Green Gown Awards 2015
Finalist's case study
Dissemination supported by:
HIGHER EDUCATION hefce
FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND

Coventry University
Carbon Reduction
Carbon Challenge

About the project
Summary

Coventry University's Carbon Challenge is a completely self-funding competition which encourages a healthy rivalry to be the 'greenest' between our various campus faculties. The aim is for faculties to save the most electricity, recycle the most waste, utilise space as best as possible and report on sustainable initiatives undertaken.

The revamped scheme for 2014 - 15 saved a total of 224 tonnes of CO_2, 73% of buildings have reduced their electricity consumption, recycling has increased from 71% to 74% and there has been a 13% increase in teaching rooms booked and used. Furthermore, the tree of sustainability now has 46 leaves which recognises green initiatives sent in by staff and students throughout the year. The total value of prizes awarded back to participating faculties during this period was £30,000.

Project partners
No third parties were involved in this project.

The results
The problem

With an ever expanding student population, a growing estate and a movement towards a research focused University the emphasis on reducing the University's carbon emissions had never been more difficult. The Environment Team in Estates decided that a revamp of the extremely successful Carbon Challenge which won an EAUC Green Gown Award back in 2011 and didn't need any form of investment from Estates was the best way forward in reducing carbon emissions as well as encouraging recycling and better space utilisation.

The approach

In the original Carbon Challenge, the key area of focus was electricity as this was a key area of usage directly controlled by our users as our heating systems are largely gas powered and automated. However, this didn't account for other highly intensive categories which are also directly controlled by our users such as waste and space. With the revamp of the Carbon Challenge it was decided to incorporate electricity consumption in addition to waste and space into the new scheme.

Previously there were set targets for reducing electricity consumption, but this presented difficulties in achieving further reductions from switching off alone and without investment from Estates. Therefore, by removing the target this allowed us to continue to measure and report on progress as has been done previously. However, it also allowed us to incorporate the other two categories of waste and space which are also highly carbon intensive. Albeit, switching off equipment and lights and identifying areas of energy wastage are still fundamental to the campaign.

There is also a further new element to the revamped Carbon Challenge which is the 'Tree of Sustainability'. This recognises sustainable activities undertaken across the University and encourages involvement and awareness of sustainability. For each activity which is undertaken by a faculty such as carrying out energy audits in buildings a leaf is rewarded.

Financial incentives are awarded to buildings that have made electricity savings, increased savings, increased recycling rates and improved space utilisation in buildings based on end of year league table results.

Quarterly reports displaying performance statistics are produced in the form of an infographic with each faculty being able to view their buildings as well as others across campus to increase the competitive element of the competition. The infographics were a great way to engage with our building users because they draw attention, get the data across in an accessible and visual format hence allowing people to absorb the information better and promote examples of good practice. All the feedback we've had on the infographics has been positive from right across the campus. Furthermore, because of the quarterly reporting we decided to compare the electricity data reported for each quarter with the four year quarter average for the same quarter to attempt to iron out any variations such as seasons.

We have a network of 22 energy champions spread across every building who administer the management and promotion of the Carbon Challenge to staff and students both in terms of sharing the infographics and giving advice. We also have a team of 6 students who engage with students across campus and in halls of residences showing how they can get involved with the Carbon Challenge and demonstrate good sustainability practice.

Our goals

As this was the first year of the revamped Carbon Challenge we didn't set any targets because we wanted to see how much each building could save across the three categories and also how many leaf proposals we could receive for the tree of sustainability.

Obstacles and solutions

Obstacle	Solution
Marketing struggled to understand the data when implementing it into the infographics.	We arranged one to one meetings with them to explain the data and presented it to them in a simplistic and basic format which could easily be fed into the infographics.
Some departments/faculties were not feeding back on sustainable initiatives which staff and students had undertaken.	We sent out mass reminder emails on a regular basis to our network of sustainability champions to encourage transparency of sustainable initiatives which staff and students had undertaken.
A few departments/faculties are based in the same buildings.	For rewards, we split each site based on percentage occupancy by each department/faculty so rewards were distributed fairly.

Performance and results

- 224 tonnes of CO2 saved
- 73% of buildings have reduced their electricity consumption
- Recycling has increased from 71% to 74%
- There has been a 13% increase in teaching rooms booked and used

- The tree of sustainability now has 46 leaves which recognises green initiatives sent in by staff and students throughout the year.
- The total value of prizes awarded back to participating faculties during this period was £30,000

The future

Lessons learned

1. There is always scope for reducing carbon across every corner of the campus
2. Refresh your messages to ensure continued engagement
3. Providing data in a visual and accessible format is important to appeal to everyone

Sharing your project

We met with our network of 22 sustainability champions based across all our main campus buildings at the beginning of the year to introduce the revamped Carbon Challenge. We described the revamp of the scheme and provided advice which led to reestablished links across the campus. These champions then administer the management and promotion of the Carbon Challenge to staff and students both in terms of sharing the quarterly infographic reports and to give advice. A dedicated Carbon Challenge portal page was also set up with open access to the University to act as a hub to share information and tips.

We've presented the Carbon Challenge to De Montfort University who are very interested in setting up a similar scheme. We gave a thorough overview of the project in terms of how it's been set up, problems we've faced and how to tackle them and top tips for successfully running it so hopefully this will aid them in their project.

There is always scope for reducing carbon across every corner of the campus and this could be a project which other institutions would like to replicate. Therefore, we welcome other institutions enquiring about it and we would be happy to present our project to aid others in the wider sustainability agenda.

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

The Carbon Challenge project as a Green Gown award finalist is a celebration of the continued dedication towards sustainability at Coventry University. This award underlines our long-term commitment to carbon reduction, even when the University is faced with the challenge of growth. We are therefore delighted to have our achievements recognised in this way.

Further information

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