The University of Manchester Environmental Sustainability Team

Our progress in 2025-2026 and our priorities for 2026-2027

In October 2025 we published our priorities for the forthcoming academic year. These are listed below, alongside a brief description of what we achieved on each topic.

Underneath the table you'll find our new priorities for 2026-2027.

We'd love to hear your thoughts on what we achieved (and didn't achieve) and our to-do list for this academic year. Please send any comments to es@manchester.ac.uk

Our commitments for 2025/26	What we achieved
Review existing ES Strategy and complete a draft refresh ensuring alignment with Manchester 2025.	Refreshed ES Framework 2030 drafted following engagement with stakeholders.
Develop an environmental sustainability framework to enable schools and directorates to create their own action plans. Pilot with at least one PS directorate, one cultural institution, and one school.	On hold pending approval of the ES Framework.
Develop 3-5 year energy efficiency plan.	5 year energy plan to align with M2035 and interim 2030 carbon target drafted. Pipeline of projects developed. Plan to be finalised by end of 2026.
Explore heat decarbonisation options working closely with colleagues developing the Integrated Infrastructure Plan.	We have contributed to the development of the Integrated Infrastructure Plan (IIP) where zero carbon was a key line of enquiry as part of the consultation process. Heat decarbonisation is a key priority in the IIP and will be reflected in the Statements of Infrastructural Intent that are due to be published in Autumn 2026.
Draft a 5 year roadmap for reducing Scope 3 emissions with SMART targets for each top 10 priority category.	We have identified our top ten Scope 3 priorities and taken the important decision to include pensions in our Scope 3 footprint. We have created a video outlining what Scope 3 is and what this means for the University. A 3-year delivery plan will be developed during 2026/27.
Incorporate sustainable construction and refurbishment guidelines within the formal review of Estates EPMs.	The Guide on Sustainable Construction has been confirmed as an important component of the Estates' EPMs, with development underway to embed sustainability requirements across the University's construction and refurbishment projects.
Pilot the construction tracker in at least two on-going projects (one by Feb 2026, second one by Jul 2026), review outcome, listen feedback from ESAs and improve the tracker functionality.	The new construction tracker was piloted on a project to review sustainability performance, with positive feedback from our Environmental Sustainability Advisors (ESAs). Further improvements will focus on flexibility to accommodate different project types.
Publish report identifying priority climate risks to our estate.	Draft report has been completed working in partnership with the Resilience Lead from Sustainable Futures. The report will be shared

	with colleagues to inform next steps and the development of a climate risk assessment.
Draft a Waste & Circular Economy Plan for the next three years.	The draft Waste & Circular Economy Plan has been completed following extensive stakeholder engagement, with work now underway to assign action owners and establish clear responsibilities for delivery over the next three years.
Develop a LEAF implementation plan to streamline and scale up LEAF certification across all labs.	LEAF accreditation increased from 46% in 2024/25 to 76% in 2025/26. The approach has broadened to explore alternative sustainability accreditation schemes, including SPARKHub and Green DiSC for dry labs.
Develop biodiversity principles and guidelines and work with colleagues to integrate into Integrated Infrastructure Plan.	The Nature Action Group (including planting subgroup) has contributed to the development of the IIP. We will continue to embed biodiversity principles within the IIP.
Work towards bronze Hedgehog Friendly Campus accreditation.	The Hedgehog Friendly Campus Team worked on SOS-UK's Toolkit, completing 18 bronze level tasks (only 10 are needed to achieve Bronze). Tasks included fundraising, awareness campaigns, habitat-making on campus and footprint surveys.
Review ecologist report for habitat improvements on campus and build business cases for implementation.	Under ecologist's advice, 5 bird boxes have been installed (Starling and Song Thrush specific), 3 bat boxes relocated, and 2 new bat boxes are due to be installed. Additionally, a brief has been written to propose a pond site on campus.
Calculate changes in quantity of green space to enable measurement of our KPI.	Contract signed with ecologist to map full estate biodiversity baseline for 2026. Tracking via ArcGIS will allow us to see progress against nature targets and forecast BNG.
Review Travel Policy, aviation target and associated initiatives providing recommendations for improvement.	Having achieved our target to reduce aviation emissions by 50% compared to 2018 baseline we have developed a new target. To help deliver this, we have drafted a paper proposing tighter measures on business and first-class flights, alongside further guidance for travel approvers.
Better support faculties with data & bespoke guidance on how to reduce aviation emissions.	In 2025/26, we carried out a deeper analysis of aviation data, identifying trends and patterns in emissions hotspots, frequent flyers and popular destinations. We shared the findings with Faculties to inform discussions with Heads of Department and travel approvers. One Faculty held a workshop to explore opportunities to reduce emissions.
Launch CommuteUoM car share and travel app for staff and students including refresh of staff travel incentives.	CommuteUoM launched in September 2025, and to date we have 1,359 registered users. We have run targeted car-sharing campaigns, introduced train booking functionality and developed a prize competition to encourage rail travel. Recent app improvements support its

