

# Sustainability Policy



## THE UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING STUDENTS' UNION

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### 1. Introduction

The University of Stirling Students' Union, hereinafter referred to as 'the Union', is committed to equality for all. We will demonstrate this by being a signatory of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), by taking a pro-active and inclusive approach to sustainable development and by participating in external sustainability standards such as Green Impact Students' Unions.

### 2. Scope of Policy

This policy covers all members of the Union, as defined in Section 6 of the Union's Constitution, as well as Union staff, volunteers and Trustees. It is the responsibility of all to acquaint themselves with this policy and its principles. This policy will extend to all aspects of our operational activity. It will also apply to all those engaging with the Union, beyond those already listed, including clients, contractors, consultants and partners.

### 3. Purpose

This policy is to ensure that sustainable development is a priority for the Union. We will be working to guarantee that the Union and the University's activities have minimal impact on the environment.

### 4. Policy Statement

This policy is informed by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2016-2030 and the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report (2018). Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 commits Scotland to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050. The UN SDGs are a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice. The seventeen goals interconnect and in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve each Goal and target by 2030. The seventeen interconnected goals are;

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| 1. No Poverty                               | 10. Reduced Inequalities                   |
| 2. Zero Hunger                              | 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities     |
| 3. Good Health and Well-Being               | 12. Responsible Consumption and Production |
| 4. Quality Education                        | 13. Climate Action                         |
| 5. Gender Equality                          | 14. Life Below Water                       |
| 6. Clean Water and Sanitation               | 15. Life on Land                           |
| 7. Affordable and Clean Energy              | 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions |
| 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth          | 17. Partnerships for the Goals             |
| 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. |  |

The IPCC Special Report (2018) sets out that, globally, we need to limit global warming to 1.5°C to prevent forecast widespread catastrophic consequences to society and the natural environment from 2°C of warming. The report highlights that the world is already experiencing the consequences of 1°C of global warming for example through more extreme weather, rising sea levels and diminishing Arctic sea ice. To limit warming to 1.5°C will require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.

## **5. General Principals**

*5.1 This policy reflects the Union's core values and exists to:*

- i. Ensure that the Union carries out its activities within a framework that complies with legislative requirements;
- ii. Ensure that the Union is pro-active in promoting sustainability development;
- iii. Commit the Union to monitoring the implementation of this policy and the evaluation of its effectiveness.

*5.2 Our commitment*

We will work to embed positive, lifelong environmental, ethical, and sustainable practices into Union operations, the University and wider community. We'll provide opportunities for students to get involved in our projects and activities which focus on environmental and sustainability issues. By doing so, we'll create positive impacts to student health and wellbeing and contribute to changing and challenging community attitudes and behaviours to the impacts of socio-economic development and climate change.

## **6. Roles & Responsibilities**

Overall responsibility for implementation of this policy lies with all Union staff. Day-to-day implementation of the policy will be the responsibility of the Environmental Development Coordinator and VP Communities, with support from the Sustainability Officer.

## **7. Provision**

The Union will provide information sessions and workshops as and when required for new staff and relevant student officer positions or future policy changes.

## **8. Monitoring and Review**

The Environmental Development Coordinator will be responsible for monitoring the day-to-day implementation of the policy. There will be a Sustainability Working Group, which will consist of the President, VP Communities, Chief Executive, Environmental Development Coordinator and the Sustainability Officer. The Working Group will meet once every semester to assess and assist with implementation of the policy. The Working Group will consult with relevant people and organisations to help inform their implementation of Union policy to meet best practices.

*8.1 Promotion & Publicity*

- i. The Students' Union will ensure transparent annual reports are published online.

## **9. Areas of work**

In line with the Union's overall Strategic Plan (2018-2021), the Union will address five core aspects of sustainability:

### ***9.1 Embedding sustainability within the Union***

We will embed sustainability within all organizational activities and ensure best practices are followed by utilizing the Green Impact Award as a framework. We will also work with the University to achieve Fairtrade University accreditation and engage with Green Impact Universities.

