University of Leeds
Annual Sustainability Report
2016/17
We will become a university where sustainability is truly embedded through knowledge, engagement, collaboration and innovation. Each and every one of our staff and students will understand the principles of sustainability – it will be an integral part of our operations and will bring about positive, sustainable change for the future.

The University of Leeds has once again proved its commitment to a sustainable future through a whole series of activities, innovations, research and policies. There have been some challenges – political uncertainties and a growing campus – but sustainability has remained a key priority for us throughout.

I am particularly proud of the fact that, through continuing to integrate sustainability into our curriculum, we are graduating students who are responsible global citizens. As a University, we have an important role to increase knowledge and opportunity for the benefit of society. Our graduates are testament to this; they understand global challenges, and are eager to be part of the solutions.

I am looking forward to yet another year of challenging ourselves, and others, to be more sustainable. Another year of innovation, behaviour change, outstanding research and collaboration to ensure the University of Leeds plays a leading role in building a sustainable future.

— Alan Langlands
Vice Chancellor, University of Leeds
That’s why we’re thinking way beyond 2020 to our vision for a sustainable university in 2050. Our vision has been created for the University of Leeds by the University community. But we don’t exist in isolation; we take a wider view of everything we do, from the effects on our local communities to the impact on the world. As a result of this global outlook, we are also ensuring that our vision and commitments contribute to the United Nations’ Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs), a set of 17 goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. Throughout the report, we have linked the relevant UN SDGs to our four themes to demonstrate how our approach aligns with this wider set of global commitments.

WHAT DOES OUR VISION FOR A SUSTAINABLE UNIVERSITY ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE?

Here we outline the characteristics we will have, the ways we will work, and the priorities we will focus on:

1. All of our students know and understand sustainability.
2. We have an open, accessible campus that is interconnected with the city.
3. Our campus is a test bed for new ideas and an exemplar of sustainable design.
4. We’re a zero carbon, zero waste institution.
5. Sharing space, equipment, skills and knowledge across the institution is the norm.
6. Our education is excellent and is accessible to all.
7. Our research addresses the grand challenges of sustainability and is accessible to all.
8. Partnership and collaboration, globally and locally, are at our heart.
9. We are an equitable and open employer that creates opportunities across the spectrum of our activities.
10. Challenging the status quo and making a real difference are the norm.
11. We’re an inspiration in the city and our campus and culture are used as a blueprint for other organisations to follow.
12. All staff have the capacity and knowledge to make sustainable decisions and this is the norm.
13. Our supply chain is sustainable and we continuously strive for further improvement and innovation.
14. Our research addresses the grand challenges of sustainability and is accessible to all.
15. We are an equitable and open employer that creates opportunities across the spectrum of our activities.
16. Partnership and collaboration, globally and locally, are at our heart.
Q&A WITH
Dr Louise Ellis
— Director of Sustainability

Reflecting those commitments, our Annual Report is a total impact report – a more holistic appraisal of our social, environmental, economic and cultural impacts. To demonstrate our total value, our report is full of case studies, commitments, progress, facts and figures. Together these tell the story of the amazing work we are doing to become an even more sustainable University. It’s by no means an exhaustive record of all the initiatives and projects we’ve devised or been involved in, but it provides a great overview of what we’re up to, how sustainability is embedded across the University, and our ambitions for the future.

Critically, it’s an honest reflection of where we are. Across the University of Leeds, we’ve had some brilliant achievements and even exceeded our own targets in some areas; but we’ve also struggled to meet some of the stretch commitments we gave ourselves. This Annual Report is a chance to both share our progress and take stock internally as to what we need to prioritise in the future to become the leading sustainable university we know we can be.

Once again, this year’s Annual Report is structured under the four themes that we set out in our Sustainability Strategy: Embedding sustainability through collaboration; Building knowledge and capacity; Being a positive partner in society; and Making the most of resources.

As a university, our core purpose is to increase knowledge and opportunity for the betterment of society. To do this, we have made firm commitments to take our economic, social, environmental and cultural responsibilities seriously.

WHAT’S IN THIS REPORT?

MATERIALITY

The themes set out in our Sustainability Strategy, and subsequent Annual Reports, reflect the economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts of the University of Leeds. Our targets and commitments reflect the issues that we know we can have a direct and indirect impact upon – our material topics that have, or can create, a real difference. Although some of these will have a financial impact, our materiality goes beyond that to social and cultural impacts. That’s why you’ll find commitments ranging from carbon reduction and resource efficiency to research and volunteering.

