

Agenda Item	3
Report No	CCWG/11/20

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Climate Change Working Group

Date: 17th September 2020

Report Title: Green Impact

Report By: Climate Change Coordinator

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report introduces the National Union for Student's (NUS) Green Impact Tool. More specifically, it discusses the benefits that this tool could bring to the Council, how the Council might collaborate with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and The University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) and the costs associated with the tool.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
1. Note the contents of this report: and
 2. discuss and agree that opportunities should be explored to secure funding to pilot Green Impact for a period of 1 year.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – there are no resource implications arising from this report. However, Members will note that Green Impact represents an excellent opportunity to engage both staff and Members around the climate change agenda, with opportunities to reduce spend and emissions across a number of areas including energy, travel and waste. Given the relatively modest cost of the platform, this should be seen as a spend to save opportunity.
- 3.2 Legal – there are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – there are no community implications arising from this report.
- 3.4 Climate Change/Carbon CLEVER – there are no direct climate change implications arising from this report. However, if the model is adopted, it is expected that emissions reductions through behaviour change would be achieved and quantified.
- 3.5 Risk – there are no risk implications arising from this report.

3.6 Gaelic – There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4. Background

- 4.1 Green Impact is a United Nations award-winning programme designed to support environmentally and socially sustainable practice in a range of organisations. It has been developed over the last 12 years by NUS and is now delivered by Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS), an educational charity created by NUS in response to the climate emergency and ecological crisis.
- 4.2 Green Impact is delivered through online toolkit software, which is custom-made to fit the requirements of each organisation which adopts it. The toolkit offers a platform on which “teams” within an organisation, such as The Highland Council, can set, record and evaluate sustainability goals over the course of a year.
- 4.3 Highland Council staff will be supported by UHI students, who will be trained by SOS. This support will include using the online toolkit, setting appropriate sustainability goals, uploading sufficient evidence of completed goals and carrying out an end of year audit to evaluate the successes of each team. The training received by UHI students will aid their understanding of sustainability and social justice, as well as aiding their professional development.
- 4.4 At the end of the year SOS will organise an awards ceremony in recognition of the successes of organisations, teams and supporting students.
- 4.5 SOS will also give Council staff access to a suite of workshops on themes such as sustainability, communications and wellbeing. SOS will also develop a support and communications package to accompany the online tool; this will allow teams to seek support and advice to help them get the most out of Green Impact.

5. Collaboration and Internal Staff Resourcing

- 5.1 Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) are pursuing Green Impact in collaboration with The Council. The benefits of this include cross-learning opportunities, shared financial investment in Green Impact and the potential for Green Impact to spread across Highland as the leading tool for workplace sustainability action.
- 5.2 The University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) has agreed to include volunteering with Green Impact in their list of accredited activities for MSc Geography students. As a result of this, there are already six students willing to volunteer 120 hours of their time to supporting the rollout of Green Impact as Sustainability Officers. These students will receive full training from SOS, frequent support from their tutors at UHI and will report to the Climate Change Coordinator for The Highland Council.
- 5.3 The Council’s Climate Change Coordinator lead on this project, in close collaboration with HIE’s University Engagement Manager. Within the Council, the Eco Officer Network will be a valuable resource for Green Impact; Eco Officers will take the lead in putting together teams and will then encourage their teammates to carry out and record sustainability actions.
- 5.4 SOS will commit to project management support. Details of this support can be found in **Appendix 1**.

6. Benefits of Green Impact to The Council and Partners

- 6.1 Green Impact will lend a ready-made structure for sustainability action within the Council and will provide Eco Officers and other staff with motivation and confidence to try new ideas. Engagement with the tool may also encourage members of staff to join the Eco Officer Network.
- 6.2 Monthly reporting on targets will help to keep teams on track and could serve to embed sustainable practices and standards into all areas of the Council.
- 6.3 Green Impact has proven wellbeing benefits associated with higher self-esteem, making new friends and supporting a healthier work environment.
- 6.4 Green Impact promotes communication among staff members who might otherwise not have met. These new interactions can lead to new ideas and innovative collaborations both within and outside of the programme. There may also be opportunities for Council staff to collaborate with HIE staff on Green Impact, which could serve to strengthen ties.
- 6.5 Actions within Green Impact can save money and reduce the carbon footprint of individuals and offices. If these actions become embedded, these benefits could be replicated and even developed year on year for no additional expense.
- 6.6 The training received by UHI students will strengthen their job prospects and their engagement with the Council and UHI will introduce them to potential future careers. In the other direction, staff members may benefit from the research skills and novel ideas of the postgraduate students.
- 6.7 Please follow this [link](#) to read sustainability success stories from King's College London, who have used the Green Impact Programme to create "sustainability champions" within their organisation. These champions serve a similar function to that imagined for the Eco Officers Network in this proposal. These success stories highlight the varied, lasting and innovative sustainability results that Green Impact can bring to an organisation.

