



Quarterly report:  
**Actions and Initiatives**





OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHÉ  
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



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## Quarterly Update 3 (October – December 2023)

Name of organisation/group: University of Galway

Date: Oct – Dec 2023

Please provide an update on the initiatives and activities your organisation/group has undertaken to promote, make use of and contribute to the SDGs in the last quarter:

### Introduction and Report Format

The University of Galway's approach to embedding the SDGs centres on a [Learn-Live-Lead](#) model. The focus of **learn** is to continue to embed SDG literacy into all aspects of university learning and research. The focus of **live** is to implement the principles of the SDGs through campus operations and engagement activities. From a **lead** perspective, the aim is to play a central and transformative role in attaining the SDGs by 2030. Our *Learn-Live-Lead* model is organised around six key themes: Research & Learning; Energy & Greenhouse Gas Emissions; Nature & Ecosystems; Health & Wellbeing; Built Environment; and Governance & Leadership.

We recognise that reporting is an important part of assessing our progress towards achieving the SDGs. As SDG Champion, we publish a quarterly report showcasing our activities and work. The reports are structured on our Learn-Live-Lead model and each initiative highlighted, details the SDGs that initiative is seeking to progress. This is our third SDG quarterly report, capturing the time frame October– December 2023.

### LEARN

#### Key academic partner in an Ireland-UK research collaboration on climate and food sustainability

University of Galway has joined a partnership of academics, industry and governments across Ireland and the UK, to advance research to address climate, food sustainability, biodiversity, and water crises. The developments are part of a new Co-Centres research programme announced by the Irish, British and Northern Ireland governments with a €70 million investment over six years. University of Galway's Ryan Institute is a key academic partner in the *Co-Centre for Climate + Biodiversity and Water*, and in the *Co-Centre for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems*. The *Co-Centre for Climate + Biodiversity and Water* will carry out research to enable the transformative change urgently needed to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and water crises, as well as developing solutions on just transitions in land use. The *Co-Centre for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems* will aim is to develop innovative and transformative solutions to transition the food system for positive and sustainable change in the transition to climate-neutrality by 2050.



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## Peatland Futures

In December 2023 University of Galway hosted the *Peatlands Future* event bringing together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to deliberate on the future of peatland and wetland research and innovation in Ireland. Representatives from government departments, universities and community and farming organisations took part in the event. The event featured two workshops aimed at shaping the future of peatland research. The first discussed the proposal for a National Peatland Centre of Excellence, while a second focused on creating a policy summary and providing actionable strategies for informed decision-making in peatland conservation. A crucial component of *Peatlands Future* was the collective call to action for wetland and peatland restoration and conservation. Following on from this event, University of Galway has announced plans to establish a [National Peatland Centre of Excellence](#) at the University to help tackle national and global challenges related to peatlands and associated decarbonisation, biodiversity loss, just transitions and culture.



## International research project developing a new set of therapeutics for the treatment of Triple Negative Breast Cancer (TNBC)

University of Galway will lead an international research project developing a new set of therapeutics for the treatment of Triple Negative Breast Cancer (TNBC). TNBC is a very aggressive and challenging cancer, affecting about 10-15% of women diagnosed with breast cancer. The cancer is highly aggressive and challenging to treat as it lacks hormone receptors, making targeted therapies ineffective. Consequently, treatment options for women suffering from the disease are limited to surgery and chemotherapy. The research project - *Advanced Engineering of Nitric Oxide Based Therapeutics for Triple Negative Breast Cancer Training Network (No-CANCER-NET)* - will focus on developing a new set of therapeutics for the treatment of TNBC. The project is supported by €2.7million Horizon Europe grant funding from the European Research Executive Agency. The research team is a collaboration between researcher at the University of Galway; University of Luxemburg; University of Udine; University of Sienna; Trinity College Dublin; EPHE-PSL; Danish Cancer Institute; ISOF-CNR; Saolta University Health Care Group; Galway Clinic; Houston Methodist Hospital; and other international partners.



## Methodology for assessing whole-life carbon of buildings

University of Galway and Irish Green Building Council have been collaborating through [Construct Innovate](#) on an SEAI-funded project UPFRONT-CO2e to develop a methodology for assessing whole-life carbon of buildings. Carbon emissions are released not only during operational life of our buildings, but also during the manufacturing, transportation, construction, and end of life phases of all built assets, buildings and infrastructure. These emissions, commonly referred to as embodied carbon, have largely been overlooked historically, but contribute around 11% of all global carbon emissions. In Ireland's Climate Action Plan, there is a focus on reducing both embodied and operational carbon of our buildings. The recast of the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), includes mandatory whole life carbon assessment at building design stage. Within the Climate Action Plan 2023, SEAI have been tasked with developing an embodied carbon building rating calculation methodology taking account of EPBD by 2025. It is envisaged that the methodology developed and tested in the UPFRONT-CO2e project will be adopted by SEAI.

The [Construct Innovate webinar series](#) on Sustainability Planning in Construction ran over 7 weeks from September and featured over 20 experts in the area. Typically, over 100 people attended the live webinars each week with 100s more watching the recording online afterwards.



