

## Summer Meeting of the General Council: Saturday 17 June 2023

### University Address by Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dame Sally Mapstone

#### Introduction

My last update to the General Council was delivered at the autumnal meeting on 26 November 2022, during which I described the vibrant atmosphere of the town following the successful return to full in-person teaching. We are now at the end of another academic year and the end of a wonderful week of Graduation celebrations. Over the past five days, more than 2000 students from 90 different countries have crossed the stage in Younger Hall. We have also had the pleasure of welcoming back 73 returning students from the Class of 2020 or 2021 who missed in-person ceremonies due to the Covid-19 pandemic – I am delighted that we have eventually been able to give them the send-off that they deserve.

The core of my address today will be an update on the significant progress that St Andrews has made since our last meeting under the pillars of our University Strategy 2022-27. Work to launch our new Business School has commenced, the Eden Campus continues to grow as a hub for innovation, and our online learning offering is now live, as is our Kaleidoscope Alumni Network.

There is first, however, a series of other developments and successes that I wish formally to acknowledge. In my last update, I described the University's success in topping the *Guardian University Guide 2023*, as well as in *The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide*, which named us their Scottish University of the Year 2023. To these accolades, I am pleased to add that in *The QS World University rankings 2023*, we are ranked 96th globally, which is in the top 7% of institutions ranked by this leading international Higher Education league table.

We have also had a great deal of sporting success, reflecting our investment and hard work over many years. St Andrews looks certain to produce its best ever British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) performance, which will place the University second in Scotland – behind only Edinburgh – and 17th in the UK. Across an outstanding range of achievements, highlights this year include promotion to the top tier of women's football in Britain, following our Scottish league win, as well as Scottish league wins for women's hockey, women's basketball and women's lacrosse. In April, the University of St Andrews Performance Golf Team won the British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) National Final for the second year in a row.

Finally, I am pleased to note that the Laidlaw Music Centre was one of seven buildings named by the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) as winners of the 2023 RIAS Awards, which were announced just a few weeks ago. The winners of the RIAS Awards will now become the 'longlist' for the RIAS Andrew Doolan Best Building in Scotland Award – one of the most significant architecture prizes in the world. At the RIAS awards ceremony two weeks ago, the University was also given the additional Special Award of 'Client of the Year', which recognises how the relationship between client and architect contributes significantly to the creation of a building of outstanding quality. The citation from RIAS noted the Laidlaw building's mission as a space that is enjoyed by both town and gown, as well as its success in bringing together different parts of the St Andrews community. This award is only given to one client each year, so it is a real mark of success that it has been awarded to us.

The impact that the Laidlaw building is having on our community is not only aesthetic and artistic. In 2022-23, 256 students have taken modules organised by the Music Centre. This figure is considerably higher than in previous years and it is probable that the raised profile of music following the opening of the Laidlaw has played a significant part in these excellent figures.

Such accomplishments are important in the face of what has been a challenging year: inflation remains a pernicious force and, in May, the new Scottish Government decided to cut £20m of university funding that had been promised to the sector, a decision further problematised by a flat settlement from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for the coming year. Nevertheless, we welcome continued engagement with the Scottish Government, particularly following the recent publication of the Withers Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape in Scotland, of which universities are a vital part, and their Scottish National Innovation Strategy, which recognises the key role of universities in making Scotland one of the most innovative small nations in the world.

Furthermore, despite these cuts to funding, our commitment to support students and staff during the cost-of-living crisis will continue. As many of you will be aware, in November last year, the University launched a unique six-month pilot scheme offering a 75% discount to all staff and students on Stagecoach bus services, to help combat the cost-of-living crisis and the increase in energy costs.

This scheme has been very successful, saving students and staff £328,000 in travel costs so far. More than 10,000 tickets have been bought by over 1600 staff and students. According to a survey conducted by Transition St Andrews last month, 900 members of staff are now using the bus to travel to work compared to just under 400 recorded in last year's annual travel survey. This increased use of public transport is also helping the University to reach our goal of being carbon net zero. The average carbon saving over the last six months by staff or students taking the bus instead of travelling

by car amounts to around 6,374 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e (kilogrammes of carbon dioxide equivalent) per month. Following negotiations with Stagecoach, the University has been able to provide a 75% reduction on bus travel for a further six months. We will continue to monitor uptake and hope that more staff and students – those not eligible for the Scottish Government’s Under-22 free travel scheme – will get on board and help us ensure we can continue the subsidy in the longer term.

