

Edinburgh Napier University

**Environmental Sustainability Strategy**



**Environmental Sustainability Strategy Group**
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# 1. Executive Summary

Edinburgh Napier has set innovative and pioneering commitments within the University Strategy, Shaping our Future: *Driving Distinctiveness*. The strategic objectives and enabling commitments will enhance environmental sustainability within and beyond the University.

The commitments made do not focus on one specific area or aspect. Instead, the commitments purposefully and proactively provide a strong foundation that will enable holistic and embedded action building upon historic action, project delivery and success. Ultimately, the commitments made will perforate throughout the entire University community, governance principles, digital infrastructure, physical infrastructure and beyond to achieve collective success and impact.

This Environmental Sustainability Strategy extrapolates our commitments and guides action. The information contained within this document considers all commitments highlighted within the University Strategy and provides meaning including detailed purpose and project opportunity. High level actions up to the end of our 2023/24 academic year are shown within this document. Future opportunities will be introduced following ongoing and annual review of this document.

The expectations and targets set will be achieved through collective and collaborative action. The University will be an active leader within Edinburgh, working collaboratively as a member of the Edinburgh Climate Compact and supporting the city wide 2030 Climate Strategy. The University will actively enable progress towards the legislative carbon reduction targets set by the Scottish Government.

An Actions & Projects Register sits underneath this document to collate and encourage a live and adaptable action list highlighting a myriad of small and significant projects that will enable the delivery of our commitments made. Key performance indicators and annual reports will highlight step change and progress.

Examples of immediate action commencing within the 2021/22 academic year include the embedment of environmental impact audits within the planning process of every project led by Property & Facilities; development of an Energy Plan; review of the existing Business Travel Policy; launch of the ‘Achieving Sustainability: a better world is possible’ University wide module; scope, develop and action a Carbon Offset Plan including scope of legacy carbon commitment; and continued support of Gold Healthy Working Lives accreditation and linked action on campus.

This Environmental Sustainability Strategy has been developed and written at a time of extensive Climate Crisis conversations leading to COP26 in Glasgow during November 2021. More than ever, we know the historic, current and future impacts of climate change. More than ever, we are equipped with knowledge, technology and opportunity to adapt, mitigate and offset our impact.

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to highlight the very personal impact, individually and collectively, we all have within our local and global community. The impact of climate change and the Climate Crisis we currently face isn’t always visible or apparent. But the impact is here. And the impact to our climate, our ecosystems and each other can only be mitigated by personal and collective action.

#GetOnWithIt

# 2. Introduction & Scope

We have a strong history of enhancing environmental sustainability within and beyond the University. An overview of our work to date is publicly available at [www.napier.ac.uk/environment](http://www.napier.ac.uk/environment)

To enable and develop our collective story further, we have embedded fundamental and far reaching environmental sustainability commitments within our core University Strategy ‘Shaping our Future: *Driving Distinctiveness*’ launched during our 2020/21 academic year.

The embedment of environmental sustainability principles and practice within the University Strategy, as extrapolated within this Environmental Sustainability Strategy, comes at a key and threshold moment at Edinburgh Napier. Not just because of the innovative and pioneering commitments made. But also because the commitments have been developed and published at a time of global Climate Crisis conversations and within the midst of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

More than ever, we are aware of our global impact. As an academic, research, professional and community focused organisation, we are aware of our collective accountability and our absolute responsibility to mitigate existing and future impacts as well as acknowledging our historic impact. The commitments detailed and explained within this Environmental Sustainability Strategy will be met through an embedded approach filtering throughout and encapsulating the entire University. We will enable demonstrable and measurable action and progress through utilising and enhancing the knowledge and expertise of the entire internal and external University community both professionally and personally.

# 3. Strategic Aim & Outcomes

Our University Strategy, ‘Shaping our Future: *Driving Distinctiveness*’sets out key and overarching strategic objectives to ‘build careers – create opportunities’; ‘grow networks – connect communities’; and ‘advance knowledge – deliver impact’. The three strategic objectives are underpinned by a core commitment to growing sustainability, encapsulating growth of reputation, income and impact. Environmental sustainability, including a measurable carbon focus, is committed to be at the forefront of growth and decisions made, supported by the distinct and underpinning commitments detailed within the Enabling Objectives section below.

