

# environmental business support

## GROWING YOUR BUSINESS BY GOING GREEN



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### Rationale

Concerns over the impact of climate change are growing. Raising awareness of this issue among the region's businesses, and introducing them to measures which can assist them in reducing their carbon footprint are high on the agenda with both Government and at a local and regional level. At the same time, environmental issues continue to rate increasingly highly with consumers.

The West Durham region includes many areas of environmental importance such as the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It relies upon its environmental conservation heritage and landscape credentials to attract visitors. Encouraging the region's tourism industry to 'go green' in an area with such intrinsic environmental credentials would seem a logical step forward, and one which also has the potential to add value and save money for businesses, both large and small.

### Actions and activities

The Enterprise Agency (TEA) used Pathfinder funding to help set up a number of seminars aimed at raising awareness of climate change and other environmental issues among

businesses in the Teesdale and Wear Valley districts. In particular, farmers, small manufacturers and rural micro businesses were targeted, with many of the speakers local, while also experts in their field. In addition, the TEA web site has been used to set up an information point collating useful information sources on adopting green measures within your business. An on-line business 'tool kit' has also been devised to allow individual businesses to assess their environmental credentials and learn how they can improve.

“ The tourism offer for the North Pennines is based on its high quality environment. A strong commitment by tourism businesses to environmental management will send a consistent message to our visitors about the way we care together about this special place. ”

Peter Samson,  
North Pennines AONB

The North Pennines AONB Partnership has worked with tourism networks to stimulate uptake of the nationally recognised Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS). Pathfinder funding has enabled the AONB Partnership to facilitate two technical seminars to outline to tourism businesses the benefits of joining GTBS.

Encouraging tourism businesses to improve their green credentials and use nationally recognised environmental accreditation schemes is an important part of tourism development in the area. Pathfinder funding for the roll-out of GTBS has allowed tourism businesses to consider their environmental performance in a structured way and make improvements in areas where they are most beneficial to both the business and the environment.

Membership of the nationally recognised Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) is actively encouraged - it is recommended by the AONB Partnership, but it is also the accreditation promoted by the regional development agency, One NorthEast.

Following the technical seminars an additional 17 businesses have decided to join the scheme, getting the number of members up to 26.



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## Next steps and Results

With regard to GTBS, advisory and grading visits will be carried out over the next few months and criteria have been developed for 'greening your business' grants.

Four seminars aimed at raising awareness of green issues were held by TEA, attracting over 75 attendees from businesses in Teesdale and Wear Valley. A review of the statistics collated by interviews with some 40 businesses in the region to assess their attitude to 'going green' remains on-going. These fed into a research document, which will be circulated among local agencies and interested parties. The results suggest keen interest in renewable and alternative energy, but with small businesses finding the capital cost prohibitive to adopting many such practices.



For more information, please contact the chair of the West Durham Rural Pathfinder, Bryan Rees, on 0191 202 3669 or email [bryan.rees@gone.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:bryan.rees@gone.gsi.gov.uk) or visit [www.westdurhampathfinder.com](http://www.westdurhampathfinder.com).

The project also identified a clear need to raise awareness among business advisors working across the North East of key environmental issues which have an impact on businesses. Advisors are well-placed to work with businesses to identify key environmental benefits such as cost savings through energy efficiency and renewable technologies. They could also play a key role in linking local businesses to the wide range of regional and national specialist projects. The project has also helped to increase businesses' understanding of the natural environment.

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The Business and the Environment project identified that many of our businesses, particularly those who are rurally based, have a keen interest in both the environmental and economic benefits to their business. I believe that we have an opportunity to provide a co-ordinated approach using local knowledge and regional assets to ensure that businesses get the help and support they need to effect change

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Shaun Stuart chief executive, The Enterprise Agency



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