Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan

Estates / June 2025

The Open University

Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan

Introduction

The Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan supports the Net Zero Carbon policy and provides the roadmap to how the OU will deliver the Net Zero 2030 commitment.

Scope

The OU operates sites across the four nations, England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The Net Zero Carbon 2030 policy and Net Zero 2030 Plan applies to all OU sites.

The Net Zero Carbon 2030 target includes all scope 1 and 2 emissions. All other scope 3 indirect emissions will be included in the Net Zero 2050 target. Activities to monitor and reduce scope 1 and 2 emissions are relatively mature, however, our scope 3 emissions are still in its infancy where our priority is to develop an accurate scope 3 baseline.

- Scope 1: direct emissions from carbon-based fuel combustion, fleet vehicles and fugitive emissions.
- Scope 2: in-direct emissions which arise from purchased electricity
- Scope 3: all other emissions in the University supply/value chain, notably arising from; staff working from home, purchased good and services, business travel, employee commuting, waste disposal, transportation and distribution (up- and downstream), leased assets and franchises and investments.

Net Zero Carbon 2030 Roadmap

The Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan sets the baseline year at 2020/21. The new baseline aligns with the OU Learn and Live Strategic Plan and because we broadly anticipate this to be our new post-covid business as usual profile where the University has adopted the hybrid working model.

Our forecasted emissions to 2030 have been modelled under 3 scenarios:
Scenario 1: Business as usual with static grid emissions factor, 2021/22

Scenario 2: Business as usual with projected grid decarbonisation factor
Scenario 3: Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan

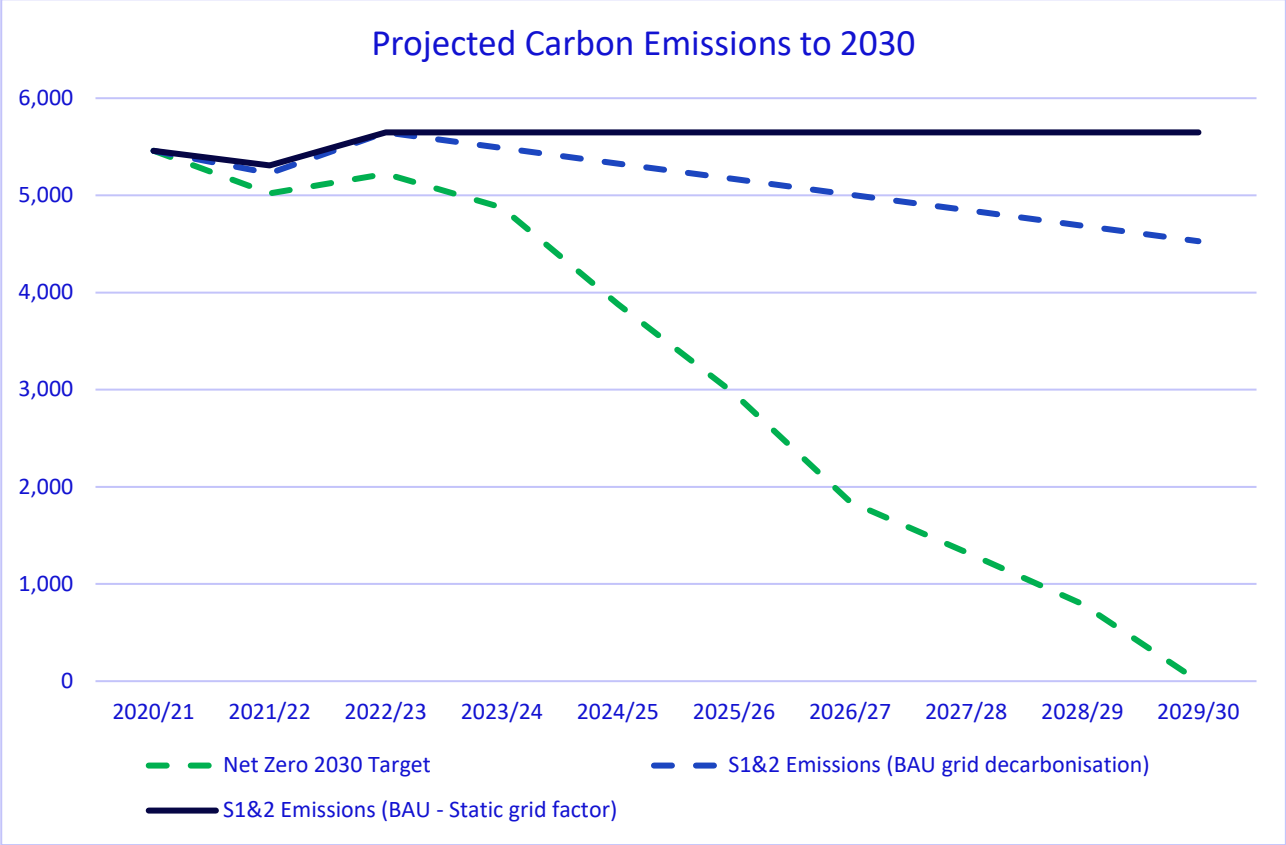


Chart 1: Projected Scope 1 and 2 Emissions to 2030

Chart 1 shows the projected business as usual consumption and emissions to grow marginally over the next year before stabilising. The increase in consumption is expected as more staff return to campus under the hybrid working model and additional face to face events. Scenario 2 shows the BAU emissions profile with grid decarbonisation factor, this scenario shows our scope 1 and 2 emissions will continue to reduce as the electricity grid becomes greener.

In scenario 3, the Net Zero 2030 modelling accounts for the grid decarbonisation factor but also recognises that further carbon reduction intervention is required. The reduction targets will be achieved through the phased implementation of 5 high level programmes consisting of:

1. Consolidation - since the pandemic, the OU has adopted dynamic hybrid working practices. This has seen a significant reduction in occupation of

buildings and space utilisation. A review is currently underway to consolidate space to reflect future needs and working practices of the faculties and professional units. The consolidation of the estate will result in significant reduction in the OU's Scope 1 and 2 emissions.

2. Data centres – non-sensitive data services will transition to cloud-based solutions, this provides greater flexibility and speed to the IT infrastructure. Moving these services to cloud-based data centres will reduce scope 1 and 2 emissions from the estate operations, noting the emission will transfer to scope 3.
3. Building retrofit and optimised operations - to increase energy efficiency and reduce energy demand of the remaining buildings. Projects include energy management and monitoring, optimisation of building management systems, upgrades to LED lighting upgrades, HVAC and building fabric, etc. In parallel, close collaboration with Ways of Working to create flexible working and studying spaces to increase space utilisation.
4. Decarbonisation of heat systems – replacing gas boilers for hot water and heating systems with ground or air source heat pump technology or other electricity-driven systems, this includes the centralised heat network at Walton Hall campus.
5. Renewables – this programme has three components, increase onsite renewable generation through increasing roof top solar PV systems, feasibility study to install large scale renewable energy technology system on university owned land at Walton Hall campus and finally to procure electricity from 100% renewable source through a renewable power purchase agreement.

Chart 2 illustrates the Net Zero Carbon 2030 roadmap by intervention projects. The projects providing the greatest carbon reduction potential are the estate rationalisation strategy and decarbonisation of heat systems. The residual reductions will be met by onsite renewable energy generation and purchase of 100% green electricity.

