



UNIVERSITY OF  
LIVERPOOL

# SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

We are projects that make headlines,  
and people that make history

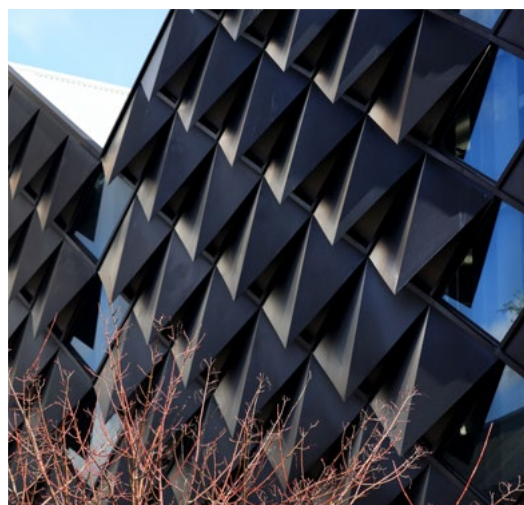
**WE ARE THE ORIGINAL REDBRICK**





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# Key achievements since the strategy was launched



64th in QS World Rankings: Sustainability, 88th in THE Impact Rankings, and 32nd in the People & Planet University League



48% reduction in domestic general waste sent for incineration with energy recovery



New Biodiversity Plan published, supported by estate-wide habitat surveys



£248k savings through the Warp It reuse platform



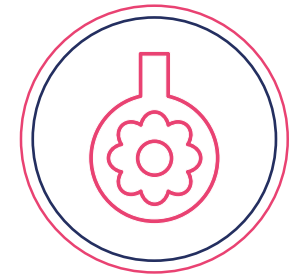
Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainability Research launched



Fairtrade University Accreditation achieved



Sustainability requirements embedded in the curriculum through the new Liverpool Learning Framework



Living Labs Programme launched





## Foreword from the Chief Financial Officer

The past year has seen significant progress in sustainability at the University of Liverpool. Guided by our 2031 strategic framework and the launch of our Sustainability Strategy in February 2025, we strengthened our environmental performance and social equity across research, education, and operations.

I am therefore delighted to present this report, which outlines key achievements over the past year alongside performance data to give a transparent account of delivery against our strategy commitments. Looking ahead, the report also outlines what to expect over the next 12 months including the implementation of the University's new Energy Strategy, and development of a researcher toolkit which will support compliance with funder policies on sustainability.

We are only able to achieve our aims through the collective efforts of the entire university community, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your dedication and support.

**Nicola Davies**

Chief Financial Officer and Chair of the Sustainability Committee

## Strategic alignment and reporting context

Sustainability is a cross-cutting theme within **Liverpool 2031**, the University's strategic framework. As such, environmental and social sustainability underpin our approach to research, education, partnerships and operations, reflecting our role as a civic and global university and our responsibility to drive positive change locally, nationally and internationally.

Published in February 2025, the **Sustainability Strategy** sets out how we will deliver our environmental and social equity commitments. It provides a clear framework for action, supported by defined success measures and underpinned by robust governance and reporting.

Progress reported in this document is measured against the Strategy's success measures, which are intended to position the University as a sector leader in sustainability by 2031.



## Measures of success

The Sustainability Strategy identifies six measures of success, which provide the basis for monitoring progress and accountability:

- 1** Maintaining a **global top 100** position in the annual QS Sustainability Rankings.
- 2** Six additional interdisciplinary research projects >£1m that are focussed on the UN SDGs.
- 3** Embedding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within **100% of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught programmes**.
- 4** Achieving a transition towards **net zero** in scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2035, and scope 3 by 2050.
- 5** **Gold status on the Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) for 100% of eligible labs.**
- 6** Biodiversity net gain of at **least 10% linked to all estate developments**.

## United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Our Sustainability Strategy and plans have been underpinned by the **United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) since 2020, when we **signed the SDG Accord**. Our contribution to all 17 of the Goals is reported annually as case studies highlighting our research, education and operations. The annual **SDG Report** should be read alongside this strategy review, as together they provide a comprehensive and transparent account of the University's sustainability activities and progress.

## Carbon reporting

In keeping with our commitment to transparency, we also publish carbon data annually within the University's **financial statements**. From 2026 we will supplement our existing scope 1, 2 and partial scope 3 reporting with full scope 3 reporting using methodology set out in the sector-specific Standardised Carbon Emissions Framework (SCEF).

