BIRMINGHAM CITY University

2024/25 Annual environment report

Foreword

This is the final annual environment report for our Environmental Plan 2020-25. Work has been underway throughout 2025 to develop a new sustainability strategy for the University to supersede our Environmental Plan.

As the Plan comes to an end, it is good to reflect on our achievements.

Over 2024/25 we have developed and approved several key strategic sustainability documents, such as a new Travel Plan and a revised Sustainable Catering Plan. These plans will stand us in good stead to progress our sustainability ambitions outlined in Strategy 2030 and our new sustainability strategy.

We were successful in recertifying our environmental management system (EMS) to ISO 14001:2015, the international standard for EMS, which provides a framework for us to manage and improve our environmental performance.

We launched Green Impact for the first time at BCU, a scheme which encourages staff to work as teams to deliver sustainability actions. 21 staff teams across the University signed up to the scheme and completed over 350 sustainability actions which is a fantastic achievement for the first year of running the initiative.

We have established a new Sustainability Committee, formed of senior academic and professional service colleagues with Student Union representation. The Committee has helped to drive the sustainability agenda forwards across the institution.

There is a lot more for us to achieve. This will be outlined in our new strategy, Our Sustainable Future. I look forward to engaging with our students, staff, and partners – from businesses to local community groups – to progress our new sustainability ambitions and make a difference within Birmingham and beyond.

Professor Ian Blair,

Pro-Vice Chancellor - Academic and Sustainability

Contents

Key

These are the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For each section of this report, the relevant SDGs are referenced at the top of the page to indicate the goals our sustainability work is contributing to.

1. Introduction

During 2024/25, progress has been made in reducing our environmental impacts, for example, through decreasing our water use and total waste generated across our sites. February 2025 saw the launch of a new Sustainability Committee formed of senior staff to help drive the agenda forward at the University. The new Committee has already supported the agenda by approving key documents and plans such as new Travel Plan and key ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management System (EMS) documentation.

Resourcing was addressed with the recruitment of a second Environmental Officer, taking the resource to four members of staff. The new Environmental Officer is undertaking the day-to-day management of our EMS and is delivering work on our sustainable catering and procurement agendas, which has enabled key areas of development, for example developing environmental training.

The Sustainability Team were also able to extend a BCU graduate placement in a role as Environmental Assistant, who delivered on key projects associated with the travel plan, environmental data improvements, and sustainable engagement and communications. This enabled the Sustainability Team to develop strategic thinking in key sustainability areas and develop new plans such as a replacement travel plan.

Environmental performance has continued to improve across a range of areas as highlighted in the headline figures below.

Headline figures and successes from 2024/25 include:

73
sustainability
related communications delivered to students and staff, an increase of 10% from 2023/24

41,418m³
reduction in
water use
from 2023/24 to 2024/25

ISO 14001:2015
Environmental Management System
accreditation maintained

Maintained
Bronze
Food for Life award

Overall
waste generated
reduced by
5.1%
(from 2023/24)

Achieved Gold
Hedgehog Friendly Campus
Award

Green Impact
21 staff teams
across the University.
Over 350 sustainability actions completed

Sustainability team delivered
39 events
(160% increase from 2023/24)
engaging **2,200 staff**
students and external stakeholders
(340% increase from 2023/24)

New
Sustainability Committee
launched

New
Travel Plan
signed off

Ranked
40 in the
People and Planet university league.

2. Carbon emissions summary

The table below outlines our carbon emissions against the Standardised Carbon Emissions Framework (SCEF), which was developed by the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC) to create a sector-wide framework to report carbon emissions. The University is including its carbon emissions in line with this framework in our annual report to ensure transparency and accountability. 2024/25 saw a 3% reduction in our carbon footprint compared to 2023/24 based on the SCEF categories. The main emissions reductions were seen in refrigerants.

Standardised Carbon Emissions Framework categories			**2023/24**	**2024/25**	**+ / - % change**	
Scope	Category	Area	tCO_2e	tCO_2e	%	Comment
1	1	Natural gas	2830	3248	+15%	
	2	Fleet - petrol	1	1	+55%	Rounded up for reporting.
	2	Fleet - diesel	10	14	+42%	
	3	Refrigerants & Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) - fugitive emissions (refrigerants)	140	0	-100%	F-gas leaks only
	3	Volatile Organic Compounds	0	0		Data not currently collected.
	4	Gas oil	1	0	-100%	
	4	Woodchip (CO2e reported for N2O and CH4)	0	0		None ordered in 2024/25.
	5	Land and Livestock				Not applicable to BCU.
Sub-total - Scope 1			2981	3263	+9%	
2	1	Electricity (location based)	2396	2837	+18%	
	1	Electricity (market based)	2252	4	-99.8%	Bryt energy is 100% renewable. Millennium Point moved to Bryt.
	1	Solar - generated electricity (avoided emissions)	4	43	+979%	Rounded up for reporting.
	1	Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin certificates	1	1	0%	2025 Certificate requested
	1	Power Purchase Agreements	0	0		Being reviewed
	2	Purchased heat or steam				Not applicable to BCU.
Sub-total - Scope 2			2401	2882	+20%	
3	1	Purchased goods and services	44675	47129	+5%	HESCET data
	1	Water	14	10	-29%	
	2	Capital goods - Construction	1227	353	-71%	HESCET data
	3	Fuel and energy related activities - electricity transmission and distribution	319	297	-7%	
	3	Fuel and energy related activities - electricity well-to-tank	800	795	-1%	Waiting for Bryt
	3	Fuel and energy related activities - gas well-to-tank	504	536	+6%	

2. Carbon emissions summary

Scope	Category	Area	tCO_2e	tCO_2e	%	Comment
3	3	Fuel and energy related activities - petrol well-to-tank	0	1		
	3	Fuel and energy related activities - diesel well-to-tank	3	3	+10%	
	3	Fuel and energy related activities - gas oil well-to-tank	0	0		None used in 2024/25
	4	Upstream transportation and distribution	0	0		Emissions included in scope 3 category 1.
	5	Waste generated in operations - waste	4	3	-25%	Significant change in DEFRA conversion factors for 2024
	5	Waste generated in operations - waste water	17	12	-29%	
	6	Business travel - air travel	1521	1375	-10%	Includes WTT emissions.
	6	Business travel - rail travel	13	14	+8%	
	6	Business travel - hotel	0	0		Data not currently collected.
	6	Business travel - taxi/coach	0	0		Data not currently collected.
	6	Business travel - car hire	0	0		Data not currently collected.
	6	Business travel - grey fleet	0	0		Data not currently collected.
	7	Employee commuting - staff commuting	1971	1818	-8%	EAUC travel carbon emissions spreadsheet used
	7	Employee commuting - Staff homeworking	0	0		Calculation method to be agreed
	8	Leased buildings and vehicles	0	0		
	9	Downstream transportation and distribution - UK student travel & international student travel	13060	9116	-30%	EAUC travel carbon emissions spreadsheet used
	9	Downstream transportation and distribution - Student accommodation	0	0		Data not currently collected.
	10	Processing of sold products				Not applicable to BCU.
	11	Use of sold products				Not applicable to BCU.
	12	End of life treatment of sold products				Not applicable to BCU.
	13	Downstream leased assets - leased buildings and vehicles	0	0		Data not currently collected.
	13	Downstream leased assets - land use				Not applicable to BCU.
	14	Franchises				Not applicable to BCU.
	15	Investments	0	0		Data not currently collected.
Sub-total - Scope 3			64,128	61,463	-4%	
TOTAL tCO_2e (all 3 scopes)			69,510	67,580	-3%	

Table 1. BCU's scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon emissions for 2024/25

Objective 1:

Embedding sustainability in our processes

3. Environmental Management System

Objectives and targets	Status
Continue to manage, maintain and continually improve our ISO 14001:2015 certified Environmental Management System throughout 2020-25	EMS maintained

3.1 Progress update:

EcoCampus conducted a peer audit of our Environmental Management System (EMS) in March 2025. The three-day audit included a review of EMS documentation, evaluation of compliance, interviews with members of staff and on-site audits of the Seacole Building, Parkside Building and Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

The audit found that the well-established EMS continues to drive environmental improvement, supported by strengthened governance, active staff and academic engagement, and initiatives ranging from updated processes and training to material re-use and biodiversity projects. The audit identified three minor non-conformities (MiNC) and three opportunities for improvement (OFI). MiNCs related to the absence of F-Gas records during the audit (subsequently provided), missing waste transfer notes and incorrect waste storage. Opportunities for improvement included ensuring SE Recycling consignment notes to include a permit number, enhancing clinical waste storage and obtaining documented evidence of sustainability requirements at the contract management stage.

