

### **Better business support in the West Midlands**

Business Link West Midlands was launched by AWM in April 2007, reforming the way business support was provided in the region. The new streamlined, more accessible service is being introduced to tackle underperformance in productivity and business start-ups, which are the two key challenges facing the region's economy.

Research showed that businesses wanted more from public sector support and that too few companies were accessing the support that was on offer. The new service offers a single access point for all business, skills and manufacturing advice. A single regional provider - instead of the previous five sub-regional providers - will ensure a more consistent delivery of services and increasing the number of business advisors will mean better service. In terms of value for money, the efficiency achieved by consolidating back office costs will mean more of the funding that goes into business support will be reaching those who need it.

As the driving force behind the new set-up, AWM has tasked the organisation with adding an additional £400m to the regional economy. It is forecast that the service will help 89,000 businesses each year with basic information and provide intensive support for a further 16,000 - tripling the number helped at the moment.

### **Encouraging low carbon vehicle technologies**

The West Midlands has produced the UK's first low-carbon Regional Economic Strategy: 'Connecting to Success'. The strategy provides leadership for the region to achieve its low-carbon ambitions and ensure that the economic future of the West Midlands is resilient to climate change and prepared for the challenges of the future. A key action that has resulted from 'Connecting to Success' is the £80 million Low-carbon Vehicles programme to encourage West Midlands automotive companies to conduct further research and development into low carbon vehicle technologies. Advantage West Midlands has contributed £30 Million and with additional support from Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), this will create a Low Carbon Vehicle Development and Proving Centre which will link high tech research with manufacturing. It will have a particular emphasis in developing new drive trains and lightweight structures and will link up with similar programmes elsewhere in the UK. It will also build on similar, successful programmes such as the Premium Automotive R&D programme based at Warwick University and the £12.5 million Centre of Excellence in Lightweight Vehicle Technologies announced earlier this summer.

### **National Industrial Symbiosis Programme (NISP) (promoting sustainable development)**

A business initiative where one company's waste is used to benefit another company has been so successful in the West Midlands that it became the world's first industrial symbiosis initiative to be launched on a national scale.

The National Industrial Symbiosis Programme (NISP) in the West Midlands was a pioneering approach to industrial recycling and is supported by Advantage West Midlands.

The programme positively contributes to the environment, assisting in diverting materials that would otherwise go to landfill or be stockpiled and utilising them as more useful resources.

This not only has the advantage of creating local jobs, but also contributes to the environmental sustainability of the region.

The range of different businesses that have joined NISP shows that there is almost no limit to the kind of waste that can be turned into valuable products. The national programme has succeeded in reducing CO2 emissions by 1.6 million tonnes, eliminated 202,000 tonnes of hazardous waste and diverted 1.1 million tonnes of industrial waste from UK landfill sites.

NISP in the West Midlands has received further funding from Advantage West Midlands to target the region's biggest sectors automotive and construction - a UK first. It shifts the understanding of industrial symbiosis up a level within the West Midlands and brings its benefits to the mainstream business community

NSIP has been recognised by the European Commission as an exemplar programme and the project is also being transferred to the US and China.