

2020/21

Annual Sustainability Report



INTRODUCTION

Ulster University is committed to acting responsibly and sustainably, to enhance our social, economic, and environmental contributions year on year. This annual review highlights some of our 2020/21 activity, with a snapshot of examples that bring our commitment to being a truly sustainable university to life.

2020/21 was an extraordinary year, the COVID-19 pandemic involved students and staff studying and working remotely or adopting a hybrid approach. The University volunteered its campuses in support of the NHS, our communities accessed our campus grounds for daily exercise and wellbeing and our academic community were involved in developing solutions to the pandemic.

At Ulster every person, course, research project, professional service area and campus contributes towards the global sustainability and climate change agenda.

Ulster seeks to utilise the framework of the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide our responsible leadership and to deliver positive impacts with a key focus on partnership working. This report is structured around People, Partnerships, Planet and Place to showcase our expanding sustainability agenda.



// What the pandemic has taught us is that we as a university are resilient and can respond quickly to change. Continuing to embed sustainability in our choices and decisions across teaching, research, operations, and outreach is more important than ever as we face multiple global crises related to health, climate, biodiversity, and social justice. We have an opportunity to develop radical ideas to shape sustainable thinking and action as part of the University's recovery and future development. //

Professor Ian Montgomery
Director of Brexit and Sustainability



PEOPLE

AN INCLUSIVE UNIVERSITY: EVERYONE MATTERS



Athena Swan Bronze award
for Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment



Autism NI Impact Award Champion
for Student Wellbeing team



New staff networks, LGBT+ and Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) networks



New health and social care
education provision



Derry and Strabane
City Deal



Radox Laboratories
funding and sponsorship



KTP Best of the Best Awards
2020 - Societal Impact Award



Architects of Change
partnership with Belfast City Council



Platinum in the BITC Environmental Benchmarking Survey



Exceeded our **Carbon reduction target** of 29%



BREEAM 'Excellent' rating
for all new buildings



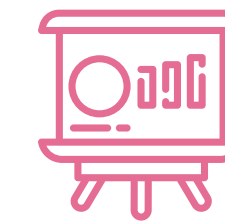
Pride in the **natural capital** of our estate



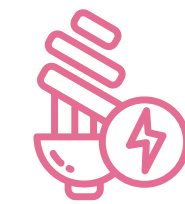
Ranked 2nd in the SDG 'Teach In'
for staff engagement



Sustainability more widespread
throughout all courses



Research project
Sustainable Curriculum:
Educating for the Future



SPIRE 2 - RULET
(Rural-Led Energy Transition)
initiative with Northern Ireland Housing Executive

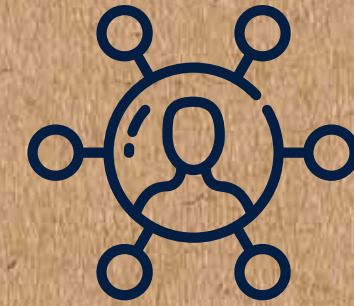


PLANET

A CLIMATE POSITIVE UNIVERSITY: PROTECTING NATURE

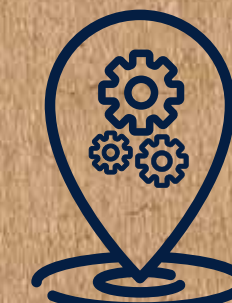
PARTNERSHIPS

A CONNECTED UNIVERSITY: CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIETY



PLACE

AN INNOVATIVE UNIVERSITY: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES



PEOPLE

Ulster University is about its people; we seek out excellence in everyone and everything because we believe there is always a passion to be honed, a talent to be nurtured and an interest to be cultivated. We are an open and inclusive institution that celebrates and welcomes diversity.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Ulster has a co-ordinated approach to support the health & wellbeing of staff and students.



University Mental Health Day

was celebrated online with Wellbeing Wednesday webinars held each Wednesday throughout March focusing on the topics of: Loneliness and Isolation, Change and Challenge, Our Tricky Minds and Mental Health Matters.



Marking this event provided an opportunity to focus on the range of support services available to our students and to reinforce the message that “It’s ok not to feel ok”.



Aspiring medical students sat the **Graduate Medical School Admissions Test (GAMSAT)** at our Magee campus. Passing the GAMSAT examination is just one of the criteria applicants to Ulster’s School of Medicine must fulfil before securing a place on the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery medical degree programme that is unique in Northern Ireland.

A new BSc Hons Paramedic Science degree was launched within our popular and highly regarded School of Nursing, ranked 1st in Ireland and in the top 50 globally. Based on our Magee campus the course will add to our health and social care education provision in the North West alongside the new School of Medicine and School of Health Sciences.

On **International Nurses Day**, Ulster University, The Open University, and Queen’s University came together to celebrate the diversity of the nursing profession. The three universities created an online resource highlighting nursing as a career path for anyone who is caring and compassionate regardless of their age, gender, or background.





Researchers worked in partnership with Heath and Social Care Trusts to resource and establish COVID-19 testing as well as sharing their knowledge and expertise by sitting on advisory groups and contributing to the development of the StopCOVID NI app.

Colleagues produced PPE to assist with COVID-19 efforts, students elected to take their final clinical placement early to support the health service during this crisis and the entire university community came together to help raise money to purchase equipment for testing.

The Office for Digital Learning ran webinars focussed on core institutionally supported digital learning technologies to support academic staff with the transition to online delivery. Information Services made Microsoft Teams available to all staff to support meetings and collaboration whilst working from home.

Senior leaders and colleagues supported the Recovery Planning Group which focused on **safeguarding students and staff and delivering the best experience possible for work and study**. The Wellbeing Team developed a suite of resources for managers and staff to help support the phased return to campus. An easy-to-follow guide was introduced along with training on personal resilience, support for mental wellbeing, bespoke training for teams, as well as individual, personalised support.

Collaboration on the Magee campus with UUSU and our Estates Services team saw the **installation of a new Wellbeing Garden**, enhancing biodiversity and student and staff wellbeing.

Staff and students continue to support local charity and food bank initiatives and over the last seven years the Science Shop Magee students have successfully **raised over £88,000 for local charities**.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

At Ulster, we are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and to providing an inclusive and fair environment in which to work and study



Following the introduction of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategy last year a programme of training and awareness sessions was launched across the institution demonstrating **a commitment to placing EDI at the heart of our culture.**



As part of our wider EDI agenda, we celebrated the National Day for Staff Networks. In addition to the Wo/men's and staff Disability Networks, **two new staff networks were launched:** LGBT+ Network and the Network for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME).

