

Sustainability Strategic Action Plan

2024-2030

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INTRODUCTION



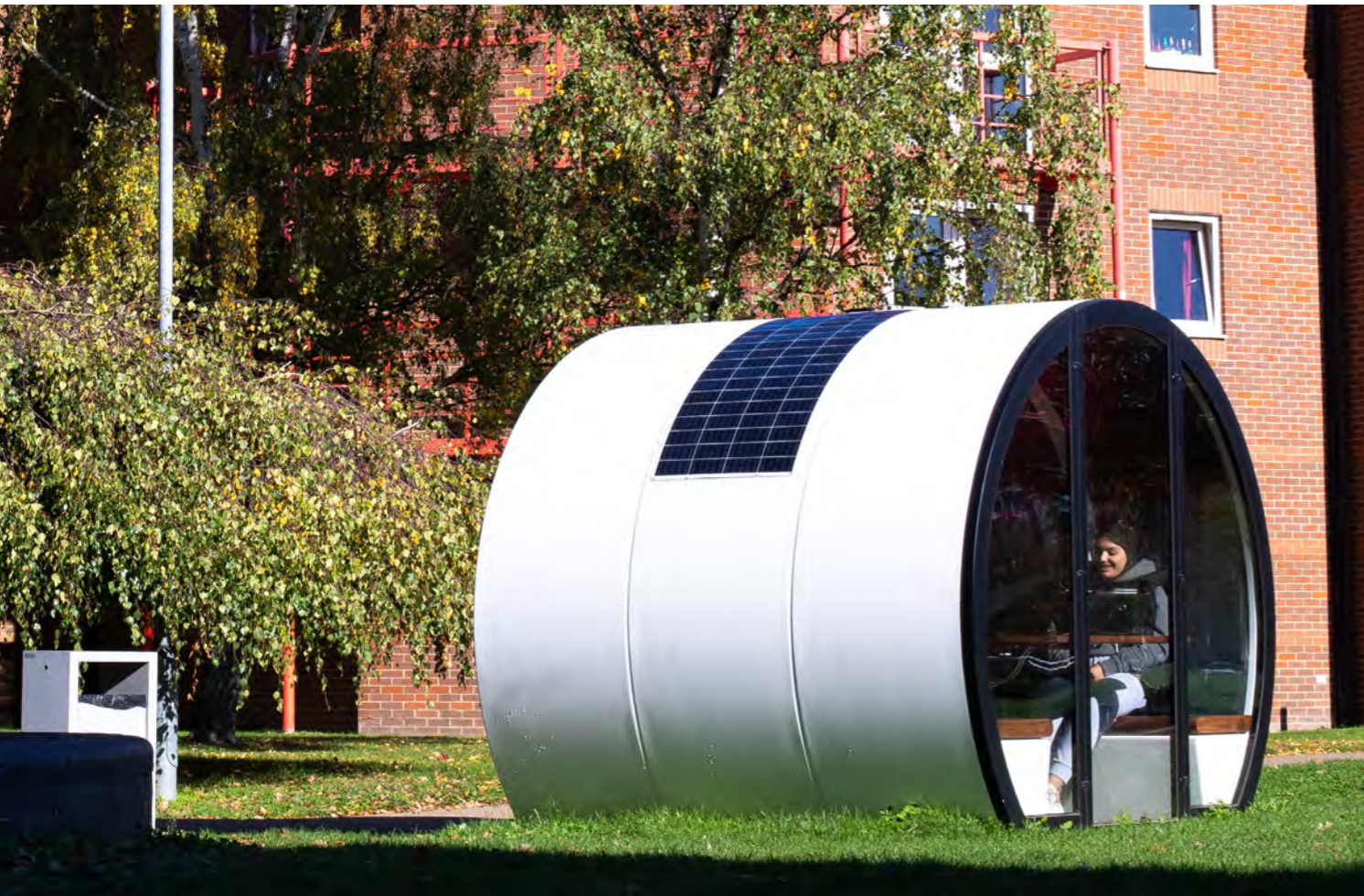
“Our goal is sustainability excellence in everything we do. By 2030, we will be recognised as a leader, putting sustainability at the heart of our teaching, research, partnerships and services to help to build a more sustainable society.”

This Sustainability Strategic Action Plan sets out what we have achieved so far and what we plan to do between now and 2030.

