

University of Westminster Sustainability Report

2022-23



Introduction

Throughout the 2022-23 academic year, we have continued our focus on our operational emissions while also accelerating our work under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While this work is closely linked and all ties together, we will continue to publish a Sustainability Report covering our activities towards reducing our impacts in our own operations, while also covering SDGs activity in our [annual SDGs Report](#).

This Sustainability Report, while closely linked with many of the activities that fall under the SDGs, will focus on the three pillars covered in [last year's Sustainability Report](#): Pathway to Net Zero; Sustainable Campus; and Sustainable Community.

In the academic year 2022-23 we have continued to refine and improve our operational objectives and plans. A key area of focus has been around decarbonisation. Our scope 1 and 2 carbon footprint target has been exceeded this year and plans for further decarbonisation in the future are ongoing.

The University has also made great progress in supporting student projects, including the Green Fund, which supported several student projects across the year. Similarly, engagement with colleagues and students alike has continued at pace, with Carbon Literacy Training being offered to both staff and students across the University.

This report will outline Westminster's progress and achievements towards its three pillars throughout the 2022-23 academic year. It will also outline some of the steps we expect to take next.

Highlights



EcoCampus Gold Award

In May 2023, our Environmental Management System (EMS) was re-certified with the Gold Award through the EcoCampus Scheme. Our EMS provides a robust framework to manage sustainability and helps us improve our sustainability performance.

Green Fund

The Green Fund provides grants of up to £5,000 for short-term projects that are co-created, designed and implemented by staff and students working in partnership. Students who contribute to project teams also receive a bursary of £100 as a recognition of their efforts. In the 2022-23 academic year, the Green Fund supported seven projects. Funding has been confirmed to continue the Green Fund in 2023-24 under the new name of the Sustainability Fund.



Sustainable Travel Plan

A Sustainable Travel Plan has been developed, based on the results of a staff and student travel survey. The Plan is being used to guide internal projects and help decision-making to ensure active and sustainable travel options are accessible options for as many students and staff as possible.



Expansion of solar photovoltaics (PV)

In 2023, we expanded our solar photovoltaic (PV) and solar thermal energy system at the Harrow Halls of Residence. Westminster now has 15 PV arrays on the roof of these buildings generating electricity and heating hot water for our student residents. In the last year, these systems generated 25,828 kWh of heat and 20,500 kWh of electricity, which has saved us a total of 10 tonnes of carbon and over £5,500 by using renewable systems rather than gas heating.

Diversion of waste from landfill

Westminster has achieved 100% diversion of waste from landfill across all its sites for the third year in a row. Some 47% was recycled in 2022-23, with the remaining waste going into energy from waste or anaerobic digestion.



PATHWAY TO NET ZERO

Our 2035 net zero target demonstrates our commitment to climate action. Alongside improvements to our scope 1, 2 and 3 benchmarking, we have developed decarbonisation plans for all our sites and increased renewable on-site generation.

