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go!
Your sustainable
choices matter.

Sustainable living guide

By the
University Sustainability Team



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**Leading the
charge against
climate change.**

go!

Your sustainable
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Introduction

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges humanity is facing. Scientists agree that it's driven by human activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes, which are increasing atmospheric greenhouse gases (GHGs).

Couple this with a global decline in wildlife and the depletion of natural resources and you get a planet that cannot sustain the developed world's current way of living.

But, if it's human activities got us here, there are actions we can all take to reverse the situation. Everyone has a part to play, everyone can make a difference.

Thinking about how we all travel, use energy, shop and bank... this is our chance to make a change for the better. Even the smallest actions add up to big impacts, like eating a more plant-based diet and avoiding single-use plastics. **Change is possible when we all work together.**



It can be difficult and overwhelming knowing where to start – especially as a student. So we've put this guide together to help make things a little easier. It includes tips and links to useful websites, apps and places. Our aim is not that you do absolutely everything, but rather that you find it a useful reference and encouragement for living a more sustainable life.

**Make a
change.
Make a
difference.**

The Sustainability Team

go!

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choices matter.

Travel



Transport was the largest GHG emitting sector in the UK in 2024, responsible for 30% of net GHG emissions.¹ Here are some ways of making your travel more sustainable.

Around Nottingham

Taking public transport

- A number of bus services run between Nottingham city centre and all our campuses. Find out more about local bus services [here](#).
- Local transport operators [NET](#), [Nottingham City Transport \(NCT\)](#) and [CT4N](#) offer discounted rates to students.

Cycle instead of taking a bus or car. Good for your health and good for your pocket!



- There are lots of cycle routes around Nottingham to make cycling easier. View this [Nottingham Cycle Map](#).
- [Nottingham Bikeworks](#) sell refurbished bikes at affordable prices. Occasionally they hold bike sales on campus. Keep an eye on the UoN Sustainability social media to find out when!
- [Dr Bike sessions](#), where you get free bike service, are regularly run at different places around campus. [Subscribe to our newsletter](#) to get a monthly update of the times and locations.
- There are lots of places around campus [to lock your bike](#). For extra security we recommend you use one of the university card-access bike sheds.

Travelling between campuses

- View the [hopper bus timetables](#) to get between campuses.
- Sometimes it may be quicker to walk than to take the bus. Here are some walking times between common locations.

Coates Building (University Park)

8 Portland Building (University Park)

18 10 Humanities Building (University Park)

13 19 27 Advanced Manufacturing Building (Jubilee)

23 29 37 10 Exchange Building (Jubilee)

25 30 38 23 33 King's Meadow



Around the country

Travel between Nottingham and home by train or coach instead of going by car. The carbon footprint from travelling by coach or rail to London from Nottingham is about 10kg of CO₂. It's about 40kg if you travel by car, and about 70kg if someone drives from London to pick you up!²

- Coach travel is an affordable method of transport between cities around the UK. Go to [this website](#) to see the options available for your journey.
- [Click here](#) for a railcard for 16-25 year olds that will give you a 1/3 off your train ticket.

Food



Agriculture has a huge environmental footprint. It is the leading driver of deforestation, requires significant fresh water and overall, our global food system accounts for 30% of our worldwide GHG emissions.³ Here are some tips to reduce the environmental impact of your food.

Understand your ‘foodprint’

A good place to start is to work out your diet's carbon footprint. [Use this interesting tool from the BBC to see what food has the biggest impact](#). You might be surprised by a few things.

Eat more plant-based food

What you eat is much more important than where it comes from.⁴ Transport accounts for very little of food's carbon footprint. To stop global temperature increasing, we need to reduce the amount of meat and dairy we're eating by more than half by 2030.⁵



Food waste

Given the resources and costs that go into making food, it's shocking that 30% of all food produced doesn't even get consumed³. In the UK, 4.7 million tonnes of food is thrown away by people at home⁶. But you can be part of the solution.

Make a meal plan to reduce waste. Plan what you are going to eat to minimise the risk of buying more than you need.

Batch cook meals and freeze extra portions – saving you time and money later one when you need a quick meal.

Cook with friends and flatmates. A good excuse to get together whilst also avoiding food waste.

Give away food you are not going to eat.

- If the food is unopened and long life, consider taking it to a food bank. There are several on campus including the [Portland Building](#). A list of foodbanks around Nottingham can be found [here](#).
- If it is opened or needs to be kept in a fridge or freezer, you can give it away on the app, [Olio](#). You can also get other people's unwanted food for free!

Download Too Good to Go. [Too Good to Go](#) is an app that allows you to buy surplus food from cafes, restaurants and shops for a reduced price that would otherwise go to waste. Most [university cafes](#) sell surplus food through the app.



