



Annual Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

IMPACT REPORT 2024/25



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Foreword from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost

I am delighted to write this foreword for Keele University’s 2024/25 SDG Impact Report. The report demonstrates the huge breadth of impressive work and initiatives being undertaken across the institution to advance our contribution to the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to embed sustainability across the institution and all aspects of our operations. The SDGs provide a collective framework for understanding our responsibilities to society, the environment and future generations.

Keele University is strongly committed to aligning itself with the principles of the UN SDGs to drive long-term positive societal and environmental impact and value, providing sustainability leadership both across the higher education sector and more widely in society. This report therefore stands as a testament to the collective efforts of the Keele staff and student community who contribute so much to translating these ambitions into meaningful and tangible actions.

The University has a strong commitment to ensuring that our teaching, research and external partnerships, and our campus operations and community, actively contribute to a more just, inclusive and sustainable future. Every member of our community has a role to play in progressing the SDGs, and our institutional objectives have been designed with this shared responsibility in mind. Whether through reducing our environmental footprint, strengthening community partnerships, advancing health and wellbeing, or enhancing educational opportunity, our work is united by a belief that higher education has a vital role in shaping a better world.

I hope that you can see the dedication, innovation and passion of the staff and students whose work is showcased within this report as a snapshot of the activities taking place across the University. Our contribution to the SDGs continues to grow each year, and this report reflects both our achievements and our ongoing commitment to creating positive impact locally, nationally, and globally.



Professor Mark Ormerod OBE
Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost
Chair of the University SDG Impact Committee

Highlights of 2024/25

In 2024/25, Keele delivered clear progress across its sustainability priorities – reducing emissions, strengthening regional engagement, enhancing education for sustainable development and earning recognition for sector leading practice. Keele accelerated its transition to a low carbon campus, recording a 3.5 % cut in emissions year on year, including a 7 % reduction in gas consumption.

The University ranked within the top five nationally for renewable electricity generation at 6,253 MWh and clean electricity exported to the grid (627 MWh). Building on the success of the Low Carbon Energy Generation Park, Keele deployed a Fuel Cell Systems' anion exchange membrane electrolyser, powered by campus renewables and integrated with the Smart Energy Network Demonstrator to optimise production of green hydrogen. The system currently fuels two Toyota Mirai vehicles and provides a real world platform for clean hydrogen research and development. Alongside delivery, Keele completed a carbon baseline and decarbonisation roadmap with Equans, giving a clear, data driven plan for the next phase of the University's net zero journey.

Regionally, Keele strengthened its role as a convenor and skills engine for climate action. Co leading the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Climate and Nature Commission, the University supported cross sector progress while delivering Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to around 150 professionals on net zero, smart energy and place based decarbonisation, including tailored programmes for local authorities through Skills Bootcamp funding. In partnership with Staffordshire County Council, Keele contributed to a project on Green Skills for Growth, creating the evidence base for a county wide green skills strategy.



The University also led community centred design for the Brockmoor Net Zero Neighbourhood in Dudley – informing six further neighbourhood projects across the West Midlands, as well as hosting the launch of the Department for Education-funded West Midlands Climate Ambassadors Hub, part of a national programme to support education settings to develop and implement climate action plans through support from volunteer Climate Ambassadors. In its first year the hub recruited 100+ Ambassadors and delivered 300+ engagements with education settings while offering Keele students meaningful experiential learning opportunities.

In education, the Global Challenge Pathways reached a milestone as the first cohort graduated. Running alongside students' main degrees, these pathways are underpinned by the SDGs and develop interdisciplinary capability across climate change and sustainability, social justice, global health and digital society – reinforcing Social, Environmental and Ethical Responsibility as a core Keele graduate attribute.



Recognition of our commitment to education for sustainability included consolidation of global leadership in planetary health education: 1st in the world for Medicine in the 2025 Planetary Health Report Card (for the sixth consecutive year) and, for the first time, 1st globally in Pharmacy and Physiotherapy.



Keele Business School progressed its responsible management agenda, publishing a School Sustainability Strategy and Societal Impact Plan and scaling its SDG Passport – a digitally supported portfolio that enables students to evidence and track sustainability skills and experiences across their studies – deepening staff-student sustainability projects.



