



A PATH FOR NET ZERO

A SUMMARY OF
BIRKBECK'S ENERGY
AND CARBON
MANAGEMENT
PLAN 2025



OUR TRANSITION TO NET ZERO

"THE TRANSITION TO NET ZERO IS FUNDAMENTALLY ABOUT HOW WE MANAGE AND MODERNISE OUR ESTATE. ESTATES IS LEADING THE DELIVERY OF THIS STRATEGY, INTEGRATING DECARBONISATION INTO EVERY REFURBISHMENT, PLANT REPLACEMENT, AND CAPITAL DECISION WE MAKE.

Through decarbonising our heating systems, targeted energy efficiency upgrades, and the Estate Strategy, we are reshaping our infrastructure to reduce reliance on fossil fuels while maintaining high-quality teaching and research environments.

Net Zero is not a standalone project; it is becoming embedded in our asset management, procurement choices, and long-

term investment planning. By taking a measured, evidence-led approach, we are ensuring that progress is financially responsible, operationally resilient, and aligned with Birkbeck's broader ambitions."

Daniel Xuereb,
Chief Property Officer



“

Birkbeck has always been a place where we like to think we are radical, and so is our approach to protecting the planet and reducing emissions. We are creative, resourceful and impactful.”

Vice Chancellor,
Professor Sally Wheeler, OBE

Scope 1 & 2 emissions

Birkbeck has committed to reach Net Zero scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2050 and will work towards an earlier date of 2040.

Scope 1 and 2 emissions include gas use, electricity, fossil fuel-based heat networks, and refrigerant gases.

Scope 3

Birkbeck has committed to reach Net Zero scope 3 emissions by 2050 and will work towards an earlier date of 2045.

Scope 3 made up approximately 68% of Birkbeck's measured emissions in the 2023-24 financial year. Over the next few years, we expect to develop our understanding of the activities that produce the most emissions through scope 3 and address these via behaviour change campaigns and introduction of new processes and policies. We will also aim to improve scope 3 data collection to ensure we are capturing all of our scope 3 emissions and will update the figures annually on our website.

OUR PLAN

BIRKBECK WILL WORK IN FOUR PHASES TO DELIVER NET ZERO. THE PHASES ARE NOT SEQUENTIAL; INSTEAD, THEY WILL COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER TO PROVIDE A HOLISTIC PATHWAY TO NET ZERO.

Initial phase

This phase will see Birkbeck embedding low carbon projects into ongoing works across its

The power of LED

Upgrading our estate to full LED lighting could save up to 100 tonnes of CO₂e emissions annually – equivalent to approximately 7,000 car journeys from London to Brighton or the annual carbon uptake of about 4,500 mature trees.

estate. This may include activities such as LED lighting introduced as standard in any building refurbishment or upgrade works, energy and water saving initiatives in the Malet Street laboratories, initial cost-benefit analysis of potential invest-to-save projects such as solar PV, and improving building heating and cooling systems both to save energy and to ensure that students, staff and researchers are in a more comfortable working environment.

Estate strategy

The Estate Strategy is about building the Birkbeck community through strategic upgrades to the building assets. This includes updating the teaching and learning facilities at Gordon Square and Birkbeck Central. These changes will create a better teaching and learning environment for students and staff and showcase our educational and environmental credentials to the local community.



“The Estates team are applying the HDP and Estate Strategy to map out the transition from fossil fuels to low carbon electricity whilst maintaining a comfortable learning space.”

Jim Gorman, Director of Estates Operations

Heat decarbonisation plan (HDP)

The HDP outlines the steps needed to move away from fossil-fuel heating, with a preference for electric heat pumps and low-carbon, energy efficient infrastructure. The HDP supports achieving Net Zero scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2050, while providing a framework to work towards an earlier date of 2040.

DAY-TO-DAY ACTIONS

Travel

Birkbeck is developing a new business travel policy through a dedicated working group. The focus is on reducing business travel emissions through efficient scheduling and discouraging domestic and short-haul flights where practical.



We've procured a much wider range of suppliers that really focus on and prioritise sustainability, one example is Angry Monk, they source unwanted vegetables that would have gone to landfill and instead end up in a range of our homemade dishes."

Matt Weston,
Associate Director,
Food & Beverage

Food

A shift towards sustainable catering is underway. Staff and students support initiatives such as expanding the number of high-quality plant-based and locally sourced options, reducing food waste, and introducing on-site composting.