Our ISO 14001:2015 recertification audit took place in May 2025 over five days. The audit identified one MiNC and four OFIs. The MiNC related to delays in conducting internal audits in 2023/2024. OFIs were centred around improvements to strengthening checks of contractor waste storage areas, reviewing the location of chemical storage cabinets in the Parkside external yard and enhancing processes for identifying and monitoring environmental-related approvals (e.g. pesticide certificates) held outside the Sustainability team. This strong outcome resulted in the successful award of recertification, reflecting the University's ongoing commitment to environmental excellence.

Internal audits were conducted by the Sustainability Team in 2024/25 at the following sites:

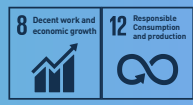
- Seacole Building
- Millennium Point
- Parkside Building
- STEAMhouse
- School of Art
- School of Jewellery
- Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
- Heneage Street
- Doug Ellis Sports Centre
- Joseph Priestley Building

3.2 Going forward we will:

- Continue to develop EMS documentation and review audit approach
- Conduct a peer audit in March 2026
- Conduct an external surveillance audit in May 2026

Objective 1:

Embedding sustainability in our processes



4. Procurement

Objectives and targets	Status
Maintain Level 4 of the Flexible Framework throughout 2020-25, exploring the option of achieving Level 5 or moving to ISO 20400:2017 should it become a formalised accreditation.	Continuing to maintain level 4 of the Flexible Framework
From 2020 onwards, all procurements over £60k require a Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA), which considers environmental, economic and social impacts, and a light-touch process in place for contracts below £60k.	Achieving
All "higher-tier" suppliers will have a sustainability action plan by 2025 and are being monitored to ensure delivery.	In progress

4.1 Progress update:

During 2024/25 the Procurement Team has continued to embed sustainability as a requirement through sustainability impact assessments (SIA) and discussions with stakeholders to drive sustainability into contract deliverables.

Procurement have continued to work to the principles of Level 4 of the DEFRA Sustainable Procurement in Government Flexible Framework, with the hope to achieve Level 5 in flagship areas.

All procurements undertaken are assessed on a preliminary basis for sustainability, and where appropriate a full SIA is completed to help inform the procurement objectives, although this is not always based on the monetary value, but instead on the opportunities for sustainability improvements.

The review of specific action plans and re-assessment of sustainability objectives for important contracts continues, with individual and targeted plans tailored to the specifics of the contract. Performance will then be recorded centrally and alongside other contract information for compliance monitoring and reporting.

Key procurements in 2024/25:

Printing paper: The University's requirement for printing paper was tendered and awarded to Antalis, for the supply of carbon-neutral and FSC certified paper.

All paper products will comply with:

- UK Timber Regulations
- FLEGT
- FSC and PEFC chain of custody standards
- Upcoming EU Deforestation Regulation

Electric car charging: The University procured and installed 8 electric vehicle charging points across the campus. This will facilitate both the University and its suppliers moving to electric vehicles to service the campus.

Accommodation laundry: A new supplier was appointed to provide the laundry service for University accommodation. WashCo provide a subsidised facility in University Locks for residents' use:

- New energy-efficient washers and dryers: high spin speeds reduce drying times and energy use; auto-dosing reduces detergent waste and eliminates single-use packaging for students; uses less than six litres of water per kilo of laundry.
- WashCo will plant one tree for every machine installed and offset the carbon emissions of installation.

Biomass fuel: The University retendered its requirement for biomass fuel for the remaining boilers on campus. These are expected to be replaced with energy-efficient and sustainable heat-pump technology in the lifetime of the contract but will ensure in the interim that fuel for heating buildings is provided in the most sustainable way possible.

- All timber is sourced from local woodlands and sawmills.
- Procurement is only from forest owners/managers committed to the UK Forestry Standard.
- Wood is either FSC certified or subject to a Forest Design Plan, EWG/BWW Scheme, or Felling Licence.

Objective 1:

Embedding sustainability in our processes

Bottled water: Wherever facilities allow, the University offers free to use and sustainably filtered tap water for both students and staff. However, in some remote locations, this is not possible and an alternative supply of drinking water is needed. Culligan were appointed as the University's new supplier of drinking water and chillers for their alignment to UN Sustainable Development Goals and support of global water projects.

Sports uniform: A new supplier for sports uniforms was appointed following a tender. Akuma will provide uniform for staff and students both studying and participating in sports activities with benefits including:

- Use of Akuma ECO-GEN fabrics, made from recycled plastic bottles and certified to GRS standard, and 100% recycled fabrics by the end of 2025.
- Local manufacturing: 70% of Akuma garments are made in the UK, reducing international shipping.

Strategic audio visual: IDNS were appointed following a competitive tender as the University's supplier, installer and maintainer of audio-visual equipment across the University such as the projectors and screens used in lecture theatres and classrooms across campus. IDNS have:

- Committed to Net Zero by 2035 based on Science Based Targets
- Partnered with Ecologi and have a Silver Award
- Delivered integration with Crestron Fusion for monitoring and auto power-down features

Key contracts

Outsourced catering contract: BaxterStorey provide a comprehensively sustainable approach to the service, which is delivered and continuously improved via the University's Sustainable Catering Plan.

- All single-use plastics have been removed from university catering within two years.
- Managing and reducing food waste, including anaerobic digestion.
- Reduction of coffee cup waste by promoting sustainable alternatives (measured and reported monthly) and use of single-wall cups.
- Reducing energy usage – outlets are now individually metered to enable more precise control of energy usage.
- Zero emissions vehicles – campus deliveries have moved to electric vehicles.

Waste contracts: The University's e-waste continues to be managed by SER and ensures zero-landfill and 100% re-use or recycling of all university e-waste. All revenue generated by the re-use of IT equipment is given to the university's chosen charities.

The University's main waste contractor is Veolia, in a continuation of the long-standing partnership. This provides the University with a zero-waste-to-landfill approach and a commitment to improving recycling rates and innovation. There is a commitment to reduce both the absolute volume of waste and proportionate to university population and improve recycling proportions.

Veolia introduced food-waste recycling to University Locks accommodation this year, collecting 5.5 tonnes in the first half of 2025 and contributing to a 10% increase in recycling rates for accommodation.

Restore Datashred provide the secure recycling of all confidential and general paper waste, ensuring that all paper waste is recycled and never sent to landfill or for energy recovery.

Litho-print services: The University's contracts for commercial printing are carbon-offset and supplies FSC certified paper for all the University's requirements.

CDW, the University's computer supplier of Lenovo laptops and computers, continue to be carbon-offset and all packaging is recycled.

Training and development: Contract management training continues to be delivered to colleagues across the University, including how to embed and develop sustainability considerations during the lifecycle of supplier contracts using continuous improvement methodologies.

Objective 1:

Embedding sustainability in our processes

A recent graduate worked on a paid internship with the Net Zero Carbon Supplier tool gaining experience working with the project and received training in the platform and sustainable procurement principles. They also produced an initial report, comparing two methods of measuring the University's Scope 3 carbon footprint.

The University Procurement and Sustainability teams continue to work with peers in the sector via the TEC consortium to share and embed best practices in energy and sustainability and participate in the NETpositive Future Supplier Engagement and Net Zero Carbon Supplier Tools.

Each member of the Procurement Team has a sustainability goal in their performance review to support the delivery of our Environmental Plan. A workshop was undertaken to develop sustainability principles for use in procurement tenders.

Measurement: Regular (monthly and quarterly) reporting of sustainability goals occurs in several key contracts, such as waste management, catering and cleaning.

The University continues to encourage suppliers to engage with the NETpostive Supplier Engagement Tool and use it to commit-to and track sustainability goals. This gives suppliers access to support and information to improve their own sustainability.

