

Investors in the Environment: Case Study

Education Training Collective



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collective

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ABOUT ETC.



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Across the Tees Valley, the Education Training Collective (Etc.) - which includes Stockton Riverside College, Redcar and Cleveland College, NETA Training, Bede Sixth Form College, and Innersummit - has been shaping futures and building skills. In recent years, the college group has prioritised reducing their environmental impact across the collective, as part of the Investors in the Environment programme.

At a time when the Department for Education (DfE) is calling on all education settings to appoint sustainability leads and deliver climate action plans by 2025, the Etc. has already taken bold, strategic steps. In response to increasing expectations from students, communities, and national policy, the organisation recognised that sustainability needed to be more than a checklist; it had to be woven into the culture of their organisation.

Partnering with Investors in the Environment (iE) and supported by Genee Consulting, The Etc. found a structure that not only guided them through compliance, but helped ignite a cultural shift. The Etc. is now accredited at Green Level and has a thorough Environmental Management System (EMS) that is delivering tangible change.

Education settings are an important cog in the sustainability wheel, as schools are at the centre of their communities. It's important to use this position to address the climate crisis, the need for action, and demonstrate what changes can be made and how. The Etc. understood that to truly serve their students and community, they had to equip them not just with academic knowledge but with the tools, awareness, and inspiration to be stewards of the planet.

Journey with iiE

The Etc.'s sustainability journey has involved strategic integration and measurable impact. They have a comprehensive Sustainability Strategy, aligned with national Net Zero goals, which has guided the organisation in embedding environmental principles into governance structures, curriculum development, staff inductions, and day-to-day operations. This strong foundation enabled the group to make data driven decisions including regular monitoring of energy, waste, and travel, and revealed a 50% reduction in paper use and an 18% drop in overall waste.

With clearly defined, SMART targets, the Etc. transformed sustainability from an aspirational goal into tangible action. A cultural shift has also taken root across the organisation. From student led reuse initiatives to staff engagement campaigns and community events, sustainability has become a shared, lived value earning the Etc. the 2024 iiE Sustainability Influencer Award.

Supporting this momentum, the Etc. has implemented a robust travel plan based on stakeholder input, alongside SmartCarbon reporting that provides detailed insight into emissions performance and helps shape their path to decarbonisation. These efforts are complemented by a strong focus on circular thinking, with improved waste audits and recycling practices aligned to the waste hierarchy, and new initiatives underway to expand food waste recycling and promote a more circular economy across campuses.

The Etc.'s success story illustrates why iiE is more than just an accreditation, it's a catalyst for meaningful, long-term change. For multi-site organisations like the Etc., iiE offered a practical roadmap, a shared language for sustainability, and the confidence to meet evolving regulations. More than that, it created momentum, energising staff, empowering students, and embedding sustainability into every decision.

By working with iiE, the Etc. is now not only compliant with the DfE's strategy but ahead of the curve as well as leading by example in the education sector and beyond.

What's next?

With Green Level accreditation in hand, the Etc. is already looking forward:

- Reviewing long term carbon budgets and Net Zero trajectories
- Embedding sustainable procurement group wide
- Scaling food waste recycling
- Engaging supply chains and developing biodiversity action plans



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The Etc. has had a great experience of the Investors in the Environment process, and this is largely due to the ongoing support from Genee.

Going from 'bronze' to 'green' has involved a significant amount of learning and effort, but this has been a pleasure since the start of the process. Jo has a wealth of knowledge when advising on initiatives and evaluating progress made, and a warm and approachable nature which makes audits an opportunity to showcase our positive work in the sustainability arena.

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**Erika Marshall, Group Marketing Director
Education Training Collective.**

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