

The Environment Committee works to bring together expertise, energy and ideas from across the College to help reduce Clare's environmental footprint.

Despite this year's challenges there have been several headline environmental achievements:

- Gold award in University's annual Green Impact competition
- completion of St Regis redevelopment to highest sustainability standards, resulting in halving of electricity use
- new wild area established in front of Memorial Court

Green Impact

1. Breaking news - the Clare team has once again received a Gold Colleges award in the University's Annual Green Impact scheme. The auditors drew particular attention to the work done installing smart meters, the Green Formal Halls and Vegan Mondays, and the free-cycling work led by the MRC. Clare has won a Gold or Platinum award for seven years in a row, which is among the best long-run performances of any college.



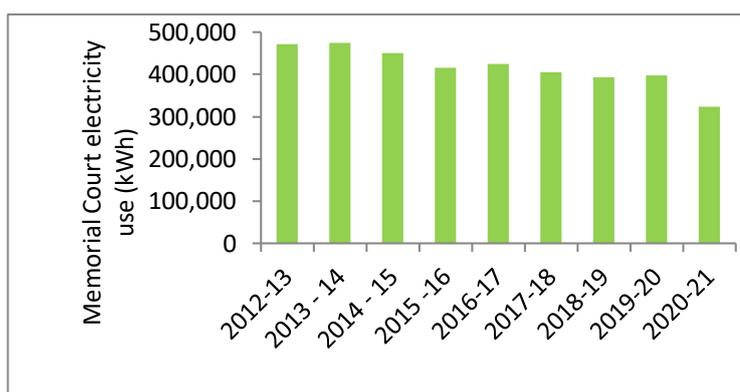
Buildings

2. This year has seen the completion of the St Regis project, replacing energy-inefficient flats housing 63 students with 85 new units for students and 14 flats for commercial rent. Sustainability concerns have been key throughout the development, with important features including a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant which provides electricity as a by-product of heating (to 102 Chesterton Rd as well as to St Regis itself); photovoltaic panels to generate additional electricity, with surplus feeding into the national grid; orientation of the building to limit solar gain and thereby the need for mechanical ventilation; green roofs to improve air quality and reduce the risk of storm surges; and the reduction of embodied carbon by using concrete blockwork made from re-purposed blast furnace slag. Initial indications are that electricity consumption in the student units is down by 54%. Landscaping - much of it with native species - has replaced extensive tarmac. The project has also substantially increased the number of people accommodated on the site - itself an important way of limiting urban expansion.

The St Regis development, showing the green roofs and cycle racks, photovoltaic panels, and the CHP plantroom



3. Lower levels of occupancy of rooms and offices through much of the year meant energy consumption was reduced. However, because of social distancing considerations most staircases and houses were still occupied and required heating, so the reduction in gas use (4.7% compared with 2019-20) was less marked than the fall in electricity consumption (19.5%).



Annual Memorial Court electricity use 2012-21 (in kWh)

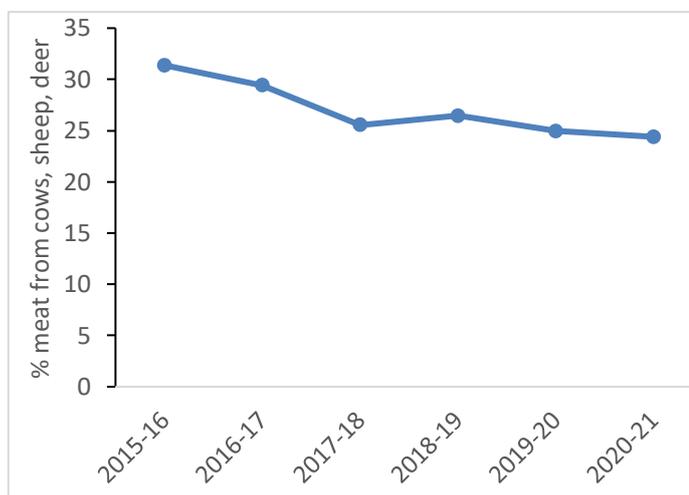
Electricity use in Memorial Court was by far the lowest recorded, down 31.3% on our 2012-13 baseline.

