

THE SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT

Lighting the way to a better tomorrow, together.

Report – 2025/26

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

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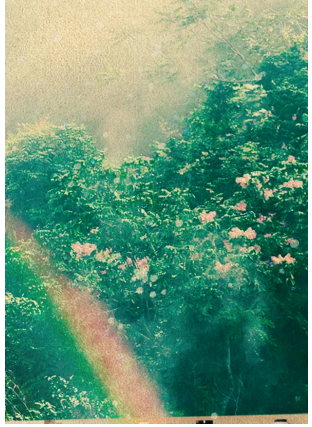
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Introduction

Creating a thriving, forward-looking research environment is essential to tackling the interconnected ecological, economic, and social challenges of our planet. The Sustainability Spotlight serves as a vital bridge connecting the University of Warwick's Sustainability Strategy with its broader Research Strategy. It provides an inclusive, cross-faculty ecosystem where academics, early-career researchers, industry pioneers, and policy leaders come together to generate impactful research and tangible societal change.

Since its inception, the Spotlight has expanded from an internal networking initiative into a dynamic collaborative hub. By breaking down traditional departmental barriers, the initiative empowers researchers across all disciplines—from engineering and life sciences to the humanities, social sciences, and business—to co-design solutions that address regional sustainability goals and global climate agendas. These are following on from thematic network-building initiatives, which were launched following Warwick Sustainability Forum (WSF) in 2024.



6

Thematic network-building initiatives this year, lead by our championing members

3

Established Themes

4

Interdisciplinary participation spanning all 4 Warwick Faculties

3

Distilled Collaborative Laboratories

3

Emerging Themes



15+

Events run

40 — 60

researchers per thematic session

Strategic Infrastructure

Current Leadership Team



The Sustainability Spotlight is driven by an inclusive, interdisciplinary Leadership Team — led by Professor Elena Korosteleva — that is dedicated to fostering research synergies across the university.





Chair



PROFESSOR ELENA KOROSTELEVA
CHAIR, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS, IGSD DIRECTOR

Co-Leads



PROFESSOR GARY BENDING
CO-LEAD, PROFESSOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL MICROBIOLOGY & WESIC DIRECTOR



PROFESSOR GIULIANA BATTISTI
CO-LEAD, PROFESSOR OF THE ECONOMICS OF INNOVATION



PROFESSOR GRAEME MACDONALD
CO-LEAD, PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES NETWORK LEAD



PROFESSOR STUART COLES
CO-LEAD, PROFESSOR IN SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS AND MANUFACTURING, ASSOCIATE DEAN (RESEARCH) AT WMG

The 3 Distilled COLABs

To sharpen focus and drive higher research output, horizontal co-laboratories have been streamlined into three core delivery engines:

COLAB1

Research Synergies & Funding
Leads: Gary Bending & Fred Dahlmann

This COLAB focuses on interdisciplinary synergy-building around specific funding calls. As an outcome of WSF 2025, COLAB 1 have developed three thematic groups to foster synergy and collaboration.

COLAB2

ECR Platform & Training
Leads: Elena Korosteleva & Stuart Coles

This COLAB focuses on developing early-career researchers in sustainability research by offering bespoke training in interdisciplinary concepts, methodologies, creative skills and outputs, through exposure to practitioners, global stakeholders across the industry and policy world, and across various geographies.

COLAB3

Impact & Visibility:
Leads: Giuliana Battisti & Professor Graeme Macdonald

COLAB3 focuses on developing global impact & network visibility through bespoke training, and by connecting it to all-level stakeholders for outreach and knowledge co-production.

