

WEEE is a bitter-sweet relief for small businesses

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) today welcomed the announcement from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) detailing the implementation of the WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) Directive. Under the legislation producers and importers of electrical and electronic goods will, from July 2007, be required to meet the environmental costs of dealing with waste products.

The FSB reflected the view of its members by expressing relief that the long-delayed regulations and fee structure have been published so that businesses now know where they stand.

The FSB also welcomed the nature of the revised fee structure from the DTI, which is much improved from the original proposals. The DTI's approach in listening to the FSB's concerns on

the fee structure was particularly refreshing. However, the changes do not appear to have gone far enough and it still risks being overly expensive for smaller businesses.

The FSB consistently highlighted throughout the consultation processes that special consideration must be given to the small business case. Small businesses are often disproportionately affected in terms of both the administration and direct costs of legislation.

The FSB also welcomed the appointment of Valpak as the operator of the Distributor Take-back Scheme (DTS). The FSB has been very much involved with the development of the Valpak DTS. As a result, the scheme currently contains an excellent fair fee structure for small businesses and minimum administrative requirement. John Holbrow, FSB Environment Chairman, said:

“We broadly welcome the DTI announcement because it finally provides a degree of certainty for businesses in terms of a clear timetable for implementation”.

“We believe that it is now imperative that the DTI begin a planned and sustained communication and awareness-raising programme aimed at small businesses.

“WEEE will present significant financial, operational and administrative challenges for all businesses affected by the Regulations. These are likely to be proportionately more burdensome for small businesses. The DTI WEEE team must take the unique position of small businesses into account during the implementation stages of the Regulation.

“However, the reaction of small firms that will be affected by this legislation is one of bitter-sweet relief. These regulations have been seriously delayed, causing a great deal of uncertainty, and businesses at least now know where they stand and can get on with dealing with them.”



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