

# Beckettsphere Case Study



This project case study template will help you to summarise the scope and impact of your project. You should fill it in as fully as possible and upload it to your One Drive folder. Your auditor will use this case study to assess your project and decide your final award level.

Name of Team: Geography and Planning

Project Title: 'Making a difference' – Developing an active learning community

Project Level you are aiming for: Platinum

## Project summary:

The Geography and Planning Green Impact Team is a cross-course student and staff team that aims to create an ongoing and lasting learning community in our subject area. It is comprised of 5 members of staff and 8 undergraduate students ranging from L4 to L6. As geographers and planners, sustainability is at the heart of what we teach and learn. We wanted to ensure that this set of principles was not just knowledge but was directed into some form of social action that would benefit not only our students, but the wider community. As such, our plan for this year is a threestrand approach that incorporates at least four of the programme's criteria, namely, to support a local charity, to support biodiversity, to foster sustainability with students and to support mental health. These deliberately overlap and the underlying aim is to demonstrate that our geographical learning needs to be translated into action to make a real difference

## Measurable Outcomes of the project:

Outcomes are the specific changes, learnings or benefits that came about as a result of the project (i.e. what you achieved). This could be (for example) a reduction in waste sent to landfill, an increase in use of sustainable transport, an increase in the amount of vegan food eaten at team lunches etc. You should include measures wherever possible.

- **Winter Ball Charity Fundraising Event** – the event was open to all staff and students on our courses emphasizing the importance of an inclusive learning community and took place on Monday 31st January. There was a good mix of staff and students who attended the event (Figure 1a and 1b) and was enjoyed by all. The event raised £315 for the Love Leeds Parks Charity through the purchase of tickets to the event (Figure 2a). We sold 42 tickets for the event (tickets were sold through Eventbrite). Our donation has provided needed resources for the Love Leeds Park charity which will be used in the upkeep and development of the park areas within Leeds. Figure 2b shows the charity's response to this. It demonstrates clearly how touched they were by the student's dedication and support for the charity and its work at maintaining these important green spaces in our city. This is something which we felt can be replicated by other departments. It really nurtured a positive feeling among staff and students and produced an event that could be enjoyed by students living and studying on our campuses and at the same time clearly benefits the wider Leeds city community.

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Figure 1a and 1b: Staff and students at the event



Figure 2a and 2b: 'Love Leeds Parks' response to the donation



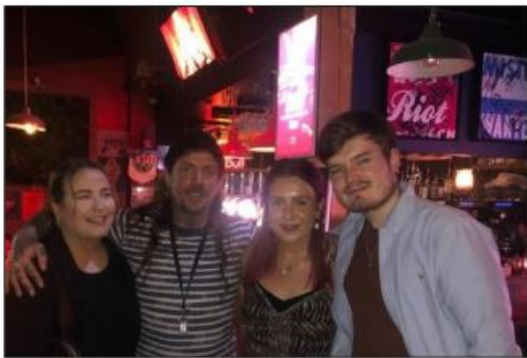
- **Supported a local business** – in organizing the Winter Ball, the team deliberately used a locally run business to host the event. This was very important to us all given the recent difficulties that the hospitality industry has been through and also the importance of supporting venues that are very student centred. As a result, the event took place at 'The 212 Café & Bar' Brewery Place in Leeds (Figure 3a and 3b). The event enabled us to put £525 into the local economy (cost of the venue and food for the event).

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Figure 3a: Winter Ball venue – ‘The 212 Café & Bar’



Figure 3b: The owner of ‘The 212 Café & Bar’ (2nd from left) with 3 student members of the green impact team



