

Sustainability Strategy



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Putting Students First

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Executive summary of commitments

We aim to become one of the most sustainable Further Education Colleges in the country and will align our teaching and campus to ensure sustainable practice across everything we do.

Our commitments acknowledge the balance that to be truly sustainable we must be environmentally, economically and socially sustainable. This strategy will seek to engage staff and students from across the College as well as other key stakeholders through the programme of strategic planning.

Our aim is to be a leading light in the Further Education sector for its commitment to, and achievement of, sustainability targets (<https://www.eauc.org.uk/7033>).

Carbon neutrality

- Develop a meaningful and achievable roadmap to progress towards our aim of being a net-zero carbon College by 2050, and net-zero for Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2040.
- Make significant cuts to absolute carbon emissions: reduce Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 25% by 2025 and Scope 3 emissions by 30% by 2025 and 50% by 2030 (based on a 2018/19 baseline).
- Investigate and implement effective and scientifically robust carbon offsetting schemes that balance environmental, economic and social factors.

Education

- Embed Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)¹ into our courses wherever possible or ensure there is a significant theme for sustainability within them.
- Give students a voice in sustainability improvements.
- Teach in ways that are consistent with our sustainability commitments.
- Provide our staff with the skills and knowledge² to make decisions to help them promote sustainability and to contribute to the College's goals.

Campus

i. Biodiversity

- Replace any trees removed on a two-to-one basis and increase canopy cover by at least 2% across our estate.
- Ensure a net biodiversity gain³ across our capital projects.
- Support wellbeing through our green spaces.

1 <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development>

2 <https://carbonliteracy.com/>

3 Biodiversity net gain is an approach which aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than beforehand.

ii. Buildings

- Embed sustainability in all decision-making related to campus developments.
- Retrofit inefficient buildings through progressive, sustainable, capital investments.
- Ensure buildings are used efficiently, taking account of sufficiency.
- Ensure effective monitoring and reporting of energy use in buildings.

iii. Energy

- Contract a 100% renewable purchased electricity supply.
- Build on our 23% carbon reduction (2010-2020).
- Consider on-site renewable electricity generation wherever possible.
- Explore low-carbon heating and lighting options as technology and funds allow.

iv. Food

- Reduce sale of high impact foods⁴.
- Use suppliers who can contribute to our sustainability goals and encourage our suppliers to do the same.
- Reduce single-use packaging and waste.

v. Procurement

- Improve understanding of Scope 3 emissions relating to our supply chain.
- Introduce staff training to eliminate unsustainable purchasing practices.
- Drive social value through our supply chain.

vi. Travel

- Invest in infrastructure to support active travel to campus.
- Electrify our fleet.
- Discourage flying and encourage remote working and surface travel (seeking alternatives to high emission air travel) where possible.
- If not alternative to flying, offset carbon emissions through on-site activities.

vii. Waste

- Commitment to the waste hierarchy: avoid, reduce, reuse, recycle.
- Improve upon our overall recycling rate of 20%.
- Help students to reuse and recycle unwanted items, particularly at the end of day.
- Engage with local organisations to reduce food waste.

⁴ Lamb, beef, cheese almonds

viii. Hedgehogs

- To secure “hedgehog friendly campus” status for the College site.
- <https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/hedgehog-friendly-campus/>
- <https://bighedgehogmap.org/>

College vision

The world is facing a climate emergency and public sector education providers are uniquely placed to respond to the challenges that we face.

The education we provide ensures that the next generation, those who will be most affected by the climate crisis, have the skills needed to find solutions. It is essential that our staff and our wider student body understands how to apply their subject knowledge to make society more sustainable.

As the country recovers from COVID-19, we have the chance to reshape our activities and press forward with innovative solutions to long-term sustainability challenges. We must grasp the opportunity for a green recovery and take full advantage of the changes to behaviours and practices that have become embedded in these unprecedented times. We recognise the urgency to do more than we have done before, and faster.

The College has made good progress in reducing its emissions over many years. This sustainability strategy is the next step on our journey to reduce emissions with the ultimate aim of becoming net carbon neutral. We want to do this by 2040 for Scope 1 and 2 emissions and 2050 for Scope 3.

