



Royal  
Agricultural  
University



**Our Environmental Sustainability  
Strategy  
2025-2028**

*Growing futures since 1845*



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# Executive Summary

The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) is committed to being a global leader in sustainable farming and land management. Building on our core purpose – *care for the land* – this strategy sets out our ambition to address the critical challenges of climate change, food security, and biodiversity loss. These priorities underpin our approach to sustainable food systems, biodiversity conservation, and resilient agricultural practices, while embedding sustainability into our teaching, research, operations, and community engagement.

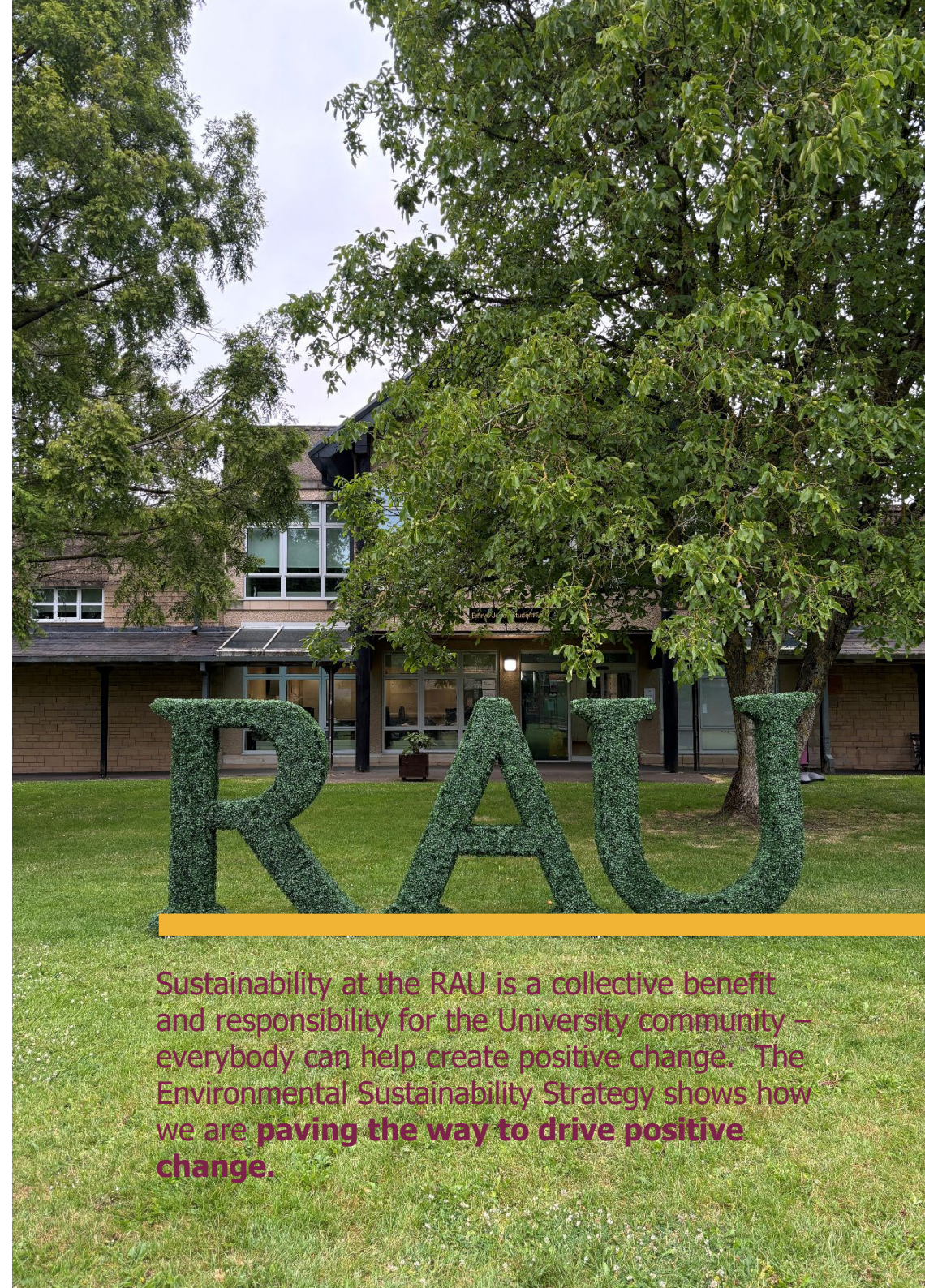
Our 2028 University Strategy provides a clear direction to become the Global University for Sustainable Farming and Land Management. Three strategic goals: Reach, Quality and Sustainability drive our corporate aims and aspiration for excellence. In support of these goals, the Environmental Sustainability Strategy has been formed.

