

Welcome to this month's Sustainability Bulletin

July 2025

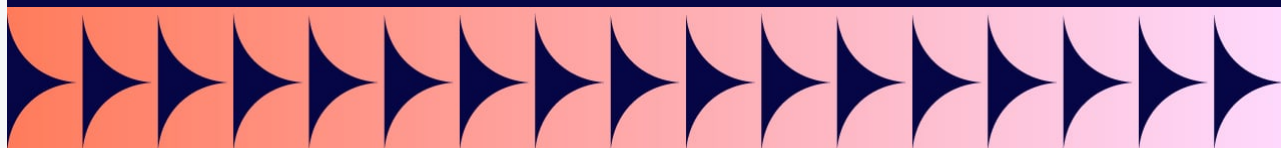


Photo by Willow Neal

I hope everyone will have the chance to take a break over the summer and get into nature in your local area or beyond. If you are at home, for the rest of July and until 10 August, it is the annual **Big Butterfly Count**. Just 15 minutes in your garden or nearest outdoor space noting which butterflies you see will help researchers, including our own [postgraduate researcher and Associate Lecturer Willow Neal](#).

[Find out more here](#), where you can download a butterfly identifier, access the database to find out about sightings in your local area and sign up to a regular newsletter with tips on how to support our pollinators. This includes pollinator planting and leaving wildflowers to grow and setting aside wild areas in our gardens or allotments. I spotted red admiral and peacock on the buddleia and two large whites very happy on the blackberry flowers. The blackberries are early this year and, despite the lack of rain, very juicy.

After 18 months of hard work, the **Youth Shadow Panel launched their final report** in the Palace of Westminster earlier this month. One of the 14

recommendations for education reform is: Integrated solutions-centred climate change and sustainability content and developing a connection with nature across subjects and key stages.

As school children say what they want to be taught, the tertiary sector can take their cue. You can read the full report here: [Final report | Youth Shadow Panel](#)

Whether as a parent, educator or young person, if you agree, you can endorse the Shadow Review's recommendations here: [I endorse the youth-led recommendations for education reform](#)

Does your research contribute to Net Zero?

The Wales Innovation Network (WIN) is mapping research strengths in Net Zero and Decarbonisation (NZD) across Welsh universities. As Universities Wales and Medr recognise the Open University in Wales as part of this landscape, we're keen to ensure OU expertise is fully represented.

This is an opportunity to highlight work from across the OU, not just in Wales, but drawing on UK-wide expertise where it aligns with Welsh priorities. We're particularly keen to hear from colleagues working in:

- climate change, sustainability, and decarbonisation
- social, economic, and political transformation
- across STEM, Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, and interdisciplinary fields.

With only ten responses from the OU so far, we are sure there are more examples of research to contribute to Net Zero, so please [consider completing this short survey by 31 July](#) to help shape the picture of OU contribution to Wales's NZD priorities.

Wishing you a restful summer, with continued optimism,

Victoria, Gabriella and Klaus-Dieter

Dates for your green diary



EAUC and AUDE

[EAUC](#) is the leading body for sustainability in the post-16 education sector in the UK and Republic of Ireland. The OU has an institutional membership which means that all staff and students can attend EAUC events and benefit from the resources on offer or share our own resources with others (please let the Sustainability Office know first). If you would like to be part of this collaborative community to learn and exchange with your counterparts in other universities, please do [sign up here](#). If you have students who would find this useful, please let them know by [sharing this page with them](#).

- Sustainability Communications Community of Practice (Virtual) – 4 September 2025 11:00 – 12:00
- Biodiversity Community of Practice Meeting (Virtual) – 8 September 2025 11:00 – 12:30

To register and to see a full list of EAUC events visit [EAUC Events](#) | [EAUC](#)

[The Association of University Directors of Estates \(AUDE\)](#) promotes excellence in the strategic planning, management, operation and development of Higher Education estates and facilities.

- Climate Change Risk, Adaptation & Resilience with Arup – 19 August 2025 11:00–12:30

[To register and to see a full list of AUDE events visit AUDE.](#)

News, resources & engagement opportunities

Validation Partnerships Conference 2025

In May, [Open University Validation Partnerships](#) (OUVP) was delighted to host over 100 delegates from its valued partner network and from across the sector to its biennial conference entitled "Innovate and Collaborate."

This year's theme reflected OUVP's vision to deliver high-quality validated provision through sustainable partnerships that support the University's mission and widen its impact. Together with our partners, we aim to promote educational opportunity and social and environmental justice for all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential. Conference themes included: AI, with a stimulating review of the many tools available and their different capacities; and Sustainability, with a workshop on embedding sustainability in teaching and a keynote presentation from Mark Brandon, Professor in Polar Oceanography.

The OU at EAUC conference 2025

Learning designers Paul Astles and Catriona Matthews represented the Open University at the 2025 [EAUC conference in their Sector Showcase session](#) about the project '[Words of Wisdom](#)'. You can read their contribution in the link above, get involved in the project or find out more about how sustainability can be brought into your module or content design. Please be in touch with the Learning Design team if you feel they can support you.

