Sustainability Communication & Engagement Plan 2026-27

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Background

The University of Reading is a leading sustainable university, including being the 2025 Times/Sunday Times Sustainable University of the Year and a 4th place ranking in the People and Planet league 2025/26. Environmental sustainability is one of our four key principles in our University strategy, aspiring *"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."*

Sustainability communication and engagement is a critical piece of the puzzle that will enable us to meet our environmental sustainability ambitions as set out in the ESSAP. The importance of behaviour change is recognised by the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) who were quoted in 2022 as saying "People power is critical to meet those targets…without changes to people's behaviours now, the target of net zero by 2050 is not achievable."

It is a key thread throughout our work across the following areas: Environmental compliance, pollution prevention, energy and water consumption, resource use and waste, travel, procurement, conservation and biodiversity, and community involvement.

Purpose

This document will be used primarily by the Sustainability Team to support the University's ISO certified Energy and Environmental Management System (EEMS) and will help meet the targets set out in the Environmental Sustainability Strategic Action Plan.

This document presents our overarching communication objectives, the methods we will use to communicate and what engagement activity we will deliver between August 2026 and July 2027. It also sets out how we will monitor and measure the success and impact of our C&E activities so that we can make improvements in the future.

Communication and Engagement Objectives

We will communicate with our staff, students and local community to achieve the following objectives:

1) **Inform.** We will increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of sustainability issues among departments, schools, students and staff. We will support our communication with clear information about our University sustainability ambitions, activities and achievements.
2) **Empower.** We will inspire our audiences to make changes ranging from personal lifestyle to supporting bigger projects. We will provide support to encourage them to have the confidence to lead future positive change.
3) **Together.** We will embed a culture of sustainability, ensuring that everyone feels they can bring about positive change at all levels through collaboration. We will bring the University community with us on the journey toward our sustainability goals.

These objectives underpin and inform our planned communication and engagement activities for 2026/27.

Supporters and Partners

We recognise that our department in isolation cannot achieve these objectives alone. We will harness the support of colleagues, students and our local community and stakeholders including:

- Reading Students' Union
- Sustainability Champions
- External Relations Directorate: Digital team, Head of Strategic Engagement, Internal Communications Team, Events Team, Community Relations Manager.
- Student Experience and Education: Student Communications and Careers
- UPP
- Venue Reading
- Community partners and stakeholders
- University Library
- Chaplaincy
- MERL

- Key delivery partners, including Reading Climate Change Partnership, Reading Buses, Avanti Cycling, Reading Bike Kitchen, Reading Cycle Campaign, and Select Environmental.

Communication and Engagement Channels

This table details the ways that we communicate to ensure we reach our intended audience which are:

- Internal staff audience
- Internal student audience
- External community

Channel	Location	Audience
Sustainability social media	Instagram Facebook	Internal staff and students and external community - publicly available
Sustainability Website	Internet	Internal staff and students and external community - publicly available
Sustainability blogs	Hosted on Sustainability website	Internal staff and students and external community - publicly available
Sustainability Matters	Mailchimp - hosted on Sustainability website	Internal staff and students and external community - anybody signed up
Staff portal	University of Reading intranet	Internal - University of Reading staff
In Brief	Emailed to all University of Reading staff	Internal - University of Reading staff
Digital screens	Library, Carrington, Palmer, Reading Students Union, Catering, Campus Screens	Internal staff and students and external community - publicly available
Department mailing lists	University of Reading staff	Internal - University of Reading staff

Sustainability

Channel	Location	Audience
Student Newsletters	Emailed to all University of Reading students	Internal - University of Reading students
Student Portal and app	University of Reading intranet	Internal - University of Reading students
Essentials Pages (The Student Handbook)	University of Reading website	Internal students and external community - publicly available
Sustainability Champions mailing list	Emailed to all Sustainability Champions	Internal - University of Reading staff

Communication and Engagement Action Plan

The entirety of the Action Plan will be completed by July 2027.

