

Sustainability Annual Report 2026

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Executive Summary

The University of Kent has made good progress in the first year of its Sustainability Strategy 2025–2030, reaching a 50% reduction in Scope 1 and 2 emissions since 2010, joining nature positive universities, maintaining ISO14001 certification, receiving external recognition through the Green Gown awards, and gaining Green Meetings and LEAF accreditations.

Progress has been strongest in Net Zero, Biodiversity and community engagement activities, with notable successes including habitat enhancement projects, expansion of Kent Community Oasis Garden, and improved waste segregation and reuse initiatives. However, delivery has been mixed across the wider strategy, with several targets and objectives remaining behind schedule.

The most significant challenges relate to Curriculum and Research Sustainability, where organisational restructuring, unclear ownership and resource constraints have delayed implementation of key commitments, including the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice. Similar governance and capacity challenges have affected delivery in other areas of the strategy.

Looking ahead, strengthening governance, accountability and delivery capacity will be critical to accelerating progress, addressing overdue actions, and preparing for the requirements of the new ISO14001:2026 standard. By building on current successes and improving delivery arrangements, the University is well placed to achieve its sustainability ambitions and enhance its environmental, social and institutional resilience.

Awards and Recognition

ISO14001 Certification

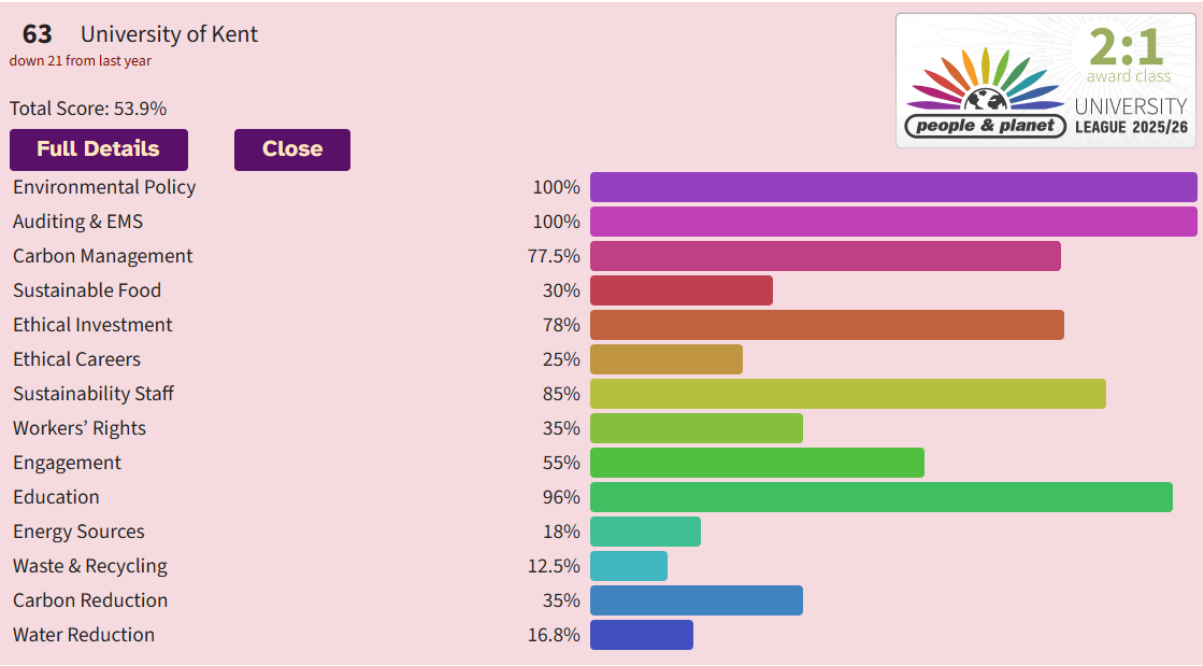
The University of Kent is certified to the internationally recognised Environmental Management System (EMS) standard ISO14001 which we have maintained since 2012. An external annual surveillance audit was completed in January 2026, and the university was recommended for continued certification.

International Green Gown Awards

Following our win in the Benefitting Society category of the UK & Ireland awards in 2024, we were awarded ‘Highly Commended’ in this year’s international awards for the work on the Right to Food initiative.