Nationwide, strike action and a marking and assessment boycott (MAB) called by the University and College Union UCU have also caused disruption. However, thanks to the outstanding efforts of key several teams and colleagues across our University, we have been able to award a classified honours degree to all of our cohort in June with no diminution of quality.

As recent events thus show, we continue to operate in uncertain times. However, the last few years have proven that St Andrews is an incredibly resilient institution, and that we can change, adapt and research our way out of even the most testing of times. I will now share examples of how we are moving forward under the Strategy’s pillars.

### **World-leading St Andrews**

The World-leading pillar expresses our commitment to bolstering our international excellence and the University’s links with international partners are vital to the success of our vision for a “World-Leading St Andrews”. Our developing connection with the Sean Connery Foundation is a perfect example of our commitment to our institutions’ global identity. The Foundation honours the legacy of Sir Sean through grant making in the two countries the legendary actor called home: Scotland and the Bahamas. The Connery Foundation aims to accelerate positive change in ocean conservation, an issue of particular importance to Sir Sean and a key area of strength for St Andrews. The Connery Foundation’s recent contribution to the University supports the work of our Scottish Oceans Institute, an interdisciplinary research institute located by the East Sands beach. This contribution will help develop the next generation of marine conservation scientists in both Scotland and the Bahamas, by supporting a pilot educational programme bringing together undergraduate and postgraduate students from both countries to conduct collaborative ocean research projects. I visited the Connery Foundation in the Bahamas in January.

The global identity of St Andrews was also affirmed when our town took on an air of Hollywood glamour, with the arrival of the second Sands: International Film Festival of St Andrews, in April. This year’s exciting programme of events built on the spectacular success of last year’s inaugural festival, creating more profound connections between our town and the international film scene. In particular, we were delighted to see Joe Russo, co-director of Marvel productions such as *Infinity War* and

*Endgame* and key supporter of the Sand's festival, return to St Andrews. Joe was joined by actor and filmmaker, Stanley Tucci, who gave a fascinating Q&A session following the screening of the terrific film "Big Night", his directorial debut from 1996. Being able to attract major figures like Stanley Tucci really does demonstrate the international pulling power of Sands and St Andrews!

Furthermore, Sands showcased a diversity of filmmaking voices, and questions of equality, inclusion, and accessibility were rightfully at the forefront of many events throughout the weekend. This focus aligns with our Film Department's – and indeed the University's – commitment to the broader Diverse St Andrews theme of our University Strategy. Sands also provided some of our students with an excellent opportunity to gain valuable practical experience, as they engaged with the festival through internships and voluntary positions in the Byre Theatre's curatorial, ambassador, and marketing teams. It was wonderful to see the enthusiasm, hard work, and creativity that they brought to these roles.

Beyond Sands, there has been a wider flurry of activity on the St Andrews cultural scene. In February, we were pleased and honoured to host Hobart Earle, Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Odesa Philharmonic Orchestra. Maestro Earle's event, entitled *Ukraine: Music in Wartime*, took place at the Laidlaw Music Centre on 22 February and paid homage to members of his orchestra, many of whom are currently displaced by the war in Ukraine. This builds on the University's offer of solidarity to our international partners and friends during this most difficult time, which I described in my previous updates on the University's direct links to the Ukrainian Government via Lesia Vasylenko, a Member of the Ukrainian Parliament and on the dedicated financial and pastoral support offered to Ukrainian students. To this end, a team of academics from the University of St Andrews' School of International Relations – including a member of the Principal's Office, Professor Stephen Gethins, travelled to Kyiv recently. They met with key members of the Ukrainian government including a range of Government Ministers, senior military commanders, MPs, and academics involved in developing strategy and policy in the defence of the country against Russia. And in mid-May, the University St Andrews welcomed five visiting scholars from the National University of Ostroh Academy in Ukraine. The group is spending two months here as part of the UUKi twinning grant awarded to Dr Emily Finer and Dr Victoria Donovan, both Senior Lecturers in the School of Modern Languages.

We must match such world-leading talent with resources which befit their standard; we are therefore working on several key projects that will enhance and transform our Estate. As I've already briefly indicated, exciting progress is being made on our New College on the site of what was the distinctive Madras College on South Street. When we last met, the University was in the final stages of appointing an architect and design team. Following an exhaustive selection process, we have selected

WilkinsonEyre, one of the world's leading architectural practices, whose extensive expertise in realising visionary new projects within a historic context makes them a great fit for our vision for New College. Indeed, WilkinsonEyre are a firm I know well from their work on the Weston Library at the University of Oxford; their more recent projects include the restoration of the iconic Battersea Power Station in London.

