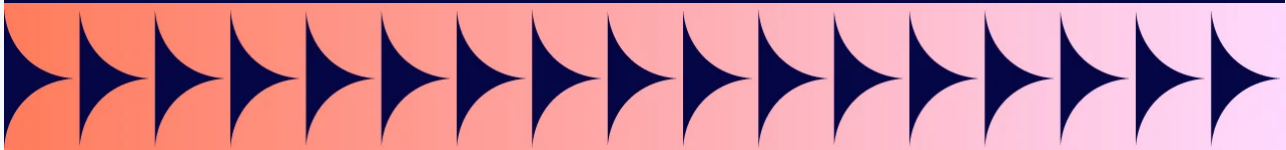




Welcome to this month's Sustainability Bulletin

December 2025



Season's Greetings



Wishing you festive cheer and a sustainable, peaceful time as we end 2025 and enter 2026.

As we think about gifting during the festive season, you might want to explore how to support nature at the same time with some of the ideas we feature below. A gift to our native butterflies could start by reviewing this letter by Butterfly Conservation [asking UK retailers to stop selling harmful pesticides](#). This follows the 2025 Big Butterfly Count which shows worrying long-term trends in decline, despite the sunny conditions this year.

It feels like much of the science on nature and climate and much of the news on local and global social equality, or the lack thereof, is pointing to a truly critical period in human history. There is still time for us individually and collectively to

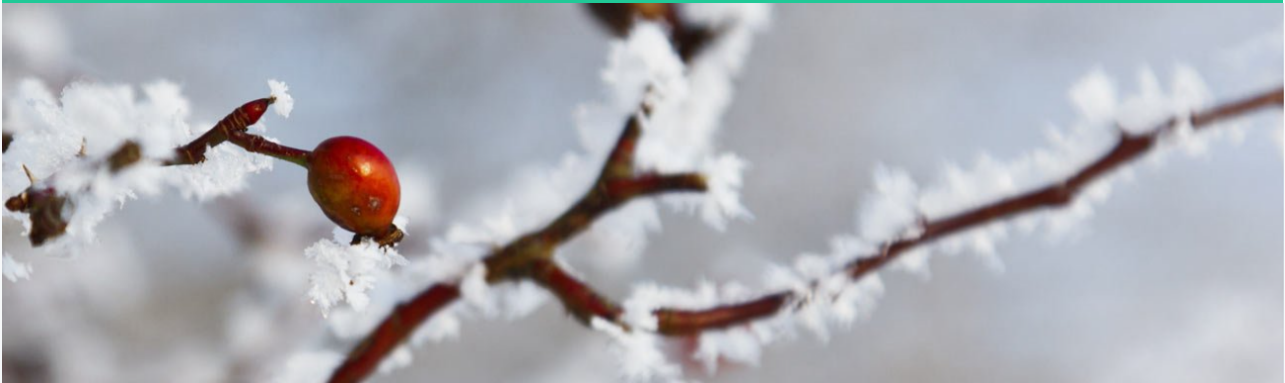
make choices to support the flourishing of all life on Earth. Many people are working to bring about a 'societal tipping point' to enable a rapid transition to regenerative practices. It is inspiring to find out more about their work. For instance, there are some disruptive innovators already reshaping the purpose of business – read more about Ecosia's regenerative business model below. Learning about these innovations can inspire us to reimagine our own practices for sustainability.

Thanks to those of you who promoted the National Emergency Briefing with your local MPs. The event hosted over 1200 guests including 81 of our 650 MPs and 52 of our 799 peers. Chris Packham, CBE and OU honorary graduate, opened the event. Expert briefings are available on the website, focusing on critical areas of interest to us all such as health, food security and national security. These briefings also make good resources for our teaching. There are also opportunities for current and future engagement. [National Emergency Briefing on climate & nature](#)

With continued optimism,

Victoria, Klaus-Dieter, Gabriella and Avril

From Festive Giving to New Year Living



Give experiences instead of things this festive season

Instead of buying material gifts that often lead to overconsumption and waste, consider giving experiences, like a local cookery or bread making class, museum or gallery pass, membership or a UK nature experience, from bird or seal watching, to hiking. Check out the [Visit Britain](#) website for inspiration. Experiences create lasting memories, building relationships and a sense of community, without adding clutter, and they often have a much smaller environmental footprint than manufactured goods. Search the [Directory of Environmental Organisations](#) for membership ideas (put in your county or town to find relevant entries from the 1200+). Explore around 50 [Environmental Courses & Events](#). Find out more about [Environmental Volunteering](#) near to you and broaden you and your family's horizons for 2026.

