

Glasgow Kelvin College

Finance and Resources Committee Meeting of 10 March 2026

Environmental and Sustainability Update

Report by Assistant Principal - Estates, Corporate Planning and Governance, Head of Facilities and Environmental Sustainability and Environmental Sustainability Manager

1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members in relation to environmental and sustainability matters, and it covers the following areas:

2. Engagement with Sustainability
3. Funding
4. EAUC Learning for Sustainability Pilot Programme - Update
5. Nature Friendly Grounds Pilot Programme - Update
6. Easterhouse Campus Garden - Update
7. SFC Net Zero and Sustainability Framework for Action
8. EAUC State of the Sector Report
9. Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report
10. Off-white Paper
11. Springburn Station Path Route
12. Sustainable Car Lease Scheme

2. Engagement with Sustainability

2.1 Student & Staff Engagement:

Veganuary

The College delivered a successful Veganuary engagement campaign throughout January, led by student ambassadors from the newly established *Students for People and Planet* group, with support from the catering partner, BaxterStorey. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the environmental, health, and wellbeing benefits of plant-based diets while promoting affordable and accessible food choices for students and staff.

Weekly engagement stalls were held across campuses, offering plant-based food samples, simple and low-cost vegan recipes, guidance on everyday food swaps, and wellbeing and self-care resources. The campaign encouraged positive conversations around sustainable food choices and demonstrated strong student leadership and peer-to-peer engagement.

The College also partnered with Prepmate Meal Kits, who provided plant-based meal kits to students and staff. This collaboration supported both sustainable eating and efforts to address food inequality, further strengthening the social sustainability outcomes of the campaign.

Cycling Initiatives

Supported by funding from Cycling Scotland, the College's Campus Cycling Officer continues to engage students and staff through class visits, cycling promotion activities, and the provision of free bike loans. Working in partnership with Outdoor Adventure Sport courses, a student-led cycle ride from Springburn is planned as part of Staff Development activities.

The College also continues its collaboration with Bike for Good, delivering free *Dr Bike* maintenance sessions across campuses to support safe and accessible cycling.

2.2 Engagement with the Sector

In December 2025, the Environmental Sustainability Manager attended the Scottish Climate Adaptation Leadership Summit, which brought together senior public-sector leaders to focus on climate adaptation rather than mitigation. The summit highlighted the role of colleges as anchor institutions at the intersection of public service delivery, estates management, community resilience, and workforce development. This reinforced the importance of colleges in responding to climate impacts already being experienced at a local level.

Following the College's success in winning the *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Sustainability* Green Gown Award for the *Cycling for All* initiative, the Environmental Sustainability Manager has presented the project at the EAUC Winter Forum and the Further Education Community of Practice. She has also been invited to deliver a session at the EAUC National Conference in June.

In addition, the project has been selected as a case study for the Association of Colleges' Sustainability and Climate Change Hub. This recognition positions the initiative as a model of best practice within the sector and raises the national profile of Glasgow Kelvin College

3. Funding

The College was successful in securing £13,826 of grant funding from Cycling UK to expand its cycle fleet. This includes the purchase of two adapted tricycles for use by Support for Learning students.

These bikes will form part of the College's permanent free-to-borrow fleet for students and staff and directly support both equality, diversity and inclusion objectives and the sustainability outcomes highlighted in the award-winning *Cycling for All* project.

4. EAUC Learning for Sustainability Pilot Programme - Update

Glasgow Kelvin College is one of four Scottish institutions participating in EAUC's Learning for Sustainability (LfS) Pilot Programme. Through this programme, the College has identified three key projects to support the embedding of LfS across learning and teaching:

- Establishment of the *Students for People and Planet* student ambassador group
- Integration of an LfS thread within the Teaching Development Programme
- Identification and collection of evidence of existing sustainability-related teaching practice

Early progress and examples of good practice have been shared with the Academic Board and the Learning and Teaching Committee, with further opportunities for recognition and dissemination currently being explored.

5. Nature Friendly Grounds Pilot Programme – Update

As part of the College's participation in the SOS-UK Nature Friendly Grounds Pilot Programme, three staff members have completed Biodiversity Literacy Training. Habitat mapping is currently underway across all campuses to establish baseline biodiversity data, and a cross-College 'Nature Friendly Working Group' has been formed to take forward further actions.

Work associated with achieving *Nature Friendly Grounds* accreditation will directly support delivery of the College's Biodiversity Action Plan.

