



Talking Low Carbon

...with Kent County Council

Kent County Council Develops its own Low Carbon Brand

Kent County Council (KCC) leads local authorities in recognising the importance of the Low Carbon Economy to its economic viability. As early adopters of the low carbon movement, in 2011 KCC began developing its own low carbon brand: *Low Carbon Kent* which is run by its Sustainable Business Team.

Low Carbon Kent delivers a range of projects and services for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) around environmental sustainability.

Addressing the supply of Low Carbon Environmental Goods and Services (LCEGS), the *Low Carbon Kent* network represents over 1500 Kent businesses that operate in the LCEGS sector as well as a variety of other sectors.

And on the demand side, KCC's Steps To Environmental Management (STEM) scheme creates the corresponding demand for LCEGS by companies looking for suppliers who can help them to improve their own environmental sustainability.

STEM provides tools, templates and guidance for businesses to implement or improve an

environmental management system.

STEM has three levels: Blue, Silver and Gold. The scheme recognises the need for flexibility and businesses can complete a workshop with guidance from KCC staff or use an electronic assessment form in their own time.

Each level of the scheme corresponds with requirements for the international standard for environmental management, ISO14001, so that a business reaching the Gold level of the scheme will be well positioned to look at applying for the international standard. Since its launch, over 500 businesses have been certified to at least the first level of the STEM scheme.

The results can be seen in the bottom line. By implementing an environmental management scheme carrying out associated energy efficiency and waste actions, businesses completing the STEM scheme are estimated to save up to £2065 annually.





Kent Businesses
attending a STEM Blue
Workshop

What KCC learned about Talking Low Carbon:

Through engagement with both existing and potential *Low Carbon Kent* network members, we have found that when talking to SMEs about the benefits of being low carbon or “green” it is not necessarily best to focus on or even initially mention the environmental benefits. Many businesses seem to respond far more strongly to ideas around both cost savings from improved efficiency and winning new business through improved environmental credentials than they do to appeals around climate change or other environmental issues. Part of the reason for the success of the STEM scheme may well be that businesses are increasingly being asked about their environmental credentials. From our experience, businesses that operate in a low carbon manner or wish to because “it’s the right thing to do” to help combat climate change tend to be those that offer low carbon goods or services such as renewable energy installations or energy saving measures.