

## Sustainability Matters Now Podcast

### Season 1, Episode 3. Sustainability and Partnership: Biodiversity Restoration in Practice

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Hello and welcome back to Sustainability Matters Now. My name is Tom Ritchie and today I'm really pleased to be joined by Josh Cleall, CEO of TeamJump, and Yurong Tian, Sustainability Coordinator at the University of Warwick. TeamJump runs Warwick's Green Rewards Platform, an online web space and app where staff and students log sustainable actions like active travel, recycling, and sustainable shopping, which they use to earn green points. Users who reach certain point thresholds can then win vouchers through monthly raffles,

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creating a gamified approach to behaviour change that builds community whilst tracking collective impact. Today's conversation will explore how gamification and competition can drive sustainable behaviour change on university campuses, whether rewards-based platforms create lasting habits beyond short-term compliance, and how individual action connects to institutional sustainability commitments like Warwick's Nature Positive Universities pledge. Josh and Yurong, hello.

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Hi, Tom. Thanks so much for having us. Hello, So what brings you both to this conversation on sustainability, please? So, when I was doing my master's, my dissertation was on social entrepreneurship. And that's really where I discovered my passion for sustainability. I've always wanted to do something meaningful, something that contributes to others and make like a positive difference. I realised sustainability is an area where I can actually use the knowledge and skills I've learned again at the university, and I've developed to help people and the environment.

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So that's why I chose sustainability as my career path. Fantastic. Thanks. And I think very similar to be honest, for me, Yurong. think I've always wanted to work for an organisation which has impact at its core. And that's absolutely what we do at Team Jump. We're about motivating and empowering people. I actually joined the business nearly 15 years ago. So, in my career at Team Jump, it's all been about communicating sustainability and using technology as a mechanism for doing that.

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Thank you both for that. think it's really useful to know how you've come to this point in the conversation. And Josh, Team Jump runs Warwick Green Rewards platform where staff and students can earn points for sustainable actions and compete in raffles, as I mentioned earlier. What's the thinking behind using gamification and competition to try to drive sustainable behaviour change? Yeah, gamification. think it's recognising that we as individuals, as human beings, we all care about the climate crisis, We all, especially in this forum, this audience.

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We all know that there's a biodiversity crisis, a climate crisis, climate emergency. We need to be doing more about it. And all the gamification and the technology that we have is a mechanism for getting the message out there. It's a mechanism for helping empower and motivate individuals to take that change. And it's all about making it easy,

right? You've got to break down the enormity of the challenge of climate change into small, easy to access, easy to understand steps.

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I kind of see that's what Green Rewards at Warwick does. It takes a really complex issue and makes it manageable. And all those points, you know, we've got a great point scheme, you can earn vouchers for doing the right thing. It's all really fun. The leaderboards, the badges, it's all really good, but it's all about that core message. It's all about making sustainability accessible. Yeah. And I think that point about it being accessible is really key because for so many people, think sustainability can mean a few things. Sustainability.

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can just mean recycling, which we know that that isn't what it means, although recycling is a factor. Or sustainability can be something that feels so big and so difficult to engage with, particularly when you compare the impact that you as an individual can have compared to the world. I think things like Green Rewards and other platforms like this, I think allow for people, as you say, to begin to engage with it in a way that doesn't feel overwhelming, which I think sometimes it can feel, particularly when we talk about sustainability.

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And Yurong, from Warwick's perspective, what made the green rewards appealing as a way to try to engage the campus community with sustainability? I think there are two main things. The first one is definitely about the rewards. We put a lot of thoughts into the reward options because our users are so diverse. We offer monthly prize draws, and the winners can win a £5 or £10 voucher. For example, we've got on campus operations by far that's the most popular one.

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including also nearby businesses within walking distance and local sustainable businesses like refill shops. So, what's nice is that the on-campus one is consistently the top choice and our on-campus operations are really good as we have got Escali-sourced coffee, healthy food and co-op, etc. So, staff and students doing sustainable activities end up choosing sustainable rewards.

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And the second one is the wide range of activities we have got. So, everyone comes to sustainability from a different angle. I'm pretty sure. So, it can be food, energy, nature, or transport. Originally, the idea of having an app or web platform started from sustainable transport behaviour change. That links to the university travel plan. But then we realised why stop there if we're building something for travel, we can actually include so many other sustainable actions.

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So that's how we ended up with Warwick Green Rewards with Jump. So, Warwick Green Rewards brings all of that together and help STEM students discover parts of sustainability they may not have thought about before. So, most of our staff members and students have very careful sustainability, but don't always know what exactly they can do. Green Rewards gives them the ideas, the knowledge, and a fun way to build more sustainable lifestyle.

