

Find A Solution - Friends of the Earth Project 2011

Final Report

Introduction

At the start of this summer project we had hoped to leave a lasting impression on the university's environmental practice. This has been quite difficult to achieve in such a large institution where change and development is slow. During the course of the project, we have assessed the university's environmental practice and found specific areas for improvement. Within these areas we created achievable goals for ourselves. These goals have been community orientated rather than a change in physical infrastructure as we felt we could best implement solutions in this way. We hope to see continuing improvements in all aspects of the university's sectors in accordance with its own environmental values.

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/about/values/environment/>

Survey

Since our last report we've completed the staff survey and sent it out to all staff through David Newall, Secretary of Court. The survey proved to be reasonably successful, with 874 responses from a total of 6,334 staff. Many interesting contributions were made especially through 'comment'/'other' boxes. Amongst the mass comments highlighting the importance of energy conservation on campus and the need to improve the recycling facilities, were some unique ideas including incentives for UK train travel; allotments on campus; competitions for 'Greenest School'; having bird and bat boxes as well as bee hives on campus; ban/restrictions on campus car parking; and questioning whether or not we really need to light the iconic Glasgow University Tower.

The survey demonstrated that staff practice sustainable activity outside the workplace with around 80% 'always' recycling glass, plastic, paper and cans; as well as local, seasonal and fair trade produce being prioritised in grocery purchases. The university can harness these current actions which staff practice at home, to improve its overall environmental performance, as nothing new would be asked of the staff in the campus culture of conservation. The survey showed that staff are receptive and keen to contribute:

“Great that we have green champions and the various policies and strategies - communication is poor. This survey is a good start.”

Bike Scheme

Ideas for the student bike scheme have been finalised, consolidated and we have discussed our plans with various individuals who have deemed them viable and a worthwhile project. We intend to host ten Dr Bike workshops throughout the year to provide free maintenance and advice for the students' bikes. During these sessions we plan to provide free bike lights and water bottles as well as discounted helmets and rucksack covers. We have also budgeted for four students to become fully qualified as cycling proficiency instructors allowing them to provide students with courses in safe city cycling. A hundred students will also be given vouchers for a day of free bike hire; this will make the bike scheme accessible to students who do not own a bike, encouraging students to try sustainable travel. The first draft of the bike scheme lottery application is now complete.

Meeting with David Newall, Secretary of Court

This was a general meeting organised to discuss the project and the university's environmental sustainability; issues discussed include the Green League, the project itself, the Carbon Management Committee (CMC) and green champions. Although we had already decided on green champion support as the direction of the project, it was proposed at this meeting that we propose a new model for the green champions network. We saw this as a worthwhile move because of the flaws in the current system. Therefore, we worked on this instead of the green champion support pack in hope of implementing a new structure which would revitalise the entire system, better supporting the green champions.

Remodelling the Green Champions Network

After meeting with David Newall, we researched other organisations' Green Champion networks in order to create a new model to present to the Carbon Management Committee (CMC). To find the best model for Glasgow University we had to assess the experiences of other institutions to see different types of models and evaluate the effectiveness of these. We spoke to the sustainability teams in Edinburgh and Aberdeen Universities and had email correspondence with other universities, local councils, as well as two NHS trusts. The experience of other universities provided the most valuable information for us in terms of presenting a new model. The universities had huge amounts of experience in green champions schemes, especially in comparison with that of Glasgow; and in changing and developing their own systems. They were able to advise us with a critical and experienced eye of the pros and cons of their own systems, which allowed for us to compile the best systems for our models. Model A is the ideal; model B is perhaps more feasible:

Model A

Model A would employ an overall Environmental Manager working with Albert Young (Estates and Buildings - Energy Conservation Officer). This would be a full time paid position. This individual, an expert in the field, will train and guide the re-branded Green Champions, The Sustainability Coordinators of the Schools and Service areas. In other universities it is common to have a large team working to improve environmental practice. For Glasgow the workload from the Carbon Management Plan is not equally shared amongst current staff; this would lighten the load for those with a heavy Carbon Management workload. In the long run the university will save money by funding the salary for this individual as he/she will increase efficiency in achieving Carbon Management targets through communication throughout the university, both from the Carbon Management team out to all staff and in feeding information back from staff to the Carbon management team.

There will be one Sustainability Coordinator per School/ service area and that person will meet monthly with the Environmental Manager, reporting from their 'local area'. The Environmental manager will then compile annual reports for each School and the service departments and update the existing Carbon Management Committee.

The Sustainability Coordinator role should be a mandatory requirement for Schools/service areas, on the same level as safety officers and advisors of study. It will be an unpaid position; however, incentives for the role will include professional development and a channel for personal interests.

PRO'S

- Huge amounts of progress will be possible with someone monitoring and developing the role of the Sustainability Coordinator, bringing in new ideas and challenges for Sustainability Coordinators
- The Environmental Manager will lighten workload of Sustainability Coordinators who have other responsibilities

CONS

- Investment would be required to fund the Manager's salary
- The process will be longer, as time would be required to advertise and hire the Manager, even if it were an internal hire

Model B

Model B would, again, make departmental Sustainability Coordinators a requirement of Colleges and Services. The coordinator would communicate between staff and Head of Schools, discussing issues found or work completed in their local areas during informal monthly meetings. As well as meeting with their own Head of School, Sustainability Coordinators will meet monthly with other Sustainability Coordinators in their College. The current six Green Champions will then represent their College or Service area and report back to the Carbon Management Committee at quarterly meetings. All Sustainability Coordinators will compile annual reports which will be submitted to both the Carbon Management Committee and the Head of School (or equivalent managers in service departments).

