**Salford CVS Annual Conference**

**30th October 2024**

**Salford Community Stadium**

**Afternoon - Panel of local speakers**

**Bec Bennett**, University of Salford

**Ian Bocock**, Incredible Education

**Emma Gardner**, Diocese of Salford

**Michael Hemingway**, Salford City Council

**Andrew Swarbrick,** RHS Garden Bridgewater

**Vic Bennett – University of Salford's Sustainability Journey**

**Experience and Vision**
Vic Bennett, Assistant Director at the University of Salford, has dedicated 15 years to environmental sustainability at the University, establishing its first sustainability-focused role and driving substantial progress over the years.

**Key Achievements**

* **Carbon Emissions**: Reduced direct carbon emissions by over 70% through energy management and electrifying the University’s fleet
* **Sustainable Infrastructure**: Used public funds to retrofit buildings, upgraded facilities, and achieved the ISO certification and Green Flag Award for sustainability
* **Rankings**: Improved the University’s position in the People & Planet University League, consistently placing within the top 20

**Highlighted Programs**

* **Hedgehog-Friendly Campus**: Achieved a Platinum award for protecting wildlife, especially hedgehogs, on campus. This program has now expanded to schools
* **Scope 3 Emissions**: Emphasis on reducing indirect emissions, which account for a significant portion of the University’s environmental impact. Initiatives include sustainable procurement and assessing the carbon impact of international student travel

**Future Goals**

* **Integrated Sustainability**: Embed sustainability across teaching, research, and community engagement, helping students and staff drive positive change
* **Community Support**: Support local communities with resources and expertise, aiming to create a sustainable impact that reaches beyond campus

**Ian Bocock – Empowering Communities through Environmental Education**

**Overview**
Ian highlighted the Community Forest Garden’s role in promoting environmental awareness and sustainability. This community initiative, supported by local volunteers, serves as a hub for education, resource sharing, and conservation.

**Key Initiatives**

* **Water Harvesting**: A new system collects rainwater for the Edible Garden, allowing the community to sustainably irrigate plants and study water quality
* **Educational Outreach**: Programs engage local schools and groups, encouraging young people to connect with nature, learn recycling techniques, and embrace sustainable practices
* **Volunteer Involvement**: Volunteers are essential, contributing to building projects, managing wildlife habitats, and creating recycled furniture
* **Recycling and Resourcefulness**: From repurposing motorcycle parts to creating stools and benches from donated materials, the garden emphasizes creative recycling

**Looking Ahead**
Ian shared his vision for the future, aiming to deepen the garden’s educational impact and inspire sustainable practices across the community. He encourages everyone to visit, get involved, and support environmental initiatives.

**Emma Gardner – Building a Sustainable Future for the Diocese of Salford**

**Overview**
Emma Gardner, Head of Environment for the Diocese of Salford, shared her work on environmental sustainability across Greater Manchester and parts of Lancashire. Covering nearly 1,000 buildings and involving around 80,000 students, the diocese's initiatives emphasize collaboration across faiths to address interconnected social and ecological issues.

**Key Initiatives**

* **Guided by Pope Francis’s Vision**: Inspired by Pope Francis's *Laudato Si’*, which calls for unity in addressing the "cry of the earth and the cry of the poor," the diocese’s approach integrates environmental and social responsibility.
* **The Laudato Si’ Centre**: This center fosters learning, well-being, and spirituality. Programs help participants connect with nature, experience mental and emotional benefits, and deepen their sense of purpose and community.
* **Decarbonizing the Diocese**: With over 60% of emissions from gas, the diocese is transitioning buildings to greener electricity and reducing energy consumption. This effort is in partnership with universities, public entities, and private organizations to make lasting change.

**Looking Forward**
Emma emphasized the importance of community support, education, and partnerships to achieve these ambitious goals. She urged everyone to take part in sustainable practices and advocate for policy changes.

**Michael Hemingway – Salford’s Climate Initiatives and Future Goals**

**Overview**
Michael Hemingway, Principal Officer for Climate Change at Salford City Council, discussed the council’s commitment to tackling climate change through various initiatives. Salford declared a climate emergency in 2019 and aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2038, aligning with Greater Manchester’s environmental targets.

**Key Initiatives and Programs**

* **Decarbonization Goals**: Salford’s ambitious targets include reducing emissions across council-owned buildings, with a major focus on cutting down gas use and increasing renewable energy
* **Solar Projects**: The city is launching a new 2-megawatt solar farm, part of a broader effort to power Salford sustainably and reduce reliance on non-renewable energy
* **Public Engagement**: Through the "Green Yourself" campaign, Salford aims to educate residents about climate action and sustainable practices with an interactive website dedicated to stories, tips, and resources
* **Climate-Friendly Housing**: New developments in Salford are moving towards net-zero carbon standards, including the construction of the region’s first "Passive House" apartment block on Chapel Street, a highly energy-efficient, electric-powered social housing model

**Looking Ahead**
Salford will continue to advance climate efforts, including developing a Fire Environment Plan and enhancing the Greater Manchester Adaptation Strategy to respond to climate impacts. Collaboration across sectors and educating the public remain central to Salford’s mission for a sustainable future.

**Andrew Swarbrick – RHS Garden Bridgewater’s Role in Community and Environmental Initiatives**

**Overview**
Andrew, representing RHS Bridgewater, shared the RHS’s mission to improve green spaces and engage communities through gardening and environmental projects. RHS Bridgewater, a premier garden in Salford, plays a key role in RHS’s national goal of promoting sustainable gardening practices across the UK.

**Key Initiatives**

* **Community Engagement**: Through the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund and other outreach programs, RHS has helped Salford and other areas secure funding for green projects. This includes supporting community groups and enhancing public spaces with gardens, biodiversity initiatives, and sustainable landscaping
* **Nature-Based Solutions**: RHS Bridgewater has been part of the European-funded Ignition Program, which promotes green infrastructure like green roofs and walls, urban gardens, and sustainable drainage. These projects aim to combat climate change impacts while beautifying urban spaces
* **Wellbeing and Mental Health**: RHS collaborates with the NHS to create therapeutic green spaces around clinics for staff and community wellbeing. These spaces are designed in consultation with local residents, fostering a sense of ownership and sustainability
* **Youth Involvement and Skill Development**: RHS Bridgewater works with young people, involving them in planting and maintaining green spaces. Recent projects included planting thousands of bulbs in Salford parks, helping youth connect with nature and gain hands-on skills in environmental stewardship

**Looking Forward**
RHS Bridgewater continues to strengthen community partnerships, focusing on local gardens, food-growing initiatives, and green space improvements across Salford. Andrew emphasized RHS’s commitment to supporting local groups, using Bridgewater as a hub for environmental learning, and encouraging sustainable gardening for the future.

**Get Involved**
Andrew encouraged community groups to connect with RHS Bridgewater, visit the garden, and reach out for potential support or partnerships.