

Environmental and Sustainability Policy 2023/24

This environmental policy sets out the Catering Department’s intention to promote sustainable practices and minimize the impact of its business activities on the environment.

The content and associated aims forms part of wider University Environmental and Sustainable Policy. Actions generated from the policy will form part of environmental audit conducted by Estates and Facilities Environmental Officers.

**Foreword**

There are several key environmental and sustainability factors to consider when producing a far-reaching policy that seeks to have a meaningful and measurable positive impact on a complex and busy catering operation which spans five campuses.

Our social and ethical intentions must align with our existing capabilities, infrastructure and resources; otherwise, the policy will simply become an aspiration, less meaningful, less productive and ultimately ineffective. It is therefore essential that we set a clear and measurable policy and invest sufficient resource and commitment to realizing our pro-environmental and sustainability aims.

As a catering business the day-to-day production, operation, service and disposal of food and drink is likely to consume moderately high levels of natural resources and generate significant volumes of packaging and food waste that if not managed, is likely to cause a detrimental impact on the environment and our vital eco-systems to include marine life. The more we can do now through intervention, influencing and education the more likely we can make a real difference in terms of reducing our environmental impact and changing attitudes, and social behaviors more widely through interaction with staff, customers and suppliers.

As the predicted future state of the environment becomes increasingly bleak, it has given rise to “eco-anxiety” which is described as “a chronic fear of environmental doom” and refers to a fear of environmental damage or ecological disaster. This sense of anxiety is largely based on the current and predicted future state of the environment and human-induced climate change. Although statistics aren’t readily available, experts have noted a marked increase in the public concern around climate change, leading to a shift in buying behaviour. Eco-anxiety is suggested to be one of the key social trends driving food innovation last year. As individuals, we need to be vigilant and thoughtful of our own activities, our own carbon footprint and levels of food waste and fuel consumption. Accordingly, our message to all is NOT JUST AT WORK! In order to shape a better future for all, our environmental behaviour must be constant and far-reaching in all that we do both at work and at home.

If we want to secure a healthy planet for all future generations, we must act now; sustainability must be embedded in everyday life, in all decision-making and future investment. The first step on the path to a greener planet is to understand the environmental impact of our business activities, then to educate our staff and employ intervention methods or policies to reduce or where feasible, reverse the negative environmental or sustainability impact our activities are having at a local or global level. At an aspirational level, if we can change behaviors and influence others to do so, collectively we can bring about meaningful change to help protect all vulnerable parts of the global eco-system and all its habitants.

There are a number of environmental considerations; however, this policy will mostly focus on deforestation, natural resource depletion, air pollution, environmental and land degradation and of inherent interest, ocean degradation.

**Key environmental considerations**

## Deforestation

Deforestation is the destruction of vast rain forest lands that are biodiversity rich and the subsequent displacement of indigenous people and endangered animals, which is changing the landscape, eco-systems and livelihoods for future generations. Rain forests contain and supress huge quantities of human-induced carbon emissions that are released back into the atmosphere if deforestation occurs, contributing to global warming. The net effect is a detrimental impact on the balance of nature, communities and our existing way of life, and in some forms, life itself.

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| **Consideration** | **What can be done** | **Commitments** |
| It is vital that we protect and maintain our Rain Forest and its indigenous people, providing them vital resources, security and education. Coffee plantation and production can, if not managed well contribute to deforestation and unethical commercial gains. It remains imperative that organisations and business do all they can to help protect vulnerable indigenous people and their way of life. | We will explore all forms of commercial schemes that re-invest in the forest and indigenous people, including the retail of non-profit merchandise associated with the Rain Forests. We shall provide clear messaging and information to our customers on our policies and continue to create awareness of the RFA (Rain Forest Alliance). | In 2023 we replaced The Arlott coffee beans with ‘Sea Dog’ coffee – roasted locally in Southampton. Sea Dog’s beans are sourced from single origins and carefully selected from a small group of dedicated producers with a commitment to quality and sustainability. They are dedicated to ensuring fair compensation for their product, consistently meeting or surpassing Fairtrade standards in pricing. |
| Palm Oil (and derivatives) and soy plantations are significant factors to the change in the rainforest landscape. Reduction in use of either commodity as a food source or bio-fuel and finding alternatives will lessen the department’s carbon footprint and societal cost. | We will identify all food products that contain palm oil which is not Certified Sustainable (CPSO), and work with our supply chain to find alternatives. We will also reduce soy-based hot menu products through careful menu planning and better product sourcing. To monitor this, annual menu reviews are to be undertaken to determine success in reducing soy and palm oil products. | Palm oil containing products will be minimised across our catering outlets and alternative products sourced wherever feasible. Our policies will be promoted in our outlets, through the use of posters and signage, staff engagement, social media and website. |
| In all catering service outlets where hot food is prepared and served, the number of products containing soy are limited to less than a third of the menu. |
| Some of our most endangered species such as, orang-utans, gorillas and the Bengal tiger live in tropical forest habitat. The harvesting of rainforest timber to produce paper based materials is a key factor to their natural habitation and subsequent dwindling numbers. | We must continue to educate our customers on the initiatives we are taking to encourage them to make informed purchasing decisions and to inform them of the importance of protecting our most endangered habitat and species. | Catering administration will continue to only use recycled paper for all photocopying and printing in the main office. Messaging will be displayed to encourage staff to limit printer usage. All cardboard and paper that is not contaminated with food/liquid will continue to be recycled.  Consistent marketing material will be displayed in all areas outlining our initiatives and the progress we are making.  SUSSED, the university’s online platform, will be regularly updated with marketing material and news to circulate information rather than printing. |

