

Dilemma

# Should I switch to eco bulbs?

Early energy-saving bulbs raised barely a flicker of interest. But now there's no excuse not to get turned on, says **Lucy Siegle**



Green types get so overexcited about changing light bulbs that, understandably, it can leave those on the periphery in the dark. But

compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) do use five times less electricity to do the same job, producing 60-70 per cent fewer CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than normal lighting.

And because no home is complete without a light bulb (or on average 23 of them) the cumulative CO<sub>2</sub>-reducing effect is stunning – changing over could prevent 2.3m tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from being released into the atmosphere every year – an important saving in this post-Stern report, low-carbon world. Plus, they deliver up to seven years' of light, lasting 8-12 times longer. Overall, they are a shining example that green isn't always miserably expensive – hence the excitement.

In fact, what's not to like? Well, apparently the light eco bulbs give out, for one. As suggested by the begrudging nature of today's question, not everybody finds the glow of CFLs as nurturing as that of a conventional bulb. But it's time to look again, because the new eco bulbs give out a softer light. In fact, the decorative eco bulbs from [www.megamanuk.com](http://www.megamanuk.com) look damned near normal ([www.lumin8.co.uk](http://www.lumin8.co.uk) also has a vast range).

What doesn't look normal, though, are the traditional spiral eco bulbs that can't find a lampshade to fit. Most lampshades leave these ecologically friendly bulbs poking down

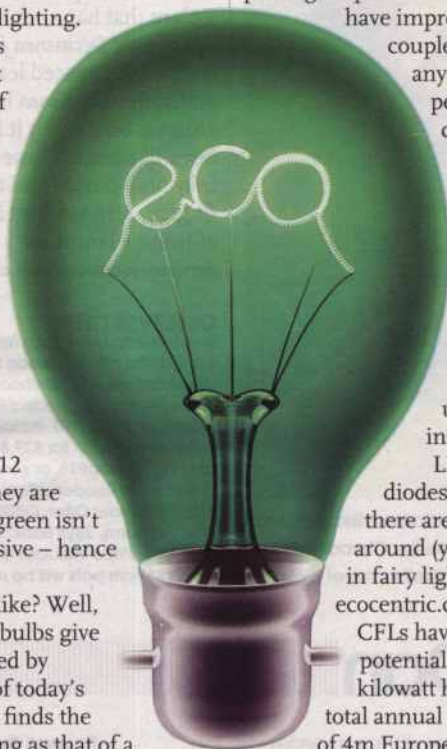
from beneath said shade. Not surprisingly, Ikea has thought of this in relation to the look of some of its lampshades, as has design company [www.bluemarmalade.co.uk](http://www.bluemarmalade.co.uk). For cool recycled plastic shades and bulbs to fit, try [www.luminair.co.uk](http://www.luminair.co.uk).

Admittedly, in the old days eco bulbs used to take a long time to flicker into action, putting off punters in their droves. But they have improved, brightening in a couple of seconds, with hardly any flickering. And don't be persuaded by the small charms of 'energy-saving' incandescent bulbs, which are really just low wattage. Halogen lights are 10-15 per cent more efficient than conventional bulbs, but still part of the overall problem because we are increasingly using lots of them as inset lights in kitchens.

LED (light-emitting diodes) is full of promise and there are some nice designs around (you can even get them in fairy light format at [www.ecocentric.com](http://www.ecocentric.com)).

But given that CFLs have an electricity-saving potential of around 16.7bn kilowatt hours (kWh) a year – the total annual electricity consumption of 4m European households – they can't be beaten. In fact, in this light-bulb survival of the fittest, don't be surprised if the incandescent bulb starts to get pushed out (go to [www.banthebulb.org](http://www.banthebulb.org) to join the campaign to remove it altogether). So, in answer to your question, yes, it would be good to embrace eco bulbs now before it's lights out for incandescents in any case. ★

[lucy.siegle@observer.co.uk](mailto:lucy.siegle@observer.co.uk)



▲ It might be the playful symbol of capitalism, but the new US version of **Monopoly** swaps the car token – a gas-guzzling

Packard Roadster – for a Toyota Prius

▲ From small acorns grow great, sustainable trends – we hope. London's first truly **eco-restaurant** opens this week. Acorn shuns air-freighted produce, sources locally and seasonally, and composts its waste

▲ Vegans are beefing up their argument thanks to body builder and **Mr Universe 2007** contestant Robbie Hazeley. A long-term vegan, he uses dehulled hemp seed and oil to maintain his muscles



▲ GOING UP ▲

## The Green Gauge

▼ GOING DOWN ▼



▼ **Australian sheep** are at the bottom of the pile when it comes to animal rights, according to Peta. Clothes store Abercrombie & Fitch and US designer Marc Bouwer have boycotted Australian wool on the grounds of 'barbaric and tortuous slaughter methods'

▼ The Stern report singles out the **kiwi fruit** as a contributor to environmental damage. It is estimated every fruit flown to Europe emits its own weight in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Growers are not pleased, with accusations of a smear campaign

▼ According to research from *Ethical Consumer* magazine, the fingerprints of **sweatshop labour** can still be found on many mainstream children's toys. Santa's grotto paid more of a living wage



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