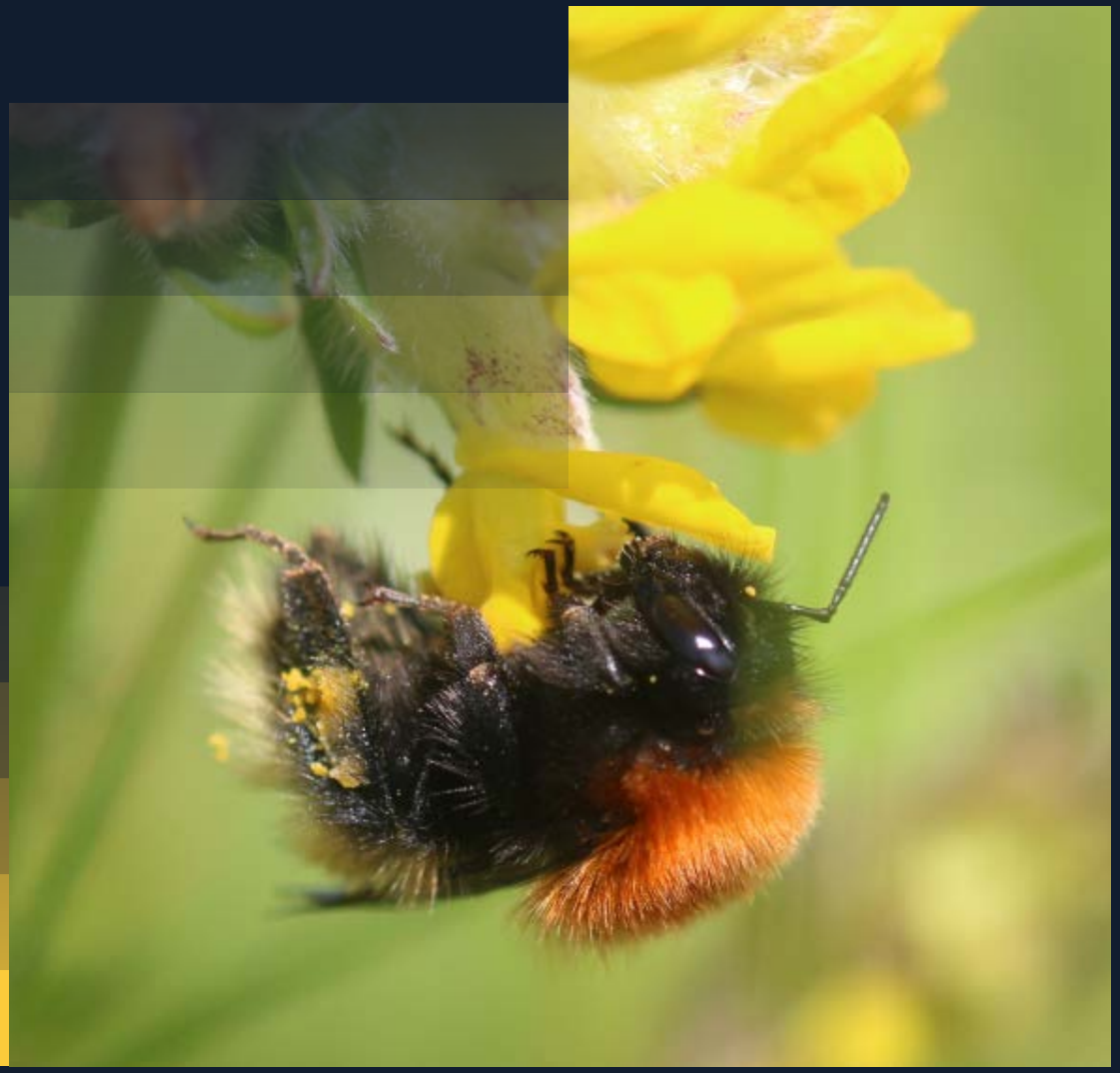
1495 UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

Sustainable Development Goals

Annual Report 2025-26





Professor Peter Edwards,
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Welcome

Welcome to our latest annual Sustainable Development Goals Report. This is the sixth year of producing these reports and every year the depth, breadth and volume of stories they contain has been enhanced. This year's edition is packed with stories from every corner of the University, including more than 60 articles that contain links and references to over 100 separate initiatives, and with scores of colleagues from every academic School featured.

This year we hear about life-transforming medical breakthroughs, research that addresses the complexities of climate change, including how communities are adapting to major societal changes, but also, we find a range of community facing stories that serve to demonstrate the myriad interventions the University makes that affect local, regional, national and global communities.

Alongside showcasing research we find heartening accolades for the quality of our teaching, as well as evidence of the University's role in supporting local cultural life. Readers will also notice that many of the articles are tagged as serving SDG 17 'Partnership for the Goals'. This reflects the extensive partnership working at the heart of much of what we do. This includes the global and national academic collaborations with universities that underpin many of the research initiatives detailed here, but also collaborations and stakeholder engagement with public and private sector organisations ranging from the NHS to business. Beyond these, there are extensive community engagements that place citizens at the heart of our research activities, and there are also numerous relationships with those that fund our research; be they bodies like research councils; charities that fund specific research areas; or relationships with individuals from our philanthropic donor community who do so much to support our day-to-day academic and non-academic endeavours.

While the context facing the higher education sector remains challenging, these reports provide us with an opportunity to step back and reflect on the contribution the University continues to make in turbulent times. As always, the work described here is a testament to the dedication of the entire University community. That includes the academic and research community whose dedication and persistence drive so many of the developments these pages herald, and our professional services staff who enable this work through their commitment and endeavour.

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Sustainability Report

Although 2025/26 has been another year of considerable upheaval in the UK Higher Education sector, the need to maintain a focus on sustainability challenges across a wide spectrum of activities has remained a constant.

In terms of emissions reporting, 2025/26 saw considerable effort dedicated to understanding the implications of the first comprehensive review of the guidance supporting the Public Bodies Climate Change Duty (PBCCD), since its introduction over a decade ago. This has resulted in a substantial review of our Net Zero Strategy, adjusting it to reflect the new guidance, as well as a reflection on all aspects of our reporting to ensure that we continue to be seen as an exemplar of good practice in terms of how we engage with this statutory process. We have also in 2025 developed and made available our first comprehensive strategy and materials in support of climate change adaptation.

Annual data on emissions continues to be gathered comprehensively against all required categories.

Scope 1 emissions (predominantly from natural gas use) have remained broadly static this year, reflecting some challenges in the operation of our main heat centre.

Scope 2 emissions from electricity use have reduced substantially as a result of a major change in the Government derived emissions factor that determines them, although this has been partly undercut by increased consumption due to extended periods of downtime for our CHP engine. In contrast, Scope 2 steam consumption on our Foresterhill Campus is expected to be broadly similar to last year.

Meanwhile, our **Scope 3 emissions**, i.e. those indirect emissions from downstream impacts like travel and procurement, show some interesting trends. Business Travel emissions are down largely as a result of a substantial decrease in business air travel, but student relocation travel emissions are much the same as last year. Procurement data is incomplete, and as one of the largest and most unpredictable categories has a major influence on eventual final totals. Current indications are that this category seems likely to rise, potentially quite substantially. However, in those critical emissions categories that are at the core of our Net Zero ambitions, we have seen a minor reduction in our overall emissions profile, although in categories over which we have less control e.g. procurement, an increase seems likely.



The geopolitical situation in the Arabian Gulf and elsewhere gave rise to considerable worries about energy security and pricing, although our status as a participant in the Scottish public sector's approach to consortium purchasing of energy has limited our exposure to the worst excesses of energy price volatility. These risks look set to persist into 2027, but the consortium approach continues to be an effective way of mitigating these risks.

Headline performance in the main global sustainability rankings saw Top 200 global positions in both, with individual components of note, including e.g. a global ranking of =24th for SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production.

- **THE Sustainability Impact Ranking 101-200 globally and 24th in the UK**
- **QS Sustainability Ranking =57th globally and 20th in the UK**

Operationally, the year has seen us explore some major changes to our main heat generation plant, with the arrival and installation of a thermal store that will capture waste heat from our district heating scheme to improve operational efficiency and emissions impact. In parallel we have undertaken an exercise to explore replacement of our workhorse CHP engine with a smaller engine, better able to balance our heating plant's operation and, in theory, improve efficiency.

One major development of note in 2025/26 has been the launch of the academic-led Aberdeen Geothermal Feasibility Project (AGFP) with the aid of a £1m NERC grant. This project will drill a 500m test well on campus to assess the heat potential beneath our feet, while a city-wide deployment of seismic nodes aims to enhance understanding of the heat potential across Aberdeen. This project has seen partnerships evolve with industry and other interested public bodies, notably the NHS and RGU (both of whom have their own interest in looking at geothermal).

Following our decision to sign up to the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research Practice in 2025, research laboratories have continued to sign up to the Laboratories Efficiencies Assessment Framework (LEAF). A handful of pioneer labs have now secured Bronze level accreditation, with a further 30+ labs exploring the criteria. Next steps with this initiative will be to engage colleagues beyond the Medical School and to settle into an annual cycle of repeat audits, across a growing number of labs and supported by an expanded group of lab auditors.



King Charles meeting the AGFP team

This year also saw an undergraduate internship undertake the tri-annual process of reviewing our biodiversity habitat mapping, building on work undertaken by a previous intern in 2023. Biodiversity has also been to the fore in a series of workshops held with key Estates colleagues that sought to raise awareness of the expectations on bodies like the University to protect nature on its campuses, with particular attention paid to the implications of construction and maintenance projects for nesting bird and bat species.

Our experience of working with interns from the University's various award-winning student internship schemes continues to be very positive. As well as biodiversity, an undergraduate intern was tasked with undertaking our first institutional self-assessment against the EAUC's Sustainability Leadership Scorecard, ensuring we have populated an institutional profile for the first time, establishing a baseline in this sector benchmark tool that will serve as the basis for future assessments.

After a prolonged period where our Energy team was below strength, we are delighted to have been able to bring in a new Energy Manager, a new Controls Engineer, and a part-time Energy Data Analyst. These recruitments enhance the team's strength and offer the realistic prospect of re-emphasising the monitoring and targeting efforts that have proven successful in the past in helping drive energy efficiency, reducing consumption and costs. These appointments have also brought back the capacity required to focus on critical annual energy compliance regimes like UKETS and CHPQA.

Looking ahead to 2026/27, we anticipate that the following will be among the priorities:

- **Net Zero**: undertaking a comprehensive site-wide decarbonisation survey, utilising this as the basis for a new 5-year Carbon Management Plan, and taking forward a proposal to explore innovative funding solutions for decarbonisation investments. The identification of a likely chair for the mooted Decarbonisation Programme Board should provide another fillip.
- **Sustainability Literacy**: finalising a new student-facing module and 'quiz' (and linking this to MySkills), updating our staff e-learning module, and agreeing the parameters of sustainability training for senior managers as part of new expectations around the PBCCD commitments.
- Further embedding of the **Laboratories Efficiency Assessment Framework** (LEAF) accreditation scheme, including expanding the number of labs and Schools involved, while also growing the roster of qualified auditors.
- Full revision of our **Net Zero Strategy** to reflect the 2026 PBCCD Guidance, while also revising our PBCCD submission in a way that ensures that we continue to demonstrate best-practice engagement with this statutory expectation.

Gateway 2 Medicine recognised at Herald Education Awards

The University of Aberdeen's Gateway2Medicine (G2M) programme won the coveted Widening Access Award at the Herald Education Awards in 2026. The accolade honours the University's long standing commitment to expanding opportunities for students from under represented backgrounds who aspire to pursue a career in medicine. Announced at a ceremony in Glasgow attended by more than 300 representatives from across Scotland's further and higher education sectors, the award recognises the impact of the Gateway2Medicine programme - a joint initiative between the University of Aberdeen and North East Scotland College (NESCol).

Established in 2017, Gateway2Medicine provides a supported and structured pathway into medical education for talented students who may otherwise face barriers to entry. Through academic preparation, mentoring and clinical exposure, the programme helps widen participation in one of the country's most competitive and high demand professions.

Professor David Blackbourn, Head of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition at the University of Aberdeen, said: "Gateway2Medicine has grown into a programme we're genuinely proud of. It gives talented students a clear and supportive route into medicine, and we see the difference it makes every year. This recognition is a credit to the hard work of our staff, our partners at NESCol, and, most importantly, the students who bring so much commitment and potential to the course."

Gateway2Medicine is a partnership between the University of Aberdeen, NESCol, and NHS Grampian. The programme offers a one year, college based route into the University's MBChB degree, designed specifically to support students who have the ability and ambition to study medicine but may not have had equal access to opportunity. Further information is available on the University's Gateway 2 Medicine programme, while information on scholarships supported by the Cormack Family Foundation and available as part of the programme can also be found online here.



Herald Awards Host, Des Clarke; Dr Veronica Sneddon (NESCol); Dr Pietro Marini and Dr Alison Jack (UoA)

> **"This recognition is a credit to the hard work of our staff, partners, and the students who bring so much to the course."**
>
> Professor David Blackbourn, Executive Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Health & Life Sciences



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/latest-news/in-brief/25597

University research helps shape national debate on school uniform costs

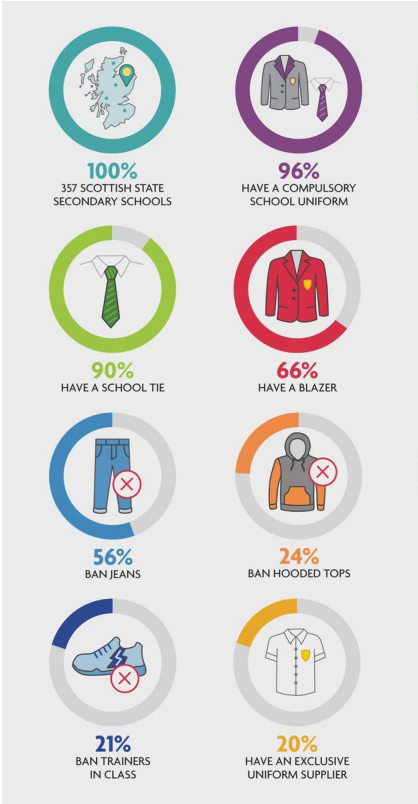
The University has played a leading role in influencing national policy around the affordability and accessibility of school uniforms. Highlighted in a briefing from The Children's Society, the latest study shows parents overwhelmingly supported limits on the number of school-branded uniform items, with 78% agreeing a limit should be introduced.

