

**University of Glasgow  
Sustainability Working Group**

**Minute of 4 October 2023**

- Present: Jaime Toney (Chair) (JT), David Duncan (co-Chair) (DD), Anna Brown (GUEST) Chrissy Sanachan (CS), Fabrice Renaud (FR), Gioia Falcone (GF); Josephine Gallagher (JG), Laila Elaasar (GUEST) Peter Craig (PC), Peter Haggarty (PH), Robert Garnish (RG), Roddy Yarr (RY); Stewart Miller (SM), Mariama Bah (SRC), Charlotte Michel (SRC)
- Apologies: Alasdair Thomson, Ross Barker, Gordon MacLeod, Minty Donald, Matthew Gilmour, Barry Morton, Molly Davison
- Attending: Viola Retzlaff, Bryce Whyte, Rhona Little (clerk)

**1 Decarbonising transport case studies**

Bruce Whyte from the Glasgow Centre for Population Health joined the meeting to present the outcome of a case studies report on carbon emissions from transportation and related policies in Scotland, focusing on five institutions, including the University of Glasgow. The key points of the presentation were:

- Many reports and policies aim to address climate change and improve air quality.
- The Scottish Government actively promotes sustainable transportation to reduce car usage and improve public health.
- Glasgow and Strathclyde updated their transportation strategies in line with these policies.
- Data from the Scottish census over 45 years showed increased car usage for commuting, decreased walking to work, and declining bus usage, with cycling remaining a small mode of transportation.
- The data did not include information from the 2022 census or the increased budget for active travel.
- Carbon emissions from transportation remained largely unchanged between 1990 and 2018, with road transport emissions increasing.

The presentation emphasised the importance of active transportation for health, environmental benefits and reduced air pollution. It also highlighted the need for safer cycling infrastructure in Scotland. A 2011 study showed health benefits valued at 780 million euros for commuters who walked or cycled to work, contributing to reduced hospitalisation, improved mental health and more vibrant local economies.

The study discussed commuting trends showing that the organisations had lower car usage and higher rates of public transport, walking, and cycling compared to the national average. Car use increased during the COVID-19 pandemic due to public health concerns. Facilities for active travel, showers, secure bike parking and support for public transport and car drivers were also examined.

In conclusion, public transport use and active commuting are higher than the national average in the organisations studied but there were no sustained trends in car use reduction. The report made recommendations including making public transport affordable, accessible, reliable, and safe, as well as improving ticketing and offering flexible options. It also suggested better coordination of behaviour change efforts, investment in sustainable transport infrastructure, and reducing car parking capacity while considering fairness and affordability.

The report aims to encourage a post-pandemic shift back to public transport and sustainable commuting while reducing car use.

## 2 **Minute**

The minute of 2 August was approved.

## 3 **Matters Arising**

### 3.1 Draft Carbon Management Plan

SM confirmed it was not possible to provide shared access to the CMP showing the version control or have a version of the plan with tracked changes. CS suggested treating the CMP like a financial presentation, with tables and data to show what was planned, budgeted, achieved, and the variance year to year.

**Agreed:** SM, DD & RY to take discussion offline to determine the best way to present progress

Ross Barker had been tasked with discussing the goal of reducing carbon emissions by 7.6% per year with the internal communications team and communicating it across the university.

**Action:** DD to follow up with RB and to collaborate on creating a bulletin about the SWG activities

## 4 **Feedback from SMG meeting**

DD reported that feedback from SMG about the CMP was positive. They discussed various topics including business travel guidelines. SMG agreed that we should give these guidelines more attention and make it easier for schools to use them. We need to collectively raise awareness at the school level and help schools utilize the monitoring data to track their progress in reducing business travel. There was discussion about how far we should go in mandating certain types of travel, mainly air travel, which has the highest carbon footprint. Some senior managers opposed mandating a ban on air travel within the UK possibly due to their own travel plans. However there was recognition that we can encourage alternatives like trains or buses for domestic travel and promote thoughtful planning for international trips. The goal is to minimize the impact on research and academic careers while considering essential international connections.

RY attended SMG and was given an action to review the travel policy. There was a discussion about the importance of data cleansing for accuracy and VR and SM have already made progress in this regard. There is a need to continue addressing the issue of staff travel and providing solutions for more thoughtful travel decisions. There is also an opportunity for further consultation as part of the review and the importance of involving a cross-section of staff in this process. It was noted that there had been an increase in travel between pre-COVID and post-COVID periods suggesting a need for careful consideration of travel practices.

