

HALF OF CONSTRUCTION BUSINESSES STILL UNAWARE THAT SWMPs ARE LAW

11 November 2008: More than six months on from Site Waste Management Plans (SWMPs) becoming a legal requirement, a survey conducted by NetRegs.gov.uk and the Federation of Master Builders has shown that more than half (51.2 per cent) of construction businesses are still unaware that SWMPs are mandatory for projects over £300,000 in England.

In response, NetRegs has launched a campaign to help businesses and individuals to understand their obligations under the new law. The campaign includes special emails featuring a video case study as well as top tips and user-friendly in-depth information. The free email alerts for construction businesses can be subscribed to by visiting www.netregs.gov.uk and clicking on to the 'Site Waste – It's Criminal' logo. Businesses in the construction industry already using the government-backed service are saving at least £2,637 a year¹.

During this time of economic uncertainty for the construction industry, positive statistics show that businesses are successfully using SWMPs to save money and even win new business. The NetRegs survey revealed that almost half (45 per cent) of those that have used SWMPs reported money savings for their business as a result of less wastage and more efficient handling of environmental requirements. In addition, a quarter (25 per cent) of those that had used SWMPs stated that using the plans had helped them to win new business. The statistics suggest that having environmental credentials could be the route for construction businesses to differentiate themselves from competitors and win new business in a shrinking market.

Overall, the research indicated a very positive trend of construction businesses improving their environmental credentials. The survey results show that 83 per cent

¹ Research conducted by Economics for the environment consultancy (eftec), March 2008.

of respondents have, in the last 12 months, looked at the way they work and have tried to find ways to reduce the amount of waste they produce. Two thirds of respondents have also changed the way that they work to prevent or reduce harm to the environment. As results show that environmental responsibility can result in business benefits, rather than increased costs, it is proving an increasingly important factor in businesses' thinking.

Richard Martin, Programme Manager at NetRegs comments: "Using SWMPs for all construction projects should be considered good industry practice, whether a project is above the £300,000 threshold or not. Our survey revealed that 52 per cent of respondents believed they did their best in terms of good environmental behaviour. This is a big improvement, and the construction industry must be applauded for its efforts, but the goal should be 100 per cent. Using SWMPs as a benchmark for this is a great way to ensure that all the right checks and balances are in place, to not only ensure legal compliance but, to help businesses add revenue to their balance sheets."

Peter O'Connell, Policy Manager at The Federation of Master Builders said: "Site waste is an important issue for all our members and the industry as a whole. The research we conducted with NetRegs highlighted some interesting issues and we welcome NetRegs' work to raise awareness and provide guidance to our sector."

NetRegs also offers a free, simple guide to SWMPs, which has already been downloaded by more than 29,000 website visitors.

For further information about Site Waste Management Plans or to download the guide, visit www.netregs.gov.uk.

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About NetRegs:

- NetRegs - www.netregs.gov.uk - is a joint initiative between the Environment Agency in England and Wales (EA and EAW), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).
- NetRegs was launched in 2004 to provide SMEs with guidance on complying with environmental legislation.

- The website currently offers specific guidelines for the great majority of industry sectors in the UK.
- NetRegs provides free guidance to SMEs in the UK, which is available without the need to register.
- The NetRegs survey was undertaken 1st and 6th October 2008. The survey was conducted through the Federation of Master Builders and comprised 930 respondents.

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