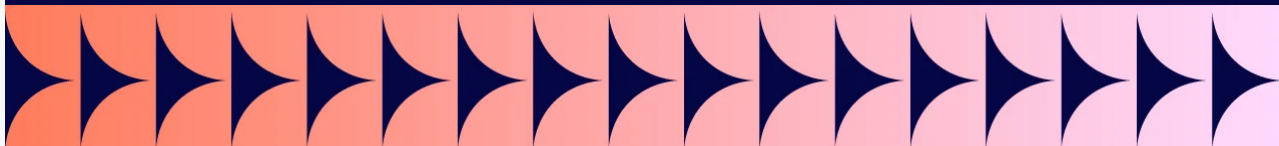


# Welcome to this month's Sustainability Bulletin

May 2025



This May started with Dawn Chorus Day when birdsong reaches its peak, Dr Emma Dewberry organised a recording from the MK Campus Living Lab which you can [listen to here](#). 'From lush green spaces to the tranquil River Ouzel, explore how nature and innovation thrive side by side.' Listening to nature is also shown to aid wellbeing!

May also saw the 99<sup>th</sup> birthday of Sir David Attenborough (8<sup>th</sup> May) and the launch of his latest film [Ocean](#) – in cinemas now. Our Professor of Polar Oceanography, [Mark Brandon MBE](#), drew on his work with Sir David on a range of BBC co-productions to bring his polar research to life for the OU Validation Partnerships Conference. What happens at the Poles affects us all and our daily choices affect the Poles! The OU Validation Partners ensure their curriculum follows the [QAA Quality Code](#) and are committed to enacting the latest September 2024 update to the code which puts both Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Education for Sustainable Development within its 12 principles.

**With Continued Optimism,**

**Victoria, Gabi and Klaus-Dieter**

**Guest note**

We invite colleagues from across The OU family to write for the Sustainability bulletin to help us all understand how our institutional goal of sustainability really is 'everyone's job'. This month we hear from Professor Al Laville, our Pro-Vice-Chancellor Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, and his co-authors Sanya Gupta and Emma-Jayne Conway from the University of Reading:

The Learn and Live strategic priorities of equity and sustainability are closely linked and this is often referred to as intersectionality. With a background in Clinical Psychology, I was part of a research project with my two colleagues which explored how Postgraduate Psychology students feel about integrating ESD within their curriculum.

'With the climate crisis at an all-time high, research has recognised its impact on not only physical health, but also mental wellbeing. This encompasses both the eco-anxiety resulting from witnessing climate change effects, and the ripple-effect of environmental changes on mental health – consider, for example, how the UK heatwaves can affect your mood. Bearing in mind UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) framework that aims to embed sustainability knowledge and action within educational content, we wanted to understand the relevance of ESD to Psychology education and careers within mental health. We also looked at what demographic factors might influence concerns for climate change.

In a small study, we interviewed nine UK university Postgraduate Psychology students and analysed their responses to understand the themes emerging from the data. Participants showed an existing awareness of climate change and its direct and indirect impact on mental health. However, they were dissatisfied with the level of knowledge held by themselves and their cohort as a result of the lack of teaching around this area in previous education. They therefore expressed a desire to increase this knowledge through the inclusion of ESD within their curriculum.

The students also spoke about the various other benefits of learning about climate change and its impact on mental health and how this would allow them to have a holistic understanding of their clients who may be impacted by climate change and/or experiencing eco-anxiety. Many participants were already encountering such situations within their Postgraduate training, particularly with younger clients. They expressed the need for greater information and skills to support them and additionally, participants said that if they were taught about climate change and sustainability in a practical sense, they could incorporate sustainable action within both their personal and professional lives. They felt this could also potentially have a ripple-effect, passing on to their social circle and leading to climate action on a larger scale.

We found that these positive attitudes towards ESD may have been related to some demographic factors – being female, being from a country experiencing a direct impact of the climate crisis, or being politically left-aligned. It would be important, therefore, to conduct further research into these attitudes and how exactly ESD can be

seamlessly integrated into the curriculum – within not only psychology courses at the university level but also within training and professional development at mental health organisations.’

This example demonstrates the need to ask our students and our colleagues how climate change is affecting us and to take action within our direct sphere of influence. I am interested in hearing your views on how to embed sustainability in the EDI work we do across the OU. Please feel free to [let us know](#).

## Dates for your green diary



### Summer dates: EAUC Opportunities to network

Sadly, only 326 staff and students take advantage of our institutional membership, please take the time to sign-up and grow your professional and disciplinary networks, this is a fantastic resource for all staff and all students.

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](#).

Upcoming events:

There is a full list of regional, national and community of practice meetings and networking opportunities [on the EAUC website](#).

