

Autumn 2002

Bedfordshire Waste Exchange - saving waste disposal costs

The Bedfordshire Waste Exchange is helping companies throughout Bedfordshire to make significant savings on their waste disposal costs, as well as introducing them to potentially cheap or free sources of raw materials.

Membership of the Exchange is free and, on registration, the project co-ordinator will send you details of other companies that may be interested in using your waste materials.

You can also use the Exchange to find companies

who can meet your material requirements with their waste materials.

The service is of particular interest in light of recent studies on waste (see page 3), and the new EC Landfill Directive coming into effect.

For more information about the Bedfordshire Waste Exchange, please contact Joanna Thompson on 01799 524328 or, email: jthompson@lindenconsulting.co.uk, or visit www.bedfordshire-waste-exchange.co.uk to register your company on-line.



Pictured opposite are Joanna Thompson of Bedfordshire Waste Exchange, and Mike Edwards of Danfoss Randall

Environment Agency boss calls for tougher penalties for polluters

The publication of *Spotlight on Business Environmental Performance* - the Environment Agency's (EA) third annual report on good and poor performance by businesses in England and Wales - has prompted calls for tougher penalties for companies polluting the environment.

EA chief executive Barbara Young said, "The Environment Agency takes a tough line with businesses that pollute, but, with a few exceptions, the scale of penalties levied by the courts makes pollution - and prosecution - an acceptable risk and an

acceptable business expense for too many businesses across England and Wales.

"By contrast, the first two penalties exacted by the Office of Fair Trading for breaches of competition law were £1.2m and £3.2m. We welcome new guidance from the Magistrates Association for sentencing environmental offences. I hope that in the future these guidelines will mean that there will be tougher fines and other strict penalties for those who fail our environment."

The *Spotlight* report revealed an increasing number of prosecutions for

environmental crimes; nearly 700 businesses and individuals were prosecuted for serious pollution offences during 2000, which left the public and the environment exposed to contamination including raw sewage, acid and fuel leaks.

Baroness Young said, "These pollution offences are the result of negligence, deliberate acts, or basic management failings. We need to see a culture change across management, with zero tolerance for pollution replacing apathy and acceptance of poor environmental performance."

Subs Due

GBN Membership renewals are due at the end of December 2002.

Membership forms and invoices for renewals are included in this issue of *Bedfordshire Green Business Network News*.



Environmental accidents - just another form of waste

There's something ghoulishly satisfying reading about other companies being prosecuted for environmental crimes. It's a fair bet that most of you turn to the prosecutions section of this newsletter before you look at anything else. But how do you feel when you read it?

If you're thinking: "There but for the grace of God...", or even if you're feeling self-righteous, ask yourself: "Could this happen to me?", "Have I done everything possible to prevent this from occurring?"

When Simon James, executive officer of GBN and environmental management systems consultant and lecturer, reads about environmental accidents, he gets hot under the collar.

"Most prosecutions arise out of ignorance or complacency," he says. "And most could very easily be avoided."

To illustrate the point, let's look at two recent incidents where organisations have been prosecuted for causing environmental damage.



Huntsman Petrochemicals (UK) Ltd was fined a total of £23,000 by Teesside magistrates after around 100 tonnes of benzene escaped into the River Tees.

A ship was being prepared to leave its berth when there was a strong smell of benzene. Investigations revealed that a valve on a benzene storage tank was *not properly closed* and defects were found in a drainage system installed to prevent chemical leaks into the ground, which could find their way into the Tees.

A slip plate, normally fitted to the drain valves of a chemical storage tank as a *leak-prevention back up*, had been removed to allow water to be taken out of the tank, *but had not been replaced. The company had no written instructions informing employees* to replace this plate.

The loss of benzene from the tank before the incident would have also showed up in stock level records, but the company failed to pick this up.



David Drew and Andrew Rickard, trading as Cartell Autocare, were fined £12,000 (£6,000 each) and ordered to pay costs of £429.61 after they pleaded guilty to causing engine oil to enter a brook near Peterborough. Drew and Rickard now face a bill of £12,438.05 for the clean-up operation.

When the Environment Agency received reports of a lot of oil on the Werrington Brook, they called in the Water Authority, who traced the oil back to a surface water culvert and then to a surface water drain. The oil was coming from a connection to the main surface water sewer in Cartell Autocare.

David Drew accepted that the oil had come from his premises after *a wash down area behind the company's main building became heavily contaminated with oil and water.* He then *acted to have the oil in the interceptor on-site emptied.*

There are striking similarities between these two incidents. In both, there is evidence that proper hazard analyses and risk assessments haven't been carried out; staff are inadequately trained; inspections either haven't been performed at all or not rigorously enough; procedures, notices and instructions are missing or unavailable, and the list could go on. However, the most pitiful thing is that neither incident would have taken place if environmental management systems had been implemented.