It will help ensure our sustainability initiatives have real impact and create excellent opportunities for learning, development and research. Often this will be through collaboration with partners and underpinned with a drive to operate in ways that have smaller environmental footprints.

We are already recognised for our sustainability achievements, many of which you can read about on the following pages.

We know that there is plenty of work still ahead of us, and we would welcome your contribution. It is only with the support of our staff, students and partners that we can take positive action to help protect the future of our planet.





WHY IS SUSTAINABILITY SO IMPORTANT FOR US?



“I believe, as a Greenwich student, sustainability is crucial because it ensures that we live in harmony with the planet, safeguarding it for future generations. Supporting the Sustainability Strategic Action Plan is a step toward empowering our students to lead this vital mission.”

Aminul Islam
Greenwich Students' Union Officer

Our students, staff, partners and alumni continuously tell us how crucial sustainability is for them as individuals and us as a university.

We believe that every organisation has a role to play in helping to tackle the climate crisis and ensuring that the planet can thrive.

We are a large organisation with a significant estate across three campuses and almost 30,000 students. Inevitably, we consume large amounts of energy, water and resources, which creates emissions, waste and impact on natural systems. So, we have a role to play.

We aspire to be the 'go to' university for students keen to solve real-world challenges. We seek to attract the brightest minds to work with us and develop partnerships and research activities increasingly focused on sustainability solutions. We will run our estates and wider operations as a case study for sustainability excellence.

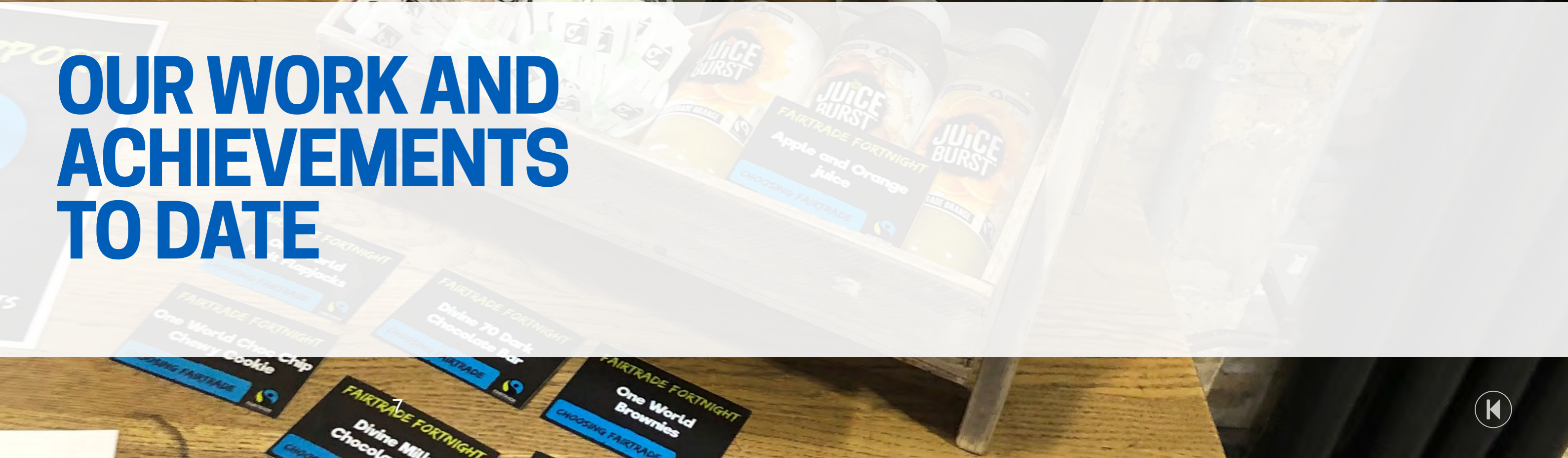


At Greenwich, we define sustainability as the application of our thinking and action that leaves a future society and planet in a better condition than we found it.





OUR WORK AND ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE



We have been thinking and acting sustainably for over 15 years and are proud of what we have achieved over that time.

We have created natural habitats for rare and endangered species, applied circular economy solutions* to our waste challenges, delivered on our Net Zero Plan* through the decarbonisation of our estates and vehicles, and much more.

Our inspiring educators have delivered impactful teaching and learning, applying sustainability to subjects as diverse as English literature, engineering, accountancy and health care. As well as offering sustainability teaching as part of some of our existing programmes, we provide other opportunities for students to learn about sustainability, such as carbon literacy training.

