

## Hertfordshire Students' Union

### Part-time Environmental Officer

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**The issue:** No current Environment Campaign Officer

#### ***Why do we need an Environmental Officer?***

Climate Change and the effects of Plastic Pollution are two of the key challenges of our time. Humans are having a significant impact on the environment and its ability to support humans.

It was noticeable, that in the recent 2019 elections, there were no environmental actions on candidate manifestos. This was very disappointing, since it is deemed to be one of the biggest concerns of our society.

An Environmental Officer at Hertfordshire Student Union would be vital in coordinating student action on sustainability and responding to global movements such as the Climate Strikes and Earth Hour. The role will provide an organising force for environmental action in the University, provide a platform for students to engage with sustainability and promote partnerships between UHSU and the University Environmental Team.

The Environmental Officer would be able to drive forward ideas from students as well, as provide advice to societies encouraging them to be more sustainable. Societies are also a big consumer, since they can use large amounts of plastic and paper. This role has many achievable opportunities.

#### **What is the issue?**

Human activities have increased the temperature on earth to approximately 1.0 °C above pre-industrial levels. We have less than 30 years, to ensure temperature does not exceed 1.5C above pre-industrial temperatures.

As shown in the graph 1, you can deduct that there are high-risks associated with a temperature increase.

Figure 1: Impacts and risks associated with the Reasons for Concern Graph 1: The temperature increase is on the y-axis and the Reasons for concern are on the x-axis, describing 5 aspects.

(RFCs) (Stocker et al., 2018).

Each degree of warming comes with consequences. These include, biodiversity loss, extreme weather, sea level rise, causing diasporas, water shortages and crop loss, just to name a few. All with their own disastrous consequences. The diagram below categorises the effects (Meterological Office, 2013)

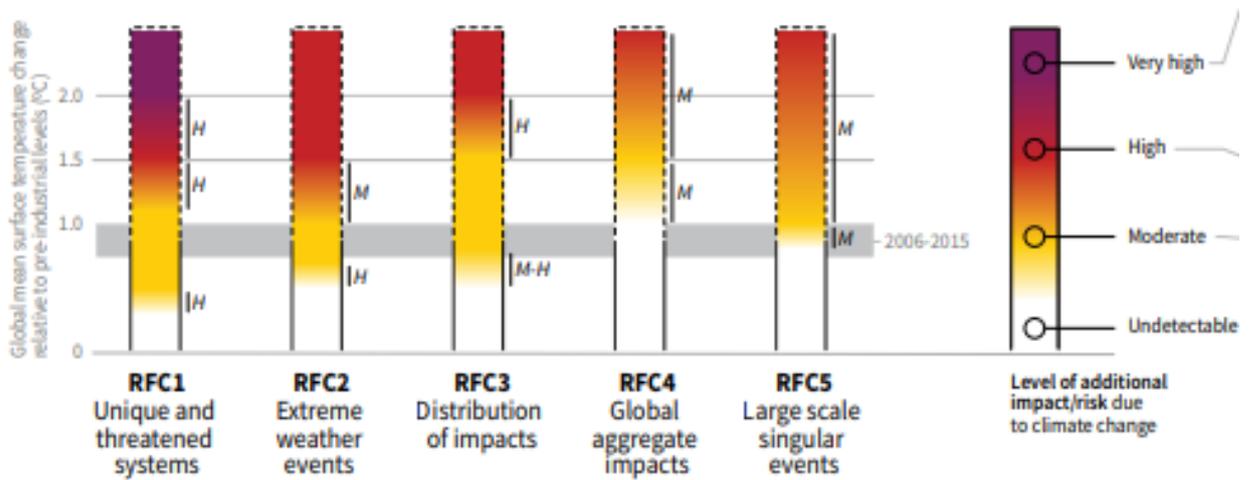
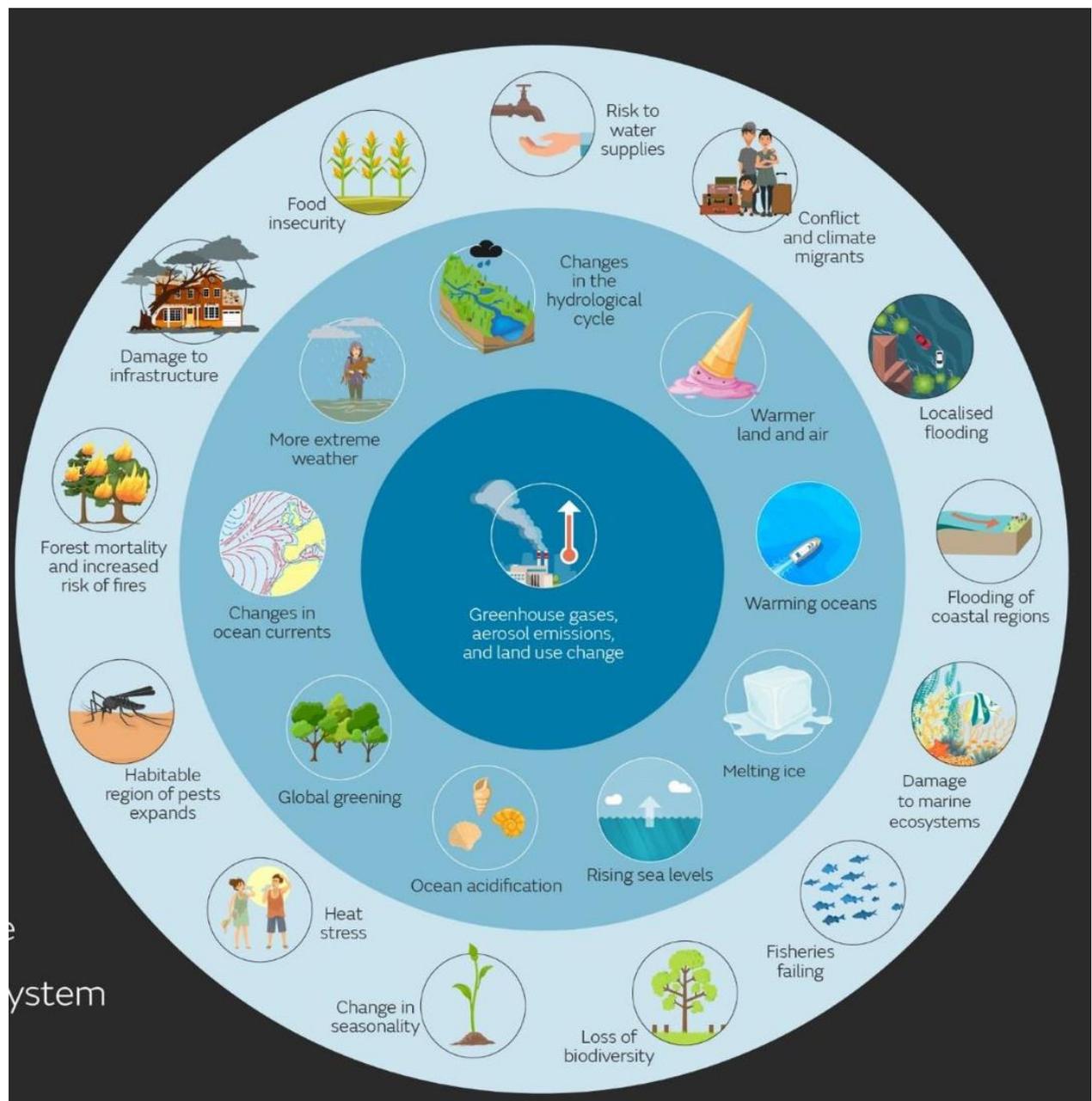


