



## *Sustainability Strategy 2023 - 2028*

## Foreword

The state of the Earth is the most pressing challenge of our time. How we rise to it will define how we and our descendants live. Significant climate change will have profound impacts on our way of life. Many communities will be either destroyed or displaced. The impacts of mass migration will be felt all over the planet.

In the face of these global issues, it is all too easy to conclude there is nothing we can do; that changes in our own lifestyles are too insignificant to matter. But climate change is the product of all human activity, and each of us must change if we are collectively to make a difference.

Buckinghamshire New University is a forward-thinking organisation. We believe in doing the right thing by our students, staff and communities. For our environment, this means that we, as all people and all organisations, have a responsibility to act. We must take climate change seriously and minimise, as far as we possibly can, the impact we have on our planet.

The University has already committed to becoming carbon net-zero by 2030, even earlier if we can possibly manage it. But to do this, we must all play our part by changing our individual and collective behaviours.

This Sustainability Strategy proudly bears the imprint of the University and articulates the approach we will take. Aligned to Thrive 2028, it boldly sets out our ambition to become a leader in the higher education sector, finding creative and innovative ways of overcoming the constraints of our urban campuses to increase biodiversity and have a positive impact on nature. We will build on our existing carbon-reduction measures, including clean energy, to ensure that our use of the world's natural resources can be sustained long into the future. We will work in partnership to deliver change. We will continue to prioritise social sustainability, with a focus on social mobility and well-being. We will encourage all in our community to champion change and challenge the status quo. Our students will shape the next generation, championing best practice and sustainability in their careers and throughout their lives.

By delivering on this strategy, we will not only benefit our people and their environment, we will serve as a role model within and beyond the higher education sector. We will encourage others in our community to play their part too. Together, we will lay down a legacy for future generations ensuring they will be able to enjoy a sustainable way of life.

**Professor Nick Braisby**

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive

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# Sustainability Principles

As a university we wish to develop our staff, students and partners to allow everyone to grow and Thrive. We are committed to the principles of Sustainable Development.

The most common definition of sustainable development is that developed by the Brundtland report: 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Brundtland, 1987).

There are three key pillars of sustainable development.

Environmental

Social

Economic

Viewed using the lens of Sustainable Development, the interpretation of each principle becomes clear.

**Environmental Sustainability:** Using resources ethically and fairly to ensure that we can develop as we need to but refrain from damaging the environment and biodiversity. Our actions should always have a positive impact and consider not only the immediate area and impacts but our wider impacts over the long term.

**Social Sustainability:** We should be a force for a good through our actions, in the University, our local community, and through the global impact of our supply chains and partnerships. Everyone we impact should be treated with fairness, respect, and dignity. Our actions should go beyond ensuring those we work with can meet present and future needs, we should offer opportunities for growth and development regardless of background or circumstances.

**Economic Sustainability:** Ensuring that the University is in a healthy financial position with enough funds to grow and to be financially secure. Whilst ensuring that our partners and suppliers are paid fairly and those we work with across our entire supply chain are paid and treated fairly and share in our opportunities for growth.

As a core concept, sustainability is having respect for others, be that people, organisms, or the environment and having the integrity to do the right thing.

Every decision we make and every project we do should have a positive impact on economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability. To assist this, we will adopt a systems approach that considers sustainability issues as a group of interrelated, interdisciplinary issues. Improvements to one area will often lead to improvements in other areas.

Each of these areas is simply too big to consider as a standalone aspect, it helps to break them down into distinct aspects.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were developed and adopted as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The goals were adopted by all UN member states in 2015. Part of the reason for the development of the goals was in response to the difficulties of turning the three pillars of sustainable development into targets for meaningful action. The UN SDGs break the topics of Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability down into 17 key areas, each of which includes its own narrative and includes qualitative and quantitative targets for improvement.

Each of the SDGs responds to one of the pillars of sustainable development be that Environmental, Social, or Economic sustainability. Many goals will have a positive impact on multiple pillars.

## The Goals



BNU has signed up to the UN Sustainable Development Goal Accord, a network of institutions and businesses that look to make the world a better, fairer place through supporting and contributing to the SDGs. However, the number of goals and the terminology used can make them difficult to translate into university policy. It is proposed that we adopt a simplified approach whereby the University codifies the 17 SDGs into a smaller number of Strategic Areas that are more closely aligned to the traditional operational areas of the University.

# **Our Sustainability Vision and Mission**

Our commitments are courageous and will make us one of the UK's most sustainable Universities. Our ambitions are more than the sum of our commitments. We are keen to show our students, staff and partners how integral Sustainability is to our operations and core beliefs.

We have developed a Sustainability Vision and a Sustainability Mission to summarise our approach to sustainability. Our Sustainability Vision and Mission will be included in everything we do and assessment against these will be an integral part of any project development moving forwards.

## **Our Sustainability Vision**

To provide high-quality education by building engaged, well-rounded future citizens and improving access to education. We will encourage our learners to be advocates for sustainability by leading through example to become a leader in sustainable education.

## **Our Sustainability Mission**

We will have a positive impact on social, environmental, and economic sustainability and deliver benefits to our colleagues, learners and communities through our activities and partnerships.

## **How will we become a leader in sustainable education?**

We must recognise the areas in which we can have the most impact and which areas are most aligned to our strengths. These will be the areas in which we will be most ambitious and strive to be sector leading.

BNU have analysed our historic activities across a range of different sustainability areas to explore how and where we believe we can have the most impact and where we have the greatest opportunities for improvement.

