



Welcome to this month's Sustainability Bulletin

September 2025



Hoping that the new academic year is off to a good start for everyone and that the International Day of Peace on 21st September brought solace and hope for the future. I appreciated the words of [Dr Jane Goodall](#) (dedicated primatologist and anthropologist, and a United Nations messenger of peace who turned 90 this year) and the call from the [Secretary General of the UN, Antonio Guterres](#) that 'peace is everyone's business' and that we can take action for peace every day through inclusive practices and simple kindness.

As the trees turn into their autumn glory, we are busy gathering data from across the organisation to ensure our sustainability progress is transparently available on our external website. With thanks to Gabriella's persistence and your hard work, we can better report externally and internally. If you have data or case studies of the progress you are making in sustainability, please let us know, or if you would like support writing up your activities, please contact us – every action counts!

All your hard work embedding sustainability in your daily actions, enables us to coordinate responses for The Open University to a range of external mandatory and voluntary reports as well as feeding into OU governance processes. The Autumn is a particularly busy period as we:

-respond to the national **People and Planet** appeals process consisting of a range of sustainability indicators across The OU. The student-led league table will be published in December, and we hope to continue The OU's upward trajectory.

-draft our Communication of Engagement for the United Nations **Global Compact**. The world's largest voluntary sustainability initiative is recognised when applying for external funding. You can view a brief presentation on the United Nations Global Compact and the ten indicators relating to human rights and sustainability, another example of the intersectionality of sustainability and equality, and add in any [data or case studies here](#).

-prepare for our first year of **Climate Reporting in Northern Ireland**, working closely with Kevin Donnelly and the team at the OU in Ireland to respond to the new legislation.

-update our annual report for the **Scottish Public Bodies Climate Change Duties**, working closely with Ebony Carberry and the team at the OU in Scotland to respond to the mandatory reporting. It is likely that there will be increased scrutiny of both climate mitigation activities – reducing carbon impacts from our operations, as well as climate adaptation activities – how we adapt to a changing climate, where The OU's key role as educator and green skills provider is critical.

-write a review of our last five years progress and forward plans for the **Sustainability Steering Group, the Vice Chancellor's Executive meeting and a future Council paper**.

We have a firm foundation from which to move forward thanks to a very collaborative approach. Please join us! Share your views and ideas by emailing us at sustainability@open.ac.uk

With continued optimism,

Klaus-Dieter, Victoria, Gabriella and Avril

Dates for your green diary



Go Green: Waste management – 23 September 1-1.45pm

Please join us on Tuesday 23rd September at 1-1.45 pm where Director of Estates, Dorian Holloway be sharing statistics concerning our OU waste streams and processes. It is a great opportunity to see how far the OU has come on their green waste journey and get an insight into how we aim to improve even further in the future. [Please sign up with your OU email address here](#).

SOS-UK: Embedding sustainability in learning – 24 September 2-3pm

SOS-UK are celebrating the 15th year of their [Sustainability Skills Survey](#) by sharing key insights from the 2024–25 research, and longitudinal trends in student attitudes and experiences from across the research. The session will include insights from colleagues at the OU and Mohawk College (Canada) sharing their experiences of applying the survey in their own contexts, as part of SOS-UK's Responsible Futures programme. The session takes place on Wednesday 24 September 2025 between 2pm–3pm. [For more information and to sign up visit the SOS UK website](#). Our Responsible Futures team, led by Teresa Cox, will present on OU student responses gathered via promotion to Totem card holders. In spite of the small numbers, it is a rich data set with some interesting findings which we intend to respond to in our work on embedding sustainability in the formal, informal and subliminal curriculum

British Standard Institution's Net Zero Week 2025 – 22–26 September

BSI's Net Zero Week 2025 is a dedicated programme of expert-led webinars and interactive sessions designed to inspire, inform, and equip people with the knowledge and tools to drive climate action forward. Taking place between 22 – 26 September, each day focuses on a distinct theme, uniting thought leaders, practitioners, policymakers and innovators to share practical insights and success stories that are shaping a more sustainable future. [For more information and to sign-up to the event visit the BSI website](#).

Plant Powered People Conversations – 29 September 1–2pm

As part of OU Welcome Week, students and staff are warmly invited to a special joint online event hosted by the OU students Vegan Club and the Plant-Powered People monthly staff group. Whether you're curious about plant-based living or already passionate about sustainability, this is a great opportunity to connect, share ideas, and explore how plant-powered choices can make a difference. The event takes place Monday 29th September, 1–2pm, and promises lively discussion, inspiration, and community. [Sign up now](#) to secure your spot!

Dialogues on Inclusive Capitalism, MK campus – 1 October

The Juncture team from the University of Auckland Business School will be hosting a workshop at the Milton Keynes Campus and online on '[Dialogues on Inclusive Capitalism](#)'. Juncture is a platform dedicated to reimagining what capitalism can do when the future matters – placing fairness, sustainability and shared prosperity at the heart of our economic system. The Workshop will be held on Wednesday 1st October at the Open University Walton Hall campus in the Betty Boothroyd Library.

Open Ecologies – 8 October 1–2pm

This first lunchtime meeting is an opportunity to say hello to new members and have a forum discussion about our existing research. The 2025 – 2026 Open Ecologies Programme is in development, please save the following dates as the main lunchtime sessions, all on Wednesdays at 1 pm:

- 26 November / 14 January / 18 March
- 20 May Field Day (all day event) / 15 July

If you would like to secure your place or receive more information, contact: [Maria Nita](#)

Go Green: Working towards a net zero home – 16 October 12-1pm

Interested in living in a cosier, affordable, lower carbon home, but not sure how to get there? Join us on Thursday 16th October at 12-1pm where you can find out how to assess your home and work out realistic routes forward, including sequencing improvements and working within your budget, so that you can have the net zero home of your dreams! [Please sign up with your OU email address here and we will send a Teams link nearer the time.](#)

EAUC events

EAUC is the leading body for sustainability in the post-16 education sector in the UK and Republic of Ireland. They hold regular events and workshops which share sustainability knowledge across the sector. Their events are free to attend for OU staff.

