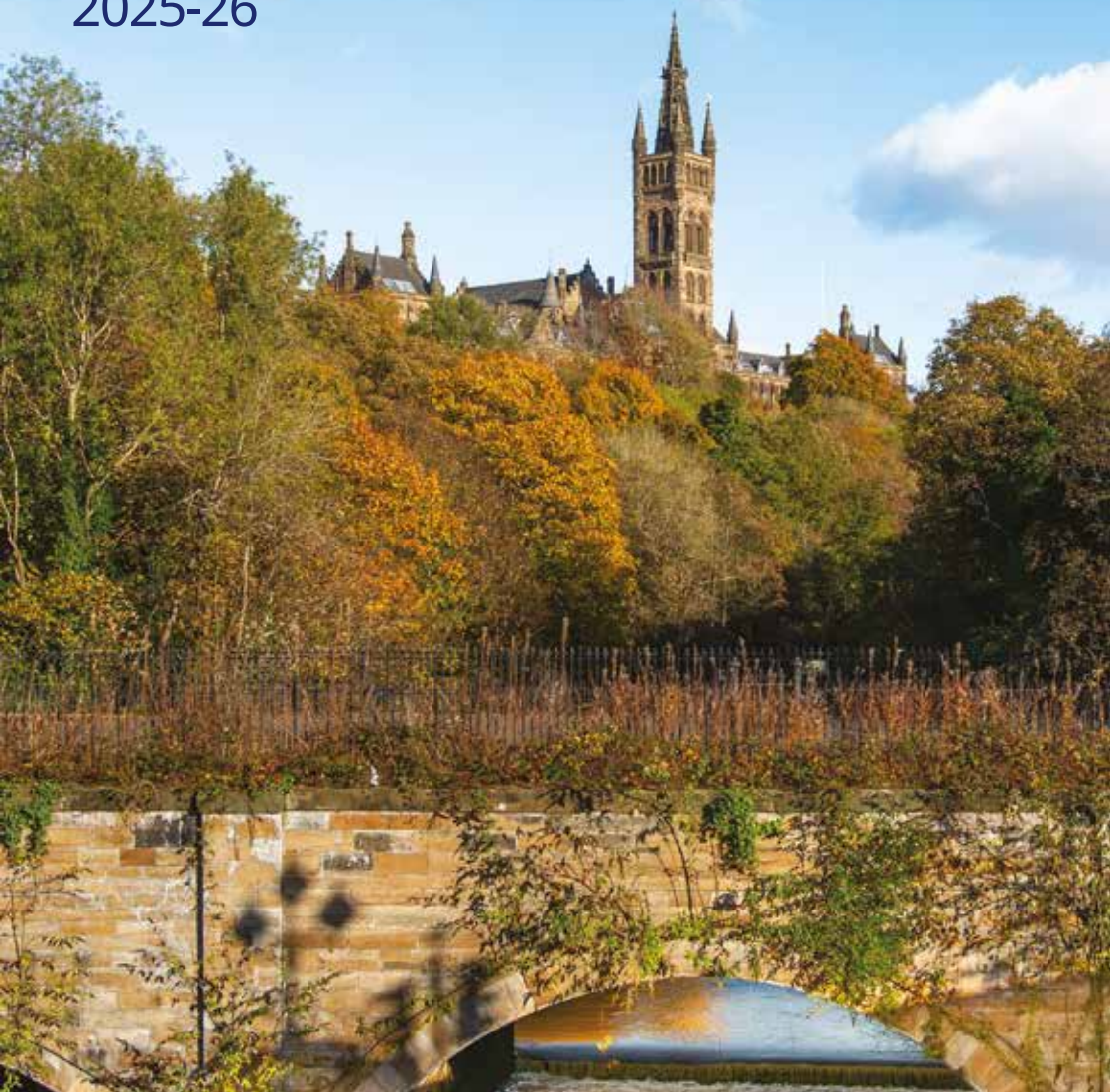
University of Glasgow

575 FOR THE WORLD SINCE 1451

SUSTAINABILITY ANNUAL REPORT

2025-26



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INTRODUCTION

As a world-leading University with a strong commitment to sustainability, Glasgow recognises that it has a duty to lead by example. In 2014, the University became the first UK university to commit to fully divesting from fossil fuels by 2024. In 2017, it signed the Sustainable Development Goals Accord, committing to combating climate change and environmental degradation. And in 2019, it became the first Scottish university to declare a climate emergency.

