

Green Lines

An Environmental Bulletin for the University



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This is the twentieth Bulletin in a series, to keep Departments informed on a range of topical environmental issues in the University. It aims to provide practical advice on implementing good practice. For more detailed information on guidance and policies please see the Environmental Office website on www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/environment/

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Green Lines and comprehensive environmental information about the University are available on the Web: www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/environment/



Recycling bin for collecting aluminium cans

ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATIONS

The Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) came into effect on 1 January 2005. The Regulations are administered by the Information Commissioners Office alongside the existing Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

The Regulations require the University to respond to requests (verbal or written) for environmental information relating to activities and procedures throughout the University, particularly EMBS, Health & Safety Division and Academic Departments.

The definition of environmental information under the terms of the Regulations is very broad, and includes information relating to discharges, emissions, waste management and energy & water usage, as well as organisational issues such as policies and procedures.

The University must respond to any requests in writing as soon as possible, but no later than 20 working days after receipt of the request (although this can be extended to 40 days for very complex requests).

There are certain exceptions (e.g. personal information or requests that are manifestly unreasonable). A reasonable charge can be made for information that is not already publicly available (e.g. on the web).

If you receive a request for environmental information please contact the Environmental Office on x39354 or x66758 or e-mail environment@admin.cam.ac.uk.

It would be preferable for all requests for environmental information to be co-ordinated by the Environmental Office. However, if you prefer to respond direct, it would be helpful if you could inform the Environmental Office of the nature of the request and the response made.

If the enquiry is from a member of the press or media please inform the Press Office on x32300 or ucam-press-office@lists.cam.ac.uk. If the enquiry relates to information specifically to your Department, please inform your Head of Department or Environmental Co-ordinator.

The Information Commissioners Office has produced a log sheet (available on the Environmental Office webpage) to help ensure that any verbal requests for information are recorded and dealt with correctly.

Please contact the Environmental Office or see the websites below for more information.

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/environment/guidance/information.html>

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/information/foi/>

HEFCE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

Earlier this year, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) published a consultation document on Sustainable Development in Higher Education. It sets out HEFCE's vision, and plans for support, for higher education's contribution to sustainable development. The Action Plan sets out a support role for HEFCE in four key areas:

- Engaging with stakeholders to bring about policy synergies on sustainable development
- Building the capacity of people to manage sustainable development
- Sharing good practice, or supporting the development of good practice where none exists
- Rewarding more sustainable behaviour

The Plan covers both academic and estate-related issues. For example, it is hoped that it will provide a framework to facilitate and encourage the design and construction of more sustainable buildings throughout the sector to reduce environmental impact through the implementation improved energy and resource efficiency measures.

Cambridge is already well advanced in this respect, having recently produced revised guidance for the

design and construction of environmentally sustainable buildings, which was approved by the University's Buildings Committee in December 2004. It includes a requirement that a BREEAM assessment should be carried out on all new buildings of over 1000 m² with a target to achieve a rating of 'Excellent' with a minimum rating of 'Very Good'.

BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Model) is the recognised standard in the UK for the assessment of a wide range of environmental building parameters that exceed the minimum requirements needed to comply with the Building Regulations.

See the Environmental Office web site for more information on the guidance:

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/environment/guidance/building.html>

Another initiative in the Action Plan that is already being considered is Cambridge's participation in a pilot programme co-ordinated by the Carbon Trust to promote better carbon management in the HE sector.

YELLOW PAGES

The need for paper copies of Yellow Pages has dropped in recent years due to the availability and ease of use of Yell.com on the Internet for many people. Following consultation with Departments on their requirements for paper copies, the Environmental Office has arranged for a reduction in the number delivered to the University by around 500 copies to reduce unnecessary impact associated with the

production, delivery and disposal of unwanted copies. Hopefully there should still be plenty of paper copies available for anyone who wants them. However, if you do find that you have too few or too many please contact Sarah Irish on x66756 or e-mail on sei20@admin.cam.ac.uk and we will do our best to assist with the redistribution of any imbalance between supply and demand.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WASTE AUDIT

The Environment Agency has recently carried out an audit of the University's waste management procedures and documentation. The main focus of the audit has been on Special Waste (Chemical, Biological, and Asbestos), but they have also looked at our centrally co-ordinated procedures for general waste disposal and recycling facilities for paper, glass, fluorescent tubes and aluminium cans. The Agency's initial reports concerning their findings have been generally very positive.

As part of the audit process, the Agency may also want to assess other waste management activities. Please remember that any independently arranged waste disposal (e.g. lab/office clear-outs using skips) must be carried out by a registered waste carrier. The contractor must provide a Waste Transfer Note (WTN) that gives an accurate description of the waste

and must be kept for 2 years to comply with the Duty of Care provisions of the Environmental Protection Act.

Another point to note is that any contamination of recycling bins by non-recyclable waste is contrary to the requirements of the legislation and can also lead to a hefty charge being levied by the recycling contractor, so please make sure that recycling bins are kept locked when not required.