Our world-renowned researchers have worked on issues of critical importance to the planet. In our faculties, our experts have dedicated themselves to helping protect the natural world, as well as supporting people and societies across the globe. Whether they are early career researchers or Nobel Prize winners, we are proud of our academics and the breadth and depth of their research.

Moving towards net zero

In March 2024, we commissioned our first large-scale decarbonisation project. Our air source heat pump system has reduced carbon emissions at Avery Hill by 60%, with heating at the campus now run on carbon-free electricity rather than fossil fuels. We are planning to add further heating capacity, which will enable us to completely decarbonise the campus by 2030.

Supporting nature on campus

We maintain 6.7 hectares (equivalent to nine football pitches) of natural land across our campuses. We have recorded over 250 animal species on site, including 25 listed as vulnerable.

At Avery Hill, we have large natural spaces rich in habitats and species, while extensive woodland areas can be found at Medway. We design nature into our buildings at Greenwich, including 14 landscaped roof gardens at our award-winning Stockwell Street Building.

Making our food more sustainable

We are committed to delivering sustainable and nutritious food at our catering outlets. We have introduced a wider range of healthy, plant-based meals, and reduced food and drink container waste.

Our work in this area has been recognised by Food For Life, a charity for sustainable and healthy food and farming, who have awarded the university Gold for its catering outlets and menus.

Some of our successes



Rated First Class in the People & Planet University League since 2012



Top 100 university in the global Times Higher Education Impact Rankings in both 2023 and 2024



We have achieved Food for Life Gold across all UoG outlets and menus. Food For Life ensures access to healthy and sustainable food



This university spin-out company Carbon8 Systems is a global leader in carbon capture, utilisation and storage.



ISO 14001 accreditation recognises the excellent environmental management of the university's Estates and Facilities Directorate



Awarded Silver accreditation by the Hedgehog Friendly Campus Initiative since 2022, indicating that our biodiversity work on campus supports hedgehogs



Recipient of the Fairtrade University Award since 2012

*For more information on the terms 'circular economy' and 'net zero carbon', please see the Appendix.



