

Smart SME, Wiltshire Programme Highlights

The e-wiltshire Smart Business Initiative offered free business advice and grants to allow companies to develop their on-line presence.

Smart Business Initiative

The £398,000 scheme was managed by Wiltshire's County Council's economic regeneration team and delivered in association with Great Western Enterprise and Wessex Association of Chambers of Commerce. The South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) has invested more than £170,000 into the initiative, which focused on SMEs with up to 250 employees. The project focused on supporting businesses falling into three themes:

- Smart SME – support for small and medium sized businesses in their use and adoption of broadband and e-technologies
- Smart Procurement – support for businesses wishing to engage in public sector procurement
- Smart Tourism – support for tourism businesses to engage with e-marketing and use of the new destination management system

Smart SME

The Smart SME part of the project was run by GWE Business West Enterprise Services and included an offer of funding for websites, intensive assists with an IT advisor and a series of seminars providing information on:

- Effective website design and detailed marketing techniques to maximise visitor benefits
- E-commerce applications and e-security issues
- Guerilla marketing – opportunities available through social networking sites and email marketing

Business Support

The seminars were supplemented by intensive one-to-one business support sessions. These offered tailored advice on maximising the benefits to the business of the adoption of e-technologies to compliment broadband use. For example, e-marketing techniques or e-commerce deployment or integrated stock control.

Technology Vouchers

The Smart SME theme also supported the distribution of Technology Vouchers available to businesses wishing to move up the e-adoption ladder. Technology vouchers were up to 50% of the cost of the introduction of new technology and up to a maximum of £500 per stage that a company moves up the e-adoption ladder (e.g. a company moving up two stages during the course of the project would be eligible to receive up to £1000). The maximum value of technology vouchers that a single business could receive was capped at £2000.

Highlights

The Smart SME project proved so popular that it was extended twice. At the end of the three projects almost £110,000 had been allocated to Wiltshire based businesses to create or enhance their e-commerce. 216 companies had received intensive assistance from an ICT Advisor and 167 businesses had attended the e-commerce optimisation workshops.

Feedback from Workshops

- Very informative excellent presentation
- More detailed and helpful than expected, made me completely re-think e-marketing
- Very good range of topics
- Lots of good information about very current issues
- Some very useful information and insights
- Fascinating stuff, provided lots of thoughts
- Cleared up many questions

To register interest in mentoring please email juanita.mclaren-brown@gwebusinesswest.co.uk or call on 01225 338383.