



## Finalist's case study



# Canterbury Christ Church University

## Continuous Improvement

### Building a Sustainable Future: From Start to Beginning

#### About the project

##### Summary



Canterbury Christ Church University

#### Profile

- Higher Education
- 18,000 students (includes full and part time students)
- 1,800 staff
- Urban

As a Church of England Foundation, Sustainability, in its broadest sense, is written in to the core of our mission and values. But, not until 2010 was this explicitly stated through strategy, and through the appointment of the first person to take an institutional lead on sustainability. Since then, a strategic and evolutionary approach has transformed the University infrastructure, both operationally and academically.

Subsequent Strategic Plans have continued to raise the priority of sustainability, and in 2015 an institutional Framework for Sustainability was approved. Underpinned by the LiFE Index performance improvement framework, our Environmental Management System (EMS) incorporates all our positive and negative impacts.

The *Futures Initiative*, the Sustainability Research Network (SRN), *Bioversity*, Edible Campus, Walk Ways, "Beer, Bread and Honey", and the Student Green Office (SGO) continue to enlarge the University community, which is working towards a sustainable future.

Over a period of 7 years sustainability leadership at Christ Church has developed into an on-going serendipitous leadership cycle: Using opportunities, as they arise, to nurture creativity, build agency, gain support, influence strategy, and implement new operational and institutional policy; Changing the culture of the University. Christ Church may have started late in taking explicit and visible action on sustainability, but it is beginning to make a real and tangible difference!

#### Project partners

Driving institutional change requires the support and participation from a wide range of partners. This includes several members of the Senior Management Team, who chair working groups and sit on the Sustainability Strategic Management Group. From across the University there are a wide range of staff and students who sit on working groups, from Travel and Sustainable Business to Biodiversity, Sustainable Food to Education for Sustainable Futures, the SRN to the Carbon Management Oversight Group. The SGO and the Students' Union have been instrumental partners in recent years through the NUS Green Impact and Responsible Futures programmes.



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## The results

### The problem

To guide Christ Church to a more sustainable future

### The approach

- Build a governance structure that fosters a whole university approach to sustainability
- Bring stakeholders to the table around an issue and give them the agency to make change happen
- Use EcoCampus and ISO14001 as core process around which performance improvement is attained
- Use the LiFE Index to underpin ISO14001 continual cycle of performance improvement
- Report and celebrate regularly
- Use a living lab approach and the 6 capitals model to articulate value creation
- Use a project focused approach that encourages partnerships to develop with academics and students
- Nurture creativity and facilitate change through supporting individual motivation
- Align sustainability with organisational goals to ensure win-win change

Our approach is underpinned by:

**Integrity:** A principled response to sustainability and sustainable development

**Optimism:** A focus on positive responses to current contexts which acknowledges the potential for engagement and action

**Rigour:** A commitment to challenging bias through critical, creative and futures thinking

**Inclusion:** An inclusive approach, which embraces the rights and responsibilities of others locally, globally, now and in the future.

## Our Aims and Objectives

### 1. STUDENT AND STAFF EXPERIENCE

**Aim:** To develop culture and practices based on our vision for sustainability and university values

**Objectives:**

- Enhance the level of engagement and participation in sustainability related initiatives
- Encourage the development of student initiated and led sustainability-related activity
- Foster connections between individuals, communities and their environment
- Create spaces to support health and wellbeing

### 2. EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Aim:** To support curriculum innovation so that all students have the opportunity to engage with sustainability related issues relevant to their discipline and chosen field of work

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## Objectives:

- Embedding sustainability in the development of new modules and the enrichment of existing formal and informal curriculum.
- Ensure that academic infrastructure aligns with internal and external quality frameworks for sustainability
- Maximise opportunities for student involvement in the development of formal, informal and campus curriculum.

## 3. RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Aim: To encourage the development of sustainability research through on-going interdisciplinary dialogue, exploration and dissemination locally, nationally and internationally.

## Objectives:

- Demonstrate leadership through sharing knowledge and experience, such that the University becomes known for excellent practice within the HE sector.
- Facilitate the development of inter and trans-disciplinary research with a sustainability focus.
- Collaborate across sectors to develop new thinking for sustainability.

## 4. OUR ENVIRONMENT

Aim: To develop campus environments that demonstrate excellent sustainability practice, which are open, accessible and inclusive, and provide explicit examples of our distinctive education and research profile

## Objectives:

- Develop the University estate, in a way that maximises educational, research and community benefit and enhances positive environmental impact.
- Develop our campus environments, recognising our sense of place within unique heritage locations.
- Integrate our built and natural environments in ways that embody our values.
- Maintain progress in reducing environmental impact, maintaining a focus on reducing our carbon emissions in support of sector and national targets.

## Obstacles and solutions

Resistance to change or agenda	Persist! Try a different approach. Find a way that you can support their priorities.
Loss of key staff	Take a break and move on to another area.
Lack of belief in organisational willingness to change	Demonstrate through example. Facilitate and give permission at a grass roots level, and build policy and infrastructure to support at a higher level.
Lack of legitimacy	Align with external agendas and internal priorities – be cunning!



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## Performance and results

- EcoCampus Platinum and ISO14001:2004 since 2013
- Achieved ISO14001:2015 in 2017
- Funded over 100 *Futures Initiative* curriculum development projects
- Developed a hop garden planted with heritage hops and brew a green hop ale every September in partnership with the Canterbury Brewers
- Worked with Mark Edwards to develop Whole Earth? And displayed in Kent and South India
- Helped the Christ Church Students' Union to win Green Impact Union of the year in 2017
- Reduced scope 1&2 carbon emissions by 19% in 6 years
- Achieved "Zero waste to landfill" in 2013
- Built an academic partnership with a large local community residence group

## CO2 savings

During the life of our first carbon management plan 2010-2016, the target for scope 1 & 2 CO<sub>2</sub>e reduction was 24% from a 2009/10 baseline. Actual reduction was 19% from 8,682 tCO<sub>2</sub>e to 6,605 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.

## The future

### Lessons learned

The external and internal environment is constantly changing. Work with this change and use it to your advantage.

### Top 3 learnings from implementing your project

- Build a resilient infrastructure to support a long term change programme
- Bring stakeholders together around a purpose and allow them to lead!
- Give away what works: No one will remember who started it!

### Sharing your project

Leadership is at the core of this initiative. We have presented at EAUC conferences since 2012. Run a national conference at Canterbury in 2016. Co-authored a book entitled leadership for Sustainability in HE (to be published in 2018). This includes 4 global HE case studies. Project, research and case study elements have been widely presented and published at a variety of conferences with positive feedback.

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

It is always gratifying to be recognised for good practice.

### Further information

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