

Draft Sustainability Strategic Framework 2027 - 2032

Shaping Sustainable Futures: Knowledge – Action – Value

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SECTION 1: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

1.1 Context

At the University of Exeter, sustainability is not an additional priority; it is fundamental to who we are, central to our Purpose and at the heart of our ambition to create the possible.

Our Purpose

*To use the power of our education and research to create
a sustainable, healthy and socially just future.*

This commitment is core to our University strategy, [Strategy 2030: Together We Create the Possible](#), which identifies our three interconnected ambitions:

- Lead meaningful action against the climate emergency and ecological crisis
- Make key breakthroughs to transform human health and wellbeing
- Lead the progress towards creating a fair, socially just and inclusive society

These recognise that we have a critical role to play in addressing the interconnected environmental and social challenges facing our world. Biodiversity loss, climate change, resource pressures, health inequalities and social injustice are increasingly linked, creating what is being described as an environmental and social polycrisis.

1.2 Our Approach

This document sits as an overarching framework, setting our shared direction, establishing our strategic priorities and bringing together the many strategies, plans and activities that already contribute to sustainability across the University. Our approach is to embed and empower; it is therefore intentionally strategic in scope. Detailed delivery, targets and actions are contained within contributing strategies and policies.

Figure 1: Sustainability Strategic Framework overview



This Sustainability Strategic Framework sits within a wider ecosystem of strategic enablers, including sustainability-specific strategies —such as Climate, Circular Economy and Sustainable Transport — and institutional strategies, such as Research and Innovation, where sustainability is embedded as a core principle.

Figure 2: Contributing strategies and policies



1.2.1 Our Mission: Sustainable Value Creation

Our Sustainability Mission

Creating lasting environmental and social value through meaningful action across our education, research, operations and partnerships.

Sustainable value is the positive environmental, social and organisational benefit created through our decisions, actions and collaborations.

In a world facing interconnected environmental and social challenges, creating a sustainable future requires more than reducing harm. For the University of Exeter, this means using our education, research, operations and partnerships to create lasting benefits for people, communities and the environment — both within and beyond our campuses. Through these, we contribute to healthier communities, a fairer society, a more resilient environment and new knowledge and solutions to global challenges. At the same time, we create value within the University by supporting our people to thrive, fostering inclusion and belonging, improving wellbeing, strengthening performance and making the best use of our resources.

1.2.2 Guiding Principles

Our approach is underpinned by seven guiding principles that shape how we will make decisions, prioritise resources and deliver impact.

Guiding principle	What this means
Whole Institution Approach	Sustainability is embedded across education, research, operations, partnerships and governance. It is a shared responsibility, integrated into decision-making and delivery across the University.
Inclusive and Collaborative	We work in partnership and encourage collaboration across our staff, students, communities and external partners, valuing diverse perspectives and ensuring that opportunities and benefits of our actions are shared fairly.
Evidence-based	We use research, data and innovation to understand impacts, inform decisions and continuously improve our approach.
Grounded in Global Responsibility	Guided by the UN SDGs, we act as a global institution, maximising our contribution to a sustainable future for all while managing the environmental implications of our activities.
Meaningful Action and Sustainable Value Creation	We focus on actions that deliver measurable outcomes, creating environmental, social and organisational value.
Empowering and Enabling	We empower and enable our community with the knowledge, opportunities and support needed to take action and contribute to a sustainable future.
Brave and Transformative	We embrace innovation and challenge established approaches, taking bold action to drive long-term change and create lasting impact.

We are committed to supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and embedding them across all our activities. The SDGs provide a globally recognised framework for addressing the world's most pressing social, environmental and economic challenges, and we will continue to use them to guide and measure our contribution to a more sustainable future. Details of our current activities in support of the SDGs can be found on our [website](#).

