Loughborough University

WASTE AND RESOURCE ACTION PLAN

January 2026

Executive Summary

This action plan covers both Loughborough University (LU) campuses as well as the Imago facilities. This plan supports legislative compliance; reduced environmental impact; improvements to reputation and image and supports the wider university strategy including the 2025 Sustainability Strategy.

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to set a direction for the university's waste and resource management including the reduction of waste and improved resource efficiency, through application of the waste hierarchy. This plan aims to support the university's commitment to Sustainability, reducing our environmental impact and ensuring compliance with relevant legislations.

LU has recently entered a new waste contract after 10 years with its incumbent. This presents unique opportunities for collaboration and fresh perspectives on waste management.

Scope

This action plan covers both Loughborough University campuses as well as the Imago facilities. Loughborough University is home to around 25,000 staff, students and tenants and host multiple large scale events each year. This demonstrates the importance of having a clear action plan for waste management and resource use.

Objectives

This action plan is in place to help the university reach its strategic theme of Climate Change and Net Zero. Controlling our waste and resources will not only reduce our environmental impact, but it will also have a financial benefit through reduced waste and procurement costs.

Current Waste Management Overview

Table 1 below shows the last 10 years of waste data at Loughborough University*. Over the last 10 years (excluding COVID affected years), LU has averaged at around 1930 tonnes total waste. This dramatically reduced in the 2023/24 academic year to 1523 tonnes and reduced further to 1507 tonnes in 2024/35, making this the lowest year on record (excluding COVID years).

Table 1: Overview of waste tonnage from the last 10 years

Academic Year	Total Waste (Tonnes)	Residential Total Waste (Tonnes)	Non-Residential Total Waste (Tonnes)	Onsite Recycling Rate
2024-25	1507.35	952.63	554.72	51%
2023-24	1523.86	923.39	600.46	49%
2022-23	1947.22	1053.54	893.67	46%
2021-22	1955.09	953.66	10001.42	35%
2020-21	1376.52	883.56	492.95	42%
2019-20	1330.79	843.45	487.34	56%
2018-19	1898.68	1136.74	761.94	53%
2017-18	1898.13	1090.49	807.64	52%
2016-17	2241.63	1129.83	1111.80	51%
2015-16	1989.06	1136.72	852.34	49%

Shaded = years affected by COVID pandemic

*This data is for the Loughborough campus only and excludes data from the London campus, however this is as low as 10 tonnes per annum.

Loughborough University's onsite recycling rate has averaged around 48% over the last 10 years which sits just above the national rate of 44% The offsite recycling rate (including waste when processed) has sat on average around 75%; however this has seen a significant drop in 2024/25 to 51.34% as our general waste is no longer going

through a second sortation to remove missed recyclables and instead being sent straight to Energy From Waste (demonstrating a carbon saving). This emphasises the need for an increase in recycling on campus.

Waste Streams

Loughborough University has source segregated waste streams for many years supporting compliance with the Separation of Waste Regulations 2025. All recycling streams are segregated on campus including cardboard, plastics, paper, metal and wood away from general waste. You can find more information on our waste streams on our A-Z Recycling.

Reuse

In alignment with Circular Economy, reuse is a priority for Loughborough University. In the academic year 24/25, 25.43 tonnes of items were recorded for reuse as shown in Figure 1. This gives us a reuse rate of 1.6%

Whilst we have some figures capturing reuse on campus, there are many reuse loops on campus which are not recorded. An example of this is equipment sharing between labs on campus. Whilst we are in the early stages of encouraging Kit Catalogue (a system that will record this data), technicians are demonstrating enthusiasm to reuse, by setting up a Teams Channel for this purpose.

It is a priority aim to improve the recording of reuse, not just in line with the waste hierarchy but also to reduce scope 3 emissions and reduce university spend.

