

# University of Leeds Annual Sustainability Report 2016/17



# POSITIVE CHANGE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

We will become a university where sustainability is truly embedded through knowledge, engagement, collaboration and innovation. Each and every one of our staff and students will understand the principles of sustainability – it will be an integral part of our operations and will bring about positive, sustainable change for the future.



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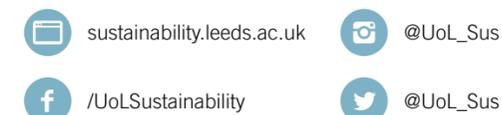
## INNOVATIVE, IMPACTFUL, INTELLIGENT

**The University of Leeds has once again proved its commitment to a sustainable future through a whole series of activities, innovations, research and policies. There have been some challenges – political uncertainties and a growing campus – but sustainability has remained a key priority for us throughout.**

I am particularly proud of the fact that, through continuing to integrate sustainability into our curriculum, we are graduating students who are responsible global citizens. As a University, we have an important role to increase knowledge and opportunity for the benefit of society. Our graduates are testament to this; they understand global challenges, and are eager to be part of the solutions.

I am looking forward to yet another year of challenging ourselves, and others, to be more sustainable. Another year of innovation, behaviour change, outstanding research and collaboration to ensure the University of Leeds plays a leading role in building a sustainable future.

— Alan Langlands  
Vice Chancellor, University of Leeds



# THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS IN 2050

Our Sustainability Strategy sets out the commitments we have made to 2020. But we know that a longer term vision is vital; a sustainable future for all requires a change in behaviour and a combined effort forever.

That's why we're thinking way beyond 2020 to our vision for a sustainable university in 2050.

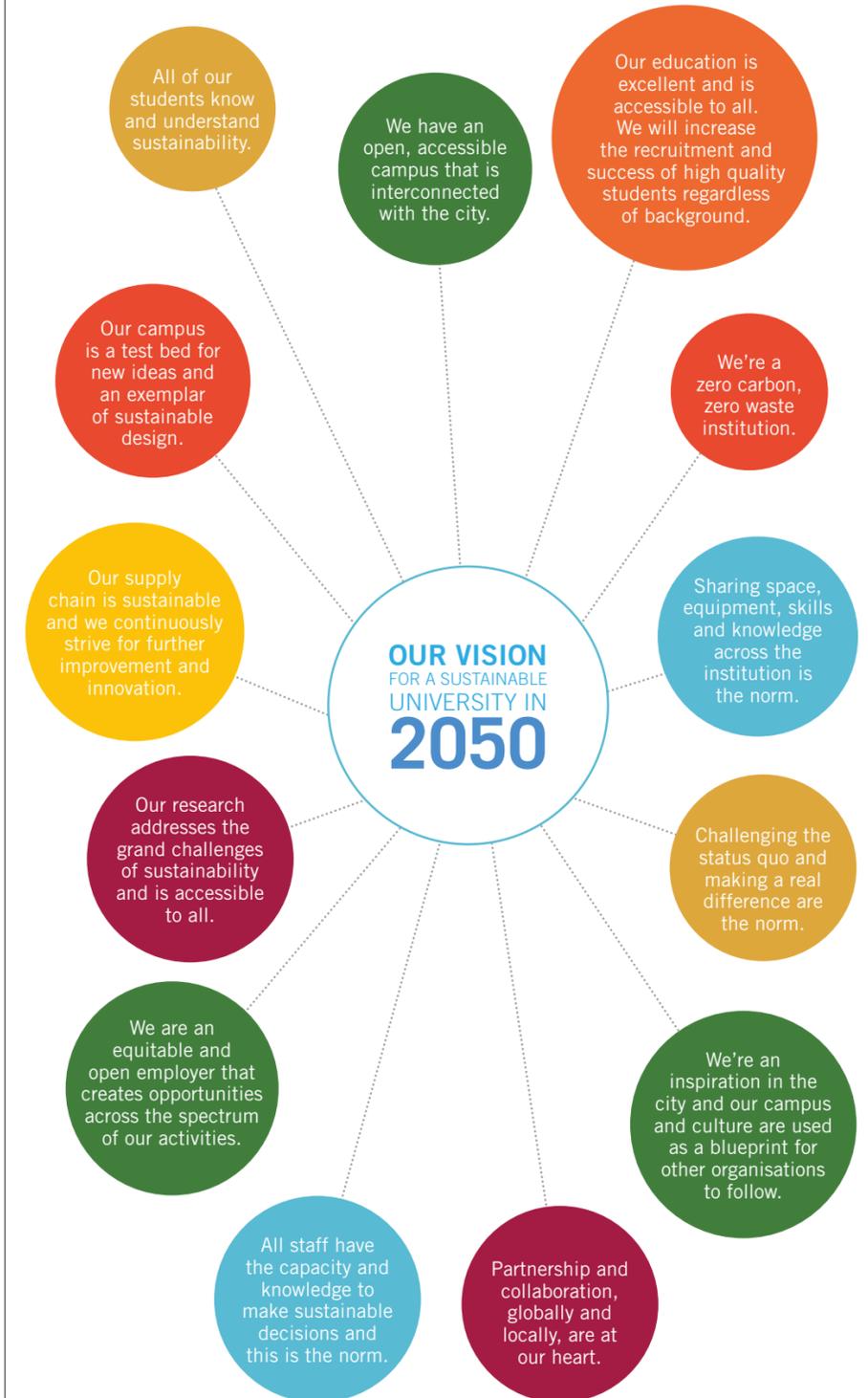
Our vision has been created for the University of Leeds by the University community. But we don't exist in isolation; we take a wider view of everything we do, from the effects on our local communities to the impact on the world.

As a result of this global outlook, we are also ensuring that our vision and commitments contribute to the United Nations' Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs), a set of 17 goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. Throughout the report, we have linked the relevant UN SDGs to our four themes to demonstrate how our approach aligns with this wider set of global commitments.



## WHAT DOES OUR VISION FOR A SUSTAINABLE UNIVERSITY ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE?

Here we outline the characteristics we will have, the ways we will work, and the priorities we will focus on:



# Q&A WITH

*Dr Louise Ellis*

— Director of Sustainability



**Q** Is sustainability at Leeds all about what happens on campus?

**A** What happens on our campus is really important, but sustainability isn't just about what happens here. It's about our students, staff and visitors and how they interact with what we're doing, our initiatives and research. It doesn't stop when we step off campus.

We take our responsibility to our local communities really seriously and we aim to have a positive impact beyond our campus. This can be an economic benefit through employment at the University; environmental impact, such as the way we travel and operate; and a social impact through our programmes to bring equal educational opportunities to all. We see it very much as our civic duty to be an active partner within Leeds – and we work closely with Leeds City Council and third sector organisations to do just that. Sustainability addresses global challenges, and their impact on the local level and beyond. That's why it's vital that we are an active member in our local, national and global communities.

**Q** What has been the biggest achievement this year?

**A** It's not a single project or piece of research, it's the fact we've maintained the breadth and depth of activity. It shows real commitment that there are so many different aspects of sustainability going on across the University, and that we continue to be bold and challenging.

**Q** You've been the Director of Sustainability since 2012. What changes have you seen in that time?

**A** The environment in which we operate has undergone huge changes. Take Brexit for one. The world's a different place. But against that backdrop, there's also been an increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary work that addresses global challenges. Our commitment to sustainability has always been high, and we have never wavered from that. If anything, we're even more committed.

**Q** Targets have been missed in some areas, why is this?

**A** In our Sustainability Strategy we set ourselves stretch commitments, which were always going to be challenging to meet. However, there are a number of reasons why we have missed some of these. The physical changes we've seen on campus were not always known or accounted for in our initial targets, but it's encouraging that sustainability has been integrated into these. In some cases, the way we collect data has changed, which has affected results. For example, we now measure carbon associated with our generating station as inputs rather than outputs. It may seem like a small shift, but it generates higher – yet more honest – figures.

**Q** How much can people make a difference? Or is it all about technology?

**A** Technology plays a huge part, but people make a difference in all kinds of ways. From the way we commute to the research topics we choose, our approach to sustainability is about individual actions and community impact.

**Q** Do you benchmark yourself against other universities?

**A** We do look at the rest of our sector, and you can see how we're doing on page 28 of this report! It's incredibly useful to see how we're performing against others in the same position, but it doesn't drive our approach. Our vision and materiality assessment inform our strategy. It's uniquely Leeds and we're proud of our achievements so far.

**Q** In an ever-changing environment – both in the university sector and beyond – what drives you?

**A** Working in sustainability in an organisation that is fundamentally based on principles of sustainability is a good place to be, and there are three key things that drive me personally. One, I believe completely in the need for a sustainable society. We're not there yet... and we all have a part to play. Two, universities have an important role in society. They are based on social responsibility and social good and these are intrinsically linked to sustainability. And three, we have an amazing team in the Sustainability Service and get to work with really engaged people across the University. And that's something I will never take for granted.

“ I believe completely in the need for a sustainable society. We're not there yet, and we all have a part to play.”

As a university, our core purpose is to increase knowledge and opportunity for the betterment of society. To do this, we have made firm commitments to take our economic, social, environmental and cultural responsibilities seriously.

# WHAT'S IN THIS REPORT?

Reflecting these commitments, our Annual Report is a total impact report – a more holistic appraisal of our social, environmental, economic and cultural impacts. To demonstrate our total value, our report is full of case studies, commitments, progress, facts and figures. Together these tell the story of the amazing work we are doing to become an even more sustainable university. It's by no means an exhaustive record of all the initiatives and projects we've devised or been involved in, but it provides a great overview of what we're up to, how sustainability is embedded across the University, and our ambitions for the future.

Critically, it's an honest reflection of where we are. Across the University of Leeds, we've had some brilliant achievements and even exceeded our own targets in some areas; but we've also struggled to meet some of the stretch commitments we gave ourselves. This Annual Report is a chance to both share our progress and take stock internally as to what we need to prioritise in the future to become the leading sustainable university we know we can be.

Once again, this year's Annual Report is structured under the four themes that we set out in our Sustainability Strategy: Embedding sustainability through collaboration; Building knowledge and capacity; Being a positive partner in society; and Making the most of resources.



You can discover more about this year's report and sustainability at the University of Leeds online:

[sustainability.leeds.ac.uk](http://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk)

# MATERIALITY

The themes set out in our Sustainability Strategy, and subsequent Annual Reports, reflect the economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts of the University of Leeds. Our targets and commitments reflect the issues that we know we can have a direct and indirect impact upon – our material topics that have, or can create, a real difference.

Although some of these will have a financial impact, our materiality goes beyond that to environmental, social and cultural impacts. That's why you'll find commitments ranging from carbon reduction and resource efficiency to research and volunteering.

