



Aston University

BIRMINGHAM UK

Aston University 2023-24 Sustainability and Sustainable Development Report

For All People, Through Our People





2023-24 Sustainability and Sustainable Development Report

Chief Operations Officer Richard Billingham Foreword

At Aston University, sustainability has always been a core priority of our operations and activities. Our achievements, such as strong performances in the [Times Higher Education Impact Ranking](#) and [QS Sustainability Ranking](#), along with our continued ISO 14001 Environmental Management and 50001 Energy Management certifications, reflect this commitment.

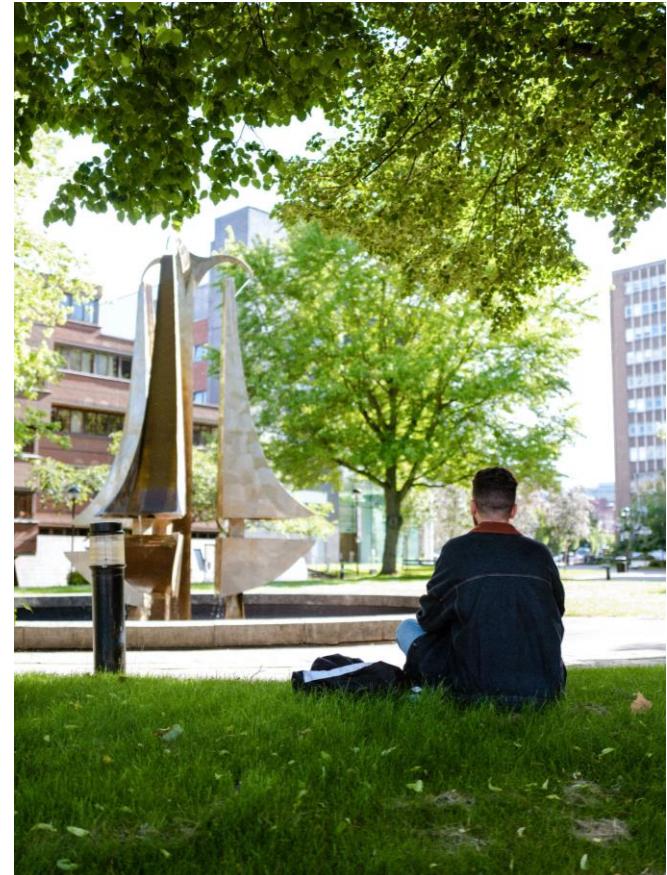
This report reaffirms our commitment to enabling Sustainable Development in our institution and highlights the significant strides we've made over the past year in advancing our Sustainability Strategy. It also marks the end point of our current [Sustainability Strategy](#).

We are in the process of developing a new Sustainability Strategy, closely aligned with Aston's 2030 Strategy and the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To strengthen our 2030 Sustainability Strategy, we are assessing our sustainability efforts to align these with best practices in the higher education sector and available resources.

This new Strategy will allow us to streamline decision-making processes, enabling more efficient procedures and changes in areas where our efforts can be maximised, and setting us on a path to achieve our environmental goals.

With these initiatives, we are poised to continue making bold strides toward becoming a more sustainable and ethically responsible institution, fulfilling our commitment for **All People**, through the work of **Our People**.





2023-24 Sustainability and Sustainable Development Report

Sustainability Vision

Aston University is dedicated to making sustainability and social responsibility a core component of its practices, benefitting its three main stakeholders: students, staff, and the broader community. The goal is for all students and staff to incorporate sustainable values into their daily activities, enhancing both local and global impacts.

The following report will demonstrate the most significant actions we have taken towards enabling Sustainable Development in our campus and community between 1st August 2023 and July 31st, 2024.





2023-24 Sustainability and Sustainable Development Report

Sustainability Strategy

Aston University's sustainability efforts are directed by their comprehensive [Sustainability Strategy](#), which aims to embed sustainability and social responsibility into all facets of the university's operations.

This strategy is aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is integrated into the university's academic triangle: Education, Research, and Operations.

Our sustainability strategy is implemented through specific objectives that are crucial to our community and aligned with our capacity for substantial progress.

The following pages will outline the Sub-objectives of our strategy, our governance and examples of the work being done for each SDG in our institution.





2023-24 Sustainability and Sustainable Development Report

Objective 1: Sustainable Campus

Sustainable Campus aims to reduce environmental impact and conserve resources. Managed by the Sustainable Campus Work team, it includes enhancing ISO 14001 and ISO 50001 systems, cutting carbon emissions and energy use, lowering water consumption, boosting recycling, supporting biodiversity, and promoting sustainable travel.

Objective's Supported SDGs:



Objective 2: Sustainable Communities

Strategy includes fostering Sustainable Communities by engaging with regional, national, and international stakeholders to integrate sustainable practices. This involves forming partnerships to extend sustainability efforts beyond the campus and contribute to broader environmental and social goals, reflecting the university's commitment to driving positive change in various communities.

Objective's Supported SDGs:



Objective 3: Sustainable Development in Academic Activities

This Objective aims to embed sustainability and social responsibility into both formal and informal education. This includes integrating sustainability into the curriculum and supporting related research, ensuring that students and staff contribute to and engage in sustainable development, and fostering a culture of environmental stewardship and social responsibility.

Objective's Supported SDGs:





2023-24 Sustainability and Sustainable Development Report

Sustainability Governance

To enable the delivery of our strategy, a governance structure is in place to allow for effective internal reporting sustainability.

Within this structure, the Sustainability Strategy Steering Group (SSSG) has overall responsibility for managing and overseeing the delivery of Aston University's Sustainability Strategy.

Reporting into SSSG sit 3 work/steering groups. Each group is responsible for its namesake objective, progressing on work and reporting progress against their Key SDGs.

The SSSG is chaired by Aston University's Chief Operating Officer, and its purpose is to advise the University Senior Leadership Group (USLG) on all strategic matters relating to the Sustainability Strategy.

The SSSG is also responsible for reviewing the Sustainability Strategy on behalf of the USLG and keeping this group regularly informed of progress made in implementing any initiatives.





