



Sustainable Aston Working Group Annual Report 2010/2011



"The future of the environment is the responsibility of all of us, both collectively and individually."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James King".

Contents

Introduction	2
Governance	3
Sustainable Aston Working Group	3
Sustainability Team.....	3
Environmental Management	3
Policies / Documents.....	4
Teaching and Learning	4
United Nations Principles of Responsible Management Education (UNPRME)	4
Research	5
Centre for Sustainability and Innovation (CSI)	5
European Bioenergy Research Institute (EBRI).....	6
Estates	6
Campus developments	6
Energy.....	7
Waste management.....	7
Sustainable Transport.....	8
Community	8
Staff and Student Engagement.....	8
Fairtrade.....	9
Events	9
Future plans	9

Introduction

At Aston University sustainability is central to our mission. At the end of 2009/2010 we set ourselves some targets and priorities for the year ahead, in order to help us work towards our target of becoming a leader in this field.

- Launch our Green MSc through ABS and our Sustainability module through Interdisciplinary studies.
Applications are currently open for the Green MSc which will launch in September 2011; this will then be reviewed to determine whether there are possibilities for part-time and distance learning options. Structural changes within the University have affected plans for the Interdisciplinary studies module, so we are now considering alternative ways to incorporate this into teaching.
- Conduct further research into the incorporation of sustainability into all teaching and build an action plan to achieve this.
Sustainability in teaching will be included in the updated Aston 2020 strategy and we have put forward a KPI based on % of taught modules which include reference to sustainability.
- Further encourage interdisciplinary sustainability related research through the CSI and SERG groups.
CSI (Centre for Sustainability and Innovation) continued for its second year with a new lot of projects, bringing together researchers from the different schools to focus on these topics.
- Maintain a top 10 position in the People&Planet Green League and improve our score in the Universities that Count survey.
In the 2011 Green League we were awarded 5th place for the second year running. Universities that Count did not run during 2010/2011 but we plan on taking part in the replacement (Learning in Future Environments) which is due to launch in November 2011.
- Reach the Gold award phase of EcoCampus, our Environmental Management System.
We achieved the Gold EcoCampus award in July 2011 and are on track to complete Platinum before the end of the year.
- Achieve a 10% reduction in our carbon emissions as part of the 10:10 campaign.
The data we submit to the Estates Management Statistics shows that we achieved a 13% reduction in energy use last year (2009/10) and a 20% reduction in water which equates to a fantastic 20% year-on-year reduction.
- Complete the roll out of recycling across the entire campus, including halls of residence.
Recycling bins are now in place in around half of our campus buildings, including halls of residence. We aim to have the roll out completed by the end of 2011, in line with our new waste management contract.

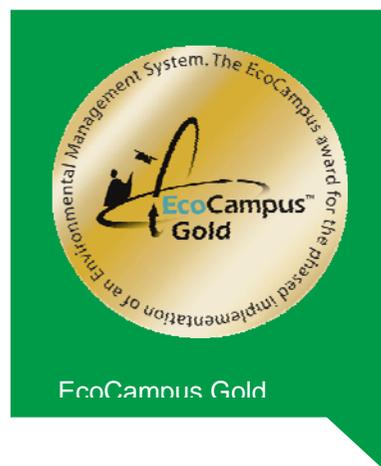
- Implement a Business Travel Policy and review targets for staff and students commuting.
We elected to delay this project to fit in with the publication of Hefce guidelines on measuring travel and related emissions. This work is due to be published this autumn, which will allow us to develop our travel plan throughout 2011/12.

This report expands on these achievements and highlights our progress over the last academic year (2010/2011). It also outlines our priorities and plans for 2011/2012.

Governance

Sustainable Aston Working Group

The Sustainable Aston Working Group (SAWG) provides a forum for discussing initiatives and programmes to enhance sustainability within the University environment, curriculum and research as well as within the wider community. The group has continued to support the work of the Sustainability Team, as well as bringing together the work of other groups around the University (Sustainable Procurement group, the School of Life and Health Sciences, Aston Business School, Fairtrade Steering Group, Bicycle Users Group and Aston Campus Wildlife Group).



Sustainability Team

To enable Aston University to deliver its commitment to environmental improvement an Environment and Sustainability Team of three staff is based in the Estates and Capital Developments department, where they work together on implementing projects and policies as well as communicating progress to staff and students. They work closely with the rest of the department as well as with SAWG and other areas of the University.

