

## SUSTAINABILITY: STUDENT AND STAFF ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The RCM aims to be a global centre of excellence for sustainability leadership in arts higher education. The College acknowledges that our planet faces a climate emergency, ecological crisis and significant socio-economic challenges on a global scale, such as those that the UN Sustainable Development Goals seek to address.

### The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



The College recognises the power of music-making and education to inspire positive change. As such, we will champion opportunities for RCM students and staff to learn about sustainability. We will support students and staff to make a difference to the future of the planet as individuals and to inspire others to do the same.

Engagement and communication formed a big part of the RCM's sustainability programme in 2022/23, driven by student and staff demand.

The core purposes of the College's student and staff engagement work are as follows:

- To communicate to students, staff and external interested parties the work the College is doing to reduce the environmental and social impacts of its operations and capitalise on the positive impact that the College has through education and the arts.
- To provide opportunities for students and staff to learn about sustainability issues and themes.
- To empower students and staff with the knowledge and skills to make a difference to the future of the planet as individuals and as artists.
- To provide students and staff with the knowledge and tools to contribute towards the achievement of the RCM's sustainability targets.
- To ensure there is suitable student and staff representation for sustainable development in the College's governance structures for sustainable development, namely the Environmental Steering Group and Environmental Management Committee.

The Projects and Environmental Coordinator holds overall responsibility for sustainability student and staff engagement strategy and its delivery. The budget is covered by contributions from various departments across the College.

Key activities which contribute to the delivery of this strategy include:

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Governance</b>              | <p><b>Environmental Steering Group</b> – a steering group which meets monthly and is responsible for the implementation of the College's sustainability policy and delivering the work which contributes towards the achievement of its targets and objectives. This group has both student and staff representation.</p> <p><b>Environmental Management Committee</b> – a management committee which meets termly and is responsible for monitoring the achievement of sustainability targets and objectives as well as advising on policy and strategic direction. This committee has both student and staff representation.</p>   |
| <b>Communication</b>           | <p><b>Student and staff e-newsletters</b> – termly newsletters and communications are sent out to students and staff informing them of progress and upcoming events in the College's sustainability programme.</p> <p><b>All-staff meetings</b> – The Director of Estates and Projects and Environmental Coordinator regularly present on sustainability at the College's all-staff meetings.</p> <p><b>Staff and Student Committee Meetings</b> – papers and updates on the sustainability programme are regularly provided to committees across the College.</p> <p><b>Social media</b> – we use social media platforms to ensure sustainability initiatives reach the widest possible audience among our staff and students.</p> <p><b>External forums</b> – the College aims to take a leading role in higher education and the arts. We have recently contributed to the 'South Ken ZEN+' forum and the Advance HE Sustainability Symposium, and the Director of Estates has recently presented at the Built Environment Networking conference and the UI GreenMetric International Workshop.</p> |
| <b>Inductions and Training</b> | <p><b>Staff induction</b> – all staff receive an introduction to the RCM environmental policy and information on how they can get involved with the sustainability programme (e.g. joining the Environmental Steering Group) as part of their induction.</p>   |

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**Student induction** – all students also receive an induction to the RCM environmental policy and information on how they can get involved with the sustainability programme (e.g. joining the Environmental Steering Group) as part of their induction.

**ISO14001 training** – all staff involved with delivering against sustainability objectives as part of their role receive additional training in the processes of the ISO14001 environmental management system.

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**Engagement and informal learning**

**Green Week** – Green Week the RCM’s annual sustainability festival. Green Week 2023 took place during the week commencing 27 February. Events included Forest Bathing, a Q&A with the Director of Estates, onsite Bicycle Maintenance session with Dr Bike, a Lunch & Learn session with the College’s waste management company and an opportunity to cook vegan recipes using ingredients provided by the Students’ Union.

