

# A MESSAGE FROM NICK BRAITHWAITE



Dear Colleagues,

The Open University is an official partner of [Net Zero Week](#) (1 - 7 July). Victoria Hands, our Director of Sustainability will be hosting [our online Net Zero Week](#) panel discussion 'Net Zero



Skills and the Role of Universities' on Thursday 6 July at 12 - 1pm.

In 2019 the UK Government legislated to reach Net Zero emissions by 2050. The transition to Net Zero represents a huge opportunity to secure livelihoods, enhance social justice, and improve health and wellbeing across all four Nations. To succeed we need people in place with the right skills, so that Net Zero and sustainability become *everyone's job*.

Universities and other education providers play a key role in the global transformation to Net Zero, as they have the unique opportunity to build skills, champion climate research, 'create and share knowledge and learning for social and environmental justice' (our own OU sustainability vision) and empower action in our wider communities.

At our event Victoria will explore green skills and career pathways from the perspectives of our panel members: Charlotte Bonner, CEO at the EAUC (Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges - of which all OU staff and students have membership), Ramla Khan, OU PhD Student, Stephen Peake, OU Professor of Climate Change and Energy (who discusses upskilling and reskilling [in this short video](#)) and Dr Freya Wise, OU Visiting Fellow and postdoctoral researcher.

Please do [register for the event here](#) and join us to contribute to the conversation. Whilst this panel involves STEM colleagues, we aim to run similar discussions across all faculties, so please get in touch if this could be you.

# NetZeroWeek™

The UK's National Awareness Week

1-7 July 2023

#NetZeroWeek

## SPARK

In [my last bulletin](#), I updated you on the University's Sustainability Planning, Action & Reporting Kit (SPARK) which enables every Unit to demonstrate how they are meeting the institutional goal for sustainability and progressing towards Net Zero. Units are to nominate a Sustainability Lead to attend the Sustainability Coordination Group and to create a Unit SPARK. I also invited you to a series of SPARK 'Lunch and Learn' sessions, open to all, as an opportunity for you to find out more and coordinate with your Sustainability Lead. Previous sessions have been recorded and can be found at the bottom of the [SPARK intranet page](#).

There are still three upcoming sessions and I encourage you to come along. There is no registration, so please save the event in your diary with a link to this page, you can join directly on the day using the MS Teams links assigned to each date.

4th July: SPARK Procurement & Resource [Click here to join the meeting](#)

11th July: SPARK Buildings & Workspaces [Click here to join the meeting](#)

1st August: SPARK Travel & Hybrid Working [Click here to join the meeting](#)

## Warp-It

[Warp-It](#) is available for staff across the four Nations. It enables us all to upload functional surplus items, well ahead of considering how to otherwise dispose of them. We can each state our own locations for pick up *internally* and move ourselves up the waste hierarchy to reuse, whilst saving carbon emissions from recycling or disposal. This still excludes furniture (contact Estates) and IT equipment (contact IT). By using the platform, we can record the carbon and financial savings made from our reuse and demonstrate our progress to Net Zero. After a period of time, the items are offered *externally* to schools and charities who can sign up to Warp-It for free. Many of you will have relationships with local charities and schools, so I would be grateful if you could let us know at [sustainability@open.ac.uk](mailto:sustainability@open.ac.uk) so that you can invite them to sign up and benefit from reusing surplus items from ourselves and the many other public sector organisations using Warp-It at a local level

## **Sustainability Research Festival**

As part of Open Societal Challenges, the OU held its first OU-wide Sustainability Research Festival in May. The event raised awareness and connected OU research communities working in sustainability, paving the way for new interdisciplinary research collaborations. It was a fantastic opportunity to hear from OU academics who have submitted challenges around sustainability-related projects globally and to spend time scoping new research ideas. Communications spoke to some of the attendees to find out what they thought about the event and why it is important to collaborate – [find out what they thought on Vimeo](#). You can read more about how the OU Sustainability Research Festival highlighted the need for collaboration in [this article](#) on the Research website.

## **Go Green ... go plastic free in July**

The next lunch time Go Green session is on Thursday 29 June at 12pm where colleagues can learn how to prepare for climate risk as individuals, in the community and in the workplace. We'll also be asking you to share your top tips for coping with extreme weather and how we can plan for the future. Find out more and [sign up via Eventbrite](#).

To mark Net Zero Week, Go Green will be running another [Giki](#) (carbon footprint calculator) challenge. Starting on Monday 3 July Go Green is encouraging staff to take steps to find alternatives to plastic. When the challenge starts, all you need to do is go to your personal progress page on [Giki Zero](#) and choose one of the steps from 'The Plastic Detox' to join the challenge. If you haven't signed up to Giki yet, now is a great time to get started, [just sign up here](#) so you are ready to join the challenge.

## **How Bad Are Bananas**

On Friday 23 June, several colleagues gathered on MK campus (see image) to learn how to facilitate the 'How Bad are Bananas' game based on the book of the same name by Mike Berners-Lee (it's a great book for dipping into when you need to check the climate change impact of a whole range of commodities, activities and events from bananas to wildfires).

The facilitator training will visit all the Nations by the end of the year and is designed to start conversations around climate impacts with any audience. Following training, the game is available to borrow and play with your friends, families, communities or work teams. It comes in two sizes – 'small' hand-carry board game size, suitable for use around a table or in an office, or 'big' 2metre square, self-assembly, ideal for away days and conferences in a large space. If you would like to invite one of our trained OU facilitators to play the game as part of your event or if you want to learn to facilitate the game yourself, please email [sustainability@open.ac.uk](mailto:sustainability@open.ac.uk)



I am grateful to Louise Casella, former Director of The OU in Wales and her colleagues for supporting pilots of our Net Zero work, this includes Carbon Literacy Training, the Bananas game, curriculum mapping, and numerous other reports and recommendations which support the well-being of future generations. If you have not yet done so, [please do sign up for Carbon Literacy Training here](#). Louise highlights the benefits of the training in [this short video](#).

With continued optimism,

**Nick**

**VCE Sponsor for Sustainability and Executive Dean, STEM Faculty**

DISCLAIMER: Internal Communications are aware of a known issue with Mailerlite where links are sometimes corrupting after we have sent the message out. Please be assured that if this does occur, we will work with MailerLite to rectify the issue as soon as possible.

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England and Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University needs to collect and process personal data in order to carry out our duties as an employer. This document sets out how we use your personal data. [Colleague Privacy Notice](#).

### **The Open University**

Walton Hall, Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA, UK  
01908 274066  
[www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)