

Macroom Small Business Case Studies



Macroom EcoBusiness Award

The Macroom EcoBusiness Award was set up as pilot programme with the aim of extending such an award scheme for Small and Medium Enterprises across the country.

SMEs are thought to have a substantial collective impact on the environment. However, in terms of environmental issues they tend to lag behind their larger counterparts in terms of environmental activeness and performance. Therefore they often require direct assistance to improve this area of their business operations and a goal of this programme was to provide such direct help. Macroom town and hinterland, was chosen due to its

typical nature of the small provincial Irish town. In such towns the majority of businesses are small or micro enterprises with employees of less than 20 people.

The Macroom area has a tradition of good environmental practice and with the assistance of Macroom E Eco Industrial Park, The Clean Technology Centre worked with over 20 businesses of varying size during the two year programme.

Environmental Management by Businesses prior to joining the programme

Waste Management

Waste management was, by and large, quite good from the outset. The presence of an excellent Civic Amenity Site has led to good source segregation by most of the small

businesses in the town who avail of this service.

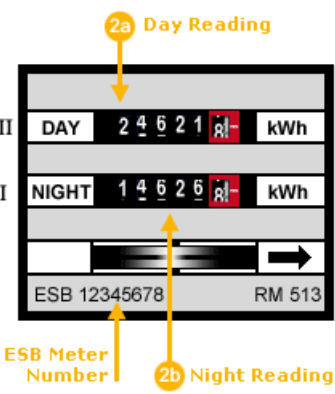
Water

Initially water was not perceived as an issue by the majority of businesses. However, with the introduction of water meters for all commercial businesses in the area during the time frame of this programme, water became a more notable concern.

Energy

Energy costs were the single largest concern of most participants. As the majority of micro businesses were either retail or office based there were a number of common areas for improvement. These tended to be lighting, computers, heating and to a lesser extent refrigeration.

TYPICAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ARISING

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|  <p>2a Day Reading</p> <p>RATE II DAY 2 4 6 2 1 kWh</p> <p>RATE I NIGHT 1 4 2 6 kWh</p> <p>ESB Meter Number 12345678</p> <p>2b Night Reading</p> | <h3>Electricity</h3> <p>Most businesses did not read their meters on a regular basis and their bills were mainly estimates. While businesses were aware of their electricity costs, there was little knowledge about how much electricity was being <i>used</i>. One of the first steps of the programme was to get businesses to read their meters on the first day of every month.</p> | <h3>Save Money on Electricity costs</h3> <p>Once a business knows how much electricity it is <i>actually</i> using, the next step is to find out where it is being used. This is not always as straight forward or obvious as first imagined. But once this is done, options to improve and save money for the business become apparent.</p> |
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Environmental Improvements Made

Its all about timing!

When this awards programme started it was based on the idea of annual certification. While this works well with larger businesses it was found to be less effective found when dealing with different types of micro businesses. There are numerous reasons for this. For example, these businesses can be busy at different times of the year, they worked on this programme at different paces and others didn't have the time to dedicate themselves to it when required. Most of the participants did what had to be done in the first year - that is starting to monitor their **actual** resource use and come up with ideas for improvement. For most, it was during the second year where they started to make actual changes to their businesses. Here are some small examples of the experiences of the Macrooom participants.

This small office is over heating!

One of the offices involved in the programme examined their electricity use thoroughly. They put in place a switch-off policy for their computers and upgraded their lighting. Even after this, the amount of electricity being used, especially during the summer, was quite high relative to their other office in Ballincollig. In addition, the offices were very hot and uncomfortable. They compared the two offices by benchmarking the amount of electricity used against the square area of each office. In the Macrooom offices it was found that the high electricity consumption was due to faulty storage heaters. After the first year they got these serviced in the hope that this would improve the situation. While there

was a small improvement the consumption was still too high. This year they are replacing these old storage heaters with more efficient ones.

A Gift shop sees the light!

A local gift shop, which had their recycling well in control, took part in this programme. After the onsite visit it was recommended that they consider changing their lighting. Much of the lighting used was tungsten halogen spot lights. These are common in retail but are inefficient and if installed in poorly ventilated places blow on a regular basis due to the heat they generate during all day use. After the initial review this shop started offering their customers the option of packing the delicate products (glass and ceramics) in reused packaging. This got very positive feedback from customers. More recently they have started changing their spot lights to more efficient fittings and are currently putting skylights into the darker areas of the shop to maximise the use of daylight.

Butcher cuts the fat off packaging

One of the main local butchers in Macrooom participated in the programme. Their main areas of environmental impact were cooling, lighting, water use and packaging materials. They had a very good maintenance system in place for the large refrigeration units. However, some of their smaller fridges were put on timers as well as improved covering on some of the larger open fridges improved their energy use. The use of LED lighting on their outside displays as well as CFLs inside also reduced energy consumption. Their largest success has been the use of returnable packaging. At a time when one-way packaging was becoming the norm for this industry they turned instead to reusable plastic crates which has reduced both their, and their customers, packaging handling costs.

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