

SUSTAINABILITY EXECUTIVE REPORT

March 2023



**THE STUDENTS'
UNION**
AT UWE

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE 2022-2023

The Students' Union Sustainability Committee have been planning their annual campaign, taking place this March, 'Sustainable Food for All'. The events and activities of this campaign on the webpage [here](#). Key events and activities are as follows:

- **Student cook book:** creating a sustainable student recipe book, working with a student graphic designer to do so, and gathering a diverse range of recipes from around the world. The Committee have already gathered 18 recipe submissions.
- **Healthy and sustainable eating stalls:**



One of our VP Community and Welfare's manifesto points is engaging students with healthy and sustainable eating by encouraging them to prep meals in advance, batch cook, eat seasonally and share healthy recipes. Partnering with the Sustainability Committee we have organised a healthy eating engagement stall on each of our three campuses. The aims of these stalls are to chat with students about healthy eating, encourage them to fill out a survey on sustainable eating on campus and then give them the chance to spin the wheel to win prizes such a reusable metal lunchbox, fruit, vegan cookbooks, and seasonal food guides. We also utilised our smoothie bike, so students had the chance to make a fresh fruit smoothie. Our first stall was at Frenchay Campus on Thursday 23 February and we our hosting ones on Bower and Glenside w/c 20 March.

From the first stall:

- 207 students filled out the sustainable food survey
- One student quote "I am having the best day here"
- 11 students submitted recipes to the student recipe book submission



- **Sustainable Sri Lankan Cooking Class:** we have organised a plant-based cooking class which will be run by a talented UWE student of Sri Lankan heritage, where we will be using local and organic vegetables from the Community Farm to make a delicious curry. The event is being promoted via [this](#) video, featuring Kathryn who is the co-chair of the Sustainability Committee.
- **[A Taste of Home](#) – Bring and Share with UWE Global:** The Sustainability Committee are teaming up with UWE Global for a food and cultural event where students will be bringing in a sustainable version of a dish from their country.
- **[Solidarity Supper](#) – Fundraiser for Earthquakes in Turkey:** we are collaborating with some Turkish students who reached out to us wanting to fundraise. On Monday 20 March we are running a pay-as-you-feel supper and vegan bake sale at The Students' Union, where we will serve a sustainable, plant-based Turkish meal and all the money will go towards the Turkish Mozaik Foundation who are providing support, food, shelter and medical supplies to those most impacted by the Earthquakes.

SUSTAINABLE PERIODS

To make sustainable period products more accessible and support students and staff during the cost-of-living crisis we have continuously increased our free period product offering.

The Students' Union at UWE provide free organic, sustainable single use products in all our toilets as well as providing them at a fortnightly stall outside OneZone. This stall is also how we promote our free sustainable period product trial where students can choose to try reusable period underwear, reusable tampon applicators, reusable pads, or menstrual cups. Students can handle example products on the stall, ask any questions about how to use them, and sign up.



Some feedback noted down from the stalls:

- Some people came to the stall wanting to be part of the trial after receiving positive feedback from their friends.
- Positive feedback regarding the fact that this is a great opportunity to try products that are usually expensive, for free. Many people mentioned that they wanted to try reusable products for a long time but never wanted to buy some because of the price.
- Majority of people mentioned that they love the idea of using fragrance-free products as they contain less chemicals and can be less irritating.

So far 305 students have filled in the sign-up form to try a product with the following breakdown in choice:

- Period pants – 201
- Reusable pads – 23
- Menstrual cup – 74
- Reusable tampon applicator – 7

When asked why they wanted to take part in this trial these are the most common choices:

- I want to reduce my plastic waste from my periods
- I have always wanted to try a sustainable period product, but price had been a barrier
- To save money in the long run

We have started to collect feedback from students about the trial. So far, 35 students have filled it out. Some comments left about the trial:

- I was really impressed with the Wukka pants so comfy and leak proof. I will definitely try and buy some more. Really good to try first before you invest. Thanks
- Amazing alternative to tampons/sanitary towels, made me rethink ever buying them again. Super comfortable and also amazing to wear with no fear of leakages - 5 Stars.
- Great opportunity from the uni

CLIMATE CONVERSATIONS AND CAKE

The Students' Union and Vicki Harris from UWE Sustainability are supporting the Environmental Management BSc course leader, Dr Sara-Jayne Williams, and Environmental Management student volunteers to run sessions to combat increasing levels of climate-related concern and anxiety. This is embedded as a course activity (timetabled for students across all year groups of Environmental Management), and in addition is open to all students who may also be feeling eco-anxiety.

