



Green Gown
Awards 2016



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Finalist's case study

Field Studies Council Best Newcomer Carbon Vision 2020

About the project

Summary

FSC has been in existence since 1943 and our learning locations are predominantly in grand, listed properties set in rural locations. These include the Lake District, Pembrokeshire Coast, Snowdonia and the Isle of Cumbrae. In 2010 the FSC set its vision for 2020 and with the huge awareness of the need to reduce carbon emissions a target was set to reduce our carbon emissions by 40% per learner by 2020. This would focus on our properties, learners and transport and would give many challenges as there is no 'one size fits all' solution to carbon reduction. Since this time we have been working hard and investing heavily to ensure progress towards our carbon reduction target. Many of our learning locations now have some energy created from biomass, solar or hydro sources. We have also implemented a new Environmental Policy and focused on promoting positive environmental behaviours to our staff and visitors.

Project partners

The Carbon Vision 2020 project has involved the staff, trustees as well as all of the studies that visit our learning locations across the UK. Within this project there have been several focus areas in behaviour change and capital projects that have used a variety of partners including various National Parks, National Grid, local authorities and the National Trust. We have also had a number of funders for our various elements of the Carbon Vision 2020 project that include the Rural Carbon Challenge Fund, Lake District National Park, Neath Port Talbot Borough Council, Welsh European Funding Office, Scottish Government and Scottish Natural Heritage.

The results

The problem

Set in 2010, the 40% carbon reduction per learner was an ambitious target for the FSC as previous to this there had been no specific targets in reducing carbon emissions and any programmes that had taken place were very specific and adhoc. Some of the reasoning for this was that the organisation had many historic buildings in both rural and urban locations which gave many challenges. On top of this many of the properties that FSC has are leased from organisations such as National Trust and National Grid. Whilst this gives our organisation huge diversity, there is no 'one size fits all' solution to carbon reduction.



Profile

- Environmental Education Charity
- 32,000 Undergraduate and Postgraduate visitor nights each year
- 500 staff across 19 learning locations
- Urban and Rural



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The approach

The Field Studies Council takes a holistic approach to reducing carbon emissions through both physical and behavioural change initiatives. In 2015, 150,000 people visited FSC learning locations on courses (equating to 219,000 visitor nights). FSC's ten-year vision (2010) committed to reduce carbon emissions by 40% per learner by 2020 through capital investment and behavioural change.

- Capital Investment** - Much of the funding for the projects that have taken place has been funded internally by FSC. Each year a maintenance and development fund is set up by trustees through the Finance and Administration Committee. Learning locations bid for projects and emphasis is also given to projects that will target or contribute to carbon reduction. Some specific investments at learning locations include an HEP Archimedes screw at Flatford Mill, Suffolk; installation of a 300kw biomass heating scheme and 35kW HEP scheme at Blencathra, Cumbria; and solar energy installations at Dale Fort, Pembrokeshire. All of our newly acquired buildings such as Margam Discovery Centre, South Wales, and Millport, Scotland have been designed to very high sustainability specifications. The new field centre at Margam received funding of £6.2 million from the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO). For some of our larger scale projects we have received external funding through working with grants and partners.
- Behavioural Change** - We also prioritise carbon reduction through investment in our staff and promoting positive environmental behaviours. We have an annual green fund of £20,000 (again funded internally) where staff apply for projects to reduce carbon at our learning locations. The focus of the Green Fund is for Sustainability teams based at each learning location to formalise a bid and, with the support of the Head of Learning Location, apply to the fund at the start of each year. We are now in the third year of the Green Fund having put £60,000 into projects that have been designed by staff from across the organisation. These include biofuel generation, advanced composting schemes, investment in green energy, improved interpretation and the promotion of positive environmental behaviours to our visitors. Additionally, we have held conferences, meetings and workshops to develop our staff and trustees' understanding so that these messages can also be communicated to our visitors. We have developed a new environmental policy and have completed a new sustainable procurement statement to guide not only ourselves but also our suppliers through a supplier questionnaire.

Our goals

The overarching goal of the project is to reduce the carbon emissions of the FSC by 40% per learner by 2020 (based on a 2011 baseline).

