



# Sustainability Communications & Engagement Plan

2025-30

## **Background**

The University's commitment to sustainability is deep-seated, evidenced by the fact that it has been consistently ranked among the most sustainable institutions in the Country for more than a decade by the People and Planet League, and in 2019 was named Sustainability Institution of the Year in the Green Gown Awards.

The University 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.

Higher education institutions have an exciting opportunity to inspire, educate and develop generations of students and staff who will take their experiences of sustainable behaviour into their everyday lives and workplaces. The University of Worcester works to make the most of this opportunity; through our motto "Change today, protect tomorrow", the University aims to create critical thinkers and agents of change to protect our common future.

## **Communication Objectives**

This communications plan sets out the many ways in which the University can increase awareness of new and ongoing sustainability and carbon reduction initiatives and encourage meaningful behavioural change among staff, students, and all other University stakeholders.

The Climate and Ecological Emergency is arguably the most serious global issue we are currently facing, and individually, people often feel they cannot make a difference and behave accordingly. The University's sustainability communications will aim to focus on simple and practical changes that every individual can make, but which, when added up collectively, can significantly reduce our negative impact on the environment.

It aims to give collective and personal responsibility and opportunity to the University of Worcester's students and staff and instill a sense of ownership and desire to make a difference, however small.

Communications should help staff to understand how to embed Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development principles as a core part of their daily working, teaching and research processes and to provide the opportunities that encourage students to make day-to-day lifestyle changes and become advocates and ambassadors for change.

Effective communication is essential to enhance the University's position as a sustainable organisation and manage the environmental and social impact of our actions and to position the University of Worcester as the destination of choice for students and staff seeking a distinctive environment and culture.

The University's sustainability communications will seek to:

- Foster a culture of sustainability at the University that leads to widespread behaviour change
- Enhance the student experience through learning about global challenges and how these skills and attributes are key requirements for employers
- Identify opportunities for research
- Demonstrating the impact of the work of the University for wider society

Effective communication leading to higher levels of engagement is the key to both behaviour change and continuing support for the sustainability agenda. Any communication should inform people of what they can do themselves to make a difference, as a call to action, and take an evidence-based approach to recognise how communications can be best used.

Engagement and participation are particularly important as behaviours are influenced not through information alone but through action. Increasing participation in sustainability initiatives is the best way to develop a culture of sustainable behaviour at the University.

### **Overarching key messages**

In all communications, both internal and external, the University should seek to promote its commitments to sustainability and achievements to date, as well as the opportunities it provides, including, but not limited to:

- As a large institution, the University of Worcester understands both its negative and positive impacts on the environment and society and has developed Environmental and Energy Management Systems (EcoCampus) to reduce/increase these in a structured way.
- The University of Worcester is already involved in numerous activities to improve its sustainability and environmental credentials such as declaring a Climate Emergency, signing up to the SDG Accord and Race to Net Zero, Nature Positive Universities and submitting to the THE Sustainable Impact and People and Planet University Leagues.
- The University engages [with Responsible Futures](#) as a programme which supports embedding sustainability and social responsibility in the formal, informal and subliminal curriculum and [Green Campus Revolution](#) and [Green Impact](#) to provide students and staff with scaffolded programmes to develop sustainability skills and experiences.
- The University of Worcester supports its staff, students, and the wider community in making a positive impact on the local environment, and has a Sustainability Forum so all can contribute to this work.
- The University of Worcester is committed to the principle of Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development.
- Established a [Sustainability Forum](#) so everyone can actively engage
- The University will act as a good practice model to help organisations and individuals in the region change their behaviour.

### **Communication Approach**

Net Zero carbon, Climate Overheating and Climate and Ecological Emergencies are now high on the public's agenda and are key to sustaining interest and participation among as many individuals and organisations as possible. As such, the University will seek to communicate its sustainability messages both with internal and external audiences, including:

- Students
- Staff
- Partners – to include schools, colleges, local authorities, health trusts, businesses, and charitable organisations
- Contractors, sub-contractors, and suppliers employed to carry out work or provide goods and services for the University
- The local community – both immediate neighbours of the University's campus as well as the wider city and region, international partners

### **Internal communications**

As it currently stands, students and staff at the University of Worcester are aware that there are sustainability measures in place on campus but may not be entirely sure what they are and how they can find out more about them. We are developing Power BI dashboards to help both technical staff and the wider campus community in visualising energy data and the impact of energy-saving measures.

With nearly 9,000 students and around 1,000 staff, to be successful at achieving our sustainability goal, everyone needs to be involved and engaged, as institutional behavioural change is essential to the University becoming more sustainable. The last Responsible Futures audit in 2024, for example, noted that whilst progress had been made since our 2022 audit, many students are unaware of all the activities and successes the University has achieved over the past 10 years or so, and were immensely proud once they had learned about them.