4.2 Going forward we will:

- Continue to participate in the Net Zero Carbon Supplier tool project to better understand our procurement scope 3 carbon emissions.
- Continue to work with a prioritised list of our main suppliers to better understand and ultimately reduce our scope 3 carbon emissions.
- Follow up on NETpositive Supplier Engagement tool findings.
- Develop a sustainable procurement roadmap/strategy including goals for procurements and development of general principles (e.g. no single-use plastics).
- Start a review of Power Purchase Agreements and energy consortiums in relation to sustainably generated energy and access to best practice and frameworks.
- Continued development of centralised KPI reporting and embedding of sustainability into Contract Management disciplines and using continuous improvement to drive changes to contract delivery.

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

5. Projects and other processes

5.1 Progress update - IT

Work has progressed with embedding sustainability into the IT department. A sustainability session was held with the departments senior leadership team to identify where the biggest sustainability impacts are. As a result of this, work is being progress to identify the carbon footprint of IT services, including our cloud-based servers.

The IT department has been using carbon emissions data from Lenovo and Apple to calculate the embodied and life cycle carbon of our laptops, monitors, and workstations. The baseline estimate as of July 2025 is 1,232 tCO_2e per year. It is estimated that 987 tCO_2e of this is scope 3 emissions, i.e. from the manufacturing, packaging, transport etc. (not the in-use electricity consumption).

A digital clean up competition was undertaken to encourage students and staff to delete files and emails that were no longer needed. The staff and student who made the largest reduction to their OneDrive storage won a prize. Overall, 38 TB of data was deleted saving approximately 9,500 $kgCO_2e$ per year. This initiative forms part of a wider project to reduce the amount of data in BCU's OneDrive, Outlook Exchange and SharePoint accounts.

The Head of Sustainability has been working with IT project colleagues to further embed sustainability thinking and requirements in the IT project process. A new project template is in development to support in the identification of sustainability criteria in IT projects which can then be address and embedded through the project business case, procurement, and impacts/benefits monitoring.

5.2 Going forward we will:

- Calculate the embodied carbon of further IT equipment such as audio-visual (AV) equipment.
- Review the lifespan and quantity of IT equipment and where we can make changes to support the environmental agenda.
- Work with our IT supply chain to identify where further environmental benefits and carbon savings can be realised.

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

6. Biodiversity

Objectives and targets	Status
Achieving gold for the Hedgehog Friendly Campus scheme	Achieved
Using the ecological survey report, develop a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for BCU to maintain the number of species and habitats, and where feasible increase these	In progress
Deliver species specific and habitat surveys	In progress

6.1 Progress update:

Our draft Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has progressed and is expected to be published in the autumn of the 2025/26 academic year. The BAP will set biodiversity targets aligned to site-specific metrics, enabling future measurement against goals within a changing estate.

To ensure biodiversity targets are both ambitious and achievable, the Sustainability, Grounds, and Gardening Teams collaborated to identify habitat parcels for enhancement. Twenty habitats were selected - 10 near the Seacole Building and 10 around the Pavilion's field. Planned improvements include reducing non-native species and introducing native shrubs and trees such as hazel, hawthorn and oak.

A significant biodiversity success this year came in the form a swift tower installation beside the giant oak at Seacole Building. Designed to support the declining migratory species, the tower also includes compartments for house martins and bats. A solar-powered speaker emits bird calls to attract nesting swifts and house martins.

Other biodiversity actions include:

- **Wildflower meadow:** A previously derelict area beside Joseph Priestley Building has been transformed into a vibrant green space with wildflowers like cornflower, ox-eye daisies and poppies. Benches and tables now make it a welcoming spot for students, staff and the community.
- **River cleaning project:** Through the College of Engineering's STEAM module Leading Engineering Endeavours, students partnered with The Rivers Trust to design nature-based water solutions. Projects were showcased at Innovation Fest, offering real-world experience and biodiversity impact.
- **Growth garden development:** Located on the third floor terrace of Parkside Building, the Growth Garden connects people to nature and supports teaching. Plants grown here are used to create natural dyes. The space has also been enhanced with new planters and tools.
- **Tree branch feeder workshop:** In partnership with the Community Environmental Trust, a workshop was held to create bird feeders from willow branches. This initiative promoted sustainable practices and provided additional food sources for local birds.

5.2 Going forward we will:

- Finalise and achieve sign off the BAP
- Deliver further planting projects and schemes to support biodiversity improvements across our estate
- Undertake a year of bird conservation work for the Year of the Bird campaign
- Conduct habitat surveys in summer 2026

Swift tower at Seacole Building

Cornflower and ladybirds on the wildflower meadow

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

7. Catering

Objectives and targets	Status
Embed sustainability as a core requirement in the tender of the catering contract in 2020/21, developing a new Sustainable Catering Policy and Targets for the duration of the contract (2021/26)	Achieved
Deliver our Sustainable Catering Policy and Targets.	In progress

7.1 Progress update:

In 2024/25, BaxterStorey achieved Food for Life Bronze accreditation across all Birmingham City University catering sites. This recognises sustainability criteria embedded in our catering, such as using free-range eggs in all cooking, Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified fish, local and seasonal produce and working with dedicated suppliers. For example, locally farmed R-Oil rapeseed oil from the Cotswolds is used across our sites and collected for conversion into biofuel. Westway's, established in 1889, supply all BaxterStorey sausages from the West Country and were named Sustainability Champion 2023 in the Taste of the West awards.

BaxterStorey has also introduced initiatives to encourage sustainable choices, including Eco to Go boxes and Keep Cups, promoted during BCU's 2025 Waste Awareness Week and available year-round to reduce disposable use. A growing range of vegan and vegetarian dishes is available across menus, supported by the Food Equilibrium project, which gradually reduces high carbon meat content in selected meals.

Other key initiatives include:

- **Soup with purpose:** Chefs use surplus seasonal vegetables from the Waste Knot scheme to prepare soup, with proceeds supporting local charities such as The Bus Shelter Homeless Community.
- **Beans is how:** As the first food service provider to sign this global pledge, BaxterStorey is committed to doubling bean consumption by 2028 and promoting pulses as a low-carbon, nutritious alternative.

In 2025, BCU also hosted guest chef Jenny Chandler, UN FAO Special Ambassador for Pulses. Through events, she inspired staff and students to explore the versatility of pulses and plant-based meals, linking sustainable diets to health, affordability and climate action.

In 2024/25, the updated Sustainable Catering Plan (2025-2030) builds on the success of our previous approach and reflects our commitment to BCU's Environmental Plan, Strategy 2030 and Beyond, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has been developed in collaboration with BaxterStorey, internal stakeholders, and through student feedback to ensure it reflects shared values around sustainability, health, and inclusivity. The plan was approved by BCU's Sustainability Committee in May 2025. Progress will be tracked and reported annually through the Environmental Report.

7.2 Going forward we will:

- Monitor and deliver Sustainable Catering Plan and targets in collaboration with BaxterStorey
- Aim to achieve Food for Life Silver Award
- Develop sustainability KPIs for the catering contract performance meetings

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

8. Energy and carbon

Objectives and targets	Status
Continue to purchase 100% renewable energy (both electricity and gas)	Achieved for electricity
Increase onsite energy generation from 2020 levels by 2025.	Achieved
Review what is required to achieve a net zero carbon University before 2050 and start the delivery of actions to achieve this by 2025.	Achieved
Throughout 2020/25, improve the capture of scope 3 carbon emission data for reporting, and setting associated goals for reporting and net zero carbon work.	Achieved

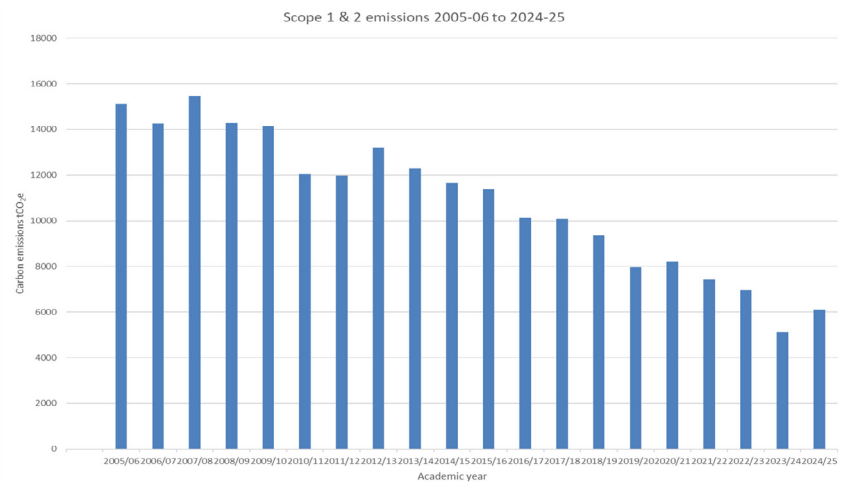


Figure 2. Scope 1 and 2 emissions reductions 2005/06 to 2024/25.

