**University of Glasgow  
Sustainability Working Group**

**Minute of 8 February 2024**

Present: Jaime Toney (Chair) (JT), Mariama Bah (SRC) (MB), Ross Barker (RB), Anna Brown (GUEST) (AB), Molly Davison (GUEST) (MD), Laila Elaasar (GUEST) (LE), Gioia Falcone (GF); Gordon McLeod (GMcL), Stewart Miller (SM), Alasdair Thomson (AT), Chrissy Sanachan (CS), Roddy Yarr (RY)

Apologies: Peter Craig, David Duncan, Minty Donald, Josephine Gallagher, Matthew Gilmour, Peter Haggarty, Hailie Pentelton-Owen, Fabrice Renaud

Attending: Craig Chapman-Smith (CCS), Craig Thomson-Gold (Observer for Shadow Board), Natalie Welden (NW) for Fabrice Renaud, Rhona Little (Clerk)

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

2 **Previous Minutes and Actions**

The minute was approved subject to a minor correction in item 6, Glasgow Green Feasibility Projects funding, second sentence which should read ‘approximately 32 projects’ and not ‘23’.

**Divestment Update**

A statement about fossil fuel divestment was circulated internally on 26 January. Additionally, DD has reached out to Richard Warburton to decide how to communicate this externally and it is anticipated those updates will be sent out in the following weeks.

JT discussed with DD about GF leading a short-term working group to develop guidance for academics and clarify our relationship with companies beyond just those in the oil and gas industry, such as those involved in alternative energy. DD will present this proposal to the SMG to ensure a diverse range of perspectives is considered before establishing the working group and will update the SWG on the next steps following this discussion.Top of Form

It was noted that several sustainability-related internal communications on various topics, have been circulated including divestment, tree planting initiatives and reducing business travel. RB will pick this up with comms again after the meeting in particular the update about the concerns PC had about raising awareness of the new cycle hangers.

CS reported that the four trade unions have decided to exclude offsetting from their discussions with the University. They believe it is more effective to focus on concrete actions to reduce emissions rather than investing in offsetting measures. This decision reflects a desire for tangible steps towards emission reduction rather than relying solely on offsetting practices.

JT replied that the consensus within the group is to prioritise efforts and resources towards reducing carbon emissions rather than relying solely on offsetting. There is a clear stance that offsetting alone is insufficient for CO2 reduction and instead a broader approach is favoured, one that incorporates ecological, biodiversity, and community benefits alongside emission reduction measures.

3. **Thermal Comfort Policy – revised**

RY updated the group on the amended version of the Thermal Comfort Policy paper which included feedback from the December meeting of the SWG, in particular, the section ‘Accommodations and Exemptions’.

RY mentioned work done over the Christmas shutdown period, focusing on improving systems in the Maths and Stats building, which resulted in carbon savings and cost reduction and emphasised how this sort of policy supports interventions aimed at reducing carbon emissions and meeting sustainability goals.

The paper was endorsed at the December meeting but the SWG are now asked to review these changes so that the Thermal Comfort Policy can be implemented.

The group agreed that the upper heating operating range of 18°C to 28°C was too high.

CS asked how prioritisation of implementing the policy across campus buildings would be decided. RY mentioned the ongoing feasibility work to identify buildings needing improvement and noted a lack of controls and metering in energy systems. By using the policy as a tool to build a case for improvements and manage expectations, although it will not solve problems immediately, will contribute to a systemic approach to address issues.

GF raised concern about the lack of sensors and procedures for addressing temperature discomfort in offices and stressed the need for a formal procedure for individuals to report uncomfortable conditions and suggested guidelines for measuring temperature, including considerations for humidity and duration of measurement. GF emphasised the importance of not only absolute temperature readings but also the duration and peak values of temperature extremes and expressed dissatisfaction with the current approach and called for more comprehensive monitoring procedures.

RY acknowledged the feedback regarding the lack of monitoring and proposed a temporary solution by installing temporary sensors through the estates help desk while working on a more comprehensive sensing and metering strategy.

RY emphasised the need to manage expectations regarding the policy, acknowledging that while it will address some issues, it will not solve everything. He highlighted that the team is working diligently within the current resources and infrastructure to determine the necessary steps moving forward. Related papers to be discussed later in the meeting acknowledge the extensive work required in this area, indicating a commitment to tackling challenges with the available resources.

GF raised the question about the possibility of delay to the Keystone project, which has been a source of reassurance for the school's engineers and expressed concern that the absence of this project might lead to increased complaints and dissatisfaction among academics, students, and researchers who have relied on this building as a promise of improvement.

