

# UN Sustainable Development Goals Summary Report 2021



## 1.0 Introduction

Cardiff University is committed to leadership in sustainability and improving our environmental performance. Our vision is towards building an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future for our community and to bring about environmental benefits not only to Cardiff and Wales but to the wider world. It is crucial to develop environmental sustainability as an integral part of our values and to embed the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into all aspects of our academic and operational activities.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

## 2.0 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)

As signatories of the Sustainable Development Goal accord, we have committed to embed the SDGs into our academic and business processes, this is reflected within our Environmental Sustainability Enabling Strategy. As part of the Accord, we are required to complete an annual survey. The survey details our work on embedding the 17 SDGs into University education, research, leadership, operations, administration, and engagement activities.

The following summary details each of the 10 SDG's that we have submitted evidence for 2020/21 providing a breakdown on Research, Learning and Teaching and Strategic actions.

### 2.1 Research

Recently, Welsh Government's Chief Scientist commissioned an analysis of SDG related research entitled "[UN Sustainable Development Goals: Wales' Research Performance with UK and Global Comparators](#)" which convincingly shows that Wales punches above its weight in SDG related research, not only in the UK but also worldwide. Below, we highlight some example projects that fall within the SDGs. Importantly, Cardiff research maps strongly to some SDGs that we cannot currently submit to for non-research reasons (eg SDG6).

#### SDG3

**Wastewater surveillance helps tackle pandemic.** *Professor Andy Weightman, BIOSI.* Wastewater surveillance is a key public health tool. Building upon strengths that in Wales in environmental sciences, disease surveillance and pathogen genomics, an interdisciplinary team of Welsh experts from Cardiff University, Bangor University, Public Health Wales and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water is currently monitoring COVID-19 levels in wastewater across Wales. They are also sharing their expertise with local and international partners to develop and apply monitoring systems worldwide, ensuring that these efforts are applicable to different contexts. Sharing best practice is allowing a resilient approach to tackle this worldwide pandemic. SDGs: 3, 6.

**Data for development – working with countries to develop and use better indicators of poverty and hunger.** *Dr Shailen Nandy, SOCSI.* Understanding and assessing progress towards meeting the SDGs requires reliable data for a wide range of new indicators. Research entails collaborating with national statistical offices, policy makers and UN bodies, like UNICEF, to develop better measures of multidimensional poverty to reflect the needs of adults and children as required by SDG1. The work also informs SDG2 (Zero hunger), since they showed why conventional indicators of malnutrition miss large numbers of malnourished children in west and central Africa; this work has implications for the resourcing of programmes seeking to deal with the challenge of global hunger. SDGs: 1, 2, 3.

## **SDG12**

**Assisting event organisers to hold more sustainable sporting and cultural events.** *Dr Andrea Collins & Professor Max Munday, CARBS.* Research has changed how policymakers; event organisers and consultants understand and evaluate the environmental impacts of major events. The researchers have worked with a wide variety of partners to produce the environmental section of the 'eventIMPACTS' toolkit from UK Sport (the UK's high-performance sports agency) and has led to the staging of more sustainable events in five continents. For example the research has influenced the development and scope of the first International Sustainability Standard for Golf Tournaments, which runs major tournaments in the US, Italy, and China. SDGs: 12, 13.

## **SDG13**

**Assessing public perspectives on climate action in the UK and beyond.** *Dr Kat Steentjes, Dr Caroline Verfuert & Dr Stuart Capstick ([SteentjesK@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:SteentjesK@cardiff.ac.uk)), PSYCH.* The involvement of the wider public is imperative for climate action, both in terms of people's support for ambitious emissions reduction policies, and their participation in low-carbon social transformations. Cardiff-based research in the UK, China, Sweden and Brazil assesses public attitudes towards climate change using representative opinion surveys; they also look at people's views in more detail through speaking with smaller groups of individuals about their interests and concerns. This work is helping to inform climate policy and maintain wider momentum for climate action across society. SDGs: 13 (3, 12).

## **SDG14**

**Healthy freshwaters for people and ecosystems.** *Prof Isabelle Durance, Prof Steve Ormerod, Prof Andrew Weightman, BIOSI.* Healthy freshwaters provide a major source of clean drinking water and sustain all wildlife downstream, supporting key human activities including fisheries, agriculture and recreation. Despite this, freshwater ecosystems are amongst the most threatened in the world. Cardiff research found that transfers of energy by river ecosystems connect landscapes, river biodiversity and key services such as clean water or the provision of fish. These findings were key to a new, sustainable management programme of a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Africa. The research also prompted an overhaul of both the policy and practice of freshwater ecosystem management in Wales. SDGs: 6, 14 (3, 15).