7.0 Delivery Structure and Costs

- 7.1 Each cycle of Green Impact runs within a twelve-month period and consists of 6 steps. A cycle can begin at any time of the year. Step one involves planning and developing the toolkit. Step two involves the organisation of "teams" within an organisation; these teams then set themselves sustainability targets for the coming year, with the help and support of the trained students. Step three is an ongoing series of workshops and support throughout the year to keep team members motivated and inspire them with new sustainability ideas. Step four is the submission of toolkit results from each team and an audit of the entire organisation, carried out by the students. Step five is an awards event which recognises the achievements of teams, students and staff members. Step six includes feedback sessions and the initial planning for the following year of Green Impact.
- 7.2 SOS have provided two cost estimates for a Green Impact Tool from 2020-21. The lower estimate is for £10,815 (excluding VAT) and would be for one toolkit which would be used by both The Highland Council and HIE. A higher estimate of £17,660 (excluding VAT) was given for a bespoke toolkit for each organisation, along with tailored support. It is important to note that **in both cases, the cost would be shared between The Council and HIE**. It is also important to note that subsequent years of Green Impact would come at a lower cost, as there would be less work required at the start of the year.

Designation: Climate Change Coordinator

Date: 9th September 2020

Author: Joe Perry

Appendix 1: Support received from SOS during Green Impact

Online toolkit and Reporting

Support to develop and host a bespoke online toolkit and ongoing technical support, which includes:

- Tailored actions and innovative design of your programme to link your toolkit with wider sustainability strategies, global issues and UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Opportunity to create and deliver a monthly campaigns toolkit, focusing teams' actions around thematic campaigns to increase engagement and maintain momentum;
- Opportunity to utilise a pre-defined set of actions collecting data direct from participants to locally and internationally measure broader environmental and social impacts
- Live dashboard of personal and national progress for teams and departments, and local admin access to monitor progress
- Specific actions for catering outlets developed alongside the Soil Association enabling easier accreditation for the Food For Life Catering Mark (this includes a discounted accreditation rate with the Soil Association as well as specialized support for catering outlets to achieve this external accreditation); and Laboratory actions developed in partnership with S-Labs, Kings College London and the University of Bristol
- Ability to brand your toolkit to fit with organisational sustainability branding
- Annual reports for each team and organisation to demonstrate reach, impact and achievements

Project Management Support

May include, but not limited to:

- Regular (monthly or fortnightly, as required) support and idea sharing calls to guide you through each stage of the process
- Up to 5 on-site visits over the course of the year, as agreed with your dedicated SOS-UK Project Manager, which may include, but are not limited to:
 - Project planning and toolkit development
 - Launch event - support with on-the-day event management, speech and/or workshop delivery
 - Support and feedback workshops for GI teams
 - IEMA Approved auditor training and support with audit coordination
 - Awards event – support with on-the-day event management, speech and/or workshop delivery
 - In your first year, an additional two days of support are allocated to develop a comprehensive organisational review and proposal for creating your bespoke programme

Communications and Resources

- Access for you, your teams and students to a series of tailored Green Impact support and skill sharing webinars, online events and resource banks
- Opportunity to profile your teams and innovations through our regular international newsletter and website
- Certificate templates for all Green Impact teams and student volunteers
- 15 sustainably sourced Green Impact Awards and stands
- Green Impact cost-price shop for sustainable products for teams and departments (e.g. refillable drinking water bottles, awareness stickers, room thermometers, etc.)
- Support in engaging your local students' union in your Green Impact programme
- Actively supported to collectively shape the strategic development of the programme and celebrate the collective achievements of Green Impact across the sector
- Centrally curated sponsored Special Awards to recognise local actions and impacts on an international stage