

## St Anne's College Environment & Sustainability Policy

### Foreword

The twin challenges of increasing greenhouse gas emissions contributing to global temperature rises, and accelerating biodiversity loss call for immediate and ambitious action.

In 2018, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a report stating that to limit the rise in average temperatures to 1.5°C, global emissions must decrease by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030.<sup>1</sup> As stated in the IPCC report supported by the Paris Agreement, 'limiting warming to 1.5°C is possible [...] but would require unprecedented transitions in all aspects of society.' In 2021, the Physical Science Basis IPCC Report recorded that current global surface temperatures are 1.09°C higher than the 1850-1900 baseline. This is higher than any point in the past 2 million years, and will continue to increase unless deep reductions in greenhouse gas emissions occur. According to the IPCC's Working Group 1 Report, this is a 'Code Red for Humanity' and urgent ambitious action is required.

**Target: Aligning with the wider University Sustainability Strategy, St Anne's College will contribute to supporting the University of Oxford achieve targets of *net zero carbon emissions and biodiversity net gain by 2035*. Furthermore, the College will endeavour to achieve the same goals<sup>2</sup>.**

This will require real and significant changes in how individuals from all areas of the St Anne's community live and work away from a 'business as usual' especially as we shift towards changes and adjustments throughout all areas of college life. Although this may appear an uncomfortable transition for some, working towards a net-zero and nature-positive future will not only allow St Anne's College to play our part in addressing the climate and biodiversity crises. It will bring significant health, emotional and wider benefits for the College and its members whilst also setting an ambitious example for others to follow.

### Background

Oxford University has published their environmental sustainability strategy<sup>3</sup> which was written by the Environmental Sustainability Working Group and with the help of world-leading academics such as: Professor Myles Allen, Professor Cameron Hepburn, Professor Nick Brown and Professor Richard Barker, among others. The University hopes that colleges 'will implement similar measures and commitments to those' within this strategy document. The strategy sets a target for Oxford University to achieve ***net zero carbon and biodiversity net gain by 2035*** to address the global challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss in the organisation.

Nationally, many of the top universities have now made ambitious carbon commitments with King's College London committing to be net zero by 2025,<sup>4</sup> UCL, the University of Leeds and the University of Bristol committing to be net zero by 2030,<sup>5,6,7</sup> the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/SR15\\_Full\\_Report\\_High\\_Res.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/SR15_Full_Report_High_Res.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> By September 2023 St Anne's College will publish quantitative targets to clearly state how we will achieve net zero carbon emissions and biodiversity net gain.

<sup>3</sup> <https://sustainability.admin.ox.ac.uk/consultation>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/zero-carbon-by-2025>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2019/oct/ucl-divests-fossil-fuels-it-launches-bold-new-sustainability-strategy>

<sup>6</sup> <https://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/climate-principles/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/green/doing/pledges/>

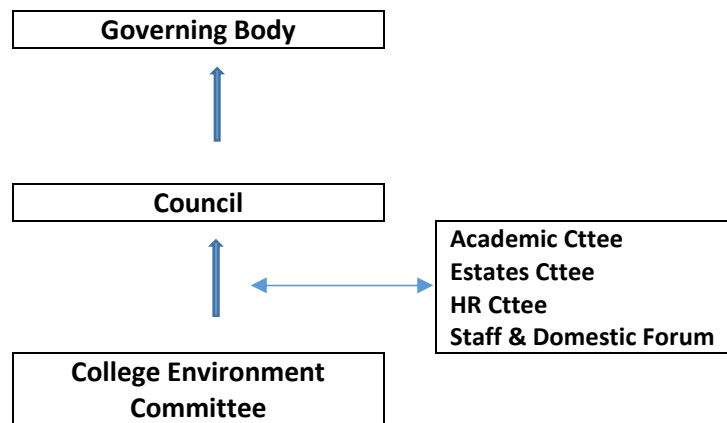
University committing to be absolute zero by 2038,<sup>8,9</sup> and Cambridge University committing to be net zero by 2038 (but with an aim of being absolute zero by 2038).<sup>10,11</sup> It is also reasonable to expect that more colleges will develop ambitious net zero plans as a result of the university-wide environmental sustainability strategy.

By adopting the targets *of net zero carbon emissions and biodiversity net gain by 2035*, St Anne’s College could establish itself as a pioneer and advocate for the urgent need to address Climate Change and biodiversity loss, demonstrating the need and inspiring others to follow in our footsteps.