We don't take this commitment on lightly and we don't currently have all the answers. The challenges we face are multifaceted and any action we take to overcome them requires a careful balance between environmental, economic and social factors to understand their full impact.

But we will never lose sight of the urgent need to cut emissions, restore habitats and secure our planet for the future.

Our approach

We believe that sustainability must be something that runs through all of our operations and plays a role in all business, planning and teaching decisions. It unites our staff and students in a one-college approach to implementing solutions to the challenges we face.

Sustainability is a central pillar of our overarching College vision and values, underpinning everything we do. This embedded model helps us to convey to staff and students that sustainability is something that we must all consider; it is not an add-on that can be addressed in isolation.

A Sustainability Steering Group will oversee the strategic direction of sustainability at the College. It will monitor our sustainability performance and policies. It will be chaired by a senior member of the College's management team and membership of the Steering Group will be made up of the both teaching and support staff, students and representatives of the College's governing body.

Carbon neutrality

Carbon neutrality means achieving a state in which our activities result in no net greenhouse gas emissions.

To tackle the climate emergency, we must work to reduce absolute carbon emissions as much as possible, with the ultimate goal of carbon neutrality. The UK Government has a legally-binding target of net-zero by 2050.

Mainstream scientific opinion is clear that the next 10 years are crucial for any efforts to slow the trend of global heating. As such, we believe we have a responsibility to aim to be net carbon neutral in our Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2040.

Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions: those that can be directly attributed to the College's activities, such as the fuel used in its fleet and any gas used on site.

Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions: those produced by our procured energy supply. Scope 1 and 2 emissions are often grouped together.

Scope 3 emissions are all other indirect emissions arising from the College's activity. Examples include staff and student commuting, business flights and emissions embedded in supply chains.

The College has large associated Scope 1 and 2 emissions due to the energy we consume, with many buildings, and some very old buildings which are heating and lighting inefficient. Despite growing our estate in recent years, our absolute and relative emissions have continued to fall. Between 2010 and 2020, the College cut its Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 23%, even while our estate grew by 24%. While this has been partly due to wider grid decarbonisation, improvements have also been achieved by investing in energy saving technologies including LED lighting, new boilers, heating and cooling controls and energy efficient equipment.

	Baseline 2010	Outcome 14/15	Outcome 15/16	Outcome 16/17	Outcome 17/18	Outcome 18/19	Outcome 19/20
Carbon Tonnage produced by the college	1,595 tonnes	1,504 tonnes	1,400 tonnes	1,353 tonnes	1,513 ¹ tonnes	1,397 tonnes	1,226 tonnes

Further reductions will become increasingly difficult to achieve as many of the relatively low-cost, high-yield initiatives and investments have already been completed. However, a green recovery from COVID-19 may present opportunities to accelerate our transition to greener infrastructure and practices.

Scope 3 emissions add a further level of complexity; they are very difficult for the College to control and yet are much larger than the Scope 1 and 2 emissions. The College has much less ability to directly influence its Scope 3 emissions which are embedded in complex global supply chains, often many times removed from the College itself. This makes them difficult to track and reduce. Despite the difficulty, it is vitally important that we begin to understand and reduce our Scope 3 emissions. We aim to be net zero for Scope 3 emissions by 2050.

Carbon offsetting

The College will inevitably produce some emissions; this is unavoidable due to the nature of our operations and technological limitations, particularly around energy for heat and the energy embedded in the construction and operation of electricity generation infrastructure.

When we judge we have done all we reasonably can to reduce our absolute emissions, we will need to offset the remaining carbon to achieve net-zero.

In the short-term our priority is to reduce our absolute emissions as much as possible and this is where our energy should focus. Additionally, before committing resources to any offsetting scheme, we must establish what the most effective way of offsetting is.

Education

Our commitment to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) aims to help our students to learn more about how they can have a positive impact in the world. As a College, our greatest contribution to promoting sustainability comes from the students we nurture to become the change makers of the future.

- Learning

ESD⁵ takes a holistic definition of sustainability, as set out by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It aims to make sustainability relevant to all students, no matter what subject they study.