Training must be provided; the format of a workshop and a support pack as well as communication seems most appropriate considering there will be no management.

PRO'S

- No new post need be advertised (although it is obviously advisable)
- Culture of conservation can be implemented
- 'Local' nature of post allows for them to use their expertise to ensure that their school/ service area runs efficiently
- FREE! These staff are already university employees; however it will cost time.
- Annual reports: focus, progress, commitment.
- There would be 33 SC's from Colleges not including service areas
- Better than existing system

CONS

- Developing the objectives of the green champions will not be easy without anyone to coordinate and plan.
- Perhaps not a solid solution, more of a 'cop out solution'. An easy step up from the current situation.

CMC Presentation

We presented the two models explained above and emphasised the importance of formalising the green champion role. The pace of the meeting meant that many items were discussed extremely briefly after each item was presented. This made it difficult for us to gauge the response to our item; and what the next steps would be for the green champions. We will provide a written report with our overall findings from the project for the CMC because there were many issues that we would have liked to have raised but couldn't, as they were irrelevant under our section of the agenda.

CMC Document

As a follow up to the CMC meeting, we have prepared an extensive document accounting our findings from the summer containing:

- A summary of results from the Environmental Practise staff survey
- Details on the green champions networks in other institutions
- A case for formalising the green champion role
- Some ideas for basic duties; for re-branding; training; communication; annual reports
- Outlines of the green champion network models proposed at the CMC meeting
- Our thoughts on the Green League
- Information on the bike scheme
- A full copy of the survey results.

Green League

We have been mindful of this during the course of our project, as it was a driver for the project itself as well as being a benchmark that we have been able to work from in completing the project. The university was awarded a lower second rank in the 2011 Green League. This has been taken into account by the university and was on the agenda at the Carbon Management Committee meeting where they discussed improving the University's score by updating the environmental policies, curriculum and SMART targets.

Further to this, we would like to encourage changes within the hospitality services as we feel there are achievable points to be earned in Green League; such as sourcing seasonal produce, free range eggs, sustainable fish, and seeking Soil Association certification.

Recycling is an area of concern for many individuals within the university and the score in the Waste and Recycling sector of the Green League explains why. The university was awarded only two out of the available eight points and this score was accompanied by the figure - only 7.28% of university waste is recycled. We aim to improve this through student representatives. In our survey staff rated their environmental practice at home. Results showed that 80% of staff always recycled their glass, paper, cans and plastic bottles. With such high results for recycling at home we feel it is essential to provide similar facilities in the work place.

A student sustainability team would be able to pursue Hospitality Services in making changes with respect to Green League criteria and staff opinion (from the survey). They would also be able to work with departments to assess recycling needs in each area and pass information on these requirements to Safety and Environmental Protection Services. We are currently looking for a means to employ students part time to do this.

Carbon Trust

We will keep the members of staff who are working with the University up to date with our work as well. They are interested in the employment of students as well as student representatives attending CMC meetings (these will be SRC students).

The Carbon Trust suggested that they might be able to train the Sustainability Coordinators in response to our item on the CMC agenda. They requested a copy of the survey results which we hope they will find useful in their Carbon Management role.

Student Sustainability Team

In order to improve the Green League score and therefore environmental practice on campus we would like to apply for funding for students to continue the project we have started and to target other weak areas in University sustainability. The students would coordinate with current Green Champions, the SRC Environmental Officer and other relevant contacts. If the application is successful, The Chancellor's Fund will remunerate students for the work they carry out. This application will be completed by The Chancellor's Fund deadline, October 13th. The project would be approximately 5 hours per week for 2-3 students from January - June 2012. We hope this scheme will be continued in future years, with new students selected and funding sources secured. This year, the project would aim to work with and advise Hospitality Services and Safety and Environmental Protection Services on Green League criteria. The students could also create a survey to investigate the environmental concerns from the student community and share these with the Carbon Management

Committee by submitting a formal report at the end of the session. The students would also be able to work alongside the Travel Officer, Viola Retzlaff, who has been away on maternity leave during the course of the Find a Solution project this summer. By working with Viola, the students could investigate funding for a bike hire scheme for University students.

RSPB

Go Green Week 2012 will, amongst other events, host a bird and bat box building workshop for staff and students in association with RSPB. We've initiated this project to increase campus biodiversity and awareness of university's wildlife. The RSPB will teach us how to build the boxes and where to locate them on campus as well as providing information on RSPB events, membership and answering relevant questions. Funding has already been granted by Ecotricity to buy the materials and we'd like to source these from Glasgow Wood Recycling.

And so...

After three months of research and hard work in this ancient university we hope to have steered it a little further in the right direction. We hope to have assisted the University's community in its environmental practice through our collaboration with the SRC for the bike scheme application and the investigation for a new Green Champion network model. In initiating the Student Sustainability Team, we hope for our work to continue. The University of Glasgow is an institution without a fully-fledged environmental team, making our project vital for catalysing development in environmental practice. Our solution won't yet be visible but we hope that our hard work will pay off.