

SUSTAINABILITY EXECUTIVE REPORT

June 2024

**THE STUDENTS'
UNION**
AT UWE

Green Impact Highlights

In April we submitted our annual submission for Green Impact Students' Unions (GISU). Looking ahead to our audit in two weeks, The Students' Union would like to extend a thank you to all those who contributed to GISU 2024, our partnership with the university is crucial in our reaccreditation. We are delighted to share some key highlights from the report below.

Sustainable Fashion

This academic year The Students' Union at UWE continued our successful sustainable fashion events series to spread awareness to students and staff. The events provide opportunities to learn new skills and knowledge. This campaign encompassed a range of events and workshops to engage staff and students in thinking more ecologically and ethically about their fashion consumption and raise awareness about the devastating impacts that the fast fashion industry has on people and the planet:

- 4 Swap Shops across all 3 campus sites, including a pop-up Swap Shop for a whole month at The Students' Union. We engaged approximately 600 students in total, and 10 staff members.
- The success of our Swap Shops led to the university creating a permanent location for swapping items at Frenchay: The Sustainability Hub. We have now been supporting this project for over a year.
- Launched the 'Community Corner' at Bower Ashton Campus – a Sustainability Hub for Students and Staff, building on the Sustainability Hub success
- Continuing the running of our new Placement Uniform Swap Shop, meeting the needs of our healthcare students (see self-defined criteria)
- Ran key engagement activities: 2 Charity Shop Crawls, engaging 12 students; hosted 1 vintage clothes sale; and helped support 10 Stitch UWE's Mend sessions.
- Launched the Climate Education Module with a Talk from fashion activist Aja Barber
- Celebrated the launch of the Climate Education Module with a book giveaway - 3 copies of fast fashion activist Aja Barber's Book 'CONSUMED' and 9 copies of 'Planet & Plate' - a sustainable vegetarian and vegan cookbook
- Multiple resources and social media shares, e.g. a blog, reel and social media posts.

Fairtrade Fortnight

UWE Bristol's Fairtrade Fortnight ran from the 19th of February to the 3rd of March in partnership with The Students' Union at UWE. We aimed to raise awareness of how Fairtrade connects us with people across the globe and how it provides us with a simple way to show solidarity, be a global citizen, and address climate justice issues.

During the Fortnight, we run a series of events related to Fairtrade, including talks, bake sales, bulb planting sessions, and promotions and discounts to encourage students to learn about and look for Fairtrade labels when buying products and groceries.

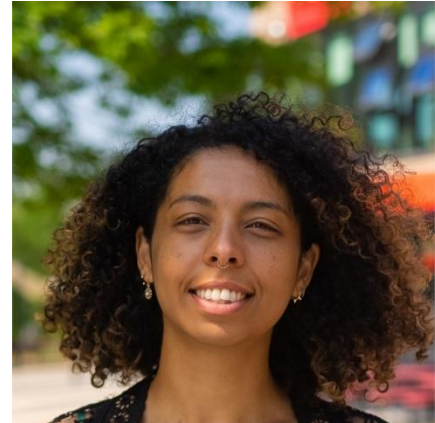
Our Fairtrade products saw an increase in sale numbers of £670.01 (~21%) during Fairtrade Fortnight (19th of February till the 3rd of March) compared to the previous two weeks (5th till 18th of February), which we hope was due to our placing of positive Fairtrade Facts alongside our Fairtrade

products in our commercial outlets. As a result of the bake sales we raised a total of £301.60 for Fairtrade. And 46 students came along to the Neutral talk and bulb planting session.

SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER

Chela has shown a huge amount of initiative and dedication this academic year, attending our weekly Sustainability Committee meetings and attending the Sustainability Executive Committee meetings along with The Students' Union Presidents and Staff and University senior management.

Additionally, Chela is campaigning to save the below area (outlined in red) for rewilding. The 9.5-hectare site is on Frenchay campus and is currently set aside for development. The "rewilding" site would be accessible to students for wellbeing, research, and wildlife.



To aid her campaign, she used our Student Ideas platform to garner support. Her submitted idea can be seen here: <https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/representation/student-ideas/527/>. This idea opened on 30 November 2023 and closed for voting on 20 January 2024. Her student idea received 101 votes - 94 of which were 'strongly agree'. As a result, her idea received 4 stars and is due to proceed to The Student Council.

She is currently in the process of writing a proposal to UWE and is in conversation with members of the sustainability executive board regarding developing this. To support her proposal, she is surveying students and staff to gather their opinions on the rewilding idea. To increase the number of respondents, she ran two outreach stalls where, as an incentive to encourage students and staff to fill out her survey, she had a spinning wheel, and students could spin the wheel to win a prize if they filled out her survey.



All her hard work has been well rewarded with 402 Students and 107 Staff filling out her surveys.



Students! Tell Us Your Thoughts On A New Greenspace for a Chance to Win £5

Laura Thomas
402 responses



Staff! Tell Us Your Thoughts On A New Greenspace

Laura Thomas
107 responses

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Chela, our Sustainability Officer, chairs The Students' Union's Sustainability Committee. This student-led team meet to discuss key projects and campaign topics. The Committee members were selected in October and received campaign training in early December. The Committee has chosen to focus this year's campaign on UWE's greenspaces, and they ran their campaign from the 18th – 24th March 2024.

