

# Climate Change - Net-Zero Nation: Draft Public Engagement Strategy Consultation.

## Introduction

Colleges Scotland is the collective voice for the college sector in Scotland, representing its interests and ensuring that colleges are at the heart of a world class education sector that is recognised, valued and available to all. Colleges Scotland, as the membership body, represents all 26 colleges in Scotland, which deliver both further education and around 24% of the provision of all higher education in Scotland.

The college sector's Statement of Ambition commits the sector to being 'a key partner in delivering Scotland's inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth', and colleges have been liaising with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and outlining their plans for further carbon reductions. Since the launch of the Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education on 13 November 2019, Colleges Scotland has represented the college sector in Scotland in discussions and been involved in the development of the 'Scottish Colleges' Statement of Commitment on the Climate Emergency', an action plan by College Development Network (CDN) in response to the UK government's stated climate emergency (Appendix A).

As such, Colleges Scotland is aligned with the Scottish Government objectives for Clean Growth and Green Recovery and recognises the role these objectives will have in strengthening social and economic prosperity while reducing carbon emissions and increasing sustainability. We therefore welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation.

## Key Points

### Objectives

The college sector is supportive of the Scottish Government's wider ambitious plan for Scotland becoming a net zero economy by 2045. Colleges play a vital role within their communities and, as such, welcome and endorse the objectives to make the public aware of the Government's action on climate change, to actively encourage community participation in policy shaping and to normalise action on climate change across communities. Colleges are well placed to assist in achieving these objectives and are fully supportive of this work.

### Principles

The overarching principles outlined in the consultation are welcomed by the college sector. Colleges have a proven track record in upskilling and reskilling workforces across Scotland, such as through delivering against the Flexible Workforce Development Fund since its inception in 2017, and through working with Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs). We are aware that Covid-19 has had, and will continue to have, a huge effect on the economy and the job market and many people will be looking for employment during the green recovery.

The college sector places particular emphasis on the 'just' and 'inclusive' principles in the consultation, as many of the communities served by the college sector have high levels of deprivation, which will only be exacerbated by current pandemic and, potentially, the transition to

net-zero as more traditional jobs are phased out and replaced by new, green roles. It is key going forward that colleges are supported in their endeavours, through inclusive policy making, to offer upskilling and reskilling to those furthest removed from education and the job market find meaningful, long-term work in the new, green economy and also to encourage a sense of personal responsibility for the future of our climate.

### **What are your views on the opportunities and challenges for public engagement in the Green Recovery?**

As stated in the consultation, strategies for public engagement will require people to feel a connection to the transition to net-zero. The college sector has set out, in its statement of commitment on the climate emergency, the intention to not only embed climate emergency work into the curriculum but to also use the wide reach of colleges within their communities to instil an understanding of the climate emergency and to invoke a sense of personal responsibility amongst the general public.

Due to the nature of the unique position of colleges within their communities, they are exceptionally well placed to engage those who can be hardest to reach and to promote awareness of the work that must be undertaken to combat climate change. It is the view of the college sector that everyone, including those furthest removed from education and the workforce, must be engaged on the issue of climate change and, as such, have committed to undertake this work in their communities.

Therefore, we welcome the approach of the Scottish Government in engaging the public and normalising the taking of action on climate change across communities.

### **What are your views on our approach to enabling participation in policy design?**

Colleges Scotland recognise the varied approach being taken to encourage participation in policy design. Across Scotland, colleges have participated in various conversations around the climate emergency and have submitted a sector response to the [Just Transition Commission](#) in support of the move to net-zero by 2045 (Appendix B), as well as responding to the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI) [Call for Views on Scotland's Clean Growth Future](#)

As a sector which engages with people of all ages across a variety of communities and landscapes, colleges have first-hand experience of the diversity in Scotland and welcomes the inclusive approach to policy design.

The sector considers it vital that there is sustained engagement with communities across the country to ensure that the voices of all Scottish citizens are represented, regardless of location or background. Colleges are well placed to facilitate these discussions, create awareness and represent the views of their staff and students.

### **What are your views on our approach to encouraging action?**

The sector welcomes the approach to encouraging action set out in the consultation. As previously stated, Colleges Scotland worked with (CDN) to create a sector statement of commitment on the climate emergency and as part of that colleges committed to embedding the climate emergency into, not only their curriculums, but also into the work undertaken in their communities.

The sector considers the assumption of personal responsibility for the environment to be paramount in the fight against climate change and will continue to use the role of colleges as civic anchors to promote awareness and positive change in their communities.

### **How do you think COP26 can help deliver a positive legacy for people of Scotland and climate action?**

COP26 is an opportunity for Scotland to not only make a positive impression on the rest of the world, but also to serve as a catalyst to promote climate change awareness and continue the ongoing work

required to ensure Scotland reaches its net-zero target by 2045. Colleges have already made a commitment on the climate emergency and will continue to engage in this work for years to come. However, as a sector, colleges are keen to promote the impressive work being undertaken to contribute to Scotland's net-zero goal and to promote positive change amongst their communities. To that end, the sector, through a partnership approach incorporating CDN and the Energy Skills Partnership (ESP) has submitted a proposal to COP26 and welcomes the opportunity to take part, showcase the work of Scotland's colleges and encourage continued focus and innovation in the climate sector.

Colleges Scotland represents the college view that COP26 offers wonderful opportunities for Scotland to showcase its commitment to net-zero. The sector remains committed to taking forward the ongoing work required to educate people around the climate emergency, and to upskill and reskill people into new, green jobs, whilst ensuring that climate change remains at the forefront of people's minds, which is the most impactful work the college sector can do in working with communities across Scotland.

## **Conclusion**

Scotland's colleges are at the forefront of education, working across the country with students from diverse backgrounds. Colleges engage with their students but also work within their communities to provide education and opportunities to those hardest to reach learners. Covid-19 coupled with the climate emergency has provided the sector with the opportunity to invest in the future of people and the planet through the green recovery.

On that basis, the sector welcomes the opportunity to input into the consultation for a net-zero nation and would implore Government to continue engaging with the sector to ensure that the voices of everyone are heard and represented, given the crucial role that colleges will play in supporting the transition to a net zero economy in communities across Scotland in their role as civic anchors, and in ensuring that this transition to a net-zero carbon economy is a successful one.

Colleges Scotland  
March 2021



## **Scottish Colleges' Statement of Commitment on the Climate Emergency**

In 2015, world leaders gathered in Paris and made a historic agreement to tackle climate change, which came to be known as the Paris Agreement, or COP21. Its central aim was to hold any increase in global average temperatures to well below 2°C, and this set a new course for collaborative global effort on climate change.

Responding directly to stark warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Scottish Government declared a climate emergency in 2019, and pledged to speed up efforts to achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Since then, Scotland's colleges have responded at individual institutional level by addressing a range of environmental issues. Now, as Scotland looks forward to hosting the COP26 UN climate change conference in Glasgow in November 2021 (postponed from November 2020 owing to Covid-19), colleges have come together to establish and commit collaboratively to delivering on a set of key actions.

Scotland's college principals recognise the urgency and extent of the climate emergency. We are committed to tackling the challenges it presents by working with staff and students, and with the Scottish Government and stakeholders, to ensure that colleges contribute to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions, and a more sustainable future for Scotland. We are committed to the *Climate Action Roadmap for FE Colleges (Annex A)*.

Colleges are unique in being well placed to influence local communities. We are civic anchor points, bringing communities together by providing local hubs for people to meet and offering campus amenities that are affordable for the people in the local area. Colleges will have an important role in helping local communities to adapt to climate change, and to build their resilience around its impact.

We have a long established and successful track record in social inclusion and widening access to education. Colleges support individuals of all ages and backgrounds to gain skills and qualifications, helping the most disadvantaged and furthest from the labour market - people who may not otherwise have opportunities to learn about and engage with environmental sustainability.

