



Universities and Colleges
Climate Commitment for Scotland



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**Universities and Colleges Climate Change Commitment for Scotland:
Universities and colleges lead the way on addressing climate change**

Leaders from across Scotland's universities, colleges and government agencies gathered last week to celebrate the voluntary Universities and Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland (UCCCS) and institutions' commitment to address the challenges of climate change and reduce their carbon footprints.

Organised by the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC), the UCCCS event took place at the University of Edinburgh's *Playfair Library* and represented a significant step towards creating a Greener Scotland. Stewart Stevenson, Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change gave a keynote address at the event alongside Mark Batho, Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council and Dr Anthony Cortese, co-founder of the American Colleges and Universities Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). This event comes just months after the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit in December 2009, the halfway point of the UN Decade for an Education in Sustainable Development (UNDESD) and almost a year after the passing of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

Officially launched in January 2009 and developed through collaboration by key sector agencies and representative bodies and with the financial support of the Scottish Funding Council, the UCCCS represents a significant collective effort by Scotland's universities and colleges to address the environmental, social and economic challenges threatening our society through climate change.

The Scottish Government's endorsement of the UCCCS through its forthcoming second action plan for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development provides a solid foundation upon which we can continue to deliver meaningful changes within universities and colleges and it signifies the valuable contribution this sector has to make toward the Government's wider sustainability objectives.

In support of the UCCCS, Mr Stevenson said "Sustainability is at the heart of this Government's purpose of creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth. We can only achieve our ambitions if we are equipped with the skills, expertise and knowledge for success and learning has a key role in helping us rise to the challenge of making Scotland a better place for all. I am delighted that Scotland's colleges and universities have taken the initiative and declared that they will address the challenges of climate change and reduce their carbon footprints. It is a fantastic achievement that, to date, 50 institutions - that is 80% - have signed on a voluntary basis the Universities and Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland - a commitment that goes well beyond signing a piece of paper - but commits signatories to preparing, publishing and delivering a five year Climate Change Action Plan."

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EAUC Scotland Manager Andrew Chamberlain echoed Mr Stevenson, adding "The college and university sectors have the potential to make a significant impact on climate change as no other sector has the opportunity to engage, influence and educate so many people in tackling climate change. Through our primary role as educators, researchers and skills trainers, we have a unique opportunity and a crucial role to play in equipping current and future generations with the skills and knowledge base necessary to tackle the local, national and international challenges of climate change. This opportunity is acknowledged and addressed in institutions' Climate Change Action Plans.'

Scottish Funding Council Chief Executive, Mark Batho said: "We're committed to helping universities and colleges meet their own aspirations for sustainability across a whole spectrum of activities. We're working very closely with the EAUC on this and are currently investing £400,000 to fund the Association's excellent sustainability programme - just one element of a really important partnership for the Scottish Funding Council." He also said that the UCCCS "will involve real changes" and voiced encouragement for the remaining 20% of Scottish institutions to sign the commitment.

A guiding influence on the development of the UCCCS has been the work undertaken by colleagues in North America through the ACUPCC. Dr Anthony Cortese, co-organiser of the ACUPCC spoke proudly about the success the ACUPCC has seen so far as "the 677 colleges and universities in all 50 states and the District of Columbia that have made this unprecedented commitment represent about one third of the student population" in North America, he went on to highlight that the ACUPCC, similar to the UCCCS, "is an example of courageous leadership by college and university leaders' and that the 'Higher Education sector is the first major public sector with a significant number of its members to commit to climate neutrality'".

The UCCCS contributes to Scotland's international reputation for education and research and the EAUC is delighted that a collaborative approach to tackling climate change through further and higher education has been agreed not only with colleagues in the United States but also in Australia and the Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability. Together with colleagues in North America, the EAUC has agreed to support the development of a Climate Commitment for Australia's 38 universities and to work closely in sharing our good practice with one another across the globe to tackle the international challenge of climate change through further and higher education.

For more information on UCCCS, please visit

http://www.eauc.org.uk/scotlands_principals_climate_commitment

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The EAUC is a member-led organisation and is the sustainability one-stop-shop for the further and higher education sector. For more information on the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC), please visit <http://www.eauc.org.uk/home>.

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Mark Batho, Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council

Dr Anthony Cortese, co-founder of the American Colleges and Universities Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC)

Dr Mary Spilde, Lane Community College, USA

Stewart Stevenson, MSP, Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change

Andrew Chamberlain, Scotland Manager for EAUC

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