

INTERVIEW

Rob Halford – the art of management

Rob Halford and his team at RH Environmental have created an online tool to help the running of environmental health services. He explained to Will Hatchett how it works

What is an environmental health management system?

It is an internet-based system of policies, procedures and standard documents – all the resources that an environmental health department needs. It is broken down into a series of modules to reflect how most environmental health services are structured. Users pay an annual licence, allowing an unlimited number of people in each authority access. It does not replace other premises or geographical databases but sits on top of them. The content is continually serviced and updated by a panel of environmental health experts.

What is different about it?

It is really innovative because the database is flexible and can be adapted to each user. So when the user logs in, the system recognises which authority they are from and which specific procedures they need. As well as standard letters and notices, it delivers policies, procedures and contact information which are relevant to each authority. Because it is accessed via the internet it is ideal for

people working from home, or on the road and the 24/7 availability means everything is on hand in the event of an out of hours emergency. The system is a brilliant way to deliver best practice standards in environmental health, which is why the CIEH is supporting it.

When will it be available?

The full system will be available from February. The system has already been trialled successfully with eight authorities but we are interested in talking to other local authorities that would like to be involved in trials.

What gave you the idea?

It grew out of collaborative working with several Welsh local authorities in 2007. We had a series of get-togethers to work out how we could improve the consistency and delivery of services

across a wide area of Wales. We came up with the concept of a web-based portal with an innovative database at the back of it.

What does your company do?

RH Environmental mainly does high-quality consultancy and technical work, in the areas of environmental protection, food safety, health and safety and acoustics. We are specialised contractors to Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government. At the moment we have nine staff – a mixture of EHPs, technicians and IT experts. We're expanding and more will be taken on.

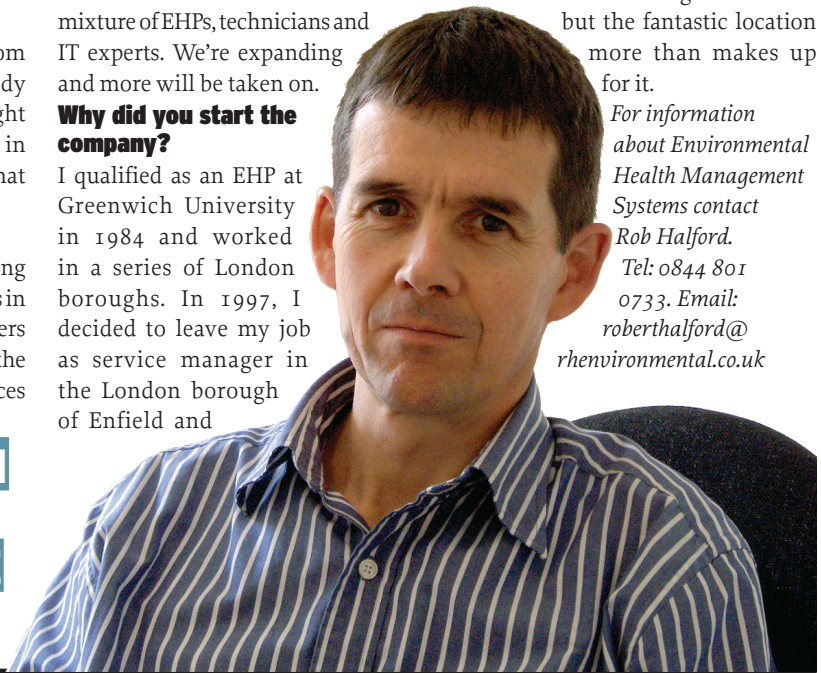
Why did you start the company?

I qualified as an EHP at Greenwich University in 1984 and worked in a series of London boroughs. In 1997, I decided to leave my job as service manager in the London borough of Enfield and

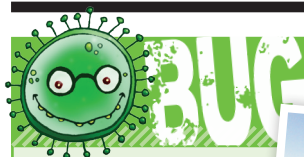
moved to Llandysul in west Wales, with my wife. It was a lifestyle change. We came to live on a 57-acre dairy and sheep farm. The area where we live has lots of sandy coves and is called little Cornwall. It is really beautiful.

After a couple of years, we realised that we would have to do something to pay the bills. I set up RH Environmental in 1999. I love the scope and variety of my life. On average, I spend about two days each week on the road. It is sometimes a long drive home but the fantastic location more than makes up for it.

For information about Environmental Health Management Systems contact Rob Halford. Tel: 0844 801 0733. Email: roberthalford@rhenvironmental.co.uk



'IT'S ACCESSED ON THE INTERNET SO IDEAL FOR PEOPLE ON THE ROAD'



What a talented lot you are. There was a great response to the EHP/EHN photo competition, 'How Does the Environment Affect Health?'. Winning and short-listed photographs will be exhibited at next week's Best of the Best conference in Nottingham.

Two entrants who did not win but whose photos tickled the judges' fancy were Andy Holden, pest control officer with Craven DC in North Yorkshire, and retired EHP Phil Noble.

Andy sees some bizarre sights in the course of his job. The first picture



shows fly-tipped material on a local hill-top and the second a local tramp's discarded sneakers. Thanks Andy.

Phil Noble now lives in Lake Hawea, Otago, a stunningly beautiful part of New Zealand's South Island. Lake Hawea, writes Phil, is named after the early Maori

inhabitants of the district. The lake, which is 30km long and 8km wide, is the most northerly of the glacial lakes in Otago. Drained by the Hawea River, it is enclosed at its foot by a moraine wall deposited by a glacier.

It offers excellent water sports and fishing for brown trout and salmon and the surrounding countryside is home to deer, goats, chamois, quail, chukor, ducks, and geese.

The area has a pleasantly dry climate, very warm in summer, and is suitable

for walking and mountaineering trips.

The lake is a major supplier to the Clutha and Roxburgh hydrodams. Controversially, its water level has been allowed to fall very low and is now close to the minimum introduced in the 1970s. The photograph shows the lake on a typical winter's day with snow-capped mountains, reflecting the winter sunshine.

Phil writes: 'It's only when you look more closely at the photographs that you see the normal water line and how far the level has been allowed to fall.'