Environmental Management

Aston University has signed up to take part in EcoCampus, an environmental management system specifically designed for Universities and equivalent to ISO14001. The scheme is a 3 year program designed to help improve our environmental performance. The system is based on 4 tiers - bronze, silver, gold and platinum. Aston received our Gold award in July 2011, and we are now aiming to achieve the Platinum award by the end of 2011.

Policies / Documents

Aston's overarching Sustainability Policy is supported by a number of documents: Environment Policy, Ethical Investment Policy, Waste Management policy, Biodiversity policy and Sustainable Procurement policy. An updated version of the Carbon Management Plan was published in October 2010 and the Waste Management Strategy and Transport Plan are both due to be reviewed during 2011/2012. All these policies are available for the public to view online, through the Environment and Sustainability web pages <http://www.aston.ac.uk/environment/>.

Teaching and Learning

Aston has, as one of our targets, committed to ensuring that no student graduates without an insight and understanding of the issues relating to sustainability. To this end, we are working to incorporate some element of sustainability into all subject areas.

In Sept 2008, Carole Parkes and Stuart Cooper completed the Aston Business School Social Responsibility & Sustainability Curriculum Report. 2010/2011 has seen the implementation of many of the recommendations of this report.

The recommendations aimed to create 'social responsibility and sustainability literate' graduates and during the 2010/11 academic year the following recommendations were implemented in the Undergraduate programme:

- i) There should be a core module in this area in the early years of the UG programme,
- ii) Social Responsibility and Sustainability should be included in the issues investigated as part of the placement year.

In the postgraduate programme the following recommendations were implemented:

- i) All MSc Course Directors should report on where these issues relate to and are incorporated into the specialist MSc programmes.
- ii) A new MSc in Social Responsibility and Sustainability has been developed as an interdisciplinary course and will see its first students enrol in September 2011.

United Nations Principles of Responsible Management Education (UNPRME)

John Edwards and Carole Parkes of Aston Business School attended a joint EFMD and UNPRME meeting in Brussels in June 2011. As a result of this Carole has been invited to be involved in an international working group on sustainable leadership and attended a UNPRME conference in Slovenia in July as part of the UN working group on 'the challenges of poverty for management education'. Carole is also working with the former head of PRME on a project to produce a global inspirational guide on how to implement PRME based on experiences of UK PRME schools.



Carole Parkes was invited to speak about PRME and Aston's approach at Lancaster Management School in November 2010 as part of a seminar for the Sustainability and Responsibility Plus Network.

Aston Business School were invited to be an 'exemplar case study' as part of a HEFCE-funded research project on the integration of sustainability in business schools, being run by Nottingham and Bath Universities. Carole Parkes will be presenting at an event highlighting Aston's work in October 2011.

Research

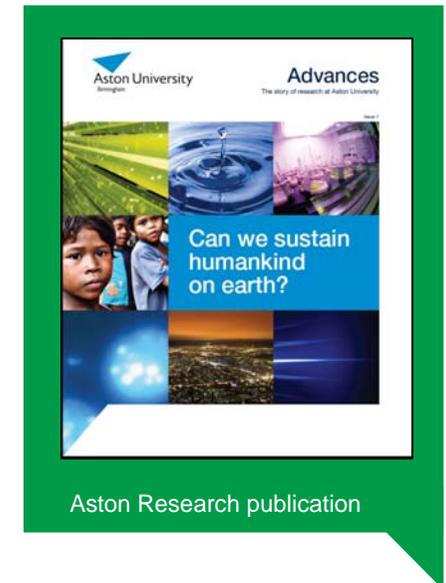
Aston is a research led university with an excellent reputation for ground breaking, innovative and applicable research. In particular, the University has a continuing and growing emphasis on sustainability research including substantial external and internal investments. Some examples of these projects have recently been brought together in the first publication of 'Aston Advances' entitled 'Can we sustain humankind on earth?'.

Centre for Sustainability and Innovation (CSI)

The Centre for Sustainability and Innovation, launched in 2009 with the aim of bringing together researchers from across the university's schools for collaborative research, has continued successfully during 2010/11. A second round of seed funding (amounting to a total of £75,000) was made available to faculty and a call was issued in July 2010 following which successful applicants were informed in December. The following projects were selected for funding; some of these projects will also roll forward into 2011/12.

