



Sustainability and Climate Plan

2026-2033

Empowering People, Engaging Partners,
Enhancing Our Campus Environment



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Foreword

Ulster University is recognised for its impact, civic leadership and commitment to widening participation – demonstrating what can be achieved when purpose is aligned with action. Building on this foundation, the University is committed to shaping an inclusive, resilient and sustainable future. As society confronts the accelerating climate crisis, biodiversity loss, widening inequalities and global uncertainty, the role of the University is clear: to equip people with the knowledge, skills and leadership to drive meaningful and lasting change locally, nationally and globally.

This ambition is pursued within a challenging and rapidly changing operating environment. Universities face significant financial and operational pressures, alongside evolving student expectations, technological change and increasing demands to demonstrate value and impact.

At the same time, climate change, resource constraints and social inequality require institutions to adapt and innovate. Against a backdrop of constrained funding and competing priorities, delivering meaningful sustainability outcomes requires careful investment choices, collaboration and a focus on actions that strengthen institutional resilience and long-term sustainability.

The **Sustainability and Climate Plan** reflects the University’s commitment to shaping a more sustainable, inclusive and prosperous future, placing sustainability at the heart of our vision for the future. It sets out a whole-University approach to embedding environmental and social sustainability across teaching, research, operations and partnerships. Central to this is a commitment to a just and low carbon transition.

Guided by our values of integrity, collaboration, enhancing potential and inclusion, the **Sustainability and Climate Plan** reflects the collective purpose of the University community. Our action is supported by being locally rooted and globally connected through international partnerships, research networks and opportunities for our students and colleagues. Through this approach, Ulster University will shape solutions to address global challenges and to foster a sustainable and equitable future for generations to come.

Professor Ian Montgomery
Dean of Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility



Executive Summary

The **Sustainability and Climate Plan Empowering People, Engaging Partners, Enhancing Our Campus Environment** sets out how Ulster University will deepen its contribution to a fair, prosperous and sustainable Northern Ireland, while advancing positive change globally by 2033.

It integrates our core missions in teaching, research and civic engagement with the responsible stewardship of our campuses, resources and partnerships. This is supported by a Sustainability Action Plan outlining clear objectives, outcomes, targets and actions.

Built around three interconnected pillars:

- **Empower:** enabling students and colleagues to navigate current and emerging challenges
- **Engage:** co-creating sustainability solutions that drive meaningful outcomes
- **Enhance:** strengthening our campus environments, systems and cultures

The **Sustainability and Climate Plan** places students and learning at the centre, empowers colleagues across the institution, strengthens Ulster University's contribution to a thriving Northern Ireland and demonstrates responsible use of public and institutional resources.

Rapid environmental and societal change, including the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, inequality, technological disruption, geopolitical unrest and cost of living pressures, brings both significant challenges and new opportunities. The **Sustainability and Climate Plan** positions Ulster University to respond confidently, balancing early, visible progress with long term transformation. Interim targets, streamlined KPIs, milestones and annual reviews provide focus and drive progress towards our 2033 ambition.

Grounded in a robust double materiality assessment, the **Sustainability and Climate Plan** prioritises the areas where the University can have the greatest impact: skills and human capital; equality, diversity and inclusion; health and wellbeing; carbon emissions; research impact; education for sustainable development; and community relations. Embedding these priorities across all three pillars advances institutional resilience, enhances the student and colleague experience, strengthens the University's contribution to society, and amplifies Ulster University's role in delivering a sustainable future.



Ulster University has already achieved strong progress and this next phase offers major opportunities for transformation. Decarbonising a multi campus estate, reshaping supply chains, embedding sustainability across disciplines and building integrated data systems will enable more connected, evidence based decision making. By focusing on what matters most, Ulster University can maximise its impact while continuing to honour its wider commitments to people, place and partnerships across Northern Ireland.





Staff and students show strong commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing, supported by multiple accreditations and staff networks.



An active commitment to global sustainability frameworks is demonstrated through participation in the SDG Accord and Nature Positive Universities.



