

ESG Strategy and Targets Update

ESG Working Group

April 2026

ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance)

ESG Strategy

Following extensive consultation sessions across the wider university, Estates and Facilities have launched the University of Wolverhampton's first Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Strategy 2035. This complements the overarching Strategy 2035 which sets out the university's commitment to become a more sustainable institution. The ESG Strategy establishes clear, measurable targets and guides progress towards 2035, enhancing the University's national and international ranking. It was endorsed by the University Executive Board (UEB) in May 2025 and has been formally published since. A key ESG target is the University Level 1 KPI to reduce carbon emissions year on year. The first ESG Impact Report was published at the end of 2025. A Sustainability Policy is currently under consultation to complement the ESG Strategy. This progress report includes updates on the ESG targets to date.

Curriculum Framework

The Sustainability team collaborated with experts from across the university to develop the new Curriculum Framework. The framework includes ESG Considerations to ensure that graduates are equipped with the knowledge and skills to be responsible global citizens. The successful pilot paved the way for a phased integration in academic programmes; a strategic initiative that will position the UoW at the forefront of higher education to meet the goals of set out in Strategy 2035.

Sustainable Development Goals Digital Badge and Student Champions

Fifteen University students were recognised as Sustainability Champions on Earth Day (April 2026), after achieving a university digital badge and certificate that acknowledges their commitment to sustainability through academic and careers-focused projects. The students, drawn from a range of disciplines, completed the WLV Sustainability Champion Digital Badge, a reflective learning initiative designed to help students explore sustainability through their studies, placements and practical experiences, while linking this learning directly to future careers and employability. The initiative supports the University's wider sustainability ambitions and the Green Innovation Corridor, encouraging students to engage with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to

recognise that sustainability spans social, environmental, economic and employability dimensions.

One Sustainability Champion, Sharanjit Rattu, BA (Hons) Education Studies, said:

“Our habits, our views, our actions matter. Adjusting your views and habits changes things for the better. We are all one and have the right to act responsibly for our planet, even the smallest changes can make a big difference.”



Another student awardee, Shradha Limbu, MSc Computer Science with Professional Practice, highlighted the long-term impact of the programme, adding:

“Moving forward, I aim to integrate these values into my practice both as a student and in my future professional career. By carrying these values into my future behaviour and professional practice, I hope to contribute to a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.”

The Sustainability Champion Digital Badge is led from within the Student Success Directorate and has recently been expanded across the University following strong engagement in its early phases. It encourages participants to reflect on how sustainability connects to their subject area, personal values and future professional practice, while also helping them articulate these skills to employers.

Dr Laura Nicklin, Student Success and Graduate Outcomes Lead, who created and oversees the initiative, said:

“Our Sustainability Champions work is so important to staff and students at the University of Wolverhampton, as well as the wider Wolverhampton community. By connecting the global goals to their own values, studies and careers, participants begin to see how sustainability can support their success, strengthen their employability and position them as active contributors to a changing world.”

The University will continue to grow the Sustainability Champions initiative as part of its commitment to embedding sustainability across teaching, learning and campus life.

Carbon Management

The University of Wolverhampton has published its Carbon Management Plan (CMP) as a guiding roadmap to forecast the projections of the university’s carbon journey. The

university is an official signatory for 'Race to Zero' committing to achieve net zero for scope 1 & 2 by 2050.

The CMP sets out the historic carbon emissions recorded for the university from 2007/08 academic year and incorporating considerations for the university Estates Masterplan to make the campus more sustainable which will contribute to circa 16% reduction on the carbon footprint. The government funded Walsall Campus decarbonisation project, the UK grid decarbonisation and long-term maintenance projects indicate that university is estimated to achieve a reduction of 35% of its Scope 1 & 2 emissions by 2034/35. A Carbon Footprint Report has been produced for the academic year 2024/25 with full reporting on scope 1 and 2 emissions and enhanced Scope 3 reporting. The annual exercise ensures accurate monitoring of the University's progression towards its strategic targets to reduce Scope 1 and 2 carbon footprints by at least 16% by 2030 and 35% by 2035 (vs. 2021/22 baseline). The report indicates that 12% reduction has been achieved to date (against the 2021/22 baseline); showing the university on track to meet its KPIs and may exceed them. The greening of the UK electricity network and reduced energy consumption across the estate has led to the decrease in emissions. Reduced energy consumption has been made possible thanks to more efficient lighting, heating and solar pv in addition to effective control of heating systems. Further analysis of scope 3 emissions will be undertaken with targets set to reduce these.

