



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean

Partnership

Carbon Management
and Sustainability
2020 - 2023





Background

This plan sets out the ambitions of the university partnership with regards to carbon management and sustainability for the period 2020-2023.

In contrast to other carbon management plans, this plan sits a strategic level and seeks to establish a baseline from which subsequent work will be carried out. Individual academic partners may choose to implement their own detailed local carbon management plan alongside this partnership-wide strategic plan.

This plan is owned by the Carbon Management and Sustainability Project Board, who will report to Partnership Council and relevant local bodies on progress. The Carbon Management and Sustainability Project Board have regular liaison with the Environment and Sustainability Group and an academic-led group. There is link members on both groups to ensure joined up working and sharing of good practice.

Overview

The university partnership acknowledges the Scottish Government's climate emergency declaration in May 2019.

With evidence to support climate change increasing every day one thing is clear – business as usual is no longer an option. This Partnership Carbon Management and Sustainability Plan seeks to initiate the required change in a diverse partnership of institutions who have individual starting points.

Four workstreams will be developed and establish a baseline that will allow continual measurement and management of institution and partnership level carbon footprints, along with developing improved practice with regard environment-aware behaviour, paper usage, and plastic usage.

Our academic activity forms a vital element of the partnership's work to improve our carbon management and sustainability. This takes many forms, from integration of environmental literacy in curricula through to research done by postgraduates and academics. This plan does not cover academic activity, which is coordinated by the office of the Vice-Principal (Research and Impact) via an academic-led group.





Opportunities

The university partnership, along with the planet, people of the world, governments and other educational institutions face a period of unprecedented challenges related to climate change. Meanwhile, as a partnership we face many structural challenges that do not face other further and higher education institutions. The work being carried out by the Partnership Assembly, Programme Board and related groups will help mitigate many of these challenges, but many are not within the scope of this work and will remain.

Some of these issues include but are not limited to location, rurality, access to energy sources and air travel. The university and academic partners each have their own local and unique iteration of these challenges, but responding to them as a collective will share knowledge, enhance partnership working and create opportunities that all institutions within the partnership will benefit from.

In keeping with our role in the region, we will liaise with other strategic partners such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise, local authorities, NHS Highland, Skills Development Scotland, as well as private sector organisations. We will also liaise on a local basis with third sector organisations and community partners.



The future

The Carbon Management and Sustainability Project Board have developed this plan with the aim of collectively improving on current practice and sharing knowledge. Some academic partners have made carbon savings as a result of facilities and buildings improvements, but these projects can have significant cost attached to them.

Once we have established a track record of development in the carbon management and sustainability area we will be in a better position to apply for funding for more significant projects, resulting in larger carbon savings. There will be opportunities to apply for funding individually or collectively but support could be provided on a peer-to-peer basis to improve knowledge of opportunities and likelihood of success.

We expect a reduction in carbon footprints from these workstreams based on targets that will be set following baselining. We anticipate in future plans more ambitious carbon footprint reduction will be set as we have access to more resources.

Workstream One:

Regional Carbon Footprint

This workstream will produce a regional carbon footprint. It will be produced by establishing comparable baselines across all academic partners from which calculations for reductions in carbon footprint will be taken. The initial focus will be on Scope 1 and 2 emissions, with work being done to prepare for including Scope 3.

The University and nine academic partners (Inverness College UHI, Lews Castle College UHI, Moray College UHI, North Highland College UHI, Orkney College UHI, Perth College UHI, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI, Shetland College UHI and West Highland College UHI) are obliged to submit carbon footprints in annual Climate Change Reports.

Scottish Funding Council require a carbon footprint figure in the Regional Outcome Agreement but thus far we have been unable to provide this owing to an incomplete dataset.

It is also likely that future legislation will increase the requirement on educational institutions, both in terms of volume and detail. It will be beneficial for all academic partners to reach the same level in carbon reporting in order to make the transition to potential future arrangements easier.

This information will be made available through University and academic partner websites to improve information accessibility for staff, students (current and prospective) and our partners.

Workstream outputs:

- Regional carbon footprint prepared for SFC return and Climate Change Reports in autumn 2020
- Shared methodology for obtaining local carbon footprint data
- Development towards sector best practice in anticipation of future legislation
- Local and partnership targets for reduction to be set after data collection

Workstream Two:

Awareness Raising and Shaping Pro-Environment Behaviour

This is an overarching workstream that aims to increase awareness and shape pro-environment behaviour among staff and students across the partnership, as well as potential students and our partners. The ambition for this workstream is for there to be a baseline of awareness and pro-environment behaviours across the partnership which will facilitate future development. We will also improve how potential students and our partners can access information about what we do to reduce our environmental impact.

Work will be done to raise awareness of the carbon footprint and monetary cost of:

- Electricity
- Staff Travel
- Single use plastics
- Heating
- Paper usage
- Recycling

Publicity campaigns will raise the profile of the work being done in the partnership, highlighting reduction strategies and alternatives through Yammer, MyDay, digital screens and local communications. The aim of this is to gradually change the behaviours of staff and students by improving awareness of the most beneficial options available.

Workstream Three: Paper Usage Reduction

This workstream focuses on efforts to reduce overall paper usage and disposal. Workstream Two focuses on the soft measures of awareness raising and behaviour through reducing printing and increasing awareness of the cost and environment impact of printing. This workstream seeks to build on the work done by the Environment and Sustainability Group, including a detailed survey with suggestions from staff and students.

This workstream requires engagement with Learning and Information Service, academic partner IT and procurement staff to assess contracts and provision. A new baseline will be established to optimise printer paper usage. Baselining again will be kept in establishing the success of the project.

Workstream outputs:

- Baseline for printing across the partnership
- Assessment of areas for particular focus-Plan developed with LIS and IT colleagues to reduce overall paper usage and tackle areas for particular focus
- Tie in work to Workstream Two, particularly with awareness raising for printing volume and savings being made
- Local and partnership targets for reduction to be set after data collection



Workstream Four: Single Use Plastic Reduction

This workstream will formalise and expand the partnership's contribution to a high-profile environmental issue: single use plastic reduction.

Media coverage has significantly increased public awareness of the damage that single use plastics causes to the environment and many educational institutions are now taking significant steps to reducing their single use plastic consumption.

Workstream Two contains soft measures that will seek to influence people to reduce their consumption of single use plastics, but this workstream will develop concrete measures to reduce single use plastics (and also where possible single use materials such as coffee cups and polystyrene food trays).

There has been a significant amount of work done in other institutions, with Dundee and Angus College receiving industry recognition for their Planet Before Profit campaign. Further engagement with them and other sector-leading organisations will be sought to understand their processes.

Workstream outputs:

- Liaising with facilities teams in academic partners to gain insight into current recycling practice and plastic wastage
- Identify strategies to a) avoid usage, b) explore reuse (e.g.composting) and c) improve recycling
- Local and partnership targets for reduction to be set after data collection



Measurement and Reporting

The university and academic partners will publish the partnership plan, local plans and baselining information online provided the information is not commercially sensitive. In keeping with our attempts to become more transparent in relation to carbon management and sustainability we will share more data online individually and collectively, even if we have regressed against targets we set. If there is regression, we will analyse the reasons why and publish lessons learned online.

Future Partnership Carbon Management Plans

This plan will be rewritten in 2023 to cover 2023-2026. At that time, consideration will be given to the make-up of the group who will write the new plan, including internal and external stakeholders, in order to produce an ambitious yet realistic plan that reflects development in the sector and the country. Should legislative changes or external drivers require the current plan to be rewritten before 2023, consideration will be given to the membership of the group and new staff added if necessary.

