



NUI Galway  
OÉ Gaillimh

# Sustainability Strategy

*Leading the transition to a sustainable future*

**2020-2025**

LEARN  
LIVE  
LEAD



[www.nuigalway.ie/sustainability](http://www.nuigalway.ie/sustainability)

## PREFACE

DRAFT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NUI Galway recognises that the future of humanity is threatened by unsustainable interactions between our societies, economies and our environment. We are on a journey to lead the transition to a sustainable future. We launched our inaugural sustainability strategy in November 2017. The NUI Galway Sustainability Strategy 2017-2020 set out an ambitious vision to establish the University as a top-class, green, smart and healthy campus. We have achieved significant progress over the last three years and our actions are already having an impact in Galway and globally. While we are inspired and motivated by our progress to date, as 2020 draws to a close, we must look to the future, to a new decade, and plan for success beyond that laid out in our inaugural strategy. As a university community we are deeply committed to sustainability; we have identified sustainability as one of our four core values. At an institutional level, sustainability is a key pillar of our new Strategic Plan: *Shared Vision, Shaped by Values* and NUI Galway is a signatory to the SDG Accord. Against this back-drop and clear commitment from University leadership and our wider University community, we present to you our second sustainability strategy; the NUI Galway Sustainability Strategy 2020-2025.

The NUI Galway Sustainability Strategy 2020-2025 sets out a vision of being a leader in sustainability by embedding sustainability in our culture, operational policies and governance structures and empowering our communities to be champions of sustainability. The vision is anchored in the *Shared Vision, Shaped by Values* ambition to lead the transition to a sustainable future on our campus, in our city and region and around the world. The Strategy was developed by the Community University Sustainability Partnership (CUSP) team following campus-wide consultation.

Building on successful first steps, the Strategy is based on a Learn-Live-Lead model organised around 6 themes (Research and Learning, Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Nature and Ecosystems, Health and Wellbeing, Built Environment and Governance and Leadership). Each theme is comprised of a series of aims, objectives and targets for the next five academic years. The Strategy identifies 25 key measures of success across the six themes of the Learn-Live-Lead model. The Strategy is a roadmap for the *Shared Vision, Shaped by Values* commitment: *'Building on the work of our Community and University Sustainability Partnership and its approach to learn live lead sustainability across the university mission, we will embed sustainability in our culture, operational policies and governance structures and empower our communities to be champions of sustainability'*.

## NUI GALWAY'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Ref	Measures of success	2025 Target
<b>Research and Learning</b>		
RL1	Integration of sustainability across all education programmes of the university	By 2023
RL2	Availability of co-curricular sustainability experiences for all NUI Galway students	By 2023
RL3	Provision of opportunities for all to learn about sustainability and to be part of the change process in the transition to a sustainable campus	By 2025
RL4	Leading research addressing the challenges of sustainable development carried out across all colleges and research institutions. Establish baseline of research activity aligned to sustainable development with an ambition to increase such activity to 60% of all research activity by 2025.	60% by 2025
RL5	Leadership in sustainability innovation and entrepreneurship	Increase programmes by 2025
<b>Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b>		
EN1	Improve energy efficiency by 45%	By 2025
EN2	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 15% based on 2021 baseline	By 2025
EN3	% Renewable electrical energy of total energy	Increase by 5% year-on-year
<b>Nature and Ecosystems</b>		
NE1	Biodiversity Action Plan implemented and monitored for future updates.	Ongoing
NE2	Demonstrated linkages between sustainable management of campus and research on campus biodiversity. Applied for funding for actions to showcase sustainable biodiversity management for wider community.	Start in 2021 and continue year on year
NE3	Signatory to Leave No Trace and principles implemented.	By 2022
NE4	Co-developed community projects in city and county with key partners.	By 2025
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>		
HW1	Achieve the Keep Well Mark	Achieve by 2021
HW2	Achieve Healthy Campus Status	Achieve by 2022
HW3	Smoke Free Campus	Achieve by 2021
HW4	Level of harmful drinking among students	Reduce year on year

<b>Built Environment</b>		
BE1	From a 2019 baseline, reduce total water consumption by 10%	Achieve by 2025
BE2	Ban specific single-use plastic convenience items including polystyrene food containers, cups and drinks containers. Reduce food wastage by 50%.	Achieve by 2021 Achieve by 2025
BE3	Establish baseline transport carbon footprint by 2021 and reduce year on year	2025
<b>Governance and Leadership</b>		
GL1	Show year-on-year progress on the achievement of the SDGs	Annual Improvement in Times Higher Societal Impact Ranking
GL2	Impactful partnerships established with community groups to achieve the SDGs	Continuous Growth each year
GL3	All labs green lab certified	By 2025
GL4	Achieve inaugural STARS ranking and improve award rating. Maintain An Taisce Green Flag status	Initial STARS ranking by 2022 with improved award rating by 2025
GL5	All contracts/tenders incorporate green purchasing criteria	By 2021
GL6	Achieve pathway to carbon neutrality	Measure and report carbon footprint by 2021. Develop a framework by 2023 for the university to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has been gathering momentum as a core value at our university for a number of years. We launched our inaugural sustainability strategy for the campus in November 2017 with a vision of establishing the university as a leading, green, smart and healthy campus. With growing support and commitment from our campus community, we have achieved significant progress over the last three years. Some of the major milestones reached as a result of the inaugural strategy include: academic staff embracing sustainability as part of the curriculum; becoming a Green Campus Ireland awarded site recognising the work undertaken across the campus to promote sustainability in each of five themes that include energy, waste, water, travel and biodiversity; exceeding the Public Sector 2020 Energy Efficiency target; the first Green Lab certification for a lab in Europe; and managing the campus grounds in line with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Most recently, after a campus-wide consultation process, sustainability was enshrined in the NUI Galway Strategic Plan for 2020-2025, *Shared Vision, Shaped by Values* as one of four key values, with ten associated flagship actions across the university's mission. Alongside and linked to respect, openness and excellence, sustainability is now at the heart of our strategic approach at NUI Galway. In December 2019, the university further demonstrated its commitment to sustainability at an institutional level by signing the SDG Accord, committing *to embedding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into our education, research, leadership operations, administration and engagement activities.*

