

## Transport Advice Helps Businesses Smile



**With domestic transport alone responsible for 24 per cent of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the UK, and with a government target to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent by 2050, it is essential a solution can be found to address this growing problem.**

To help tackle this issue regionally, a green travel consultancy service called Business Smiles has been set up to help SMEs in

Suffolk and Hertfordshire, by providing advice on how to reduce businesses' use of cars, vans and lorries.

The free travel advice service has been specifically designed to assist SMEs review their transport needs, including commuting by staff. The plans are then used to make their transport policies as efficient as possible, saving around £10,000 annually and cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 10 per cent.

The scheme also enables staff within these businesses to access discounted bicycles, public transport, journey planning, car sharing and real-time travel information through mobile ticketing and digital technologies.

The initiative will take an innovative approach to assessing the effects of these changes. Specialist software specifically designed to track commuting and business mileage through the movements of cars, vans and lorries, will enable the collation of a sophisticated level of data. The degree of reduction in carbon emissions will then be calculated for each mode of transport and the effects of the change in behaviour fully analysed and evaluated.

Peter Lee, sustainable transport strategy manager, at Suffolk County Council explained why the project is so important to businesses in the area: "Very few small businesses have taken advantage of the tax incentives and other benefits that large organisations can achieve through green travel plans. This is simply because they don't have the resources, expertise or time to investigate the details.

“Business Smiles helps SMEs access practical measures and solutions to their transport problems as well as offering advice on other available grant schemes. This will go a long way towards helping them cut their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and reduce their business costs and is welcome news to businesses, especially during the current economic climate.”

A regional project, Suffolk County Council is supported in the delivery of Business Smiles by business, skills and economic development company, Exemplas, along with a multi-agency partnership including the Highways Agency, Ipswich Borough Council, St Albans District Council and Hertfordshire County Council.

With congestion costing businesses millions of pounds annually through lost productivity, the three-year project will play an important role in enabling SMEs to grow their businesses and reduce their carbon footprint.

The £2 million project has received funding from a number of sources, including £830,000 from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The project aims to assist 160 SMEs within Ipswich and St Albans.

Priority Axis 3			
<b>Funding:</b>	Total Project Cost: £2,051,000 ERDF: £830,000		
<b>Scope:</b>	Suffolk and Hertfordshire	<b>Project Duration:</b>	Jan 2010–Dec 2012
<b>More Information:</b>	Peter Lee, Suffolk County Council: 01473 265043 or peter.lee@suffolk.gov.uk		
<b>ERDF Details:</b>	<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:  <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/regenerationfunding/europeanregionaldevelopment/eastengland/">http://www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/regenerationfunding/europeanregionaldevelopment/eastengland/</a>  or tel+44 0303 4446400</p>		

