



ISO 14001 – Environmental Management Systems

CASE STUDY SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Summary

Needs

- Improve environmental awareness and performance
- Ensure ongoing legal compliance
- Demonstrate community leadership
- Encourage corporate buy-in

Benefits

- Ability to demonstrate legal compliance
- Improved image and reputation
- Reduced energy consumption
- Increased recycling
- Cost savings and continual improvement

Background

Suffolk County Council has a history of putting environmental performance at the top of its agenda. Having achieved certification to the environmental management system, ISO 14001, in 2002 for its environment and transport division, the decision was then made to roll out the system across the whole organisation, resulting in corporate certification in December 2005.

The scope of Suffolk County Council's management system now covers the entire authority apart from schools which are managed by individual governing bodies. However, support services to schools are included within the scope such as property, catering and cleaning services.



In 2008 Suffolk published its community strategy, 'Transforming Suffolk', to set the vision for the next 20 years. One of the four priorities of that strategy is to 'create Suffolk as the greenest county'. The County Council has recently agreed its new vision called the Suffolk Story with six key priorities. One of these priorities includes the Council's commitment to 'creating the greenest county'. The actions behind this commitment are detailed in the Council's recently published Environment Action Plan for 2009-2011 (available online at www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/EnvironmentalManagement).

ISO 14001 is an internationally accepted standard that defines the specification for an effective environmental management system. Suffolk County Council recognised that ISO 14001 would provide a valuable framework within which to achieve environmental improvements. The standard is designed to address the delicate balance between making efficiency savings and reducing environmental impact.

Customer Needs

Emma Flint, Environment Strategy Manager for Suffolk County Council explains that, "As part of an ongoing commitment to the environment and in keeping with the objectives detailed in the Suffolk Story, the Council continues to implement ISO 14001 to improve environmental performance, ensure legal compliance and demonstrate community leadership". The recognised and respected ISO 14001 framework enables the Council to speak with authority to businesses and key stakeholders that it wishes to influence. The standard also proves that the Council is operating to best practice.

Benefits

ISO 14001 offered Suffolk County Council a framework within which it could operate to high environmental standards and improve financial efficiency. A wide spectrum of issues were considered within this framework including energy efficiency which resulted in the setting up of an energy fund to implement 'invest to save' measures across the Council.

ISO 14001 also helped the Council ensure that legislative compliance was externally verified and new legislation flagged up in advance. Processes were refined and adapted to ensure ongoing compliance.

The Council has been pleased with the high level of corporate buy-in to improving environmental performance. As a result improvements continue to be seen across the Council and wider community.

Emma Flint explains that the management system has been positively received by the Council and that environmental champions across the authority have been able to get involved to develop drive the system forward. Environmental champions are now recognised on an annual basis with the introduction of the Council's 'Green Heroes' scheme.

Continual improvements have resulted from the implementation of ISO 14001 including; the installation of 17 wood chip boilers across the Council's estate - which reduce carbon dioxide emissions, reduced wattage in street lighting and the setting up of the Green Suffolk Fund to help communities in Suffolk cut their carbon emissions. The Council has also gained certification to the Carbon Trust standard in the last year.

Emma Flint explains that, "Implementing ISO 14001 has enabled us to focus on the key environmental issues of our organisation. Now

we understand these issues better, we can implement effective initiatives to improve our environmental performance."

BSI's Role

Suffolk County Council chose to work with BSI so it would be aligned with a credible and recognised business partner. BSI also demonstrated best value for money through the tender process. Suffolk County Council used BSI for its lead auditor training to learn how to plan, conduct and lead effective audits and self-assessments internally.

Councillor Paul West, portfolio holder for 'creating the greenest county', explains, "The County Council is playing a key role driving forward Suffolk's ambition to 'create the greenest county' and continues to implement ISO14001 to demonstrate this commitment to others. BSI has continued to provide us with a valuable external auditing service which has helped us to continually strive to reduce our environmental impact across our services".

BSI

Beech House,
Breckland,
Linford Wood,
Milton Keynes,
MK14 6ES
United Kingdom
T: +44 (0)845 080 9000
F: +44 (0)1908 228 180
E: certification.sales@bsigroup.com
www.bsigroup.co.uk/improve