SDG 1: No Poverty

Bursaries and Scholarships

Aston University provides diverse bursaries for financial support. One example is The Peter N Roberts Expendable Bursary, which aids Engineering and Applied Science students. In 2023 three £750 bursaries were offered to prioritise first-generation university students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Another example is the Aston Placement Scholarship award, which provides £1,250 to support living expenses during a placement year. In the 2023/24 cohort, 65% of students on placement who applied for the award have received financial support through Placement and Bursaries, with 6.8% securing placements overseas.

These activities support the university's efforts to enhance access to education, thereby reducing inequalities through bursaries. Additionally, A large portion of our students come from international backgrounds, with some hailing from developing countries. We provide a variety of financial support options through Scholarships to ensure that finances do not hinder students' learning opportunities, including:

- The Aston Bursary
- The Aston Placement Scholarship Bursary
- The Vice Chancellor Achievement Scholarship
- The Aston Forward Scholarship
- The Ernest Edward Scholarship for Asylum Seekers





SDG 2: Zero Hunger

Aston Sikh Society - Langar

Each year, the Aston Sikh Society brings Langar to campus, providing over 1,800 students and staff with free vegetarian meals prepared at the Gurdwara in West Bromwich.

This tradition of communal dining fosters inclusivity and selfless service, allowing everyone to eat together and strengthen their community spirit.

Students and staff unite to serve and celebrate the harmony demonstrated through sharing food. One of Langar's core objectives is to ensure that no one goes hungry, reflecting the motto of our student-led society.



Chance for Change - Enactus Aston

The 'Chance for Change' project, started by Enactus Aston, has significantly aided 70 refugees in Birmingham by offering entrepreneurial resources and addressing food insecurity, language and employment barriers to foster integration.

Funded by the Enactus Global Recipe Book and in partnership with Sodexo Stop Hunger, this project has enabled two female entrepreneurs to embark on their food business journey and gain insights into food sustainability with Sodexo's UK chefs.





SDG 3: Good Health and Well Being

Aston Students Union Pantry & Free breakfast

ASU Pantry and Free Breakfast initiatives support students facing the cost-of-living crisis, by promoting well-being through appropriate nutrition. The Free Breakfast initiative happens every Wednesday, 40 students enjoy free breakfast. The ASU Pantry serves 122 students weekly, providing cooking equipment, and essential food items

Additionally, over 200 students participated in four "Bring Your Own Bowl" events, where free meals were provided to students and over 20 Food packages were also delivered. This resource promotes a culture of sharing, allowing students to take what they need and contribute any excess food, fostering a sense of community and solidarity among students.

Hygiene Poverty - A Priority

Hygiene poverty is a significant issue impacting those who cannot afford essential personal hygiene products. In response, Aston University has launched an initiative to provide free period products at multiple campus locations.

This effort was led by Alison Levey, Former Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students, and Andy Keogh, Facilities Officer at the Estates & Capital Development department. The team has also partnered with our Students' Union and Women's Officer to introduce a new program offering free period products to our students.





SDG 3: Good Health and Well Being

Martin Luther King Multi-Faith Centre

The Martin Luther King Multi-Faith Centre offers a variety of weekly events for students and staff in collaboration with the Students' Union, Faith Societies, University staff, and Unite Students Accommodation to support community wellbeing.

- **The Mindfulness Group:** Provides a space to learn mindfulness techniques, stay present, and manage stress.
- **Games Session:** Allows students to bond with new acquaintances or reconnect with old friends in a relaxed setting.
- **The Grief Café:** Serves as a compassionate environment for navigating grief.
- **Wellbeing Meditation:** Session focuses on integrating mind and body.



Wellbeing Day

Aston Students' Union has established a dedicated Wellbeing department focused on promoting student welfare, health, and wellbeing through various innovative initiatives. Key projects include the Aston Canal Garden, which involves student and staff participation in gardening and maintenance activities, fostering physical activity and community engagement.

The Wellbeing Days, themed "Happiness & Balancing a Student Wellbeing Lifestyle" offered activities such as jewellery making, tarot card readings, relaxation rooms, and beauty sessions, while the 'Well-fair' connected students with support services.



SDG 4: Quality Education

Green Advantage

The Green Advantage Courses seeks to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to advance sustainable development.

These short courses are tailored for business leaders, managers, and professionals to grasp the impact of climate and environmental challenges on their businesses while maintaining performance and profitability.

This initiative has trained numerous organizations and individuals to integrate SDGs into their business practices. To date, it has engaged 195 learners. Over the past five cohorts, 96 learners have actively participated in the program.

Redesigning the Classes

The School of Bioscience at Aston University has launched a project to incorporate sustainability into undergraduate education.

This initiative develops virtual learning resources on sustainability, with students' contributions.

Undergraduate students identified ways to reduce the carbon footprint of practical classes, which will be presented at the Advanced HE T&L conference in 2024.



Accredited institution



Responsible Futures

Aston University has maintained its Responsible Futures accreditation from Students Organising for Sustainability UK, recognizing its efforts to integrate sustainability and social responsibility into the curriculum.

This followed a student-led audit that assessed the University's progress in sustainability awareness. Aston also received a 'Very Good' rating in the SOS-UK Green Impact Students' Unions program.



SDG 4: Quality Education

Environment and Sustainability Team Education Activities

Living Labs and Placements: The Environment and Sustainability Team (EST) within the Estates and Capital Development department offers project-based work and placement opportunities to students, enhancing sustainability efforts on-campus while providing valuable professional development.

Since the 2022-23 academic year, two students have completed business-related projects or dissertations focused on the University's energy systems, including methods to reduce carbon emissions and a dashboard for monitoring carbon output.

Additionally, since 2021, three placement students have worked under the Environment and Sustainability Manager, gaining hands-on experience with SDGs, and contributing to campus sustainability. These opportunities were to enrich students' learning experiences by providing practical skills in sustainability.

Environmental Training: The EST has developed a course to educate staff and students on sustainability topics such as SDGs, Waste and Energy Management, and sustainability governance.

The course provides an overview of our strategic approach, defines roles and responsibilities, and explores the connection between work and SDGs.

By the end of the course, participants understand what sustainability and sustainable development mean on our campus, including the relevant practices, policies, and actions. Ultimately, the course is designed to ensure that all members of the university community are well-informed and actively engaged in sustainability efforts.



