

**Tony Corbin** the MATISSE Smart Working Project Manager presents the case for smart working by drawing upon the Sustainable Development Commission's "Smarter Moves" report and using the example of Hampshire County Council.

## It's a 21st Century world... time transport caught up

Information technology promised us paperless offices, more leisure time and a better work/ life balance, yet the vast majority of us continue to rise early every morning. We commute on busy, overcrowded public transport or sit in congested traffic on the road to make it into the office on time. After the end of a long day, we repeat the process in reverse before arriving home tired and then have to start all over again tomorrow.

It's not for want of the technology. Information communications technology enables us to videoconference around the world. During the worst of last winter's blizzards, more than three million people connected to their office systems from home. If it can be shown to work in an emergency, there's an argument we should be working technology harder for a more sustainable future.

A recent report by the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) has looked at exactly this issue. The "Smarter Moves" report highlights the role of technology in reducing the need to travel and so helping to tackle carbon emissions, improve health, improve air quality, reduce noise and increase wellbeing.

The SDC report looks at technologies available that can reduce the need for travel - both by replacing the workplace with home or local working and by making sure transport networks provide useful information. It makes a series of recommendations for how changes can happen now, that will use technology to see big reductions in carbon emissions from transport. The recommendations fall under six headings:

- Reducing the demand for travel
- Influencing travel mode choice
- Changing driver behaviour
- Changing vehicle behaviour
- Increasing vehicle loading behaviour (fewer empty seats)
- Improving efficiency of transport networks

While it clearly identifies the need for Government to take the lead in implementing these recommendations and setting an example to other businesses, there is no reason why all kinds of businesses couldn't and shouldn't adopt the same principles.

On average, 13.5 billion miles are clocked up each year by commuters travelling to and from work. By encouraging and enabling employees to work from home or more locally one day a week, that number could come down by as much as 20 per cent along with the carbon emissions that go with them. In addition to the carbon reduction, employers can look forward to a happier, more committed workforce, less days lost to stress and better resilience if staff are unable to get to a central workplace.

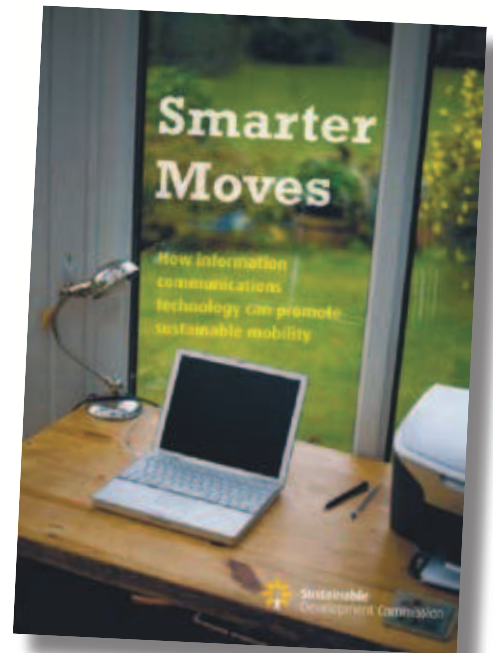
One employer leading the way in providing more choice and flexibility for staff and reducing carbon emissions along the way, is Hampshire County Council. The Council's aim is to reduce its office space by 60 per cent over the next decade. It has already been able to significantly reduce workspace and parking provision by offering staff home working, flexible working, 'smarter choices' travel schemes, that encourage car sharing, increased use of public transport through specially negotiated fare reductions and on site bike racks and showers to encourage walking, running and cycling to work.

As well as reducing the Council's carbon footprint, this investment in employees' welfare has improved staff retention and recruitment, which, in turn, reduces business costs.

The Council is also a sponsor of MATISSE (Mobile and Teleworking Initiative for a Smarter South East). Matisse has developed an online cost savings calculator, which is a quick and easy three-step method to calculate how much an organisation can save by adopting flexible working and using technology to enable people to work remotely. Since its launch 18 months ago, the calculator has already shown more than 5000 businesses how they can save money

- and carbon - by adopting better working practices.

So the technology has been proven to work. The benefits of employing the technology can clearly be seen. And while moving to different ways of working requires some initial investment, both financially and in terms of support for employees, the carbon reduction and the improved quality of life has to be worth the effort.



For a copy of the Sustainable Development Commission report visit:  
[http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/file\\_download.php?target=/publications/downloads/SDC\\_Smarter\\_Moves\\_w.pdf](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/file_download.php?target=/publications/downloads/SDC_Smarter_Moves_w.pdf)

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