Engagement opportunities include the Net Zero Challenge, circular economy initiatives such as Warp-It, Carbon Literacy Training and biodiversity projects.



On-campus energy and water efficiency systems have been introduced, alongside becoming the first UK university to generate wind power on-site.



Ulster University hosts over 10 research centres advancing sustainability, from renewable energy, environmental processes, social justice and beyond.



Sustainability is embedded across teaching, learning and student engagement through initiatives such as the SDG Teach In, the Sustainable Innovation Challenge and Responsible Futures accreditation.



Education in energy has been delivered at Ulster University since 1972, reflecting a long-standing commitment to developing expertise in sustainable energy.



Impactful research at Ulster University contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals by supporting meaningful outcomes and informing policy and practice.



High standards for sustainable campus development are reflected in BREEAM Excellent buildings and a focus on low-impact construction and infrastructure.



Our 2033 Ambition

By 2033, Ulster University is a recognised leader in sustainability education, research and practice empowering people, engaging partners and enhancing our campus environment to deliver meaningful change for society.

We enable students and colleagues to become confident, skilled agents of sustainable transformation; we co-create impactful research and innovation with partners that shape policy, practice and meaningful outcomes; and we embed responsible stewardship across our campuses, ensuring a resilient, low-impact, socially responsible University culture. Together, these pillars position Ulster as a university that not only responds to global sustainability challenges but actively shapes a fairer, greener and more prosperous future for all.

Our Approach

The Sustainability and Climate Plan sets out how Ulster University will embed sustainability as a core institutional commitment, aligning teaching, research, operations and partnership working under a shared vision of sustainable transformation, guided by Empower, Engage & Enhance and integrating sustainability into decision-making, behaviours and practice to drive positive local and global impact.

The framework ensures coordinated and meaningful progress across the organisation.



Our Framework



Pillar 1: Empower

Empower students and colleagues to navigate current and emerging challenges

The Empower pillar focuses on inspiring and enabling our students and colleagues to become confident agents of sustainable change. By embedding relevant knowledge, practical skills and opportunities for applied problem solving, we ensure that our graduates are not only aware of sustainability challenges but are prepared to lead and influence within their organisations and communities. This pillar places people at the heart of transformation, cultivating a culture where everyone has the capability and confidence to drive positive impact.



Pillar 2: Engage

Engage to co-create sustainability solutions that drive meaningful outcomes

The Engage pillar positions Ulster University as a leader in sustainability focused research and innovation. Through responsible, collaborative and impactful research, we generate new knowledge that informs policy, shapes professional practice and benefits society. This approach champions co-creation with partners and communities, ensuring that research outcomes deliver tangible environmental, social and economic value. By engaging deeply with external stakeholders and emerging global priorities, Ulster University reinforces its commitment to addressing the pressing issues of our time.



Pillar 3: Enhance

Enhance campus environments to create sustainable spaces and cultures

The Enhance pillar strengthens the University's own infrastructure, operations and cultures, ensuring that sustainability is built into everyday practice. This includes adopting low-impact behaviours, embedding responsible stewardship across the University's campuses in Belfast, Coleraine and Derry~Londonderry and at the Ulster University Sports Village (Jordanstown) and developing policies and systems that support resilience and social responsibility. Leading by example, Ulster University demonstrates its commitment to social and environmental integrity and provides a living laboratory for sustainable practice.

Empower

Empower students and colleagues to navigate current and emerging challenges

Ulster University equips future leaders to respond to climate, nature and social challenges by embedding sustainability across teaching, learning and assessment. The UN Sustainable Development Goals shape curricula and develop ethical, inclusive and future focused competencies, supported by institution wide curriculum design, quality assurance and professional development.

Ulster University also promotes intergenerational learning and accessible pathways for lifelong learners. Together, these approaches ensure graduates drive positive change in their professions and communities.

By 2033, Ulster University empowers colleagues and students to develop the knowledge, skills, confidence and personal resilience needed to lead on sustainability. This includes supporting people to thrive emotionally, physically and professionally and creating an environment in which colleagues and students feel healthy, supported, capable and resilient.



