Case Studies of Action to Support Sustainable Development from Around the LSC

March 2010

Of interest to all in the Learning and Skills Council, learning and skills sector and partners involved in sustainable development
Further information
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The sustainable development agenda has picked up a great deal of momentum in the past few years. When you look at how it progresses within organisations, you often find it is maintained and developed through the energy of people who work together to make a difference. It is with this in mind that I read this review of the excellent efforts of staff within the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

What the LSC has pulled together is a range of inspiring examples of how individuals and groups of people across the country have worked together to make a difference. From green fairies in Newcastle to bras in Essex! They have risen to the challenge of turning thoughts into actions and changing how they and their colleagues behave and work.

As we all continue to work together to take forward sustainable development it is vital we share good ideas and experiences with each other to help raise awareness and understanding of what can be achieved through collective action.

Here are some of the activities that demonstrated to me the creativity and enthusiasm of the LSC staff on this agenda. They will also give you a taste of and an insight into the variety of the projects which have taken place.

• The Neighbour Learning in Deprived Communities Fund – over 198 adult learners in Bromley, South London have been helped to create CVs and find out about job opportunities on the internet.

• New software has been introduced at the LSC which turns on all computers centrally in the network (over 4,000) for downloading updates overnight and can then turn them off again, saving £109,000 worth of energy and using 487,566kg less of carbon.

• A web-based resource – Sustainability Online Resource and Toolkit for Education (SORTED) has been developed as a resource for providers.

• In the Brighton office a sustainability action group raised issues, discussed ideas and agreed actions – one was to use a small local company to handle their recycling when they found out that their local council was not able to do it.

Without the commitment of the LSC staff involved in these projects they could not have made the progress we see here in this document.

I hope these case studies will help you do your bit and inspire you to get involved in supporting the sustainable development agenda. Make a start and take some action today, you will be surprised how easy it can be when we work together.

Jimmy Brannigan
Director
ESD Consulting

Jimmy has worked with over 100 global organisations on implementing sustainable development.
The Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund

1. Our mainstream business at LSC is already contributing to sustainable development. The Adult and Lifelong Learning Team at National Office is responsible for one example – the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) fund.

2. Launched in 2002, NLDC is part of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. LSC provided £10m each year to support NLDC capital projects and £20m annually on NLDC learning initiatives.

3. The project has targeted some of the most deprived communities in Britain, helping them to help themselves in a way that aids community regeneration and social cohesion – both fundamental aspects of sustainable development. For example, in Bristol learners with sufficiently developed presentation and communication skills gained accreditation and became involved with community groups to actively support positive developments in their communities such as children’s summer play activities, tenant association newsletters and community campaigns.

4. NLDC was not just about delivering learning to develop basic skills but about creating the conditions where learning could be delivered, enabling these communities to stand on their own feet. LSC created a framework through which Local Authorities and voluntary and community sector organisations could target the communities needing help the most.

5. Here is one example of how the fund has helped communities support themselves in Kingston, Surrey:

- £121,033 total project funding
- 150 PCs recycled per year, distributed to residents without home computers
- 600 residents accessing online learning resources
- Local unemployed residents were used as volunteers and gained a range of skills which will support them in securing future employment.

“The project has enabled a wider regeneration of the targeted neighbourhood and has enabled the delivery of identified priorities.”

Head of Leisure and Learning and Children’s Services, Royal Borough of Kingston

6. Local communities are at the heart of social progress so the NLDC is a great example of sustainable development in action.
The LSC Volunteering Policy

7 Last year, the LSC launched a new policy on volunteering – part of Learning and Development’s Widening Experience Strategy said Raj Joshi, Director of HR Shared Services and Colette Osborne, Manager of HR Direct.

8 The Government now recognises the importance of, and is strongly committed to, building an inclusive society in which community and voluntary groups can play a vital role.

9 With this in mind, the LSC actively supports employees who wish to volunteer within the community or with charitable institutions. For the LSC Learning and Development team, launching the new policy was a chance to draw together two important strategic objectives: recognising the importance of working in a way that contributes to sustainable development and continuing to develop the skills and experiences of LSC staff in a positive and engaging way.

10 The policy is designed to support employees undertaking community or charitable objectives that can be connected to LSC business objectives like:

- Working in schools or organisations involved in learning and skills activities
- Working with third sector organisations involved in raising the profile of learning and skills

11 Employees are encouraged to use the skills that they have developed at work to help in the community or to learn new skills as a result of committing time to volunteering. Sally Stewart, LSC HR Director said:

“The volunteering policy was developed as part of the LSC’s commitment to learning and development, personal development and fostering good community relations. Since the launch of the policy, LSC staff have contributed over 300 hours in volunteering to a range of organisations.”
The LSC Volunteering Policy in action at London East LSC

12 We went to London East to see the LSC volunteering policy in action.

13 Jane Swanscott represents London East on the LSC London Working Group for Sustainability. They have started to make a difference through easy wins like changing printer settings to double sided and to switching to Fairtrade tea and coffee.

14 Jane had tried to arrange volunteering days already but the initiative really got off the ground when Partnership Manager Sheila Weeden, got the local staff development group behind the idea. After the LSC volunteering policy was published, the group agreed a budget to support volunteering, believing it was a great opportunity for staff to develop their skills of leadership, teamwork and organisation, be proactive, use their own resourcefulness and enterprise and support Doing Our Bit.

