



# University of Leeds

## Annual Sustainability Report

2020-21



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

**This year's Sustainability Report is a culmination of how we continue to develop sustainability across our University and beyond in unprecedented times. It provides a glimpse of the full spectrum of activities we have continued to push forward with, to put us in the best position for 'living with Covid' sustainably. Inside we celebrate our successes, highlighting the enormous efforts by our staff and students and recognising we still have a great deal more to do. We spotlight the contributions made towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals – a set of 17 goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. We also provide an update on our Seven Climate Principles which form our Climate Plan and our progress since these were introduced in 1988.**

As a newcomer to the University of Leeds, I've been inspired by the level of dedication across all parts of the University to address those difficult climate questions; keeping a desire for climate justice and social equity at the forefront of our decision making.

The close of 2021 saw the launch of our pathway to net zero emissions by 2030, a core pillar of our Climate Plan and the largest single investment ever made by the University of Leeds. We recognise that this is no easy challenge. We have been big, bold and inclusive in the way we have undertaken to develop the pathway, working alongside our world-leading Climate Change academics, professional technical experts and our engaged student population.

As we draw all this activity together, we intend to bring our new and challenging strategy for sustainability to you in our next Annual Report. In the meantime, I look forward to working together to progress our demanding programme of sustainable activity as we continue our journey to meet our global challenge.



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 and challenges where we know we can have the largest direct and indirect impact. Not all sustainability issues and opportunities have the same potential to create lasting and measurable change. That's why our chosen material topics are those that have, or can create, a real difference, bringing about the most impact across the University and beyond, to local, national, and international communities. Our work is also guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and we review our material impact areas regularly, to ensure we stay relevant, impactful and able to make a significant difference.



The University and global sustainability commitments

This year the University launched its new strategy for 2020-30. It is rooted in our desire to make a difference in the world. It sets out our commitment to harness our expertise in research and education to help shape a better future for humanity, working collaboratively to tackle inequalities, benefit society and drive change through delivery of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Embedding the SDGs into everything we do

The Global Goals are a framework to achieve a sustainable future for all, covering everything from reducing inequalities, responsible consumption and production, enabling safe, sustainable cities and communities. Find out more about the SDGs at [sdgs.un.org/goals](https://sdgs.un.org/goals)

Here’s how our nine key themes are most closely linked to the Goals:



Sustainability engagement



Climate



Environmental management



Sustainable consumption



Biodiversity



Sustainable construction



Community



Research



Sustainable curriculum



SDG Accord

We remain committed to the SDG Accord, which we signed in 2018. It is a global commitment for the education sector to embrace the critical role that education has in delivering the SDGs and sharing best practice and learnings, both nationally and internationally.

2021 Times Higher Education (THE) University Impact Rankings:

The University of Leeds placed 16th globally and 4th in the UK, out of 1154 educational institutions worldwide. We were delighted to be ranked 1st in the UK for SDG 1 No Poverty, SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation and SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals. We also improved our impact scores across 13 out of the 17 SDGs including SDG 13 Climate Action, SDG 15 Life on Land, and SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Our performance is recognition of the positive actions taken by the whole University community working together, leading by example to achieve a sustainable future not only for the institution but also globally. Going forward, our focus is on developing our own, challenging sustainability benchmarks, acting in collaboration with other institutions and organisations to deliver the greatest impact.

UN Global Compact

The University of Leeds is a signatory of the United Nations Global Compact, which encourages organisations to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies, aligning with Ten Principles on human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption, and with an emphasis on collaboration and innovation. We provide a biennial submission of a Communication on Engagement (COE). You can read our latest submission here: [ris.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/UN\\_Global\\_Compact\\_COE\\_FINAL.pdf](https://ris.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/UN_Global_Compact_COE_FINAL.pdf)

We are ranked 1st in the UK for 3 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals:



# Seven principles



Work to develop the University's Climate Plan started in December 2018 through a series of staff and student workshops. Core themes were identified including the need to take urgent action towards net zero, greenhouse gas emissions linked to food, embedding climate across the curriculum, decarbonisation of transport and public engagement to influence change beyond the University.

In September 2019, the University Council announced our seven principles for climate action:

**1. Preparing our Climate Plan with a view to securing a net zero carbon footprint by 2030**

**2. Ensuring that sustainability shapes institutional decision making**

**3. Reorienting research and teaching away from fossil fuels and towards sustainable solutions**

**4. Integrating sustainability into our teaching provision**

**5. Working with partners to support a net zero carbon city**

**6. Supporting the development of sustainable travel infrastructure**

**7. Ensuring that we invest responsibly**



Before Covid-19 caused some activities to be temporarily paused, we had:

- spoken to over 740 staff and students through workshops, stalls, and a climate roadshow to help shape our approach, with a particular focus on net zero carbon emissions
- held three academic working groups focused on research and innovation, embedding climate into the curriculum and governance, and decision-making. Summary reports contributed to the draft Climate Plan
- completed a consultancy project on decarbonising heating on campus
- completed a consultancy project to develop a net zero compliant pathway

Whilst Covid-19 significantly impacted community engagement, the core team of professional services staff and academics continued to develop the University's approach to tackling the climate crisis throughout this period, in particular, developing our overarching Climate Plan and associated workstreams to deliver against the Climate Principles. More detail on this process can be found on pages 14-15 of this report. The outcome can be seen in the Climate Plan itself, which was approved by University Council in November 2021 and is available on our website.

