

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

A

MINUTE OF A MEETING of the Sustainability Strategy Advisory Group held in the Balcony Room, Old Moray House on Thursday 30 January 2020.

- Members:** Dave Gorman, (Convener) Director of Social Responsibility & Sustainability
Michelle Brown, Deputy Director & Head of SRS Programmes
Michelle Christian, Director - Property & Residential Services
Glen Cousquer, UCU Green rep
Emma Crowther, Transport & Parking Manager
Dean Drobot, Head of Utilities & Energy Management
Grant Ferguson, Director of Estates Operations
Kate Fitzpatrick, Waste & Recycling Manager
Claire Graf, Joint Unions Liaison Committee representative
David Jack, Energy & Utilities Operations Manager
George Sked, Director of Procurement
Rosheen Wallace, Students' Association VP Community
Hugh Edmiston, Director of Corporate Services (ex officio)
Gary Jebb, Director of Estates (ex officio)
- In attendance:** Matthew Lawson, Student Engagement, Events & Reporting Programme Manager, for item 3
- Apologies:** Michelle Christian; Emma Crowther; Grant Ferguson; Hugh Edmiston (ex-officio); Gary Jebb (ex-officio)

- 1 The minute of the meeting held on 8 October 2019 was approved as a correct record. **A**

Actions carried forward

Action – MB to follow up with Glen Cousquer on sustainable tourism.

2 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

3 **Annual SRS Report**

The Student Engagement, Events & Reporting Programme Manager, in attendance for this item, updated the Group on progress and flagged changes to the report from previous years. Following a recommendation to improve transparency and accessibility, the SRS Department developed a new website to host the annual report. Formerly hosted on EdWeb, it had been difficult to find information, as compared to the current standalone reporting website. The usual physical 4-page brochure would be replaced by a postcard covering the highlights.

The data and reporting narrative had also been improved, and efforts made to embed the SDGs into reporting, including case studies for each. Content had been expanded, particularly around Widening Participation. A small group of external contacts, including Iain Patton of EAUC, Jamie Agonbar from NUS, and George Tarvit of the Sustainable Scotland Network had been brought in to provide feedback on the content and format. The report was approaching its final draft, and was due to be published in February.

The Programme Manager had also liaised with services and Schools to feed in to the Annual Report & Accounts which included a range of case studies and updates on

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sustainability. The University had participated for the first time in the Times Higher Education (THE) Rankings, which could offer an efficient way to gather data in future.

SSAG welcomed the new website, finding it accessible, informative and easy to navigate.

Action – ML to include reference to the Scottish National Performance Framework.

Action – ML to liaise with contacts in Finance and Procurement to ensure it aligned with content and messaging on their website.

Action – ML to circulate the current draft to the union representatives for their feedback.

Action – ML to circulate a link to the group once the draft was finalised.

Action – ML to follow up with DD if construction or infrastructure images of the Estate were needed.

4 Scottish Government Public Bodies Duties Report 2018-19

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It was a requirement under section 44 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 for UoE and all other public bodies to report on their climate change emissions, against a baseline year of 2007/8. The Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN), based at ECCI currently undertook collation for reporting. As they had lost their funding, it was unclear who would collate in future. There had been a decrease in grid electricity consumption, reflecting efforts across the University, but particularly from Estates. Growth of the University estate would continue to be an issue.

Members discussed whether the growth of UoE's online study body had impacted the University's footprint. At present, reporting did not tend to account for positive impacts of University operations, particularly where this was difficult to quantify. The FlowWave facility, for example, technically had a negative impact on UoE emissions, even though its purpose was to save carbon. The intention in future was to present a more nuanced picture, though how to account for positive impacts would require further thought.

The University did not currently have good data on the impact of construction, just a record of spend. This would be developed, including links to wellbeing, and the future of low carbon buildings.

Members discussed current restrictions on opening windows in some buildings. The Group recognised that some needed to be restricted for Health and Safety reasons, while others would be counter-effective, conflicting with other systems operating in these buildings. However, SSAG would welcome further discussion, communication and engagement with building users on this issue.