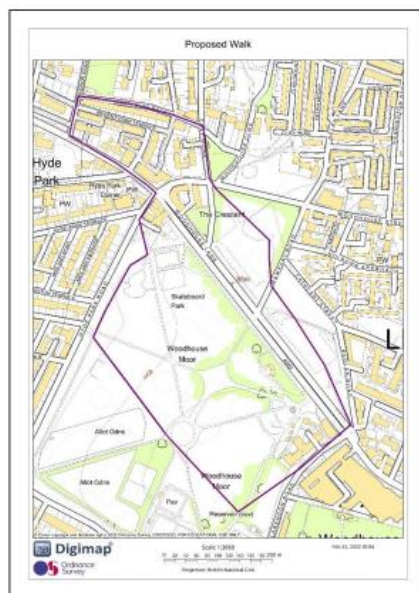
- **Gorilla gardening in Hyde Park area of Leeds** – this is an on-going part of our work. Seed Bombs had already been purchased but after doing some research it became apparent that we cannot do the seed bombing until after the danger of frost. This means that there will be a delay until March for the walk to allow for this. The route can be planned- Figure 4a and b show the aerial map and Digimap showing the proposed route. A pilot walk will take place in the next week or two to check the route for safety and accessibility for all. But, the actual walk has had to be delayed with a provisional date of Monday 28th March or Tuesday 29th March depending on weather forecasts nearer the time

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Figure 4a: Aerial map (Google Maps)



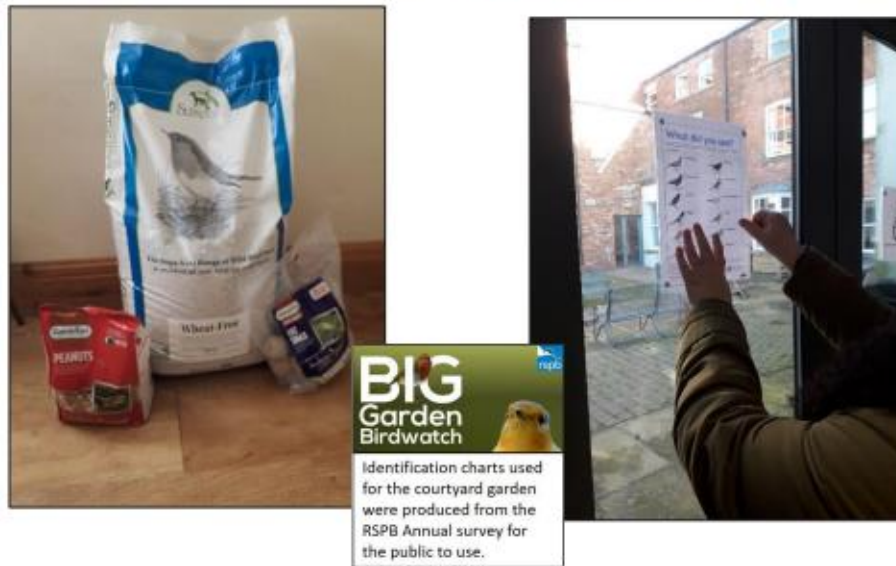
Figure 4b: Digimap of the proposed walking route



- **Developing the sustainability garden in Northern Terrace** – this is an on-going project. Staff have purchased bird seed, nuts, and fat balls (Figure 5a) and some feeders and stand for the courtyard. The extreme wind issues have delayed the erection of the feeders until next week. Students in the Green Impact team put up laminated bird identification sheets from the RSPB annual bird survey (Figure 5b).

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Figure 5a and 5b: developing bird feeding facilities in Northern Terrace



- **Fostered sustainability with students.** Our new first year (Level 4) module developed thinking in two different areas: a good appreciation of the importance of greenspaces in our built environment for well-being, but also the need to make them safe and inclusive spaces to be enjoyed by all. It also developed an understanding of the wider problems of balancing increasing access to the countryside, witnessed particularly following the national lockdown, with protecting the local communities and the natural environment. Additional evidence is provided in the form of two project briefs appended separately. The module incorporated two field visits one for each project (Figure 6a and 6b) and feedback from students demonstrated that they appreciated the relevance of these field visits to their learning and gained a lot in their understanding (Figure 7).