In 2023, the Scotland Beyond Net Zero partnership was launched, founded by the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, bringing together world-class research and expertise from across Scotland in the name of climate action. Four UofG-led projects have secured funding in 2026–27 for ideas that respond to some of the country's most pressing climate and environmental challenges – spanning three key themes: climate finance, energy and the circular economy.

In 2024, the University of Glasgow launched a new research centre focused on supporting the global transition to sustainable, low-carbon energy systems. The Glasgow Centre for Sustainable Energy brings together academics from across the University to find interdisciplinary new ways of delivering the radical reform of energy services and infrastructure required to reach net zero. In January 2026, the centre marked the second anniversary of its foundation with a look at its past success and substantial growth, and a discussion of future plans.

In 2025, the University of Glasgow launched an exciting initiative aimed at transforming the educational experience of our pre-Honours' undergraduate students. Explicitly aligned with the United Nations' SDGs, Curriculum 4 Life courses focus on real-world challenges, foster future-ready skills and encourage collaboration across colleges and schools at the University.

These actions have been recognised by the Times Higher Education Impact Ratings, where the University ranked 14th globally in 2026 for the positive impact it has on the world, and 27th in the world in QS Sustainability Rankings 2026.

Emission-related data included in this year's report **covers academic years up to and including 2024–25**, in line with published Scottish Government Climate Change Reporting Duty timelines. Emission data for 2025–26 will be included in next year's report.



CARBON MANAGEMENT

Glasgow Green – carbon reduction

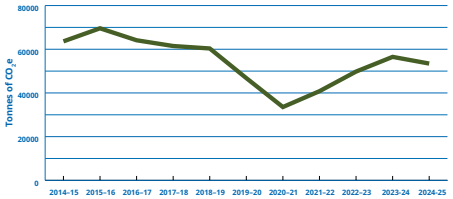
The University of Glasgow recognises that the world is facing a climate emergency; urgent action is needed. Our Glasgow Green Strategy is the University's response to that emergency.

Our aim is to reduce our own carbon footprint, while also advancing public understanding of climate change and the challenges it presents for humanity. We will support and mobilise the passion, expertise and ambition of our staff and students, many of whom inspire us to go further and faster.

This report provides information on emissions up to and including academic year 2024–25, in line with Scottish Government Climate Change Reporting Duty timelines.

The chart below tracks published progress since academic year 2014–15.

Carbon emissions



In 2024–25, our emissions totalled **53,448.19 tonne CO_2e**, a decrease from 2023–24, and a stabilisation of trends seen since the return to campus post-Covid and increases in resultant flight-related business travel and other Scope 3 emissions. The University implemented an updated travel policy that seeks to address this trend, with more detail provided later in this report.

Our Glasgow Green Strategy and associated implementation plans outline the actions which collectively will allow us to achieve a significant reduction in our carbon footprint and reverse the trends seen across the last two reporting years.

