

South Devon College Learning & Skills

South West Energy Centre,
providing training & support for a
bright future in the low carbon
sector.

About the project

Summary

South West Energy Centre (SWEC) is an award winning, unique facility providing advice, guidance and training to industry and consumers in all matters relating to the Low Carbon Sector. The Centre has developed a wide range of training courses and is a catalyst to drive demand from business and domestic customers to open up innovative and new market opportunities for renewable technologies and to stimulate sustainable growth.

Project partners

South Devon College is the lead delivery partner working with the Project Advisory Group. The project has been supported by many companies in the public and private sector such as Schneider, Worcester Bosch, Regen SW and many more.

The project has been funded by the Skills Funding Agency, European Regional Development Fund and the Regional Growth Fund including significant investment from South Devon College.

The results

The problem

The overarching challenge was to engage and inspire the local community and business to embrace a culture of change. The role of SWEC in the Project was to help manage and assist in this change by providing knowledge and skills that would stimulate sustainable growth.

SWEC is a dynamic partnership facilitated by South Devon College bringing together key public and private sector funding in a visionary project that sits in the heart of the Government's policies for the transition to the Green Economy. It is physical hub acting as a catalyst to drive demand from business and domestic customers to open up innovative, new market opportunities for renewable technologies and to stimulate sustainable growth.



Profile

South Devon College

- FE/HE/ Short Courses
- 12,000 students
- 650 staff
- Semi- rural

The approach

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This approach includes;

- Providing advice, guidance and support in sustainability and the Low Carbon sector.
- A series of drop in sessions at various locations, providing helpful advice and guidance to homeowners and tenants on reducing their energy bills.
- SWEC have specialist Business Mentors, Research & Development Facilities, Innovation Suites and business start-up support specifically for the Low Carbon Sector.
- A minimum of 12 hours support is offered to each business and a tailor-made plan is developed based upon the individual business needs.
- Offer a broad range of training courses, including full time EnviroSkills training, apprenticeships, short courses and bespoke training packages.

Our goals

- To work with over 200 SMEs to provide advice and guidance in relation to diversification into the Low Carbon Sector.
- To create a hub where consumers can visit and receive advice, education and get hands-on with the renewable technologies.
- Train the next generation of engineers through full time, part time and apprenticeship courses, equipping them with the skills required to work on the major projects planned over the next 10 years in the local area, such as Hinkley Point C, Smart Metering and various smaller renewable projects.
- Provide short courses and refresher training to individuals helping reduce unemployment in the area while meeting the skills shortage in the sector.

Performance and results

Case Study 1 – South West Energy Trust

Over 200 businesses have been supported to date. A good example of this is the South West Energy Trust. The 2 Directors of the Trust started out undertaking their training at South West Energy Centre to become Green Deal Advisors. Following this training they now operate out of the Innovation Suite in the Centre and run an extremely profitable business which has expanded considerably in the last 2 years and now employs five Green Deal Advisors and one Administrator.

Case Study 2 – Brixham Cricket Club

SWEC was asked to review energy consumption of Brixham Cricket Club, and establish if renewable energy would offset current consumption. SWEC carried out an investigation and provided a report to the club. The club commented: "*We were concerned that some 18% of our income was spent on utility. Thanks to the work of SWEC we can now identify where these costs fall and have been pointed in the direction of solutions. We have already cut our electricity bills by 25% by implementing recommended changes. We now hope in our business plan to address the key recommendations of the SWEC team in relation to gas, water and electricity usage.*"

-PHILIP GREGORY, Club Secretary.

Case Study 3 – Hamworthy Heating

Hamworthy Heating and SWEC agreed that it would be advantageous to work in partnership to further develop CPD and other commercial activities. The first Commercial Energy Saving CPD event was held on 4th March at SWEC and was well attended. The business commented: *"We were very impressed with the CPD that we held at SWEC. We worked in partnership with the Centre to promote the event and were delighted with the number and quality of attendees. Some of our customers from across Devon and Cornwall attended and we received really positive feedback."* Following the success of the CPD event it is planned to explore future opportunities to continue to develop a robust and mutually beneficial partnership.

- JULIE SHAW, Hamworthy Heating Ltd.

The future

Lessons learned

It was important to remember the changes in the world between the writing of the bid and the commencement of the project (not just global recession but also the government shift on Green Deal). The lesson here was that a reappraisal needed to have taken place, before the project actually started to reconsider wherever the original plan, targets and objectives were still appropriate and viable.

Recruiting the “Right” Team

The recruitment of the best possible team, in terms of the appropriate mixture of technical and generic business support skills was absolutely central to the delivery of the project's goals.

Establishing the Credibility of the Business Support offer

The successful development of the SWEC business support “offer” to a point where it had become a replicable model that others, locally and nationally, were looking to learn from and imitate was a further key achievement.

Tailoring SWEC Support to Meet Individuals and Business Needs

Focusing and tailoring the support, advice and workshops provided by SWEC onto the individual needs of enquirers was highlighted as a further key success: enabling the team to provide much better support and adapt our training offer to meet the needs of local employers. The development of both full-time qualifications at Levels 1 and 3 by SWEC, that have enhanced the available curriculum and RE apprenticeship opportunities were further significant benefits resulting from SWEC.

Sharing your project

The project has been communicated widely through our relevant stakeholder communities, business engagement, social media, and events. Community engagement has been vital to the success of this project and in increasing the awareness of the Renewables and Low Carbon agendas. Raising and prioritising the activities and being able to create a sustainable activity has resulted in real and measurable impact for the community.

Sharing the progress of the Project has allowed us to further develop and implement plans that measure the on-going impact. Celebrating success has also allowed us to maintain key relationships with both the community and employers.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

We are delighted to be a finalist for this prestigious award, which is a direct result of the hard work and dedication of all at South West Energy Centre. Our launch and continuing management of the project has seen it go from strength to strength, in a way which benefits both our students and the local community.

Further information

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