Energy and Water



The proportion of energy we get from renewable sources is increasing, but in 2024, 39% of GHG emissions in the UK still came from the burning of fossil fuels for heat and electricity.⁸

Reduce energy use

The best place to start when trying to save energy – and money – is to reduce demand for it in the first place. The less you use, the less you'll pay and the less CO₂ emissions it will create.

Energy tips

Here are our top energy tips to save money and CO₂

	Turn down the thermostat and layer up Every 1-degree reduction saves up to 10% on your energy bill	£135 240kg CO ₂
	Plug any drafts Doors, windows, floorboards, skirting and fireplaces	£126 38kg CO ₂
	Air-dry laundry It takes 3x more energy to dry your clothes than to wash them	£122 68kg CO ₂
	Wash at 30 degrees 80% of energy used in wash cycles is to heat the water	£71 41kg CO ₂
	Don't leave appliances on standby Around 8% of a household's energy use is wasted on standby	£68 38kg CO ₂
	Turn off heating in unoccupied rooms Only heat the rooms you use and keep the doors shut	£55 98kg CO ₂

Figures from: www.gov.uk

- There are lots [more energy tips](#) on the [sustainability webpages](#).
- If you live in on campus catered halls, take part in the [halls energy competition](#) to win prizes – go! Greener.

Reduce water use

Water also has a carbon footprint. In fact, it accounts for 6% of all carbon emissions in the UK. The bulk of the emissions comes from the energy used to heat water in the home and the rest comes from pumping and treating water as part of the supply and sewage network.¹⁰

Reduce how much water you use in the shower or bath.

- Take shorter showers – maybe try a shower timer to help you keep to sub-5-minute showers.
- Run a shallower bath. Reducing your bath by just 2.5cm saves about 5 litres of water!
- Don't keep the tap running whilst you brush your teeth and wash your hands.

Use your dishwasher. If you fill your dishwasher to capacity, you'll use less water than if you wash your dishes by hand.

Use leftover water for watering plants. Water used for cooking pasta, rice or vegetables has lots of nutrients so let it cool and then use it to water your plants!



Fashion



Cheap 'fast fashion' is causing the fashion industry to produce 10% of all humanity's carbon emissions and is the second-largest consumer of the world's water supply. Clothing quality is decreasing; made of polyester (a form of plastic) items are worn less and 85% ends up in landfill⁷.

The British Fashion Council has said that world has enough clothing to dress the next six generations so here are some ways you can reduce your fashion impact and still dress to impress.

Buy less, buy better

Prioritise quality over quantity. It's wiser to invest in a smaller amount of durable clothing that will last, rather than buying numerous 'fast fashion' garments that quickly wear out and get thrown out.

If you can, buy from shops that are environmentally conscious. [Good on You](#) lets you find out how brands are doing from the point of view of sustainability, labour and animal welfare. You can also use it to find new shops that are environmentally conscious.

Get what you can second-hand and save some pennies too.

- Look out for vintage clothes sales and clothes swaps happening on campus.
- Nottingham has lots of charity shops with great selections of clothing. [White Rose](#), in particular, picks out the items it sells such that there is a great quality of choice.
- [Depop](#) and [Vinted](#) are platforms on which you can buy and sell second-hand clothing.



Look after your clothes to help them last longer. [This list](#) gives lots of helpful tips for looking after your clothes.

Pass clothes on

If you no longer want an item of clothing and it's still wearable, give it to a friend, donate it or sell it on (see the suggestions above).

If you have clothes that are not in good enough condition to pass on, you can:

- Get creative and upcycle them into something else.
- Use them as cleaning rags.
- Recycle them! Here are some places that take textile recycling:
 - [Sainsbury's, Castle Boulevard](#)
 - [Sainsbury's Beeston](#)
 - [British Heart Foundation Donation Banks](#)

Waste



In 2023, UK households alone produced over 26 million tonnes of waste – of which, only 46% was recycled.¹³ The rest mostly gets burnt or buried. Buying and owning less stuff is not only good for the planet, it can actually make you [feel happier](#). And less plastic in the world would certainly make us all healthier.

[Start by assessing where you're at](#). This [waste audit table](#) from Zero Waste Week helps you do exactly that. Why not challenge yourself to record everything you throw away in a week and identify where you could improve?

Reduce

The most environmentally friendly product is the one you didn't buy. Pausing to consider if something is really needed means we're less likely to buy on impulse.

[Buy the best you can afford](#). It's tempting to always go for the cheap options, but you will pay out more in the long run when you have to replace frequently. For example, rechargeable batteries.