This momentum was recognised through Keele's inclusion in the Corporate Knights 'Better World MBA Top 40 and Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) Champions for 2024-25, placing Keele Business School among a select group of global leaders shaping the future of responsible management education. Our staff expertise in whole-institution approaches to sustainability, and Education for Sustainable Development, was further reflected in invitations to judge the high profile International Green Gown Awards, and significant national leadership roles such as co-Chair of the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges

The University's Events and Conferencing operation secured dual sustainability accreditations – 3 Star Gold Food Made Good and ECOsmart Platinum, embedding low impact principles into the visitor experience. Institutionally, Keele rose 14 places to 45th in the People & Planet University League – the highest ranked institution in the Midlands Innovation group – and achieved a Top 30 global position for Reduced Inequalities in the THE Impact Rankings. Taken together, 2024/25 demonstrated Keele's longstanding commitment to taking a whole-institution approach to sustainability, and combined measurable operational progress with regional leadership, curriculum innovation and sector leading recognition – advancing climate action, social equity and graduate impact.



Our ESG Strategy

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide the overarching framework that shapes Keele's approach to sustainability and strengthens our Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) responsibilities. While ESG describes how we manage our environmental impacts, social contribution and governance standards, the SDGs translate these commitments into a coherent set of internationally recognised outcomes.

We recognise that the Goals are deeply interconnected rather than discrete targets – progress on climate depends on advances in education, health, equity, biodiversity and partnership, and the reverse is equally true. This systems view has been central to how sustainability is structured and embedded across the University. To reflect this interconnected approach in our governance, Keele embeds ESG principles through a whole institution model that turns strategy into accountable delivery.

Our Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework 2024–2029 sets a clear mandate by positioning sustainability across leadership and governance, campus operations, learning and research, and partnership and engagement, integrating ESG into Keele's core planning, decision making and risk processes.



The Committee acts as the central hub for oversight, alignment and assurance, while six thematic spokes – sustainable operational strategy and planning; responsible consumption and waste management; natural environment restoration and development; education and research for sustainable development; EDI and wellbeing; and communications, engagement and partnerships – coordinate specialist activity and drive delivery through dedicated sub groups or embedded forums. Insights, data and progress updates are fed into the Committee, ensuring a coherent, institution wide approach that recognises that progress in one area depends on collective action across many others.



Turning Strategy into Action

Keele's institutional strategy for delivering sustainability takes place in practice across the core areas that shape our environmental and social impact. Building on the governance model set out in our Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework, these themes represent the University's priority domains for coordinated action and measurable progress.

Together, they reflect the breadth and interconnectedness of our sustainability work – from reducing carbon emissions and managing resources responsibly, to protecting biodiversity, fostering inclusive and healthy communities, strengthening sustainability within education and research, and deepening partnerships that drive collective impact. These thematic areas collectively frame how Keele advances its contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and embeds their values across the University.

Operational Sustainability and Responsible Resource Use

Keele manages its campus and infrastructure sustainably through an integrated approach that links long term operational planning with responsible day to day resource use. The Sustainable Operational Strategy and Planning function embeds environmental, social and financial sustainability into institutional decision making – covering net zero commitments, capital planning, climate risk, energy strategy and procurement. Keele's governance framework incorporates structured risk assessment and reporting mechanisms, enabling the University to identify, evaluate and manage operational, environmental and climate related risks across its estate. Alongside this, the Responsible Consumption and Waste Management group focuses on minimising the University's environmental footprint through coordinated work on energy and water use, waste reduction and recycling, sustainable food, laboratory efficiency, and supply chain emissions. Together, these areas aim to ensure that Keele's estate is operated efficiently, transparently and in alignment with the University's wider sustainability ambitions.

Nature and Biodiversity on Campus

Keele's 600 acre campus is one of its greatest assets, offering rich biodiversity, woodlands, lakes, heritage landscapes and unique opportunities for environmental leadership. The Natural Environment Maintenance, Restoration & Development group coordinates activity across ecology, biodiversity, nature recovery, land management, grounds maintenance and habitat restoration. With academic, professional services and student representation, the group drives forward Keele's commitments as a Nature Positive University and supports ambitions for improved biodiversity, sustainable grounds management and enhanced green and blue spaces. Work includes ecological mapping, habitat and species monitoring, nature recovery planning, student led growing initiatives, community gardening projects and biodiversity focused capital works. Through this stewardship, Keele is positioning itself as a sector leading campus for nature recovery and nature based solutions, while supporting wellbeing, outdoor learning and research.