15 One of the barriers had been ensuring well being and covering risk assessment. This was solved when Sheila spoke to The East London Business Alliance (ELBA) who had relevant experience and helped arrange the event.

16 The two days took place at the Lambourne End Outdoors Centre in Essex. The centre is a charity that helps young people from the London area to develop skills which in turn will support the development of their communities.

17 The first LSC group rebuilt a hut used by young people, including a sensory trail. The group sawed logs of wood and dug out clay from the ground to make cement to stick the wood together and repair a wall that had been destroyed.

18 22 colleagues took part. The feedback for the two days was very positive with staff lining up to be involved in future volunteering days.

“It was great to see what working together can really achieve. While we were there we saw youth groups who will now be able to enjoy using the hut we rebuilt.”

Jane Swanscott
LSC Information Management team does its bit for all of us

19 Doing Our Bit encourages a mindset of being aware of the impact of our actions and making them more positive. But some things are beyond our control in the office. At the LSC the Information Management (IM) team is doing its bit on behalf of everyone. We caught up with IM’s Technical Support Manager, Ranjeet Bhupla.

Disposal of old IT equipment

20 Have you ever wondered what becomes of old equipment, including printer cartridges, PCs, PC monitors, network servers and cables once they have reached the end of their usable lives?

21 The IM team follows the reduce, reuse, recycle model. If equipment cannot be re-used within the LSC or refurbished it goes to Northern Realisations who specialise in disposing of IT equipment. They refurbish, re-use or rebuild the equipment given to them, before selling it on. Any components they can’t renew, they recycle. The percentage of materials reclaimed and equipment redeployed currently exceeds 97.5 per cent.

22 Northern Realisations recycled a total of 3607.5kg - about 3.6 tonnes - of LSC equipment between March 2008 and March 2009.

Virtual Servers

23 A server is basically the brainpower for all the computers on a network. There are 55 servers in the LSC which use a huge amount of energy and generate enough heat to make cooling a necessity. Because of this the IM team is moving to virtual servers.

LSC Night Watchman and 1E Wake-up

24 There are over 4,000 computers at the LSC. Many are left on overnight using up energy and increasing our carbon footprint. From August 2009 new software called 1E Wake-up will turn all desktop computers on to do any necessary updates and Night Watchman will turn them off again.

25 The new approach should save about 907,943 kilowatt hours (Kwh) of energy each year - around 295 Kwh for each user. That adds up to around £109,000 each year and 487,566 fewer kg of carbon – similar to driving a car 143 times around the circumference of the earth!

PC Refresh

In 2009 the IM Team replaced 2,300 desktops and laptops at the LSC and refurbished 2,000. After the Refresh our Desktop PCs will use up to 70 per cent less power than previous generation.

26 In addition the 250 remaining CRT monitors are being replaced by more modern TFTs – which on average use 30 per cent less energy.

Multi Functional Devices (MFDs)

27 You may have noticed existing printers being replaced by multi-functional devices - combined printers, scanners, fax machines and photocopiers.

28 It is more energy efficient to have all these functions combined in one device. They also have an automatic standby (low-power) mode when not in use. And their default setting is to print double sided and in black and white.

29 These advances, led by the IM team, show that sustainability is higher on the agenda at LSC than ever before. But don’t forget that we can all help by switching off our PCs, only printing double-sided etc. Take the Energy Pledge on the Doing Our Bit website.
Sustainable Construction Pathfinder Project in the East Midlands

In March 2008, Government published the Innovation Nation White Paper. It included plans for a Further Education (FE) Specialisation and Innovation Fund worth £2.5m to create 5 pathfinder projects using FE to drive business innovation by the transfer of skills, knowledge and technology.

LSC led the assessment and selection process, and subsequently negotiated and managed the contracts with the FE networks.

One of the pathfinder projects was in sustainable construction. Patrick Maxwell is a Specialist Advisor at one of the FE colleges in the East Midlands New Technology Institute (NTI) – the network which gained the contract. We caught up with him to find out how the project was going.

The take up of sustainable construction practices across the UK has been slow with much of the expertise having to come from abroad. The project helps SMEs recognise the need to develop their expertise in sustainable construction techniques. Patrick is a Specialist Advisor at Stephenson College, one of the colleges in the East Midlands NTI. Each college has a specialism in sustainable construction - Stephenson’s is sustainable energy.

The project had a target to reach 180 SMEs by the end of 2009 but that was achieved early.

The SMEs targeted are mainly installers of heating and energy systems, often working for households or other SMEs but designers, architects and heating manufacturers are also targeted. Providing these companies with the knowledge and understanding needed to install sustainable energy systems is a vital part of meeting the Government’s target to reduce the UK’s carbon footprint. It is also vital that the UK has access to these home grown skills so that we may achieve high and stable levels of growth and employment – another crucial aspect of sustainable development.

The project will be funded by the LSC for 12 months, after which it is expected that clients – architects, designers and installers of heating and energy systems – will pay for the expertise they gain. It could well become a valuable source of income for the colleges involved and the network should help them to develop their own specialism in sustainable construction. It is hoped that other networks of colleges will want to take up the approach in other parts of the country.
Three Years of LSC sponsorship of the Green Gowns Awards

37 The Green Gown awards recognise the great work being done in the HE and learning and skills sectors in the UK on sustainable development. They are five years old and more widely sought after, recognised and reported on than ever.

