

Environmental Sustainability

Strategic Action Plan 2025-30

INTRODUCTION

The University of Reading received its Royal Charter in 1926. As we look toward our centenary in 2026, I marvel at the immense advances since then in the way we live our lives, in our health and healthcare, in our understanding of science, in economic development, in our use of technology and in becoming a truly connected world.

Yet within the lifetime of the University the world has also seen the damage caused by our pursuit of economic growth and overuse of natural resources, from a rapidly changing climate to the dramatic decline in the natural world, which increasingly threaten lives and livelihoods all around the globe.

In this decade we are at a pivotal moment in addressing the challenges the planet faces, and the choices we make today will have consequences for many centuries to come. As a university we must play our unique role to respond to this fully, and are committed to do everything we can to work towards greater understanding of the challenges and solutions that will secure the planet's future.

That is why we put environmental sustainability at the heart of our University Strategic Plan, setting an aspiration to be recognised for our world-class research in climate change and its impact on the environment and society, and be a leader in global environmental sustainability.

We are rightly proud of our many research strengths, our significant progress in reducing our own environmental footprint, and our growing reputation and influence as a sector leader. But recognising the crisis upon us, we must continue to unite as a global community to working towards the solutions that the world needs.

To realise this ambition, we will expand our research in climate change and environmental sustainability, which will be strengthened by our partnerships with ECMWF, the Met Office, the Natural History Museum, Kew Royal Botanical Garden and other organisations, and we will implement AgriFood Futures in full. Outside of the UK, we will seek to leverage existing partnerships such as with ECMWF and the World Meteorological Organisation and develop new ones in key regions of the world to support our sustainability-related priorities. We will contribute to tackling the challenges facing the global community by providing organisations and individuals throughout the world with regional access to our academic, research and commercial expertise.

It will also mean that all our undergraduate students will have more access to educational opportunities to increase awareness of environmental sustainability, and how their discipline can help address the linked challenges. Many of these students will become sustainability leaders of the future as well as advocates for the University of Reading. It means that, as an organisation, we will continue to be 'green in all sorts of ways', continuously reducing our environmental impacts including aiming for net zero carbon by 2030, and use our collective knowledge to support other organisations to transition to net zero carbon and be more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

It is by working together, harnessing our collective expertise, talent, support, commitment and diversity, that we can make a real difference – to become a true 'partner for the planet'.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Noort', with a large, sweeping initial 'R'.

Professor Robert Van de Noort CBE

Vice-Chancellor

OUR VISION FOR 2030

Understanding the breadth of the environmental challenge

Across the world, people's quality of life, and even their very existence, is under increasing threat due to the extreme degradation of our environment.

Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge the world faces. The recent IPCC report, to which Reading was a lead contributor, showed more than ever that the impact of human activity on the climate is not just a future threat. It is a current reality. We have already seen increasing incidents of deadly flooding, heatwaves and wildfires that will only become more frequent and severe in the future.

While international efforts have so far failed to arrest the continued growth in carbon emissions, many have declared a '**Climate Emergency**', reflecting the urgency to act to avert the worst potential consequences of climate change around the world. We are no longer talking about stopping climate change but of mitigating its effects. Failing to do so will have wide reaching implications for every person, every community and every country.

Meanwhile, **biodiversity is declining** around the world at a staggering rate. Since 1970, there has been on average a 73% decline in the populations of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians. It is thought that one million animal and plant species - almost a quarter of the global total - are threatened with extinction. Relentless over-exploitation of natural resources, destruction of habitats and now the changing climate mean that this dramatic decline continues – jeopardising the ecosystems we rely on and threatening our own survival.

With the current world population of just over eight billion people set to rise to well over nine billion by 2050, we face many challenges in providing enough healthy and nutritious **food for everyone**. The increasing demand being placed on our natural resources makes it vital that our food production systems are as efficient and sustainable as possible, and that we move away from destructive practices such as industrial scale monocultures and mass deforestation fuelled by the demand for livestock feed and palm oil to produce many packaged foods.

