

## Peterborough, the Environment City

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The City of Peterborough is the home of the UK's largest cluster of environmental goods and services companies. It has been successively an Iron Age and Roman settlement, the site of an important medieval abbey in the Fens with a head of navigation location on the River Nene, and a centre of engineering excellence. Perkins Engines founded in the City in 1932 is now the world's largest producer of diesel engines. For a period Peterborough was Europe's fastest growing city

Modern Peterborough is still expanding to meet the demand for new houses. It is a regional centre for commerce, industry, transport and leisure, and home to a community of diverse cultures. The city is surrounded by contrasting countryside, gently undulating limestone and clay hills to the west and the flat expanse of the unique Fens to the east. Once wetlands, and the haunt of those resisting central rule, the Fens have been drained. Much of the resulting land is now below sea level

Much of the City's prosperity arose from the substantial railway engineering industry and brick works based around local clay quarries, whilst farming also provided employment as large food-processing companies bought up local produce grown on rich Fenland soils. The farming, engineering and brick-making industries are still important elements of the local economy, but the early history left other legacies including a strong and growing focus on the importance of the local environment.

According to Trevor Gibson, Director of Environment Capital at Opportunity Peterborough, "the City is a place which prides itself on putting environmental and sustainability first. It aspires to be a role model and leader in all aspects of sustainable development." Products produced in the City today include large wind turbines.

### Sustainability

Peterborough's environmental credentials go back a long way. It was designated one of four UK Environment Cities in 1993, establishing the Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) to deliver a wide range of environmental initiatives across all sectors. PECT has established a strong and growing reputation for innovation and success through projects such as the Investors in the Environment, "Greeniversity" and the "Forest for Peterborough".

The city's ambition to grow both substantially and sustainably, coupled with a clear and renewed focus on the global challenge of climate change, led city leaders to step up their game and, in November 2008 at the PECT's 15<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations, key partners signed a pledge committing them to creating the UK's Environment Capital. According to Trevor Gibson, "Environment Capital is about the way we manage resources and build our future economy. The city's sustainability focus provides solutions that drive and support improvements in health, and on-going work to build strong and safe communities, whilst growing the local economy."

As a consequence, “Creating the UK’s Environment Capital” has been adopted as one of four priorities contained within Peterborough’s Sustainable Community Strategy. For Trevor Gibson “In short, for the people of Peterborough being the UK’s Environment Capital will mean living in a city and surrounding villages where quality of life constantly improves through the adoption of sustainable solutions to the issues the city faces today and tomorrow.”

Other building blocks include the creation of an Environment Capital Cabinet portfolio and the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee as part of the City Council’s decision making structure. The strategy which has extensive city-wide support has been achieved through clear political direction and the efforts of a committed, cross-sector Environment Capital Partnership.

The city is currently leading on some areas of environmental activity. For example, it has the highest recycling rates of any unitary authority. It has also received global recognition for its unique “Peterborough Model” - a 3D model of a sustainable city which includes energy, water, waste, transport, and social infrastructure. As a result of bus/cycle travel choice, electric vehicle, green buildings, open spaces, climate change, carbon, renewable energy and other initiatives, the city is gaining a significant reputation for its environmental innovation, experience and credentials.

### Sustainability and Health

Peterborough has long recognised that health, quality of life and sustainability share many of the same roots. As a consequence a significant portion of the city’s health and environmental agendas have been aligned, under the overall framework of the Sustainable Community Strategy and Single Delivery Plan, to support people in making changes to their behaviours in ways that will deliver long term benefits to both individuals and the environment.

According to David Harris, Chairman of NHS Peterborough, “Helping people and organisations to live more healthy and sustainable lives, reducing energy consumption, and using our resources more innovatively, efficiently and effectively are key local programmes. The “Live Healthy, Live Green” initiative ‘ is targeting specific areas including the links between the drive to promote exercise for health with the outdoor enjoyment of nature and sustainable transport, between healthy eating and growing/selecting local, seasonal food and the links between fuel poverty, health and wellbeing and the environment.”

### Sustainable Transport

Peterborough’s sustainable transport work is worthy of particular note. As one of three Department for Transport Sustainable Transport Demonstration Towns, with Worcester and Darlington and branded locally as TravelChoice, the city has facilitated a significant shift towards more sustainable travel modes with a corresponding reduction in car usage. In addition to an increase in bus passengers of 35% in five years significantly more people are walking or cycling to work. Less than a quarter of students are now taken to school in a car. The changes have benefited access to essential services, healthier lifestyles and road safety. The former was recognised in 2008 with the city council being awarded Beacon Status in the Accessibility theme.

Peterborough City Hospital has collaborated with the City Council on a bus initiative and uses an electric vehicle between hospital sites. Twenty three new bicycle shelters are being built for cycling to work campaign. Within the new hospital there is sensor controlled lighting in admin areas and sensor controlled taps in public areas to reduce carbon footprint.

For Cllr Samantha Dalton, Peterborough's Cabinet Member for Environment Capital: "the Council's role in encouraging a shift towards more sustainable forms of travel is crucial to our future success as Environment Capital. We work with a wide range of partners to ensure that safe, effective and healthy alternatives are accessible to all. We have been very pleased with the public response to our efforts but there is always more to be done!"

