**University of Glasgow  
Sustainability Working Group**

**Minute of 15 August 2024**

Present: David Duncan (Chair) Jaime Toney (JT), Anna Brown (GUEST) (AB), Gioia Falcone (GF); Stewart Miller (SM), Peter Craig (PC), Roddy Yarr (RY), Inge Sorensen (IS), Craig Thomson-Gold (CTG), Charlotte Michel (GUEST), Scott Hilditch (SH), Sophie Renner (SR), Fabrice Renaud (FR), Peter Haggarty (PH), Gordon MacLeod (GMacL), Cat Scothorne (CT) (GUEST), Angelica Wilson (SRC),

Apologies: Josephine Gallagher (JG), Alistair Thomson, Viola Retzlaff, Rhona Little, Ronnie Webster (RW)

Attending: Lee McClure (LMcC)

1 **Welcome and Apologies**The group welcomed Sophie Renner to the group; Sophie replaces Chrissy Sanachan as the Union Sustainability representative.

2 **Previous Minutes and Actions**The draft minute was approved as an accurate record

Divestment Update

SM continuing to work on editing website

KPMG Audit Sustainability Response

Action: DD to follow up with Comms to get intern in place for start of new term.

SMG Strategic Risk Register Sustainability Review

Action: RY to follow up with Craig Chapman-Smith (CCS)

Sustainability Manager Policies Update

SM to provide update from RSPB later on agenda.

CfSS

Discussion ongoing with James Hamilton about resources.

Action: RY/JT/SM to discuss offline and try to move forward.

Travel Policy Working Group update

DD confirmed that this had been taken to SMG for discussion and had received general support. SMG supported most of the recommendations, except for some debate about mandating rail travel within the UK. RY agreed, noting the importance of engaging with college management groups to build trust, especially around data, and to inform and enable change. The need for quick action was noted given rising emissions, and DD proposed sharing the minutes of the discussion to ensure clarity and transparency.

PC was disappointed with the SMG’s response to a paper's recommendations, noting that it fell short of accepting all the recommendations. The response mainly focused on improving communication while neglecting other important recommendations such as strengthening travel authorisation, improving information distribution and implementing carbon reduction plans. PC emphasised that meaningful progress would not be achieved through missionary work or merely discussing potential ideas and that concrete actions were needed.

DD believed that there was a discussion about possibly mandating rail travel within the UK but it faced some opposition. He also noted that this was not one of the recommendations. He indicated that the other recommendations were generally supported.

RY noted that the procurement dashboard contained a wealth of data but was unsure if this information is adequately shared with the Colleges and suggested that discussing the dashboard with the Colleges could be a positive and progressive step provided people engage with it.

FR requested clarification on the final version of the business travel guidance document for distribution at the school or CMG level. It was noted that the final version was available on the website [University of Glasgow - MyGlasgow - Sustainability [for students & staff] - Strategic Travel Planning - Guidance for sustainable business travel for staff and postgraduate researchers](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/sustainability/travel/business/)

Sophie Renner (SR) was aware that younger PhD students and postdocs in her department are interested in more sustainable travel but are constrained by tight group travel budgets, making train travel, which is usually more expensive, less feasible. Unless there are restrictions on flying or financial incentives to choose trains, sustainable travel options will remain out of reach for them.

JT suggested finalising the document with a summary from the previous SWG meeting, noting the lack of full consensus and proposed retaining the original document and adding an appendix with the discussions and response from SMG to ensure clarity on progress and next steps.

IS expressed concern about the lack of urgency and awareness in her school regarding emissions and suggested a middle ground where even before a finalised plan is in place that Schools and Colleges should be informed that these initiatives are underway. This would allow them to start collective conversations on what actions they can take to address emissions.

DD agreed but suggested a further discussion was needed on how to communicate the group's guidance to schools and services.

**Action:** DD to share SMG minute with group

**Agreed:** SWG members to discuss via email between meetings to avoid delays and then hopefully raise awareness across the University

3 **Carparking and Travel Planning Management Review**

RY presented a paper proposing a review of the 2025 car parking permit management scheme. The review will consider not only the current criteria but also sustainable alternative travel options for staff and broader social aspects. The paper highlighted the need to align car parking management with the wider travel plan, especially regarding emissions targets set for 2025. Rising public transport costs are also a concern and input from public transport providers is needed to support necessary changes. RY seeks feedback from colleagues and suggested possibly expanding the working group to better address the issues. DD agreed noting the existence of a car parking working group that could be re-engaged.