### ***9.2 Minimising our environmental footprint***

We acknowledge that many of our activities have the potential to cause significant damage to environment, both locally and globally. We will continue to minimize our environmental footprint through operational changes, investments and campaigns, explicitly linking the benefits of strong corporate social responsibility leadership to enhancing the student experience and building a strong community.

More specifically, we aim to:

- Establish a Union carbon footprint incorporating all Scope 1 and 2 emissions, and several Scope 3 emissions <sup>1</sup>;
- Reduce our operational carbon, water and waste footprint through infrastructural investments and behavioral change;
- Increase the carbon savings generated through the Green and Blue Space to offset the Union's negative carbon footprint;
- Offset the remaining carbon footprint through purchasing "carbon credits" <sup>2</sup> to become a "carbon neutral"<sup>3</sup> Students' Union.

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<sup>1</sup> Scope 1 and 2 emissions are direct emission sources from an organisation; for the Union these include the emissions arising from use of electricity and heating. Scope 3 emissions are indirect emissions sources from an organisation; for the Union these include the emissions arising from travel (business, sports, clubs and societies, staff commuting) and waste disposal. For more information view [www.carbontrust.com/resources/faqs/services/scope-3-indirect-carbon-emissions/](http://www.carbontrust.com/resources/faqs/services/scope-3-indirect-carbon-emissions/)

<sup>2</sup> Carbon credits are credits that pay for the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere from an emissions reduction project. A credit is usually measured as 1 tonne of carbon dioxide equivalence and can be used to compensate for the emissions the purchasing organisation generates. This system can also be referred to as "carbon-offsetting".

<sup>3</sup> A carbon neutral footprint is one where the sum of the greenhouse gas emissions produced by an organisation is offset by carbon credits.

### ***9.3 Campaigning for sustainability***

The UN SDGs demonstrate that sustainable development is not solely about carbon reductions but involves creating an equitable society. Using student feedback, and supporting the UN SDGs, we will look to expand our current range of sustainable development projects and campaigns, providing meaningful opportunities for students to develop new skills, social networks and contribute to creative wider societal change.

In addition to adapting future campaigns to a changing socio-environmental landscape, we will focus on:

- Advocating for the removal of University fossil fuel investments as part of its Social Ethical Investment Policy;
- Working with the University to create biodiverse spaces on campus and provide learning and research opportunities for students to develop surveying and monitoring skills;
- Calling for the University to match sector-leading commitments and set an ambitious timeframe for becoming carbon neutral;
- Pressing the University for further reductions of single-use waste on campus whilst improving waste management facilities.

### ***9.4 Embedding sustainability in the curriculum***

To face the interdisciplinary challenges of the present and future, students and graduates must be able to place the work they will do in the context of addressing wide-ranging and often inter-related societal issues. To support this, the University curriculum should play an active role in framing subject matter in the context of sustainable development issues and demonstrate how the knowledge and skills graduates are equipped with can support a more equitable and sustainable society.

To achieve this, we will work to:

- Advocate the embedding of subject-specific sustainability in the curriculum across all degree programmes;
- Increase the use of the University campus's natural and human capital as a resource for student learning and research;
- Implement paperless dissertation submissions across all bachelor programmes;
- Advocate the inclusion of "sustainability" where appropriate in grading of research

### ***9.5 Improving sustainable travel***

Transport contributed to 34% of UK CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2017<sup>4</sup>. Despite UK carbon dioxide emissions were 43% lower in 2017 than in 1990, emissions from transport decreased by only 1% over the same period. Given the local geography, strong local partnerships and established local cycling services, the city centre of Stirling and the University are exceptionally well placed to embed sustainable travel within the local community. However, local and national investment in sustainable travels remains low.

To address this, we aim to:

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<sup>4</sup> Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2018) 2017 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Provisional Figures.

- Through advocacy, improve the accessibility and quality of sustainable travel options within the University and wider community, highlighting their benefits to physical, environmental and economic wellbeing;
- Seek external funding to improve infrastructure and services to better support students walking and cycling to and from the University;
- Continue discussions with public transport providers to improve service provision and value as based on student feedback.