



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY GROUP

Minute of the meeting held on Monday 29 January 2024
from 1.30-3.30 pm in Principal's Board Room (7B27),
Sighthill Campus and online via MS Teams

PRESENT: G Hutchison (Convenor and Dean of School/Campus Principal); G Akshil (ENSA President); G Barkess (Head of Research Environment & Services, Research & Innovation); A Bonthron (Head of Asset Management, Property & Facilities); C Gee (Development Manager, Development & External Relations); E Hunter (Director of Property & Facilities); R Lamb (ER & Policy Advisor, HR); A McGoff (Finance & Operations Director); A Ogilvie (Executive Manager, Strategy, Strategy Hub, Principal's Office); J Pearson (Environmental Sustainability Manager, Property & Facilities); I Russell (Head of Infrastructure, Information Services); N Scrimgeour (Senior Student Communications Officer); M Weaver (Associate Professor, The Business School); E Zara (Procurement Manager)

IN ATTENDANCE: S Burnett (PA to School Leadership, Clerk)

APOLOGIES: K Murray (Head of Procurement); I Dencer-Brown (Lecturer, DLTE)

1. OPENING REMARKS, WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Members welcomed to the meeting and apologies noted.
- 1.2 Welcome to Rebecca Lamb who will replace Ailie McConnell as the HR representative on the group.
- 1.3 It was noted that Lisa McMillan had now left the University. The Convenor extended his thanks, and those of the group, for Lisa's contribution to the ESSG. We do not have someone from the Staff Sustainability Network to replace Lisa.

Action: the Convenor will identify whether a representative is required/available through the Staff Sustainability Network.

2. MINUTE OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 23 OCTOBER 2023 ESSG(23/24)03

- 2.1 The minute was approved as an accurate record.

2.2 Update on Action Points

Everyone Action Campaign

In the process of planning the next sustainability event, which will take place on 12, 13 & 14 March (dates to be confirmed). There will be one day for each campus. The Marketing & Communications Officer is leading on this in discussion with ENSA.

Information on Moodle – it depends on the level of access what announcement you can make on a specific Moodle site. There are different layers of sites, and it often comes down to access/ownership. There is a way to do this by creating a master site which all programmes link into.

Action: the Convenor will speak to the Learning Technologists to ascertain options for Moodle.

Environmental Sustainability Strategy Document

Thanks to everyone for feeding into this process. This information was used for the report for Finance & Property sub-committee of Court, and we have also pulled data together for further enhancement.

Net Zero Reduction

A meeting had taken place prior to Christmas between the ESM and Head of Infrastructure, Information Services. We will require to further assess the impact of IT equipment. A further meeting will be organised, with specific areas of focus.

Data

The ESM updated that he was currently looking at project opportunities and actions and pulling these together. We need to commit time to this body of work (a focus for the next 2 weeks) as we require to update the Environmental Sustainability Strategy at the end of the year. It would be useful to see the data at the quarterly ESSG meetings.

Procurement Action

Postponed until the April meeting.

DLTE

There has been promotion of work being undertaken including the UN SDG Guide and promoting the Enhanced Framework. Unsure if this has been promoted externally. This can be followed up at the ESSG Workstream Leads meeting.

Action: Convenor will follow up at Work Stream Leads meeting on 5 February.

Core Focus on Environmental Sustainability

It has not been possible to get the VP for Learning & Teaching to include as a core focus, however this will be built into academic provision.

UN SDG Accord

Require to report annually. Before the report is submitted, it will require to be signed off by someone in the university, firstly through the work stream leads and then by SLT/ULT.

3. EUROPEAN FUNDING

It was noted that we have secured funding from the Scottish Government's SEEP programme (a pilot to provide mobility funding for activity not currently funded by Turing following our withdrawal from Erasmus). We have secured funding to support 3 members of staff to attend an International Staff Week (22-24 March) at one of our Eureka partners in Ghent. The International Week has a focus on sustainability <https://hogent.be/en/international-week/>.

Action: information will be circulated to the ESSG and if anyone would like to attend this event, please contact the Convenor direct ASAP.