⁵ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development>

While it can include measures to directly combat the climate emergency, depending on their vocational specialism it might also include climate justice, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, sustainable consumption, human rights, social equality and responsible citizenship. ESD connects and expands skills and content from each course to key sustainability challenges.

We have pledged that every 16-18 year old College student will receive Education for Sustainable Development as part of their study programme and in the wider student experience. ESD will be embedded over a period of five years.

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd>

We will work with all teaching departments on embedding ESD in a way which will equip students with the knowledge, skills, values and attributes needed to work and live in a way that will bring about solutions to the environmental, economic and social challenges that we face.

ESD can be a challenge for subjects that are not traditionally seen as sustainability related. We will not force all students to become climate scientists. Sustainability, as set out by the United Nations' Sustainability Development Goals (SDG)⁶, is defined broadly. There are skills and approaches that all subjects can link to sustainability challenges. ESD must, therefore, find those skills and attributes already present in these programmes, investigate where further connections can be made, and support departments to develop learning opportunities for students.

- **Teaching practices**

It is important that our own teaching practices are consistent with the sustainability principles we teach.

COVID-19 presents us with an opportunity to reassess how we use our spaces and incentivise a greater degree of sharing and flexibility between different departments and uses. This will ensure that we are getting maximum use out of our spaces and that the associated carbon costs of heating and lighting are as low as possible.

A number of our courses currently entail international travel. These trips are a vital part of many courses and provide students with exciting and enriching opportunities to further their studies and personal development. But these opportunities must be balanced with their carbon cost. We will ensure that emissions are considered as part of the decision-making process when trips are planned and lower-carbon alternatives are considered, while ensuring that learning outcomes and our student experience are not compromised. Where high emissions trips are justified and continue, they can be used as an opportunity for reflection, discussion and undertaking positive climate action projects.

⁶ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

- **Staff training**

We are committed to providing our business support and academic staff with the information and knowledge to be more sustainable in their work and personal lives.

We will develop a staff training programme to help guide staff to make evidence-based choices as part of their roles, in order to balance environmental, social and economic factors.

This will include aspects such as departmental procurement decisions, office energy use and recycling. We will align this to our Green Impact programme to ensure an approach which engages staff at their appropriate knowledge level. This will be rolled out to existing staff and embedded into our induction process for new-starters. In addition, we will ensure that senior leaders are trained to understand the sustainability impacts of their departments' operations and how these can be improved.

The College aims to achieve Carbon Literate certification through the Carbon Literacy scheme whereby all staff undertake training in better understanding their carbon footprint (<https://carbonliteracy.com/>).

College site

We are committed to maximising the ecological value of our green space for the benefit of a wide range of plants and animals and for the mental wellbeing of staff, students and local communities.

i. **Biodiversity**

The UK is facing a crisis of biodiversity loss. Some of the key drivers include climate change, urbanisation and pollution. These pressures on wildlife can be mitigated by strong sustainability action and the creation and protection of greenspace. Our long-term vision is to increase the amount of green space the College has and improve the biodiversity value of the existing estate.

Trees play a vital role in the environmental, social and economic sustainability of our Island. They improve our air, soil and water quality, aid mental health and well-being and provide a sense of place. They are also a cost-effective means of controlling stormwater runoff, reducing building energy costs and increasing pavement longevity.

We will continue with our two-to-one replacement policy for all trees on campus to achieve our objective of increasing canopy cover by at least 2% by 2030 (from a 2020 baseline). We will increase the genetic diversity of our tree stock to promote resilience to climate change and ensure that our most valuable trees are identified and protected for future generations.

ii. **Buildings**

The way in which we use our buildings, how efficiently they are designed, the activities that

occur within them and the layout of campus have a significant impact on our Scope 1 and 2 emissions. Many College spaces are energy-intensive, but there is a lot of progress that can be made in reducing emissions by improving our current building stock and ensuring new buildings are designed to the most rigorous environmental standards.

While COVID-19 has made the immediate future uncertain, it is likely the College will need to construct new buildings in the coming years as the staff and student bodies grow and to ensure start-of-the-art teaching facilities.