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And I really liked the kind of nudge theory that sits behind that where you mentioned by undertaking sustainable behaviour change, people are rewarded with points that they can use to access other sustainable options where you can imagine that there'll be people who don't even know that what they're doing is part of a more sustainable behaviour who are introduced to these different options for what they can consume on campus and how they can interact with different spaces, as you say, both on and off campus, which sounds sensible. Josh, thinking about that though, what does

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sustainable behaviour changes actually look like on a university campus? from where you're sitting, what kinds of actions are people taking through the platform and what surprised you about how people are engaging in it? We run programmes for all manner of different audiences, right? So, we've got universities, large businesses, NHS and for councils. But I always find working with universities the most exciting. And that's, think, because of lots of different reasons, but the one being the passion that students and staff have for lot of these topics.

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And we're all about, we offer the rewards mechanism, the points, and it can incentivize any behaviour. The behaviour can be the classic recycling, as you mentioned before, Tom, it can be anything. And so, I think it's the broad remit of the activities that you can incentivise. Now, if you look at it from a student perspective or staff perspective as well, different behaviours will appeal to different groups. So, the staff might be more interested in commuting, maybe commuting a further than the students do.

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Whereas students might be more interested in biodiversity or energy saving tips, which might help them reduce their electricity bills in their student homes, not just on campus. I think that's, you when we're looking at higher education, we're looking at the types of things that we can influence. It's all those subtle little nuances, which make it really interesting. And I think you described there really well, the kind of the small actions that people are taking, but Yurong, I wonder how...

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Does Green Rewards connect to the broader sustainability strategies that we've got at Warwick and the Nature Positive Universities Pledge? Where do you see individual behaviour change fitting in alongside those kinds of bigger institutional commitments? Yeah, that's a really good question. I mean, here at the university level, we make commitments about environmental sustainability, and we do a lot of work around it. But we also want staff and students to feel like they can be part of that journey, not just watch it happen.

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Green rewards help us build that sense of community where everyone is contributing to the same goals. For anyone who doesn't know, we signed the Nature Positive University Pledge in May 2025. That means we're committing to halt and reverse nature loss and actively restore biodiversity across our teaching, research, operation, and supply chain. So, people sometimes think, well, how much I can actually do for biodiversity, but it's not just about contributing.

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It's also about benefiting. So, our biodiversity activities are great for wellbeing and people can learn so much from our events such as bird walks, fungi walk and ecology surveys. So, for example, in Green Rewards, when users upload nature photos or record sightings through iNaturalist, they're contributing real data to science, learning about the species around them and connecting directly to nature-positive work on campus.

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So, the platform acts as a bridge between big institutional commitments and like every day individual actions. And I think it's great to hear how the ability to be part of this competition and get rewards is leading to these other behaviours, as you mentioned around taking pictures of animals and contributing to research. But Josh, we know obviously that rewards are a motivation for people, but they can also raise questions about whether behaviour sticks once the incentive disappears.

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Josh, do you have any evidence that gamification helps contribute to lasting sustainable habits or is it just more about short-term compliance, do you think? I think it's a bit of both, right? Absolutely, in the here and now, I'm sure the rewards are motivating. But all that the rewards are doing is a bit of a hook to getting people to listen, engage with the content, listen to the stories which we're telling, doing the actions that we want them to do in order for them to build habits. And that's what we're in the

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the business offering, the business of building habits. We want people to think about these things, not just when they're receiving a push notification from us or receiving a voucher for one of the on-campus outlets or anything like that. We want people to think about those sorts of sustainability habits day in, day out. And that's where I think the power of doing something like a reward scheme with points, that's what you're trying to do. It's using it as a vehicle for greater impact.

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And I think once you've got a user coming to the platform, once they're doing one behaviour, so say it's a travel behaviour, active travel, traveling to campus sustainably, which is really important for work or when you're campus based. Once you've got someone doing that behaviour, it's then possible to do something called habit stacking, which is when we stack more behaviours and more actions on top of that. So, once you've got them doing one thing, it's then easier sometimes then to build more behaviours into that journey for that individual. Yeah, thank you.

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Yurong, wonder, know, Josh has just mentioned about habit stacking. What's been the response that you've seen from staff and students? Are there any particular groups or communities who are engaging more strongly and have there been any trends that have helped to reveal anything about how others could try to build sustainability engagement for their campus populations as well? Yeah, I think it's been quite positive. So far, we've had more than a thousand two hundred registered users with over seventy-seven thousand actions logged.