Activity	Purpose and objectives (Focus area)	Details (specific information, key messages and call to action)	Dates	Measure of Success	Owner	Budget	Target audience
Welcome Week and Student Inductions	To **inform** students about the University's goals and highlight the things they can do to be more sustainable at the University. Focus on re-use of resources, bus services and safer cycling, including bike lock sale. Promote sustainability website, social media and Sustainability Matters newsletter. To **empower** students to make a difference, report issues, and highlight improvements through personal lifestyle and supporting bigger projects. Focus on events where students can get involved and have the confidence to lead future positive change. Having a presence at these events will demonstrate to new students that the University are committed the Environmental Sustainability and that there are options for then to get involved and change their habits.	In-person presence at Welcome fairs - including IoE and University Life, and Sustainability Campus Tour.	Sept 2026	High level of engagements from students. Increase in number of student Sustainability Matters newsletter sign-ups by 30 from 448. Increase in number of social media followers on Instagram by 80 from 1,246. Sign-ups and attendance to fill two Sustainability Campus Tours on the 23rd September 2026.	Yasmin Noor	£200	All students - focusing on new students.
		Sustainability information within Welcome Booklet for all new students.	2026/27		Rachel Alipour		
		Sustainability section within all online student newsletters.	2026/27		Julia Topazio-Smalley		
		Sustainability sections on Essentials pages.	2026/27		Julia Topazio-Smalley		
		Participate in Student Engagement Group with UPP and Partners to build sustainability into student events.	2026/27		Yasmin Noor		
Policy, Reporting and Targets	The annual sustainability report aims to summarise the progress made from August 2025 to July 2026 across a range of different areas of sustainability, provides a review of the targets we have been working towards over the past 12 months, and highlights how research undertaken at the University aligns to our key sustainability themes. To be recognised as a leading UK University for sustainability, by consistently achieving a top 10 position in People & Planet University League (currently 4th). To be recognised globally as a leading university for climate and sustainability by consistently achieving top 25 positions in global sustainability rankings, such as	Publication of Environmental and Energy Policy.	2027	Successful publication of Report.	Jackie Simpson/Anna Glue	£0	
		Publication of Annual Environmental Sustainability Report 2025/2, as well as an accompanying webpage.	Oct 2026	Successful publication of Report and webpage. Associated news article(s) published.	Yasmin Noor	£800	
		Compilation of information and updating the website for the People and Planet league 2026/27.	Spring 2027	Information available for P&P assessors to assist with the maintaining top 10 People & Planet University League.	Yasmin Noor	£1,000	

	THE Global Impact Ranking (currently 91st) and QS Sustainability Ranking (currently joint 30th).	Complete return for Times Higher Education (THE) Sustainability Impact Ratings.	Oct 2026	Information submitted in time to assist with the submission of the relevant rankings, to assist with the objective to be top 25 Globally.	Sustainability Team	
		Complete return for QS Sustainability rankings.	Apr 2027	Information submitted in time to assist with the submission to QS Ranking. Assisting with the objective to be Top 25 globally QS Sustainability Rankings.	Yasmin Noor	
Staff Training and Inductions	To raise awareness of the overarching sustainability policies and procedures, highlight the achievements, and communicate the University's goals. To inform staff of the University's sustainability goals, and how they can get involved with sustainability and make a difference themselves.	The University runs monthly central induction training sessions for new starters, which is attended by the Sustainability Team for a 15 minute face to face slot to present on sustainability at the University. During these sessions we take questions and listen to the sustainability ideas from new staff members.	Monthly 2026/27	A member of the Sustainability Team to attend all sessions.	Sustainability Staff	New staff
		All staff are encouraged to complete the recommended 30 minute online training every 3 years which includes the University's sustainability vision, sustainable travel, energy and water, waste, sustainable procurement, Environmental and Energy Management System (EEMS), and how to get involved. Additional courses can also be found on the website. Quarterly completion data will be received and forwarded to Sustainability Champions as a way to encourage Schools and Directorates to increase their mandatory sustainability training completion rates. Additional training is provided and managed as part of the EEMS.	2026/27 - training completed every 3 years, completion rates sent to champions quarterly	Improved completion rates across all Schools and Directorates - quarterly results received.	Yasmin Noor / Jo Merry / Articulate Licence	£720	All staff - new and current

