

BRITISH
LIBRARY

**Sustainability and
Climate Change
Strategy 2024–2030**

Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy 2024–2030

Reducing our carbon impact and collaborating with partners to create a more sustainable future.

“The era of global warming has ended and the era of global boiling has arrived... Climate change is here. It is terrifying. And it is just the beginning. It is still possible to limit global temperature rise to 1.5C [above pre-industrial levels], and avoid the very worst of climate change. But only with dramatic, immediate climate action.”

António Guterres, UN Secretary General

“At the British Library, we are charged with safeguarding the national collection for generations to come. This naturally leads to long-term thinking about climate change. It is widely recognised that the scale of change ahead amounts to a planet-wide emergency, with devastating impacts. Our strategy reflects a sense of determination about our role; these are global challenges and, as one of the world’s great libraries, and proud signatories to the Green Libraries Manifesto, we are determined to play our part.”

Sir Roly Keating, Chief Executive, the British Library

Contents

Introduction from the Chief Librarian.....	7
Defining terms.....	8
A planet-wide emergency in need of a vital response	9
Our starting point	10
Our strategic drivers and priorities	11
Focusing our efforts	12
Priority 1. Our places.....	15
1.1. Measuring our progress towards net zero carbon	15
1.1.1 Measuring our core emissions – as reported now (scopes 1, 2 and specific parts of 3)	15
1.1.2 Measuring our wider scope 3 emissions.....	17
1.1.3 Setting carbon emission targets	18
1.1.4 The role of offsetting	18
1.2. Energy use of existing buildings	19
1.3. Our new spaces	21
1.4. Collection management	23
1.5. Technology infrastructure	24
1.6. Transport and travel.....	25
1.7. Waste, materials and water	27
1.8. Commercial (catering, retail and events)	30
1.9. Green spaces and biodiversity.....	31
1.10. Risk, adaptation and resilience	33
Priority 2. Our purposes	35
2.1. Custodianship and research : Opening up the collection in new and interesting ways, including supporting climate research	36
2.2. Public engagement: Engaging people through culture and learning , including increasing climate literacy and the visibility of climate science.....	38
2.3. Enabling sustainable business and enterprise.....	40
2.4. International collaboration	41
Priority 3. Our partnerships	43
Priority 4. Embedded in our work.....	46
4.1. Leadership, governance and reporting	46
4.2. People.....	47
4.3. Communications and marketing	48
4.4. Procurement	49
Funding the strategy	51
Tracking progress and future review.....	52
Appendix 1: UN Sustainable Development Goals	53
Appendix 2: Green Libraries Manifesto.....	54

Executive summary

The British Library is committed to reducing our carbon impact and collaborating with partners to create a more sustainable future. This will see us take action across four broad areas.

Sustainable places

We aim to continue decarbonising our buildings and embedding best practice in environmental performance in our new spaces.

Sustainable purposes

We aim to collaborate with people to open up the collection in new and interesting ways, to support work on solutions to the environmental challenges we face – from climate research to enabling sustainable business and enterprise, and engaging people through events, exhibitions and learning, to increasing climate literacy and visibility of climate science.

Sustainable partnerships

We aim to embed partnerships across the sectors we work in to support wider change, share and encourage climate action, best practice and learning.

Embedding sustainability

We aim to embed sustainability in how we work; our culture, policy, processes, governance, planning, collections and communications, ensuring it is seen not as an add-on, but as how we do everything we already do. This includes incorporating climate-related risks into our risk management, governance and conservation policies.

Key aims in 2024–2030 for reducing the environmental impacts of our places

Energy and carbon emissions

- **Carbon:** Meet or exceed the Greening Government Commitments and UK carbon reduction targets (a 78% reduction by 2035 against 1990 levels for our currently reported greenhouse gas emissions and net zero carbon by 2050 for all emissions, scopes 1, 2, and 3). Fully realise the benefits of the major Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme-funded projects at St Pancras and Boston Spa. Offsetting to be used for no more than 10% of the Library ultimately achieving net zero
- **Energy:** Take a more zero, less net approach, targeting an average real reduction in energy use of 4% each year, despite the annual growth in our collection, through applying the energy hierarchy and seeking opportunities for solar generation and other renewables
- **Scope 3:** Begin to measure and report the emissions generated by our wider supply chain
- **Collection management:** Continue to review environmental parameters, seeking solutions better for our collection and saving energy. Research sustainable collection management including more passive techniques, and the complex trade-offs between digital and physical.

Our new spaces

- Embed best practice in environmental performance in our three new capital projects, including reducing their whole-life carbon, being nature-positive and climate resilient.

Waste, materials and water

- Continually seek out sustainable suppliers and partners for our retail outlets and work with catering, events and retail partners to continually improve our operations
- Reduce our use of non-renewable resources, minimise waste and increase the use of re-used, recycled and environmentally responsible materials across all our operations
- Embed sustainable working in our exhibitions programme, starting with our gardening exhibition in 2025.

Risk, adaptation and resilience

- Review climate risks to operations and collections. Create a climate change adaptation plan, and review business continuity, maintenance and conservation plans.