**Working together to take urgent action and deliver on our climate principles.**

# Our Results



## 1 – Sustainability engagement

**36**

Blueprint teams live and in development

Including  
**5** new Blueprint teams

**33**

Staff Sustainability Architects

**12**

Student Sustainability Architects

**119**

hours student volunteering



### Training:

**499** staff training hours  
**25** Carbon Literacy Certified staff in LUBS (Leeds University Business School)



### Communications:

**155,090** Sustainability website page views  
**48,010** Sustainability website users  
**9,354** Sustainability social media followers – up 12%

## 2 – Climate

**159,488**

tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions

**Down 3.2%**  
year on year

## 3 – Environmental management

**159** pieces of environmental legislation reviewed

**1 ISO 14001:2015 audit** successfully completed



## 4 – Sustainable consumption

**602.5**

tonnes campus waste – down from 669 tonnes

**£177,546**

of equipment reused (35.67 tonnes)

**371.3**

tonnes of campus waste recycled

**60%**  
recycling rate

## 5 – Biodiversity



**5,000**

trees planted at Bodington Playing Fields



**500m**

new hedgerows planted



Bronze Hedgehog Friendly Campus achieved



ISCN Sustainable Campus award



**3** biodiversity site surveys completed



**1** grey heron

## 6 – Sustainable construction

**1,450**

tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e avoided during construction of Esther Simpson building

## 7 – Community

**283**

community and civic partners worked with

**296,028**

attendees at public events

**35,801**

beneficiaries of University outreach programme

**1,867**

households engaged through citizenship project

**17,649**

support hours provided to partners in the community

**782kg**

food donated to food banks

## 8 – Research

**£260m** sustainability related research income

**20 labs** began work on LEAF certification



## 9 – Sustainable curriculum

**369**

sustainability related modules offered

**13**

student Living Lab projects facilitated

**11,241**  
students completed sustainability modules

# Core themes



## Theme 1. Sustainability engagement

### More Blueprint staff engagement teams

We now have 36 Blueprint teams either live or in development, bringing together Schools and Services and empowering staff to own and deliver sustainability action plans that are important to them. Five new plans began during this period, after adapting to online workshops.

### Growing our staff sustainability community with Staff Sustainability Architects

Our 33 Staff Sustainability Architects are a network of colleagues working on sustainability objectives within their areas across the University. They support each other to embed sustainability and build the knowledge and capacity of their colleagues to grow our sustainability community.

### Increasing our Sustainability Community to over 200 colleagues

Our wider Sustainability Community, a network of engaged and enthused colleagues, has grown to over 200 people. During the last year we have held many successful events and seminars to share and inspire, including:

- a return to campus seminar in September 2020, which focussed on incorporating active travel into the staff commute with Dr Joey Talbot (Institute of Transport Studies) presenting on the Rapid Cycling Prioritisation Tool, which works out the most efficient places for new cycling routes across the country
- a biodiversity webinar with author and spokesperson for Hedgehog Friendly Campus, Hugh Warwick
- an event on embedding sustainability into the curriculum with Dr Jen O'Brien from the University of Manchester

### 499 hours of staff sustainability training – creating positive change

Building the knowledge and capacity of our staff and wider partners is key to how we develop, share and promote sustainability across our campus, city and beyond. Training in 2020-21 was predominantly delivered through online learning, including an introduction to sustainability as well as a course geared towards managers.

### Clearer communications & increased engagement

We undertook a complete refresh and revamp of the Sustainability website to meet accessibility requirements and ensure our community can find the information they need when they need it, as well as growing Sustainability Service social channels by 12% (Instagram by 25%) to keep up engagement whilst staff and students were working from home. We also worked with the wider communications team at the University to ensure sustainability initiatives were embedded in wider communications plans.

### Our first ever online Student Sustainability Research Conference

Covid-19 restrictions meant that for the first time this annual conference had to take place online. The event brings together students from all levels from across all disciplines to showcase their sustainability-themed research, projects, performances and installations – a key objective of the Leeds Sustainable Curriculum. With a theme of 'Leaving No One Behind', we welcomed 36 student presenters as well as a keynote presentation from Dr Amrita Mukherjee (School of Law) who explored this guiding principle behind the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).





