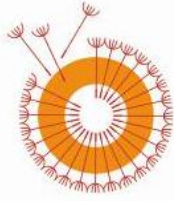


Business in the

Community



THE PRINCE'S
MAYDAY
NETWORK

CLASP. CLIMATE CHANGE
LOCAL
AREA
SUPPORT
PROGRAMME

The Prince's Mayday Network in Warrington

Business engagement on climate change



Contents

1. Introduction	3
2 Description of the programme	3
2.1 Purpose.....	3
2.2 Roles	3
2.3 Co-ordination	3
2.4 Delivery and evaluation	3
2.5 Target Audience	4
2.6 Project objectives	4
3 The engagement programme	5
3.1 Opening Doors Event – the Green Warehouse, hosted by Crown Paints	5
3.2 Resource Efficiency Masterclass – the Green Office, hosted by MWH.....	5
3.3 Sustainable Travel Masterclass – Green Travel Planning, hosted by Morris & Spottiswood ..	5
3.4 Business Resilience Masterclass – hosted by G&J Greenalls.....	6
3.5 Other aspects of the engagement programme.....	7
3.5.1 Engagement through Birchwood Forum	7
3.5.2 Engagement through Birchwood Park.....	7
3.5.3 Promotion of the project.....	7
3.5.4 online networking	7
4 Outputs and outcomes.....	8
4.1 Number of businesses/individuals engaged	8
4.2 Feedback from events	8
4.3 Companies joining the Mayday Network	8
5 Long term impact and follow up	9
6 Lessons learnt.....	9
7 Conclusions and recommendations	11

Local Business Engagement on Climate Change

The Prince's Mayday Network in Warrington

1. Introduction

This project supported collaborative business engagement in Warrington, run by Warrington Borough Council (WBC) and Business in the Community (BITC), working in partnership with Cheshire and Warrington Economic Commission (CWEC) and Birchwood Forum.

The project provided four engagement events in Warrington, open to businesses of all sizes and with a focus on Transport and Logistics and the Birchwood area.

2 Description of the programme

2.1 Purpose

The project idea was developed before the National Indicators were withdrawn and was intended to engage with the business sector of the community to support the achievement of NI 186 (per capita emissions in a LA area). In addition, WBC developed its climate change strategy in 2007, with a target of reducing its community emissions by 20% of 2006 levels by 2020. A revised target of 40% by 2030 (from 1990 levels) was agreed in WBC's Sustainable communities strategy in 2009. Neither the climate change team nor the council's project delivery team had the capacity to engage with businesses themselves so sought to develop a partnership approach and felt that working with BITC would be a good option.

The main purpose of the project was to engage businesses on the climate change agenda, with a secondary purpose to develop a best practice network in Birchwood and engage specifically with the Transport and Logistics Sector.

The project focused on key issues for businesses: resource efficiency, the sustainable warehouse, sustainable travel and business resilience and a combination of Masterclasses and Opening Doors events were held, one on each topic. The events were hosted by key businesses in Warrington and used their knowledge, expertise and experience as the basis for peer learning with other businesses.

2.2 Roles

Lead Partner: Warrington Borough Council

Other partners: CWEC, BITC, Birchwood Forum, Birchwood Park, Groundwork Cheshire

2.3 Co-ordination

Business engagement was co-ordinated by BITC with support from the other partners.

2.4 Delivery and evaluation

The project worked on the assumption that peer learning is the most effective method of business engagement and each event was hosted by a business who gave the keynote presentation. Other partners were brought in to add their expertise, including Groundwork Cheshire, the National Business Travel Network and the Highways Agency.

After each event delegates were asked to give feedback on how useful the event was and this was analysed to inform future planning.

2.5 Target Audience

The main target audience was businesses in Warrington. While we were interested in working with businesses in Birchwood invitations were open to all businesses in the borough and extended more widely to Cheshire and through partners networks.

2.6 Project objectives

- Engage 50 businesses on key issues
- Provide networking and shared learning opportunities
- Profile the achievements of businesses in Warrington
- Develop good working relationships between the project partners
- Embed thinking and action on climate change/sustainable business within other partners' activities
- Develop a focused approach to engaging businesses in a geographical location and a key sector

3 The engagement programme

3.1 Opening Doors Event – the Green Warehouse, hosted by Crown Paints

This event was attended by 14 people. The aim of these events is for the host organisation to share their experiences of tackling a key aspect of environmental management and then show delegates around their premises to see this in action. Numbers were kept small so that there was plenty of opportunity for interaction.

