

## Minute of the meeting of the Sustainability Working Group (SWG)

2 August 2023 via Zoom

Attending: David Duncan (DD) (Chair), Ian Campbell (IC), Peter Craig (PC), Chrissy Sanachan (CS), Robert Garnish (RG), Ross Barker (RB), Bethan Wood (FR), Molly Davison (GUEST)

Apologies: Jaime Toney, Stewart Miller, Gordon McLeod, Alasdair Thomson, Fabrice Renaud, Josephine Gallagher, Barry Morton, Minty Donald, Gioia Falcone, Haile Pentleton-Owens (SRC President), Anna Brown (GUEST), Charlotte Mitchell (SRC Environmental Officer), Mariama Bah (SRC VP Activities),

In attendance: Rhona Little (Clerk)

### 1 Minute of 6 June 2023

CS had discussed some of the offsetting items offline with other members of the SWG and trade union colleagues. The June minute was detailed in terms of the presentation from Palladium but included less detail on the concerns expressed by some members of the SWG. It was agreed that more detail on these points should be incorporated into the minute.

**Action:** DD/RL to add in more text to this minute to note concerns that were expressed at the meeting in June.

#### Several questions were raised about concerns and ethical issues:

- **Social acceptance – have local communities been engaged with the intervention and would there be any job losses in the local community or loss of homes for tenants.**
- **Geographical closeness to National Park – is there a guarantee that the organisation will keep partners local as we would not want to be seen as far away partners dumping our emissions in the park or buying into a scheme with less than reputable businesses and industries.**
- **How will the land be used in the future as this is private land what are the guarantees that it will not be sold on. Contracts seem to be for 40-100 years but what about longer than that.**
- **Is there an option to take this on as a collaborative pilot project as we have researchers who can monitor wider benefits like biodiversity.**
- **What are the similarities with the Woodland Carbon code of the UK.**
- **What would the cost per tonne of carbon be.**
- **Is Palladium doing research into and looking into the climate resistance of the kinds of forests to be planted because with climate change there are risks associated with which types of species and forests will survive and the potential for migration of vegetation species due to increasing temperatures and changing hydrologic patterns.**
- **What is the current use of the land you are proposing to plant on and what habitats are going to be changed because of that and how different would the impact of what you are doing be if we excluded hill sheep from the land and stopped them grazing.**
- **Flamingo Land are pushing for a site to develop a park on the national park area – have you had any discussions if they were to get approval for that and what impact this would have on plans over next 20 years.**

## 2 Matters Arising

A few matters arising to come back to meeting in Autumn.

## 3. Draft Carbon Management Plan

Ian Campbell (IC) introduced the first update of the Carbon Management Plan (version 1.2) and outlined several changes from the original. The CMP will be updated annually. The updated version of the CMP contains additional detail around the timeframes on which we expect to deliver emissions reductions. A covering paper had been put together the key issues to note in this draft plan are outlined in section 4 of the paper:

- The carbon footprint for 2022/23 reporting year is yet to be determined. We have assumed a worst-case scenario for 2022/23, in which emissions rebound back to 2018/19 levels; this will be updated in Version 1.3 of the plan in 2024.
- The plan now includes annual targets which will highlight our ongoing achievements from 2023/24.
- Our learning over the last year has reduced our focus on building fabric improvements for energy efficiency but increased our optimism on the potential to replace current fossil-fuel derived heat sources. A major study on low-carbon heat options is currently underway which will inform Version 1.3 of the plan in 2024.
- Some excellent work has commenced on Sustainable Laboratories but is still at an early stage. However, it has highlighted the opportunity in this area which should move from discovery to design in 2023/24. We are getting a far better handle on how much our electricity use is dedicated to the IT estate and how we use IT and would expect by iteration 3 to be much more developed in that.
- The 'bounce back' in business travel is our most significant risk. It is thus proposed that we evolve our school targets so that any excesses require the purchase of offsets. It is also proposed that we remove the option of air travel for journeys in the UK. It is proposed to firm up on targets and if any school exceeds their target they would be expected to pay for offsets.

