

TRANSFORM

ISSUE 21

In print and online issue | www.iese.org.uk

The benefits of setting up a Climate Commission

We speak to the Edinburgh Climate Commission

Green finance: a new funding model

Using crowdfunding to support green projects

Also inside:

- Coalition seeks greater powers to tackle climate change
- How island authorities approach sustainability
- Supporting the tourism sector for a green recovery
- The role of the UN's Sustainability Development Goals
- A case study with the University of Leeds on sustainability

The logo for IESE, consisting of a small red dot above the lowercase letters 'iese' in a blue, sans-serif font.

The public sector transformation partner

Local authority key to Building Back Better

As the country aims to Build Back Better, Build Back Greener and Build Back Faster, local authorities must be at the forefront.

The pandemic has highlighted that centrally devised schemes without local knowledge do not work very well and that local authorities should have a strong role in recovery from the pandemic, to which a green recovery to drive the economy and the associated benefits of boosting health and wellbeing of residents have been linked.

At iESE we believe sustainability goes beyond the environment, which is a pressing and vital component, but that it also embraces social and economic factors too. All are linked and tied to our methodology of helping local authorities move from surviving to thriving. A community cannot be thriving if it is not sustainable. In these challenging times, local authorities with strong local supply chains, such as in East Ayrshire where they work with local producers to get fresh produce into schools, have had a greater level of built-in resilience.

While no organisation is better placed to help drive forward changes in their local area than the local authority, joining forces with other organisations, such as colleges and universities, local businesses, the third sector and with residents is key to achieving sustainable communities.

As we look more closely at our sustainability as a sector and as individual entities, we need to consider how our policies and plans affect the people and places we serve and the planet. In this issue we learn how the tourism industry has been assessing its sustainability (see page 3). Get in touch if you are interested in helping us develop an assessment of sustainability for local authorities and their communities.

- **To contact iESE and learn more about sustainability assessments please go to:**
www.iese.org.uk/build-back-greener



Dr Andrew Larner,
Chief Executive

@LaverdaJota

CONTENTS

Page 2

Welcome letter from iESE Chief Executive Dr Andrew Larner. We also hear from a coalition joining together to push for greater powers and responsibility for Local Government in fighting climate change and look at how iESE can help you meet your green agenda

Page 3

How local authorities can support their local tourism sector and why the United Nation's Sustainability Development Goals are important

Page 4-5

We find out how setting up a Climate Commission could benefit your area and speak to the Climate Emergency UK about declaring a Climate Emergency

Page 6-7

A look at green finance and a new funding model being used by some local authorities to support their sustainability plans. We also look at what mainland councils can learn from island authorities about sustainability

Page 8

Learn how a large organisation can tackle sustainability with this case study with the University of Leeds

EDITORIAL CONTACTS

TRANSFORM IS PRODUCED BY:

iESE, www.iese.org.uk
Email: enquiries@iese.org.uk

@iESLtd

CREDITS:

Editorial by: Vicki Arnstein
Designed by: SMK Design

Views expressed within are those of the iESE editorial team. iESE is distributed on a triannual basis to companies and individuals with an interest in reviewing, remodelling and reinventing public services.

© Copyright iESE 2021

CareCubed is copyright of iESE.
©iESE Ltd 2021. All rights reserved.

NEWS

Give councils more powers, coalition urges

A COALITION IS URGING GOVERNMENT TO GIVE LOCAL AUTHORITIES MORE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITY TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE.

A group of organisations, including ADEPT (the Association of Directors, Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport), SOLACE, Friends of the Earth and PCAN (the Place-Based Climate Action Network), have produced a blueprint for accelerating climate action and green recovery at a local level.

The blueprint, which had gathered support from more than 100 signatories at the time of writing, is also supported by the Local Government Association and London Councils. The document was submitted to Government in the summer followed by an updated version in response to the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution announced in November and the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) Sixth Carbon Budget and accompanying report *Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget*.

