Sustainability

University of Exeter

Sustainability Report 2024/25

exeter.ac.uk/sustainability

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Foreword from Professor Lisa Roberts,

President and Vice-Chancellor at the University of Exeter

I am delighted to introduce the University of Exeter's Annual Sustainability Report 2024/25.

Over the past year, we have continued to advance our commitment to leading meaningful action against the climate emergency and ecological crisis – one of the three core missions within our Strategy 2030.

Our efforts were recognised in the 2025 Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings, in which we were ranked 28th in the world for our commitment to meeting the aims of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This includes being ranked second globally for our work on Responsible Consumption and Production.

We also secured the Outstanding Contribution to Environmental Leadership prize at the THE Awards 2024 (The "Oscars of Higher Education"), where we were **commended for our global leadership** in sharing high-quality research on environmental science and climate change, such as the Global Carbon Budget and Planetary Solvency report.

A major highlight of the year was the development of our **new Climate Strategy 2025–2030**. Refined through extensive internal and external consultation, this new strategy places direct emissions reduction at its heart. This reaffirms our commitment to climate leadership, sets out the rationale behind our targets and timelines, and drives us forward in the journey toward scientifically robust solutions.

A further standout moment from the year came at the end of June, when our Streatham Campus played host to the inaugural **Exeter Climate Forum**, bringing together more than 1,000 academic, government and industry figures. The Forum included the Exeter Climate Conference, the second Global Tipping Points Conference, the annual meeting of the New Carbon Economy Consortium, and dedicated events for policymakers and business leaders. We also played an important role at COP29, which included presenting the 2024 Global Carbon Budget and launching the Azerbaijani version of the Parliamentarians' Guide to Climate Change.

These are just a few highlights of our work, and this report contains a range of remarkable achievements made by colleagues across our University – I hope you will find inspiration in their work. We are so proud of how far we have come, yet mindful that our journey is not complete. We fully intend to build on these efforts and drive forwards meaningful action into next year and beyond.

Thank you again for taking the time to read this report,

L.O. Roberts

Professor Lisa Roberts FRSB FRSA
President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Exeter

Contents

Introduction

The University has set ambitious net zero and nature positive commitments which require a coordinated effort by all areas of the institution. This annual report provides a review of sustainability activities across all our campuses, focusing on the period 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025.

Photo credit © Jake Baggaley.

Policy and governance

Strategy 2030 includes a commitment to **lead meaningful action** against the climate emergency and ecological crisis.

The Climate and Environmental Crisis (CEC) Board is the University's senior governance group responsible for setting policy and priorities, maintaining oversight and approving the resource and delivery programmes for the climate emergency and ecological crisis response across the University. They are accountable for **ensuring our sustainability policies are implemented**. The Advocate Climate Taskforce (ACT) provides academic expertise and oversight to plans to deliver on our sustainability commitment.

See our full governance diagram.

Shortened governance diagram:

Our Penryn Campus is a shared campus, managed by FX Plus on behalf the University of Exeter and Falmouth University. Our KPIs include our share of data from the Penryn Campus and each operational section of this report includes examples of activities at Penryn undertaken by FX Plus.

University's Performance Framework

Net zero is an institutional KPI within the University's Performance Framework with progress reported annually to University Council. The associated metric is **carbon emissions from business and field trip travel** and annual targets are set for Faculties and Professional Services.

Key highlights

Climate Strategy

A major highlight of 2024/25 was the development of our Climate Strategy 2025–2030. Created in collaboration with ACT and the CEC Board, and refined through extensive internal and external consultation, this new strategy places direct emissions reduction at its heart. Using the latest climate science, it **realigns our net zero target to 2050 across all scopes**. Following the recommendations of our Offsetting Task and Finish Group, chaired by Professor Peter Cox CBE, our revised targets no longer include offsetting.

This reaffirms our commitment to climate leadership, sets out the rationale behind our targets and timelines, and drives us forward in the journey toward **scientifically robust solutions**.

Our new targets were developed using the principles of the Science Based Targets Initiative framework:

Our targets

Near-term target

To reduce emissions by 26% by 2030 from a 2023/24 baseline for all scope 1,2 and 3 categories, with the exception of international student out-of-term travel.

Long-term target

To reduce absolute emissions across all scopes, including international student out-of-term travel, by at least 90% by 2050 and use insetting to achieve the balance to net zero.

Sustainability Strategy

We have begun work to develop a new Sustainability Strategy, which will replace the existing Environment and Climate Emergency Policy Statement. In order to focus this strategy on our material issues, we are **undertaking extensive engagement** to understand and prioritise our sustainability issues and identify the social and environmental areas that hold most significance for the University and our stakeholders.

Tipping Points conference.

Faculty/PS Sustainability Committees

Health and Life Sciences (HLS)

The HLS Sustainability Committee was relaunched in 2024/25 with a strong senior leadership membership and clear accountability for implementation of the Faculty Sustainability Action Plan.

The Committee also hosted their first termly **Faculty-wide Sustainability Forum** to foster greater dialogue across the Faculty and have launched Task and Finish Groups for Sustainable Procurement and Sustainable Research. HLS were **awarded four out of the nine projects** under the new Sustainability Projects Fund (two led by members of the Committee), and have recently completed work with a student intern to review the Faculty travel activity and make recommendations for action.

Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS)

In 2024/25, the HASS Sustainability Committee published their Sustainability Action Plan (2024–2026) and prioritised the delivery of their education, travel, digital and partnership strategic clusters. This has meant the delivery of the inaugural HASS-S-Education symposia, the construction and delivery of a **Sustainable Travel proposal** (to HASS Faculty Strategy Group), a series of introductory meetings with all HASS departments and building the first iteration of a dedicated digital infrastructure and distinctive brand.

Environment, Science and Economy (ESE)

Following completion of the ESE Sustainability Action Plan in 2024, the Sustainability Committee ran a Faculty-wide consultation to rank the goals that emerged. This **resulted in a focused set of key priorities**, led by improving guidance for lower-carbon procurement, identifying and targeting energy wastage, and leveraging student projects to address the broad range of sustainability issues in which ESE has expertise. Each priority has been assigned to a relevant staff member and work is now underway to deliver the top-rated actions.

Professional Services (PS)

The PS Sustainability Plan was approved by the PS Divisional Leadership Team (PSDLT) and launched in July 2025. It was developed through consultation with senior managers across the Divisions and incorporated feedback from the Faculties. It includes named leads for each theme. The plan outlines PS initiatives to **enhance sustainability across the University** through its service delivery and in its own operations. Key focus areas include sustainable procurement, business travel, catering, biodiversity and energy use.

Early actions include exploring the tensions and opportunities between the University's Global and Sustainability strategies, taking forward recommendations from the Travel Project and improving communications on current initiatives – all supported by the development of a sustainability culture change programme.

Sustainability Projects Fund

The 2024/25 academic year saw the introduction of a new Sustainability Projects Fund (SPF). Managed by the Sustainability team, the SPF is for small to medium-sized projects aimed at helping the University meet its sustainability commitments. There were **28 applications received** during the first submission round, with **nine projects receiving funding**. Examples include a project to transform waste into raw pellet materials for 3D printing (ESE), and a tree and woody plant propagation unit (Grounds). You can read about the successful projects here.

New Task and Finish groups

Adaptation Task and Finish Group

The group will support an **evaluation of the University's resilience to climate change** by developing the scope and methodology for a Climate Change Risk Assessment, supporting the delivery of the assessment and making recommendations on next steps for the University. This will include contributing to the development of an **Adaptation Plan** for the University.

Sustainability Culture Change Task and Finish Group

The group will support the **development of a Culture Change for Sustainability Programme**, responsible for defining a strategic, values-led approach to **embedding sustainability** into University culture. It will span a broad range of areas, including staff and student training, communications and engagement, the formal and informal curriculum, policy alignments and more.

Benchmarking and awards

One of the ways in which we can benchmark our progress within the sector is through annual league tables that measure sustainability activities.

In 2024/25, Exeter's performance in the three headline sustainability league tables demonstrated strong progress towards our goals.

Times Higher Education
Impact Rankings 2025

RANKED

28TH GLOBALLY

in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2025.

The THE Impact Rankings are global performance tables that assess universities against all 17 SDGs.

We have also been ranked as a leader in the following SDGs:

2nd **globally for Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12)**

2nd **in UK for Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7)**

17th **globally and 2nd in UK for Climate Action (SDG 13)**

33rd **globally and 3rd in UK for Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6)**

RANKED
2ND
in the UK

in The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2026 'University of the Year' for Sustainability – one of the most respected annual league tables in the country.

The Business School's One Planet MBA

RANKED
10TH
GLOBALLY

in the 2024 Corporate Knights Better World MBA Rankings out of 174 MBA programmes, and

#1 number 1 in the UK.

RANKED
32ND
GLOBALLY

in the QS Sustainability Ranking 2025.

Exeter's highest individual ranking was **3rd globally for Health and Wellbeing** in recognition for its action and research into health and wellbeing.

We also secured:

- joint **24th** place in Knowledge Exchange;
- **25th** for Environmental Research; and
- **24th** for our Environmental Education.

THE Outstanding Contribution Award

Exeter secured the Outstanding Contribution to Environmental Leadership prize at the **Times Higher Education (THE) awards**, held in November 2024.

In 2025, three of our four nominations relate to sustainability:

- The University of Exeter Business School has been shortlisted for its outstanding achievements and commitment to sustainability
- Dr Edvard Glücksman, Senior Lecturer in Sustainable Futures within the Business School, has been nominated for Most Innovative Teacher
- The nomination for International Collaboration of the Year recognises the University's work leading the Global Tipping Points Report

Green Gown Awards 2025

- **Winner:** Dr Ewan Woodley, Sustainability Champion (staff)
- **Winner:** Reporting with Influence for 2023/24 Annual Sustainability Report and 2023/24 Annual Report
- **Highly commended:** Emily Pink, Sustainability Champion (student)
- **Shortlisted:** Creating Impact for Gift it Reuse it

PIEoneer Awards 2025

Nominated and highly commended, alongside QS Global, for the PIEoneer Sustainability International Impact Award for our **Future17 SDG Challenge Programme**. This recognition celebrates innovative international partnerships that are reducing global and local impacts.

Exeter Sustainability Awards

Gift it Reuse it won first place in the Educational Organisation category of the Exeter Sustainability Awards 2025.

The Sustainable Labs team were **highly commended for leadership in sustainable research practices**, including 100% LEAF accreditation, lab plastic recycling, LED upgrades and sustainable equipment investment.

Education Estates Awards 2024

The Forum won **'Building Resilience** – Buildings that have stood the test of time' at the 2024 Education Estates Awards. From its inception, the Forum has been strong on sustainability, achieving a 130% increase in area with only a 40% increase in energy consumption.

The Forum:

130%
increase in area with only
40%
increase in energy consumption.

Emissions overview

Market-based vs location-based reporting

Market-based reporting reflects emissions from the specific electricity our institution purchases. It takes into account Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGOs) or other energy contracts we have made.

Location-based reporting calculates emissions based on the average emission intensity of the power grid a company is physically connected to. It doesn't matter which electricity contracts the company holds.

Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions

Scope 1 emissions – greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that we make directly from sources that we own or control such as burning fuel in boilers or vehicles.

Scope 2 emissions – emissions from purchased energy, such as electricity, steam, heat or cooling.

Scope 3 emissions – includes all the other emissions for which we are indirectly responsible, for example buying products from our suppliers, travel on university business and commuting.

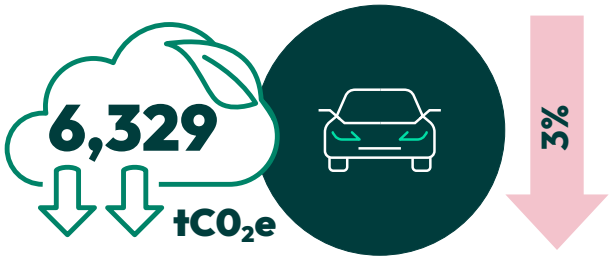
Sustainability reporting is a strategic cornerstone that ensures transparency about the progress that we are making and the risks and opportunities we face. It plays a crucial role in enabling us to measure, evaluate and understand our operational footprint, providing the insights necessary to define and achieve our objectives. We are reporting using the GHG Protocol and progress against our target is reported using our market-based emissions.

