

SUSTAINABILITY BOARD REPORT

July 2021



UWE BRISTOL AND THE STUDENTS' UNION AT UWE HAVE BEEN SHORTLISTED FOR 11 EAUC GREEN GOWN AWARDS

Established in 2004, the Green Gown Awards recognise the exceptional sustainability initiatives being undertaken by universities and colleges. With sustainability moving up the agenda, the Awards have become established as the most prestigious recognition of best practice within the further and higher education sector.

The Students' Union were delighted that 3 UWE Students were shortlisted for Green Gown Awards, UWE Bristol 5 further awards, and we were shortlisted for the 'Student Engagement' category for our 'Greener Futures' Accreditation.

Our President, Evan Botwood had this to say on the recent news:

'I'm so pleased that our focus on sustainability has been recognised. A massive congratulations goes out to all students and staff who worked on and fed into these projects, especially those with individual awards. Sustainability is a strong area of partnership with the university, and it is amazing to see its accomplishments recognised.'

Greener Futures is a sustainability competition for societies and sport clubs at The Students' Union at UWE. It is a creative, fun and rewarding way for our students to gain inspiration and recognition for building sustainability into their communities.

The programme features a workbook of challenges that are completed throughout the academic year and connected to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Participating clubs and societies are given the option to apply for financial aid of up to £500, this enables groups to carry out in-depth sustainability projects.

At the end of the academic year, the club or society with the most points will receive the 'Greener Futures Club/Society of the Year' title, presented at their respective awards ceremony. There is also an award for 'Leader of the Year', celebrating a student who has made particularly strong efforts to be sustainable and encourage their group to get involved.

Winners 2020/2021:

The Greener Futures Club of the Year was awarded to Lacrosse:

Lacrosse have once again (also 19/20 winners) shown excellent initiative in engaging their members on sustainability and taking action. Their members have been upcycling clothes, starting their own small, sustainable businesses making recycled jewellery and face masks, and also running vegan bake-offs. A particularly impressive project has been The Free Meal Project, set up by their President to deliver nutritious food boxes to those who need them across Bristol.

The Greener Futures Society of the Year was awarded to Geography:

This year, Geog Soc has been dedicated and passionate about embedding sustainability into their society. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, they have created fantastic blogs, organised small-scale litter picks and taken numerous sustainability actions around the home during lockdown. In addition, they have been a key student voice in pushing for Green Walls on campus, working collaboratively with staff to advance this agenda.

The Greener Futures: Leader of the Year was awarded to a student from Cheerleading, they have been working on a fantastic selection of unique projects this year. They've been experimenting with making vegan leather, homemade concrete and eco-resin pots. They have also been making eco soy wax melts using locally sourced lavender and natural dyes and selling these via Instagram. To connect with other club members, they've also been encouraging walks in nature.

THE GREEN TEAM THE STUDENTS' UNION IS AWARDED EXCELLENT ACCREDITATION FOR GREEN IMPACT

The Students' Union at UWE is delighted to announce we have been awarded 'Excellent' in our Green Impact submission for the 2020/21 academic year. This is the highest rating that can be achieved.

Green Impact is a sustainability and social responsibility programme run by Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS-UK).

We'd like to say thank you to all the students and staff involved in sustainability, that have made this happen. It would not be possible to achieve Excellent without all their hard work and passion for change!

