Annual report on progress of the Sustainability Sub-Strategy 2021-26

Sustainability Sub-Strategy - Background

1. The Sustainability Sub-Strategy 2021-26 (SSS) received approval from Council July 2021 and is a sub-strategy of the University Strategy; it is designed to support our core values and aims. Staff and students striving for excellence in research and education require and deserve a sustainable institution that provides comfortable and inspiring places to work and live.
2. The SSS is comprised of 13 priority areas, indicating the breadth of activity that is required to embed sustainability throughout the University.
3. The 13 priority areas are:
    1. Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions
    2. Scope 3 carbon emissions
    3. Education
    4. Research
    5. Biodiversity and grounds
    6. Water management
    7. Waste and recycling
    8. Travel and transport
    9. Food and drink
    10. Sustainable buildings
    11. Space use
    12. Finance and procurement
    13. Our community
4. This paper covers recent progress on delivery of the SSS, focusing on successes and highlights, as well as challenges since Autumn 2022. Information covered in the 2022 update[1] has not been included in this update.

Overview

5. 2022-23 has been a challenging and rewarding year in terms of progress on environmentally sustainable action. Delivery of the SSS action plan has been steady, with some actions being delivered ahead of their target date, but others a

[1] Full URLs are provided in Appendix 2 (page 28)

little behind, often due to resource capacity or competing priorities. Environmental sustainability challenges require all parts of the University to act and in different ways. Achieving targets can be challenging for some, particularly when there is tension between embedded ways of working to deliver local objectives and change to more sustainable practices. Sustainability projects can require fundamental changes to mindsets and practices, and the capacity to do this takes focused commitment. Support at a senior level encouraging us all to ask, 'have we considered the sustainable options?', complements the same message that is being embedded from the bottom up.

6. This update on progress with the SSS in 2022-23 shows a huge range of activity that happens on our campuses to develop environmentally sustainable action, embedding it across core operations. Priority leads for each area continue to take the lead in their areas of responsibility and work progressively for change. Much of this focuses on raising awareness amongst colleagues and providing educational and extra-curricular opportunities for students.
7. Although we measure and see the immediate effects of energy costs, and the efficiencies that support carbon reduction, the wider effects of an engaged and active community will also reap significant benefits from reduced waste and considerate personal and professional practices. Environmental sustainability reaches all aspects of University life, and a sustainable estate is only as effective as its users.

SSS KPIs

8. Table 1: Summary of KPI progress

KPIs	Total
Achieved	7
Under way	26
Yet to start	6
TOTAL	**39**

9. The KPIs in the SSS indicate success of measures in the action plan up to 2026. Details below draw out achievements so far, as well as highlighting some of the

challenges and identifying actions to address these. A full overview can be found in Appendix 1 (page 25).

10. The current trajectory towards our net zero emissions (scope 1 and 2) target is trending in the right direction, although it will become more challenging as time progresses due to the complexity and cost of works that will be required to substantially reduce emissions. If funding in the CIP continues at the current level (£2.5m per annum) through to 2035, it is forecasted scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions will reduce to c.6,443 tCO_2e by 2035, short of the net zero target of 2035. Using an assumptions-based linear model for the electricity grid decarbonising to zero by 2035, 6,443 would reduce to 4,500 tCO_2e (KPI 1).
11. We generate approximately 5% of electricity demand through onsite renewables (KPI 2). Plans are in development to increase this to 14% by the end of 2024; the target is to reach 25% by 2026.
12. An initial assessment of the University's scope 3 emissions for 2021-22 year has been undertaken; it is estimated that these annual indirect emissions are approximately 65,000 tonnes (KPI 3), based on a mixture of actual and assumptions-based data.
13. Sustainability training is available to new starters (KPIs 7 & 36) through *How We Work At Essex* courses for staff, and the *Essex Preparation Programme* for students (171 reported users for 2023 start). *Carbon literacy* training sessions are being delivered by the Sustainability team to staff teams upon request. To date this has been delivered to 69 staff, across six teams; more are scheduled for the coming months, including sessions for students (KPI 8).
14. Work towards a paperless education has started, with a shift to digital, interactive prospectuses, although (slimmed down) physical prospectuses are still sent to UK students upon request (KPI 9). All prospectuses include brief information on our environmental commitments in the 'Why Essex' section.
15. Essex continues to play an important role in advancing knowledge that will support a more sustainable and socially responsible future. Research funding reached £34.3m in 2022-23, with significant projects related to plant productivity and food security, AI and robotics in agriculture and multiple forms of human-environment interaction (KPI12).
16. The strategic plans for the Centre for Environment and Society (CES) and Centre for Public Policy and Engagement (CPPE) are being delivered, raising the profile

of environmental research at Essex (KPI 14). The CES aims to be a strong hub for research at Essex, act as a beacon for Education for Sustainability and be a strong environmental partner to the University and local community. The CPPE specifically features the climate crisis as one of its themes.

