



SUSTAINABLE RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION SUSTAINABILITY RATING

Plymouth University – July, 2014

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INTRODUCTION

Plymouth University is one of the UK's most prominent and dynamic universities with an educational history dating back to 1862. The university has over 30,000 students as well as almost 3,000 staff making it one of the biggest employers in the south west. It has its main campus in Plymouth with affiliated satellite sites across the south west in Taunton, Truro and Camborne.

The university has a strong commitment to operating in a sustainable way and strives for excellence in financial, environmental and social responsibility across all its activities. As part of its aim to have a sustainable campus, the university has undertaken this Sustainability Rating to assess the operations of eleven its catering outlets including Drakes, Loafers, Roland Levinsky Building Café, Nancy Astor Building Reservoir Café, JBB, Cookworthy, Library Café, Mast House, Portland Square, Hospitality and the University Technical College for whom the university provide the catering. Hereby, these outlets collectively are referred to as 'Plymouth University' or 'the university'. Furthermore it is noted this rating does not assess any catering operations not listed, including the Student Union bars.

The completed SRA Sustainability Survey was submitted by Darren Proctor, Head Chef of Plymouth University. The scoring was conducted by, and the report written by, Hannah Crump of the SRA upon completion of the mandatory evidence collection process.

The SRA Sustainability Rating recognises universities as One, Two or Three Star Sustainability Champions depending on how they rate against a wide range of criteria covering 14 areas of sustainability. This provides universities with a detailed assessment of their credentials across the SRA's three pillars of sustainability: Sourcing, Society and Environment. Good universities will be rated One Star Sustainability Champions, excellent universities Two Stars and exceptional universities Three Stars. The SRA Sustainability Rating system provides universities with not only recognition for their sustainability and benchmarking information, but also a ready-made marketing tool to help students feel confident in their choice of dining destinations.

PLYMOUTH UNIVERISTY SUSTAINABILITY RATING RESULTS



Plymouth University scored **72%** achieving **Three Star Sustainability Champion** status. Three Star Sustainability Champion status is awarded to universities scoring above 70% and is an exceptional achievement.

| SUSTAINABILITY SECTION | % SCORE |
|------------------------|---------|
| Sourcing | 68% |
| Society | 86% |
| Environment | 70% |

The university's performance across the SRA Sustainability Rating was exceptional. Society (86%) was the university's highest score in the rating and some excellent initiatives were observed, particularly in the *Treating People Fairly* (97%), *Community Engagement* (89%) and *Healthy Eating* (77%) areas.

Sourcing (68%) was the pillar in which the university received its lowest score in the rating, although it is still recognised as an excellent score. Very commendable practices were observed across the areas of *Sustainable Fish* (85%), *Ethical Meat & Dairy* (84%) and *Local & Seasonal* (71%) with opportunities to build upon practices identified in the *Environmentally Positive Farming* (45%) area.

In the pillar of Environment, the university scored exceptionally in the areas of *Waste Management* (87%) and *Workplace Resources* (71%). The university demonstrated an excellent commitment to reducing food waste and has implemented a number of innovative methods to do so. One area of the rating where the university scored slightly lower is *Water Saving* (52%).

The performance of Plymouth University across all key Sustainability Rating areas is detailed below.

| SUSTAINABILITY SECTION | % SCORE |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| Local and Seasonal | 71% |
| Sustainable Fish | 85% |
| Environmentally Positive Farming | 45% |
| Ethical Meat and Dairy | 84% |
| Fairtrade | 68% |
| Treating People Fairly | 97% |
| Healthy Eating | 77% |
| Community Engagement | 89% |
| Responsible Marketing | 74% |
| Supply Chain | 62% |
| Waste Management | 87% |
| Workplace Resources | 71% |
| Energy Efficiency | 64% |
| Water Saving | 52% |

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

SOURCING

Within the Sourcing pillar, Plymouth University scored exceptionally well in the area of *Sustainable Fish* (85%). This was due to its commitment to remove all ‘fish to avoid’ from menus, as rated by the Marine Conservation Society, and for purchasing most fish and seafood from not only British waters, but also landed in Plymouth ports. They have switched fish suppliers recently as the new supplier has pledged to send zero waste to landfill – a practice applauded by the SRA.

The university’s achievement in *Ethical Meat & Dairy* (84%) is attributed to its continued commitment to purchasing high welfare meat and poultry including free-range pork, chicken, beef and lamb. An area where the university could look to improve is *Environmentally Positive Farming* in which it achieved its lowest score (45%). In order to do this and improve its environmental impact, it could consider purchasing more organic products including meat, poultry and vegetables. Organic certification incorporates an element of environmental stewardship in addition to ensuring that high animal welfare standards are met.