The event featured three short presentations:

- An overview of Crown Paints' operations
- An insight into Crown Paints' sustainability activities
- A summary of how Crown Paints' transport contractor is tackling sustainability and supporting Crown to achieve their sustainability goals

The event finished with a tour of the warehouse that brought Crown's achievements in housekeeping, maintenance, warehousing processes and recycling to life. A particularly innovative aspect of Crown's work was the 'Canback' Scheme, through which empty paint containers, brought back to Crown Decorating Centres by Trade Customers, are returned for reprocessing and converted into items such as park benches, sundry products and new paint containers.

3.2 Resource Efficiency Masterclass – the Green Office, hosted by MWH

This event was attended by 21 people. The aim of the event was to help people to understand the practical steps that could be taken in order to save money and resources in the office. The masterclass provided an interactive forum with presentations, action planning and group discussions.

The presentations covered:

- An overview of MWH's environmental management practices
- An introduction to Resource Efficiency from Groundwork Cheshire

These were followed by an action planning session where delegates were given the opportunity to discuss in small groups and work through an action planning template.

3.3 Sustainable Travel Masterclass – Green Travel Planning, hosted by Morris & Spottiswood

This event was attended by 24 people. The aim of the event was to provide an introduction to travel planning, outline the Local Authority travel planning process and to give people the opportunity for a guided session to begin looking at how to put a travel plan together.

The event featured three presentations:

- An overview of Morris & Spottiswood's travel management activities, the successes achieved and the challenges overcome
- An introduction to the impact of business travel with examples of organisations that have taken steps to address travel and their achievements in terms of cost savings, improved employee morale, etc
- An overview of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) process in Warrington and the Local Travel Plan for Birchwood

This was followed by a short session in groups where people were encouraged to think about the benefits of creating a travel plan and what they would do back at work to start putting a travel plan into place.

3.4 Business Resilience Masterclass – hosted by G&J Greenalls

This event showcased how G&J Greenalls responded to a major fire that occurred at their premises and the lessons learnt about planning for disaster recovery. The event also covered the principles of lean manufacturing and tips for keeping moving in bad weather.

The event had three presentations:

- An introduction to disaster recovery planning
- An overview of lean manufacturing and how this can be applied in any business
- Hints and tips to keep moving in bad weather

The event finished with a tour of the distillery.

3.5 Other aspects of the engagement programme

3.5.1 Engagement through Birchwood Forum

During the project BITC worked closely with Birchwood forum, attending forum meetings and presenting about the project at two meetings.

3.5.2 Engagement through Birchwood Park

BITC attended a Birchwood Park event to encourage people to get involved with the Travel to Work Scheme.

3.5.3 Promotion of the project

The project was promoted widely through the partners and their networks. All events were circulated through the databases of BITC, Birchwood Forum, WBC and CWEC. They were also promoted on websites and through newsletters.

In addition, the climate change team at WBC were working on a low carbon community's project which enabled a mail shot to be done to all the businesses in this area.

3.5.4 online networking

The project aimed to set up online networking forums using LinkedIn. While these were set up and promoted to people who had been involved in the programme we did not get any participation.

4 Outputs and outcomes

4.1 Number of businesses/individuals engaged

Over the duration of the programme, 50 organisations and 68 individuals participated in the events that were run.

4.2 Feedback from events

All of the events received extremely positive feedback. This is summarised below:

Feedback category	Classification	Response
Rating of the overall event	Excellent/very good	85%
The event was enjoyable	Strongly agree/agree	90%
The speakers were relevant and interesting	Strongly agree/agree	100%
I feel inspired by the event	Strongly agree/agree	75%
I have a better understanding of how the issues can be embedded into my organisations	Strongly agree/agree	65%
The event was relevant to my job/needs	Strongly agree/agree	86%
I have practical actions that my organisation can take away from this event	Strongly agree/agree	88%
I would recommend these events to colleagues	Strongly agree/agree	97%

4.3 Companies joining the Mayday Network

Throughout the duration of the project 17 companies joined the Mayday Network from Warrington and an additional 10 organisations joined from elsewhere in Cheshire.

5 Long term impact and follow up

The project has enabled relationships to be built between key partners in Warrington and these continue now that the project is completed. The relationship between BITC and Birchwood Forum is now well established and the two partners are looking at ways to continue to embed climate change and sustainable business in the Birchwood area.