17. A baseline survey indicates approximately 40% of students have explored their greenspace at Colchester's Wivenhoe Park (KPI 17). Collaborative work between the Grounds team and Sustainability Engagement team will continue to raise awareness and invite engagement with the environment around them. Actions within the SSS such as (SSS24.3) installing information boards will highlight the breath of wildlife and biodiversity and complement the raising awareness and contribute to the target that by 2025 there is an overall rise of 15% from the baseline of awareness and 10% usage of our green spaces.
18. Overall water usage in 2022-23 was up compared with 2021-22 and 2020-21. When compared with 2019-20's usage and normalising the impact from the pandemic the increase has been 3%, despite there being 14% more staff and students, accommodation occupancy increasing from 50% to 66% and 135% more bed nights during the summer conference season. The target is to use no more than the 2019-20 level, delivered through further efficiency measures including reducing the waterflow from taps and low flush urinals and toilets (KPI 18).
19. The post-pandemic return to campus has seen our total waste figures lower than 2019; however, the target to achieve an annual 5% reduction has not been achieved in 2022-23 (KPI 19); this is an ambitious trajectory in the face of a growing community, with increased on-campus activity. To monitor success of existing interventions better, waste per head figures are now monitored. In 2022-23, waste per head was 51kg overall, and 17kg for recycled material, compared with 39kg and 12kg respectively in 2021-22[2]. Overall rate of recycled material on campus reached 33% in 2022-23; the target is 50% by 2026 (KPI 22). This will be achieved through a holistic approach to enhancing physical waste and recycling infrastructure, messaging and engagement for both internal and external spaces, while also increasing on campus reuse.

[2] Please note: these are not exact comparisons; for 2022-23 a greater level of data sources were used than previously.

20. To date there has been a 16% reduction in parking permits issued (target 20% reduction by 2026) (KPI 23). 30% of the University's fleet are electric vehicles (EVs) (target 75% by 2026).
21. Food waste is now being collected separately from both South Towers at the Colchester campus (KPI 20). The roll -out to other accommodation areas will happen incrementally, to manage operational impacts.
22. Essex Food's new Sustainable Food and Drink Policy was introduced in 2022 and is reviewed annually. There is a focus on ethical and sustainable purchasing, and the use of local, seasonal produce whenever possible (KPI 27).
23. Reuse of furniture on campus is now well-established. Since November 2022 140 items have been rehomed on campus, estimated to have avoided £20,000 in expenditure and saved nearly five tonnes of CO_2 through avoided manufacture and disposal (KPI 33).
24. Integration of environmental considerations into financial planning and procurement processes is progressing. All revenue planning requests need to indicate adverse, neutral or positive carbon impact. The vast majority are negative or neutral (although with some inconsistencies on how they are assessed). Decision-making does not yet routinely refer to estimated impact or take it into account, however, there is current work underway that will provide a clearer understanding of carbon impact per staff and student and Net Present Value of decisions. This is due to be completed by February 2024 (KPI 34).
25. Strong participation levels in the Sustainable Essex Awards programme continue, with teams across all directorates taking part (KPI 32 and 38).

Priority Areas – Progress summary

26. Table 2: Summary of actions by target date, colour coded progress indicators. (Red = action yet to start; amber = action under way; green = action completed)

Action Plan Target Dates				Total
2021-22	5	16	37	58
2022-23	6	51	35	92
2023-24	7	19	6	32
2024-25	2	12	1	15

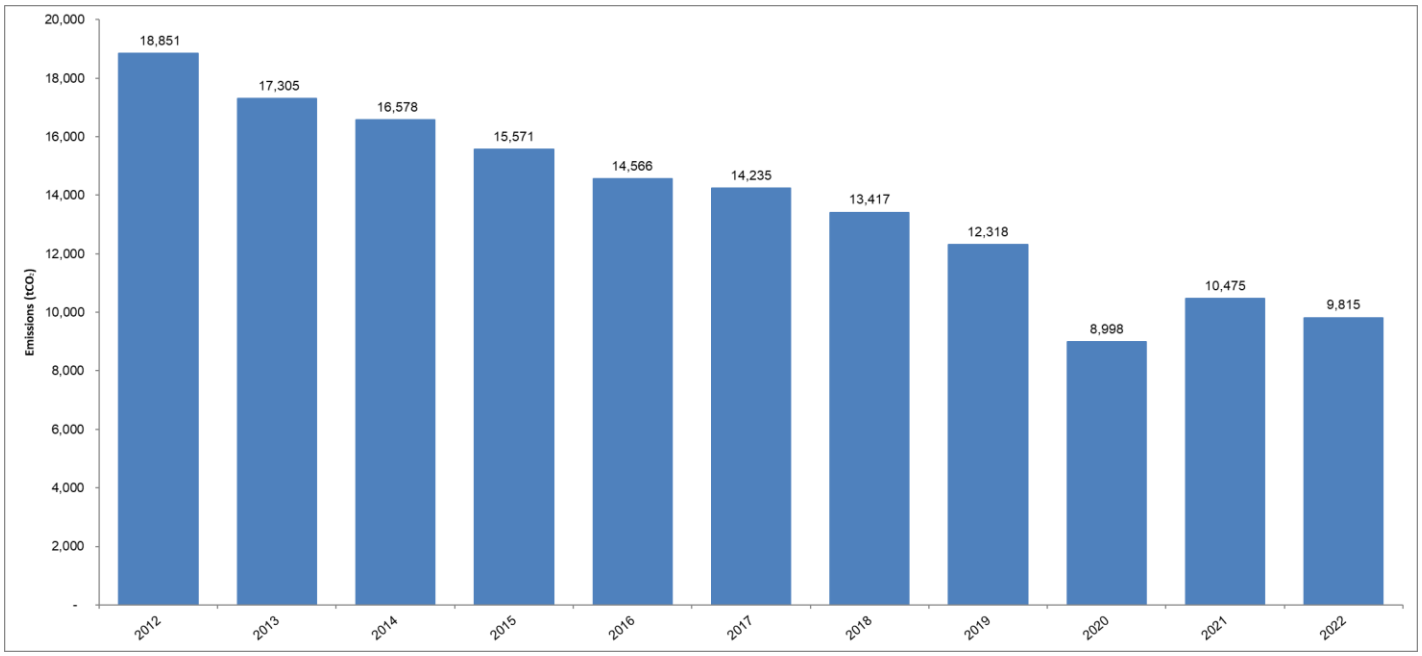
2025-26	1	9	3	13
TOTAL	**21**	**107**	**82**	**210**