Commendable actions are evident across all Sourcing areas and are detailed below. Some recommendations for improvement are also provided.

Commendable

- Sourcing some fruit grown in Britain. This helps support the British economy, as well as reducing food miles from imports and subsequently the carbon footprint of the business. Furthermore, a wide range of seasonal fruits are available in the UK which enables the business to retain variety in the menu.
- Changing the menu monthly to incorporate seasonally available fruit and daily to incorporate seasonally available vegetables. This avoids CO₂ emissions from growing, packaging, storing and transporting food that is not in season. Seasonal produce can also be fresher as it is often grown locally/nationally and so does not need to travel so far between farm and plate.
- By purchasing British poultry and eggs, the university is reducing food miles associated with international transportation whilst also supporting British farmers. British poultry can be produced to higher standards of animal welfare and environmental practice than continental Europe.
- Purchasing British and local pork, beef and lamb. This results in the business investing money in its local economy and thus supporting its local community. Furthermore, it considerably reduces food miles, thus improving the university's carbon footprint.
- Sourcing free-range poultry, pork, beef and lamb. This ensures that the animals have led lives with access to natural light and open spaces, allowing them to exhibit natural behaviours.
- Purchasing British cheese and milk, some of which is produced locally to the business. The university has reduced food miles from international transportation and is supporting British dairy farmers whose livelihoods are currently under threat from imported value-added dairy products (e.g. cheese, butter).
- Purchasing organic milk, which has been shown to have higher levels of some vitamins and omega 3s. This ensures higher welfare as cows have guaranteed access to pasture, with lower milk yields and reduced incidences of lameness and mastitis.
- Sourcing free-range, high welfare eggs and ensuring that any processed products which contain eggs are also free range. This ensures laying birds have led a life with access to natural light and open spaces, enabling them to exhibit natural behaviours such as foraging, with the additional benefit of lower stocking densities in the outdoor areas.
- Purchasing most fish and seafood from British waters and landed in Plymouth ports. This reduces the carbon associated with transportation and storage, whilst supporting fishing communities throughout the UK.

- Purchasing wild fish and seafood according to seasonality. This approach reduces pressure on fish during their spawning season, allowing stocks to breed and replenish their populations.
- Having a written sustainable seafood sourcing policy stating the university's ethical stance and sustainability aims on fish. This information can be provided to existing and new suppliers to ensure that they are fully aware of the university's sourcing standards. It also helps to inform customers of the good things that the university is doing behind the scenes.
- Implementing a range of fish and seafood sustainability measures such as having a Sustainable Seafood Supplier Agreement in place with suppliers and serving a broad range of species on a flexible menu.
- Purchasing UK craft, organic cider and English, Welsh or Scottish wine for its hospitality operations. This helps support local economies and the wine and cider industries in the UK. It also helps towards reducing food miles and thus the carbon footprint of the business.
- Having some soft drinks that do not include added sugar. Food and drinks that are high in sugar are often high in calories and contain very few nutrients so are best kept to a minimum.
- Having a range of soft drinks on offer that includes a variety of bottle sizes. This enables customers to have a choice on how much sugar they consume.
- Purchasing some soft drinks from a company which is involved in a social or environmental initiative. This demonstrates to customers that the university considers its supply chain and how its purchasing can have a wider social or environmental impact.
- Buying tea, coffee, most sugar and some chocolate that is produced to a standard that incorporates fair trade criteria. Fairtrade guarantees a fair price for the farmers and also invests an additional premium in community development projects chosen by farmers and farm workers.
- Purchasing tea, coffee and some chocolate that is produced to a standard that incorporates environmentally positive farming criteria including organic and Rainforest Alliance. The Rainforest Alliance works to conserve biodiversity and ensures sustainable livelihoods by transforming land use practices, business practices and consumer behaviour. Their work covers areas of agriculture, forestry, tourism, climate change and environmental education.
- By purchasing British flour, the university has reduced food miles from international transportation and is supporting British farmers.
- Purchasing bought-in products for ready-made sandwiches that are purchased locally, have ingredients that reflect seasonality. These products also contain meat,

poultry and eggs that are free range, meet key welfare indicators and do not include any 'fish to avoid' as assessed by the Marine Conservation Society.

- The university are commended for being part of the Sustainable Fish City campaign which aims to join cities, towns and counties which serve and promote sustainable fish.

