



Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024–25





Sustainability is embedded in the University of Leeds’ 10-year strategy, ‘[Universal Values, Global Change](#)’, which is rooted in our desire to make a difference in the world. The strategy reflects our commitment to shaping a better future by working collaboratively to tackle inequalities, benefit society and drive change through delivery of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For us, sustainability means creating social value by taking responsibility for our economic, cultural, social and environmental impacts. Guided by the SDGs, we aim to make everything we do inclusive, fair and just, ensuring every voice is heard and considered along the way.

Throughout the year we have continued to engage our University community in refreshing our strategic approach to sustainability, with our new Framework for Environmental and Social Responsibility due to be published in early 2026. In the meantime, we continue to work across the themes and aims set out in our previous [Sustainability Strategy \(PDF\)](#), as well as to updated targets from our University strategy, [Climate Plan](#), and the Facilities Directorate [Our Way Ahead](#) business plan.

This annual Sustainable Development Goals report demonstrates how we are supporting the United Nations SDGs through our research, teaching and operations. It includes key activities and achievements for the 2024–25 academic year, delivered through the work of the Sustainability Service and the many people across our University community who strive to build a more environmentally and socially responsible institution. We extend our sincere thanks to all of them for making sustainability second nature at the University of Leeds.

Further reviews and reports on our environmental and social responsibilities and performance can be found in the University’s integrated [report and accounts](#), as well as our [Climate Plan reporting](#). You can also explore our 2024–25 news and blog posts [on our website](#) to find out more about our progress throughout the year.

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Welcome

Welcome to our Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024–25. Each year, this report gives us the opportunity to reflect on the remarkable breadth of work taking place across our institution, through world-leading research, transformative teaching, responsible operations, and civic and community partnerships. It demonstrates that sustainability is woven through the very fabric of who we are and how we work.

One of the highlights of the past year was our Sustainability Celebration in July 2025, where staff and local community organisations came together to recognise the individuals and teams driving change across our campus and region. The event was a reminder of the collective commitment and creativity at the heart of our sustainability community.

The Blueprint programme received recognition through the International Sustainable Campus Network (ISCN) Excellence Awards, acknowledging the strength of our collaborative approach to embedding sustainability.

The 2025 Student Sustainability Research Conference once again brought together students from across Yorkshire to showcase research with real-world impact. Their contributions demonstrated not only academic excellence, but also a strong commitment to collective approaches to meeting global challenges.

This report reflects our shared commitment to a collaborative and just approach to environmental and social responsibility, whether locally, nationally or globally. In June 2025 we invited all staff to take part in engagement cafes designed to shape the future of environmental and social responsibility at Leeds. The insights from those discussions will directly inform the next stages of our strategic approach to sustainability, and I look forward to sharing more on that in next year’s report.

Thom Cooper, Head of Sustainability



The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a framework for achieving a sustainable future for all, covering everything from reducing inequalities and responsible consumption and production, to enabling safe, sustainable cities and communities.

We are committed signatories to the SDG Accord, a global commitment for the education sector to embrace the critical role that education plays in delivering the SDGs and to share best practice and learning, both nationally and internationally.

We are also signatories of the United Nations Global Compact, which encourages organisations to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies, aligning with the Ten Principles on human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption, with an emphasis on collaboration and innovation. We provide a biennial submission for a Communication on Engagement (COE).





No Poverty

End poverty in all its forms everywhere.



Our people

Our **Access and Student Success Strategy** continues to tackle the inequalities experienced by underrepresented students through widening participation for prospective undergraduates from diverse backgrounds and ensuring they are supported throughout their studies at Leeds. The strategy also focuses on closing the award gap and encouraging students to progress into postgraduate study.

A range of **scholarships, grants and financial support** are available for students from lower-income households, including the non-repayable **Leeds Bursary**. Additional support is provided through **Sanctuary Scholarships** for forced-migrant students, covering full tuition fees and £10,000 per year toward study costs. **The Financial Assistance Fund** helps students facing financial hardship to meet essential living costs, so they can continue their studies.

Through our ongoing partnership with Leeds-based charity Money Buddies, staff can access free, confidential guidance on debt, budgeting, grants and benefits. For staff facing immediate financial hardship, the Employee Assistance Fund offers short-term grants or loans, where other options are not available. In the past year, the fund supported 72 colleagues with a total of £113,862, including £23,433 in grants.

On 26 November 2025, Leeds University Business School hosted its first Sustainability Speaker series, featuring Tina Leslie and Sarah Priestley Turner from the Yorkshire-based charity Freedom4Girls. They shared insights into the charity's work to end period poverty in the UK and Kenya, highlighting the stigma, taboos and gender inequalities surrounding menstruation.



Beyond campus

The Lifelong Learning Centre has continued to widen access to higher education, working with local community and voluntary organisations, as well as providing an adult learning summer school and its flagship, eight-week **JumpStart taster course**. The JumpStart course was shortlisted for the NEON Widening Access Initiative (Outreach) Award at the NEON Awards in June 2025, where it received a commendation.

The University also conducts extensive research with partner organisations to address poverty. This includes the Child of the North group, a collaboration between the N8 Research Partnership (including the University of Leeds), Health Equity North and the Centre for Young Lives think tank. Researchers from the Supergen Energy Networks Hub and the Fair Energy Futures research communities have also been exploring how energy networks and their operators can help to alleviate energy poverty and vulnerability.



CASE STUDY

Making a difference: The impact of our winter coat donations

The University of Leeds supported the Leeds Winter Coat Appeal, a city-wide initiative run by Zero Waste Leeds to support individuals and families across the city who are experiencing financial hardship.

Throughout January 2025, the generosity of our University community resulted in 111 adult coats, 35 children’s coats and 166 winter accessories being collected. These donations were distributed by Zero Waste Leeds to families and individuals, ensuring that more people had access to warm clothing during the winter months.

The appeal also had positive environmental benefits by extending the life of good-quality items and reducing textile waste. By redistributing, rather than producing new items, an estimated 3.8 metric tonnes of CO2 emissions and 1.2 million litres of water were saved.

This project was led collaboratively by the Sustainability Service and the Public Engagement team, reflecting our role as a civic anchor institution, mobilising resources and taking collective action to reduce poverty, improve community wellbeing and foster inclusive, sustainable development across Leeds.



Zero Hunger

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.



Campus and operations

The University of Leeds is embedding sustainable and ethical food practices across its operations. Our [Sustainable Food Standard \(PDF\)](#) prioritises local and seasonal produce, ethical sourcing, animal welfare and sustainable production, while ensuring all catered outlets offer varied vegan and vegetarian choices alongside a range of healthy and affordable options.

Great Food at Leeds (GFaL) holds a three-star Food Made Good Standard, awarded by the Sustainable Restaurant Association, recognising our work to reduce food waste and provide healthy, affordable meals. The University’s [research farm](#) further advances sustainable agriculture by collaborating with academic and industry partners to address contemporary food system challenges.



Beyond campus

The University is home to the **Global Food and Environment Institute (GFEI)**, which continues to engage a vibrant research community across academia, industry and public policy. Through its knowledge exchange events, GFEI has engaged with a wide range of people within local and global food systems. The transformation of food systems is essential for tackling climate change, ecosystem erosion, food insecurity and unhealthy diets.

In 2025, more than 1,200 people registered for GFEI’s 11-part webinar series addressing critical food system questions linked to the UN SDGs, with over 55% of participants from outside the University. The webinars, some with over 1,500 views, are available on the [GFEI YouTube channel](#). GFEI also delivered a series of social media campaigns around World Food Day and Food Waste Day, highlighting outputs and findings from key research projects.



In March 2025, GFEI and Energy Leeds supported a nine-person delegation to the Low Carbon Agriculture Show, showcasing the University’s research farm and expertise in low-energy food production. GFEI promoted the event through social media, raising the profile of researchers from three faculties: Engineering and Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, and Environment. This has led to several follow-up visits to the farm, to continue the conversation and further develop ideas.

Elsewhere in 2025, Dr Ruth Wade contributed to a Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) expert session, exploring definitions, evidence of benefits, and the challenges of implementing regenerative agriculture practices through schemes like the Sustainable Farming Incentive. The resulting POSTnote, published to brief MPs and Peers, **is now available**.

Also in 2025, Claire Quinn published **Transforming African food systems: perspectives from the Food Systems Network for Africa (FSNet-Africa)**, a synthesis of 19 FSNet-Africa projects, demonstrating the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration, local innovation, and indigenous crops in food system transformation across Africa.



CASE STUDY

Collaborating to improve food procurement across Leeds

The GFEI team, led by Associate Directors Effie Papargyropoulou and Sara Gonzales, has been working with FoodWise Leeds to improve procurement at large institutions across the city through the Good Procurement of Food project.

The project supports large institutions, including schools, hospitals, prisons and universities in sourcing healthy and nutritious food from local, sustainable and ethical sources. It focuses on embedding good food policies, scaling up local innovation and building a more resilient food system. This supports FoodWise Leeds in delivering the Leeds City Council Food Strategy to reduce food insecurity and strengthen the local food system. In addition, the project also supports the University’s Catering and Sustainability teams with their net zero goals by establishing new partnerships with regional producers and suppliers.

As part of this work, the team held three workshops for researchers, professional services staff and key council stakeholders to discuss barriers and potential solutions. Following the workshop on 18 June, the team hosted a public talk with Professor Kevin Morgan, who presented his new book Serving the Public. His message emphasised the power institutions hold through purchasing to improve diets, tackle poverty, support a values-driven economy and reduce environmental impact. A panel

discussion followed, including Tim Howells, Head of Public Health, Bradford City Council; Louise Hill, Headteacher, Grimes Dyke Primary School, and Sonja Woodcock, Coordinator of FoodWise Leeds.

The workshop series has since led to the creation of a working group to produce good practice examples, gather feedback on existing procurement systems, collect input from small and medium enterprises, and trial new approaches.

CASE STUDY

Showcasing regenerative agriculture

In May 2025, the University of Leeds hosted the Farmers Weekly Transition Live event at the **research farm**, bringing together farmers, policymakers, researchers and industry experts for a full day of knowledge-sharing, collaboration and networking.