1.2.3 What Does Success Look Like?

Fundamentally, success will be achieving our vision. This requires our approach to creating sustainable value to be fully embedded across the organisation. Breaking this down, by the end of this framework period (2027 – 2032):

- **Our operations will be on a clear pathway to net zero and nature recovery**, actively restoring and enhancing the natural environment whilst reducing our contribution to climate change and increasing resilience.
- **Our staff and students will be empowered to make sustainable decisions**, equipped with the knowledge, confidence and opportunities to contribute to positive environmental and social outcomes through their learning, work and everyday actions.
- **Our research will address society's most pressing challenges**, generating new knowledge, developing innovative solutions, synthesising evidence and translating ideas into real-world impact.
- **Our education will share learning and opportunity** with students at all stages of higher education, providing them with the theory, tools and real-world experience to translate sustainability principles into their careers and lived experiences.
- **Our partnerships will create shared value and lasting impact**, with trusted relationships that enable collaboration, innovation and positive change locally, nationally and globally.
- **Our approach will be inclusive and equitable**, ensuring that sustainability contributes to a healthy, socially just future where everyone can participate, benefit and thrive.
- **We will demonstrate measurable environmental, social and organisational impact**, including through our supply chains, showing how sustainability strengthens our institution while creating wider benefits for society and future generations.
- **We will be recognised as a global leader in sustainability**, known for turning evidence, innovation and ambition into meaningful action and positive impact.

Within each contributing strategy there are detailed key performance indicators which are tracked and reviewed through our governance structure with key metrics reported in our [Annual Sustainability Report](#). This will demonstrate whether we are on track with the commitments outlined in this framework and allow us to make operational decisions accordingly. Additionally, we will use external indicators — such as the THE Sustainability Impact Ratings, the QS Sustainability Rankings and the NSS scores — as a proxy of our overall success.

1.3 Our Journey So Far

We are not tackling this from a standing start. Over the past decade, we have built strong foundations for sustainability across the University.

2019	• Climate Emergency White Paper • Environment and Climate Emergency Policy Statement published • Committed to divest from direct investments in fossil fuel companies • Signed the SDG Accord and Planetary Health Alliance
2020	• Launch of the Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework
2021	• Advocate Climate Taskforce formed • Established first Civic University Agreement for Exeter
2022	• Climate and Environmental Crisis Board formed • Founding signatory of the Nature Positive University Commitment • Launch of Future17: Sustainable Development Goals Challenge Programme
2023	• Launched Green Futures Solutions
2024	• Awarded the Outstanding Contribution to Environmental Leadership prize at the THE Awards • Faculty and Professional Services Sustainability Committees formed and began development of local Sustainability Action Plans • Received Responsible Futures accreditation • Founding signatory of the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice • Publication of Circular Economy, Sustainable Transport, Nature Positive and Responsible Procurement strategies • Launch of Gift It Reuse It, redistributing unwanted household items from outgoing students to new arrivals
2025	• Publication of new Climate Strategy, aligning targets with science and focusing on direct decarbonisation • Launch of Sulitest to assess the sustainability knowledge of the undergraduate and postgraduate learning communities • Won Green Gown Award for Reporting with Impact for Annual Sustainability Report
2026	• Launched the Sustainable Solutions minor • First GreenDisc accreditation received for digital spaces

SECTION 2: CREATING VALUE WHERE IT MATTERS

2.1 Focusing on What Matters

Meaningful action requires all of us to play our part. This means we have the responsibility to make this strategic framework relevant to the whole University community whilst focusing on the areas which have the most impact. To this end we completed a period of wide engagement to understand what matters across our community. Through this engagement period over 500 people contributed their views via a variety of methods, including workshops, questionnaires, pop-up stands and social media.

In addition, we recognise that, as a global university, our international ambitions can create both opportunities and challenges for sustainability. We have undertaken work to understand where our global activity and sustainability goals are aligned and where tensions may arise. This analysis enables us to maximise the positive value created.

This process has helped us identify core priorities which we have grouped into three pillars:

1. **Regenerative Environment:** Restoring and regenerating natural systems through climate action, nature recovery and circularity.
2. **Transformational Knowledge:** Generating, sharing and applying knowledge to address global challenges and create lasting positive impact.
3. **Thriving People and Partnerships:** Creating social value by fostering inclusion and belonging, strengthening partnerships and enabling people, communities and places to thrive.

Together, these pillars provide the foundations through which we will realise our Purpose and Vision, as well as strengthen our position as an international leader in sustainability.

2.2 Pillar 1: Regenerative Environment

This pillar brings together our work in restoring and regenerating natural systems through climate action, nature recovery and circularity.