Learning, Research and Innovation for Sustainable Futures

Sustainability is deeply embedded in Keele's academic mission, underpinning both teaching and research. This thematic area brings together Education for Sustainable Development, sustainability literacy and skills, research impact, interdisciplinary scholarship and lifelong learning. The work is integrated across the Education Committee and Research Committee supported by an Education for Sustainability Community of Practice, to ensure a coordinated approach to curriculum development, graduate attributes, Global Challenge Pathways, Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) within Keele Business School, Planetary Healthcare initiatives, sustainability research culture, carbon literacy and outreach programmes. Through this approach, Keele strengthens its reputation for interdisciplinary sustainability education and research, ensuring students graduate with the knowledge, skills and values needed to tackle global challenges, while research contributes to societal and planetary wellbeing.

Equity, Wellbeing and Inclusive Culture

Keele's sustainability framework recognises that social sustainability is foundational to all SDG progress. Work within this theme is delivered through established Health & Safety, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), wellbeing and student support governance structures, which champion equity, diversity, inclusion, health and wellbeing across the University community. The thematic remit includes gender equality, race equality, LGBTQ+ inclusion, disability support, social mobility, staff wellbeing, occupational health, student wellbeing services and initiatives such as #NeverOK and the Care Leavers Covenant. Through accredited schemes and national charters (including Athena Swan, the Race Equality Charter and Stonewall), and a strong institutional strategy for EDI, Keele is committed to creating a fair, inclusive and thriving campus environment. This commitment ensures that staff and students are supported to succeed, feel valued, and can contribute fully to Keele's sustainability journey.

Engagement, Partnerships and Communications

Collective action sits at the heart of Keele's sustainability ethos. Work across the University is coordinated and led by the lead for sustainability communications, who brings together colleagues from across faculties, directorates and student led initiatives to ensure that our sustainability activity is communicated clearly and consistently. This collaborative approach strengthens internal engagement and supports the development of partnerships that extend Keele's influence and impact. Engagement takes place through a rich portfolio of activity, including civic and community partnerships such as the Keele Deals, cultural collaborations, student volunteering and social action, research partnerships and international networks. Events such as the annual sustainability festival help bring together staff, students and partners to share progress and spark new connections. Together, these efforts amplify Keele's contribution to the SDGs and reinforce our role as an anchor institution committed to social and environmental good.



Our Research Institutes

Keele's four interdisciplinary Research Institutes continued to drive progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals throughout 2024–25, acting as hubs for collaboration, innovation and impact across disciplines.

Together, they anchor Keele's mission to shape a healthier, more sustainable and more inclusive world, aligning directly with SDGs across health, climate, inclusive societies and digital futures. The Institutes tackle society's most urgent challenges through world leading and internationally excellent research, reflected in Keele's performance in REF 2021, where 80% of research was rated world leading or internationally excellent.

The Institute for Global Health and Wellbeing advances SDG 3, SDG5 and SDG 11 by addressing global and planetary health challenges and inequalities, spanning infectious disease, primary care, adolescent and maternal health. Its work supports evidence based policy, strengthens health systems internationally, and connects research across continents.

The Institute for Sustainable Futures leads Keele's contribution to SDGs 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 through research on sustainable agriculture, crop protection, food security, energy futures, environmental resilience, sustainable education, green skills and just net zero transitions. The Institute brings together scientists, engineers and social researchers to develop solutions for climate adaptation, nature recovery and sustainable communities.

The Digital Society Institute supports SDGs 9 and 16 by shaping ethical, inclusive and responsible technological futures. Its work spans digital policy, data ethics, artificial intelligence, digital citizenship and societal impacts of emerging technologies, helping ensure that innovation contributes to equitable and democratic societies.

The Institute for Social Inclusion advances SDGs 1, 2, 5, 10 and 16 by addressing inequalities, structural injustice, and community wellbeing. Its interdisciplinary research explores migration and displacement, social determinants of health, heritage and culture, policing partnerships, and inclusive economic development – strengthening policy and practice across local, national and global communities.

Together, these Institutes drive Keele's contribution to the SDGs by mobilising research, partnerships, and policy engagement, creating the collaborative environment that empowers researchers, students, and external partners to develop solutions to complex global challenges. They also enhance teaching and student experience, connecting research expertise to learning opportunities and ensuring that Keele graduates become globally aware, sustainability literate leaders capable of driving change in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda.



Our Global Challenge Pathways

Keele's Global Challenge Pathways (GCPs) continued to play a central role in embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals across undergraduate education, offering structured opportunities for students to link their studies to the Goals across all years of their degree.

