

Beds farmers first to benefit from BETI environmental training

Farm managers in Bedfordshire have just become the first group to benefit from environmental awareness training under the newly launched BETI (Business Environmental Training Initiative) programme. The training is available to all small and medium sized companies within Bedfordshire, and aims to help businesses minimise their impact on the environment and avoid falling foul of environmental legislation.

For the first training day, early consultation with the participants enabled the organisers to tailor the course to meet both the requirements of the nationally accredited CIEH (Chartered Institute of Environmental Health) certification and the needs of those taking part. Specialists from the Environment Agency, who are partners in the BETI programme, volunteered to attend to give advice and guidance on how farm managers could avoid prosecution by complying with the recently published Ground Water, Nitrate, Vulnerable Zones and Oil Storage Regulations.

The Bedfordshire and Luton Sustainable Business Partnership (BLSBP) has secured £120,000 of European Social Fund Money to launch BETI, which aims to benefit the Bedfordshire economy by offering SMEs training to equip them with the necessary tools, information and expertise to meet increasingly complex environmental legislation.

The training starts by providing induction training for one company representative, usually a manager, and then goes on to offer support as the individual cascades the training to others within the company.

While the course itself is free of charge, BETI asks businesses to bear the time costs associated with releasing a member of staff. This is usually around 20 hours, including the one-day course.

BETI's nationally accredited courses start by giving an overview of environmental issues and how these will impact on the way we run our businesses in the future.

Other sessions focus on: how pollution can put your business at risk; the major



pieces of current and future environmental legislation that affect business and how to comply with them; how to make significant financial savings by effective use of energy and water; waste management; and how to go about creating environmental management systems and the benefits that can be expected.

Companies in Bedfordshire are now invited to express

provisional interest and reserve a place on the programme.

Businesses are advised to express their interest at the earliest opportunity by contacting Sarah Williams on 01234 228096 or email: williamss@deed.bedfordshire.gov.uk. To find out more about the newly launched training initiative visit www.beti.info.

Anglian Water fined for sewage pollution offence

Bedford Magistrates imposed fines of £15,000 and awarded costs of £2,894 against Anglian Water when the company pleaded guilty to allowing sewage effluent to enter Silsoe Brook. This brought the company's fines for sewage pollution offences in 2002 to

nearly £0.5 million. Anglian notified the Environment Agency that the sewage discharge had taken place. Agency investigations revealed that crude sewage from a blocked sewer in Silsoe high street had overflowed into the brook; high levels of ammonia were

also found in the water and sewage fungus was growing on the river bed. Anglian also footed the bill for a month-long clean up of the brook.



World Class Worst Practice Guide - a new approach

The Government Office for the South West is pioneering an innovative approach to getting the message about environmental management systems (EMS) across to its businesses. Consultant John Pooley has produced an Energy and Environmental Management Worst Practice Guide on behalf of the Office to provide a refreshingly humorous look at how companies should NOT implement their EMS strategy. Envirowise, Action Energy and CIMA have endorsed the guide.

Pooley has gathered nuggets of worst practice from companies to enable businesses new to environmental management to learn from the mistakes of others. By telling businesses what they shouldn't be doing, the booklet also makes them think about their own approaches and creates an admirably strong way of

reinforcing what they should be doing. The guide can be used by managers to 'break the ice' with senior management on why energy and environmental management is not as good as it should be in their own organisations.

Phil Harding, head of sustainable business at the

Government Office for the South West, is delighted with the impact the guide is having. He says, "The feedback on the guide just gets better and better, and I am sure your members will find it useful. It also makes a good basis for a training workshop. Keep a look out for the sister guide on dealing with senior management,

which John Pooley is currently writing and should be available later this year on our website."

We've included extracts from the *Worst Practice Guide* here, but you can read or download the full text by visiting the Business page of www.oursouthwest.com

Energy and Environmental Worst Practice Guide - Extracts

WARNING! APPLYING THE GUIDANCE IN THIS DOCUMENT CAN LEAD TO WORLD CLASS WORST PRACTICE

Before using the guide there are three key messages.

1. Worst practice is the synergistic combination of many elements of bad practice
2. Worst practice doesn't just happen
3. To be really bad you need to work at it!

The key areas are explored in nine sections. As a taster, we've included an extract from section 1.

1. POLICY

- Don't spend too much time developing a policy, copy one from another company

It happens to be good practice to review the policies of other organisations when developing a policy statement for an organisation. Ideally, the policies reviewed should relate to a similar type of organisation. By copying a policy from another organisation (or text book) you can achieve the following:

- ✓ Use of terminology that is 'alien' to your organisation
- ✓ Recycle the mistakes of others
- ✓ Set unrealisable objectives

The setting of unrealisable objectives can also be achieved by simply trying to impress your customers. If you promise high you will be expected to deliver high.

- Ensure that nobody 'owns' the policy

For a policy to work it needs to be 'owned' by as many people as possible. This can be achieved by processes such as consultation, brainstorming, review and awareness raising. But we can avoid all of this by simply issuing the policy document (even better if it

is someone else's policy!).