Our growing population and rapid urbanisation have also significantly increased our consumption of materials and created a growing legacy of **waste and pollution**, which the UN has cited as the ‘third planetary crisis’ alongside climate change and biodiversity loss.

For decades we have buried or burnt most of our waste materials, polluting our air, land and water, with increasing impacts on ecosystems and human health. In recent years the growing awareness of the impact of plastic waste polluting our oceans has been a sobering reminder that such careless consumption within our lifetimes could have impacts on our environment for thousands of years to come.

Taking a broad view of sustainability

True global sustainability is about more than protecting our environment, solving climate change or protecting the natural world. Environmental degradation will have significant social and economic impacts too, part of a web of inter-related sustainability issues that society must address.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework for ensuring a more sustainable future for our people and planet across society, the economy and the natural world. Agreed in 2015, they set the agenda for sustainable development until 2030, recognising that *“ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests”*.

While several of the SDGs directly relate to environmental challenges such as Climate Action, Responsible Consumption, Sustainable Cities and Life on Land, all the SDGs are closely interrelated and failing to make progress with the environmental goals will impact on all of them. Successfully achieving the SDGs will require commitment and collaboration across all parts of society and around the world, and higher education can play a vital role in enabling and informing this.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



How is the University of Reading committed to taking action?

Every aspect of what we do needs to reflect and support our commitment to achieve environmental sustainability. We are accustomed to looking beyond the short term, beyond immediate political and economic cycles, and projecting the impact of our education and research activities well into the future. And we have a powerful role as facilitators, with broad networks that bridge the gap between local and global, able to bring people together to co-create solutions.

This strategic action plan sets out our next steps as we work to maximise our influence and impact to help achieve environmental sustainability, and sustainable development more widely, across three areas:

Education & Engagement	Research & Influence	A Green University
Nurturing and inspiring future leaders, experts and citizens as we progress together towards a more sustainable future	Using our world leading research to inform and influence innovation, policy and best practice	Managing our resources and campuses to minimise our environmental footprint and to showcase our research and expertise

Education and Engagement

The University of Reading can influence societal changes by engaging, enabling and equipping all members of our community – staff, students and alumni – as leaders, decision-makers, consumers, parents and citizens.

For the next generations of students, in particular, the impacts of the changing climate and further decline in the natural world will be their lived reality. We must support all of our students to develop an understanding of the challenges ahead and the skills, knowledge and resilience to help address them through their future careers and in their day-to-day lives, and help nurture the global sustainability leaders of the future.

Research and Influence

At the University of Reading, sustainability is at the core of our research mission. As a globally recognised leader in climate science, biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and energy systems, our work informs policy, transforms industry practice and builds a more resilient future.

Our [Research and Innovation Strategy](#) sets out how, by 2030, we will be the go-to institution for bold, interdisciplinary solutions to the planet's most urgent environmental and societal challenges. Our research will fuel breakthrough innovations and actively drive societal and economic transformation, moving beyond influence to direct action and ensuring real, lasting change where it is needed most.

We must also fulfil our duty as a 'University for Reading' by working closely with our neighbours and partners and playing a lead role in supporting Reading and the Thames Valley towards a resilient, sustainable future.

A Green University

We have already made sector leading progress in reducing our carbon emissions and minimising our waste, and are increasingly applying our own research expertise in how we manage our operations.

