Sustainability Strategy
2015-20

Enhancing our social, economic & physical environments by embedding sustainability into University core business
Sustainability Strategy 2015-20

Who we are and will be...

**Our vision** is for the University of Leicester to be renowned for the quality of its graduates’ understanding of the complexity about current and future global challenges with an ability to draw together economic, social and environmental issues. Likewise, our research has the potential to positively impact practices and procedures at every level of society as the University positions itself at the forefront of solving complex problems.

Leicester has the opportunity to make sustainability a ‘Unique Selling Point’. We already have huge strengths in this area through our teaching, research and student engagement activities so we have a real opportunity to embed sustainability into the DNA of Leicester. Our challenge is to embed sustainability into the heart of what we teach, research and do and to do more with what we have and produce a positive global impact.

We require an evolution of the previous Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2010-15) as it brings a new and coordinated approach to sustainability across the University. As other research-intensive universities have done, Leicester needs to develop its Sustainability Team beyond that of Estates functions into the wider Professional Services Directorate as a standalone team who have a wider remit that engages with curriculum and research as well as the more typical operational functions, such as energy, procurement, construction and catering. Sustainable development cannot simply be achieved by political agreements, financial incentives or technological solutions; it requires changes in the way we think and act. Education plays a crucial role in this.

At present we do not have a clear picture of our current sustainability impacts or future direction so the attached delivery plan outlines a mechanism to achieve these.

**Excellence and interdisciplinary**
Sustainability is one of the truest interdisciplinary areas, which we will encourage through our work with the ESD Forum, Sustainable Research Network and Innovation Hub.

**Synergy between research and learning**
We use the University estate as both a classroom and laboratory to provide students with ‘real world’ project experience.

**Innovation, enterprise and partnership**
The Sustainable Environment Enterprise Development (SEED) Fund will encourage staff and students to come up with innovative solutions to sustainability challenges. There is scope to develop this further with the local private sector through partnership with the proposed Innovation Hub and EDRF funding.

**A student-centred approach and widening participation**
We offer many HEAR accredited activities including a student-led volunteering scheme and are responding to student feedback through the development of sustainability-related modules and online courses

**Diversities, equalities and people who flourish**
Sustainability includes social justice and equality issues. Our engagement opportunities also enhance staff and student experience.

**Local impact and making a difference for our city and region**
CSR and sustainability both understand that the context, community and environment in which we operate are integral to our success but sustainability also considers the needs of the future generations. Thus, CSR looks backwards at performance while sustainability is more forward-facing. From reducing our carbon emissions, our Fairtrade status to our biodiversity work offering staff, students and local residents opportunities to get involved in and to learn more about their environment: we continue to make a positive impact.

**Global presence and a focus on Internationalisation**
Globalisation is about interconnectedness of economic, environmental and social issues. Our academics and students need the knowledge and skills to overcome the world’s complex challenges and, as an excellent educational institution, we are well placed to deliver this.

Welcoming and cohesive campus experience

The University has 305 acres of green space, including a diverse range of habitats, and from pond clearing to food growing, we offer staff and students the opportunity to get involved and to learn about their environment as well as enjoying it.

Our Commitments & Priorities

Discovery-enabling Culture

1. We propose to develop a Sustainability Hub within Professional Services led by a Director of Sustainability. This would have a number of advantages:
   - Allow us to identify and develop the existing sustainability–related teaching, research and practice at Leicester
   - Provide University-wide leadership to ensure sustainability is embedded throughout the institution
   - Encourage greater inter-disciplinarity
   - Greater professional independence to challenge sustainability issues
   - Improved staff and student engagement

   The team will be adequately resourced, well-informed and will be led through appropriate governance.

Discovery-led Research

2. We will form a sustainable research network to enhance our interdisciplinary research and funding opportunities
3. We will work with the Enterprise and Research Division to maximise opportunities for CSR, research and student engagement.

Discovery-led Learning

More than 80% of students, surveyed by the NUS & HEA in 2015, believed that sustainable development should be actively promoted and incorporated by UK universities, a belief which increases as they progress through their studies.

4. We will create new sustainability learning opportunities through the curriculum Pathways initiative
5. We will continue to support student-led sustainability opportunities such as the Sustainable Student Working Group and our HEAR accredited activities

Discovery-enabling Environment

6. We will continue to embed environmental sustainability within Estates operations
7. We will support the Sustainable Procurement Policy
8. We will implement a staff behaviour change programme through the appointment of Sustainability Coordinators
9. We will continue to enhance biodiversity at the University and encourage staff, students and visitors to engage with our wildlife and natural environment
10. We will support the University’s CSR Strategy
Our Culture

Sustainability is the ability to continue a defined behaviour indefinitely. The Three Pillars of Sustainability can guide the University to fulfilling its legal, moral and business obligations. We will develop a leadership model to ensure that sustainability is considered in all areas of strategy, planning and decision making at Leicester to ensure the longevity of the institution:

- **Economic sustainability** – the desire to still be a top ranking university in the future (organisational sustainability) requires that our strategies and policies ensure future financial sustainability
- **Environmental sustainability** - pollution generation and resource preservation – i.e. the day to day business and operations of the University, such as the waste generated and energy used
- **Social sustainability** - population well-being, for example Corporate Social Responsibility, ethical procurement and Fair Trade.

A more sustainable University is also a more efficient one, thereby releasing funds for investment in infrastructure and research. The sustainability agenda is now so large on the world stage that students are increasingly expecting their institutions to make bold environmental choices and to provide them with teaching on this important area, regardless of their chosen subject. Furthermore, large research opportunities exist for solutions to sustainability problems. Thus, a sustainable University is a more efficient, effective, attractive and forward-thinking University.

Our Measure of Success

Sustainability will be embedded within the University when:

- All staff take ownership of the targets set out in the Sustainability Plan and seek ways to incorporate sustainability in their own areas of work
- All strategic decisions made within the University consider the sustainability implications
- Our absolute carbon footprint is reduced
- Our campus facilitates staff, students and visitors to make sustainable choices
- All our students are aware of the University’s commitment to sustainability
- All our students have access to formal and informal opportunities to learn more about sustainability issues
- Our curriculum helps students to develop the skills required to solve today’s global challenges, including complex problem solving
- Our Sustainable Research Network is a truly innovative, interdisciplinary group who are able to compete for research funding
- We promote sustainable solutions locally and globally through our teaching, research and engagement work.

Link to other strategies

As set out in the Sustainability Implementation Plan (2015-18), the environmental components of this strategy are closely aligned with the Estates Strategy and associated plans and policies (i.e. Carbon & Energy Management and Biodiversity). The procurement commitments will be delivered through the Sustainable Procurement Strategy (to 2017) and RACs Sustainability Policy. More widely, the Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy are very closely linked and the University of Leicester’s Learning and Teaching Strategy (2011-15) aspires to offer all students access to the wider sustainability agenda.