

Sustainable Development in the Union

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What will we do?

1. The Vice President Community will run a campaign every year aimed at educating students on sustainable practices, informed by a student-led steering group.
2. The Union will establish a student-led advisory group to improve the sustainability of the commercial services.
3. The Union will hold a minimum of 2 sustainability-focused events in the first year of this policy, a minimum of 4 in the second and 6 in the third year.
4. The Union will train its staff to be more sustainably focused and aware.
5. The Union will lobby and support the University to embed sustainable development in the curricula.

What is the background to this?

1. Between 2002 and 2012, global urban waste doubled from 680 million tons per year to more than 1.3 billion tons per year. By 2025, it is anticipated that the world's urban population will be producing 2.2 billion tons per year.¹
2. In June 2019, the UK became the first major economy to pass laws committing to reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.² Edinburgh council have set a target of net-zero emissions by 2030.³ The UK has committed to delivering the UN Agenda 2030: Sustainable Development Goals both at home and abroad.⁴
3. Experts agree that limiting global warming to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels is critical to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁵
4. Establishing a Union agenda for sustainable development and practice has been a key feature in feedback from students through focus groups, surveys and representatives.
5. Students across the nation have called for action through marching for climate action⁶ and through groups like Students Organising for Sustainability UK (SOS-UK).⁷

What beliefs motivate these actions?

1. The Union is committed to building an inclusive organisation reflective of the diverse communities that we serve.
2. We need a collective effort to reach the goals set by the UK government for 2030.
3. The effects we have on the environment now will impact the lives of current and future generations of student, so we must act accordingly in the present.
4. Students play a crucial role in the development of sustainable practices and are key stakeholders in the Union.
5. Student staff have raised concerns over the sustainability of the commercial services.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics?content_store_document_type=upcoming_statistics

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-becomes-first-major-economy-to-pass-net-zero-emissions-law>

³ <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/climate-2/climate-target-net-zero-2030/1>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agenda-2030-delivering-the-global-goals>

⁵ <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/synergy-conference-underscores-inextricable-links-between-climate-sustainable-development-agendas/>

⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-49758914>

⁷ <https://sustainability.nus.org.uk/>

6. It is important that the Union leads on events to help engage more students and inform them of the direction they are taking to be more sustainable.