## Governance and assurance

Effective governance underpins delivery of the Sustainability Strategy. Oversight is provided by the **Sustainability Committee**, which is responsible for strategy implementation, performance monitoring and risk management. The committee is accountable to the Senior Leadership Team. Environmental performance is managed through the University's **ISO 14001-certified Environmental Management System** and assured through internal audit processes and external reporting frameworks, including SCEF and statutory submissions to the Higher Education Statistics Agency.

# Progress to date

This is a summary of our progress towards delivering the Sustainability Strategy during its first year, presented under each of our strategy pillars: research, education and student experience, and campus operations.



## Research

- The **Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainability Research** was launched in February 2025, strengthening capacity to develop major funding bids aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Alongside this, our existing Sustainability Research is addressing the twin global challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. Just a few of our leading research centres include the Stephenson Institute for Renewable Energy, the Liverpool Institute of Sustainable Coasts and Oceans, and the Centre for Sustainable Business. We are also leading the way on sustainable clinical trials nationally, and closer to home our research has influenced Liverpool City Council's travel plan, resulting in improved cycle infrastructure and healthier air conditions for local residents.
- As of January 2026, all eligible laboratories and workshops (151) are participating in the **Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework** (LEAF). 71 have achieved bronze awards, 60 have silver awards and 20 have achieved the highest rating of gold.
- A working group was established in the autumn of 2025 to oversee development of an action plan for the **Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation**. Alongside this, work is underway to support researchers in meeting environmental policies of research funders.
- In November 2025 an offsetting scheme was introduced for business travel funded through Wellcome grants (inline with **Wellcome requirements**).
- Tagging of research outputs and grant applications has been implemented in Liverpool Elements and IRIS, improving SDG reporting and strengthening our QS Sustainability and THE Impact submissions.





## Education and student experience

- As part of the Curriculum 2027 project, the new **Liverpool Learning Framework** has incorporated mandatory requirements for embedding sustainability across all taught programmes.
- Our sustainability-focused **Living Labs programme** was launched in 2025, providing students and staff with opportunities to engage in real-world sustainability challenges on campus.
- New postgraduate programmes were introduced in 2025, including the **MSc Green Finance and Sustainability Accounting** and **MSc Sustainable Business**, supporting the development of green skills and responding to employer demand.
- We delivered our third annual **Sustainability Week**, engaging over 500 staff, students and alumni through research showcases, educational activities and campus tours, including 246 attendees at the Sustainability Fair, and strong digital engagement.
- Our Libraries, Museums and Galleries embedded sustainability across their operations, delivering key commitments set out in their **strategic plan**.
- A Sustainability Intern has been employed within the University Sustainability Team, alongside their studies on the MSc in Sustainable Business.



## Sustainable campus and operations

- Our **Climate Plan** was refreshed to reflect commitments in the new strategic framework, Liverpool 2031, and to incorporate our new carbon baselines. We also published a new **Biodiversity Plan** in February 2025, followed by a comprehensive estate-wide habitat survey.
- The **Waste Management Plan 2021-25** was successfully implemented, achieving a 48% reduction in domestic general waste being sent for incineration-with-energy-recovery, through prevention, reuse and recycling initiatives. One such initiative is the **Warp It reuse platform**, which was launched in February 2025 and has saved 52 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e, and diverted 14 tonnes of waste from disposal.
- Work has been underway to develop a new Energy Strategy, alongside this our on-site solar generation has increased by x8 from our baseline, and geothermal feasibility with the Royal Liverpool University Hospital has progressed, strengthening the foundations for long-term decarbonisation within the Knowledge Quarter.
- **Fairtrade status** was awarded by the Fairtrade Foundation and SOS-UK in June 2025, reaffirming our commitment to responsible procurement and supply chains.
- Our **Ethical Investment** and **Treasury Management** policies were reviewed and updated during 2025 to strengthen our commitments to sustainability and ESG. Alongside this a new reporting template was introduced for Fund Managers to make sustainability reporting on our investments more robust and transparent.
- Sustainability and Climate Change **training** was made available to all staff, and was included in all new starter inductions, supporting sustainability literacy and practical action across the University.

# Key highlights



## Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainability Research

The launch of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainability Research (ICSR) during Sustainability Week in February 2025 has strengthened capacity for interdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together expertise from across faculties to shape major funding bids aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In its first year, the Centre focused on climate-related SDGs resulting in 4 projects receiving pump priming:

- Microplastics in Construction: Understanding environmental and health risks to guide policy and public awareness
- Co-Creating Geothermal Sustainable Heating
- Feasibility study for renewable energy solutions in coastal ecosystems and fisheries
- Green Adaptation Strategies for Flood Resilience in Infrastructure, ecosystems, health and wellbeing

Two IBM studentships also commenced in December 2025 and will undertake research into AI and air quality monitoring.

