

# SUSTAINABILITY REPORT — 2024/25

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# 03. INTRODUCTION BY OUR VICE-CHANCELLOR

Welcome to our Annual Sustainability Report! This report provides a snapshot of our sustainability activity over the academic year 2024/25, with examples of progress, achievements, partnerships and projects across our operations and curriculum.

Our approach to sustainability covers everything we do; from managing our Estate, to integrating it into our learning and teaching, ensuring that our students and staff have opportunities to engage and develop awareness and understanding of sustainability in the context of their specialism.

We have achieved emissions reduction despite considerable expansion of campus with the opening of the new café space in Autumn 2024.

Through our Estate Sustainability Plan, we continue to progress practical work

on our net zero target through planned upgrades / refurbishment works, alongside a range of collaborative activity both within and outside of the University.

Everyone has a part to play in sustainability at Leeds Arts University, and our staff and students are pivotal to our ongoing work in this area. In testament to this, we were pleased to have risen by 36 places in the People & Planet University League table, making it into the Top 100 of universities in the UK.

I would like to thank everyone from across the University who contributed to this progression and further embedding of sustainability across the Institution. We remain committed to building on existing activity and continuing to improve the sustainability performance of our University.

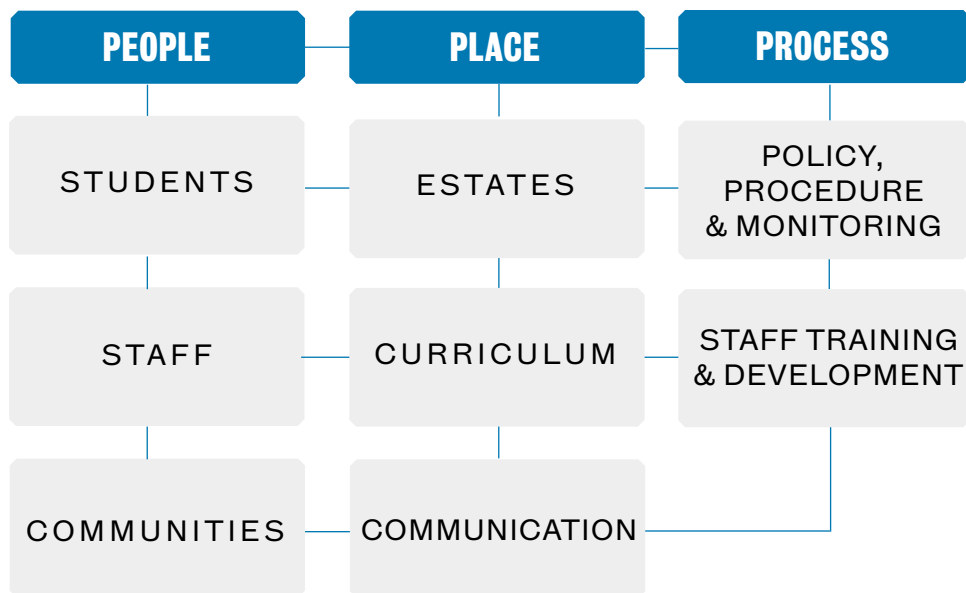


**PROFESSOR SIMONE WONNACOTT**

# 04. OUR APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY

## Our Sustainability Framework

Sustainability activity at Leeds Arts University is guided by our Sustainability Framework which was first developed in 2015. The Framework operates within three pillars of People, Place and Process, providing a visual overview of how the areas under each of these top-level headings intersect in practice.



## Our Sustainability Committee

The Sustainability Committee is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and includes staff and student representation from across the University. The Committee meets regularly throughout the year to provide oversight of sustainability activity and progress.

## Stakeholder Engagement

As demonstrated by the range of initiatives, projects and research highlighted in this report, we seek to engage widely on sustainability issues and opportunities with stakeholders at every scale.

# 05. THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND SDG ACCORD

We align our sustainability activity to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, also known as ‘the Global Goals’).

The collection of 17 SDGs were set in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030. They represent the holistic and cross-cutting nature of sustainability across environmental, social and economic issues, and the collaboration required to progress solutions.

The SDG Accord is the University and College sector’s response to the SDGs. As a signatory of the SDG Accord, we report annually on our progress in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

The latest SDG Accord report is available [here](#).





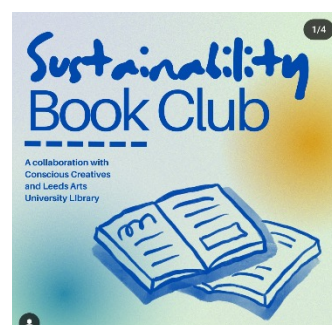
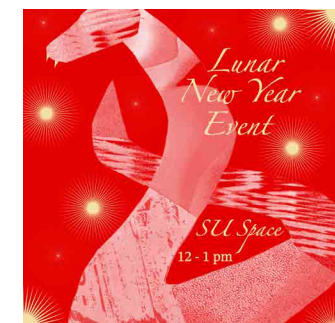
# 06. OUR STUDENTS' UNION



Our Union aims to embed sustainability in everything they do, across their campaigns, events and student opportunities.

