

Sustainability Board

Monday 11th July at 11:00am

Via Teams.

Attendees:

Janet Baines (JB)	Owen Morris (OM)	Becky Bradshaw (BB) (Chair)
Chris Powis (CH)	Victoria Blake (VB)	Brendan Fawcett (BF)
Janet Jackson (JJ)	Scott Freeman (SF)	Michelle Chodyniewski (MC)
Becky Bradshaw (BB)	Janet Baines (JB)	Paul Bramble (PB)
Hollie Darby (HD)	Robert Farmer (RF)	Richard Hazenberg (RH)
Simon Stanton (SS)	Ebenezer Laryea (EL)	Danielle Bird (DB)
Emma Stone (ES)	Phillippa Bennet (PhB)	Nikki Harford (NH)
Gemma Robinson (GR)		

Apologies:

June Charlton-Hughes (JCH)	Annette Devine (AD)	John Sinclair (JS)
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In Attendance:

Megan Abbott (MA)

1.0 Minutes of the Meeting held on 2nd February 2023

1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held 2nd February were agreed as a true and accurate representation of the meeting.

2.0 Actions of Previous Meeting

2.1 BB explained actions have been updated in Paper A1, we will discuss those not updated.

2.2 **Update:** MA circulated the staff volunteering policy.

2.3 **Update:** The Travel Hierarchy Policy is covered in the agenda has been progressed with VB and our Procurement team.

2.4 **Update:** MA circulated the papers and agenda for this meeting.

2.5 **Update:** VB circulated the sustainability scorecard from the standardised carbon framework.

2.6 **Update:** GR circulated the job descriptions and terms of reference for the Sustainability Champions.

- 2.7 **Update:** MA added student champions and engagement to this meeting's agenda.
- 2.8 **Update:** EL circulated the Sustainability Summit schedule.
- 2.9 **Update:** EL and OM discussed the press support for the Sustainability Summit.
- 2.10 **Update:** EB confirmed biodiversity was discussed and included throughout the Sustainability Summit. EB added there were issues with availability due to teaching which meant J could not support some of the events.
- 2.11 **Update:** VB had requested feedback on the strategy for sustainability, she received no further feedback. The paper has been brought to this meeting for discussion.
- 2.12 **Update:** VB received feedback on carbon offsetting and reviewing our targets and outcomes. This is also covered in the agenda.
- 2.13 **Update:** VB explained the workshop on developing training modules for staff and students have been set with details in the engagement plan. VB's update on support for sustainability being included in education is covered in the agenda.
- 2.14 **Update:** VB explained confirmation that we have an audited system will become clear after the next People & Planet review, which is occurring in the next few months. GR is updating the website for this review and the team will feedback once complete.
- 2.14.1 BB added there were areas we had missed in terms of scoring, some of these had previously been agreed on and some had not. VB explained some will be assessed going forwards such as sustainable catering, and as a vast amount of work has been completed in this area over the last year it was considered our performance in this area would be positive.
- 2.15 Following Wray Irwin's departure BB will take forward this action with the new Director of Student Futures. **Ongoing:** A gap identified the lack of a Careers Policy, despite all the work begin done without an official policy the University does miss out.

Action: BB

- 2.16 **Update:** VB ensured improvements were made to highlight the University's sustainability activity on our webpages.
- 2.17 **Update:** The Procurement & Commercial Services Travel Policy was discussed briefly but and it was decided the policy would return to Trade Union (TU) Liaison to address feedback from UCU and UNISON in relation to incorporation of sustainable travel.
- 2.17.1 PB agreed with BB adding the comments made were detailed and constructive in terms of what needs to be expressed. PB took the policy to RIIC and BEEC then gave Steve Booker the feedback who will consider all feedback and send a revised policy to TU Liaison.

3.0 **Carbon Offsetting Policy**

- 3.1 VB circulated the draft of the University's Carbon Offsetting Policy.