The pathways enable students from almost any discipline to study one of five interdisciplinary themes – Climate Change & Sustainability, Global Health, Social Justice, Digital Futures, and Enterprise, Entrepreneurship & Employment – each explicitly underpinned by the SDGs and designed to develop graduates who can understand, analyse, and address complex global challenges.

Enrolment continues to grow, supported by Keele's redesigned curriculum and its commitment to ensuring every student has access to sustainability aligned education. The pathways bring students together from diverse subject backgrounds to examine issues such as health inequalities, climate change, power and conflict, social justice, global citizenship, and the ethics of emerging technologies, situating these topics within the SDG framework. This interdisciplinary and sustainability focused learning is delivered through real world projects, collaboration with international experts and employers, and experiential activities that build skills in leadership, problem solving, teamwork, digital capability, and creative communication – all essential for advancing the SDGs.

Modules within the pathways include topics such as global health inequalities, the social determinants of wellbeing, climate action and activism, sustainability skills, digital citizenship, enterprise for a just transition, and understanding systemic injustice. In this way, the GCPs help equip students not only with subject knowledge but with the capacity and motivation to apply SDG thinking to real societal problems – locally, nationally, and globally. Through these pathways, Keele ensures that sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility are not the domain of a single discipline but are woven into the academic experience at scale.





Progress across the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals in 24/25



SDG1 – No Poverty

Keele strengthened its contribution to tackling poverty by expanding support for students and communities experiencing financial hardship, including Higher Horizons outreach work to widen participation and provide equitable access to higher education, particularly for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This was complemented by wider civic partnerships, with the Keele Institute for Social Inclusion leading collaborative projects that address the root causes of poverty through lived-experience research, community engagement, and policy-shaping activity – for example, its role in supporting Cheshire West and Chester Council's Poverty Emergency work and examining how lived experience can inform more ethical and effective poverty-related policy change. Keele's community-embedded methodologies were further advanced through the coCREATE participatory research network, which co-develops projects with charities, public sector bodies and civil society organisations to understand and challenge inequalities, including those associated with poverty and exclusion. Together, these activities reflect a whole-institution commitment to reducing poverty through targeted support, inclusive pathways into education, and research that works in partnership with communities to shape fairer futures.



SDG2 – Zero Hunger

Keele continued its whole-institution approach to food sustainability, affordability and access through certified healthy, sustainably sourced catering under the Soil Association Food for Life standards, alongside direct community access to food through campus allotments for staff, students and local residents. This operational practice was complemented by research that advanced SDG 2: Zero Hunger, including a UKRI-funded programme preparing UK agriculture to withstand viral and bacterial plant disease epidemics spread by insects, improving national resilience and crop security; a major Keele-led report recommending 24 industry-wide actions to strengthen surveillance, early detection, containment, and AI-based prediction for crop disease outbreaks, helping protect growers from significant economic losses and safeguarding food supply chains; and new strategies to control an immune-system-damaging poultry virus detected on UK farms, addressing livestock health risks with implications for food production and farmer livelihoods. These efforts align with the Institute for Sustainable Futures' 'Providing Food Security' theme and are reinforced by Keele Institute for Social Inclusion and coCREATE programmes exploring lived experience, food poverty, social isolation and community resilience- ensuring that Keele's contributions span sustainable agriculture, animal health, equitable access to nutritious food, and community-informed policy and practice. Keele's Leverhulme funded Doctoral Training Centre 'Sustainable Rural Futures (SURF)' continues to recruit high quality PhD students, many of who are tackling aspects of sustainable food systems.



SDG3 – Good Health & Wellbeing

Keele strengthened its global profile in planetary-health education and wellbeing, graduating over 2400 health-profession students and deepening work with clinical and public-health partners. In April 2025, the Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy and Physiotherapy ranked 1st globally in the Planetary Healthcare Report Card, recognising leadership in curricula, research and sustainability. Staff and student wellbeing initiatives also remained highly visible, supported by a broad programme of mental-health, inclusion and wellbeing activities across the year – including mindfulness and resilience workshops, physical activity promotion, healthy lifestyle campaigns and enhanced access to mental health support services – helping to create a healthier and more supportive campus community. Research highlights included new evidence on postpartum haemorrhage risks for minority and socially deprived women, effective interventions reducing adolescent suicide attempts, and an emotion-aware psychological first-aid chatbot expanding access to mental-health support. Keele researchers also advanced global health insight through dengue-trend analysis and innovations in prostate-cancer diagnostics, while contributing to regenerative medicine and clinical safety through biomaterials research and fracture-risk findings. Keele further addressed structural inequalities via the largest study of British South Asian maternal mental health and work within the NIHR Maternity Disparities Consortium, with community outreach and the new Exercise Physiology Laboratory enhancing learning and engagement