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Figure 6a: West Stray and the walking route for the Harrogate field trip – walked in daylight and at night



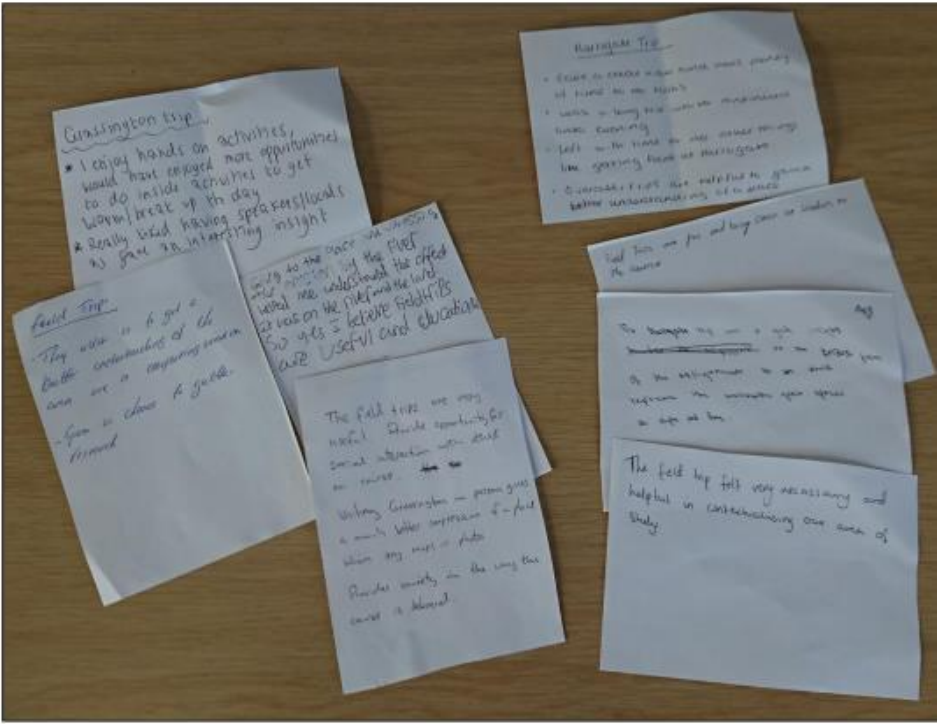
Figure 6b: Field work in Grassington village and down by the river



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Figure 7: Level 4 student feedback about the field visits to Grassington (Yorkshire Dales National Park) and Harrogate (Greenspaces of the Strays and the Valley Gardens)



The level 6 dissertation writing retreat showed students the value of incorporating nature into everyday life and how this can help with their mental and physical wellbeing. The trip is open to all students on our courses as part of their dissertation module. The students and staff spent time studying and writing together on specific aspects of the dissertation, and also went on substantial walks in the surrounding national park: Janet’s Foss, Gordale Scar, Malham Tarn (Figure 7a, 7b and 7c). As the feedback demonstrates, this is something that everyone enjoyed and all benefit from the different parts of the programme that are on offer (Figure 8). It is also a time to enhance our staff student learning community again with staff teaching and also walking and relaxing with the students.

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Figure 7a. level 6 students and staff enjoying a group walk to Janet's Foss (Malham) during their dissertation writing retreat



Figure 7b: students and staff on the limestone pavement above Malham Cove



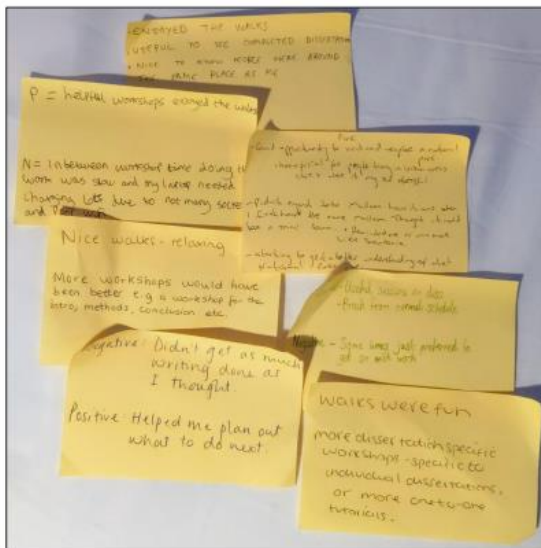


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Figure 7c. Students on the limestone pavement above Malham cove



