

# Regional Sustainability Advisers 2012-13

## Collaborative project report for the North East Region: NE Regional Sustainable Enterprise Market



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| <b>1. Aims of the project</b>                                       | The aim of the project was to provide a NE Regional Competition for education providers that would promote sustainability within a variety of curriculum areas. At the same time creating a bridge between sustainability and enterprise which would promote the concept of self-employment based around the idea of 'sustainability' as a realistic future option for learners.   |                     |
| <b>2. Situation: Identify the situation or issue that faced you</b> | <p>The main issue for both me and the members of the NE Network was to identify a collaborative project that would create a real interest in sustainability and excite curriculum staff sufficiently that they would be keen to take part, despite any potential additional workload.</p> <p>The theme for the project was proposed at the first of the NE Events (October 2012) following a presentation by Nicola Errington, Deputy Head of Quality, Teaching and Learning, Stockton Riverside College (SRC) about a Sustainability Fair that she had held in the High Street of Stockton on Tees, as part of an Enterprise project for students. The idea had been to build sustainability into the enterprise curriculum and groups of students from SRC had set up small businesses, producing business plans, making or sourcing 'sustainable' goods to sell at a one day market event in the local high street. The project had been run as a competition with prizes for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Best business plan</li><li>• Best market stall</li><li>• Overall winner</li></ul> <p>The presentation was extremely well received and the Network members were keen to try to adapt and expand the market event to create a regional competition.</p> <p>It was hoped that a regional wide competition would stimulate interest in the sustainability theme and encourage enterprise tutors to take part in an event that would, by its nature, involve an increase in workload for both staff and students.</p> |                     |

The initial sustainability event at SRC had made a huge impact on the students involved, who had thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of creating sustainable goods that they would sell in a live public market in the local town centre. Competition between different curriculum groups had been quite intense and the post market review had been extremely positive. The project as a whole was felt to have significantly raised awareness of both enterprise and sustainability not just in the groups taking part but across the college. Nicola had found that other departments were keen to become involved in the following year's event. As a result we felt that holding a series of sustainable enterprise markets across the region, while creating a competitive atmosphere, would stimulate interest in sustainability while enabling local councils to promote the regeneration of High Streets and encourage students of all ages and abilities to consider the possibility of self-employment.

The NE RSA post covers a large area and it was acknowledged quite quickly that the need to travel to a central market event with groups of students, goods to be sold and associated staff would put pressure on education providers. Because of this the original idea was based around multiple markets in different areas of the region which would be judged by a single 'team' with the selection of a winning team from each area. From these individual area winners an over-all regional winner would then be selected.

The idea of the Sustainability Enterprise Market presented the Network with an opportunity to have an on-going year on year competition, which we hoped would grow across the region, encouraging more and more providers to take part each year. If this outcome were achieved the 'sustainability' theme would become embedded within a variety of curriculum areas across a whole range of education providers. A goal which is extremely important to the Network.

The motivation behind the Sustainability Enterprise Market also included the theme of regenerating High Street's across the region. The recession and on-going flat economy have decimated High Streets and empty shop premises are evident in every town centre. The need to regenerate our High Streets and bring life back into town centres is a major priority for local councils who are keen to see education providers develop entrepreneurial skills in the future workforce.

The opportunity for action was highlighted by the enthusiasm and interest generated in the Network members. The need has been identified above:

- Increased understanding and awareness of sustainability in both students and staff