Recommendations

- Examine the possibility of purchasing more fruit and vegetables grown locally to the business. This ensures that money is invested in the local economy. Furthermore, it considerably reduces food miles, and consequently improves the carbon footprint of the university.
- Explore the options for sourcing more organically certified fruit and vegetables. This ensures that products have been produced in line with IFOAM's principles of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems of organic agriculture.
- Where fruit is imported, consider the possibility of purchasing more Fairtrade fruit where available. This ensures that the university uses exotic fruit from farmers who are guaranteed a minimum price for their produce, together with a premium to benefit their families and communities. This helps to secure a better deal for farmers in developing countries and ensures a more sustainable supply chain.
- Explore the options for sourcing more LEAF certified vegetables. LEAF stands for Linking Environment And Farming and ensures that produce is grown in a way that ensures high levels of environmental stewardship are adhered to in the farming practices.
- Look into purchasing more local poultry (within 50 miles from the university). This results in the business investing money in its local economy and thus supporting its local community.
- Explore the options for purchasing more organic eggs, poultry, pork, beef and lamb. Animals are raised to high welfare standards and production standards also confer better environmental practices than standard farming.
- Explore the options for purchasing more organic cheese, made from organic milk which ensures higher welfare as cows have guaranteed access to pasture, with lower milk yields and reduced incidences of lameness and mastitis.
- Consider gaining Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Chain of Custody certification for the university, to complement the university's sustainable seafood sourcing policies. This would enable the university to promote the fact that it is the final link in an entirely sustainable food chain by using the MSC eco label on menus, next to MSC items.

- Look into purchasing solely UK craft beers and more organic beer. This helps support local economies and the beer industry in the UK. It also helps towards reducing food miles and thus the carbon footprint of the business.
- Investigate sourcing more organic, biodynamic, natural and fairly traded wines. Biodynamic wines are made using a practical method of farming, which embodies the idea of ever-increasing ecological self-sufficiency. Biodynamic viticulture brings enhanced environmental benefits and it would be great if the university could support this.
- Consider purchasing sugar that is produced to a standard that incorporates environmentally positive farming criteria such as organic or Rainforest Alliance. The agricultural techniques used to grow organic sugar are kinder to the environment and help soils remain nutrient-rich.

SOCIETY

Society (86%) was Plymouth University's highest score across the pillars in the SRA Sustainability Rating. The university performed exceptionally in the areas of *Treating People Fairly* (97%) and *Community Engagement* (89%). They are commended for providing all staff with written contracts and for offering them a comprehensive training programme which includes environmental awareness, health and safety and management training. The university are also recognised for having a comprehensive community engagement programme through which they partner with a co-operative of schools in Cornwall to provide resources as well as help and advice.

Although the university achieved an exceptional score in *Healthy Eating* (77%), they could implement some new methods to encourage and accommodate healthier eating options for students such as offering smaller portion sizes at a reduced cost.

Commendable actions are evident across all Society areas and are detailed below. Some recommendations for improvement are also provided.

Commendable

- Having formal contracts in place for both part-time and full-time employees. This validates the terms and agreements between the university and its employees and also provides a degree of job security. This is an ethically minded approach and is part of what makes a university socially sustainable.

- Providing and implementing written formal grievance and disciplinary policies. This makes staff aware of the working relationship between themselves and their management. It also ensures that all members of staff are treated fairly.
- Developing and implementing a comprehensive employee training scheme and induction programme. This is essential for employees' development and leads to well-informed and sufficiently aware staff.
- Offering staff a range of staff benefits. The added benefits of extensive training and benefit opportunities such as time off for education and free uniforms for workwear contribute to improved employee morale and a better understanding of the job role.
- Providing apprenticeships for school leavers. This offers those seeking employment an opportunity to learn vital skills to enter the job market.
- Ensuring that the university can cater for specific dietary requirements and informing customers of this in writing. This improves the business' inclusivity, widens the customer base and ensures that customers with specific dietary requirements or allergies are able to dine at the university without worrying if what they are eating is suitable for them.
- Offering a wide proportion of dishes suitable for vegetarians. This ensures that the offering to vegetarian customers is more inclusive and appealing whilst also reducing the university's carbon footprint.
- Highlighting healthier and reduced-fat options on the menus as standard to make it clear which items contain less fats, calories and sugar. This is essential for personal health and wellbeing, and ensures that customers at Plymouth University are assisted further in making healthier choices.
- Regularly supporting national charities including Comic Relief and CLIC Sargent. Universities are a fantastic resource for charities and it is brilliant to see the university raising money for worthy causes. It also demonstrates to students that the university's catering outlets do not run solely for profit, but also focusses on the benefits the business can generate for society.
- Delivering community initiatives such as 'Culture café' every week, which encourages minority students to come together. This improves and strengthens the business' position within the student community and can also lead to social improvements for students in the local area.
- Partnering with a co-operative of local schools to offer resources and advice. Using the expertise gained by operating an environmentally aware and sustainable business, and passing this on to students, helps improve their understanding of the various issues facing sustainability in the food sector.
- Providing customers with information about the provenance of ingredients used at the university. This demonstrates to the students how focused the business is on the produce that is sourced for the menu. This approach also displays transparency to