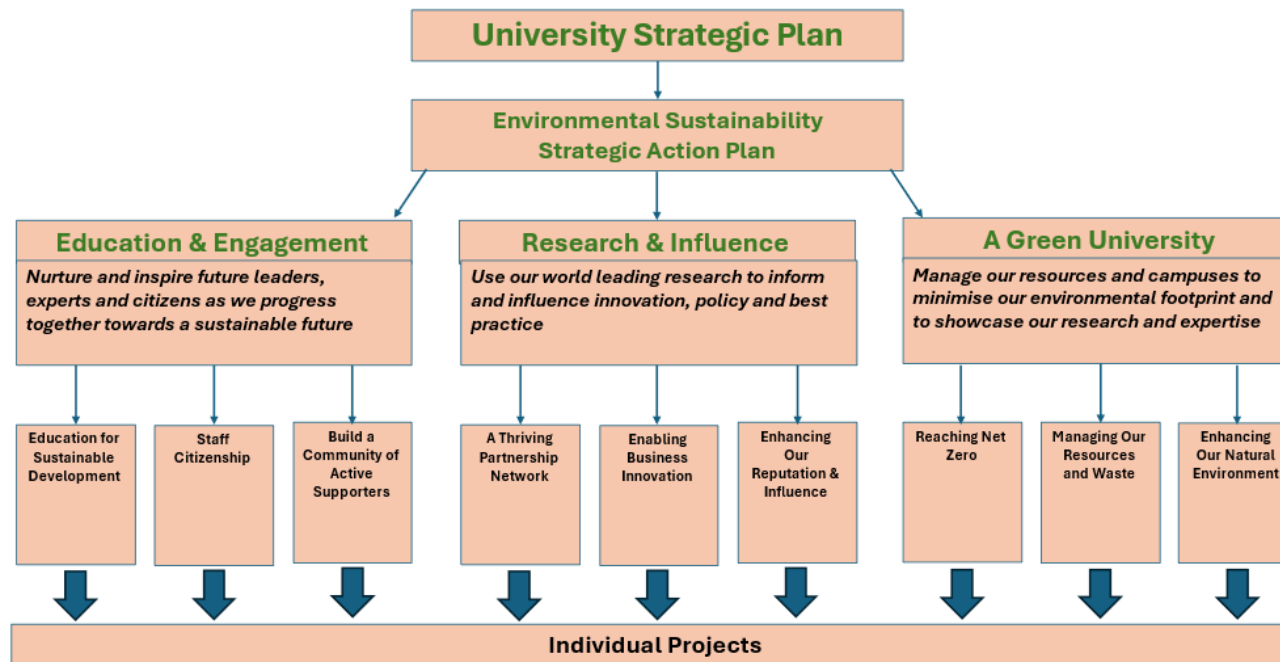
How the University manages its operations and business activities, how it conducts its teaching and research, and how it works with partners around the globe, will all help us ensure all of our community can work together to deliver a better future.

STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES 2025-30

Our Strategic Action Plan highlights the major workstreams and projects that deliver on the ambitions for environmental sustainability in the University Strategic Action Plan (2020-2026) and further ambitions agreed with University Council in 2024.

The breadth of activity it encompasses has expanded over time, with significant progress made in many areas and new opportunities identified. This will continue to be an evolving plan as we raise our ambitions and respond to new opportunities.

With addressing climate change and environmental sustainability being fundamental to everything that the University does, the range of projects contained within the plan are diverse and far reaching. The plan has been structured around nine strategic pillars, which provide a coherent way of grouping the activities in the plan.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES to 2030

- To demonstrate leadership in operational sustainability, keeping Net Zero Carbon 2030 on track (70% carbon reduction against baseline by July 2027)
- To be recognised as a leading UK University for sustainability, by consistently achieving a top 5 position in People & Planet University Green League
- To be recognised globally as a leading university for climate and sustainability by consistently achieving top 25 positions in global sustainability rankings, such as THE Global Impact Ranking and QS Sustainability Ranking

1. EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

UNESCO defines Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as “empowering learners of all ages with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to address the interconnected global challenges we are facing including climate change, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, poverty and inequality.”

Our students should leave the University with a strong understanding of the sustainability challenges we all face, how these apply to their subject discipline and feeling empowered for their future career. We will support our students to be resilient and positive in a time of greater climate anxiety.

The University is progressing a comprehensive programme to support embedding content for ESD across the Curriculum Framework, as well as providing new opportunities for students to develop as leaders and advocates for addressing climate change and environmental sustainability.