A limit on school-branded items was to be included in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill covering England – reflecting the surveys results that underscored the financial strain uniform costs place on families, while also outlining the benefits of limiting the number of branded items schools require their pupils to wear. Central to this was the work of Dr Rachel Shanks (School of Education and Director of Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity).

Conducted in partnership with the University of London, the latest research reveals that 54% of families with the lowest income are struggling to pay for school uniforms. As a result, some children are being wrongly penalised - facing detention, exclusion or even isolation. Parents overwhelmingly supported the introduction of a statutory limit on branded items and when asked about what schools should be allowed to require, the median number was three items.

Moreover, over half of parents on the lowest incomes selected zero to two items, with just one-in-five of those parents choosing five or more. Dr Shanks welcomed the measures put forward by the UK Government in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, saying: "While there has been progress in bringing down the costs of school uniforms, this latest survey shows there is still more to be done, especially for families on the lowest incomes and those struggling with the affordability of school uniforms."

Further details about this research, includes extensive background materials, while the graphic seen here (see right) reflects a survey of school approaches to uniform policy.



> **"Addressing the challenges of often expensive branded uniform items is a key next step in reducing the burdens on families' finances."**
>
> Dr Rachel Shanks, School of Education



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/latest-news/in-brief/24878

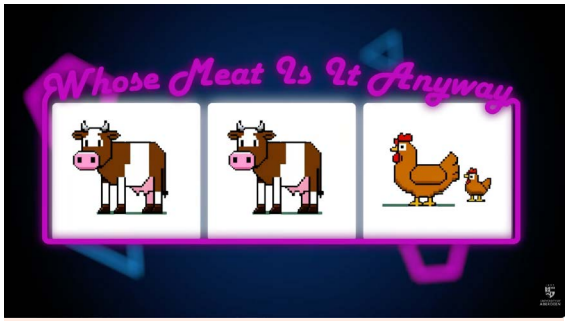
Food-fraud breakthrough: New system speedily pinpoints rogue ingredients in popular dishes

A "robust, reliable and highly-sensitive" tool that quickly and reliably identifies rogue ingredients, even in processed and cooked foods, has been developed by University of Aberdeen scientists. The MEAT-iCode system combines proteomic testing with an advanced database to identify multiple meat species in a single processed food sample. In initial lab tests of 19 shop-bought products, the team found that most (17) contained the ingredients listed. In two cases however, there were discrepancies. One kebab showed none of the 14% lamb advertised – and another, said to be 60% lamb and 20% chicken, was recorded as containing twice as much chicken as lamb.

Dr Renata Garbellini Duft, who led the study in the Rowett Institute, noted that "food fraud in the meat industry is a growing concern. Cases of mislabelled or adulterated meat have made consumers question what they're eating and whether it's safe."

The research team have liaised closely with Food Standards Scotland and others in developing the process to understand how it can support the bodies tasked with fighting food fraud, estimated to cost the UK £2 billion a year. MEATiCode represents a big step forward in the fight against this fraud and provides a highly accurate and reliable way to confirm what's really in meat products. It can be deployed in any proteomics lab and is faster than DNA-based techniques. The Rowett team is particularly excited by the prospect of adapting the technique to detect allergens such as nuts, fish and dairy products, extending its role in food safety – expanding the database beyond meat to protect other sectors from damaging fraud.

The team's explainer video "Whose Meat is it Anyway" also won a special *Study.EU* award for its humorous game-show based take on making the science accessible to a wider audience.



Still from "Whose Meat is it Anyway" video

> **"MEATiCode represents a big step forward in the fight against food fraud."**
>
> Dr Renata Garbellini Duft,
> Rowett Institute for Nutrition & Health



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/24813

Joint laboratory to advance global energy metabolism research launched

How the body converts food into energy and its impact on conditions such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes is the focus of a new joint laboratory between the University of Aberdeen and The Shenzhen Institutes of Advanced Technology (SIAT) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The new International Joint Laboratory for Energy Metabolism based in China's third most populous city, will serve as a collaborative hub for cutting edge research in this important area.

Energy metabolism research explores how the body converts food and oxygen into the energy needed for every essential function, from movement to brain activity, and why these processes sometimes go wrong. By uncovering the mechanisms that drive metabolic efficiency and imbalance, scientists can better understand widespread conditions such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and age related decline.

This work underpins the development of improved treatments, more effective prevention strategies and evidence based public health guidance. The Lab will draw on the complementary expertise of both institutions to advance joint scientific inquiry, develop talent and strengthen academic exchange.

The Joint Laboratory, co-established by SIAT's Centre for Energy Metabolism and Reproduction under the Institute of Biomedicine and Biotechnology (IBB) and the University of Aberdeen, is directed by Professor John Speakman, an internationally renowned expert in energy metabolism. Professor Xueying Zhang and Dr Catherine Hambly serve as Deputy Directors.

The project is supported by a grant provided by SIAT to the sum of around £65,000 (600,000 CNY) from April 2026 to April 2028. In his welcome address, Professor Dong Liang, Vice President of SIAT, noted that the establishment of the Joint Laboratory marks a significant milestone in the longstanding partnership between SIAT and the University of Aberdeen, providing a robust platform for deepened collaboration in energy metabolism research with the potential to generate findings of international impact.



Professor John Speakman, British Consul Sarah Mann, and Professor Dong Liang

> **"We are creating new opportunities to advance understanding of energy metabolism."**
>
> Professor Ben Tatler, Vice-Principal (Research)



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25463

Colleagues tackling cancer from all angles

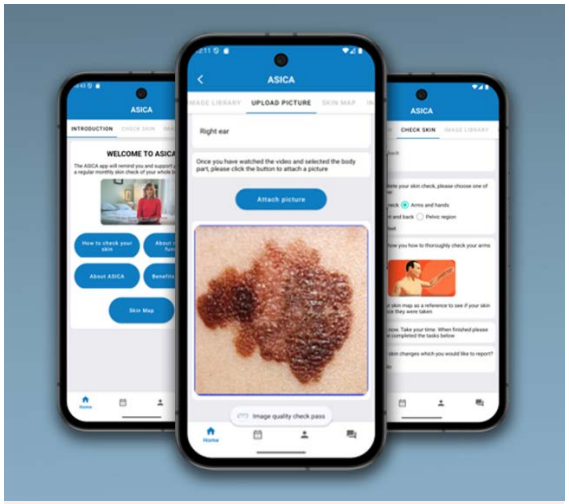
2025/26 has seen University researchers pioneering ways to detect, prevent and treat various cancers. This article summarises a few of those developments, with embedded links taking you to more detail on each of the individual stories.

One project sought skin cancer survivors to evaluate a new mobile phone app. The app guides users through a thorough self-examination and where they identify something they are concerned about, the app enables them to submit a report for review by a healthcare professional. In another development, new research from the University, in partnership with the Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC), outlined ways to make cancer screening services more accessible, noting that within the Grampian region, uptake of screening is markedly lower among people living in more deprived areas and among some ethnic minority communities, particularly those from Polish and African backgrounds.

Following on from landmark research in 2025 that identified a genetic link and increased cancer risks among women from Westray and Whalsay, a charity funded initiative will see a Scotland-wide genetic cancer screening programme begin, offering testing for the specific BRCA gene variants which are the highest risk. New research found that men with cardiovascular disease are at higher risk of cancer and death than women. This new study found this pattern across all subtypes of cancer, with lung cancer and colorectal cancers accounting for the highest risk.

Other research has seen University teams find that AI increases cancer detection by over 10 percent; as well as contributing to a major study that aims to improve rectal cancer radiotherapy standards across the UK. A study in the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition saw new analysis argue that cancer be managed as a chronic condition within primary care settings to better support the rapidly growing population of cancer survivors, while other colleagues found that bowel cancer screening samples had untapped potential to be used in research to better understand other major health conditions (see the Team's YouTube video here).

All of the projects detailed here involve extensive partnership and stakeholder collaborations with partner institutions, patient cohorts and clinical teams, and with research funding coming from a variety of different sources.



The ASICA app helps melanoma survivors carry out regular checks of their skin and identify changes which may need further assessment

> **"Surplus screening samples could lead to large-scale, low-cost, population-based studies."**
>
> Professor Anne Kiltie,
> Rowett Institute of Nutrition & Health



Heart health and cardio-vascular diseases in the spotlight

A major award aims to help develop a therapy to 'block' bad cholesterol. The five-year grant from the British Heart Foundation, worth £1.1m, will advance research that could find a new way of protecting people from heart disease. The project, led by Professor Mirela Delibegovic, builds on earlier research showing that blocking a key enzyme may help reduce the build up of fat in the arteries - a process known as atherosclerosis (which causes most heart attacks and strokes). Aberdeen researchers have previously shown that targeting the PTP1B enzyme can help 'block' this fat building process. Further research is needed before it can move towards human trials - and the BHF funding will help make that possible. The project will bring together the universities of Aberdeen, Liverpool, Leeds, Dundee, Copenhagen, Leiden and Nantes to explore whether this approach could benefit people at high risk of heart disease.

Elsewhere, a world first trial to mend broken hearts gets underway with the clinical trial of medication for the long-term management of Takotsubo cardiomyopathy, sometimes called broken heart syndrome. The seven-year study, led by Professor Dana Dawson, was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and will involve scientists and clinicians from Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leeds, Leicester, Belfast and almost 1,000 takotsubo patients from across the country. Often mistaken for a heart attack, a takotsubo attack is usually triggered by sudden emotional stress, such as the loss of a loved one. However, unlike a heart attack, it is not caused by a blockage in the heart arteries but instead, a severe weakening of the heart muscle.

Separately, a University of Aberdeen pre-spinout company hopes a new blood pressure treatment is on the horizon. Thanks to funding from the Scottish Funding Council's 'Proof of Concept' scheme, the University-led pre-spinout group DIOKA Therapeutics will test whether their revolutionary new idea will work beyond the cellular level that has already proven more successful than they could have imagined. This next step of the project will involve further testing before moving to human trials. The team's explainer video sees study lead Dr Guy Bewick provide more detail.



> **"We are a step closer to being able to offer a clear and evidence-based treatment to those living with Takotsubo cardiomyopathy."**
>
> Professor Dana Dawson, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition





Sustainable medical research and teaching recognised

A University scientist has been honoured for animal-free research. Professor Valerie Speirs received a grant of £25,000 from the Centre for Human Specific Research to establish the Animal Replacement Centre (ARC). The ARC will enable Professor Speirs and her team to continue their work on human-specific, animal-free approaches. It will establish the UK's third - and Scotland's only - Animal Replacement Centre.

ARC laboratories work to replace animals in medical research, instead championing innovative, ethical, human-specific methods. The Aberdeen ARC, the first in the UK north of London, will advance human-specific methodologies, including developing advanced human breast tissue models and using interdisciplinary approaches to design experiments that replace the use of animals. A central aim of the Aberdeen ARC is to play a vital role in supporting the next generation of research leaders, ensuring that expertise, leadership and ambition are embedded and shared across the research community. Along with the grant, Professor Speirs has been honoured with a plaque in the University's Institute of Medical Sciences building, in recognition of her work and its innovation.

Meanwhile, a national collaboration between the University and Scotland's other medical schools, has been awarded £100,000 from the Scottish Government to support the integration of sustainability into medical degrees in Scotland. Globally, healthcare generates around 5% of all greenhouse gas emissions, driven by pharmaceutical manufacturing and distribution, staff and patient travel, energy use, and waste. Clinical waste, in particular, carries a far higher financial and environmental cost compared with general waste, making it an important target for reduction. The £100k award will support the appointment of a Scottish Clinical Leadership Fellow to lead coordinated work across Scotland's medical schools to embed principles of sustainable healthcare within medical curricula, in alignment with NHS Scotland's climate commitments and the Scottish Government target of net zero by 2040.



Left to right: Mrs Lynn Wilson, Dr Emily Stevenson, Dr Morven Wilson, Prof Jon Issberner, Prof Camille Huser, Dr Alison Jack, Dr Noy Basu

> **"We can create a system that will be better for patients, budgets and the environment."**
>
> Dr Alison Jack, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition



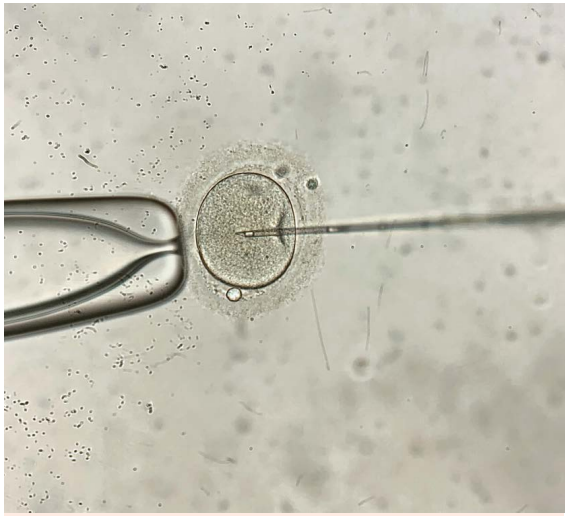
To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25535

Broad range of pregnancy and maternal health research

Research in 2025/26 has seen a range of pregnancy and maternal care research. Among this is the news that the University will co-lead a £50m research programme to transform maternal health care. Funded by the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) and involving the universities of Newcastle and Birmingham, the NIHR Inequalities Challenge: Maternity Disparities Consortium will unite higher education, the NHS, and community groups to close the most critical gaps in maternal care. Separately, a team of experts led by the University will consider how maternity care should be delivered to pregnant women with multiple long-term health conditions. The award of £1.3 million from NIHR, could benefit the almost one in five women who receive maternity care whilst also managing two or more long term health conditions.

Other studies this year have included one finding that women who experience pregnancy loss in the second trimester are at increased risk of complications during future pregnancies. Findings highlighted the urgent need for more research, clearer clinical guidance, better follow-up care and dedicated support pathways for affected women. Other research found that pregnancy complications were reduced in HPV vaccinated women. This was the first study in the world to investigate the link between HPV vaccination and a broad range of adverse pregnancy outcomes (see paper in European Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology and Reproductive Biology).

Elsewhere, researchers from Aberdeen and Edinburgh universities have been awarded just under £2m to trial a new drug for heavy menstrual bleeding, which could transform the lives of millions of women around the world who live with the debilitating condition. The three-and-a-half-year study, funded by the NIHR, will investigate whether a new medicine taken as a pill every day could treat the condition more effectively than current treatments. This year also saw a team at the University launch an IVF success calculator. Drawing on data collected from all licensed fertility treatments across the UK, the calculator translates this information to give tailored success estimates based on factors such as age and specific infertility diagnoses.



