



Green Gown
Awards 2016



Dissemination
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Finalist's case study

Durham University

Leadership

Professor Tim Burt

About the project

Summary

Tim is the first Dean for Environmental Sustainability in the history of the University. For almost ten years he has undertaken this role on a voluntary basis on top of his other roles as Master of Hatfield College and Professor of Geography and has been a constant influence striving to embed environmental sustainability into Durham University. Tim is proud that his leadership has been instrumental in driving the environmental sustainability agenda in the University to its present position.

Ten years on, the University now has a Green Gown Award-winning Environment Team, a plethora of activities and campaigns associated with all elements of sustainability, senior-level accountability and responsibility for 'environmental sustainability' and a Dean for Environmental Sustainability. Tim has striven to ensure that sustainability is considered in all of the University's major plans and policies.

Project partners

None in relation to this nomination but it is appropriate to note that the Greenspace team works closely with Durham Students' Union and with Durham County Council.

The results

The problem

Back in 2007 the environment agenda at Durham University was just beginning to gain momentum. At that time, there was no Environment Team, therefore raising the sustainability profile of the University both internally and externally was going to be a challenge.

The approach

Along with a colleague formerly from Harvard, Tim started up the first pan-University environmental group – ESAG (Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group) to ensure the momentum kept going and it did. As a Professor and Master, Tim did not have any direct 'environmental sustainability' responsibilities, however he agreed to Chair ESAG in his spare time.

As the agenda grew and more projects developed, Tim agreed to host a newly formed Environment Team in his College – affording them office space and line-management. With the recognition of his work reaching our Executive Committee, Tim was given the additional title of 'Dean for Environmental Sustainability'.



Profile

- HEI
- Over 17,000 students
- Over 3000 staff
- Urban



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Our goals

Durham University is committed to reducing its environmental impact, and improving the local environment, both for the people who live and work in the University, and for the wider community. This commitment is reflected in plans, policies and procedures which seek to make the most effective and efficient use of all resources, encouraging all members of the University community to develop an ecologically sound approach to their work and lifestyle.

Obstacles and solutions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding sustainable projects, including behaviour change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured an annual carbon-ring fenced budget of £100k of revenue fund
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small Environment Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointment of a Sustainability Manager, Sustainable Travel Plan Co-ordinator and a Student Sabbatical post on a permanent basis to allow continuity for the team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication and promotion of Sustainability across the University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group (ESAG); rebranding to Greenspace and established Environment Champions across Departments and Colleges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed Sustainability across the student body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports Environmental Bursar (based at Hatfield and University Colleges) who leads the Green Move Out scheme, which collects unwanted items (clothes, etc.) at the end of each academic year, for resale or donation to charitable organisations

Performance and results

Under his leadership the 'Environment Office' of 2FTE grew to a strong team of 4.4 FTE and was rebranded as 'Greenspace' giving consistency and weight to the environmental messages it was communicating across the University community. Tim's role as Dean afforded gravitas to the team whilst they afforded their work increased visibility amongst the University community – a truly symbiotic relationship, of which he is very proud. Together, the team has worked to embed environmental sustainability further into the University including the 'Responsible University' framework and New Programme Development.

Tim's leadership has ensured environmental sustainability has retained a structure in the University via established groups and teams – Carbon Management Team, Environmental Sustainability Strategic Planning Group, Fairtrade Steering Group and the Sustainable Travel Plan Steering Group. Tim Chairs of all of these groups in order to afford them high-level visibility and all of which developed under his guidance and which he undertook in his 'spare' time.

Other key performance areas and results include:

The Carbon Ring-Fenced Budget (CRFB) is an annual £100k revenue fund which was given to the Carbon Management Team to help realise additional carbon savings in Departments and Colleges. This money is a product of the finance related to energy saving and can be spent on anything from training or publicity materials to timer switches or new equipment. Since its inception in 2011/12 the CRFB projects are estimated to have saved over 700tonnes of carbon with an average payback of five years.



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As the 'Green Dean' Tim advises the Deputy Vice-Chancellor who is the Environment Sponsor for our University Executive Committee (UEC).

Additionally, Tim has recently been appointed to the role of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Colleges and Student Experience) on a temporary basis until January 2017. This means that he is again a member of the University Executive Committee and in this role he will ensure that Environmental Sustainability is high on the UEC agenda.

With regards to impacts beyond Durham University, Tim was integral in the instigation of the 'Durham Bag Reduction Partnership' back in 2008. The project was to reduce the amount of single-use bags used in the City. We received support from many local shops and local school children were involved in a competition to design the logo for the bag. This partnership then morphed into 'Climate Durham' which was a group (now disbanded) consisting of interested local parties looking into environmental issues in Durham City.

More recently Tim has signed the County Durham Food Charter on behalf of the University. In addition to this the Sustainability Manager in Greenspace is a member of the Durham County Environment Partnership Board and is the Chair of the County's Climate Change Group, as well as being the Chair for the NE Group for the EAUC. Tim knows that his leadership and encouragement aided these appointments and he is proud to have mentored the Greenspace team.

In addition Tim is also a trustee and President of the Field Studies Council (FSC) (which recently became a member of the EAUC).

A constant influence for the last ten years, Tim has been the voice that is always there asking the difficult questions of the VC and his team and provoking thought where he can. Tim feels the biggest unexpected outcome and that he is most proud of, is the way in which the Greenspace branding has been adopted and understood right across the University. Communication has been a big part of our work and the Greenspace marketing media such as logos, posters and emails are well known in the University.

The future

Lessons learned

1. It is important to be passionate about the role you have taken on
2. Ensure you surround yourself with enthusiastic, passionate people who are well placed in the University to take the agenda forward in their respective areas.
3. Being in a senior position in the University affords the ability to gain access to other senior groups which you are then able to influence.

Sharing your project

As an influential senior member of staff Tim was able to take the environmental agenda to a wide range of meetings across the University and ensure that environmental sustainability is always being considered.

Promotion of Environmental Sustainability and Greenspace are regularly promoted throughout the University at various meetings, through our Dialogue Magazine (produced every three months) and Dialogue Signpost (weekly email) and through our campaigns and events for all staff and students.



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

Tim Burt is proud to see the direction in which the University is currently heading, in terms of environmental sustainability, and he feels his leadership over these years and support from his team and his peers has been instrumental in the appetite for this that the University currently has. He is therefore delighted to have been nominated for a Green Gown Award.

'It has been a delight over the last decade to watch the development of the environmental sustainability agenda at Durham University. The award-winning Greenspace initiative has been core to this and it has been a pleasure for me to be part of that exciting enterprise.' Professor Tim Burt.

Further information

Professor Tim Burt

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