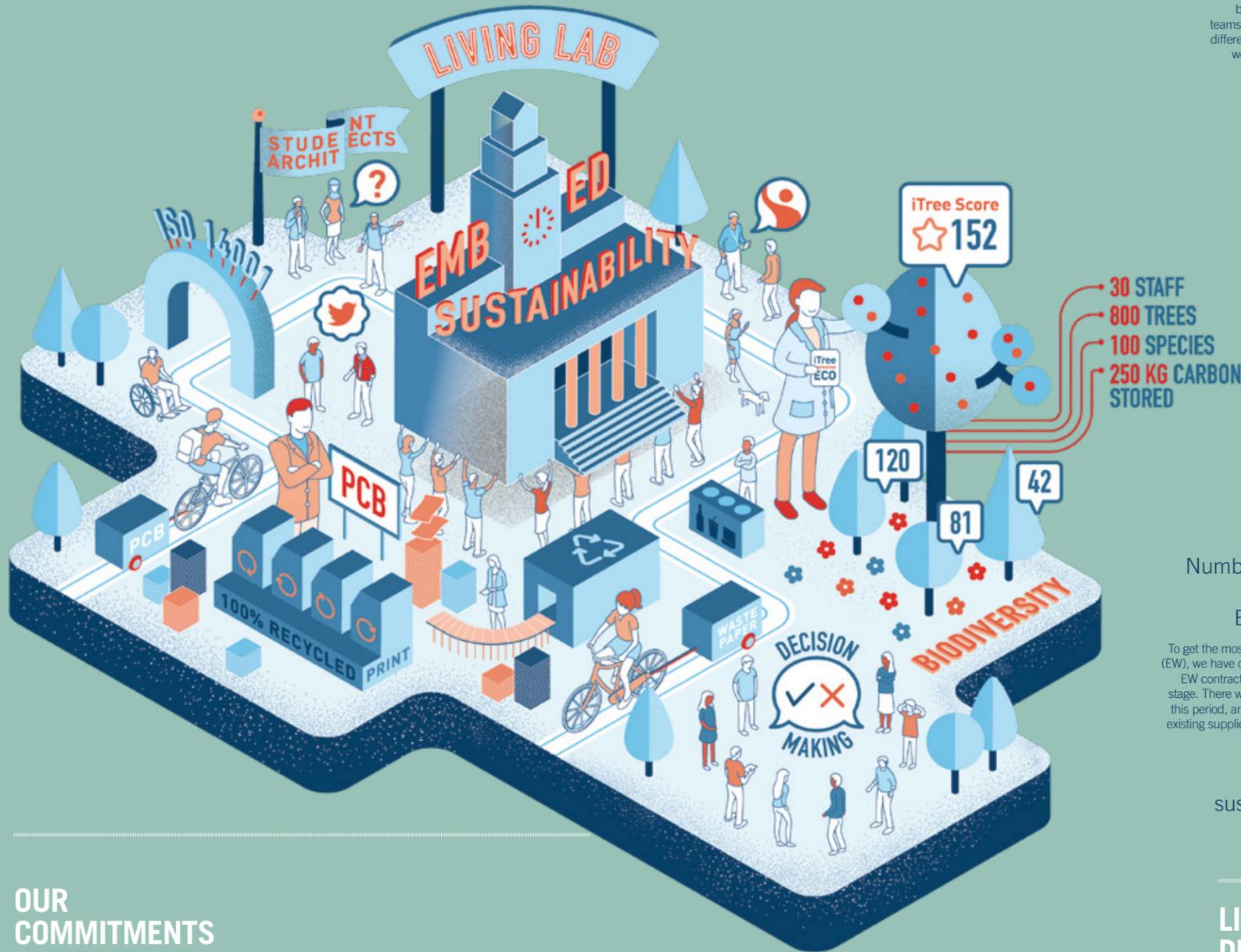
To determine these materiality issues, we engaged with our staff and students. Working together we determined the actions and commitments we could make to bring about the most impact across the university and beyond to local, national and international communities. These are reviewed regularly to ensure we stay relevant, impactful and able to make a significant difference.



# EMBEDDING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH COLLABORATION

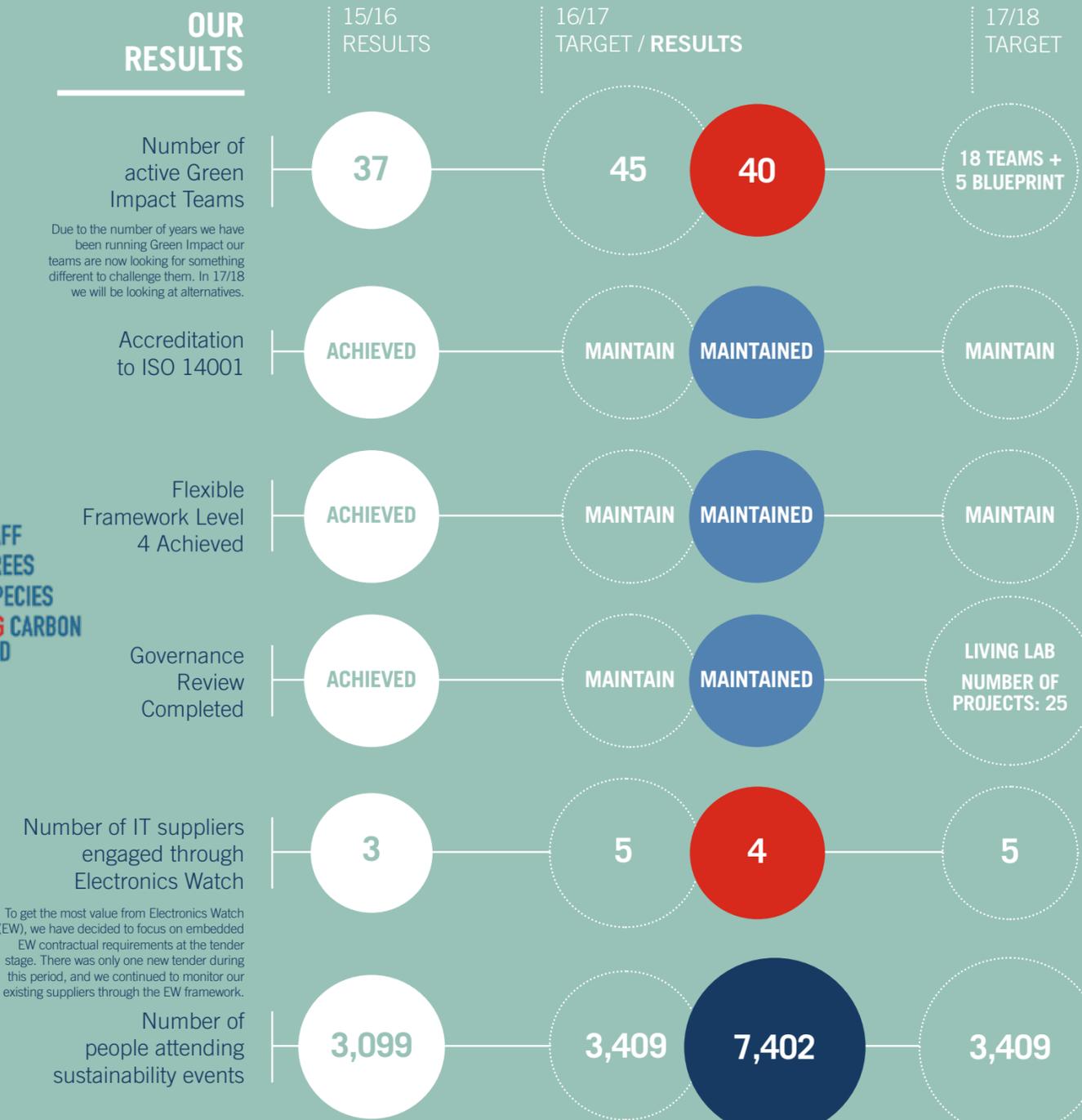
In the year following our Sustainability Strategy, we focused on making sure we had the management systems, policies and reporting structures in place to make sustainability a reality, right across the University. These achievements – including ISO 14001, our procurement and construction standards – are now influencing decision making and allowing individuals to make a difference in their fields.

In the examples that follow, we show how the University of Leeds is leading the way in innovative approaches to embedding sustainability in our Schools, Faculties and Services, looking at sustainability as a whole as making sure that everyone has the opportunity to play their part.



## OUR RESULTS

● EXCEEDED TARGET ● HIT TARGET ● MISSED TARGET



Due to the number of years we have been running Green Impact our teams are now looking for something different to challenge them. In 17/18 we will be looking at alternatives.

To get the most value from Electronics Watch (EW), we have decided to focus on embedded EW contractual requirements at the tender stage. There was only one new tender during this period, and we continued to monitor our existing suppliers through the EW framework.

## OUR COMMITMENTS

We will embed sustainability across the whole University.

We will create and support proactive collaborative networks.

We will develop robust management systems.

We will establish governance and accountability structures that drive sustainability and place it at the heart of our Institution.

## LINKED SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS



## LOCAL PRINTING, GLOBAL IMPACTS

Switching to 100% recycled paper, reducing carbon and preserving ecologically important rainforest are just some of the things that our in-house printers have been up to this year. **The Print & Copy Bureau (PCB)** is the University's in-house printing, copying and mailing service for both staff and students. PCB offers digital and litho printing and had made the switch to recycled papers back in 2008 – but it couldn't be used on the existing digital printing equipment. So when the digital equipment was coming up for renewal in 2017, it was the perfect opportunity for Chris Askew from PCB to research the capabilities of new machines.

As part of this process, PCB, machine manufacturer Ricoh UK, and paper merchant Denmaur Independent Papers successfully carried out the world's first official test to digitally print using toner on Revive 100% Recycled Carbon Balanced Art Papers. It was a success, and means that PCB can now print all litho and digital work on recycled paper, which equates to around 800,000 sheets of A3 every year.

This is a great example of how everyone at the University of Leeds is involved in the sustainability agenda, how individual teams are working within the policies we've created, and how we can devise innovative, sustainable solutions with global impacts.

## INCREASING ENGAGEMENT

Our **Student Sustainability Architects** are part of a unique programme to increase student involvement in sustainability activities and provide the opportunities for them to lead on key initiatives that reach out to staff and students across the University. The students benefit from year-long, in-depth, paid work experience. They are embedded in the Sustainability Service, developing their knowledge and skills and enhancing knowledge and capacity at the University. The chance to be a Student Sustainability Architects is just one part of our student opportunities package, and provides us with a direct connection to the student body, their opinions and priorities.

This year, there are six Student Sustainability Architects in part-time paid positions.

Extending the Student Sustainability Architects to other services has proved to be a real success and we're working with other teams to create opportunities in other areas.