New IVF calculator helps couples understand the likelihood and potential cost of treatment

"Our calculator can show couples the cumulative chances of success for between one and six rounds of IVF."

Dr David McLernon, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition

World first brain health study and new brain model

A former colleague of Professor John Mallard, the pioneer of the MRI scanner (invented and built at the University of Aberdeen in the 1980's) was one of the first volunteers to experience Aberdeen's newest imaging technology, Field-Cycling Imaging (FCI). The next generation scanner has been effective in producing previously unattainable imaging in stroke and cancer patients. This new study could transform detection of early signs of declining brain health. Research participant, John Heatherill worked at M&D Technology Ltd in Aberdeen during the 1980s and became involved with development of the MRI systems.

The team's initial focus is on cerebral small vessel disease, a common age-related condition that increases stroke and dementia risk. Although most people develop some degree of small vessel disease, identifying those at risk of severe decline remains challenging. Unlike MRI, FCI can switch between low and ultra low magnetic fields, revealing details that were previously imperceptible. Funded by the Scottish Government Chief Scientist's Office, NHS Grampian Charity and collaborating with Scottish Brain Sciences, the team will investigate if FCI can detect brain health changes with a view to identifying who could benefit from early intervention.

Meanwhile another team has been exploring how inflammation during pregnancy may influence early brain development. The study, funded by UKRI (BBSRC) was co-led by Dr Eunchai Kang and Dr Daniel Berg. Inflammation and infection during pregnancy have previously been associated with an increased risk of neurodevelopmental conditions. However, understanding exactly how inflammation affects brain development has been a challenge because many aspects of human brain development cannot easily be studied in the laboratory. To address this, the team developed a 3D human brain tissue model known as a 'cerebroid'. Cerebroids preserve much of the cellular organisation and structure seen in the developing brain, providing researchers with a powerful research tool.



FCI scan volunteer patient

> **"It's exciting that Aberdeen is once again at the forefront of advances in imaging."**
>
> Professor Mary Joan MacLeod, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25087

UK First General Practice and Mental Health Teaching Centre Opens

The University of Aberdeen and NHS Grampian have opened the doors of a new, first of its kind, General Practice and Mental Health Teaching Centre in Aberdeen. Based in a purpose-built educational facility within the University's Health Sciences Building at Foresterhill, the Centre has welcomed its first cohort of final year medical students and has already seen hundreds of patients attend the clinic. It is a partnership between the University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership, and NHS Grampian. It is financed with NHS Scotland Medical Additional Cost of Teaching (ACT) funding.

Different from a walk-in centre where people self-refer, patients will be invited to attend the Centre by their GP or mental health team. The Centre is designed to look and function like a modern GP practice and will deliver thousands of additional appointments each year - relieving some of the pressure on GP practices and other local services. Fully staffed, the Centre has enabled the creation of four full-time GP posts, a Consultant Psychiatrist post and several support staff. The Centre provides assessment and treatment for health problems that need attention within 1-2 days but is not designed to replace routine GP services. It has been established in response to growing medical student numbers and, in addition to benefiting patients, the centre will create more student placement opportunities in GP clinics and in Psychiatry.

Final year medical students will see patients under the direct supervision of GP tutors and Consultant Psychiatrists, gaining experience in listening, taking history, examining patients and presenting their clinical reasoning. Professor David Blackbourn, Executive Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Health & Life Sciences noted that "As student numbers continue to rise nationally, universities must find new and innovative ways to ensure every future doctor receives the high quality, supervised clinical experience required under GMC standards. This Centre allows us to do exactly that.



2 students, a patient and GP Clinical Senior Lecturer Dr Aisling Halliday

> **"The Centre marks a major milestone for medical education in Aberdeen and across the country."**
>
> Professor David Blackbourn, Executive Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Health & Life Sciences



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/26110

Improving classroom outcomes in Rwanda

A spring 2026 international policy event in Rwanda, showcased new research that demonstrated how low-cost, neuroscience-informed classroom practices may significantly improve school climate, teacher wellbeing, and student learning outcomes across the country.

The event showcased the work of '*The Neural Bridge: Reclaiming School Climate for Human Capital Development*' a joint research initiative led by the University of Aberdeen and the University of Rwanda College of Education. The project is part of the NIHR Global Health Research Group on Promoting Children's and Adolescents' Mental Wellbeing in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The project is about making sure that investments in education truly reach children in the classroom. It responds to a critical challenge facing education systems in contexts of deprivation. While investments in infrastructure and curriculum reform are essential, they are often undermined by the 'cognitive tax' experienced by children exposed to adverse childhood experiences. Research shows that chronic stress and trauma can leave children in a persistent state of neurobiological hyper-arousal, limiting attention, emotional regulation, and readiness to learn.

The research demonstrates that mindfulness-based interventions can act as a 'neural bridge', helping pupils shift from a survival state to a learning state. Importantly, these interventions are designed to be integrated into daily classroom transitions, requiring no additional curriculum time and minimal resources. Rather than focusing narrowly on individual outcomes, the project identifies both direct benefits for pupils and indirect, emergent benefits for the entire classroom when the most disruptive pupils gain the ability to remain regulated and engaged. This reduces teacher stress, increases instructional time, and creates a calmer, more productive learning environment for all students.

The research is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) using UK Government aid. It is jointly led by Professor Pamela Abbott at the University of Aberdeen, and Professor Wenceslas Nzabalirwa from the University of Rwanda.



> **"We are giving teachers practical tools to create calmer, more productive environments where all pupils can succeed."**
>
> Professor Pamela Abbott,
> Director of the Centre for Global Development



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/latest-news/in-brief/25533

Initiatives aim to enhance teacher training and local retention

The University's School of Education has been selected to host a new hub to support teachers across Scotland by providing professional learning grounded in the latest research and policy. The *Pedagogy to Support Attainment in Diverse Classrooms* research hub aims to build capacity within the profession and strengthen evidence informed teaching that directly improves outcomes for learners. It will engage teachers through the provision of practical resources and facilitated learning opportunities tailored around key themes identified in collaboration with educators, researchers and national stakeholders.

It will support teachers to explore and develop their practice through practitioner enquiry, working collaboratively in communities of practice. Utilising the University of Glasgow's Centre for Teaching Excellence (CfTE) online digital environment, the hub will reach educators across Scotland and address areas essential to equitable and inclusive education, including nurturing relationships and promoting positive behaviour; promoting inclusive pedagogies; thriving through diversity; developing counselling skills to support relationships and attainment; supporting mental health and wellbeing for learners and educators.

Separately, the School of Education also aims to help tackle the shortage of STEM teachers in the local region with a new 'train local, stay local' collaboration between the University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire councils. The initiative aims to boost STEM subject teachers in the region and is supported by a £141,000 Scottish Government grant that has seen two new programmes launched to strengthen the pipeline of STEM teachers and equip young people with vital skills for high-growth industries. From August 2026, the one-year, full-time 'Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) in Computing Science' and a new 'MA (Hons) Secondary Education with STEM Subjects' programme create additional pathways into teaching STEM topics. A key feature being the close partnership with local authorities to offer guaranteed local placements for individuals living in the region who aspire to become Computing Science teachers.



> **"These developments reaffirm the University's commitment to supporting teachers deliver inclusive and equitable education."**
>
> Catriona MacDonald,
> Head of the School of Education



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/latest-news/in-brief/25263

Educational quality recognised by QAA and ASME

The University received a highly positive outcome in the latest Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER). Conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), the review confirms that the University is 'effective in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience, and enabling student success.' TQER is Scotland's national framework for reviewing the quality of tertiary education providers.

Review visits took place in late 2025 / early 2026, involving a team of independent reviewers, including a student. The review team highlighted areas of good practice that included: strong oversight of quality processes; mature and context-responsive approaches to transnational education partnerships; effective embedding of the Aberdeen 2040 strategy; well developed virtual learning environments; proactive and collaborative student support and wellbeing services; a strategic approach to employability and skills development; an embedded culture of listening to the student voice; and a proactive approach to staff development led by the Centre for Academic Development. The report also made recommendations aimed at further strengthening consistency in assessment feedback, improving clarity of assessment expectations, and supporting more consistent use of data in course and programme review.

In other teaching quality news, the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition received the 2026 Institutional 'Commitment to Scholarship' Award from the Association for the Study of Medical Education (ASME). The only Scottish medical school to receive the award, judges praised 'outstanding and sustained commitment' to scholarship in health professionals' education'. ASME awards celebrate organisations that 'demonstrate excellence in advancing educational scholarship and foster environments where innovation, research and collaboration can thrive.'

This was welcomed by Professor David Blackbourn, Executive Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Health & Life Sciences, who said: "To receive this award from ASME is an exceptional honour. ASME is one of the most respected organisations in the field of medical education, known for championing excellence, innovation and evidence based practice."



> **"The report is a strong endorsement of our commitment to providing high quality education."**
>
> Professor Peter Edwards,
> Principal and Vice-Chancellor





To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25497

School of Psychology gains University's first Athena Swan Gold award

As well as celebrating its 130th anniversary, 2026 has seen the School of Psychology become the first School at the University of Aberdeen to be awarded an Athena Swan Gold award for its work advancing gender equality in higher education and research.

The successful application was led by Dr Clare Sutherland, Professor Doug Martin and Dr Eva Rubinova, with support from Senior EDI Partner, Dr Maria-Grazia Cascio. A Gold award is the highest recognition within the Athena Swan Charter and recognises Schools that demonstrate excellence in representation, progression and success for all genders. It demonstrates leadership in gender equality, diversity and inclusion and is evidence of sustained, measurable cultural transformation. The School has consistently led the University's efforts in this regard, becoming the first School to receive Athena Swan Bronze in 2016 and Silver in 2020.

Head of the School of Psychology, Professor Doug Martin, said: "We are delighted to have received this Gold award. They are extremely rare, with fewer than 5% of academic departments achieving them, and we are only the sixth psychology department in the UK to receive one. Originally pioneered by Dr Madge Jackson in 2014, our Athena Swan efforts have become a School-wide endeavour." The School has also helped promote EDI across the University, with School staff leading three of the University's eight EDI networks, founding two of them (i.e. the Menopause and Neurodiversity groups). It also has staff representing EDI on the committees of various national and international learned societies.

Professor Peter Edwards, Principal and Vice-Chancellor said: "I am delighted that the University has been recognised for its commitment to gender equality with its first Athena Swan Gold award. I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to colleagues in the School of Psychology, as well as the central EDI team who have contributed to these successes."

> **"This award reflects more than a decade of work towards progressing gender equality."**
>
> Professor Doug Martin,
> Head of the School of Psychology

To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/latest-news/in-brief/25013

New University comic calls for improved menopause support in the workplace

A postgraduate student has come up with a creative way to educate the public and employers about the impacts of menopause - which could help more than 13 million women living with symptoms in the UK. Psychology PhD student, Chithramali Rodrigo, and a team of researchers have worked with comic experts and artists to design a comic that raises awareness of the realities of living with menopause and how it affects women in the workplace.

The comic, 'Navigating Menopause in the Workplace', was funded by Henpicked, an organisation supporting those going through menopause. Written by Rodrigo and Professor Christopher Murray, Director of the University of Dundee's Comics Studies Creative Research Hub (CSCRH), with artwork by comic creators Katy Stone and Phillip Vaughan, the comic follows Melanie as she starts to experience symptoms and follows her journey to diagnosis. It focuses on how a lack of support affects her at work. To start, Melanie doesn't understand her symptoms but following diagnosis, she decides to raise awareness of menopause in her workplace, leading to improved support and a more open environment for conversations that address the misconceptions of her colleagues. The comic also covers actions employers can take, including providing desk fans, adjusting working hours, taking shorter, more frequent breaks and making changes to uniforms.

Menopause occurs when periods stop due to lower hormone levels, typically between the ages of 45 and 55. Common symptoms include hot flushes, difficulty sleeping, body aches, headaches, brain fog, vaginal dryness and low mood or mood swings. Symptoms can be debilitating and can affect all areas of work and home life.

It is hoped the comic will reduce stigma of menopause in the workplace and empower women to ask for the support they need. It also aims to highlight to employers their obligations to make their work environments more inclusive.



Artwork by Katy Stone and Phillip Vaughan

> **"My PhD involves developing a toolkit to support women experiencing menopause at work."**
>
> Chithramali Rodrigo,
> PhD Student in the School of Psychology



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25237

Water and hydrology researchers recognised

A University of Aberdeen hydrologist has been named the recipient of a prestigious international award, recognising a lifetime of outstanding contributions to his field. Professor Chris Soulsby received the Langbein Award from the American Geophysical Union (AGU) at its December 2025 meeting in New Orleans, where he also delivered the keynote "Langbein" lecture. Established in 1991, the award commemorates the legacy of Walter B. Langbein, a figure whose work helped transform hydrology into a rigorous scientific discipline.

The award recognises "lifetime contributions to hydrologic science and unselfish scientific cooperation". Recipients are chosen for careers that have fundamentally shaped the understanding of water in the environment. Since joining the University in 1993, Professor Soulsby has carried out work around the globe, although some of his most influential work has been carried out close to his home in Banchory on the River Dee where his work has included internationally important long-term studies of Atlantic salmon habitats in the region.

Elsewhere, the University appointed Dr Wolde Bori Mekuria as an Honorary Professor, recognising more than a decade of exceptional collaboration, high-quality science, and global impact delivered in partnership with colleagues in Ethiopia. Dr Mekuria, a Senior Researcher at the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) in Addis Ababa, has played a central role in collaborative research between the University and Ethiopian partners, helping secure over £3.5 million in funding. In co-developing research with smallholder farmers, tangible benefits have included new income streams for landless youth and women, community led soil restoration, and improved sustainable use of organic resources.

In separate news, Dr Josie Geris (School of Geosciences) received one of eight RSE Research Awards secured by the University in the 2025 funding round. The award relates to Dr Geris' research "When wet places run dry: Shaping Scotland's water resources resilience to drought".





Left to right: Dr Wolde Bori Mekuria, Professor Chris Soulsby

> **"This honour is a collective achievement and renews our commitment to expanding our joint efforts."**
>
> Dr Wolde Bori Mekuria,
> Honorary Professor



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/latest-news/in-brief/25445

Researchers warn of climate change 'roulette' for European nitrate pollution

Climate change could significantly increase nitrogen pollution risks in freshwater systems across parts of Europe unless nutrient management practices adapt to changing environmental conditions, new research has found. The use of both synthetic and organic fertilizers increases nitrate pollution risk by allowing surplus nitrogen to leach into rivers, groundwater, and other freshwater systems. The research, from the University of Aberdeen and the Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB) in Berlin, reveals that climate-driven changes can strongly influence both the pattern and speed at which nitrogen from fertilizers is transported into freshwater. Published in *Science*, the study demonstrated how climate-induced changes such as rainfall patterns, snowmelt and drought frequency, all influence how water moves through landscapes and that both extremes - too wet or too dry - can increase nitrate pollution risk.