Key aims in 2024–2030 for enabling others to act through our purposes

- Create a content development plan for climate change and sustainability and create new collection resources for our users, raising awareness of what we hold in this area
- Embed the theme of sustainability within public engagement, exhibitions, and events, including a new strand of programming on climate literacy for adults and young people
- Ensure awareness and action on sustainability is a core part of our business offering
- Continue to support and amplify the voices of international libraries and their communities already at risk of climate change.

Key aims in 2024–2030 for supporting sustainability through our partnerships

- Support the work of the Green Libraries Campaign with the aim that every library in the UK becomes a green library. As part of this, amplify and engage with Green Libraries Week
- Embed sustainability in the work of the Living Knowledge Network and contribute to local neighbourhood partnerships in Camden and the wider West Yorkshire region.

Key aims in 2024–2030 for embedding sustainability at the Library

- Bring environmental sustainability to the heart of decision-making, through embedding it in our other strategies, policies and processes, as they come up for review
- Ensure that all Directors have at least one relevant performance objective against which they report and that sustainability KPIs are strengthened
- Understand learning needs, develop and deliver customised learning, including Carbon Literacy training, and becoming a Carbon Literate organisation
- Formulate and implement an external and internal communications plan
- Ensure a sustainable recovery from the October 2023 cyber-attack, embedding sustainability into the Rebuild and Renew change programme and into our new digital strategy
- Embed sustainability in Supply Chain Management policy and guidance. This includes a minimum sustainability criterion of at least 5% for larger contracts, with these suppliers asked to commit to carbon reporting and providing a carbon reduction plan.

Reporting progress

Progress against this strategy will be tracked through the actions in the associated action plan. The Sustainability and Climate Change Steering Group will review progress every six months, with an annual report to Direction Group and Board.

The strategy itself will next be updated in 2027. We will have learned much by then, both from our successes and our failures in implementing this, our first Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.

A note of thanks to the many people from across the Library who have contributed to this strategy, from their own specialist areas. It is truly a co-created document, with ownership across multiple teams, coordinated by the Places and Purposes working groups, and overseen by the Sustainability and Climate Change Steering Group. Thanks also to 3Adapt and to our external peers and partners; your valuable feedback has strengthened our approach in many ways.

Introduction from the Chief Librarian

Who we are

We are the UK's national library. We hold one of the largest collections of printed material in the world featuring almost every known language, and we care for over 170 million items from books, maps and stamps to sound recordings and even a copy of every UK domain website.

At the time of writing, we're accelerating the renewal of our systems and ways of working after 2023's unprecedented cyber-attack, with its many consequences. We are committed to doing so in as sustainable a way as possible, but conscious of the complex trade-offs due to the need to move at great pace, within budgetary constraints, and ensure future resilience.

Our priorities for sustainability and climate change

We recognise the urgency of the climate crisis and the impact it will have on our operations and collection, and we want to support the library sector to lead the way on sustainability.

In our recent strategy, *Knowledge Matters*, we have set out our commitment to sustainability, covering both our own estates ("**our places**") and our wider role in informing and inspiring positive climate impact through the Library's many communities and partnerships ("**our purposes**").

In terms of our own operations, we are best known for our landmark, purpose-built, Grade I listed site at St Pancras, but we also have our 42-acre facility at Boston Spa, one of the great library infrastructure centres of the world. In addition we have a growing our presence in Leeds, and we act as the hub for two national networks; one of Business & IP Centres and one of major public libraries and library authorities. Around 70% of our print collection is at Boston Spa, in a variety of buildings including bespoke high-density storage archives – the next of which will be fully passive (not actively heated or humidified).

Through our research, business support, cultural and learning programmes and international work we reach a wide and varied audience. We will put our user communities at the heart of our sustainability work, inspiring them and supporting choices to take positive climate action. Often this will be through collaborating with other organisations ("**our partnerships**") and through making sustainability an intrinsic part of how we work ("**embedded in our work**").

Crucially, our staff are at the centre of this transformative journey. We understand that meaningful change requires the collective efforts of every individual within the British Library community. As we embark on our sustainability endeavours, we will not only reduce our carbon impact but also empower and engage our staff in this vital work.

Our challenges

This is our very first Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy and we have much to learn. We have unique challenges and it will take us time to develop the right solutions. For example:

- finding technical solutions for heating and humidity that safeguard the national collection through low-carbon options
- balancing the ongoing growth of our collection, as required through statute, with year-on-year reductions in our energy use and ultimately net zero carbon
- developing our unique role in using the national collection to inform climate action for our varied audiences (including the complex interplay of climate impacts and social inequality).

The other clear challenge, common to all in our sector, is funding. Our strategy reflects ambitious aims on many fronts. While much can be achieved through existing budgets, low-cost quick wins, and invest-to-save business cases, we know that some of our aims require us to raise funds, in a very competitive marketplace. This is especially true of the capital works needed to make further energy savings. We will prepare plans to enable us to make strong applications, but the practical reality is that the pace of change will be determined by whether we are successful.