Carbon offsetting

To achieve net zero, we expect to offset a small portion of our emissions. Birkbeck will explore different schemes for offsetting, and will consider natural solutions and biodiversity as first choice options.

Procurement

Birkbeck is embedding support for sustainability into all tender processes and developing a new sustainable procurement policy.

The detailed document '**A Path for Net Zero: Birkbeck's Energy & Carbon Management Plan 2025**' is available upon request from



It's clear from our carbon footprint analysis that 'purchased goods and services' is one of our largest contributors to scope 3 emissions. We're working closely with our supply chain and are making significant headway in tackling this substantial emissions source."

Keith Willett,
Chief Financial Officer

Birkbeck's Sustainability and Energy Manager, who will act as the owner of the plan.

The Energy & Carbon Management Plan will be treated as a live document and will be fully reviewed and updated periodically. Our full scope 1, 2, and 3 carbon footprint will be updated annually to monitor progress.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

BE ENERGY CONSCIOUS. HEATING AND LIGHTING ACCOUNT FOR A LARGE PORTION OF A BUILDING'S EMISSIONS, AND WHEN WE'RE CARELESS, A LOT OF THAT ENERGY GOES TO WASTE.

We sometimes leave lights on or open windows while the heating's running, so being conscious of our actions can have a real impact.

Take a moment to think:

- i. Do you open a window when you're too hot but see that the heating is still switched on?
- ii. Do you leave lights on in empty rooms or leave computer monitors on?
- iii. Do you turn the heating up instead of dressing for the weather?

Small actions like switching appliances off, closing windows, and layering up your clothes can make a big difference.

Get involved

Birkbeck's [Climate Festival](#) provides a

wide array of opportunities to learn about what your fellow students, staff and researchers are doing at Birkbeck. The 2025 Climate Festival inspired action for a greener future through a series of in-person and online events including a talk by Greg Jackson, CEO of Octopus Energy.

For students, we have a range of [focused courses and subjects](#) covering sustainability and the environment. There are also volunteering opportunities where your time and energy working on green initiatives not only helps our local environment but also improves your employability and connection



By being more energy aware, you're helping Birkbeck reduce its emissions and reducing your own impact on the planet."

Holly Jones, Sustainability and Energy Manager

with the Birkbeck community.

Keep an eye on the [Birkbeck events](#) page for more opportunities to get involved.

Reuse and recycle

Waste only makes up a small part of Birkbeck's scope 3 emissions but has wider impacts relating to resource scarcity. You can help reduce these impacts by making a few simple changes:

- Use the correct bin: Birkbeck provides clearly labelled bins to separate food waste, recyclables, and general waste. Sorting items correctly helps ensure materials are recycled.
- Bring a reusable mug or bottle: Grabbing coffee in your own travel mug helps cut down on single-use waste from cups and lids sold in the cafés.
- Buy, sell or swap: Buying, selling or swapping second-hand items can help reduce overall waste. Look out for swap shops or second-hand sales locally or online.



WHAT WE'VE DONE SO FAR

BIRKBECK HAS ALREADY TAKEN REAL STEPS TOWARD REDUCING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT. **HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING BEHIND THE SCENES:**

Estate improvements

- Energy-efficient upgrades like LED lighting in labs and better building controls
- Greener labs, replacing old equipment with more energy-efficient alternatives
- Toddler Lab and 373 Euston Road buildings are rated BREEAM Excellent
- Solar PV on Euston Rd
- Waterless urinals
- Energy efficiency upgrades at Gordon Square as part of a refurbishment
- A detailed Heat Decarbonisation Plan has been developed to support Birkbeck's transition away from gas heating

Working groups

- Wellcome Environmental

Sustainability Policy Group meeting monthly

- Business Travel Policy working group in progress
- Catering team and Sustainability Manager working towards two sustainable catering certifications

Catering

- All coffee and tea sold onsite comes with the option of switching from dairy milk to plant-based alternatives at no extra cost
- A 100% plant-based hospitality menu is available via room bookings
- At least one-third of each day's menus are made up of vegan and vegetarian options
- Food waste bins introduced across all campuses

Improved data and visibility

- Over 7,500 tonnes of emissions tracked and baselined for the first time in 2023-24, with most coming from scope 3 (indirect emissions from Birkbeck's value chain).



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