Our new Climate Strategy was approved by Council in July 2025 and its KPIs are included in table 1. The Climate Strategy revised our baseline year to 2023/24.

In 2024/25, our **scope 1, 2 and 3** emissions[1] (excluding international out-of-term commuting) were 97,861 tCO_2e, a **decrease of 6%** compared to the baseline year of 2023/24.

[1]Includes F-gas emissions. Selected scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions data for the year ended 31 July 2025 has been subject to independent limited assurance procedures by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP ('PwC') and the results of that assurance can be found on our website. It is intended that the assurance process will continue, with additional metrics being brought in as they become audit-ready.

Our **scope 1**[2] emissions were 6,329 tCO_2e, representing a **3% reduction** compared to the 2023/24 baseline. This decrease reflects ongoing efforts to improve operational efficiency.



Scope 2 emissions present a more complex picture due to changes in electricity tariffs and carbon factors. Market-based scope 2 emissions increased significantly to 3,677 tCO_2e, compared to 463 tCO_2e in 2023/24. This rise was due to a fixed six-month period during which the University moved away from a zero-carbon electricity tariff while tariff decisions were under review, taking into account cost and environmental impact.

From April onwards, **Exeter returned to a zero-carbon tariff**. At the Penryn Campus, there has been a transition away from a zero-carbon tariff, and future decisions on whether to return to one remain under consideration.

[2]At the current time scope 1 calculated emissions do not include F-gas, whilst an accurate methodology is completed.

Our **scope 3 emissions** were 76,977 tCO_2e, a decrease of 7.9%. This is due to a refinement of our bought goods and services category, using more activity and supplier-based data allowing more detailed and accurate representation of our supply chain emissions.

Emissions from our investments have also decreased as a result of the actions of Rathbone Greenbank who manage our endowment funds. Rathbone Greenbank apply a rigorous ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) framework, ensuring investments are screened for ethical considerations and climate impact.

Figure 1: 2024/25 market-based greenhouse gas emissions by category, with scope 3 breakdown (excluding international out-of-term commuting).

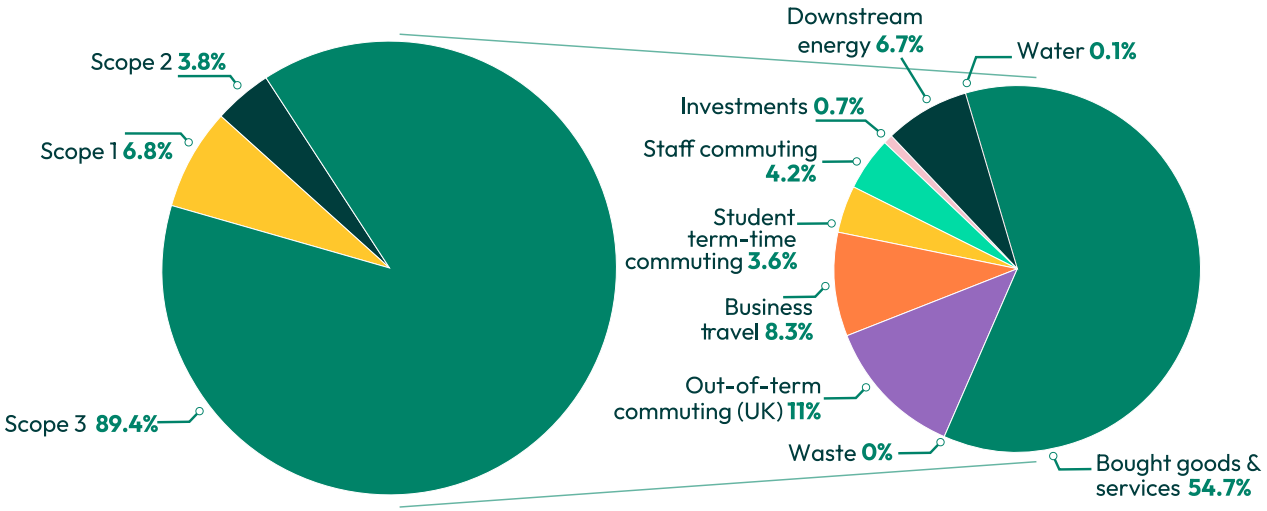


Figure 2: 2024/25 market-based greenhouse gas emissions by category, with scope 3 breakdown (including international out-of-term commuting).

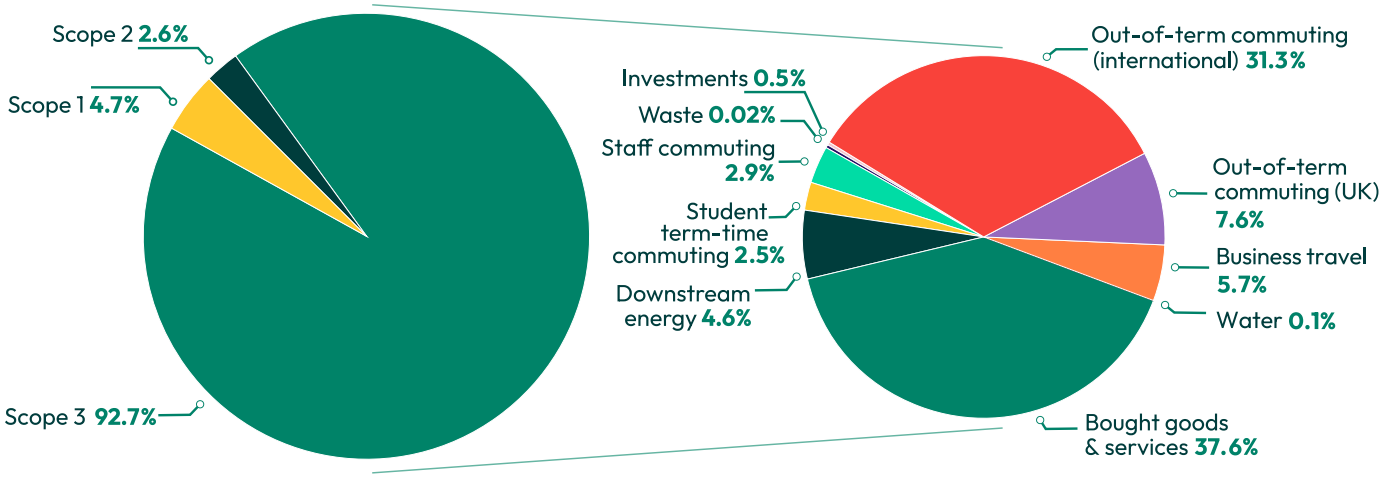
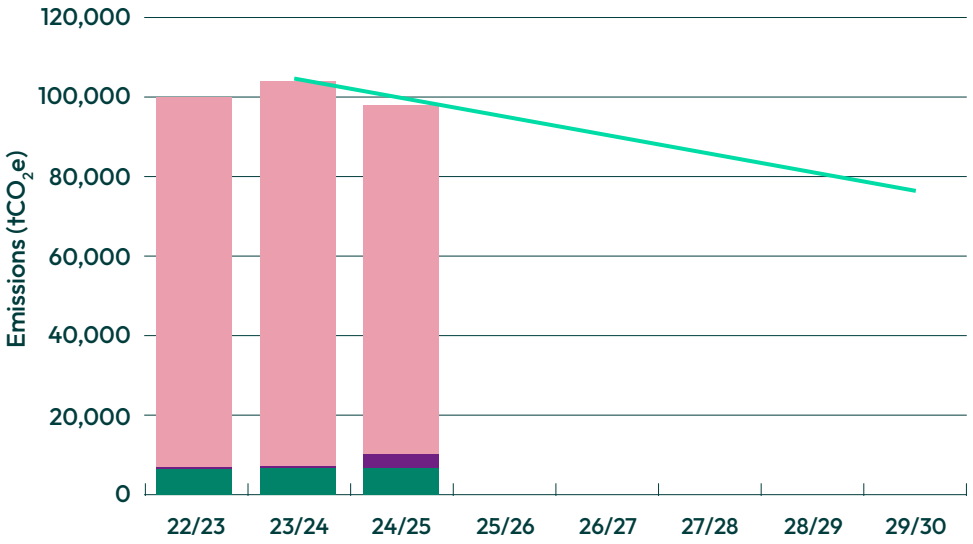


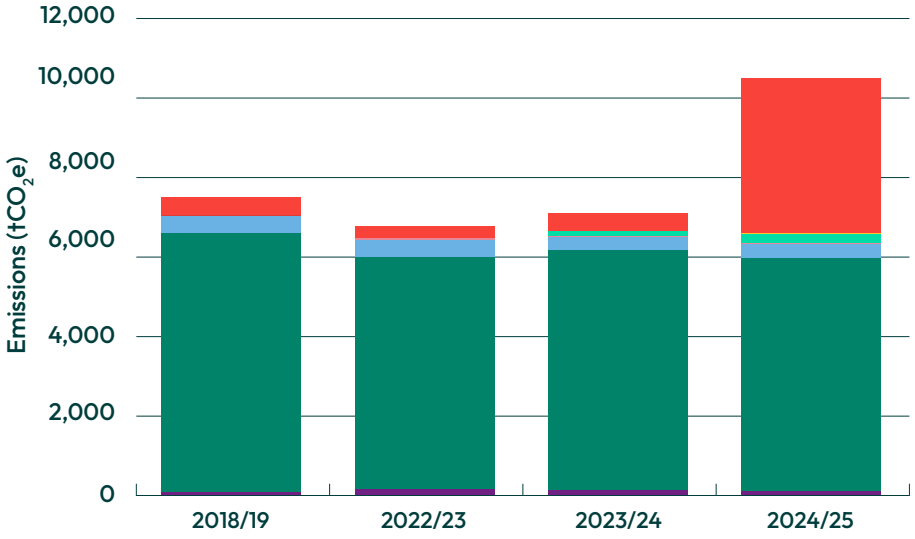
Figure 3: Scope 1, 2 and 3 reported market-based emissions:
Showing existing target line and progress towards it.



Key:

Scope 1 Scope 2 Scope 3 Target

Figure 4: Breakdown of scope 1 and 2 market-based emissions.



Key:

Scope 1: Gas Oil Diesel Petrol Fugitive gas

Scope 2: District heat Electricity

Key performance indicators

Our key performance indicators (KPIs) cover Streatham and St Luke's campuses and include our share of data from the Penryn Campus.

The below table provides an overview of our top-level KPIs. You can find a full KPI table in the appendix.

Table 1: Top-level KPIs

Measure	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	% from baseline**
Reduce scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions by 26% by 2030 (excl. international student out-of-term commuting) (tCO_2e)	103,455	104,043+	97,861	-5.9%
Reduce absolute emissions across all scopes by at least 90% by 2050 (incl. international student out-of-term commuting) (tCO_2e)	145,847	145,717+	141,794	-2.7%
Reduction in total energy consumption of our estate (kWh)	64,461,092	66,806,805+	65,438,720	-2.1%
Waste reduction by 47% by 2030 (tonnes)	1,516+	2,181	1,629	7.5%
Increase reuse by 75% by 2030 (tonnes)	40+	47	224	460%*
Commuting annual emissions (tCO_2e) (staff and term-time only students)	5,649+	6,331	7,484	32.5%
Business travel annual emissions (tCO_2e) - excluding hotels	7,818+	9,250	6,465	-17.3%
Increase biodiversity value of University campus			Habitat units - Not assessed Hedgerow units – 78.65 +0.83% Watercourse units – 13.69 +3.6%	

* Large increase due to the Hatherly project contractors (BVLR) and Cornwall House construction project (Mercury construction) where 172 tonnes of construction material was reused.

**Values in table have been rounded. Percentage changes are calculated using unrounded figures.

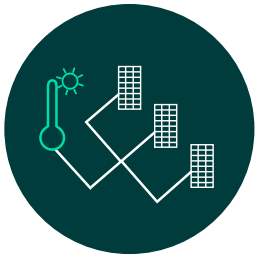
+ Baseline

Energy
(scope 1 and 2 emissions)

We continue to work hard to reduce our energy-related emissions by both reducing our consumption and decarbonising our energy supply. While they do not form a large part of our overall carbon footprint, it is important to target these as they are our direct emissions and contribute to achieving our net zero target.