To determine these materiality issues, we engaged with our staff and students. Working together we determined the actions and commitments we could make to bring about the most impact across the university and beyond to local, national and international communities. These are reviewed regularly to ensure we stay relevant, impactful and able to make a significant difference.
In the year following our Sustainability Strategy, we focused on making sure we had the management systems, policies and reporting structures in place to make sustainability a reality, right across the University. These achievements – including ISO 14001, our procurement and construction standards – are now influencing decision making and allowing individuals to make a difference in their fields.

In the examples that follow, we show how the University of Leeds is leading the way in innovative approaches to embedding sustainability in our Schools, Faculties and Services, looking at sustainability as a whole as making sure that everyone has the opportunity to play their part.
SUSTAINABILITY SNAPSHOT

Genna Ash (@genna–ash)

The University of Leeds’ Ecosystem Atmosphere & Forest (LEAF) Centre was looking to pilot a natural capital project, and the Facilities Directorate was looking to develop its understanding of natural capital in operational decision-making and deliver the Biodiversity Action Plan. We developed the Tree project, gained match-funding from the United Bank of Carbon and worked alongside our Estates Services, to make sure they were on board and would benefit from the results.

At the heart of the project is a survey of all the trees on our campus – recording species, height, canopy cover, condition and health. We host training sessions with Treeconomics, the leading organisation in measuring and valuing the benefit of urban trees, to make sure staff and student volunteers were fully armed with the knowledge and equipment they needed.

To date, over 800 trees have been surveyed, representing 100 different species. This is about 75% of the trees on campus, and we’re continuing to survey the remaining 25% to provide a complete set of results. All of the data collected is being fed into a Tree Eco, a software suite specifically created to determine the value of urban trees and the key to a value report and design recommendations for the University, academic papers, seminars, and a Living Lab case study. When the data has been analysed, it will provide us with financial values for carbon storage and sequestration, pollution removal, runoff avoided and energy services that the trees on campus provide.

Plans are already coming together for the second phase of this Tree project, working with staff from the Centre for Doctoral Training in Bioenergy to focus on understanding the benefits and issues of removing and replacing trees, researching staff and student perspectives of campus green spaces, and providing recommendations to our operational teams.

Ultimately, the Tree project helps us to meet our Biodiversity Standard and deliver our Biodiversity Action Plan to improve the way we manage green space. It’s also a scalable project, making it a perfect project to trial across the city with Leeds City Council, starting with the Leeds Forest Observatory in Middleton Park.

GLOBAL IMPACTS

Switching to 100% recycled paper, reducing carbon and preserving ecologically important rainforests is just one of the things that our in-house printers have been up to this year. The Print & Copy Bureau (PCB) is the University’s in-house printing, copying and mailing service for both staff and students. PCB offers digital and litho printing and had made the switch to recycled papers back in 2008 – but it couldn’t be used on the existing digital printing equipment. So when the digital equipment was coming up for renewal in 2017, it was the perfect opportunity for Chris Askew from PCB to research the capabilities of new machines.

As part of the procurement process, machine manufacturer Ricoh UK, and paper merchant Denniar Independent Papers successfully carried out the world’s first official test to digitally print using toner on Rever 100% Recycled Carbon Balanced Art Papers. It was a success, and means that PCB can now print all litho and digital work on recycled paper, which equates to around 800,000 sheets of All every year.

This is a great example of how everyone at the University of Leeds is involved in the sustainability agenda, how individual teams are working within the policies which they help to create and how we can devise innovative, sustainable solutions with global impacts.

INCREASING ENGAGEMENT

Our Student Sustainability Architects are part of a unique programme to increase student involvement in sustainability activities and provide the opportunities for them to lead on key initiatives that reach out to staff and students across the University. The students benefit from year-long, in-depth, paid work experience. They are embedded in the Sustainability Service, developing their knowledge and skills and enhancing knowledge and capacity at the University. The chance to be a Student Sustainability Architect is just one part of our student opportunities package, and provides us with a direct connection to the student body, their opinions and priorities.

This year, there are six Student Sustainability Architects in part-time paid positions.

They are directly supporting three projects in line with the Sustainability Strategy:

- **Developing a Sustainability Volunteers programme**
  - Gloria Kosopie and Murun Muthiti have scoped out the opportunities that volunteers can get involved with throughout the year. They developed a new online space for people to register to volunteer along with dedicated social media pages where volunteers could interact and share opportunities and experiences. They also handled the logistics of recording volunteers’ experiences to better tailor opportunities to students’ skills and interests. All of this work has laid the foundations for an official Student Sustainability Volunteers Programme and increased the number of volunteers who are engaged in sustainability topics.

