

Training for Viridor Waste Staff Goes From Strength to Strength:

Viridor Waste Management has started a new phase of an important local training initiative for its waste management staff in and around Sheffield. Another 15 operatives are poised to start a training programme in the spring, which will earn them level II National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in Environmental Conservation, with a strong emphasis on community recycling. Most of the operatives come from Viridor's recycling and secure product destruction facility at Salmon Pastures and its Parkwood landfill, also in Sheffield. In addition a further five employees from nearby Erin landfill in Derbyshire will also be taking advantage of the programme. The company started the first phase of a comprehensive NVQ programme two years ago, when it sponsored 26 level II candidates, 15 managers or supervisors at level III and four senior managers on the degree standard level IV programme. Dr Andrew Goddard, technical manager at Salmon Pastures said: "We've gained real business benefits from staff undertaking the NVQ programme, and particularly at level II, where most people hadn't previously established a life-long learning habit. For instance, they are now much more confident about answering questions on their work in the course of inspections by bodies as British Standards Institute, the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive. Some have gained an added advantage in that the training has prompted them to return to learning for personal benefit and pleasure." Tom Franklin, unit manager at Parkwood Landfill added: "People don't think of waste management as an industry with a skilled workforce. However, Viridor considers it to be essential in providing a highly professional service. In many ways we are custodians of the environment and it is essential that everyone contributes to the best of their ability and beyond. Naturally, we are very pleased to have been able to access a number of local funding initiatives to accelerate the training process." In up-skilling its staff, Viridor is using specialist locally-based training provider, Environmental Monitoring Solutions Limited (EMS). A team of 5 EMS staff provide training in such areas as environmental conservation and management, waste management and occupational health and safety. EMS trainer Chris Houghton ran hour-long training sessions for Viridor's manual staff in the initial phase of the NVQ programme and is now looking forward to working with the company again. He said: "Once again we will be accrediting the operatives' competence in key areas such as operating lifting and other handling equipment and in driving diggers. Crucially we will be repeating awareness-raising sessions on ISO 14001, the highest international environmental management system standard. This is central to operating environmental management systems effectively, and lies at the heart of Viridor's corporate ethos."