

## **Sustainability Engagement Plan 2023/2024 - 2024-2025**

### **Background**

The University of Kent recognises that communication and engagement are key to achieving the ambitious objectives set out in our Sustainability Strategy for Climate and the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). As such the Sustainability team, working in conjunction with central communications, are working on delivering against several objectives included in the sustainability strategy action plan.

It is important that we show our students, staff, and the wider community the progress we are making towards becoming more sustainable, as well as encouraging others to get involved to help combat Climate Change. Having a visible sustainability presence can also help attract new students to Kent, with GenZ being the generation who are potentially most concerned about Climate Change and the global environmental impact.

### **Aims**

- To **raise awareness about sustainability progress** at Kent, for example sustainability reports
- To share **sustainability successes** with internal and external audiences
- To **build sense of community around sustainability** at Kent, for example Sustainability Champions network and Kent Community Oasis Garden
- Build momentum and **inspire action** from our Kent community
- To provide opportunities for all to **engage with and learn** about sustainability challenges and solution
- To be transparent about the challenges and build a community around finding solutions

Last updated: June 2024 by Emily Mason.

## Engagement Programmes and Opportunities

Engagement Programme/Area	Stakeholders	Objective 2023/24	Objective 2024/25
Staff / Student induction Training	Staff Student	Review staff induction training and work with HR to improve uptake rate to 40%	Develop student sustainability induction to roll out in 2025/26 academic year
Sustainability Champions Network	Staff	Develop and trial new champions network model	Run year one of new model and review outcomes
Kent COG	Staff Student Community	Complete year one of KentCOG strategy objectives and report on progress	Complete year two of KentCOG strategy objectives and report on progress
Carbon Literacy / ESD	Staff Student	Launch Sustainability pathway on Target connect Run 2 carbon literacy courses for students Secure funding to deliver CL training to staff.	Offer CL training to staff through staff connect
Sustainability network / Societies	Student	Connect with the KU sab lead for Sustainability. Continue supporting student groups and societies on request	Connect with the KU sab lead for Sustainability. Continue supporting student groups and societies on request
Staff consultation / Biodiversity Forum	Staff	Review and trial new model of the forum.	Adopt trial results.
Right to Food / Civic Mission	Staff Community	Represent sustainability on the Right to Food Steering Group Participate in the NCIA programme Develop River of Vegetation project	Represent sustainability on the Right to Food Steering Group Deliver River of Vegetation project
Website / Social Media	Staff Student Future Student Community	Annual review of website Maintain Instagram Regular internal news stories	Annual review of website Maintain Instagram Regular internal news stories
Reporting	Staff Student Future Student Community	Publish sustainability round up	Publish sustainability round up

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CCAP / CDBN	Community	Participate in CCAP climate action awards and festival 2023 Maintain engagement with CDBN Organising Committee and build on partnerships	Participate in CCAP climate action awards and festival 2024 Maintain engagement with CDBN Organising Committee and build on partnerships
Recruitment activity	Future Student	Include SDGs, Curriculum and alumni case studies on course landing pages	Embed sustainable events practice into open days and applicant days
UPP Waste Engagement Programme	Student	Support UPP to complete year 1 of SOS student residences engagement programme	tbc
Other	All	Begin development of 'Secret Sustainability' – highlighting the ways the University are working on sustainability that might not be immediately obvious  Personal stories from Sustainability Champions and students/societies  Celebrating sustainability successes big and small	Deliver secret sustainability project

## Sustainability - Communications Plan

This is a light-touch communications plan outlining how the Communications Team can support sustainability communications at Kent. This will support the Health, Safety and Environmental Sustainability (HSES) Team's own communications activity, and that of Future Student and Brand (responsible for marketing communications to prospective students).

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### Audience/Insight

It is important that we show our students, staff, and the wider community the progress we are making towards becoming more sustainable, as well as encouraging others to get involved to help combat Climate Change.