- **Increasing student understanding of sustainability within the curriculum and research**
  - Matthew Morton and Emma Weaver focused on raising awareness of how students can embed sustainability into their studies. Specifically, this meant mapping dissertation proposal deadlines across schools so that the Sustainability Service could allocate resources and support as many students as possible. They were also involved in organising the University’s inaugural Student Sustainability Conference (see ‘Building Knowledge and Commitment’ for more), and creating a special recognition award for dissertations at the annual Sustainability Awards, which highlighted not only the most innovative and original ideas, but also captured the breadth of sustainability research across from our faculties.

- **Increasing ethical procurement and Fairtrade awareness across the University**
  - As we continue to embed sustainability into all of our schools, departments and services, this year has seen the architects working across not just the Sustainability Service but the University Catering Services too. Two architects – Opemesis Ashokulu and George Middemans – carried out a campus-wide audit of our food and drink outlets, recording the number and type of Fairtrade products available. The results were used to identify any gaps where we could offer more options and led to a trial of eight new Fairtrade products. They also ran an awareness campaign around the University’s commitment to Fairtrade, organised events as part of Fairtrade Fortnight and a lively debate discussing “How fair is Fairtrade?” Extending the Student Sustainability Architects to other services has proved to be a real success and we’re working with other teams to create opportunities in other areas.

The Tree project is part of the Living Lab, where we’re using the University as a test bed for research and innovation. The project aims to calculate the environmental and economic value of trees on campus, increase staff and student understanding of these benefits, and provide information to influence decision-making around new developments.

We identified over 100 different tree species on campus – hopefully our work quantifying the benefits they bring will help protect them. – Dr Catherine Scott, Thesibiodiversity
We will work across University departments to build capacity and share best practice on sustainable change.

We will equip all our staff with sustainability skills.

We will develop external links to enhance knowledge and capacity.

We will support and promote research that examines the issues relating to sustainability.

We will integrate sustainability into learning programmes and ensure all our students understand the importance of sustainability.

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As a university, building the knowledge and capacity of our students and staff, as well as with the city and wider society, is key to how we help build a sustainable society. Through teaching, research, facilities, partnerships and volunteering we have both local and global impact, and we develop, share and promote sustainability across our campus, city and beyond.
Our aim is that all students will graduate from the University of Leeds knowing what sustainability is. A key part of this is integrating sustainability into the curriculum, giving all students the opportunity to study and to gain experience of developing sustainable solutions. The Sustainability Service works in collaboration with academic colleagues to develop focused teaching experiences that provide sustainability knowledge and make it relevant to real world settings. There are lots of examples of this integration, some of the highlights...

The Creating Sustainable Futures Discovery Theme – available to all students, whatever their discipline – ran twice during this academic year. The module in this theme allows students to really get stuck into the challenges facing local and global society; the environmental, social and economic issues that shape our world, and what we can do to manage these.

This year, the projects looked at everything from assessing our lifetime storage capacities and accessibility, to gaining a better understanding of people’s perceptions of the University’s impacts on society. Some of the key findings included the fact that 47% of the 269 teaching and communal spaces assessed had lights on when not in use, 50% of people asked understood the importance of Fairstay, and 89% of people surveyed believed the University’s research was having a significant positive impact. The data collected is a great source of information for the Sustainability Service too, and it fed into University-wide reports and audits.

This year, sustainability was the focus of the assignment project for Masters students taking the Commercial and Professional Skills module at Leeds University Business School. Students took on the role of internal consultants, tasked with reviewing student and staff awareness of sustainability initiatives here at the University, and coming up with recommendations to increase awareness and get more people involved in sustainability activities. Over in the School of Medicine, we ran a two-week Sustainability in Healthcare RESS Special Studies Project. We held pop-up dissertation workshops in May to help with these decisions. We were able to advise students on how to connect their area of study with other disciplines, explain the potential of sustainability research and inspire them to use their dissertation as a way to create solutions. It was also a chance to challenge students to critically evaluate and question the current thinking on sustainability, how it fundamentally affects global challenges, and provide the space to challenge the direction of their own research. This directly feeds into our commitment to support and promote research that examines the issues relating to sustainability.

And to recognise excellence in dissertations, we also added a Sustainability Dissertation Award in the Building Knowledge and Capacity category of our annual Sustainability Awards. In 2017, the award went to James Patrick Glover-Ochiltree from the School of Earth and Environment for his dissertation: Reckoning the Bioeconomy, an investigation into how social accounting mechanisms can help community-led renewable energy projects (CUREP) to better evaluate, measure and profit their success.

