



For the future you want



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2019 - 2024

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Edinburgh College recognises that climate change, now often referred to as climate crisis or climate emergency, is one of the most significant global challenges of the century.

As one of the UK's largest colleges, with around 26,000 students, 1,300 staff, and an annual budget of £65m, the College stands shoulder to shoulder with other organisations willing to take urgent action to cut carbon use.

In 2016 the UK, along with more than 170 other countries, signed the Paris Agreement, which commits governments and public institutions to take meaningful action on climate change. In response to this agreement, the Scottish Government continues to set ambitious targets, and in 2018 it published the Climate Change Emissions Reductions Targets (Scotland) Bill, due for enactment in 2019. The Bill sets out how Scotland will improve its approach to climate change action, and specifically names Edinburgh College as a major player. This means the College has a legal duty to:

- Contribute to carbon emissions reduction targets;
- Contribute to climate change adaptation; and to
- Act sustainably.

The College also acknowledges the importance of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (known as the 'Global Goals' or 'SDGs') in addressing the wider issues of economic and social sustainable development. In 2015 Scotland was one of the first nations to sign up to the Global Goals. In 2018, Edinburgh College, along with many other colleges and universities, signed the Sustainable Development Accord, and agreed to report on progress every year.

Climate change and sustainability action is also required as part of the College's Regional Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council. Specifically, the College should 'demonstrate leadership in addressing environmental and social sustainability challenges' through the implementation of a 'dedicated sustainability strategy' which should include 'ambitions and targets'. In addition, the College acknowledges the recent First Minister's emergency climate declaration in April 2019.

In response to all of the above, the College has developed this new **Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2019-24**. At the heart of the strategy sits the ambition to:

'Be a College at the cutting edge of environmental sustainability through its learning, teaching, partnerships and core operations'

Specifically, to reduce carbon emissions by 75% reduction on the College baseline, by 2024, with an aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030.

The strategy identifies the progress the College has made over recent years, and the ambition of the College to achieve further progress over the next five years, aligned to four strategic themes:

1. Leadership and Governance
2. Partnership and Engagement
3. Learning and Teaching (including the College's Sustainable Education Strategy)
4. Estates and Facilities Management

Progress will be monitored through the College's Sustainability Steering Group, and publicly reported annually through the Scottish Government's Public Bodies Climate Change Reporting framework.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Where are we now?

The Ambition

Whilst the College has achieved much over recent years, including a recent CDN sustainability award, it acknowledges that it still has much to do. Consequently, this strategy sets out the vision for how Edinburgh College will help tackle climate change and drive forward environmental sustainability initiatives over the next five years.

The overriding ambition is to 'be a College at the cutting edge of environmental sustainability'. The College will achieve this ambition by delivering the actions described in section 3 below.

The importance of this determined aim cannot be overstated. Many college students will, in their working and personal lives, come face-to-face with the realities and challenges of climate change, which will impact on every aspect of their daily lives. As an educational institution, the College has a responsibility to ensure it is preparing students for these challenges, and building on the progress made to date. This is further described below.

In order to change, the College will develop a whole institution approach through a network of Sustainability Champions who will ensure that environmental sustainability is central to everything the College does, and plans to do.

SUSTAINABILITY STEERING GROUP

Where are we now?

Edinburgh College's Sustainability Steering Group was established in 2015, and is responsible for leading on sustainability within the College. It meets quarterly, is chaired by the Chief Operating Officer, and

draws membership from across the College community, including representatives from the Edinburgh College Students' Association (ECSA).

ENERGY, WATER AND CARBON

Where are we now?

The College's Estates Services team lead efforts to reduce energy consumption, and carbon emissions in the College. Up to 97% of the College's carbon footprint is associated with its buildings, from heating, lighting and use of other equipment. The first Carbon Management Plan (2014-19) shows that the College emitted 7,581 t/CO₂e in 2013-14, and this was reduced to 5,481 t/CO₂e in 2016-17, a 2,100 t/CO₂e (28%) reduction. In 2017, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) funded the College Energy Efficiency Pathfinder Programme, which provided investment of approximately £2.2m, and this project is projected to reduce carbon emissions across the College by a further 494 t/CO₂e (9%).

WASTE

Where are we now?