27. To date 39% of actions have been completed, with 51% in progress. 10% have not yet started. Almost half of the actions were set for delivery in 2022-23, over one third have been achieved, while others are ongoing.
28. A range of causes have contributed to the delay in completion of some actions, which include resource challenges (i.e. staff capacity and/or financial constraints), availability of data and competing priorities (for example when one action leads on from another, a delay to the preparatory work has a knock-on effect with further steps). In some instances, there are more embedded hurdles to overcome, including readiness for change, overall maturity of Higher Education (HE) sector/wider initiatives that then allow us to deliver the ambitious targets we set ourselves, and unforeseen external factors. The Sustainability team will work to develop resources to support departmental understanding of their contribution to our environmental footprints and the opportunities to address these, to break down some of the barriers. There are times where there is tension between sustainability objectives and other University objectives and priorities (e.g. business travel and recruitment of international students, which contribute to our scope 3 carbon footprint). Work will be undertaken to create clarity around these tension areas to allow progress to be made.
29. The following sections provide more detail on successes and challenges to date, highlighting the significant breadth of work being undertaken by colleagues across their areas of responsibility.

Priority 1 – Scope 1 and 2 Carbon emissions

30. The University's carbon emissions for 2022-23 is c.9,815 tonnes CO_2e (due to the rebilling process of our utilities company this may fluctuate slightly over this financial year). This is positive progress in line with a steady reduction in emissions, as seen in figure 1 below.

31. Figure 1: University of Essex scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions graph 2012 to 2022.



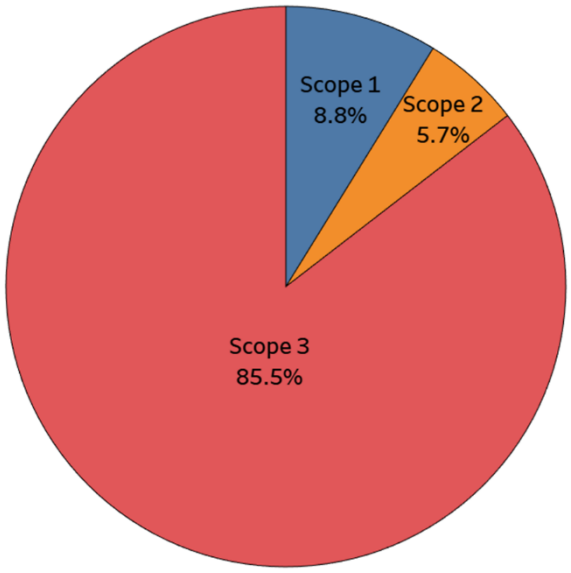
32. Work to deliver carbon emissions reduction in 2022-23 included continued lighting upgrades (from fluorescent tubes to light emitting diode (LED) lights), boiler replacements and roof insulation, as well as efficiencies from building management systems (BMS) such as lowering average heating temperature. Trials of 129 smart thermostatic radiator valves (TRV), which ensure that heating only comes on in occupied offices have seen positive results, reducing energy consumption by at least 30%. Further installation of 1,600 TRVs in South Courts accommodation is planned for 2023-24. Information on energy efficiency projects is now live on the website, to keep our community up to date.
33. A draft Carbon Management Plan (CMP) has been produced, which sets out the principles of our approach to carbon reduction. The Plan is due to be finalised by April 2024, alongside work on decarbonisation plans. Once ready it will be audited by the Carbon Trust with the aim of achieving their Net Zero Standard.
34. The University is currently generating circa 5% of its electricity from renewable sources (solar photovoltaic (PV)). Plans are in development to increase this to 14% by the end of 2024; the target is to reach 25% by 2026.
35. The Soft FM team have overseen refurbishments of the launderettes at Colchester and Southend, with efficient new machines installed. ‘Eco wash’

cycles are the default and offered at £1 less than other cycles. Not only does this make efficiency normal but makes a cheaper option standard for students.

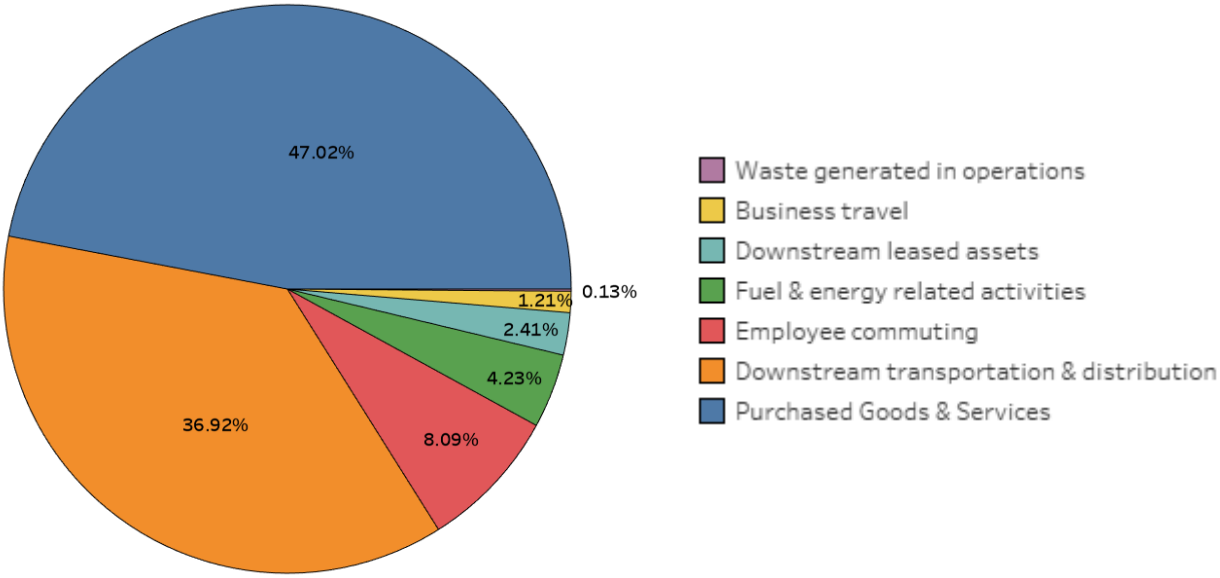
36. An Energy Manager has now been recruited to the Sustainability team, which will increase resource and capacity to scope and deliver crucial projects. A second Project Manager is due to join the team in early 2024.

