



The world is changing: A rising world population, declining resources and a changing climate are all reshaping where we live and how we live. So how do we respond?

This was the key question recently considered by a group of experts from across the University of Cambridge – all keen to examine how we can best respond to some of the planet’s most pressing global sustainability challenges.

On a global scale, we need to find a way in which 7 billion people, expected to rise to 8 billion by 2030 and 9.6 billion by 2050, can live a high quality of life that is less demanding on our planet. And to adapt, be efficient and sustainable, we need to know where to place our energies – nationally and globally – to meet the challenges the future will bring. Unfortunately there is no silver bullet: The solutions will need to be “multi-pronged” and multi-disciplinary, requiring knowledge from many different sources.

“Sharing the knowledge” and catalysing those connections are two of the goals of the Cambridge Forum for Sustainability and the Environment, a new forum in the University made up of 20 of the University’s leading experts in areas ranging from energy, biodiversity and food security to anthropology, architecture, history and economics.

Across the University, there is a huge amount of research into different aspects of sustainability and the environment we live in. The Forum provides a platform for Cambridge researchers to make connections across these diverse areas, and to discuss some of the most pressing sustainability challenges we are facing, as well as the research needed help to prepare for and address those challenges.

The Forum was founded in early 2013 and it has adopted a theme of “Sustainability in an uncertain future”, with the first topic for discussion to focus on the subject of “Cities”. Today, more people live in cities than in rural areas and, by 2050, this ratio is predicted to rise to 7 out of every 10 people.

What measures can be taken to make cities more resilient to disasters or to long term changes in climate? How can houses, traffic and use of resources be made more efficient? Can we rethink how we design and live in cities? What will the impact of increasing numbers of people living in cities be on society, or biodiversity, or on food, water and energy security?

To help us to think about questions like these, a selection of both internal and external experts will be invited to the Forum’s monthly meetings to provide their perspective on sustainability and the greatest challenges they face in their area of expertise. By bringing together a rich mixture of policy- and decision-makers from governments and business, technical experts and researchers, we hope the Forum will generate fresh and innovative perspectives on each of these critical questions, and more.

The results of all of these discussions will be collated as short topical briefings which will provide an overview of the intellectual landscape of each issue. They will also identify areas of consensus, significant gaps in knowledge, fresh ideas and emerging research pathways.

In March/April 2014, the Forum’s theme will shift to “Balancing biodiversity, energy, water and food security”, stimulating connections between three of the University’s Strategic Initiatives (Conservation, Food Security and Energy), and exploring the challenges we face as we place ever increasing and sometimes competing demands on our environment and the world in which we live.

By its nature, environmental sustainability is a multidisciplinary challenge that requires the input of minds from all fields. The Forum’s role is to provide the opportunity to stimulate these cross-disciplinary conversations.

Members

Currently there are 21 members of the Forum— drawn from departments ranging from Zoology to Social Anthropology, Architecture, Engineering and History and Philosophy of Science, and from cross-departmental collaborations working on conservation energy and global food security. Current members and the Schools they belong to are given below:

Physical Sciences

Professor Lord Martin Rees (Dept of Astronomy), Chair
Professor Paul Linden (Dept of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics DAMTP), Director
Dr Rosamunde Almond (DAMTP), Executive Secretary
Professor Susan Owens (Dept of Geography)
Dr Bhaskar Vira (Dept of Geography)

Technology

Polly Courtice, Jake Reynolds, Nicolette Bartlett (Cambridge Programme for Sustainability Leadership)
Dr Mike Rands (Cambridge Conservation Initiative and the Judge Business School)
Professor Peter Guthrie (Dept of Engineering)

Biological Sciences

Professor Chris Gilligan (Dept of Plant Sciences and the Global Food Security Initiative)

Humanities and Social Sciences

Dr Tiago Cavalcanti (Faculty of Economics)
Dr Douglas Crawford-Brown (4CMR and Dept of Land Economy)
Dr Helen Curry (Dept of History and Philosophy of Science)
Dr Hildegard Diemberger (Dept of Social Anthropology)

Arts and Humanities

Professor Koen Steemers (Dept of Architecture)

Independent of any Schools

Dr David Cleevely (Cambridge Centre for Science and Policy)
Gordana Najdanovic (Research Strategy Office)
Dr Miles Parker (Cambridge Centre for Science and Policy)
Dr Emily Shuckburgh (British Antarctic Survey)

Meetings

The core activity of the Forum centres on monthly discussions. Members meet on the third Tuesday of each month (except in July and August) from 4pm until 7pm, followed by an informal, working dinner. The meeting dates for 2013 and early 2014 are:

2013	2014
15th October	21st January
19th November	18th February
17th December	11th March
	29th April
	20 th May
	17 th June

For more information about the Forum, please contact:
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