

- 76% of students believe that lifestyles need to radically change for human civilisation to survive the next century, and 46% say that environmental considerations are important or very important when deciding what organisation to work for - UCAS Future Leaders Survey 2007

## HIGHLY COMMENDED

### Kingston Borough, Students' Union and University Create a Positive Environmental Partnership

Positive Environment Kingston (PEK) uses student mentors to improve the sustainability performance of local organisations, and to help reduce the Borough's ecological footprint. It is a joint project between Kingston Council's Environment and Sustainability Department (who find and co-ordinate placements), Kingston University Students' Union Volunteer Service and the University's Sustainability Team.

The work counts as a 48 hour credit module (comprising 16 hours of training, and 32 of mentoring). In 2006-07 13 students were recruited and assigned to 9 local organisations to help and support them reduce their environmental impact. Each mentor visits their organisation(s) regularly to help them improve through research, monitoring, inspiration and ideas, and advice. In particular they help the organisation to develop an Environmental Action Plan, prioritising areas such as reducing waste, recycling, buying locally, using alternative transport, saving energy and water, and procuring green energy. The volunteers have so far contributed over 600 hours.



Hannah Smith and Daniel Czako, PEK mentors

these. The students develop learning and skills in a real life situation, enhance their career opportunities, and can gain academic benefits - for example, one of the students researched the Borough's eco footprint for their dissertation. The University improves its standing within the community, local organisations save money and improve their environmental performance, and the Borough reduces its ecological footprint. In addition a local sustainability network is emerging, sharing and promoting environmental best practice in the area."

The mentors also help the organisations to explore and identify ways of increasing the environmental awareness of the people they work with, in ways that contribute to delivery of their organisational aims. For example, *Learn English At Home* taught English to their clients through organic gardening activities and reading about ecological footprints.

The scheme was an exceptional winner in the Higher Education Active Community Fund volunteering awards, and *Learn English at Home* won a local Green Guardian Award for best environmental champion.

Nicola Corrigan, Sustainability Facilitator at Kingston University, believes that "everybody wins from projects like

### Judge's Comments on Student Initiatives (Continued)

*Positive Environmental Kingston is an impressive model of community collaboration between 'town' (Kingston Council) and 'gown' (Kingston University and its Students' Union). The initiative's use of student mentors to engage in a range of local volunteering tasks is reducing energy, minimising waste and producing other environmental benefits, whilst providing educational and personal development benefits to participants.*