



East Antrim employers excel in 'green' poll

TWO of East Antrim's largest employers have excelled in Northern Ireland's only survey benchmarking environmental business standards.

Larne Borough Council and Kilwaughter Chemical Company entered Quintile 1 in the Northern Ireland Network Environmental Benchmarking Survey.

A decade after hitting the green scene, the Survey, delivered by the ARENA Network and supported by the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, was launched in Belfast.

Minister for the Environment, Sammy Wilson MP, MLA, helped launch the survey at the Harbour Commissioners building, where representatives from dozens of local companies were recognised for environmental excellence.

Peter Dixon, Group Chief Executive, Phoenix Energy Holdings and Chair of the ARENA Network, the environmental arm of Business in the Community, was enthusiastic about the survey launch and reflected on the ten years ARENA had been reporting environmental results.

He said, "To mark the 10th year of the survey, we made it even tougher for participating companies.

"Changes included increased follow up checks, a renewed focus on companies' suppliers and new questions on legal compliance and climate change.

"Local organisations responded magnificently, with 128 taking part.

"91% of these now have an environmental management system in place, 50% of which are fully accredited, which contrasts with 15% when the ARENA Survey first began in 1998.

"This year's average environmental score of 63% across all companies is very commendable.

"Indeed, 57% of companies involved either maintained their quintile position on this year's survey, or improved it – despite the more difficult framework presented to them!

"It's an incredible achievement to see standards maintained in this way, in such a challenging business environment and clearly many of our companies are putting themselves in great positions to weather any future storms."

Eight local companies entered the new high-performance Platinum Quintile, with a further 24 companies entering at Quintile 1.

The local textiles and clothing sectors topped the poll in the sectoral examination, with an average score of 83%, followed by the financial sector, with a 75% score and the retail sector at 63%.

Dr Roy Ramsay, Acting Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency said, "The Northern Ireland Environment Agency is delighted to be involved once again in this important survey of business performance, both as a sponsor and as a participant.

"Smart businesses have again shown that by raising their environmental performance, they can improve their bottom line."

Roy Adair, Chief Executive of Belfast Harbour Commissioners, said: "With responsibility for Northern Ireland's busiest port and the region's largest logistics hub, Belfast Harbour Commissioners (BHC) is delighted to support the ARENA Survey.

"This year BHC became the first Harbour Authority in the world to achieve carbon neutral status, but we're aware that minimising the impact of our operations on the environment is a continuous process.

"The ARENA Survey is an excellent means of measuring progress

and highlighting those areas where further improvements can be made.

"I would encourage even more businesses to take part next year"

To download the 2008 Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey, click online at www.arenani.org.uk.

For more information on Business in the Community, visit our website "<http://www.bitcni.org.uk>" www.bitcni.org.uk