

# Stepping Up in Sustainability

## Exeter College case study



<b>Title of project</b>	<b>Exeter Urban Garden</b>	
<b>Lead partner organisation name and address</b>	Exeter College Hele Road Centre Hele Road Exeter Devon EX4 4JS	
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<b>1. Aims of the project</b>	The aims of the project were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To foster an awareness of sustainable living</li><li>• Support learning activities in a practical way, and</li><li>• Transform a neglected corner of campus into a vibrant space</li></ul>	
<b>2. Situation: Identify the situation or issue that faced you</b>	Exeter College occupies a campus with largely built-up grounds allowing students few opportunities for contact with natural experiential learning. Students' experience of their world is largely gained through virtual experiences and while they know some technical sustainability issues, their knowledge of food and biodiversity is limited. This project aims to improve this by offering them experience in planning, design, building and cultivation, plus everyday sustainability issues such as recycling and composting.	
<b>3. Task: Define the outcomes you needed to achieve</b>	We sought to gain student involvement by creating a space that would be made available to future generations and become a centrepiece for sustainable learning at the College. In order to achieve this, students to foster contacts with the wider College and City community, involving them in a team effort to the benefit of all including the disadvantaged. Cultivation of the urban garden is planned by those within and outside the College community and the Seating Area includes an area of decking and an open space as a small arena for future events.	

<p><b>4. Actions that you took in order to achieve your plan, and your approach</b></p>	<p>Students were encouraged to consider what could be done with a plot, to develop their own approach and test it democratically in their groups to develop concrete plans out of the vague and idealised ideas first shown. Their inputs have set the pace of progress here and their gains in learning, confidence and ability have shown them a world previously unknown to many of them.</p>
<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> </ul>	<p>The garden is taking shape and students are making contact with practical sustainability issues such as recycled goods and the natural world as well as learning teamwork and consideration for those nearby in the confines of the old school buildings.</p> <p>The student response has been predictably varied but includes those who have shone; who have discovered abilities they previously had no outlet for; who have come together as a team for the first time; worked with great focus as a team; and professed themselves proud of what they have achieved together.</p> <p>External contacts include not only commercial sponsors such as Western Power with stated aims to support sustainability, but also personal ones like Greenpeace, Barclays Corporate and the Met Office who share our aims and have worked personally on the project. The Men In Sheds scheme have repaired our tools and this encourages our students to look after them more carefully.</p> <p>Like all of us, some students seem hardly to exercise and at times lack motivation or stamina. Others however revel in the task and we almost have to pull them off the tools at break time! Then there are those who initially show no enthusiasm for helping but do often join in once the rest of the group get going.</p> <p>Exeter College is currently tackling issues arising such as who should use the seating area created and whether the whole space should be a bookable classroom. Staff will need to consider how the garden is tended over the summer holidays; an opportunity for some of them perhaps to take part themselves!</p>

<p><b>6. What made the project a success? What were the key ingredients? (Picking up in part from section 4 above)</b></p>	<p>A good network of voluntary helpers, on top of support from those whose job it is, has proved invaluable. This has allowed students time to work at their own speed and has enabled enjoyment and satisfaction to flourish among those involved and in time, brought in initially reluctant group members.</p> <p>Fun, shared experience and the creativity of productive teamwork is key; each day is assigned achievable tasks and its results are celebrated. Practical discoveries fascinate a whole group – what’s under a manhole cover? Or a butterfly landing behind them – but it takes awhile for consideration of what they learn to show itself in their behaviour; this aspect can still be improved upon.</p> <p>Teamwork did bond them together and the design stage results surprised their own tutors. At the end of the design phase, one piped up ‘I feel proud’ at being questioned on what they had achieved; their presentations too were an eye-opener for all present, since they really threw themselves into the choice of items and materials they wanted to see in the garden. The build phase hasn’t yet had this impact as the student groups stay on the project for less time; classes are broken up into stages to mark progress, but are often too short to accomplish a tangible result.</p>		
<p><b>7. Any resources or tools produced by the project</b></p>	<p>The project has produced the following resources and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The garden itself;</li> <li>• Its College Portal site as a forum for interaction;</li> <li>• Sustainability survey, first round as a baseline for more;</li> <li>• Regular compost collection at Foundation Studies;</li> <li>• Contacts with partner organisations;</li> <li>• A concept for future extension of some project aims.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>8. Total costs of the project</b></p>	<p>LSIS funding</p>	<p>Match funding</p>	<p>Total funding</p>
	<p>£25,000</p>	<p>£27,000</p>	<p>£52,000</p>