Upcoming events include: ESD CoP: Rethinking Learning – Risks and Benefits of AI, Sustainable Events Community of Practice, Waste Community of Practice and many more.

To view a list of the upcoming events and to sign up, visit the [EAUC website](#).

News, resources & engagement opportunities

Net Zero Week

The OU was once again a proud supporter of Net Zero Week in July, and this year hosted a webinar titled Community Engagement and Net Zero on 8 July.

The event explored the vital role that community and stakeholder engagement plays in achieving Net Zero goals. Speakers discussed how harnessing local knowledge and fostering collaboration can drive impactful change, while also addressing the challenges that come with engaging diverse communities. The session brought together experts who shared innovative approaches to building a more sustainable future through inclusive engagement.

[The webinar is available to watch online.](#)

Last year's event "Driving change: Imagining a different transport future" is also [available to watch again](#).

Inclusive and sustainable business growth

Growth has dominated the political and economic agenda over the past year. But for many employers, the pressure to grow can create difficult trade-offs – especially when it comes to inclusion and sustainability.

That's why the Business Development Unit (BDU) brought together leading employers and skills organisations for a roundtable event on campus in Milton Keynes. The question on the table: Can business growth be inclusive and sustainable?

[The roundtable events which included OU representatives Dr Victoria Hands, Alex Hobbs and Dr Aqueel Wahga can be viewed online.](#)

AUDE publishes Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Guide

The Association of University Directors of Estates (AUDE) has published a [Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Guide](#). The guide has been developed to give outline recommendations and case studies for the UK higher education sector relating to climate change adaptation and resilience. [The guide is available from the AUDE website.](#)

Welcome to the Sustainability Office, Avril



The Sustainability Office now sits within the Governance, Compliance and Legal Services team where we can ensure sustainability is embedded pan-OU. We are delighted to have 0.5 FTE administrative support from Avril Moore who many of you will have met already through her work on Ecosia....

"Hi, I'm Avril – I have recently joined GCLS from Academic Services where I co-chaired the unit's EDI group. Part of my new job role is to support the Sustainability Office which is perfect for me as I am passionate about nature and the environment and believe Sustainability and EDI are intrinsically linked. I completed my [Carbon Literacy Training](#) in 2023 which really helped me to understand how I could contribute to reducing both my personal and my family's carbon footprint (among other things, "zero power hour" is now a thing on Sundays in the Moore household!) and how I could contribute to the OU's carbon reduction mission too. I'm a member of the Go Green Community and have had the honour of donning the Neville the Newt costume from time to time at the fabulous events they hold. You may have come across me talking about eco-friendly search engines like Ecosia – more on that to come in next month's bulletin! I'm also studying on the microcredential "[Climate change: Transforming your Organisation for Sustainability](#)" which will give me even more of the tools I need to support the OU in taking practical steps towards a more sustainable future."

Help us share your positive news

National Green Libraries week – end of October

The last week of October is [CILIP Green Libraries Week](#). This nationwide event takes place every year, with all types of libraries getting involved. From public libraries to health and academic libraries, events range from author talks to family treasure hunts and craft sessions. Our own OU Library has put together two resource lists, covering [Green Skills](#) and [Sustainability](#) to help people start their research journey.

New Digital Sustainability resources

The OU Library have also launched a new Digital Sustainability pathway on [Being Digital](#), our platform for developing digital literacy skills. The pathway includes three activities, covering Coping with Climate Anxiety, Greener online study, and Sustainability of Generative AI. The pathway has been presented at Mercian, a national conference for academic libraries, and the reception was fantastic. Being Digital is freely available to everyone, so these activities will have fantastic reach and a significant impact. Let us know what you think!



Sustainability is Everyone's job



OU Carbon Literacy Training

Students and staff can sign up to our fully funded Carbon Literacy Training. The training gives participants a solid awareness of climate change and the climate impacts of our everyday actions. It also allows people to map their own carbon footprint and gain an understanding and the motivation to reduce personal and work-place emissions.

[Dates for future training and more information can be found on the Sustainability website.](#)

MK Food Bank

The catering Hub has partnered with MK Food Bank and have installed a collection basket in the lobby of the Hub. OU staff and students can donate non-perishable food items and toiletries to help those in need in the local community. [MK Food Bank](#) provides vital short-term crisis support and care for families and individuals in Milton Keynes.

Call for health researchers – Environmentally Sustainable Health Research

Are you a UK-based health researcher working in labs, data analysis, or clinical trials?

Dr Gabrielle Samuel, Lecturer in Environmental Justice and Health at King's College London, and her team want to hear your thoughts on the environmental impacts of health research and the use of tools like carbon calculators and accreditation systems to reduce harm.

Whether you actively use these tools, are unfamiliar with them, or question their effectiveness, your perspective is valuable. Interviews will be held online via video call (30–60 minutes) at a time that suits you. Topics include your experiences, institutional practices, and views on sustainability in research. Recordings will be transcribed, with video deleted afterward.

[Register here to participate.](#)

Get involved



Become an EAUC Member

To access resources and invites to regional meetings

How Bad Are Bananas?

The Carbon Footprint Games



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

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