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REGIONAL BOARD REPORT

Subject: Sustainability	**Purpose:** **For Approval** ☒ **For Discussion** ☐ **For Information** ☐
Prepared by: Angela Cox	**Date: 23/11/20**

Purpose: Requesting Board to consider and approve the newly developed Sustainability Strategy 2020-25

Linked to Strategic Ambition: Take a leading role in enabling an inclusive, resilient and sustainable Scotland

Executive Summary:

This is one of the underpinning strategies agreed by Board in supporting us to realise our Strategic Ambition.

Our Head of Facilities and Assistant Principal for STEM have jointly led a small working group including the Head of Sustainable Construction and Head of Land Based Services to develop this strategy.

The ambition in the strategy is much broader than infrastructure changes, which we have been over dependant on in previous years to reduce our CO2 footprint but builds on the success we have had to date.

Our focus is on behavioural change through how we conduct ourselves as an organisation and education.

The strategy has also highlighted the changes we will need to make in our curriculum offer in responding to the emerging Green Energy and Bio Diversity sectors.

Our Ambition is that 'Sustainability at Borders College will be at the core of who we are and what we do. It will shape and drive everything that happens here'

Our Objectives are to:

- Develop awareness of and implement good sustainable sector practice in all our learning programmes.
- Influence positive sustainable behaviours across the wider community
- Adopt best ethical, sustainable and social practice in our operations and supply chain

- Promote sustainable innovation and the adoption of technological breakthroughs with our employers and stakeholders.

We will measure the success of our performance by the following outcomes:

- We will embed sustainable development into every course by 2025
- We will develop a range of new programmes of study in response to the green economy
- We will ensure we procure a minimum of 60% of products and services via sustainable national frameworks by 2025
- We will increase recycling rates to 80% by 2025 by applying the Reduce, Re-Use, Recycle waste Hierarchy.
- We will have over 50% of all staff and student journeys made by public transport, walking, cycling or other sustainable means of transport by 2025.
- We will cut Carbon Emissions by 50% by 2025 based on our 2015 baseline.
- We will complete a biodiversity assessment and actions will be progressed by 2025.

The detailed action plans that underpin the supporting plans will be monitored for progress through the Sustainability Committee and high level progress through the college annual priorities document agreed by Board.

The most difficult aspect to measure is behavioural change and we are currently in discussions with Edinburgh University and Zero Waste Scotland to be part of a research project to measure the impact of changes we make.

Our intention is to follow the same approach we followed when launching our Strategic Ambition. We will host a staff and student launch in January and external stakeholder launch at the beginning of February.

Recommendation: Board are asked to consider and approve the Sustainability Strategy.

Previous Committee Approvals: No

For publication ☒	**For publication with redactions** ☐	**Not for publication** ☐

BORDERS COLLEGE

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2020-2025

Regionally Focused — Globally Engaged

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Introduction

Our Strategy

I feel a genuine sense of pride in our ambitious, yet vital, Sustainability Strategy 2020–2025, a sentiment I know is echoed by the entire Borders College team. The climate emergency has redefined sustainability, taking it from a component of corporate social responsibility, escalating it to become a leadership essential, to be placed at the heart of all of our plans. This strategy is our opportunity to continue our journey from good to great. We will demonstrate the importance of moving towards a more sustainable society through our work as an instigator of behavioural change, ensure relevance and impact on a global scale by committing to the circular economy and developing our staff and students to become global citizens. Our strategic objectives are overarching, enabling us to respond to emerging issues and continuous change.

Angela Cox, Principal

Our World

Since we first started our journey, a point marked in time by the launch of our SHARC renewable energy system, a first in the UK, a lot has changed. The launch of the UN Sustainable Development Goals – with Goal 4 emphasising the

importance of education and learning opportunities for all, noted as a key juncture in the UK environmental movement within post-16 education – has grown to embrace all aspects of sustainability. Students are more engaged in the world around them and more empowered to influence and affect change within their communities, organisations and even governments. As a college, we have much more autonomy to lead and take our own path whilst respecting and reflecting on what society expects from an educational institute. While it is undoubtedly a time of change, we are clear that this change yields opportunities to build better. The interconnected relationships between industry, our community and our students enable us to act as the catalyst for change. The results will go beyond change to become transformation.

Our Approach

The issues of social, environmental and economic sustainability are interlinked, so our approach to solving them must be too. Our strategy is underpinned by the interlinking of behavioural change, global citizenship and the circular economy. We are appreciative of the fundamental role education has in creating a world with sustainability at its core. In order to enable and accelerate this, our team will work at an operational, academic and strategic leadership level with all of our students, staff, partners, communities and the wider society.

Strategic Context

Borders College is committed to working collaboratively to respond to the global climate emergency and the Scottish Government's target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2045.

Over the course of the last decade, a diverse and impactful range of projects have resulted in a significant reduction in the College's carbon footprint, including the development of its first carbon management plan, which has informed its future strategy.

