Chairperson’s personal comments/achievements:

This report covers the period July 2005 to July 2006.

Perhaps the most significant event was the production of the Committee’s desktop calendar. This high quality production, which was given free to all staff and postgraduates, received very positive feedback from many within and beyond the University. This was an important step in addressing one of our terms of reference - to raise awareness of environmental matters. My thanks to Colin Fitzpatrick for leading this project.

I am pleased to report that following request going back some years, the Committee has finally been allowed a budget of 5,000€. This will facilitate our work without the need for the administrative complication of applying for funding for particular purposes. I would however acknowledge the support we have had in the past from the President’s fund.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Downer for his ongoing support for the Committee and to wish him well for the future.

The Committee, in conjunction with Limerick County Council, was successful in applying for funding from the EPA for a paper reduction project of 30 months duration. The Local Authority Prevention Demonstration (LAPD) programme seeks to substantially reduce the amount of paper used in both institutions and will culminate in the production of an e-guide to be presented to other local authorities and third level institutions. Again, the efforts of Colin Fitzpatrick in putting together the application are much appreciated.

The draft Environmental Policy has been substantially reworked and will be resubmitted to the appropriate bodies for approval.

It is to be regretted that the University no longer sources its electricity from Airtricity, the ‘green’ energy suppliers. Unfortunately they were unwilling to tender this time, due to their wish to use the limited amount of power they have available to supply a larger number of smaller customers. It is hoped that this situation may change in future.
The twice-yearly meetings with management, which began in 2003, continued to prove a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas and information and as last year, I am including the reports of these below. I would like to welcome Ailish Quinlivan, the new Financial Controller, to these meetings.

2. Members/officers

Tony Kay agreed to continue as Chair and Colin Fitzpatrick took on the duties of Acting Chair while Tony was unavailable due to his hip replacement. Maria McHale and Patricia Conlan jointly acted as secretary.

Brian Considine, Colin Fitzgerald, Tom Harrington, Vincent Warfield, Colette Ryan, Martin Leahy and Toshko Zhelev continued as members. Aine O’Malley replaced Grainne O’Malley, Plassey Village. Joachim Fischer, who had been Secretary for many years, retired. Thanks to Joachim for his contributions over the years. Paul Butler joined. Rónán Kennedy, School of Law, joined in September 2005 but announced his resignation at the end of the academic year. He was a great contributor to the Committee and was particularly active in the Sustainable Education Sub-Group*

Maria McHale’s replacement as representative of the Postgraduate Student Association, is Maja Niebrzegowska. Alannah Turner replaced Anne Sheridan as SU representative. Thanks and best wishes to both outgoing student reps.

Thanks are again due to Eugene Benilov who has continued as before to update the website, promptly and efficiently, on request.

3. Sub groups

The Committee operates more or less as before with focused sub-groups and plenary meetings of the full committee every four weeks or so. These groups are active or dormant according to the importance attached to particular themes and the interests of members as well as the time the members can squeeze from other demands. Some of these groups have been less active than heretofore as other, more particular tasks were undertaken such as the calendar and the LAPD paper reduction project. The groups which were active during the period under review were Waste and Transport.

4. Meetings with Management

As in previous years, representatives of the Committee met with management twice, in January and May 2006. Reports of these meetings are attached below.

Minutes

Board/Committee: Environmental Committee/Management
Venue Presidents Office
Date/Time 20th January 2006, 10.00am
TK suggested that it might be useful to have Ailish Quinlivan attend future meetings and RD and BH agreed that for budgetary matters it would be useful.

TK raised the issue of an annual budget for the committee, stating that when requests had been made for funding for particular purposes in the past that they had not been refused, however the method of drawing down the funding was involved and time consuming. RD expressed surprise that a budget allowance of €5,000 had not been made available to the committee following the 2005 meeting. RD felt that the budget should be made available and will discuss this with Ailish Quinlivan.

TK requested information as to the progress of the Environmental policy document drafted by J. Callaghan. BH stated that it had been sent to Executive Committee but had been returned, as it was not appropriate for BH to submit the document. BH stated that he would be reluctant to draw up an environmental policy document for the physical development as he felt that such a document might be used in a negative fashion. RD and TK suggested that such a document could be useful as a guideline. RD suggested that, for example, a statement of intent regarding energy consumption of future buildings should be included. RD stated that he would enquire about the progress of the original policy document. Agreed that BH will compile a statement relating to physical development and ML and CF to compile research and teaching section for document. These will be brought together to form a new draft policy.