2035
net zero target
for scope 1 and
2

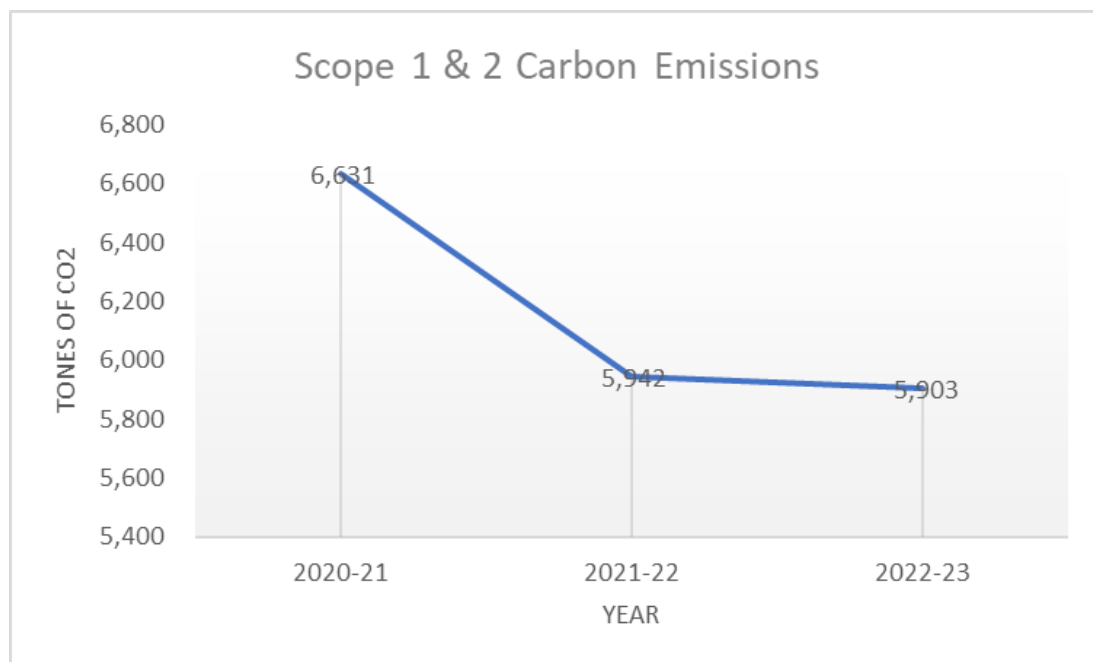
5,903
tonnes of CO₂
produced in
2022-23

20,500 kWh
electricity
produced by
solar PV

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Westminster has exceeded the target set last year in our [Sustainability Report](#), which was a 50% reduction in scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions across the university against the 2009/10 baseline. The baseline emissions were 13,867 tons of carbon in 2009/10. We have reduced our emissions significantly to 5,903 tons of carbon in 2022/23, with a total reduction of 57.4%.

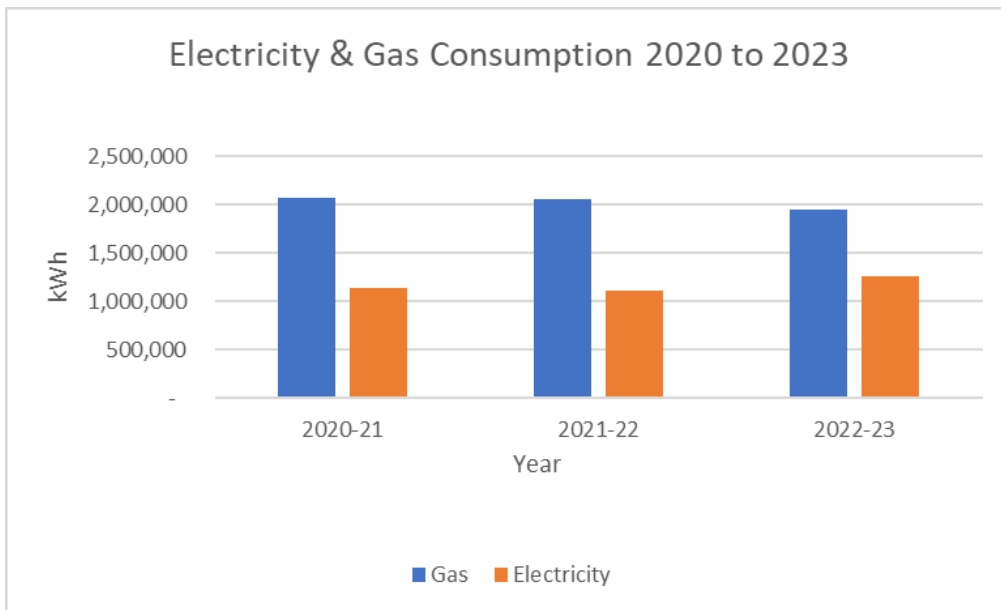
Scope 1 & 2 carbon emissions in the last three years can be seen in the chart below.