As the Environmental Trade Union Rep, CS highlighted that the issue of temperature control is the most significant concern among TU members and offered to support any actions taken to address complaints and manage expectations.

The group agreed to formalise this policy to include the changes and get it on to relevant platforms and implement through the Helpdesk and across Estates and the wider University.

4. **Strategic Risk Review Presentation**

Craig Chapman-Smith (CCS), Director of Risk and Strategic Projects gave two presentations on sustainability strategic risk and a new strategic and project tracking tool.

The first presentation was to ask SWG to contribute towards the articulation and mitigation of the SMG Strategic Risk Register on Sustainability.  He noted that this would be reviewed twice annually at SMG, Audit and Risk Committee and Court.

It was noted that there are some aspects missing from this document and JT proposed forming an extraordinary meeting to discuss the contents of the document to ensure thorough representation of views. It was noted that the next date for review was to provide content by the end of May.

**Action**: meeting to be arranged within timelines given.

The second presentation was a first look at a project which aims to bring project and risk data together into a single source across the University and link to our strategic objectives and KPIs.  The project will pilot major projects in May and roll out across the University in October.  Additional information was provided on capturing a question on the business case template about any direct or indirect impact on sustainability.  CCS noted he would add an extra slide to the presentation that showed what the trigger questions were.  Further presentations and training will be communicated in the coming months.

RY wanted to highlight a resource issue within the sustainability team and emphasised the additional time and effort that would be required by the team to ensure proper implementation of this project within operational sustainability constraints. He expressed full support for the process but stressed the need to recognise the added resource requirements.

JT concluded that the group discussions indicated a strong interest and wholehearted support for the initiative in development but also noted that many questions had been raised regarding the implementation process and considerations about how to proceed effectively.

**Action**: JT/RY/DD to take forward to think about best way to feedback to CCS. As a new function it might need to have time specifically set aside to do this.

5. **Capital Project Sustainability Form Review Paper**

RY presented a paper for discussion.

A high-level review of the Project Sustainability Form within Estates had been carried out. The review took account of the creation of a Sustainability Team with the expertise to offer guidance and enable sustainability to be embedded successfully within the project process. The review suggests a revised wording and a supporting resource being adopted. The revised wording is clearer about what should be considered and planned to achieve more sustainable outcomes for projects.

RY has proposed a revised set of questions combined with guidance and expert input will also enable Capital Project Steering Group and Investment Committee aims to be met. This revised form will be included within an emerging Investment Case Template that includes sustainability. The current project sustainability question set and layout should help enable colleagues to better consider how projects can minimise their impact in terms of environment and sustainability. To seek to quantify impact with measurable indicators that enable the University to track changes in emissions reduction and to ensure alignment with wider University sustainability aims.

6. **Operational Sustainability Investment Discussion Paper** (RY)

RY introduced a paper on Operational Sustainability Investment, emphasising that it was a discussion paper for the Investment Committee. The paper provided an overview of various funding options available to the university, highlighting the benefits of each in terms of delivering results such as energy savings or investment returns and stressed the significance of addressing utility costs and decarbonising the estate in light of climate initiatives. RY mentioned upcoming projects and seeks to gauge the groups appetite for funding. RY mentioned potential case studies, like freezer revamps and fume cupboard optimisation, to illustrate the potential savings and efficiency gains. The purpose of the paper is to outline both current and future investment opportunities in sustainability, with ongoing discussions with relevant stakeholders.

RY asked SWG colleagues to review the listed options and authorise engagement with the funding providers and looking for permission to seek to develop the identified funding opportunities into a structured investment approach for scaling up sustainability initiatives.

9. **Scotland Beyond Net Zero initiative**

A landmark initiative has been launched to bring together Scottish universities to address the climate emergency. [Scotland Beyond Net Zero](https://scotland-beyond-net-zero.ac.uk/) (SBNZ), founded jointly by the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, aims to help the country meet and go beyond its ambition of achieving net zero by 2045.  The collaboration will catalyse action and empower government, policymakers, organisations and industry to make informed change to help Scotland reach its climate targets. The new venture will combine world-changing research, innovation and expertise in climate science and sustainability. It will address key challenges linked with the climate emergency, including clean energy, storage, decarbonisation, green transport, community empowerment and climate justice.  DD attended the launch of this initiative in January and could provide an update to the group if required.