The Estates Services team is responsible for managing the College's waste, in line with the 'Waste and Recycling Policy' and Scottish Government protocols. Improvements in infrastructure, signage and operating procedures have enabled the College to reduce its total waste from 815t in 2014 to 594t in 2018, a reduction of 221t (27%). The College has also increased its on-campus recycling rate from 29% to 32% over this period. In respect of off-campus activity, the existing waste contractor sorts most of the waste so that it can be fully recycled. Estimates indicate that

the recovery rate is >90% for mixed recycling, and approximately 60% for general waste. The College's food waste is also turned into green energy using an anaerobic digester at Millerhill Waste Facility in Midlothian.

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

Where are we now?

In the 2016/17 induction travel survey, 73% of around 5,000 students surveyed, claimed to have travelled to the College using sustainable travel options including public transport (62%), Walking (9%) or Cycling (2%). Whilst 24% of students travelled to college by car. In 2018/19 ECSA surveyed around 5,000 students during welcome week and this indicated that 66.5% of students used public transport, 8% walked, 2.5% cycled and 22% used the car. This positive change is mainly a result of the College's partnership work with councils, public transport operators and Cycling Scotland, which has provided investment of over £50,000 in cycling initiatives over the past few years. Edinburgh College Students' Association (ECSA) also received a grant in 2018 from the Climate Challenge Fund to deliver low carbon travel for students which runs over the next two years. The College also has an all-electric pool car fleet, several electric vans, and four electric bikes for use by members of staff, which will reduce use of petrol and consequent carbon emissions. ECSA established a new online lift sharing platform for students and staff, launched in May 2019.

COMMUNITY GROWING AND BIODIVERSITY

Where are we now?

Edinburgh College is unique as a result of its work on community gardens on two campuses, and improved growing opportunities at the other campuses. The Community Gardens are extensively used as part of the learning experience of students in the College, as well as by a number of community groups. The Gardens won the UK and International Award in the Green Gown Student Engagement Category in 2015. The College expended considerable time enhancing biodiversity on its estate, and is a member of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership.

Climate Change Adaption

Where are we now?

Climate change predictions by local authorities, identified in their respective climate change adaptation plans, are set to have far reaching consequences in the future. The local climate is predicted to get hotter and wetter, including increased flooding, increased wind speeds and storms, many of which could directly and indirectly impact the operation of the College across its four campuses. Work will soon be undertaken to assess these impacts, and to improve future resilience. However, the College Business Continuity Plans do cover some aspects of climate change adaptation.

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

Where are we now?

Advanced Procurement Universities and Colleges (APUC) provide the College's procurement services, and have embedded sustainability within their procurement and contractual frameworks. The most recent tenders included a comprehensive suite of sustainability specifications which influenced the tendering process. Most of the photocopier paper used is now from recycled sources. The College is also considering reductions in single use plastics.

FAIR TRADE

Where are we now?

The College's Fair Trade Policy outlines the commitment to selling and promoting fairly traded products within the College. Much work has been undertaken to ensure such products are widely available in College retail and catering outlets, many via the College's catering provider. Fair Trade has been incorporated within areas of the curriculum as a result of the Sustainable Education Strategy. College achievements were recognised in 2018, when it was awarded the Two-Star Fairtrade College award.

SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION

Where are we now?

The Sustainable Education Strategy aims to ensure that sustainability becomes a core concept in the delivery of college courses, so that students are prepared for the requirements of a low-carbon and sustainable 21st-century workforce. This work is in line with the Skills Development Scotland Regional Skills Assessment, which indicates that employers are increasingly looking for awareness of good sustainability practice in their prospective employees. Students at Edinburgh College have the opportunity to learn about sustainability through a variety of topics and contextualised approaches, for example, sustainable food sourcing in catering courses, sustainable practices in hospitality courses, and sustainable business development in enterprise and commerce courses. Curriculum options could investigate the subject of climate change and the role of individuals and organisations in reducing carbon emissions. The College aspires to integrate the principles of sustainability more widely across other curriculum areas.

3. STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Where do we want to get to (and how do we get there)?

Following a review of the College’s work on climate change and environmental sustainability during the 2018/19 academic year, this new strategy has been developed and aligned to four strategic themes.

These themes are based on the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC) Sustainability Leadership Scorecard tool categories. Each of these four themes are then further broken down into strategic objectives, as indicated below:

LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE
Board, Executive, SMT and Sustainability Steering Group

LEARNING & TEACHING
Sustainable Education

PARTNERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT
Sustainable procurement & fair trade
External Partnership Activity

ESTATES & OPERATIONS
Energy, Water & Carbon
Waste
Travel & Transport
Community Growing & Biodiversity
Adaptation

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Sustainability Steering Group and Sustainability Champions

Goal: To provide good governance and ensure that there are clear actions to embed sustainability across all college activities and operations.

