

# BEDFORDSHIRE GREEN BUSINESS *network news*

Spring 2003

## *Packed audience receives sound advice at special GBN seminar*

The GBN special Breakfast Meeting, which took place last month, saw a packed audience receive expert advice on waste management, environmental management systems, the Waste Exchange, and how the Business Environmental Training Initiative (BETI) could provide benefits to their business.

First up was Amanda Harrison, Mid Beds District Council's environmental development officer. Her no-nonsense, commonsense approach encouraged the 70-strong audience to: "Be sensible! Keep wastes under control and understand the Duty of Care". She said "Most companies fall foul of waste regulations yet compliance is so simple. Not storing and disposing of waste properly is really an expensive accident waiting to happen".

In addition to clarifying legal definitions, Amanda emphasised easy no-and-low-cost improvement measures that managers and supervisors could implement quickly. These included:

- Keeping wastes away from drains and controlled water
- Negotiating product take-back with suppliers
- Getting maintenance contracts to include waste disposal
- Not storing waste; it will have to be paid for and the price is rising
- Not storing other people's waste and passing it off as product
- Not burning waste on site
- And double checking that your waste carrier is disposing of your waste properly.

Members of GBN contributed to the proceedings by sharing their own experiences, and the Environment Agency answered specific questions posed by attendees.

Simon James led the next presentation on environmental management systems and how their implementation can help to both ensure compliance with environmental legislation and



*Amanda Harrison from Mid Beds District Council offers practical advice to GBN members at the recent seminar*

make substantial cash savings in business operations.

The Seminar also introduced Joanna Thompson, manager of the Bedfordshire Waste Exchange project. The Waste Exchange helps companies to reduce their expenditure on disposing of waste by identifying other businesses that can use it as a raw material. Recognising the obvious benefits of the scheme, several people in the

audience signed up on the spot to become members of Waste Exchange.

The seminar concluded with representatives from the Business Environmental Training Initiative (BETI) answering questions about financial and other benefits to be gained by increasing staff awareness of environmental issues, which can be achieved by participating in this free EU funded training programme.

## *GBN awarded contract to offer free assistance to member businesses*

GBN has just been awarded funding from Bedfordshire County Council to enable it to offer a half-day of free on-site assistance to GBN members and other qualifying companies.

The help on offer can either

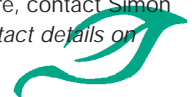
be general advice – for instance, offering information on environmental management systems, waste exchange, breakfast seminars, sources of information and funding – or, in some cases specific help with assessing

environmental performance and risk management.

If a company wishes to receive a visit and has specific questions or problems that need to be addressed, it can specify these in advance and the

advisor will tailor the visit to encompass particular issues.

Existing and new GBN member companies alike can benefit from the new visits. To find out more, contact Simon James (*contact details on page 4*).



# Green business practices make sound financial sense

*With European and US economies looking set to be in a status quo for the foreseeable future, what can businesses do to increase their competitiveness and hold on to their existing customers?*

When times get tough for business, cutbacks become inevitable. Many companies hit so-called soft targets, such as marketing and promotions, training, and the introduction of new systems. In the case of environmental management systems, they could be missing a trick.

Introduction or implementation of environmental management systems, such as those to ISO 14001 or EMAS (Eco-management and audit scheme), can result in significant costs savings, which help businesses to be competitive and meet increasingly tough environmental demands from both the law and their customers.

## Most measures aren't rocket-science

Many of the measures that can be introduced aren't demanding; they're not rocket science. Simply reducing waste by scrutinising manufacturing processes, improving design, or looking at the way which things are done can bring about a rise in profitability. At the same time, reducing the environmental impacts of business processes can bring about unexpected PR benefits and open doors to new business opportunities.

Environmental management systems provide a commonsense method of first measuring, then managing any company's environmental impact. It encourages

businesses to look at how they use resources, reduce emissions and other forms of waste, distribution and packaging issues, and what they need to do to meet legal requirements. As many recent cases have shown, the cost of falling foul of the law can be very expensive indeed.

In addition, an EMS helps to ensure that employees are kept up to speed with what they need to do not only to comply with the law, but also to maintain efficient and effective working practices.