- Make the policy statement as long as possible

Drafting a good short policy statement requires effort and understanding. The longer the statement usually the less effective it is. In the author's experience the longest 'policy' was over 40 pages of A4. This was not so much a policy but a set of procedures. So to save time and promote bad practice don't worry about the length of the policy - and don't forget, the longer it is the more chance of building in errors and traps!

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Fines and prosecutions for packaging offences dramatically increased

Offenders under the Packaging Regulations experienced a major crack-down by the Environment Agency during 2002. 57 companies were prosecuted for failing to comply with the Regulations, almost double the number during 2001. In addition, average fines doubled to more than £8000.

Companies whose packaging fell within the thresholds set

by the Regulations were obliged to register themselves with compliance schemes by April 2002. The government is now putting pressure on the Environment Agency, which is responsible for enforcing the Regulations, to ensure companies are not evading their responsibilities.

Of particular concern is that businesses have not fulfilled their duty to gain evidence of

packaging waste recycling and recovery - these usually take the form of packaging waste recovery notes.

Several companies have fallen foul of failing to register. Among these are Huntingdon-based meat packers Hilton Metas Retail, which was fined £6000 and awarded £782 in costs, and the Billericay Dental Supply Company, which was fined £5100.

The Agency looks set to continue along this path of coming down hard on offenders. This, coupled with the fact that magistrates are taking matters more seriously and imposing larger fines, means that companies should ensure they are registered with compliance schemes, and meet the requirements of the Regulations or face the consequences.



Gory discovery leads to massive fine for Eurocare

Human tissue, used dressings and syringes loaded into unrefrigerated trailers and left in private lorry parks, sometimes for several months, were just part of the grisly discoveries of Environment Agency officers, when they investigated clinical waste disposal company Eurocare. One of the trailers found was even oozing blood.

After a tip-off, Agency officers found parked trailers full of clinical waste in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Birmingham. Experts found that much of the waste was at least two, and in one case five, months old.

In spite of Environment Agency orders to remove the illegal trailers, Eurocare continued to park its lorry loads of gore on the same and other sites. 26 trailers were found illegally parked on the Birmingham site - within yards of public amenities.

The company's flagrant disregard for the law didn't stop there. During a night-time surveillance operation, Agency officers filmed liquid waste and washings at Eurocare's Wrexham site being flushed into a domestic sewage tank. The overflow from the company's septic tank was also allowed to run into the Red Wither Brook, and the River Clywedog - a supplier of drinking water.

Chester Crown Court fined Eurocare Environmental Services Ltd - a company with waste contracts for many NHS Trusts -£100,000 with £114,818 costs.

Help Available

Don't fall foul of the law. Remember, help, advice and guidance for businesses is available, often free of charge.

See page 4 for a list of useful contacts.

Small businesses unaware of environmental regulations

Research carried out on behalf of the small business advice service, Netregs, has revealed that only 18% of small firms questioned could name the environmental legislation that applied to them.

The Environment Agency was so troubled by the results of the research that it has now launched an advice service for smaller businesses. "The findings suggest an urgent need to improve the availability of environmental information to help small

companies improve their performance which is why we have launched Netregs," said Environment Agency Chairman Sir John Harman.

Although individually small businesses may have less environmental impact than larger firms, as a whole they produce 60% of the UK's commercial waste, and are responsible for 80% of pollution incidents. This information gives more cause for concern because the research revealed that 86% of small to medium-sized

enterprises (SMEs) believed that they had no impact on the environment.

SMEs in Bedfordshire are now able to take advantage of several initiatives, which will give them access to training, advice, guidance and information about their legal responsibilities under environmental legislation.

For help with environmental law, see the BETI article (page 1), useful contacts (page 4), or attend one of GBN's EMS Support Seminars (page 4).

Minister acts on stricter sentencing for environmental crimes

The Department of Environment has recently launched a Magistrates' toolkit to give guidance on effective sentencing for environmental offences.

The toolkit was launched to combat low fine levels for those breaking the law. Michael Meacher, Minister for the Environment, believes that the new guidelines will result in higher fines for offences. "We must make sure it is always more costly to break

the law than comply with it," he said. The Environment Agency has been lobbying for this action for some time, believing that inadequate fines enable people to profit by breaking the law.

Under the new guidelines, prosecutors must present the full costs involved in any environmental offence. Those responsible for these crimes are to be made to pay for both clean-up costs and the cost of law enforcement.

The information pack contains guidance for magistrates on aggravating and mitigating circumstances, the implications of environmental crimes, and sentencing. The kit covers offences, such as diffuse pollution and illegal trade in wildlife, and common offences, such as fly-tipping and dog fouling.

"The initiative focuses on better sentencing to ensure the polluter pays," said Meacher.

Managers' understanding of environmental risk is inadequate

According to a survey conducted by the London School of Economics for law firm DLA, 96% of business people believe regulatory risks are growing, but almost a third of boards are unaware of this, or do not know about the activities in their companies which could lead to a regulatory intervention.

