

This is the first Newsletter in what is expected to be a regular series, to keep staff and students informed on a range of environmental issues which come under the umbrella of “green housekeeping”. While many environmental concerns are global, there is much that can be done locally to contribute to a more sustainable future.

If readers have any suggestions or observations on how the University can be progressively greened please contact the Environmental Officer (see below). In this first Newsletter, we aim to provide some background to this environmental work, and to provide updates on a number of environmental initiatives already taking place. It is hoped that this Newsletter will be used to publicise new initiatives, provide updates, and to share information on best practice around the University.

#### New Environmental Officer post for the University and a new Committee for University Environmental Issues

The University appointed its first Environmental Officer, Mary Scott, from 1 September 1995, to raise awareness and encourage improvements in environmental practice across a range of University activities. Together with a new Committee for University Environmental Issues, the Environmental Officer will develop a policy for the University across a wide range of key environmental issues including:

- \* energy and water use and conservation
- \* choice and purchase of materials
- \* efficient use of materials, plant and equipment
- \* recycling of paper, packaging, glass, cans etc
- \* waste management and disposal
- \* reducing pollution

The overall aim will be to develop a strategic approach to how the University interacts with the environment, through policy implementation, monitoring and review, including a system of environmental auditing. Key issues are currently being identified and a draft policy is being prepared which will be submitted to the University for approval as soon as possible in early 1996.

Why should the University have an environmental policy?

- \* Good environmental practice is an integral part of good business practice - organisations can enhance their reputation through good environmental management and efficient use of resources
- \* Legislation is becoming increasingly stringent and penalties for non-compliance ever more severe
- \* Good environmental practice can save money!

The last few years have seen growing enthusiasm for “greening” Universities particularly in environmental management. This heightening sense of environmental responsibility has taken place alongside increasing interest on the parts of local governments, eg in pursuing local Agenda 21 initiatives following the Rio Conference on Sustainable Development in 1992.

Everybody has some scope for doing his or her work in a more environmentally responsible way - a basic level of environmental awareness is therefore essential across the University as a whole. But many individuals will need more than this, because their work could have specific environmental impacts which need to be minimised as much as possible. Once an environmental policy has been agreed, a system of advice notes and good practice guidance will be set up to ensure that people have access to information to help them make the right environmental decisions in the course of their work.

There already exists in the University a Committee for Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies which .....For further information on the work of this Committee, contact Jo Smith.....

## Recycling

There is currently some confusion around the University about the availability of recycling banks for paper, glass, cans etc. Most people will already know that the City Council operates recycling schemes through its widespread network of collection points around the City. But there are also a number of University and College collection points available to staff and students. The list below is thought to be up to date (but if you know otherwise, please let the Environmental Officer know).

But firstly, why recycle?

The 8 major benefits of recycling are that it can:

- save natural resources
- save energy
- reduce pollution
- reduce the need for landfill
- generate an income
- reduce imports
- create jobs
- help reduce landfilling

## Paper

Paper is purchased as an asset but is perceived to be low in value and suffers from rapid depreciation. Wastage is common. This can be avoided through simple measures including:

- \* double sided photocopying
- \* control of office printing and copying
- \* use of electronic mail
- \* not using fax header sheets
- \* designing publications for less paper area

Once paper consumption has been reduced, ensure what waste there is gets recycled.

The University's paper collection banks are operated for the City Council by their sub contractor Aylesford Newsprint. They are navy blue in colour and are currently wrongly labelled as only taking newsprint and magazines - but in fact, they will take any waste paper apart from cardboard and "Yellow Pages". Aylesford are currently aiming to change all the labels to clarify this, though this may take some time. Deposit all your paper in them!