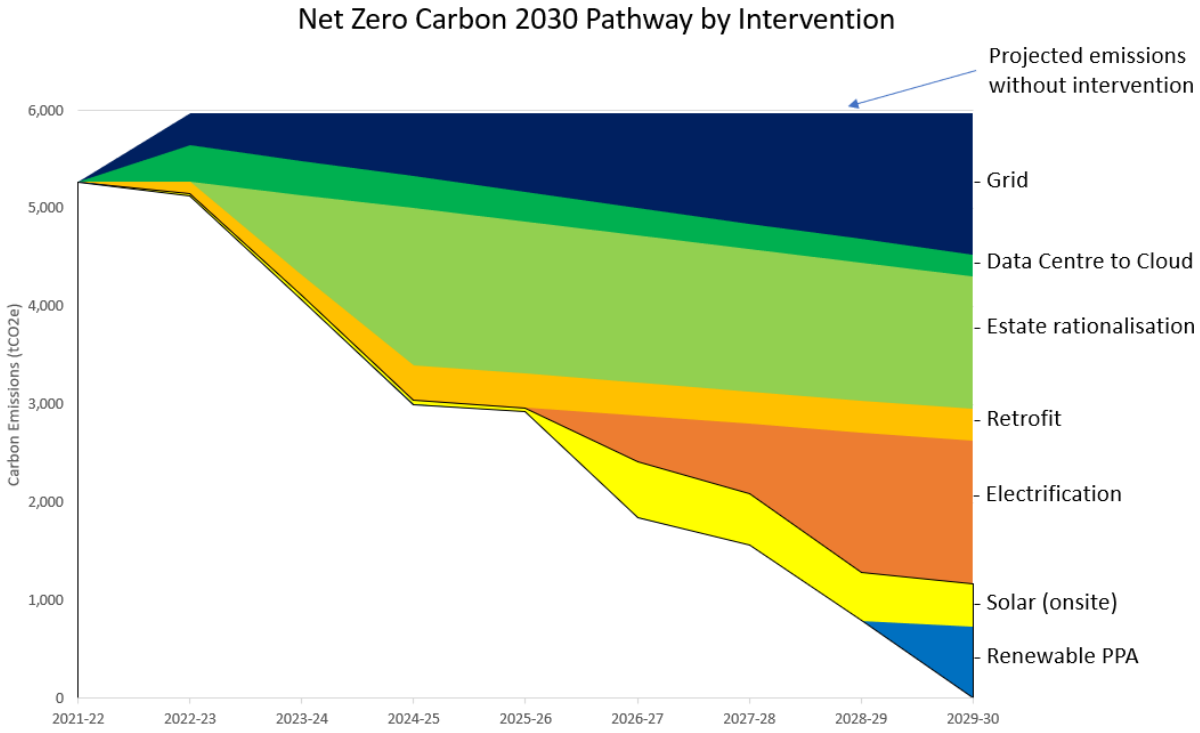


Chart 2: Net Zero Carbon 2030 Roadmap

Campus 2030

In latter end of 2023, the Open University launched the Campus 2030 programme to look at the case for change and the future of how we work at the OU Walton Hall campus, Milton Keynes. The programme actively investigates the business case for:

- A new central Milton Keynes campus and new academic model, which will be forward-looking and student-centred, including responding to student feedback about the need for flexibility and employer engagement; and
- Outline designs for Walton Hall show how we could retain and refurbish our existing campus for the future, reducing our overall footprint and becoming more economically and environmentally sustainable for the decades ahead.

2025 Update
City Centre Campus Work provided helpful insights on how the University could potentially attract more full-time students via a new market offer. However, the scale of investment required remains a significant barrier.

Version number: 1.2	Approved By: Director of Estates
Effective from: June 2025	Date of next review: June 2026

Therefore, future efforts to develop our strategy in the City Centre will be integrated into a Civic University Agreement.

The Open University will remain at Walton Hall campus and review long term space needs, sustainability targets, and a deeper exploration of commercial opportunities. Planning stages for carbon reduction programmes have begun with below key projects:

- Decarbonisation of heating infrastructure
- Fabric upgrades
- LED lighting upgrade
- Solar PVs

As the project transitions to this next phase, the name “Campus 2030” will be retired

Nation Net Zero Plan

To support the Net Zero Carbon 2030 commitment, nation-specific Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plans have been developed to address the unique circumstances and requirements of each region, these include:

- OU in Ireland Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plans
- OU in Scotland Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan
- OU in Wales Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan

Carbon Tracking

Since the new 2020/21 baseline year, we have achieved minor year on year reductions in carbon emissions from:

- consolidation and closure of spaces and buildings to better support dynamic hybrid working practices, improve space efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.
- continued rollout LED lighting projects
- decommissioning of a datacentre to cloud
- reducing winter set point by 1 degree to 21°C

Chart 3 shows our scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions since 2020/21. For historical carbon reduction performance, see Appendix A.

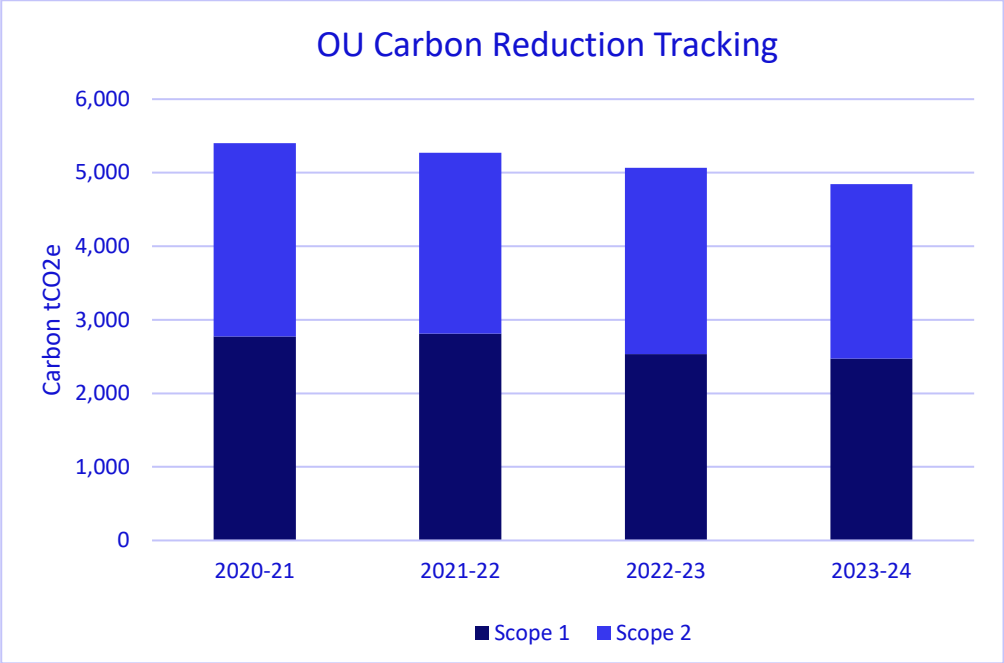


Chart 3: OU Scope 1 & 2 Emissions Tracking

Linked policies

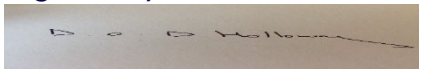
Policies, strategies and plans linked to The Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan include:

- Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Net Zero Carbon 2030 Policy
- Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan – Ireland, Wales & Scotland
- Sustainable Construction policy
- Water Policy
- Waste and Resource Policy
- Waste and Resource Management Plan
- Sustainable Food and Catering Policy

Monitoring and review

The Net Zero Carbon 2030 Policy and Plan is owned by OU Estates. The policy will be reviewed annually, and targets reported to the OU Executive Sustainability Steering committee and forms part of the Institutional Performance Measures.

Signed By



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Effective from: June 2025	Date of next review: June 2026

Dorian Holloway, Director of Estates

Version History

Version Number	Date of change	Originator of change (title)	Description of change
1.0	May 2024	Energy Manager	New Net Zero 2030 Policy and Plan
1.1	May 2025	Energy Manager	Added Campus 2030 Programme section Updated carbon tracking figures
1.2	June 2025	Energy Manager	Updates - Campus 2030 - New Nation Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plans – Ireland, Scotland, Wales - Carbon tracking figures and commentary

Next review date: June 2026

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Appendix A: Carbon Reduction Progress

The OU has a long history of carbon reduction with its first plan adopted in 2007. The 2014 Carbon Reduction Plan targeted absolute reduction in carbon emissions of 36% by 2020 relative to a 2005 baseline. This target was not only achieved but exceeded with a total reduction of 9,894 tCO2e or 64%.

Chart 4 shows our historic scope 1 and 2 emissions in relation to our targets from 2005/06 to 2021/22.

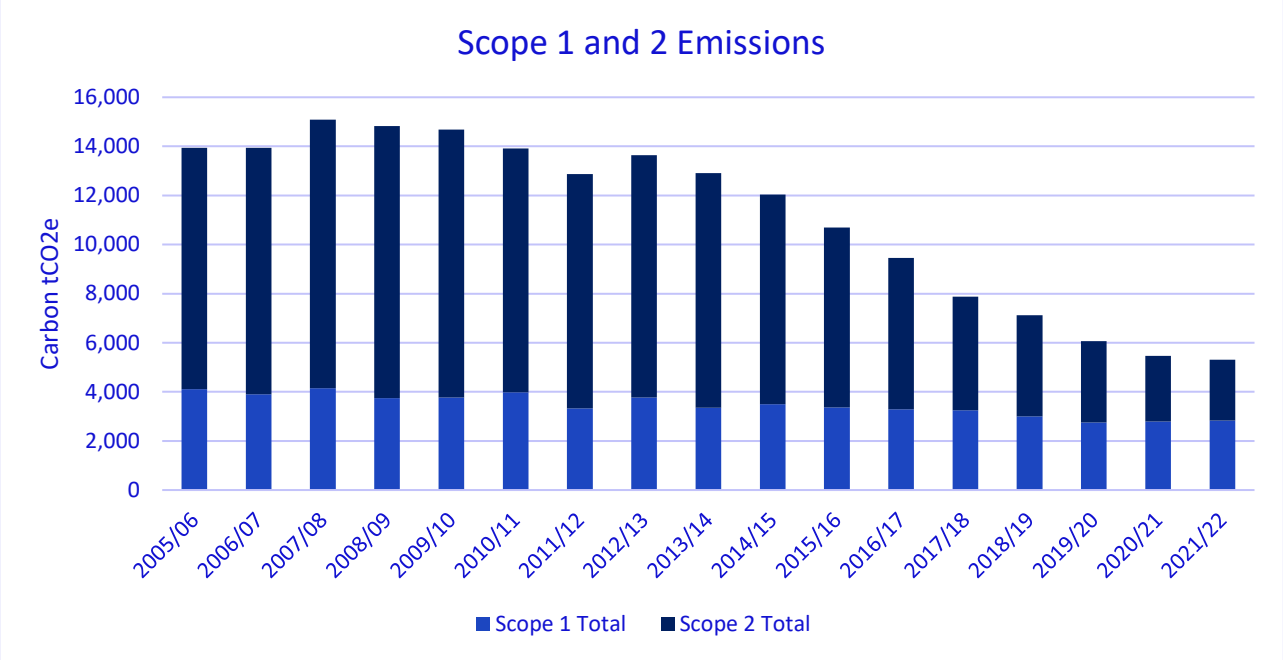

Chart 4: Scope 1 and 2 emissions performance

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