The monthly sessions focus on fostering community cohesion between students and offer a place where students can come together to talk about their feelings arising from the climate crisis in a relaxed and social setting. These sessions are funded by The Students' Union's Change for Change budget which students can apply for to turn their idea into reality.

100% of students attending said they enjoyed or really enjoyed the session. They also said they liked:

“Being able to meet students of the same course from other years and seeing how their perspectives are different from mine after having learnt more and spent more time here. I also think that having guest speakers is very interesting and helps with some positivity getting to see what people are doing.”

On Thursday 2 March, 23 students attended a Q&A on 'Growing Racial Equality within the Environmental Movement' with our guest speaker, Gnisha Bevan. We heard inspiring stories from Bristol and had hosted insightful discussions about what we could do to make space for black Environmentalists and Environmentalists of colour.



GREENER FUTURES

Greener Futures is The Students' Union's sustainability competition for Sports Clubs and Societies. We have 38 sports clubs and societies signed up for Greener Futures this year, 100% increase in signups from 19 last year. Sports clubs and societies are working hard to try and complete as many challenges as possible in the Greener Futures sustainability competition! This has varied from switching their search engines to Ecosia, to creating care share schemes, to calculating their carbon footprint.

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT

Along with Vicki Harris, we are currently sharing information with our students about the importance of Fairtrade, and have organised events to spread awareness. For example, we ran an information session about Fairtrade at one of the Global Café events on Thursday 2 March. We gave out Fairtrade freebies and spoke with 16 students about what it means and why Fairtrade is important for workers across the world, gender equality and climate justice.

The Students' Union are offering free Fairtrade tea and coffee all throughout February and March to help with the cost of living. We are also running a Fairtrade Cookie Cooking Class, using as many Fairtrade ingredients as possible.

GREEN TEAM EVENTS

Clothes Mending

In February, The Green Team organised two clothes mending sessions, run by a Glenside student who has amazing mending skill.



Swap Shops

At the end of January, 125 students came to swap their items at the Swap Shop at the Bower Welcome Back Fair. This was the largest Swap Shop that we have ever facilitated at Bower, it was a great opportunity to chat with so many students about the importance of second-hand.

“This has been such a fun and well put together event, I found some amazing tops and I’m really impressed with the selection that’s on offer. Please run this again!” – UWE student feedback



GREENSPACE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERING

The Green Team runs a popular conservation volunteering project, located at either Splatts Abbey Wood or Sims Hill, and we usually recruit between 15-20 students to attend.

GreenSpace enables students to learn new skills, spend time outdoors and get to know local woodlands. The Chair of the Splatts Abbey Wood Committee commented “students have had a transformational impact on the woodland”, we are very proud of all our volunteers and student Project Leaders who have now been trained to run the sessions themselves!



“Honestly everything I’ve learned has been a great & meaningful exposure. From learning how & where to plant a tree, sawing trees down, using all the appropriate tools, pruning & coppicing, cleaning up the bushes and so on, these are definitely new skills gained! But perhaps what I treasure most about the workdays is everyone’s positive attitudes and the value we place on teamwork!” – UWE student feedback



Students and their newly created living fence at Splatts Abbey Wood during a Greenspace session in October.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

The Community Garden sessions, in collaboration with UWE's Grounds Team, are taking place every other Wednesday on Frenchay campus, and once a month at Glenside. The sessions have been very successful, building a 'WildPod' at Frenchay and at Glenside to increase biodiversity. In addition, students have recently made willow cages for the blueberry bushes and planted raspberries and rhubarb.



COMMERCIAL SERVICES

Sustainable Food

The Student's Union Commercial Services Team are engaging with SOS-UK's Sustainable Food Guide, developing their action plan.

