

Keele University Continuous Improvement Greening Keele through hearts and minds: Embedding sustainability in everything we do

Section 1 About the project

Summary

Keele's growth in sustainability activity has been astronomical, fuelled by dedicated high-level support, incredible local-level passion and engagement, and collegial partnership working. Our approach is to empower individuals to drive positive change where it matters to them, producing change across the whole institution that we are incredibly proud of.

Section 2 The results

Our goal

Our goal is to embed a culture of sustainability within the institution, and with it meaningful holistic change for sustainability, beyond discrete projects and isolated approaches.

The approach

At Keele, we don't *tell* people to be more sustainable, we make people *want* to drive their own positive changes. Strong high-level support empowers local-level action, leading to new sustainability initiatives springing up in all parts of the institution.

This is underpinned by a strong narrative of sustainability leadership:

2010: New Vice Chancellor appointed, a renowned sustainability champion; role of Pro-Vice Chancellor for Environment & Sustainability established; new University plan, incorporates '*an environmentally-aware, sustainable outward-facing campus community*' as one of only six strategic aims; high-level Environmental and Sustainability Steering Group established with strong student participation

2012: 'Sustainability', added as one of three themes in Keele's Distinctive Curriculum, ensuring sustainability features in all programmes; role of Director of Education for Sustainability established; Jonathon Porritt installed as Chancellor

2013: Four Sustainability Project Officers appointed to support sustainability initiatives across the curriculum and campus



Profile

- HEI
- 10,000 students
- 1600 staff
- Rural
- 617 acre campus

Finalist's case study

Performance and results

Continuous improvement is seen in all parts of the University. Improving energy efficiency and renewable energy generation; increasing recycling; decreasing water use... A greening curriculum, driven by the programmes themselves, reflected in increasing sustainability-related modules (over 40), associated with 'non-typical' programmes (e.g. psychology, chemistry, pharmacy, history; midwifery, languages); sustainability 'free electives' available to any student; student projects feeding into estates developments; dedicated sustainability undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.... The Students' Union developing a strong sustainability focus, developing society 'sustainability stripes'; sustainability-related volunteering; sustainability fashion show, bike-hire; 'Green Move Out' diverting waste from landfill.... Keele also takes seriously its role in engaging the wider community in sustainability, through the Sustainability Hub and dedicated sustainability education outreach group. And at the centre, students provide the link between the campus, formal and informal curriculum, and community, through their coursework, own initiatives and campaigns and community work.

Staff: Green Impact scheme 100 staff, 21 teams (a record); >100 non-academic staff on sustainability workshops; >100 new lecturers engaged with Education for Sustainability training; >100 staff participating in cycling training/maintenance sessions; Sustainability Research Network 100 staff; development of ESD online training.

Students: Student society 'Think:Green' became 'opt out' SU 'student-led service'; students living as exemplars of sustainability on campus, engaged >120 unique visitors in 2013/14, providing free vegan meals, sourced largely from their garden; Students' Union activities engaging 100s of 'non-typical' students; Student Eats reaches >150 people through events; student-led organic, local veg box scheme.

Community: 25,000 unique visitors to Keele's Sustainability Hub since October 2011, (average 54% public; 18% business); sustainability workshops for >10,000 schoolchildren and >600 teachers.

Communication and engagement: Annual Sustainability Report; Green:Keele website; tri-annual Green:Keele campus newsletter; 'Green:Keele' branding and inclusion on University homepage.

Environmental benefits

Transport: Electric post-room vehicle – 4,800 miles travelled since September 2012 (1.2tCO_{2e} saving); Nissan Leaf - travelled 2,000 miles in 9 months on University business; car sharing scheme in 2014; vast array of initiatives to encourage cycling.

Waste: recycling increases by 60% from 2010; charging for carriers bags reduces number by 20%; British Heart Foundation banks diverts >2 tonnes from landfill, raising over £7,000

Energy management: ISO 50001 Energy Management Certification gained. Energy efficiency and renewable energy generation initiatives leading to 27.32 tCO₂/m² reduction from 1990. RGF projects estimated 200 tCO_{2e}/a savings. University Carbon Management plan projects expected to save 2,225 tCO_{2e}/a.

Renewables: 3x50kW solar PV arrays installed (April 2013), saving 72,461tCO_{2e} and £37,380 to date, producing 134,485kWh.

Buildings and refurbishment: Multi-user chemistry wet lab, BREEAM excellent; recent new builds designed to BREEAM 'Very Good'.

Finalist's case study

Biodiversity and land use: Biodiversity Action Group and Plan; University Arboretum; National Collection status for cherry trees; lunchtime walks for staff and students; public leaflet and nature trail; allotments 30 regular staff/student users

MORE IMPORTANTLY, ALL THIS ACTIVITY IS LEADING TO GREATER ENGAGEMENT AND LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS - REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS AND WASTE AND INCREASING BIODIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

Some of the approaches used that have been important for Keele's success include:

- Embedding sustainability in high level policy (University mission statement, strategic aims etc) is important – it ensures all staff know this is a priority for the institution, they hear the 'sustainability' word frequently, and eventually they start to consider how they can embrace it in what they do
- Look for opportunities to embed sustainability in new developments. Look for the win-wins. For example at Keele we have used sustainability-discipline linkages as the context for delivering skills based sessions as part of a university-wide curriculum development project. Programme directors request the skills (e.g. time management, presentation skills) to be covered by a central support team in a teaching 'Away Day' for students designed for individual programmes, and sustainability-discipline linkages are used as the context to deliver this skills training.
- Titles and roles are important. Having a PVC for Environment & Sustainability means there is a high level decision maker, able to 'unblock' impasses. A Director for Education for Sustainability highlights the importance of this to the institution and allows greater connection to be made between academic staff and professional support services.
- Make it something that is part of everybody's job, not just the job of a small 'centre' of people

Sharing our project

Part of developing a culture of sustainability at Keele has involved enhancing internal communication of activities and plans and giving staff and students a voice. Strategies have included:

- An annual sustainability report
- A tri-annual 'Green:Keele' e-newsletter
- A bi-annual staff and student sustainability forum
- An annual Green Week, which in 2014 included a week long 'visioning' exercise for staff and students to feed into the University's new Sustainability strategy
- Consultative visioning workshop of campus food-growing developments

We also hold external events sharing our experiences for example a two day 'Student Action for Sustainability conference'; an HEA-funded workshop on 'New to ESD' for staff new to the area and interested in developing strategies for embedding sustainability in their work; and an HEA-funded workshop looking at Keele's approach to embedding sustainability.

Finalist's case study

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

The Vice Chancellor, Professor Nick Foskett said: "I am delighted that Keele has reached the final in not just one, but three categories. I am struck by the breadth of the three submissions. It shows that we have been committed to sustainability at a strategic level, and that we have really turned this into results that can be seen across the whole campus, and in so many diverse ways. Perhaps especially pleasing is to see the engagement of our students being recognized, as they represent the future generation, whose commitment to sustainability is so important."

Further information

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