TK stated that the annual energy bill for UL stands at €2.5m and with the appointment of an energy manager, an estimated 10% of this bill could be saved. BH stated that €1.78m was electricity and €0.625 was gas of which €0.64m in electricity and €0.324m in gas is charged out to campus companies, leaving an annual bill of €1.5m. ML stated that 10% was still a significant saving. BH stated according to the Dublin study 5% would be more realistic. He said that there was a proposed post before HR that had a 50% energy management element included. The progress of that post was unknown. TK to write to Ailish Quinlivan to present the arguments in favour of such a post.

RD suggested that our environmental credentials on campus were good but could be enhanced; he suggested that the provision of a wind turbine on or near campus, used for both energy generation and research would be useful. TK suggested that PV cells for lighting have been installed in educational premises in the UK. TK stated that in the 2005 budget, €65m had been made available for renewable energy projects but that details were not available as yet. Again an Energy Manager could investigate these possibilities.

BH stated that the present electricity supplier is An Bord Gais. Eintrinsicity, who were suppliers last year, were unable to supply for this year.

RD stated that he would like to have a survey of all flora and fauna on campus. BH said that he was at present looking at the possibility of producing a book covering the flora and fauna and was looking for a suitable author.
BH stated that a survey of energy usage of all new buildings is routinely carried out between the conceptual and final design stages and that any grants available are utilised.

TK requested that energy studies should be made available to the members of the environmental committee, RD agreed.

Minutes

Board/Committee: Environmental Committee/Management
Venue Presidents Office
Date/Time 30th May 2006, 10.00am
Attendance John O’Connor/Brian Hand/Ailish Quinlivan/Tony Kay / Colin Fitzpatrick/Rónán Kennedy

Budget; TK reminded the meeting of the discussion which took place at the previous meeting when RD had expressed surprise that a budget allowance of 5000€ had not been made available to the committee and had undertaken to discuss this matter with AQ. This did not happen. TK also restated that over a period of 14 months a total of 4000€ had been made available to the committee from the President’s discretionary funds in response to seven separate applications for particular purposes. It would be administratively simpler if a budget were given which the committee itself would administer. Agreed that AQ will discuss this with Eamon Cregann and give a response by mid June.

Environmental Policy; BH stated that he has no difficulty with item 7, the section which deals with the Campus. There was some discussion as to whether there should be separate policies for campus issues and teaching and research. This suggestion had been discussed before. It was proposed that while the proposed policy might be the ‘overarching’ document, parts of this might be incorporated elsewhere, for example in the Development Plan. It was agreed that the policy would be brought to Executive Committee in the near future.

Energy Manager; BH would take a proposal for an Energy Manager (which had been discussed at the previous meeting) to the recruitment committee when he felt there was a reasonable chance of success.

Energy in Buildings; BH stated that, while he would be delighted to have an Energy Manager, the potential energy savings in buildings were sometimes exaggerated – that they were trying hard to reduce gas consumption in the Arena in order to stay within a tariff threshold and that this was proving very difficult. TK stated that in other situations there were easy savings to be made, for example the lights in the Lonsdale atrium are permanently switched on. TK said that if there was an Energy Manager, one of the responsibilities would be to monitor what grants were available for energy conservation/renewable energy measures. BH replied that for every new building consultants were asked to look into energy issues including the availability of grants. At present there is a grant of 25% from SEI for wood chip or wood pellet boilers up to 1 MW and a feasibility study grant of 45% of costs up to 5000€. BH said that they
had looked into wood pellet heating for the Kemmy Business School building but that
the storage space required, together with the size of the boiler and the need for it to be
located on the ground floor, made it unacceptable architecturally. TK said that in
countries where this technology is widely used such as Finland, Sweden and Austria,
architects had no problems incorporating the space; and also that the amount of
storage required was dependant on the frequency of delivery. CF mentioned a hotel
in Cork which is heated by wood fuel. BH said that geothermal heating had also been
considered but that the payback period was unacceptably long. TK said that as these
technologies develop and the prices of conventional fuels rise, the payback situation
will change. The energy conservation project, e3, in which four Dublin colleges are
targeting a reduction of 10% in energy use was discussed. SEI is prepared to support
similar initiatives elsewhere and a possible ‘Atlantic Alliance’ was discussed which
might involve UL, LIT and UCG, however BH would prefer to have an Energy
Manager on board before investigating this possibility further. CF said that the time
is rapidly approaching when the economic arguments for energy saving technologies
will become more compelling than the environmental ones.

