

No time to waste

What is sustainable development?

The past 20 years have seen a growing realisation that the current development of the world is unsustainable. In other words, we are living beyond our means. From the loss of biodiversity with the felling of rainforests or over-fishing of the seas to the negative effect our consumption patterns are having on the environment and the climate, our way of life is placing an increasing burden on the planet.

The increasing stress we put on resources and environmental systems such as water, land and air cannot go on forever. Especially as the world's population continues to increase and we already see a world where over a billion people live on less than a dollar a day.

A widely-used and accepted international definition of sustainable development is: 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' - globally we are not even meeting the needs of the present let alone considering the needs of future generations.

Unless we start to make real progress toward reconciling these contradictions we face a future that is less certain and less secure. We need to make a decisive move toward more sustainable development. Not just because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is in our own long-term best interests. It offers the best hope for the future. Whether at college, in the home or at work, we all have a part to play. Our small everyday actions add up to make a big difference.

(Source UK Government)

The College Front

Over the past month, posters have been placed around the main campuses unveiling its Sustainable Development (SD) initiative, SAVE (sustainability awareness valuing the environment) and over the coming months we will be looking to launch this initiative to the College as a whole.

Steve West, who is the college Sustainable Development Manager, will head the initiative up. One of his first actions will be to recruit staff and learner volunteers to become SD champions. The volunteers will form action groups and these groups will form the backbone of this initiative and put forward plans of action, as well as promote the cause.

If you're interested in getting involved please get in touch with Steve.

The aim of the SAVE campaign is to change the culture of the College to develop an ethos of social and environmental responsibility, so that all staff and learners will be aware of Sustainable Development and expect it to be part of everyday practice. All aspects of SD will be covered.

Principal, Rob Badcock, has led from the front on the initial steps to make the college a Sustainable Development beacon for Milton Keynes. The campaign is an important part of the College's strategic plan and is fully supported by the Governors and Senior Management Team.

Have a Think about This

The Office Front

- Leaving your monitor or computer on stand-by mode still consumes significant amounts of electricity, as much as 30% of normal use in some cases. A light flashing on your monitor shows that it is still on and is wasting energy.
- Switch off lights when you are last to leave all rooms and when they are not needed. Turning off fluorescent tubes frequently does not mean that more electricity is used when they are turned back on and does not have a significant impact on the life of the tube (compared to the energy saved).
- Check that the radiators in your room are set appropriately. Thermostatic radiator valves work by stabilising the local temperature to that set by the valve. Generally, once set, they do not need to be touched again.
- Where appropriate photocopy double sided as much as possible. Do you really need a hard copy of it? Can you save the message/attachments instead? Proof the document on screen before printing.
- If you do print something, retrieve it immediately. This helps to avoid the need for printing it again (because it has gone walkabout etc.)
- Switch the computer, printer, copier and water cooler off at night - the last person to leave the office should do this (a photocopier left on overnight wastes enough energy to make 5,300 A4 copies).

The Home Front

- Ensure your home is correctly insulated.
- Conserve energy. If every household changed just two of the four most regularly used bulbs for energy efficient ones, the energy saved would be enough to power all of the street lighting in the UK.
- Recycle as much as you can. In one year there would be enough waste to fill dustbins stretching from the Earth to the Moon and each tonne of paper recycled saves 15 average-sized trees, as well as their surrounding habitat and wildlife.

The Building Front

According to a recent YouGov poll, Britain's homeowners are more concerned about environmental issues than ever and, as such, have a real appetite to embrace energy saving in the home. Yet, half of all Brits think it currently costs too much to make their homes eco-friendly.

Currently the energy used to heat, light and run our homes accounts for 27 per cent of all the UK's emissions - the third biggest cause of carbon emissions after business and transport. At around 40 million tonnes, our homes consume three times more energy than the use of private cars.

(Source UK Government)

Zero carbon homes

Imagine then, being able to buy a new zero-carbon home that was built to be self-sufficient in energy and super insulated. A new package of measures just announced by the Government will mean that dream homes like this are on the cards, as part of a strategy to put tackling climate change at the heart of the planning system and the way we build new homes, the ambition of the Government is that all new homes be zero carbon by 2016. Under the scheme, a zero-carbon home is one that uses less energy than it generates.

This definition encompasses all energy use in the home rather than just those energy uses that are currently part of building regulations, such as heating and hot water.