We will equip our students and wider communities with expertise and life skills which are essential to tackling climate change. Our students are at the heart all that we do, and they are well placed to demonstrate our commitment to educating a next generation of leaders with knowledge and understanding of climate change issues. We are committed to working in partnership with student associations as part of the wider efforts to tackle the climate emergency on campus, as well as connecting student and staff mental health and wellbeing to our environmental work and climate change actions. Colleges are instrumental in making the link between the wellbeing of whole-college and wider communities, the environment, and climate change actions.

Our colleges play an important role in supporting lifelong learning, by providing flexible learning

pathways and have the potential to reach deep into their local communities and stimulate positive change. This has never been more necessary. Across the full range of academic disciplines, Scotland's colleges have the capacity to find practical solutions to climate change.

Sustainability, including climate change is already being embedded within curricular teaching throughout Scotland's Colleges. Additionally, the Sustainable Development Goals will be used to continue to support each colleges vision to widen access to quality education, whilst also helping to encourage economic growth and reduce poverty.

To enhance professional learning in all areas of sustainability we will continue to work in partnership with expert local, national, and global organisations. We support staff to undertake their professional responsibilities, including vital industrial upskilling, and by utilising college staff's collective expertise we will allow for the Sustainable Development Goals to be further embedded in all taught areas. This will require a greater understanding of how to engage students in the importance of sustainability regardless of course subject or study mode.

Scotland's colleges will take a proactive stance on influencing the inclusion of sustainability and climate challenge as an integral part of the core curriculum within all courses. We will collaborate and work with our Awarding Bodies to ensure that focus is brought to these vital areas for all college students throughout Scotland. This may be through the further creation of specialist units based on sustainability and through clearer focus on appropriate elements within subject-based units. This will allow for dedicated time to explore and learn about a variety of environmental and human issues that will affect them as individuals, their local communities as well as the world that we all call home.

The infrastructure and physical operation of Scotland's college estates already address sustainability, and we will continue to improve and innovate in how we operate, from the way in which our buildings function, to our supply chains, and fleet. This is already making a significant contribution to clean transport, and the transition to zero emission vehicles. We are committed to creating greener, more sustainable learning environments by ensuring our college estate is a high priority, recognising that the buildings students are educated in must be a focus of our efforts.

We will set an example by committing to meaningful emission-reduction targets, by reducing waste and maximising recycling and by addressing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in our institutional strategies. We will take a collaborative approach to addressing these challenges, working with each other, and with our partners and stakeholders, to cut our emissions further, reduce waste and promote positive behaviours in relation to environmental sustainability across our college and wider communities.

**In addressing these elements, Scotland's colleges commit to the following 10 action statements:**

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, public sector bodies and others to 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 and communities on the impact their daily lives 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.

College Development Network (CDN) has established a dedicated group, the Climate Emergency Expert Group, which will allow us to work together and to go further and faster in tackling the climate emergency, while supporting the sector in delivering against these action statements. We are committed to applying those mechanisms for the benefit of all. We also explicitly endorse the determination which the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament have shown.

All policy related issues will be taken forward by Colleges Scotland.

Annex A

# Climate action roadmap for FE colleges

Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education | Nous Group

LAST UPDATED 25 JUNE 2020



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A CLIMATE ACTION ROADMAP FOR FE COLLEGES

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LEADING

# INTRODUCTION

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Climate change and ecological destruction are some of the biggest challenges of our time. Colleges, like all institutions, have a responsibility to address them; and to meet the UK government's target to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

There is currently a great deal of variation in how colleges are responding to the climate crisis. Some are leaders in this area, with clear sustainability strategies. Others are approaching the issue for the first time. All have a significant opportunity, to build upon the energy of their students and their close ties to their local communities to reduce their environmental impact in innovative ways.

The Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education was established in November 2019. Its goal is to develop a strategic, sector-wide approach to tackle the climate emergency. The Commission engaged Nous Group (a management consulting firm specialising in education) to support them to develop a 'road map' for further education colleges to reach the net zero target.

This roadmap is based on a range of existing materials, including the EAUC's 'SORTED: Guide to Sustainability in Further Education', the Sustainability Leadership Scorecard, the Climate Emergency Framework, and past winners of the Green Gown and AoC Beacon Awards, among others. It is also based on a workshop with FE college leaders and students, held in June 2020.



# HOW TO USE THIS ROADMAP

▶ The roadmap includes three 'levels' of colleges' approaches to sustainability, organised by different levels of maturity:

- **Emerging:** colleges just beginning to address sustainability
- **Established:** colleges with an established approach to sustainability and structures in place to support it
- **Leading:** colleges which are models to others on sustainability

▶ Each 'level' contains a series of initiatives colleges can implement to reach net zero emissions and improve their environmental impact.

These initiatives are categorised into the same categories as the EAUC's 'Sustainability Leadership Scorecard':

- Leadership and Governance;
- Learning, Teaching, and Research;
- Estates and Operations; and
- Partnerships and Engagement.

We have also added another category, data collection.

▶ The roadmap is intended to be used by college Principals and their leadership teams, students, and other members of the college community. Although many of the initiatives require executive action or investment, students should be seen as partners in developing and implementing the college's approach to sustainability. The roadmap can also be shared by the college with other stakeholders – such as local authorities, or businesses – to explain their approach to reach net zero emissions.

▶ This roadmap shows just ONE possible path to reach net zero emissions. Because it is intended for the whole sector, it does not take into account the range of contexts colleges operate in and different opportunities. Every college's journey will look different. We encourage you to use this roadmap as a 'starter for ten' as you begin to develop your own roadmap to net zero.

▶ Each initiative has both a 'cost' and 'time' rating. Because every college is different, it is not possible to estimate this precisely. Instead, the ratings should give a sense of whether the cost and time is high/medium/low.

As a general guide, we would estimate the following:

COST	EXPLANATION	TIME	EXPLANATION
	Main cost is staff time		<6 months
	Additional costs (e.g. £10-50k) and/or substantial staff time		6 months – 1.5 years
	Additional costs (e.g. >£1m) and/or very substantial staff time		+1.5 years

▶ There are many more resources available to assist colleges in sustainability. Some of these are linked throughout this document, while others are available with the EAUC, Students Organising for Sustainability, and others. Colleges looking for inspiration should look to awards like the Green Gown and AoC Beacon, to learn from and share good practice across the sector.

# KEY WORDS AND DEFINITIONS

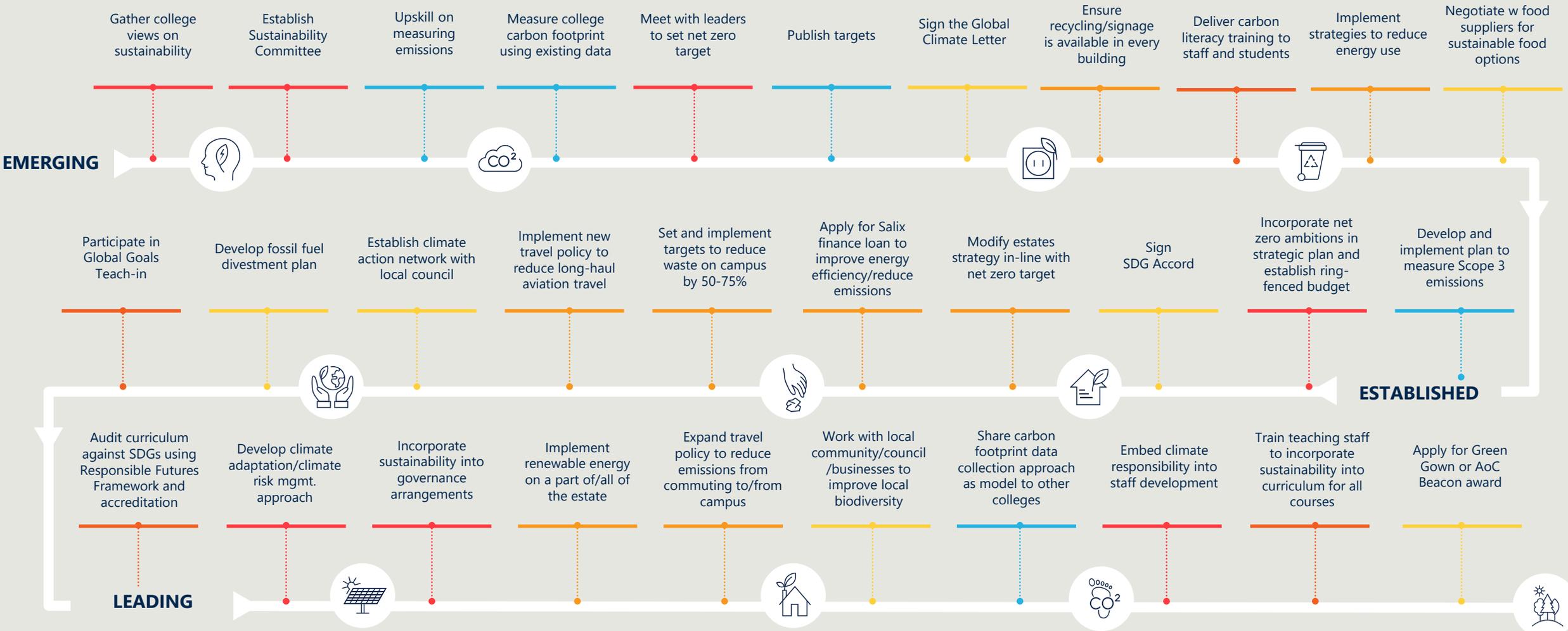
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The following table contains definitions for some of the key words used in this document

