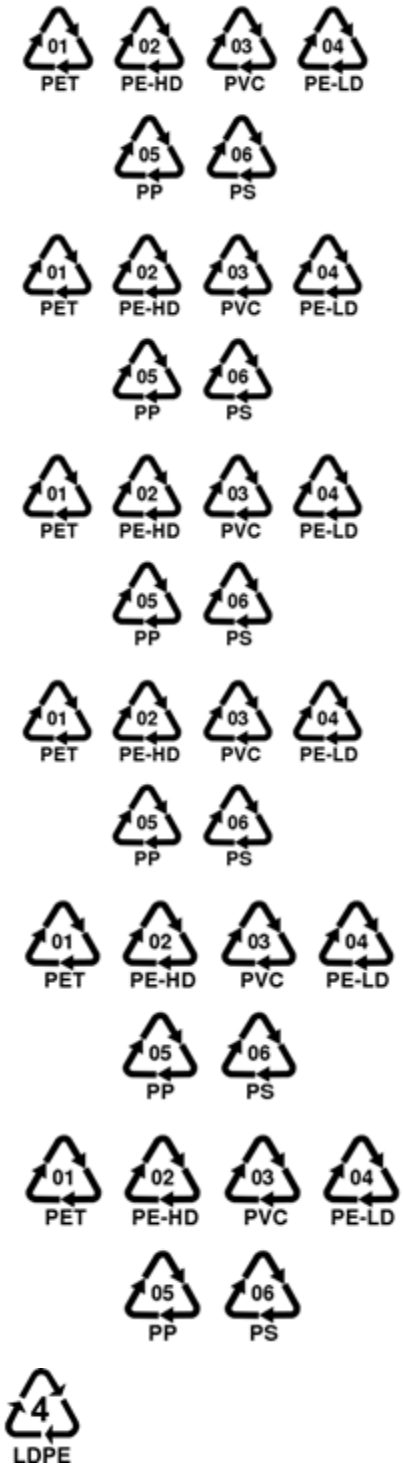
Understanding Eco Terminology

Product Material	Sustainable Credentials	Sustainable Considerations The Good and the Not So Good
BIOplastics 	Bioplastics are plastic-like materials made from natural sources like vegetable fats, oils, starches, straw, wood chips and sawdust.	The Good Made from natural materials which are renewable Does not contain toxic chemicals or compounds Biodegradable and compostable under the correct conditions The Not So Good There is a lot more research needed on this material and its sustainability credentials. A call for evidence was recently published by the UK government on the sustainability of bio-based and biodegradable plastic and they are now considering the responses. At the moment, there is a question mark on whether this product is adding to the plastic issue or helping to solve it. Bioplastics are a product of farming and take up valuable capacity that could be used for growing much-needed food Most types are not recyclable Local authorities have no way of recycling bioplastic, meaning it will end up in landfill or being incinerated – causing further release of CO_2 and pollutants into the atmosphere. We contacted our local authority on this point and they have confirmed that bioplastic cannot be recycled. Only some types of bioplastic are compostable and those that are require industrial composting facilities. They cannot be discarded in domestic compost bins. The use of compost can be compromised by any ink printed on the product, as this could pass into the food chain

		Considerations When recycling bioplastic pens, remove the refill and spring Remove the ink from the product where possible Remember that composting requires a set temperature In the promotions industry, we have mainly seen pens and bags made of this material Printed pens and packaging should not be placed in composting bins as the print will contaminate the compost heap and, if the compost is used as fertiliser, contaminants will enter the food chain
Organic	Organic farming promotes ecological balance and biodiversity by not using harmful chemicals in the growing process. There's a long-standing joke that *organic food* is what your grandparents called *food*! That's because we've become reliant on pesticides and chemical fertilisers to grow crops on a commercial scale.	The Good Healthier Better taste Contains high levels of antioxidants The Not So Good Organic farming requires more labour and higher production costs than pesticide-assisted farming, resulting in an expensive end product It cannot produce enough food for the world's population
Bamboo	Bamboo is a renewable natural product and the fastest growing plant on Earth.	The Good Naturally pest-resistant – requires no nasty pesticides! Requires far less water than similar plants Regrows to adult size in 3-5 years (it can grow 2 feet in 1 day!) Absorbs 5 times more carbon dioxide than similar plants Produces 35% more oxygen than similar plants

		Bamboo fibres that make up the natural element of processed bamboo products reduce the amount of plastic required The Not So Good Some bamboo products use a chemical process to convert the material into the end product Processed bamboo products only contain bamboo fibres and the rest is made up of polymer Processed bamboo products cannot be recycled and must be put in a landfill or incinerated Processed bamboo products cannot be composted Considerations If the product is made from processed bamboo and is used to store food or liquid, it should have tests completed prior to use to ensure chemicals are not released when heated. Presently, we see products made from processed bamboo across our industry
Recycled 	Recycled materials are products made from discarded or no longer needed products or materials.	The Good This product will have been made up of one or more materials from an item previously used and no longer needed The Not So Good Product quality or colour can be impacted There is no universal standard for accreditation Considerations Trusting your supply chain is key here to ensuring the products are as described Post-consumer recycled material is the best form of recycled product
Recyclable	Recyclable materials can be reused in order to make new materials.	See Sustainable Considerations for “Recycled”

Plastic



Plastic is made from non-renewable resources like fossil fuels to create a solid material.

The most popular plastics are:

- PET: Polyethylene Terephthalate
- PE-HD: High-density Polythene
- PVC: polyvinyl chloride

PET plastic – Highly-recyclable material accepted by 94% of UK councils.

PE-HD: High-density Polythene – collected by 92% of UK councils.

