CUECS COLLEGE ENVIROMENTAL LEAGUE TABLE 2006/07

SUMMARY

The Cambridge University Environmental Consulting Society (CUECS) has produced a League Table that ranks individual colleges by their environmental performance. This is an annual project and was achieved using methods adapted from previous years. The rankings reflect college practice in eight key areas: kitchens & college bar, computers, printers & photocopiers, gardens, insulation, lighting, waste, housekeeping and college commitment. This report includes an examination of the methods used, a discussion of the final results and suggestions for how Colleges can make progress in order to perform better environmentally.

CONTENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

This environmental League Table has been produced by CUECS to rank the colleges of Cambridge University based on their environmental performance. This report follows three previous League Tables, the first produced 2002 in which 25 colleges participated and Jesus College ranked top[1], the second in 2005 where 23 colleges participated and Churchill College ranked top,[2] and the third in 2006, Darwin ranked first out of the 27 colleges which participated[3].

The environmental performance of Cambridge colleges is an increasingly important issue in the light of growing concerns regarding environmental problems such as climate change and the exploitation of non-renewable resources. Cambridge University is a large and prominent institution with global influence. It is therefore very important that environmental practice and policy within the university sets a high environmental standard that can be widely recognised for its efforts to achieve. The aims of this project are threefold:

1. To gain a quantitative measure of the support and commitment of college administrations toward environmental initiatives.
2. To increase awareness of environmental issues throughout the university, its colleges and members;
3. To promote the effective exchange of ideas between college staff and student representatives in order to further the aim of improving the university's environmental performance through the implementation of realistic and accessible policies.

We hope that this project will be continued annually to ensure that environmental issues remain high on the university agenda and to encourage continual improvement throughout the university and individual colleges.

[1] http://www.cam.ac.uk/societies/cuecs/projects/upto2003/leaguetable/index.html
[2] CUECS Environmental League Table 2004/5
[3] CUECS Environmental League Table 2005/6

2. METHODOLOGY

In October 2006, a comprehensive questionnaire was developed from the survey and weightings used to generate the CUECS League Table in 2005. The new questionnaire was distributed to student Green Officers, and returned throughout October and November. The quantitative data provided were entered into a spreadsheet from which the tables were generated. The qualitative information was collated for use in the analysis of the tables and in making suggestions for further improvements.

The questionnaire was adapted from the one used last year. A number of questions were added, rephrased or removed in response to feedback sought from Bursars, Green Officers and last year's CUECS team, in order to make the questionnaire as appropriate and straightforward as possible. The main section headings remained the same although some of the weightings were altered to make different sections more comparable, and a question was added regarding water use in college gardens. The qualitative questions were also altered to reduce repetition and include a question on initiatives in place for college accommodation outside of the main site.

To generate the table from the quantitative data, points awarded for each question were weighted, summed and scaled to give each college a final score as a percentage, by which they were ranked. It should be noted that due to several alterations in questionnaire design and methodology this year's percentage scores for each college are not themselves comparable with those from previous years. In particular, the method in previous years dealt with unanswered questions by awarding them a default minimum score; this year's questionnaire omitted unanswered questions entirely when calculating overall percentages, so that results were based purely on the answers provided.

The ranking method used was one developed by CUECS members in previous years to appropriately consider the particular context of Cambridge colleges and the initiatives they have in place. This was based on the 1994 CUSU publication 'Another 700 years'[4], from which the questionnaire categories were derived as follows: *kitchens and college bar, computers, printers and photocopiers, gardens, insulation, lighting, waste, housekeeping* and *college commitment.* Each category was examined with respect to, among other things, the resources used, the extent of recycling and waste reduction and any policies that encouraged better practice. Weightings given for individual questions were based on their impact on the environment; in brief, each weighting was calculated by working out a sustainability factor and an impact factor for that practice and multiplying the two together[5]. The environmental footprint system was employed to make policies with different environmental impacts- low energy consumption versus low emission of pollutants for example- more comparable[6].