2.2.1 Climate Action

We are steadfast in our action to address the climate crisis. We have moved from commitments to meaningful action, including campus decarbonisation, reducing travel, conducting world-leading climate research and providing our students with high-quality climate education. Our net zero approach is aligned to science-based targets.

Our strategic commitments

- We will lead meaningful climate action locally, nationally and globally, using our education, research, operations and partnerships to support the transition to a sustainable, healthy and socially just future.
- We will reduce our carbon emissions from our baseline by 26% by 2030, prioritising reductions across our operations and value chain in line with our science-based approach.
- We will reduce carbon emissions by at least 90% against our baseline and address any residual emissions through insetting, achieving net zero by 2050.

Delivering on our commitments

Our [Climate Strategy](#) outlines the actions we have developed to reduce carbon emissions across all aspects of our operations. Key initiatives include:

- *Campus decarbonisation* through the delivery of our Infrastructure Decarbonisation Masterplan, reducing scope 1 and 2 emissions across our estate.
- *Improving how we conduct research* as signatory of the [Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice](#). This includes tools such as TRACE, sustainable laboratory practices, and embedding sustainability into facilities and equipment through our [Exe-Tech Strategy](#).
- *Embedding responsible procurement* practices that enhance environmental, social and economic value, including reducing overall consumption and disposal as core elements of a circular approach.
- *Travelling more sustainably*, through the [Sustainable Transport Strategy](#). We recognise the importance of travel for collaboration, learning, research and impact, but will reduce it where possible and prioritise climate-conscious options when travel is necessary.
- *Adapting our campuses and operations to become climate resilient* by preparing for the impacts of climate change through climate risk assessment, resilient infrastructure and adaptive planning.

2.2.2 Nature Positive

In 2022, the University committed to becoming a Nature Positive University, with the ambition of delivering a net positive contribution to biodiversity and the natural environment. As part of this commitment, we are measuring, monitoring and reporting the environmental impacts of our education, research, operations, partnerships and supply chains to target action where it can create the greatest environmental value and support a more resilient future.

Our strategic commitments

- We will enhance biodiversity and natural capital on our estates and areas of influence, increasing habitat biodiversity value by 20% by 2030, with a stretch goal of 30%, from a 2020 baseline.
- We will engage and connect people with nature, creating social value by increasing the benefits it provides for all our communities.
- We will embed biodiversity enhancement, environmental regeneration and sustainable water stewardship across our operations, supply chains and global activities.

Delivering on our commitments

Our [Nature Positive Strategy](#) outlines our actions to improve the natural world through an embedded, evidence-based approach with clear targets and monitoring. Key initiatives include:

- *Enhancing biodiversity, natural capital and water resilience* by delivering habitat restoration, species recovery and biodiversity enhancement projects across our campuses and landholdings.
- *Connecting people with nature through learning, research and engagement* by creating opportunities for staff, students and local communities to experience, understand and contribute to nature recovery. Building on initiatives such as the Lower Hoopern Valley project, outdoor learning, volunteering and citizen science activities, we will support wellbeing, foster environmental stewardship and create social value through stronger connections with nature.
- *Creating positive value for nature through our wider influence, supply chain and partnerships* by measuring and understanding our global biodiversity footprint to identify opportunities to reduce negative impacts and enhance positive ones. Through our Nature Positive commitment, responsible procurement practices and world-leading research on biodiversity and environmental change, we will contribute to nature recovery beyond our campuses.
- *Exploring how we can develop a water smart campus* that demonstrates how a modern university can radically reduce potable water demand, improve management of storm and surface water, and future-proof its estate.

2.2.3 Resource Use and Circularity

Resources underpin every aspect of the University's activities; from the materials we purchase and the food we consume to the way we design and operate our campuses. We recognise that

creating a sustainable future requires more than reducing waste; it requires a fundamental shift in how we value and use resources.

Our strategic commitments

- We will embed circular economy principles across all aspects of University life, transforming the way we design, use and manage resources.
- We will support the transition to a circular economy by reducing waste and maximising the value and lifespan of resources through reuse and repair.
- We will create sustainable value through responsible resource management, minimising environmental impacts while strengthening environmental, social and economic resilience.