International Transgender Day of Visibility was promoted to help spread knowledge and understanding of the transgender community and to promote a place to work and study where everyone feels accepted.

The Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment achieved an Athena Swan Bronze award.

11 Schools at Ulster currently hold Athena Swan awards for the advancement of gender equality: representation, progression, and success for all. In support of Ulster's Athena SWAN agenda and an ongoing commitment to promoting and valuing leadership development and career progression for women across the University, 12 funded places were provided for the AURORA Leadership Programme for Women, delivered by Advance HE (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education).

New scholarship programmes were launched to support equality. The FinTrU Women in Finance Scholarship aims to address underrepresentation of female graduates entering a career within the Financial Services industry. The So She Did Female Entrepreneurship programme provides free support to help female students identify business opportunities, validate their ideas, and start a new venture.

The aim of our Schools Outreach activity is to diversify the student body at Ulster by **empowering and supporting prospective students from underrepresented backgrounds** to access university. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way in which Schools Outreach operated. Adapting from traditional face to face engagement to an online virtual Learning Environment allowed outreach activities to reach a wider audience, gave us a much wider impact and ensured we offered 'Outreach for All'.

40 new Belfast Community Scholarships were announced. The **Scholarships help to remove some financial barriers** that may prevent many students from accessing higher education. As one of the top 5 UK universities for widening access to higher education and first in NI, Ulster is renowned for its work in supporting students from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds. Currently, over 40% of our 27,000 students present with widening access indicators such as financial hardship, background of care, health issues, or other barriers that complicate and compromise successful study.



The Student Wellbeing team at Ulster were awarded an Autism Impact Award from Autism NI in recognition of their work supporting students with autistic spectrum disorder. AccessAbility Advisors within Student Wellbeing provide a range of services and resources to help all Ulster students with disabilities.

Launch and implementation of **a needs-based approach for car parking** at the Belfast campus to prioritise staff and students who have a disability or a health condition and staff who are carers of disabled dependents.

UUSU's Student Council was revised to include 8 Equality Counsellors, 2 on each campus.

The Equality Counsellors work individually with students from a minority background providing support and advocating for meaningful change. They also engage with UUSU Diversity Networks.

UUSU in conjunction with other local Students' Unions **launched a Period Poverty Action Group** to address period poverty and lobby for period products to be provided free of charge to students.

“Since the Clinic opened in 2013, staff and students have provided thousands of hours of free advice and representation.”

(equivalent to around £1.1m free legal advice and representation)

Ulster have a long-standing commitment to access to justice. **The Law Clinic was recognised by the UK's Attorney General** when it was named runner up in the category of Best Contribution by a Law School in the UK for student pro-bono work in the LawWorks and UK Attorney General Student Awards 2021. Since the Clinic opened in 2013, staff and students have provided thousands of hours of free advice and representation (equivalent to around £1.1m free legal advice and representation) in employment, social security, and family law cases.

Every year Transitional Justice Institute PhD researchers organise sessions entitled 'What's the Craic?'. These **informal discussions and talks bring the faculty,**

researchers, and masters students together to discuss work in progress, reflect on fieldwork, and hear draft conference papers. During 2020-2021 due to the pandemic the series ran online. The sessions focused not only on research topics, but also on sharing useful tips and insights, such as publishing while writing a PhD or strategies on job searching. The sessions are held in-house, the invitation is restricted to the research community of Ulster University to allow for a comfort of sharing the work in progress and personal reflections in collegial and non-judgmental atmosphere.

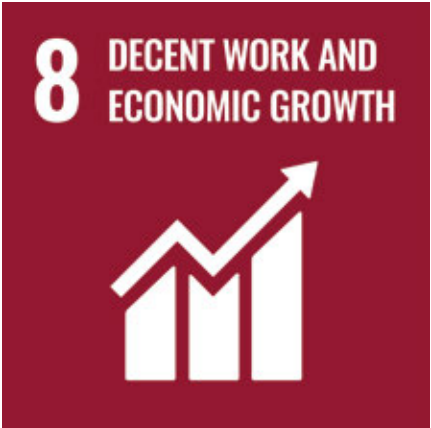
PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration and working with partners is key to addressing global sustainability concerns. We work with businesses, the public sector, charities, and research organisations to tackle the challenges of tomorrow.



BUSINESS

Partnership working is a key mechanism of knowledge exchange between academics and industry.



Thanks to £1.2million in funding for medical education and research, **the University created its first Professor of Medicine post, titled, the Radox Professor of Medicine.** This is a clinical and academic post so the Professor will provide educational leadership, teaching and training thus inspiring the next generation of doctors and researchers in the area. Radox Laboratories also extended their university-wide student sports sponsorship deal for a further three years. This investment will continue to supply kit and equipment for 70 sports clubs across the university’s four campuses, including individual and team sports.

Through the **1,000 Chartered Accountants campaign** Ulster has supported Chartered Accountants who have committed - or want to commit - to begin their journey to net-zero carbon emissions.

A Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with Inspire Wellbeing Group won Innovate UK’s ‘KTP Best of the Best 2020 Awards’ in the Societal Impact category. This KTP led to the development of Inspire’s Wellbeing Identification and Support Platform – WISP creating immersive, digital tools that help people dealing with impacts of trauma.

Ulster entered a partnership with the Antonio Carluccio Foundation to encourage young people in NI to consider studying in the fields of Hospitality and Culinary Arts Management.

The outreach programme involved university lecturers, students and representatives of the local hospitality industry engaging with school leavers who may not previously have considered university as an option through a series of workshops and fieldtrips that highlight the many exciting career opportunities available in this sector.



COMMUNITY

We actively seek to build and engage in sustainable community partnerships with the primary aim of positively influencing individuals and communities across the region.



The Belfast Campus has a '**University Community Benefit Framework**,' developed jointly with Inner North Belfast and Greater Shankill Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships. It works with local communities to maximise the social, educational, environmental, and economic benefits of our location in the city. One of the initiatives within the Framework is the 'Taking Boys Seriously Programme' which started in Belfast Boys' Model School in 2012 and sees the University working closely with the school to encourage boys to reach their academic potential.



Ulster's Tech Fund Initiative 2020/21 included partnership working across our Widening Access and Participation, Student Wellbeing and Development and Alumni Relations teams to **purchase and distribute 1,000 laptops to students who struggled** during the pandemic to access remote online learning.



We are committed to supporting access to Higher Education and have **raised care experienced enrolments from 3 in 2008/09 to 93 in 2020/21**. We actively partner with Fostering Network in their annual Tick the Box campaign. This promotes the services offered to students who attend Ulster University for applicants at the UCAS stage to inform universities that they are care experienced. In doing so, in confidence, students will have a named contact throughout their time at Ulster. This additional support includes a £1,000 per annum bursary.