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**Funding for student-led sustainability projects**

RCM Accelerate, run by the RCM’s Creative Careers Centre, is intended to support graduating students and help kick-start a new creative project, social enterprise, or business idea, or develop an existing initiative. The successful applicants received grant funding and will benefit from ongoing mentoring support to foster and encourage proactivity, creativity and an entrepreneurial mind-set.

This programme particularly welcomes applications from individuals working on initiatives that have a positive environmental or social impact.

More information on the fund can be found here:

[RCM Accelerate start-up funding making a difference to recent graduates | Royal College of Music](#)

Examples of initiatives recently funded can be found here:  
[https://youtu.be/K5hxmoA20\\_U](https://youtu.be/K5hxmoA20_U)

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## Student and staff engagement: baselines, targets and objectives

Our plan in 2022/23 is to grow participation and engagement across all existing sustainability activities by at least 10%. The targets are total number of student and staff participants.

| Target/objective   | 2021 /2022 baseline | 2022/23 target |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| To increase participation in the Green Week Zero Waste Challenge or similar week-long sustainability initiative by 10% by the end of 2022/23.  | 73                  | 81 (+10%)      |
| To increase the number of responses to surveys covering sustainability themes by 10% by the end of 2022/23.                                    | 246                 | 270 (+10%)     |
| 100% of new staff to have completed the staff sustainability induction.  | 100%                | 100%           |
| To highlight sustainability themes in at least 3 concerts by the end of 2022/23.<br>(new baseline for 2022/23).                                |                     | 3              |
| To attend and present at one or more conferences per year to share the work the RCM is doing on sustainability themes with external audiences. | 1                   | 1+             |
| To continue to hold one Green Week festival per year   | 1                   | 1              |

## 2022/2023 Sustainability Staff and Student Engagement activities report

Engagement and communication has formed a big part of the RCM's sustainability programme in recent years, driven by student and staff demand.

### Green Week: 27 February – 3 March 2023

In February 2023 the RCM held a week-long festival of events and activities on the theme of sustainability. The programme was designed to engage students and staff of the work the RCM is doing to become more sustainable, provide opportunities to learn about sustainability and provide ideas and support as to what they can do in their everyday lives and as musicians to ensure a better future for the planet.

#### Bicycle Maintenance with Dr Bike

Experienced bicycle mechanics set up an onsite maintenance station for a day. Students and staff were invited to take their bikes to be serviced, where everything from wheels, brakes, gears and tyre pressure to lights, racks, pedals and saddles were checked. Basic repairs were carried out onsite and recommendations made for any further maintenance required. This proved popular with students and the RCM will look to repeat this service in the future as part of our efforts to encourage sustainable travel.

#### Lunch & Learn: Where does our recycling go?

Representatives from the company that manages the RCM's waste, Recorra, were invited to present a 'Lunch & Learn' session during Green Week. The session offered insight to what happens to waste generated onsite, including the 52% of waste that is recycled. Recorra also offered some tips and guidance to how we can improve our rates of recycling and minimising waste.

## Q&A with the Director of Estates

Students and staff were offered the opportunity to come and have an informal chat with Aida Berhamovic, Director of Estates and Gethin Lewis, Projects & Environmental Coordinator. This was a chance to ask questions about the RCM's long-term sustainability strategy and decarbonisation plan, among other ideas or concerns that staff or students had.

## Forest Bathing

A group of staff and students took some time out of their busy day to meet in Kensington Gardens for a moment of calm and quiet among the trees. Toireasa McCann, a counsellor at the RCM, led the group in a session of Forest Bathing, a Japanese art that encourages relaxation and mindfulness.

## Get Cooking

To encourage cooking with plant-based and sustainably sourced produce, the Students' Union released two vegan recipes on social media while also offering students the opportunity to collect the ingredients from the SU free of charge. Students were encouraged to share their culinary achievements on social media.

## Display boards and email communication

During Green Week 2023 a number of display boards were set up in the RCM's public areas and email newsletters were circulated to staff and students that highlighted the ways that the RCM is working to reduce its environmental impact. Among the achievements noted was the announcement that scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions had already been reduced by 79% from a 2005 baseline due to a number of decarbonisation projects and the RCM's zero carbon electricity tariff.