The People and Planet University League

This ranks universities on their environmental and ethical performance. In 2025 we maintained our 2:1 award but fell from 42nd to 63rd place.



Although we perform well in many areas, our score is significantly impacted by our operational performance (Energy sources, waste and recycling, carbon reduction, water reduction) which is measured based on data submitted to HESA as part of the EMR.

Green Meetings Award

Our event management service and Darwin conferencing suite were awarded the Silver Green Meetings Award, overseen by Green Tourism, in recognition of our commitment to sustainability and action to deliver sustainable conferences and events.

LEAF

Several teaching labs within the School of Natural Sciences have achieved bronze certification under the Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework – an Internationally recognised scheme developed to make labs more sustainable.

Highlights

Each year in April, to celebrate Earth Day, the Sustainability team collates an annual round-up of sustainability successes and stories from across the University. Published in the form of a web page, our sustainability successes showcase over 50 projects, initiatives and achievements from teams, student groups, individuals and university leadership.

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/sustainability/awards-and-successes/sustainability-2026>

More information about many of these initiatives are included in more detail in this report, but below is a selection of other highlights from the last 12 months:

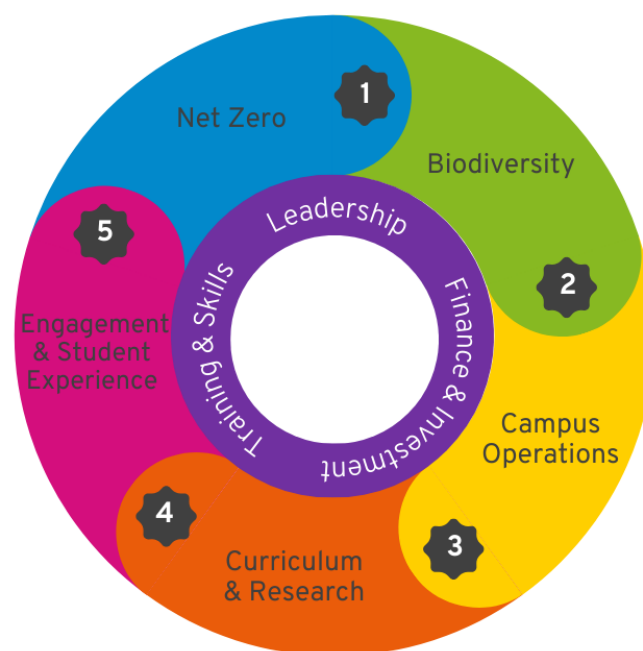
- In December 2025 we launched our new strategy for Landscape & Biodiversity, setting out our overarching plans to enhance the campus for biodiversity, engage people with natural spaces and strengthen links with learning & teaching activity.
- We hit the milestone of a 50% reduction in our scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions since 2010, putting us on track to achieve our goal to be Net Zero by 2040.
- Kent COG began its expansion into Hothe Court Farmhouse and took the first steps to refurbish the ground floor into a wellbeing in nature centre.
- The University provided support to Canterbury Climate Action Network to deliver its aims of bringing Canterbury and the surrounding district together as a network to share knowledge, experience and ideas.

- A record 450 people were involved in the 2025 BioBlitz event, recoding over 300 species on our canterbury campus.
- Over 295 tonnes of furniture have been reused through our WARP-IT platform putting us top of the leaderboard in the UK.

Sustainability Strategy

Our new Net Zero and Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 was published in July 2025 and is based on five key commitments underpinned by a number of targets and objectives. Each commitment and the associated actions will support delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Supporting the delivery these five commitments are a number of enablers which interact with the commitments.



Strategic Commitment 1 - Net Zero

"We will achieve Net Zero scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2040 and Scope 3 by 2050"



Headline Position

- Total emissions: 43,106 tCO₂e, a 14.7% reduction year-on-year.
- Scope 1 & 2: On track against interim targets.
- Scope 3: Overall reduction achieved, but key areas of underperformance emerging.