Sustainability

Green Festival	To engage with our University community to promote, educate and celebrate sustainable actions. To promote environmentally friendly actions and advice that help save money as well as emissions. To work with the community to champion environmental sustainability through practical action, and inspire behavioural change.	Deliver a programme of events which will inform and empower staff, students and local community to take positive sustainable steps. Utilise a range of different modes of communication to maximise engagement. Work with partners across the University to put on a range of events across many areas of business, particularly the Sustainability Champions. Work with supporters to promote the festival widely across our community.	10-12 Nov 2026	Deliver a range of 30-35 different events. Aim for 500 - 1000 people to engage with the festival.	Yasmin Noor / Sustainability Team / Energy Team All engagement staff - Reading Students Union, Community Engagement, Sustainability Champions All comms staff - Student Comms, Internal Staff Comms, External Comms	£2000	All staff, students and external community
Smile with Sustainability	To provide an opportunity for staff and students to engage with our team, find out more about what we are working on, give feedback and provide new ideas.	Deliver programme of regular themed sustainability events in the Library Foyer ranging from promoting sustainable travel options, to resource use. Work with Sustainability Champions to deliver at least one session.	2026/27	Aim for 100+ people to engage in the sessions.	Yasmin Noor / Sustainability Team / Energy Team / Sustainability Champions	£500	All staff and students
Our Future First	As part of the Net Zero Carbon Plan, the aim of OFF is to encourage, empower and enable others to take action and support the creation of a culture of sustainability by being open to change, collaborate, lead by example, continually improve, and empower others. To commit to continuing to apply the 5 pillars of EnCO through OFF to continue to drive energy reductions and retain our EnCO certification.	Support OFF by embedding Our Future First messaging into comms to encourage others to take action and report successes. Co-ordinate energy saving campaigns throughout holiday shutdowns, and promote heating and cooling policies. Run quarterly Sustainability Champions meetings, and ‘Learn with Sustainability’ sessions throughout the year, with each session being open to all staff. Co-ordinate at least one OFF campaign with Champions to encourage staff and students to take small sustainability actions that collectively have significant impact.	2026/27	Deliver four Learn with Sustainability sessions during 2026/27, aiming to engage at least 150 participants in total. Deliver at least one Our Future First campaign with Sustainability Champions. Retain EnCO certification.	Luke Cantellow / Jo Merry Luke Cantellow /Jo Merry / Yasmin Noor Jo Merry Jo Merry	(£4,000)* (£1500)*	All staff and students All staff and students Sustainability Champions and all staff All staff

Know Your Bins Campaign	To improve recycling knowledge by helping staff and students correctly identify which waste belongs in each bin through clear, accessible guidance.	Develop and promote a University waste and recycling guide and colour-coded bin guide ahead of the start of the academic year. Promote the campaign through Welcome Week activities, website updates, Sustainability Matters newsletters, social media, digital screens, Sustainability Champions and other University communication channels.	14-18 Sept 2026	Measure the reach and engagement of the campaign across multiple University communication channels using available analytics, establishing a baseline to inform future waste and recycling communications targets.	Paul Taylor / Yasmin Noor	All staff and students
Promoting Sustainable Travel Initiatives	To increase awareness and uptake of the University's sustainable travel initiatives by promoting the range of support, incentives and travel options available to staff and students.	Deliver a coordinated programme of communications promoting existing sustainable travel initiatives, including EASIT, cycling facilities, public transport, car sharing and other travel support. Update the associated webpages as new initiatives are introduced and existing projects progress. Use the Travel Survey 2025 findings to inform future travel communications and engagement activities.	2026/27	Deliver at least three sustainable travel communications campaigns during 2026/27.	Rebecca Ching / Yasmin Noor / Internal Staff Comms / Student Comms	All staff and students
Switch Off Campaigns	To promote energy conservation and sustainability by encouraging students and staff to switch off non-essential electrical devices before leaving for the holiday break. To reduce the University's carbon footprint and energy bills during periods of low campus occupancy. Improve the reach, consistency, and effectiveness of sustainability communications across the University.	Deliver targeted staff and student communications through Sustainability Champions, the Staff Portal, blog posts, the Sustainability Matters newsletter, mailing lists, and other University communication channels.	14-18 Dec 2026 22-26 Mar 2027	To increase the amount of energy saved through the campaign by measuring energy usage before and after the campaign has run. To increase the number of communication methods used.	Luke Cantellow / Jo Merry / Yasmin Noor	All staff and students
Energy Saving Comms	To promote energy literacy and help staff and students understand their role in energy consumption and conservation. To highlight progress toward energy goals, and celebrate milestones and projects that reduce the carbon footprint.	Staff and student comms through website updates, a blog post, the Sustainability Matters newsletter, and social media.	12-16 Apr 2027	Increase the number of energy related comms from 2025/26.	Yasmin Noor / Lynne Moore	All staff and students