	role in our Drive Less This October campaign, which offers events, incentives and resources to help staff reduce car use, even by just one journey.
Develop proposals for a centralised EV charging hub.	A working group was established and identified a site for a central EV charging hub. An audit of existing EV chargers and fleet vehicle requirements was completed. Potential suppliers have been engaged, and work is underway to develop the specification for the formal tender process.
Develop vehicle purchasing policy and identify and address barriers to meeting 2030 target.	We have been liaising with fleet vehicle owners to understand the barriers to transitioning to fully electric vehicles. These discussions are informing our approach to developing a vehicle purchasing policy in collaboration with our Procurement Team.
Develop and pilot an environmental sustainability essentials training course for staff.	Content has been developed drawing on expertise form across the organisation. The pilot is due to start early 2027.
Launch the No Time to Waste engagement app for staff and students to encourage sustainable behaviours.	This was launched in October 2025 with 91% of users reporting a change in their behaviour and 96% increasing their knowledge on climate science. In the last quarter, people registered every day and we will be looking to build on this momentum over the following months, including running interdepartmental competitions. A comprehensive engagement programme has been written for 2026/27 to increase users and build on this initial success.
Oversee and deliver a series of engagement events in line with our engagement calendar and develop an events toolkit and library of content including an annual report, a Christmas switch-off campaign, and a celebration event recognising our students and staff who have contributed to the University's sustainability journey over the year.	We delivered a series of engagement events in line with our engagement calendar, including several cross-university collaborations which helped to increase our visibility and presence on campus. A library of content is being continually developed. A Christmas Switch-off campaign was delivered. Due to capacity, a celebration event was not held. We have discussed opportunities to recognise colleagues and students who contribute to our sustainability journey. Annual report published.
Manage the Stellify Student Sustainability Champion programme, coordinating training and supporting delivery of events.	Over the 2025/26 Academic year, we had over thirty students commit to two semesters of promoting Environmental Sustainability on campus. Two in person induction events were held at the beginning of each semester to facilitate development of ideas. Small groups of students planned and implemented 11 engagement events reflecting the commitments in our Environmental Sustainability Strategy. Feedback from students has been received to improve the programme going forwards.

Create a display on campus to visualise the amount of renewable energy that we are generating on our solar farm	A live energy dashboard is in final testing stages. This will be displayed on screens around campus as well as being accessible on our website. Our Sunny Campus campaign saw staff, students and the local community plant over 800 sunflower seeds. Many of the sunflowers were planted across campus to highlight that up to 65% of our electricity now comes from our solar farm.

Priorities for 2025/26

All our actions will contribute to the delivery of our Environmental Sustainability Framework and Manchester 2035. We will:

1. Embed the ES Framework and strengthen delivery and accountability

We will finalise and launch the ES Framework and co-develop delivery plans across nature, procurement, waste and circular resources, travel and research practice to turn our commitments into action. We will establish governance, accountability and reporting arrangements across our priority areas.

2. Improve environmental sustainability data, evidence and reporting

We will work on strengthening the quality of our data, particularly across waste, engagement, procurement, business travel and biodiversity. We will set up a waste data dashboard, establish KPI reporting mechanisms and collect and share evidence for relevant rankings. We will trial digital tools to improve how we collect, manage, analyse and communicate ES data to enable better reporting and decision-making.

3. Accelerate action to reduce carbon emissions

We will support Scope 1 and 2 emissions reduction through energy efficiency works alongside heat decarbonisation plans via the Integrated Infrastructure Plan. We will develop the Scope 3 delivery plan and ensure our carbon calculation methodology is clearly documented and supported by appropriate evidence. We will strengthen our approach to reducing travel emissions through business travel policy and guidance, Faculty roadmaps and a vehicle purchasing policy that supports the transition to an electric fleet.

4. Enable sustainable, low-carbon and nature-positive infrastructure

Working through the Integrated Infrastructure Plan process we will ensure it supports delivery of our targets for carbon reduction, sustainable travel, resource efficiency, climate resilience and nature recovery. We will support the development of heat decarbonisation plans, embed sustainable construction policy and guidance, and identify opportunities to improve commuting, EV charging and waste and circular resource infrastructure, green space, habitats and biodiversity.

5. Build awareness, engagement and action on environmental sustainability

We will deliver coordinated engagement, comms and behaviour change activity that helps our communities understand ES and take meaningful action including delivery of the student Sustainability Champions Programme, development of the engagement delivery plan and delivery of our calendar of campaigns and comms to support delivery of ES Framework.

6. Strengthen team effectiveness, skills and resilience

We will strengthen our shared systems, processes and ways of working so the team remains organised, resilient and able to deliver our priorities effectively. We will improve our digital literacy, team administration, budget management and wider skills and capability. We will continue to work collaboratively across the organisation and beyond to deliver the ES Framework priorities and review the resources and capability required, identifying gaps and areas where further support is needed.