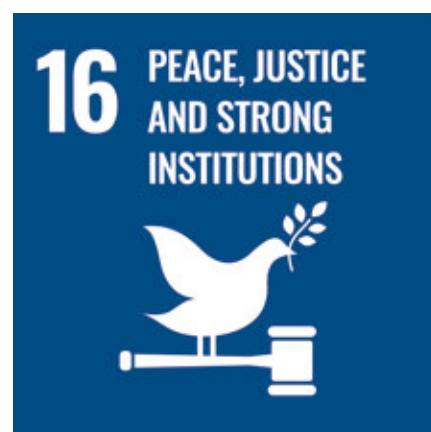
Belfast School of Art students collaborated with Oxfam to **recycle and upcycle donated clothes that could not be sold in Oxfam stores** into new contemporary fashion garments.

Students from BA Hons Textile Art, Design and Fashion are collaborating with Alex Begg & Co in Ayr Scotland and the Social Enterprise Maker & Producer from Glasgow. **Students use the waste woven material from Alex Begg & Co's weaving mill** to come up with new fashion and textile design concepts to utilise this waste product and upcycle it into manufactured outfits.

"We are committed to supporting access to Higher Education and have raised care experienced enrolments from 3 in 2008/09 to 93 in 2020/21."

GOVERNMENT

We work with regional and local government in the delivery of effective innovative and research-based solutions.



Ulster University joined city and region partners to **celebrate the Heads of Terms Agreement** for the Derry and Strabane City Deal.

As a strategic partner, Ulster University will work with the city and other stakeholders to deliver innovation projects focused on priority growth areas including Artificial Intelligence, Smart Manufacturing Systems and Personalised Medicine.

Ulster entered into a unique research partnership with Belfast City Council

to make a practical and tangible impact on the climate change emergency. The Architects of Change project puts students from the School of Architecture and the Built Environment at the heart of developing a training programme for business leaders to **bridge the green skills gap**. Focusing on sustainability, the training programme will support current business leaders to deliver environmentally and socially sustainable practice within organisations.

822 students were registered at Ulster on **courses funded by the Department for the Economy** to upskill and retrain people whose jobs had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The online courses were spread across Computing, Engineering, Energy, and Pharmaceuticals and offered opportunities in priority areas including Artificial Intelligence which was recently identified as one of the fastest growing fields of computing science by the World Economic Forum as well as key skills gaps identified within the Renewable Energy and Green Technology sector in Northern Ireland.

The CAIN archive (Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland) received confirmation that it would be retained as a live and curated archive, made possible by support from Initiatives of Change. **The CAIN website is**

a unique academic and civic resource containing a large archive of materials and information related to the conflict and politics in Northern Ireland, with new materials added on a regular basis.



PLANET

We deliver a world class estate with a reputation for achieving ambitious campus sustainability targets and initiatives providing exceptional campus experience for staff, students, and visitors.



REDUCING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT



FUEL AND ELECTRICITY RELATED EMISSIONS
(known as Scope 1 and 2: Gas Fuels and Electricity)

Ulster’s 2020/21 scope 1 and 2 carbon footprint was 7,918 tonnes CO₂e. We have reduced our scope 1 and 2 carbon footprint by 60% since 2005/06.

This reduction is attributed to significant investments in green buildings and infrastructure. Four building developments have been built to BREEAM Excellent sustainability standards: Belfast (BB Building) Coleraine (New Teaching Block and a New Sports Centre) and Magee (New Teaching Block). Sustainable infrastructure includes a combined heat and power system and a ground source heating system. On-campus renewables include two large wind turbine generators and eight solar photovoltaic generation schemes that provide 14.5% of the university’s electricity demand.

In 2020/21 energy-related carbon emissions decreased overall by 4.5% resulting from a reduction in fuel and electricity consumption due to campus closures and proactive management of covid-safe ventilation.









INDIRECT EMISSIONS ASSOCIATED WITH OUR ACTIVITIES AND SUPPLY CHAIN
(Scope 3: Purchase of Goods and Services, Travel and Waste)

A gap analysis project was completed to provide an initial baseline for the university’s Scope 3 emissions along with a high-level analysis of key emissions hotspots. This is the first step for Ulster to understand our full value chain impact and the extent of our carbon footprint, which will allow the university to set science-based targets for reductions.

“Ulster has been measuring its direct on-campus carbon emissions since 2005/06. This year we have completed a project to quantify our indirect carbon emissions such as those from procurement, construction, waste and travel.”

CARBON FOOTPRINT

(Baseline Year 2018/19 pre-Covid-19)
Carbon Emissions measured in tonnes of carbon equivalent (tCO₂e)

SCOPE 1		
Direct emissions from our activities		
	GAS AND FUELS Used to heat and operate our buildings	EMISSIONS: 6,330 tCO ₂ e
SCOPE 2		
Indirect emission from our electricity use		
	ELECTRICITY Used for lighting, IT equipment, ventilation...	EMISSIONS: 3,360 tCO ₂ e
SCOPE 3		
Indirect emissions associated with our activities and supply chain		
	GOODS & SERVICES All the things we purchase including for construction	EMISSIONS: 54,024 tCO ₂ e
	EMPLOYEE AND STUDENT COMMUTING Travel to and from the campus	EMISSIONS: 28,319 tCO ₂ e
	BUSINESS TRAVEL Air and car travel	EMISSIONS: 5,237 tCO ₂ e
	FUEL AND ENERGY RELATED ACTIVITIES (FERA) Extraction, processing and transport of fuels and electricity to campus	EMISSIONS: 1,728 tCO ₂ e
	TRANSPORT AND DISTRIBUTION Transport & Storage and mail services	EMISSIONS: 380 tCO ₂ e
	WASTE Generated in operations	EMISSIONS: 97 tCO ₂ e

The university’s carbon (Scope 1, 2 and 3) emissions footprint for baseline year 2018/19 is 99,473 tCO₂e, with Scope 3 emissions accounting for 90% of total emissions.

The top 3 Scope 3 Categories were found to be:

- 1. Purchased Goods and Services & Capital Goods (60%)
- 2. Employee and Student Commuting (32%)
- 3. Business Travel, i.e., emissions from flights, car journeys and hotel stays (6%)

The next phase of our decarbonisation journey will include developing a Climate Positive Statement outlining our reduction commitments and establishing a science-based target model for scope 1, 2 and 3 emission reductions and how to achieve them.



