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Education at the forefront of creating a better future

Universities and colleges from across the UK and Ireland have shown how they are leading the path to efficiency, employability and creating a better future of life for us all. Education is proving how sustainability is just good business sense. From the efficient buildings they create and the effective way they use energy, to how they create students fit for the future, their research in finding better ways to adapt to a changing climate and the communities they impact, universities and colleges are at the forefront of radically creating a better future.

This was evident at the 12th Green Gown Awards 2016, held at the Athena in Leicester, in partnership with De Montfort University (DMU) and University of Leicester. It was a celebration of remarkable sustainability initiatives, starring 21 Winners and 26 Highly Commended entries from 115 finalists representing 1.5 million students and 240,000 staff. With an audience of 390 sustainability leaders applauding sustainability excellence within tertiary education, the Green Gown Awards celebrated those that are making the radical change that is needed to make all our lives better.

The evening was hosted by Mike Barry, Director of Sustainable Business, Marks & Spencer. Amongst others, Mike is a Visiting Fellow at the Smith Centre for Enterprise and the Environment at Oxford University, a Senior Associate at the Cambridge Programme for Sustainable Leadership and a chemistry graduate from Sheffield University. Mike said, "We stand on the cusp of great change in the economy and society. It is no longer enough to be a ‘less bad organisation’ focused on preventing the worst environmental and social excesses. Every higher and further education establishment, business and government department needs to be thinking about how we change radically our approach to education, commerce and politics to create a future that is low carbon, equal, circular, fair, restorative and committed to the wellbeing of all. The Green Gown Awards help identify these sustainability best practices and encourage the wider higher and further education system to scale up their use."

Each year the Awards bring together the most inspirational projects from across the sector and this year was no exception. Scooping an amazing haul of four Awards was University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE) (Continuous Improvement: Institutional Change; Learning and Skills); and in partnership with the University of Bristol (Student Engagement), culminating with Professor Jim Longhurst, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Environment and Sustainability being awarded the coveted Leadership Award – which is exclusive to senior strategic leadership, at executive or governance level, at a tertiary
education institution. Of Jim’s win, Professor Steve West, Vice-Chancellor, says “UWE is committed to embedding sustainability in everything we do particularly within the curricula. The award of a Leadership Green Gown will be welcome external recognition of our efforts and, in particular, the excellent leadership role that Jim has played in our journey towards becoming a sustainable university.”

Royal Agricultural University won an impressive two awards (Best Newcomer and Enterprise and Employability) where they nurture students to embrace sustainability, both social and environmental, offering them opportunities to put such theories as corporate sustainability and ethical leadership into practice. Professor Chris Gaskell MBE, Vice-Chancellor, says “It is a fantastic achievement for us at the Royal Agricultural University to be recognised for our enterprise activities, and we are very proud. We aim to foster and support an enterprising spirit within our student and alumni populations, and also to involve the local community; we all need a sustainable future, and entrepreneurial approaches will be a key component.”

Scotland stole the show for the Built Environment category with wins for South Lanarkshire College and the University of Aberdeen. With University of Aberdeen actively reducing energy use by going ‘passive’ which sees the first fully certified Passive House Nursery in Scotland and the first at a Scottish University.

Organised and delivered by the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC), Chief Executive, Iain Patton, describes the importance of the Green Gown Awards, “Every year the excellence recognised by the Green Gown Awards shows the business alignment and value of sustainability. Sustainability makes business sense and this year’s inspiring initiatives prove that sustainability benefits staff, students, the wider community and of course the bottom line. Congratulations to all the winners and finalists for their hard work. It was wonderful to celebrate their successes in Leicester.”

The full list of winners can be found at www.greengownawards.org.uk

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END - Notes to the Editor

Media contact: Helen Exton, Event Manager, greengown@eauc.org.uk, 07531 244208

Media pack: http://www.greengownawards.org/media-pack
About the Green Gown Awards
Established in 2004, the Green Gown Awards UK and Ireland recognise the exceptional sustainability initiatives being undertaken by universities, colleges and the learning and skills sectors across the UK and Ireland as the education sector leads a path to efficiency, employability and better quality of life for us all.

As the ethos of the Green Gown Awards is to ensure the lessons and examples of best practice are shared within the sector and beyond, we are working hard with the partners of the Awards to ensure this information is disseminated far and wide. All the 2016 stage 2 Winners, Highly Commended and Finalists have created case studies and videos which are freely available on the sector owned Sustainability Exchange website [http://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/2016x](http://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/2016x). The dissemination of these best practice case studies is supported by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The Green Gown Awards UK and Ireland, is further enhanced by its international presence. The Awards are also delivered on a regional basis in Australasia, French speaking Europe and Canada and the GUPES Green Gown Awards supported by the United Nations Environment Programme. Winners of the three international categories: Community, Continuous Improvement: Institutional Change and Student Engagement go head-to-head for the coveted International Green Gown Awards to take place in spring 2017.

About the EAUC
The EAUC represents over 2 million students and nearly 400,000 staff with a spending budget of over £25 billion. We help leaders, academics and professionals to drive sustainability to the heart of their post-16 education institutions. [www.eauc.org.uk](http://www.eauc.org.uk)