

How the Further Education Sector Is Adopting Sustainable Development as a Central Organising Principle



Students at Llandrillo-Menai celebrate the opening of the Renewable Energy and Sustainability Centre for Wales, Rhos on Sea campus

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Foreward

Skills for Sustainability and FE as a driver for Change

Why is it that we have allowed the astounding pace of successive technological developments in the modern world to reduce the futures horizon to a point where most attention is paid to present and near-future challenges? How is it possible that whole sections of our global society are uneducated, living in poverty, facing starvation or living in the shadow of conflict? Why do we see continuing destruction of our natural capital and how have we allowed atmospheric carbon to reach 401.3 parts per million? As the gap between rich and poor, north and south and the have and have-nots continues to widen perhaps our senses have simply been moulded to become ever more desensitised? Has deregulation, privatisation and globalisation simply imposed materialistic values on individuals and is this creating a vicious circle of greed and insecurity? So what are we willing to sacrifice in the pursuit of unsustainable living?

In order to meet these global challenges of complexity, uncertainty and unsustainability, we need minds capable of creating new possibilities and an ability to translate ideas into action to transform our daily experiences into ones that allow a sustainable future.

This raises both challenges and opportunities for leadership and management in delivering a commensurate educational response for outstanding teaching, learning and assessment for sustainability.

Are Colleges taking action right now to ensure resilience to emerging global challenges? Do you know what your college will look like in 10-20 years' time? Do you know what employment skills will be required of your learners? Do you know who your learners will be and how your relationship with the community may change?

Sustainability is the single greatest leadership challenge of our time; should we not therefore re-envision, re-invent and re-define the business model for sustainability? An avalanche is coming and we have the option to stand still or move out of its' way.

'It's tragic because, by my reading, should we fail to radically change our approach to education, the same cohort of students we're attempting to "protect" could find that their entire future is scuttled by our timidity.

(D. Putnam, 2012)

*Chris Long, Health, Safety and Sustainable
Development Manager, Bridgend College*

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1.0 Introduction

The Welsh Government’s Sustainable Development Charter and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Bill provide a new context for public service delivery in Wales. The Bill will put into law six clear, integrated, well-being goals for Wales. A Commissioner for Future Generations in Wales will support public bodies in making better, more sustainable choices, and safeguard the well-being of future generations in Wales. The Bill also obliges public bodies to work together better, whilst also working with communities to find sustainable solutions to improve well-being, by reforming integrated community planning arrangements and establishing Public Services Boards.

Although Further Education colleges will not be subject to the duty enacted by the bill, as members of public service boards they will be part of the framework of organisations that make decisions and take action in pursuit of the bill’s goals. On the introduction of the bill in July 2014 the goals were as follows:

Goal	Description
A prosperous Wales	An innovative and productive, low carbon emission, economy that makes more efficient and proportionate use of resources; and which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities for a skilled and well-educated population.
A resilient Wales	A biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change.
A healthier Wales.	A society in which people’s physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
A more equal	A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their back-
A Wales of cohesive communities.	Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving	A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recrea-

We will show in this report how the Further Education sector in Wales has an enormous contribution to make in delivering these goals and is already delivering tangible outcomes to this end. This report does not claim to be a comprehensive or detailed analysis of the sector and is offered as a snapshot or illustrative window. It is based on interviews and investigations of seven colleges.

These are; Grwp Llandrillo Menai, Coleg Cambria, Pembrokeshire College, NPTC Group, Bridgend College, Coleg Gwent and Cardiff and Vale College. All of these colleges have signed the Sustainable Development Charter. In addition to the report we provide a series of mini case studies that focus on a particular aspect of a college’s contribution to the goals and sustainable development in general.