79 hours of student volunteering

Our student volunteering programme offers the opportunity to get involved in delivering sustainability projects and initiatives on campus and within our wider community. Covid-19 continued to limit our ability to develop and offer volunteering opportunities. Despite this, our students completed 79 hours of volunteering on projects, including community litter picks, noise and citizenship focus groups, along with our award-winning Biodiversity Ambassador Programme.

Student Sustainability Architects – increasing student participation with sustainability

This year we had 12 Student Sustainability Architects, working on projects from developing and delivering a campaign to engage student societies in the #2023 Plastic Free pledge, mapping the Leeds University Business School curriculum against the UN Sustainable Development Goals, developing a methodology to calculate the carbon footprint of food sold in University catering outlets and hosting an online sustainability careers panel event.

Sustainability Internships

Internships are central to our commitment to provide student experience and opportunity in sustainability during their time at Leeds. We gain significantly in terms of student voice and a fresh perspective to our projects and programmes, which in turn strengthens our credibility with the student community and our ability to engage them in important strategic work. We aim to provide a strong foundation of skills, knowledge and experience for students interested in a career in sustainability, with many of our previous interns going on to develop successful careers in the sector. Our two Sustainability Projects Assistants for 2020-21 worked on a range of projects, including community and citizenship work, the annual Sustainability Awards and calculating the University’s emissions.

“Working with the Sustainability Service exposed me to the huge variety of work that falls under “sustainability” – from behaviour change, to reporting, carbon footprinting, and working with city partners. From the beginning I was in equal parts supported and mentored, and encouraged to step out of my comfort zone and take ownership of my work. I developed skills in managing my projects, presenting, and facilitating change – all of which are valuable and highly regarded, and will support me in my current role and beyond. Plus, it was really fun!”

– Phoebe Jarvis, Sustainability Project Assistant  
2020-21



“As a geography student committed to working towards a socially-just and climate-friendly future, I applied to work with the Sustainability Service during my Year in Industry to gain experience in the sector. During my placement, I got to work on various projects including reporting on the University’s Scope 3 emissions, supporting the Student Citizenship programme of work, planning the Sustainability Awards 2021 and contributing the team’s communications work. The best part was that I got to work with so many amazing people from across the University on projects I found enjoyable and rewarding. Overall, it was an incredible experience which allowed me to develop numerous different skills which have been invaluable to both my professional and academic achievements.”

– Zoe Gilbank, Sustainability Project Assistant  
2020-21

Theme 2.  
Climate

Climate Plan and Net Zero

Covid-19 restrictions meant face-to-face engagement work across the University community had to be paused, but work continued during this period on developing the University Climate Plan.

Building on the staff and student consultation of 2019-20 and our seven climate principles, an outline plan was drafted. Academic-led working groups were set up to review and develop the draft into the University Climate Plan ready for review and approval by University Council.

Due to the level of capital investment required the period was also used for an extensive technical review of the pathway to net zero and to develop an outline budget to achieve this. The technical review modelled 21 different pathways to achieving net zero emissions and used insights from consultancy work carried out with Arup and Buro Happold. The pathway recommended through this review and taken forward within the Climate Plan is underpinned by a move towards electrification of heat.

The University farm has also been included within the net zero scope alongside commuting and business travel. It was identified that further work would be required within the Climate Plan to develop credible pathways for emissions reductions in these areas.

University of Leeds 2020-21 greenhouse gas emissions

The University of Leeds reports greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions annually to HESA (the Higher Education Statistics Agency). The figures provided in this report are based on our annual HESA submission but have been expanded to align with the greenhouse gas reporting protocol, by including an estimate of emissions associated with the University Farm, and fugitive emissions from air conditioning units. We are in the process of developing improved methodologies for calculating emissions such as those associated with the supply chain.

Total greenhouse gas emissions for the University of Leeds were 159,488 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e, after taking into account 1,000 tonnes of offset emissions. This figure compares with 164,803 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e for the previous year and 165,370 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e for 2018-19, the last year unaffected by Covid-19.

The University’s Climate Plan was signed off by the University Council in November 2021. With a predicted spend of £174m it represents the biggest single investment the University has ever made.



Greenhouse Gas Emissions

	2018-19 (EMR 2020)	2019-20 (EMR 2021)	2020-21 (EMR 2022)
Scope 1 and 2 emissions (includes vehicles)	42,411	43,661	43,565
Scope 1 – agricultural emissions	n/a	n/a	7,795
Scope 1 – fugitive emissions	n/a	n/a	728
Total scope 1 and 2 emissions	42,411	43,661	52,088

Scope 3 – business travel	13,427	6,398	410
Scope 3 – staff commuting	4,970	3,572	3,875
Scope 3 – student commuting	1,693	1,055	1,701
Scope 3 – waste, water and wastewater	761	696	286
Total scope 3 emissions excl supply chain	20,851	11,721	6,272

Scope 3 – supply chain	102,108	109,421	102,128
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Total emissions	165,370	164,803	160,488
Offsetting of emissions			1,000

Net emissions	165,370	164,803	159488
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Energy based Scope 1 and 2 emissions for 2020-21 showed a slight drop compared with 2019-20, at 43,565 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e. This was the first year we reported on Scope 1 agricultural emissions and it is expected this number will change as our calculation methodology improves. We have also included Scope 1 fugitive emissions from University air-conditioning units for the first time.