We will strive to become a sustainability leader in the following fields:

Greening urban sites

Civic engagement

Decarbonisation of properties and supply chains

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI), Health and Well-being

## **Greening Urban Sites**

We recognise that nature and biodiversity have an important impact on both the local environment, and the well-being of our staff and learners. Our campuses are predominantly located in urban environments with historically poor levels of biodiversity and green social space.

We will dedicate at least 15% of our property footprint to green spaces. These spaces are likely to take several forms, at a smaller scale, these might be pockets of outdoor social spaces for learners and staff with some planters and potted trees. At a larger scale, these might be larger, multi-purpose areas with dedicated areas for wildlife and a focus on larger biodiversity and Well-being spaces.

Every building refurbishment project that we complete will result in a biodiversity net gain. That means that each project will result in an improvement to the type and variety of species across our sites. Our biodiversity net gain works will focus on the outdoor environment to ensure that these improvements help local wildlife.

Greening our Pinewood Studios space is likely to be a challenge due to an inability to make long-term changes. In reflection of this we will look to include indoor planting and will work with Pinewood Studios to explore other options for biodiversity improvements.

## **Civic Engagement**

Civic engagement is a key mechanism through which BNU can make a substantially positive impact on economic, social, and environmental sustainability issues within our communities, while increasing our presence and raising our profile.

For this strategy, we aspire to become a leader in civic environmentalism, taking sustainable and environmentally beneficial actions, with and for local, national, and global communities. Though the name suggests a focus on environmental causes, civic environmentalism also contributes to social and economic sustainability within the community.

To achieve this recognition, primarily through public and sector perception, we must prioritise high-impact social projects and research that help those communities to lead more equal, healthy, and prosperous lives. Combining our academic expertise, skills-based education, and industry insights, with partners' knowledge, experience, and networks, we can help to drive responsible regeneration and infrastructure projects, upskill local populations, alleviate poverty and reduce inequalities, both at home and abroad, over the next five years.

Further information on our Civic Engagement ambitions will be detailed within our upcoming Civic Engagement Strategy. This project is currently under development and is being written in close collaboration between our Civic Engagement, Sustainability and EDI teams.

## **Decarbonisation of Properties and Supply Chains**

Our commitment to achieve net-zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030 is one of our largest and most important commitments. This is a commitment that we proudly share with many other institutions and public sector bodies. Where we aspire to show leadership is in the decarbonisation of our supply chains. Though it will not be possible to completely eradicate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from our supply chain, we can show leadership in the sector through the development of effective partnerships that focus on driving forwards environmental sustainability. We also aspire to support our partners to help them to reduce their own supply chains through the provision of guidance, best practice guidance and the development of a collaborative network of like-minded organisations.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions will likely lead to substantial public health benefits. A recent study estimated the potential public health benefits associated with achieving net zero emissions in England and Wales. The cumulative benefits associated with net zero actions would likely result in a gain of more than 2 million cumulative life-years between 2021 and 2050 (Milner, et al., 2023). Many of these savings were due to reductions in pollution, reductions in direct emissions from fuel consumption, and changes to diets. These issues typically affect low socioeconomic status communities more heavily. We have an opportunity to positively impact public health through direct emissions reductions and by encouraging our supply chain partners to reduce emissions.

Our supply chains offer us major opportunities to positively impact almost every aspect of sustainability through environmental improvements, EDI improvements and civic engagement opportunities. As a public sector body, we are obliged to consider social value as part of any procurement activities. We aspire to go beyond minimum compliance standards by ensuring that our partners share our aspirations for EDI, social value, and civic engagement improvements. By working together, we can help people and communities to thrive.

### **EDI, Health and Well-being**

Further information on how we will continue our EDI works will be detailed in the upcoming EDI Strategy. Our EDI priorities are:

1. Involve and empower our community
2. Take action to tackle inequalities
3. Build a university community where people can be themselves.

Sustainability, EDI, and Civic Engagement activities are so closely interlinked that we must consider them to be different ways of framing the same challenges. Our Sustainability, EDI and Civic Engagement teams will work together to ensure that our projects, operations, and practices all contribute to the common good.

### **Alignment with Thrive 2028**

Our Sustainability Strategy has been developed to operate alongside and in support of our overarching University Strategy. Thrive 2028 sets out our Strategic Vision and Mission and includes four key pillars:

- Our customers thrive
- Our Product base is thriving
- Our People thrive
- Our environment thrives

### **Scope and Boundaries**

Sustainability issues are not bound by national or regional boundaries, they affect people, environments, and ecosystems around the world. Therefore, our Strategy must apply to all our sites and operations. Each site and activity come with their own challenges and so while they may be governed by the same ambitions and targets, they must be considered individually. We recognise the importance of our partner institutions and will encourage and support them to develop similar strategies and targets. We shall work together to combine knowledge, work efficiently, and share best practice.



## Tailoring our Sustainability Strategy

We can make our Sustainability Strategy easy to understand by tying all projects, targets, and objectives to a small group of key umbrella terms, known as our Strategic Areas. These Strategic Areas have been selected as they are conceptually simple, aligned with our existing management structure, and easy to communicate.

### Strategic Areas

1. Governance
2. Biodiversity
3. Energy
4. Decarbonisation
5. Waste
6. Water
7. Procurement
8. Transport
9. EDI, Health and Well-being
10. Education

Though few Strategic Areas directly incorporate goal 17, Partnerships for the Goals, it is not through lack of action. Partnerships are the golden thread that runs through every one of the Strategic Areas.

### Expected ownership of Strategic Areas

By aligning our Strategic Areas alongside our existing management structure, we can allocate a Management Champion to oversee each area. Though each Strategic Area will require the consideration and input of a range of stakeholders from across the University and our partners, each Strategic Area must have a Management Champion who can take ownership and lead the development of goals and progress against targets.

