



Green Gown  
Awards 2013

# Finalist's case study

Dissemination supported by:



## City College Plymouth Student and Staff Engagement Grow Allot



### Section 1 About the project

#### Summary

'Grow Allot' is an exciting organic food growing initiative created by City College Plymouth. Half an acre of overgrown, disused ground has been transformed into a vibrant community allotment. This unique site, once a historic railway line is now a relaxing, green space, where students, staff and the community can learn about creative gardening and biodiversity.

#### Profile

- FE
- 16,564 students (includes full and part time students)
- 837 staff
- Urban

#### Project partners

Diggin It (a community garden situated in Plymouth) was the College's main project partner along with various stakeholders including Plymouth City Council and Groundwork UK.

### Section 2 The results

#### The problem

In 2010 City College Plymouth began discussing plans to develop a dark, overgrown and misused area of land. At first, a cost effective and time efficient plan was proposed to turn the space into an extension of the student car park. This idea was rejected by the student and staff body who wanted a solution that would help conserve the local biodiversity and provide an invaluable green space for the area. The College supported the idea to transform the half-acre site into a vibrant, community allotment, thus improving the habitat and creating a unique outdoor teaching facility. It has taken three years to develop the 'Grow Allot' project which included funding bids and applications, ecological and biodiversity assessments, soil sampling, planning conditions and restraints, and its final construction. The allotment was opened to the students, staff and local community in March 2013.

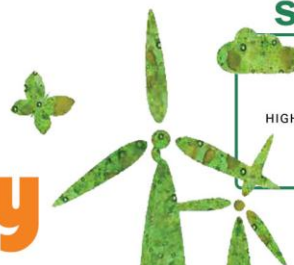
#### The approach

In April 2012, the College were awarded £155,226 as part of the Big Lottery Local Food Programme. In addition, the College committed to cash match fund the project with £25,479 and provided an 'in kind' contribution (staff time) of £23,470. We submitted 5 clear outcomes, which we aim to achieve by March 2014.

#### Our goals

To embed the allotment into all areas of learning at the college. In relation to our funding then we aim to achieve the following:

- Reduce the Council's local allotment waiting list by a minimum of 2 people.
- Engage 550 students and young children and increase their knowledge through hands-on planting and maintenance of the allotment



- Involve 350 members of the community who will learn about the benefits of outdoor activities and the variety of local food on offer
- Engage 200 NEETs within the local area of Plymouth who will learn new skills relevant to the work place
- Encourage 1180 students, staff and members of the local community to engage in the positive benefits of growing local produce through presentations, forums, workshops and discussions based around the project.

### Obstacles and solutions

Land that was unmanaged and misused.	Identify possible usage. Poll students and staff for possible outcomes and obtain funding.
Obtain planning permission for the project.	Follow council protocol and obtain the required environmental surveys to assess the land.
Opposition to our application	Attend the council's planning committee meeting. Invite local residents to the college to discuss the project.
Land contamination	Remediation including a membrane and importation of top soil.

### Performance and results

Up to Christmas 2013 we have engaged with 1000 individuals since the project officially opened in March 2013. We are on target to achieve the five outcomes by the end of March 2014 when the funding is completed.

## Section 3 The future

### Lessons learned

1. Gaining commitment from the College in the early stages was essential, but maintaining communication is equally as important.
2. As we move forward with the project we have learnt it is important to find better ways to communicate our ideas, gather information and educate.
3. Better management of contractors.
4. Achieving funding to enable the project coordinator to have a full time position.
5. Sustainability of the project by achieving funding that is longer than the two years given by funder.

### Sharing your project

City College Plymouth are keen to promote the 'Grow Allot' project and will be doing this through various social media platforms including, the college website and staff bulletins, mail shots, posters and by face to face communication through attending events at the college and at other venues.

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

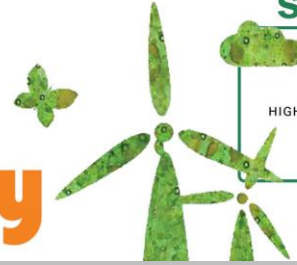
- Recognition of the continuing work that the College is committed to undertaking for its students, the local community and the wider environment.
- The opportunity to be at the awards ceremony to see and meet other colleges and universities who are striving to be more environmentally alert.



Green Gown  
Awards 2013

# Finalist's case study

Dissemination  
supported by:



HIGHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL  
FOR ENGLAND

hefce

## Further information

- Darran Mclane Local food Allotment Coordinator 01752 305722 [dmclane@cityplym.ac.uk](mailto:dmclane@cityplym.ac.uk)
- Laura Parry Sustainability Officer 01752 856803 [lparry@cityplym.ac.uk](mailto:lparry@cityplym.ac.uk)
- City College Plymouth website: [www.cityplym.ac.uk](http://www.cityplym.ac.uk)