Project Number	Project Name	ES Strategic Principle (primary)	ES Workstream	Key Measure/Target	Description	Development Phase	Project Start	Proposed Completion
1a	Embedding Education for Sustainable Development	Education & Engagement	Education for Sustainable Development	Develop baseline of SDG related content across all programmes and set improvement target Develop educational gain metric for sustainability from 2025 onwards	Ensuring relevant SDG content is identified within each programme, and colleagues supported to develop this, so that all students access sustainable development learning by 2026. Includes Community of Practice and Quality Assurance strands.	Active	Ongoing	Summer 2028
1b	Develop new University Wide Module/Online Course on Climate & Sustainability	Education & Engagement	Education for Sustainable Development	500 students access the optional module during launch year	Creation of a new climate/sustainability module (non-credit bearing) made accessible to all students for academic year 2025-26	Active	Ongoing	Autumn 2026
1c	Launch a 'Global Sustainability Leaders' scholarship programme	Education & Engagement	Education for Sustainable Development	300 UG students awarded new scholarship in 2025, 400 per year ongoing	Scholarship scheme for UG students from any discipline with a strong commitment to becoming sustainability leaders, supported by funding and an enhanced package of development opportunities.	Active	Spring 2025	Summer 2030
1d	Creating better outdoor learning opportunities for our students	Education & Engagement	Education for Sustainable Development	Launch new outdoor learning space in 2026 and monitor usage to set baseline and 2030 target	Identifying flexible opportunities to provide and embed more outdoor learning experiences across our programmes and campuses	Active	Ongoing	Summer 2026
1e	Enhance student opportunities to thrive in a green economy	Education & Engagement	Education for Sustainable Development	Develop metric (eg from Graduate Outcomes survey) around green skills/sectors and set baseline/future target	Develop our offering around future green skills and jobs, linking our programmes, careers support, student awards, work experience and volunteering opportunities. Strengthen our connections with policy makers relating to the green transition.	Scoping	Autumn 2025	Summer 2026

2. STAFF CITIZENSHIP

The impact of the environmental challenges we face, and the changes needed to avert the worst consequences, will affect everyone in the University community in the years to come. While many of our academics are recognised as leading experts on climate and other environmental issues, we need to support all members of our staff community to understand these issues and the part they can play, whether through teaching and research, or delivery of University services, or in careful use of resources, or the individual choices we make each day towards 'greener' behaviours.

Project Number	Project Name	ES Strategic Principle (primary)	ES Workstream	Key Measure/Target	Description	Development Phase	Project Start	Proposed Completion
1f	Our Future First	Education & Engagement	Staff Citizenship	2% of staff signed up as sustainability champions Aim to become an 'Aspiring Energy Conscious Organisation (EnCO)	Ongoing delivery of the flagship staff behaviour change programme, contributing to significant carbon and waste reduction action	Active	Ongoing	Summer 2026
1g	Improve Climate/Sustainability training modules/toolkits for staff	Education & Engagement	Staff Citizenship	75% of staff completing current refresher module within first two years Scope need for additional modules/training around wider sustainability impact	Creation of a new climate/sustainability training module covering the science, our activities and individual actions.	Scoping	Autumn 2025	Summer 2026
1h	Review sustainability training and support for non-UK based staff	Education & Engagement	Staff Citizenship	Complete assessment of training and support provided/needed for non-UK campuses/offices	Review climate/sustainability training available for non-UK staff, and develop plan to address any gaps with campuses/offices in relevant locations.	Scoping	Autumn 2025	Autumn 2027

3. BUILD A COMMUNITY OF ACTIVE SUPPORTERS

As we support our staff and student community to develop their understanding of climate change and sustainability, what the University is doing about it, and consider how this relates to their own work, many will want to go further – helping spread the word, giving their time and commitment to University initiatives and joining with external volunteering.

Through engagement with the local community, and our global community of alumni and supporters, we also aim to facilitate more involvement in a range of practical and impactful activities. This could include discreet volunteering supporting local organisations and projects, or increasing the number of opportunities to support research or community projects on campus. Or harnessing our community and networks to provide opportunities for students working towards sustainability, through mentoring, work experience or even funding.