Implementing this strategy:

This strategy document sits alongside the **Sustainability and Climate Change Action Plan**. The action plan contains specific actions for 2024–27, against each for the four themes in bold above. While we don't expect to update this strategy until 2027, the action plan will be a living document. Performance against it will be reported every six months to the Sustainability and Climate Change Steering Group, which I chair and is made up of senior managers from across the Library.

Overall we are committed to reducing our carbon impact and collaborating with partners to create a more sustainable future.

Liz Jolly

Chief Librarian and Chair of Sustainability and Climate Change Steering Group

Defining terms

Throughout this strategy we use the terms sustainability and climate change. By this we mean:

- **Sustainability** – A broad view of all of our environmental impacts, based on the need for the current generation to use the world's resources at a sustainable rate, not at the expense of future generations. This covers fossil fuels (used for energy and transport), water use, building materials, exhibition materials and waste. Sustainable procurement is critical here. Sustainability also covers our impact on nature, through the actions we can take to reverse the decline of nature and boost biodiversity and abundance. **Note:** We are not directly addressing in this strategy social or economic sustainability, although there are co-benefits.
- **Climate change** – Here we refer to the impact of humanity's use of fossil fuels and other sources of greenhouse gasses on the Earth's climate, in terms of the frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events, rising average temperatures, and the impacts this has on food and water, infrastructure, migration, poverty and health. Our focus here is on:
 - **Climate mitigation** – taking action to reduce climate change, through reducing our use of fossil fuels and, over time, achieving net zero carbon
 - **Climate adaptation and resilience** – preparing for a changing climate, and the impact it will have on our operations and collection
 - **Climate action** – informing and inspiring others to act, in an inclusive way which supports a fair transition to a lower carbon world.

A planet-wide emergency in need of a vital response

All of our work is taking place against a backdrop of profound and damaging changes in the Earth's climate and its ability to support bio-diverse ecosystems. **It is widely recognised that the scale of the change ahead amounts to a planet-wide emergency.**

"We are already seeing the impacts of climate change across the globe (IPCC, 2022), with observed increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. Even with global targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is still necessary to adapt structures and systems to reduce the impacts of climate change. This includes critical infrastructure, the built and natural environments, water use and food production."

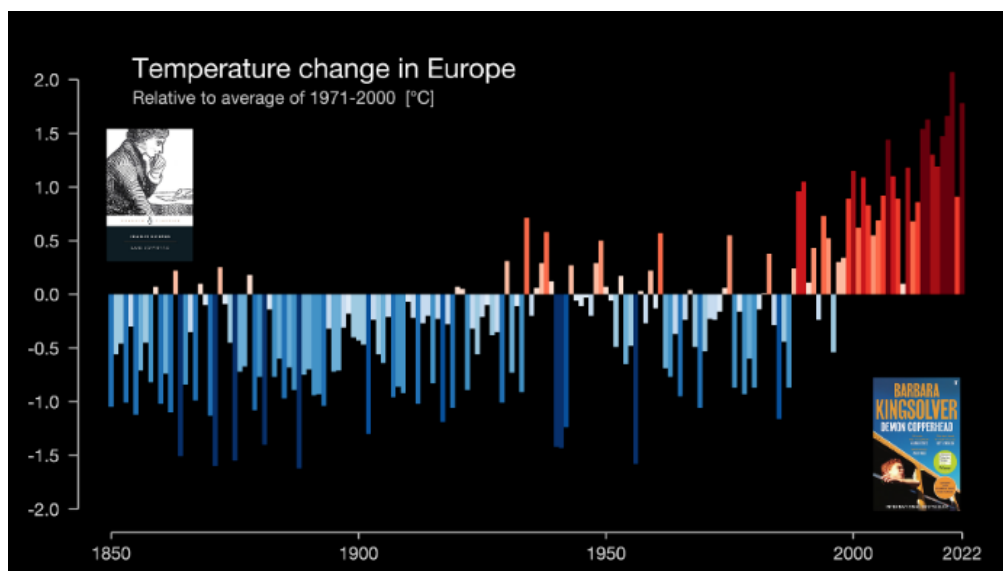
DEFRA, October 2023, [source](#)

The impact of the climate and environmental crisis is already being felt globally and locally; our international work on the Endangered Archives Programmes demonstrates the devastating impact of floods and other extreme weather events around the world. It affects us all, but with complex interdependencies for social justice (see UN SDGs in Appendix 1).

As the UK's national library, we occupy a place at the heart of the communities we serve. We want to lead by example through our own environmental actions and use our power and reach to inform and inspire people to take positive action and build resilience.

Our collection and operations are also at increased risk from this changing climate, through heat waves, flooding, power cuts and new moulds and pests.

Our most vital response is to tackle the challenge of sustainability and climate resilience in our own organisation: to adapt our behaviour, systems, and buildings in ways that radically reduce our carbon emissions. But we also want to help address the climate crisis in other ways: to be a trustworthy, engaging and accessible source of information for our communities; to catalyse positive action across the library sector; to provide the businesses we support with the knowledge they need to go green; and to support climate science through our expertise and collection.