Please contact Ian Watson on x66758 or e-mail imw25@admin.cam.ac.uk for further information or see the Waste Handbook on the Environmental Office website at:

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/environment/guidance/>

COMMUNITY GIVEAWAY BOARD

The 'Community Giveaway Board' is a free on-line service enabling departments and colleges to dispose of unwanted furniture and IT equipment to local community organisations. Do bear this service in mind when your department or college next needs to dispose of furniture or other equipment that is still in usable condition. Electrical equipment posted on the

Board does need to be PAT tested first (which the University Health & Safety Division will do free of charge). For more information, visit the board at:

www.clo.cam.ac.uk/community/cgbb

or contact Penny Wilson, Community Relations Co-ordinator on x65490 or pw271@cam.ac.uk

ALUMINIUM CAN RECYCLING

Empty aluminium drinks cans are often destined for the rubbish bin followed by a swift visit to the nearest landfill site. That was until Departments became aware of the local registered charity Opportunity Without Limits (OWL) based in Sawston, which strives to improve the lives of many people, young and old, who have learning difficulties.

Cans can be saved up until there is a sufficient amount to warrant a collection by OWL (normally around 10 black plastic sacks). The cans should be empty, but do not require crushing, although this would be appreciated by OWL. They are then taken to a reprocessor in exchange for cash, which is currently in

the region of 45p per kg for sorted aluminium cans (approximately 60 cans). This is used to support the activities of the charity.

OWL are currently looking to expand their operations and give their people the chance to find independent employment by giving them hands-on training and experience in repairing bicycles for re-sale. The feasibility of organising a sales event for Freshers' Week is currently being investigated; more details to follow. For further information, please contact Ian Watson at the Environmental Office on x66758 or e-mail imw25@admin.cam.ac.uk

VIDEO CONFERENCING

A recent assessment of the University's contribution to global warming identified carbon dioxide emissions associated with work-related travel as a significant part of our overall impact.

Emissions of carbon dioxide, particulates, sulphur dioxide, and oxides of nitrogen, as well as the use of non-renewable fossil fuels, can all be reduced by using videoconferencing instead of travelling to meetings, lectures or interviews. Add to this the considerable amounts of work-time and money that can be saved, and the benefits of videoconferencing start to look even more attractive.

The University Computing Service Videoconferencing Facility is centrally located on the New Museums Site. It can be used by any staff or student of the University or related institutions in connection with their work or study.

A videoconference to Canada costs from just £35.25 per hour. With the room seating up to 30 persons, that's just £1.41 per person. Lost work-time is a major but often unseen cost of travel. Travel to Canada would involve at least two days of lost work-time plus the additional cost of accommodation and meals. Travelling to the New Museums Site takes at most half an hour for most staff and students.

With UK meetings, the cost-benefits of videoconferencing remain obvious. A three-way UK conference between Cambridge, London and Birmingham, would involve at least two sites' parties having to travel. At off-peak rail rates, the cost is around £20 per person, plus subsistence and lost work-time. Hold the same meeting via videoconference and the total cost to Cambridge is also from just £35.25 per hour for 1-30 Cambridge attendees with no subsistence costs and hardly any work-time lost to travel. Travel by car from London and Cambridge for a meeting in Birmingham would result in total emissions of carbon dioxide of about 100 kg for a small diesel car up to around 180 kg for a large petrol car.

Typical uses so far have included research and admin group meetings, lectures and groupwork with student classes in different locations, student and staff interviews, vivas, tutorials and presentations. The Vice-Chancellor is a regular customer.

For further details, please contact the UCS Videoconferencing Service on x35477 or e-mail: videoconf@ucs.cam.ac.uk, or see

<http://www.tus.csx.cam.ac.uk/videoconf/index.html>

TRAVEL FOR WORK LOAN SCHEME

Travelling around Cambridge is difficult at the best of times and rush-hour commuting can be a nightmare. The University has a loan scheme to make it easier to buy a bicycle or a season ticket to help you to leave your car at home.

The Travel to Work loan scheme offers staff a maximum of one month's pay as an interest-free loan to buy a bike and associated safety equipment, or to buy a bus or train season ticket. The University hopes this new loan scheme will help to remove obstacles to

choosing a more environmentally friendly means of getting to work – and hope it will encourage as many people as possible to make the move away from cars.

Repayments will be deducted from the employee's monthly pay over a maximum period of ten months. Full details of the scheme can be found on the Personnel Division's website at:

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/personnel/benefits/>

BREAKDOWN SERVICE DISCOUNT

The Environmental Transport Association (ETA) provides a full vehicle breakdown service and actively campaigns with other organisations for sustainable solutions. University staff are eligible for a £10 discount off annual membership of the ETA to provide breakdown cover for their private vehicles.

Call for an application form on 0800 212 810 or email eta@eta.co.uk quoting reference 1678. ETA checks to ensure applications made under this affinity scheme are from genuine Cambridge University employees. Please see the ETA website for more details: <http://www.eta.co.uk>