Reducing fossil fuels:

£8.6M
awarded to the University to remove
29 gas boilers and upgrade eight buildings for low carbon heating.



District heat network developments

We're collaborating with partners in Exeter to explore opportunities for offtake from a major low-to-zero carbon heat project being delivered by 1Energy. The initiative will **supply sustainable heat to businesses** and organisations **across the city** via a 20km network of underground pipes, connected to an energy centre powered by air source heat pumps and other low carbon technologies.

PSDS funding success

We have been **awarded £8.6 million** from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme for a three-year project which will **remove 29 gas boilers** and upgrade eight buildings for low carbon heating on our Streatham and St Luke's campuses.

Oil-fired heating removal

In advance of the implementation of the future district heat network, we have replaced Harrison building's oil-fired heating with natural gas, **removing 60,000 litres of stored oil tanks.**

Metering improvements

The first phase of the metering improvement works – which included a metering survey – has been completed. The outcomes will inform the next phase, which will involve **metering replacements and commissioning**. The overall aim is to enhance real-time data availability and enable better monitoring of our consumption.

In parallel, most high-voltage substations have recently undergone upgrades, with building-level meters also fitted within the substations. In addition, **half-hourly electricity data at building level** is now available for the majority of our buildings, improving visibility and monitoring across our sites.

Energy savings

We have achieved significant energy savings this year, with notable reductions in both gas and electricity consumption during 2024/25 compared to the previous year. **Gas consumption has reduced by 2%** compared to the previous year.

LED lighting replacements

Our lighting replacement programme with LED luminaires is continuing to deliver energy savings and is planned for completion in 2029 when the programme will deliver a total annual **carbon saving of 650 tonnes each year**.

Additional PV installation

This year, we have **increased our overall annual solar generated energy supply to over 2,760 MWh**, reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and supporting our net zero targets.

The installation of the solar panels on the Physics Building completed in March 2025 and is expected to generate **430 MWh of clean energy per year** (equivalent to providing energy to over 90 domestic households) and **saving 90 tonnes of CO_2 per year**.

In May 2025, we completed installations on two additional buildings: Richards Building (St Luke's) and Holland Hall.

More installations are planned for 2025/26.

Energy at Penryn

Submetering upgrades

Building on last year's progress, we continue to enhance the sub-metering system at Penryn Campus. The focus this year was resolving legacy issues to **ensure all sub-meters are accurately recording and transmitting data** to the central Energy Monitoring Software dashboard. This supports detailed energy analysis, ongoing efficiency improvements, and robust data for regulatory reporting requirements such as HESA and SECR.

SERSF / Stella Turk heat decarbonisation

Decarbonisation efforts on Penryn Campus have taken a significant step forward with the completion of the SERFS and Stella Turk Replacement Boiler Project in May 2025. This major milestone involved **replacing five gas boilers with four air source heat pumps**, now fully operational and supplying both hot water and heating to the two buildings.

£55k

Glasney Eco-Block

The Glasney Eco-Block Pilot Project, which began with Glasney Parc Block A, is the first of its kind and sets out to explore the feasibility of implementing an **air source heat pump system, with future upgradability to district heating**.

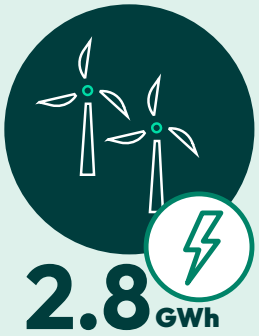
The installation began summer of 2025 with Glasney Parc Block A as we start to replace gas boilers and install a standalone air source heat pump and PVs onto the roof of the building.

It is supported by a **£55,000 grant** from the Salix Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, contributing toward the £114,000 total project cost.

LED lighting – ESI Lab

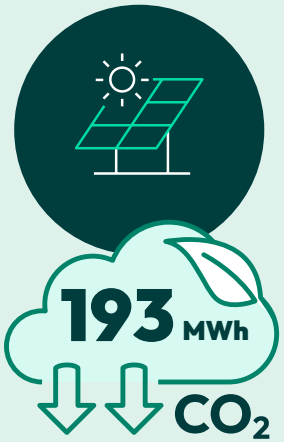
In June 2025, the Estates team completed work which saw the **entire lighting system** in the ESI Labs switch to an **LED upgrade**. Moving from a fluorescent lighting system to the greener LED alternative is significantly more efficient and cost effective. We received positive feedback from users, noting a significant improvement in their working environment.

Energy at Penryn contd.



Wind turbine

The wind turbine project at Treleiver Research Field has made steady progress over the past year, with strong public support throughout. Planning permission has now been secured and the grid connection process is underway. The **installation of the 1 MW turbine** is scheduled to begin in late 2026, with commissioning expected by Easter 2027. Once operational, the turbine is projected to generate approximately 2.8 GWh of renewable electricity annually.



DDM / SOFT solar panels

The PV installation project for DDM (CSM roof) and SOFT building roofs is currently under development, with installation anticipated in August 2025. The project comprises two components: **replacing the non-operational PV array** on the DDM roof and installing a **new system on the SOFT roof.**

The planned capacity for the new array is ~155 kWp, which almost triples the capacity of the old array. The planned capacity for the SOFT PV array is ~59 kWp. Combined, the two systems will provide 215.1 kWp of installed capacity, **generate an estimated 193 MWh annually**, and deliver carbon savings of around 40 tCO_2e per year.

LED lighting – Glasney Parc

Lighting upgrade at Glasney Parc phase 1 is now complete, with **all corridors and main room lights replaced with LEDs**. This upgrade reduces energy use, lowers maintenance needs, and improves lighting quality – contributing to carbon savings and a better living environment.

EV charging

The planned expansion of the EV charging infrastructure at Penryn Campus has experienced delays. The project involves the installation of **14 new EV charging bays** in Car Park F, including 6 x dual 22 kW chargers and 1 x dual 80 kW fast charger. While initial planning and tendering had been completed, the process was disrupted by technical and contractual challenges encountered during the tender phase. Additionally, concerns were raised regarding the existing sub-station's electrical capacity and whether it can support the added load from the new charging infrastructure.

As a result, the project timeline has been extended while FX Plus consults with electrical engineers and external contractors.

Nature and biodiversity

Biodiversity is a defining theme across all our campuses and our green spaces are prime habitat for a wide variety of amphibians, birds, insects, mammals and reptiles. They are expertly managed by our Grounds teams and have earned national acclaim and accreditation.

We published our Nature Positive Strategy in 2024, pledging to become a Nature Positive University and committing to halting, preventing and reversing nature loss caused by our teaching, operations and research. We have also committed to delivering environmental net gain in parallel with our net zero emissions target. Environmental net gain means leaving the environment in a better condition after any activities than it was before.

Lower Hoopern Valley opening event.

Botanic Garden status

Our Streatham Campus has achieved registered Botanical Garden status from Botanic Gardens Conservation International, as well as being awarded the prestigious Britain in Bloom Gold Award in the Business, Leisure and Tourism category.

A wilder, greener campus

This year **59,448m² of grass was mown – or not mown!** – with wildlife in mind. Some areas were left to flower for No Mow May; other areas were left long throughout the summer to allow invertebrates to complete their life cycle.

A 'nectar bar' of horticultural planting (plants which provide nectar and pollen for insects) was planted outside Geoffrey Pope, and a new food growing area and tree nursery have been established on campus. We added some yellow rattle rich green hay to help enhance grassland and were rewarded with some yellow rattle plants in spring. These achievements are testament to the dedication and hard work of our Grounds team and reflects the University's efforts to create a campus that supports the botanical heritage, is aesthetically pleasing and ecologically responsible.

Lower Hoopern Valley

Working with our local community, we have started our biodiversity enhancements in the Lower Hoopern Valley, including **planting over 500 native trees to increase diversity**. We are working with the Environment Agency to install **nature-based flood management solutions** in the Taddiforde Brook, removing artificial structures that reduce connectivity for wildlife and putting in woody flow spreaders and leaky dams. These help connect the brook to its flood plain, slowing the flow during high rainfall, improving water quality and providing habitat for wildlife.

We celebrated the completion of our **access improvements** with an official opening event in May 2025, featuring valley tours, interactive activities like hedge mulching and leaf printing, and contributions from Devon Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency and Exeter Student Volunteers. Professor Lisa Roberts, President and Vice-Chancellor, and the Lord Mayor of Exeter, Councillor Kevin Mitchell, officially opened the revitalised green space with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Wildlife-friendly lighting

In collaboration with our Estates team, we have trialled red lighting on a Streatham Campus footpath near a light-sensitive bat roost. Response to our survey asking for feedback was positive, with **90% of respondents supporting the eco-friendly approach** and 70% still feeling safe using the path.

Biodiversity footprint

We are **developing a biodiversity footprint for the whole University**, including our activities at St Luke's and Penryn campuses. A biodiversity footprint is a measure of how much we impact biodiversity via all our activities, not just those on our estates. Exeter academics from the RENEW project are working with us to carry out this analysis. Initial results suggest our key impacts on biodiversity are via our contribution to climate change and that our purchased goods and services have the greatest impact. We will be doing further work to understand the details and how we can reduce our global footprint.

We have engaged over 770 people at 26 events.

Engaging and connecting people with nature

Over the past year, we have **engaged over 770 people at 26 events**, such as regular volunteering working on the grounds or growing vegetables, biodiversity monitoring events and tree planting, information talks and student-led events. We ran our first cross-campus Campus Green Space survey to understand how people feel about campus green spaces: 96% of people enjoyed spending time in campus green spaces and **67% used them to help their wellbeing**.

> "The uplift to my wellbeing that these spaces afford – the tranquillity, space, connection with nature – I really, really value the green spaces here (they are one of my favourite things about this university)…
>
> University colleague Streatham Campus.

> "The [campus green] spaces themselves, being outside is a wonderful gift and having somewhere so beautiful to enjoy it is really important. The range of environments available on campus is amazing…
>
> Student, Penryn Campus.

Nature at Penryn

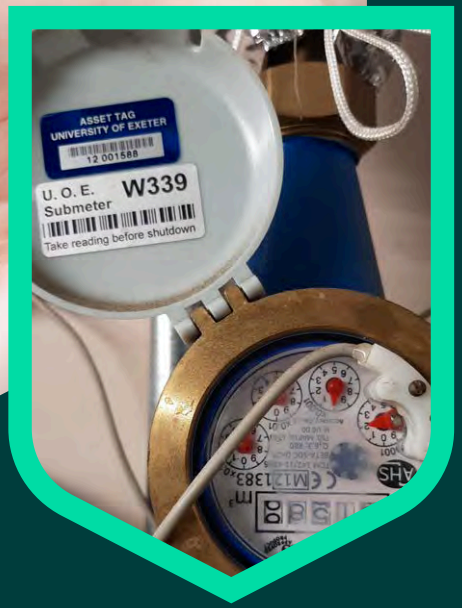
Green Flag Award

Penryn Campus earned the prestigious **Green Flag Award for the eighth year in a row**. This award celebrates our commitment to maintaining beautiful, well-managed green spaces that benefit both our community and biodiversity. This achievement is testament to the dedication and hard work of our Grounds and Garden and Facilities Management teams, along with the invaluable contributions of volunteers.

Meadow planting

Our FX Plus Grounds and Gardens team at Penryn have secured and **planted 290m² of wildflower turf** across appropriate sites. This includes 100m² of wildflower meadow that was planted in April on Penryn Campus following a collaboration project with the Falmouth University Launchpad team. These have a mixture of native and near-native species which are specially selected to be brightly coloured, attractive and provide resources for pollinators. In addition to this, they have **planted an amazing 3,358 wildflower plugs and 120 trees**.

Water



Surface water runoff contributes to negative environmental impacts by carrying pollutants into waterways, causing water quality degradation, habitat destruction and increased flooding. Our Water Resilient Policy aims to maximise our influence in reducing our water use, ensuring sustainable supply of water and managing wastewater discharge.