KEY WORD	DEFINITION
Climate change	Changes in the large-scale, long-term shift in the planet's weather patterns and average temperatures. For more information on climate change and what causes it, visit the <a href="#">Met Office web page</a> .
Climate emergency	The situation in which urgent action is needed to reduce or halt climate change to avoid catastrophic environmental damage, and its effects on people and communities.
Carbon footprint	The amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of an individual, organisation, or community. 'Carbon' is used as a shorthand to also include other green house gases (e.g. methane and nitrous oxide) which cause climate change.
Net zero	Achieving an overall balance between emissions produced and taken out of the atmosphere.
Biodiversity	The variety of life on Earth in all its forms and interactions. Biodiversity on earth is being lost at an alarming rate. This loss of species and natural systems threatens the food we eat, the water we drink, and the air we breathe.
Environmental sustainability	Maintaining or 'sustaining' the environment by protecting natural resources and preventing damage through climate change.
Scope 1, 2, and 3	Scope 1, 2, and 3 are different categories of emissions. Scope 1 emissions are those directly under a college's control (e.g. from cars owned by the college). Scope 2 are indirect emissions (meaning the college does not directly control them) from electricity purchased by the college. Scope 3 emissions are all other indirect emissions from activities of the college, including travel to and from college, emissions from waste and water, and emissions from investments. Scope 3 is usually the largest category of emissions.

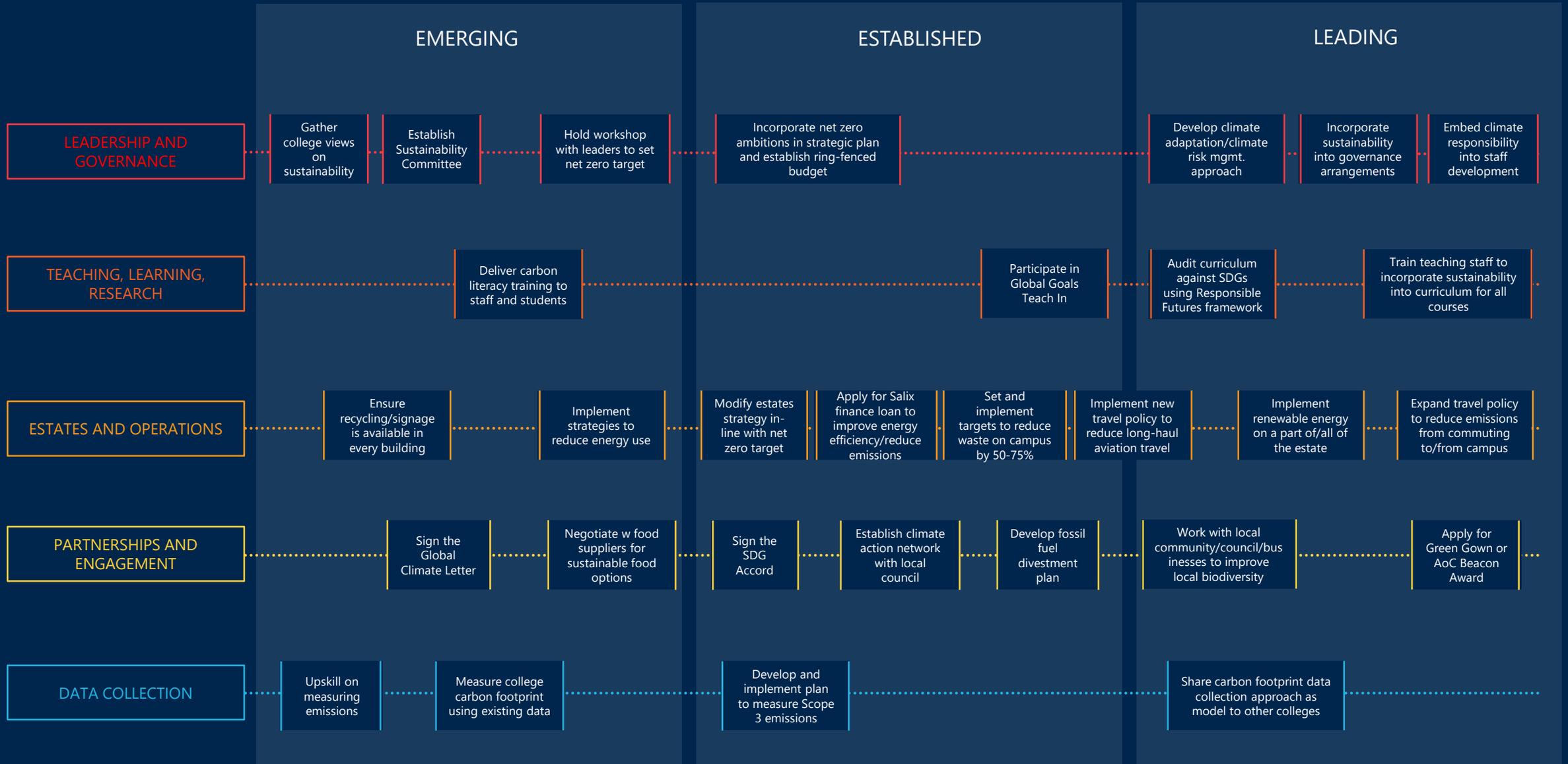
# A climate action roadmap for FE colleges