The blueprint highlights seven themes and related policy areas the coalition believes need to be addressed. In theme one, for example, Growing the zero and low carbon economy, the blueprint asks for flexibility in the business rates system to allow councils to support local decarbonisation. In theme three, Decarbonising transport, the blueprint seeks devolved powers to enable local authorities to transform local public transport provision and in theme five, Reducing waste and encouraging sustainable consumption, it calls for local authorities to be allowed to restrict the frequency of waste collection services. Many of the themes also address the issue of funding.

Hannah Bartram, Chief Operating Officer at ADEPT, said local authorities were keen to tackle climate change and tying green recovery to

economic recovery was a "win-win". The key, she said, was to strike while the iron was hot by giving local authorities more powers and funding to act at a local level. "The work needs to happen now, we can't wait for 2040/2045. It was very positive that the government announced, for example, that it wanted to phase out combustion engine cars by 2030 but we need to start planning the infrastructure now. It is about pace and scale and we really need to pick up the tempo and get the motor going. We are in first gear, but we need to get to fifth gear really quickly to put down the framework and strategy to drive towards that net zero target of 2050," she explained.

The coalition welcomed the focus placed on councils in the separate local authority report published by the CCC. "It is encouraging to have a separate report on local authorities, recognising the need for sufficient funding, and we will work with the Committee to help develop and deliver this. We would have liked to see firmer recommendations on some points, for example to set up a joint taskforce of central and local government on climate change.

"As we have set out with our partners in our updated *Blueprint for accelerating climate action and a green recovery at the local level*, much of this work has to be done at the local level. We agree that we need to ramp up action, particularly in the lead up to COP26, but to do this, leaders need to be empowered with the right funding and resources to act effectively," Bartram stressed.

- **To read a copy of the blueprint or become a signatory visit:** <https://www.adeptnet.org.uk/>
- **To read Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget visit:** <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/local-authorities-and-the-sixth-carbon-budget/>

Go green to clean up on visitor attraction



The tourism industry has been one of the hardest hit by Covid, the recovery of which is being linked to green recovery. Here we look at how councils could benefit from encouraging green tourism, including aligning with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals to strengthen their position as a green destination.

The tourism industry, which generates £106bn a year, employs more than two million people and supports thousands of businesses, is expected to lose £37bn from the impact of Covid-19 according to VisitBritain.

As the UK starts its Build Back Better campaign, the One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme has called for the responsible recovery of the tourism sector. Its report, *One Planet Vision for a Responsible Recovery of the Tourism Sector*, builds on the World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism by supporting the development and implementation of recovery plans which contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs are a set of 17 goals agreed by the UN Member States centred around the five Ps – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. The UK Government signed up to meet the SDGs by 2030 and, whilst there is no formal requirement for local authorities or individual companies to meet them, alignment could make good business sense (see the box for more information on SDGs).

Andrea Nicholas, Chief Executive of Green Tourism, a company which runs an awards certification programme for sustainable tourism, says the SDGs are becoming increasingly important for the sector and local authorities. "We have been running Green Tourism for twenty-three years and over the last ten, but definitely last three to five years, we have seen a growing concern for sustainability," says Nicholas. "Our programme is about reducing carbon, reducing waste, promoting the local food and drink and heritage and sourcing locally and this is something that is going to become expected. Local authorities not engaging in sustainable messaging for their residents and visitors are going to be left behind."

Nicholas, who also sits on the Edinburgh Climate Commission, believes greater adherence to the SDGs could become a more formal requirement in the future but aligning policies and procedures could boost visitors regardless. "It is not mandatory for local authorities to report what they are doing for the

SDGs but it is likely that it will become mandatory or, if not mandatory, expected that local authorities should be able to demonstrate what they are doing against each of the 17 SDGs," she notes.

The company has incorporated a code within its certification process to indicate which SDG is being met in its three assessed areas of caring for people, places and the planet. Its work with the Glasgow Convention Bureau, run by Glasgow Life on behalf of Glasgow City Council, has helped Glasgow place fourth in the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index, a global benchmarking index for business tourism and events destinations, the criteria for which is linked to the SDGs.

