

A SUSTAINABLE YORK





University of York Sustainability Plan to 2030

Sustainability has been part of life at the University of York for many years. To take this journey forward we have now launched our new ambitious Sustainability Plan.

The plan sets out how we intend to tackle the current and future challenges we face in order to become a more sustainable institution, and play a part in creating a more sustainable world.

The plan will embed sustainability into our core functions of teaching and research, whilst setting ambitious goals for carbon neutrality, partnerships, reduced consumption and for improved health and wellbeing.



Distinct challenges and unique opportunities

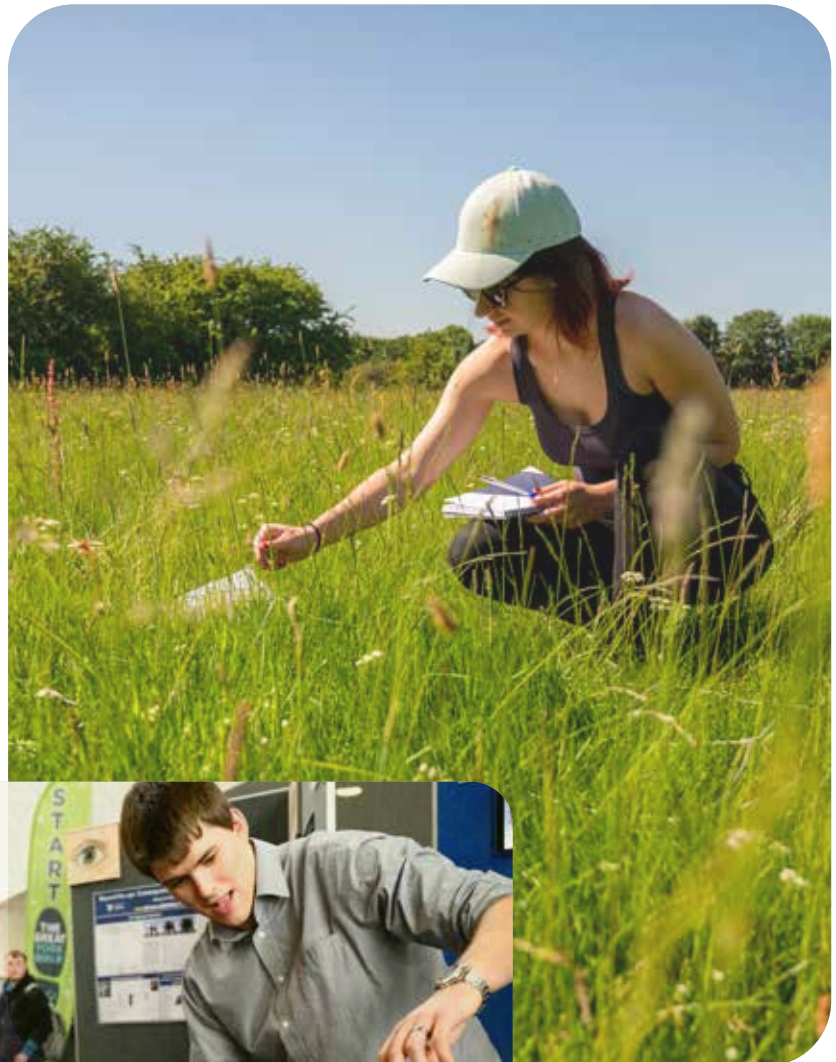
Our campus provides both complex local challenges as well as unique opportunities when striving to ensure a more sustainable future.

The international reach of our graduates, academic departments and research extends the potential of our impacts to the global stage.

As a University founded on a commitment to public good, sustainability is and will continue to be embedded in our responsibilities and values.

We're committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030, but to do so our sustainability vision needs to be ambitious. We've made great progress already, but there's still more room for growth. One of the benefits of being a relatively new University is that we're not afraid of new ideas, but old ones shouldn't be discarded.

The plans our founding generation laid out during York's conception are just as relevant and inspirational today as they were back then.



Where we've come from

Our campus provides both complex local challenges as well as unique opportunities when striving to ensure a more sustainable future.

A commitment to public good

Built in the early 1960s during the large expansion of the UK's higher education system, the University of York was founded on a commitment to public good.

While most universities of the time were driven by the need to supply the skills for a modernising economy, York's founders wanted to do more. They were keen that the interest in 'social betterment' of Joseph and Seebohm Rowntree should be honoured in the new University.

“To honour an interest in social betterment, that's a potent statement of purpose!”