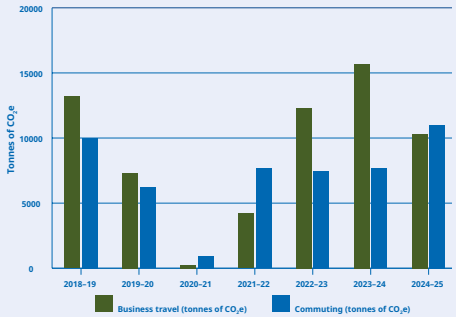
Below are some examples of projects initiated and competed across the last year are highlighted:

1. Approval and introduction of five business travel principles, which includes no internal UK flights other than in exceptional circumstances.
2. New EV charging points installed at Thurso Street and the Kelvin Building for University fleet vehicles.
3. Fluorescent tube obsolescence replacement with LED across level 5 of the library.
4. Replacement of ultral-low temperature freezer lab equipment in the Sir Graeme Davies Building.
5. Introduction of solar panels in suitable locations, with all new builds on campus having PV planned at initial stages. This includes the Fraser Building, with panels fitted in 2024.
6. We are working on consolidating the estate and introducing high utilisation rates to reduce our use of energy across the campus while also making buildings more energy efficient.

We are already generating electricity via our solar PV panels, in 2024–25 we generated 183,166.01 kilowatt hours of electricity, up from 86,270.52 kilowatt hours generated in 2023–24. This is alongside the ongoing use of wood pellets for bioenergy.

BUSINESS TRAVEL AND COMMUTING EMISSIONS

Business travel & commuting emissions



The University is committed to reducing its carbon footprint from commuting and business travel and making it easier for staff and students to travel sustainably. Emissions associated with business travel in 2024–25 reduced significantly year-on-year, back to below pre-Covid levels. However, this came alongside a rise in commuting-related emissions when compared to 2023–24. This is likely due to an increase in staff travelling to campus from further afield.

Business travel emissions

The University provides guidance to staff about business travel and ensures that guidance and policies on reducing carbon emissions from business travel are proportionate, fair and equitable. Recent updates have been made to institutional business travel policy, including new sustainability considerations covering no use of flights within the UK other than exceptional circumstances and non use of business class flight travel for journeys of less than five hours.

We also support and promote the use of alternative means of disseminating research and interacting with peers, collaborators and stakeholders, such as social media, including advice on how to gather and evaluate social media 'reach'.

We also advocate for changes in travel patterns throughout the higher education sector, in collaboration with other HEIs and funding bodies, eg providing advice and support for grant application budgets seeking to include sustainable travel.



Commuting travel emissions

One of the challenges to increasing public transport use is the cost, frequency, capacities and timings of some services. Parking fees and the associated cost of driving are often cheaper than public transport fares, with travel by car the only realistic method of commuting available to some staff.

In addressing this, the University seeks to provide discounts and support for low-carbon travel where possible. For example, the University continues to offer staff access to an interest free transport loan for purchasing an annual rail pass or SPT Zonecard, which is then paid back in ten equal deductions from salaries.

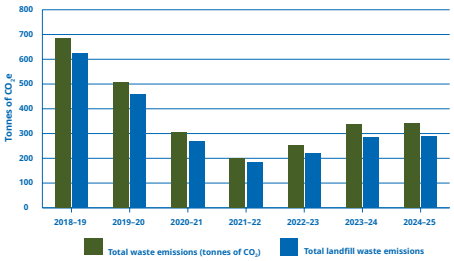
The University also encourages active travel by offering the Cycle to Work scheme, allowing staff to obtain a bike for a discount, and various free incentives such as bike repair stations, storage lockers, training and routes, showers and bike parking.

LOW CARBON ENERGY USE

The University tracks the use of low carbon energy sources across the estate, published in our annual report to the Sustainable Scotland Network. In 2024–25, the University's overall energy use increased by 4%, from 554,993 gigajoules to 576,248 gigajoules, due to a proportional increase in University floorspace with the opening of new buildings on our Western Site. Further, our renewable electricity production increased from 311 to 659 gigajoules, an increase of over 100%.