Several questions had been raised after the draft CMP was circulated at the June meeting and IC addressed these:

- ***Are we committed to Clyde Climate Forest:*** – we are interested in their prospects but are actively looking at three forms of offsetting. As well as the Clyde Climate Forest, there will be another discussion with Palladium to address some of the questions that arose after their presentation, and we are looking at the University wide Carbon Coalition scheme.
- ***Is there a tracked change version of the CMP:*** – rather than give a tracked version which is difficult to follow, we have tried to explain in the covering paper the differences as well as section 4, which is the text piece, where you can see the differences in terms of the actual carbon numbers. CS would like to see a tracked changed version of the plan for transparency and although she agreed the table where the key changes are highlighted is very useful, would like to see a 'living document' as the tables are all informed from a spreadsheet, and it would be useful for SWG to have access to that data in whatever form it is stored in. IC explained that in terms of tracked changes, the CMP had probably been through 5 or 6 different iterations, and it has been consolidated at each stage. Each section of the document is currently managed by different parties so there is not a single portfolio of where all the data is held. The intent is that now we have annual targets, to bring this back to SWG probably on a quarterly basis with what we are achieving in.

**Action:** SM to provide shared access to the document showing version control

- ***Do the figures in the CMP take into account the most recent working trends as there is a risk of split messages/management that could cause diversity issues:*** - the document makes certain assumptions about hybrid working and the amount of data we have centrally about who is on and off site on any given day is limited so it is an extrapolation of information rather than being precise. If the question relates to home working and the possible issues that can differently affect people with different characteristics this would stray into more P&OD territory and there are policies on their website to explain that.
- ***Will buildings that are difficult to retro fit be discarded and become a problem elsewhere:*** - we have a policy within the University that we will retain land within certain parameters and within Gilmorehill we have 133 listed buildings. Within the construction section of the CMP, we are effectively working to the guidance within the build environment led by the Royal Institute of British Architects which effectively says one should resume retention before complete redevelopment and unless we follow this guidance, planning consent would not be given. We are following the Scottish Government guidelines on sustainable development that has involved us putting a sustainability guardian into all projects who will investigate and oversee on any development we are undertaking in the most sustainable way. They will also set down targets to reduce both operation carbon and embedded carbon.
- ***Could a date be provided when offsetting international students would be included in the CMP:*** - this will happen by 2030 but we would want to start before then and we are in discussion with Finance about when we do this. Just as an aside, many airlines are now offsetting themselves and we are looking at whether we can monitor that. It would become difficult to recommend one airline over another but it may well be that we could guide students towards the airlines that are offsetting already.

PC raised a point about the bounce back in business travel. He agreed it was a good idea to require schools to pay for offsetting if they exceed business travel but if we are going to do this, we should combine it with other measures to change people's behaviour and decisions around business travel. We have had discussions in the past about how individuals are aware of guidance but we should still be trying to find solutions to change individual travel behaviour at a lower level and ways to move towards this.

IC and JT have debated this at length and clearly we are on a trajectory which will exceed our overall University targets. They debated whether we could mandate the current guidance which would require people to question this to go to management level but JT was of the view that we were not at that level of maturity yet and it would be at least another year to help schools understand their responsibilities and improve communication around this area. The idea of the offset is to signal to the schools that the target is real and by effectively paying for offsets it is helping the University.

In terms of Individual carbon targets, it is feasible but difficult, but we would be getting into issues on data management at an individual level. If the business travel rules were mandated we could actually calculate this but it would be unusual for the University to do this.

A decision on charging will have to go to SMG to get their views. There are different ways we can get to our goals on business travel. One is charging, the second is having approvals before flights are booked, the third is to prohibit certain things, for example flights to London within the UK and fourthly is the behavioural one because we really want people

to take responsibility for their own actions. This message still needs to be amplified quite considerably across the University community rather than going down the other routes.

