

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

MINUTE OF A MEETING of the Sustainable Laboratories Steering Group held in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House on Monday 29 May 2017.

1 Welcome and Introductions

The Convener welcomed attendees to the seventh meeting of the Group and outlined the agenda for the session.

2 Minute

The minute of the meeting held on 12 December 2016 was approved as a correct record.

Actions carried forward

Action – AA & CO to follow up with David Gray on links to Impact Committee.

3 Matters Arising

A £20K Freezer Replacement fund had been set up within the Sustainable Campus Fund for replacement of old inefficient units. A freezer fund update was circulated on 29th May, including the replacement criteria (also available on the [website](#), along with an application form). Some notes of interest had been received, though there had been no draw down as yet. Retrospective applications would be accepted, provided they met the criteria.

Action – All members to make colleagues aware of the existence of the fund.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS**4 Sustainable Labs Vision and Programme Plan**

A meeting was held on 1st May to focus on developing a medium-term plan and long-term vision for sustainable labs at the University of Edinburgh. A 3-year project plan would be put in place to meet the interim vision to 2020, including targets and KPIs, as well as a longer term vision to 2040, in line with the University's Climate Strategy and zero carbon goals. Both comprised actions across three categories: buildings and energy; communications and engagement; and practices.

Key elements included: influencing building design to optimise sustainability and operational functionality, developing new design standards, and encouraging uptake of the Sustainable Campus Fund to facilitate improvements. Improved internal communications would share developments, promote good news stories and facilitate communication to technicians, including events and training opportunities. By 2020 there were aims to see full participation in the Lab Awards, develop and publicise a body of evidence around sustainable equipment, and work with Schools and Colleges to integrate sustainability into their plans.

By 2040 good practices in design standards should enable delivery of low carbon and net positive buildings, with soft landings as standard, waste heat reclamation, better understanding of the needs of building users, and better briefings for contractors. Improved energy data would allow better metrics and measurement. Aims included non-SRS people spreading SRS messages, development of a sustainable equipment register, and roll out of shared services across the University (e.g. waste disposal,

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freezer farms, washing/sterilisation). Aims included running a prestigious conference over video-conferencing technologies, and having many active living lab and student projects. In future sustainability elements may be a requirement for funding bodies.

Action – AA to formalise output into a 1-year, 3-year and long-term Labs plan, to be in place by 1st August.

Action – AA to bring forward the soft landings goal, include space utilisation, and factor in data driven innovations to long term aspirations.

Action – All members to pass on their feedback and ideas to AA by 3rd July.

SLSG noted the difficulties inherent in planning to 2040, when science would be very different. Other University planning tended to be for 10 years, and thinking further down the track was problematic. With the number of students increasing, it would be important to ensure provision of sufficient quantity and quality of lab space in the long term. Labs were expensive to build and run, and their carbon impact could be significant, so it was important to use the space well, and share facilities where practical. There was a 60% usage target for teaching spaces. While some were used beyond that, there were constraints that made this difficult to achieve in some areas, in which case the aim was to make the best use of existing space to the maximum efficiency that could be evidenced. It was not thought to be likely that UoE could consolidate and bring campuses together within this timeframe.

More time would be spent on messaging, as this was not going out universally, and there were pockets of good practice that were not being captured. It was more difficult to access people in labs, and more thought would be given on how to improve this.

5 Lab Awards: Change from S-lab to NUS criteria

Part of the overarching Sustainability Awards Scheme designed to recognise and reward good practice, the Lab Awards were transitioning from S-Lab criteria to NUS Green Impact Sustainable Laboratories criteria, developed by Anna Lewis at the University of Bristol. The NUS scheme targeted HEIs but with a broader outlook, in line with the sustainability sector standard, with criteria that were more numerous, robust, and up to date. There were no cost implications as the online platform had been developed in-house and the content was open source. Some teething problems were anticipated in the first year. The NUS criteria were being adopted across the sector, particularly within the Russell Group. With the aim of having one nationally recognised scheme, UoE risked being left behind, with out of date criteria, if it did not adopt the NUS criteria.

Action – AA to recirculate the new criteria to the Group.

6 Engagement with Wellcome Trust

Meetings had taken place in April with contacts at the Wellcome Trust tasked with investigating what best practice looked like in sustainable labs and sustainability in universities. They would report back, and WT would decide whether to include this in what they asked of their grant recipients. WT were leading other research councils in this area. The investigation was in its early stages and changes may not go ahead. There had been a meeting in London between the WT and the cross-Russell Group Lab Efficiency Network.