Net Zero Targets

Ref	Top-Level Objective	Target	Target Accountability	Target Met?	2024/25 Data
1.1	Reduce our operational emissions	Achieve Net Zero carbon emissions in our operations by 2040,	Director Campus Services	Yes	Target - 8839.6t Actual - 8734.3t
1.2	Reduce emissions from our supply chain	Reduce supply chain by 4% per year	Director of Finance	No	Target - 23792.5t Actual - 24163.3t
1.3	Reduce our emissions from staff and student travel	Reduce business travel emissions by 4% per year	Director of Finance	Yes	Target - 1781.6t Actual – 1579.1t
1.4		Reduce commuting emission by 4% per year	Director Campus Services	Yes	Target – 2028.3t Actual – 321t

Net Zero Strategy Objectives

Total Objectives – 15 (3 complete, 6 in progress, 6 overdue)

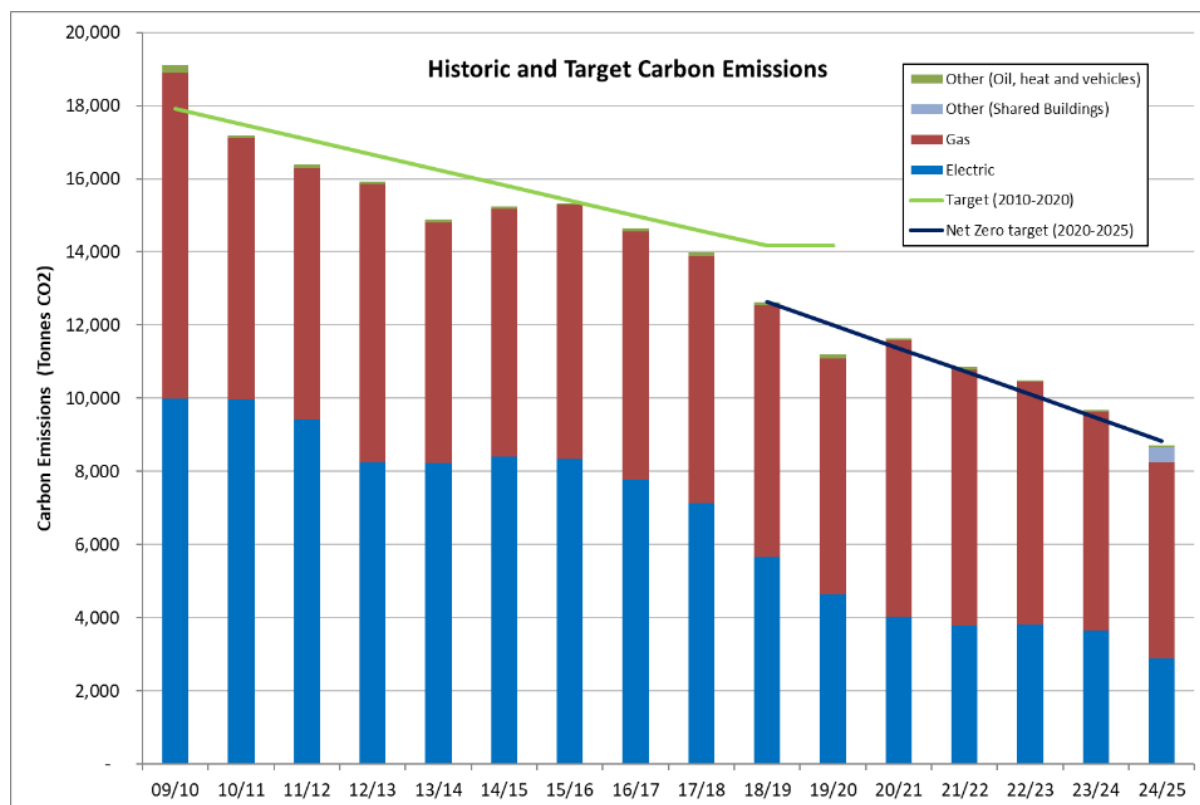
Reducing our operational (scopes 1 & 2) emissions

Scope 1 and 2 emissions reduced by 14.8% between 23/24 and 24/25 largely driven by a mild winter and resulting reduction in gas consumption and changes to the carbon intensity of electricity. Our variance against target has improved from -4.78% to 1.19% putting us on track to date.

Reductions were largely driven by a mild winter and resulting reduction in gas consumption and changes to the carbon intensity of electricity. Delivery of Siemens infrastructure projects has also contributed to the reduction.

- Lighting upgrades to 6 buildings resulting in annual energy savings of 493,349 kWh, with financial savings of £120,000/year. Additional benefits include £30,000/year in reduced maintenance costs and major improvements in space utilisation across the campus.