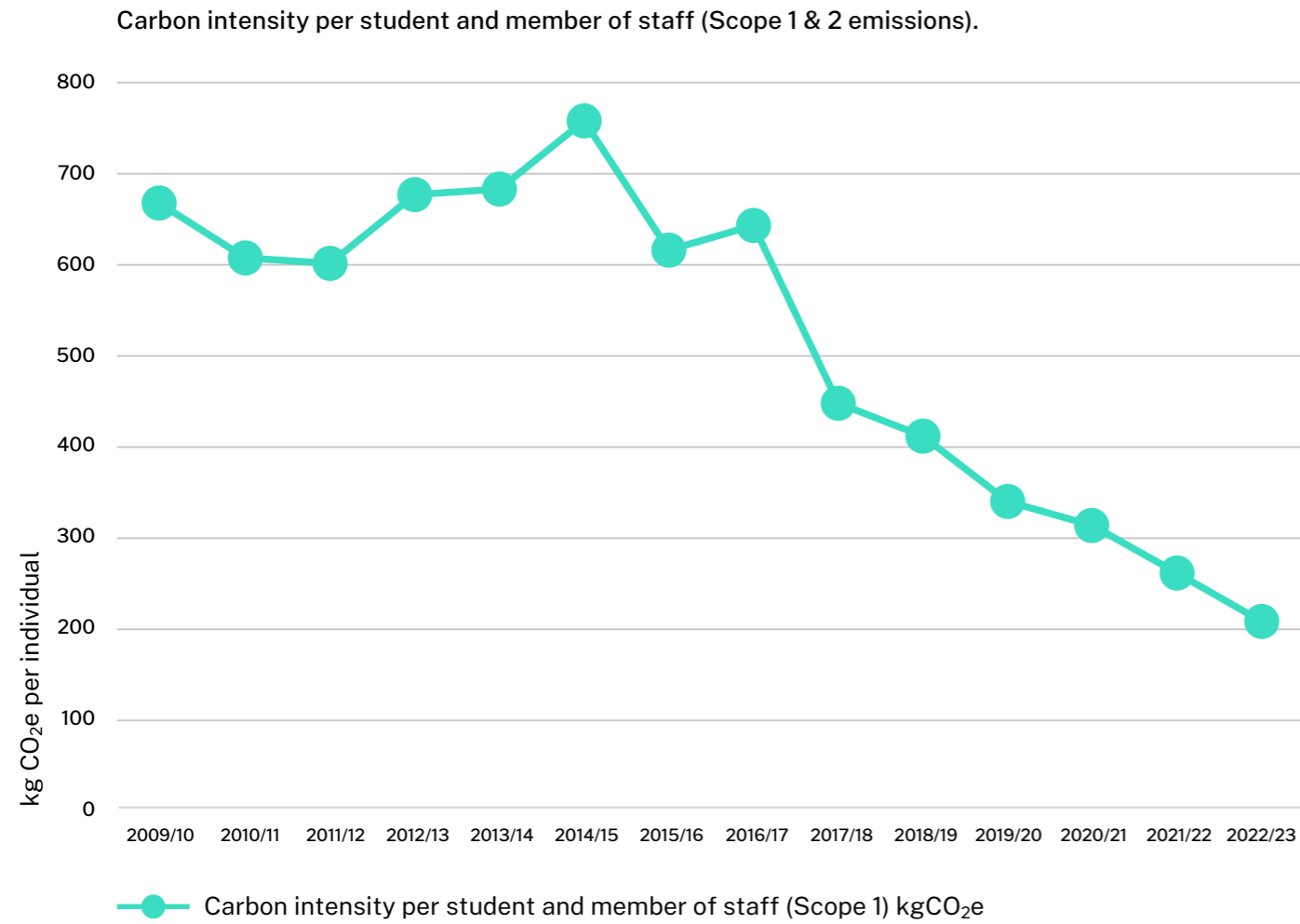
Reducing our environmental footprint

Our environmental footprint has reduced over the past 15 years or so, even as our student numbers have risen by 50%. We have:

- **Cut our estate's carbon emissions by over 59%** (between 2009/10 and 2023/24)
- **Generated enough solar electricity to power an electric car for 2.4 million miles** (601,775 kWh between 2013/14 and 2023/24)

- **Reduced our waste by 41%** (between 2009/10 and 2023/24)

The graph below shows the reduction of our carbon intensity (Scope 1 and 2 emissions*) where our carbon emissions are falling yet our staff and student full-time equivalent numbers are increasing.



*For more information on carbon emission scopes, please see the Appendix.





OUR PLAN



Vision	Priorities	Targets
Values: Inclusive, Collaborative, Impactful		
<p>Our vision is sustainability excellence in everything we do.</p> <p>By 2030 we will be recognised as a leader, putting sustainability at the heart of teaching, research, partnerships and services to create a more sustainable society.</p>	<p>Priority 1 Delivering positive environmental and social outcomes</p>	<p>By 2030 we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be carbon neutral for our Scope 1 emissions • Be net zero for our Scope 2 emissions • Have reduced our Scope 3 business travel emissions by 50% • Have achieved a top 10 position in the People & Planet University League • Be in the top 100 in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings for at least three UN SDGs • Ensure all programmes provide an understanding of how the subject relates to the UN SDGs.
	<p>Priority 2 Research & Knowledge Exchange that supports the UN SDGs</p>	
	<p>Priority 3 Equipping our students with the knowledge and skills to engage with real-world problems</p>	
	<p>Enabler 1 Financial sustainability</p>	
	<p>Enabler 2 Impactful sustainability partnerships</p>	
	<p>Enabler 3 A digital environment that supports our sustainability ambitions</p>	
<p>Enabler 4 Staff with the knowledge, skills and tools to deliver the university's sustainability aims</p>		

Through the Sustainability Strategic Action Plan, we will improve the university's environmental and social impact and place sustainability at the heart of our teaching, research, partnerships and services.

We have three areas of focus:

- Delivering positive environmental and social outcomes
- Research and knowledge exchange that supports the delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*
- Equipping our students with the knowledge and skills to engage with real-world problems.

Each priority will be delivered as part of the university's existing strategy programmes. Sustainability is best delivered where it creates value through opportunities that come from the connections across areas of action. Our plan will ensure that sustainability cuts across our institution while creating space for collaboration, innovation and inclusivity. Through this, we will create positive social and environmental impact.

We know that strategies and policies alone do not create change and invite our staff, students and partners to get involved and take action.

*For more information on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, please see the Appendix.