Our four key audiences are:

#### **Kent staff**

- 34% of U.K. office workers would refuse a job offer if a company's environmental, sustainability or climate control values do not align with their own (Robert Walters).

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- More than 40% of Gen Z and Millennials have changed jobs or sectors due to climate concerns, or plan to do so in the future (Deloitte).

### **Kent students**

- Over 60% of all university students want to learn more about sustainability, with 87 per cent of all students agreeing that their universities should take sustainability seriously (NUS).

### **Prospective students**

- Having a visible sustainability presence can help attract new students to Kent, with GenZ being the generation who are potentially most concerned about Climate Change and the global environmental impact.
- Gen Z (72%) and boomer (68%) consumers globally were very or extremely concerned about the environment in 2023.

### **External stakeholders/partners**

- More than 8,000 companies and countries representing 90% of the global GDP have committed to reaching net zero by 2050. They will be looking for us as a partner to have a commitment to sustainability too.
- 49% of organizations developed new climate-friendly products or services in 2023. Raising the profile of our sustainability expertise will help us foster collaborations to support this.
- Between February 2022 and February 2023, LinkedIn job postings requiring at least one green skill have grown by a median of 15.2% and the median LinkedIn hiring rate for workers with at least one green skill is 29% higher than the workforce average. Raising the profile of how we're embedding sustainability will attract graduate employers.

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## Strategy/Ideas

We will deliver the following activities through these channels:

Audience	Sub-Audience	Channel	Info
Staff		Staff Newsletter	Weekly (Wednesdays). Managed by Sophie Connor/Rhys Higgins
		Staff News	Ad-hoc
		Intranet	Ad-hoc
Students		Student news	Ad-hoc
	Postgraduate Taught	Email newsletter	Weekly (Wednesdays), managed by the Graduate Researcher College
	Postgraduate Research	Email newsletter	Weekly (Wednesdays), managed by the Graduate Researcher College
		Digital Screens	Managed centrally by Communications (mainly Miriam Sandiford/Alice Allwright). Divisions and Department also manage at local level (their screens also show the central content)
		Student emails	Themed emails (ad hoc) and start/end of term emails. Miriam Sandiford/Allie Burnett/Helen Kirk
		Social media (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/TikTok)	Ad-hoc, managed by James Mercer
External businesses		Email newsletter	Quarterly (April, July, October, January), managed by Emily Collins
		LinkedIn	Business and Partnerships managed by Emily Collins
Alumni and prospective donors		Alumni newsletter	Monthly, managed by Hannah Collins
	Website	Sustainability website	Ad-hoc Managed by HSES
		Research Round-Up	Quarterly. Managed by Emily Collins

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		News Centre	Daily. Managed by press office
	Earned media	Press releases/exclusives/feature pitches	Ad-hoc. Managed by the press office

## Achievements and milestones

To raise awareness about sustainability progress at Kent, we will share sustainability stories with relevant audiences in line with key dates/milestones. The HSES team will support this by sharing news stories with the press office ([pressoffice@kent.ac.uk](mailto:pressoffice@kent.ac.uk)) who will then triage them to the rest of the communications team according to the intended audience. This will ensure that they are communicated through the most appropriate channels to maximise reach and engagement.

## Sustainability-related research

We want to raise awareness of Kent's sustainability expertise and how Kent research is driving sustainability. Emily Collins will support this by identifying sustainability-related research and emphasising sustainability impact when creating content for the news centre, Research Round-up and social media.

## Sustainability explainers

We want to be transparent and provide opportunities for all to engage with and learn about sustainability challenges and solutions. Emily Mason and Catherine Morris will work with James Mercer's team to develop some short videos providing answers to commonly asked sustainability questions, such as:

- Questions about maintenance of university grounds
- Is the University of Kent going plant-based?
- What happens to our food waste and can we compost it?

These will be shared with students on social media and Rhys Higgins will schedule these into the staff newsletter throughout the year in line with key dates e.g. bird nesting season.

