

The Organisation for Responsible Businesses

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case study



environmental goods & services sector

INVEST Essex case studies highlighting Essex companies who are leaders in their fields

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Jill Poet,
Founder

INVEST
Essex



Essex County Council



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Jill Poet, Founder

Although Jill Poet has an accountancy qualification and is an experienced business woman, she also understands the value of working with a business mentor. Jill applied for and received this support via the Essex County Council's Essex Innovation Programme, as she explains. “ORB is a big project with aspirations to become a national leader in its field.”

“Working with my mentor has been really helpful and has proved to be an invaluable asset in the strategic development of ORB.”

ORB's official launch took place early in 2010 with a free to attend business exhibition that attracted high-profile exhibitors and speakers reflecting the importance of environmental issues in Essex. These included Envirowise, Renewables East, National Industrial Symbiosis Programme (NISP), Health and Safety Executive, Thames Gateway South East Low Carbon Project and Essex Federation of Small Businesses. “The work of organisations like these shows that there are a lot of important initiatives already happening in Essex,” says Jill Poet.



The Organisation for Responsible Businesses encouraging socially and environmentally responsible practices

The Organisation for Responsible Businesses (ORB), based at Southend-on-Sea in Essex, is a membership organisation for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It encourages socially and environmentally responsible business practices, and actively supports and promotes its responsible business members.

ORB's founder, Jill Poet believes that a new business paradigm is emerging. “For businesses to create and sustain profitable growth it is essential for them to fully embrace ethical, social and environmental values - and communicate those differentiating factors to customers, suppliers, employees and the community. Extensive research has revealed quite clearly that businesses actively applying social and environmental considerations in their day-to-day operations enjoy far greater long-term profitability.”

To help SMEs achieve this, ORB provides information and updates on relevant legislation via a website and regular members' newsletters. “There is a great deal of information, support and funding available for SMEs,” says Jill Poet. “Many of them just don't know it's there!”

A key element in the ORB model is a benchmark questionnaire for businesses which includes immediate summary and detailed responses. ORB collaborated with the University of Essex to develop the questionnaire, as Jill Poet explains. “We received an Innovation Voucher which covered the cost of the development work. We worked closely with the University team at the Innovation Centre on the Southend Campus to create a series of questions that would help SMEs develop a mindset and move their business forward in terms of workplace, environment, community, marketplace and transparency.”

INVEST Essex provides confidential advice and practical support to companies wanting to establish a presence or expand in the UK. We promote Essex as an outstanding business destination and help existing and potential investors make the most of our strategic location, thriving business environment, and quality of life.

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