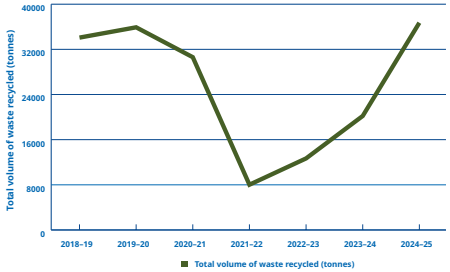
WASTE AND RECYCLING

Total emissions from waste



In 2024–25 we produced 340 tonnes of CO_2e emissions associated with our waste, a marginal increase from 2023–24. While we have seen an increase in the last year, our waste emissions continue to be significantly lower than 2018–19 levels. The emissions from waste sent to landfill proportional to total waste emissions has remained consistent across the last two reporting years. It is important we continue to monitor waste production closely and push forward with recycling plans and initiatives to encourage behaviour change.

Total volume of waste recycled



We have seen changes in the total volume of waste recycled, with the overall trend downward from pre-Covid highs. Due to the significant campus redevelopment activity that has been taking place in previous years, the total volumes are heavily influenced by the scale and type of construction activity taking place on campus in a given academic year.

The University has been working hard to change the way it collects, sorts and recycles its waste. Our Waste Management Strategy & Action Plan 2022–27 sets out our policy toward the collective responsibility for the management of waste across all our campus locations, and to ensure that the waste hierarchy of 'reduce, reuse and recycle' is promoted and practised. As part of our annual climate reporting obligations, we monitor and record the volume of waste landfilled and recycled. The Strategy & Action Plan commits the University to continually improve the way it manages waste and will also help us to ensure that we achieve and maintain legal compliance. The associated action plan provides a detailed description of the steps that we will take in the next 12 months to improve waste management on campus. We will undertake to update the action plan on an annual basis.

Spotlight on 2025–26 Christmas shutdown

Responding to the increasing cost of energy and in line with stated carbon reduction targets, an energy reduction campaign was delivered across 27 University buildings on the Gilmorehill campus over a 14–day period in December 2025 and January 2026, targeting several of the University's most energy intensive facilities, including the Gilbert Scott Building, the Library and the Advanced Research Centre (ARC).

Technicians carried out a blend of manual and automated Building Management System (BMS) interventions, optimising Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning operation, adjusting pump activity and reducing DHN flow temperatures to minimise demand.

The Energy Management team completed a high level savings assessment, using verified substation electricity import and CHP generation data.

Heat consumption was successfully monitored at an individual building level, with a small number of exceptions where data coverage was incomplete.

The shutdown saw a total carbon saving of 143.8 tCO_2 – alongside significant financial savings for the University.

Planned next steps include implementing quick win solutions, such as adjusting BMS settings, optimising controls and upgrading outdated controllers, identifying priority buildings that show potential for inclusion in future energy reduction campaigns, and developing a structured implementation plan for energy saving measures to be applied across future seasonal breaks.

Chemical waste

The University's Safety & Environmental Protection Service (SEPS) provides guidance and training on occupational health and safety, and environmental legislative compliance matters across the University.



SEPS provide full instructions to staff and students on the proper disposal of chemical waste from laboratory operations to prevent harmful contamination of waterways and aquatic ecosystems from pesticides, biocides and mercaptans, as well as other flammable, corrosive, poisonous and radioactive substances. Instructions outline how to properly identify, segregate and contain chemical waste in accordance with the University's 'Zero to Drain Policy', where all chemical waste is disposed via the University's approved chemical waste contractor so far as is reasonably practical.

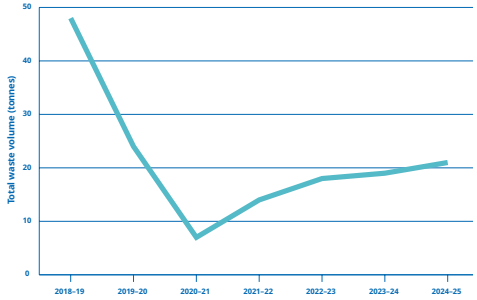
PLASTICS WASTE

The University has a single-use plastics-free campus policy and has implemented several initiatives to fulfil this aim. This involves ensuring that all crockery and cutlery in our catering operations are recyclable and compostable. We also work to minimise single-use plastics in packaging and supply chains, working closely suppliers to achieve this.

