

## Writtle University College strategy for environmental Sustainability & Sustainable Development

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### Preface

The Environmental sustainability strategy for Writtle University College sets out targets for reducing environmental impact in the 4 key areas presented in the institute’s policy document, which are :

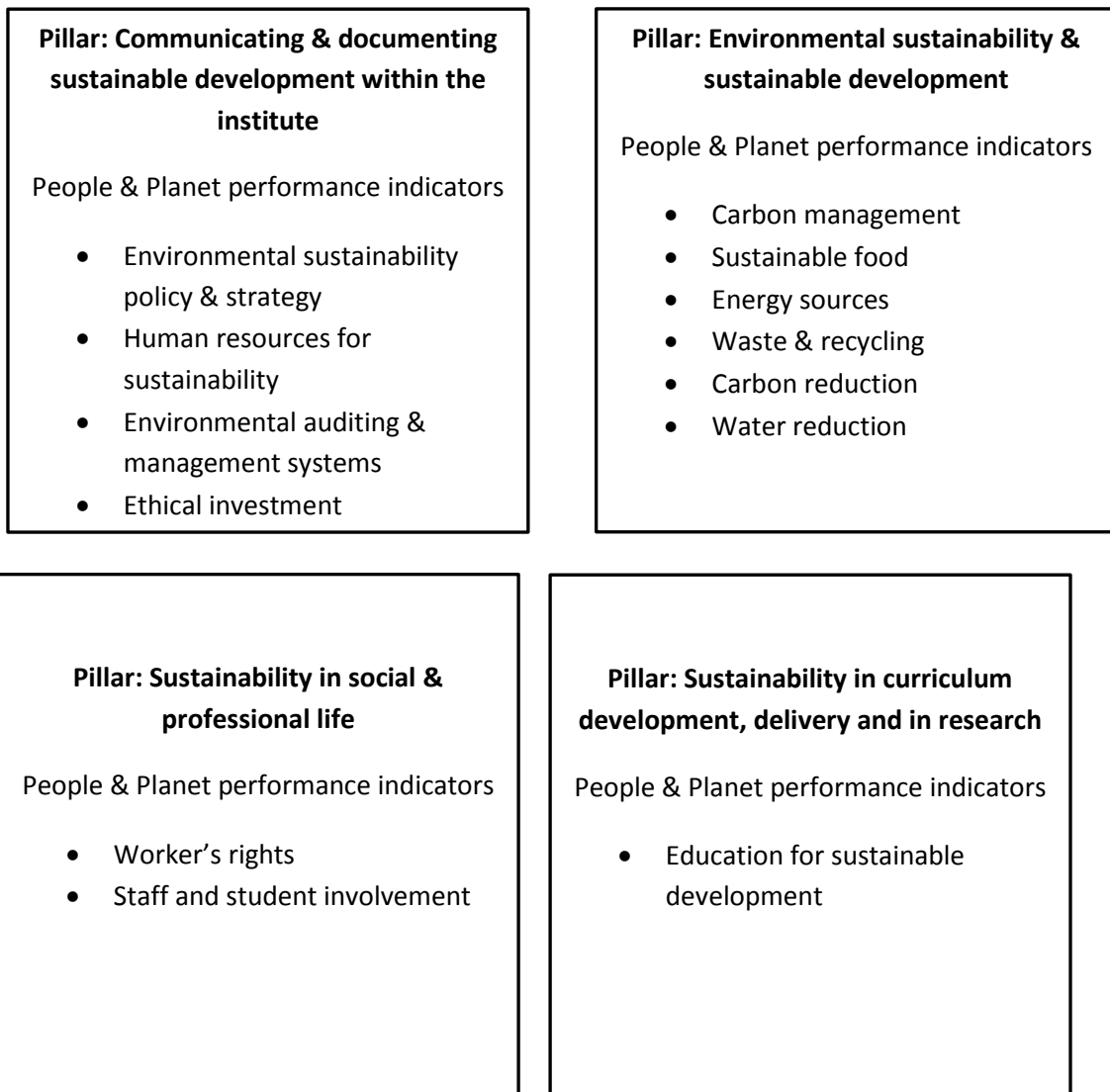
1. Sustainability in curriculum development, delivery and in research
2. Environmental sustainability and sustainable development
3. Sustainability in social and professional life
4. Communicating and documenting sustainable development within the institute

The four key areas or ‘pillars’ are grounded in the global Sustainable Development Goals (see Figure 1)



<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/>

All institutional strategic activities and targets relating to the UK “People & Planet” initiative and assessment process will be delivered within the four key areas or “pillars” as they will be called, as shown below:



## **I Structuring and delivering Writtle University College's strategic objectives for environmental sustainability**

The institute's environmental sustainability strategy is intended to change lives and to have a very real and positive benefit on the environment. Given its unique position as a specialist HE institute in land-based studies with over 200 hectares of farmed landscape, WUC has the opportunity to establish itself as one of UK's HE forerunners in environmental sustainability.

Environmental sustainability and sustainable development are already part of the curriculum delivery in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in environmental studies, horticulture, agriculture and landscape architecture. The intention is to widen provision to other areas of study, including animal sciences and art & design.

Delivering on commitments is essential to maintaining the institute's standing and credibility amongst other HE establishments and sector organisations but also to winning the hearts and minds of future students. To achieve its ambitious goals it is important WUC adopts a pragmatic, step-wise approach, based on realistic targets and an adaptive management framework. Circumstances and fortunes are continuously changing, which increases vulnerability at all levels of operation. To counter some of the problems inherent in uncertainty it is necessary to develop strategies that are risk-robust, realistic, and flexible. That is to say, despite good intentions not all ambitions and objectives can or will be met but rather, priority will be given to those outcomes perceived to be most achievable.