Project Number	Project Name	ES Strategic Principle (primary)	ES Workstream	Key Measure/Target	Description	Development Phase	Project Start	Proposed Completion
1i	Informing and mobilising our local communities	Education & Engagement	Community of Active Supporters	Explore model/dashboard to measure resident footprint/behaviour across Berkshire. Develop joint communications and engagement activity for 2026-	Working with local authorities and networks to inform and engage residents in climate action and sustainable behaviour change to support local net zero ambitions	Active	Spring 2025	Autumn 2030
1j	Informing and mobilising our global community	Education & Engagement	Community of Active Supporters	Define scope of activity and ambitions by end 2025 Develop comms and engagement activity plan for 2026-	Identify opportunities for our community to be involved regardless of location, such as more online courses, online citizen science, local organising, stripes, alumni engagement, network building, supporting students.	Scoping	Autumn 2025	Autumn 2030
1k	External volunteering	Education & Engagement	Community of Active Supporters	Collate resource showing 'green' volunteering opportunities and promote to staff by end 2025 Monitor year 1 activity to set baseline and then improvement target	Ensuring climate/sustainability opportunities built into future formal staff volunteering scheme.	Active	Spring 2025	Summer 2030

4. A THRIVING PARTNERSHIP NETWORK

The University community collaborates with a huge range of partners – academic institutions, local authorities, Government departments, corporates and charitable organisations – both in the UK and around the world. Many of these involve disseminating our research and collaborating towards common goals, and are often managed by relevant Schools or departments, or even individual academics.

To facilitate greater reach and impact from such collaboration, and to encourage the cross-disciplinary working required to address the complex interconnections across the SDGs, we will seek to strengthen our network of institutional level partnerships with key organisations working towards environmental sustainability. This may include academic organisations, professional bodies, commercial partners or NGOs, and with a focus on knowledge sharing, collaborative working and a strong focus on finding solutions together.

Project Number	Project Name	ES Strategic Principle (primary)	ES Workstream	Key Measure/Target	Description	Development Phase	Project Start	Proposed Completion
2a	Supporting local authorities towards net zero, climate resilience	Research & Influence	Thriving Partnership Network	Climate Emergency Strategies for both boroughs published with identified expert input from University Confirm UoR role in supporting Berkshire Prosperity Board by end 2025	Supporting Reading and Wokingham Borough's Climate Emergency Strategies through UoR research collaborations. Possible extension to other Berkshire authorities.	Active	Ongoing	Autumn 2030
2b	Strengthening institutional level partnerships with a sustainability focus	Research & Influence	Thriving Partnership Network	Set targets and actions for improvement for SDG17 within THE Global Impact Ranking by end 2025	Further investment to strengthen programmes with key partners, including ECMWF, Met Office, NHM, Kew and WMO.	Scoping	Autumn 2025	Autumn 2030
2c	Identifying and securing new institutional level sustainability partnerships globally	Research & Influence	Thriving Partnership Network	Set targets and actions for improvement for SDG17 within THE Global Impact Ranking by end 2025	Establishing new institutional partners/networks to collaborate on climate/sustainability, including through our international operations	Scoping	Spring 2025	Autumn 2030
2d	Increase our influence and reach through sustainability focussed sector networks.	Research & Influence	Thriving Partnership Network	Reviewing role in existing and potential networks completed by end 2025, with new target networks agreed	Growing our leadership role within relevant climate and sustainability networks, such as IUCA and London Higher, and assessing suitability of new networks to join.	Scoping	Spring 2025	Autumn 2030

5. ENABLING BUSINESS INNOVATION

Sustainable Development Goal 9 aims to ‘build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation’.

As many nations commit to deliver their carbon reduction targets, or build their climate resiliency, many businesses increasingly anticipate both the challenges and opportunities this will mean for their business, and that access to expert advice and knowledge will help them successfully navigate the changes ahead and remain competitive.

Across the University community we should enshrine a strong understanding of the sustainability challenges of business, and how they can apply their expertise to solve these, build successful collaborations and secure external funding. Fostering innovative thinking and practice, harnessing the expert knowledge within the University, and providing real world experience for our students, will all help businesses successful transition within a green economy.

