



Case Study: The Sustainability Centre

Sustainable Business Awards Winner:
Small Business Winner 2010
Business Sector: Education and Campsite

Company Background

Established in 1995, the Sustainability Centre aims to educate, enable and inspire people from all walks of life to make positive changes to the way they live and work. Set in 55 acres of woodland and grassland in the South Downs National Park, the Centre is an educational facility that provides more than 30 different courses, ranging from bush craft to renewable energy.



Summary of Key Achievements

As part of The Sustainability Centre's vision they aim to manage their land, their charity and their businesses as working examples of sustainability.

They practise and promote sustainability as a process of making decisions which balance economic, social and environmental factors for positive benefit.

Social Achievements

Over 2,500 children and young people from local schools visit the centre each year and benefit from the facilities and courses on offer. Green Beans baby and toddler group use the centre each week free of charge, and the site hosts the annual Green Fair which attracts over 2,500 visitors.

Although a charity itself, the Sustainability Centre actively supports a number of good causes, including the Permaculture Association and the local Scouts. Discounts and free catering are offered to charities.

Woodland is coppiced to ensure rich bio-diversity and range of wildlife	
Income from all of the business has grown steadily over the past five years	
Providing volunteering opportunities and work experience	
Company website is hosted entirely by a wind-powered server	
'Listening post' provide information for the visually impaired	
KEY	
Economic Achievements	Social Achievements
Environmental Achievements	



The staff receive statutory training and are encouraged to broaden their skills and knowledge in relation to their jobs. All courses run by the Sustainability Centre are offered to staff and volunteers as part of their training.

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Environmental Achievements

Photo-voltaic panels on the side and roof of the building provide approximately 20% of their needs, and the rest they buy from Good Energy.

The Sustainability Centre works very hard ensuring the efficient use of resources, for example, chalk from the natural burial site is used on other areas of the site for building work; wood from managed woodland is used in the biomass burner in order to heat all site buildings; rainwater is used for flushing toilets, (apart from compost toilets) solar power is used for lights and other electrical appliances; any excess wood used for building is sourced from local and sustainable supplies.

The natural burial ground lies in a peaceful and secluded corner of The Sustainability Centre, bordered by woodland and sheep pasture. In keeping with their ethos, each grave is dug especially by hand to minimise any impact on the flora, fauna and tranquillity of the site. Coffins and shrouds are made from fully biodegradable materials and no permanent headstones or grave-markings are used



The offices have been arranged to make full use of the huge amounts of natural light. Similar techniques are used in the hostel (plus the lights are also on sensors) which have resulted in an energy reduction of 80%.

Around the grounds of the Centre constant visual and environmental improvements are being made, including planting trees and restoring chalk grassland.

Economic Achievements

The Sustainability Centre does not rely on revenue funding to support its core activities and employs six full time equivalent staff. In the last two years the organisation has become financially independent, a position that they believe is key to true sustainability.

Data is recorded on the numbers of schools, course participants and visitors that come to the centre to learn about sustainability and experience the Centre. They also track the interactions through our social networking pages.



In real terms, the natural burial site is the Sustainability Centre's main source of revenue, but the income from all aspects of the business (burials, cafe, learning and accommodation) has grown steadily over the past five years and continues to rise.

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