

A MESSAGE FROM NICK BRAITHWAITE



Dear Colleagues,

It's good to see that [No Mow May](#) is impacting positively from a Sustainability perspective on wide swathes of the Walton Hall campus. This allows grasses and wildflowers to thrive, providing habitat and food for our pollinators and other wildlife. You can learn more about pollinators through an OU collaborative Citizen Science project [X-Polli:Nation](#) (I've just been there to refresh my bee identification skills and was interested to see AI being effectively deployed to support learning). Often acting more sustainably can be as simple as stopping doing something and leaving nature to just be – not mowing for the month of May is a welcome contribution to Sustainability from the Estates grounds staff ([see Estates mowing map](#)).



The Estates Showcase at Walton Hall last month profiled a range of teams who are rethinking how they normally operate and are embedding sustainability into their activity both at MK and across the four nations.

There was information on how to recycle responsibly including more unusual items such as pens and crisp packets (via [TerraCycle](#)) and encouragement to move up the waste hierarchy to reuse unwanted items via [Warp-It](#) (see below). Our approach to low-carbon buildings was seen in a display of building fabrics (including green roofing) highlighting the 'fabric first' approach and space planning for hybrid working. The Catering team highlighted our growing appetite for plant-based options which we know reduce carbon emissions, alongside a local and seasonal approach. There were timely reminders about OU Travel Advice which encourages cycling, walking, public transport and supports [electric vehicles](#) and car sharing.



Our Go Green team demonstrated the 'How Bad Are Bananas?' game (based on [the book](#) by Mike Berners-Lee, which I regularly dip into) - if you want to host a game in your Unit, drop a request to Sustainability@open.ac.uk. Neville the Newt (pictured right with Tim Blackman) encouraged staff to sign up to be a Change Champion via Go Green, to calculate personal carbon emissions with Giki and to learn how to make a bigger difference in their communities or at work with free Carbon Literacy Training and pledges. (see below for more details).

Events

SPARK Lunch & Learn sessions

[SPARK](#) is the University's Sustainability Planning, Action & Reporting Kit (SPARK), collaboratively produced over the last 9 months. Units are being asked to nominate a Sustainability Lead to attend our Sustainability Coordination Group and to oversee engagement with SPARK. As Units start populating SPARK, a series of SPARK Lunch & Learn sessions begins. The lunchtime sessions are based around six themes where we have the most impact and potential for carbon reduction. The sessions are open to all as an opportunity for you to find out more and coordinate with your Sustainability Lead. There is no registration, so please save the event in your diary with a link to this page, you can join directly on the day using the MS Teams links assigned to each date.

16th May (12 - 1pm): Introduction [Click here to join the meeting](#)

23rd May (12 - 1pm): Research & Innovation [Click here to join the meeting](#)

13th June (12 - 1pm): Teaching, Learning & Assessment [Click here to join the meeting](#)

20th June (12 - 1pm): Societal Impact & Engagement [Click here to join the meeting](#)

4th July (12 - 1pm): Procurement & Resource [Click here to join the meeting](#)

11th July (12 - 1pm): Buildings & Workspaces [Click here to join the meeting](#)

1st August(12 - 1pm): Travel & Hybrid Working [Click here to join the meeting](#)

Decolonisation and Immigration session

On Wednesday 24 May @ 1-2pm, FASS are holding a session on 'Decolonisation and Immigration: What We Can Learn from Kamala Markandaya's 'The Nowhere Man'. Anne Wetherilt, Research Student in FASS, will explore the ways in which the novel provides a complex picture of race relations in 1960s Britain, and ask what it can tell us about today's multi-cultural society. [Sign up for this event via Microsoft Teams](#)

OU Sustainability Research Fest

As part of Open Societal Challenges the first OU-wide Sustainability Research Festival will be held on Monday 22 May 2023 10am - 3.30pm. The event aims to raise awareness and to connect OU research communities working in sustainability, paving the way for new interdisciplinary research collaborations. Registration is now closed but I'll ask for a report on the outputs for our next bulletin.

OU Travel Advice Cycling event

The Travel Advice team have arranged for Cycle Saviours to come to the Walton Hall campus on Thursday 8 June 10am – 1pm on the Mulberry Lawn (outside The Hub). They will be fixing bicycles for colleagues for 3 hours including parts (except high spec puncture-resistant tyres).

Giki – reduce your carbon footprint

In a previous bulletin, I invited you all to participate in the Giki Earth day challenge. The results are in, and some of the highlights include:

- 30 members of OU staff attended the Giki webinar

- The top three pledges were: Buy nothing new for 3 months, avoid giving unwanted presents, and avoid plastic wet wipes. Pledges we could all sign up for!

Don't forget that you can [sign up for Giki Zero](#) (a fun and interactive Carbon footprint calculator) at any time and start taking steps to minimise your impact.

Carbon Literacy Training – sign up and buddy up

Congratulations to the 378 OU staff and students who are now certified Carbon Literate. We have seen 627 staff and students complete the training and lots more expressions of interest. Please do continue to [sign up](#) and benefit from this free training.

If you have got your certificate, please [let the Sustainability Office know](#) if you would be willing to buddy up with current learners and support them to make their pledges? Could you spare an hour to share a short (400 word) update on your pledge progress? The Sustainability Office are keen to feature these on our website and you can make even more of an impact by inspiring others!

Join the UK Universities Climate Network in preparation for COP28

The OU has membership for [UUCN](#) (UK Universities Climate Network). Researchers and Academics can find resources on the UUCN website and contribute any of their own resources. You can also attend the monthly UUCN member events and join any relevant subgroups. I would encourage colleagues to utilise UUCN and input where possible. Join the network via the [website here](#). If you are involved in COP28 in any way or have contacts in the UAE, then let us know by emailing: sustainability@open.ac.uk

Warp-It

The [Warp-It](#) pilot is collecting small stationery items in the Go Green Centre (on the Central Walkway of the Walton Hall campus) on Tuesdays 12pm-2pm throughout May. These will be uploaded to the OU's Warp-It site, so colleagues on the Walton Hall Campus can search for and pick up these items for free. After this pilot, staff can upload their own surplus items, stating their own location for pick up. Do take a look at surplus equipment around your office and share what you can. The pilot currently excludes furniture (contact Estates) and IT equipment (contact ITS). For access and details of our pilot, visit our internal [Warp-It page](#).

With continued optimism,

Nick

VCE Sponsor for Sustainability and Executive Dean, STEM Faculty

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The Open University

Walton Hall, Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA, UK

01908 274066
www.open.ac.uk

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