1.1 Further Education (FE) in Wales

There are fifteen Further Education colleges/institutions in Wales. This follows a recent period of mergers. In addition to the campus colleges there are the YMCA Community College and the Workers Educational Association providing FE in the community. A map showing the distribution of the colleges and links to their websites can be found on the Colleges Wales website - www.collegeswales.ac.uk/en-GB/wales_colleges-42.aspx

The FE colleges of Wales show a lot of variation in size, number and type of students, and the educational services provided. Some have chosen to specialise in the provision of services aimed at satisfying a particular need or employment sector as well as providing general post 16 education.

“FE Colleges in Wales offer 80% of all post-16 qualifications and provide learning experiences for almost 200,000 people in Wales. Two-thirds of all 16-18 year old learners in Wales choose to study at colleges. Even more adults (by far) study at college. 80% of students in colleges are adults over the age of 19. Most study part-time.” COLLEGES WALES

1.2 Policy Context

Each college/institution is funded directly by The Welsh Government’s Department for Education and Skills although they are also free to generate their own income. They are responsible for their own governance and management and since 1992 are no longer in local authority control.

The Welsh Government policy, “Transforming Education and Training Provision in Wales”, was launched in September 2008 and sets out the case, guidance and framework for all post 16 education providers to work in partnership across geographic areas and skill sectors. In particular it calls for local/regional activity to evolve in response to evidence of need. In 2009, the policy was supplemented by "Transformation - Y Siwrnai" which acted as a review of the implementation of the original policy one year after its launch. This policy is thus the driver for a Learning Partnerships approach that puts further education in a local/regional context with a strong expectation that colleges will work with schools, universities and employers in their area.

The policy is implicated in the round of recent mergers which have seen 25 institutions in 2008, become 15 today.

In 2008, the Welsh Government issued guidance on Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) for all educational sectors. The FE guidance includes good practice case studies that show how the principles of sustainable development should inform governance and management and not just curriculum design. The guidance is clear on the holistic, whole-system philosophy that defines sustainable development.

Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, independent of but funded by the Welsh Government. It is the body responsible for quality control and the maintenance of standards in all education except higher education. In its inspections of colleges, Estyn looks for evidence of how the principles of ESGC inform teaching and management.

In November 2012 The Welsh Government published a review of qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds. This has major implications for FE and raises the profile of the Welsh Baccalaureate in particular. It also develops the concept of "Learning Area Programmes" which are intended to produce outcomes of use to both the student and the wider economy. Each programme is meant to direct a student towards further study in the specific learning area or employment within that area. It is claimed that this approach also allows input from relevant employers and sectors of the community and integrates with the Welsh Baccalaureate. Examples of programmes include; "construction", "hair and beauty", "land-based studies".

2.0 Colleges and Sustainable Development

In 2008, The Welsh Government issued guidance to Further Education colleges on how they should interpret and contribute to the commitment to sustainable development. This document was preceded by the ESGC Action Plan 2006/2008.

At the time of its publication there was considerable energy and enthusiasm for ESGC in Wales. The FE guidance is a reflection of that and is one of several similar documents written for the different parts of the educational sector. It and its companion documents are well researched and represent a body of practical experience by teachers, academics and policy makers. The document is in part a response to an Estyn survey on ESGC and to the development of the concept of sustainability at an international level. The document also quotes the findings of Sir Adrian Webb's review "*Promise and Performance*" that identified a need for radical change in the Further Education sector and states that ESGC can make "a significant contribution" to the changes called for.

A core part of the document is six case studies and it is interesting that even with mergers these are largely the same colleges that today exhibit good practice on integrating sustainable development principles into management and teaching. Some of the colleges featured in the 2008 guidance are not referenced in this report. This is not a judgement or indication on their commitment to sustainable development and success in implementing its principles. It is simply a case that they fall outside the group interviewed for this study.



2.1 Leadership



Principal of Bridgend College,
Simon Pirotte

The 2008 guidance on ESDGC clearly identifies the importance of leadership in embedding the principles of sustainable development in a college. It calls for a commitment to the principles from the board/corporation, the Principal and senior management team, the estates manager, the curriculum manager and “the ESDGC champion”. It requires colleges to establish an ESDGC group that is part of the formal management structure and that includes student representatives. These recommendations have been broadly implemented by the colleges featured in this report. There are variations but the general guidance is adhered to.