8.1 Progress update:

Our Scope 1 and 2 emissions continue to reduce compared to 2005/06 levels. 2024/25 is still down compared to 2023/24 but has increased by 19% in part due to the biomass boilers and combined heat and power (CHP) failures impacting both gas and electricity consumption and part due to better data reporting.

Further progress has been made through:

- Tracking and monitoring energy use by reviewing HH data and identifying areas for improvement.
- Focusing on improving energy efficiency and reminding people to turn off equipment when not in use.
- Optimising the building management system (BMS) to control heating and cooling. Although more could still be achieved, we've had a positive start.

There has been an increase in gas use during the period across our non-residential sites, and this is in part due to the particularly cold and elongated winter period.

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

Seacole air source heat pumps (ASHP) have been installed and commissioned which should influence gas consumption across winter 2025/26. Further photovoltaic (PV) panels installed on site has supported the additional electricity used by the ASHP. 177 new panels have been added to Seacole, and these have generated 54460kWh.

A full review was undertaken of existing PV installations to ensure we are generating electricity efficiently and safely. This has identified improvements that could be made to our PV installations to maximise generation.

The Sustainability Team secured £1m for LED lighting and emergency lighting replacement at Parkside which will be tendered and delivered in 2025/26.

All sites (except 86 Heathmill Lane) are supplied by 100% renewable electricity. The fuel mix reported by Bryt to March 2025 is 70.3% wind, 27.2% solar and 2.5% hydro, however, the full fuel mix cannot be calculated until the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) releases the line loss factors in August of each year.

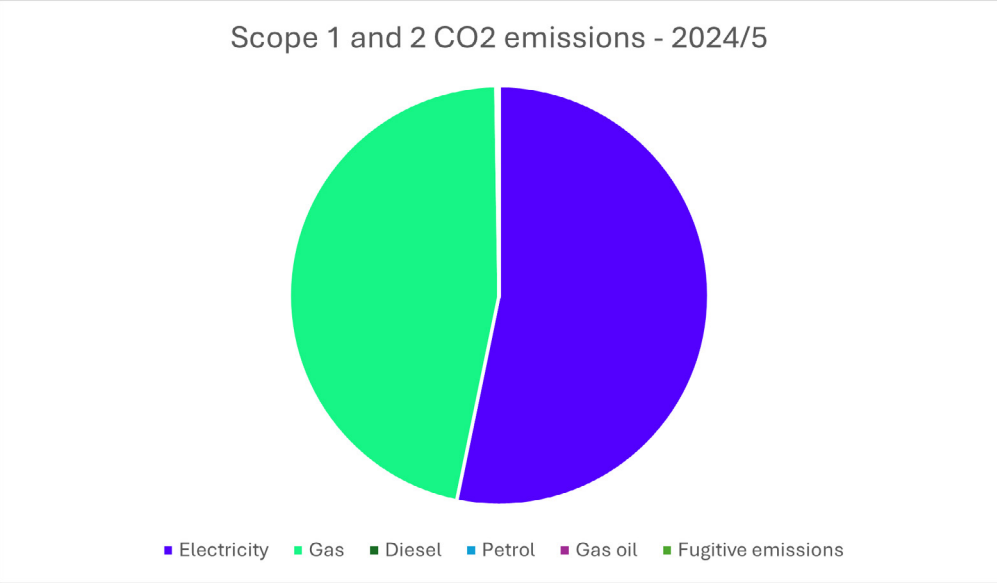


Figure 3. BCU Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions 2024/5

7.2 Going forward we will:

- Tender and deliver a phased project of LED replacement in Parkside Building.
- Develop a net zero carbon plan.
- Identify further utilities efficiencies through efficient building management and the BMS.

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

9. Environmental management and compliance

Objectives and targets	Status
Zero major non-conformances due to a compliance obligation breach.	Achieved
From 2020/25, complete the marking of manhole covers with correct identification across the estate, to include drainage CCTV inspections to all PPM maintenance contracts.	In progress

9.1 Progress update:

There have been no major non-conformances in our ISO 14001:2015 EMS due to a compliance obligations breach. An external review of our environmental compliance register was undertaken in February 2025. The review of our compliance register identified any new or updated legislation. Recent updates include new ISO 14001 requirements to consider climate change, the removal of harmful firefighting foams by July 2025, ongoing packaging and plastic reporting duties and revised deadlines under the UK Emissions Trading Scheme.

No refrigerant gas leaks occurred in 2024/25. We continue to work to reduce the risk of leaks with preventative maintenance and ensuring services include leak testing to maintain compliance.

Trade effluent discharge consent was renewed for School of Art, and a new consent was approved for the Benjamin Zephaniah Building (formerly University House).

9.2 Going forward we will:

- Continue to progress drainage mapping and drain labelling across the estate budget permitting.
- Continue to implement the compliance related opportunities for improvement identified by the Compliance Review
- Complete a Compliance Evaluation

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

10. Sustainable buildings

Objectives and targets	Status
Achieve an EPC rating of 'A' on all new builds.	No new builds in 2024/25
Achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' as a minimum for all new builds.	No new builds in 2024/25
Deliver BCU's Sustainable Building Standard for all new builds and refurbishments from 2020-25.	In progress

10.1 Progress update:

Whilst there have been no major new build projects, BCU has continued to address sustainability through a number of refurbishment projects through the capital programme as outlined below.

University House:

University House was formerly a professional services building, with the International College located on the ground floor. A major refurbishment took place to repurpose the building into a new home for the Department of Education, and the building was renamed to the Benjamin Zephaniah Building.

The refurbishment, delivered by contractor Overbury, followed the SKA HE principles with relevant good practice measures (GPMs) selected for Overbury to deliver against. The SKA rating is an environmental assessment method developed by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) specifically for non-domestic fit-outs and refurbishments.

Key features included:

- Thorlux SmartScan LED lighting installed with built in photo cell or presence detection.
- Furniture reuse throughout the building.
- Removal of gas from the property to support our net zero carbon ambitions and the decarbonisation of heat.
- The installation of a variable refrigerant flow (VRF) system, which is an energy efficient technology which operates by varying the refrigerant flow rate based on demand. To note, this solution has required the use of refrigerant gas which was the highest impact on the lifecycle carbon assessment due to the global warming potential of the gas.
- All timber Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) accredited.
- Installation of 802m2 refurbished flooring tiles. This saved approximately 97% of carbon compared to installing new tiles.
- Avoidance of suspended ceilings which saved money and carbon on installation.

We had our first LCA conducted on the project. It used CarboniCa, Morgan Sindall Groups third party verified life cycle and embodied carbon calculator tool. This identified that the embodied carbon over the lifecycle of the building was 217.7 kgCO2e/m2 based on gross internal area (GIA), which has achieved well below the UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard 2030 target of 450 kgCO2e/m2.

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

The proportions of embodied carbon has been outlined in image 1, which shows that building services, such as power cabling, accounted for the highest proportion of embodied carbon.