- 3.2 The policy was driven by the University's acknowledgement that in some cases offsetting may be unavoidable on the route to Net Carbon Zero.
- 3.3 VB explained that the policy enables UON to invest in projects from outside our supply chain. For example, external offsetting to carbon offset flights which have occurred we can invest in the Amazon Rainforest.
- 3.3.2 The other way is to carbon inset, this is where we can offset within what we do; so within our supply chain if possible.
- 3.4 Certificated schemes who ensure the University's offset payments are correctly spent and officially approved were discussed with VB outlining that EAUC are preparing a HE/FE sector approach to carbon offsetting and in-setting. It was confirmed UON will consider this approach to offsetting, to ensure UON follow's sector best practice.
- 3.5 The University will need to be consistent on how carbon is measured carbon and what is offset etc. PB has been reviewing this with our dedicated calculator tool.
- 3.6 Carbon offsetting and in-setting requires funding, the University needs to acknowledge what needs to be offset and how this should be funded. The University will have a policy covering both, and a group will be established to approve carbon offsetting going forwards.
- 3.7 PB explained this is quite an emerging area especially for research funding, so it is encouraged.
- 3.8 NH asked how we calculate usage or what needs to be offset. VB explained when looking at carbon offsetting it can be anything from a very small to high amount depending on what is being offset.
- 3.8.1 PB for example will look at research, this could entail travelling by plane then instead deciding to travel by train, this would be carbon in-setting, as carbon consumptions been reduced. Then to offset the amount of carbon created by travelling on the train then as a university we can decide to then fund offsetting this amount.
- 3.9 VB confirmed the University's current carbon footprint is circa 5000 tonnes, currently it costs between 35 and 175 pounds per tonne of carbon to offset. The University needs to agree on what is offset, currently our international students travel booked via Western Union is offset
- 3.10 PhB agreed with the report stating the focus should remain on carbon neutral and not offsetting as it often does not work. For example, planting trees which take years to grow and can result in the movement of indigenous people. PhB asked what kind of assurance is made to ensure climate justice is achieved?
- 3.10.1 VB explained the Sustainability and Environment has had a discussion regarding climate justice it was agreed there will be residual issues. However, the university will have used carbon that will need offsetting. Additionally, VB does recognise and understand that when looking at offsetting it is only used as a last resort when reduction of carbon is not an open. Offsetting will run parallel with all the Universities other carbon plans. Therefore, a carbon offsetting group is required to vet all the decisions and ensure offsetting is carried out properly.

3.11 MC asked when it comes to a project would carbon offsetting be reviewed in the same way risk is for example, so reviewing the project for the carbon usage. MC added if this is the case will people be trained to do it for themselves or will someone do it for them, how will it work practically?

3.11.1 VB explained the aim is to avoid adding to people's workloads however this will need to be linked into field trips and risk assessments. Individuals will need to review how they get there, where they spend money on arrival etc. For example, the universities approach to attending conferences is being reviewed, these may see all carbon offsetting linked together with one large carbon offset or individual offsetting.

3.11.1 BB explained reflecting on the last point BB would be in favour of a more localised response, to avoid the route of offsetting all of a trip in 1 large way it becomes someone else responsibility. This would seemingly provide an infinite pot of money to pay to offset whereas locally people will think about their individual choices etc. centralising it would be an easy get out for individuals to not consciously make more sustainable choices.

3.11.2 BF added it may make sense to centralise advice so when booking travel, train travel should be prioritised, for example. Then identifying areas that have not yet been considered by the University such as the use of computing resource etc. Regarding travel aspects two policies have been put together recently, one on field trips and one on business travel to conferences etc so it is linked into the activity.

3.12 PB added, currently carbon offsetting is only relevant to one major fund in terms of research, WELCOME, who require this as part of a research application. PB agreed with BF in terms of a central advice point then local level training for staff. This would be helpful as people can then ask their questions and understand how to apply etc locally.

3.12 BB agreed with PB's point and added, the group would need terms of reference so not necessarily a decision-making group if it is budget related but can feed into ULT for approval.

3.13 **Action:** VB will share the carbon offsetting guidance document and policy once finalised. VB confirmed to BB it has not gone to TU yet. The Board approved the document for onward progression to Trade Union Liaison.

Action: VB

4.0 Engagement Plan for Sustainability Strategy

4.1 VB introduced the paper which captures the consultation process for the engagement plan.

4.2 The paper was shared at the last Sustainability Board and feedback was received in relation to sustainability in education. The Environment & Sustainability team will be hosting six strategy consultations sessions. In these session feedback will be collected, and amendments made to the strategy accordingly.

4.3 **Action:** The Board are asked to share the engagement plan with the areas they represent, noting specifically the dates offered for consultation workshops.

Action: All

- 4.4 BB asked if support is required from Corporate Communications. OM added the timeframe of this will be when the University Strategy is released so wording will need reviewing. **Action:** VB and OM to review the engagement plan and agree dates where the University strategy launch, and this consultation do not conflict.