Green Tourism works with businesses on a one-to-one level through its individual membership programme, through which an attraction can go through its online supported programme followed by an assessment to achieve bronze, silver or gold certification. Local authorities which run tourist destinations, such as leisure centres or visitor information centres, often seek certification to show they take the green agenda seriously and demonstrate to local businesses what they can achieve.

The company can also work with local authorities at a destination level. For example, it has worked with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council in County Down. Over a two-to-three-year period, Green Tourism certified 120 attractions and accommodation providers – some council-owned and some private. The local authorities then used that to promote themselves as a sustainable destination.

Nicholas believes the environmental awareness building before Covid has not gone away and will emerge stronger than before: "Those local authorities that are greener, healthier, more considerate and looking after their residents are likely to attract more visitors to their area," she adds.

• Find out more about Green Tourism: www.green-tourism.com

The SDGs: What you need to know

What are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

The 17 SDGs were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, including the UK. There is a 15-year plan to achieve the 17 goals and their 169 accompanying targets by 2030 which are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of people everywhere.

What requirements do they place on local authorities?

There are currently no direct requirements for local government to incorporate the SDGs into policies and plans or report on their progress. National government has the role of showing that the UK is attaining the SDGs, but local authorities are at the forefront of many of the challenges the SDGs seek to resolve. The 11th SDG relates directly to local authorities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The Government's first Voluntary National Review (VNR) estimated that two-thirds of the 169 SDG targets need local stakeholders, such as councils, to be engaged to achieve them. Whilst councils are not currently required to report on the SDGs, they can input into the next UK VNR or choose to submit their own Voluntary Local Review. Bristol was the first UK city to do this in 2019.

Why incorporate them?

In its Guide for Councils, the Local Government Association states five reasons to engage with the SDGs. The first is that there is a moral, not statutory, duty to engage with them. In addition, it argues that the SDGs can help improve the health and wellbeing of those furthest behind, can help focus on action for climate change and, because of the broad reach of the 17 goals, can help councils break down silos, work in a joined-up way and review progress.

• Learn more about the 17 SDGs here: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Coming together on the climate agenda

At least 300 local authorities have declared a Climate Emergency since Bristol City Council took the lead in 2018. What they do next varies but, for some, setting up a Climate Commission could be a logical step. Here we look at the potential advantages of setting up a Climate Commission and what it can achieve.

The first city to launch a Climate Commission was Leeds in 2017. Since then another ten have formed in other areas and more are in the pipeline to launch in 2021.

Edinburgh's Climate Commission was established in February 2020 just as Covid-19 took hold. It is co-sponsored by the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation at the University of Edinburgh and City of Edinburgh Council. Its purpose is to catalyse action, challenge decision makers, and convene stakeholders critical to the accelerated responses needed to meet Edinburgh's 2030 net zero target.

The Commission's first report published in July 2020, *Forward, Faster, Together*, links green recovery to economic recovery from Covid-19 and notes that creating jobs and income are vital for recovery but that this must be delivered while cutting climate emissions and improving wellbeing. A 2019 report, *Achieving Net Zero report for Edinburgh*, found that in delivering two-thirds of its 2030 target, Edinburgh can create more than 16,000 jobs and pay back its original investment in commercial terms in 12 years.

Adam McVey, Leader of the Council and Vice-Chair of the Edinburgh Climate Commission, says Covid-19 hasn't changed the Commission's core strategy. "We are looking at things through a slightly different lens in a Covid world, but actually the medium and long-term vision and the aim of what our city should be and could be hasn't changed. People have the same aspirations of wanting a greener city to live in and a fairer city to live in where the success that we build as a city is shared amongst more of our citizens and that is the vision we are holding to. I see absolutely no reason to shirk away from that long-term goal."