Currently, paper banks are sited at:

- New Museums Site (adjacent to the Examinations Hall)
- Downing Site (2 banks, adjacent to the Geography and Biochemistry Departments)
- Sidgwick Site (adjacent to the Economics Faculty)

The following Colleges/Hostels also have banks:

- Corpus Christi College
- Clare Hall
- Downing College
- Fitzwilliam College
- Kings College
- Robinson College
- Trinity College
- Wolfson College
- Alston Court
- Leckhampton House
- Wolfson Court

The City Council's Recycling Officer, Mark Shelton, informs us that during August, less than 2.5 tonnes of paper were collected from all the University and College sites. The large City sites at Sainsbury's (Coldhams Lane), the Beehive Centre, Arbury Court and Colville Road collectively yielded more than 40 tonnes. Whatever

the reason for our low level of recycling (eg timing, wrong labelling of banks, lack of information) there is obviously a big opportunity to ensure that as much paper as possible gets into the recycling chain rather than to landfill!

If any Departments/Colleges wish to secure additional skips, these can be obtained through Mark Shelton at the City Council, and further information can be obtained from Mary Scott. It would, however, be wise for Departments to consider how they might form appropriate local groupings to avoid an over-abundance of inappropriately sited facilities! Mary Scott can advise.

We are also investigating the possibility of setting up a few revenue-earning paper recycling schemes through a company which will a tailor-made collection system (with desk boxes, wheeled bins and steel banks) to individual large Departments or groups of Departments. Such schemes would generate revenue for Departments taking part (we are quoted guaranteed minimum prices of £25/tonne for mixed waste paper and £80/tonne for computer paper, but current prices above the minimum would apply - currently mixed waste earns £30/tonne and computer paper £100/tonne). More on this in the next Newsletter when we hope to have one or two trial schemes to report on and more information on how your Department might be able to get into paper recycling and make money at the same time!

#### Glass and Cans

Most Colleges and some outlying College Hostels have glass and can bins provided by the City Council. There are also can banks at the University Library, Sidgwick Site, the Examinations Syndicate and the Veterinary School, and both glass and can banks at the University Centre. Otherwise, the University can use all the City's public sites.

The City Council are currently unable to provide additional glass/can bins free of charge. However, if demand for additional bins is sufficient, the University may be able to secure these through a cash contribution to the City Council. This is currently being explored.

Cambridge City Council has published a "Recycling Directory for Cambridge" which can be obtained from the Recycling Officer, Mark Shelton (Tel. Cambridge 463359). (The Environmental Officer also has some spare copies). This contains a wealth of useful information on how to dispose of a wide range of materials and goods. While this will not contain the more specialised advice that some Departments will require, it is an excellent starting point for a lot of things - from building materials and cardboard to tools and toner cartridges.

#### Cycle Challenge

The University has joined forces with Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council, Activity and Health Forum, Cambridge Cycling Campaign, and the Cambridge and Huntingdon Health Commission, in submitting a bid to the Department of Transport for funds under the Cycle Challenge initiative. Cycle Challenge is a national scheme which has pledged £2 million to fund local projects to encourage cycling.

The Cambridge joint bid is to fund a "Cycle Friendly Employers Club" to carry out a cycle audit of local employers, including the University. The University would be helped through this scheme to design and implement a workplace Cycle Plan to achieve a transfer from car to cycle. More on this in the next Newsletter.

#### Free exhaust checks

Cambridge's air pollution problem is serious with high levels of carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide. Vehicle exhausts contribute to this problem.

To help combat this problem, Marshalls Car Centre, promoted by the City and County Councils, Cambridge Evening News, Q103fm radio station, and the Government Office for the Eastern Region, are offering a scheme of free exhaust checks for all petrol-powered vehicles. If any Departments or individual members of staff would like to have their cars checked, please contact Tim Griffin at Marshalls Vauxhall Branch (.....) (tel. 377390). The free checks will be available till the end of November. This is a good opportunity to do your bit for the air quality in and around Cambridge.

## Future Newsletters

Please inform the Environmental Officer of the type of information you would like to see in this Newsletter. We envisage providing technical advice through additional media (eg advice notes, good practice guides) while using this Newsletter to keep people informed of more general developments in environmental good practice. If you have details of environmental good practice which you would like to share with others, consider doing this through the Newsletter. Any contributions for the next issue to Mary Scott by Friday 16 February please.