Key figures from across the industry explored how different aspects of sustainable farming can be brought together to build business resilience. The event included an innovation zone, talks in the World War 1 aircraft hangar and farm walks to view our research on regenerative agriculture, quantifying carbon fluxes in agroecosystems and the Biomass Connect demonstration site. Pippa Chapman and Ruth Wade led tours of the University’s regenerative agriculture trails for around 120 visitors throughout the day.



Good Health and Wellbeing

Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.

220

Health and Wellbeing champions in post (overall)

3,310

consultations delivered by the Workplace Counselling team

5,625

Wellbeing Hub visitors



Our people

The university continues to embed a whole-institution approach to mental health and wellbeing, ensuring students and staff have access to timely, high-quality support. Students benefit from free access to counsellors, wellbeing practitioners and mental health advisors through the **Student Counselling and Wellbeing** service, as well as regular **groups and workshops**. Staff are supported through **Workplace Counselling** and an Employee Assistance Programme.

In 2024–25, we strengthened our focus on preventing work-related stress. An optional Understanding Stress (BritSafe) module has already been completed by around a quarter of colleagues, alongside a new interactive Work-Related Stress Management course developed with the Digital Education Service. A dedicated digital wellbeing hub now provides a single point of access to tools, guidance and support for individuals and managers.

We also promoted proactive wellbeing through our Window on Wellbeing Summer and Winter festivals, which were inclusive, week-long events featuring pet therapy, guided walks, book swaps, movement classes and free access to fitness facilities.



Campus and operations

The University operates a smoke-free campus and provides a range of sports and physical activity facilities. Many of these, including the Edge, Bodington playing fields and Weetwood sports park, are open to the local community as well as students and staff, and are regularly used by schools, community groups and sports clubs.

Through the **Active Campus** programme, we offer free or low-cost activities designed to fit around study and work schedules, helping reduce barriers to participation and encouraging movement, social connection and positive mental wellbeing.

In 2025, a new **Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy** was published, reinforcing our commitment to a healthy, safe and secure environment for staff, students, visitors and others affected by University activities.



Beyond campus

The University **works closely with local, national and global health institutions**, including Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and the Leeds Academic Health Partnership (LAHP). We are also founding partners of the **Northern Health Science Alliance** and a founding partner and host of the **Leeds Academic Health Partnership**.

As a **Health Innovation Yorkshire & Humber** partner, and through initiatives such as **HealthTech Leeds**, we bring together academic, clinical and industry expertise to accelerate the development and adoption of new health technologies.

Research led by scientists at the University of Leeds, the University of Edinburgh, North Carolina State University and the UK Met Office has produced Air Quality Stripes, a global visualisation of concentrations of one of the major air pollutants affecting human health. This offers a powerful illustration of both progress made and the urgent challenges that remain.

CASE STUDY

Sustainable Garden refresh

In 2024, a partnership between **The Edible Gardener** Caroline Scott, **Incredible Edible Leeds** and the Sustainability Service was formed to rejuvenate the University's Sustainable Garden, creating an edible and wildlife-friendly space at the heart of campus.

Originally installed in 2015 beside the Roger Stevens building, the garden included a forest garden, fruit hedgerows, wildflower areas and allotment-style beds. Recent enhancements have added new seating, raised beds, a willow tunnel and extended wildflower lawns. The refresh reimagines the garden for current times, taking into account the climate crisis, cost of living pressures and the wellbeing needs of our University community.

Gardening, and particularly growing edible crops, has been shown to support mental health, increase fruit and vegetable intake, encourage seasonal eating and boost local biodiversity. Weekly sessions have created an open and inclusive space where students, staff and local residents can learn, grow and connect. The garden also supports skills development and remains an active Living Lab for education and research.

CASE STUDY

Gryphons Abroad: Supporting 10,000 children and young people to cycle since 2016

In 2025, the Gryphons Abroad project reached a major milestone: teaching its 10,000th child or young person to ride a bike since launching in 2016. What began as a single-school collaboration in KwaZulu-Natal has grown into a sustained partnership between the University of Leeds, the Bambisanani Partnership, KZN Cycling and the KZN Department of Education.

A dedicated community cycling hub and development officer now supports the Nkandla community year-round, delivering cycling clinics alongside coaching and pathways for young riders interested in competitive cycling. The programme builds confidence, develops life skills and expands access to sport for children in rural areas with limited opportunities.

More than 100 University of Leeds students and staff have taken part to date. In 2025, two staff and eight students delivered 25 clinics across eight schools and ran a sports leadership festival attracting over 1,500 participants. The initiative has also been recognised in the South African Parliament.

2026 will mark the tenth anniversary of Gryphons Abroad. Supported by a new three-year agreement with the Bambisanani Partnership and KZN Cycling, nine students have been selected for the 2026 visit, with plans to sustain and grow the cycling hub further.



Quality Education

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

50
JumpStart participants

35%
of programmes include
sustainability content linked
to at least one SDG theme



Our people

The University of Leeds is committed to inclusive and equitable education for all. The Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC) supports adults who are traditionally under-represented in higher education through flexible pathways into university study.

The **JumpStart** course, for example, is a free, eight-week programme delivered twice a year on

campus and helps adults overcome barriers to higher education. In 2024–25, 50 learners took part, and the programme received the runner-up sustainability award at the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL) and Standing Committee on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA) awards in June 2025.

The LLC also provides flexible opportunities for adults from diverse backgrounds through courses such as the **Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship**, **Nursing Associate Foundation Degree (Level 5)** and **Learning and Teaching with SEND BA (Hons)**.

Our **Sustainable Curriculum** programme equips students with the knowledge and skills to make a positive impact in the world. In 2024–25, sustainability content was incorporated into the Organisational Development and Professional Learning (ODPL) Foundations in Teaching programme, with dedicated resources including a step-by-step guide to embedding

sustainability across all disciplines. This work drew on the Sustainable Curriculum professional development strategy, Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence fellowship projects and insights from our Leeds Network for Sustainability in Higher Education (LUNSHE) community.

We also continued our collaboration with **Yorkshire Universities** to deliver the **Student Sustainability Research Conference 2025**.

Beyond campus

Our **Students into Schools** programme gives students valuable work experience in local primary and secondary schools while supporting quality education in the community. In 2024–25, the **Positive Impact Partners (PIP)** programme, which connects third sector and civic organisations with people at the University to help them tackle their sustainability challenges, collaborated with Students into Schools to expand opportunities for students, with the Sustainability into Primary Schools partnership connecting local schools to University students through creative climate change and sustainability activities.

In May 2025, the University delivered Be Curious, its flagship public engagement event, welcoming over 2,200 visitors to explore research through hands-on activities co-created with academics, professional services and community partners. The programme placed renewed emphasis on inclusion, accessibility and co-creation, with stalls addressing real-world issues including sustainability, transport, play and wellbeing. The aim was to reach audiences who may not traditionally engage with universities, and over 65% of attendees were first-time visitors, with one in five travelling from outside Leeds.

In 2024–25, the Public Engagement Associates and Fellows (PEAF) programme supported 93 Associates and five Fellows from a wide range of disciplines and career stages to develop inclusive, creative approaches to sharing research with public audiences.

The LLC delivered a wide range of on-campus and community-based events in 2024–25, building local relationships thanks to the dedicated **Communities and Partnerships** outreach team, working with 39 community and voluntary groups across the region and engaging around 1,300 local people through 69 activities. The team also led outreach with adults studying at Level 2 and 3 in local further education colleges, visiting 58 Maths, English GCSE and teaching assistant groups in Leeds and Wakefield, reaching a total of 890 further education learners.

CASE STUDY

Connecting local climate education to global action

In 2024, the Public Engagement team delivered Be Curious about... Climate Change, supporting primary-aged children to engage with climate issues through age-appropriate, creative and participatory learning. Delivered as a hybrid event, the programme enabled both in-person and online participation, widening access for schools and pupils.

Researchers worked directly with children to explore climate change, sustainability and global responsibility. One activity invited pupils to write postcards to world leaders attending COP29, encouraging them to share their hopes and demands around climate action. These postcards were taken to COP29 in Baku as part of the University’s presence, creating a tangible link between local voices and global decision-making. In total, 180 primary school children attended in person, with five additional classes taking part online.

CASE STUDY

Learning champions: Authentic outreach improving access to higher education

The Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC) Learning Champions scheme engages mature students from under-represented backgrounds to volunteer as peer role models. In 2024–25, 16 new Learning Champions were recruited, bringing the total to 70 registered on the programme. Throughout the year, 45 contributed to events on campus, online and in community settings, sharing their experiences of university study with adults considering a return to education.

Learning Champions also helped shape the new ‘Essential Skills for Volunteers’ free online resource, created by the LLC in partnership with Voluntary Action Leeds, contributing to the content and design of the resource through working groups, interviews and photography.





Gender Equality

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.



Our people

The University champions gender equality through a wide range of initiatives that support women's access, success and progression. We encourage more women to enter underrepresented fields, particularly through programmes such as **Leeds Futures – STEM**, and offer targeted mentoring and scholarship opportunities. Since 2021, we have also strengthened representation in academia by supporting Black women academics to progress to professorship through the **100 Black Women Professors Now** leadership programme.

Our Careers Service partners with PwC to deliver one-to-one mentoring for Plus Programme students who identify as female, giving them direct insights from industry professionals alongside tailored employability resources and workshops. **Staff networks**, including the Women at Leeds Network and the Parent and Carer Peer Support Network, create supportive spaces for colleagues across the University.



Campus and operations

We have several policies and plans in place to support gender equality. Our **Equality and Inclusion** policies prohibit discrimination based on gender or sex, and aim to create a supportive environment free from harassment, bullying and victimisation. The **Report + Support** platform allows students and staff to report incidents of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination confidentially.

The University is a proud holder of an Athena Swan bronze award, recognising gender equality and progress in universities. Both the Faculty of Environment and the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences were awarded Athena Swan silver certification in May 2025. Across our faculties, we now hold three bronze and three silver awards, along with four school-level awards including one gold and three silvers.

