



Julie Coxon, BISNES

Organisations in Sandwell are ahead of the game when it comes to managing their environmental performance thanks to a novel way of tackling the 'low carbon agenda'.

More than 200 local firms have tapped into the exper-

tise of Business in Sandwell Network of Environmental Support (BISNES) to reduce their energy usage, cut harmful emissions and, importantly, save money on escalating costs.

The innovative network, which brings together a number of specialists under one banner, provides a host of tailored assistance, ranging from site reviews and

thermal imaging surveys to legislation updates and a dedicated helpline.

It also organises a calendar of interactive free seminars, with the latest one giving 60 organisations an insight into preparing for and dealing with pollution issues on-site.

BISNES' Julie Coxon has been impressed with the take-up so far.

"Our industrial base means that there are a lot of companies locally who need to be more energy efficient, yet few of them know where to go for external help.

"There are lot of support offers out there and this can be confusing and contributes to putting people off. What we've tried to do with BISNES is to create one point of contact that brings all the best knowledge together."

She continued: "I think the latest event proves what an impact we are having locally. This was by far our best attended seminar and the feedback we've received has been excellent - the demand is certainly there for similar workshops going forward."

The Environmental Emergency Preparedness and Response event, which was

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jointly hosted by Groundwork West Midlands, gave firms the chance to participate in a mock emergency spill exercise so delegates could gain practical experi-

ence to take back into their companies.

There was also an update on legislation and an introduction to the CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme, the UK's mandatory climate change and energy saving scheme for large public and private sector organisations.

It provides a financial incentive to reduce energy use by putting a price on carbon emissions from such use and also gives participants the chance to make savings on energy bills through improved efficiency.

Anyone who falls within the requirements of the CRC will have to provide information on their energy consumption, and, once the scheme kicks off, buy allowances to cover emissions for the next 12 months. An annual league table will publicise the energy efficiency performance of everyone involved.

Julie continued: "CRC is a big issue for firms and we believe the event got attendees thinking about how they get the most out of it.

"The next event is scheduled for mid September at the Bethel Convention Centre in West Bromwich,

with 'resource efficiency as a means of preventing pollution' the main topic on the agenda."

Another key element of the BISNES offer is the Business Environment Charter, which companies can sign-up to once they make a commitment to improving environmental performance.

Each firm receives a certificate, an information pack containing hints, tips and contacts and access to specialist business support.

Over 90 companies have already made the pledge and are currently working towards the scheme's four levels of bronze, silver, gold and platinum.

BISNES

Sandwell
Business Network

■ If you would like to find out more about BISNES or book your place for forthcoming events, please contact Julie Coxon on 0121 569 6603 or julie_coxon@sandwell.gov.uk