2.1.1 Individual Leadership

Our investigation has highlighted the importance of individual leadership. In a number of colleges, the sustainable development journey began with an individual. In Coleg Cambria for example, Rick Bedson, Head of Estates, Health, Safety and Sustainability first became interested in 2000 when his role was solely focused on health and safety.

“At that time I felt that health and safety had sort of run a good course. The momentum was beginning to slow down in the profession. I saw sustainability as not only being a benefit for the organisation and a way of meeting moral obligations but it also gave a new area for me to become interested in and I took it up with a great deal of enthusiasm.”

This is a fairly typical example of how a commitment to sustainable development within an organisation starts with an individual and in the early stages is driven by a personal enthusiasm. An individual alone however cannot change an organisation and what is striking about the colleges in this study is how quickly the senior management accepted the case made by an individual or a team and were prepared to back it. In Pembrokeshire College for example, Maxine Thomas (Head of Safeguarding and Learner Services and one of the longest serving members of staff) reports that the college had “the right Principal at the right time” and that as the sustainable development approach matured, the leadership style changed. Latterly a flatter management structure has allowed ideas from across the college to work their way into strategies and plans.

In some cases however it is the senior management team itself that was the first to grasp the sustainability challenge and initiate a top down culture change. In Bridgend College, The Principal and management team created a new post to drive forward action on sustainability but once the appointment had been made the enthusiasm and knowledge of the individual (Chris Long, Health, Safety and Sustainable Development Manager) became crucial to the success of the initiative.

2.1.2 Financial Leadership and Long Term Thinking

It helped that in the early stages of the colleges' progress, champions of the SD concept were able to make their case in robust financial terms. Many of the colleges had old buildings that were poorly insulated as well as other fixtures and fittings that were inefficient. It is not surprising then that the early adoption of sustainable development was framed as environmental efficiency. What is striking however is the way that the managements' support for SD has evolved in pace with how sustainable development is defined and implemented in the wider professional community. Ten to fifteen years ago the general discourse was focused on environmental impacts and management of risk but now colleges, like the top sustainability performers in the private sector, see their purpose in a global, holistic context and are confident and articulate in identifying sustainable development as their core organising principle.

The Future Generations Bill identifies *long term thinking* as a key behaviour necessary for sustainable development. Implicit in this is the suggestion that short term costs savings are not a sound basis for decision making. Ian Rowe, Health Safety and Environment Manager at Gwent College states that his senior management team have never said 'no' to a well thought out and financially sound environmental improvement idea. Several of the colleges with healthy finances report that investments for long term sustainability are considered on as much as a seven year pay-back period. This is perhaps a luxury that not all colleges (and few SD Charter signatories) can afford given the recent climate of cuts but it does illustrate the timescale associated with sound environmental management and underlines the principle that sustainable development is focused on the needs of future generations as much as the present day.

2.1.3 Dispersed Leadership and Shared Responsibility



The supportive relationship between management and the individuals who have championed sustainable development appears to have survived recent mergers and in some cases has led to a spreading of the sustainability culture to other campuses. Grwp Llandrillo Menai for example has fifteen campuses across North Wales with a wide variation in function. Responding to different challenges and taking advantage of different opportunities, campuses can share

learning on operational management and ESDGC. The dispersed leadership approach further supports this with opportunities for staff and students to input ideas into improving the environmental and social impacts of the group as a whole.

In Coleg Cambria, a series of energy and efficiency champions are dispersed across the college. They lead the pursuit of greater efficiency and reduced emissions to the environment. Any financial savings made in pursuing these goals are then passed back to the departments that have made them. This arrangement is supported by staff consultations on environmental sustainability plus the presence of a Health, Safety and Sustainability technician on each site who, as well as having their own personal performance targets, act as local experts for the site/departmental management teams. In Bridgend College, this commitment to shared responsibility is reflected in the structure of

the Health, Safety and Environment Committee which includes senior representatives of all departments and sites but more importantly, responsibility for sustainability is included in all job descriptions within the college.

