

REPORT SUMMARY

September 2009

Sustainable Innovation, Waste Economics, Low Carbon Technologies

Carbon Footprint Evaluation

Oakdene Hollins investigates carbon footprint of textile recycling business

A leading UK textiles recycler commissioned Oakdene Hollins to carbon-footprint its business activities. Based in West Bromwich, BCR Global Textiles is a family run business specialising in the reuse and recycling of end-of-life textiles. The firm was one of the first to operate clothing bring banks, and now collects some 7,000 tonnes of textiles annually from local authorities. The material is sorted at a dedicated processing facility before being sold on to both domestic and export markets.

Keeping this amount of textiles out of landfill has huge carbon savings but, keen to understand the impact of its haulage and processing activities, BCR turned to Oakdene Hollins for advice. By following the Publicly Available Specification for carbon footprinting products and services - PAS 2050 - we analysed greenhouse gas emissions resulting from all of BCR's operations including collection vehicles, lighting, heating, waste and machinery at the depot.

Using data for the business activities undertaken during the whole of 2008, we concluded that 64.1% of the emissions were caused by disposal of approximately 9% of the collected textiles to landfill as they are unsuitable for re-use or recycling. A further 38% of emissions were caused by transport of the textiles.

Once the textiles have been sold to others in the supply chain for both re-use and recycling, these end users can claim significant CO₂ benefits from displacing primary materials. Hence, while CO₂ or its equivalent is generated by BCR's own activities, because it operates at an early stage of the supply chain we calculated that its activities make available estimated carbon savings of more than 40,000 tonnes further along the line. In other words, BCR's emissions are negligible compared to the good it is doing for the environment.

Background to this report:

BCR Textile recycling is asked by the local authority about their carbon impact and they decide to get the carbon footprint done on their operations and present the findings when required by the outside world.

About Oakdene Hollins:

Oakdene Hollins is a research and consulting company working to support change toward more sustainable and less carbon-intensive products, processes, services and supply chains. The business sectors we work with include Food & Drink, Textiles & Clothing, Metals & Mining, Construction, Wastes Management, Nanotechnology and European & UK Policy. We have built a strong reputation for integrity, reliability and excellence with public sector and private industry clients alike. We operate at a European scale and manage the Ecolabel scheme in the UK in collaboration with TUV/NEL.

Oakdene Hollins employs people with science, economics, business administration and manufacturing disciplines, so that within each industry sector we can offer the following core services:

- Market appraisal
- Technology appraisal
- Protocol and standards development
- Economic modelling
- Lean manufacturing projects
- Financial impact assessment
- Management of research projects
- Ecolabelling advice
- Carbon footprinting
- Critical review of life cycle assessments.

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