What will we do? The Sustainability Steering Group (SSG) membership and remit was refreshed in 2018, and includes faculty and support service staff, ECSA, and Union representation. Lead officers will be appointed from this group to drive forward the strategic themes and objectives described below. The SSG will establish a network of sustainability champions across the College comprising staff and students, to

ensure that sustainability is embedded in all areas of College activity. It will bring these champions together every year as part of the annual Learning and Teaching Seminar, and the annual staff Wellbeing Conference, and as part of ECSA’s class conferences. The SSG will also work in partnership with the Sustainability Exchange and their Learning for Sustainability Champions Course, to improve the knowledge of the College’s champions. The SSG will also ensure that relevant actions are included in all college operational plans. The SSG will report progress on the actions in delivering the strategy to the Senior Management team and Executive team, who will then report into the Policy and Resources Committee (who in turn report to the College Board of Management). The SSG will monitor staffing and financial resources required in

delivering this strategy, to ensure adequate resources are secured, and ensure all college staff are made aware of the strategy and the need to act sustainably. SSG members will be committed to participating in SSG meetings, to deliver the objectives, whilst exhibiting leadership for sustainability across the College. All of this activity will be promoted and publicised through the staff intranet, College Update staff newsletter and various college social media platforms.

PARTNERSHIPS & ENGAGEMENT

Sustainable Procurement

Goal: Ensuring our purchasing of all goods and services is ethical and socially responsible.

What will we do? Procurement Services (via APUC) and the Sustainability team will work in partnership to ensure sustainability is incorporated into all our purchasing processes and contracts. There will be a specific focus on ensuring all sourced paper is recycled paper, electrical units of any description are high grade energy efficient, and goods procured do not involve high carbon mileage.

Fair Trade

Goal: Maximise opportunities to promote and use Fair Trade products within the College, and in the wider college community.

What will we do? The Fair Trade Working Group will continue to support and build on the excellent work to date to ensure the College maintains Fair Trade status. Work will be undertaken with our catering provider and vending machine operators to improve local and seasonal food sourcing, improve the range of healthy food options, and reduce the use of single use plastics.

External Partnerships

Goal: The College will engage with more external partners and in partnerships to maximise resources, learning and sharing best practice.

What will we do? The SSG members will lead on partnership activity on behalf of the College. There will be a focus on engaging with community planning partnerships dealing with sustainability, improving partnership work with other educational institutions, and improving partnership work with third sector organisations like Bright Green Business.

LEARNING & TEACHING

Sustainability Education

Goal: Deliver the Sustainable Education in the Curriculum Strategy outcomes, and ensure that sustainability is embedded within learning and teaching activities, so that students have relevant knowledge of sustainability within their career.

What will we do? The Vice Principal for Innovation, Planning and Performance will lead the implementation of the College's Sustainable Education in the Curriculum Strategy. This strategy aims to ensure that sustainability is embedded across more courses at the College, and staff are more aware of available teaching resources via Moodle and learning and teaching seminars. This work will be aligned to the recently launched Scottish Government's Action Plan for Learning for Sustainability. It sets out how Scottish Government and a wide range of partners and practitioners will deliver recommendations set out in the Vision 2030+ Report. Resources for this work will be sought from the Scottish Government's £1.3 million of funding available for professional learning to help deliver inspirational teaching in STEM subjects.

ESTATES & OPERATIONS

Energy, Water and Carbon

Goal: To reduce carbon emissions by 75% reduction on the College baseline, by 2024, with an aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030.

What will we do? The Estates Services team will continue investing in the College Estate through LED lighting, improved heating systems, and closer monitoring of building management systems, utility costs and usage, and reporting areas where savings are made. There will be refreshed awareness campaigns to encourage students, staff and visitors to turn off electrical appliances, lights and other equipment when not in use. The College will explore the feasibility of using grey water, further on-site production of energy, and turning off radiators in corridors.

Waste

Goal: To ensure that waste is managed effectively across all four campuses in accordance with the waste hierarchy (Eliminate > Reduce > Reuse > Upcycle > Repair > Recycle > Recover > Responsible disposal), and that we move towards a more circular economy.