# FE CLIMATE ACTION ROADMAP



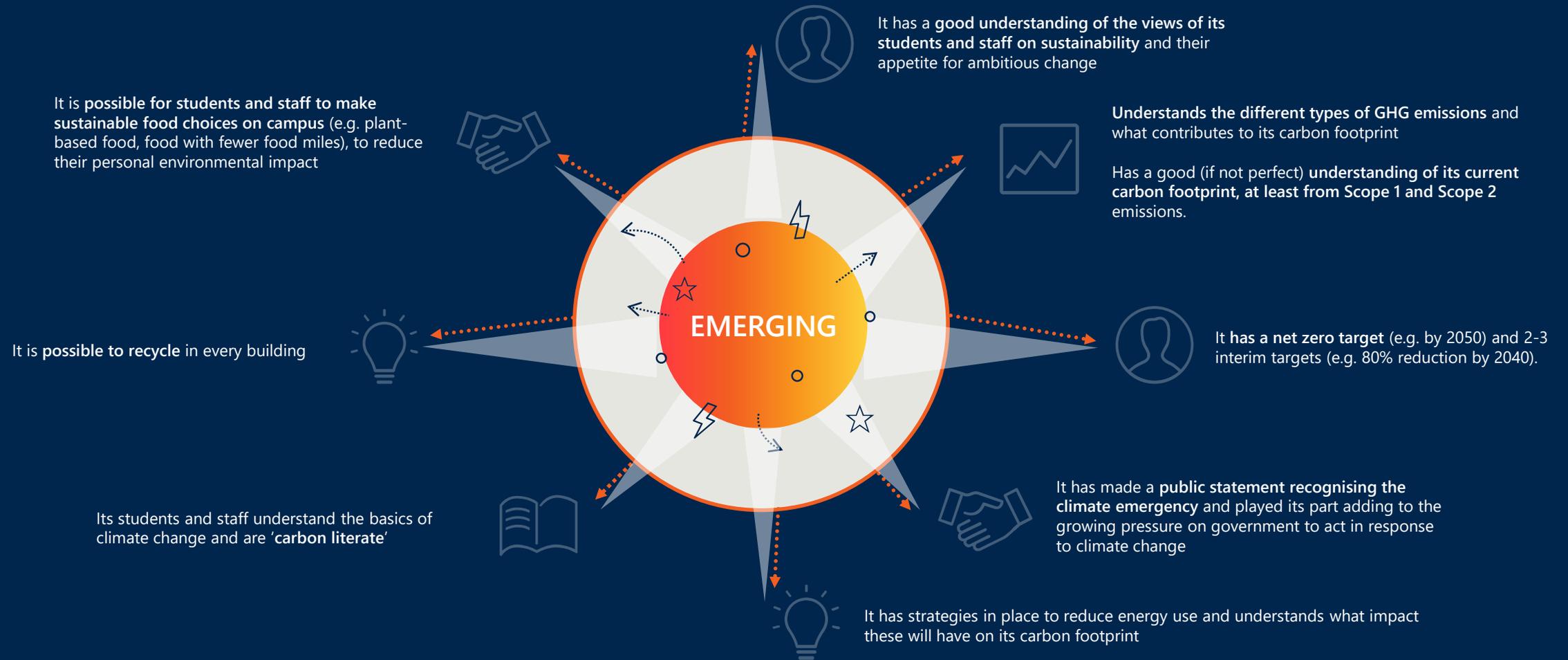
- Leadership and Governance
- Teaching, Learning, and research
- Estates and Operations
- Partnerships and engagement
- Data collection

# CLIMATE ACTION ROADMAP ACTIVITIES BY AREA



Emerging

# WHAT DOES AN 'EMERGING' COLLEGE LOOK LIKE?



# EMERGING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (1)

## Leadership and Governance

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?
<p><b>Gather college's views on climate change and sustainability.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and distribute a short online survey to students and staff to gather their views on sustainability and assess their ambition for action in the college.</li> <li>Include questions like 'how important is sustainability for you?', and 'in what ways would you like to see the college respond to climate change?'</li> </ul>	<p>Understanding the appetite for action to combat climate change among the college community will help to build the case for change</p>	 <p>Staff time is involved in designing, distributing, and analysing the survey</p>	 <p>~2 months</p>
<p><b>Establish a Sustainability Committee/Group:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a group of roughly 10 people who meet regularly, with responsibility for delivering sustainability initiatives.</li> <li>The group should include students and staff, including a member of the college's leadership team</li> </ul>	<p>This group will give a face to, and help to drive forward the sustainability agenda in the college. Including a member of the leadership team will ensure the group has clout. Including students will make sure it is representative of the whole community.</p>	 <p>Only cost is staff time involved in the committee</p>	 <p>~1 month</p>
<p><b>Meet with college leaders to set net-zero targets and sustainability ambitions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold meeting/workshop with Sustainability Committee, senior leadership team, and governors to discuss level of ambition for net zero and sustainability targets</li> <li>Set net zero target (e.g. 2050, or more ambitious and earlier?)</li> <li>Set interim targets (e.g. 50% reduction by 2030)</li> </ul>	<p>College leaders will ultimately be responsible for delivering on these targets, so it is important they are involved in setting them. Having an explicit discussion about the level of ambition, and how quickly the college can achieve net zero, will help to ensure initiatives are practical and appropriate to the college's context.</p>	 <p>Staff time being involved in the workshop</p>	 <p>~1 month (including preparation and holding the meeting)</p>
<p><b>Publish targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on the results of the workshop, share the college's net zero target and interim targets (e.g. net zero by 2040, 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2025) with the wider college community</li> <li>Publish targets on college website</li> </ul>	<p>Publishing targets signals the college's sustainability ambitions to the whole community, including partners and external stakeholders. It should also help to hold the college to account.</p>	 <p>Staff time (e.g. marketing/communications team/individual)</p>	 <p>~1 week (working between sustainability committee and communications person/team)</p>

# EMERGING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (2)

## Data collection

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?
<p><b>Upskill on measuring emissions/carbon footprint</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainability team and others learn about how to measure carbon footprint, including Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions.</li> <li>Use resources like <a href="#">Greenhouse Gas Protocol</a> guidance, and <a href="#">guidance from EAUC on measuring Scope 3 emissions in HEI context</a>.</li> <li>Connect with other colleges (e.g. leading colleges) to learn from others in the sector</li> <li>Sustainability committee share their knowledge with others</li> </ul>	<p>Measuring an institution's carbon footprint can be tricky. Take the time to first learn how to do this, drawing on external resources. Educating others will help reporting to be more effective</p>	 <p>Staff time to upskill and share resources</p>	 <p>~1 month</p>
<p><b>Measure college carbon footprint using existing data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainability team collect available data to measure College's carbon footprint.</li> <li>Aim to measure Scope 1 and Scope 2. Try to estimate Scope 3, if possible</li> <li>Use freely available existing tool to measure and project emissions, such as <a href="#">Carbon Footprint and Project Register Tool</a>.</li> </ul>	<p>Even if the college has patchy data, it is important to measure it current carbon footprint as accurately as possible, to establish a baseline and inform your net zero targets. This should also reveal gaps in the college's current data collection.</p>	 <p>Staff time involved in collecting data/measuring</p>	 <p>~2-3 months</p>

## Teaching, learning, and research

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?
<p><b>Deliver carbon literacy training to all staff and students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design and deliver 1-day carbon literacy training to all staff and students with support from the <a href="#">Carbon Literacy Project</a> (which offers a day's worth of training on climate change, carbon footprints, and other environmental issues)</li> </ul>	<p>The college community must have a good understanding of climate change, what causes it, and how it is likely to affect them if they are to take action in response. The Carbon Literacy project delivers this foundational understanding and shows individuals actions they can take to reduce their individual environmental impact.</p>	 <p>There is a cost involved in the Carbon Literacy Project certifying/delivering training for the college. For more information contact <a href="mailto:info@carbonliteracy.com">info@carbonliteracy.com</a></p>	 <p>~2 months to arrange and then deliver training</p>

# EMERGING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (3)

## Estates and Operations

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Implement strategies to reduce energy use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify opportunities to <i>reduce</i> energy use (e.g. by doing an energy walk-around, different heating and cooling timers, campaigning to switch-off lights).</li> <li>Draw on free and publicly available resources/guidance, such as the <a href="#">Carbon Trust's guide to energy saving</a></li> <li>Report to the college community how much energy has been saved and the impact on the college's carbon footprint</li> </ul>	<p>There are likely to be several, low or no-cost initiatives the college can implement to reduce its energy use before it begins to explore higher cost options to increase energy efficiency and eventually explore renewable energy. Focusing on these 'quick wins' first will reduce the college's carbon footprint straight away and build momentum for future initiatives.</p>	 <p>Staff time involved in designing and implementing initiatives</p>	 <p>It may take longer than 6 months to design and implement these initiatives and report on their results</p>
<p><b>Ensure recycling, food waste, and signage is available in every college building</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check recycling bins and food waste bins (where possible) are available in every college building with signs showing people how to recycle/dispose of food waste</li> </ul>	<p>Having the right bins available and guidance for what to put in them will help to divert more of the college's waste away from landfill, reducing emissions from landfill and the pollution the college creates. It will also educate students about recycling and encourage positive behaviour towards waste.</p>	 <p>Cost of additional bins, collection points (if needed) and signs</p>	 <p>~2 months</p>

