



ASSOCIATION
OF COLLEGES
CHARITABLE TRUST

Green Skills For The Future Programme

South Thames College Group Case study

July 2024



South Thames
Colleges Group



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Introduction

Project

The Association of Colleges (AoC), with funding from JP Morgan and Chase has launched a new programme to provide future generations with the sustainable construction skills they need. The Creating a Greener London – Sustainable Construction Skills programme is aimed at developing innovative, local approaches to the delivery of eco-friendly skills training.

The purpose of the programme is to meet the needs of students, employers, and colleges in delivering green skills training, through the development of practice. It aims to provide insights into how the local ecosystem can support young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Enabling them to access skilled employment while meeting Government objectives around achieving net zero and delivering green skills to meet the demand for green jobs. Two pilot projects, South Thames College Group (STCG) and London South East Colleges (LSEC), are commissioned in the Greater London area to identify, develop, and embed green skills training into existing Level 2 Construction courses to tackle green skills shortages in the homes and buildings sector.

Green skills definition

Green skills are the specific knowledge, abilities and values needed to promote the reduction of negative environmental impact in the workplace.

Project aims and objectives

- To provide participating Level 2 construction students with green and wider employability skills, which supports their progression into Level 3 study (with a focus on Apprenticeships) and ultimately into higher skilled, better paid and more stable employment in the homes and buildings sector.
- To identify the green skills required at Level 2 for successful progression into Level 3 study and green jobs.
- To improve student understanding of the career opportunities and progression routes into green jobs in the homes and building sector.
- To support practitioners to improve their skills and knowledge in a range of green skills.
- To ensure participating students who enter employment at the end of their Level 2 qualification are better prepared to progress to potentially higher skilled, more stable employment.
- To improve local workforce planning across Greater London to deliver vital green skills training in the homes and building sector.

Case study

Each pilot project has produced a case study detailing activities, challenges, successes, and recommendations for successful local collaborative approaches to the delivery of green skills for green jobs. Please see the South Thames College Group case study below.

South Thames College Group

Case study



What was the Green Skills Curriculum offer like at your college before the start of this project?

Awareness of the significance of Green Skills in the Construction industry has been growing steadily during the last few years and they are beginning to take on more prominence in traditional Construction provision. Different sites have also been testing the market with short micro-credential courses such as 'Electrification of Cars' and 'Sustainable Waste Management'.

This work was consolidated and was given added momentum when the Group took the lead for the South London Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and worked as a partner within the Central London LSIP. Both LSIPs consider Green Skills/Construction to be a key London priority, have generated good amounts of Labor Market Information and have helped shape curriculum thinking with regards to Green Construction.

In addition, the Group's involvement in both the Mayoral Academy Programme and Strategic Development Fund has enabled the different College sites to develop a strong local partnership approach to scoping and developing Green construction training. These partnerships involve all colleges in south London, and local employers, including many SMEs. SMEs are particularly important when scoping out a Retrofit offer as they represent 80% of the employers currently involved in Retrofit work.

What is your college's experience of the project to date?

The project has given useful focus to our Level 2 provision, providing a framework to help us: plot in dedicated advice and guidance; monitor our students' responses to and appetite for Green opportunities within the curriculum and then as progression routes; and consider how we can enrich the Green offer for students through developing partnerships.

The Solar Careers Fair, in February 2024, is a good example of an event which was established to support our work on the Greener Construction brief. Twelve employers (from a cross-section of the industry) were invited to set up career and information stalls and many brought along the latest industry gadgets for visitors to interact with. Visitors included DWP clients from across south-west London, students from STCG's various sites as well as local school partners. Mark Wakeford (Chair of Evo Energy and part of the Government's Solar Taskforce Group) helped support industry involvement and delivered a short opening speech.



The project has also provided important stimulus with regards to sharing approaches to Green Construction development. Some examples include: delivering a 'break-out' session at the AoC conference in November to share initial learning points, alongside London South-East Colleges (LSEC), our project partner; hosting an insight day in February which included representatives from the Government's Department for Energy Security & Net Zero as well as Solar Energy UK, an established trade association working on behalf of the solar energy sector; arranging for our Construction team to visit London South Bank Technical College to view and discuss its new Green Construction workshops.



How has the green skills in the construction curriculum improved?