Although in its quiet phase, our fundraising for this project is ahead of schedule, with almost £30m pledged in advance of drawings from the architect (for comparison, when I last addressed General Council, this figure stood at £12m).

Once complete, in 2027, the New College will host the University's highly ranked School of International Relations and the new St Andrews Business School, plans for which were announced in December 2022. Bringing together our current Schools of Economics and Finance, and of Management – both ranked in the top 5 of their subject areas in the UK – the Business school is the cornerstone of our aspirations for the New College project to generate outstanding interdisciplinary research and teaching in areas such as Leadership Personality and Governance, Responsible Finance, and International Financial Market Policy. It will also provide the University's internationally renowned experts in economics, finance, and management with the environment, investment, and support necessary to respond effectively to post-pandemic, climate-emergency agendas, in line with our strategic priorities to be world-leading, sustainable, and socially responsible.

The initial structural changes and building of collaborative activities will be overseen by Deputy Principal and Vice-Principal (International Strategy and External Relations), Professor Brad MacKay, who has recently added to his responsibilities by becoming the Business School's interim Dean. In order to provide timely strategic support to the Deputy Principal, Professor Stephen Gethins has been appointed to the new role of Assistant Vice-Principal (International Strategy and External Relations). Professor Gethins took up this position on 1 June and will remain in post until August 2024, when Professor MacKay will step down as Interim Dean of the Business School and reassumes full responsibility for St Andrews international portfolio.

### **Sustainable St Andrews**

Within the context of today's climate crisis, it is not possible to be world-leading without being sustainable. As part of the Sustainable St Andrews theme of the Strategy, we are committed to being leaders of sustainable change locally, nationally, and internationally through what we research, our opportunities for learning, and how we operate. This commitment is at the heart of the key changes to our Estate, for example we have also taken a significant step forward in our ambition to create a high-quality home for the School of Mathematics and Statistics, which is currently split

across two sites. To achieve our aim of creating a new building on the North Haugh which can further enhance the world-leading work of the School, whilst providing an architectural centrepiece for this area of our University, we have hired architects HLM Architects, whose expertise in carbon-neutral buildings will help us to achieve our vision of a building designed to the highest environmental standards, thereby supporting the University's ambition to become a net-zero carbon institution by 2035.

Our work at Eden Campus has also attracted much attention for its innovative engagement with the theme of sustainability. Members of the Scottish Parliament, Liz Smith MSP and Alexander Stewart MSP, visited the site in March for a tour of its solar farm and biomass plant, and to hear an overview of forthcoming developments based on their interest in the contribution made by the Eden Campus to the economic transformation of Scotland.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Malcolm Offord was also given a preview of the new battery prototyping facility, or "dry lab", located at the Eden campus. The special ultra-low humidity environment is the first of its kind in Scotland and will enable companies and researchers to develop and evaluate battery prototypes before they are manufactured in battery gigafactories. Malcolm Offord commented that the dry lab "will help to deliver on the Prime Minister's priorities to grow our economy and create better-paid jobs by putting the country at the cutting edge of the transition to net-zero".

Across the board, our researchers are forging links with local and national policymakers, to lead on responses to climate change. This month, in fact, the Scottish Government's Minister for Energy, Gillian Martin MSP, was in the Younger Hall, delivering a keynote speech on Scotland's ambitious plans to transform the nation's energy economy and to reach net zero. This speech was part of the programme for our Centre for Energy Ethics' 2023 conference, *Financing the Future*. Ms Martin has already visited the University – in April she launched the Tay Cities Clean Growth website during a visit to the Eden Campus. This initiative aims to promote clean growth across the Tay City regions to boost the area's economy. Ms Martin toured the Campus and viewed the various clean growth initiatives that are being taken forward under our Tay Cities funding.

Our students are, of course, also at the heart of the University Strategy, including its Sustainability theme. At the start of February, the University launched its largest ever programme of student internships focused on sustainability. Over a dozen paid opportunities have been created – with support from Santander Universities and the Careers Centre – which will enable students to join teams working on the University's transition.

## Entrepreneurial St Andrews

These examples of our Sustainable St Andrews activities also have an entrepreneurial spirit at their centre. Through our contributions to the entrepreneurial ecosystem and through social enterprise, we aim to further our ambition as a university to effect the lasting changes society needs. The Entrepreneurship Centre is therefore deepening its engagement with Schools, with a focus on the Schools of Chemistry, Physics and Astronomy, Medicine, and Computer Science, as well as the provision of entrepreneurial training to PGR students and post docs.