Action: VB & OM

- 4.5 NH asked if some of the events could be on teams and OM explained the AV team were successful in supporting hybrid events so if the AV team is engaged, they should be able to deliver this. **Action:** VB to link with AV team to ensure consultation sessions can be hybrid.

Action: VB

5.0 Formal Proposal on the partnership approach for the Environment & Sustainability

- 5.1 VB introduced the proposal and explained this approach had been tested with LLS with considerable success, which was confirmed by DB and CP.

- 5.2 **Action:** The proposal was approved, and feedback was received in relation to recent changes introduced by the re-organisation, and it was agreed that VB would review the partnerships proposed and circulate a revised version ahead of the next meeting to enable an introductory meeting to be undertaken with each area.

Action: VB

6.0 Education for Sustainability

- 6.1 VB explained the Environment and Sustainability team took the sustainability targets and made an agreement these will be included in the future targets and will be run as a project to show what sustainable education should look like and how this is managed and rolled out.

6.1.1 For example the FBL's education prize could be an opportunity to push education for sustainable engagement.

6.1.2 This groups needs to review whether to run this for this academic year or next year.

- 6.2 EB explained there have also been discussions around having some level of consultation as sustainability is very well embedded in the university. This would involve having a round of consultation to allow the Environment and Sustainability team to fine tune an action plan to take forward. Colleagues in the group felt a lot is done in terms of sustainable education already and a review of this is required to see how to approach measuring this to meet the targets from a holistic point of view.

- 6.3 J explained it would be great to have points of contacts with the Sustainability Team and have a co-ordinated approach to messaging and communicating.

- 6.4 VB explained there will be 2 groups, a steering group and working group which has pulled together a Project Implementation Document. **Action:** VB to provide update in next meeting.

Action: VB

7.0 Management Plan for Biodiversity

- 7.1 JJ introduced the plan and explained it was a method of accumulating biodiversity information following the move to Waterside Campus. The plan also sets out the ambition to move a brownfield site to be one of the most biodiverse campuses in the UK.

7.1.1 This management plan is vital for the future to ensure biodiversity is kept and more is encouraged. This is a list for assets currently on site which will be quantified. Then a decision can be made on the appropriate management according to the species to conserve and encourage.

- 7.2 NH asked if there was scope in the future to involve schools on our site, making it a biodiversity spot for education as there is such variety. JJ explained schools could participate in monitoring but warned the campus may not provide sufficient 'action' to be appealing to schools. The university could encourage schools to increase their biodiversity and as the university has achieved a gold hedgehog friendly campus award this can be incorporated as it is being pushed out to schools.

7.2.1 PB suggested working with Beavers or Brownies. **Action:** VB to ensure the Environmental & Sustainability team explore the option of working with Beavers and Brownies.

Action: VB

7.2.2 VB explained the university is also a champion of the Department of Education's Nature Parks, and all data collected will be shared with this scheme.

BB also suggested there could be a link with the Forest School currently being explored by Emma Whewell's team in conjunction with Delpare Abbey.

7.2.3 **Action:** VB to link in with one of the Changemaker teams on focusing on sustainability within their projects and on the above idea of offering forest schools on campus and including this in our biodiversity works.

- 7.3 ES confirmed via the chat function that the plan will be peer reviewed by the Local Nature Partnership before final approval.

- 7.4 BF added via the chat 'Before sharing the report I think we need to be clear about what it is and/or updating a couple of places, e.g. p.5 the introduction needs updating if this is meant to be a current plan (as it refers to expected changes) to dates that have already happened. Other place it needs to be updated is in relation to targets on p.21.' BB explained this can be shared within our teams etc. but not fully published, JJ added it is not designed to be a living document just a baseline. **Action:** BF and JJ to discuss and amend the document according.

Action: BF & JJ

- 7.5 JJ explained biodiversity needs to be addressed as seriously as carbon management, as it is often seen as the softer side. It still requires an accounting method for its management and response. **Action:** JJ added Estates and Campus Services staff need educating on this.

Action: VB & GR

- 7.6 PB asked if the university is working with the local wildlife trust or woodland trust on this as they would be interested. JJ explained campus has some species on it that were potential however JJ confirmed there are no issues with dominant species currently. PB asked how much this is built into Open Days and our promotional information, as this could be shared that students can be involved etc. PB added have we checked that as we build anything new do we have it written that biodiversity will be at the focus of this for example in woodland areas.