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building sustainability into the curriculum of as wide a range of subjects as possible with education providers across the region</li> <li>• Regeneration of town centre areas</li> <li>• Promote the idea of self-employment among learners</li> <li>• Forge links between education providers and local borough councils.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>3. Task: Define the outcomes you needed to achieve</b> | <p>The overall goals of the collaborative project were defined by the needs that the Network hoped to meet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Increased understanding and awareness of sustainability in both students and staff:</i> the goal was to increase knowledge and understanding of sustainability by promoting curriculum involvement. With increased engagement and interest, and making sustainability, fun, challenging and rewarding, we aimed to promote the idea that it isn't just "recycling" but that living sustainably is vital in all areas of our lives, and that we all have to make choices which will have an impact on everyone and everything around us.</li> <li>• <i>Building sustainability into the curriculum of as wide a range of subjects as possible with education providers across the region:</i> By combining sustainability and enterprise we aimed to encourage uptake from a wide range of subject areas, and promote the inclusion of all age groups across a range of providers around the region. The enterprise theme would allow students an opportunity to understand and develop a range of skills including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrepreneurial skills – developing themes and ideas for innovative and original products to sell</li> <li>• Research skills – what are your customers interested in and who are your competitors?</li> <li>• Develop an understanding of what 'sustainable' goods are e.g. are the goods being obtained from a sustainable source? Do you have longevity of supply? What processes are used to produce the goods? What do they cost to produce and can they be sold at a profit?</li> <li>• Potential to develop design and production skills by producing the goods themselves</li> <li>• Development of written English skills (writing business plans),</li> <li>• Event planning</li> <li>• Marketing, promoting your product and also promoting sustainability to customers</li> <li>• Working together / team working skills</li> <li>• Budget planning and management</li> <li>• Promotion and sales techniques</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

- Meeting deadlines and managing timescales
- Social responsibility – it's not all fun; a business has to have a social conscience – leaving the High Street clean and tidy when the market is over!
- Understanding that to be successful a business has to be sustainable
- Provide an additional qualification by encouraging the uptake and completion of an Enterprise qualification with NCFL

As part of this Nicola produced an information booklet for the regional event which was sent out to local providers and gave an overview about writing a business plan and 'what is sustainable enterprise'. This is provided as a supporting resource to this case study.

- *Regeneration of town centre areas:* The regeneration of town centres across the region is a primary concern for all local borough councils. Discussion with the Stockton Borough Council Regeneration Team highlighted their interest and enthusiasm for the collaborative project which was seen as an excellent opportunity, for potential entrepreneurs across the region, incps n sustainable goods, which were locally sourced, made from recycled materials, had the potential to generate local jobs to experience and develop the idea of setting up their own business on the region's high streets. In addition the promotion of 'sustainable businesses' based on sustainable goods, which were locally sourced, perhaps made from recycled materials, had the potential to generate local jobs etc. and also increase the footfall into the town centre through promotion of the market event, was seen as an excellent opportunity by the local council.
- *Promote the idea of self-employment among learners:* Encouraging entrepreneurship among students is not a new concept, but in today's struggling economy there is an increased need to encourage the idea of self-employment and generate an understanding that through the setting up of new small businesses high streets can flourish and bring new life into town centres. The ultimate aim of the project and subsequent markets would be that some of the students taking part in the Sustainable Market Events just might ultimately establish their own long term businesses, selling sustainable goods and creating employment for themselves and perhaps others through supply chains.
- *Forge links between education providers and local borough councils:* I have been increasingly aware that many education providers have