This Environmental Sustainability Strategy provides a foundation for our wide reaching and holistic environmental sustainability actions and targets to develop. This Strategy follows a values based approach in line with the transformational ethos of the University. The Strategy is also guided by our University values of ambitious, innovative, inclusive and professional.

# 4. Strategic Context & Alignment

Legislation, enabled through the Climate Change Bill (2019) legally commits Scotland to reach net zero by 2045. The target, encapsulating all greenhouse gases, will be met through a Just Transition creating a net zero carbon economy and society. Visit [www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change](http://www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change) for more information including a wealth of background and up-to-date information.

As a public body and a higher education institution physically based in Scotland, there is an expectation placed on the University to lead by example and embed innovative and pioneering activity to reduce carbon and wider environmental sustainability impact. The University has publicly committed to meeting this expectation by setting the environmental sustainability goals as detailed within the University Strategy and as explained within the Enabling Objectives section below.

In terms of geographical and place based collaboration, an aspirational target of net zero by 2030 has been set in Edinburgh encompassing all impacts and opportunities. The development of a 2030 Climate Strategy for the city will support collaborative work and active engagement with all organisations and citizens leading towards 2030. To support this work, the University is a member of the Edinburgh Climate Compact, an independent group of organisations focusing on collaborative action. Visit [www.edinburghclimate.org.uk](http://www.edinburghclimate.org.uk) for more information including updates from the University.

The overall agreement and embedment of environmental sustainability targets within the University Strategy has been enabled by the action, engagement and passion of Edinburgh Napier students, staff and partners. Collaborative action and leadership is key, both personally and organisationally.

Given progress towards environmental sustainability goals is ever changing, we have developed an online hub at [www.napier.ac.uk/environment](http://www.napier.ac.uk/environment) to provide an organic and engaging overview of our progress, including active links to national and local government strategies and progress. The hub also includes a library of practical project examples and glossary of terms to ensure language and understanding around all commitments, work and progress is explicitly transparent and clear.

We will be influenced by and ready to act on new experiences, new ideas and new opportunities as well as new legislation and national expectation to ensure the University is an active leader. We recognise that this not only means acting with pace but being willing to learn and take risks as we go. We encourage and welcome your engagement and contribution at environment@napier.ac.uk

# 5. Enabling Objectives

The core enabling objectives referred to and explained below are ingrained within the University Strategy. The objectives are split within the themes of Net Zero Carbon, Our Expertise & Motivation and Embedding & Measuring Success. Within each of the three themes we have highlighted indicative opportunities covering our 2021/22 to 2023/24 academic years. We will review and update this Environmental Sustainability Strategy annually to ensure all opportunities listed are aspirational, relevant to our work and look ahead at least three academic years in time.

Within this section, all text provided within quotation marks refers directly to the University Strategy ‘Shaping our Future: *Driving Distinctiveness*’.

## Net Zero Carbon

“We will take progressive action to achieve net zero carbon in our operations by 2030 at the latest. We will also seek to minimise both our wider and legacy carbon footprint and influence sustainable practices within and beyond our campuses”

We have measured and reported carbon emissions since our 2006/07 academic year. We can show significant action to date. For instance, carbon emissions associated with the consumption of electricity, gas and water at our campuses has reduced by 65% between 2006/07 and 2019/20.

We will build upon our successes and look ahead to achieve net zero carbon in our operations by 2030 at the latest. Our operational emissions encapsulate business travel, electricity, gas, water, waste and fluorinated gases. We will develop and embed key actions throughout all six operational areas underpinned by detailed plans and supported by our organic tracker of actions and project opportunities (see ‘associated documents’ referenced on page one). In terms of our recent measured emissions publicly reported to the Scottish Government see Table 4.1.

What the data shows is that in terms of carbon only, our key focus areas for action are electricity, gas and business travel. The data also shows the impact of Covid-19, with the reduction shown between 2018/19 and 2019/20 categorically due to the impact of the pandemic on our operational emissions.

