

# What Price Sustainability?

A pioneering project by the EAUC to support universities, colleges and students procure more sustainably





# What is Sustainable Procurement?

If sustainable development can be defined as **“development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”**,

Gro Harlem Brundtland

then sustainable procurement can be defined as the engine which delivers it.

Pressure is increasing on purchasing professionals to integrate this thinking into university and college supply chain processes. Integrating sustainable development into the supply chain often means identifying and reducing problematic social, environmental and health and safety issues.

Typically this means questioning

- **what you buy**
- **how you buy it**
- **and who you buy it from**

## Why is sustainable procurement important?

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) have both published strategies outlining their commitment to sustainable development. In these strategies, procurement is identified as having a major part to play in demonstrating a commitment to sustainable development and realising the environmental, social and economic benefits of its implementation.

The Government reinforced the importance of sustainable procurement when in May 2005 it announced the creation of the sustainable purchasing task force. The task force has to create an action plan **‘to bring about a step-change in sustainable public procurement so that the UK is among the leaders in the EU by 2009.’**

Integrating sustainable development into purchasing practice is not ‘nice to do’, it will soon be a core requirement of how you do business.

## What are the benefits of sustainable procurement?

- **Achieving** the strategic sustainable development objectives of your institution
- **Complying** with environmental law
- **More efficient** use of resources
- **A reduction** in materials used and waste produced
- **Saving** money and controlling costs
- **Market differentiation**, adding to your unique selling points to students and staff
- **Minimising** your future environmental liabilities
- **Reducing** your corporate risk
- **Enhancing** your reputation
- **Ensuring** security of supply
- **Contribute** to the quality of life of the local community

*If your organisation is serious about the environment and enhancing its contribution to society, it has to address its main impact areas. Procurement then becomes a driver for change.*

**“Sustainable procurement is a fundamental part of the wider sustainable consumption challenge. We can not expect to have an impact on consumption patterns overall if we are not prepared to change those patterns ourselves. By working to understand the barriers to change we can more effectively put into place measures that enable, engage and encourage action addressing not only environmental issues but also other ethical issues, such as social justice.**

*I fully support this project and wish it every success.”*

**Elliot Morley MP,  
Minister of State  
(Climate Change and  
Environment),  
February 2006**

# What is the scale of the challenge?

Whilst many organisations have ambitions to procure more sustainably they often find implementation is difficult and complicated. In September 2005 the National Audit Office published a report summarising their review of 'Sustainable Procurement in Central Government'.

In the report a number of challenges were indentified.

- There is a **gap** between **policy and practice - 'the implementation gap'**
- Procurement staff are often **not trained** in sustainability issues and **do not understand** how to achieve the targets
- The **link** needs to be made between **sustainability, efficiency** and **cost savings** with a long term approach being taken.



# The Project

To help **'bridge the implementation gap'**, with support from the Defra Environmental Action Fund, the EAUC is helping colleges and universities respond positively on the sustainable procurement agenda. Working alongside a range of institutions, the EAUC is providing support and expertise on many issues highlighted by the institutions themselves.

Working with partner institutions and under the guidance of the project steering group, this 3 year project (culminating in March 2008), is focused on implementation rather than theory. Whilst a plethora of excellent guidance exists on sustainable procurement, research has shown that implementation is often sporadic and ad-hoc. Working alongside project partners the EAUC is supporting institutions move forward on the sustainable procurement agenda.



The project will develop a set of practical tools, tailored to the Higher and Further Education sector, which will help universities and colleges integrate sustainable procurement into their processes in a systematic way.

## Project Steering Group includes :



## Project partners represented by:



## Who are our partners ?

- Bicton College
- Blackpool and The Fylde College
- Nottingham Trent University
- Pershore Group of Colleges
- South Tyneside College
- Suffolk College
- University of Bristol
- University of Durham
- University of East London
- University of Gloucestershire
- University of Hertfordshire
- University of Hull
- University of Northampton
- University of Plymouth
- University of Southampton
- University of the Arts London
- University of the West of England
- Wigan and Leigh College
- Worcester College of Technology



# Project Approach

# EAUC

The project is working closely with all partners and steering group members to ensure dialogue, discussion and debate are at the heart of the project. Initial baseline research has shown that the communication of sustainable procurement is a key objective of all partners and this has helped shape the project outputs.

The project is committed to supporting partnering institutions to take the principles of sustainable procurement beyond the procurement teams to devolved buyers and internal customers. To do this the following training workshops are being developed:

- **Developing a sustainable procurement policy and strategy**
- **Social issues in procurement**
- **Supplier engagement for sustainability**
- **Risk based approaches to sustainable procurement**
- **Train the Trainer – Communicating sustainable procurement**

As well as these specific activities the project is working alongside institutions and steering group members to influence the buying patterns of students. This will continue to develop along the course of the project.



The Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges – EAUC, is the Environmental and Sustainability Champion within Further and Higher Education in the United Kingdom.

By being a member of the EAUC, key staff in your institution will be kept up to date with developments in environmental legislation, technologies, Education for Sustainable Development and best practice.

*With a membership of over 200 Further and Higher Education institutions, the EAUC is leading the way in integrating sustainability and environmental management into the business management of universities and colleges in the UK.*

The EAUC works closely with sector companies and now offers a number of opportunities to make much closer linkage with us and our university and college members.

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## How can I benefit from this project?

As the project progresses, training, tools and other resources will be developed with project partners. This process will conclude in March 2008 when the resources will be widely available through the EAUC. Project updates will be available regularly on the EAUC website [www.eauc.org.uk](http://www.eauc.org.uk)