We now have a comprehensive decarbonisation plan in place for all our campuses, which we are using to inform our plans for the estate going forward and help with planning our capital spend for years to 2035.

Meeting our targets will be challenging, which is why we have included a commitment to a £2 million minimum spend on carbon-related projects annually. This will ensure that we have the capital set aside to make real changes to our Estate.

In 2023 we expanded our solar PV and solar thermal energy system at the Harrow Halls of Residence. We now have 15 arrays on the roof of these buildings generating electricity and heating water for our student residents. In the last year, these systems generated 25,828 kWh of heat and 20,500 kWh of electricity, which has saved us a total of 10 tonnes of carbon and over £5,500 by using renewable systems. As seen in the graph below, our gas use has decreased as a result.



	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Gas Consumption (kWh)	20,727,00	20,509,68	19,456,87
Electricity Consumption (kWh)	11,403,90	11,151,69	12,619,32

NEXT STEPS

Since we achieved our emissions reduction target in 2022-23, we have set new ambitious yearly emission targets to reach net zero for Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 2035, with a reduction in Scope 3 carbon emissions by 50% by 2035.

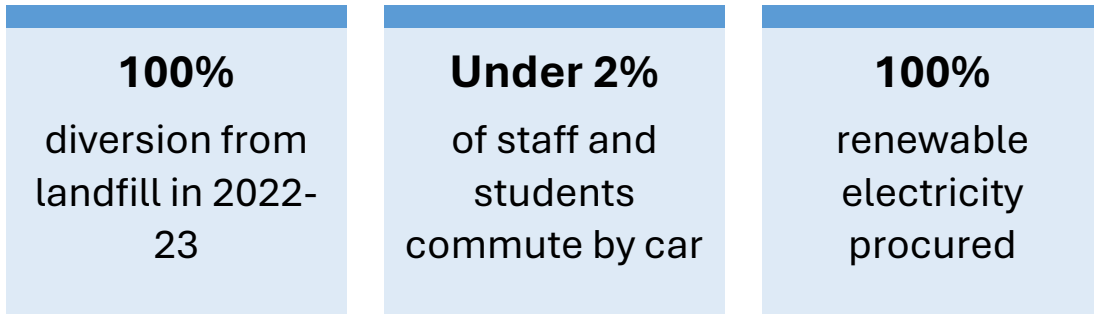
We are working towards expanding Westminster’s carbon footprint to incorporate information about our scope 3 emissions. We expect to publish our initial Scope 3 carbon footprint for the academic year 2024-25, which will include waste, water, and business travel.

Once we have initially defined these emissions, we will include them as part of our annual carbon reporting. Further scope 3 emissions will be incorporated over the following years, with an exact schedule for inclusion of further elements to be determined.

This coming year we will also be voluntarily participating in the Energy Saving Opportunity Scheme (ESOS). This scheme will provide us with a full energy audit of our Estate, providing us with more information about areas we need to focus on to improve energy efficiency and therefore reduce carbon emissions.

SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS

We ensure sustainability is considered across all our sites by embedding Environmental Management into our decision-making processes. Our revised environmental targets prioritise waste reduction and ensuring that standards such as BREEAM are considered in all capital projects.