**Table 1 : Carbon Emissions (Operational) 2017/2018 – 2020/21**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Carbon (tCO2e) | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
| Electricity | 2467.0 | 2093.7 | 1554.6 | 1203.1 |
| Gas | 2055.1 | 1835.8 | 1839.7 | 1840.9 |
| Water | 24.3 | 22.1 | 16.0 | 2.5 |
| F-Gas | 86.5 | 0.0 | 51.2 | 48.5 |
| Travel – Business | 2728.0 | 2463.3 | 1092.9 | 35.2 |
| Waste | 9.0 | 7.7 | 4.6 | 3.8 |
| Total | 7369.9 | 6422.6 | 4559.0 | 3133.9 |

In addition, we know, as a community that we collectively emit carbon beyond our operational boundary and our physical buildings and campuses. We have committed to taking progressive action within these areas to ensure we consider our full impact.

We estimate that in a typical academic year our community influences the emission of a further 500tCO2e due to home working, 12,000 tCO2e due to procurement, 7,000 tCO2e due to the term-time commute (students travelling to Edinburgh to study), 7,000 tCO2e due to the day-to-day commute (students and staff travelling to campus each day) and 1,000 tCO2e due to our investments. Our potential wider emissions therefore total 27,000 tCO2e. A significant impact that we have committed to actioning and reducing.

We will use ethical offsetting to deal with emissions that, in the short term, we cannot eliminate. In the long term, we have also committed to address our legacy carbon emissions through offset. Ethical offsetting means a firm commitment to three actions, in order of priority:

1. Reduce operational emissions through the embedment of best practice and further development of projects within our operational boundary.
2. Use our influence and position as a thought leader to work with our community, partners, stakeholders and wider society to reduce their emissions.
3. Offset emissions that we cannot avoid or legacy emissions that we have already produced through projects that are verifiable, fair and bring benefits in addition to carbon reduction.

We recognise that we will not achieve our net zero carbon target through mitigation alone. We will approach our net zero carbon target by continuing and augmenting our proven and successful carbon reducing activity blended with offset opportunities. We will adopt a mixed approach to offsetting, covering local, regional and international opportunities. We already host world-leading expertise in offsetting to fund nature-based solutions through projects developed and run by our community. This means we have existing academic experience of knowing how offsetting money can be spent for the benefit of nature and people.

**Table 2 : Net Zero Carbon: Operational Opportunities**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2021/22 | * Review existing Business Travel Policy to include clear travel hierarchy, including explicit reference to measured impact of travel and ending all domestic flights.
* Build upon historic success and ensure each new vehicle leased is electric.
* Review and develop Energy Plan. The Plan will highlight key mitigation opportunities including longer term transition from natural gas.
* Embed and audit environmental impact through all capital funding requests.
* Scope, develop and action Carbon Offset Plan including scope of legacy carbon commitment.
 |
| 2022/23 2023/24 | * Update Business Travel Policy and Energy Plan, as appropriate based on continual review all opportunities including new technology and innovation.
* Implement first phase of Energy Plan, including specific energy reduction projects.
* Implement first phase of Offset Plan, including specific offset projects. Capture data in relation to research impact and societal development.
 |
| Key Performance Indicators* Measured carbon emissions, CO2e. Existing internal and external public reporting.
* Achievement of annual targets specified in Carbon Offset Plan.
 |

**Table 3 : Net Zero Carbon: Wider & Legacy Opportunities**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2021/22 | * Develop a Travel Plan to highlight and support personal day-to-day and term-time commute opportunities for students, staff and partners. The Plan will contain guidance and actions encapsulating all opportunities covering core themes of walk, wheel and cycle; public transport; and private vehicle ownership, including action towards developing more electric vehicle charging points on campus.
* Build upon historic work and collaboration to provide updated guidance to students and staff regarding personal, home and wider community opportunities to reduce carbon and wider environmental impact.
* Update historic Ethical Financial Investment Policy and review opportunities to enhance environmental sustainability through indirect investments (banking, pensions and partnerships for example).
* Implement sustainable by default procurement policy and practice.
 |
| 2022/23 2023/24 | * Review opportunities to confidently report carbon impact of procurement through existing tools such as HESCET.
* In tandem with the Offset Plan, embed feasible and reasonable opportunities for measuring and considering legacy carbon emissions.
 |
| Key Performance Indicators* Measured carbon emissions, CO2e. Existing internal and external public reporting.
 |