Christmas eCards at the OU

Sending an eCard is an eco-friendlier alternative to traditional cards. Physical cards require paper, ink, and packaging, often ending up in landfills after the holidays. Whilst eCards have a digital environmental footprint, the good news is they generate no physical waste, eliminating the need for envelopes, postage and transportation to deliver to your door. To help OU colleagues make greener choices this Festive Season, [the OU has created a series of eCards](#).

Swap Shop at MK Campus

The Go Green Centre hosts a permanent swap shop at Walton Hall which is open Tuesdays 12.00-2.00pm (and some additional days and times before Christmas). If you are wondering what's on offer, [you can see for yourself in this very festive video!](#)

VEGANUARY



Kickstart Your Year with Veganuary at The OU!

Start the year with purpose and impact by joining Veganuary! Every choice you make has the power to transform, enhancing your health, protecting our planet, and giving animals a better future.

We've prepared inspiring events and exciting culinary challenges, designed to ignite your curiosity and keep you motivated every step of the way:

- [Eating for the Environment with Shonil Bhagwat](#)
- [Ethical veganism: What it is and why it matters for social justice? with Matthew Melsa](#)
- [Plant Power: Exploring the nutritional and health benefits of a vegan diet](#)
- [The Great Vegan Bake-Off](#) – because who says plant-based can't be indulgent?

Whether you're vegan, curious, or just love a good challenge, this is your moment to try something new and make a difference.

[Ready to take part? Register now and let's see how many of us at The OU are stepping into Veganuary together!](#)

New Year, New Wheels: Join the Cyclescheme

Thinking of getting fit in 2026? If cycling to work could be an option then you may be wanting to invest in bike and or cycling equipment. Did you know The Open University has a partnership with Cyclescheme for the Tax-free Bike Scheme initiative aimed at getting more people on their bikes to work. Want to find out more visit [Cyclescheme](#).

News, Resources and Events



COP 30 From the Global South

The 2025 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference (COP-30 for short) took place in Belém, Pará, Brazil from 10 to 21 November 2025. To reflect on COP-30, the OU put together a panel of experts from the OU and beyond to discuss the impact of the agreement, their reflections on the global talks and what COP-30 means for the Global South.

[You can watch back the discussion on the Sustainability web pages.](#)

Colleagues from The Open University have been closely following COP-30 from afar, offering critical insights into the negotiations and their implications. You can [read their contributions](#) on the COP30 page also.

Carbon Brief, the well-respected UK website covering climate science and policy, have published their summary of the outcomes from COP30. [COP30: Key outcomes agreed at the UN climate talks in Belém - Carbon Brief](#)

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.

Upcoming events include:

- [Sustainability communications: community of practice meeting – 13 January 2026, 11:00–12:00, Online](#)
- [Wales branch meeting \(Virtual\) – 14 January 2026, 11:00–12:30, Online](#)
- [Sustainable events: community of practice meeting – 21 January 2026, 11:00–12:00, Online](#)
- [Waste: community of practice meeting – 27 January 2026 11:00 AM, Online](#)

Sustainability Confidence

We've collaborated Dr Inma Alvarez in WELS to apply the confidence circle she developed to our own staff to find out how best to increase our confidence for sustainability.

Teresa Cox and Avril Moore piloted the approach in the break time of a recent face to face Faculty Assembly and reported:

‘We had good engagement, those we spoke to approached the survey with positivity and enthusiasm, the discussion proved just as valuable as the survey and we look forward to following up with colleagues on their ideas.’

[The confidence circle asks us to map our individual confidence levels in response to four questions:](#)

- How confident do you feel in your knowledge and understanding of sustainability?
- How confident are you explaining sustainability to others?
- How confident are you taking action for sustainability?
- How confident are you influencing others for sustainability?

We aim to collaborate to develop support to increase our confidence levels for sustainability and welcome your input.

