

Quarterly Policy Briefing: Environmental Sustainability

April 2021

This document outlines the main policy changes seen in the last quarter that will affect EAUC-Scotland and Scottish institutions.

Scottish Policy Updates

- Scottish Government wrote to all University and College Chairs and Principals on 9th February 2021 outlining recent changes made through the Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020. This sets out that public bodies will be required to provide in their annual reports:
 - where applicable, the body's target date for achieving zero direct emissions of greenhouse gases, or such other targets that demonstrate how the body is contributing to Scotland achieving its emissions reduction targets;
 - where applicable, targets for reducing indirect emissions of greenhouse gases;
 - how the body will align its spending plans and use of resources to contribute to reducing emissions and delivering its emissions reduction targets;
 - how the body will publish, or otherwise make available, its progress to achieving its emissions reduction targets; and
 - where applicable, what contribution the body has made to helping deliver Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation Programme.

The new requirements apply from the report year ending on 31 March 2022 onwards. Further detailed guidance is expected to be issued by the Scottish Government in April 2021.

- Update from Scottish Government at the SSN Steering Group referenced that the [£95 million heat decarbonisation fund](#) will be spread over the next parliamentary period.
- Circularity Scotland has been appointed the [Deposit Return Scheme administrator](#) for Scotland - the scheme will go live for customers on 1st July 2022.
- The Scottish Government recently ran a consultation for the new [Net Zero Public Engagement Strategy](#). EAUC-Scotland ran an evidence gathering event and responded to the consultation. Our main feedback was that the strategy lacked depth, had minimal focus on education and that it could go further to engage the public.

- The Scottish Government has announced it will not be continuing with the [Circular Economy Bill due to the pandemic](#). They have also said they will not issue a Climate Change Plan Update in April as originally planned. It is likely Scottish Government will not publish their position on carbon offsetting as originally planned – this is something the FHE sector needs confidence on as they develop net zero strategies.
- The law on single-use plastics is changing. As part of a wider package of measures to tackle our throwaway society, the Scottish Government set out its plans to introduce restrictions on problematic single-use plastic items in 2020 with a twelve-week public consultation on the issue, which ended in January 2021. A report with findings from the public consultation is [available](#). For an overview of the draft regulations see [ZWS's information](#). The regulations will see market restrictions (effectively a ban) imposed on problematic single-use plastic items which are most commonly found as marine litter in Europe.

UK Policy Updates

- The UK Government has published "[Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth](#)" detailing their pandemic recovery plans. The plan states there will be a 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution but no date of publication was given.
- Advance HE and QAA have published new [Education for Sustainable Development Guidance](#). This aims to get sustainability into the curriculum for all subjects and to raise its profile as much as possible.

Other Updates

- The University of Glasgow has launched a new [Travel Strategy](#) which links to previous EAUC-Scotland work on the [Travel Better Package](#). Their new strategy aims to minimize travel altogether and to replace flights with train travel as much as possible.
- In partnership with EAUC-Scotland, Colleges Scotland and APUC, College Development Network have released a Statement of Commitment on Climate Change to colleges principals in Scotland. This will be formally launched on the 22nd of April and features the use of the [Climate Commission FE Roadmap](#) that EAUC support. The ten main aims are detailed below:
 1. Support Scotland's efforts to achieve net-zero climate emissions by 2045 or earlier if possible, with Scotland's colleges aiming to achieve net-zero by 2040 or earlier.
 2. Embed environmental sustainability in our institutional strategies and set measurable targets.

3. Address the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in our strategies.
4. Share best practice within and beyond the college/university sector.
5. Deploy our expertise and experience to combat climate change.
6. Contribute to public debate on climate change and use the power of our example to encourage others.
7. Work with Scottish industry, employers, public sector bodies and others to improve working practices and find practical solutions to climate change and to make our planet safe for future generations
8. Encourage where appropriate, colleges to adopt the UK HE/FE Climate Commission's 'Climate Action Roadmap for FE Colleges'.
9. Each college will publish action plans to address on-campus and supply chain emissions, setting out what steps they will take over a five-year horizon and beyond where possible, and what they aim to achieve to address the climate emergency.
10. Educating staff, students, employers and communities on the impact their daily lives and working practices have on the environment/climate. While working with our partners, local employers and communities to ensure everyone is aware of their personal responsibility to our planet.