

Minute of the meeting of the Sustainability Working Group (SWG)

2 December 2021 via Zoom

Attending: Jaime Toney (JT) (Chair), David Duncan (DD), Stewart Miller (SM), Robert Garnish (RG), Fabrice Renaud (FR), Peter Craig (PC), Kelum Gamage (KG), Thalia Groncott (GUEST), Meli Vasiloude Bayada (GUEST), Molly Walker (GUEST), Ella McCabe (SRC President), Eva Simmons (SRC VP Student Support), David Gabra (SRC Environment Officer), Susan Ashworth, Ian Campbell, Gioia Falcone, Josephine Gallagher, Sam Malis, (SRC VP Activities),

Apologies: Minty Donald (MD), Barry Morton (BM),

Attending: Mark Johnston, Jennifer Russell, Gillian Brown, Rhona Little (Clerk)

1 Minute

The Minute of the meeting of August was approved.

2 Matters Arising

2.1 EAUC Pilot report – not finalised but some information is available on their website. The web link was circulated to the group.

2.2 Timetable for divestment at UoG (item 6 refers) – this was discussed with the Convenor of the Finance Committee. The University will stick with current plan which is to disinvest completely by 2024.

2.3 Cargo bikes on campus (item 11 refers) – Stantec were unable to attend this meeting but will attend in February and give a detailed presentation on the analysis that sits behind the travel-related content in the Carbon Management Plan.

3 Draft Carbon Management Plan 2020-21 and 2030-31

Stuart Miller talked the group through a presentation and update on the carbon management plan. The group noted the following points:

- The University of Glasgow declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and published a Climate Change Strategy, that commits the University to 'net zero' for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030.
- The University has committed to setting interim GHG reduction targets that align with the UNEP Emissions Gap Report (to prevent global warming greater than 1.5°C); currently a 7.6% reduction in GHG emissions per year, for the next decade.
- Over the period 2020/21 to 2030/31 this translates to a reduction in GHG emissions from 60,358 to 27,000 ton CO₂e per annum.
- Our carbon footprint has decreased significantly over the past six years.
- The most significant reduction in our carbon footprint can be attributed to the huge impact of the coronavirus pandemic on both staff/student commuting and business travel.
- As we move on from pandemic-related restrictions on our day-to-day activities we must minimise the possible rebound in emissions from staff/student commuting and business travel. We should
 - Continue to make it easier for staff and students to access the campus using active travel or via public transport

- Support more agile/flexible working patterns.
- Ensure that emissions from flight-related business travel are minimised.
- We have now reached the point where the electricity supplied by the grid is less carbon intensive than that supplied by our gas-fired CHP engine. Thus, we must consider how to supply our estate with low carbon heat in the future.
- This Carbon Management Plan highlights various and often challenging interventions around the University that we will need to take if we are to reach our emissions target of 27,000 tCO₂e by 2030/31.

The group discussed the plan in depth and agreed to scrutinise the targets in more detail before agreement could be reached on any actions. It also noted that Court would need to approve any wholesale changes to the Strategy adopted in December 2020.

Action: Stantec to be invited to February 2022 meeting

Action: Kit England, Green Economy Manager, GCC to be invited to talk to SWG

Action: Susan Ashworth to work with SM to quantify IT data issues

4 **Public Sector Climate Change Reporting Duty Data Return 2020-21**

The group noted the data return and key points.

5 **Presentation on Frugal Computing**

Professor Wim Vanderbauwhede and Professor Ana Basiri joined the meeting to give a presentation on the impact of computing on carbon emissions.

Since the 1970s we have been using increasing amounts of computational resources and are all used to upgrading equipment that has become outdated after only a few years. Computational resources have until recently effectively been treated as infinite, but this is not the case. Growth in demand cannot be offset by increased power efficiency and if we carry on as we are now, the carbon footprint from computing will become a major contributor to the world total. Manufacturing of computers also has a huge footprint as devices are upgraded when it is not necessary and as a society we should try to make computer equipment last longer and start treating computational resources as finite and precious, to be utilised only when necessary. Computing has to have the lowest possible energy consumption where possible and the lifetimes of compute devices needs to be extended. In 2020, emissions from using computing were between 3.0-3.5% but by 2040 this will grow to 14% and energy consumption of compute devices will be responsible for 5Gtonnes of CO₂. Considering the carbon cost of production of computing equipment would be responsible for a further 10 Gtonnes of CO₂ by 2040, this is almost 80% of the 13 Gtonnes of CO₂ emissions target necessary to keep global warming below 1.5°C. In less than two decades, a radical transformation of the global use of computational resources is needed to meet the climate targets as is a dramatic reduction in the carbon cost of both production and operation of computing. As a University we can adopt longer update cycles for computing hardware, make staff aware of carbon footprint of internet usage and actions to reduce it, promote advocacy and outreach and support research in low carbon and sustainable computing.