38 The awards are managed by EAUC, the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges. EAUC has a membership of over 270 universities and colleges and is the environmental and sustainability champion within the FE and HE sectors across the UK.

39 The LSC has been a proud sponsor of the awards for the last three years. We help steer their direction on a Steering Group and LSC staff take part in the short-listing and final judging panels.

40 In 2009 the final judging day was hosted at National Office. 30 expert judges from key players across the FE, HE and sustainable industry sectors came together for the difficult job of choosing the winners.

41 The world of FE is increasingly well represented at the awards. Our sponsorship has helped to make it absolutely clear that achievements within the learning and skills sector are equally as important and just as worthy of celebration and recognition as those within HE. In 2009 we were particularly proud to see FE winners in two award categories.

Leicester College – Winner

42 Reduced the College CO2 footprint by 317 tonnes of carbon, a potential energy saving of 950,000KWh, having installed variable speed pumps, improved building insulation and installed heating and lighting controls.

Warwickshire College – Winner

43 Achievements ranged from implementing a recycling strategy and developing renewable energy systems, to exposing learners to sustainability through the curriculum with new courses having sustainability at their core and theme weeks to raise awareness.

“The LSC has been invaluable in their partnership with EAUC to bring the Learning and Skills Sector into the heart of the Green Gown Awards. There is much excellent pioneering work going on in colleges and other learning providers. Thanks to the LSC, the good news story is getting out and giving credit where it is due, and helping the rest of the sector raise its sustainability game.”

Iain Patton, Executive Director, Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC)
LSC Procurement team driving forward the sustainability agenda

The Procurement Team sources goods and services like travel and stationery from external parties, manages the contracts and helps LSC staff to use them. Mandy King, Christopher French and Sian Thomas told us how the team is putting sustainability at the heart of what they do.

Hire cars

The team refreshed the car hire contract this year and having considered the types of cars being hired, successfully put forward a business case to restrict the use of vehicles with 2 litres or greater engine size. Smaller engine sizes are more cost effective while still delivering the service required but consume less fuel and are therefore less harmful to the environment.

Stationery

Our stationery supplier, Banner, offers a more environmentally friendly range of supplies. The team has been encouraging staff to buy from it and in the last 18 months there has been a 20 per cent increase in uptake. Now, almost half of all orders are from this range.

Business travel

To reduce the LSC’s carbon footprint, the team continually analyses the monthly carbon figures for business travel.

- Between April 2008 and April 2009, business air travel at the LSC decreased by 10 per cent over the same period, rail usage (a more carbon efficient way to travel) increased by 10 per cent.

- The average CO2 rate for hire cars has been reduced by 5% between April 2008 and April 2009

- The restriction on engine size has, on average, resulted in a saving for the LSC of £30 for every vehicle hired, which is more than enough to hire a smaller car for a day

- While hire car usage increased by 10% from 2008 – 2009, costs only increased by 2 per cent. This anomaly is indicative of the restriction of large engines, which are generally in more expensive cars

Saving paper

To save paper, the team is introducing an online booking tool for hotels. The introduction of the government procurement card is estimated to have decreased paper for invoicing by 21 per cent, a saving of approximately 10 trees.

Better choices

The team reviewed its corporate stationery contracts and since February, all LSC business cards have been printed on recycled paper.

The team keeps up to speed on the environmental impacts of our procurement. For example, the more paper we order from Banner, the more deliveries we have. By encouraging everyone to avoid small orders the CO2 emitted from deliveries fell by 22 per cent (to 4.8 tonnes) in 2008/09 and the fuel used by 22 per cent (to 2,471 litres).

It’s about getting out there too

The team held a supplier day at National Office to promote the use of more sustainable (and cost effective) stationery. People attending could see for themselves that the environmentally friendly products were just as good as the regular products, contrary to some misconceptions, and cheaper too.

So the LSC Procurement team really is doing its bit for sustainable development at the LSC.
Facilities make office improvements in the NW Region

In reviewing office accommodation in the North West region, the Facilities Team took the opportunity to make some cost effective and sustainability friendly changes. Five main areas were considered - office size, furniture and equipment, heating and ventilation, lighting and recycling. John McEwen in the Facilities team told us more.

Office size

In many cases the LSC no longer needed all its accommodation due to flexible, modern working practices like hot-desking and shared facilities.

Furniture and Equipment

As many offices were downsized, there was a surplus of equipment and furniture. Many items including desks, chairs, reception sofas, pedestals, TVs, DVD players, fans, heaters, fridges, freezers, microwaves and tables were donated to local colleges, schools and community centres. The team received many letters of thanks from grateful community organisations.

The team was also able to create a more generic look and feel throughout offices in the North West, making it easier to transfer and reuse equipment and other office materials in future. This reduces the need to make further purchases, again saving money and resources.

Heating and ventilation

Where possible, heating and ventilation systems were replaced or improved. Many existing systems were less effective than their modern equivalents and it was not uncommon to see fans and other cooling devices in use whilst radiators were on, wasting energy and money and increasing the office’s carbon footprint. Master and local controls on the new systems are more able to maintain a balanced temperature.

