

A MESSAGE FROM NICK BRAITHWAITE



Dear colleagues,

As the festive season comes around, we begin to don our festive jumpers (the Go Green team encourages reuse of the same ones as previous years and advises putting jumpers on before putting on the heating). However, it is also a time to reflect on this past year and to look at what we want to focus on in the New Year.



Thank you for your support in 2021

Sustainability activities in 2021 involved valuable contributions from numerous colleagues across the OU. Highlights included:

(i) the launch of the [Open Account](#) in June; [setting out our sustainability vision](#) in September; the launch of the [Sustainability website](#) in October; watching our [OU COP26 official Green Zone event](#) and [hearing from our COP26 observers](#) in November.

(ii) Social and Environmental Sustainability is the focus of one of the five goals in the new OU Strategy 2022-2027.

(iii) The OU is now on course to divest from fossil fuel investments by the end of 2023, to reach net-zero emissions from our 4 Nations estate by 2030 (scope 1 & 2), and to achieve full net-zero (including scope 3 emissions) by or before 2050.

If you've engaged in activities related to OU sustainability this year that we may have missed, please [send us an email](#) and let us know.

People & Planet

Last year's data on sustainability is used in several external benchmarks including the People and Planet University League which was published last week.

This ranks institutions on the basis of a snapshot of a number of green credentials in addition to the data. Despite considerable work by colleagues across the OU we remain close to the bottom of this league. In part, this reflects the timing of the snapshot and publication of data (we are addressing these issues for next year) but it also reflects that we still have a lot to do to convert good intentions into action. Tim Blackman and I are both fully committed to ensuring that the OU progresses up the league table by improving performance against the indicators on which it is based. This will be a key focus for the newly formed Sustainability Steering

Group which has its first meeting this week (more below). Whilst certain parts of the OU will take a lead role in improving on these indicators, sustainability is 'everybody's job' and so sustainability@open.ac.uk invites your suggestions and ideas on how we might support sustainability actions in your areas of work and responsibility.

Global Compact

A positive reflection on our progress is found in the Global Compact '[Communication on Engagement](#)' letter which we submit every two years. The [UN Global Compact](#) is a call for organisations to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies and practices and to report on their implementation. I am grateful to the many colleagues who were involved in compiling this report. We drew on the information we have been collecting through the Open Account to populate this report and welcome all colleagues who may have evidence to support our next submission due in 2023.

Current priorities

We have recently set up a Sustainability Steering Group to lead on implementation. This group will meet quarterly and consists of members of the Senior Leadership Team who are pivotal in ensuring that sustainability is part of everybody's job – sustainability must be woven through everything we do. Dave Hall, Marcia Wilson, Liz Marr, Kevin Shakesheff and Paul Traynor will ensure sustainability is embedded in unit and budgetary planning as we launch our new Strategy in 2022. We are currently working with colleagues across the University to set out our sustainability Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress. If you hold data that might be of use to us or have ideas on how to measure what matters, please contact us.

The current Sustainability Coordination Group meets monthly to discuss operational matters and disseminate updates *and report on actions*. We welcome new members representing all areas of the university and will refocus our attention in 2022 on actions to demonstrate improvements for our KPIs. If you wish to contribute, please email us at sustainability@open.ac.uk

Looking forward

If you have any events, projects, research or other milestones coming up in 2022 that have a link to sustainability, please do [let us know by inputting them into our sustainability calendar](#); we are keen to capture and amplify your activities and support where we can in terms of dissemination, award applications and a wide range of institutional reporting.

Ways of Working – Travel carbon footprint

We have been assessing our carbon data related to travel, reviewing the value of travel for different activities, and the impact that different types of travel have on the environment.

Prior to the pandemic, it was common to travel nationally and internationally for meetings, research, and other University business. The pandemic demonstrated that it is possible to undertake at least some of this business online. Pre-pandemic, in the

year 18/19, the OU's travel and accommodation footprint from centralised procurement with Click Travel was made up of:

3,351 flight bookings (mostly return journeys) = 2,451 tonnes CO2e

6,002 hotel bookings = 235 tonnes CO2e

12,282 train bookings (mostly return journeys) = 1,106 tonnes CO2e

Total = 3,792 tonnes CO2e.

This compares to almost 6,000 tonnes CO2e from the whole estate.

Although there is clear guidance to use centralised procurement, we have only been able to capture around 50% of our travel data. This is an important reason why Click Travel must be used to book all University business travel activity.

The major carbon impact is from our flights. Approximately 5.5% of total flights were business or premium class bookings, which have a higher carbon emission intensity, so are responsible for almost 17% of flight carbon emissions. The flight breakdown is as follows:

Long-haul flights – 726 journeys – 1,906 tonnes CO2e

Short-haul flights (within Europe) – 1,617 journeys – 314 tonnes CO2e

Domestic flights – 1,008 journeys – 231 tonnes CO2e

Of which - Business or premium flights – 180 journeys – 633 tonnes CO2e

The University supports the creation and sharing of knowledge, however, we now need to do this in the most sustainable manner possible, with thought to reducing our negative environmental impacts. We are interested in best practices on travel and welcome your input. Some schools across the University have travel policies that encourage colleagues to give weight to the most sustainable option when booking travel options, encouraging colleagues to only travel when necessary, travel by train wherever possible, and reduce the use of long-haul flights and premium bookings. How would this work in your area? Are you aware of your carbon emissions from travel bookings? Can you identify ways to reduce the need for travel? We welcome your views.

Please do keep an eye out for the January sustainability bulletin which will discuss curriculum and finding 'hidden gems' amongst our colleagues. We hope you enjoy a healthy and peaceful festive season, and return to work with fresh optimism for what we can accomplish together in 2022.

Nick

Prof. Nicholas Braithwaite

Executive Dean, STEM Faculty and VCE Sponsor for Sustainability

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Sustainability: Reflecting, looking forward and thinking about travel

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