In many ways, environmental accidents are just another example of waste within businesses because we're not just looking at money lost through fines, court costs and clean-up operations. In these cases, we're experiencing the loss of heating fuel, chemicals, time - in terms of people attending court, sorting out problems, dealing with the inevitable press enquiries, taking remedial action, meetings, etc - not to mention the loss of confidence in the company.

Simon James believes that the key to success lies in companies devoting more time and energy to implementing proper environmental management systems, and other modern manufacturing techniques.

There are beneficial spin-offs when environmental issues are properly addressed, such as cutting down on waste, scrap and rework, saving time, becoming more efficient, complying with legislation, and, most importantly, saving money and raising profits.

So, it beggars belief that many companies aren't implementing even the most basic of systems and procedures, or carrying out realistic risk assessments. In almost all cases, these measures would not only

improve the bottom line, but would also be of enormous benefit to the environment.

Simon Calkin writing about environmental issues in a recent edition of *The Observer*, said, "Every company in the world would directly benefit - in lower costs and higher profits - by doing its bit for the earth. And it would cost nothing except the energy to shift office furniture or a few machines around the factory floor. This sounds fantastical. But the most fantastical thing of all is that there is no catch. All it takes is for managers to start tackling the waste in which their companies wallow."

Companies need to take preventative action by looking at what they do, how they do it and ensuring systems are in place. One of the best ways of doing this is by implementing an environmental management system. "Don't look at management systems as a chore or an obligation - use it to your advantage," says Simon James.

Help is available to companies who don't have the time, resources or expertise to implement their own systems; videos, booklets and courses are on offer from a variety of sources, often free of charge.

EMS Breakfast Seminars

Companies can also take advantage of the free GBN Environmental Management Systems Breakfast Seminars, which take place every fourth Friday of the month from 8 am to 10am. These help members to identify environmental risks and implement management systems to minimise any potential harm.

Venues will be announced soon.



INTEREST FREE LOANS

Government allocates £10 million to energy efficiency loans

In a bid to promote best practice and improve energy efficiency in English and Welsh companies, the government has allocated £10 million for interest free loans, together with funding Action Energy - a new energy efficiency business advice service.

Action Energy provides free advice to any business, small or large, but it is keen to deal with SMEs, which have found dealing with environmental issues particularly challenging. The organisation believes it could help companies save up to 20% on their energy bills.

Interest free loans have been set aside for businesses. Funding from £5000 to £50,000 for energy efficiency initiatives is available and firms can pay back loans over a four year period.

On launching the scheme, Margaret Beckett said, "Smaller businesses are responsible for a significant amount of the carbon emissions in the business sector. A key barrier is that they may not have easy access to the capital they need to make the necessary investment. This new programme addresses this head-on by offering up-front interest free loans."

For more information, contact Action Energy's free helpline on 0800 58 57 94.

Larger pubs, clubs, restaurants and hotels now obliged to recycle bottles

A legal ruling over the sharing of packaging waste recycling targets means that major pub, club, restaurant and hotel businesses will now be obliged to recycle drink bottles.

Under the Packaging Regulations, the legal obligation to recycle beer, soft drink and mixer bottles supplied to licensed premises for consumption on-site has now been extended to include premises serving drinks in or from bottles. The Regulations apply to businesses handling at least 50 tonnes of packaging per year, and with an annual turnover of £2 million or more.

These businesses will now have to recycle - 48% in the case of glass bottles. This is yet another example of how the law can be reinterpreted after the event to include

companies who didn't believe they would be affected. A similar situation occurred with garden centres, where plant pots and seed trays were deemed to be packaging waste and many of these businesses had to rethink their purchasing and disposal strategies.

Businesses in England and Wales affected by the new ruling have to register either with the Environment Agency (EA) or with an appropriate compliance scheme by 31 December 2002. Those who fail to register and fulfil their recycling obligations for 2002 will be subject to enforcement action.

The impact of the change is also likely to extend to other types of packaging, with hotels, for example, being considered 'sellers' of packaging associated with



bath and toiletry products provided for guests, and restaurants, cafés and other premises serving food being 'sellers' where they provide customers with milk, sauce and other catering portions.

For more information, call the Environment Agency on 0845 933 3111.

Study reveals small businesses could be missing out on savings by ignoring waste reduction

SIEnA, a division of the Southampton Environment Centre, has carried out a one-year research study and found that companies with fewer than 15 staff are least likely to take advantage of waste reduction and recycling initiatives, or monitor their waste costs.

The study of over 700 companies provided information on types and volumes of wastes produced, waste reduction and recycling

initiatives and attitudes towards waste management. Perhaps the most disturbing fact uncovered by the study was that over half of the businesses taking part were unaware that they had a duty of care regarding the waste they produce.

