

A MESSAGE FROM NICK BRAITHWAITE



Dear colleagues,

With the UK having presidency over COP for the last year, the OU was able to send a group of delegates to observe COP26 in Glasgow. I greatly appreciated their reports and briefings. This year, with COP27 being held over 2000 miles away in Egypt, we have opted to observe from a distance. In the last sustainability bulletin, Dr Victoria Hands, Sustainability Director, put out a call for articles, and I would like to thank all of those who have been in touch to share their contributions. We will begin publishing selected articles on the [OU Sustainability COP27 blog post](#) and Climate Change hub in due course.



If you are looking for ways you can take action on climate change, consider undertaking our [free Carbon Literacy Training](#), available to all OU staff and students – this training helps you to identify how you can make a difference. The training (which I did a couple of weeks ago) provides a thorough briefing on climate change and the climate impacts of our everyday actions. It starts with four hours of online self-study, followed by four hours of interactive training and an individual and group action pledge that leads to Carbon Literacy certification. Colleagues are encouraged to make a work-place action pledge which can then be linked into our sustainability tool SPARK (Sustainability Planning, Action & Reporting Kit). [Sign up for Carbon Literacy Training in English here](#) or [in Welsh here](#).

Open Conversations

Marketing and Communications are piloting a new event series called 'Open Conversations'. This series is designed to promote and enable open conversation between panel members and the audience, prompting dynamic discussion and a solutions-focussed approach on a range of sustainability issues. The first Open Conversations event will take place on **Tuesday 13th December at 1pm** and will reflect on COP26 & COP27; consider the lower-profile sister COP on Biodiversity; and look to the future COP28 to be hosted by the United Arab Emirates. The event will also ask:

- What if it is still possible to keep 1.5°C alive? What would this mean?
- What if we all committed to take action now to contribute to reduced carbon emissions and protecting nature? What might this look like?
- What if organisations all committed to transformative action now?

The event will be a 90-minute, interactive panel discussion held online (MS Teams), open to both internal and external audiences, and hosted by Victoria Hands. Please do [sign up to attend and join in the conversation here](#).

Gifting a positive legacy

As we enter the season of winter festivities – a time for appreciating our friends and families, spending time together and often gifting to one another – how can we ensure we are gifting a positive legacy? The cost of living crisis may also be an opportunity to review what we value. With so much advertising and pressure to buy new stuff, including Black Friday, Cyber Monday and other such dates designed to boost the retail economy, might we be able to find an alternative? 'Buy nothing day' (25 Nov 2022) is a global initiative aimed at raising awareness of our over-consumption and its impact on the environment and finding alternative ways to enjoy our time – look it up online.

Go Green

Whilst sharing gifts with loved ones gets a high profile at this time of year, all manufactured items have a carbon footprint from their production, transportation, and eventual disposal. Most of us have been given many manufactured things we don't really need, and we've probably given a few to friends and family over the years too. Can we think about other ways to share and show appreciation of each other? What other ways can people gift sustainably? [Email your sustainable gifting ideas to Go Green](#).

I am very grateful for the inspiring lunchtime Go Green workshops organised by Jodi Houghton, Carbon Coordinator. You can catch up on the last Go Green session, where we were joined by award winning campaigner, changemaker and activist Simone Ahiaku who explored the issues around environmental and social justice. Everyone who joined the session was inspired by her energy and call to action. You can [watch now on stream](#).

This month's Go Green workshop will be discussing the important topic of embodied carbon of existing buildings and the need for retrofitting. For this session colleagues will be joined by OU graduates Annie McHugh and Freya Wise, who will explain what embodied carbon is and why it is so important to retrofit existing buildings - 80% of the buildings which will exist in 2050 are already built. Annie and Freya will explain why retrofitting is more beneficial than new construction. They will also be identifying and sharing measures that we all can take both now, and in the future, to reduce carbon emissions from our buildings. [Find more information and register for the session here](#).

Cycling Citizens

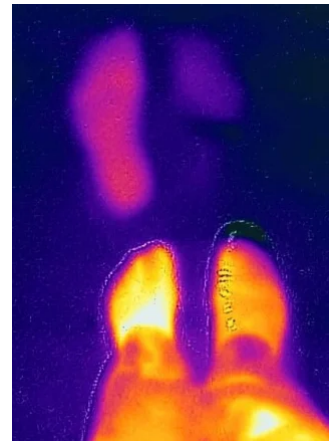
On Thursday 10th November, our Estates Travel Advice colleagues, Jodi Houghton, Beth Sear and Lorraine Skinner attended the Milton Keynes Mayor's Cycling and Sustainable Travel Awards Breakfast, where the OU came second in the local Top Cycling Company (for most cycling activities and miles cycled). The event celebrated the achievements of local schools and businesses in the scheme and also gave an opportunity for them to share their passion for sustainable travel and their ideas to

encourage more colleagues and local partners to get involved. The Sustainability Office have been championing Cycling Citizens for a while and we believe that we can inspire more people to adopt active travel for health and low carbon benefits. If you'd like to find out more about Cycling Citizens MK or log your rides, please [take a look at their website](#). We are working with the four nations to identify similar opportunities for all our colleagues, get in touch with us if you are interested or already participate in such a scheme, and watch out for Cycling Santas rides in your local area next month!

Your top sustainability tips

We'll be sharing some top sustainability tips over the '12 days of sustainability', so we want to hear your top or favourite sustainability tips. Please do [email them over to Go Green](#).

And just to get you thinking, here's mine. For those of us living in a cold house, the picture below shows a thermal image of my footprints (in the upper half of the image), formed by standing for 30 seconds on carpet and recorded 30 seconds after stepping back. The lower half of the image shows legs and feet in the stepped-back position – demonstrating that much more heat leaks into the carpet from my socked left foot than my shoed right. Conclusion: you lose less heat wearing shoes or slippers than bare or stockinged feet.



With continued optimism,

Nick

VCE Sponsor for Sustainability and Executive Dean, STEM Faculty

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