

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND**THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

Climate change, now recognised by the UN as the 'climate crisis', has reached a tipping point. We are already witnessing disastrous climate-related events both nationally and internationally, the impacts of which are often being felt unevenly and most severely by vulnerable and underrepresented people. Rising global temperatures, melting of ice caps and an increase in the frequency of extreme weather events are all having visible and serious impacts on populations and the environment both in the UK and internationally.

At Newcastle University, we recognise the urgency associated with climate change, as well as the inequitable impacts this has on the natural world and societies across the globe. We have been working for over 10 years on reduction of our environmental impact, **having already achieved a 43% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020 against a 2005/6 baseline**. In April 2019 we declared a climate emergency, at the time, setting a target for net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2040.

In November 2019, we held a Climate Conversation and, through a series of structured discussions punctuated by stimulus talks, we developed ideas for the roadmap to net zero and a decarbonised future. We followed up that thinking with other talks, meetings, workshops and student summits to shape our Climate Action Plan.

In April 2021, following careful discussion and re-examination of fast-changing contexts and in recognition of the need to act with pace and commitment, both University Council and Executive Board decided that the University's ambitions to achieve net zero should be brought forward from 2040 to 2030.



WHAT IS THE AIM OF THE CLIMATE ACTION PLAN?

At Newcastle University, we recognise the threat that the climate crisis poses and that we must play our part in addressing this. Echoing the pledges made within the Paris Agreement, this Climate Action Plan seeks to provide detail and clarity on the following:

- The current national and regional landscape in the context of the climate crisis, and the key efforts being made at both levels;
- Newcastle University's place within this context, our climate action background, carbon accounting methodologies and performance to date; and
- Newcastle University's framework in addressing the climate crisis going forwards; including our targets and action plans, and our projected performance against these.

Through the communication of the Climate Action Plan, we also wish to educate and engage with all audiences on the climate crisis and how we can affect the change needed.

This plan also aims to reinforce the University's commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to social and environmental justice by aligning our climate action work across this agenda. The action plans documented within this report will contribute to the delivery of SDGs including:



This document is the first in what will continue to be an annual reporting mechanism against a pre-determined number of reporting 'phases', in line with our newly developed carbon budgeting and action plan structure as defined later in the 'Net Zero' section of this roadmap.

It is our hope that through this plan and future communications we will engage with people across all audiences on the vital importance of this agenda,⁴ not just internally here at Newcastle University but globally, to share knowledge, best practice and experiences in the fight against the climate crisis.

FIGURE 1 Newcastle University Climate Action Plan – relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals.

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS THE AIM?

WHAT ARE OUR EMISSIONS SOURCES?

WHAT ARE OUR TARGETS?

OUR 10-POINT PLAN

SCOPE 1

Direct emissions from combustion of fuels and/or generated by the University's owned/controlled sources

- Natural Gas (Heating)
- Gas Oil (Heating)
- Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Heating)
- Fugitive Emissions
- University Owned Vehicles

SCOPE 2

Indirect emissions from the purchase and consumption of energy outside the University's owned/controlled sources

- Grid Supplied Electricity
- Purchased Heat eg Steam/ District Heat

SCOPE 3

Indirect emissions from the University's value chain and other activities

UPSTREAM

- Purchased Goods and Services
- Capital Goods
- Business Travel
- Colleague and Student Commuting
- Waste

DOWNSTREAM

- Leased Assets
- Investments

Student Out of Term Travel

NET ZERO BY 2030

ACTIVITY SPECIFIC TARGETS

CURRENTLY OUT OF SCOPE OF TARGET

WHAT ARE OUR TARGETS?

NET ZERO BY 2030

Our net-zero emissions target is defined as follows, with a target date of 31st July 2030. The net zero target covers scope 1 and 2 emissions only.

The term 'net zero/net-zero' in this context is defined as:

Achieving an overall balance between greenhouse gases produced and those taken out of the atmosphere. This should be achieved through a rapid reduction in carbon emissions, but where zero carbon is not possible, offsetting through carbon credits or sequestration through technological or nature-based solutions needs to be utilised.¹

To demonstrate leadership and to align with our partners across the city and the HE sector, we have brought forward our net zero target from our initial declaration of 31st July 2040 at the latest, to 31st July 2030. We are under no illusions as to the greater challenge this new target poses, but we also know it is the environmentally just course to take in response to what is an emergency situation.

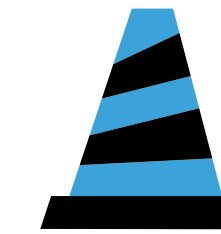
¹ EAUC (2021), Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education https://www.eauc.org.uk/climate_commission

SCOPE 3

For our scope 3 emissions, for Phase 1 we have prioritised by our largest contributing sources and set ambitious SMART targets against these.

Whilst scope 3 emissions are not currently covered within our net zero carbon target, we are implementing a similar, phased carbon budget approach in order to better monitor our progress. Given this plan is iterative and under constant review, we may look to bring certain scope 3 emission sources into our net zero target or develop a net zero target for all of scope 3, at a later date. These decisions will be guided by what is possible, desirable and technically achievable working collaboratively with sector bodies including EAUC, UUK, and AUDE to develop and define common approaches to scope 3 emission sources.

KEY GOALS – SCOPE 3



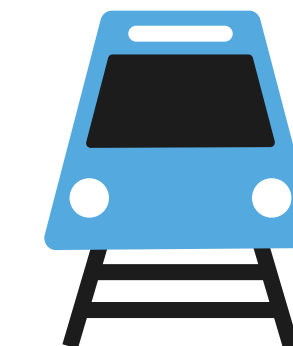
CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

Reduce our embodied carbon emissions from major capital projects below 800 kgCO₂e per m² of Gross Internal Area (GIA)



PURCHASED GOODS AND SERVICES

Identify our top 10 carbon emitting goods 'material groups' and the key suppliers within them, establishing an emissions baseline per group



BUSINESS TRAVEL

Cut annual emissions from business travel by 30% against a 2018-19 baseline

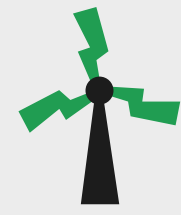


INVESTMENT

Through our upcoming tender for fund managers, investigate the options available for Paris-aligned investment funds.

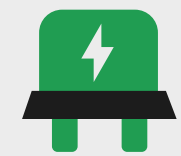
HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

OUR 10 POINT CLIMATE ACTION PLAN



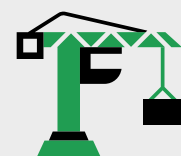
1. ENERGY ORIGIN AND PROCUREMENT

Decarbonise our heating and cooling and increase our renewable energy generation



2. ENERGY USE

Improve the energy performance of our estate



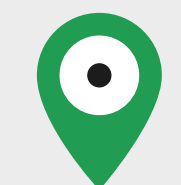
3. CAPITAL GOODS

Minimise embodied carbon associated with our construction activities



4. PURCHASED GOODS AND SERVICES

Become visibly leading in sustainable procurement and apply a risk-based approach



5. TRAVEL

Reduce emissions from business travel and commuting, and electrify our fleet vehicles



6. INVESTMENTS

Minimise the carbon footprint associated with our endowment investment portfolio



7. CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Embed waste hierarchy principles and decrease our total waste mass



8. RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Expand our sustainability curriculum and create our 'Living Lab'



9. LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Demonstrate leadership in the fight against the climate crisis, and support others to do so



10. ENGAGEMENT

Promote sustainability and climate action within and outside of our institution

