**University of Glasgow  
Sustainability Working Group**

**Minute of 9 April 2024**

Present: David Duncan (Chair) (DD), Jaime Toney (JT), Anna Brown (GUEST) (AB), Molly Davison (GUEST) (MD), Laila Elaasar (GUEST) (LE), Gioia Falcone (GF); Stewart Miller (SM), Alasdair Thomson (AT), Chrissy Sanachan (CS), Peter Craig (PC), Christie Bone (CB), Hailie Pentleton-Owen (HPO), Fabrice Renaud (FR)

Apologies: Roddy Yarr, Peter Haggarty, Inge Sorensen, Gordon MacLeod, Mariama Bah, Ross Barker, Josephine Gallagher, Craig Thomson-Gold

Attending: Rhona Little (Clerk)

1 **Welcome and Apologies**

The group welcomed Christie Bone to her first meeting who will be deputising for Matt Gilmour for the next few meetings.

2 **Previous Minutes and Actions**

The draft minute was approved as an accurate record.

PC raised an issue about an open letter from academics calling for transparency by universities to disclose their sources of funding and donations. It follows an investigation by openDemocracy that found more than £281m of anonymous donations had been made to ‘Russell Group’ universities since 2017. Academics are calling for political parties to make manifesto commitments to ensure universities are open about their finances.

**Action**: DD to contact Fran Shepherd to share University Gift Acceptance policy and bring to next meeting. PC to share open letter.

Divestment Update

DD confirmed that a group had been set up and chaired by Jonathan Loukes (JL), member of Court, dealing with divestment issues brought up by student lobby groups. JL had met with students and TU representatives and the intention is the group will report to Court in June. However, as SWG meets again before Court, it was agreed that the issues raised by the students would be brought to the next SWG meeting for input.

**Action:** Divestment update for input from SWG before June Court meeting

GF raised concern about the clarity of guidance for researchers and academics regarding collaboration with certain organisations for research purposes rather than students and the role and responsibility of the SWG in providing advice or guidance in this matter. Any decisions regarding restrictions on academics collaboration should go through the Research Policy and Strategy Committee chaired by Chris Pearce, rather than through the SWG and suggested delegating this to a smaller group.

**Action:** delegate to DD/JT/GF/FB to discuss with VP Chris Pearce

3 **Climate Anxiety presentation – Chiara Hill-Harding**

Chiara Hill-Harding (CHH), a PhD student at the School of Psychology & Neuroscience gave a presentation which focused on the emotional and mental health impact of climate change, particularly among university students. Her recent study surveyed Glasgow University students to gauge their emotional experiences and views on how the university could support them regarding climate change. CHH defined "climate anxiety" as anxiety specific to human-induced climate change and highlighted its prevalence among young people. The study aimed to assess students' levels of climate anxiety, identify situations triggering higher anxiety and understand their views on university support. Results showed that while severe symptoms of climate anxiety were rare, moderate anxiety was common across everyday situations. Students experienced higher anxiety when facing climate catastrophes or feeling dismissed due to their age, while proactive engagement lowered anxiety. Negative emotions like powerlessness, sadness, and anger were prevalent, correlating with students' perceptions of the university's response to climate change. The study suggested actions for universities, including integrating climate change into teaching, providing mental health support, and taking students' concerns seriously. Students also emphasised divestment from fossil fuels, campus awareness campaigns and sustainable practices. Aligning with these recommendations could improve student satisfaction and university rankings in sustainability.

The group thanked CCH for her presentation and acknowledged the efforts already made by the University in areas such as divesting from fossil fuels, spreading awareness, sustainable practices in catering and buildings, student involvement opportunities and recycling. It was noted that while progress has been made, there is still room for improvement or greater emphasis on these initiatives.

The group noted the importance of addressing the relationship between mental health and climate anxiety within the University's Mental Health Working Group and to discuss the need for improved comms regarding the University's actions, such as divesting from fossil fuels, to ensure that the community is aware of positive initiatives and can contribute effectively.