This, our second sustainability strategy, from 2020 to 2025, builds on the success of the first strategy and is a roadmap to achieve the NUI Galway Strategic Plan commitment *'Building on the work of CUSP and its approach to learn, live and lead sustainability across the university mission, we will embed sustainability in our culture operational policies and governance structures and empower our communities to be champions of sustainability'*. CUSP is a multi-disciplinary voluntary team of over 30 students and staff from across the campus and community partners, all working together with the common aim of establishing the university as a leading institutional model for sustainability. CUSP was established in 2015, under the direction of the Deputy President and Registrar, to showcase how a university can become a role model for the transition to a sustainable future. The implementation of the work is led by the Community and University Sustainability Officer, appointed in 2019.

The NUI Galway Sustainability Strategy 2020-2025 was developed following wide ranging consultation with students, staff and the wider community. We recognise that there is a strong cohort of motivated and passionate employees who are dedicated to making NUI Galway a more sustainable place. We appreciate the crucial role that staff play in achieving the aims and objectives set out in this strategy and effectively communicated with staff in developing the Strategy. As a university community, we recognise that the value of sustainability comes most strongly from our students. Our students are motivated and demand action on sustainability. As a university that prides itself on the qualities of responsiveness and promoting a participatory process, CUSP placed a strong emphasis on the student voice when developing the Strategy. For example, students form a core part of the CUSP team representing sustainability from the perspective of student societies, Students' Union and Volunteering. A strong emphasis is placed on generating awareness of sustainability among incoming first year students and maintaining engagement with students throughout the year with various themed days, workshops, information sessions, internships and events. At various events over the last two years, CUSP asked students to provide feedback and ideas on campus sustainability. Thousands of responses and a multitude of insightful information was received. At NUI Galway, we recognise that our students are the current and future sustainability implementers, leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs and citizens and the Strategy firmly places students at the heart of our sustainability journey.

The Strategy sets out an ambitious vision to *lead* by example and develop the campus as a role model for sustainability, with the delivery of aims, objectives and targets for the next five academic years, under six themes, as part of a Learn-Live-Lead model (see below). An annual Sustainability Report will be produced outlining progress against targets. Good governance and continuous engagement with the campus community will ensure the effectiveness of this approach over five years.

## **IMAGE OF LEARN LIVE LEAD MODEL**

## 2 OUR JOURNEY TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

### Vision

NUI Galway will be a leader in the transition to a sustainable future. We will embed sustainability in our culture, operational policies and governance structures and empower our communities to be champions of sustainability.

### Mission: Learn-Live-Lead

Building on the work of CUSP, we will learn, live and lead sustainability across the university mission. The focus of *learn* is to continue to embed sustainability literacy into all aspects of University learning and research, the focus of *live* is to implement the principles of sustainability throughout campus operations and engagement activities; from a *lead* perspective the aim is to play a central and transformational role in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Our mission is organised around six themes: Research and Learning, Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Nature and Ecosystems, Health and Wellbeing, Built Environment, and Leadership and Governance.

### Values

This Strategy is underpinned by the University's four core values:

- **Respect** – Respect for people, our purpose, our place and our planet.
- **Excellence** – We serve our region, our students and our society best through our high standards in research, teaching, support and engagement
- **Openness** – We are open to the world. We also go out seeking new and deeper research co-operation, new ideas, new partnerships and new ways of engaging
- **Sustainability** – We cherish our role as a university sustaining our communities and the next generation of citizens and of knowledge for our students and for our society.

Moreover, the work of this Strategy will be engaging, holistic and inclusive; students and staff will be at the heart of the sustainability journey.

### 3. RESEARCH & LEARNING



At NUI Galway, we recognise the pivotal role that our teaching and research activities can play in developing the next generation of students, researchers and innovators for tackling society's evolving sustainable development challenges. As a globally focused research-led university, NUI Galway supports a large number of inter-disciplinary research centres directly related to sustainability and the environment. We understand that the problems of the world cannot be solved from just one perspective and we will continue to affirm the importance of inter- and trans-disciplinarity in delivering impact. Through our teaching and learning, we can provide students with the necessary knowledge, skills, interest and motivation to understand and address the SDGs. Through our research, we can offer knowledge, solutions, pathways and technologies for addressing sustainability challenges.

While we have made considerable progress over the last few years in embedding sustainability literacy into University practice, we recognise that there is much that needs to be accomplished if we are to live up to the commitments expressed in the NUI Galway Strategic Plan *Shared Vision, Shaped by Values* 'to be world renowned for our teaching and research activities that develop our graduates as future sustainability leaders in Ireland and globally'.

