

# A MESSAGE FROM NICK BRAITHWAITE



Dear colleagues,

For this month's newsletter, I have invited Dr. Victoria Hands, Sustainability Director, to be a guest author. Dr Hands leads the Sustainability Office which works with sustainability leads across the University to guide and support us to embed sustainability as a strategic priority.



Over to you Victoria...

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Dear colleagues,

Autumn is well and truly upon us and we're starting to feel a chill in the air as the leaves turn from shades of green to beautiful yellows, reds and browns. As the nights draw in, many of us will be thinking about how to keep warm this winter – particularly with the energy price increases. We have shared some [useful tips to help you lower your home's carbon footprint](#) and save on your bills this winter. If you have other good ideas to share, then please do get in touch.



Similarly, the University has been reviewing the need to heat and light buildings with low occupancy levels and has made the decision to temporarily close (mothball) some or parts of our buildings on the Milton Keynes site. This will save energy and related carbon emissions and makes sense with reduced numbers of staff on campus. Conversations with those impacted are ongoing and will be communicated locally. [Dave Hall shared an update about this recently on OU Life.](#)

In our last sustainability bulletin, we offered 5 free places on [Climate Change: Transforming your Organisation for Sustainability](#). Congratulations to Anna Elliott, Staff Tutor, WELS; Matthew Higgins, Senior Lecturer, FBL; Franziska Florack, Senior Strategy Manager, Strategy Office; Martin Braun, Staff Tutor, STEM; and Hayley Johns, Learning Designer, LDS for being selected to participate. Sustainability is everyone's job, and I am inspired to see colleagues from across the OU keen to learn how we can all play our part across a range of roles.

In a previous bulletin we also asked for you to vote for a name for our sustainability tool. Over 50 people voted (thank you!), however there was a new suggestion which caught our attention and was the favourite of our MarComms colleagues. Our sustainability tool will now be known as SPARK (Sustainability Planning, Action & Reporting Kit). Thanks to colleagues who are helping to shape and develop the tool. We'll be launching a pilot with this year's Unit Business Planning cycle (more below).

## Go Green

Go Green and Estates have recently opened three new 'pods' or outdoor working spaces near the Hub on the Walton Hall campus. The pods are weatherproofed, high quality composite shells that have been manufactured in the UK from recycled plastic bottle tops and FSC certified wood. They feature solar panels that power LED lighting and USB charging point. Neville, the Go Green Mascot (pictured right) was at the opening of the new pods. I hope to see colleagues also making use of the pods in the future as a well-ventilated outdoor meeting option.



## COP27 – Call for articles

Ahead of last year's COP26 (Conference of the Parties), we launched the [Climate Change hub on OpenLearn](#); a place to learn about climate change from different disciplinary perspectives. COP27 will be hosted by Egypt this November, and we are reopening the call for articles for the Climate Change hub. Articles should be 400 - 800 words in length and written in the style that OpenLearn requires. They must be rigorous and accurate and reflective of the OU's mission and values. Articles do not have to be written in an academic style and could be a personal reflection on climate change, where your academic or other knowledge and experience is clearly articulated. The theme of any article must relate to climate change from your own disciplinary or lived experience. We welcome articles highlighting the link between climate and nature, a key theme of COP27 and to profile the sister [COP on Biodiversity](#) which receives less media attention.

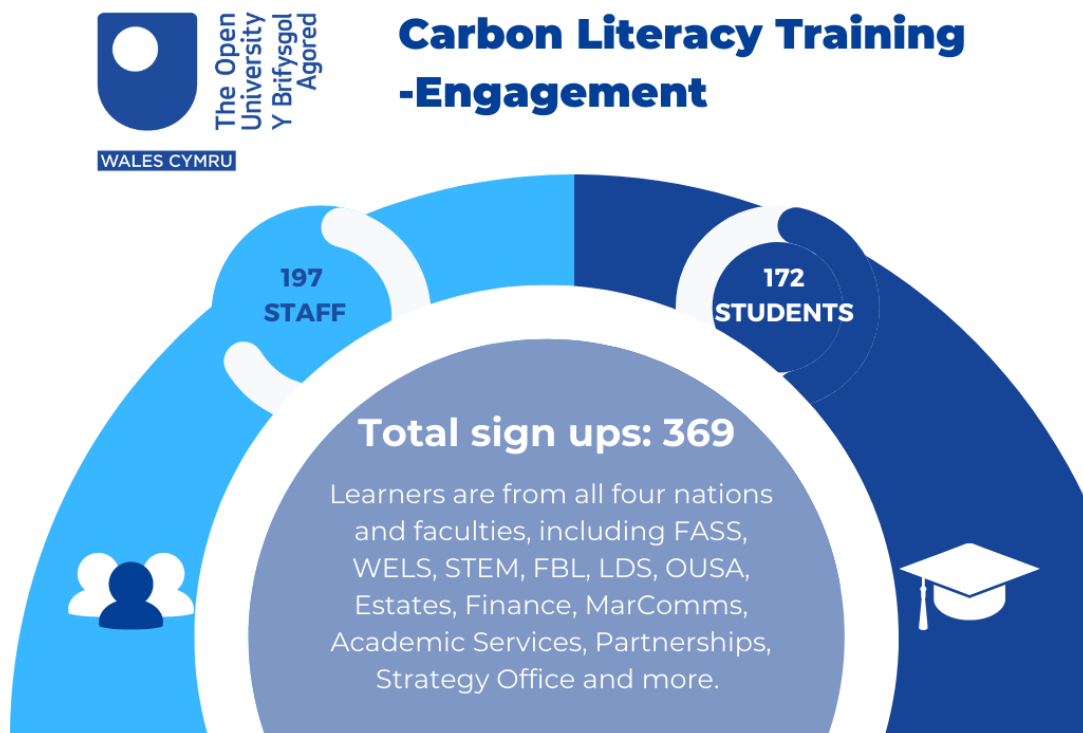
If you are interested in submitting an article, please email [Sustainability@open.ac.uk](mailto:Sustainability@open.ac.uk) with a 200 word expression of interest by Friday 28th October. We'll also be launching a series of Open Conversations this Autumn and look forward to your contributions.

