



SUSTAINABLE
RESTAURANT
ASSOCIATION

SRA CASE STUDY: PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY



Profile

Plymouth University has 11 catering outlets serving 30,000 students a wide range of dining experiences.

Like many universities, sustainability has featured strongly on its agenda for some time, evidenced by its consistently high ranking in the People and Planet Green League of UK universities. The catering department has been a big part of this, but it was in 2013 that it made a concerted, strategic commitment to put sustainability at the very core of its offering. The appointment of Darren Procter as Head Chef was a key part of this.



Darren says: "Sustainability is at the heart of everything the university does from the Vice Chancellor down. Rather than questioning why we should operate sustainably, I think the more relevant question is why wouldn't we? We are also very lucky that both the staff and students are really engaged and it excites them – so our customer base is completely onside."

Working with the SRA

The SRA approached Darren and his team about working together to tailor the SRA's sustainability rating to meet the specific requirements of universities and colleges.

Plymouth was initially a little sceptical about the SRA but says it changed its opinion when it saw the supporting newsletters and it realised it had an opportunity to help shape something that could specifically help those in university environments to better understand sustainable initiatives and opportunities.

Three Stars ★★ ★

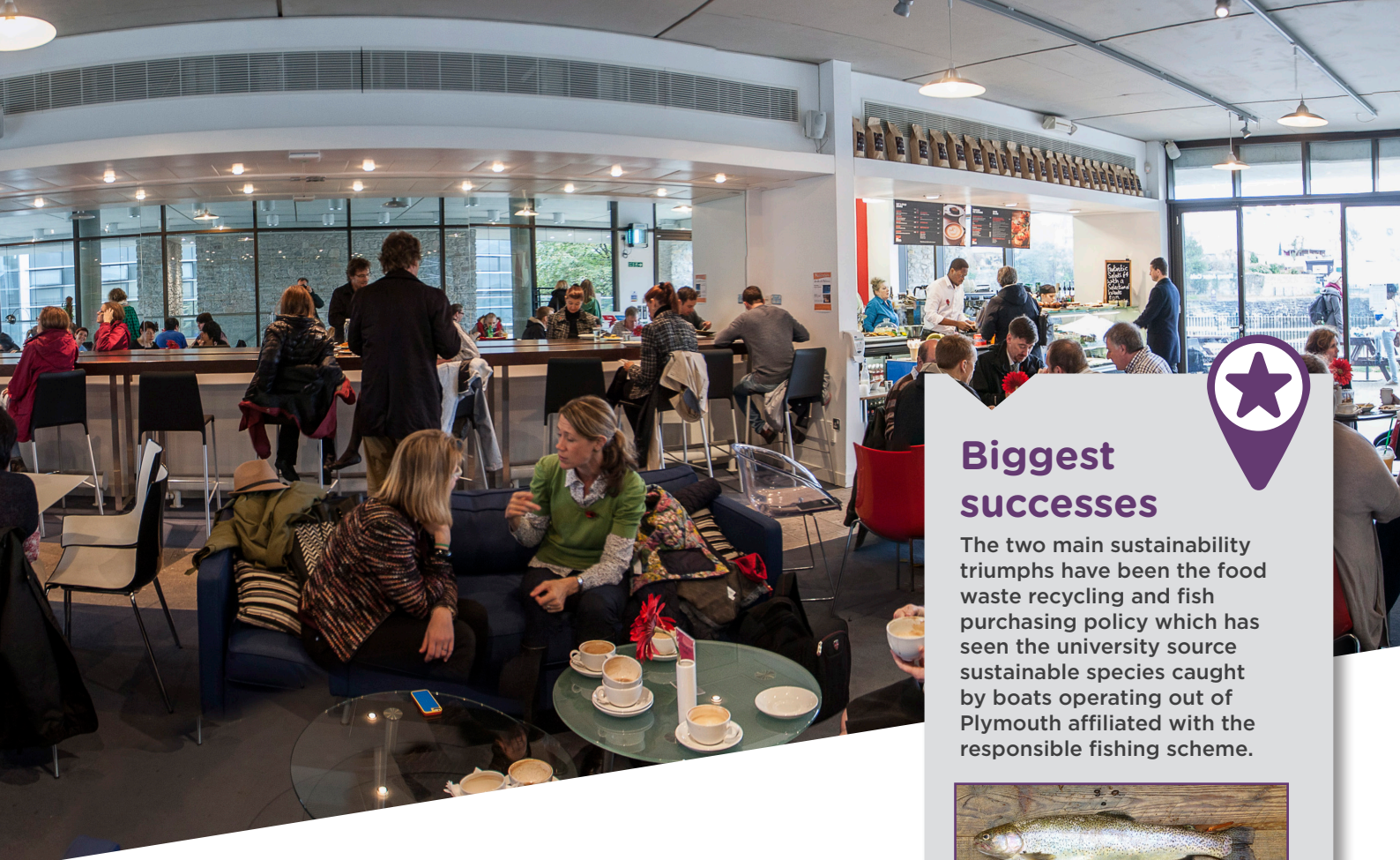
Plymouth's exceptional level of sustainability was rewarded with the highest possible rating – Three Stars. In terms of the university's sourcing, the SRA particularly noted the strict adherence to organic milk, seasonal fish and local free-range eggs and British Freedom Food charcuterie. Under the SRA's Society pillar, Plymouth excelled in its work educating local school children about food and in employing apprentices. While significantly reducing deliveries, using a grey water system and recycling food waste all demonstrate a commitment to reduce its environmental footprint.