Project Number	Project Name	ES Strategic Principle (primary)	ES Workstream	Key Measure/Target	Description	Development Phase	Project Start	Proposed Completion
2e	Improved support for business innovation in climate and sustainability	Research & Influence	Enabling Business Innovation	Define and scope need and opportunity for this programme by end 2025	Developing a renewed programme for support for business to access UoR sustainability expertise and enabling climate action and innovation	Scoping	Summer 2025	Autumn 2030
2f	'Just IMAGINE If' innovation competition	Research & Influence	Enabling Business Innovation	Set target for number of applications to competition in 2026	Deliver and expand this global competition to support entrepreneurship in support the UN SDGs, benefiting from UoR research	Active	Autumn 2023	2026

6. ENHANCING OUR REPUTATION AND INFLUENCE

The challenges of environmental sustainability, and urgency to make significant progress, require all sectors of society to work together to allow the best solutions to be found and implemented at pace. Often this will require organisations to cut through traditional silos or put aside competing agendas in order to collaborate in new and unexpected ways.

The University's leading reputation on climate and sustainability, and its ability to convene and advise partners at all levels, places us in a strong position to inform and influence policy and practice. We need to widely communicate our increasing contribution and impact, locally and globally, and use this to strengthen our reach and influence, building pride and common purpose across our global community to address the challenges the planet faces.

Project Number	Project Name	ES Strategic Principle (primary)	ES Workstream	Key Measure/Target	Description	Development Phase	Project Start	Proposed Completion
2g	Influencing policy and best practice to address climate and sustainability challenges	Research & Influence	Reputation & Influence	Review and recommendations completed by end 2025-26 Advisory panel formed and active for centenary	Review and recommend additional opportunities to strengthen cross disciplinary working to inform and influence policy and best practice. Convene an advisory panel of influential external experts to help shape our priorities and extend our influence and reach.	Scoping	Spring 2025	Autumn 2030
2h	Review institutional commitment to SDGs and opportunities for strengthening	Research & Influence	Reputation & Influence	Assess Signing SDG Accord Top 25 globally in THE Impact	Assessing benefit of signing SDG Accord, improve tracking and reporting on SDG activity, optimise THE Global Impact	Scoping	Autumn 2025	Autumn 2030
2i	Lead agenda to improve Climate Education in all educational settings in England	Research & Influence	Reputation & Influence	1000 Climate Ambassadors recruited in England # settings supported to develop Climate Action Plans	Lead National Climate Education Action Network. Lead DfE funded Climate Ambassador scheme. Contribute to related schemes such Education Nature Park, teacher training, supporting resources.	Active	Ongoing	2026
2j	Improved Sustainability Rankings and Awards	Research & Influence	Reputation & Influence	Maintain top 5 People & Planet Top 25 globally THE Impact Top 25 globally QS Sustainability Win 3 relevant sector awards over 2025-2030	Active planning and sourcing best evidence for submission to key sustainability ranking schemes, as well as sector awards	Active	Ongoing	Autumn 2030
2k	Sustainability in Research and Innovation Practice	Research & Influence	Reputation & Influence	Sign UKRI Concordat by autumn 2025 Develop plan for additional actions and reporting	Reviewing and reporting on sustainability actions within delivery of our research activity, in line with the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice	Scoping	Spring 2025	Autumn 2030
2l	Partnering for the Planet campaign	Research & Influence	Reputation & Influence	Set baseline and target for staff and student awareness in perception surveys by end 2025 Set baseline and target for increase in external perception surveys by end 2025	Deliver an integrated series of campaign pushes, targeting all main UoR audiences, to significantly elevate our reputation as a leader in climate and sustainability	Active	Ongoing	2026

7. REACHING NET ZERO

As a University we have already made great progress, having cut our emissions by around 60% since 2009, making us a leader amongst research intensive universities. Our purchased electricity has for many years been Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin (REGO) certified and a huge programme of energy efficiency measures has already been implemented, as well as a major expansion of our renewable energy generation, including installation of over 3,800 solar panels across our estate.

Reaching Net Zero by 2030 will however require a whole new level of effort, planning and investment, and commitment from everyone in the institution. This will include a complete replacement of our heating systems with low carbon alternatives, and increasing our energy efficiency and using the lowest carbon sources of electricity across our operations. Funding this ambition is a significant challenge, and we will seek creative and innovative ways to secure the resources needed.

