



## UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

### MINUTE OF A MEETING of the Sustainable Laboratories Steering Group held in the Balcony Room, Old Moray House on Tuesday 21 January 2020.

- Members:** Dave Gorman, (Convener), Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability  
Andrew Arnott, SRS Projects Coordinator  
Rachael Barton, SRS Projects Coordinator  
David Brown, Technical Services Manager, School of Chemistry  
Michelle Brown, Deputy Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability  
Glen Cousquer, Joint Unions Green Rep  
Dean Drobot, Head of Energy and Utilities Management  
Joanne Dunne, Early Stage Researcher  
Grant Ferguson, Director of Estates Operations  
Kate Fitzpatrick, Waste & Recycling Manager  
Val Gordon Technical Officer, Institute for Education, Teaching & Leadership  
David Gray, Head of the School of Biological Sciences  
Sharon Hannah, Bioquarter Campus Operations Manager  
Yuner Huang, Early Stage Researcher  
Angela Ingram, Service Manager, IGMM  
David Jack, Energy & Utilities Operations Manager  
Andy Kordiak, Laboratory & Medical Equipment & Consumables Team Manager  
Julia Laidlaw, Estate Development Manager  
Chris Litwiniuk, Engagement Manager  
Guy Lloyd-Jones, Forbes Chair of Organic Chemistry  
Robert MacGregor, Energy Engineer, Utilities Management  
Stewart McKay, Technical Services Manager, IGMM  
Brian McTier, Easter Bush Campus Facilities and Services Manager  
Lee Murphy, Genetics Core Manager  
Claudia Schaffner, Technical Services Manager, School of Biological Sciences  
Candice Schmid, Occupational Hygiene and Projects Manager  
Matthew Sharp, BVS Deputy Director - Business
- Apologies:** Dave Gorman; Dean Drobot; Joanne Dunne; Grant Ferguson; David Gray;  
Yuner Huang; David Jack; Julia Laidlaw; Brian McTier; Claudia Schaffner;  
Matthew Sharp

#### 1 Minute

A

In the absence of the Convener, the Deputy Director of SRS welcomed attendees to the sixteenth meeting of the Group.

The minute of the meeting held on 23 September 2019 was approved as a correct record.

#### *Matters Arising*

Action – AA to follow up with Evan Morgan to check if he was still the right contact for the LILLEE project.

#### 2 Sustainable Labs Programme Plan Update

B

The SRS Projects Coordinator updated the Group on progress. Members were pleased to see so many activities at Green status.

Efforts to identify substitution opportunities for hazardous chemicals had met with limited success. The volumes used in teaching labs had already reduced, and opportunities for further efficiencies were not evident. SLSG agreed to drop this line item for now in order to focus resource on more impactful work.

Action – AA to take a paper on chemical substitutions to the next meeting on 12 May.

Action – AA to provide RAG updates on outcomes as well as activities in future.

### **3 2020-2025 Draft Plan**

**C**

SLSG noted this draft programme plan for 2020-2025, based on workshop sessions held in autumn 2019. Four objectives and six key targets were proposed, designed to pull activities together.

The first objective was to see good practice behaviours adopted across all labs. This would be measured via three targets: 100% of buildings with labs having at least one Lab Awards team; 100% of building with labs having a Sustainability Coordinator working in or regularly with labs; and expanding knowledge of good practice outwith key contacts and Sustainability Champions (as measured in biannual SRS staff and student surveys).

Members discussed whether Sustainability Champion and lab Sustainability Coordinator roles were taken into account and allocated time as part of the Annual Review process. This was very mixed, depending on the individual line manager. SLSG noted that the Principal had recommended becoming a Sustainability Champion during recent Town Hall meetings. Health & Safety had found HR unreceptive to acknowledging these types of roles.

Action – CS to send GC a link to the HR paper.

The second objective was investment in lab sustainability projects. This would be assessed via one target: lab sustainability projects saving 500tCO<sub>2</sub>e annually, implemented by 2025. This was a stretch target, but should be achievable (depending on funding), particularly factoring in carbon savings from fume cupboard refurbishments. Ventilation was the largest energy consumer in most labs. There were huge potential savings across campus if UoE could drop to six to eight air changes per hour. After fume cupboards, the next major area to tackle would be long term storage freezer farms, which would require significant systemic change.

Action – AK to feed back further information on the dry heat autoclave and large volume steriliser tender.

The third objective was to increase reuse of materials and equipment across UoE labs. There were no associated targets, though there were reuse targets outwith labs. Members discussed recognising a Warpit Champion at the Sustainability Awards, and logging uptake numbers of the new reuse/resale policy.

Action – AA & AK to have a follow up discussion on how best to capture data for a potential target.

The final objective was to eliminate avoidable lab plastic waste by increasing options and awareness, measured via two targets: working with waste contractors to develop recycling/reuse streams for 10 new categories of lab plastic items by 2025; and 100% of labs following best practice in relation to reducing lab plastic waste.

Recommendations that were just tasks for the SRS Department would be carried over into SRS work streams, but would not be included in the Plan for this SLSG audience.

Members endorsed the proposed targets.

Action – All members to read through the actions and send their comments to AA.

Action – All members to feed in any notes or actions in their area for inclusion in the new Plan.

Action – All members to review proposed timescales and confirm if they were appropriate.

Members were asked to feed back within one month. Attendees could share the Plan within their teams, provided they emphasised that it was in draft form.

