



Helping SMEs save scarce resources and become more competitive

ENWORKS is a unique, environmental support service that is helping thousands of businesses in the North West of England to use scarce resources more efficiently, reduce their carbon emissions and become more profitable, competitive and sustainable.

Since 2001, ENWORKS has provided a single source of professional environmental advice and support, through a network of local organisations, for businesses right across the urban and rural landscape of the North West of England.

Prior to ENWORKS, access to environmental advice for businesses in the region was fragmented, with more than 180 small-scale, overlapping projects, and little knowledge transfer from one local project to the next.

Within the current round of structural funds (2007-2013), ENWORKS has completed one successful three-year programme and is now delivering a second. The key goals of the EU-supported programmes are to improve the competitiveness and productivity of North West SMEs by reducing their exposure to environmental risks and improving their resource efficiency. Furthermore, they set out to improve the region's skills and knowledge on environmental management and to demonstrate that environmental practice is profitable.

Greener solutions for enterprises

ENWORKS offers support across a wide range of issues, from managing environmental risk through to the rewards of reducing energy, water and material usage, and improving waste management. It addresses the broad spectrum of issues that face business today, including: eco-design, process efficiency, sustainable procurement, carbon foot-printing and climate change adaptation.

Support is tailored to the circumstances of the business concerned. ENWORKS will typically undertake individual on-site reviews to identify environmental risks and resource efficiency improvements. It then provides ongoing technical and change management support in the implementation of improvements.

Every business has free access to the ENWORKS Online Resource Efficiency Toolkit: custom-built software which helps managers to understand, prioritise, track and assess their improvements and savings. ENWORKS also organises training and networking events, and provides regular e-bulletins and online resources, including business case studies, to assist with knowledge and skills transfer into SMEs.

"Our on-site resource efficiency reviews identify ways in which businesses are exposing themselves to risks associated with resource scarcity, security of supply, climate change impacts, legal non-compliance and rising energy/material prices. We then demonstrate how those risks can be addressed through simple, no-cost and low-cost actions," explains ENWORKS Programmes Director, Samantha Nicholson. "We take a holistic approach to reducing resource consumption, waste and GHG emissions, and focus on the message that environmental improvements will bring tangible bottom-line benefits."

Saving costs

A key part of the success of ENWORKS is its strong partnership structure, under-pinned by a governing board made up of regional business leaders and decision-makers from a range of organisations. Having senior level representation from a wide range of stakeholders provides access to a broad range of knowledge, skills and networks, and ensures that the work is fully embedded within the North West's infrastructure and strategies.

Through the last two EU-supported programmes, ENWORKS has helped North West SMEs to identify £79 million of annual cost savings through resource efficiency, £13 million of which have been implemented so far. These improvements have saved over 47 000 tonnes of CO2 emissions, 413 000 m3 of water and 9 300 tonnes of materials to date. In addition, the environmental improvements have created or safeguarded over 960 jobs, and over £113 million of sales.

ENWORKS has received widespread recognition in the UK and abroad, most recently being named 'NGO of the Year' at the UK's BusinessGreen Leaders Awards (2011). They also regularly share their learning, for example through www.enworksinbox.com and through enabling access to the ENWORKS Efficiency Toolkit to other UK regional bodies, the Welsh Assembly Government and multiple UK government departments.

"Our hands-on, one-to-one support has helped nearly 4 000 SMEs in the last few years alone to reduce their consumption of energy, fuel, water and materials, and where necessary, substitute resources with alternatives that have lower environmental impacts. The savings we achieve through simple, low-cost or no-cost efficiency measures go straight onto a business's bottom line, and we then encourage them to re-invest by making further improvements, that will bring even greater, long-term savings."

Samantha Nicholson, ENWORKS Programmes Director

Technical information

Project:	Helping SMEs save scarce resources and become more competitive
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