<b>Strategic Area</b>	<b>Owned by</b>	<b>Supported by</b>
Governance	Head of Sustainability, Sustainability Committee	UET
Biodiversity	Head of Sustainability, Sustainability Committee	Estates Team, university community
Energy	Head of Sustainability, Sustainability Committee	Estates Team, university community
Decarbonisation	Head of Sustainability, Sustainability Committee	Estates Team, university community
Waste	Estates Team	Head of Sustainability, university community
Water	Estates Team	Head of Sustainability
Procurement	Head of Procurement	Head of Sustainability
Transport	Head of Sustainability	Estates Team, university community
EDI, Health and Well-being	Human Resources, Head of Sustainability, EDI Committee	Head of Sustainability, Head of Civic Engagement & Communications
Education	Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Digital, Education Committee	Head of Sustainability, university community



# Our Strategic Areas

## I. Governance

### **What do we mean?**

How we ensure effective control over our sustainability ambitions and make sure that sustainability is part of every major decision. Good governance helps to mitigate risk and achieve success.

### **What is our approach?**

We have relaunched our Sustainability Committee, which includes a wide range of stakeholders from across our academic, professional services and student bodies.

Our sustainability efforts will continue to be championed by the VC and UET and will encourage all staff, learners, and stakeholders to take part and shape our ambitions and operations. Major sustainability decisions will be informed and shaped through staff and learner consultations and our Head of Sustainability will hold a monthly open forum which will be open and accessible to all staff and learners.

Sustainability will be a key consideration as part of all future strategic decision making. All future bids for capital funding will be required to consider the impact of the project against our sustainability ambitions.

### **What are our goals?**

To build a thorough, documented sustainability management system that allows the management of sustainability risks and the achievement of our wider sustainability goals.

We must ensure that sustainability is integrated to both strategic and operational decisions. We can address strategic decision making through the regular sustainability engagement with senior decision-making staff and the integration of sustainability assessments within decision making. Ensuring day to day operational decisions reflect our sustainability ambitions requires every decision maker to be reasonably well informed about sustainability issues. Our sustainability ambitions, policies will be included within our management training program. This will include sharing examples of day-to-day sustainability projects, how our actions can improve sustainability and how to encourage others to do the same. These activities are strongly linked to our education goals and ambitions.

Our values define who we aspire to be as an organisation. Our commitment to sustainability is a major part of our long-term strategic aspirations, it therefore needs to be integrated into our values. This does not require a substantial change to our values, rather, a shift in how we communicate our values. An example might be how we discuss being Responsible and Visionary through the lens of sustainability.

## **What are our targets?**

1. Launch a Sustainability Committee in the year 2022-2023, record all meetings
2. Sustainability Committee provides an initial report to UET in the year 2022-2023
3. Introduce a sustainability impact assessment for strategic decisions and capital funding bids by the end of 2023-2024
4. 10% staff involvement\* by the end of academic year 2024-2025, with an interim target of 5% by the end of 2023-2024
5. 8% learner involvement\* by the end of 2024-2025, with an interim target of 5% by the end of 2023-2024
6. Relaunch our Environmental Management System using EcoCampus, or similar system by the end of academic year 2023-2024

\*Where involvement is defined as making suggesting ideas to the committee, Senate, or Head of Sustainability either as individuals or through learner/staff associations or taking part in sustainability training. Based on learners at High Wycombe, Aylesbury, Uxbridge or Missenden Abbey sites.

## **2. Biodiversity**

### **What do we mean?**

The variety of life, both across our sites and across the globe.

Recognition of our direct impacts on our local ecosystems is straightforward. We must go beyond this to consider the impacts of our actions across the world stage. It is expected that our indirect impact on biodiversity is far greater than our direct impact on our campuses.

### **What is our approach?**

We will follow the Mitigation and Conservation Hierarchy, which is explained further in the section on our goals. Examples of how we might do this include:

Increasing the amount of space dedicated to green spaces across our campuses, both in the form of dedicated green space projects and the integration of new green space into other projects.

Introducing more external and internal planting, both to improve biodiversity and to improve staff and learner well-being.

Encouraging our partners and our supply chain to reduce negative impacts on biodiversity and to encourage improvements to biodiversity through changes in practices, product selection and dedicated biodiversity projects.

### **What are our goals?**

To become a nature positive university. Our commitment requires us to follow the principles of the Mitigation and Conservation Hierarchy. Thereby reducing the harm that our operations have on life across our planet.

The principles of the Mitigation and Conservation Hierarchy should be within our decision-making and procurement processes.

**Refrain from harm**

**Reduce our impact**

**Restore our ecosystem**

**Renew environments**

By minimising the harm our operations have on nature and enacting projects to improve biodiversity we can ensure no net loss of biodiversity. The eventual aim is that our actions should lead to a net gain in biodiversity. This area is strongly linked to our ambition to become a leader in greening urban campuses, alongside our goals for water and EDI, Health Well-being.

**What are our targets?**

1. To produce a baseline measurement of biodiversity across our three main campuses in the year 2022-2023
2. To develop a simple biodiversity impact assessment that can be used to assess the expected impact of any new project by the end of the year 2022-2023
3. Develop a biodiversity action plan to improve biodiversity across our three main campuses by the end of 2024-2025
4. To require all building projects to achieve a biodiversity net gain of 10%
5. Carry out three projects each year to improve the biodiversity of our sites through habitat improvement projects from 2023-2024

We aspire to improve the biodiversity of our space at Pinewood Studios, but we do not control any external areas. In addition, we are unable to make any changes to the buildings without permission from Pinewood Studios. We will work with Pinewood Studios to explore other means of improving biodiversity, this might include some joint projects, or other contributions towards biodiversity on the Pinewood Studio site.