4. REPORTING

4.1 Internal Reporting

- All documents can be accessed through the Sharepoint site.
- The "Going Global" conference in November had been an opportunity to meet international partners and had been a successful event.
- The Convenor and ESM presented to SLT on 7 December.
- The Convenor and ESM presented to the Finance & Property Committee on 25 January (all slides and papers on Sharepoint).
- Strategic targets set as part of risk management therefore it is good to see strategic targets through that process.
- Progress working document on Sharepoint for information.
- ESM produces a monthly report (as do a number of staff in P&F), all of which are available through Sharepoint.
- Credit to everyone (especially ESM) on presentation of last year's report to Property and Finance sub-committee of Court and the amount of information shared. Understanding the true level of carbon a useful conversation. Key metric came out of this, almost looking for carbon value per head count, which enables you to truly see if you are reducing your carbon. Likely that the actual carbon per person likely to be good for us as we are accommodating more students into the current building footprint.
- We need to engage more externally, particularly into some areas which University of Edinburgh and Glasgow are looking at.
- We could have amended data for the next full Court meeting, based on F&PC discussions.

- Extracts could be taken from the F&PC paper and shared with all staff.

Action: the Convenor will speak to the VP for Research & Innovation in relation to the developments taking place with Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Action: ESM and Senior Student Communications Officer will catch up to plan for sustainability week and what comms will be issued in the run up to this.

4.2 Scottish Government

The Public Bodies report was submitted at the end of November, again this is available on Sharepoint. This included items on term time commute and procurement figures, all of which publicly reported through the Scottish Government.

4.3 University League

The university moved from 1st to 3rd in Scotland and from 43rd to 56th in the UK. We should not be concerned about this, ultimately the difference in the scores is very small. The paper is available in Sharepoint and you can see where we scored well and opportunities for moving forward. We scored highest in Scotland in terms of management and strategic goals. The education for sustainability piece also scored highly. Water consumption is also nicely controlled compared to other institutions.

Staff have met to look at the THE Impact Award.

Staff shortlisted for the THE award for sustainability did not win, but recognition of the work in lab plastics is still sector influencing.

It was noted that catering are undertaking a large amount of work looking at local suppliers and sustainability.

A submission has been made to the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce business awards.

4.4 Queen's Anniversary Prize – Coastal Restoration Work

The application (part of the work undertaken by Prof Karen Diele and Prof Mark Huxham) reached the final stages, and the submission was very well received. A feedback session had taken place with the Queen's Anniversary Trust, however feedback is only given verbally, not in writing. Our application required more information/evidence in relation to the degree of impact on the institution itself. Hugely positive that what we are doing is making a difference. Overall the feeling conveyed by the reviewers is that we are delivering world leading change in this space. Next time round we will require to prepare more in advance of the submission and allow sufficient time for review. We also gave feedback on the process itself. Looking at options for publicising information from those who were not necessarily successful, but the projects have international impact.

Need to think about a communication strategy for the wider public to ensure we are put on the map and don't disappear where other institutions are aggressively advertising/sharing information. Usually any key information/developments would be published as a news item on the Napier website or distributed to local media.

Action: Senior Student Communications Officer will liaise with colleagues in Communications to share information more publicly. Will also link in with the Convenor and representative from RIE to include the research piece.

5. SOCIAL IMPACT WORK STREAM

5.1 The Impact Rankings

We entered the Impact Rankings for SDGs on Times Higher. Submitted across a number of sustainable development goals. We should hear in April 2024.

Further students have been secured from the SCEBE to work through the SDGs. Students have created a Moodle site on the Moodle community. Have also gone into the SDGs and used infographics used by the UN. They have taken elements of the submission written for the Times Higher and have undertaken a benchmarking exercise. There are gaps and we will work through those over the coming months.

Still looking at key words and research profile. Some of our activities are sporadic. Need to consider strategic ways to embed the terminology and understanding - we could put on specific events. There are gaps in terms of policy, and these will throw up a number of conversations with regard to updating policies in the future.

A spreadsheet is available of all the questions and our submission and a column for what our submission may be next year. Also, a link to obvious gaps and what we can act on. Once this is in place, we will need to seek more detailed input from those in specific areas. We need to know if we can address the gap effectively.

Students integral to these developments. The Moodle page will be available to all students and staff.

