

Sustainability Spotlight | Time to Talk



4th JULY 2024

Centre for Facilitation | Christine Bell



1 Executive summary

The consultation session ‘**Time to Talk**’ on organising the university-wide cross-disciplinary Sustainability Spotlight was held on **4th July 2024**, bringing together 65 registered representatives from all faculties, and all levels of seniority, including professional, central research services, business partnerships and regional engagement. The event generated a lot of proposals and recommendations, which will be developed for implementation by the Sustainability Spotlight Leadership Team and Steering Group.

Creating structured networking opportunities for sustainability research has been recognised as important by everyone, highlighting a series of urgent concerns. **A range of Ambitions and Ideas were prioritised by the participants.** These *inter alia* included:

- Developing a **database of researchers with similar thematic interests** to develop synergies, collaborations and become ‘multifaceted connected’ for external stakeholders.
- Facilitating a **community of practice**, which should include **ECR platform and training**; and organising dedicated funding workshops to encourage idea exploration and iteration.
- Activities should focus on **synergy-building**, and include matchmaking forums, speed-dating around project-based ideas and/or calls; nomadic sustainability seminars; podcasts and position papers.

Action Ideas of the forum were summarised with the help of AI taking all individual comments into consideration. They highlighted the importance of the following:

- Develop **forward-thinking approaches**, by reimagining ‘alternative futures’ in a designerly way. Explore systems’ approach to offer a holistic way forward.
- We need **to think differently**: develop alternative thinking through network engagement, training and creative skills development.
- Translate shared passion for sustainable futures into tangible actions and **meaningful research** through joint funding bids & wider engagement.

The Sustainability Spotlight will continue its engagements throughout the year, based on the Action Plan to be prepared by the Sustainability Spotlight Leadership Team, in partnership with the Steering Group. The next ‘Time to Talk’ session is planned for summer 2025 (date TBC), to evaluate the progress towards the identified KPIs (see [the website](#) for further information).

2 'Time to Talk' Overview

2.1 Purpose

The event on 4th July 2024 was designed to provide space for the research community across the existing sustainability networks at Warwick to meet and share their thoughts about the vision and activities for the new Sustainability Spotlight. The intention is to use the material that has been captured on the [digital pinboard](#) and the summaries outlined in this report to provide some key themes for the leadership team to use in shaping the Spotlight prior to the formal launch in Autumn 2024.

2.2 Process Design

The facilitated process was co-designed by the leadership team, programme administrator and the lead facilitator, Christine Bell from [Centre for Facilitation](#). The process was designed to provide plenty of opportunities for participants to connect with each other and have conversations about their current and future sustainability ambitions. The format was kept relaxed and in designing the event the team were mindful that this was the end of term, and levels of fatigue were high. It was a conscious choice to avoid formal presentations and to have a more conversational format so that a culture of participation and inclusivity could be encouraged. This included the avoidance of formal name badges in preference for more informal name labels – using first names.

2.3 Summary of the Sessions/Output

A total of 45 people (of 65 registered) attended the actual event from all faculties, and all levels of seniority: from PhD students and ECRs, to senior academics, professional services, business partnerships, R&IS and regional engagement. The event was facilitated by Christine Bell and Amelia Wakeford from the [Centre for Facilitation](#) with support from Emellyne Forman (IGSD Administrator) and Ura Martin (Administrative and Project Coordinator) The Spotlight Leads (Elena Korosteleva, Giuliana Battisti, Gary Bending, Graeme Macdonald and Stuart Coles) took on group facilitation roles throughout the morning so that they were able to closely hear the ideas shared during the session.

Session 1: Sustainability Connection Building

The opening session was designed to encourage a conversational exchange between participants in small groups about their research. They were asked to summarise their

conversations with some [short persuasive reasons](#) for joining the sustainability research network, to influence other researchers at Warwick.