The University is fully breastfeeding-friendly, with **baby changing, bottle, breastfeeding and wellbeing facilities available across campus.**

CASE STUDY

Increasing safety in parks for women and girls

Urban parks are vital for health, wellbeing and active travel, yet these benefits are not equally accessible to all. In the UK and globally, women and girls often avoid parks due to concerns about safety, limiting their use of and participation in public life.

In Britain, one in six women feel unsafe in parks during the day and four in five after dark, compared with one in 20 and two in five men respectively (ONS, 2021/22). Ensuring parks feel safe, welcoming and inclusive, particularly for women and girls, older people and disabled individuals, remains an urgent challenge.

Since 2021, Dr Anna Barker and colleagues at the University of Leeds have led a sustained programme of research and knowledge exchange on women's and girls' safety in parks, generating new evidence, tools and training to inform policy and practice. The programme has:

- Established a robust evidence base on the environmental, social and structural factors shaping perceived safety and access.
- Translated these insights into actionable Safer Parks guidance to strengthen practitioners' understanding of gender-sensitive design and management
- Applied the findings in a Leeds-based case study using art and culture to foster safer, more inclusive public spaces.
- Tested an open-data dashboard to put the Safer Parks guidance into practice spatially in Bradford, now being scaled to England and Wales for use by local authorities, police and community groups.
- Co-designed and delivered research-informed active bystander training across England and Wales, evaluating its impact using pre- and post-test measures.





Clean Water and Sanitation

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.



Our people

The University is actively working to reduce water consumption through a focus on efficiency, research into water reuse and a commitment to sustainable water practices.

Our **Sustainable Labs programme** provides support and guidance on reducing water use in labs across the University, including recommendations on equipment improvements such as dedicated water circulators for condenser and chiller units, enabling large-scale equipment to run with less water.

An interdisciplinary approach to tackling water issues is **water@leeds**, a hub for researchers from a range of disciplines and backgrounds across the University, **training the next generation** of water experts with the knowledge and skills to make a positive contribution to tackling future water-related challenges.



Campus and operations

Our **Sustainable Construction Standard (PDF)** requires that new builds, refurbishments and other works within the University use water-efficient appliances and fixtures.

There are **over 200 free drinking water points** across our campus, both indoors and outdoors, across all catering facilities, libraries and office buildings. We also promote conscious water use among students across our campus through our Sustainable Living Guide.

Deli(very), the catering service provided by Great Food at Leeds (GFaL), is partnering with Thirsty Planet to offer sustainably sourced water, bottled in 100% recyclable glass, helping to minimise waste.



Beyond campus

The University of Leeds aims to become a leader in water stewardship and research, contributing to global efforts to address water-related challenges. Water conservation is supported by water@leeds through community-based projects, and we lead the **NERC Freshwater Quality Champions Programme** to investigate freshwater pollution in rivers across the UK. The programme includes a series of webinars to promote communication and collaboration between researchers, policymakers, businesses and practitioners.

In May 2025, the University welcomed Mr Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation. Hosted by Professor Julia Martin-Ortega, water@leeds Associate Director, the visit included a focus group exploring how the expertise of water@leeds researchers can contribute to advancing UN water efforts, and concluded with a keynote address on rights-based water management.

The University is a core partner in **WASH Systems for Health**, a major international partnership focused on learning, evidence and long-term sector reform. The programme supports countries in building reliable, resilient and inclusive systems that sustain water and sanitation services, with its research and learning agenda led by the University of Leeds, working alongside governments and development organisations.



CASE STUDY

Enhancing global cooperation with clean water

In June 2025, water@leeds brought together 14 researchers from around the world for a workshop led by Professor Laura Carter and Dr Gabriela Lopez-Gonzalez: ‘Enhancing Global Cooperation for Clean Water: Strategies to Manage Contaminants and Sustain Ecosystem Services.’

Sessions focused on sharing regional water quality challenges and insights into effective, equitable water management strategies, including the need to tailor research and regulation, build diverse international networks and identify future water quality priorities.

Through meaningful discussions and shared expertise, participants worked towards a shared vision for sustainable water quality management at both regional and global scale.



Affordable and Clean Energy

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

53

lab spaces on campus
hold LEAF certificates



Our people

The University supports students and staff to improve energy efficiency, reduce consumption and avoid waste. Through our winter and Easter shutdown procedures, we encourage all building users to close down their workspaces during the holidays, alongside promoting good housekeeping measures to support energy saving throughout the year. Over the 2024 festive period alone, energy use fell by 26% compared to normal operations, saving 1.76 kWh of energy and the equivalent of 463 tonnes of CO₂e.

The **Sustainable Labs** programme continued throughout the year, with a staff-facing Resource Hub and awareness-raising roadshows and webinars helping to build engagement across our community. As of August 2025, 53 lab spaces on campus hold Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) certificates, including 16 gold awards, with energy and resource efficiency forming a key part of the certification criteria.





Campus and operations

We have continued to progress our work towards net zero emissions across campus, including initiating trials for smart energy infrastructure and completing feasibility studies for renewable energy projects both on campus and at the University farm.

Results from our 2024 geothermal test drilling showed positive groundwater conditions with the potential to support a hybrid ground and air source energy centre to power a cluster of campus buildings. Work has continued on designs for this prospective energy centre, alongside ongoing use of the site as a geothermal Living Lab through Geosolutions Leeds.

We also switched off two end-of-life combined heat and power (CHP) engines within the University's Generating Station Complex. This change will reduce our reliance on gas-generated electricity and deliver an overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for the 2024–25 reporting year.



Beyond campus

Energy Leeds focuses on developing and maintaining clean, secure and affordable energy supplies as part of a sustainable energy future. The team plays a key leadership role in major UK energy centres and research projects, with a particular focus on supporting energy policy development on issues including transport, materials and products, and industrial decarbonisation. Through these projects, we engage extensively with policymakers and produce reports setting out policy recommendations.

The geothermal Living Lab has supported a range of research projects, including an Ofgem-funded GeoGrid project exploring how heat storage in the subsurface can support decarbonisation and help balance the electricity grid.

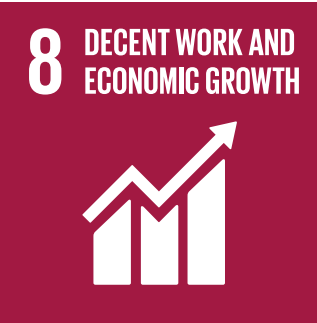
CASE STUDY

Supergen Energy Networks Hub

The Supergen Energy Networks Hub (SEN) is a £9m research project funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), bringing together collaborative teams from industry, academia, government and civil society to carry out interdisciplinary research. The aim is to enable energy networks to become a driving force in a rapid, safe and just transition to net zero.

The University of Leeds leads a work package focused on policy, society and place. In 2024–25, the team interviewed policy, private and community stakeholders on local energy planning, and co-developed a briefing note with the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission (YHCC) to share findings with local authority chief executives and private sector representatives.

The team also hosted a workshop with local authorities, the regulator, and private and third sector representatives to explore the relationship between energy networks and vulnerability, identifying key actions and evidence gaps. Outputs from these activities are informing fair pathways to a low-carbon heat transition. The team is also supporting YHCC in developing a response to the National Energy System Operator's methodology consultation for their Regional Energy Strategic Plan.



Decent Work and Economic Growth

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.



Our people

The **Careers Service** at the University of Leeds helps students and graduates develop the skills and experience they need to achieve their career goals. This year, we welcomed over 330 employers onto campus and delivered 44 events to help students connect with employers and support their future careers. In total, 8,500 students accessed these events and 7,900 job vacancies were posted on the MyCareer student job board.

In 2024–25, the Work-Based Learning and Partnerships team supported 174 students into paid internships, both on campus and with external partner employers. Over £15,000 was invested in paid internships with partners in the local charitable and SME sectors. In 2025, a dedicated Work-Based Learning and

Partnerships Officer role focusing on sustainability was established through funding from the University’s Climate Plan, recognising the important part that higher education and employer partnerships play in meeting regional net zero targets.

In March 2025, the Employer Engagement and Careers teams ran a Sustainability Spotlight Week of events for students interested in working in sustainability, engaging over 130 students and 12 organisations. Events included ‘Careers in Sustainability: Meet the Employers’, a networking event connecting students and graduates with organisations that work sustainably; a talk from SAIL entitled ‘Sustainable Futures in the Arts’, giving students the opportunity to meet SAIL’s founder and explore its initiatives; and a mock

assessment centre with a sustainability-focused task, allowing students to practise their skills in a supportive, low-pressure environment.



Campus and operations

Our award-winning business advice service, SPARK, is free to all University of Leeds students and graduates, offering business advice and mentoring, financial support, business competitions and Enterprise Scholarships.

We publish **pay gap reporting** for gender, disability and ethnicity, and through our **EDI Strategy** and **EDI Implementation Plan (PDF)** we aim to tackle the structural inequalities that underlie pay gaps.