Priority 2 – Scope 3 Carbon emissions

37. A substantial amount of data-gathering and analysis has been undertaken over the last 12 months to calculate an estimate of the University's scope 3 emissions, the indirect emissions impact from our activity. This has been done in line with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol's Corporate Value Chain Standard for all relevant categories across our upstream and downstream emissions. This includes (but is not limited to) student and staff commuting, purchased goods and services, leased assets, waste and recycling, and business travel.
38. For 2021-22, the figure is estimated to stand at circa 65,000 tCO_2e, based on available data. Around one third of this comes from purchased goods and services. Scope 3 emissions are those over which we typically have no direct control but count towards our impact as they occur as a result of our operations. In some cases, it is possible to develop policy that can reduce them; in other instances we can only monitor them, but give useful context to our wider impact.
39. Figure 2 shows the proportional share scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions.



40. Figure 3 shows the proportional break down of scope 3 by category.



41. A detailed report will be produced by April 2024 and will allow greater understanding of the focus areas and challenges posed. This will allow a data-driven net zero target for scope 3 to be made, although it is anticipated that 2050, in line with the Government's target, is most realistic.
42. The new Carbon Management Plan (CMP) will incorporate scope 3 emissions, as we begin our journey to address our biggest impacts beyond energy use.

Priority 3 – Education for Sustainability

43. The Ready for Success pre-arrival Essex Preparation Programme (EPP) includes a short course on sustainability, which 27% of students taking the EPP completed in 2023. A Masters Preparation Programme is under development, and both will run in 2024.
44. For all course periodic reviews, course leaders and external panel members are asked to address the question, "How has sustainability been taken into consideration in the design and delivery of the curriculum in accordance with the University's sub-strategy for sustainability?" For Annual Review of Courses, schools and departments are asked to consider what progress has been made against all University goals, including the SSS. The Annual Review of Courses (ARC) process is being reviewed in 2023-24 for implementation in 2024-25 which will include how to improve the integration of sustainability in the process.

45. For Outline Approval of new proposed courses, schools and departments are asked "Please indicate how the department incorporates sustainability/ environmentalism into the curriculum/teaching." For new module proposals, schools and departments are asked "Describe how this module aligns with the University's Strategic Plan and its supporting Education Strategy, as well as any relevant department-level plans including how this module incorporates sustainability/ environmentalism into the curriculum."
46. The Executive Deans have been consulted about whether a dedicated sustainable education lead can be created in each school/department and what Work Allocation Model (WAM) it should be afforded. For 2023-24 the proposed solution is to include education for sustainability in the Director of Education brief since they are already working in sustainable education through the curriculum review. For 2024-25 we will seek to start introducing dedicated education sustainability roles.
47. Delivery of carbon literacy training is currently ad-hoc, delivered either online (via Zoom) or in person to groups; wider roll-out will occur when resource capacity allows.
48. Action SSS11.1, which focuses on the review of policies that require physical attendance has been reconsidered now that the pandemic is over. It is accepted that physical presence on campus is an important part of learner engagement and student experience, performance and outcomes. To address the carbon cost of education, smart timetabling is considered the most appropriate means of ensuring that students' journeys to campus are consolidated where possible, reducing travel emissions (SSS13.1). Smart timetabling opportunities need to be explored with professional leads, to gain a better understanding of whether and how timetabling could be altered, while recognising the challenges of producing a viable timetable within the constraints of our existing estate and the complexity of our curriculum. This work is planned for May 2024.

Priority 4 – Research

49. Essex has contributed to the drafting of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice, which has been out to consultation into the wider sector. The final

document is due to be launched in early 2024. This is a significant contributor to KPI 10, which centres on embedding sustainability at all stages of the research planning, costing and delivery process by 2025.

50. A Civic Universities launch event in October 2023 showcased our collaboration with Essex County Council, Colchester City Council, Tendring District Council and Suffolk and North-East Essex Integrated Care Board, and the memorandum of understanding which was signed at that event contains various commitments to a shared vision for net zero.
51. Research Action Plan for 2023-24 contains multiple actions related to our declaration of a climate and ecological emergency, spanning European and international partnerships, internal community building, and external funding. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research (PVCR), Faculty Deans Research (FDRs) and Research and Enterprise Office (REO) are working collaboratively to identify climate, ecology and sustainability calls, to supplement the very proactive work going on within schools and departments.
52. Cross University Research Events (CURE) have continued to bring the community together and contributed to the generation of a shared understanding on climate and sustainability, presenting opportunities for networking and collaboration.
53. The 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Report showcases the breadth of research and innovation undertaken at Essex which aligns with the United Nations' (UN) framework for social responsibility.
54. Partnership working continues to evolve. The Eastern ARC Conference 2023 was on the theme of Food Security at a Time of Crisis, held at the University of Kent, with several Essex Academics presenting and in attendance.