This year, particular areas of focus for the Union embedding sustainability have been:

- Developing a variety of sustainable Freshers events and resources
- Supporting this year's Sustainability Officer in the running of events/campaigns under the Conscious Creatives Society, including the redesign of the Sustainability Map that went out to all new students
- Supporting other societies in their workshop ideas and use of recycled materials
- Collaborating with the Student Advice and Wellbeing Team on themed campaigns and events
- Having a variety of cultural and religious celebrations throughout the year to highlight the diversity of our community.
- Conscious Creatives collaborated with the Library to launch the Sustainability Book Club, hosting three individual-title focused events
- Providing free period products (dispenser located in SU Space) and working with Trans Leeds to provide free second-hand Binders
- Promotion of campaigns including the Sustainability Award, Travel Survey and Student Sustainability Research Conference.



[leedsartsunion.org.uk/sustainability](https://leedsartsunion.org.uk/sustainability)  
[@leedsartsunion](https://twitter.com/leedsartsunion)

# 07. OUR ANNUAL STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY AWARD



The Sustainability Award is open to all students, and recognises innovative work that addresses environmental, social and ethical issues.

Students were invited to submit a piece of work that relates to one or more of the UN SDGs, and to detail how it will influence or contribute to new ways of thinking and/or actions relating to sustainability. The 2025 winning entries can be found on our website [here](#).



## Further Education 1st Prize Winner

Fern Woodhead (Foundation Diploma in Art and Design; Fashion/Textiles pathway) - *'Bioplastics: is a sustainable future in fashion possible?'*

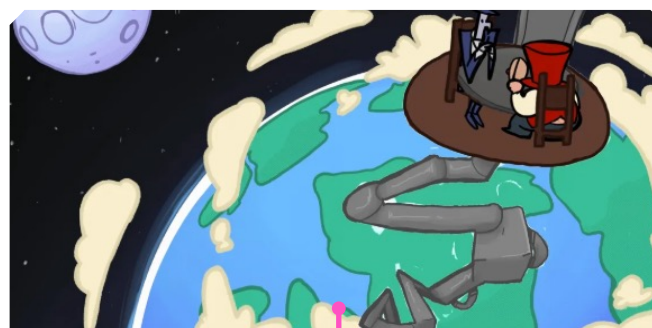
## Further Education Runner Up

Riley Tierney, Extended Diploma in Creative Practice, was the Further Education runner up for the second year running with *'Tackling plastic pollution in the ocean'*.



## Higher Education 1st Prize Winner

Kole Morris, BA (Hons) Comic and Concept Art, Level 5 created *'Safin: Slash that Trash'* - a video game concept to encourage young people to think about cleaning up our beaches.



## Higher Education Joint Runners Up

Anca Nicula, Onche Ikwue, Sean De Asis, Cody Reilly and Claudio Figueiredo, BA (Hons) Animation, Level 5, with their short film *'Billionaire Bullhonkey'*



Jade Pharoah, BA (Hons) Visual Communication, Level 6, created a narrative photobook *'How to Become Human Again'*.



# 08. OUR COMMUNITY



## Visual Communication exhibition

In December 2024, level 5 Visual Communications students curated an exhibition of their own work for three large window spaces at the department store John Lewis, Leeds. Aligning to the retailer's long-standing Partnership values and the course ethos of 'Sharing with Purpose', the brief had a focus on collaborative working and sharing work with a public audience – both of which are crucial for progressing sustainability. The poster and graphic were designed by Amakai O'Brien.



## Fashion Loves Comedy catwalk

Students from BA (Hons) Fashion Design, Fine Art, and Visual Communication played key roles in Fashion Loves Comedy, a ground-breaking catwalk event at community space Left Bank Leeds in December 2024. Founded by Bo Carter, this social enterprise redefines fashion shows by promoting collective growth, empowering emerging talents, and celebrating diverse voices. The event featured our students and graduates, performances by local and notable comedians, an art exhibition, and a charity raffle supporting Choose Love, aiding refugees and displaced people.

## Empty Bowls project

Empty Bowls, an international grassroots initiative, made its debut in Leeds thanks to the efforts of students on our MA Creative Practice degree, raising £1000 for Rainbow Junktion, a community café and food bank in Hyde Park, Leeds. The project invites artists, students, and communities to create handmade bowls which are sold to raise money for organisations tackling food insecurity. The initiative was launched in Leeds by ceramicist Rylee Shafer, who co-curated the project with fellow student Cara Burton, a visual artist and creative strategist, and was supported by other MA Creative Practice students.



## Climate Action Leeds Assembly

University representatives attended the Climate Action Leeds Assembly - Exploring university-community collaborations event in December 2024, building links with community initiatives including Roadblock CIC, a local group pioneering bike-powered, off-grid sound systems, with continued involvement of several of our students and graduates.



# 09. OUR STAFF



A number of our staff are active researchers who explore a range of sustainability themes in their creative practice. Here are some examples from the past year.



**Barker, G. 2024.** Drawing Age: Visualising the lives of older people and the development of wellbeing activities. (Poster & presentation) at Reimagine Ageing Interdisciplinary Research Network, 11 September 2024, University of Leeds.

Barker won the Best conference poster at the Reimagine Ageing Showcase event. Pictured with co-leads from the left: Maria Kapsali, Anne Forster and Sarah Astill.

[\(image source\)](#)



**Tsionki, M. & Cunha, M.** 2025. Liminal Ecologies: Thresholds of Transition and Entanglement. Bratislava tranzit sk.

[sk.tranzit.org/en/exhibition/0/2025-03-27/liminal-ecologies-thresholds-of-transition-and-entanglement](https://sk.tranzit.org/en/exhibition/0/2025-03-27/liminal-ecologies-thresholds-of-transition-and-entanglement)

27 March – 11 July 2025.

In September 2024, researchers **Prof. Samantha Broadhead** and **Dr. Dawn Woolley** hosted the West Yorkshire-based Socially Engaged Arts Practice Symposium. The event critically examined notions of place-making, city-making and community voice, and evaluated the ways in which the creative arts can work with communities.