Delivering on our commitments

Our [Circular Economy and Sustainable Resource Management Strategy](#) provides the foundations for our approach to resource use. Key initiatives include:

- *Embedding circular principles into decision-making* by integrating circular economy thinking into procurement, estate development, campus operations and resource management. Through initiatives such as responsible procurement, whole-life costing and sustainable construction practices, we will reduce waste, minimise resource use and maximise the value of products, materials and assets throughout their lifecycle.
- *Keeping resources in use for longer* by prioritising reuse, repair, refurbishment and redistribution across the University. We will build on initiatives such as furniture reuse, IT equipment refurbishment, laboratory equipment sharing and resource exchange schemes.
- *Using our campuses as living laboratories for circular innovation* by applying research, innovation and operational expertise to develop and test new approaches. Through collaboration with the [Exeter Centre for the Circular Economy](#), students, staff and external partners, we will trial circular solutions, share learning and identify practical approaches.
- *Creating value through sustainable food systems* by implementing our [Sustainable Food Policy](#) and working with suppliers, students and catering partners to reduce food waste, support sustainable sourcing, promote healthy and sustainable food choices and strengthen local supply chains.

2.2.4 Exeter in Action — Examples of Initiatives

TRACE

How we conduct research is as important as what we research. Led by the University of Exeter, [TRACE](#) (Tracking Research Activity Carbon Emissions) was developed in 2022 to enable researchers to measure the carbon impact of their projects. Supported by the Wellcome Trust and delivered in partnership with leading UK universities, TRACE is being developed as an open-source tool to support more sustainable research practices across the sector.

Renewable energy and power generation

We have installed solar PV across 19 buildings, a carport canopy and a ground-mounted array of 1,800 panels, generating over 3,000 MWh annually — enough to power more than 1,100 homes. A new wind turbine at our Penryn campus, expected by 2027, will generate around 2.8 GWh per year. Building on this progress, our forthcoming Power and Generation Strategy will set the future direction for how energy will be generated, managed and distributed across our estate, including the expansion of on-site generation, battery storage and opportunities for energy export.

The Lower Hooper Valley

We are transforming the 38-acre [Lower Hooper Valley](#) into a living example of nature recovery, research and community engagement. Through habitat restoration, hedgerow planting and nature-based flood management, the project is enhancing biodiversity, improving water resilience and creating new opportunities for learning and wellbeing. Developed in partnership with researchers, local organisations and the community, the Valley supports teaching, field research and long-term ecological monitoring while providing an accessible green space that connects people with nature.

Exeter Centre for the Circular Economy

The [Exeter Centre for the Circular Economy](#) brings together world-leading research, education and partnerships to accelerate the transition to a circular economy. Working with businesses, policymakers and communities, the Centre develops practical solutions that reduce waste, extend resource lifecycles and create economic, environmental and social value. Through research, industry collaboration and student engagement, it positions the University as a leader in translating circular economy principles into real-world impact.

Gift It Reuse It

Launched in 2024, [Gift It Reuse It](#) helps keep reusable items in circulation by collecting thousands of unwanted household goods from departing students and redistributing them to new arrivals. The scheme reduces waste, supports a more circular campus economy and lowers demand for new products, while also helping students manage the cost of living by providing free essential items. By creating opportunities for students to help deliver the scheme, it strengthens student engagement and enables the University community to take practical sustainability action together.

2.3 Pillar 2: Transformational Knowledge

Transformational knowledge is central to creating a sustainable, healthy and socially just future. As a University, one of our most powerful and unique opportunities to create lasting positive impact is through the knowledge, education, skills, innovation and capabilities we generate, share and apply.

This pillar brings together our:

- research and innovation
- education
- engagement

2.3.1 Research and Innovation

Research and innovation are central to how we create sustainable value. Through the knowledge we generate, the partnerships we build and the solutions we develop, we contribute to addressing global challenges and advancing a more sustainable, healthy and socially just future.

Our strategic commitments

- We will further strengthen our world-leading interdisciplinary research to continue to address the defining challenges of our time.
- We will continue to foster a collaborative and interdisciplinary research culture that enables bold ideas, supports innovation and brings together diverse expertise to address complex societal challenges.
- We will ensure our research creates lasting impact by translating knowledge into practical solutions, policy influence and innovation. Through initiatives such as Exeter Futures, research networks and global partnerships, we will create the conditions for research that delivers real-world impact.