Figure 8: Feedback from students about the level 6 Malham writing retreat



- Winter Ball Charity Fundraising Event Measure: The event raised £315 for the Love Leeds Parks Charity through the purchase of tickets to the event. We sold 42 tickets for the event (tickets were sold through Eventbrite). The fundraising event was held on Monday 31st January 2022 at 'The 212 Café and Bar' in Brewery Wharf, Leeds at a time when venues are mostly quiet after Christmas and enabled us to provide economic support to a local, independently run venue at this relatively slack time of year. The event enabled us to put £525 into the local economy (cost of the venue and food for the event).
- Developing the sustainability garden in Northern Terrace Measure: Feeders and bird food, fat balls and nuts purchased with group funds demonstrating department support for the initiative. Surveys of wildlife will be taken once plantings have started to grow.
- Fostering sustainability with students Measure: initial module feedback from level 4 students taken in week 3 suggests a successful outcome from the field visit and teaching Measure: interim feedback from level 6 students about the Malham writing retreat during and after the trip, indicates clearly that students found this a good trip both academically and socially, providing a calm and relaxed environment in which to discuss and formulate ideas.

Outputs (how did you achieve the outcomes):

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Outputs are how you achieved the outcomes above – what you actually did as part of the project. This could be (for example) held an awareness raising event, conducted a litter pick, held a fundraiser etc.

- **Supported a local charity** – we ran a fundraising event in aid of ‘Love Leeds Parks’ (<https://loveleedsparks.org.uk/>). This is a local charity, and the chosen event was a crosscourse winter social for the Geography, Planning and Housing students that brought together all year groups and staff. The choice of a fundraising event was based on a two-fold reasoning: (i) to raise awareness of the charity and its important role within Leeds and (ii) to bring the Geography student community together in a positive, social event which is important following the isolation and limited contact time of the last two academic years. Parks in Leeds play a significant part in city life. They have a key role in enhancing diversity and access to green spaces within Leeds, which as Geographers we were keen to support. Furthermore, parks are crucial in maintaining health and well-being, which is important given the growing issues with mental health within the student body. To enable the booking and purchase of tickets for the event, Eventbrite was used with a member of staff acting as Treasurer.
- **Supported a local business.** The fundraising event was held on Monday 31st January 2022 at ‘The 212 Café and Bar’ in Brewery Wharf, Leeds. This is a time when venues are mostly quiet after Christmas and enabled us to provide economic support to a local, independently run venue at this relatively slack time of year. The food was all vegetarian/vegan to make sure it was inclusive of all needs and allowed for more sensitive food choices in line with our sustainability focus. We approached the venue management to ask when the best time was to hold an event. We liaised with them to provide exclusive hire of the venue for our event, food and drinks and DJ. The event was in association with the recently formed ‘Geog-Soc’ which is a student-led society and draws the students together in a more cohesive way for social and academic events. The event was published on social media, through our group Twitter channel and promoted by announce emails via our VLE. The event will be easily replicated by other departments and is aiming to be repeated on an annual basis. A number of different channels were used to inform and raise awareness of the event among students across all courses.
- **Gorilla gardening in Hyde Park area of Leeds** – this is an on-going part of our work. Seed Bombs had already been purchased from specialist suppliers in Ireland but had not been able to be used because of a lockdown last spring. We wanted to ensure these were not wasted and the idea of gorilla gardening was postponed until this term. However, following a mild early part of the Winter, January and February have seen a significant fluctuation in temperatures and following some research on optimum times for seed bombs, it became apparent that we could not do the seed bombing until after the danger of frost had past, meaning realistically a delay until March to allow for this. The choice of area for the walk has been decided by the student members of the team who felt it should be a student area as a way of putting something back into the community, so Hyde Park area has been chosen. Planning the route so that the gorilla gardening isn’t intrusive or that inappropriate areas are bombed has been undertaken using Digimap. A pilot walk will go ahead in early March to check the route. The actual walk has had to be delayed with a provisional date of Monday 28th March or Tuesday 29th March depending on weather forecasts nearer the time.
- **Developing the sustainability garden in Northern Terrace** – this is an on-going project. The development of the courtyard garden is all about bringing our student and staff community

