

Case Study

University of the West of England

The University of the West of England (UWE) in Bristol has been running its farmers' market for a number of years. Historically, the market has been coordinated by university staff members. The summer of 2016 will see an exciting change to this, as members of the Student Union (SU) will take over the responsibility of running the market. Students will be setting up a working group in the Student Union, whilst linking in with entrepreneurial groups and the Green Leaders Team. Elected officers such as the Communications Officer and Events Manager will also take on key roles in the management of the market. Links will also be continued with the Facilities Team (who have been invaluable when it comes to setting up) and the Sustainability Board.

Currently, the market has a wide range of stallholders who attend. Popular foods include cheese, bread, fish, jams and ready-to-go healthy snacks such as pasties wraps and dips. Students have also traditionally been involved with selling at the market, with a host of societies and student entrepreneurs selling their wares and promoting their causes. Many students have linked their market involvement with their academic work by setting up enterprises and societies as part of their course work. Student engagement and involvement will be developed further as the market management is handed over to the Student Union. The plan is for the team to consult even closer with students to create a database of food enterprises that are personally recommended by and involving the student community.

It would be fair to say that, as with any project, there are challenges to be addressed when running a market. The structure of the academic year means that there are very

few students on campus during the exam season in April and May. Consequently, it has always been important to take this into consideration when adding market dates into the diary. During Green week there is lots going on at the university and the specially themed market, which features a food waste prevention stall, has always proved popular.

Footfall can also sometimes be an issue. This raises the question of how to ensure the maximum number of customers at the market? UWE addressed this by locating their market in a prime location on campus and by ensuring that markets were promoted through the SU and UWE Facebook and Twitter pages. Signs and A-boards were also used to point potential customers in the right direction on market day.

We asked UWE what their advice would be to any other universities who are interested in putting on a farmers' market. Top of their suggestions was – Location, location, location! Think carefully about where the market will be sited to ensure maximum footfall. They also advised on being flexible and accommodating with stallholders. If a stallholder is unhappy with their pitch, try your best to re-site them, always provide tables and don't charge stall fees to first timers. All this helps to create a good impression and will ensure that stallholders are willing to attend any future markets.