Information on the University's sustainability performance and new projects and initiatives should be continually drip-fed to both staff and students and should seek to:

- Encourage academic staff to educate their students and research partners about the UN SDGs and what they can do to help realise them
- Raise staff, students and others' awareness of the UN SDGs and encourage them to adopt more sustainable lifestyles, contributing to our Net Zero Carbon targets of all direct and indirect carbon emissions by 2030
- Provide details of the various opportunities that exist and are accessible to staff and students
- Use, where possible, evidence of the effectiveness and success of these various activities
- Instill a sense of pride in staff and students in the University's sustainability ethos

Specific messages should encourage staff and students to:

- Volunteer for community projects
- Procure fewer items, share, and consider second-hand, and if you need items, buy more environmentally/ethically responsible products
- Use Teams/Zoom for conferences and meetings, reducing the need for business travel
- Order sustainably sourced/Fairtrade hospitality
- Curriculum/learning, such as participation in the SDG Teach in and embedding sustainability and the SDGs in curriculum reviews. Join the academic community of practice or Sustainability Forum to more actively

engage.

- Engagement in events such as Go Green Week
- Use the appropriate bins to recycle their rubbish
- Consider their travel arrangements, e.g. try a more sustainable travel mode at least one day a week
- Try going meat and dairy free for at least one day a week
- Increase biodiversity by leaving gardens 'untidy' and planting native species
- Reduce their online carbon footprint (e.g. reducing email traffic, storage/downloading large files and use of Generative AI)

### **External communications**

The University engages closely with local organisations, including schools, local authorities and businesses and was involved in the City of Worcester's pledge to make the city Net Zero carbon by 2030 and to be Plastic Free.

In a city of around 100,000 people, there is much scope to share the best practice of work within the university and to inspire others to change behaviour and think about sustainability. The Sustainability Forum is the vehicle to help support this work.

Many projects have already taken place, including with local schools, where university students worked with pupils to learn about the SDGs, explore recycling and promote behaviour change in their homes and wider communities.

The University's external communications will be supportive of all efforts being made and to encourage people to make small but purposeful work-based changes, while showing how the University is leading by example through its research and practical efforts. Communications should seek to feature students wherever possible as leading drivers of change.

### **Methods of communication**

<b>Susthingsout.com</b>	<p>The 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 from students.</p> <p>This website could be further utilised to host a range of videos, information packs, news and data which could then be shared through social media, becoming a go-to place for information about all kinds of sustainable activities, as well as specifically about the University.</p> <p>It is already a place for academics to find resources to aid their teaching, and this could be further expanded to provide resources to schools and colleges or for individuals.</p>
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<b>University website – worcester.ac.uk</b>	The University website is primarily aimed at prospective students. There are specific pages on sustainability, listing many of the University's achievements, to inform prospective students and other external stakeholders of the University's commitments. This site could be used further through contributions to the academic blog hosted on the main homepage, with featured stories shared widely on social media.
<b>Press releases and media interviews</b>	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.
<b>Social media</b>	The University's Sustainability Team manages its own Instagram account where news, tips and advice on sustainability are shared. Recent campaigns to promote behaviour change have seen good success and can now be built upon and developed.
	In addition, the University's main social media accounts are often used as a conduit to reach wider audiences and to share success stories from the University with the aim of engaging and inspiring others. TikTok could be used to engage internal audiences, both students and staff, and create a community messaging service whereby people can share tips, advice, swap items or share relevant information on an informal basis.
<b>Email</b>	The University's regular email bulletins, 'Daily Update' to staff and students, are an excellent source for internal communications with the ability to deliver messages directly to everyone's inboxes. These messages must be clear, concise and with purpose.
<b>Community Forum</b>	The Director of Sustainability gives regular updates at meetings of the University's Community Forum, which consists of residents, councillors, business, and school leaders, as well as representatives from the police and other agencies. This is a good way to keep stakeholders informed of the University's achievements, efforts, and work.
<b>Events</b>	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. These events are promoted using many of the means above. The Sustainability Forum will contribute to these activities.
<b>Training</b>	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.

### **Measurement and evaluation**

It is very important to continually measure and evaluate a campaign to assess whether it is achieving its

targets, aims and objectives. It is essential to know how effective a campaign has been and whether it was an efficient use of all the resources. Regular and consistent monitoring will highlight any weaknesses and failures at any early stage and enable the campaign to be modified if necessary. It is important to remember that our sustainability campaigns and actions are not about quantity but quality. It doesn't matter how heavy the collection of clippings is, what matters is what those clippings have achieved in terms of changes in behaviours. For example, changes in behaviour, attitude, awareness and opinion of our staff and students.