## UKRI Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice

Since becoming signatories to the **Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice** in April 2024, work has taken place to address the six priorities areas through alignment with the new Sustainability Strategy delivery plan. This includes actions to address our business travel emissions, with the launch of new **Sustainable Travel Guidance** and the introduction of an offsetting scheme to support compliance with Wellcome Trust funding. Alongside this, we have published resources to support the research community in addressing the environmental impacts of their work, including **Sustainability Laboratory Guidance**.



## LEAF

Plans to achieve **Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework** (LEAF) 'gold' ratings across all eligible labs by 2031 are progressing well, with 100% of labs (151) now registered for the framework and over 99% with an award. Driven by a dedicated Laboratory Sustainability Officer working across the three faculties, LEAF supports improvements in energy and water efficiency, waste reduction and sustainable procurement. As of January 2026, 20 labs had achieved a gold award, 60 had achieved a silver award, and 70 had a bronze award. Demonstrating our strong leadership in this area, the University is represented on the Institute for Technical Skills and Strategy (ITSS) Environmental Sustainability Network and the Northwest Lab Sustainability Network.



## Liverpool Learning Framework

We have embedded sustainability more consistently across the student learning journey over the past 12 months, through the launch of the new **Liverpool Learning Framework** which was created as part of the Curriculum 2027 project and approved at the highest level by University Senate in the summer of 2025. The framework includes sustainability and global citizenship as core learning outcomes, ensuring that all students develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to contribute to sustainable development. Beyond the formal curriculum, students have engaged with sustainability through co-curricular activity and volunteering opportunities offered by the Student Guild, while new sustainability and climate change training has supported staff to embed sustainability within their teaching and professional practice.



## Living Labs

Our Living Labs programme was launched as a pilot in May 2025, providing opportunities for students and staff to collaborate on real-world sustainability challenges, supporting objectives set out in the Liverpool Learning Framework and reaffirming our commitment to the **Joint Declaration on Embracing a Living Lab Approach to Promote Carbon Neutrality**. Four project briefs have been adopted to date, including to explore domestic waste on campus, and fast fashion in halls. Outputs from these projects will be shared with the Sustainability Team to inform delivery of actions in the Sustainability Strategy. As part of the longer term roll out of the programme, sponsors will be sought from across the city region, strengthening ties with local partners as part of our wider civic mission.

## Sustainability Week

Each year we host **Sustainability Week** as part of Feel Good February. Taking place between 24th–28th February 2025, last year's event was our most successful with over 500 staff and students participating in 25 activities covering a broad range of sustainability topics. With over 20 stalls and nearly 250 attendees, the Sustainability Fair showcased sustainable research centres and projects, as well as sustainable initiatives taking place across the University in areas such as our libraries, IT Services, procurement and PCS. Several guided tours took place throughout the week including the Materials Innovation Factory, The Spine and the University's onsite Energy Centre. The Liverpool Guild of Students played a key role in the success of Sustainability Week 2025 hosting a variety of workshops and events such as a Swap Shop which has since become a permanent fixture in the Guild running every Tuesday–Thursday 10–3pm.





## Biodiversity Plan

A major milestone achieved during 2025 was the publication of our first **Biodiversity Plan**, supported by completion of estate-wide habitat surveys using the UK Habitat Classification. This work established a robust baseline aligned with Biodiversity Net Gain requirements and will inform future capital projects, grounds management and public realm improvements. Alongside these, initiatives such as the Hedgehog Friendly Campus, coordinated by staff and student volunteers and ongoing work at Ness Gardens, and planting at the Leahurst Site have supported our strategy commitments to protect and enhance nature across all our sites.

## Waste and Recycling

Significant progress has been made in reducing waste over the past 12 months. The **Waste Management Plan 2021–2025** concluded, resulting in a 48% reduction in general waste sent to incineration with energy recovery compared with the pre-COVID baseline. This was achieved through the introduction of new recycling streams (including green waste, glass, mattresses, metals and wood), alongside expanded food-waste recycling, green waste composting and the launch of the Warp It reuse platform, delivering significant financial savings (£248k), avoiding 52 tCO<sub>2</sub>e carbon emissions and diverting 14 tonnes of waste. Our new Waste and Resources Management Plan will be published in 2026.