Sustainability

Energy Advice Service	This service will be run by the RSU's existing student advice service and will offer Students Advice on saving energy in their accommodation. To promote the Energy Advice Service to students.	Promotion of service at events (Welcome Week and Green Festival). Deliver two campaigns in the year. Website updates, a blog post, the Sustainability Matters newsletter, and social media.	2026/27	Increase the number of enquiries that the service receives from its launch in 2025/26.	Yasmin Noor / Jo Merry	£14k - UPP Foundation**	UoR Students
Water Efficiency Comms	To educate staff and students about the importance of water conservation, as well as highlight the University's water usage and how individual behaviours contribute to it. To highlight progress toward water usage goals, and celebrate milestones and projects that reduce water usage.	Staff and student comms through website updates, a blog post, the Sustainability Matters newsletter, and social media.	19-23 Oct 2026	Increase in engagement with water related comms.	Yasmin Noor / Lynne Moore		All staff and students
Lectures and Tours for Student	To provide input to different academic modules in the form of lectures and tours for students. To provide tangible, real-world examples that promote interdisciplinary awareness, enhance academic engagement, and reinforce the university's role within sustainability. To integrate sustainable thinking into diverse academic disciplines.	Deliver lectures and tours to students as part of various academic modules.	2026/27	Deliver 10+ lectures and tours to students.	Yasmin Noor to co-ordinate, Sustainability / Energy Team to deliver		All students
Sustainability Website	To serve as a central communication hub with a primary purpose of informing, engaging and connecting with students, staff and the external community. To provide accessible, up to date information and to increase online presence and long term engagement.	Ensure the website is up to date, provide accessible information, fix broken links and remove outdated information, add meta titles/descriptions, use keywords, and add alt text to all images. Therefore, making the content accessible, improving user experience, improving the SEO and supporting better website performance.	2026/27	Update and optimise Sustainability webpages to align with and support institution-wide sustainability goals, aiming for green SEO and readability scores across all updated pages.	Yasmin Noor		All staff, students and external community - publicly available
Sustainability Matters Newsletter	To increase engagement and interaction, effective content distribution and sharing, faster and easier communication with others, boosting organic visibility and outreach, and increasing website traffic. To have direct communication with everybody signed up to the newsletter and educate our audience about sustainability and current events.	Create clear, visually engaging content on a consistent schedule, featuring a variety of topics such as news, tips, events, and more.	2026/27 - every two months	Increase the percentage of open rates and click rates for both staff and student newsletter by 5-10% each. Increase the number of staff and student newsletter signups by 5% from 593 and 448 respectively.	Yasmin Noor Mailchimp account		All staff, students and external community - anybody signed up

Sustainability Blogs	To educate and raise awareness, promote university initiatives, encourage engagement and action, build a knowledge sharing culture, and document progress and success.	Publish a variety of blogs covering a range of topics/sustainability issues to educate and raise awareness, promote university initiatives, encourage engagement and action, knowledge share, document progress and success, and call to action. Include updates and promotions of various projects across sustainability such as recycling facilities and Warp It for resource use, recycling and waste. Energy and carbon updates include SportsPark air source heat pump, Energy centre water source heat pump and other decarbonisation projects. Travel updates include travel offers, alternatives to travel, and cycle safety.	2026/27 - twice a month	Publish two blogs a month with green rated SEO and Readability scores.	Yasmin Noor Yasmin Noor / Sustainability Team / Energy Team	All staff, students and external community - publicly available
Sustainability Social Media	To increase engagement and interaction, effective content distribution and sharing, faster and easier communication with others, boosting organic visibility and outreach, and increasing website traffic.	Create engaging, audience focussed content to increase engagement, interaction and create faster and easier communication.	2026/27	Increased engagement through likes, comments, replies and poll/quiz participation. Increase Instagram following by 10%.	Yasmin Noor, CANVA	All staff, students and external community - publicly available

*Net Zero Carbon Budget **Reading Students' Union Budget

Impact

Measured through: Sustainability website hits, Sustainability Matters newsletter opens / clicks, social media reach and followers, events attendance, lectures delivered, staff and student portal data collection of hits. These are reported quarterly to Sustainability team meetings.