We need to ensure that the publications/websites we are aiming for are appropriate to our target audience and that the coverage we gain is exposed and displayed to the relevant people.

The Sustainability Department at the University of Worcester has been measuring and reporting the levels of awareness of the institution's sustainability initiatives amongst staff and students since 2006 with regular reviews. These are published on <https://www.worcester.ac.uk/about/sustainability/how-to-get-involved/>

We will develop our monitoring to include:

- Is the University community aware of how the University is minimising its impact on climate overheating and increasing its sustainability credentials?
- What are students and staff doing to help reduce carbon emissions and have a positive impact on society?
- How can we work with them and help them to do more?
- Have the awareness levels increased?
- Have students and staff become more motivated to try to reduce their contribution to climate overheating?
- Have changes in motivation and awareness led to measurable changes in sustainable behaviours?

We will continue to collect data and publish the results of our projects and programmes so trends over time can be monitored and to measure their effectiveness.

The press cuttings/internet coverage will also be collected and evaluated to ensure that the correct message is going out and is published in the right publications.



## Timetable for Communication

Date	Audience	Actions	Measure of Success	Responsibility
Term time	Staff and Students	All user WordPress Blog, regular updates included with weekly all user Blog. Daily emails for Go Green Week	Number of occurrences	KB/C&P
Term time	Students	MyDay Student Update, regular information posts to student MyDay page blog	Review analytics	KB/PK
Oct and May/June	Internal/External	Sustainability Webpages - updates	Review analytics	Web Team/KB
Term Time	Internal/External	<a href="http://www.susthingsout.com">www.susthingsout.com</a>	Gain 120 commentators/readers over the period of this plan.	WC/HH/Students
Term Time	Internal/External	UW_sustain Instagram	Increase number of followers and likes	KB
Oct-April	Students	Green Campus Revolution – annual campaign to increase awareness and knowledge	Last year 11% energy reduction aim for greater than 11% this year. To reduce the amount of power used in student halls.	SOS UK & the Residential Life Team
February	Staff	Learning for Responsible Futures call for project proposals	Increased number of proposals submitted by staff	HB
2 <sup>nd</sup> week in February	Students/Staff/Community	Go Green Week – weeklong behaviour change with community business and local schools	Level of involvement/interactions	ENMS1005 students /SU
January/February	Academic staff/students	Comms on March SDG Teach-in participation	Increased numbers of staff and students participating	HB
Oct - May	Staff	Green Impact – Staff team/department-specific sustainability projects to increase knowledge and awareness	Behaviour changes as a result, Green Impact SOS UK surveys pre/post. More teams signed up each year.	SOS UK/PK/KB
To be agreed	Community	Annual Sustainability Lecture, conference, or similar, to give us a chance to showcase our sustainability credentials. E.g. Bike Bus conference or NHS sustainability Forum	Numbers attending in person. number watching online or viewing recording.	KB/HB
Term Time	Internal/External	Staff and students work jointly with the Community, on projects such as litter picks. Foodbank collections.	Reports to Community Forum. Local press articles.	All
Nov/Dec	Students/Staff/Community	Tree/hedge planting	Trees planted	ALL
April	Students/Staff/Community	Earth day in partnership with The Hive	The Hive Footfall/ STO hits	The Hive/KB/EL

Ongoing	Students/Staff/ Community	Worcester News press coverage	Maintain an elevated level of local press coverage	Comms/KB
Ongoing	Students/Staff/ Community	BBC Hereford and Worcester/HITS Radio	More than two interviews on local radio	Comms/KB
Ongoing	Students/Staff/ Community	National/Sector wide coverage	At least two sector/national items.	Comms /KB/HB
May/June	Students/Staff/ Community	Green Gowns and Green Apples other sustainability awards applications	2 Green Apples and 1 Green Gowns shortlisting ceremonies normally held Nov and April.	KB/Comms
Term Time	Staff/Students/Community	Prioritise Fairtrade as normal for major on campus events and assisting a community group obtain Fairtrade status. Raise awareness amongst academic staff.	Fairtrade – raising awareness/promotion	PK/EL
Christmas/Summer/Easter	Staff/Students	Increase re-use and re distribution of food etc as well as reporting maintenance items and defrosting fridges/freezers to make them more efficient.	Holiday Switch Off/Reporting Leaking taps	PK
Term Time	Students/Staff	Responsible Futures – implement recommendations from bi annual audit	Higher score in Impacts and Outcomes metric	HB