

Renewable Energy Select Committee – Supplementary Information for Members – Low Carbon Futures¹

The Low Carbon Futures Project

KCC are leading on this project, which is funded by the South East Regional Development Fund Competitiveness Programme and runs from 2007 - 2013. The project promotes sustainable business operations, focussing on reducing carbon emissions. KCC is delivering the project with support from Business Support Kent, the Environment Agency, Kent Fire and Rescue, Kent Police and The Carbon Hub.

The four elements of the project are:

1. The South East Business Carbon Hub
2. Sustainable Transport
3. Accreditation
4. Providing a service which could be replicated elsewhere

The South East Business Carbon Hub

The website was created by The Carbon Hub Ltd and has been developed and tailored in conjunction with KCC.

What – An online resource for businesses that allows them to measure their carbon footprint (including energy, water, waste, and transport); create action plans to reduce carbon emissions and costs; work towards implementing an environmental management system (EMS); communicate with other businesses and access resources in relation to sustainable business.

Website <https://southeastbusiness.carbon-hub.com>

How - Businesses can apply or be invited to the hub. Following checks for eligibility (SME, <250 employees, turnover <50m Euro, based in the South East) the organisation can feature on the site. Service support will be provided via online seminars and businesses will be supported to use the site to its full potential by the Carbon Hub Advisor.

When – The site is now live with more than 70 businesses registered on a trial basis. It will undergo further development in June, following which there will be a push for more businesses to sign up.

Why - Businesses seeking to implement an EMS will find useful tools on the website. A sophisticated but simple reporting mechanism will be available in June to enable businesses to monitor their own progress.

¹ Information provided by Viviane Walker, Carbon Hub Advisor and Jennie Colville – Low Carbon Futures Project Manager

Through the Hub, businesses will be enabled to respond to increased pressure from clients, stakeholders and legislation to take effective, practical action to measure and reduce their carbon emission. They will also benefit from lower operational costs from improved efficiencies.

Sustainable Transport

This part of the programme will involve engaging with 150 businesses to help them develop sustainable mobility strategies. A Sustainable Transport Advisor will offer onsite travel audits to help businesses achieve reductions in carbon emissions by reducing travel. He will be working with the Travel Planning Team Leader to assist businesses to put together travel plans. Key to achieving sustainable transport aims are smarter working options such as teleconferencing, car sharing, flexible hours, working at home and teleworking.

Accreditation

By promoting an accreditation scheme (BS 8555 EMS), the Hub will enable businesses to be recognised for the environmental work they have undertaken and having better environmental credentials could give them a competitive edge and lead to new business.

The Future

The Hub intends to engage with 1,000 businesses in the South East over the 3 years of the project, enabling them to adapt to a low carbon economy; minimising negative impacts and maximising positive outcomes.

With further funding from the private or public sector, the hub will be able to continue to influence businesses beyond the lifetime of the project ensuring that reductions in carbon are achieved throughout the South East.

Relevance to National Targets

The project relates to National Indicators on carbon emissions reduction NI185 (KCC's own estate) and NI186 (Kent-wide) and to the strategic aims of adopting resource-efficient business practices as well as sustainable consumption practices. Extending the reach of the project could further help to achieve these aims.