AOB; There was some discussion on the role of the Committee and whether or not the
management side ought to raise items for the agenda for these meetings. There was
no conclusion reached on this matter.

5. Proposals for Management

We continue to encourage the appointment of an Energy Manager which we believe
would be self funding.

We hope that the Environmental Policy will be adopted.

We ask management to facilitate the sharing of savings resulting from any particular
energy conservation project.

We expect the University to continue to bring all possible influence to bear on local
authorities in seeking improvements to public transport services and infrastructure.

6. Subgroup Reports

1. Transport Sub-Group

Members: Paddy Healy, Vincent Warfield, Joachim Fischer (Convenor) and Gordon
Young.

The transport sub-group was mainly inactive for the majority of this year, however
one of the initiatives undertaken in previous years was realised in April with the
completion of the re-configuration of the road layout at the main entrance and the
inclusion of the cycle lanes in this layout. Cycle lanes now stretch from the
Brookfield apartments through to the campus, a cycle lane was also recently included
in the pavement renewal between the Kilmurry Lodge and Plassey Park road. The
inclusion of cycle lanes in new road planning and in road upgrades is something the
group has lobbied for, for some time.
Work for the future will include studying novel methods of encouraging members of the campus community to adopt car-pooling as a viable alternative to individual car use by outlining benefits such as cost saving, reduced pollution reduced congestion and the maintenance of the green campus.

2. Waste Sub-Group

Members: Jeremy Callaghan (Convenor), Brian Considine, Paul Butler and Vincent Warfield. When Jeremy left early in 2006 Brian Considine took over as acting convenor, with Paul Butler taking this over for a short period.

This year built on previous years successes. The compactor and cardboard log facility are back in action, just in time for the Winter season; while the successful paper collection is being examined to see how it could be more effective. The Buildings Division is proposing a new scheme of collection with the aim of promoting a greater awareness of our individual waste. This system will require Buildings to provide a paper tray in each staff member’s room specifically for paper. Once full, the occupant will be asked to bring their tray’s contents to a central repository which will be located at various locations and floors in the building. This will be rolled out on a building by building basis and upon agreement, is set to begin in early 2007.

While the above efforts are to be lauded, there still remain many areas where waste could be tackled on several levels. The following are some possible waste preventions:

- Ensure that all printers bought through the University have a duplex facility and maximise the amount of duplex printing
- Eliminate the use of polystyrene cups and plates on campus. There are more environmentally friendly alternatives and ‘what’s wrong with washing’?
- Provide incentives for people using their own cups for coffee, tea etc
- Place timers on all lights left on in the university to turn off at midnight (these can be easily overridden by somebody turning them on again as necessary)
- Consider phasing out traditional turn taps with push taps for all washrooms, which automatically turn off.

In this consumer society of ours, it is easier to continue as we are, than to change. As energy resources and waste become more costly, new, better and imaginative ways of conserving will continue to come to the fore. The Waste Sub-Group will continue to lobby for and support change.

3. Energy Sub-group

Members: Martin Leahy (convenor), Brian Considine, JJ Leahy, Toshko Zhelev, Tony Kay
This group has been largely inactive, but a successful conference Limerick Clare "Energy Solutions" was organised by the Limerick/Clare Energy Agency (which is based on campus) and held in UL May 18-19th.

4. Sustainable Development in Education Sub-Group

Members: Colin Fitzpatrick (convenor), Rosie Gowran, Bernadette O'Regan, Tom Harrington, Bernadette Connaughton, Lisa O’Malley, Sheila Killian, Rónán Kennedy.

The group submitted a proposal entitled "An Interdisciplinary Vision of Education for Sustainable Development in UL" to the teaching innovation fund in January. This was not successful. The group has not met since January. Arising from the work of the Sub-Group, Colin led a project which produced an environmental calendar. This was distributed to the campus community, and was very well received. Each month was sponsored – and sponsorship was sought by Tony, Colin and Jeremy.