The widely respected "warming stripes" reminds us of how rapidly the planet is warming. In the years between the publication of Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* and its re-imagination as *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver, humanity's burning of fossil fuels and large-scale deforestation has changed the Earth's climate in a measurable way.

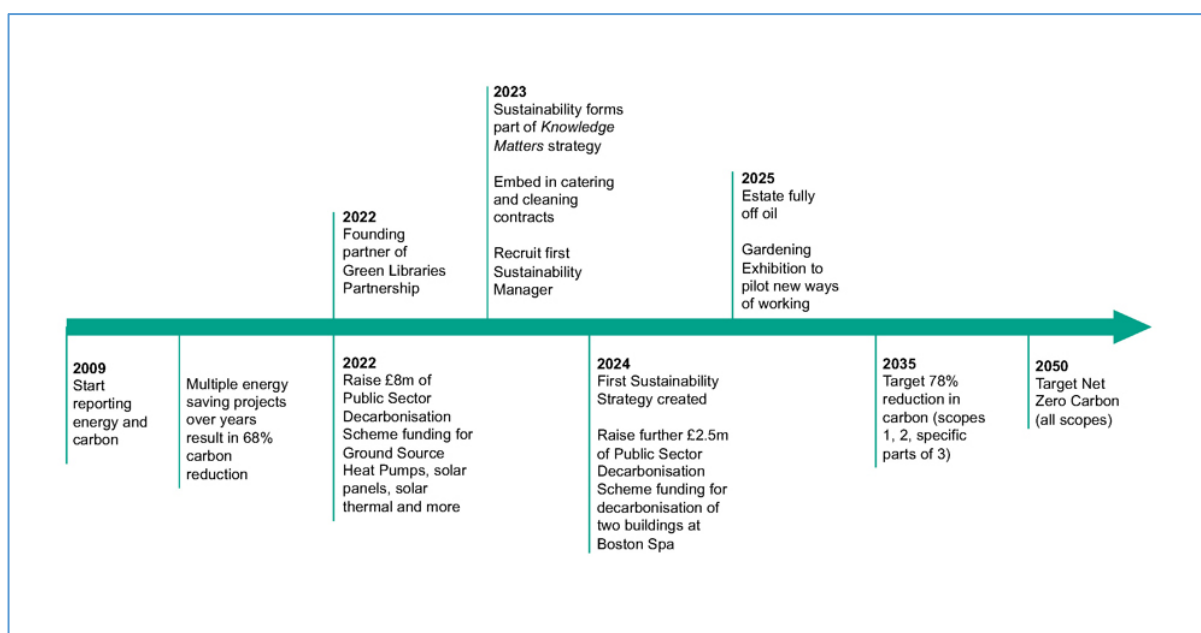
Our starting point

While this is our first sustainability strategy, much has already been achieved.

- In our operations:** The Library's scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions have significantly reduced, year on year (down 68% since 2009/10) and £7.9 million of SALIX grant funding has enabled major energy-efficiency and renewable energy generation projects at both St Pancras and Boston Spa. Waste has been reduced year on year, with 0% going to landfill and 65% recycled. Sustainability has been embedded in the design of our three major capital projects and formed a factor in the procurement of catering and cleaning contracts. Environmental parameters for the collection have been reviewed, and international travel has been reduced through risk-assessed virtual installations
- In our purposes:** There have been many individual initiatives, events and webinars to communicate climate change issues, including as part of our *Animals: Art, Science, Sound* exhibition, through our business workshops and international webinar series. Key partnerships have been established, especially the Green Libraries Campaign and the Endangered Archives Programme
- In our governance:** Increased reporting is in place against the Greening Government targets, reported publicly through our annual report, and as part of our KPI dashboard. The Sustainability and Climate Change Steering Group takes leadership oversight of the work, while the well-established staff Sustainability Group engages teams across the Library. Some of the required policies are in place or are currently being updated, and, critically, sustainability has been embedded in *Knowledge Matters*.

This strategy builds on these foundations and identifies areas where continued improvement is needed.

Green Libraries Manifesto: The British Library was one of the founding signatories of the Green Libraries Manifesto (Appendix 2) and this strategy, and the associated action plan, aims to turn the Manifesto commitments into concrete action.



Our strategic drivers and priorities

Our organisation strategy, *Knowledge Matters*, places an increased importance on sustainability in recognition of a range of strategic drivers:

- **Climate science and the wider world**; the urgent need to address the well-understood crises for climate and nature, and the very real risk they present to our institution and the collection
- **Local and national government policy, targets and regulation** including:
 - Ambitious climate commitments from local government in the areas where we operate (Camden and the GLA in London, and Leeds in Yorkshire and Humber)
 - Relevant UK legislation, including the Climate Change Act 2008 and Environment Act 2021, and policies such as the UK’s 25-year Environment Plan
 - New and increasing requirements for climate-risk disclosures in annual accounts
 - The mandatory Greening Government Commitments against which we are required to report (currently under review, and likely to increase from 2025 onwards)
 - The UK International Development strategy (2022) and its commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (see Appendix 1).
- **To support the needs of our many users, stakeholders and communities**; researchers, businesses, learners, partners, funders, the networks of libraries and BIPCs, and our staff
- **The Board’s commitment**, set out in the 2022/23 annual accounts, for the Library to adopt a Sustainability Strategy, a Nature Recovery Plan and a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

