

# Finalist's case study

## Roehampton Students' Union and University of Roehampton Food & Drink Growthampton

### Section 1 About the project

#### Summary

Growthampton is a sustainability project with a big focus on food – from seed to plate to palate! From our edible campus, to our bee hives and The Hive sustainability café, Growthampton provides opportunities for staff, students and the local community to engage with sustainability as volunteers, ethical consumers and through research, coursework and work experience.

#### Project partners

This project is run by Roehampton Students' Union in partnership with The University of Roehampton. Different elements of the project are achieved through collaboration with community organisations.

#### The problem

- The University of Roehampton is set on a beautiful 54 acre parkland campus, however only a small percentage of this land was being utilised to provide students and staff with fresh fruit and vegetables
- The campus lacked a catering venue with sustainability as its core value
- The heart of the campus lacked a homely, inspirational social space
- Sustainable behaviours were not part of everyday life for most students and staff

#### The approach

- We have installed a large polytunnel on campus and established raised beds and container growing areas. In total there is 100m<sup>2</sup> of growing space spread throughout campus at the heart of accommodation, teaching and social spaces.
- We have opened a sustainability café, serving ethical, organic and local produce. The café is open Mon-Sat.
- We have developed partnerships with local community organisations. The Feel Good bakery, a local social enterprise is a key partner. They produce sandwiches for the café using fresh Growthampton produce.
- Education and engagement with where food comes from is at the heart of the project. We run volunteering sessions each week so that students can learn about how to grow their own food. They assist on the main growing site and develop their own college growing spaces.

### GROWHAMPTON

#### Profile

Example:

- HEI
- 9,200 students (1750 PT, 7450 FT)
- 800 staff
- Urban

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- We run an organic veggie bag scheme enabling students and staff to buy all their veggies for the week on campus.
- Reuse and upcycling are core values throughout all elements of the project. The café was built from upcycled shipping containers and furnished with reclaimed materials. We also run a pop up thrift shop supporting clothes recycling.
- We run a weekly farmers' market selling Growthampton grown produce and Growthampton veggie bags. Community partners, the Bread Angels, who bake real bread also operate a stall. The Growthampton thrift shop operates on market day.

## Our goals

- To embed sustainability in everyday life through a focus on sustainable food
- To ensure sustainable food is available on campus and affordable for all
- To make sustainable food and 'being green' fun and popular

## Obstacles and solutions

Obstacles	Solutions
Roehampton University has a beautiful campus containing listed building and woodland, meaning we had to think carefully about where to establish growing spaces.	In order for our sites to be as productive as possible we looked for areas across campus that had good sun and spent a period of time sun mapping before deciding on the location. As the campus doesn't allow for us to have one large site we have spread our growing across campus. It means that we are visible in numerous sites, engaging more people.
We needed to find a location and create a design for the café.	The final decision on the location for the café was a courtyard that had high footfall but didn't see many people staying to enjoy the space. It was an area of real potential and through the café and container garden we were able to give people a reason to stay. It has transformed the space. A new building needed to be constructed to house the café. We used upcycled shipping containers for the physical because we wanted to showcase reuse, stay within budget and attract a student audience.

## Performance and results

The main productive growing site with polytunnel was established in February 2014 and was producing enough produce to start the weekly farmers' market in May 2014. Veggies such as salad mix, stir fry veg mix, spinach, radish and beetroot are grown and sold. Over 100 student and staff members are regulars at the stall. Volunteers help with the harvest and care of crops on both the main growing site and their own college growing sites.

The café took six weeks of construction and was opened in May 2014 by our local MP. Our core values in terms of sourcing are local, ethical and organic and we only work with suppliers who share our values. The café has very quickly built up a loyal customer base and has seen over 12,000 customer transactions since opening. In October 2014, less than six months after opening, the café was recognised by the Soil Association and received a 2014 Organic Award after winning the 'Eating Out' category through a public vote.

## Lessons learned

We have learned that students, staff and the local community do want and will buy sustainable food if it is accessible and affordable. We have received great feedback on both the produce we grow on campus and that which we source from sustainable sources for the café. It has highlighted that people are interested in knowing where their food comes from and they do want to make sustainable choices if it is available. A social enterprise with sustainability as its core value can be a success on a university campus and can be financially viable.

## Sharing our project

We have our own website and social media accounts (twitter, facebook, Instagram). We communicate through our Student Union and university channels. We also write a weekly online growing blog for our local newspaper, the Wandsworth Guardian and have had a couple of articles in the paper. This project is one of 26 Students' Green Fund projects, who we regularly network with and share learning.

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

We are delighted to have been shortlisted as a Green Gown Award finalist. It is fantastic to be recognised as an example of best practice within the sector.

## Further information

Teresa Sheppard – Growthampton Development Officer – [Teresa.sheppard@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:Teresa.sheppard@roehampton.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.growthampton.com](http://www.growthampton.com), Twitter: @growthampton, Facebook: Growthampton