Delivering on our commitments

Our [Research and Innovation Strategy](#) sets the foundation for all our research at Exeter and includes activities which:

- *Turn world-leading research into solutions for global challenges* by advancing interdisciplinary research that supports a greener, healthier and fairer future, building on Exeter's strengths across climate, nature, energy, health, food and social justice.
- *Create impact through partnership, innovation and influence* by working with governments, businesses, healthcare providers, communities and global institutions to translate research into meaningful action.
- *Lead the transition to sustainable research and innovation* by embedding sustainability into the way research is designed, delivered and shared.

2.3.2 Education

Education is another powerful way in which we create sustainable value. Through the knowledge, skills, experiences and perspectives gained during their time at Exeter, our students have the potential to create positive change throughout their lives, careers and communities.

Our strategic commitments

- Through our curriculum and real-world experiences, we will equip our graduates with the knowledge, skills and confidence to address complex environmental and social challenges.
- We will cultivate climate and sustainability literacy across our community by providing learners with opportunities to receive personalised feedback on their sustainability knowledge while enabling staff and students to engage in social learning. We will also support staff to enhance their knowledge and embed sustainability into their education programmes.
- We will work in partnership with students to embed sustainability across formal and informal education, campus life and the wider student experience. We will do this by working closely with the Students' Guild, the Students' Union, the Athletic Union, student societies and SOS UK.

Delivering on our commitments

Through our [Curriculum for Change](#) programme we are developing a distinctive model of education that equips students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to address global challenges. We will embed sustainability within formal and informal education by:

- *Introducing the Sustainable Solutions Minors Pathway*, building students' skills and confidence to analyse sustainability challenges, innovate responsibly and communicate sustainable solutions. The Future17 SDG Challenge Programme will continue to connect students with international organisations to develop innovative solutions.
- *Using Sulitest TASK™* to enable students to better understand, improve and demonstrate their knowledge of sustainability, providing personalised learning feedback.
- *Continuing to grow our Transformative Education Framework*, through which we provide extensive guidance and workshop-based support for staff to help contextualise the importance of sustainability education, as well as resources to enable colleagues to make practicable education interventions.
- *Progressing our commitment to Responsible Futures*, an SOS UK change programme that brings institutions, students' unions, staff and students together to embed sustainability across all aspects of education and the wider student experience.
- *Continuing to expand our monthly staff sustainability education forums* to provide a welcoming space for all colleagues to discuss initiatives, build networks and share developments in sustainability learning.
- *Committing to providing a diverse range of informal learning opportunities* for students to develop personally and professionally. Green Consultants and Grand Challenges bring

together like-minded students and top academics to design innovative solutions to real world challenges. Our regular Climate Fresk and Green Seeds sessions provide opportunities for discussions and activities. Create Your Future, the Exeter Award framework and our University Career Mentor Scheme support students in developing their sustainability thinking to make informed choices on their future career.

2.3.3 Engagement

As a University, we are deeply connected to the places and communities in which we operate. We recognise that creating a sustainable, healthy and socially just future requires strong relationships, shared responsibility and meaningful collaboration with our local and regional communities.

Our strategic commitments

- We will work collaboratively with our communities and partners to address shared challenges, creating opportunity for participation and shared action to address shared challenges and create environmental, social and economic value for our communities.
- We will use our resources, expertise and influence to support inclusive opportunity, wellbeing, environmental improvement and sustainable development across the places where we live and work.
- We will connect organisations with expertise, support talent development, and provide innovation support to translate research into real-world solutions, strengthening our research and education and creating opportunities for students and staff.

Delivering on our commitments

We will support our communities through:

- *Strengthening our role as a civic University* by delivering our [Civic University Agreements](#) and working alongside local and regional partners to address priorities, creating shared value for communities across Devon, Cornwall and beyond.
- *Supporting local environmental action and regeneration* by working in partnership with community organisations, schools, charities and local groups to enhance biodiversity, improve green spaces and create opportunities for people to connect with and care for the natural environment. Through initiatives such as the Lower Hoopern Valley partnership, we will support nature recovery, community engagement and environmental stewardship while creating lasting value for both people and place.
- *Creating opportunities for collaboration and shared impact* by bringing together communities, businesses, local authorities and the University to share knowledge, develop solutions and celebrate positive action through initiatives such as the Exeter Sustainability Awards and community partnerships that support environmental and social change.
- *Supporting local economic development and inclusive growth* by working with local businesses, SMEs and partners to strengthen skills, innovation and enterprise. Through our purchasing power, knowledge, expertise and partnerships, we will support local

businesses to thrive, create opportunities for collaboration and help build a more sustainable, resilient and inclusive regional economy.