Subsequent activities, including the installation of a 50kW Solar PV system on the roof of the main campus and the retrofitting of LED lights across the College estate, have together generated significant cost savings and resulted in a substantial drop in electricity usage.

Perhaps most notably, the College initiated an award-winning and innovative partnership with SHARC Energy Systems to install and operate a wastewater heating recovery system to supply its campus buildings, the first of its kind in the UK.

The success of these individual projects, alongside others, including harvesting rainwater for gardens and livestock, repurposing recycled and reused materials, and student site visits for practical learning, has highlighted the need for a coherent approach to delivering a sustainability strategy for the future, holding students, staff and key stakeholders to account.

This strategy, which covers the period to 2025 and contributes to the Scottish Government's interim target of reductions of at least 75% by 2030, focuses on the following four areas: bio-diversity; carbon; curriculum; and recycling.

Strategic Context

Borders College is well placed to be a national leader in contributing to Scotland's circular and green economies, supporting the country's response to the global climate emergency – but it is a national effort.

The most recent report from the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC), of which Borders College is a member, highlights that the combined sectoral reduction in CO_2 from all Scottish colleges was down 24% over the past four years.

Independently, Borders College has delivered a 34% reduction over the same period. These are impressive figures, but the collective focus now is to reduce emissions, specifically from burning fossil fuels, by reducing our reliance on natural gas, reducing staff transport and fuel consumption by implementing green travel policies, and increasing recycling rates and reducing waste to landfill.

Within the context of a rapidly changing world, and against the backdrop of COVID-19, that is more important than ever. It also provides a foundation for action, as Borders College can build upon the changes that have been forced on regional communities.

34%
reduction in CO_2 delivered by the College in the last four years

We will embed into all of our learning programmes development of cardon literacy to empower individuals to make informed choices and we will develop our curriculum offer in response to the green economy.

The environment and economy are intrinsically linked, and Scotland's transition to a more prosperous, net-zero emissions economy is already well underway.

Agile and innovative in its approach, Borders College leads by example with a strong proposition, outlined in this Sustainability Strategy for the future, which demonstrates its meaningful and purpose-driven ambition.

Our Sustainability Journey

Borders College is committed to working towards a more sustainable world, and over the last ten years has implemented big projects and little actions, which together have resulted in a significant reduction in our carbon emission.

Shredded paper used for animal bedding

Energy efficient LED lights

Online delivery and assessment of course content

Site visits for staff and students to experience sustainable projects

Use of recycled material to create childcare area in courtyard

Wild bird feeding stations

The first SHARC system in the UK, providing heat from waste water

Reduction of food waste

Bespoke teaching environments, e.g. the zero–carbon house

Hedgehog houses

Rainwater harvesting for livestock and gardens

Solar PV system on the roof

Source pre-used resources as teaching aids, e.g. scrap cars used to teach Vehicle Maintenance and Repair students

Composting and green space projects across the College campuses

Electric vehicles

Staff and students using re-usable cups

Green Gown Awards

Partnership with sustainability-focused organisations

Borders College continues on this sustainability journey, with net-zero by 2045 as the ultimate destination.

Strategic Ambition

"Sustainability at Borders College will be at the core of who we are and what we do. It shapes and drives everything that happens here – what we teach, what we learn, what we buy, what we use, what we share, how we travel.

"Sustainability is about ambition and belief in ourselves. It's about working collaboratively within the College, with our partners, and with wider society."

Strategic Objectives

To be a national leader in contributing to making Scotland a net-zero country by 2045:

Develop awareness of, and implement, **good sustainable sector practice** in all our learning programmes

Influence **positive, sustainable behaviours** across the wider community

Adopt best **ethical, sustainable** and **social practice** in our operations and supply chain

Promote **sustainable innovation** and the adoption of **technological breakthroughs** with our employers and stakeholders

Performance Measures

We will measure the success of our Sustainability Strategy by the following outcomes:

Our Three Underpinning Themes

We believe the collective impact of considering the three themes of Circular Economy, Behaviour Change and Global Citizenship as a continuous process is much more powerful, and our approach to sustainability will be underpinned by this collective of themes.

Themes such as Circular Economy, Behavioural Change and Global Citizenship are often referred to within a sustainability context, and often in silo.

Achievement of our strategic objectives requires a fundamental shift in how we, as a College community, view ourselves – how we behave as individuals and as a community – and how we measure our impact on the world we live in.

Circular Economy

Circular economy is the concept that bridges the gap between economic and environmental concerns, effectively re-defining the process of consuming goods and services as circular, not, as is the current case, a linear economic model. The linear approach cannot be sustained: we harvest our natural resources, materials and labour, water and energy, we make goods, we use them, they wear out or fashion changes, we throw them away and buy new goods to replace them. A linear approach to consumption can only progress in one direction and the destination is not positive for people or planet.