AN ENERGY EFFICIENT ESTATE

The effective management of energy has been a key strategic objective within the University for many years, having been at the heart of its Estates Strategy for the past two decades.



Our energy usage per m² for 2020/21 was 62.89 kWh/m² which represents a 2.8% reduction from 2019/20 and 30% reduction in the last ten years.

Actual energy cost increased slightly despite falling consumption primarily due to gas prices increasing from previous historic lows.

The partial closure of campus provided an opportunity to review our buildings energy use and optimise controls.

A re-boarding working group was established to ensure that as we moved into the 2020/21 academic year the heating load continued to match actual demand. Night-time and peak load energy audits were conducted to establish new energy baseloads and recommendations were implemented.

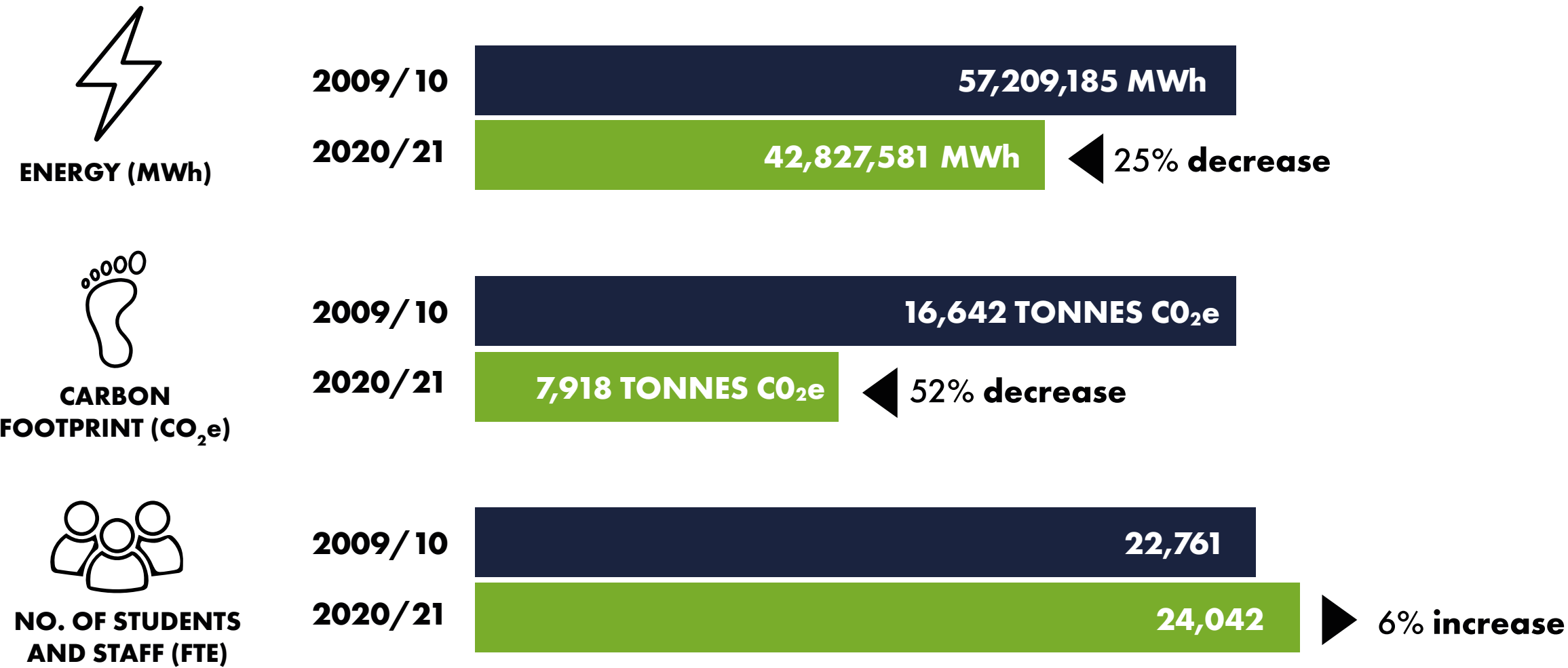
We engaged with staff highlighting the potential impact on comfort levels given government COVID guidance to improve fresh air ventilation, **a flexible and agile approach was adopted to balance the competing priorities of comfort, safety, environment, and cost.**

Driving high energy efficiency standards continues to be a key aspect of how we

conduct buildings refurbishments and design new buildings.

Going forward we will continue to identify new energy saving projects and develop an approach for decarbonising the heating of buildings.

ENERGY USAGE (AND ASSOCIATED CARBON EMISSIONS) IN RELATION TO 2009/10



INCREASE IN RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

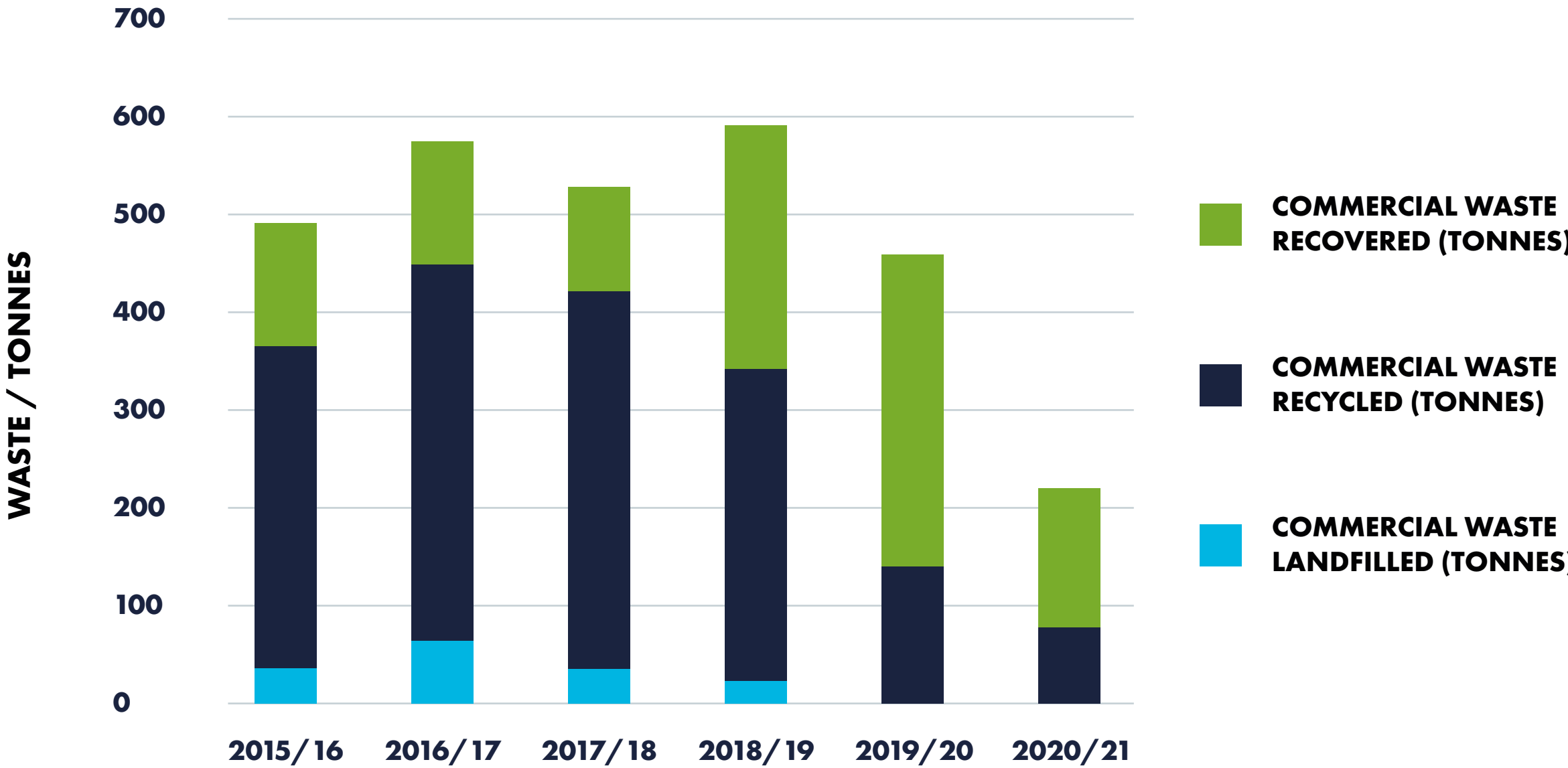
We apply the “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover” waste hierarchy in our waste and resource management.



