



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

UK
DUBAI

COP28 Engagement and impact report

We adapt
We activate

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Introduction

In 2023, the UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP (Conference of the Parties) 28) was hosted in the United Arab Emirates. To mark COP28, the University of Birmingham (UoB) orchestrated a comprehensive communications and engagement strategy.

A programme of activity was curated by the University to highlight research outcomes and capitalise on opportunities to collaborate with policy makers and other stakeholder groups. This initiative was geared towards fostering meaningful partnerships and driving impactful projects in sustainability and climate change.

This work was led by the **Birmingham Institute for Sustainability and Climate Action (BISCA)**; and it built on a range of activities at COP26 in Glasgow, presence at COP27 in Sharm El Sheik and the **Keeping 1.5°C Alive project**.



Strategic objectives

COP28, being held in Dubai, represented an opportunity for UoB to use its convening power to make key climate change related policy impacts on the UK government and international policy arena. Strategic objectives were as follows:



1.

Build reputation of the University around four key thematic areas: global finances and governance; global goals on adaptation; health and environmental quality; and food systems.



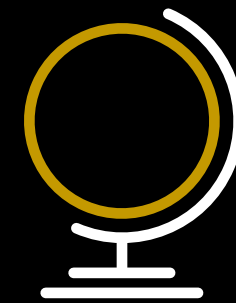
2.

Engage with policymakers to influence policy and develop new long-term strategic relationships for UoB.



3.

International profile building with policymakers, including raising the profile of our Dubai campus and supporting the University's top 50 ambitions.



4.

Align with the University's strategic framework sustainability pillar and the ambition to influence changes and tackle this global challenge through our academic research.



5.

Work collaboratively with other leading higher education providers, business and industry on research recommendations to tackle the climate crisis.



6.

Raise awareness of research and sustainability with internal audiences including colleagues and students.



7.

Equip the academics selected to attend as part of the COP28 QR funding cohort with new skills and knowledge which will be developed with support from the Public Affairs and Press team.



Approach

Collaborating with colleagues across academia, public affairs, and communications, the University formulated a strategy to ensure strategic objectives were realised.

Activity was focused on targeting policy makers, University colleagues, students, and industry. We highlighted the key thematic areas of global finances and governance; global goals on adaptation (water, forests, biodiversity, build infrastructure); health and environmental quality; and food systems.

To strengthen the University's position of sustainability and policy action, the University planned an extensive programme of events, discussions, and projects. Working groups were

set up to ensure colleagues from across all relevant departments and functions had opportunity to engage with and be part of the initiative.

This activity was overseen by a UoB COP28 Steering Committee that met monthly from October 2023 until the event. It was agreed that a small, diverse cohort of academic colleagues be chosen (and supported by Research England QR funds) to represent the thematic research areas in the run up to and during the event. These individuals (one per research area) were media trained and briefed before the event. A wider expert group were joined in Dubai by in-country colleagues to ensure an appropriate and robust institutional contingent.



Policy briefs

Strategic objectives met-
1, 2, 3, 4, 7

To create a coherent policy position for the University of Birmingham, in Spring 2023, the External Relations team worked with select academics (led by Professor David Hannah) to create a series of four new policy briefs with recommendations for regional and international policy makers.

These aligned to the focus areas of:

- Global finances and governance
- Goals on adaptation
- Health and environmental quality
- Food security

These policy briefs set out the steps needed to bring about improved resource security, a fairer global economy, a healthier society, and a more climate-resilient planet.

The policy briefs were brought together to form a physical, professionally executed report, '**Adaptation and Building**

Resilience in a Changing World'

For this special report, the team were able to secure a foreword from Vice-Chancellor Professor Adam Tickell, and an afterword by Anna Nsubuga, UK Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO.



Report launch

Strategic objectives met – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

The 'Adaptation and Building Resilience in a Changing World' report was launched at a panel discussion and networking event held on the Dubai campus. The panel of speakers included:

- David Hannah, Professor of Hydrology; UNESCO Chair in Water Science, University of Birmingham
- Aleks Cavoski, Professor of Environmental Law, University of Birmingham
- Hisham Farag, Professor of Finance; Head of Research, Birmingham Business School and Director of Sustainable Financial Innovation Research Centre, University of Birmingham
- Dr Rebecca Heaton, Group Environmental Sustainability Director, Lloyds Banking Group
- Shruti Tamilselvan, Business Management and Marketing student, University of Birmingham Dubai

UoB was able to secure a **video introduction from Razan Al Mubarak**, UN Climate Change High-Level Champion for the leadership team of COP28 and President of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Razan delivered a short statement recognising the University's work into climate research and praising the ambition of the report.

