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Dear Deb,

You may have recently had a call from a company who offer carbon offsetting to businesses and encourage them to use the term 'carbon neutral'. We have included a short article below which gives some information about carbon offsetting and 'carbon neutrality'. Also included in this month's Technical Newsletter are articles on the need for the construction industry to 'green' their skills in order to gain more business, UK landfill targets and the usual round up of environmental prosecutions.

Mandy Stoker

Is your company 'Carbon Neutral'?

With green issues being high on many companies' agendas, being able to say your company is 'carbon neutral' could be seen to give commercial advantage. But what does 'carbon neutral' really mean?

There is currently no agreed definition for carbon neutrality. Generally it is accepted to mean that a person or company's unavoidable carbon dioxide emissions are balanced by either carbon offsetting or sequestration. The accounting process can look at just direct carbon emissions or both direct and indirect - the lack of an agreed definition means that either can apply.

Crucially, a key word is 'unavoidable' so any ambition to achieve carbon neutrality has to first focus on reviewing the emissions made and deciding how these can be reduced - by limiting transport, energy usage and emissions from buildings, livestock, equipment and processes and using renewable energy sources. The remaining emissions that cannot be avoided are then calculated (your 'carbon footprint') and can then be 'offset' by investment in a responsible carbon project (eg. reforestation projects, renewable energy projects etc) or by buying carbon credits.

There are a number of companies able to offer carbon offsetting. For more information please see: www.carbonfund.org

Construction Industry advised to improve green skills

Small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) within the construction industry have been advised to

improve their green skills so as not to miss out on business opportunities that may arise from the low carbon economy.

The training board and sector skills council CITB Construction Skills says that 'urgent steps' are needed in order to improve green skills within the industry.

The Government's energy efficiency policy, the Green Deal, is due to be launched in October and will see billions of pounds lent every year to businesses and homeowners who wish to undertake energy efficient improvements such as cavity wall insulation, draught proofing, insulation and lagging. Companies wishing to be involved in the assessment and installation of energy efficient measures will have to prove that their staff have been suitably trained.

A lack of green skills within construction sector SMEs has been identified as a barrier to the success of the Green Deal scheme. CITB Construction Skills has formed the Green Deal Skills Alliance (GDSA) which was awarded £3m by the Government last month for delivery of Green Deal training.

For more information about training, please see - <http://www.assetskills.org/GreenSkills/GreenDealSkillsAlliance.aspx>



UK landfill lagging behind Europe's best performers

The UK has successfully reduced the amount of waste going to landfill over the past decade but is still well behind Europe's best performers, according to a European Commission report.

The report found that European countries, such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany and Sweden, all send less than 3% of their municipal waste to landfill compared to the UK's 48%. However, the UK saw drastic reductions in waste sent to landfill from 464kg to 259kg per capita between 2002 and 2009 and is performing better than nine other member states.

Greece and Malta send more than 75% of waste to landfill; France sends 31%, Italy 51% and Spain 58%. According to Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik lower performing countries have much to learn from those leading the way.

He said: "Six member states now combine virtually zero landfilling and high recycling rates. Not only do they exploit the value of the waste, they have created thriving industries ... by making prevention, reuse and recycling more economically attractive through a selection of economic instruments."



Waste exemptions - paragraph 13 and 21 exemptions removed

Companies with the old Paragraph 13 and Paragraph 21 exemptions must apply for a new free of charge waste exemption or an environmental permit.

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/permitting/130158.aspx



CONSULTATIONS

Transposition of the Industrial Emissions Directive 2010/75/EU (England and Wales)

The consultation of the transposition of the Industrial Emissions Directive 2010/75/EU has opened. This Directive combines seven existing Directives - those on integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC), large combustion plants, waste incineration, activities using organic solvents and three on titanium dioxide production. The Directive aims to control a range of industrial activities in order to protect the environment from possible harm from emissions. Consultations end on 6 June 2012.

For more information and to give your opinions please see - www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2012/03/12/industrial-emissions-1203/?dm_i=2WX,QKV9,2ZE6O0,25C0O,1



PROSECUTION

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Toxic waste boss jailed over illegal dumping

A Merseyside company have been prosecuted for illegally storing tonnes of hazardous chemical waste, some of which ended up dumped in lay-bys across Yorkshire, Lancashire and Shropshire.

The discovery of the dumped chemicals led to a nationwide investigation by the Environment

Agency lasting two years and named Operation Pandora. Six illegal waste sites were operating across Lancashire by Moreton-based TWMS. The most serious operating of these sites was in an industrial unit in Skelmersdale where 100 chemical drums containing acid, pharmaceutical vials and crushed tablets were stored. One container marked 'Very water-reactive, explosive on contact with water', was stored under a leaking roof. The drums were leaking into the River Tawd. At another site, eleven 1,000 illegally stored containers marked as containing 'carcinogenic substances' were within 125 metres of the River Ribble, a Site of Special Scientific interest. The bosses of TWMS and haulage companies were sentenced to up to 18 months in prison and ordered to carry out unpaid work for their offences.

Guilty plea for Brazil waste exporters

Three defendants have pleaded guilty to exporting approximately 750 tonnes of illegal waste to Brazil. Two other defendants have pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The gang is charged with illegally exporting 89 containers of contaminated waste described as 'mixed plastics' to Brazil in 2009. The shipment was rejected by Brazilian Authorities and returned to the UK. Exporting waste, such as plastics, for recycling to Brazil is legal, however, exporting waste is not. Andy Higham, Head of the EA's National Crime Team welcomed today's development saying: "The Environment Agency takes waste crime seriously and will pursue offenders through the courts.

"Illegal waste exports risk harm to human health and the environment in the country of export, it also undermines law-abiding recycling businesses back home. There is a legitimate export market for recyclable material, but those considering flouting the laws should know we will take vigorous action where there is evidence of waste being exported illegally." A trial date has been set for 29 October 2012.

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