1. Commit to phasing out industrially produced meat and dairy

- The menu in our main food outlet is currently 52% vegan/vegetarian, and we are exploring ways to further reduce meat and dairy without limiting choice, for example by introducing blended meat products like beef burgers including a percentage of mushroom
 - Following a recent unsuccessful Student Idea, proposing to remove beef and lamb from our menus, we voluntarily committed to removing products containing lamb
 - We have started work with Forward Food, who will support us with modelling future targets (environmental vs. financial impact)
2. Commit to only serving and selling demonstrably sustainable fish
 - Following an audit on our retail product range in summer 2022, we have now removed any non-sustainably sourced fish products, and have committed to only selling sustainably sourced products in future
 - We do not currently sell any fish products in our F&B outlets, and have committed to ensuring any new menu additions use demonstrably sustainable fish
 3. Eliminate all avoidable food waste and compost the remainder
 - We believe that we currently limit the amount of food waste we produce very well, but any that is created is collected and taken to be composted
 - As part of our monthly reporting, we previously set a target of 4% wastage vs. sales. Due to achieving less than 2% wastage over the last year or so, our target was updated to 2%, and we are currently achieving 1.03% for the academic year to date
 4. Make seasonal, local, ethically produced, plant-based food the default option
 - We plan to work with Forward Food ahead of academic year 2023/24 to look at ways to encourage students to make more sustainable choices
 - We are also exploring options to introduce more locally-sourced ingredients, although this is difficult due to our relationship with NUS Services where, for example, the majority of our catering purchases must be done through major national suppliers
 5. Explore ways to make sustainable food the more affordable option
 - We had planned to explore ways to develop our menu pricing to make sustainable food the more affordable option ahead of this academic year but, due to the cost of living, the organisation made a decision not to increase menu prices from 2021/22
 - We implemented the Student Idea to remove the dairy alternative additional charge on our hot drinks range
 - We applied a 10% discount across our vegan product range for the month of January, as part of Veganuary
 6. Contribute to creating a better food system in the UK
 - The Students' Union at UWE on the journey to becoming a Real Living Wage employer
 - Our Commercial Services Director contributes to two working groups as part of Bristol Good Food 2030, whose goals include:
 - "Local, regional, sustainable, nutritious and Fairtrade food is available and accessible citywide with community-based infrastructure widely available
 - The local and sustainable food economies continue to grow
 - Food distribution across the city is more efficient and with lower emissions and supports the local food economy

- Catering and hospitality settings citywide offer healthy and climate friendly meals, and these are popular choices”

The Students’ Union Sustainability Committee recently attended Future Leap’s Sustainable Food and Drink Evening. One of the committee members said “this was a fantastic and inspiring event, it was amazing to see how many positive things are happening in Bristol in regards to food. We learned about regenerative agriculture, the good food plan, some of the barriers to eating sustainably and how to build a more resilient and just food system”.

Plastics

Recently, our President, Community Manager and Commercial Services Director met to discuss our briefing for an upcoming student project looking at identifying and evaluating environmental challenges, and presenting proposed solutions which we can look to implement. This opportunity has been created by the UWE Sustainability Team, in collaboration with FET, developing and delivering an undergraduate Environmental management in Organisations module. The assessment piece for the module is based around identifying and evaluating environmental challenges based on UWEs strategic sustainability commitments and presenting proposed solutions which can be implemented, with a supporting report.

We have asked these students to focus on single use plastics. The project is due to run through March and April, and we hope the outcome will help shape our roadmap towards elimination of unnecessary plastics.

ENERGY – ADVICE CENTRE

Advice Centre

The Students’ Union’s annual Accommodation Fair, which took place in November 2022, invited the charity Severn Wye Energy Agency to attend, they were able to talk to students about their sustainable energy options. Also on the day, the Advice Centre team gave ‘top tips for renting’ talks which included highlighting to students that they should be provided with a copy of the property’s Energy Performance Certificate and how they might wish to consider changing their energy supplier once they have moved into the property.

The team have produced a QR code for their accommodation agency list, so that students who want the list can take a photo of the list rather than having it printed out.

STUDENT MATTERS TO RAISE

Fossil Free Careers

The Students’ Union Executive have released an open statement to the UWE Careers Service: <https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/news/article/thesuatuwe/Open-Letter-to-UWE-Careers-Service/>

Students have run a Fossil Fuel Free Careers outreach stall where engaged their peers to acquire signatures for the petition and talked to students about the campaign and why it was important.

The Campaigns Officer from People & Planet also ran a workshop with 18 students, one student said: *“It was really interesting to know more about the Fossil Fuel Free Careers campaign and to meet people from different courses and backgrounds that are also supporting this initiative. I feel like this session provided good insights in how to take action as a University and encouraged us that it is possible to make a change fighting against oil, gas and mining industries.”*



The Fossil Free Careers campaign has been specifically mentioned in [Green Impact](#) this year. It has been added as a criteria to the Green Impact workbook, and it will therefore be one of our priorities. As I am sure many of you know that Green Impact is a really useful guide for a lot of our sustainability work as a Students' Union. We would also like to continue to create more positive change in the areas laid out by Green Impact, as well as getting a grade Excellent for the 7th year in a row for this accreditation.