Lighting

There were two major improvements here. Motion sensors were fitted to switch off lights in the office and in meeting rooms if they were on when no one was in the area. Many old fluorescent tube lights were replaced with new low wattage units. The old tubes were disposed of in accordance with Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment regulations.

Recycling

Recycling has been introduced where possible, — some of our landlords have led on this. All offices in the NW gained facilities for paper and toner recycling and many have card, plastic and aluminium can recycling too.

Results

The whole project was so successful, Roger Taylor, Director of Facilities, who lead the project, won an award for the new office lay out. Property Week, a business magazine, congratulated Roger for winning the award, commenting that he reduced the LSC’s carbon footprint and running costs.
LSC helps the sector get SORTED

http://www.eauc.org.uk/sorted/home

SORTED – what is it?

SORTED is the Sustainability Online Resource and Toolkit for Education. It’s a web-based resource available to all with no subscription or registration. It is funded by the LSC and managed by the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC).

The new SORTED website launched on September 7th 2009, so we caught up with Iain Patton, Executive Director of the EAUC, to find out more.

SORTED and the LSC

SORTED was commissioned by the LSC four years ago and we continue to play an active role. EAUC looks after the site, drawing on experts for knowledge, insight and advice on sustainability.

The site has been developed around the four key themes in the LSC Strategy for Sustainable Development: leadership and management; buildings and estates; community and business; teaching and learning.

Iain says “LSC staff managing the project have taken a very hands-on approach. They’re helping to evaluate the new site and are finding new case studies from colleges that they’re in contact with anyway.”

What can it achieve?

The Learning and Skills sector has an important role to play but many providers are at the early stages of understanding what sustainable development is and the impacts their institutions can have. SORTED is a source of information for those beginning to register an interest or with some experience. It takes them on a journey, offering support and advice at each stage. It is somewhere to turn for advice, facts and case studies of similar institutions who have taken the same journey.

Sorting out SORTED

SORTED was re-launched following a review with users. “The site felt a bit like a text book, which is not what we wanted so with the support of LSC, we developed it further” explained Iain. “The new version is far more accessible to principals, energy managers, whoever you are.”

Interactivity is an important way to increase engagement so users are encouraged to leave their own comments or feedback about case studies. But that in itself is a challenge. “Sustainable development is an embryonic activity within the sector. With still a relatively small number of people interested and a general lack of confidence, people are unwilling to feedback their thoughts and share learning.” The lack of confidence within the sector, however, is exactly what SORTED is trying to rectify.

“We are proud to be working with the LSC to make SORTED an online toolkit that everyone can use. Many FE organisations are at the forefront of sustainability and have valuable experiences to share with their colleagues.”

SORTED is making this happen, and providing advice and support to an important sector on what is likely to be the most crucial issue for this and subsequent generations.

Iain Patton
From the Black Country

“…It’s all about changing personal behaviour and leading by example.”

Says Resham.

“Information can only go so far. We all need to start making changes and encourage others to do the same.”

Beyond LSC

72 The Black Country is one of LSC’s smaller offices, with around 30 people. But their sustainability activities haven’t been limited to the office. After the training course a local Council (Sandwell) happened to start working on their own SD agenda. Their consultants asked the LSC to take part in a Sandwell partnership approach to sustainability. Resh attended a local workshop, joining staff from West Bromwich Building Society, Sandwell Council staff, local charity staff and others.

73 The aim was to review how everyone could contribute to the Council target to reduce emissions and produce an action plan. Resh and his colleagues are feeding in ideas. One was a car free day, encouraging people to use public transport. “Transport links aren’t a major problem in the Black Country so we need to get people to see the alternatives.”

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66 As part of Doing Our Bit Resham Gill and colleagues from the West Midlands region recently attended one of the LSC Introduction to Sustainable Development training days.

67 “The starting point of anything is being well informed.” Resham says. “That training course prompted us to come back and reflect about what was going on in our own office.”

68 The Doing Our Bit campaign had raised awareness of the sustainability agenda around the office. People were more energy conscious for one thing. “We’re just more aware now. The training course encouraged us to look at our energy usage – are we using air conditioning instead of opening the window?”

69 There were already paper recycling facilities in the office but no facilities in the area for plastics. Resham and colleagues plan to team up with local businesses to lobby the council to provide facilities for other materials.

70 In the Black Country office, they don’t have a ‘green fairy’ like in Newcastle, but if you leave your computer switched on unnecessarily, you may return to find it switched off and highlighted with a yellow sticker.

71 Actions like this that can really help to make a difference. Everyone can forget to do the little things or stick to old habits because they’re used to them.
Brighton: Sustainable City, Sustainable Office

 Brighton has always been a city at the forefront of green living, with issues like recycling and reducing carbon footprints high on local residents’ agendas. But how is everyone at the LSC office taking these principles from home to work? We caught up with Yodit Tesfaye to find out.

Sustainability Action Group

For the past eighteen months the Sustainability Action Group (Nicole Healing, Liz Topham, Josephine Simonon and Marie Taylor) has met to raise issues, discuss ideas and agree actions to make the Brighton Office more sustainable. The group has helped the team to keep sustainability high on the office agenda and it gives staff somewhere to go with ideas. As a result, Brighton has kicked off a whole range of sustainable initiatives that are making a real difference to the workplace.

Recycle Everything!