For example, Mossgiel Dairy deliver in recycled plastic containers which are washed and sent back to be reused again. We also have replaced paper plates and plastic platters for delivery functions with reusable alternatives such as melamine plates and 'clip-closure' storage containers or compostable alternatives. Our policy also intends to minimise the use of disposable items; for example we have introduced a loyalty scheme for reusable cup holders, offering free drinks for every ten drinks purchased. Our catering team works closely with the GU Heritage gift shop to promote sales of Keep Cups to members of the University community and beyond. We also work hard to ensure disposable cups go into the correct waste stream after they leave the University.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD

Volume of recycled food waste



The volume of food waste that the University recycles is tracked and has fallen since 2018–19, though there has been a small increase from 2021–22. The increases over the last two years can be explained by the return of in–person working and teaching to campus. This means that the University is becoming more efficient in its food consumption.

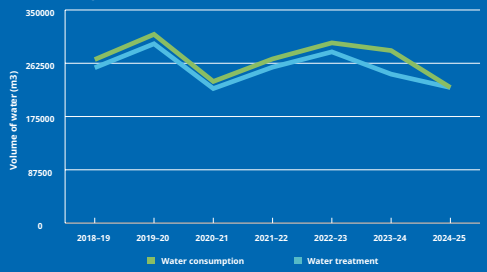
However, the decrease in food waste over the years does not capture the amount of food that is wasted but not split from general waste to landfill and mixed recycling. The University must therefore continue to manage food efficiently but also maintain efforts to 'close-the-loop' by doing our best to ensure food is placed into the correct waste streams. Our catering team is leading on this by developing a waste audit procedure to identify any major waste issues; by improving chefs' knowledge of the amount of waste produced; and by providing support for the Eco-Hub project.

In 2025 we were delighted to announce that we now hold a Bronze Food For Life Certification and a 3-Star Food Made Good Award. We are the only university in Scotland to hold both these accreditations.

WATER

Water consumption and production

Year-on-year water use



We measure the total volume of water used in the University that is taken from mains supply and other sources. Our water consumption has decreased in 2024–25 by 21% from 2023–24. The University is taking steps to reduce our levels of water consumption and wastewater. Our Design Standards Document specifies that we prioritise low water use appliances in our buildings' showers, WCs and taps. Our design teams also aim to prioritise the use of water-saving technologies such as self-closing taps, check meters for new water tanks to detect leaks, non-refrigerated plumbed-in drinking water fountains, low flush toilets and low flow rate hand wash taps and showers.

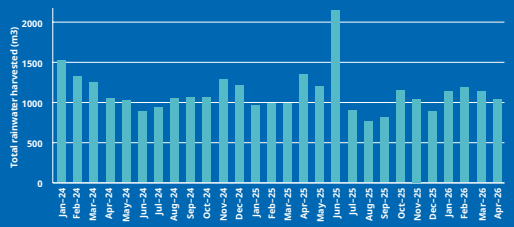
We have also promoted water consciousness through the installation of 50 free-to-use sustainable water fountains in buildings around campus to encourage the use of reusable water bottles. The fountains are sustainable because they are not chilled and are run on the domestic water supply. This means that they are not plugged into the electricity supply to chill the water or require deliveries of plastic water barrels. Furthermore, the fountains continue to de-incentivise the purchase of single-use plastic bottles and cups by providing ample access to water on campus.

Water recycling and reuse

Additionally, our design teams prioritise water recycling through the implementation of rainwater harvesting systems for use in the flushing of buildings' toilets and urinals as well as for gardening and landscaping use.

