

# eauc case study

CLASSIFICATION:  
**Business and Community**

SUB CLASSIFICATION:  
**Strategy**

TITLE:

## Sharing for sustainability in the South West

DATE: **March 2010**



### SUMMARY

Colleges across the South West have benefitted from sharing their experience and expertise on sustainability by forming a dedicated group.

Good information was gained from a baseline survey and a shared action plan has been developed so the colleges are taking action together to tackle this important subject.

This model also means that costs are shared, an important driver in the current financial climate.

### INSTITUTION PROFILE

FE/HE: Wiltshire College of Further and Higher Education  
No of students: 10,000  
No of staff: 1200  
No of sites/campuses: 4 main campuses, 9 Outreach centres

### EAUC COMMENT

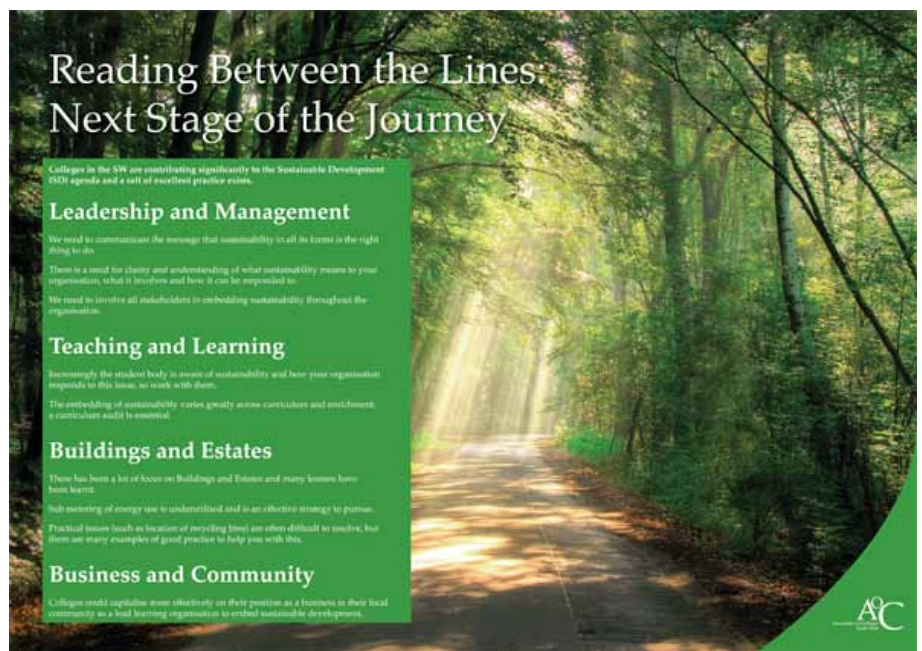
Wiltshire College takes on the responsibility of chairing a far reaching and ambitious best practice sharing network in the South West. By coordinating thematic groups the College has helped the region share resources and financial burdens allowing more to be done. This is an exceptional study of cooperation and the EAUC congratulates the South West for getting to the heart of sustainability in their region.

### PROJECT PARTNERS

33 colleges across the region  
Association of Colleges South West Region  
South West Regional Development Agency  
Learning and Skills Council  
Government Office South West

### THE PROBLEM

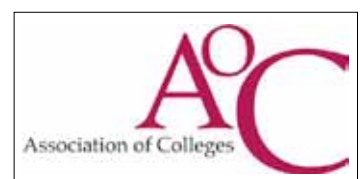
The South West has a history of sustainability as a region with many of the UK's premier examples of sustainability such as the Eden Project and the Schumacher Centre for Technology and Development, in the region.



Sustainability was rising up the FE agenda and some of the colleges in the region realised it would be great to support each other and share best practice through a region-wide sustainable development group.

### THE APPROACH

In 2007 the Association of Colleges in the region co-ordinated an invitation to all 33 colleges suggesting the idea of a number of thematic groups and asking for those who would be interested to attend an initial meeting.



A group with representatives of 10 colleges was formed and is chaired by Wiltshire College. Funding was sourced from the LSC and regional development agency. The funding was gained through looking at how the group's objectives could

match those of other organisations. Key in this was the South West Regional Development Agency's strategic target for the region to become the first low carbon region in the UK.

The funding was used to commission a regional baseline audit to establish where each of the colleges was on its sustainability journey. Of the 33 colleges, 29 responded to the questionnaire and the responses were then followed up with a phone call to get more detail, and with additional interviews where appropriate.

The findings of the report highlighted several themes which the group used to create a regional action plan. Top of the list was to deliver a dissemination event which would contain seminars addressing each of the key issues and presented by colleges with experience in that area. Examples of these include how to create a strategic action plan for sustainability and top tips for quick wins on sustainable development.

The group also looked for expertise within the FE sector which they could call on for help. This came in the form of Esin Esat, Bedford College's Director of Sustainability, who willingly led sessions on embedding SD at the dissemination event.

## OUR GOALS

- Set up a group to provide mutual support for FE colleges tackling sustainable development in the South West
- Share best practice
- Ease the financial burden of integrating sustainability by sharing information

## OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

### Obstacle

- How to set up a regional group with such a large number of colleges
- Deciding where to start with a regional action plan
- How to engage those colleges which weren't active in the group
- How to make progress on embedding ESD in the curriculum
- Finance and resources

### Solution

- The initial invitation was sent by the Association of Colleges. Those colleges which were enthusiastic nominated representatives to attend regular meetings
- Funding was sourced from the LSC for a regional baseline audit. This provided a clear direction for the first version of the action plan
- The dissemination event was fully funded for delegates and showcased good practice and included practical sessions which enabled people to go away and make changes at their institution
- Sharing best practice among the group and looking outside the region for additional examples
- Expertise from colleagues exchanged. Funding sourced through aligning the group's objectives with those of other organisations

## PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

- 29 colleges responded to the baseline audit and a clear picture of sustainability in the South West was gained
- 62 colleges attended the dissemination event in May 2009 at which five seminars were hosted to share good practice
- 11 case studies of good practice were produced in a publication. This was distributed across all SW colleges
- Additional funding has been secured for three further workshops. The first, recently held at Weston College, looked at embedding ESD in the FE curriculum. The second to be held June 2010 looked at low cost estate solutions.

## LESSONS LEARNT

- Trialling survey and case study questions with a few people before finalising them would allow some amending to get the very best, most useable data
- Funders are very keen on groups delivering objectives on their behalf. Look carefully at what funding is available and what the priorities of the funding bodies are. If you can help them meet their targets you are very likely to get funding
- Ensuring the dissemination event was free for those attending meant that a large number of colleges sent delegates. This may have been different if there had been a cost attached
- Expertise on ESD is available within the FE sector. Sharing good practice and calling on expertise from other colleges is a good, cost effective way to take the agenda forward

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Wiltshire College  
[www.wiltshire.ac.uk](http://www.wiltshire.ac.uk)

Association of Colleges  
[www.aoc.co.uk](http://www.aoc.co.uk)

Association of Colleges (South West)  
[www.aoc.co.uk/en/aoc\\_regions/aocsouthwest/](http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/aoc_regions/aocsouthwest/)

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