Priority 5 – Biodiversity and Grounds

55. Work towards a Green Space Policy is developing and will be formed based on the careful consideration of surveys and reports over the coming year. The intention is to ensure that impact of activities on green space and the ecology of our campuses are avoided, mitigated and managed. Carbon capture and biodiversity/ecology audits have been completed.

56. Information boards that highlight the breadth of wildlife and biodiversity on our Colchester campus are due to be installed by July 2024, which will help to inform the community on our green spaces, biodiversity and wildlife – allowing them to identify what they see.
57. Wivenhoe Park tours are delivered as standard as part of Welcome activities, to encourage students to explore their environment. Baseline data indicates that almost half of students at Colchester explore the parkland; engaging with nature and making best use of these spaces has positive benefits for wellbeing, as well as encouraging people to care for their environment.

Priority 6 – Water Management

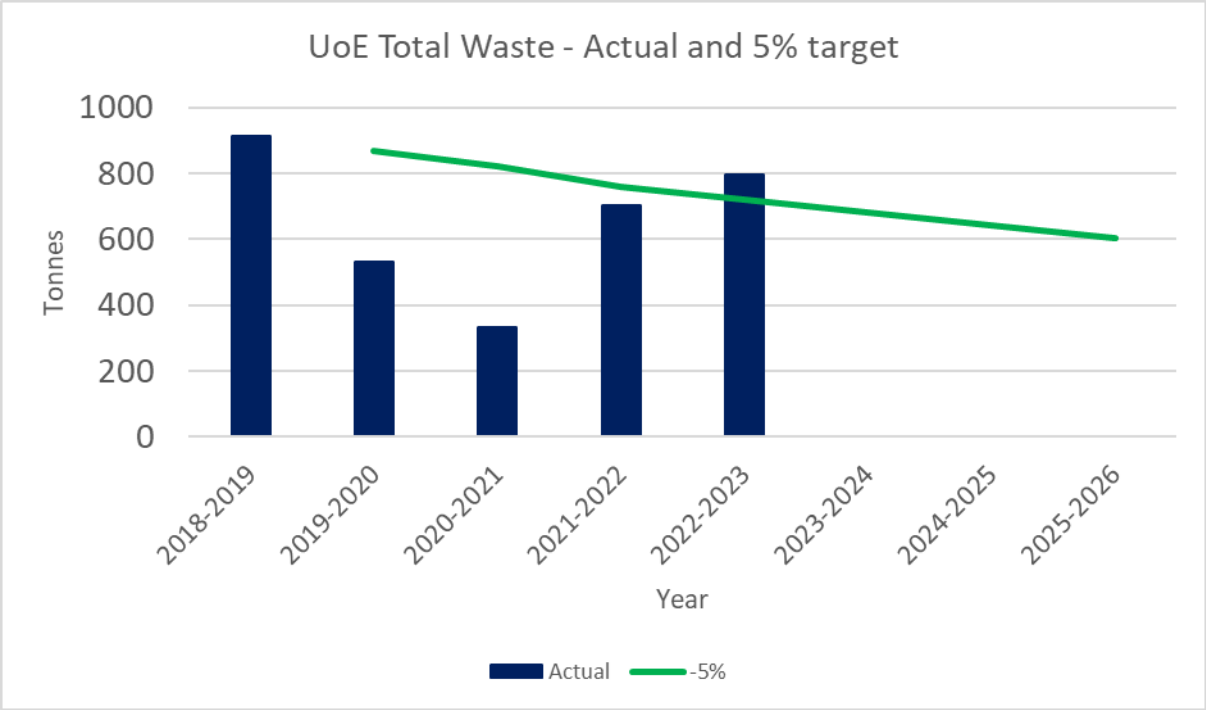
58. Overall water usage has been increasing since the end of the pandemic, as students and staff return to our campuses and activity increases. 2022-23 usage when compared with normalised 2019-20 data, was at a similar level, in spite of a larger student/staff population, higher levels of accommodation occupancy and a significant increase in summer activity in our accommodation spaces.
59. An overarching Water Management Plan is in development and will help to identify further opportunities to make efficiencies across academic buildings and student accommodation. This is expected to be in place by July 2024.
60. 1,218 shower flow restrictors were installed in South Courts accommodation over the summer, saving 11 litres of water per minute when in use.
61. Monthly water anomaly checks take place to identify any issues or unexpected increases, avoiding wastage.
62. As the University is based in one of the UK's driest counties, our grounds landscaping team focuses on plants that have low water consumption whenever possible, to avoid the need to water them regularly with mains water. A bore hole and roof/gutter water harvesting for the Grounds team are being planned to ensure reserves are available.

Priority 7 – Waste and Recycling

63. The ambition to achieve a year-on-year 5% reduction in overall waste generation has to date proved challenging. The below graph demonstrates that we are below 2018-19 levels, however, we are seeing a rise annually following the pandemic.

The green line shows the intended trajectory. Increases and decreases in on-campus activity impact the overall waste generation, so to track better our performance on waste and recycling, we have calculated the overall mass and recycling mass (in kg) per head.