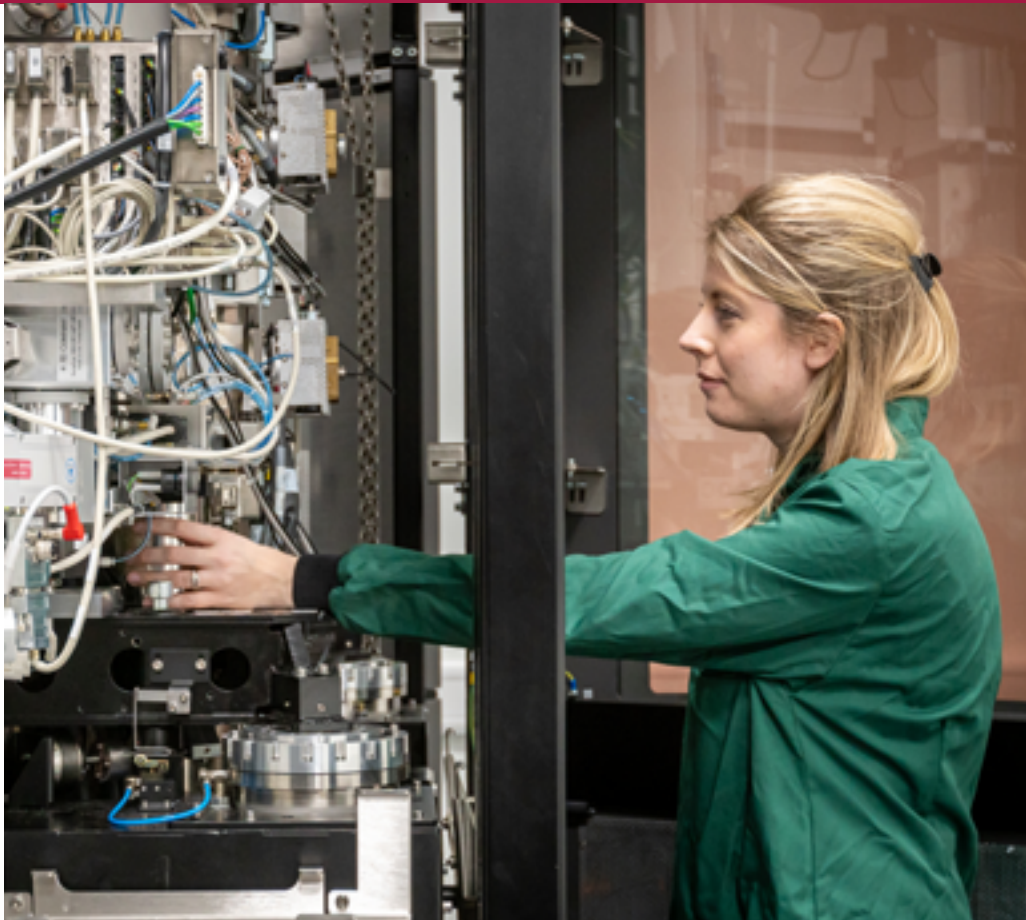


Beyond campus

The Lifelong Learning Centre offers a range of **part-time applied degree courses** designed to be studied alongside work and other commitments. These include the **BA Child and Family Studies**, for those working in a paid or voluntary capacity with children, young people and families, as well as the **BA Learning and Teaching with SEND** and BSc **Business Management and Leadership**.

Published by the University of Leeds Climate Evidence Unit in June 2025, **What workers want: Conditions for a fair and just transition in the UK (PDF)** synthesises wide-ranging research from the University's Centre for Employment Relations, Innovation and Change (CERIC).

Authored by Professor Vera Trappmann, Dr Jo Cutter and Dr Alice Garvey, the report sets out the conditions for a low-carbon transition from the perspectives of workers and those who represent them, recommending that the UK government learns from international examples to ensure oversight, fairness and the co-benefits that a managed transition can provide.



CASE STUDY

Careers in Sustainability networking event

Working closely with the organising team of the Student Sustainability Research Conference, the Employer Engagement team and Student Sustainability Architect Grace Nash organised and delivered the ‘Careers in Sustainability: Meet the Employers’ networking event in March 2025. Held immediately after the conference, the event invited 11 organisations to meet with attendees and other interested students from across the University.

Grace researched which organisations to invite, focusing on companies with B Corp certificates and those meeting SASB standards, and reviewing companies’ impact reports thoroughly. She also encouraged travel by public transport and discouraged giveaways and paper handouts commonly seen at similar events.

Over 100 students and graduates took the opportunity to meet employers and discuss how to find roles in sustainability – including how to identify organisations that practise what they preach – and to learn about different career paths. Feedback from both students and employers was very positive, and we look forward to running the event again.



Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.



Our people

At the University of Leeds, we transform academic research into commercial success, supporting our academics through licensing and spin-outs, with a track record in creating **innovative spin-out companies**. Our dedicated Commercialisation Team helps researchers develop new intellectual property and build strong partnerships to bring ideas to market, attracting industry investment while creating jobs and driving meaningful economic and societal impact.

A recent example is the development of all-cellulose composites, which are strong, fully biodegradable materials made entirely from cellulose fibres without synthetic resins. Led by Professor Mike Ries in the School of Physics and Astronomy, this technology has attracted interest from automotive and engineering companies for applications such as interior vehicle panels and high-performance products.



Campus and operations

Nexus at the University of Leeds is a purpose-built innovation hub connecting businesses with academic expertise, high-quality office and lab spaces, and funding opportunities to drive regional growth. Nexus fosters collaboration between industry, government and academia, providing technical facilities and specialist support for sectors including smart cities and health.



Beyond campus

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) are a key route for collaboration between the University and external organisations tackling strategically important challenges. By placing talented graduates or postgraduates within businesses, KTPs translate academic expertise into practical solutions, driving growth and innovation and supporting sustainable regional development.

We also offer **Knowledge Exchange Fellowships**, enabling academics to work with external partners – or non-academic partners to be based at the University – for up to 12 months. Open to industry, business, public sector and third sector organisations, these fellowships strengthen mutual understanding and accelerate the commercialisation and application of academic research.

The Leeds Anchor Network (LAN) is a partnership of 14 large employers across local government, health, culture, education and utilities, collaborating to boost the local economy, reduce poverty and tackle health inequalities in Leeds. As one of the city’s largest employers, the University is a key LAN partner, working to promote inclusive growth and improve local skills, procurement and environmental, social and economic outcomes across the region.

The NIHR HealthTech Research Centre (HRC) in Accelerated Surgical Care, a partnership between the University of Leeds and Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, leads research and applied activity into sustainable surgery. In 2025, the team secured

Department of Health and Social Care funding to build the **Sustainability and Simulation Theatre for Academia and Industry (SUSTAIN)**, a space bringing together clinicians, engineers, organisational psychologists and industry to reduce environmental impact while protecting patient outcomes.

Working together with Leeds University Business School, SUSTAIN will identify barriers to innovation adoption and understand in-theatre decision-making to develop an environment that supports sustainable choices. During the design and build phase, the team has strengthened cross-sector engagement to ensure the facility reflects partners’ needs and focuses on scalable opportunities capable of delivering measurable environmental and system-level benefits.



CASE STUDY

NIHR Net Zero Innovation Catalyst

The **NIHR Net Zero Innovation Catalyst** builds on the Innovation for Healthcare Net Zero pilot delivered in spring 2025, which tested a new model of support for early-stage HealthTech innovators, offering targeted input from academic, clinical and industry specialists. Its success led to the creation of a full three-month, CPD-accredited Catalyst programme, delivered in partnership with Pd-m and the NIHR HRC Network, and aligned with the Department for Health and Social Care’s Design for Life framework on circular economy principles.

Each year, a cohort of ten early-stage HealthTech innovators will receive structured training on integrating sustainable practices into their work, including understanding NHS net zero targets, future Greener NHS strategies and developing a sustainable value proposition for future funding applications. The programme also includes a £5,000 pump-prime fund for those showing the most progress towards their sustainability goals, accelerating the development of greener HealthTech for the NHS.

CASE STUDY

Decolonial Approaches to Technological Agency (DATA)

The DATA project brings together researchers from the University of Leeds, the University of the Witwatersrand, Imperial College London, South-West Jiaotong University in China, and partners from across sub-Saharan Africa to co-develop low-cost, open-source environmental monitoring infrastructure. Over 200 students across six institutions are collaborating to design and build sensor prototypes monitoring water quality, air quality, flooding and agricultural conditions, addressing sustainability challenges where commercial solutions are unaffordable or unavailable.

Using LoRaWAN networks and open IoT hardware, the prototypes are designed to be locally manufactured, maintained and adapted by the communities that use them. Committed to open software, open science and open hardware principles, the project develops IP frameworks that balance accessibility with legal protection, ensuring innovation benefits flow back to communities rather than reproducing extractive models of technology transfer. With dedicated support for student and community start-ups and growing interest in commercialising the prototypes, DATA offers a model for building resilient, inclusive innovation infrastructure from the ground up.



Reduced Inequalities

Reduce inequalities within and among countries.



Our people

The University of Leeds is committed to widening participation and ensuring equitable access and outcomes for all students. The **Access to Leeds** scheme aims to bridge the gap between the least and most privileged students, assessing academic potential through more than grades alone.

The University is making considerable progress in recognising and supporting students from Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater (GTRSB) backgrounds. In September 2024, we committed to the GTRSB into Higher Education Pledge, supporting the development of an inclusive and welcoming culture for students and staff from these communities.

Our Careers Service continues to deliver the **Exclusive to Leeds** programme, giving students the opportunity to connect with employers, explore career pathways and build professional networks. The Future Leaders Experience provides a fully funded programme for 50 students from under-represented backgrounds.

Our **staff networks** offer safe, welcoming spaces for colleagues who identify with a protected group or share specific interests, including those related to gender, accessibility, sexual orientation, gender identity and religion, providing community, advocacy and practical support.





Campus and operations

Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) **governance structure** and **policies** ensure we are building a community that actively opposes discrimination. In 2024, we published new guidance for colleagues working with or supporting disabled students. In 2025, a new Workplace Adjustments Process was introduced to streamline access to and implementation of reasonable adjustments for disabled employees, making the process clearer, quicker and more supportive.

In 2023, the University committed to the principles of the Race Equality Charter (REC), and throughout the year we have continued to work towards achieving a Bronze Award by addressing key areas of racial inequality.



Beyond campus

We are proud members of the **Leeds City of Sanctuary** Working Group, and in May 2025 the University of Leeds became the first university in the Leeds City Region to be accredited as a University of Sanctuary.

More than 20 research centres and groups across the University address social, economic, health and environmental inequalities. This includes work on reducing inequalities between the Global North and South, including initiatives in low-cost healthcare, STEM education and access to clean and sustainable energy. In September 2024, the EDI Hub+ launched as a new national partnership designed to strengthen inclusivity across the UK's engineering, physical and

mathematical sciences (EPMS) sectors. Led by the University of Leeds and delivered in partnership with seven UK universities, the EDI Hub+ brings together the research and innovation community to leverage collective expertise and best practice as part of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council's (EPSRC) three-year EDI action plan.

The Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC) offers work-based learning modules as part of BA Learning and Teaching SEND and BA Child and Family Studies. These modules are delivered in collaboration with a wide range of partners. Working with Digital Education, Anita Collins, Programme Manager for Learning and Teaching with SEND, has also developed a free online short course titled '**Inclusive Education: Exploring SEND Practice and Strategies**', which launched in July 2024. As of January 2026, over 12,000 people had enrolled on the course through the FutureLearn platform.



