TransitionLab.earth announces open letter to UK Vice Chancellors, UUK and UKRI signed by over 315 scientists and academics, calling for new major action to address climate change and ecological collapse.

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Links
https://www.transitionlab.earth
https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk
https://www.overshootday.org
http://www.scientistswarning.org

TransitionLab.earth announces open letter to UK Vice Chancellors, UUK and UKRI signed by over 315 scientists and academics, calling for new major action to address climate change and ecological collapse.

In response to Earth Overshoot day, TransitionLab.earth have facilitated an open letter to all university Vice Chancellors, Universities UK (UUK) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) with a clarion call to everyone in the UK research and university sector to take a much stronger and active role in climate change mitigation, adaptation and ecological restoration.

Earth Overshoot day, this year being the earliest date ever: “marks the date when humanity’s demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year” (https://www.overshootday.org). Along with recent research from the IPCC that states we now have 11 years to resolve emissions and record high temperatures, the answer is clear - we need to act now.

Top signatories include:
• Dr Shaun Fitzgerald, Director of The Royal Institution,
• Prof. Leroy (Lee) Cronin, Regius Professor of Chemistry, University of Glasgow
• Dr Jean McKendree Stockholm Environment Institute, University of York
• Prof Mark Maslin, UCL, Professor of Climatology & Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and the Royal Society of the Arts,
• Professor Michael J Reiss, Professor of Science Education, UCL Institute of Education,
• Dr Victoria Hurth University of Cambridge, Institute for Sustainability Leadership
• Prof Joy Carter, Vice Chancellor, University of Winchester
• Professor Paul Chatterton Professor of Urban Futures University of Leeds
• Dr Kate Simpson Imperial College London/ Alan Turing Institute, RA, Design for Retrofit

(The full list will be made available on Monday 29th July.)

With the backing of scientists and academics from universities including: UCL, Cambridge, Oxford, Manchester, Kent, Leeds, Winchester, Edinburgh and many more, TransitonLab.earth proposes the university sector to take a new, urgent perspective on climate change and our ecology, and take on a

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much more urgent action-oriented role. This would include supporting new fellowships, programs and voluntary placements with renewable energy companies, local governments' adaptation efforts and NGOs working to address climate change from tree planting to cleaning up plastic pollution. We also hope to raise funds for patent-free clean up and renewable energy technology. Both factors will bring the cost of transition down considerable as well as speed it up.

In the letter, TransitionLab.earth invokes the major collective effort of academics, scientists and engineers and the spirit of enterprise and invention that rose to the challenge of enabling humans to reach the moon within the span of just one decade 50 years ago this year. To address climate change we need collective action on the scale of the International Space Station, CERN and the huge voluntary sector in one major push.

With reference to the UK's current lack of preparedness and coordinated action TransitionLab.earth's mission is to facilitate the placement of scientists and engineers, followed by a range of highly skilled people, students or anyone willing, directly with projects seeking to mitigate climate change and ecosystem collapse, and adapt to climate change.

This is a call to think and act bigger than ever before. More signatories are expected in the coming days as TransitionLab.earth invites the entire sector to unite and join them in mobilising for the Great Transition to a truly sustainable country, while it is still possible.

Quotes
Paul Chatterton, Professor of Urban Futures in the School of Geography, University of Leeds, and Founding Steering Committee member of TransitionLab.earth said:

"We are the last generation of academics who can act to avoid ecological and climate catastrophe. We need to repurpose University research, teaching and their campuses to respond to this emergency and create a fairer and liveable green country."

Mark Maslin, UCL, Professor of Climatology & Royal Society fellow and Founding Steering Committee member of TransitionLab.earth said:

"The UK has declared a climate emergency and announced a zero carbon target for 2050.

The Universities Minister says Britain's Universities are the key to our carbon neutral revolution. But funding of climate change research in our Universities must match this rhetoric.

An open letter to Vice-chancellors, UUK and UKRI already signed by over 220 scientists, calls on Universities to provide support for essential new programs, fellowships, sabbaticals and voluntary placements to help the UK undergo the Great Transition to a sustainable country.

Innovation and new ideas coming out of our great Universities will ensure the UK will decarbonise before 2050 and show the world how it can be done while improving the livelihoods of all citizens."

Alison Green Co-founder of TransitionLab.earth & National director of Scientists Warning said:

"It feels right that members of the academic community, who have researched aspects of climate change for decades, should now come forward in their hundreds to support the mission and aims of Transition Lab. Scientists have issued their warnings - in 1992 and then again in 2017 - and they have been largely unheeded. It's time to act. The work needs to start now"

About TransitionLab.earth
Aspiring to the vision that initiated and sustained grand collaborative projects such as CERN TransitionLab's vision is of academics, highly trained individuals and volunteers working together in a spirit of cooperation to avert the climate change and ecological collapse that threatens life on earth.

Critically, we need to mobilise the level of expertise that led to the construction of the Hadron Collider and the ISS. Such an undertaking will be costly but the Lab will remain as independent as possible, sourcing funds from The Giving Pledge members, foundations, benefactors and crowdfunding for local projects which share our values.

We are politically neutral and are not a lobbying or campaign organisation. While we are open to working with local and national government, we are an action-oriented organisation.

Logo

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Transparent PNG

The open letter

Open letter to Vice-chancellors, UUK and UKRI; help us take action on climate change now

Dear Vice Chancellors, UUK and UKRI,
Humanity stands at the brink of a precipice. If we do not urgently address climate breakdown and the ecological crisis, the very future of life on earth is in question. David Attenborough has said, 'We cannot be radical enough' in tackling the climate crisis and the people are listening. Universities are the bastions of wisdom and knowledge that are urgently needed to combat the climate crisis. Now is the time to increase our efforts.

The crisis is at our doorstep
The impacts of climate change are being felt more rapidly than predicted, with Himalayan glaciers melting twice as fast as expected and the Arctic warming to a full 4°C above average. Thawing permafrost soil is releasing unprecedented amounts of methane and CO2 into the atmosphere. 2018 was the world's 4th hottest year on record. As the UN warns that climate crisis related disasters are happening at a rate of one a week, the risk we face is that impacts may soon run away from us with changes too swift and unpredictable to mitigate.

We need to achieve the impossible: The Great Transition
When in 1961, President John F Kennedy committed the United States to 'go to the Moon' before the decade was out, it was the collective efforts of scientists and engineers that saw this seemingly impossible feat accomplished 50 years ago this year. Today, we face an even greater challenge, and the IPCC's 2018 report makes clear that the 10 year window available to us is non-negotiable. The work starts now to transform our world into a sustainable, safe, fair place for our children to thrive - the Great Transition. We owe our students and the world nothing less than full engagement.

We must act independently and swiftly
The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) recently said ministers were failing to cut emissions fast enough, and failing to adapt to rising temperatures. The Grantham Research Institute just published a report which found that half of all major companies do not factor the climate crisis into decision-making. The Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges recently announced that 7000+ universities and colleges globally have declared a climate emergency. More will join and a global network, working together, could make an enormous difference.

Support fellowships, placements and volunteering for mitigation, adaptation and ecological restoration
We ask you to support scientists and students to help address the climate emergency through a series of new programs, fellowships, sabbaticals and voluntary placements to help the critical efforts needed to save all life on our planet. These will be hosted by a large partnership between universities, companies working on solutions and NGOs.

We need to be leaders. We need to transform our universities into action-oriented institutions.

Please help us make this possible.

Signed,

Signatories o be published soon.

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