

Sustainability at the University of Bath

5 February 2025



- **Higher Education is uniquely placed to have a positive impact on the environment and society!**
- In HEIs, 'Sustainability' should arguably be viewed as the means by which we conduct ourselves (through our culture, ethos, management, governance, etc) and our activity (our research, our education, our operations and our engagement) in a way which embodies and positively contributes to:
 - Environmental Health and Climate Action
 - Social Responsibility, Equity and Inclusion
 - Economic and Financial Sustainability

- **Broad range of global issues** – cost of living, geopolitics, energy security, water security, inequity and social coherence, economic vitality and employment, the effects of climate change, public health, degraded ecosystems and so on
- **Challenges:** campus operations; availability of space; affordability; staff recruitment; employability; what we teach?; how we research; what we research etc
- **Opportunities:** resilience and readiness; efficiency; competitiveness; reputation; finances

Why is Sustainability relevant to HEIs and Bath?

Foundations for the Future			Global Excellence with Impact	
Resilience	Compliance	Financial	Reputation	Competitiveness
Climate Change – prepare, mitigate and adapt for climate	BNES Planning requirements for net zero, biodiversity net gain, embodied carbon. New Net Zero Carbon Building Standard. Equality Act.	Improved efficiency; reduced waste; Lifecycle costs	QS rankings; THE Impact Ranking	UK Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation; Wellcome and CRUK now require compliance to LEAF; PRME accreditation in Business Schools

What can a single University do?

- Single University's rarely (if ever) achieve global change. But doing nothing is not an option. Taking a sustainable approach supports business resilience, reputation and arguably long term finances.
- Responding to these issues requires focus, first upon what we control (products, services and operations) and then what we depend upon (resources, energy, partners and suppliers). In addition, it also involves what we influence through relationships, leadership and innovation.
- The changes we may be able to make might be incremental (how we do things) or more major (the things we do).
- For Universities, examples might include approach to the business operations, specific educational changes, research priorities and outputs, behavioural change programmes, changes to your value chain, alterations to performance management or governance.

Vertically Integrated Projects

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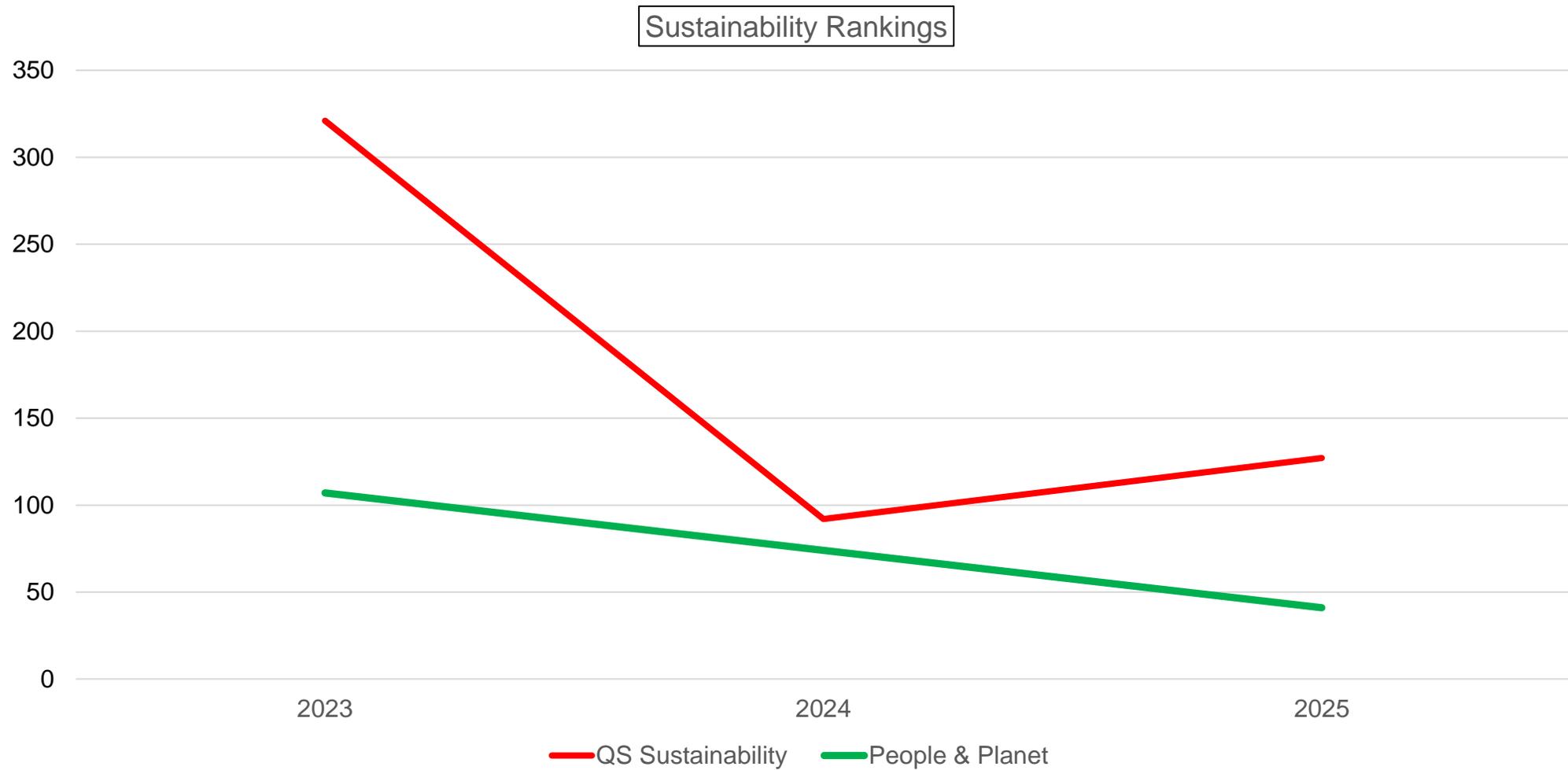
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Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