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2.3.4 Exeter in Action — Examples of Initiatives

Parliamentarians' Guide to Climate Change

Led by the University of Exeter in partnership with Peers for the Planet, the [Parliamentarians' Guide to Climate Change](#) provides authoritative, evidence-based insights into the causes, impacts and solutions to climate change. Bringing together accessible, high-quality resources, it supports policymakers to make informed decisions and take effective action.

RENEW

[RENEW](#) is a five-year partnership programme focused on addressing the global challenge of biodiversity loss. Using a 'people-in-nature' approach, it brings together research, communities and institutions to develop solutions that restore ecosystems and reshape how biodiversity is understood and supported. Through creating knowledge and influencing policy and practice, RENEW drives action at local, national and global scales.

Green Consultants

[Green Consultants](#) equips students with the skills and experience needed to succeed in the sustainability sector. Through a combination of targeted training, live projects and internships with external organisations, the programme enables students to apply their learning in real-world contexts and create meaningful impact.

Exeter Climate Forum

The [Exeter Climate Conference](#) convenes researchers, policymakers, businesses, students and community partners to share knowledge, showcase innovation and accelerate action on climate and sustainability challenges. By fostering collaboration across disciplines and sectors, the conference helps translate world-leading research into practical solutions and strengthens Exeter's role as a hub for climate leadership. Since its inception, the conference has engaged thousands of delegates from the UK and internationally, creating opportunities for learning, partnership-building and collective action towards a more sustainable future.

Green Futures Solutions

[Green Futures Solutions](#) brings together Exeter's research, education and partnerships to turn sustainability knowledge into real-world impact. By working with businesses, policy makers and communities, it develops practical solutions to climate and environmental challenges — creating environmental, social and economic value at local and global scale.

2.4 Pillar 3: Thriving People and Partnerships

Thriving people and strong, trusted partnerships are fundamental to the University's ability to create sustainable value and realise our Purpose. We recognise that positive change is achieved through strong relationships, inclusive communities and meaningful collaborations within and beyond the University.

This pillar focuses on creating social value through:

- fair and ethical practices
- inclusion and belonging
- staff development

2.4.1 Fair and Ethical Practices

Creating sustainable value requires us to consider not only what we do, but how we do it. The choices we make about who we work with, how we invest, what we buy and how we manage our resources have significant environmental, social and economic impacts beyond our campuses.

Our strategic commitments

- We will embed environmental, social and ethical value into procurement, investment and partnership decisions, ensuring that our resources are used to create positive value for people, communities and the environment.
- We will work with suppliers, partners and investors who share our commitment to sustainability and responsible practice, using our influence to contribute to climate action, nature recovery and the transition to a more circular economy.
- We will build and strengthen our partnerships with governments, business, healthcare providers, communities and global institutions that share our commitment to sustainability, integrity and social responsibility.

Delivering on our commitments

Delivering ethical and fair practices requires action across the University. This includes:

- *Working with partners and suppliers to drive positive change* by applying our [Partnership Principles](#) and collaborating with organisations that share our commitment to sustainability, fairness and responsible practice. We will use our influence to support the reduction of scope 3 emissions, encourage sustainable resource use and strengthen environmental and social outcomes throughout our value chain.
- *Embedding sustainability into procurement and investment decisions* by delivering our [Responsible Procurement Strategy](#), [Sustainable Procurement Policy](#), [Social Value Policy](#) and [Sustainable Food Policy](#), ensuring environmental, social and ethical value is integrated into purchasing, supplier selection and contract management. We will continue to align our investment activities with ESG principles and best-in-class standards.
- *Building knowledge and capability for sustainable decision-making* by drawing on our research, innovation and educational expertise to inform our own practices. We will

support staff, suppliers and partners to develop the knowledge and confidence needed to contribute to climate action, nature recovery, circular economy approaches and the responsible use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence.

