



UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

CLIMATE PLAN

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

WE ARE THE ORIGINAL REDBRICK



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INTRODUCTION

This document sets out our ambitions, principles, and commitments as well as referencing the key supporting documents that work to enable the University to address the climate crisis.

It outlines how we are going to move forward in developing our pathway to net zero, and how we will use climate adaptation to respond to the risk climate change poses. Creating a low carbon future and achieving net zero cannot be achieved overnight, it will be a transition. This transition needs to be achieved at pace but more importantly it must be inclusive and fair. We have set out how we will support the entire university community in increasing our collective understanding of climate change, and how we will focus our research expertise to address one of the most important issues which currently faces society.



CONTEXT

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Net Zero Targets

In January 2020 we formalised our commitment to the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (UN SDGs) by signing the global higher education sector's SDG Accord in partnership with the Liverpool Guild of Students. In signing the SDG Accord, pledged to put the UN SDGs – including SDG 13 'Climate Action' – at the heart of all our activities. The following year we issued a [joint declaration on the climate and ecological crises](#) in conjunction with campus Trade Unions and the Liverpool Guild of Students, reinforcing the University's commitment to addressing climate change and harm to nature.

Locally, Liverpool City Council has an ambitious target to reach net zero by 2030 focusing on buildings, energy, transport and waste. Under the leadership of Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has set a target to become net zero carbon by 2040 or sooner. The University's Sustainability Strategy 2031 sets a success measure to achieve a transition to Net Zero in scopes 1 and 2, in line with the University's Strategic Framework Liverpool 2031 and with similar targets across the wider Higher Education sector. Our target for scope 3 emissions is 2050, in line with the UK government's binding target to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Additional success measures for sustainability are set out in the University's strategic plan, [Liverpool 2031](#), and the [Sustainability Strategy](#).

'Net Zero' and Carbon Scopes

Net zero refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. We reach net zero when the amount we add is no more than the amount taken away. Greenhouse gas emissions are categorised into three groups or 'scopes' by the most widely used international accounting tool, the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol:

- **Scope 1:** The direct emissions from the sources we control and own, such as from heating sources (gas boilers and CHP generators) or vehicle fleet emissions.
- **Scope 2:** The power we purchase (e.g. electricity from National Grid) such as to light buildings.
- **Scope 3:** The emissions associated with the wide range of activities we engage in, including staff and student commuter travel, business travel, waste, water, and the goods and services we procure.

Reporting our Emissions

The University uses the sector-specific Standardised Carbon Emissions Framework (SCEF) and the HESA Estates Management Return (EMR) to report on its carbon emissions. These frameworks also enable us to track our methodologies and data capture to make continuous improvements in the quality of our carbon accounting.

The SCEF is used to track our scope 1 and 2 emissions, and scope 3 emissions, separately. The reporting period for the SCEF will align with the financial reporting year 31st July – 1st August. These are reported in the University's Annual Financial Statements.

Appendix 1 presents our Carbon Management Plan which includes a breakdown of the University's baseline scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon emissions and the supporting plans, policies and strategies that work to mitigate and reduce these emissions.



Solar Panel charging station on the city campus

OUR PRINCIPLES

We have developed a set of principles that will guide our climate response and therefore underpin this plan. These include:

- 1 Achieving a just and equitable transition to a sustainable strategic and operational delivery model, both within and beyond the University of Liverpool, working collaboratively with stakeholders across the city region and further afield.
- 2 We will lead the development and sharing of climate knowledge and using this to find solutions within our own operations that have a positive impact locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.
- 3 We will focus our decarbonisation efforts on improving functionality, reducing inefficiencies and reducing consumption to ensure the achievement of net zero.
- 4 We will enhance resilience of our campuses to withstand both the physical and non-physical risks imposed by adverse climate events and trends.
- 5 We will prioritise resources based on environmental aspects and environmental impacts as outlined within our ISO 14001 Environmental Management System and optimising the reduction of carbon, consumption, and waste.
- 6 We will adopt circular economy practices to maximise the value of our assets, minimise waste and emissions, and to rehabilitate and replenish natural resources on campus.
- 7 We will encourage our staff and students to be positive agents for change and champions of sustainability guided by the UN SDGs.

OUR COMMITMENTS

To facilitate the University addressing the impacts of climate change, we have made a series of commitments aligned to the pillars of the Sustainability Strategy.

Sustainable Campus and Operations

We are committed to achieving a transition to net zero for scopes 1 and 2 by 2035, and scope 3 by 2050. This approach is supported through a strong framework of plans which outline how we operate sustainably and drive emissions reductions. These include:

- Environmental Policy
- Business travel and expenses policy
- Ethical investment policy
- Energy strategy
- Procurement strategy
- Guidance for sustainable design and performance of our campus developments
- Waste management plan
- Travel plan

Each of these documents have their own related actions which are governed through individual routes to hold them to account.

Research and Impact

The foundations of the University are built upon research, and we continue to develop solutions and knowledge, responding to global sustainability challenges. We are in clear pursuit of climate protection and continue to align our Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange to the UN SDGs, ensuring our approach to research is ethical and transparent. We work collaboratively with the wider research community, including funding bodies and other universities, to drive a just and equitable transition to low carbon through research in its widest sense.