## **SDG15**

**Conservation of the okapi: the Congo rainforest's lost giraffe** *Professor Mike Bruford, BIOSI.* The okapi is one of the most enigmatic rainforest mammals on earth; only discovered at the beginning of the 20th century and first photographed in the wild in 2008. Genetic research by Cardiff University (working with partners including the Zoological Society of London) has shown it is a 'ghost lineage (extraordinarily distinct evolutionarily). The team have used DNA barcoding of faeces to assess the status of this hard-to-survey species which resulted in it being recognized as more threatened than previously thought and new conservation action.

**Halting biodiversity loss through genetic management guidelines** *Dr Isa-Rita Russo, BIOSI.* We are developing genetic management guidelines for large mammals in southern Africa, in partnership with conservation practitioners, policymakers, and academics in the region. Through the guidelines, they aim to protect genetic diversity within species by preventing excessive mixing of genetically unique populations, which would ultimately reduce species' ability to adapt to climate change and lead to a loss of biodiversity.

**Multidisciplinary landscape and biodiversity management in the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, Sabah, Malaysia.** *Prof. Benoit Goossens, Prof Mike Bruford, Dr TC Hales, BIOSI, EARTH).* Multifunctional landscapes of high biodiversity value provide numerous scientific challenges,

particularly in balancing the requirements of local communities, wildlife and ecosystem service provision. In Sabah, Cardiff University have been working with actors from governmental departments to local communities to develop management plans in an environment where landscape change (deforestation and palm oil agriculture) has resulting in declining populations of key wildlife species for ecotourism (eg Bornean elephant, orang-utan, crocodile) and loss of ecosystem services. They are also collaborating with community forest restoration via the Regrow Borneo program, that seeks to reconnect the 'corridor of life' envisaged for the Lower Kinabatangan floodplain.

## 2.2 Learning and Teaching

As a comprehensive Higher Education institution, Cardiff University has a breadth of formal education programmes at Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research that contribute to our students' understanding of the SDGs. Business school We also have a range of informal initiatives in place that support this work, such as the [Community Gateway project](#) and [Syniad](#). However, our educational leadership has acknowledged that to date our engagement with the SDGs might be characterised as pockets of practice, led by individuals in an absence of strategic support.

However, during the academic year 2020 to 21 the university reviewed and re-framed our university strategy:

### ***The Recast Way Forward:***

*Our Values: Environmental sustainability*

*We promote sustainability education and enable students and staff to make positive changes to our environmental impact, in particular our aim to become carbon neutral by 2030.*

This is supported and reinforced by enhancement of both the environmental and education and student experience sub strategies.

### ***Environmental Sustainability Sub Strategy***

*Our ambition: Cardiff University is committed to leadership in sustainability and improving our environmental performance. Our vision is towards building an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future for our community and to bring about environmental benefits not only to Cardiff and Wales but to the wider world. It is crucial to develop environmental sustainability as an integral part of our values and to embed the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into all aspects of our academic and operational activities.*

***We will promote sustainability through education, dissemination, and direct participation, enabling students and staff to make positive changes to our environmental impact, in particular our declaration of a Climate Emergency and our aim to become carbon neutral (Scopes 1 and 2) by 2030.***

***We will empower our students, graduates, and staff to become sustainable citizens who make a positive contribution to society and are active within their communities.*** *We will ensure sustainable development is a key consideration in all major decision making, promote sustainability issues and principles with all staff, students and stakeholders and enable the application of our innovative research to improve global sustainability.*

***A Globally responsible University:*** *We will promote sustainability education and dissemination and enable students and staff to make positive changes to our environmental impact*

### **Education & Student Experience Sub Strategy:**

- *We will be known as a University which values, promotes and embeds sustainability in education, enabling students and staff to make positive changes to our environment.*
- *Theme 3: Planning for Successful Student Futures*
  - o *Provide opportunities to explore how the Sustainable Development Goals and the Wales Future Generations legislation relate to learners and the discipline they are studying, as set out in the [Environmental Sustainability Enabling Strategy](#)*
  - o *Ensure our curriculum provides learning experiences that equip students for whatever path they follow once they graduate, including greater integration and visibility of graduate attributes and employability in all programmes; university-wide courses in a broader range of skills, for example quantitative methods, digital skills and languages*

These strategic actions have been supported by new leadership in the context of Education for Sustainable development (an Education Dean) and is being driven by their role as chair of the European University Association's Thematic Peer Group on Environmental sustainability of learning and teaching (Gwilliam J A & Peterbauer H, 2021). This has enabled the development of a comprehensive action plan that seeks to progress our educational engagement with the SDGs, to drive towards integrated action across the institution. Over the next three years we aim to:

- Initiate activities to support the evolution and embedding of this agenda in CU Education
- Annual reporting of ESD and SDG engagement
- Training for Staff to enable engagement with the SDGs and the ESD agenda
- Partnership working with students

Gwilliam J A & Peterbauer H (eds) (2021). Environmental sustainability of learning and teaching: LEARNING & TEACHING PAPER #14. Thematic Peer Group Report.