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together through improving our own building whilst bringing some of the principles of 'Incredible Edible' into our university buildings. Liaison with key staff within the School of the Built Environment, Engineering and Computing was done to obtain permissions to enable the team to develop the garden. Permission was also obtained to purchase bird seed, nuts, fat balls and various bird feeders and a feeding station of some form. Bird identifying charts were considered and it was decided to use the RSPB annual survey charts that are readily available on their website and are designed to allow the general public to identify common types of bird and are therefore accessible in their approach. The garden has been dormant over the Winter months, but members of the team have been out to check on the beds and done preliminary checks on viability of placing different types of bird feeding stations in the courtyard. Staff have subsequently purchased bird seed, nuts, and fat balls and some feeders and stand for the courtyard. The extreme wind issues have delayed the erection of the feeders until next week. However, students in the Green Impact team put up laminated bird identification sheets from the RSPB annual bird survey ready for when the bird feeders go up.

- **Fostering sustainability with students.** This focused on two core activities: the new level 4 module was delivered January to March with two projects each with a fieldtrip incorporated running parallel with two separate groups, and the second focusing on the level 6 dissertation writing retreat that ran in January 2022. Student feedback for both activities indicates that these were successful in their delivery and the practical field-based approach used for each. There was significant pre-activity planning of the content of each trip and teaching to be undertaken. In the case of the level 4 module, there were pre-trip visits and liaison with professionals in Harrogate planning Department and the Yorkshire Dales National Park to determine routes, field safety and timings. Liaison took place with the coach companies to ensure appropriate costings for the trips.
  - For the level 6 trip, there was a lot of pre-trip liaison with Malham Youth Hostel management to arrange food, safety and check covid regulations for the site. Significant risk assessments and provisions were put in place related to covid concerns including provision of masks, lateral flow kits and precautions/planning for anyone testing positive whilst away at the hostel. Briefings with students were done online using Collaborate Ultra because this trip took place prior to the start of term so students were still at home. Coordination/organization was also needed for transport of students and staff to Malham. This focused on encouraging car-sharing and where possible the use of public transport, given the rural location.
  - Both activities raised awareness of the dilemmas facing sustainable living. For example, in the level 4 module making students appreciate the difficulties of creating places that are safe and inclusive for everyone without causing changes that damage the greenspaces in our towns and cities. Also, challenging students to consider the dilemma of opening up the countryside to encourage greater participation of different groups within society but in so doing bringing greater potential damage to the countryside from increased numbers of tourists.
  - In the case of the level 6 writing retreat in Malham, the programme was developed with content and timings that prioritized physical and mental wellbeing for students. In the programme, workshops, tutorials and writing sessions were interspersed with

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substantial group walks in the surrounding national park led by experienced walkers from the teaching team. This was developed on the basis of staff researching the benefits of exercise / nature / relaxation for academic writing. The trip incorporated several elements of communitybuilding activities to bolster mental health and wellbeing: a quiz night, dormitory sleeping, group mealtimes and coffee breaks.

## Which Sustainable Development Goals does your project contribute too?

These can be found [here](#)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. No poverty <input type="checkbox"/>                                     | 2. Zero hunger <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 3. Good health and well-being <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>          | 4. Quality education <input type="checkbox"/>                                  |
| 5. Gender equality <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                     | 6. Clean water and sanitation <input type="checkbox"/>                         |
| 7. Affordable and clean energy <input type="checkbox"/>                    | 8. Decent work and economic growth <input type="checkbox"/>                    |
| 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure <input type="checkbox"/>        | 10. Reduced inequalities <input type="checkbox"/>                              |
| 11. Sustainable cities and communities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 12. Responsible consumption and production <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Climate action <input type="checkbox"/>                                | 14. Life below water <input type="checkbox"/>                                  |
| 15. Life on land <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                       | 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 17. Partnerships for the goals <input type="checkbox"/>                    |  |

## Where did your project have an impact?

Home

### **On Campus x**

After the Malham Fieldtrip, students have reported a positive impact on their dissertation projects and wellbeing.

Students have reported that they enjoyed the level 4 modular field visits because they are a really good visual aid to understanding the role of nature and green or wild spaces in people's lives and the challenges this presents in balancing the needs of both.