The impact of Covid-19 on business travel was evident in 2020-21, with emissions dropping from 6,398 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e in 2019-20, to just 410 tonnes in 2020-21. Whilst staff and student commuting figures show a year-on-year increase, these figures were estimated based on car parking data, as no travel survey took place during the peak of the pandemic. Given that hybrid working and studying continued throughout this period these figures may overestimate commuting emissions.

Our supply chain emissions are down compared with the previous year, bringing them back to a similar level to those seen before the impact of Covid-19. These numbers do, however, need to be treated with caution - they are calculated based on the emission intensity of particular categories of product, which gives an estimate of emissions per pound spent. In future years we intend to develop more accurate measurement for areas within our supply chain where we believe we can reduce impact.



Theme 3.  
Environmental  
management

Our Environmental Management System is accredited to the internationally recognised standard ISO 14001:2015. In 2020-21 an external audit of the system was successfully completed, with the result that our registration to ISO 14001:2015 was maintained, despite difficulties in monitoring and operating the system caused by restrictions brought in to manage the Covid-19 pandemic.

Two minor non-conformances were raised during the audit:

- Some building display energy certificates had expired. This was due to difficulty in collecting data through the pandemic. All are now up to date.
- Due to internal audit postponements (necessary due to Covid-19), not all areas of the system were audited in the planned timescale and the system did not contain a mechanism to rectify this. Our audit procedures have now been updated to address this.

We have reviewed 159 pieces of environmental legislation and identified 59 that contain environmental compliance obligations for us. All of these have been assessed and graded as currently compliant. Regular monitoring of these is required to maintain compliance.



Theme 4.  
Sustainable  
consumption

2023 Plastic Free

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted the delivery of the Plastic Free pledge across the University. In some areas, the move to remote working from home for many staff during this period reduced the use of single use plastics. However, there was an increased need for single use plastics in other areas to maintain a safe environment for those on campus, particularly within healthcare settings. These included the use of personal protective equipment, food packaging, cleaning and sanitising materials.

The University made reusable face masks available to all staff and students, and the Faculty of Biological Sciences were participants in an NHS reusable face mask research trial, through our leadership of the Leeds Anchors Plastic network - a network of organisations working together to share best practice and solve challenges around single use plastic.

Cleaning services had an important role in keeping our campus safe throughout the pandemic. Despite the increased need for cleaning products, the team reduced the need for single use plastics by creating a central delivery point and operating a refill scheme across campus for both cleaning products and hand sanitiser. On some residential sites, plastic containers for cleaning products replaced entirely with starch-wrapped pellets in compostable cardboard boxes, reducing plastic use by between 57% and 88%.

The University's Catering services operations team continued to develop new recyclable packaging solutions for Deli(very) operations, despite the pausing of the service during the initial stages of the pandemic. The team brought in paper wallets for reusable cutlery as an alternative to switching to disposable cutlery, and worked with a supplier to create a bio-film wrap as a preferable option for packaging in-house products. Reusable cups were reintroduced across all outlets, whilst also installing specialist recycling bins for disposable hot drinks cups where they were used.

As more staff and students return to campus there is a need to reassess the current situation with regard to single use plastics, incorporating the role of circularity, wider single use items and the relationship to climate impact.



We are committed to reducing the need for single use plastic and exploring alternatives across the University.



# Core Themes

## Yorkshire Circular Lab

We are committed to our wider impacts as an institution. Our Sustainability Service partnered with academics to deliver a combination of workshops and activities to drive forward circularity across the region, by means of a living lab approach to the circular economy.

During 2020, a funded circular economy project was undertaken by Mike Howroyd from the Sustainability Service and Dr Anne Valenturf from the School of Civil Engineering, in collaboration with Kirklees Council. The project was focused on identifying sustainable routes to economic regeneration, particularly due to the economic crisis caused by Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic.