Obstacles and solutions

Learning locations across the whole of the UK, predominantly in grand, listed properties in rural locations. These old properties give many challenges and, whilst we own some, others are leased from organisations such as National Trust or National Grid.

We have had to look at these buildings in different ways to ensure progress towards our carbon reduction target. There has been major capital investment to tackle this. Many of our learning locations now have some energy created from biomass, solar or other renewable sources. Our upland Blencathra centre, at an altitude of 300m exemplifies our commitment: from the worst to one of the best on the basis of investment in biomass boilers and HEP.



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Being able to encourage behavioural change of our staff and visitors that has an impact of reducing our carbon emissions at learning locations but also communicates the message to visitors when they leave our sites effectively.

Through different training programmes such as developing our values and behavioural change training with our staff, we have tried to engage staff to actively buy into carbon reduction. This is supported by the FSC Green Fund, for which all learning location staff teams are encouraged to apply for innovative carbon reduction ideas at their centres directly. We have also engaged more with our learning location sustainability coordinators and they meet at least twice per year to discuss progress in centres and ideas that are represented from all staff. Ultimately information disseminates through a variety of ways to the 150,000 visitors that attend our centres each year. We are striving to include elements of sustainability in all of our courses and to get students to apply this to issues in the real world. As such we have now built this into our teaching quality criteria assessments. We also encourage students to take part in our programmes by educating through our displays and we are now trialling digital monitor displays in centres where students can see what energy is being used and are encouraged to reduce their consumption.

Performance and results

At the end of 2015 we had reduced our overall carbon emissions by 16.3% per learner. We also have now gained the Carbon Trust Standard who stated that the 'Emissions Intensity Reduction Benchmark' showed FSC to have achieved a 29.8% reduction between 2013 and 2015, the highest in the education sector.

Organisationally, in absolute terms, we reduced our annual carbon emissions from 2,620 tonnes to 2,023 tonnes in the same time period.

We have modified our buildings across the organisation using a sustainable approach. Our Head Office moved from oil central heating to biomass and solar energy saving 23.8 tonnes of carbon per annum. The new HEP and biomass installations at Blencathra now save at least 155.5 tonnes of carbon per annum as the centre previously relied on oil, LPG and electricity.

FSC continues to invest heavily in the infrastructure at our learning locations. Between 2013 and 2015 our energy costs have reduced by 49% for heating oil, 19% for electricity and 7.6% for gas with biomass costs rising 474%. Overall, FSC has reduced its energy bills by £37,000 per annum. The other benefits from the investments in green energy such as solar, hydro and biomass have meant that we are also receiving funding back through Feed-In tariffs and Renewable Heat Incentives.

The future

Lessons learned

- To be able to achieve significant carbon reductions capital investment from both within the organisation and external sources is required at a meaningful level. Without this, small changes can be made, but no major steps can be taken. Instilling this ethos is vital in order to make a significant impact.
- Engaging with staff and visitors is imperative. Having structures that allow changes from bottom up (such as the FSC Green Fund) allows buy-in from all employees. This gives a greater level of staff ownership and positivity that is communicated to our visitors more clearly.



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- In order to have a greater impact in carbon reduction it is vital to work with partners and stakeholders. Joint programmes enable the promotion and sharing of best practices, allowing new ideas to be incorporated across the organisation.

Sharing your project

Since starting the Carbon 2020 Vision Project the FSC has communicated the reductions we have made through our website and we now have specific pages that link to our programme and where you can download copies of our Carbon Management Plan and Environment Policy. We have also communicated the work we have done through the 'Fit for the Future' Network that includes partners such as the National Trust. Our members and visitors can also see what we are doing through the updates that we have published in our twice-yearly FSC magazine. There are also displays in our centres that engage our customers with the things that we are doing in each learning location. Through sharing our project we have also found new ideas that we can incorporate and has led to us having further impacts on our carbon reduction.

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

Being shortlisted for a Green Gown Award has been a huge accolade for the work of the Field Studies Council. It has helped us to demonstrate that the positive effort that we are putting into shaping our carbon reduction programme has been recognised externally. Being a finalist also provides gravitas and reassurance that shows others that our work can be easily replicated at further locations. Finally, receiving recognition as a finalist inspires us to continue with this, and future projects.

Further information

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