

Sustainability Proposal

Action for UEB: To endorse the recommendations within the paper on governance structure, management structure, operational delivery and strategy regarding sustainability.

Background

1. This work was originally sponsored by Professor Nigel Clarke and follows two consultative meetings of the 'Sustainability Task and Finish Group'. This group was composed of senior staff members from faculties and professional services departments across the University and representatives from the Students' Union.
2. Following these meetings, Tracy Wray, Director of Human Resources and Communications, conducted an audit of current University resource dedicated to sustainability and discussed the proposal with the Strategy Delivery Group. The draft proposal was then amended accordingly.
3. This paper outlines the structure and remit of a sustainability governance structure, sustainability operational delivery group and the broad content of a sustainability strategy.
4. Both staff and students have consistently shown interest in creating a more sustainable University. More than two thirds of departments have a Green Impact team and the SU has its own Sustainability Committee. Sustainability-focused projects and pressure groups are informed by the expertise that exists within the University. Much of the work done in the area of sustainability is at a grass roots level with limited central coordination.
5. The suboptimal central coordination has led to difficulties in progressing efforts to make the University's work more sustainable. The Public Value Sub Group and the Carbon Management Group filled this coordination role on issues relating to sustainability. However, the Public Value Sub Group did not have access to an independent budget, which meant that much of the Lead Coordinator and Graduate Intern's time was spent directing queries to other departments, relying on good will to move sustainability projects forward.
6. Both the Public Value Sub Group and the Carbon Management Group have now been dissolved and the corresponding jobs have not been replaced. This has removed the formal channels for coordination of sustainability projects and the link between the University and Students' Union on sustainability issues, as Students' Union Officers sat on both groups.
7. Sustainability is an issue that is likely to grow in importance for all large institutions. By making a clear commitment to fostering a sustainable ethos, the University may enjoy reputational gains as a forward-thinking, ethical institution that has retained its founding links to the city region. Universities are well-placed to tackle issues related to sustainability by testing innovative and creative ideas and leading other organisations to improve their practices by example.

Recommendation - governance structure

8. It is recommended that Andrew Dodman, Chief Operating Officer, is given the role of UEB sponsor for sustainability, with oversight over the University's work in this area. The group further recommends that Tracy Wray takes on the role of professional services lead for sustainability and that Professor Duncan Cameron, Co-Director of P3, takes on the role of academic lead for sustainability. Sustainability related issues will also be added to the remit of the University's Health and Safety Committee.

9. It is proposed that these three staff members and Megan McGrath, the Students' Union's Development Officer, form a steering group with responsibility for overseeing the development and implementation of a sustainability strategy, which should be adopted by February 2018, and for evaluating the University's progress on sustainability. This group may require a larger membership, but this should not exceed eight. This steering group should meet three times before the end of the 2017/18 academic year.

Recommendation - management structure and operational delivery

10. It is recommended that an operational delivery group is hosted in Corporate Communications and co-chaired by Tracy Wray and Duncan Cameron. This group would prioritise two or three sustainability-related tasks to implement before the end of the 2017/18 academic year. The group would consist of academic and professional services staff and student representatives, including Megan McGrath and Naomi Guo, the chair of the Students' Union's Sustainability Committee.

11. There will be a sustainability point of contact in Corporate Communications, but it is envisaged that the bulk of the group's work will be enacted by other relevant departments. The group should feed back on its progress at meetings of the steering group and evaluate its performance at the end of the 2017/18 academic year.

12. Investing in sustainability projects will often, but not always, create savings in the medium term. However, on top of financial savings, successful sustainability related work will have reputational benefits for the University, such as improved league table positions, higher levels of engagement in the city region and greater levels of interest in the University from prospective students.

Recommendation - strategy

13. It is recommended that the University develops a sustainability strategy to inform the University's work and to further embed a culture of sustainability throughout the institution. This would not only recognise and encourage students and staff already involved in sustainability related work by showing that sustainability is an institutional priority at the highest level, but would also galvanise more interest in the University's work in this area.

14. Addressing sustainability in this way would reinforce the image of the University as a community oriented, forward-thinking institution, whilst also bringing us into line with other Russell Group universities, such as the University of Leeds, and ahead of others on this issue. Google analytics show that across eight days

during clearing this year over one third of external visitors to the University website were categorised as 'Green Living Enthusiasts'; the largest interest-based demographic. This suggests that the adoption of a sustainability strategy would deliver substantial reputational benefits for the University.

15. The sustainability strategy would be built around five of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals; *Quality Education, Affordable and Clean Energy, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Responsible Consumption and Production* and *Climate Action*. These would focus the strategy on environmental issues, whilst also granting scope for engagement with social and economic issues.

Quality Education

16. By including Quality Education in our sustainability strategy, we do not seek to make onerous new demands of academics, but to give institutional backing to academics with an interest in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). It would also empower managers in academic departments to coordinate existing ESD work, which would complement Learning and Teaching's emphasis on a 'programme level view'. Furthermore, as any University's greatest long term influence is found in the work of its alumni, as an institution we should take the opportunity to educate students on sustainability in a wide range of fields.

Affordable and Clean Energy

17. Whilst the University already considers issues of sustainability in its decision making processes, by codifying its commitment to clean energy in a strategy the University would encourage a more co-ordinated and creative approach to its energy policies. By developing a system where researchers, experienced professionals and student representatives are regularly consulted on energy policies, the University would take advantage of its position as an institution with access to a diverse pool of knowledge and experience. This joined-up approach could deliver creative solutions to decarbonisation, energy efficiency and cost-saving.

Sustainable Cities and Communities

18. Stating our commitment to the city region in the sustainability strategy would not only highlight our current work in local communities but also entrench the University's status as an integral part of local communities. By reflecting the University's deep and historic connection to the city region in the sustainability strategy, a clear link would be drawn between the University's pride in its founding connection to Sheffield and its commitment to the city's future. This would also demonstrate a broader understanding of the concept of sustainability than as an exercise in carbon reduction. This is pivotal in generating engagement with sustainability focused projects and policies among University staff and students.

Responsible Consumption and Production

19. The University's many policy documents on procurement, food consumption, water use and waste management would be brought together under a unifying set of ethical principles. Many of the University's consumption and production based policy documents are out of date. By making it clear that sustainability is an important consideration in decision making processes in all of these areas,

the University would underline its status as an organisation that takes its environmental and social responsibilities seriously. It will also provide a cohesive and transparent framework for the University's work in these fields.

Climate Action

20. By making a clear commitment to mitigating its impact on the climate, the University would clearly show that its values and actions are those of a modern, responsible institution. Whilst the Carbon Management Plan illustrates in detail how the University plans to meet its carbon reduction targets, a statement of intent on climate change would refer people to the good practices the University already employs and broadly demonstrate our plans for the future. In order to make the sustainability strategy a forward looking document, we must address our responsibility to the planet.

Tracy Wray, Director of Human Resources and Communications