Figure 2: Drivers, changes and Impacts of climate change (Meterological Office, 2013).



On Earth, we have roughly 9 million species of organisms, including plants, animals, protists, and fungi. Biodiversity does not have the sole purpose of aesthetics, as you may think. Yes, plants and animals are beautiful to look at, but they also provides us with ecosystem services (Cardinale et al., 2012). Although, species loss is a natural occurrence and it is normal to lose roughly, 1-5 species per year. Currently, we have a species loss of 1,000 to 10,000 times the background rate. This emphasises the importance to preserve and protect biodiversity (Center for Biological Diversity, 1998).

Furthermore, climate change also influences Human Health. In 2014, WHO documented that more than 7 million deaths every year are attributable to air pollution (Watts, Adger, & Agnolucci, 2015).

All this evidence delivers a clear-cut message.

As students, we should demand and fight for change. It is important that we stand together and express our thoughts and ideas on how to move forward. Mitigation and adaptation are needed, alongside sustainability. Everyone should know what climate change is and everyone should learn how to live a sustainable life, this would be achieved by having an environmental officer who campaigns for:

***-Our campus***

***-Our environment***

***- And our future.***

### **Why do Hertfordshire students care about this?**

This is important to students because this is our future on the line. This is important to students and this is proven by the youth strike movement. This is important to students at Hertfordshire because they need someone who is going to support, encourage and advise them on what they can do about their 'climate anxiety', sustainable products at the University or need for information about living a sustainable lifestyle.

I'm sure that Hertfordshire Students want to do everything that they can to lessen the effects we have on our Environment. This was evidenced by the fact that we had over 1,500 interactions at events during the Environment and Wellbeing Festival 2019.

The Student union is yet to have an environmental leader and to name a few universities that do have an environmental officer: UEA; Reading; Winchester; London City university; Portsmouth, Cardiff, Aston, Roehampton, and Chichester. Their students care, so why wouldn't the students of Hertfordshire?

### **Action undertaken by the student union:**

The Union should express their support in acting to prevent the consequences of climate change by liaising to introduce an Environmental Campaign Officer by the Bi-elections in October. This would allow University-wide encouragement for students to live a sustainable lifestyle.

**Officer responsible:** N/A

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