Communication and Engagement Calendar

This calendar is a visual representation of the comms and events the Sustainability Team will be doing across the year, the first being an overall look across the year, followed by a more detailed calendar split into Semester 1 and Semester 2. This will ensure strategic delivery through consistent messaging, cross-team coordination, proactive planning, efficient resource use, and effective tracking for continuous improvements.

September 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

October 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

January 2027

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

February 2027

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

March 2027

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

April 2027

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

May 2027

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

June 2027

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

- Welcome Week
- Smile With Sustainability
- Our Future First
- Sustainability Matters
- Green Festival
- Dr Bike
- Project Comms
- On Your Bike Day
- IOE University Life Fair

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Semester 1:

September 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
	1	2	3 OUR FUTURE FIRST	4 IOU UNIVERSITY LIFE FAIR
7 IOU UNIVERSITY LIFE FAIR	8	9	10	11
14 SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT COMMS (KNOW YOUR BINS)	15	16 DR BIKE	17	18
21 WELCOME WEEK	22 UNIVERSITY LIFE FAIR	23 DR BIKE SUSTAINABILITY CAMPUS TOUR	24 SMPCS MARKETPLACE	25
28	29	30 DR BIKE		

October 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
			1	2
5	6	7 ON YOUR BIKE DAY	8	9
12	13	14 DR BIKE SMILE WITH SUSTAINABILITY	15	16
19 SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT COMMS (WATER EFFICIENCY)	20	21 DR BIKE	22	23
26	27	28 DR BIKE	29	30 SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
2	3	4 DR BIKE	5	6
9	10 GREEN FESTIVAL	11 GREEN FESTIVAL	12 GREEN FESTIVAL	13
16	17	18 DR BIKE	19	20
23	24	25 DR BIKE	26	27

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
	1	2 DR BIKE OUR FUTURE FIRST	3	4
7	8	9 DR BIKE	10	11
14 SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT COMMS (CHRISTMAS SWITCH OFF)	15	16 DR BIKE SMILE WITH SUSTAINABILITY	17	18 SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

January 2027

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13 DR BIKE	14	15
18	19	20 DR BIKE	21	22
25	26	27 DR BIKE	28	29

Welcome Week
Smile With Sustainability
Our Future First
Sustainability Matters
Green Festival
Dr Bike
Project Comms
On Your Bike Day
IOE University Life Fair

Semester 2:

February 2027

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
1	2	3 DR BIKE	4	5
8	9	10 DR BIKE	11	12
15	16	17 ON YOUR BIKE DAY SMILE WITH SUSTAINABILITY	18	19
22	23	24 DR BIKE	25	26 SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

March 2027

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
1	2	3 DR BIKE OUR FUTURE FIRST	4	5
8	9	10 DR BIKE	11	12
15	16	17 DR BIKE SMILE WITH SUSTAINABILITY	18	19
22 SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT COMMS (EASTER SWITCH OFF)	23	24 DR BIKE	25	26
29	30	31		

April 2027

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12 SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT COMMS (ENERGY SAVING)	13	14 DR BIKE	15	16
19	20	21 ON YOUR BIKE DAY SMILE WITH SUSTAINABILITY	22	23
26	27	28 DR BIKE	29	30

May 2027

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
3	4	5 DR BIKE	6	7 SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS
10	11	12 DR BIKE	13	14
17	18	19 DR BIKE	20	21
24	25	26 DR BIKE	27	28
31				

June 2027

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
	1	2 DR BIKE	3 OUR FUTURE FIRST	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

Welcome Week
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Version Control

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval date
1.0	Sustainability Team	Annually	Anna Glue	04/11/2026