McVey explains that there are two things at the

forefront of meeting the 2030 target – heat and transport. There are plans to continue to expand the city's tram network to extend into areas such as the main shopping centre, the docks, and the bio-tech quarter of the city. There are also plans around the bus network and to introduce more cycle routes. Heat is more complicated, he says, because it involves greater partnership working and changes in government legislation to encourage a shift away from gas. In terms of job creation though, he believes heat will be a key area. "Heat will be a far more localised solution because the energy centres that will be needed are going to have to be in the city – heat doesn't travel as well as electricity so it will have to be in the city boundary in a way that gas is not. There are huge opportunities there for jobs," McVey explains.

His view is that Edinburgh needs to be at the forefront of achieving net zero and in developing, testing and rolling out solutions for the rest of Scotland. "I think Edinburgh has to be at the forefront of this. We have the Centre for Carbon innovation within our city, the manpower, the technology, the inward investment and the brains across our universities and within the city itself. My view is that if Edinburgh cannot do this within that timeframe, then the rest of Scotland's 2045 target looks far shakier."

When asked why the council cannot drive the agenda on its own and why the Commission is a sensible way forward, McVey points out that council activities are only responsible for a small proportion of carbon emissions in the city and that it has already been successful in reducing these by 60 per cent, a full year ahead of its 2021 target. This is largely due to a new waste processing facility which prevents waste going to landfill, instead turning it into a resource which generates energy. In addition, it removes and recycles metals from waste, providing further environmental benefit.

However, he does see councils as a key player in the environmental agenda. "Councils are where the solutions to this will lie – the tailored local solutions in terms of transport, heat, electricity and getting enough baseload electricity to facilitate the huge

number of electric cars that we are going to be needing in the future, for example." However, collaborations such as Climate Commissions are also essential to deliver on the agenda, especially in times of austerity.

"This cannot just be a council response, we will not get where we want to if it is just a council or public service response, even including some of the big players like the NHS. It must be across industry and include the private sector. Our Climate Commission has fantastic people on it who represent a huge amount of diversity. What it aims to do is speak to the whole problem, not just look at little bits of it, but how we can collectively come together. Its purpose is to hold up good practice and drive it forward," he adds.

The members of the commission meet between four and six times a year, with much of its work going on in the background with voluntary contribution and leadership of the expert commissioners.

Whilst McVey is also Leader of the Council, the Climate Commission is a separate body. "There is an element of accountability in that I can be questioned but it is not meant to be a decision-making body. It is meant to apply pressure when needed for change and encourage positively the change we need to see and that is all about facilitating the right solutions in the right parts of industry."

Andy Gouldson is Chair of the Leeds Climate Commission, Professor of Environmental Policy at the University of Leeds and co-lead for PCAN (the ESRC Place-Based Climate Action Network), an organisation which seeks to share learning and assist the creation of new Climate Commissions. The core members of PCAN are Leeds, Edinburgh and Belfast.

Gouldson believes Climate Commissions have a key role to play. "After 2010 when the statutory obligations to act on climate for local government were cancelled and then austerity hit in, climate change was dropping off the agenda a bit, but then in 2018 the beginnings of the Climate Emergency wave started to appear. Since then, the majority of



Adam McVey

councils have declared and set targets but are now thinking how on earth do we deliver at a time when there is even more austerity.”

He says gone is the time when the local council could or was expected to deliver on the whole agenda but realises that for some councils being part of a Commission can involve a culture change and a switch to a more facilitating and enabling role. “There are enormous amounts of pent-up energy and commitment out there amongst communities and businesses that can be tapped into – but what they need is the structure to operate in that co-ordinates diverse activities and channels them so they contribute to a bigger picture” he explains. “A commission brings together the main organisations but also the public, private and third sectors across a city to accept a shared responsibility. It changes it from being an overwhelming challenge to an opportunity to energise the city to step up and do more.”

Having a Commission as an independent body from the council is valuable, he believes, and can keep the agenda moving forward. “Sometimes policy change is needed and sometimes Commissions can say things that maybe councils can’t – that we need this policy change, not only at a local level but in national policy in building standards or transport or whatever. Commissions play a vital role in ensuring that this agenda does not fade away and provides continuity over time through different electoral cycles, for example. They are also a safe space to discuss contentious issues in a neutral and constructive way.”

