



Green Gown  
Awards 2016



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UWS UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WEST OF SCOTLAND

# Finalist's case study

## SAUWS and UWS

### Community

## Engage, Empower, Ember – E<sup>3</sup>



### About the project

The partnership between the University of the West of Scotland, the Student Association of the University of the West of Scotland and Community organisations has assisted in achieving our aspirations to not only reduce carbon emissions but make a real economic, social and health impact in our internal and external community. The project focuses on a Sustainability Hub, providing a space in the community for sustainability workshops and free essential goods; community gardens with a focus on inclusion and the health benefits of therapeutic gardening and locally produced organic fruit and vegetables.

#### Profile

- Higher Education
- 15,000 students
- 1,500 staff
- Urban

### Project partners

SAUWS has brokered relationships with the wider community, as a result of initial Climate Challenge Funded activity, in keeping with the ethos of the Community Empowerment and Engagement (Scotland) Act 2015 where the emphasis is reaching across and through communities. The project has a strong focus on inclusivity with involvement of UWS and SAUWS staff, UWS staff and student volunteers, partnership groups such as Alzheimer's Scotland and Migrant Help. There has also been the participation of UWS students and disadvantaged members of local communities who have accessed services such as the free shop, or been actively involved in the community gardens.

### The results

#### The problem

Both internal and external community engagement on Sustainability had been ad hoc and limited in impact.

#### The approach

Providing physical spaces in the form of a Sustainability hub and internal and external Community Gardens has made a significant impact on engagement levels. Dedicated Scottish Government funded SAUWS staffing to kick start the project was crucial to its success, through the development of volunteering programmes and strong links with community organisations.

#### Our goals

With a focus on Community Gardens and a free shop, UWS and SAUWS aimed to reach out to our local communities to provide a range of benefits stretching far beyond core carbon reduction activity. We have created strong links with partners such as Alzheimer's Scotland, Migrant Help and local schools, as well as our own Student Services department, to target disadvantaged groups with multifaceted outcomes including benefits to mental and physical health, economic and social welfare and social inclusion.



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## Performance and results

The Community Gardens and Sustainability hub, have resulted in carbon savings of 120 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e over the first year.

**Inclusion** – The project aims to make a difference in the communities we serve, we have developed working partnerships with local groups and the gardens have been designed with accessibility and inclusion as a key part of the project specification. An excellent example of this is the partnerships developed with Migrant Help, facilitating workshops where migrants can meet up, learn new skills and more importantly meet other members of the community.

**Health** – Both the UWS on site community gardens and those off site have been used as vehicles to improve mental and physical health. Working with groups such as Alzheimer's Scotland focusing on the therapeutic effects of gardening and a healthy diet.

**Welfare** – Students and disadvantaged members of the community have accessed the free shop for the provision of essential goods.

Over 1300 people participated in project initiatives in the first year.

## The future

### Lessons learned

It has been vital to have physical spaces where members of our community can actively participate in activity. When the project funding came to an end it was a challenge to ensure that core activity would be able to continue without project specific staffing. Due to SAUWS creative thinking and commitment, the key deliverables are continuing through the dedication of SAUWS staff members, student and staff volunteers.

### Sharing your project

We are looking at ways of replicating the project and have been in discussion with other Charities such as those working with ex-service personnel and FE providers to expand the project community.

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

UWS and SAUWS are proud of the Engage, Empower and Embed Project and what can be achieved through effective cross sector relationships. It is a fantastic achievement to be Green Gown Award finalists.

### Further information

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