SDG 5: Gender Equality

Women at Aston Network

Aston University advances SDG 5 Gender Equality through its "Aspiring Women at Aston" network, which supports over 170 members with peer-to-peer assistance and relevant information on women's health and opportunities. Monthly meetings at local cafés foster community and engagement.

The university also hosts various events during International Women's Week, addressing topics like neurodiversity, diet, and nutrition through a gender lens. Since 2017, Aston has supported the Women of the Year awards, celebrating women's achievements. In collaboration with Citizens UK, Aston launched a Women in Community Leadership course, enhancing the development and confidence of 20 women leaders in their communities.

Women in STEM

Aston University, in collaboration with the British Council's Women in STEM Scholarships, is committed to empowering women and girls to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

This year, with support from the British Council, Aston University is proud to offer five fully funded scholarships, and three early-career researchers are expanding their research globally through the Aston Institute of Photonic Technologies.

Supporting early-career female researchers in expanding their work on a global scale promotes women's leadership and participation in high-impact research, aligning with a target to ensure full and effective participation of women everywhere.



SDG 5: Gender Equality

CyberKali Initiative

Aston Business School's Cyber Security Innovation Centre launched the CyberKali Initiative to inspire young women to pursue careers in cybersecurity. Supported by the Department for Science and Innovation and the UK National Cyber Security Centre, the initiative included key events like the Cyber-Women Conference, Capture the Flag, and CyberKali Explorer Day.

The program engaged 300 female students from Year 8 through to university level, with 100 Year 8 students from Birmingham schools participating in Explorer Day. Led by an all-women team, CyberKali 2024 supports SDG 5 by empowering young women in cybersecurity, challenging gender stereotypes, and addressing the gender .



Aston Women in Engineering, Science & Technology

The Women in Engineering, Science, and Technology Society (WEST) at Aston University is dedicated to creating a more inclusive STEM environment, with a focus on women and underrepresented minorities, promoting diversity, and empowerment.

Addressing the "leaky pipeline," especially for Black women in STEM, WEST provides supportive spaces for its members. Through its spin-off, WEST C.I.C., the society works on innovative projects like improving garri-frying processes in Nigeria using sustainable energy, contributing to clean energy and economic growth.

WEST also champions gender equality and strives to increase representation in STEM through events like "Speed Networking" and collaborations with professionals.



SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Water Consumption and Disposal

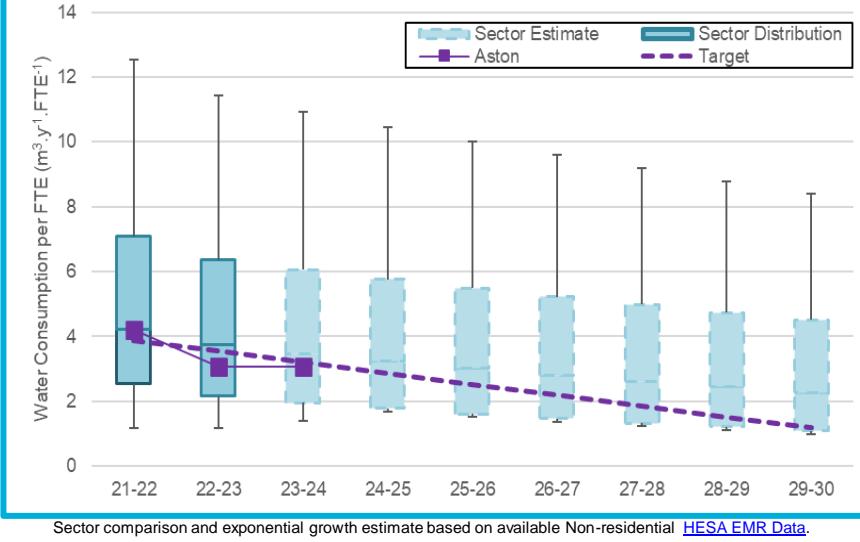
Reducing our on-campus water consumption remains one of our priorities at Aston University. In the previous year, we have dedicated significant resources to improving our data monitoring and analysis capacity.

This was done through a metering improvement project, that expanded metering, automated data acquisition of existing meters, and validated data and labelling. This project included water, heat, and electricity meters, to improve data monitoring on campus for all utilities.

Although we remain ahead of our 2030 Target of being at the Sector's Lower Quartile for Per Person On-Campus Water Consumption by 3.8 %, our improved metering system is being used to develop the plans that will allow us to keep progressing with water consumption reduction.

Additionally, we are also working on establishing better protocols for our liquid waste streams. Currently, we are working with other higher and further education institutions in Birmingham to develop a unified disposal method for laboratories, increasing security in our local wastewater system. Ongoing work is also being conducted to improve contamination in our on-campus to improve the quality and availability of water sources.

Water Consumption per Person





SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

Energy Consumption and Projects

The Estates & Capital Development department at Aston University continues to energy efficiency work on our campus. Alongside water, resources were dedicated to improving data monitoring and systems management to allow for future projects. Most projects were focused on improving heating and cooling controls, by upgrading Building Management Systems (BMS) to improve thermal comfort in our buildings and reduce demand from our District Heating and Electricity Network (DHEN).

Our DHEN is powered by natural gas and produces electricity and heat used in most of our buildings. Although this system is more efficient and has a lower carbon footprint than other sources, usage reductions will lead to a smaller reliance on fossil fuels.

To reduce this dependency, we are closely tracking our 2030 Target of being at the Sector's Lower Quartile for Per Person On-Campus Energy Consumption, being 0.8 % above the target in the last reporting year. Nevertheless, this was helped by a mild winter, and progress going forward will require larger building fabric alteration projects, which are currently being assessed.