### By 5 June: EAUC Green Gown Awards – contact us for support/notification

The [EAUC Green Gown Awards with UKRI](#) is a fantastic opportunity to showcase the OU's sustainability achievements. The deadline for entries is 5 June 2025. If you wish to make an entry, please send a draft to [sustainability@open.ac.uk](mailto:sustainability@open.ac.uk) so we can support you.

### By 25 July: Journal articles invited

Dr. Clare Lee, Dr. Alison Fox, Dr. Alison Glover and Dr Victoria Hands are Guest Editors for a [special issue](#) on Higher Education for Sustainability. The deadline for manuscript submissions is 25 July 2025. Do get in touch with your abstract

by clicking on the special issue link above (scroll down to the editors to see their email address).

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a critical role in advancing global sustainability. They must reduce their environmental impact while supporting their staff and students and equipping them with the skills to adopt sustainable practices. A sustainable future depends on graduates applying sustainability across sectors as climate impacts grow. HEIs face the challenge of combining subject-specific education with sustainable thinking, linking disciplines to the Sustainable Development Goals, and fostering transferable skills like creativity, critical reasoning, and sustainable action— aligned with the Inner Development Goals. This Special Issue focuses on sustainability education in HEIs and seeks articles on:

- Enabling students to understand and practice sustainability across disciplines.
- Defining and applying sustainable pedagogies to facilitate sustainable action.
- Promoting diverse thinking, collaboration, and relational skills for complex challenges.
- Addressing the challenges of delivering sustainability education remotely.
- Envisioning and measuring progress toward becoming sustainable HEIs.

## News, resources & engagement opportunities



### BBC coverage as OU brings environmental research to the rooftops

[The Open University's first green roof research installation is in place](#), thanks to a collaboration between scientists and a Milton Keynes-based Living Roof contractor.

Living Roof Live Lab, located on top of the Stuart Hall office building at the OU's Walton Hall campus, features a vista of rectangular beds, known as rigs,



containing different combinations of substrate and vegetation.

Researchers at the OU's STEM faculty are collaborating with the Green Roof Organisation (GRO), it's members, and local green roof specialists Bridgman & Bridgman, to turn a traditional flat rooftop into a state-of-the-art green roof research lab. Last month, the [BBC News interviewed, Dr Kadmiel Maseyk, about the Green Roof.](#)



## **Treezilla features at the Urban Tree Festival!**

[Treezilla](#), The Open University's innovative citizen science tree mapping platform, was showcased at the [Urban Tree Festival](#).

Established in 2013, in partnership with Forest Research and Treeconomics, Treezilla empowers the public, local authorities, businesses, and community groups to collaboratively map, measure, and monitor trees, with a particular focus on the often under appreciated urban canopy. Now, Treezilla is deepening its connection with the public, communities and stakeholders through [Branching Out](#), a project that explores the rich social and cultural values of trees.

Through this project, members of the public and people involved in the management and care of urban trees have contributed their own stories about the past, present, and future connections between people and trees. This month Treezilla will be unveiling two new features: the first will enable users to record the often-unseen social and cultural significance of trees in their communities, moving beyond traditional mapping to capture the personal stories and values we associate with these vital natural assets. Through the second update, users will be able to add more details on the physical conditions of trees such as size, shape; crown and trunk condition, as well as other trunk details.

At the webinar the Treezilla team ([Phil Wheeler](#), [Janice Ansine](#) and [Holly Woo](#)), provided a deeper dive into Treezilla features and how anyone can contribute to this project.

## **Go Green Event – Responsible Futures**

Marta Nowicka (SOS-UK) and Teresa Cox (Senior Manager, PVCS) hosted a session discussing the results of The OU's full Responsible Futures Accreditation in spring 2024, along with the SMART action plan developed to deliver the next accreditation process in 2026. [Watch the recording here.](#)

[Find out how you can help us with our KPI on embedding sustainability in the formal, informal and subliminal curriculum](#)

The OU is also running the [Host Partnership](#) event on 18 June, open to all OU staff

and students. It will focus on three key areas: Brand Value and Communication; Employability and Green Skills and Gen AI.

## **OU Social Work academics highlight role of their profession in climate education**

An article published this month reports on a research study undertaken by Gillian Ferguson and Lindsay Giddings. They completed a document analysis to look through social work regulatory and professional body standards and statements, to understand how the climate emergency was featured and how these documents called upon social workers to act on the climate crisis. [The article is available here.](#)

Lindsay has recently been appointed Deputy Chair of the QAA advisory group reviewing the Social Work Subject Benchmark Standard.

If you are inspired to review and influence your accreditation standards and Subject Benchmark Standards, please be in touch with the Sustainability Office.

