

Community Panel Meeting

14th May 2026 6.00 to 8.00 pm

Innovation Hub, Exeter

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed All.

2. Minutes and actions from the previous meeting

Action	Status
LA to get in touch with UoE Estates and ask them to follow up on removal of litter bins in the Lower Hoopern Valley.	Actioned
AL / SF to send LA some blurb on FoHV and student testimonials to share in the staff bulletin and promote volunteering opportunity to new student cohort via community magazine	Actioned
LA to invite the Sustainability Living Assistant and Sustainable Transport Manager to the next meeting.	Actioned – agenda item 4
LA to raise Recycling Awareness Week idea and waste / recycling communications with sustainability and community liaison teams.	Actioned – agenda item 5
LA to explore potential for panel members to join a tour of the reclamation facility	Actioned – agenda item 5
LA to arrange a meeting with Community Builders to explore ideas about using Innovation Hub for a wellbeing pop-up.	Actioned – agenda item 7
WP to share details on Nottingham workplace car parking levy	Actioned

3. Update on CUA Delivery Progress

Lindsey provided a brief overview of some of the highlights since the last meeting:

Mission 1: Support the positive transformation of the city through sustainable and inclusive growth

- UoE, The Guild and ECC worked together to deliver and promote the [City Nature Challenge](#) on campus and across [Exeter](#) for the first time in April. There was excellent engagement and we achieved 1533 observations of 507 species. Importantly, 75% of our records are 'research grade' which means that they will find their way into international and national biodiversity recording databases, and can be used by researchers and conservationists to understand and protect wildlife.
- Exeter Climate Forum will take place from 28th June to 3rd July 2026 – this event is designed to accelerate climate action and reflect on the latest climate science.
- We are planning some public facing events to align with the Climate Forum – and hoping to align one of the events with "First Thursdays" – possibly on "climate misinformation" – with a focus on decision making on a small scale

Mission 2: Build a City of Aspiration and Opportunity

- Researchers from the University's School of Education, Exeter College and Devon County Council are working together to pilot a new exam centre for Electively Home Educated students to sit their GCSEs this summer in English and maths. The partners, along with Cornwall Council and the exam board AQA, are applying for independent exam centre status, so some young people not in school can sit GCSEs without payment.
- The Thriving Futures for Young People, Small Grants Fund, a joint fund with DCC has been launched to support the implementation of research findings, pilot and scale proven interventions, and strengthen delivery capacity to support and improve outcomes for young people in Devon.

Mission 3: Enhance the Health and Wellbeing of our citizens

- The University's Regional Engagement Team hosted a *Health and Wellbeing Research: Matchmaking event* for VCSE and Academic Partners in partnership with the VCSE Research Community of Practice of the VCSE Assembly in April.
- The event connected researchers with VCSE organisations who are interested in evidence-based practice and partnering in research.
- The Regional Engagement Team is delivering a Pop-Up wellbeing event for students and local people, with local Community Builders, in the Innovation Hub in May. The event will aim to help students integrate in their local community and will signpost to volunteering opportunities, and wellbeing support.
- The University's Learning and Development Team will be delivering [Bystander](#) training to CUA Community Panel members and their organisations and networks to help equip them with practical strategies to effectively challenge harmful or inappropriate behaviours.

Mission 4: Support an ambitious Culture and Tourism offer

- Exeter City Council is developing a 5 year cultural strategy. The University and other partners are involved in this, and a draft strategy is out for public consultation later this month, before seeking approval late summer and early autumn.
- We are seeking the guidance of the CUA partners and Board to determine the priorities for this mission. We recommend that:
 - The ambitions in this Mission are aligned with the emerging Exeter Cultural Strategy once it has been formally adopted by Exeter City Council.
 - A series of focus groups are organised with cultural and heritage practitioners, academics, creatives and residents, to help develop an actionable and measurable delivery plan.

4. Sustainability update

Members of the University's sustainability team provided updates on:

- **The development of the new Sustainability Strategy and supporting Nature Positive Strategy and Climate Strategies:**
 - This work is being shaped by the changing economic and political context, with a need to review and update priorities to reflect current social and financial pressures. The recently launched climate strategy focuses on reaching net zero by reducing emissions and positioning Exeter as a leader in

decarbonisation through a whole-institution approach based on strong partnerships. A key short-term goal is to reduce baseline emissions by 26% by 2030.