- Climate Change in the Media: the West and China (*continuation of Corporate Climate Change Reporting and the Media in BRICS*)
- Tackling climate change at the sub-national level (*continuation of 2009/10*)
- Measuring Green Progress (*continuation of 2009-10 Greenwash or Green progress*)
- Engaging different communities with sustainability (*continuation of 2009/10*)
- **Using Semantic Technologies in encouraging Green behaviour (*new for 2010/11*)**
- **The Library of Birmingham project (*new for 2010/11*)**

Concurrently the Centre for Sustainability and Innovation continued to organise a series of seminars of invited speakers. A full list is available at: <https://wiki.aston.ac.uk/foswiki/bin/view/Sustainability/CsiSeminars>



Under the auspices of the CSI, Christopher Brewster (ABS) obtained FP7 funding for the 2 year project SmartAgriFood in collaboration with 20 other partners across seven countries. This project focuses on the future uses of the internet for the agri-food sector. Further information available <http://www.smartagrifood.eu>



The proposed EBRI facility

European Bioenergy Research Institute (EBRI)

The European Bioenergy Research Institute at Aston University was officially launched in 2008 to create a unique platform for the development and implementation of bioenergy systems in local, national and European contexts as well as reaching towards the International community.

The new multi-million pound EBRI facility, funded by the European Regional Development Fund, Advantage West Midlands and Aston University, will include giant photo bioreactors harnessing algae, and a 0.4MWel small scale industrial power plant fuelled by biomass. The Plant will generate heat and power from biomass using algae, sewage sludge, wood and agricultural waste as sources of fuel. This new facility, an extension of an existing listed building which is aiming for BREEAM Excellent rating, is now under construction and due to open in October 2012.

Estates

Campus developments

The new residences project, rated BREEAM Excellent, opened on time to welcome our new students in September 2010. The second phase of this project is well underway and on track for completion in 2014.

The new residences incorporate a number of energy saving features such as double glazing, automatic lighting and sophisticated heating and mechanical systems as well as various innovative features such as greywater and wastewater recycling, a green roof and a wind turbine on the roof. The new buildings also offer our students improved recycling facilities and cycle parking.

The Aston Brain Centre (also awarded BREEAM Excellent) opened on time in July 2011 and the library has also undergone refurbishment. The historic Woodcock Sports Centre will reopen in September 2011 following a full refurbishment; this work is allowing us to greatly improve the mechanical and electrical systems to reduce energy wastage.

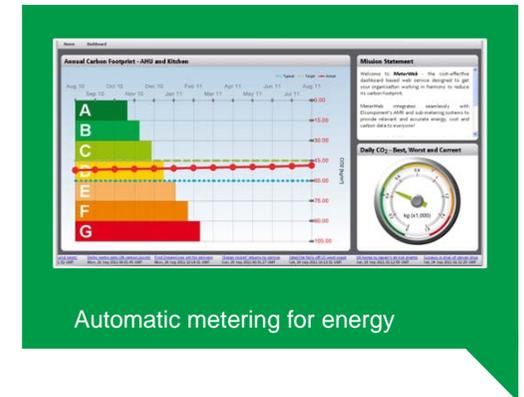


Aston Student Village

Energy

In October 2010 we published our revised Carbon Management Plan. This outlines our ambitious targets to reduce carbon emissions from energy by 53% by 2020. These targets will be met in a number of ways: improved space efficiency on campus; generation of electricity and heat through our on-site Combined Heat and Power plant; small-scale projects using our Salix funding; behavioural change.

During 2010/2011 we continued to use our £250,000 Salix funding to finance a number of smaller-scale projects across campus, including installation of power perfectors, roof insulation, lighting upgrades and improved building controls. We also installed an automatic metering system to enable us to better track and control electricity usage in all of our buildings.



Automatic metering for energy

Waste management

During 2010/2011 our main focus in improving our waste management was working through the tender process to award a new waste contractor. This is on track and we hope to have a new contract in place for October 2011 which will allow us to provide improved recycling facilities as well as collect much more robust data on our waste tonnages.



Zero Waste from Halls

We have also been increasing the number of mini recycling centres across campus, extending the binless office system. This means staff and students can now easily recycle paper, cardboard, plastic bottles, cans and glass. External recycling bins are also in place around campus and all student residences have recycling facilities available, the majority in each individual flat.