2.4.2 Inclusion and Belonging

Inclusion, equality, diversity and belonging are fundamental to sustainability. Creating a sustainable future requires everyone to have the opportunity to participate, contribute and thrive, recognising that environmental, social and economic outcomes are interconnected. This strategy complements and supports the University's wider commitments to widening participation, equality, diversity and inclusion. By focusing on the intersection between sustainability, opportunity and social justice, we will help ensure that the benefits of a sustainable future are accessible to all and that no one is left behind in the transition to a more sustainable, healthy and socially just society.

Our strategic commitments

- We will foster a University culture where everyone feels respected, valued and able to be themselves, creating an inclusive and accessible environment where people can thrive and succeed. This includes being part of delivering this strategy and all our sustainable value initiatives.
- We will widen access to education and opportunity, ensuring that people from all backgrounds can access, participate in and benefit from the opportunities provided by the University. We will specifically support access to sustainability education, supporting just transition and realisation of the UN SDGs.
- We will support the wellbeing, development and success of our students and staff, recognising that healthy, connected and empowered people are fundamental to creating sustainable outcomes for our communities.

Delivering on our commitments

Realising inclusion and belonging requires actions across the University. This includes:

- *Expanding access and opportunity* by building on our sector-leading work in widening participation and social mobility, ensuring that talented individuals from all backgrounds can access, succeed in and benefit from higher education. Through initiatives such as Exeter Scholars and our award-winning widening participation programmes, we will continue to create opportunities that transform lives and communities.
- *Creating inclusive environments where people thrive* by delivering our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion commitments](#), embedding dignity and respect, and supporting the wellbeing of students and staff through our award-winning wellbeing services, inclusive people practices and whole-University approach to mental health and wellbeing.
- *Using evidence to create fairer outcomes* by building on the work of the [Centre for Social Mobility](#) and applying research, data and lived experience to inform our practice. Through collaboration across the University and beyond, we will identify and address barriers to participation, success and progression, creating social value through improved outcomes for students, staff and communities.

2.4.3 Staff Development

Creating sustainable value depends on the actions, decisions and leadership of our people. To achieve our sustainability ambitions, we will create the conditions that enable staff to contribute effectively through their roles, embedding sustainability into the way we work, learn, lead and make decisions.

Our strategic commitments

- We will support all staff to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to contribute to a sustainable future, regardless of their role or how long they have been part of the University community.
- We will foster a culture that empowers people to take meaningful action, encouraging creativity, innovation and continuous improvement to create environmental, social and organisational value through everyday decisions and activities.
- We will bring together people from across disciplines, professions and communities, using our expertise to inform our practice and develop new approaches that strengthen our contribution to a sustainable future.

Delivering on our commitments

We will support our staff by focusing on the following areas:

- *Building sustainability knowledge, skills and confidence across our community* by providing accessible learning and development opportunities for all staff and students, such as through climate literacy training, Climate Fresk and Learn Exeter.
- *Creating a culture that enables meaningful action and innovation* by delivering a University-wide sustainability culture change programme supporting collaboration, creativity and continuous improvement. We will create an environment where staff and students feel empowered to identify opportunities, challenge existing approaches and are able to act to develop new solutions.
- *Turning ideas into action through shared learning and collaboration* by bringing together staff and students from across disciplines and professional areas to apply sustainability knowledge in practice. Through initiatives such as the Sustainability Projects Fund, Circular Economy Community of Practice and cross-University sustainability networks, we will support people to develop, test and deliver projects.

2.4.4 Exeter in Action — Examples of Initiatives

Friends of Lower Hoopern Valley

[Friends of the Lower Hoopern Valley](#) brings together students and local residents to collaborate with the University in caring for the Valley. Through events, activities and ongoing engagement, the group promotes environmental awareness, community connection and active stewardship of the local ecosystem.

Using emerging technologies responsibly

We are embedding sustainability into our [Enabling AI Strategy](#) and [AI Policy](#), supported by training and guidance on responsible use. Alongside this, we are assessing infrastructure and supply chains to reduce environmental impacts through energy-efficient computing, responsible procurement and transparent reporting. By integrating sustainability from the outset, we are aiming to ensure that AI becomes a catalyst for climate ambition and sustainable value creation, rather than a source of unintended harm.

