



**CLIMATE
CHANGE
VISION**

The University of Hertfordshire's climate vision sets out our commitment to becoming a net zero institution by 2050. By taking a whole University approach, our vision aims to underpin our core values and integrate climate action and sustainability as a common thread into every area of activity.

Background

Climate change is the biggest challenge of our time. Unprecedented rates of global warming are responsible for more severe and frequent extreme weather events, rising sea-levels, and declining biodiversity. Climate change poses a threat to all aspects of life as we know it.

The latest evidence on climate science paints a sombre picture and highlights the need to increase the scale and pace at which we address the climate crisis. While the consensus is that climate change is a consequence of human activity, we know there is still time to reverse the trend if we take ambitious, yet urgent action.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer one of the most recognised and accepted global blueprints to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all (Appendix 1). As well as addressing the climate crisis, they also consider other areas such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. While Goal 13 – Climate Action - sets out explicit mitigation and adaptation targets relating to climate change, the interconnected nature of the framework highlights the need for integrated and collaborative action.

The Higher Education sector has a pivotal role to play in fighting climate change and advancing the SDGs. Changes to the way we live, work and study are inevitable, and as such, we have a responsibility to not only prepare our staff, students, and campuses for the challenges that lie ahead, but also to provide the knowledge, awareness, and motivation to empower the citizens and leaders of tomorrow to create a more sustainable future. It is this responsibility that drives the motivation for our climate vision.

Our climate vision

The University of Hertfordshire's climate vision is to become net zero by 2050.

This vision addresses the climate crisis and sets out our commitment to taking climate action. By adopting an integrated approach and setting ambitious targets, the University aims to reduce its overall carbon impact while empowering positive action within the community. Our measurable targets will span all areas of activity including Research, Teaching and Learning, Estate Operations, Procurement, Global and Community Engagement. It will provide opportunities to explore sustainable innovation and consider implications for future growth and development.

This vision is a pledge to the Race to Zero global campaign, which aims for a healthy, resilient, zero carbon recovery that prevents future threats, creates good jobs, and unlocks inclusive, sustainable growth.

Pathways to zero

In order to become net zero, our strategy sets out four pathways which collectively aim to make the biggest impact on our carbon footprint and encourage positive behaviour across our campuses.

The four pathways are:



Building a sustainable community

By developing a whole university approach to sustainability and climate action through engagement.



Reducing operational emissions

Adopting carbon mitigating and decarbonisation strategies including nature-based solutions and showcasing our commitment to environment and sustainability.



Education, student and people experience

Equipping our graduates and staff with the knowledge, and skills to influence the challenges of sustainability in their future careers and employment. Empowering our future citizens and leaders to become carbon literate.



Research, enterprise, and global engagement

We will showcase our researchers who are involved in climate change and Health and Wellbeing and the key part they play in meeting our collective ambition on net zero.

How we will get there

We have individual management plans for areas such as waste and energy management, environment education and biodiversity, and these feed into our Environmental Management System – which directly informs our operational activity.

Energy management

Becoming more energy efficient is a strategic priority across our estate, achieved by consuming less, purchasing renewable energy, and making our buildings 'greener'. We've already invested £2m in green energy projects since 2016. We continue to hold an ISO14001 certificate and Eco Campus Platinum status. 38% of our electricity is also generated from on-site solar panels and our combined heat and power plant, reducing the amount we take from the grid. Heat captured from the process provides heat and hot water for College Lane Residencies.

Waste management

We're constantly making improvements to our approach to waste management and are proud of our successes so far. This includes our reduction in waste output by 90% since 2012/13, and the reduction in the number of weekly waste lorry collections by two-thirds. We have also prevented over 1.2 tons of food waste, equivalent to 3,261 kettles boiled for an hour.

Our carbon plan

We're taking a measured approach to planning more sustainable investment across the estate, from modernising old and inefficient buildings to carrying out important planned maintenance projects which make a real difference to the environment. For example, our bus company, UNO, is expanding its fleet with eco-friendly vehicles, and we encourage our staff to use schemes such as cycle to work and 'park and ride'.

Biodiversity on campus

We embrace opportunities to deliver new and expanded green spaces along with biodiverse habitats across our properties. Each new campus development considers biodiversity gains such as nesting boxes and biodiverse roof areas. We also offer opportunities for staff and students to take part in activities to enhance our biodiversity like gardening, wildflower projects, and nature conservation.

Procurement

We aim to embed the principles of responsible procurement into our business practices and ethos to ensure that our activities, products and services meet the diverse needs of students, the economy, and the planet now and in the future. We continue to work with suppliers who have the same ambitions as us for carbon reduction and environmental preservation.

Environmental engagement and education

Environmental management is of increasing importance to organisations around the world, and along with it an urgency for more qualified practitioners of environmental planning, conservation, and preservation. That's why along with training our staff in carbon literacy, we also offer a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses for long term study in geography, environmental management, sustainable planning, transport planning, and water and environmental management.



How we will measure success

To achieve our vision, we will review and report on progress regularly, and continue to publish an annual report which summaries our performance across the key areas of our University's Environmental Management System.

A more sustainable future

Adopting this whole University approach to tackling climate change requires the support and commitment of the entire University community. While there may be growing recognition for the need to address the climate crisis, it is important that this recognition translates into meaningful and transformational action that can be sustained long-term. Our climate vision transforms our commitment to climate action beyond compliance and represents a proactive and considered approach that will enable and empower our activities, staff, and students to play their part in building back a more sustainable future.



Appendix

Fig 1. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



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