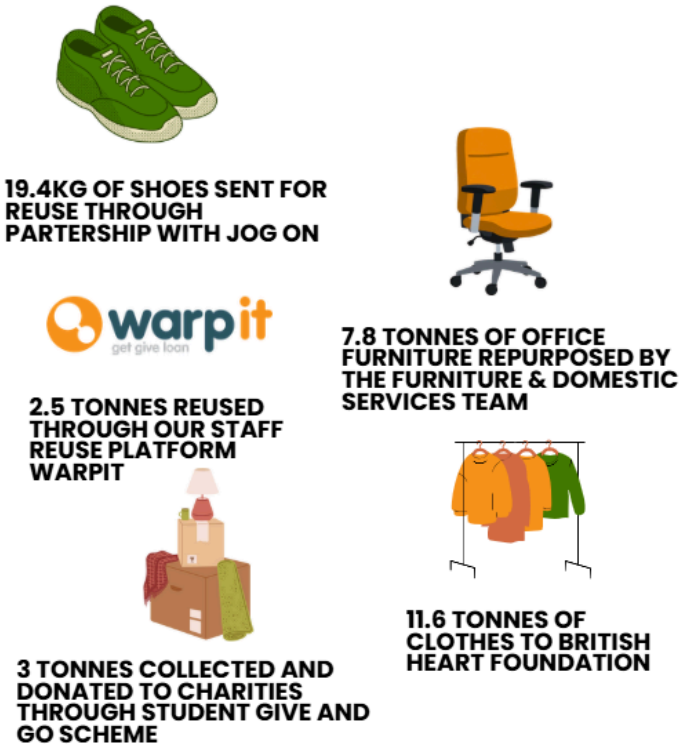

Figure 1: Infographic showing reuse streams on campus

Our Achievements

Diversion from Landfill

In the academic year 24/25, 99.69% of Loughborough University's waste was diverted from landfill. This has been achieved by increasing recycling opportunities and diverting the remaining waste to an 'Energy from Waste' plant (EfW) where the waste is incinerated to produce electricity. This EfW plant is situated on Junction 23 of the M1, just 2 miles from the university. This has resulted in lower carbon emissions associated with transporting waste.

Mattress Recycling

Each year hundreds of used mattresses from our estate of 5,500 student bedrooms reach their end of life and therefore require disposal. Through a partnership with TFR, we send our mattresses for recycling. In 2024/25, we sent 232 mattresses for recycling.

Give and Go

Each year when students move out of halls, we run a donation campaign with students with the aim to reduce waste and promote reuse. Donation bins are placed in each hall for items such as cupboard food, electricals, kitchen items, and much more. We then sort through these and organise them ready to go to local charities. In 2024/25, 3 tonnes of donations were collected and given out to charities such as the Falcon Centre, Trent Vineyard, and One Roof Leicester. The Give and Go scheme has now extended to students who live in Loughborough Town Centre through partnership with the Community Warden Team.

British Heart Foundation (BHF)

BHF have 10 clothing banks across campus which allow people to deposit their unwanted clothes so that they can be reused or recycled. In 2024/25 the Loughborough University community donated 1454 bags to BHF equating to 11.6 tonnes diverted from waste.

Reusing Furniture

The Furniture and Domestic Services Team work hard to ensure that any furniture unwanted by departments does not go for disposal unless it is at the end of its life. In the academic year 24/25, the team donated over 135 pieces of furniture to a variety of different community groups such as Loughborough Wellbeing Centre and local schools. Alongside these donations, to avoid waste, the team had 535 pieces of furniture reupholstered. All together these efforts have saved 7.79 tonnes of waste.

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE)

Prior to 2023, all electrical waste was taken by a sole contractor, whereas since then, the university has moved to a 3-tier system. IT WEEE Waste is taken by our IT provider for secure recycling and reuse. Domestic WEEE waste is taken by our domestic electrical provider. And finally, any residual WEEE that cannot be taken through the previous contractors, is taken by our central WEEE contractor. This process has resulted in higher recycling of IT waste.

Jog On

Loughborough University is a partner of Jog ON, who collect and repurpose sports shoes. As a university with a sports specialty, this is a unique waste stream where pushing items up the waste hierarchy will make a positive difference.

Guiding Principles

The Waste Hierarchy

At Loughborough University, we are ultimately guided by the Waste Hierarchy set out in the Waste (England and Wales) 2011 Regulations. The waste hierarchy (as demonstrated in Figure 2), sets out the preferential options for waste management, starting at preventing the waste, all the way down to disposal. The University has a legal responsibility to apply the waste hierarchy and must take all available measures to do so.