### **3. Energy**

#### **What do we mean?**

The electricity, natural gas, and other fuels we use to operate our buildings, fuel our vehicles and carry out our activities.

#### **What is our approach?**

Our immediate focus is to make sure that all our energy supplies make use of traceable and ethical renewable power that minimises emissions and promotes global investment in renewable energy systems. Due to the lack of availability of biogas, it is expected that we may have to start with our electricity contract before reviewing our gas contracts in later years.

After greening our supplies, we will then look to reduce our energy consumption through energy efficiency projects. These will be funded either through direct capital investment, pre-planned maintenance works or third-party funding systems. BNU will seek out grants for energy-efficiency projects wherever possible. Our work will prioritise projects that result in both energy-efficiency benefits and improvements to occupant wellbeing.

Reducing our energy consumption through projects will reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, reduce our energy costs, and improve occupant comfort within our buildings.

Whilst we are looking to reduce our energy consumption, we will also look to implement renewable energy technologies wherever appropriate. The more we can generate our own renewable energy the more we can reduce our energy costs and improve our self-reliance. We will investigate the development of a learning lab whereby learners gain the opportunity to learn about renewable energy technologies and the use of energy in buildings.

We will think strategically in the placement of these systems to make sure that they are only located in areas that will not be subject to major renovations during the life of the system.

#### **What are our goals?**

To maximise our use of renewable energy through self-generation and greening of our energy supplies.

To minimise the use of fossil fuels

To improve the energy efficiency of our buildings and operations

#### **What are our targets?**

1. Reduction in the proportion of total energy consumption from fossil fuels
2. Ensure that all future electricity contracts include traceable renewable electricity when our current energy contracts expire in 2022-2023.
3. Complete a programme of energy-efficiency and decarbonisation surveys by the end of 2022-2023.
4. Reduction in energy use per square metre of internal floor area relative to a 2018 baseline.

2018 baseline:	265 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year
2026 target	231 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year
2028 target	216 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year
2030 target	210 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year

All dates should be read as 'by end of'

We expect that these targets may be more challenging to achieve in some sites than others. Challenging sites might include those which are already highly energy-efficient, or buildings that are listed. In each case we will work to maximise the energy-efficiency of these sites as far as practicable, but without compromising our ability to improve our other sites. We must invest wisely and prioritise projects that will deliver the biggest impacts.



## 4. Decarbonisation

### What do we mean?

The reduction of direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions through our activities and operations.

### What is our approach?

To reduce our direct and indirect emissions as far as possible by taking a systems approach in conjunction with our energy-efficiency targets. Buildings and direct fossil fuel consumption are responsible for our Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions under the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Protocol.

Our property decarbonisation approach is to follow the energy hierarchy to reduce our emissions:

- Operational changes to cut energy demand
- Retrofitting properties to be more energy-efficient
- Adopting high-efficiency low/zero carbon systems
- Using energy from renewable sources
- Communicating the need for sustainability action.

This is summarised by the Greater London Authority Energy Hierarchy of 'Be Lean, Be Clean, Be Green and Be Seen'.

Our buildings are the most visible element of our carbon emissions, but they are only a comparatively small part of our total emissions. Most of our emissions are associated with our procurement, travel, waste, or construction activities etc. which are referred to as Scope 3 emissions under the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Protocol. These are more difficult to identify, monitor and reduce.

Scope 3 categories, as defined by the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Protocol:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Purchased goods and services             | 9. Downstream transportation and distribution |
| 2. Capital goods                            | 10. Processing of sold products               |
| 3. Fuel and energy-related activities       | 11. Use of sold products                      |
| 4. Upstream transportation and distribution | 12. End-of-life treatment of sold products    |
| 5. Waste generated in operations            | 13. Downstream leased assets                  |
| 6. Business travel                          | 14. Franchises                                |
| 7. Employee commuting                       | 15. Investments                               |
| 8. Upstream leased assets                   |   |

Most organisations find that they are only able to measure, monitor and influence some of these categories. Not all categories are necessarily relevant to every organisation, and even if relevant, it isn't always possible to influence that category e.g., a university cannot change how electricity is transmitted and distributed. Nonetheless, we wish to do everything we can to reduce these indirect emissions. As part of our Decarbonisation plans, we will identify which areas of our Scope 3 emissions we can measure and manage.

**What are our goals?**

To reduce our energy-related greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2030

To measure, monitor, and reduce our indirect greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible.

**What are our targets?**

1. Identify which areas of indirect (Scope 3) emissions we can measure and develop a measurement plan by the end of academic year 2023-2024
2. To complete the initial baseline assessment of indirect emissions by the end of 2024-2025
3. Work with our supply chain to identify the suppliers and partners we can encourage and support to reduce our emissions and drive sustainability improvements
4. Develop an emissions reduction plan for our indirect emissions by the end of 2025-2026

## **5. Waste**

### **What do we mean?**

Those materials we use or generate that are disposed of without being reused or repurposed. Including general waste, recycling, food waste and other waste. Our waste also considers products we dispose of when they reach the end of their working life. As of 2020-2021 we recycled 38% of our waste, landfilled 37% and sent 25% to energy from waste facilities. These figures include both residential and non-residential waste consumption figures. Our total waste generation figure is c. 65kg per learner and staff full-time equivalent.

