

Business & Jobs

Call the Lambeth Business Help Desk on 020 7926 3032

Blue Star House.



Energy audits send business carbon emissions crashing

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BUSINESSES in Brixton are being encouraged to help the environment while saving money by becoming part of the Brixton Low Carbon Zone.

This scheme helps local businesses to reduce their energy bills by making them more efficient. There are 700 buildings involved ranging from small units on the indoor market to large employers such as the Met Police.

Blue Star House, a ten-storey modern office building on Stockwell Road in Brixton is a keen supporter of the project and has recently had new energy efficient boilers fitted.

In September they were able to use 40 per

cent less gas than during the same period last year, making a saving of over £1,000. They hope to increase this amount before the turn of the year after making an investment in new energy saving technology.

As an associate of the Brixton Low Carbon Zone, Blue Star House have had access to a free on-line energy management tool called Smeasure which runs in partnership with Oxford University's Climate Change Institute.

This device has let them regularly monitor how much electricity and gas they are using, helping them to target areas of the building that are using too much energy.

Richard Baker, building manager at Blue Star House, said: "Through this and other energy schemes we have been able to dramatically reduce how much energy we use in the building.

"By working with our staff we have been able to find out where we overuse energy and have

been able to reduce it; the figures show that it has significantly reduced the amount we spend on energy."

The aim of the Brixton Low Carbon Zone is for the area to become a centre of excellence in energy saving by tackling carbon reduction to deal with climate change.

As well as the Smeasure technology, Brixton businesses can get a free energy audit that looks at ways they can save money while reducing energy and they can also get a grant of £500 to invest in energy efficient technologies.

Richard added: "I recommend that other businesses in Brixton should register an interest in this scheme as it helps saves energy and money while making you feel better about the world."

Grants are still available for local businesses and they should contact jkeates@lambeth.gov.uk or 0207 926 2702. Businesses across Lambeth can also receive a free environmental audit.

Lambeth telecoms company on a winning roll

A FORMER Lambeth Business Awards winner is continuing to pick up the plaudits after winning a top Confederation of British Industry award.

Local firm trueCall created an innovative device to put and end to a range of nuisance calls, including robocalls, fax calls, malicious calls and wrong numbers. The company, which secured £100,000 in funding from Peter Jones on the BBC's Dragons' Den programme, has now been awarded the Product of the Year prize at the Growing Business Awards.

Company director and co-inventor of the trueCall device Steve Smith said: "Winning the CBI award is a very public vote of confidence from some of the most respected names in UK business. We are currently negotiating a major worldwide distribution agreement with four of the biggest companies in the telephone market – an award like this strengthens our credibility and gives them confidence in us."

The company has been working with UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) to maximise its international trade. Steve said: "UKTI have helped us hugely over the past 18 months. They supported our visits to the CES Conference in the US, and the Technology Fair in Hong Kong, where we had meetings that kicked off the current round of negotiations.

"Our first export order – to Mexico – is imminent. It is also the largest single order we have ever taken for trueCall, and UKTI's recent conference on exporting to Mexico was a great help."

Ian Paterson, trueCall's International Trade Adviser at UKTI London, said: "I am delighted for trueCall. They fully deserve their award. By breaking into international markets, which they are now starting to do, they are showing what innovative companies can achieve with the right preparation and support."

Visit www.truecall.co.uk.



Self assessment tax deadline approaches

ONE local company, Taxfile, is now gearing up for its busiest time of year as the deadline for tax self-assessment approaches on 31 January.

It is thought that around 1 in 15 people in Lambeth will have to complete these do-it-yourself Self Assessment tax returns which apply to self-employed, skilled workers and tradespeople like builders or cab drivers and those who run micro-businesses.

Director Guy Bridger runs Taxfile, a 15 year-old company that has offices in Tulse Hill and Dulwich. He said: "Over a quarter of all our customers come to us in January for help with their tax returns. It's our busiest time of year."

"Businesses pay tax on their earnings, and we help companies sort their business and private expenditure into categories and assess the eligibility and proportions of allowable expenditure. Some expenses like transport and mileage can be tax-free if they can be proven to be business related. This can make a substantial difference to the end result."

Working out tax returns can be stressful for people who do not have the correct information to hand and have left it too late. "The best advice for those who haven't started their returns yet is to start gathering information now", says Guy. "The law requires people to keep business records, at Taxfile we favour simple excel spreadsheets to track business income and expenditure. It's a good idea to register for

Guy Bridger (second from left), with the team at Taxfile.



online banking and periodically download bank statement data into a CSV file. It saves on paper too."

But Guy insists there are some positives to doing tax returns as well. He says: "Working out your tax position each year is a good barometer for the health of your business finances.

"We can help by asking the right questions to safeguard our client's finances and taking the necessary care in the tax handling process."

For more information visit www.taxfile.co.uk or call 020 8761 8000.