

University of Cumbria

Carbon Reduction

How to Eliminate a Pool Car Fleet

Section 1 About the project

Summary

The University of Cumbria operates from several geographically dispersed sites, the main ones being 70 miles apart. Approximately 70% of our students attend placements as part of their courses. As a result, the University has a significant culture of business travel by car. Until 2010 this had been provided for by a combination of pool cars and private car use.

This project has been about implementing changes to eliminate or reduce the need to travel and, where travel is needed, to persuade staff to think about alternatives to single occupancy car use. By November 2012 the University had eliminated all of its pool cars (a fleet that in early 2010 numbered 49).

Project partners

Helping us to get staff to think about alternatives and more efficient ways of using cars, the University has been privileged to work with a range of internal and external partners, public and private sector organisations. This is what Virgin Trains and car club operator Co-Wheels had to say:

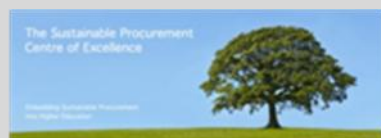
"We have been engaged in partnership with the University of Cumbria since 2009. This has been a true partnership - we have implemented several creative and innovative ideas that have led to mutual benefit. We initially supported their in-house travel events to promote the use of sustainable travel. In January 2011 we collaborated on a trial to reduce the use of pool cars at the University in line with their objectives of eliminating business road travel, reducing costs and carbon emissions and to maximise Virgin Trains' capacity north of Preston. By the end of 2011, VT estimates that over 5,000 University journeys had been made by rail. The trial was extended to the end of the current franchise (8th December 2012). Between January and June 2012 travel by University staff on Virgin Trains was up 76%." *Anna Doran, National Sales Manager, Virgin Trains*

"We have been engaged in partnership with the University of Cumbria in Carlisle for two years. Their commitment and enthusiasm was key to the establishment of a Car Club in Carlisle, centred on their campus. Outside London, car clubs are still a relatively new concept and it has been hard work overcoming cultural barriers to reduce reliance on private cars and increase the understanding of the benefits of car clubs. But we have been steadily growing membership and use of the club, and are looking forward to expanding the Carlisle club, as we build on this to roll out the wider club concept in Cumbria, including electric Car Club vehicles in the Lake District." *Paul Balmont, Managing Director, Co-Wheels*

University of
Cumbria 

Profile

- HEI
- 8900 students (includes full and part time)
- 930 staff (includes full and part time)
- Urban / Semi-Rural



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Section 2 The results

The problem

The dispersed nature of our sites and student placements have contributed to the establishment of a culture of driving in the University. This project, which is continuing, reflects our intention to change the policies and behaviours that have allowed this culture to develop.

The approach

Beginning in 2009-10, the University of Cumbria started a programme of changes to tackle this, including:

- Course consolidation (running courses on a single site where ever practically possible).
- Increased availability of ICT (phone and video conferencing; Communicator).
- Campus consolidation.
- Travel behaviour change programme.

Our goals

We are continuing to seek:

- Financial savings, in the form of travel, estate and staff time costs. A particular financial target was the considerable fixed cost tied up in leasing and managing a large car fleet.
- Improvements in staff wellbeing.
- Reductions in the environmental impact of our travel.

Obstacles and solutions

Obtaining senior management support and endorsement for the travel behavior change work.	We sought and obtained finance and estates director support at an early stage, based on projected financial savings.
The core issue: how to change entrenched travel behaviours.	We have adopted a mixture of approaches, including policy and senior management endorsement; financial incentives and disincentives; new and innovative travel options.
How to get the messages through.	We used everything from screensave messages to posters and global emails, but face to face surgeries and workshops had the biggest impact.
Obtaining good data: any HEI trying to work out their Scope 3 emissions will understand the difficulties involved in calculating the carbon impact of business travel.	We had to develop methods for calculating or making informed estimates of carbon emissions from all modes involved in the project. These methods were applied consistently year by year so that our carbon change figures are reliable. Where estimation was involved, savings were under rather than over estimated.

Performance and results

- Senior management acknowledgement of the potential to change travel behaviour.
- The University's costs of vehicle ownership and management fell by approximately £240k pa.
- Eliminated all pool cars.
- Reduction in car use between the University's two main cities (Carlisle and Lancaster) by 49%.
- Net reduction in overall carbon emissions from staff business travel of 119 tonnes per annum (27%).
- Anecdotal evidence of improved staff wellbeing resulting from the reduced need to drive.
- More productive use of travel time.

We have set more challenging financial and carbon targets for the 2012-13 academic year.

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

- We have learned that it is possible to change peoples' travel behaviours, particularly where there is a personal benefit in terms of time, wellbeing or, in some cases, money.
- Accurate, concise and well-targeted information is key to the success of behavior change programmes, and this is best passed on face to face.
- Despite our core aim to reduce the amount of travel, face to face communication remains very important in a number of situations.

Sharing your project

The project has involved a range of communications with internal colleagues and these will continue, including a major article about the project in an edition of next year's staff magazine. Externally, we have generated a significant amount of local media coverage on behalf of ourselves and our partners.

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

Apart from the cost and carbon savings, we have been able to contribute to knowledge about how to reduce carbon emissions in an area of behaviour that is often regarded as difficult to tackle.

Further information

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