We use the Sustainability Strategy to help staff to bring aspects of sustainability into their specialist teaching modules. These modules are open to all students through the Discovery Theme of Creating Sustainable Futures. In this way, we reach students right across the University, giving them knowledge and skills to improve sustainability issues in their own profession and lifestyles.

— William Young – Inst Co-Director of SRI; Sustainability in Practice – 2016/17 Sustainability Report

Focusing on sustainability and the environment is an integral part of our curriculum and teaching, and Sustainable Development has become part of our everyday working practices.

Sustainability in Practice

In February 2017, we held the inaugural Student Conference on Sustainable Futures – Sustainable Perspectives on Future Challenges. Forty-five undergraduate and postgraduate students presented their sustainability activist stories. The 150-strong audience on a whole range of topics from the potential of solar energy for communities in developing countries of Africa, investigating the social impact of petroleum demonstration projects and extinction risk in the marine realm to an eco-friendly app to extend the life of clothes and investigating sustainability disclosure in Ugandan print media.

There was a real buzz on the day, with an exhibition, performance art session and chance to exchange ideas, ask questions and gain valuable insight into what’s going on across the University. The conference drew representation from all faculties at the University, promoting the interdisciplinary approach and collaboration we believe in. By bringing this next generation of researchers and innovators together, we hope to kickstart the creation of new solutions for a sustainable future.

Sustainability in Practice – 2016/17 Sustainability Report

Sustainability is important to me and here at the University of Leeds it is inspiring and encouraging to see the ongoing commitment to knowledge building initiatives. It currently has 187 members from eight faculties, three Chairs, 22 University Academic Fellows and an interdisciplinary doctoral programme. A recent study into climate change study across the University found that over 170 academics are currently working on climate change, with 197 active research awards raising £65 million in grant income.

Alongside the Priestley Centre, the Priestley Society has been set up to create and support collaborations between researchers through social events, seminars and workshops. It’s a great example of the Leeds Way, a holistic, inclusive and proactive approach to sustainability.

Sustainability in Practice – 2016/17 Sustainability Report

In last year’s Annual Report we said that we wanted to develop a full year’s training programme to underpin our vision that all staff will understand what sustainability means and how it is related to the University. Our training module – Sustainability in Practice – does just that. Available to all University of Leeds staff, the course explores what sustainability is, why it is important and what active steps can be taken to make sure that the University has a positive environmental, social and economic impact. The course is available both online and face-to-face and examines a whole range of scenarios. And the focus on sustainability doesn’t stop when the course is over – at the end of the module, every participant is asked to suggest a personal commitment that can contribute to positive change.

The new training module was released in August 2017, with an initial uptake of 373 staff. Although this represents only 5% of all staff, every single one made a personal commitment to make a positive change, so it’s a great start. We also felt a little under our target of 582 staff training hours, with 531 hours completed. This was an optimistic target, somewhat hampered by the delay in rolling out the online training. However, we’re confident that by increasing the uptake and creating more in-depth training to help staff embed sustainability into everyday working practices.

Sustainability in Practice – 2016/17 Sustainability Report

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WHERE IDEAS AND COLLABORATION THRIVE

A WHOLE WORLD OF SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

The critical outcome for all the pilot projects in the Living Lab is the fact that they produce innovative and transformational solutions to real-world problems, and that these solutions are scalable and transferable beyond the University. From climate change research and inspiring behaviour change to enhancing biodiversity, the Living Lab opens the door to a whole world of sustainable solutions.

As an educational institution, the Living Lab is encouraging us to think and operate differently; to take the theory from the classroom and apply it to real-world situations. Funding, feasibility, research, testing and delivery are all undertaken by the project teams, with results shared beyond the University to provide the evidence for real change.

You can apply to the Living Lab at any time by completing the application form online: sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/the-living-lab

Launched this year, the Living Lab is an exciting University-wide programme that uses our University as a test-bed for the co-creation of sustainable solutions. It relies on collaboration between students, academic and operational staff.
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WHERE IDEAS AND COLLABORATION THRIVE

Leeds Living Lab
Accessible Enhancing the environment

Leeds City Council

Interdisciplinary

Leadership

Collaboration

Sustainable solutions

Continual improvement

Collaboration

Outreach

Scalable & transferable

A more sustainable University

Influence

Influencing the University of Leeds, engaging in a dialogue with the wider community and identifying and trialling solutions to support and engage with enhancing the environment.

Health Withing

Providing seedcorn and match funding for interdisciplinary research projects and supporting students to deliver their innovative projects.

Impacts are scalable and transferrable to other organisations and to cities, addressing our global challenges such as climate, culture and energy, in the UK and internationally.

Breaking institutional boundaries and bringing together all areas of teaching, research and University operations.