Knowledge Matters goes on to set out three sustainability priorities for 2023 – 30:

1. Our places	Continue decarbonising our buildings and embedding best practice in environmental performance in our new spaces
2. Our purposes	Collaborate with people to open up the collection in new and interesting ways, to support work on solutions to the environmental challenges we face – from climate research to enabling sustainable business and enterprise, and engaging people through culture and learning, to increasing climate literacy and visibility of climate science
3. Our partnerships	Embed partnerships across the sectors we work in to support wider change, share and encourage climate action, best practice and learning









Delivering these three priorities will be under-pinned by embedding sustainably.

4. Embedded in our work:
Embedding sustainability in how we work; our culture, policy, processes, governance, planning, collection and communications. Ensuring it is seen not as an add-on, but as how we do everything we already do. This includes incorporating climate-related risks into our risk management, governance and conservation policies.



Focusing our efforts

We have considered the most **material** environmental impacts we have, both positive and negative. To do this, we used the topics from the well-respected Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).

From the extensive list of GRI topics, we identified eight which we consider material at the Library:

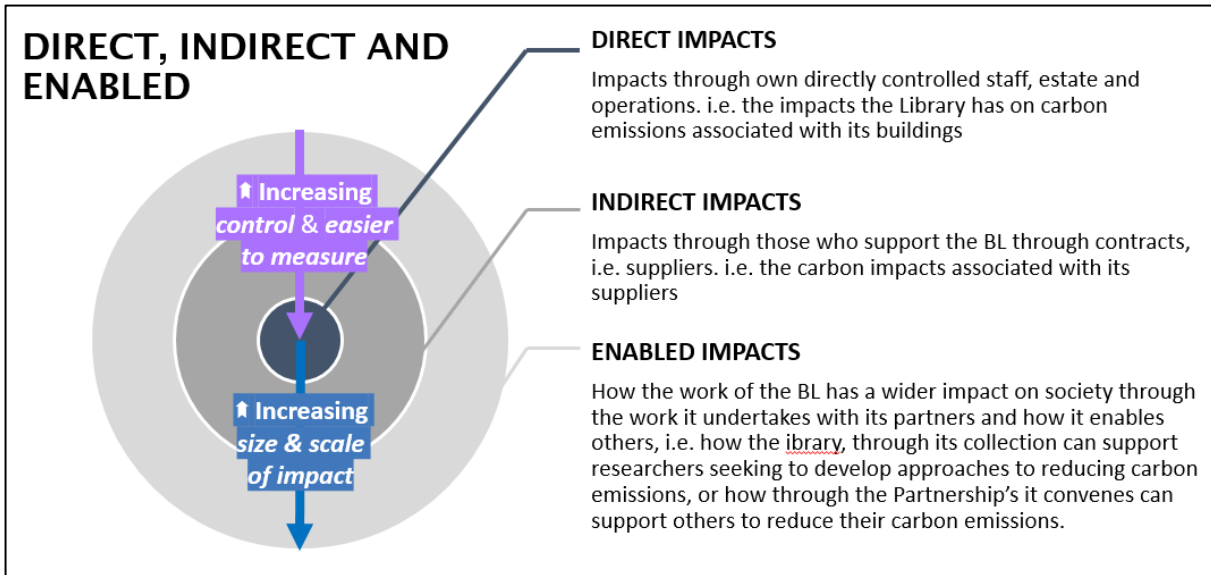
GRI Topics		Reason for inclusion	Document sections
	Energy and emissions	Majority of our scope 1 & 2 emissions Mandatory Greening Government Commitment (GGC) reporting	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 4
	Materials	Purchased goods and services are the majority of our scope 3 emissions Mandatory GGC reporting	1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.7, 1.8, 4
	Waste	Significant construction waste Mandatory GGC reporting	1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.7, 1.8, 4
	Water and effluents	Mandatory GGC reporting	1.2, 1.7, 4
	Biodiversity	Boston Spa site has 42-acre grounds Impact of capital projects	1.2, 1.3, 1.9, 4
	Procurement practices (including Supplier Environmental Assessment)	Purchased goods and services are the majority of our scope 3 emissions Mandatory requirements to meet	1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.8, 4
	Training and education	Core purpose of the Library	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3, 4
	Local communities	Core purpose of the Library	1.2, 1.9, 1.10, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3, 4

We also identified two additional topics which are highly relevant at the British Library:

	Climate risk, resilience and adaptation	Increasing climate risk levels Resilience of capital projects Mandatory reporting against Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures	1.2, 1.4, 1.10, 2.4, 4
	Provision of information and advice	Core purpose of the Library	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3, 4

We then considered the different types of impacts we can have:

- Direct
- Indirect
- Enabling.



Our **direct environmental impacts** are primarily covered by Section 1 (Places), the **indirect environmental impacts** through our supply chains by Sections 1.1 (measuring scope 3), 1.5 (Commercial) and 4.4 (Procurement), whilst our far wider **enabling impacts** by Section 2 and 3 (Purposes and Partnerships).