He adds that councils considering setting up a commission are welcome to speak with PCAN or join one of its meetings to hear what work and knowledge-sharing is going on to consider whether the Commission model would be effective in their area.

- To find out more about PCAN visit: <https://pcancities.org.uk>



Apply for the Green Council Award

This category recognises, rewards and promotes **environmental best practice** across the public sector in the UK. This organisation has shown how they have **helped the environment and improved sustainability** not only in their organisation but in their surrounding community.

The Public Sector Transformation Awards 2021 is an opportunity to celebrate and share the most innovative practice in transforming local public services, with the awards ceremony being on Wednesday 17th March 2021.

DOWNLOAD YOUR NOMINATION FORM AT:
www.iese.org.uk/public-sector-transformation-awards-2021

Respond to climate threat like Covid

Local authorities have shown how quickly they can respond to an emergency and should step up their action on climate change before it is too late.

Kevin Frea, the former Deputy Leader of Lancaster City Council who runs Climate Emergency UK, says: “Covid is a short-term crisis but climate change and ecological emergency have been a known crisis for at least 40 years and it is becoming more urgent – some people would say it is almost too late – to act. We have got to learn from how we responded to Covid and how quickly we did that and apply what we have learnt to really step up our action to tackle the climate emergency,” he adds.

According to Frea, 300 UK councils (75 per cent) have declared a Climate Emergency so far but what they do after is less easy to gauge. “There are those that declare and then it is hard to tell what they have done since. Others have produced really good

plans, they are really committed, and they are pulling out all the stops to implement those plans – there is a complete spectrum,” he explains.

Climate Emergency UK aims to encourage councils to declare a Climate Emergency and publishes declarations and action plans on a searchable database so others can use them as a model. “The more they can see others doing it, the more they have confidence to do it themselves and that particularly applies to political leadership. The declarations have been made regardless to who is leading politically but if a Conservative council, for example, sees that lots of others have declared a climate emergency they get the confidence to do it themselves.”

Using the searchable database, a council could

search the term ‘electric taxis’, for example, and see what comes up from other local authorities. In future, the organisation hopes to encourage local authorities to look at a range of environmental issues too, including biodiversity.

Freya believes all local authorities are going to be affected by climate change and thinks Central Government should support local government further in helping them act. “What local government is showing is that these are issues that matter to people and we are doing our best to say to Government you need to support us, help us and give us the powers needed so we can get on and do things,” he adds.

- Visit the Climate Emergency UK website: www.climateemergency.uk

Bonding with the local community

With economic recovery being linked to green recovery, environmental goals are going to become a bigger priority for local authorities, with the key question being how they are going to fund them. For some, the emerging model of Community Municipal Investments (CMIs) will provide part of the answer.



Crowd funding

A recent survey by the Local Government Association (LGA) found lack of funding was the single largest barrier to delivery of climate change ambitions. Whilst around 75 per cent of local authorities have declared a Climate Emergency and committed to becoming net-zero, this will require significant investment into low-carbon infrastructure and the decarbonisation of heat.

At the same time, it is becoming clear that investing in sectors such as green travel and green energy could be key to post-Covid economic recovery. A report by the London School of Economics and Political Science, *Jobs for a strong and sustainable recovery from Covid-19*, suggests tens of thousands of jobs could be created this way.

Since it was introduced in 2003, the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) has been a key source of funding for local authority capital programmes, however new rules which came into effect in November 2020 mean councils now cannot borrow to fund an investment that is primarily intended to generate a return.

Other possible finance streams for cash-strapped local authorities for green projects include Salix Finance, which provides Government funding to the public sector to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and lower energy bills. The Government has a range of other support mechanisms in place for green projects, including grants. In November 2020 Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, announced that the UK would issue its first sovereign green bonds in 2021.