The ecosystem-based approach adopts a systemic, whole system perspective to management. It also encourages adaptive management strategies to planning and implementation with an emphasis on long-term objectives and inbuilt flexibility for modification subject to continual monitoring and review.

The time frame for rolling out the environmental sustainability strategy is '*long-term with stepping stones.*' Stretch goals are to be set for a 10 year rolling programme with targets and a progress check determined every 5 years. Annual monitoring and recording is to be carried out and documented with the opportunity to make short-term adjustments within the framework of adaptive management.

## **Recording and communicating progress and achievements**

The WUC strategy for environmental sustainability will be made available as an open access document on the institute's web site.

Every 5 years a 'mid-way check' report will be produced with details on progress and target-setting based on a combination of both environmental and performance indicators to assess achievements and trends. The findings will also be available as open access.

Annual monitoring, evaluations and operational activities will be documented and stored on '*moodle*', and any relevant information will be published in the appropriate fashion before transferring it to a centralised open access site.

Twice a year there is to be a stakeholder's steering group meeting to discuss progress and issues relating to the sustainability strategy. Minutes of the meetings will be posted on to the moodle site.

## **Governance and operational management**

Writtle University College Sustainability project will be managed by a steering group made up of representatives from two levels of stakeholders. A core group of stakeholders will include members of staff and students, and they will meet twice a year. Both student and staff are to be involved in the development and ongoing monitoring of the university environment or sustainability policy / plan / strategy. Within the group four leaders will be elected by consensus to take forward strategies and operations under each of the 4 pillars.

But to honour our obligations to widening participation, and to share our knowledge beyond borders, there will be a second stakeholder tier, which will meet once a year.

Sustainability is to be included within the portfolio of responsibilities of a member of the university senior management team and they will be responsible for providing institutional direction and guidance for the steering group. Two other appointments will be for a staff sustainability officer and a student sustainability officer whose roles will be agreed by the steering group within the institute’s employment framework.

In addition to the steering group a student coach’s network, organised and managed by students, will be responsible for developing student activities, including liaising with fellow-students at other HE institutes from this country and abroad.

## II Strategic objectives

The following strategic objectives are derived from WUC’s policy on environmental sustainability and the underpinning principles. More detailed operational objectives are framed, by the guidelines set out in the UK framework for ‘People & Planet’s University League’

- 1 To launch a comprehensive and far-reaching policy and strategy for environmental sustainability that is planned for now and the long-term future, and is designed to safeguard the environment and promote human well-being.

Strategic targets	Time bound dates
Produce an institutional policy on environmental sustainability;	2017
Provide a strategy for environmental sustainability	2017
Elect a steering group for the project	2017
Appoint a member of SLT to drive the process	2017
Appoint a member of staff as sustainability officer	2017
Appoint a student as sustainability officer	2017
Create a student coaches network	2017

- 2 Organise the effective disseminate of information and sharing of knowledge on environmental sustainability as a means of promoting good practice and raising awareness within the institute, amongst partners and the wider community.

Strategic targets	Time bound dates
Generate an open access web site page on environmental sustainability	2017
Create a moodle site with staff & student administrative rights	2017
Incorporate environmental sustainability policy in to the institute’s strategy	2017
Incorporate the environmental sustainability policy in to the student induction programme	2017

- 3 **To develop a comprehensive programme for the sustainable management of natural resources to safeguard biodiversity, protect soils and water, and to promote ecosystem resilience to climate change whilst delivering on the socio-economic and educational needs of the institute.**

Strategic targets	Time bound dates
Produce an integrated farm management plan with strong measurable outcomes for environmental protection	2018
Produce a comprehensive water management plan that includes water storage, flood & drought mitigation, and sustainable utilisation.	2018
Develop a landscape strategic plan for the estate based on the UNESCO 'Man & Biosphere reserve' model	2018 - 2019
Produce a biomass and land-based carbon management plan for the estate	2018 - 2019
Produce a biodiversity & ecosystem services analysis for the estate	2018
Produce a long-term sustainable waste management & recycling plan for the estate	2018
Produce an institutional policy statement on climate change risk-robust principles to practice	2018

- 4 To invest in a long-term strategic programme for carbon management that includes increasing institutional investment in alternative energy sources, reduction in carbon emissions, and the development of carbon off-setting opportunities.

Strategic targets	Time bound dates
Produce a carbon management plan for the institute	2018
Carry out a detailed environmental audit of the building management system (BMS)	2018
Promote ongoing investment in alternative energy systems and reduction in energy / material waste	2018 - 2020
Produce a carbon storage and off-setting plan for the estate	2018

- 5 to promote and show-case innovative techniques in environmentally-friendly sustainable food production and post-harvest management through an integrated theory-to-practice programme

Strategic targets	Time bound dates
Register the WUC farm estate under environmental stewardship and / or as LEAF	2018
Develop a curriculum-led programme of locally sourced food production for WUC and the local community	2018-2019
Establish a 'field-to-plate' "healthy eating" programme between the farm estate and catering firm at WUC	2018 - 2019
Expand the community orchard project to include a 'neighbourhood food box scheme'	2018 - 2019

- 6 Establish a far reaching, long-term curriculum portfolio in environmental sustainability through a combination of developing new programmes and the incorporation of environmental sustainability into existing courses.**

Strategic targets	Time bound dates
Review the content and delivery of existing modules & courses with the intension of introducing topics linked to environmental sustainability	2018
Develop a new generic masters programme in environmental sustainability with specialist pathways	2018 - 2019
Launch a series of short professional courses in aspects of environmental sustainability, including 'food security & the environment'; 'environmental design and planning'; 'natural capital assets and human well-being'	2018
Develop a cross-discipline module on 'environmental sustainability in context'	2018