Over the next five years, we will seek to transform the university's teaching and learning culture so that sustainability becomes a core part of our student learning objectives and all students, staff and key stakeholders engage with sustainability as a core value of the institution. Using the SDG framework as a blueprint, we will sharpen the focus of our research and innovation over the next five years and seek to carry out research that is revolutionary in its positive societal impact. As a signatory to the SDG Accord, we commit to embedding sustainability into our education and research and recognise that we have a responsibility to play a central and transformational role in delivering the SDGs.

#### ***Strategic Aim***

Through our teaching and research activities, using the UN SDGs as a framework, we will develop the next generation of students, researchers and innovators for tackling society's

evolving sustainable development challenges. We will embed sustainability across our learning, research and the student experience so that individuals across our entire campus community gain the necessary knowledge and skills to become sustainability role models and leaders.

### ***Objectives***

- Measure and increase the number of programmes delivering sustainability content at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.
- Work with colleges, schools, disciplines and units to identify a network of sustainability curriculum champions who will support academic staff, module owners and programme directors across schools and colleges to review learning objectives and integrate sustainability across educational programmes of the University.
- Work with students to make university participation more accessible and affordable for them to ensure that sustainability education and experiences are available at every income level.
- Embed sustainability across the entire student experience including student recruitment stage, new student orientation, activities and life on campus.
- Develop on-campus student sustainability leadership opportunities e.g. institutional awards and student led demonstrator projects.
- Work in conjunction with Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI) to develop co-curricular experiences that achieve sustainability learning objectives and support student organisations, clubs, societies and events focused on sustainability.
- Incorporate sustainability as part of employee recruitment, staff induction, training and professional development.
- Offer sustainability workshops, awareness days, engagement events, seminars and tours to students, staff and the wider community.
- Map, measure and increase research projects aligned to the SDGs.
- Champion inter- and trans-disciplinary collaboration and engagement as drivers of sustainability research.

- Engage with partners locally, nationally and worldwide and become a global leader in research and innovation that address the SDGs.
- Develop targeted relationships with universities in low and middle-income countries focused on sustainability and create sustainability-related scholarships for students from low and middle-income countries.
- Develop innovation and entrepreneurship programmes that enable our faculty, staff and students to sustainably make an impact and promote sustainability within leadership roles.

<b>Research and Learning</b>			
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Measures of success</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Owner</b>
RL1	Integration of sustainability across all education programmes of the university	By 2023	CUSP R&L
RL2	Availability of co-curricular sustainability experiences for all NUI Galway students	By 2023	CUSP R&L
RL3	Provision of opportunities for all to learn about sustainability and to be part of the change process in the transition to a sustainable campus	By 2025	CUSP R&L
RL4	Leading research addressing the challenges of sustainable development carried out across all colleges and research institutions. Establish baseline of research activity aligned to sustainable development with an ambition to increase such activity to 60% of all research activity by 2025.	60% research activity aligned to sustainable development by 2025	CUSP R&L
RL5	Leadership in sustainability innovation and entrepreneurship	Increase sustainability innovation and entrepreneurship programmes by 2025	CUSP R&L

## 4. ENERGY & GHG EMISSIONS



At NUI Galway, we recognise the grave threat that climate change poses to our health and our planet's future and the urgent need for society to transition to a low carbon future. We know that addressing a challenge as big as climate change requires a truly collaborative, society-wide approach. We are committed to playing our part in reducing our emissions and acting as an exemplar of best practice to lead a wider transition. Over the next five years, we will continue to show leadership and vision, setting ourselves ambitious targets in the area of sustainable energy and carbon mitigation. We will aggressively pursue reducing energy consumption in new and refurbished buildings and procuring energy saving equipment and technologies. We will diversify energy supply by investing in renewable energy sources and reinvesting energy cost savings in new sustainability technologies and engagement with building occupants as agents for making our buildings more energy efficient. We are committed to more comprehensive sustainability reporting and will lead the way in measuring and reporting carbon footprint. We aim to deliver on these commitments by promoting the concept of energy efficiency and carbon mitigation at all levels in the organisation from students and academics to administration staff and contractors.

It is envisaged that the aims and objectives set out in the strategy will build on the university's progress over the last 10 years in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, designing energy efficient buildings, transitioning to renewable energy sources and using the campus as an exemplar for sustainability in the wider community.

### ***Strategic Aim***

Building on past progress, we will continue to exceed targets set out in the Public sector Energy Efficiency programmes and act as a leader in the sector through project demonstration, community engagement and collaboration with energy users across our campuses. We will embrace proven new technologies to increase our buildings' energy

efficiency and Building Energy Rating by integrating sustainability in all Buildings and Estates planning and development under the auspices of the Climate Action Plan. We will develop a pathway to achieve carbon neutrality for the university by 2030.