Looking at the key themes that have emerged there is a degree of surprise that anyone would need persuading to get involved in sustainability research. It would be interesting to explore why some researchers do not see sustainability as relevant to their research

Session 2: Sustainability Spotlight Ambitions: Leadership Team

The formal introduction from the leadership team was deliberately positioned later in the agenda than would be expected at these types of events. This was to ensure that participation was encouraged from the start and to enable the leads to listen to the conversations from Session 1 and build on these shared insights. The Spotlight leads [shared their ambitions](#) for the Spotlight and their reasons for being inspired to work in the sustainability research arena.

Session 3: Horizon Scanning: 2024 and Beyond

The first challenge for this session was for the participants to re-organise themselves into groups that were of equal size and that would provide a mix of people from the five existing sustainability networks. The reason for this was to give participants control over the mix of the groups and to avoid the confusion that can be caused by pre-allocating groups when people either do not register or do not turn up.

Participants were asked to initially reflect individually about their involvement in the current networks and to use words and pictures to share their experiences of these networks with others in their group.

In the next phase of the conversation, the groups were asked to consider what this new "Network of Networks" might be able to add to strengthen and integrate the current networks.

The final activity was for the groups to identify "[just one thing*](#)" that the Spotlight could do to support and build the sustainability research culture at Warwick. The [summarised list](#) closely correlates to the suggestions captured on the post it notes by each group, and which can be seen on the [Padlet](#). (*a deliberate reference to the late Michael Mosley who had died in June 2024)

Session 4: Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Learning from Failure

One of the [reasons](#) for the introduction of the Spotlight Programme within Warwick is to develop interdisciplinary research. The Spotlight Leadership Team recognised that interdisciplinary collaboration is often challenging and in designing this session we wanted to acknowledge the "messiness" in these conversations. Five academic leaders with vast experience of collaborative bids were invited to join the session and share their experiences. The format used for this session was a podcast interview based on the acclaimed podcast

series hosted by [Elizabeth Day "How To Fail"](#). Participants were invited to ask questions to their allocated guest who shared (under Chatham House Rules) some of their learning about the messiness of interdisciplinary collaboration.

At the close of the interviews the groups were asked to [share tips](#) about what could be done to ensure that researchers at all career levels were well prepared to submit large interdisciplinary bids. These [tips](#) have been collated and summarised into five themes that could be used by the Spotlight Team to consciously focus efforts on preparing successful collaborations.

[Session 5: Making an Impact](#)

The Session Leads identified 5 discussion topics in advance that they wanted to explore with the participants to help them to shape the Spotlight programme. Each lead hosted a conversation:

1. [Developing a Spotlight Vision – Giuliana Battisti](#)
2. [Building on Existing Networks – Graeme Macdonald](#)
3. [Impact and Engagement – Elena Korosteleva](#)
4. [Sharing Resources and Communication Strategies – Stuart Coles](#)
5. [Early Career Development – Gary Bending](#)

Participants could choose to join a discussion of their choice and were able to move between topics if they wanted. The session started with a short reflective pause so that each participant could take time to think about what they wanted to contribute to the discussion. The Session Leads facilitated the discussion to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to contribute if they wanted to.

The raw output from each discussion has been [collated](#) on the Padlet. A summary of the main points for each discussion has been [provided](#). There were many commonalities across the different discussion topics so, in addition to the topic summaries, all the output has been combined (with the help of AI) to generate broad themes across all these discussions. This has produced a list of [6 ways](#) that this community believe that the Sustainability Spotlight can make an impact/difference.

[Session 6: What would we love to see happening as result of the Sustainability Spotlight?](#)

In the final session participants were given some time to reflect on what they wanted to see happening as a result of the Sustainability Spotlight. They took these ideas into pairs and chose the strongest suggestion and then joined another pair to create a four. Each group of four was asked to select and share their insights The verbal summaries were shared in the

[final plenary](#). The post it notes from this conversation were added to the “sticky wall” and added to during the lunch break.

Summary of Hopes and Concerns

During breaks and the lunch period participants added to the “sticky wall” their hopes from Session 6 and any additional hopes or concerns about the Spotlight. These are captured in raw format on the Padlet and have been [summarised into core themes](#) in this document.