Water network replacement

The first year of our water network replacement project has been completed, surveying the whole network to clarify the future replacement activities of our 1960s deteriorating metallic water mains. Works have been undertaken to improve the monitoring of the water network pressures, to **improve metering for network leakage** and to minimise risks of water discolouration.

Following on from the water improvement works carried out by South West Water, our water consumption has continued to decrease and leaks have also reduced.

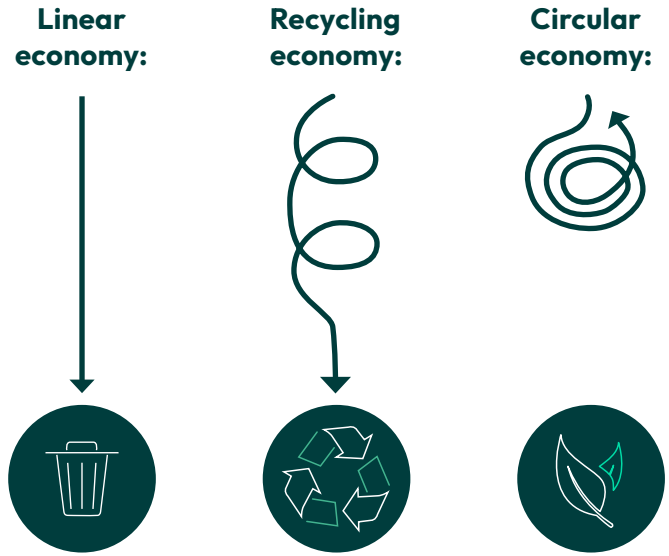
Circular economy

Currently, most of what we consume flows through a linear 'take, make, waste' economy, in which products and materials are made, used and then thrown away.

A recycling economy still follows a linear path but incorporates recycling at the end-of-life stage. Materials are recovered and reused to some extent but not fully addressing resource extraction and product design.

A circular economy, by contrast, focuses on **regeneration, restoration and re-use** at all stages of a resource's life cycle. The waste generated by a linear economy is designed out from the start.

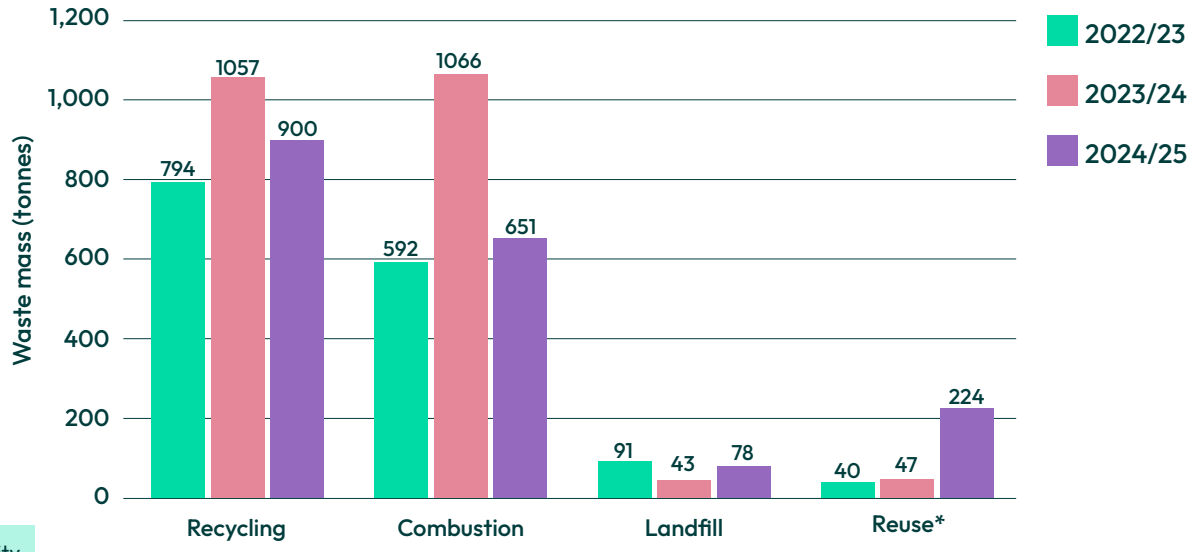
ECCE Community of Practice.



ECCE Community of Practice

In July 2025, the Exeter Centre for Circular Economy (ECCE) convened colleagues from across the University to launch a new Community of Practice focused on **embedding circular economy thinking into core University functions**. The event brought together staff from estates, procurement, research, operations and education to explore how UoE can lead by example in designing out waste, keeping materials in use and creating regenerative systems.

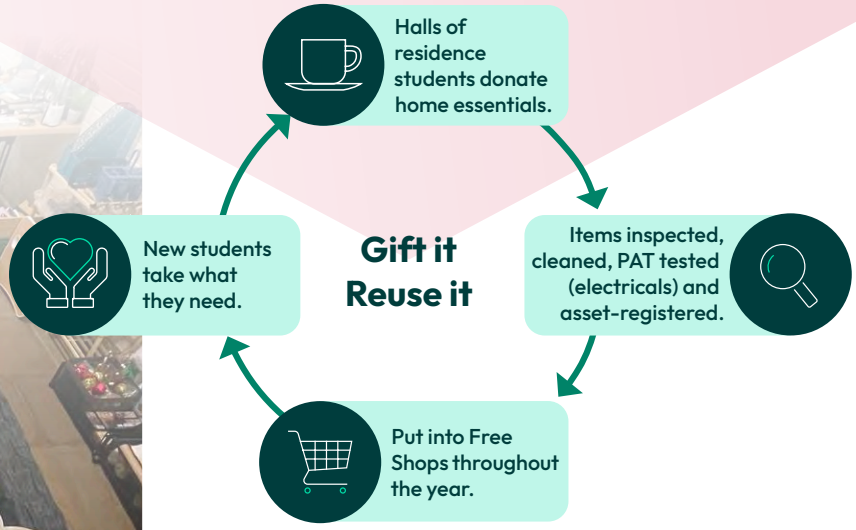
Figure 5: Waste by weight (tonnes) covering Streatham, St Luke's and Penryn – 22/23 vs 23/24 vs 24/25



* Incomplete Penryn data.

Free Shop.

Refill station trial in East Park to reduce plastic consumption in student accommodation.



Gift it Reuse it

Following the first iteration of Gift it Reuse it (GiRi) between June and September 2024, we set up **two additional pop-up Free Shops** in Clydesdale House between September and November 2024. These shops were open to all and allowed the remaining summer donations to be claimed. This was followed by another Free Shop in January 2025 which included donations left by students moving out of halls in December.

The scheme is continually expanding. By summer 2025, we had **received 17,635 items**, weighing 3,417kg. This is a **102% increase** compared to summer 2024. We have also seen items returned to us this year that were taken from the Free Shops in September 2024, demonstrating the circular economy in action!

Project RESCUE

Project RESCUE (Recycling, Enterprise and Storage Centre at University of Exeter) continues to progress as we seek the best option for a **centralised reuse, storage and circular economy facility.** Work is ongoing to identify a sustainable and cost-effective solution that supports our long-term circular economy ambitions.

Anaerobic Digestion Feasibility Study

A feasibility assessment was carried out to explore the potential for an on-site anaerobic digestion (AD) facility. The study highlighted that while AD offers environmental benefits, the operational and financial challenges make it difficult to deliver a viable solution at present.

BHF and Warp It

The University has a long-standing partnership with the British Heart Foundation. In 2024/25, **36.43 tonnes of clothing was donated to BHF** via the UoE donation points. Warp It saw **4.81 tonnes of resources reused**. Whilst BHF has increased significantly, we note the reduction in items passing through Warp It. However, this should be viewed positively, as it likely reflects the overall drop in new purchases.

UN Centre of Excellence

The University of Exeter serves as a partner in the first ever UN-backed Centre of Excellence **dedicated to circular economy research**, established in early 2024. The initiative builds on Exeter's role in the £30 million NICER programme and brings together top UK institutions to deliver new models, evidence and systems for sustainable resource use in areas such as metals, construction and critical minerals.

New waste contract

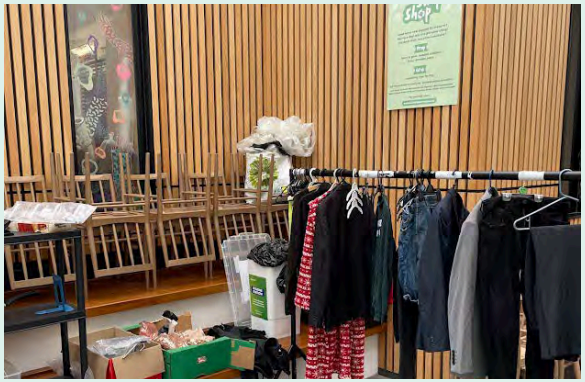
Following a competitive open tendering process, the University awarded a new contract to SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK Ltd. This new contract is aligned to the forthcoming **Simpler Recycling legislation** and will bring improved recycling opportunities for all staff and students. This means that most dry recycling can now be put into the same bin. **Zero waste goes to landfill**. What can't be recycled goes to an energy from waste plant.

UPP Foundation Student Sustainability Fund

Run in collaboration with UPP Foundation and two other university partners, the Student Sustainability Fund supported student-led projects with the money needed to get their ideas off the ground. At Exeter, the *Be The Change* society **received £1,000 to launch their Stitch by Stitch initiative** – a campaign promoting sustainable fashion and ethical consumption. Activities included jewellery and embroidery workshops, speaker events and clothes swaps, culminating in the Big Slow Fashion Day, a large-scale swap event held in the Forum. The Exeter project team were also named as **national winners** of the scheme, with their prize including a paid internship at the UPP Foundation in London.

GiRi and Sustainable Labs at Exeter Sustainability Awards.

Circular economy at Penryn



Swap shops and reusable cups

The on-campus Swap Shops were delivered throughout the year, helping to keep products in use for longer.

Our buy-back-scheme for **reusable coffee cups** has continued and is reducing the number of disposable coffee cups being used.

Recycling

New food bins were introduced to some areas previously without provision, such as Penryn Nursery, the TIC building and Amata. **Food waste recycling has increased** in 2024/25 because of extra bins and awareness promotion.

New smaller bins with improved signage were introduced throughout Glasney Halls of Residence and has proved successful at reducing pest incursions (and subsequent spreading of litter around the waste compounds).

Tetra-pak recycling has increased again, with retail outlets doing an excellent job of recycling empty soya milk and oat milk cartons.

Recycling of hard-to-recycle items such as medicinal blister packs, pens and toothpaste tubes has increased significantly. These are turned into items such as planters, chairs and picnic benches.

The installation of a new compactor, along with the addition of a second unit, has significantly improved waste and recycling management. Together, these compactors have **led to an 80% reduction in transport-related emissions** for waste and recycling removal from the site, while also delivering substantial cost savings.

Digitisation

A newly created working group with our FX Plus IT team has started to identify a series of project opportunities. Taking a cradle to grave approach, the aim is to:

- Capture emissions and impact data from campus digital activity
- Ensure all suppliers we engage with have sustainability and decarbonisation at the core of their business
- Ensure that all on-campus digital technology supports energy efficiency measures, including servers and data capturing systems
- Explore routes to extend the lifecycle of campus digital equipment through in-kind donations.

Travel and transport

With 30,000 students and 6,000 staff, our travel emissions are a significant part of our overall footprint.

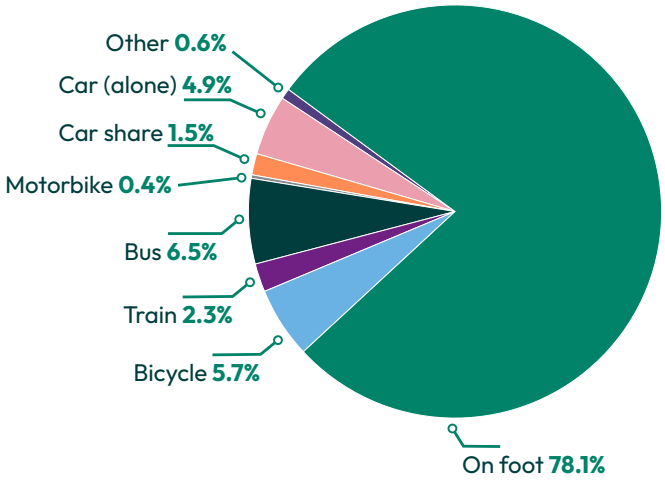
Our Sustainable Transport Strategy 2024–2030 encourages the use of **environmentally responsible transport options** for commuting. Complementing this, the University's Travel Policy integrates sustainability into decision-making for business travel and applies to all staff and students undertaking travel for work or study purposes.