PVC: polyvinyl chloride – Not generally collected from households for recycling, which could explain why PVC use is in decline.

PE-LD: Low-density Polythene & PP: Polypropylene – Not generally collected for recycling, but mixed plastic recycling is expected to be under way within five years.

PS: Polystyrene – Not

The Good

Cheap

Strong & long lasting

Inexpensive

Can be sterile

The Not So Good

Non-biodegradable

Impacts wildlife and marine life if not disposed of correctly

Takes up landfill space

Not all plastic can be recycled, so contact your local facility before attempting to recycle it

Plastic cannot be recycled an infinite number of times

Recyclability isn't always clear or consistent

Considerations

Contact your local authority

Plastic products have a long shelf life when made well

Reusable plastic products are still a great sustainable choice because they will not be thrown away, so choose wisely when buying plastic products

	generally collected from households for recycling with the exception of some commercial polystyrene. LDPE – Only recyclable at specialist facilities.	

Process	Sustainable Credentials	Sustainable Considerations The Good and the Not So Good
Biodegradable  	A substance or product that is able to decompose by exposure to bacteria or other living organisms.	The Good Biodegradable products reduce carbon dioxide levels and greenhouse gas emissions Break down naturally and don't release harmful compounds when doing so The Not So Good Depend on certain weather conditions to break down properly Do not decompose in water, so they won't solve the issue of marine pollution Considerations Remember they must be disposed of very specifically
Compostable 	A natural process in which microorganisms, bacteria and fungi break down organic matter into a nutrient-rich substance.	The Good Creates a natural, organic fertiliser Reduces landfill waste Improves soil health The Not So Good Not all compostable products are suitable for domestic compost bins Compostable items cannot be placed with your standard recycling
Recycling	The act of converting	The Good Recycling ensures a secure supply chain by processing

 Widely Recycled: can be recycled at 75% or more of UK facilities  Check Locally: recyclable at 20-75% of UK facilities  Not Yet Recycled: Recycled by less than 20% of UK facilities	waste materials into new products to avoid sending the waste to landfill.	non-biodegradable plastics that are already in circulation and turning them into new products Conserves valuable non-renewable resources Reduces landfill waste The Not So Good Some areas do not have access to recycling facilities or simply can't afford them, so are forced to use landfills as a cheaper alternative Recycling and manufacturing products from recycled materials uses energy Considerations Not all products that you might assume are recyclable are actually recyclable, so always check the symbols carefully
Renewable Energy	Renewable energy works by harnessing power from renewable resources like sunlight, wind, rain, and tides so that we're not relying on depleting or damaging sources.	The Good Sustainable and abundant Takes advantage of power that would otherwise go to waste Low-maintenance systems The Not So Good Can result in air pollution Requires a lot of energy to produce Can be dependent on seasons

Popular Accreditations

Name	What the Accreditation Stands For
FSC®	Forest Stewardship Council Any product that is FSC® Certified has met the environmental and social requirements of the council.

FSC	This makes FSC® paper and card a great option for sustainability, as the organisation ensures that all wood harvested for use is replaced to protect against deforestation. Choosing FSC® products also guarantees that certain sections of forests and woodlands are left completely intact to protect wildlife and their habitats. All products can be traced from store to source.
Fair Trade FAIRTRADE	The symbol of a person triumphantly raising one hand in the air means better pay and trading standards for producers in developing countries.
ISO14001	ISO14001 is the international standard that specifies requirements for an effective environmental management system (EMS). It provides a framework that an organisation can follow, rather than establishing environmental performance requirements.

Eco Terms

Let's take a look at some general eco terms and what they mean:

Biodiversity: Biodiversity is the level and variation of life in a particular environment. High biodiversity means that plant and animal life is thriving, while low biodiversity suggests that only a small amount of natural life is supported.

Bioaccumulation: This super-sciency sounding term is what we call the accumulation of materials within an organism. Over time, chemicals and pesticides build up in certain organisms – often at a much faster rate than the organism can get rid of those substances…

Carbon Emissions: Carbon emissions are released when fossil fuels are burnt, causing harmful greenhouse gasses to be released into the atmosphere.

Carbon Footprint: Carbon footprint is determined by the amount of carbon dioxide a person, product or organisation emits.

Climate Change: Climate change is a change in climate patterns caused by an increase in carbon dioxide. This has a knock-on effect on the environment and causes global temperatures to rise, leading to the shrinking of glaciers and disruptions to natural habitats.

Corporate Responsibility: In terms of sustainability, corporate responsibility refers to the self-regulated goals of a company or organisation to reduce their carbon footprint and adopt sustainable business practices.

Deforestation: This refers to the removal of trees from forest areas to make room for other things that certainly aren't forests… When deforestation occurs, habitats are lost, and greenhouse gases are increased.

Eco: 'Eco' has become an umbrella term for anything that is beneficial for the environment. It also refers to any product or practice that is less harmful than non-eco alternatives.

Global Warming: This describes the warming up of the planet over time as a result of greenhouse gas emissions and carbon dioxide.

Greenhouse Effect: Gases in the Earth's atmosphere trap heat from the Sun, causing the Earth to get hotter. This process is similar to the heat-trapping phenomenon experienced with actual greenhouses.

Greenwashing: This relatively new term that suggests that an environmental claim is misleading and has just been made in order to make the manufacturer appear to care about the planet.

Sustainable: And just like that, we've come full circle in our discussion of sustainability jargon. The word itself means maintaining something at a certain level, so in terms of the Earth, we want to make sure we are using processes and materials that we can continue to use over a long period of time in order to cause as little damage to the environment as possible.

In Summary

We hope this article helps to demystify some of the jargon around sustainability, and we encourage you to share this information with your friends and family so that we can all understand the change we're working towards that little bit better.