## Our Expertise & Motivation

“We will combine the expertise and motivation of our community to enhance environmental sustainability within and beyond the University through our curriculum, research, operations, partnerships and engagement”; and

“We will align and build academic excellence focused on Wellbeing & Sustainability, underpinned by the themes of: Health; Environment; AI & Technologies; and Culture & Communities”

We are a global community of students, staff, alumni and partners. Our story is of academic leadership and community-based action. Our purpose is to enable and encourage confidence, experience, knowledge and expertise. We will approach our Environmental Sustainability Strategy with a clear focus and within the context of who we are as a University and community of people. We will build on our existing academic attributes and personal expertise to ensure we are a leader and pioneer of innovation, influencing professional practice and policy.

Our Learning & Teaching Strategy (2020 – 2025) and Research & Innovation Strategy (2020 – 2025) both reference their role in our environmental sustainability focus and enable interdisciplinary and innovative academic and research leadership, bringing our community and stakeholders together.

**Table 4: Our Expertise & Motivation Opportunities**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2021/22 | * Launch and embed University wide module ‘Achieving Sustainability: a better world is possible’.
* Continued research into environmental sustainability in the curriculum within the School of Computing.
* Use the rollout of the Curriculum Enhancement Framework (Enhance) to support the embedment of environmental sustainability in the curriculum through an enhancement approach drawing on the QAA and Advance HE education for sustainable development guidance.
* Engage with new academic thematic leads and initiate a project to enable mapping of research against sustainability themes. For example, through WorkTribe.
 |
| 2022/23 2023/24 | * Review connections, embedment and references to environmental sustainability within existing curriculum and research activity.
* Continue to scope living laboratory opportunities, linking academic and research expertise to practice throughout the University.
* Disseminate innovative practice developed by students and staff to further build University reputation as a leader in the sector and beyond.
 |
| Key Performance Indicators* Number of students actively participating in new module.
* Number of learning, teaching and research areas where aspects of environmental sustainability are embedded.
* Growth in external esteem markers and institutional invitations to lead debate.
 |

## Embedding & Measuring Success

“We will demonstrate delivery against Scotland’s National Performance Framework and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. We will join our further and higher education peers by signing the Sustainable Development Goals Accord”

To ensure an embedded, holistic, planned and structured approach we will use measurement and performance frameworks such Scotland’s National Performance Framework and the United Nations Sustainable Goals to audit our work. We will also consider the achievement of international standards such as ISO14001:2015 to support structured and auditable development of our work.

We will measure success by developing progressive and forward looking annual targets supported by and reported through a sequence of key and supplementary performance indicators. We will ensure that all targets meet SMART principles. Our progress and all key projects developed will be open, shared and transparent. We’ll also learn from and share when things don’t go to plan!

**Table 5 : Embedding & Measuring Success Opportunities**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2021/22 | * Sign Sustainable Development Goals Accord. Embed all associated activity required and reporting obligations within wider and appropriate planning.
* Review opportunities enabled through Business School membership of PRME and the pilot of the UNSDG dashboard in collaboration with St. Joseph’s University.
 |
| 2022/23 2023/24 | * Use the Sustainability Leadership Scorecard tool to complete a full review of existing progress, including progress against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
 |
| Key Performance Indicators* Number of UNSDGs embedded within learning, teaching, research and professional work.
* THE UNSDG Rankings.
 |

# 6. Wider Commitments

Biodiversity; ecosystem services; health and wellbeing; and adaptation are inferred and encapsulated within our University Strategy commitments noted above. However, for the purpose of absolute clarity, all wider commitments warrant specific comment. We will protect and enhance biodiversity and all ecosystem services throughout our physical estate. This includes reducing the wider impact of our actions, for example, chemical use. We will also work collaboratively throughout disciplines, recognising and actioning the significant and symbiotic links between environmental sustainability, health and wellbeing. We will link to existing programmes such as Healthy Working Lives.