5 Scottish Government Public Bodies Duties Reporting Consultation

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SSAG noted this paper on the SRS response to the Scottish Government Public Bodies Duties reporting consultation. The response noted the importance of structured awareness-raising and leadership programmes across the public sector, community engagement guidance, and a comprehensive and holistic approach to procurement guidance. It expressed concern at the ending of funding for the SSN, whose contract would run out at the end of March, and noted difficulties in setting targets that include indirect/Scope 3 emissions.

6 Biodiversity / Adaptation Update

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An adaptation framework for the University was launched in May 2019 and included innovative thinking around adapting for climate change and biodiversity. The framework

needed additional granularity from an Estates perspective, including a flood map for the University highlighting buildings at risk.

UoE had supported the Council in securing a £1.1M investment in the future of parks in the city. The Future Parks Accelerator pilot mapping project had been approved and began in January 2020. It would develop and test a green infrastructure mapping application on four to five park sites, based on the app created for UoE campuses. Members noted that UoE could do more with its green spaces, and improve its design processes to factor in impact on wellbeing. UoE had world-leading expertise in this area that it could call on for advice, particularly Catharine Ward Thompson at ECA. Work was ongoing to integrate consideration of green spaces and wellbeing into Learning and Teaching Spaces Strategy.

The Hedgehog Friendly Campus Campaign had been a very popular engagement tool. UoE had achieved Bronze accreditation and was working towards Silver. Members acknowledged that there was still a lot of work to be done in this area, particularly in terms of organising an ongoing survey, and developing biodiversity action plans for each campus. SSAG recognised the excellent job done by the Landscape Section on all aspects of practical sustainability.

Once the Director of Estates Operations had approved them, the Biodiversity Policy and Strategy could be finalised, giving a full suite of documentation to underpin work in this area.

Action – All members to send any further questions to Elizabeth Vander Meer.

7 Sustainable Procurement Update

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The Director of Procurement introduced this update on UoE sustainable procurement, including an increasing focus on carbon reduction, and development of collaboration opportunities. Representatives from each of the four main category teams had been meeting to discuss how to better integrate social, economic and environmental impacts into tenders, and build in community benefits. One barrier at present was around recording deliverables. As the contracts were held by other units, it could be challenging for Procurement to ensure that suppliers were held to their obligations in terms of community benefits. The new Head of Contract Management was taking this forward. Peter Hayakawa was working with DDI on ways of recording community benefits. A tool was in place to track community benefits realised through the DDI programme, but due to the cost of the licence, it would not be used more widely.

The contract for the new IRP system included £300K of benefits. There was a new APUC Code of Conduct that all suppliers were expected to adhere to and that would be embedded within UoE tenders. UoE was working with the Scottish Government and HEPA to develop tools and training to roll out across the procurement function throughout the UK. The department had been challenged to become the first zero carbon finance and procurement team in the country.

Key successes included working with ECCI on a grant for the Climate KIC programme, and working with a number of construction companies on ways to reduce their climate emissions. A procurement restructure would take place later this year, and procurements hubs would be in place by the end of the year. Procurement strategy had delivered value for money efficiencies of £19.6M in 2018-19. 83% of spend was through tenders or contracts. The procurement hubs would address the other 17%.

Members discussed whether it would be possible to direct community benefits to align with institutional priorities (i.e. to focus on homelessness, digital inclusion, and social

enterprise). While most areas could be expected to buy in to these overall priorities, some would follow their own preferences, however these would still deliver benefit for the University.

Members discussed difficulties in procuring ethical washing up liquid through existing frameworks. The Director of Procurement emphasised that the frameworks needed to work for staff, they were not there to constrain, and other solutions would be sought.

8 Energy Quarterly Report

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The Head of Energy & Utilities Management updated the Group on quarterly energy performance.

Utilities Metering Update

Highlights included a website displaying energy generation. Information for the data centres was intended for internal use to engage with ISG staff.

Action – DD to circulate a link to the web portal for comment.