Nitrogen pollution is a growing global environmental challenge - contributing to the growth of harmful algae blooms, threatening drinking water supplies, damaging ecosystems, and affecting food production. The research team developed a new isotope-enabled biogeochemical model to track water and nitrogen movement across more than 3,800 European river basins. Using stable water isotopes, the model mapped the velocities of water cycling and assessed how shifts in wetter and drier climatic conditions have influenced nitrogen pollution since the 1980s. The study also projected how these patterns may evolve by the end of the 21st century.

The findings show that landscape water velocities are a major but previously underappreciated control on nitrogen pollution. Faster-moving water, often found in mountainous areas and along Europe's north-west coast, can rapidly flush nitrogen into groundwater and streams before plants and microorganisms have time to remove it. In contrast, slower-moving water in lowland regions generally allows more time for natural nitrogen processing and retention. The research was supported by the German Research Council and the Leibniz Association.



> **"We have demonstrated that landscape hydrology and water velocities are critical controls on nitrogen leaching."**
>
> Professor Chris Soulsby,
> School of Geosciences



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25763

£1m investment to explore geothermal potential in Aberdeen

The Aberdeen Geothermal Feasibility Pilot (AGFP) is a city-wide collaboration to pave the way for low-carbon heating solutions. Funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and led by the University of Aberdeen, the project will see an instrumented borehole drilled to a depth of over 500m on King's College campus in Old Aberdeen. The borehole will help determine geothermal potential across the City, with the drilling supplemented by data recovered from over 100 seismic nodes which mapped out the City's subsurface structures to help inform where geothermal heating may work best in Aberdeen.

Dr David Cornwell, project co-lead has been assembling a large group of interested and skilled collaborators around the project. "Coupling borehole data with the city-wide model will reveal the potential of geothermal heating in Aberdeen," he said. "The data we collect will be openly available, providing data that can be used to predict the geothermal potential of other places across the UK."

If successful, there is potential to roll the initiative out across the city and use geothermal heat for district heating across the wider community. The NERC funding enables the first phase of a larger vision for the city energy mix by integrating technical development and research as part of a just energy transition for all. The pilot draws on expertise from the University of Aberdeen's Estates & Commercial Services, the Schools of Geosciences and Engineering, the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research and the Just Transition Lab. It is supported by a broad consortium of collaborating and partner organisations, notably Robert Gordon University, NHS Grampian, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeen Heat and Power, the Net Zero Technology Centre and Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group. Further afield partners include the University of Leeds, British Geological Survey, TU Delft (Netherlands), the National Geothermal Centre, and numerous geothermal industry partners and individuals.



Dr David Cornwell, Professor Clare Bond, Tristan Roberts and Dr Vahid Vaziri

> **"The borehole will provide direct subsurface temperature, geology and hydrology data."**
>
> Professor Clare Bond,
> School of Geosciences



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/24918

New course evaluates progress in the energy transition

In spring 2026, the University of Aberdeen launched a new introductory course, "The State of Energy Transition", designed to equip participants with a foundational understanding of the UK's evolving energy landscape. The programme brought together senior staff from the University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon University (RGU) and North East Scotland College (NESCol) alongside leading industry figures to present an up-to-date assessment of the opportunities and challenges associated with the energy transition. Developed as part of the National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA) collaborative partnership, it was targeted at individuals seeking to enter roles within the energy transition sector as well as those working in non technical positions within energy companies such as HR, finance and business support. It was also of interest to professionals in stakeholder organisations including local authorities and Scottish Enterprise.

NESA is an initiative aiming to accelerate the UK's energy transition through delivery of industry-informed training, education and upskilling opportunities. It provides access to new and relevant skills that help businesses contribute positively to the green economy. This latest course builds on the hugely successful £1m Scottish Government Just Transition Fund project award which enabled NESA academic partners - the University of Aberdeen, RGU and NESCol – ably supported by Skills Development Scotland and Energy Transition Zone (ETZ) Ltd. to develop 15 new courses and offer more than 700 fully funded places to support the re- and up-skilling of workers for energy transition. The new course reflects the continued commitment of all three institutions to collaborate on high impact learning and the collective expertise they bring to the energy transition agenda.

Meanwhile in June 2026, Professor John Underhill, Director of the University's Centre for Energy Transition, was re-elected to chair NESA, the National Energy Skills Accelerator, the body that brings the University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon University and NESCol together to create a more flexible and resilient workforce for the UK's energy sector.



Image credit: Nicholas Doherty on Unsplash

> **"The course provides an invaluable opportunity for learners to understand how the UK's energy mix is evolving."**
>
> Professor John Underhill, Director of the University's Centre for Energy Transition



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/latest-news/in-brief/25313

Centre for Energy Transition influences national energy discourse

Throughout the year, the University's Centre for Energy Transition (CET) has been at the heart of the national debate about energy security and pricing, seeking to influence policy and bring University expertise to bear in the discussion about energy and the critical national infrastructure that delivers it.

In late 2025, University research warned that UK electricity bills were unlikely to fall under current arrangements and urged policymakers to consider structural reforms to protect consumers while delivering the energy transition. The independent study undertaken in the Centre for Energy Transition (CET), highlighted that wholesale electricity prices in the UK are often set by gas-fired generation, leaving consumers exposed to global gas market volatility. Rising network and infrastructure costs, increasing standing charges and the impact of supplier failures have compounded the problem. "Our research shows that strategic cost allocation and investment planning can deliver resilience without eroding public support for the energy transition." said Professor John Underhill. The report concluded that without structural reform, the UK's exposure to global energy prices will continue and bills are unlikely to fall soon.

November 2025 saw the UK Government announce a relaxation of restrictions on new oil and gas licences in the North Sea as part of the Autumn Budget. New Transitional Energy Certificates will enable limited oil and gas production on or near to existing fields. The move came after publication in August of an independent review which suggested the policy change could offer a solution for investment and growth, increase energy security, address environmental sustainability and global climate impacts. In September 2026, it was announced that the University of Aberdeen would be part of a partnership announced by Great British Energy focused on supporting young people, including those currently not in education, employment or training (NEETs), into energy sectors.

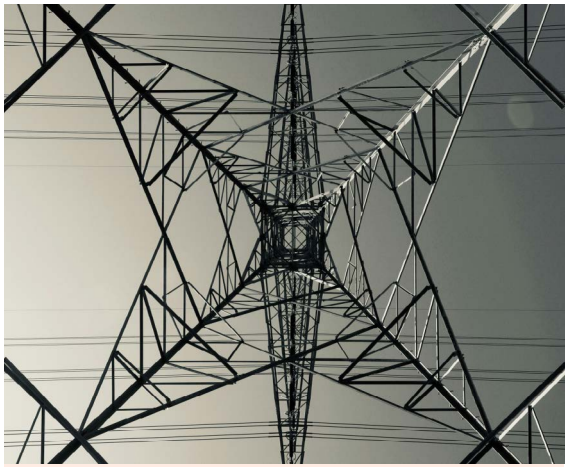


Image credit: Salam Habash on Unsplash

> **"Energy security and affordability must be viewed together."**
>
> Professor John Underhill, Director of the University's Centre for Energy Transition



To read the main story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/24865

Cross-sector study identifies offshore co-location opportunities and challenges

A major report by the University of Aberdeen has assessed the practicalities of co-locating offshore wind, carbon capture and storage (CCS) and oil and gas projects in UK waters. With offshore wind and CCS critical to helping the UK reduce emissions, enhance energy security and create new jobs, and with oil and gas activity expected to continue for many years, the report offers timely insights for developers, regulators and operators navigating an increasingly busy seabed on a multi-energy UK Continental Shelf. Commissioned by The Crown Estate and Crown Estate Scotland on behalf of the Offshore Wind and Carbon Capture and Storage Co-location Forum, the report focuses on the East Irish Sea and the Outer Moray Firth, areas where co-location issues have the potential to arise. The report sets out a series of key findings and the challenges presented by colocation are investigated. The report also identifies how careful planning and collaboration can assist in the delivery of UK climate goals and in minimising delays.

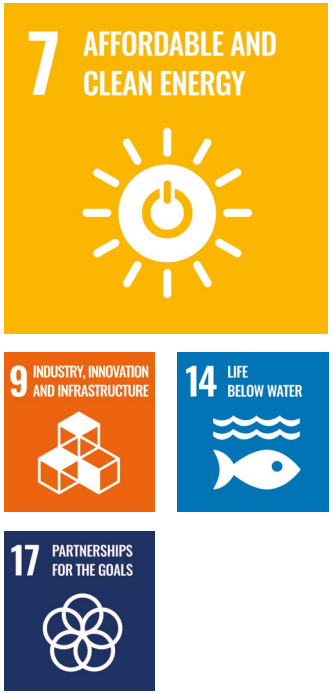
It shows the crucial importance of early communication, coordinated operations and adapting monitoring methods to mitigate colocation risks. As new infrastructure leads to offshore waters becoming busier, integrated planning and regulatory alignment will be key to ensuring project viability and accelerating the UK's decarbonisation. Ultimately, co-location between wind, carbon stores and oil and gas operations is possible but may not be preferable due to the issues it presents for monitoring subsurface stores, insurance, indemnity, access and costs. Project Colocate was commissioned by The Offshore Wind and CCS Colocation Forum, chaired by The Crown Estate. The report presents the independent findings of University researchers Dr Nigel Platt, Dr Sam Head and Professor John Underhill from the University's Centre for Energy Transition and Interdisciplinary Institute. Full details of the report can be found here.

Elsewhere, a study led by the University and published by the Geological Society concluded that the Viking South gas field has the geological suitability, proven containment integrity and operational readiness needed to become one of the UK's most advanced and reliable offshore carbon dioxide (CO_2) storage sites.



Image credit: Shaun Dakin on Unpslash

> **"Offshore wind and CCS are vital elements in decarbonising the UK's energy systems to reduce emissions."**
>
> Professor John Underhill, Director of the University's Centre for Energy Transition



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/latest-news/in-brief/24833

Scotland's first national Transformation Readiness Index launched

The University of Aberdeen Business School has led a major research initiative designed to answer an urgent question for organisations across Scotland: are they truly ready for transformation? The Scottish Transformation Readiness Index (TRI) is the first national benchmark to measure how prepared Scottish organisations are for major change. Focusing on areas such as AI adoption, net zero transition, digitalisation, restructuring, and workforce transformation, the TRI aims to provide the first evidence-based national picture of organisational readiness across Scotland.

The project sought to address a significant gap in understanding how organisations manage change. While many transformation initiatives focus on strategy, technology investment, or project delivery, evidence suggests organisations are insufficiently prepared to absorb and sustain change. The TRI seeks to change that by creating a shared national benchmark that can be used to better understand where readiness gaps exist, where strengths sit, and where investment is most likely to translate into successful outcomes. The research was conducted by Dr Iva Atanassova and Dr Ye Li, supported by more than 15 partner organisations including Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group, Decom Mission, the Interdisciplinary Energy Institute, Peer Works, Business Gateway, NESA and others.

The findings suggest that organisational culture plays an important role in shaping outcomes. Only 14.5% of respondents said their organisation fully delivered the intended results of recent change initiatives, while the study also found that more than half of major change initiatives ran behind schedule or over budget. While 70.3% of respondents felt safe challenging ideas or decisions at work, fewer than half (48.5%) said it was easy to speak up. In addition, only 29.1% said mistakes are routinely used as opportunities for structured organisational learning; while the most common response to mistakes was to implement a quick fix (32.7%).
The full report is available to download here.



Image credit: Headway on Unsplash

> **"Scotland does not have a change failure problem. It has a change completion problem."**
>
> Dr Iva Atanassova,
> Business School



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/26084

Asthma charity celebrates placement success

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation (AAF), Scotland's only dedicated asthma charity, celebrated another successful year of partnership with the University of Aberdeen through its Work-Based Placement Programme, an academic initiative designed to bridge classroom learning with real-world experience. Through this collaboration, postgraduate students from the Institute of Applied Health Sciences spend ten weeks at the Asthma and Allergy Foundation, gaining hands-on experience in public health projects, community engagement, and organisational leadership. The placements offer a unique opportunity to translate academic knowledge into practical skills that enhance students' employability and prepare them for impactful careers.

"Working with the Asthma and Allergy Foundation has been an inspiring experience," said University of Aberdeen placement student, Niamh Fraser. "I have enhanced my teamwork and communication skills that go beyond theory. Seeing how AAF supports people living with asthma has deepened my understanding of community health and made me more determined to make a difference."

Under the supervision of Project Coordinator, Stephen Tetteh Nakote, the Foundation provides a supportive and professional environment where students take part in meaningful work such as public education campaigns, research projects and community outreach initiatives. According to Stephen "Our role as a host organisation is to provide students with exposure to real-life challenges, so they leave better prepared to lead with compassion and purpose." These placements not only help students gain essential work-based experience but also inspire them to apply their academic learning to real community needs. It is a partnership that benefits everyone involved.

During the past decade, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation has hosted hundreds of students through the University's placement scheme, helping them gain practical insight into health promotion, research, charity operations and leadership development. Many alumni have gone on to successful careers in healthcare, research and public service, continuing to champion respiratory health and wellbeing.



MSc placement students Niamh Fraser and Pelumi Adebayo

> **"These placements inspire our students to apply their academic learning to real community needs."**
>
> Toni Gibson, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/24862

Evolution of hybrid and remote working explored

A University expert in hybrid working has published a new book examining how remote and hybrid work have transformed office-based jobs and reshaped the modern workplace. While hybrid working has become firmly established in a relatively short period, the nature of these arrangements and how organisations are adapting to this change continues to evolve, with many organisations wrestling with how best to balance employee expectations with organisational needs.

Donald Hislop, Professor in the Sociology of Work and Technology in the Business School, explores the rapid growth of flexible working arrangements following the pandemic and the challenges and opportunities they present for employees, managers and organisations in his new book, 'The Evolution of Hybrid and Remote Working – Transforming Office-Based Jobs'. Written for both academics and practitioners, the book combines the latest research with practical guidance on one of the most significant cultural and workplace developments of recent decades. It examines issues including productivity at home and in the office, health and wellbeing, workplace isolation, managing work-life boundaries, leading hybrid teams, running effective hybrid meetings, and how different home and office workspaces influence working practices and behaviours.