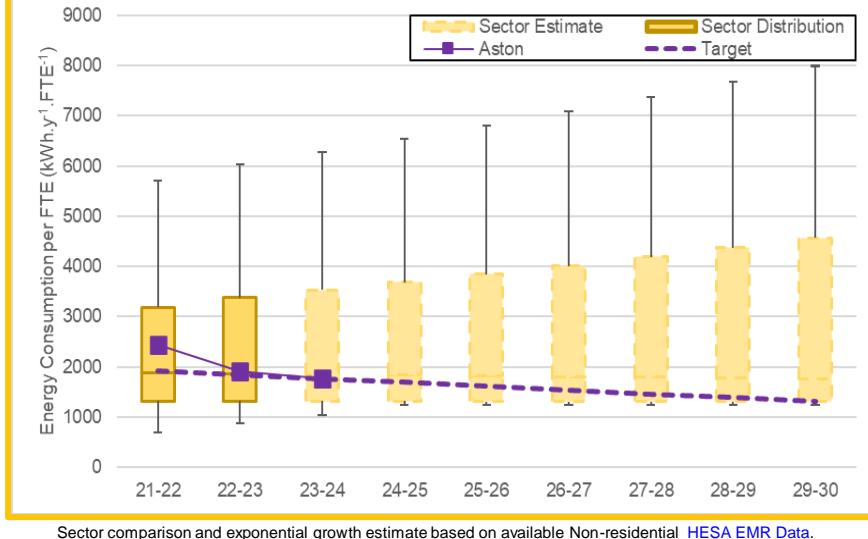
Electricity Generation/Import

- 88 % DHEN Produced
- 12 % Carbon Neutral

Solar Generation

- 117.0 MWh produced
- 14.1 tCO₂e avoided

Energy Consumption per Person On-Campus



2023-24 Completed Energy Projects	Reduction (MWh.y ⁻¹)	Carbon Savings (tCO ₂ e.y ⁻¹)
Woodcock Sports Centre BMS Upgrade	166.5	20.1
John Cadbury House BMS Upgrade	107.1	0.0
ABS/CA BMS Upgrade	81.3	9.8
Library Air Conditioning Additive	94.8	11.5
Main Building BMS Upgrade	253.4	30.7
Totals:	703.0	85.1



SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

2024 Youth Award- UN GBEP

Czaneil Gomez, a visiting researcher at Aston University, has been recognized by the United Nations for her contributions to sustainability and renewable energy. She was awarded the 2024 Youth Award by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations' Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP) for her groundbreaking research conducted at Aston University's Energy and Bioproducts Research Institute.

Her research "Harnessing Rice Straw to Empower Rice Farming Communities in the Philippines", conducted in spring 2023, focuses on sustainable energy solutions by utilizing rice straw, a widely available agricultural byproduct, to support local farming communities.



Decarbonize Net Zero Programme

An Aston University-led consortium's Decarbonisation Net Zero Programme has helped over 400 SMEs in Birmingham, Solihull, the Black Country, and Coventry reduce energy usage by 10-30%. The initiative offers energy audits, expert guidance, and workshops, promoting sustainable practices and cost reduction.

Aston University recently hosted the first of six workshops on navigating grants and net zero implementation. The program is aligned with the government's legally binding climate target to achieve net zero by 2050 and with Aston University's 2030 Strategy.





SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

The Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship

The Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship at Aston University conducts extensive research focused on ethnic minority entrepreneurship.

This research addresses critical aspects of economic growth and employment by enhancing productivity and providing tailored business support to ethnic minority micro businesses.

Projects like "Pathways to Enterprising Futures" (PEF) exemplify the centre's commitment to this cause. PEF is an innovative program that opens employment pathways and supports enterprise skills for ethnic minorities.



Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Aston University fosters entrepreneurship through initiatives like the Aston Centre for Growth, BSEEN, and Aston Enterprise & Entrepreneurship, offering support for SMEs and startups to grow, innovate, and create jobs. These programs help students and graduates explore and launch new ideas.

The Aston Enterprise & Entrepreneurship offers valuable mentoring programs, with monthly meetups and expert guidance, which have led to the success of many award-winning startups.

The hub provides a platform for students to present and develop their business ideas through launchpad opportunities.



SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Living Wage

Aston University demonstrates its commitment through its accreditation as a Real Living Wage employer. Since 2013, the University has voluntarily paid its staff a wage higher than the government's National Living Wage, based on the actual cost of living.

In 2022/2023, Aston became the first university in Birmingham to be officially accredited by the Living Wage Foundation, ensuring that all regular employees receive fair compensation.

This commitment has led to salary increases for 137 employees, supporting their well-being, promoting economic stability, and setting a positive example for other employers.



Work Global, Stay Local

Aston Business School's Virtual Internships "Work Global, Stay Local" Scholarships Scheme and the Aston Placement Bursary Scheme, key components of the Aston Global Advantage (AGA) professional development module, promote sustainable economic growth, inclusive employment, and decent work for all.

The Virtual Internship Programme, launched in 2018, was recognized with the Future of Talent & Innovation Award at the UIIN annual conference in Madrid.

This program allows students to gain professional experience through global virtual internships, expanding career opportunities.



SDG 9: Industry Innovation and Infrastructure

Aston Innovation & Research Hub

Aston University's research hubs are crucial in advancing industry innovation and infrastructure development. The institution is committed to bridging the gap between academia and industry by fostering collaboration with businesses and governmental bodies.

- Aston Research Centre for Healthy Ageing (ARCHA): Enhances healthcare technologies for aging populations.
- Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Centre (AMEC): Drives innovations in manufacturing and infrastructure.
- DIATOMIC Accelerator: Facilitates digital transformation.
- Advanced Institute for Membranes (AIM): Leads in membrane technology for water and energy solutions.
- SuperGen Initiative: Focuses on sustainable power generation.
- Energy and Bioproducts Research Institute (EBRI): Excels in bioenergy and bioproducts.





SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

Athena Swan Gold

Aston University has achieved Athena Swan Gold status, a prestigious honour recognizing exceptional commitment to gender equality and leadership in EDI. Aston is the only university in Birmingham and the West Midlands to receive this accolade.

The university also holds gold, silver, and bronze awards for its colleges in Engineering & Physical Sciences, Health & Life Sciences, and Business & Social Sciences.

Aston promotes inclusivity with policies on parenting, menopause, domestic violence, miscarriage, gender-neutral facilities, and reducing the gender pay gap. These efforts advance SDG 10 by promoting equality and reducing disparities.