Company directors are responsible for ensuring that environmental risk is evaluated and planned for. David Hockin, director of environmental due diligence for consultancy firm Enviros, says that the real environmental liabilities relate

to operational issues rather than land issues.

And the key to managing those operational risks is knowledge. "If you don't know where your material environmental liabilities lie you certainly can't manage them," Hockin says. "Knowledge is the platform from which to go on to better environmental performance."

Peter Waite, technical director of risk management at Entec UK, says it is important to be radical when considering just what might go wrong. "Companies need to be prepared for what they might not have foreseen. Some of the regulator examples are

quite mind-bending," he says. "You have to follow the chain of events right through."

To make matters worse, the report also found that less than one in five directors describe themselves as "very confident" in their risk management processes.

Waite says: "Fine levels have been increasing - with six and seven figure penalties - but the actual cost of incidents is much higher. There is a big diversion of management resources into investigating incidents and the costs of legal defence. There can also be a huge cost if there is a plant breakdown."



In Brief - Environment Update

GBN hosts special event

Bedfordshire Green Business Network (GBN) is to hold a special half-day event on 27 March at the Holiday Inn on the A1 near Sandy. The event supplements the GBN's usual monthly EMS Support Seminars.

The event will focus on three areas of interest: Waste Management - "The Duty of Care", Environmental Management Systems (EMS), and Business Environmental Training Initiative (BETI).

The waste management session is aimed at companies who aren't completely sure about their responsibilities, liabilities and compliance under waste legislation. It is essential for anyone responsible for managing contracts with organisations removing waste from their site.

During the EMS seminar, experts will explain how an EMS can help ensure your compliance with environmental legislation, and detail how you can make substantial cash savings by changing the way you operate your business. The session will include case study examples from GBN members and others on how an EMS has saved them money and ensured compliance with the law.

Finally, the morning's sessions will close with a brief introduction to the Business Environmental Training Initiative (BETI) and how this can bring exciting new opportunities to your business.

For more information, or to book a place, please contact Simon James, GBN, PO Box 151 Bedford, MK43 8BQ (tel: 01234 881531) or email: simon.james@james-co.co.uk.

EMS breakfast meetings move to start of each month

The well-established EMS breakfast meeting programme, which helps local businesses with environmental management and other related issues, is to move to the first Friday of each month. This follows feedback from members of the Bedfordshire Green Business Network, who were finding that the last Friday of the month was difficult to attend regularly due to work commitments.

The Breakfast Club is a self-supporting group of

companies that can network and share EMS issues. Companies that attend are at various stages in the implementation process and the more experienced members are willing to impart their expertise and experience to those just starting out.

Attendance at the breakfast meetings is free of charge to GBN members. For more information about the programme, and future meetings, please call Simon James 01234 881531 e-mail simon.james@james-co.co.uk

Disclaimer

"These updates are for guidance only. GBN is not in a position to give definitive advice on matters concerning the law and you should always consult your legal advisors on these matters. GBN does not accept liability for any errors, omissions or misleading information."

Prosecutions

 **BP Oil UK** has just been ordered to pay £71,035 in fines after allowing tens of thousands of litres of fuel to pollute groundwater in Luton, which put the town's water supply at risk.

The equivalent of a road tanker full of petrol escaped from a hole in the BP service station's 30-year-old tank before the leak was located.

BP is now paying for an extensive clean-up and monitoring programme, which will have to continue for a number of years. It is also incurring costs at a rate of £225 a day for water being brought in from a nearby reservoir.

 Cheshire company **A&B Tyres** has recently been fined more than £10,000 for unlicensed storage and shredding of over 40,000 tyres following a prosecution by the Environment Agency.

 Kent-based **Erith Haulage Company Ltd** has been fined £30,000 for stockpiling waste in breach of its licence conditions. It was also awarded costs of £1,260.

 Bedford Magistrates Court recently fined **Shanks Waste Group** £15,000 and costs of £3,894 for a major fire at its landfill site in Stewartby.

The fire started when a forklift at the tipping face of the landfill clipped containers of cigarette lighters confiscated by Customs and Excise. The fire spread quickly and burnt other special wastes, which had been tipped at the face, including paint, lubricating oil, aerosols and asbestos.

Black smoke could be seen four miles away in Bedford; a nearby road and railway had to close, and a local education centre had to be evacuated.

 **Saxon Organic Foods'** managing director Matthew Carter received a community punishment order of 180 hours and was ordered to pay prosecution costs of £4201, after pleading guilty to three charges of causing polluting matter to enter controlled waters.

The company had been discharging vegetable processing wastes into the New Bedford River.

Useful Websites

www.beti.info
www.environment-agency.gov.uk
www.edie.net
www.envirowise.gov.uk
www.detr.gov.uk
www.gbn-bedfordshire.org.uk
www.energy-efficiency.gov.uk
www.envirolinkuk.org

GBN Contacts

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