Professor Hislop said: "Hybrid and remote working have become a permanent feature of working life for millions of people. Through this book, I wanted to provide an evidence-based understanding of how these ways of working affect employees, managers and organisations, while offering practical insights into how the benefits can be maximised and the challenges addressed."

Professor Stefanie Reissner, Durham University Business School, described the publication as: "This timely and authoritative book offers rigorous international analysis of remote and hybrid work practices. It addresses critical themes in remote and hybrid work practice and the management of geographically dispersed workers. An indispensable resource for scholars and practitioners looking for evidence-based insights into remote and hybrid work."



Image credit: Annie Spratt on Unsplash

> **"Hybrid and remote working have become a permanent feature of working life for millions of people."**
>
> Professor Donald Hislop,
> Business School



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25921

Ade Adesina appointed Entrepreneur in Residence

The University welcomed Ade Adesina as Entrepreneur in Residence, working with students and staff on a research-led, decolonial arts project responding to the institution's Legacies of Slavery report. Adesina is a Scottish-Nigerian artist based in Aberdeen and one of Scotland's leading contemporary practitioners who has established an internationally recognised practice through high-profile exhibitions, residencies and fellowships. Working from WASPS studios and as a member of Peacock Visual Arts, Adesina has played a significant role in Aberdeen's cultural landscape. His work frequently addresses the historical, political and economic relationships between Scotland and Africa through print-based works that are both thought-provoking and accessible.

The residency builds on the 'Legacies of Slavery' report published in 2024, which examined the institution's historic links to slavery and the slave trade. In 2025, the School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History, in collaboration with University Collections, hosted *Framing the Past, Imagining the Future: Adjusting Material Legacies*, an event that explored how material culture might be reinterpreted in light of this research. Adesina participated in the event as a guest speaker, contributing to discussions around the portrait of Gilbert Ramsay, a seventeenth-century donor and enslaver, currently displayed in a University building.

Adesina will work closely with students and staff to consider the future of this portrait and the broader role of artistic intervention in responding to difficult and contested histories. The residence will help students gain first-hand experience of working within a contemporary studio environment, to develop skills in project management, ethical research-led practice, professional self-presentation and networking, while engaging directly with questions of history, memory and institutional responsibility.

Ade Adesina said: "I'm honoured to be joining the University at such a significant moment. This is an opportunity to work with students and staff on a project that brings research, creativity and critical reflection together."



Ade Adesina

> **"This appointment reflects our ongoing commitment to address historical legacies through critical research and creative practice."**
>
> Professor Beth Lord, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25022

RSE award success for University of Aberdeen projects

Eight University projects were selected in the autumn 2025 Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) Research Awards call, with a further six projects successful in the spring 2026 funding round. Read more about their awards on the RSE's website.

Recipients in autumn 2025 were: Dr Sacha Fop (Chemistry): *Developing sustainable all-solid-state proton batteries*; Dr Ainsley McIntosh (English): *A light in the dark: Walter Scott's lighthouse yacht journal and its textual and cultural legacy*; Dr Zhenhua Yu (Computing Science): *Cochlea-inspired tactile sensors for intelligent and sustainable wearable health monitoring*; Dr Jonathan Ainslie (Law): *Death and law: Interdisciplinary explorations*; Dr Josie Geris (Geosciences): *When wet places run dry: Shaping Scotland's water resources resilience to drought*; Dr Hans Hones (Art History): *Empirical aesthetics in art education: Pedagogies beyond formalism*; Rev Dr Ken Jeffrey (Divinity) with collaborator Dr Brian Theu, University of Livingstonia, Malawi: *Witchcraft accusations and violence in northern Malawi: Strengthening community-based protection systems*; Professor Hai Deng (Chemistry): with collaborator Professor Keqiang Wu, National Taiwan University: *Uncovering novel bioactive cyclic peptides in tomato*.

In the spring 2026 call, recipients included: Dr Johannes Heim (Linguistics): with collaborator Professor Martina Wiltschko, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain, *SELFLings: Development of self-talk in children*; Professor Gordon Noble & Professor Kate Britton (Geosciences): *Tracing livestock mobility and provisioning networks in early medieval Dál Riata: A multi-isotope analysis*; Dr Frances Wilkins (Elphinstone Institute) with Professor Duncan MacLeod, Glasgow School of Art and Mrs Floraidh Forrest, Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches: *The carrying stream: Activating Scotland's sound archives through creative transmission*; Dr Sergiy Sylantyev (Rowett Institute) with Dr Olga Kopach, City St. George's University of London: *Investigating the PIEZO1 channel function across brain neuronal types in health and in pathological models*. Personal Research Fellowships were awarded to Dr Michiel Poesen (Law) and Professor Alison Brown (Social Sciences).



> **"Being selected for an RSE Award is a powerful recognition of the excellence and ambition that defines our research community."**
>
> Professor Nick Forsyth,
> University Provost



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25940

Triple success for Aberdeen at annual innovation awards

The University of Aberdeen was well represented at the 2026 Converge Challenge awards, with four innovative ventures reaching the final stages. The projects - two academic spinouts and two student start-ups - competed across three categories as follows:

Winner of the overall Converge Challenge was ***Scensai***, an affordable, handheld, electronic device for beverage quality control. An alternative to subjective human sensory assessment or expensive lab tests, the device gives an objective chemical reading. The project is led by Marcus Campbell Bannerman.

Top prize in the Net Zero Challenge were ***Catalyst Neuromorphic*** a project led by undergraduate student Henry Shulayev Barnes. Seeking to tackle the spiralling energy demand of data centres, a neuromorphic processor provides a fundamentally different path for AI hardware. A finalist in the same category was ***RapidSOH***, led by postgraduate Patrick Umeadi, a platform that enables battery refurbishers to decide quickly whether used electric vehicle batteries should be reused or recycled.

A third award came in the KickStart Challenge where ***Belonging Quotient***, led by Shannon Babbie, was also successful with a tool to help organisations improve accessibility for neurodivergent people, by addressing sensory barriers and creating more welcoming environments.

Dr Adelaja Israel Osofero, Dean for Enterprise and Innovation, said: "Having four University ventures named as Converge finalists is an acknowledgement of the talent and ambition of our students and researchers and recognition of their creativity on a national stage. These successes highlight the breadth of entrepreneurial talent across our community." Dr Heather May Morgan, Vice-Principal (Regional Engagement & Innovation), said: "I'd like to offer my congratulations to all the finalists. It is fantastic to see the University of Aberdeen so well represented at the awards in various categories and for the first time including a social enterprise project."



> **"This is a tremendous achievement and reflects the creativity, ambition and determination of the projects recognised."**
>
> Dr Heather May Morgan, Vice-Principal (Regional Engagement & Innovation)



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/26248

Space kit for future 'away missions' tested in Scotland

Scientists have been testing cutting edge equipment for the astronaut 'away teams' of the future. Researchers from the University of Leicester and the University of Aberdeen have carried out a series of field demonstrations in Portsoy to test cutting-edge handheld analytical instruments. Designed for use by astronauts on the Moon, and eventually Mars, the devices would support field scientists when exploring other worlds. The research focused on an advanced portable spectrometer developed by the University of Leicester team in collaboration with INTA (Spain), Mission Control (Canada) and University of Valladolid (Spain) as part of the European Space Agency's PHOENIX programme. Through this programme, two scientific handheld devices have been developed that combine multiple analytical techniques to enable rapid identification of rocks and minerals during future human exploration missions.

Built with spacesuit ergonomics in mind, these spectrometers have been supported by ESA's 'Exploration Preparation, Research and Technology' team and teams in the European Space Agency (ESA). While their primary mission is to give astronauts the fundamental knowledge and training they need to act as field scientists on the Moon and Mars, these teams also play a key role in helping engineers trial new exploration technologies such as those developed under PHOENIX.

Portsoy was selected as the test site due to its uniquely diverse geology, which closely resembles the composition of the lunar surface. The area contains a rare combination of rocks, mirroring those found on the Moon and making it an ideal natural laboratory for validating space technologies. During their fieldwork, the researchers simulated lunar exploration scenarios, using the instruments to analyse rocks directly in the field. The tests demonstrated how astronauts could use these tools to quickly assess geological samples, search for resources, and identify signs of past water activity without the need to return samples to Earth.



Image credit: A. Porcelli & R. Incerti, LAMB Team (ESA-EAC)

> **"Our work at Portsoy is helping us understand how we can study the lunar surface using instruments carried by astronauts."**
>
> Professor John Parnell,
> School of Geosciences

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25974

Para athlete and coach secure global and national success

As well as providing a high-performance pathway for able-bodied swimmers, the University's Performance Swimming Programme (UOAPS) has seen its para swimmers excel. In 2025, biochemistry graduate Faye Rogers returned from the World Para-Swimming Championships in Singapore, with a Gold and four Silvers.

Faye trained with High-Performance coach, Patrick Miley, throughout her time as a student, with the pair navigating Faye's transition into para swimming after a car accident just before she started University. That transition saw her global breakthrough at the 2024 Paralympics where she won Gold. Faye's success has also translated into recognition for Patrick, who was named Aquatics GB's Para-swimming Coach of the Year in 2025, recognising his role in supporting Faye's international success. Adding to the atmosphere of success around UOAPS, the programme emerged as Top Club at the Scottish National Age Group Swimming championships in 2026.

Faye's stellar season, in which she set multiple world, European and British records on top of her multi-medal performance at the Worlds, was also supported by a University of Aberdeen Sports Bursary. The scheme provides financial and other high-performance support to dozens of the University's most accomplished student athletes. Supported by the generosity of the University's donor community, bursaries enable aspiring athletes to combine study with high-performance sport. In recent years this has included para athletes in several sports, including: Grace Harvey and Toni Shaw (swimming – both World and Paralympic medallists); Lucy Kerr (para rowing and part of British Rowing's paralympic academy and LA28 podium potential athlete); Neil Simpson (para alpine skiing - Winter Paralympic medallist and multiple World Cup podiums); and Sofia Mazzoni (para badminton - BWF ranked 17th in singles).

Of course, the bursary scheme supports all athletes, among whom this year were Bradley Francis (athletics) who represented Scotland in the Commonwealth Games 4x400m relay (*5th*) and who won a BUCS Indoor Gold. Full details of the Sports Bursaries available to students are available here.



Faye Rogers and Patrick Miley

> **"Faye Rogers' dedication and excellence in training and competition have been truly inspirational."**
>
> Patrick Miley,
> UOAPS High-Performance Coach





Curriculum options embrace race and colonial legacies

Several new undergraduate courses have embraced the effort to 'decolonise the curriculum', by bringing forward options that focus on issues of race and colonial history in the context of how we perceive the modern world and the challenges societies currently face. In Politics & International Relations, Honours module 'QI 4509 Climate, the Environment, and Colonialism', offered by Dr Bennett Collins seeks to explore the idea that the causes of climate change cannot be reduced to carbon emissions alone. Rather, we must examine climate change as a consequence of dominant and extractive social and political systems. The course examines how the environment has been historically conceptualised and materialised to further colonial aims, and ultimately how this has led to our rapidly changing planet.

Also coming out of Politics and International Relations, two first year courses were offered as part of the Sixth Century framework of electives open to students from across the University. Dr Ritu Vij co-ordinates both:
SX1023: The Global Colour Line I - Race and the Making of the Modern World and
SX 1523: The Global Colour Line II - Race in the 21st Century.

These interdisciplinary courses explore the role of racialised differences in the making of the modern world. They begin with an examination of racialised and non-racialised forms of hierarchies in settler colonialism, plantation slavery, and the history of enslavement and dispossession. Focus then turns to a consideration of the colonial roots of the global economy, the study of languages and cultures, science, techniques of government, medicine and law, and the colonial legacies that inform our knowledge of modernity. In the second half-session, the curriculum explores regimes of producing and resisting racialised difference, beginning with a consideration of the historical lineages of racialising practices, exploring contemporary debates about ethnicity and race including: 'double consciousness', Afropessimism, conviviality, the Black & Red Atlantic, Indigeneity, and race as the lived experience of class. Topics covered include Indigenous Rights and International Law; Race & Religion; Race and Social Abandonment. Case studies include the 2008 Financial Crisis; the Grenfell Fire; the Covid19 pandemic; border crossings and the racialization of migrants and refugees; the Rhodes Must Fall campaign; and the Black Lives Matter movement.



Image credit: © carballo, Adobe Stock

University takes the lead in breaking barriers for disabled doctors

A new project led by the University of Aberdeen will explore the challenges that doctors with disabilities face when trying to progress in their careers. The collaborative investigation, funded by an award of more than £800,000 from the National Institute for Health and Care Research, will be led by the University's Centre for Healthcare Education Research and Innovation (CHERI).

Considered 'a critical issue' in the field of medicine – the authors report that, despite legal protections already in place, doctors with disabilities in the NHS continue to face discrimination and significant barriers to their career progression. Previous research published by the General Medical Council has found that whilst the proportion of NHS doctors who report having a disability is significantly lower than the proportion of people with disabilities in the UK population, they are more likely to experience bullying, discrimination and limited career choices than doctors without disabilities.

The research team will identify and address these barriers, offering practical solutions to create equity. The collaborative network will include scientists and experts from across the UK, including the universities of St Andrews, Edinburgh Napier and Queen's Belfast and advocacy organisations for disabled doctors. Through data analysis, examination of current guidance, interviews and workplace observations across the UK, the team will uncover why these disparities exist and offer practical solutions to solve them. Their findings will be shared with doctors, patients, employers, and regulators who, it is hoped, will co-develop actionable recommendations to improve fairness and equity in NHS careers and to ensure that that medics with disabilities can realise their professional potential and career aspirations.

Dr Anita Laidlaw, Director of the University's Centre for Healthcare Education Research and Innovation (CHERI) explained: "This is an important piece of research as doctors with disabilities bring unique strengths to healthcare, including empathy and lived experience, which enhance patient care."



> **"Retaining and supporting these professionals is essential for a stronger, more inclusive NHS."**
>
> Dr Anita Laidlaw, School of Medine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/24927

Two renowned local music culture festivals return to Aberdeen

2025/26 saw two major local music festivals return to Aberdeen's cultural calendar after several years absence, as part of celebrations for the Elphinstone Institute's 30th anniversary. As well as the Institute team, UoA students featured prominently in the event – both as volunteers helping with logistics, and as vocal and instrumental artists contributing to the programme.