## Partnerships and Engagement

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Negotiate with campus food suppliers to supply sustainable food options</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand how sustainable are the food options on your campus (consider number of vegetarian/vegan options available, food miles, and seasonality)</li> <li>Develop a set of criteria for more sustainable food. Check for resources and information on <a href="#">Sustain</a>.</li> <li>Procurement team and sustainability committee negotiate with food suppliers to ensure more sustainable options are available, based on criteria</li> </ul>	<p>A significant proportion of carbon emissions come from food we produce, eat, and waste; and some foods – like beef, lamb, cheese, and chocolate<sup>1</sup> – have higher carbon footprints than others. Other factors, like how far away food comes from and whether it is in season, also affect its environmental impact. Offering sustainable food options allows students and staff the choice to reduce their personal environmental impact and contributes to positive behaviour change across the college.</p>	 <p>Cost should be borne by the supplier and consumers</p>	 <p>3-6 months to negotiate change and implement</p>

(1) Poore, J., & Nemecek, T. (2018). Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers. *Science*, 360(6392), 987-992

# EMERGING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (4)

## Partnerships and Engagement

### INITIATIVE

#### Sign the Global Climate Letter

- College Principal sign the [Global Climate Letter](#) on behalf of the college – a letter from universities declaring a climate emergency, in recognition of the drastic societal changes that must occur to respond to climate change

### WHY DO IT?

Demonstrate the college's commitment to climate action and increase the growing pressure on governments to act in response to climate change. The letter is linked to the SDG Accord, and recognises the important role of education in responding to climate change.

### HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?



No cost

### HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?



Established

# WHAT DOES AN 'ESTABLISHED' COLLEGE LOOK LIKE?

It understands what parts of its investment portfolio are invested in fossil fuel companies. It has a plan to divest from fossil fuels and achieve a green investment portfolio

It has established relationships with the local community and council with a shared aim to combat climate change locally

Its 10-year estates strategy reflects its commitment to its net zero targets, including an ambition to optimise the use of the estate (rather than build new buildings), refurbish buildings to improve their efficiency, and applying BREEAM standards to new buildings

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become 'part of the conversation' at the college, through the signing of the SDG Accord and the Global Goals teach in. The college community are aware of the SDGs and students have a sense of how they might apply to their subject of study

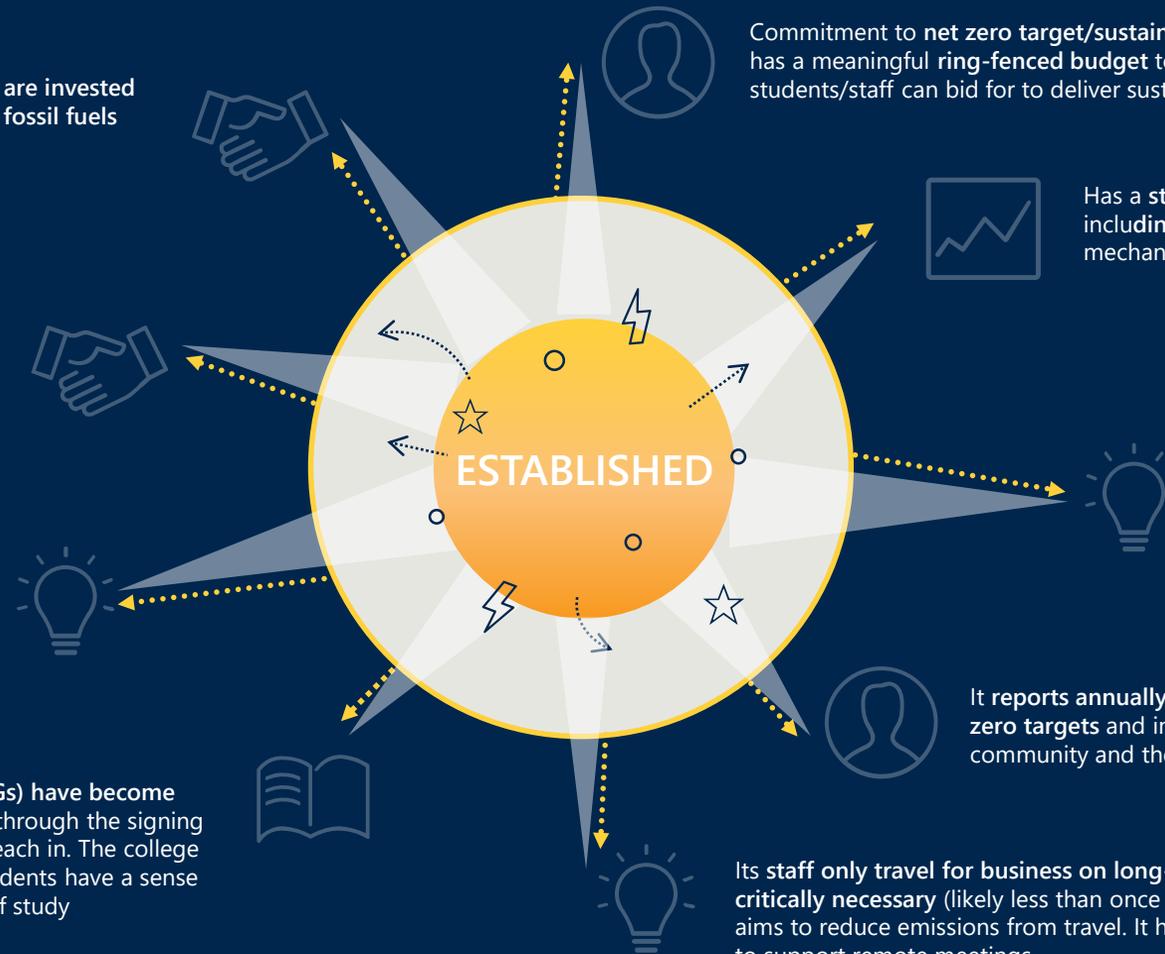
Commitment to net zero target/sustainability is reflected in strategic plan and it has a meaningful ring-fenced budget to deliver on it (which includes funds students/staff can bid for to deliver sustainability projects)

Has a strong and precise idea of its carbon footprint, including its Scope 3 emissions, and ongoing mechanisms in place to collect the data to measure it

It has undertaken/is currently undertaking an ambitious project to reduce emissions from its buildings with the help of a Salix Finance loan

It reports annually on its progress on meeting its net zero targets and interim targets, to the college community and the public

Its staff only travel for business on long-haul airplane flights when it is critically necessary (likely less than once a year), under a travel policy that aims to reduce emissions from travel. It has invested in video-conferencing to support remote meetings



# ESTABLISHED COLLEGES INITIATIVES (1)

## Leadership and Governance

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Incorporate environmental ambitions into strategic plan and establish ring-fenced budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the next review of the college's institutional strategy/strategic plan, revise the strategy in-line with the college's environmental targets</li> <li>Based on the college's net-zero target, establish a ring-fenced budget to implement strategies to reduce the college's carbon footprint and improve its environmental impact</li> <li>Include a part of this budget that students/staff can bid for to fund specific sustainability projects (with measurable environmental impact)</li> </ul>	<p>There is a risk that environmental ambitions are superseded by other strategic goals if they are not incorporated into the strategy.</p> <p>Strategies to reduce the college's carbon footprint through energy reduction/efficiency/renewables may bring cost savings to the college, but also require an up-front investment. Ring-fencing a budget will protect the funds needed to implement these initiatives</p>	 <p>This cost will depend on how much of your budget/surplus you are prepared to dedicate to sustainability. This should match your level of ambition.</p>	 <p>~3-6 months to adjust strategy and negotiate budget</p>
<p><b>Establish reporting schedule against net zero targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a schedule (likely annual, but possibly more frequently) to report publicly on the college's progress in reducing its carbon footprint/progress to net zero</li> <li>Reporting does not have to be complex – a simple, up-to-date page on the college's website is enough to have an impact</li> </ul>	<p>Establishing a rhythm of reporting will help to hold the college to account on reaching its environmental targets and also advertise its successes to the community/wider sector</p>	 <p>Low cost if the college continues to measure its carbon footprint on an ongoing basis</p>	<p>N/A - ongoing</p>