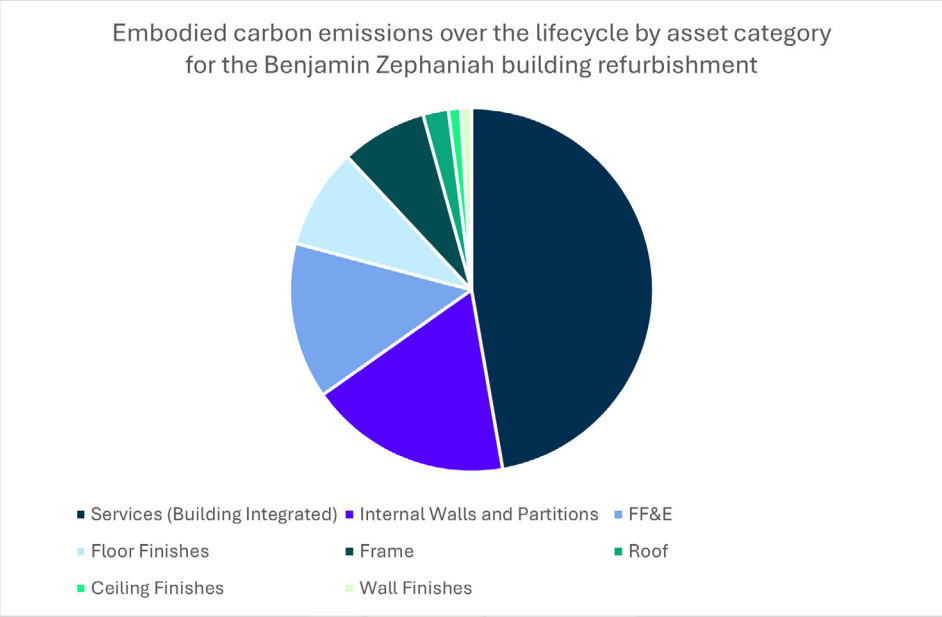


Figure 4. Embodied carbon emissions over the lifecycle by asset category for the Benjamin Zephaniah building refurbishment

VC Office move and 5th floor teaching space refurbishment:

The Vice-Chancellors Office (VCO) was relocated from the 4th floor of Curzon Building to the ground floor to make the VCO more accessible. As part of this project, furniture was reused and LED lighting installed to reduce energy use and improve the quality of light.

The project generated 18 tonnes of waste of which 16 tonnes was recycled, achieving a 89% recycling rate.

10.2 Going forward we will:

- Work to develop a revised version of the Sustainable Building Standard to align with the new Masterplan strategy.
- Improve our environmental monitoring and reporting of projects including furniture reuse and the avoided cost and carbon.

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

11. Transport

Objectives and targets	Status
Improve the capture of business travel information through any travel procurements from 2020/25.	In progress
Conduct biennial travel survey	Complete
Publish 2025-30 Travel Plan, outlining BCU's sustainable transport commitments.	Complete

11.1 Progress update:

An updated Travel Plan was approved by the Sustainability Committee in May 2025, which focuses on reducing transport-related carbon emissions, increasing the health and wellbeing of students and staff, and encourages sustainable travel across the City Centre, City South and satellite campuses.

BCU's 2025-2030 Travel Plan will bring numerous benefits to the university community by improving travel choices, enabling safer access and supporting BCU's wider net-zero carbon targets. The plan has been shaped by results of the 2024 Travel Survey, stakeholder interviews and policy reviews.

BCU were also awarded bronze accreditation for a 'good' Travel Plan by Modeshift STARS in May 2025, a national award which recognises the steps the University has taken to promote greener, safer and healthier travel. This scheme helps BCU to create, deliver and track the effectiveness of its Travel Plan.

Further actions include:

- **Bike maintenance stands** – Installed on City Centre and City South campuses, offering cyclists and wheelchair users a station to perform repairs.
- **Bus pass offer** - Collaborated with TfWM to provide 4-week free bus travel to students and staff, empowering the BCU community to travel sustainably.
- **Cycling initiatives** - Adult cycling lessons and bike maintenance sessions conducted by qualified trainers from EcoBirmingham.
- **Electric vehicle charging points** - Installed at Seacole Building, Curzon Building, Heneage Street and Harborne Road.
- **Bikers Breakfast** - Free breakfast incentives for students and staff that cycled onto campus on cycle themed days.

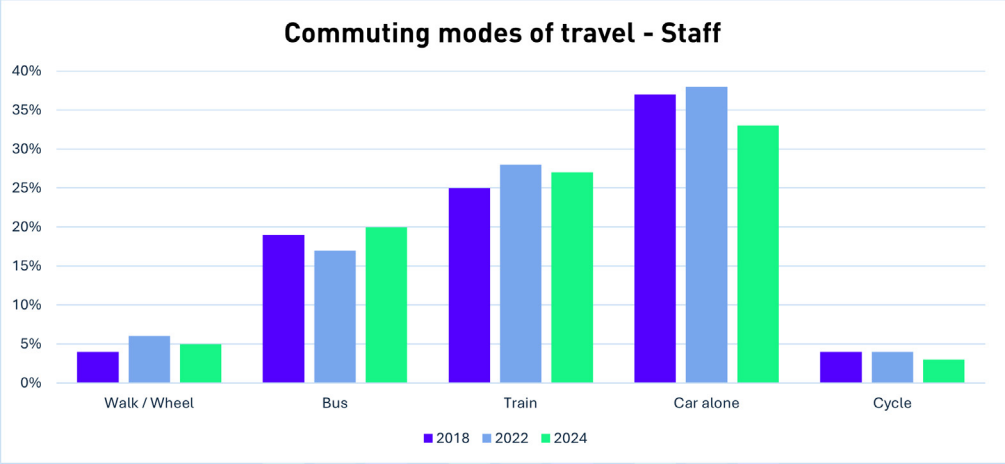
Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

Travel survey: The Sustainability Team conducted its biennial staff and student travel survey in the Autumn of 2024, to understand commuting behaviours, barriers, and opportunities for more sustainable travel. In total, 3,456 responses were received (920 staff, 2,536 students), an increase from 2022. Combined commuting emissions were estimated at 9,805 tCO_2e, with students responsible for the majority (7,987 tCO_2e).

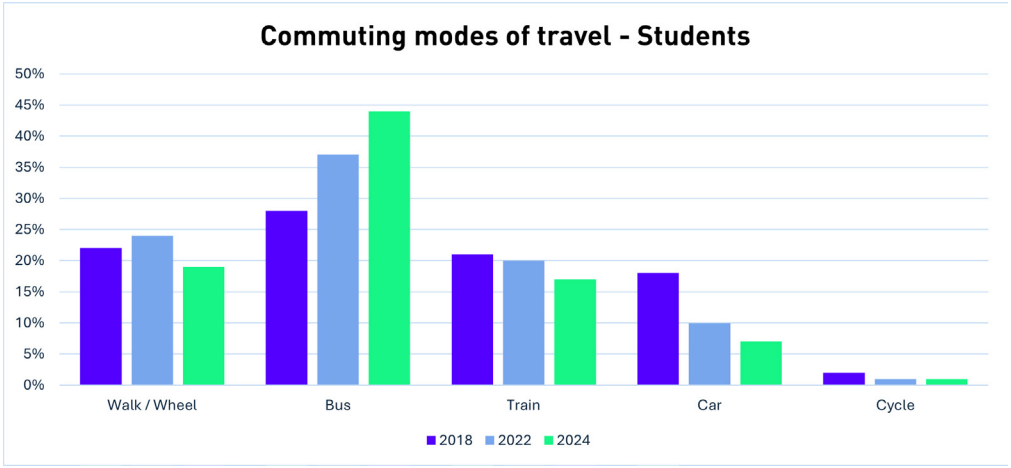
Staff travel: Staff commuting patterns show a significant move away from single-occupancy car use, which dropped to 33% (from 38% in 2022). Train travel remained steady at 27%, while bus use increased to 20%. Hybrid working has reduced commuting frequency, with most staff now attending campus two to three days per week. Interest in electric vehicles (EVs) is growing: 7% already own one and 29% plan to switch within five years, though cost and charging remain barriers. Walking (5%) and cycling (3%) remain low due to safety and infrastructure concerns. Staff feedback focused on affordability, public transport reliability, and the need for flexible travel policies reflecting hybrid work and caring responsibilities.

