

# **The University of Leicester Students' Union Environmental Communications and Actions Strategy 2010-2012**

The University of Leicester Students' Union realises that it has a key role to play in making sure that throughout all Union activities that the negative effects towards the environment are minimised. As the Union's Environmental Sustainability Policy states:-

*"The University of Leicester Students' Union recognises that its activities have the potential for both positive and negative impacts upon the environment at local, national and global levels. The Union acknowledges its responsibility for environmental protection and also aims to contribute to the national commitment to sustainable development. It will seek to achieve continual improvement in how it measures and responds to its environmental impacts and actively communicate this to students and stakeholders."*

The Union has a responsibility to encourage the student body to become more environmentally aware both on campus and in their own lives. The University of Leicester Students' Union Environmental Committee has identified three main areas:

## **Increasing the ease at which students can recycle on campus**

Recycling at the University of Leicester is unnecessarily confusing with a non-homogenous recycling scheme between the main campus and halls of residence. The Union currently has an above average rate of recycling compared to other University departments of 48%. Nevertheless, many students find the current system unclear as to what waste goes into which bin. The Union plans to resolve this problem through the following methods:

- Clearer signage around recycling points, allowing students know exactly what constitutes plastic, paper and metal recycling. In addition, looking into the possibility of having the recycling notices in varying languages in order to aid international students whose primary language is not English.
- Increased education of the benefits of recycling and the negative and harmful aspects of landfill.
- Innovative placing of recycling bins, to encourage students away from throwing recyclable products into landfill, coupled with the reducing of the amount of landfill bins in the Union building, forcing students to consider the recycling options.

**Raising the awareness of the impact that student actions have on the environmental both at a local and global level.**

The Students' Union currently has a very good relationship with the University's Environmental Team and work very closely alongside them to ensure that the environmental message is communicated in an efficient, coherent way and to a wide ranging audience. It is imperative that the Union set aside time in its annual campaigns schedule for an environmental campaign, to raise awareness of current environmental issues and contemporary solutions. In the interests of efficient campaigning and not delivering two varying messages to students it would be beneficial to continue as the Union has done in previous year to work alongside the University's Environment Team with their *Big Green Week* campaign, which has proved a tremendous success. In addition the Union need to stay aware of what is going on at a global level and where need be to join in national campaigns to lobby the Government towards a 'Green' agenda.

Over the academic year 2009/10 hard hitting environmental films have drawn large crowds and have proved to be vastly successful at communicating complex environmental messages over to large numbers of students. It has also been found that films attract a different demographic of students to normal Union events, which is a positive. Over the period of this strategy the Union will continue to show films with an environmental focus at appropriate times, during environmental week and Fairtrade Fortnight.

**Setting an example as a Union, which the students will be encouraged to follow and campaigning against the University to increase their environmentally friendly activities.**

The Union has a key part to play as role models for environmentally friendly activity. It is essential that the Union are a benchmark for best environmental practise in the local area and should strive to achieve this status.

The Union currently embark on many fantastic environmental initiatives yet this information is never passed onto the student body. Henceforth, the Union shall make more publically aware any activities undertaken that have a substantial benefit to the environmental or towards improving the ethics of the Union.

The Union also has an essential role in placing pressure on the University to improve its activities and make them more environmentally friendly. The Union's Environmental Committee has assessed two areas, one short-term and one long-term, where the University can make substantial improvements.

*Short-term*

- Replacing paper towels in all University owned and managed buildings with hand dryers, preferably the more environmentally friendly high speed dryers.

*Long-term*

- Review the possibility of alternative energy sources with the review of the option of installing an urban wind turbines on campus.

**Owen Jones**

Campaigns & Involvement Officer 2008/09

**Laura Wilkinson**

Environmental Officer 2008/09