## Resource depletion

Over population, overconsumption, industrial development, excessive waste, consumption and use of water, fossil fuels, phosphorus, livestock, agriculture and fishing are collectively attributing to a depletion in natural resources at an unsustainable rate. Food production, especially crops such as soy, use high levels of water and power to fuel farming machinery.

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| **Consideration** | **What can be done** | **Commitments** |
| The exploration, extraction and commercial delivery of natural resources is energy intense and subsequently depleting our planet’s natural resource. | We will seek to reduce consumption of water, gas and electricity by educating the team and continuing to promote the campaign to ‘turn off’ power, water and gas across all outlets, offices and kitchens. | We will produce material to encourage both catering and University staff to buy into the ‘turn-off’ campaign to be displayed both front and back of house and via our online platforms. We will share this promotional material and messaging within other departments we work alongside, to include the domestic department, to encourage cleaners to turn lights off as they finish working in areas, helping us to work towards one goal. |
| When replacing any item of electrical equipment every opportunity to purchase power saving features will be explored. | The energy efficiency of all proposed new electrical equipment for the Piazza and other kitchen areas will have an efficiency rating ‘A’. |
| All future contractor tender processes will have an environmental consideration and be part of the scoring matrix. |

## Environmental and land degradation

A comprehensive report (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Eco-Systems Services (IPBES)), published in 2018 was commissioned by the United Nations to provide Governments, private sector and civil society policy-makers essential information about the status, human trends and threats to biodiversity and eco-systems. The report profoundly details the negative net impact that growth in population and consumption is having on the eco-system, that if not curtailed and a commitment to land and forest restoration is enacted, will have significant, irreversible and detrimental effect on our economic, social and life systems.