It was noted that a Knowledge Exchange & Impact Partner post has been advertised in RIE – would be useful once the person is in post to connect with staff focussing on the SDGs.

6. COMMUNICATION WORK STREAM

6.1 Every Action Counts/Christmas Switch Off

- Focus was on PC lock screens and various pieces of messaging in the run up to the winter break.

- A number of posts went out over social media from social media ambassadors and also through student newsletters.
- Staff comms – article in the Bones and included in Line Managers briefing before Christmas.
- There was a push for people to think about this ahead of the festive break.
- In terms of access to websites, the “Get Involved” website saw an increase of almost 1500% from the previous year.
- In general visits to the sustainability pages up by 52%.
- We don’t have information/data as yet on energy usage. EDF data is available which shows where energy consumption was reduced. Still consumed energy when we were shut therefore we need to understand how/why. Data will be reviewed to ensure meaningful conclusions. Students may be able to help us with the review of this data and comparison with previous years.

6.2 Sustainability Week (March)

In the planning stages at the moment. The plan is to have a roadshow and invite partner organisations into the university.

6.3 Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce Award

We have been shortlisted for a net zero award. Ceremony usually February/March so will keep us updated.

7. PARTNERSHIP

7.1 Edinburgh Climate Compact

- There was a pre-Christmas meeting and documents issued last week. Hosted by Edinburgh Trams and there were a number of substantive items.
- Useful update from Council, low heat/energy efficiency delivery plan is out for consultation (closing date March). Strategic positioning around about Sighthill.
- Much greater sharing of data which has been gathered over a long period of time.
- Presentation from Jamie Brogan from Edinburgh University, mapping work for NZELB (Net Zero Emission Leadership Board). Shows where energy is coming in/going out, water flooding etc. Have mapped publicly available data but have also used partner data too (this has not been made public yet).

Information available on Sharepoint site.

Action: a meeting will be organised by the Executive Manager (Strategy) with Jamie Brogan of Edinburgh University. Members to contact the Executive Manager (Strategy) if they would be interested in attending the meeting.

7.2 2030 Climate Strategy

- Big push through the Council and partners. A number of new appointments have been made which has had an impact.
- Partnership through EAUC – more action taking place.
- We should refresh the list of who our contacts/partners are to ensure we have an overview of this.
- Heat partnerships at Sighthill/Merchiston. Happy to continue discussions, however not in a position to move forward with this yet. We can apply for £50K towards project. Buro Happold on list of approved suppliers.
- NHS looking at being key partner for developments at Merchiston. George Watsons also involved in these discussions. The NHS are keen to develop but don't have the funding to progress this.
- Vattenfall and Robertson Group are keen to share what they have been doing and their modelling with Abertay. No harm in us finding out what the options are. Need to think about procurement and due diligence therefore Vattenfall may be put on hold and conversations held with Abertay direct.
- There is also a lot of information we can learn from Edinburgh University, Edinburgh College, University of Strathclyde amongst others.
- There are issues around ground source heat pumps as you would require drilling down quite a level. Unproven technology at the minute.

Action: information will be collated and then we will have a strategic engagement process for partners when we are ready to move forward with this. Will look at what others are doing but not enter into any conversations around partnerships at present. ESM will move forward with this.

8. ENSA UPDATE

- During Christmas time, collected a number of items from people which were no longer required, and these were passed on to students.
- There is a shop on Bread Street in Edinburgh (ShrubCoop) which is now a trading shop which takes items in and gives items out to students. It is an all-year-round organisation. Four Square furniture is also very useful.
- Conservation Society – students will form this Society. They will look at UN SDGs, collectively putting a document together. During sustainability week this document could be shared as part of that discussion.
- Film screening – looking at sustainability, great success and people have been talking a lot about it. Actively taking part in year long sustainability campaign the university have been working on.
- COP 28 in Dubai – a contact is available who could engage the student community to push towards sustainability. The Development Office can assist with identifying key contacts.
- Canteen – people are buying food and using takeaway boxes but sitting inside. Consideration should also be given to removing paper cups. Slightly longer-term but conversations happening. Could consider charging more for disposable cups again.
- There is a lot of momentum towards students taking actions on sustainability. Slow progress, but it is taking place.