64. Figure 4: Annual total waste (rising annually), overlaid with the aspiration to reduce it by 5% annually.



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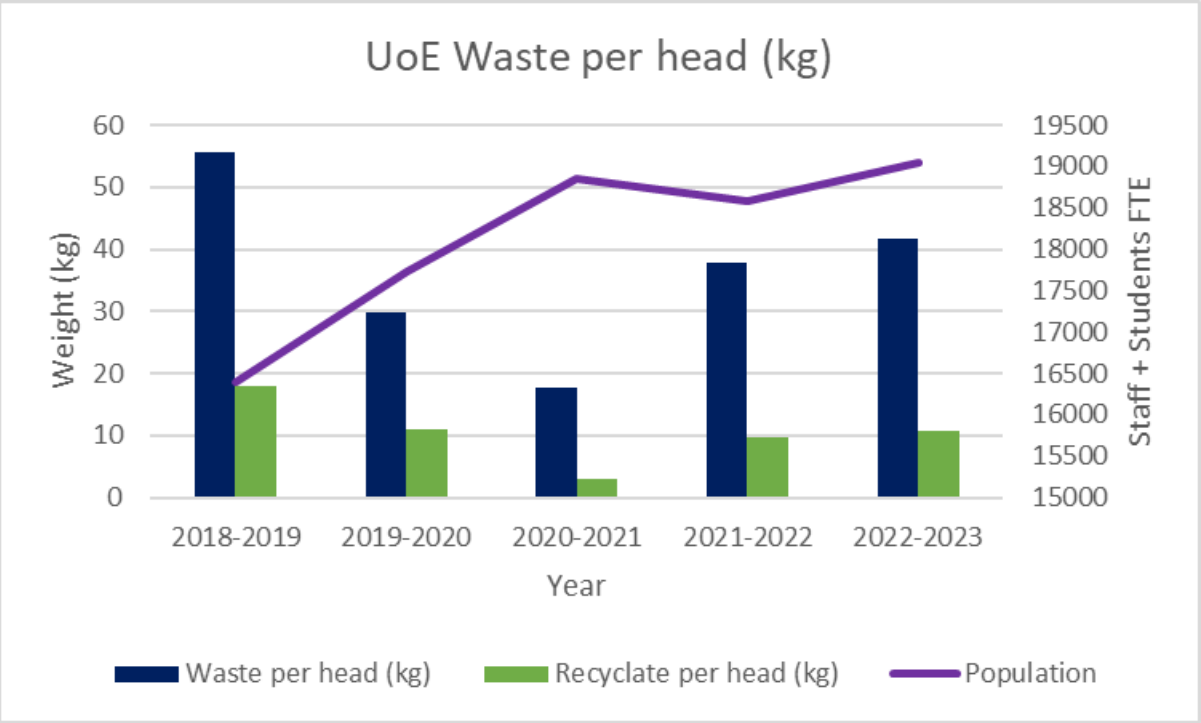
65. Figure 5: Waste per head (total and recyclable)[3]



66. Waste data is collated by the Circular Economy Manager to bring together all available sources, as there are a variety of contractors for different types of waste and their treatment. When all types of recycling and reuse are factored in (with available data to date) the University's recycling rate for 2022-23 was 33%; the target is to reach 50%. Increasing recycling and reducing waste will initially be achieved through a holistic approach to enhancing physical waste and recycling infrastructure, messaging and engagement for both internal and external spaces, while also increasing on campus reuse.
67. Retention and reuse of serviceable furniture items is now being managed via a dedicated storage space. Since the project began in late 2022, based on the cost of new furniture, the University has saved circa £20,000 (compared with buying new at conservative prices), and an estimated 4.9 tonnes of CO_2 avoided.
68. Work is progressing to review the provision of bins on campus, with outside spaces currently being prioritised for upgrade.
69. Options to reduce the use of single use coffee cups from cafes across the Colchester campus are being reviewed, with the intention to launch an enhanced

[3] Note the total figures used here only includes data from our waste contractor, due to the availability of historic data for other types.

scheme in early 2024. Discounts currently offered are not considered to serve as sufficient incentive; Essex Food data indicates only 6% of hot drinks sold are served in the customer's own reusable cup. Consequently the University uses more than 100,000 disposable cups annually through its outlets (Essex Food only; the Students' Union (SU) data not included), which we buy, sell and dispose of.

Priority 8 – Travel and Transport

70. Budget has been approved for the procurement of software that will facilitate and support car-sharing journeys. A review of suitable providers is taking place.
71. Progress is being made on KPI 26, to reduce business air travel by 30% by 2026. Members of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Advisory Group (CEEAG) are liaising with departmental stakeholders to discuss business travel, to develop policy that will help those who travel for business to make informed decisions and understand the environmental impact of the available options. Business travel isn't one of the most significant areas of our scope 3 emissions, but it is one where individual members of our community feel that they can exercise a level of control over their own behaviours to make change happen through informed choices.
72. When making travel bookings through our providers Key Travel and Diversity Travel the carbon emissions of each journey is shown. This aims to raise awareness among users, and where possible nudge towards lower carbon options.
73. To date there has been a 16% reduction in parking permits issued, compared with a 2019 baseline, which will have had a positive impact on the emissions of student and staff commuting. A plan will be developed by April 2024 to reach the target of a 20% reduction by 2026.
74. An additional 211 covered cycle parking spaces have been installed at a range of sites across the Colchester campus.
75. Further to of the TIER e-scooters roll-out on campus, a trial of e-bikes is taking place in Colchester, with the University taking part.