### ***Objectives***

- Improve Energy Efficiency by 45% by 2025 recognising that the Climate Action Plan Target is to improve energy efficiency of Public sector buildings by 50% by 2030. This will be achieved through the installation of energy saving equipment and technologies (e.g. LED lighting, Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Panels, Electric Heat Pumps) and carrying out fabric upgrades to existing buildings-an approach that has already proven successful on the NUI Galway campus.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 15% by 2025 based on 2021 baseline year.
- Increase reliance on renewables by 5% year-on-year based on 2021 baseline year.
- Determine our baseline carbon footprint and develop a roadmap to move ambitiously towards carbon neutrality, by 2030, with a reduction of 15% in Scope 1 and Scope 2 greenhouse gas emissions by 2025 and a reduction of 10% in Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions by 2025.
- Display up to date Display Energy Certificates (DEC) in all buildings by 2025.
- Achieve certification to ISO 50001:2018 by 2020
- Design and implement an ambitious programme of active engagement among the entire campus community which focuses on energy reduction in our buildings. Use the support of Energy Champions and Energy Working Groups to implement behavioural change.
- Become a research leader in the development of energy-saving technologies and renewable energy technologies through pilot projects with Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI).
- Participate in partnerships with enterprise and community groups who have as their goal improvement in use of resources and reduced climate impact. Promote community building through a partnership approach where campus resources and expertise are shared with the local and wider community.

Energy and GHG Emissions			
Ref	Measures of success	Target	Owner
EN1	Improve energy efficiency by 45%	2025	Buildings & Estates
EN2	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 15% based on 2021 baseline	2025	Buildings & Estates
EN3	Renewable electrical energy of total energy	Increase by 5% year-on-year	Building & Estates

DRAFT

## 5. NATURE & ECOSYSTEMS



At NUI Galway, we recognise that healthy and biodiverse ecosystems are the foundation for life on this planet. We are fully aware that we depend on nature to sustain our economies, livelihoods, food security, health, and quality of life. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reports that of an estimated 8 million animal and plant species, around 1 million are threatened with extinction. In what has been declared by some ‘the Anthropocene epoch, this new wave of extinction is largely due to our human influence on the natural world. We view loss of ecosystems and biodiversity as our loss and must play our part in addressing one of the greatest sustainability challenges of our times.

NUI Galway values and respects our biodiverse campus grounds and we are a signatory to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. We are committed to implementing our Biodiversity Action Plan, to ecological planning for improved biodiversity, to promoting the benefits of interaction with nature and developing and sharing the campus as an educational and nature resource. Ecological stewardship is explicit in the University Strategic plan. We are committed to good citizenship and local, regional and global sustainability; to the sensitive management of our biodiverse grounds and to becoming an exemplar in biodiversity related research and learning. We recognise the synergies between Nature and Ecosystems and other areas of the Sustainability Strategy; for example, we promote the Health and Wellbeing benefits from interacting with nature and acknowledge our strategic plan commitment to be an exemplar in Research and Learning about biodiversity.

### *Strategic Aim*

To become a role model for our positive impact on the environment. To continue to enhance the management of our campus environment in ways that are sensitive to our ecosystems, in keeping with our aspirations to be an exemplar in biodiversity research and learning.

## ***Objectives***

- Continue to be a leader in how we implement sustainable procurement, planning, materials and practices to ensure the campus remains biodiverse, safe and healthy.
- Build on survey work to identify, map and enhance biodiversity sites on campus.
- Implement and update our biodiversity action and pollinator plans.
- Apply for funding to implement commitments within the pollinator plan and biodiversity action plan (e.g. outdoor classroom and signage).
- Continue to use the campus and our wider research stations as a living lab, and utilise research to inform management/biodiversity practices; for example, habitat management for wildlife (including pollinators), invasive species treatment and control, and diverting food wastes into composting/ anaerobic digestion and bio-compatible outdoor lighting (low blue content, lower overall intensity, fully directed downwards).
- Continue to collaborate with others to make findings from our research available and share the benefits of our approach to promoting, researching, managing, and enhancing biodiversity on campus to the wider community, including other third level institutions.
- Increase campus and wider community awareness and appreciation of biodiversity for its intrinsic value, for ecosystem health and for personal health and wellbeing. Sign up to and encourage Leave no Trace ethos in engagement with biodiversity and across campus.
- Embed outdoor teaching within the learning experience of our students, staff, and wider community. Through Teaching and Learning committees, promote and increase the use of outdoor classes and laboratories on the NUI Galway campus and including our field research stations (for example Mace Head, Carron, Finavarra, Carna).
- Engage staff, students and the wider community with campus biodiversity through activities timed to coincide with recruitment, orientation, induction and other hosted events.

- Employ a biodiversity survey with the wider community to co-develop actions to improve biodiversity where we live, study, work and relax.
- Map and encourage nature connections from the NUI Galway campus outwards towards the Burren, Connemara, and wider Corrib hinterland, including the Greenway, in collaboration with community partners.
- Work with national bodies, local and regional authorities, city and county civil and civic society organisations e.g. (but not limited to) Galway Environmental Network to help implement Galway City Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Co-develop coastal and marine biodiversity plans with flagship community partners, the campus and wider community to include ocean literacy research, learning and conservation.

Nature and Ecosystems			
Ref	Measures of success	Target	Owner
NE1	Biodiversity Action Plan implemented and monitored for future updates.	Ongoing	CUSP N&E
NE2	Demonstrated linkages between sustainable management of campus and research on campus biodiversity. Maximise funding opportunities for actions that showcase sustainable biodiversity management to the wider community.	Start in 2021 and continue year on year	CUSP N&E
NE3	Signatory to Leave No Trace and principles implemented.	By 2022	CUSP N&E
NE4	Co-developed community projects in city and county with key partners.	By 2025	CUSP N&E

## 6. HEALTH & WELLBEING



At NUI Galway, we recognise that health and sustainable development are inextricably linked. Sustainable development aspires to health enhancing environments, societies and economies; health is determined by a wide range of social, environmental and economic influences. The sustainability and vitality of our University depends on the health of our population, and vice versa. As a supporting partner of Healthy Ireland<sup>1</sup>, we adopt a holistic view of health. We are committed to helping our communities attain full physical, social, sexual and mental wellbeing by implementing an ambitious programme of health and wellbeing objectives, organised around four areas (governance & leadership, physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing and social wellbeing). Objectives are driven by a comprehensive health-promoting framework supported by the principles of building policy, creating supportive environments, developing skills, reorienting services and strengthening community action. By adopting a whole-of-university approach, we seek to improve the health and wellbeing not only of the staff, faculty and students who spend a significant time in our care, but also their families and the wider community in which the university is located.