In addition, there will always be a need for ongoing maintenance and retrofitting activities in an estate that has developed over 60+ years. It is essential that any new developments and major refurbishment projects reflect our ambition to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2050. Given the overwhelming impact of our existing building stock on operational carbon emissions, there will be a presumption of prioritising refurbishment and retrofitting over new build, unless an exceptional case is made.

While some high yield results will be possible by improving the efficiency of our buildings, how we use our buildings can also affect energy consumption. Part of our retrofitting efforts will be directed at putting in place strategies and associated infrastructure, such as diagnostic metering to provide feedback enabling users to reduce energy usage.

We will also continuously review how our spaces operate to ensure they are providing carbon efficiency and that we are not using more space than necessary and sufficient for our needs. Building materials and construction activities have a major impact on our scope 3 emissions.

COVID-19 and the resulting lockdown has provided further possibilities for changing our practices. College staff have generally adapted well to home working and we recognise that flexible working practices can be beneficial to both staff and the students. There might also be significant environmental benefits, including a reduction in Scope 3 emissions and air pollution associated with commuting. In addition, more flexible working may make it possible to reduce emissions relating to office space and, in the long term, allow for a reduction in overall office space.

However, at colder times of the year this might result in more carbon emissions, as staff individually heat their homes. There is also a social impact, as the College would be outsourcing its energy bills to individuals, and different personal circumstances will mean not all staff want to work from home. We will carefully consider any move to flexible working to ensure it provides mutual benefit for individuals, the College and the environment.

iii. Heating and Lighting

Providing low-carbon heating to the College is a particular challenge. Many options for decarbonising heating are dependent on infrastructure changes as well as being financially challenging. Making full and every use possible of “SALIX type” funding through schemes like Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) will be critical to making inroads to this area.

In any room or building refurbishment, provision will be made to replace lighting with more energy efficient alternatives.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Total Energy Consumptio	4,120,917 kWh	3,726,900 kWh	3,680,371 kWh	3,669,388 kWh	3,499,588 kWh	4,062,468 kWh	3,693,962 kWh	3,638,692k Wh
Electricity	1,724,555 kWh	1,657,874 kWh	1,829,580 kWh	1,810,766 kWh	1,771,716 kWh	1,924,928 kWh	1,791,735 kWh	1,516,029k Wh
Fossil Fuels	2,396,362 kWh	2,069,026 kWh	1,851,228 kWh	1,858,622 kWh	1,727,872 kWh	2,137,540 kWh	1,902,227 kWh	2,122,663k Wh
Natural Gas	1,247,698 kWh	1,157,734 kWh	1,320,534 kWh	1,858,622 kWh	1,727,872 kWh	2,137,540 kWh	1,902,227 kWh	2,122,663k Wh
Oil	1,148,664 kWh	911,292 kWh	530,256 kWh	0 kWh	0 kWh	0 kWh	0 kWh	0 kWh
Total Energy Costs	£300,156	£285,929	£291,143	£296,509	£258,710	£292,524	£315,606	£293,364
Total Water/Waste Costs	£45,912	£43,285	£52,486	£48,554	£38,146	£50,941	£40,000	£27,263

iv. Food

The problem of feeding a growing population is both a technical and social challenge. To ensure that enough food is produced, and that it is distributed equitably, governments and industry must draw on contributions from individuals, institutions and researchers from many academic disciplines.

Our current global food system will have to adapt to ensure that everyone has access to adequate nutrition in decades to come. The biggest challenges include more inhospitable climates for growing food, soil degradation, the food sector's greenhouse gas emissions and inequitable distribution resulting in malnutrition. There is an urgent need to implement social and technical solutions to these global problems.

Working closely with the supplier, we will remove carbon-intensive foodstuffs, such as most beef and lamb, from our food outlets and develop an understanding of the consumer choices in our food outlets allowing us to actively promote sales of sustainable foods, including vegan, vegetarian and healthy food options.