The recent period of mergers has put considerable strain on staff morale but it seems safe to say that those colleges who have got through the merger upheaval and have adopted the dispersed management structure, supported by a consultative and open approach are benefiting from improved staff morale. Those colleges that participated in this research report that staff well-being is an important part of the sustainable development ethos.

2.1.4 Strategy and Planning



Leadership from the top however continues to be important particularly when it comes to business planning. There is some variation between the colleges in how they express their commitment to sustainable development and how it informs governance and strategy. For some it is incorporated and referenced in the overall corporate plan while for others it is presented as a strategy or plan which informs the overall governance. Two of the colleges have opted for a sustainability statement which

is a short expression of values and general commitments with the detail being presented in more targeted policies such as *estates management strategy* or guidance on ESGC.

It is interesting that while individuals, including senior managers, clearly understand sustainable development as a philosophy of integrated, holistic management, there is a tendency to present sustainability via the policy section of the college's web pages, as *environmental stewardship*, thus parcelling the environmental aspects in a separate place to the contribution of the college to what is sometimes known as "social capital" and of course economic prosperity. This is a pertinent issue to those organisations which are subject to the Well-being of Future Generations Bill as they seek to embrace integrated reporting. The challenge here is to be able to identify how your management of environmental aspects produces economic and social-cultural benefits and fulfils the ambition of;

'healthy people living productive lives in a more prosperous and innovative economy, safer and more cohesive communities, with lower levels of poverty and greater equality; a resilient environment with more sustainable use of our natural resources and a society with a vital sense of its own culture and heritage'

Programme for Government, Welsh Government, 2011

2.1.5 Regional Leadership and Partnership

Although not subject to the duty enacted by the bill, colleges are an important part of Local Service Boards at both a strategic, executive level and as delivery partners. Aside from the obvious priority of delivering national curriculum outcomes and education and skills for employment, there are other less obvious benefits such as the personal safety and wellbeing of students. Pembrokeshire College for example employs a full time College Nurse who is an appointee of the local health board. In practice this means that the nurse and the counselling service act as an additional resource for the health board providing early stage intervention in student health matters. There is a culture of wider care in which college staff, the health board and designated police officers co-ordinate their activities and share information in pursuit of student well-being.

Colleges also have a role to play in delivering local prosperity. Each college has developed relationships with local business. These can range from “meet the buyer” events which underline the importance of the colleges as procurers of local goods and services, to specific partnerships with important local employers in which the college delivers training for the existing work force and the employer creates apprenticeships for students moving into employment from full-time education. Examples of relationships between colleges and business include; Llandrillo-Menai’s support of the off-shore wind industry, Cambria’s relationship with Toyota and Airbus, Cardiff and Vale’s International Centre for Aerospace Training and Pembrokeshire’s School of Marine Engineering.



First Minister Carwyn Jones opens the RWE Wind Turbine Training Centre and apprenticeship programme at Coleg Llandrillo’s Rhos-on-Sea campus.

2.2 Teaching and Learning

Generally speaking, further education colleges in Wales understand Education for Sustainable Development and do it well. At best, ESDGC is completely integrated into all courses and curricula and part of the core function of the college. At worst, it is seen by some tutors as an add-on and a box to tick. Thankfully, the latter is rare. In any case, all the colleges are required by Estyn to integrate ESDGC into teaching and evidence for this will be sought during internal inspection and quality control checks such as peer observation sessions and when schemes of work are submitted by tutors prior to course delivery. Many of the colleges – Grwp Llandrillo Menai and Pembrokeshire for example – have ESDGC as a mandatory item on meeting agendas for all management teams.