## SDG focused podcasts, publications, and webinars

To increase awareness of sustainability and the SDGs, University of Galway is delivering the University of Galway's Sustainability Podcast series. The series is available across a variety of platforms, allowing a wide range of listeners to tune in and hear about our efforts to embed the SDGs across the campus. In the [latest episode](#) we hear from Adam Mullins, student at University of Galway, and founder of The Student Pantry, an initiative aimed at reducing food wastage, saving money and lowering carbon missions.

In the [23-24 Winter Edition of Cois Coiribe](#), University of Galway's commitment to sustainability takes centre stage, reaffirmed by the University's designation as an SDG Champion. Academics, alumni, students, and staff, share their stories on the range of possibilities for climate action. This Winter Edition contains over 20 insightful research stories sharing how our university is rising to the challenge of the SDGs.

Stores include for example:

[The Secrets of our Future preserved in Climate Archives](#); [Cultural Values in a Sustainable Future](#); [The Real-World Effects of Cyberbullying](#); [Water is at the Centre of the Climate Crisis](#); [Smart Sustainability at the World's largest Sports Air Dome](#); [Imagining a Futuristic Sustainable City between Galway and Dublin](#); [Creating a Better World through Better Business](#); [Students for Climate Action](#); [Understanding Viruses at Molecular Level](#); and [Aligning our Research with the SDGs](#).

A leading academic in Geography has published a new strategy paper for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The strategy paper, [Envisioning Security for a More-Than-Human World](#), sets out the cooperative global security vision required in tackling the wide set of human-environmental crises currently unfolding on the planet. It conceptualizes a move away from narrow, prioritised and counter-productive military security concerns to a conjoined sense of human-environmental security to effectively respond to the globe's multiple overlapping precarities.



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## LIVE

### Opening of new student accommodation

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris T.D. officially opened Baile na Breacóige - Dunlin Village – the new student residences at University of Galway. The project on the north campus of the University consists of 674 bedrooms and includes 35 accessible bedrooms, located across all floors, designed in line with best practice for people with disabilities. Dunlin Village represents the second major student accommodation project that the university has completed in recent years bringing our total number of on campus student accommodation beds to nearly 2,000. The University is committed to continuing to work with students and Government to provide further, more affordable accommodation choices for our students.



### SEAI Awards 2023 Energy in Buildings

University of Galway was the [2023 SEAI Energy in Buildings winner](#) for the Áras De Brún building retrofit project. The Áras de Brún Building, constructed in 1960, was a successful retrofit utilising numerous sustainable technologies achieving energy reductions and serving as a live research platform. This "Living Lab" research platform promotes further exploration of decarbonisation strategies and offers the academic community valuable insights and data. The project is an innovative approach to retrofitting existing structures, leading to significant reduction in carbon emissions, and contributions to research and education on decarbonisation. This project was funded by the Higher Education Authority under the Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Pathfinder Programme.



### Opening of IdeasLab

The University of Galway [formally opened the IdeasLab space](#) on campus, marking the institution's commitment to fostering innovation and entrepreneurship among its student body. *IdeasLab* is University of Galway's student innovation hub. It is an open collaborative space designed to enable students to explore ideas and personalise their entrepreneurial and innovative skillset to succeed in the complex world beyond university. The formal opening of the *IdeasLab* space symbolises the University's dedication to creating an environment that nurtures creativity,

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collaboration, and transformative ideas. This space is a vibrant hub where students can bring their innovative concepts to life, collaborate with like-minded peers, and receive mentorship from industry experts.



## University of Galway Parkrun

The University of Galway Parkrun launched in December 2023. This is a free, fun, weekly, 5km community event. It is organised by volunteers for the benefit of everyone. The inaugural run saw over 200 participants take to the starting line. The Parkrun follows along the scenic route of the river Corrib on the ground of the University of Galway campus. The Parkrun is a fantastic initiative promoting physical, social, and mental health and well-being.



## LEAD

### The *Greater Galway Charter for Sustainable Urbanism*

University of Galway and Atlantic Technological University (Galway) have come together with the Mayor of the City of Galway and the Galway Chamber to announce and sign the [Greater Galway Charter for Sustainable Urbanism](#) – a manifesto for long-term strategic thinking and planning for the region. The *Greater Galway Charter* is intended as a living, working document which helps to stimulate cross community conversations about the kind of city and places signatories want for Galway by 2070, and the steps to begin today to deliver that 50-year vision. *The Greater Galway Charter* is underpinned by four anchoring Principles that guide what Galway should aspire to be as a City and a Place, namely: Sustainable; Inclusive; Responsive and Proud. Everyone interested in the future direction of development of Galway, and anyone who shares the passion for the city of the future, can sign up to signal support for the Charter and be part of the conversation.



