



6 Reasons Your Customers Will Ask for UK-Made, Recycled Merchandise in 2027

Oct 2026 - CHX Products

Executive summary

The businesses buying branded merchandise are being asked to prove more than ever: where a product was made, what it was made from, how it reached them and whether the claims printed alongside it stand up. Since February 2025, new public procurement rules have made social value a scored part of central government tenders and carbon reduction plans a condition of bidding for major contracts (Cabinet Office, 2025a; 2025b; 2025c). Since April 2025, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has been able to fine businesses directly for misleading environmental claims, and its January 2026 guidance confirms that liability runs through the whole supply chain, distributors included (CMA, 2026).

This paper sets out six reasons why listing UK-made, recycled merchandise is now a commercial advantage for promotional merchandise distributors, rather than a niche range. It covers procurement, green claims, supply chain stability, transparency, brand perception and the UK recycling economy, and closes with how CHX Products helps distributors meet these expectations with evidence they can share.

Introduction

For most of the last two decades, choosing promotional merchandise came down to price, lead time and print quality. Those still matter, but they are no longer the whole picture. Procurement teams now ask for carbon reduction plans and social value commitments; marketing teams worry about greenwashing; finance teams want supply chains that will not stall when a shipping lane closes.

At the same time, the people who receive branded products are paying closer attention to origin. A 2026 YouGov survey for Made in Britain found that 86% of UK adults consider where a product was made when deciding to buy it, and 70% are more likely to buy a non-food product carrying the Made in Britain mark, up from 44% a year earlier (Made in Britain, 2026).

For distributors, this creates both a risk and an opportunity. The risk is being left with a range that cannot answer the questions customers are now asking. The opportunity is to list products that answer them clearly, with evidence, at no extra cost to the customer.

Reason 1: Procurement now scores it

The Procurement Act 2023 came into force on 24th February 2025, alongside a new National Procurement Policy Statement that public bodies must have regard to (Cabinet Office, 2025a). The statement asks contracting authorities to deliver social and economic value, support local and regional growth, and maximise spend with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).



Two procurement policy notes put this into practice for central government:

- **Social value:** since 1st October 2025, in-scope central government buyers must give social value a minimum 10% weighting in tender evaluation (Cabinet Office, 2025b). Under the replacement model, PPN 026, that floor doubles to 20% for contracts of £5 million or more from 1st January 2027 (Stotles, 2026).
- **Carbon reduction plans:** for major central government contracts, a published carbon reduction plan committing to net zero by 2050 is a pass or fail condition of participation, and it must cover a defined set of Scope 3 (supply chain) emissions categories (Cabinet Office, 2025c).

The private sector is moving in the same direction. The UK Sustainability Reporting Standards were finalised in February 2026, and the Financial Conduct Authority has proposed applying them to listed companies from 1st January 2027, with Scope 3 emissions on a comply or explain basis (Department for Business and Trade, 2026).

What this means for distributors: your customers in the public sector, and the large companies supplying them, are being asked to show that their purchases support UK jobs, cut supply chain emissions and favour SMEs. Merchandise made in the UK by an SME, from recycled UK feedstock, gives their procurement teams something concrete to point to. An imported product with no traceable origin gives them nothing.

Reason 2: Green claims now carry real liability, all the way down the chain

When the CMA published its Green Claims Code in 2021, it reported that 40% of green claims it reviewed online could be misleading consumers (CMA, 2021). The Code sets out six principles, including that claims must be truthful, clear, substantiated and consider the full life cycle of a product.

What has changed is enforcement. Since 6th April 2025, the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 has allowed the CMA to decide for itself whether consumer law has been broken and to impose fines of up to 10% of global turnover (KPMG, 2025). Then, on 22nd January 2026, the CMA published guidance on green claims across the supply chain. It makes clear that a business can be liable not only when it originates a claim, but when it repeats or passes one on, and that more than one business in a chain can be held responsible (CMA, 2026; Osborne Clarke, 2026).

What this means for distributors: if you list a product as recycled, sustainable or UK-made, you share responsibility for that claim. The safest products to list are those whose claims are specific and backed by evidence you can access. Vague terms such as "eco-friendly" on an imported product with an unknown material source carry the most risk, for you and for the customer whose logo goes on it.

Reason 3: A supply chain that does not depend on a shipping lane

Since late 2023, attacks on shipping in the Red Sea have pushed most Asia to Europe container services around the Cape of Good Hope, adding roughly 10 to 14 days to each voyage (Suaid Global, 2026). Typical Asia to Europe transit times have moved from 32 to 35 days via Suez to 45 to 60 days via the Cape, pulling seasonal shipping cut-offs forward to late July or August (SEKO Logistics, 2026). As of



September 2026, the largest carriers had returned only selected services to the Red Sea route (Suaid Global, 2026).

For promotional merchandise, where a product is often needed for a specific event, launch or season, that uncertainty matters. A product that misses its date has failed, however good it looks.

What this means for distributors: UK manufacture removes ocean freight, customs clearance and port congestion from the equation. When a customer's event date moves, or an order lands late in the year, a UK-made product with fast dispatch as standard is far easier to deliver on than one that left a factory overseas two months ago. One CHX customer put it simply in a satisfaction survey: quick lead times and UK-made products make CHX "an ideal supplier for customers with tight deadlines" (CHX Products, 2026a).

Reason 4: Transparency your customers can stand behind

Under section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, larger organisations must publish an annual statement on the steps they take to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains. In March 2025, the Home Office published the first substantive update to its statutory guidance in a decade, placing greater emphasis on supply chain mapping, risk-based due diligence and year-on-year progress (Home Office, 2025). The guidance also notes that the Procurement Act 2023 gives public bodies stronger powers to exclude suppliers where there is evidence of modern slavery in their supply chains.