- The supply temperature to the buildings via the district heating network has been reduced over the winter 2024-25, and the boilers matched with the load requirements. This has resulted in a reduction in gas use in excess of ~400,000 kWh equivalent to a reduction in carbon emissions of 73 tCO₂e.



Reducing Scope 3 emissions

Overall, a reduction of 14.7% in scope 3 emissions was measured between 23/24 and 24/25. This was largely driven by changes to the carbon emissions factors for aviation leading to a significant reduction in this area.

Category	2023/24	2024/25	% Change
Supply Chain	23,767.0	24,163.3	1.7%
International Student Travel	9,225.7	4,634.9	-79.6%
Other	2,198.9	2,119.3	-3.6%
Commuting	2,112.4	431.3	-79.6%
3 rd Party Accommodation	1,531.0	1,338.0	-12.6%
Business Travel	1,342.9	1,579.1	17.6%
Water & Wastewater	94.9	96.9	2.2%
Waste	8.8	9.2	4.3%
Total	40,281.66	34,372.02	-14.7%

* Impacted by change in methodology

These reductions were largely driven by changes to the carbon emissions factors for aviation leading to a significant reduction in this area.

Work has been ongoing with procurement to improve sustainable procurement practices and to review our suppliers net zero targets. However, we are unable to demonstrate progress in this area as emissions from our supply chain are currently calculated on a spend basis. In order to demonstrate improvement, we will need to utilise specialist software and platforms to obtain data direct from suppliers. This will enable us to work directly with suppliers to reduce their emissions.

Key Risks to Delivery

Over-reliance on external factors. Reductions driven partly by mild weather, grid decarbonisation and changes to emissions factors, not structural change. There is a risk that progress may not be sustained year-on-year.

Insufficient delivery pipeline (Scope 1 & 2): Current projects identified by Siemens partnership do not meet required annual reduction (~630 tCO₂/year). Key projects such as the ground based solar project paused due to site constraints. We are likely to fall off trajectory for 2040 target without accelerated investment.

Supply chain emissions increasing: Largest emissions source (56% of total) is not yet under control with a +1.7% increase vs 4% reduction target.

Data and control limitations (Scope 3). Reliance on spend-based carbon data limits accuracy and is a weak evidence base for decision-making and progress tracking.

Oversight of business travel. Responsibility for developing a delivering business travel policy is unclear with a lack of process for encouraging sustainable modes of travel. Without policy intervention, travel emissions could continue to grow and offset gains elsewhere.

Opportunities

Accelerate Infrastructure Decarbonisation. Targeted investment could close the delivery gap for Scope 1 & 2 and reduce exposure to energy price volatility.

Embed net zero into decision-making. Integrating carbon and net zero risk into business cases and procurement would ensure future capital and operational decisions align with net zero trajectory.

Supply chain transformation. Implement supplier emissions data platforms to move beyond spend-based estimates and engage with suppliers on carbon reduction.

Strategic Commitment 2 - Biodiversity

"We will regenerate the ecology of the campuses to mitigate biodiversity loss and the decline in ecosystem services, whilst supporting the use of our natural spaces for education, engagement, and wellbeing activities."



Headline Position

- Strong progress made in establishing the strategy, evidence base, and partnerships needed to deliver the University's Nature Positive ambitions.
- Key milestones achieved in habitat mapping, biodiversity enhancement, woodland management, and reducing chemical use.
- Delivery is increasingly constrained by capacity and resourcing, requiring further investment to sustain progress.

Biodiversity Targets

Ref	Top-Level Objective	Target	Target Accountability	Target Met?	2024/25 Data
2.1	Become a Nature Positive University	Complete the biodiversity impact data collection baseline by the end of 2026	DVC Education and Student Experience	Not yet due	n/a
2.2		Map 100% of the Canterbury campus to the UK Hab standard by Sept26	DVC Education and Student Experience	Not yet due	Approx. 30%

Biodiversity Strategy Objectives

Total objectives - 11 (7 completed, 3 in progress, 1 overdue)

Become a Nature Positive University

The University has pledged to the Nature Positive Universities network which is made up of over 700 higher education institutions across the world. The pledge is a commitment to baseline the biodiversity we have on campus, as well as our impact on global biodiversity through our operations and activities as a university. Progress towards this over the last year included:

- audit of existing data on biodiversity on campus
- completion of new woodland surveys
- begun mapping campus to the UKHab standard.
- DICE commissioned to deliver Woodland Condition Assessments
- Development of a new woodland management plan

Delivering further Biodiversity Improvement Projects

Over the last year the *River* project has delivered a number of standout feature projects on campus including the river of bulbs along the Eliot footpath; a new planting scheme in the Gulbenkian flower bed; and increased meadow diversity on the Southern Slopes. These projects sit alongside previously completed projects including the nuttery in Parkwood, the apple espalier hedgerow on central campus, and the hop frame in Eliot outer courtyard. Trail posts and signage have been developed and due to be installed spring/summer 2026.