Ulster’s total routine commercial waste volume in 2020/21 decreased to 216 tonnes, 100% was recycled and recovered with zero waste to landfill achieved again this year. The significant reduction in waste generation is mostly attributed to campus closures. However routine commercial waste has reduced overall by 52.7% from 2009/10 baseline.

2.3 tonnes of unwanted items were donated to the British Heart Foundation ‘Pack for Good’ campaign delivered by Residential Services, with a value to the charity of £4,158.

COMMERCIAL WASTE



We continue to reuse furniture and other resources on campus during space planning moves and use the online Warpit resource reuse portal to record this. This year obsolete furniture and equipment from our Jordanstown campus was reused to help set up the Integrated-Diagnostics-Laboratory at Belfast providing start up office desks, chairs, and storage units.

Our next phase of work with the Warpit reuse portal will look at **connecting with local schools, community, and charity organisations to redistribute obsolete furniture**, maintaining the circularity of resources, and avoiding waste.

REDUCE WATER CONSUMPTION

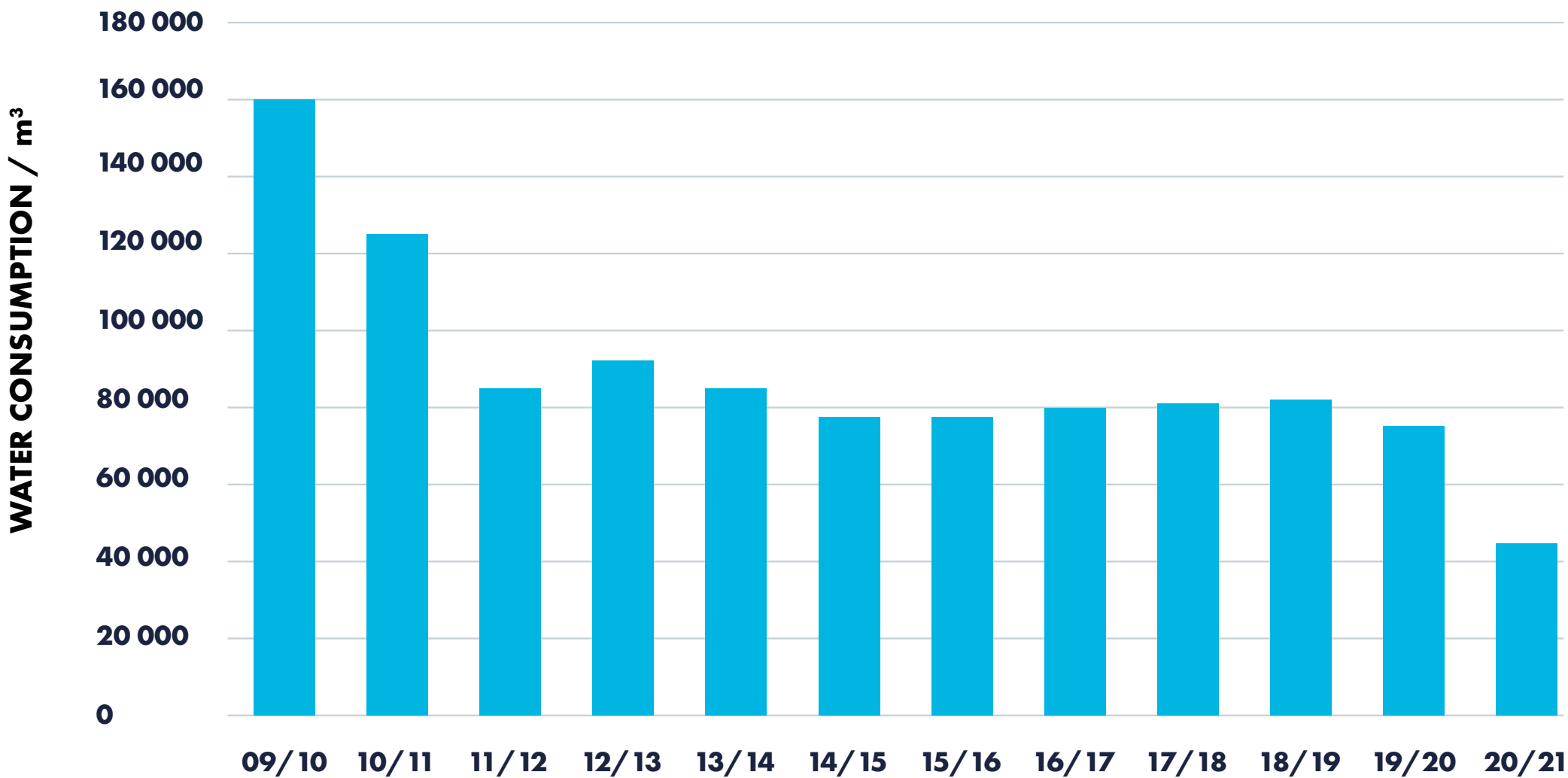
Proactive programme in place to minimise water consumption.