**Action:** CCH to be invited to future meeting to provide an update

4 **KPMG Audit Sustainability Response (Paper 1)**

KPMG acts as the University’s Internal Auditor and recently carried out an audit review of several sustainability aspects, including net zero target monitoring and reporting, communications, and governance for partnerships. The full A&RC response was circulated to the committee before the meeting.

The main issues identified are noted below and a detailed summary and response of the current status of the actions was included on the accompanying tabled spreadsheet.

* Monitoring achievement of Glasgow Green
* Structure, frequency and content of reporting from SWG
* Communications on Glasgow Green
* SWG responsibilities (Partnerships)

**SWG noted this paper and agreed** with the proposed list of actions identified by KPMG which included the response prepared for the University’s Audit and Risk Committee.

CS suggested creating a dashboard that presents the University's sustainability efforts and targets in one place and emphasised the importance of separating organisational efforts from research, education, and policy initiatives. Craig Chapman-Smith, Director of Strategy Implementation and Risk may be able to help with this.

**Action**: DD/JT/RY/SM to discuss with Comms to get message out across campus and to utilise a student intern resource over summer to undertake this project with aim to have completed by Autumn.

5 **SMG Strategic Risk Register on Sustainability (Paper 2)**

The Strategic Sustainability Risk Register was provided by Craig Chapman-Smith and the aspects noted within it should be reviewed regularly. The University Risk Register is discussed every 10 months and a mid-cycle update is required by May 2024. It was proposed that a sub-group of SWG should review the risks noted, update them and propose any new risks that may be relevant and appropriate since the last review. Potential risk areas identified by RY, Director of Sustainability are:

* Utility costs
* Sustainability Funding
* Sustainability Staff Resource
* Legislation Changes for Sustainability
* Infrastructure Risk

Since the release of the Glasgow Green Strategy, there have been significant developments. Events like COP26 have contributed to raising awareness and JT suggested that the risk register and the KPMG Audit call for a more comprehensive examination of the University's sustainability structures beyond just reporting and auditing.

**Action:** The group acknowledged the paper and approved a meeting involving JT/RY/SM to discuss and draft a plan, to be presented to future SWG meeting for feedback and discussion.

6 **Sustainability Funding and Investment paper (Paper 3)**

SM summarised Paper 3, which outlined the University's ambitious goal to reduce its carbon footprint by 7.6% annually aiming for a 50% reduction by 2030. However, recent data shows how challenging it will be to meet these targets. To address this, feasibility studies on decarbonisation interventions have been proposed, including operational, tactical, and strategic opportunities. SM emphasised the need for funding to implement these interventions effectively, suggesting the establishment of an invest-to-save fund and exploring various funding streams to meet the carbon reduction commitments. He highlighted the potential serious consequences of failing to secure additional funding for achieving these targets.

JT had discussed the invest-to-save fund scheme and new initiatives like the UK Concordat with RY. There will likely be a resource requirement behind these initiatives, which can be supported by pots like the invest-to-save fund. JT suggested setting up criteria-based funding and reporting mechanisms, drawing inspiration from similar initiatives at other universities like Edinburgh and Strathclyde and proposed starting with a pot of around 5 million in the first 2 years, with potential for growth by investing in sustainability efforts across the campus.

DD noted that there was money earmarked within the longer-term budget for sustainability initiatives, but further discussion would still be needed at the Investment Committee level. He highlighted the financial considerations, such as potential borrowing and its impact on the University's covenants. The paper is encouraging as it addresses both strategic and tactical priorities for reducing the carbon footprint and emphasised the importance of balancing sustainability progress with financial costs, which aligns with the expectations of the Investment Committee. DD suggested leaving further discussion for when RY is present and to report back on the outcomes of discussions in other forums.