You can discover more about this year's report and sustainability at the University of Leeds online:

[sustainability.leeds.ac.uk](http://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk)

They are directly supporting three projects in line with the Sustainability Strategy:

**Developing a Sustainability Volunteers programme**  
Gloria Koepke and Mumo Mutulili have scoped out the opportunities that volunteers can get involved with throughout the year. They developed a new online space for people to register to volunteer along with dedicated social media pages where volunteers could interact and share opportunities and experiences. They also handled the logistics of recording volunteers' experiences to better tailor opportunities to students' skills and interests. All of this work has laid the foundations for an official Sustainability Volunteers Programme and increased the number of volunteers who are engaged in sustainability topics.

**Increasing student understanding of sustainability within the curriculum and research**  
Matthew Morton and Emma Weaver focused on raising awareness of how students can embed sustainability into their studies. Specifically, this meant mapping dissertation proposal deadlines across schools so that the Sustainability Service could allocate resources and engage with as many students as possible. They were also involved in organising the University's inaugural Student Sustainability Conference (see *'Building Knowledge and Commitment' for more*), and creating a special recognition award for dissertations at the annual Sustainability Awards, which highlighted not only the most innovative and original ideas, but also captured the breadth of sustainability research from across our faculties...

**Increasing ethical procurement and Fairtrade awareness across the University**  
As we continue to embed sustainability into all of our schools, departments and services, this year has seen the architects working across not just the Sustainability Service but the University Catering Services too. Two architects – Opemiposi Adegbulu and George Middlemiss – carried out a campus-wide audit of our food and drink outlets, recording the number and type of Fairtrade products available. The results were used to identify any gaps where we could offer more options and led to a trial of eight new Fairtrade products. They also ran an awareness campaign around the University's commitment to Fairtrade, organised events as part of Fairtrade Fortnight and a lively debate discussing 'How fair is Fairtrade?'

Extending the Student Sustainability Architects to other services has proved to be a real success and we're working with other teams to create opportunities in other areas.



"I successfully encouraged our University's cafés and Refectory to partner with an app called 'Too Good To Go', selling fresh leftovers at half the original price. The results have been astonishing... saving 840 meals from being wasted, equivalent to 797kg of CO<sub>2</sub> or 71 days of electricity use in one household!"

— Vaishnavi Maganti, Student Sustainability Architect

## BRILLIANT BIODIVERSITY

The **iTree** project is part of the Living Lab, where we're using the University as a test bed for research and innovation. The project aims to calculate the environmental and economic value of trees on campus, increase staff and student understanding of these benefits, and provide information to influence decision-making around new developments.

It all came about when the University's Leeds Ecosystem Atmosphere & Forest (LEAF) Centre was looking to pilot a natural capital project, and the Facilities Directorate was looking to develop its understanding of natural capital in operational decision making and deliver the Biodiversity Action Plan. We developed the iTree project, gained match-funding from the United Bank of Carbon and worked alongside our Estates Services, to make sure they were on board and would benefit from the results.

At the heart of the project is a survey of all the trees on our campus – recording species, height, canopy cover, condition and health. We held training sessions with Treeconomics, the leading organisation in measuring and valuing the benefit of urban trees, to make sure staff and student volunteers were fully armed with the knowledge and equipment they needed.

To date, over 800 trees have been surveyed, representing 105 different species. This is about 75% of the trees on campus, and we're continuing to survey the remaining 25% to provide a complete set of results. All of the data collected is being fed into i-Tree Eco, a software suite specifically created to determine the value of urban trees and we'll use this insight to write a report and devise recommendations for the University, academic papers, seminars, and a Living Lab case study. When the data has been analysed, it will provide us with financial values for carbon storage and sequestration, pollution removal, runoff avoided and energy services that the trees on campus provide.

Plans are already coming together for the second phase of the iTree project, working with students from the Centre for Doctoral Training in Bioenergy to focus on understanding the benefits and losses of removing and replacing trees, researching staff and student perspectives of campus green spaces, and providing recommendations to our operational teams.

Ultimately, the iTree project helps us to meet our Biodiversity Standard and deliver our Biodiversity Action Plan to improve the way we manage green space. It's also a scalable project, making it a perfect project to trial across the city with Leeds City Council, starting with the Leeds Forest Observatory in Middleton Park.

## iTREES IN NUMBERS

800 TREES

105 SPECIES

12 UNIVERSITY STAFF

14 STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

25 PARTNERS

2016/17 SUSTAINABILITY SNAPSHOT



Enjoyed reading Leeds Uni first sustainability report - important Unis take a lead @uol\_sus @TheEAUC

Mike Barry (@planamikebarry)



The University of Leeds' new MSc Sustainable Cities programme is helping students transition towards a more eco-friendly world. @EnvLeeds @Study\_INTNL #StudyAbroad

Genna Ash (@genna-ash)



**Staff winner:** Re-use at St Marks Residences  
**Student winner:** Ravi Toor  
**Team winner:** Olivia Miller and the Cleaning Services Team



Calling all @UniversityLeeds teaching staff! The nationwide #SDGTeachIn is taking place next week (19th - 23rd) led by @NUS\_sustainable. Take the pledge to include the Sustainable Development Goals within your teaching or assessments. @UniLeedsStaff

Sustainability@Leeds (@UoL\_Sus)



"We identified over 100 different tree species on campus – hopefully our work quantifying the benefits they bring will help protect them."

Dr Catherine Scott, iTrees/biodiversity

# BUILDING KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY

As a university, building the knowledge and capacity of our students and staff, as well as with the city and wider society, is key to how we help build a sustainable society. Through teaching, research, facilities, partnerships and volunteering we have both local and global impact, and we develop, share and promote sustainability across our campus, city and beyond.



## OUR RESULTS

	15/16 RESULTS	16/17 TARGET / RESULTS	17/18 TARGET
Number of students completing sustainability modules <small>Although the overall target was missed, an increase was seen. We are looking into the way we communicate sustainability module options to students.</small>	5,600	5,768 (MISSED TARGET) / 5,700	5,768
Number of modules relating to sustainability	163	244 (EXCEEDED TARGET)	MAINTAIN
Number of student hours spent on sustainability initiatives	1,019	3,985 (EXCEEDED TARGET) / 1,120.9	1,500
Staff training hours completed <small>We actually saw a decrease in staff hours completed. This was due to the delayed launch of online training.</small>	582	531.5 (MISSED TARGET) / 873	600
Research Income (£) <small>*Data changed to live grants</small>	49.8M	243M* (EXCEEDED TARGET) / 50M+	MAINTAIN
Webpage views	77,684	90,459 (EXCEEDED TARGET) / MAINTAIN	80,000

## OUR COMMITMENTS

We will work across University departments to build capacity and share best practice on sustainable change.

We will equip all our staff with sustainability skills.

We will develop external links to enhance knowledge and capacity.

We will support and promote research that examines the issues relating to sustainability.

We will integrate sustainability into learning programmes and ensure all our students understand the importance of sustainability.

## LINKED SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS



## SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CURRICULUM

Our aim is that all students will graduate from the University of Leeds knowing what sustainability is. A key part of this is integrating sustainability into the curriculum, giving all students the opportunity to study and to gain experience of developing sustainable solutions. The Sustainability Service works in collaboration with academic colleagues to develop focused teaching experiences that provide sustainability knowledge and make it relevant to real world settings. There are lots of examples of this integration, here we outline some of the highlights...

The **Creating Sustainable Futures Discovery Theme** – available to all students, whatever their discipline – ran twice during this academic year. The modules in this theme allow students to really get stuck into the challenges facing local and global society; the environmental, social and economic issues that shape our world, and what we can do to manage these.

This year, the projects looked at everything from assessing our bicycle storage capacities and accessibility, to gaining a better understanding of people's perceptions of the University's impacts on society. Some of the key findings included the fact that 47% of the 269 teaching and communal spaces assessed had lights on when not in use, 50% of people asked understood the importance of Fairtrade, and 89% of people surveyed believed the University's research was having a significant positive impact. The data collected is a great source of information for the Sustainability Service too, and is fed into University-wide reports and audits.

This year, sustainability was the focus of the assignment project for Masters students taking the **Commercial and Professional Skills module at Leeds University Business School**. Students took on the role of internal consultants, tasked with reviewing student and staff awareness of sustainability initiatives here at the University, and coming up with recommendations to increase awareness and get more people involved in sustainability activities.

Over in the **School of Medicine**, we ran a two-week Sustainability in Healthcare RESS Special Studies Project. These projects allow 2nd and 3rd year students to develop specialist knowledge and understanding of the research process. The Sustainability in Healthcare module outlined what sustainability is, why it's important, and how they can utilise what they have learnt in their future careers.

When it comes to dissertations, we understand that there is a whole world of subjects, issues and approaches for our students to tackle. We held **pop-up dissertation**

**workshops** in May to help with these decisions. We were able to advise students on how to connect their area of study with other disciplines, explain the potential of sustainability research and inspire them to use their dissertation as a way to create solutions. It was also a change to challenge students to critically evaluate and question the current thinking on sustainability, how it fundamentally affects global challenges, and provide the space to challenge the direction of their own research. This directly feeds into our commitment to support and promote research that examines the issues relating to sustainability.

And to recognise excellence in dissertations, we also added a **Sustainability Dissertation Award** in the Building Knowledge and Capacity category of our annual Sustainability Awards. In 2017, the award went to James Patrick Glover-Ochiltree from the School of Earth and Environment for his dissertation: *Realising the Benefits; an investigation into how social accounting mechanisms can help community-led renewable energy projects (CLREPs) to better evaluate, measure and profess their success.*

The new training module was released in August 2017, with an initial uptake of 373 staff.

Every single one made a personal commitment to make a positive change.



"We use the Sustainability Strategy to help staff to bring aspects of sustainability into their specialist teaching modules. These modules are open to all students through the Discovery Theme of Creating Sustainable Futures. In this way, we reach students right across the University, giving them knowledge and skills to improve sustainability issues in their own profession and lifestyles."

– William Young – Inst Co-Director of SRI; Professor of Sustainability and Business

## SUSTAINABILITY IN FOCUS

In February 2017, we held the inaugural Student Conference on Sustainable Futures – **Sustainable Perspectives on Future Challenges**. Forty-five undergraduate and postgraduate students presented their research to over 100 delegates on a whole range of topics from the potential of solar energy for communities in developing countries of Africa, investigating the social impact of permaculture demonstration projects and extinction risk in the marine realm to an eco-friendly app to extend the life of clothes and investigating sustainability disclosure in Ugandan print media.

There was a real buzz on the day, with an exhibition, performance art session and chances to exchange ideas, ask questions and gain valuable insight into what's going on across the University. The conference drew representation from all faculties at the University, promoting the interdisciplinary approach and collaboration we believe in. By bringing this next generation of researchers and innovators together, we hope to kickstart the creation of new solutions for a sustainable future.

