

Environmental Sustainability Policy

Brief Description & Purpose:	This Policy sets out the University's commitments to sustainability, including our Environmental Management System (EMS) and support for the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through research, teaching, campus and operations.		
	Our Environmental Sustainability Policy is overseen by the University Sustainability Management Group. It is reviewed on an annual basis and reported on via the Sustainability Annual Report.		
Applicable to (list cohorts):	Staff: All staff	Students: All students	Third Parties: Not applicable
Effective From:	22 June 2019	Last Review Date:	01 June 2026
Approval Authority:	University Sustainability Management Group	Approved:	15 June 2026
Executive Owner:	Prof John Woodward	Business Owner:	Dr Paul Steadman
Next Review Date:	15 June 2027	Publication External Y/N	Yes

1. Introduction

Our University Strategy commits to enhancing our reputation for sustainability and to supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through our research, teaching, campus and operations.

We are a signatory of the SDG Accord and the United Nations Academic Impact in recognition of the positive impact we can make. Many of the SDGs directly relate to environmental challenges such as Climate Action, Responsible Consumption, Sustainable Cities and Life on Land.



The University acknowledges that its operations and wider influence have environmental impacts. Through the implementation of its policies and Environmental Management System, the University is committed to mitigating these impacts and ensuring that future growth and development are achieved

in a sustainable manner. We recognise the urgency associated with environmental challenges such as climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

In addition to this Policy, the SDGs are supported by additional University Policies and Reports including:

- [Equality & Diversity](#) – supporting SDGs including Gender Equality and Reduced Inequalities
- [Access & Participation Plan](#) – supporting SDGs including Quality Education and Reduced Inequalities

2. Policy Detail

2.1 Commitments

We are committed to:

- supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals through our research, educational activity, campus and operations;
- the protection of the environment, including the prevention of pollution;
- meeting, and where possible exceeding, all relevant legislation, industry standards and other environmental requirements to which the University subscribes;
- demonstrating continual improvement of the Environmental Management System (EMS) in order to enhance environmental performance.

2.2 Environmental Management System

The development of our Environmental Management System (EMS) provides a framework for achieving our environmental commitments.

The scope of the EMS is defined as: services and operations in the provision of higher education, research and training including administration, and support services.

2.3 Policies and Plans

The following policies and plans set out our commitment to supporting the UN Sustainability Goals:

Area	Aim	SDG
Environmental Management System	Continual improvement of the Environmental Management System .	11, 12, 13, 14, 15
Energy & Carbon	Continuously reduce energy consumption and enhance energy efficiency across the University estate. Progress towards comprehensive metering of all buildings, ensuring automatic integration of metering data with the University's utilities database. Monitor, measure and report energy performance to the University Sustainability Management Group on an ongoing basis to support informed decision-making and continual improvement. Engage staff and students in energy reduction initiatives through awareness	7, 11, 13

	<p>campaigns, guidance and opportunities to contribute to energy-saving measures across campus. Expand renewable energy generation by extending our campus photovoltaic (PV) arrays and ensure that our data centres are powered by renewable energy.</p> <p>To reduce scope 1, 2 and 3* emissions, as supported by our Carbon Management Strategy 2020-2030.</p>	
Waste & Resource Management	<p>Support circular economy principles. Reduce the volume of waste we produce and maximise recovery and recycling of waste, as supported by our Waste Management Policy and Single Use Plastics Policy. Northumbria operate a 'No Landfill Policy'. All of our residual waste is diverted from landfill and sent for recovery via energy-from-waste.</p>	12
Water Management	<p>Minimise our use of water, as supported by the Sustainable Water Policy.</p>	6
Travel	<p>Minimise the environmental impact of organisational travel and commuter travel, as supported by our Sustainable Travel Plan Strategy.</p>	11
Biodiversity	<p>Protect and enhance biodiversity across the University as set out in our Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>	11, 15
Careers	<p>Northumbria's Graduate Futures Team supports our students to achieve their ambitions and make the most of their experiences, develop skills and manage their future. Our Careers Policy describes our approach to working with partners that aim to recruit our students</p>	8, 17
Procurement	<p>Minimise the negative, and maximise the positive, environmental, economic and social impacts of the goods and services we buy, as supported by our Sustainable Procurement Policy and Sustainable Food Policy.</p>	1, 8, 12, 16
Community Involvement	<p>To increase community engagement in campus sustainability projects. Supported by our Sustainability Engagement Plan.</p>	11, 17
Ethical Investment	<p>The University acknowledges the climate emergency as a significant challenge for society and future students. Consequently, the University aims to align with the Paris Agreement on climate change. Northumbria's Treasury Management and Ethical</p>	1, 3, 8, 13, 16