When they found out the local council could not process their recycling, the team found a small local organisation instead. Starting off with paper and cardboard, it built up to plastics, glass and tin, plus old marketing material like leaflets or CDs.

The team also found that lots of old ring binders weren’t being re-used and tried to find schools or local charities that could make use of them.

"Anytime we find something we’re no longer using there is usually someone who puts their hand up and says ‘I can do something good with that. It’s a real team effort.”

The team says the recycling push has helped to ‘declutter’ the office and open up more space, and made them more vigilant about ensuring documents with confidential information are disposed of correctly.

Clothes Swap!

After watching a television programme about people bringing their unwanted clothes to the office and swapping them with colleagues, Marie Taylor and Josie Simonon turned one of the conference rooms into a clothes swap shop for a day. They emailed the office in advance to encourage everyone to bring in anything they’d stopped wearing and used clothes rails and hangers to give the place a shop feel. Everything left over went to local charity shops. So successful was the day that another organisation in the building was even inspired to run their own.

It also built on the ground laid during Learning at Work Week, where the team invited a guest speaker to talk about clothing production and supply processes. This raised awareness of the carbon footprint of a single garment and encouraging people not to buy ‘disposable clothing’.

“Everyone benefited from the clothes swap. It was just really enjoyable and really nice. You felt like you were doing something good as well as coming away with a new outfit. I got a scarf I really loved.”

Involving the whole team

The Sustainability Action Group works hard to involve the whole office and allow everyone to push for their particular passion from fair trade coffee and sugar for meetings to recycling plastics. This allows everyone to have their say and make a difference. In one area for instance, simply raising awareness about the existence of a spider phone has dramatically cut down travelling between offices for meetings. While this contributes to the sustainable agenda by reducing travel, it also saves people a lot of time, and has been very popular as a result.

“Every time there is an opportunity to do something on sustainability, whether it’s at Learning at Work Week or in training or wherever, we try to put the sustainable message in there. There is so much more we could do if we had more time, but we do try to do as much as we can, and it isn’t really that hard once you get going”. 
‘Bin’ wondering about recycling at National Office?

84 A frequent question at National Office has been ‘Why don’t we have any recycling bins?’ Sue Walker, Facilities Manager, would tell groups like the Open Forum they weren’t needed because ‘everything that can be recycled is extracted off-site’.

85 To some this sounded too good to be true. Others said ‘fine in theory but what happens if I throw a banana skin in my bin with paper. Isn’t the paper then useless for recycling?’ To answer some of these questions Mary Kelly and Elizabeth McCann followed our office bins to Cwik Skip in Rugby. Manager Mark showed us round.

What a waste!

86 The rubbish from your bin goes to a skip in the LSC car park which is collected regularly by Cwik Skip and taken to Rugby by road. It is tipped into a big pile of mixed waste at one end of the yard.

Like the generation game but different!

87 The mixed waste is scooped up by a crane and placed in something Mark described by Cwik Skip as ‘a big washing machine without the water’. As it spins the machine pushes out soil which is sold or donated. It is expensive to send to landfill so it comes out first.

88 What’s left is pushed onto a conveyor belt. Half a dozen workers extract wood, cardboard, glass, plastic and paper by hand and drop it into dedicated bins below them. Two thirds of the way along a magnet pulls metal from the belt and at the end a machine sucks up the small pieces of paper, plastic, cardboard etc that have escaped sorting until now. As the remaining waste (mostly rubble) goes off the end of the belt, a powerful blower extracts any remaining light scraps. Back at ground level Mark showed us the waste left – almost all bricks and pieces of concrete etc which is sold or donated. We also saw the large machine in which cardboard is compressed and baled. This is one of the busiest machines on the site.

The good news

90 As we looked at the giant bales of sorted paper we asked Mark the contamination question. If the non-confidential paper waste in our bins has a close encounter with a banana skin or a half-eaten sandwich, is it useless for recycling?

91 For recycling into high quality recycled paper for re-use in offices etc, then yes. But not for recycling into products like toilet paper which is where the paper from Cwik Skip goes (the ‘bottom end’ of the market!)

The bad news

92 Mark showed us two huge piles of sorted and baled soft plastic which looked like it was also waiting for collection. Not so. Mark told us the market for plastic has disappeared – previously most of the demand was from China. Now the only business interested in the plastic wants to be paid to take it away. So, until the market picks up again, extraction of plastic may be scaled back.

93 The take away message has to be to remember the waste hierarchy – reduce, revise then recycle. Recycling is great but we should all be reducing the amount of waste we produce in the first place.
It’s all just a fairy story in the North East!

94 Catching the eye and capturing interest to change attitudes and behaviours is what SD is all about. Marie Bartley and her colleagues in the North East Sustainability Group are doing just that. But they are not doing it alone – they are employing the help of a Green Fairy! She is the guide to good recycling practice for LSC staff in North East Regional offices at Gateshead and Wynyard.

95 The fairy has been adapted from a traditional design and started as a bit of a joke says Marie. “Someone turned off another person’s PC for them one evening. In the morning we told them it was the green fairy! This immediately struck us as a way to get the sustainability message across in a light-hearted way.”

96 The fairy can be seen in both of the LSC’s North East buildings. They have different approaches to recycling (the Wynyard office being managed by a landlord) but the green fairy is highly adaptable. She appears on different posters with different messages. The use of the gentle fairy also makes it easier to put across difficult messages such as what not to place in certain bins!