Priority 1: Our places



Priority 1. Our places

1.1. Measuring our progress towards net zero carbon



1.1.1 Measuring our core emissions – as reported now (scopes 1, 2 and specific parts of 3)

For well over a decade we have successfully worked to improve the sustainability of our buildings and operations, across energy use, waste, travel, water and materials. By 2023 we had reduced energy use by **68%** compared to the year we began measurement (2009/10).

Finding further savings, however, and achieving net zero carbon are considerable challenges, especially in the context of the year-on-year growth in our collection.

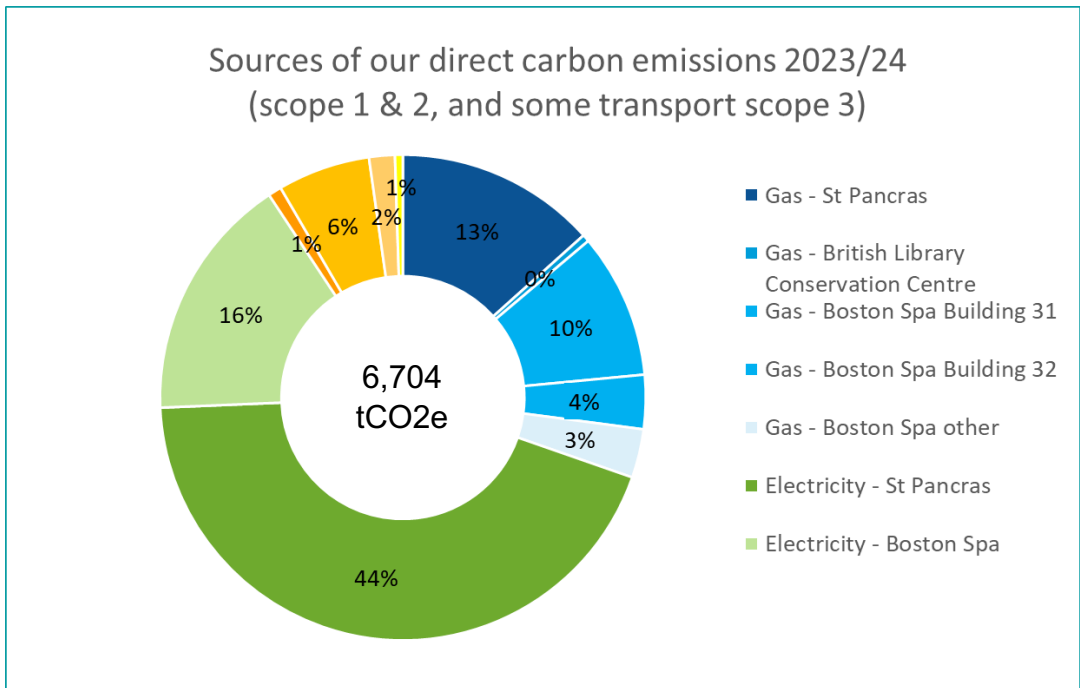
Against our current near-term Greening Government Commitment targets we are on track for reducing direct greenhouse gas emissions (from oil and gas use) but at risk of missing the overall reduction target (including electricity and transport). Ambitious actions to rectify this are set out in following sections.

Greening Government Commitment	2017/18 baseline	2023/24	Progress	Status
Reduce overall GHG emissions by 58% by 2025/6	10,464 tonnes CO ₂ e	6,704 tonnes CO ₂ e	-36%	At risk – see actions in 1.2
Reduce direct GHG emissions by 25% by 2025/6	2,305 tonnes CO ₂ e	2,073 tonnes CO ₂ e	-10%	On Track

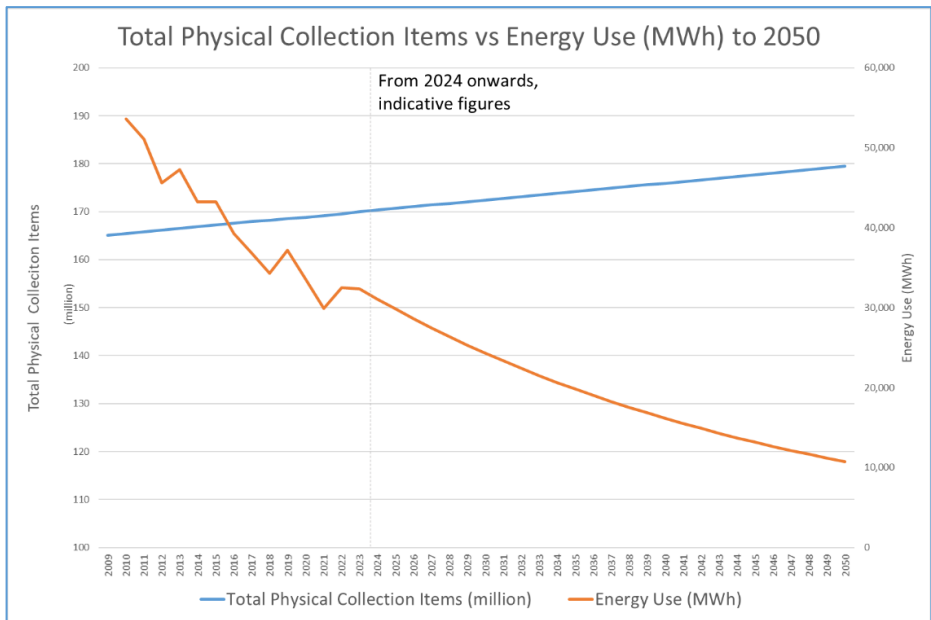
In 2023/24, with total reported carbon emissions for the Library of **6,704 tCO₂e**, this is around the same impact as 2,500 return economy flights to New York.

