

Open University in Wales Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan

Estates / June 2025

Open University in Wales – Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan

Introduction

The Open University in Wales Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan aligns with the Net Zero Carbon policy, outlining a roadmap to achieve the Net Zero 2030 commitment in Wales.

Scope

The Open University (OU) operates across four nations: England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. A Net Zero Carbon policy is in place and applies to all OU sites. In support of this, nation-specific Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plans have been developed to address the unique circumstances and requirements of each region.

The University has committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions for all Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions by 2030. For Scope 3 indirect emissions, the target date is set for 2050. Established processes are already in place to monitor and reduce Scope 1 and 2 emissions across all locations. The current focus for Scope 3 emissions is the development of a robust and accurate baseline to inform future reduction strategies.

- Scope 1: direct emissions from carbon-based fuel combustion, fleet vehicles and fugitive emissions, e.g. refrigerants from chiller plant. Please note: there are no fleet vehicles at Open University in Wales.
- 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 goods and services (of which digital and flights are carbon intensive and high spend), business travel, employee commuting, waste disposal, transportation and distribution (up and downstream), leased assets and franchises and investments.

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Net Zero Carbon Principles

The Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan establishes the baseline year as 2020/21. This revised baseline aligns with the **OU Learn and Live Strategic Plan** and more accurately reflects the University's post-COVID operational model, including the adoption of a dynamic working approach.

The plan is structured around the **energy hierarchy** principles, which guide sustainable energy use across the University estate:

- **Reduce/Avoid Energy:** Prioritising effective space utilisation, incorporating passive design strategies, and improving building fabric to minimise energy demand for heating and cooling.
- **Use Energy Efficiently:** Upgrading mechanical and electrical systems to incorporate energy-efficient technologies and advanced controls.
- **Use Green Energy:** Investing in onsite renewable energy generation and securing offsite renewable electricity through dedicated supply contracts.

Open University in Wales Net Zero Plan

Open University in Wales is a modern office building constructed in 2006, comprising four floors with a gross internal area of 1,808 m². Located in Cardiff City Centre, Custom House benefits from excellent access to both the train station and main bus terminus.

In 2024, the building underwent a comprehensive refurbishment to support the University's sustainability goals and evolving ways of working.

Measure	Category	Status
Hybrid work patterns and agile desk-sharing practices – Desk capacity reduced from 141 to 87	Space utilisation / Demand reduction	Completed
Meeting room capacity was increased from 11 to 15, addition of substantial soft seating and breakout furniture to encourage collaboration and flexible use of space.	Space utilisation / Demand reduction	Completed
The Annex, previously leased to provide additional meeting space, was released,	Demand reduction	Completed

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as all necessary facilities are now accommodated within the main building.		
Glazing upgrade	Demand reduction	Business case required
Installation of LED lighting systems with advanced controls	Energy Efficiency	
Upgrade to high-efficiency reverse cycle air-conditioning units	Energy Efficiency	Completed
Upgraded Building Management Systems (BMS) for improved monitoring and operational control	Energy Efficiency	Completed
Installation of rooftop solar PV system (14.5 kWp) with battery storage	Renewable Energy	Completed
Electric vehicle charging (EV)	Energy efficiency	Completed
Install Solar PV	Renewable energy	Completed
100% renewable electricity supply via a power purchase agreement.	Renewable energy	2029-30

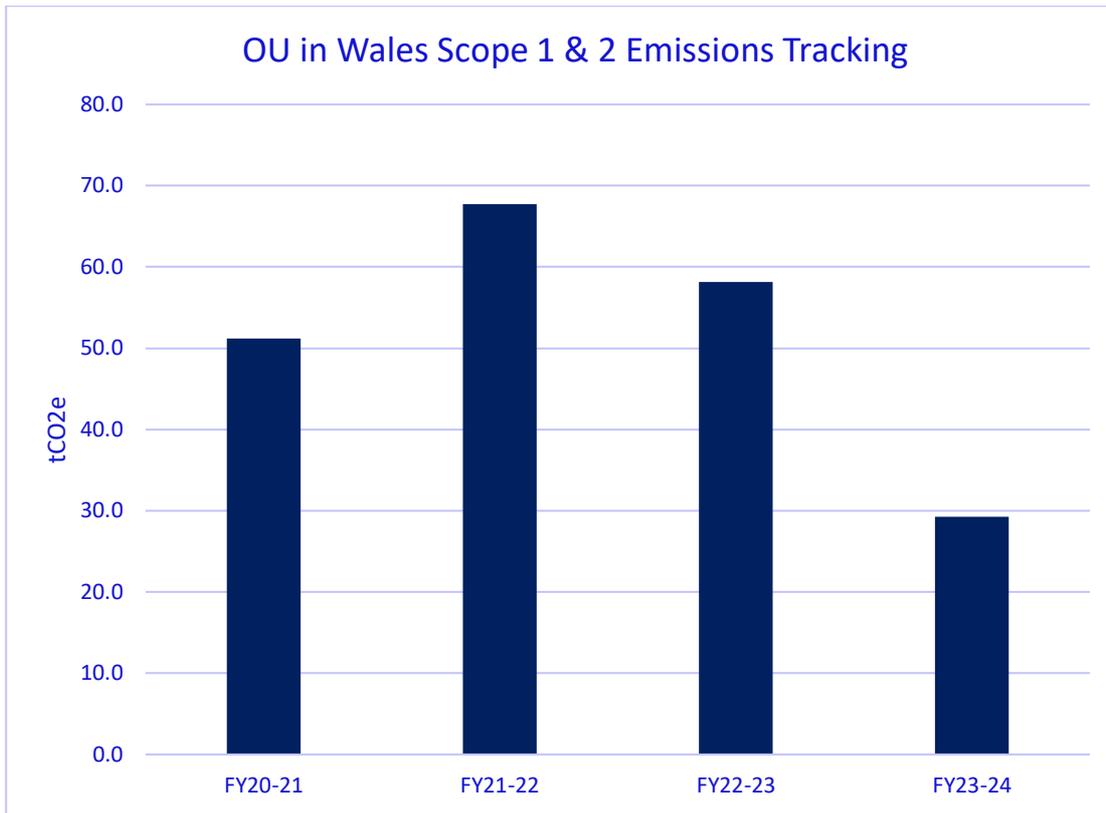
Note: The building operates entirely without gas.

As a fully electric building equipped with solar PV, the path to Net Zero will be achieved through the procurement of 100% renewable electricity via a 100% renewable power purchase agreement.

Carbon Tracking

As a fully electric building, Custom House reports only Scope 2 emission, see below chart. Emissions decreased significantly in 2023–24 due to the building being closed for refurbishment from February to July 2024. While emissions are expected to rise in the following year compared to 2023–24, they are forecast to remain approximately 20% lower than levels recorded in 2022–23.

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Linked policies

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

- Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Net Zero Carbon 2030 Policy
- 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 2030 Policy and nations Net Zero Plans are owned by OU Estates. The policy will be reviewed annually, and progress on targets reported to the OU Wales Senior Management Team, Sustainability Coordination Working Group and Vice-Chancellors Executive. This forms part of the Institutional Performance

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Reporting and Strategic Risk Register mitigation measures which are updated quarterly.

Signed By

Dorian Holloway, Director of Estates

Version History

Version Number	Date of change	Originator of change (title)	Description of change
1.0	June 2025	Energy Manager	New OU in Wales Net Zero 2030 Plan

Next review date: June 2026

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