We are committed to bridging and integrating strategies that promote sustainable development with those that promote health. For example, we recognise that by developing biodiverse grounds, we create a health and wellbeing resource that can be used to reduce stress, promote coping and improve physical and mental wellbeing. We know that connecting with nature makes people restored, happy, and more motivated to be more physically active. Increasing the availability of clean energy, providing opportunities for

---

<sup>1</sup> Healthy Ireland<sup>1</sup> is a national framework (2013-2025) for action set out by the Department of Health to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Ireland. The vision is one where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility.

active transport, finding ways to reduce waste and eliminate single-use plastics, ensuring easy access to safe clean drinking water, providing healthy, safe and sustainable food options, and creating opportunities for physical activity all have a positive impact on our health and wellbeing, at both a community and individual level.

At a global level, we know that health is centrally positioned in the SDGs, where all of the goals are directly related to health or contribute to health indirectly. The goals recognise that our future prosperity depends on human health, planetary and ecological health and a liveable earth.

### **Strategic Aim**

Using a whole-of-university approach, improve the health and wellbeing of students and staff who live, learn, work and play in our community by helping them to attain full physical, social, sexual and mental health and wellbeing.

### **Objectives**

#### ***Governance & Leadership***

- Create a health and wellbeing steering group with broad membership from across the University community (students and staff) to mobilise and develop health and wellbeing efforts under a multi-disciplinary organisational framework.
- Identify and establish a baseline of current health and wellbeing related activities on campus, building on these to improve health and wellbeing across the University.
- Develop and implement a Healthy Campus Charter/Framework.
- Embed a Healthy Campus Culture into the governance, strategy structures operations and outreach.
- Achieve 'Healthy Campus Status' by creating a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the mental, physical and social wellbeing of our campus community, enabling our people to achieve their full potential.
- Work to improve the physical, social, sexual and mental health and wellbeing of not only the staff, faculty and students who spend a significant amount of time in our care, but also their families and the wider community in which the university is located.

- Take a whole-university approach to improving health and wellbeing, ensuring the campus community students, staff and the wider campus community partners are actively engaged in deciding on and implementing health and wellbeing promotion actions.
- Strengthen interactions, collaborations and partnerships with key external agencies, for example Local Authorities, health services, community organisations and local partners.
- Offer the widest possible access to our health and wellbeing research expertise.

### ***Physical Wellbeing***

- Develop an NUI Galway Healthy Eating and Active Living policy.
- Develop an NUI Galway Alcohol, Drugs and other Substance policy.
- Develop and implement a Smoke Free Campus policy.
- Identify and establish a baseline of current physical activity levels. Increase and develop the physical activity opportunities available to the campus community and wider community, encouraging everyone to achieve optimal health or personal goals through physical activity and sport. Increase the number of campus community participating in university sports clubs.
- Promote healthy active lifestyles by achieving more sustainable travel patterns
- Using the National SMART Consent Programme developed by researchers and staff at NUI Galway, make Sexual Consent workshops available to the campus community, in line with the National Sexual Health policy.

### ***Mental Wellbeing:***

- Implement, review, and update the NUI Galway Mental Health Strategy.
- Increase the attendance at, and delivery of workshops and training programmes, seeking to address sexual and mental health issues.
- Increase participation in university societies and clubs, through an expanded programme of exercise and physical activity, and in wider community and outreach activities, as mechanisms to promote and improve mental health.

- Continue to develop and deliver cross campus sexual and mental health and wellness programmes.
- Continue to promote and support sexual health and wellbeing among the campus community.
- Ensure that mental health is a priority in all faculties and is part of the teaching curriculum (for example continue to build on Student Resilience Project)

### ***Social Wellbeing***

- Ensure our work and interactions are rooted in trust and respect, and approached with positive intent.
- Further the development of social spaces and communal areas on campus to facilitate social engagement and relaxation. Make provision for social spaces in new buildings and in older buildings that are undergoing refurbishment.
- Prioritise affordable and sustainable on-campus accommodation for our students.
- Prioritise opportunities for students to engage in social activities on campus.
- Promote and support sexual health and wellbeing among the campus community.
- Build on the staff work positive initiative.

<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>			
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Measure of success</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Owner</b>
HW1	Achieve the Keep Well Mark	Achieve by 2021	Student Services/ Human Resources
HW2	Achieve the Healthy Campus Status	Achieve by 2022	Student Services
HW3	Smoke Free Campus	Achieve by 2021	Student Services/ Healthy Galway City
HW4	Alcohol, drug and other substance policy Reduced the level of harmful drinking among students.	Reduce year on year	Student Services Healthy Galway City Students Union

## 7. BUILT ENVIRONMENT



### **WATER**

At NUI Galway, we are committed to the effective and efficient use of water resources because we recognise the economic and environmental cost of providing safe, clean drinking water and the need to safeguard the supply for the future. Concerted efforts to reduce water consumption have been ongoing across the campus for more than a decade, from the completion of an extensive leak detection and repair programme in 2017, to improved monitoring, equipment upgrades and the adoption of behaviour change campaigns. In the period 2007/2008 to 2017/2018 alone, we have successfully reduced by 46% the water usage, per occupant, on campus.

