

# Stepping Up in Sustainability

## City College Coventry case study



<b>Title of project</b>	<b>Social Media and Further Education: 21st Century Tools to Develop 21st Century Skills</b>
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<b>Contact details (lead organisation)</b>	Debbie Thorpe Email: d.thorpe@staff.covcollege.ac.uk
<b>1. Aims of the project</b>	A better understanding of how social media tools and technologies could be harnessed to help develop some of the necessary skills – those of connecting, creating and collaborating – not just amongst an elite few in specialist training or occupation but across a generation.
<b>2. Situation: Identify the situation or issue that faced you</b>	<p>Of the perfect storm of global challenges facing us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the greatest of all are the twin threats of diminishing global energy supplies and climate change. Taken together these place us under an absolute imperative to break our addiction to fossil fuels and find instead a fair and equitable path to a radically different, low carbon future.</p> <p>Shaping a post-carbon world that is sustainable, flourishing and fair for all presents the human race with the greatest learning challenge it has ever faced, requiring imaginative and innovative leadership from the further education and skills sector.</p> <p>City College Coventry is determined to be in a position to help provide that leadership.</p> <p>In 2009 the College successfully applied to the LSIS Flexibility and Innovation Fund for support to enable it to provide answers to two fundamental questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What would the new learning landscape, needed to help society become low carbon ready, actually look like?</li> <li>2. What could a further education college do to help not only its own members but also the wider community to become “fit for purpose” for the transition to a low carbon future?</li> </ol> <p>The result was the College’s “Planning for a Low Carbon Future” initiative.</p> <p>In trying to answer these questions the College came to the conclusion that to make society low carbon ready there was an urgent need to rediscover, redevelop, re-democratise and re-deploy skills – call them 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills - that go to the very</p>

	<p>heart of what humans are really made for – our ability to CONNECT, to CREATE and to COLLABORATE.</p> <p>Such skills are now more critical than ever before. They include critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, creativity, self-direction, leadership, adaptability, responsibility and global awareness.</p> <p>They are skills for all, not just the elite few and this is one of the most profound challenges that the further education and skills sector needs to face.</p>
<p><b>3. Task: Define the outcomes you needed to achieve</b></p>	<p>When the College started to ask whether tools and resources existed which could help with the process of meeting this 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills challenge it became clear that, perhaps by design, perhaps by accident, a hugely powerful set of tools and technologies were already in the process of development - social media.</p> <p>With the help of its external sustainability adviser Roger Talbot, the College again successfully approached LSIS, this time in the form of its “Stepping Up in Sustainability Fund”, to support a second and follow-on project which we called “Social Media in Further Education: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Tools to develop 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills”.</p> <p>The aim was a better understanding of how social media tools and technologies could be harnessed to help develop some of the necessary skills – those of connecting, creating and collaborating – not just amongst an elite few in specialist training or occupation but across a generation.</p>
<p><b>4. Actions that you took in order to achieve your plan, and your approach</b></p>	<p>The eight-month project was structured around five key phases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The LISTENING phase which consisted of five main areas of study: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a look at the global trends that are fuelling the growth of social media</li> <li>b. a closer look at the forces leading to the transition to a low carbon economy</li> <li>c. a look at the emergence of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills agenda</li> <li>d. a study of social media today, with the focus on the underlying principles and functionality and not just at the headline brands</li> <li>e. a review of the current use of social media in education.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. The ASSESSMENT phase, when we conducted surveys into usage of social media amongst students and staff and developed a new assessment tool that would enable users to determine exactly where they were on a learning trajectory</li> </ol>

	<p>towards becoming social media savvy and low carbon ready.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The LEARNING phase, when we developed and piloted an intensive 10-week training course – with a special focus on video production and blogging – for mixed teams of students, teaching staff and support staff.</li> <li>4. The PLANNING phase, during which model strategic learning plans were developed</li> <li>5. The SHARING phase during which our results could be disseminate across the sector.</li> </ol>
<p><b>5. Results that you obtained including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>practical achievements (what’s in place)</b></li> <li>• <b>quantitative change (statistics etc)</b></li> <li>• <b>qualitative change (behaviour, culture, thinking, attitudes etc)</b></li> <li>• <b>what the organisation(s) have learned from this</b></li> <li>• <b>what it means for learners</b></li> <li>• <b>Include relevant quotes, statistics etc</b></li> </ul>	<p>All the content referred to in the Outcomes section of this case study is brought together in the online Interactive Guide we have called “Connect   Create   Collaborate”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An objective survey of the current usage of social media by staff and students across all Faculties for both recreational purposes and in the context of their work at the College.</li> <li>• A tried and tested template for in-house and online training courses across a wide range of content.</li> <li>• A set of demonstration videos powerfully linking the social media and low carbon agendas within the College. Copies of the videos can be found on the Social Media Groups website and blog at <a href="http://covcollegesocialmedia.wordpress.com/">http://covcollegesocialmedia.wordpress.com/</a></li> <li>• A well trained and highly committed team of staff and students who are willing and able to take on the role of a Social Media Advisory Group to the College’s Executive Management Team and to provide the all important link to the College’s Sustainability Group, to jointly progress the College’s low carbon agenda.</li> <li>• A set of exemplar “How-To” Guides for key social media concepts such as social networking, blogging, micro-blogging, media sharing, web conferencing and collaborative document production.</li> <li>• A training needs analysis tool for students, staff and College management that will enable the preparation of personal, team and organisational learning plans.</li> <li>• A template for the creation of a formal Social Media Policy for the College and for other institutions across the sector.</li> <li>• An online Interactive Guide that collates - into an important sector-wide resource -both the lessons that have been learned through City College Coventry’s practical experience over the duration of the project AND international best practice.</li> </ul>

