

Minute of the meeting of the Sustainability Working Group (SWG)

26 August 2021 via Zoom

Attending: Jaime Toney (JT) (Chair), David Duncan (DD), Stewart Miller (SM), Robert Garnish (RG), Fabrice Renaud (FR), Peter Craig (PC), Barry Morton (BM), Kelum Gamage (KG), Thalia Groncott (GUEST), Meli Vasiloude Bayada (GUEST), Molly Walker (GUEST), Ella McCabe (SRC President), Eva Simmons (SRC VP Student Support), David Gabra (SRC Environment Officer), Rhona Little (Clerk)

Apologies: Susan Ashworth, Ian Campbell, Minty Donald, Gioia Falcone, Josephine Gallagher, Sam Malis, (SRC VP Activities),

1 Minute

The Minute of the meeting of June was approved.

2 Matters Arising

2.1 The Savill's report was circulated to the group

2.2 COP26 presentation by Rachel Sandison to be circulated to the group

3. Carbon Offsetting Options – Savill's Report Nature Based Offsetting Strategy

Following a presentation by Savills and the report produced by them, DD proposed a multi-strand approach as follows:

1. Enacting the promise to offset one return flight a year for international students via a bespoke scheme involving minimum bureaucracy.
2. Following Savill's recommendations to work with Estates Managers in Scotland or the UK and look at forestation projects and peatland reclamation projects.
3. Participating in the EAUC (The Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges) / MyCarbon collaboration which has recently been piloted by a group of UK universities, including Strathclyde. **ACTION: DD to circulate pilot report**
4. Undertaking small-scale projects on our own land (principally at Cochno Farm).

Broadly speaking we must do off-setting but it is a moving target and we will have to take broad based approach and consider the four strands suggested.

Action: to pursue a four-pronged approach as set out above.

4. Cochno Farm – Student Research Projects

FR updated group on discussions with students interested in working on Cochno farm and looking at providing as much information on topics that are potentially researchable by students. The timescale for completion of projects will differ for each school but would probably be in first quarter of 2022. The timescale should be verified as it would be important to take findings from student projects into consideration before the Green Action Trust make a formal approach to Scottish Forestry for grant funding.

Action: SM to liaise with FR & GF on when outcomes from student projects can feed into the tree planting plans

5. Student Food Survey

Update by Meli Vasiloude Bayada, a new GUEST coordinator responsible for community engagement, transport and budgets. August has been busy with handover for new promoters

with meeting planned with the Travel and Transport Co-ordinator. Lots going on for freshers' week - organising tours of halls of residences, plans to introduce monthly bike routes around campus, organising bike workshops for rest of year as well as the usual projects such as social media campaigns, tagging nuisance bikes which get donated to Bikes for Good. Long term plan is to use wildlife gardens on campus to partner with schools around Glasgow with the aim of widening participation and bringing children from further afield who may not have considered going to university. Promoters have been busy networking with other universities to organise events throughout the year, especially around COP. Planning a mock COP working with Professor Kelly Kollman and Dr Andrew Judge to run a simulation COP for politics students. Student journalists at COP project working with communications and Glasgow Guardian to provide training for students and have a team of reporters during COP and publish these on the GUEST website. Finally, QMU have offered a physical (or hybrid) space for the duration of COP to offer a wellbeing and socialising space as well as providing workshops

Update by Thalia Groncott, the new GUEST Sustainable Food promoter shared a presentation on the background of the Student Food Survey with the group. The presentation focussed on the barriers to sustainable eating and the University catering services as this would be most relevant to the SWG. 90% of respondent were interested in eating sustainably but the survey showed that 40% did not know how to shop for sustainable food. The UoG food co-op will start up its food distribution in September and staff and students will be able to find sustainable veg at a decent price and the Green Guide will be included in freshers' packs.

One of the main things that came up during the survey was the cost of sustainable eating with almost 74% of the respondents agreeing eating sustainably is too expensive. 85% said this higher cost was why they would not eat sustainably and agreed more people would eat more sustainably if it was cheaper to do so. The main issue is trying to make locally produced sustainable food more affordable for everybody and this ties into the survey of trying to work how all this relates to food insecurity. The food insecurity results section was taken from the Food and Agriculture Organisations Food Insecurity Experience Survey. Food insecurity is broadly defined as not having access to nourishing food which can be compared to food poverty but just a slightly different term. Over a third (34.8%) of the respondents were placed somewhere on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale. This is 2.5 times the Scottish rate in 2019 based on the Scottish Health Survey.

