

BEDFORDSHIRE GREEN BUSINESS *network news*

Autumn 2003



SME-environment Survey says SMEs still failing to act

The recently published results of SME-environment 2003 – the largest ever study of the environmental behaviour of smaller UK businesses – revealed that the nation's smallest firms are failing to take action to protect the environment. Environment Agency Chairman Sir John Harman said: "What this research shows is that smaller businesses are failing to take steps to limit the effects of their activities. Micro businesses in particular appear to be falling behind when it comes to understanding environmental legislation."

More than 8,000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across a range of industries were interviewed for the Netregs commissioned survey, with the aim of identifying the problems that face small businesses in relation to recognising and understanding their green obligations.

The survey found that only 20% of micro businesses (those with fewer than ten staff) questioned had taken practical measures to limit their environmental impact, compared with 44% of medium-sized firms with 50 to 250 staff.

In addition, few SMEs are aware of the business benefits of going green. When asked what had motivated them to take measures to prevent environmental damage, 54% of respondents referred to a general concern for the environment and a further 39% said they were motivated by legislative pressure. However, only 8% cited potential business benefits as the reason for going green.

Despite saying legislative pressure is a key motivator, only 18% of businesses could name any environmental regulations affecting their activities unprompted. Micro businesses particularly need to improve their awareness – while 43% of medium-sized businesses had heard of the Duty of Care Regulations, which apply to all firms, just 22% of micros knew about them.

Sir John Harman said: "NetRegs is designed to help smaller businesses navigate the environmental legislation affecting their particular activities. But compliance is not just good for the environment, there are also real commercial benefits for small businesses – a greener firm is often more

competitive. It is essential that we communicate these benefits to smaller firms."

The SME-environment 2003 survey found that 41% of businesses asked would welcome more information and advice in dealing with environmental matters.

SMEs and micro businesses in Bedfordshire can take advantage of a number of local initiatives, including BETI (Business Environmental Training Initiative) for basic training and help to cascade information throughout the workforce; GBN, which offers advice, guidance, seminars and free consultancy to member companies; the Waste Exchange, where companies can arrange exchanges of waste as use for raw materials; and the Eco-Directory, which advertises companies supplying environmentally-friendly products and services.

For more information from NetRegs visit www.netregs.gov.uk. For more information about BETI's training courses, or for the Eco-Directory listing visit www.beti.info.

Upgraded Waste Exchange website available



The Bedfordshire Waste Exchange has just upgraded its website to provide a much more efficient and user friendly service. Members can now access contact details of other members who have waste materials they are interested in.

This free service aims to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill by enabling businesses to exchange their

waste materials. Those taking part in the Exchange could benefit from reduced waste disposal costs and cheaper raw materials.

The Waste Exchange is managed and co-ordinated by Linden Consulting Partnership, with Bedfordshire and Luton Sustainable Business Partnership and GBN. The project is a Shanks.first project supported by EB Bedfordshire Ltd with

funding from Shanks under the landfill tax credit scheme.

Visit Waste Exchange at www.bedfordshire-waste-exchange.co.uk to place a listing of any waste materials that you would like to exchange and/or raw materials that you would like to obtain. For more information, contact Sam Griggs on 01799 524528 or email: sgriggs@linden-consulting.co.uk.



Systems are worthless unless your staff use them

GBN executive officer Simon James delivers sound advice about staff training and keeping up to date with legislative requirements.

Looking through the latest edition of one publication I noticed the headline "firm gets £24,000 penalty for employees' misdemeanours".

Intrigued, I read on. It appeared that employees were taking cash payments for accepting unsuitable waste materials onto site and not keeping proper records of what had been coming in and out. When questioned, the company accepted that some of its employees had not fully appreciated the need to record lorry entries in the site record book and that management were unaware that these practices were taking place. Turning the page, another article detailed the company whose employees put full and half-full cans of paint into a waste skip, while the paperwork said that the cans were "empty paint tins". This resulted in a fine of £4,500.

The more I look around the more obvious it is that companies, directors and senior managers are being prosecuted for the actions of their employees. In many cases, neither the managers nor the employees were aware that the law had been broken. In fact, the management have often taken steps to try to comply with their understanding of what is

required. For instance, I recently took my old Landrover down to the local garage for a service and MoT. While waiting to book in, I noticed a mechanic pour waste-oil into a drum clearly marked "waste-oil" and thought "hurrah the message is getting through". I then noticed the same mechanic bleed the radiator of its fluorescent green liquid, walk into the centre of the yard and pour the antifreeze straight down the surface water drain (and into the river).