**How Will We Achieve This?**

Building on the priority areas laid out in the current University Sustainability Strategy<sup>12</sup>, the College will focus on the following **7 priority areas**:

- 1. **Governance:** Environmental and Sustainability issues affect many areas of College life and in order to ensure that we coordinate our activity and focus efficiently, there must be clear governance oversight. Ultimately, Governing Body is the main decision making group for College supported by Council.



It is probable that proposals identified by the College Environment Committee will require staffing via an appropriate College sub-committee prior to submission to Council and Governing Body. The College Environment Committee will produce this policy document and the associated St Anne’s Sustainability Action Plan (Annex A) which will clearly set out our goals and measure progress to achieve them. The Policy and Action Plan will be submitted to Council and Governing Body for approval. The St Anne’s Sustainability Action Plan will be key to ensuring the College supports the goal of net zero carbon emissions and biodiversity net gain by 2035. The College Environment Committee will produce an annual report, submitted to Council and Governing Body in Trinity Term.

- 2. **Finances & Investments:** St Anne’s College will work to provide inward investment to ensure that we have sufficient funding to deliver improvements in College to reduce our carbon footprint and to increase our biodiversity. For example, we are currently delivering a major regeneration project with our 10 Bevington Road houses. This project, at £16.6M, will significantly improve the energy efficiency of these Victorian buildings that are currently in a poor state of repair. Further projects are outlined in

<sup>8</sup><http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=41829#:~:text=The%20University%20of%20Manchester%20has,for%20zero%20carbon%20by%202023.&text=The%20University%20of%20Manchester%20believes,become%20a%20zero%20carbon%20city>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.mmu.ac.uk/sustainability/news-and-events/story/?id=12151>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.zero.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.zero.cam.ac.uk/files/2020-09/Cambridge%20Zero%20-%206%20Month%20Progress%20Report.pdf> (page 33)

<sup>11</sup><https://www.zero.cam.ac.uk/>

<sup>12</sup><https://sustainability.admin.ox.ac.uk/consultation>

the St Anne's Sustainability Action Plan including an intent to fund a decarbonisation masterplan to consider how we might migrate our energy solutions to newer technology in the years ahead.

Secondly, St Anne's College undertook an extensive consultation on possible changes to its investment strategy in Hilary Term 2020. This resulted in a move to total return from income and the exclusion of several industry sectors from its investment guidelines, adding to the longstanding exclusion of tobacco. These sectors included fossil fuel producers, mining companies and weapon manufacturers. This action was as a direct result of the consultation. As part of the second stage of the review the college produced a responsible investment policy which is principles-based and guides future practice in this area by:

- Covering areas of concern in relation to the environment, social impact, and corporate governance.
- Setting out a process for working with third-party investment managers and engagement with the companies in which they invest.
- Outlining how the college will report on its activities to its members and look to involve them more in the investment process.

The St Anne's College Responsible Investment Policy is published on the College website [here](#).

- 3. Estates:** St Anne's College has an eclectic mix of buildings that have evolved as the College has developed over the last 150 years. Many of these buildings pre-date modern building regulations and they have inefficient heating, fabric and lighting solutions.

The New Library, our newest building, benefits from modern insulation and a ground source heat pump but the rest of our building stock is heated by gas. Improving the energy efficiency of our buildings will be critical to achieving our policy aims. As indicated above, the Bevington Road project is a major regeneration of 10 Victorian buildings that represent our highest need in terms of improvement. We have worked with our design team to deliver the highest standard of energy efficiency that we can afford. For future new builds, as outlined in the College masterplan<sup>13</sup>, we would aspire to the highest affordable standard of energy solution available.

For the remainder of our buildings, we propose to invest in a decarbonisation master plan to determine how we can transition away from our current high carbon solution and propose a priority of work that we can tackle. The masterplan and the follow-on work are likely to require significant College funds. Compared to other Colleges and considering the relative size of St Anne's College, our carbon emissions from our utilities consumption is reasonably good, as can be seen by the Conference of Colleges report. (Annex B.) However, first we need to understand how we can improve before we consider our options carefully.

In addition to major capital projects, we will work with our College community to build upon and improve our existing initiatives, such as reducing our energy consumption and waste as well as improve opportunities to recycle where practical. Every member of College has a role to play to support a reduction in our carbon footprint.