- Some students may reach out for permissions to add plants to the campus.
- It was noted that G Akshil will be leaving office in approximately 3 months.

Action: the Convenor will follow up the behavioural change piece with the Head of Psychology and get back to the Student President.

The Student President will ensure the Senior Student Communications Officer and ESM are put in contact with the two new societies which have been formed.

9. NET ZERO REDUCTION

9.1 Energy Plan

We have committed to writing this document. There is a draft energy plan on Sharepoint. We have the building condition survey and surveys undertaken by Buro Happold, therefore have very good data available to us.

9.2 Business Travel Plan

The ESM and ER/Policy Adviser will catch up about this. Good opportunities through Key Travel and Procurement with suggestions on how travel could be improved. The ESM has been invited to the Sustainability Customer Advisory Group through Key Travel. Travel policy to be reviewed by HR, however the VP for International also wishes to be involved in this process.

Action: ER & Policy Adviser will take this forward.

9.3 Travel Plan (Commute)

Have committed to updating this document. We have the travel survey results pre-pandemic and post-pandemic. We have a draft parking policy and there are considerations to take into account, for example the workplace parking levy. The consultation response to the Council is due by 5 February and it was noted the Director of P&F has already responded. There is very positive news that the Cycling Officer has worked through reaccreditation for Sighthill and that has been approved. Also working with Craiglockhart Campus. An award of £21K was made for improvement to bike storage at Craiglockhart. It would be good to tie in the Cycling Officer's work with the Mountain Bike Innovation Centre. The Cycling Officer's placement ends in April.

Action: the Convenor will ask Mountain Bike Centre staff to contact the Cycling Officer direct to progress links.

9.4 Offset Plan

Need to look at this in more detail. Offset is a bigger picture/consideration. The Marketing Business Partner is looking at projects with smaller landowners. Need to do what we feel is appropriate/important. It is the quality of the offsetting they are trying to drive. Not something UKRI are keen to see and it's not an allowable

cost. Wellcome Trust expect offset so it varies between funding institutions. The wording in the Concordat is also very interesting in relation to carbon offsetting.

Use of grey water systems – it was noted there is a drum attached to one of the downpipes at Sighthill which is used for watering plants. That is the only grey water we use currently. Could look at using this in toilets etc in the future.

9.5 Waste Plan

We have committed to providing this.

Action: The various plans will be the main focus at the ESSG meeting scheduled for 29 April.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

10.1 Each school and department need to think about their actions and embedment of UN SDGs in the training piece. In the planning round, sustainability will be included in planning documents and guidance. Have enhanced theme and research theme included.

11. SUSTAINABILITY – LEARNING, TEACHING & RESEARCH

11.1 Update from DLTE

Apologies had been received from the DLTE representative.

11.2 Update from RIE

UKRI Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice – ESSG(23/24)02 had been circulated.

This document has been circulating in the sector for quite some time now. Was due to be finalised/published in January. Key points: universities can become signatories/formal supporters of the Concordat. There are around 8 Concordats being used. Scotland has different timeframes for net zero to the rest of the UK. Little bit broader than carbon net zero conversation. Looking at running management and development of research projects. Want to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. They do recognise one of the challenges is that campuses are split. Difficult to differentiate between research and teaching. A lot of the concordat transposes onto our own strategy documents. A lot of how we already report would meet requirements of the Concordat. Places responsibilities on both the employer and on individual researchers. Also some aspects in relation to funders. The UKRI is comfortable in funding research into development of carbon offsetting but not keen on carbon offsetting of research activities. Too variable are the current offset schemes and we should look to reduce first and offset as last option. Key point that URIC needs to consider, from research perspective, as we will be asked if we have signed up to this document when submitting future funding.

Scotland Beyond Net Zero – network set up between University of Edinburgh and University of Glasgow. Options for us to join and contribute. Also looking at industry. Obvious connections to our current research – will probably be driven through Research Centre Leads.

Decision for signing Concordat will lie with University Research & Innovation Committee. Need to decide if we are a signatory or supporter. If URIC wish input from ESSG we would be happy to contribute.

12. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Monday 29 April, 1.30-3.30 pm

Focus of agenda: plans and strategy.

Monday 29 July, 1.30-3.30 pm