Borders College staff and students understand the need to develop our local economy with a circular approach, where goods are designed to be repaired, not replaced; where resources are recovered, repurposed and reused, so we can minimise or eliminate waste. We will strive to build a collaborative local supply chain that promotes innovation and sharing, that creates jobs, opportunities and expertise in our local area. We will use our unique position within the heart of our community to show an alternative approach to consumption, the antithesis of the throwaway society. We have a chance to become a society that nurtures our resources and builds a strong and resilient community around collaboration and innovation.

Behaviour Change

The increased awareness of the environmental impact of human activity has led to international efforts to promote sustainable development. Policies and regulations, technical solutions and environmental tools have been applied, but widespread environmental damage continues due to unsustainable human consumption behaviour. Behavioural change to counter and combat the environmental damage is needed, both at a College and individual level. We will be the catalyst for this change with our staff and students.

Behavioural change also requires a change to social practice that goes beyond interventions at an individual level. Borders College will facilitate intrinsic change that integrates into the everyday lives of our staff and students. By acting as individuals, and together as a community, we can make a difference.

Global Citizenship

Borders College staff and students have a strong sense of identity and belonging; our local towns, the heritage, the customs and traditions, all shape our feelings toward our local community and make us who we are.

Within the region, we also have a sense of responsibility as guardians of the future, with the what and how we teach and learn making a direct impact on the attitudes and behaviours of our staff and students outside the College environment.

There is little doubt that our horizons have widened, and we now look beyond the Scottish Borders, appreciating the sense of 'place' is, in fact, global.

The digital revolution, global communications and the global economy have connected us with people from around the whole world.

Borders College is part of the Scottish Borders, but we now also feel a connection to the world community, and this comes with increased responsibility to care for the planet for all. We encourage all staff, students and stakeholders to identify and act as global citizens.

Being a global citizen means we share the responsibility of what is happening to the planet as a whole: we share values such as human rights, environmental protection and sustainable economic growth, all of which have no borders.

Partnerships

"It is clear that education is a vital tool in providing Scotland's workforce with the knowledge and skills to harness the opportunities the move to net-zero will entail. The climate crisis is forcing us to look at what we can all do differently to deliver a future that mitigates the worst of its impact, regardless of our job, our career or our broader role in society. This strategy clearly sets out not just the importance of learning for a net-zero future, but also the importance of how places of learning need to be exemplars in reducing energy and resource demand to inspire their students to go further and faster, as well as providing a point of engagement and focus for the wider community. Forward thinking institutions, such as Borders College, will be key in ensuring the country moves forward in a manner that is sustainable for the long-term."

"We're delighted to work with Borders College to provide support and opportunities to help reach the net-zero targets. Education and Skills is one of the key areas to raise awareness and provide training opportunities that support a Just Transition. This strategy clearly outlines the importance of that, and how Borders College will work with schools, employers, stakeholders and the local communities to ensure that this vision is shared."

"We are delighted to work with Borders College to help local businesses make the transition into Energy Efficiency by providing training and information."

"Borders College has been an excellent partner. The College's adoption of innovative sewer heat pump technology has been undertaken in an open and collaborative way to promote innovation, whilst de-risking the project commercially and technically. As one might expect from a teaching organisation, Borders College has shown how to be a learning organisation and, not surprisingly, has been the worthy recipients of two prestigious sustainability innovation awards. Recirc Energy looks forward to growing our relationship with Borders College and providing further contributions to their sustainability goals."

"Understanding the very real connections between global issues and our local actions, and tackling sustainability and inclusion, are key to success in our century. I commend Borders College for recognising the challenge and setting out ambitions to lead."

"We worked closely with Borders College on the innovative sewer heat recovery project; indeed, this was a first such project for the UK. It takes courage to be innovative and step away from the norm and I applaud the team at Borders College for the courage to embrace innovation in low carbon heating. It has been a really positive experience working with Borders College and we look forward to continuing to work with them in the future."

Partnerships

"Borders College are a key member of our Energy Transition Group. This group was established to ensure an ambitious and coordinated focus on responding to the significant opportunities facing the South of Scotland arising from a green recovery and a just transition to net-zero.

We know that to maximise these opportunities, ongoing collaboration and alignment of skills, and bold leadership will be key, and we feel this strategy fully embraces this."

"Scotland has ambitious goals to become net-zero by 2045. Flagship education projects, such as Energy Skills Partnership's Energy Efficiency Training Network, supports this ambition and helps to power the next generation of green energy experts and develop the workforce of tomorrow.

"It's incredible to see so many colleges coming together to help provide opportunities for skills developments within the energy, engineering, and construction sectors. The Green Economy Fund was created to help communities build their green economy and establish low carbon infrastructure. We're delighted to contribute to the success of these nine Renewable & Energy Efficiency Training Centres as they help us all unlock net-zero."

Supporting Plans

Our Sustainability Strategy will be achieved by the successful delivery of a series of inter-related plans, including a Carbon Management Plan, a Curriculum Plan, a Procurement Plan, a Behavioural Change Plan, a Waste Management Plan, a Travel & Transport Plan and a Biodiversity Plan. These plans will be agreed and monitored through the Sustainability Committee with a high-level report presented annually to our Board.

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