

## **Highland Businesses could be breaking the law**

Recent legislation governing how businesses dispose of their Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) came into force last year but many highland businesses are flouting the law, inadvertently, as they continue to be unaware of this obligation.

The WEEE Directive came into force in 2007 making it illegal for businesses to dispose of electrical and electronic equipment using the normal, general waste channels. Businesses that wish to dispose of electrical and electronic equipment and machinery such as, computers, fax machines, photocopiers, printers; in fact, any item fitted with an electrical plug, must, by law, use an 'Approved Authorised Treatment Facility (AATF).

Following a random survey of local businesses in Inverness late last year, an independent marketing consultant discovered that the vast majority of businesses contacted had not heard of the WEEE Directive and did not know their legal obligations when it came to disposing of their redundant electrical or electronic equipment.

Isobell Tesch, independent marketing consultant revealed, "A day was spent contacting firms in Inverness from a range of business sectors to establish their level of knowledge about the WEEE Directive and to discover what methods they had adopted to ensure compliance. Unfortunately, of the twenty five businesses from both private and public sectors, it soon became apparent that very few had even heard of the WEEE Directive and even less had a disposal strategy in place."

The WEEE Directive was introduced by the Government to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill; to increase the use of reuse and recycling and to minimise the impact on our environment.

In the north of Scotland, the only Approved Authorised Treatment Facility at present is ILM Highland. From its base on the Teaninich Industrial Estate, Alness, ILM Highland offers a wide range of reuse and recycling services for businesses throughout Grampian and The Highlands. Its client-base runs from Thurso to Aviemore; from Ullapool to Aberdeen. To hold an AATF licence, ILM Highland had to demonstrate it had the necessary resources and workshops in place to prove its capability and sustainability in ensuring the safe collection and disposal of all different types of WEEE.

Andy Dytch, general manager of ILM (Highland) explains, "Achieving the accreditation status has not been straightforward. Apart from it costing several thousand pounds, we had to, as a company, review all our policies and procedures in order to align our overall objectives with strategies that satisfied the legal aspects of being a Designated Collection Facility for WEEE. Now that we are a recognised WEEE centre we can offer businesses an authorised disposal route for waste electrical and electronic equipment."

WEEE can be collected directly from business premises or businesses can deliver items to the company's depot in Alness. Mr Dytch went on to say, "We have devised a fair system for businesses; single items will carry a nominal fee per unit but where there are lots of items for collection there are quantities of mixed WEEE, a charge by the tonne will be made."

Businesses using ILM Highland do so in the knowledge that they are complying fully with their legal obligations and will be in receipt of approved certification that businesses may be asked to produce during corporate audits and inspections.

Isobell Tesch suggested, "More public information needs to be readily available so that businesses can respond in a positive way to the obligations that are being placed on them by Government. Enterprise organisations and other public offices could, perhaps, do more by way of seminars, workshops or bulletins to ensure that businesses are equipped with the necessary facts and have access to the information which will allow them to incorporate appropriate measures as part of their business procedures."

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