Operational Environmental Management

Published within the new Biodiversity Strategy are a new set of operational targets predominantly for the Landscape and Grounds Team that continue to reduce management impacts on campus habitats and species. The targets sit alongside 15 Landscaping Principles that guide our work and were developed with the team, with their full support.

Our priority this year has been the reduction of harmful chemical herbicides, particularly the use of Glyphosate. We are in the 2nd year of a 2-year trial where we are not using the chemical on central campus. This is allowing us to monitor the impact and weed loading on central campus, and trial alternative methods for managing them.

Key Risks to Delivery

Capacity constraints: Critical elements of the Nature Positive commitment remain unstarted, particularly the baseline assessment of global biodiversity impacts, due to limited capacity. Without this, the University cannot set credible targets or demonstrate progress.

Under-resourced delivery model: The biodiversity budget has not kept pace with the scale of the estate or rising costs. There is a risk that basic maintenance will be prioritised over enhancement, slowing or reversing progress.

Strategic alignment and reputation: Perceived tension between biodiversity ambitions and wider land use decisions risks reputational damage and undermining credibility if not clearly aligned.

Stakeholder expectations: Changes to land management (e.g. reduced herbicide use, less formal landscaping) have generated mixed feedback. There is a risk of pressure to revert to higher-impact practices, increasing costs and reducing biodiversity gains.

Opportunities

Establishing a robust baseline: Habitat mapping and surveys provide a foundation for setting measurable targets, prioritising interventions, and strengthening reporting and credibility.

Academic and student engagement: Expanding collaboration (e.g. student projects, placements) can address capacity gaps while embedding biodiversity into teaching and research.

Low-impact land management: Moving away from chemical use offers long-term ecological and cost benefits, while enhancing sustainability credentials.

Communications and engagement: Clearer, more proactive messaging can build support, reduce resistance to change, and align biodiversity work with the University's broader strategy.

Strategic Commitment 3 - Campus Operations

"We will ensure that our campuses operate in a financially, socially and environmentally sustainable manner creating buildings and facilities that are flexible, resilient and fit for the future."



Headline Position

- Progress against Campus Operations objectives has been mixed, with sustainability increasingly embedded in capital planning and improvements, and delivered in waste segregation and reuse initiatives.
- Positive operational changes demonstrate growing integration of sustainability across campus activities and decision-making.
- Delivery of several targets remains constrained by capacity and resourcing challenges, impacting the pace of progress.

Campus Operations Targets

Ref	Top-Level Objective	Target	Target Accountability	Target Met?	2024/25 Data
3.1	Ensure sustainability in the built environment	Projects to complete the sustainability assessment framework and achieve a minimum of 60%	Director Campus Services	n/a	No projects completed in timeframe
3.2		Reduce our water consumption by 2% per year	Director Campus Services	No	Target -224,491 m3 Actual - 274,867 m3
3.3		80% of relevant staff receive spill response training during induction	Director Campus Services	No	22.1%
3.4	Adopting circular economy principles	Increase the proportion of our waste that is recycled by 5%	Director Campus Services	No	Target - 40.7% Actual - 37.3%
		Reduce the amount of waste we produce by 5%		Yes	Target - 5.058 Actual - 4.642

Campus Operations Strategy Objectives

Total objectives - 10 (3 completed, 4 in progress, 4 overdue)

Ensure sustainability in the built environment.

All capital business cases now include sustainability considerations, but a lack of large-scale construction and refurbishment projects has meant there has been little opportunity to explore how use of the sustainability assessment framework can improve the sustainability of our built environment. Resource constraints have delayed any progress in utilising space utilisation data to improve efficiency.

Ensuring a resilient and sustainable campus in the future.