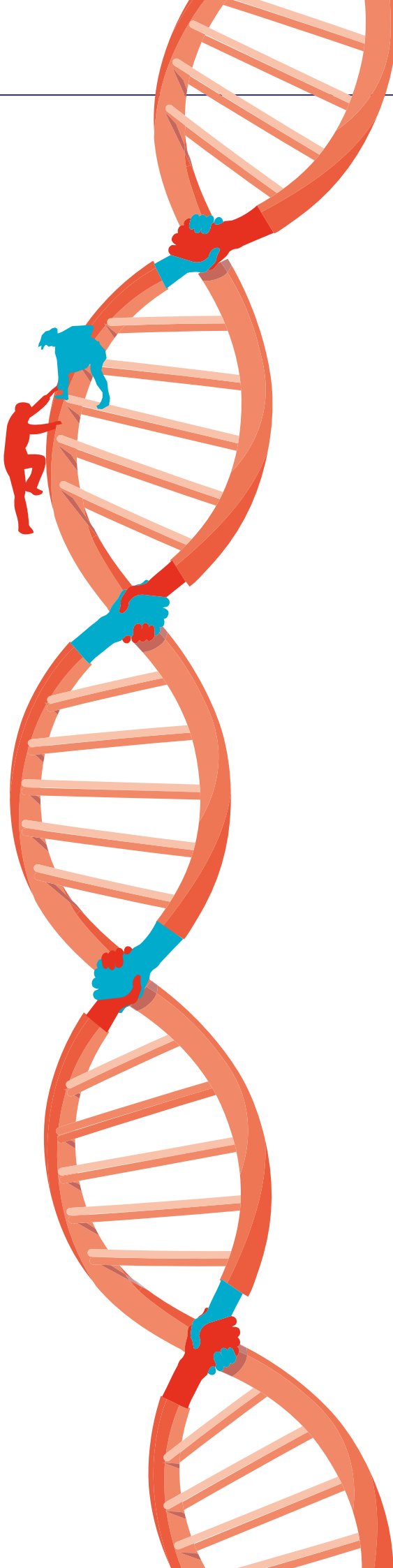
Following completion of this project, a funding bid to Research England began the development of plans for a Circular Living Lab for Yorkshire. Extensive consultations - with local and combined authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), companies and business representatives, and civic and voluntary sector organisations - showed there was great interest in participating in the creation of a region-wide initiative. The Yorkshire Circular Lab resulted from this project, providing enhanced understanding of a circular economy and realising the tangible benefits of practical implementation, aligning with existing initiatives across the region. Five key priorities for action were identified, including the creation of a knowledge and tools hub to bring together research and practice, community building, supporting positive action and monitoring progress. The work set the foundations for further development of the Yorkshire Circular Lab into 2022 and beyond.

## Sustainability initiatives in University residences

Residential Services progressed a number of sustainability initiatives through 2020-21, including switching to longer-life mattresses through the existing planned replacement programme, with end-of-life mattresses collected for recovery and reuse by an external partner. Work with a Student Sustainability Architect focused on student-facing communications to improve recycling rates and reduce waste.



Replacement programme moving to longer life mattresses



## Themes 5. Biodiversity

Whilst Covid-19 limited the ability to run on-site programmes and measurement of biodiversity, work continued throughout 2020-21, particularly through the Grounds and Gardens team and our biodiversity ambassadors.

### Key achievements this year:

- **Bronze certification by the British Hedgehog Preservation Society ‘Hedgehog Friendly Campus’ scheme**
- **Biodiversity ambassadors programme winning an International Sustainable Campus Network award for Progress.**



### Biodiversity improvement and monitoring

The University Grounds and Gardens team moved forward with a number of initiatives designed to improve biodiversity including the creation of new deadwood habitats on St George’s Field, outside the School of Earth and Environment, and on the Western Campus. A relaxed management regime for green spaces was adopted in a number of amenity spaces, including St George’s Field.

The Residential Services team also began work on the Well Wood Project located at North Hill Court, alongside partners Unite Students and Groundworks Yorkshire. The project involves the transformation of two disused and overgrown tennis courts into a communal green space for use by students, staff and the local community, and work included a topographical, tree and ecological survey before more work took place in November 2021.

Student Sustainability Architect, Caitlin Harris, completed biodiversity surveys of three University residence sites in 2020-21, generating biodiversity action plans and site maps for each. Her work will enable integration with the University-wide Urban Biodiversity Monitoring Programme, which was impacted by Covid-19 restrictions, but is being reinvigorated in 2022 to allow us to measure the impact of initiatives on biodiversity. This living lab programme is student-led by a team of biodiversity ambassadors, who remained active throughout the pandemic by completing virtual training sessions, presentations, and even international lectures. This team’s activities and commitment were key to achieving our Bronze Hedgehog Friendly Campus and ISCN awards.

### Living Lab – using our spaces as a test bed for researching sustainable solutions

**Roger Stevens Pond** - A key Living Lab project in 2019 involved the installation of sub-aquatic planting pods in the Roger Stevens pond on campus, as part of a project to manage water quality and improve biodiversity. One highly visible impact of the new environment is the addition of a regular campus visitor in the form of a grey heron, which has become a favourite of students and staff, alongside our resident Peregrine Falcons. Damselflies and Pipistrelle bats have also been seen in the area. The return of our biodiversity monitoring project in 2022 will allow us to develop our measurement of biodiversity species in this and other areas of campus.