CASE STUDY

University of Leeds Student Success Conference

In November 2024, we delivered the third annual University of Leeds Student Success Conference, bringing together staff and students from the University and across the sector to share good practice and build connections that enhance student success provision in the UK and beyond.

Delivered in a hybrid format to maximise accessibility, the conference was attended by 182 people in person and online, with recordings of most sessions made available afterwards. Themes included understanding the lived experiences of under-represented groups, facilitating an inclusive student experience, using research to shape systemic change, and designing authentic, inclusive curricula.

The student success team’s work, including this annual event, is widely recognised as sector-leading. It focuses on fostering belonging, actively engaging students with their programme and the wider institution, and enabling them to thrive throughout their time at the University and beyond.

CASE STUDY

Leeds: A University of Sanctuary

In May 2025, the University of Leeds became the first university in the Leeds City Region to be accredited as a University of Sanctuary by City of Sanctuary UK, and it is formal recognition of the range and impact of our work to welcome and support refugees and people seeking asylum.

The award reflects our commitment to ‘shaping a better future for humanity’, working together for those displaced by humanitarian crisis both within the UK and beyond. The work is coordinated by the University’s Sanctuary Steering Group, representing academic and professional services staff and students, and supported by an extensive network of colleagues across the institution. We have supported asylum seekers and forced migrants in accessing education since 2018, with more than 30 students finding sanctuary at Leeds through our Sanctuary Scholarships.

Our research influences national policy on forced migration, and these issues are embedded in our teaching, creating a culture of solidarity and welcome. Becoming a University of Sanctuary strengthens the good practice we already have, and we recognise the journey does not stop at the award. We will continue to build our networks, deepen partnerships and work towards institution-wide coordination of efforts centred on advocacy, policy influence and long-term sector-wide change.

“We are incredibly proud that the University of Leeds has officially been awarded University of Sanctuary status. This recognition honours the compassion, commitment, and collaborative spirit of our entire community, whose tireless efforts have created a welcoming and supportive environment for sanctuary scholars and at-risk academics. Thank you to everyone who has helped make this vision a reality.”

Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Shearer West

“When I learned Leeds was awarded University of Sanctuary status, I felt deeply moved and proud. It’s more than a title – it’s a symbol of commitment to human rights and academic freedom.”

CARA Fellow, Kawita Sarwari





Sustainable Cities and Communities

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

2,550

visits to the Bike Hub
and 607 bikes hired

110

staff used the Cycle
to Work Scheme

2,258

cycle spaces now on campus

405

opportunities advertised on the
National Volunteering Hub, with
over 5,000 students applying



Our people

Through our **Student Citizenship programme** and **Sustainable Living Guide**, we equip students with tools and guidance to help them live sustainably during their time at Leeds. In 2025, the Changeover project diverted material from landfill, prevented approximately 198 tonnes of CO₂ emissions, supported local charities and contributed to a reduction in community complaints.

The **Bike Hub** continued to support active travel throughout the year, helping students, staff and the wider community with bike hire, guidance and practical skills. In 2024–25, supported by 12 new and three returning volunteers, the Bike Hub welcomed over 2,000 visitors and maintained a programme of more than 20 mechanic-led bike maintenance classes, helping make cycling more accessible and encouraging sustainable travel.

In 2025, over £50,000 was made available through Leeds Living Lab funding to support staff in delivering collaborative projects with real-world impact. A new model was trialled this year, offering higher-value awards for high-impact projects with potential for scalability, alongside smaller-scale funding for exploratory, early-stage ideas that engage diverse stakeholders. The focus was on behaviour change and sustainable travel as being key to building a greener, fairer future.



Campus and operations

Our **Sustainable Construction Standard (PDF)** sets out the requirements, regulations and technical guidance to ensure buildings are safe, efficient and sustainable. Aligned with the University of Leeds Climate Plan and other strategies, it establishes minimum performance requirements for energy efficiency, carbon reduction, biodiversity, materials, water use, and health and wellbeing.

We provide a range of **initiatives to support sustainable travel**, including travel discounts, season ticket loans and a Cycle to Work scheme for staff. In October 2024, we began a six-month pilot of a Climate Conscious Business Travel Policy, encouraging staff to avoid, shift and improve their business travel behaviours, with findings set to inform a university-wide policy.

Across campus, **our galleries and museums, libraries, performance venues** and **green spaces** are open to students, staff and the public.



Beyond campus

The **Cultural Institute** oversees the relationship between the University and the creative sector. Throughout the year, we have continued to support research development and knowledge exchange with the cultural sector, protecting our cultural and natural heritage and promoting sustainable practices through our **Cultural Engagement Strategy 2024–2029**.

In 2025, the Sustainability Service delivered several community projects focused on belonging and wellbeing. These included the **Community Mural Project**, where students co-designed and painted a mural at the Junior Sports Hub in Harehills, and the **Community Arts Project**, where music students facilitated a series of workshops with the Elders Connect Group exploring identity, connection and wellbeing through music and artistic expression.

Between December 2024 and July 2025, the University carried out a funded consultation to explore how a sustainable, inclusive community board could help guide the **Be Curious** programme.

The work prioritised listening, reciprocity and trust-building with diverse community groups across Leeds. The project found that meaningful power-sharing is better supported through a flexible “moving board” model that works with existing community groups in trusted spaces, alongside transparent decision-making, fair payment and clear follow-through.

In August 2024, the **INFUZE (Inspiring Futures for Zero Carbon Mobility)** project launched. Over four years, the University of Leeds will lead this collaborative project, working with local communities, businesses and governments to reimagine how we travel, co-designing solutions with residents and trialling new mobility services in real-world settings.

The University also continues to engage regularly with local and regional authorities on city travel consultations and developments, including the Woodhouse Lane Gateway and Mass Transit developments.





CASE STUDY

Inclusive Public Space

The six-year Inclusive Public Space project came to an end in 2025. Delivered by the University of Leeds with partners in India, Kenya, the Netherlands and the USA, the project investigated how disabled people, older adults and parents and carers experience urban environments. Through extensive qualitative research, it identified persistent physical, social and legal barriers that limit equitable access to public space.

A major achievement was the project’s comprehensive analysis of law and policy, which revealed that although frameworks appeared robust on paper, significant implementation gaps remained. In the UK, the research showed that accessibility was not adequately embedded in the roll-out of active travel schemes or many COVID-related emergency street measures, creating new barriers alongside longstanding ones. The work also highlighted the limited effectiveness of the Equality Act due to structural obstacles in access to justice.

The project produced targeted recommendations to strengthen law, policy and practice, and developed practical awareness-raising tools including public guides and immersive films showing everyday accessibility barriers. In June 2025, a legacy website was launched to make these resources publicly available, ensuring the project’s work continues to support more inclusive streets for everyone.

CASE STUDY

Leeds-KAIST International Leadership Programme

Now in its seventh year, the Leeds–KAIST International Leadership Programme (ILP) offers students an intensive, cross-cultural learning experience blending leadership theory, innovative practice and real-world application. Developed in partnership with Common Purpose, the programme focuses on solving a major societal challenge through international collaboration.

In 2025, 28 students – 15 from the University of Leeds and 13 from KAIST University in South Korea – worked on the challenge: “How can we ensure our cities are inclusive and resilient through advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals?” As cities worldwide face rapid growth and pressures linked to climate change, digital threats and social inequality, the ILP equips students with the skills to lead in complex urban environments.

Students engaged in peer learning, leadership workshops and conversations with sector leaders, and visited organisations across Daejeon, Sejong and Seoul to explore urban resilience in practice. The 2025 programme welcomed its graduates into a growing network of 190 ILP alumni, building lasting global connections and strengthening future leadership capacity.



Responsible Consumption and Production

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

43%
waste recycled

8

12

22



LEAF certificates
awarded in 2024-25



Our people

The University supports students and staff to practise sustainable consumption and encourages circular economy initiatives such as reuse@leeds, an online platform for sharing surplus items within the University community.

At the Repair Café, a collaboration between the Sustainability Service and the Makerspace in the Edward Boyle Library, skilled volunteers support staff and students in repairing clothes, electronics and appliances. Throughout the year, 28 volunteers contributed 114 hours across 156 fixes, helping prevent 2,752kg of CO2 emissions and 248kg of waste.

In 2024, student Niamh Robertson, working as a Student Sustainability Architect, developed a charity shop trail in Headingley to tackle

fast fashion and promote preloved shopping among students, staff and local residents.

We have also continued to support adoption of the Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF), a tool developed by University College London that helps researchers, staff and students understand and improve the sustainability and efficiency of their laboratories, focusing on areas such as waste and recycling, equipment management, procurement and energy.

 Campus and operations

The University’s approach to **responsible consumption and production** is guided by our Sustainable Procurement Standard and Sustainable Food Standard. Suppliers are required to comply with our Environmental Policy and sustainability requirements as part of the procurement process, and our Sustainable Construction Standard commits contractors and delivery partners to embedding sustainability in all construction and maintenance projects.

Our Reuse, Recycling and Waste standard sets out the principles of the waste hierarchy, focusing on reducing resource use and managing waste in ways that minimise impact on the environment and human health.

In April 2025, the University’s Environmental Management System was recertified to the ISO 14001:2015 standard, an internationally recognised benchmark for developing and improving environmental management practice.

In May 2025, the Refectory was awarded **Green Tourism Gold certification** for meeting

the highest standards of sustainable practice, including energy conservation, waste management, water use and local sourcing.

 Beyond campus

We continued our work with Leeds Beckett University, Unipol and Leeds City Council to reduce waste and encourage reuse among students through the summer Changeover Campaign.

In 2024–25, the School of Design delivered a major phase of its ongoing upcycling fashion project, culminating in public exhibitions and external showcases that highlighted student-led reuse of post-consumer textiles, strengthening public engagement and the visibility of sustainability-led education.

We continue to work with the **Leeds Anchors Network** to share learning, align best practice and drive responsible procurement across large employers in the local area.