An LGA report, *Financing Green Ambitions*, published in November 2020, states that whilst developments such as sovereign green bonds are of interest, they may not replace the PWLB and CMIs as the preferred funding route for local authority-owned projects. The report notes that CMIs may be an increasingly attractive funding option for local authorities since they provide the opportunity to connect local people to local projects in addition to affordable finance.

The CMI model has currently only been tested by West Berkshire Council and Warrington Borough Council. Leeds City Council is next on the list to roll out and Bruce Davis, Founder and Joint Managing Director at Abundance Investment, the administrator of the first CMI platform in the UK, says it has another two local authorities launching

soon, four in the pipeline and around twenty actively considering the model.

With CMI, the local authority offers a low-risk, low-yield bond to investors through crowdfunding. Investment starts at a minimum of £5 with a return of 1.2 per cent interest per year over a five-year term. The investment is secured against the local authority rather than individual projects.

Research funded by PCAN (the Place-Based Climate Action Network) carried out in partnership with Abundance Investment found that only a minority of respondents (ten per cent) were strongly aware that their council had declared a climate emergency or knew about climate actions taken or planned. However, 73 per cent said they would invest in CMIs.

To this end, Davis believes CMIs are a cost-effective way of raising awareness of a local authority's environmental strategy and financing it at the same time. "The aim of the CMI is that residents and individuals feel part of the solution. It is partly about money, but it is also about engagement," he explains.

The bonds raised by both Warrington and West Berkshire were done as project bonds, with both pledging to put the money into solar, but Davis believes authorities will increasingly offer a 'green bond' rather than a 'project bond'.

Both local authorities set an eighty-day target to raise the funds, giving them time to raise public awareness. "We carry out marketing support for every raise we do through combination of press articles and email communication," explains Davis. "Both of these bonds were raised through lockdown, so we had to change our strategy and do a lot more work online."

Warrington Borough Council was the second local authority to launch. Warrington's bond attracted around 500 investors with an average investment of almost £2,000 per investor. Councillor Russ Bowden, Leader of Warrington Borough Council, says: "Reaching our £1m investment target is a fantastic achievement, particularly in such challenging times. It shows that tackling the climate emergency is something people really care about. It is so important that the public is engaged in our carbon neutral ambitions and this project is an important part of that work. Its success bodes really well for our green future."

Davis notes that when measuring the rates of people visiting the platform and then investing, the

conversion rate was higher for local investors than for general investors and local people also invested higher amounts.

With more CMI's set to launch in 2021, it could be a timely opportunity to harness untapped local wealth to drive the local green agenda and boost the economy. "There is a lot of spare money around, especially after Covid with all the handouts that have gone on. We are keen that a chunk of that money goes into something positive and sustainable," adds Davis.



STEVE ARDAGH-WALTER IS THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AT WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL.

Here he explains the council's environmental strategy and how it used Community Municipal Investment (CMI) to raise £1m for green projects.

"The Council has been actively driving environmental projects for several years but last year in July 2019 we declared a climate emergency and committed to striving towards carbon neutrality by 2030. That is a very challenging target against a Government target of 2050," Ardagh-Walter explains.

Against this backdrop the council published its environmental strategy. This led to a carbon audit of its own and partner activities and identified many actions for the council to take in the coming years, such as electrifying its entire fleet.

"We are driven by the belief that we need to do more and we can do more. We do believe that while we do need to balance environmental progress with our other responsibilities, the change to low carbon can be a good thing and there are lots of opportunities for businesses, organisations and individual households," explained Ardagh-Walter. "We did realise that all of this activity is going to take investment. We do have a capital budget, so we do borrow and

invest already, but we wanted to supplement that for the carbon neutrality projects we are going to be undertaking.”

The council launched its green bond in July 2019 with a £1m target. This offered the chance to invest in green solar schemes in the region for a minimum of £5 with returns of 1.2 per cent per year over a five-year term. It closed the bond five days early after reaching its target. Local investors provided 22 per cent of the £1m and represented about ten per cent of the investors.