### **What is our approach?**

We will prioritise the minimisation of waste by working to stop waste being generated in the first place. This isn't always practical and there are limits to how much we can avoid, so, we will then look to maximise the proportion of waste reused or recycled.

Instead of disposing of materials to be recycled or disposed of, we intend to promote the principles of the circular economy and waste hierarchy. A circular economy is one in which economic activity is we work together to separate or reduce the reliance of economic activity from the consumption of finite resources. Common examples include the reuse of products, sharing and leasing items, refurbishing and repairing existing items to prolong lifespans, and designing out waste from the manufacturing process.

One way in which we can help to drive the principles of the circular economy is to incorporate little green nudges into day-to-day activities, such as increasing the price of takeaway food, but only if users don't bring their own reusable container.

We will also work with our supply chain to 'design out' waste as far as possible. This will be done either by reducing surplus materials, changing the types of materials used to allow them to be recycled or re-used, and through an emphasis in the importance of circular economy principles.

### **What are our goals?**

To reduce the amount of single-use material used across our sites.

To increase the amount of waste material that is recycled or re-used.

To reduce the carbon footprint associated with our waste

To shift staff and learner attitudes in favour of reusable materials through incentivisation.

### **What are our targets?**

- I. Reduce waste generated per learner and staff full-time equivalent
  - a. Reduce overall waste generated to 60kg per learner and staff full-time equivalent by the end of 2024-2025
  - b. Reduce overall waste generated to 55kg per learner and staff full-time equivalent by the end of 2026-2027
  - c. Reduce overall waste generated to 50kg per learner and staff full-time equivalent by the end of 2029-2030

2. Increase reuse and recycling
  - a. Increase our reuse/recycling rate across the organisation to 45% by the end of 2024-2025
  - b. Increase our reuse/recycling rate to 55% by the end of 2026-2027
  - c. Increase our reuse/recycling rate to 65% by the end of 2029-2030
  
3. Reduction in waste by incentivising the use of reusable hot food and drink containers for takeaway orders
  - a. Introduce reusable hot food & drink containers and achieve 10% use of reusable containers by the end of 2024-2025
  - b. Increase the use of own hot food and drink containers to 20% by the end of 2026-2027
  - c. Increase the use of own hot food and drink containers to 33% by the end of 2029-2030

Note, these targets exclude construction related waste and clinical waste. Construction waste will be addressed separately.

## **6. Water**

### **What do we mean?**

The consumption of clean, drinkable water purchased from water suppliers. As of 2020-2021 we used 8.06m<sup>3</sup> of water per full time equivalent staff and learner. This figure includes both residential and non-residential water consumption figures. Our total water consumption was equal to 52,875 cubic metres.

### **What is our approach?**

To improve our awareness of how and when we use water across our portfolio. Through the measurement of our water footprint, we will identify priority areas for the reduction of water use.

As our climate changes it will become increasingly important that we take action to minimise the amount of water we draw from our rivers and aquifers, while ensuring that periods of severe rainfall can be adequately drained to minimise the risk of surface flooding.

Our efforts to reduce our water footprint will focus on reducing the amount of water needed to operate our buildings through a combination of water efficiency technologies and staff and learner engagement methods.

Wherever possible, we will look to replace the use of clean mains water with rainwater or recovered water that is clean enough for uses other than drinking.

We will also work to improve how rainwater is managed across our sites to reduce the risk of flooding both on our sites and the wider area. This area is strongly linked to our ambition to become a leader in greening urban campuses, alongside our goals for biodiversity and EDI, Health & Well-being.

### **What are our goals?**

To reduce the amount of mains water used across our sites, and to manage rainwater more effectively.

### **What are our targets?**

1. Reduction in water use per staff and student full-time equivalent
  - a. Achieve a 10% reduction in water use per staff and student by the end of 2024-2025
  - b. Achieve a 20% reduction in water use per staff and student by the end of 2026-2027
  - c. Achieve a 30% reduction in water use per staff and student by the end of 2029-2030
  
2. Climate change adaptation
  - a. Increase the use of permeable surfaces or other Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) by 200m<sup>2</sup> by the end of academic year 2024-2025
  - b. Increase this by 500m<sup>2</sup> by the end of academic year 2026-2027
  - c. Increase this by 1,000m<sup>2</sup> by the end of academic year 2029-2030
  
3. Accurate measurement
  - a. Fit Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) systems to all our water supplies by the end of the year 2023-2024

## **7. Procurement**

### **What do we mean?**

Sustainable procurement was defined by the Procuring the Future Task Force in 2006.

‘Sustainable Procurement is a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole-life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment.’ (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2006).

We have carried out a preliminary assessment of supply chain CO<sub>2</sub> emissions via the Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium and the use of the Higher Education Supply Chain Emissions Tool (HESCET). Though this does not cover all of our procurement activities, it was sufficient to show that our supply chain CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are likely several times greater than our Scope 1 and 2 CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It is therefore of paramount importance that we develop effective relationships with our supply chain to support them in the journey to net zero.

### **What is our approach?**

Living Wage Employer and drive this forward through our supply chain.

To adopt a sustainable procurement system that provides us with methods and working practices to maximise sustainability impact whilst offering good value to BNU. Examples of systems include ISO 20400:2017 ‘Sustainable Procurement – Guidance’ and the National Flexible Framework produced by the Sustainable Procurement Task Force.

We recognise that while we should push our supply chain to be more sustainable, the biggest improvements in sustainability will come from helping those who are not as advanced on the journey. We must strike a balance between proactively selecting those who are more sustainable and encouraging and supporting those who wish to improve.

### **What are our goals?**

Explore options concerning different sustainable procurement methodologies and decide on a system/method that best matches our aspirations, requirements and capabilities.