Over the next 5 years, we are committed to maintaining these reductions on campus and achieving further reductions. We will continue to highlight the importance of water as a critical and limited resource and eliminate all unnecessary water usage on campus. We will engage staff, students and visitors in responsible water usage on campus and by example, encourage responsible water use practice in the wider community. We will continue to lead and contribute to water research providing sustainable local and global solutions for water resource management, supply and treatment. Through research-led teaching and on campus applied solutions, we will ensure that our future water professionals are cognisant of best, sustainable practises in water resources management, treatment and supply.

#### ***Strategic Aims***

To raise awareness with staff, students and visitors of water as a critical and limited resource that must be used responsibly. To eliminate all unnecessary water usage on campus, to maintain and further improve the water usage reductions achieved on campus in the last

period. To eliminate the reliance of staff, students and visitors on single use plastics for water consumption.

### ***Objectives***

- To recognise water as a critical and limited resource by adopting an NUI Galway Water Policy
- To reduce, from a 2019 baseline, water usage in campus buildings by 10% by 2025
- Continue programme of installing water metering and sub-metering on our largest buildings on campus.
- Continue programme of installing water saving devices in laboratories, kitchens workshops and WC facilities across the campus e.g. low flow taps, dual flush WC's time control on urinal flushes and showers and low flow shower heads.
- Incorporate water usage reduction as a key project design component as part of new buildings and retrofits. (To be confirmed by B&E)
- Increase the awareness of staff, students and visitors of the importance of water as a critical resource that must be used responsibly.
- Engage staff students and visitors in responsible water usage and water consumption reduction at a building level and beyond by providing water consumption information and inviting inquiry and feedback.
- Continue to lead and contribute to research activities in water resources management, water usage reduction, water supply and water treatment.
- Share knowledge and information with the wider community about sustainable water practices locally and globally and by example seek to encourage responsible water use beyond the campus.
- Work with staff, students and visitors to eliminate single-use plastics for water consumption
- Use research led teaching and on campus applied solutions to instil unsustainable water practice in our future generations of water professionals

### **WASTE**

The University's approach to waste is an area that students, staff and wider community are increasingly interested in. How we manage our waste is considered a very visible reflection of our commitment to sustainability. At NUI Galway, we recognise the need to design out waste and move away from linear production and consumption models - based on 'produce, use and dispose' that are significantly carbon and resource-intensive. We need to strategise to prevent waste at every opportunity and embrace the circular economy. A key building block for the circular economy is resource efficiency and efforts to reduce waste. The NUI Galway Strategic Plan 2020-2025 commits to developing a roadmap to move ambitiously towards carbon neutrality by 2030. We recognise that development and promotion of practical initiatives relating to circular economy is essential in order to fulfil the vision of becoming a carbon neutral University.

### ***Strategic Aims***

Prioritise prevention of waste at every opportunity through eco-design, reuse and repair. Recycle and re-use waste in ways that promote resource efficiency, reduce cost, protect health and the environment and move us towards a circular economy.

### ***Objectives***

- Increase the recycling rate from 52% in 2019 to 60% by 2025. This is ahead of the national Climate Action Plan targets, which are striving for 55% in 2025 and 60% by 2030.
- Undertake a new campus-wide waste characterisation survey as part of an information gathering exercise to influence and target behavioural change.
- Work with catering contractors to reduce food waste by 50% by 2025 ahead of the Climate Action Plan objective to reach the same target by 2030.
- Ban specific single-use plastic convenience items including polystyrene food containers, cups and drinks containers in line with the Single Use Plastics Directive.
- Provide clearly labelled recycling facilities at all waste disposal points.

- Provide composting facilities at all kitchen/canteen locations throughout the campus.
- As part of Galway Green Labs programme and the new Procurement Framework, seek to reduce single-use laboratory plastics and promote the use of green products/alternatives. Substitute single-use plastic with other reusable materials and work with supplier to reduce packaging plastic.
- Ensure the correct segregation, packaging, labelling and storage of hazardous waste. Seek to reduce quantity of hazardous waste arising onsite, e.g., by adherence to the ‘12 principles of green chemistry’.
- Continue to promote student-led collaborative projects with civil and civic society organisations that seek to reduce waste and reuse resources (e.g. second hand bookshop, vintage clothes sale, plastic free Galway city).
- Using the campus as a living lab, increase student engagement on waste as a resource to recycle, reuse and recover raw materials as part of a circular economy and bio economy.
- Be a world leader in research and innovation that seeks to optimise waste as a resource to recover raw materials.

## **TRANSPORT**

As a world leading research institution and the largest third level institution in the West of Ireland, NUI Galway is visited by thousands of students, staff and visitors on a daily basis. Transport is a fundamental part of daily activities and we are committed to developing safe, equitable, sustainable travel options that optimise access to education, employment opportunities, services and impact positively on health and wellbeing. As part of our commitment to sustainable healthy lifestyles and reducing our carbon footprint, we will expand walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure and facilities to promote modal shift; implement policies to reduce carbon intensity of travel and develop working practises that reduce unnecessary journeys and promote work-life balance. This Strategy is linked to the NUI Galway Travel Plan 2016-2020 through which the University commits to promoting sustainable travel options. This strategy is linked to the Climate Action Plan that aims to make growth less transport intensive.