[Avoid disposable items or those with excessive packaging](#). Buy loose fruit and veg or take your own containers to the deli counters of supermarkets and when buying takeaway items in cafes – including those on campus. Use washable cloths instead of disposable wipes or paper towels.

[Shop at zero waste shops](#). Bring your own containers – jars, bottles, takeaway tubs – and fill them with pasta, beans, shower gel, washing up liquid etc.

- [Shop Zero](#) in Nottingham city centre and online, focuses on quality sustainable goods with minimal packaging.
- [Waste Nott](#) in Sherwood, Nottingham, opened as a community project to provide an alternative to packaged food retailers.
- [The Good Weigh](#) in West Bridgford makes it easy for you to shop plastic free.



Reuse

Make your things last longer. Use [repair cafes](#), or [learn how to repair](#) clothes, tech, or household items yourself. If you live in on campus halls, ResX often run repair workshops for free.

Rent and borrow instead of buying. [Library of Things](#) exist in [Beeston](#) and [Loughborough](#). They hold things that you might only need a few times a year. Think PA systems for that party your having (and a carpet cleaner for after!).

Refill a water bottle instead of ever having to buy bottled water again. Lots of places will fill up your bottle for free if you ask nicely and there are [water fountains](#) across campus.



Use reusable coffee cups. University catering outlets operate the Latte Levy - save 20p on every drink when you use a reusable takeaway cup. There's an additional 20p charge for using a disposable cup. This means customers can **save up to 40p** on their drinks just by using their own cup.

If you're buying three drinks a week, you could **save around £50 a year!**

Shop second-hand and pass on the items you no longer want. Most second-hand stuff is cheaper than new or even free, so it's good for your wallet as well. [Some places to try:](#)

- [Freecycle](#) and [Freecycle](#) - People advertise items they no-longer want **for free**.
- Facebook marketplace - integrated within Facebook, users can buy, sell, and trade various items with others in their local community.
- [Gumtree](#) - buy and sell almost anything.
- [Vinted](#) - an online platform where individuals can buy, sell, and swap second-hand clothing and accessories.
- [Depop](#) – a mobile app that allows users to create their own online shops to buy and sell vintage, pre-owned, and unique items, with a focus on fashion and lifestyle products.
- Local charity shops – some top charity shop spots are Beeston, Hockley in Nottingham and Loughborough.

Recycle

If you've already succeeded in reducing waste, make sure what's left is Recycled Right. Only 9% of plastic gets recycled globally!¹⁴ In 2025, that is shocking.

Check what is and isn't recyclable for your kerbside collection or hall recycling:

- [On campus](#)
- [Nottingham City Council](#)
- [Broxtowe Council \(Beeston\)](#)
- [Northwest Leicestershire District Council \(Kegworth\)](#)
- [Recycle Now](#)

Recycling must be **clean and dry!**

Packaging that has become greasy – like pizza boxes – is no longer recyclable.

Find out where to recycle other things:

- Clean soft plastics (e.g. yogurt pot lids, pasta bags and bread bags) can be placed in campus recycling bins, but council collections don't tend to collect them. Supermarkets that recycle soft plastics include:
 - Sainsbury's, Castle Boulevard, Nottingham
 - Most Co-op's including: Market Place, Kegworth; University Boulevard, Beeston
- Clothes, shoes, books, furniture, video games, cooking equipment, crockery and pretty much anything else* can be recycled at the [British Heart Foundation donation banks](#) found on campus and in the community.
- Household batteries can be put in [UoN battery bins](#). Batteries must be disposed of correctly as they are hazardous, causing fires at several local recycling plants. Mobile phone batteries, cordless tool batteries and vehicle batteries, are all accepted at [recycling centres](#).
- [Pens can be recycled in most UON libraries](#).
- If you are based in labs as part of your studies, you should be familiar with the [waste initiatives](#) that exist within them.



*Duvets, pillows and sharp objects are not accepted.

Finance



Where you *save* your money is just as important as how and where you spend it.

Banks, insurers and pension funds use our money to invest in a wide range of industries to generate profit. Sadly, many of the most 'profitable' industries are [unethical and damaging to the environment](#). In 2023, the Big 5 UK high street banks (Barclays, Natwest, HSBC, Santander, Lloyds) provided \$55billion to fossil fuel companies.¹¹

Choosing to put your money in a bank, pension or investment with sustainable policies is one of the most powerful ways to fight the climate crisis.

Banking

Find out how your money is used, and which banks and investors are reliable and ethical with the 'Money' section of the [Good Shopping Guide](#).

If you leave a bank because of their destructive practices, let them know.