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| **Consideration** | **What can be done** | **Commitments** |
| The detrimental effect on our biodiversity and eco-system is likely to exacerbate if natural habitats such as wetlands and forests continue to be re-purposed for industrial farming. | Farming, transportation, storage and production is resource heavy and has a high carbon footprint. Ethically, food waste is deplorable. | All used coffee grounds from the Arlott Brassiere will continue to be collected by Estates and Facilities to be incorporated into the general compost for use on the University gardens. |
| In 2021 we changed the style of service in Piazza from counter serve food to a made to order operation with the aim to significantly reduce food waste over the service period. This has successfully achieved a consistent food waste level below 2%.  In 2021 we introduced a waste initiative (Too Good To Go) which was been implemented across all areas, to sell the produce which would otherwise be wasted for a heavily reduced price. This has significantly decreased the wastage of pre-packaged food.  In 2023 we introduced an additional scheme to decrease wastage further – the remaining unsold products are taken to the Library Starbucks where they are then sold at a heavily reduced rate. This has reduced the number of retail food products going into the bin to a minimal quantity.  In 2024, we are implementing a new digital stock control system which will further utilise our smart till software reporting capability to monitor product sales and remove any products which do not sell helping us to ensure food outlets are stocked appropriately and excessive stock is not left over. |
| All waste oil will continue to be sent for recycling. |
| Cattle farming has a high carbon footprint and is a key contributor to land degradation and deforestation. Chickens emit far less methane (a greenhouse gas more powerful than CO2), when they digest food, than cows and sheep. We will reduce beef consumption by substituting or removing red meat entirely from specific outlets and creating more awareness about the detrimental effect cattle farming is having on our eco-systems. | In 2022 we achieved and now maintain two “Beef Free” catering outlets – the Arlott and Life Science Café.  In 2024 we joined the TUCO Chefs Forum with a focus on “Menus of Change”. This initiative takes steps to keep flavor at the forefront but benefit our community with a healthy and sustainable diet, being plant forward and in turn reducing the meat consumption of our consumers. |
| Growth in population and associated food consumption and waste is driving unsustainable levels of agricultural expansion, increased farming systems, natural resource and mineral extraction. The IPBES reports that over one third of the Earth’s surface is used to farm agriculture and livestock, that if poorly managed will lead to higher levels of soil erosion and subsequent soil organic carbon released into the atmosphere. | There are people within our own society that are either incapable of looking after themselves or do not have the resource to pay for adequate food nutrition. | Through the ‘Too Good To Go’ scheme, food that would otherwise be wasted, is available to the local community for purchase at a reduced price shortly before close of business. This initiative helps support the local communities and encourages minimal waste.  In 2023, we launched several “Cost of living” initiatives for the university community, to include both staff and students. These have included:   * 5-piece buffet breakfast for £2.50 every Friday. * A bowl of cereal (hot or cold) with a hot drink for £1.00 (Monday – Friday). * Reduced sandwiches for £1.10 available end of day in specific outlets. * £3.95 meal deal which includes a sandwich, crisps and a drink.   Once a month, Campus Kitchen donate food products to SUSU food banks as part of a University wide initiative. The food bank is available to all who may need support in keeping their cupboards stocked up. We have been able to donate over £6000 worth of food to the food bank to date.  All students receive 20% off hot meals.  In 2023 we launched a catered package to students for £60 a week to help students with budgeting and exploring a wider variety of healthy options when they may struggle to cook for themselves. This package allows students to purchase food and drink (excluding alcohol) using their pre-loaded student card at any of the university food outlets. The £60 balance is refreshed weekly.  Simply “Better for later” product range allows individuals to buy a healthy, flavoursome meal to be taken and eaten at any time. It is a hassle-free meal that be eaten hot or cold with a shelf life of 3 days. |

## Ocean degradation

The pollution and acidification of our seawater and subsequent impact on the oceans’ and coastal biodiversity and the world’s natural eco-systems. The disposal of waste, particularly hard substances such as rubber, plastic and metals are not just toxic they are physically hazardous to marine life. If entered into our oceans, these materials have the propensity to entangle and disfigure some of our most precious and endangered ocean living creatures and sea birds, plastic substances can often end up in their digestive system too. Plastic is also blighting some of the most naturally beautiful places on our planet.

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| **Consideration** | **What can be done** | **Commitments** |
| A number of plastics are made from petroleum or natural gas (non-renewable) resources extracted and processed using energy-intensive processes thus contributing to resource depletion and carbon emissions. | Find alternative solutions to our single-use plastic products. Products which require single use, such as takeaway food/drink items, should be researched thoroughly to find the best and most sustainable option. | Where feasible, we will replace all plastic service items or disposables with a sustainable alternative (starch/plant-based materials) and introduce schemes to promote reusable liquid or food containers such as “bring your own mug”. |
| Teabags which contain plastic and condiments which are served in plastic will be replaced with compostable options in the Arlott Brasserie by the end of 2023. If successful, this will then be rolled out to other catering outlets within the department.  In 2023 we introduced a ‘take-away’ charge of 25p for all disposable cups and containers to reduce the number of disposable cups used. This scheme is in addition to our already established ‘Bring your own cup’ scheme offering an incentive of 25p off any hot drink if you bring your own reusable cup and our own branded Keep Cup launched in 2022 offering 5 free drinks with every cup purchased. The combination of these efforts helped us achieve a huge decline in the amount of single use disposable cups, approximately 50% less in 2023 in comparison to 2019 based on total hot drink sales.  Bottle refill stations around the university campus, encouraging the use of reusable water bottles. |
| The disposal of plastic either in whole or particle form are devastating and toxifying our oceans. | Wooden cutlery is 100% natural and no chemicals are used in the manufacturing process, causing no chemical impact to the environment. Manufactured from fast-growing trees, such as birch & bamboo, from responsibly managed forests, it absorbs CO2 while it is growing and creates habitats for wildlife. Wood utensils also benefit from being fully compostable and decompose in about 90 days without the need for an industrial facility or special process to break down properly. | Due to restrictions surrounding composting Vegware products in our region, all Vegware cutlery in from the end of 2022 has been replaced across our outlets with a wooden or recyclable alternative which can be disposed of within our food waste bins. |
| In 2023 we introduced the option of re-usable cups free of charge with all delivered catering orders to minimise the number of disposable cups supplied. By the end of 2024, where feasible, single use containers and service-ware will be eradicated within our hospitality offering. In instances where disposables are required, they will be recyclable. |
| Every effort must be made to reduce our purchase, use and subsequent disposal of all plastic items | Unavoidable single use containers must be disposed of via the University’s recycling policy. | In 2022, the re-usable cup scheme was re-introduced in Residential Halls.  In 2023, an Eco Container scheme was introduced into the university’s catered halls. For any students wishing to take their food away and having not supplied their own container, they are asked to put down a £5 deposit in order to take an Eco Container. This is then refunded at the end of term.  These schemes have successfully eradicated all single use cups and containers in catered halls. |
| Within La Piazza food court, each separate food station has fully recyclable packaging; 4ork branded packaging being fully plastic free. Clear signage of recycling bins are also be prevalent in La Piazza to help reduce the amount of take away packaging going to landfill. |

