

Edinburgh College

Carbon Reduction

Cracking Carbon at Edinburgh College

About the project

Summary

Edinburgh College is adopting a holistic approach to carbon reduction. The college developed its first Carbon Management Plan in 2014 and aims to reduce emissions by at least 18% by 2020. The plan covers all aspects of Edinburgh College's operation and many projects are progressing including voltage optimization, BMS improvements, a waste strategy and numerous sustainable travel options. This is just the start of the college's sustainability journey.

Project partners

A number of partners have been involved in our carbon reduction and wider sustainability initiatives, both internal and external. Key internal stakeholders have been the Carbon Management Group, ISS (our facilities management contractor) as well as with many of the students and staff.

External partners are wide ranging and have included Zero Waste Scotland, Resource Efficient Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Futures Trust as well as the EAUC itself and other Scottish FE/HE institutions. There has been also collaboration with the likes of Sustrans and Cycling Scotland. The community gardens project is a partnership with a diverse range of college and community groups.

The results

The problem

In 2012, Edinburgh College was formed from a merger of Jewel & Esk, Stevenson, and Telford Colleges. The merger has required a period of transition to align practices, procedures, strategies and policy. From a carbon reduction perspective the merger meant a coming together of different approaches to resource management and wider sustainability. The main problem was a lack of overall strategy to enable carbon reduction across the whole scope and organizational boundary of the organization.

The approach

The first steps to managing carbon came with the development of a Carbon Management Plan and Group. Initially, this was with the support of Resource Efficient Scotland on a project aiming to support all Scottish Colleges who were at various stages in Carbon Management. Determining the organizational boundary was important and allowed us to develop the Carbon Footprint – which was not without its problems. In parallel to



Profile

- FE
- 22,565 students (includes full and part time students)
- 1,439 staff
- Urban

Category supported by



Finalist's case study

this, carbon reduction projects (past, current and future) were identified and assessed for viability using the best available data and estimates.

Our goals

- Reduced carbon emissions by a minimum of 18% by 2020
- Develop a comprehensive Carbon Management plan
- Develop sub-strategies and targets for energy, water, waste and sustainable travel
- Maximize opportunities for inclusion of sustainability with curriculum
- Increase opportunities for community gardening and enhance biodiversity

Obstacles and solutions

Establishing organizational boundaries and data quality and availability	Data quality and availability proved to be a real obstacle. Only electricity data could be described as of a quality where confidence was high. Gas, waste, water and particularly travel data were of variable and sometimes dubious quality. Analysing the data, however, has provided an insight into some issues which we are on the way to resolving – for example, AMRs will soon be fitted to all our meters. Some data issues remain and assumptions have had to be made, for example, waste is via a proxy weight based on bin capacity, waste type and uplift frequency, This all has implications for our organizational boundary as we only want to include sufficiently robust information. This is an ongoing process and aligns to new mandatory Scottish Government reporting, which will require a degree of retrospective data to backdate a suitable baseline.
Funding	Funding was, and remains a major obstacle. The College is running a deficit which it is not allowed to do meaning a lot of belt tightening. In addition, borrowing rules prevent us from using mechanisms such as Salix. We have managed to use some capital and other funding to undertake some projects, but this is a major problem in the near future. We are working with Scottish Futures Trust, Scottish Funding Council and Resource Efficient Scotland on a pilot energy performance contract, which would allow us to adopt spend to save approaches within our borrowing constraints. In addition we have actively sought grant funding. The largest grant from Zero Waste Scotland for £42k for improving recycling infrastructure has proved invaluable. Smaller grants from Sustrans and local groups have also helped with other sustainability related activity.
Organisational change	There has been much organizational change within the college – not least the merger in 2012. There have been various changes to leadership and management roles which have impacted on the organizational structure and thus on carbon management. With a new principal (May 2015) in place and organizational structure we will be looking to reinvigorate our carbon management governance in the coming months

Performance and results

A Carbon Management Plan (CMP) was developed with a Carbon Management Group to oversee strategy and operations. This comprised the Carbon Footprint (currently being backdated to align with Scottish Government mandatory reporting) and a projects register. The first year of the CMP has seen an overall reduction of

approximately 4%, this was in spite of a relatively cold winter (compared to 13-14 baseline). Much of that reduction was in electricity and came from Voltage optimization at 3 of our campuses; IT related projects; Building Management System tweaks and controls; as well as changes to opening hours and cleaning practices. Improving waste management is our current focus. In September 2015 we received a grant from Zero Waste Scotland allowing us to invest in infrastructure. This was much needed as the bins and signage were not consistent across our estate. Along with planned awareness raising we are hoping that our headline recycling rate (based on main collection bins only, excluding construction waste) can be improved from a poor 27% to something more respectable. On the travel side our pool car fleet is entirely electric and we also have some electric cycles for staff to use. We have installed secure cycle storage and worked to promote aspects of active travel. In all these areas there is still a huge amount of potential to improve but we are pleased with progress given financial and resources constraints. Our community Gardens are one of our biggest successes, with huge amounts of participation from a varied group. Whilst carbon reduction is not its main purpose – growing provides the medium to examine and learn about issues such as food miles, upcycling and other environmental topics.

The future

Lessons learned

Strong governance and leadership along with a clear set of KPIs is valuable to provide the background and aims for any corporate projects such as carbon reduction. But sometimes, acting at a local level can be just as important, particularly when financial and other constraints are holding up those wider projects.

Sharing your project

Various aspects of the carbon and wider sustainability work is shared through our internal (and external) communications – digital and printed. In future, we are looking to establish a green network to build the connections into what we know is an already vibrant sustainability scene (but is not necessarily coordinated and supported as well as it might).

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

Being a finalist is something we are very proud of. For the organization as a whole it is a time to showcase the work that we have been doing and to get some recognition for what has been a lot of hard work. At a smaller level, for those involved in delivery sometimes working so closely to projects it's hard to see all the successes, particularly when one is so aware of the shortcomings – so having someone else say well done is a pat on the back.

Further information

Sustainability Officer: Martin.Webb@edinburghcollege.ac.uk

Community Gardens Coordinator: Severine.monvoisin@edinburghcollege.ac.uk

Facebook:

- <https://www.facebook.com/MiltonRoadCommunityGarden> or
- <https://www.facebook.com/SighthillCommunityGarden?>

Twitter:

- <https://twitter.com/ECCommunityGrow>
- [@ESSust](https://twitter.com/ESSust)