



# AN ADDED DIMENSION TO PARTNERING

Fast-Track-14 identified additional environmental advantages for London-based contractor, Mulalley, as it successfully prepared for ISO 14001 certification in just six months. Drawing on its experience and knowledge, Mulalley found that by managing environmental issues, the company's ability to influence its clients and supply chain partners in their key environmental decisions, brought an unexpected but welcome cost saving. Fast-Track-14 process recognised and took account of the development of Mulalley's existing system and was able to quickly and effectively help finalise its certificated environmental management system.

In September 2006, Mulalley became the first Fast-Track-14 participant to achieve independently audited ISO 14001 certification much to the delight of Head of Quality, Safety and Training Division, Martin Perry, who skilfully guided the company team over six months.

Since its formation in 1972, Mulalley has expanded steadily, adding partnering, design and construct, and joint ventures, to its core construction activities. Today, it has more than 350 employees and a strong reputation for empathetic housing and education projects.

Two-thirds of the company's business lies within the M25 and its strengths include urban construction, refurbishment and regeneration projects with public sector partners for whom sustainable values are a priority.

"People increasingly want us to be environmentally accountable but they often use buzz words and make requests which show they don't really understand what's involved. However, as sustainability is at the core of much of our work," explains Martin Perry. "We wanted to be quite sure of our ground."

The company opted to create its own environmental management system in six months using Cheshire-based ISYS International's Fast-Track-14 (FT-14) programme, Mulalley quickly found it was

already more than 60% compliant with the international ISO 14001 environmental standard.

This first insight – based on the company's existing quality management system – was one of several to come from FT-14's ISO Toolkit electronic implementation guide, says Perry.

"Initially, we had assumed that FT-14 would centre on producing another manual but its approach of preparing for ISO 14001 certification is clearly much stronger".

"The FT-14 programme proved to be a good catalyst demonstrating just how much more we could achieve. We found we were missing some of the fundamentals and lacked sufficiently robust results driven mechanism. Previously, we couldn't easily implement this because, without the methodology, we had nothing to run with. The Toolkit showed exactly what we had to do. Now, we have a dynamic and practical system," continues Perry.

The ISO Toolkit's Gap Analyser initially identifies a company's environmental risks and deficiencies before a suggesting a tailored implementation plan.

A big plus from this system is the potential to influence clients in respect of responsible working within the built environment and to assist them to meet their own targets.

Initially, Perry with his team, committed up to five days a month on FT-14 to create Mulalley's closely customised Environmental Management System (EMS) using Project Environmental Plans (PEP). The awareness drawn from the programme has made him an enthusiastic environmental ambassador, keen to understand more about environmental implications for business. "I hope to be going on an IEMA diploma course in the very near future," he adds, pointing out, "It also helps to work for a company such as ours where you have total commitment from senior management."

Joining FT-14 marked a change in gear. "The company did have an EMS in place for some ten years which was sufficient for an earlier less concerned time, but today, being able to demonstrate that you are in control of the environment is increasingly important," Perry points out.

"From that positive start, the programme swiftly gave a wide overview, identifying those elements of good environmental management and highlighting precisely the steps to take.

"For instance, we had been looking at resource efficiency and examining the impact of transport, monitoring gas and water use and starting to understand the power of waste management, but these systems were unwieldy and lacked focus and we needed to strengthen them and further emphasise recycling and other forms of waste disposal.

Mulalley is looking to work closely with its supply chains so that it can pass on these environmental efficiencies and assist them to achieve similar certification.





Environmental management, says Perry, is about raising environmental awareness. "It's not a short journey and we must continue to work hard to push the initiative into wider use in our industry.

At the moment we are probably well ahead, of other contractors and with the advantage this certified approval provides, it gives our Partners confidence that we can assist to provide environmentally aware processes. It's another way of saying that we know our business.

"Building a complete management system costs money in the short-term but can generate income and create better commercial opportunities. The environmental context is important and developing and is more important than just saving money"

Mulalley empowers its works managers to be responsible for sustainability and monitors their progress. To support them, it issues concise procedures and processes in documents that make good use of easy-to-assimilate pictures, organograms and diagrams.

"The Toolkit was extremely useful here," explains Perry. "It allowed us to assess what we already had and then extract missing parts of the procedures. We have summarised these in our own style in our Environmental Management 2006 manual and PEPs, distilling procedure information in single pages of flow-charts that spell out clearly 'do this and don't do that'."

The manual and PEPs – which are accessed through the company's Intranet system – sets the company's environmental vision and strategy before detailing risks and the standards expected on site. Individual managers will extract material relevant to their specific risks and circumstances. A reporting matrix is included.



FT-14 workshops were also instructional and inspiring, says Perry. "Support and anecdotal information from ISYS was another insight. If, as a participant, you were prepared to contribute, you got a return. There is always a reluctance to give away your secrets, nevertheless, we exchanged valuable ideas with other companies. Everyone gained.

"In the near future, we have several more innovations to implement, including training in and using various media to publish our message. Our two priorities are our systems and our people and to keep our people enthused, we will hold reviews at least once every three months. Our integrated management system will also be a driver. Supported ably by our internal environmental auditors, trained by ISYS, who I am sure will "torment" us.

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