Figure 5. BCU staff commuting modes of travel



Student travel: Students demonstrated sharper changes. Bus use rose to 44%, making it the dominant mode, while car use fell to 7% and train travel to 17%. Walking (19%) remains important, but cycling (1%) is rare despite many being confident cyclists. International students primarily arrive via Birmingham Airport (67%) and complete their journeys with taxis or public transport. Most students attend campus two to four days weekly, reflecting hybrid learning. Concerns centred on affordability, unreliable services, limited promotion of support schemes, high parking fees, and safety - 86% felt unsafe on surrounding roads and paths.

Figure 6. BCU students commuting modes of travel



Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

11.2 Going forward we will:

- Reintroduce the bike loan scheme for students and staff.
- Continue to improve data capture associated with business travel and commuting.
- Install additional bike maintenance stands across campuses.
- Continue to liaise with relevant parties to enhance travel options and break down potential barriers to sustainable/active travel.
- Achieve silver accreditation from the Modeshift STARS scheme for a 'very good' Travel Plan.

Bike Maintenance Stand

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

12. Waste and recycling

Objectives and targets	Status
Reduce the amount of waste generated year on-year by 1% by 2025 from a 2018/19 baseline.	Achieved 5.1% reduction from 2023/24
Increase recycling rates annually by 2% per year by 2025 from a 2018/19 baseline.	Achieved 5.2% increase
Maintain zero waste to landfill (excluding waste from building projects).	Achieved
Establish and maintain a Waste Task Group at BCU throughout 2020/25 to continue to identify areas of waste prevention and reduction and increase recycling.	In progress

12.1 Progress update:

2024/25 saw a 5.1% decrease in total waste generated when compared to 2023/24 across all academic and accommodation buildings. This is an 13% decrease on the baseline figure of 2018/19.

Waste across the university has continued to reduce in quantity despite staff and student footfall remaining consistent. Waste per FTE student has fallen consecutively since the pandemic, with an overall reduction of 27% from baseline figure to 2023/24 academic year.

The overall recycling rate has increased by 5.2% on the previous academic year. There have been several initiatives that have contributed to this increase in recycled waste.

Simpler Recycling is an England-based legislation that was introduced in April 2025 to standardise recycling across households and businesses. Commercial premises must now segregate and recycle specific waste streams with this further being introduced to households in 2026.

BCU has always separated waste at source and implemented single stream recycling, therefore only minor changes were needed to be compliant with Simpler Recycling. As such, further food waste caddies have been introduced into staff and student kitchens, and additional glass and cardboard recycling points have been located within buildings where this type of waste is produced.

Work has also been undertaken in conjunction with Students' Union to recycle food waste from the Eagle & Ball, therefore diverting this away from general waste. This, in combination with the additional food caddies, has led to a 10% increase in food recycling in comparison to 2023/24 data.

In September 2024, a food waste recycling trial was introduced into University Locks, in preparation for the roll out of simpler recycling. The FM Contracts team, in collaboration with the Accommodation team and waste contractor, introduced food waste caddies into all kitchens within Block A alongside better signage and information detailing the food waste journey.

The trial was deemed successful and further food recycling was introduced into the remaining block in January 2025. The annual waste and recycling data for University Locks demonstrates the success of the introduction of food waste with over 5.5 tonnes of food waste being sent to anaerobic digestion and diverted away from general waste.

University Locks saw an overall reduction of 9.4% in waste generated from the previous year. General waste reduced by 20%, which is mainly attributed to the introduction of food recycling. This meant that University Locks' overall recycling rate increased by 10% from the previous year.

Simpler Recycling legislation has also meant that BCU are now able to accept and recycle more plastic materials; previously only plastic bottles were accepted within this waste stream.

Recycling bin signage has been updated, and digital communications circulated around the university to inform of and encourage additional plastic recycling. The annual recycling data reflects a 46% increase in plastic recycling in the current year when compared to 2023/24.

The annual campus waste and recycling data demonstrates an overall recycling rate of 49%, which is a 4% increase on last year. The introduction of more recycling streams and bins across the estate, along with better signage, digital communications and the rollout of Simpler Recycling toolbox talk training to key stakeholders, has all positively contributed to the reduction in overall waste tonnage and the increase to recycling rates.

Industrial waste disposal has significantly reduced in 2024/25 from the previous year. This is mainly due to the reduction in large scale space reconfiguration projects. Where there have been minor projects, concerted efforts have been made to reuse furniture and materials where possible.

The combined recycling rate for both campus and accommodation waste was 45% which is 4% up on the previous year. This reflects the positive efforts and progress made with waste reduction and recycling initiatives within the academic year.

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

Waste reduction and recycling initiatives: March 2024 saw the University hold its fourth annual Waste Awareness Week. This was the biggest and best event to date with the 'Recycling Rangers' promoting best recycling practices across the university.

All waste and cleaning contractors to BCU engaged with staff and students in a Waste Awareness Fair to educate and gain valuable feedback on waste and recycling within the University. During the week, a 'Common-waste Games' event was held in Parkside to further engage and educate stakeholders while having fun with waste themed games. A litter pick also took place around the city centre involving both staff and students, and supported by our waste partner, Veolia, whose staff joined in from a local depot. A mini games day was also held within University Locks to encourage and promote better recycling within accommodation.

Positive feedback was received from this event and valuable information gained, which then helps to shape the way in which waste can be better managed and promoted in future.

Coffee cup recycling bins have been further rolled out across staff areas to further encourage recycling of disposable cups.

Waste collection schedules continue to be reviewed across the estate to ensure that collection frequencies match demand and so providing value for money to the University as well as assisting in managing the environmental impact of our suppliers through collection efficiencies.

Items such as stationary, crockery and cutlery that have been surplus to requirements when clearing out buildings for refurbishment projects, continue to be donated to students within accommodation. This has demonstrated a positive contribution to student experience while also contributing to waste avoidance.

Regular waste audits carried out by BCU's Quality Control Officer, assist with ensuring lower contamination of external bins by staff and contractors. All Facilities staff have also undertaken a waste awareness toolbox talk, and bespoke training on the new Simpler Recycling legislation and how that impacts our waste operations at BCU. This has been delivered by the Quality Control Officer to ensure they fully understand and support the recycling message.

BCU also continues to work in partnership with ISS, our cleaning contractor, who are asked to identify and report hotspots where recycling is being contaminated. Where possible, and safe, the ISS cleaning team also help to segregate waste to reduce contamination into other waste streams and promote recycling. The ISS team have also undergone waste related toolbox talk training to ensure they are fully aware and compliant with the new legislation and continue to help promote cleaner, single stream recycling.

Positive feedback around waste initiatives and robust documentation and processes was also received again from the ISO14001 auditors when carrying out the external environmental accreditation.

The Grounds and Gardening team play a key role in reusing or composting green waste created from around campuses. Additional compost bins have been built around City South Campus and compost bins now implemented within the City Centre Campus to help reduce the quantity of green waste sent to contractors for disposal and therefore reducing both cost and carbon emissions.

The Grounds and Gardening team also reuse pallets for making compost bins, bird boxes and insect houses to encourage further biodiversity to our campuses. The team also chip fallen trees and branches for use on the gardens and re-use the coffee grounds from on-campus cafes on the gardens.

The FM contracts team now meet with the Sustainability team monthly to discuss waste management initiatives and agree targets to continue to reduce and improve waste statistics.

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

BCU continues to recycle all redundant IT and electrical equipment via our WEEE waste contractor and 10% of all rebates are donated to Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid. In 2024/25, £2,935 was donated to charity on behalf of BCU.

Further promotion of increased plastic acceptance is planned to be promoted in 2025/26 via BCU communication channels to continue to reduce general waste and further improve upon recycling.

A Waste and Recycling task group is to be formulated in 2025/26 to bring together key stakeholders across the University to work together to reduce the amount of waste produced. The aim will be to focus on specific faculties or departments that produce significant quantities of waste and look at ways of further reducing, reusing and recycling.

Objective 2:

Reducing the environmental impacts of our operations

13. Water

Objectives and targets	Status
Install water meter loggers and establish a baseline of water consumption for 2019/20	Achieved
Once a baseline is established, develop a water reduction target and approach to reduce water consumption and associated carbon emissions by 2025	Achieved

13.1 Progress update:

Annual water loss can only be provided for those sites where water meter loggers are installed. This gives us the granular detail to react to unusual consumption patterns and record water lost due to leaks. Without loggers we can't identify water loss or continuous use. Over the 20 sites where we have direct control and have water meters installed, 15 had loggers before 31 July 2025. This represents a logger rate of 80%. Of five sites that didn't have loggers during this year, two have since had loggers installed, namely the Lodge and the Research Hub. The three remaining sites without loggers are Ruskin Hall, 3A and 3B Heneage Street and there are currently no plans to install loggers at these sites.