Develop a system of tracking supplier sustainability performance and contribution towards both net-zero and UN Sustainable Development Goals.

To work with our supply chain to identify and share examples of good sustainability practices. We should celebrate the success of our partners and encourage others to work with us to make improvements. Our partners should share in our aspirations and be proud of our joint success.

We will work with our supply chain partners to develop a collection of case studies which detail good and best practice procedures and projects. These will be made available to all via our sustainability website. This information will be shared with all organisations we work with to inspire and educate other organisations in how they can improve environmental, economic and social sustainability.

We will explore how we can further promote the use of social enterprises across the university supply chains. Recent projects have shown that partnerships with social enterprises can be highly beneficial to both BNU and the social enterprise.

Recent successes include collaborations with:

Missenden Walled Garden for planting and plant maintenance activities

Oxford Wood Recycling for outdoor furniture

Useful Simple Trust for architectural and landscape design services

Though it is important to us that our procurement activities are as beneficial to society as possible, it is also a legal requirement. The Social Value Act requires us to consider and evaluate the economic, social and environmental benefits of our procurement activities.

All sustainable procurement efforts will be developed in close conjunction with our Civic Engagement and EDI teams.

### **What are our targets?**

1. To identify an appropriate sustainable procurement system by the end of the year 2023-2024
2. To implement an appropriate sustainable procurement system by the end of the year 2025-2026.
3. We will support our procurement team by providing each person with relevant training in sustainable procurement by the end of the year 2023-2024.
4. To introduce a means of tracking output indicators from our suppliers that allow us to measure our social and environmental sustainability performance more accurately. Starting with those suppliers with whom we spend over £90,000 p.a. which is estimated to cover 63% of spend and 54% of known supply chain CO2 emissions. With an ambition to reduce this threshold in the future. This will be introduced to new contracts by the end of the year 2023-2024.

Examples of potential data requests are listed below:

#### **Environmental sustainability:**

Tonnes of waste generated, water and energy consumption, CO2 emissions, Net-zero targets and plans.

#### **Social Sustainability:**

Living wage compliance, Disability Confident membership, staff training opportunities.

#### **Promoting sustainability:**

SDG engagement and reporting activities

## **8. Transport**

### **What do we mean?**

Transport in the context of our operations simply means journeys taken by staff and students to their place of work/study, including journeys made for business purposes.

### **What is our approach?**

Working with other major stakeholders in our community to drive forward a sustainable transport solution across the local communities.

Focus on the reduction of single occupancy vehicle journeys made by staff, by making it easier for our staff to access lift share services and feel comfortable that lift share services are safe, convenient and save money.

Encourage more staff and students to walk to cycle to our sites by improving on-campus cycle storage, and by making it easier for staff and students to access changing and showering facilities.

### **What are our goals?**

To develop effective partnerships with wider employers in our communities, and work with those partners to promote sustainable transport initiatives across our sites.

Reduction in the number of single occupancy car journeys to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion around our sites.

Promotion of walk and cycle to work and study schemes by staff and learners.

### **What are our targets?**

1. To carry out a survey of staff and student transportation methods by the end of the year 2022-2023
2. To develop a strategy to reduce the proportion of single occupancy vehicle journeys by the end of 2023-2024
3. To improve our facilities for cycle users by the end of 2024-2025.
4. To reclaim space currently used for car parking across our High Wycombe campus and to use the space to improve staff and student wellbeing and biodiversity by the end of 2023-2024.



## **9. EDI, Health and Well-being**

### **What do we mean?**

There are two key elements to our Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) and Well-being Strategic Area. We have linked these sections as both are about making sure that the BNU community are supported and that all staff and learners are comfortable and successful.

We are proud that BNU has a diverse community with a strong record of accomplishment of inclusion, though we accept that our past success does not absolve us of the need to take further action. Through our activities and our educational offerings, we are ideally placed to build a fairer society and challenge inequality.

### **EDI**

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion is about how we ensure everyone feels valued and comfortable contributing to university life without fear of discrimination or unfair treatment.

### **Health and Well-being**

Our staff and students should have a comfortable environment in which to work and study. A large amount of research has been carried out on the impacts of an uncomfortable work environment on performance. Research shows that people work and study, less effectively when they are not comfortable. Improving the quality of indoor environments can lead to an improvement in performance of 0.5 to 5% (Lamb & Kwok, 2016), (Fisk & Rosenfeld, 1997). Improving the comfort of our buildings may lead to an improvement in academic performance and staff performance.

### **What is our approach?**

#### **EDI**

Following a period of consultation and reflection, we developed three EDI priorities which will be progressed between 2022 and 2028. Each priority is underpinned by size objectives and measurable outcomes, which will be supported by baseline measurements. Further information on each priority can be found within our Equality Strategy.

University Senate and Council take overall accountability for our EDI commitments. All staff and learners must play their part to deliver, develop and support our EDI work. Our colleagues in UET, UMG, Heads of Schools and Directors can each have a major impact on our EDI progress.

### **Health and Well-being**

We will assess how comfortable our buildings are and, when necessary, make changes to how we heat, cool, ventilate and light our buildings to make them as comfortable as possible. Whenever we change buildings as part of decarbonisation or energy-efficiency works we should assess how comfortable the buildings are based on end-user feedback.

Indoor planting can have a substantial positive impact on occupant wellbeing. Our sites currently have limited indoor planting. We should look to encourage our staff to introduce more indoor planting, to give a sense of ownership of the space, introduce life and colour into work and relaxation spaces and improve indoor air quality.

