



# SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY





## INTRODUCTION

As education providers, colleges are not only producers of knowledge but also have a civic and social responsibility for the wellbeing of their communities and society as a whole, playing an important role in sustainable development, economic growth and responding to societal and environmental challenges.

This strategy sets out The Bedford College Group's (TBCG) approach to positively responding to climate change by reducing its impact on the environment, helping to boost the economy through the delivery of green skills and inspiring its students and staff to tackle climate action to achieve its goal to be a net zero organisation and a leader in sustainability practices by 2042.

It applies to TBCG and the following colleges and centres: Bedford College, Central Bedfordshire College, National College for Motorsport, Shuttleworth College, The Bedford Sixth Form, The Corby Sixth Form, The Learning Centres and Tresham College.

It does not directly apply to Aston Recruitment and Training Limited (Aston) and Bedford College Services Limited (BCS) which are independent institutions with their own vision, strategies and policies. However, in implementing this strategy the Groups will seek to work collaboratively with these organisations on sustainability matters.





# CONTEXT

**One of the greatest challenges facing the world is climate change, with rising temperatures and severe weather threatening the existence of the planet.**

In response, the UK government has set a target for the country to become net zero by 2050 (Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener<sup>1</sup>) and has ambitious plans to lead the way globally. At the UN Climate Change Conference in November 2021, the government launched its Department for Education (DfE) Strategy for Sustainability and Climate Change<sup>2</sup> which sets out how it will become “the world-leading education sector in sustainability and climate change” by 2030 through:

- Providing opportunities to young people to develop their knowledge and understanding of the importance of nature, sustainability and the causes and impact of climate change, translating this knowledge into positive action and solutions
- Providing people of all ages to train, retrain and upskill into green careers
- Increasing opportunities for young people to become actively involved in improving their local environment and spending more time in nature and learning more about it
- Supporting providers with decarbonisation and climate resilience so that young peoples’ learning can be enhanced and contextualised by seeing changes around them.

TBCG Sustainability and Climate Action Strategy supports the delivery of this plan whilst working within the context of:

- The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education’s (EAUC) Sustainability Leadership Scorecard which provides a framework to enable colleges and universities to benchmark their sustainability practices
- The Climate Commission’s Climate Action Roadmap for FE Colleges which provides clear actions and guidance on how colleges can respond to the climate emergency and advance sustainability
- The National Climate Education Action Plan which recommends how climate education can be delivered to students under the age of 19.

**“WE WANT EDUCATION THAT INSPIRES US,  
THAT PROMOTES EMPLOYMENT AND GIVES  
US THE TOOLS TO TACKLE CLIMATE ACTION.”**

Global Youth Statement on Climate Action 2021

<sup>1</sup> Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)); accessed 8th August 2022

<sup>2</sup> Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children’s services systems - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)); accessed 8th August 2022

## LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN AND AIMS



### TBCG PURPOSE

To help individuals, communities and society flourish through education by raising aspirations and reducing inequality to create a sustainable future.



### TBCG CORE VALUE

We **care** about the wellbeing of our staff, our students our community and wider society.



### TBCG STRATEGIC GOAL

To become a net zero organisation and a leader in sustainability practices by 2042.



### SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY AIMS

1. To demonstrate clear leadership and governance in tackling climate change to foster a culture where staff and students care about sustainability and continuously improve their own and collective practices.
2. To embed climate and sustainability education into the curriculum and wider enhancement activities to enable young people and adults to develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to tackle climate change, and prepare them for green jobs and the changing skill-set required in their chosen careers.
3. To protect and enhance the natural environment by minimising our environmental impact from our estate and infrastructure.
4. To develop and advance practices and habits for sustainable procurement and responsible use of resources throughout the supply chain.
5. To become a leader and key influencer on sustainability matters within our internal and external communities and the wider FE sector, gaining a reputation as 'doing the right thing' on all things sustainable.

# LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE



## AIM

To demonstrate clear leadership and governance in tackling climate change to foster a culture where staff and students care about sustainability and continuously improve their own and collective practices.

## STRATEGY

### By August 2023:

- Gather student, staff and wider community feedback on sustainability to ensure that we take account of stakeholders' views
- Establish a sustainability and climate change committee with representation from the Executive, Governors, senior staff and students to drive forward this strategy, reflecting on stakeholder feedback and monitoring performance against KPIs
- Appoint a Sustainability Manager to oversee the implementation of this strategy, reporting to the sustainability committee on its progress
- Develop and communicate a sustainability and climate action policy to outline the Group's position and commitment
- Incorporate sustainability into work plans and reporting templates for the Corporation and its committees so that it is embedded into governance processes and decision making to reflect its importance.