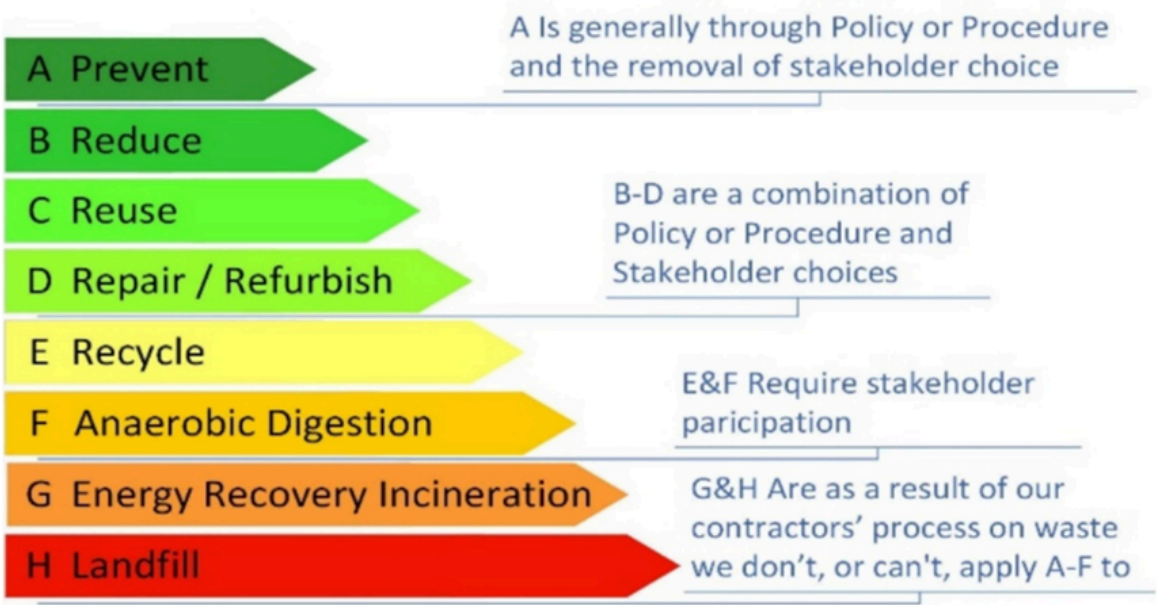

Figure 2: The Expanded Waste Hierarchy

Legislation

The university needs to be compliant with all relevant waste legislation including the Waste (England and Wales) 2011 Regulations as well as the Separation of Waste

(England and Wales) 2025 Regulations which mandated source segregation of materials, notably food waste as a separate stream. Whilst the university was in a fortunate position as it was already source segregating these items, it has emphasised the need for users to comply and use the waste streams correctly to avoid any legislative breaches.

EMS and SEMS

The university is accredited to both ISO 14001 (Environmental Management System) and ISO 20121 (Sustainable Event Management System). Included in both of these international standards is a commitment to managing waste and resources with continual improvements.

Stakeholder expectations

Our stakeholders expect us to address waste and resource management issues, but the University also expects many of its stakeholders to support its approach. Various stakeholders including tenants and event hosts are increasingly monitoring their environmental impact and therefore we need to make sure we have the right action plan in place to support this.

Scope 3 emissions

Disposal of waste falls within our Scope 3 emissions and as the drive towards net zero increases there will be increasing focus on these emissions. In 2023/24, waste resulted in 10.768 tonnes of CO_2e. Whilst waste disposal does generate carbon emissions, key to carbon reduction is a reduction in procurement, as this has a far bigger carbon impact through the emissions associated with the supply chain.

League Tables

Increasingly sustainability metrics are being incorporated into league table rankings. Therefore, how we perform with our waste management will increasingly be judged and benchmarked against the sector and become influential to our stakeholders choice in university. League tables such as People and Planet have dedicated criteria linked to waste, therefore reducing our overall waste tonnage and encouraging waste management up the waste hierarchy will positively impact our league table rankings.

SDGs

The University has signed the UN SDG accord which means we have a commitment to support the SDG actions and report on these. Improving our waste and resource management helps support all of the SDGs, especially the following:

- SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities
- SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production
- SDG 13 - Climate Action
- SDG 14 - Life below water
- SDG 15 - Life on Land

Figure 3: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Circular Economy

The Circular Economy system is based on principles whereby materials do not become waste and therefore nature can regenerate (Ellen MacArthur Foundation. 2012). In a circular economy, products and materials are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse and refurbishment. This system replaces the traditional system of consumption, the linear economy (also known as the 'take-make-waste' economy) and more recently, the recycling economy. Figure 4, shows the difference in these 3 consumption systems whereby moving to a Circular Economy sees the transition from end-of-life disposal to products never reaching an end of life. The university needs to move from operating in a linear economy to a circular economy through adopting sustainable procurement practices and reuse initiatives. As a university, we have a role to play through our teaching and research to improve the design, reuse, repairability and recyclability of products. By delivering guest lectures to students in subjects such as design and engineering, the Sustainability Team are encouraging students to embed circularity into their designs and careers.

