

## **Topic Support Networks (TSNs)**

### **Outcome of AGM held on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

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#### **Background**

A Topic Support Network (TSN) is a group of people working together on a specific sustainability subject that is relevant to Scottish colleges and universities. Six TSNs were established for the EAUC-Scotland Branch through the Campus Sustainability Programme (2005-2008) funded by the Scottish Executive and Scottish Funding Council and launched at an event held in May 2007 at the University of Edinburgh, one of which morphed into the EAUC-Scotland Branch; a further three TSNs were established through the EAUC-Scottish members at a recent AGM held in Edinburgh on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

There are now 8 established and functioning networks. These are: Energy; Sustainable Construction; Transport; Waste; Education for Sustainable Development; Responsible Procurement; Sustainable ICT; and Behaviour Change.

#### **Aims and Objectives**

The purpose of the Topic Support Networks is to provide an opportunity for people to work together on a specific sustainability subject that is relevant to Scottish Colleges and Universities. Members of the network can be staff in further and higher education institutions or in public or not for profit organisations. Specifically the TSNs will provide opportunities for individuals and institutions to:

- Share information on best practice and support (e.g. between institutions and strategic partners);
- Identify problems, threats and opportunities for new initiatives;
- Participate in consultation exercises;
- Deliver practical outcomes that will help others in the sector through case studies / templates / guidance / workshops/ general support amongst individual practitioners;
- Provide networking opportunities to the sector in Scotland by topic area; and
- Provide added value to the Universities and Colleges Climate Change Commitment for Scotland (UCCCfS) and the wider EAUC training programmes & projects by theme.

#### **Benefits**

The intended benefits of being a member of a TSN include:

- Sharing experience with colleagues in the sector in similar situations;

EAUC Scotland, Queen Margaret University, Queen Margaret University Drive, Musselburgh, EH21 6UU  
Tel 0131 474 0000 [scotland@eauc.org.uk](mailto:scotland@eauc.org.uk) [www.eauc.org.uk](http://www.eauc.org.uk) Company No: 5183502 Charity No: 1106172

- Being part of a group that can develop solutions to solve the problems you are experiencing;
- Sharing the burden of horizontal scanning, particularly useful for keeping up to date with legislation;
- Contributing to a group that can influence change in the sector; and
- Raising the profile of your institution by taking a proactive approach to sustainable development.

## Organisation and Structure

- The EAUC Scotland office will provide the structure for the TSNs;
- Each topic area will have a convenor who is well informed about the topic area and must be a member of the EAUC;
- Convenors will provide EAUC-Scotland with a topic title to be covered in upcoming meeting, identified presenters to invite and a small outline of what the group would like them to cover in their presentation, and suggested dates for TSN meetings which will take place when the demand is present; and
- Topic areas for the TSNs include:
  - a. Leadership
    - i. Behaviour Change
  - b. Campus
    - i. Sustainable Construction
    - ii. Energy and utilities
    - iii. Travel and Transport
    - iv. Waste and Resource Efficiency
    - v. Responsible/Sustainable Procurement
    - vi. Sustainable ICT
  - c. Learning
    - i. Education for Sustainable Development

Following a consultation in January 2010 and the presentation of a report outlining the findings at the EAUC-Scotland AGM in May 2010 the option outlined below was selected out of the four presented to members:

Appropriate individuals agree to lead on a particular topic. The TSN would meet twice a year – or as considered necessary by each TSN – to ensure some face to face contact. A change in the set up of how TSN groups meet is also required for network links to

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potentially reach the whole sector. The use of a variety of media could be used to ensure members were fully engaged i.e. via email discussion groups or other identified email systems, increased video conferencing opportunities and web conferencing (webinars) to reduce travel and pressures of host institutions.

Focus would be primarily on (but not limited to) interested individuals in specific topic areas to ensure a good solid network and these topic networks to scout for any new members to join. Support available from the Scotland office would be limited to helping find suitable dates and venues and assisting the convenor in identifying speakers and arranging invites. A dedicated email address would be maintained for each TSN, administered by the Scotland office. A convenor can stand down from the TSN provided there is a suitable handover period to ensure consistency within the TSN.

## Framework for TSN meetings

To ensure that TSNs are beneficial to colleagues with varying degree (from limited to advanced) of knowledge and experience in the sector, the agendas for each TSN meeting will be carefully constructed to reflect the generic structure below to ensure that the objectives of TSNs are being met at each meeting:

1. Major challenges facing FHE institutions in Scotland
  - *identify problems threats and opportunities for new initiatives;*
  - challenges currently faced; and
  - provide a strategic view of the future regarding Scotland
2. Effective environmental management - top tips
  - *share information on best practice and support (e.g. amongst institutions and strategic partners); and*
  - this session will help those attending better understand the major environmental management challenges the sector is facing and provide up-to-date advice about effective measures that can be put in place to improve how they can play their part.
3. Overview of recent changes to be aware of in the [TSN topic] sector
  - provide delegates with a summary of what has been happening in recent months (the last year) and the ways in which this will be likely to affect them in the future.
4. Practical outcomes
  - *Identify practical outcomes to deliver that will help others in the sector through case studies / templates / guidance / workshops/ general support amongst individual practitioners*

\* Short presentation [if convenor has invited a speaker relevant to the group]

\*\* *the italic writing in the structured agenda above represents the three key objectives of Topic Support Networks*

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