All the colleges understand that ESDGC is about the personal development of the learner as much as it is about mitigating damage to the wider system. The NPTC Group for example state that they wish to create “global learners” who can think beyond their immediate context and be creative problem solvers.

The 2008 guidance was explicit in stating that the sustainability approach to estates and facilities management should integrate with

teaching and learning. There are some excellent examples of this. In Coleg Cambria for example there is a Student Assembly funded by the College. The Assembly has an operational budget which funds activities that benefit the students. The sustainability team within the estates department initiated a scheme in which the Assembly is financially rewarded for recycling plastic bottles. Bottle bins were placed around the campus and the student body was encouraged to use them. The waste collection contractor compresses and weighs the material and passes the information to the facilities team via the waste transfer note. The end result is that the college rewards the student body (via the Assembly) for recycling plastic bottles at the rate of £1.50 per cubic metre. Students now police their own activity and plastic bottle recycling rates have increased.

Chris Long, Health, Safety and Sustainability Manager of Bridgend College and David Phillips, Safety Health and Environment Manager of Llandrillo Menai regularly participate in ESDGC teaching activities, visiting classrooms and engaging directly with students.

Several of the colleges display real time energy use on digital displays and share data on energy, water and waste with students either as part of lessons or within the focus of an “ESDGC week”. Posters in the classroom are used by some of the colleges to raise awareness of how the building and facilities are being managed.

The colleges are also recognising the need and opportunity to train both sixteen to nineteen year olds and work-based learners in low carbon technology. Llandrillo Menai for example has a New Technology department that address this and uses its own ‘green’ buildings and infrastructure as a teaching aid for construction and related trades.

The NPTC group, CAVC and Bridgend College have used an external ESGC specialist “Plan-It Eco” to stimulate staff and engage students. This resulted in a comprehensive sustainability audit of the Neath campus conducted by the students under the auspices of Plan-it Eco which was presented to the senior management.

Based on these interviews and investigations, we sense that ESGC is generally well established and well-practiced in Further Education although there has been no recent formal Estyn review of this sector that we could refer to. Certain topics such as Catering and Hospitality, Construction and related trades, Land Based Studies, Arts and Humanities and Hair and Beauty lend themselves more easily to ESGC but creative tutors can weave the themes into less obvious topics. In Cardiff and Vale College for example, there are some excellent examples in the IT department where tutors have encouraged

2.2.1 Curriculum Cymreig



The National Curriculum in Wales requires ESGC be a component of all curricula. A similar requirement exists for raising awareness of Welsh language and culture. This is known as Curriculum Cymreig. These two components of a wider learning experience overlap. They are a part of a college’s contribution to the surrounding region’s “social capital”. This is of particular importance to colleges in the West and North where Welsh is part of the fabric of daily life. Grwp Llandrillo Menai understands the College’s role in protecting, enabling and

enriching Welsh language culture. Their starting point is to help students see their bilingualism as an employable skill. The group’s Welsh Language scheme upholds the right of every student to do their learning in Welsh. Problems arise however when the awarding and accreditation body is based in other parts of the UK and the College constantly struggles with failures by such bodies to appreciate the practical needs of fulfilling this commitment. For example, if a student has sat an exam in Welsh, it is obviously not acceptable and in conflict with the College’s ethos if the accrediting body is unable to provide secondary markers who can read and understand the language.

Cardiff and Vale College takes learners from the culturally and ethnically diverse Cardiff region. For them the challenge is to build the skills of learners for whom English is a second language, therefore their provision of “English for Speakers of Other Languages” (ESOL) courses are an important part of the service they provide to their region. For example they provide “ESOL with Construction” courses and in the past have provided ESOL courses that also develop enterprise and basic business skills.

