



WIG

The Whitehall & Industry Group  
connecting the sectors



## 'Environment & Climate Change' Series

The role of academia in COP26 - integrating  
experts with industry & government

Thursday 13 May

### Expert Insight

As we look ahead to COP26 in Glasgow this November, WIG was delighted to host a cross-sector panel to discuss how the expertise coming out of the UK's academic institutions can be best integrated into policymaking and industry developments, with: Alyssa Gilbert, Director of Policy and Translation, Imperial College London, Rhona Turnbull, Climate, Environment & Emerging Issues Lead, Natwest Group and Pauline Metivier, Head of Business Transformation and Sector Support, ReLondon (formerly LWARB).

- Alyssa introduced the audience to the tools available to connect research with policy and industry decision makers, including: specialist staff, exchange schemes/ secondments e.g. the Royal Society pairing scheme, UKRI funded programmes, publications, events targeted at specific audiences, and corporate partnerships.
- The COP26 Universities' Network initiatives include: a directory of experts which can be searched by topic to help make those crucial connections, podcasts and briefings aimed at informing civil servants on key strategic issues, and next week's virtual [Climate Expo](#) event.
- Rhona shared how climate is core to the Natwest group's purpose moving forward, aligned to Paris agreement commitments and Sustainable Development Goals.
- Key to collaborative partnerships is converting academic research into something that can be practically implemented, e.g. recent Handbook for Nature-related Financial Risks.
- Consider engaging both external and internal audiences with academic insights; Natwest Group do this through stakeholder roundtables, and extensive climate education programmes across seniority levels in the organisation that have been developed with partner universities.
- Pauline noted that while energy related emissions have the most significant impact on climate change, product based emission account for 45% globally; moving to a circular economy is a crucial component in achieving net zero.
- Collaboration between cities and academia is a powerful and necessary engine to tackle the climate emergency in 3 key ways: to inform cities' actions, amplify their reach, and pilot new circular models on campus.



### Presentation Spotlight

The panel highlighted numerous examples of collaborative projects where their organisations have taken a leading role, including:

- [The COP26 Universities Network](#) - A growing group of over 55 UK-based universities and research centres working together to raise ambition for tangible outcomes from the UN COP26 Climate Change Conference. They aim to do so by easing access to evidence and academic expertise for COP26 for government, NGOs, and other actors, and by taking action.
- [The Banking Environment Initiative \(BEI\)](#) - a group of global banks committed to pioneering actionable pathways towards a sustainable economy, convened by the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership.
- [CIRCuiT](#) - Circular Construction in Regenerative Cities with 31 partners in Copenhagen, Hamburg, the Helsinki Region and Greater London, including ReLondon and Imperial College. Bridging the gap between theory, practice and policy by delivering a series of demonstrations, case studies, events and other dissemination activities.

### Our members' questions

Our members asked some challenging questions. Some points that were touched upon include:

- What the future of academic collaboration looks like in the context of a move to virtual meetings and conferences in place of face to face, due to both the environmental impact of travel and new working practices post pandemic.
- The importance of tailoring engagement activities to the audience, particularly in terms of speaking to the wider public, e.g. in behavioral change initiatives
- Where the driving force behind research engagement on climate change lies; within academia, industry, government, or across sectors.

WIG members can listen to the panel's presentations [here](#)  
To see our full programme of webinars, visit [www.wig.co.uk](http://www.wig.co.uk)