Nevertheless, there are many opportunities for all students across the University to get involved with the great work of the Entrepreneurship Centre. A fourth cohort of students have completed the Fast Start programmes run by the Centre and the Start Up Challenge, funded by Santander Universities, received 23 applications, the largest number for the competition thus far. The Start Up Challenge targets students and recent graduates who are moving from the 'idea' stage of development to starting up, and nine finalists attended a pitching event at the end of March.

Indeed, our focus on Entrepreneurial St Andrews is paying dividends as three University spin-outs and start-ups have made the cut for the next cohort of Converge, Scotland's premier company creation programme for staff, students, and recent graduates of all Scottish universities and research institutes. The one hundred spin-outs and start-ups selected will receive support to turn their ideas for products and services into reality as part of Converge's 2023 programme, which includes people from all 19 Scottish higher education institutions.

The University was also shortlisted for two Herald Higher Education Awards 2023. In the Outstanding Contribution from a Staff Member category, Dr Shruti Narayanswamy was nominated for her work in CEED as an Entrepreneurial Education Developer. In the Enhancing Student Learning category, the CEED Entrepreneurial Education Core Team was shortlisted for its work in promoting entrepreneurship at St Andrews to students. Dr Gosia Mitka, Associate Dean for Education (Faculty of Arts & Divinity), is now a finalist for the Female Entrepreneurial Leader of the Year Award in the global Triple E Awards 2023, the results of which will be announced at the end of June.

## Digital St Andrews

The University's current innovative projects are not, however, limited to its offline activities. We are in the process of launching a suite of innovative digital only programmes, with pilots taking place at Masters level. The courses currently on offer include postgraduate degrees in Data Science from the School of Computer Science,



in Data Literacy for Social and Environmental Justice from the School of Geography and Sustainable Development, and in Health Professions Education from the School of Medicine. As I described in my last update, these courses offer flexible learning opportunities to people who are currently in employment and who are looking to develop their skillset. They are not, therefore, only intended to transform our digital reach and impact; they will also provide a significant revenue stream for the University by attracting learners from more diverse backgrounds than those from which we traditionally recruit, while also becoming yet another way that St Andrews graduates stand out from the crowd in terms of employability.

Registrations of interest in these new PGT online offerings continue to grow steadily, and applicant activity is strong at this early point in the cycle. Insights from marketing activities show that interest in the Data Science programme is most pronounced and applications have come from employees at some of the largest financial and consultancy companies, as well as graduates of St Andrews.

### **Diverse St Andrews**

Finally, I've already mentioned the Diverse St Andrews theme of the University Strategy several times – this is not surprising because as a university we strive to put equality, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of all that we do. I am delighted that Dr Rebekah Widdowfield, Vice-Principal (People and Diversity), has joined us today and will expand more fully on the activities of the University in this area in just a few minutes.

However, I do want to mention our new Kaleidoscope Alumni Network, which was launched by our Development team at the end of November 2022. The Kaleidoscope Alumni Network is a pioneering project celebrating the ethnic and cultural diversity of our alumni around the world. The network is open to everyone – new alumni, especially those who are under-represented, and anyone who is interested in acting intentionally to advocate for changes to the social norms that make discrimination such a challenge. The overarching aim of the network is to facilitate discussion and connections between our diverse graduate community – including future alumni – to inspire and effect meaningful change in society by leading by example. [Further information about the Kaleidoscope Alumni Network can be found online on the alumni pages of the University website](#) and I would really encourage you to get involved.



## Conclusion

As this update on our ongoing strategic aims demonstrates, in this current moment, as throughout history, great universities have to anticipate, lead, and adapt. They have to move forward and act as society's engines of innovation and change.

The world we serve has rarely been in greater need of the transformational powers present in the highest quality of independent research and teaching. It is in this context that I will be preparing to take on my new role as President of Universities UK, the advocacy organisation for 140 universities across the UK, on 1 August 2023. I have served as a Board Member of UUK since 2016, including as Vice-President for Scotland, by virtue of currently being Convener of Universities Scotland. In this new role, I will be setting and taking forward an agenda for how Higher Education is seen, overseen, funded, and resourced across the UK, and I will foreground the dynamism and potential of the sector's extensive contributions to the economy, science, the arts, and entrepreneurialism.

Mindful of other business to which we must attend shortly, I shall pause there for now – although, of course, I welcome your questions.