BALLIOL COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Balliol College Sustainability Strategy

Foreword

Balliol College is a 760-year-old institution but with its mind firmly on the future, in particular how to greatly reduce our carbon footprint and work to improve the biodiversity of its gardens and open spaces.

We formed the Biodiversity and Climate Committee in 2022 and have been working on looking at our outputs through monitoring our gas consumption, water use and waste produced so that we may measure our carbon emissions and set targets for reduction.

It is important to have a strategy to start to achieve this.

1. Governance

   The Biodiversity and Climate sub-committee reports termly to Executive Committee, which in turn reports to Governing Body. It is important that all facets of our community are included and engaged in efficiently moving through the action plan.
   The members of the Committee:
   Chair: Derek Moulton, Climate Fellow
   James Kwan, Fellow
   Finance Bursar, Fellow
   Domestic Bursar, Fellow
   Executive Head Chef, Staff
   Buildings Manager, Staff
   Deputy Domestic Bursar, Staff
   JCR Environmental Reps
   MCR Environmental Reps

2. Finances and Investments

   Balliol College will continue to include sustainability in budget discussions to ensure that projects are properly considered in the budget round. Sustainability will also be a key decider in any future work we do around the college, in the same way that accessibility is. For example, if we are replacing heating systems, we will look at energy efficient and carbon neutral replacements. We will make sustainability one of the key considerations when any project is started and actively look for ways to include it in plans.

   In 2020 the College, with the support of the JCR, started a divestment plan to reduce its Endowment's fossil fuel exposure (FFE) as far and as fast as was practicable. The College's investment managers abide by this policy and report on progress in their regular reports to the Finance Bursar and Investment Committee.

On an annual basis the Finance Bursar will report on fossil fuel exposure and ESG metrics to the Biodiversity and Climate Committee.

3. Estate

Balliol College has a wide range of buildings that have changed and evolved over the last 760 years. With the exception of the Master's Field Buildings which has CHP (combined Heat and Power), all pre-date modern building regulations and they have inefficient heating, fabric and boiler solutions.

The College received funding under the Low Skills Carbon Funding scheme to develop a heat decarbonisation plan. The decarbonisation plan included the full Balliol estate and considerations of potential carbon-saving measures that could be adopted. This included the continued roll out of thermostat radiator valves and improvements to energy efficiency of existing buildings. Further work will be required to consider the viability of alternative heating systems.

Biodiversity – The College took part in a Biodiversity study in 2021 the report can be read here:
https://www.balliol.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/balliol_college_dashboard.pdf
This will allow us to continue to benchmark our current provision and look at ways of improving our biodiversity. Work has already started with the Head Gardener to ensure that when we do new areas of planting, looking at the most biodiverse planting becomes the normal process.

We have recently installed green roofs at the Master's Field site and have looked at other spaces where this might be possible.

4. Catering and Events

Balliol is very lucky to have an Executive Head Chef who is keenly involved in food and sustainability. Food waste has been weighed for many years with adaptations to numbers and menu being made to reduce the waste. Vegan options have become ever more present and the College has been introducing more lunches and dinners where the vegetarian and vegan options outnumber the meat options.

Over the last year or so, beef has been dramatically reduced on the College menus and the use of plant-based substitutes has also increased.

To continue to improve our carbon footprint in the kitchen, we need to do so as a community. We welcome feedback on the menu choices but also want to encourage engagement with the kitchen so we can share good ideas. Sourcing food locally is not always the best way to reduce carbon and so we will continue to research this complex area.

5. Procurement and Resources

Buying goods and procuring services will have an impact on our carbon output and our biodiversity. Supply chains may be very difficult to unpack and may take time to do so. The College is a member of a College Shared Purchasing Board. With our collective bargaining power, it enables the colleges to explore important issues such as sustainability with suppliers, identifying and prioritising environmentally preferable products as well as engaging with the supplier's sustainable policies and

practices. In addition, the University regularly reviews it suppliers to meet a variety of criteria and sustainability is one of these.

The College also uses Select Environmental Services, who employ a waste hierarchy across all waste streams. Food waste is specifically recycled at anaerobic digestion plants to create energy and general waste is used to generate energy through incineration rather than landfill.

We do have a large amount of parcels being delivered daily for students and the impact of many vans coming into the centre of town should be looked at and alternative solutions seriously considered. Some couriers are now using bicycles rather than petrol and diesel vehicles. We should work with our suppliers and our College community to ensure we all receive the items we all need but we should actively encourage our suppliers and contractors to work to the same sustainable approach we are working to. We ourselves need to think about how we order goods, the packaging and the amount of deliveries.

6. Transport and Travel

   Academic staff, students, college staff and guests all contribute to travel and transport impact. Whilst we acknowledge that there is travel involved in academic research, teaching and our commercial business, it is imperative that we consider, as a College, how we can reduce unnecessary travel. A transport survey has been issued to collect data on our current methods of travel.

7. Community

   To achieve any of the above priorities, we must look to our community as it is the heart of everything we do as a college. A priority needs to focus on educating our community, making culture changes and empowering everyone in our community to engage in reducing our impact on the environment. The formation of the Biodiversity and Climate Committee is a good example of all facets of the Balliol community coming together, Fellow, Staff, JCR and MCR to work together to make positive changes and collate ideas and collaborate together.

This strategy will exist alongside the Balliol College Action Plan which will be the vehicle for showing the detailed work we will need to do, as a College, and a method for measuring our progress.

The Strategy and Action plan will be reviewed annually, first by the Biodiversity and Climate Committee and then signed off by Executive Committee. Progress on the action plan should also be reported to Governing Body but shared with the entire community to engage and keep momentum.