

INSTITUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

GUIDING TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

STRATEGY

JULY 2021 – JUNE 2024



The institution of
environmental sciences





FOREWORD

Adam Donnan
CEO, June 2021

Society is facing a series of interlinking crises – climate change, biodiversity-loss, soil depletion, deepening inequality, and public health issues – that threaten to overwhelm us. To overcome these crises, over the next 30 years society will have to change, and the economy will need to be retooled in a process analogous in its scale and complexity to the industrial revolution. To build capacity to manage this transformation and to accelerate and validate this process, we need a knowledgeable, diverse, trusted, skilful, and engaged environmental science profession.

The industrial revolution left large swathes of the population impoverished and politically and socially dislocated. If we are to avoid a repeat, we need to ensure a just transition and have a concerted programme to help people deal with radical transformation.

As a multi- and cross-disciplinary organisation connecting professionals, academics, and policy makers from across the environmental sciences, the Institution of Environmental Sciences (IES) has a vital leadership role to play in addressing some of the wicked problems facing society. We represent the full spectrum of environmental disciplines – from fields as diverse as air quality, land condition, marine science, and education – wherever you find environmental work underpinned by science. Together we work as a cohesive membership of thinkers, problem solvers, and doers.

We will champion forward-looking educational standards, imagination, innovation, science, and evidence. We are committed to highlighting to our members, policymakers, the private sector, and the public the ways in which environmental problems might be solved, and the implications of different

pathways. We will not only highlight the importance of systems thinking in solving these interlinked crises, but will utilise our convening power to facilitate systems-level action.

The IES will remain ambitious and seek to grow in size and influence, whilst remaining agile and adaptable to changing circumstances.

This strategy captures the best of the values of our fifty-year history, whilst recognising the accelerated role we must play in helping members and society overcome these challenges.

The following is a guiding document for the period July 2021 to June 2024, although many of its themes will outlast this period.





OUR PURPOSE

1. To unite science and people to resolve environmental challenges

We do this by:

- Horizon scanning emerging science and social issues
- Synthesising best available evidence and highlighting divergences
- Convening debate
- Demonstrating practical solutions
- Giving people the tools to realise and deal with transformative change
- Influencing key people and organisations
- Facilitating collaboration

OUR PURPOSE

2. To create and sustain a knowledgeable, skilled, diverse, and trusted environmental profession engaged in the transformation to a sustainable society

We do this by:

- Inspiring and informing
- Building skills, careers and networks
- Opening pathways into the profession
- Embedding equity, diversity and inclusion across the organisation
- Ensuring trust in the profession
- Leading by example
- Amplifying members' voices and influence



HORIZON SCANNING

What are the themes which will have the biggest impact on the discipline?

Throughout 2019-20, the IES Council and staff identified several societal trends that may impact the discipline, the most important of these were:

- A perfect storm of environmental and social crises that require accelerated radical transformation of society.
- Political and social division arising from that radical transformation between parts of society comfortable with these changes and those who feel left behind or powerless.
- The broadening of environmental science to include other disciplines such as social science, behavioural science, engineering science etc. Within and between these disciplines, new niches will emerge.
- The rise of global movements accelerating social and environmental trends.
- Continued virtual and social globalisation.
- The rapidly changing face of technology, particularly digitalisation, remote sensors, increases to computational power and machine learning, that is affecting many aspects of environmental science.
- Movement toward fractured, shorter, and broader education and training.
- A need for systemic solutions that reach across environmental science communities and into other sectors and disciplines, including green finance.



STRATEGIC SHIFTS

The following items represent shifts in our approach to our work.

1. Have a primary focus on solutions, not just highlighting problems

The environmental sciences have changed considerably over the past 50 years, from a discipline investigating human impacts on the natural world, to a profession leading the transformation to a sustainable society. Our organisational identity and outputs must reflect this change. We will be imaginative, innovative, and solutions orientated. Most environmental problems are wicked problems, so we will help people understand that 'solutions' are at best imperfect and often experimental in nature. We will involve a multitude of stakeholders in the development of proposed solutions.

Emerging problems do not always have solutions, and in these areas we will continue to highlight the relevant science.

2. Stimulate public conversations and help individuals and society cope with change

In addition to changes required to overcome environmental challenges, factors such as machine learning, big data, and automation will change the environmental sciences and society radically over the next 30 years. Our focus will be on helping our members and society cope and possibly thrive with some of these changes.

We will focus not just on upskilling future generations through robust environmental science education, but also on reskilling the current workforce to ensure they are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to support a transition. We will also advocate for the integration of sustainability-focused knowledge and skills in education and training.