The more people that do this, the more likely they are to change. The [Make My Money Matter](#) campaign have support, templates and information to help you.

For more information about banking ethically, read this [guide from Students Organising for Sustainability](#).



Pensions

Research by [Make My Money Matter](#) shows that for every £10 you put in your pension, £2 is linked to deforestation. And yet UK pensions have the potential to invest over £1 trillion in climate solutions by 2035.

If you have a pension (you may have been auto-enrolled in one when you started a job), ensuring it is invested ethically could be the most powerful single action you for the climate.

[Take action with the Make my money matter campaign.](#)

Get Involved



Campaigning

For big change to happen, we need to put pressure on those in power.

Engage in politics!

- **Vote!** Vote for, campaign for and support candidates who champion emissions reductions. Make sure you are [registered whilst at uni](#).
- **Writing to your local MP** on an issue shows them what their constituents care about. Imagine if we all did this, they'd be unable to ignore us. Campaigns by environmental groups often have template emails you can send to your MP. Find your MP and how to contact them [here](#).



Sign petitions. Show politicians and companies that you care by signing petitions calling on them to act. [Current Greenpeace Petitions](#).

Participate in non-violent political movements. Within 2 months of Extinction Rebellion's initial protests in London in 2019, the UK declared a climate emergency and adopted a target of net-zero emissions by 2050. Lots can be achieved by large groups of people making noise.

Talk about the emergency on planet Earth. With your peers, with your family, with your social media followers.

Student societies

If you want to spend time helping to look after the planet and meeting other people wanting to do the same, here are some suggestions.

- [UoN Sustainability Society](#) – 'We are a student led society enabling people who care about reducing their impact on the environment to get together and meet people with similar views. We are also encouraging others to live more sustainably in our current climate emergency.'

- [UoN Conservation Society](#) – ‘At ConSoc we’re all about hands on conservation in and around Nottingham! We get involved with habitat management, litter picking and like to grow our own food in our garden. Join us to get out in nature and to give back to the community.’
- [UoN VegSoc](#) – ‘Vegetarian and Vegan Society aims to create a community for students interested in reducing their animal product consumption. Our socials usually focus on socialising over delicious veggie food in various veggie-friendly restaurants around the city! We welcome everyone: from seasoned vegans to the plant-curious.’
- [UoN Green Economy Society](#) – ‘Our goal is to teach and develop concepts of sustainable innovation and economics. We publish our quarterly 50-page Sustainable Business Review and run guest speaker events and workshops to develop sustainable business models and participate in international competitions.’

Work experience



- [Conservation Wednesdays](#) Join hands-on sessions with the university grounds team and the Conservation Society on [Wednesdays](#) during term time. Learn practical skills and meet new people. Everyone welcome.
- Find lots of [volunteering opportunities](#) on the [Students' Union's website](#).
- [Foodprint](#) is a social enterprise started by students at UoN, selling surplus food at greatly reduced prices through their low-cost social supermarket in Sneinton.
- [Charity shops](#) Volunteer a few hours to help reduce waste and raise money for a good cause.
- The university’s [Sustainability Team](#) can support short term work experience for students on a range of projects.

Use your studies

Can you incorporate an environmental issue into your degree? If needed, the [Sustainability Team](#) can help you develop an idea to use for a project or dissertation.

Summary

Calculate your footprint

Whilst this guide is full of useful ideas, to really understand the areas in your life where you personally can make changes that will have the biggest impact, calculate your environmental footprint. It's not perfect, but it's a good place to start.

This [calculator from WWF](#) is one of the best.

Go big or go home

Let's be honest, recycling and using paper straws aren't going to save the planet. We all need to think bigger. Ultimately, the most impactful actions we can take are:

1. Consume less stuff
2. Eat more plant-based
3. Reduce your flights
4. Ditch the car
5. Bank ethically
6. Vote and make your voice count

[Take the Jump](#) have six similar shifts to try to protect our Earth and live with joy – all based on science. They also have practical guides to help you make these changes.

What is UoN doing?

We're committed to being truly sustainable and are taking a stand against climate change. We've pledged to become carbon neutral by 2040 and to reduce our carbon emissions by more than half by 2030. By completing some of the actions we've listed here, you can truly help us in getting there.

Find out more and keep up to date:



[@UoNSustainability](#)



www.nottingham.ac.uk/sustainability



[Read and sign up to our newsletter](#)



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**It's time
to act.**



Sources

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3. Around 30% of all greenhouse gas emissions come from the food and drink industry
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14. Half of the world's plastic still goes straight to landfill. Another fifth is mismanaged.
<https://ourworldindata.org/plastic-pollution?insight=only-a-small-share-of-plastic-gets-recycled#key-insights>