

# A MESSAGE FROM NICK BRAITHWAITE



Dear Colleagues,

Monday 20th March marks the 'equinox', with our northern hemisphere days now longer than nights until late September. It's also the 'equinox' in the southern hemisphere but with days now shortening and nights lengthening. This globally significant

time is chosen by the [Earth Hour](#) initiative to call for an hour of active reflection: at 8.30 pm local time on Saturday 26th March, Earth Hour calls for 60 minutes of widespread, large-scale 'lights out'. It's a time for our local natural world to prevail, so do make plans to disconnect from the energy network and perhaps just be in nature. I filmed [this one minute clip](#) for social media about what happens when you ask nothing more from the Earth than an hour of oxygen while being at rest.



## Wild Isles

Talking of the natural world on our doorsteps, on Sunday 12th March, the new and highly anticipated OU/BBC natural history co-production *Wild Isles* reached our television screens after three years in the making. The series, which focuses on the beauty and fascinating diversity of the British and Irish countryside was informed by the expertise of OU academics Dr Philip Wheeler and Dr Miranda Dyson.

To celebrate the release, the OU is inviting everyone to share their favourite British and Irish nature spots or species on social media, using the hashtag #ShareYourWildIsles. You can find out more information on how to get involved [on OU Life](#). A special gallery featuring some of our favourite images will be set up on our Broadcast and Partnerships site, OU Connect, where you can find resources and information on topics related to this series, including an interactive map exploring our wild isles and their diverse species and habitats. The first two episodes of *Wild Isles* are now available on [BBC iPlayer](#).

STEM is also hosting an exclusive, free, behind-the-scenes online event. The event will be hosted on YouTube on Tuesday 18th April at 19:35 – 20:45 and will feature producers, consultants and commissioners involved from Silverback Films, The Open University, and the BBC. You can [register for the event on Eventbrite](#).

## Go Green

Continuing the theme of events, Go Green's February workshop welcomed back Jen Gale from Sustainable(ish). Jen discussed the Sustainable(ish) ideas around progress

over perfection when incorporating sustainable actions into our everyday lives, and some of the things we can do to change our homes and lifestyles, as well as call for systematic change. You can [catch up on the event here](#).

Go Green have decided to get out into nature for their lunchtime workshop this month. Jodi Houghton, Carbon Coordinator, has set up a local litter pick event where colleagues are encouraged to come along and litter pick for half an hour over in Kents Hill (a short walk from Walton Hall campus). This is a great way to appreciate the biodiversity around us and pitch in to help it flourish. Jodi will have some Go Green litter pickers, gloves, and bags available – you can [sign up to join her here](#) (those signed up will receive a calendar reminder). If you are in a Nation office or other OU location, Jodi is keen to get in touch with folks who can set up other lunchtime litter picks for colleagues. This is a fantastic initiative to get outside for some gentle exercise whilst doing something to help sustain our natural environment.

On Thursday 6th April at 12.00-12.30pm, Go Green will continue the theme of biodiversity as they return to online workshop sessions. Joined by the Parks Trust, Jodi and colleagues will be discussing the protection of Great Crested Newts and how they are important for biodiversity. You can [sign up via Eventbrite to attend](#).

#### **544 Books Reused**

You may also remember that in my last bulletin, Tom Mitchell from the OU Students Association had partnered with Go Green to collect books for The Children's Book Project on International Book Giving Day. Tom left a box in the Go Green Centre and upon his return found that 544 books had been donated by colleagues! Jodi and Lucy helped to compile the books and took some photos to share, which you can see in this interesting [article Tom wrote for the Hoot](#).

#### **Travel Advice**

Hybrid working leads to reduced levels of fossil fuel use in commuting to the benefit of our Scope 3 emissions (Greenhouse Gas Protocol). Car sharing and the use of public transport can make further reductions. For people traveling to our Walton Hall campus, the Travel Advice team would like to make colleagues aware of the [car share scheme](#) and the recently negotiated new bus service (the 9/9a). This service runs twice a day (08:45 arrival and a 17:13 departure), you can find the full route and timetable [via the travel advice page](#).

Travel Advice has also announced that electric vehicle (EV) charging posts have been installed at the Cardiff and Nottingham offices. So, if you have an EV and wish to use these posts, including the Walton Hall and Wellingborough posts, please join the EV Charging Scheme. More information can be found on [the travel advice website](#) along with information on the electric vehicle salary sacrifice scheme [page](#).

#### **Fossil Fuel Divestment**

In October 2021, in the run up to COP26, we responded to calls to divest our holdings in fossil fuel extraction companies as part of our net zero plan. Yvonne Chakraborty, OU Student and member of People and Planet OU, was part of the campaign and

welcomed the announcement, tweeting “Fantastic news @OpenUniversity and @TimJBlackman what a good day for the OU!!!”. At this time, holdings in fossil fuels businesses amounted to around 1.5% and we committed to full divestment from this sector by 2023.

Paul Traynor, Chief Finance Officer, has provided the following update on progress to divestment. “Following Council’s decision last year to ensure our long-term investment funds do not contain exposure to fossil fuel companies, the Investment Committee has been working to ensure that we achieve this aim by the December 2023. It is not a simple transaction as there are costs involved and the choice of ethical funds is relatively limited currently. However, good progress is being made and the deadline will be met.”

Our commitment to sustainability stretches far and wide across the University, and social and environmental justice form a golden thread that runs through all that we do in the OU as a business and the OU as an educator.

With continued optimism,

**Nick**

**VCE Sponsor for Sustainability and Executive Dean, STEM Faculty**

DISCLAIMER: Internal Communications are aware of a known issue with Mailerlite where links are sometimes corrupting after we have sent the message out. Please be assured that if this does occur, we will work with MailerLite to rectify the issue as soon as possible.

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England and Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University needs to collect and process personal data in order to carry out our duties as an employer. This document sets out how we use your personal data. [Colleague Privacy Notice](#).

**The Open University**

Walton Hall, Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA, UK

01908 274066  
[www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)

You received this email because you are a member of staff of The Open University.

**Unsubscribe**