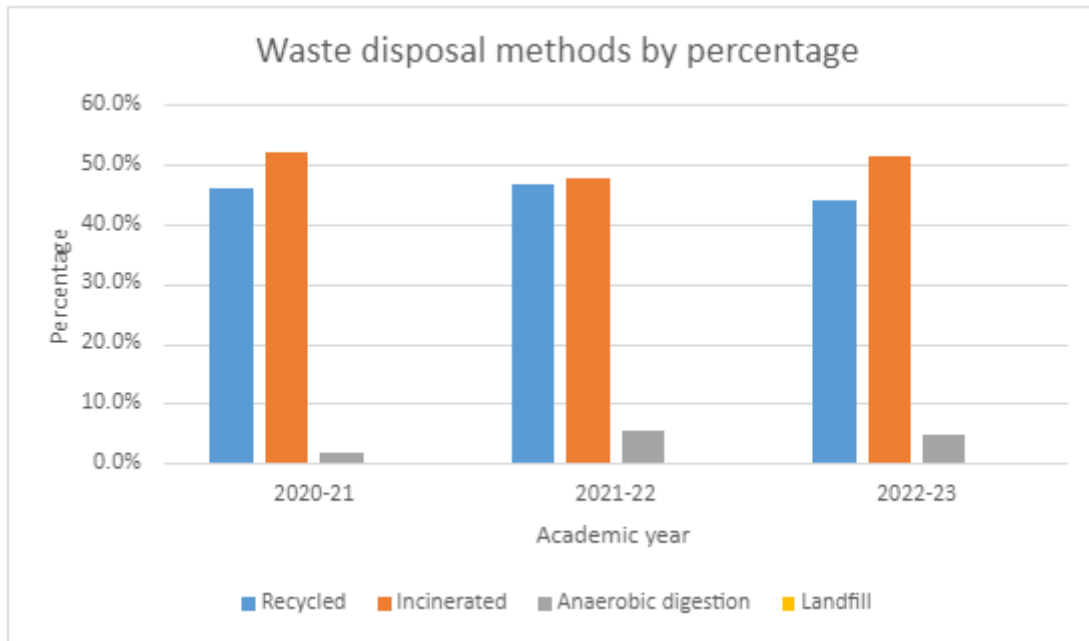
OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Currently, water use is not monitored as closely as would be preferred as our billing is based on estimates. A project is underway to improve water metering across all campuses and is expected to be completed in late 2024. This will allow us to more accurately report on water consumption and water use reduction by our 2023-24 annual environmental report.

Although Westminster is consistently achieving a 100% diversion of waste from landfill, our recycling and anaerobic digestion rates have both decreased slightly by percentage of total waste from 2021-22 to 2022-23, as shown in the below table. However, significantly less waste was generated throughout the 2021-22 academic year than usual, largely due to campus being less populated than usual during Covid lockdowns. Further investigation is needed to determine why our recycling and anaerobic digestion rates both increased while incineration decreased during 2021-22.

If we discount the 2021-22 academic year, our recycling and incineration rates have remained largely consistent over the past three years, with an increase in food waste sent to anaerobic digestion that may account for the slight decrease in incineration.

Our waste disposal by weight and by percentage can be seen in the following chart and table, covering the past 3 academic years.



	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23	
Total waste, tonnes	608,395		356,394		637,775	
Recycled	46.2%	281,007kg	46.8%	166,870kg	44.1%	281,014kg
Incinerated	52.1%	316,868kg	47.7%	170,166kg	51.3%	327,131kg
Anaerobic digestion	1.7%	10,520kg	5.4%	19,359kg	4.6%	29,630kg
Landfill	0	0	0	0	0	0

A method for tracking the recycling rate of waste from demolition, construction and refurbishment projects at the University is currently under discussion with the Projects team. Criteria for diversion from landfill are expected to be finalised over the coming year. Achieving ‘Excellent’ in BREEAM will be an ongoing project and will be reported on annually.