Energy & Utilities Performance

A significant amount of work had been done in this area over the last year, leading to a lot of accumulated data. There was expected to be a good deal of interest in this data. It would be reviewed, looking at heat and electricity demand on each campus, to identify the main drivers. KPIs and metrics would then be reviewed. The recent drop in emissions was largely a result of decarbonisation of the grid combined with better heating controls.

Campus Development / Growth

There had been some changes to the structure of Estates, with two new roles reporting to the Director, with oversight of the Project Managers. This would help ensure capital development programmes were more widely understood, and the Energy Team could feed in to their future forecasting.

Energy Masterplans

Over the last year the team had been considering how to make the transition from generating electricity from gas on site to what should come next. Each campus would need a different solution, stacking measures over a long period to ensure UoE's infrastructure was future-proof. There was an initial deadline for Scottish Government funding of 20 February. Energy and SRS would work together to ensure the application reflected SRS forecasting data.

Low Carbon Infrastructure Transition Funding (LCITP)

The Head of Energy & Utilities Management updated the Group on recent LCITP funding bids, including the Peffermill Low Carbon Village, which would not now go ahead. A decision on the Low Carbon Outdoor Centre at Firbush was expected in February.

SFC Financial Transactions programme 2019/20 – 2020/21

In July 2019 an application to the SFC Universities of the Future Fund was prepared for the £5.3M 'deep efficiency' retrofit of the School of Chemistry, aimed at halving energy demand. Ultimately the application would not be taken forward, in order to limit exposure to loan obligations, and alternative funding strategies would be sought. There had been

productive discussions with Finance, including development of a Living Energy document to sit alongside capital business cases.

Sustainable Campus Fund Update

The £4.75M fund was partially allocated (£2M) across 72 projects. Actual spend was currently at £998K. Savings were £384K and 1032tCO₂e p.a. Members were urged to keep reminding colleagues about the fund and ask those with local ideas to bring them forward through the [online application portal](#).

Action – All members to pass information on the SCF through their networks.

A strategy review for the fund was in progress, including looking at ways to increase engagement. One suggestion was to host workshops to help colleagues work up their ideas. Having addressed the low hanging fruit, in order to continue to work toward zero carbon, annual funding would need to be increased to enable the SCF to roll out campus-wide programmes and tackle more complex infrastructure issues.

It was clarified that, at present, fund applications needed to be for projects based on UoE's physical campus. Remote students were not currently able to apply to draw funding for projects local to them.

9 SRS Programmes Quarterly Report

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The Deputy Director of SRS updated members on SRS Programmes highlights from Q1:

Student & Staff Engagement

Over the summer and through consultation the SRS Department had been reviewing the future of its energy and waste coordinator networks. These had now been replaced by the [Sustainability Champions network](#) for staff and students. The network would ensure colleagues had the knowledge and tools to effectively embed sustainability in their areas. Two launch events had already taken place, in the Central Area and at KB, with another planned for Easter Bush. There had been a lot of interest so far, with 400 champions already signed up. Climate distress was a topic of particular interest and would be the focus of one of the quarterly meetups. Champions had also flagged the need for communications training, which would be taken forward by SRS and CaM.

Communication around the University's commitment to civic and social responsibility had resulted in a lot of interest from departments that had not previously engaged with SRS. There had also been increased interest in the [Sustainability Awards](#) from offices and labs looking for tools and approaches to implement actions in their areas. (A bronze level award indicated compliance, silver was for teams pushing the criteria forward, and gold award recognised completion of a dedicated project). A comprehensive evaluation of the awards scheme was undertaken last year. The full report was available if members wished to see it. The review was currently focused on updating criteria for future alignment and embedding sustainability.

The [Be Sustainable Advanced](#) course used blended learning to give staff a more in-depth understanding of how to affect change at work and at home. A third cohort of around 50 staff had started the course in January 2020. The Student Pathways project had enabled 50 students to complete their Edinburgh Award on Climate Leadership. Despite the recent increase in interest, there were still areas that were not being reached, and this would continue to be a communications and engagement challenge for SRS.

