



# A DEAR, GREEN PLACE: TOWARDS A CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

## Introduction

In January of this year the University of Glasgow launched a climate change strategy for widespread consultation. This builds on our 2017 commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and our declaration of a climate emergency in May 2019 – a statement which was reported worldwide and which reinforced similar messages from universities around the globe.

**WITH OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FROM OUR STAFF AND STUDENTS WE HAVE SET OUT PLANS TO ACHIEVE NET ZERO CARBON EMISSIONS BY 2035.**

## Our carbon footprint

We have made some progress in reducing our carbon footprint over recent years.

In **2016** our carbon footprint was calculated as **70,000 tons** of CO<sub>2</sub> and by **2019** the figure had come down to **61,000 tons** of CO<sub>2</sub> – a 12% reduction.

We are now planning a series of actions which have the potential to reduce our carbon footprint to **32,000 tons** of CO<sub>2</sub> by **2035** and to offset the difference to reduce our carbon emissions to **net zero** by **2035**.

Offsetting is not just about salving our institutional conscience, it can also deliver tangible benefits. For example, reforested land in Scotland could provide research and learning opportunities, while projects in low and middle income countries can improve the quality of life for people around the world. We would like to work with other universities in the UK and internationally, developing bespoke approaches to offsetting which can be seamlessly linked to academic activity. In doing so, the benefits for local biodiversity and local communities will be paramount.

**2016** 70,000 tons CO<sub>2</sub>e

**2019** 61,000 tons CO<sub>2</sub>e

**2035** 0 tons CO<sub>2</sub>e

## Engaging our local community

Engaging our staff and students more effectively in actively supporting our sustainability agenda is a vital part of our strategy, and we know we have their overwhelming support.

In our climate change strategy consultation

**95%**

of respondents said they “agree” or “strongly agree” that the University of Glasgow should play a leading role in tackling climate change by eliminating its own carbon footprint.



Our students' demands will drive much of our work and their commitment to community engagement is epitomised by the important work of their societies and environmental internship programme. Students are lobbying for more ambitious targets, more resources to be allocated to environmental initiatives and a greater strategic focus on climate change.

Our novel initiative GUEST (Glasgow University Sustainability Team) provides a valuable opportunity for a new group of environmentally minded students each year to act as ambassadors for aspects of our sustainability agenda such as biodiversity, energy conservation, transport and waste and recycling.

GUEST allows our students to communicate environmental matters to the wider University community, and a significant number of our past interns have taken these talents further, into sustainability-related careers. Some recent GUEST initiatives have included engaging with the local community to foster grassroots action on sustainability, establishing a community fridge in the University library and rolling out the S-Labs project, which promotes sustainability of our laboratories and research institutes.

The power of small changes in behaviour undertaken by everyone in our community cannot be underestimated as we tackle the climate issues we face as a University.

## Our 5-point action plan

- **Engaging and empowering our community**  
We will ensure that the climate emergency is placed at the heart of what we do.
- **Promoting efficiency**  
We will ensure that our estate and infrastructure are optimally organised to reduce our carbon footprint and minimise harm to the environment.
- **Governance and policy**  
We will allocate appropriate resource to initiatives that make a significant impact on our carbon footprint.
- **Continuous improvement initiatives**  
We will reduce waste and contribute to the wider sustainability agenda.
- **Building resilience**  
We will ensure that we are prepared for the effects of climate change on our operations.



## Our place in the world

As a world-changing University, Glasgow must react to the global climate crisis – it is undeniably the right thing to do given the scale of the challenge. Putting climate change at the heart of our agenda is consistent with our status as a values-driven organisation which wants to change lives for the better, both for our own community and for the world at large.

There is a clear expectation that we will provide leadership in this space, influencing public opinion and government policy alike.

We are determined to face up to the challenge and to establish our position as a leader in this field, but we can't achieve our full potential on our own. Climate change is a global issue of the utmost importance for everyone and we hope to collaborate with our partners in Universitas 21 as we move forward.

[glasgow.ac.uk/sustainability](https://glasgow.ac.uk/sustainability)