Note: Defining the scope of our core carbon emissions. We currently report emissions as required by the Greening Government Commitments. In standard Greenhouse Gas Protocol, this covers scope 1 and 2 emissions from the electricity, oil, and gas taken to run our buildings, plus certain specific aspects of scope 3 transport, including our business travel cars at Boston Spa, the link van between our two sites, and international travel. These are collectively referred to in this document as our **core emissions**.

The majority of our core carbon emissions come from electricity and gas use in our largest buildings; St Pancras and Boston Spa buildings 31 and 32. To achieve net zero carbon we need to continue to reduce energy use year-on-year and get the energy we still use from cleaner sources. A small percentage of our emissions come from transport and fugitive emissions from air conditioning.



Our single biggest challenge, when it comes to decarbonisation, is to achieve carbon reductions while our collection continues to grow, year-on-year, as it is legally required to do. For our carbon emissions to even stand-still while we ingest approximately 350,000 new physical items each year is a stretching goal, but we are committed to achieving continuing reductions.



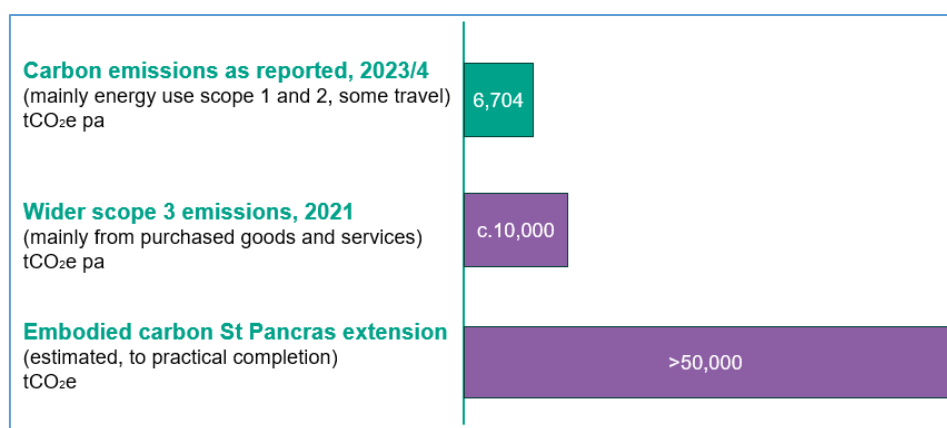
We also know that we need to improve the data that we gather from our Building Management System and install better sub-metering, so that we can more accurately identify the major drivers of our energy use and associated carbon emissions.

1.1.2 Measuring our wider scope 3 emissions

Like many other organisations, our emissions reporting does not yet cover the wider scope 3 emissions, generated by our supply chain of goods and services, our digital footprint, our building projects, waste and water.

Based on a desktop estimate of our Scope 3 emissions from 2021, we expect them to be c.10,000 tonnes CO₂e per year; 55% higher again than the core emissions we currently report.

We have also commissioned an embodied carbon assessment of our St Pancras extension project, estimating the carbon generated by manufacturing and transporting the materials used to build the extension. At over 50,000 tCO₂e, this is more than five times the core annual emissions from running the Library.



When considered alongside the scope 3 and embodied impact of our capital projects, we can see that targeting only our currently reported carbon emissions is not enough. **If the Library is to truly reduce its environmental impact, and ultimately achieve net zero carbon, we must start measuring, reporting and reducing our scope 3 emissions.**

This is not simple. Scope 3 emissions are harder to measure, and where we have influence rather than control. We will need to gather new information. It will require a process of engagement with suppliers and contractors, starting with pilots in a few areas, chosen because they are material.

We have assessed the materiality of our emissions against the well-established scope 3 categories in the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. Of the 15 categories, we believe the material ones to be:

- Category 1 (purchased goods and services, which are potentially 80% of our scope 3, based on the 2021 desktop study)
- Category 2 (capital goods)
- Category 3 (fuel and energy-related activities)
- Category 7 (employee commuting and home-working)
- Potentially Categories 4 and 9 (upstream and downstream transportation and distribution).

We will, therefore, start by focussing on improving our data quality and reporting in these material areas, reporting scope 3 in our accounts from 2024/5 onwards.