**Bodington Playing Fields** - 2020-21 saw the development of land at Bodington Playing Fields into a Living Lab natural flood management demonstration site in partnership with the Environment Agency and Leeds City Council. The scheme forms part of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme’s Natural Flood Management (NFM) programme, which seeks to reduce flood risk in the city centre and build resilience and adaptation to climate change, whilst also offering research opportunities for students and staff. Work took place throughout 2020-21 to install natural flood management defences, including a balancing pond, leaky wood dams, wetland scrapes and cross-track drains, as well as wildflower areas, 5,000 trees to make up new woodland, and 500 metres of hedgerow which will also offer a valuable biodiversity habitat.

The site is due to be opened officially in spring 2022 and will offer opportunities for further Living Lab research, citizen science, outreach and wider public participation.



Theme 6.  
Sustainable  
construction

Similar to other universities, we use a bespoke sustainable construction standard to inform design and construction. It's reviewed every three years to ensure relevance and improve on the process. In the last review we incorporated a section on embodied carbon, while running the implementation as a 'living lab' to increase design team and University knowledge in this area. BAM – our main contractor for these projects – has significant experience in this area.

- For the Sir William Henry Bragg building, our focus was using the measurement tool to build knowledge on the RICS whole life carbon assessment process
- For the Esther Simpson building, the tool was used at the pre-tender design stage to identify opportunities for material efficiency. We asked tender respondents to reduce embodied carbon further. The concrete and steel used in the foundations, structure and façade design contributed significantly to the overall building impact. However, BAM worked with their supply chain to utilise low carbon concrete and steel with high recycled content produced at sites using electric arc furnaces and renewable energy. We saw significant savings compared to a business as usual approach with an estimated 1,450 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e avoided

Construction projects also increasingly focus on understanding and improving biodiversity around developments, with both the Bragg and Esther Simpson buildings adopting a more biodiverse and enhanced landscaping approach. Additional cycle shelters with integrated green roofs were added, along with the installation of 'pollinator poles' providing habitats for solitary bees and other pollinators.



Theme 7.  
Community and  
civic engagement

We are committed to engaging and collaborating with the local community and our civic partners, with a focus on the public good and driving benefit to the region in the context of post-pandemic recovery. Central to this is ensuring our students and staff feel they are, and are seen to be, active and positive citizens.

**More third sector partnerships** - We have expanded our Positive Impact Partners (PIP) Programme to facilitate and support a wider range of partnerships, offering civic partners, local business and third sector partners opportunities to connect with our staff and students to network, share knowledge and experiences, and form new partnerships. We introduced Information Sharing and Collaboration Workshops to provide an opportunity for University staff and civic partners to come together, to share knowledge and identify collaborative opportunities.

**Accessible public engagement** - In 2021 the annual Be Curious event aimed to spotlight the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and showcase how research at Leeds is making a world of difference to people's lives. From monitoring local air pollution with the help of school children to measuring climate change from space with world-leading Earth Observation scientists, the programme was packed with live after-school events for all the family, a series of late talks for adults, and an array of short activity videos, all free to stream via YouTube.

**Citizenship guidance and training** - In 2020-21 we provided good citizenship guidance, training and support to 1,867 student households. This included the introduction of Community Ambassadors to provide essential information to support our students' move into the community and help them get to grips with independent living.



**The End of Term Big Clear Out** project collected more items in 2021 that could have been otherwise destined for landfill, and distributed these to community and charity partners. This joint project with Leeds City Council and Leeds Beckett University has intercepted 28 tonnes of valuable household goods to date and passed these on, free of charge, to local people in need.

**Food bank donations** - In winter 2020, we joined forces with Leeds University Union to support local food banks which have seen demand skyrocket during the pandemic. Staff, students and members of the community came together to donate essential items and food. Throughout the year more than ¾ of a tonne of non-perishable food items were donated from residential sites to local foodbanks across North West Leeds.



1,867 student households trained,  
28 tonnes of valuable goods intercepted  
from landfill and 782kg of food donated  
to food banks.





Theme 8.  
Research and  
sustainable solutions

Sustainable research income

The University of Leeds is at the centre of the global research and innovation community. We deliver transformational fundamental and challenge-led research to advance knowledge and tackle major issues, to improve the future of our world. Research income in sustainability-related themes in 2020-21 totalled £260 million.

Case studies

**SLabs** – In March 2022 we reformed our Sustainable Laboratories Network (SLabs) to build action and share best practice on sustainable science across campus. We also introduced LEAF (The Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework) to the University. LEAF is a standard developed by University College London, which helps researchers, staff and students to improve the sustainability and efficiency of their labs, awarding a bronze, silver or gold certificate. Five groups signed up in the initial stage, covering 20 labs, and the first certificate was issued in September 2021.