Annual travel surveys

Our annual travel surveys provide valuable data and insights on commuting behaviours across our three campuses and play a crucial role in informing decision-making. In the 2024/25 surveys, we collected **1,231 responses from staff and 883 from students** across Streatham, St Luke's and Penryn campuses. This was a joint survey with Falmouth University. You can find the commuting emissions data in the appendix.

Student modal splits:

Figure 6: Student travel modal split – Streatham / St Luke's 2024/25.



Staff modal splits:

Figure 7: Staff travel modal split – Streatham / St Luke's 2024/25.

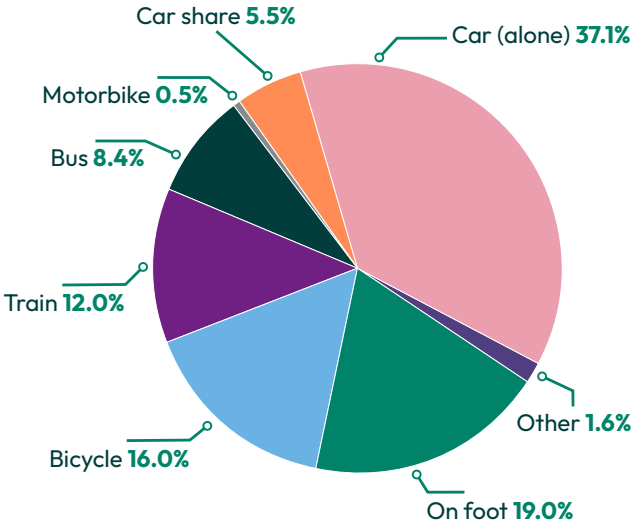


Photo credit © Jake Baggaley.

Low carbon field courses

For the past seven years, Renewable Energy Engineering field courses have become entirely no-fly. This has meant replacing overseas trips to places like Barbados, Tenerife and Greece with immersive, local experiences focused on real-world energy transition projects.

Students now work with remote and often overlooked communities – such as those in the Channel Islands, the Aran Islands in Ireland, and the Hebrides – applying their engineering skills to practical sustainability challenges. Alongside this, students are **encouraged to engage in outreach** during the trip, visiting schools, local businesses and giving public talks to support community education around sustainable energy.

In 2025, third-year students were based in Oban, Scotland. Whilst there, they cycled to remote sites like Scotland's most sustainable distillery, used community transport to reach sparsely populated islands like Ulva and visited large-scale renewable facilities. They learnt from real-world engineers and **applied their Renewable Energy expertise to identify engineering solutions** and improvements. They also visited primary schools and delivered presentations to the u3a.

The result is **significant carbon savings** to our activities and a legacy of contributions to real world efforts. Just as importantly, the field course delivers life-changing opportunities and gives students the confidence to apply their education and develop into tomorrow's energy leaders.

Photo credits © Saada Al Zakwani, Lisa Morton, Harry Cooper.

Bike infrastructure and initiatives

An external consultant has been commissioned to review sustainable transport infrastructure across the Exeter campuses, including improved cycle and pedestrian permeability, bike parking and charging stations for e-bikes, scooters and cargo bikes.

Innovation Centre Phase 2

As part of the ADA project at the Innovation Centre, **four new showers** were installed, along with two heat pump condensation **drying cabinets** and **33 lockers**.

Bike repair stations

The first **three bicycle repair stations** have been installed in front of Amory, Geoffrey Pope (Streatham) and Staff House (St Luke's).

Dr Bike

In 2024/25, **238 bikes were checked at 13 Dr Bike events** organised with Saddles and Paddles on both Streatham and St Luke's campuses.

New cycle shelters

By November 2025 new cycle shelters will be installed on Streatham Campus (Northcote House, Old Library, Geoffrey Pope, Laver Building) with the creation of **50 new covered cycle parking spaces** in areas with high demand.

Active Devon

Active Devon have started offering **free cycle confidence sessions** on campus. Bikes and helmets can be borrowed and instructors tailor each session to the attendee's personal goals. 45 people have attended so far and monthly sessions are being organised for 2025/26.

Abandoned bikes

Over **70 abandoned bicycles have been donated to Ride On** weighing around 1 tonne and saving up to 8.6 tonnes of CO_2 being produced. They will be repaired and resold at affordable prices.

Liftshare – car sharers travelled 89,000 miles:

Public transport

Line 4 and UNI night bus

In 2024/25, the Stagecoach Line 4 bus **carried 523,000 passengers**, a 270% increase compared to 2022/23 and 230% compared to 2023/24. Since September 2024, University staff have been able to benefit from free intercampus business travel on Lines 4/4A, Monday–Friday, 7:00–19:00, as well as free travel from St David's railway station. The new UNI bus night service, running three nights a week during term time, was extended to connect the Duryard and Birks Grange residences with St David's Station and Exeter city centre.

Car share

Liftshare

In March 2025, the **new Mobilityways app** was launched to make the Liftshare platform easier to use.

In 2024/25, 127 members of the car sharing community made **6,800 shared journeys**, travelling 89,000 miles and saving around 17.5 tonnes of CO_2. There were **100 new members** and 20 new teams created.

Car club

An agreement has been drawn up with Devon County Council to arrange parking for the bike club and car club on University campuses in Exeter. The **car club provider has been identified**. The bike club tender did not receive any bids despite considerable interest.

Photo credit © Katie Murphy.

Travel at Penryn

E-bike charging

Works completed on installing an additional **four e-bike charging units** in Glasney Village for students and staff. This follows the launch of a Campus Lithium Battery Policy which prohibits any electric bikes or batteries from entering campus buildings due to fire safety protection.

Beryl Bike

250 free Beryl Bike codes were procured and distributed across the campus community, promoting the community e-bike hire scheme.

Dr Bike

Our partner Sustrans were brought onto campus for a total of **eight events** over the course of the year. Funded by FX Plus, this specialist service offered a free bike repair, maintenance, security marking and consultation for all campus users. A total of **128 bikes were repaired**, **60 bikes were security marked** and **132 meaningful conversations** were had whereby active travel advice or information was exchanged.

Lighting improvements

On Penryn Campus, the Old Lane lighting has been completely rewired and updated with **low level bollard lights**. These features support campus commuters walking or cycling to and from campus.

Public transport

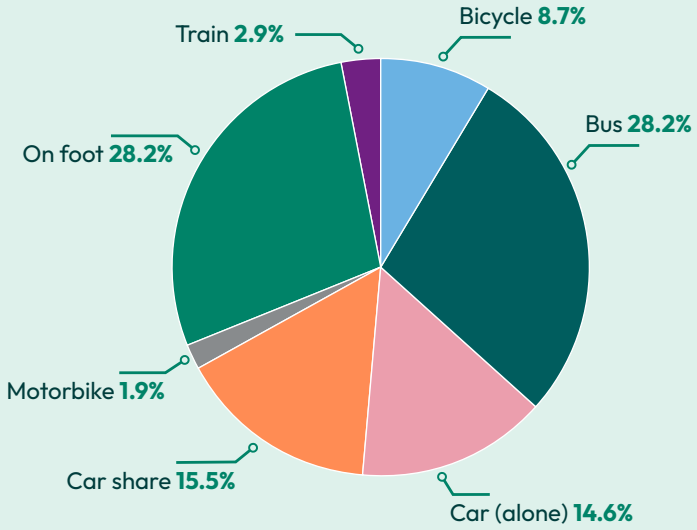
The Sustainability team established a working group with transport liaisons at Cornwall Council and First Bus in order to **improve clarity on bus bundle/ fare offers** and identify the most cost effective deals available.

Cycle Friendly Employer Gold Award continuation

Our FX Plus partner has **integrated the improvement plan** as part of the wider sustainable travel plan in preparation for re-accreditation in 2027.

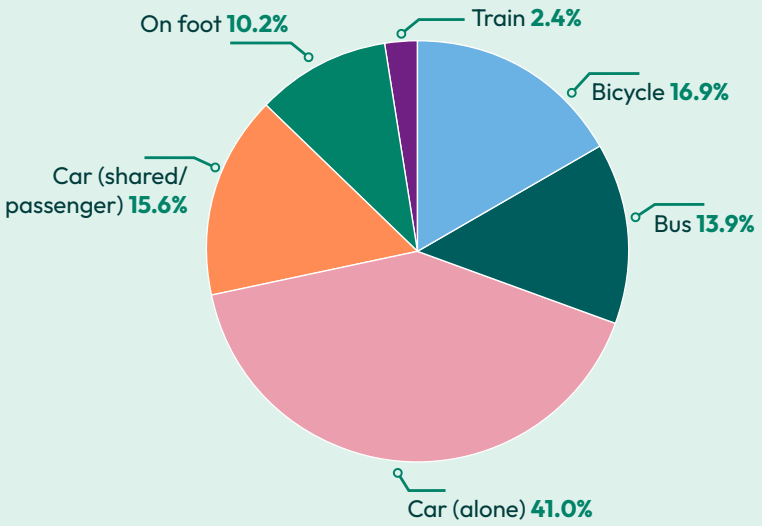
Student modal splits:

Figure 8: Student travel modal split – Penryn 2024/25.



Staff modal splits:

Figure 9: Staff travel modal split – Penryn 2024/25.



Procurement

The goods and services we purchase contribute significantly to our overall emissions, and we are actively working to address this. We are dedicated to sourcing goods, services and works in a responsible manner that supports and safeguards our environment, economy and communities. A crucial part of this is reducing the amount that we buy – a central component of a circular economy.

Responsible Procurement Strategy

In 2024/25, we continued to build on our Responsible Procurement Strategy, strengthening our alignment with the University's Sustainable Procurement and Social Value policies. Our work this year has further embedded responsible procurement into decision-making across the institution, ensuring our **social, ethical and environmental impacts** are actively considered at every stage.

Social value delivery

Through awarded contracts, we delivered close to **£200,000 in social value**, with the majority of this supporting local employment opportunities and local spend. These outcomes demonstrate our commitment to generating tangible benefits for our surrounding communities.

Increased impact through tendering

Nineteen of the 23 tenders we published incorporated responsible procurement criteria, with sustainability and **social value weightings of up to 30%** where applicable. This approach continues to reinforce the importance we place on achieving wider benefits for our stakeholders through procurement activity.

Sector and community engagement

Engagement with colleagues across the University remained a priority. The Procurement team **collaborated with multiple departments**, including Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, External Engagement and Global, PS Connect, and Circular Economy, presenting on responsible procurement initiatives and highlighting opportunities for participation. The team also co-chaired the Circular Economy Community of Practice and helped host its launch event, further promoting sustainable practices within our sector.

Global recognition

Our contribution to the THE Impact Rankings for **SDG 12** (Responsible Consumption and Production) saw the University achieve **joint 2nd place globally**, highlighting the positive impact of our sustainable procurement initiatives on the world stage.

Our leadership in sustainable procurement has drawn interest from other universities seeking guidance.

Knowledge sharing, communication and student engagement

To support staff understanding, we published a Knowledge Base Article (KBA) on the PS Connect Portal outlining the principles and practices of our Responsible Procurement Strategy. We also **delivered a supplier-facing webinar** – Our Strategy, Your Supplier Role: Driving Responsible Procurement Forward – which strengthened relationships and reinforced our expectations with current and potential suppliers.

Student engagement formed an important part of our work this year. During the SDG Teach In, the Procurement team co-hosted a stand with the Sustainability team at the Cultural Festival, increasing student understanding of **how purchasing decisions contribute to the UN SDGs**. Additionally, we employed an MSc Global Sustainability Solutions student to work with our team on supplier engagement for sustainability, enabling them to complete their dissertation while contributing valuable research and insights to our work.