customers and stakeholders whilst promoting this to other businesses as a positive approach.

- Recording customer feedback and complaints. This is good business practice and allows the university to improve on past issues. It also enables them to record the positive feedback that has resulted from sustainability improvements.
- Promoting the university's sustainability aims and ethical stance to customers in writing. It is important for the university to publish its commitment to sustainability so that customers are aware of the good work undertaken behind the scenes.
- Making sure the university's SRA rating award is promoted by displaying the badge on the universities menu and website. The SRA Award is not only prestigious but highly recognised throughout the hospitality sector. Displaying the SRA logo helps ensure that customers are aware of the university's commitment to social, environmental and sourcing sustainability.

Recommendations

- Implement more methods to encourage and accommodate customer requests for healthier options, for example offering smaller portion sizes at a reduced cost. The university could also consider signing up to the Public Health Responsibility Deal, which aims to tap into the potential for businesses, and other influential organisations, to make a significant contribution to improving public health.
- To complement the current training programme, the university could consider training their staff in Energy and Water efficiency. This would build employees understanding of the sustainability aims and aspirations of the university and encourage them to get involved in initiatives.
- The SRA recommends the university communicate costs clearly to students. This ensures that students are completely aware of what charges apply to them and avoids confusion when it comes to paying the bill.

ENVIRONMENT

Plymouth University achieved an exceptional score score of 70% in the Environment pillar, demonstrating a responsible and consistent approach to controlling each catering outlet's environmental impact.

The university scored highly in the area of *Waste Management* (87%) thanks to its commitment to reduce food waste through a number of innovative methods. In addition to this, the university recycles a number of waste items including paper, cardboard, glass,

plastics, cooking oil and food. The university also excelled in *Workplace Resources* (71%) through its responsible purchasing of FSC certified items and its creative use of furniture recycled from other areas on campus.

Although a lower score was seen for *Water Saving* (52%), the SRA commends the university for having in place some initiatives to use water in an environmentally sound way; such as having two cafés which benefit directly from the greywater system on campus. In order to improve in this area, the university could consider delivering staff training on water saving best practise and could work towards ensuring all sites have water efficient technologies in place, where possible. The university could also look to implement a 'no air freight policy' as this is an extremely carbon heavy method of shipment that contributes significantly to the university's carbon footprint, and subsequently improve the score for *Supply Chain*.

Commendable actions are evident across all Environment areas, however, some recommendations for improvement are provided below.

Commendable

- Making sure that the majority of the university's suppliers use reusable boxes and crates for deliveries or take back and recycle unwanted packaging. This considerably reduces the amount of waste that the university is producing and will reduce the business's carbon footprint.
- Working with suppliers on efficient delivery systems to reduce the carbon footprint, negative environmental outcomes and social impacts associated with the business receiving regular deliveries.
- Ensuring that the university recycles as many waste items as possible including paper, cardboard, glass, plastic, cans and cooking oil. This practice diverts waste from landfill and ensures that it is re-used instead of using virgin resources.
- Undertaking actions such as adopting a nose to tail approach to reduce the amount of food waste generated at the university.
- Separating food waste for offsite composting or anaerobic digestion. Food waste comprises a considerable amount of the university's total waste and its decision to ensure that this waste stream is diverted from landfill and utilised for other purposes is highly commendable.
- Encouraging customers to take home unfinished meals by offering them doggy bags or boxes. This helps to reduce the amount of food waste generated by the university by allowing customers to take home food that would otherwise be thrown away.