Priority 9 – Food and Drink

76. Essex Food's Pelican Procurement System continues to support efficiency and standards in the food supplied on campus, ensuring welfare accreditation for meat products and local, seasonal purchasing. Menus of Change principles have been adopted across the department.
77. A review of collaboration opportunities across all Colchester catering (Essex Food, SU, Wivenhoe House) has determined that consolidated ordering is currently impractical due to different demands within supply chain in comparison for the different businesses.
78. Essex Food outlets continue to optimise energy efficiency of their equipment. In some areas, upgrades to electrical infrastructure have taken place, or are planned, to increase capacity and support a move away from gas equipment. Staff receive training and refreshers to remind them of efficient use to avoid wastage.
79. Most outlets now offer 'cooked to order' menus, which decrease food waste and support cost-effectiveness, and stock management controls have been tightened to better track perishable items.
80. Stem and Root café in the STEM building continues to sell plant-based and vegetarian food only, and a chef specialising in vegan/vegetarian cuisine has been recruited. For 2023-24 a quarter of dishes on all Essex Food menus are vegetarian or vegan.
81. A calendar of events is planned with local suppliers to promote their produce (locally sourced, ethical etc.), with work ongoing to raise awareness of Essex Food's principles and values.

Priority 10 – Sustainable Buildings

82. Building fabric upgrades are underway with insulation being added to roofs across the central 1960s estate at the Colchester campus. Window condition surveys are being carried out to facilitate prioritisation of upgrades. A review of options to improve windows of the 1960s estate is also under way.
83. Use of smart TRVs is being extended to accommodation, with a project under development to install the units in South Courts accommodation. Following a trial in several offices, energy use savings of around one third have been achieved.

Further work to scope the potential to use occupancy sensors alongside the TRVs, as well as for lighting and ventilation and cooling systems is under way.

84. Upgrades and adjustments to Building Management Systems (BMS) continue, identifying opportunities for efficiencies in how systems operate while still creating a reasonable environment for our community.
85. Work to identify systems that will allow for the safe management of legionella risks, while reducing the level of water flushing that takes place is at scoping stage. Pipework flushing uses considerable amounts of water (both cold and hot).
86. LED lighting upgrades are taking place at University Square accommodation and the Psychology building.

Priority 11 – Space Use

87. Continuing work is being undertaken to explore opportunities to consolidate space use where possible, particularly during low occupancy periods, as well as to maximise use of the existing estate. The ongoing roll out of SWAE supports space use efficiency.
88. A review of teaching spaces is incorporating opportunities to migrate relevant department spaces to Central Timetabling where appropriate.
89. An audit of space use will inform a review of activity locations and opening/closing times of buildings, completing the completed auditing of heating regimes.
90. Installation of building level sub-metering is ongoing, with further scoping being undertaken to optimise the benefits of a data-driven approach to decision-making. It is expected to be in place by the end of April 2024 and once fully operational we will be able to see energy use in a more granular way.

Priority 12 – Finance and Procurement

91. Where appropriate the reuse, recycling and/or disposal of physical items (e.g. furniture) are considered at the procurement stage to avoid challenges at end of life. Further opportunities are being explored and we will liaise with suppliers during the procurement phase of the University’s furniture framework.

92. A simple drop-down for environmental impact was used in the 2023 Spring Planning Round. Options for more detailed information will be explored to allow analysis to help make more informed decisions.
93. Documentation has been updated to require all capital documentation with revenue implications to be shared with the Head of Service Accounting, but this process is not always followed, which Governance is in the process of addressing. Where revenue costs or benefits are identified, they are built into the planning round or approved through other routes if required out of the planning round timetable.
94. A sustainability theme has been introduced to the Strategic Planning Advisory Group (SPAG) Project Visibility Dashboard, with relevant colleagues regularly invited to discuss future initiatives. The SPAG Terms of Reference have also been updated to reference the strategic oversight of the action plan for financial sustainability, including climate emergency work streams.

Priority 13 – Our Community

95. Work to flag opportunities for individuals to take sustainable action where possible are being added and updated across our campuses. This includes simple messaging to remind people to switch off lights and close windows when vacating rooms, to signalling through communications and activities (e.g. social media campaigns, promotions in food outlets etc.). Work continues to highlight change and progress through web-based communications (including blogs and newsletters).
96. Departmental teams continue to show good leadership on sustainability through the Sustainable Essex Awards. Through the programme, many now develop their own sustainability action plans, however big or small, to help shape environmental thinking amongst their teams. Many seek out support from the Sustainability Team to put actions into place; for example the Careers team working to make their Careers Fair as environmentally conscious as possible, and Edge Hotel School producing its first Sustainability and Environmental Impact Plan, putting it at the top of their agenda.
97. During summer 2023 an Essex MBA student, as part of their degree, reviewed the Sustainable Essex Awards programme, and developed recommendations for

future improvements, with a particular focus on ways to engage Academic staff in the initiative. Actions will be taken forward for 2024-25.

98. A Student Sustainability Group has been formed, largely run by the SU but supported by the Sustainability Engagement Team. The group consists of engaged students who are keen to learn more and support action amongst their peers. Their input provides a means of ongoing consultation, helping to ensure student voices influence change and shape opportunities in ways that meet their requirements.
99. A simple carbon calculator has been developed, to allow users to understand the impacts of a range of everyday actions in their lives. Alongside carbon literacy training, the tool is useful for starting conversations around the impacts that we all have, and to further individuals' understanding of actions they can take and is currently promoted through the Sustainable Essex programme. It will be further shared as part of targeted work to engage at departmental level.
100. SUMS (Southern Universities Management Services) undertook consultancy work to assess readiness for change on sustainability and set out recommendations that will support our shift towards being a 'low carbon' university. The final report is being reviewed by the Sustainability Team and an action plan, which complements the Sustainability Sub-Strategy, will be developed by the end of 2023.

Recommendation

101. USG is asked to note the updates included in the paper, offer feedback on progress and/or comment on areas where additional support may be given.