Sustainability at the RAU is a collective benefit and responsibility for the University community. Everyone can help create positive change, and this strategy shows how we are paving the way to drive that change.

Additionally, this strategy incorporates:

- **Mapping the curriculum to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Our teaching and learning efforts align with key SDGs, including Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Quality Education (SDG 4), Climate Action (SDG 13), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), and Life on Land (SDG 15).
- **The RAU Graduate and Sustainable Mindset:** We empower students to develop a ‘sustainable mindset’, enabling them to lead sustainable agriculture and land management practices locally and globally.
- **The Food and Farm Strategy:** This initiative underpins our ambition to integrate sustainable food production and farming practices into all aspects of university operations, research, and teaching.

The RAU’s commitment to sustainability has been recognised globally. In the **2024 Time Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings**, the RAU ranked in the **top 200 globally for Zero Hunger (SDG 2)** and in the **top 300 for Life on Land (SDG 15)**, from those institutions that submitted evidence. These accolades highlight our excellence in contributing to the world’s pressing sustainability challenges despite being one of the smallest institutions to enter the ranking.



Sustainability at the RAU is a collective benefit and responsibility for the University community – everybody can help create positive change. The Environmental Sustainability Strategy shows how we are **paving the way to drive positive change.**



# Background and Context

The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) has a long history of innovation and leadership in the land-based sector. Our unique position as a centre of excellence in sustainable agriculture, land management, and rural enterprise provides the foundation for driving positive change. This strategy aligns with:

- Our 2028 University Strategy.
- RAU's mission to equip a new generation with the skills to tackle global challenges.
- The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).
- The principles outlined in the RAU Sustainability Policy, Sustainability Staff and Student Engagement Plan, and Food Sustainability Policy.

## Where we are currently:

In 2024, our institution's total electrical and gas carbon emissions were calculated at 890 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e. We consumed 1.6 MW of electricity. While this baseline provides a snapshot of some of our environmental impact, we recognise the need for a more comprehensive understanding of our carbon footprint, including indirect emissions. To address this:

- We are enhancing our data collection mechanisms through collaboration with external experts and leveraging tools such as gas and electrical meters for each building on the campus.
- Our goal is to provide a comprehensive carbon footprint report by January 2026, which will inform the refinement of our strategic targets.

## Achievements to Date:

- **Integration of sustainability principles** into our curriculum and research programmes.
- **Recognition as a National Centre of Excellence** by the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship.
- **A robust commitment to reducing environmental impacts** across our estates.
- **Impact Rankings:** RAU's recent inclusion in the Higher Education Impact Rankings highlights our growing commitment to sustainability.

- **Investment in building performance** through the land laboratories project, £5.8M has gone towards improving the building infrastructure across the existing estate.

## Challenges:

While we have made significant progress, challenges remain. These include:

- **Data Gaps:** Acquiring granular data on Scope 3 emissions and waste management remains a priority.
- **Resource Constraints:** Allocating sufficient resources to sustainability initiatives while balancing operational demands.

To address these challenges, we plan to:

- Develop partnerships with organisations specialising in carbon measurement and reduction.
- Engage our university community in data collection and sustainability projects to foster shared responsibility.

## Alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The strategy aligns closely with the following SDGs:

- **SDG 2: Zero Hunger:** Promoting sustainable food production and agriculture education.
- **SDG 4: Quality Education:** Integrating sustainability principles into all courses and equipping students with future-ready skills.
- **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Advocating for sustainable land use and urban planning principles that foster resilient and inclusive communities.
- **SDG 13: Climate Action:** Commitments to achieving net-zero emissions by 2040.
- **SDG 15: Life on Land:** Driving sustainable land management practices and biodiversity conservation.

By building on our achievements, addressing challenges, and enhancing our data capabilities, RAU is positioned to lead in sustainable farming, land management, and environmental stewardship.

# Vision and Strategic Themes

To be the UK's global University for sustainable farming and land management, enabling communities locally, nationally, and globally to thrive in harmony with nature.

## Inspire

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Lead the way in sustainable leadership, providing robust governance to embed sustainability across all RAU activities.

- » Governance frameworks for sustainability embedded across all RAU activities.
- » Sustainability leadership recognised in national/international rankings and awards.
- » Annual sustainability reports demonstrating progress and transparency in embedding sustainability.

## Transform

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Revolutionise estates and operations to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040 and minimise environmental impacts.

- » Achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040 through sustainable estates and operational changes.
- » Reduction in energy consumption and waste generation across the campus.
- » Sustainable building standards (e.g., BREEAM or equivalent) for all new developments and refurbishments.

## Empower

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Equip students, staff, and researchers with knowledge to address sustainability challenges.

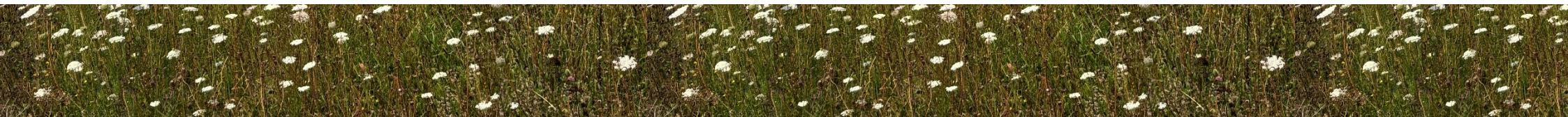
- » Curriculum integration of sustainability principles across all disciplines.
- » Increased student and staff engagement in sustainability-related initiatives (e.g., workshops, projects).
- » Research outputs focused on solving real-world sustainability challenges (measured by publications, partnerships, and impact).

## Connect

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Build powerful partnerships for shared environmental goals and to promote sustainability at all levels.

- » Strategic partnerships with key environmental organisations, local communities, and industry leaders.
- » Collaborative sustainability projects with external stakeholders demonstrating tangible impact.
- » Annual events and initiatives that bring together partners to discuss and promote sustainability issues.



# Alignment to the University Strategy 2028

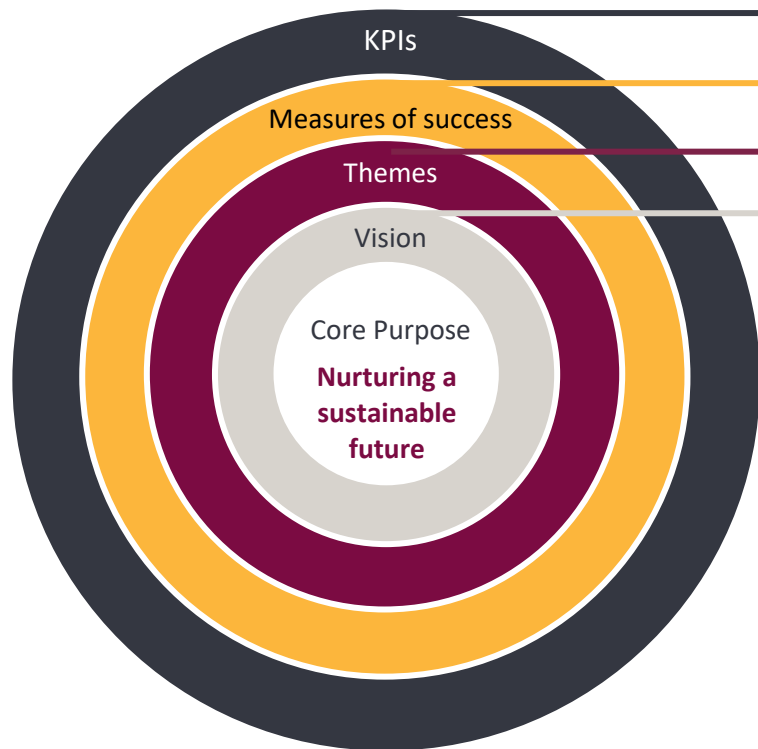
The table illustrates how the strategic themes of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy – **Inspire, Transform, Empower, and Connect** – align with the University’s institutional goals of **Quality, Reach and Sustainability**. Each theme contributes uniquely to advancing academic excellence, expanding community impact, and embedding sustainable practices into operations, reflecting the RAU’s commitment to leadership in sustainable farming and land management.