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## **Lost & Found – Conveying the realities of homelessness told through the eyes of the homeless**

University of Galway and Galway Simon Community have come together with filmmakers to produce a new film capturing the experience of homelessness from the experience of those who have lived it. *Lost & Found* is a co-created, virtual reality film produced out of the University's Centre for Creative Technologies, in collaboration with clients from Simon. The production saw people who have lived experience of homelessness working with leading virtual reality filmmakers and University of Galway researchers as part of the Immersive Empathy project. The team adopted a 360-degree style of filming, which captures a fully immersive world that can be viewed within a virtual reality headset. The production utilised oral history interviews and collaborative workshops to develop the content of the film so that it conveyed the realities of being homeless. The film was launched at a special screening at University of Galway as part of the Arts in Action programme with the audience wearing VR headsets allowing them to feel as though they are in the world of someone experiencing homelessness.



## **University of Galway and the Cois Fharráige Gaeltacht at the COP 28 Climate Summit**

University of Galway was represented at the COP 28 Climate Summit in Dubai by five leading experts, who are engaged in education, research, and innovation activities to address the climate crisis. This is the first time the University has been represented with official observer status. To find out more about our delegation that attended and hear their reflection visit our webpage [here](#)

To coincide with University of Galway's official observer status a "Dear World" message from a group of young people is being shared. The letter, and video which can be viewed [here on YouTube](#), have been created to articulate the hopes and fears about the climate crisis of students in two post-primary schools in the Cois Fharráige Gaeltacht in Galway. They shared this message with the University of Galway researchers attending COP. The *Cois Fharráige go COP* project was developed through three moderated workshops with 20 secondary school students and their teachers in the Cois Fharráige Gaeltacht community in west Galway. Workshop structure and content was developed and led by University of Galway.



## Galway Youth Climate Assembly

The third *Galway Youth Climate Assembly* for secondary school students and youth groups took place in University of Galway on 14<sup>th</sup> November, as part of the Galway Science and Technology Festival. The Youth Assembly provides a space for young people from our city's secondary schools to gather on the issue of climate action. They are introduced to local policies, processes, and products to tackle the Climate and the Biodiversity Crises. Its aim is to increase youth awareness of and participation in decision-making in relation to climate action policies. All secondary schools in Galway City were represented. The Assembly included an exhibition space showcasing local projects and initiatives in the areas of Climate, Biodiversity and Sustainability ranging from world class scientific research centres to grassroots projects. In parallel with the youth assembly Duncan Stewart, the renowned environmentalist and founder of Eco-Eye, hosted a separate morning event for secondary school teachers. The Galway Youth Climate Assembly is a collaboration between University of Galway, Galway National Park City initiative, SAUTI-Youth project, the Atlantic Technology University, the Students' Union of the University of Galway and the Galway Science and Technology Festival.



## Partnership agreement with the National Parks and Wildlife Service

University of Galway has signed a partnership agreement with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to enhance opportunities for research and learning in the Burren in Co. Clare. The partnership will support programmes for academic research and study, participation in events promoting nature conservation, research, and study in the Burren, and learning activities for students in local schools and University of Galway. The partnership underpins shared management and access to two facilities in the Burren region – the Carron Field Research Facility and the Finavarra Research Station, for education, research, and outreach. It is hoped that the partnership will promote a greater appreciation of the intrinsic value of our natural heritage and attract students from local schools, the University of Galway and further afield to explore their learning in nature conservation, ecology, geology, and archaeology.



## First signature partnership with industry

University of Galway have agreed a five-year €5 million signature innovation partnership with Medtronic plc, a global leader in healthcare technology. The partnership is focused on three pillars: developing the MedTech ecosystem, STEM and research. This is the first signature partnership between University of Galway and industry. It is envisaged that Medtronic's investment will enable significant expansion of the University's MedTech ecosystem and progress its current range of STEM programmes and offer access to early-stage seed funding for new collaborative research projects. The partnership will also support the establishment of two new research institutes at University of Galway. The first being the new Institute for Clinical Trials, which was launched in May 2023. The second, still in development, will focus on medical technologies and advanced therapeutics. The institutes, and the support afforded through the University of Galway-Medtronic partnership, will facilitate sustained, research-led development, further positioning

Galway as the centre of Ireland's global MedTech hub, a significant contributor to economic growth and regional development and the University as integral to research for the public good on the world stage.



Cois Fharraige go COP project and 'Dear World' message from Coláiste Chroí Mhuire, an Spidéal students – Chloe Ní Choisdealbha, Ella Nic Dhomhnaill, Kate Ní Raghallaigh..  
Photo- still from video production.



University of Galway Geography PhD student and UNFCCC Youth Delegate, Yuhan Zhang, contributing to a climate policy panel at Cop28.



Minister Harris with University of Galway students Anna Foley, Grace O'Mahony, Holly Macken, and Liam Kelleher at the official opening of the new Baile na Breacóige - on-campus student residence at University of Galway. Credit - Andrew Downes, Xposure



Signing of the Greater Galway Charter for Sustainable Urbanism. Credit - Andrew Downes/Xposure



Signing of Partnership Agreement with National Parks and Wildlife Service. Minister for Nature, Heritage and Electoral Reform Malcolm Noonan T.D. and President of University of Galway, Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh.



Cois Fharraige go COP project and 'Dear World' message from Coláiste Cholmille, Indreabhán students Paul Bheilbigh, Aodhán Ó Donnchadha, Daniel Mac Eochagáin. Photo- still from video production.