

The 4 R's

Did you know?

All you need to know about how mail can contribute to circularity.



87%

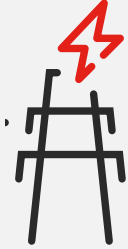
of customers want brands to act now to encourage future sustainability.

Mail can be a sustainable communications channel through eliminating waste and keeping materials in use for as long as possible. This can be achieved through 4 circular processes: **regeneration**, **reinvention**, **reduction**, and **reuse & recycling**.

Below you will discover some of the ways these processes are put into action across mail's supply chain.

Regenerate

Paper comes from a natural, regenerative crop – trees. If a brand can work with a supplier that only uses paper from sustainably certified forests this is a step towards developing a more sustainable campaign.



Did you know?

Print is one of the most sustainable communication channels. The European pulp and paper industry only accounts for **0.8% of European greenhouse gases** and it is the biggest single user and producer of renewable energy in the EU.



Did you know?

The production of paper feeds **a regenerative economy** in which more trees can be planted replacing those cut down. In this process, **carbon can be stored, tree roots can stabilise the soil and help reduce flooding downstream**.



Did you know?

The two most recognised sustainably managed forest schemes are the **FSC** and **PEFC**. Both track wood and wood fibre through every step of the supply chain, from the forest to the end-user. And they have similar objectives like conserving natural habitats and respecting the rights of local communities.

Reinvent

There are a host of useful innovations that have transformed paper mills and printing processes to be more sustainable and efficient.



Did you know?

Low-impact modern paper mills can run on 100% renewable energy, use total chlorine-free processes and **recycle most of the water used in operations**.



Did you know?

Conventional ink uses mineral-based oils with pigments containing metals which **pollute the environment**. However, different types of inks have been developed over the years which are biodegradable, while still maintaining the correct colour and longevity.

They are also generally more cost-effective than traditional inks. This is **because the ink flow spreads more efficiently and, therefore, means less ink is used when printing**.



Did you know?

Innovations like waterless printing and energy reduction technologies such as LED UV technology for instant ink curing (bonding ink to paper) are helping to reduce overall carbon emissions from ink production. **LED UV technology typically consumes 70–90% less energy for ink curing**.

Reduce

Royal Mail is focused on reducing the distribution footprint for mail and has a net zero target of 2040. Actions include decarbonising its distribution fleet, switching to renewable energy and electrifying more vehicles and operations. And a big part of its reduction strategy is its last mile delivery by posties delivering by foot.



Did you know?

Royal Mail currently operate the largest electric van fleet in the UK with **over 9,000 electric vans**.



Did you know?

Royal Mail has also introduced its **first fleet of 42-tonne fully electric HGVs** for “middle-mile” deliveries, including mail.



Did you know?

The backbone of Royal Mail's low-carbon delivery network is **the 85,000 postal workers who collectively take up to a billion steps a day**. With 50% of all delivery routes performed wholly or partially on foot.

Reuse & Recycle

To build a circular economy within the mail channel we need to find ways to maintain, reuse, refurbish and recycle products and materials. These activities can tackle waste, pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change.



Did you know?

Royal Mail reuse millions of products within the mail process, **such as ink cartridges, trays, mail bags and elastic bands**.



Did you know?

Paper is one of the world's most recycled materials. Recent government reports noted that the UK recycling rate for paper and cardboard reached **86.4%** in 2024, significantly outperforming plastic, glass, and metal.



Did you know?

In the UK, **89% of mail, including direct mail and door drops, is recycled**, making the industry highly circular and reducing the need for virgin pulp.