Image supplied by Carbon8



PRIORITY 1

Delivering positive environmental and social outcomes

At a glance

By 2030, we will have achieved:

- Carbon neutrality for our Scope 1 emissions
- Net zero for our Scope 2 emissions
- A 50% reduction in our Scope 3 business travel emissions
- A Top 10 ranking in the People & Planet University League table.

We will do this by:

- Decarbonising our Avery Hill and Medway Campuses by 2030
- Decarbonising three buildings on Greenwich Campus by 2030 and fully offsetting the remaining emissions
- Decarbonising our remaining Greenwich premises by 2033, utilising a district heating scheme
- Decarbonising our vehicle fleet and reducing business travel
- Meeting our 70% recycling target
- Reducing water use and reusing more water in our estates
- Improving the biodiversity value of our campuses
- Delivering sustainability in our catering offer
- Retaining our Fairtrade University status and other sustainability accreditations
- Delivering our sustainability-related policies and plans.

You can play your part by:

- Swapping meat-based meals for plant-based alternatives
- Adopting more sustainable travel habits, such as flying less and travelling between campuses using the university bus service
- Following greener digital practices; for instance, turning off or putting devices on low power mode when not in use, shrinking large email attachments, and being mindful when using AI, as it needs large amounts of processing power
- Following our sustainability policies and guidance to help you during your time at Greenwich.

In depth

We are a large university spread across three campuses. At Greenwich, we have the privilege of being located in some of the most historic buildings in the UK. These are part of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site, an area designated by UNESCO as being of 'outstanding universal value'.

We are extremely mindful of our responsibility to protect these historic assets while achieving our target of net zero carbon.

We are committed to delivering a large investment programme to fully decarbonise our campuses.

The programme focuses on replacing our remaining gas heating systems with ground or air source heat pumps or, where possible, utilising district heating networks.

Decarbonisation of the remaining Greenwich buildings will follow in 2033, using the planned Royal Borough of Greenwich district heating system. Carbon emissions from the remaining

buildings from 2030 until connection will be removed through the purchase of carbon offsets.

A review of our Scope 3 emissions will be undertaken as part of our longer-term commitment to reducing Scope 3 emissions by 90% by 2050.

We will reduce our non-carbon-related environmental impact by, among other things:

- Minimising our waste generation by 5% per year
- Achieving a 70% recycling rate by 2030
- Reducing our water consumption by 1% per year
- Improving our wildlife habitats across our campuses through our Biodiversity Action Plan
- Ensuring that our services, for example our catering, meet our sustainability goals.

The above will require the support of everyone at the university. By raising awareness among students and staff of the actions they can take, underpinned by our sustainability-related policies and specific action plans, we will substantially reduce our non-carbon environmental impact.

Our commitment to sustainability goes beyond our environmental impact. Social sustainability is an essential part of who we are. We already have numerous achievements in this area, including recognition from Stonewall and Athena Swan, among others. Additionally, we are actively pursuing further work, such as implementing a whole university approach to mental health, achieving the Race Equality Charter, and striving to have no gender pay gap. Efforts focused on delivering social and environmental sustainability will help us reach the Top 10 People & Planet position.

