



Kirklees Metropolitan Council — Case Study

Environmental Cascade Officers (ECOs)

Summary

Kirklees has created a network of officers to disseminate environmental information and improvement. Known as Environmental Cascade Officers or ECOs, these form a network stretching across the authority. The network was started in 1998, has grown organically over the years and now has 310 members.

The Environmental Cascade Officer Network was developed as a two-way communication mechanism to transfer environmental information between the environmental management team and the under work force. This mechanism is a cost-effective method of raising general environmental awareness to a potential of 19,500 staff. It avoids down-time of personnel being sent on training courses and avoids all 27 services duplicating work on raising environmental awareness.

So far, the ECO network has been used to deliver environmental awareness to other staff, distribute information on good environmental housekeeping measures, disseminate information on new environmental initiatives etc..

Roles & Responsibilities

ECOs have also been given the responsibility to make all staff aware of EMAS issues. In particular ECOs are responsible for:

- ◆ Disseminating the KMC Environment Policy and EMAS procedures
- ◆ Disseminating information on environmental impacts

- ◆ Disseminating good practice information on how to improve environmental performance and encouraging colleagues to do so.
- ◆ Supporting EMAS Officers in their environmental management activities.
- ◆ Raise awareness of 6 yearly environmental theme months.

Each Service has an EMAS officer who is responsible for maintaining the EMAS system. The ECOs act as a support mechanism to raise additional environmental awareness issues in a none hierarchical way.

Forming the Network

Recruitment to the ECO network has mainly been through a voluntary process. However, some larger services found it beneficial to identify an individual from each site, building, department, unit, office block etc. to cascade environmental information. Some of the authority's smaller sized services found it more advantageous to identify an individual for their different staffing types, i.e. administrative support staff, officers, middle management etc to cascade the information.

Supporting the ECO Network

There is a section on the intranet for ECO's which includes a pack explaining their role, a PowerPoint presentation and a section for team meeting updates where we provide important information for them to communicate in their team meetings. EMAS is a standard agenda item at all team meetings in KMC.



Picture: Copy of ECO section on intranet

We used to hold an ECO forum for each of the theme months, but they were poorly attended so we decided to hold an annual ECO Event instead. The first ECO event was held November 2005. Over 130 ECOs and representatives from other Local Authorities interested in setting up an ECO network attended the event. The event was supported by Central Government and Steve Nolan from the ODPM (now know as DCLG) opened the event. There was a networking competition to get people talking to each other with a Fairtrade hamper for the winner.



Picture: Networking winner being presented fair trade hamper.

Theme Months

ECO's communicate environmental promotional materials produced by the EMAS team on 6 environmental theme months. The themes concentrate on generic environmental issues for the council, which are waste, purchasing, biodiversity, water, transport and energy.

Described below are examples of a purchasing and biodiversity theme month that we have promoted.

Purchasing Month

A competition was run as part of the EMAS *purchasing* theme month in which members of staff were asked to suggest a slogan to promote green purchasing in the Council. The winning member of staff received a prize of a mountain bike donated by the BIKE SHED in Scissett.

The winning slogan was:

'Business decisions shouldn't cost the earth.'

'Buying green products makes sense – business sense + common sense.'



Picture: Winner being presented bike from the Bike Shed

The runner up received a tent as we wanted to promote outdoor activities. All the prizes were awarded at the high profile KMC awards ceremony which was held to celebrate the whole Council achieving EMAS



Picture: Runner up being presented with tent by Janet Russell Director of Environment and Transportation

A prize was also awarded to the best EMAS Lead Officer and the best ECO Officer at the Award Ceremony as it is important to make sure that officers are given recognition for their hard work.



Picture: EMAS Lead Officer receiving award

Biodiversity Month

As part of EMAS biodiversity theme month the Environment Unit has developed an employee volunteering scheme. The scheme offered a year's free membership to the RSPB if volunteers contribute at least two half days practical help on biodiversity projects in the Kirklees district.



Picture: volunteers removing reedbeds

Theme months try to make environmental issues more fun and by running competitions and giving out environmental freebies help get people more involved and thinking about the environment.

Environmental Bulletin Boards

Each officer has been issued with an environmental notice board just like the traditional health and safety notice boards. ECOs use the notice boards to



Picture: Highways staff promoting Transport Month with bags with the wording "car share, bus, cycle, train and walk"

put up posters, the authorities environment policy and the ECO Bulletins etc. for all staff to see.

Acting as an ECO is considered to be a desirable role and filling the post with good quality and motivated staff is not a problem. It is up to the individual how much time they want to spend on their role as an ECO. As environmental concern is high within the authority there is no shortage of committed volunteers who are prepared to help wherever they can.

Co-ordination of the ECO Network

The KMC ECO network requires little co-ordination. The Environment Unit who manage the ECO network devote about 17 work days per year to ECOs.

This is approximately broken down into:

- 2 days for ECO Event preparation
- 1 days for ECO Event delivery
- 2 days per ECO Theme Month

development dissemination
 2 days for ECO Network administration (updating database, team meeting update section on intranet and forwarding important information via email to ECOs)

Financing of the ECO Network is provided through the Environment Unit's budget. Delivery costs have decreased over the years due to more information being displayed on the intranet and sent via email.

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| 2002/03 | £3973 |
| 2003/04 | £2111 |
| 2004/05 | £971 |

The ECO network in KMC has been and will continue to be a valuable source of promoting environmental issues. We are continuously advertising for new members and are encouraging other local authorities to set up similar networks with a long term aim of ECOs networking and sharing ideas with ECOs from other authorities.



For more information on coordinating an ECO network and delivery of theme month please contact Adele Wiseman on 01484 223565 or via email adele.wiseman@kirklees.gov.uk.