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PRESS RELEASE: FIRST OXBRIDGE COLLEGE TO GO 'CLIMATE NEUTRAL'

Oxford University has taken a crucial first step towards a more environmentally responsible future with the decision by Linacre College to go 'climate neutral' this week.

Thanks to the student-led project, Linacre will become the first Oxbridge college to gain climate neutral status, through a series of emissions reductions and buying carbon offset credits. "We were delighted by the groundswell of student support that greeted this initiative," said Thabit Al-Murani, Linacre's student environmental representative. "Oxford has been seen as a bastion of traditionalism but this initiative demonstrates that things are changing. A new generation of students is convincing the university to take these issues seriously."

With concerns growing about the impact of the university's carbon emissions on the environment, Linacre's students launched an initiative to make their college climate neutral and have agreed to meet half the costs of this venture, which will be in the region of £2,500 per year. Through the current purchase of carbon offsets, the college has effectively been climate neutral since September 2005. Working with the respected Oxford-based company, Climate Care, the college, which is made up of approximately 300 graduate students, has now committed to a three year annual review to reduce emissions domestically and to purchase carbon credits to offset unavoidable emissions. Linacre has also agreed to use the services of the Carbon Trust to try and reduce their domestic emissions.

"I very much welcome this initiative," said Linacre Principal Professor Paul Slack. "With its established environmental emphasis, Linacre College intends to play its part in offsetting and reducing carbon emissions, an issue of obvious importance to all of us, now and for the future".

The move by the college to address its carbon emissions is leading the way for other academic institutions to follow. "Linacre College is lighting the way for the Oxford colleges in addressing their impact on the climate," said Tom Morton, managing director of Climate Care, who also provide offsets for The Guardian, British Airways and the Rough Guides company, "Oxford is one of the world's oldest academic institutions, and to see an Oxford college taking a lead on this issue is fantastic."

The college is buying offsets that invest in emission reduction projects in developing countries that also have sustainable development benefits. "Carbon offsets are an excellent way to manage emissions that we cannot easily or otherwise reduce ourselves," said Professor Diana Liverman, Director of the Oxford University Environmental Change Institute and a Fellow of Linacre College. "Where these offsets include investing in activities such as small hydro and other renewable schemes or improved wood stoves in developing countries, we can anticipate multiple benefits to the atmosphere, from reducing fuel poverty to improving the health and lives of women and children who spend their days collecting fuel, breathing the smoke from cooking fires or trying to study without electricity."

On March 8 students demonstrated over Oxford's decision not to renew a contract to buy 'green' electricity forcing the university into a u-turn and are showing increasing concern for environmental issues across the board.

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