FR raised a few concerns regarding the responsibility for monitoring and addressing carbon emissions related to university travel where the onus seems to be on schools to do this. Firstly there was no feedback regarding the use of the university's travel portal (TRICAP) so no way of knowing if the most environmentally friendly flight options are being selected and the potential trade-off between environmental considerations and cost. Secondly if schools exceed a certain cap, they are expected to pay for carbon emissions. However, many trips are not related to school business, such as transnational education programs so would it not be fairer to tag carbon emissions to project codes rather than individual staff members GUIDS to allocate costs more fairly. Thirdly there is a lot of onus on the individuals but not on the University so what policies are in place before the individual's actions which might encourage

people to travel. These policies could be related to internationalisation objectives or getting promoted through research. If we do not address these policies at the same time as asking individuals to change their behaviour, it feels like individuals are being asked to do the impossible. Perhaps discussions on working groups could look at the whole package which would mean examining the policies that influence travel behaviour and considering how these policies can also be changed to help reduce emissions.

JG is already looking at more information about how people travel and analysing it using the tool Power BI to look at the data in different ways and plans to share this with the heads of finance. Working with RY to refine the data by adding product codes and more details about why people are traveling will help us make smarter decisions in the future.

VR emphasized the importance of addressing the source of this data. While data analysis is indeed crucial, it is equally vital to collaborate with our travel agent and VR has initiated discussions on this matter but has encountered a challenge related to the data source. The travel agent has acknowledged difficulty in accurately attributing distances to certain travel bookings, thereby raising concerns about data quality.

To address this issue comprehensively, VR proposed that we embark on an initiative to enhance our internal booking portal in collaboration with the travel agent. This improvement is imperative as the quality of our reports and analyses is contingent upon the quality of the data we receive at its source.

**Action:** RY to lead with the formation of a short-term working group to review the current travel policies and practices working with procurement to improve the efficiency and data quality from Selective travel. To consult with trade unions and different forums and heads of schools to raise awareness of the guidelines. Volunteers to be on working group include SM, CS, VR, FR, PC and Dr Esther Papias from the School of Health & Wellbeing was noted to contact as having conducted potentially useful research in this area.

## 5 **Carbon Footprint update**

SM circulated a paper summarising our carbon footprint for the academic year 2022/23 (Total: 49,780 tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e), which will be submitted as part of a detailed return to Scottish Government at the end of November, under the Public Sector Climate Change reporting duty. This paper will be shared with SWG at the next meeting.

In summary the 2022/23 carbon footprint for UofG (49,780 tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e) was greater than that reported for 2021/22 by ~9,000 tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e. This increase in emissions was largely due to a further post-Covid rebound in business travel (+8,000 tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e) along with increased gas consumption (+1,650 tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e) and an increase in emissions from homeworking (+600 tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e). These increases were only partially offset by reductions in emissions from electricity consumption (-800 tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e). Increased emissions from gas consumption during 22/23 were due to the addition of new buildings (Clarice Pears, ARC) on the Western Campus and a 32% increase in CHP operation in 2022/23 compared to the previous academic year. Downtime of the CHP engine in December 2021 and January 2022 was a major contributor to this impact compared to 2022/23 total. Emissions reported for commuting travel remained largely similar to 2021/22 because data used to calculate impacts is based on a biannual staff/student travel survey, which has not been repeated in the past 12-month period. The reduction in fugitive emissions reported this year reflects a difficulty in obtaining data from an outgoing contractor, rather than any change in estate operation. Our aim to reduce our carbon footprint by 7.6% per annum, each year, during the 2020s, in line with recommendations on limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees, is now in danger of being compromised. Renewed

focus is required during 23/24 to further minimise carbon emissions associated with both the heating of the Estate and business travel/staff student commuting.

PH enquired if more detailed information about business travel and data was available on flights within the UK and international flights and whether any policy changes might affect them. He was concerned about the consumption of electricity and about the consideration of buying green electricity in the past and was unsure if the current legislation allows us to claim benefits from using green tariffs. He raised concern if we do not achieve our current 2030 trajectory what would be the potential risks of not hitting it and what mitigations and communications could be put in place in relation to this over the next few years.

SM confirmed that data is available on UK versus international flights and that he can provide more details. There are restrictions on claiming reductions from green tariffs according to Scottish government guidance. Additionally they talk about the importance of ensuring that using green electricity doesn't reduce their efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

**Action:** SM & RY – to think about projection work related to the 2030 target

## 6 **Draft Climate Neutral Estate Approach**

RY summarised a paper which is his first attempt at outlining a three-level strategy based on initial observations and experience in this field. The goal being to consolidate all the work being done at the University into one cohesive plan. He reviewed numerous reports and believed there is valuable information we can use to create a high-level vision.

