Queen Margaret University Catering Service. - **Sustainable Opportunities Realised**

Toward the end of 2016, University of Edinburgh undertook a tender, inviting suitable suppliers catering services at QMU. The requirement as set out in the tender was for suitably qualified suppliers with relevant experience and capacity to supply Catering & Related Services to support Queen Margaret University (QMU) and to the Queen Margaret Students Union (QMUSU).

The location of the services to be at the Musselburgh Campus. Queen Margaret Dr, Musselburgh EH21 6UU and the expectation by QMU that the services would be managed and provided at nil cost to the university as a minimum, if not providing a financial return.

Key elements included Sustainability and Community benefit areas within the Invitation to Tender (ITT) viz:
- Demonstration of a positive approach to rewarding workers at a level that can help tackle poverty;
- Localised Employment opportunities;
- Adopting fair working practice and equality policies supporting staff wellbeing through family friendly and health initiatives; and
- Supporting local Suppliers through proactive supply chain management.

Also included were Initiatives to reduce sustainable impact in the supply chain through Environmental Ethical and Fair Working Practices viz:
- Initiatives to reduce sustainable impact in the supply chain;
- Implementation of the Living Wage as set by the Living Wage Foundation (www.livingwage.org) to be applied to all staff operating on campus;
- Localised and seasonal produce to be used where available;
- Social Considerations to be considered and adopted;
- Use of Fair Trade Produce where applicable and available;
- Best Practise to address supply chain and food quality;
- Limited use of pesticides on fresh produce; and
- Consideration of animal welfare in delivery of any subsequent contract awarded.

Following the tender exercise the contract was awarded to Baxter Storey located at South Gyle Edinburgh, commencing as scheduled on 1st August 2017.

The evaluation of the received tenders was based on a 40% price and 60% quality ratio in response to questions set out in the ITT and the net result of Baxter Storey’s offered a number of initiatives and proposals designed to meet with the university requirements.

**Student Opportunities**

1. In the Student Union the supplier recognised the benefit in employing students and that they intended to provide a core a team of around 4 student employees build to 80% student employees in situ, encouraging changing cultural patterns. They not only proposed to be student centred, but also student led in the recruitment of staff, advertising vacancies through social media platforms with flexibility of hours etc. to ensure student take up shaped around their studies

2. Baxter Storey also offer employed students a benefits package within their employment terms, including lunch on duty, auto enrolment in pension scheme and life insurance.

**Employment practices, Ethical Trading, Diversity and Sustainability**

3. With regards to healthy eating, Fair Trade and seasonal variation along with ethical product provision, based around QMUs sustainability policies, Baxter Storey proposed offering a "trusted advisor service", to include a whole range of activities, among which; monitoring to ensure full compliance with legislation around these issues; proposal to reduce both energy and water usage, along with minimising waste and optimising recycling opportunities; transport reviews with a view to enhancing sustainability; focus on environmental improvements in the supplier offering including identifying opportunities to enhance biodiversity in delivering the service and enhanced review and reporting procedures. All of this to be delivered through an extensive in depth policy process and plan, focussing in detail on areas such as monitor and review of the current policies and measurement of the success and further scope for improvement of the various strands of those policies.

4. Baxter Storey employment policy is grouped heavily around development and retention of teams. Involving mapping out training programmes and personal development process, around assessment of skills and capabilities and
targeted improvement, all under “New Beginnings” their introduction and development programme. Flexible working is a feature of Baxter Storey’s works practices, they also benchmark salaries to ensure they are competitive with other suppliers in the trade as well as offering a range of additional benefits, pensions; increased holiday entitlement after a qualifying period chief among others, in their employment package.

5. Through their Integrity and Ethics Committee the supplier has created a Mission Statement covering legal and ethical risks at the business level, which contributes to and underpins behavioural and employment culture at Baxter Storey. The mission statement focuses on anti-bribery and corruption; data handling duties and protection; competition law; modern slavery and monitoring changes in legislation and has been established at the most senior levels of the business. Diversity training is a feature of the starter pack training received by all new staff and follows a proactive process between staff and management.

6. Baxter Storey has extensive knowledge regarding dietary requirements and food choices around ethical and religious grounds and made mention of their supplier bases in providing the various elements required by certain dietary and food restrictions. They expressed a wish to work with QMU to help promote the various strands and offerings to the student and staff community in the catering environment. Also as an Equal Opportunities Employer there stated policy is to respect the diversity and needs of their customers. Physical enhancements to enable access to all in the catering establishments were proposed from improved simple and effective signage, increase accessibility to “grab areas” shelving products at enhanced levels for access, through to training and empowerment of staff to be able to meet any customer access requirements though communicating effectively, understanding any potential restriction and creating solutions. DDA regulations along with Quality Assurance for Higher Education (QAA) recommendations would be followed by the supplier in delivering their services. Within the “Service with Style” programme developed by Baxter Storey, the focus is on assisting customers, among these measures are identifying bi or multi lingual staff who are able to assist staff and students where their first language is not English. The supplier also provides customer feedback tables which contain translation aps accessible to customers.

Waste Minimisation, Recycling and Carbon reduction

7. Baxter Storey through planning and operations target the prevention and reduction of waste and plan to introduce a separate food waste collection which they would then propose to put toward generation of renewal energy. The supplier partners with Bio-Bean to recycle the oil from used coffee grounds for bio-diesel fuelling the collection vehicles, with the dry mass being made into bio-mass pellets used in combined power and heat plants in creating renewable energy. At the counter level, customers are offered take away grounds for garden use.

8. Energy is conserved through employing Energy Management Systems, among these being, control measures fitted to thermostats on refrigeration equipment, increasing life expectancy, ensuring optimisation of performance of equipment and reducing breakdown/maintenance requirements, resulting in net overall efficiency improvements.

9. Baxter Storey seek continuous improvement around carbon reduction with aim to get as near to zero as practically possible. In addition they are a Carbon Neutral company, Gold standard accredited through the Carbon Neutral Company.

10. Cleaning materials used by the supplier were careful controlled with 100% organic chemicals and bio degradable materials used in cleaning products.

11. Reduction on packaging within the supply chain and management of waste stream are important to Baxter Storey, involving both there procurement and sustainability leads, seeking to reduce both packaging where appropriate and waste sent to landfill. The supplier Environmental Management System policy is aligned to ISO14001 with a core target of reducing waste and recycling and sits at the centre of their waste management strategy. Baxter Storey seek balance, recognising that for some foodstuffs the packaging can also act as a keep-fresh, or as protection in transit. However they do actively manage along with their supply chain, the type of packaging they use to ensure optimum recyclability, this also helps avoid cost as landfill costs more to dispose of than recyclable waste (when accounting for landfill tax).

Supply Chain

12. Lead by resourcing local produce Baxter Storey offer what they term a market leading approach to high quality low environmental impact (reducing food miles) products at competitive rates. Decisions on food buy are delegate to Chef level thus ensuring optimum and appropriate products are procured through developing relationships with local
suppliers. Beyond the local buying decisions Baxter Storey have in depth knowledge of the production methods and processes employed by the farms providing their produce. Fairtrade and other strong sustainability proven products/providers are sought when buying from overseas. Food provenance is very important to Baxter Storey and they consider the emphasis they place on this is ahead of their competitors.

13. Baxter Storey maintain a crisis management plan to deal with business interruptions and have alternative providers which they can switch to, at quick notice to maintain supplies. The supplier and maintains a Crisis Management Response Team managed at board level.