

## **Waterstone's moots a 30% reduction in returns**

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**Waterstone's believes it will reduce returns by 30% once its new consolidation centre is on stream, transforming the environmental impact and cost structure of the UK publishing industry.**

At *The Bookseller's* "Going Green" seminar last week, Waterstone's head of distribution Rob Entwistle laid bare the "administrative nightmare" of its current supply chain, which has 128,000 possible routes for how an order can reach its hundreds of stores from a host of distributors.

He promised that the new model would "massively reduce this complexity", with centralised monitoring of orders, and all deliveries and returns handled through the new consolidation centre.

Distributors and wholesalers will cut their carbon usage by 70% to 80% by delivering to the Burton upon Trent warehouse rather than individually to the 323 stores, he estimated. The new model will be tested from 31st May, initially supplying just one store. Service to additional stores will be rolled out until 28th July, and dispatch of internet orders direct to consumers will start on 31st July. The retailer then plans a "peak ramp-up" of supply from 31st July to 2nd September.

Entwistle said: "Returns cost a lot of money, for us and for publishers. We believe 30% of current returns can be recycled back into stores. We will always check if we can use a returned book elsewhere in our network of stores. Only those that genuinely need to be returned will be, and from one place."

Responding to fears that store-level and customer orders would be slowed down by the new system, he pledged that it would "not add time" because deliveries would be taken and dispatched on the same day.

The Burton upon Trent warehouse will have pulping facilities, and Waterstone's expects to pulp up to 75% of returns on site rather than sending stock back to publishers. "This will take vehicles off the road."

The system will also introduce reusable totes for shipping books to stores. Entwistle hopes it will completely eradicate the use of cardboard cartons, with suppliers encouraged to deliver books in Waterstone's totes in the future.

He added: "The outgoing model is an administrative nightmare, and we have a high level of returns. There are significant financial and non-financial benefits to redesigning our routes to market."

Source: [www.thebookseller.com](http://www.thebookseller.com)