7.6.1 JJ explained we have been in touch with the woodland trust on a local neighbourhood scheme called Street Trees and this could be developed to work with on campus and as we have planted many native trees, although there was feedback from DB that this group may have been disbanded. JJ explained we are unable to create a meaningful woodland unless we get more land.

- 7.7 It is suggested the sustainability champions in future could be a body of students and staff we could train to aid in monitoring biodiversity.

8.0 Sustainability Champions

- 8.1 GR explained we have had 11 staff and 26 students volunteer to be Sustainability Champions.

- 8.2 The Sustainability and Environmental team are pushing this opportunity through faculties and on AV screens. GR is planning a meet and greet, then getting everyone together to review the strategy etc.

- 8.3 GR is putting together the Biodiversity Action Plan which includes upskilling external services staff, pushing out our nature app which is being trial launched in ECS currently.

8.3.1 **Action:** OM has not received comms on sustainability champions, GR sent it to Emily Sheers, but she will link in with OM.

Action: GR

- 8.4 BB asked if this is available to staff across all faculties and departments, GR confirmed it does range throughout. **Action:** BB requested all this Board pushes out Sustainability Champion comms.

Action: All

9.0 Sustainability Summit

- 9.1 EB shared overview of the event slides. EB explained the summit occurred in May with over 40 businesses attending.
- 9.2 EB shared the mind map of the aims and the benefits of the summit.
- 9.3 The organisation of the event went really well, and EB thanked all colleagues that helped especially VB's team and student volunteers. There was representation from local government, charities, the business world, professional bodies. IEMA, ICIS and external funders. National and multi nation business attended to so a very board mix was achieved.
- 9.4 The income generated was 20k there was a spilt in this with some in-kind sponsorships which amount to £9570 then £10425 in income generated from sponsorships and ticket sales.
- 9.5 The main outcome of the summit was the Northampton Sustainability Accord which is a great achievement. The University was recently nominated for a UK Innovation Award, EB attended an interview for this, and we made it to the final shortlist for this. This was due to the Summit and the SLIPAH. The interviewer was impressed with the Accord which is an agreement of sustainability goals which all participants will meet and have signed off on. UON is the only HE who have achieved this. Colleagues can look at it on the sustainability pages on our website.
- 9.6 The feedback survey on delegates impressions of the summit was overwhelmingly positive. EB shared a breakdown which was very positive with the only negative being on noise in the open spaces which in the debrief the issue is resolved.
- 9.7 EB runs through the next steps such as finalising SLIPAH terms of reference. Launching this on 18th July in the Senate building in the Moorley Room this launch will formally mark the commence of the Accord and it will begin the research goals that it sets out. The steering team and management team will be engaged then, and we will begin working through the Strategic Implementation Model to see how the Accord can be approached from a strategic and holistic point of view.
- 9.8 The team are looking at funding for carbon reduction programme which has a limited pot of funding, but the idea is for the SLIPAH to design a programme to be useful in this
- 9.9 EB shared the new SLIPAH mind map which designed to simplify the process and goals of SLIPAH and how it links in to deliver the Accord.
- 9.10 BB thanked EB and the committee for organising a fantastic event that was well received internally and externally. EB confirmed the committee could send further questions if necessary.

10.0 Any Other Business

- 10.1 PB thanked DB who co-presented with him on the research element workshop on Wednesday 15th June. This resulted in many useful discussions. PB will catch up with DB to see how we can support our academic colleagues on this topic.

10.2 BF explained UON performed very well overall in Times Higher Rankings. UON have performed incredibly on some of the SDG, 25th globally for Life On Land and 29th for Sustainability Communities and this is only being strengthened.

10.2.1 The following summary was shared in the chat box 'Headlines are that we have retained our Top 200 status overall despite there now being 1591 submissions (up from just over 1400 last year). We have also done very well in SDG15 Life on Land (25th overall) and SDG10 Sustainable Communities (29th overall). We were also in the 101-200 ranks for SDG11: Sustainable Cities and Communities which has taken over from SDG12: Responsible Consumption and Production as our next best performing area.'

10.2.2 BB asked what the plan was in terms of comms and press release. BF explained there had been a discussion resulting in a lack of clarity as to whether it should be pushed out. BF outlined feedback in relation to UON performance in other league tables and our modest position in the UK, despite the high position globally. It was agreed that BF and BB would discuss further outside of the meeting, with a view to agreeing an update that could be shared internally with staff.

Date & Time of Next Meeting: Thursday 12th October at 11:00am