



**GREENPEACE**

# POWER CRAZY: LEAGUE TABLE OF LIGHT BULB RETAILERS

*If every household in the country used energy efficient light bulbs, we would save enough energy to close down two power stations. This makes using energy efficient light bulbs one of the easiest and most effective ways an individual can tackle climate change. Yet most bulbs on sale are still the old-fashioned incandescent type – an out-dated and highly inefficient technology. Greenpeace now calls on retailers to take the lead in ensuring inefficient bulbs are taken off the shelves. A new league table (page 4) names the best retailers, that have taken steps to do so, and exposes the worst.*

Energy efficiency is recognised by the UK government as the cheapest, cleanest and safest way to achieve significant reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide, the main contributor to climate change.<sup>1</sup> Yet despite the ever-growing impacts of climate change, and increasing concerns about energy security, a scandalously huge range of energy wasting, highly inefficient products remains on sale in the UK.

Incandescent light bulbs have been on the market since the 1870s. Over a hundred years later, this technology has barely changed. The bulbs still waste 95% of the energy they use as heat, and tend to burn out after around 12 months. And while far more efficient light bulbs are now available, outdated incandescent bulbs still account for around 80% of the bulbs sold in the UK.

Energy saving bulbs (known as Compact Fluorescent Lamps, or CFLs) have been available for around 30 years. They require only a fifth of the electricity, save users up to £9 per bulb, each year, and can last up to 12 times as long as their incandescent ancestors. However, despite the efforts made by some parts of the retail sector to reduce CFL prices and offer the larger range of energy efficient bulbs now available, they still represent only around 13% of light bulbs sold in the UK.<sup>2</sup>

Light bulbs are just the start. There is no justifiable reason why any energy-using product with a lower than 'A' rating (the most efficient) should still be on sale in the UK. Any responsible retailer should ensure that energy wasting goods are no longer sold in its stores.

## **Retailers tackling climate change**

Greenpeace recognises that many retailers are already taking action to minimise the impact of their operations on the climate and are responding to increased consumer concern on the issue. However, all retailers could and should do more to improve the energy efficiency of products they sell. Individually and collectively, UK retailers have enormous power to tackle climate change, and simple measures like removing energy wasting products from sale could have a significant impact on the UK's efforts to slash its greenhouse gas emissions.

Using government figures, Greenpeace has calculated that replacing all incandescent bulbs with CFLs in all UK homes would save over 5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year.<sup>3</sup> This is equivalent to taking 1.4 million cars off the road. At the same time, enough energy could be saved to close two medium-sized power stations. Given the short lifespan of incandescent bulbs, such savings could be achieved within just one year of retailers making the switch.

## **Time for minimum efficiency standards**

Greenpeace is demanding the UK government introduce tough minimum standards on all energy-using products, and that they lead the way in pushing for EU level legislation on this issue. Such standards should effectively outlaw the least efficient energy-using products, including the most energy-hungry televisions, computers, washing machines, tumble driers, fridges and the incandescent light bulb.



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With political will and effort, EU efficiency standards on lighting could be agreed in 2009, when domestic lighting next comes up for discussion under the Energy Using Products Directive. In the meantime, retailers of these products have a crucial role to play in urgently eliminating the most wasteful and outdated technologies from the marketplace. Incandescent light bulbs are a prime example of a technology that has no place in the 21st century.

### Real customer choice

A common response given by retailers to Greenpeace's energy efficiency work is the desire to offer customers a choice in their purchasing decisions. However, customers have a very limited choice at present when it comes to the energy efficiency of the products on offer. The vast majority of retailers still stock many more types of incandescent bulb on their shelves than CFLs, despite the existence of hundreds of varieties of CFL of almost every size, design and fitting.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the cost differential between incandescents and CFLs remains huge in most cases, with the low price of incandescents in no way reflecting the damage they do to the climate. The huge overall cost saving incurred by using CFLs is rarely, if ever, publicised by retailers.

The burden of responsibility is currently on the consumer to navigate their way through a maze of labels, efficiency ratings and marketing claims, whilst juggling upfront cost with long term energy bills. Greenpeace believes that government and retailers should simply act to remove the least efficient energy using products from sale, starting with incandescent light bulbs. This is the only appropriate

response to the scale and urgency of climate change. The consumer deserves the assurance that every product on the shelves is the most environmentally-friendly, efficient product possible, leaving them free to choose their purchase according to design, fitting, colour etc – that is real consumer choice.

### How long to change a light bulb?

The Treasury is currently negotiating with UK retailers to achieve a voluntary commitment to phase out most incandescent bulbs from sale by the end of 2011. Aside from the limitations that voluntary agreements present, this initiative is simply not ambitious enough. Scientists now suggest that the international community has less than ten years to ensure that carbon emissions reach their peak and then start declining if we are to avoid potentially disastrous climate change. If it takes five years to change a light bulb, there is little chance that we will effectively be able to tackle the energy wastage across all other products in the limited time we have left.

### Retailer support for a ban

Retailer support for minimum efficiency standards will be essential if we are to secure the legislation needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change. Any retailer action which pre-empted government or EU legislation would send a strong signal that the sector is ready to take responsibility for the climate impact of products sold. It would also push manufacturers towards a speedy phase-out of inefficient products.