- A strong focus is placed on engagement and culture change, which underpins all of the Sustainability team's work. This is supported by a dedicated group that brings together staff and students to help influence wider University strategy. There is a need for clear and effective language in communications, particularly in shaping behaviours and building a shared culture. This is reflected in a broader sustainability culture framework that highlights learning and adaptation, behaviour change, capacity building, communication, participation, and leadership.
- **Some of the initiatives being run on campus to support the Circular Economy, including the Repair Café, Gift it Reuse it, and WARPit**
 - The Gift it, Reuse it scheme has been a huge success, redistributing over 17,600 items last year, reducing carbon emissions and delivering cost savings. It has also encouraged a cycle of reuse, with some people donating the same items again after a year. There are practical challenges, particularly around storage space for larger items like furniture. Alongside this, Warp It allows staff and students to share unwanted items, with Exeter the first university to run a student version.
 - The repair café has repaired a large volume of items and relies partly on skilled volunteers from the local community. These events also support skills sharing and social interaction.
 - Other initiatives include donating abandoned bicycles to RideOn
 - There is interest in making initiatives more visibly open to the public, increasing participation, and using these activities to provide real-world learning opportunities for students.
- **The results of the travel survey and how these are shaping initiatives that encourage staff and students to travel sustainably.**
 - Survey data shows that most staff mainly travel by car, although many also use buses, walk, or take the train at different times of year. In contrast, most students walk as their primary mode of transport, with buses as their main alternative. Students tend to live within 30 minutes of campus, partly due to limited parking, which encourages bus use and car sharing but can also create pressure on nearby neighbourhoods. Most student travel emissions come from car and bus use. The strategy therefore aims to improve transport links to areas further from campus, such as Cranbrook, to widen housing options.
 - A range of actions are being explored to support more sustainable travel. These include introducing electric buses, improving bus routes and frequency, and offering discounted travel for staff. There are plans to invest in better infrastructure such as secure cycle storage, showers, and repair facilities, alongside partnership work with the local council. New initiatives include a car club scheme for short-term vehicle use and efforts to revive an e-bike programme.
 - The University is also using travel data to identify where improved public transport could encourage behaviour change.

Discussion

- LA highlighted the work of the sustainable transport group and its collaboration with other regional partners, including joint activity such as Clean Air Day.
- There was a suggestion that clearer signage could improve wayfinding across and beyond campus towards the city centre, including routes through Hooper Valley, which could both improve access to green spaces and encourage more active travel.
- It was noted that there is already work underway to improve signage for campus buildings, and that these efforts could be linked.
- The Climate Forum could be a good opportunity to raise the visibility of the University's sustainability activity – we could also consider hosting a repair café at the Innovation Hub during the week.

5. Recycling Awareness

- CD shared some ideas with the group ahead of the meeting, suggesting linking in with National Recycling Week in September, and using existing guidance from the council.
- Plans are already emerging for a Recycling Awareness Week from 12 to 16 October which will include activities in the Forum with partners including CAG Devon, the council, community groups and waste organisations.
- As a campus-based approach alone may not reach students living in shared housing, where recycling practices can be more challenging, there is interest in including more direct engagement through in-person events, targeted flyers, and a visible presence in areas such as Union Road.
- Ongoing work includes collaboration with community groups and local campaigns, promotion of food waste recycling, and pop-up events in neighbourhoods. There is interest in addressing misinformation being shared with students, particularly by landlords, through clearer communication and social media.
- The week could be used as a small pilot to bring these ideas together, alongside practical improvements such as increasing access to food waste caddies
- Coordination between the panel, community engagement team, and Sustainability team will take this forward.

6. Update from Community Liaison Manager

- There have been fewer Community Fund applications than last year, with repeat requests from Exeter Seed Bank and Fun A Day, and support for a neurodivergent open mic night, which is now being used as a model for similar events elsewhere.
- A new funding application is currently being developed for a bioblitz project which will be shared with the panel shortly.
- A new call for applications will be shared in the June newsletter, and the group is encouraged to promote the fund and put forward new ideas.
- There is interest in linking the fund more closely with community activity at the Innovation Hub.
- There are plans to create an FAQ page on the University's community webpages to answer common questions. Panel members will be asked for input on key topics.

- The need for a clear, central source of recycling information on the University website was highlighted. This should focus on addressing common myths and misinformation. The Sustainability team will follow this up.

7. Update from Panel on ideas and initiatives

- Attendance at the Friends of Hooper Valley AGM was lower than last year, but interest in using the site remains strong, so this is not seen as a concern. There is a focus on increasing student involvement in the group.
- Fun A Day took place in February, with a showcase in March that saw a 10 percent increase in participation compared to the previous year.
- Led by InExeter, the First Thursdays event series will run from June to September in partnership with InExeter, with the University taking part. Activities already planned include food offers, live music, comedy, talks, dance, library events, indoor markets, and other pop-up performances and experiences.
- The programme aims to support the night-time economy and may also help improve safety in the city by encouraging more people to be out and about. There is interest in expanding the initiative further across the city in future, including potential links to community mental health.
- The community builders will be hosting pop-up event at Innovation Hub on the 20th May - **Creating Connections** is designed to highlight the builders' work to the students and let them know of offerings throughout the city/ with activities, and pinpointing them towards social media accounts and volunteering opportunities to make them more accessible. A tabletop event is planned for St James at the end of term, where students can donate and recycle items they no longer need.

8. AOB

- Next meeting - October 2026
- Members will be asked to notify if they would like to remain on the panel for one more year

Actions:

- LA to share details of thriving futures fund grant, community law clinic, Sustainability Team website and the next Repair Café.
- LA to liaise with NB & RC re developing a systems thinking / culture change case study in relation to food recycling
- MH to follow up with RC to develop a central source of recycling information
- CD / RC to liaise on a template letter re food recycling to be shared with resident liaison groups