CASE STUDY

Sustainable lab solutions– equipment sharing

CASE STUDY

Reuse and repair at the Institute of Transport Studies

The Garstang 9 lab has adopted an equipment-sharing model to help researchers access specialist tools they need. High-quality research relies on specialist equipment, but the costs of buying, maintaining and storing it can be prohibitive, and much existing equipment sits under-utilised due to concerns about wear and tear, contamination or scheduling conflicts.

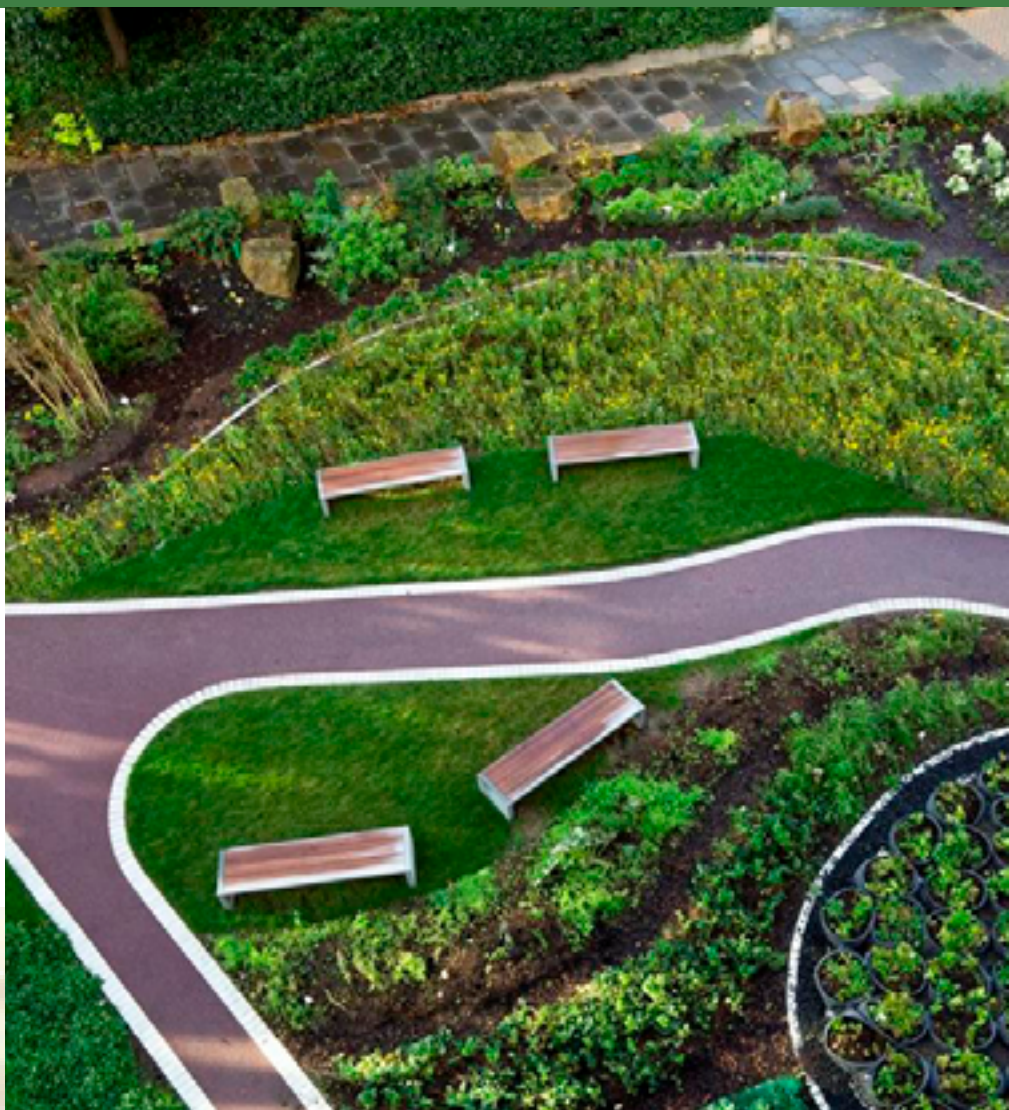
The lab now offers access to a range of scientific equipment, most notably its Incucyte S3 live-cell imaging platforms, to external users during otherwise idle periods. Training and supervised sessions ensure safe operation and protect the integrity of ongoing research.

This approach has reduced waste, lowered costs and strengthened research collaboration, making a diverse equipment pool available across a wide range of projects. The team also found that sharing equipment opened up experimental approaches they might not otherwise have explored.

The Institute of Transport Studies (ITS) Facilities Management team delivered a programme of practical improvements across ITS spaces, demonstrating how resource efficiency and thoughtful design can enhance environments for learning, teaching and research.

Furniture and materials were recovered, refurbished and repurposed across several buildings. Desks were sourced at no cost from Trinity Church and flood-affected areas within Fine Art, office layouts were redesigned to improve space use, and surplus carpet tiles and unused paint were applied to revitalise neglected spaces. Specialist equipment, including screens for the truck simulator, was recovered and reinstated. The only new purchases required were computer monitors and a single desktop.

Improvements were made with inclusivity in mind, including consistent desk finishes to support neurodiverse colleagues. Surplus materials and equipment were donated to community partners including Leeds City College and Seagulls. In total, over three tonnes of CO₂e were avoided through reuse rather than disposal.



Climate Action

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.



Our people

Our annual Climate Week took place in March 2025, featuring a range of events and activities designed to engage staff, students and visitors in climate action. Highlights included a climate showcase hosted in collaboration with Leeds University Union and an online ‘Ask Me Anything’ session on the University’s Viva Engage platform, covering topics from the environmental impact of artificial intelligence to the benefits of a more plant-based diet. Opportunities for direct engagement included sustainable gardening, cycle maintenance workshops and community litter picking.

Staff engagement programmes such as **Blueprint** continue to support people across the University to embed climate action in their work, while the **Leeds Living Lab** programme provides funding and facilitates connections to trial innovative, collaborative projects that drive positive change across campus and beyond.

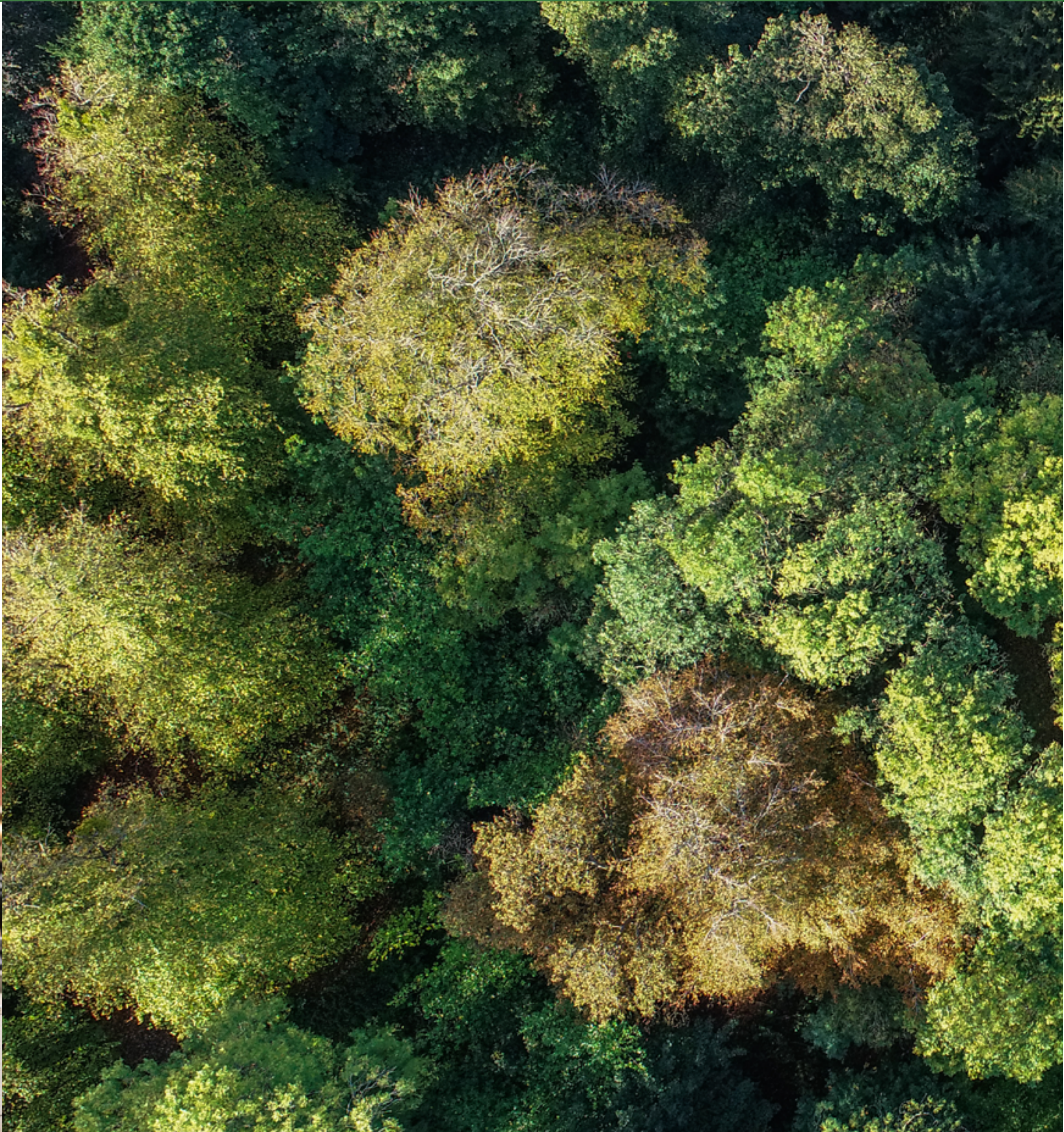




Campus and operations

Our **Climate Plan** and **Campus Reimagined** programmes lead our approach to emissions reduction and climate resilience. This includes continued investment in our net zero pathway, continuing to develop nature-based solutions at Gair Wood, the University’s newly planted woodland in north Leeds, and embedding climate resilience within the future campus development masterplan.