Time for Action

There is a high level of good will evidenced from this Time to Talk experience shown in the data collection. This good will comes with a high expectation that the Network activity goes beyond just holding an event, creating a database and hosting a website.

The next steps will be crucial in demonstrating the added value of hosting a network of networks and making a difference to the development of a successful sustainability research culture across Warwick.

2.4 What Next?

Participants shared ideas and information during the event and the 5 leads were present throughout the event, participating and listening to the conversations. This document summarises the output and in the final section outlines some [further events](#) that might help to build the community.

It is important the Spotlight Team share the findings and summary with the wider network and outline of some initial responses to the ideas shared – the format “you said/we did” can be a useful one to consider. This will help the community to believe that their time has been usefully invested and that the Spotlight focus will build on their insights and suggestions as a community.

Outputs and Summaries

The following section of the summary report contains all the output from each of the dialogue sessions and from material added to the poster area in the room.

The material can be easily seen in a visual format on the [digital pinboard](#) where the content is laid out with each session and with photographs showing the raw output.

The content has been summarised to pull together similar comments and themes that emerged across conversations across the different tables. This includes session 6 where even though the groups discussed different themes there was a high level of consensus about the future direction of the Spotlight Community across these five different conversations.

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3 **Motivation for Sustainability Research** (from Session 1)

3.1 Urgency and Importance

- "Most important problem we are facing."
- "It matters! (It really does)"
- "Sustaining life matters, especially NOW! But be creative about it!"
- "There is no research on a dead planet."

3.2 Finite Resources and Environmental Impact

- "Planet has finite resources."
- "Humans impact the environment."
- "Protect the environment/animals."

3.3 Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Approach

- "Sustainability must encompass every discipline, including the study of culture."
- "Working with diverse and international stakeholders – it's a global interdisciplinary challenge!"
- "Build inclusivity."
- "Cross discipline multi-disciplinarity = translation to impact. REAL CHANGE!"

3.4 Impact and Engagement

- "To ensure your research gets seen and heard by the right people who have the power to enact change."
- "Our research can make a difference (in biodiversity)."
- "Find the thread from your research to sustainability."
- "Engagement with policy makers and businesses – interested, legislations, good of the communities: why wouldn't you!"

3.5 Ethical Responsibility

- "Safeguarding what we have for future generations."
- "Ethical Engagement – avoid death and suffering."
- "Earth is our home; it is our duty to consider sustainability."

3.6 Practical Solutions and Actions

- "Reuse Recycle Repair."
- "Change ways things are done to more elegant solutions."
- "Making a difference."
- "Bring people together."

3.7 Personal Relevance

- "Sustainability is about you."
- "We can all make a difference and have impact, regardless of which department we work in."

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4 Spotlight Ambitions: Leadership Team (from Session 2)

- Visibility beyond Warwick.
- International and global influence and engagement.
- Bringing people together who might not have the opportunity to collaborate.
- Engagement with local communities and building on our impact.
- Energy and environment humanities and batteries as an example of how we will be bringing interdisciplinary conversations to form networks and open conversations.
- Investment in sustainability and draw upon the engagements and bringing together communities to have challenging conversations. Starting it with humility.

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5 Ideas for the Spotlight: just one thing that might make a difference (from Session 3)

5.1 Facilitate Creative Thinking

1. Professional enablers/ professional support staff with institutional knowledge to support creative ideas.
2. Have an opportunity to start thinking creatively, outside the box, about different, alternative futures to make reality better.

5.2 Build and Encourage Networking

1. Clear access to a list of past and present partners and collaborators nationally and internationally.
2. Sustainability "lonely hearts" platform: researchers outlining areas of expertise and future research interests.
3. Networking with external partners.
4. Regular network meetings that are encouraged.
5. Matchmaking - being connected with people with complementary research interests.
6. Become a multifaceted connector – linking external policy makers, businesses, charities...to engage, share challenges, ideals with Warwick. Managing a big box of different stakeholders.