	Investment Policy supports our Carbon Management Strategy 2020- 2030 (pg9).	
Ethical Banking	The University acknowledges the importance of aligning its banking relationships with its broader social responsibilities. The University’s approach to Ethical Banking is set out in Treasury Management and Ethical Investment Policy (pg10) .	1, 3, 8, 13, 16
Sustainable Buildings	Minimise the environmental impacts of our buildings – from design to occupation, supported by our Sustainable Construction and Refurbishment Policy and Guidelines .	11
Emissions & Discharges	Prevent pollution by minimising local discharges to air, land and water.	11, 14, 15
Education for Sustainable Development	Raise awareness of sustainability among staff, students and the communities in which we work, and develop their skills and knowledge to support sustainability.	4
Research & Living Lab	Undertake research that directly supports the Sustainable Development Goals. Utilise a Living Lab approach to bring together our research, teaching, campus and operations to maximise sustainable output.	All
Climate Change Resilience	To be resilient to risks from weather and climate change.	13
Reputation for sustainability	To enhance the University’s reputation for sustainability.	4

2.4 Monitoring

KPIs relating to these commitments are listed below. Our Sustainability Policy is overseen by the University Sustainability Management Group. It is reviewed on an annual basis and reported on via the Sustainability Annual Report published on the University website.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
University Sustainability Management Group	Oversees the Policy, annual review and reporting.
Sustainability Manager	Leads operational delivery of the Policy, manages the EMS, reports on KPIs, and ensures policy review and staff/student engagement.
Staff and Students	Expected to contribute to and support sustainability commitments.

4. Definitions

- **Environmental Management System (EMS)** – structured framework to achieve environmental commitments.
- **SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals)** – 17 goals adopted by the UN addressing global challenges.

5. Related Policies, Procedures and Other Resources

- As linked in Policy

6. Version

Version No.	Reviewer	Date	Changes
1.0		22.06.19	Created
1.1	Dr Paul Steadman	16.09.25	Policy format, individual Scope 3 targets.
1.2	Dr Paul Steadman	01.06.26	Policy review, targets updated

Policy KPIs

Area	Aim	KPI	Target	Deadline
Environmental Management System	Continual improvement of the EMS.	Environmental Management System certification.	Maintain ISO14001:2015 certification.	2026/27
Energy and Carbon	To reduce scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon emissions.	Report Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions in accordance with the Standardised Carbon Emissions Framework (SCEF) in our Annual Carbon Management Report.	80% reduction from 2014/15	2030
			Net Zero carbon	2040
			Maximum annual emissions of 7111 tCO _{2e} (based on 2020-2030 carbon reduction target trajectory)	2026/27
			Minimum DEC rating for campus buildings.	D
Waste and Resource Management	Support circular economy principles. Reduce the volume of waste we produce and maximise recovery and recycling of waste.	Total waste produced (tonnes).	15% reduction from 2018/19	2030
			Tonnage not exceed 1303T. (Based on 1.5% reduction per year from 2018/19).	2026/27
		Total waste sent for reuse, composting, anaerobic digestion or recycling (%).	65%	2030
			42%	2026/27
		Scope 3 emissions reduction target, 2014/15 baseline 26 tCO _{2e} .	19 tCO _{2e}	2030
			22 tCO _{2e}	2026/27
Water Management	Minimise the volume of water we use.	Total mains water consumption (m ³).	10% reduction from 2018/19 Volume does not exceed 160,717m ³ . (Based on 1% reduction per year from 2018/19)	2030
			Scope 3 emissions reduction target, 2014/15 baseline 213 tCO _{2e} .	40 tCO _{2e}
			50.5 tCO _{2e}	2026/27