## Air pollution

Foreign substances and harmful gases released into the air, when inhaled in volumes over prolonged periods, can cause irreversible damage to plants, animals and humans. Methane emissions is reportedly responsible for a fifth of global warming. The stomachs of cattle and other large, farmed animals, landfill sites and rice paddies are 3 sizeable contributors for methane emissions. According to a Carbon Trust study, 1/5 of the average personal carbon footprint produced comes from the food choices we make.

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| **Consideration** | **What can be done** | **Commitments** |
| The farming process to include fodder, fertiliser and natural resources are high contributors to air pollution. | We will inform our customers about the environmental, welfare and health benefits of consuming less meat and ensure every food outlet has vegetarian and vegan food options. Our menus will be reviewed regularly for each outlet to ensure an adequate number of vegetarian and vegan meals are being offered. | Rice dishes are reduced to a maximum of one offering per outlet and alternatives offered that are not so methane intensive. |
| Our hot food menus in all catering outlets offer a minimum of 30% vegan and vegetarian options to provide choice and encourage customers to try new products and promote a change in regular eating habits. |
| Foreign, man-made substances can release harmful gasses into the air. | We will undertake a chemicals audit to identify areas where eco-friendly alternatives can be used. | When considering new chemical contracts, we will ensure we only introduce products that have less or no chemicals than our current chemical range. |
| Transportation and the combustion of petrol and diesel contribute to carbon emissions. | Our business vision is to streamline menus, utilise fewer suppliers, and purchase products with a longer shelf life will consequently reduce the number of deliveries onto each campus, in turn reducing emissions. We will also consider alternatives to our own large, motorised vehicles for campus deliveries by 2025. | From 2024, half of the existing catering vehicle fleet are now electric powered vehicles with a view to replace all bar one fuel powered vehicle by the end of 2025. Electric vans are prioritised for use over fuel vans.  In 2023, we created our own courtyard garden to grow food produce to be used in two of our catering outlets. Produce is grown using our own compost.  We have formed partnerships with local and independent suppliers, ensuring they operate within a 20 mile radius where possible thus reducing emissions and supporting our community.  The Blue Room restaurant showcases the finest locally sourced and home-grown produce. We want to ensure we are supporting the local community while also serving the highest quality ingredients. Our commitment to sustainability and freshness is reflected in our menus. Each season brings a new array of flavours and ingredients and our menu changes accordingly to highlight that. To promote this, we have detailed a map onto our menus highlighting where our ingredients are sourced from.  Top of Form |
| Refrigerants absorb infrared radiation and hold in the atmosphere, causing a greenhouse effect. Although now legislated and regulated there are several types of refrigerants made from Fluorinated gases (Fgases) still in use and accessible that can cause a negative effect on the ozone layer. | Fgas is legislated and all movement is to be recorded. | All Refrigerant which had r404a in situ in many of the departments walk-in chillers have been replaced with r452 r449, a lesser global warming gas. |

**Procurement statement concerning sustainability and animal welfare:**

* Suppliers must have Farm-Assured and Red Tractor accreditation to supply to the University poultry and dairy.
* The University will only purchase British poultry and eggs.
* The University will only purchase free-range eggs
* The University will only source fish from sustainable sources and will avoid any species named on the Marine Stewardship Council endangered list.

**Summary**

The impact of day-to-day production, operation, service and disposal of food and drink on the environment is huge. Reducing our carbon impact and food wastage must remain central to decision making and future planning. Our practices and action plan will be subject to constant review to reduce waste and manage our procurement processes to support and protect our planet. Solutions to environmental issues are continuously evolving and we must continue to adapt our operational processes accordingly through any available means which can be feasibly applied.