## Working practices can easily be improved

Almost any company can benefit from carrying out an analysis of its environmental impacts. Many find that by

doing this, they identify areas where working practices can be improved for the better, saving time and money, and, almost as a by-product, reducing their impact on the environment.

Changes to the way in which companies work needn't be expensive or drastic – just evaluating what we do and whether it could be done better is often enough to bring about beneficial results – both financial and in terms of their impact on the environment.

Help is available to companies wanting to know more about environmental management systems – GBN offers on-site assistance, seminars and pointers to funding and further information. To find out more, contact Simon James (*contact details on page 4*).

## Agency advocates desktop surveys to clear IPPC site reporting back-log

The Environment Agency is hoping to change the law to allow it to issue permits to companies under the integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC) regime before they have completed a thorough investigation of contamination at their sites. The Agency hopes the move will help inspectors to cope with the back-log of applications.

Currently, operators must conduct a risk-based assessment of potential land contamination. For an operator to be certain of his/her assessment, a significant amount of specialist intrusive investigation is usually needed. The Agency is now pressing for an amendment to the IPPC regulations to allow permits to be issued on the strength of an initial 'desktop'

survey of the site.

Operators would then have up to six months to carry out any intrusive investigation and complete the report. While desktop surveys may be fine for low-hazard companies setting up on Greenfield sites, the picture is very different for those firms that are building on established sites, or whose business generates hazardous waste.

## EC revisits Batteries Directive

The European Commission has recently launched a new consultation paper on a proposed Batteries Directive.

It presents targets for collection and recycling targets, and proposes producer responsibility or a voluntary agreement to ensure that the targets are met. It also offers alternatives to a ban on nickel-cadmium batteries, which was crucial in previous proposals.

Original Directive proposals included a ban on nickel-cadmium batteries from 2008. Battery manufacturers and recyclers fiercely opposed the ban, and offered an alternative plan.

The latest consultation paper asks for opinions on four proposals for batteries and accumulators containing cadmium, and also asks for targets for other batteries and accumulators.



## Meacher criticises business community at awards ceremony

Environment Minister Michael Meacher has criticised the business community for its reluctance to report on environmental and social performance.

Speaking at the recent ceremony for the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) Awards for Sustainability Reporting, he said, "For far too many

companies, sustainable development is seen as something for Friends of the Earth to worry about, and social issues as a problem for the public relations department. That has to change."

Twelve organisations received awards, including Canary Wharf Group, Unilever, BT Group, ScottishPower, the Co-operative Bank, and Shell.

A number of small to medium-sized businesses (SMEs) also won awards.

While Meacher praised the increase in reporting since the last awards, he said: "I don't want to overplay the increase – quite frankly it is nowhere near good enough." The minister said he hoped next year's awards would see more entries, as a result of pressure from markets and government.

## New British Standard will provide guidance for SMEs

BSI is to publish a new British Standard – BS 8555 – which provides guidance to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to implement externally certified environmental management systems.

The standard advocates a step-by-step approach, based on the Acorn Trust's supply chain project, and should help SMEs understand legislation and reduce their impacts. Project Acorn's aim was to encourage supply chain partnerships between SMEs and larger firms and develop formal management systems and indicators of performance.

The new standard takes the form of guidance towards achieving ISO 14001 or EMAS. It is not a certifiable specification in itself, but UKAS, the national accreditation service, is currently considering some form of recognition.

The Environment Agency is interested in the standard's potential to improve SMEs' awareness of legal obligations. A recent survey found that only 18% of SMEs could name environmental legislation that applied to them. It also noted that SMEs are responsible for 80% of pollution incidents.

## ISO is to look at corporate social responsibility standard

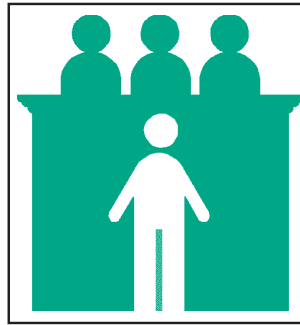
ISO – the international standards organisation – is looking at developing a standard for corporate social responsibility. The move follows a recommendation by an international advisory group convened by ISO.