Walsall Decarbonisation Project

Air and Water source Heat pumps, solar PV, and a low carbon heat network are just some of the technologies being introduced at the University of Wolverhampton Walsall Campus as part of an £11m project to accelerate our journey to net zero.

The University has joined forces with Vital Energi to deliver the multi-technology energy solution. The planning application for the heat pump compound and the sub-station has been approved. Due to delays with the planning application approval, the current completion date has been moved to September 2026.

This transformational work would not have been possible without £8.6m of funding from Salix Finance, allocated through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. Their support is helping us accelerate our transition to low-carbon heating and contribute to regional and national net-zero goals. The university is contributing £2.52m of funding towards the project.

Over recent months, contractors Vital Energi have been installing a range of low-carbon technologies across the campus. We are pleased to confirm that:

- All 1,300 solar panels are now installed, enabling us to generate clean, renewable electricity on site.

- The new district heating pipework has been fully laid, replacing the current system with infrastructure capable of carrying higher volumes of lower-temperature hot water - a key requirement for our transition away from gas-fired boilers.
- The heat pump compound base is complete, ready for installation of the new air and water source cascade heat pumps.



Image 1: Solar panels on the Sister Dora building and other buildings will significantly reduce the campus' carbon footprint.

These elements represent some of the most complex and disruptive stages of the project, including the significant trenching works that stretched across campus in recent months. With the district heating pipework now in place, paving and landscaping are being reinstated, marking the end of the most visible disruption.

The next stages of the project include:

- Construction of the heat pump compound
- Installation of the heat pump systems
- Commissioning and testing of all equipment

The project remains on track for completion in Autumn 2026, keeping us well aligned with our sustainability commitments and long-term campus strategy.

Once fully operational, the new low-carbon technologies are expected to reduce our carbon emissions, supporting the goals set out in the University's Carbon Management Plan, by reducing Scope 1 and 2 emissions. While long-term financial savings will depend on electricity prices at the time, the new systems - supported by on-site renewable energy generation - are designed to deliver significant efficiencies over the lifetime of the equipment.

Campus Upgrades

To increase sustainable operations across all campuses, Estates have been implementing technologies to reduce energy and carbon across our buildings. The Springfield Campus now has improved controls for cooling to reduce energy consumption. City North has had Solar PV installed on the MX Housman building in addition to improved controls for cooling. The student Accommodation at City has seen the installation of Solar PV and double-glazed windows. City South has benefitted from efficient heating boilers, Roof insulation and LED Lighting. Sustainability is being embedded into the Estates Masterplan and Green Innovation Corridor which is extremely exciting for the university to enhance the experience for students and visitors. We are continually investigating more opportunities. These projects represent progressive steps to producing clean and affordable energy on site. The university purchases 100% REGO (Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin) backed electricity.

Circular Economy

Contractor Bagnall and Morris (B&M) were awarded the Waste Disposal Contract in November 2024. They have recently re-branded as 'Panda'. The university is continuing to send Zero waste to landfill; The highest recycling rates were achieved in Springfield Campus where 48% of the generated waste was recycled followed by City Campus with 31.3% recycling. Overall recycling rates in the last quarter were 40%, which is significantly higher than the 23% recycled in the 2024-25 academic year.

Engagement Activities

As part of efforts to support life on land and increase biodiversity, we have run many planting schemes with students, and we plan to continue to roll this programme out further. We have dedicated campus teams, accommodation services and lecturers supporting the scheme. Initiatives include -

- Students planting saplings from the Woodland Trust.
- Planters made on site from upcycled wood.
- Bird boxes and bat boxes made on site.