**PGCert. Three Countries, one Method:**  
A Comparativist Study of how SDG Awareness is Developed in Art Education in the UK, Germany, and Spain.



**Norton, F. 2024.** Three Countries, one Method: How might a Comparative Study in Art Schools Develop Understanding of Sustainable Development Goals? *International Society for Comparative Adult Education (ISCAE)* Conference. University of Florence. 9 – 10 Nov 2024.

<http://iscae.org/conferences/2024Florence/28-Norton-formatted.pdf>



**Fox, C. 2025.** panel discussion and workshop at Migration Matters Festival in Sheffield 14-22 June 2025. Charles is a photographer and researcher working on the legacies of conflict and genocide, with a particular focus on Cambodia.

# 10. OUR PARTNERSHIPS AND PROJECTS



As part of Green Careers Week, we ran a student event 'How to be a Sustainable Creative' with Pip Tuffin from SAIL (November 2024), supported by an online Green Careers Resource page.



The Widening Participation team's workshops with schools incorporate sustainability as a core element, using scrap, surplus and reclaimed materials, exploration of connections to natural world and human impact as well as considerations of mass production manufacture vs small scale, handmade through the theme of nature.



In May 2025, Professor Sam Broadhead was a panel member of Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership (YPIP)'s Community Innovation Fund which allocated £800,000 to community projects that corresponded to the YPIP themes including 'Culture and the Creative Industry' and 'Climate-Ready Places'.



Tom Collins (Senior Lecturer, BA (Hons) Games Design) set up a partnership with Barnsley College to organise a 4 day game jam in which Level 3 Game Design students at the College were tasked with designing a game around the concept of sustainability and theme of renewal.

Our continued participation in the annual Student Changeover / Moving Out campaign with partners including Leeds City Council, Unipol and other HEIs in the city as part of the Leeds Universities Community Partnership, supports responsible citizenship, community cohesion and reducing waste in the local community generated when student tenancy agreements conclude at the end of June and students leave their accommodation for the summer.



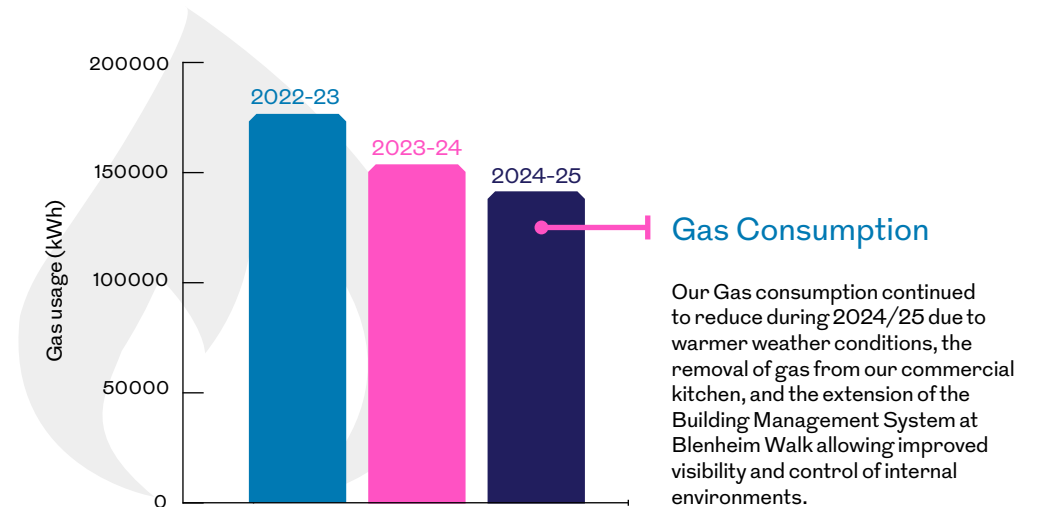
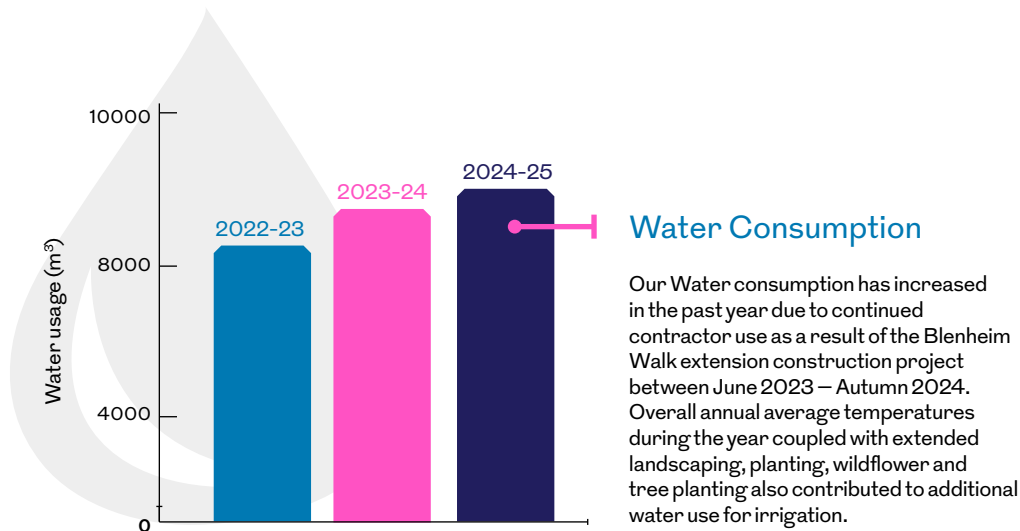
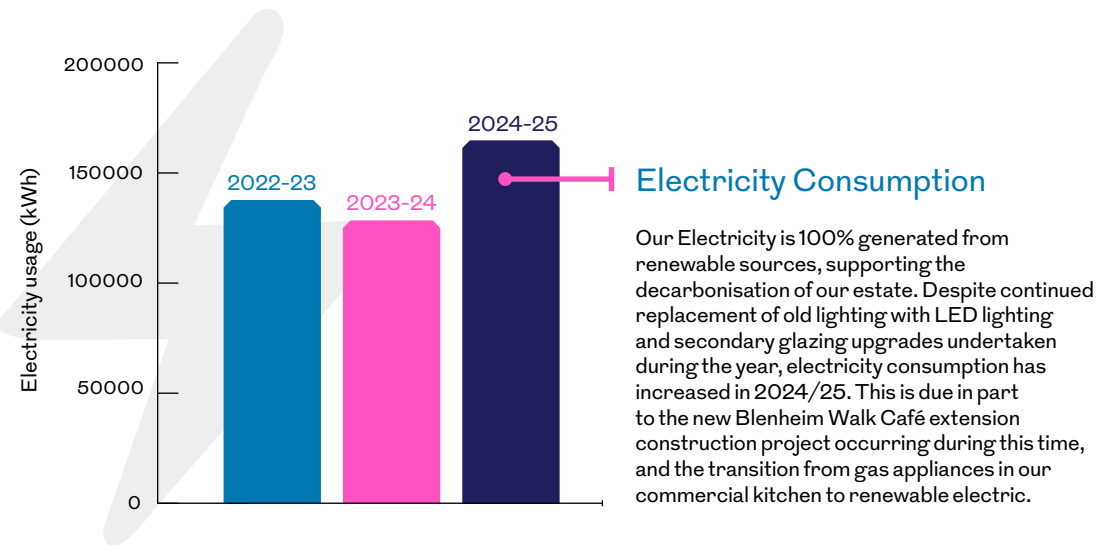
This year, to support sustainable resource use, 2 new Revive Donation Banks for good quality unwanted items were installed at our partner accommodation, Carr Mills and The Leatherworks.

