

## Built Environment Sustainable Procurement Network (BESPN)

### Case Study: Eton College

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#### COMMERCIAL – IN CONFIDENCE

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# Sustainable procurement in education: Eton College

## Summary

**Managers of state schools can call upon a wealth of expertise and support when implementing a sustainable procurement strategy. Independent schools, however, tend to be managed by small teams who operate at the school level. Although there are some established forums that raise awareness of environmental issues in the independent sector, the onus is on individual schools to adopt sustainable procurement or ignore the wider impact their activities may have. Eton College in Windsor, Berkshire, has decided to take up the sustainability challenge, and has used a surprisingly simple procurement strategy to access construction-related expertise.**

## Background

The state education sector is at the start of a long-awaited overhaul of its buildings. The government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) is the largest single government investment in improving school buildings for over 50 years. The aim is to rebuild or renew every secondary school in England over a 10–15 year period. Guidance on the design and procurement of these new buildings and refurbishments is being provided, in line with government-promoted sustainable procurement policies.

In the private education sector, however, there is no over-arching aim, and each school is responsible for its own construction and procurement strategies. And unlike the state sector, where head teachers and school management teams can access advice from their local education authority and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the management teams of independent schools are self-reliant, although there are informal networks that can share ideas on good practice (for example, through the Independent Schools Bursars' Association's magazine and conference).

The private sector comprises some 2500 independent schools, and educates around 620,000 children a year (7 percent of the UK total). In 2005 (most recent figures) the sector spent some £551 million on capital projects.

Against this background, world-renowned Eton College has set out to improve its environmental credentials and to raise awareness of the importance of energy efficiency and sustainable procurement among its pupils, their families, and suppliers.

## The need for change

Some 1,300 boys are housed and educated in Eton's famous buildings, which date from 1440 to the early 2000s. Facilities include teaching blocks, a state-of-the-art laundry, a sanatorium created by a conversion of the town church which also provides staff flats and a General Practice surgery for the town, sports pavilions and facilities, and a natural history museum.

Such a varied property portfolio presents a wide range of challenges in terms of daily management and maintenance. Paul Bayley, the school's Buildings Officer, was conscious of the need to manage resources in the most environmentally sensitive and cost-effective way. Equally, he was aware of the opportunity to raise awareness of sustainable construction and procurement issues among the school community – which potentially includes current and future national and international business leaders, academics and politicians.

## The solution

The school has not commissioned any new buildings during the past five years; instead focusing on the maintenance and renovation of its existing stock.

With limited in-house capacity, Eton has taken the sensible and practical approach of forging a partnership with a large and well-respected construction supplier to meet its maintenance needs.

Meanwhile the College has concentrated on introducing an environmental policy and raising awareness of the importance of good housekeeping and sustainable procurement across the rest of the school's activities.

### Implementation

The first step was to introduce an energy and environmental policy. This underpins all future purchasing decisions, and is the foundation for Eton's awareness-raising activities.

The policy covers energy consumption, reducing transport emissions, water usage and conservation, and sets the scene for future capital projects and for more general-purpose purchasing:

“Building and Development – The College will ensure that any new building or refurbishment will consider environmental impact and will make every effort to incorporate the maximum energy efficiency measures. It will, furthermore, ensure that the greatest use is made of existing floor area. It will endeavour to achieve a BREEAM score of at least ‘Very Good’ for every new building.

“Purchasing – The College will consider environmental impacts when purchasing supplies. It will endeavour to purchase from sustainable sources and with the minimum possible environmental impact.”

### Results

To meet the aims of its sustainable procurement objectives, Eton has formed a partnership with one main supplier – Wolseley – for all its building maintenance requirements. This company was chosen, in part, because of the wide range of services it was able to offer, but also because of its well-established environmental credentials. Wolseley has been a

member of the FTSE4Good Index since 2004. In July 2007, Wolseley will open its UK ‘Sustainable Building Center’, which will be a showcase for the renewable and sustainable building materials the company supplies, and a source of information on all aspects of sustainable construction.

Eton has also joined a purchasing consortium through which it purchases gas on the ‘next-day market’, resulting in a secure supply, cost savings and reducing administration for Eton staff.

As part of its renovation programme, Eton commissioned an infra-red aerial survey of its properties to pin-point areas where additional insulation or repairs were required. This information is shared across the school community via the intranet. Paul Bayley also regularly talks to students about good housekeeping, and has instigated energy management and recycling competitions among the students. Eton publishes a newsletter once per term to highlight sustainability issues to both students and their families.

### Looking ahead

Maintenance and renewal of plant and equipment are likely to be the main targets for sustainable procurement in the near future, with new build projects also under review. Eton will use its environmental policy to guide forthcoming investigations into the purchase of a biomass boiler and wind turbine.

#### For more information

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