Disability and Neurodiversity Support

Aston University's Disability and Neurodiversity team is dedicated to supporting students by removing educational barriers. They offer services like notetaking, study support, and collaboration on accommodation adjustments.

Additionally, construction is in progress to transform the area around the former Hub into a new Student Solutions Centre, to enhance accessibility and inclusivity.

The team also promotes neurodiversity support, expands resources for Degree Apprenticeship students, and has reduced wait times for dyslexia assessments. Through its ongoing efforts, the team at Aston University is playing a crucial role in making the university more accessible, equitable, and sustainable for all.



SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

University of Sanctuary – Ernst Scholarship

Aston University has earned **University of Sanctuary** status and joined a network of UK institutions dedicated to supporting displaced individuals and refugees.

This recognition reflects Aston's efforts to facilitate higher education access for asylum seekers through initiatives like the Ernest Edward Scholarship scheme and its proactive approach to addressing challenges faced by forced migrants.

The University also demonstrates its commitment through research in its Centre for Migration and Forced Displacement and Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship, alongside support from its University Support Services and student-led projects by Enactus.

Following this, Aston launched The Ernest Edwards Scholarships, which provide full tuition waivers, accommodation support, and living costs up to £25,000 for asylum seekers and individuals with limited stay permissions who cannot access student finance. Scholars also benefit from language assistance, professional mentoring, and support from the Students' Union.

The first cohort of Ernest Edwards Scholars, all of whom have now been granted refugee status, graduated from Aston University. One graduate earned a master's degree in mechanical engineering. These scholarships promote equitable access to education and help reduce disparities for refugees and asylum seekers.





SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Main Building and Central Square Transformation

Aston University's Main Building and central square are due to be majorly transformed as part of its 2030 Strategy, focusing on enhancing green spaces, improving mobility, and improving student experience to ensure long-term sustainability.

Alteration to the South Wing of the main building will take place to make way for new green spaces and better mobility inside the main building and the campus, as well as additional bicycle storage and changing/shower areas.

This development is part of a broader master to improve facilities for students, staff, and the local community. It will further expand one of the biggest green spaces in Birmingham city centre.



Beryl at Aston

Aston University partnered with Transport for West Midlands, Birmingham City Council, and Beryl to enhance micro-mobility on the campus. We have installed Beryl e-scooter stands at two key locations: Next to the library and at the end of Coleshill Street.

To encourage eco-friendly travel among students and to promote sustainable transport options, reducing carbon emissions, and improving urban mobility.

Transport Survey – Students Travel Habits

In the first quarter of 2024, Aston University conducted a Travel Habits Survey to better understand the commuting patterns of our students and staff, over 500 community members participating.

The findings have provided valuable insights into how our community travels to and from campus, highlighting both positive trends and areas for improvement.

- Overall Trends:** A significant portion of students and staff use public transport for commuting due to the university's central location, and a large portion of students walk to campus due to proximity to accommodations.

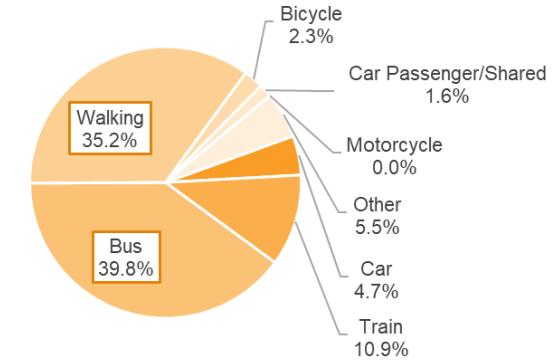
- Public Transport Use:** Over half of private transport users reported issues with public transport (cost, frequency, availability of direct services) as the main deterrent.

To enable more people to use public transport, Aston University is collaborating with local public transport operators and Transport for West Midlands, along with other education institutions, to improve public transport services.

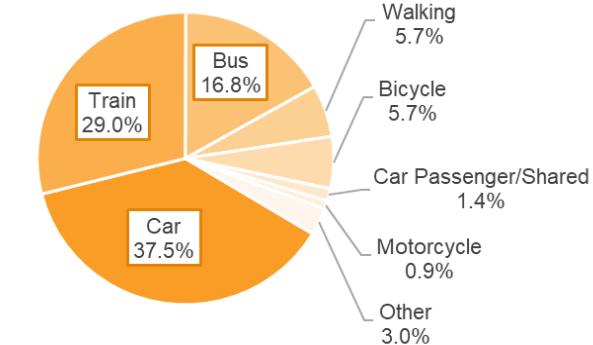
- Active Travel Use:** Cyclists highlighted the need for more secure cycle storage and showering/changing facilities on campus.

To improve conditions to bicycle users, capital development projects, like the Main Building Transformation, are being used to improve facilities, with new showering/changing facilities and secure cycle storage now available.

Student's Travelling Habits



Staff Member's Travelling Habits



SDG 12 : Responsible Consumption and Production

Aston Furniture Redundant Program

Aston University has partnered with Waste to Wonder to reduce waste and promote environmental stewardship. This collaboration has resulted in saving over 3,835 kgCO₂e by donating 2,208 kg of office furniture to deprived areas worldwide.

Additionally, the university has teamed up with BNG to stay within the circular economy framework for similar initiatives.

The Environment and Sustainability Team developed a Redundant Furniture Program for staff, where redundant furniture can be collected by staff members free of charge. So far, several colleagues have benefited, and future furniture days are being planned, as well as potential offers to students



WEEE Waste Collection

Aston University's IT team ensures that Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) is disposed of responsibly.

Partnering with Stone Group, an IT recycling company, the university's redundant IT equipment undergoes data purging and is either reused or donated.

This eco-friendly disposal process has achieved a 78% asset return rate, ensuring most of the obsolete equipment is repurposed following rigorous data cleansing.

Special Collection Projects

Our Green champions across spearhead various recycling projects. These initiatives support SDG 12 by encouraging responsible consumption, reducing waste, and minimizing environmental impact through recycling and reusing materials.

Bra Bank

Colleagues from Organisational Development have joined Against Breast Cancer and started a bra recycling scheme to raise funds for breast cancer research.