5.3 Create a Community of Practice, Skills and Experience

1. Better understanding of the sustainable ecosystem.
2. Building an ecosystem that draws on each of the networks.
3. Cross-departmental horizon scanning.
4. Resource sharing.

5.4 Career Development

1. Discipline hopping fellowships for ECRs.
2. Mentoring.

5.5 Focus on Outputs

1. Showcase success / outputs.

5.6 Events

1. Proposal-oriented sandpits.
2. Focused events on specific research themes.
3. A matchmaking forum that leads to collaboration, which will be supported by a dedicated funding scheme (provided by the spotlight) that requires trans disciplinaryity.
4. Speed dating around a specific, project-based idea, including diverse stakeholders (e.g. professional services).
5. Nomadic seminars - shared calendar of what already exists and adding a slot for interdisciplinary colleagues.

5.7 Finding Ways Forward with Leadership

1. The opportunity to sit down with university executive to identify many institutional obstacles and develop solutions.

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6 Interdisciplinary Collaboration (from Session 4)

6.1 Leadership

- For large bids you have to be a leader in what you are offering.
- Being pro-active.
- More than a sum of parts, needs a cohesive vision that is shared by all the team.
- Take and share the risks, it doesn't come naturally.
- Learn when not to submit – sometimes the timing is just not right.

6.2 Communication/Teamwork

- Alignment of assumptions, requirements and attributes through clear and regular communication between all parties (potential shared database of information and Party information).
- Develop a shared vocabulary.
- Make sure you fit into the consortium.
- Taking time to understand different disciplinary perspectives.
- Small wins are still wins.

6.3 Networking

- Knowing who else wants to work on interdisciplinary research.
- Support for networking – internally for UKRI ego online networking platform for Warwick researchers on specific bids. Professional services support for networking with European partners for Horizon bids – networking on behalf of academics to find strong coordinates.
- Get to know people, take the time – make it into a habit to join a drop in or monthly session.
- Recognition for community building/grant collaboration.
- Funding for networking way in advance of the publication of the bid.

6.4 Early Career Researchers

- Capture lessons from experienced researchers and pass on to early career researchers – communication is key, don't assume.
- Support ECRs – opportunities to get involved (sweeping away barriers to interdisciplinary research report).

6.5 Resources

- Admin/professional services support is crucial. Need grant writing support and or a professional partner who also has grant writing skills.
- Support for the non-successful submissions – time to conduct a lessons learned and not to just forget the experience.

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7 How Can our Spotlight Make an Impact? (from Session 5)

7.1 Group 1: What should Warwick be known for? What is the Next Big Question we should address?

The topics of Biomimicry and Nature Based solutions, Intervention Design and Health and Sustainability (the well-being economy) were mentioned. More broadly, the participants highlighted the need for Warwick to be bold and reimagine the future and to have the courage to tackle bold and critical challenges including the ultimate challenge about how to

help the human race from self-destruction (“the only species who think saving themselves is too expensive”).

Ideas suggested for the next Big Question included the issues of de-growth and environmental justice, both of which fit the brief in 6.1 for courageous conversations. The network opens up new collaborations that could work across different systems and different disciplines; and the potential of using interdisciplinary collaboration to tackle barriers. An example could be metrics and data that integrate social and environmental.

Transitions towards sustainability will be needed. One suggestion was to identify the 5 most pressing system transitions that are needed to save the planet/society.

7.2 Group 2: How might we better engage with other interdisciplinary centres?

The discussion highlighted the importance of horizon scanning and putting funding aside to help support proof of concept interdisciplinary projects in order to develop a better understanding of centres and what people are doing. There could also be a funded project where building relationships is the main task.

It was helpful to gain more in-depth information about the different work that the centres are involved in so ideas were put forward for research exchanges, secondments, placements or a residency (Writer in Residence).

Having people taking leadership roles in the right networks would help with this process of engagement and would help the network to map the different centres and clusters at Warwick. This might help the Spotlight to identify the communication needed for collaboration and avoid information overload.

Ideas such as sustainability week might provide opportunities to meet others, do things together.