“What is offered is a very safe council-backed investment which, while not very high yield, is very low risk. The initial range of projects are going to be solar-electric. We have already got

a pilot aground. There are about half a dozen sites which will take panels on the roof and that is going to be greatly expanded over the coming years. For people who have got cash to invest, this is a great way of being able to say I want to invest near to where I live and make the world a better place.”

- To find out more about Abundance Investment visit

<https://www.abundanceinvestment.com>

- To read the LGA report Financing Green Ambitions visit:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/financing-green-ambitions-full-report>

NO AUTHORITY IS AN ISLAND: Sharing transferable knowledge

Islands represent an estimated 11 per cent of the world’s population, according to Wikipedia, but often punch above their weight when it comes to sustainability. There is much to learn from these communities who are more vulnerable than their mainland counterparts from the threats posed by climate change.

Island populations have been very active in global climate change action and in raising the agenda. James Ellsmoor, the Founder and CEO at Island Innovation, whose organisation links islands around the world to help them learn from each other, says that around a third of the Member States taking part in COP26, the United Nations Climate Change Conference, in Glasgow in 2021 will be island states.

Ellsmoor, who also helps smaller island developing states (SIDS) implement the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), thinks that what island states can teach each other about sustainability can also be useful for many other rural, remote communities too. Beyond learning from islands in our own jurisdiction, he believes we can also learn about sustainability from overseas low-income island states which often must innovate because they have less resources.

One of the things Ellsmoor believes marks island states out is that they are typically efficient at using the “quadruple helix” – the combined forces of Government, the private sector, academia and civil society, including Non-Governmental Organisations. “Islands often have these extreme circumstances that force them to do things differently and innovate and adapt more quickly. An example would be that islands often have very high electricity costs. For example, on Sark in the Channel Islands the electricity costs are seven-to-eight times higher than in the mainland UK and so there is a driving incentive to use renewables or alternative systems to figure out how to do that cheaply,” he explains.

Ellsmoor also uses Orkney, one of the 32 council areas of Scotland, as an example. “Some of the world-leading energy projects have happened in Orkney. Despite only having 20,000 residents it has several university campuses, a local council that is very active, a strong industry and a strong local voice and all these pieces play in well together. Orkney has the European Marine Energy Centre, which is leading the continent on marine and tidal energy and other projects around electric planes and hydrogen ferries. There is this whole energy ecosystem which has a really strong private sector element but with a lot of support from government, including the local council, and I think it is a fantastic example.”

He also points to the Island Growth Deal, a £100m package for the Outer Hebrides, Shetland and Orkney co-financed by the UK and Scottish Government. The idea behind the fund is to drive forward tourism, infrastructure, innovation, energy and skills. While the deal will support the islands to thrive, those outside could in turn benefit from any low-carbon innovation developed.

As we look for solutions to the climate change crisis and for sustainability generally – including the economy and society – it seems paying attention to what is happening in island authorities might provide some good learning points.

- To find out more about Island Innovate visit: www.islandinnovation.co

BUILD BACK Greener

Thursday 25th February
10:00 - 11:00 | Online Event



This webinar will be a chance to hear more about the lessons learnt and best practice covered in this edition of Transform, with panellists discussing what local authorities must do in order to help build back better, build back faster and most importantly build back greener.

Please note that there are limited places available for this online event.

REGISTER YOUR FREE PLACE AT:
[www.iese.org.uk/
build-back-greener](http://www.iese.org.uk/build-back-greener)

iese

The public sector
transformation partner

University shares sustainability lessons

Sustainability is high on the agenda for the University of Leeds. In 2020 it was ranked third in the UK and 11th worldwide in the global Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. Here we look at some of the ways it meets its sustainability targets and what local authorities could learn from its example.

The enthusiasm and expertise of the team who work on sustainability at the University of Leeds is clear. It published its first sustainability strategy in 2014 and sees this as an issue reaching far beyond environmental concerns. To the university, sustainability means creating value for society by taking responsibility for its economic, cultural, social, and environmental impacts. This organisation with 47,000 staff and students has plenty to share and teach others.

