Renewable Energy training and awareness to upskill businesses and the community

The Isle of Wight College

Project synopsis

The project demonstrated some key findings which have been used to improve course attendance and participation, and overall increase the number of contractors who are able to install renewable energy systems.

1) Initially, although employers were already aware of the need to train in renewables, they were hesitant to commit to training. In order to stimulate demand for training, awareness sessions and marketing were carried out which increased interest.
2) Employers and the community do not all recognise the need to install renewable energy systems – this is still a relatively new way of thinking for many.
3) With the forthcoming Green Deal this project has been extremely timely and well positioned to enable the college to meet future needs.
4) The project has successfully built capacity on the Isle of Wight to train contractors to install renewable energy systems, it has raised awareness within the community, it has upskilled the workforce.

Project aims

The project aims were as follows:

- To work with local employers, particularly through the Construction Training Group, to upskill local businesses and individuals to install and maintain renewable energy systems e.g. solar energy, rain/grey water harvesting, heat pumps, biomass boilers, solar electric/PV etc. enabling local people to develop systems within their own existing homes.
  Local employers, within the Construction Training Group, will be able to train so that some may then be able to deliver courses.
- To reduce the carbon footprint of the Island
- Local construction companies will be trained to promote and install renewable energy systems in their building projects, in place of traditional techniques, for both old and new stock. The Isle of Wight Construction Training group is a network of employers who meet regularly to discuss training and skills issues. Members include companies such as Barratts, C-Skills, the construction sector skills council, and Business Link, in addition to a large number of construction employers.
- By working closely with Barratts, local construction businesses, possible sub-contractors, will learn new techniques and skills – including biomass technology, heat pumps etc.
  There will be a greater awareness of the value of renewable energy systems on the Isle of Wight which will encourage home-owners to develop the systems on their properties.

The project was innovative due to the way the college worked, which was not normal practice for courses run in the FE sector:

- The approach taken by the college was completely collaborative with stakeholders involved from the start. All through the project stakeholders such as employers and the Isle of Wight council gave input and advice on the project aims.
- This is the first renewable energy training facility of its kind, not only on the Isle of Wight but in areas on the South Coast. It was therefore at the forefront of developments in training in this field.

Project delivery

Stakeholders including The IW Construction Training group, employers, Barratts Homes, The Isle of Wight Council, attended a steering group meeting in October 2010, organised by the college in order to launch this project. Stakeholders were involved at several points after that, throughout the project. The Isle of Wight Council Environmental officer particularly took a key role in an advisory capacity and presented developments to employers such as The Great Deal, and highlighted the importance of this training facility, particularly in the context of the Eco-Island Strategy and government agenda.

Employers were consulted throughout and engaged through marketing, group meetings, flyers, presentation, awareness raining sessions, etc.

The college ran a Renewable energy awareness session on Pan Estate, where the major Barratts development is taking place. A presentation was given to attendees regarding RE technologies and the government agenda. Barratts also gave a presentation on the importance of the technologies on their site.

The project aims were mostly achieved and through an innovative way of working. Courses were planned and delivered in consultation with key organisations, such as the Isle of Wight council, Barratts homes and other construction employers. Presentations and awareness raising have been used to engage the community. Courses developed were innovative and new to the Isle of Wight.

The involvement of stakeholders allowed this project to use innovation and engaged ways of thinking of a range of organisations. Despite involvement of employers and increasing their understanding of the way in which technology is progressing, there still remained an element of lethargy and unwillingness to accept that there was a requirement, with some employers. This was an innovative project and required some innovative thinking which came though from some stakeholders but less with others. We foresee that demand and recognition of importance will pick up over the coming months as the Green Deal emerges, but this project has enabled the college to be well-placed to deliver the required training and has up-skilled members of the workforce and community.

The low demand, however, would not have prevented the college from building capacity at this stage, as, it has enabled the college to partner in a Renewable Technology National Skills Academy application, but primarily to be prepared for the growing demand with the emerging government agenda. Courses are planned to run in September and October when it is envisaged there will be more interest.

Project outcomes

Equipment was purchased and installed for Rainwater Harvesting and Solar Thermal. The college began to establish its Renewable Energy Training Facility onsite. Qualified college staff were sent on BPEC accredited Train the Trainer courses for Heat Pumps, HETAS, Solar Thermal and PV and Biomass. All remaining training requirements were completed and staff

gained competence in delivery of training for Solar Thermal and PV, Heat Pumps, Biomass, Rainwater Harvesting.

A programme of heavily subsidised training courses were developed in consultation with the Isle of Wight Council, employers involved in the Construction Training Group, and Barratts Homes. Courses were marketed in various ways including local press (County Press), Eco magazines and brochures, Construction Training Group and other networks such as the Chamber of Commerce, Greentank network, Isle of Wight Council, flyers, etc. Courses were run in Spring.

The new facility and training courses were presented to the Isle of Wight Construction Training Group, to prepare them for the forthcoming programme of training that would be available. Biomass and Heat pump equipment is currently being installed and courses will be run in September 2011.

2 Renewable energy awareness sessions were run over the project time:

- A session took place at the IW Construction Training Group, which also included a presentation from the IW Council on the importance of this training, particularly taking account of emerging developments.
- The 2nd session took place in Spring 2011 at the Barratts office on Pan Estate, which also included a presentation from Barratt Homes on the importance of these technologies for their build.

The project therefore has had its intended impact on the college in terms of training facility and capacity building. It has put the college in a strong position to support the community regarding eco-skills and renewable energy. It has provided the only renewable energy training provision on the Island. The intended range of courses have been developed although some equipment is currently being installed.

More organisations have been trained in the installation of renewable systems, with growing demand, and higher numbers expected in the autumn. Therefore the project has had a positive impact on workforce skills and the ability of contractors to install systems.

By raising awareness and there raising demand, courses will be sustained in the future as the eco-agenda moves forward. The initial establishment of the renewable technology training facility, and the training of the tutors, has meant that courses can continue to be run in the future, without project funding.

By building the capacity of local companies, the Island can install and maintain more systems, without relying on mainland organisations, which would be more costly and time-consuming.

Sharing of project findings

Project outcomes will be disseminated through partner organisations and networks, such as the Construction Training Consortium, C-Skills and its wider national networks, Isle of Wight Council, Natural Enterprise, Chamber of Commerce, etc. Through links and involvement with other providers associated with the National Skills academy, the college can promote this project and its findings.