7.3 Group 3: How might we get Non-Governmental Organisations, policy makers and media to engage with Warwick? How might we make a difference/impact?

An important consideration was about the needs of these different audiences and the importance of “cutting through the noise” and not just adding more to the overload. Timing is critical as policy makers need expertise in real time.

There might be the potential of organisation workshops and food-based activities with stakeholders and the new group of MPs could be an opportunity. It was important not to duplicate work being done by other networks/groups at Warwick.

The importance of targeted communication was highlighted and finding the right people (with the power to influence change) and then to get the right message so that they can make use of our research but in an accessible manner. This could involve having professional enablers writing policy briefs.

There needed to be room for controversy, making a difference might involve some pain and challenge to existing norms (see the degrowth topic from group 1) We might also need to think differently about the stakeholders we engage with and how we approach this.

Making a difference was discussed and concerns raised that "REF orientated impact can be shallow in reality" and we needed to find those areas where we really could make a difference to the bigger picture of sustainability of the planet.

7.4 Group 4: What communication strategies and resources might we share

It was suggested that we could make use of existing informal decentralised meetings and groups. It could be helpful to gain insights from the research comms team about which channels for communication have most engagement so that communication can be better targeted.

Having funding to support effective communication would help remove some of the constraints. We should also explore communication methods that are less traditionally academic including drawings, podcasts, illustrations.

The shared resources included having information on people and on projects which could be communicated more effectively.

There are some existing programmes such as sustainability coffee roulette, Sandpits, workshops to create connections and annual conferences which could be used.

The RIS Team is looking to manage the community of practice and will have 4 staff from September and the National Centre for Research Culture provides space for learning and sharing best practice. There are also the Business Partnership Teams (WIE and WEBS) who offer a sustainability professionals network. Professional services teams such as the research communication team could also be helpful.

7.5 Group 5 How Might the Spotlight Support ECR Development?

There was a lot of support for providing structured and supported learning such as mentoring, shadowing internships and coaching and having meaningful opportunities to learn from mistakes from own practice and that of others.

There needed to be a proactive approach to engage with ECRs on grant applications and give them the opportunity to get involved in all stages of a project, including taking on leadership roles.

Linked to the idea of leadership, the group were supportive of efforts to give ECRs access to funding and funding opportunities, maybe with mentor support so they could try out projects, networking and skill development on a **small-scale** project using funding that was easy to access.

Networking was important and this could be encouraged **more**, and time/headspace provided to make this possible and consider having shared spaces for this community, maybe both digital and in person.

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8 Consolidated Ideas – combining the 5 groups outputs (from Session 5)

This output was created with the assistance of AI in taking all the individual comments and assessing them to pull out key themes and examples. This work was then edited by the facilitation team to add more examples and make the headers clearer. What we were able to show with this analysis was there was a large amount of consensus about the future direction of the Spotlight across the five groups even though they were each discussing a different question/focus area.

8.1 Providing the Launch Pad for Innovative and Interdisciplinary Research

The network can help to reimagine a sustainable world by providing forward- thinking approaches and exploring new research combinations that might make a difference.

- **Reimagine the Future:** Focus on visionary and forward-thinking approaches.
- **Intervention Design:** Practical and actionable design solutions for the transition to sustainability.

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- **Health and Sustainability:** Emphasis on the well-being economy and integrating health with sustainability. Promoting a well-being economy.
 - **System and Discipline Examples:** Exploration of various systems (health, energy, food, transport, governance) and disciplines (politics, technology, finance, economics) for a holistic sustainability approach. What would be our top 5 system transitions to save the planet and society?
 - **Interdisciplinary Research:** Foster new and distinctive collaborations across disciplines to tackle complex sustainability challenges.
 - **Biomimicry and Nature-Based Solutions:** Emphasizing innovative approaches that draw inspiration from nature for sustainable solutions.

8.2 Courageous Sustainability Approaches

If Warwick wants to stand out from the crowd, then we need to be courageous and willing to tackle some of the more challenging sustainability issues including de-growth. We need to convince funders we have a bigger picture of sustainability.