When I mentioned this to the owner his attitude was one of "do you mean we can't do that, are you sure?" which was perhaps a less aggressive response than might have been received at some other establishments. I assured him that it was a problem and he was lucky I wasn't a member of the Environment Agency or Trading Standards. Two days later I collected my vehicle, and the garage owner called me over and said, "You're right. I checked with our waste-oil collector and they're going to give us a drum that they'll empty each week when



they do the oil". A very responsible attitude and a 'result' that will significantly reduce the risks to both the business and the environment.

So why have I highlighted this? It's to show that high levels of risk and costs of prosecution are usually caused by ignorance of the environment and the laws that relate to it. It's all so unnecessary when there is FREE training available from the Business Environmental Training Initiative (BETI) www.beti.info and help from organisations such as the Bedfordshire Green Business Network (GBN) www.gbn-bedfordshire.org.uk. GBN currently is contracted by the County Council to offer free on-site advice to local companies: telephone 01234 881531 for more details.

Source your green suppliers via the EcoDirectory

If you're looking to source environmentally-friendly products and services, you may be finding it comparatively difficult to find partners to do business with. Now you need look no further than the EcoDirectory included on the BETI website (www.beti.info).

The Directory aims to provide a reference source of all the local companies involved in producing environmentally-friendly goods or providing an environmental service. To date, these include companies involved in activities ranging from collecting and refurbishing computers for distribution to schools and community groups; manufacturing loft insulation from recycled paper; and performing electronic and electrical repairs using remanufactured items.

If your company fits into this category and is not yet included on the EcoDirectory, contact Sarah Williams via the BETI website.

Other sites are also available detailing environmentally friendly companies and other relevant information in neighbouring counties; www.northamptonshirewaste-network.org has a directory of suppliers local to the Northamptonshire area. It's also worth accessing the Milton Keynes City Council site, which provides information about where to recycle specific products - from aluminium foil to wood off cuts.

June date for huge event

On Friday 4th June 2004, a large-scale event will take place in Bedfordshire to coincide with World Environment Day.

Speakers from regional Development Agency and regional Environment Agency, other national and local policy makers will give presentations on waste, legislation, the business impact of climate change, and the critical environmental issues facing business.

Put the date in your diaries now – it's going to be huge!

Membership Renewals Now Due

We would like to remind GBN Members that membership renewals are due before the end of January 2004.

Forms are included in this issue for you to fill in and return.



National Conference applauds Bedfordshire Training Initiative

The Environment Agency applauded the success of Bedfordshire's Business Environmental Training Initiative (BETI) at its recently held national conference – Environment 2003.

The Agency was so impressed by the Initiative that it asked BETI representatives to run a special one-hour workshop, followed by a 90 minute question and answer session, as part of the conference. Delegates heard how Bedfordshire businesses are benefiting from environmental awareness training and tailored support to cascade the training to all staff.

In addition, the BETI programme was highlighted as an example of best practice. Project manager Sarah Williams said, "We were absolutely delighted to be part of Environment 2003. It was a real honour to be there and a wonderful recognition of all the hard work that has been going on to make BETI such a success."

The role of the regulator in

bringing about change was a key theme of BETI's presentation. Amanda Harrison, Mid Beds District Council's environmental development officer shared her experiences of working with companies on the Middlefield Industrial Estate in Sandy. She explained to delegates that enforcing the law is half the story, equally important was helping companies to comply by providing them with relevant information, necessary skills and even free specialist advisors.

Amanda said, "Currently over 80 per cent of pollution incidents are due to ignorance and involve small to medium sized enterprises. Many of these businesses are the least aware and see the environment as an obstacle, which must be overcome to carry on doing proper business. They don't see any opportunities and benefits, only threats and associated problems with compliance. It is part of our job to help them see why improving their environmental performance makes sound business sense



BETI project manager Sarah Williams exchanges views with Paul Woodcock at the Environment Agency National Conference

and is more socially acceptable."

The Environment 2003 conference aimed to help shape and drive the national environmental agenda, with business practice highlighted as a main theme for opportunity. Sarah Williams says, "With so many of our jobs, and so much of our wealth creation dependent on smaller companies, we must do everything we can to help companies maximise their competitiveness while

minimising their impact on the environment."

The Environment Agency clearly believes that Bedfordshire's BETI programme has made significant inroads into achieving this.

BETI is to run a final managers' environmental awareness training session for this year, but places are filling up fast. To book a place, visit www.beti.info.

Environmental Good Practice Award Winners

At a recent gala awards ceremony at the Moat House, Bedford, Briton Electronics received the Environmental Good Practice Award for 2003.

The award, sponsored by Bedfordshire County Council, is one of a series of annual Business Excellence Awards presented to businesses in the area as part of the Bedfordshire Newspapers/LSC Annual Business Awards.