Area	Aim	KPI	Target	Deadline
Travel	Minimise the environmental impact of organisational travel and the travel undertaken by staff, students and visitors to and from the University.	Emissions from Organisational/Business Travel.	To meet future emissions targets, flights must remain at least 50% lower than pre COVID levels.	2030
	Scope 3 emissions reduction targets.	Business Travel. 2014/15 Baseline 5014 tCO _{2e} .	Business Travel 1036 tCO _{2e} 2528 tCO _{2e}	2030 2026/27
		Staff & Student Commuting. 2018 Baseline 0.336 tCO _{2e} /head.	Staff & Student Commuting 0.235 tCO _{2e} /head 0.269 tCO _{2e} /head	2030 2026/27
		UK and International Student start/end of term travel. 2018 baseline 1427 tCO _{2e} .	UK student and international student travel 1% reduction per annum CO ₂	2030
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity across the University.	Metres of space considered medium or high value for biodiversity (m ²).	2% increase in moderate / high value from 2017/18 baseline	2026/27
		Hedgehog Friendly Campus certification.	Maintain Gold certification	2026/27
Accommodation	Reduce emissions from university owned accommodation (including externally managed).	Scope 3 emissions reported for externally managed accommodation include waste and water use.	Annual 9.1% reduction in Scope 3 carbon emissions from 2018-19 baseline Net Zero by 2040.	2026/27
Procurement	To minimise the negative, and maximise the positive, environmental, economic and social	Report emissions arising from procurement activities in Annual Carbon Management Report usings NEUPC HESCET.	Use NEUPC HESCET Tool to report Scope 3 emissions deriving from items and	2026/27



Area	Aim	KPI	Target	Deadline
	impacts of the goods and services we buy.		services procured in Annual Carbon Management Report.	
		Scope 3 emissions reduction target 2023/24 Baseline 44,366 tCO _{2e} .	41,770 tCO _{2e} 43,384 tCO _{2e}	2030 2026/27
Emissions & Discharges	Prevent pollution by minimising local discharges to air, land and water.	Pollution incidents.	0	2026/27
Education for Sustainable Development	To raise awareness of sustainability among staff, students and the communities in which we work, and develop their skills and knowledge to support sustainable development.	Number of programmes embedding learning about one or more SDGs.	Increase from 2025/26 (Research and Teaching for the SDGs Group purpose).	2026/27
Research & Living Lab	Undertake research that directly supports the UN SDGs. Utilise the Living Lab approach to bring together our research, teaching, campus and operations to maximise sustainable output.	United Nations Academic Impact membership.	Maintain membership.	2026/27
		Map research output against SDGs.	All research output.	2026/27
Construction & Refurbishment	Ensure that all construction and refurbishment projects work towards reducing our negative impacts, and where possible enhance the environment.	KPIs relating to Key Themes are included within Sustainable Construction and Refurbishment Policy and Guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towards Zero Carbon Buildings • Smart Buildings • Living Labs 	Individual targets for each Key Theme are included within Sustainable Construction and Refurbishment Policy and Guidelines.	2026/27

Area	Aim	KPI	Target	Deadline
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing Biodiversity and Wellbeing • Maximise the use of recycled products. • Climate Change Adaptation 		
Community Involvement	To learn from and contribute to sustainable practices within the communities of which we are a part.	Increase community engagement in campus sustainability projects. Supported by the Sustainability Engagement Plan.	1% increase in hosting and participation in a schedule of activities with the local community and other stakeholders, to discuss and deliver improvements in sustainability at the University and beyond.	2026/27

Notes: • *Scope 3 emissions include: organisational travel, waste, water supply, wastewater treatment and electricity transmission losses.