“Humans are the only species who think saving themselves is too expensive”

We need to show this commitment across the University, not just a Spotlight vision.

- **Elegant Sustainability Approaches:** Developing sophisticated and aesthetically pleasing sustainability solutions.
- **Bold Challenges:** Not shying away from critical and difficult sustainability issues.
- **De-Growth and Environmental Justice:** Exploring controversial but necessary topics such as de-growth, equitable state governance and environmental justice.

8.3 Engagement and Collaboration

We need to engage with each other across the disciplines and make use of existing interdisciplinary networks to build the sustainability agenda across Warwick and our wider networks. Our collaborations need to be transdisciplinary, and we need to develop strategies to co-produce policies, strategies and real-life projects with our stakeholders from the beginning. We need to find better and more inclusive ways of crafting interdisciplinary research to tackle barriers.

- **Better Engagement with Interdisciplinary Centres:** Funding proof of concept projects, Sandpits, secondments, researcher exchanges, and residencies to understand and leverage other centres' work.

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- NGO, Policy Maker, and Media Engagement: Developing innovative strategies to effectively engage these stakeholders, including workshops, policy briefs, and tailored communication. Identify expertise that is useful to them in real time.
 - Stakeholder Involvement: Early engagement with key stakeholders to ensure their buy-in and collaboration. Share the work to avoid duplication. Recognition that early engagement takes time and will often need funding support.
 - Sustainability Interventions: Host a sustainability week on campus, organise sustainability workshops with stakeholders

8.4 Impact and Policy

We need to demonstrate that the work of this Spotlight community is making a real difference. There is an urgency to make changes towards a more sustainable world, so the impact has to be more than just enhancing Warwick's reputation, it has to make a difference on real world sustainability metrics.

“REF orientated impact can be shallow in reality”

- Impact Measurement and Communication: Developing metrics for system transitions and effectively communicating impact to various audiences. We need to “cut through the noise, not add to it!”
- Policy Engagement: Identifying and targeting policymakers, developing policy briefs, and engaging in impactful policy work. Think about our audience and seek to better understand them.
- De-Instrumentalising Impact: Focusing on genuine impact rather than superficial metrics.

8.5 Building an Integrated Community

There is a large community of researchers focused on sustainability (and it is also argued that everyone at Warwick should have sustainability as a focus of their research!) We need to get better at making time to get to know more about each other and to build the relationships, so we are bid ready. We should focus on the next generation and give responsibilities to Early Career Researchers to take leadership roles on the networking projects. Funding can help support this.

- Leadership – need to have lead roles in the right networks

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- Shared Resources and Networking: Creating databases, informal networking opportunities (e.g., nature walks, sustainability trail, coffee roulettes), conferences and workshops to foster connections. Create a shared digital space for the community.
 - Mapping – different centres and clusters at Warwick so we have a better idea of the whole span of the community. Share current and previous bids including those that have failed to build our shared understanding of what works and what we could do differently.
 - Support for Early Career Researchers (ECRs): Mentoring, coaching, funding, shadowing, and providing leadership opportunities to ECRs for projects/workstreams. Provide light touch funding, that is easy to access to try out projects or networking events.
 - Shared Focus Areas: identify strategic areas of shared interest that we can engage with and that will develop into impact and build our shared research capacity. Identifying University focused projects where building relationships is the primary task. Preparing teams to be ready for grant applications.

8.6 Sustainability Communication Strategies

There needs to be a review of the communication channels that are already in use and to identify which ones produce the most engagement and prevent “overload”.

- **Effective Communication:** Regular decentralized meetings, use of various communication channels, remove constraints to meeting up.
- **Impactful Outputs:** have professional enablers to write accessible policy briefs. Explore ways of producing non-academic outputs like podcasts and illustrations.

