



AoC hosts global Erasmus+ EXPECT project delegates in Brighton

12th January 2022

Association of Colleges (AoC) was delighted to host the 4th Peer Learning Activity for the EXPECT project in the United Kingdom on 8 and 9 November 2021. Brighton was chosen as the host city because of the range of relevant developments taking place in the region. It has the only Green Party MP in the UK parliament as well as a large Green Party presence on the city council.

With COP26 at the forefront, all members were conscious of the urgent need for radical action on all fronts in order to decarbonise the global economy and start to reconsider our addiction to unsustainable consumption, particularly in the rich countries of the global North.

Steve Frampton, England's Further Education Climate Commissioner, reminded us that students themselves feel that progress is slow and that they are demanding 'green' knowledge and skills in the curriculum, given that all future jobs will be 'green'. Steve presented AoC's climate

change roadmap for colleges and its 3 stages: 'emerging', 'established' and 'leading'.

AoC shared the findings of its recent post-16 curriculum audit for England, which showed that less than 1% of all courses being studied have full coverage of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). This is why we are supporting the student-led campaign for compulsory climate and environmental education in all post-16 study programmes and the use of the National Skills Fund and Lifelong Loan Entitlement to fund the training needed for priority green sectors like offshore wind, electricity networks, electric vehicles, low carbon heating and forestry to support people to move into these sectors.

The day also included some background to the short online national Carbon Literacy (CLP) course, which was developed independently of government by the college sector, for the college sector with no additional funding. The Department for Education is now taking notice, and it seems likely that they will encourage the take-up of this programme.

Another theme of the visit was the urgent need for capital investment to transform college estates into sustainable zero-carbon campuses as quickly as possible and to help them adopt the technology required to train people for green jobs. Members visited two main campuses in the area; Plumpton College, a land-based specialist college, and Brighton Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College (BHASVIC).

Jeremy Kerswell, the Principal of Plumpton College told us that the college has the second largest college footprint in England and has a sustainability strategy which will place it at the centre of the massive change required.

Will Baldwin, the BHASVIC Principal, explained that the college is piloting the L3 Carbon Literacy project (CLP) qualification which teaches the science of climate change and also promotes taking action for sustainability: both at individual level and social level. The CLP has been very well received but is not yet fully embedded in the curriculum for all students, so that's their next step.

Delegates heard from the £7M government-funded Greener Sussex collaborative project of 14 colleges in the region, which has workstreams on carbon literacy, electric vehicle technology, land management, alternative energies, and decarbonisation. The funding from Greener Sussex will support the aim of embedding carbon literacy into existing courses as well as to offering the CLP course to more students.

Local authority officials and a politician gave speeches about their collaborative work on sustainability. Brighton & Hove City Council has a Carbon Neutral Programme and local authorities are working together on climate goals in a city-region partnership which has made ten pledges on the environment, ranging from marine conservation to low-carbon heating to decarbonising vehicle fleets.

There is a long tradition of partnership and entrepreneurship in this region. The aim is to work together on innovation and sustainability goals in all sectors. Innovation needs new green skills to be embedded in the work of schools, colleges, and universities as well as in industries.

'Teach the Future', a youth-led campaign launched in 2019 by Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS-UK) and UK Student Climate Network (UKSCN) which grew out of the National Union of Students also attended to explain more about their work. The national education charity focusses on sustainability through campaigning, advocacy, and

supported change programmes. The aim is to get sustainability and climate education embedded throughout the education system, for young people and adults.

In discussions, all delegates agreed that placing sustainability more firmly at the heart of the curriculum for students was imperative. Young people are right to be impatient for change; we need to listen to them and adopt a greater sense of urgency. Maximum co-operation between colleges, local and national government and all stakeholders is clearly essential as are an agreed strategic approach and implementation plan.

The UK visit gave everyone a lot to think about and that, combined with the other national visits, it can contribute to new insight on how to embed this important work into our educational priorities.