Professor Ana Basiri spoke about the digital lifestyle of individuals rather than the computing aspect. Digital data is unique because it is invisible and because email does not occupy a physical space on our desk, there is the assumption that it is green and does not have a carbon footprint but this is not true. If the Internet was a country, it would be the fifth most energy consuming country on earth. Moreover, digital data is being preserved excessively - it should be treated like plastic we need to generate, used and disposed of responsibly. The UoG could help by looking at

its digital data retention plans, think about green lifestyle recommendations, retention of research digital data plans and move towards green web/IT hosting and computing.

Action: Points raised by the presentation should be built into our action plan.

6 GUEST Branch Updates

MVB provided a verbal update on the youth hub as this has been the focus of the branch projects for the past month. It was intense but rewarding and exciting and GUEST engaged with around 500 young people from UoG but also people visiting Glasgow for COP26. About 50 events were organised ranging from workshops to talks and new initiatives such as clothes and plant swaps were very successful.

The SWG congratulated GUEST on the enormous amount of work undertaken during COP26.

7 Eco-Hub Proposal (GUEST)

The proposed Eco-Hub would be a space on campus to centralise sustainable student and staff activity and to catalyse a broader culture of environmental sustainability. This would be achieved using the Eco-Hub as a place for students to meet and engage with sustainability, for groups and organisations to run relevant events and as a base for ongoing sustainability initiatives. The circulated report detailed the proposal of the Eco-hub and how it relates to the University's sustainability agenda. It recommends what the Eco-hub space should include. The report also suggests how the Eco-hub would be run and an estimate of the cost of the project. The report concludes with a case study of the COP26 Youth Hub and how this is relevant to the development of the Eco-Hub. GUEST are looking for a suitable space in a central area of campus and would welcome comments from the SWG. The CfSS supports this proposal and is keen to bring in its connections with community groups outside the University.

Action: SM & Estates colleagues to discuss possible space options.

8 Dear Green Bothy Report

The group noted the report on the Dear Green Bothy /Reflections following COP26 submitted by the College of Arts COP project. MD to update the group on future events.

9 Community of Practice Update

KG to provide verbal update at February meeting.

10 Centre for Sustainable Solutions

JT informed group that a report has been written following COP26 but not quite finalised. The CfSS will host an Away Day in January 2022 to discuss future plans.

11 Carbon offsetting proposal

The proposal circulated by the SRC aims to provide a brief overview of the reasoning behind why the University of Glasgow should consider pioneering research into the pollution attributable to the inefficiency of housing in the city of Glasgow, with a view to developing a certification standard of carbon crediting to offsetting via insulation and retrofitting.

The UK Government's own Environmental Agency itself stated "**Installing insulation is proven to reduce carbon emissions in buildings. However, it has not been used as a carbon offsetting approach in the UK, and a framework for reliably calculating and certifying emissions reductions must be developed.**" There is significant evidence on its impact on carbon reduction, and readiness of technology to implement, the only barrier being the lack of analysis conducted to produce and verify the carbon offset. As a world-leading research University that also has ties to buildings and

housing, as well as a reasonable measure of influence over public policy both with Glasgow City Council and ScotGov generally, the University of Glasgow is both capable and strategically placed to pioneer development of a framework for reliably calculating and certifying emissions reductions that can be approved by the EAUC and UK Government and implemented nationwide on the frontlines against climate change.

The group commended the proposal but confirmed that the University could not fund research into this but could encourage academics to take it up and look at the science-based targets and carbon coalition information when available in the New Year.

12 **Any other Business**

The EAUC listed an advert for a Carbon Management Officer at UoG and SRC asked if post had been filled.

Action: DD to check and email group.

New Green Deal coalition manifesto was presented to the Principal before COP26 and this will be looked at to see which of the sixty points the UoG can respond positively to. DD suggests that this should feed through into the redraft of our overall strategy as does the carbon management plan discussed at this meeting.

Action: SWG to scrutinise Carbon Management Plan and come back with comments and to invite Stantec to speak to February meeting.

13 **SWG meeting dates 2022:**

2 February – 2.00pm

13 April – 2.00pm

8 June – 2.00pm

3 August – 2.00pm

5 October – 2.00pm

7 December – 2.00pm