## Social media

The RCM Marketing team provided social media coverage of the week's activities across social media platforms including Instagram and Twitter.

## Paper saving campaign

During the 2021/22 academic year the RCM launched a digital poster campaign across Instagram and email to encourage students and staff to print less, consider whether they really need to print something before they do so and whether there are alternatives to printing such as using mobile devices for reading scores. This was supported with guidance for, for example, paperless meetings and which added to existing guidance available for digital scores. Changes to internal systems to reduce paper usage have also been made including to the finance system, the adoption of digital class registers and the production of digital concert programmes. It is recognised that there are still some instances where printing is a necessity, for example, it is not always possible to obtain digital scores for licensing and copyright reasons. However, on the whole, students and staff are embracing the move towards less paper-intensive working and studying practices.

There was a 54% reduction in the number of sheets printed between 2017/18 and 2021/22. Printing rates will continue to be monitored while also supporting and encouraging students and staff to print less.

## Student and staff travel survey

The RCM launched a travel survey in 2021/22 with the following aims:

- To understand how the College can better support students and staff in travelling to and from College, including day-to-day travel and travel at the start/end of term;
- To understand how the pandemic has changed travel habits;
- To identify the travel-related carbon footprint of College operations and;
- To support staff and students with making greener travel choices where possible.

The survey had 246 responses which is a sample of approximately 18% of our student and staff community.

The anonymous information collected in this survey has been used to create a report on travel for the organisation which was presented to the Environmental Management Committee in May 2022.

## Staff sustainability induction

A staff sustainability induction has been developed.

## External engagement

### South Ken ZEN+

The Director of Estates and Projects and Environmental Coordinator have attended meetings of the South Ken ZEN+ group, a group of organisations in South Kensington which aims to find collective solutions to the transition to net zero, the circular economy, nature positive and green transportation.

### EAUC

The RCM is a member of EAUC, the alliance for sustainability leadership in education.

### UI GreenMetric

The Director of Estates presented a paper at the UI GreenMetric International Workshop in June 2023, highlighting the ways the RCM is working to reduce its environmental and social impact.

## Students Union Sustainability Plan

The Royal College of Music Student Union is committed to sustainability, promoting awareness of sustainability issues and working towards reducing the impact of its operations. The Student Union President is a member of the Environmental Steering Group and Environmental Management Committee. The SU has been working with the RCM's Estates department to monitor and track the environmental performance of and where possible reduce the impact of student union activities. The SU audits and tracks its environmental performance with the support of the RCM Estates team and has a plan in place to reduce its impacts.

The main activities of the Student Union are:

- Organising student socials (including Freshers Week and the annual Summer Ball)
- Supporting student health and wellbeing
- Collecting student feedback and representing students at College committees
- Supporting students with pastoral care
- Supporting student-led music
- Coordinating student societies

The Student Union has already taken action to improve the sustainability of its operations including:

- Limiting the number of paper posters used to promote SU events;
- Phased out single-use plastic straws from the SU bar in line with new legislation;
- Supporting College staff with communicating on environmental issues to students and student engagement on environmental themes/issues;

- Contributed to the RCM's 'Green Week' with sharing vegan recipes;
- The SU President is a member of the Environmental Steering Group and Environmental Management Committee;

The Student Union has agreed its needs and expectations with the RCM regarding sustainability:

- For students to have a voice in environmental decision making at the RCM;
- Knowledge and support in order to help run a sustainable Student's Union operation, including events and activities;
- For the College to communicate to students about environmental issues in relation the College's operation;
- For the College to provide opportunities for students to engage with and learn about environmental and sustainability themes and issues;
- For the College to consider a range of communications channels in communicating and engaging with students on environmental and sustainability themes and issues.

**Director of Estates**

Aida Berhamovic

June 2023