- Ensuring that catering disposables are made from biodegradable materials. This helps the university increase the likelihood that disposable items generated by the university will be disposed of in an environmentally positive way.
- Ensuring that most paper used is Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified or made from recycled materials. The FSC facilitates the development of standards, ensures monitoring of certified operations and protects the FSC trademark so that consumers can choose products that come from well-managed forests. Using paper items made from recycled content minimises the use of virgin resources in manufacture.
- Using some environmentally friendly cleaning products. This minimises the universities impact on the surrounding environment and waterways.
- Using recycled or reclaimed furniture and fittings for the refurbishment of the university. This helps to reduce the impact of the build by avoiding the use of virgin resources for the fit-out of the university. It can also result in significant cost savings if a thrifty approach is adopted.
- Monitoring energy use (via sub-meters installed in some of the buildings that have catering outlets within them; and a project being delivered in partnership with a third party who alerts the team when usage is abnormal) on a regular basis and setting targets for reduction as part of the university wide environmental strategy.
- Calculating the carbon footprint of the university. This has helped the university to establish the carbon emissions resulting from the university's operations and provides a baseline for setting future carbon reduction goals.
- Ensuring that the university is energy efficient by having some technical solutions in place such as low energy lighting and sensors or timers on lights in café toilets.
- Ensuring that the university is water efficient by installing technology such as sensors or timers on taps, dual flush toilets and sensor or low flush urinals.
- Installing a rainwater or greywater system onsite from which two of the outlets directly benefit. This ensures that rainwater or waste water is reused, where possible, rather than using up new resources.

Recommendations

- Look into implementing a 'no air freight policy'. Air-freighted transportation is an extremely carbon-heavy method of shipment and having a 'no air-freight' policy will significantly reduce the university's carbon footprint. The first step in implementing this approach is to contact all of the university's suppliers and establish which products are being transported via air-freight.
- Ensure that the university's suppliers are aware of its sustainable sourcing standards in writing. This will demonstrate the university's commitment to sustainability and will

also help towards ensuring that suppliers meet the requirements formally set out by the business.

- As well as monitoring wastage and water at the university, set targets for reduced consumption. Running a kitchen in the same way for a long period of time allows bad habits to come back into play so making a concerted effort to reduce energy use in some areas is recommended. These efforts can then be measured by using the monitoring method currently in place. If targets are reached, consider rewarding employees for their efforts as a further incentive.
- Consider serving tap water, or filtered water, to students as the default option instead of bottled water. This approach negates the need to order in bottled water and reduces the carbon associated with every stage of bottled water production, helping to significantly minimise the environmental impact of the university and its carbon footprint.
- Start conversations on converting to using renewable energy for the catering outlets. This means part of the energy used to run the outlets would be generated from renewable sources such as solar or wind. This would reduce the university's carbon footprint significantly, as a result of avoiding using energy sourced from non-renewable sources such as fossil fuels. The SRA lists suppliers of 100% renewable energy on the SRA Supplier Directory so it is recommended that the university considers approaching these suppliers for a quote, some offer SRA members discounted rates and offers.
- Implement water saving best practice in the university by training staff on water efficiency, and work towards installing water saving technology including water efficient kitchen and bar equipment across all catering outlets.

CONCLUSION

Plymouth University achieved an exceptional Three Star Sustainability Champion status and has demonstrated excellent initiatives across all three pillars of Sourcing, Society and Environment.

Sourcing was the pillar in which the university has the most opportunities to improve, yet excellent initiatives were observed across all areas, especially in *Sustainable Fish* (85%) and *Ethical Meat & Dairy* (84%). The university is commended for making clear its commitment to purchasing ingredients both locally to the business and in accordance with seasonality. Its already strong score could be further improved by increasing the amount of organic produce it purchases and by gaining MSC Chain of Custody Certification.

The way in which the university treats its employees is the highlight of this Sustainability Rating, as is the way in which the university works with students, and local and national organisations on a variety of charitable initiatives. Particularly commendable practices in the Society pillar include its link with City College to recruit and train apprentices, and its relationship with a local co-operative of schools in Cornwall for whom they provide resources and advice. The university could consider broadening their employee training programme to include a courses in energy and water efficiency which would complement other environmental initiatives already taking place.

There are a number of excellent practises in place to ensure that the university is run to minimise its impact on the environment, including how both the supply chain and waste streams are managed to create efficiencies and less wastage. A number of measures are taken to divert waste from landfill and this is commended by the SRA. There are a few areas where the business could implement additional practices to further enhance its commitment to running a sustainable operation, including implementing a 'no air freight policy' and setting formal targets per outlet for the reduction of waste and water.

The SRA commends the university on its sustainability initiatives and serious commitment to ethical practices. The areas where the university performed strongly in the SRA Sustainability Rating should be promoted to inspire other UK universities and showcase the work that the university has put into making its catering outlets function in a sustainable way. Continuous improvement is integral to sustainability and the SRA encourages the university to consolidate its strengths and improve in other sustainability areas throughout 2014.