We are a member of the N8 Network which is a collaboration between the eight most research-intensive Universities in the North of England. As part of this partnership we contributing to the Carbon Operational Knowledge Exchange Project.

In 2024, the University was one of the first Higher Education Institutes to sign up to the [Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice](#). The concordat represents a shared ambition for the UK to continue delivering cutting-edge research, but in a more environmentally responsible and sustainable way.

Additionally, in late 2024 the University opened the Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainability Research. The Centre's mission is to support teams of researchers who can collectively tackle the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. It will bring together different researchers with a variety of knowledge, experience and skills from across the University, as well as engaging with national and international experts.



Education and Student Experience

Our ambition is to provide an education that equips all graduates with the knowledge, skills and behaviours that will enable them to make their own contribution to a sustainable future, both personally and professionally.

We deliver a range of sustainability focused undergraduate and postgraduate education, programmes, including programmes aimed directly at researching and learning about climate change. As well as this, all students have access to a range of extracurricular activities related to sustainability via The Guild and Careers & Employability. All students receive an opportunity to study sustainability through the Student Sustainability Hub. The Hub is the online home for the Student Sustainability Network featuring a collection of resources: self-study online courses; a diary of events; and a database of projects, volunteering, and work placement opportunities.

In May 2025 the University launched its [Living Lab programme](#) which provides the opportunity for students to get involved with hands on research within coursework and extracurricular activities, enabling them to apply their disciplinary knowledge to real world challenges on campus.

People and Culture

We recognise the need to ensure our ambition and commitment are reflected in our university culture. We embed sustainability across all relevant strategies, policies and practices, to ensure that sustainability is taken into consideration in all decision making and activity. We place equity at the heart of our approach ensuring we are aligned to our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion commitments. We provide training opportunities for staff through various channels, including induction, online and face to face. Our comprehensive communication and engagement plan supports this work, through targeted staff engagement, knowledge sharing and reporting of our progress.

Global Engagement and Partnerships

As an anchor institution in the city of Liverpool, the University is well placed to work in partnership with city and regional partners, including Liverpool City Council, Liverpool Combined Regional Authority, Knowledge Quarter partners, local organisations and the third sector, to develop solutions and innovations to help us achieve our collective sustainability commitments.

Beyond the UK, we are internationally recognised for being a global institution, this includes our joint ventures with Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) and the University of Liverpool Bengaluru, in India. This gives us a unique position in accessing global partnerships that work tackling the climate crisis.

We engage with industry and sector specific bodies including IEMA (The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment) and EAUC (Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges – the sustainability champion for the Higher and Further Education sector in the UK) to access best practice and partnering opportunities.



GOVERNANCE

Our Sustainability Delivery Plan

To deliver our Sustainability Strategy and supporting plans, we have developed a set of actions within our Delivery Plan which details the activities lead roles and timescales required to achieve our ambitions. This Delivery Plan includes actions that cut across research, education and student experience and campus and operations.

Reporting

Delivery of the commitments and actions set out in the Climate Plan are held to account by the University's Sustainability Committee (which monitors the University's overarching Sustainability Delivery Plan), and in turn the University Senior Leadership Team. Specifically, actions relating to the estate and operations are managed and reported via the Sustainable Campus and Operations Implementation Group. You can find out more about the governance arrangements for the Sustainability Strategy by visiting the [governance webpages](#).

Our progress will be publicly reported through the University's annual Financial Statements, and in our annual Sustainable Development Goals report. Environmental data will continue to be reported through the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Estates Management Return and our progress towards net zero will be reported using the sector specific Standardised Carbon Emissions Framework.



Managing Risk

Environmental Sustainability features on the University's Strategic Risk Register and is reported twice yearly to Risk Committee. It identifies four direct risks to the University and its operations relating to student recruitment, external funding, finances and reputation. Risk is considered in all papers that are submitted through our formal governance process.

The impact of climate risk on the University's physical estate is articulated and managed through the ISO 14001 EMS Environmental Risk Register and reported on via the Property and Campus Services Risk and Assurance governance structure. These risks are managed through our wider estates and environmental strategies.



APPENDIX 1: CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN

Scope	Category	Baseline 2022–2023 (tCO ₂ e)	Reduction Plans
1	Natural Gas	26,526	Energy Strategy and Net Zero Roadmap
1	Fleet	84	Business Travel and Expenses Policy, Travel Plan and Net Zero Roadmap
1	Refrigerant Gases	295	Environmental Management System and Net Zero Roadmap
1	Managed Land and Livestock	1,063	Environmental Management System and Net Zero Roadmap
1	Other fuels (gas oil)	15	Energy Strategy and Net Zero Roadmap
2	Purchased Electricity	8,383	Energy strategy and Net Zero Roadmap
3	Purchased Goods and Services	117,503	Procurement Strategy Water Management Plan
3	Capital Goods	11,524	Procurement Strategy Sustainable standards document for major works
3	Waste Generated in Operations	127	Waste Management Plan
3	Business Travel	1,467	Business Travel and Expenses Policy and Sustainable Travel Guidance
3	Employee Commuting	4,590	Travel Plan
3	Upstream Leased Assets	160	Estates Strategy
3	Downstream transportation and Distribution (Student Commuting)	3,366	Travel Plan



FIND OUT MORE

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

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Or speak to a member of the Sustainability Team by emailing:
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