In terms of adaptation, even with focused, substantive and legislative commitments in place, our climate has changed. Our climate will continue to change due to our collective impact and atmospheric emissions. We will work internally to ensure our physical estate is resilient. We will collaborate with partners and key external leaders to audit the risk and resilience of aspects we do not directly control, such as water courses and transport networks surrounding our physical estate.

**Table 6 : Wider Commitment Opportunities**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2021/22 | * Continue support of Gold Healthy Working Lives accreditation. Continue to highlight active links between health and environment.
 |
| 2022/23 2023/24 | * Review existing working practices and develop a Biodiversity Plan.
* Review existing working practices and develop an Adaptation Plan.
 |
| Key Performance Indicators* Development of Plans and impact on related indicators.
 |

# 7. Accountability, Governance & Reporting

In terms of accountability, all members of the Edinburgh Napier community must be informed, enabled and supported to be accountable for reduction of impact that they can and will support and lead. This ranges from leadership within spaces with significant environmental impact such as laboratories to personal impact such as waste management and the day-to-day commute. Following the Scottish Government, our focus on a Just Transition is clear. In addition, from key development projects to day-to-day actions, to achieve the targets set by the University and the Scottish Government, environmental sustainability and carbon impact must be considered and acted on from the outset.

We will ensure continued compliance of all pertinent internal and external obligations including all legislative and reporting requirements. This includes the legislative requirement to submit an annual Public Bodies Climate Change Duties (PBCCD) report to the Scottish Government. Other annual reports include the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Estates Management Record (EMR) and Scottish Funding Council Outcome Agreement Report. Internal reporting opportunities will also be sought, including through the Annual Statutory Accounts.

We will develop and agree appropriate key performance indicators to measure all quantitative and qualitative progress as shown within the Enabling Objectives section above. We will also meet or exceed all aspirations and targets set by the Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Government and other key partners and policy drivers.

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy Group (ESSG) will ensure that the responsibilities noted within the University Strategy and this Environmental Sustainability Strategy are met. The ESSG, with representation from throughout the University community, will meet quarterly and report to the University Leadership Team. Workstreams originating from the ESSG will increase capacity and opportunity to continually develop all work required. Initial Workstreams are Academic; Communication / Engagement; Operations / Net Zero; Societal Impact. Best fit and ongoing requirement will be continually assessed through the ESSG. We will also review the appropriate arrangements for reporting to and scrutiny by the University Court, our governing body.

To ensure our work is open and transparent, including all aspects of governance, we will use our publicly facing platforms, notably [www.napier.ac.uk/environment](http://www.napier.ac.uk/environment) to share our progress. We will also publicly share all key documents that provide more information on our governance processes including our ESSG Terms of Reference all subsequent strategies developed for instance.

**Table 7 : Accountability, Governance & Reporting Opportunities**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2021/22 | * Review governance arrangements and fully embed the Environmental Sustainability Strategy Group (ESSG) as a catalyst for change.
* Review internal and external funding opportunities for all potential activity.
 |
| 2022/23 2023/24 | * Continue to engage and further develop relationships with external networking bodies such as the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC).
* Environmental Sustainability Strategy Group (ESSG) to continually audit progress, including a full review of this Strategy in 2023/24.
 |
| Key Performance Indicators* Number of external bodies collaboratively linked to and engaged with.
* Measure change through existing carbon and wider reporting opportunities.
 |

# 8. Interdependencies

In addition to and as referenced within the overarching University Strategy Shaping our Future: *Driving Distinctiveness*, core strategies at Edinburgh Napier include the Learning and Teaching Strategy (2020 – 2025), Research and Innovation Strategy (2020 – 2025) and the International Strategy (currently under development). Enabling plans and strategies include those within our core People and Services Strategy and the Finance and Operations Strategy.