## Data collection

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Develop and implement plan to measure Scope 3 emissions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop plan to collect data on/estimate Scope 3 emissions</li> <li>Use resources like <a href="#">Greenhouse Gas Protocol</a> guidance, and <a href="#">guidance from EAUC on measuring Scope 3 emissions in HEI context</a>.</li> </ul>	<p>The majority of a college's emissions will be in Scope 3 – emissions controlled by others and produced by things the college does/consumes (e.g. goods and services, travel, waste disposal, investments, staff and student commuting).</p> <p>It is not possible to achieve net zero without measuring Scope 3 emissions and finding opportunities to reduce them</p>	 <p>Cost involved in additional data collection, management, and reporting. Up-front investment of time to fairly estimate Scope 3 emissions.</p>	 <p>This could take time, depending on the quality of the college's data and time taken to establish a baseline</p>

# ESTABLISHED COLLEGES INITIATIVES (2)

## Teaching, Learning, and Research

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Participate in the Global Goals Teach In</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in the Global Goals Teach In: an annual week-long campaign delivered by Students Organising for Sustainability that asks college teachers (and university lecturers) to embed the sustainable development goals into their teaching for a week</li> </ul>	<p>This week-long exercise will increase students' understanding of sustainable development. It will also pave the way for sustainability being embedded across the curriculum. This is a good opportunity to engage with Students Organising for Sustainability, which are a leading voice on incorporating the SDGs into college and university education.</p>	 <p>No additional teaching cost</p>	 <p>Some time needed for teachers to upskill on the SDGs</p>
<p><b>Audit college curriculum against the SDGs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assemble a team of teaching staff from across the college to audit the college's curriculum against the Sustainable Development goals</li> </ul>	<p>Understanding where the sustainability goals are already reflected in the curriculum – and what the gaps and opportunities are – is the first step towards offering students an educational offer informed by the SDGs</p>	 <p>More substantial staff time commitment</p>	 <p>Audit is likely to be time-consuming, depending on college's size</p>

## Estates and operations

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Apply for a Salix Finance loan for financial support to improve energy efficiency on the estate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Salix Finance</a> provides interest-free Government funding (£842m) to the public sector to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, and lower emissions.</li> <li>It has helped several colleges - e.g. Lincoln College Group loaned £704,849 to substantially reduce carbon emissions by completing LED lighting upgrades across campuses (<a href="#">see case study here</a>)</li> <li>Exploring options to increase <i>efficiency</i> is based on the assumption the college has already tried to <i>reduce</i> its energy use</li> </ul>	<p>Salix finance provides the resources to implement ambitious energy efficiency and carbon reduction campaigns that can be paid back over time with money saved on electricity costs. Over 100 different energy-efficiency technologies are available for Salix interest-free financing</p>	 <p>Cost of developing the loan application and paying back overtime (depending on gap between cash saved from energy efficiency and loan)</p>	 <p>~1 month to make application/business case and pay-back period up to 5 years</p>

# ESTABLISHED COLLEGES INITIATIVES (3)

## Estates and operations

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Set and implement target to reduce waste in the college by 50-75%</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect data on the college's use and waste of plastic and paper to develop strategy to reduce waste.</li> <li>Consider the waste hierarchy: prevention, reusing, recycling, disposal</li> <li>Set targets to reduce waste; proportion of products re-used; proportion of products recycled; and proportion of products diverted from landfill</li> <li>Aim to reduce waste on campus by 50-75%</li> </ul>	<p>Everything the college consumes has an environmental impact, creates greenhouse gases in production, and uses finite natural resources. As waste breaks down in landfill it produces gases that play a part in climate change. Reducing the college's consumption of materials is the first step to reduce this impact, followed by reusing materials as much as possible, and avoiding sending waste to landfill.</p>	<p></p> <p>Costs associated with strategies to reduce waste</p>	<p></p> <p>Time taken to introduce new strategies to reduce waste and to encourage behaviour change</p>
<p><b>Modify estates strategy in-line with net zero targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainability committee work with estates director/estates team to modify the college's estates plan in-line with net zero targets.</li> <li>This may include introducing space optimisation measures to avoid building new buildings; implementing refurbishment measures to improve energy/water/waste efficiency; making sure new buildings are BREEAM standard 'excellent'</li> </ul>	<p>Optimising the college's estate (rather than building new buildings) and improving the efficiency of existing buildings through refurbishment is a powerful way to reduce the college's carbon footprint.</p> <p>Incorporating sustainability into the estates strategy will decisions about the future of the estate and investment take into account the college's net zero targets</p>	<p></p> <p>Optimising space on campus can save cost; but sustainable refurbishment requires investment.</p>	<p></p>
<p><b>Implement new travel policy to reduce emissions from long-haul travel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement new travel policy that aims to reduce long-haul airplane travel and conduct long-distance business virtually by default</li> <li>Invest in video-conferencing facility for all staff and students (e.g. Zoom licenses) if this has not happened already</li> <li>For long-haul business travel that must go ahead, managers to approve it using a framework like that developed by the <a href="#">Tyndall Centre</a> (including encouraging train/bus travel)</li> </ul>	<p>Long-haul airplane travel drives up the college's Scope 3 emissions significantly, but it can often be avoided by meeting over video-conference, or if travel is critical, taking lower-carbon modes of travel like the train.</p>	<p></p> <p>Cost saving from less and cheaper travel</p>	<p></p> <p>The college may pilot the new policy in one area first before expanding it to the whole college</p>

# ESTABLISHED COLLEGES INITIATIVES (4)

## Partnerships and Engagement

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Sign the SDG Accord</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College Principal sign the <a href="#">SDG Accord</a> on behalf of the College</li> <li>Identify staff member (e.g. member of Sustainability Committee) to be responsible for reporting (<a href="#">2020 reporting template available here</a>)</li> </ul>	<p>The SDG Accord recognises the critical role of education in advancing the SDGs. Institutions that sign make a commitment to embed the goals in teaching, learning, research, and operations.</p> <p>The SDG Accord provides a framework for action on sustainability throughout the college.</p>	<p></p> <p>Only cost is staff time in reporting</p>	<p></p>
<p><b>Establish climate action network with local council</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact local council/local community organisations to establish a local climate action network, which can implement initiatives across the region to combat climate change/OR join existing network that already exists</li> <li>Draw on resources from the <a href="#">Place-Based Climate Action Network</a> and learn from other established networks</li> </ul>	<p>Colleges can increase their impact by partnering with local councils in their region and working with local communities (e.g. implementing bike lanes throughout a city; organising direct-from-farm vegetable schemes)</p>	<p></p> <p>Low cost to establish network</p>	<p></p> <p>Less than 6 months to establish network; implementing initiatives will take longer</p>
<p><b>Develop fossil fuels divestment plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the college's investment portfolio to check whether it has any direct investments in fossil fuels</li> <li>Contact the college's pension fund for advice on whether pensions are invested in fossil fuels</li> <li>Develop plan to divest from fossil fuels over 3-5 year period/or update responsible investment policy</li> </ul>	<p>The college's investments form part of its Scope 3 emissions. Developing a plan to develop a green investment portfolio/green pensions is a step towards net zero. The college would also join the growing divestment movement, which aims to divert funds away from fossil fuel companies and encourage them to transform their business models.</p>	<p></p> <p>Cost involved in implementing divestment plan, less in developing plan</p>	<p></p> <p>How long the plan takes to develop and implement will depend on the complexity of the college's finances/the level of current investment in fossil fuels</p>

# Leading

# WHAT DOES A 'LEADING' COLLEGE LOOK LIKE?

The college is a model to other colleges seeking to combat climate change and it shares resources and lessons (e.g. data collection methodology) with others in the sector

All food consumed on campus is sustainable, mainly plant-based, and locally and ethically sourced

The college is well known for its performance on sustainability (through awards like the Green Gown and the AoC Beacon Awards) and attracts students for this reason

It has a plan in place to adapt to and mitigate climate-related risk (e.g. risk from flooding on the estate)

The campus and the region surrounding it are richly biodiverse, with a variety of habitats, including wild spaces



Sustainability is at the heart of its decision-making and its leaders are actively working towards delivering its net zero target. Sustainability is a part of induction, CPD, and job descriptions – making it integral to the college's workforce.