In November 2025 the Button Boxes & Moothies Festival brought together instrumentalists who play mouth organs, concertinas, melodeons, Jew's harps, and diatonic button accordions for the first time since 2015. The festival was centred around King's College and Festival Director Frances Wilkins, an Ethnomusicologist from the University of Aberdeen, noted that, "Festival-goers had the chance to find out more about the instruments and their music and to take part in workshops, music sessions, 'come and try' events and concerts." Workshops catered for all abilities, from complete beginners to experienced players. There was also a display of antique instruments and a pop-up exhibition at the venue.

Later in the year, June saw the internationally renowned North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo) return to Aberdeen. With its unique blend of world-class performance and grassroots participation, this year's festival saw a vibrant programme of music, dance and cultural exchange, made possible by an extraordinary wave of support from local communities, businesses and individuals. Taking place in a challenging funding climate for the arts, NAFCo 2026 secured almost £500,000 in combined cash and in-kind support from regional partners, including support from Aberdeen City Council's Culture Investment Programme and Event Scotland's National Events Funding Programme. Alongside a public crowdfunding campaign, this support all helped ensure the festival's return. In addition, Creative Scotland's Traditional Arts & Culture Fund awarded a small grant to support NAFCo's lunch time concerts.

Founded by the Elphinstone Institute in 2001, NAFCo has built a global reputation since its launch, with previous editions held across Scotland, Ireland and Canada. However, a return to Aberdeen reinforces the region's place at the heart of the North Atlantic's rich fiddle and dance traditions.

25 YEARS NORTH ATLANTIC FIDDLE CONVENTION 2026

> **"The level of support from across Aberdeen and the wider region has been remarkable."**
>
> Laura Harrington,
> NAFCo Festival Director

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25503

Projects secure funding to explore coastal communities in transition

Funding through the Coast-R Small Grants Fund will see new research examine how North Sea coastal communities are navigating environmental and energy transitions. Led by Interdisciplinary Fellow, Dr Rebecca Macklin, the project '*Listening to North Sea Coastal Communities in Transition*' will explore how climate, renewable energy development and industrial expansion are reshaping everyday life in Shetland and Aberdeen.

The interdisciplinary research will work with local communities to understand opportunities, pressures, cultural practices and lived experiences. By amplifying local voices and creating cross-regional exchange, it will support community driven approaches to ecocultural heritage preservation. The project is a collaboration between University of Aberdeen, the University of the Highlands and Islands, and community partners Greyhope Bay, and North Yell Development Council.

Meanwhile, how North Sea heritage is shaped by economic, environmental and cultural change is at the heart of a new doctoral research consortium led by the University of Aberdeen. Supported by a UKRI Focal Award in Art History, Visual Arts and Creative Practice, it will establish *North Sea Heritage in Transitions (NHT)* - a consortium that will support 30 doctoral studentships across three Scottish universities. NHT will explore how heritage is interpreted, valued and transformed, training art historians and creative practitioners to conduct impactful, community centred research. Led by Dr Joanne Anderson, the consortium brings together Aberdeen, Robert Gordon, and Highlands and Islands universities with numerous local and international partners.

Other research from the Just Transition Lab suggests that while the clean energy transition offers major opportunities, current arrangements may leave coastal communities bearing the cost of the energy transition while seeing limited long-term benefits. Looking at 200 years of change at coastal sites in Orkney, North East Scotland and the Humber Estuary, the study warns against echoing long-standing patterns of economic instability, limited local control, and uneven wealth distribution.



> **"Arts, heritage and the creative industries are essential to wellbeing, cultural identity and regional economies."**
>
> Dr Joanne Anderson, School of Languages, Literature, Media & Visual Culture



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25879

Mural honouring renowned University graduate brightens up campus

In February 2026, it was announced that the University would play a key role in this year's internationally acclaimed Nuart Aberdeen festival as a partner and host of a prestigious conference, marking the first time that the University has been involved with the festival. Nuart Aberdeen has garnered much acclaim since its debut in 2017 and has been named among the top six street art festivals in the world, attracting leading artists, academics and creative practitioners from across the globe.

The Old Aberdeen campus also became the backdrop for the University's first ever Nuart mural. The work, inspired by one of the University's first female graduates, was created during this year's festival by local street artist KMG in the grounds of the Cruickshank Botanic Garden. The mural took inspiration from the writings of Aberdeen nature writer and poet Nan Shepherd, reflecting this year's theme 'Poetry is in the Streets'. Now covering a wall that faced into the garden, the mural depicts a blackbird in KMG's trademark vibrant style, with the words "unheard, unseen" included as a direct tribute to Shepherd's writings of the 1940s. Shepherd studied at the University from 1912 to 1915 and graduated with an MA shortly after the outbreak of World War One. She maintained strong ties with the University as an alumna, editing the Aberdeen University Review and giving literature lectures until she was well into her eighties. She received an honorary doctorate from the University in 1964.

As well as becoming home to one of this year's murals, the University officially partnered with Nuart Aberdeen to host the Nuart Street Art Conference. The event featured talks and lectures from some of the world's leading street artists alongside academics, authors, researchers, curators, producers, writers and other cultural-sector professionals who are dedicated to exploring issues surrounding new forms of art and activity in public space.



> **"Nuart has helped bring creativity and colour to the heart of the Granite City."**
>
> Professor Peter Edwards,
> Principal & Vice-Chancellor





To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25452

Spuds to skincare: turning potato waste into skincare gold

Scientists from the University of Aberdeen are part of a team looking to turn potato waste into high value compounds that can be used for cosmetics and pharmaceutical products. Scotland's seed potato industry generates over 51,000 tonnes of potato shaws annually. As part of essential crop management practice, the shaws are traditionally discarded after harvest. This ambitious initiative is unlocking their hidden potential.

The project aims to extract solanesol from the discarded shaws, a compound vital for producing coenzyme Q10 and vitamin K2, key ingredients in cosmeceutical, nutraceutical, and pharmaceutical products. Currently sourced mainly from tobacco, solanesol demand has soared from 4,000 tonnes in the early 2000s to 66,000 tonnes by 2022. This project offers an ethical, sustainable alternative to tobacco; reducing waste, cutting carbon emissions, and creating new income streams for Scottish farmers. By leveraging this potential, the project will make more complete use of the potato biomass, reduce agricultural waste, and create new economic opportunities for Scottish farmers and cooperatives.

With 12,800 hectares of seed potatoes grown in Scotland, the industry could yield up to 120 tonnes of solanesol annually, driving circular economy innovation and strengthening rural resilience. Funded by Innovate UK through the 'Launchpad: Bio-based Manufacturing – Scotland' programme, this project brings together industry expertise from farmer-owned co-operative Grampian Growers Ltd., with researchers from the University of Aberdeen and the James Hutton Institute.

Professor Giovanna Bermano, Honorary Chair at the University said: "This pioneering research lays the foundation for future innovation, ensuring that the UK is at the forefront of developing sustainable, eco friendly natural products for the cosmeceutical sector. By demonstrating how agricultural by products can be transformed into high value compounds, the project sets the stage for subsequent research and commercialisation that will drive innovation, reduce environmental impact, and secure a competitive advantage for UK science and industry."



> **"This work advances sustainable innovation showcasing how science can unlock new value from agricultural by-products."**
>
> Professor Heather Wilson, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/24883

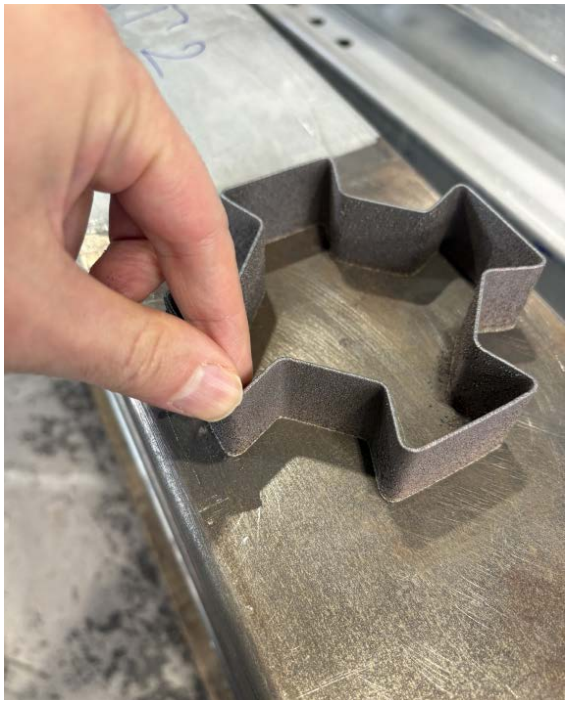
Researchers reimagine construction with reusable steel connectors for sustainable future

Researchers are developing innovative 3D-printed metal connectors for lightweight steel systems that make buildings easier to reuse, adapt, and recycle. These smart, high-precision components make structures faster to assemble and easier to take apart, allowing buildings to be adapted, reused, or fully recycled rather than being demolished. By integrating cutting-edge metal 3D-printing technologies into construction, the project aims to help the construction industry build more efficiently, reduce waste, and move toward circular economy construction techniques.

The 3D-printed steel connectors overcome the limitations of traditional mechanical connections and show that low-waste, circular construction is achievable with today's technology. By designing connectors that allow lightweight steel buildings to be quickly assembled and disassembled without damaging components, the work supports faster, more efficient construction, reduces material waste, increases adaptability and building lifespan, and lowers overall environmental impact.

The project offers a scalable route toward a future in which buildings are treated as long-term resources rather than disposable assets. This approach is entirely new. No existing construction system combines metal 3D-printed connectors with cold-formed lightweight steel. A major technical innovation has been developing a method to print directly onto very thin steel substrates, which significantly reduces distortion or residual stress. This breakthrough has been central to making the technology suitable for real-world construction.

The project is a collaboration between the University of Aberdeen and Politecnico di Milano, bringing together expertise in structural and architectural engineering, and advanced manufacturing. The concept originated in 2023, was developed through the work of PhD student Ehsan Bakhshivand and funded by the School of Engineering in collaboration with Professors Ornella Iuorio and Barbara Previtali at Politecnico di Milano. It featured extensive prototyping and 3D printing at Politecnico di Milano and was further advanced by contributions from postdoctoral researcher Dr Chuandong Xie, supported by an EPSRC grant.



> **"The aim of our research is to build homes and structures in a smarter, more sustainable way."**
>
> Dr Alireza Bagheri,
> School of Engineering



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/24981

PhD students second in global AI sustainability competition

A team of PhD students from the University has succeeded against competition from around the world to finish second in the UN sponsored 'AI Environmental Footprint Measurement Hackathon'. The competition, organised through the *AI for Good* initiative, brought together innovators from across the globe to tackle one of the most urgent challenges in modern technology: how to measure and reduce the environmental impact of artificial intelligence systems.

Representing the University were Luis Carvalho, Abu Abu, Aisha Olomowewe, and Aldo Moreno, all PhD researchers from the Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Mechatronics Systems Group (ARMS). Their project, titled "Standardizing Energy Models for Large-Scale AI Training with Long-Term Sustainability Projections", proposed a novel framework for assessing the efficiency and environmental footprint of AI infrastructure. The team progressed through multiple competitive stages, ultimately presenting their solution to an expert panel of judges. Their innovative approach earned them second place worldwide.

The students' model addresses a growing global concern that, as AI systems - including large language models - expand in scale, so too do their demands on energy and water resources. The hackathon challenged participants to create transparent, reliable methods for measuring the carbon and water footprint of AI technologies. The team's proposal not only met this challenge but also offered a pathway toward future industry standards for evaluating and comparing the environmental cost of AI across platforms. The team's submission will be showcased at COP30, placing their research in front of global policymakers, scientists, and industry leaders.

Dr Andrew Starkey, from the School of Engineering, said, "I'm incredibly proud of our PhD students for achieving such an exceptional result in a highly competitive global competition. This project demonstrates how engineering principles can drive innovation in AI sustainability, and the team's achievement will inspire further development of their model and contribute to shaping future industry standards."



Left to right: Aldo Moreno, Luis Carvalho, Dr Andrew Starkey, Aisha Olomowewe and Abu Abu

> **"The team's success highlights both their technical expertise and their commitment to advancing Green AI."**
>
> Dr Andrew Starkey,
> School of Engineering





To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25023

Researchers discover the value of learning with trees and woods

A new toolkit from researchers at the University reveals how trees in school grounds and nearby woodlands can power learning across the Curriculum for Excellence. All activities in the toolkit are anchored to specific areas of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), from maths and science, to art and drama. Building on the Scottish Government's Learning for Sustainability initiative, researchers worked with teachers and young people in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire for two years to co-develop the toolkit, 'A Treescapes Curriculum'.

Comprising a collection of tree-based activities for learners up to S3, all 26 activities are anchored to the CfE. The toolkit also sets out ways in which learning with trees enables interdisciplinary learning and learning for sustainability – key aims across the CfE. The toolkit is underpinned by creative approaches to learning. For example, the researchers found that woods are a rich setting for activities such as telling stories using found materials like berries and twigs. Children developed observational and interpretive skills through arts activities and connected with local history and their future environments. Teachers also highlighted that children who were less forthcoming in classrooms did well in these tasks. Science and numeracy activities in the toolkit include tree identification, measuring the height of a tree and learning about types of soil, which are all easily accessible for a range of ages. Den building provides a focus for aspects of technologies.

The research team also found obstacles to outdoor learning with trees. Schools have different grounds and variable access to quality environments, especially in urban areas. Teacher confidence can also be an issue.

The research is part of a UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) programme 'The Future of UK Treescapes'. The Aberdeen researchers were part of the project 'Voices of the Future: Collaborating with children and young people to re-imagine treescapes'.



"This project has enabled teachers to identify how learning from trees opens up opportunities."

Dr Liz Curtis,
School of Education



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25648

University researchers secure funding for three net zero projects

Three collaborative projects involving researchers from the University of Aberdeen have secured support through the latest Scotland Beyond Net Zero (SBNZ) Seed Fund, helping to advance innovative approaches to climate and sustainability challenges in Scotland. The projects span three key areas of net zero research – renewable energy, sustainable diets and the circular economy – and bring together expertise from universities, policymakers and external partners to address some of the most pressing environmental and societal challenges facing Scotland.

In the Energy category, the 'Warming Up Aberdeen' geothermal heating project has been awarded funding. Led by Professor Clare Bond and Dr David Cornwell from the University of Aberdeen, alongside Professor Phil Hassard from Robert Gordon University, the research team will investigate how the region's geology could help deliver low-carbon heating. The project builds on existing city-wide initiatives and will generate new subsurface data and drilling models aimed at reducing risk and improving confidence for future geothermal developments.