A detailed climate risk assessment has been developed by the Sustainability team but progress in embedding this into local campus services risk register has been delayed by resource constraints.

Adopting circular economy principles.

Over the last year, the introduction of the new separation of waste regulations has led to major changes and improvements to waste segregation and to introduction of food waste collections across both student and staff kitchen areas. Our reuse of furniture and other items continues to be incredibly successful through use of the WARP-IT reuse platform.

Key Risks to Delivery

Limited progress in sustainable estate development. A lack of major capital projects has limited use of the Sustainability Assessment Framework, creating a risk that sustainability standards are not consistently embedded into future estate development.

Resource constraints delaying delivery. Limited capacity has delayed progress on space utilisation and embedding climate risks into operational governance, reducing the University's ability to improve efficiency and resilience.

Water consumption above target. Water use remains significantly above target (274,867m³ vs 224,491m³), increasing operational costs and future resource pressures.

Low compliance training uptake. Only 22.1% of relevant staff completed spill response training, increasing the risk of environmental incidents and compliance failures.

Recycling performance below target. Although overall waste reduction targets were met, recycling rates remain below target (37.3% vs 40.7%), limiting progress towards circular economy objectives.

Opportunities

Improving operational efficiency. Better use of space utilisation and operational data could improve energy, water, and estate efficiency while reducing costs.

Strengthening climate resilience. A detailed climate risk assessment has been completed and can now be embedded into operational governance and long-term estate planning.

Expanding circular economy initiatives. Improved waste segregation, food waste collections, and strong performance of the WARP-IT reuse platform provide opportunities to reduce waste costs, improve recycling, and support sustainability goals.

Strategic Commitment 4 – Curriculum and Research

"To equip graduates with the essential skills and knowledge needed to thrive on a planet in the process of ecological collapse. We seek to draw on staff expertise throughout the university in order to develop our educational offer as one that is distinctly focused on sustainability".



Headline Position

- Progress against Curriculum and Research Sustainability targets and objectives has been limited, with no targets met and 12 of 14 actions overdue and delivery affected by restructures, unclear ownership, and capacity constraints.
- Progress on implementing the Concordat for Sustainability in Research and Innovation Practice has been slower than anticipated following changes to research service structures, with limited advancement across most priority areas.
- Work is being restarted for the next academic year, while positive progress has been made through LEAF accreditation in teaching laboratories, providing a foundation for wider adoption across research labs and supporting future funding requirements.

Curriculum and Research Targets

Ref	Top-Level Objective	Target	Target Accountability	Target Met?	2024/25 Data
4.1	Embed sustainability knowledge & skills into the curriculum	Audit 100% of the EM25 portfolio and map provision across new academic schools by Sept 2025	Director of Student Life	No	
4.2		100% of modules required to demonstrate sustainability links by September 2026	Director of Student Life	No	
4.3	Deliver sustainability in Research and Innovation	All 'wet' labs to achieve minimum Bronze level LEAF by the end of 2025	Director of Campus Services	No	Teaching labs have all achieved Bronze and 1 research lab

Curriculum and Research Strategy Objectives

Total objectives - 14 (1 completed, 1 in progress, 12 overdue)

Embed sustainability knowledge & skills into the curriculum.

There has been very little progress in this area due to restructures and staff resources. Work is now underway to restart work towards these objectives for the next academic year.

Promote employability and skills for sustainability.

There has been very little progress in this area due to restructures and staff resources. Work is now underway to restart work towards these objectives for the next academic year.

Deliver sustainability in Research and Innovation.

Responsibility for the delivery of the commitments detailed under the Concordat for Sustainability in Research and Innovation Practice signed by the University in April 2025 has been unclear following the restructure of Research services to BDRI. As such there has been very little progress across the six priority areas:

- Leadership and system change
- Sustainable infrastructure
- Sustainable procurement
- Emissions from business and academic travel
- Collaborations and partnerships
- Environmental impact and reporting data

One area where some progress has been made is in rolling out LEAF (Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework) across our teaching labs. LEAF is a sustainability accreditation scheme developed by University College London (UCL) to help laboratories and other research spaces reduce their environmental impact and is widely used by UK universities as part of their commitments under the Concordat.

Our Biosciences, Chemistry and Forensic Science teaching labs all achieved the Bronze standard in 2025. More work is needed to roll out the scheme to research labs. LEAF accreditation is currently a requirement for both Wellcome Trust and Cancer Research UK require labs to be certified and the number of funding bodies requiring this is likely to increase.