**Unlocking the Potential of Civic Collaboration** – Leeds Social Sciences Institute led a review on behalf of the University and Leeds City Council to build a more detailed picture of collaboration taking place between both organisations, and to deepen institutional understandings of barriers to such collaboration. The overarching objective was to help stakeholders explore the untapped potential of working together to drive sustainability, prosperity, social inclusivity, health and wellbeing. A list of recommendations formed the basis for an action plan to redress cultural and mechanistic challenges that are understood to make collaboration difficult. This plan is now overseen by a Reference Group, comprising of senior group of University and Council colleagues to accelerate research policy collaboration and take civic partnership to a new level.

**Wild Ingleborough** – Academics at LEAF (Leeds Ecosystem, Atmosphere and Forest Centre) partnered with Natural England, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, United Bank of Carbon, The Woodland Trust and WWF on a project to further the restoration of wildlife habitats around Ingleborough in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The Wild Ingleborough Partnership aims to undertake landscape-scale restoration of wildlife from the valley floor to the top of the mountain. This will aid nature’s recovery in this part of North Yorkshire, by supporting low-intensity farming and helping wildlife to be more resilient in the face of the climate emergency and other pressures. The team will work with local people and visitors to the Dales from the outset to involve them in the development of the project, seeking to support a thriving local economy based on restorative farming to enhance local biodiversity and nature tourism.

**PCAN** – The Place Based Climate Action Network (PCAN) is a £3.5 million initiative, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, which aims to translate climate policy into action on a local level by establishing a climate commissions model in Leeds, Edinburgh and Belfast that can be followed elsewhere. Professor Andy Gouldson, University of Leeds, is a co-investigator on PCAN and Chair of the Leeds Climate Commission (an independent advisory group made up of representatives from a wide range of businesses and organisations from across the city). In January 2021 it produced a comprehensive Leeds Net Zero Carbon Roadmap, showing the city’s pathway to net zero by 2030. Rather than putting the onus solely on Leeds City Council, the Commission encourages collective responsibility for climate action. Initiatives explored by the Commission include switching the heating network to decarbonised hydrogen, the potential for investment in green projects and running a Leeds Climate Change Citizens’ Jury which made a suite of recommendations for the city.



Theme 9.  
Sustainable  
curriculum

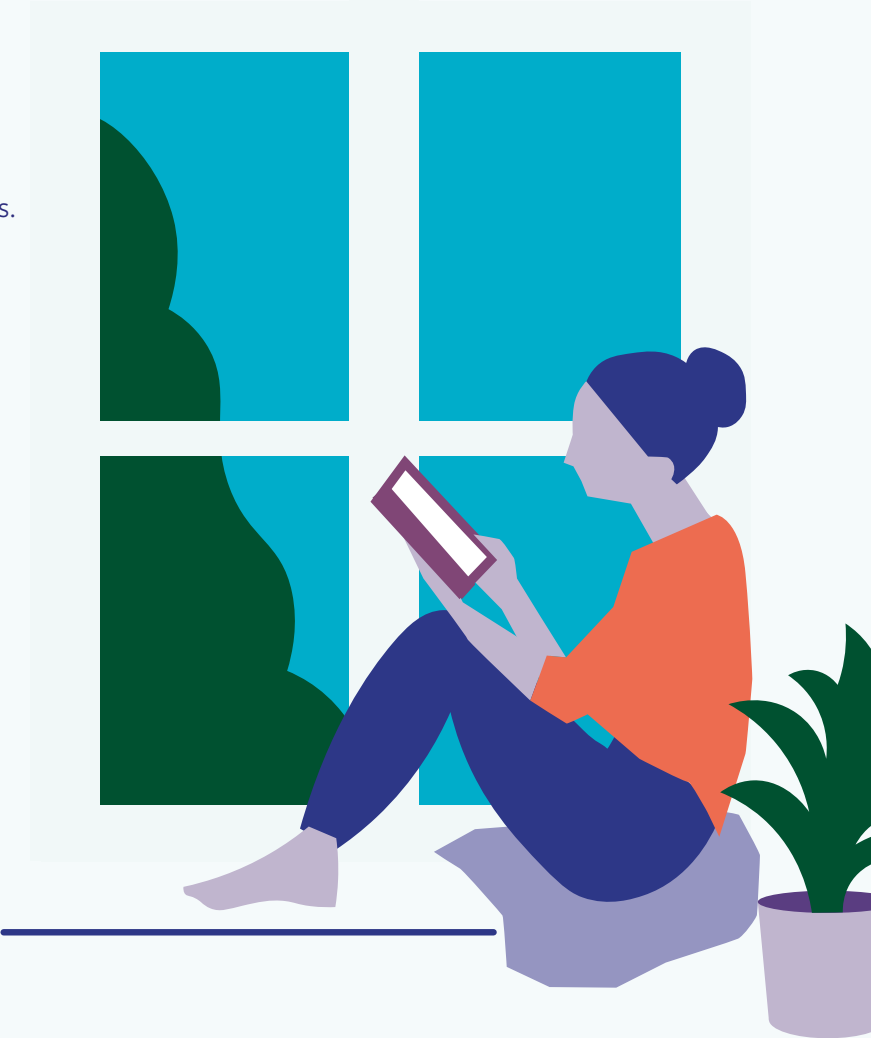
Our focus on the Leeds Sustainable Curriculum has continued to drive forwards, with a particular emphasis on integrating sustainability through the University’s wider Curriculum Redefined project. Through our seven climate principles we committed to become a leading institution for learning and teaching in sustainability and climate change, reflecting and supported by our world-leading research portfolio. We will provide our students with the knowledge and skills they need to have a positive impact in the world, and to contribute solutions both in our local community and globally in an equitable and just way.