Aim: to increase UWE Bristol student engagement in greenspaces on and around campus

Objectives:

- Provide an incentive for students to spend time outdoors via activities they would usually partake in outside/before university.
- Make greenspaces more encouraging and feel safer for students.
- Bring greenspaces to students in areas they already spend time in/improve students' mental health through greenspaces while they study and go about their normal day.
- Increase awareness of UWE's greenspaces

They ran a fun run through UWE's Greenspaces, two Bio Blitz Challenges and a Greenspace naming competition, engaging 42 students. Additionally, they are currently working on increasing the amount of greenery in the Library and adding fairy lights to green spaces in the hope of making them more welcoming to students in the winter months. Richie from the Grounds Team is currently working closely with the committee on these ideas.

GREENER FUTURES

Greener Futures is The Students' Union's sustainability competition for sports clubs and societies - 18 sports clubs and societies signed up this year. They have been working their way through the workbook of sustainability challenges and have done some great work. The teams have been attending our community garden sessions, taking more sustainable transport to university, holding Tofu BBQ's, helping out at Green Team charity bake sales, filling out sustainability surveys, raising money for charities such as Fashion Revolution and Alzheimer's Society UK, ensuring to wash their kit at 30 degrees on a full load, running events for women's history month and many more activities.

For Greener Futures Sports, UWE Cheerleading came in first place with 953 points, UWE Lacrosse came second with 824 points and UWE Boxing came third with 476 points. For Greener Futures Societies, MA Multi-Disciplinary Printmaking came first with 135 points and Pole Fitness came second with 38 points.

3C's: CLIMATE CONVERSATIONS AND CAKE

Our Sustainability Officer and Student Sustainability Engagement Coordinator have been working with Dr Sara Williams and Vicki Harris (and numerous UWE Bristol colleagues) to run Climate Conversation and Cake. This academic year, we have run 6 sessions. The session on the 21st of March focused Decolonisation with a talk and discussion lead by Cristian Heredia Ligorria, UWE PhD candidate in Environmental Law. On the 18th of April we had an empowering and motivating talk by Anette Mansikka-aho, a PhD researcher in environmental education from Finland talking about Panu Pihkala's Process Model of Eco-Anxiety and Ecological Grief.

SUSTAINABLE PERIODS

The Students' Union at UWE runs a behaviour change campaign promoting sustainable period products for the UWE community. We offered students and staff the opportunity to sign up to trial a free sustainable period product of their choice (period pants, menstrual cup, reusable pads or a sterilising cup). The aim of this project is to spread awareness of reusable and more sustainable period products, giving students a risk-free opportunity to trial products and remove the barrier of cost.

The Students' Union at UWE is committed to addressing period poverty within the student community through providing free, organic, plastic-free menstrual products in all our toilets and works in partnership with UWE Bristol to provide free products across toilets at every campus site.

- In 2023/24, we added an additional 24 locations to our period product provision across the campus sites. This is an increase of 54% from 2022/23
- We worked with UNISON to provide period products to UWE Bristol staff.
- 360 students and 30 staff members took part in our sustainable period product trial, receiving a free product (such as a menstrual cup, period pants, or reusable sanitary towel). This is a 24% increase in take-up compared to last year.
- From our feedback survey, we received many positive comments about the trial, and the average rating for this scheme from those who took part was 4.26 out of 5 stars.
- We saved students a total of £8,323 in upfront costs of a reusable period product
- When asked about the positives of using the products, the most popular responses were 'saving money in the long term' and 'reducing plastic waste' and 'comfort'.
- Over half of students said they would use this product most of the time in relation to every cycle.
- We estimate that we could have saved 5817g of plastic per year. If students carried on using these products over 5 years, then this would mean 29,085g of plastic saved over this time.
- We provide free organic menstrual products in all our toilets and increased the number of locations where plastic-free period (single-use) products are stocked and increased provisions in response to requests made by students and staff.
- We continued running 'period stalls' across campus sites, giving students an opportunity to top up on eco-friendly disposable products and learn more about the trial.

- We created information boards surrounding sustainable periods as another way to promote sustainable living and our work on periods.

THE PLACEMENT UNIFORM SWAP SHOP

The Students' Union Placement Uniform Swap Shop is run by students for students and is a creative resource to reduce waste and save students money on placement uniform. This is a hugely impactful and innovative circular economy project for a specific audience: healthcare students. As well as a circular economy approach, this project meets the needs of these particular students through a behaviour change approach.

Launched in Autumn 2022, the Placement Uniform Swap Shop operates at Glenside Students' Union to help alleviate the financial pressure faced by students studying in healthcare courses, it also saves unwanted or unused uniforms from waste. Since then, The Placement Uniform Swap Shop has continued to grow and so far, in the 2023-2024 academic year:

- 595 Students have used this service, this is an increase of 150 students from this time last year.
- In the first Swap Shop in September, 26 students attended
- Based on Alexandra Works Wear pricing, we have estimated we have saved students approximately £636.86 averaging at approximately £24.50 per student.
- For the first term, we reached 417 students either attending or swapping items. An overview of the term one is included here.
- Our records show that we helped students save at least a massive £4,495.14 on uniforms in 4 months.
- In our second term running the swap shop, we had 178 students, saving them a total of £1,859.74.