



# WE'VE SEEN THE LIGHT HAVE YOU?

Ellen MacArthur and Alistair McGowan both made a big impression at a seminar on how to cut carbon emissions in the television industry. **Jenny Minard** reports

**C**AN YOU IMAGINE a world in which thinking about our carbon emissions will become as important as managing programme budgets?

We are constantly being told how important recycling is – but in day-to-day working life, do we have time to think about what we produce? Do we have the money to implement green initiatives when budgets are shrinking?

BBC experts think so, arguing that the economic benefits can outweigh the cost of installing the measures.

TV production insiders met last week at White City to discuss sustainability and ways to reduce their carbon footprint. The BBC was hosting the Programmes That Don't Cost the Earth conference to announce the findings of a year long study into emissions.

The headline is that the BBC emits 8.2 tonnes of CO2 per hour of TV and that teams using Albert, the carbon calculator developed by the BBC, have contributed to the results. (By comparison, two average size homes emit 8 tonnes of CO2 a year.)

The study found that production offices produce 3.3 tonnes; travel 2.7; ac-

commodation, one tonne; post production, 0.5; on location, 0.5; studios and stages, 0.3.

Jez Nightingale, head of production at BBC Comedy, said: 'Albert forces programme makers to think about how to reduce their carbon footprint. It will become as important as managing budgets,' he believes.

'It's not an academic exercise, it's to provide a benchmark. When someone wants to lose weight, the first thing they do is weigh themselves, to see how far they have to go.'

The BBC is keen to stress that it's impossible to say whether the figures are good or bad, as there are no comparable figures for the broadcast industry. After another year of using the calculator, it will be able to compare results.

But the BBC is committed to embedding sustainable practices across the organisation and, over time, will make changes to technology, buildings, procurement and production methods that will result in both carbon and cost savings.

Chaired by David Shukman, the BBC's environment and science correspondent, the day's speakers included sustainability charity founder and world record breaking yachtswoman Dame Ellen MacArthur, as well as comedian Alistair McGowan. Representatives from Channel 4, Sky and inde-

pendent companies also took part.

Sustainability champion McGowan contributed to a panel discussion about how to go green in the commissioning phase of TV production.

A personal bugbear had led him to contact *EastEnders*, he said, to complain that there were no visible recycling bins in Walford. If there were, people might relate to the programme more, he argued, and it could help raise awareness.

He said his heart sank when he turned up for a TV programme and the production staff had filled his room with more food than he could possibly eat, all the lights were on and the television was blaring with no-one watching it.

← **Dame Ellen MacArthur**

→ **Alistair McGowan**

'Dame Judi Dench calls me a bat because I sit with one bulb on when I'm having my make-up done. You don't need all those bulbs,' the impressionist insisted.

MacArthur set the bar high, opening proceedings with a speech about her role as founder of a charity working towards creating a sustainable future. She envisaged a world where nothing was wasted and everything not only recycled, but reused.

She suggested businesses use reproducers which could be recycled and reproduced into new ones. She couldn't see why video cameras couldn't be made in the same way.

In a panel session, Karen O'Connor, London's head of Factual, wanted to see more video conferencing to reduce emissions from motorway journeys between London and Salford.

When asked whether environmental issues should encroach editorially she said: '...if we prophesise they [audiences] will tell us to shut up, in my opinion.'

Last week's event also included a number of workshops.

Participant Jane Taylor, production executive, London Factual, had been 'inspired and fascinated' by MacArthur's take on the subject, and said she had 'interesting new ideas' to take away from the conference: 'Like asking our presenters what they would like to see carried out on their series which would benefit the environment.'



## NO MEAT MONDAY IS HARD TO TAKE

Is it easy to implement green initiatives or are time and budgets too stretched? Producers on the ground give their views

**JULES HUSSEY**, a freelance production manager who has worked on shows such as *Silent Witness* and *Five Daughters*, says that being green is about involving the whole team.

'I had one prop guy come up to me and say, 'we need wooden stirrers'; now we use them.

'It's about making it fun and asking for feedback. It's about the support network – building and sharing information.'

With cows responsible for huge quantities of CO2 emissions, Hussey once suggested introducing a no-meat Monday on a production, but met opposition.

'Some of the set guys said it contravened their human rights. We didn't introduce it but

we had a word with the caterers, cut back to no more than two red meat days and introduced more vegetarian options. No one noticed and we reduced our emissions.'

Andrew Purcell, a production designer on shows such as *Being Human*, believes there is a problem with communication. 'The responsibility is dissipated – freelancers are another step removed from BBC policy. There is disconnection from the mother ship. We need to be supported and directed in what we do.

'Recycling comes from my own desire to make things better.'

Francis Gilson is a BBC production manager who has worked on *Mongrels* – a production

renowned for being sustainable. Highlighting the challenge of being environmentally friendly, he says: 'You might pick people for jobs but don't think about where they live and their footprint.'

In one exercise, he explains, when trying to decide a location for a meeting of department heads: 'We plotted where they lived and worked out a central point to meet, to try to reduce carbon footprint [in terms of travel].'

He admits that being sustainable is not without its difficulties.

'We introduced reusable water bottles but on location people were losing them. It did throw up some problems but we will stick with it as bottled water is very expensive.'

↑ **On the panel:**  
**Scott Jones of Footprint TV, Simon George from Ealing Studios, Fiona Ball from Sky and Francis Gilson from the BBC**  
Inset: **Karen O'Connor**  
→ **David Shukman**

## EVERY LITTLE HELPS

**Teams are doing their bit to cut their production footprint. Some steps (below) are obvious while others call for a bit of forward planning**

### Office essentials

Turning off appliances when not in use (most productions feel it could be better embedded as good practice); reducing waste through printing double sided and two sides to a page for scripts, call sheets, risk assessment docs and where there is other paper heavy production documentation.

### Travel

Many productions cite greater use of public transport (crew and contributors); increased car sharing; viewing graphics and edits via FTP sites rather than physically transporting DVDs or tapes. Some are trying to keep crew sizes to a minimum, run shoots back to back and use more local crews to cut travel. One production encouraged more tube travel by asking everyone to explain why they needed to drive to the main location, which reduced driver numbers.

### Accommodation

Programmes are choosing new hotels when possible (emissions from such buildings tend to be lower) and making sure they are as close to the location as possible to cut travel; scheduling days so crew can go home rather than stay overnight; encouraging people to stay with friends and family where possible instead of being put up in hotels.



**Albert has found that TV production emits 8.2 tonnes of CO2 per hour**  
Breakdown:  
Production office **3.3 tonnes**

Travel **2.7 tonnes**  
Accommodation **1.0 tonnes**  
Post Production **0.5 tonnes**  
On location **0.4 tonnes**  
Studios and stages **0.3 tonnes**

This figure is an example of the data that can be gathered by Albert. Use Albert: <http://albert.gateway.bbc.co.uk>. Talk to the Sustainable Productions team on (02) 24654

## TEN TOP TIPS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

■ Consider how to make the biggest cuts to your predicted carbon footprint and nominate a senior individual responsible for sustainability  
■ Don't use an office bigger than you need and sit together to avoid unnecessary lighting  
■ Keep windows shut when air conditioning is on and check

heating and air con aren't on at the same time  
■ Use laptops where possible  
■ Check paper is made from recycled materials and reduce your paper order by 20%  
■ Use cab share on Gateway and request use of low emission vehicles  
■ Schedule meetings around

public transport  
■ Keep meetings that require travel to a minimum and encourage phone and video conferencing  
■ Encourage home working  
■ Buy props, costumes etc only when they're likely to be re-used and you have somewhere to store them