10. **Arms Divestment – for discussion**

This matter was raised at the previous meeting and CS introduced a comprehensive document put together by the student organisation GAAF. The document proposed swift divestment from any involvement in the arms trade within the University's investment portfolio and although acknowledged the complexity of the University's relationships with defence companies and fossil fuel industries, it emphasised the ethical implications of profiting from destructive industries. The divestment campaign has gained endorsement from trade unions and alumni and CS had brought the document to this forum to highlight the importance of student engagement and signal support for divestment on sustainability and environmental grounds.

JT emphasised the significance of sharing views and having discussions within this group but highlighted that SMG and the Investment Committee are already engaged in discussions and deliberations regarding a response and policy to GAAF.

GF stressed the need for clarity in terminology when discussing the arms trade and broader military actions and expressed concern about the risk of ambiguity leading to contradictory actions and requested more information on the parameters being considered for defining arms trading.

GMcL emphasised the importance of clarity regarding whether discussions about divestment include research funding received by the University, not just portfolio investments and highlighted research funding as a significant contributor and suggested applying the same clarity to discussions about climate investment. It was not clear if the University is still being funded by oil companies to do research.

**Action**: as a member of the Investment Committee DD to update the group at the next meeting.

The group noted the discussion and will observe how things progress.

11. **Centre for Sustainable Solutions update**

The next Green Recovery dialogue scheduled for March will focus on designing a radical food system and will engage 30 to 40 stakeholders from food systems in the Glasgow Clyde Valley region looking at discussing mapping and co-designing a radical food system. The outputs from that will go to a senior leader Round Table and will be followed up with a community and business sharing event to bring more people into those discussions.

The CfSS is continuing to run the Urban by Nature Webinar series with ICLEI (Local government for Sustainability) and this year the theme is around storytelling with one webinar already taken place this year the next one scheduled for April with an in-person seminar in October.

The Centre is engaging in consultations initiated by the Scottish and UK governments particularly focusing on a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill and recently conducted an in-person consultation with individuals from across the University and are currently compiling the insights gathered to be sent to the Scottish government.

Finally the CfSS has been asked to curate the Code of Good practice web pages for February and JT shared a link [University of Glasgow - MyGlasgow - Research and Innovation Services - Research integrity - Good Practice in Research](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/ris/researchintegrity/goodpracticeinresearch/) where information can be found to direct people to types of activities that are coming out of the Centre or related to sustainability at the University.

RY updated the group about an ongoing project being developed by Cochno within MVLS, focusing on operational sustainability, renewables, and biodiversity access and believes this initiative holds significant potential for the University. JT is visiting Cochno as part of the consultation process, engaging strategically with various University stakeholders to discuss the future of the estate. The SCENE research station is seeking a new director, presenting opportunities for sustainability initiatives.

12. **GUEST update**

LE updated the group about the upcoming focus is on "Glasgow Goes Green," beginning with an opening event at the Mitchell Library followed by a week of sustainability-themed activities across all of the campuses of the organising Universities which include GSA, GCU, Strathclyde, one event at Kelvin College and the remainder on UofG campus. The week closes with a festival-style event at the ARC. Despite weather-related postponements during Transport Week, successful pop-up stalls were held. Efforts also include running Bike Hubs and designing signage for the Eco Hub, with plans for a Swap Shop at the end of term. Other branches are engaged in various projects currently in progress. Members of the group agreed to help promote these events through various social media platforms.

The group noted that the EcoHub coordinator post had now been advertised.

13. **AOB**

Ecohub Project

SM updated the group on this project. The refurbishment costs for the Eco Hub space in the Boyd Orr Building are over budget by approximately £20,000. A meeting is scheduled with Taylor and Fraser to explore additional cost-saving measures, with the aim to begin the refurbishment work in mid to late March. The timeline for completion is estimated to be about a month with hopes for a soft opening before the summer and a full opening by September in time for the new academic year. The job advertisement for the Eco Hub Coordinator position has been posted with a closing date in a couple of weeks. Colleagues are encouraged to share this opportunity across their networks to attract potential candidates. The aim is to have the coordinator in place by the time the space is ready for occupancy.

Sustainability Event Guidelines

MB informed the group that the SRC recently discussed the need for sustainability event guidelines after being approached by someone interested in the topic. Unlike some other organisations like GUSA, the SRC currently does not have guidelines for clubs and societies and are considering proposing the implementation of sustainability guidelines to the University and are willing to collaborate with relevant stakeholders.

The current business travel guidance includes considerations for event attendees' transportation, but there is minimal guidance beyond that. The conferencing and events team could also be involved in these discussions, extending beyond student clubs and societies. The GUEST team is interested in collaborating with the SRC to develop sustainability guidelines, and an offline discussion will take place.

14. **Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 9 April – 10am