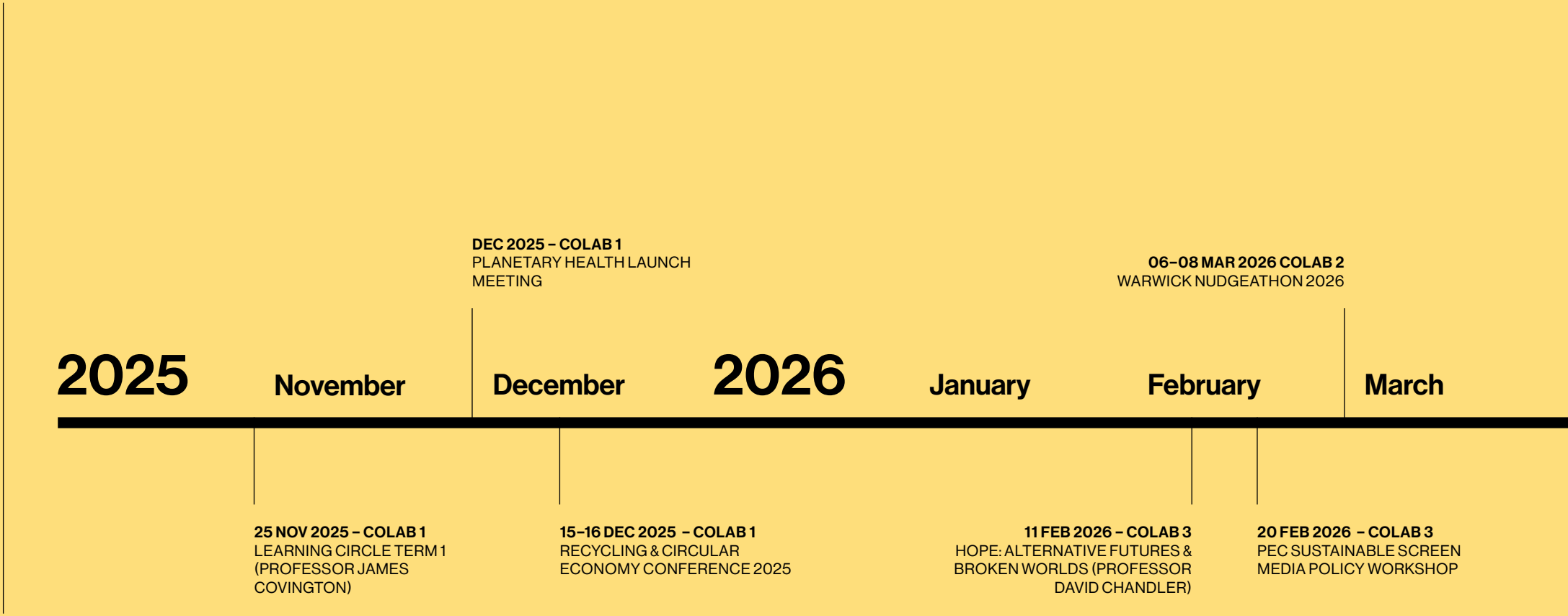
Thematic Research Networks

Following the Warwick Sustainability Forum, the Spotlight launched dedicated thematic networks led by academic champions:

3 established themes:	3 emerging themes:
Behavioural Change for Circular Economy, led by Lory Barile (Economics) & supported by Stuart Coles & Giuliana Battisti	Planetary Health (emerging), led by Fred Dahlmann (WBS) and Raquel Nunes (WMS)
Sustainable Food & Agriculture, led by Martine Barons (Stats) and Alicia Feledziak (WMG), supported by Gary Bending and Graeme Macdonald	Disasters Network (emerging), led by Pierre Purseigle (History)
Radical Imaginaries for Transformation (RIFT), led by Marit Hammond (PAIS) and supported by Graeme Macdonald and Elena Korosteleva	Social Enterprise for Sustainability, led by Fred Dahlmann (WBS) and Peter Ptashko (business)



2025–26 Activity Timeline



A Year of Interdisciplinary Impact: 2025–2026 Milestones

The 2025–2026 academic year marked a period of rapid growth and cross-faculty mobilisation across the Sustainability Spotlight. Through fifteen signature events and workshops, our three COLABs, Research Synergies & Funding, ECR Platform-Building & Training, and Impact & Visibility, translated core strategic goals into dynamic, real-world engagement. From high-level policy roundtables and strategic research sandpits to ECR capacity-building academies, cross-spotlight food symposia, and public-facing cultural exhibitions, this timeline showcases the breadth of our vibrant research ecosystem. The spread below maps our collective journey chronologically, highlighting the co-organised, co-funded, and thematic initiatives that defined our shared progress this year.

24–27 MAR 2026 – COLAB 2
ECR SUSTAINABILITY TRAINING ACADEMY 2026 (STA)

27 APR 2026 – COLAB 1
SPOTLIGHTS FOOD SERIES: TWO CONVERSATIONS

27 APR 2026 – COLAB 1
UKRI DOCTORAL FOCAL AWARD MEETING (EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS)

12–16 MAY 2026 – COLAB 1 & 3
TIMELY EXHIBITION: THIS IS MY ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNEY

02 JUL 2026 – COLAB 3
WARWICK SUSTAINABILITY FORUM 2026: FROM ACTION TO STRENGTH

March **April** **May** **June** **July** **August** ***26–27...***

18 MAR 2026 – COLAB 1
SUSTAINABLE FOOD: HEALTHY PEOPLE, HEALTHY PLANET

23 APR 2026 – COLAB 3
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE FOR SUSTAINABILITY: FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

30 APR 2026 – COLAB 3
RADICAL IMAGINATIONS, RADICAL TRANSFORMATIONS WORKSHOP

29–30 JUN 2026 – COLAB 3
DISASTROUS PASTS AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURES CONFERENCE

1 JUL 2026 – COLAB 1
TRANSFORM WARWICK: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE & SUSTAINABILITY SUPPORT



Events

COLAB 1: Learning Circle Term 1
Industry Collaboration & Impact

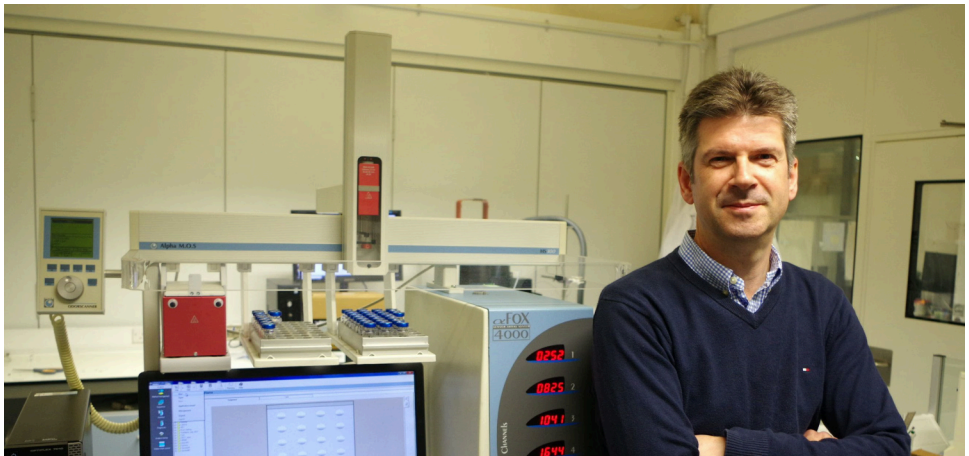
Date and Location	**25 November 2025 | Ideation Room, The Junction**
Speaker	**Professor James Covington (Associate Head of School, School of Engineering)**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

Re-launching the Learning Circle series for the 2025/26 academic year, this session provided a termly gathering space for Warwick researchers to co-develop interdisciplinary project ideas. Drawing on over two decades of industrial collaboration with global partners (including IBM, Hyundai, and Roche), Professor James Covington delivered a keynote outlining practical pathways for academic-industry engagement.

