

# SCOTTISH SMEs: SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS



Sustainable development has just as much to offer small and medium sized firms as big business organisations. That is the clear message of a successful initiative to give support and advice about best practice to Scottish SMEs.



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A scheme to provide free help with sustainable development to small and medium sized enterprises in Scotland has shown how firms can reduce costs and improve business management.

Total savings worth £25,000 have been made by 25 SMEs taking part in the 'Success and Sustainability Initiative', run by the Business Environment Partnership (BEP). The companies received support and advice with developing new technologies, sourcing new materials and introducing policies for sustainable development, biodiversity and corporate social responsibility.

Even firms that were already committed to sustainability made significant gains. A sustainability review for organic food producer Simply Organic showed how additional cost savings worth £8,400 per year could be achieved by the Midlothian company, which employs 21 people and produces organic soups, sauces and meals. Just making washing procedures more efficient has cost nothing and is saving £1,000 a year on gas, water and effluent charges.

Following the success of an initial two-year project backed by the UK-wide Sustainable Technologies programme (STI), the Scottish Executive has agreed to continue its support for the scheme for a further three years. A Business Guide has also been published giving practical information about lessons learned and the adoption of sustainable technologies and business practices.

'SMEs cannot always afford the advice of consultants or specialist advisers and this scheme provides the support they need,' says project manager Brendan Turvey. 'Our experience shows that the benefits of sustainable development are just as significant for small players as they are for big businesses.'

'We are delighted that the Scottish Executive has recognised how much sustainable development has to offer and has agreed to continue its support for our initiative,' he adds. 'Scotland is leading the way in getting

sustainable development working for the small business community. Scottish SMEs are often well aware of sustainability issues and eager to address them in their businesses, and now we will be able to help more of them to do that.'

Firms taking part in the scheme made substantial savings by reducing costs of energy, raw materials and waste disposal. They also gained advantages by demonstrating their green credentials and applying the principles of sustainability in their businesses. Far from imposing additional costs, the project showed that sustainable development offers profitable new opportunities.

'Very significant business opportunities are being created, for example by changes in environmental legislation and the way we manage our waste,' says Mr Turvey. 'SMEs are well placed to take advantage of these opportunities where the right support is in place. Sustainable development also provides a valuable management tool that can help to run the whole business more profitably.'

Case studies reveal how firms are benefiting in many different ways. When Dobbies Garden Centres sought advice on how to reduce packaging waste, a feasibility study recommended a small waste-to-energy unit as the best option and a grant was obtained from the Scottish Clean Energy Demonstration Scheme. The company, which runs 17 UK stores, now enjoys reduced waste liabilities and cheaper, cleaner electricity. Less waste is generated, reducing disposal costs and the need for on-site storage.

A sustainability review for the Edinburgh International Conference Centre identified opportunities to improve social and economic performance while reducing environmental impact. The EICC has since won a Gold Award from the Green Tourism Business Scheme and achieved significant cuts in consumption of electricity and paper. Waste reduction alone is saving £4,000 per annum in disposal costs. The Centre has also set up the Sustainable Events Programme, which actively manages



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the impact of each event.

Packaging industry supplier Glenhaze Ltd discovered how simple waste minimisation techniques could save well over £5,000 per annum. A review of the firm's activities also showed how sustainable development policy could make existing health, safety and environmental policies more coherent. It concluded that improved working relationships could help clients to reduce waste by purchasing no more than they need.

Among other innovative SMEs taking part in the scheme are a glass recycling specialist, a supplier of root-enhancement growing systems for nurseries and a developer of renewable energy solutions such as rooftop wind turbines.

A grant of £20,000 for the initial two-year project was made by the Sustainable Technologies Initiative, a major programme to improve the sustainability of UK businesses. The STI programme seeks new ways to achieve economic growth and employment while safeguarding the environment and conserving natural resources. Additional support was given by the Scottish Executive, the European Regional Development Fund, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Forward Scotland and through Landfill Tax Credits.

'STI support helped to get the project off the ground and demonstrate that sustainable development works for small businesses,' says Brendan Turvey. 'Now we aim to make it a mainstream part of standard business advice throughout Scotland.'

The Business Guide to Sustainable Development is available online as a downloadable pdf file at [www.thebep.org.uk](http://www.thebep.org.uk), and in hard copy form or on CD-ROM from BEP, contact Brendan Turvey, tel. 0131 654 1234.

#### Additional project information and background

*How is the project managed?*

The project is managed by the Business

Environment Partnership at Midlothian Enterprise Trust. BEP provides free assistance with environmental management to small to medium sized businesses throughout Scotland.

*Who provides advice and guidance?*

Technical advice and guidance on funding is given by a steering group comprising Scottish Executive, National Engineering Laboratories (on behalf of DTI), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Heriot-Watt University, Scottish Institute of Sustainable Technology, Scottish Water/REAP, Forward Scotland and East of Scotland European Partnership.

*What aspects of sustainable development have been covered?*

The scheme has covered a variety of areas including biodiversity, renewable energy, sustainable design and sustainable technologies. General sustainability reviews have also been conducted for a number of firms.

*What case studies are available?*

Case studies are available on many of the companies that have taken part. They include:

- Simply Organic – organic food producers.
- Renewable Devices – design, construction and implementation of sustainable technologies.
- Edinburgh International Conference Centre.
- Glenhaze – supplier of internal packing fitments.
- Canmore Housing Association.
- Mac-Glass Recycling.
- Hart Builders.
- Servite Housing Association.
- Dryden Aqua – water filtration.
- Dobbies Garden Centres.
- The Caledonian Tree Company – specialised horticultural products.
- Scottish Borders Rural Partnership.
- Production Geoscience Ltd – subsurface consultancy and software developer.
- T & N Gilmartin (Contractors) Ltd – landscaping and civil engineering.
- Royal Scottish Agricultural Benevolent Institute – farm plastic waste recycling scheme.
- Macmerry Industrial Estate.
- Murray International Metals and Premier Alloys.

Further details are available online at [www.thebep.org.uk](http://www.thebep.org.uk).

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#### SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGIES INITIATIVE

The STI is a programme of collaborative research and development aimed at improving the sustainability of UK business. The aim is to maintain high levels of economic growth and employment while protecting the environment, making better use of natural resources and working for the good of society as a whole. Companies are encouraged to work with the science base to develop and adopt new sustainable technologies. The Programme is sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Oakdene Hollins consultants deliver waste reduction to industry, and technical and economic studies and programme co-ordination to the investment sector, industry and Government.