

SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

BE GREEN, BE RESPONSIBLE

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Recycle it: These distinctive bins have appeared in offices and corridors throughout the University – helping staff play their part as the institution becomes a greener place to work. There are 120 larger 100-litre bins and 378 smaller 50-litre containers positioned in and around 20 locations at each of the University's four sites

WORKING TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A SUSTAINABLE DIFFERENCE

Is it too late to stop the climate changing in ways unprecedented in the history of our earth? Maybe. But it is not too late for human societies to minimise the impacts, limiting further climate change for future generations and helping societies to adapt to whatever changes may occur over the next decades.

We can all help; universities have a role in leading the way and I want Westminster to become influential in advancing the 'green agenda'.

Earlier this year, distinguished environmental scientist Professor Michael Depledge delivered a keynote address here at Westminster, outlining the ways in which universities across the world can make a difference.

Professor Depledge described how, throughout the ages, our seats of learning have provided the research and scholarship to help humans understand their world – and make it a better place.

Here at the University of Westminster, we are well-placed to contribute to that process. Cutting edge research has been ongoing at this university for many years, but I believe the urgency of the situation the world finds itself in requires us all to undergo a cultural change in the way we collaborate with each other. Working together, across disciplines, we can create new knowledge that will make a real difference on sustainability.

As an institution we are working with other organisations nationally and internationally in areas that impact on the green agenda, such as policy, governance, transport, water and tourism. Our researchers are producing the evidence-based, inter-disciplinary solutions that will be required to tackle global environmental issues.

But I am also keen to highlight the differences that we can all make in our daily working lives. As well as embracing the big picture, I want us to pay attention to the little things where we can all make a difference as we move towards a more sustainable future. There is already much good practice, but we need to see it spreading across all schools and departments. This first issue of Sustainability Matters highlights many of our initiatives.

AS WELL AS EMBRACING THE BIG PICTURE, I WANT US TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE LITTLE THINGS WHERE WE CAN ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE AS WE MOVE TOWARDS A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

As many of you will know, I have set 2015 as a reasonable target for us to get to where we need to be, both as a university and as a green employer making a sustainable contribution to life in one of the world's great cities. This will require a culture change in the way we do things – both individually and as an organisation – but I am confident that working together we can make a real difference.

Geoff Petts
Vice-Chancellor and Rector

UNIVERSITY OF
SHAPING
THE
FUTURE
WESTMINSTER

MAKING WESTMINSTER FIRST CHOICE FOR OUR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

What is the university's role in society? If it is to maintain a "dual transformative role, ie unlocking the individual's potential as well as improving a sense of collective well-being", as the New Economics Forum has suggested, then we need a unifying framework to guide us. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) provides such a mechanism.

In a nutshell, CSR is about what we do and how we do it. The main objective is sustainability through a triangular approach. This means environmental and social sustainability are as vital as financial sustainability. Environmental legislation coupled with rising energy prices, climate change imperative and increasing awareness amongst students and staff highlight the need to 'think green'. Similarly, the University needs to be regarded as a good neighbour, trustworthy partner and employer of choice.

The greatest impact comes via our students. We are all in a position to lead by example as well as equip them with the knowledge and skills required to help them to succeed – both in the jobs market and in helping shape a sustainable society.

We were one of the pioneering higher education institutions taking part in the pilot Universities That Count sustainability initiative. A very encouraging 42 per cent of students responding nationally said sustainability had influenced them in making their university choice. We led the field with our equality, diversity and inclusion work in the 2009 survey results. We now need to build on this to ensure students make us first choice for CSR.

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WESTMINSTER HOSTS GROUNDBREAKING HE SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOP

What is the best way forward for universities seeking the most effective policies to become more sustainable and responsible? Is there an easy-to-read 'route map' to guide institutions through the maze of best practice claims?

A gathering at the University of higher education professionals working in sustainability, human resource, estates and facilities and health and safety departments last month drafted the first-ever HE route map for sustainability and responsibility.

Hosted jointly by the Westminster and the Association of Sustainability Practitioners, the workshop entitled A Route Map for Sustainability and Responsibility in Higher Education Institutions, summarised current best practice, looked at opportunities for developing policies within universities and set out a suggested way forward for the sector.

WESTMINSTER SIGNS UP TO 10:10

The University joined more than 800 other organisations nationwide signing up earlier this year to 10:10 – a new national drive to cut carbon emissions by 10 per cent during 2010.

Westminster was one of only five universities, joining schools, hospitals, government departments and members of the public at the launch, in making a commitment to do their best to try and cut their own emissions.

The Energy Saving Trust and the Carbon Trust have agreed to help people reach their 10:10 goals by providing advice about energy saving measures through their free helplines and websites.

HIPPOS HELP LAUNCH WESTMINSTER'S WATER AMNESTY MONTH

Staff and students were invited to pick up a water-saving 'hippo' and plant water gel as part of the University's Water Amnesty month in October.

The awareness project – which resulted in the University saving 15 per cent in water consumption over the month – aimed to raise awareness of how much water we all consume a part of our daily lives.

At the moment, the University uses 473,000 litres of water a day – while every individual here is estimated to consume up to 150 litres on average at home and work.

The Water Amnesty asked everyone to look at the water they used – both at work and in the home – and consider ways of making savings.

Speaking at the launch of the initiative, Professor Jeremy Till, dean of the School of Architecture and the Built Environment, said the University had only recently been able to measure how much water it was consuming.

He said new meters were now installed at all sites, enabling the institution to measure water use – and target potential savings.

Water-saving hippos have also now been installed in all toilets at the University. Other measures include a new bore hole at the Chiswick Sports Ground which could soon be providing water for pitch irrigation.

Professor Till, who is a member of a group of academics known as Free Radicals promoting Water Amnesties at a number of other institutions, including the University of the Arts, London, said the project was about raising awareness and seeking "incremental" changes in people's behaviour.