



Prepared on 25/09/2017 by Elizabeth Vander Meer.

Living Lab project summary – Development of the Adaptation Strategy: Business Risks and Communications

Description of the paper

This paper describes a volunteer project undertaken by two MSc Carbon Management students in August 2017 to assist in developing two strands within the draft University adaptation strategy: business risks and communications.

Research question

How can adaptation be framed in terms of business risks, and what are the best approaches to communicating adaptation?

Objectives

The students were tasked with researching how business risk has framed decisions on climate change adaptation, for instance in terms of physical, supply chain and reputational risks, and how this framing would apply in the specific context of the University of Edinburgh, as well as how it would be most effective to introduce and discuss adaptation considering barriers to adaptation actions, which can include lack of awareness and support, tendency to focus on the short term, lack of adequate technical information, resistance to changing behaviours and practices and perceived costs for long-term resilience.

Findings and recommendations

Robyn Lockyer identified business risks to University core activities from the impacts of climate change, considering the Climate Change Strategy's whole institution approach which encompasses research, learning and teaching, operations and investments. She concluded that adaptation was required to mitigate such risks, considering more direct physical risks to the estate and supply chains, but also regulatory and reputational risks associated with a lack of adaptation action. But, she also frames action in terms of an opportunity for the University to become a public sector leader in this area. These points have been included in the final draft of the adaptation strategy, as well as reference to her full paper.

Chris Guest described the fundamental importance of communication to ensuring University stakeholders understand, support, and act upon, climate change adaptation measures taken by the University. He provided eight recommendations for communicating adaptation in the University context. These include: use of a range of communication methods; values-based communication; communicating additionality, communicating a

narrative, communicating choice, using adaptation language effectively, managing audience expectations and evidencing leadership through adaptation. This final point aligns with Robyn Lockyer's conclusions as well. These eight recommendations have been noted in the adaptation strategy, with reference to the details supplied in Chris' report.