Hosted by the Chancellor, Lord Bilimoria, the event helped the University to cement its sustainability proposition in the run up to COP28. Over 100 policy makers, business leaders, students and colleagues attended in person and 142 joined online.

Following the report launch, a private dinner for 16 people was held. Panellists attended, as well as selected guests including: Brad Jones, Executive Director of the UAE-UK Business Council; David Toman, an AI Researcher from the University of Oxford; Nick

Boucher, Head of the UK Science and Innovation Network (Gulf) and Layla Bentley, UK Science, Innovation and Technology Lead for COP28 at the FCDO (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office).

Lord Bilimoria chaired a discussion between guests and University representatives from both Edgbaston and Dubai. This has resulted in actions to strengthen research collaboration and opportunities for further engagement.

Polycymaker engagement

Strategic objectives met - 1, 2, 3, 4, 7

Working with a public affairs consultancy, UoB were able to leverage the new policy briefs to help secure new engagements and nurture relationships with key political stakeholders. Highlighted activity of note includes:



Over 400

stakeholders were engaged with the four policy briefs in the lead up to COP28.



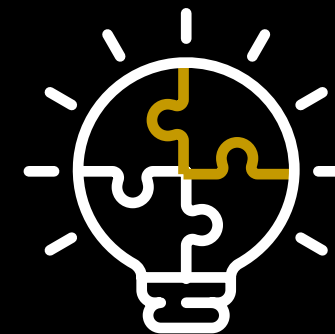
700

were invited to the hybrid report launch event in Dubai.



10

Parliamentarians agreed to a meeting with academics to discuss the policy briefs.



23

pieces of total UK Parliamentary engagement secured across the policy briefs.



2

Parliamentary questions tabled based on our academic research.



3

Food Security academics worked with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to implement department policy.



3

official responses to relevant briefs from government departments (FCDO, DEFRA and the Treasury)



Stakeholder engagement

Strategic objectives met – 1, 4, 5, 6

COP28 provided the platform for the University to collaborate with and promote UoB amongst other important stakeholder groups. Further stakeholder activity included:

- In Birmingham, the University hosted a special Culture Forward Event with Birmingham Royal Ballet. The event saw 15 researchers from the College of Arts and Law lead discussions on how culture can promote sustainability. Delegates included representatives from Royal Shakespeare Society, Botanical Gardens, Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Museums Trust.
- Professor David Hannah presented UoB research as part of a UK Universities Climate Change Network webinar.
- The University was part of the University's Climate Change Network, this included engagement with communications peers and academics from other global institutions.
- Dr Rasha Bayoumi presented UoB research as part of a Universities UK online seminar.
- Professor David Hannah and Charmaine Morrell (Head of Sustainability) presented COP28 activity to a community of staff and students at the University.
- The University organised an online seminar with the Guild of Students to increase understanding within the student community of how academics are helping to inform climate policy.
- COP28 activity and impact presented to UK undergraduates studying the BSc in Global Environmental Change and Sustainability.

UoB Colleagues at COP28 Dubai

Strategic objectives met – 1, 4, 5, 6

The Dubai campus hosted a series of thematic, and targeted events to highlight and further the impact of research activity throughout 2023. Highlight activity includes:

January – April 2023

- Youth Motivation on Climate Action - Professor Jeremy Pritchard chaired a panel during Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week to call on educational institutions to help close the gap between adults in leadership positions and youth as a critical precursor to inclusive climate change.
- Solutions to Sustainability Challenges through Academic Research - Professor David Hannah and Dr Rasha Bayoumi brought together a range of stakeholders in the UAE (United Arab Emirates) to discuss solutions for Climate Change.

May – July 2023

- Water Workshop - Dr Majid Malboubi led discussions exploring regional and global challenges on water security and how to enhance the resilience to long term threats.
- Birmingham Centre for Railway Research and Education exhibited at Middle East Rail in Abu Dhabi and hosted a pre-COP28 transport workshop.
- Embedding Time Traveling Trees into your School Curriculum - Professor Jeremy Pritchard led an immersive Teacher CPD event, inviting participants to engage in ready-made student activities that link to sustainability content within the curriculum.
- Dr Archibong Archibong, Dr Bing Lui, Professor Yulong Ding and Professor Martin Freer hosted an event that identified current challenges, highlighted novel solutions, and chartered pathways towards decarbonising the energy sector and overcoming energy related global challenges.

