Sustainability Strategy 2015-2020

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Context

Sustainability has been engrained within the University since its origins. On 2nd June 1928, as King George V and Queen Mary were set to open the Trent Building and pronounce University Park as our new home, Sir Jesse Boot wrote [1]:

… In each succeeding age the University will spread the light of learning and knowledge and will bind science and industry in the unity that is so essential for the prosperity of the nation and the welfare of our fellow citizens…

Building upon this the University has developed extensively over the last nine decades and is now established as one of the world's leading research and teaching institutions. Today we have five UK based campuses, as well as campuses in Malaysia and China, and have a staff of 9,000 and a student population in excess of 44,520 globally[2].

As a major global organisation we recognise that we have an environmental, economic and societal impact locally, nationally and internationally. Increasingly our students, staff and our local community partners recognise and expect the University to be a leading advocate of sustainability in its teaching, learning, research, decision-making and operations.

In an increasingly competitive student market how we perform is an increasingly important element of student choice. We influence our students through our curriculum, teaching and research and also by the environs, the campus experience, our decision-making and through the leadership of the University.

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[1] The University of Nottingham: Global Strategy 2020
[2] http://nottingham.ac.uk/about/facts/studentpopulation20152016.aspx (May 2016)

The development of Global Strategy 2020 clearly defines a mandate for the further development of our sustainability agenda.

The Global Strategy 2020 sets core principles and values and commits the University to:

- Think **globally**, deliver **locally**, and engage personally
- Sustain our commitment to being comprehensive, research intensive **and socially responsible**
- Put **students at the heart** of the University
- **Value all staff** and support them to excel
- Take an **international outlook** across all our activities
- Focus on **excellence** and quality
- Value **diversity** and promote **equality**
- **Enrich our heritage** and build on the legacy of Sir Jesse Boot, to **honour our public benefit obligations** to current and future generations of students, alumni and staff, and the communities in which we are embedded

It is within this context, building upon environmental excellence over the last decade, that our sustainability strategy has been developed.

Vision

The University of Nottingham will support a community that contributes towards a socially responsible and sustainable global society. Our objective is to be net-positive and to contribute more to society than we take, with responsibility broader than just reducing our environmental impact.

The University has made significant progress in driving forward the environmental agenda over the last decade and is seen as a global leader in this arena. This strategy sets out six strategic aims and key objectives for the next five years. It builds upon and celebrates our successes and defines a framework for delivering a truly sustainable University. This strategy sets the framework for more detailed plans (where appropriate) to be developed that will deliver the aims around six key areas.

1. Student Experience
2. Education for Sustainability
3. Research for Sustainability
4. Partnership and Engagement
5. Operations for Sustainability
6. Governance and Quality Assurance

Vision

Student Experience

Aim 1:

To enhance the student experience by providing an environment that fosters learning for sustainability.

Over the lifetime of this strategy we will:

- Support our staff and students to be responsible citizens and an active part of the local community wherever they live and study;
- Promote opportunities for the University community to get involved with volunteering opportunities and encourage the use of our campuses by the wider community;
- Provide opportunities for students to identify and develop their skills and understanding of sustainability;
- Evolve towards a smart campus where we can integrate our campus, teaching and research so that our campuses become 'living laboratories' to demonstrate that we practice what we teach and vice versa;
- Actively promote the investments made in the campus to our community of students and work actively with the Students' Union and other bodies;

Case Study:

Each year over 3,000 students sign up to volunteer in the local community. The Student Volunteer Centre matches the needs of charities and community groups from all over Nottingham with the interests and passions of students. These students make a positive contribution to the communities in which they are temporarily resident. They take part in a range of projects from literacy schemes in Nottingham schools to environmental projects in the Lenton and Dunkirk communities.

Vets in the Community

The University has established a student-led veterinary clinic to deliver healthcare to the pets of homeless and vulnerably-housed people living in the city. Under the supervision of suitably qualified staff, veterinary students provide health checks and treatment for simple conditions such as ear and eye infections. Animals brought to the clinics also receive preventive care, such as vaccinations and flea and worm treatments.