**Level 1: Microscale** (day to day operational energy management across the estate to ensure reduction of demand and consumption) would focus on the day-to-day management of our existing facilities and energy usage. This includes collecting and analysing data, using digital twin technology, and considering how our choices impact our emissions and overall efficiency.

**Level 2: Mesoscale** (tactical master planning of energy consumption and emissions reduction measures, aligned with demand side reduction to enable a costed, cash flowed and programmable plan of action at building level) involves creating a detailed plan, budget, and schedule for making our current buildings more energy-efficient and adaptable to low-carbon heating options. We need to explore various energy sources, like waste, heat, sewage, and hydrogen while also considering the source of our power.

**Level 3: Macroscale** (Strategic Local and Regional energy and adaptation master planning in collaboration with external public and private sector partners. Place based and socially inclusive) high-level strategic, local and regional master planning, working in collaboration with partners in our city region to plan for the broader energy needs of our community which we are already doing through sustainable Glasgow and through Clyde Vision. This includes working with sustainable organizations and initiatives and aligning with regional goals and policies, such as those related to climate resilience and social justice.

RY is seeking feedback from SWG to ask if they agree to bring all these elements together into one coherent package under a vision 'The Climate Neutral Estate Strategy' and to receive feedback on an ongoing basis as to how we progress assuming funding would be available for the work needed. RY would update the SWG on progress as it evolves.

A few points were raised.

The need to consider the terminology of strategies and plans to avoid confusion, as we have a "Glasgow Green Strategy" and a "Climate Action Plan". The need to engage the staff and students in the sustainability agenda, focusing not only on carbon neutrality but also on other aspects of sustainability and to acknowledge the need to prioritize certain efforts and not

spread ourselves too thin. The use of terms like "climate neutrality" and "carbon neutrality" might confuse people and suggested adopting consistent terminology. Considering different scales, not just in terms of physical space but also time. When each scale would have an impact and when certain events or milestones should be achieved and the importance of defining scenarios and pathways, especially related to timelines. There is also a question about whether the university is still aiming for carbon neutrality by 2030, considering doubts from Glasgow City Council about the city's ability to achieve this goal.

RY feels that the phrase "climate neutral," is important as it brings together mitigation and adaptation and emphasised that it is not just about reducing emissions but also making buildings and infrastructure resilient to climate resilient issues now. By combining the ideas of "energy carbon neutral" and "climate resilience," it is a reminder to everyone to consider both aspects. He agreed with the importance of considering timing and funding alignment with the university's development plans and addressing jargon and timescales, emphasizing that these plans should be tailored to specific locations.

CS expressed positive feedback and had shared the document with some colleagues as it aligned with their interests. She would encourage RY to add even more staff contact in level 1 as the university community have a real penchant for understanding things in depth and the trade unions would support the importance of communication to staff related to the document.

The group **agreed** that RY was heading in the right direction with this document and are comfortable with the current course of action and agreed that updates would be helpful.

## 7 **Update from Centre for Sustainable Solutions (CfSS)**

JT provided an update from the Centre for Sustainable Solutions highlighting several key activities and initiatives:

The Centre is organising a "Green Recovery Dialogue" focused on food systems and urban growing in collaboration with the city council and various partners. This event is scheduled for late January or early February 2024. The centre has become a member of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, connecting them with other organisations working on sustainable development goals. A recent meeting was held with the leadership team to discuss areas of focus for the upcoming year. These areas are led by a specific associate director within the centre. There is a particular interest in further developing a community of practice, which at one point had funding from the VP for learning and teaching so we are looking at whether this can be resourced again to support this community and aim to realise the cultural shift that was originally envisioned for it. Regarding the national parks offsetting scheme with Palladium, the Centre is interested in developing the understanding of what kind of physical and social science research opportunities are needed including long term monitoring to determine what the cost for academic time would be if that scheme does end up going forward.

Around green skills we are continuing to develop Future Learn and upscaling provisions and are exploring the creation of a potential master's degree in Sustainability. Early discussions are happening with the UN's Environment Program regarding a green skills observatory in the UK, and how this connects with the work the centre has been doing. We are considering affiliating a master's program developed through CIVIS along with European partners of the Centre.