4. Deborah Hoy and the Estates team have now undertaken many of the actions identified in the last major review of the College's energy use (in 2011). Two important initiatives for the coming year will help guide us in achieving much more ambitious targets for the next two decades. One is the appointment of an external team to draw up a route map for achieving net-zero emissions. Funding for this has been approved by the Estates Committee, and work is planned to start in January. This will complement a final-year project by a Clare Engineering undergraduate (supervised by André Serrenho) who will quantify current emissions and identify interventions for achieving net-zero in key sectors by 2038 (in line with the Vice-Chancellor's October 2020 announcement for the University).

Catering

5. Lee Corke and his team have continued to work to improve the sustainability of the food service they provide. In particular, two out of three evening meal options served in the buttery are now vegetarian or vegan, and since May all Monday Formal Halls are now either vegan or vegetarian (on alternating weeks). UCS and Clare Goes Green have also once again run their VeganuClarey campaign, with 30 students signing up for weekly emails with links to recipes for cooking vegan meals in student kitchens.

6. The dramatically lower number of meals sold during the course of the pandemic means that data on overall purchases of meat are hard to interpret, but one encouraging sign has been the continued decline in the relative use of ruminant meat (beef, lamb and venison). This has a far higher greenhouse and land-use footprint than pig or poultry products, and is now down to 24.4% of all meat purchased. Meanwhile the University's Catering Service is now in its third year of offering no ruminant meat on its main menus.



The use of ruminant meat as a % of all meat purchases, 2015-21

7. In an effort to reduce waste from the takeaway service being provided in response to COVID restrictions, Lee and his team moved to recyclable food containers, and have recently requested that college members bring along their own containers and cutlery, as far as possible.

Waste

8. The MCR's Greencycle cupboard for enabling free-cycling of unwanted household items and stationery has been back in operation at Clare Court since September, with COVID-secure measures in place.

9. Efforts to collect food waste from student and staff kitchens are continuing, with bins then being taken away by Amey Cespa and converted via their in-vessel composting system into freely available soil conditioner (<https://wasteservices.amey.co.uk/where-we-work/cambridgeshire/waterbeach-waste-management-park/composting/>).



Food waste bin in use on Ashby Drive

Cycling

10. With the easing of lockdown measures in April, MCR Rep David Ewing sent MCR members information on cycling in Cambridge, including advice on getting a bike second-hand, maintenance, safe travel, and security. Cycle maintenance

equipment has been collectively sourced and later this month will be made available for members to borrow from the Greencycle cupboard, with the requisite COVID-secure measures in place. If restrictions have eased sufficiently, a cycle maintenance workshop event will be held at the start of next academic year.

Divestment

11. The MCR Committee, UCS and Clare Goes Green have this year intensified their campaign for fossil-fuel divestment and have supported the College's initiative to transfer its investment portfolio to a fund aligned with the goals of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. The news that 80% of Clare's portfolio will be transferred to the Amundi ESG Global Low Carbon Fund was welcomed, and both UCS and the MCR Committee have urged the College to transfer the remainder of its portfolio either to this fund or another of equivalent carbon-sensitivity.

Gardens

12. Kate Hargreaves and the Gardens team have succeeded in creating a new wild area in front of Memorial Court. This has proved fantastically successful, with many native plant species now established, including cornflower, corn chamomile, wood forget-me-not, cowslip and common spotted orchid. Many invertebrate members of College seem to approve too. The area is at its prime right now - so do pop over and take a look - and if you'd like to find out more please join Ed Turner for a guided walk there at 13:30 on Tue 22 June.



Memorial Court wild area
Photos: Kate Hargreaves

Committee members, 2020-21

Lizzie Ashworth (Conference and Marketing Associate)

Andrew Balmford (Chair)

André Cabrera Serrenho (Fellow)

Lee Corke (Catering Manager)

Jo Costin (Secretary)

David Ewing (MCR Rep)

William Foster (Fellow)

Andrew Friend (Fellow)

Kate Hargreaves (Head Gardener)

Deborah Hoy (Estates Director)

Ruairidh Maclean (UCS Rep, Easter)

Geppetto Price (Staff Rep)

Oscar Simms (UCS Rep, Michaelmas & Lent)

Jackie Searle (Accommodation Manager)

Tereza Zoumpalova (Clare Goes Green)