



Green Gown
Awards 2017



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Finalist's case study



Perth College UHI

Employability

Don't Waste Your E-waste



Profile

- Further and Higher Education
- 9112 students (includes full and part time students) 3632 FTE
- 615 staff (includes full and part time)
- Urban

About the project

Summary

Perth College's WEEE Centre works with students to refurbish waste IT and communications equipment for resale, giving students access to real life work skills and fault finding as well as affordable, good quality refurbished equipment for sale. Providing students access to valuable skills, we also offer a responsible route to reuse and recycling of unwanted e-waste for the local community. All proceeds from sales go back into the student journey.

Project partners

Re-Tek UK Ltd – collect WEEE waste that we can not refurbish internally
Perth and Kinross Council – supported installation of WEEE reuse containers at 3 local recycling centres
Zero Waste Scotland have also provided funding for a 2 year remanufacturing project for which we are a partner alongside Re-Tek and Enscape Consulting.

The results

In the beginning...

The project was initially started as a 12 month environmental employability scheme in 2010, employing 4 members of staff for 6 months each to collect and refurbish IT waste from a reuse container at the local recycling centre. The team were then based off-campus, near the recycling centre. The scheme was intended to create opportunities for young people working in technology to gain experience of working in a sustainability role. After the project ended Perth College were keen to continue the WEEE Centre, finding suitable premises on campus and taking on one of the project staff on a permanent basis, to be employed by the college. As the work of the WEEE Centre grew a relationship was developed with the computing department, to offer students the opportunity to complete work experience in the WEEE Centre.

What we do

We collect IT and communications waste from the college's refresh programme, our containers at the local recycling centres, local businesses and direct donations. We sort, weigh and log all the equipment, remove all

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the data and refurbish the items for resale at affordable prices to students, staff and members of the public. Anything that can't be refurbished by us goes to our partners Re-Tek for refurbishment or recycling. Computing students complete their work experience in the WEEE Centre, giving them access to real life, hands on fault finding in a safe environment, as well as experience of a professional working environment, to develop their employability skills. This year we have run a programme of events in the college to raise awareness of and promote the work of the WEEE Centre and WEEE reuse.

Our goals

1. To ensure that all college e-waste is diverted from landfill and where possible is given another life with a new owner.
2. To reduce the amount of e-waste going to landfill in Perth and Kinross
3. To increase awareness of the hazards of e-waste and to promote e-waste reuse among students, staff and the general public
4. To provide hands on learning experiences in computer maintenance, repair and employability skills in the technology sector
5. To improve accessibility to technology
6. To allow the students to benefit from proceeds from sales
7. To promote the benefits of the WEEE Centre and encourage other organisations to improve their e-waste management

Obstacles and solutions

Finding suitable accessible premises	It is necessary to have space to store collected WEEE and that is easily accessible (ie ground floor with external door) for bringing waste items in and out of the building. We were able to adapt a former decorating studio for our needs.
Student, staff and public awareness	We have improved our online presence through updating the website, listings on Google my business and bing and starting social media channels. We have also run a programme of events over the year to raise awareness.
What to do with items we cannot refurbish in house	We developed a relationship with Re-Tek UK Ltd, an IT disposal and asset retirement company that collect everything we can't process free of charge.



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Performance and results

Our main achievements this year have been:

- increasing donations through opening 2 new reuse containers at local recycling centres and 6 new collection containers across other academic campuses in Scotland. In 2015/16 we collected approximately 3 tonnes of WEEE in 2016/17 we collected approximately 10 tonnes.
- improving awareness and student, staff and public engagement through a programme of 10 events across the year, starting a plan of curriculum engagement with other academic areas beyond computing and improved online presence on our website, search engines and 4 social media channels. We have increased our regular online following from 0 to 145 followers across our social media channels in the last year.
- Through our programme of events we have engaged 173 participants, 19 student volunteers totaling 54 volunteer hours.
- On average over the last 3 years we have achieved a 74% retention rate on the NQ Computing technologies course and 70% of students that completed the course have continued onto HE qualifications within the college. We hope that along with the WEEE Centre experience on their CVs, this will lead to progression into employment in a relevant field.

CO2 savings

[If applicable, please insert your CO2 savings. Delete if not applicable. *Overall tonnes of CO2 saved using the DEFRA/DECC conversion factors. <http://www.ukconversionfactorscarbonsmart.co.uk/>. **if your initiative does not have any carbon savings please leave this area blank. If your initiative is a long-term project then please state over how many years.]

DECC conversion factors does not have data available for WEEE reuse at present, therefore figures can only be calculated as WEEE saved from landfill

Please record the annual carbon savings* you have/will achieve with your initiative**.	
CO2t savings 2016/2017:	10 tonnes of WEEE (166 kgCO2e saved from landfill) (Actual)
CO2t savings 2017/2018:	12 tonnes of WEEE (199 kgCO2e saved from landfill) (Estimated)
CO2t savings over the life cycle of the project:	40 tonnes of WEEE collected over 7 years (approx. 664 kgCO2e saved from WEEE otherwise going to landfill) (Actual)

The future

Lessons learned

Over the course of the project it has become apparent that the WEEE Centre initiative is very popular with students on the NQ Computer Technologies course as they value the opportunity to get their hands dirty and gain some practical experience, while also getting a taste of a real life work environment! It is also very popular



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with students hoping to bag a bargain and grab themselves some affordable kit. What we have found is that most of the equipment collected from the local recycling centres is not reuseable, due to the age and condition of the equipment, so we mostly rely on ex-college equipment and business donations to stock our shelves. We hope to continue to spread the word to students, staff and members of the public and increase awareness of the environmental, social and financial benefits of early IT reuse through an increasing programme of events and initiatives.

Top 3 learnings from implementing your project

- 1 Work experience at the WEEE Centre improves the student experience and increases motivation on the computing course.
- 2 Putting on a programme of events and involving a variety of college departments has increased student engagement and awareness.
- 3 Building awareness in the local community has increased donations, the community is keen to support the students.

Sharing your project

Increasing our online presence resulted in increased donation enquiries from businesses and the public. We have also built relationships with other campuses to host collection containers and increase awareness of what we are doing.

We have written an information pack detailing our model that we believe is transferable to other institutions. This is available on request.

We ran an open event this year called the 'Culture of Consumerism', which was a series of creative e-waste workshops in the morning and talks and discussion in the afternoon around the subject of consumerism. This was an excellent opportunity to make connections and share the work of the WEEE Centre with other interested parties.

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

We are delighted to have our project recognized for the valuable initiative that we believe it is, and to be able to share knowledge nationally about our project, to encourage other institutions to adopt the model, so that more students and communities can benefit from it.

Further information

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