

Hodgson's Choice

Going with the flow?



Jim Haywood has recently moved from flood warning at the Environment Agency to take on the job of Director of Business in the Environment. At a time when businesses are rushing to upgrade from environment to corporate social responsibility, Simon Hodgson asks why he's swimming against the stream.

There's no doubt that Business in the Community (BITC) is doing well. Founded twenty-two years ago by a handful of corporations concerned about high unemployment and urban riots, the organisation today boasts 700 member companies and 400 staff spread across 10 regions. Open the business pages of any newspaper and the odds are good that you'll see a story on corporate social responsibility (CSR), with BITC right there setting the agenda.

But what about environment? Business in the Environment (BiE), now 15 years old, was one of the most successful campaigns within BITC. In 1996 it launched the 'Index of Corporate Environmental Engagement', which has now become a standard environmental benchmark for over 200 of the UK's largest companies.

But in recent years it has been somewhat overshadowed by the rapid growth of CSR. There are questions around whether 'environment' should be seen as just one-seventh of CSR, or as a subject in its own right? Is there a role for a separate campaign like BiE? And is there much left for companies to do in this field anyway?

Jim Haywood took over as director of BiE in April last year, and nine months into the job, has a clear picture of what needs doing. "In some sense BiE needs to reinvent itself" he says "so there is that challenge ahead". But in another sense he has inherited a working structure, refined during 15 years of use. The campaign is directed by a leadership team: board members from companies who are perceived to be at the forefront of environmental issues. A second group of environmental 'practitioners' from the same companies meets separately. Simplistically, the leadership team drives the agenda and the practitioners ensure that it is rooted in reality.

BiE treads carefully. It is both a campaigning organisation, constantly encouraging business to do better, and at the same time it is driven by and paid for by companies. It is like being connected to business by a piece of elastic: BiE needs to keep the tension to pull members "in the right direction" but must never tug hard enough to snap the elastic and lose the relationships on which it depends. "We are trying to take a lead and be out in front, but at the same time we support and help organisations" says Haywood.

His plans are coming together. He has recruited a new team, and will be launching the future direction of BiE at a workshop in April, exactly a year into his tenure. There will be three 'action areas': climate change, biodiversity and resource productivity. "We are focussing on the issues that we know from the Index people are telling us that they don't understand", he explains. Haywood hopes that each area will be directed by a member of the BiE leadership team, and intends that each involves partner organisations from outside the business world to bring a new perspective.

He is obviously looking forward to it, feeling that "there is an element of creativity and newness". He is also appreciative of the trust that has been built up between companies and BiE. "It's a tremendous privilege that companies give us information", he says. "Take the analogy that a company is a house; anybody can go and look through the windows, but we are invited into the hall."

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All this is a long way from Haywood's origins; he started his career in the Royal Navy. "I'm an odd fish, in a way", he puns, having started life as a submarine engineer. He spent eleven years in a variety of postings, including a stint on a Polaris submarine. Eventually the demands of reconciling life at sea with the needs of a growing family led to his leaving the Navy. He took a job at BOC to build on his engineering background and develop general management skills. The move into

environment was coincidental: one of his first projects was to review environmental issues for the company, the conclusion being that more focus was needed, and a job was created. Haywood landed the job.

"Professionally, that was what set me on the route", he agrees, "but I've always had an interest in the natural environment". He enjoys walking and has been a birdwatcher since his teens. "In a perverse way, being in a submarine at sea brings you very close to a fundamental element – close to nature – and that's quite forceful". It also provided an opportunity to see some wildlife in an unusual setting: "I was a periscope watch keeper", he explains, "and sea birds are quite interested in this thing sticking up out of the water, so I got some close up views".

His next move was to the Environment Agency, setting up and running the National Flood Warning Centre. This was another case of recruiting his team, and developing something from scratch. He enjoyed it tremendously, describing the Agency as a real "high point" of his career, and gave little thought to BiE, which he had last dealt with during his time at BOC. But then he was approached for the BiE job. "It was a new challenge and the idea of heading up the campaign was quite a thrill, particularly working from the business perspective", he admits.

And what of the business perspective? Why should companies do anything at all? Haywood advances the argument that environmentally-responsible companies save money, that

they find it easier to recruit staff, and that they are better managers of risk.

He also believes that there is a "fundamental rightness" about businesses trying to improve society. "We are all citizens, and corporates are made up of citizens", he suggests. "I would like to feel that they are led by individuals who have got some conscience and some moral values that drive them. There is strong evidence to suggest that companies that have that moral strength are the ones who do better."

It sounds persuasive, and Haywood articulates the argument well. But of course, I'm not the one that he has to convince.

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Water Framework Directive – So Far, So Good?

Wednesday, 17th March, 2004

The English Heritage Lecture Theatre,
23 Savile Row, London

Daniel Instone, Defra, Martin Griffiths and Alastair Ferguson, Environment Agency, Peter Howsam, Cranfield University and Peter Spillett, Thames Water will be amongst the speakers addressing delegates at this high profile conference, **Water Framework Directive – So Far, So Good?** on Wednesday, 17th March, 2004 at The English Heritage Lecture Theatre, 23 Savile Row, London. The conference will be chaired by Bob Breach, Severn Trent Water.

This conference examines the progress we have made in preparing ourselves for dealing with the problems of implementation of the Water Framework Directive. In particular, the development of new standards for water quality (which will have a statutory basis) and the links which will have to be forged between water management and those activities which may have the greatest impact on meeting the standards – agriculture, the development of land and the water industry.

Delegates representing the UK regulators, local authorities (particularly land use planners, and environmental and pollution control officers), water industry staff, environmental and economic consultants, scientists, academics and legislators should attend.

For further details and a conference brochure please contact:

Lis Whitehair • Terence Dalton Events
47 Water Street • Lavenham • Sudbury • Suffolk • CO10 9RN
Tel 01787 249290 • Fax 01787 248267
Email lis@lavenhamgroup.co.uk

IEMA Student Essay Awards 2004

Students in full or part-time education are invited to enter the IEMA Student Essay Award Competition. The competition is an opportunity for students to demonstrate an understanding of the subject and their ability to write in an engaging and original manner. Essays can be on any topic related to the environment and sustainable development; they should be no longer than 2,000 words.

To obtain a copy of the competition rules please contact Paula Gouldthorpe at p.gouldthorpe@iema.net or tel: 0152 254 0069

The first prize includes:

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- two days at the IEMA Annual Conference, with one nights accommodation and evening dinner included.

There will also be two runner-up prizes

- a cash prize of £100
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- invite to awards dinner on the 19th May
- a framed certificate

The closing date for essays is 29th February 2004

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