The curriculum has taken great strides during 23/24 and will continue to strengthen into 24/25. Significant building works will take place over the summer to establish a solar panel fitting workshop at our Merton site and then training bays within a re-purposed workshop at our Wandsworth site. The training bays will form three sets of three (live working; fault finding; installation & maintenance) to provide hands-on learning across three systems: heat pumps, solar thermal, electrical (solar PV, EV charging and battery energy storage). The dedicated Green workshops provide a platform which has supported the Group to considerably expand its planned Green Construction provision. This expanded provision sits within what we've branded as a 'Net Zero Training Hub'. Courses include those which are associated with the bays and solar panel workshops (Level 3 Air Source Heat Pump Installation, for instance) as well as a suite of Retrofit qualifications and the Level 3 in Domestic Energy Assessment. Some of our Multiskills students have already achieved the Level 2 Retrofit Award, a short introductory course which we bolted onto the end of their academic year.

The new curriculum offer has been accompanied by a range of CPD opportunities for staff. This summer, for example, plumbing and electrical lecturers are attending accredited installation courses linked to air source heat pump and solar PV respectively. Existing provision also benefits from staff undertaking dedicated CPD linked to Green Skills, since it means that lecturers can make up for shortfalls in existing awarding body specs (giving more emphasis to air source heat pumps and rainwater harvesting in Level 2 Plumbing, for example).

Dropping in structured awareness raising sessions for Green Skills (Phase 2 of the Project), in addition, means that students are able to see the relevance of acquiring Green Skills. This is reinforced by planning in regular trips and inviting employers in. A particularly successful event, attended by over 50 Construction students in person (and over 100 more via Teams), involved a presentation from UK Power outlining its apprenticeship opportunities and upcoming application windows. Feedback from students has been positive with regards to the impact of the Project and the opportunities provided within the Group to allow them to extend their understanding of Green Skills and Technology. In the most recent survey linked to the Project, 52% reported that they had 'learned a lot' in this area, whilst 40% reported that they had 'learned something'.

Are there other organisations that have also been helped by this project?

The Project has enabled us to enter into many useful interactions with colleagues at London South East Colleges, the second College Group in London supporting the Greener London initiative.

We meet regularly with the South London Partnership's (SLP) Green Skills Academy to share resources and networking opportunities. A colleague from the SLP delivered an excellent Green careers overview for Construction students cross Group.

There are a host of employers with whom we work to offer Construction Work Experience placements and, as can be seen from the student case study which follows, these can lead onto paid work and often help develop students' awareness of Green issues in real life work environments. Employers also attend termly panels which allow them to help us update, adapt and re-think our curriculum.

We regularly take part in webinars which help to raise the profile of the project, allowing us to share learning points and successes with other providers and stakeholders. We've agreed for example, to present Project updates to the Department for Business and Trade's Sustainable Construction webinar this September.

Has this project had an impact at college level?

Because the project is cross-Group, it has served to bring Construction staff and lecturers together in a way which may not have happened otherwise. Students from three sites, for instance, attended the South London Green Careers Summit in the autumn term; lecturers and students from different sites will share the same CPD sessions in the summer term; Information & Guidance resources were designed at our Wandsworth site and then shared across campuses; lecturers will come together in the autumn of 24/25 to be upskilled on the new Green Skills equipment currently being installed.

Good practice and positive outcomes

- There has been CPD provided to improve the skills and knowledge of practitioners, so they're more confident in highlighting green skills and options across a range of skilled trades to students.
- Purchasing and building of dedicated resources to support teaching, learning & assessment in new Green Construction workshops.
- Senior Managers, Curriculum Leads, and staff have worked as a team to understand the aims of the project and plans on how to deliver it which means it has been successfully implemented.
- Involvement of SMEs in the development of courses which makes the courses more relevant to current industry standards.
- Employer-led masterclasses on the relevance of green skills in the current industry which allow employers to interact directly with students and enhance college delivery.
- The curriculum has been broadened to improve students' knowledge and awareness of the overarching Green Skills agenda.
- The colleges have delivered quality career information and guidance which has improved student understanding of the career opportunities and progression routes into green jobs in the homes and building sector.
- The green skills agenda has been introduced from the starting point of the induction process to the end of the academic year. This means that students are introduced to green skills at the start of their college journey.
- Students learning has been scaffolded by embedding green skills into the substantial offers in the various trades (e.g. solar panels, Electrical course, heat pumps-plumbing, on site trades-retrofit).
- The pilots have worked together and with others to collaborate and share good practice. They have improved local workforce planning across Greater London to help deliver vital green skills training.
- There is wider employer engagement and work experience offered at both college pilots as a result of the project.

Contact us

Thank you to the college pilots, and JP Morgan and Chase for making the programme possible.

For more information on the programme please see our dedicated website

[Creating a Greener London – Sustainable Construction Skills](#)

or alternatively, contact the Project Delivery Lead Phil.Parle@aoc.co.uk

