

NEW I2SL CHAPTER

FOSTERS LAB SUSTAINABILITY IN THE UK **WORDS** Phil Macdonald

As a membership organisation focused on promoting the principles of sustainability in the design, implementation and operation of laboratories and facilities for science and research across the world, the International Institute for Sustainable Laboratories (I2SL) has been working for nearly 20 years to grow its global footprint. Early this year, I2SL announced the launch of a chapter in the UK.

Membership of I2SL is drawn from a wide range of laboratory professionals, including owners, operators and occupiers of scientific research space, as well as designers, engineers, constructors and suppliers. In addition to a series of chapters located across the United States, I2SL currently has chapters in China, Singapore and Australia, as well as co-benefits for members of Sustainable Labs Canada (SLCan).

There is significant variation between different parts of the world when it comes to climatic conditions and how our buildings need to perform. Sharing knowledge and technical expertise at a global level is one key to ensuring sustainable lab design and operations decisions are undertaken locally, which in turn results in a positive impact globally. Hence the value and importance of a truly “international” organization.

UK chapter charts a new course

To date, I2SL has not had a formal presence in the UK, though they have been regular contributors to this magazine, and have previously participated in UKSPA conferences and other UK industry events and organisations such as S-Lab.

In addition, the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research—signed recently by UK Research and Innovation, Wellcome, Cancer Research UK,

National Institute for Health and Care Research, and many other organisations—has signaled the importance of sustainable operations and buildings to funders across the UK research enterprise, if not the world.

At last year’s UKSPA 40th Anniversary conference at Warwick, I was delighted to be joined by Brad Cochran of CPP Wind Engineering Consultants, a Board Director of I2SL, to provide an introduction and overview of I2SL and their Labs2Zero programme to help decarbonize the world’s laboratories with energy and emissions benchmarking, scoring, and assessment tools.

Over the last year or so, I have been delighted to be part of a collaborative group of owners, occupiers, operators, consultants and contractors, leading efforts to establish an I2SL chapter here in the UK.



LABS2ZERO PROGRAMME

Read more about the Labs2Zero programme in issue 23 of *Breakthrough*

Below Brad Cochran, I2SL Board Director, delivered an overview of the Institute and its Labs2Zero programme at UKSPA’s 40th Anniversary conference



PHIL MACDONALD is Managing Partner of Oberlanders Architects and leads their Science Technology and Education teams. He has over 25 years’ experience working with owners, occupiers and operators of institutional, academic and commercial science and research facilities right across the UK and beyond.

He is a Director and Board Member representing Business Affiliate Members at UKSPA. He is also a member of I2SL and Chapter Officer for the emerging I2SL UK Chapter.

VIRTUAL EDUCATION WEEK LINKS LAB LEADERS AROUND THE GLOBE

I2SL offers various educational initiatives throughout the year, including an in-person annual U.S. conference in the Autumn.

But with limits on travel and a desire to reduce airline emissions, I2SL is offering its third annual virtual, international Education Week programme in the Spring.

In cooperation with I2SL chapters in the UK, China, and Australia, SLCan, and EGNATON in Europe, the organisation will offer five days of online presentations covering lab decarbonisation, sustainable design, HVAC system optimization, and green labs. Specific topics will include the I2SL Labs2Zero programme, space optimisation, accessible lab design, lab commissioning, and fostering behaviour change to improve sustainability in the lab environment. Registration will open soon, and sessions will be recorded for viewing at attendees’ convenience. ■

“THE I2SL UK CHAPTER WILL PROVIDE A FORUM WHICH FOCUSES ON FACILITIES FOR SCIENCE AND RESEARCH AND THEIR NEEDS IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY PERFORMANCE.”

There are already several forums for dialogue and knowledge sharing, not least the role UKSPA plays in this space, alongside other initiatives such as Constructing Science, UKGBC and commercial providers such as BisNow and BEN. However, what we don’t currently have is a forum which is solely focused on facilities for science and that is the gap which I2SL is able to fill. Rather than creating yet another new forum, bringing an established sustainability organization such as I2SL to the UK allows us to build and expand upon the extensive lab efficiency knowledge and resources that exist within the UK and across the world.

What can I2SL bring to the UK?

The I2SL UK Chapter will provide a forum which focuses on facilities for science and research and their needs in terms of sustainable environmental and energy performance.

The events programme for this chapter will be focused on and relevant to the needs of UK science. It will include building visits and talks so we can see and hear how buildings are performing, what the challenges are and how we might overcome them.

We will also promote the I2SL Lab Benchmarking Tool, which can be used at no cost to compare UK lab building energy and emissions performance to similar facilities. I2SL will encourage greater participation in the important Labs2Zero initiative through the addition of more UK based buildings in the LBT to help grow and expand this important dataset with UK peers.



BENCHMARKING TOOL

Use the code for more about the I2SL Lab Benchmarking Tool



Image ©Ed Nix

Who is involved?

We have attracted interest from over 80 organisations from right across the UK, ranging from universities, research institutes, commercial science, pharmaceutical and manufacturing clients, commercial developers, designers, contractors and suppliers of equipment and services.

The range and variety of organisations is particularly pleasing and we are keen to continue growing and expanding our membership profile. This will ensure the activities we participate in and the knowledge we share is appropriate and relevant to what the UK science and research sector needs.

Next steps

Steps to formally establish the UK Chapter of I2SL are currently being finalized, and we look forward to launching a varied programme of events right across the UK over the course of 2025.

We will also be collaborating with established partners in the UK sector, including UKSPA, to continue to promote the conversation around the positive steps we can take to ensure sustainability in the design, implementation and operation of our spaces for science and research in the UK. ■



International Institute for Sustainable Laboratories

FIND OUT MORE & GET INVOLVED

Please get in touch with us at admin.ukchapter@i2sl.org

Owners, operators, occupiers, designers, constructors and suppliers to science and research facilities across the UK are all welcome to get involved.