



Green Gown  
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# Finalist's case study

## Swansea University Student Engagement The Student SWell

### About the project

#### Summary

At Swansea University, through our comprehensive **Sustainability & Wellbeing** engagement programme (SWell), students have signed up and become part of our community for sustainable change and made a multitude of contributions. Through SWell, these student partners have helped the University improve its performance in areas such as waste and recycling, energy efficiency, sustainable and active commuting and personal wellbeing.

No matter how big or small the student's SWell contributions are, it's all about getting them to think about health - their own and that of the environment. Currently, we have 440 students signed up to the programme from a diverse range of groups and courses. In the last year more than 200 new students have signed up and are making a difference.

SWell has made a significant impact in the local and wider community, including an annual reduction of 32.7 tonnes of carbon dioxide from 65,204 Kwh of energy savings, £28,356 financial savings, 170.5 tonnes of waste diverted from landfill, volunteered for activities such as local beach cleans, and above all a visible and active contribution to the objectives set out in the University's Sustainability Strategy. SWell is making a significant contribution to improving the knowledge, skills and confidence of students, and as such improving their employability prospects and ultimately influencing their approach to sustainability and wellbeing throughout the rest of their lives, whether at home or in the workplace.

#### Project partners

Swansea Employability Academy (SEA), Students Union, Discovery, External charities e.g. IT Schools Africa and British Heart Foundation

### The results

#### The problem

There are more than 19,000 students between the two campuses of the University. As the University's biggest stakeholder, they also have a significant influence on the University's resource use, carbon emissions and other environmental aspects. There was a real need to make the students part of the solution by engaging, empowering and recognising them for their sustainable actions.



Swansea University  
Prifysgol Abertawe

#### Profile

- Established 1920
- Higher Education
- 19,709 students (includes full and part time students at all levels)
- 2510 staff
- Suburban/Coastal

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## The approach

The Student SWell contributes to the University's sustainability targets and improves its environmental performance through sustainable behavior change and contributions. The project empowers future practitioners with knowledge, experience, confidence and skills relevant to their future workplaces. The following three approaches have been used to bring the students on board with the behavior change agenda:

- **Swansea Sustainability Award:** HEAR recognised award. Students gain accredited knowledge, skills and values that are particularly desirable in the green and lower carbon job sector;
- **Sustainability Engagement:** Students add value to the local environment and community and work to help meet the University's sustainability targets;
- **Our Campus our Lab:** Students help the University's Estates and Facilities Management (EFM) achieve environmental objectives and targets.

## Our goals

- Support a culture of engagement and collaboration around sustainability issues within our local and wider community.
- Equip staff and students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to create a more sustainable future.
- Strong links between estates/ operations and academia using the campus as a teaching resource.
- Students and staff involved in a wide range of sustainability initiatives to increase their employability and improve transferable skills.

## Obstacles and solutions

Number of students on the scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing engagement through drop in sessions</li> <li>• Widen the variety of campaigns and activities that would interest students.</li> </ul>
Lack of research into sustainable behavior change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further integration with the curriculum and research groups</li> <li>• Discussions through WEAUC meetings</li> </ul>

## Performance and results

The Student Swell project has been a growing success from the first year of its launch. The student network has grown from 25 students in the first year to 440 in its third year. The students have helped the University with:

- an annual reduction of 33t of CO2 from 65,204 kWh of energy savings
- 170t of waste diverted from landfill
- financial savings of £28,356
- 31 Students achieved the HEAR recognised Sustainability Award.
- More than 30 SWell students completed formal work placements within Estates and Facilities Management (EFM) contributing to the University's sustainability targets.

## The future

### Lessons learned

- 1 Students are the greatest asset of any University. They are an amazing source of creative ideas, energy and skills which needs to be seen and utilised to meet sustainability objectives.
- 2 What has worked well is an integrated approach that creates a connection between academia and estates & facilities whilst giving practical working experience and skill enhancement to students



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3 Recognition of the student's potential contribution to the local community and low carbon economy to create a sense of achievement in our future practitioners.

## Sharing your project

The success achieved by the project has been disseminated to businesses and HEIs; at the Practical Behaviour Change - Insight seminar by Green Rewards; and at a sustainability workshop with students of the University of Northern Iowa. We plan to share learning at the next WEAUC and Low Carbon Swansea meetings.

The project's model is relevant since it can be adapted to suit any educational institution, and can also be adopted by both staff and students. We are currently running a pilot project using the same themes/model for University staff. The University will be launching its full SWell staff rewards programme/mobile app in October 2016. We will be presenting this, and the Student SWell's success and findings to the active WEAUC branch (c. 30 institutions), to help other Welsh HEIs adopt aspects of the project.

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

"It says 'diolch yn fawr iawn' (thank you very much) to a University community that works to continually improve the positive environmental and social impacts of our institution. This award celebrates our hard work, and recognises Swansea University as a responsible member of our city and regional community."

**Professor Richard B. Davies**  
**Vice-Chancellor**

## Further information

For further information on this project contact Ambreen Jahangir, SHE Officer (Environment)

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