### **2.3 Strategic actions**

Progress has continued with embedding the goals into strategic actions including a number of key strategies and Policies including, Wellbeing Strategy; Education and Students sub-strategy [Environmental Sustainability Enabling Strategy](#), [Civic Mission sub-strategy](#), ERBAP, Procurement Strategy; [Sustainable Food Policy](#) and the [Health, safety, Wellbeing and Environment Policy Statement](#).

The following, details specific actions against the goals submitted:

#### **SDG 3**

Cardiff University has made considerable progress against SDG3. In September 2020 it launched its Staff Wellbeing Strategy [CUWellbeingStrategy.pdf \(cardiff.ac.uk\)](#). This key strategic document contained 26 new goals intended to maximise the wellbeing of staff. As of August 2021, the university has completed or made significant progress against 18 of those wellbeing goals. Highlights include:

- Putting 248 managers through i-act mental health and wellbeing training.
- Creating a comprehensive slate of wellbeing training opportunities, to provide staff with insights and practical support to improve their wellbeing.

- Creating an annual calendar of events that staff can participate in to improve different aspects of their wellbeing.
- The launch of Personal Wellbeing Promotion Plans (PWPPs). These documents have a preventative purpose. They encourage staff to demonstrate self-awareness about the factors that promote or impinge upon their wellbeing and record this information in their PWPP.
- The creation of a stress assessment training film in line with Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance.
- Creating a network of over 100 Dignity and Wellbeing Contacts throughout the various schools and colleges of the university, to help disseminate information and create a culture of wellbeing.
- Undertaking a comprehensive staff wellbeing survey. This found that around 80% of staff who completed the survey agreed or strongly agreed that the wellbeing support offered to staff during the pandemic was timely and well-focused.

### **SDG5 and SDG10**

Whilst gender balance for grades 1-5 has remained constant, there has been a slight increase in females applying for positions at Grade 8 and above from 35% in 2015 to 37% in 2019.

Our Strategic Equality Plan promotes and improves equality across the University. We have launched the Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024. The plan includes five equality objectives and covers the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation. It focuses on three specific groups of stakeholders: staff, students, and the wider community.

View the new [Strategic Equality Plan](#). Some of the achievements during the previous plan were:

- An increase in BAME staff at grades 1-5 by 4% since the start of the plan (this is now at 6.5%) and a rise in BAME applicants for positions at Grade 8 and above from 21% in 2015 to 24% in 2019. Whilst gender balance for grades 1-5 has remained constant, there has been a slight increase in females applying for positions at Grade 8 and above from 35% in 2015 to 37% in 2019.
- Progress has also been made in how we collect data about our staff. The ‘unknown’ disclosure rate has dropped by roughly 50% in each of the characteristics of ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability.
- Introduced the [Unconscious Bias training module](#) across the University. The module was originally introduced for those with recruiting, selecting and PDR responsibility - however it has proved an invaluable tool and this course is now mandatory for all staff.
- We have promoted equality of opportunity for those in research roles. A [comprehensive suite of EDI training](#) has been developed and delivered, with training tailored to the roles of individuals in the REF process.

Other successes in equality, diversity and inclusion have included:

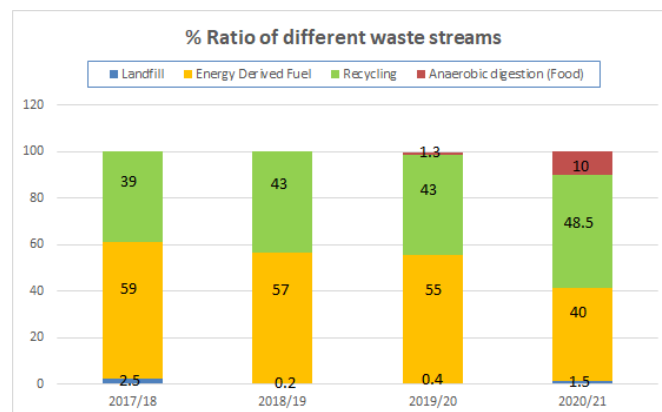
- The key appointments of Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Senior Assurance Advisor for Race, Religion and Belief.