[4] www-green.cusu.cam.ac.uk/archive/a700y/
[5] http://www.cam.ac.uk/societies/cuecs/projects/upto2003/leaguetable/index.html for more information
[6] www.bestfootforward.com for more information

The League Table project had a very good response this year, with 22 colleges supplying completed questionnaires. The majority of the colleges attempted most of the questions. A few questions were unanswered for various reasons including the inapplicability of the question to the college, the responsible party being unavailable, or reluctance on the part of the college to respond to particular questions. Furthermore, some colleges did not participate at all in this exercise despite repeated attempts on our part to gather information from them and this has also been indicated in the table.

For some individual colleges the submitted answers may not fully reflect their environmental performance; that we are only able to present the results as submitted by the official representatives of the colleges is a limitation of which to be aware.

3. RESULTS

Rank	College	Percentage
1	Churchill	71.3
2	Robinson	70.6
3	Downing	70.5
4	Lucy Cavendish	68.7
5	St Catharine's	68.3
6	Corpus Christi	65.0
7	Magdalene	63.6
8	Selwyn	61.0
9	Trinity Hall	60.0
10	Jesus	59.0
11	Pembroke	58.1
12	Peterhouse	57.3
13	Darwin*	54.7
14	Christ's	53.4
15	Girton*	52.8
16	Newnham	52.6
17	Homerton	49.8
18	Fitzwilliam*	49.2
19	St John's	43.7
20	King's*	43.4
21	Queens’	41.8
22	Clare*	30.5
23	Clare Hall	-
23	Emmanuel	-
23	Gonville & Caius	-
23	Hughes Hall	-
23	New Hall	-
23	St. Edmund’s	-
23	Sidney Sussex	-
23	Trinity	-
23	Wolfson	-

* Questionnaire not complete
- Questionnaire not returned

4. DISCUSSION

Churchill topped our table this year, repeating their success in the 2004-2005 League Table by scoring an overall 71.3% in their quantitative questionnaire. The college built on the commitments stated in its environmental policy to achieve excellent performance across the various categories, particularly with regard to 'computers, printers and photocopiers', 'gardens' and 'housekeeping'; this includes an economical approach to paper use in student and staff areas, and to water use in college gardens. Environmental initiatives around the college are supported by the positive response of students and staff, and by the college environmental policy. Channels for educating students and staff are well used and a "Green Guide to Churchill" is distributed to Freshers every year. One area showing clear room for improvement are the kitchens, particularly in terms of developing a policy to use more local and/or organic produce and to provide foodstuffs in refillable containers.

Several colleges showed significant improvement this year, such as Pembroke, which rose from 18th place to 11th. This college did relatively well in the 'kitchens' section but poorly in terms of gardens, as methods such as organic pest control and fertilisers had been tried but had proven problematic. The accessibility of recycling bins could also be improved. Despite performing below average in the quantitative section on college commitment to environmental issues, Pembroke has a very effective staff-student environmental committee, through which it is hoped further improvements will be made in future.

The results from some colleges indicate that while they score above average in some sections, there are several areas where they can improve. For example, though Queens' college are very environmentally-friendly in its levels of insulation, lack of non-reusable bar glasses and the establishment of paper recycling bins in student rooms which are emptied weekly by college bedders, the relatively low commitment of the college to environmental issues suggests problems may arise in terms of implementing bigger, more long-term projects. Low scores in the areas of 'gardens' and 'lighting' suggest that more environmentally-friendly gardening practices and the college-wide introduction of, for example, low energy light bulbs show clear areas for improvement.

Some colleges had excellent policies with regard to the use of printing and photocopying facilities. As can be seen in the full results breakdown (appendix 6a), six colleges achieved a score of over eighty percent in this category. However, performance in this area was not universally good, and a number of colleges could improve by implementing simple measures such as marking duplex functions more clearly, and enabling 'power down' settings on computers and printers.

Commitment to recycling is extremely variable across colleges. For example, Corpus Christi provides opportunities to recycle paper, glass and metal in student rooms and staircases as well as providing a central area where materials such as cardboard and plastic are collected for recycling. But six colleges scored less that thirty percent on

recycling, with several failing to provide any convenient collection point for easily recyclable materials such as glass.

An encouraging trend is shown by a generally high level of college commitment, with fourteen of the twenty-three responding colleges scoring over seventy-five percent in that category by implementing measures such as publishing an environmental policy, designating a member of staff a responsible for environmental issues, and implementing a green travel plan for members of staff. The importance of these sorts of measures for overall sustainability is show by the clear correlation between college commitment and overall performance (the top five colleges all scored over eighty-five percent on college commitment, whereas only one of the bottom five did so).