Sector thinking on net zero plans has evolved since we published our original Net Zero Plan in 2021. We will seek to align with best practice, by updating our plans for the future to include an expanded scope of emissions in line with the Standardised Carbon Emissions Framework (SCEF).

Project Number	Project Name	ES Strategic Principle	ES Workstream	Key Measure/Target	Description	Development Phase	Project Start	Proposed Completion
3a	Net Zero Plan	A Green University	Reaching Net Zero Carbon	70% reduction against 2008/09 baseline and scope by July 2027, 70% by 2027 and Net Zero by 2030.	Continuously reduce our carbon footprint of 2008/09 scope of emissions towards 2030 Net Zero target. Expand future Net Zero scope through refreshed Net Zero Carbon plan to incorporate all scope 1-3 emissions and align with Standardised Carbon Emissions Reporting guidelines	Active	Ongoing	Summer 2030
3b	Energy and carbon reduction programme	A Green University	Reaching Net Zero Carbon	Year-on-year reduction in primary energy consumption, certified to ISO50001 energy management standard.	Continued energy and carbon reduction, including through the expansion of renewables and transition from gas heating to electric heat pumps	Active	Ongoing	Summer 2030
3c	Sustainable Business Travel	A Green University	Reaching Net Zero Carbon	35% reduction in business travel emissions against 2018/19 levels by 2025 (50% by 2030)	Ensuring Travel Policy is successful in meeting Business Travel carbon reduction targets through reduced and greener travel	Active	Ongoing	Summer 2030
3d	Greener Commuter Travel	A Green University	Reaching Net Zero Carbon	Reduction in proportion of staff and students commuting by single occupancy vehicle to 27% and 9.5% respectively by 2029	Continued increase in the proportion of journeys to and from our campuses made by sustainable means	Active	Ongoing	Summer 2029
3e	Catering and Campus Commerce	A Green University	Reaching Net Zero Carbon -- Managing our Resources and Waste	Maintain Food Made Good 3 star rating in 2026 Reduce food waste by 50% (against 2018 baseline) by 2030	Delivery of Sustainable Food Policy & Framework across our catering and hospitality programme. Identifying additional priorities with wider Campus Commerce.	Active	Ongoing	Autumn 2030

8. MANAGING OUR RESOURCES AND WASTE

Within the UN's 17 SDGs, Goal 12 - 'Responsible Consumption and Production' focuses on ensuring that sustainable consumption and production patterns are improved. Consumption and production drive our global economy, but often the over use of natural resources has destructive impacts on our environment.

Promoting sustainable resource use and re-use, improving resource efficiency, and reducing the amount of waste generated remain important priorities for the University, building on our impressive progress so far.

Project Number	Project Name	ES Strategic Principle	ES Workstream	Key Measure/Target	Description	Development Phase	Project Start	Proposed Completion
3f	Reducing our operational waste	A Green University	Managing our Resources & Waste	Year-on-year reduction in total waste per capita (staff and students) since 2018/19 baseline (50.9kg).	Delivery of Waste Strategy objectives to significantly reduce the environmental impact of waste in line with the waste hierarchy principles	Active	Ongoing	Summer 2030
3g	LEAF framework in laboratories	A Green University	Managing our Resources & Waste	LEAF bronze certification across all laboratories	Improving sustainable resource use including energy efficiency, waste management and water use	Active	Ongoing	Autumn 2030
3h	Reducing water consumption across our operations	A Green University	Managing our Resources & Waste	45% reduction against 2011/12 baseline for non-residential estate	Reduce water consumption per head in line with best practice for research intensive universities	Active	Ongoing	2026
3i	Protecting our environment and preventing pollution	A Green University	Managing our Resources & Waste	No more than three reportable emissions/discharge incidents reported each year	Ensuring training and procedures are effective in minimising chances of polluting discharges and ensuring prompt mitigating action to address incidents	Active	Ongoing	2026
3j	Responsible procurement	A Green University	Managing our Resources & Waste	Maintain Fairtrade University Three Star Status Implement Net Zero Carbon Supplier tool to help delivered reductions in supply chain emissions	Ensuring our Responsible Procurement Group is effective in reducing supply chain environmental impacts. Implement Net Zero Carbon Supplier Tool run by NetPositive Futures to further assess and reduce our scope 3 supply chain emissions.	Active	Ongoing	2026
3k	Greening our digital estate	A Green University	Managing our Resources & Waste	Reduction in e-waste through the roll out of Device Lifecycle programme operated by Digital Technology Services	Ensuring we manage the impact of our digital estate, including energy efficiency, reusing equipment and through sustainable procurement	Active	Ongoing	2026