Sustainability in teaching is strengthened by robust quality processes and ongoing review across every Faculty. Colleagues are equipped to integrate sustainability through continuous professional development, shared practice and opportunities to showcase innovation across University platforms.

Embedding sustainability expectations across recruitment and practice will foster a culture of shared responsibility and continuous learning across the University community.

Enhancements to the Development Appraisal Review process will strengthen colleague capability and confidence by integrating sustainability into goal setting, feedback and professional growth, building capacity to contribute to institutional ambitions.

By 2033, students build confidence through practical and challenge led learning with external partners, supported by opportunities such as the Sustainable Innovation Challenge, Enterprise Placement Year activities and sustainability pathways within the Ulster Graduate Award. Annual engagement campaigns, expert led sessions and visible green career routes deepen participation, applied learning and future readiness.

Empowerment is further reinforced through accessible learning resources, digital first library practice and Ulster University's leadership within sector sustainability networks. Inclusive and socially just sustainability education is strengthened through a Cultural Competency Framework, Age Friendly initiatives and collaborative working groups that create equitable, supportive learning environments.

By 2033, empowered, supported and thriving colleagues and students drive meaningful and community focused sustainability leadership across Ulster University.



Priority Focus:

- Measure Sustainability Literacy
- Expand the Sustainable Innovation Challenge
- Embed Sustainability within the Ulster Graduate Award

Students Get Involved:

Build your sustainability skills through enhanced modules, challenge led learning and the Sustainable Innovation Challenge. Join inclusive student led societies and take part in events and training that build your confidence and readiness to lead on sustainability.



At a Glance:

Everyone across Ulster can contribute to sustainability by developing the knowledge, skills and awareness to make informed, inclusive decisions in their work and study. All colleagues, students and partners are encouraged to join sustainability events, training and learning that drives positive impact.



Action Plan

Objectives	Outcomes by 2033	Targets
1. Integrate sustainability into teaching, curricula and assessment across disciplines, including Degree Apprenticeships.	By 2033, sustainability related principles are woven through curricula and assessment. Students encounter sustainability related concepts and understand environmental and social impact and have access to elective sustainability modules.	Embed student sustainability outcomes and their associated indicators into curriculum approval and enhancement processes.
		Identify and pilot modules for focused sustainability curriculum enhancement activity.
		Develop and pilot elective sustainability modules.
2. Embed sustainability across teaching by empowering colleagues and students to collaborate, share best practice and demonstrate impact.	By 2033, colleagues and students are actively engaged in sustainability across teaching and learning, sharing best practice, co-creating projects and showcasing impact through professional development, festivals, publications and panels, with Ulster University maintaining Responsible Futures accreditation as a measure of ongoing commitment.	Enable Ulster University educators to develop, share and gain recognition for sustainability knowledge exchange through accredited programmes and recognition routes.
		Maintain SOS-UK Responsible Futures Accreditation.
3. Foster student led sustainability innovation through initiatives like the Sustainable Innovation Challenge, enabling collaborative solutions to environmental and social challenges.	By 2033, the annual Sustainable Innovation Challenge is delivered in partnership with other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), fostering collaboration, strengthening external partnerships and enhancing opportunities for students to develop skills in sustainable innovation and employability.	Design and deliver in partnership with other HEI’s the annual Sustainable Innovation Challenge.
		Develop partnerships for sustainable innovation and employability.
4. Integrate sustainability into learning, enterprise and recognition programmes, including Graduate Futures, the Enterprise Placement Year and the Ulster Graduate Award, so students develop knowledge, skills and recognition for applying sustainable practices.	By 2033, sustainability is embedded across student learning and recognition frameworks, with pathways and activities within Graduate Futures, Enterprise Placement Year and the Ulster Graduate Award. Students gain recognition for engagement, apply sustainability principles in practical projects and are encouraged to integrate sustainable thinking and innovation into their enterprise and applied learning activities.	Establish and promote sustainability focused pathways and activities within the Ulster Graduate Award, providing students with opportunities for participation, engagement and recognition.
		Embed sustainability across all cohorts, ensuring students apply sustainability principles in their learning and practical activities.
		Integrate sustainability into the Enterprise Placement Year workshop series and establish an annual Sustainability Prize at the Pitching Event to recognise student innovation and engagement.

