

TITLE:

Construction and Strategic Sustainability at Cambridge Regional College



DATE: November 2009

INSTITUTION PROFILE

FE with some HE provision
700 staff
Urban
1 main site

SUMMARY

Cambridge Regional College not only addressed sustainability across the institution, but developed a specialism in sustainable construction to meet the needs of local businesses.

This has resulted in a beneficial partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council and the development and delivery of a bespoke course in a dedicated building, which in itself is an exemplar of sustainability.

EAUC COMMENT

Cambridge Regional College is determined to developing a skilled workforce with the intelligence to understand and positively react to the growing needs of the sustainability agenda. By addressing a local and imminent issue, the College is at the forefront of a practical and sustainable drive forward

THE PROBLEM

National and regional targets coupled with a skills shortage prompted Cambridge Regional College (CRC) to address sustainability, not only in its own operations but in the courses it provided.

Government has set a target for nearly half a million new homes to be built in the East of England between 2001 and 2021. A growing awareness of the sustainability agenda was also pushing CRC to consider its operations. The college had seen that climate change was receiving more attention from policy-makers and the media and was mindful that it needed to give its students an understanding of sustainability and climate change. In addition, there was a shortage of skilled construction workers and a drive for increased sustainability in construction.

In 2007 the college signed the Cambridge Climate Change Charter, which is a statement developed by Cambridge City Council which, when signed, commits organisations to carry out a number of actions to understand and reduce their environmental impact. These include:

- carrying out a baseline audit of emissions
- setting targets and taking action to reduce these emissions, and
- report annually on progress

THE APPROACH

CRC's answer to these multiple drivers was a partnership project with Cambridgeshire County Council. The two organisations set up the SmartLIFE centre which is dedicated to teaching modern construction methods and sustainable development.

The wider construction curriculum was enhanced by ensuring that all full time students studied the NCFE level 1 qualification in sustainable development in addition to their main course.

In addition, all other students at the college studied sustainable development during tutorials and the college promoted it through dedicated themed weeks of activity.

In order to embed sustainability into the operation of the college, an Environmental Task Group was set up in 2008. This is made up of a senior manager, staff representatives from the facilities and health and safety teams and teaching staff with expertise in sustainable development or environmental issues.

The group's remit is to improve the college's environmental performance. It has done this by:

- undertaking a staff survey to identify staff with the knowledge and enthusiasm to become environmental champions
- undertaking an environmental aspects survey to identify the college's environmental impacts. the impacts were then reviewed by the group and priorities for improvement identified
- working with a consultant to develop an environmental management system and achieve ISO14001
- developing and implementing a green travel plan
- embedding sustainable development into purchasing decisions

OUR GOALS

- Provide construction workers with knowledge and experience of modern methods of construction (MMC)
- Provide workers with the skills needed by local construction companies who are already delivering MMC
- Ensure all construction students at the college had an appreciation and knowledge of sustainable development
- Ensure college environmental performance improved
- Ensure new college buildings achieve exemplary environmental performance

OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

Obstacles

- Staff knowledge and expertise in MMC
- No existing full time course in MMC
- Funding SmartLIFE - the dedicated construction centre
- Staff resistance at being asked to teach a new subject, which some had very little knowledge of
- Funding environmental improvements to new buildings

Solutions

- Built partnerships with companies working in this field. Ensured staff developed the necessary knowledge
- The college developed a course with NCFE to meet the needs of the industry
- Formed a partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council and bid for EU funding
- A resource pack was developed for all lecturers and standard resources/worksheets which could be used by all students to produce their portfolios were produced
- Sale of the college's city centre campus provided capital for these projects

PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

- A one year full time MMC course with recruitment, retention, achievement and success improving every year. The college is working with CSkills to transfer this to the Qualifications and Credit Framework, which will enable other colleges to offer the course
- The college has formed strong partnerships with local companies supplying and constructing homes using MMC. This provides opportunities for students and ensures staff benefit from current industry knowledge
- All full time construction students study NCFE Sustainable Development as part of their course. Success rates for this course are improving year on year
- Standard tutorial material produced, which provides a starting point for tutors to address sustainable development within tutorial sessions. A themed college week dedicated to sustainable development with additional activities provided for students around the theme e.g. environmental films shown in cycle powered cinema, stalls where students can calculate their carbon footprint, publicise college recycling initiatives
- New college buildings with environmental performance which exceeds regulations (Energy Performance Certificate A rated)

- A dedicated and active Environmental Task Group which meets regularly. The group has identified and prioritised issues to work on, resulting in the college now working towards environmental accreditation via ISO14001

LESSONS LEARNT

- Commitment from senior management is essential for success. The success at CRC has been led from the top and would not have been as significant without this commitment. Senior commitment gives staff the confidence that these initiatives have a long term focus and will continue to be a priority for the college
- Partnerships are key to success. These take time to establish and the benefits may not initially be clear, but the time taken to build solid relationships based on mutual respect for each others' abilities, skills and business needs have been worth while
- Access as much additional funding as you can. Funding for energy efficiency projects at CRC came from the sale of its city centre campus. Other funding for these kinds of projects is available through Salix Finance



FURTHER INFORMATION

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Cambridge Regional College - www.camre.ac.uk

SmartLIFE - www.smartlife.org.uk

Salix Finance - www.salixfinance.co.uk

NCFE - www.ncfe.org.uk

Information on ISO 14001 -

<http://www.iso14000-iso14001-environmental-management.com/>

Cambridge Climate Change Charter:

www.cambridge.gov.uk/public/docs/Cambridge%20climate%20change%20charter.pdf



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