## FACING THE CHALLENGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

At the University of Leeds we're proactive in tackling global challenges head on. We challenge the status quo and promote working across disciplines to find innovative solutions to global challenges. And the newly launched Priestley International Centre for Climate is a great example of this.

The Centre is dedicated to improving our understanding of fundamental climate science, developing strategies to reduce and mitigate climate change and its impacts, and supporting society, ecosystems and infrastructure in adapting to our changing climate. Priestley Centre researchers are a fascinating mix of palaeontologists, geochemists, volcanologists and climate modellers. Together they are leading international efforts to better understand the past in a way that helps us to predict future climate.



You can discover more about this year's report and sustainability at the University of Leeds online:

[sustainability.leeds.ac.uk](https://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk)

Our aim is that all students will graduate from the University of Leeds knowing what sustainability is and their role in it. A key part of this integrating sustainability into the curriculum, giving all students the opportunity to study and be involved in sustainability.

## SUSTAINABILITY IN PRACTICE

In last year's Annual Report we said that we wanted to develop a full staff training programme to underpin our vision that all staff will understand what sustainability means and how it is related to the University.

Our training module – **Sustainability in Practice** – does just that. Available to all University of Leeds staff, the course explores what sustainability is, why it is important and what part everyone can play to make sure the University has a positive environmental, social and economic impact.

The course is available both online and face-to-face and examines a whole range of scenarios. And the focus on sustainability doesn't stop when the course is over – at the end of the module every participant is asked to suggest a personal commitment that can contribute to positive change.

The new training module was released in August 2017, with an initial uptake of 373 staff. Although this represents only 5% of all staff, every single one made a personal commitment to make a positive change, so it's a great start. We also fell a little under our target of 582 staff training hours, with 531 hours completed. This was an optimistic target, somewhat hampered by the delay in rolling out the online training. However, we're continually working on increasing the uptake and creating more in-depth training to help staff embed sustainability into everyday working practices.

Our cities need to be agile, adaptable and connected to the larger global eco-systems. Leeds should make bold decisions.  
**@UoL\_Sus #FOILeeds**  
Leeds University Business School  
(@LeedsUniBSchool)

Fantastic day at Uni of Leeds Sustainability Conference with some eye opening research. I'll definitely be changing my ways  
**#UoLSSC18 @UoL\_Sus**  
Cormac Trigg (@CormacTrigg)

**Staff winner:**  
The Priestley International Centre for Climate  
**Student winner:**  
James Patrick Glover-Ochiltree

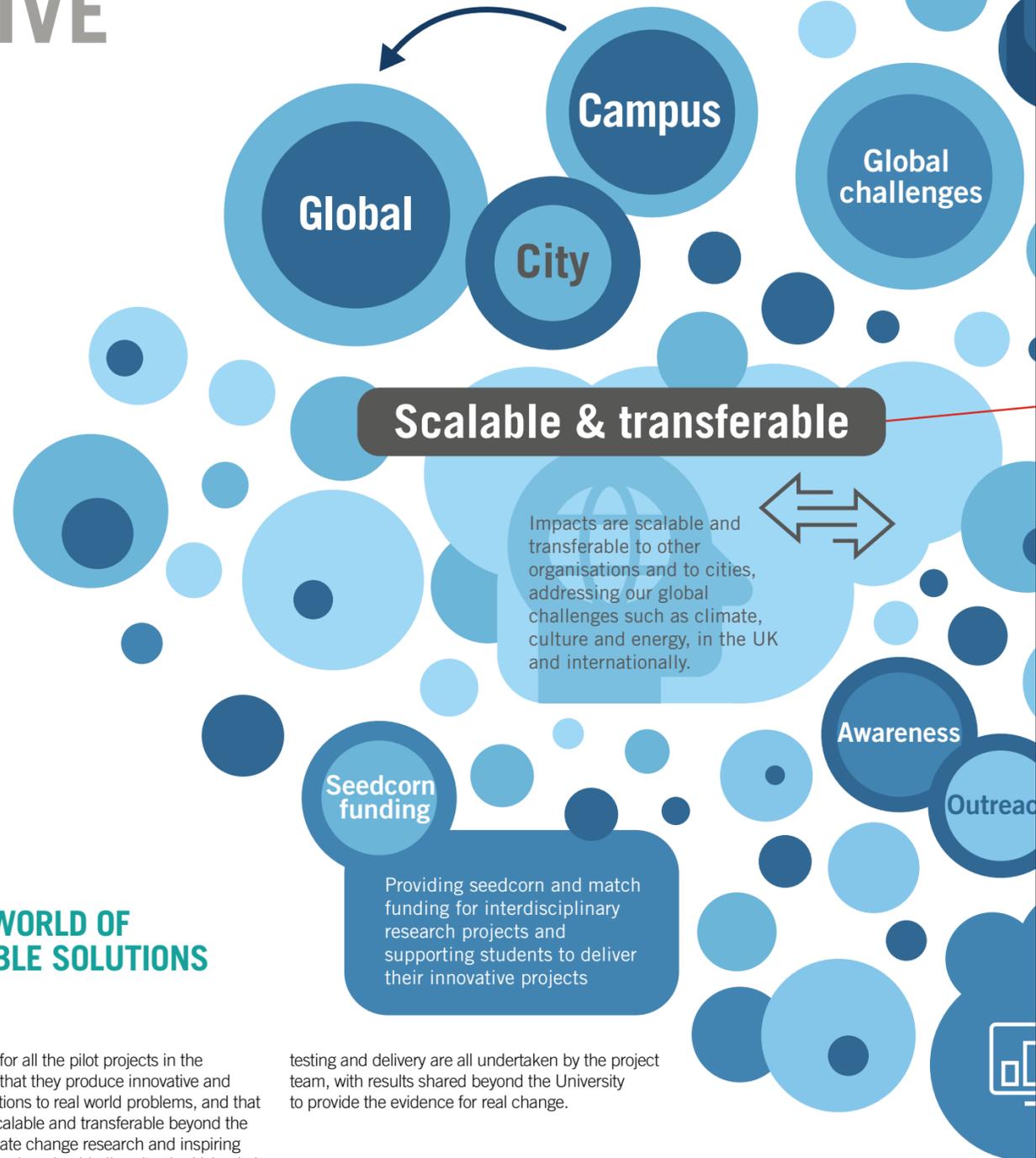
Great #UoLSSC18 conference today - well done to Josh and the excellent @UoL\_Sus team. I enjoyed learning so much just from the poster display... over a vegan lunch. I had no idea about Shelley and Vegetarianism!  
StewRossLeeds (@StewRossLeeds)



"Sustainability is important to me and here at the University of Leeds it is inspiring and encouraging to see the ongoing commitment to knowledge building initiatives."

— Amy Parsons, student

# WHERE IDEAS AND COLLABORATION THRIVE



## A WHOLE WORLD OF SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

The critical outcome for all the pilot projects in the Living Lab is the fact that they produce innovative and transformational solutions to real world problems, and that those solutions are scalable and transferable beyond the University. From climate change research and inspiring behaviour change to enhancing biodiversity, the Living Lab opens the door to a whole world of sustainable solutions.

As an educational institution, the Living Lab is encouraging us to think and operate differently; to take the theory from the classroom and apply it to real world situations. Funding, feasibility, research,

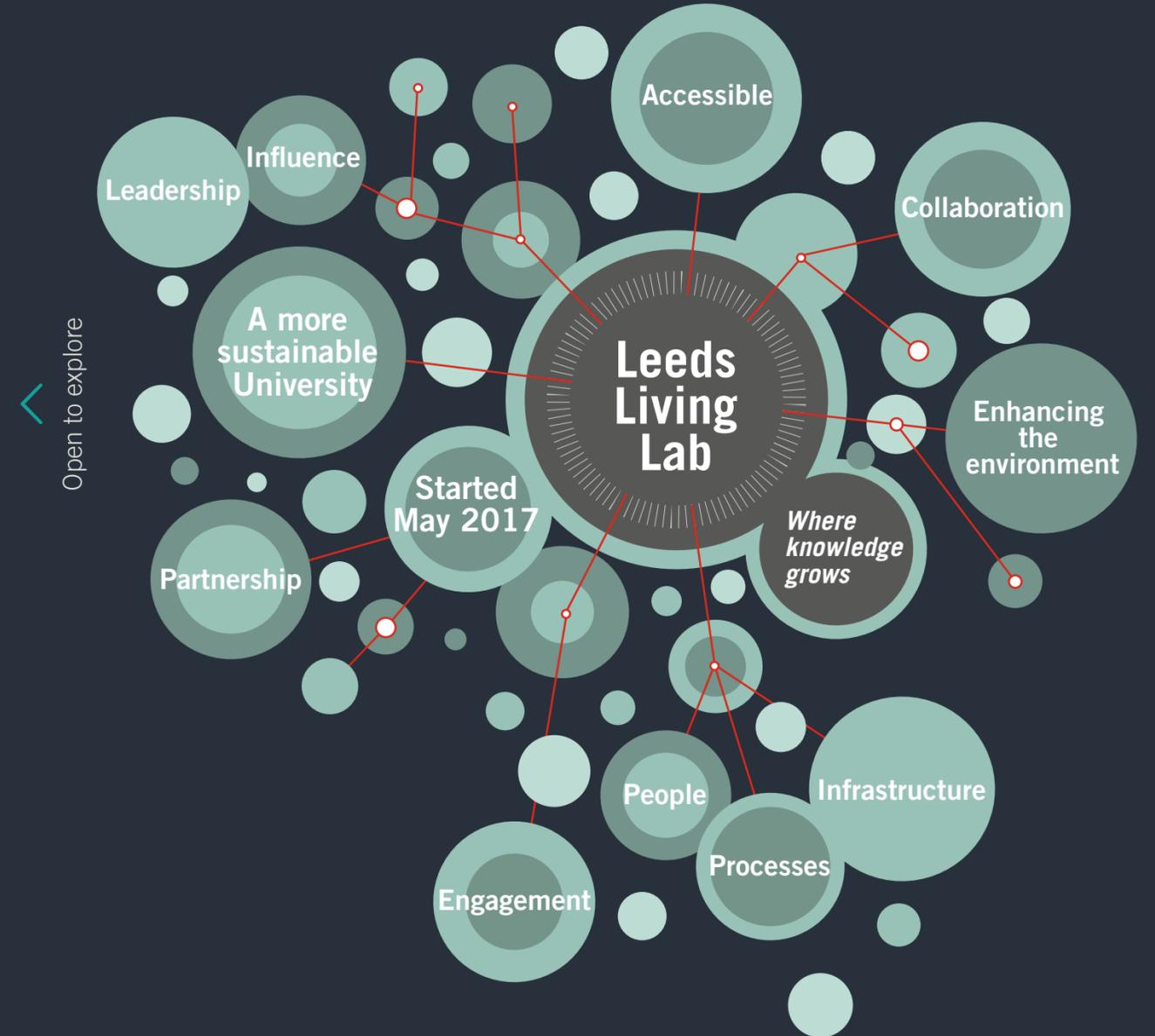
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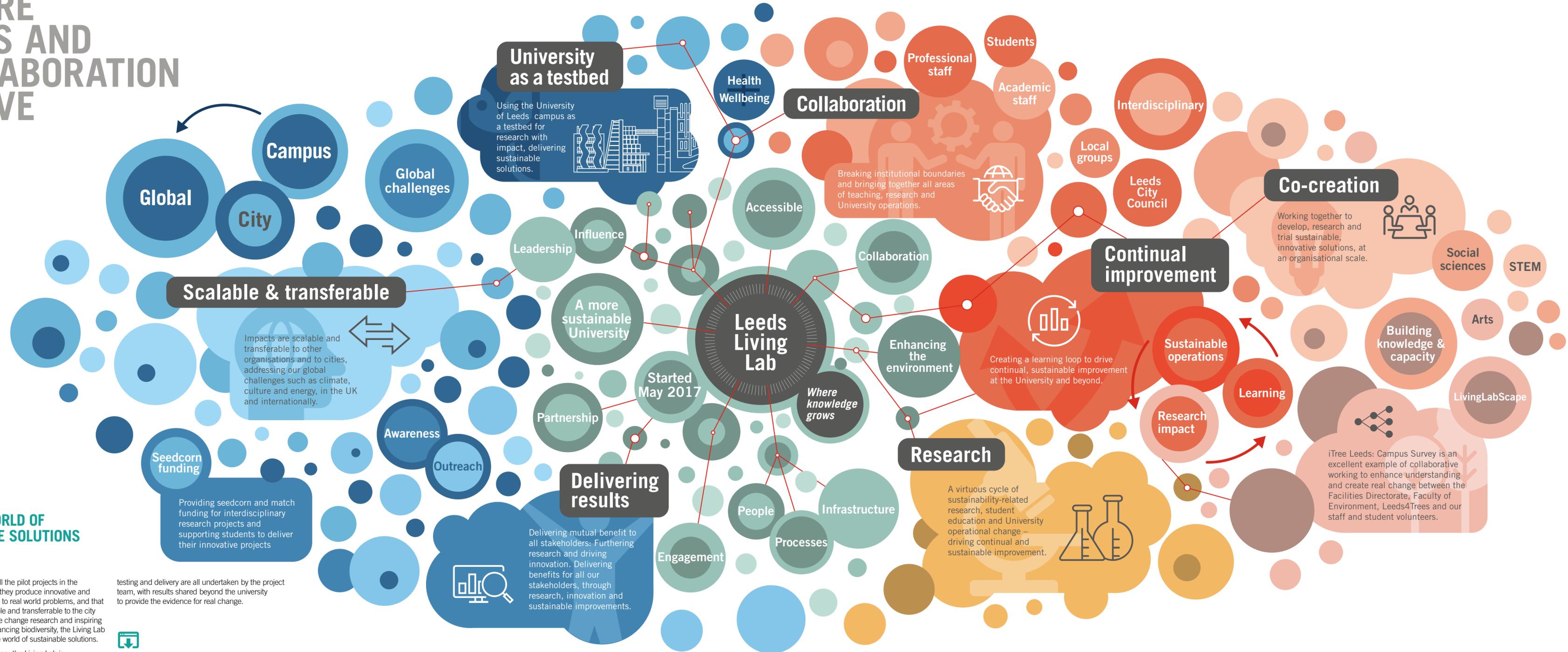
You can apply to the Living Lab at any time by completing the application form online:

[sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/the-living-lab](http://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/the-living-lab)

Launched this year, the Living Lab is an exciting University-wide programme that uses our University as a test-bed for the co-creation of sustainable solutions. It relies on collaboration between students, academic and operational staff.



# WHERE IDEAS AND COLLABORATION THRIVE



## A WHOLE WORLD OF SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

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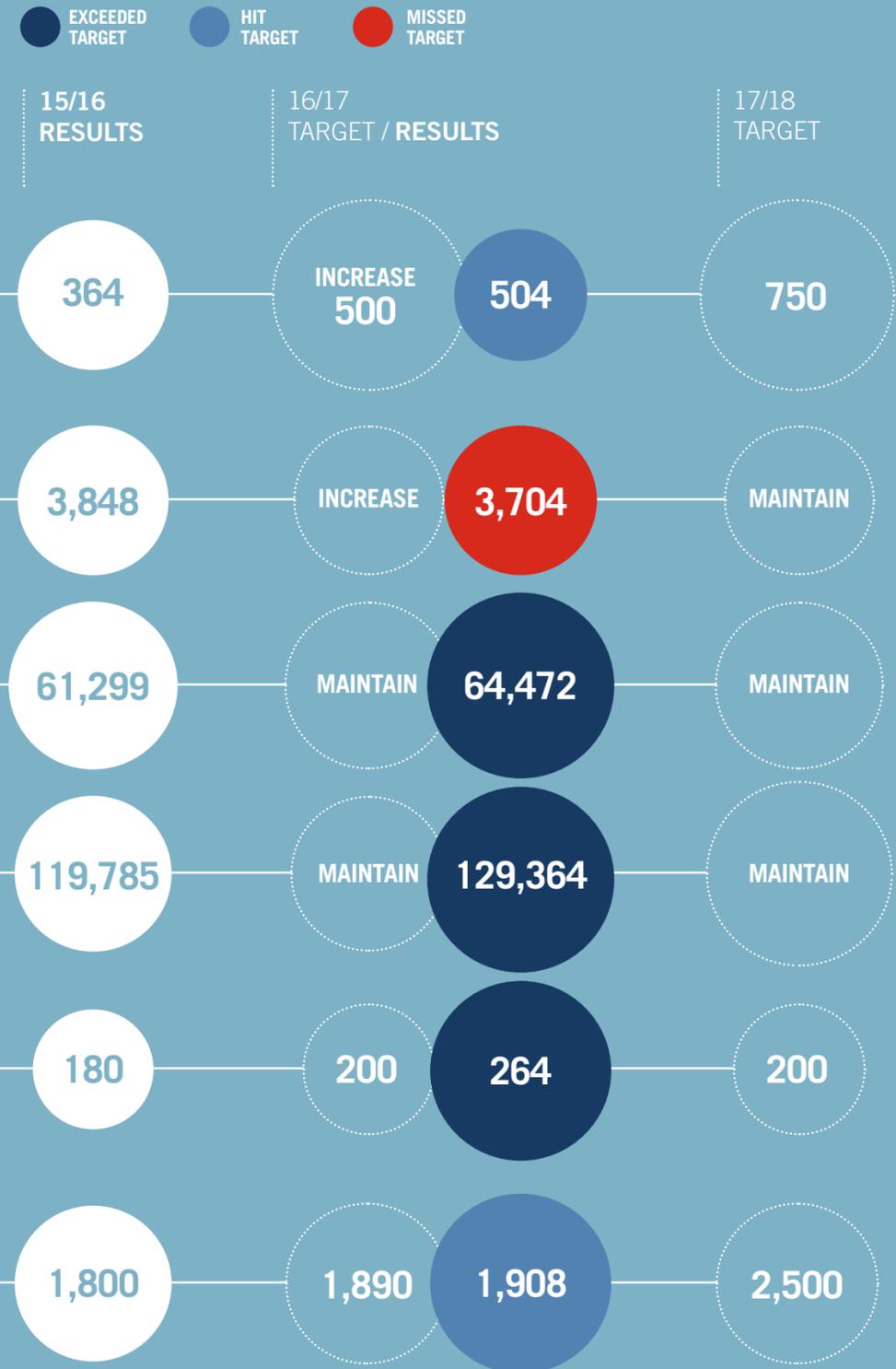
# BEING A POSITIVE PARTNER IN SOCIETY

At the University of Leeds our core purpose is to increase knowledge and opportunity for the betterment of society. We have made a firm commitment to take our economic, social, environmental and cultural responsibilities seriously and we're continually exploring opportunities to work local communities, organisations and partners. These partnerships often go beyond the City Region. We exist in a global society and are committed to influencing sustainability and having a positive impact beyond our campus.

But it's not just about sharing our own knowledge and skills. Working with local, national and international partners provides the perfect opportunity to learn from them, understanding the challenges they have and working together to respond to them. It's something we encourage all our staff and students to do – creating truly global citizens who understand the role they can play in a sustainable future.



## OUR RESULTS



We were close to last years target, in the coming year we will review our communications and support to students in this area.

## OUR COMMITMENTS

We will build external engagement to further develop internal and external capacity and knowledge, and influence wider policies.

We will lead by example, share best practice, learn from others and ensure our research is accessible.

We will take our responsibility to society seriously, as an employer, good neighbour and in creating opportunities.

We will support our students to be responsible citizens and an active part of society, both locally and globally.

We will create a welcoming, culturally and environmentally vibrant campus.

## LINKED SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS



## SHOWCASING THE RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH

We have some incredible research happening here at the University of Leeds, and it's important to us that the activities and benefits are shared with the communities of Leeds.

Our annual **Be Curious** event is just one of the ways we do this – a day where we open our doors for the public to discover and join in with our research. In 2017, the theme was 'Leeds and Yorkshire', highlighting all the ways that the University's research is relevant to the local community.

The day was filled with a programme of guided tours, exhibitions, talks, stalls and children's activities. Parkinson Court was a hive of activity where visitors could explore five interactive zones: Science and Engineering, Culture, Climate and Water, Cities, and Health.

Sustainability was a key theme, showcasing everything from how the climate of Yorkshire has changed over the last 20,000 years and how Leeds is becoming a sustainable city to 'Wetropolis', a live demonstration showing the effects of extreme rainfall on our region.

Our Be Curious events are a great way of creating an accessible and friendly university. They also encourage education equality – showing everyone in the local community that we're a friendly, accessible campus where they can come to engage in learning and sustainability. For many people, they may not have considered a university career or education, and our Be Curious days are just one of the ways we can open these opportunities to all.

## TACKLING LONELINESS... ONE LETTER AT A TIME

At a time when email and social media seem like the primary way we get in touch with each other, our Writing Back project is bucking that trend.

It's the brainchild of Dr Georgina Binnie, who remembered how great it was to receive letters from her grandmother when she was an undergraduate. Now a research fellow at the University of Leeds,



**"Writing Back promotes the University's vision of building positive partnerships by matching students as pen pals with older, Yorkshire residents. Since 2014, Writing Back has been generating friendships between different age groups and tackling loneliness."**

– Dr Georgina Binnie, Writing Back

she decided to set up the Writing Back project, so that other people could have the same experience, while helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation in both demographics.

Writing Back is an intergenerational pen pal project, matching students with elderly Leeds residents to exchange letters, memories, local knowledge and photographs to give the other an insight into their lives. It may seem like small act of kindness, but it can transform someone's day. After all, there's something lovely about receiving a letter, seeing the effort that someone has put in to get in touch and share a little piece of their lives.