# 11. OUR ESTATE



Our Estate comprises of our Blenheim Walk and Vernon Street campuses, which contribute significantly to our overall environmental impacts.

We continue to work collaboratively with staff, students and partners to manage and enhance our estate by identifying opportunities to reduce our carbon footprint, improve energy efficiency, optimise waste management, reduce water consumption, optimise biodiversity/green space and manage our supply chain.





# 12. OUR JOURNEY TO NET ZERO

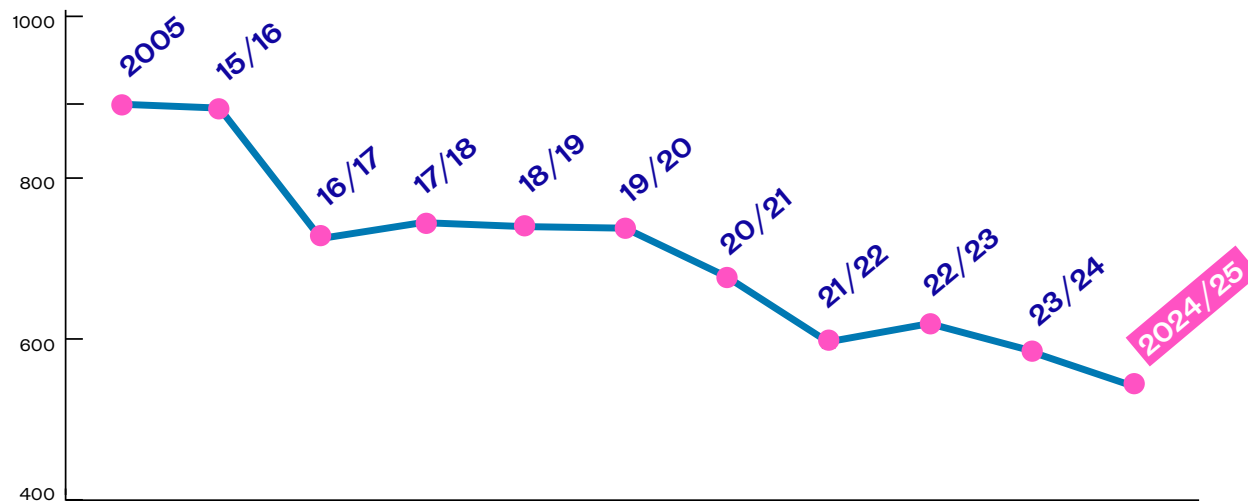


Our Estate Sustainability Plan was developed in 2023 and sets out our target to achieve a net zero carbon estate by 2035.

## Our Carbon Emissions

We recognise that our emissions can vary annually and will be influenced by our activities and changes in external climate conditions.

Our Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions have reduced since last year and are continuing to trend downwards since the 2005 baseline.



## Our Solar Panels

Solar panels at our Blenheim Walk site were first installed in 2018. During 2024-25, they have offset over 192 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. The new Café extension project at the same site (completed Autumn 2024) included additional solar PV panels on the roof terrace, further boosting our renewable capacity with this new 10 Kilowatt system.

