

ENVIRO TALK

ISSUE 1



→ Welcome...

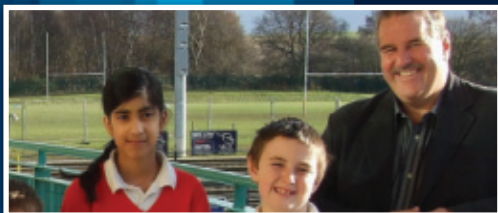
This is the first newsletter published by us highlighting cutting edge issues and our role in the community. Overcoming the challenges faced by us in dealing with the 25th June flood in Sheffield proved that our greatest strength is our people along with our passion for sound environmental advice.

Philip Wilbourn

Philip Wilbourn
Managing Director

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Direct Initiative

Wilbourn Associates - promoting rugby at school level in Doncaster.

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Sheffield Under Water

The causes, effects and how Wilbourn Associates were affected by the rising waters.

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EU Soil Directive

Are are commercial and housing developments sitting on a potential time bomb!

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Vision Statement

We operate in a people business and we do business by being accessible, flexible and placing our customers first. This will enable us to: Build a sustainable people focused business which is the first point of call for advice on contaminated land and environmental risk and its impact on land, property and construction.



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ASSOCIATES

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→ Scrum and Get It!

A charity aimed to promoting fitness and well being amongst Doncaster's school children over the next 2 years has been launched with a £20,000 donation from Wilbourn Associates.

Children at three of the town's primary schools were among the first to try out the new project designed to introduce the game to young people and highlight the fitness and social aspects of the sport.

Year five and six pupils at the schools, have learned about exercise, health and diet - as well as tackling the game – in a pilot of the initiative. Spearheaded by the Doncaster Knights' charity DIRECT, it is backed by the borough's Primary Care Trust and sponsored by Sheffield-based environmental surveyors Wilbourn Associates, whose managing director Philip Wilbourn is a former Doncaster first team player.



Philip has sponsored Doncaster Knights through his company for the last ten years and is keen to see newcomers take up the game. "I referee matches throughout Yorkshire and, although it is very much a growth sport, there has definitely been a drop in fitness levels among the younger age group which is a serious concern," he commented. "Encouraging children to be more active and to learn about such things as teamwork and commitment is a very positive move.

"Rugby is a great sport to be involved in and embodies some very good ethical issues. As well as the health and exercise benefits, it promotes self-discipline and personal development as well as the chance to make friends for life,"

Wilbourn Associates Environmental Award

Wilbourn Associates sponsored the prestigious Environmental award at the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce Awards. The winners were Bag It Don't Bin It. As a new eco business, Bag It Don't Bin It is helping retailers replace the national trend for using disposable, plastic bags – which harm the environment – with branded, re-usable cotton or jute bags that are made from non-fossil sources and totally biodegradable. Bag It Don't Bin It provides businesses with a environmentally friendly packaging solution.



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→ Flood lessons need to be learned warns Wilbourn Associates

Wilbourn Associates who were hit by the summer's floods is warning that a repeat of the devastation is likely to recur if swift action isn't taken locally to counteract the effects of climate change.

Philip Wilbourn, was trapped overnight in his premises off Brightside Lane after three feet of water gushed through the doors on Monday, June 25. Several other businesses at the Jessops Riverside office development suffered the same fate but Mr Wilbourn believes the severity of the flooding could have been avoided.



→ see more pics and video at: www.environmental-surveyors.com/floods

"The River Don is right next to us and we'd been checking the water levels all morning. At one point it rose about eight inches in half an hour. It was very fast flowing and full of debris. We saw fridges, bins and trees float past and knew we were in trouble. All the flood alerts said we were safe but it was clear that wasn't the case," he commented. "Some staff left at lunch-time and we dismantled our computer server farm but couldn't do anything else when the water started to seep in."

Left without electricity, landline telephones and very little food, Mr Wilbourn and six colleagues could do little else but watch the chaos unfold outside. "Abandoned cars were just floating along the street, a retaining wall eventually collapsed and a pregnant woman was rescued by a helicopter from one of the buildings nearby. Several vehicles in our car park were written off after filling with mud and water and there was just devastation everywhere," he said.

The ground floor of Wilbourn Associates' two-storey offices has since needed a complete refurbishment at an estimated cost of £100,000. "The flooring and plasterboard were sodden and everything had to be replaced," explained Mr Wilbourn. "As soon as the water receded we got straight on with tackling the damage. We managed to get some dehumidifiers and a skip almost immediately and were fully operational again by Wednesday morning. It was a very grim experience and my main concern now is that it could happen again at any time if action isn't taken by the authorities to guard against it."



Mr Wilbourn firmly believes that neglect of the river bed was to blame for the extent of the flooding. "Obviously the rainfall was exceptional but the river was full of rubbish such as scrap and tyres which is what caused it to overflow," he said. "Nothing appears to have been done about it since and it seems that the Environment Agency, the owners of the East River Bank and the City Council can't decide where the responsibility lies. Climate change is obviously a big problem but this situation is just waiting to happen again and probably sooner rather than later," he warned.

→ EU Soil Directive

Fears that the fragile housing and commercial markets are sitting on a potential time bomb have been raised by Philip Wilbourn who is warning that new European legislation will hit property owners in the pocket and add weeks to the already lengthy conveyancing process.

All property transactions will be more complex, costly and time-consuming after the introduction of an EU directive requiring a detailed soil analysis to be conducted on sites for sale to assess pollution levels. And this 'unnecessary' move will have catastrophic results for buyers, vendors and businesses linked to the property sector as well as for the country's long-term economy.

The European Framework Directive for the Protection of Soil has yet to be adopted by EU member states but the initial proposal has been agreed by the European Parliament and could take effect this year. For house buyers, the initiative will be another financial burden following hot on the heels of the Government's controversial Home Information Packs. For the commercial sector, any downturn in property values is likely to affect business investment and could seriously compromise those areas working hard at regeneration.

"It is likely to cost about £900 to have a soil survey done by an accredited expert, assuming you can find one but, in the early stages, there won't be enough people trained to do them and there is a danger that cowboys will appear with a DIY kit to carry them out," he explained. "When samples are taken properly, they will have to be rigorously tested which will prolong the conveyancing process and any unsatisfactory reports will bring sales to a standstill.

"We're already experiencing a credit squeeze, the buy-to-let market is suffering and there is a shortage of first-time buyers. The commercial market has also slowed down significantly and this could lead to a reduction in land and property values," he predicted. "There are grave concerns within the industry that this legislation will have a very negative impact here, particularly as we have a much higher percentage of property ownership than other European countries."

While acknowledging the need to inform and reassure buyers about their investments, Mr Wilbourn believes that the current practice of conducting an Envirosearch report is sufficient for most sales. "Around 90 per cent of transactions already involve an Envirosearch which provides essential site history and environmental information to home buyers and vendors in mainland Britain," he said. "These are carried out for about £45 – hundreds of pounds cheaper than a soil analysis report. It will also be completely impractical in some cases, especially in the commercial field. Sheffield's Meadowhall shopping centre was for sale recently but how is it possible to take a soil sample there?"



"Home buyers are already paying extra money for HIPs which don't actually serve the purpose for which they were intended and this Directive will put even more pressure on the market. Soil is a finite resource and some of it is undoubtedly at risk but there will be disastrous consequences when the legislation comes into force which it inevitably will do," he added.

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