Where knowledge grows

Delivering mutual benefit to all stakeholders: Furthering research and driving innovation. Delivering benefits for all our stakeholders, through research, innovation and sustainable improvements.

A virtuous cycle of sustainability-related research, student education and University operational change – driving continual and sustainable improvements.

A whole world of sustainable solutions

Leeds Living Lab

Leeds

City

Global

Campus

Global challenges

Leadership

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A virtuous cycle of sustainability-related research, student education and University operational change – driving continual and sustainable improvements.
At the University of Leeds our core purpose is to increase knowledge and opportunity for the betterment of society. We have a firm commitment to take our economic, social, environmental and cultural responsibilities seriously and we’re continually exploring opportunities to work with local communities, organisations and partners. These partnerships often go beyond the City Region. We exist in a global society and are committed to influencing sustainability and having a positive impact beyond our campus.

But it’s not just about sharing our own knowledge and skills. Working with local, national and international partners provides the perfect opportunity to learn from them, understanding the challenges they have and working together to respond to them. It’s something we encourage all our staff and students to do – creating truly global citizens who understand the role they can play in a sustainable future.

**OUR COMMITMENTS**

- We will build external engagement to foster development of internal and external capacity and knowledge, and influence wider policies.
- We will lead by example, share best practice, learn from others and ensure our research is accessible.
- We will take our responsibility as a society seriously, as an employer, good neighbour and in creating opportunities.
- We will create a welcoming, culturally and environmentally vibrant campus.
- We will support our students to be responsible citizens and an active part of society, both locally and globally.

**OUR RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15/16 RESULTS</th>
<th>16/17 TARGET / RESULTS</th>
<th>17/18 TARGET</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring hours</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>INCREASE 500</td>
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<td>Number of Students Volunteering</td>
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<td>INCREASE 3,704</td>
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<td>Attendees at public events on campus</td>
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<td>MAINTAIN</td>
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<td>Third sector organisations worked with</td>
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<td>Household visits within student citizenship project</td>
<td>1,800</td>
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</table>

**LINKED SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

- **3. Good Health and Well-being**
- **5. Gender Equality**
- **10. Reduced Inequalities**
- **11. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**
- **17. Partnerships for the Goals**
SUSTAINABILITY LEEDS

2016/17 SUSTAINABILITY SNAPSHOT

22

SHOWCASING THE RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH

We have some incredible research happening here at the University of Leeds, and it’s important to us that the activities and benefits are shared with the communities of Leeds.

Our annual Be Curious event is just one of the ways we do this – a day where we open our doors for the public to discover and join in with our research. In 2017, the theme was ‘Leeds and Yorkshire’, highlighting all the ways that the University’s research is relevant to the local community.

The day was filled with a programme of guided tours, exhibitions, talks, stalls and children’s activities. Parkinson Court was a hive of activity where visitors could explore five interactive zones: Science and Engineering, Culture, Climate and Water, Cities, and Health.

Sustainability was a key theme, showcasing everything from how the climate of Yorkshire has changed over the last 20,000 years and how Leeds is becoming a sustainable city to ‘Wetropolis’, a live demonstration showing the effects of extreme rainfall on our region.

Our Be Curious events are a great way of creating an accessible and friendly university. They also encourage education equality – showing everyone in the local community that we’re a friendly, accessible campus where they can come to engage in learning and sustainability. For many people, they may not have considered a university career or education, and our Be Curious days are just one of the ways we open these opportunities to all.

TACKLING LONELINESS… ONE LETTER AT A TIME

At a time when email and social media seem like the primary way we get in touch with each other, it can transform someone’s day. After all, there’s something lovely about receiving a letter, seeing the effort that someone has put in to get in touch and share a little piece of their lives.

It’s the brainchild of Dr Georgina Binnie, who remembered how great it was to receive letters from people as a child. To date, there have been over 280 people in the programme, many of whom have had the chance to explore the world or learn something new through a pen pal who might otherwise never have come across. It may seem like small act of kindness, but it can transform someone’s day. After all, there’s something lovely about receiving a letter, seeing the effort that someone has put in to get in touch and share a little piece of their lives.

Issues of loneliness and social isolation are found in both younger and older people. In 2016, research from Age UK found that there were 1.2 million chronically lonely older people in the UK; and in 2014, Writing Back has been generating friendships between different age groups and tackling loneliness.

Dr Georgina Binnie, Writing Back

Writing Back promotes the University’s vision of building positive partnerships by matching students as pen pals with older, Yorkshire residents. Since 2014, Writing Back has been generating friendships between different age groups and tackling loneliness.