The following retailers have indicated to Greenpeace that they would support a ban<sup>5</sup> on all lighting products with an efficiency of below 20 lumens per watt:<sup>6</sup>

**Asda**

**Co-op**

**Habitat**

**Home Retail Group (Argos and Homebase)**

**Morrisons**

**Travis Perkins (Wickes and Focus DIY stores)**

Whilst such support is important, the key indication of a responsible attitude towards tackling climate change comes from a clear, time-specific commitment to remove incandescent light bulbs from sale.



## The League Table

Greenpeace wrote to all major lighting retailers early in 2007 asking whether they:

- support the principle of mandatory minimum efficiency standards for energy-using products
- would support a ban, at UK or EU level, on sales of all incandescent light bulbs
- would eliminate incandescent light bulbs from their range, and by when.

The Greenpeace League Table of light bulb retailers demonstrates which retailers are taking the lead when it comes to commitments on energy efficiency, and which retailers are lagging woefully behind. In order to achieve a clear and straightforward comparison, we have ranked the retailers only on their stated commitment to remove incandescent bulbs from sale.

**Currys** deserves full marks for having committed itself in April 2007 not to renew stocks of incandescent light bulbs. **Habitat** has committed to end sales of incandescent bulbs by 2009. **The Co-operative Group** is piloting the removal of incandescent bulbs from sale in 50 stores in Autumn 2007, and has committed to a complete phase-out across all its branches as soon as practically possible, and by 2011 at the latest. Other retailers that have reported they will end sales of incandescent bulbs by 2011 are: **Tesco; B&Q; Homebase; John Lewis; Waitrose; Co-op; Sainsbury's; Wickes/Focus.**

These are the more progressive retailers. Unfortunately, some retailers gave no time-specific commitment at all to end the sale of incandescent light bulbs – **ASDA, Ikea, Morrisons and Somerfield**. Greenpeace awarded these retailers an 'F' rating – as low down the list as the outdated, inefficient, incandescent bulbs they continue to sell.

When comparing the F-rated retailers Greenpeace examined current practice as well as policy. A key indication of how seriously a retailer takes its responsibility to promote more efficient choices to customers is the comparative sales figures of incandescent bulbs to CFLs each year. While **Ikea**, for example, has no clear commitment to end the sale of

incandescents, CFLs account for 41% of its light bulb sales<sup>7</sup> – meaning that it currently sells 1.5 incandescent bulbs for every CFL.

The price of the CFLs on sale is another indication of a retailer's commitment to encourage good consumer choice. Amongst the F-rated retailers, **Morrisons** deserves credit for currently selling the most affordable CFLs on the market: 'Energy Saving Recommended' bulbs for 39p each<sup>8</sup>. **Asda**, meanwhile, halved the price of its CFL range in January 2007.

## 'W' for Worst

But one retailer stood out even from the rest of the F-rated group as the worst on almost every count. **Woolworths** stood out for a number of reasons: the high ratio of incandescents to CFLs sold last year (7 to 1)<sup>9</sup>, the lack of support for a mandatory ban on inefficient lighting, and the relative price of the bulbs it sells: its CFLs retail for over ten times the price of its cheapest incandescent. We have awarded them 'W' for 'Worst'.

**Somerfield** was a close contender for this rating, with barely better practice or policy than Woolworths, but because its cheapest CFLs were considerably less expensive than those sold by Woolworths it escaped the 'W' rating – this time.

1 2003 Energy White Paper.

2 2005 figure, from MINTEL, Domestic Lighting, UK, May 2006.

3 DEFRA, Market Transformation Programme, 2006  
www.mtprog.com/ReferenceLibrary/MTP\_SPO6\_web.pdf p126-7

4 The EST Energy Recommended Label applies to 170 different CFL bulbs alone.

5 Not necessarily an immediate ban, but support for the principle of government intervention which would level the playing field for all retailers.

6 'Lumens per watt' is the standard way of measuring the efficiency of a light bulb. It means the number of lumens (unit of light output) produced per watt of electricity consumed by the bulb. A minimum efficiency standard for lighting of 20 lumens per watt would effectively outlaw all incandescents, and the less efficient halogens. The newer halogens produce around 26 lumens per watt (low voltage, infrared coated), CFLs 60-70 lumens per watt and fluorescent tubes 80 lumens per watt.

7 Global figure. Source: letter to Greenpeace, 23 May 2007.

8 Tested for quality and lifespan and approved by the Energy Saving Trust.

9 Letter from Woolworths to Greenpeace, 7 March 2007, stating that CFLs account for approximately 13% of sales.

## Retailers must act now

As the league table below shows, despite progressive and clear commitments from some, far too many retailers still do not take their role in tackling climate change seriously. There is no longer any excuse for a major retailer to stock and promote climate-destroying, incandescent light bulbs. The league table publicly demonstrates the commitments of the most progressive retailers – and also names and shames the worst.

## Greenpeace calls on all UK retailers to make a public commitment to an early and total phase-out of incandescent bulbs

Greenpeace will publish updated league tables when necessary and will continue to highlight the attitudes of the best and the worst retailers.

## GREENPEACE LEAGUE TABLE OF LIGHT BULB RETAILERS



## GREENPEACE

July 2007  
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Greenpeace is committed to halting climate change caused by burning coal, oil and gas. We champion a clean energy future in which the quality of life of all peoples is improved through the environmentally responsible and socially just provision of energy. We promote scientific and technical innovations that advance the goals of clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency.