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A sustainable University

The University makes a significant contribution to sustainable development, not only in its role as an globally recognised provider of research and teaching, but also in the way it performs as a business engaging positively with the local and wider community. Whether it's our environmental policies, research into sustainable energies or our schemes to encourage staff and students to travel more sustainably, sustainability is at the core of the University's activity.

The University is committed to improving its environmental and sustainability performance in many areas:

Open all sections

Climate change and carbon management

We are committed to an absolute reduction in carbon emissions of 20% by 2020 from a 2005/2006 baseline whilst sustaining our position as a leading global university and expanding our research base. We accept the challenges to achieve and exceed the target as part of our contribution to reduce the impact of carbon emissions on society. Initiatives have been detailed in our **Carbon Management Implementation Plan 2010-2020 (PDF - 486KB) (/Documents/university/environment/carbon-plan.pdf)** .

We are undertaking practical measures, including capital investment in infrastructure projects. The extension of our steam main from our efficient combined heat and power plant to the Medical School will result in savings of around 1500 tonnes/carbon per year.

We are improving the fabric and interior of buildings and the equipment they contain. This includes the development of an IT Carbon action pan contributing to significant energy and carbon emissions savings. We are also at the forefront of initiatives that enable all members of the University community to contribute to delivering our ambitions such as our participation in the **Green Impact (https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/collaboration/environment/green-impact/index.aspx)** and **studentswitchoff (http://www.studentswitchoff.org/)** schemes.

Sustainable travel plan

Our **travel plan (PDF - 1.34MB) (/Documents/university/environment/travel-plan.pdf)** covers a five year period from 2010 to 2015. The plan details a series of initiatives to help the University meet its carbon reduction targets, and includes;

- campaigns to get our staff and students walking to work. This includes our lunchtime walks run in partnerships with the Ramblers Association, walk to work scheme and the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences 'Step by Step Walking Programme' to encourage employees to become more active in their every day lives
- our cycling facilities include numerous on campus cycle parks to encourage staff and students to cycle into work. We also run a salary sacrifice scheme which gives a discount for employees wishing to purchase a bike. Our Cycle Roadshows also also promote cycling to staff and students, the roadshows include free bike maintenance, cycle training, bike security from West Midlands Police and the sale of second hand bikes
- free bus travel on the 'Selly Shuttle' running between our Selly Oak and Edgbaston campus for those holding a staff or student ID card.
- encouraging staff to make use of video conferencing facilities for meetings elimating long journeys and saving costs.

Waste reduction and recycling

Through implementing numerous initiatives in tandem with clear communication and awareness raising with our staff and students, we have increased recycling rates year on year to a current rate of around 50%. We have introduced a mixed recyclables scheme and general waste is no longer sent to landfill.

We have combined this with other innovations such as the electric powered Green Machine to collect recyclable waste from around our Edgbaston Campus, further reducing our carbon footprint.

Student activities

There are a variety of sustainability related opportunities to sample at the University. We are always looking for innovative, creative and enthusiastic students to take part in “green” initiatives, such as the inspiring **Global Sunrise Project (http://www.globalsunrise.net/)** , which sees students capturing environmental actions on video to raise money for a solar power project in Sierra Leone. Or why not become an auditor for the green impact awards or pledge to save energy in your accommodation.

Studentswitchoff (http://www.studentswitchoff.org) a not-for-profit energy saving competition which has been running at the University for the past five years, signing up hundreds of eco-power rangers pledging to save energy. The ‘heat is off’ as students compete between halls to be crowned the most energy efficient. Substantial energy and carbon savings have been achieved since running this campaign. Have a look at the **Facebook page (http://www.facebook.com/BirminghamSSO)** .

Every year since 2008 the University has held its annual “zero waste” in halls project. Which encourages students to donate their unwanted belongings at the end of the summer term. Last year the we joined forces with Birmingham City Council, the Guild and the British Heart Foundation for the “In Waste Deep” campaign. A sum of £13,500 was raised last year! 200 plus duvets were also donated to both the Birmingham City Mission, a charity for the homeless and the Local Greyhound Trust. If this was not enough our Food Cycle volunteers received numerous donation packages, which were used to provide food for poorer communities in the Birmingham area.

Staff and students at universities have a reputation for consuming vast quantities of tea and coffee-and of course, chocolate! In 2003, we made the decision to become a **Fairtrade University (/university/services/retail/fairtrade.aspx)** by selling a selection of Fairtrade products within our university. This is celebrated widely during fairtrade fortnight when the students get the opportunity to hold events around campus to support fairtrade.

Staff activities

Many staff have taken the opportunity to be part of a **Green Impact (https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/collaboration/environment/green-impact/index.aspx)** team. Teams aim to achieve a bronze silver or gold award based arround implementing environmental actions. 39 teams took part this year, an increase of ten on last year. An impressive increase in standards has also taken place, Bronze awards (7 to 15), Silver (16 to 17) and Gold (3 to 6). An annual awards ceremony is held to celebrate achievements.

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