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A pioneering renewable energy initiative between Solarcentury and the University of East London has just been officially launched by the Energy Minister, Malcolm Wicks.



On Monday 10 March, Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks visited London's Docklands to launch a pioneering renewable energy initiative at the University of East London (UEL).

We have teamed up with UEL to install solar photovoltaic panels and wind turbine technology at its Docklands campus, as part of the government's Low Carbon Buildings Programme.

130 high-efficiency solar photovoltaic (pv) Sharp panels have been installed on the roof of UEL's new Business School and Library, located on the waterfront of the Royal Albert Dock.

The installation has the potential to generate 17,430 kWh of electricity, enough to power the 800 computers and workstations in the building, or equivalent to the amount of electricity that the average student would use to watch TV or surf the Internet continuously for nearly 10 years!

The system also monitors the level of electricity being produced, and links to a screen display in UEL's Knowledge Dock café which shows the current and total levels of energy generated and carbon saved.

Malcolm Wicks MP, Minister of State for Energy, said: "Our Government has targeted a demanding reduction of at least 60% in CO₂ levels by 2050. Such a high target requires a wide-ranging strategy, which will certainly incorporate renewable energy.

"Many of the solutions to global warming involve big ideas, big projects, and big institutions, but I think it's very important that we engage and inspire our citizens. Smaller-scale micro-generation projects like the one here at the University of East London will play a highly significant role in the fight against climate change.

"I'm particularly keen to see such projects established in educational institutions, and am pleased that the Government's Low Carbon Buildings Programme has been able to provide funding. There is still money available, and we're inviting applications from homeowners, charities and the public sector to help more organisations go green."

UEL's Sustainability Research Institute and Solarcentury are also installing a number of 2.5kW Proven wind turbines on campus. The first has now been set up at the adjacent Knowledge Dock

Centre, UEL's enterprise development service, and will help generate electricity for the business incubator units and specialist laboratories housed there.

The new technology will save over 10 tonnes of CO2 every year, and will contribute to UEL's targets under phase 3 of the national Higher Education Carbon Management scheme. Supported by The Carbon Trust, the university is set to cut its total carbon footprint by up to 20% by 2012.



The project was partly funded by the European Regional Development Fund in 2007, and is part of phase one of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) Low Carbon Buildings Programme, which provides grants for the installation of micro-generation technologies across a range of buildings including the education, public and not for profit sectors.

Professor Martin Everett, Vice Chancellor of the University of East London, said: "Sustainability is a vital part of our agenda and increasingly important aspect of all university operations. This project is a fantastic launch-pad for our carbon reduction strategy; as well as the real carbon and cost savings it will generate, it also serves as a visible and tangible platform to communicate the importance of sustainability, and promote responsible practice among our students, staff, partners and visitors."

Kenny Tang, a member of the UEL Board of Governors, has been described as "Asia's Al Gore" by Strategic Direction magazine. Kenny said: "The University of East London is a beacon of innovation and regeneration in East London. It is my hope that the UK education sector, with its undoubted array of scientific, social, architectural, financial and business expertise, will turn to the issue of climate change with such vigour and energy to bring us the solutions, the technologies, the concepts to address the challenges we face – not just for the UK but for the many countries around the world."

Over forty invited guests attended the UEL launch, including Samantha Heath, Director of the London Sustainability Exchange and Stephen Timms, MP for East Ham, a former Energy Minister and current Minister of State for Employment and Welfare Reform.

Jeremy Leggett, Executive Chairman of Solarcentury, said: "It is always wonderful to come to any installation of solar panels, perhaps particularly so at educational establishments. The weather's pretty terrible today, but it actually offers a tremendous example of how solar energy still works well even on the most horrible days.

"At Solarcentury, we refer to the 'seeing is believing' effect; we realize that people need to see solar energy in action in order to understand the potential of renewable technology. I very much hope that this installation will inspire generations of students at the University of East London."



The Sustainability Research Institute was set up at the University of East London in 2005. It researches and develops innovative eco-efficient technologies and processes in architecture and the built environment, civil engineering, new materials technologies, GIS, pipeline technology, renewable energy, flood defence, environmental science and biodiversity conservation.

The Institute is focused on sustainable development projects around London and the Thames Gateway. Director Darryl Newport and his team are working with a range of partners and consultancy clients including Aggregate Industries, Barking Riverside, Centre for Alternative Technology, East London Business Alliance, English Partnerships, the Environment Agency, Gunpowder Park, Knowledge East, London Development Agency, London Hydrogen Partnership, London Sustainability Exchange, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation and the Olympic Delivery Authority.

Darryl Newport, Director of UEL's Sustainability Research Institute, said: "Renewable energy is a vital element of our sustainable development strategy, not only for our university, but for Thames Gateway as a whole. Solarcentury have done an excellent job, working with our team on-site to design the system and manage installation."

"Today's launch gives a massive boost to our Carbon Management programme, and together with other projects, will enable us to conduct ongoing research and develop innovative eco-efficient technologies not only for our own campuses, but developments throughout our region."

UEL's Docklands campus is London's first new university campus to be developed in 50 years. It was short-listed for Building of the Year 2001 for its energy efficient design, and the new waterfront Student Village, opened in 2007, is engineered to minimise heat and water wastage. The Children's Garden nursery was created by UEL architecture staff and students in 2006 from recycled prefabricated units.