6. Easterhouse Campus Garden – Update

The Easterhouse *Climate Engagement Learning Garden* has benefitted from significant investment through the Glasgow City Council LEZ Community Support Fund. Infrastructure improvements completed in autumn 2025 include the installation of a rainwater harvesting system, a secure cycle shelter, and a shipping container for garden equipment storage.

Remaining funding has supported the installation of interpretive signage and a range of planting and habitat creation projects. These include over 90 metres of new native hedging, bird boxes, a bee post, a mini meadow, and more than 300 plug plants in the wild water vole area, enhancing biodiversity and learning opportunities across the campus.

Photos of the Easterhouse Campus Garden are attached to this report in **Annex 1**.

7. SFC Net Zero and Sustainability Framework for Action

The Scottish Funding Council's *Net Zero and Sustainability Framework for Action* outlines how sustainability and net zero will be embedded across SFC funding, policy, and accountability processes, supporting Scotland's statutory net zero target of 2045.

The Framework positions colleges as key delivery partners in Scotland's climate response and signals increasing expectations around leadership, measurable progress, and accountability. It emphasises alignment of funding and assurance processes with net zero outcomes, the role of estates and infrastructure in emissions reduction, and the importance of colleges in delivering climate-related skills and supporting the green economy.

Overall, the Framework signals a move from policy aspiration to delivery, with increasing integration of net zero objectives into funding, performance, and investment decisions affecting colleges over the medium to long term.

8. EAUC State of the Sector Report

The EAUC *State of the Sector 2025* report provides an evidence-based overview of sustainability in post-16 education across the UK and Ireland, drawing on responses from over 120 institutions, including Glasgow Kelvin College.

While the majority of institutions now have sustainability strategies and targets, the report identifies a significant gap between ambition and delivery. Resourcing is highlighted as the primary constraint, with sustainability activity often led by very small teams and limited dedicated budgets.

Despite these challenges, student influence continues to drive progress, and engagement has increased across the sector. The report concludes that closing the delivery gap will require stronger leadership accountability, more stable funding, and greater investment in capacity and collaboration.

9. Public Sector Climate Change Duties Report 2024/25

The College submitted its annual Public Sector Climate Change Duties Report (PBCCDR) for Academic Year 2024/25 to the Scottish Government by the statutory deadline of 30 November 2025. A full report detailing compliance, emissions data, and progress against climate duties was presented to, and noted by, the Audit and Risk Committee in February 2026.

The PBCCDR confirms that Glasgow Kelvin College remains fully compliant with the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and continues to report across Scope 1, 2 and relevant Scope 3 emissions. The College has now established over ten years of consistent emissions reporting, providing a robust evidence base for trend analysis and future planning.

Key headline outcomes from the 2024/25 submission include:

- A 15% reduction in organisational boundary carbon emissions compared to 2023/24, and a 63% reduction since the 2014/15 baseline (from 3,257 tCO₂e to 1,184 tCO₂e).
- Continued reductions in energy consumption, including a 21% decrease in grid electricity use and an 11% reduction in gas use, primarily linked to estate rationalisation following the disposal of the West End Campus.
- First-time reporting of Scope 3 supply chain emissions, using the APUC emissions tool. While this significantly increased total reported emissions, it represents an important step forward in transparency and alignment with sector best practice.

The report also outlines progress across governance, estates, and operational sustainability, including:

- Development of a Climate Risk Register and Climate Adaptation Plan, with climate risks embedded within the College's Strategic Risk Register.
- Ongoing energy efficiency audits across campuses to identify cost-effective carbon and energy savings.
- Investment in sustainable travel and cycling infrastructure, including additional fleet bikes and new cycle shelters.
- Continued development of biodiversity initiatives, including the Easterhouse Climate Engagement Learning Garden, drafting of a Biodiversity Action Plan, and participation in the Nature Friendly Grounds Pilot Programme.

The PBCCDR highlights the increasing alignment between carbon reduction, estate efficiency, and financial pressures, noting that while capital constraints limit large-scale decarbonisation investment, efficiency measures that reduce energy and water consumption also support financial sustainability.

Five priority actions for the year ahead were identified, including progressing the Biodiversity Action Plan, completing energy audits and implementing feasible efficiency measures, seeking external funding, embedding Learning for Sustainability and green skills, and continuing to influence sustainable behaviours across the College community.

The PBCCDR will be published on the College website following sector assessment and confirmation, in line with previous reporting practice.