## Sustainable Refurbishment

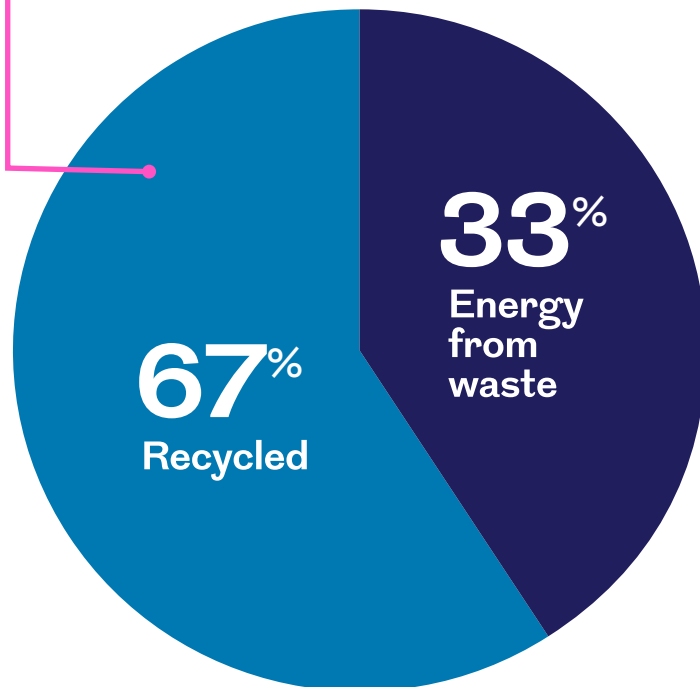
Over the past year, a range of refurbishment works have been progressed to deliver on carbon reduction, including:

- 98% of lighting switched to more energy efficient LEDs at Blenheim Walk campus, with installation works in remaining studios scheduled for completion over Summer 2025.
- 70% of lighting at the Vernon Street campus is LED and the remaining 30% will be progressed during the next year
- New sympathetic and fully reversible secondary glazing scheme completed at our Vernon Street campus, significantly improving the thermal and acoustic performance of these two listed buildings.

# 13. OUR RESOURCE USE

Our resource use and waste has reduced overall in 2024/25 compared to the previous year and recycled waste has increased from **59%** to **67%** as awareness of waste types increases amongst students and staff.

Final Destination for University Waste Streams in 2024/25



## Sustainable Procurement

Our Sustainable procurement activity is monitored in a number of ways, including:

- We are part of the North-East Universities Purchasing Consortium (NEUPC), through which we are able to access Framework suppliers whose sustainability has been assessed. Updates on this are provided via the Procurement Consultant's updates on tender activity to the Sustainability Committee.
- Through NEUPC, we are an affiliate of Electronics Watch, through which we support work to promote and protect the rights of workers in global supply chains through the monitoring and reporting of supply chain activity.
- The percentage of work procured via Frameworks with embedded sustainability criteria is reported to the Sustainability Committee. Scope 3 emissions from calculated (HESCET) supply chain data is reported annually to the Sustainability Committee.

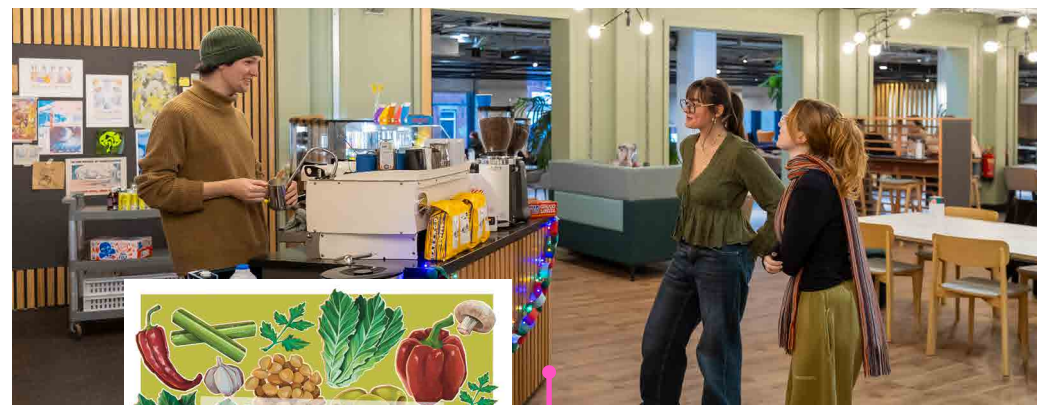


# 14. OUR WIDER IMPACTS



## Carbon Reduction at our Student Accommodation

In March 2025, our student accommodation provider Njoy invested significantly to increase the capacity of their solar PV array on the roof of Carr Mills student accommodation (see image below). The new 159.46 Kw system increased their energy from solar from **17%** to **28%** per year.



## Sustainable Food

Our on-campus café is run by Dot the Lions, a local independent operator offering a range of ethically considered brands including Tony's chocolate (certified Fairtrade), Two Farmers crisps (100% compostable packets) and locally roasted Darkwoods coffee (imported on fairtrade terms) – in addition to fresh products made in-house, of which c. 55% is vegan and 35% is vegetarian. In summer 2025, Dot the Lions have launched a weekly vegan food promotion to further encourage plant-based dietary choices.