In 2011, for the first time we also ran a “Zero Waste in Halls” campaign, which was a huge success. During the end of year move out period in June, we asked students to donate their unwanted items all of which went to Acorns Children’s Hospice. We collected around 700 bags of clothing, bedding, kitchen equipment, electrical items and even furniture!

This year we have also developed an internal furniture reuse system which is now on track to launch at the start of the new term. Unwanted furniture will be reused internally wherever possible or donated to local charities and community groups; this will help to reduce the amount of furniture being stored and, in some cases, scrapped and will also create cost savings on new purchases.

Sustainable Transport

We have now installed a number of electric car charging points on campus, as part of the Coventry and Birmingham Low Emission Demonstrators (CABLED) project focussing on the testing of low carbon cars as a practical alternative to conventional cars in an urban environment.

We published a 'Business Travel Guidelines' document which promotes tele/video-conferencing and offers advice on the most sustainable ways to travel for short journeys, longer distance and international travel. This has been promoted to staff and sits together with our travel purchasing policy, designed to save the University money and reduce our environmental impact.

In August 2011 we re-launched our on-campus 'City Car Club' vehicle. This means that both staff and students have access to a low-carbon car which is available to hire for short periods of time. We encourage staff to use this for local journeys and meetings, meaning that they can leave their car at home and travel to and from the University using sustainable transport.



Aston's electric smart-car

Community

Staff and Student Engagement

During 2010/11 we ran our Aston Go Green Awards for the second year in a row. This competition is designed to engage staff across all departments of the university and includes a checklist of criteria on topics such as energy saving, waste and recycling, paper reduction, etc. We had a good number of teams signed up and the average score was a fantastic 86%.



Student Switch Off

To complement our Go Green programme, 2010/11 also saw the launch of a network of Energy Champions. This campaign is designed to engage both staff and students to sign up as a champion, pledging to be energy efficient and to encourage their colleagues to do the same. We produced an information pack, including top 10 tips, info posters and switch off cards and stickers which was given out to all the Champions.

2010/2011 was the third year that we ran the successful Student Switch Off campaign, encouraging students living in halls of residence to save energy by taking simple actions such as turning lights off and unplugging appliances. Our new residences meant it was difficult to calculate savings as we had no previous years for comparison but we will be running the campaign again in 2011/2012 when we'll be aiming for a 12% average saving.

Fairtrade

Aston has been accredited as a Fairtrade University since 2007, which made 2010/11 our 4th Fairtrade birthday! During this year, the group helped to organise our 'Fairtrade Friday' events during Go Green Week and also ran the second 'Festive Fairtrade Wine-tasting' for staff. In addition, they focused their efforts on raising awareness of Fairtrade cotton, running a petition and lobbying the University and the Student Guild to change their suppliers to Fairtrade cotton goods. This petition is due to be presented this autumn and will be followed up during 2011/12.

Events

Our second annual 'Go Green' week took place in February 2011. We held an entire week of sustainability-related events all based around one of our five themes: "Move-on Monday", "Turn-off Tuesday", "Wildlife Wednesday", "Throwaway Thursday" and "Fairtrade Friday". During the week we hosted presentations, lectures and discussions as well as a second-hand bike sale, film screenings, competitions and activities.

December 2010 saw the return of our very popular Fairtrade Wine-tasting event, which was organised together with Conference Aston. We also organised a number of our regular second-hand bike sales to support local charity Cycle Chain and a series of events for National Bike Week, from 20th - 26th June.



Future plans

The Environment and Sustainability Team have identified a number of priorities for 2011/12, including:

- Review and update our Sustainable Travel Plan, in line with Hefce guidance, incorporating business travel and emissions monitoring.
- Publish a new Waste Management Strategy to coincide with the start of our new waste contract and in line with Hefce guidance.
- Maintain a top 10 position in the Green League and complete the LiFE index.
- Reach the Platinum award phase of EcoCampus, our Environmental Management System.
- Increase staff and student engagement through a programme of events (Go Green Week) and activities.
- Conduct further research into the incorporation of sustainability into all teaching and build an action plan to achieve this.

These will be reviewed again at the end of the academic year. Our aim is to improve year on year until we reach our goal of being a leading University for sustainable development.