Bridging the gap between scientists and other actors within society is a challenge, and we will need to develop effective practical methods for doing so, ensuring that our messaging across these groups is coherent and cultivates the change we are seeking.

In addition to leadership in the technical aspects of our profession, we will be prepared to move quickly on social issues and provide leadership to the sector. We will underpin this with research and create or use existing coalitions to accelerate change. This will be done in a way that brings the whole membership along with us, and we will be prepared to defend our actions in public forums.





3. Maximise the role of IES members as influencers & innovators

Environmental scientists should distil scientific information to society and influence policy makers and educators. We will encourage and upskill our members to be more influential within society, with a renewed focus on engagement tools and methodologies.

4. Go beyond observing and reporting on the sector to making strategic interventions

Our work has identified a number of structural issues within the environmental sector, such as the lack of diversity within the sector and the restricted pathways into the profession. With our span across education, the profession, and public and civil society, the IES has reached a scale where we can - either acting independently or in coalition with other organisations - make structural interventions to address these issues.

5. Increase our international focus

Many environmental problems require a global response and many environmental professionals straddle more than one administrative domain. The IES aspires to be a global standard setter, particular as an accreditation body of environmental programmes. We will build our accreditation of international universities as a launch pad for future international expansion. We will continue expanding our online delivery, so that our resources are accessible outside of the UK.



MAINTAINING FOCUS

The following represent continued areas of focus carried on from the last strategy.

1. Specialisation of membership services and reaching new audiences

We will launch new communities in areas of growth and targeted growth, including challenge-led communities. The aims of these communities will be to provide guidance to our members where there are gaps in the industry, stimulate debate, and learn from best practice. We will continue building on membership services rolled out from existing communities.

As understanding grows that environmental science is highly integrated with social and economic issues, we will collaborate with other organisations to engage with environmental economists, policy professionals, and those involved in land management. These groups may not be traditionally seen as scientists, but to effect the changes we want, we need their work to be informed by science.

2. Be the recognised voice for environmental science professionals, working to promote evidence-informed policy making

We will build a portfolio of policy positions that flow from our organisational objectives, and transmit these to influencers at an early stage. Our policy work should be aimed at embedding IES viewpoints (or a range of views) in emerging policy.

3. Scale the organisation in numbers of members, registers, turnover and accreditations

To achieve the strategy, we need to continue to increase our resources and influence. Expansion of the Institution allows us to have greater impact, offer a broader range of membership services and keep individual unit prices (e.g. event tickets, membership subscriptions) low.

OPERATING MODEL

The following represent new or accelerated changes to the operating model for the period 2021-24, to improve our ability to deliver on our purposes.

1. Recognising our position and role in the wider ecosystem, broadening collaboration, and realising our potential as a convening body

The organisation has taken big strides in the recent years to be outward facing, but we need to have systems in place to increase and maintain engagement with a wide range of external organisations to forward our purpose. We will use our position as an independent organisation to be a convening body, creating a space for debate, collaboration, and leveraging the collective resources of coalitions.

2. Making our horizon scanning an ‘event’, then organise functions around critical issues identified

On a biennial basis we will organise a high-profile horizon scanning event that pulls in work done by government, arm’s length bodies, research organisations and think tanks. This will look at emerging science, workforce data, policy issues and social movements and will be used to inform our work.

Where the horizon scanning has identified an issue, we will prioritise and operationalise our response in a cohesive manner. This will involve bringing together our various membership services – events, education and training, communities, policy, accreditation, and public engagement – around a shared vision, with a focus on a measurable end-goal. This will require maintenance of the inter-team working and agile management techniques. We will expand our Corporate Partnerships Programme and seek grants to help fund this.



4. Increase understanding and use of public engagement

We will expand our own understanding of public engagement and grow our capacity to roll out initiatives that go beyond our membership. We will be firmly focused on helping the public understand the need for radical transformation and support them through the process.

5. Equipping members for the future

We will launch new event, webinars and a community to upskill members in public engagement, further their understanding of the impact of new technologies and techniques, and keep on top of new scientific developments.

We will develop innovative ways for our members to learn, record that learning, and have learning validated. We will expand our guidance on pathways through a career in environmental science. We will be receptive to collaboration with other fields and disciplines to ensure our members pick up a broad range of skills. We will provide online tools for members to collect micro-credentials.

6. Increase marketing

We will accelerate our scaling of turnover, membership, and registrant numbers through targeted marketing and investment in modernising our visual identity.

7. Seamless digital experience

We will ensure our digital offering matches or exceeds what our members expect. We will continue moving a multitude of processes online and automating administration wherever possible to keep costs low, improve the user experience, and minimise the administrative workload.



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