

A MESSAGE FROM NICK BRAITHWAITE



Dear colleagues,

The first signs of spring are appearing and, a little ahead of schedule, alongside the snowdrops I saw my first daffodil of the season, heralding an early start to spring.

Our sustainability vision at The Open University is to create and share knowledge and learning to realise social and environmental justice. Such knowledge and learning helps develop green skills for transitioning all our job's so they contribute positively for sustainability and prepare us for future green careers. After all, as you'll hear me say repeatedly, sustainability is everybody's job.



The Regenerators

This month we are working with a range of OU colleagues on the latest digital collaboration between the OU and the BBC. Additional materials are set to launch in March for Careers Week. [‘The Regenerators’](#) website is a new avenue for reaching younger audiences (11-16 years). It aims to address eco-anxiety and to empower young people to adapt to a more sustainable world.

The [Broadcast Partnerships Green Careers section](#) also provides resources and advice for the pragmatic and ambitious to explore their options. It is designed to enable teenagers to understand the issues associated with climate change, how our actions can make a real difference, and inspire them to take simple steps, not just to live more sustainably, but to make sustainability a part of their career, whatever that might be.

I encouraged Dr Victoria Hands, our sustainability strategy advisor, and colleagues from across our Faculties to challenge preconceptions around ‘green’ careers to demonstrate how becoming more sustainable applies across all roles and sectors – just like here at The OU. [The series of ten short films](#) include careers as diverse as engineering, gaming, horticulture and teaching. We ask ‘what if’ questions to encourage us all to reimagine our jobs for sustainability.

I popped along to one of the filming sessions last week and met Dr. Chitra Balakrishna, Senior Lecturer in Cyber Security, (pictured above with me) talking online with Jane Campbell, a studio operations lead, who believes that the video game industry has the potential to connect audiences with environmental messages. Our COP26 Observer

Graeme Smith highlighted the power of gaming for climate education [in this article](#).

What do you think?

The Power of Plants

The OU / BBC Partnership has yielded some exciting and ground-breaking content this year, with sustainability at its heart. The Green Planet has once again shown the power of these films to raise awareness about the challenges facing us.

On **Friday 25 February between 6 – 7pm**, the OU in Northern Ireland and STEM are holding a livestream event '**The Power of Plants**' from Belfast's Tropical Ravine. The event, which is part of Northern Ireland's Science Festival will feature OU academics Yoseph Araya and Julia Cooke and a BBC producer from The Green Planet series. It will be hosted by Dr Tara Shine (Irish environmental scientist, policy advisor and science communicator) and will feature a panel discussion about working on the programme; plants and biodiversity; and a Q&A from the online audience. This event is open to all, so to join please [register via the NI Science Festival website](#).

What does 'sustainability' mean to you?

The University is currently developing an OU/FutureLearn course 'Transforming your organisation for sustainability'. We would like to create a 'word cloud' associated with sustainability.

It would be fantastic for colleagues to contribute

at <https://www.menti.com/i9igzmfypf> entering up to seven words that you associate with sustainability. You can request a link to the word cloud which will be built from everyone's contributions. All entries are entirely anonymous and the word cloud is open until the end of Sunday 20 February 2022.

Sustainability is everybody's job

In my [January 2020 bulletin](#), I discussed the importance of ensuring that we embed sustainability across the OU by thinking about the sustainability aspects and impacts of everybody's role and work. As you can see from The Regenerators 'Green Careers' website, this is something we can all engage with. If you are struggling to think how you might ensure your role, area or discipline contributes to sustainability, [get in touch](#) describing your module, role or work and challenge Neville the Newt (our Go Green Mascot) to share ways you can embed sustainability. Neville will be in touch next month with those of you who send in requests.

National Climate Ambassadors for schools

Creating and sharing knowledge and learning on climate change is critical and I am delighted to support a new initiative led by Reading University to attract volunteers to act as 'Climate Ambassadors' who can pledge a proportion of their working time to providing help to teacher-led climate education initiatives in schools. If you would like to put yourself forward, please [complete this form](#) and we shall be in touch to agree how best to enable you. You should be working in a field related to climate science, policy, or practice and have enthusiasm to improve climate education.

With continued optimism,

Nick

Prof. Nick Braithwaite

Executive Dean, STEM Faculty and VCE Sponsor for Sustainability

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Walton Hall, Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA, UK

01908 274066
www.open.ac.uk

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