To make the survey results useful to Catering Services, it was essential to ask how many of the respondents used catering services on a regular basis and the response was that the majority did not use the service often. The results of the survey can be taken as confirmation that the sample of respondents are very keen to see the University push sustainable food on campus and the University's role is to ensure that students are able to nourish themselves properly. The food insecurity results are surprising and if this is something that is being experienced by a lot of students then it should be addressed and investigated further.

Catering services are making good progress and single use plastics target is to be achieved by end December. Quite a few catering outlets have been closed and will not reopen. A consolidation period has resulted in tighter control and visibility going forward and would encourage feedback to keep coming.

Might be worth taking this survey to the Mental Health Working Group or Student Experience Committee and TG to contact DD directly to discuss.

6. Timetable for divestment at UoG

A question was raised about how much money the UoG still had invested in fossil fuel and whether it would be possible to accelerate the divestment process in view of the COP conference coming up.

A proposal from the Investment Advisory Group was discussed at Court about whether the UoG should change its policy on this investment and allow selective investment in firms that were showing good progress moving away from fossil fuels into alternatives. It was decided that it was not the right thing to do and that we would stick with the policy that was set up back in 2015 which was to divest completely by 2024. This could be accelerated but the difficulty is it could have an impact on the value of the endowments for student bursaries and scholarships. Given that we are 6 years into a 10-year divestment programme the UoG is committed to doing it over that time. The group agreed to the suggestion that we take a closer look at the numbers and perhaps raise at Court if there is desire to take this further and faster.

Action: Ella/DD take item to Court

7. Community of Practice Update

There are two student workshops scheduled for September and October. One is a practice workshop and is going to showcase the student voice that motivate our commitment to sustainability and six student volunteers have been identified to contribute to this workshop. There is also a seminar series on sustainability in learning and teaching with the first one taking place on 27 September and KG will share more information nearer the time. Any of the SWG group can join if interested by letting KG know.

8. Centre for Sustainable Solutions – update on work of CfSS and City Partnership update

There are two upskilling courses running in September. One is a re-run of the Climate and Carbon Literacy course that was run in April and one is a new course called Systems Thinking for Climate Change and Sustainable Decision Making. The new course has 150 students booked in and at least 20% students are conversions from the April course which suggest we are engaging with new demographic. There is potential to create a Masters course from a mix of these short micro credential courses in the area of climate change and carbon literacy.

Update on our partnership with GCC and an organisation called C40 Cities. The Centre has a new postdoctoral research post and 4 candidates have been shortlisted for interview in September. Working with GCC ahead of COP26 what city looks like in terms of their sustainable practices and moving forward with sustainable agenda and we intend to run a stakeholders workshop with communities and other stakeholders across the city with initial workshops planned for December and January.

The Centre has been extensively involved with what is happening within the city and JT was a speaker at a recent Glasgow Citizen Assembly. In terms of COP26 the Centre is leading and supporting several events and are involved in organising a Scottish Power and Strathclyde collaboration on a series of talks and podcasts called Connect with Climate Change. At the end of September there will be another seminar on Carbon Free Commuting and Connection thinking about how we travel in the new norm after covid. We have successfully created a promotional video with an external company, Brand Calibre and asked if we would be willing to have it shown at the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) conference. Also pleased to report that Rory Porteous's contract has been extended and he is using this time to compile evidence to make a business case to have a permanent sustainable labs position within Estates.

9. GUEST update

Molly Walker is a new GUEST co-ordinator, whose branches are student engagement and communications & social media. The main focus for the semester is the COP plans but have been working hard on wider plans and are meeting with the CfSS soon to continue or rebrand the drop-in sessions previously run by Green New Deal. These might be renamed Climate Café Sessions

with focus on creating a space for students who want to meet various sustainable societies or like-minded students on campus. Weather permitting these will be run in the wildlife gardens.

