

10 November 2014

One in seven Cornish businesses afraid to contact regulators

Research by the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP has revealed that nearly one in seven Cornish businesses do not contact their local regulators because they are afraid it will trigger an inspection.

13 per cent of the businesses that responded to a survey, conducted on the LEP website Business-Pulse, said that they do not make contact with Cornwall Council's regulators because they are afraid of enforcement. Despite this perception, enforcement action is extremely rare with less than one in every 2,000 visits resulting in prosecution.

More than half of responding businesses listed difficulties of finding what they need on the Council's website or getting hold of the right person for advice as their top regulation 'gripe'.

Through the Better Business for All initiative, the LEP is now working with Cornwall Council and other partners, including the Cornwall Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses, to address these issues. This includes supporting the Council to develop a clearer, more positive style of communication with businesses and making it easier for businesses to find the information they need in order to comply with the law.

The LEP has also commissioned a series of videos to bring the subject of regulation to life and challenge the perception of regulators as a threat to business. The latest video 'What Would you Change?' features business-owners, including Michelin-starred chef Nathan Outlaw, revealing their personal gripes about regulation.

Cornish businesses have also taken part in short videos that show how a good relationship with local regulators has saved them time and money and helped them grow. All videos appear on the LEP's website www.business-pulse.co.uk

LEP Board Director Simon Tregoning said: "Too many of our businesses are afraid to pick up the phone to speak to the regulators. It's natural to be nervous about enforcement, but there is more that could be done to break down the barriers between businesses and regulators. We will be working hard to get the message out that regulators and businesses can work together.

"I would like to thank everyone who took part in our survey. Their feedback is helping us reduce the regulatory burden on businesses, a priority for the LEP."

Mark Luxton, Assistant Head of Public Protection & Business Support (Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing), said: "Through this survey, businesses have made it clear that we need to do more to help them find the information they need. We are committed to improving and working with the LEP and businesses, we are adjusting some of our communications to make it easier for businesses to access our guidance and advice.

"We have over 60,000 one-to-one contacts with local businesses every year and the vast majority of these do not result in enforcement activity. We clearly need to do more to prove to the business community that we are on their side."

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP has been selected as one of just 11 early adopters of Better Business for All in the UK, a national initiative endorsed by the Better Regulation Delivery Office, part of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Better Business for All aims to take a business-led approach to improving regulation and show how working with regulators can save businesses time and money, improve competitiveness and help them grow. It is also about encouraging more businesses in Cornwall to seek advice from regulators without fear of enforcement activity.

Better Business for All is being managed by a steering group which includes small and large regulated businesses in Cornwall, the Federation of Small Businesses, Cornwall Chamber of Commerce, the LEP and representatives from a cross-section of regulatory services at Cornwall Council (including Environmental Health, Licensing, Trading Standards, Fire, Planning and Building Control).

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Note to editors:

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was launched in May 2011. Private sector-led, it is a partnership between the private and public sectors and is driving the economic strategy for the area, determining local priorities and undertaking activities to drive growth and the creation of local jobs.

www.cornwallandislesofscillylep.com

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