Objectives	Outcomes by 2033	Targets
5. Connect students with sustainable career pathways by linking them to work-based and related learning opportunities with employers offering green and sustainable jobs.	By 2033, a clear system is in place to identify and tag green and sustainable career opportunities and employers, enabling targeted promotion and communication to students and increasing awareness and engagement with sustainability related career pathways.	Establish a tagging system where opportunities and/or employers can be identified for green/sustainable career opportunities.
		Promote and communicate opportunities to students.
6. Embed sustainability across Library Services, by promoting best practice and sector engagement in low-impact and responsible resource management.	By 2033, sustainable practices are embedded across Library Services, through low-impact policies and responsible sustainability engagement initiatives.	Embed sustainable practices in Library Services through engagement with the Green Libraries Manifesto, sustainability guidance, low-impact policies and sector leadership.
7. Embed an inclusive, culturally competent and fair sustainability culture across Ulster University by integrating Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principles, promoting health and wellbeing, strengthening student and colleague development processes, ensuring clear sustainability expectations for applicants and maintaining fair employment standards.	By 2033, Ulster University will foster an inclusive, culturally competent and fair sustainability culture, where colleagues, students and applicants are supported through equitable practices, diverse learning environments, a focus on health and wellbeing and strengthened development processes that empower everyone to contribute confidently to sustainability.	Embed equality, diversity and inclusion, including anti-racism and age friendly principles, within Ulster University’s sustainability education, student experience and community engagement.
		Ensure student led sustainability initiatives and societies, are inclusive and celebrate diversity, supported by a Cultural Competency Framework.
		Ensure sustainability culture and expectations are clearly communicated to all applicants through the Applicant and Recruitment Platform and Candidate Briefing Documents.
		Enhance the Development Approval Review (DAR) process with a pilot to embed sustainability practices and performance.
		Deliver annual programmes of wellbeing initiatives, maintain a network of Wellbeing Champions and provide targeted training for staff.

Case Studies

Scholarships: Widening Access and Supporting Student Success

Ulster University offers a broad portfolio of scholarships designed to increase access to higher education, support academic excellence and remove financial barriers for students from diverse backgrounds. These include need-based awards such as the Inspire and Choice Scholarships, international and merit awards like the International Undergraduate and Dean's Scholarships and specialised funds including the GREAT Scholarships and performance sport support.

These scholarships provide targeted financial support that helps students from diverse backgrounds focus on their studies, participate fully in University life and access placements and enrichment opportunities. By supporting inclusion and social mobility, the scholarship portfolio directly advances equality, diversity & inclusion, health and wellbeing and long term skills development.

[Find out more](#)

Responsible Futures: Embedding Sustainability in Teaching & Learning

Ulster University and UUSU worked together through SOS-UK's Responsible Futures programme to embed sustainability more systematically across teaching and the wider student experience.

A cross-Faculty group of colleagues and students led a student-driven audit against more than 50 criteria, reviewing curricula, policies, engagement and outreach. The audit highlighted strong processes, innovative colleague initiatives and active student involvement in shaping sustainability priorities.

Achieving Responsible Futures accreditation signals a clear commitment to graduate sustainability knowledge and strengthening skills and human capital as a top strategic priority.

[Find out more](#)

Sustainable Innovation Challenge

Ulster University delivered a two-day interdisciplinary sustainability challenge, combining field-based learning, industry mentoring and team-based problem solving.

Students identified practical ways to reduce environmental impact and enhance social value within major sporting events. Teams developed and pitched innovative, evidence-informed sustainability solutions.

Students strengthened sustainability knowledge, collaboration and practical problem solving skills. Ulster University will continue to expand challenge-based learning to support sustainability across sectors.