97 Marie chairs the Sustainability Group in the North East. She has 10 very committed members including representatives from every directorate. The group has had notable successes.

- The contract for refuse disposal was coming up and after doing some independent research, they found a new contractor enabling a recycling service to be added whilst saving one third of the budget for refuse collection.

- Some members are qualifying in SD through a project based on the team’s sustainability action plan for the region. The emphasis is on simple behaviour changes which the team hopes will catch on in the office.

- Briefing security staff to turn off the lights as they do their evening checks.

- Car sharing is encouraged through an open calendar for people to plot their regular journeys, particularly those to Wynyard and Coventry.

- Shutting down PCs, turning off docking stations and unplugging e-items is also within the reach of the green fairy. Random evening checks are made and those who have ‘turned off’ are rewarded with an organic (and fair-trade!) chocolate.
SD in Neighbourhood and Family Learning in the South East

The South East is alive with innovative opportunities for individuals and families to learn. Henry Morgan, Regional Coordinator told us about just one example of sustainable development in the use of our funding.

Furniture Now! (FN) is a re-use, recycling and training charity. It provides high quality low cost furniture to people living in Eastbourne, Wealden, Brighton and Hove, Lewes District and surrounding areas. In Hastings, the Hastings Furniture Service (HFS) offers the same service. Local people donate unwanted furniture and household items (rather than send them to landfill) and these organisations sell them on at realistic prices.

Local volunteers are sought from deprived areas of the community who may not have been able to work for some time or simply want to learn new skills. Skills offered include manual handling, telephone skills, craft skills such as furniture restoration and technical skills such as portable appliance testing. The aim is to help people return to paid work through practical support and training in a commercial environment.

Both FN and HFS receive Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) funding which supports first steps and progression to accredited provision for those wanting to return to work.

FN has also been providing the Box It! kerbside recycling scheme in Lewes and the surrounding area since 2002, in partnership with Lewes District Council, covering over 9,000 households. FN collects all kinds of paper, plastic bottles, tin cans, tin foil, textiles and bric-a-brac. They offer courses in interior design, jewellery making, furniture renovation & decoration and work-related skills to under-represented groups in the community such as those experiencing mental health difficulties, drug/alcohol dependency, the long term unemployed and women returning to work.

HFS volunteers collect reusable furniture or appliances from doorsteps at no cost. Every year they re-use 115 tonnes of furniture that otherwise would go to landfill sites. In their shop, items are discounted for members of the public who receive state benefits such as Income Support, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Working Tax Credit.

These two organisations, with the support from NLDC funding, are exemplars of sustainable development in action. As well as supporting people in local communities to acquire new skills (especially those going through difficult times) and furnish their homes they are doing it with a strong environmentally friendly message.
Case Studies of Action to Support Sustainable Development from Around the LSC

**SD – Gearing up for change in the South West**

105 Mike Davies, Regional Office Manager for the South West has been leading the drive there on SD in the run up to the creation of the Skills Funding Agency, the Young People’s Learning Agency and the move of some LSC responsibilities to local authorities.

106 In June 2008, Mike set up an SD Group in Bristol to raise the profile of SD. Keen for it not to look like a management initiative, Mike persuaded a volunteer with an interest in SD to chair the group of 9-10 people from the 4 floors of St Lawrence House. “But its not just a Bristol site thing”, added Mike. “The aim was to create a local forerunner to a wider regional approach encouraging local ownership and action.”

107 “We wanted to get SD going through the day-to-day things we could change,” Mike explains. “The team was clear that it was about behaviour change through raising awareness, not through preaching. Everyone has a level of awareness of green issues through other media. It’s about bringing to work what is becoming routine at home.”

108 Here are just some of the ideas the team has taken forward.

- Installing extra bike racks at the Bristol office and looking at a Bike Doctor scheme – offering staff a free health check on their bikes if they cycle to work
- Encouraging an eco driving course which shows staff how to drive in the most environmentally friendly way
- The new hire car request form prompts video conferencing as a first choice by asking “Why do you need to travel?”
- An on-line who is travelling where and when to encourage car sharing
- Reviewing the availability and use of spider phones to see if more are needed
- Making bus tickets available on site to encourage use of public transport
- Removing individual waste bins to encourage use of separated recycling. Rewards good behaviour and highlighting bad practice e.g. sweets on PCs if people turn them off and colourful balloons if they do not!

109 Mike recognises the challenge of keeping SD high on people’s agenda. “It’s so easy to get diverted and not do what you planned” he says. With this in mind, Teresa Copping from the Truro office arranged accommodation at the Eden project in Cornwall for one of the LSC Introduction to SD training days in December. “The ideas and action plan enabled us to reinvigorate SD across the region” she says. The regional group later organised an event to review progress at the Genesis conference centre in Taunton – an example of sustainable construction.

110 And behaviours are changing. Teresa recalls the recent breakdown of the double sided printer in her office and the satisfaction of seeing people’s consciences openly kicking in when faced with having to print single sided.
Running with Inspiration

Bob Boswell doesn’t mind telling you he’s 58 – because 8 years ago he was 50 and that was when it all started. He had joined LSC and wanted to kick start charity fundraising in the organisation. He had also entered the London Marathon as a ‘birthday treat’ – never having run before.