Financially, smaller companies are also missing out on the potential cost savings and other benefits to be gained from implementing environmentally sound business policies. SIEnA

projects manager George Padelopoulos said, "The study shows that there are considerable opportunities for businesses to reduce the waste they generate, thereby reducing their disposal costs and legal liability as well as reducing their impact on the environment."

The news wasn't all negative. Several small businesses were singled out for using their flexibility and ingenuity to find the most innovative uses for their waste.

Six-month prison sentence for illegal waste disposal

A man has been sentenced to six months' imprisonment for deliberately storing controlled waste materials without a waste management licence.

Kenneth Richards, who operated a skip hire company, dumped almost 3000 tonnes of waste on land he rented. Before abandoning the site

and selling his company vehicles, Richards' skip hire firm nearly filled the entire site with household and commercial waste. The landowner is now faced with trying to recover clean-up costs from Richards through the civil courts.

The Environment Agency brought the prosecution after

investigating Richards' activities. Although he had previously been fined to the tune of £800, and imprisoned for 28 days, Richards continued to deliberately flout the law.

Environment Agency inspectors visited the site in March 1999 and then took photographs in July 2000,

which proved that the amount of waste had doubled in just two years.

The Environment Agency is delighted at the severity of the sentence passed by the Crown Court, and believes that this will help to deter others within the waste management industry from breaking the law.



In Brief - Environment Update

Free video advice on avoiding groundwater pollution

The Environment Agency is now offering copies of its video *Keeping out of Deep Water – Groundwater Protection for Industry* free of charge. The video contains advice for SMEs on how to reduce the risk of causing groundwater pollution.

Groundwater – from underground sources – is a vital part of the natural environment and provides a large proportion of the water supply for industrial and domestic use in the UK. Accidental spills and leaks from storage tanks of hazardous chemicals, such as chlorinated solvents and oils, can pollute groundwater and, in some cases, make it unusable.

Cleaning up groundwater is difficult and usually expensive, so the video promotes prevention above cure. For your free copy, call 08457 337700 or fax 0151 604 1222.

Free business guide to water efficiency

Waterwise - a new guide to the environmental and financial benefits of water efficiency is available from the Environment Agency.

Designed for business use, the publication gives information about reducing water consumption and outlines how to save money by implementing a water management plan. It includes advice on issues such as metering and leakage.

For a free copy of *Waterwise*, call 01903 83207 or download it by visiting www.environment-agency.gov.uk/savewater.

Environmental Training Initiative receives the go ahead



EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund

Thanks to support from the European Social Fund, GBN members will be able to take part in the next phase of the BETI (Business Environmental Training Initiative) project.

BETI provides nationally accredited environmental

awareness training to local SME managers and supports them in cascading the training to their staff.

The benefits to participating businesses include cost savings, increased competitiveness and increased staff morale and motivation. The project helps managers to ensure that environmental responsibility becomes the responsibility of everyone from shop floor to managing director.

Bedfordshire County Council, Bedford Borough Council, Mid Beds District Council, South Beds District Council, Bedfordshire Trading Standards, the Environment Agency, Chamber Business, EEF, Cranfield University, the Luton and Dunstable Innovation Centre, LSC, and GBN support the BETI project.

With a limited number of places available and the only cost to business being time spent on the one-day course, members are encouraged to watch this space, or express their provisional interest by emailing myles.greenhalgh@chamber-business.com.

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

The UK's largest privately-owned waste company, **Grundig**, and its Chairman **Norman Grundig**, were each convicted for discharging foetid, stagnant water. The company was fined £50,000 and the Chairman £15,000. Costs were also awarded against them.

Transfer operator, **David John Brotherton** was fined £9,750 after ignoring an Environment Agency notice telling him to stop storing waste. Breaches of his company's licence included excessive tipping and waste overflow, non-existent drainage, and depositing scrap metals next to a stream.

Milton Keynes based **Hitachi Power Tools** were fined £9,500 plus costs for offences under the 1997 Packaging Regulations.

Northamptonshire company **Springfirs Estates Ltd** was fined £5,500 and ordered to pay costs of £744 after pleading guilty to

disposing of controlled waste by burning, which was not in accordance with its Waste Management Licence.

Causing sewage to enter the grounds of properties resulted in a £65,000 fine for **Thames Water Utilities**. The company also received a further fine of £20,000 for polluting a river in the area.

The **Faccenda Group**, one of the UK's top 100 food businesses, has been fined £75,000 following a series of effluent breaches at one of its poultry processing plants, which caused polluting matter to enter a nearby river.

Automotive components companies, the **Lear Corporation (UK)**, **Lear Corporation UK Interior Systems** and **Lear Corporation (Nottingham)**, were fined a £96,000 after pleading guilty to 24 charges brought under waste packing regulations, including failing to take reasonable steps to recover and recycle waste.

Useful Websites

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

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