Location: Main Building Lobby

Bic Pen Recycling

Stationery is collected, and its donation generate funds that are donated to Birmingham Children's Hospital.



Location: Main Building Entrance

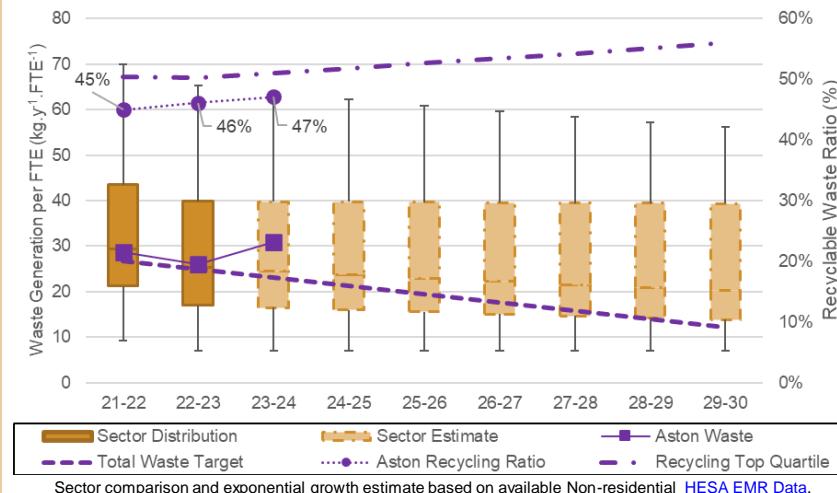
Suited For Success

Used business attire is donated to Birmingham Suited for Success, a local charity that provides clothing and coaching for job interviews.



Location: IT Helpdesk

On-Campus Waste Generation Per Person



We have consistently been above our **2030 Target of being at the Sector's Lower Quartile for Per Person On-Campus Waste Generation**, with a significant increase in the last reporting period due to ongoing effort to correctly track waste generation on campus, that lead to an apparent increase in waste generation.

Nevertheless, additional monitoring provides a better representation of how refuse is generated on campus, and thus enabling more effective reduction and recycling ratio increase plans.



SDG 13 : Climate Action

Go Green Week

Go Green Week is an annual campaign in the UK aiming to raise awareness and promote action on environmental issues. Student-led sustainability groups organize the week-long campaign and involve various activities and events that engage students, staff, and the wider community.

- **Plant and Sip:** Staff and students participated in decorating vases and planting chilli and peas in their vases.
- **Repair Fair:** Free assessments and quick repairs for electronics and appliances were offered for staff and students.
- **Clothes Mending Workshop:** Staff and students joined the activity where they were shown by [Missfit Creations](#) how to do small.
- **Bug Hotel:** Students participated in a hands-on activity focused on assembling bug hotels kits made by local charity [Warm Earth](#).
- **Bike Maintenance:** This workshop led by [Biclas B12](#) covered how to maintain a bicycle for safety and efficiency.



The poster features the Aston Students' Union logo at the top left. The main title "GO GREEN WEEK" is in large, bold, green letters with white outlines. Below it, the dates "29 Feb - 7 March" are centered. To the right, there's a QR code with the text "SCAN HERE TO SIGN UP" above it. The poster lists several events with their dates, locations, and descriptions:

- 29TH FEB MENDING WORKSHOP Students' Union Foyer Space 11am - 3pm
- 5TH MARCH BIKE WORKSHOP Students' Union Foyer Space 10am - 12pm
- 6TH MARCH GREEN CAREERS SESSION Online (Sign up on our website) 11am - 12pm
- 7TH MARCH REPAIR FAIR Students' Union Foyer Space 11am - 3pm
- 7TH MARCH PLANT & SIP Students' Union Outside Shop 11am - 3pm
- 7TH MARCH BUILD AN OUTDOOR BUG HOTEL Students' Union Outside Shop 11am - 3pm
- 7TH MARCH THE JUNGLE CLUB PLANT SHOP Outside the Library 11am - 3pm

At the bottom, there are illustrations of a house, trees, and wind turbines.





SDG 13 : Climate Action

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

To meet our 2030 Net Zero Target For Scope 1 and 2, a reduction of 90 % of our emissions from a 2005/06 baseline is required. For such we will need to significantly alter our DHEN. To support continual improvement before significant resources are obtained to alter our DHEN, yearly targets are divided into two reduction Slopes:

- **Interim Target:** 25 % Reduction in Per GIA Emissions by 2028-29 from 2021-22 baseline before DHEN is altered.
- **Main Target:** 90 % Reduction in Total Emissions by 2029-30 from 2005-06 baseline after DHEN alteration.

Current Progress:

- **Interim Target:** We are currently ahead of our yearly target per-floor area emissions target by 2%.
- **Main Target:** We have achieved a 61% reduction in our total carbon footprint from the 2005/06 baseline.

Further Work: We have established an internal executive-led work group tasked with assessing alternative solutions for our DHEN and an external multi-stakeholder group to discuss decarbonization opportunities for the Birmingham Innovation Quarter.

Scope 3 Monitoring: Ongoing work is being done to enhance our Scope 3 monitoring. Our current estimate through HESA EMR methodology (32.028 tCO₂e for 2022-23), is not yet accurate enough to inform our future plans.