[Find out more](#)



Engage

Engage to co-create sustainability solutions that drive meaningful outcomes

Ulster University delivers impactful sustainability research across areas such as sustainable architecture, renewable energy engineering, marine sciences, sustainable business and sustainable textiles. The University also leads influential social sustainability research, including long running work on community engagement and urban regeneration that informs better planning and public participation processes across Northern Ireland. Community engagement is strong across all campuses, with Ulster University contributing to flagship cultural events in Belfast, Coleraine and Derry~Londonderry, strengthening cultural, social and economic sustainability region wide. Through this work, Ulster University drives meaningful social value and regional impact.

By 2033, Ulster University is recognised for a strong, visible and connected sustainability research community, enabled through a Sustainability Researcher Network that brings together colleagues working across sustainability-related disciplines and themes. The Network will foster collaboration,



knowledge exchange and interdisciplinary research, helping researchers, students and external partners to connect with expertise and engage with Ulster University's sustainability research. The Sustainability Researcher Network will showcase and celebrate research achievements through regular features, including sustainability-focused PhD outputs and the annual PhD Research Festival.

To further strengthen research visibility, sustainability recognition and promotion are embedded within Research & Impact and Doctoral College programmes.

By 2033, sustainability related research outputs are tracked and reported annually, supported by partnerships that generate case studies highlighting community benefit, policy influence and environmental and social outcomes. Ulster University's commitment to social responsibility is advanced through a faculty-led pilot to develop a Social Responsibility Framework, with the faculty

adopting shared social value language and metrics. Ulster University Business School continues its leadership in responsible management education by further embedding the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) and demonstrating progress through annual Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) reporting.

By 2033, sustainability is embedded through community engagement events and partnership meetings across all campuses, supporting widening access priorities and highlighting the social value created through the Derry~Londonderry campus expansion. University-wide colleague engagement in social value and sustainability is supported through an active colleagues' network, annual recognition mechanisms and participation in core activities such as Carbon Literacy Training and the Net Zero Challenge.

By 2033, Ulster University is a visible, connected and impactful centre for sustainability research and engagement.

Priority Focus:

- Establish Sustainability Researchers Network
- Pilot Social Responsibility Framework
- Embedding PRME to develop future sustainability leaders

Students Get Involved:

Explore Ulster University's sustainability research through its Sustainability Research centres, events and activities that showcase live research and its impact. Get involved in community projects, student led initiatives, PhD led lectures and partner seminars that build your networks, skills and confidence to contribute to social value and positive change.



At a Glance:

Ulster University provides opportunities for students, colleagues and partners to engage in sustainability research through collaboration, interdisciplinary projects and applying expertise, alongside community engagement activities, social value initiatives and events, including seminars and conferences.



Action Plan

Objectives	Outcomes by 2033	Targets
1. Establish a strong sustainability research presence and visible hub at Ulster University.	By 2033, Ulster University has a strong, visible and connected sustainability research community. The Sustainability Researcher Network brings together expertise from across the University, making it easier for colleagues, students and partners to engage with and contribute to sustainability research.	Strengthen Ulster University’s position as a leader in sustainability by centralising access to sustainability related research outputs, expertise, partnerships and impact case studies.
2. Strengthen engagement, impact and recognition of Ulster University’s sustainability research.	By 2033, Ulster University’s sustainability research engages wide audiences and delivers positive policy and practice impact. Embedded recognition of excellence, alongside strong REF performance, events and communications, positions Ulster University as a leader in sustainability research.	Enhance the visibility and impact of Ulster University’s sustainability related funded research and PhD activity by integrating sustainability recognition, promotion and celebration into Research and Impact and Doctoral College programmes.
3. Embed a consistent, measurable and institution wide approach to social responsibility that strengthens social value, deepens community engagement and enables colleagues to contribute to positive societal impact.	By 2033, Ulster University will be recognised for its approach to social value creation and measurement of positive impact. Social value and social responsibility will be embedded across community engagement at each campus and across each faculty.	Deliver a two-year pilot to develop and implement a Social Responsibility Framework in one faculty, including the rollout of shared language and agreed methods for measuring social value.
		Strengthen UUBS’s leadership in responsible management education by embedding PRME principles and demonstrating continuous improvement through annual Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) reporting.
		Deliver community engagement across all campuses through learning events and partnership meetings that advance widening access priorities, showcase the social value of the Derry~Londonderry campus expansion and generate insights to inform annual sustainability reporting.
		Strengthen colleague engagement in social value and sustainability through an active University wide colleague network.



