

Finalist's case study

The London School of Economics and Political Science

Institutional Change: Continuous Improvement LSE: Sustainability embedded

Section 1 About the project

Summary

LSE published its first Environmental Policy in 2005. Since then the School has come a long way on its journey to embed sustainability in all aspects of the School's day to day life. Becoming ISO 14001 certified in 2012, the School has now achieved its zero waste to landfill target, reduced energy intensity per m² by 19% and has 34 departments actively participating in reducing our environmental impacts.

Project partners

LSE's continued sustainability journey involves the School at all levels, involving staff, lecturers and students as well as key contractors and suppliers. The LSE Estates Division plays a key role, firstly, through its own functions managing the LSE's Estate and secondly via its Sustainability Team in engaging stakeholders and managing the process of embedding sustainability into the workings of the LSE. Other partners include the NUS Environment & Ethics team, and various LSE student societies.

Section 2 The results

The problem

LSE set out to reduce its significant impacts on the environment and the associated contribution to climate change.

The approach

The School recognises the significance of its actions, and is strongly committed to reducing these impacts as well as influencing students to become environmentally aware citizens and leaders. Sustainability is a key principle within the School's Strategic Plan and Ethics Code.

In order to achieve continuous improvement the School started by identifying 11 key priority areas, including energy, carbon, waste, community involvement etc. and used these to establish its first Environmental Policy in 2005. Since then, policy, day to day work practices and sustainable behaviours have matured to the point that good progress has been made on all priority area targets.



Profile

- HEI
- 9,900 students (and a further 4,500 Summer School students)
- 3100 staff
- Urban

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At the heart of our endeavours are students and their campus experience. The LSE's approach to sustainability includes raising awareness and influencing behaviours with the aim that when students return to their 140 countries, they take with them a wider view of sustainability and how it relates to their everyday life. Over time, our work and that of others in the sector will have a huge influence on reducing global environmental impacts.

Our goals

The LSE's target is for excellence in all areas, including sustainability. In order to achieve this, the School set out a number of aspirations in its Environmental Action Plan. These include sending zero waste to landfill, reducing carbon emissions by 54% by 2020 compared to our 2005 baseline year, reducing water use and managing our resources responsibly, etc.

Obstacles and solutions

Obstacles	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federation-like structure of LSE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The various departments are very independent, in order to achieve buy in it has been essential to establish good personal relationships with key personnel that are able to champion sustainability within the department.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constant turnover of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catch them early and reinforce the message. New starters receive joining packs which include sustainability information, from how to use our recycling system to how to get involved, including a sustainability themed campus tour.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications momentum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's important to refresh and maintain a constant level of communication using all media avenues. Informing staff and students of the efforts the School is making and what they can do without being pushy or creating message fatigue is essential for continuous improvement

Performance and results

Since LSE started monitoring its environmental impact it has achieved a great deal across all key areas, but particularly in:

- Energy:** Our estates renewal programme has reduced the intensity of our buildings' energy use by 19% (from 83 kfcO₂e m² in 2005-06 to 68 kgCO₂e / m² in 2012-13), whilst increasing the size of our Estate by 30%.
- Engagement and Community:** the success of the Sustainable Projects Fund stands out, the Fund has facilitated 20 student led projects that improved sustainability across campus and halls. The project was shortlisted for the Guardian University Awards for best student engagement initiative. In addition, LSE has 34 departmental teams participating in Green Impact; and has delivered a very successful Student Switch Off campaign in 2013-14 which achieved 11% reduced emissions in halls of residence.
- Waste:** reduced waste sent to landfill from 59% in 2008-09 to less than 1% in 2013-14. In addition the overall volume of waste continues to decrease by 0.6% year on year, despite the increase in student numbers.
- There are significant **avoided costs** associated with improved sustainability, altogether these amounted to approximately £50K in 2013-14, this could be higher if the cost of avoided taxed carbon (via the Carbon Reduction Commitment) were included.

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Section 3 The future

Lessons learnt

The nature of sustainability is cross-cutting; however, not everyone can deliver across all our priority areas. Tailoring each team's approach to what they can affect and achieve whilst leaving room for innovative ideas is essential in fostering continual improvement. A good example of this is how a small department limited by what their direct impact could be, took on the challenge of producing an LSE wide guide for sustainable office moves. In the context of LSE's current complex estates renewal programme (which involves a high number of moves) the whole School is benefiting from this project, as anyone managing an office move, has at their disposal a tool to reduce the environmental impact of the move.

Sharing our project

We have a strong communications plan that spans key media: online, posters, staff and student newsletters, blog and twitter, even in person. Next year, 2015 will mark the 10 year anniversary of our Environmental Policy and we will be organising a celebratory event discussing our journey. In addition, we will be publishing our second Annual Sustainability Report in 2015.

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

Being a finalist for institutional change is the culmination of 10 years of hard work in transitioning the School's leadership vision, physical actions and staff/student behaviours to create a more sustainable organisation. Receiving external recognition has long been a motivating factor, and is a wonderful reward for those who have worked so hard and continue to do so, to move the School forward on its sustainability journey.

Further information

The LSE Sustainability webpage is a great point of reference for other sustainability practitioners
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/estatesDivision/sustainableLSE/home.aspx>

The antics of the Sustainability Team and what we find interesting can be found by following us on twitter:
@sustainableLSE