For 7 years Bob has run exclusively for Guide Dogs for the Blind. He was inspired by his friend David Healey who lost his sight when he was 19 and whose life was totally changed by being given a guide dog.

Even now Bob feels he was ‘not born to be a runner’ – but had to take on the challenge. His best marathon time so far is 4 hours 53 minutes but he is hoping to reach 4 hours.

A year ago, Bob used his sponsorship to open the Daniel Saldanha Tribute fund in memory of a 28 year old LSC colleague who lost his life to saucoma earlier that year. Daniel was a Guide Dogs supporter and had appeared with Bob for the Running Team. Bob says, “This £5,000 account will fund a guide dog puppy to be born, bred, trained and placed with a visually impaired owner in the Coventry and Warwickshire area. The Association has agreed to name the puppy ‘Daniel’ - a wonderful tribute to a missed friend, colleague and fellow guide dog runner.”

Bob is a dab hand at persuading others to run and fund raise – not least his own Director and a colleague who achieved lifetime ambitions in completing the last two marathons with him. Bob sets the example, running annually in the Great North, Great South, Adidas Half and London Marathons. He estimates that over the 7 year period with LSC he has raised almost £40,000 for Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Running isn’t the only fundraising activity thing that Bob encourages LSC people to do. There are:

- Regular Bonus ball sweepstakes with 20 per cent of takings going to charity
- LSC Charity Quiz Nites – so popular that now there are 4 each year with almost 100 people attending each. Everybody donates food and prizes so every penny of the £5 entrance fee and raffle goes to the Guide Dogs. With such generous support from LSC colleagues, it is possible for a single Quiz night to raise almost £1000.
- Charity tombolas, notably the Christmas one, a chance to donate unwanted presents. Last year the event raised a record £300.

A proportion of the money raised sometimes goes to a ‘guest charity’ in addition to Guide Dogs. Recent Quiz Nites have supported CRY – Cardiac Risk in the Young - following the sudden collapse and death of a colleague’s daughter. Other local charities supported have included Doorway which supports homeless young people.

“The LSC makes it easy for us”, says Bob, “not just the facilities like accommodation during and after work but things like the time of people to help us, a third of the Finance notice board for posters and the use of the intranet to spread the word about events and what they’ve raised.”

So having kick started fund raising in the LSC National Office eight years ago, some 30-35 formal events are now held there each year. Bob emphasises how supportive LSC has been – everyone from the Management Group down supports the events. The LSC’s help in publicising fundraising and communicating what has been achieved has also been of immense value. "It’s not just that we feel supported,” explains Bob, "but we feel that the Management Group is genuinely keen to get even more people involved across the LSC in organising fund raising for good causes.”

And Bob should know...
LSC colleagues John and Arthur have come a long way...

120 The RAC says that over a working career, the average person will commute the equivalent of 2½ times around the globe. So it’s not surprising that the LSC is trialling a car sharing with National Office staff.

121 Mary Kelly from the SD team explains. “With funding from the Human Resources Team, we asked Liftshare to set up a restricted group for us. These sites are open only to people with a common email address such as @lsc.gov.uk, addressing a common concern about car sharing - safety”.

122 Registration was encouraged by a desk drop, an eco-friendly prize draw, emails and posters. Mary’s colleague Elizabeth McCann looks after the site. “We now have 57 people registered and several car share arrangements up and running” she says. “It takes just a few minutes to register. You can say if you need to start or finish at a certain time. Once you’re matched with someone you can always meet for a coffee to decide anything important – like what music to have on in the morning!”

123 Prompted by the publicity, John Lodge from the Transfer Project team visited the site in the unlikely event – he thought – that somebody else would be doing his daily commute from Abingdon to Coventry. “Surprisingly, I found another LSC guy.” says John. “So I sent an email and Arthur and I met in the restaurant to talk about it.”

124 Arthur Mulumbu is a Data Analyst at National Office, but also lives in Abingdon and had already registered his daily journey with Liftshare.com. “I had only just put my name down so I was really pleased when John said he was interested in sharing the trip. To be honest I had listed myself on the wider Liftshare site rather than just the restricted, safer LSC area.”

125 “We decided to give it a try for a couple of weeks to see how it worked – and whether our own ‘in car habits’ were compatible!” confessed John. He feels that loss of ‘personal space’ is an aspect of sharing which might put people off but recommends just giving it a try to see if it works.

126 John and Arthur share the 120 mile round trip alternate weeks which saves fuel and wear and tear on their vehicles. “It saves wear and tear on us too,” says John. “The stress and tedium of a long journey is halved as well and you only appreciate that saving when you experience it.”
Case Studies of Action to Support Sustainable Development from Around the LSC

Fund raising - a positive approach gets results!

127 If you ask Julie about her chilli jam, she will tell you it comes in three strengths (hot, medium, mild) and three colours (red, green and yellow). People in LSC National Office buy it at her charity cake stall because they like it - it tastes good and the money raised goes to Cancer Research UK.

128 Julie Binns is an Accountant in the LSC Finance unit and became involved in fundraising when she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2006. She attended ‘Relay for Life’ – a 24 hour ‘pass the baton’ team event - and participated in the opening ‘survivors lap’. So impressed was she by the occasion that she was determined to give something back.