Key Risks to Delivery

Funding and compliance risk - Limited progress on Concordat commitments and LEAF rollout may reduce competitiveness for research funding as more funders introduce sustainability requirements.

Reputational risk - Failure to deliver sustainability commitments could weaken the University's credibility with students, staff, partners and funders.

Governance and delivery risk - Unclear ownership, restructuring and resource constraints continue to hinder progress and increase the likelihood of missed targets.

Graduate readiness risk - Delays in embedding sustainability within the curriculum may limit students' development of skills increasingly valued by employers.

Key Opportunities

Strengthen governance and accountability: The planned restart provides an opportunity to establish clear ownership and accelerate delivery of sustainability objectives.

Build on LEAF success: Bronze accreditation in teaching laboratories provides a proven foundation for expansion into research labs and future funding compliance.

Enhance research competitiveness: Improved delivery of Concordat commitments and LEAF accreditation can strengthen access to research funding and partnerships.

Differentiate the student offer: Embedding sustainability across the curriculum can enhance graduate employability and support Kent's strategic positioning as a sustainability-focused university.

Strategic Commitment 5 – Engagement and Student Experience

"To enhance sustainability practices, promote engagement with staff, students and public through our engagement and civic mission initiatives, and foster a positive student experience within the university and local community."



Headline Position

Progress across Engagement and Student Experience has been mixed, with delivery affected by governance and capacity challenges following the departure of the subgroup chairs. Responsibility for progressing objectives has largely transferred to the Sustainability Team, creating delivery pressures across a broad portfolio of activity. Despite this, strong progress has been made in civic engagement, wellbeing activity, and sustainability-focused student engagement, with notable successes including achieving the Green Meetings Silver Award and continued expansion of Kent Community Oasis Garden (KentCOG).

Engagement and Student Experience Targets

Ref	Top-Level Objective	Target	Target Accountability	Target Met?	2024/25 Data
5.1	Ensure our catering is sustainable, healthy and affordable	Increase vegetarian and plant-based meals sales to 28%	Director Campus Services	No	
5.2	Engage our staff and students on sustainability	Launch the Hazaar reuse platform and achieve 1000 student sign-ups by Aug 26	Director Campus Services	Not yet due	Postponed to Sept 2026
5.3	Fulfil our role as a civic university and to engage with the local community on sustainability	Achieve Green Meetings Bronze Award	Director Campus Services	Yes	Achieved Silver July 2025
5.4		Achieve Green Flag status for the Canterbury campus in July 2026	Director of Campus Services	Not yet due	Submitted January 2026

Engagement and Student Experience Strategy Objectives

Total objectives – 25 (13 complete, 2 in progress, 10 overdue)

Support health and wellbeing activities on campus and ensure our catering is sustainable, healthy and affordable.

Kent Sport has continued to expand the range of health and wellbeing activities available to staff and students. With the move to a catering partnership with Chartwells, there has been no progress on our sustainable food action plan which expired in 2025.

Engage our staff and students on sustainability.

The Sustainability team provide a range of mechanisms for staff and students to engage with sustainability through staff sustainability champions initiative and through support to student sustainability societies.

Fulfil our role as a civic university and to engage with the local community on sustainability.

Sustainability is an integral part of the universities civic mission work, in particular with the links between the Kent Community Oasis garden and the Right 2 Food initiative. The university also [provides administrative support to both the Canterbury Climate Action Network and Canterbury District Biodiversity network.

Kent Community Oasis Garden (KentCOG)

KentCOG has continued to expand its reach and impact over the past year, with strong engagement in biodiversity, food growing, and wellbeing activities. Over the last two terms, the project recorded more than 800 volunteer visits, while 275 students participated in wellbeing sessions, including the relaunched Wellbeing Café delivered in partnership with Student Support and Wellbeing at Hothe Court Farmhouse. The project is now moving into its next phase, supported by a communications strategy focused on KentCOG's three pillars: sustainable food growing, engagement with nature, and wellbeing. Expansion into the Hothe Court site continues, alongside plans to refurbish the farmhouse into a dedicated Wellbeing in Nature Centre and permanent home for KentCOG, creating a flagship space that brings together sustainability, wellbeing, and student engagement.

