

Welcome to this month's Sustainability Bulletin

April 2025

(The OU Climate Conscious Shovel of Office being passed on to the next Sustainability Sponsor, Klaus-Dieter Rossade, Exec Dean WELS (left). Previous sponsors have been Josie Fraser, Paul Traynor and Nick Braithwaite)



As with all families, the OU family is experiencing a period of change. The role of Executive sponsor for Sustainability was designed to incorporate such change and to rotate across the OU, benefiting from a range of expertise.

Inaugural sponsor Josie Fraser as Deputy Vice Chancellor responded to academic's concerns and staff requests to embed social and environmental justice across the university. Practically this work took two strands: Equality

Diversity and Inclusion in response to the Equality Act and now under the leadership of Professor Al Laville; and Sustainability. Josie organised the October 2019 Climate Emergency Forum, compered by Nick Braithwaite as Executive Dean of STEM. Almost 500 staff were welcomed by Tim Blackman in one of his first events in his new role as VC. Participants gave a clear message that a sustainability function was required to coordinate sustainability activity across the institution.

Chief Finance Officer Paul Traynor took up the Executive sponsor role and commissioned work to review best practice across the sector, validate carbon reporting and environmental compliance for our Estate and operations, to collate evidence of OU sustainability activities and to contribute to COP26, hosted by Glasgow. Sustainability was proposed as an institutional goal in the next OU Strategy. A small Sustainability Office was created to coordinate activity across professional services, Faculties and nations.

With a lot of good practice in STEM, Nick Braithwaite became Executive sponsor and was charged with improving our ranking in People and Planet. Nick consulted to specify the OU Sustainability vision 'to create and share learning and knowledge for social and environmental justice' and the focus for Sustainability delivery in Learn and Live: developing and promoting the curriculum for sustainability; upskilling and reskilling staff so that 'sustainability is everyone's job'; and coordinating a pan-OU matrix team through the Sustainability Office. Accompanied by the establishment of the Sustainability Steering Group, Sustainability Coordination Group and School Sustainability Leads (thanks to Emma Dewberry in STEM) and the development of our Sustainability Planning, Action and Reporting Kit, all teams across the OU can now contribute to this institutional goal and become good ancestors for future generations.

This month the role of Executive sponsor for Sustainability passes once more, this time to Klaus-Dieter Rossade, Executive Dean of WELS. Nick leaves a legacy, including a new tradition, as he quite literally passes the baton in the form of the Wimpey shovel. This miniature metal shovel is symbolic of planting seeds for future generations and a great example of reuse. It's origins date back to the early days on Walton Hall campus when teaching took place in Wimpey huts, before any buildings were finished. The Wimpey shovel was used as an award to schools in STEM in the 1980s and is now finding a new lease of life in the safe hands of the Executive sponsor for Sustainability.

With continued optimism,

Victoria, Gabriella, Nick and Klaus-Dieter

Dates for your green diary



Go Green – No Mow May: 24 April, 11am –12pm

This month Daniel McCarthy from the OU Grounds team will help us get the most out of No Mow May. Ciara Linehan from OUSA will also give us some exciting updates from the Hedgehog Friendly Campus team.

Dan will explain the benefits of prioritising biodiversity and there will be plenty of ideas to try out at home in our own green spaces. The session is also a great opportunity to find out how the Grounds team ensures plants and wildlife thrive all year round and how they take a thoughtful approach to No Mow May. Ciara will have some top tips to make your spaces hog friendly too.

[Please sign up via Microsoft Forms with your OU email address where possible](#) and we will send a Microsoft Teams link nearer the time. There will also be time for Q&A.

OU-wide Sustainability Research Fest: 30 April–1 May

The [Open Societal Challenge](#) (OSC) programme, with generous help from various quarters, is organising the third OU-wide Sustainability Research Fest in the OU Library, and online, on 30 April–1 May 2025 from Wednesday afternoon to Thursday morning. Everyone with interests in sustainability research is warmly invited to take part.

The event will be focused on strengthening interdisciplinary research collaborations and clusters across and beyond the OU and will include presentations from highlighted OSC projects, external collaborators and research users, and a panel discussion on future research directions. There will be opportunities to present posters and soap-box/lightning talks. The format will be semi-hybrid with online networking sessions interwoven as far as practical for those unable to attend in person.

