



Introduction

The University of Worcester takes a ‘whole university’ approach to sustainability, from the development of its curriculum to the purchasing of goods and services, research and consultancy and has mapped its work to the SDGs through the publication of its annual review, clearly demonstrating its commitment and support for social responsibility, environmental sustainability and carbon emissions reduction to its students, staff and to the wider community.

Each year, the University’s Sustainability team runs a number of campaigns and activities, with targets mapped against set baselines, to achieve effective engagement with students, staff and the wider community.

Effective communication leading to higher levels of engagement is the key to both behaviour change and continuing support for the sustainability agenda.

This report sets out how well some of those activities have performed in the 2022/23 academic year and should be read in conjunction with the Communications and Engagement Plan.

Knowledge & Training

The Climate Emergency is arguably the most serious global issue we are currently facing, however, individuals often feel that they lack the knowledge, or confidence, in order to affect change.

In 2022 the university asked students and staff about sustainability knowledge and awareness, as part of a longitudinal study.

The survey found that students were increasingly becoming aware of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, with 27% of respondents claiming to know a fair amount about them, a rise of 11% on the previous year – despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

You can read more about the survey at <https://susthingsout.com/what-do-you-know-about-sustainability/>

In 2021 the University began delivering Carbon Literacy Training aimed at staff, students, and partners. The course offers participants the chance to learn in-depth knowledge about climate change and discover ways to change their behaviour. So far free Carbon Literacy Training has been delivered to around 150 people, both internally and externally, including to users of the public library.

In addition, the University ran the sixth Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Teach-In, raising awareness of the SDGs throughout March 2023. Our target this year was to increase participation by 10% on numbers for the SDG Teach-In in 2022. In 2023, the University of Worcester had 41 educators pledge (105% increase on the 2022 figure of 20 educators), reaching 4374 students – 48% of the student body (72% increase on the 2022 figure of 2546 students). The University was ranked 8th overall for educators pledging and 10th overall for students reached, the first time we have been in the top ten for this. This year we had increased participation from staff involved in health courses, which demonstrates the widening of engagement with the SDGs across the University.

It is clear that there is a growing appetite to engage with the SDGs from courses and this year’s growth in participation provides an important foundation to further develop work on embedding the SDGs and evidencing engagement more explicitly to our students and externally.



Travel

The University conducts annual travel surveys with both staff and students in order to inform its Sustainable Travel Plan and as a way to communicate with each about ways to travel more sustainably. The survey provides an opportunity to remind staff and students about active travel schemes.

In the 2022/23 survey, more than 44% of those student not living on campus travelled to the University either on foot, by bicycle or using public transport. This has reduced from 60% in the previous survey, and may be as a result of Covid. The number of students travelling by bicycle has reduced since 2018/19, as has the number of students travelling on-foot, to 26.5% almost half from 42% in 2021/22: The number of students travelling in single occupancy vehicles has significantly increased each year since the 2018/19 survey, from 29% in 2021/22 to 52.8% in 2022/23.

The number of students travelling by bus has reduced from 5% in the 2018/19 survey to 2% in the 2021/22 survey but has returned to 4.3% in 2022/23 while those travelling by train has increased to its highest total, with 14% travelling by train in 2021/22 survey is reduced to 11.1% in 2022/23.

The student survey also showed awareness of the various transport schemes, including the electric bike share scheme (with over 40% of students saying they had heard of it) and the bus route through campus (which almost 56% of students were aware of).

The survey revealed that more than 70% of staff still travel to the campus by car alone, indicating the need for more initiatives to reduce this further. Staff were also more aware of the bike share scheme and through-campus bus service.

Digital Engagement

The www.susthingsout.com website is a central repository for all the University's sustainability work and news. It is currently managed by the University's Director of Sustainability with input and most of the content created by students. Many of the posts are shared across the University's main social media channels as well as the sustainability specific Twitter and Instagram feeds.

Analytics tells us that some of these student created posts are well read and engaged with. The site has been going for over 10 years and some of our very oldest posts are still very popular with the local and University communities. The site is continually revamped and refocused.

The University's main website worcester.ac.uk is primarily aimed at prospective students. There are specific pages on sustainability, listing many of the University's achievements, to inform prospective students, current students and stakeholders about the University's commitments.

About Sustainability consistently gets around 1500 page views and transport and travel, waste, carbon targets and sustainability achievements getting most views.

Press coverage

News about sustainability events and activities is regularly shared via the University's Press Office with local media. This is a useful tool for engaging with external audiences, sharing messages of best practice, and aiming to inspire others to continue to take on the sustainability baton.



In 2022/23 a number of articles were published in the media about the University's sustainability credentials and work with a combined total of over 34.1 million Opportunities To See (OTS) a measure which illustrates the impact of media coverage by quantifying the level of exposure to an item – ie: how many people have potentially seen the media item.

Articles included:

- Coverage of the University's Green Gown Award.
- Articles about new wildflower areas being created on the University's campus to boost biodiversity.
- Several articles and broadcasts on local radio about the University's Go Green Week activities, including coverage of its special air quality debate.
- Articles about the university's involvement in hosting the SolarButterfly tour.
- Several articles about the University's success in the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings, which are based on universities' contributions to achieving the UN's SDGs.

Awards and achievements

In March 2022 the University was named winner of the Innovation for Engagement Award in the national Green Impact Awards, organised by the independent group, Students Organising for Sustainability UK. In addition, student Megan Asbury was named winner of the Student Leadership Award "for being 'committed to forwarding environmental education', supporting Green Impact team members, and developing communications to increase public understanding of sustainability".

The Innovation for Engagement Award recognises ways in which Green Impact teams have engaged more people in sustainability activity, supporting more staff and students to learn about and lead on sustainability.

It followed the news in December 2022 that the University had been ranked 14th in the latest People and Planet Sustainability League, an independent league table of UK universities ranked by environmental and ethical performance. It is compiled annually by the UK's largest student campaigning network, People & Planet.

The University of Worcester scored 100% across four categories, policy, auditing, food and engagement.

We were an inaugural participant in the Times Higher Education Impact League. The 2023 Impact Rankings is the fifth edition and the overall ranking includes more than 1,500 universities from 112 countries/regions. Worcester is ranked joint 3rd in the UK for Quality Education, which highlights the contribution made by universities around the world to achieving the internationally agreed SDGs, which the United Nations adopted in 2016. It has never been out of the top 5 in the UK for Quality Education since the rankings were launched in 2019. The University has also been placed in the top 5 in the UK for Gender Equality in all years, this year taking the number one spot.

Events

The University's sustainability team hosts regular events both on campus and in the local community which are an excellent way to engage people of all levels.

In 2022/23 events included:



- In June 2023, the University hosted the Solar Butterfly World Tour which is gathering 1000 first hand ideas and projects that work on solutions to climate change. These will be presented at the 10th anniversary of the UN Paris Climate Change Agreement, COP30 in Belem, South America.
- During the University's Welcome Week, the Sustainability team handed out over 500 packets of herb seeds and 140 house plants grown from cuttings and potted in reuse containers encouraging students to grow their own.
- Go Green Week – the University's annual sustainability week saw engagement from over 800 people who took part in a range of activities.
- In 2021, the Nature Society was re-established with 15 members who have been supporting several events. The allotment and garden Society was established in 2022 with 17 members and the student built earth cob pizza oven has had many successful firings supporting training and celebration events. Thanks to a generous donation from Ringway the allotments and oven are now fully wheelchair accessible.

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