Key Risks to Delivery

Governance and delivery capacity. Changes in subgroup leadership have reduced strategic oversight and slowed delivery across several objectives. Without clearer accountability and resourcing, delivery momentum and long-term engagement may weaken.

Lack of progress on sustainable food objectives. Transition to the new catering partnership has delayed progress on the Sustainable Food Action Plan, which expired in 2025. Failure to refresh the sustainable food agenda may undermine health, sustainability, and student experience ambitions.

Delayed student engagement initiatives. Launch of the Hazaar reuse platform has been postponed until 2026. Delays reduce opportunities to strengthen student participation in circular economy and sustainability initiatives.

High proportion of overdue objectives. 10 of 25 objectives are currently overdue. Growing delivery backlog may impact credibility and reduce the visibility of sustainability progress across the student experience.

Opportunities

Strengthening sustainability engagement culture. Existing staff sustainability champions, student societies, and engagement programmes provide strong foundations for broader participation. A more coordinated engagement approach could embed sustainability more consistently across campus culture and student life.

Building on civic and community partnerships. The University continues to play an active role in local sustainability initiatives. Civic partnerships strengthen the University's role as a sustainability leader within the region and support community impact objectives.

Expanding KentCOG as a flagship initiative. KentCOG continues to demonstrate strong engagement. Development of the Hothe Court Farmhouse into a Wellbeing in Nature Centre creates a significant opportunity to integrate sustainability, wellbeing, food growing, and student engagement into a high-profile flagship project.

Recognition and external accreditation. Achievement of Green Meetings Silver and submission for Green Flag accreditation demonstrate positive external progress. These achievements can strengthen institutional reputation and support recruitment, engagement, and civic positioning.

Environmental Management System

The University of Kent maintains certification to the ISO14001 Environmental Management System (EMS) standard across its Canterbury and Medway campuses, including outsourced services. The EMS provides the framework for managing environmental performance, compliance, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

As part of annual internal and external review processes, an external surveillance audit was completed in January 2026. The University was recommended for continued certification with no non-conformances identified, and several areas of best practice were highlighted.

Key Findings and Recommendations

- Strengthen sustainability governance and reporting arrangements to improve leadership oversight and accountability.
- Improve Executive Group review and oversight of environmental performance data and sustainability targets.
- Embed environmental and climate risks more consistently within institutional risk management, business planning, and business continuity processes.
- Introduce clearer escalation and accountability mechanisms where sustainability targets are not achieved.
- Ensure governance arrangements are reviewed and aligned as part of the proposed merger with the University of Greenwich, taking advantage of opportunities to adopt more mature governance structures.
- Strengthen oversight and assurance arrangements for outsourced services, particularly catering operations following transition to Chartwells.
- Update business continuity documentation to better reflect environmental risks and pollution prevention responsibilities.

Overall, the outcomes were positive and confirmed the effectiveness of the current EMS. However, they also highlighted the importance of strengthening governance, assurance, and risk management arrangements to support continuous improvement and organisational change.

Upcoming Changes to ISO14001

The new ISO14001:2026 standard was published in April 2026. The university will need to transition to the new standard over the next 1-2 years.

The revised standard significantly expands the University's responsibilities and accountability for environmental performance. Key implications include:

- **Greater oversight of suppliers and outsourced services:** Environmental expectations will need to be embedded more strongly within procurement, supplier evaluation, and outsourced operations such as catering, with these activities incorporated into the EMS and audit processes.
- **Increased leadership accountability:** Executive Group members will be expected to demonstrate visible commitment to environmental performance and ensure the EMS is integrated into institutional strategy and decision-making.
- **Embedding sustainability into teaching and research:** The updated standard places greater emphasis on lifecycle impacts, requiring stronger integration of sustainability skills within teaching and embedding sustainability principles across research activity.
- **Stronger sustainability governance for institutional change:** New requirements around planning and managing change will require sustainability risk assessments to be incorporated into strategic projects and organisational change processes.
- **Enhanced focus on risk and opportunity management:** The University will need to strengthen its approach to identifying, assessing, and managing environmental risks and opportunities, including links to business continuity planning.
- **Improved evidence and performance reporting:** Greater emphasis will be placed on demonstrating measurable environmental improvement, requiring stronger data collection, monitoring, and potentially the development of digital dashboards to support reporting and assurance.