Generally speaking, Further Education colleges are contributing to the goals of the Future Generations Bill through their course content and teaching practice. There are specific examples which align to specific goals such as the centres that focus on the skills necessary for a low carbon, resource efficient economy and qualifications that focus on care and wellbeing. A key area of activity which has become vulnerable in the face of cuts to expenditure is the outreach function of colleges

that provides essential skills for hard to reach groups and literacy and numeracy for adults. Other agencies may be able to step in and provide services where colleges cannot but it is beyond the scope of this study to verify whether this happening. We can report however that almost all of the colleges see community adult learning as a vulnerable part of their portfolio due to the cuts in public expenditure.

2.3 Facilities and Estates



The issue of environmental sustainability in the management of estates and facilities is core to the work of all the colleges featured in this report. Across the country, the Further Education estate contains a very wide variety of buildings – from the nineteenth century to modern, award winning eco-buildings. Examples of the award winning buildings include;

- Grwp Llandrillo Menai's teaching centre at Glynllifon, the Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor campus near Caernarfon, has won the 2012 All Wales *Local Authority Building Control Award for 'Best Educational Building.'*
- Pembrokeshire College's Innovation Centre won the 2008 BREEAM Bespoke Award for Wales.
- Coleg Gwent's Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone Campus was shortlisted for a Welsh Architecture Award in 2013 and was Highly Commended in the Community Benefit category of the 2013 RICS Awards.

Despite the challenges posed by some of the older buildings and an era of public funding cuts and college mergers, steady progress has been made in the last ten years. In many cases the colleges have benefited from expert advice. Cambria for example cites Arena Network and the Green Dragon scheme as motivation and a source of valuable advice at the start of its sustainability journey. Pembrokeshire College had provided incubator units for start-up business on its main campus. One of these was an energy and facilities advice company. They suggested staying on site twenty four hours a day and in doing so identified a number of wasteful practices that were contributing to an energy and water-use base load.

All the colleges report that in the early days it was relatively easy to make significant savings simply by addressing bad practices that were indicative of the culture that pervaded in the twentieth century. External funds played an important role: NPTC group made use of Salix funding and a number of the colleges benefitted from Welsh Government funds provided through the Advanced Metering Monitoring and Targeting project. Both of these funding programmes were administered by the Carbon Trust.



Since the early two thousands however, it has become increasingly challenging to maintain the same level of gains but this should be seen as a sign of success: all the basic improvements have been made and subsequent savings in energy, waste and water will only be made through innovative new technology. The impact of cuts however is generally restricting further innovations. Sustainability improvements are integrated

into the schedule of maintenance but in the words of Colin Heffy, Facilities and Estates Manager for the NPTC Group, “we are treading water” and what budget is available is targeted at basic maintenance and upholding minimum legal standards. Even so, the colleges generally take a long-term, principled approach to investment and are prepared to consider long pay-back periods if an improvement has clear environmental and social benefits.

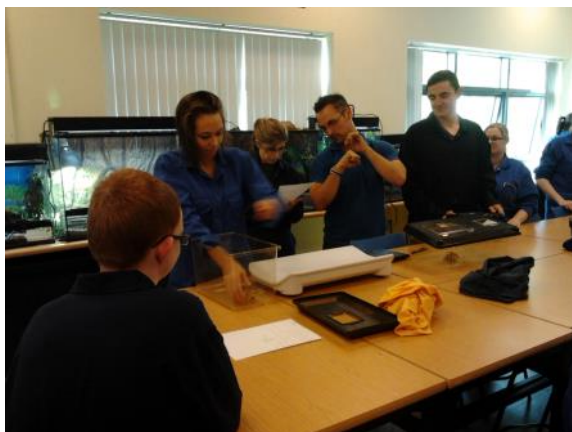
Ian Rowe, Health Safety and Environment Manager for Gwent College reflects,

There’s a whole list of things we wanted to achieve but you need to know where the big wins will come from – get those in place then concentrate on the other things and be realistic. So for example it’s more sensible to encourage video conferencing and Skype than to expect large numbers to start cycling to work. We plan and integrate sustainability actions into the design before we start something – materials, supply chain, waste – it’s part of the process as well as the ultimate aim.”