As detailed throughout this document, including within the Accountability, Governance & Reporting section above, embedment of all University Strategy commitments and wider environmental sustainability aspirations within and throughout all core and enabling strategies is key to achieving success. In fact, strong focus towards Just Transition and Covid-19 Green Recovery provides significant opportunity for the overall success and development of the University.

To ensure absolute transparency, it is important to highlight that there will be activity led by the University that could be seen as contradicting the carbon and wider environmental sustainability goals set within this Environmental Sustainability Strategy. International travel is one example, purely highlighted because the principle and acknowledgement of impact is obvious. Other activity could include increasing the physical size of the University estate, increasing staff and student numbers and increasing income. With embedded measures in place, including accountability, governance and planning, increasing any factor referenced above does not mean that there will be commensurate negative environmental impact. Our University Strategy commitments require the University to approach growth with environmental sustainability impact at the heart of decision making. Mitigation will be achieved through actively pursuing all opportunities, by embedding principles and actions towards environmental sustainability and reduced carbon from the outset.

# 9. Communication & Engagement

The environmental sustainability commitments embedded within our University Strategy and the development of this Environmental Sustainability have been supported and enabled by our active, dedicated and vocal community to provide, in addition to our academic and professional expertise, further confidence that our aspirations and targets will be met.

To facilitate success we will ensure that our students, staff and all those associated with or engaged with Edinburgh Napier University are encouraged to lead and embed their sphere of academic, professional and personal influence and knowledge into all work carried out.

We will continue to develop and strengthen our existing local, national and international partnerships. We will continually seek new partnerships and networking opportunities. We will be encouraged, inspired and influenced by best practice led by others. To achieve our full collaborative potential we will publicly share all of our work. We will also encourage members of our community to share their stories of academic, research, professional and personal success. To do this we will fully utilise our information hub at [www.napier.ac.uk/environment](http://www.napier.ac.uk/environment)

**Table 8 : Communication & Engagement Opportunities**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2021/22 | * Continue the development of [www.napier.ac.uk/environment](http://www.napier.ac.uk/environment) as a hub for sharing all progress, projects and activity.
* Focus on COP26 to further increase knowledge of existing expertise and environmental sustainability progress at Edinburgh Napier and encourage further work and partnerships.
* Continue to encourage students, staff and partners to consider their own personal influence and opportunity.
* Review opportunity to introduce carbon literacy training for staff and students.
 |
| 2022/23 2023/24 | * Develop a Communication, Engagement & Training Plan, formalising and publicly promoting all best practice in place.
* Establish local measures for Departments and Schools to monitor, influence and reduce their carbon and wider environmental impact. Build on existing examples, such as Lab Efficiency Assessment Framework pilot.
* Implement a sustainability theme within University research and L&T staff conferences.
 |
| Key Performance Indicators* Use existing reporting frameworks and expertise to measure reach and impact of all communication activity.
 |

# 10. Enabling & Measuring Success

Within our University Strategy and the information provided throughout this document we’ve made significant reference to our commitments, how they’re embedded within Edinburgh Napier and how we’ll communicate our progress. But we appreciate that we also need to make significant reference to how we will plan and develop the actual work and projects that we’ll carry out.

To ensure this Environmental Sustainability Strategy remains succinct and to ensure the work and projects that we will carry out remain appropriate and focused but also flexible and adaptable we have developed an Actions and Projects Register. The Register contains a myriad of immediate, medium-term, and aspirational opportunities.

The Register will sit underneath and support this Strategy document and will add to the opportunities referenced throughout this document. The indicative review of opportunities will be updated on an annual basis in line with the University planning round. To ensure this Strategy remains relevant we will also complete a fully review of this Strategy and publish an update within our 2024/25 academic year.

To view our progress and read examples of our work visit [www.napier.ac.uk/environment](http://www.napier.ac.uk/environment)

To engage with our activity through social media follow [@SustainableENU](https://twitter.com/sustainableenu)

To contribute and suggest actions please do not hesitate to contact us at environment@napier.ac.uk

# Appendix 1: Version Control Record

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| --- | --- |
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