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We've got a bit more staff users and students, but both groups are engaging well. We see representation from across the whole university. Something we found quite interesting is that some of the most sustainably active people on campus, for example, those who integrate sustainability into teaching, research, or day-to-day work, they hadn't heard of Warwick Green Rewards. That actually reassures us that

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using multiple engagement methods works because obviously we have other ways to engage people besides the Warwick Green rewards. So, we reach different people through different channels and that's really good. So, what we did was we started doing cross promotion a lot. For example, we promote the web and app platforms during the Green Week, which was organized by students. So, students can earn extra points for attending these events at Warwick Green rewards.

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We also collaborate with careers team and other departments to kind of broaden our reach. We've started sharing more user generated content on social media as well to inspire more students to join us. We also regularly update the activities to reflect new sustainability topics and make sure the app and web platform stays relevant and interesting for different user groups.

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I think that's really great to hear, Yurong, and you mentioned that not all staff and students are aware of Green Rewards and what the offers are. For those who are at the University of Warwick and who perhaps want to get involved with other sustainability initiatives on campus, as well as Green Rewards, what is there available and how can people participate? Sure, there are few exciting things coming up. The first one is the journey sharing feature. The platform will be updated at Green Rewards.

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It will make it easier to share walking, cycling, or even carpooling journeys. And the second one would be a whole series of upcoming biodiversity and ecology events in spring and summer. And we always encourage people to become green champions, to lead real changes in their own areas. So, all of the info is at [warwick.ac.uk/sustainability](http://warwick.ac.uk/sustainability), and everything can be found there.

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Great. That's really useful. And I would recommend people have a look at that if they are interested in learning more about what they can be involved with. Josh, last main question for you is we've discussed how you work with multiple stakeholders, but particularly universities as part of Team Jump. Have you learned anything specific about what makes sustainability engagement work in educational settings and how that might differ from other contexts that you work in? I think the big difference is students, right? And I think that's where we see the biggest shift between

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higher education sector and other clients that we work with. That's a very positive thing. We know that universities will have more transient audiences, right? Students stick around for three or four years before moving on. You've got a very short window to engage with them. Whereas when we work with corporates or the NHS, if you've got

somebody signed up, they're probably going to be sticking around for longer than just that short amount of time. But I think it's also, there's great passion amongst students for some of these subjects.

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They've come up from school and from colleges and sixth forms, learning about the climate crisis, learning around sustainability, thinking that this is something that society needs to act on. And then they end up at university, and they end up then thinking about their future careers and realising that it's not something that lots of organizations are prioritizing. So quite often harnessing that and steering that shaping that within the remit of a green awards intervention and gamification gives them a bit of an outlet to

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share some of that passion and share some of that desire to act around sustainability in the climate crisis. And I think just to add, I think it's the peer influence as well is huge for students. And that's something we see more with students than we do in other cohorts across other schemes. And I think there's a really interesting dynamic there. You mentioned how obviously students come with this burning passion for these issues that you might not see in other contexts, but also the fact that students are transient and they're constantly changing. There is a real opportunity there that you would hope that

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There will always be fresh passion coming in each year with each new cohort of students. But also, the fact that you have the staff cohort who are more or less unchanging, probably similar to the other corporate environments that you're in. You can see why universities are a place where a lot of this work can really resonate because you have staff who can understand process and structures, but who are kind of rejuvenated by that student passion, which Yurong mentioned about Green Week run by the students and the Students' Union. You can almost see it happening in real time at Warwick and I'm sure elsewhere.

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But looking ahead, what steps do you think that universities and sustainability platforms can take to try to deepen engagement with environmental action and building these lasting sustainable behaviours that we need to see? From our side, once user numbers are growing, the focus can be shifted to improving the experience for the people already on the platform. For example, new activities or campaigns, including travel campaign, and also helping users see that their actions genuinely make a difference is key.

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At the same time, we should keep nudging the people who want to make more sustainable choices, but aren't sure where to start. It's about making sustainability feel accessible, rewarding, and part of everyday life. It's not a separate extra task. Yeah, absolutely. And I think with the work that Warwick has done and is doing around increasing awareness of the sustainability activities and actions that the university is taking, both at strategic level with new environmental sustainability strategies through to

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individual actions that people can take. You can really see how things like Green Rewards and other approaches that you and your team are taking are really beneficial. Thank you both so much for joining. It's been great to learn more

about the Green Rewards program and how people can benefit and also how they can get involved. Look forward to chatting again in future and seeing how we're doing in a couple of years' time. But otherwise, thank you so much and have a lovely rest of day. I'll speak to you again very soon. Thanks so much.

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Lovely. Thanks so much, Tom. Thank you very much.