**Action:** the group acknowledged the paper and agreed for RY to report to next meeting

7 **Sustainability Manager Policies and Progress update** (Paper 4)

Carbon Offsetting

SM provided a brief update on the University's carbon offsetting requirements. This ‘Scope of Service’, developed with input from academic colleagues and the head of procurement, sets out the need to offset approximately 44,000 tons of UK-based carbon emissions from 2030 onwards. Requirements include schemes located in Scotland, accredited under carbon code, generating at least 1,000 tons of carbon offsets annually, and considering local community impacts and co-benefits like biodiversity. Proposed projects should offer long-term research and teaching opportunities and define their climate benefits over time. SM is seeking feedback and approval to publish the PIN (Prior Information Notice) news, aiming to shape future tenders.

The SWG **approved and agreed** to go ahead and publish the PIN.

Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan   
and Climate Neural Estate – Biodiversity Feasibility Studies

SM presented an action plan for biodiversity initiatives, developed through consultation with various university departments and stakeholders. The plan encompasses a range of projects, including planting, engagement, and survey work. Additionally, it commits to conducting biodiversity feasibility studies totalling £90,000 over the next year. Contracts have been established with the Green Action Trust to develop woodland management plans for Garscube and Cochno. The plan also includes feasibility studies for green infrastructure on campus and in residential areas.

The SWG **approve**d the updated plans and to move ahead with the implementation of these actions.

Eco-Hub Progress Update

The Eco Hub project involves refurbishing the ground floor space in the Boyd Orr Building with completion expected by the end of May. Interviews for the Eco Hub coordinator position have been conducted, yielding strong candidates, and negotiations are ongoing with the preferred candidate, aiming for a start date in June. The goal is to have the space operational by Fresher's week in September.

The group acknowledged the update and thanked the GUEST coordinators for their fabulous contribution in facilitating the project over the past year. Overall, the project is progressing positively.

8 **Travel Policy Working Group**

PC discussed a paper prepared by himself, CS, and EP, which focussed on concerns about the rate of progress on reducing emissions from business travel. The paper outlined six areas for action, including accountability for travel decisions, better benchmarking, communication and information, review of incentives with sustainability goals, and the need for investment in sustainable travel policies. PC emphasised the importance of conducting economic appraisals and evaluations of the strategy's effectiveness.

The group acknowledged the paper and accepted it as the basis for further discussions and actions with the ultimate aim for it to go to SMG.

**Action**: paper to come to future SWG meeting for endorsement

9 **Update from CfSS**

JT updated the group on the activities of the CfSS. In March the Centre had organised a green recovery dialogue on food systems at the ARC with 27 stakeholders participating. They received insights from Mondragon in Spain, offering a different perspective on food systems compared to the Clyde Valley region. Proposals emerged around economy, environment, food production and land use funding models, to be presented at a senior leadership roundtable. The Centre is actively responding to Scottish government consultations on climate change and sustainability and are collating responses for the climate change National Adaptation Plan consultation. Unfortunately, we were unable to host the French Republic's Ambassador for Climate Change negotiations due to lack of suitable space on campus. They are further developing upskilling provision, including master courses for external organisations and researchers, scheduled for late August.

10 **GUEST update**

LE provided an update on the work of GUEST which included continuing projects such as the busy bike mechanic and successful community fridge initiatives. Future projects include student central drop-offs for homeware as part of a circular economy initiative, with events planned for Earth Week at the end of April, such as beach and wildlife garden clean-ups, rewilding activities and an international trade workshop. Progress has been made on the Eco Hub with a draft communication plan submitted for feedback, and the Eco Hub Coordinator hiring process completed. The hiring process for next year's GUEST team has begun. Despite a quieter month due to exam deadlines they anticipate increased activity after the exam season with plans for broader collaborations with student accommodations.

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11 **AOB**

There was no AOB

12 **Date of next meeting**

6 June – 10am