The session utilised an interactive Padlet ideation process to facilitate research matchmaking, allowing academics to map out collaborative research, contract research, consultancy, and student placement models while balancing IP, funding, and publication timelines.

Speaker Professor
James Covington – Associate Head of School for
the School of Engineering



COLAB 1 : Emerging Network
Planetary Health Launch Meeting

Date and Location	**10 December 2025 | WBS 1.015, University of Warwick**
Network Champions	**Dr Frederik Dahlmann (Warwick Business School) & Dr Ana Raquel Nunes (Warwick Medical School)**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

This inaugural workshop established a cross-faculty research community dedicated to exploring the systemic interconnections and mutual co-benefits between ecological sustainability and human well-being. Bringing together researchers across business, medicine, life sciences, and social sciences, the network aims to move past siloed approaches to health and environmental degradation by developing interdisciplinary proposals for major funding calls, including UKRI (NIHR) and EU Horizon programs.

The launch directly generated two key high-impact deliverables: a public-facing educational briefing paper (Explainer on Planetary Health) and a foundational conceptual paper published in Corporate Governance outlining how organisations can manage operations using a planetary health lens.

Key Deliverables & Research Outputs

Public-Facing Explainer: *"Why Caring for Air, Water and Soil Matter for Human Health"*

- Core Thesis: Human health cannot exist in isolation from the health of the planet. Unprecedented disruption to natural systems directly degrades nutrition, spreads zoonotic and non-communicable diseases, and drives mental and physical ill-health.
- Preventative Infrastructure: The briefing frames clean air, potable water, and fertile soil not merely as environmental assets, but as vital preventative healthcare infrastructure—asserting that protecting natural systems is the most effective form of disease prevention.

Journal Publication (Corporate Governance): *"Managing with a Planetary Health Lens"*

- Authors: Dr Frederik Dahlmann (WBS) & Dr Ana Raquel Nunes (WMS).
- Contribution: Synthesises interdisciplinary literature across individual, organisational, societal, and planetary levels to establish a novelty management framework that helps businesses generate simultaneous co-benefits for human well-being and ecological systems.

The 5-Pillar Framework for Planetary Health Management

- Purpose and Intentionality
- Strategic Orientation
- Inputs and Design
- Processing and Pace
- Relationships

Read more at:

https://doi.org/10.1108/CG-08-2025-0530


Managing with a planetary health lens: how business can create co-benefits for ecological sustainability and human well-being

Frederik Dahlmann and Ana Raquel Nunes

COLAB 1, Thematic: Circular Economy

Recycling and Circular Economy – (co-funded)

Date and Location	**15-16 December 2025 | IMC 002, University of Warwick**
Organisers	**WMG Researcher Forum Organising Committee & WMG Research Office**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

The conference convened academics, regional authorities, and industrial leaders to accelerate the shift away from linear manufacturing models toward closed-loop circular systems. Across two days, participants examined breakthroughs in critical raw material recovery, plastic recycling infrastructure, and life-cycle assessments for next-generation vehicles.

A primary outcome was establishing cross-faculty research alignments on machine-learning-assisted sorting technologies and battery circularity frameworks. The event also featured 24 early-career flash presentations, creating immediate pathways for junior researchers to connect with industrial partners.



Day 1 Summary
Plenary Insights & Industrial Solutions

- Opening keynote addresses by Professor Kerry Kirwan and Sarah Wilson set the strategic agenda for circular manufacturing.
- High-level sessions explored AI applications in circular economies, planetary boundary design, and financial mechanisms for metal recirculation.
- Panellists evaluated regulatory barriers and behavioural interventions required to scale industrial symbiosis.

Day 2 Summary
Early-Career Innovation Showcase

- Dedicated early-career showcase featuring 24 PhD presentations across four thematic streams.
- Interactive poster sessions and peer voting established new cross-departmental research pairings.

Conference Leadership

- Professor Kerry Kirwan, Sarah Wilson.

Keynote Contributors

- Fajli Bibi (AI in Sustainability)
- Dr David Bott (Systems
- Sustainability), Professor Stuart Coles (Plastics Circular
- Economy), Dr Lory Barile (Behavioural Nudges)
- Megan Clement (Recycled Polypropylene)
- Dr Luke Bellamy (Planetary Boundary Design)
- Dr Sumit Hazra (Finance Systems for Metals)
- Dr Aru Singh (Spectroscopic Sorting),
- Dr Kit Jones (Battery Circularity)
- Mohamed Abdelhalim (Vehicle LCIA)