SDG4 – Quality Education

Keele strengthened its contribution to SDG 4 in 2024-25 by expanding inclusive access to learning and enhancing curriculum quality, with 1,285 first-generation students entering Keele (representing 41% of students starting a full-time equivalent degree) and a wide programme of public lectures and community educational events supporting lifelong learning across the region. The University remained a valued provider of high-quality professional education, helping to meet national workforce needs and improve educational outcomes more widely. Education for Sustainability continued to be advanced through Keele's commitment to embedding Social, Environmental and Ethical Responsibility (SEER) across the student learning experience. Through curriculum development, co-curricular activities and staff engagement, students were supported to develop the knowledge, skills, values and attributes needed to respond to complex sustainability challenges, make ethical and informed decisions, and contribute positively to society and the environment. Opportunities for deeper engagement were provided through Carbon Literacy training and the Sustainability Education and Outreach programme, which created interdisciplinary, hands-on learning and volunteering experiences across Keele's campus living-laboratory environment. The quality of Keele's educational provision continued to be reflected in its Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Gold rating, recognising outstanding student experience across the institution. Keele also strengthened its academic standards and continuous improvement processes through an enhanced University-wide quality monitoring and enhancement framework, ensuring that programmes remain rigorous, inclusive and responsive to emerging societal and workforce needs.



SDG5 – Gender Equality

Keele advanced its commitment to gender equality in 2024-25 through a whole-institution approach embedded in its Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-27, which aims to eliminate systemic barriers, foster inclusive leadership and ensure an accessible, equitable environment for staff and students. The University continued to build on its longstanding participation in the Athena Swan Charter, holding an institutional Bronze award and maintaining departmental awards across all eligible Schools, supported by a comprehensive action plan to improve gender representation, tackle sexism, and enhance women's career progression. Progress on the gender pay gap was demonstrated through a 5% reduction in 2025, reflecting targeted actions such as real living-wage commitments and focused support for roles predominantly occupied by women. Keele also advanced gender equality through nationally recognised research on supporting women's career continuity, including a study demonstrating the positive impact of maternity mentoring on wellbeing, confidence and reintegration into the workplace. These insights contribute to evidence-based policy and employer practice, reinforcing Keele's role in shaping more inclusive approaches to maternity, return-to-work support and gender-equitable employment environments.



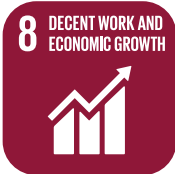
SDG6 – Clean Water & Sanitation

Keele advanced its contribution to SDG 6 in 2024-25 by strengthening its campus-wide water efficiency strategy, which focuses on minimising water consumption across its 617-acre estate through targeted operational improvements and sustainable infrastructure management. As part of its whole-campus sustainability approach, the University integrated water stewardship into its broader Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework, ensuring that clean water and resource efficiency are embedded into operational planning and long-term sustainability governance. Keele's 'living laboratory' campus supported research and teaching related to environmental management, with students and researchers using real-time campus systems and green infrastructure as applied learning tools for understanding water, ecosystems and environmental sustainability more broadly. Engagement and awareness-raising formed a complementary strand, with sustainability education and outreach activities helping students and staff develop the knowledge and competencies needed to make responsible environmental decisions, including those linked to water conservation and stewardship.



SDG7 – Affordable & Clean Energy

Keele advanced SDG 7 in 2024–25 through major commitments to clean energy generation, innovation and applied research. The University’s Low Carbon Energy Generation Park, comprising two wind turbines, 12,220 solar panels and battery storage, continued to supply approximately 40 % of campus electricity from renewable sources, avoiding around 1500 tonnes of carbon emissions. Keele’s campus also functioned as a national testbed for smart and zero-carbon energy systems, with the Smart Energy Network Demonstrator (SEND) providing real-time carbon and energy monitoring and control across the estate, supporting teaching and research and enabling students to work on emerging clean-energy technologies embedded directly within the campus environment. Keele further supported wider transitions through its involvement in Midlands Innovation for Sustainability, helping local authorities progress their clean-energy goals and strengthening regional decarbonisation partnerships. Keele also contributed to wider clean-energy transitions through its involvement in the Brockmoor Net Zero Neighbourhood. By sharing learning from neighbourhood-scale decarbonisation and community-centred retrofit approaches, Keele helped strengthen regional evidence for affordable, low-carbon energy solutions that cut emissions while reducing household energy costs.