## Biodiversity

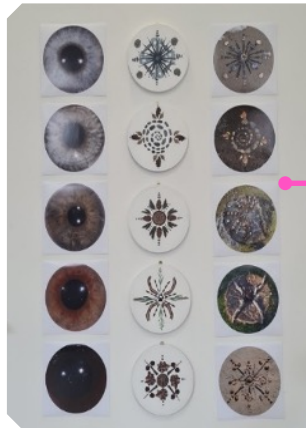
In January 2025, a preliminary Biodiversity Audit was undertaken by staff, of 5590m2 of urban green space land owned by the University. This green space had previously been continually maintained with the grass cut on a monthly basis. To support and improve the bio-diversity in this urban environment, monthly mowing was ceased to let the grass land rewild to increase the diversity of plant species and encourage more habitation from wild life.



# 15. OUR CURRICULUM

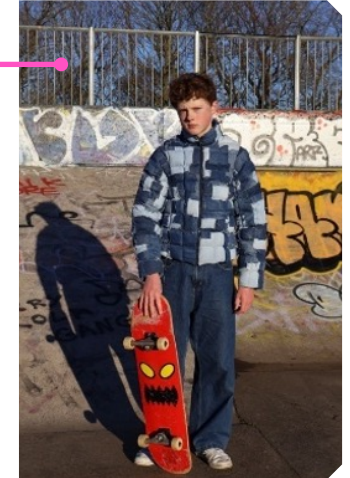


We work to embed sustainability across our curriculum. These examples show the ways our students respond to sustainability in their work from a range of sources, from taught module content, live brief themes, industry speakers, community engagement, field trips/visits and exploring alternative materials and techniques.



## Extended Diploma in Creative Practice

Inspired by their interest in skateboarding, Flo Pell's unisex jacket repurposes denim to create a sustainable and affordable padded garment designed for the skate community.



Katie Ward's respect for the environment was deeply embedded in their connective Land Art, in which the patterns of the tides and natural materials were used to explore humans' relationship with nature, prompting consideration of how the waves reclaimed 'what belongs to it' and sea foam interacted with the installation in situ.

## Foundation Diploma in Art and Design

### 3D Pathway

- The Invented Archaeology project discusses the future of sustainable design and explores social equity, community needs, and potential innovations.
- The Wild Things project promotes rewilding and a shift from human-centric to nature-inclusive design.
- Economic sustainability is emphasized in Synergetic Spaces, where students manage budgets, reuse materials, and assess the environmental impact of their choices.

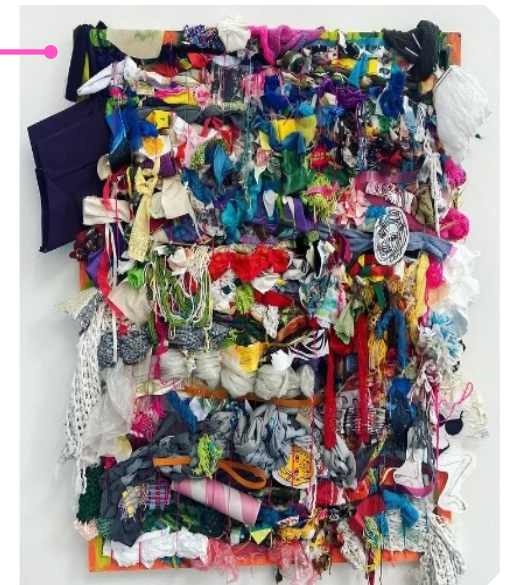


Image: Nicole Carroll's work "How can Spatial Design allow us to live on and with Water?" offers an adaptive design to address rising sea levels.

### Fashion and Textiles

Responsible creativity is developed through both environmental and social lenses, including via the Sustainable (Re) Construction brief, where students repurpose pre-existing garments, the creation of a Material Bank using surplus or waste materials, and the Experimental Weave, made from offcuts.

Image: FT 24/25 collaborative Experimental Weave Mixed media, 1000mm x 1000mm



# 16. OUR CURRICULUM



## BA (Hons) Illustration

Recent graduate Kira McLennon - How Walking Can Be Used to Keep a Landscape Alive.

Essay, artwork and research document explore how walking connects people to their landscape and the sustainable implications of these connections.

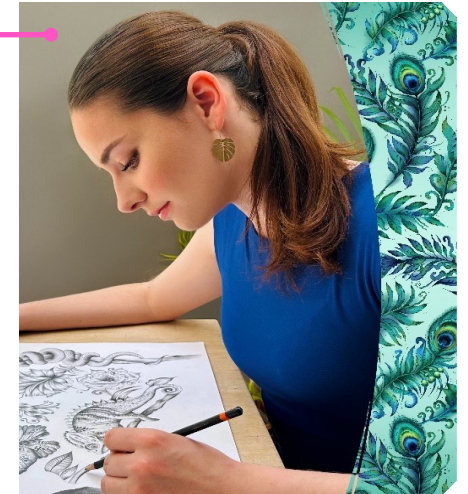
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## BA (Hons) Textile Design

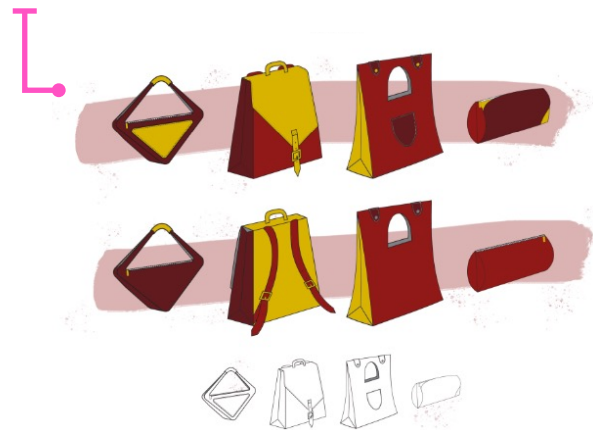
Level 6 Beth Lingard's enchanting collection of wallcoverings and furnishing designs 'Dusk Till Dawn' immerses the client in nature's embrace, inviting them to step into the hope of new beginnings in a world beyond.