COLAB 1, Thematic: RIFT Keynote

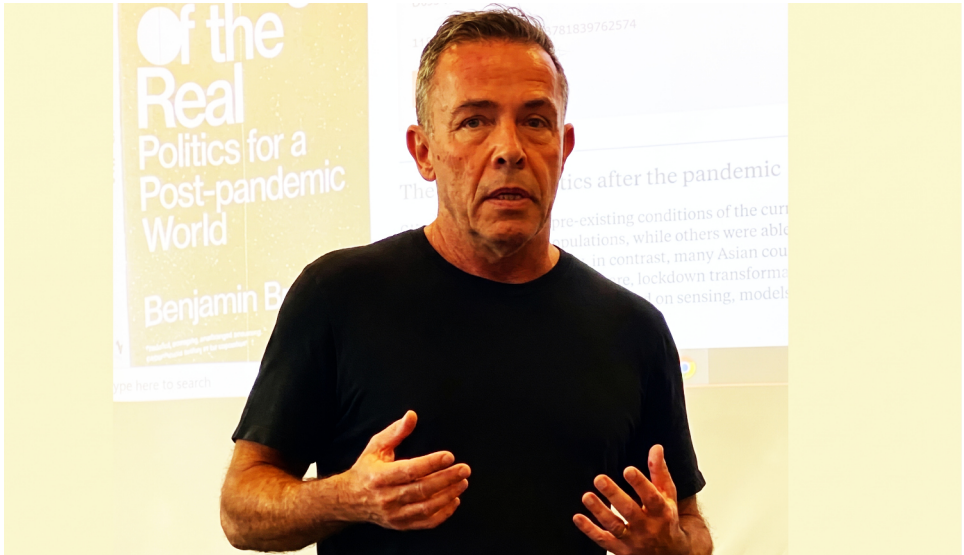
Hope: Alternative Futures and Broken Worlds

Date and Location	**11 February 2026 | Social Sciences (S0.19)**
Speaker	**Professor David Chandler (Professor of International Relations, University of Westminster)**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

Launching the RIFT network's 2026 event series, this keynote address explored the contemporary impasse of hope at a time when grand narratives of social progress feel exhausted. Professor David Chandler contraposed instrumental views of hope found in analytical philosophy and social psychology against radical ethico-political imaginaries that seek to imagine and build "otherwise worlds" rather than merely maintain current structures.

Speaker Professor
David Chandler – Professor of International Relations,
University of Westminster



COLAB 3: Impact and Visibility

Sustainable Screen Media Policy Workshop – (co-funded)

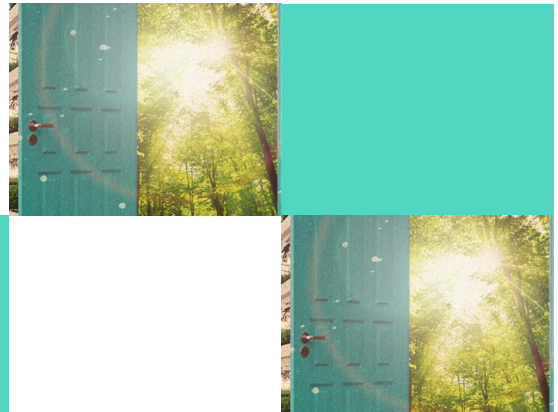
Date and Location	**20 February 2026 | Co-founded Policy Event**
Organisers	**Dr Heidi Ashton (SCAPVC)**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

The Creative Industries Policy Evidence Centre (PEC) global research fellow network has joined forces with CCMPS -led research networks to explore how industry and government policies can cultivate, strengthen and grow social and environmental sustainability across the UK's screen production sector.

With support from the sustainability spotlight the workshop brought together policy makers (local and national), industry leads (Netflix, Sony, BFI), union leads, practitioners and academics to seek out and discuss the policy tensions and opportunities for increasing sustainability in these sectors.

There will be a further online event to gain an international perspective before the production of two policy discussion papers written for the PEC and disseminated widely.



COLAB 1, Thematic: Circular Economy

Nudgeathon 2026 – (co-organised with WBIT)

Date and Location	**14–15 March 2026 | University of Warwick**
Co-Organisers	**Warwick Behavioural Insights Team (WBIT), Behaviour Spotlight.**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

Warwick Nudgeathon 2026 was a collaborative, student-led hackathon designed to bring together bright minds across multiple academic disciplines to explore how behavioural insights can tackle complex real-world challenges. Supported by the Research Spotlights, the event provided students with an experiential learning platform to translate behavioural science into practical solutions.

Supporting Sponsors & Industry Partners

External Industry & Civic Partners: Coventry City Council (#CovConnects), Virgin Media O2.

Events Team:

- Coventry City Council (CCC): Carl Holloway, Catherine Partridge, Charlotte Todd, Jas Sandu, Laura Waller, Paul Ward, and Tamara Duignan.
- University of Warwick (UoW): Aayush Bhandari, Andrea Isoni, Cher Zou, Chris Wilkinson, Danae Macleod, Daniel Reed, Janhavi Sawant, Lory Barile, Sai-Sham Shinde, Shanze Khalid, and Tanya Liguori.
- Virgin Media O2: Louise Whitakker.

"This student led initiative from WBIT brings together bright minds from across disciplines to explore how behavioral insights can help tackle real-world challenge (...) Nudgeathon is proudly supported by Warwick's Interdisciplinary Research Spotlights - Behaviour Spotlight, whose funding helps make this collaborative learning experience possible (...) We are also grateful to our fantastic partners, Coventry City Council Virgin Media O2, for real world perspectives, and challenges that inspire the teams."
— Warwick Interdisciplinary Research Spotlights



COLAB 1, Thematic: Sustainable Food and Agri-Tech
Sustainable Food: healthy people, healthy planet

Date and Location	**18 March 2026	Interdisciplinary Scoping Workshop**
Co-Organisers	**Health Spotlight & Sustainability Spotlight**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

This cross-faculty workshop brought together experts across life sciences, medicine, history, economics, literature, and the arts to examine the critical intersections between nutrition, agricultural systems, and environmental health. Discussions spanned clinical diabetes insights, historical food cultures, and the economic drivers of food inequality.