### By August 2027:

- Assess and incorporate the risks and opportunities associated with climate change into the TBCG's risk management and opportunities register to manage them appropriately and enable better decision making and achievement of the goal to become net zero
- Embed consideration of the Group's sustainability aims into strategies, policies and decision-making across the Group so that decisions and approaches taken support achievement of this strategy

- Include the development of a sustainability action plan for every department across the Group into the planning cycle, including incorporating reflection on progress in department self-assessment reviews
- Incorporate climate responsibility and sustainability into employees' recruitment, induction, training and development practices to reinforce its importance
- Publish our ambitions on our website and report annually on progress made to become net zero against key performance indicators
- Demonstrate sectorial leadership in the area of sustainability through the winning of at least one relevant industry awards each year.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Staff's perception of the extent to which leaders are leading by example the sustainability agenda
- Student and staff sustainability awareness, understanding and behaviour changes
- Stakeholders' perception of TBCG in leading the sustainability agenda
- Achievement of awards for sustainability practices.

## SUPPORTING PLANS, STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

- Sustainability and climate action policy.

# LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH



## AIM

To embed climate and sustainability education into the curriculum and wider enhancement activities to enable young people and adults to develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to tackle climate change, and prepare them for green jobs and the changing skill-set required in their chosen careers.

## STRATEGY

### By August 2023:

- Appoint a senior member of staff at each college within the Group to lead on climate education
- Appoint sustainability champions in each subject area to promote green awareness and engender a passion in staff to successfully embed sustainability into every day teaching and learning
- Develop a professional development programme (such as the carbon literacy project) for staff, including learning from practice and academic research, that widens their knowledge and understanding of climate change and sustainability so that they can advance their own expertise and deliver the knowledge and skills students need to move into green jobs
- Utilise our own retrofitted and new-build net zero buildings and other facilities to provide practical learning opportunities for our students, such as energy efficiency, the circular economy, green careers and sustainable practices.

### By August 2027:

- Embed the teaching of vocationally relevant climate change and sustainability across all provision, with a particular focus on T Levels, apprenticeships and adult courses to support the government's green skills and careers agenda and meet national and regional skills needs in the green sector
- Ensure that programme modules within apprenticeship standards are designed in partnership with employers to align with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's (IFATE) green categories

- Develop and deliver climate education as part of the Group's wider enhancement programme to its full-time students on study programmes, including providing practical opportunities for students to participate in activities to improve their local communities and the planet and bring their learning to life (e.g. social action projects and volunteering)
- Participate in the government's Climate Leaders Award programme which will develop students' skills and knowledge in biodiversity and sustainability and celebrate their work
- Implement the professional development programme for staff
- Identify and access available funding to support the design and delivery of new provision for green skills and careers, such as the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Trailblazer Project Fund
- Embed climate change and sustainability into training for new teaching practitioners to enable them to model sustainable practices and promote sustainable development principles in relation to their subject specialism
- Utilise the government's annual climate literacy survey and own internal surveys to measure students' climate knowledge and distance travelled.

### From 2027:

- Use digital technologies and digital thinking to deliver a student experience that encourages sustainability practices, creates efficiency and supports the journey towards net zero.

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# LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH



## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of students going into green jobs and careers measured through the student destinations survey
- Student's climate knowledge and distance travelled measured through the climate literacy and internal surveys
- Number of students participating in climate education enhancement activities
- Percentage of programmes and courses that have climate education embedded
- Number of T Levels, apprenticeships and courses for green jobs and careers, and recruitment onto these
- Evidence of meeting local and regional skills needs
- Number of teaching staff participating in climate change and sustainability training and the impact of this training, such as level of knowledge.

## SUPPORTING PLANS, STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

- Curriculum strategy.

# ESTATES AND INFRASTRUCTURE



## AIM

To protect and enhance the natural environment by minimising our environmental impact from our estate and infrastructure.

## STRATEGY

### By August 2023:

- Develop baseline measurement data at Group and college level to enable the development of plans, strategies and targets to reduce carbon emissions from buildings, staff and student travel including our own vehicles; and electrical, gas, oil and water consumption
- Encourage students and staff to engage more with the natural world throughout the Group's estate by developing and implementing a biodiversity plan which will include, for example, introducing new wildflower areas and creating places for wildlife at all campuses
- Develop decarbonisation, electric vehicle and transport, energy and water management plans/strategies to set out how TBCG will work towards net zero.

### By August 2027:

- Ensure any new builds and campuses are net zero in operation and achieve an A or A+ environmental impact rating, including considering creating 'Generation Zero' based buildings
- Develop and implement an energy efficiency and carbon reduction programme for existing buildings, ensuring the refurbishment of existing buildings at our campuses incorporate sustainable building practices, including low carbon technologies
- Work with building contractors to ensure that they support the Group's green agenda in relation to materials, equipment and tools being used on a project
- Reduce water usage through its efficient use and management, including installing rainwater harvesting equipment where appropriate (for example at Kingshill Farm) and sensor taps

- Reduce energy usage through the adoption of renewable energies, such as air source heat pumps and photovoltaic panels; improved building systems controls; better insulated windows and doors; energy efficient lighting; and reducing energy through the use of ICT by purchasing energy efficient equipment and enabling power management features
- Provide viable and accessible sustainable travel options for students and staff to reduce carbon emissions, including replacing existing Group vehicles to an electrical equivalent, providing EV charging points at campuses.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Percentage of estate net zero
- Carbon emissions from energy use
- Carbon emissions from staff and student travel
- Percentage of energy generated from onsite renewable or low carbon sources
- Number of EV charging points and usage
- Total water consumption per student and staff member.