Water consumption decreased by 16.1% in 2020/21, this is less than half of what it was in 2010, partly due to campus closures and effective leak detection and remediation.

We continue to implement water efficiency measures and have installed Water Hydration Stations on campus providing access to drinking water and contributing to the reduction of plastic waste.

WATER CONSUMPTION SINCE 2009/10



REDUCE EMISSIONS ASSOCIATED WITH TRAVEL

Ongoing implementation of sustainable travel initiatives.



TRAVEL PLANS

Regular communication activities to **promote 'car free' campuses** and sustainable travel.

Collaboration with Translink on a range of initiatives including an **enhanced bus service to and from the Jordanstown and Belfast campuses**, creation of bespoke Translink video promoting the use of public transport services to campus and journey planning events for staff and students to explore routes, ticketing options and best value fares.

Working in partnership with Belfast City Council to **develop an active travel hub in the vicinity of the Belfast campus**.

Engagement with multi agency external stakeholders on a variety of sustainable travel projects linked to the Belfast campus including **way finding, cycle routes, junction**

upgrades, traffic restriction measures and upgrade to street lighting along pedestrian route between the campus and Yorkgate station.

A Transport Operational Readiness Plan was prepared and implemented for the phased opening of the extended Belfast campus including an integrated communication plan and arrangements for enhanced monitoring of parking and traffic volumes in the vicinity of the campus.

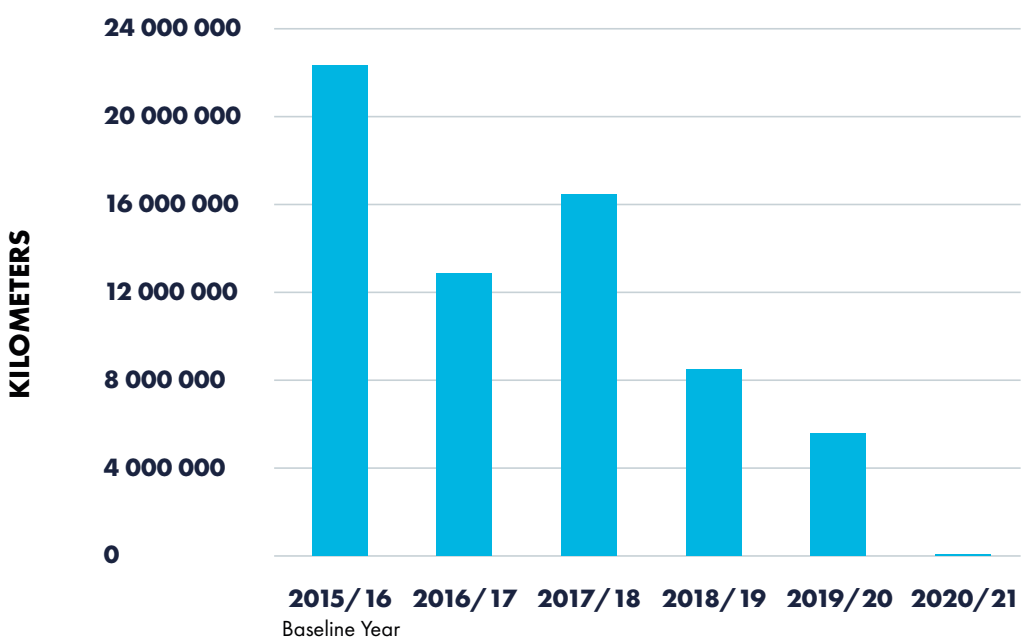


AIR TRAVEL

During 2020/21, there were 113,622 Kilometres of business air travelled by university representatives with carbon emissions of 16.6 tonnes. This a remarkable decline compared to previous years.

The reduction in air travel is attributed to restrictions to travel and in-person meetings because of the Covid-19 pandemic which has seen the suspension of in-person meetings and international conference events.

BUSINESS KILOMETERS TRAVELLED BY AIR



It is widely agreed within the Higher Education sector that something needs to be done to reduce academic related air travel and to avoid a return to pre-pandemic travel trends,

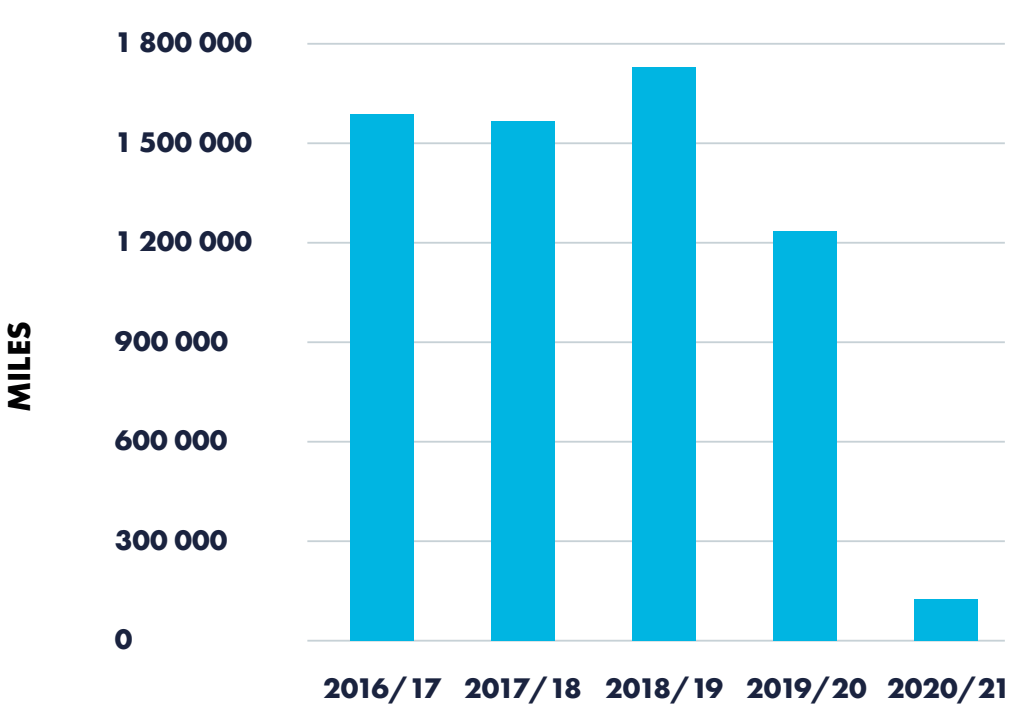
however, most agree that an outright ban on flying is not appropriate.