In the Sustainable Diets category, the project 'Fairness, Feasibility and Acceptability of Dietary Transition Policies in Scotland' is led by Dr David McBey of the University of Aberdeen and Dr Stuart King of the University of Edinburgh. It will examine how people across Scotland perceive potential policy measures designed to reduce consumption of red and processed meat, which are significant contributors to greenhouse gas emissions.

Finally, in the Circular Economy category, funding has been secured for a project exploring sustainable funeral provision. Led by Professor Vikki Entwistle and Dr Arnar Árnason from the University of Aberdeen and Dr Racheal Adedokun from Robert Gordon University, the research will bring together stakeholders to develop a future research agenda focused on reducing the environmental impact of funeral practices while ensuring funeral provision remains respectful, inclusive and responsive to diverse cultural, religious and personal values.



> **"These awards bring together researchers, policymakers and communities to deliver impactful, interdisciplinary solutions."**
>
> Professor Ben Tatler,
> Vice-Principal (Research)



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25970

Tiny mountain lakes pose overlooked flood risks

Researchers call for a rethink of global hazard monitoring in a new international study that has revealed a critical blind spot in global climate risk assessments - the growing danger posed by small alpine lakes formed by glacier retreat and permafrost thaw. Published in Nature Sustainability, the research highlights how these lakes, which are often too small to appear in conventional hazard databases, can still unleash sudden and destructive floods with little warning.

The findings challenge long-held assumptions that only large glacial lakes pose significant threats and call for a fundamental shift in how mountain hazards are monitored and managed. The study introduces the concept of Small Alpine Lake Outbursts (SALOs), a new hazard category that includes both small glacial and thaw lakes. These floods are often triggered when rocks, ice, or landslides suddenly crash into fragile mountain lakes, or when the natural dams holding them in place give way. Earthquakes and extreme rainfall events can also be the primary triggers.

The researchers argue that this emerging risk is intensifying as climate change accelerates glacier melt and destabilises mountain environments worldwide. Despite their size, these lakes can produce devastating impacts, particularly in steep and unstable terrain. The study shows that risk is not determined by lake size alone, but by a combination of environmental triggers, landscape instability, and downstream vulnerability. Crucially, the research finds that current global monitoring and policy frameworks are heavily skewed toward larger lakes, meaning many smaller but dangerous lakes are systematically ignored. This leaves remote and marginalised mountain communities - often with limited early warning systems and institutional support - especially exposed.

The study represents a collaborative effort between the University of Aberdeen, the Indian Institute of Science and Kyoto University, combining expertise in cryosphere science, remote sensing, geomorphology, and disaster risk management across multiple mountain regions.



Small alpine lakes – often smaller than an Olympic swimming pool - can trigger sudden, destructive floods affecting vulnerable communities

> **"Several recent outbursts globally show that even tiny, hidden lakes can trigger serious floods."**
>
> Dr Lydia Sam,
> School of Geosciences



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25888

Native oysters: tiny creatures, big impact beneath the waves

Marine shellfish like oysters have a vital role in marine ecosystems, however the UK's native oyster species has suffered a drastic decline in recent years. Scientists from the University and NativeAqua, a native oyster farm, are investigating how to improve the resilience of the native oyster, in a bid to boost numbers.

Researchers will use novel data-driven genetic approaches to inform a new breeding programme. By analysing the genetic fingerprint of each species, they can then optimise which oysters to breed together for the strongest offspring. This approach is common in all agriculture farmed species but has so far not been used to help the native oyster. The species has suffered significant decline due to overfishing of wild stocks and climate change, but because every healthy oyster on a farm will release 1-2 million baby larvae, farming and breeding this species will restore populations and improve commercial opportunities.

Dr Victoria Sleight, from the University of Aberdeen who is leading the project said: "Marine shellfish, like oysters and mussels, are small underwater miracles. They filter seawater and extract nutrients for food in a process called filter feeding. Not just absorbing nutrients from the water and helping to tackle harmful nutrient run-off from human land use, they also form complex three-dimensional reef habitats that other species live in and so boost biodiversity. And these underwater miracles also taste delicious. They are an extremely sustainable, low-carbon, healthy and affordable source of protein for human diets."

Dr Tom Ashton, Co-Founder of Native Aqua who are the commercial partner on the project said: "Our collaboration with Aberdeen will advance the development of quality farmed oysters and will leave a permanent positive legacy on the UK's marine ecosystem." Funding for the one-year project has been awarded from the Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance and The Data Lab.



Dr Tom Ashton and Dr Victoria Sleight

> **"Marine shellfish, like oysters and mussels, are small underwater miracles."**
>
> Dr Victoria Sleight,
> School of Biological Sciences



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/24766

University experts help shape landmark ocean treaty as UK ratifies global agreement

Researchers from the University have played a significant role in the development of a landmark international treaty designed to better protect the world's oceans, following the UK's formal ratification of the agreement in July 2026. The UK has joined more than 90 countries in ratifying the United Nations Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, also known as the UN Ocean Biodiversity Treaty or High Seas Treaty. The agreement aims to protect marine life in areas beyond national borders and supports the global goal of conserving 30% of the world's ocean by 2030.

Professor Marcel Jaspars and Professor Abbe Brown have been involved in the treaty process for more than a decade, contributing expertise that helped shape key aspects of the final agreement. The treaty was adopted under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in 2023 to improve the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, which cover nearly two-thirds of the ocean. It establishes, for the first time, a legal mechanism to create marine protected areas on the high seas, helping to conserve vulnerable habitats and species for future generations.

Professor Jaspars and Professor Brown worked throughout the negotiations on complex issues including marine genetic resources, benefit-sharing arrangements and intellectual property. Drawing on their expertise in marine biodiscovery, science policy and international law, they provided advice that helped ensure the treaty would be both scientifically practical and legally robust. Their work also extended to collaboration with the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, providing documentation and expert commentary that informed the development of the UK's legal text for ratification.

As more countries move towards ratification, the treaty is expected to become a cornerstone of global ocean governance, helping safeguard marine biodiversity for future generations while supporting sustainable use of the ocean's resources.



Left to right: Professor Marcel Jaspars, School of Natural & Computing Sciences and Professor Abbe Brown, School of Law

> **"The agreement establishes stronger protections for marine biodiversity."**
>
> Professor Abbe Brown,
> School of Law



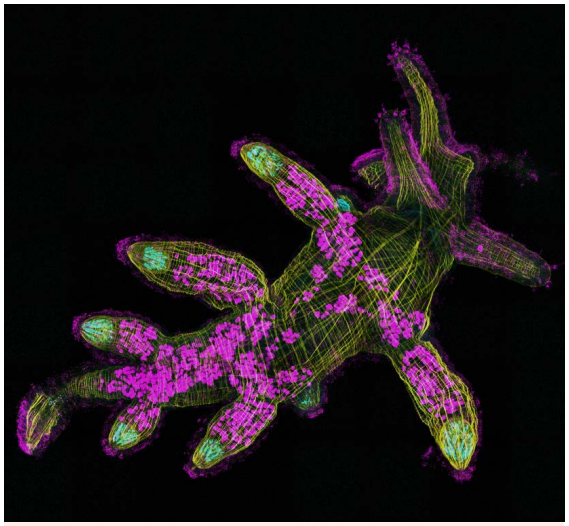
To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25975

Research team secure grant awarded to uncover how new traits evolve

An Aberdeen-based researcher is part of an international team that has secured a highly prestigious research grant to investigate one of biology's most enduring mysteries: how completely new traits evolve in animals. Dr Victoria Sleight is part of the group that has secured a research grant from the Human Frontier Science Programme (HFSP), one of the world's most competitive and sought after funding schemes for fundamental science. The $1.2 million award will support a three year project to explore the genetic origins of evolutionary novelty using the diversity of molluscs. The project aims to uncover how new biological features arise over evolutionary time. Rather than relying solely on the emergence of entirely new genes, the research focuses on gene family expansion—a process in which genes are duplicated, creating multiple copies that can then evolve new functions.

Dr Sleight said: "Snails, clams, squid and sea slugs show incredible diversity in form and function, and many of their most striking traits involve incorporating materials or components from their environment. This project is about understanding the rules that govern life's ability to invent. By studying how evolution has repeatedly found new solutions in molluscs, we hope to uncover principles that apply far beyond this group alone. Examples of this include shells that embed calcium and pigments derived from diet, and sea slugs that can steal stinging cells from their prey and use them in their own defence. We hypothesise that expansions in a group of genes known as pattern recognition receptors have enabled molluscs to safely recognise and integrate 'non self' materials—forming the basis of these evolutionary innovations."

Dr Sleight will collaborate with Dr Jessica Goodheart of the American Museum of Natural History, who will lead the project, and Dr Manabu Bessho Uehara, of Tohoku University. Together, their expertise spans evolutionary biology, genomics, developmental biology and biochemistry.



A fluorescent microscopy image of a juvenile sea slug (Berghia stephanieae)

> **"Molluscs give us a remarkable window into evolution's creativity."**
>
> Dr Victoria Sleight,
> School of Biological Sciences





To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25787

Hebri-bees project to explore the future of Scotland's rare island pollinators

Research from the University is investigating how honeybees and rare Hebridean bumblebees share - and compete for - resources in the islands' unique flower-rich landscapes. The three-year Hebri-bees project seeks to provide answers to the question of whether managed honeybees are negatively affecting wild bumblebee populations. Led by ecologist Dr Johanna Yourstone, the study will focus on the Hebrides' internationally important machair habitats – flower-rich coastal grasslands – to investigate whether honeybees compete with rare bumblebees for food and whether disease transmission between managed and wild bees plays a role in bumblebee decline. While many previous studies have examined bee competition in agricultural landscapes, these areas tend to be homogeneous and are very different to the abundance of flower species found in the machair.

The Hebrides are an ideal study system for rare bumblebees. In many other places, these species survive only in tiny numbers, making meaningful research extremely difficult. The islands still hold strong populations and extraordinary flower-rich habitats,providing an opportunity to understand how these bees live, forage and respond to environmental pressures. The research will include the great yellow bumblebee, once widespread across the UK, but now largely confined to northern Scotland's coasts and islands, and the threatened moss carder bee, which earlier University surveys identified as the most common bumblebee in the machair.

"People care deeply about these bees, and understandably there are questions about whether increasing domestic beekeeping could affect them. What we need now is robust evidence, so that future decisions are guided by science rather than assumption" said Dr Yourstone. The Hebri-bees team will combine field observations with cutting-edge pollen analysis, to identify the flowers visited by different bee species. The study spans the Hebrides, from Islay to Lewis, as well as parts of Scotland's north-west coast. Researchers will work closely with organisations such as the RSPB, volunteers and beekeepers.



Moss carder bee

> **"The great yellow bumblebee is a beloved symbol of the Hebrides."**
>
> Dr Johanna Yourstone,
> School of Biological Sciences



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25819 (includes a Gaelic language translation)

AI's wild take on rewilding

A new study from the University has revealed that artificial intelligence may be shaping the future of rewilding in ways that create an idealised version of what restored nature can look like. For the study, published in People & Nature by the British Ecological Society researchers analysed AI generated images and descriptions of rewilding produced by chatbots and compared them with materials used by UK rewilding advocacy organisations. The findings show that both sources consistently favour familiar, idealised aesthetics: dramatic landscapes, charismatic wildlife, and scenes notably free of people or the "messy" ecological processes that underpin real ecosystems — including decay, disturbance, and death.

The study warns that by repeatedly using selective imagery, rewilding organisations are inadvertently training AI systems to reproduce exclusionary visions of nature. As AI tools become increasingly embedded, these biases risk being reinforced and widely disseminated, shaping how future audiences perceive rewilded landscapes. However, the researchers emphasise that this trend can still be reversed. By incorporating a wider, more inclusive visual content — featuring diverse species, human presence, and the full spectrum of ecological processes — organisations can help steer AI models toward more socially accurate and ecologically authentic representations of rewilding.

Dr Flurina Wartmann said: "Our research highlights a pressing issue: conservation organisations are, often unintentionally, encoding incomplete visions of nature into the AI systems that will influence how the we imagine our environment in the future." The study also demonstrates how social science methods can – and must be - used to critically interrogate AI generated content. The study marks one of the first examples of human geographers analysing GenAI produced visual materials and highlights the importance of ensuring that emerging technologies reflect inclusive, realistic, and equitable depictions of the natural world.

This project was in part funded by the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, which is generously supported by the Leverhulme Trust.



> **"Conservation organisations are, often unintentionally, encoding incomplete visions of nature into AI systems."**
>
> Dr Flurina Wartmann,
> School of Geosciences



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25360

Nature recovery policies must address environmental inequality

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries globally. England's new Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) policy requires developers to compensate for nature lost to construction, however, current approaches risk worsening environmental inequality by allowing green spaces to be destroyed in disadvantaged communities and recreated elsewhere. A discussion paper from scientists at the University, commissioned by The British Academy, examines how policymakers can redesign biodiversity policies to better integrate people and place. The paper provides a framework for embedding social and cultural values into nature recovery, informed by lessons from England's early BNG implementation challenges and insights from Switzerland's more locally focused model.

The research team involved state that future policy must prioritise place-based approaches that restore nature where losses occur, ensuring that communities and wildlife benefit. Dr Emma Cary, School of Geosciences said: "When nature is removed from areas that already have limited access to green space, local residents lose vital health, wellbeing, and social benefits. These losses cannot be adequately replaced by ecological improvements miles away."

With the UK facing a biodiversity crisis and England's mandatory BNG policy now in force, billions of pounds will be invested in nature recovery over the coming years. Access to nature already provides an estimated £2 billion in health benefits annually in England alone. But without considering where nature is created and who benefits, these policies could inadvertently deepen existing inequalities, particularly for deprived and marginalised communities.

Dr Flurina Wartmann, also School of Geosciences added: "This research reveals the hidden justice issues in current policy, which treats biodiversity as tradeable units regardless of location. It demonstrates practical methods for meaningfully involving local communities in shaping nature recovery. As Scotland develops its own biodiversity metric, our work will help ensure the approach is more equitable from the outset."



> **"Nature is not only an environmental asset, it is closely tied to community identity, cultural values, and social justice."**
>
> Dr Emma Cary,
> School of Geosciences



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/24943

New scholarships for postgraduate students in conflict zones

Two humanitarian scholarships to support postgraduate students impacted by armed conflict have been launched by the University of Aberdeen. Available from September 2026, the scholarships are open to postgraduate applicants who have excelled in their studies while their education has been disrupted due to armed conflict. The scholarships will cover all academic and accommodation fees, as well as providing students with a stipend for living expenses. Applicants will be eligible for the one-year scholarships if they hold an offer from the University of Aberdeen.