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|   | <p>not had an opportunity to develop links with their local borough councils. I feel that this is an opportunity lost, not only to the education provider but to their students as well. By running the Sustainable Enterprise Market education providers would be developing links between themselves and the regeneration teams within councils which could open up a host of opportunities for students who, having developed their enterprise skills, see a genuine opportunity to set up their own business. By opening the door to the idea of self –employment, and allowing students the opportunity to set up and run a business for a day, we could assist in providing a tap into the regeneration services available, enabling students to source information about potential grants, or funds for the establishment of small businesses, links to available properties in which to house those businesses (even if it were as simple as a ‘pitch’ within a market). Having forged those links with local councils the potential to tap into skills and services to support curriculum areas would be enormous.</p>   |
| <p><b>4. Actions that you took in order to achieve your plan, and your approach</b></p> | <p>Having formulated the idea for the Collaborative Project it was decided that as the NE region is large and travelling distances for different providers to a central point would be extensive, that an attempt should be made to make the project ‘local’ – which also fit with the sustainability theme. To do this we would need to encourage as many local borough councils to participate in the project as possible. This would enable the various education providers to put on local Sustainable Enterprise Markets rather than travel to a central market. If we could obtain the agreement of individual councils, we would endeavour to arrange the markets over the period of one month and the travelling would therefore only be done by the judging team who would attend the markets in turn.</p> <p>With this in mind we then began trying to make contact with Sustainability or Enterprise Managers at each of the local borough councils across the region. This proved to be problematic because I was informed that at the same time that this was happening there were major restructures happening in borough councils nationally. One or two of the councils, where I did manage to identify an appropriate person, did not feel that they had funds to support the market and eventually we decided that this was not the way forward.</p> <p>After discussion with the Regeneration Team at Stockton Borough Council (SBC) it was proposed that a central market be held in Stockton High Street and we would invite education providers from around the region to take part in one large Sustainable Enterprise Market.</p> |

To this end we held meetings with SBC to:

- identify potential dates
- identify the number of market stalls that might be available
- review potential costs for the market stalls
- outline health and safety arrangements
- identify key roles

We drew up an outline plan of how many teams could be involved, based on available funding and the number of market stalls that were being made available to us.

The date of 20 March 2013 was identified as the most likely date for the Market (13<sup>th</sup> March was also a possibility at that stage).

At this stage Nicola began work formulating a 'process' for the project, which included an Event Guidance Document and a Business Plan brochure which also gave an explanation of "What is Sustainable Enterprise". The Event Guidance document also included a time-line plan for the event (below) and these documents were circulated to the NE Network as well as directly to named staff within organisations that had already expressed keen interest by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012 as indicated on the time line plan.

### **Time Plan for the Event**

Information to Post 16 Providers

30 November 2012



Closing date for applications – by email to Ann Anthony

14 December 2012



Guidance on business plans and sustainable products sent to applicants

19 December 2012



Closing date for business plans – by email to Ann Anthony

31 January 2013



Confirmation of points awarded and set-up funds awarded.  
Supporting materials for NCFE qualification available

8 February 2013



Send out details of Stockton High Street layout, location, parking  
and event details

1 March 2013

We invited members of the Network (and curriculum/enterprise staff within their organisations) to take part in the regional competition, entering up to 2 teams per organisation with up to 10 students per team, and received 6 very positive responses from other organisations that would like to be involved.

Our next stage was to ensure that SRC had 2 teams fully prepared to enter the competition, and as we expected, the difficulty was in choosing which of the proposed teams to put forward because the requests to be involved outnumbered available spaces.

To keep the ball rolling, Nicola remained in contact with the external providers who had expressed interest in taking part and offered to visit them to offer guidance and support to the staff and the students concerned.

Work continued on preparations for the market, Nicola was working with business students who were helping to plan the event. However the deadline date for the receipt of the business plans was fast approaching and no business plans had been received. In anticipation that the plans might not appear: this had been identified as a risk in the risk assessment for the project, I had a discussion with my critical friend and LSIS about how we planned to move the project forward should the worst happen. The worst did happen. A combination of tight time frames, January exams, coursework deadlines etc. prevented the completion of the business plans by the deadline date. Despite the best efforts of the various education providers the time line was just too tight and the regional competition had to be shelved.

However we were delighted when the revised plan was accepted by LSIS and Nicola quickly worked with the enterprise tutors at SRC to increase the number of enterprise groups to enable the college to put on its own market as a showcase to the Network. A revised date of 24<sup>th</sup> April was agreed with Stockton Borough Council (to enable a slightly longer time-frame for students to produce goods) and we continued to promote the

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|                                     | <p>event;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diary reminders (x 2) were sent out to members of the NE Sustainability Network to 'save the date' for the showcase market</li> <li>• Business students worked on the design for an e-mail 'invitation' to be sent to providers to come to the event, visit the market and help with the judging of the stalls etc. We wanted the NE providers to see the results of the work, experience for themselves the enthusiasm of the students and the benefits of being involved. This was to be the pilot for a regional event and we wanted the Network members to have an opportunity to experience it first-hand.</li> <li>• Promotional banners were produced.</li> <li>• An agenda for the 'event' was produced and a guest speaker from Stockton Borough Council was invited.</li> <li>• We calculated times for minibus runs to and from the market, booked catering, transport and invited the Principal to provide a 'welcome speech'.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>5. Results that you obtained</b> | <p>The result was that we had 8 SRC teams taking part in the Sustainable Enterprise Market competition on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2013. The teams and their 'themes' for goods were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IT students – 'Fairtraders' - Fair Trade Goods</li> <li>2. IT students – 'Smurfs' -Bird feeders (made by the students)</li> <li>3. Public Services students – 'Rugs Galore' - rugs and runners (made by students from off-cuts of carpet)</li> <li>4. Pre-vocational students – 'Easter Boxes' - Bird boxes (made by the students)</li> <li>5. Hairdressing team – 'Head to Toe' - organic beauty products and hand-made hair accessories</li> <li>6. Childcare team – 'Bags of Fun' - children's 'treasure bags', based around a theme from 'Forest Schools' – child and environment friendly, homemade play dough (the bags included an information sheet about how to make this at home).</li> <li>7. European Team Challenge - 'Snergy' - Tombola, 'Guess the name of the Teddy bear' etc. to raise funds for a European trip to Austria to work on a community sustainability project.</li> <li>8. Business students – 'Dig and Dine' – recycled crockery and</li> </ol> |



gardening products with a vintage and retro theme

Three further groups of students also took part in the day, although they did not 'host' a market stall for the competition, they were:

1. Beauty Therapy students – a group of students cycled to the market to promote cycling and living a healthy lifestyle, during the market day by handing out leaflets.
2. Business students – working as Event Planners, marketing the event, organising the day, giving a presentation to guests, escorting the Network members around the market, collecting score sheets and assisting with the setting up and clearing up after the market event etc.
3. Mattie's Bistro – a member of staff working with a group of NEET students who arranged an organic food stall for the market selling home-made organic, steak pies with locally sourced meat.

The Itinerary for the market day was:

#### SUSTAINABILITY ENTERPRISE MARKET

- 10.15 Arrival, light refreshments and opportunity to view display of business plans
- 10.30 Principals' Welcome
- 10.40 Presentation by Business students (Event Planners):

#### "SRC Sustainable Enterprise Market"

- 11.00 Visitors to board minibus to travel to Stockton High Street
- 11.15 Tour of the market, accompanied by Business Students and 'judging' of stalls
- 12.00 Collection of score sheets and Market Stall winner to be announced
- 12.15 Visitors board minibus to return to SRC
- 12.30 Lunch at SRC (catering provided by SRC Catering Students)
- 1.30 Presentation by Richard Poundford, Stockton Borough

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|  | <p>Council Regeneration Team on High Street Regeneration and working with SRC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.00 Group discussion on proposal to carry forward the Sustainability Market theme and the potential to create an annual regional competition</li> <li>• 2.30 Announcement of competition Overall Winner, collection of feedback forms and close.</li> </ul> <p>The market has helped SRC to further develop our links with Stockton Borough Council, broaden interest for the Regional Collaborative Project across the Network and further embed sustainability into a variety of curriculum areas.</p>   |
| <p><b>6. What made the project a success? What were the key ingredients?</b></p> | <p>The SRC Sustainability Enterprise Market was a success because everyone involved was totally committed to the event. Stockton Borough Council, always enthusiastic and supportive, showed their usual determination to assist the college and work with our students. The teaching staff and students pulled out all the stops to ensure that we had as wide a variety of market stalls as possible in the timeframe available, and a good selection of goods for sale.</p> <p>The enthusiasm and determination were demonstrated when on the day of the market, we experienced very strong winds and although the market had been set up in the designated area, it became apparent that the stalls were in danger of being blown over. With the agreement of Stockton Borough Council and assistance from their teams and SRC facilities staff, the market stalls were moved to the opposite end of the market where they were more sheltered.</p> <p>A key factor in making the event a success was the joint willingness of staff, students and Stockton Borough Council, to make it work. To go the extra mile to make sure that the day was a success and the students achieved everything that they could from the day. We can't thank SBC enough for their support, commitment and flexibility.</p> <p>There was clear communication between the different people involved in the project, potential risks had been identified prior to the event and the willingness to co-operate and adapt ensured its success.</p> <p>For me the over-arching success of the day was the attitude, willingness for hard work and outstanding behaviour of the students. They were amazing in every aspect and thoroughly enjoyed the event. It was extremely difficult for everyone involved to choose winning teams but when the points were collected and the scoring completed the</p> |

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|   | <p>competition winners were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winner of business plan – Smurfs (IT)</li> <li>• Winner of market stall – Bags of Fun (CHILDCARE)</li> <li>• Overall Competition winner – Bags of Fun (CHILDCARE)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>7. What were some of the challenges and obstacles you faced in planning and implementing your project? How did you anticipate or respond to these challenges?</b>                          | <p>The size of the Region, the timing of the event which clashed with changes to staffing structures within local councils and the tight time-frames all proved stumbling blocks to the Collaborative Project. However, the ability to adapt the project, with guidance and support from my critical friend and LSIS and the willingness of Stockton Borough Council to be flexible and supportive of the project, enabled us to overcome the various issues. Nicola's enthusiasm and experience of hosting markets previously was also one of the critical success factors which enabled the project to develop and evolve.</p> <p>We did not anticipate all of the obstacles but the completion of the risk assessment did enable us to anticipate some of them. As a result we were able to 'think on our feet' and move quickly from one direction to another without changing the theme of the project. Although the project changed from multiple locally based markets, to one central market within Stockton. And then from a Regional Competition based in Stockton to a Pilot demonstrating what could be achieved, we were still able to provide the Network members with an opportunity to be included in the days' events and take part in the judging process.</p> |
| <b>8. What would you say were the most important things you learned from this project, which you will take forward as an individual or as an organisation in your sustainability journey?</b> | <p>Keeping things simple and downsize where possible! Aiming for individual markets across the region was too optimistic and required input and backing from too many sources. It also absorbed too much of the valuable time that we had to get the ball rolling. By aiming this high we increased the variables and therefore increased the risk.</p> <p>It is important that for the competition next year we begin earlier, set out our time-line and publicise this right at the start of the academic year. We can do this because we already have the backing of Stockton Borough Council who will host the regional event and therefore already have the ability to by-pass the early time-absorbing hurdles that we experienced this year. In addition it is vital that we maintain contact with the organisations who express interest in the competition and we will aim to hold a workshop on helping students prepare business plans and identifying potential 'sustainability themes', early in the autumn term</p> <p>But for me, the most important piece of personal learning is 'Don't Give</p>  |

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|  | Up'! Things may not come together as planned, there may be a whole host of unforeseen obstacles and challenges but if you believe in something and you keep going your efforts will eventually reach fruition and you will get there!  |
| <b>9. Any resources or tools produced by the project</b> | <p>Nicola produced a variety of documents as part of the Collaborative Project which will be included with this case study. The documentation includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A presentation about the original SRC Sustainability Market which was given to the Network and was the basis on which the Network chose the theme of the market for the Collaborative Project.</li> <li>• An Event Guidance Document</li> <li>• A Business Planning brochure which also gave an explanation of "What is Sustainable Enterprise".</li> <li>• Photographs of the Sustainable Enterprise Market (24th April 2013)</li> </ul> |



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