Our 2025 water loss target was 5% and we have achieved an annual water loss equivalent to 0.9% of our total annual consumption, therefore we have exceeded our target by 4.1%. This is due to diligent efforts in monitoring the water loggers and responding to breaches of tolerance levels and working alongside on-site staff to find and rectify the cause of the leak in a timely manner. Fortunately, this year, we have not experienced any major or complicated water loss situations.

Our total water use was 65,057m3 across the estate to 31 July 2025. This compares to 93,517m^3 at 31 July 2024 and 71,416m^3 at 31 July 2023. This is largely due to University House, now Benjamin Zephaniah House being closed for renovation, although reductions have occurred at all buildings except the Research Hub and Ruskin Hall, that had limited data in 2023/24 due to faulty meters.

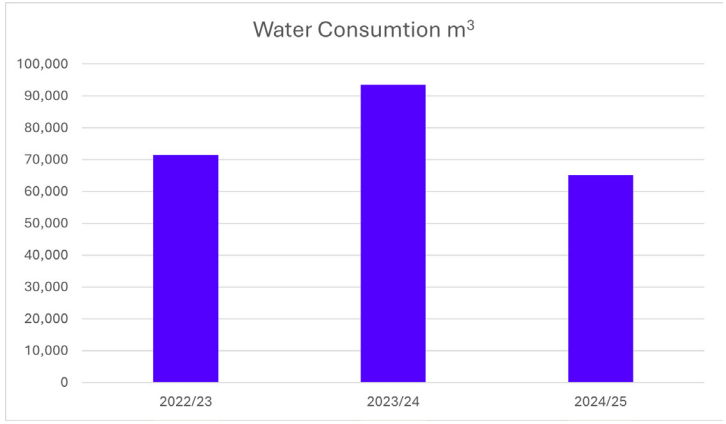


Figure 7. Comparison of annual water consumption, from 2022/23 to 2024/25

13.2 Going forward we will:

- Continue to proactively monitor and manage our water consumption through the loggers installed on site.
- Install water saving technology where feasible.

Objective 3:

Creating a green culture within BCU, locally and globally

14. Curriculum

Objectives and targets	Status
Sustainability has been integrated as a requirement in the course approval form	Achieved
By 2025 every course has been assessed for sustainability, using the SDGs as a framework, via the Periodic Review.	Partially achieved through the periodic review
Develop and deliver a new SEDA accredited course for staff on Embedding Sustainability in the Curriculum by August 2020.	On hold due to resourcing

14.1 Progress update:

The graduate attributes – the 6Cs – have been aligned to the STEAM and employability agendas. The Sustainability Team reviewed these attributes to ensure alignment to the UNESCO Key Competencies for Sustainability.

STEAM Graduate Attributes		
Knowing	Doing	Being
Critical thinking	Collaboration	Citizenship
Creativity	Communication	Change-ready

Some examples of sustainability in the curriculum in 2024/25 include:

- The College of Engineering delivered a STEAM module entitled **Leading Engineering Endeavours**. The module involved level 5 Engineering students across automotive, mechanical, electronic, and manufacturing courses, working closely with water welfare charity The Rivers Trust on a green engineering project. Students were given the challenge of educating schoolchildren, undergraduates, and teachers about the challenges of water welfare.
- The 12th annual **Innovation Fest** took place in May 2025. The week-long event provided an opportunity for students from the Faculty of Computing, Engineering, and Built Environment to share the creative projects they have been working on. The theme was Sustainability and Digital Innovation, and graduates and guest speakers shared their experience in talks including environmental and material science and AI for sustainability.
- A BCU alumni delivered a bio-material workshop featuring seaweed bio-yarn. Students from various interdisciplinary courses including photography, fashion, and textiles created an array of colourful yarns, beads and crochet pieces.
- CoLab 15 minute campus: As part of a project, students reviewed improvements which would help make BCU's City Centre campus a '15-minute campus', meaning everything needed to live a fulfilled like is within a 15-minute walk. Some key ideas students developed were dedicated study spaces, biodiversity hotspots and sports facilities to improve student experience, provide food growing opportunities, green corridors and improving our interface with the canal.

EDS:

The Education Development Service ran a decolonisation and pedagogy event in November 2024. This event for module leaders covered what decolonisation is and how it is important to BCU, looking at our (EDS) latest project enabling module leaders and students to collaborate on module modifications from assessment styles to exploring language we use.

14.2 Going forward we will:

- Embed ESD in the new Education Strategy.
- Develop and further embed the STEAM agenda throughout the BCU curriculum, embedding sustainability at the heart of the agenda.
- Embed ESD into the STEAM implementation plan to ensure the agendas are aligned and working cohesively.
- Embed ESD in the Curriculum Development Plan.

Objective 3:

Creating a green culture within BCU, locally and globally

15. Communications, engagement and training

Objectives and targets	Status
Deliver at least one environmental communication per month to staff through our communications channels	Achieved
Embed environmental content through nonstandard communication channels to students throughout 2020/25	Achieved
Reintroduce a Go Green Week	Achieved
Introduce a staff and student engagement programme to best utilise staff and student environmental champions	Achieved
Deliver carbon awareness training to students and staff	Achieved
By 2025, all permanent staff have completed the environmental awareness training, with specific environmental training provided to key stakeholders from a 2020 baseline.	In progress – work done to update environmental awareness training was undertaken in 2024/25

15.1 Progress update:

Green Impact, a university-wide sustainability engagement programme, was launched at BCU, creating 21 staff teams across the University who completed over 350 sustainability actions, including energy saving, waste reduction, wildlife conservation, low-emissions travel, sustainable procurement and much more. Teams who participated include, but are not exclusive to:

- Finance Team
- International Office
- IT Department, Joseph Priestley Team
- Production Department, Research Office
- Careers Employability and Graduate+
- Academic Services
- ADM Technical Team
- Estates and Facilities
- Legal Services
- Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Through the Green Impact Project Assistant initiative, students were paired with staff teams to help them deliver on their sustainability goals, developing their professional skills and understanding of sustainability challenges and solutions.

In addition to Green Impact led actions, the Sustainability Team delivered 39 events, engaging over 2,200 staff, students and external stakeholders. Additionally, 73 articles, social media posts and newsletters were shared to keep stakeholders informed about the latest sustainability developments at BCU.

Sustainability events included:

- **Go Green Week** – five days of activities encouraging staff and students to take part in various environmental and active travel initiatives. Events included Learn to Ride lessons, tree planting with the volunteering team and sustainability fairs.
- **Waste Awareness Week** – five days of activities that encourages staff and students to reduce, reuse and recycle and avoid waste. Events included the Common-waste Games, Waste Fairs and litter picks.
- **Carbon literacy training** – 28 students and staff completed carbon literacy training to understand the causes and impact of their everyday carbon emissions, learning how they can help tackle climate change on a personal, organisational and national level.

Objective 3:

Creating a green culture within BCU, locally and globally

National awards recognition

The University's community received three Green Gown 2025 finalist nominations. The Green Gowns celebrates and awards the higher and further education sectors for their contributions towards sustainability.

- **Anya Logue**, IT Communications Coordinator, was a finalist in the Sustainability Champion – Staff category, recognising Anya's commitment to sustainability at the university outside of a job role that directly connects to the subject.
- **Helen Parmenter**, Art and Design student, was a finalist in the Sustainability Champion – Student category, recognising the impact of Helen's involvement in environmental and volunteering events throughout the year.
- **Mohammad Mehdi Yousefi**, Construction Project Management student, was a finalist in the Sustainability Champion – Student category, recognising Mohammad's efforts to embed sustainability into everyday decisions and campus culture.