The main achievement of the session was the formulation of concrete research themes to target major national funding calls. Working groups mapped out joint proposals addressing sustainable horticulture, weight stigma, and community food resilience, with progress reported at WSF 2026.

Event Speakers
Conceptual Foundations & Civic Briefing

- **Professor Rosemary Collier**

  Life Sciences, Integrated Pest Management, Sustainable Crop Production, and Ecosystem Preservation.
- **Professor Beat Kümin**

  History, Cultural histories of Food and Drink, Communal Traditions, and Social Identity.
- **Dr Petra Hanson**

  Warwick Medical School, Clinical diabetes research, nutrition, and interprofessional health collaboration.
- **Professor Thijs van Rens**

  Economics, Food System Economics, Health Disparities, and Multidisciplinary Grant Strategy.



COLAB 2: ECR Sustainability Training Academy 2026
Radical Futures & Interdisciplinary Imaginaries

Date and Location	**24-27 March 2026	Radcliffe Space 37, University of Warwick**
Funding & Partners	**Co-funded by the Enhancing Research Culture Fund 2025-2026; organised in partnership with the Society & Culture Spotlight.**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

The ECR Sustainability Training Academy (STA 2026) delivered an intensive four-day residential retreat for 18 early-career researchers, providing hands-on training in interdisciplinary methodologies, public communication, and project management. ECRs worked closely with 21 senior researchers, research support officers, and external advisors to transform creative ideas into robust research proposals.

STA Lineage & Mentorship Panel

- **4-Year Legacy:** STA 2026 builds directly on the success of STS 2023 (Resilience), STS 2024 (Water Security), and STA 2025 Venice (Green & Just Transitions).
- **Senior Academic Chairs:** Elena Korosteleva, Stuart Coles, Gary Bending, Graeme Macdonald, Dr Marit Hammond, Dr Fred Dahlmann, and Briony Jones.
- **Adjudication Panel:** Kerry Kirwan (WMG), Fabienne Peter (Philosophy), Alison Cooley (IAS), Giuliana Famiglietti-Pipola (Coventry City Council), and Sebastian Conran.



Day 1 Summary
Conceptual Foundations & Civic Briefing

- ECR participants delivered rapid Ignite presentations to share research backgrounds and spark cross-disciplinary pairings.
- Senior academic roundtables debated the evolving definitions of sustainability, exploring the tensions between technological adaptation and social equity.
- Officers from Coventry City Council briefed participants on regional sustainability challenges, establishing real-world targets for group projects.

Day 2 Summary
Creative Methodologies & Systemic Transformation

- Interactive workshops equipped ECRs with non-traditional research toolkits, including design thinking and visual communication.
- Panel discussions analysed how radical social, economic, and technological transformations can be operationalised.

Day 3 Summary
Digital Casting & Interdisciplinary Toolkits

- Participants completed hands-on "Digital Methods Casting" workshops to refine their research design and ethical frameworks.
- Project teams finalized their proposals with guidance from senior mentors.

Day 4 Summary
Project Pitches & Keynote Address

- ECR teams pitched their interdisciplinary projects to an expert panel, resulting in seed funding awards for civic implementation.
- Keynote Address: Celebrated designer and innovator Professor Sebastian Conran FCSD delivered an inspiring keynote on sustainable design, robotics, and social innovation.



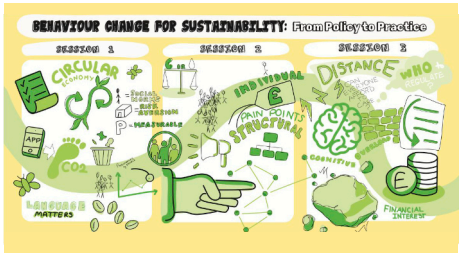
COLAB 1, Thematic: Circular Economy
Behaviour Change for Sustainability: From Policy to Practice

Date and Location	**23 April 2026	High-Level Policy Roundtable**
Organisers	**Dr Lory Barile (Warwick) & Dr Sanchayan Banerjee (KCL)**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

This policy roundtable brought together academic researchers, civil servants, utility leads, and municipal planners to evaluate how behavioural insights can enhance environmental policy. The agenda centred on comparing individual choice nudges (I-frame) with broader structural and institutional changes (S-frame).

The session produced a policy consensus paper emphasising that individual behavioural nudges must be paired with systemic infrastructural reform to achieve net-zero targets. Participating organisations-including Ofgem, Net Zero Centre, and regional councils-agreed to integrate these findings into upcoming regional campaigns, establishing a foundation for the major BEEP Conference in September 2026.



Visual Summaries by Ella Caine

Presenters

- Professor Stuart Coles (Warwick), Hiba Yazbeck (Shifting Gaia), and Professor Nick Chater (Warwick).

Support Team

- Cher Zou, Youn Affejee, and Ella Caine.