Help us share your positive news

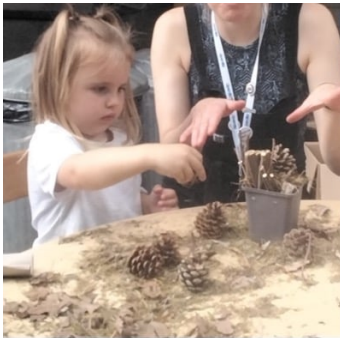


A Heartwarming Day at Amberwood Animals ☺☺☺

[The Plant Powered People OU community](#) had an unforgettable volunteer day at Amberwood Animals, supporting Mark and his 44 rescued sheep, cows, and pigs. It was inspiring to see the animals so calm and thriving, and the experience left us all recharged and uplifted. Mark shared a touching thank-you video, you can [watch it here](#). Huge thanks to Georgina, Alexandra, Justine, and Io for joining!

Love animals and plants? Join our [Plant Powered Viva Engage channel](#), no need to be vegan to join!

Building bug hotels at Mulberry nursery



In June, Open SU and OU staff were warmly welcomed to the Mulberry Bear Nursery to teach the children how to build bug hotels. Over 20 bug hotels were constructed by the children. Nursery staff plan to install a collection of bug homes in the outdoor area to attract insect visitors. Perhaps they will be able to do the Big Butterfly Count too!

The Big Student Meet-up

The Big Student Meet-up was held at the Walton Hall campus on Saturday 5 July where a range of stalls and sessions were organised in the Hub Lecture Theatre, Juniper and Medlar Suite and on the Mulberry Lawn. We were so pleased to welcome around 120 students with their friends and families to the meet-up.

Sessions included block printing, craft, creative writing, biodiversity tours, walks around the Living Lab and Living Roof and plant propagation.

Colleagues from across the OU and the Student Union set up stalls to chat to students, introduce them to their work and ask their thoughts and opinions. Stalls included Astrobiology, The Centre for Electronic Imaging who brought their space cameras!, Life and Chemical Sciences, Maths and Statistics, Design, Mindapples (mental health service), Student insights, The OU Students Shop and Hedgehog Friendly Campus.

Sustainability was front and foremost in the organising and planning stages prioritising using what we have, buying second hand and ensuring disposable waste was compostable or recyclable.



FASS Scotland nature writing workshops



Dr. Rachel Marsh, an Associate Lecturer who teaches English and Creative Writing, is leading a series of Creative Writing workshops in a Dundee community garden – ‘Victoria Garden Writes’. The theme of the workshops is ‘biodiversity’ and the aim is to engage local community members with the natural world through Creative Writing. The workshops explore the fundamentals of writing and how storytelling intersects with environmental sustainability. Participants at the first workshop enjoyed the garden setting which is thriving at this time of year, with grapes, artichokes, sweet peas, raspberries, and hundreds of other plants which promote biodiversity and support nature and wildlife (see photo montage). The Victoria Garden also runs a community larder where food is on offer to save it from landfill – this includes food grown in the garden and consumer goods saved from becoming supermarket waste. Dundee has an impressive network of 30 community gardens, and this is a wonderful opportunity to showcase how they can benefit individual learning in addition to the well-being and environmental benefits that come with spending time in a garden. For further information contact: Natalie.lewis@open.ac.uk

Sustainability is Everyone's job



An introduction to floodplain meadows

If you have a couple of hours to spare, one of our latest OpenLearn courses is well worth doing: '[An introduction to floodplain meadows](#)'. The course explores how these traditional landscapes can deliver a range of nature-based solutions that will improve our environment. Produced with financial support from Anglian Water, the authors also consulted with representatives from the Dadima's Community Interest Company, and teachers from [Denbigh School in Milton Keynes](#) in selecting course content. If you live near a floodplain meadow, then let us know and perhaps they can join the thriving network led by the OU team.

Green Gown Awards – Finalists announced

With 97 entries from 59 universities across 29 countries, this year's finalists include two entries from the OU. 'Take Five to Age Well' is a finalist in the Benefitting Society category and 'Challenge us! – reimagining research to deliver tangible societal impact' is a finalist in the 'Research with Impact' category. The next stage is to respond to the judges' clarifying questions and provide additional evidence of impact. The award winners will be announced in October this year. Good luck to our two finalists!

Bookmarks and stationery available at the GO Green Centre on MK campus

In need of a bookmark with a reminder about our sustainability commitments? In its design we aimed to optimise sharing of information by using a QR code which links to our website of sustainability resources, so you can always access the latest information without having to reprint materials. We featured our biggest impact area; our work to embed sustainability in our qualifications, free learning and interaction with all our students is detailed in our Responsible Futures actions, everyone can get involved.

The Go Green centre has a supply of donated stationery that can be reused and repurposed saving you and your team money. If you are on the Milton Keynes campus, do pop in and see what is available. Stationery (**and bookmarks**) are available to pick up from Go Green centre in MK on Tuesdays 12–2pm. Or through arrangement by contacting Jodi.Houghton@open.ac.uk



Get involved



Become an EAUC Member

To access resources and invites to regional meetings

HOW BAD ARE BANANAS? The Carbon Footprint Games

How Bad Are Bananas?

Play this game at your next team away day or event

Carbon Literacy Project



Carbon Literacy Training

Upskill, resell and make a pledge to take workplace action.



LinkedIn

Join The Open University's Sustainability LinkedIn Group.



Go Green

Join our Go Green network and workshops.

Responsible Futures

Responsible Futures

A framework to embed sustainability in the curriculum

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