While benefiting pet owners, the initiative is also set to provide students with practical experience and the opportunity to build on their communication, management and organisation skills.

Education for Sustainability

Aim 2:

To enable all staff and students access to learning that enhances their understanding of sustainability.

Over the lifetime of this strategy we will:

- Encourage and support the development of sustainability learning within both the formal and informal curriculum;
- Work with faculties to embed education for sustainability in their curricula;
- Continue to provide staff and students with opportunities to develop skills for sustainability through a range of teaching and learning opportunities including online learning;
- Support the University's wider employability objectives and create opportunities for students to engage in sustainability activities; and
- Actively showcase and promote good practice through our social media, website, conferences and seminars, as appropriate.

Case Study: Sustainability, Society and You

In 2013 the University launched a new **"Perspectives on Sustainability" Nottingham Open Online Course (NOOC),** which considered sustainability from a range of different perspectives. This included content from geography, engineering, business and the arts and humanities but also from the perspectives of different stakeholder groups: students, employers and professions, corporate and academic staff working in higher education. This area has grown from strength to strength with this first module attracting more than 1,000 learners from across the University.

Mindful of the global context of the sustainability agenda and our commitment to sustainability globally, we developed this further and have used a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) to create an interdisciplinary online course 'Sustainability, Society and You'.

The MOOC was delivered twice in 2014, again in 2015 and has engaged 17,000 learners many of whom were local learners as well as from around the globe, allowing for varied and lively debate. From October 2014 the NOOC course 'Perspectives on Sustainability' was approved as a first year undergraduate elective and is offered for both academic and Nottingham Advantage Award credit. More recently we have seen the development of further online teaching with a MOOC recently launched that aims to understand the issue of fracking and a NOOC within the International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility (ICCSR) within the Business School.

Research for Sustainability

Aim 3:

To support and promote research related to sustainability and ensure that our operations are informed by this research.

Over the lifetime of this strategy we will:

- Work with the research community to understand where there are opportunities for collaboration between operational and research-led activities that will actively demonstrate our commitment to sustainability;
- Capture and communicate current research activity in sustainability and signpost key activity on the University's sustainability web pages, social media and newsletter;
- Identify and support opportunities that exist to conduct sustainability-related research across our campuses;
- Ensure the research community is engaged with and has access to current operational activities and data particularly through annual reports and case studies; and
- Actively engage with the research community to invite their inputs and support undergraduate and postgraduate research.

Case Study:

Creative Energy Homes is a £1.9m project that is a key resource, particularly with respect to micro-smart grids energy storage, demand-side management and occupants' acceptance of innovative technologies.

The seven-house development provides a living test site for leading firms including E.ON, David Wilson Homes, BASF, Roger Bullivant, the Mark Group, Tarmac and Saint Gobain, to work with the University to investigate the integration of energy efficient technologies into houses.

This high profile project attracts over 3,000 visitors every year, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Climate and Housing Ministers, MPs, Vice Chancellors, industry, Government departments, schools and colleges.

The houses are occupied by families and their experiences help to inform the research; the houses are used for both formal and informal teaching. The research findings have fed into the UK Government's Green Deal strategy and the Nottingham Community Climate Change Strategy, and have received widespread acclaim through a number of public engagement activities, reaching out to over 5 million people.

Partnership and engagement

Aim 4:

Provide opportunities where staff, students and the wider community can develop and share their knowledge of, and contribute to, making The University of Nottingham more sustainable.

Over the lifetime of this strategy we will:

- Collaborate with the Students' Union, student societies and other bodies;

- Develop our communications and engagement strategy to support this strategy;

- Communicate and promote current sustainability activities and achievements to staff, students and alumni;

- Create opportunities where staff and students can get involved in practical sustainability activities;

- Maintain, and further develop, networks of staff and student sustainability champions at School and Faculty level; and

- Provide opportunities for community engagement in sustainability activities at the University.

Operations for Sustainability

Our campus operations cover a wider range of areas and these areas outlined below all contribute to address the overarching aim as detailed below. For each of these areas detailed plans have either been developed or are in development.