August – November 2023

- Climate Change, Biodiversity and Just Transition – Professor Luisa Orsini brought colleagues together in an event to explore a multidisciplinary approach to the interconnected issues of climate change, biodiversity and just transition to sustainable technologies.
- How can Literary Studies contribute to a Just Transition? – Professor John Holmes and Dr Niveen Kassem held an event for early career scholars and research students, to present cases of their own work linked to how literary studies can help us empathise with those on the front line of the climate crisis.

During COP28

- 15-minute Cities, Integration and Net Zero – Dr Mohammed Radfar hosted an event to explore social sustainability and how innovation can help to drive greener urban development.
- The University worked with the Institute of Physics to host an 'Energy Transition' event with the Royal Society.
- Mobility Forum - UoB's Railway Research and Education Centre in collaboration with GEN UK hosted an event to debate and discuss topics relevant to the sector - led by influential industry figures, promoting active participation, interaction, and networking.
- The Birmingham Business School and Department of Economics led a Climate Change, Renewable Energy, and Extreme Events Workshop (CREE), The event, led by Dr Nikos Fatouros, Professor Robert Elliott and Dr Ceren Ozgen, brought together researchers, young scholars,

post-doctoral researchers, and PhD students actively engaged in the fields of Environmental Economics, Energy and Disaster Economics.

- Professor Heather Flowe and Dr Rasha Bayoumi hosted the launch of the University's BEACON (Behaviour Analysis of Climate and Security Network).
- Professor Dominique Moran (Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor Impact) delivered a Research Impact Event, highlighting prominent examples from the University's sustainability projects. This was attended by the UK Ambassador to the UAE (United Arab Emirates).

Youth engagement

Strategic objectives met – 1, 4, 6

Working with School groups

A virtual mangrove tour was developed by researchers in the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR) and was filmed in the Jebel Ali Mangrove, near Dubai. It sits alongside existing free education resources which bring the effect of elevated CO2 on a UK oak forest directly into the classroom.

During a series of in-school and on campus events in Dubai, Professor Jeremy Pritchard guided school students in the UAE through understanding climate change with the use of these interactive learning resources. The students were then empowered to develop their own solutions and actions for climate change. Over 50 students from across five schools had the opportunity to present their solutions to a public audience at the University of Birmingham stand in the Ministry of Education pavilion at COP28. The students acted as UoB Climate Ambassadors to present their findings and promote the youth voice.

To date, the mangrove tour has been viewed 375 times and the University of Birmingham School and Arbor School (in Dubai) have used it in their Geography curriculum.

25 A-Level students from across eight schools came together at the Dubai campus for a Sustainability Camp. This activity was led by Dr Heather Jeffrey and Rebecca Keogh.

University students engaging in COP28



'I met world leaders and learnt from the speeches. As someone wishing to work in development economics, it was great to talk to leaders of multinational development banks.'

UoB student who attended the blue zone.

Over 100 students were given COP28 tickets.

Eight Dubai students attended at COP28 Universities Programme as Climate Ambassadors. The Climate Ambassadors Program was created to provide an immersive experience of what discussions and negotiations between global nations at COP entail.

Through simulated COP sessions, the students were able to develop leadership, negotiation and decision-making skills. They became 'ambassadors' for a selected country, learning about the impacts of climate change on their assigned nation and working with fellow ambassadors (other students) to find solutions by drafting and amending action plans before negotiating a final consensus together.





Media engagement

Strategic objectives met – 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7

Before COP28, the select academic cohort were provided with expert media training to help ensure they were confident and briefed in media engagements. In addition, some of the cohort attended general training on science communication around the climate crisis.

In partnership with the in-country PR agency (APCO), the University was able to secure significant media coverage – aligned to the overall objective of cementing the University's position on climate research, and the report launch.

Highlights of media coverage included:

- Quotes from Professor David Hannah and Professor Hisham Farag in the Newsweek - **COP28: Five Things Scientists Want to See Happen As Conference Begins Today**
- Professor David Hannah included in the *Forbes* article - **Five Ways Agriculture Can Help Solve The Climate Crisis**
- Dr Yuli Shan on **Why emerging economies must have a seat at COP28** (*Arab Times*)
- Dr Helen Onyeaka on **COP28 concludes; But the world is still off course for climate goals** (*Fast Company*)

- Professor David Hannah; **What does the world need from COP28?** (*Fast Company*)
- Professor Hisham Farag; **Plan must be developed to reduce emissions in partnership with oil and gas companies** (*Alarabiya*)

The University of Birmingham (and related research) was referenced in over **230 media items**, with a combined global reach of over **596M**.