[Registration for the event will remain open until 11 April 2025](#) with an option to register for online or in-person attendance. Please note that in-person spaces are limited due to space restrictions and will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis. The agenda for the event will be circulated closer to date.

Forthcoming EAUC events

[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](#).

- 7 May 2025 11am– 12:30pm [Waste Community of Practice](#)
- 8 May 2025 11am–12pm [Sustainability Communications Community of Practice](#)
- 15 May 2025 11am–12pm [Sustainable Events Community of Practice](#)
- 15 May 2025 3–3pm [Wales Branch Meeting](#)
- 20 May 2025 1–2pm [Environmental Sustainability Concordat CoP](#)

Save the date for this year's Travel Fayre: 9 June, 11am–2pm

Join us and local transport/travel suppliers around the MK area at Walton Hall on Wednesday 11th June, from 11am–2pm. Keep an eye on the [Travel Advice Viva Engage page](#) as over the next month we will provide details of attendees, discounts and promotions.

If you can't join us onsite for the event, the week from 9th June 2025 – 13th June 2025 we will be bringing back our Walk, Wheel, Ride Challenge! where a form will be live for you to submit your steps/miles at the end of the week to be entered into a prize draw, this is open to all staff including the Nations and Locations as well as homeworkers.

Empowering Futures: Enhancing brand value through sustainability, Employability and Responsible AI in Education: 18 June, 10am–2:30pm

The OU and OUSA are the host partners with SOS-UK in an ESD hackathon entitled Empowering Futures: Enhancing brand value through sustainability, Employability and Responsible AI in Education which will take place on the 18th of June 2025, 10am–2:30pm. All details about the event, including the agenda and sign-up link, can be found on the SOS-UK [Action Network sign up page](#).

News, resources & engagement opportunities

Sustainability Office news

This month included lively discussions at the Sustainability Steering Group (SSG) on the need to embed sustainability in all that we do as an organisation, even and perhaps especially in responding to the challenges we are facing as a university. So as we roll out our response to the financial savings, please do include sustainability in your considerations, think about the impact of your solutions on the environment and how to minimise this. The approach we have adopted at The OU is that 'sustainability is everyone's job' and we are seeing meaningful actions to embed sustainability in all roles and projects, with some creative examples which are also enhancing the quality of our service and the student experience. So, the message from SSG is – embed sustainability now – and if you face barriers to doing so, please let us know at sustainability@open.ac.uk so that the Sustainability Office and SSG can support.

This month's Sustainability Coordination Group (SCG) heard how small teams can make big differences by taking a little time to reflect on how to embed sustainability in current deliverables and new projects. Some top tips other teams can adopt include:

- Peer learning from counterparts in other institutions
- Establishing a monthly sustainability working group (which also has team building and well-being benefits).

Making a difference – sustainability

Wednesday 9th April, 10:00–11:00am



I'm working with the Open Societal Challenges
to inspire SMEs who are,

[VIEW TECHNICAL FAQs](#)

Overview

Sustainability is no longer just a corporate responsibility – it is a business imperative. As organisations face mounting pressure to address climate change and sustainability, the ability to innovate and adapt has become critical. This panel discussion will explore how intrapreneurial thinking can empower organisations to tackle these pressing sustainability challenges and create meaningful, long-term impact.

The session will examine how intrapreneurial thinking fosters creativity and innovation to address challenges such as carbon reduction, renewable energy adoption, circular economy integration, or waste minimisation.

Skilled Intrapreneurs can help identify opportunities for sustainability across operations, product development, and supply chains, and we will discuss how they can break down barriers to become champions for green initiatives within their organisations.

Resources



The Intrapreneurship Series: driving innovation from within

Access the previous episodes on-demand. This limited webinar series explores the concept of intrapreneurship and how innovation can be driven from within organisations.



Open University Sustainability Hub

The Intrapreneurship Series: Sustainability

Sustainability is no longer just a corporate responsibility – it is a business imperative. As organisations face mounting pressure to address climate change and sustainability, the ability to innovate and adapt has become critical. Organised by the Business Development Unit this panel discussion explored how intrapreneurial thinking can empower organisations to tackle these pressing sustainability challenges and create meaningful, long-term impact. [Watch the recording on demand.](#)



The Role of Social Networks and Social Capital in Farmers' Climate Change Adaptation

Zohreh Moghfeli, a PhD student in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, School of Social Sciences and Global Studies is the latest OU postgraduate student to write for Climate Perspectives. [Zohreh's article](#) 'The Role of Social Networks and Social Capital in Farmers' Climate Change Adaptation' talks about the importance of farmers social networks in helping them deal with shocks and changes as a result of climate change.

