

Campus Living Labs, Bulky Item Reuse Workshops

Recommendations for Next Steps Irish Universities

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Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Irish Universities Association's (IUA) 'Campus Living Labs Sustainability Project', specifically the bulky item reuse workshops which was provided by the Community Resources Network Ireland (CRNI) as part of the project. It also briefly reviews some key barriers to bulky item reuse identified during the workshops. However, the main goal of this report is to provide recommendations for the next steps that universities can take to increase sustainability and bulky item reuse on campus, and how they might realize a bulky item reuse scheme on campus.

Overview

The Campus Living Labs Sustainability Project is a two-year partnership project between the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Irish Universities' Association (IUA). The project aims to deliver evidence to inform campus sustainability programmes and foster and advance activities that will introduce systemic change in preventing waste and increasing recycling on campus.

Three bulky item reuse workshops were held as part of the joint IUA Living labs project in the University of Galway, Maynooth University and Trinity College Dublin. Trinity acted as a host to, University College Dublin, Technology University Dublin and Dublin City University. The workshops were well attended, and participants found them beneficial. The workshops aimed, as mentioned above, to facilitate the identification of key barriers to bulky item reuse on campus, potential reuse partners and schemes, and how these reuse schemes could potentially be set up on campuses.

Key Barriers

From a facilitators/trainer's perspective, it became clear throughout all three workshops that "unofficial" bulky item reuse is already happening on all participating campuses, e.g., bookshelves and office equipment is shared among offices, Departments, and Schools and old filing cabinets being reused as flower planters. However these actions are not documented or structured, with the exception of UCD which is currently using [Warp It](#) (Waste Action Reuse Portal), a web based, furniture reuse platform.

Some additional key barriers to bulky item reuse on campus identified throughout the course of the workshops, include lack of storage space, end-user specifications, lack of policy or formal guidelines, de-centralised decision making, the culture of wanting new items, health and safety/legalities and paperwork associated with reuse initiatives.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions and insights generated from the bulky items reuse workshops, the following recommendations were identified to improve bulky items reuse practices on university campuses which have no formal scheme, and to support the introduction of such a scheme:

1. Establish an interdepartmental/interdisciplinary sustainability committee or working group to oversee and coordinate sustainability efforts across departments, for example a bulky item reuse scheme.
2. Develop a business case for the introduction of a bulky item reuse scheme that outlines the financial and non-financial benefits of bulky item reuse.
3. Establish bulky items reused policies that include procurement so that bulky items are reused before new items are purchased, and ensure the policy is disseminated and communicated to all staff.
4. Integrate sustainability actions (e.g. bulky item reuse) into the university's budget and financial planning processes, allocating resources and budget to support these actions.
5. Provide sustainability training and education, which would address bulky item reuse as part of programme, for faculty, staff, and students.
6. Develop a sustainability guide for all staff members that outlines best practices and policies for reducing environmental impact, (e.g. bulky item reuse) which is regularly updated.
7. Create education and awareness campaigns, which promote and support sustainability initiatives/practices including bulky item reuse.
8. Encourage and incentivise staff and students to adopt bulky item reuse through recognition and rewards programs.
9. Set specific targets and timelines for bulky item reuse, linking them to reducing the university's carbon footprint and Climate Action Plan requirements.
10. Document what is currently happening informally on campus in relation to bulky item reuse, with the aim to developing and establishing formal and official policies and procedures for bulky item reuse on campus.
11. Establish metrics and reporting mechanisms to track progress and communicate the impact of bulky item reuse.
12. Establish partnerships with local and national organisations to promote bulky item reuse initiatives and share best practices.

13. Collaborate with government and regulatory bodies to ensure compliance and advocate for bulky item reuse.
14. Establish a Regional Network for University Sustainability Officers/teams for shared learning, best practice, and collaboration, aiming to build a joint/regional approach for universities to achieve shared sustainability goals, which can be tailored to meet individual university needs as appropriate i.e., a campus bulky item reuse scheme.
15. Use legislation and regulations as a framework for setting targets and implementing a bulky item reuse scheme.
16. Engage with an online platform for staff members and students to share bulky item reuse ideas and initiatives. This platform should be managed by a part-time staff member or a student intern.

Conclusion

The workshops provided valuable insights into potential reuse schemes and identified key barriers to bulky item reuse on campus. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, universities can take the next steps towards introducing a bulky item reuse scheme and creating a more sustainable campus environment.