JT raised a question concerning the next steps and the action plan, particularly the value of incorporating focus groups and suggested that engaging with permit holders who are expected to make behaviour changes could provide insights into potential resistance or support for the changes. These focus groups could reveal practical issues and preferences, offering valuable information beyond just the quantitative data, especially regarding travel routes and other logistical concerns.

SR emphasised the importance of encouraging people who have the option to choose public transport over driving. While acknowledging that some people may have no choice but to drive due to a lack of public transport options, she believed incentives are needed to motivate those who do have both options to opt for public transport.

CT reasoned that individual car use is unsustainable in the 21st century and should not be subsidised and believed the University should use its influence to lobby for better public transport across Glasgow and subsidies to improve the accessibility of public transportation for staff and students.

PC emphasised the need to seriously consider raising parking charges which could be done gradually as without such a measure progress will be slow. PC urged faster action using all available tools, similar to efforts to reduce business travel while still keeping a system of exemptions but more narrowly defined.

AB suggested that UofG should consider offering travel funds to subsidise students' public transport similar to that already in place at UWS. Discounted bus passes for young people are only up to age 22 and the high costs of commuting means that many students miss out on the full university experience because they reduce their on-campus days to save money.

DD acknowledged the points made in the discussion and it was agreed to proceed with a review. The need to consult with the SRC, Trade Unions and others and the idea of using focus groups were also seen as potentially helpful. He further stressed the importance of considering equality, diversity and inclusion issues in the process.

**Action**: RY to take forward

4 **Update on Carbon Offsetting Progress Work**

SM provided an update on carbon offsetting efforts following the SWG June meeting where the group agreed to prioritise working with two national charities in Scotland, the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) and RSPB Scotland, both with expertise in tree planting and peatland restoration. An initial visit and discussion with SWT had been promising with potential carbon offsets identified though not yet sufficient to meet the required 30,000 tons annually by 2030. A visit with RSPB was planned for September.

Other options were explored such as purchasing credits from Forest Carbon Limited and Woodland Trust but SM found issues with commercial focus and limited availability. Additionally, PNZ Carbon’s energy efficiency projects were considered but raised concerns about carbon accounting.

SM suggested continuing partnerships with the Scottish Wildlife Trust and RSPB Scotland and further discussions on procurement strategy.

**Action:** SM to keep group updated and will aim to pull together a business case in the coming weeks.

5 **Sustainability Manager Polices Update**

SM provided an update on the carbon footprint reporting to the Scottish Government, noting recent changes in the guidelines. The new requirements include estimating procurement-related carbon emissions which UofG has not routinely done before and this change could add around 100,000 tons per year to the carbon footprint. SM expects to receive the necessary data in October which will be timely for the Government's deadline at the end of November but not for the UofG 2023-24 end of year financial report. The other issue is that if we start reporting the procurement related carbon emissions, we will significantly increase our carbon footprint and we would need to have some sort of discussion about how we deal with this from a net zero prospective moving forward.

DD expressed doubt about the feasibility of meeting the new expanded carbon targets emphasising that we should focus on achieving the existing goals set in the Glasgow Green strategy first. He acknowledged that the initial targets are already challenging and suggested avoiding setting unattainable goals in the short term.

GF suggested considering carbon offsetting in other countries where the institution has a presence due to existing collaborations but highlighted the challenges related to data quality, accuracy, and adherence to UK standards when dealing with international projects. GF noted that expanding to Scope 3 emissions opens the possibility of offsetting beyond local activities but introduces complexities in communication and potential speculative issues. She emphasised the importance of transparency and awareness in addressing the broader challenges of carbon reduction, acknowledging that achieving net zero is not a simple task and requires understanding the full scope of the problem.

DD expressed a preference for carbon offsetting within Scotland but acknowledged the need to consider offsetting outside of Scotland, especially given the university's global presence and research partnerships in regions like Africa. He suggests that this possibility should be considered, even if a final decision is not made immediately.

GF suggested considering partnerships with strategic partners in countries where the university frequently travels and proposed collaborating with those who are already investing in sustainability efforts, forming transparent partnerships to address offsetting needs.

RY suggested that the proposed new reporting requirements should be brought to the attention of SMG.

DD suggested that we should continue reporting as required, emphasising that changes in measurement do not alter our footprint just the way it is being measured. It suggested we should focus on meeting current targets before setting new ones and believed this should not change the overall strategy. DD also supported strengthening the connection between reporting and raising awareness at higher governance levels.