Issues of loneliness and social isolation are found in both younger and older people. In 2016, research from Age UK found that there were 1.2 million chronically lonely older people in the UK; and a 2010 study from the Mental Health Foundation found that 36% of 18-34-year-olds worried about feeling lonely.<sup>1</sup>

In the words of one of the older letter writers, "The Writing Back project has allowed me to write to someone whom I would otherwise never have come across. It is interesting to exchange letters with a much younger person, to hear her views, discover her interests and share topics of 'written conversation' without necessarily having met one another".

To date, there have been over 280 people in the programme, with many of them building long-lasting friendships.

1 Age UK (2016), 'No One Should Have No One' Available from: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/get-involved/no-one/>

2 Griffin, Jo. (2010) 'The Lonely Society?' (Mental Health Foundation)



You can discover more about this year's report and sustainability at the University of Leeds online:

[sustainability.leeds.ac.uk](https://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk)

## A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

We have a solid civic duty to play an active part in the City, and by doing so the University of Leeds can make a lasting positive impact way beyond our campus. Building on our Community Mentoring project, our Positive Impact Partners – or PIP – programme is based on exactly that belief. Our region boasts some brilliantly active third sector, community and not-for-profit organisations.

We devised PIP to link resources with local need. Collaborating with third sector partners brings together a wealth of skills, knowledge and research expertise to create new projects that build capacity and create positive social change.

### The PIP programme is unique

Critically, PIP is open to all University staff, individuals in the third sector, charitable organisations, state funded schools and any other social-benefit organisations. Working with organisations beyond our campus not only allows us to provide support for their projects, it's also great for staff in terms of personal and professional development.

Once the partnerships have been made, the Sustainability Service supports PIP partners through workshops, training, networking and events. Through these, partners benefit from the advice, experiences and best practice of others involved in PIP.

This year, 28 third sector organisations have been involved in PIP. These provide a whole range of services including education, conservation, social services, health, culture, faith, housing and recreation. It's a hugely vibrant and innovative sector that is dedicated to improving the lives of people in Leeds – we are proud to be in a position to work with them through PIP to increase their capacity to do good and create sustainable futures.

No two PIP matches are the same; the specialisms, needs and priorities of the organisation and our staff create unique support programmes that ensure everyone benefits.

Here are just three examples of PIP in action:

**"We are a very small and young organisation and it seemed like an amazing opportunity to tap into expertise and get advice in areas where we are lacking capacity. Our University partner has an extensive network within the University that he can refer us to, should he think of others who might be able to help in other ways. It is amazing how many chance links come up in conversation that might lead onto opportunities and avenues to explore."**

– Jen Dyer, IMAS

- In Wakefield, PIP matched the charity Wakefield District Sight Aid with Katheryn Watson, Research Impact Manager from Leeds University Business School to help develop a business plan, which resulted in an extra £8,000 from a successful grant application.
- Three team members from the educational charity IntoUniversity were matched with our staff to build relationships across the University and benefit from more ways for us to work together in the community.
- A match between Ben Williams from the Research and Innovation Service and International Mixed Ability Sport has seen them expand their sporting and social inclusion activities across to Europe.

It's a beautiful day to see some wildlife around campus! We are on a bird watching tour with @UoL\_Sus and hopefully we will spot something else that tweets!

MEETinLEEDS at the University of Leeds (@meetinleeds)

The University of Leeds has signed the Clean Air Leeds pledge demonstrating our commitment to improving air quality in the city.

Sustainability@Leeds  
(@UoL\_Sus)

Yr 6 collecting data, in partnership with Leeds University & the BBC, to provide evidence to protect trees and help fight climate change!

KESBathJuniorSchool  
(@KESBATHJunior)



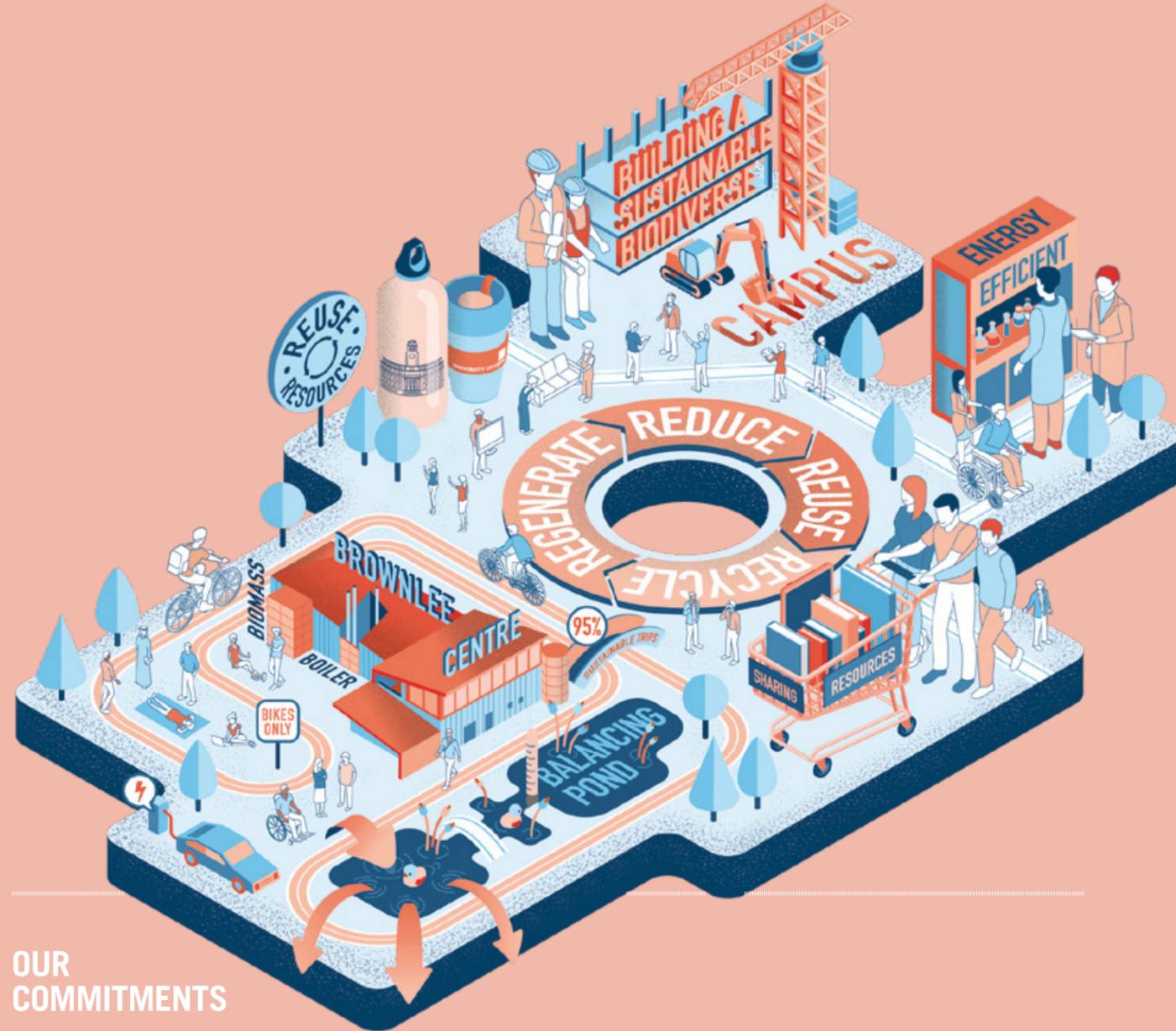
**"We were pleased to be given the opportunity to assist one of our students. It was a fascinating insight into what can be achieved by the collaboration of our staff and the students together to create an impressive artwork, and witness the process from the students perspective."**

– Taff, Cleaning Services

# MAKING THE MOST OF RESOURCES

The University of Leeds is getting bigger. With this growth comes the challenge of meeting our carbon, water, biodiversity and resource reduction targets. But these are challenges we are ready to tackle, and having policies in place – including our Reuse, Recycling and Waste Standard, Sustainable Construction Standard, Carbon Management Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan – help through robust guidance, both internally and for our partners.

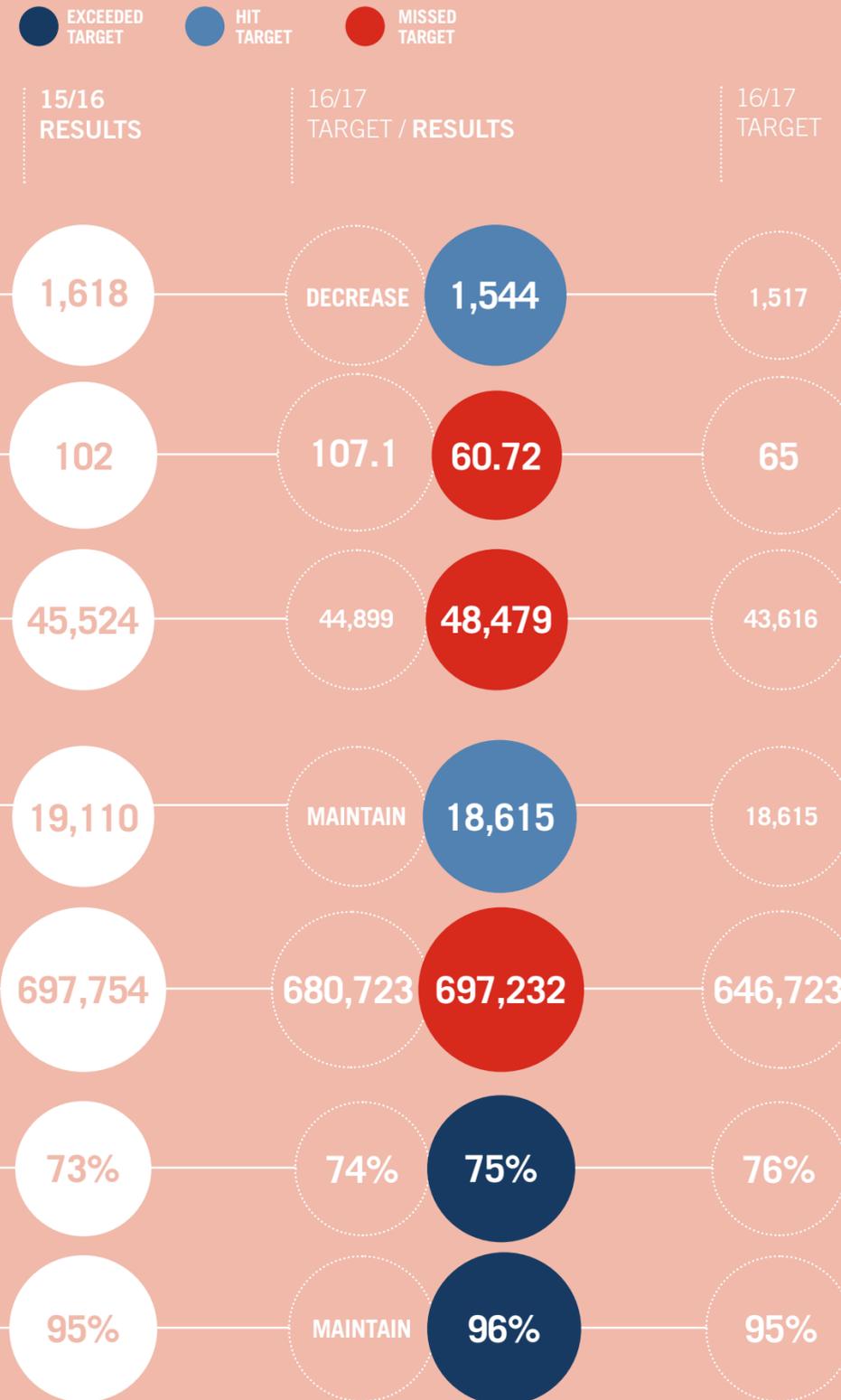
At the heart of this theme is the circular economy – closing the loop, doing more with the resources we have – closing the loop, doing more with the resources we have, getting the maximum value from them, and considering wider social impacts. From increasing the number of solar panels and electric vehicle charging points to enhancing biodiversity and reducing waste, we have had some encouraging results under this theme.



## OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will reduce our consumption of goods and services.
- We will embed sustainability into the procurement process.
- We will reduce the amount of waste we produce.
- We will enhance biodiversity on campus.
- We will use water efficiently and reduce, reuse and recycle where possible.
- We will become a low carbon University, through energy efficiency and reduced carbon emissions.
- We will foster a staff and student body where sustainable travel is the norm.

## OUR RESULTS



## LINKED SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS



## BIODIVERSITY IN DEVELOPMENT

The University of Leeds has made a commitment to becoming an exemplar of urban biodiversity. We're delivering this through our biodiversity standard, which recognises the value of biodiversity for wildlife, but also wellbeing and health. It's an ambitious aim, and made more challenging due to our development programme and the land use changes this brings.

The first challenge to this aim came in 2016/17, when an existing car park was identified as the site of our new Nexus innovation centre. The site was home to 90 mature trees. These created a covered canopy in an urban area alongside a busy dual carriageway and formed the end of a green corridor into the heart of Leeds city centre.

The loss of these trees was unavoidable, but it gave us the opportunity to develop a long-term strategy to offset this impact. Using a bespoke offsetting tool developed here at the University, we made sure that 99 trees were planted as part of the landscaping work, with a further 173 trees planted on the wider campus.

In addition to planting trees, we looked at wider landscaping to ensure an increase in biodiversity value, this included choosing species that would provide food for pollinators and birds and create new areas of canopy for shelter and nesting.

Understandably, it's going to take many years for the trees to establish, and we are assessing the development work on a regular basis to make sure the loss is properly mitigated and enhanced. But in the long-term the planting will mean many more trees on campus, strengthening biodiversity and providing a legacy for future generations.

## CITY LIVING LAB

The City Living Lab brings together University colleagues, civil society, business and government to co-produce transformational solutions to real-world sustainability challenges, using the city of Leeds as a test-bed.

Our vision is a city where ideas and collaboration thrive, where the integration of sustainability enhances the value of the city, and where everyone is given the knowledge and skills to be more sustainable.

A recent example is a collaborative project between the University of Leeds and Leeds City Council to evaluate the many interventions that have been implemented to improve recycling rates. The project focuses on three areas with consistently low recycling rates compared to Leeds as a whole: Harehills, Headingley and Middleton. The aim is to identify opportunities for future interventions and to contribute to research and evidence on recycling behaviour.

The research team used data from Leeds City Council on recycling rates, contamination of bins, recycling quantity and rejection rates for these three areas. The data was linked with other census data for socio-demographics, the index of multiple deprivation and green and ethical attitudes data from Callcredit. The data was analysed to establish any relationships along with intelligence from focus groups to develop a better understanding of recycling behaviour. Leeds City Council and the University are now using this insight in the planning of management and intervention activities.



**"To remain at the forefront the University is actively promoting electric vehicle technology through an expansion of the charging network and we are now considering rapid chargers for the future."**

— Majid Khan, Support Services Manager

## BALANCING AT BROWNLEE

Alongside the new £5 million Brownlee Centre on the University's Bodington playing fields is a 1.6km cycle track. As one of the longest in the country, it's the perfect traffic-free cycling environment for staff, students and the wider community, and great for recreation, coaching and competitions.

But in order to create this public amenity, the area needed a drainage solution to cope with current and future weather events. The initial plan was for a standard drainage and storage tank. However, the team came up with another solution, one that would create an attractive feature on site and improve local biodiversity. That solution? A balancing pond as part of a wider sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS).

Balancing ponds work by controlling the flow of water – storing floodwater and releasing it only when the risk of further flooding has passed. The pond at Brownlee has the added bonus of enhancing the environment, with new wildlife habitats being created as marginal and aquatic plants are added.

It's also going to be a useful addition to our Living Lab and an interdisciplinary space for teaching and research. We're installing monitoring equipment to measure its effectiveness as a sustainable drainage system, along with a range of other environmental indicators such as sediment, nutrients and temperature.

## FUMES, FANS AND CARBON PLANS

As part of our Carbon Management Plan, we actively look for projects that reduce our energy consumption and, in turn, our carbon emissions.

Fume cupboards have notoriously high energy consumption, and the fume extraction system in our Chemistry Building was identified as something that could be improved to deliver significant carbon savings.

The system served a number of research and teaching laboratories, and each had its own fume cupboard extraction system. These fume cupboards discharged into one of six fume dilution systems on the roof. There was a mix of constant and variable volume extraction systems, consuming an estimated 1300MWh of energy a year. These were replaced with high efficiency fans, ventilation ducts were consolidated and an intelligent control system was installed which links to the external conditions.

This project relied on the University working with delivery partners, staff and student lab users to model fume discharge dispersal patterns. Only by doing this could we set discharge velocity at suitable levels to ensure that fume cupboard extracts are discharged safely but not at excessive rates.

And we are already starting to see the impact – monthly energy use has decreased by almost 50,000kWh, with annual savings of around 600,000kWh. This has resulted in annual cost savings of over £43,000 and carbon reduction of 242 tonnes. The success of this project means we can build the case for future energy saving projects across the University.



You can discover more about this year's report and sustainability at the University of Leeds online:

[sustainability.leeds.ac.uk](http://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk)

2016/17  
SUSTAINABILITY  
SNAPSHOT



How can you cut down on the amount of #plastics in your home? Dr Costas Velis, an expert in waste and resources management @UniversityLeeds offers some advice via @BBCLookNorth

Cultural Institute  
(@UniLeedsCulture)



Here at @UniversityLeeds we're proud to support the @KeepCup initiative, encouraging our staff & students to invest & reuse! Our sustainability colleagues - @UoL\_Sus are also currently working on moving to compostable cups in our outlets too

#waronwaste #lattelevy

Great Food at Leeds  
(@GreatFoodLeeds)



Come rain or shine DR. Bike and the Sustainability Volunteers are on hand to show you how to safety check your bicycle

#SUSITOUT!

Sustainability@Leeds  
(@UoL\_Sus)



**"By changing to 100% recycled, carbon-balanced paper, we've seen a key shift towards being more sustainable here at the Print & Copy Bureau."**

— Chris Askew, Print Copy Bureau

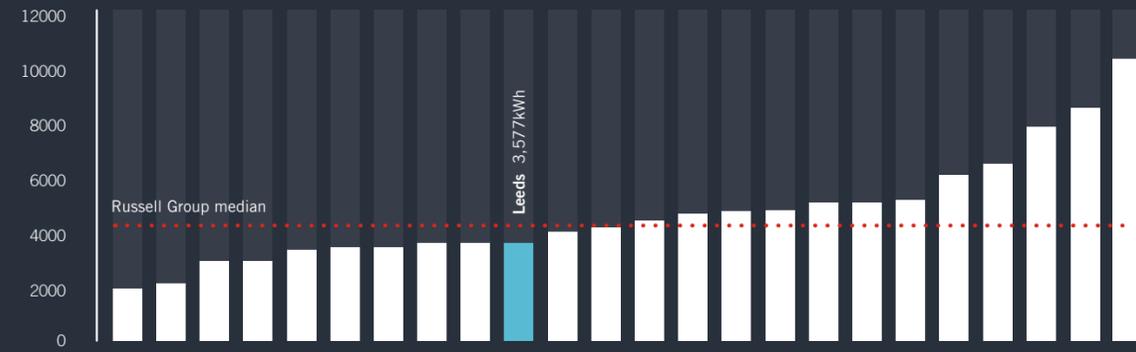
# OUR PERFORMANCE IN THE SECTOR

The University of Leeds benchmarks its sustainability performance against the UK's 24 leading research universities in the Russell Group. It's important to gauge our performance in relation to the wider sector. We don't exist in isolation, and we're always looking for ways to collaborate and create wider impact.

Source: HESA Estates Management Record 16/17

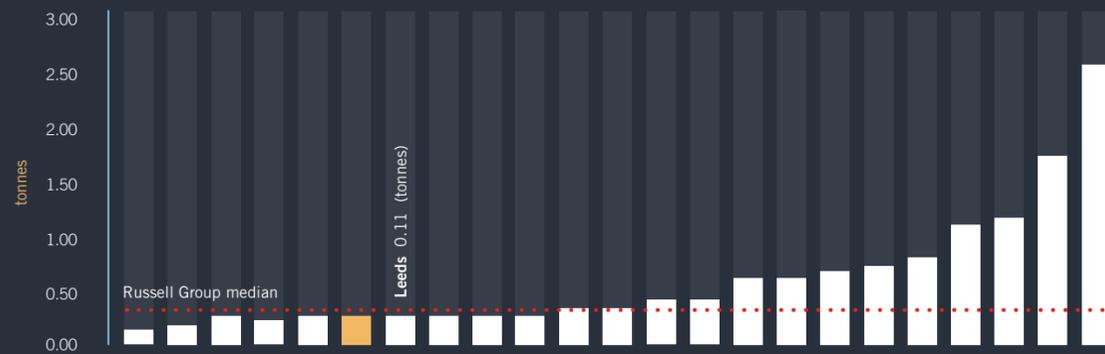
## Campus energy consumption per staff and student (full-time equivalent) 2016/17

Compared to our peer group we have made improvements in our campus energy consumption per FTE. We are now below the Russell Group median.