- We have progressed from ranking 24th in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index in 2015 to 11th overall in 2019 (the UK's highest ranked University). We currently hold Top Trans Employer status and Enfys, our LGBT+ network was recognised as a Highly Commended Network Group.
- We retained our bronze institutional Athena SWAN award along with a number of school level successes.

## SDG12

Catering Services launched a new [Sustainable Food Policy](#) ensuring ethically and sustainably procured food across all catering activities, incorporating every stage of the food delivery chain from procurement through production to end consumer. It also considers impact of packaging and food waste and how to minimise our impact. The vision is to operate a responsible catering service that succeeds in providing healthy, sustainable, and affordable food to the University community. We also aim to support staff and student-led activities and research to enhance the University's contribution to sustainable food systems.

We secured £1,001,000 of funding from the Welsh Government Circular Economy grant for implementing recycling infrastructure across the campus. Single stream recycling bins were installed in March, our aims are to reduce the amount of waste sent to Energy Recovery to no more than 30% and to increase the proportion of total waste that is sent for recycling to 70% by 2024/25.



## SDG13

A [Climate White paper](#) was published detailing our baseline scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon emissions and our intention to be net zero for scope 1 and 2 by 2030 and for scope 3 before 2050.

Our [Environmental Sustainability Strategy](#) and Action plan have been updated to incorporate our actions to 2023. Climate Emergency Risk has been included on the University Strategic Risk Register.

A Carbon Net Zero Board was initially set up to provide clarity and focus specifically to the University's Carbon Net Zero ambition and are developing specific business cases related to our identified priorities. A new Environmental Sustainability Sub-Committee chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor has now been constituted and will lead on this work and provide reports in Council.

We are working in partnership with Cardiff Council on their One Planet Cardiff Strategy.



## **SDG15**

The [Ecosystem Resilience and Biodiversity Action Plan](#) (ERBAP) was launched in March 2021. The ERBAP, developed in collaboration with Cardiff Council, draws upon the resources and expertise of our wider University community: academic staff, professional services staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students. It allows us to ensure that our estate is managed to increase our green infrastructure, encourage and enhance biodiversity, and make more of our staff and students aware of the biodiversity that our campuses provide. Through the University's Biodiversity Action Plan, we will enhance the University's green infrastructure by ameliorating the environmental conditions of 30% of the green estate by 2023. As part of the ERBAP, we have joined the [Hedgehog Friendly Campus](#) accreditation scheme. Current and future activity from our working group includes regular litter picks, education campaigns, expert talks, and hedgehog surveys using footprint tunnels. Last year, our Pharmabees project launched a biodiversity monitoring project called Spot-A-Bee. Members of the public can use the free app to submit photos of plants that attract bees in their local area. This is helping to build a map of the floral and insect diversity across the UK.

## **SDG16**

The University continues to provide expert advice through a range of events, briefings and consultation responses including the Business School's breakfast briefings, briefing to Government on the impact of COVID 19 on Welsh Universities and Research and a consultation response to the Westminster's Science and Technology Committee inquiry into the role of technology. The University also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Future generations Commissioner providing support in a range of policy interventions, including most recently procurement.

## **SDG17**

Monthly Blas articles have been published raising awareness to staff and students across the University on actions towards embedding the SDGs helping to raise awareness and educate on our activities. We are replicating actions in the inaugural SDG report and will be enhancing information through our sustainability webpages.

### **3.0 Measuring progress**

#### **3.1 Times Higher Impact Ranking**

The THE Impact Rankings measure how Universities across the world are embedding the SDG's. Cardiff took part for the first time in 2020, submitting against 6 SDGs with the following results:

- SDG3 Good health and wellbeing – ranked 45<sup>th</sup> (top 5.2% globally) and 5<sup>th</sup> in the UK
- SDG12 Responsible consumption and production – ranked 18<sup>th</sup> (top 3.6% globally) and 11<sup>th</sup> in the UK
- SDG13 Climate action – ranked 34<sup>th</sup> (top 6% globally) and 4<sup>th</sup> in the UK
- SDG14 Life below water – ranked 47<sup>th</sup> (top 12.4% globally) and 9<sup>th</sup> in the UK
- SDG15 Life on land – ranked 58<sup>th</sup> (top 14.4% globally) and 16<sup>th</sup> in the UK
- SDG17 Partnerships for the goals – ranked 401<sup>st</sup>–600<sup>th</sup> globally

This academic year we will submit evidence for 10 of the SDGs with the aim to submit evidence for all 17 SDGs for academic year 2022/23. We have set an environmental sustainability key performance indicator to rank within the top 50 organisations by 2023.