Avril has designed an online version of the Confidence Circles on a whiteboard that we look to trial ahead of Faculty Assembly’s and other meetings in 2026. If you can host a short reflective session either face to face or online, please contact Sustainability@open.ac.uk

UK Universities Climate Network survey

Join the growing network and share your research and experience. Please take just a few minutes to fill in the survey [here](#) to share your areas of expertise. Whether you are publishing research findings, developing teaching materials or are a sustainability practitioner, you can share your expertise. The UUCN enables collaboration across higher education ‘to advance ambitious evidence-based action on climate change’. Monthly one hour meetings (Mondays at midday) include briefings from Government departments and key external stakeholders to build joint strategic engagement and partnerships. For more details visit: [UK Universities Climate Network |](#)

Sustainability Thought Leadership with the Business Development Unit

The professional body for Human Resources and development (CIPD) hosted their annual event in Manchester last month. The [OU Business Development Unit](#) took the opportunity to embed inclusion and sustainability – a key area for skills development across the public and private sector. If you are interested in developing your skills in this area, or have resources to enable this, please get in touch.

Electric vehicles

If you’ve got a question about electric vehicles and want to know how the OU can support you, the [new FAQs from the Travel Advice](#) team may well have the answer. Whether you’re curious about home charging , the OU’s workplace scheme , or how EVs stack up against petrol cars, they have the answer.



The OU climbs 23 places in sustainability

The Open University has achieved a major milestone in the People & Planet University League, climbing from 62nd place in 2024 to 39th in 2025. This independent ranking assesses UK universities on environmental and ethical performance, and our progress reflects a strong commitment to sustainability. Over the past four years, OU has advanced from 116th to 39th, driven by improved policies, transparent reporting, and accessible sustainability information. [Read the full article](#) and [explore the rankings](#).



7,215

Estimated trees planted

360,753

Total number of searches

Ecosia default search engine

As you'll be aware, at the end of October The OU made the switch to Ecosia as the default search engine on all OU managed devices. Ecosia is a certified Benefit Corporation, or BCorp, and uses 100% of its profits to plant and protect trees. This disruptive innovation shows the potential for regenerative business practices to act in the public interest. In fact, Ecosia has made a [radical proposal](#) suggesting that Google Chrome can move from a focus on shareholder profit to collective good by investing 60% of their profits to safeguard Earth's natural ecosystems!

For The OU, using Ecosia means all our Ecosia searches are powered by renewable energy and we can now track the number of searches we make each month. Whilst our searches now do good, we can still avoid dirty digital habits and bookmark sites we use regularly.

For those essential searches, our monthly institutional report shows the cumulative number of searches we all carry out using Ecosia, and the estimated number of trees our searches have helped to plant. In the pilot period from January to October 2025, we performed over 36,000 searches and helped to plant 726 trees. This has now jumped to **over 360,000 searches and 7,215 trees, the equivalent to 8 football pitches!**

We'll keep you updated periodically with tree reports and hope you will be inspired to reimagine your business objectives to become regenerative and contribute to collective good!

Global Compact report goes live

Thank you to everyone who helped with The OU's submission to the United Nations Global Compact. The UN Global Compact is a voluntary initiative urging businesses worldwide to align strategies and operations with ten principles on human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption. Participants, such as The OU, commit to responsible practices, transparency, and annual progress reporting, supporting UN initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goals through collaboration, learning, and collective action across sectors and regions. [You can read the OU's latest report on the UN Global Compact website.](#)

Sustainability reporting in the OU Annual Report

Paul Traynor, CFO, announced the publication of The University's [Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2024/25](#), capturing a year of determination, progress and collective effort across the OU.

He highlighted actions taken to '...strengthen the University for the future, from creating a more adaptive and sustainable Walton Hall campus to improving energy efficiency and supporting more collaborative, connected ways of working...' as well as the '...growing impact of our teaching and research.....addressing global societal challenges through interdisciplinary research, the OU's mission remains firmly rooted in helping students and communities thrive.'

Thank you to colleagues who contributed evidence-based achievements in relation to sustainability which you can read on pages 50 to 52.

Sustainability is Everyone's job



Teams chats change: automated deletion

Rebecca Ward and the team in Information Rights and Compliance have [announced automated deletion of Teams chats older than 6 months](#). Rebecca said: 'We also anticipate this will support our sustainability goals, by reducing our energy consumption and carbon footprint linked to data storage and processing.'

Get involved



Become an EAUC Member

To access resources and invites to regional meetings



How Bad Are Bananas?

Play this game at your next team away day or event



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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