

TITLE:

Developing and Reporting on a Sustainable Development Strategy at the University of St Andrews

DATE:

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SUMMARY

The University of St Andrews Estates Environment Team (EET) obtained approval from the University Court for a new Sustainable Development Strategy, focusing on environmental, social, business, financial and legal issues. It includes objectives for which targets and KPIs have been developed and are used to report upon. The University's commitments won them the THES Award for the Top University for Outstanding Contribution to Sustainable Development.

EAUC COMMENT

The fundamental requirements for continual improvement are described here through the positive response, support and leadership given by senior management and the need for management systems to monitor, measure and report accurately and regularly on sustainability performance.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Internal partners - Estates; Residential and Business Services; Finance; School of Management and Principal's Office

External partners - Fife Council and the Carbon Trust

THE PROBLEM

Before the University had an Environment or Sustainable Development Strategy it was difficult to gain support for sustainability and environmental initiatives and it was difficult for senior management and others to establish how the University was performing. Following an extensive consultation exercise with key stakeholders, the University developed a Sustainable Development Strategy which was approved by Court and contains a commitment to delivering agreed objectives and targets. Fundamental to the effective management of the strategy are the monitoring and measuring systems that enable accurate data to be reported, priority sustainability aspects to be understood, and improved performance to be obtained.

THE APPROACH

The Strategy is facilitated by the EET and supported by the Environment Task Group (ETG) which includes representatives from the Changing Behaviour Group and the Travel and Parking Group. The EET reports to the Planning and Resource Committee (PARC) which reports annually to the University Court on budget, performance and progress. Future targets are proposed, approval is sought and high risk areas are identified. Annual performance reports and a quarterly update are given to the ETG. A set of KPIs are used to track progress and are based upon legislative compliance, policy and best practice, and economic factors including waste, water and energy spend.

GOALS

The University of St Andrews was aiming to obtain senior management approval and commitment:

- To a sustainable development strategy and policy applicable to all Schools, Units and individuals associated with them;
- To obtain resources to deliver key objectives and targets;
- To improving sustainability performance and raising the profile of the University;
- To raising awareness and educating staff and students on environmental and sustainability issues; and
- To continual improvement of sustainability performance.

OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

- Incoherent approach to understanding and management of sustainability issues
- Lack of good quality data
- People not involved
- Ensuring continued progress
- Develop proposed policy and strategy based on significant aspects and obtain senior management support and governance. Ensure that all staff and students understand their responsibilities.
- Appoint trained and experienced staff to manage, monitor and measure key aspects including utilities, waste and transport use.
- Consult widely to obtain feedback from Schools and Units and Student Body. Establish working groups and involve students.
- Develop, review and report on objectives/targets with indicators, e.g. energy use kWh/m²; % recycled waste; % staff using public transport.

PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

The University of St Andrews bases their reporting on the Global Reporting Index, DEFRA indicators and internal discussions.

Examples of their indicators include:

- Number of prosecutions/enforcement notices
- % waste recycled
- % staff travelling to work by car (alone)
- % of projects with environmental/social criteria over EU procurement threshold
- Consumption kWh/m² (electricity, gas, oil) / m³ water
- Tonnes CO₂ (electricity, gas, oil)
- Area of land under biodiversity management
- Cost (£) (electricity, gas, oil, water/wastewater)

LESSONS LEARNT

The University is developing new indicators for their carbon footprint, business travel, biodiversity, ethical performance, staff training, theft and vandalism. It is vital that there is a clear understanding of the issues that need to be addressed and that support and governance processes are established to ensure long term delivery. The issues need to be communicated effectively to senior management and the risks associated with not managing them responsibly highlighted. It is important to communicate the benefits of effective management to staff and students so that they can see how their contribution is enabling the University to become more sustainable. It is vital to report successes and failures so that lessons are learned and acted on. It ain't easy but its fun!

FURTHER INFORMATION

Roddy Yarr, Environment and Energy Manager, University of St Andrews
try@st-andrews.ac.uk



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**www.eauc.org.uk
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