You can discover more about the Writing Back project and sustainability at the University of Leeds online: sustainability.leeds.ac.uk

A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

We have a solid civic duty to play an active part in the City, and by doing so the University of Leeds can make a lasting positive impact way beyond our campus. Building on our Community Mentoring project, our Positive Impact Partners – or PIP – programme is based on exactly that belief. Our region boasts a number of arts and innovation-rich third sectors, community and not-for-profit organisations.

We devised PIP to link resources with local need. Collaborating with third sector partners brings together a wealth of skills, knowledge and research expertise to create new projects that build capacity and create positive social change.

The PIP programme is unique

Critically, PIP is open to all University staff, individuals in the third sector, charitable organisations, state funded schools and any other social-benefit organisations. Working with organisations beyond our campus not only allows us to provide support for their projects, it’s also great for staff in terms of personal and professional development.

Once the partnerships have been made, the Sustainability Service supports PIP partners through workshops, training, networking and events. Through these, partners benefit from the advice, experiences and best practice of others involved in PIP.

This year, 28 third sector organisations have been involved in PIP: These provide a wide range of services including education, conservation, social services, health, culture, faith, housing and recreation. It’s a hugely vibrant and innovative sector that is dedicated to improving the lives of people in Leeds – we are proud to be a position to work with them through PIP to increase their capacity to do good and create sustainable futures.

No two PIP matches are the same; the specialisms, needs and priorities of the organisation and our staff create unique support programmes that ensure everyone benefits.

Here are just three examples of PIP in action:

In Wakefield, PIP matched the charity Wakefield District Sight Aid with Kathryn Watson, Research Impact Manager from Leeds University Business School to help develop a business plan, which resulted in an extra £8,000 from a successful grant application.

Three team members from the educational charity IntuUniversity were matched with our staff to build relationships across the University and benefit from more ways for us to work together in the community.

A match between Ben Williams from the Research and Innovation Service and International Aid and Development (IAD) Sport has seen them expand their sporting and social inclusion activities across to Europe.

— Taft, Cleaning Services

“Writing Back promotes the University’s vision of building positive partnerships by matching students as pen pals with older, Yorkshire residents. Since 2014, Writing Back has been generating friendships between different age groups and tackling loneliness.”

Dr Georgina Binnie, Writing Back

“We are a very small and young organisation and it seemed like an amazing opportunity to tap into expertise and get advice on areas where we are lacking capacity. Our University partner has an extensive network within the University that he can refer us to, should he think of others who might be able to help in other ways. It is amazing how many chance links come up in conversation that might lead onto opportunities and avenues to explore.”

— Jen Dyer, IMAS

“Writing Back promotes the University’s vision of building positive partnerships by matching students as pen pals with older, Yorkshire residents. Since 2014, Writing Back has been generating friendships between different age groups and tackling loneliness.”

Dr Georgina Binnie, Writing Back

“We were pleased to be given the opportunity to assist one of our students. It was a fascinating insight into what can be achieved by the collaboration of our staff and students to create an impressive artwork, and witness the process from the students perspective.”

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— Taft, Cleaning Services
The University of Leeds is getting bigger. With this growth comes the challenge of meeting our carbon, water, biodiversity and resource reduction targets. But these are challenges we are ready to tackle, and having policies in place – including our Reuse, Recycling and Waste Standard, Sustainable Construction Standard, Carbon Management Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan – help through robust guidance, both internally and for our partners.

At the heart of this theme is the circular economy – closing the loop, doing more with the resources we have, getting the maximum value from them, and considering wider social impacts. From increasing the number of solar panels and electric vehicle charging points to enhancing biodiversity and reducing waste, we have had some encouraging results under this theme.

We will reduce our consumption of goods and services.
We will embed sustainability into the procurement process.
We will reduce the amount of waste we produce.
We will enhance biodiversity on campus.
We will use water efficiently and reduce, reuse and recycle where possible.
We will become a low carbon University, through energy efficiency and reduced carbon emissions.
We will foster a staff and student body where sustainable travel is the norm.