What will we do? The Estates Services team will lead on developing waste actions in partnership with other key stakeholders within and outside the College. There will be a focus on catering, facilities management, and waste management contractors. A particular focus will be reducing the use of plastics in the College, more discount for using re-usable cups, reducing/eliminating single-use cutlery and plates in restaurants and café bars, and developing a new approach for the upcycling/repair of college furniture and IT hardware, which could have curriculum links.

Travel and Transport

Goal: Maximise the opportunities for students, staff, visitors and contractors to use sustainable travel options and actively discourage unsustainable options.

What will we do? ECSA and the Estates Services team will lead on developing and promoting take up of low carbon travel opportunities within the College, through the development of specific green travel actions, including actively discouraging unsustainable transport, encouraging active travel, lobbying for improved public transport with university partners, reassessing college car parking provision and policies (taking into account the proposed car parking levy). This work will cover both travel to/from (the commute) the College, as well as business travel. In addition, there will be work to improve the active travel infrastructure (e.g. lockers, better shower rooms, free puncture repair kits at reception desks), and reduce car single-occupancy through lift sharing, and improvement of incentives for these schemes (e.g. reserved car parking spaces for multiple occupants). Resources and funding will be sourced via external partners including local authorities, public transport providers, Scottish Government Climate Challenge Funding, South East Scotland Transport Authority and other sustainable transport organisations.

Community Growing and Biodiversity

Goal: Maximise opportunities for students, staff and community groups to participate in our community gardens and other growing opportunities as well as enhancing our estate to ensure space for biodiversity.

What will we do? The Sustainability team will improve existing community growing and garden facilities to cover all four campuses, and develop further biodiversity actions, including better use of existing green spaces and verges. It will better promote opportunities to work on and access these facilities amongst staff groups at each campus, via the staff intranet and College Update staff newsletter.

Climate Change Adaptation

Goal: Ensure the College is resilient and able to adapt to the impacts of future climate change.

What will we do? The Estates Services team is developing a set of actions to address climate change adaptation, based on the three local authority statutory climate change adaptation plans. These actions will shape the approach to how the College manages its estate and operations, to prepare for adverse impacts of climate change like hotter and wetter weather, including flooding. The actions will be delivered through the SSG and will be aligned to the new adaptation guidance produced by the Sustainability Exchange (<https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/home>).

4. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

How do we know we have got there?

The College will ensure that it reports on progress in delivering this strategy through the following mechanisms, using a range of key performance indicators:

- **Public Bodies Climate Change Duties report** – Annual statutory report to Scottish Government on all aspects of our climate change and sustainability work, using the standard government carbon emission conversion factors.
- **Fair trade** – Annual report to the Fairtrade Foundation on work to promote fair trade.
- **Sustainable Development Goals Accord** – Annual report to the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges.
- **SFC Regional Outcome Agreement (Section 8.7)** – Annual report to SFC on meeting outcome agreement guidance on leadership in sustainability, as part of wider ROA reporting.
- **Carbon Reduction Commitment** – Annual report of electricity and gas consumption based on data provided by the College's Energy Officer.
- **Sustainability Leadership Scorecard** – Environmental Association of Universities and College 'All in One' tool for sustainability reporting.

5. GOVERNANCE

Who is responsible?

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2019-2024 will be implemented and managed by members of the SSG, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer.

The SSG will report into the SMT (Senior Management team) on an annual basis.

The SMT will sign off performance monitoring reports, and other associated documentation, for consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee, who in turn report into the Board of Management, on an annual basis.

All staff, students, visitors and contractors are responsible for environmental sustainability and reducing carbon emissions.

6. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

When will we review and report progress?

Performance of the Estates Strategy will be reviewed and monitored against:

College's utility reporting consumption/costs	Reviewed monthly by Estates Services Managers, Sustainability Officer and Energy Officer
College's waste reporting consumption/costs	Reviewed monthly by Estates Services Managers and Sustainability Officer
Annual Public Bodies Climate Change Duties report and SDG Accord Annual Report	Reviewed annually by SSG, SMT and with Executive Team sign off, and then approval by Policy and Resources Committee and the Board of Management.

7. CONTACT DETAILS

Who do I contact to get more information or other copies?

Chief Operating Officer, Executive Team Offices, 4th Floor, Milton Road Campus, 24 Milton Road East, Edinburgh, EH15 2PP.



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