SDG8 – Decent Work & Economic Growth

Keele strengthened its contribution to SDG 8 in 2024–25 by driving inclusive economic growth, skills development and innovation-led employment across the region. The University contributed around half a billion pounds in gross value added (GVA) annually to the West Midlands economy, supporting more than 7000 jobs across the region and acting as one of the largest employers in Newcastle-under-Lyme. Keele’s long-standing Keele Deals further expanded opportunities for local businesses, with programmes in innovation leadership, digital transformation, health technologies and low-carbon growth supporting hundreds of SMEs to innovate and become more competitive, while also attracting significant inward investment and accelerating regional regeneration. The University’s Science and Innovation Park, now home to more than 50–60 high-growth companies, continued to anchor knowledge-intensive employment and skills development in areas such as med-tech, clean energy and digital technologies, with expansion plans set to create thousands more future jobs and strengthen the region’s innovation ecosystem. Through these programmes – as well as expanded work placements, apprenticeships, and collaboration with FE partners – Keele continued to build a resilient skills pipeline that supports sustainable economic growth and decent work locally and regionally. Keele also worked with Staffordshire County Council, through Innovate UK funding, on research into green skills needs and provision and the development of green skills planning across the county.



SDG9 – Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure

Keele strengthened its role as an engine of innovation and resilient infrastructure in 2024–25 through major investments, research collaborations and business-focused facilities. The Keele Science and Innovation Park continued to provide a hub for high-growth sectors, supported by eight purpose-built Innovation Centres offering laboratories, workshops and flexible workspaces for start-ups and established firms alike. Keele further strengthened its contribution to innovation-led infrastructure through research advancing both digital and scientific capabilities, including how to improve digital connectivity in rural areas, identifying ways to make networks more reliable, secure and resilient-critical infrastructure for regional productivity and inclusive growth. Keele scientists advanced frontier methods in synthetic biology by developing new computational infrastructure to accelerate the design and testing of biological systems, supporting future biotechnology innovation and industrial applications. Together, these actions demonstrate Keele’s active contribution to SDG 9 through innovation-led growth, modern research spaces and strong industry-academic partnerships



SDG10 – Reduced Inequalities

In 2024–25, Keele strengthened its commitment to fairness, inclusion and equality of opportunity through institution-wide action and nationally recognised progress. The University’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023–27 continued to shape change across leadership, student experience and organisational culture, focusing on removing structural barriers and enabling equitable outcomes for all. Staff networks supporting race equity, LGBTQ+ inclusion, disability, neurodivergence and international staff remained central to building an actively inclusive culture. Annual EDI reporting highlighted improvements in embedding equal opportunity frameworks and deepening community engagement, demonstrating Keele’s sustained, multifaceted work to address inequalities on campus and beyond. Keele’s global commitment to equity was also evident through the MADAR (Maghreb Action on Displacement and Rights) project. Led by Keele researchers, MADAR challenges securitised narratives of migration by centring the lived experiences of displaced people in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Through interdisciplinary, participatory and decolonial research – developed with civil society partners, policymakers and migrant communities – MADAR promotes a more inclusive, human-centred understanding of mobility and rights, advancing social justice internationally.



SDG11 – Sustainable Cities & Communities

Keele’s 600-acre historic estate, woodlands and lakes form one of the UK’s most significant green campuses and remain freely accessible year-round. The Arboretum, with its nationally recognised flowering cherry collection, offers heritage trails and self-guided routes that connect Keele’s community and visitors such as schools and local residents with the campus’s cultural and ecological history. Keele Hall and the Chapel host public talks, concerts and community events, while ArtsKeele delivered more than 80 free arts events. Partnerships such as the Three Counties Open Art Exhibition, organised by ArtsKeele, and work with the New Vic Theatre broaden cultural participation and support creative livelihoods, while the University preserves regional heritage through Special Collections, folklore archives and community-centred creative projects. Keele further contributed to SDG 11 through research including that supporting community resilience in Tamworth after a period of unrest in 2024. A Keele-led project, delivered with Tamworth Borough Council and supported by the Community Recovery Fund, is helping young people and local SMEs – especially those from minority and migrant backgrounds – build cohesion, counter hate and strengthen local inclusion. Together, these activities demonstrate Keele’s contribution to accessible heritage, vibrant cultural life and resilient communities – core elements of sustainable cities and communities under SDG 11.