Contributors Panel

- Dr Anna Rita Bennato (Loughborough), Dr Armenak Antinyan (Thames Water), Beth Moon (Ofgem), Carl Holloway (Coventry City Council), Professor Daniel Read (Warwick), Edward Houghton (DG Cities), Edward Whincup (BIT), Professor Elena Korosteleva (Warwick), Dr Eugene Malthouse (Nottingham), Fajli Bibi (GSI Centre of Excellence), Frances Nibbs (Warwick), Dr Ganga Shreedhar (LSE), Dr Irene Mussio (Leeds), Professor Katy Tapper (City St George's), Laura Waller (Coventry City Council), Dr Louise Bernard (Centre for Net Zero), Louise Whitaker (Virgin Media O2), Professor Nicole Koenig-Lewis (Cardiff), Rachael Kirwan (Warwick), Sophia Looney (Lambeth), Stephanie Whitehead (Warwick)

COLAB 1, Thematic: Sustainable Food and Agri-Tech
Spotlights Food Seminar: Two Conversations

Date and Location	**27 April 2026	Scarman Conference Centre (Space 11)**
Co-Organisers	**Health Spotlight, BMI Spotlight, and Sustainability Spotlight**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

This double-session seminar explored the evolving dynamics of international trade, agricultural processing, and employment across African agrifood value chains. The event brought internationally recognised scholars and trade executives to Warwick to analyse how midstream enterprise growth and downstream industrial innovation can strengthen continental food security and trade resilience.

Session 1
Beyond the Farm: Unlocking Employment and Livelihoods in Africa's Evolving Food Systems



DR SAWEDA ONIPEDE LIVERPOOL-TASIE
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Key Insights
Examined the vital, underappreciated role of midstream and downstream micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs)-including wholesalers, processors, and logistics providers-in driving food security and employment across sub-Saharan Africa.

Session 2
Cocoa, International Trade and Innovation in Africa: Lessons from Ghana's Evolving Supply Chain



FUAD ABUBAKAR MOHAMMED
MANAGING HEAD, COCOBOD & GHANA COCOA MARKETING COMPANY UK LTD

Key Insights
Evaluated value-addition pathways for African cocoa beyond raw exports, focusing on downstream processing in nutraceutical, pharmaceutical, cosmetic, and bio-based sectors to build trade competitiveness

COLAB 1: UKRI Doctoral Focal Award Workshop
Environmental Evidence Synthesis

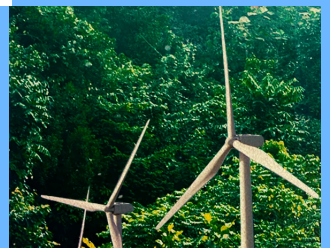
Date and Location	**27 April 2026	Radcliffe Space 12**
Organiser	**Professor Gary Bending (WESIC)**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

This strategic proposal-scoping meeting convened researchers from across the university to prepare a major bid for the UKRI Doctoral Focal Award in Environmental Evidence Synthesis. The call focuses on designing cohort-based doctoral training programs that equip early-career researchers with advanced skills to evaluate, synthesize, and translate complex environmental data for real-world policy impact.

The workshop successfully mapped Warwick's interdisciplinary strengths across data synthesis, environmental science, and public policy, establishing the core leadership team, partnership framework, and strategic vision for the upcoming submission.





COLAB 1, Thematic 3: Radical Transformations Workshop
Radical Imaginations

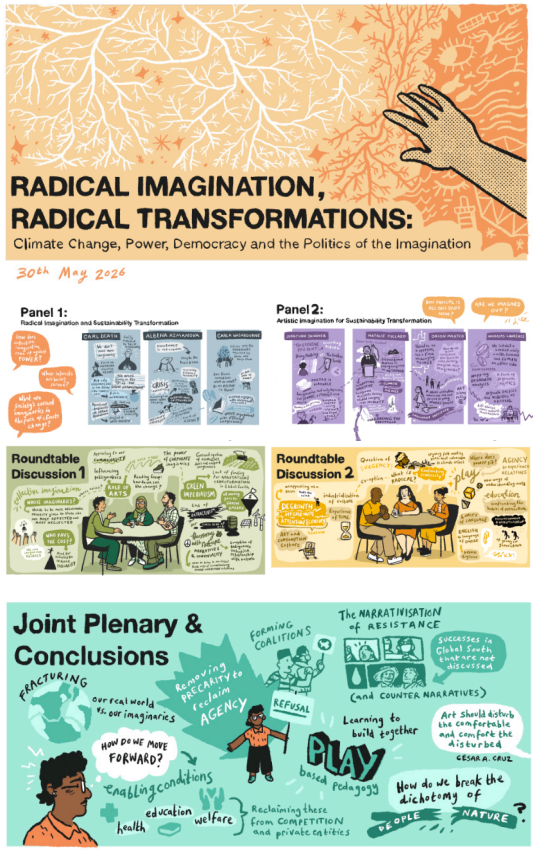
Date and Location	**30 April 2026	The Oculus (OC1.06), University of Warwick**
Organisers	**Marit Hammond, Elena Korosteleva & Graeme Macdonald**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

This workshop brought together scholars from political ecology, democratic theory, and the humanities to explore how collective imagination can drive radical societal change. Participants critically evaluated how post-capitalist futures can be democratised to overcome social and ecological inertia.
The workshop resulted in the creation of the cross-institutional Radical Imaginaries Research Network and initiated a position paper examining alternative democratic visions. Live graphic illustrations created by Nifty Fox captured key debates to inform an upcoming AHRC large grant application.