### Sustainability and the Economy

The city's strong environment goods and services sector (the "Enviro-Cluster") currently comprises 380 businesses of varying sizes and is widely regarded as the biggest in the UK. Based in the centrally located Eco-Innovation Centre, there is emerging evidence that this sector is "bucking" the economic downturn trend and is continuing to expand. The cluster is playing an increasingly significant part in Peterborough's economy as well as playing an increasingly influential role in a range of European projects where learning is actively shared between European partners.

Local businesses are supported in making their own activities more sustainable through Peterborough Environment City Trust's "Investors in the Environment" initiative which provides businesses with a framework for cutting their environmental impact and an accreditation stamp for achieving different levels of reduction – bronze, silver and green. Over 400 businesses have pledged their support for the scheme with 39 currently working towards achieving accreditation.

Participants measure their environmental impact and are guided through making reductions in areas such as water use, energy use, and the amount of waste produced. The scheme focuses on practical ways businesses can implement green changes to make it as easy as possible for them to take part. Not only does this help the environment both locally and globally, it also saves money and improves the participant companies' reputation, profile, viability and competitive advantage.

Unlike most environmental accreditations, Investors in the Environment takes a bold approach insisting that actual environmental savings are made, rather than just having the right paperwork in place. Rachel Huxley, Chief Executive of the Peterborough Environment City Trust believes: "The response to our Investors in the Environment campaign has been hugely encouraging. More and more of our local businesses are seeing the commercial and environmental benefits of reducing their environmental footprint. The cumulative effect of these reductions coupled with our work with communities across the city play a key part in the cities Environment Capital work."

### Sustainability and Education

The city is also up-skilling local residents through its unique “Greeniversity”, again the brainchild of PECT. The aim of Greeniversity is to promote informal adult education and to encourage local people to learn 'green skills'. The initiative offers a range of free green courses from knitting to bike maintenance and from healthy cooking to insulating your own loft. Classes will be held across the city in many different locations. It connects people who have green skills with others who want to learn green skills. The teachers are essentially local people willing to share their know-how in order to inspire others to learn something new.

Steve Magennis, Chair of Peterborough Environment City Trust said: “Working at the grass roots level in the city is key, and the Greeniversity plays to the cities environmental strengths. There is always strong support for our work and the passing on of knowledge in this way is a great way of encouraging greener and healthier lifestyles.” Ninety percent of the City’s schools are now Eco-schools. At tertiary and higher education level three Universities and a Regional College now offer a range of courses in the City that are relevant to its aspirations.

### Sustainability and Future Growth

McKinsey’s the management consulting firm thinks that Peterborough will be the quickest growing city in England – with 40% growth in GDP - by 2025. According to Trevor Gibson “Such a growth rate presents a number of significant challenges from a sustainability perspective. Peterborough is no different. Finding mechanisms and delivery models that accelerate the pace of change towards more sustainable cities will be crucial if we are to deal with climate change and resource depletion.”

Cities are technically, politically, socially and environmentally complex. There are in-built tensions between the agencies, authorities and public companies that administer and provide ‘life support’ services. A local authority, for instance, is a key partner for change in a city but also a regulator of many activities. Similarly, statutory agencies are often local partners who have to deliver their own centrally set national objectives. A private sector utility provides services and is often regulated by both the local authority and statutory agency (but accountable to its shareholders).

Commissioned by Peterborough City Council and Opportunity Peterborough, IBM, Royal Haskoning and Green Ventures have collaborated on an innovative Peterborough Model pilot project to maximise Peterborough’s current and future sustainability. The ultimate aim of the project is to create a three-dimensional, online resource to provide a full picture of the city’s environmental performance and act as a platform for collaboration, using existing data on energy, water, transport, waste, the natural environment and environmental businesses based in the city. The work built on an Integrated Growth Study and resultant Energy and Water Cycle Studies.

The Peterborough Model visualises the environmental performance of the city and is a platform for improved collaboration and partnership working between the many public and private sector organisations working or operating assets within the city. At the stakeholder and community levels it will lead to more efficient and effective decision making towards a more sustainable future.

Gr. Uff. Cllr Marco Cereste, Leader of Peterborough City Council understands what is required: “We recognise that the successful cities of the future will be smarter, more sustainable cities ensuring a good quality of life to people and developing innovative approaches to addressing challenges such as Climate Change. The Peterborough Model is the cornerstone of this work and is already helping us to work more closely with partners as we enter an exciting phase of the city’s development.”

#### Lessons for Business Leaders

With companies like Thomas Cook travel, Perkins Engines, Meadow Foods, leading financial services businesses, and large distribution warehouses of IKEA and other companies in Peterborough, the City is not short of business leaders. They have learned the value of partnerships and collaboration. The Greater Peterborough Partnership shared vision is for a truly sustainable City that is the urban centre of a thriving sub regional community of villages and market towns, a healthy, safe and exciting place to live, work and visit, famous as the environment capital of the UK.

The City’s experience is of public, private and voluntary sector agendas being linked by cross cutting themes. Trevor Gibson feels that, “For Peterborough, becoming the Environment Capital will create a city which encourages and supports its people in making significant and real improvements to their quality of life. Through this it aims to deliver truly sustainable growth, ensuring a cleaner, greener, healthier and more vibrant Peterborough for the future. Success in this ambition will be directly related to the support and actions of every citizen, business and organisation in the city”.