Even in an era of cuts, behaviour change programmes continue to play their part and in fact become even more relevant as budgets shrink. Ian Rowe has observed that colleagues working in the newer “green” buildings seem to have a greater capacity for pro-environmental behaviours. They appear to be responding to the values which have informed the design and function of the building in which they work. It also seems that Gwent students coming from schools that have been active in the Eco-schools programme are bringing pro-environmental habits with them; while most colleges have had to persuade staff to give up personal waste bins for example, Ian has observed that some students arrive in college as first years expecting a waste segregation scheme and asking to be shown the location of bins for specific waste types.

Collectively, colleges are responsible for a huge area of land. Most of this will be grass that is mowed regularly but some colleges are waking up to the potential to put this land to more productive use. Grwp Llandrillo Menai own 200 acres of forest which is used in land based studies. Cuttings from this forest provide the wood chip for the biomass boiler in the Glynllifon teaching centre. Bridgend College has a specific biodiversity strategy which addresses management of open spaces and commits the college to planting species beneficial to pollinating bees and insects via the River of Flowers project. The management of green space could be one of the issues that colleges approach next having spent the last ten years improving the environmental performance of the buildings they occupy.

2.4 Student and Staff Wellbeing

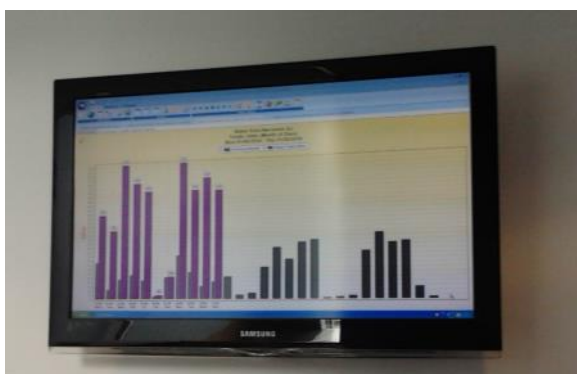


All colleges maintain that students come first and that their services are ‘student led’. Each college has a number of policies covering all aspects of student safety and wellbeing and each will have some method of seeking the views of students on a variety of college functions including the standards of teaching. Pembrokeshire and Cambria are both examples of colleges with a ‘student parliament’ and Pembrokeshire augments this with the use of the “Vocaleyes” software platform to capture feedback via the

intranet. Gwent also use the intranet with a “Buzz the Boss” facility through which students and staff can email complaints, ideas or praise.

In looking after their students and staff, colleges are providing an important role in delivering the wider well-being goals of the Future Generations Bill. Most of the colleges have schemes which address the physical and mental wellbeing of staff and students. These include cycle/walk to work promotions, staff buses, counselling services, point of delivery advice on healthy eating in canteens, healthy option menus, Health and Well-being weeks/days, free advice workshops, free and subsidised training, support for personal and professional development.

2.5 Measuring and Reporting



As explained above, for most colleges, the sustainable development journey started with a focus on environmental management. All of the colleges interviewed in this study have achieved Green Dragon level four in some of their estate. Grwp Llandrillo Menai, Coleg Cambria, Pembrokeshire, Bridgend and Gwent colleges have achieved level 5 for all campuses.

As the sustainable development concept is a holistic, systems level approach, it can legitimately claim a huge variety of reporting mechanisms. It comes down to a choice by managers as to what should be left out. Things can get out of hand with hundreds of indicators being included in the sustainable development action plan and report. At a workshop held with Colleges Wales and the Estates, Facilities, Sustainability, and Health and Safety Managers in October 2013, we identified a large number of reporting mechanisms that FE colleges in Wales were using either as a mandate or voluntarily. Here are just some examples:

Examples of awards, standards, and reporting structures used by colleges		
Green Dragon	Investors in People	BREEAM
ISO14001	Energy Performance Certificates	Riddor
Estyn	Wales Corporate Health Standard	E Mandate
Green Gown Awards	Sustainable procurement – projects and capital bids	DFES Code of
ROSPA	Health and safety self-assurance exercise	Tribal
EMAS	Green Travel Plan Awards	WFPC
Financial Accounts	AoC (Association of Colleges) Beacon and Gold Awards	