SDG12 – Responsible Consumption & Waste Management

In 2024–25, Keele further embedded sustainable consumption and circular resource management into its operations and engagement activities. The University maintained its commitment of zero waste to landfill, supported through widespread recycling facilities and student-facing programmes that encourage reuse, clothing donation and responsible end-of-term resource management. Sustainable procurement practices remained a core institutional priority, with Keele aiming to purchase goods and services that minimise social and environmental harm, complementing its wider sustainability commitments as part of it Responsible Procurement As part of its broader sustainability offer, the campus continued to serve as a ‘living laboratory’, enabling student and researcher engagement with food waste reduction, resource efficiency and behaviour-change initiatives connected to sustainable lifestyles. Sustainability-focussed educational outreach, including SDG Awareness Month activities throughout March 2025, strengthened understanding of responsible consumption through practical, accessible events such as plant-based meal promotions and device repair opportunities. Together, these efforts demonstrate Keele’s continued leadership in modelling sustainable consumption across operations, student life and community engagement



SDG13 – Climate Action

The University's Low Carbon Energy Generation Park, combining large-scale solar, wind power and battery storage, continued to supply approximately 40 % of campus electricity from renewables, significantly reducing carbon emissions and serving as a national exemplar of low-carbon infrastructure. Keele's pioneering HyDex hydrogen pilot and Smart Energy Network Demonstrator reinforced its position as the UK's leading campus-scale living laboratory for clean-energy innovation and climate-related research. Climate literacy and sustainability competencies were strengthened across the curriculum through dedicated education for sustainability initiatives intended to help learners understand climate impacts, systems change and their role in advancing climate solutions. Keele's regional climate leadership was further reflected in its role as co-founder and Chair of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Climate and Nature Commission, which brings local government, business and community partners together to coordinate climate strategy across the region. Keele also strengthened its climate policy influence through its association with the Brockmoor Net Zero Neighbourhood, which is now informing regional approaches to fuel poverty alleviation, retrofit policy and place-based climate action. This visibility supports policymakers, local authorities and regional bodies in adopting more integrated, community-driven decarbonisation strategies.



SDG14 – Life under Water

Keele contributes to SDG 14 through its longstanding expertise in freshwater ecosystem management and applied aquatic science. Keele Water, the University's specialist environmental consultancy, provides ecological monitoring, water-quality assessment, pollution diagnosis and fish disease expertise for organisations managing freshwater bodies, using tools such as macroinvertebrate sampling, chemical analysis and ecosystem impact assessment to support healthier aquatic environments. This work helps prevent and respond to pollution events, supports biodiversity protection in inland waters, and informs sustainable management by public authorities, conservation organisations and industry partners. Through its scientific methods and advisory work, Keele contributes practical knowledge to safeguarding freshwater ecosystems and also advanced scientific understanding of freshwater ecosystem resilience through new research identifying habitat complexity as a critical conservation priority. A study led by Keele researchers showed that restoring natural structural features – such as gravel, wood and boulders – in urban rivers and canals can significantly enhance macroinvertebrate biodiversity, while highlighting that simple litter removal can unintentionally reduce habitat value if natural materials are not restored in their place. This work provides evidence-based guidance for conservation practitioners and public authorities, strengthening policy and management approaches that protect and restore inland waters as part of wider aquatic ecosystem health.



SDG15 – Life on Land

Keele made significant contributions to terrestrial ecosystem stewardship and biodiversity protection during 2024–25. Its expansive 617-acre campus, rich in woodland, lakes and habitats, continued to function as a living environment for biodiversity research, conservation volunteering and habitat restoration work, all embedded into institutional sustainability practice. Keele's involvement in the Nature Positive Universities Alliance and its student-led conservation groups strengthened place-based actions to restore habitats and enhance ecosystem resilience, with activities ranging from invasive species removal to biodiversity monitoring and habitat improvement. Ongoing research into the biodiversity impacts of the Low Carbon Energy Generation park provides an opportunity for long-term monitoring of the impact of ground-mounted solar installations on biodiversity and exploration of best management practices to benefit both climate and biodiversity goals. The Lottery-funded Nature in your Neighbourhood project works with local community groups in the Staffordshire Moorlands, who act as citizen scientists to measure biodiversity in their local area, to design, implement and then monitor the impact of biodiversity-enriching interventions. Environmental education, fieldwork and sustainability outreach further enriched understanding of ecological stewardship at all levels, connecting learning with real-world land management challenges. These efforts underscore Keele's active role in advancing SDG 15 through conservation, research-led habitat management and community engagement.