#### **4 Lab Procurement - Equipment Re-use/Re-sale Process**

**D**

Members noted the finalised paper, approved by University Executive in September 2019. The Convenor thanked all members who worked on the process. The FAQ and equipment relocation flowchart were included for noting. While some additional guidance from Health & Safety was still outstanding, these considerations would not change the process.

UoE had been selling on unwanted equipment for quite some time, with an approach generally based on financial value, and including a CT scanner and laser vibrometer. The current process had not set a lower threshold, as this would depend on the resource needed. Various options for lower value kit had been considered, including a 'shop window' facility. Help to find a buyer was not currently offered, as those in possession of the equipment tended to have the best networks for resale. Feedback had already been received on the wording and what should be included, and a full scale review of the process was scheduled at the three year point.

#### **5 Consultant Report on Equipment in Swann Building**

**E**

The Group noted this report from Andy Evans of Green Light Laboratories, an independent consultant specialising in lab equipment sustainability. The report had been commissioned to identify items of laboratory equipment suitable for replacement. The audit, carried out last summer, covered all benchtop lab equipment, ULTs and fume cupboards in the Swann Building. It identified seven ULT freezers in need of replacement. Fume cupboard alterations would be incorporated into Estates' wider work plans. Members recognised that a snapshot audit did not always get the best idea of actual usage. If benchtop autoclaves were being used for media bottle sterilisation, moving to microwave autoclave media bottle sterilisers would be recommended. Recommended for replacement with high efficiency models when they came to end of life were: -20 freezers, fridges, drying ovens, incubators, heater blocks, water baths and microbiological safety cabinets. Members noted that as Swann had an on-call system for alarms, there was less concern around replacing old freezer kit.

Action – AA to circulate a stand-alone copy of the report.

Action – AA to review user behaviour change recommendations to check if they were already integrated into Lab Awards criteria.

#### **6 Freezer Fund Performance Summary**

**F**

SLSG noted this paper updating members on the financial and carbon performance of the ring-fenced sub-fund of UoE's Sustainable Campus Fund (SCF). The Freezer Fund had been running for three years, offering a maximum grant of £1,500 towards purchase

of new energy saving models. A lower amount was offered towards replacing -20s. The fund in general was not supportive of fleet expansion, but would offer an 'eco top-up'. £34K had been awarded to date, generating a total electricity cost saving of £10K and annual CO<sub>2</sub> savings of 32.6 tonnes. These figures were on the basis of the grant, not the total cost of the ULT.

As a good proportion of the 23 applications received to date were from repeat customers, members advised trying to promote the fund more widely. It was proposed that the Freezer Fund go further, by recommending a machine or range of machines. Procurement and SRS could arrange a ULT tender, provided there would be reasonable demand over the next four years. (As it would be below the £50K threshold, this could be via the three quote route). This would put a framework in place that could serve as a 'shop window'.

Action – AA & AK to take forward the freezer proposal.

Action – AK to look into framework options and report back.

## **7 Non-recyclable Plastics**

This issue was moving up the agenda, with increasing numbers of staff and students wanting to know more about plastic waste and reuse. While UoE was working with its contractors and suppliers, there was no definitive list as yet of what could and could not be recycled. The University could not take on this recycling itself – there needed to be a market for it. Coordinated efforts across the sector would be required to consolidate supply and generate enough demand. Changeworks were not currently on the framework as they were not equipped to handle the quantity of waste produced. Terracycle had proved useful for certain waste streams. It was recommended that UoE find out what the NHS was doing, as they were expected to be leading on this issue, with developments then trickling down. In the meantime, UoE could look at what it was buying in order to try to produce less plastic waste, and consider making additional staffing resource available for wash up. A section could be added to the SRS website advising that the issue was being looked at and outlining the intricacies involved.

Members noted that there were potential procurement levers. Within the Life Sciences tender currently out for renewal, some of the suppliers had responded very positively to the University's sustainability agenda (with plastics as a focus item). Engagement with clinical waste contractors would be key. A lot of these companies were SMEs, and already on APUC frameworks, so were open to engaging on the issue. Different suppliers offered different sustainability options (such as take back schemes).

Action – AA to share output from the My Green Lab audit with the Group.

Action – KF to follow up with BIFFA on microplastics and feed back to the Group.

Action – All members to send any further comments to AA.

Action – AA & KF to review steps taken by the NHS and pharma companies and bring a paper to the next meeting on 12 May.

Action – JR to make this a standing item.

## **8 Technician Commitment update**

Members recognised that a lot had been happening since the last meeting, with highlights including an apprenticeship celebration event at QMRI on 12 December, with Moira Whyte acting as the University's Technician Commitment Champion. Bringing in new technicians was vital to sustainability of skills. On 17 February UoE's Employer

Champion award would be presented at University Court. Members of SLSG had been invited to speak at the Edinburgh Managers event and would discuss the Technician Commitment. Full details were available on the [technicians website](#).

## **9 Any Other Business**

### *Life Sciences Tender*

The Life Sciences framework was up for renewal, with 33 offers in (down 20 compared to the previous framework). The process would allow suppliers to join a dynamic purchasing system over the four years of the arrangement. It was not just a one shot opportunity, and suppliers were able to continue trying until they were successful. The Laboratory & Medical Equipment & Consumables Team Manager was reviewing the sustainability and community benefits side, which had met with a range of responses. Strong CB offers would be highlighted and taken forward.

### *Selling Equipment*

An MRI machine at the Western General was being removed this weekend, following a three quote process. The saving would be recorded.