Daisy Malt, Sustainability Manager

Rob Davey, Director of Sustainability

20 November 2023

Appendix 1 - Sustainability Sub-Strategy Key Performance Indicator Summary

KPI Maturity Rating	
7	Achieved
26	Under way
6	Yet to start

Priority Area	Key Performance Indicator	RAG
Scope 1 and 2 Carbon Emissions	**KPI 1:** By 2035 Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions reduced by 76% from 2019 baseline	
	KPI 2: By 2026 25% of our electricity is generated through renewable sources	
Scope 3 Carbon Emissions	**KPI 3:** Scope 3 emissions data defined, collected and reported on an annual basis and by 2022 have an agreed date to aim to achieve Scope 3 net zero carbon emissions.	
	KPI 4: By 2023 scope 3 emissions reduction actions included in Carbon Management Plan	
Education for Sustainability	**KPI 5:** Creation and implementation of a policy setting out the principles of delivering education sustainably by 2022	
	KPI 6: Sustainability integrated into all course approvals, ARCs and periodic reviews	
	KPI 7: Sustainability training available to all new starters (students and staff)	
	KPI 8: 50% of current students and staff to have received Carbon Literacy training by 2024, and 100% by 2026 and completion will be recorded on the HEAR and HR records	
	KPI 9: All prospectuses, module content and assignments to be paperless by 2026	
Research	**KPI 10:** The opportunity to consider sustainability is embedded at all stages of the research planning, costing and delivery process by 2025	
	KPI 11: A sustainability module is developed for the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), and sustainability is embedded across the RDF more generally by 2022	
	KPI 12: There is an increased number of funding, knowledge exchange and impact activities in the areas of climate, ecological and sustainability research by 2025	
	KPI 13: There is an increased number of events showcasing our climate, ecological and sustainability research to internal and external stakeholders by 2023	

Priority Area	Key Performance Indicator	RAG
	KPI 14: The strategic plans for the Environment and Society and Centre for Public and Policy Engagement are delivered by 2023	
Biodiversity and Grounds	**KPI 15:** Greenspace policy being delivered by 2023	
	KPI 16: By 2024 achieve >5% increase in biodiversity from 2022 baseline	
	KPI 17: By 2025 surveyed student and staff's awareness of green spaces increases by 15% and use of green spaces increases 10% both from a 2020 baseline	
Water Management	**KPI 18:** Average annual consumption to be no more than 2019 levels (average allows for seasonal variations) by 2026	
Waste and Recycling	**KPI 19:** By 2026 total waste reduced by 5% (measured in tonnes) year-on-year from a 2019 baseline	
	KPI 20: General food waste audit across all areas and food waste trial undertaken in accommodation areas by 2023	
	KPI 21: By 2024 single use plastics will not be used by events or marketing materials	
	KPI 22: Average annual recycling reaches 50% by 2026	
Travel and Transport	**KPI 23:** 20% reduction in parking permits issued from 2019 baseline and a 100% increase in proportion of EV/Hybrid vehicles being used for commuting by 2026	
	KPI 24: By 2026 a 5% increase in student and 11% increase in staff journeys by sustainable means (bus, train, bike, walk) from a 2019 travel survey baseline	
	KPI 25: 75% of University of Essex fleet vehicles to be electric by 2026	
	KPI 26: 30% reduction in business air travel from 2019 baseline (2,188 tCO2e, 3,844 trips) by 2026	
Food and Drink	**KPI 27:** Sustainable Food and Drink Policy that ensures ethical and sustainable purchasing using local and seasonal produce created and being delivered by 2023	
	KPI 28: By 2026, vegetarian and vegan food to represent 50% of all food sales	
	KPI 29: By 2024 single use plastics will not be used by catering or be available in catering outlets	
Sustainable Buildings	**KPI 30:** By 2035, energy consumption for the built environment reduced by 76% from 2019 baseline	
Space Use	**KPI 31:** Student and staff number growth incorporated without further growth to the built environment	
	KPI 32: 100% achievement of the Sustainable Essex programme by all departments / sections by 2023	
	KPI 33: 100% reuse or recycling of fixtures, fittings and equipment by 2023	

Priority Area	Key Performance Indicator	RAG
Finance and Procurement	**KPI 34:** Carbon and environmental impact is integrated into procurement process, life of contract and embedded into financial planning processes and whole life cost of capital purchases are used to minimise financial and environmental impact	
	KPI 35: Investment and banking processes align with our environmental and ethical principles	
Our Community	**KPI 36:** Sustainability embedded into pre-arrivals and inductions for new starters by 2023	
	KPI 37: Continuous multiplatform consultation in place by 2022-23	
	KPI 38: All departments participating in and achieving a minimum of Bronze in Sustainable Essex Awards programme by 2023	
	KPI 39: Students report satisfaction in provision of sustainability education and extra-curricular activities, measured through NSS or equivalent by 2026	

Appendix 2 – Full URLs for hyperlinks included in main document

Paragraph 4: 2022 SSS Update - https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/sustainability/sustainability-sub-strategy-(sss)-annual-report-2022.pdf

Paragraph 15: Digital prospectus - https://prospectus.essex.ac.uk/

Paragraph 33: Energy projects webpage - https://www.essex.ac.uk/sustainability/sustainability-on-campus#energy-efficiency-and-infrastructure-projects

Paragraph 38: Green House Gas Protocol Corporate Value Chain Standard - https://ghgprotocol.org/corporate-value-chain-scope-3-standard

Paragraph 54: University of Essex Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023- https://www.essex.ac.uk/sustainability/development-goals