Royal Veterinary College Students’ Union Environmental Policy

# Introduction

The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) Students’ Union (RVCSU) aims to operate with environmental efficiency, actively seeking to benefit our local environment, including its biodiversity, through our actions. RVCSU will also strive to ensure that its actions are beneficial to the wider global environment, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change.

# Background

RVCSU recognises that its members have declared a global climate emergency. RVCSU has committed to becoming net zero in scopes 1 and 2 by 2030[[1]](#footnote-1).

RVCSU recognises its members are students drawn from the RVC and will also strive to ensure the RVC maintains its commitment to environmental sustainability.

**Scope of Policy**

This policy covers all members of RVCSU, as well as RVCSU staff, volunteers and trustees. The listed parties have a responsibility to acquaint themselves with this policy and follow its principles.

**Policy Statement**

The main aim of this policy is to ensure that sustainability is a priority for RVCSU. It will also hold RVCSU accountable to its net zero commitment.

This policy is informed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). The UN SDGs are a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all[[2]](#footnote-2).

# Roles & Responsibilities

All members, staff, volunteers and trustees of RVCSU have a responsibility for the overall implementation of this policy. Day-to-day implementation of the policy will be the responsibility of the RVCSU Environment Officer, with support from the RVC’s Environmental Sustainability Manager.

**Monitoring & Review**

The RVCSU will ensure that transparent annual sustainability reports are published online. The Environment Officer will be responsible for monitoring and reviewing the policy at least once annually.

The RVC’s Environmental Sustainability Manager will be responsible for holding RVCSU to account over its environmental commitment, alongside an advisor on Council, such as an external trustee.

# Strategy

As far as possible, subject to resources, financial limitations, and legal powers and duties of the charitable organisation, RVCSU will:

1. ***Campaigns and Activities***
   1. Define its net zero target, set checkpoints in time to ensure the organisation is on track, and finally meet our target of net zero before the set deadline of 2030.
   2. Campaign to ensure the RVC are doing the same, as well as striving to lower their net zero deadline.
   3. Embed sustainability within all organisational activities.
   4. Encourage its members and staff to take responsibility for ensuring that the best environmental policy is used and adhered to at all times.
   5. Continue to adhere to its paperless commitment, and encourage its members to do the same, especially during the annual election campaigns.
2. ***Directly Relating to Energy***
   1. Strive to reduce its own energy usage in line with its net zero target.
   2. Support initiatives for community energy projects.
   3. Support energy reduction strategies within the university and student halls.
3. ***Climate Change and Biodiversity***
   1. Consider the impact its activities have on both climate change and biodiversity issues and will endeavour to introduce measures that either mitigate negative outcomes or actively support beneficial outcomes.
   2. Work with the RVC to create biodiverse spaces on campus.
   3. Support local initiatives aimed at climate change and/or biodiversity protection or enhancement.
   4. Meet all relevant environmental legislation and regulations.
4. ***Relating to the Student Experience***
   1. Ensure wherever possible safe walking and cycling routes are available for students to travel to and from both campuses.
   2. Empower students to make their own contributions to environmental sustainability.
   3. Work to reduce waste and plastic usage at SU events e.g., by requesting that stalls at Fresher’s Fair do not hand out plastic bags or bottles.
   4. Ensure all RVCSU-branded merchandise is produced with a purpose in mind, made from the most sustainable materials available, and that excess products are disposed of in an appropriate manner e.g., by donating excess t-shirts to charity or for textiles recycling.
5. ***Relating to Third Party Suppliers***
   1. Consider the impact that the goods and services it procures, including the environmental commitment of its suppliers, has on the environment.
   2. Seek to only use contractors and suppliers who have their own environmental policy, which is continually reviewed, updated and measured against recognised, best practice.
   3. Support local businesses, particularly those providing local employment and services.
6. ***Relating to Waste and Waste Management***
   1. Work with the RVC to further reduce single-use waste on campus.
   2. Work with the RVC to improve waste management facilities.
   3. Work with the RVC to improve recycling facilities both in on campus and in student halls, and make it clear what can and cannot be recycled.
   4. Improve the availability of recycling facilities for hard-to-recycle materials.
7. ***Embedding Sustainability in the Curriculum***
   1. Advocate for subject-specific sustainability teaching to be embedded in the curriculum across all degree programmes.
   2. Work with the RVC to ensure that sustainability teaching is implemented in a way that is relevant and clear to the students, and that this is regularly reviewed.
8. ***Improving Sustainable Travel***
   1. Encourage its staff and members to use the most sustainable travel methods available to them e.g., by highlighting their benefits to physical, mental, environmental and economic wellbeing.
   2. Campaign for improvement of local cycle paths and walking routes.
   3. Campaign for continued improvements to the Hawkshead shuttle bus service based on staff and student feedback.
   4. Aim to reduce the carbon emissions of the RVCSU minibuses by reducing the number of journeys where possible and transitioning away from fossil fuel vehicles and towards more sustainable options, such as electric or hydrogen, when the technology becomes available.
   5. Advocate for staff and students to car-share where use of public transport is not possible.

RVCSU recognises its unique position as a charity in being able to seek funding for projects which would otherwise be restricted to the College and will actively seek funding to support the sustainability initiatives on campus highlighted above.

1. Scope 1 emissions include direct emission sources such as fossil fuel combustion for heat and fuel use from vehicles owned by the organisation. Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions relating to purchased electricity, heat or steam only. Scope 3 emissions include wider indirect emissions from organisational activity not covered in Scopes 1 or 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. There are seventeen interconnected SDGs, as follows: 1) No poverty; 2) Zero hunger; 3) Good health and well-being; 4) Quality education; 5) Gender equality; 6) Clean water and sanitation; 7) Affordable and clean energy; 8) Decent work and economic growth; 9) Industry, innovation and infrastructure; 10) Reduced inequalities; 11) Sustainable cities and communities; 12) Responsible consumption and production; 13) Climate action; 14) Life below water; 15) Life on land; 16) Peace, justice and strong institutions; 17) Partnership for the goals.

   For more information, visit <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)