Professor Charlie Jeffery,
Vice-Chancellor and President,
University of York

These are ambitions which hold as much relevance today as they did back then. By continuing to follow our founding principles of social betterment, amelioration of life and conditions, and a relevance to the things outside, we can create a more sustainable future.

Collaborative from conception

Such ambitious impetus can't be achieved alone. Collaboration is key and it's also something that's been built (quite literally) into our foundations.

In its original conception, York's campus was designed to encourage social interaction, to enrich the minds of our staff and students, and bridge the gap between academic disciplines.

In other words, York's architects were keen for our staff and students to bump into each other in our corridors and colleges, helping them to collaborate on a shared campus so that their university experience could be “enriched by the greatest possible contact with the others”

The visions of our founders are poignant, but what's a vision if not followed by action?

Here are some examples of how we have been working together with our staff and students to turn those founding principles into sustainable action.

‘Enriched by the greatest possible contact with the others’



What we've achieved so far

Our campus provides both complex local challenges as well as unique opportunities when striving to ensure a more sustainable future.

The visions of our founders are poignant, but what's a vision if not followed by action?

Here are some examples of how we have been working together with our staff and students to turn those founding principles into sustainable action.



Our ambitious vision

Our campus provides both complex local challenges as well as unique opportunities when striving to ensure a more sustainable future.

While we've made some great progress in becoming a more sustainable university, there's still a lot to be done.

Making it happen will require an ambitious vision of what a sustainable York might look like.

An ambitious sustainability vision

The most significant positive long-term impacts that the University can have in addressing sustainability and the climate emergency results from equipping students with knowledge of sustainability through its teaching, for their lives and careers after they leave University, and also the direct impacts from advancing environmental sustainability through the research projects it undertakes. The impact of these efforts have the potential to outweigh any of our direct campus emissions.

The University has set out a commitment for achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. We will do so by ensuring that our direct emissions and the management of our campus are environmentally sustainable. The University can have a positive impact through addressing the direct effects of how it operates as an organisation, specifically from reducing the carbon emissions from its activities. Our new Sustainability Plan is the first step towards achieving these goals, by setting out how we plan to achieve them and become a carbon neutral campus by 2030.





**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**

Guided by Sustainable Development Goals

The University is in a strong position to enhance sustainability across its teaching and learning, research and campus activities.

To ensure we coordinate our actions to support the global sustainability agenda, our new strategy will be framed around the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are categorised into 17 areas of sustainability. During the development of our strategy, we have prioritised SDGs where we can make the most significant impact and use these to focus our actions, whilst continuing work against the remaining SDGs where applicable to our activities.



Sustainability Development Goal

QUALITY EDUCATION



4 QUALITY
EDUCATION

A red square icon containing a white graphic of an open book with a pencil standing vertically to its right.

Mission



We will ensure all students of the University of York are equipped to become leaders of change, able to take action on the most pressing global issues, including sustainability and climate change.

Strategic Goal

Deliver a suite of wide-ranging programmes of learning that provide necessary competencies and empower students to make a positive impact on sustainability.

Target

Implement a suite of training packages, ranging from mandatory training to areas of interest and specialism. Providing tailored levelling up of training provisions resulting in personal certification, ranging from induction training, to overarching carbon literacy, to faculty or department specific packages.

University Strategy link – Ethical and empowering education and Research with relevance and reach

Target

Establish a range of courses (e.g. mini-masters) and modules focussing on UoY's areas of strength in sustainability, incorporating the 'skills for a sustainable future' and 'transformative competencies'.

University Strategy link – Ethical and empowering education

Target

Develop a brokerage of local and University based research projects to support students to undertake dissertations or projects that both enhance sustainability and meet community needs.

University Strategy link – Ethical and empowering education and Research with relevance and reach

Strategic Goal

Provide engaging and focused opportunities outside of teaching to equip students with practical knowledge and experience of effective sustainability actions.

Target

Create a suite of key focussed initiatives (with collaboration from YUSU and GSA) that students can actively participate in outside of their formal academic activities that increases their awareness of sustainability and enhances their employability.

University Strategy link – Ethical and empowering education

Target

Increase the availability and accessibility of key non-academic sustainability initiatives to students.

University Strategy link – Ethical and empowering education

Target

Learning by sustainable living - development of accommodation blocks dedicated to practising and developing more sustainable lifestyles.

University Strategy link – Ethical and empowering education

Strategic goal

Lead our students by example through environmentally sustainable teaching operations.

Target

Provide departments with accountability for implementation of clearly demonstrable sustainability improvements in teaching operations (while still ensuring inclusivity and accessibility), including travel, paper and other resource usage.