If the development goes ahead, ISO will be looking at the existing standards for corporate social responsibility throughout the world, and will report on whether a new standard is justified.

## EU decision to bring environmental offences under criminal law

Controversial legislation requiring EU Member States to ensure that a wide range of environmental offences are penalised under the criminal law has been published after being adopted by Justice Ministers in late January.

The Framework Decision, which Member States must implement by January 2005, requires them to criminalise a variety of intentional or negligent or "at least seriously negligent" environmental offences. These include the discharge of substances or radioactivity, which cause death or serious injury to a person, unlawful



trade in ozone-depleting chemicals and acts that damage protected flora or fauna.

In addition, unlawful releases of substances, handling of waste or operation of a plant "which causes or is likely to cause death or serious injury

to any person or substantial damage to the quality of air, soil, water, animals or plants," must be criminalised. These offences must be punishable in law "by effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties." These would include imprisonment. In the UK the law says that the above penalties "may" be accompanied by others, "in particular, people can be prevented from: taking part in any activity that needs official authorisation or approval; founding, managing or directing a company or foundation. In addition, people with criminal records have difficulty securing insurance, loans and jobs.

## Health of EMAS scheme called into question

Questions are being asked about the long-term future of the EU's EMAS environmental management scheme as the number of companies involved continues to drop.

Companies throughout Europe are starting to express doubts about the rewards from the scheme bearing in mind the extra effort that's needed for EMAS registration, compared with that of ISO 14001.

Total EMAS registrations fell by 3.4% in 2002, to 3,780 in January. Meanwhile, ISO 14001 registrations in Europe

grew by 42% to reach a massive 20,400.

In the scheme's traditional strongholds of Germany and Austria, companies are exiting the scheme with alarming rapidity.

According to Hermann Hühwels of DIHK, Germany's EMAS competent authority, firms such as Bayer and Henkel are leaving EMAS because they see no benefits. "I'm very pessimistic about the scheme," he said.

In Austria, registrations are down 14% on their peak, while in Sweden and Denmark

registrations have stopped increasing.

In Britain the situation is "becoming critical," says Chris Howes of the Anglo-Welsh environment agency. "If this trend continues and there isn't visual support from the European Commission then I think the scheme will wither."

According to European Commission statistics, there are only 76 EMAS-registered sites in the UK – one fewer than two years ago – giving it the fourth lowest registration rate per million people across the EU.

## Government consulting on EU electrical waste

The government is inviting businesses to comment on how EU Electrical Waste Directives should be transposed into UK legislation.

The DTI will manage the 18-month consultation process to ensure the legislation achieves its goals.

The EU's Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive and the Restricting Certain Hazardous Substances (ROHS) Directive

came into effect in February, and must be adopted as UK law by August 2004.

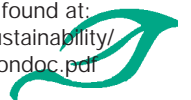
The Directives call for more recycling and fewer hazardous substances in electrical equipment, including TVs, videos, hi-fis, electric tools, toys, sports equipment, and medical devices. The consultation aims to collate advice on estimated costs and methods of collection and recovery.

From July 2006, the use of

lead, mercury, cadmium, hexavalent chromium and flame retardants poly-brominated biphenyls (PBBs) and poly-brominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) will be banned in new products.

A previous study has estimated the market for recycled electrical goods to be worth £235 billion.

A full copy of the consultation document can be found at: [www.dti.gov.uk/sustainability/pdfs/weee-rohs-condoc.pdf](http://www.dti.gov.uk/sustainability/pdfs/weee-rohs-condoc.pdf)



# In Brief - Environment Update

## July event to focus on Councils' Greener Purchasing policies

Officers from several local authorities in Bedfordshire are to host an event to raise awareness about the environmental requirements of Council purchasing policies. The half-day event will take place on 10 July 2003 at Wyboston Lakes Hotel, just outside Bedford.

Presentations will focus on greening the supply chain, the criteria used by local authorities for awarding contracts and how this affects main contractors and their sub-contractors. Any company that currently tenders for work with local authorities, or those that sub-contract to companies holding Council contracts will find the event invaluable to

keep them up to speed with current and future developments.