Supplier engagement and performance tracking

This year, we improved our understanding of supplier engagement and performance, enabling better insight into how we can work together to achieve shared sustainability goals. As a result, we made a strategic decision to pause partnerships with third-party sustainability ratings providers, ensuring cost savings while maintaining robust in-house evaluation processes. We continue our partnership with the **Social Value Portal** which supports us and our suppliers to deliver **social value in the local area**.

Responsible procurement at Penryn

Supplier engagement

Within our tender criteria, 20% of the overall scoring process is attributed towards responsible procurement activity. This has resulted in:

92%

92% of our core suppliers now holding a **social value strategy**.

87%

87% of our core suppliers holding a **carbon reduction policy**.

94%

94% have joined our **NETPositives supplier engagement platform**.

Social value

The NETPositives portal enables suppliers submit or create their own sustainability action plans. Our aim is to have all our suppliers submit action plans for the 2025/26 academic year.

Construction

Investing in our estate and ensuring that our facilities meet the demands and expectations of our community is a key element of the University's strategic operations. Construction remains one of the most carbon-intensive areas of any organisation. A shift away from building new buildings towards maintaining, refurbishing and improving occupancy levels of our existing estate will support a reduction in both operational and embodied carbon emissions.

Sustainability Design Guide review

Our 2021 Sustainability Design Guide informs sustainable design and construction **decisions across all projects**. The creation of a Sustainable Buildings Manager post in 2023/24 has increased its application in Estates projects. A comprehensive review of the guide began in 2023/24, with extensive stakeholder consultation. The proposed changes aim to make the new Sustainable Design and Construction Standard clearer, appropriate to project scale and easier to embed, driving consistent delivery of sustainability goals across all project types. The Standard will be implemented in 2025/26 with training provided.

Construction and refurbishment projects – design stage

West Park: The proposed new West Park student accommodation is among the first projects to be guided by the Sustainability Design Guide and is expected to become **one of the UK's largest Passivhaus student accommodations**. The scheme was given approval by University Council in 2024/25 to progress to construction.

The Al Qasimi initiative: The first major project to adopt the Sustainability Design Guide from inception, is being **designed for Passivhaus certification**.

Harrison, Exeter Engineering 2030: Construction commenced of a new Structures and Building Materials lab behind the Harrison building, and the partial refurbishment of the existing building to create two new electronics labs, a hydrogen storage research lab, and refurbishments to common areas. This is the first project of this scale to follow the requirements and processes set out in the Sustainability Design Guide. The new building is designed to meet the **UK Net Zero Carbon Building Standard (UKNZCBS)** pilot version target for operational energy and upfront carbon, which are proposed to form part of the updated Sustainable Design and Construction Standard. Additionally, both the new building and the refurbishment will achieve certified SKA Gold rating.

Penryn 2.0: Originally tabled as an extension project to provide new lab spaces, this project will now see refurbishment of existing spaces across the Penryn Campus. This aligns with a circular economy approach and will result in **considerably lower embodied carbon**, whilst also offering an opportunity to make improvements to energy demands. The project will apply the existing Sustainability Design Guide as well as some of the principles proposed within the new Sustainable Design and Construction Standard.

Thornlea and Alexander Buildings – Creative industries: This fit-out project will make alterations to the existing buildings to improve teaching spaces. The project will **undertake a certified SKA assessment** in accordance with the Sustainable Design and Construction Standard, demonstrating a level of rigour to the assessment of sustainability for the scheme and providing valuable learning for future projects.

Construction and refurbishment projects – construction stage

Duckes Meadow changing blocks: The new changing blocks facility at Duckes Meadow had its full business case approved by Council in July 2025 and work is due to commence in September 2025. The project involves replacing the existing structure with a modern building currently designed to **meet the AECB CarbonLite New Build standard**. A whole-life carbon assessment will also be conducted.

Hatherley Neuroscience: This project will provide a new three-storey modular building to replace a single-storey temporary classroom. Whilst the Sustainability Design Guide has not been applied on this project, and formal derogations process not followed, it has been designed to **achieve BREEAM Excellent**.

Sarah Turvill Multifaith Centre

The Multifaith Centre was completed in November 2024. It is designed to promote inclusion and respect for diverse faiths and beliefs, while fostering a sense of community, encouraging connections and inter-faith collaborations. Sustainability and reducing operational carbon emissions have been fundamental both to the design and the construction of the building, with achievement of **certified Passivhaus accreditation** and inclusion of roof PV and air source heat pumps for heating and hot water.

Food and drink

The Catering and Retail Services team is committed to leading by example in sustainability, with a clear public commitment to reducing its carbon footprint. This commitment is embodied in the Sustainable Food Policy and Action Plan. To advance our goals, the team has implemented eight core initiatives. These initiatives aim to promote informed choices rather than restricting options.

This year:

64.2% ↑ 5.9%
of all meals sold at Cross Keys were vegan and vegetarian.

10%
of all milk used was plant-based.

27.5% ↑ 9.5%
of all meals served in the Forum Kitchen were vegan.

4,597 LITRES ↓
reduction in dairy milk usage compared with 2023/24.

50.7%
of all meals in our retail outlets in Veganuary were vegan.

46.4%
of all hot drinks were served in reusable cups.

In residences, we reduced meat purchases by **2,442 KG** ↓
and introduced venison as a more sustainable option.

Kitchen garden

The joint kitchen garden project between the Catering and Retail and Grounds teams continues to expand, with over one tonne harvested this year. Using both traditional planting and hydroponics, it **provides local, sustainable produce year-round**. The Grounds team are trained in permaculture and manage the garden in a way that **improves soil health and supports biodiversity**. Between April and October, the team run regular volunteering sessions in the garden for staff and students.

OVER 1 TONNE of fresh produce was harvested from our garden kitchen.

Hydroponics is the horticultural technique of growing plants using a water-based nutrient solution rather than soil.

Composters

We have invested in **Ridan composters for the residences**. These composting machines speed up the composting process without requiring power, making them cheap and easy to operate. They allow us to compost food waste which will then be used in the kitchen garden.

SRA Food Made Good Standard

We are delighted to have **retained our three-star rating** – the highest possible grade – under the SRA Food Made Good Standard. Our overall score **increased from 71% to 76%**, reflecting improvements across the Sourcing, Society, and Environment pillars, and highlighting the team's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement through reduction, reuse and recycling initiatives.

Energy efficient equipment

We have invested in new energy-efficient **cook-line equipment at the Ram Bar**. The upgraded system offers precise temperature control, better cooking performance, and longer-lasting oil thanks to improved filtration and monitoring. With the addition of an oil testing kit, **our chefs can now track oil quality and change it only when needed** – reducing waste, saving energy and keeping our food at its best.

Veganuary research

For several years, HLS academics Sophie Hearn and Natalia Lawrence have **explored what helps people cut back on meat** during and after Veganuary. This year, they tested an "if-then" planning strategy with 130 participants, with findings featured in the Guardian, The Conversation, and even LADbible. On campus, they teamed up with catering staff who served up Vegan Voyage dishes in the Forum Kitchen.

Catering and retail at Penryn

FX Plus staff collaborated with the Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union to deliver a **two-day Sustainability Fair** across the Penryn and Falmouth campuses. Attracting over **200 attendees**, the events showcased a diverse range of sustainability-focused local businesses, grassroots organisations, SU societies, and talented student crafters.

The Catering team continued to advance key sustainability initiatives, including the expansion of the **reusable coffee cup buy-back scheme**, aimed at reducing packaging and general waste. In partnership with Minor Figures, they also hosted a complimentary **plant-based oat coffee sampling event** at the Sustainability Café in May, serving a total of **376 hot and iced oat coffees**.

Meat Free Mondays were trialled in March 2025 at the Stannary, in collaboration with the Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union, with the aim of gaining insights into consumer preferences.

Looking forward, the plan will be to develop a **sustainable catering, retail and hospitality policy** that will establish objectives for Campus Services.

200
people attended the Sustainability Fair

Labs and research

Laboratories are among the most resource-intensive spaces in any sector, using up to 3–10 times more energy per square metre than standard offices. The Sustainable Research Thematic Forum plays a key role in supporting the University to meet its commitments under the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice. Our Sustainable Labs project, from Technical Strategy & Operations, supports lab users in reducing environmental impact and achieving green accreditations.

Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice

We were a founding signatory (August 2024) of the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice. By signing the Concordat, we have **committed to taking action in six priority areas**. This report presents how we are delivering on these commitments, including transparent and consistent reporting of our environmental data.

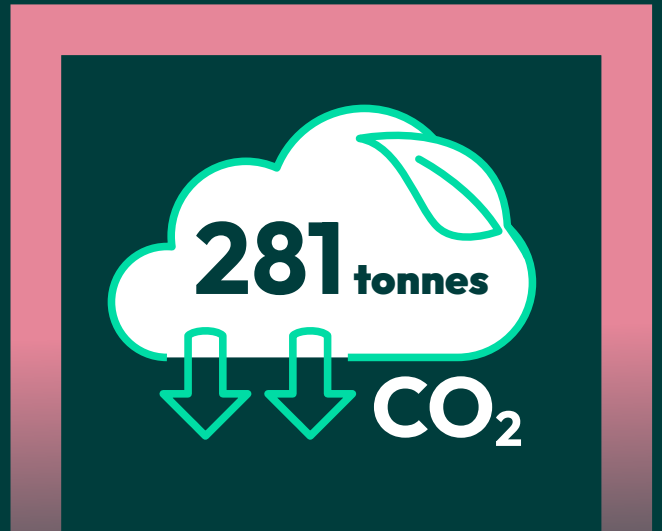
Concordat priority areas:

1. Leadership and system change
2. Sustainable infrastructure
3. Sustainable procurement
4. Emissions from business and academic travel
5. Collaborations and partnerships
6. Environmental impact and reporting data

Green accreditations

We have adapted to evolving frameworks and we have also introduced technical and academic Sustainability Champions in each lab.

Since 2020, the Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) has saved an estimated 281 tonnes of CO_2. This is equivalent to **powering 100 average UK homes for a year!**



TRACE

TRACE is a tool for **Tracking Research Activity Carbon Emissions**. The development of this carbon footprint estimator for research projects has entered a testing and refinement phase, involving partner HEIs to ensure broad applicability. In October 2025, the project team will launch a **five-month pilot phase** to evaluate the tool's usability. Drawing on initial data, the pilot will also assess the extent to which it supports researchers in making greener choices.

Funded by the Wellcome Trust, the project has already attracted interest from numerous organisations and is beginning to foster the sharing of best practices in research sustainability.

Sustainable Labs Action Plan (2024–2026)

We launched a University-wide Sustainable Labs Action Plan, aligning with departmental committees, the University's Climate Strategy, the UK Concordat, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Advancing Sustainability Initiatives Fund

The Advancing Sustainability Initiatives Fund has been launched to **support circular practices in technical spaces**. By donating unwanted lab equipment, income has been reinvested into a range of impactful sustainability projects across the University.

Projects include water-saving dishwashers, cold storage upgrades, plastic recycling start-ups, 3D printing to reduce procurement emissions, and improved vented cabinet storage to increase fume hood efficiency.

Read more here about past funding for sustainability initiatives through Sustainable Labs.

Lab recycling

This academic year, the University has **recycled 450 kg of decontaminated lab plastics** and **76 kg of gloves** – equivalent to **over 21,000 gloves diverted from landfill**.

Equipment sharing

We introduced a system to **mark assets** and chemicals as '**freely available**', supported by training videos, to promote reuse and align with the University's circular economy goals.

Engagement and education

We rolled out a **Stakeholder Engagement Plan** for internal and external partners. This has included hosting on-site stalls, providing updated resources and the redevelopment of our University webpages to deliver detailed advice on sustainable practices.

Lab tours are underway to support ongoing accreditation efforts.

We also launched the **Sustainable Labs Induction** via PowerApps to ensure all lab users are aware of the importance of sustainable practices and the role they play.

Research excellence

Our world-class research makes a powerful contribution to the sustainability landscape, across a multitude of fields. We are home to the UK's top five most influential climate scientists – all in the top 21 in the world (Reuters Hot List). In total, we have over 1,500 research and education specialists working on a green future.