University Strategy link – Lasting legacies

Target

Where practical (with consideration of pedagogy, inclusivity and accessibility) move to online digitised processing of assessments including student submission, marking, feedback, marks administration and exams.

University Strategy link – Lasting legacies

Sustainability Development Goal

SUSTAINABLE RESEARCH



Mission



We will be a global leader in research for sustainability and sustainable development, developing interdisciplinary understanding and solutions to key local, regional and global sustainability challenges, and promoting more sustainable research practices.

Strategic Goal

Creation of a new entity that acts as a flagship for globally-recognised research and teaching on environmental sustainability

Target

Establish new sustainability entity.

University Strategy link –
Research with relevance and reach

Target

Code of practice for sustainable research fully implemented, with key performance indicators developed and demonstrating a reduced environmental burden of research activity to complement carbon and broader sustainability targets of the University strategy

University Strategy link –
Research with relevance and reach

Target

Enhance research capacity across the University's research portfolio to establish and reinforce global leadership in key areas of environmental sustainability.

University Strategy link –
Research with relevance and reach

Target

Develop transformational competencies to maximise opportunities for our research on environmental sustainability to make an impact for the public good.

University Strategy link –
Research with relevance and reach

Target

Develop innovative ways of research practice and funding to establish York as an internationally renowned 'go-to' resource for research of relevance for policy and practice on environmental sustainability.

University Strategy link –
Research with relevance and reach

Sustainability Development Goal

CLIMATE ACTION



Mission



We shall manage our estate operations, teaching and research activities so that the carbon emissions from their undertaking will have a minimum contribution to climate change, and enable the University to cope with the future impacts of climate change. We shall achieve this through reduced consumption, space usage policies, increased efficiencies, sustainable travel policies, behaviour changes, technological implementation, and proactively adapting for climate change.

Strategic Goal

Minimise the impact that the University operations have on climate change by becoming carbon neutral in all its activities.

Target

Carbon net-zero for Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 2030.

University Strategy link –
Lasting legacies

Target

Reduce indirect (Scope 3) carbon emissions by 30% by 2030 against 2017-19 average baseline data.

University Strategy link –
Lasting legacies

Target

Carbon net-zero for direct and indirect (Scope 1, 2, and 3) carbon emissions by 2050.

University Strategy link –
Lasting legacies

Strategic Goal

Creating a campus estate that is lean and agile to effectively adapt to climate change, addressing the risks and opportunities it will present to the University.

Target

Creation of a Climate Change Adaptation plan to feed into existing policies and processes.

University Strategy link –
Agile, able and aligned

Target

Implement technical climate change considerations into University building and campus grounds design standards, to reduce negative impacts and realise opportunities resulting from climate change for estate operations and student experience.

University Strategy link –
Agile, able and aligned

Target

Implement strategic climate change considerations into Campus for the Future and space usage policies to deliver an estate that is sufficiently agile to react to the future changes in climatic conditions, preventing them from negatively affecting facilities for delivering teaching and research services.

University Strategy link –
Agile, able and aligned

Target

Implement climate change considerations into continuity planning to address operational interruptions caused by climate change impacts.

University Strategy link –
Agile, able and aligned

Strategic Goal

Be a leading example for ecological management, demonstrably improving biodiversity on campus and in the local region for the benefit of nature, campus users and the local community.

Target

Carry out a broad spectrum ecological survey of the campus (east & west).

University Strategy link –
Lasting legacies

Target

Identify, set and achieve a biodiversity net gain improvement target based on a baseline (identified through initial ecological survey).

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships
and Lasting legacies

Target

Identify and purchase a suitable piece of land off campus locally upon which to begin planting a new managed woodland of up to 50,000 trees, to complement the Northern Forest initiative.

University Strategy link –
Lasting legacies

Sustainability Development Goal

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Mission



To communicate, co-curate and facilitate impact and change based on the applied public and social value of our research, teaching, resources, knowledge and networks to address societal needs and empower civic engagement for the creation of a sustainable society.

Strategic Goal

To be instrumental in the development of structured collaboration and empowering processes and alliances within our City and community to achieve climate neutrality for the region.

Target

Map the key interactions and interplay of the targets we share with our strategic partners to support achievement of carbon neutrality for the region by 2030.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Target

To identify and understand issues related to the development of low carbon pathway in our community and to focus our research firepower and institutional professional service expertise on exemplar challenge tasks to resolve them.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Target

Implement a series of shared community action plans to engage and facilitate community Climate Actions.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Strategic Goal

Identify, empower and facilitate development of ambitious sustainable solutions to civic-, business- and community-led challenges

Target

To align with the Civic Mission 'social action' workstream in development of policy and guidelines for academic and professional service staff to actively engage with community-led volunteering opportunities.