SDG16 – Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions

Keele strengthened its contributions to transparent, inclusive and responsible governance in 2024–25 through globally-recognised research excellence, community partnerships and institutional practices. Research advanced trustworthy information systems and protection of vulnerable communities; in early 2025, Keele scientists developed an AI-powered fake-news detection tool capable of identifying misinformation with 99% accuracy, offering an important contribution to safeguarding public discourse and supporting democratic resilience. The MADAR project, which has engaged over 1500 local, national and international stakeholders, hosted a major 2024 summit that brought together academics, policymakers and NGOs to address rights, safety and policy challenges facing migrants across the Maghreb region. Together, these initiatives demonstrate Keele's growing influence on evidence-based governance, ethical technological innovation and the protection of human rights.



SDG17 – Partnership for the Goals

Partnership working remained central to Keele's sustainability mission in 2024–25, strengthening impact across education, research and civic collaboration. The University's strategic partnerships span local authorities, NHS Trusts, businesses, cultural organisations and community groups, formalised through sustained initiatives such as the Keele Deals, which align research and innovation capabilities with regional priorities in the economy, health, culture and climate action.

This collaborative approach was further demonstrated through a project with Cannock Chase and Stafford Borough Councils, which co-designed and delivered training for council officers and elected members to support the development and implementation of Climate Action Plans. Combining applied research with capacity building, the project explored practical approaches to evidencing value for money in climate interventions, strengthening local authority capability for data-informed and evidence-based policymaking.

Keele also deepened its international collaboration, with its Research and Innovation Strategy emphasising global cooperation as essential to tackling complex challenges and advancing equitable knowledge exchange across borders. A major new partnership with the global environmental consultancy RSK Group further extended opportunities for shared research, student placements and industry-informed sustainability initiatives, supporting mutual goals in climate, food security and green technology. Through these wide-ranging collaborative relationships, Keele continued to build cross-sector alliances that amplify SDG impact locally and internationally.



Building on our Impact

This report demonstrates the depth and breadth of Keele's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals, underpinned by a strong governance framework and a culture of collaboration, innovation and continuous improvement. It reinforces the importance of connecting strategy, operations, education, research and partnerships to drive measurable impact, and highlights the role of the University as both a local anchor institution and a contributor to addressing global sustainability challenges.

The activity presented represents only a selection of a much broader programme of work taking place across the institution. Collectively, these examples reflect an increasingly integrated approach to sustainability, where social, environmental and economic considerations are becoming more deeply embedded within decision-making, teaching and learning, research, campus operations and community engagement. As such, this report offers more than a record of activity; it demonstrates a growing maturity and coherence in Keele's approach, underpinned by leadership, shared responsibility and a commitment to evidence-based action.

In a global context where progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals remains uneven and many challenges are becoming increasingly complex and interconnected, the role of higher education has never been more important. Universities have a unique capacity to bring together knowledge, innovation, critical thinking and partnership to support positive change. Keele's continued commitment to sustainability reflects not only a responsibility to respond to these challenges, but also an opportunity to help shape a more resilient, healthy, equitable and sustainable future.

Looking ahead, the achievements and insights captured within this report provide a strong foundation for the University's next strategic chapter and will help inform the development and delivery of Keele's new University Strategy. Sustainability and social responsibility will remain key drivers of institutional ambition, shaping decision-making across education, research, enterprise, partnerships and operations. Recognising the interconnected nature of environmental health, human wellbeing and social prosperity, Keele will continue to embed sustainability across its activities and strengthen its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. Through this commitment, the University will seek to maximise its positive impact locally, nationally and globally, creating lasting value for current and future generations.

While much remains to be done, the collective efforts of staff, students, partners and communities continue to build momentum and demonstrate what can be achieved through a shared commitment to sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals provide not only a framework for measuring progress, but also a common language for collaboration and a vision for the future. Keele remains committed to playing its part in advancing that vision through purposeful action, partnership and leadership in the years ahead.

