



ERDF case study

Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) / Leading a low carbon economy

- TGSE project helps local businesses towards lower carbon future
- £2.5m ERDF grant enables awareness raising events, grants and environmental action plans
- Up to 1200 businesses could benefit

ERDF funding is now supporting an ambitious programme designed to help the business community in Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) weather the current economic downturn – and lower its carbon footprint - by improving its use of energy and other resources such as water and transport. 'Much of the industry in our area is very polluting,' explains Tina Murphy, Regeneration Manager for Thurrock Council, initiator of the TGSE / Leading a Low Carbon Economy programme, 'and so the potential benefits of minimising energy and resource usage are quite significant.'

The programme, started by Thurrock Council, initially focused on supporting existing SMEs and the establishment of business start-ups and social enterprises in Thurrock, but the idea was so relevant to the wider TGSE sub-region that the programme has been extended and is now run by a partnership of 10 organisations, including six local Councils, a charitable trust, a Development Corporation, a Local Enterprise Agency and specialist consultancies*.

The £2.5 million grant was awarded in October 2009, and although the programme is still at an early stage, the roadmap is clear. 'We have three overarching phases of targeted activity,' explains Tina. 'In phase one, we want to raise awareness of the benefits of 'greening' a business. To do this, we're planning a series of events and other awareness raising initiatives, and the development of a 'Green Business Pledge'. In phase two, we will start to embed green management principles within businesses, aiming to make sure any innovations adopted remain effective in the longer term. We will undertake energy audits, deliver personal support for businesses, and develop environmental action plans on an individual business basis. Finally, in phase three, we plan to deliver carbon reduction solutions which will really enhance business activity, such as advising on existing support (grants, loans etc), mentoring support, and provision of a 40 per cent revenue or capital grant to

achieve the carbon reduction solutions outlined in the environmental action plans.'

Following the launch (July 2010), the partnership organisations are now recruiting key team members, holding events across the region to raise the profile of the programme, and starting to undertake green audits with some of the 1,200 businesses identified as potential beneficiaries of the programme. The partnership will also undertake baseline research into current information provision to gain a true picture of the advice on offer. Feedback shows that businesses feel 'swamped' by the amount of information available – this torrent now needs to be assessed and managed so that businesses can easily access information of real relevance.



When researching possible funding for the programme, Tina and her team soon realised that an ERDF grant was an excellent fit. 'Having already identified low carbon as a strategic initiative in Thurrock, we realised that an ERDF grant was even more appropriate, especially as the core idea was now extending beyond Thurrock.' Tina welcomed the assistance of the team during the grant application process, and found the regular meetings held with facilitators were a great source of pragmatic help and advice when drafting the application and business case.

In summary, the grant £2.5m is being used to:

- support initial awareness raising events and activities
- fund 40 per cent of the grants which form part of the programme.
- support the delivery of the green audits and environmental business plans
- enable delivery of some of the operational aspects of the project, such as the website and branding for the whole programme.

Clearly defining indicators of success was an important part of the grant application process: 'We have very precise targets, such as a five per cent reduction in water use by 2010. We will also be monitoring the number of SMEs that receive a minimum of 12 hours support from the programme; the number of green audits undertaken, the number of grants awarded and how they are used, any increase in jobs resulting from the programme, the number of Social Enterprises and Business Start Ups established in Thurrock; and also the way the partnership is operating,' explains Tina. With ten partners involved, establishing the best way to work together has been 'challenging but also inspiring' she says, adding: 'Getting it right is vital, as our experience could become the model for similar initiatives across the UK.'

***TGSE partnership:** Castle Point Borough Council, Thurrock Council, Essex County Council, Groundwork South Essex, Southend Borough Council, Basildon District Council, Rochford District Council, Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation, Thurrock Local Enterprise Agency, National Industrial Symbiosis Programme on behalf of International Synergies Ltd.

Priority Axis 2			
Funding:	Total Project Cost: £6.359m ERDF: £2.543m		
Solution for Business Product:	Improving Your Resource Efficiency (IYRE) 		
Scope:	South Essex	Project Duration:	October 2009 – December 2012
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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</p>  <p>+44 03034446400 W: http://www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/regenerationfunding/europeanregionaldevelopment/eastengland/</p>		