New update to EAUC careers guide

EAUC have updated their [popular careers guide](#) which now also includes profiles of people with green jobs, defined inclusively including net zero, behaviour change, and green-enabling jobs. It signposts to new resources, for example a quiz to help people explore which green job they would be good at, and updated reports and insights into green jobs and skills. There are also promotional materials that can be passed to students.

EAUC: When Canteens Go Green – Sustainable Food on Campus

The food we eat is a major contributor to global carbon emissions. From animal agriculture to food miles to food waste, our global systems of [food production and consumption account for over a quarter of the world's emissions](#) – of which, the management, feeding and land use of livestock account for more than half.

EAUC cite some of the best examples of [sustainable food practice](#) in their new blog.



EAUC Green Gown Awards are now open

With categories ranging from Campus Health, Food and Drink to Creating Impact, the awards recognise exceptional sustainability initiatives taking place across the post-16 education sector. This is a fantastic opportunity to showcase the OU's sustainability achievements at the [EAUC Green Gown Awards with UKRI](#). The deadline for entries is 5 June 2025. If you wish to make an entry, please send a draft to sustainability@open.ac.uk so we can support you.

Responsible Futures next steps

Following the [OU's Responsible Futures Accreditation in Spring 2024](#), work is well underway to prepare for the next accreditation in Spring 2026. A key part of that process is the development of a [SMART Action Plan](#). If you would like to contribute or have your activities featured, then please get in touch: sustainability@open.ac.uk

Help us share your positive news



Fulfilling futures in environment and sustainability

This was the focus for a 6-day online forum for OU environmental science and environmental studies students and those studying any subject interested in potential careers in this innovative, growing sector. Students could join other OU students, alumni, the OU careers team and hear from employers to discover career pathways, how to gain valuable experience and professional training. The forum ran between 6–11 March 2025 and will remain open on a read only basis for 12 months. The top 5 threads were viewed over 440 times and 133 unique students viewed and/or posted on the forum.

Living Roof Live Lab

Thanks to a collaboration with researchers in STEM and a local green roof creator, we are developing a green roof research platform. The initial building blocks of the Living Roof Live Lab were put in place in early February on top of the Stuart Hall building on campus. Later this month further planting and seed laying will take place to make the gardens grow.

The project represents a significant stride towards sustainable urban development and came about as Milton Keynes-based green roof specialists Bridgman & Bridgman and the research team secured Open Societal Challenges (OSC) funding through the Challenge Us! programme. This initiative will contribute to crucial research on the ecological and urban benefits of green roofing technologies. [You can read more on the project here](#)

Almost 150 trees planted through Ecosia

Following her Carbon Literacy Training, Avril Moore pledged to champion the tree planting search engine, [Ecosia](#). Currently, each member of staff can select it as their default search engine. After a successful pilot, almost 150 trees were planted by Ecosia following colleagues switching to the search engine. Results of the pilot will be shared with the University Secretary and we hope to join a handful of pioneering universities who have made this their default search engine.

Sustainability is Everyone's job



Celebrating Biodiversity

With May just round the corner, it's not too early to be thinking about what you might do for [No Mow May](#). Some new residents to The OU campus will certainly be enjoying the OU's No Mow May efforts. Our very first beehive has been installed on the Milton Keynes campus.



Sustainability in Wales

Colleagues in Wales attended the OU's Cardiff office on Wednesday 12 March for a lunchtime sustainability meet. The local Sustainability Working Group spoke to colleagues, along with Dr Victoria Hands and Gabriella Daroczi from the Sustainability Office. The following day, at an all staff Away Day over 120 colleagues took part in sessions on the Five Ways of Working for sustainability, and played the game 'How Bad Are Bananas?', promoting The OU approach to sustainability and the many ways to get involved. A highlight was a lunchtime team walk around a local park and a few minutes spent together in stillness and silence under the Spring sunshine (thanks Anna Elliot for inviting this). It's amazing what a few moments in nature can bring!



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](#).

With continued optimism,

Dr Victoria Hands, Gabriella Daroczi

(The Sustainability Office)

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

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

[Unsubscribe](#)