There is a real interest to connect more with student experience including potential placements for both pg and ug students particularly in connection with GALLANT and the Eco Hub in the first instance. The centre is interested in connecting a bit more with the university's carbon management plan around business travel, and around the large social and behavioural

change that needs to happen around sustainability. We are exploring ways to collaborate further, potentially through internally funded Ph.D. students or improved liaison efforts.

JT clarified that ongoing discussions have not led to any commitments, and all SWG questions have been shared with Palladium for consideration. No decision has been made on whether it will be a commercial or pilot project. JT acknowledged that there are still unanswered questions and concerns, and if the project proceeds, addressing these issues and involving academic engagement will be essential for its success.

## 8 **GUEST update**

Laila Elaasar returned as a coordinator and Anna Brown attended her first SWG as a new coordinator. They have been actively tracking impact data related to the Ecohub since the start of the academic year to help build a case for support. Attendance at events has been monitored particularly for events like the Student-to-Student Essentials and the Homeware Swaps where they tracked item distribution by category and weight and converted this to an approximation of money saved and CO2 emissions reduced. The events have been very popular and likewise with Freshers week plenty of people have signed up as volunteers. A recent garden party attracted around 60 attendees and they are in the process of hiring a bike mechanic to resume bike repairs. Finally GUEST has been nominated for the EAUC awards, reaching the final stage for their Green Gowns and Sustainable Suits initiative which is the black-tie renting platform. The award ceremony is scheduled for November in Liverpool.

## 9 **Divestment Update**

DD reported that the University had committed to divest from the fossil fuel industry over a 10-year period starting in 2015. He confirmed that this divestment was successfully completed at the end of September this year, fulfilling a promise made by the University Court.

CS acknowledged this significant achievement and asked whether an announcement would be made to staff and students and emphasised the importance of providing comprehensive details about how this divestment was accomplished.

**Action:** DD to raise this with Comms

## 10 **Cochno Tree Planting Update**

SM updated the SWG about the tree planning at Cochno Farm. It is hoped to plant approximately 14 hectares of native broadleaves over the next few months and Mark Falconer will oversee delivery of this phase. Deer fencing has been erected but there was a slight adjustment in one compartment's size due to feedback from farm managers who took back a hectare which may have a slight impact on grant funding from Scottish Forestry. Planting is expected to start in late November or early December. The project primarily focuses on biodiversity enhancement and habitat creation rather than carbon offset generation. There is concern about the planting compartments visibility to the public as it is close to routes to the Jaw reservoir and SM would like SWG input on how to communicate and use on-site signage and communication to inform the public about the project which has not been considered until now.

RY expressed support for the project and commended the University for being ahead of the curve in terms of environmental initiatives. He emphasised the project's visibility to the local community and suggested explaining its purpose to engage with them. He also mentioned its connection to the Clyde Climate Forest initiative which is now being reinvigorated by Glasgow City region and proposed exploring a branding message to highlight collaboration without significant costs to the University. RY highlighted there are vandalism concerns in the area but emphasised the importance of focusing on the positive outcomes of the project. He suggested

signage and signalling the project to passersby and if we can link it to Climate Clyde Forest, RY thinks they would be keen to have evidence that there is a collaboration going on and that UoG is part of it.

There might be a need to secure additional budget for the project which was not initially considered but hopefully this will not be excessively costly. Some compartments may be less visible than others, so prioritisation of signage may be necessary and this should be coordinated with colleagues at Cochno to determine their preferences on approach.

JT informed the group that there are various sustainability initiatives happening around campus, such as the announcement regarding the Tiny Forest and the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) in front of the ARC building and these initiatives may not be widely known to the campus community. JT is happy to take an action to improve awareness of these sustainability efforts and would be willing to collaborate with Michelle Crane from External Relations to highlight these initiatives more prominently either regularly or for specific ones that need greater visibility.

PH highlighted the various sustainability initiatives in the new buildings each with its specific purpose including solar panels (PV), SUDS and energy performance certificates (EPC) and explained how the new Marks & Spencer stores prominently advertise their green credentials throughout their stores and suggested that there might be value in raising the visibility of these sustainability initiatives within the University buildings. It was recommended coordinating with the Estates comms team to potentially seek their support in promoting these initiatives.

**Action:** SM/JT/RY to take forward with Estates and External Relations.

11 **AOB**

SWG Terms of Reference

To maintain the accuracy of the UofG Corporate Governance webpages, the SWG ToRs had been circulated for review. The group agreed that the membership had changed over the last year and that the group met on a more regular basis and the ToRs should be updated to reflect the changes. The tracked changed document would go to the next Court meeting for endorsement.

12 **Date of next meeting – Wednesday 6 December 2023 – 10:00hrs**