BITC has continued to follow up with organisations that participated in the projects and is including them in invitations to further events, encouraging deeper participation in the Mayday Network, etc.

BITC will support those organisations in the Network through the Mayday journey and will encourage them to report their progress on an annual basis.

6 Lessons learnt

The project has successfully engaged with 50 business and developed a number of new and successful partnership working links. Along the way a number of lessons have been learnt that will enable us and others to refine a business engagement model.

- The General Election period meant that the start of the project had to be delayed significantly and did not start properly until July as no promotion could take place before purdah had ended. This was an unusual situation due to the nature of the 2010 election and the protracted Purdah period due to the formation of the Coalition Government.
Lessons learnt: planning the timing of a project is crucial, but sometimes plans have to change due to factors outside of your control so it is important to be flexible.
- The re-organisation and budget cuts at the local authority came at a bad time for the project and subsequently meant that we have had to delay the project on a number of occasions. The re-organisation also meant that the Officer from the Business Engagement Team who had championed the project left the council and the project then moved to within the climate change team. The reduction in resources and move in departments made it more difficult to engage businesses and to get involved in other business engagement activities. For example, a large business conference was run by the Local Authority and the project was not part of this and therefore unable to use this platform to engage more businesses.
Lessons learnt: It is difficult to implement a collaborative project during times of significant change. While the project has adapted to the new circumstances a number of lessons have been learnt. It is helpful if there can be consistent project sponsorship within the Local Authority and in this case it would be have been really beneficial if this could have been within the business engagement team or jointly between the business engagement and climate change teams.
- The project took longer to implement than we anticipated. This was in part due to the factors outlined above. In addition we had some delays due to event hosts having to reschedule the dates.
Lessons learnt: the project was initially planned to last for 6 months but took a year to fully implement. Developing a project of this nature is all about effective partnership working and developing good relationships with local stakeholders. This meant that it was important to allow enough time for those relationships to develop and also that plans had to change to meet with changing business demands, etc.
- The difficult economic climate that we are currently experiencing means that the environment is not necessarily a priority for businesses, especially SMEs.

Lessons learnt: it is vital to make sure that the topics selected for events and the messages used are both appealing and demonstrate ways to add real value for businesses who attend. Promotion needs to be widespread and thorough in order to get the messages out.

- Some of the ad hoc things that were done along the way proved to be valuable, for example participating in the event at Birchwood Park.
Lessons learnt: keeping alert for additional opportunities that can add value to the project can help to embed the messages and extend the reach and impact of activities.
- The Prince's Mayday Network is a great way for businesses to be inspired and learn. Providing opportunities for peer learning and finding businesses to host events and share their knowledge and experience is valuable to other businesses. Providing the opportunity for networking is also valued by delegates.
Lessons learnt: where possible secure businesses to host and speak at events. The opportunity to have a tour of a facility and see the practical actions in place can really bring things alive. Building in opportunities for networking is an important part of any event.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

Applying a partnership approach to business engagement is the most effective way to maximise the reach and impact of a project. Peer learning is valued amongst businesses, both from those who want to share the knowledge and profile the achievements and from those who want to learn how they can successfully achieve similar results in their own organisations. Positioning climate change and environmental sustainability in difficult economic times is tricky and it is often the opportunity to hear from and meet with peers that will encourage people to participate. Networking opportunities are still seen as valuable in themselves.

While this project met many of its objectives there is still room for improvement. If other local authorities would be interested in developing a similar business engagement programme these are our recommendations:

- It is important that there is a strong champion within the Local Authority, ideally jointly held between the business engagement and climate change functions.
- The process of developing effective partnerships and building the social infrastructure takes time and there should be a commitment of at least one year to begin embedding the systems in the local area.
- There are some issues that are important to businesses and it is important to focus on those that are relevant, useful and of mutual benefit to meet business and Local Authority needs.
- Securing buy in from businesses to host and speak at workshops enables a strong element of peer learning and useful networking. Having an opportunity to see firsthand how practical actions have been embedded in the organisation can really bring ideas to life and help people to see how they could replicate them back at work.
- Implementing an effective process of follow up is important. It is difficult to find a balance between being obtrusive and not supportive enough. However, it is important to remember that not all businesses will want follow up support.
- Perseverance is key. It is a determined process employing a variety of activities and engagement opportunities that will facilitate the development of an effective business support network.

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