

Edinburgh College wins at the Green Gown Awards



Edinburgh College's community garden and orchard project won major UK and worldwide awards last week for its work getting students excited and engaged about sustainability.

The college won both the UK and International Student Engagement Awards at the Green Gown Awards in Bristol, beating competition from colleges and universities across the UK and the rest of the world.

And the college's electric vehicle project won a Highly Commended Facilities and Services Award.

The Green Gown awards recognise sustainability initiatives by universities, colleges and the learning and skills sectors across the UK, and are organised by the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC).

Edinburgh College was the only college up for the UK Student Engagement award, and the community garden project won against schemes from eight UK universities. The community garden team topped the evening with the International Green Gown Student Engagement Award, competing against educational institutes from the UK, Australasia, French speaking Europe and Canada.

The college's Sustainability team has developed the college's two community gardens as a valuable teaching resource since the introduction of the first as a student-led project at its Milton Road Campus in 2012. A second garden was launched at Sighthill Campus in 2014 and they now provide learning and participation opportunities for more than 250 people including students, staff and local community members and groups.



The gardens have helped students, including those with additional learning needs, develop knowledge and skills in gardening and sustainability, and increased their confidence and employability.

Séverine Monvoisin, community garden coordinator, said: “These awards recognise the hard work done by our volunteer team, who selflessly give their time to keep the garden going. For many of our users the gardens represent much more than a space to grow food. They are a space to learn about healthy living, gain new skills and build self-confidence and self-esteem as well as increasing employability, promoting sustainable behaviours and helping make new friends. We were surprised and delighted to get the international award in recognition of the value of the gardens to sustainability and community.”

There are now plans to plant four orchards at the college campuses thanks to a donation from Coffee Conscience and Commonwealth Orchards. The first of these was planted at Midlothian Campus in March.

The college’s electric car project was also highly commended in the Facilities and Services category. The college has been operating a fleet of electric cars since its inception in late 2012 to provide staff with a sustainable transport option for travel between its four campuses and other corporate travel.

The cars are integrated with the curriculum, offering students on Engineering, Automotive and Electrical courses experience of working with the technology.

Earlier this year the college’s electric vehicle administrator Bob Murphy won the GreenFleet Public Sector Fleet Manager of the Year award.

The college was also shortlisted for the Green Gowns Carbon Reduction Award for the Carbon Management Plan which has at

its heart a target of 18% minimum reduction by 2020.