

Coventry University Facilities and Services Eat the Campus!

Section 1 About the project

Summary

Eat the Campus! has aesthetically and environmentally transformed urban areas across the University through the creation of an interactive campus for fun, learning and research replacing places of traditional planting and bedding with two new spaces of colour, smells and tastes; transforming under-used urban corners into a pick your own campus of "what's that and how do you cook it?"

Project partners

The work is recognised and supported by organisations such as Ryton Organic, Britain in Bloom and even our external auditors for ISO14001.

Section 2 The results

The problem

The University's Grounds Team and academic researchers have developed strong relationships to collaboratively inform decisions regarding the management of the grounds and wished to demonstrate that even an urban campus has plenty of opportunities for biodiversity and can inform research on green roofs, choices in planting and impacts on people.

The approach

The University has transformed two separate areas that were only used as walk-throughs into an interactive campus. One new permanent multipurpose area opened in 2012 called Inside/Outside and with porous paving, green walls, outdoor seating a perennial forest garden it now serves as an event space, as well as demonstration area for researchers in sustainable urban drainage and agroecology. The planting includes perennial herbs, fruit and vegetables, which anyone is welcome to pick. The second area is by the student Hub building created by the Grounds Team in 2012 with bug hotels from recycled materials and extensive planting of recognisable and less obvious herbs, vegetables and salad. The area was previously underused even with its extensive seating but now thrives with activity as a highly public area where people stop, and because there are no labels they explore and experiment with the tastes and smells around them. This is now an annual feature and 2013 planting began in May with Garden Organic partnering with their Heritage seed library. This area is also used by horticultural therapy students as an outdoor classroom.

Our goal

To show that an intensively built city centre campus could be used to provide educational opportunities that were innovative and usable whilst adding much to the campus public realm and larger city landscape.



Profile

- HEI
- 22,554 students (including full and part time)
- 2,676 staff
- Urban

Twitter: [@covcampus](https://twitter.com/covcampus)

Website: www.coventry.ac.uk

Category supported by





Finalist's case study

Obstacles and solutions

Funding	An internal funding bid was made through a process that had support of Faculties and Services to develop this area for shared uses
Existing trees and infrastructure	The design brief accommodated trees, building elements and future needs for access to infrastructure

Performance and results

The benefits of this project include:

- Improved University and general public use of tricky areas of an urban campus, allowing people to slow down and investigate their surroundings and supported a continued collaboration to make the campus a demonstrator and learning and research tool as well as maintain high levels of amenity.
- Demonstration areas for dissemination events such as SUDSnet conference September 2012, for Water Efficiency Network January 2013.
- Unifying the University's approach to grounds management with academic research including our intensive and extensive green roofs, rainwater harvesting systems, edible urban environment, carbon sequestration and swales and two new BREEAM Excellent buildings.
- Continuing to strengthen the grounds team very positive reputation on campus.

Positive unexpected outcomes have included local media interest, support from Garden Organic regarding future schemes, visiting industrialists working with Coventry City Council and an event held by, and for, the Institute of Landscaping in May 2013.

Eat the Campus! has also contributed to the University's recent achievement of Platinum EcoCampus status and international standard ISO14001 for performance in environmental management. The grounds were specifically mentioned by the external auditors of the EcoCampus award.

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

Making the deliberate choice not to highlight the freedom to "pick your own" was an interesting experiment in people's attitudes and actions but it did result in staff having to explain and encourage. Interpretation boards will soon be placed to address this. Opportunities for voluntary involvement were limited and could have been extended at an earlier point in the work.

Sharing your project

Practical showcasing:

- Students from the Living Geography group and Horticultural Therapy course use the beds as practical examples to demonstrate to peer groups how HT is beneficial. Thrive, the national charity encouraging the transformation of lives through gardening are a key partner in delivering a second-year HT module, allowing for information sharing.
- Tours have been given to local authority representatives, Institute of Landscaping and other parties to allow knowledge transfer.



Finalist's case study

Dissemination through media:

- Appearances in the Coventry Telegraph, promoting its benefits to local communities and encouraging involvement.
- Blogging and social media.
- An article is being prepared for submission to Horticulture Week, the industry's leading and most widely read professional journal.
- We are intending an application to the Landscape Institute awards scheme for 2014.
- Discussions are underway with Green Flag Award Scheme representatives regarding a proposal to use the edible campus as an exemplar to stimulate interest in the project with special reference to HE.

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

It is a fantastic endorsement of the range of exemplar activities at Coventry, as sector interest is 'growing strongly' for edible schemes. It recognises the grounds team and academics that have collaborated to create unique learning tools and an amenity for students, staff and the general public.

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