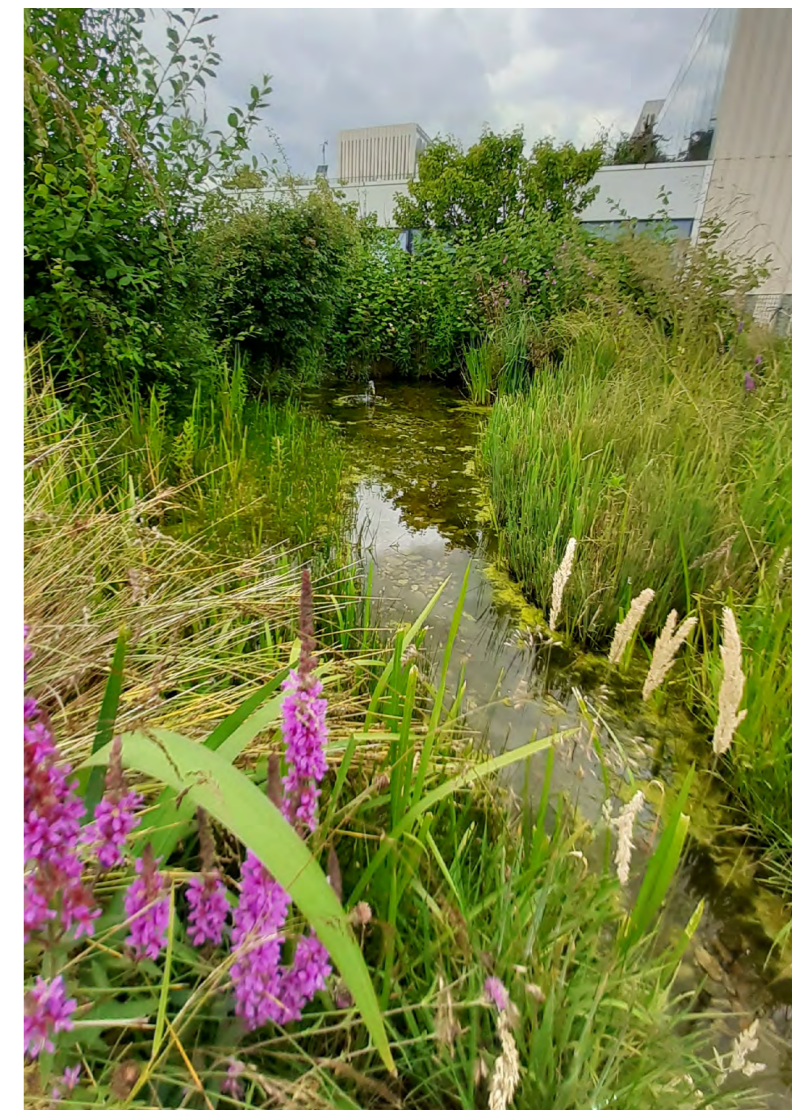
We seek to retain best-practice accreditations for processes relating to our environmental and social responsibilities. We will deliver a climate and sustainability risk plan to help us deal with issues material to our success.

Delivering the circular economy

Since 2019, our internal resource reuse programme has saved us from disposing of 35 tonnes of furniture and other items, worth £194,000. Over the same period, we have donated an additional 2,700 items to local schools, colleges and health organisations, saving another 39 tonnes of waste.

Tackling travel and transport emissions

We run electric double-decker buses between our two London campuses and two hybrid coaches between Greenwich and Medway. Each-double decker saves 20 tonnes of carbon a year compared with a traditional diesel bus, while our hybrid coaches emit a third of the carbon emissions of a standard coach.



PRIORITY 2

Research and knowledge exchange that supports the UN SDGs

At a glance

By 2030, we will:

- Focus our research and knowledge exchange (R&KE) activity to support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)
- Achieve top 100 in at least three SDGs in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings
- Ensure that at least 20% of our Research Excellence Framework (REF) case studies focus specifically on sustainability
- Ensure that at least 25% of Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) narratives specifically highlight sustainability outcomes
- Monitor and report progress, including producing an annual Sustainability Impact Report.

We will do this by:

- Aligning our R&KE activities with specific SDGs
- Developing annual planning and reporting processes that identify R&KE activity focused on the SDGs
- Creating a Knowledge Exchange for Impact Fund to support identifiable sustainability impacts from research outputs and align research outputs to the SDGs
- Communicating research outputs to enable engagement, uptake and impact
- Incorporating sustainability-related research and knowledge work in our taught programmes.

If you are a member of staff, you can play your part by:

- Engaging with the R&KE centre most relevant to your work or expertise
- Contributing to development of the theory of change* for your centre
- Developing, with colleagues, applications for external funding to undertake R&KE activities that contribute to your centre's theory of change
- Liaising with your supervisor or line manager to explore how you can apply your research to support the sustainability objectives of your R&KE centre
- Publishing your research in journals that are usually well-cited; you should indicate the SDG to which your work contributes or use language in the abstract/introduction that positions the work against a specific SDG
- Sharing news about your sustainability-related R&KE activities with the university's Communications Team
- Incorporating your sustainability-related R&KE in your teaching work
- Developing sustainability-related continuing professional development activities
- Encouraging our students in sustainability-related enterprise activities, including start-ups.

In depth

Our sustainability-driven research is recognised globally, but we know we can deliver much more.

Sustainability is part of an incredibly diverse range of research areas, and delivering sustainability requires research-led insights, innovations and collaborations. It provides a perspective that we need to harness more to help us solve the growing

societal, economic and environmental challenges we face. This is something that we can and will focus on at Greenwich.

We aim to undertake impactful R&KE contributing to our sustainability goals, and all R&KE activities will be aligned with specific SDGs.