University Strategy link –
Lasting legacies

Target

Develop and showcase circular economy trials and example initiatives

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Target

To develop integrated partnerships with education providers to position York as a Learning City that encourages sustainability knowledge and actions for all potential learners, re-learners and graduates, providing opportunities for communications, and shared public engagement, across diverse audiences.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

interruptions caused by climate change impacts.

University Strategy link –
Agile, able and aligned

Strategic Goal

Creation of inclusive facilities and shared spaces (both real and virtual) on campus and beyond, to stimulate creative and innovative interactions, skill sharing and partnerships to support action planning and engagement that showcases York as an exemplar pilot city in addressing sustainability challenges.

Target

Creation of a formal plan detailing areas/facilities and digital spaces that are accessible and available to the wider community, increasing their use year on year, ensuring that all key university public engagement events, and communications channels are used to disseminate to and engage diverse audiences.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Target

Increase access (wider and better) to cultural assets owned by University and enhance opportunities for continued partnership programming, commissioning and curation of student/community art, with widespread programming, dissemination and promotion support through the York Festival of Ideas.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Target

Match the future development and promotion of University's cultural, sports & leisure offer to complement wider city provision and to ensure that university public engagement programming and strategic engagement offer collaborative opportunities for co-curation, co-design and co-delivery.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Sustainability Development Goal

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



Mission



Proactively utilising its size and influence for good, the University will drive the sustainability agenda forward through undertaking positive impact investments, engaging and challenging its suppliers, and radically reducing its own environmental impacts through minimised resource consumption and waste creation.

Strategic Goal

Ensure that our University investments generate a positive sustainability impact.

Target

Invest 50% of endowment investments (in terms of value) through impact investment.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Target

Establish an internal sustainable investment fund for sustainability.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Target

Operate and grow (by 10 fold) an internal self sufficient investment fund for sustainability.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Strategic Goal

Proactive monitoring of sustainability for all key suppliers, and working with them to improve their sustainability.

Target

Identify the most significant 100 suppliers (by value / impacts / volume) and undertake a formal baseline sustainability assessment of them.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Target

Undertaking annual reviews on most significant 100 suppliers (by value/ impacts/volume) to ensure that they are improving their sustainable performance.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Target

Ensuring all service suppliers implement real living wage.

University Strategy link –
Positive and productive partnerships

Strategic Goal

Become a natural resource efficient University, minimising the amount we consume while reducing the impact of our waste creation.

Target

Reduce waste volumes from campus by 33% (by weight). [10% reduction by 2025].

University Strategy link –
Lasting legacies

Target

Increase waste recycling rates to 80% by weight. [70% recycling by 2025].

University Strategy link –
Lasting legacies

Target

Increase water consumption efficiency to provide a 25% reduction per FTE staff and student against baseline usage (average of 2017/18 and 2018/19 usage figures).

University Strategy link –
Lasting legacies

Sustainability Development Goal

GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING



3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING

Mission



Have a workforce and student cohort which is healthy in mind and body, supported by interacting with the University wellbeing programmes, natural grounds initiatives, and buildings designed for the health and wellbeing of occupants.

Strategic Goal

Working together as a whole University community to deliver the aims of the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Target

Deliver a Student Wellbeing Programme throughout the academic year, focussing on times of higher risk in the student journey and delivering a range of responses.

Target

Embed the Student Wellbeing Officer roles within departments, and develop this role to provide support (to both staff and students) with student welfare and wellbeing issues.

Strategic Goal

Offer new, accessible approaches to health and wellbeing for staff in the workplace.

Target

Incorporate health and wellbeing activities and provisions into departmental staff events.

Target

Provide an enhanced range of staff mental health training and enhance the Mental Health First Contact network.

Target

Accreditation with the real Living Wage Foundation and a range of improvements to the pension provision for the lowest paid staff.

Target

Strike an improved work life balance for staff through expansion of relevant policies.

Strategic Goal

Provide a campus estate that supports the mental and physical health and wellbeing of its users by recognising the tangible benefits of the built and natural environment and outdoor activity.

Target

Actively develop the campus grounds as a tool to boost Health and Wellbeing activity.

Target

Formally incorporate health and wellbeing of occupants into the design considerations of future building projects.

Target

Provide access to sporting facilities for a range of sporting abilities to engage with, in order to promote the impact of physical activity, sport and wellbeing within an 'active campus'.



UNIVERSITY
of York

york.ac.uk/sustainability