There is an allotment at the Walsall Campus used to complement courses for Early Years and Childhood Studies, and for nursing to support mental health and wellbeing.

Over 200 saplings were planted at the Walsall and Springfield campuses in the Autumn, tying into courses for students at the School of Architecture learning about urbanism.

An initiative called 'WILD WLW' is in development with passionate staff and students to support biodiversity and wellbeing across campuses with a focus on collaborative projects between campus teams and students.

ESG Governance

As part of embedding Sustainability into the Curriculum, Governance was agreed for an ESG Group and smaller sub-working groups with representation from schools, faculties and departments from around the university. The ESG Groups have been established, and we now have over 75 ESG champions from across the university who receive quarterly dashboards, and they are invited to working groups and events where possible.

People and Planet League

The People and Planet League is a university Sustainability ranking that contributes to the Times overall ranking. It is based on a range of categories, including carbon emissions, recycling, catering, travel, procurement, policies, strategy, engagement, investment, ethical careers, sustainable education and more. It is scored from information available on webpages and Estates HESA Return. We are up 21 places from last year. We are now a 3rd Class university which has improved from a failed university previously. This improvement is due to the strategy, updated webpages ([Environmental, Social and Governance - University of Wolverhampton](#)) and the HESA Estates Return. We aim to continually improve.

ESG Targets Updates April 2026

KPI	Baseline	Target for 2029/30	Target for 2035	Spring 2026 Update
Total Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions *University Level 1 KPI ref 9	21/22 emissions: 8,779.5 tCO ² e	16% reduction from 21/22 baseline	35% reduction from 21/22 baseline	24/25 Academic year: Scope 1 and 2 - 12% reduction against baseline: 7467.41 tCO ² e
Renewal of Race Equality Charter and Athena Swan *University Level 1 KPI ref 13	REC: Bronze Athena Swan: Bronze	Athena Swan Silver mark REC Silver mark	Athena Swan Silver mark REC Silver mark	REC renewal submitted at the end of March 2026 with outcome expected by end of May. EDI team is in the process of combing the AS and REC action plans into one overall EDI action plan and are implementing some of the actions. Progress reports will go to the People and Culture committee. University on target for Silver submissions.
Recycling from University student accommodation, teaching and admin buildings.	2023-24 recycling rate: 23%	30%	35%	24/25 Academic year: 27% Recycling rate across the university as of Spring 2026 are currently at 40%

Sustainable Construction & Refurbishment	Not previously tracked	100% new build and 50% major refurbishment work on site over 12 weeks registered with Considerate Constructors.	100% new build and major refurbishment work on site over 12 weeks registered with Considerate Constructors.	<p>The University Executive Boards endorsed the University becoming a Client of the Considerate Constructors Scheme. Projects over 12 weeks on site will now be registered with the scheme to monitor there</p> <p>SKA Certification being adopted in the Springfield refurbishment projects currently in progress and are currently aiming for Gold.</p> <p>Sustainability being embedded into Estates Masterplan and capital projects including Black Country Medical school and the School of Art.</p>
Supporting Biodiversity by increasing vegetation and nature habitats on site	2023-24: 40 new trees were planted	50 new plants/trees planted at the university and 10 nature habitats	60 new plants/trees planted at the university and 10 nature habitats	<p>365 plants were planted on Earth Day 2025 across all campuses.</p> <p>18th November 105 saplings planted at Walsall - on with students and visitors from the Hive College.</p> <p>8 bird boxes made by maintenance teams were installed in 2025.</p> <p>20th November planted 99 saplings with students and members of staff from estates and the School of Architecture at the Springfield Campus.</p> <p>25th November planted 20 saplings with students and a member of staff at Springfield Campus.</p> <p>Biodiversity net gain Walsall Campus with Vital Energi.</p> <p>Wild WLV initiative begun at Walsall Campus with student residences pollinators and more.</p> <p>March 2026: Mental Health Day - 150 new plants planted in wall planters at Costa and city accommodation</p> <p>Initial discussions for pop up allotment at Springfield Campus.</p>