Professor Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support and Experience, said: "We are delighted to launch these two Humanitarian Scholarships at the University. The impact of armed conflict can be devastating. Nick Edwards, Chief People & Student Officer, said: "The University of Aberdeen has a long-standing commitment to supporting scholars and students who are at risk in their home country. These scholarships will complement our existing portfolio to provide support for talented international students whose studies have been disrupted due to conflict." You can learn more about the full range of scholarship opportunities and how to apply here.

Our portfolio of scholarships and bursaries provide a wide range of funding opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate students. From the internationally focussed scholarships detailed above, to a broad range of scholarships that support individuals from certain locations or those who are studying specific subjects. Elsewhere in this report we heard about the Gateway 2 Medicine programme, a scheme aimed at students who have experienced local authority care or are resident in an area classified by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation as SIMD20. In many cases these scholarships are the result of gifts and dedications to the University.

For information on how to donate to support scholarships at the University please visit the webpage or email giving@abdn.ac.uk.



Image credit: © Olena Vasylieva, Adobe Stock

> **"We are proud to be able to offer this support to those in need."**
>
> Professor Jason Bohan,
> Dean for Student Support & Experience



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/latest-news/in-brief/25872

UNESCO status granted to 'exceptionally rare' University of Aberdeen foundation document

The foundation document which granted permission for the establishment of the University of Aberdeen has been recognised with UNESCO 'Memory of the World' status. The Papal Bull, dated 10 February 1495, is the permission granted by Pope Alexander VI for King James IV of Scotland to create a university in Old Aberdeen. The document enabled the creation of a centre of higher learning, formerly known as King's College. Its historic and cultural significance has now been recognised through this UNESCO status which lists documentary heritage that has world significance and outstanding universal value.

The Papal Bull has been in the care of the University ever since it was carried back to Scotland from Rome by its author William Elphinstone, the Bishop of Aberdeen, 531 years ago. Prior to the Reformation, the patronage of higher education in Western Europe came under the authority of the church and so it was necessary to gain papal permission. Elphinstone petitioned Rome for permission to establish a university in Aberdeen, presenting an argument in the document of the need for a centre of higher learning in the North. He stressed – or perhaps exaggerated - the remoteness of the region and the state of the people who he described as "rude, ignorant of letters and almost ungovernable" on account of their lack of education. Aberdeen was the last university in the UK to require and receive papal authority for its foundation.

In late 2025, the University of Aberdeen was among 60 universities to sign the Magna Charta Universitatum, a declaration and affirmation of the fundamental principles upon which the mission of Universities should be based. The original Magna Charta was signed in 1998 on the occasion of the 900th anniversary of the University of Bologna. The formal signing of a 2020 update of the Charta had been delayed by COVID.



The Papal Bull

> **"We are delighted that our University's Papal Bull has been recognised with this prestigious UNESCO status."**
>
> Professor Peter Edwards,
> Principal & Vice-Chancellor





To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25705

UK must strengthen community action to deliver Net Zero

Researchers identified that the UK must strengthen its policy on supporting community action and empowerment in order to successfully deliver Net Zero, or risk undermining climate action. The report titled 'Stick or twist? Why the UK's net-zero strategy is faltering and may need to change' is from the JUST Systems project, a UKRI '*Building a Green Future*' funded £5m, five-year programme delivered in partnership between the universities of Aberdeen, Stirling, Strathclyde, Edinburgh, Reading, and Warwick.

It finds that while the UK has made significant progress in reducing carbon emissions since 1990, a different approach may be required to deliver the next phase of decarbonisation, which will be far more disruptive to everyday life. For decades, the UK has been regarded as a global leader, with emissions less than half of their 1990 levels. This success was underpinned by broad political consensus and strong public backing. But that consensus is beginning to fracture. According to the report, declining cross party political support and a shift in public attitudes, raise concerns about the durability of the UK's climate strategy. The authors argue that one key reason for this shift is that the benefits of net zero have not been evenly felt and need to be aligned to the social realities of communities.

While past progress relied largely on changes in the energy sector with the removal of coal and growth of renewables - often invisible to the public - the remaining emissions are tied to everyday activities: transport, heating and food. Decarbonising these will require direct involvement from households and communities, making public support essential. "Policies so far have reduced emissions impressively, but they haven't always empowered people or improved day to day lives," said Professor Tavis Potts, project lead at the University of Aberdeen. "Our research is ultimately about creating a net zero transition that enriches lives."



Image credit: © Björn Wylezich, Adobe Stock

> **"Many communities simply haven't seen themselves as part of the net zero story."**
>
> Professor Tavis Potts,
> School of Geosciences



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/25301

Just Transition Lab at the heart of national 'transition' dialogue

The University's Just Transition Lab (JTL), a multi-disciplinary group of academics, has been actively influencing the national transition debate. In October 2025, they joined national leaders, community voices and innovators at a landmark summit convened by Scotland's Just Transition Commission, to explore how to build a resilient, low-carbon economy, fair for all. The summit aimed to ensure that the costs and benefits of transition are shared fairly, with JTL's work subsequently recognised in the Just Commission's final report.

In November 2025, the JTL observed that the North East of Scotland needs immediate action to secure its future as a leader in the energy and net zero transition. They noted that the regional transition is hindered by fragmented efforts, challenging access to funding, and lack of coordination. Despite a £500 million Just Transition Fund and years of promises, the region still lacks a coherent, locally led, inclusive Just Transition plan. Later that month, the UK Government's 'North Sea Future Plan' highlighted the need for a just transition for workers and communities, recognising the role of the north-east of Scotland in supporting the energy sector and citing JTL researchers. In March 2026, the Scottish Government announced significant reforms to the Just Transition Fund for the North East and Moray, with JTL recognised as a key influence on the new approach.

JTL's call for action came in the wake of a Scottish Affairs Committee report on the future of Scotland's oil and gas industry, which acknowledged that the North Sea basin is 'geologically mature' and domestic production is expected to follow a trend of 'continued decline' and that this decline is already impacting workers and communities in the region. JTL highlighted the urgent need for a strategic framework to guide investment, support workers and engage communities in shaping a decarbonised future.



> **"The North East's transition is being hindered by fragmented efforts."**
>
> Dr Daria Shapovalova,
> School of Law



To read the full story visit: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/latest-news/in-brief/24791

Students' Union looks ahead to 2026/27

There are many reasons to address sustainability issues as a Students' Union. Many students are concerned about climate change and generally want the SU to be doing our part and advocating for meaningful change. Sustainability initiatives are broad ranging, and include activities like supporting emissions reductions, undertaking training, supporting student initiatives and campaigns, and liaising with the University.

We continue to provide students with the opportunity to contribute to circular economy with initiatives such as our SwapShop, a long-standing initiative that provides a free second-hand store that encourages students and staff to donate items they no longer need or want, instead of disposing of them and buying new ones. Additionally, we are working towards transitioning to more plant-based food options at our cafe and are keen to lobby the University to do more in this regard as well, for example by encouraging the adoption of plant-based menus as the default option.

Through our adoption of an ethical and environmental procurement framework, the Students' Union has taken the decision to move towards suppliers whose practices are more in line with the values outlined in our 2024 strategy. This has included a full boycott of suppliers linked to human rights breaches, harmful pollution and discriminatory practices.

Our ambition is to build on this foundation: strengthening local partnerships, expanding sustainable and inclusive initiatives, and continuing to embed social responsibility in every aspect of our work. Ultimately, we want sustainability, inclusion and student wellbeing to be at the heart of the experience of studying at Aberdeen, creating a community where students are supported when they need help, have a meaningful voice in the decisions that affect them, can build resilience, skills and confidence, and are empowered to make a positive difference during their studies but also as they move forward with their future lives. In doing so, our Students' Union can help create a stronger, fairer, and more sustainable University community with lasting impact and a strong positive legacy.

STUDENTS' UNION



SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES AT A GLANCE

- Zero waste efforts with our free Swap Shop and Zero Waste Store
- Free Community Cafe dinners and breakfasts to eliminate food waste and feed uni students
- Student voice on climate issues through Sustainability Advocates
- Student Housing Starter pack to reduce the cost of buying new and creating waste
- Ethical Procurement Policy guides responsible purchasing decisions for people and the planet



Student raising and giving campaign supports local charities



Founded in 1889 as the Charities Campaign, its modern incarnation as the Raising and Giving (RAG) Society, builds on a long history that sees student activities raise money and generate funds that support charitable causes across Aberdeen and the local region. From organising well established events such as Charities Week and the Torcher Parade, to supporting modern fundraising initiatives, RAG has served a valuable role in enabling student efforts to make a positive impact in the local community.

This year, RAG was delighted to welcome representatives from its four chosen charities to its annual Raising and Giving Disbursement Ceremony in May, where donation cheques were presented at the end of another successful fundraising period. More than £11,000 was raised through a variety of fundraising activities across the year, including collaboration with the Charity Fashion Show, raffles at the Students' Union Activities Ball, and campaigns such as Dons Day Out.

The funds were distributed to local charities the Denis Law Legacy Trust, Men in Mind, Tillydrone Community Flat and Grampian Women's Aid. The ceremony also provided an opportunity to celebrate not only the funds raised, but also to hear more about the incredible work each charity does within the local community. Hearing directly from representatives about the impact of these donations, alongside celebrating the long-standing impact of RAG's work, was a highlight of the day.

RAG was also pleased to welcome members of the Filmmaking Society, who attended to record the event and capture the celebrations and presentations throughout the ceremony. During the event, the "Partnership of the Year" shield was presented to Shinty in recognition of its continued support and partnership throughout the fundraising year. This new award aims to recognise the work students do to support the local community and will hopefully encourage more student groups across campus to engage in charitable and community-focused activities.

Raising more than £11,000 this year was a fantastic achievement and would not have been possible without the support of everyone who attended events, volunteered their time, partnered with RAG, and contributed throughout the year. RAG would like to thank everyone who supported its fundraising efforts and looks forward to continuing its work with local charities and community organisations long into the future.

STUDENTS' UNION
RAISING & GIVING

1 NO POVERTY
5 GENDER EQUALITY
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

To read the full story visit: https://www.ausa.org.uk/organisation/rag

Notable honours for University colleagues

This year colleagues from across the University of Aberdeen community have been recognised for their academic and thought leadership. The selection over the next two pages provides a flavour of the depth and breadth of positive contributions being made by our academic community that contributes, directly and indirectly, to the Sustainable Development Goals:



Dr Graeme Brown,
School of Law

The University conferred one of its highest and rarest academic honours this year, when **Dr Graeme Brown** was awarded the degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) by research. Widely known as an honorary degree, ancient Scottish universities retain the power, exceptionally, to award the LLD as a higher doctorate.



Dr Monika Gostić,
School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition

Dr Monika Gostić became a member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh Young Academy of Scotland. Monika's work spans microbiology, genetics, nutrition, women's health, and entrepreneurship. Through the Young Academy, she will join a network of emerging leaders working to create positive change across Scotland.



Professor Marcel Jaspars,
School of Natural & Computing Sciences

Professor Marcel Jaspars, Professor of Organic Chemistry, was one of 10 academics recognised for outstanding achievement by the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) in November 2025 for his work in marine biodiscovery. RSE medals are awarded to individuals to recognise exceptional contributions and achievements in their field.



Dr Kristin Konnyu,
Aberdeen Centre for Evaluation

Scientist **Dr Kristin Konnyu** was named a research leader of the future as part of an initiative supporting Scotland's next generation of academics, 'Build Scotland's Green Future' from The Royal Society of Edinburgh's 'Research Leadership Scheme' supports mid career academics with outstanding potential, address critical scientific and societal challenges.



Dr Alfonso Martinez-Felipe,
School of Engineering

Dr Alfonso Martinez-Felipe was awarded a high-profile Energy Security Fellowship by the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence. Working closely with NATO experts to strategically assess Europe's biofuels production capacity, the aim is a detailed, evidence-based assessment of the state of the art in sustainable fuel production across Europe.



Professor Graeme Murray,
School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition

Emeritus Professor Graeme Murray was awarded the Ritchie Medal by the Pathological Society. The Society's most prestigious award, it is awarded for distinguished contribution to Pathology. The medal is named after the first general secretary of the Society and Professor Murray is just the fifth recipient since its inception in 2006.

Notable honours for University colleagues

As well as securing widespread academic recognition, several University colleagues also featured in the 2026 New Year's Honours List. Professor Zosia Miedzybrodzka, Professor of Medical Genetics was appointed OBE, as was Professor Angus Watson, Clinical Chair in Surgery, while Professor Rhona Flin, Emeritus Professor of Applied Psychology was awarded a CBE.



Professor Wendy Russell, Rowett Institute for Nutrition & Health

Leading food systems scientist, **Professor Wendy Russell**, will steer a push to enshrine the right to food and a healthy environment in Scottish law after being named as the new chair of the Scottish Food Coalition, an alliance of over 70 organisations working towards a fair, healthy, and sustainable food system.



Professor John Speakman, School of Biological Sciences

Professor John Speakman has been recognised by the Polish Academy of Sciences. Foreign membership of the Polish Academy is awarded to internationally recognised researchers for outstanding scientific achievements and close cooperation with the Polish research community in making a significant contribution to the advancement of science.



Professor Val Speirs, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition

Professor Val Speirs, Chair in Molecular Oncology and Co-Director of Aberdeen Cancer Centre was named as Chair of the Scientific Advisory Panel of the Centre for Human Specific Research. Val brings extensive experience in human-specific science and will play a key role in shaping the Centre's strategic direction.



Professor Steve Tucker, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition

Professor Steve Tucker was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the British Pharmacological Society at its annual conference in Belfast in December 2025. Honorary Fellows are elected for life by the British Pharmacological Society in recognition of sustained excellence and leadership in science, healthcare, and public service.



Professor Neil Vargesson, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition

Professor Neil Vargesson was awarded the prestigious Lewis Wolpert medal at a ceremony in March 2026. Awarded by the British Society of Developmental Biology (BSDB), it is awarded annually to individuals who have "made extraordinary contributions to the teaching and communication of developmental biology".



Professor Marian Wiercigroch, School of Engineering

Professor Marian Wiercigroch, founding director of the University's Centre for Applied Dynamics Research, has been widely lauded this year, being elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering, given the Yanzhao Friendship Award, and being inducted as a Foreign Member of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

1495 UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

Sustainable Development Goals

Annual Report 2025-26



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