If pressures and constraints allow, the College is prepared to consider other ways in which its experience and growing expertise in this field can be made available to the sector and beyond, perhaps through a team of trainers from this project offering either in-house or online training



**Figure 1: The Social Media Advisory Group**

### **Impact**

In our project bid, we proposed to measure the impact of the social media initiative under three different headings:

1. **The uptake of social networking opportunities:** As a result of the project there has been a significantly greater awareness and understanding of the potential of social networking amongst the College's leadership and teaching staff.
2. **Estimates of opportunity costs:** The project has demonstrated that a strong financial case for the use of low or zero cost "mass" social media tools and technologies exist.
3. **The Impact upon the College's wider "Planning for a Low Carbon Future" initiative:** The social media project has been markedly successful in extending the reach and influence of the Low Carbon Readiness agenda beyond (as in the initial pilot programme) the Faculties of Technology and Business and Society to the Faculties of Creative Studies and Skills and Commercial Development.

"The Social Media Advisory Group is to have a reporting line directly to the College's Sustainability Group, headed by the director of Estates. With the full support of the College's Executive Management Team and the day-to-day oversight of the

Vice Principal for Commercial Development this is the clearest possible indication that the College sees long term potential in the development of an effective social media policy linked to its Low Carbon Future's Initiative."

**Carrie Smith, Vice Principal for Commercial Development  
City College Coventry**

"Working on the production of demonstration videos with colleagues and students taught me personally a great deal about sustainability and about the low carbon agenda. It proved a great learning tool."

**Nathan Dodzo, Head of Media Production**

"We think the Interactive Guide – which we call "Connect | Create | Collaborate" – will prove one of the most useful and lasting legacies. In it we have sought to bring together all the lessons we have learned – and learned about – in the course of the project and presented these in a form which will invite the contribution of others in the sector so it stays fresh and relevant within a very fast moving field. The next stage of an ongoing process – and a key future task for the Social Media Advisory Group – is to ensure that a wider process of culture change across the College, and in time across the sector as a whole, is facilitated. I hope the results of the City College's efforts can help to bring this about.

**Dr Roger Talbot, Independent Sustainability Advisor**

**6. What made the project a success? What were the key ingredients?**

"In preparing our bid to LSIS for this latest project we were of course aware of other work in the same field. **We felt it important to base the delivery of our project on a sound research footing** to be sure we were building on existing work, not duplicating it and that our perception of trends in social media were well founded."

**Dr Roger Talbot, Sustainability Adviser**

"The results of the **survey** provide a **valuable baseline** against which the development of the College's social media profile can be assessed and taken forward"

**Debbie Thorpe, Sales and Marketing Manager  
City College Coventry**

"I am delighted that **the efforts of a dedicated group of staff and students** has produced such successful results **which can be replicated across the College** and provide a template for training not only in video but in other important aspects of social media"

**Nathan Dodzo, Head of Media Production  
City College Coventry**

<b>7. Any resources or tools produced by the project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Interactive Guide <a href="http://connectcreatecollaborate.wordpress.com/">http://connectcreatecollaborate.wordpress.com/</a></li> <li>• The Website of the City College Coventry Social Media Group <a href="http://covcollegesocialmedia.wordpress.com/">http://covcollegesocialmedia.wordpress.com/</a></li> <li>• The College’s Low Carbon Futures Website <a href="http://www.lsiscccproject.co.uk/home.asp?slevel=0z0&amp;parent_id=1">http://www.lsiscccproject.co.uk/home.asp?slevel=0z0&amp;parent_id=1</a></li> </ul>		
<b>8. Total costs of the project</b>	LSIS funding	Match funding	Total funding
	£25,000	£13,500	£38,500



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