

## Meet a... Director of Sustainability



Andy Nolan, Director of Sustainability at The University of Nottingham

### How would you describe your job in a tweet i.e.140 characters?

Fantastically varied, challenging and demanding, fun and rewarding.

### What does an average day look like?

My working day starts when I begin my commute from Sheffield to Nottingham and I use the time on the train to deal with emails and reading any reports. I leave home at 6.30am and I am on campus by 8.15am on a typical day. I usually work from my office on University Park, but try to get out to our campus at Jubilee or Sutton Bonington whenever I can. Days consist of meetings with my direct reports, with co-directors in Estates and with other services in the University. I leave the office at around 5pm and will work on the train home – but then it's laptop off and no more work!

### What are the key skills and qualifications required for your job?

The most important skills are strong communication, coaching and management skills and qualifications in a sustainability-related field.

### What training and continuous professional development do you require?

I always value CPD that helps me get the best from others, helping to empower them to perform well.

### What are your top three responsibilities?

- Staff management and related budget, HR and strategy work
- Sustainability Strategy and integration with the University's strategic plan
- Engagement with academic colleagues and external stakeholders.

### What are the positives and negatives of the job?

First and foremost I work with some great people who are really committed to our work including our University Executive Board. The University recognises the importance of this agenda and has invested in it. The scale of the University is both a positive and a negative – with over 33,000 students on 5 campuses and several other sites it means we have plenty of opportunities to invest and make a difference. However, sometimes the sheer scale of the University can be daunting. It's like running a small town with a number of satellite villages! A real positive for me was having the opportunity to work with colleagues on our China and Malaysia campuses.

### Do you manage a budget, and what are your key priorities for this?

Yes, I have a total budget of circa £18m across my portfolio – of which £11-12m is utilities costs. In addition we have a rolling programme of around £3m/yr capital investment in carbon reduction and efficiency projects. Other budget



To help our Members understand more about the roles in further and higher education institutions, we've created a suite of career profiles. These share the main responsibilities and skills and knowledge required of many of the key roles that play a part in embedding sustainability in a tertiary education institution.

View the entire suite at [www.eauc.org.uk/meet\\_a\\_member](http://www.eauc.org.uk/meet_a_member)





priorities include the contracted 'Hopper Bus' service, grounds and landscape maintenance and enhancement, waste and recycling and the building management system.

## **What does the path to career progression in this role look like?** *What are the opportunities? What's this limited by?*

Progression would mean taking an even wider portfolio of responsibilities (I report directly to the Chief Estates and Facilities Officer, a member of the University Exec Board. He has responsibility for everything from new capital build, strategic investments/projects, catering, hospitality (including a hotel) and the University's Innovation Park). Opportunities are limited in this post given they are few and far between in the sector and there is no template for the job – it very much depends on the strategic direction of the institution.

## **What is the minimum and maximum salary band for this role?**

Over £70k.

## **What advice do you have for graduates and other potential candidates who are considering joining?**

It's a rewarding field to work in. Be prepared to muck-in and push yourself into areas that make you feel uncomfortable, you'll be surprised what you can achieve and people respect those who are prepared to take on additional responsibilities.

## **For institutions without a Director of Sustainability – what 3 aspects of your role do you think are the most important for any institution's sustainability journey?**

Vision, strategy and commitment to invest.

## **What department do you and your line manager sit in? Which departmental interactions are vital for your role?**

I am one of three Directors in the Estates service but work closely with colleagues in Information Services, Sport (we manage the sports grounds), Finance and Procurement, HR, Student Services, Student Union and, of course, academic Schools and Faculties.

## **What opportunities and challenges does working in a higher education institution bring?** *How is this role different in tertiary education compared to another sector?*

Universities are wonderful places to work but they can be frustrating. Opportunities abound when you are surrounded by creative, intelligent and committed people. However, it's not always easy to identify who or how decisions are made. They have a democratic or collegiate style of decision making that can take time to process. On other occasions they can be nimble and respond quickly. They are more of an organism than a machine and work quite differently to the private sector and are less structured than local authorities.

## **How do you communicate the outputs of your role to the wider institution, and what does this include?**

I report directly to the Exec Board via the Chief Estates & Facilities Officer, but we ensure the outputs we deliver are reported in annual reports (energy, carbon and a broader sustainability report are produced annually), via induction programmes for new starters, through social media and a monthly newsletter as well as through established external reporting mechanisms.

## **What are the unique opportunities to embed sustainability in to this job?**

Working with academics and students is fundamental to the job and brings opportunities to integrate research and teaching practice in to operational practice for mutual benefit. Researchers trying out new ideas and experimenting within the context of our campuses, buildings, green and blue spaces is what we're all about (e.g. research, community engagement, sustainable procurement).

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## How has EAUC Membership helped you in your job and within your institution?

I wouldn't be where I am today without the EAUC. My time as Convenor of the EAUC in 2000 – 2005 gave me the opportunity to learn from many experienced sustainability practitioners in the sector and beyond. It also gave me the opportunity to learn how to lobby effectively and work with external agencies. Of course, not everyone can have this opportunity, and the EAUC has also supported me in very practical ways in terms of guidance, sharing best practice and enabling access to new thinking. I have used their experience in each of the 4 universities I have been at: Bradford, Leeds Metropolitan (now Leeds Beckett), Sheffield and Nottingham.

## How can other Members contact you?

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