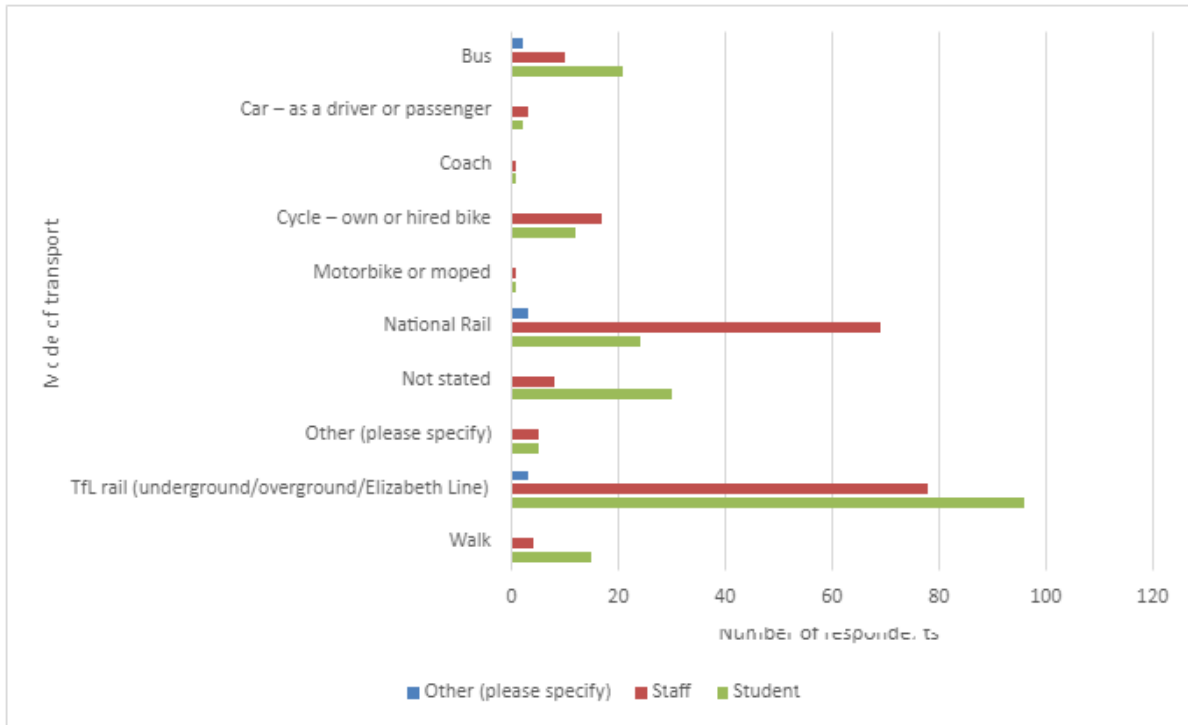
Some projects relating to reuse of furniture have already taken place. For example, a staff room at Harrow campus used 100% recycled or reused furniture during a recent refurbishment. This is expected to expand as future construction and/or refurbishment projects take place.

In 2023 we undertook a university-wide travel survey to develop a better understanding of the way in which colleagues and students travel to site, and to get feedback on our travel facilities. Key findings from this survey are:

- Fewer than 2% of respondents (colleagues or students) travel by car to attend campus
- The majority of colleagues (71%) and students (55%) travel using rail services

- 15% of those respondents travel this way because it is the more environmentally friendly option
- 32% of respondents that cycle to our sites are either 'Very satisfied' (11%) or 'Satisfied' (21%) with the current facilities and initiatives in place.

A breakdown of the primary modes of transport used by colleagues and students can be seen in the chart below.



The University of Westminster has a [Commitment to Responsible Procurement](#) and a [Supplier Sustainability Charter](#). The University also asks suppliers bidding for contracts to self-declare whether, in the last three years, it has breached any environmental, social law, or labour law obligations as part of its standard selection questionnaire. Suppliers who have breached any of these obligations may be excluded from supplying the University. Although not all tenders are currently subject to the standard selection questionnaire, documents are in the process of being standardised so this will become a component of all tenders.

The University of Westminster in partnership with Aramark, their caterers, was awarded the Food for Life Served Here Bronze award for the 2022-23 academic year, affirming its commitment to sustainable catering.

A new 3-year contract for 100% renewable electricity was procured in 2023.

