

# A MESSAGE FROM NICK BRAITHWAITE

Dear Colleagues,

A poem by Thomas Hood (“No”, 1844) opens with “No Sun, no Moon, no morn, no noon, no dawn, no dusk, no proper time of day...” and after further gloomy reflections it ends with the name of this month: November. I once knew it ‘by heart’. It’s clearly a northern European perspective and quite despondent, but whenever I recall it now, I try to use it as a springboard to trigger and sustain more optimistic thoughts.



## **Sustainability in business terms**

Our Director of Sustainability, Dr Victoria Hands, and I have contributed the Foreword of a timely Business Development Unit report related to sustainability implementation. The OU’s Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) report was released this week, at The Scotsman’s Green Skills Conference in Glasgow, attended by around 200 people. The [report](#) reveals that although ESG strategy is discussed in board rooms, lack of skills is holding back action. Surveying over 500 UK businesses, the report highlights a disconnect between awareness and action. It cites as major blockers: lack of financial resources (28%), essential skills gap (24%), and complexity (23%).

Within The OU we are tackling these obstacles through our matrix Sustainability Office, upskilling and reskilling staff across our large and complex organisation, and supporting colleagues so that sustainability becomes everyone’s job and is incorporated into their own areas of expertise. We have introduced the [Sustainability Planning and Reporting Kit \(SPARK\)](#) to help units identify the actions they can take professionally to embed sustainable practices and to help us deliver [our three sustainability KPIs](#) (see our visual). We are learning from good practice where sustainability is being included across units. This ranges from objectives in individual CDSAs and unit plans, to reviews of our policies and processes.

The ESG report’s recommendations are encapsulated in its title: ‘*Educate, Measure, Speak up: How Business can get ahead with ESG*’ and we are promoting our educational, research and public engagement offer as well as acting internally – so walking the talk! Feel free to share the report with any organisations you feel could benefit.

## **Carbon Literacy Action Day**

Monday 4 December is International Carbon Literacy Action Day, the world's largest climate education-and-action training event. It encourages learners from all walks of life, organisations, sectors, backgrounds, and nations to complete Carbon Literacy Training and pledge positive action to reduce carbon emissions – officially becoming certified as Carbon Literate. We will be running Carbon Literacy Training, open to all staff and students for free, on Wednesday 6 December. If you have not already done so, please consider undertaking the training – [details can be found on the sustainability website](#).

### **Responsible Futures**

Responsible Futures is a student-led audit of 50 criteria which covers our teaching and learning in the broadest sense:

- the formal curriculum (our qualifications)
- the informal curriculum (free learning)
- the subliminal curriculum (our public engagement such as our BBC co-productions and all the varying communications with students, all that they are exposed to via the OU).

So, whilst the major focus is qualifications, it is relevant to everyone, and auditors could quite feasibly ask any member of staff about their understanding of our approach to embedding sustainability in our core business of teaching and learning. David Morse (STEM) on behalf of all 4 Faculty Associate Deans Curriculum, Teresa Cox, Senior Manager in PVC-S, Jessica Smith and Lou Robinson from our Students' Association are playing a key role in preparing us for our first student-led audit in April 2024. You can [access a presentation](#) or [recording of the presentation](#) which will brief you on Responsible Futures and we welcome your ideas on how we can deliver on the criteria. Thank you to those who have offered to join the working group.

### **Responsible Procurement**

Procurement of goods and services makes up the majority of our carbon footprint – almost 100,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e, compared to 5,500 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e from our energy use and small vehicle fleet. Everything we purchase has a carbon impact from resource extraction, to production, to distribution and culminating in end-of-life (hence why reuse is so very important).

Stephen Harlon, Head of Procurement, has ensured his team understand these impacts and embed responsible procurement practices in all our procurement processes. This includes a Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) Tool to assess risk across spend areas and provide responsible procurement questions to include within tender packs to ensure we embed sustainability into supply contracts and throughout our supply chain.

If you purchase goods or services on behalf of the OU, [this slide deck](#) gives an excellent overview of what you need to be aware of, why it is important and who can support you.

### **Library Resources on Sustainability**

Inspired by their Climate Literacy Training, the Library Team have put together a collection of almost 300 [sustainability-related resources](#) to help audiences (including module teams and students) to understand key concepts and issues and to explore ways to make a positive impact. The resources fall under five categories, which are known as the five ways of working for sustainability:

- long-term thinking: to help us think bigger and invest in our planet's future
- prevention: there is a lot we can learn to prevent further damage being done
- involvement: how and why we can make changes in our daily lives, inclusive of all
- collaboration: the power of working together and involving all kinds of people
- integration: approaches that ensure the longevity of the human race and planet Earth

Take a look at the collection to deepen your knowledge and understand the various ways we can act to preserve our natural environment and reduce our carbon emissions. If you would like to recommend other resources that you find helpful let them know via their 'suggestions or feedback' link.

### **Role of Hydrogen in a NetZero UK**

Last week, we sponsored the UK Energy Security and Green Infrastructure Week. We ran a lunchtime online event where our Director of Sustainability asked, 'What would it take for hydrogen to have a place in the UK's net zero energy future?' Time flew and we heard from OU colleagues Bill Nuttall, Professor of Energy, Dr Tarek Rashwan, Lecturer in Sustainability and the Smart Environment, and postgraduate researchers Marc Cochrane and Harri Williams. You can [watch the recording here](#).

### **COP28**

The 28th [Conference of the Parties \(COP28\)](#) will be hosted in Dubai, UAE at the end of this month. The OU has official 'observer status' and when COP26 was hosted in Glasgow, we sent a delegation of Glasgow-based colleagues to attend and report back to us. Since then, to avoid carbon emissions, we have observed from a distance. In [this article](#) published last year, we shared some COP related materials from COP26 and COP27 and we welcome any perspectives on the COP28 from colleagues across the OU ([Sustainability@open.ac.uk](mailto:Sustainability@open.ac.uk)).

Other dates for your diary

- Thursday 21 November, 10am – 2pm: Evidence Café – Game Theoretic Approaches to Environmental Risk – [information and registration here](#)
- Wednesday 22 November, 12.30pm – 1.30pm: Go Green Workshop – Eco Anxiety with Trudi Macagnino, Staff Tutor in School of Psychology & Counselling, FASS – [register to attend here](#)
- Thursday 30 November, 4pm: Giki Live event – Sustainable celebrations [sign up to attend here](#)

- 4th - 8th December: Giki challenge - can you [take on any of these festive Giki steps](#) during December?

Do not forget to keep warm in this cold and stormy weather - refer to [this infographic](#) from the Sustainability Office for ways you can lower your carbon footprint while keeping warm.

With continued optimism, even in November,

**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**

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