10. Off-white paper

Following a request from the Advice, Guidance, and Learner Support Team, we are exploring alternatives to standard bleached white paper for general printing. This initiative addresses the negative impact that stark white glare can have on neurodivergent students. While fully coloured paper is cost-prohibitive for our high-volume needs, we have identified a more affordable solution through our supplier, Lyreco. We have trialled Steinbeis No. 1 paper at our Springburn and East End campuses. This 100% recycled "natural white" paper has a ISO 70 brightness level—roughly 30% softer than our current stock which should make it easier on the eyes while remaining cost-effective.

Benefit to Students

Using off-white paper can significantly improve the reading and writing experience for neurodivergent students by addressing sensory and visual processing differences.

- **Reduced Visual Stress:** Bright white paper can create a dazzling glare that interferes with the ability to see text clearly. For students with some visual stress conditions this glare can cause letters to appear as if they are shaking, swimming, or jumping on the page.
- When visual distortions are minimised, students can focus their mental energy on understanding the content rather than just interpreting unstable letters.
- **Improved Concentration for ADHD and Autism:** Off-white paper creates a calmer visual environment, which can help students with ADHD or Autism stay focused by reducing sensory overstimulation and potential visual triggers.

Benefit to the College

- **Reduced Cognitive Load:** Students with dyslexia or ADHD often face cognitive overload when processing visually intense materials. Using off-white backgrounds reduces this strain, allowing students to focus their energy on higher-level academic analysis rather than simply trying to decipher the text on the page
- Inclusive methods, such as providing visual support, have been shown to improve academic performance across the board, including for neurotypical students
- **Enhanced Student Wellbeing:** Many neurodivergent students experience high levels of anxiety and sensory distress in traditional settings. Simple environmental adjustments like reducing glare helps lower student stress and prevents zoning out
- **Financial Benefit:** The new paper is £2.10 cheaper for a box of 5 reams than the paper we currently order. This would save the College approximately £1,932 per annum, based on current ordering patterns

Benefit to the Environment

Steinbeis Recycled Classic Paper is better for the environment because it is made from 100% wastepaper without harmful bleaching agents, which dramatically reduces resource consumption compared to virgin-fibre paper. According to a life cycle assessment cited by the manufacturer, switching to Steinbeis paper saves 100% of wood, 73% of energy, 79% of water, and 42% of equivalent emissions. By using a gentle washing process and generating energy from its own power plant, the production is highly efficient and low-emission, diverting waste from landfills and preserving forests and biodiversity.

11. Springburn Station Path Route

In their latest update, the 'A Railway for Everyone' Team at Network Rail report that they continue to pursue funding for the creation of an accessible path from the Springburn rail station platform to the rear access of Springburn campus. The Network Rail team are leading on this project, with the support of the College, and hope to secure funding to improve the accessibility of the Springburn rail station.

12. Sustainable Car Lease Scheme

In moving towards greener transport solutions, the College is exploring the feasibility of offering College employees' access to a sustainable car lease scheme utilising EV and Hybrid vehicles. An existing scheme, offered through Knowles Fleet, is currently being rolled out to a number of Colleges across Scotland. The Environmental Sustainability Manager is working with APUC to assess the scheme which offers sustainable vehicles to employees through e.g. salary sacrifice or salary deduction. An update will be given to members at a future meeting.

13. Impact on Students

There are a number of positive student impacts detailed in this report. In addition to those specifically listed, the Environmental and Sustainability Manager has participated in many events with College students to raise awareness of environmental and sustainability matters. These events assist with learning/development and citizenship skills and continue to provide an opportunity to promote our Learning Network Sustainability module.

14. Risk and Assurance

There are no additional risk and assurance implications that are not covered within this report.

15. Equality

There are no negative Equality implications arising as a consequence of anything within this report.

16. Data Protection

There are no direct data protection implications arising as a consequence of anything within this report.

17. Environmental and Sustainability Impact

The Environmental Sustainability Manager continues to engage with students, teaching and support staff to raise awareness of various events.

18. Resources

£13,826 of grant funding from Cycling UK was received and the College continues to apply for additional grant funding to support environmental and sustainability activities.

19. Recommendations

- i) It is recommended that members note the content of this report and its annex.

20. Further Information

Further information can be obtained from Lisa Clark, Assistant Principal – Estates, Corporate Planning and Governance - lisaclark@glasgowkelvin.ac.uk, Claire Reid, Head of Facilities and Environmental Sustainability – creid@glasgowkelvin.ac.uk or Sarah Shea, Environmental Sustainability Manager on sshea@glasgowkelvin.ac.uk

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Easterhouse Campus Garden – Update