## SUPPORTING PLANS, STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

- Biodiversity plan
- Decarbonisation plan
- Electric vehicle and transport plan
- Energy strategy
- Water management plan.



# PROCUREMENT AND WASTE MANAGEMENT



## AIM

To develop and advance practices and habits for sustainable procurement and the responsible use of resources throughout the supply chain.

## STRATEGY

### By August 2023:

- Develop a sustainable purchasing policy which minimises waste, encourages the purchasing of energy efficient and sustainable goods and services, and uses regional sources where possible
- Develop a sustainable food policy which focuses on seasonal produce and local suppliers
- Develop a waste management policy which focuses first on waste reduction (particularly food, paper and card) and then reuse and recycling approaches, undertaking an audit first to identify how much waste is currently produced.

### By August 2027:

- Embed sustainable purchasing into existing policies and processes
- Procure from companies that commit to achieving net zero by 2050 and have a plan in place
- Co-ordinate sustainable procurement expertise to reduce our carbon impact.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Amount of waste produced annually (per staff/student)
- Amount of waste sent to landfill
- Percentage of regionally sourced suppliers
- Percentage of suppliers committed to achieving net zero.

## SUPPORTING POLICIES AND PLANS

- Sustainable food policy
- Sustainable purchasing policy
- Waste management policy.



# PARTNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT



## AIM

To become a leader and key influencer on sustainability matters within our internal and external communities and the wider FE sector, gaining a reputation as 'doing the right thing' on all things sustainable.



## STRATEGY

### By August 2023:

- Join the Race to Zero pledge to demonstrate the TBCG's commitment to become net zero
- Sign up to the SDG Accord (Universities and College's sector collective response to the global crisis) to demonstrate the TBCG's commitment to deliver on the UN's sustainability goals
- Identify and actively participate in established local, regional and national networking group to tackle climate change and adopt good practice from other industries, and develop and take forward partnership opportunities to meet green skills needs.

### By August 2027:

- Work in partnership with BCS Ltd to make the Group's food services more sustainable, reducing carbon emissions and aligning menus with seasonal production and harvesting cycles
- Provide carbon literacy training to all staff to improve their personal understanding of climate change and sustainability to encourage positive behavioural changes, such as a reduction in energy usage and waste, and changes to how they travel to college
- Promote energy, water and waste reduction practices across TBCG to students and staff through communication campaigns, events and activities outside of learning and teaching
- Share and celebrate good practice with staff, students and wider stakeholders, for example displaying energy certificates to show a college's energy use against national averages and previous years

- Develop and implement a recognition system to reward ideas and activities that reduce water and energy usage
- Utilise internal surveys to measure staff's and students' knowledge and behaviour changes.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Student and staff surveys to measure awareness, understanding and behaviour changes among students and staff
- Stakeholder survey to measure the perception of each College/ the Group in leading the sustainability agenda.

## SUPPORTING POLICIES AND PLANS

- Sustainable food policy.





## RESPONSIBILITIES

The Sustainability & Climate Action Committee is responsible for overseeing and monitoring the achievement of this strategy, which is chaired by the Executive Director of Marketing & Student Recruitment who reports into the Executive.

The Sustainability Manager, who sits within Estates, will be responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of this strategy and reporting to the Committee.

## MONITORING KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Executive and Governors will receive a bi-annual report on the Group's performance. An annual report will also be published online on the Group's website. Performance will be measured against other education providers based on the government's standardised framework and DfE's published targets which will be in place 2024 and 2025 respectively.



## DEFINITIONS

### **Climate change**

Changes in the large-scale, long-term shift in the planet's weather patterns and average temperatures (EAUC)

### **Climate education**

Education to help students understand and address the impact of climate change, empowering them with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to act as agents of change (UNESCO)

### **Corporate (college) social responsibility (CSR)**

An ongoing commitment towards the welfare of society, contributing to sustainable development and proactive solutions to societal and environmental challenges (Vasilescu et al. 2010)

### **Decarbonisation**

Transitioning to energy with low or zero carbon emissions

### **Environmental sustainability**

Maintaining or sustaining the environment by protecting natural resources and preventing damage through climate change (EAUC)

### **Generation zero buildings**

Manufactured off-site using modern methods of construction (DfE)

### **Net zero**

Achieving an overall balance between emissions produced and taken out of the atmosphere (EAUC)

### **Sustainability (sustainable development)**

Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (UN)



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