In conclusion, the comments prompted by the results of the questionnaire show that students and Bursars have taken measures to conserve energy and minimise waste. However, there is considerable room for colleges to improve their environmental performance. By adopting a clear environmental policy which encourages co-operation between staff and students in order to make these improvements, the colleges of Cambridge University can proudly contribute to a national and global effort for a sustainable world.

5. FEEDBACK

We asked Green Officers how they thought their college could reduce its environmental impact. There was a general agreement that the availability, accessibility and awareness of different types of recycling in college could be improved. In particular, Green Officers saw the recycling of materials such as cardboard and plastic as key areas for improvement. In many colleges responsibility for emptying existing recycling bins lay with student volunteers, although kitchens, bars and offices often emptied their own. Some colleges (such as Pembroke and Trinity Hall) provide monetary incentives to students, in return for which they encourage environmentally-friendly practices and take responsibility for emptying their accommodation unit's recycling boxes. Some Green Officers expressed a desire for college staff, particularly housekeeping and maintenance, to be more involved in the emptying of recycle bins, where this was not done already.

Several Green Officers also highlighted more long-term suggestions for improvement. It was encouraging to see that many colleges were considering installing solar panels to reduce energy costs, particularly on the roofs of new buildings. Other ideas for the future included improved insulation and motion sensors for lights in public areas. The widespread use of more environmentally-friendly materials (especially paper, cooking ingredients and cleaning products) was also advocated.

According to the questionnaire, most colleges use a combination of posters, notice-boards and sections of the college website to educate staff and students about environmental issues and ways in which they can reduce their environmental impact in college. Additional channels include fresher's guides, the college magazine and regular emails to the JCR.

When questioned about how college members respond to environmental initiatives, many Green Officers admitted that student attitudes could be a challenging, and tended to oscillate from year to year. One further issue highlighted by most Green Officers is the need for better communication between staff and students to develop and implement realistic and effective ideas, particularly for larger, longer term strategies.

The questionnaire showed that systems through which staff and students could discuss and implement environmental initiatives varied significantly between colleges. Some colleges require Green Officers to approach a suitable member of the college administration with a complete proposal, while others adopt a more participatory approach by which ideas are reviewed and put into practice by a combined group of staff and students. Pembroke College, for example, has an established "Environmental Awareness Committee" consisting of staff representatives from different departments, the JCR Green Officer and MCR President, as well as sub-committees for different issues, each with relevant staff and student members.

TOP TEN IDEAS

1. Each college should have its own **environmental policy**. This will provide a framework for long-term commitment to environmentally friendly practice throughout the college e.g. when replacing appliances. It should include guidelines for an established Environmental Committee comprising of both staff and student members.

2. "**Power down**" notices and "**switch off**" stickers are proven cheap and effective ways to reduce college electricity bills.

3. **Recycling bins for metal, glass and paper** should be accessible to all students, ideally at the individual staircase/ corridor level depending on college restrictions, as well as appropriate areas such as computer rooms for paper and near can machines for cans.

4. **Low energy light bulbs, motion sensors** and **timers** on corridor lights are three ways to further reduce energy costs. Low energy light bulbs in particular have been shown to reduce electricity bills, can be easily recycled and often do not require any fitting replacements.

5. Enabling **automatic "power down" settings** on computers, printers and photocopiers

6. **Kitchens** should recycle cardboard, cooking oil and food waste. All condiments should be refillable.

7. The production of readily accessible **"green maps"** of college recycling points encourages environmental awareness and action among all members of college.

8. **Educating** new members will make sure that they know from the outset what environmental facilities are available within college. Introducing college recycling in **Fresher's guides** can be particularly effective.

9. **College Ball/ Events** committees can significantly reduce their ecological impact in a number of ways. The College Ball Sustainability Guide offers a range of cost-effective ideas and details on how this can be done.

10. Appointing **student representatives** to take responsibility for recycling and energy/water saving initiatives within accommodation units has proven successful in several colleges so far, especially where financial incentive is offered.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. We welcome your comments, which can be sent to Clare Black at cuecs@cusu.cam.ac.uk

Regards, the CUECS Environmental League Table Team 2006/7

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