The Climate Plan drives progress through a dedicated delivery team and targeted investment in key initiatives, with strong emphasis on behaviour change. Staff and students are engaged through Climate Week, year-round communications and initiatives such as the Energy Teams Good Housekeeping Guide and participation in shutdown periods. Each of the plan’s seven core principles is sponsored at senior leadership level, demonstrating our commitment to climate action as a strategic priority.



Beyond campus

As a founding partner of the **Leeds Climate Commission** and **Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission**, we are working with partner organisations to support a net zero city and region, and to deliver their Climate Action Plan.

Throughout the year, we collaborated with partners across the city on climate action projects, including a workshop with Climate Action Leeds exploring students’ perspectives on climate priorities and what motivates or inhibits their involvement in community-led initiatives. Researchers also worked with the councils in Leeds, Bradford and Hull to pilot a new digital approach to citizen engagement, informing innovative solutions to local climate challenges.

The **Priestley Centre for Climate Futures** is a world-leading climate centre based at the University, ensuring climate action is informed by the latest research and collaborating with organisations and individuals to translate expertise into real-world impact that sustain water and sanitation services, with its research and learning agenda led by the University of Leeds, working alongside governments and development organisations.

CASE STUDY

Leeds University Business School

Leeds University Business School (LUBS) continues to champion climate action by embedding sustainability across its curriculum, generating research on low-carbon business practices and reducing the environmental footprint of its operations.

In June 2025, LUBS achieved Level 4 – Transforming School – status in the Positive Impact Rating, reflecting strong student perceptions of the school’s commitment to sustainability. Supported by the Blueprint programme, LUBS also implemented a slow travel policy encouraging staff to reduce air travel in favour of lower-carbon options. A Student Sustainability Champion also developed a prototype app for integrated travel planning, making it easier to choose sustainable travel across the school.

Also in June 2025, LUBS held its annual Sustainability Day, celebrating past achievements and showcasing its newly launched free FutureLearn Climate Action course. The event featured a taster session of the Carbon Literacy Project’s carbon literacy training from Professor Sigrun Wagner, and demonstrated how collaboration between student sustainability champions, colleagues and external partners can bring a wide range of sustainability activities to life in a single day.

CASE STUDY

Geothermal Campus Living Lab

In early 2024, **Geosolutions Leeds**, a research group bringing together expertise across geology, engineering and social sciences, began exploring the potential of geothermal energy to heat and cool University buildings, drilling 11 boreholes beneath campus to depths of 150 to 250 metres.

The data, borehole infrastructure and future system monitoring form part of our **Geothermal Campus Living Lab**, supporting research and student education in line with the Climate Plan’s principles of delivering net zero, supporting a net zero city, and reorienting research and teaching. Results have already fed into taught modules, a new Geothermal Energy Discovery Module and multiple student research projects.

In 2025, the Geosolutions team began working with Northern Powergrid, LCP Delta, E.ON Next, Leeds City Council and Star Refrigeration on research funded by Ofgem’s Strategic Innovation Fund. The GeoGrid project aims to demonstrate how geothermal systems can help balance intermittent renewables, support a clean power system and cut costs for households. Within a few years, this will produce a whole-energy-system living lab integrating subsurface, building, system-level and climate data.

CASE STUDY

Scenarios Forum 2025: Making climate conferences better for the planet

In July 2025, the Priestley Centre for Climate Futures and the University of Leeds hosted the Forum on Scenarios for Climate and Societal Futures (Scenarios Forum 2025), bringing together more than 300 experts from around the world to discuss socioeconomic scenario development for sustainability and climate.

While conferences play a vital role in generating knowledge, policy and collaboration, they can also carry a significant environmental cost. To address this, the University established a **Living Lab** to trial sustainability solutions, treating the forum as a real-world testing ground across four areas: travel, encouraging delegates to travel by train or bicycle and improve online participation options; accommodation and suppliers, evaluating sustainability policies, and providing sustainable and affordable options; catering, developing environmental and social sustainability principles for food served at the event; and accessibility and inclusion, ensuring the conference was as accessible and inclusive as reasonably possible.

Rather than simply introducing one-off measures, the aim was to test practices that can be embedded into business as usual. This legacy work will be advanced further by integrating the approaches and sharing learning internally and externally.





Life Below Water

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.



Campus and operations

Across the University, procedures under our ISO 14001-accredited Environmental Management System prevent the release of harmful or polluted water. These include our **disposal to drain procedure (PDF)** and plastic waste reduction processes, supported by our **Single Use Plastics Management Standard (PDF)** and **Single Use Plastics Programme**.

We support the health of pond and river systems both on campus and across the wider Leeds area. The Roger Stevens Pond is monitored for algal and invertebrate biodiversity using sensors that create an interactive virtual pond, with data used in teaching and research as part of our Living Lab programme.

At the Brownlee Sports Centre, sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) are in place, with water testing, underwater camera surveys and eDNA used to monitor aquatic ecosystem health and support natural flood management.





Beyond campus

The world-leading **water@leeds** interdisciplinary centre for water research, brings together over 500 researchers from across the University. It partners with organisations to address water-related challenges at regional, national and international scales, and hosts regular workshops, seminars, webinars and the annual Confluence event, which promotes networking and collaboration on water issues.

We monitor the River Aire catchment, examining water quality, ecosystem processes and hydrology, and share monitoring sites with the Environment Agency to strengthen cross-organisational working.

The University also leads the **NERC Freshwater Quality Champions Programme**, which investigates pollutants and their interactions with UK freshwaters across six research projects, with a monthly webinar series updating on progress and promoting dialogue between researchers, policymakers, businesses and practitioners.

CASE STUDY Empowering Citizen Science Partnerships

On 11 June 2025, water@leeds hosted the Empowering Citizen Science Partnerships event in collaboration with the Meanwood Valley Partnership. Led by Dr Paul Hutchings, water@leeds Associate Director for Impact, and WaterWISER CDT PhD candidate Madison Wright – both from the School of Civil Engineering – the event brought together environmental stakeholders and eight local groups involved in water quality monitoring across the Leeds area.

The event provided an opportunity to share insights between more established and less experienced monitoring groups, address shared challenges and identify areas for collaborative working.

CASE STUDY Assessing invasive species in Kruger National Park

In May 2025, researchers from the University of Leeds played a central role in an international expedition to assess invasive species threats in the river systems of Kruger National Park. Led by Dr Josie South from the School of Biology, alongside Dr Dumisani Khosa, freshwater ecologist at Kruger National Park, the two-week expedition explored river health across the park and the impacts of invasive aquatic species.

Three river systems were sampled using a range of methods, including crayfish traps and electrofishing, capturing data on species composition, ecosystem processes and environmental pressures. This data was used to assess food web interactions, river health and the threats posed by invasive species.

Initial findings confirmed the presence of the invasive red-claw crayfish alongside other freshwater organisms and invasive plants including water hyacinths, Parrot’s Feather and Water Lettuce, all of which pose risks to ecosystem function. The collaboration between scientists, early-career researchers and postgraduate students has helped establish the first dataset of African freshwater crab distribution and abundance, which will inform future management strategies and underlines the importance of early detection and ecosystem monitoring in biodiversity hotspots.



Life on Land

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.



Campus and operations

The University of Leeds is committed to being an exemplar of urban biodiversity, embedding nature-positive practices across its estate and operations.

Our [Biodiversity Standard \(PDF\)](#) sets out a clear framework for protecting and enhancing ecosystems across campus, supported by the [Sustainable Construction Standard \(PDF\)](#), which ensure biodiversity considerations are fully integrated into planning, design and development.

The University has completed a comprehensive biodiversity baseline assessment using the statutory biodiversity metric, which will inform the development of targeted site plans designed to deliver measurable biodiversity improvements. These plans will strengthen long-term ecological resilience while keeping interventions realistic and aligned with our ambition to be recognised as exemplars of urban biodiversity.

As part of Leeds Light Night 2024, the Sustainability Service and the Cultural Institute collaborated to create an interactive sound trail installation. Entitled ‘The Space Between the Lights’, the trail was designed to complement the Light Night installations and draw attention to nature’s nocturnal activity.



Beyond campus

The University hosts regular environmental and biodiversity events for students, staff and the wider community. In 2024–25, these included regular biodiversity monitoring sessions to record campus wildlife, guided Wildlife Wanders to identify birds, bees, butterflies and flowers around campus, and regular gardening sessions to help manage the Sustainable Garden. Since 2012, we have also maintained a corporate partnership with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, delivering Wild Work Days.

We contribute to sector-wide understanding and best practice across further and higher education, including chairing the EAUC Biodiversity Community of Practice and co-delivering a session on biodiversity and community access to green spaces at the EAUC 2025 Conference.

We collaborate with local communities and external partners to protect and enhance ecosystems in the UK and internationally. Key initiatives include the **Hardknott Forest restoration project**, where we

support ecosystem management and research, and the **Gair Wood project**, which examines the real-time impact of tree planting as a nature-based solution to climate change while creating opportunities for research, education and volunteering.

The **Leeds Ecosystem, Atmosphere & Forest (LEAF) Centre**, in partnership with Leeds City Council and the United Bank of Carbon (UBoC), operates a **Forest Observatory** in Middleton Park, enabling students and staff to contribute to long-term environmental monitoring and study the role of forests in delivering vital ecosystem services.

Professor Jonathan Carrivick from the School of Geography has joined an international team responding to global glacier loss. He is one of 37 researchers selected for the new Glacier Stewardship Programme, which focuses on mitigating glacier melt and safeguarding glacier biodiversity.

CASE STUDY

New Biodiversity Standard

In 2025, the University of Leeds introduced a new Biodiversity Standard designed to transform its 450-hectare estate into an exemplar of urban nature recovery. Building on a decade of progress, the standard embeds biodiversity into every aspect of campus life – from teaching and research to estate management.

Central to the approach is a commitment to reversing biodiversity loss and creating healthier ecosystems that can adapt to climate challenges while improving everyday life for students, staff and local communities. Five guiding principles shape the approach:

- integration across all areas
- tailored nature recovery plans
- innovative, sustainable spaces
- climate resilience and wellbeing
- global impact, local action.

The Standard places people at its core, making environmental stewardship a shared responsibility across the institution. By combining long-term planning with community engagement, the University aims to restore nature across its campus and demonstrate how urban environments can become places where people and wildlife thrive together.