Here are some of the highlights and achievements of our Green Impact submission:

- We planted 2,000 trees through our pledge to plant with Tree Sisters for every voter who turned out this election
- We released a Divestment update with UWE Bristol
- Improved our hedgehog friendly campus award from Bronze to Silver
- Despite our two main coffee-selling outlets being closed since March 2020, students still saved £768.80 from bringing their own coffee cups this year
- In collaboration with UWE, we reached over 100 students about their carbon footprint and holistic ways to reduce their impact during 'Creating Change: Climate Action for 2030'
- 'In 18/19 academic year we loaned 27 bikes and in 19/20 we loaned 75. So far in 2020/21, we have loaned 22 bikes, which is impressive considering COVID-19 restrictions
- 20/21 menu changes have resulted in meat being reduced by 9% and vegetarian and vegan options making up 58% of the menu
- 2020/21 has seen 40% of all Student Ideas submitted being related to sustainability, double that of 19/20 (20%)
- Idea 336, on banning disposable cups, received 383 votes, which is the second highest number of votes ever received through the system



Our new president, Evan Botwood had this to say:

'For us to be awarded 'excellent' demonstrates the strong commitment from The Students' Union to sustainability, and as such the abundant passion of UWE students for environmental and social justice issues. I can't wait to see how we can continue and go beyond the excellent work that has been done'.

RESPONSIBLE FUTURES ACCREDITATION

UWE Bristol and The Students' Union at UWE were audited by our students and SOS-UK for our Responsible Futures Accreditation. The two day audit was a success and we have retained our accreditation status. We look forward to receiving the full report in late July.

COMMUNITY GARDEN & GROWING SESSIONS

After the Easter break we have returned to running fortnightly small group Community Garden sessions. You can see an Instagram reel we made from the first session [here](#) as well as these photos below. Through a short survey after the event we found it had positive impact on students' with 75% agreeing it supporting their wellbeing 'a lot'. Furthermore 50% agreed it supported their gardening skills 'a little' and 50% agreeing 'a lot'. Here's a couple of other comments on the session:

"I found it pleasant and I didn't know the place existed on campus, so it was great to be there and know for next time."

"Really enjoy these sessions helps me de-stress from everything else going on."



Student allotments

At the Community Garden, students have the opportunity to have their own growing space. Information about this is on our website. We also regularly promote this in the Green Team newsletter and on social media. Four students have taken up the opportunity this year.

Here is a reflection from a student using the space:

"The garden is beautiful and Will & team are friendly & accommodating. After doing the induction it's nice to be able to drop by when possible. I've planted potatoes & cauliflower with peas, carrots & beans in waiting. Looking forward tending to my patch on more frequent visits, during the upcoming warmer months." Gayle, first year BSc Physiotherapy

Gardening drop-in

In April when restriction eased, we got students at Bower Ashton and Glenside involved in planting for this and to expand the Beeline to these campuses. We ran a drop-in session for students where they could sow green beans and sweetcorn for the Beeline which is being expanded from Frenchay to these campuses. We engaged around 15 students and staff at each campus on this. As footfall is lower due to the pandemic, we are looking forward to running these again next academic year as they proved to work well on this first trial in April. In total, between SU staff and those who dropped by, we helped the Grounds team sow 60 pots worth of green beans and sweetcorn.



Glenside



Bower Ashton

Grow your Own Kits with HallsLife

In March 2021, UWE HallsLife ran a competition where students were able to win either a herb or a vegetable growing kit complete with peat free and vegan compost, seeds, bamboo biodegradable plant pots, wooden plant markers, and a guide.

<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/ents/event/10326/>

We had 23 entries and 10 winners.

Edwin, an international student who was a winner said “it’s super cool you’re giving us this”.

Windowsill Planters Craft Club with HallsLife

On 21 March 2021, UWE HallsLife partnered with Crafty Hen, an organisation that runs craft workshops, to offer our students a ‘crafternoon’ event making windowsill planters. Students were able to register for a free kit containing s a trio of mini ceramic pots, high quality ceramic paints, peat-free soil, three types of seeds, and a paintbrush. They could then join the live ‘crafternoon’ session over Zoom to learn how to grow plants on a windowsill and other similar confined environments.

We had all 15 kits collected, and 6 students tune into the live session.

