

## **Introduction**

"Legislation" can be a dirty word but not as dirty as some of the waste produced by industry that can be harmful to our air, water, soil and health. Companies are required to comply with environmental legislation by law and penalties for failing to do so can be very serious, including prison sentences and closure of your business. There are a myriad of requirements and standards that must be complied with and this can be rather daunting, especially for SMEs. This data sheet is designed to help identify legislation and regulations and the list is rather extensive.

There is a positive spin that can be put on all this red tape. Good environmental performance can enhance profits as well as the reputation and standing of the company in the market place. In doing so it can provide competitive advantage which can be a useful marketing tool, as it can be difficult to design or produce product differentiation in a crowded business sector or market segment. Over half of the top 250 UK companies now report their environmental performance as it can influence investment and investor confidence. From April 2006 all companies listed on the stock market were required to disclose any important environmental issues that affect their business performance in their annual report. This page from Business Link illustrates why it makes economic sense to comply with environmental law: <http://tinyurl.com/6cngn8>.

## **Assistance for Small Businesses**

Obviously the vast majority of businesses are not listed on the stock exchange although their profits can benefit in the same way. Environmental legislation can be daunting, especially when they do not have the same capacity as larger organisations to keep on top of the latest regulations that can appear all too onerous. Envirowise have a very good introduction to help the smaller business: <http://tinyurl.com/6256ar>.

## **How and Why the Government Regulates British Business**

This link explains how the Environment Agency works with businesses to improve the environment and covers European Directives, Permits and Licences, Compliance, Enforcement and Prosecution, and Methods of Regulation: <http://tinyurl.com/6pn3dz>.

## **Importance of Environmental Issues to Your Business**

This website from Business Link offers practical advice: <http://tinyurl.com/6k5odk>.

## **Find out What Legislation Applies to Businesses in England on the Natregs Website**

Natregs is a website produced by UK environment agencies and covers air, chemical, conservation, energy, land, noise and statutory nuisance, plant protection, environmental permitting, radioactive substances, waste and water legislation: <http://tinyurl.com/63lfjo>.

## **Envirowise - Government Funded Programme that Offers Free Advice to UK Businesses**

Envirowise's aim is to increase profitability of businesses and reduce their environmental impact. This link deals with environmental legislation and although it includes some of the above topics it also looks at packaging, solvents, waste and hazardous waste, including WEEE and RoHS regulations. WEEE stands for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment and places responsibility on producers and distributors to reduce landfill. RoHS stands for Restriction of Hazardous Substances and is designed to reduce

hazardous substances in electric and electronic equipment to make recycling easier: <http://tinyurl.com/6ejz7o>.

## Climate Change Levy (CCL)

This is a tax on energy used by industry, commerce and the public sector and is intended to provide an incentive to increase energy efficiency and thus reduce carbon emissions. Ironically it was introduced on April 1st 2001 and was forecast to reduce emissions by 2.5 million tonnes of carbon by 2010. Crucially electricity generated from renewables and approved cogeneration schemes is not taxed, which is reason enough to switch to a truly 'green' electricity tariff. Please see Vision 21 business information sheet: *Energy Supplies*. Vision 21 have also made it easy to switch by simply clicking a mouse:

<http://www.vision21.org.uk/index.asp?page=goodenergy>

<http://www.vision21.org.uk/index.asp?page=ecotricity>

Climate Change Agreements allow energy-intensive business users to receive an 80% discount from the Climate Change Levy providing they meet energy efficiency or carbon savings targets. For more information from DEFRA please see:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/uk/business/ccl/index.htm>.

## EU Emissions Trading Scheme

The EU ETS came into force on 1 January 2005 and is intended to allow member states to meet the reduction targets required by the Kyoto Protocol. It was established by Directive 2003/87/EC and is a 'mandatory cap-and trade' scheme for greenhouse gas (GHG) emission allowance trading. GHG emissions verification is vital for this scheme to be workable and transparent. The BSi Group offers a comprehensive verification service <http://tinyurl.com/6qjd9y>.

## ISO 14001

ISO 14000 is a series of international standards on environmental management and came about following the Rio Earth Summit. ISO 14001 is the most important part of the ISO 14000 series and was first published in 1996. It applies to the environmental aspects that an organisation has control over. Although the standard might be more associated with larger companies it will enhance any company's reputation and can increase access to new customers, potentially reduce public liability insurance costs and lead to overall cost savings. For more details: <http://tinyurl.com/2586wy>.

## Further Assistance

There is a great deal of support available (especially to the SME) in Gloucestershire regarding environmental legislation. Organisations include: The Green Business Club, Gloucestershire Environmental Business Forum and Horizon South West, the regional environmental business support organisation for the South West. Alex Steele from the University of Gloucestershire is Director of the former and latter and Chair of the Forum. For more details, please see: <http://www.glos.ac.uk/>.