## ***Strategic Aim***

Support day-to-day operations and planned growth of the university, while minimising traffic impact and enhancing mobility and sustainable travel options. Working in collaboration with local government and other partners, endeavour to reduce the carbon footprint of transportation.

## ***Objectives***

- Maximise the potential for walking and cycling by enhancing permeability of the campus through the creation of high quality pathways, pedestrian friendly entrances, cycle friendly passages and keeping volume and speed of vehicular traffic to a minimum.
- Reduce the number of journeys made to campus by car by ensuring that walking, cycling and public transport remain safe, convenient and predictable options. Investigate the impact of remote working and blended learning on travel patterns. Identify innovative ways to reduce single-occupancy car journeys to the University.
- Maintain and renew cycle parking facilities to ensure adequate, safe, dedicated bike parking across the campus, which also facilitates cargo bikes or child carrying trailers. Ensure shower and locker facilities are in line with demand.
- Continue to promote bike share scheme, travel to work scheme and the tax saver commuter scheme through targeted awareness initiatives. Promote active travel campaigns such as pedometer and cycle challenges, fun runs, bike maintenance classes, etc.
- Liaise with Galway City Council (GCC) and National Transport Authority (NTA) to raise awareness of deficiencies in Galway City's pedestrian and cycle network. Collaborate to increase opportunities for sustainable transportation.
- Endeavour to influence GCC and NTA to expedite NUI Galway's access to the Galway Transport Strategy's proposed 'Public Transport Interchange'. In the process, enhance bus service provision, access to bus services and bus service/timetable information.

- Continue the process of upgrading university transport fleet with electric or hybrid vehicles with a view to achieving a zero emissions university fleet by 2025.
- Extend the number of e-car charging points throughout the campus.
- Make future growth of the University less transport intensive and support staff wellbeing and work-life balance by supporting a work-from-home /remote working protocol.
- Develop and implement University-related Air Travel Policy to mitigate the climate impacts of air travel (e.g. international travel pertaining to study abroad, academic travel as part of research). Enhance web/video conferencing facilities and promote video conferencing and collaboration technologies as viable alternatives to physical travel.
- Explore the recruitment of an intern Travel Plan Co-ordinator to play a lead role in the effective implementation of the Travel plan, to promote sustainable transport to student staff and the wider community and to liaise with key stakeholder including NTA, GCC and interested parties in the local community e.g. cycle user groups.
- Collaborate comprehensively with students and staff and make best use of world leading research within the University to reach these objectives.

<b>Built Environment</b>			
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Measure of success</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Owner</b>
BE1	From a 2019 baseline, reduce total water consumption by 10%	2025	Buildings
BE2	Ban specific single-use plastic convenience items including polystyrene food containers, cups and drinks containers in line with the Single Use Plastics Directive.	2021	Buildings & Estates/Commercial Services/CUSP
	Reduce food wastage by 50%	2025	
BE3	Establish baseline transport carbon footprint in 2021 and reduce year on year	2025	Buildings& Estates/CUSP

## 8. GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP



At NUI Galway, we are committed to playing a central and transformational role in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As signatories of the SDG Accord, we have committed to aligning all major efforts with the SDGs, targets and indicators, including through our education, research, leadership, operational and engagement activities. Since launching our inaugural sustainability strategy in November 2017, we have made significant process in this regard. Through extensive consultation with the university and wider community, sustainability was selected as one of four key values that shapes the University's overall Strategic Plan: *Shared Vision, Shaped by Values*, which was launched in December 2019. As a university community, we are deeply committed to sustainability and have an ambition to lead the just transition to a sustainable future on our campus, in our city and region and around the world.

### ***Strategic Aims***

CUSP will provide leadership in the transition to a sustainable future through our teaching, research, professional support services, actions and impacts. We will sustainably manage our campus and all our external affairs and become a role model for similar organisations, by our positive impact on the environment and society. We will develop our graduates as future sustainability leaders in Ireland and globally, developing the next generation of students, researchers and innovators for tackling the world's evolving sustainable development challenges.

### ***Objectives***

- Embed the SDGs into all our education, research, leadership, professional support services, operations, administrative and engagement activities, by building on the work of CUSP and its approach to learn, live and lead sustainably. Involve members from all key stakeholder groups in our endeavours, including students, staff, local

communities and other external groups. Collaborate across cities, regions, countries and continents as part of a collective international response working towards the achievement of the SDGs.