Key Discussion Panels

- **Panel 1**: Power, Politics & Precarity: Dr Marit Hammond (Chair), Carl Death (Deconstructing Eurocentric Narratives), Albena Azmanova (Precarity & Democratic Solidarity), and Carla Washbourne (Policy Narratives & Indigenous Knowledge).
- **Panel 2**: Artistic Imagination & Refusal: Professor Graeme Macdonald (Chair), Jonathan Skinner (Extreme Present Rituals & Poetry), Natalie Pollard (Countering Clichéd Island Imagery), Orion Maxted (Systems Theatre), and Nicholas Lawrence (Degrowth Aesthetics).



Live scribed by Nifty Fox

COLAB 1 & 3: From Synergies Building to Impact
This Is My Environmental Journey (TIMELY)

Date and Location	**June 2025 – June 2026, Exhibition: 12–16 May	Warwick Arts Centre**
Organisers	**TIMELY Project Team**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

TIMELY (This Is My Environmental Journey) stands as a success story of the administrative excellence behind Spotlight programme, which provided the vital space and time required for the project's initial inception. Showcased at the Warwick Arts Centre, this interactive exhibition explored the diverse, non-linear routes people take into, though, and around environmental careers. Through personal narratives, creative reflections, and visual storytelling, TIMELY illustrated how curiosity, chance, activism, and lived experiences intersect with scientific research.

Spotlighting Research Culture & Professional Services

Beyond academic outputs, the project made a unique contribution to Warwick's broader research culture by explicitly recognising the role of professional services colleagues. Featuring personal story contributions, including from Spotlight administrator Cher Xueer Zou, the exhibition highlighted how research excellence relies not only on academic expertise, but also on the coordination, creativity, and community-building provided by professional services staff.

"Research is strengthened not only by academic expertise, but also by the insight, collaboration, creativity, coordination, and lived experiences of the many people who help make research communities thrive. Professional services colleagues are often central to building connections, enabling collaboration, supporting communities, and helping ideas develop into impactful projects, yet these contributions are not always visible..."
— Warwick Interdisciplinary Research Spotlights





COLAB 3: Impact and Visibility
Disastrous Pasts and Sustainable Futures Conference

Date and Location	**29-30 June 2026	Faculty of Arts Building & The Oculus**
Organisers	**Global History and Culture Centre (GHCC)**

Executive Overview & Key Achievements

This international conference gathered historians, social scientists, disaster relief practitioners, and urban planners to re-examine urban devastation, recovery, and resilience. By challenging the division between "natural" and "man-made" disasters, the conference demonstrated how urban development patterns actively produce community vulnerabilities.

The conference established an interdisciplinary research framework connecting urban history with modern disaster response, launching the emerging Disasters Network under COLAB 1. Case studies ranging from 19th-century international relief to post-war reconstruction yielded actionable insights for urban planners and humanitarian organisations.

Day 1 Summary
Historical Vulnerabilities & Archival Practices

- Plenary sessions analysed historical seismology, Eurasian philanthropy, and the role of legal archives during urban crises.

Day 2 Summary
Sustainable Futures & Urban Resilience

- Presentations evaluated modern urban agriculture in Senegal, cultural heritage restoration in Antakya/Hatay, and futureproofing cities.
- A closing debate titled "Whose city? Whose resilience?" critically interrogated top-down resilience narratives to ensure marginalised communities are prioritised in recovery planning.

The Four Conceptual Pillars

Temporalities
Viewing disasters as long-term historical processes rather than isolated events.

Geographies
Connecting local, national, and global scales, with special focus on port-cities.

Practices
Analysing emergency relief alongside local community survival strategies.

Archives
Reconstructing lost municipal records to preserve community testimonies.

COLAB 3: Warwick Sustainability Forum 2026

Flagship Theme: From Action to Strength

Date and Location	**02 July 2026	OC0.02, The Oculus**
Organisers	**Sustainability Spotlight (3rd Annual University-Wide Forum)**







Executive Overview & Key Achievements

The 3rd Annual Warwick Sustainability Forum served as the flagship event for the academic year, bringing together university leaders, researchers, civic officials, and industry partners to consolidate research outcomes into institutional strength.

The primary output of the 2026 Forum was the co-creation of the Interdisciplinary Sustainability Action Plan 2026-2027. The forum showcased the work of seed-funded ECR project teams, celebrated thematic network achievements, and featured a VIP roundtable with regional politicians, youth leaders, and business advisors.

Event Accomplishments

Objective	Focus
Progress Audit	**Comprehensive review of research outputs across COLABs 1–3.**
Priority Identification	**Surfacing emerging regional and global climate priorities.**
Action Planning	**Co-developing the strategic research roadmap for 2026–2027.**
Cross-Sector Alliances	**Solidifying partnerships with local councils, industry, and NGOs.**















3-Year Forum Progression

2024

2025

04 JULY 2024 – TIME TO TALK
UNIVERSITY-WIDE CONSULTATION GATHERING 40 DELEGATES TO ESTABLISH SPOTLIGHT GOVERNANCE.

03 JULY 2025 – FROM REFLECTION TO ACTION
CONVENED 60 DELEGATES ACROSS 15 EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS TO TRANSITION TOWARD COMMUNITY-OWNED ACTIONS.

2026

02 JULY 2026 – FROM ACTION TO STRENGTH
TRANSLATING RESEARCH OUTPUTS FROM STA 2026, POLICY ROUNDTABLES, AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES INTO LONG-TERM INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTH.