Beth was recognised for her exceptional creativity and commercial potential at this year's Tex+ Showcase, winning The Sanderson Art in Industry Prize, The Sahara Prize and The Pattern Cloud Prize.



## BA (Hons) Fashion Design

Level 5 Jessie Stith won the Zalando x Graduate Fashion Foundation Circularity Masterclass live brief competition for her creative up cycling of waste firehoses.



Sam Brown was shortlisted for the Innovation Award at Graduate Fashion Week. Their collection addressed sustainability by only using materials which were bio-degradable.



Floss Tuppen was shortlisted for the New Business award and has also been recognised by the Creative Industries Council as one of nine rising stars in sustainable fashion, having been honoured in Visa's 'Recycle the Runway' competition, which spotlights emerging circular fashion talent in the UK.



# 17. OUR CURRICULUM



## Creatives in Residence scheme



The University Library exhibition 'The Changeable Nature of Stories' (June-October 2025) by recent Leeds Arts University graduate and Creative in Residence, Nell Heys (BA (Hons) Illustration 2024), contained themes about humanity's relationship with the non-human world and the implications for human and non-human health and wellbeing.

## BA (Hons) Graphic Design



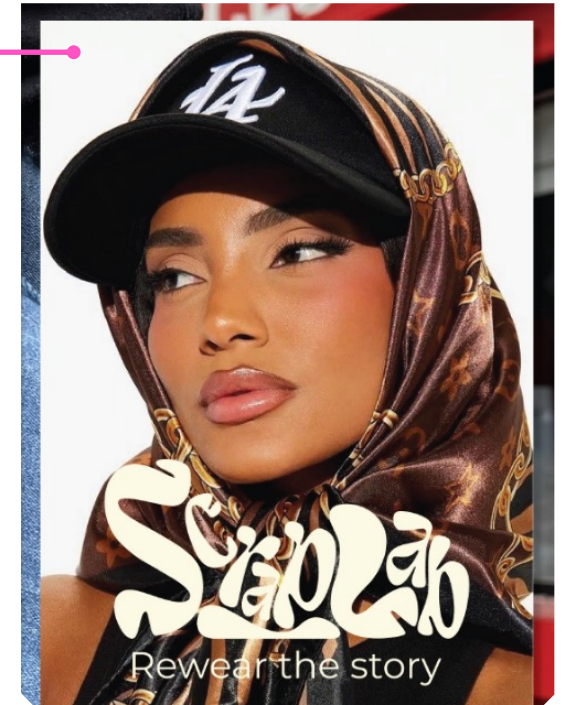
Level 5 student Jade Ng's project addresses the issue of consumerism by critiquing the social and psychological drivers behind excessive consumption in modern society.



Level 5 student Freya Kearney's project tackles the environmental impact of fast fashion and throwaway culture, particularly the social perception, shaped by influencer culture and social media, that clothing should only be worn once.

## MA Graphic Design & BA (Hons) Fashion Design collaboration

Carlma Fon-Akkum (MA Graphic Design & Millie Crinnion (BA (Hons) Fashion Design collaborated to brand and design upcycled fabric scraps into fashionable and unique scarf designs.





# 18. THE STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH CONFERENCE



Leeds Arts University was on the Steering Group for the annual Student Sustainability Research Conference 2025, and were represented by our students across a range of courses and levels. The event offers the opportunity for students to exhibit, present and showcase their sustainability focused projects amongst peers from across all 12 of the Yorkshire Universities.

## BA (Hons) Fashion Design

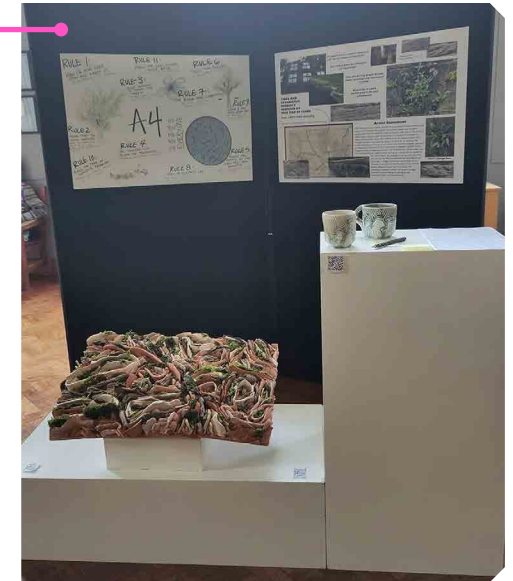


Students Isali Nanayakkara, Lily Robinson and Gracie Chadwick presented in response to a live competition brief on Circular Fashion. The students used the learnings from masterclasses developed by Graduate Fashion Foundation and Zalando to design bag collections with circularity at the heart of their materials, design processes and construction methods.

## MA Creative Practice

Student Rylee Shafer's individual project 'Re-greening Urban Areas' is about bringing nature back into urban environments using ceramics for green walls.

Rylee also worked with fellow MA Creative Practice students Cara Burton and Jess Watson on 'Empty Bowls', a community project tackling food insecurity through ceramics. See page 8 – Our Community – for more on this impactful initiative.



## BA (Hons) Visual Communication



BA (Hons) Visual Communication student Flora Houldsworth showcased a campaign film project: 'We Share a World' focusing on the theme of learning to live with, rather than dominate nature.