Embedding equality, diversity and inclusivity in travel policy development

Our [Travel Policy](#) was shaped by the University's commitment to both equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and environmental sustainability. The policy promotes climate-conscious travel, while recognising that travel choices must remain accessible, inclusive and enable equitable participation in University activities. By embedding EDI alongside carbon reduction objectives, the policy supports more sustainable travel without creating unintended barriers for members of our community.

Exeter Scholars

Our widening participation programme, supporting young people from under-represented backgrounds to access and succeed in higher education. Working with schools, colleges and communities across the region, the programme provides tailored academic support, mentoring and skills development. By widening access to opportunity and helping learners fulfil their potential, Exeter Scholars creates lasting social value, supports social mobility and contributes to a more inclusive and equitable future.

Learn Exeter

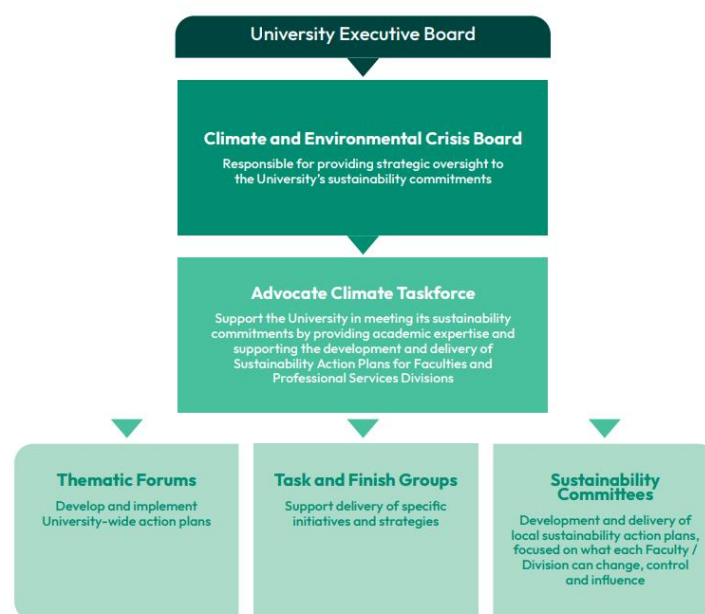
[Learn Exeter](#) provides free online courses on sustainability and the UN SDGs for staff, students and the wider public. Covering topics such as climate change, sustainable food systems, tipping points and valuing the natural environment, these courses build knowledge, raise awareness and enable individuals to engage with global challenges and take informed action.

SECTION 3: OVERSIGHT AND ASSURANCE

3.1 Good Governance

Value not only lies in what we do, it is also created in how we go about it — this is why good governance is so important to us.

To support this, we have a mature and effective framework for accountability, oversight and decision-making that reflects the importance we place on sustainability. Senior responsibility for delivery of this framework sits with the Senior Vice-President and Provost and the Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary, who jointly chair the Climate and Environmental Crisis (CEC) Board.



The CEC Board reports to the University Executive Board and provides strategic oversight of the University's sustainability ambitions, monitoring progress, guiding priorities and ensuring sustainability is embedded within institutional decision-making. Supported by the Advocate Climate Taskforce, Faculty and Professional Services Sustainability Committees, Thematic Forums and Task and Finish Groups, this governance structure helps translate strategic ambition into meaningful action and sustainable value across the University.

3.2 Reporting and Monitoring

The successful delivery of this framework requires clear accountability, robust monitoring and transparent reporting. Progress against this framework and its associated strategies will be monitored regularly to ensure that actions remain aligned with the University's Purpose and that we create meaningful impact and value in line with our targets, metrics and delivery plans.

We are committed to being transparent about both our achievements and the challenges we encounter. Progress will be reported publicly through the University's Annual Sustainability

Report, providing an overview of performance, key achievements, emerging priorities and areas requiring further action. Alongside reporting our contribution to the UN SDGs, selected sustainability metrics, case studies and examples of sustainability impact and positive outcomes will also be included within the University's Annual Report and Financial Statements, ensuring sustainability performance is considered alongside the University's wider strategic and financial performance.

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