It has delivered on its interim carbon emissions reduction targets (e.g. 30% reduction by 2023; 40% reduction by 2025)

Sustainability is a part of every course at the college, integrated into the curriculum. It is accredited with Responsible Futures.

It is powered by majority renewable energy sources and it has radically reduced the emissions produced by energy used on campus

Students and staff travel to the college in low-carbon ways – they walk, ride bikes, take public transport, and participate in car-sharing schemes

# LEADING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (1)

## Leadership and Governance

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Incorporate sustainability into all governance arrangements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make clear leaders' accountability for delivering on sustainability agenda</li> <li>• Make the sustainability agenda a part of executive group and governing board arrangements – e.g. a standing agenda item is how the college is delivering on its net zero target/environmental objectives.</li> </ul>	<p>Being explicit about leaders' accountability for sustainability in the college will future-proof the college against a change in leadership or change in priorities.</p> <p>Incorporating sustainability into key governance meetings will ensure the issue and progress on targets is front of mind for these groups</p>	 <p>Low cost</p>	<p>N/A - ongoing</p>
<p><b>Develop climate change adaptation/risk strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the risks of climate change to the college (e.g. heatwaves, flooding) and incorporate these risk explicitly into the college's risk management plan</li> <li>• Draw on <a href="#">guidance developed by the EAUC and AECOM</a> on how universities and colleges should adapt to a changing climate</li> </ul>	<p>The effects of climate change – particularly severe weather events like flooding and heatwaves – pose threats to almost everything colleges do (teaching, recruitment, their supply chains, infrastructure). Colleges should incorporate these risks into their normal risk management approaches.</p>	 <p>There may be costs involved in additional risk management approaches/mitigations</p>	 <p>How long this takes may depend on the complexity of climate-related risk to the college (e.g. susceptibility to floods)</p>
<p><b>Incorporate climate responsibility and sustainability into staff development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with college HR team/representative to incorporate climate responsibility and sustainability into staff development practices, including induction, CPD, and possibly promotion and award structures</li> <li>• Consider incorporating sustainability as a standard item on job descriptions – for example, knowledge about and commitment to the SDGs</li> </ul>	<p>Incorporating sustainability into the college's staff development practices is an opportunity to make it a key part of the workforce. It will also help teaching staff to become better teachers of sustainability and ensure that sustainability initiatives in the college are more likely to 'stick'</p>	 <p>Staff time associated with updating standard induction and other procedures</p>	 <p>Changes to staff development practices and the workforce will take some time, as people adapt. Changes to pay and reward structures, for example, require careful change management.</p>

# LEADING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (2)

## Data collection

### INITIATIVE

- Share data collection methodology with other colleges**
- Share data collection methodology – particularly approach to measuring Scope 3 emissions – with other colleges in the ‘emerging’ or ‘established’ phases. E.g. share spreadsheets/examples of data-collection processes.

### WHY DO IT?

Sharing this methodology as a model to other colleges will help them to measure their own carbon footprints more accurately, particularly more complex aspects like Scope 3 emissions

### HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?



Very low cost.

### HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?



Some time may be needed in explaining the methodology to other colleges (e.g. a webinar)

## Teaching, Learning, and Research

### INITIATIVE

- Audit college curriculum against the SDGs using Responsible Futures Framework and accreditation**
- Assemble a team of teaching staff and students from across the college to audit the college’s curriculum against the Sustainable Development goals
  - Engage with [Responsible Futures](#), run by Students Organising for Sustainability, to conduct the curriculum audit, drawing on the Responsible Futures Criteria (although note that these expand beyond just teaching and learning)
  - Gain accreditation with Responsible Futures

### WHY DO IT?

Understanding where the sustainability goals are already reflected in the curriculum – and what the gaps and opportunities are – is the first step towards offering students an educational offer informed by the SDGs

Responsible Futures offers a comprehensive approach to reviewing the college’s teaching and operations against the SDGs, and can give the college accreditation. This signals to the college’s community and external stakeholders how seriously it takes sustainable development. Also, it gives students an opportunity to be closely involved in sustainability at the college.

### HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?



More substantial staff time commitment  
Cost of first-year accreditation with Responsible futures is £1,600.

### HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?



Audit is likely to be time-consuming, depending on college’s size

# LEADING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (3)

## Teaching, Learning, and Research

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Train all teaching staff in climate change/environmental issues and support them to incorporate the SDGs into the curriculum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train teaching staff in climate change and the SDGs and run a short programme supporting them to incorporate sustainability into their curricula</li> <li>• Draw on data collected in the audit of the curriculum against the SDGs</li> <li>• Draw on resources such as <a href="#">Learning for Sustainability Scotland's College Learning for Sustainability Champions programme</a>, a free 10-week programme in which a 'champion' from each department learns how to embed sustainability in their curriculum, and shares the lessons with other staff and students.</li> <li>• Draw on resources such as <a href="#">College Education for Sustainable Development Workbooks</a>, which provide guidance on how to incorporate sustainability into specific subjects, like hairdressing, or construction</li> </ul>	<p>Incorporating sustainability <i>into</i> students' core curriculums will help them to understand its importance and how sustainability is connected to almost everything we do. This is likely to be more meaningful and enduring than one-off modules on issues like climate change.</p> <p>Teaching staff are best placed to incorporate sustainability into their curriculum – for example, in methods of sustainable construction, or sustainable materials – and should be given the license to think creatively about how to educate students in these issues.</p>	 <p>Some cost associated with training all teaching staff and time taken for those staff to modify curriculums</p>	 <p>Time taken to modify curriculum – it may take 18 months or more to incorporate sustainability into every course's curriculum</p>

## Estates and operations

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Implement renewable energy on a part of/all of the Estate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Switch to green electricity tariff – check they are a REGO certified providers</li> <li>• Consider project to implement on-site renewable generation (e.g. <a href="#">University of Lancaster's wind turbine generates 15% of campus electricity</a>)</li> <li>• Consider direct power purchase agreement of renewable energy, potentially in partnership with other colleges (e.g. <a href="#">20 universities, including Newcastle, Exeter, and Aberystwyth cut £50m deal in 2019 for 10 years of direct wind energy</a>)</li> </ul>	<p>Renewable energy (such as solar, wind, hydro, and biomass energy) produce no green house gas emissions and in some cases can reduce air pollution. Renewable electricity is also often cheaper than electricity from fossil fuels, particularly on-site renewable generation, which will eventually cover the initial costs of installation. Installing renewable energy will help the college to further reduce its carbon footprint, once it has explored opportunities to reduce its energy use and become more energy efficient.</p>	 <p>There are costs associated with installation; although renewable energy may offer cost savings</p>	 <p>Switching the whole college to renewable energy may take more than 1.5 years, depending on its size and the complexity of installation</p>

# LEADING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (4)

## Estates and operations

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Expand travel policy to reduce emissions from commuting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set a target to reduce carbon footprint of staff and student travel to and from the college (e.g. 75% reduction)</li> <li>Implement a range of initiatives to support low-carbon travel (e.g.: shuttle bus from town centre, bike storage, car sharing scheme, bike hire and repair scheme, walk-a-thon, etc)</li> </ul>	<p>Colleges can reduce their Scope 3 emissions and work towards their net zero target by reducing emissions from people commuting to and from college.</p> <p>Initiatives like cycling and walking schemes can also help to improve mental health and wellbeing.</p>	 <p>Potential cost associated with subsidising bikes or building additional bike lanes/bike storage in college</p>	 <p>Travel policy will not take long to amend but behaviour change will take time</p>