CASE STUDY

New research partnership to map nature recovery strategies

In 2025, the University of Leeds launched a research partnership to better align nature-recovery policy with grassroots environmental action across the city. Through the **Leeds Institute for Societal Futures** PGR Placement scheme, PhD researcher Xiaojia Lyu collaborated with local charity Hyde Park Source to analyse how nature-recovery strategies operate across national, regional and local governance levels. The project mapped key gaps and synergies in existing policy, producing discourse analysis that highlights where community-led initiatives face barriers or find opportunities.

Facilitated by Dr Rebecca Brunk through the Sustainability Service’s Positive Impact Partners programme, the work was shared at a community Nature Recovery and Connection conference and has since supported the appointment of a Knowledge Exchange Fellow. It is also informing new collaborations with West Yorkshire policy specialists developing emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategies.



Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.



Campus and operations

A robust and transparent **governance structure** enables inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making across the University. The University Council is our highest governing body, comprising 22 members, the majority lay members, alongside staff and student representatives. Its principal committees include the Audit and Risk Committee, Finance and Investment Committee, Nominating and Governance Committee, Remuneration Committee, Ethics and Values Committee and the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee.

The Senate is responsible to the Council for academic governance, regulating the admission of students, the curriculum, academic standards and the award of degrees and other qualifications. The University Court serves as a mechanism for – and symbol of – the University’s accountability to the wider community.

The University recognises Leeds University Union (LUU) as its independent students’ union, with LUU representatives sitting on the University Council. We also recognise three trade unions: UCU, UNISON and Unite.

Key policies, procedures and codes of practice – including the [Anti-Bribery Policy](#), [Responsible Investment Policy \(PDF\)](#), [Freedom of Expression Protocol \(PDF\)](#) and [Whistleblowing procedure \(PDF\)](#) – ensure we operate accountably and transparently at all levels. We publish full financial statements annually.

 Beyond campus

The University of Leeds works in partnership with the city’s other higher education institutions, Leeds City Council’s Antisocial Behaviour Team and West Yorkshire Police to prevent and address noise and antisocial behaviour in our local community. Together with Leeds Beckett University, we co-fund a dedicated service delivered by Leeds City Council, providing intelligence-led proactive patrols, response officers and a streamlined reporting and enforcement system.

Policy Leeds, our policy engagement hub, continued to lead projects advancing justice, inclusivity and accountable governance. We have a long history of working with Leeds City Council to address pressing challenges in the region, and many projects facilitated by the Research England Policy Support and Participatory Research Funds have been developed in response to the

Council’s knowledge needs. Key projects in 2024–25 included work on anchor institutions and economic resilience in Leeds, **evaluating the impact** of the ‘One-Stop-Shop’ model for climate hubs as an innovative approach to a just climate transition, and research into designing accessible and **inclusive public play** spaces across the city.

In 2024, the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) published a new Horizon Scan for UK Parliament, identifying issues including prison reform, extremism and trust in institutions. Researchers from the University of Leeds contributed to all 12 topics, helping Parliamentarians plan future work and identifying where research evidence may be needed.

Dr Sam Lewis from the School of Law contributed evidence to the UK Home Affairs Select Committee’s inquiry on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), focusing on domestic abuse in rural areas. Building on Home Office-funded research into geospatial and contextual patterns of rural domestic abuse, and developed with Cumbria Constabulary and partner organisations, the submission made five recommendations aimed at ensuring rural needs are recognised, improving data standards and enabling equitable access to national VAWG funding.

CASE STUDY
Cuckooing Research and Prevention Network

The Cuckooing Research and Prevention Network, led by Professor Laura Bainbridge from the School of Law, has produced a new animation in collaboration with West Yorkshire Police, Leeds City Council and Horton Housing. ‘Cuckooing’ refers to the practice of organised crime groups or perpetrators taking over properties through force, deceit or coercion.

The **short, accessible animation** raises awareness of the practice to help disrupt and prevent victimisation. It is one of several resources the team has produced to support cuckooing prevention, alongside research and advocacy that has helped push for legislative action to make cuckooing a specific criminal offence.

CASE STUDY
Junior Detectives Programme

In April 2025, the University of Leeds supported West Yorkshire Police in delivering the Junior Detectives Programme, an immersive, week-long initiative aimed at reducing knife crime.

Throughout the week, pupils followed a fictional case from first police report through to a mock court conclusion. Students learned about trauma response in the Medical School’s A&E simulation suite, observed interview procedures in the School of Law, and explored investigative technologies in the University’s HELIX Makerspace, guided by staff and student mentors throughout. The programme combined experiential learning, cross-sector partnership and youth engagement to address knife crime.

CASE STUDY
Pioneering a civic gateway space on campus

In 2025, a **Living Lab** project explored the value of a civic gateway space on campus and the potential benefits for the University, its community and the wider city. The project was delivered through the Sustainability Service, with research, stakeholder engagement and analysis carried out by Alice Tenney during her year-in-industry placement as Communications and Engagement Assistant.

The project found that a dedicated civic gateway space, run by community partners, could help break down traditional power hierarchies and support more equitable, co-produced approaches to addressing climate, social and environmental challenges. It could also foster creative collaboration between students, staff and external organisations, strengthening mutually beneficial relationships and enhancing the University’s civic impact.

Findings were presented in a **short report (PDF)** delivered to senior leadership in the Facilities Directorate, making the case for a civic gateway to be embedded into the Campus Reimagined project, the University’s long-term development plan for its estate.





Partnership for the Goals

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnerships for sustainable development.

29

Student Sustainability Architects
in paid part-time roles

44

Staff Sustainability Architects
in post

21

Blueprint teams



Our people

Internal collaboration and partnership is central to how we embed sustainability at the University of Leeds. Our sustainability community of staff and students comes together to share learning, drive change and develop collaborative solutions to shared challenges.

Our **Sustainable Curriculum** programme ensures students have the opportunity to study, research, work and engage with sustainability as part of their studies, while also creating opportunities for them to become active partners in shaping and delivering sustainability across the institution and in our city and region.

In 2024–25, 29 Student Sustainability Architects worked in paid, part-time roles to co-create and deliver sustainability projects and Living Labs across schools and professional services, connecting students, academics and professional teams to accelerate progress across multiple SDGs.

At the 2025 Student Sustainability Research Conference, contributors showcased collaborative projects addressing real-world sustainability challenges, strengthening the link between research, community and policy impact.

In parallel, 44 Staff Sustainability Architects committed a proportion of their time to driving sustainability in their areas of work, enabling peer learning and cross-departmental collaboration. Our flagship sustainability engagement framework, **Blueprint**, further embeds this partnership approach. In 2024–25, 21 Blueprint teams worked collaboratively to create and deliver bespoke five-year plans for their teams or departments.



Campus and operations

Our Campus Reimagined programme takes a people-centred design approach to the future of our campus, looking at the campus as an experience rather than simply a collection of buildings. The programme is structured around the development of a Masterplan Framework, guided by evidence and engagement with our staff and student community through events such as Campus Reimagined Live!, which took place in February 2025.

Campus Reimagined Live! was a three-day festival at the heart of campus, featuring talks, activities and workshops designed to uncover our community’s ideas and expectations for the future campus. Staff and students were invited to suggest quick-win improvement projects, six of which were selected for delivery through a University-wide vote. Work is now under way to implement them.



Beyond campus

In June 2025, the Sustainability Service collaborated with colleagues at University College London to lead a session at the EAUC Conference on Environmental Management Systems, exploring how institutions can support one another and develop shared practice. Following interest from the sector, discussions with EAUC are under way, with the first EMS Community of Practice sessions, co-chaired by the University of Leeds and University College London, scheduled to begin in early 2026.

The University of Leeds and Leeds City Council have introduced a new **Research Collaboration Framework** to address the city’s evidence challenges, building on the 2020 review Unlocking the Potential of Civic Collaboration, conducted by the Leeds Social Sciences Institute (now **Leeds Institute for Societal Futures**). In response to that review, we worked with the Council to develop the Leeds City Council Areas of Research Interest (LCC ARI), which highlight where further knowledge and evidence are needed and invite researchers to work in partnership to shape future policy and activity across the city.

In 2024, the Horizons Institute launched the Horizons Platform Programme, developing interdisciplinary research collaborations with the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg to tackle challenges linked to climate, sustainability and inequality.

In 2025, the University of Leeds joined a consortium of partners to form the North Sea Universities Partnership (NSUP), focusing on research across the Arctic, cultural heritage, health and the North Sea, incorporating energy, marine research and the green transition.

Research and innovation from the University of Leeds contributed to discussions and negotiations before and during **COP29**. As an official observer of the UNFCCC, the University sent a delegation to Baku, with members involved in events and activities across both the UN’s Blue Zone and the publicly accessible Green Zone.



CASE STUDY

Embedding child-friendly principles across a civic university

In December 2024, the University of Leeds Public Engagement team and Child Friendly Leeds (CFL) launched a formal partnership to align the University’s civic mission with the city’s long-term commitment to children and young people. Grounded in shared values, the partnership provides a structured framework to embed the Child Friendly Leeds 12 Wishes across research, engagement and cultural activity.

The partnership brings together University colleagues, Leeds City Council and city-wide ambassadors to explore how the University can contribute to making Leeds a more inclusive, welcoming and opportunity-rich city for children and young people. Established as a pilot with clear commitments, KPIs and a five-year development pathway, it is already creating impact including new connections between University researchers and CFL networks that enable collaboration which would not otherwise have taken place.

CASE STUDY

Research in the community

The **BA Professional Studies** degree, delivered by the Lifelong Learning Centre, introduces students to research from their first year. The Research in the Community initiative strengthens the connections between students’ coursework and the communities of Leeds.

Through their Level 2 and 3 research modules, students can undertake projects for voluntary, community and statutory organisations with research needs. Partnerships are renewed each academic year, running across two consecutive years.

Since launching in 2019–20, the initiative has worked with organisations including Neighbourhood Watch, LS14 Trust, Our Way Leeds, Leeds Engage and the Family Learning Team at Leeds City Council.





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