The event will also bring in information about how local authorities are working with GBN and BETI, and several local companies will present case studies to illustrate how using greener business practices has been of benefit to them, both financially and in terms of winning contracts.

For more information about the event, or to book a place, email: Sarah Williams at [williamss@deed.bedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:williamss@deed.bedfordshire.gov.uk), Amanda Harrison at [amanda.harrison@midbeds.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.harrison@midbeds.gov.uk), or Jo Broughton at [jbroughton@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:jbroughton@bedford.gov.uk).

## Earthwatch offers first class advice on biodiversity in site development

Companies looking for advice on developing waste ground could benefit from a visit to Earthwatch's website. The organisation promotes the concept of biodiversity (preservation of wildlife) to companies when they are considering site expansion, developing waste ground, or in formulating environmental strategies.

The website provides an excellent introduction to what biodiversity means and includes free downloads of publications, which provide information on Biodiversity Action Plans, together with case studies from companies who have successfully introduced biodiversity policies.

If you are considering developing or redeveloping your business site and want to ensure you minimise the impact you have on wildlife, visit Earthwatch's site at: [businessandbiodiversity.org](http://businessandbiodiversity.org).

## BITC publishes first CSR Index

Business in the Community (BITC) has just published its first Corporate Social Responsibility Index. BITC is a group comprising 700 companies, whose aim is to improve the impact of business on society. The first Index saw 125 companies participating, including half of the FTSE 100 firms.


The index is based on criteria such as product safety, occupational health and safety, community investment, energy and transport, and biodiversity.


A representative from BITC will be the keynote speaker at a local authority event that GBN will also be involved with. We'll be reporting on the event in the next issue.

### 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

 Kent strawberry farm – Working Wonders – was fined £10,000 and ordered to pay £3,291 in costs after admitting a discharge of an organo-phosphate insecticide. The release killed invertebrates and fish along 15km of a tributary of the River Ouse. The Environment Agency described the incident as the worst in Sussex since 1996. In addition, the farm has paid £35,000 in legal costs and clean-up costs. It was a first offence.


 Food processing firm Sunjuice of Llantrisant, South Wales, was fined £5,600 with £1,237 costs after admitting six charges under packaging waste regulations.

The offences related to the company's failure to register, recover and recycle packaging waste and to produce a certificate of compliance in 2000 and 2001.

 BA Cash and Carry (Cardiff) Ltd was fined £3,000 with £1,448 costs after pleading guilty to three offences under the packaging regulations.

The company ignored several requests from the Environment Agency to provide an assessment of the volume of packaging it was handling.

 Glossup-based paint manufacturer Keroc Products was ordered to pay nearly £14,000 in fines and costs after it allowed drums containing liquid hazardous waste to be taken away by an unregistered carrier and dumped at an unlicensed site.

 Anglian Water's latest fine of £18,000 and £1879 in costs for illegal discharge of sewage to enter the North Sea, brings its total convicted offences to 16 since the start of 2002.

## Housebuilders ignore energy efficiency rules

A survey carried out by NHER has revealed that housebuilders are routinely ignoring a legal requirement for them to provide information about the energy efficiency of new

homes to prospective buyers.

Peers are now using the findings to press government for for stricter legislation and better enforcement.

## Useful Websites

[www.beti.info](http://www.beti.info)  
[www.bedfordshire-waste-exchange.co.uk](http://www.bedfordshire-waste-exchange.co.uk)  
[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)  
[www.edie.net](http://www.edie.net)  
[www.envirowise.gov.uk](http://www.envirowise.gov.uk)  
[www.detr.gov.uk](http://www.detr.gov.uk)  
[www.gbn-bedfordshire.org.uk](http://www.gbn-bedfordshire.org.uk)  
[www.energy-efficiency.gov.uk](http://www.energy-efficiency.gov.uk)  
[www.envirolinkuk.org](http://www.envirolinkuk.org)

## GBN Contacts

Bedfordshire Green Business Network  
PO Box 151  
Bedford MK43 8BQ

Simon James tel: 01234 881531  
email: [simon.james@james-co.co.uk](mailto:simon.james@james-co.co.uk)