Case Studies

Future Island–Island: Co-Designing Green Transitions on Rathlin Island

Ulster University leads the Future Island-Island Green Transition Ecosystem, an Arts Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded partnership with other universities and Rathlin Island's community to explore circular economy, sustainable tourism and digital innovation.

Using design-led research, the project combines local knowledge with academic expertise to develop practical solutions for waste, resource use and visitor experiences. It has created a collaborative research ecosystem that supports community resilience, low carbon innovation and new skills in a remote island context. The work offers a replicable model for place-based green transition, aligning research impact with carbon reduction and fair regional development.

[Find out more](#)

EPIC Futures NI – Fair and Inclusive Employment for a Just Transition

EPIC Futures NI is a Local Policy Innovation Partnership led by Ulster University that brings together academia, policymakers, business and community partners to co-design evidence based solutions for fair and inclusive employment across Northern Ireland.

Research and labour market analysis have highlighted high economic inactivity linked to health, disability, caring and skills gaps, underlining the need for targeted interventions. The partnership funds projects that test new approaches to skills, inclusion and employment pathways, helping shape more equitable labour strategies.

By focusing on skills and human capital, equality, diversity and inclusion and wellbeing in the labour market, EPIC Futures supports collaboration towards a just transition to a more sustainable economy.

[Find out more](#)

Degree Apprenticeships

Degree apprenticeships combine academic study with paid, work-based learning, giving students industry experience while earning a degree.

Programmes are co-designed with employers across key sectors, ensuring learning meets industry needs. Apprentices develop practical skills and confidence, applying knowledge directly in the workplace, while employers benefit from a pipeline of skilled, work-ready talent. Graduates gain both a recognised degree and significant on-the-job experience, ready to progress in their careers. The programmes strengthen workforce development, support economic growth and provide accessible, debt-free education that promotes social mobility.

[Find out more](#)



Enhance

Enhance campus environments to create sustainable spaces and cultures

Ulster University is advancing campus sustainability, building on a strong track record of reducing Scope 1 and Scope 2 operational carbon emissions achieved under its previous Carbon Management Plan, alongside strengthened action on biodiversity, responsible supplier engagement and sustainable travel.

The University embeds responsible resource management principles into operations and transparent annual sustainability reporting ensures accountability and demonstrates continued progress across all areas of campus sustainability. By embedding responsible stewardship and social value into everyday decision making, the University reduces emissions and waste, enhances biodiversity and ensures the accountable use of public funds.

By 2033, Ulster University will advance a coordinated estate transformation programme that delivers a modern, efficient and climate resilient campus. Estate rationalisation, fossil fuel free new builds, major refurbishments and targeted energy efficiency



upgrades will collectively support a 51.1% reduction in Scope 1 and Scope 2 direct operational carbon emissions, subject to capital funding outlined in the *Expansion of the Derry~Londonderry Campus* report. Continued improvements in carbon data, stronger supplier engagement and carbon informed procurement, investment and travel decisions will enable a 45.7% reduction in material and influenceable indirect Scope 3 carbon emissions. Ulster University's long term ambition is to achieve net zero Scope 1 and 2 direct operational carbon emissions by 2040 through sustained operational improvements and strategic investment in the estate.

By 2033, nature based assessments and environmental planning will play a central role in shaping the University's estate. Natural capital assessments, biodiversity net gain measures and climate change risk assessments will guide nature positive enhancements across all campuses, helping build long term environmental resilience.

By 2033, Ulster University will also strengthen environmental sustainability in its research ecosystem by adopting the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice and progressing from supporter to full signatory status as institutional practices align with the Concordat principles. A University wide Sustainable Labs Programme will ensure that laboratory based research operates to high environmental standards, reducing resource use, improving energy efficiency and minimising environmental impact.

