



SCOTLAND: WORKING TOWARDS A LOW CARBON ECONOMY

Universities across the UK have increasing pressures on them to perform sustainably, compete financially, increase recruitment and educate students while maintaining a degree of autonomy, and this is no different in Scotland. However, there is an initiative that unites Scottish universities; the Universities and Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland (UCCCfS).

All universities and colleges across Scotland have committed to addressing climate change and carbon challenges head on by signing the Commitment. The UCCCfS has been facilitated by the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) since 2009, and offers a framework for institutions to structure their activity and report on progress, firstly through a commitment from the principal, and then by producing a five-year Climate Change Action Plan with timely action driven targets.

In 2012/3, the Scotland office of the EAUC worked with institutions to produce a progress report template to collectively assess how the sector is performing on environmental action and carbon reduction within their institutions. Supported by the Scottish Funding Council, EAUC-Scotland work



closely with colleagues at the Scottish Government and sector representatives to ensure a collaborative and joined-up approach to addressing national priorities for Scotland.

This is not without its challenges. Estate portfolios continue to expand and this poses a challenge for further carbon abatement. Increasing business activity such as research and expansion aspirations has caused conflict with carbon reduction. Investment in energy-

intensive buildings to equip latest research facilities and equipment, along with growing estates (ensuring a viable institution to attract students) is counter-productive to carbon reduction. However, efforts are being made to address these issues e.g. initiatives such as S-Labs (sustainable laboratories) and behavioural approaches, but this will be ongoing and in some cases, limited.

The majority of existing estates (even UK wide), are old and have a backlog of maintenance issues to address. Often the fabric of buildings is compromised and therefore not as energy efficient as it could, or should be. Investment has been made at various institutions through using available loan schemes e.g. Salix Finance etc. However, understanding often falls short between finance/procurement departments and the wants of estates/facilities departments to address issues. Most have limited budgets for specific carbon-saving initiatives due to competing priorities and the reinvestment of these savings to continue with additional works is not realised. A more collaborative approach and wider education of the issues is required internally within finance and estates departments.

EAUC-Scotland is working closely with the Scottish tertiary sector to continue to develop the UCCCfS as a viable model to assist in driving change and knowledge transfer across departments. We strongly believe that social responsibility and sustainability issues, including climate and carbon activity, should not be shoehorned into operations and should be addressed with a holistic approach. The University of St Andrews has recently announced they are working towards becoming the first carbon neutral university. This is a great example of successful collaboration internally that would not be possible without a whole university approach. 

The Next Generation

Underpinning the UCCCfS is a package of support facilitated by the EAUC, which includes the ongoing Continual Professional Development Programme, the Sustainability Leaders Programme and the Topic Support Networks, all of which provide opportunities for sharing best practice and networking.

The EAUC is also holding its second Scotland Conference which this year



focuses on **The Next Generation** – a positive future for further and higher education in Scotland.

For further information please contact Sarah Lee, Scotland manager and UCCCfS programme manager at slee@eauc.org.uk. For more information about UCCCfS, visit: www.eauc.org.uk/ucccfS or www.eauc.org.uk.