	Quality	Reach	Sustainability
<b>Inspire</b>	Lead sustainable governance to ensure excellence in teaching and research	Inspire global and local communities to adopt sustainability practices	Establish sustainability leadership through policies and decision-making
<b>Transform</b>	Revolutionise operations to achieve academic and operational efficiency	Transform outreach efforts to scale impact globally	Drive operational changes to achieve net-zero carbon emissions
<b>Connect</b>	Foster partnerships that enhance academic and research excellence	Build networks with global and local partners to expand sustainability influence	Collaborate on shared goals to promote environmental stewardship



The UK’s global University for sustainable farming and land management

# Our five-year strategy: overview



To lead in sustainable land management, research, and education for a thriving future.

**Inspire  
Transform  
Empower  
Connect**

- Inspire**
- » Governance frameworks for sustainability embedded across all RAU activities.
  - » Sustainability leadership recognised in national/international rankings and awards.
  - » Annual sustainability reports demonstrating progress and transparency in embedding sustainability.
- Transform**
- » Achieve a substantial reduction in energy consumption by 2030 through sustainable estates and operational changes.
  - » Reduction in energy consumption and waste generation across the campus.
  - » Sustainable building standards (e.g., BREEAM or equivalent) for all new developments and refurbishments.
- Empower**
- » Curriculum integration of sustainability principles across all disciplines.
  - » Increased student and staff engagement in sustainability-related initiatives (e.g., workshops, projects).
  - » Research output focused on solving real-world sustainability challenges (measured by publications, partnerships, and impact).
- Connect**
- » Strategic partnerships with key environmental organisations, local communities, and industry leaders.
  - » Collaborative sustainability projects with external stakeholders demonstrating tangible impact.
  - » Annual events and initiatives that bring together partners to discuss and promote sustainability issues.

- Inspire**
- » Establish and implement a sustainability steering committee by 2025.
  - » Achieve recognition in 2 x national/international sustainability rankings/awards by 2028.
  - » Produce and publish an annual sustainability report starting in 2025, measuring progress towards carbon reduction, sustainability initiatives, and governance.
- Transform**
- » Reduce waste by 20%
  - » Reduce scope 1 and 2 emissions from energy consumption by 10% by 2030 and 50% by 2040.
  - » Ensure 100% of new buildings or refurbishments meet sustainable building certifications (e.g., BREEAM Very Good or Higher) from 2028.
- Empower**
- » Integrate sustainability principles into 100% of relevant courses by 2028.
  - » Engage at least 50% of students and 40% of staff in sustainability related initiatives by 2028.
  - » Increase the number of sustainability focused research projects by 20% annually, with measurable impact (publications, partnerships).
- Connect**
- » Develop 3 new strategic partnerships with environmental organisations or sustainably focused industry leaders by 2028.
  - » Launch 2 new collaborative sustainability projects by 2028, with measurable outcomes.
  - » Host at least 1 sustainability focused event per year, with participation from external stakeholders and clear, impactful outcomes.

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