- Establish a Sustainability Advisory Board to provide strategic oversight of the University's commitment to sustainability, play a key role in the development of strong governance structures, support the integration of sustainability into daily activities at all levels of the University and ensuring cross-sectoral work and implementation.
- Demonstrate commitment to integrity and ethical leadership. Ensure a diverse, inclusive and safe workplace for all. Continue to implement an ethical investment policy. Continue to embed explicit, green ambitions within our Statement of Corporate Social Responsibility that forms part of the NUI Galway Annual Financial Statement.
- Implement best practise nationally for sustainable procurement and develop a sustainable procurement charter and a green code of conduct for suppliers. All newly procured contractors and those seeking contract renewals shall have a sustainability policy/charter, reflecting our commitment to sustainable development and to doing business with partners that have made a similar commitment.
- Achieve international recognition for progress on sustainability. Participate in international sustainable ranking systems, including Sustainable Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS) by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) and Times Higher Societal Impact Rankings. Continue to achieve national recognition through the An Taisce Green Campus Programme.
- Join international sustainable campus networks. Continue to seek partnerships and collaborations with other universities on a similar path so that we can share experiences, learn from each other and work together to solve societies' evolving sustainable development challenges.
- Scale sustainability successes beyond the campus by building sustainability partnerships with neighbouring communities, national bodies and partners across

Europe and the globe. This will include delivering flagship projects with Saolta University Healthcare Group, Galway City Council, local industries and community partners; through the Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI), expand student access to engaged scholarship focused on sustainability challenges; connect regional, national and European policy makers to expertise in NUI Galway to address the challenges of sustainable development.

- Demonstrate sustainability leadership in our management of the physical and operational dimensions of the university. We will exceed the targets set out in the Public Sector Energy Efficiency programme and we will act as a leader in the sector. We will determine our baseline carbon footprint and develop a roadmap to move ambitiously towards carbon neutrality. We will achieve Green Lab certification across all the university laboratories.
- Consider and recommend options for the evolution and continuation of the Sustainability Strategy for NUI Galway.

Governance and Leadership			
Ref	Measures of success	Target	Owner
GL1	Show year-on-year progress on the achievement of the SDGs	Annual Improvement in Times Higher Societal Impact Ranking	CUSP G&L
GL2	Impactful partnerships established with community groups to achieve the SDGs	Continuous Growth each year	CUSP G&L
GL3	All labs green lab certified	By 2025	CUSP G&L
GL4	Achieve inaugural STARS ranking and improve award rating. Maintain An Taisce Green Flag status	Initial STARS ranking by 2022 with improved award rating by 2025	CUSP G&L
GL5	All contracts/tenders incorporate green purchasing criteria	By 2021	CUSP G&L
GL6	Achieve pathway to carbon neutrality	Measure and report carbon footprint by 2021. Develop a framework by 2023 for the university to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030	CUSP G&L

## 9. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

We recognise the important role that communications and engagement with our diverse communities has played in our success to date and will continue to play in achieving our vision. We must leverage the expertise, dedication, passion and energy for sustainability that exists across the university and wider community, through strong collaboration and meaningful engagement. Our first priority is to deepen engagement in a more structured fashion with our campus community of over 19,000 students and over 2,700 staff.

### **Our Students**

As a university that is shaped by values, our value of sustainability comes most strongly from our students. We want to amplify this and ensure that there are continuous opportunities for students to become actively involved in sustainability on campus.

### **Our Staff**

We recognise that there is a strong cohort of motivated, and passionate employees who are dedicated to making NUI Galway a more sustainable place. We appreciate the crucial role that staff play in achieving the aims and objectives set out in this strategy. We will effectively communicate and engage with our staff, aiming to raise awareness, influence attitudes and encourage behaviour change.

### **Our Communities**

As a university whose mission is for the public good, our sustainability ambitions extends far beyond the campus walls. Throughout this plan, we will seek opportunities to actively engage with civil and civic society organisations and groups in the Galway region; seek partnerships with key stakeholders including Galway City Council, Saolta University healthcare group and other educational institutions; and seek strategic sustainability alliances with European and International partners; all with the aim of maximising our sustainability ambition and reach.

## *Objectives*

Continue a two-way dialogue with our communities, with an open and respectful mindset, to improve and deepen our communications.

- Communicate the CUSP General Board/working groups as a platform for students and staff to progress sustainability on campus.
  - Develop a communication and engagement framework within each working group to organise and deliver engagement schemes across the six core theme areas of our sustainability strategy.
  - Provide continuous opportunities for student and staff involvement in sustainability on campus e.g. through involvement in working groups, workshops, consultation days, seminars and networking events
  - Develop working group case studies that communicates sustainability initiatives to the wider University and our external and global communities
- Recognising that sustainability emerged as a core value of our campus community, work with Internal Communications to build an effective, robust communication network on sustainability throughout the university e.g. website, newsletter, social media platforms.
- Support the work of the University Sustainability Advisory Board in raising the profile of NUI Galway among key national and international audiences including aligning the identity of the university with the concept of sustainability
- Partner with the NUI Galway Explore Programme to provide seed funding for innovative student projects and student-staff collaborations that engage students and staff to tackle on-campus sustainability challenges. Seek opportunities for engagement with Professional international organisations to

support student internships on key sustainability projects, where the campus is used as a living laboratory.

- Engage with, mentor and support sustainability themed student societies. Integrate sustainability into student events to normalise it as a cultural practise.
- Establish network of staff sustainability champions and student brand ambassadors as a resource of expertise and experience to progress the NUI Galway Sustainability Strategy.
- Host University-wide events to reward and recognise the sustainability champions within our community. Continue to roll-out Student Sustainability Awards Programme to foster student leaders in the area of sustainability. Extend awards programme to include staff recognition award.
- Engage with community groups and organisations in the Galway region and develop new community-engaged learning, volunteering and outreach opportunities in the area of sustainability.
- Actively engage with government bodies, state bodies, development agencies, the Saolta hospitals group, other educational institutions, European and International partners to maximise our contribution to regional, national and international sustainable development.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**