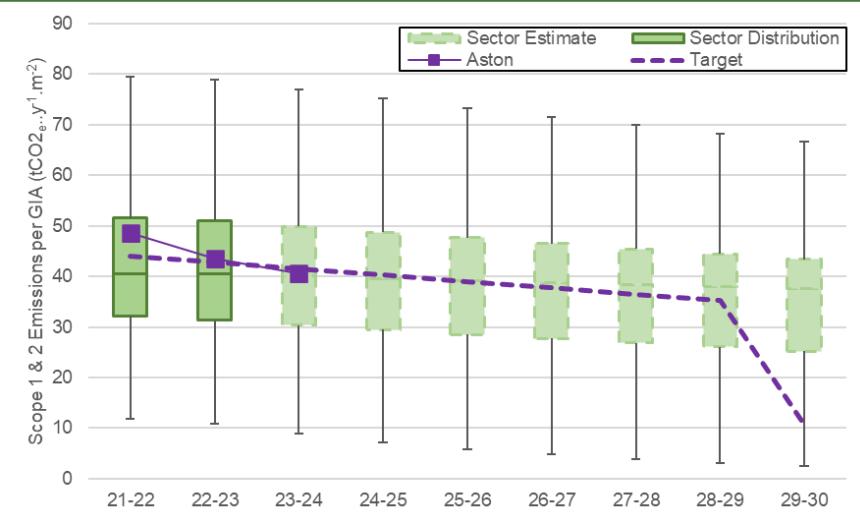
Scope 1 & 2 Sources Ratios

DHEN Heat
49.4 %

DHEN
Electricity
32.8 %

Natural
Gas
14.9 %
Other 3.0%

Per Floor Area Scope 1 & 2 GHG Emissions



SDG 14 : Life Below Water

Enactus Drop in the Ocean

Enactus Aston, in collaboration with the Canal & River Trust, is tackling plastic pollution in Birmingham's canals through their project "A Drop in the Ocean". This initiative will implement innovative waste management technologies, involve the community, and promote sustainability.

The project includes recycling canal waste into valuable resources, running awareness campaigns, and introducing eco-friendly waste collection devices.

Enactus Aston has been a finalist for the Green Gown UK & Ireland Awards for 2022-23 and 2024-25. They have received various accolades from notable organizations, including Roth & Co, and British Airways.



Changing the Value of Plastic Bottles

Lecturer in Product Design at Aston University highlights the potential of converting waste plastic bottles into valuable products for the developing world, addressing the global plastic pollution crisis.

Repurposing PET bottles into 3D printer filament, this approach increases the value of recycled plastic and supports local manufacturing. With advances in 3D printing technology, including affordable, locally manufactured machines and applications such as prosthetic hands and microscopes.

This initiative exemplifies how leveraging technology, and recycling can create impactful solutions for both environmental and socio-economic challenges.



SDG 15: Life on Land

Living Campus

As part of Environment Day, Aston University's Environment and Sustainability Team and Gardeners Team hosted a sunflower planting drive across campus, funded by non-profit electric vehicle charging stations. This initiative enhances campus biodiversity and beauty, demonstrating our commitment to sustainability.

Funds for the activity were sourced from our on-campus Not-For-Profit Electric Vehicle. The revenue generated from the charging services are used to cover electricity expenses, emissions offsets, and initiatives to enhance biodiversity on our campus, fostering a collaborative spirit among students and staff while promoting an environmentally friendly campus.



EBRI Biochar Cleantech Innovation Accelerator

Aston University, through the Energy and Bioproducts Research Institute (EBRI), is driving sustainability efforts by integrating biochar into campus soil. The Biochar Cleantech Innovation Accelerator Project, led by EBRI, explores biochar's potential to enhance the health of plants, animals, and trees, demonstrating its impact on sustainable land management.

EBRI researchers have also used biochar in other products to reduce their overall Carbon footprint. The biochar for these items was produced at a demonstrator pyrolysis plant, highlighting the potential for innovative, sustainable materials in everyday products.



Refugee Journey through the Balkan Route

The Centre for Migration and Forced Displacement at Aston University is a leading research hub that connects with local, national, and international stakeholders to address critical migration issues by combining cultural and policy impacts in several media.

A project funded by RKE Research Impact carried out by Dr Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik (Co-Director of the Centre), brought together academics and investigative journalists to examine the rise in migrant deaths and disappearances at EU borders has been listed by Der Spiegel for the One World Media in the Refugee Reporting Category.



Union Council

The Aston Students' Union (ASU) Council, is an elected representative body, that oversees the union's activities and governance, promoting transparency and accountability. Regular open meetings enable broad student participation, with over 190 attendees this year.

Student representatives, totalling 450+ students, ensure students' voices are heard by meeting with university staff to convey peer feedback. This involvement, supported by training from the ASU, fosters good governance and community engagement.



SDG 17: Partnership for Goals

Collaboration through KTP

Funded by Innovate UK, Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTPs) pair academic expertise with business applications. Aston University, a sector leader in KTPs, boasts an average ROI of 1,107%. Over 80% of completed projects are rated very good or outstanding by Innovate UK. We also won the Best KTP Project and Best KTP Support Team awards at the 2023 Innovate UK Knowledge Transfer Partnership Awards. The university supports SDG 17 through various KTPs, driving innovation with partners across Africa. Projects include:

- **Solagen Technologies and the University of Nairobi:** For solar and wind-powered irrigation systems for Tropical Growers Ltd.
- **KNUST-Ghana:** To develop a digital plant health monitoring platform.

These initiatives showcase the university's commitment to SDG 17 through research and global partnerships. Bringing together the worlds of research and business for 45 years, KTPs expand capability and foster a culture of innovation.



Return on Investment

- Average 1.107 % per project.



KTP Ranking

- We're a top KTP provider and the 2nd most active in the country.



Outputs Ranking

- 80% of our projects rated outstanding by Innovate UK



SDG 17: Partnership for Goals

Research and Academia Exchange Partnership

Aston University maintains over 250 partnerships across approximately 45 countries, fostering student, researcher, and staff exchanges that promote cross-cultural understanding and collaboration in tackling global challenges.

Among its notable partner institutions are ESSEC Paris, the University of Rennes, the Technical University of Munich, and the University of Hong Kong. Additionally, Aston University has a strategic partnership agreement with Symbiosis International (Deemed University) in India, focused on cross-cultural collaboration in teaching, enterprise, and research.



Adobe Creative Campus

The partnership between Aston University and Adobe, making it Midland's first Adobe Creative Campus, greatly enhances the upskilling of students and staff with cutting-edge technology. By offering free access to Adobe Creative Cloud tools such as InDesign, Photoshop, Premiere Pro, and Illustrator, the initiative enriches the learning experience.

Additionally, the student ambassador program provides valuable career opportunities, ensuring graduates are equipped with advanced technological skills for the modern workforce. This collaboration exemplifies a successful strategic partnership between an educational institution and a global tech leader.



SDG 17: Partnership for Goals

Regional and National Partnerships

Aston University has built a network of regional and national partnerships, positioning itself as a leader in innovation, research, and community impact.

