**Date:** 3rd October 2022

**Time:** 10 - 11.30am

**Venue:** Virtual

[**Resources**](https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/community_engagement_topic_support_network_clim)

**MINUTES**

**Community Engagement Topic Support Network: Climate Conversation on Campus**

**Attendees:**

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| Alice Smith | AS | EAUC-Scotland |
| Alison Clayton | AC | University of Nottingham |
| Arlene Barclay | AB | SRUC |
| Cameron MacKay | CM | University of Strathclyde |
| Derek Cowie | DC | APUC |
| Eleanor Wills | EW | Bournemouth University |
| Fergal McCauley | FM | City of Glasgow College |
| Hannah Morgan | HM | University of Bristol |
| John Thorne | JT | Glasgow School of Art |
| Kathrin Mobius | KM | EAUC-Scotland |
| Neil McBeth | NM | University of Strathclyde |
| Rod Strachan | RS | Robert Gordon University |

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| **10.00** | **Welcome and Introductions** *John Thorne, Sustainability Coordinator, Glasgow School of Art*  JT welcomed everyone to the meeting and led a round of introductions.  FM has just held a Switch Off campaign and their IT team has started switching off computers centrally every evening.  NM has also been working on a Switch Off campaign. They have just gotten a full Ovo Bikes scheme membership and will be working on a storytelling campaign around cycling.  RS is working on Sustainable Travel policy and Net Zero goal, with carbon reduction teams creating an element of competition.  KM is working on an Energy guide for the sector.  EW is working on heat decarbonisation, biodiversity, procurement and engagement – including climate action training for management.  HM is working on carbon literacy and climate science education for staff and students, as well as a departmental climate action plan.  AB is working on developing Climate Impact teams across SRUC’s five main campuses.  DC is working on escalating the climate conversation to a higher level of management.  JT is working on signposting low cost and low carbon resources to students. GSA shares a Cycling Officer with the University of Glasgow. |
| **10.20** | **Roundtable discussion: how do we make use of national campaigns such as Scotland’s Climate Week to further the climate conversation on campus?** *John Thorne, Sustainability Coordinator, Glasgow School of Art*  JT gave some examples of national campaign days, weeks and months, and asked which institutions had previously promoted.  NM said that they had done a Walk to Work project and promoted the Step Count challenge. People seem to like a challenge.  EW said that they do a Green Week in November and a Climate Week in March, as well as Fair Trade Fortnight and a Cycling Day in June. Some of these dates don’t align well with student timetables.    JT said that sometimes the days don’t work with academic timetables. Fashion Day in April means that GSA students are often too stressed with end of term submissions to engage.  JT raised Glasgow Goes Green, a collaborative series of events hosted by four universities in Glasgow.  JT raised Veganuary, saying that GSA’s chefs enjoyed the challenge and they have a high proportion of vegan students.  NM said that their canteen is using the term “plant-forward” rather than vegan to frame this as giving something extra rather than taking something away – for example, by adding a charge for meat.  AS raised issues of communication and engagement around catering – people consistently react negatively to “meat-free” and “vegan” messaging.  KM explained the behavioural science behind this – intention is influenced by attitude; pushing an idea doesn’t change attitude or perceived norm.  JT has worked with Climate Psychology Alliance in the past – telling people the truth can be scary, put people off.  HM said that if you want to engage people, scaring them is counterproductive. This year they have felt interest in climate events waning, while also seeing increased climate anxiety. They are asking how they can reframe the conversation to be more uplifting and less scary.  NM said that we need to be asking people to find the time for these issues.  JT raised part-time contracts – finding time for training is tricky, management needs to prioritise it. |
| **10.40** | **Case study: Opening dialogues at all levels**  *Cameron MacKay, University of Strathclyde*  [Please see the Sustainability Exchange for a recording of Cameron’s presentation.](https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/community_engagement_topic_support_network_clim)  CM introduced the Climate Change Communication guide for Scotland. This summary of best practice gathered expertise from businesses, academics, Climate Psychology Alliance etc.  CM emphasised importance of “non-environmental drivers” and inclusivity.  Through Carbon Literacy delivery, CM’s team was able to take responsibility for a KPI, speaking the language of SMT. This was a positive story for the university, and CM acknowledged the risk of greenwashing. They were also able to capitalise on COP26 engagement in the city.  What is the value of training?   * Entertainment – the delivery is fun, funny, upbeat * Brings staff and students together, opening a line of communication and allowing catharsis * Helps the university with reporting * Learning about staff and student demands   CM acknowledged failures highlighted in feedback from students to staff:   * No transparency on campaigns, including divestment – students wanted to work with the university, but instead were made adversarial by lack of transparency * Meeting delays and postponements * Students hear commitments but don’t see actions   Next steps:   * Bringing action group to Task Group Meetings with Leadership * Fewer staff representatives to avoid calendar conflicts * Circulate feedback with Leadership Team   CM closed by quoting drag artist Pattie Gonia – “We have to connect to climate now so that we can act on it from a place of connection and love”. CM emphasised the importance of engaging at an emotional level.  CM starts a new role at the University of Glasgow as Communications Coordinator for GALLANT shortly. To keep in touch please email [info@cameronmackay.co.uk](mailto:info@cameronmackay.co.uk). Contact the Sustainability team at the University of Strathclyde at [sustainability@strath.ac.uk](mailto:sustainability@strath.ac.uk).  **Q&A**  NM said that transparency with students’ points were eye opening. We can’t just be the information we are curating.  CM said that academics tend to think they know best, but students want to and should lead on these issues.  JT raised leadership training from EAUC. The gamechanger is when these issues become part of the mainstream strategy and focus.  KM appreciated the idea of humour and entertainment. Finding the right level is hard, but when you do it is very gratifying and helps with climate anxiety.  CM said that entertainment is storytelling. Narrative arcs, story-structure and resolution are comforting as they take you through a range of emotions and leave you somewhere safe.  JT says young people are blameless – why should they feel guilty or blamed?  CM said that queer theory has something for everyone, creating communities that are more inclusive and accepting. A queer, decentralised, non-normative shared vision for the future is a great a way to start having fun. |
| **11.30** | **Thanks and Close** |