Training

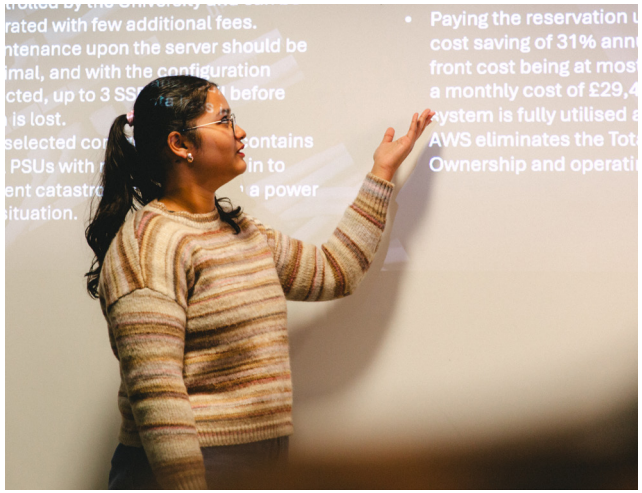
The University is on track to launch its first mandatory Environmental Awareness training for all staff to complete every two years, due to be released in September 2025, demonstrating leadership and a strong commitment to embedding sustainability across the organisation.

The updated online spillage response toolbox talk, launched in April 2025, achieved strong engagement with 76% of relevant staff completing it within the first three months. In addition to this, the in-person spills training delivered in April 2025 successfully tested emergency preparedness, with 87 staff members trained to respond effectively to spillage incidents. These results demonstrate a robust foundation and will further strengthen the university's resilience in managing future environmental risks.

The University has partnered with the Wildlife Trust to deliver sessions to equip our students with knowledge and competencies in green skills and green career pathways. The sessions allowed students to discover what green jobs are, explore career routes, and gain practical tools and advice. BCU will continue to work to embed this thinking and advice to our students.

15.2 Going forward we will:

- Support the SU student Welcome Week and SU Environmental Committee, as well as the student-led Sustainability Society.
- Launch mandatory environmental awareness training for all staff.
- Continue regular communication and engagement with students and staff through various communication channels.
- Implement annual Sustainability Fairs, educating students and staff on how they can make impactful changes by considering sustainability in their decision-making process.



Green Impact team litter pick

Objective 3:

Creating a green culture within BCU, locally and globally

16. Research and partnerships

Objectives and Targets	Status
Environmental activities contribute towards the Graduate+ awards programme each year, including attending and/or involvement in environmental events and volunteering.	Achieved
Maintain our graduate attributes to include a sustainability and global element year on year.	Achieved
STEAMhouse: Deliver environmentally focused event/workshop once a year from 2020/25.	Achieved
Work in collaboration with stakeholders and organisations throughout 2020/25 to keep at the forefront of the environmental agenda locally, regionally and globally	Achieved
Deliver research projects to develop sustainable solutions locally, regionally and globally through Faculty Research Centres and Groups, for example the Global Environmental Challenges Research Centre	Achieved

16.1 Progress update:

November 2024 – Graduate+ Week

In November's iteration of Graduate+ Week, climate literacy was embedded into the curriculum by Tom Bedford of the Globe Foundation delivering a lecture on Climate Change and the Law that was attended by all level 4 Law students on the LLB Law course. Seminar content for that week was also provided through a collaboration between Tom and the module leader, ensuring all students had vital climate literacy information about the intersection of law and climate change.

March 2025 – Graduate+ Week

March 2025's Graduate+ week mirrored this model, with level 5 students reflecting on how climate change intersects with specific elements of the Law e.g. business and criminal.

Sustainability course for Go Abroad students:

All students on the Go Abroad scheme will also be encouraged to complete a climate literacy course and accept a sustainability challenge with a series of activities pre-placement, during their international placement and post the placement looking at: carbon footprint of travel choices, carbon offsetting etc.

The sustainable challenge asks students to choose a challenge from one of four options:

- Reducing waste
- Buying locally and/or choosing ethically sourced goods
- Moving to a more plant-based diet (i.e. more vegetarian/vegan food)
- Dressing Retro - Buying second hand or renting, sharing or swapping clothes.

STEAMhouse

Sustainability events an initiatives have continued at STEAMhouse. A sustainable materials workshop was held in November 2024, providing a hands-on workshop exploring the fundamentals of eco-friendly materials and sustainable credentials. The session delved into the basics of material sustainability and circular design principles.

Further STEAMsprints took place, many of which have a sustainability dimension e.g.

- Change buying habits for Gen Z away from fast fashion. Making the circular economy attractive!
- 60% of all 1–2-mile trips in the UK are made by car. How do we get people out of their cars and on foot and on bikes?

Climate Literacy – eLearning package

Work is ongoing to deliver a self-contained eLearning package on climate literacy based on materials from the Globe Foundation. The purpose of the materials is to provide a grounding in climate literacy for our students, with an aim to make this compulsory for all level 4 students to ensure a foundational knowledge on climate change.

Objective 3:

Creating a green culture within BCU, locally and globally

Research and Partnerships

BCU continues to be a key partner to charities, businesses, and other education providers, delivering projects and research in the UK and globally to drive a more sustainable future. Some examples from 2024/25 are outlined below.

Driving sustainable agriculture in Bangladesh: Researchers in the College of Engineering are leading on a new £2.6 million project to advance clean energy and sustainable agriculture in Bangladesh. BCU secured funding from a UK Research Institute fund to drive a large-scale clean energy transition in rural communities that will cut emissions and use energy more efficiently. Smart energy systems will harness excess electricity generated by solar irrigation pumps and channel it to local agricultural needs.

The Centre for Future Homes: BCU opened the Centre for Future Homes in November 2024 in our City Centre campus. The new research facility is a flagship initiative aimed at leading the transition to net-zero, safe, and sustainable housing, working closely with industry partners to support the governments target to build 1.5 million new homes by 2030. To combat climate change, the Centre for Future Homes research team is focused on adapting homes to ensure they are resilient for the next 150 years.

Birmingham Clean Air Zone: More than 300 sensors spread across Birmingham will help researchers at BCU analyse the impact of the city's Clean Air Zone as part of a new 'digital twin' initiative. This will enable researchers to analyse air quality data and assess the impact of the Clean Air Zone three years after its introduction.

Skills Bootcamp - Retrofit The City training course: BCU launched a new course, Retrofit the City, led by the Birmingham School of Architecture and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), taught by industry leading experts in the field. The bootcamp was run for professionals, self-employed individuals, and company employees in the West Midlands region, and focused on eight taught sessions including community powered retrofit, retrofit in public buildings, and sustainable materials for retrofit. With the UK targeting Net Zero by 2050, and buildings responsible for 20% of greenhouse gas emissions, retrofitting has become critical. The Retrofit the City Skills Bootcamp aimed to equip participants with the skills and understanding needed to drive the retrofit agenda forward.

United Nations (UN) event: BCU lecturers organised a one-day conference 'In Conversation with the Experts: The Future of the United Nations' at our City Centre campus. The conference focused on the UN's Pact for the Future, which is under negotiation. The event attracted speakers and panellists from around the world and provided staff and students the opportunity to delve deeper into the role of the UN, which works to maintain international peace and security around the globe. The event saw the launch of BCU's first United Nations Student Society which aims to represent the UN's core principles on and off campus as well as inspiring students to learn about human rights and how to promote them.

Manufacturing Briefing- How to Reduce Waste, Cut Costs & Boost Productivity: In March 2025, BCU, in partnership with Warwick Manufacturing Group, Make UK, Innovate UK and others, created a morning briefing for manufacturing businesses on how to reduce waste and energy use and save money, increase efficiency and productivity, and benefit from grants and support schemes.

Funding to help UK transport tackle climate change: Researchers at BCU were awarded nearly £50,000 to develop AI-powered strategies that will make UK transport systems both greener and more resilient to the impacts of climate change. The BCU-led project will examine key transport corridors across the UK and use real-time data, international best practice and AI tools to produce decision-making support systems and practical policy guidance.

Objective 3:

Creating a green culture within BCU, locally and globally

16.2 Going forward we will:

- Expand the volunteering project further, offering more volunteering opportunities and increasing student participation.
- Develop a carbon/climate literacy module focused for level 4 students to complete.
- Further develop research and partnership work to support the UN SDGs.