We are achieving this through key focus areas:

- Bringing together content, materials, guidance and training and development
- Growing, supporting and enabling student-led activity, projects and opportunities
- Coordination of specialist programmes in sustainability and climate change

Our Living Lab Programme continues to play a core role in our approach to student centred, active learning by bringing together research, education and operations, using the University as a test-bed for sustainable solutions. Despite pandemic restrictions, the Sustainability Service facilitated 13 student living lab projects in 2020-21, exploring topics as diverse as plastic-free field trips in the School of Geography, to exploring the impacts of Covid-19 on student engagement with sustainability.

Providing a sustainable curriculum, ensuring students graduate as global citizens equipped to tackle current, and future challenges.



# And that's not all...

## Collaboration on global issues

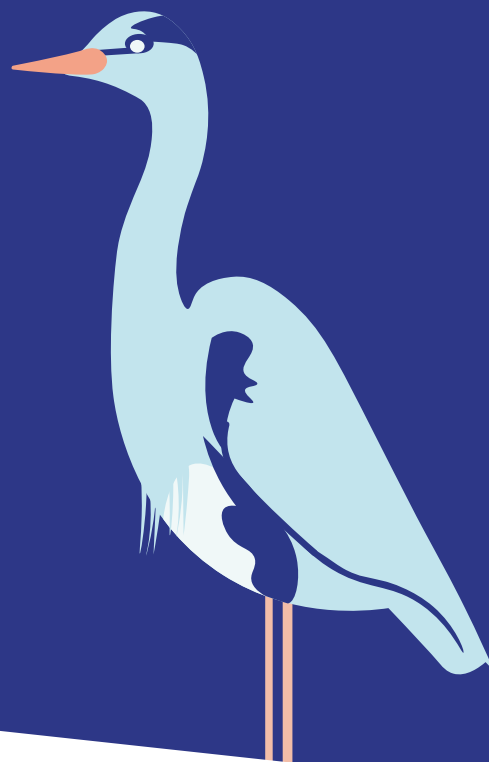
We are committed to making a difference to the world we live in. We are an outstanding research university, carrying out world-changing research and innovation through international collaboration to maximise global impact. To date, the University of Leeds has been involved in approximately 150 individual projects in more than 50 countries that have been funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund, or the associated Newton Fund.

One such project is the African Science for Weather Information and Forecasting Techniques (African SWIFT). Every year, high-intensity weather events result in devastating loss of life and damage to land and infrastructure. They are set to increase because of climate change. By improving the accuracy of weather forecasting, the project has had an impact on millions of people's lives, by allowing them to protect themselves and their livestock from extreme weather, as well as allowing governments and organisations to better respond to emergencies.

**COP26 Universities Network** - The University of Leeds was a founding member of the COP26 Universities Network, a group of over 80 UK universities and research centres working together to raise ambition for tangible outcomes from the United Nations climate negotiations. The network delivered several strands of activity, including a series of briefing notes to outline the latest insight on key issues, an international conference for over 5,300 attendees, engaged five COP26 research fellows (two of whom are from the University of Leeds), a podcast series, and much more.

**Sustainability Research Institute** – The Sustainability Research Institute explores a wide range of sustainability issues and specialises in participatory, action-oriented research that brings together government, business, NGOs and local communities to enhance the relevance, quality and practical influence of their research.

**YES TO Net Zero (Youth, Education, Skills and Training to Operationalise Net Zero)** is an example, one of four COP26 Fellowships funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to synthesise and translate research to support policy-makers and practitioners in the lead up to COP26. The project investigated how young people can be meaningfully engaged in, and drive forward, a just transition towards Net Zero.



## Find out more about sustainability at the University of Leeds:

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