In addition, the University created and shared opinion-led Birmingham Briefs to coincide with the relevant COP28 thematic days. Audiences included regional and national policy makers.

These Briefs included:

- **Why it matters that emerging economies have a seat at COP28** – Dr Yuli Shan
- **How can we inspire future generations towards climate action?** – Professor Jeremy Pritchard
- **The potential of peelings: COP28 must address the sustainable use of all food** – Dr Helen Onyeaka

Digital and Social Media activity

Strategic objectives met – 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7

The University orchestrated a multi-channel digital campaign through all central UoB channels to help raise and support the profile of key academics and the thematic research areas, including:

- New video content was shared through LinkedIn pages to encourage engagement with the new policy briefs.
- Creation of a series of informal TikTok videos with academics explaining what they would like to see as a change from COP28 (see below)
- Topline content and assets shared through the University's Facebook page
- Series of thematic posts through the University's X page
- University of Birmingham students created a COP28 reel for Instagram to amplify the student voice of concern around climate change and their hopes for COP28. This reel was shared from LES' (Life and

Environmental Sciences) Student Comms and from the main University Instagram accounts and was viewed more than **27,700 times**.

In addition to content shared at a central level, individual colleges, schools, and academics were encouraged to share their own content through their own channels.

Content tagged with the institutional #UoBClimatImpact hashtag had a combined reach of **93,000**.

Between November 1 and December 31, posts from the University's central social media accounts accumulated a total of **119,111 impressions** and **1,510 engagements**, in the form of likes, comments, reposts, and saves, across Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, and TikTok.

Content shared through the University of Birmingham Dubai social media accounts had **527 engagements**.





College content engagement on X

Strategic objectives met - 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7

336

LES (College of Life and Environmental Sciences)

109

EPS (College of Engineering and Physical Sciences)

229

CAL (College of Arts and Law)

476

COSS (College of Social Sciences)

14

MDS (College of Medical and Dental Sciences)

In addition, colleagues, Institutions, and strategic partners (including West Midlands Combined Authority) shared news and opinion article through LinkedIn in the run up to and during the event.

TikTok

videos highlights



What concerns students the most about climate change?

1,848 views

Clean air expert Dr Suzanne Bartington tells us what she wants to see happen at COP28.

1,507 views

In a warming world we expect more floods, droughts, more water quality extremes.

1,946 views

Did you know in the UK, last year, greenhouse gas emissions are now back to the pre-pandemic levels?

2,047 views

Food security experts Dr Helen Onyeaka and Dr Taghi Miri tell us what they want to happen at #COP28

2,218 views



Web and Digital

16 new videos

were produced and shared through social media and web platforms.

The [COP28 webpage](#) received

3,440 views

The [Policy Briefs webpage](#) received

789 views

Next steps

The University's work at COP28 has provided a platform to accelerate and amplify efforts to inform policy activity. Next steps include:

- Following productive introductory sessions, the University is liaising with MPs to organise a follow-up event in Parliament. This will bring together relevant parliamentarians from Parliamentary Renewable and Sustainable Energy Group (PRASEG) and academic experts to discuss the policy recommendations of our report and opportunities post-COP28.
- Working to ensure COP28 activity can be leveraged to profile the ambition of the Birmingham Institute for Sustainability and Climate Action.
- Sustainability messaging created for COP28 is being repurposed for policy engagement and general election communications material.
- Building a plan to ensure opportunities from COP30 are explored and maximised, given the strategic importance of Brazil as a region.



A group of people in business attire are engaged in conversation at what appears to be a conference or networking event. In the foreground, a woman with long brown hair is seen from the back, wearing a light-colored blazer. To her right, a man in a blue checkered shirt and dark tie is smiling and talking to her. Behind them, several other men in suits and business shirts are also engaged in conversation. The background shows a well-lit indoor space with a bar area, plants, and a wall-mounted display.

Collaborative approach

The University adopted a highly collaborative, cross-departmental approach to this project. Internal stakeholders were mapped, a steering group set up, and separate task groups assembled. This ensured a sense of shared ownership amongst colleagues and significantly elevated level of engagement from academic and professional services colleagues.

This collegiate project management approach is being replicated in future projects.

“ The impact we have achieved through COP28 has been possible through collaboration with our colleagues, students, policy makers and other partners across the globe. The University of Birmingham is a beacon of knowledge and innovation. We are proud to stand at the forefront of global sustainability leadership through our involvement in the COP summits; and we will continue to work with partners to foster collaborative solutions for a more sustainable and resilient future. ”

**Professor David Hannah
and Dr Rasha Bayoumi**

