

Stakeholder panel

Our external stakeholder panel of CR experts reviews our CR Report and provides us with valuable insights into the expectations of key stakeholder groups.

PANEL MEMBERS

PROCESS

FEEDBACK

Stakeholder Panel – Statement Update, January 2013

An update from our external stakeholder panel of CR experts.

As part of the 2012 CR report assurance process, the Panel challenged the Kingfisher business to make more significant progress in the way it brings sustainability to life for its customers, and requested the business to update the Panel on progress by the end of 2012.

In order to demonstrate how the business has responded to the Panel's challenge, Panel members were invited to join a Kingfisher team of sustainability and marketing experts at a B&Q store in the UK in late 2012. The Panel heard first-hand the latest thinking on brand identity and communications within the B&Q business, and were also invited to tour the store.

The plan for execution of sustainability through the B&Q brand is impressive. The Panel heard how choice editing and product reformulation have been the areas where B&Q has had the greatest effect on what its customers buy, with the business learning that green labelling of products and dedicated eco-stores has been largely ineffective. These two key insights have led B&Q to develop a strategy where sustainability will be incorporated into the brand identity, not treated as an add-on. This will mean that sustainability messages will become increasingly visible in all mainstream communications (such as kitchen brochures) and eco sub-brands will be phased out. In addition, there will be multi-channel campaigns designed to bring certain aspects of B&Q's sustainability strategy to life through activation via the brand, with the first of these planned to address timber.

The Panel whole-heartedly supports this planned approach, as for sustainable living to become mainstream, the brands that consumers trust, such as B&Q, need to do much of the heavy lifting – and need to make sustainability easy, as well as desirable and affordable. The Panel was also heartened to hear that mechanisms are in place to both transfer the learning from B&Q's pioneering practice to other Kingfisher brands, as well as to ensure a central role for customer engagement on sustainability within the Net Positive strategy. Kingfisher is also an active participant in a project sponsored by the World Economic Forum designed to understand how businesses can work together to transform demand to enable sustainable lifestyles (reported on at Davos in January 2013).

Finally, the progress made by the business in addressing consumer engagement on sustainability is not solely in strategy development. The store tour showed two tangible examples of ways in which B&Q is beginning to make sustainable living easy. The first was the 'You Can Do It' centre, one of fifteen around the UK (with plans for more), where B&Q customers can sign up to learn home-improvement skills, allowing them to learn practical and affordable ways in which they can create better homes. The second was an energy saving section of the store, where customers can seek advice and tips from energy experts on how to cut energy bills in the home.

However, this is just the beginning of what will inevitably be an iterative process of bringing sustainability to life for Kingfisher's customers. Going forward, the Panel would like to see evidence of the Net Positive ambition across multiple ranges and to be a key component of the retail experience Kingfisher offers to its customers. We would also like to see future customer focus groups describe Kingfisher's brands differently in the future, using words clearly associated with sustainability.

In summary, the Panel feels that while sustainability has yet to be fully activated through the Kingfisher brands, the strategic development of the Net Positive strategy which has taken place in the last few months, along with the tangible evidence of this strategy beginning to come to life in store, indicate that Kingfisher is serious about ensuring better, and more sustainable homes, for all of its millions of customers around the world.