Over the last few years, winner Briton Electronics has made every effort to operate with the minimum of adverse environmental impact, including the implementation



The delighted team from Briton Electronics receives the Environmental Good Practice Award for 2003

of an Environmental Management System registered to ISO 14001.

The entire workforce has been given a two-phase environmental training package. This involved basic

environmental awareness training followed by company specific training. Those with greater environmental involvement have received formal training certified by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. The company is an enthusiastic supporter of the Business Environmental Training Initiative (BETI) and all formal training has been carried out under the auspices of the programme.

In addition to increasing staff awareness through the BETI programme, the company is also actively involved with the Bedfordshire Green Business Network and has had significant success with

reducing waste and resource use.

Highly commended by the award judges was Parkview Nursery. Although a small organisation, Parkview Nursery recognises the importance of demonstrating good awareness of safe environmental practices. Over the past few years, they have been committed to helping to preserve and care for the environment and to teaching the children in their care to do the same for the future.

Congratulations to both companies for their achievements.



In Brief - Environment Update

GBN New Seminar Programme 2004

14 January

New Look Seminar Programme Introduction

An extended breakfast seminar, which will take place at The Forest Centre, Marston Moretaine from 9.00 to 12.30 on 14th January will introduce companies to the new series of GBN seminars planned for 2004.

There are to be different levels of GBN offerings in 2004 aimed at satisfying the needs of all member companies, including:

- Introductory seminars for companies new to environmental issues.
- Seminars for those that have already accepted the need to do something, who are already looking at their operations and want to progress to some form of management system (14001 or just in-house)
- Seminars for those companies with (or well down the road towards) ISO14001 who want help with updating to the new Standard and demonstrating continual improvement etc.
- Seminars on related topics such as Corporate and Social Responsibility, green purchasing, triple bottom line etc.

GBN is also looking for guidance from you to say what you would like to see included in the programme, and would also welcome offers from companies to make short presentations on their experiences. For more details and booking, visit the GBN website or call Simon James on 01234 881531.

Envirowise offers Free waste minimisation visits to Companies

Envirowise – the government funded organisation designed to offer free, independent business advice and consultancy – is now able to offer FastTrack visits to businesses, which specifically address waste minimisation. These visits go hand in hand with the energy audits offered through Action Energy, and the on-site consultancy visits available through GBN. All three services are free of charge to SMEs.

The FastTrack visits involve an independent expert visiting your site to provide free, confidential resource efficiency advice, together with guidance on relevant regulations. You can apply for a free FastTrack consultancy visit online by downloading the pdf file on the BETI website (www.beti.info).

Some companies are also eligible for Action Energy's no-interest loans to improve their energy consumption. Also available from this organisation is advice and listings of products that save energy and cut costs.

For further information about Envirowise and FastTrack, visit envirowise.gov.uk, email: antony.gough@peterborough.gov.uk.

For further information about Action Energy, contact Ben Howe (email: ben@essexeeac.com) or visit actionenergy.org.uk.

GBN member companies still have the chance to benefit from the chance of a free on-site consultancy visit, which will look at all aspects of a company's environmental performance. But hurry! You may miss out if you don't register your interest by mid January. Contact Simon James on 01234 881531.

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

 Bubble bath producers **Alchem Contract Services** of

Wolverhampton was ordered to pay £7,600 in fines and costs after polluting the river Tame with detergent, causing extensive foaming.

Following a spillage of detergent due to vandalism at its Willenhall site, the Environment Agency received reports of foam up to a metre deep on the river. An Agency officer inspected the premises and found evidence of a spill. Investigations showed traces of the detergent in the site drains.

The company pleaded guilty to causing polluting matter to enter the river, but said, in its defence that despite taking security measures, there had been vandalism of one or more containers in the yard. However, Magistrates took the view that the company could have done more to prevent the spill.

 National bakery chain **Greggs** was fined

£4,000 with costs of £2,513 for polluting three kilometres of a Northumberland stream following a discharge from its Longbenton bakery.

Magistrates heard that the incident occurred after a valve sheared off a container of glaze containing vegetable oil.

 Meanwhile, **Arla Foods**, a dairy company based in

Leeds, has been fined £7,000 with £1,156 in costs after admitting polluting a brook with cream. A spillage of the material entered drains connected to the Cockshot brook in Walton-le-Dale.

 Portuguese-owned chipboard producer **Sonae UK** has been

ordered to pay over £40,000 after repeated discharges from its Kirkby site cleared a local watercourse of aquatic life. The Environment Agency said the incidents were all foreseeable and preventable.

 **Speedstrip** - a Welsh paint stripping business - has been

prosecuted by the Environment Agency for illegally storing over 60,000 litres of hazardous chemical waste on its site. The firm's director initially received a four-month custodial sentence, which was reduced to community punishment and fines on appeal.

Useful Websites

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

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