9. ENHANCING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The University estate encompasses a range of habitats and much biodiversity, and it is vital that we actively manage our land to ensure this continues to thrive, minimising our impact on wildlife and encouraging native species. We need to ensure our planning fully assesses the impact on biodiversity in relation to campus development and implement strategies to mitigate any loss of habitat.

We will aim to showcase the biodiversity on our Estate in an engaging and accessible way, providing benefit to our community and encouraging involvement in the future evolution of our natural spaces. This includes developing more opportunities for enhancing student learning through involvement in sustainability research projects that utilise our green spaces as a ‘Living Lab’, as well as offering local school groups new ways to access nature based learning opportunities. Longer term projects such as Loddon Garden Village will provide opportunities to create significantly more green space for the benefit of the local community.

The changing climate will also increase the likelihood of extreme weather impacting on our facilities and activities, and planning ahead to ensure our resiliency to such impacts will be important to our future success.

Project Number	Project Name	ES Strategic Principle	ES Workstream	Key Measure/Target	Description	Development Phase	Project Start	Proposed Completion
3l	Enhancing campus biodiversity and engaging our community	A Green University	Protecting and Enhancing our Natural Environment	Set baseline % of campus estate prioritised for biodiversity and improvement target	Launch Biodiversity Action Plan (phase 1) setting enhancement opportunities across UK campuses and community engagement in biodiversity.	Scoping	Autumn 2025	Autumn 2026
3m	Enhancing biodiversity across our non-campus estate	A Green University	Protecting and Enhancing our Natural Environment	Develop Biodiversity net gain metric and target for non-campus estate	Developing Biodiversity Action Plan (phase 2) setting enhancement opportunities across our non-campus estate, including significant development opportunities such as 'Loddon Garden Village', and contributing to the Berkshire Nature Recovery Plan.	Scoping	Not Yet Set	Summer 2030
3n	UoR Nature Park	A Green University	Protecting and Enhancing our Natural Environment	Validate scheme through pilot schools activity before launch in summer 2026	Launch improved scheme offering outdoor learning opportunities to local education settings, aligned with the National Education Nature Park	Active	Ongoing	2026
3o	Develop UoR climate resilience and adaptation plan	A Green University	Protecting and Enhancing our Natural Environment	Plan published by end of 2025	Develop plan to anticipate and mitigate future risks to business continuity and business activities from evolving climate change impacts, including extreme weather events	Active	Autumn 2024	Autumn 2025

OUR CERTIFICATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

Governance

Environmental Sustainability is one of four principles enshrined in the University of Reading Strategic Plan 2020-2026.

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy is overseen by the Environmental Sustainability Committee, led by Professor Robert Van de Noort CBE, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Reading

Certifications

ISO 14001 (2015) Environmental Management
ISO 50001 (2018) Energy Management

Three-star Fairtrade University 2025+
Three-star Food Made Good Award 2024

Memberships

Race to Zero for Universities and Colleges
Menus for Change Universities Research Collaborative
Nature Positive Universities Alliance
Climate Action Barometer
International Universities Climate Alliance

Rankings and League Tables

No 4 in People and Planet University League 2024-25
Joint 50th globally in THE Global Impact Ranking 2025
Joint 42nd globally in QS World Sustainability Ranking 2024

Awards

The Times/Sunday Times Sustainable University of the Year 2025
Green Flag Award Winner 2024
THE Awards 2023 – Winner of Outstanding Contribution to Environmental Leadership
London Higher Awards 2024 – Winner of Outstanding Contribution to Sustainability Leadership
Energy Managers Association Awards 2024 - Decarbonisation Project of the Year
Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services Awards 2025 – Green Careers Award



Partnering for the planet

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