To assist our researchers, each R&KE centre has a theory of change and annual plan that links through to the SDGs. Reporting requirements will specifically identify R&KE activity focused on contributing to these goals.

Our Knowledge Exchange for Impact Fund will support sustainability impacts from research outputs. This work will be communicated with researchers and practitioners to ensure reach and engagement across the institution and beyond.

Success will partly be assessed through the number and quality of REF impact case studies that have a specific focus on sustainability. We will also encourage and support KEF narratives that specifically highlight sustainability outcomes and increase visibility of sustainability research at the university. We will produce a Sustainability Impact Report and contribute progress to the university's Annual Sustainability Report.

Sustainability provides an invaluable focus for new perspectives and knowledge. It enables us to apply our research to real-world situations, whether they be within the university itself, between institutions, or through partnerships fostered with industry and governments in the UK and around the world.

These applications support our research, develop academic careers and contribute positively to the planet. They also demonstrate that we can deliver knowledge exchange outcomes not just through research but through student learning and development.

Our goal is to achieve a top 100 position in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings for at least three SDGs. This global ranking takes into account the research contributions to the SDGs. It provides a useful comparator, illustrating the numbers of publications our research staff produce, as well as the citations these papers generate.

Reducing fresh produce losses

The Natural Resources Institute is working with major UK supermarkets to reduce fresh produce losses. It is developing ways of reducing the resources that are wasted by producing food that goes uneaten, making a major contribution to sustainability.

Fund helps establish sustainable businesses

We are using the UK government Community Renewal Fund to help create new businesses in our region. As part of this process, we are preparing a blueprint to establish sustainable food businesses and community partnerships in three local authorities in Kent.

Greener solutions through carbon capture technology

A novel carbon dioxide mineralisation technology has been developed by the university, leading to the formation of a spin-out company, Carbon8 Systems. This technology enables the diversion of industrial solid waste from landfill. When combined with CO₂ gas from industrial processes, this can be used to make construction materials.

This technology has led to the creation of 'CO₂ntainer', the world's first mobile 'plug-and-play' device in this field. This can be deployed to industrial sites and integrated into their systems.

Construction multinational Vicat Group is currently using the CO₂ntainer to remove CO₂ from flue gas emitted during cement manufacture. As well as creating significant savings, this small-footprint innovation is helping the company manage their waste and take a step towards becoming carbon neutral.

*For more information on the theory of change, see the Appendix.



PRIORITY 3

Equipping our students with the knowledge and skills to engage with real-world problems

At a glance

By 2030:

- All programmes will provide an understanding of how the subject relates to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Sustainability will be integral to our enhanced curriculum framework
- Programme specifications will address real-world problems
- We will have developed partnerships with enterprises and organisations working on sustainability initiatives.

We will do this by:

- Implementing a revised curriculum framework
- Enabling our teaching staff to reflect on the relevance of sustainability to their programmes
- Providing support for teaching staff to help them create engaging, relevant and, where possible, practice-led development opportunities in this area
- Developing partnerships with enterprises and organisations working on sustainability initiatives.

How our teaching staff and students will play their part:

- Teaching staff will consider how sustainability relates to their subject area and how they can apply the SDGs as a teaching and learning tool
- Students will be able to seek out opportunities to learn about sustainability within and in addition to their curriculum;

they can also gain experience in practising sustainability through opportunities at Greenwich and beyond

- Students can explore how their subject could help them enter a career where they can solve sustainability challenges.

In depth

Through our Student Success Sub-Strategy, we are committed to proactively supporting our students to achieve their ambitions because of, rather than despite, their backgrounds.

We aim to do this by ensuring that our graduates leave the university ready and able to face the challenges of work and life. They will be equipped to make an impact on the world and bring about change.

We know that our students aspire to careers driven by purpose and are motivated to solve social and environmental challenges. We are also aware that the capability to act in sustainable ways is often demanded by employers.

Our goal is therefore to ensure that all our programmes meet these needs. Our students must have the opportunity to critically engage with real-world problems and develop the ability to tackle these collaboratively. Ultimately, our students must become impactful, ethical agents of change.

Our faculties already provide learning and development opportunities on sustainability issues. We will build on this by reviewing our programmes to ensure that they explore real-world problems and teach how the United Nations SDGs are reflected in the subject of each course.

This will enable our students to develop the ability to operate effectively in uncertain contexts, drawing upon different perspectives and disciplinary views. We will know that we have achieved this when, by 2030, all programmes provide an understanding of how their subject relates to the SDGs.