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## Sustainability in the Life

To help build momentum and inspire action from our Kent community, Rhys Higgins will add a sustainability-related question to the weekly 'Day in the Life' feature in the staff newsletter. This will give Kent staff the chance to share their own sustainability actions and inspire others to follow suit.

## Annual Earth Day

HSES team to update their Sustainability Round up with Alice Allwright supporting them to produce a video summarising their key achievements. These will then be shared on social media and via the staff/student comms channels.

## Greenwashing guidance

It is important that our communications aren't perceived as 'greenwashing'. Catherine Morris and Emily Mason will produce a summary of anti-greenwashing communications guidance for the Sustainability intranet page which we can then support them to share with staff.

## Implementation

The above activities will be delivered over the course of the next year and, where relevant, will be aligned with the following key dates:

High priority dates will always form part of our communications whereas low priority dates will depend on other commitments, initiatives or events taking place.

Month	Awareness day/week/month	Priority	2024 content ideas
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September		High	
	Organic September (all month) Recycle Week (20 <sup>th</sup> - 26 <sup>th</sup> )	Low	Recycling myths
October			
	No disposable cup day (4 <sup>th</sup> )	Low	KBS Coffee Cup Research (Emily Collins) Reusable cup discounts
November			
	World toilet day (19 <sup>th</sup> ) National tree week (27 <sup>th</sup> - 5 <sup>th</sup> )	High Low	
December	Coppicing activities start	High	Explainer on coppicing for Biodiversity (EM/Grounds Team).
	Festive season / End of term	Low	Sustainable Christmas Shutdown practices
January	Veganuary (all month)	High	
	Big Energy Saving Week (8 <sup>th</sup> - 24 <sup>th</sup> ) Big garden bird watch (26 <sup>th</sup> - 28 <sup>th</sup> )	Low	
February		High	
		Low	
March	Start of bird nesting season	High	Explainer: we don't trim hedges in the summer (repeat in May/June)
	Food waste action week (1 <sup>st</sup> - 7 <sup>th</sup> )		Explainer: why we don't compost our food waste (yet)(Catherine Morris)
	Earth Hour (27 <sup>th</sup> )		

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	SDG teach-in (all month)		
April	Earth Day (22 <sup>nd</sup> )	High	Sustainability Update with video (Emily Mason/Catherine Morris/Alice Allwright) shared via staff/student channels
		Low	
May	Bird nesting season	High	Explainer: we don't trim hedges in the summer
	No Mow May (all month)	High	
	Annual Bioblitz (date varies)	High	News Centre/social media/staff newsletter/part of student emails
	Hedgehog awareness week (1 <sup>st</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> )	Low	
	National walking month (all month)		Staff photos of walks to work? (Rhys Higgins)
June	UK overshoot day (3 <sup>rd</sup> )	High	
	Show your stripes day (21 <sup>st</sup> )		Net Zero comms
	World refill day (16 <sup>th</sup> )	Low	Map of refill points on campus
July	Plastic free July (all month)	High	
		Low	
August	Earth overshoot day (tbc)	High	#movethedate
	Cycle to work day (5 <sup>th</sup> )		

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	National allotments week (12 <sup>th</sup> –18 <sup>th</sup> )	Low	Focus on Kent Community Oasis Garden (Emily Mason)
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This is a live document so the above table will be constantly added to and revised. (Last updated June 2024)

## Evaluation and Reporting

There are a number of ways we will monitor the success of these activities:

- Staff newsletter views/clicks
- Website views
- Earned media coverage
- Social media engagement/views

We will collect this information in our first full academic year of this plan as our baseline. Progress and achievements will be reported internally as part of our Environmental Management System Reporting, as well as our annual Earth Day Round up which is publicly available.

## Resourcing

This plan will be enacted but the Communications Team and Sustainability utilising existing capacity. Where coms are linked to specific projects e.g. Kent Community Oasis Garden, then any additional resources required will be sourced from project budgets.