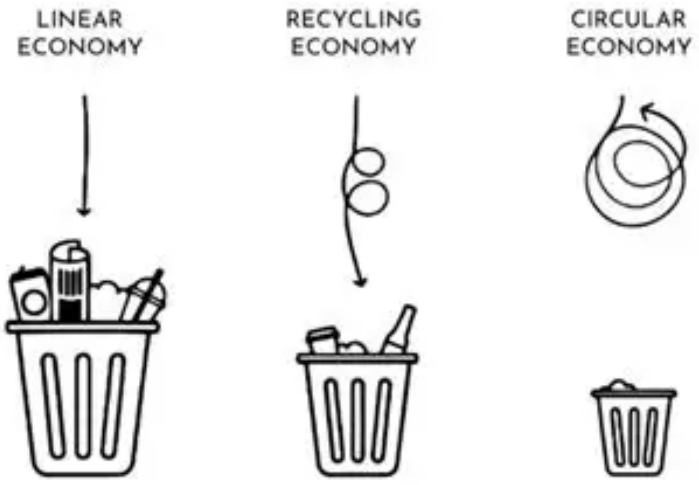

Figure 4: Graphic visualising the consumption economies (Source: Sustainable Review)

Aims

The overall aim of this action plan is to move Loughborough University's waste management up the waste hierarchy, achieving a more sustainable approach to tackling waste and resource use. To achieve this, the following targets have been created with key actions to achieve them:

Target	Current Position	Key Actions
5% reduction in total waste tonnage by 2030 using 2023/4 baseline	2023/24 - 1523.86t 2024/25 - 1507.35t (-1%)	• Analyse data to identify easy reductions • Target high producing departments/buildings
Reduction in residential waste to sit below 90kg per student in halls by 2030	2023/24 - 100kg per student 2024/25 - 98.3 kg per student	• Waste audits • Identify issues • Targeted interventions with halls • Continued improvement of Give and Go campaign
Increase in recycling rate year on year - goal to reach 60% by 2030	2024/25 - 51%	• Analysis of different departments to identify high and low performers • Improve recycling knowledge of staff and students • Improve bin placement
Improve reuse data availability and reach reuse rate of 5% by 2030	2024/25 - 1.6%	• Communicate with departments encouraging them to record and share reuse figures • Identify new and innovative ways to reuse internally and through external partnerships
Reach 500 members on WARPit by 2030	December 2025 - 268 members	• Push through Carbon Action Planner (CAP) • Work with teams who order stationery and smaller miscellaneous items • Promotion at New Starters Fair • New Starters packs on WARPit with recycled stationery.
Reduce food waste in self-catered halls to 10kg per bedroom by 2030	2023/24 -13.1kg per bedroom 2024/25 - 16.2kg per bedroom	• Identify how food becomes waste through focus groups with students • Engagement campaign with students in self catered halls helping students reduce food waste • CAS Rep Challenge

Collaboration and Partnerships

The commitment to this plan involves a collaborative approach across all parts of the university. Alongside working with the principal waste contractor, the Sustainability Team will work with a range of key stakeholders on the roll out of this action plan. These key stakeholders will include:

- Domestic Services
- Hall Managers
- Charnwood Borough Council/Leicestershire County Council
- Campus and Sustainability Reps
- Sustainability Ambassadors
- Catering Team
- Events & Sports Events Teams
- Procurement Team

Communication and Engagement

To engage both staff and students, a variety of different engagement methods will be used. These include but are not limited to:

- Visits to recycling facilities
- Targeted waste campaigns to departments/professional services
- Waste audits
- Poster Campaigns
- Social Media Posts
- Improved signage
- Webpage improvements
- Internal communication posts (email/newsletter/intranet)

Summary

This action plan sets out the university's aims for waste and resource use acknowledging our current position, achievements, opportunities and challenges. The delivery of this action plan requires a campus wide effort and commitment from all campus stakeholders.

The outcome of this action plan will result in multiple benefits, not only will there be a reduction in waste and improved recycling, which will support our position in sustainability metrics in league tables, but it should also reflect in a reduction in spend, both on waste and procurement. As a result of this, there should be a reduction in carbon emissions contributing to our net zero goal.

Good waste management at the university will also have social benefits. By following sustainable waste management, students will gain these beneficial skills for their futures. Similarly for staff, by adopting these practices at work, it will have parallel benefits to their home lives. Moreover, by moving up the waste hierarchy to prevention and reuse, the university will continue to work with the local community whether that be through donating equipment or partnerships with local charities.