Our plan is to drastically reduce single-use packaging on campus, particularly food packaging such as coffee cups and water bottles, will need to be reassessed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is likely that in the short term we will be unable to use reusable containers at our outlets, which will lead to an increase in waste. However, we will continue to plan in the long term for the elimination of single-use items, including by introducing a levy on single-use cups across campus and the installation of more water fountains to further reduce the consumption of bottled water. Where single use packaging would be difficult to eliminate, we will seek out and use the "least worst" option available from an environmental perspective.

v. Travel

Sustainable travel is not just about reducing carbon emissions, it is about ensuring that everyone can access environmentally friendly and economically viable means of transportation that meets each person's needs.

There is no single travel solution that will work in every circumstance and trade-offs between different aims are necessary in many cases. However, by approaching the problem holistically, we are committed to enacting a travel policy that mitigates environmental impacts in a way that ensures necessary travel is available to everyone.

Transport is the UK's biggest emitting sector. Even excluding international aviation and shipping, transport accounts for a third of the UK's carbon emissions. At a College level, we estimate that in 2018/19 over 500 tonnes of CO² equivalent came from associated travel including business travel, staff and student commuting and our fleet of vehicles. Of these emissions, approximately 25% are associated with business travel. Moving away from carbon intensive, individual travel patterns is a challenge that requires people to understand the impacts of their travel and to be empowered to reduce travel and to use low- carbon active or public transport options where possible. Individuals and institutions must work in partnership if we are to make transport more sustainable.

Less than 5% of our staff and students either walk or cycle to the College – well below the national average for commuting to work of under 15%.

We remain committed to ensuring that access to the College for public transport remains safe and readily available and to ensuring that public transport is a practical and affordable option for our staff and students. We will continue to work with local operators to improve the College's public transport provision and we will be exploring ways to secure better bus links. Regular revision and consideration of the College's Green Travel Plan will help ensure its continued prioritisation

It is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic will have an impact on the long-term commuting habits of our staff. More flexible working is likely to reduce Scope 3 emissions relating to staff commuting to campus, although this may result in increases to emissions from heating homes. With reduced capacity on public transport, more staff may walk or cycle to work. For those who do need to drive, we will encourage and support a move to less polluting vehicles. We will ensure that any policy in this area considers the differing needs of staff, for example caring commitments or mobility issues and we will continue to promote options identified in our Green Travel plan to encourage staff to transfer from single driven cars to more environmentally beneficial travel.

vi. Waste

We produce a varied and substantial amount of waste every year. Waste can have significant environmental impacts including releasing greenhouse gases and polluting local environments during processing. It can also pollute natural environments further afield if it is not properly dealt with. We take the commitment to avoid, reduce, reuse and recycle

materials very seriously and are committed to applying the principles of the circular economy wherever possible.

This means that we seek to reuse and upcycle products and resources as much as possible before disposal, so that waste from one process becomes materials for another. We will also procure re-used and upcycled products where possible.

As indicated by the waste hierarchy, upcycling, recycling and disposal should be secondary to avoiding and reducing the total amount of resources used. For example, coffee cups equate to around 2.5% of our waste stream – equivalent to 29 tonnes of waste per year. Disposable cups are an example of where we know that we can make an impact by safely promoting reusable alternatives in order to reduce the production of unnecessary single-use materials.

Finding alternative uses for products will be an important part of our circular economy commitment. It is also possible to design out waste altogether if waste implications are considered from the outset in any activity, or to repurpose or redirect them as resource inputs in the next supply chain.

Appendix 1 – Streamlined Energy and Carbon Report 2019/20 (from website and accounts)

Greenhouse gas emissions and energy use data for the period 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Energy consumption used to calculate emissions (kWh)	3,680,902				
Energy consumption breakdown					
Gas	2,122,663				
Electricity	1,516,029				
Transport fuel	42,210				
Scope 1 emissions (metric tonnes)					
Gas consumption	390.29				
Owned transport	1.68				
Total scope 1	391.97				
Scope 2 emissions					
Purchased electricity	353.45				
Scope 3 emissions					
Business travel	8.59				
TOTAL GROSS EMISSIONS	754.01				
Intensity ratio					
Tonnes CO2e per member of staff	2.83				

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/college-corporation-financial-management-good-practice-guides/streamlined-energy-and-carbon-reporting-for-college-corporations>

Appendix 2 – FE Climate Action Roadmap

<https://www.eauc.org.uk/7033>