Rainwater harvesting systems are used in our James McCune Smith Building, the ARC and the Sir Michael Stoker Building, and the volume tracked and re-used as 'grey' water to offset the need to use water from the mains for toilet flushing etc. Between April 2021 and April 2026, we harvested over 50,000 m3 of water for reuse on the estate, equivalent to flushing well over 250,000 toilets.

Rainwater harvesting



Wastewater treatment

All the University's wastewater is treated by Scottish Water, as is all wastewater across Scotland. The process to treat wastewater is as follows:

Stage 1: Removal of litter, wood and plastic.

Stage 2: Removal of stones and grit.

Stage 3: Removal of sludge for treatment until it is made harmless. It is then used to improve soil health for plant growth or for burning to generate electricity.

Stage 4: Cleaning of wastewater tanks by benign bacteria to remove harmful chemicals and waste.

Stage 5: The wastewater is stirred and allowed to rest before being poured back into rivers or the sea.

This process prevents polluted water from entering our water system. It also protects our marine environment and aquatic ecosystems from harmful waste.

Adaptation to climate change means anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate action to prevent or minimise the damage they can cause or taking advantage of opportunities that may arise.

As such, the University requires our design teams to identify key impacts and risks of future climate change and propose adaptation solutions – this includes a focus on river and surface water flood risk, including contributions of the site's flood risk to other places, as well as flows onto the site. The design of drainage systems and groundworks should consider the possibility of increased maximum run-off rates, increased risk of flooding and rising groundwater levels.

A detailed adaption to climate change report should be developed at RIBA Stage 2 which outlines how the building design will help to mitigate the above risks.

The rain gardens on University Place, planting beds in St Mungo Square and the main rain gardens below the square are designed to catch and attenuate surface water runoff (carrying pollutants and any spilt materials). The planting includes species capable of cleaning surface water runoff and the check dams within the rain gardens slow the rate at which surface water passes through the planting, enabling the settlement of pollutants and silt within the beds.

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

The University procures all goods and services with high ethical standards, focusing on social, economic and environmental considerations by applying principles of sustainable procurement. This follows the Public Contract (Scotland) 2015 regulations, the Procurement Reform Act 2014 and the Procurement (Scotland) Regulation 2016.

The University's Procurement Office has implemented the Advanced Procurement of University & Colleges (APUC) Supply Chain Code of Conduct. This focuses on the organisations and their suppliers responsibilities in social, ethical, economic and environmental areas across the supply chain. The University Procurement Strategy is committed to delivering our sustainability objectives, which include identifying modern slavery risks within our supply chain.

The University's Procurement Office has received various accreditations including being the first higher education institution globally to receive the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply's Sustainable Procurement Review GOLD Award.

ETHICAL INVESTMENT

The University is committed to socially responsible investment. As part of this commitment, the University has put in place a policy on socially responsible investment.

Since coming into force, the policy has been reviewed annually to ensure it continues to be applicable to the University's annual accounts and presently has remained unchanged. Ethical investment reports too are produced and published annually.

The University's investments are monitored by the Investment Advisory Committee (IAC), a sub-committee of the Finance Committee. The student body is represented on the Finance Committee by the President of the Students' Representative Council, and provisions within the policy allow for student and staff representation with respect to investments via student bodies, trade unions or IAC structure.





BIODIVERSITY

The University has committed to an ongoing responsibility to protect and enhance biodiversity throughout our campuses and local communities. We improve the biodiversity capabilities of our estate by continuing to annually review our Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan (2022–27). Throughout our campuses, staff from the Estates Directorate and the Biodiversity Working Group work together to help support the sustainable use of natural habitats. We continue to recognise the importance of trees in the townscapes of university buildings and the imperative to protect and support biodiversity in university-forested areas.

Our campuses at Garscube, Dumfries and Cochno Farm cover vast sways of woodlands and historic parklands, offering conservation and protection to natural specimens. The University is keen to further promote this, ensuring sustainable planting is observed by providing guidelines for specific species to cultivate in a variety of local ecosystems. Along University Gardens, Oakfield Avenue and the Principal's Lodgings, native plant species to support biodiversity have been re-cultivated, with a variety of shrubs including rose bushes and wildflower gardens to support natural habitats in urban environments.

