

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2024

Present: Karl Leydecker (Chair), John Barrow, Morag Beers, Josefine Bjorkqvist, David Burslem, Helene Ganniccliffe, Joseph Huttich, Beth Lord, Fraser Lovie, Douglas Martin, Christopher Osbeck, Tavis Potts, Stuart Piertney, Adam Price, Liz Rattray, Lyne Rose, Alexandra Stuart, Hulda Sveinsdottir, Mark White, Tristan Wolfe, and Ross Anderson (Clerk).

Apologies: Ainhoa Burgos Aguilera, Brian Henderson, Vanessa Mabonso Nzolo, Bob Philp, Tracey Slaven, and Ursula Witte.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 November 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

2. MATTERS ARISING - TABLE OF ACTIONS

It was noted that several actions are complete and can be removed:

- Item 2. Car Parking Charges
- Items 8 & 9. Net Zero
- Item 10. Re-Imagining Our Campuses Project

Action: Clerk

3. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee received and noted an update on Internal Audit progress. The Committee will try to ensure it meets the timescales in the document.

4. SUSTAINABILITY OPERATIONS SUB-GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

SDC received and approved terms of reference for an operations sub-group. It was noted that the intention is for people to attend when necessary.

Action: TP – Speak to TS about a process for training students to clerk meetings.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY RISK REGISTER

SDC received and discussed the Strategic Risk Register (Environmental Sustainability). It was noted that the risk register is in good shape for this area and the mitigations and timelines seem appropriate and address the risks.

6. ABERDEEN 2040 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN UPDATE

SDC received and discussed an update on the Aberdeen 2040 Implementation Plan. It was noted that there have been actions on almost all points since the last meeting, so most things have moved forward. It was also noted that some RAG scoring could be updated to reflect progress made in several areas.

7. UPDATE FROM DEAN FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Dean for Environmental Sustainability provided an update to the committee on progress on the delivery of the University's SDC commitments. He also provided some global context, noting that January 2024 has been the warmest month on record and is now the eighth month in a row that the 1.5-degree threshold has been passed. SDC also noted that in the marine world there is an unprecedented heat wave as the oceans warm incredibly quickly. SDC also noted increasing levels of climate anxiety which have been demonstrated to impact the choices young people are making in terms of university study. It was noted that students are attracted to strong sustainability credentials, and as such this is an area that the University will need to continue to invest and grow in 2024.

The Dean noted that the next Climate Assembly will likely be in September 2024, with a topic to be decided, and that in the meantime there is a focus on delivering the recommendations from previous sessions.

The Dean also provided an update on his work with the Re-Imagining Our Campuses process, which has involved staff and student representatives from across the University. It was noted that it is a good group which could potentially be turned into a sustainability champions group after the re-imagining process.

8. CLIMATE ASSEMBLIES – UPDATE FROM BIODIVERSITY & GREEN LABS WORKSTREAMS

The Dean for Environmental Sustainability provided an update on the outputs from the Climate Assembly at the end of October 2023. It was noted that it was a successful event with 65 lab users attending, both students and staff. It was noted that six recommendations came from the event:

1. Form School level green-lab working groups to assist with sharing equipment, and waste management. It was noted that the first green-lab meeting in Foresterhill is being held today and an Old Aberdeen group is in development.
2. Develop processes and guidelines for equipment sharing and waste management.
3. Develop a demonstration Green Lab in the University – Potentially in the Science Teaching Hub.
4. Invest in a laboratory bench-marking accreditation framework for green laboratories.
5. Address issues around procurement and work towards collective and sustainable procurement.
6. Build staff capacity around green labs across the Uni and encourage behavioural and cultural changes.

9. BIODIVERSITY POLICY AND ACTION PLAN

SDC discussed and endorsed a proposed Biodiversity Policy and an initial action plan, subject to some amendments. The policy was developed in response to the University's first Climate Sustainability Assembly in March 2023. It is expected that the policy will next go to a future meeting of the Senior Management Team (SMT) for approval. **Action: RA to check with TS.**

10. SUSTAINABILITY E-LEARNING MODULE

SDC reviewed and endorsed an advanced beta version of the proposed "Introduction to Sustainability" staff e-learning module. Committee members will continue to review the module and provide feedback as they work through it. SDC also noted that the module meets the expectation from the Scottish Government for what the University should be providing in terms of free training for staff. More discussion will be needed on how best to ensure staff engage with the module.

Action: AS to check with DD if the module needs to go anywhere else for approval or if it can be launched when ready.

11. SUSTAINABLE HEATING UPDATE

It was noted that Sustainable Heating Programme Board meets later this week. SDC noted that options appraisals are nearing completion. No formal recommendations yet but they group is working towards that. Work is also ongoing on the pipework project at Hillhead. It was noted that the project is now under a formal review process as costs have come in higher than expected. It was also noted that Old Aberdeen is currently working on one boiler and the CHP engine for now. A recently repaired boiler is currently out of action, while another older boiler that had failed is in the process of being replaced.

12. RE-IMAGINING OUR CAMPUSES UPDATE

SDC noted that a raft of workshops are currently taking place across the University covering all the topics within framework of re-imagining our campuses. Outputs from these sessions will be used to develop a report with recommendations for future consideration.

13. SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS UPDATE

SDC noted that a student relocation travel tool developed at the University won the Innovation Award at the Higher Education Strategic Planners Association in January.

The University also had two nominees in the Research with Impact category at the Green Gown Awards in November. The Rowett's work alongside the hemp industry won the award for the University, marking the second year in a row the University has won this category. Professor Azizul Islam's work on the Bangladeshi garment industry was also shortlisted. It was noted that a postgraduate student from Engineering was also a finalist at the Green Gown awards for his work on semi-submersible wind turbines.

14. UPDATE FROM INTERDISCIPLINARY CENTRES & REPORT FROM COP28

SDC received and discussed a report on activities connected to the University's five Interdisciplinary Challenge Areas with links to sustainable development since the last SDC meeting.

SDC also received an update on the University's activities at COP28. It was noted that four delegates attended the event in Dubai and several others attended virtually. The University's engagement received a lot of attention at COP28 and there is a plan for a knowledge exchange event between COP28 and COP29, which is currently in development.

SDC also noted that a nature-based solutions to climate change event, to be held later in the week, has attracted more than 1,000 registrations, showing the scale of interest in this area.

15. UPDATE FROM DEAN (EDUCATION)

The Dean for Employability & Entrepreneurship (Education) reported that the Aberdeen 2040 attributes and skills were approved at Senate last week, including sustainability. It was also noted that a total of 20 internships have been made available through the University's careers team. There has been huge demand for these with 729 applications received. There are plans for further internships to be created this year.

16. STUDENTS' UNION UPDATE

SDC received and discussed an update of general sustainability related activities, developments, plans and proposals which have taken place at the Students' Union since November 2023.

17. NET ZERO UPDATE

SDC received and discussed an update on the progress being made with various stages of Net Zero related activity, including the development of a more comprehensive understanding of Net Zero and a Net Zero strategy.

18. FOR INFORMATION: SCOTLAND BEYOND NET ZERO PARTNERSHIP

SDC received and noted information about the Scotland Beyond Net Zero partnership which the University has joined with other universities including Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The Chair noted that it is always uplifting to read the papers for this committee. He noted that SDC is working with limited resources, but a lot of good work is being done.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Sustainable Development Committee will be held on Wednesday 29 May 2024 at 1.35pm via Microsoft Teams.