Poster by Flora Houldsworth, BA (Hons) Visual Communication

# 19. OUR COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

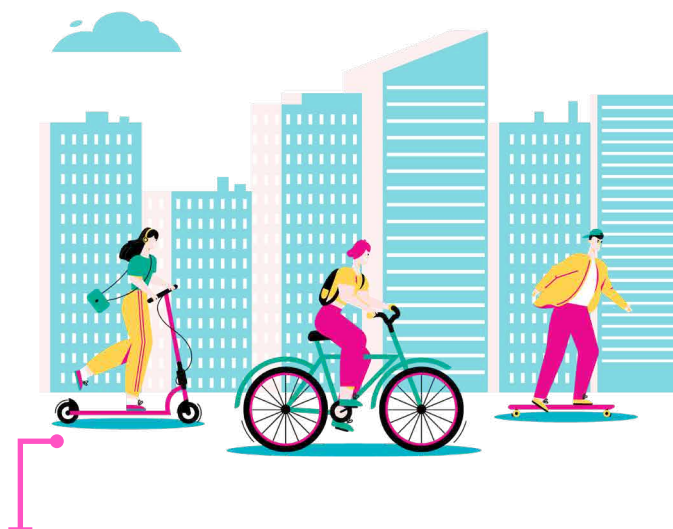


We continue to promote our sustainability activity internally through communication platforms, staff and student inductions and training, conferences, events, papers, guidance, blogs, and to community partners via University news stories, social channels, our prospectus, exhibitions and Open Days.

## Sustainability Skills Survey

In November 2024, almost 200 students participated in the National Annual Sustainability Skills Survey run by SOS-UK.

- **85%** of students agreed / strongly agreed that LAU 'takes action to limit the negative impact it has on the environment and society'
- **71%** of students agreed that 'the SU takes action to limit the negative impact it has on the environment and society'
- **73%** of students agreed that 'being a student at LAU encourages me to think and act to help the environment, and other people'
- **88%** of students agreed that 'Sustainable development is something which the university's courses should actively incorporate and promote'



## Annual Sustainability Travel Survey

Our 2024-25 Annual Staff and Student Travel survey was undertaken in spring 2025 to provide us with a snapshot how we travel to and from campus.

Results indicated that **96%** of student respondents travel to University by sustainable travel modes, and **74%** of staff - including walking, cycling, public transport and car-sharing.

We have continued to support consistently high levels of sustainable commuting including through increased provision of cycle storage as part of the Café extension construction works and a Staff Cycle to Work scheme launched 1st August 2024.

## Our Memberships

Through our continued membership of organisations - including EAUC (The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education), the CHEAD Sustainability Think Tank network, SAIL (Sustainable Arts In Leeds), Yorkshire Universities, the West Yorkshire Travel Plan Network (WYTPN) and the Leeds Universities and Colleges Travel Planning Partnership convened by Leeds City Council amongst others - we continue to participate in sustainability-relating working groups, to engage, share with and learn from others on our collective sustainability journeys.



SAIL



# 20. POLICY, PROCEDURE AND MONITORING



We seek to align to sector-focused sustainability guidance and best practice, as appropriate to the size and specialist nature of the Institution. Supporting both internal monitoring and external benchmarking, we participate in the annual Higher Education Statistics Agency Environmental Management Record (HESA EMR) and the People & Planet University League.

## Our Recruitment

Sustainability has been further embedded into recruitment, with job descriptions for all permanent vacancies including the following as a minimum “To actively support and engage with all aspects of the Sustainability Framework to assist in establishing the University as a sustainability leader”, with additional criteria to support sustainability, commensurate with seniority and nature of the role.

## Our Inductions

Sustainability Inductions are part of the Vice Chancellor’s Welcome Sessions attended by all new staff starters. New students across Further Education, Higher Education and Postgraduate attend a Sustainability Induction at the start of the year. The inductions introduce key concepts, how sustainability is managed at the University, individual responsibilities and opportunities to get involved in sustainability activity across the curriculum, our operations and external partnerships.



## People & Planet University League Table

We are pleased to have risen by 36 places in the latest League table (2024-2025), making it into the Top 100 of universities in the UK. The People & Planet League assesses the Sustainability performance of all universities in the UK and ranks them annually across a comprehensive set of criteria including: Environmental Policy, Environmental Auditing & Management System, Sustainable Food, Engagement, Education, Carbon Management, Carbon reduction, Water reduction, Ethical Investment, Ethical Careers, Sustainability Staff, Worker’s Rights, Energy sources, Waste & Recycling.

## Staff Training and Development

Sustainability related CPD / training undertaken by staff during 2024-25 included:

- Green Libraries Conference (November 2024)
- Wild Baskets (November 2024)
- FLOWERS – FLORA IN CONTEMPORARY ART & CULTURE (February 2025) – exhibition, Saatchi Gallery
- Forces of Nature Conference: New Perspectives on Art and Changing Environments (May 2025) – symposium, Henry Moore Institute

In addition, the Sustainability Manager has contributed content to the University’s Digital Fair (February 2025) and the Annual Learning & Teaching Enhancement Conference 2025 on Graduate Attributes.





Thank you to all who have contributed to the content of this report. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership to create a more sustainable future.

We all have a part to play. Find out more and get involved!

[www.leeds-art.ac.uk/about-us/sustainability](http://www.leeds-art.ac.uk/about-us/sustainability)

[www.leedsartsunion.org.uk/sustainability](http://www.leedsartsunion.org.uk/sustainability)