Sustainable procurement: ESG Inclusion in University tendered contracts	2023-24: All University tendered contracts included minimum 2.5% ESG Scoring	All University tendered contracts include minimum 10% ESG Scoring	All University tendered contracts include minimum 12.5% ESG Scoring	<p>Currently 5% ESG Scoring for university tendered contracts.</p> <p>ESG Questions have been updated, and the Sustainability team scores these sections in each tender.</p> <p>Updated Sustainable Procurement Policy has been approved.</p>
Responsible Water Consumption	2023-24 consumption for all sites: 100,570 m ³ (Data Source – Water2Business reporting)	Reduce water consumption by 5%	Reduce water consumption by 10%	<p>2024/25 Academic Year water consumption: 114,527 m³ (Data Source – Water2Business reporting)</p> <p>Water consumption is being monitored closely to see to identify opportunities for reductions.</p>
Sustainable Catering	2% plant-based meals available September 2024 620,759 disposable items purchased 2023-24	5% plant-based meals available 10% reduction in disposable items purchased	10% plant-based meals available 15% reduction in disposable items purchased	<p>2024/25 Academic Year: Disposable items reduced by 5.4%</p> <p>3% plant-based meals will be available on the menu from August 2026.</p> <p>Catering is now working with MY emissions: They provide a report on what all our products we purchase and rate them. From lowest emissions, highest emissions.</p> <p>Catering uses Nopla: A takeaway system that doesn't contain any plastic, these products are made from seaweed and degrade into the ground.</p>

Sustainable Education	Not currently measured	Inclusion of sustainability during revalidation of university courses to embed 'Sustainable Environmental, Social and Governance' for students.	Creation of Sustainability Digital Badge for students.	<p>The Curriculum framework was launched in September 2025, with Sustainability included as a part of the 'Future ready education'.</p> <p>The WLV Sustainability Champion Digital Badge, a reflective learning initiative designed to help students explore sustainability is now available and has been completed by 15 students in 2025/26 academic year.</p>
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<p>Community involvement and university engagement</p>	<p>Not previously measured</p>	<p>Establish one student-staff sustainability group.</p> <p>Deliver a minimum of 3 sustainability engagement events per year.</p> <p>Ensure 100% of new students living in student accommodation receive sustainability induction information.</p> <p>Issue one sustainability survey per year.</p>	<p>Increase number of participants at the student-staff sustainability group or create additional groups.</p> <p>Deliver a minimum of 6 sustainability engagement events per year.</p> <p>Ensure 100% of new students living in student accommodation receive sustainability induction information.</p> <p>Issue one sustainability survey per year.</p>	<p>Walsall Saplings planted with 50 students 2024 March. Volunteers plant 200 saplings planted at Wolverhampton university - BBC News</p> <p>18th November - 10 students and 1 lecturer planting saplings at Walsall. 4 students and 2 pastoral staff from the Hive Post 16 SEND College.</p> <p>20th November planted saplings with 25 students and 9 members of staff from estates and SOABE at the Springfield Campus.</p> <p>25th November planted saplings with 20 students and 1 member of staff at Springfield Campus.</p> <p>An E-Learning course has now been developed and is available to staff, percentage of completion to be tracked.</p>
<p>Improve the University ranking in the People and Planet League</p>	<p>2024 People and Planet League Ranking Class: Fail Score: 10.5% Ranked 147th.</p>			<p>2025 League Ranking Class: Third Class Rank: 125 Score: 29.1%</p> <p>Continual work has taken place to improve the ranking by submitting the Estates Management Record to HESA. The university website is continually updated to share positive actions, green events are being planned, a Sustainability Policy is currently in consultation.</p>

Contact

Robert Gilbert – Director of Estates and Facilities

Charlotte Baker - Sustainability Manager

Zainab Own – Sustainability Manager

VERSION	1.0	AUTHOR/OWNER	Charlotte Baker and Zainab Own
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