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9 What would we love to see happening as a result of the Sustainability Spotlight (from Session 6)

9.1 Verbal Plenary from the Reflective Discussions

- Building interpersonal relationships, creating a community of scholars.
- Tangible solution - happy and content research community.
- Agile network of research professionals who can respond quickly and in an easy manner to research calls.
- Expert directory - of people involved in sustainability research.

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- Influential leads who proactively bring up the challenges of our community to key decision makers.
 - Shared passion for sustainability is translated to real world research and action.
 - Community Building - bringing together the whole of Warwick community to tackle the threat to our planet by exploring, experimenting, trying ideas that might make a difference.
 - Sustainability research that is supported and incentivised by Warwick University and embedded into all that we do.

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10 Summary of the Hopes for the Sustainability Spotlight Initiative (from Session 5/6)

10.1 Networking and Collaboration

- Develop a “dedicated online platform” for internal networking and specific sustainability funding calls.
- Foster “open opportunities to collaborate” through “targeted collaborations” and “cross-faculty collaboration”.
- Facilitate “research exchange days/speed networking” and “mini sandpits on different topics” to spark new connections and ideas.
- Organize “annual sustainability conferences” and “regular presentations and workshops” to maintain momentum and share successes.

10.2 Institutional Support and Resources

- Secure “university support for networking with European partners” on Horizon bids, including “personnel to help” and funding to join bids using consultants.
- Provide “admin and funding support for the environmental humanities network” and other sustainability initiatives.
- Offer “seed funding for Proof-of-Concept projects” and to “scope and coordinate big projects”.
- Establish a “researchers database” that is up to date and facilitates efficient responses to funding calls.

10.3 Policy and Impact

- Position the Warwick Sustainability Spotlight as the “first point of call for policymakers on sustainability issues”.
- Build a “vibrant, productive interdisciplinary community” with a strong reputation that translates shared passion into meaningful work.
- Create impactful collegial networks that enrich Warwick’s ecosystem and beyond.
- Ensure the spotlight “communicates successes” effectively, showcasing new bids or collaborations that result from events.

10.4 Research Culture and Innovation

- Promote a “greater university-level responsiveness to institutional barriers” to sustainability.
- Foster the “emergence of new impact-oriented sustainability research communities”.
- Encourage the development of “innovative ideas beyond Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”.
- Support an “ecosystem of sustainable and responsible research” that is open, sound, and impactful.
- Improve the “research culture” by supporting grant writing and providing resources for impactful interdisciplinary research.

10.5 Community Building and Sustainability Focus

- Build a “community of like-minded researchers committed to sustainability”.
- Focus Warwick wholeheartedly on avoiding the multiple serious threats to human and natural flourishing through community building and iteration.
- Ensure that “tangible solutions” enable a vibrant interdisciplinary research culture where researchers are happy, creative, and productive.
- Translate the shared passion for sustainability into impactful and meaningful work through continuous support and innovative approaches.

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11 **Spotlight Concerns** (across the morning)

The focus of the workshop was deliberately positive, to encourage people to bring ideas for possibilities for the future.

There was space to post more critical ideas and concerns, and these were raised both verbally and added to the “concerns wall”

- The concerns reflected include the need to see tangible outputs from the ideas generated. There is a recognition that there have been workshops/networks/databases in the past, but the challenge is to both build out from these starts and make something that gains its own momentum and to put energy into updating and administrating these types of networks, so they become both agile, responsive and a supportive culture. If we are not careful, we can put more energy into the visible and tangible events instead of the less visible work of making a community of practice that is sustainable.
- Further discussions need to be more inclusive and representative so that everyone involved in sustainability at Warwick gets their voices heard.
- It is also important that the reporting process from this event is transparent and that the contributors feel that their voices have been heard and that actions that are taken by the Spotlight are aligned to the suggestions made in the workshop. This will help the workshop to feel more like an aligned part of building the network and not “another” event.

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12 **Ideas for Events** (additional suggestions)

There is a clear theme emerging across all the discussions about wanting the Spotlight to host more events. As Centre for Facilitation have expertise in events, we have reviewed these suggestions and provided examples of the different formats that might be used. Although professional facilitation may be important for some event it would be possible for many of the events to be facilitated by the leads or by other members of the team. Some of the events could also provide a rich learning experience for more early career researchers and professional support to take on leadership roles for relatively low risk events for the community.