AB believed that it is essential to include all relevant factors like procurement in carbon reporting to genuinely meet targets and not doing so would mean failing to address the true scope of carbon emissions.

JT agreed with RY on the importance of improving communications noting that it is easy to see what other universities like Edinburgh and St. Andrews are doing in this area. JT recalled a collaboration during the Queen's Platinum Jubilee challenge where universities in the north of England engaged with their supply chain to address emissions collaboratively rather than excluding parts of it and suggested UofG explore similar innovative collaborations.

DD acknowledged that universities collaborate with APUC regarding the supply chain but pointed out that many products are manufactured in countries reliant on fossil fuels, making it difficult to avoid these environmental impacts in the short term but agreed it is an issue that still needs to be addressed.

CS highlighted that carbon offsetting even in its most advanced forms can only address about 1% of global emissions and suggested that the University should limit its offsetting to 1% to avoid taking resources that other groups might need. She also expressed concern that purchasing land for offsetting, especially outside the UK or Scotland, could replicate colonial practices and negatively impact indigenous communities and would be concerned that similar issues may arise in Scotland where land values increase due to offsetting, potentially leading to economic and social problems, such as reduced local jobs and ownership.

GF clarified that her suggestion to collaborate with partners abroad was about compensating for emissions caused by activities in those countries, rather than offsetting Glasgow's emissions elsewhere. She believed it is important to give back to the local communities affected by their collaborations in a fair and equitable way and agreed with others that offsetting is not a sufficient solution for addressing emissions.

6 **Centre for Sustainable Solutions**

JT provided an update on the activities of the CfSS which included designing and delivering a systems master class in collaboration with the Centre for Public Policy and the Scottish Government Summer School which will training 60 Scottish government civil servants on systems thinking. Through GALLANT this will be delivered to public, private and third sector partners as well as researchers in Glasgow in August and in Oxford with other collaborators in September.

JT and GF have joined a short-term working group focusing on how researchers engage with the fossil fuel sector, aiming to develop recommendations for RPSC to take forward guidance for individual researchers by October.

The CfSS has supported the University's "Solutions for Change" programme, particularly on reducing food waste from meetings and events and continue to act as a point of contact internally and externally for sustainability-related enquiries.

The Centre has been invited by the Guild of Research-Intensive Universities to share insights on learning and place-based methods for sustainability and RY will share this learning through a presentation later in September.

CfSS is co-ordinating and hosting a visit from a Harvard University, Professor Kari Nadeau, in early October largely to connect with a new initiative coming out of Harvard called Global Environmental Health Alliance and Climate Change in Sustainability. The purpose is to help students gain access to courses on solutions to climate change in health.

Finally, the Centre is helping to coordinate a roundtable in collaboration with Public Health Scotland in their dialogue series with the next roundtable addressing racial inequalities in the sustainable and just transition.

7 **GUEST update**

AB presented a paper summarising what GUEST had been doing over the last year.

In summary GUEST have hosted over 100 events with more than 2,000 attendees, supported by over 130 volunteers contributing 300+ hours and have saved over 1400 GhG emissions and over 2000 items from landfill. Regular bike hubs took place once or twice a week with nearly 200 bikes being repaired. In collaboration with Bike for Good and SPT they ran stalls on campus giving advice on bike rides and how to get Young Scots cards, SPT and Subway cards and provided leaflets during Freshers and Welcome Weeks. One of the promoters has reached the finals of the Green Gown Awards with a rewilding project of the wildflower garden behind the QMU and has identified 197 species around campus and Kelvingrove Park using an iNaturalist app. They hosted biodiversity workshops, garden sessions and litter-picking activities, engaged with Glasgow Science Festival and organised community fridge initiatives, saving 1,400 kg of GHG emissions. Student Support and Resources distributed essentials during Freshers Week and held clothing swap shops and provided sustainability-focused workshops including Green Careers Week. They also worked with various campus groups, including the Sports Union and Eco societies to promote climate justice and sustainable practices.

The focus over summer was preparing the Eco Hub which will open in early September and the new promoters have started planning upcoming events.

The full Impact Data Report is appended.

8 **Any Other Business**

RY discussed the potential benefits of the University becoming an associate member of Scottish Renewables, a trade body for the renewables sector. He was surprised to learn that the University is not currently a member and suggested joining to provide students with access to discounted conference fees and University staff would benefit from accessing some of the policy decisions and the network. RY believes membership would be beneficial and sought feedback on this idea from the group.

PH agreed it would be useful to join on a year’s trial to evaluate the benefits and if it proved to be unhelpful we would not renew the following year. RY agreed to fund the membership from the Sustainability budget.