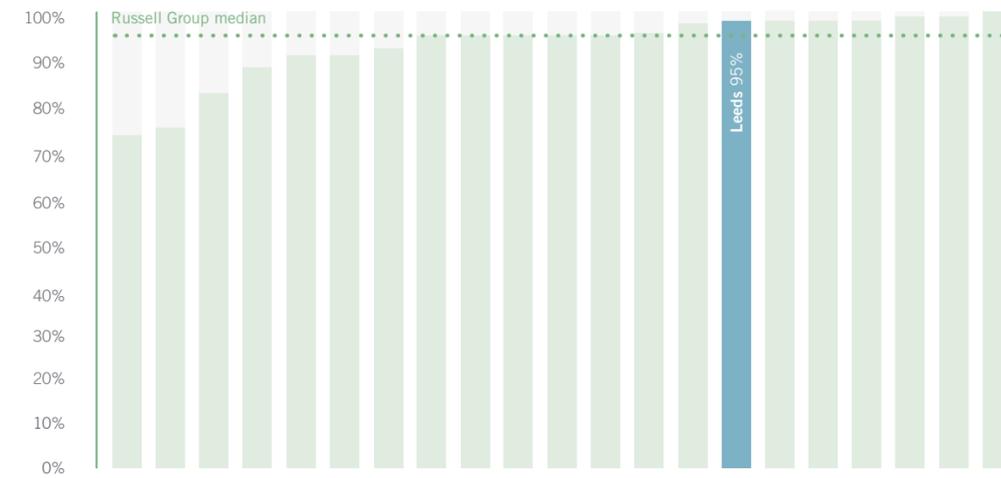
## Waste mass per student and staff (full-time equivalent) 2016/17

This year has seen improvements in our comparative waste performance. This is due to waste initiatives and changes in construction activity. Last year we were sat 10th against our peers.



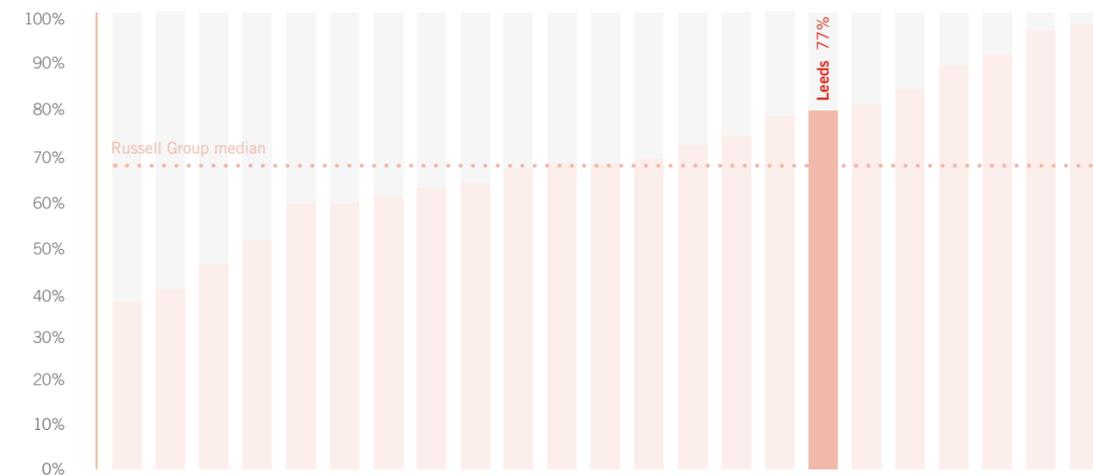
## Modal split for sustainable commuting by students 2016/17

This year we have maintained our position in relation to student commuting modes. We continue to perform above the median.



## Modal split for sustainable commuting by staff 2016/17

We have seen an increase in our staff using sustainable travel modes. As a result this year we have gone further above the Russell Group median.





## NUS verification

# INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION

Following a verification visit, I am delighted to be able to validate the information in this report. During verification I have talked to various people involved in the work outlined in this report. In addition, I have reviewed the data sets which have been collected to track progress against the targets outlined in the report.

The University should be commended on an impressive overall achievement. It has exceeded many of its own targets on increasing positive impacts, such as the number of student hours spent on sustainability initiatives (3,985 against target 1,120), and the number of modules relating to sustainability (244 against target 163), whilst also achieving significant decreases in its negative impacts, including a reduction in the total waste generated (1,544 tonnes against a target of 1,618 tonnes) and a reduction in carbon emissions (44,899 tonnes against a target of 48,479 tonnes).

It is very reassuring to see the University investing so much time and effort in student and staff engagement relating to sustainability. From their staff training programme that reached 1,500 people, delivering short talks on sustainability to thousands of new students, and including of sustainability as an optional discovery module that any student can take, there is a genuine commitment to participation. The institution is showing valuable leadership for the higher education sector through initiatives like their student sustainability research summit, their Living Lab programme, and their student sustainability architects roles, all of which are novel and impactful in terms education for sustainable development.

I encourage the University to continue to invest in engaging and empowering students and staff on sustainability, as we know from our research that allowing people to own a problem helps secure their investment in the solution. To this end, it would be a good next step for the University to develop more ways of creating and encouraging student activism and campaigns relating to sustainability. These might help to challenge the University further on topical issues like single use plastics and divestment, as well as providing transformative learning experiences for students.

With the Sustainable Development Goals becoming mainstream now, it might be an opportune moment to look at how students could be trained on assessing how the University is implementing them, and supporting the students to map the institution's progress in any future sustainability report.

Finally, a good next step would be to research and celebrate the positive sustainability outcomes created by University of Leeds students, graduates and alumni. Many universities run sustainability engagement initiatives, but I am not yet aware of any that can attribute good sustainability leadership back to competencies that students develop by engaging in the University's sustainability programme.

— **Jamie Agombar**,  
Head of Sustainability, NUS

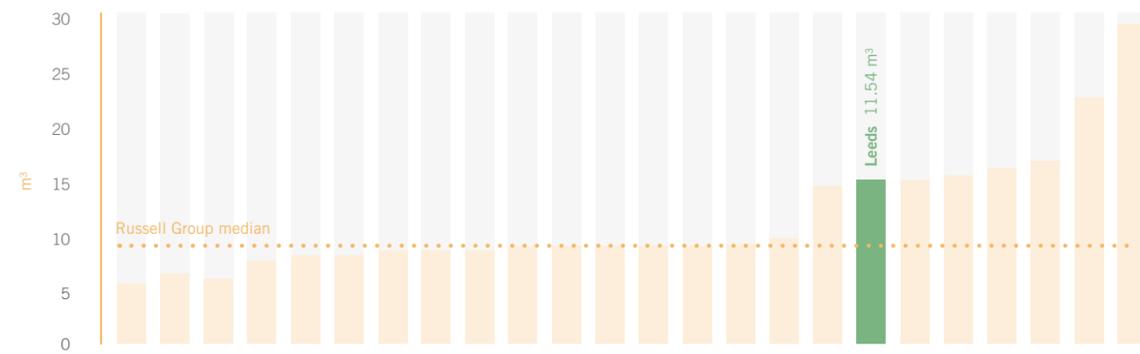


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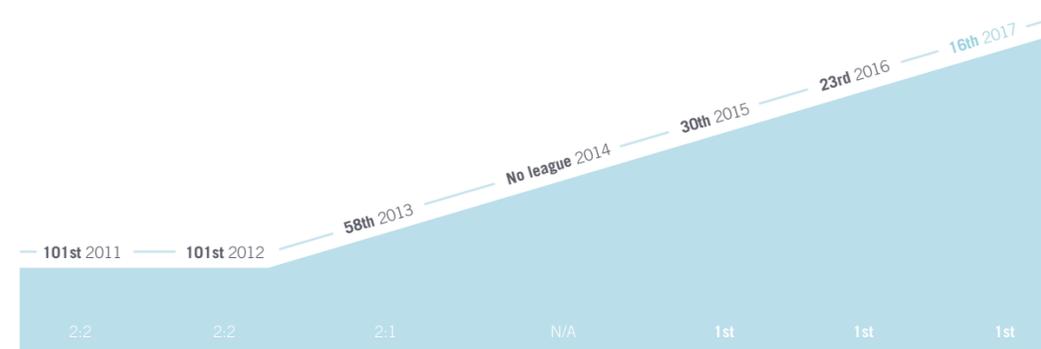
## Campus water consumption per staff and student (full-time equivalent) 2016/17

Water continues to be an area of concern. However, this year we have seen some improvement in comparison to our peers. We are moving closer to the median of the Russell Group.



## People & Planet Green league table

The People and Planet Green League ranks UK Universities on their environmental and social justice performance. We are pleased to continue to improve our performance in the Green League, improving our overall placing to 16<sup>th</sup> but also to rank 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Russell Group.



## The future

# WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2017/18?

We're always looking ahead; considering a more sustainable future. As set out in our vision to 2050, we understand the need for a long term view of sustainability.

And 2017/18 looks set to bring all this and more. Next year is filled with exciting opportunities as we continue to develop many of our projects and activities, and brand new ones are inevitably born.

We will increasingly focus on the Living Lab programme – as an exemplar of how sustainability is embedded into the way we work and the wider impact we can have. We will also strengthen our commitment to the circular economy approach, namely by revitalising our Reuse@Leeds system.

Opportunities to get involved in sustainability will increase. We are looking to develop an approach to engaging staff in sustainability, including a full review of the Green Impact programme and taking a look at our wider student opportunities to ensure everyone can develop their knowledge, understanding, and practical skills.

Our PIP programme will continue to grow, seeing our staff work with even more local third sector organisations to create mutual benefit, new partnerships and co-learning. We're also looking to develop a new School Governors Programme, an incredibly important volunteer role to help school leadership teams to set targets, policies and standards and to plan for future development. This hugely valuable experience will give even more staff and alumni the chance to give back to their local community and make a positive impact on the education of young people across the city region.

As we continue to contribute to the United Nations' Sustainability Development Goals, our global outlook will increase as our environmental, social, economic and cultural impacts are regarded through an international lens. Of course, we will continue to work with our own City of Leeds – the council, public, private and third sector partners. As an anchor institution, this enhances the sustainability of all involved and reinforces our core purpose to increase knowledge and opportunity for the betterment of society.



## Get involved

Do you want to know more about incorporating sustainability into your research? Have an idea for a reducing our impact on the environment? Know a great community group we should partner with? Or want to get involved in sustainability events?

We welcome your feedback, it helps us to improve and innovate for the future, so let us know what you think. Get in touch with the Sustainability Service, we'd love to hear from you:

 [sustainability.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:sustainability.leeds.ac.uk)

 [/UoLSustainability](https://www.facebook.com/UoLSustainability)

 [@UoL\\_Sus](https://www.instagram.com/UoL_Sus)

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**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

University of Leeds  
 Leeds, United Kingdom  
 LS2 9JT  
 Tel. 0113 243 1751  
[www.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.leeds.ac.uk)