**OUR COMMITMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUR COMMITMENTS</th>
<th>15/16 RESULTS</th>
<th>16/17 TARGET / RESULTS</th>
<th>17/18 TARGET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total waste generated (tonnes)</strong></td>
<td>1,618</td>
<td>DECREASE 1,544</td>
<td>1,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tonnage through the reuse system</strong></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>107.1</td>
<td>60.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total carbon: reduction in carbon emissions</strong></td>
<td>45,524</td>
<td>44,899</td>
<td>48,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope 3 emission baseline established (tonnes)</strong></td>
<td>19,110</td>
<td>MAINTAIN 18,615</td>
<td>18,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total water: change on previous year (M³)</strong></td>
<td>697,754</td>
<td>MAINTAIN 697,232</td>
<td>646,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of sustainable travel (staff)</strong></td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of sustainable travel (student)</strong></td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>MAINTAIN 96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LINKED SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

1. Peace & Justice
2. Clean Water & Sanitation
3. Affordable & Clean Energy
4. Good Health & Well-being
5. Quality Education
6. Life on Land
7. Life Below Water
8. Sustainable Cities & Communities
9. Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Peace, Justice, & Strong Institutions
12. Life on Land
13. Life Below Water
14. Good Health & Well-being
15. Quality Education
16. Clean Water & Sanitation
17. Affordable & Clean Energy
18. Peace & Justice
**Biodiversity in Development**

The University of Leeds has made a commitment to becoming an exemplar of urban biodiversity. We’re delivering this though our biodiversity standard, which recognises the value of biodiversity for wildlife, but also wellbeing and health. Its an ambitious aim, and made more challenging due to our development programme and the land use changes this brings.

The first challenge to this aim came in 2016/17, when an existing car park was identified as the site of our new Nexus innovation centre. The site was home to 90 mature trees. These trees provided canopy in an urban area alongside a busy dual carriageway and formed the end of a green corridor into the heart of Leeds city centre.

The loss of those trees was unavoidable, but it gave us the opportunity to develop a long-term strategy to offset this impact. Using a bespoke offsetting tool developed here at the University, we made sure that 99 trees were planted as part of the landscaping work, with a further 135 trees planted on the wider campus.

In addition to planting trees, we looked at wider landscaping to ensure an increase in biodiversity value, this included choosing species that would provide food for pollinators and birds and create new areas of canopy for shelter and nesting.

Understandingly, it’s going to take many years for the trees to establish, and we are assessing the development work on a regular basis to make sure the loss is properly mitigated and enhanced. But in the long term the planting will mean more trees on campus, strengthening biodiversity and providing a legacy for future generations.

A recent example is a collaborative project between the University of Leeds and Leeds City Council to evaluate the many interventions that have been implemented to improve recycling rates. The project focuses on three areas with consistently low recycling rates compared to Leeds as a whole: Headingley, Headingley and Middleton. The aim is to identify opportunities for future interventions and to contribute to research and evidence on recycling behaviour.

The research team used data from Leeds City Council on recycling rates, contamination of bins, recycling quantity and rejection rates for these three areas.

The data was linked with other census data for socio-demographics, the index of multiple deprivation and green and ethical attitudes data from CALLCRD. The data was analysed to establish any relationships along with intelligence from focus groups to develop a better understanding of recycling behaviour. Leeds City Council and the University are now using this insight in the planning of management and intervention activities.

**City Living Lab**

The City Living lab brings together University colleagues, civil society, business and government to co-produce transformational solutions to real-world sustainability challenges, using the city of Leeds as a test-bed.

Our vision is a city where ideas and collaboration thrive, where the integration of sustainability enhances the value of the city, and where everyone is given the knowledge and skills to be more sustainable.

**Balancing at Brownlee**

Alongside the new £5 million Brownlee Centre on the University’s Briggate playing fields is a 1.6km cycle track. As one of the longest in the country, it’s the perfect traffic-free cycling environment for staff, students and the wider community, and great for recreation, coaching and competitions.

But in order to create this public amenity, the area needed a drainage solution to cope with current and future weather events. The initial plan was for a standard drainage and storage tank. However, the team came up with another solution, one that would create an attractive feature on site and improve local biodiversity. That solution? A balancing pond as part of a wider sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS).

Balancing ponds work by controlling the flow of water – storing floodwater and releasing it only when the risk of further flooding has passed. The pond at Brownlee has the added bonus of enhancing the environment, with new wildlife habitats being created as marginal and aquatic plants are added.

It’s also going to be a useful addition to our Living lab and an interdisciplinary space for teaching and research. We’re installing monitoring equipment to measure its effectiveness as a sustainable drainage system, along with a range of other environmental indicators such as sediment, nutrients and temperature.

**Fumes, Fans and Carbon Plans**

As part of our Carbon Management Plan, we actively look for projects that reduce our energy consumption and, in turn, our carbon emissions.

Fume cupboards have notoriously high energy consumption, and the fume extraction system in our Chemistry Building was identified as something that could be improved to deliver significant carbon savings.

Fume cupboards are currently being replaced with fume cupboards that have been designed as a sustainable package, along with new fume cupboard extraction systems. These were selected due to their high efficiency fans, ventilation ducts were consolidated and an intelligent control system was installed which links to the extenal conditions.

