



# Awards 2014 Case Study

Award Winner

## Leadership & People Development

Melin Homes

As Scheme Manager for the Welsh Government's Arbed 2 ERDF project in South and West Wales, Melin Homes has sent ripples of benefits to businesses and communities throughout the region.



The not-for-profit housing association used its experience of delivering the Welsh Government's Arbed 1 project as a client, to win the contract for the management of the Arbed 2 phase. The organisation's aim was not simply to deliver the installation of energy saving measures but also gain significant sustainable community benefits, through training and employment, collaborative working and community initiatives.

It was this huge impact on the development of many different groups of people – from end-user, to numerous sub-contractors – well beyond the scope of their contract that caught the attention of CEW judges' attention and won Melin Homes the 2014 award for Leadership and People Development.

For Melin Homes, the flagship £45 million project was never just going to be about meeting the brief to provide better energy solutions to 2,000 plus homes over three years. Their fresh and dynamic outlook encompassed improving lives, changing attitudes, enabling local SMEs to thrive and forging stronger, flourishing communities.

Although it was a departure for the RSL to take on the management of a scheme like this, it built on competencies they had developed through delivering grant funded projects and engaging communities.

An OJEU framework of contractors and suppliers was set up by the Melin team, with the tender split between the procurement of labour and materials to give SMEs, whose cash flow restrictions may have been a barrier, the ability to tender. This freedom from potentially crippling outlay on materials also gave small businesses greater flexibility to employ additional local labour and to grow. In addition, Welsh SMEs were encouraged to create multi-skilled consortia, making them better placed to challenge larger non-welsh entities when bidding for principle contractor opportunities.

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Dave Cook

Director of Customer Services - Melin Homes



Early engagement with Welsh SMEs through Meet the Buyer events ensured clear communication of project objectives and the opportunity for relationship building. Melin's dedicated Training and Employment Officer engaged with each business, helping understand their respective challenges and supporting sustainable employment, successful recruitment, training and business growth.

With the officer's extensive business support, the scheme secured the employment of 276 local people. Of these, 161 positions have been newly created and 115 were retained as a result of the Arbed 2 project, providing continued work.

In the procurement of materials, businesses were asked to consider the benefits they could offer and, as a result, a community fund was created enabling lasting large scale legacies to be gifted to the communities in which Arbed 2 had been operating. Wherever possible, Welsh materials were sourced to be used on the project, as a key aspect of the Melin Homes' vision.

The Community Benefits Evaluation Officer was available to help SMEs with user friendly reporting methods, ensuring businesses had access to the results of their contributions to the community fund – whether it was cash, material donations or labour - that could be used as evidence of past achievements in future tendering opportunities.

Less immediately tangible but equally important was Melin's engagement and leadership within the communities it was serving. The organisation was already committed to renewable energies thanks to its concerns about fuel poverty and sustainable tenancies, transcending national requirement to reduce carbon usage. Early arrival on site to meet families at a series of events helped disperse scepticism about the scheme. And the RSL's own Powering Up Communities First (PUCF) project worked with schools and communities to promote behavioural change and energy saving advice, ensuring householders were equipped to reap maximum benefit from the measures installed in their homes which should save residents an average of £330 a year.

For Dave Cook, Director of Customer Services for Melin Homes, it was their unique approach to the task that clinched them the CEW award. “We identified something that was much needed, so rather than just put in an eco bid where we would deliver and walk away, we hand held residents and the local communities we were serving throughout. Right from the tender stage, our business model stood out because we were going beyond the necessary.

“We have always collaborated with our contractors to make a difference within the supply chain. Within this framework, we have encouraged them to work together so that businesses that were competitors are now collaborating on other projects. It is part of our legacy that local SMEs are working together for their mutual interest and that of their communities.”

The whole approach of Melin Homes to community involvement, engagement with local contractors, providing employment for long term unemployed and apprenticeship opportunities, earned the project exemplar status. It is leadership and people development on a major scale that has had a huge impact on the area and left a footprint that others in the industry would do well to jump into.