## **What are our goals?**

### **EDI**

Priorities:

1. Involve and empower our community
2. Take action to tackle inequalities
3. Build a university community where people can be themselves

Each Priority has a set of six objectives.

## **Health and Well-being**

All new and refurbished offices should allow our staff to work comfortably, our learners should be able to focus on their studies without being distracted by the temperature. For most people, this means a temperature of 20 to 25°C outside of extreme events. Wherever possible, we will look to provide temperature control through natural means, this means providing natural ventilation to reduce the heat and provide fresh air. However, in the future it may not be possible to ensure spaces are comfortable during peak summer periods without the use of air conditioning systems.

Our staff and learners should work and study in well-lit spaces, make effective use of natural light, efficiently lit, free from glare, and neither too bright nor too dark.

No building or room should feel stuffy or uncomfortable.

## **What are our targets?**

### **EDI**

1. Future surveys show more than 68% of our BNU community agree with the statement: 'BNU involves our university community to make progress in tackling inequality'
2. Future surveys show more than 66% of our BNU community agree with the statement: 'BNU takes action to tackle inequalities'.
3. Future surveys show that more than 78% of our BNU community agree with the statement: 'BNU is a place where people can be themselves'.

Further information on our EDI activities is available from our EDI Strategy.

## **Health and Well-being**

1. Survey staff in all offices about environmental comfort (temperature, light levels, ventilation) by the end of year 2023-2024, identifying priority areas of our estate.
2. Consult with the students, the Student Union and teaching staff to find out which, if any teaching and learning areas are not comfortable. Identify priority areas by 2023/2024.
3. Introduce indoor planting into office areas to improve air quality and improve the working environment. Run a staff consultation by the end of 2022/2023 and, subject to positive feedback, a pilot study by the end of 2023/2024.

## **10. Education**

### **What do we mean?**

Social and environmental issues are often interconnected. There are examples wherever you look, in every sector of the economy and every aspect of society.

Commonly known examples include:

- Systemic inequalities in housing developments mean that low-income households are more likely to be exposed to higher levels of indoor and outdoor air pollution for reasons outside of their control. (Ferguson, et al., 2021)
- Reduced access to green space can have a negative impact on mental health. (Barton & Rogerson, 2017)
- The most affordable clothing, including fast fashion clothing, often contains the most plastics or is manufactured in the worst social conditions, (Changing Markets Foundation, 2021)

All of these issues are sustainability challenges. All of these are a blend of social, environmental, and economic sustainability.

The intrinsic links between social and environmental sustainability mean that a holistic approach is needed to maximise the effectiveness of any treatment.

### **What is our approach?**

Our curriculum team and Head of Sustainability are working to make sustainability accessible to all learners, no matter the course. We are developing new Opportunity Modules through which learners can gain an understanding of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and wider sustainability issues. Each module is worth 10 credits and will be taught through a range of methods, including Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), lectures, workshops, and independent and collaborative study. Learners will be encouraged to work with those from other courses to apply an interdisciplinary approach to sustainability issues. Our learners should understand the interaction between social, economic, and environmental sustainability issues and how progress may require civic engagement, working with external partners and organisations both local and internationally.

Wherever possible, our research should include some form of discovery and analysis of sustainability issues. This may be a discussion of how future climates may impact the area of study or consideration of the need to follow the principles of the circular economy.

### **What are our goals?**

Sustainability issues are by their very nature interdisciplinary, and wide-reaching. Every education programme can positively impact one or more UN Sustainable Development Goals. Our education programmes must inspire learners to question how their actions can improve sustainability. No learner should leave BNU without an understanding of how their topic of study is relevant to sustainability issues.

We aspire to include an element of sustainability in every course in our aim to develop well-rounded, future thinkers with an understanding of ethical issues and a global perspective.

All learners and staff should have access to sustainability training. Examples could include carbon literacy courses for learners, sustainable education and research courses for our academic staff, and organisational sustainability courses such as social and ethical procurement for our professional services staff.

Teaching staff should be encouraged to learn how they can best integrate sustainability and climate education into the curriculum. It will be necessary for all academic teaching staff to demonstrate some form of sustainability related continual professional development. Our educators must understand why sustainability issues are so important, know how they can engage learners in sustainability discussions and are confident in how sustainability is relevant to their programme.

### **Research and knowledge exchange**

By the end of academic year 2023-2024 every research and knowledge exchange project should be able to show a link to sustainability issues. We will be able to collate these projects to show how our research and knowledge exchange activities further sustainable development across the topics of environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

Discussions are ongoing on how we can further incorporate sustainability and the SDGs within our research and knowledge transfer activities.

