

South Lanarkshire College

Depute Principal

Angus J Allan

Leadership

Promoting Sustainable Behaviours



South
Lanarkshire
College
East Kilbride

Profile

- Depute Principal
- 70% Further and 30% Higher Education
- 5000 FT and PT students
- 324 staff
- In East Kilbride – 6th largest town in Scotland

About the project

Over a period of several years I've established "Promoting Sustainable Behaviours" as one of our three overarching Strategic Priorities. It's a key objective in all Managers' Operational Plans, Lecturers lesson plans, the College's Annual Report, and other corporate documents. It's high profile in student documents such as the prospectus, student diary and other publications. Most importantly, it has influenced staff, students and stakeholders to pause ... and think. As a result, it's had a huge impact on the way we go about our business, change in our curriculum and the buildings on our campus.

Project partners

Key partners that have enabled this are: students and staff in the college; specific staff with a passion, let loose to try ideas; The Senior Management Team; The Principal and the Board of Management. These people have been key enablers.

In general our staff have embraced this priority enthusiastically. There is active and passionate membership on the college's Sustainability Group, chaired by a Depute Head of Faculty. Individuals take on specific projects and run with them, reporting back to the group. the Board of Management has endorsed the strategy and the College has signed up to the SDG Accord. The Scottish Funding Council provided a small amount of seed funding as a one off support 8 years ago and we have never looked back!

The problem

Not so much of a problem, but a challenge:

To engage and enthuse staff and students to consider sustainable behaviours and what that means for them; to reflect sustainability as a priority strongly through the college's day-to-day business; to demonstrate publicly that promoting sustainability should be an integral part of an educational



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establishment's business; to discharge our moral duty as an educational establishment in preparing students as best we can for their future.... and to make sure that people do not assume that sustainable behaviour is someone else's responsibility, e.g. that of the estates team or for a single identified individual to run with.

The approach

In 2008 I chaired a group that constructed an affordable low-energy, low-carbon house as a "Big Hairly idea" to start people thinking about Sustainable approaches and behaviours and to influence our curriculum delivery. Interest in this project was way beyond what we expected.

In 2014, I incorporated the strategic priority **Promoting Sustainable Behaviours** into all the college's plans and used a quotation from Robert Swan, the first person to walk to both poles, to explain its significance to our organisation: "**The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it**". (R.Swan; March 2012).

I am fortunate in my role to have headroom and empowerment to take on initiatives and have subsumed responsibility for a strategic and operational directive: *Promoting Sustainable Behaviours*. I've embedded it in the colleges' strategic plans, operational plans and lesson plans; commissioned a sustainable travel booklet for students and visitors; set up and steered the college's Sustainability Group; re-launched the group when it was becoming solely focused on estate matters; authored teaching materials for school pupils; written case studies for the Scottish Government; chaired the steering group for our ground-breaking low-energy, low-carbon house; facilitated the "greening" of our campus with less reliance on fossil fuels through solar panels and ground source heat pumps; annually author and publish the college's annual report with 6 of the 28 pages focused on sustainability; engaged with BRE over the development of our new award-winning net-zero-carbon teaching block; lead the team that calculates the college's annual carbon footprint and reports on it to government; organised 3 conferences on sustainable buildings at the college; supported a "re-use-cup" project to reduce packaging waste; achieved support from our Board that Promoting Sustainability is appropriate as one of the college's three strategic priorities and a core value for the college.

Our goals

- Annually renew our vision for sustainable behaviours – there is a risk that over time behaviours may revert.
- Re-brand and re-publish a carbon management plan next year with a wider scope entitled: "South Lanarkshire College's Action Plan for a sustainable future"
- Make sure that Promoting Sustainability is formally written into the job description for the Depute Principal - currently it doesn't feature in anyone's job description, so future-proofing is required.
- Continue to reduce our carbon emissions beyond our published targets
- Stretch and challenge ourselves and students to test and adopt best practice in sustainability by looking to other organisations who have good ideas



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- Share our experiences with as wide an audience as possible
- Continue our philosophy that Promoting Sustainability is rightly an integral part of an educational establishment's normal business: in the way we conduct ourselves; in how we engage with partners and in what we encourage our students to learn about.

Obstacles and solutions

Obstacle	Solution
Sustainability is often viewed as a matter solely for estates.	Involve all curriculum areas and departments on the Sustainability Group, chaired in rotation by a member of teaching or departmental staff—everyone has a shared responsibility.
Sustainability is often viewed as a cost for an organization.	Adopt approaches that make environmental sense but also demonstrate financial prudence. Eg. for our new build now we didn't just look at the cost of a building, we looked at the materials used; waste streams; environmental impact and most critically the full anticipated life-cycle costs. A low-carbon, low-energy building wins hands down.
Board "buy-in"	It is a bold move for a Board to agree that of three strategic priorities, one should be "Promoting Sustainability". The key argument links with above that it is actually very good business sense as well as important educationally for our generation and for future generations.

Performance and results

Huge reduction in carbon emissions. Despite the student population growing by over 40%, over the same time frame our absolute t eCO₂ carbon emissions have declined as per the table below.

Staff engagement and involvement in projects that promote sustainable behaviours
Partner organisations such as the local authority and a raft of private companies and employers view us as a "go-to" organization for information and advice about adopting sustainable approaches and behaviours.
Students are empowered to bring ideas to the table and see them implemented.

CO₂ savings

Please record the annual carbon savings* you have/will achieve with your initiative**.	
CO ₂ t savings over the life cycle of the project:	Since moving into our new campus in 2008 we have reduced our annual eCO ₂ emissions by 36% from over 1900t eCO ₂ per year to just over 1200t eCO ₂ per year.

The future

Lessons learned

We have learned from experience that *Promoting Sustainable Behaviours* makes good business sense and when people consider the evidence, most people agree it is the sensible and right thing to do.

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We've learned to challenge traditional thinking and "experts" with evidence when we are being encouraged by them to do things that we don't believe contribute to long-term sustainability.

Top 3 learnings from implementing your project

1. Communicate clearly as a reference point in documents no more than three things your organisation believes are key strategic priorities ... then deliver it.
2. Identify enthusiasts with good ideas and let them loose to deliver them.
3. Involve people in all departments and faculties to share responsibility for sustainable behaviours.

Sharing your project

We communicate this in all our corporate publications, plans, annual reports and student brochures. As a result we have a large footfall of organisations and private individuals interested in our approaches who visit us, see what we have achieved, talk with us about their ideas and ours and use some of the lessons learned. We also share best practice with Scottish Government agencies and publish case studies, on their website, to share what we have learned and encourage others to do similar.

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

Being a Green Gown Award finalist is a wonderful accolade and ultimate external endorsement of approaches that contribute towards a more sustainable future for everyone.

Further information

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