

A MESSAGE FROM NICK BRAITHWAITE



Dear colleagues,

Since the last sustainability bulletin, across the UK we've had 'a hot spell' (I hesitate to call it extreme heat in view of the conditions prevailing elsewhere on the planet) and a period of relatively heavy rain (which also relatively far from the extremes others have experienced this year). Extreme variations are stark reminders of the climate crisis affecting weather patterns both locally and globally. For most of us, we are privileged to be able to cope with such variation and it may barely affect our plans. Others are not so fortunate - which is why social justice and environmental justice are inextricably linked. The OU has a key role to play, in our own operations, in our impactful research and most influentially through our curriculum.



Climate Risk and Adaptation

If we look more closely, we also realise that such climate changes impact our food security and our supply chains. Work assessing our institutional Climate Risks and the development of an Adaptation Plan is underway with a multi-stakeholder group. In **Go Green's** June session, Ann Cummings outlined Climate Risk and we listened to the ways our staff are adapting to extreme weather at home, in their communities and in the workplace. You can [watch Ann's Climate Risk session here](#). If you would like to lead a Go Green session relating to our Net Zero commitments, or join the Climate Risk and Adaptation working group, please [get in touch](#).

Reading University's ['warming stripes' graphic](#) is a visual representation of global temperature changes over the past 100+ years. The stripes change over time from mainly blue to mainly red, illustrating the heating of our planet. The Sustainability Office is coordinating 'the big picture' and we count on each one of you to do your bit and embed sustainability practices in your daily work. To guide the actions, each Unit has been asked to use the [Sustainability Planning Action and Reporting Kit - SPARK](#). We'll be updating about Unit progress on **SPARK** in the September bulletin.

EAUC Conference - call for good practice and attendance June 2024

Five OU colleagues attended the EAUC Annual Conference 2023: Conversations on Climate Solutions, held at the University of Bath. They returned inspired having connected with their counterparts in Higher Education and Further Education institutions across the UK. Resources from the conference will be made available to all once EAUC have disseminated

them – you can search for keywords to find good practice in your area of interest. We welcome applications to support colleagues from across the OU to attend next year’s conference - both to present your own good practice, or to learn from others. It takes place on 25 and 26 June, hosted by the University of Winchester. You can find out more about EAUC and the conference in this [news post](#) on the sustainability website.



Global Compact - call for contributors to writing team

Every two years we submit an update on how we are responding to the [Global Compact](#) – ten values relating to human rights, labour, environment, anti-corruption and sustainable development. Our next update is due at the end of November, and we welcome anyone who would like to contribute any case studies, examples of how this is embedded in our teaching, research, or operations. Contact sustainability@open.ac.uk in the first instance.

Department for Education - Climate Action Plan bid

A group of colleagues are preparing to submit a bid, by mid-August, to the Department for Education to support all educational settings in England (including nurseries, primary and secondary schools to FE and HE) to create Climate Action Plans. This builds on the work we have undertaken on SPARK, creating a tool to support Unit action plans for sustainability, and utilises our expertise in user-friendly digital platforms and data analytics. The bid will create an online self-assessment tool, signpost to existing quality assured resources, promote with educational settings and most importantly, analyse data to ensure good practice is rapidly scaled for Net Zero and nature positive educational settings. This does not include the curriculum. If you have experience to share or want to contribute in any way, please [contact us](#). Whatever the outcome of the bid, we know we’ll gain by having these sorts of multi-disciplinary conversations.

Working towards Net Zero

The OU has committed to Net Zero by 2030 for emissions from our energy use and vehicle fleet (“Scope 1 and 2”). Actions to reduce the 5,500 tonnes of CO₂e emissions are led by Estates. You may have seen in the University Secretary’s last message the carbon (and financial) benefits of the programmed mothballing of some MK buildings and the resetting of the thermostats by one degree Celsius. This resulted in total savings of £225k and c.340 tonnes CO₂e. Thanks to all those who have had to adapt to the consequences of this carbon-reducing initiative. We are learning how to affect this sort of culture change that enables us all to contribute to cooling the planet and climate safety.