Some institutions are using a ‘nudging’ approach with colleagues encouraging them to change their mindset about when and how much to travel. This is a university wide discussion that needs to be addressed.

CAR TRAVEL

During the reporting year, staff travelled a total of 162,039 miles by car on university business, which resulted in approximately 337 tonnes of carbon emissions. This is a decrease of 87% from the previous year and 93% below the 2009/10 baseline year level. The decrease is attributed to campus closures.

BUSINESS MILEAGE TRAVELLED BY CAR

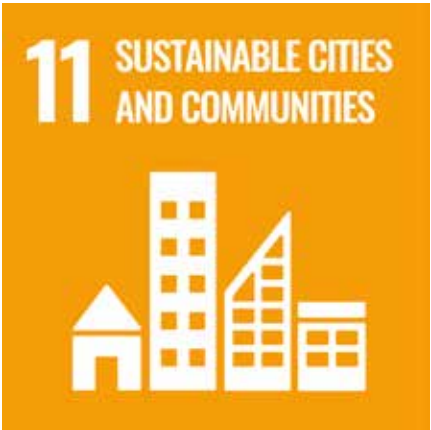


With business travel accounting for almost 10% of the university’s carbon footprint we will need to ensure that post-pandemic we travel less, make more use of digital technologies to connect, and factor sustainability into the mode of travel we select.

“We will need to ensure that post-pandemic we travel less, make more use of digital technologies to connect, and factor sustainability into the mode of travel we select.”

ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY

Pride in the natural capital of our estate.



MAGEE CAMPUS

The grounds team identified and **preserved a veteran cut leaf hornbeam tree**. Through a ‘grafting’ process three genetically identical replacement trees were created for future planting.

Work continues with Ulster Wildlife to help **red squirrels thrive on our Magee campus** by providing feeding boxes and monitoring grey and red squirrel populations. Red squirrels play a vital role in regenerating our woodlands, burying nuts and seeds which grow into future trees that sustain a host of native woodland dwellers, such as pine martens and jays.

Plantlife’s **“No Mow May” campaign** was supported. During May grass areas were not mown allowing lawn flowers to bloom providing nectar for bees and other pollinators.

A draft maintenance plan for the campus grounds was developed including enhancements to current practices, creation of open spaces for “quiet reflection” and replacing existing planting with pollinators, bulbs, and wildflowers.

The existing treescape was surveyed, mapped, and actions highlighted to **transition to a more diverse urban woodland**.

COLERAINE CAMPUS

A further 1.2 hectares of lawn area on the Coleraine campus was managed to provide a more diverse species rich grassland. This adds to the already established native wildflower areas extending to circa 2 hectares.

Planting of naturalised bulbs continues on the Coleraine campus. Each year for the last three years 20,000 native species bulbs have been planted.

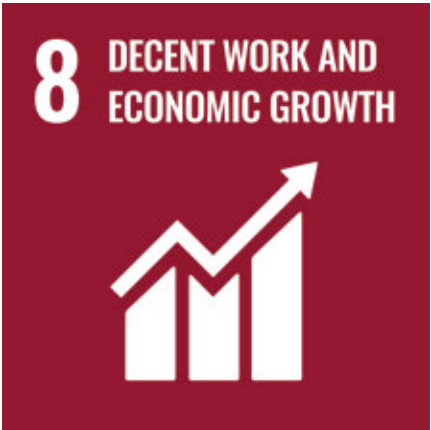
A further 12,000 bulbs (biodiversity mix) have been planted in support of “Buglife”, the only organisation in Europe devoted to the conservation of all invertebrates.

Tree thinning continues within the woodlands to open the overall canopy to **permit a more diverse understory** to develop.



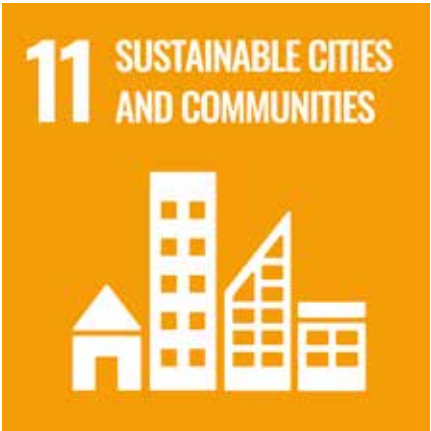
IMPROVE SUPPLY CHAIN

Embed sustainability considerations into purchase of goods and services. Long-term commitment to engaging suppliers on issues ranging from modern slavery to delivering on carbon commitments.



Continue to operate to **Level 4 of the Flexible Framework** (national approach for sustainable procurement).

A **Sustainability Impact Analysis** carried out for all major procurement expenditure identifying the environmental, social, and economic impacts of the procurement activity with the benefit of reducing risk and raising the understanding of sustainability across faculties, schools, and departments



The new Belfast Campus has been a catalyst for change in the city centre. The building development project has supported training, placements, and apprenticeship and 500 jobs through the supply chain purchases. It is these talented young apprentices and placement students who have laid the foundations and built the university campus of the future in Belfast City Centre.



Since launching the NETpositive Supplier Engagement Tool to suppliers in 2018 (helping suppliers to develop sustainability action plans for free), over **500 suppliers have committed to 9,095 actions and provided 1,508 pieces of evidence of action.**

The Supplier Engagement Tool **supports suppliers to enhance social value** and stimulate a range of actions, which support the environmental commitments of the university.

Our next steps will include exploring how data from the Supplier Engagement Tool can be used to demonstrate positive impacts through procurement and improving the understanding of the carbon impacts of various expenditure items.

“The building development project has supported training, placements, and apprenticeship and 500 jobs through the supply chain purchases.”

PLACE

We are passionate about sharing with our students the vital role they each have now and as future professionals in promoting a sustainable future for all. We believe that sustainability is not the domain of one discipline or profession. It is the responsibility of all disciplines, professions, organisations, and individuals.



EDUCATION

Our teaching and learning approach is driven by high quality research and real-world examples encouraging students to explore and tackle the biggest challenges in their discipline. This rich learning culture is designed to foster new thinking, promote the acquisition of skills, and nurture creative risk-taking within a supportive world-class campus environment.



An Education for Sustainable Development Project (ESD) was approved in 2020/21 with **an overall aim to improve the learning experiences, skills, and successes of our students and graduates**, by progressing the institution-wide adoption and embedding of effective Education for Sustainable Development, across all curricula. This will be achieved through staff engagement and the adoption of approaches that integrate ESD with inquiry-based learning approaches.