Students and staff from Northern Terrace will start to see more wildlife and in particular birds coming into the gardens with the erection of bird feeders and regular feeding rota (as birds start to realise the feeders are there). This will positively impact people's mental health seeing birds, even in the Winter since there are windows on all four sides and this courtyard can be seen from the seating areas in the foyer and from the seating area near the coffee and snack machines

Good attendance at the Winter Ball from the staff and students in the Geography, Planning and Housing department – proved really positive after the disrupted university lives the students had last academic year.

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The new level 4 module in particular, has undoubtedly helped students to appreciate first-hand the importance of inclusive places and spaces by making them aware of the way greenspaces can be both positive spaces to be enjoyed by all, but also at night can become dangerous spaces particularly for women. The field work gave a very clear insight into the need to address gender in core sustainability teaching in a very practical and visual way. Also, talking to National Park volunteers whilst doing the field work really brought home the challenges of National Park management. It helped them to think about the complexity of applying sustainability into everyday lives and the difficulty of balancing different needs.

The level 6 dissertation writing retreat added to the sustainability values that the courses already offer to students, but also helped to build positive values about the role of nature in well-being and the way this can produce a more balanced quality of life. All level 6 students were invited, and 24 attended. The cost of the trip was kept low at £60 for 3 days, including accommodation and all meals, making it financially accessible to all. Following the Fieldtrip, students indicated that the retreat had really helped them to focus and had a positive impact on their dissertation projects and wellbeing.

Other departments within the School of Built environment, Engineering and Computing at Northern Terrace (e.g., admin team, Leeds Sustainability Institute etc) will start to benefit from the improvements made to the sustainability garden and the birds and wildlife that these attract, whilst the identification charts will offer those with time a calming activity of bird spotting from the student seating areas. As we move forward, there will be an ongoing need for help with the maintenance of the garden and there will be an opportunity to get involved with the gardening and/or wildflower/vegetable planting.

## **Beyond the university x**

The money fundraised from the Winter Ball has provided additional resourcing for the 'Love Leeds Parks' charity in their important work in managing the set of green spaces within the city for the benefit of the wider community in Leeds.

Boosted the local economy and supported a local business in Leeds by using a local venue for the Winter Ball thereby underpinning the hospitality industry locally.

## Could your project be repeated in the university or by external teams?

The Winter Ball charity fundraising event is something others can easily do – the choice of event can be changed to suit the team and its wider needs.

The Dissertation Writing Retreat is easy to replicate in other institutions with most undergraduate courses having a major project or dissertation in their final year of study. It requires staff commitment to a residential trip and access to a suitable venue. We used a Youth Hostel for this with spaces that could be used as teaching spaces and break out rooms.

## Will your project have a lasting legacy beyond this project year?

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It provided needed resource for the Love Leeds Parks charity which can be used in the upkeep and development of the park areas within Leeds. This has definitely enhanced the student learning experience at level 4 and level 6 developing a better understanding of contemporary issues of safety, gender and greenspaces in particular and also the importance and value of nature and well-being in supporting student learning.

We are hoping to make the Winter Ball an annual fundraising event run by the Geog-Soc.

We intend to continue with the new first year module to enhance the way our students view sustainability and nature as something for everyone (inclusive) and the importance of gender in this understanding.

We intend to continue to organise the Dissertation Writing Retreat to help instil the positive values of nature in well-being in student's everyday lives as they study and as they go onto professional careers.

We will be continuing to develop the sustainability garden in Northern Terrace as a calming space for staff and students alike.

## Reflections – what did your team enjoy, what might you have done differently etc.?

The Winter Ball offered a really good event with lots of positive outcomes (noted before) but covid concerns around Christmas when the tickets went on sale led to clear concerns about the rapid escalations in infection rates as a result of the Omnicom variant. This meant that fewer people felt they could go than might have been the case.

Whilst it has been effective in academic online conferences, using Eventbrite for bookings, was not ideal for a fundraising event however convenient they are to access. They charge £2.50 per transaction so this added to the cost (tickets sold for £22.50 but we only got £20) and detracted from how much profit made for charity. Future events will need to use a different approach to selling tickets.

From the outset of setting up our Green Impact Team we were really keen to have a mix of staff and students on the Team. Whilst there was a great core of students from across the courses and year groups who joined this year's team, we are hoping to get more people involved year on year once it becomes an established cross-course activity that we run as a department.