12.1 Subject Expertise Sharing

One of the challenges of interdisciplinary working is getting to understand more about the different worlds of research. The presentational format is often suggested however in our experience this needs more careful curation so that the information presented is engaging for all participants.

One option might be an “Scientific Café” where there is a mix of short (5-minute presentations using the Ignite style – 20 slides, with 15 sec per slide) combined with informal discussions.

Another option is to take a challenge e.g. wind turbines and impact on wildlife and ask each disciplinary group to share what they might be able to contribute towards understanding and resolving this challenge.

12.2 Networking/Connecting

Many people feel awkward in the traditional “free form” networking setting so having some kind of structure is helpful.

Speed networking – participants have a series of 3 min one to one conversations with each other often with a set question that might explore sustainability topics.

Research Journeys – using a storytelling approach participants share their research journey. We would ask them to share how and when they got involved in sustainability research and about their personal journey into more sustainable living. This can help to open up deeper understanding and trust between participants which is vital for effective collaborations.

“Coffee Roulette” – individuals are matched with each other and need to find a time to meet for coffee within a 4-week period. There can be a shared report back at a monthly coffee lounge and further coffee dates arranged.

Regular Coffee Mornings – a monthly event to focus on “What's New?”. You could host this on a set morning of the month (e.g. first Thursday of the month). The regularity gets it into people's consciousness, and they can turn up when they are not too busy. You could focus on sustainability news, new funding opportunities, new partnerships etc...-

12.3 Sandpit/Innovation Labs/Hackathons

There were requests for Sandpit type events. These events are designed to address a particular sustainability challenge and participants brainstorm ideas and gradually form into

teams before submitting a proposal. The original Sandpit methodology from UKRI is based on a 4–5-day residential format. It can be adapted into shorter formats and even online formats. The purpose of the Hackathon is to create proof of concept and is similar to the Sandpit format although you may ask people to prepare ideas a week before the Hackathon. You can also ask participants to form teams in advance of the Hackathon and submit a team application.

Another option is to allocate participants into interdisciplinary groups on the day and get them to explore ways that they might be able to respond to a recent funding call.

12.4 Relationship Building with Stakeholders

Having a network of local stakeholders that may want to get involved in a research project can help to build towards successful collaborative bids. This relationship building can take time and some options can include:

Visits/Tours – finding organisations that would be open to a small group visiting for 1-2 hours can be a good first step to connection building. This can be very helpful for ECRs to get experience of finding out more about another organisation. The visits can be structured as a morning activity and then a follow up group session on campus is arranged so each group can share their learning and the groups can explore any commonalities between the sustainability challenges faced by these different organisations.

Sustainability Clinics – in a clinic session a number of stakeholders are invited to the campus and each stakeholder is interviewed by a small group of participants who then summarise back to the stakeholder their understanding of the challenges that need addressing and the stakeholder can correct any faulty assumptions. This simple method has proven to be highly effective at helping researchers to move away from “selling” towards a listening approach.

12.5 Sustainability Action

There are already activities across campus that are raising awareness of sustainability issues or directly addressing them. Members of the spotlight could recruit others to join them in one of these activities.

Activities such as Nature Trials, Spot the Sustainability Challenge or a Sustainability Food Fair are all events that could be easily and appropriately led by an ECR to provide experience in leadership. We find it helpful to make this activity-based leadership more purposeful by

providing some mentoring support before the activity, so the ECR is consciously thinking about leadership/teamwork and to provide structured reflection time after the activity to review the learning in a conscious way.

12.6 Lessons Learned

One of the ambitions of the Spotlight is to submit interdisciplinary bids. Building in time to reflect on collaboration before the submission and a team-based lessons learned after the bid result will help to gradually build the experience and expertise of the team in making successful bids.

There is a lot of useful methodology in the Agile project management space – including “Agile Retrospectives”

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