BW raised the point that some schools that require staff to teach abroad would have to be omitted from penalties and believed this matter should go to Court as there are Court members with sustainability experience who may have some insight that perhaps we may have missed or not.

To achieve our overall target, we need to reduce carbon by 7.5% per annum and all of the targets are taken from base year and reduced year on year by this percentage. If the pattern of behaviour has changed between the base year and now then that needs to be taken into consideration. Targeting should reflect our activity and not just be a number.

**Action:** RB to raise this discussion with the internal comms team and ensure this is communicated across the university.

Feedback on these matters will be taken to SMG who will inform a paper that would go to Court and it is important that the SWG group are heard and all the views captured. The overall strategy gets approved by court but decisions about whether we mandate offsetting by schools are made by SMG.

There are Procurement restraints on what staff can purchase so during a climate crisis is it not perfectly reasonable to ban flights from Glasgow to London. The tolerance of mandatory action is probably shifting but we are not quite there yet and if we introduce a ban on flights to London there is likely to be pushback. Things are moving in the right direction, but this is the biggest risk we have within the CMP at this point.

When buildings are identified as no longer being required we would not do a retrofit. More difficult issues for Glasgow and other ancient Universities are that we have a lot of old buildings that were not built for the way they are used today. We have 103 townhouses and the best and ultimate use of these would be for accommodation, but that means we must think about how we accommodate people from these buildings into alternate buildings. In the meantime, we have a statutory duty to maintain these buildings which usually means external maintenance and to some degree internal but the challenge in the 2030s will be to revert the townhouses to their original use and move their current activity into more appropriate places.

For example, the intention is to vacate the Rankine building in 2027 and we are doing a lot of work on the feasibility and carbon impact on refurbishing vs replacement. These are not insignificant decisions but what is relatively new is to have to make the carbon decision alongside the pound decision.

CS, trade union representative, stated that one of the biggest issues she hears about from staff concerns space utilisation and working conditions. Some colleagues take a cynical view of sustainability and about the University's hybrid working policies. She suggested that the issue warrants further discussion with the trade unions offline. In her view, it is generally agreed that daily life will have to change to reduce carbon given the high carbon footprint associated with maintaining a large number of cellular offices. However, some colleagues on lower grades and students cannot afford the extra energy bills incurred from working from home one or two days a week.

There is a project running in University Services called Workspace Futures which is a good way to try and address the practical and cultural issues around this. It will require people to change their mindset and further discussions with the trade unions will be part of that.

4. **GUEST update (MD)**

The new team has been hired and nine new promoters have started in post apart from a bike mechanic who will be interviewed for soon. Plans are moving ahead with work on the Ecohub and one main focus is measuring how much carbon will be saved. The Welcome Fair is coming up and Glasgow has been selected as finalists for the Green Gown awards organised by the EAUC in two categories, creating impact and student engagement, two projects that were started last September. One of the projects will be part of the QMU programme for freshers week.

New lockable bike sheds will be on campus within the new few weeks which will hopefully prevent bike theft and encourage more people to bring bikes onto campus.

The first meeting of the Sustainability Hub was in July and meetings will take place on the first Tuesday of each month. The main tasks are focusing on finalising spatial design of the space in the Boyd Orr Building. Another focus is the hiring of the fulltime coordinator who will help with the next steps in terms of logistics of organising, how the space will work. By the end of August the space will be designed and construction will begin.

The GUEST models of interns are being used in other areas such as the homelessness initiative and perhaps for music on campus. It is a great way to give students a paid opportunity to contribute to a university wide civic agenda.

**Action:** DD/RB to come up with a bulletin at start of academic year about the work of the SWG and RB to flag with comms about the Sustainability Hub and bike shed.

**To note:** A new Director of Sustainability will start in post at beginning of September.

9. **Centre for Sustainable Solutions update**

No update as JT not in attendance.

10. **AOB**

11. **Date of Next Meeting**

4 October – 10:00hrs