Some highlights from 2024/25 include:

The release of the **Planetary Solvency report** proved to be one of the biggest environmental stories of the year. The jointly authored document by University of Exeter and the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries warned that **global GDP could fall 50%** if action isn't taken on the climate crisis.

Another report from Green Futures Solutions, developed with J O Hambro Capital Management, concluded that major UK firms are on course for a **'disorderly' green transition**.

A policy brief by the University and NGO the Regulatory Assistance Project has warned that the UK needs coordinated plans to **prevent a rush for domestic air conditioning** as temperatures rise. This year saw the launch of **Exeter Climate Policy**, a new initiative staffed by top scientists and economists, to offer advice to policymakers on navigating the green transition.

Transition Risk Exeter Limited (Trex), a new University spin-out company, was also launched to offer climate scenario analysis for investment professionals.

The University unveiled the **Global Meteorological Simulator** (GMS), a pioneering research facility – funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council – that will enable scientists to recreate extreme weather conditions in a controlled environment.

Between 30 June and 4 July 2025, the University hosted the **Exeter Climate Forum**, which included the Global Tipping Points Conference. With **more than 1,000 attendees**, it brought together world-leading climate researchers, businesses, policymakers and young people to shape and engage with the priorities for COP30 and beyond.

Ahead of COP30, the **Parliamentarians' Guide to Climate Change** – produced by the University of Exeter in collaboration with Peers for the Planet – has now been translated into Portuguese, following an Azerbaijani translation for COP29.

Storying Water is an arts-led research project to **explore our water system through audio stories**, exploring how it works, its challenges and future resilience. The project is led by Dr Ellen Wiles, artist-in-residence at CREWW.

Research paper highlights

This year saw the publication of numerous climate and sustainability-related research papers in high-impact journals. These include:

Antarctica is 'greening', with vegetation cover across the peninsula increasing more than tenfold over the last four decades, according to new research published in the journal *Nature Geoscience*.

Multiple climate 'tipping points' are likely to be triggered if global policies stay on their current course, with the most conservative estimate being a **62% risk of triggering** if current policies remain.

On a brighter note, there are signs of a **positive tipping point on electric vehicles** in the UK used car market, where they have become more popular than equivalent petrol and diesel cars. EVs made up just 0.7% of new car sales in 2019. In 2023, this figure had risen to 16.5%.

HASS academic **Heather Wren** secured an ESRC South West Doctoral Training Partnership Fellowship for her project 'Addressing the climate crisis through the empathetic ruptions in environmental education'.

The UK's **peatlands face an uncertain future** amid the escalating impacts of climate change, according to research in the *Journal of Applied Ecology*, suggesting further peat accumulation will be impossible by 2061.

Other research revealed that: two-thirds of Key Biodiversity Areas in tropical forests are experiencing new temperatures; climate change is threatening the future of the banana industry in Latin America; cities in the Global South lack cooling green spaces; ozone pollution is reducing tropical forest growth; and tree planting is still the best way of removing carbon.

Major funding secured

£10m

£10m from UKRI to establish the **Centre for Net Positive Health and Climate Solutions**, which will deliver research on climate change and its impact on health and environmental health inequalities.

£6.5m

£6.5m from UKRI and NIHR to set up a new centre – **UK Hub for One Health Systems**: Creating Sustainable Health and Social Care Pathway – that will work with the NHS to reduce its carbon footprint concerning the 'patient care journey'.

£5m

£5m from the Science and Technology Facilities Council for a five-year project to build a next-generation **modelling tool for the solar atmosphere**.

£3.3m

£3.3 million from a philanthropic gift from André and Rosalie Hoffmann to fund the new **Hoffmann Impact Team** for **Accelerating Action on Nature and Climate**.

Education

Activity in 2024/25 has been led by the Sustainable Education Advocates with support from members of the Education Thematic Forum and the Sustainable Education Assistant within the Sustainability team.

Curriculum for Change (C4C)

The Curriculum for Change (C4C) initiative is the University's ongoing project of curriculum transformation, embedding sustainability literacy across all academic programmes.

In 2024/25, we made the following progress:

- The **Exeter Skills Framework**, endorsed by Senate in 2024, is being mapped into all our programmes. The Skills Framework is informed by the skills and mindsets recognised as important to support the UN SDGs. Programmes will be mapped to the framework in Phase 1, with skills linked to assessments on core modules during later phases of the project.

- In September 2025, we launched our **Sustainability Solutions undergraduate pathway**. This pathway will enable students across the University to develop sustainability literacy and skills, regardless of their chosen programme of study.
- The **Transformative Education Framework** will be embedded in programmes from September 2025 through the C4C Course and Assessment Principles.
- Through **Grand Challenges**, a team of students proposed an update to compulsory modules in UG Stage 1, aiming to foster community and belonging; align with the University's 'greener, fairer, healthier' mission; and engage with principles of free speech and academic freedom.

New resources developed during 2024/25 include:

- Guidance for colleagues on the Exeter Skills Framework Checklists and timelines to help academic leadership teams make progress against the Course and Assessment Design Principles developed through C4C.
- Guidance on field trips to ensure they are informed by sustainability principles.
- A resources hub to support colleagues to implement C4C.

Responsible Futures
accredited institution

Responsible Futures

Responsible Futures is a whole-institution supported change programme and externally-assessed accreditation mark to embed sustainability across all aspects of student learning. In 2024, the University, The Guild and Falmouth & Exeter Student Union were awarded full accreditation.

Supported by SOS-UK, we have continued to support a working group – made up of students, educators, union representatives, and more – to engage with the framework.

Highlights from this year include:

- Implementing recommendations from last year's student-led audit and preparing for the second in June 2026
- Listening to staff and students' feedback to identify gaps and opportunities
- Increasing collaboration with Exeter and Falmouth SU and the Students' Guild and developed involvement of representatives in the Education Thematic Forum
- Releasing a second survey to assess staff confidence in delivering sustainable education
- Participation in the Education for Sustainability Leaders Symposium in April 2025

SDG Teach In

The SDG Teach In – a campaign by SOS-UK – ran for the entirety of March, asking educators to pledge to **include the SDGs in their educational activities**. In 2024/25 Exeter ranked 2nd for the number of learners reached and 5th for the number of educators who pledged, both higher positions in the SOS-UK Leaderboard than last year.

2nd for the number of learners reached.

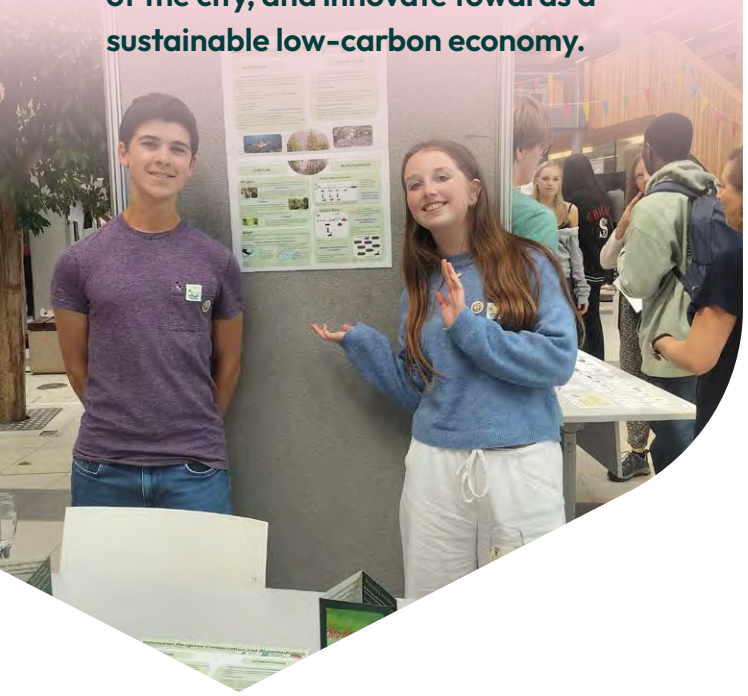
5th for the number of educators pledged.

Sulitest

We are in the process of implementing Sulitest TASK to **raise student awareness of sustainability** and to assess how this changes over their time at the University. This builds on previous use of Sulitest 327 and it is expected to be more strongly integrated into the curriculum.

Engagement

The Civic University Agreement Exeter recognises that the University is fundamentally linked to the place and people of Exeter. Partnerships within our city are now more important than ever, especially as we seek to support the sustainable and inclusive growth of the city, and innovate towards a sustainable low-carbon economy.



101 students involved 2024/25.

GRAND CHALLENGES
Tackling 21st Century challenges together

Grand Challenges

Grand Challenges is a project week in which participants work in interdisciplinary groups with other students to design innovative solutions to real world challenges. All of the Grand Challenges **topics link to the UN's 17 SDGs**.

In 2025, **101 students were involved** in the three challenges that focused specifically on sustainability issues: Future Food, Climate and Environment Emergency and Grand Challenges Penryn. Students explored sustainability issues in wide-ranging fields, from water waste in fashion and student accommodation, to projects addressing food security, waste or packaging, and campaigns for curriculum change, awareness of habitat loss or dispelling misinformation about climate science.

Grand Challenges 2025 project examples operated at different scales from local to global:

Local and regional:

Aqua-Tracker – an app monitoring and gamifying water consumption/reduction in student accommodation.

Redeem your Rubbish – vending machines that collect recyclable materials not currently recycled on campus.

Earth Kind – a charity providing free resources to primary schools in Cornwall to increase biodiversity in playgrounds.

National and international:

Living On Our Planet (LOOP) – advocates global sustainability challenges' inclusion in the UK primary curriculum.

SustainErgy – AI powered interactive website encouraging sustainable diets for athletes.

Go Farm – educational boardgame about sustainable farming practices in the UK.

Nature-based Solutions to Climate Change – awareness campaign on the importance of Indonesian mangroves and the use of bioremediation

GREEN CONSULTANTS

Green Consultants

Green Consultants is an **award-winning extra-curricular programme** delivered jointly by the Career Zone and the Sustainability team.

After completing an online learning module, students are eligible to apply to undertake a Green Consultants project. These projects are sourced and managed by the Sustainability team and contribute to delivering strategic sustainability aims across both the Professional Services and Academic divisions.

During 2024/25, we have supported 54 students to deliver 14 projects. Our target for 2025/26 is to support 75 students to complete projects.

Working with students and graduates

The Sustainability team **recruited SCP student interns** to support work in a number of areas including communications and engagement, biodiversity, sustainable education, and emissions data. In addition to employing two GBP graduates to work on sustainable living initiatives and our sustainable education programme, they also hosted a 4-month graduate placement as part of the Future Leaders and Innovators programme and hosted Masters students in short-term module placements.

Culture Change for Sustainability

We are in the process of developing a **Culture Change Programme for Sustainability**, led by our newly formed Task and Finish Group. Reporting to ACT, the group will be responsible for defining a strategic, values-led approach to embedding sustainability into university culture. The programme is a vital part of delivering on our strategic and ambitious sustainability goals.

It will span a broad range of areas, including staff and student training, communications and engagement, the formal and informal curriculum, policy alignments and more.

COP29

The University played an **important role at COP29**, the UN Climate Change Conference held in Baku, Azerbaijan in November 2024. Exeter's work included leading the Global Carbon Budget – an important annual report on the sources of carbon emissions and natural 'sinks'. Our experts were involved in a variety of events across the two-week conference.

Glastonbury 2025

Two Exeter climate experts, Professor Richard Betts MBE and Laurie Laybourn, spoke at this year's Glastonbury Festival as part of the Speakers Forum. Professor Betts joined a **panel on climate breakdown**, and was also interviewed by Roger Harrabin about major cuts to US climate science. Laybourn, a visiting Fellow at Exeter's Global Systems Institute, gave a talk entitled: *Geoengineering: Trap or Tool?*

Engagement at Penryn

We had another successful year of our Penryn engagement program. We provided **42 events** with and for our student and staff community. We also delivered five events for the local off-campus community. These included events such as **free bike repair stalls** during the Community Day on Falmouth Campus; **climate anxiety workshops**; the RSPB Big Bird Watch; on- and off-campus **litter picking**; and community bike rides.