## **Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies and their role in climate education**

The OU's engagement on Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) started following a summer 2022 student-led sustainability [curriculum mapping](#) exercise. We paid 90 students to train and review over 450 module descriptors for sustainability, triangulating the results. We then interviewed OU staff and were signposted to colleagues working with PSRBs. Embedding sustainability in PSRB requirements was identified as a potential game-changer ensuring a curriculum that meets student needs and supports professional development during early careers. We listened to colleagues in additional interviews and made plans to collaborate on action with SOS-UK, the EAUC, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Southampton. We came back to OU colleagues in late 2023 and early 2024 to ask for their input into a call to a St George's House consultation. The invite went out from OU Chancellor, Martha Lane-Fox, who also kindly recorded a word of welcome played at the event. The consultation heard from 8 students, engaged 20 of the c.200 PSRBs including QAA, Advance HE and Universities UK. We hosted a follow up session with colleagues asking for comments on the draft report ahead of being published. [Delivering integrated climate education, skills and professional standards](#) has a foreword and call to action from our Chancellor.

## **OU learning designers contribute to Education for Sustainable Development book**

As we confront the daunting challenges of the 21st century climate change, social inequality, resource depletion, and the loss of biodiversity, the role of education has emerged as a pivotal force in driving transformative change. A new book "[Education for Sustainable Development: The Contribution of Universities](#)" is a response to this urgent call for a reimagined educational landscape, one that empowers current and future generations to navigate and address the complexities of sustainability. OU learning designers Paul Astles and Catriona Matthews have contributed a chapter to the book featuring their work on Sustainability Skills Study cards, designed to support the learning

design process for OU academics. If you are redeveloping your curriculum, please contact [sustainability@open.ac.uk](mailto:sustainability@open.ac.uk) to receive support from your learning design team.

## Help us share your positive news



SketchNoting at the OSC Sustainability Research Fest 2025

### Sustainability Research Fest 2025

The festival was a lively gathering with poster sessions, lightning talks, panels and workshops. A short film will be available soon.

Dr Vicky Bowskill, Communications and Engagement Officer (Open Societal Challenges) and Associate Lecturer on ([SDT306](#)), used her artistic skills to capture some of what happened (above), and introduced her collaborative work:

*Art and science make a strong combination for addressing the challenges of both inclusion and the climate and biodiversity crises.*

Since completing my [PhD](#) in 2024 with the [Floodplain Meadows Partnership](#) and [EEES](#), I've been working on the [Open Societal Challenges blog](#) to share your research stories and you may have spotted my [SketchNotes](#) from some of the OSC events. The piece that really spurred me on to my creative communication path was the [Shoots to Roots](#) poster I worked on with [Irina Tatarenko](#) back in the pandemic. Other OU collaborations have included [Macro to Micro](#), where we worked A-level students in Birmingham to connect them with their local landscape. Most recently I've been working on the [Mitti Matters project](#) where we used arts-based methods to co-create a floodplain-meadow research proposal with schools and community partners. Right now, I'm working with the [Art & Ecology](#) team to engage schools with local museums. For more on these and other projects you can visit [www.inklusiveinature.com](http://www.inklusiveinature.com). Do drop me a line with your OSC sustainability stories for the blog at [Vicky.bowskill@open.ac.uk](mailto:Vicky.bowskill@open.ac.uk).

### No Mow May

Ciara Linehan from OUSA recently led a Go Green workshop on No Mow May where she demonstrated how she was encouraging wildlife into her own garden and gave top tips for us all to boost biodiversity. You can watch [Ciara's talk](#) on the Go Green Viva Engage and also be inspired by what you can do in your own garden by watching the [presentation of her amazing garden](#).

## Sustainability is Everyone's job



### Earth Overshoot Day 2025 – Steps you can take

Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources exceeds what Earth can regenerate in a year. Each year it has moved forward so that in 2025, the UK reaches this point alarmingly early, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable action. As OU staff, we can all lead by example, starting with our digital habits.

Here's your **Top 5 Digital Sustainability Cheat Sheet** to use from this month forward:

- **Link, don't attach** – Use document links in Teams instead of attaching files to reduce data duplication.
- **Inbox detox** – Regularly clean out your inbox to cut down on storage related emissions.
- **Search sustainably** – Switch your default search engine to [Ecosia](#), which plants trees with every search.
- **Think before you thank** – Skip unnecessary “thank you” emails to reduce email traffic. Instead, use Outlook's emojis to show your appreciation.
- **Meet mindfully** – Choose online meetings when travel isn't essential to lower your carbon footprint.

Let's make every click count. Together, we can push Earth Overshoot Day later into the year.

## 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



### Sign up to Giki

Register with Giki and take 10 minutes to calculate your personal carbon footprint.



### 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

A framework to embed sustainability in the curriculum.



### Warp-It

Save money and reuse OU resources with Warp-It internally, or by signing up local charities and schools.



### Sustainability Home

Keep revisiting the Sustainability pages for more information or [contact us via email](#).

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England & Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).



Walton Hall, Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA, UK

01908 274066

[open.ac.uk](http://open.ac.uk)

You received this email because you are subscribed to receive updates from the Sustainability Office.

[Unsubscribe](#)