**Agreed:** that RY would take this membership forward.

A logo with green leaves

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GUEST

Impact Data Report 2023-24

*Created by* Molly Davison (July, 2024)

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| **COMBINED IMPACT DATA All Branches 23-24** | |
| Events | > 100 |
| Attendees | > 2200 |
| Volunteers | > 130 |
| Volunteer Hours | > 320 |
| Bikes Fixed | > 50 |
| Gardening Sessions | > 50 |
| Identified Species | > 190 |
| Money Raised for Charity (£) | > 400 |
| GhG Emissions saved (kg) | > 1400 |
| Items Saved from Landfill | > 2100 |

*SPOTLIGHT ON…*

**Bike Hub (as of january) & Transport Branches**

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| **COMBINED IMPACT DATA FOR Bike Hub & Transport 23-24** | |
| Hours | > 100 |
| Bike-Hub Appointments | 162 |
| Attendees | 306 |
| Bikes Fixed | 162 |
| Returning Attendees | ~18 |

* *Pop up Stalls- Bike For Good and SPT*
* *GU Bike Ride*
* *Bike Hub Repairs*
* *Pop Up Stall- Get Glasgow Moving*

*Resources created explaining and promoting the use of active and public transport*

*Excellent working relationship with Bike for Good promoting cycling in Glasgow*

# **Biodiversity & Gardening Branches**

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| **COMBINED IMPACT DATA FOR Biodiversity & Gardening 23-24** | |
| Attendees | 550 |
| Identified Species | 197 |
| Volunteers | 53 |
| Volunteering Hours | 24 |
| Trash Bags Collected | 34 |
| Gardening Sessions | 51 |

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### *Freshers: Bioblitz and iNaturalist Project*

### *Litter Picks*

### *Garden Party*

### *Biodiversity Climate Café*

### *Site Visits*

### *Fungi Foray*

### *Glasgow Flower Gardens*

### *Festival of Social Sciences (FoSS)*

### *Green Spaces + Transport Sub Crawl*

### *Rewilding*

* *Gardening Sessions*

### *Dr Mark Millan Talk*

### *Biology 1A Biodiversity Eco-Quest*

### *Biodiversity De-Stress Walk*

### *Glasgow Goes Green: Opening Event*

### *Hillhead Biodiversity Workshop*

### *Desert Vista High School Sustainability Club Outreach Talk*

### *Earth Week*

### *Estates Biodiversity Lunch & Learn Talk*

### *De-Stress: Wildlife, Snacks, and Crafts*

### *Mesmerising Macro and Wonderful Mad Beasties*

### *Green 15 Podcast*

### *Glasgow Science Festival*

### *CIVIS: Birds of European Campuses*

### *Nursing and Sustainability Talk*

**Food & Waste Branch**

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| **COMBINED IMPACT DATA FOR Food & Waste 23-24** | |
| Attendees | 1010 |
| Kg GhG emissions saved | 1431.8 |
| Items Saved from Landfill | 2119 |
| Meals Donated | 1216.765 |
| Volunteers | 15 |
| Volunteering Hours | 138 |
| Charity Money Raised in £ | 410 |

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### *Student2Student Essentials*

### *Swap Shop*

### *Care4Calais*

* *Meatless Mondays*
* *Community Fridge*
* *Rising Star Basketball*
* *Vegan Bake Sale*
* *Don’t Ditch it Stitch it*
* *Large scale Student2StudentEssentials project for the incoming year in collaboration with accommodations*

**Student & Staff & Community Engagement Branches**

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| **COMBINED IMPACT DATA FOR Student & Staff + Community Engagement 23-24** | |
| Attendees | 473 |

* *Freshers Climate Cafe: Get to know GUEST*
* *UofG Eco Societies*
* *Climate Justice TED Talk + Discussion*
* *Climate Snakes and Ladders*
* *Bannock Bread Making*
* *Glasgow Goes Green Festival*
* *Doughnut Economics*
* *Documentary Screening*
* *Inequali-tree Workshop*
* *Pot Painting*
* *Destress Eco-Walk*
* *Climate Cafe*
* *Climate Fresk*
* *Green Careers*

**Sustainable Laboratories Branch**

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| **COMBINED IMPACT DATA FOR S-labs 23-24** | |
| Attendees | 40 |
| LEAF Labs | ~ 30 |

* *Lab Coat Swaps*
* *LEAF*

# *MVLS Sustainability Showcase Fair*