Abbreviations

ACT	– Advocate Climate Taskforce
CEC Board	– Climate and Environmental Crisis Board
CRC	– Commercial, Residential and Campus Services
ECCE	– Exeter Centre for Circular Economy
ECE	– Environment and Climate Emergency
GBP	– Graduate Business Partner
GHG	– Greenhouse Gas
KPIs	– Key Performance Indicators
kWh	– Kilowatt hour
kWp	– Kilowatt peak
LEAF	– Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework
PV	– Photovoltaics
SCP	– Student Campus Partnership
SDGs	– Sustainable Development Goals
SPF	– Sustainability Projects Fund
STS	– Sustainable Transport Policy
UEB	– University Executive Board

Appendix

Commuting emissions by transport type:

Figure 10: Staff and student commuting emissions (tCO_2e) for Streatham / St Luke's.

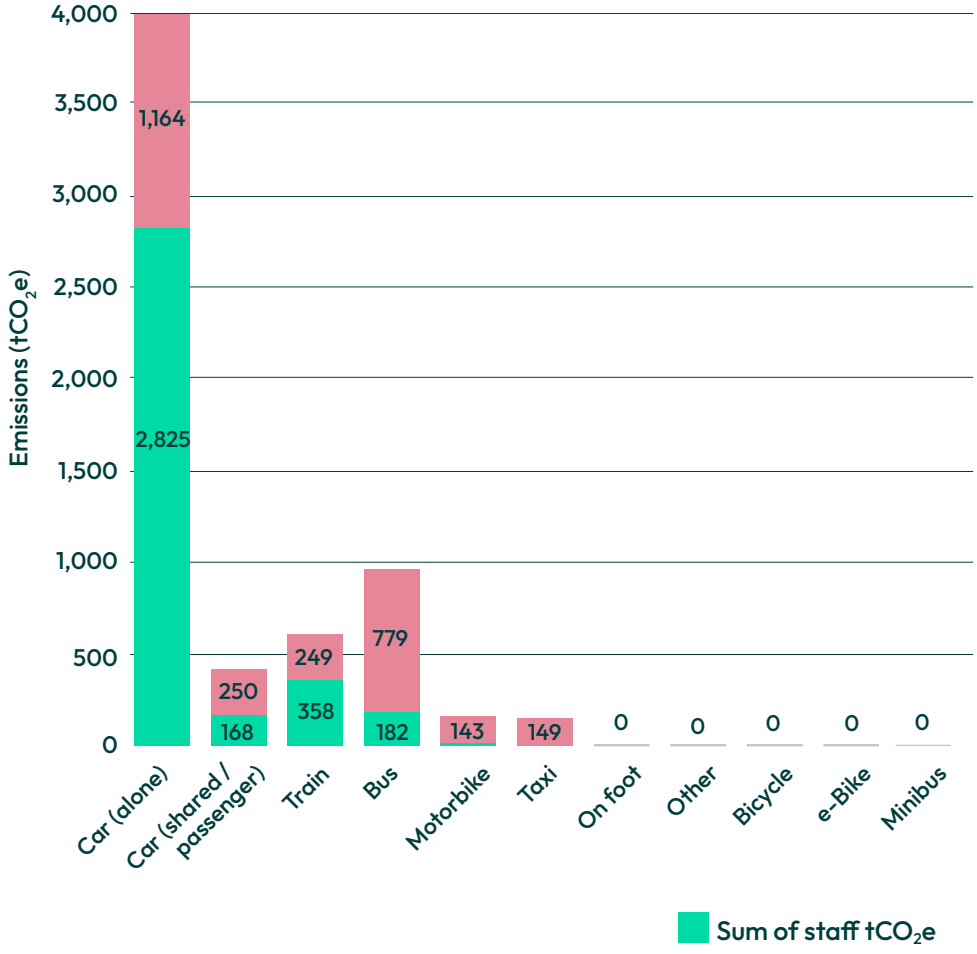
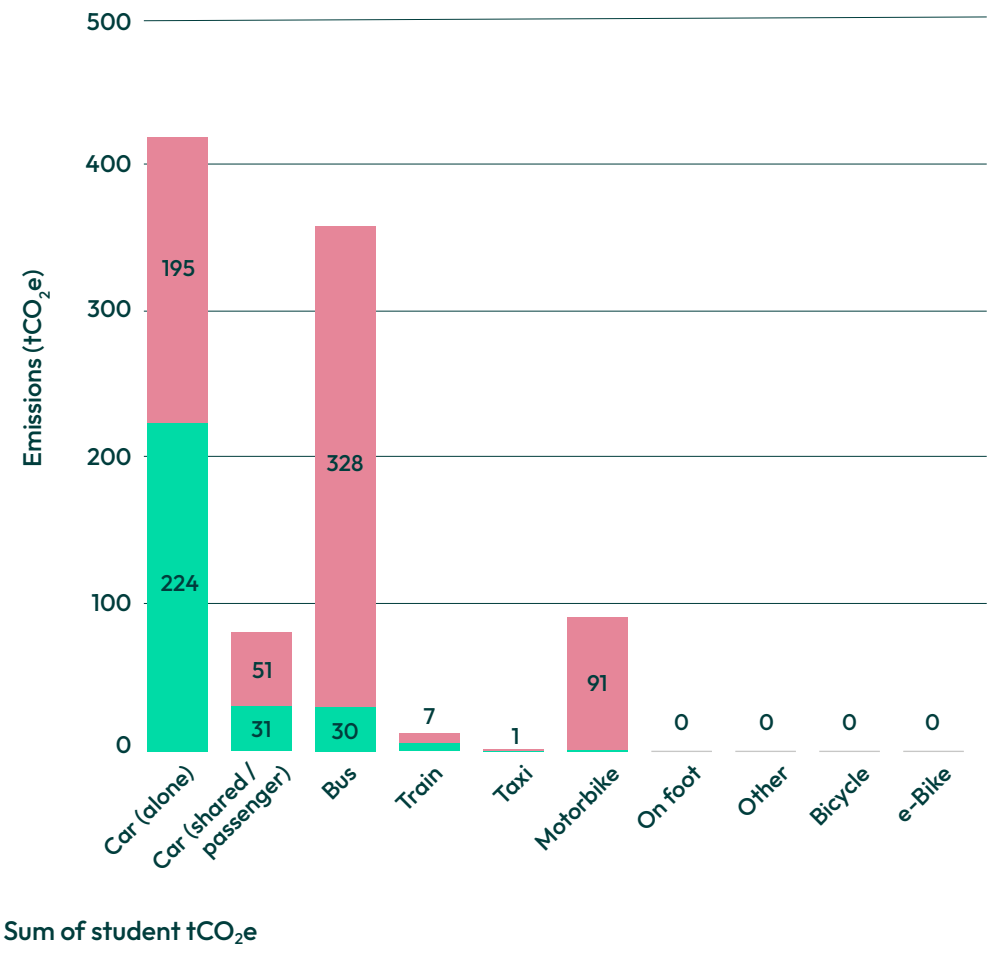


Figure 11: Staff and student commuting emissions (tCO_2e) for Penryn.



Sum of staff tCO_2e Sum of student tCO_2e

Key performance indicators

Our key performance indicators (KPIs) cover Streatham and St Luke's campuses and include our share of data from the Penryn Campus.

In 2024/25, we will be reviewing our progress reporting approach to incorporate advice from the independent assurance process. This will include prioritising the most material sustainability issues, aligning with the forthcoming Sustainability Strategy and reducing the number of KPIs that we report against. We remain committed to transparency but believe that it is important to focus reporting on the material issues.

	Key Performance Indicator	2018/19	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	% from baseline**
1	Total scope 1 and 2 location-based carbon emissions (tCO_2e)	15,702	13,017	13,341	12,009	-10%
1a	Total scope 1 carbon emissions (tCO_2e)	6,998	6,439	6,505	6,329	-2.7%
1b	Total scope 2 location-based carbon emissions (tCO_2e)	8,704	6,578	6,836	5,680	-17%
2	Total scope 1 and 2 market-based carbon emissions (tCO_2e)	7,480	6,761	6,968	10,007	44%
2a	Total scope 2 market-based carbon emissions (tCO_2e)	482	322	463	3,677	694%
3	Scope 1 F-gas, not included in overall scope 1 and 2 emissions (tCO_2e)			119	221.65	86%
4	Total scope 1 and 2 location-based carbon emissions per FTE (Full Time Equivalent) staff and student (tCO_2e/FTE)	0.56	0.37	0.37	0.34	-10%
5	Total scope 1 and 2 market-based carbon emissions per FTE staff and student (tCO_2e/FTE)	0.27	0.19	0.20	0.28	44%
6	Total scope 1 and 2 location-based carbon emissions per total income (tCO_2e/£1,000)	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	-12%
7	Total scope 1 and 2 market-based carbon emissions per total income (tCO_2e/£1,000)	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	40%
8	Scope 3 emissions (total) (tCO_2e) – excluding out of term-time commuting	74,721	89,505	83,464	76,977	-8%
9	Scope 3 emissions (total) per FTE staff and student (tCO_2e/FTE)	2.65	2.54	2.34	2.16	-8%
10	Scope 3 emissions (total) per total income (tCO_2e/£1000)	0.17	0.14	0.13	0.11	-10%
11	Scope 3 emissions Energy (tCO_2e)	7,044	8,604	8,061	6,515	-19%
12	Scope 3 emissions Water (tCO_2e)	425	157	149	141	-6%
13	Scope 3 emissions Bought Goods and Services (tCO_2e)	46,139	57,280	58,090	52,830	-9%

* F-gas has been separated from the wider scope 1 emissions as it has not been assured this year due to complications in identifying all the equipment that is affected.

**Values in table have been rounded. Percentage changes are calculated using unrounded figures.

	Key Performance Indicator	2018/19	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	% from baseline
14	Scope 3 emissions Business Travel - including hotels (tCO_2e)	10,802	11,262	9,541	7,981	-16%
15	Scope 3 emissions Term Time Student Commuting (tCO_2e)	1,802	2,722	2,516	3,441	37%
16	Scope 3 emissions Out-of-Term Time Student Commuting (tCO_2e)	25,409	49,581	55,163	54,679	-1%
17	Scope 3 emissions Staff Commuting (tCO_2e)	3,999	4,672	3,815	4,043	6%
18	Scope 3 emissions Investments (tCO_2e)	4,389	4,737	1,255	679	-46%
19	Scope 3 emissions Waste (tCO_2e)	121	71	37	24	-37%
20	Total scope 1 and 2 energy consumption, excluding vehicle fuel (kWh)	68,832,306	64,461,092	66,806,805	65,438,720	-2%
21	Total scope 3 energy consumption (kWh)	16,769,255	23,506,276	18,304,431	17,266,357	-6%
22	Total on-site renewables generation (kWh) - excluding Penryn	198,843	689,600	867,749	717,032	-17%
23	Total energy consumption per FTE staff and student (kWh/FTE)	3,036	2,496	2,390	2,326	-3%
24	Total water consumption (m^3)	404,231	415,428	439,827	395,540	-10%
25	Total water consumption per FTE staff and student (m^3/FTE)	14	12	12.35	11.12	-10%
26	Percentage of estate electricity from renewable sources or low carbon sources (%)	0	44	63	53	-16%
27	Percentage of electricity supply procured from renewable PPA (%)	20	16	19.6	20.83	6%
28	Percentage of electricity with REGO certificates retired on behalf of the University (%)	39	100	77	21	-73%
29	Total waste mass (tonnes)	2,394	1,516	2,181	1,629	-25%
30	Waste mass generated per FTE staff and student (tonnes/FTE)	0.08	0.04	0.06	0.05	-25%
31	Waste mass non-construction (tonnes)	1,608	1,216	2,038	1,267	-38%
32	Waste mass construction (tonnes)	786	299	143	362	153%
33	Percentage of waste sent to landfill (construction and non-construction waste) (%)	21	6	3	4	54%
34	Percentage of waste generated that is recycled or composted (construction and non-construction waste) (%)	37	53	49	42	-14%

Contact Us

Please get in touch with the Sustainability team to find out more about our plans to lead meaningful action on the ecological crisis and climate emergency, and how you can get involved at sustainability@exeter.ac.uk or follow us on Instagram @uoesustainability.

exeter.ac.uk/sustainability

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2024SUS013