



Finalist's case study

Ayrshire College Sustainability Champion Dave Dougan



About the project

Summary

I nominated Dave Dougan for the sustainability champion award primarily for his leadership work in the Get Kilmarnock Active campaign. This is a sustainable enterprise designed to reduce carbon emissions, promote active travel and improve health within the community.

This innovative community development partnership was inspired by Dave who wanted to make a difference to the lives of the residents of Kilmarnock both today and in the future. The premise of the partnership project was to mobilise key employers from community to develop active travel, reduce carbon emissions and improve community health by engaging hard to reach populations within community in an innovative manner. As well as promoting a critically important environmental message the campaign allowed over 70 of our students to engage and work with future employers.

The project literally took the environmental and health message to the streets as the students engaged over 5000 shoppers within Kilmarnock town centre.

Project partners

The campaigns partner employers were,

- Sustrans
- Kilmarnock Active Travel Hub
- East Ayrshire Vibrant Communities
- Lifestyle Fitness
- Boots Chemist
- East Ayrshire Physical Activity Supergroup
- Kilmarnock History Club
- Kilmarnock Town Centre Management Team
- The National Health Service
- East Ayrshire Community Health Improvement Partnership
- Kilmarnock Football Club
- Fresh Air-shire (a smoking cessation project)

Profile

- Further Education
- 14000 students (includes full and part time students)
- 800 staff
- Urban





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The results

The problem

The Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) 2015 Health and Wellbeing profiles highlighted the problem

- Overall life expectancy in East Ayrshire for both men and women is below the national average. This can be explained by deprivation within our communities.
 - Patients hospitalised with coronary heart disease are above the Scottish average.
 - In East Ayrshire the rates of alcohol related hospital stays are significantly higher than the Scottish average.
 - Of the 32 local authorities, East Ayrshire is shown to have the highest prevalence of smoking.
 - East Ayrshire has the highest rate per 100,000 population of patients hospitalised with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in of all Scottish local authorities.
 - Mental health rates are above the national average in East Ayrshire and are increasing.
- With these horrifying statistics in mind it was decided to open up the programme everyone and the "Get Kilmarnock Active" initiative was born.

The approach

The campaign has been delivered by our students and community partners took over Kilmarnock town centre for a year-long series of engaging health promotion events.

The partnerships aim was to introduce subtle changes to make significant health improvements within the community. The project offered the following

- Free regular health checks, that could be evaluated throughout the year.
- An exercise referral scheme to free weekly fitness classes for children, older adults and families.
- Monthly heritage walking tours to promote mental health
- Promotion of the Irvine Valley walking festival
- Healthy eating demonstrations and nutritional advice
- Pedometer challenges for shoppers
- Active travel promotion
- Electric bike rides
- Come and try sports

Our goals

While I state that these are our goals these are effectively the vision that Dave had when he planned the initiative.

- For people to make small changes in their lives that will have significant benefits.
- To promote the message of sustainable travel to improve health and wellbeing.
- To address the shocking health statistics that illustrate that if you are born in East Ayrshire your life expectancy is significantly lower than it is in other parts of the country.

Obstacles and solutions

Getting Partners Involved	Clearly Dave has a vision, a vision of a healthier greener community where everyone can play their part. However the vision requires community buy in from our partners, employers and our students. Dave has met and continues to meet with the various partners in his own time to outline his vision. Without exception
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	each of the partners were fully supportive of a greener healthier community.
Engaging the public	<p>In terms of Get Kilmarnock Active while we had buy in from the health and environmental partners the question of community engagement was a difficult one. Typically people do not like being approached in the street and they do not like publicly discussing their own health, adding the two together was always going to be difficult. However Dave and his students were indefatigable and were not easily put off. In truth the community embraced the initiative and gave the students plenty of support.</p> <p>Dave believes in the pursuit of righteousness, and regardless of the time commitment or the effort Dave is fully committed to making the world a better greener, happier healthier place.</p>
Sustainability	To replicate good practice is a continual struggle but Dave produces students every year who share his values and ideals. In the case of the Get Kilmarnock Active initiative there is a desire from our community partners to not only replicate the project again this year but also to make it bigger and deliver it in the wider Ayrshire community.

Performance and results

As things stand we have engaged with over 5000 members of the public to deliver the message of Active Travel and health promotion with the majority of these people being from hard to reach groups.

We were also able to work with many key partners such as Ayrshire College, the NHS, Kilmarnock Town Centre Regeneration team, Boots Chemist, East Ayrshire Vibrant Communities and Kilmarnock History Club.

The future

Lessons learned

Firstly we learned that If you are doing the right thing people will support you.

Secondly we learned that people like to see the focus on prevention rather than administering a cure. For too long the traditional focus on health has been to address problems in a costly fashion in the doctors surgery or the hospital. By offering the public a series of lifestyle choices we would be able to initiate significant change to their health for example the promotion of active travel rather than taking the car.

The third lesson learned was to mobilise key stakeholders from community to improve community health by engaging the community in an innovative manner.

The final lesson learned was to engage the public outwith a health associated environment. People often steer clear of medical checks citing a lack of time and not wishing to receive bad news. With the students engaging the public in the town centre this enabled us to take positive health messages to the public in an innovative manner. The simple and effective advice was very well received from all within the town centre.



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Sharing your project

The project was shared with our various community partners and the wider community via official forums such as the East Ayrshire Super Group for Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (PEPAS) and the media both formal and informal. The message was well presented and the public were fully supportive.

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

The nomination has meant a great deal to not just Dave and the College but to our students, community partners and the town of Kilmarnock in general. Dave never dreamed that his work would receive this level of recognition, as he feels that he is only trying to do what is right.