Aim 5:

To reduce the impact of our operational activities and make a positive contribution to the local environment through the effective management of our estate and operations.

We will do this through:

Carbon management

Aim 5.1: To use energy more efficiently, move towards a lower carbon intensity with less dependency on fossil fuels and contribute to achieving a 34% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020.

Objective: To reduce energy use across the estate and to increase the amount of onsite generation

Supporting document: Carbon Management Plan – Key objectives of this are:

1. Carbon reduction
2. Cost reduction
3. Resilience
4. Student experience
5. Revenue generation

Waste management

Aim 5.2: To develop and implement waste management practices in line with the waste hierarchy

Objectives: to minimise the amount of waste generated and to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill through recycling and reuse initiatives

Supporting documents: Waste Management Plan and Procurement Strategy

Built environment

Aim 5.3: To reduce the environmental impact of our buildings and refurbishment projects

Objective: to ensure new buildings and refurbishments take into account sustainable construction principles and address the range of environmental issues relevant to them.

Supporting documents: Estate Strategy and BREEAM assessments

Travel and Transport

Aim 5.4: to reduce the impact of the University's travel demands

Objectives: to reduce the need to travel and to further improve the sustainable transport options available to those travelling to and between our campuses.

Supporting documents: Corporate Travel Plans and Business Travel Policy

Biodiversity

Aim 5.5: to protect and enhance the rich biodiversity we have on our campuses

Objective: to enhance our campuses to improve their ecological and social value

Supporting documents: Landscape Management Plans, Biodiversity Strategy and BREEAM assessments

Procurement

Aim 5.6: To promote and influence the purchase of goods and services that have minimal impact on the environment and offer a positive social and economic contribution.

The University of Nottingham is committed to sustainable procurement. Purchasing decisions have major social-economic and environmental implications, locally, nationally and globally, now and for generations to come. To enable a net-positive outcome we have to embed a culture adopting sustainability practices when making decisions which support our core activities.

Objectives:
- Develop, disseminate and adopt a Sustainable Procurement Policy covering all aspects of sustainability (Environmental, Social and Economic)
- Undertake a risk-based approach to identify priority commodity areas and develop plans for sustainability improvements
- Look for opportunities to reduce the negative impacts and enhance the positive impacts of what we buy, how and who we buy from.
- To ensure external suppliers and contractors are working towards improving their own sustainability performance
- Provide a programme of activity which distils financial sustainability and enhances operational effectiveness.
- Deliver appropriate training and guidance to staff which raises their awareness and adoption of sustainable practices across the institution

- Raise University awareness of SME activity and ensure procurement opportunities are accessible to the SME community.
- Measure, monitor and communicate sustainable procurement activities and outcomes.

Key Performance Indicator: achievement of level 4 'Enhance' across all themes of the Sustainable Procurement Flexible Framework by December 2017 and level 5 by 2020

Supporting documents: Sustainable Procurement Policy and Sustainable Food Policy

Governance and Quality Assurance

Aim 6:

To ensure that the aims and objectives contained herein are delivered to a high standard and in a transparent way.

Over the lifetime of this strategy we will:

- Continue to embed our sustainability objectives into the wider policies and strategies of the University
- Strive for continual improvement in our environmental performance through the implementation of an accredited environmental management system
- Benchmark our performance against other institutions within the sector and where appropriate other business areas
- Communicate effectively with staff, students, stakeholders and the wider community to ensure that they are all aware of our performance and their responsibilities
- Ensure all new staff and students receive information about sustainability through the induction programme and through an ongoing engagement programme
- Work with Human Resources to embed these objectives into job descriptions and staff responsibilities
- Report on our performance through the Environment Committee and produce an annual report for University Council outlining performance and success
- Ensure a consistent and ethically-informed approach to investment and work with the Investment Committee to achieve this
- Monitor performance with appropriate external metrics and league tables such as the UI World Green Index.
- Develop a communications and engagement strategy to be delivered alongside this strategy