While SLSG noted concerns about the additional burden in terms of research admin that this would occasion, the SRS Department had capacity to support Schools and

Colleges with this extra work. Some bodies were already asking for a statement from institutions outlining their procurement practices.

Action – GS to share a small sample of text supplied for these applications.

Action – DG to share any updates with the Group.

7 Lab Equipment re-use process update

One output of the reuse workshop in October was development of a flowchart indicating what to do with items that were no longer needed but still worked. This would shortly be finalised and posters made available to display in labs indicating the right legal process to follow.

Action – AA to share the final draft with the Group.

The warp-it reuse portal was not working as well as it could, with automatic alerts not being issued.

Action – CO to look into the issue and report back.

There were legal implications around the disposal of assets funded by others (such as funding councils), and it was not a given that UoE could retain the proceeds from such sales. Written permission from the funder had to be secured before any major asset sale. Legal services were feeding in on the process.

Action – AA to recirculate the document, changing wording to “funded”.

Action – All members to review the process and feed back to AA.

8 SFC bid – update and request for suggestions

The Scottish Funding Council were about to launch a £20M low carbon fund offering 0% loans for shovel-ready projects, with bids due over the summer, decisions to follow in the autumn, and funds to be spent by March 2018. UoE would look to submit a portfolio in the £1-5M range, redirecting some projects from the Sustainable Campus Fund, possibility including Aircurity, solar PV, and outputs from the new energy audits. The advice of the RELCO group would also be sought.

Action – All members to send their ideas to CO.

9 Improving support for Technical staff careers

The Technical Staff Steering Group had met five times since November, taking its remit from a paper to the People Committee. It had a diverse membership and was looking to expand this to include representation from every School and Department that had technicians (including ECA). Exploratory emails had been sent to groups that were not yet represented. Efforts were ongoing to liaise with HR to automatically update email lists when members left the University. The lists included technicians and managers of technicians. Meetings were planned with colleagues at other institutions, including Janet Milne at Strathclyde, who developed a two-year programme for technicians, and Terry Croft at Sheffield, who was working on a toolkit with HEFCE.

A dedicated webpage was being developed which IAD or HR would host. This would describe the work done by technicians, courses available, news and reports. It was not obvious from the wording of the IAD website that they offered courses that were open to technical staff. Future actions included the proposed secondment of a member of technical staff into HR. The overall aim was to become employer champions, recognised by the Science Council. This would involve expanding internal

training, with a pilot to be run on technicians' uptake of CPD courses by campus or location, and support offered to staff who want to achieve professional registration. Isolation among technical staff was a core issue to be addressed. A figurehead within UoE was needed to give this work visibility. Apprenticeship schemes would be expanded, a survey would be issued to technical staff in order to better understand their needs, and questions on technicians would be included in existing surveys.

Action – AA to follow up with Jenni Dixon in HR on modern apprenticeships.

Action – AA to circulate 2-page briefing.

Action – All members to contact AA with suggestions for a suitable champion for the scheme, which should be a senior academic active in the field.

10 Estates Development sustainability guidelines development

Investigation of the standards set for University buildings had begun last year, looking at the issues from a sustainability perspective. Work was proceeding, and labs would be considered as a major part of the process. SLSG would be updated on developments.

11 Lab equipment selection for sustainability

Desk-based research had been carried out into the most efficient versions of different types of laboratory equipment (principally CO₂ incubators, glasswashers, and sterilising ovens), producing a useful resource for staff interested in buying or trialling more efficient equipment. SRS would support this through the Sustainable Campus Fund and by tracking and monitoring available information which could be used to inform future purchases. Whole life costing was integral to procurement processes, including utilities costs and import duties.

Action – AA to work with AK to continue to build a body of knowledge.

Action – All members wishing to suggest items for assessment to contact AA.

12 Freezer Inventories – Student Summer Internships?

Work drawing up freezer inventories was one option for students looking for academic-linked summer placements (this would be paid work). The Wellcome Trust carried these out every summer to get rid of old samples.

ROUTINE ITEMS (verbal)

13 Any Other Business

Sample Databases

The Group discussed interest in adopting a database capable of identifying and locating samples within freezers. Such a system had been procured at Chancellor's Building, a chemical management system was already in place, and another had been developed within the Health & Safety Department which was starting to be rolled out for biological samples down to fridge level. The key issue was management, with a hierarchy needed to co-ordinate it University-wide. Projects of this type had previously been put to central IS.

Action – JR to add this issue to the agenda for the next meeting on 3rd October.

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