## Partnerships and Engagement

INITIATIVE	WHY DO IT?	HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?	HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE?
<p><b>Partner with local community/council/businesses to improve local biodiversity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with local businesses and draw on local climate action network to implement local biodiversity strategy (e.g. bee highways, re-wilding areas around campus/owned by local communities).</li> <li>If appropriate, draw on students to implement biodiversity initiatives as learning activities</li> <li>Draw on guidance produced by <a href="#">EAUC to Biodiversity on Campus</a></li> </ul>	<p>The loss of biodiversity – the variety of natural species on earth – threatens natural ecosystems we depend on for food, water, and protection against climate change. Colleges have a responsibility to protect and foster these natural ecosystems in their natural environments; by partnering with their local community, they can do so over a greater area. Strategies to enhance biodiversity also offer teaching opportunities (e.g. through planting new green spaces).</p>	 <p>Likely to be cost involved in implementing biodiversity initiatives (e.g. planting new wild flower meadow)</p>	 <p>Time taken will vary based on size of the college/level of ambition of biodiversity initiatives</p>
<p><b>Apply for a Green Gown or AoC Beacon Award</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply for a Green Gown Award, which recognise exceptional sustainability initiatives in colleges and universities.</li> <li>AND/OR apply for an AoC Beacon Award, such as the 'Education for Sustainable Development' award, which recognises excellence in embedding the SDGs in all aspects of college teaching, learning, and operations.</li> <li>Either Sustainability Committee or people involved in specific college sustainability project apply for the award</li> </ul>	<p>Applying for a Green Gown Award or an AoC Beacon Award is an opportunity for a leading college to showcase its performance on sustainability – the awards are well known in the UK and increasingly internationally. The award could increase the college's profile and encourage more students to attend, and it also provides an opportunity to learn from other colleges' sustainability projects and performance.</p>	 <p>Staff time involved in applying for the award</p>	 <p>Less than 1 month</p>



# Call for Evidence: Just Transition Commission - Colleges Scotland Comments

## Introduction

Colleges Scotland is the collective voice for the college sector in Scotland, representing its interests and ensuring that colleges are at the heart of a world class education sector that is recognised, valued and available to all. Colleges Scotland, as the membership body, represents all 26 colleges in Scotland, which deliver both further education and around 26% of the provision of all higher education in Scotland.

The colleges sector Statement of Ambition commits the sector to being ‘a key partner in delivering Scotland’s inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth’, and colleges have been liaising with the SFC and outlining their plans for further carbon reductions. Since the launch of the Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education, Colleges Scotland has represented the college sector in Scotland in discussions and been involved in the development of an action plan by College Development Network in response to the UK government’s stated climate emergency.

As such, we welcome the opportunity to respond to the call for evidence issued by the Just Transition Commission to inform its final recommendations to Scottish Ministers that will maximise the economic and social opportunities that the move to a net-zero economy by 2045 offers as well as building on Scotland’s existing strengths and assets.

## Key Points

### College Sector Support for Net-Zero Agenda

The college sector is supportive of the Scottish Government’s wider ambitious plan for Scotland becoming a net zero economy by 2045. We welcome the focus of the commission on providing practical, realistic, affordable recommendations for action to Scottish Government Ministers and agree with the intended goals of maximising the economic and social opportunities that the move to a net-zero economy by 2045 offers, and we would strongly endorse the key role of the college sector in supporting this agenda.

### College Sector Role in Supporting Economic Recovery and Working with SMEs

Scotland’s economy is forecast to suffer from a very significant contraction because of Covid-19 and colleges will be pivotal in driving economic recovery with their agility and ability to upskill and retrain people, providing them with the employability skills employers need.

Colleges are ideally placed to support organisations across Scotland to rebuild businesses and their confidence and to do this with the net zero targets in mind, whilst creating opportunities to develop resource efficient, inclusive and sustainable economic approaches, which help address inequality and poverty, in line with the goals of the Commission.

Given the college sector’s extensive networks and unique reach to SMEs, colleges have a key role to play in supporting net-zero related innovation activity in these businesses, whilst driving regional economic developments and recoveries focused around moving towards a net zero economy and simultaneously maximising the opportunities for workers to develop their skills as part of these changes.

## **What do you see as the main economic opportunities and challenges associated with meeting Scotland's climate change targets?**

As the national organisation for colleges in Scotland we know that the sector has a vital role to play in supporting both the development and delivery of low and zero-carbon infrastructure in Scotland, as across the sector our members are large users of infrastructure, in terms of the college learning estate and the wider digital infrastructure underpinning wider learning on digital and virtual platforms.

With this in mind, we know that there is a real opportunity for the sector, in contributing to the upscaling of this infrastructure, to play a greater role in helping Scotland achieve its climate change targets.

Of equal importance, colleges are a key delivery partner for the workforce who construct and maintain infrastructure across Scotland, delivering high-quality technical education courses to provide workers with the skills that are required for them to hold successful careers in low and zero-carbon infrastructure related roles.

There is real opportunity for the college sector here to upskill and reskill this workforce, including those who lose their jobs as a result of Covid-19, to ensure that the wider Scottish infrastructure network is futureproofed to support a low carbon economy, whilst also supporting the key Commission aim of making all possible efforts to create decent, fair and high value work, in a way which does not negatively affect the current workforce and overall economy.

The college sector has an important role to play in supporting inclusive growth and the development of a low carbon economy, and colleges are currently heavily involved in both areas, through actively developing projects in collaboration with the Energy Skills Partnership. Therefore, it is important that colleges are a key component of conversations as the commission develops its work going forward.

## **Are there specific groups or communities that may be, or feel that they may be, adversely affected by a transition to a net-zero carbon economy? What steps can be taken to address their concerns?**

We welcome the recognition by the Commission that there should be an assessment of workforces most likely to be affected by the transition (including those indirectly affected through supply chains), and in responding to most immediate and pressing skills requirements needed to support the net-zero transition.

The college sector can play a key role in supporting this agenda, as colleges as a whole have a proven track record in upskilling and reskilling workforces across Scotland, such as through delivering against the Flexible Workforce Development Fund since its inception in 2017, and through working with SMEs.

In order to support a transition to a net-zero carbon economy there should be a sustained focus on creating and maintaining apprenticeship pathways (particularly at this time of economic uncertainty as a result of Covid-19), to provide a skills pipeline to support any increased activity in relevant sectors of the economy, and more importantly to give young people the opportunities to forge successful careers in this context. As traditional apprenticeships in the Oil and Gas sector may be susceptible to the transition to net-zero it is vital that apprentices are not adversely affected.

To this effect the college sector has been engaged in developing a net-zero apprenticeship challenge, to support innovative practice and to maintain learning pathways and opportunities in careers focused around the net-zero carbon economy. We would be happy to share practical examples of this work with the Commission.

As part of this the college sector welcomes the development of a Climate Skills Action Plan being outlined as a key action to be taken forward in the interim report, and similarly we are encouraged by the focus within the interim report on the need to establish strategic planning on skills in order to

deliver a just transition. Given the crucial role of the college sector in providing opportunities for upskilling and reskilling across Scotland we would strongly advise that the sector is involved in those development discussions as they unfold, and not just brought into discussions at the delivery stage.

## **Conclusion**

Going forward colleges across Scotland will continue to help Scottish workers, and Scottish apprentices, to keep pace with technological, environmental and labour market changes and to increase workforce and business resilience to future disruption as the economy both recovers from the impact of Covid-19 and transitions to a net-zero, low-carbon inclusive format in response to the Climate Emergency

As the Commission receives responses with which to inform and shape the delivery of a net-zero economy for Scotland, we would hope that the knowledge and thinking of the college sector, a sector which is increasingly supporting both the development of an inclusive, cohesive and resilient economy across Scotland, is taken into consideration in the next stages of the work of the Commission, especially around planning, investing and implementing a transition to environmentally and socially sustainable jobs, sectors and economies, and in building on Scotland's economic and workforce strengths and potential.

We note that the Commission intends to work openly and transparently, and engage meaningfully with workers, communities, NGOs, business and industry leaders, and other relevant bodies across Scotland. As part of this engagement we would welcome the opportunity to consult with the Commission, given the crucial role that colleges will play in supporting the transition to a net zero economy in communities across Scotland in their role as civic anchors, and in ensuring that this transition to a net-zero carbon economy is a successful one.

Colleges Scotland  
June 2020