## Energy

Our focus during 2025 was on developing a new Energy Strategy which serves as a framework to guide future decisions on the development and management of the University of Liverpool's energy operations. It includes activity to prioritise clean energy and aligns with our broader Net Zero reduction targets. Through its implementation we will focus on energy conservation and efficiency across our large estate, as well as decarbonising our district heat network assets. Whilst still accounting for <1% of our total energy consumption, significant progress has been made towards increasing on-site solar generation, with an eightfold increase compared to our baseline. Alongside this, a geothermal feasibility study has been undertaken in collaboration with Royal Liverpool University Hospitals and supported by academic expertise from within the University, targeting upgrades to improve the efficiency and resilience of campus heat networks. Additionally, two projects are underway – funded by the previous Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to install air source heat pumps at Vine Court and the Small Animal Teaching Hospital at Leahurst.

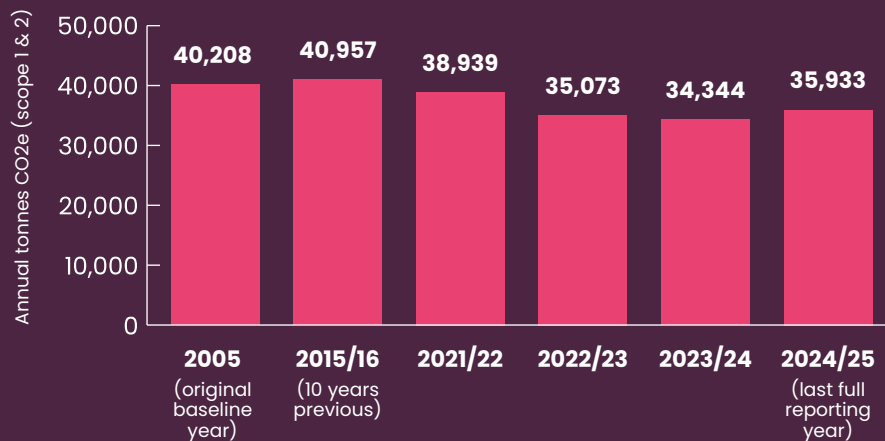


## Carbon Reduction

In 2024/25, total Scope 1 and 2 emissions from energy consumption and the vehicle fleet increased slightly, by 4.6%. This reflects seasonal operational fluctuations including increased usage across halls of residence. Despite the increase, overall Scope 1 and 2 emissions remain below both the original 2005 baseline and pre-pandemic levels.

It is important to note that 100% of the University's grid-imported electricity is procured through certified renewable electricity tariffs. However, in line with reporting to EMR, HESA, the Financial Statements and this report, location based carbon factors have been applied, meaning imported electricity is calculated using the grid-average carbon intensity rather than being treated as zero carbon.

Absolute emissions are presented here to show long-term trajectory, while intensity-based metrics (per m<sup>2</sup> and per FTE) are reported through the Estates Strategy.



## Statutory Compliance

2025 was a strong year for statutory compliance at the University of Liverpool. We successfully maintained our ISO 14001 certification following a surveillance audit in November 2025 and achieved full compliance with our Greenhouse Gas (GHG) permit and UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) responsibilities, while retaining Combined Heat and Power Quality Assurance (CHPQA) certification. We also completed the Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS) Phase 3 and published our action plan, obtained a new environmental permit under the Industrial Emissions Directive and Specified Generators Regulations, and advanced heat network assurance by submitting a Heat Network Efficiency Scheme (HNES) grant application for a network optimisation study.



## Residential Services

Phase 1 of the halls lighting upgrade programme at Vine Court replaced 1,800 fittings with LED lighting, reducing energy demand and delivering annual savings of £22,325. Recycling performance in our student accommodation also improved year-on-year, with the recycling rate increasing to 22.75% (excluding food and glass), alongside a 21% increase in food waste diverted to anaerobic digestion through separate collections across all halls. And for the second consecutive year no skips were used during student move-out, resulting in zero landfill waste from this activity. These outcomes were complemented by the launch of the Sustainable Halls campaign, embedding sustainable behaviours into student induction and day-to-day living.

# Sustainability Rankings

External benchmarking via rankings provides independent assurance of our progress whilst also raising the profile of our work. The University participates in all 3 major sustainability rankings and has consistently performed within the top 100 globally (QS and THE) and top 50 in the UK (People & Planet) over the past 4 years.