This year the aim is to get more students involved with GUEST, to offer more students volunteering around COP, to promote the Centre for Student Solutions Newsletter and think about starting own newsletter which will advertise GUEST events and relevant societies events happening in and around campus. Have just recorded first episode of new rebranded GUEST podcast called Green 15 where 15-minute tips are shared about being a sustainable student and living sustainably in Glasgow. The new Comms promotor has been working on an updated version of the Wee Green Guide. An introductory GUEST and sustainability event has been planned alongside the SRC during Freshers week to encourage new students to get involved.

The food branch, biodiversity and sustainability labs are continuing with last year's promotors so hopefully momentum will continue to engage staff and student with S-labs. We are in the process of getting LEAF certification on the biodiversity working group as well as working with broader organisations. The food branch has an event coming up at the Glasgow Autonomous Space as part of Climate Week and the Eco hub proposal is almost finished.

10. COP26 Working group verbal update

There is a lot of activity on campus but there has been some squeeze on events that are allowed into the green and blue zones which has displaced some events to the University campus. The two challenges are that it is during teaching term and secondly beginning to get wind of restrictions on movement with streets being closed off and as yet do not know how this will impact on campus.

Action: RL to distribute slides from Rachel Sandison

11. Any other business

Cargo Bikes on Campus

At the last meeting the proposal from Amazon regarding the e-cargo bike delivery scheme was not upheld but would there be any opportunity for the University to promote their use on campus to replace vehicles.

Estates have been trialling a cargo bike for internal mail and store service. A logistics team has been set up as part of the restructure of Facilities Services and one of the things being looked at is the possibility of creating an off-site consolidation centre at the large store in Govan using electric vehicles to bring deliveries to campus. At the moment there are lots of direct deliveries going to Colleges, Schools, RIs and departments and this will be looked at to start to consider and encourage whether all deliveries should be put to an off-side location and brought in. There are sustainability benefits and pedestrian safety benefits doing it this way as it stops a lot of traffic coming on to campus. It would be helpful if one or two people from the SWG could get involved in this and Peter Craig volunteered.

It was suggested that next year we should take another look at the baseline numbers developed by ARUP consultants. The projections on business travel might be overly pessimistic in terms of the carbon footprint if more meetings are going to continue to happen online. Similarly with more people working from home a couple of days a week the impact on commuting will reduce and thirdly electrification of cars should help reduce the carbon footprint. On the other hand, student numbers have grown since 2019 so pros and cons within baseline numbers so next summer ask ARUP to look at these again.

It is at this time of the year that SM starts to pull together the University's carbon footprint for the previous 12 months. 2018-19 was the last academic year that we were able to produce a full

footprint that was not impacted by covid and we were sitting with a footprint of about 60,000 tons a year. In 2019-20 we saw this reduce to 46,000 tones and in 2021 it is likely to drop even further because basically that full academic year was impacted by the pandemic and business travel was non-existent along with a significant proportion of commuting travel. It is difficult to predict what is going to happen with business and commuting travel over the next 12-24 months. Although the University has a policy of facilitating flexible working, nobody knows at this stage where things will move back to over time. The Town Planning Manager along with the Travel Plan Co-ordinator have been doing a lot of detailed work on commuting travel and future commuting scenarios working with external consultants Stantec who have just issued a final report so it might be worth asking them to present at the next SWG to update us on this matter.

Action: SM to ask Stantec to present at next meeting.

Lawns on Campus

A question was raised about the number of lawns on campus and how sustainable they are and could there be better use made of the spaces they occupy.

A lot of work has been done over the last couple of years pulling together a Biodiversity Strategy and Yearly Action Plan and there has been a huge increase in the amount of lawns sown with wild flowers. It is fair to say that this might have dropped off the priority list over the last 12 months, but it is something that will be focussed on in future. The quadrangles do have formal lawns but these are very much important social spaces that are used for student experiences such as graduations and marquee events for clubs and societies and therefore must be grass of the type that can be walked on. Estates are refocussing on Biodiversity and looking at as many spaces as possible that can be converted to wildflowers

12 **2021 dates:**

6 October 2021 – 2pm

2 December 2021 – 2pm