- Regional Partnerships:** Collaborates with Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership, West Midlands Combined Authority, and University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust to drive economic growth, innovation, and healthcare in the West Midlands.
- National Partnerships:** Aston University cooperates with NHS England, UKRI, The Royal Society, and Unilever to tackle key challenges in health, sustainability, and education. Partners with EPSRC and the British Council to expand research capabilities and global influence.
- Design Factory:** One of two hubs at Aston fostering cutting-edge innovation and technology.
- Civic University Agreement:** Collaborates with Citizens UK, Aston Students' Union, Aston Villa Football Club, Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Birmingham City Council, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce, and WMCA to promote education, health, and community well-being.
- Aston Villa FC:** Official university partner, supporting initiatives like Villa Vision to enhance education and health.
- City of Birmingham Rockets Basketball Club:** Supports the club's school program, providing enriching experiences for students.

Aston University
BIRMINGHAM UK

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Gold

Triple Gold Award
Winning University

Proud sponsors
and supporters of
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WOMEN FOOTBALL CLUB





QS Sustainability Ranking

Aston University climbed 309 places, moving from 640th in 2023 to 331st in 2024. This ranking evaluates universities based on their environmental impact, social impact, and governance, showcasing the comprehensive approach.

Aston is now ranked in the top 25% for sustainability in universities globally, placing 131st for equality and 172nd for health and wellbeing, key components of the social impact metric.

We are in the Top 10% of evaluated institutions in the world in the overall QS World University Rankings 2025.



Times Higher Education Impact Ranking

The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings evaluates global universities on their contributions to the UN SDGs. The 2024 rankings included 2,152 universities from 125 countries.

These rankings highlight the critical role of universities in addressing global sustainability challenges. The three highest scores in the SDGs alongside the grade for SDG 17 is used to rank universities.

Aston University was scored on SDGs 5, 8, 10, and 17 and ranked within **the top 20 %** in the combined score and was ranked 24th for SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities worldwide and 19th (Joint-UK) for SDG 8 Decent Work and economic growth in the UK.



Top 44 % Worldwide



Top 2% Worldwide



Top 17% Worldwide



Top 40 % Worldwide



2023-24 Sustainability and Sustainable Development Report

2030 Sustainability Strategy

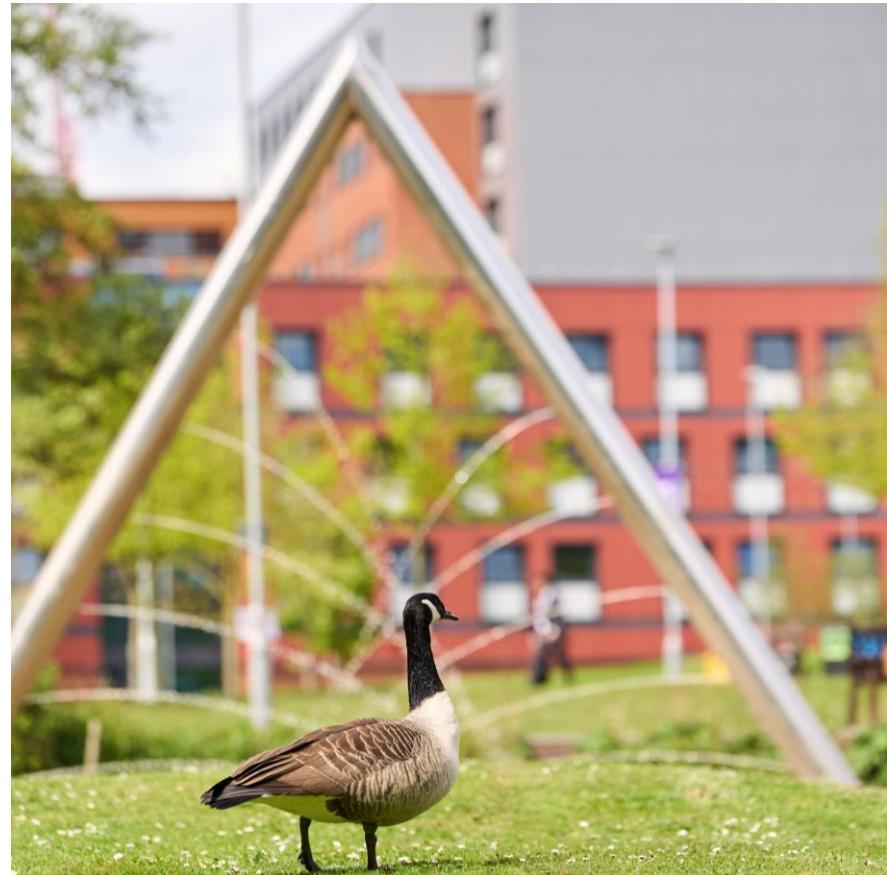
This is the final year of our current [2020-2024 Sustainability Strategy](#), its outcomes have been reported in this and previous Sustainability Reports to demonstrate how Aston University works towards continual improvement.

To continue our work towards a sustainable campus and community, and to respond to the growing urgency of climate change and fluctuating socio-economic conditions, both in the UK and globally, we are currently developing an enhanced 2030 Sustainability Strategy.

This new strategy aims to build on the successes of our previous approach, address its limitations, and accelerate our sustainability commitments.

We are prioritizing agile progress within our community and campus by concentrating our efforts on advancing key SDGs where our impact can be most significant.

Through this subsequent strategy, we will work towards being more **Inclusive, Entrepreneurial and Transformational**, as set out by our 2030 Strategy, while making our institution a more sustainable place **For All People, Through Our People**.





2023-24 Sustainability and Sustainable Development Report

Contact

Any Queries and feedback on the strategy can be direct to the Environmental and Sustainability Team at:

environment@aston.ac.uk

Report Activities

Staff and students at Aston University can contribute to advance our Sustainability Strategy by reporting any partnership, event, activities, and other outcomes related to Sustainable Development on this form: [Submission Form](#).

Authorship

This Report was written on behalf of Aston University by Krutika Ganeru MSc, and Dr. Vitor Badiale Furlong from the Environment and Sustainability Team at the Estates and Capital Development department, with support from colleagues from different departments.