Julie now runs a regular cake stall with colleagues as part of an annual cancer fundraising effort in LSC for Cancer Research UK. Last year her team, aptly named Oddbins (‘partly wine, partly my surname – but not sure where the odd comes from!’ says Julie), won the shield at ‘Relay for Life’ for raising the most money in the previous 12 months. It was £12,500, part of an overall sum of £52,000 from all the teams involved.

129 One of their main fundraising activities is the Donation Station, a highly successful office collection point for bags of items LSC staff don’t need anymore. Under an arrangement with the local Cancer Research shop, every bag of goods credits the LSC fundraising effort with £23.

130 As Julie says “We make it easy for colleagues to donate things for reuse by others. My single trip to the Cancer Research shop saves travel so it’s environmentally friendly too.” Julie collects throughout the year and can take as many as 40 bags a month into the shop.

131 She has nothing but praise for the support she gets, “The LSC is always helpful - not just in their readiness to offer tables, space for a shop or help set up an event. Managers have been genuinely supportive in allowing staff time to come along, buy or participate.”

132 Julie’s culinary reputation has encouraged sustainability in other ways – LSC people bring fresh surplus produce such as apples, pears and organic herbs into the office for her to use in her recipes. Others like to bring her jam jars for re-use. “People cannot get enough of my chilli jam”, she proudly boasts. Maybe Julie should raise even more funds by selling her jams through the post too – hotmail?
Fair Trade and more in Essex!

It all began for Anne Ronsky when she attended one of the LSC Introduction to SD Training days in early 2009.

Anne has lived in Kenya for much of her life and so understands the importance to human survival of maintaining a successful economy. This is part of what prompted her thinking to choose a Fair Trade project for her NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Sustainable Development.

She set herself five objectives:

1. Promote the benefits of using Fair Trade products
2. Trial Fair Trade products in the office
3. Assess the success of the trial
4. Undertake a cost and supply analysis of the Fair Trade products
5. Present findings to the Executive Leadership Team

To get things going she bought a selection of Fair Trade products and left them in the office kitchen - not forgetting her roots she included tea from Kenya! Believing this was the best way to get buy-in to a change, she invited everyone to try them out and asked them to complete a questionnaire to tell her what they thought.

"Interestingly, perceptions of price and availability seemed to be two of the main deterrents’ says Anne ‘but there is not a great deal of difference. In fact, my Fair Trade products were marginally cheaper”.

Once the results were in, Anne felt the office would support a permanent move to Fair Trade. She submitted a short paper to the Essex Executive Leadership Team which was unanimously approved.

Sustainability is beginning to be seen all around the Essex office. There is strong culture of recycling paper and double sided printing and plans to drive up the use of conference calls to save travelling. Car sharing and better lighting control are also on the agenda.

But it’s not just Anne taking the initiative... One of her colleagues, Andrea Clarke, collects unwanted bras from ladies in the office and recycles them. “Sometimes men bring them in, but they take pains to reassure me that their wives have asked them to”, says Andrea, “we collected 35 good quality bras and they went to women in developing countries who cannot afford what are seen as luxury items, and it really helps improve their self esteem.”

Altogether a sustained Essex effort!
Educating for SD in Yorkshire and Humberside – inside and out

141 Colin Forrest is a man from Yorkshire and Humber who likes to help bring SD together – not just in the office and the Region, but with LSC interests outside. He is the Learning and Quality Director in West Yorkshire and believes that if LSC is to become an exemplar, it must practice what it preaches.

142 On the inside, Colin is concerned that the drive on SD across the area is variable. Much of the activity – commendably - has been taken forward by small groups of volunteers. “In some areas there is a proper structure for recycling, for example, but in others there is much more to be done” says Colin. An example is the need to focus on the energy and paper themes of ‘Doing our Bit’ at Regional Office now that recycling bins have been placed around the building and can crushers fitted in three kitchens. There is good cooperation to build on too – such as the fitting of environmental controls by the Facilities Team.

143 “Unfortunately there are issues currently that are more pressing such as the transition arrangements for the changes LSC is going through”, says Colin. “Getting airtime for SD is a real challenge”.

144 The Organisational Development Group is now being used by colleagues at Mercury House to update on progress. “I see it as part of staff’s SD development,” says Colin. “It helps them understand how they can save energy and paper and go further by doing an audit.”

145 On the external front, Colin sits on the Education for Sustainable Development Forum (ESD) for Yorkshire and the Humber, alongside representatives from the local Government Office, Yorkshire Forward, Local Authorities, National Park and the University of Bradford. It is a long established and highly regarded forum for educators and others interested in the design, development and dissemination of innovative ESD partnership initiatives across the region.

146 In particular it has shown how SD can permeate education at all levels by supporting networks linking education sectors. Through the Association of Colleges, the LSC contributed £30k to enable the further education network to be even more effective. Most colleges in the region participated with involvement at very senior level. Links with capital build were explored along with case studies linked to curriculum development, teacher training and the use of new technologies. During the work it emerged that many education providers now recycle in excess of 60% of their waste.

147 With LSC now being dissolved, thought is being given to who should take its place at the ESD table. “It’s really important that adult skills and learning continue to be represented at the table”, says Colin, “I am sure the ESD chair would welcome interest from the Skills Funding Agency”.