Energy Engagement

85 projects had now been approved by the Sustainable Campus Fund, estimated to bring annual savings of over £557,000 and 1,700 tCO_{2e}. Work was ongoing to promote the fund. SRS had prepared communication materials for the annual [Winter Shutdown campaign](#), which encouraged staff and students to switch off lighting and equipment to save energy over the winter break. It was difficult to get the data necessary to measure the impact of the campaign. In future, it would be possible to establish an energy footprint for individual buildings, which would make it easier to see the impact of various interventions and policy changes. Labs were particularly problematic, due to unstable patterns of use and demand.

Sustainable Travel

The biggest opportunity for UoE to reduce its carbon emissions was from business aviation, which accounted for 15% of the University's overall carbon footprint. Initial research had been carried out looking at approaches to incentivise rail travel and video conferencing, and discourage travellers from flying into London. The Travel and Aviation Working Group, which first met in November 2019, was working to develop next steps. A consultation, supported by Town Hall meetings, would be launched in March, and more updates to SSAG would follow.

Community Engagement

The Community Engagement Programme ([Edinburgh Local](#)) had opened another round of Community Grant applications, with awards in Q2. Since 2017 more than £180K had been awarded to over 40 community projects across the city region.

Action – All members in contact with local community groups to make them aware of the grants scheme.

Sustainability at the Festival

Work was ongoing to investigate approaches the University could take as a responsible landlord, and to identify opportunities to engage with the wider community on key issues.

Members welcomed the report, noting positive steps taken. While these quarterly updates were helpful, they were also time consuming. The Group were still searching for the right format for these meetings, and may take some parts online in future, to allow more time for discussion.

10 Waste, Reuse & Recycling Quarterly Report

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SSAG noted this report from the Waste Manager. Members were particularly keen to hear more about the internal bin signage review. The Group recognised that more could be done in terms of training and awareness raising to improve the quality of UoE recycle, for example, by making Be Sustainable online training obligatory.

Action – All members to forward their questions to Kate.Fitzpatrick@ed.ac.uk.

11 Travel & Transport Quarterly Report

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SSAG noted this report from the Travel & Transport Manager.

Action – All members to send any queries to Emma.Crowther@ed.ac.uk.

12 SFC – Climate Emergency Collaboration Challenge funding

The Scottish Government had made up to £500K available immediately to support innovative carbon reduction projects this academic year. Universities and colleges were invited to submit proposals for funding by 24 October. UoE was putting together a bid to

support Circular Economy innovation and smart data analytics for energy, though could struggle to meet the October deadline.

Action – All members wanting further details to email DD.

13 Update on the Climate Emergency and Strategic Direction on Energy

The Director of SRS updated the Group on developments since the paper to University Executive in August. Next steps would include integrating teaching on sustainability across the curriculum, ensuring that all students received some exposure to climate change, the SDGs and global ethics, regardless of their subject. Another key area of focus would be the future of zero carbon buildings. There was an existing tool to help get buildings close to zero, and SRS were working with Estates to refine it. Once designed, the focus would be on minimising energy demand. The next major issue was reducing the University's travel emissions, resolving the tension between UoE's international and research agendas and the rocketing number of flights. A vision of climate conscious travel had been developed to help inform decision making. One current proposal was to introduce a levy, recycling funds back to invest in VCT tools and carbon sequestration. A consultation process on the issue was about to launch. The Travel & Aviation Working Group was also looking into ways of hosting conferences on these issues without contributing to climate change, and how to make low-carbon and virtual conferences more effective.

14 Any Other Business

Sustainable Travel

SSAG members would like to see the University do more to promote sustainable travel options, e.g. by providing more bike storage and tyre pumping facilities.

Sustainable Food

Members noted that a sub-group of SSAG was being formed to take forward issues around sustainable food and climate-conscious diets, as well as looking at current commitments in the Good Food Policy. Taking action on plastics and disposables would be a priority area.

Action – All members wanting more information to contact MB.

Action – All members interested in joining the sub-group to contact JR.