At the time of writing, it was yet to publish its Sustainability Report for 2018-2020, but its 2017/2018 report highlights how much progress has already been made. By 2018, it was working with 30 per cent more third sector organisations, the number of student hours spent on sustainability issues was up by 95 per cent, campus waste had been reduced by five per cent and 95 per cent of students were travelling sustainably. Reducing carbon emissions remains a challenge with an ever-expanding estate, however recent commitments by the university through its Seven Climate Principles focused attentions towards a 2030 net-zero carbon target.

Katie McGuire is Deputy Director of Sustainability Services at the University of Leeds. She is proud that the university has made some bold statements and commitments in the past few years. "Whilst we have published our Seven Climate Principles, we know it will take a lot of determination to achieve our targets as we don't have all the answers yet. We understand the importance of addressing global issues such as climate change and single-use plastics, so it is important we challenge ourselves to be brave, show leadership and be part of the solution. Becoming single-use plastic free and net-zero right across the institution is really important to us, and something we are committed to achieving," she adds.

But McGuire points out that an organisation cannot deliver on sustainability just by having a team overseeing it. "It is not our job as a service to deliver, our role is to enable and support our colleagues to implement sustainability initiatives in areas that are important to them alongside the university agenda."

Through a unique scheme called Blueprint, the Sustainability Service works with the schools and services to establish their impacts and what they can influence or change. Participants have maximum input into the process and then own delivery of the plan over a five-year period.

Mike Leonard is the Residential Property Manager at the university. His team's Blueprint covers everything from sustainability of the local economy to biodiversity. "We try to meet sustainable

purchasing principles looking at the impact on the local environment and local community. When we look at bidders for contracts, we look at their impact on issues like carbon, clean air and plastics but also on the local economy, like supporting apprenticeships. We are about to appoint a landscape management company based locally with local staff and local suppliers. Currently we are supporting a hedgehog-friendly campus initiative, and we are also talking to them about enhancing biodiversity through pollinator-friendly planting, for example."

The catering department is another with wide-reaching sustainability goals. Julie Tong, Head of Retail Catering, says the Blueprint scheme has helped bring everything together into a strategic plan. "It is to make sure sustainability is constantly in everything that we do. This year Covid-19 has brought many challenges to our department. The urge might be to throw sustainability out of the window and concentrate on the crisis but actually what it allowed us to do is step back and ensure sustainability was part of it."

The catering service has partnered with the app Too Good To Go to reduce food waste, which allows users to purchase surplus and discounted food. In 2017/18, more than 2,000 meals were bought this way. The team has also worked with small local businesses to develop products, e.g. artisan cakes and then given them regular orders.

Through its sustainability work the university aims to reach beyond its boundaries. It works in partnership with other academic institutions, the third sector, private companies, government bodies, through its 'Living Labs' research projects and in close collaboration with Leeds City Council to improve sustainability of the city region. The Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme, for example, is installing Natural Flood Management initiatives across the River Aire catchment to reduce rainwater surges and flooding downstream in the City. Both academic staff and volunteers from the university are working alongside Leeds City Council, the Environment Agency, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, and others, through a Living Lab approach to develop solutions through research and deliver positive impact.

For organisations at the start of their journey, McGuire believes it makes sense to start with the "big hitters" of environmental impact, climate change mitigation and carbon neutrality. "Those issues are the topics of now so it would be logical to start there. We have some ambitious targets as a



country and as a world. If you are not looking at these now, you are behind the curve."

To successfully push sustainability up an organisational agenda, McGuire believes it is essential to have strong governance, including action plans, processes and accountability. At the university, a Sustainability Steering Group feeds directly into the University Executive Group and its annual report aids transparency around its successes and challenges.

Sustainability also needs to be embedded into the heart of the institution. "We have a leadership team who really believe in it and in the value of what it brings both to us operationally but also through teaching, research and outreach. If you have leadership buy in and an engaged staff community, through collaboration you can really start to drive change in an institution," McGuire concludes.

• Visit www.sustainability.leeds.ac.uk for more information about sustainability at the University of Leeds