

A MESSAGE FROM NICK BRAITHWAITE

It's good to see positive contributions to a sustainable culture from teams across the OU using SPARK to deliver sustainability in their business planning, including the Estates Green Team putting away their mowers to give pollinators a chance to get ahead. I'm pleased to see a range of improvements in our coordination and reporting on Sustainability ahead of this year's People and Planet League. If you are not already collating evidence of your Sustainability activity, please do be in touch!



A recent OU report, co-produced with HRZone.com, is rooted in our expertise and specialist knowledge offering five key governance levers for businesses to bring about sustainability. For us to advise and support others externally, we must continue to lead here internally at the OU - walking the walk and very importantly avoiding any greenwashing, which is now becoming a concern for the Financial Conduct Authority with newly released guidance (see below).

In this newsletter, I want to highlight the importance of individual and collective efforts for Sustainability within our University community. From embedding sustainability into job roles to nominating sustainability leads in all areas of our work (as OUSA has just done), we're actively fostering a culture of Sustainability, and on to actions to prepare the next generation for their sustainable future.

Let's make Sustainability everyone's job at the OU.

New OU report: Five governance levers to prioritise for ESG success

In an era where corporate responsibility and ethical business practices are paramount, [a new report](#) from the OU and HRZone explores a progressive approach to governance that focuses on today's most critical environmental, social and governance (ESG) challenges.

Research for the report included interviews with a range of experts, including academics and alumni from the OU: Ali Atallah, Professor of Finance, Richard Blundel, Professor of Enterprise and Organisation and Director of the Centre for Social and Sustainable Enterprise, Natalia Szablewska, Professor in Law and Society, Sara Vermeulen-Anastasi, member of The Open University Business School Alumni Council and Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University.

The report is a follow-up to [last year's report into environmental, social and governance \(ESG\)](#), which found that skills were a major blocker to the development and implementation of ethical business practices. This points to the opportunity for all faculties to ensure skills for sustainability are embedded in their current offering and designed into any new provision.

How to avoid greenwashing

A timely reminder for us all of the need to collect evidence on the impact of the sustainability actions we are taking is this new guidance. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) are the latest regulatory body to [introduce measures to reduce greenwashing](#) and improve trust and transparency in sustainability products and narratives. From 31 May 2024, firms will need to ensure their Environmental Sustainability claims are fair, clear and not misleading and proportionate to the sustainability profile of their products and services.

Sustainability is for everyone

Here at the OU, we believe 'sustainability is everyone's job' which means we can all build sustainability into our daily activities and actions. A critical part of this is embedding sustainability into job roles, so that sustainability is something that is core to each role. Of course, we provide training and development to support all post-holders.

We are currently discussing with People Services on how to embed sustainability into policies and processes including new job descriptions, interview questions, role objectives and annual CDSA processes.

There are many areas of the university where this is already happening and we would love to hear and share your examples of good practice. Please email sustainability@open.ac.uk with any examples that you may have.

One example is from OUSA who are introducing a new Sustainability Representative role – that will ensure student representation within the University on sustainability matters. The elected student post-holder will build on Lou Robinson's great work as Vice President Engagement and will start their two-year term in August.

Go Green lunchtime sustainability socials: Tuesdays 12-2pm from 23 April

We will be hosting regular lunchtime drop-in sustainability social sessions at the Go Green centre on the Milton Keynes campus. Staff and students can meet to talk Sustainability and ask questions about what they can do as individuals and teams to promote sustainability.

You can also learn about activities on offer such as the Bananas Game and the Swap Shop. Our first session is hosted by our Director of Sustainability, Dr Victoria Hands and will take place on Tuesday 23rd April between 12-2pm.

In the nations, please contact your Sustainability working group to find out more if you would like a similar sustainability social session.

Our Responsibilities at this Time; Towards an Ecoversity?

On 23rd April from 2pm until 4.30pm join us to listen and discuss with a panel of speakers about the need to act, and how to act, in response to issues related to our current *polycrises*. We'll discuss

- 1) Our responsibilities as a University (could we move towards being an Ecoversity?)
- 2) Our responsibilities as Academics (our obligation to be activists?)
- 3) Our responsibilities as individuals (outside of the day job)

We would be delighted if you could join us for this session. Please email karen.mccafferty@open.ac.uk to indicate if you will be likely to attend in-person or online

No Mow May

With Spring's arrival, you can now hear the hum of lawn mowers most weekends. With over 20 million gardens in the UK, we can deliver enormous gains for our pollinators and endangered wildlife by not mowing, leaving wild areas, stone and log piles, and allowing the winter flowering wild plants like dandelions and ivy to bloom and feed our hungry insects. This needn't be confined to the month of May, however, each May, why not put away the mower and participate in No Mow May. According to [Plantlife](#), the UK has lost approximately 97% of flower-rich meadows since the 1930's and the vital food needed by pollinators, like bees and butterflies has also disappeared, threatening our food security. To find out more about the campaign and to take part visit [Plantlife's No Mow May Movement](#)

□ Sheep grazing on campus □

To improve our biodiversity and improve the wildflower meadows on the MK campus. The Estates team have agreed to let a local farmer graze a small flock of sheep on the meadows. The sheep have now moved in and are grazing happily at the side and behind the Michael Young Building.



Electric vehicle roadshow success

It was amazing to see so many people attend our school holiday EV Roadshow Event at our MK campus, despite the weather. Stands included Travel Advice, Go Green and OU Clubs. There was also an opportunity to test drive a Tesla and have charging cables PAT tested. We hope to run the event again in the summer, we'll let you know upcoming dates!

Tree planting for the Weston Living Lab

As a contribution to the [Weston Living Lab](#) around the Milton Keynes campus, the Maths and Stats team in STEM arranged a tree planting session as part of their Carbon Literacy Training Pledge. (The Weston Living Lab is an outdoor addition to the OpenSTEM Labs and is the brainchild of Kadmiel Maseyk in the School of Environment, Earth and Ecosystem Sciences.)

These photos are from mid-March, where the team of 8 colleagues planted over 50 trees.



Webby Awards nomination needs your vote

Broadcast & Partnerships are delighted to announce that an OU/BBC co production for BBC Ideas : [What children can teach us about climate change](#) has been nominated for a prestigious **Webby Award**, which is the leading international award honouring excellence on the Internet.

The BBC Ideas OU playlist covers a broad range of contemporary issues told through playful storytelling, witty animation and a raft of mixed media formats. They aim to challenge and inform audiences in a digital-friendly and accessible way, inspired by and drawing on the University's academic expertise to explore the ideas and concepts that are shaping our world.

Please lend your support to the academics, Dr Mimi Tatlow-Golden and Sarah Burton, and OU/BBC team members who created this thought-provoking film by voting online. Our film has been nominated in the Sustainability and

Environment category and voting closes on 18th April. Please [do vote for the Webby's](#) here.

With continued optimism,

Nick

VCE Sponsor for Sustainability and Executive Dean, STEM Faculty

**Carbon
Literacy
Training**

**SPARK Lunch
& Learn
recordings**

**Warp-It
information
and sign-up**

**LinkedIn OU
Sustainability
Network**

occur, we will work with MailerLite to rectify the issue as soon as possible.

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