By 2033, across all areas, transparent reporting and timely benchmarking submissions will demonstrate measurable progress and ensure that Ulster University remains accountable, compliant and continuously improving across its key sustainability performance areas.

By 2033, the University will be recognised for delivering a future ready, environmentally responsible and climate resilient campus estate that supports its academic mission and wider societal commitments.

Priority Focus:

- Reduce Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 Carbon Emissions
- Implement Endowment Responsible Investment Policy
- Deliver Sustainable Labs Programme

Students Get Involved:

Support a low carbon, nature positive campus by choosing sustainable travel, reducing waste and taking part in student biodiversity and climate action initiatives. Get involved through sustainability societies, campus projects, consultations and surveys to help improve sustainability performance.



At a Glance:

Ulster University is strengthening the sustainability of its campuses through action on carbon, nature and resource efficiency. Everyone across the University and its suppliers can contribute by supporting low carbon choices and taking part in initiatives that enhance environmental performance and long term resilience.



Action Plan

Objectives	Outcomes by 2033	Targets
1. Decarbonise our campuses and infrastructure, supporting government targets of net zero by 2050.	By 2033, Ulster University is delivering a coordinated programme of estate rationalisation, fossil fuel free new builds, major refurbishments and energy performance improvement that establishes a credible pathway to net zero estate emissions. Capital and operational decisions are informed by whole-life carbon, cost and climate risk, with delivery enabled through partnerships and external investment.	Deliver on emissions reductions for Scope 1 and Scope 2 direct emissions by 51.1%.
		Ensure all new and major refurbishment building projects meet high environmental performance standards.
2. Decarbonise our most material and influenceable Scope 3 emissions by improving data, procurement practices and travel behaviours, aligned with wider sector and global decarbonisation pathways.	By 2033, material Scope 3 emissions from goods, services, capital projects, travel and commuting will be measured and managed through better data, supplier engagement and carbon-informed decisions, aligned with the University's sphere of influence.	Deliver on emissions reductions for Scope 3 indirect emissions by 44.6% (Purchased Good and Services including Capital Goods, Commuting and Business Travel).
		Establish Cloud Computing carbon footprint.
		Establish International Student Commuting carbon footprint.
3. Create nature-rich, climate resilient campuses.	By 2033, Ulster University's campuses are visibly greener, more biodiverse and more resilient to climate risks. A Natural Capital Implementation Plan guides investment in habitats, green spaces and infrastructure.	Complete natural capital assessments, accounts and enhancement plans for Coleraine, Derry~Londonderry and Ulster University Sports Village (Jordanstown).
		Implement biodiversity net gain policy commitment within the Sustainable Design Procedure.
		Complete climate change risk assessments and action plans for Belfast, Coleraine, Derry~Londonderry and Ulster University Sports Village (Jordanstown).
		Become a member of BITC NI's Business & Biodiversity Charter.

Objectives	Outcomes by 2033	Targets
4. Embed sustainable resource management and low carbon travel practices across University operations to support a more circular, efficient and environmentally responsible campus.	By 2033, Ulster University demonstrates leadership in operational sustainability through responsible resource use, reduced waste and travel impacts, increased circularity and sustained progress towards low carbon campus operations.	Deliver a coordinated programme of sustainable resource management and low-carbon travel initiatives that embed responsible operational practices across the University, reducing waste, advancing circularity, improving water efficiency, and supporting a shift towards lower-carbon business and commuter travel through effective policy, engagement and performance monitoring.
5. Embed responsible sustainability research standards across Ulster University.	By 2033, Ulster University is recognised for conducting research sustainably. Environmental research standards are embedded, aligned to the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice, ensuring research is designed and delivered sustainably.	Strengthen the environmental sustainability of Ulster University's research ecosystem by adopting the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice, transitioning from supporter to full signatory status as institutional research practices align with the Concordat principles.
		Implement a University wide Sustainable Labs Programme that embeds environmental research standards into laboratory practice, ensuring that all research labs operate sustainably and in alignment with the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation.
6. Enhance Ulster University's transparency and sustainability performance by delivering robust annual reporting and completing all statutory and sector benchmarking submissions that demonstrate compliance and drive continuous improvement.	By 2033, Ulster University enhances its transparency, accountability and performance by delivering high-quality, timely and comprehensive sustainability reporting that meets all statutory obligations, strengthens sector benchmarking and informs continuous improvement across environmental, social and governance priorities.	Ensure delivery of complete, timely annual reporting and benchmarking submissions that demonstrate compliance, transparency and measurable progress across key sustainability performance areas.