This project relied on the University working with delivery partners, staff and student lab users to model fume discharge dispersal patterns. By doing this we could let discharge velocity at suitable levels to ensure that fume cupboard extracts are discharged safely but not at excessive rates.

And we are already starting to see the impact – monthly energy use has decreased by almost 50,000kWh, with annual savings of around 600,000kWh. This has resulted in annual cost savings of over £43,000 and carbon reduction of 242 tonnes. The success of this project means we can build the case for future energy saving projects across the University.
The University of Leeds benchmarks its sustainability performance against the UK’s 24 leading research universities in the Russell Group. It’s important to gauge our performance in relation to the wider sector. We don’t exist in isolation, and we’re always looking for ways to collaborate and create wider impact. Source: HESA Estates Management Record 16/17

**Campus energy consumption per staff and student (full-time equivalent) 2016/17**

Compared to our peer group we have made improvements in our campus energy consumption per FTE. We are now below the Russell Group median.

**Waste mass per student and staff (full-time equivalent) 2016/17**

This year has seen improvements in our comparative waste performance. This is due to waste initiatives and changes in construction activity. Last year we were sat 10th against our peers.

**Modal split for sustainable commuting by students 2016/17**

This year we have maintained our position in relation to student commuting modes. We continue to perform above the median.

**Modal split for sustainable commuting by staff 2016/17**

We have seen an increase in our staff using sustainable travel modes. As a result this year we have gone further above the Russell Group median.
People & Planet Green league table

The People and Planet Green League ranks UK Universities on their environmental and social justice performance. We are pleased to continue to improve our performance in the Green League, improving our overall placing to 16th but also to rank 2nd in the Russell Group.

The University should be commended on an impressive overall achievement. It has exceeded many of its own targets on increasing positive impacts, such as the number of student hours spent on sustainability initiatives (3,985 against target 1,120), and the number of modules relating to sustainability (244 against target 163), whilst also achieving significant decreases in its negative impacts, including a reduction in the total waste generated (1,544 tonnes against a target of 1,618 tonnes) and a reduction in carbon emissions (44,899 tonnes against a target of 48,479 tonnes).

It is very reassuring to see the University investing so much time and effort in student and staff engagement relating to sustainability. From their staff training programme that reached 1,500 people, delivering short talks on sustainability to thousands of new students, and including of sustainability as an optional discovery module that any student can take, there is a genuine commitment to participation.

The institution is showing valuable leadership for the higher education sector through initiatives like their student sustainability research summit, their Living Lab programme, and their student sustainability architects roles, all of which are novel and impactful in terms education for sustainable development.

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With the Sustainable Development Goals becoming mainstream now, it might be an opportune moment to look at how students could be trained on assessing how the University is implementing them, and supporting the students to map the institution’s progress in any future sustainability report.

Finally, a good next step would be to research and celebrate the positive sustainability outcomes created by University of Leeds students, graduates and alumni. Many universities run sustainability engagement initiatives, but I am not yet aware of any that can attribute good sustainability leadership back to competencies that students develop by engaging in the University’s sustainability programme.

— Jamie Agombar,
Head of Sustainability, NUS
We’re always looking ahead; considering a more sustainable future. As set out in our vision to 2050, we understand the need for a long term view of sustainability.

And 2017/18 looks set to bring all this and more. Next year is filled with exciting opportunities as we continue to develop many of our projects and activities, and brand new ones are inevitably born.

We will increasingly focus on the Living Lab programme – as an exemplar of how sustainability is embedded into the way we work and the wider impact we can have. We will also strengthen our commitment to the circular economy approach, namely by revitalising our Reuse@Leeds system.

Opportunities to get involved in sustainability will increase. We are looking to develop an approach to engaging staff in sustainability, including a full review of the Green Impact programme and taking a look at our wider student opportunities to ensure everyone can develop their knowledge, understanding, and practical skills.

Our PIP programme will continue to grow, seeing our staff work with even more local third sector organisations to create mutual benefit, new partnerships and co-learning. We’re also looking to develop a new School Governors Programme, an incredibly important volunteer role to help school leadership teams to set targets, policies and standards and to plan for future development. This hugely valuable experience will give even more staff and alumni the chance to give back to their local community and make a positive impact on the education of young people across the city region.

As we continue to contribute to the United Nations’ Sustainability Development Goals, our global outlook will increase as our environmental, social, economic and cultural impacts are regarded through an international lens. Of course, we will continue to work with our own City of Leeds – the council, public, private and third sector partners. As an anchor institution, this enhances the sustainability of all involved and reinforces our core purpose to increase knowledge and opportunity for the betterment of society.