**Biodiversity:** St Anne's College benefits from beautiful outdoor spaces and we recognise the importance of our green space within the urban setting of the College. We will work with the University, other Colleges, and our local community to connect our outdoor spaces in the most beneficial approach possible. The College will conduct a biodiversity audit to benchmark our current provision and propose ways to make a positive contribution to our location in the City.

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<sup>13</sup> St Anne's College Masterplan – Pre-Application Submission dated Sep 2020 prepared by TSH Architects

Our proposed development of the Bevington Road properties will make a positive contribution to improving our green space. Working with a specialist landscape consultant, our planning application seeks to remove the 7 car parking spaces at the front of the development in order to return the front gardens to green spaces; additionally, we are redesigning the space between Bevington Road houses and the Ruth Deech Building to include additional mature trees.

- 4. Catering & Events:** The catering industry is experiencing a revolution in terms of menu design and supply chain considerations in order to reduce impact on the environment. At St Anne's College, we are fortunate to have a Head Chef who is passionate about delivering menus based on seasonal produce sourced as locally as possible. We are working closely with our core suppliers to reduce our carbon footprint. Whilst improving menu design and sourcing locally is critical, we also have to encourage our community to make better choices, to reduce red-meat consumption and to evolve to better balanced, planet friendly diets. We will articulate progressively achievable targets in the St Anne's Sustainability Action Plan and deliver effective communication to our community to enable people to make informed choices.

The majority of our food purchasing is from a consortium of Oxford Colleges collectively known as Foodquad<sup>14</sup>. Through membership of this scheme, and by working with other Colleges, we are able to bring pressure to our food suppliers and supply chain. As a first step, they have recently launched a dashboard providing basic data on our carbon footprint around deliveries. This requires further development but shows the influence that we can bring to suppliers when we act with others.

- 5. Procurement & Resources:** Buying goods and procuring services generates an 'upstream' impact on the carbon, biodiversity and social impacts of the goods that we buy. As outlined with food procurement above, we can exert influence on our suppliers in support of our sustainable values. The University of Oxford have acknowledged that from the top 5 impacts on their biodiversity, 3 of the items identify the supply chain as root cause.

Furthermore, our student population increasingly make on-line orders resulting in dozens of deliveries each week. On a typical day, the lodge receives up to 200 parcels from many different companies. We should work with our suppliers and with our College Community to ensure that we receive the items that we all need but with the minimum impact on the number of deliveries and the ways that our goods are prepared and packaged. We should actively encourage and incentivise our suppliers and contractors to work to the same environmental goals that we pursue.

We should work to reduce and recycle our waste across all of our activities.

- 6. Transport & Travel:** Academic staff, students, College staff and guests all generate a significant travel and transport impact. Whilst maintaining our academic research, teaching and commercial goals, we must be mindful of the carbon footprint we generate from transport and travel emissions. We must consider how we can reduce unnecessary travel and deliver policies that encourage our community to make the right choices. We will support the work of the newly formed DBC/EBC Transport & Travel sub-committee which seeks to collaborate and understand the emerging City Council's policy direction.
- 7. Community:** People and our community sit at the heart of everything that we do in College. Our last priority focuses on making sure that we educate, encourage and empower all College members to engage in activities that help to reduce our impact on the environment.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.foodbuy.co.uk/sustainability/>

Under this heading, we will seek actions to improve our:

- A. **People policies:** Informed responsibilities of each individual.
- B. **Thinking:** Open up opportunities to expand knowledge and understanding.
- C. **Research & Teaching:** Encourage and promote active engagement.

### **St Anne's College Sustainability Action Plan**

To make progress against each of the 7 priority areas outlined above, the St Anne's Sustainability Action Plan (Annex A) will be our vehicle for detailing the work that we need to undertake and for measuring our progress.

The plan will be reviewed at the termly Environment Committee meetings and actions that have implications for other committees (for example Estates) will be fed into those committees as appropriate. Progress against the objectives identified in the Action Plan will be reported to Council and Governing Body in an annual report each Trinity Term. Additionally, we will seek opportunities to inform and engage with all members of College including staff, students and the College wider community such as the alumnae. We will aim to produce a termly newsletter to update all College members on the initiatives that we are progressing and to gather support for the changes that we are all going to need to embrace.

### **St Anne's College Environment Committee**

#### **Annexes:**

- A. St Anne's College Sustainability Action Plan.
- B. Conference of Colleges Report: St Anne's College, Gas, Electricity and Water Use (period 1<sup>st</sup> Aug 2019-31<sup>st</sup> July 2020)