Over the past year, we have worked closely with both Green Action Trust and the consultancy Urban Movement to develop woodland management plans for the Garscube and Cochno estates, generate a GIS model of habitat types on the estates, understand the feasibility for additional green infrastructure on the Gilmorehill campus and around our halls of residence and develop a costed set of interventions that will help us to enhance biodiversity on the campus.

Spotlight on Carbon literacy training

In 2026, the University of Glasgow successfully launched a carbon literacy training programme as a key step in embedding sustainability across its campuses. Working in partnership with Residential Life, the sustainability team recruited and trained 22 volunteers (comprising 16 staff members and six students) who completed accredited carbon literacy and facilitation skills training.

The programme was designed to build long-term internal capacity by creating a network of trained facilitators able to deliver carbon literacy training across the University. Participants were selected from all four colleges and a range of professional services teams, ensuring broad representation and the ability to reach diverse audiences throughout the institution.

Following certification, each facilitator has committed to deliver at least one carbon literacy training session, helping to raise awareness of climate change, carbon footprints and practical actions that individuals can take to reduce environmental impact. It is hoped that academic staff can also integrate learning from the programme into their teaching, thus further extending its influence on students and supporting the University's contribution to delivering on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Alien species management and native wildlife

The University's grounds & gardens team also prioritise the removal of invasive and alien plant species. They use an external contractor to spray and remove Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed, as well as the biannual spray of impatiens balsamina at the Garscube campus.

Surrounded by a rich variety of aquatic and terrestrial habitats, the University's Scottish Centre for Ecology & the Natural Environment field station gives researchers unique opportunities for studying and the conservation of a broad range of species and ecological communities. With Loch Lomond on one side and the Dubh Loch on the other side, plus mountains and moorlands with broadleaf and coniferous, ancient oak woodlands is part of the rare temperate rainforest ecosystem with a wealth of biodiversity set in protected University land.

The Eurasian hedgehog is on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List for British Mammals. It is imperative that we protect these and all endangered species. A team of dedicated staff and students has signed up to the UK nation-wide Hedgehog Friendly Campus Campaign, striving to make the University sites accessible and welcoming environments to Eurasian hedgehogs.

The University's estates team also works closely with the SSPCA, RSPB and the Glasgow Peregrine Project to ensure the protection of the peregrine falcons who, until the summer of 2025, nested in the University's tower.

Peregrine falcons are a highly protected species under the Wildlife a& Countryside Act, and across the UK they are increasingly using historic buildings to raise their young. The University installed cameras in the nesting area at the top of the University tower and discovered earlier this year that the falcons had hatched several chicks. This allows for regular monitoring of the falcons and their young, with the tower being the only closely monitored peregrine falcon nest in Glasgow.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2025, the Glasgow Peregrine Project hosted falcon viewing sessions outside the Hunterian Art Gallery, where members of the public were able to watch the falcons in their urban environment through high-powered telescopes. In late 2025 the peregrine falcons relocated across the city, most recently nesting at Glasgow City Chambers in George Square.



OUR STUDENTS' COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Glasgow University Environmental Sustainability Team (GUEST) is a student-led team within the Estates Directorate providing paid project-based work placement opportunities to students in areas such as biodiversity, sustainable food, sustainable travel, communications and student/community engagement. These projects not only play a vital role in the ongoing promotion of sustainability on campus but also provide an opportunity for students to develop both professionally and personally, while contributing to the everyday functioning of the University. GUEST also offers the opportunity for interns to work on its projects on a voluntary basis. GUEST were once again heavily involved with promoting partnerships for sustainability across global audiences delivering a number of important sessions for students and staff.

We are World-Changing Glasgow.

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