

UK Forum for Environmental Industries

Leading the way in the Regions

by the **UK FORUM FOR ENVIRONMENTAL INDUSTRIES** (UKFEI)

Celebrating five years of close working partnerships, this year sees the UKFEI continue its valuable and rewarding work in the environmental goods and services (EGS) sector.

The UKFEI is a well-established forum for all the Regional Development Agencies in England, together with the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to exchange best practice in the environmental technologies and services sector. Over the years, partner organisations have played a key role in the development of the UKFEI, such as the DTI's Environmental Industries team, the Environmental Industries Sector Unit at UK Trade & Investment and more recently, the Integrated Pollution Management Knowledge Transfer Network (IPM-Net) and the Water and Wastewater Team, also part of UK Trade & Investment.

The UKFEI also promotes UK expertise, new technological developments and innovation within the global marketplace. Working to increase the knowledge base of the industry, and to encourage the exchange of best practice, which is vital to the development of the industry, the Forum facilitates a number of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) covering areas such as international trade and skills that are ongoing, and sustainable procurement and mapping which have now reported back.

The UKFEI provides a range of services for its members, partners and to the industry itself, via its network of specialists and support organisations.

The UK Market

The UK environmental industry has been developing at an increasingly rapid pace over the past ten years. It now employs over 400,000 people with an estimated annual turnover of over £25bn – this has risen from an estimated £16bn just two years ago, illustrating the nature of this growth. Projections suggest that the market will grow to £34bn in 2010 and on to £46bn by 2015. Employment will grow by at least 100,000 over the same period. The UKFEI through its extensive network of members and partners is well placed to provide specialist advice on the industry and on regional developments.

Over the last 12 months, the media has made the job of the UKFEI that little bit easier by raising awareness amongst businesses and the public of the imminent issues the world faces such as climate change and the need for greater resource efficiency. Global firsts,

instigated by the UK Government, such as the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change, the draft Climate Change Bill currently under consultation, and the formation of the Commission on Environmental Markets and Economic Performance (CEMEP) have been widely covered. The announcements by many major corporate organisations such as Marks & Spencer and Tesco to green their products and supply chains, has also given the industry the boost it has been looking for to really get to the forefront of everyone's business agenda.

Sector Growth and Development

With climate change and the EGS sector firmly at the top of the agenda, it is clear that legislation is no longer the only thing building up the market. It could even be argued that the rapidly developing supply chain, the action by large organisations and the well-established regional co-operation in spreading best practice, has led to more development of the industry in the last year, than legislation.

Two key bodies set up by the Government are leading the way for the UK EGS sector in the global marketplace. The Environmental Innovations Advisory Group (EIAG) was set up to identify practical measures to bring about change and the Environmental Sector Advisory Group (ESAG) was established with UK Trade & Investment to assist in developing strategies to target the highest growth overseas markets.

The UKFEI is continuing to support measures to tackle barriers to market, lay the foundations to increasing innovation and to address any remaining weaknesses within the sector. It is also working to spread the word on the UK's competitiveness, as identified by ESAG's report launched in March 2007. This examined the areas in which the UK leads the field – such as better regulation, strong supply chains, transforming scientific excellence into commercial success and heading up global financial services in sustainable issues. Once the Commission on Environmental Management & Economic Performance (CEMEP) publishes its report, the UKFEI will assist wherever possible in taking forward its recommendations.

UKFEI Successes

There are numerous examples of UKFEI successes over the years it has been operating. In 2006, inter-regional

collaboration in mapping the environmental industry between the Northwest, North East and Wales together with central government, led to the revised definitions for the sub-sectors. It also developed a mapping guide that should ensure more robust, consistent and comparable market intelligence across the UK. The development of supply-chain directories and clusters in the water and other sub-sectors is spreading across the UK through the exchange of information in the way in which data is gathered. This co-operation has ensured that regional information is comparable and presentable as a whole if required.

A reception in the House of Commons in late 2006 raised the profile of the UKFEI amongst the industry, ministers and peers, and illustrated the strength of the sector across the UK. This was only possible through the close co-ordination of activities amongst all the regions and devolved administrations.

Perhaps the most enduring example of the UKFEI's legacy is the joint promotion of capabilities in the International Showcase, taking part during the ET/Sustainabilitylive! Exhibitions over the last three years. Such inter-regional working is facilitated by the International Trade SIG and is unique to the sector.

Contact the UKFEI:

- For regional and national contact points and specialists;
- For information and good practice examples from the UK;
- For networking opportunities and knowledge sharing;
- For market intelligence on environmental technologies and services;
- To discuss business development opportunities in the UK or worldwide.

Visit the UKFEI website: www.ukfei.co.uk or email info@ukfei.co.uk