## Carbon Literacy Training

We have been encouraging colleagues to sign up for our [free Carbon Literacy Training](#), available to all OU staff and students following a pilot with The Open University in Wales. The training gives us all a solid awareness of climate change and the climate impacts of our everyday actions. It allows us to map our own carbon footprint and gain an understanding and the motivation to reduce personal and work-place emissions. Louise Casella discusses the importance and benefits of the Carbon Literacy training in this [two-minute video](#).

Our online learning starts with four hours of self-study activity, followed by four hours of interactive training, and an individual and group action pledge that leads to Carbon Literacy certification. We encourage you to make a work-place action pledge which can then be linked into our sustainability tool SPARK (Sustainability Planning, Action & Reporting Kit). The training runs twice a week and it can be made available for groups of 20 upon request, including on Saturday afternoons. So far, almost 400 staff and students have participated. [Sign up for Carbon Literacy Training in English here](#) or [in Welsh here](#).

The first day of COP27, on 7 November is also the date for the second Carbon Literacy action day. Last year over 500 people trained simultaneously in a range of sessions. This year, you can schedule your 4 hours of self-study for 7 November and comment in the forum to let us know! You can then book into a 4 hour facilitated session for our newly released November dates.



## Upcoming Events

To mark **Black History Month**, Go Green's October webinar is proud to host award-winning changemaker, campaigner and activist Simone Ahiaku. Simone will discuss the wider issues of environmental racism and how income inequalities hinder campaigning and justice. The webinar will be held on Thursday 27th October at 12.00-1.00pm and you can [register to attend via Eventbrite](#).

Our EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) Unit are running a [series of events](#) to mark Black History Month, which I encourage colleagues to attend. Social justice and climate justice are 'intersectional' and we can collaborate on integrated responses.

Another opportunity, for collaboration and inter-disciplinarity is through Open Ecologies, a collaborative research group that focuses on questions of environmental change and ecological thinking through history, in the present, and into the future. The next Autumn event is below:

- 16 November at 1-2pm: *Assemblages and Ecologies* (thematic discussion, online)

Details of the full programme are available on the [Open Ecologies website](#) so do check for updates.

## **Unit Business Plans**

Finally, Unit Business Planning is starting again for the next year. We reviewed the UBPs for last year and noted some good practice from some Units adopting sustainability objectives and embedding them in their priorities. For instance, The Open University in Scotland has a statutory requirement to meet more rigorous carbon emissions reporting than the other nations currently and has ensured visibility of sustainability and carbon reduction in their UBP. We understand that BEIS (The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) will be adopting best practice from across the nations in the next couple of years. In Learn and Live we have committed to levelling up to best practice across the nations. To support Units to deliver on our strategic sustainability goal and to demonstrate institutional progress, we are adopting several headline indicators related to our commitments. We welcome your views on how best to measure this for your Unit or sub-unit:

- nominated sustainability leads from across all UBP areas with dedicated time to attend monthly Sustainability Coordination Group meetings , to disseminate information across Unit and sub-unit, to track actions in the KPI dashboard and to use our sustainability tool SPARK (Sustainability Planning, Action & Reporting Kit) to identify high impact Unit specific actions to progress throughout each planning cycle. Leads coordinate queries and activities related to sustainability within each Unit or sub-unit and liaise closely with the Sustainability Office to ensure appropriate support and advice.
- introductory Carbon Literacy Training with the option to become certified by the Carbon Literacy Project by delivering a work-place action pledge. This can be followed by tailored sustainability training for Units, sub-units or teams in agreement with the Sustainability Office.
- completion of actions in the sustainability tool SPARK (Sustainability Planning, Action & Reporting Kit) to contribute to progress on Net Zero commitments in relation to building use across the estate, in relation to travel for commuting and business, procurement, resource reuse, and specific high impact areas, identified and with support from the Sustainability Office.
- actions related to high impact activities within Units and where appropriate, actions to enable sustainability to be embedded in the formal, informal and subliminal

curriculum to contribute towards Responsible Futures accreditation. The Sustainability Office are available to guide and support.

We look forward to supporting you to embed sustainability in your Unit Business Plans and remain committed to enabling and empowering all colleagues to contribute to social and environmental justice.

Warm wishes,

Victoria

**Dr Victoria Hands**  
**Director of Sustainability**

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