A number of the colleges reported that that for them there was an audit burden that required considerable resource – in other words, too much reporting. Since colleges are legally required to record data and be audited on a number of topics it makes sense that this mandatory data should form the basis of a sustainable development report. The big question and challenge is; *how do you place this in a sustainable development context so that it tells a coherent story?* This is an issue for all Charter signatories. We advise that an audit of reporting mechanisms should be one of the first steps an organisation takes: start with where you already are and build your sustainability report on that.

Bridgend College has grasped this challenge and has created a comprehensive Health, Safety and Environmental Management System for the time period 2010 to 2020 that links a set of **Visions to Outcomes and Indicators**. Under a set of operational themes such as “developing the curriculum and enhancing the student experience”, “water management”, “waste management” and “procurement”, there are a total of 50 actions with associated target dates when the action will be completed.

Coleg Cambria has an over-arching set of 11 measurable Key Result Targets which form the basis of the annual report. Most of these are understandably focused on educational achievement but they also include measures of staff well-being, benefits to the local economy and impacts on the environment. Underneath these headline measures there are more detailed specific auditing processes such as the estates strategy and the Green Dragon audit. The College has published a “Sustainability Policy Statement” which comprises of 12 commitments which make broad reference to measurement and audit processes.

Coleg Gwent has received recognition at the UK level as a “highly commended” finalist in the Green Gown awards. This was in the “continuous improvement” category for which the College submitted evidence of the five year plan that had taken it from the position in 2007 where it had no formal management system to the point where it now operates an integrated management system that combines a unifying sustainable development vision with a set of core principles. Underneath this structure there are detailed reporting mechanisms such as ISO14001 (environment), ISO9001 (quality), Green Dragon (environmental sustainability), and BS OHSAS 18001 (health and safety).

It is clear that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to measuring and reporting on sustainable development. For some colleges the principles of sustainable development are implicit in its core management and reporting approach but the concept is not explicitly identified. Other colleges have a clear identification of “sustainable development” as a core organising principle and cross reference to the Brundtland Definition, global commitments and Welsh Government policy. We feel that One Wales One Planet and the Well-being of Future Generations Bill give all colleges a reference point and ideological compass which they can use both to their benefit as businesses but also in a way that benefits society as a whole. We think that these documents provide SD Charter signatories with a similar opportunity although we recognise that the larger organisations will have commitments articulated by head offices at a UK, European and global level.

3.0 Conclusions



Although Further Education colleges are outside the scope of the Well-being of Future Generations Bill and the duty it will place on specified public bodies, we feel that they are providing a useful example of how any complex organisation can use the concept and principles of sustainable development as a foundation and guide. The challenges that many of the colleges are successfully overcoming are the same challenges faced by any organisation that commits to sustainable development, including of course the signatories of the SD Charter; shared responsibility, cultural and behavioural change, management structure, articulation of the vision, measuring and reporting on progress.

The colleges themselves would not claim to have all the answers and continue to learn from mistakes. They are also struggling to balance ideological commitments with the harsh reality of funding cuts – something that all public service bodies subject to the Future Generations Bill will have to do. The importance of FE colleges however is that they have started the journey, and while this is also true of the SD Charter signatories, what makes the colleges interesting is that they have started this journey together and through network organisations such as Colleges Wales and the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges, they are *learning* together. They happily and confidently share much of their data and the lessons each of them have learned. We have evidence of a similar open, collaborative approach in certain Local Service Boards. This is also what is now beginning to happen within the community of the Sustainable Development Charter. While competition will always remain an important driver of improvement and innovation, *collaboration* is a founding principle of sustainability. As we face the uncertainty of the future together, we would be wise to examine how Further Education colleges in Wales approach collaboration both within each college and with business and community partners.