Building on firm foundations

Since beginning its SRA Membership Plymouth University has undertaken a transformation of one of its outlets. What was a rather neglected site was given a fresh coat of paint, had the kitchen opened up and changed its offering from a carbohydrate heavy and standard canteen menu to a wide range of salads, bruschetta toppings and flatbreads, all served on compostable plates and bowls, some even made from pressed leaves. This switch to a healthier more engaging menu has been met with a resoundingly positive reception. After two months trade had doubled and waste was down 90%.

The catering department has also appointed a student sustainability ambassador, have installed food waste bins into all the dining rooms and started introducing free-range chicken onto the menu at some of the outlets.

**SUSTAINABILITY
WITH
PLYMOUTH
UNIVERSITY**



Value

Plymouth University says what make the SRA's programme stand out is the extensive advice, support and resources that membership provides, as well as the weekly newsletter.

Darren says: "It's resulted in my awareness of schemes like Farmdrop, Freefrom awards and also the 'adopt a chef' scheme which places food professionals with schools.

"We think this will help our awareness campaigns and prompt us to be more pro-active in our marketing. We feel the balance between the moral, ethical, and financial values works very well in helping target and support local businesses, British producers and local foods.

"What the SRA accreditation gives us is a publically acknowledged level of audit and support that our plans and ideas are right, appropriate and importantly, tested against a well-established criteria."

The report from the SRA has helped Darren and his team focus on what they can do rather than worry about what they can't. "The ongoing support and advice we receive from our Account Manager at the SRA is absolutely invaluable. Previously we were stabbing in the dark, now we know what we're aiming at."

Contact SRA

www.thesra.org | leigh@thesra.org | 020 7479 4226



Biggest successes

The two main sustainability triumphs have been the food waste recycling and fish purchasing policy which has seen the university source sustainable species caught by boats operating out of Plymouth affiliated with the responsible fishing scheme.



Top Tips

- 1 Engage with customers and find issues that resonate with them.
- 2 Do your research with suppliers and choose ones that you can work with closely for years.
- 3 Exploit the produce and expertise on your doorstep, it adds multi values by keeping money within the local economy improving the service you'll receive and helps drive up custom and interest.
- 4 Don't just stop at food, fully compostable disposables are now available across the range of products you'll ever need, cleaning products can now be sourced almost completely chemical free.