As every job role will be affected by sustainability in the future, we are developing partnerships with enterprises and organisations working on sustainability initiatives. Through these partnerships, students will develop transferable skills for their wider studies and careers, becoming competent and capable professionals.

As we implement a revised curriculum framework, all teaching staff will need to reflect on the relevance of sustainability to their programmes and the real-world problems their students may be called upon to tackle.

Teaching staff will be supported by our Academic and Learning Enhancement Team, who will help them create engaging, relevant and, where possible, practice-led developmental opportunities in this area.

Embedding sustainability in our curriculum

We have a range of programmes that ensure our students gain the skills and knowledge that employers need to deliver a more sustainable world.

We have created a dedicated webpage at gre.ac.uk/sustain/courses to help prospective students find these programmes more easily.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Actions supporting our priorities

At a glance

By 2030, we will have:

- Staff equipped with the knowledge, skills and tools to deliver our sustainability aims
- More impactful sustainability partnerships
- A digital environment that supports our sustainability ambitions.

We will do this by:

- Embedding sustainability requirements into the talent management frameworks
- Delivering a minimum of two gold sustainability partners
- Embedding sustainability targets into the Partnerships KPI-tracking framework
- Facilitating energy efficiency systems, reducing resource usage, and creating innovative, sustainable ways of working.

How our staff and students can play their part:

- If you are a member of staff, you can learn about sustainability by completing the Green Greenwich Foundation programme
- You can also sign up to our Green Champions Network
- Staff and students can get guidance and access support via gre.ac.uk/sustain
- Members of our university community can also take action and become sustainability changemakers to help us achieve our ambitions.

Programme boosts knowledge of sustainability

Collaborating with multinational technology company IBM, we have created our Green Greenwich Foundation programme. This supports staff to understand more about sustainability, including on carbon reduction, protecting nature and valuing resources, helping us achieve our ambitions on sustainability.

Project supports students' sustainability solutions

We are working with one of our strategic sustainability partners, the RSK Group, on a living labs project. This provides students with £1,000 to develop practical solutions to make our campuses more sustainable. Among the chosen projects were those focusing on smart energy and biodiversity monitoring.

Delivering the plan

To ensure all actions in this plan are completed, we will set project delivery plans with clear roles, responsibilities and timelines. Colleagues will be held accountable through our regular governance structures, including the dedicated Sustainability Management Committee.

The Sustainable Development Unit supports the delivery of the Sustainability Strategic Action Plan. It facilitates our university community to integrate sustainability thinking and practice into their actions at Greenwich. This includes providing guidance to enable staff and students to deliver sustainability impact on and off campus, from recycling in halls to integrating sustainability into our research. The unit works collaboratively with all stakeholders, creating opportunities and delivering on our action plan and wider corporate strategies.

The Sustainability Strategic Action Plan will only succeed with the support of all students, staff, partners and alumni, who we invite to take action with us.

If you would like to join us on this journey and learn more about what you could do, please email the Sustainable Development Unit at sustainability@gre.ac.uk.

We need everyone to participate, to make better decisions and help foster the communities and cultures that will help our species and all species to thrive.



Image supplied by Carbon8



APPENDIX



TERMINOLOGY EXPLAINED

What is net zero carbon?

This is the balance the university and countries globally need to make where carbon dioxide emitted is equal or less than the amount that can be removed from the atmosphere through natural or man-made means.

What are carbon emission scopes?

Carbon emission scopes are a way of categorising the different types of emissions an organisation creates. Scope 1 relates to carbon emitted from the burning of fossil fuels. Scope 2 relates to carbon emitted through the production of electricity. Scope 3 relates to carbon related from indirect sources, for example, from transport and travel, the water we use, and the creation and disposal of the products we consume.

What are the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals?

The 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals were agreed by the UN General Assembly in 2015. They comprise 169 social, environmental and economic targets that need to be met by 2030. They provide an important framework for universities to consider the ways in which their work contributes to key global challenges.

What is the circular economy?

The circular economy is an economic system where existing materials and products are shared, reused, repaired, refurbished and recycled for as long as possible. This extends their lifecycle in a sustainable or environmentally friendly way.

What is a theory of change?

A theory of change is a way to document and think through how a programme or social policy is expected to work and the outcomes it is intended to produce. Theories of change are used in the design and evaluation of programmes across many policy areas.