The practical effect is that buyers increasingly need to know who made what they buy, and where. With merchandise sourced through several layers of overseas factories and agents, that can be difficult to establish.

What this means for distributors: a product designed, moulded, printed and dispatched by one team at one UK site has a short, visible supply chain. When a customer's procurement or ESG team asks where a product was made, and by whom, there is a clear answer, supported by independent membership and audit schemes such as Made in Britain and Sedex.

Reason 5: What it says about your business, and your customer's

Branded merchandise is a statement made with someone else's logo on it. When a product is flimsy, thrown away quickly or quietly made from virgin plastic overseas, that reflects on the brand printed on it, and on the distributor who recommended it.

The evidence suggests buyers notice. Made in Britain's research found that 57% of UK businesses prefer to buy British-made products over imported alternatives (Made in Britain, 2024), and UK consumers now rank origin as a routine purchase consideration (Made in Britain, 2026). Deloitte's Sustainable Consumer research found that 45% of UK consumers rely on businesses to offer sustainable products as standard, rather than changing their own habits (Deloitte, 2024). In other words, many people expect the business to have made the better choice for them.



Longevity matters as much as material. BPMA insight published in August 2025 found that only around a fifth of promotional items are kept for good (cited in Mosaic Publicity, 2026). A product that is useful and built to last keeps a customer's brand in front of people for longer, and avoids becoming the waste that undermines a sustainability message.

Distributors who have listed CHX products describe the difference in their own words. Tom Verow, Operations Director at Mojo Promotions, said the Fidget Puck "offers a sustainable and locally manufactured alternative that truly stands out in a crowded market of silicone and tat".

What this means for distributors: a UK-made, recycled range tells your customers that you understand the pressures they are under, and that you have done the groundwork for them. It positions your business as a partner that helps them get sustainability right, rather than a catalogue they have to check for themselves.

Reason 6: Keeping recycled material, and jobs, in the UK

Recycling only works if someone buys the recycled material. A 2026 white paper from Ecosurety and RECOUP found that the UK's operational plastic reprocessing capacity covers only around 23% of the plastic packaging placed on the market, and that more than 200,000 tonnes of capacity has been lost since 2024 (letsrecycle.com, 2026; Packaging Insights, 2026). Among its recommendations are incentives for UK-produced recycled content, recycled content requirements in public procurement, and recycled content targets for industries beyond packaging.

That last point is where merchandise can play a part. Every product moulded from UK-sourced recycled plastic creates demand for UK reprocessing, and keeps manufacturing jobs in the UK rather than overseas. Made in Britain's research shows that supporting the UK economy and jobs is the main reason people give for preferring British-made goods (Made in Britain, 2024).

CHX has also shown what is possible when industry partners work together. With Preseli, one of the largest lanyard suppliers to the UK promotional industry, and SATCOL's UK textile recycling plant, CHX developed the LAN-KEY keyring, the UK promotional industry's first product made from recycled lanyards (CHX Products, 2025). It went on to win Gold for Award and Exhibition Product of the Year at the BPMA Product Awards 2025 (BPMA, 2025).

What this means for distributors: listing UK-made, recycled products is a simple way for your customers to support the UK recycling and manufacturing base that government and industry are trying to protect, and to say so with confidence.

Sustainability without the premium: how CHX fulfils it

Cost remains one of the biggest barriers to more sustainable choices. Deloitte found that 61% of UK consumers had not taken at least one sustainable action because it was too expensive, and 53% said making sustainable alternatives more affordable is the main thing businesses should address (Deloitte, 2024). At CHX, recycled is not an upgrade: it is our standard, and our R+ recycled biodegradable material in Tor is priced the same as our standard recycled white.



CHX Products has manufactured promotional merchandise in Bodmin, Cornwall since 1997, using recycled materials from day one. Our range is designed to be kept and used, with bespoke moulding available where a customer wants something of their own. The table below sets out how CHX answers the expectations covered in this paper.

What your customers are being asked	How CHX helps you answer it
Social value and SME spend	UK SME, designing, moulding, printing and dispatching from one site in Cornwall
Lower supply chain emissions	Most of our products start life as a UK fridge or freezer; solar panels meet around 40% of our energy needs on good days; not freighted from overseas
Substantiated green claims	Specific, verifiable claims: recycled content, zero waste verification with 95% of production waste reused internally, vegan solvent-free inks, R+ tested to ASTM D5511 (6.4% biodegradation after 45 days)
Supply chain transparency	Made in Britain member (4160), BPMA member, Sedex audited, BPMA Step Forward Pledge signatory, working towards ISO 14001
Reliable delivery	UK manufacture with fast dispatch as standard
Responsible end of life	Single-material products recyclable through hard plastics recycling; we take back and recrush any of our own products returned by distributors
Origin stories with impact	Traceable Marine Plastic range made with Waterhaul from recovered fishing gear, with 5% of profits donated to Surfers Against Sewage

Conclusion

The questions your customers face about merchandise are no longer only about price and print. Procurement rules reward social value and lower supply chain emissions. Consumer law now holds every business in the chain responsible for the green claims it passes on. Shipping routes remain unpredictable, supply chain transparency is under closer scrutiny, and the people receiving branded products increasingly care where they came from.

UK-made, recycled merchandise answers each of those questions with something tangible. For distributors, it is a way to protect customers from risk, help them meet obligations they may not yet have fully considered, and show that your business takes these issues as seriously as they do.



Get in touch. If you would like to list CHX products on your website, or talk through the sustainability or supply chain obligations your customers are facing and how we can help you meet them transparently in a way imported alternatives cannot, we would be glad to hear from you.

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