How are we doing?



Plenty of activity

- Launched the Institute for Sustainability and Climate Change
- 10 new projects funded through our [Hydrogen research hub](#) to accelerate the UK's net zero transition
- New funding awarded to the [Centre for People-Led Digitalisation](#) to explore systems-level approaches to reaching Net Zero.
- RENEW research centre has launched a [manifesto on regenerative design](#) to help engineers and designers seeking to combat the climate crisis
- IPR has welcomed new fellows onto their [Net Zero Policy Fellowship Programme](#).
- Launched Green Impact – to build engagement with our community
- Re-inforced our commitment to environmental sustainability by signing the [Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice](#).
- Annual Survey 2024 reinforces support for sustainability and tackling climate crisis



RENEW
a manifesto for regenerative
design and engineering

Concordat for the
Environmental
Sustainability of
Research and
Innovation Practice

- Good scores in the rankings suggest that there is a lot of sustainability related activity. This is true!
- It is not clear to the University community what we are trying to do with regards to sustainability – the lack of a coordinated Sustainability Policy and Plan which aligns to the business goals.
- We need to do further work to understand our risks and opportunities
- There are data sets available but these are not being used proactively. They are generally used to inform the Annual Report.
- Progress has been limited on net zero. On scope 1 and 2, lack of investment in the estate has limited our work. On scope 3, data remains challenging and there is a lack of clarity over who is responsible for what elements of the commitments.
- Governance needs some consideration. There are a number of groups addressing ‘sustainability’ issues which need to be reviewed

What does good look like?

University	Sustainability Ranking	Climate Focus	Other Sustainability goals
Toronto https://sustainability.utoronto.ca/	#1 in QS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce GHG emissions by 37% by 2030 (2019 commitment) - Achieving a climate positive St. George campus by 2050 	U of T Sustainability Pathways are clusters of courses and co-curricular activities on sustainability. Aim to develop and offer these pathways to all U/G students to provide opportunities to incorporate sustainability learning
Manchester https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=62112	#9 in QS #74 in P&P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zero direct carbon emissions by 2038 - Net zero by 2050 	Part of Social Responsibility & Civic Engagement Plan: Social Inequalities; Prosperous Communities; Environmental Sustainability; Better Health; Cultural Engagement.
Edinburgh https://sustainability.ed.ac.uk/	#7 in QS #107 in P&P	- Zero carbon by 2040	Sustainability and Social Responsibility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - zero carbon and zero waste University - widen participation in higher education and support inclusion - engage critically with, and contribute to the UN's SDGs
University College London https://www.ucl.ac.uk/sustainable/	#5 in QS #15 in P&P	- Net zero carbon by 2030 (currently being reviewed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Sustainability Plan in 2025 - Focus on consumption, biodiversity, energy and research
University of Bath	#127 in QS #41 in P&P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Net zero carbon (1&2) by 2030 - Net Zero by 2040 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate in education - Signatory to the Concordat

Lessons from others for University of Bath Sustainability

- Its more than our operations – building sustainability value into our ‘culture’ and ‘products’
- Broad definition of sustainability is important - aligns to QS
- Lots of things we already do BUT communications and visibility is critical
- Using the SDGs as a framework to report brings together a lot of existing activity
- Need to bring sustainability into all parts of our planning, processes and systems

University of Bath Sustainability Framework

Key areas

- Focus efforts to embed sustainability into education and our employability work
- Align our sustainability narrative to our academic and research priorities (sport, health, digital, engineering, management – SDG 3, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 12)
- Work to support a strong (and sustainable) research culture
- Build a strong civic engagement function
- ‘Walk the talk’ – sort out approach to climate, carbon, travel, construction

Focus on what we are good at and good for

Questions?