Ulster achieved second place in the Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS) UK SDG Teach In for staff engagement, with 69 colleagues pledging to include the UN SDGs within their learning and teaching. As a result of this commitment by staff, nearly 20% of our students were reached, with Ulster

achieving fifth place for the proportion of students involved.

ESD professional learning for staff is now embedded in the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice within the 'Shaping the Curriculum' module, and within Integrated Curriculum Design Framework workshops for programme teams preparing for evaluation/revalidation.

Students participating in the MSc Executive Leadership programme were provided with the opportunity to **articulate long-term sustainable leadership development goals**, which were then communicated through an infographic-based assessment.

Every course within the Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment formally incorporates the UN Sustainable Development Goals into the curriculum highlighting the contribution they can make now, and for graduates from the School.



“Post Graduate Certificate in Education masters level assignments promote the principles of sustainability by recognising that all actions and inactions have an impact on the world and the interconnected society around us.”

Modules with **sustainability related components are becoming more widespread** throughout all courses not just those with a traditional environmental focus. For example, within the School of Law, the Law and the Environment module includes a strong focus on climate change.

Post Graduate Certificate in Education masters level assignments promote the principles of sustainability by recognising that all actions and inactions have an impact on the world and the interconnected society around us, both now and in the future. Concepts such as environmental sustainability, economic well-being, social justice, stewardship and civic and global citizenship visibly permeate all module content teaching sessions.

The School of Nursing was involved in a **multinational exchange programme** led by the University of Pennsylvania. The project involved academic staff and nursing / midwifery students from universities across the globe and focused on promoting health in a global climate crisis.

The Ulster Screen Academy was **awarded ‘Unreal Academic Partner’ status** by Epic Games the creators of Fortnite and Unreal Engine. The award recognises exemplary

universities that have successfully integrated Unreal Engine into their classes and labs and is an endorsement of our Games Design and Animation programmes.

The Screen Academy at Ulster announced a £1 million investment in a **new Virtual Production Facility** at the Belfast campus.

The investment will help Ulster deliver new aspects of the curriculum in response to the real-time revolution taking place across film, television, games, and animation production.

The new facility will also support **leading-edge research in virtual production** for use in the screen industries.

First year business students participated in a poster competition sponsored by the Students’ Union. The task was to create a poster **encouraging students to recycle their eWaste**, following a lecture on the SDGs and SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production. The winner was publicised on social media.

RESEARCH

Ulster has a strong track record in harnessing the skills and knowledge of its students and staff across a broad culture of research and innovation, addressing real-world issues of both local and global relevance. The rich and diverse research culture at Ulster incorporates cutting-edge technology, studio and laboratory-based experiments, and a global perspective founded on international partnerships.



In partnership with Belfast City Council (BCC) the university launched Belfast-THRI(VES): Transformative Health & Regeneration Initiatives (for Vibrancy, Equality and Sustainability).



The pilot, practical research project aims to support BCC and both the Department for Infrastructure and Department for Communities to consider informed decisions around enhancing the liveability of the city, wellbeing of its inhabitants and carbon footprint of the city.

A multi-disciplinary team of researchers from Ulster's Belfast School of Architecture (Urban Research Lab) and the Built Environment and School of Psychology (The Bamford Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing) are working jointly with a team from Belfast City Council's City Regeneration & Development team to deliver this research.

A Life and Health Sciences Faculty research project focused on the lives of children with congenital anomalies.

The project assessed the first ten years of life by investigating mortality, morbidity and educational outcomes for these children compared to children without congenital anomalies. Data from different European regions was combined to produce European estimates about how long children spent in hospital, how many surgeries and prescriptions they had and what their chances of survival were compared to children without congenital anomalies.

The Political Economy of Education Research Network is a three-year initiative led by Ulster in collaboration with the University of Cape Town, Nazarbayev University and the University of Sussex and the network **aims to strengthen Political Economy Analysis of education systems** in partnership with academics, policymakers and practitioners in conflict-affected countries. This includes

provision of free access to online tools and resources to support and inform effective analysis.

International collaboration project between Ulster University and the University of Sao Paulo (Brazil) **aims to provide low-cost technologies for drinking water in Brazilian rural communities** through the provision of household slow sand filters combined with ultraviolet LED disinfection.



“The School of Geography and Environmental Sciences became the proud owners of an inshore research vessel, Laconia.”



Prevention of Violent Extremism Education in Iraq is a UNESCO Iraq funded collaboration between Ulster and Iraqi researchers to **develop a teacher training programme and associated school reference guide that promotes schools as safe and protected spaces.**



So far 60 Master trainers have completed the programme and will train Ministry of Education school teachers across the Iraqi governorates of Ninewa and Anbar.



The SPIRE 2 - RULET initiative aims to quantify the system value which could be created by

significant uptake of flexible electric heating in NI social housing. With the objective of **reducing or eliminating the risk of low-income households being left behind** in the transition to clean, smart, integrated energy systems. Ulster researchers from the School of Architecture and the Built Environment and NIHE are lead partners on the project.

Ulster’s design researchers undertook a project with Health and Social Care Northern Ireland embedding research methods that visually synthesise complexity in healthcare settings. It was specifically focused on the interactions and service design of a virtual health hub, for patients with cardiovascular disease. It involved the conceptualisation of a real-time app to manage the flow of patients and service design for a cardiology virtual assistant enabling remote patient engagement across hospital sites and diagnostic equipment.

The Department for Global Business and Enterprise was involved in a COVID-19 research project aimed at **exploring the impact that the initial stages of the pandemic had on entrepreneurs.** Focusing on the impact that the temporary business closures had on the entrepreneurs’ ability and propensity to continue, across four themes: psychological wellbeing of the entrepreneurs; their changing attitudes

to entrepreneurship; the changes they made to their business; and the supports that they needed.

The School of Geography and Environmental Sciences became the proud owners of an inshore research vessel, Laconia, which is **a state-of-the-art platform on which coastal and marine multidisciplinary science research will be conducted at sea.** The vessel was specifically designed around the school’s suite of marine surveying facilities and the national pool of equipment that it has access to, through its work with many collaborative partners including the Scottish Association of Marine Sciences, Agri-Food Biosciences Institute and the University of Limerick. The vessel can act as an outreach and public engagement tool for events, such as Clipper Round the World, International Maritime Day and schools outreach initiatives.

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION...

Do you feel inspired by Ulster's sustainability achievements?

Find out more and get in touch, everyone can make a difference!

 ulster.ac.uk/sustainability

 sustainability@ulster.ac.uk