Our commitment to Net Zero by 2050 for Scope 3 emissions is more complex. This includes 15 categories of emissions, the greatest of which comes from the goods and services we all procure, estimated to be a minimum of 35,000 tonnes of CO2e. Our Procurement team have been upskilling and making new resources available to support all Units to reduce these supply chain emissions – digital and laboratory equipment being major contributors. These resources can be found at [Responsible Procurement \(sharepoint.com\)](#).

[Warp-It](#) is our online reuse tool and we encourage all staff to start using the platform and reducing the need to procure new goods. This Autumn, we'll launch more information on our pathway to Net Zero and invite you to join us in a range of activities.

You can find out more about Net Zero and what that means for us at home and at work at the end of July in the latest episode of [What They Really Mean For You](#). Utilising our academic knowledge, it explores what energy conscious technologies, such as heat pumps and electric cars, really mean for you. For more information, [visit OU Connect](#).

Are you Climate Literate? 'How Bad are Bananas?' Game and Carbon Literacy Training

Since the request in [my last bulletin](#), five events have invited one of our trained OU facilitators to play the 'How Bad are Bananas' game as part of a meeting, event, assembly, or away day. Thanks to LDS (Corporate and Commercial, LDS, pictured below), PSLT and Estates. USO-SLT also hosted a brief taster session.



Lee Johnson, Head of the Corporate and Commercial team, emailed The Sustainability Office after the session to say, “Many thanks for joining us with the game today – the team really enjoyed it, and it provoked a lot of great discussion!” Lee’s words demonstrate how this is an excellent engagement tool to get participants thinking and talking about all aspects of sustainability in a fun and accessible way, which leads into daily actions and supports Unit Sustainability Planning, Action and Reporting Kits (SPARK). If you would like to learn to facilitate the game yourself, please email sustainability@open.ac.uk

Our free [Carbon Literacy training](#) has one last session this year on Wednesday 9 August and we invite expressions of interest for sessions from September 2023. With almost 700 staff and students attending the training and over 350 receiving Carbon Literacy Project accreditation, we are

starting to see the impact of workplace pledges and will feature these in future bulletins.

Scotland Summer event - Greta Thunberg to join OUIS sponsored event

The Open University in Scotland will be welcoming Greta Thunberg to an inspiring event at the Edinburgh Playhouse on Sunday 13 August. The sold-out event, 'It's Not Too Late to Change the World', is part of the Edinburgh International Book Festival and will feature an in-depth discussion with Greta about her activism and upcoming book publication. *The Climate Book* calls on scientists, artists, Indigenous leaders, and those living on the frontline of climate change, to tell the truth about our changing world. Find out more information about the event on the [Edinburgh International Book Festival website](#).

Zero carbon travel with Cycling Citizens MK

Neville the Newt, the OU Go Green mascot met the Mayor and Mayoress of Milton Keynes (pictured left below) at the Mayor's Cycle Breakfast & Awards hosted on the Walton Hall Campus on behalf of Cycling Citizens MK - a project aided by MK City Council's Economic Recovery Fund and Capability Fund grants linked to Active Travel England and the Department for Transport. Neville was joined by local leaders and representatives from businesses, organisations, charities and schools. The OU won an award for 'the organisation with the highest number of bikes on site on a chosen day' - 74 to be precise! Cycling Citizens MK also held an event in Central Milton Keynes to celebrate cycling. The CMK carnival cycle ride was also an opportunity to thank the council for their support to cycling initiatives. Our colleagues Tim Seal, Head of Future Learning in WELS (high-vis lycra), and Matthew Cook, Professor of Innovation in STEM (branded lycra), represented the OU. You can read the [full story of the awards breakfast here](#), and [find out more about the carnival ride here](#).



I hope that you are all able to get outside over the coming summer months, be it on your bikes or just taking some time to enjoy nature.

With continued optimism,

Nick

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