Case Studies

Coleraine Campus Natural Capital Baseline: Valuing Nature on Campus

Ulster University worked with a third-party provider to complete a Natural Capital Baseline Assessment for the Coleraine campus, quantifying the value of habitats and ecosystem services such as recreation, air quality and carbon sequestration.

The study estimated that Coleraine's natural assets generate hundreds of thousands of pounds in annual value and identified clear opportunities for habitat enhancement, tree and hedgerow planting and improved land management. Findings are already informing actions such as wildflower planting, wellbeing gardens and biodiversity campaigns.

This evidence based approach strengthens Ulster University's journey towards nature-rich, low carbon campuses, while supporting health and wellbeing for colleagues, students and local communities.

[Find out more](#)

Tackling Modern Slavery in Supply Chains – Responsible Procurement in Practice

Ulster University reaffirmed its commitment to combatting modern slavery and human trafficking by publishing a comprehensive Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement in line with the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015.

With a diverse supplier base, the University has integrated risk assessment, supplier engagement tools and targeted training for procurement colleagues to identify and address modern slavery risks in higher-risk categories. This work is strengthening responsible procurement processes and embedding human rights considerations into everyday purchasing decisions.

By improving supply chain governance and social outcomes, the initiative advances equality, dignity and wellbeing while aligning operational practice with the Framework's focus on responsible resource stewardship.

[Find out more](#)

Greater Belfast Development: A Flagship for Sustainable Campus Transformation

The Greater Belfast Development (GBD) is a flagship low carbon campus that expands Ulster University's Belfast presence and demonstrates sustainable estate transformation. Covering 76,670 m² across four interconnected buildings linked by a York Street pedestrian bridge, the development provides modern, flexible teaching, research and collaboration spaces that support innovative learning and community engagement. Designed to high environmental standards, it achieves BREEAM Excellent, low energy use, on site PV generation and incorporates green roofs, natural ventilation, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and extensive cycle facilities to reduce environmental impact and enhance resilience.

The project delivered over 5,300 person weeks of apprenticeships, strong community engagement and a range of wellbeing initiatives, supporting skills development and meaningful participation throughout construction.

[Find out more](#)



Get Involved

Turn inspiration into action. Explore the sustainability opportunities available at Ulster University, from research and projects to networks and everyday campus initiatives.

Find Out More

ulster.ac.uk/sustainability
sustainability@ulster.ac.uk



Senior Management

- ✓ Develop sustainability actions for your Portfolio and integrate these into Operational Plans.



Professional Services Colleagues

- ✓ Complete Carbon Literacy Training
- ✓ Sign up to the Net Zero Challenge App.



Academic Colleagues

- ✓ Fully integrate sustainability into your curriculum
- ✓ Participate in the SDG Teach In
- ✓ Apply sustainable thinking in your research
- ✓ Join the Sustainable Labs Programme to make your laboratory practices greener.



Students

- ✓ Join a Student Sustainability Society
- ✓ Apply for the Ulster Graduate Award
- ✓ Apply for Carbon Literacy Training
- ✓ Sign up to the Net Zero Challenge App.



Suppliers and Partners

- ✓ Align with Ulster University's sustainability and social value standards
- ✓ Share clear environmental and social value data
- ✓ Collaborate on carbon reduction and circular solutions
- ✓ Engage in sustainability events and forums.

Explore the latest
sustainability report >



ulster.ac.uk