



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 2023/24 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 2023 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 30% of respondents being aware of and engaged in the university’s promotion of the goals, a rise of a rise of 3% on the previous year. Pleasingly, a higher percentage (34%) were aware and engaged in the university’s efforts to embed sustainability into the curriculum. You can read more about the student survey here: <https://susthingsout.com/sustainability-a-student-perspective/>.

Staff were increasingly aware of efforts to embed sustainability in the curriculum, with 49% being aware and either very or somewhat engaged. You can read more about the staff survey here: <https://susthingsout.com/staff-sustainability-culture-in-2024/>.

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. We have a DESNEZ grant to deliver this using our students and co trainers to deliver this to 600 people across Worcestershire, in a partnership with the Open University.

In addition, the University ran the seventh Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Teach-In, raising awareness of the SDGs throughout March 2024. Our target this year was to increase participation by 10% on numbers for the SDG Teach-In in 2023. However, in 2024 we had 29 educators pledge (2023, 41 educators), reaching 1628 students – 17% of the student body (2023, 4374 students – 48% of the student body). The University was ranked 10th overall for educators pledging, and again staff in WBS were key contributors. Whilst there remains good engagement in terms embedding the SDGs, it appears that setting up an ESD Community of Practice would serve to showcase good practice and enhance Teach-In participation.



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 2023/24 survey, 46% of those students not living on campus travelled to the University either on foot, by bicycle or using public transport. This was a slight increase from 44% in the previous survey. The number of students travelling by bicycle is very low (1%) and has reduced since 2018/19, as has the number of students travelling on-foot, to 25% almost half from 42% in 2021/22. The number of students travelling in single occupancy vehicles had previously been increasing steadily since 2018/19 survey, but reduced this year to 39% in 2023/24, compared to 52.8% in 2022/23. This drop has been accompanied by an increase in those travelling by public transport, with 5% travelling by bus (4.3% in 2022/23) and 15% traveling by train (11.1% in 2022/23). This is an encouraging trend with a bounce back in the use of public transport, which also links to a rise in commuting students to the university.

The student survey also showed awareness of the various transport schemes, including the electric bike share scheme (with 44% of students saying they had heard of it) and the bus route through campus (which almost 61% of students were aware of). However, only 10% of students were aware of the Sojo travel app.

This year's survey revealed that more than fewer staff travel to the campus by car alone, 65% compared to 70% in 2022/23, revealing some impact of initiatives to reduce single occupancy car usage. However, few travel in a car with others (5%) revealing limited engagement in car-sharing. There was good awareness of the bike share scheme and through-campus bus service, with 71% of staff aware of the bike share scheme and 73% of staff aware of the bus service, although relatively few used either of these (1% for the bike share and 5% for the bus service). Only 13% of staff were aware of the Sojo travel app.

Digital Engagement

The www.susthingsout.com 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 2023/24 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 Awards.
- 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 Running Out Of Time.
- 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

We are number one for Quality Education in the UK, in the Times Higher Impact Rankings and The University was awarded two 'Highly Commended' in the Green Gown Awards 2023, one in the Nature Positive category, based around its initiatives to promote biodiversity, such as wildflower planting and the other in the Reporting with Influence category, which assesses how sustainability is reported. We have retained our ISO 14001, ISO 5001, Fairtrade and Responsible Futures accreditation.

June 2024