NEXT STEPS

Our revised targets place a particular emphasis on waste management and reduction. Our recycling rates on site have been relatively static over the past three years and so we are looking to prioritise an increase in recycling rates. Over the next two years, we will be developing an internal Waste Reduction Plan for our sites, focusing on key areas such as food waste and plastic waste reduction. This will allow us to set further targets by site, and by waste stream and help to contribute further towards our target recycling rate of 70% of all waste.

There has been strong interest in re-use in several schools, notably Architecture, who are planning to introduce re-use stations for students to share unwanted materials in the 2023-24 academic year. This will both help students to save money on purchasing new materials, as well as reducing Westminster's overall waste collections.

We will prioritise energy and water monitoring. Although we currently have a monitoring system in place for utilities, improvements to this will allow us to further analyse usage on sites and set clearer campus-based targets for efficiency improvements. This will enable us to provide clear, accurate reporting around progress in the future and further monitor the key areas for improvement.

The Sustainability Team is working with the University's catering company, Aramark, towards achieving the Green Kitchen Standard for 2023-24.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

We measure our impacts not only through our operational targets, but also by how well our University communities reflect the values of the SDGs. We are continually developing our Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) programmes and identifying ways we can measure the reach and impact of our sustainability research.



OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

All our work across campuses is structured around our Environmental Management System (EMS). This system is certified under EcoCampus, a national system for externally certifying our EMS to ensure we are making continuous improvements and reducing negative environmental impacts. This scheme allows the University of Westminster to be externally recognised for the way in which we are addressing key environmental sustainability issues such as energy or

waste management. This year, we were re-certified under the EcoCampus scheme and achieved a Gold award.

Our [Sustainable Development](#) webpages are updated regularly and will continue to be reviewed approximately every six months.

In 2022-23 Carbon Literacy sessions were introduced at Westminster for the first time. These sessions were made available as open courses for all staff and students. Almost 30 people participated in these two initial courses.

New employees are now directed to the Sustainable Development webpages as part of their Welcome to Westminster induction. This prompts people to read the Sustainable Development Policy, as well as the University's work within the framework of the SDGs.

This year, seven projects took place as part of the Green Fund. The Green Fund was established to provide students with the opportunity to work on funded sustainability-related projects, with grants of up to £5,000 per project available. The 2022-23 projects were:

Planet-friendly denim: Experimentation with the use of bacteria to manufacture environmentally sustainable indigo dyes for blue jeans.

Sustainable fashion hub: The creation of a dynamic focal point at Harrow Campus with the theme 'Fashion as Change'. The project will be exploring sustainability, collaboration, community, entrepreneurship, education, and inspiration in fashion.

Smart and sustainable weather station: The design and development of a low-power, minimal-maintenance weather station with a multitude of sensors to measure temperature, humidity, pressure, rainwater gauging, air quality, and so on. The station will incorporate computing facilities to collect, visualise and interpret quality data.

Furniture design in collaboration with Pedra Furada Transformation Workshop: The student designs will be shared with the Pedra Furada workshop, a Brazilian social enterprise that makes furniture from recycled plastic; they will realise the designs to sell at Global North price points.

Green approach to microbial identification: The implementation of a new technology and technique in Westminster Labs that will reduce the need for single-use plastic during the microbial identification process.

Rainwater harvesting: Exploration of issues around rainwater harvesting in design and in practice by trialling a rainwater collection point at Marylebone Campus.

Robotic recycler: A robust, remote-controlled arm to sort waste which will eliminate the need for direct contact with waste processing for recycling.

The Green Fund is expected to continue in the same format next year.

NEXT STEPS

Our focus for the next academic year is to continue to offer Carbon Literacy Training to colleagues and students. Last year, we offered two sessions and trained almost 30 people across the University, and we would like to expand this offering to ensure everyone has the opportunity to undertake this training.

Our EMS is due to be re-certified in Summer 2025 and we expect to maintain our Gold award, and will aim for the next step, which is a Platinum award – the equivalent of an ISO14001 certification.