



**The Civic Movement**  
Universities Working in Partnership  
Conference 2021

## **The Civic University Climate Declaration: A proposal for discussion at the UK Civic University Network Conference 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

COP26 which takes place in Glasgow in November 2021 presents an opportunity for the UK Civic University Network to highlight that many civic universities, as anchor institutions:

- have action plans covering year on year emissions reduction and/or a challenging date for achieving zero carbon;
- are mobilising research and teaching efforts to further environmental understanding and promote climate action on and off campus;
- are providing opportunities for students and staff to develop the high-level skills and expertise needed to tackle climate change at local as well as at global level; and
- are co-creating and implementing innovative and practical solutions with civic partners as a contribution to place-focused efforts to achieve wide ranging and positive climate action for their communities.

It is suggested that UK civic universities might make a joint declaration reflecting the place of sustainability and climate action in their civic commitments. The focus of the session is to discuss the feasibility of such a declaration being co-ordinated through the civic university network what the content of the declaration might be, who might lead it, which other organisations might be involved and how it relates to the future role of the network.

As a starting point for discussion, it is recommended that universities that sign up to this declaration would:

- set challenging institutional set challenging institutional year-on-year carbon reduction goals from 2022-2035;
- address the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in their strategies
- be engaged at city or regional scale with local government and other civic partners in sustainability and climate action geared towards locally agreed zero carbon targets;
- consider wider environmental impacts on place that broaden the scope of climate action beyond emissions reduction; and
- adopt an inclusive, participatory approach in working with civic and community partners, consistent with management of a socially responsible 'just transition'.

The role of the Civic Universities Network would be to highlight the extent to which universities are taking forward climate action as part of their civic engagement activities, linking their institutional and civic commitments, sharing knowledge and best practice across the network and providing a forum for discussion.

## **Draft declaration:**

The UK's civic universities will:

- Embed environmental sustainability in institutional strategies and business decisions e.g., by reviewing investments, estate management and property portfolios to assess compliance with responsibilities under the Paris Agreement and other relevant commitments and taking action to bring them into compliance.
- Set measurable year on year emissions reduction targets and implement action plans to deliver them.
- Use the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, where appropriate, both as benchmarks to assess progress and to link actions taken with interconnected measures that address global inequalities in the round.
- Work with civic partners and communities to achieve significant year on year reductions in carbon emissions from 2022 – 2035 in line with Paris commitments and locally set target dates
- Adopt an inclusive, participatory approach working with civic and community partners, ensuring that efforts to reduce emissions and achieve sustainability do not negatively impact on the most disadvantaged people or communities
- As anchor institutions, take a lead in developing collaborative efforts through procurement and other practices to create sustainable value chains, supporting local businesses and communities.
- Foster the enthusiasm and energy of staff and students to take part in climate action and the public debate, focusing attention on the local as well as the global dimension.
- Develop an education strategy that provides opportunities for students and young people to acquire relevant skills as well as knowledge which will help them to secure green jobs and contribute effectively to climate action.
- Mobilise the research capability housed in the city or region's institutions of higher learning to contribute to the city or region's efforts to achieve net zero and pursue wider environmental agendas.
- Draw on staff competences, where relevant, to contribute e.g. to innovative nature-based solutions, energy transition, transport modal shift, food security and other measures that can be taken forward in the context of place .
- Review their capacity to support civic partners to tackle inequality and achieve a just transition.
- Highlight the responsibilities of high income and high emitting countries and act on them e.g. by supporting universities, academics and students from poorer countries in engaging with civic partners to address climate issues.