<http://www.browzer.co.uk/uwe/hallslife-craft-club-windowsill-garden-workshop--free-kits> 141111

City Campus Grow Your Own Giveaways

One of the themes of Feel Good Feb was Try Something New – we ran a social media giveaway for different DIY kits included a grow your own herb garden from Love Rustic GB <https://growjar.co.uk/product/eco-friendly-indoor-herb-garden/>

Then throughout March we have away grow your own herb kits in exchange for student feedback on our Instagram stories. It was really useful way of encouraging student conversations.



BRISTOL BIG GIVE

We are working with University of Bristol and their Students' Union, plus the British Heart Foundation on the annual Big Give Campaign. We have promoted the donation sites to students across our social media platforms and website.

STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR

Faith Terry-Doyle will be joining us on Wednesday 11 August as our new Student Sustainability Engagement Coordinator. Faith is moving to us from University of Bristol Students' Union, where she is the Academic Representation Assistant. Faith has been supporting their Education Officer to embed sustainability into the curriculum. Faith is an active volunteer for groups such as the Climate Action Movement Society, Plastic-Free Me, and for Our Air Our City. We are excited to welcome Faith into her new post.

WELCOME & BIG GREEN WEEK PLANS

The Students' Union are working in partnership with many UWE Bristol departments to create the Start of Year Events programme, which includes move in period, Starting Block and continues to end of October (last date international students can start). We have planned Big Green Week for week commencing 18th October.

STUDENT SUSTAINABLE LIVING GUIDE

The Students' Union Sustainability Committee are creating a 'Sustainable Living Guide' for new and returning students to utilise, helping them make behaviour changes on a spectrum of easy to more challenging, to reduce their carbon footprint. The guide will be 32 pages and produced as a digital guide to be launched in Big Green Week, and a few hard copies printed, as part of The Students' Union's 50th Anniversary Celebrations. These guides will be handed out after meaningful engagement with students. The guide is being illustrated by a UWE Bristol student.

STUDENT MATTERS

The Students' Union has welcomed our new 5 elected Presidents into role at the end of June. All our Presidents are passionate about the sustainability agenda and have made a clear team commitment to advance our work towards net carbon neutrality and ensuring that our partnership continues to progress towards the 2030 goals.

Key aims for individuals and the team include:

- Lobby the university to purchase reverse vending machines for all campuses. (already in progress with UWE's waste team!)

- Launch Sustainable Fashion Fair Week. Students and local charity shops will come together to sell their second-hand clothes, shoes, and accessories at reasonable prices (currently live for students and with charity shop crawls and swap shops in planning for start of year)
- Progress carbon neutrality
- Reduce unnecessary single use plastic.

A key student matter, which came through our student ideas platform is around reducing our unnecessary plastic consumption across the campus sites.

<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/representation/student-ideas/336/>

“BAN THE USE OF ALL DISPOSABLE CUPS FROM ALL VENUES ACROSS CAMPUS. INSTEAD USE 'IN-HOUSE' CROCKERY AND HAVE RE-USABLE CUPS FOR SALE.

Some people are using their own cups but this is still by far the minority and a huge amount of disposables are being unnecessarily manufactured, bought and disposed of. A shift away from disposables will not happen unless it is fully implemented. This has been successfully carried in coffee shop chains such as Boston Tea Party where the clientele have quickly adapted and not using disposables is now the norm. To be a 'disposable cup - free' Campus at the start of the 2021 academic year would be a leading step for UWE which prides itself for it's sustainability focus, in Bristol - the Green Capital. This isn't a complicated or risk-associated policy to bring in and there's no excuse for the university to be waiting for others to do it first.”

In addition to this student idea, the Plastics Action Working Group have been looking at various ways to reduce plastics throughout operations and the new Presidents have requested that we create a firm timeline of options to address single use coffee cups and vegware as part of our offer. We have noticed that UWE Catering have replaced buffets throughout the pandemic to vegware lunchboxes with single use water bottles included, we would like to request that this offer can be reviewed in light of restrictions changing to reduce the waste of the packaging please.