COLABs in Review

COLAB 1
Research Synergies & Funding

Overarching Strategic Achievements & Programmatic Delivery

COLAB 1 has pioneered interdisciplinary research matchmaking and targeted sandpits (replacing traditional learning circles), resulting in a robust portfolio of major external grant applications and secured awards.

Applications	Status
– NERC Project TIMELY: This is My Environmental Journey led by Feng Mao.	**[Successful]**
– UKRI Doctoral Focal Award: Environmental Evidence Synthesis led by Carla Washbourne.	**[Under Development]**
– Leverhulme DTE CAUSE Application: Led by Noortje Marres.	**[Submitted]**
– ESRC 4-C Resilience Bid: Cross-faculty resilience research.	**[Submitted]**
– AHRC Large Grant (RIFT): Radical Imaginaries for Transformation.	**[Under Consideration]**
– VUB Joint Seed Fund: Co-led with Vrije Universiteit Brussel.	**[Successful]**



COLAB 2
ECR Platform-Building & Training

A milestone of COLAB 2 was the establishment of four interdisciplinary Early Career Researcher (ECR) group projects, paired with senior Warwick mentors and external advisors from Coventry City Council.

Summary of Achievements
2025-26

- **Sustainable Heritage:** Collaborating with local stakeholders to apply sustainable preservation methods.
- **Sustainable Composting & Greening:** Implementing urban greening and soil regeneration practices in regional communities.
- **Sustainable Employment Opportunities:** Researching green job creation and inclusive workforce transitions.
- **ECR Warwick Sustainability Forum Showcase:** Direct integration of ECR project leads into a dedicated showcase panel at the 2026 Forum, chaired by Harriet Richmond and Rachael Kirwan.





COLAB 3
Impact & Visibility

COLAB 3 has significantly expanded Warwick's visibility across national policy arenas and global academic networks:

Summary of Achievements
2025-26

- **Parliamentary Policy Impact:** Professor Elena Korosteleva was invited to present Sustainability Spotlight findings to the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on SDGs beyond 2030 in May 2026, receiving formal commendation from Lord McCormick.
- **International Research Alliances:** Established formal institutional links with VUB HOST (House of Sustainable Transitions) in Brussels, the UCL Anthropocene Grand Challenge, and Central Asian partner universities across Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan.
- **EUTOPIA Global Network:** Partnering with King's College London and NOVA EUTOPIA to host the international STA 'CENSE' in August 2026













Looking Ahead to 2026/27

On the Strategic Horizon...

Building on the accomplishments of the 2025-2026 academic year, the Sustainability Spotlight will continue to expand its outreach, support early-career researchers, and drive interdisciplinary excellence across and beyond Warwick. By strengthening its thematic networks and deepening external partnerships, the Spotlight aims to capture emerging funding opportunities and translate academic excellence into tangible societal impact.

2026

TARGETED EXTERNAL FUNDING BIDS:
ADVANCING MAJOR GRANT APPLICATIONS, INCLUDING THE UKRI DOCTORAL FOCAL AWARD IN ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS (LED BY CARLA WASHBOURNE), THE AHRC LARGE GRANT ON RADICAL IMAGINARIES, THE 4-C RESILIENCE ESRC BID, AND INTERNATIONAL JOINT SEED FUNDS.

SCALING SEED-FUNDED ECR PROJECTS:
PROVIDING ONGOING MENTORSHIP THROUGH COLAB 2 TO SUPPORT THE THREE STA 2026 AWARDEE TEAMS (SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE, SUSTAINABLE COMPOSTING, SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT) AS THEY COLLABORATE WITH COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL AND TRANSITION INTO MAJOR EXTERNAL GRANT APPLICATIONS.



POLICY & INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT: DEEPENING POLICY ENGAGEMENT FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP (APPG) ON SDGS BEYOND 2030 AND BUILDING FORMAL RESEARCH ALLIANCES WITH INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS INCLUDING VUB (HOUSE OF SUSTAINABLE TRANSITIONS), UCL, MONASH, AND PARTNER UNIVERSITIES IN UZBEKISTAN AND AZERBAIJAN.

September October November 2027...

EXPANDING HIGH-IMPACT EVENTS: HOSTING THE MAJOR BEEP CONFERENCE (10-11 SEPTEMBER 2026) IN PARTNERSHIP WITH KING'S COLLEGE LONDON AND THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS (EAERE), AS WELL AS LAUNCHING THE INTERNATIONAL STA 'CENSE' IN AUGUST 2026 ALONGSIDE KCL AND NOVA EUTOPIA.



The Sustainability Spotlight plans to continue its outreaching and inclusive activities to build research-synergies, ECR platform, and its visibility - across and beyond Warwick. It will continue with its KPIs supported by its flagship activities: thematic networks (established and new, premised on critical mass) which proved highly productive and conducive to knowledge exchange and preparing/applying for funding opportunities; ECR STA (regional and international); the WSF with national and international stakeholders. We will also aim to capture new funding opportunities and establish contact and learn/exchange best practice from similar interdisciplinary research initiatives – e.g. VUB; UCL; Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Monash.

"Sustainability is a shared story. Thank you to the researchers, students, professional staff, and external partners who contributed their time, insight, and energy throughout 2025–2026."

Warwick Interdisciplinary Research Spotlights

Behaviour
Business, Manufacturing & Innovation
Digital, Data Science & AI
Health
Society & Culture
Sustainability

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warwick.ac.uk/research/spotlights/sustainability



THANK YOU

THE SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT REPORT 2025/26

September 2026

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK