Regional Sustainability Advisers 2012-13

Collaborative project report for the West Midlands Region:
Developing ICT-based projects to contribute towards
best practice in sustainability

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Organisation	South Staffordshire College working in cooperation with North Warwickshire and Hinckley College and JISC
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1. Aims of the project	• Development of a simple/low cost Estates Management maintenance job allocation electronic /IT based system • Development of a carbon/cost logger/register for recording savings made by webinar-based meetings and training • Development of a Moodle based Health & Safety staff awareness training course to save on resources
2. Situation: Identify the situation or issue that faced you	• **How did you arrive at the idea for this project?** The aims of the project were a direct result of consulting various areas of the College for ideas in how ICT can facilitate and support resource efficiency in the sector. • **What was it that you felt this project could help, support, change or improve?** The project had three core aims which would be easily appraised to determine if they could be successfully implemented in South Staffordshire and other Colleges. 1) Estate Maintenance Systems: These included a simple bespoke Estates job allocation and record system that could trialled and debugged at one site and then adopted by all campuses. This system would save staff hours, paper/printing and energy, and would improve H&S through increased efficiencies. 2) Webinar carbon/cost saving logger: This system enables providers to determine the carbon/cost savings made through using ICT-based meetings and e-learning such as webinars. 3) Web-based e-learning Health & safety course: This would enable a college to reduce the costs and carbon produced by running lengthy H&S induction programmes. It would also demonstrate and evidence compliance of CPD undertaken. • **Were there particular regional factors that you considered?** No regional issues, but the projects would have the greatest benefit for organisations with more than one site to consider.

	• **What were the opportunities that presented themselves?** LSIS had already supported the partner college in developing some of the technology that could be adapted by South Staffordshire College for one of the key projects. • **What motivated you?** It was an area we had not yet made much progress in but we knew we had internal motivation to achieve the project aims. • **Why did you see a need or opportunity for action?** Comments and suggestions made by the College staff.
3. **Task: Define the outcomes you needed to achieve**	We expected to: 1) Create a new resource-efficient system for logging and recording progress and reviewing client completion satisfaction regarding faults and maintenance requests. 2) Develop an online e-learning H&S course that would permit staff to complete training independently of traditionally-taught resource-heavy CPD 3) Provide the technology and means of evaluating carbon and financial savings made through webinars and ICT-facilitated meetings and training.
4. **Actions that you took in order to achieve your plan, and your approach**	**Estates faults and Maintenance reporting system** The project was initiated in September 2012 following complaints made by our staff about the length of time required to complete certain maintenance or fault corrections within the college estate. This was always a considerable challenge for us since we have five main sites spread over a 30 mile radius. So we set out to create a system that would log, prioritise and monitor progress and report on client satisfaction whilst saving resources through removing paper, printing and other resource costs and saving staff time. In October we used the contacts of JISC to research which FE colleges had examples of best practice in this area and we were given contact details for North Warwickshire and Hinckley College. During November we researched off-the-shelf software and discussed with other facility mangers through the AoC West Midlands group the limitations that these posed to an estates and facilities department in FE. We made a visit (our Head of Estates and Head of IT, together with the RSA) to North Warwickshire & Hinckley College in late November and this confirmed the commitment to design our own bespoke software for the system. We created the system in December using one of our software programmers and piloted it at the largest, most complex campus (Rodbaston) from January to May 2013. We had to make minor

adjustments and debug the system over these months and we expected it to be implemented over all sites by April 2013.

Health & Safety Moodle Course

In September 2012 we held a management CPD H&S workshop in-house that ran for two hours; it was estimated to have cost more £3,000 in mileage expenses and lost productivity (ie hours spent by staff travelling to and from the venue).

Since H&S is mandatory for all staff, we realised real cost and carbon savings that could be made in this one area through online in-house CPD training. The course content was written between October and December 2013. The course content was then transcribed onto a suitable software package (Zerte) in Jan 2013 and trials began in February to March 2013. At the time of writing the system was about to go live for all staff from April 2013. All new staff and staff in high risk areas will be required to complete the course first and then the remaining staff will be given a target date by which to achieve the course outcomes.

Webinar and e-learning-based carbon and Financial resource saving register

Webinars and e-learning are known to be highly effective in reducing both carbon emissions – by removing the need to travel to an event – and the costs of travel expenses and lost productivity time.

We had run several collaborative development trials with FE partners (e.g. with Stoke College) and we will be investing over the next few years in technology, with the objective of expanding and improving our delivery in this area. However, we have never yet constructed a business case for such investment since we have no idea of the potential savings or the theoretical environmental benefits of the reduced carbon emissions.

Two of our staff set about through their own volition to quantify this in Oct 2013. They researched, through the JISC contacts, the existing practices in the sector, but found no evidence that any other college was exploring or using a system for capturing the desired data.

In December 2012 they had created the system and trailed it in January 2013. I ran two trials of the software and video conferencing technology and we saved 548 miles not travelled, 181 kg of Carbon not emitted and 24 hours and £220 expenses not claimed.

5.	**Results that you obtained**	We are still evaluating the effectiveness of the new Estates faults and maintenance reporting software. We plan to do an evaluation survey in May 2013. The Moodle based Health & Safety course was due to go live on April 15th 2013 and we will follow the first 30 participants through to completion and undertake an evaluation survey. The annual data from the webinar/e-learning carbon & resource register will be published every year.
6.	**What made the project a success? What were the key ingredients?**	• Clarity of purpose: We came up with strict project aims and objectives which gave clarity of purpose • Planning/scoping/project management: Key tasks were allocated to individuals and progress regularly monitored. • Flexibility and adaptability: The size and scope of projects was downsized to meet the resource issues and timescale/ deadlines but the overall aims and objectives remained the same once this was decided. • Clarity of communication: Internally we worked with staff we had already established a successful track record with. • Engagement and capacity building, and involving the right people: Through working with established network partners such as the AoC West Midlands Estates and Sustainability Group, it was easy to engage with some committed, like-minded individuals.
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?**	I found that most of the initial interest expressed by potential partners disappeared when an actual commitment was required from them. The sector is obviously much stretched and additional (financial) support for collaborative partners would have helped here.
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?**	• If the expertise is available in house then it is better to try and create a bespoke system than purchase one "off the shelf" • Listen to issues and suggestions that staff come up with rather than trying to impose an idea on them. They are often very willing to help if it helps solve the problem they have. Look for the most sustainable solution. • Research is crucial – often a lot of the work is already done.

| 9. **Any resources or tools produced by the project** | People can request access to the Carbon and Resource Savings Register and the Moodle-based Health & safety Course by emailing Ian.Holt@southstaffs.ac.uk. |
| | The Carbon and Resource Register and a screen grab of the H&S course are available as supporting resources. |

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