

Lean, Mean & Green SMEs in the Thames Gateway South Essex region



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One of the major challenges facing local businesses is to maintain viability and profitability during the economic downturn. Electricity, gas, water and raw material costs are all becoming more significant for businesses.

The Low Carbon Business programme provides help to SMEs in the Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) region in reducing financial and environmental impact whilst also seeking to develop new business in the low carbon economy and new employment opportunities in existing companies.

The programme is a partnership between ERDF/EEDA, Thurrock Borough Council,

Essex County Council, Groundwork South Essex, Southend Borough Council, Basildon Borough Council, Rochford District Council, Castle Point District Council, Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation, Thurrock Local Enterprise Agency and National Industrial Symbiosis Programme. It has been established to deliver ERDF Priority Axis 2: *Stimulating Enterprise and Supporting Successful Business by Overcoming Barriers to Business Creation and Expansion*.

Over the course of its three-year lifetime, the programme aims to reach at 1,800 SMEs in the TGSE region, delivering a minimum of 12 hours of engagement benefit to a minimum of 1,155 of them. This will be achieved by a mix of consultancy, one-to-one advice and through regional seminars and workshops. At least 415 businesses will receive a green business audit designed to drive successful environmental related initiatives.

Additional direct support will be available through a £1.38 million match funded grants programme, designed to support any actions that can support the delivery of the programme's aim to lower the commercial carbon footprint in the TGSE by 5%, year-on-year, over the lifetime of the programme. Both capital and revenue grants will be considered if they reduce carbon, waste or water usage.

The partners have also set themselves the robust targets around the creation of 40 new business start ups and 10 social enterprises, safeguarding 49 jobs and creating 36 jobs in the region.

Commenting on the importance and relevance of this programme, Peter Wognum, Programme Manager, stated, *“The Thames Gateway South Essex is a very successful economic region and, as a result, has a higher than average carbon footprint. The challenge is to engage with smaller businesses which are traditionally hard to reach and bring the message to them that taking action on reducing CO₂, waste and water usage means reducing business operating costs. At a time when fuel and raw material costs are increasing at regular intervals, there has never been a more appropriate time to create a vehicle to deliver not only the message, but also the means, to effect measurable change, which would not have been possible without the match funding available from the European Regional development Fund”.*

So far, the programme has helped businesses with the implementation of initiatives such as improved heating/cooling systems, printing processes, PV installation, IT infrastructure enabling increased remote working for traditionally office-based staff and even a bio-mass burner; and with grants being available for as little as £1,000, the programme is able to support even the smallest business.

Priority Axis 2			
Funding:	Total Project Cost: £6,359,237 ERDF: £2,543,694		
Solution for Business Product:	Improving Your Resource Efficiency		
Scope:	Thames Gateway South Essex	Project Duration:	October 2009 – June 2013
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ERDF Details:	<p>The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is a seven-year investment programme part financed by the European Union. Its objective is ‘towards low carbon economic growth’ in the East of England and €110.9 million has been allocated to our region.</p> <p>The fund aims to help small and medium size enterprises respond to the challenges of climate change and the huge commercial potential behind a low carbon economy.</p> <p>For more information visit w: http://www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/regenerationfunding/europeanregionaldevelopment/eastengland/ or tel+44 0303 4446400</p>		

