



Written Evidence to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee

I am a self employed Diversification Consultant, trading as Earthly Ideas. I advise small to medium size businesses and domestic developers on ways to diversify and save running costs by being greener with their buildings and systems. My experience to give this advice, has come from my own business activities, which include the development of eco-friendly tourism and retail facilities on the north Norfolk coast at Deepdale Farm.

The main evidence I would like to put forward to the committee is the lack of understanding by environmental organisations and authorities about the triggers and motivations required to make most individuals and businesses become environmentally conscious.

There is a large amount of talk about reducing carbon footprints, becoming carbon neutral and other similar jargon. Many individuals want to make changes and become more environmentally aware, but feel they are a small fish in a big ocean and feel their efforts will make little difference. There is also a belief by environmental pressure groups that there is a moral responsibility to be environmentally conscious. What is actually required to connect with the vast majority in the UK is a mixture of legislation to remove damaging environmental products and services, and education about the savings that could be made if a business or individual were to consider the environment.

The British public make their consumer choices on a mixed basis of cost and convenience. For example price is normally the primary motivation, however if the process of switching is hard work then convenience will outweigh price.

A prime example of legislation that would be effective is the banning of all non energy efficient light bulbs. Almost every standard bulb has an energy efficient alternative, but in many cases demand is limited because of the cheap nature of the lesser product. The same could be said for packaging materials, where legislation could outlaw materials that aren't biodegradable or recyclable. Electrical products could be banned if they can't be switched off properly, rather than staying on standby. It should be compulsory for chargers, for example mobile phone chargers, to be intelligent and switch off their power use once the device they are charging is fully charged. Why is it that you can still buy disposable nappies that aren't biodegradable, especially with landfills full of nappies that take over 200 years to breakdown? A huge opportunity was missed with the latest building regulations, that at conception were radical, but which were watered down dramatically before actually coming into force. Even the water companies have serious concerns about how they will supply all the new houses that are wanted, so why aren't more water and energy saving technologies compulsory in new and converted buildings.

In terms of education, householders and businesses need to see simple details of the money they could save by taking into account the environment. The general impression is that being green will both reduce the quality and enjoyment of a product and cost more. From my experience neither of these impressions are correct, as we run environmentally conscious tourism facilities and are graded and reviewed as being excellent quality at an excellent price. Even customers not interested in the environmental aspects of our business like the product we provide. We've saved thousands by installing energy efficient lights, solar panels to heat water and rain water capture to flush toilets. By showing companies or individuals a simple spread sheet of the savings that could be achieved through installing environmental technologies and changing the way they act, many more could be encouraged to consider the environment. Investment must be made to create

these evidence sheets and to train advisers to help people select the right technologies and systems to save them money. Once the savings are clear, there will be more demand.

The British public are not going to want to have extra work or a reduced experience by being green. Therefore councils and government need to consider systems that will make it as easy as possible for householders and firms to become green. The average Brit won't choose to be green out of a purely moral calling, they need a lot of incentives, most of them financial. For example, the idea of being charged more for producing more rubbish is excellent, however this needs to be matched by a discount for those of us who produce very little or no rubbish. There must also be a legal obligation for councils to offer full recycling services, as many have gone for budget recycle plants that will recycle enough to meet government targets, but unfortunately don't allow the recycling of many products which require a more sophisticated recycling process.