Our latest ranking positions can be found below:

- **QS Sustainability Rankings 2026**: **64th** out of 2,001 global institutions
- **Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2025**: **88th** out of 2,318 global institutions
- **People & Planet University League 2025**: **32nd** out of 147 UK institutions

Results of the 2025 NSS survey also provide useful benchmarking data relating to our Environmental Sustainability performance, as viewed by current students. These scores are not as high as we would like them to be, but we will place strong emphasis on improving them in 2026 through more targeted student engagement and promotion of the new requirements embedded in the Liverpool Learning Framework.

- *My institution encourages good environmental practice*: Score **72.5**
- *My course has encouraged me to think about environmental sustainability*: Score **59.5**
- *I have had opportunities to take part in activities supporting environmental sustainability*: Score **51.8**





# Awards

Internal contributions toward achieving our sustainability goals is recognised through our annual staff awards.

In 2025 Waste and Recycling Officer, **Sam Hay** (Property and Campus Services) received the **Outstanding Contribution to Sustainability individual award**, and the **Residential Services Sustainability Group** (Property and Campus Services) received the team award. Commendations were received by **Dr Sandra Pereira Cachinho** (Institute of Systems, Molecular and Integrative Biology), and **Professor Paula Williamson** (Department of Health Data Science) and the **Ultra-Low Temperature Freezer Project team** (Liverpool Shared Research Facilities) and the **Centre for Sustainable Business** (Management School).

External recognition was also received with University of Liverpool staff being shortlisted for the following awards:

- **Outstanding Technician of the Year** at the Times Higher Education Awards – **Jenna Lowe**, Laboratory Sustainability Officer (Sustainability Team).
- **Excellence in Sustainability** award at the Papin Prizes – **Jenna Lowe**, Laboratory Sustainability Officer, (Sustainability Team).
- **Green Gown Award** in the 'Campus Health, Food and Drink' category – **Campus Food and Drink Team**, (Property and Campus Services).



Residential Services Sustainability Group



Sam Hay, Waste and Recycling Officer



Jenna Lowe, Laboratory Sustainability Officer



# Looking ahead

## Over the next year, we will continue to drive forward progress against our strategy commitments.

Our research priorities will focus on raising the profile of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainability Research, Research Frontiers, and other sustainability-focused centres, CDTs and projects that deliver local and global impact. Oversight will be strengthened through improved reporting of SDG-tagged grant applications and research outputs. We will also prioritise delivery of the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Impact through an action plan and active engagement with the research community, while continuing to embed LEAF in labs, promote sustainable clinical trials guidance, and explore the Green Disc framework for computational research.

Building on progress made through the Curriculum 2027 project, all programmes are being reviewed and updated to include Education for Sustainable Development learning objectives aligned with QAA and relevant PSRB requirements. Sustainability will also be embedded within the Liverpool Advantage, and the Living Lab programme will be expanded so all students can gain real-world sustainability experience while contributing to campus and city-region innovation.

Under the campus operations pillar, priorities include accelerating delivery of net zero targets through implementation of the new Energy Strategy and strengthening scope 3 emissions management and reporting. The Biodiversity Plan will be translated into an evidence-led programme of action, alongside development of a new University Travel Plan

informed by staff and student surveys, strengthening collaboration with the City Council and Combined Authority. And, a new Waste and Resources Management Plan will build on progress to reduce waste, with targets including £1m savings by 2030 through reuse, up to an 80% reduction in bulky WEEE waste, and embedding circular economy principles in research processes.

While progress is positive, significant challenges remain. These include continued reliance on gas for heating, the

need to further strengthen scope 3 emissions data and management, the need to strengthen targeted water conservation measures to achieve further reductions, and delivery-dependent biodiversity gains. Progress will depend on sustained investment, recognising that the current financial environment constrains our ability to invest at pace and requires careful prioritisation of areas with the greatest impact. We thank our staff, students and partners for their continued commitment as we work together towards a more sustainable University of Liverpool.







## Find out more

You can follow our progress on any of our social media channels:

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 UoLSustainability

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Or speak to a member of the Sustainability Team  
by emailing: [sustainability@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:sustainability@liverpool.ac.uk)

We are big ideas and bold, independent thinkers.  
Individual triumphs and world firsts.  
Lively debates and life-changing research.  
Flashes of inspiration and hard-earned breakthroughs.

[liverpool.ac.uk/about/sustainability/](https://liverpool.ac.uk/about/sustainability/)