### **What are our targets?**

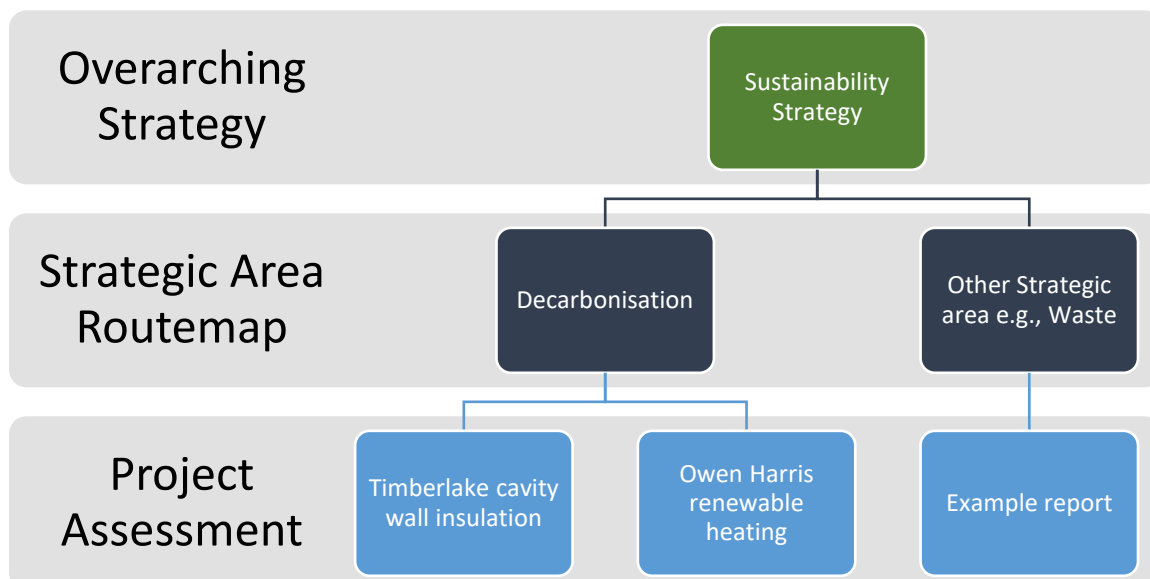
1. Identify which programmes include a sustainability related module, the nature of these modules, and how these can be celebrated and enhanced by the end of academic year 2022-2023.
2. Explore means of integrating at least one undergraduate module focused on sustainability issues into each School. Develop a plan for how to do so by the end of academic year 2024-2025.
3. Explore means of integrating at least one undergraduate module focused on sustainability into each Programme. Develop a plan for how to do so by the end of academic year 2025-2026 and do so by the end of 2026-2027.
4. Consider how we can integrate social sustainability issues into our education, research and knowledge exchange programmes. This would include matters like decolonisation, global equality and health and the links between resource consumption and environmental degradation. Summarise this into a feasibility plan by the end of 2024-2025.

These targets require further refinement due to the scale and potential complexity of the challenge. They will be refined further following discussions with the C23 team, Director of Research and Innovation and Pro-VC for Digital and Education. Any amendment to these targets will be published.

## Practical steps

We are adopting a hierarchical approach to our Sustainability policies. There will be multiple levels where each level becomes narrower in focus, but with a greater number of documents, each with a greater level of detail. Our Sustainability Strategy will be at the top of this hierarchy and will set out our overall attitudes, methods and ambitions and guide all subsequent documents.

Supplemental route maps and plans will address specific aspects of sustainability based on the attitudes, ambitions and methods set out in the Sustainability Strategy. Using Decarbonisation as an example, our Sustainability Strategy sets out our high-level ambitions, objectives, and targets. A Decarbonisation Report will then outline our emissions, ambitions and working methods in greater detail, with the detail of each project contained within Project Assessment reports. Our Decarbonisation works start with a Routemap and will be followed by our Carbon Management Implementation Plan following the completion of a decarbonisation consultancy piece.



## **Revision Mechanism**

We acknowledge that situations change over time and that targets that may seem challenging may turn out to be simpler than expected. Equally, targets that we believe to be simple may be more challenging than we originally expected or be impossible due to external events. To allow us a degree of flexibility, we will carry out an annual review of the suitability of our targets and whether they remain appropriate to our ambitions. Any targets will be revised to ensure that amendments are aligned with the spirit and intention behind the original target.

### **Example**

If through the course of the development of a waste management plan, we discover that no waste contractor can recycle or reuse a specific material. We would then seek to source alternatives to that material, or design it out of our processes, but that there are no commercially available alternatives to that material, or it could not be avoided then we may need to revise our recycling and reuse targets. We would develop a revised target in line with the original spirit of our earlier target and publish the revision alongside a summary document outlining the need for the amendment.

By including a revision mechanism, we intend to promote a pragmatic view to sustainability. We understand that we should seek to set ourselves challenging targets, but we also must accept that not everything is within our control. Our Sustainability Strategy exists to drive positive progress towards environmental, social and economic sustainability, but not at the expense our, or our learner's ability to grow and Thrive.

# Operational Practices

A common challenge experienced by organisations keen to run multiple projects at once is a lack of progress due to the use of different methods and practices. This can make it difficult for a stakeholder on one project to understand how another project is progressing and can result in confusion.

To minimise the risk of confusion, and to ensure that all stakeholders can understand our progress in each Strategic Area we have developed a framework of methods and practices that we will apply to each Strategic Area. Each of the seven methods is intended to allow flexibility within the area if it can be shown to be beneficial and explained within the context of the assessment framework.

1. Civic Engagement
2. Research and Knowledge Exchange
3. Learning
4. Adaptation and mitigation
5. Improvement
6. Circular economy
7. Investment

## Civic Engagement

- Communicating our ambitions
- Empowering our staff to be active participants
- Staff and student volunteering activities
- Encouraging our staff and learners to take part and challenge us
- Joined up plans and strategies
- Civic environmentalism

See upcoming Civic Engagement strategy for further information

## Research & Knowledge Exchange

- International development
- Equality
- Resource efficiency

## Learning

- Data gathering
- Intelligent data use
- How we use resources
- Opportunities for improvement



## **Adaptation and mitigation**

- Plan ahead
- Take prompt action
- Minimise impacts
- Refrain from harm

## **Improvement**

- Challenge ourselves to do better
- Setting stretching targets
- Progress with every project

## **Circular economy**

- Reduce resource use
- Encourage the re-use of materials
- Work with others
- Swap for sustainable

## **Investment**

- Spend money wisely
- Financially healthy
- Good value for money for students
- Plan ahead
- Socially conscious investment

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