1.1.3 Setting carbon emission targets

Mandatory targets

- **Long-term:** Achieving net zero emissions at or before 2050 in line with the UK Government's commitments expressed in the Climate Change Act 2008 (with 2019 target amendments)
- **Medium-term:** These government commitments also have a medium-term target of a 78% reduction by 2035, compared to 1990 levels
- **Near-term:** The current Greening Government Commitments target is for a 58% reduction by 2025/6 compared to a 2017/18 baseline in reported emissions and a 25% reduction in direct emissions (oil and gas). These are being reviewed by government for 2026/7 onwards.

Library targets

- In this strategy period we will meet or exceed the mandatory targets above:
 - The net zero by 2050 target will be taken to cover all emissions (scopes 1, 2, and 3)
 - We will review our targets in 2027, with a commitment to move faster if feasible.
- We will also set a challenging stretch target of a 4% average annual reduction in energy use.

We will achieve this by adapting our buildings, collection management, technology and transport to reduce our emissions. Sections 1.2 onwards sets out these areas for action.

1.1.4 The role of offsetting

Even after making real reductions, some residual carbon emissions will remain, and so there will be a role for offsetting towards 2050. The well-respected Science Based Targets Initiative recommends no more than 10% of baseline emissions should be offset (across scopes 1, 2 and 3) in order to reach net zero, and we will apply this commitment.

We do not currently offset any emissions and we don't intend to during this strategy period, since the priority is to use any available funding to invest in measures which cut our own energy use and carbon emissions (as an arms-length body of government, it is also not clear that we can use our core funding for offsetting without seeking specific permission). We will, however, begin to explore options such as tree planting at Boston Spa, Camden Council's offset fund, ring-fencing cost savings as energy-use falls, and collaborative shared infrastructure projects. Our approach to offsetting may evolve as we learn more.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **improve the data we have** on energy and carbon through upgrading our Building Management System (BMS) at St Pancras, installing sub-metering and developing real-time energy dashboards
- **understand, measure, reduce, and report our wider scope 3 emissions.** We will start with those areas which are most material plus those smaller elements where we already gather the data required. This will be a gradual process and one where we will learn as we go
- **explore options for residual emissions** towards 2030
- [See detail in section 4.4 on Procurement] **engage our supply chains in carbon reporting and carbon reduction.**

1.2. Energy use of existing buildings



Current status

Gas and electricity use in our largest buildings are the primary sources of our current core carbon emissions. We use gas boilers both for heating and for generating steam for humidification, plus some for catering. Given the price of utilities, energy savings makes good financial sense as well as environmental sense.

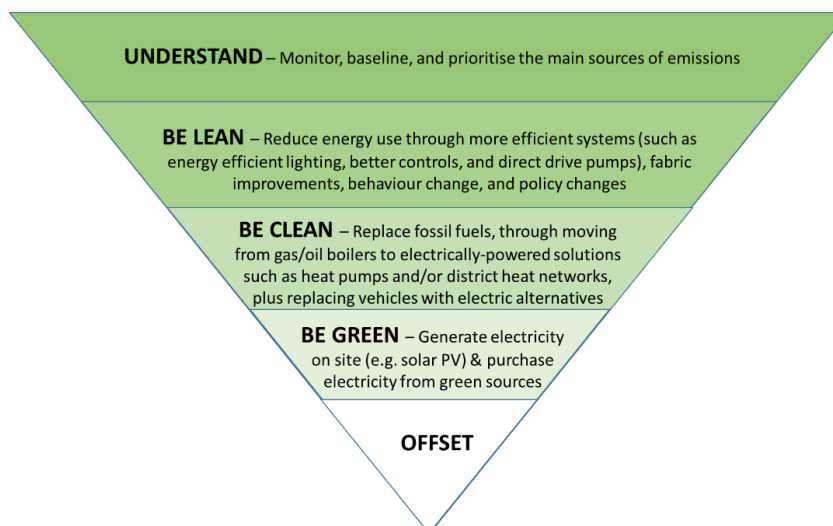
Sustainability is a key theme in our Estates Strategy and has long been an area for action. Our emissions have fallen year-on-year due to a wide range of different projects to tackle heating and lighting. Most recently £7.9 million of funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme has enabled some major projects including:

- St Pancras
 - solar thermal for hot water
 - LED lighting in the basements at St Pancras
- Boston Spa
 - solar photo-voltaic (PV) for electricity
 - a large ground source heat pump.

These decarbonisation projects are well-progressed but are not all yet fully delivering, and the benefits are expected to be fully reflected in our emissions for 2024/25.

Delivering net zero carbon:

To reach net zero carbon we will apply the well-established Energy Hierarchy:



Understand: We will update our BMS and improve our energy monitoring data (see 1.1).

Be lean: Our target is to reduce energy use by an average of 4% year-on-year between now and 2050, despite the steps up in energy-use expected in 2026, when Building 33 comes online, and again after 2030, when the St Pancras extension becomes operational.

Be clean: To reach net zero we need feasible, costed plans that radically reduce our reliance on gas, and either generate more electricity onsite or identify other sources of clean energy. Full decarbonisation plans for both existing sites are not yet in place and are a key next step. At the time of writing, we are creating such a plan for our St Pancras site, utilising a grant from the Greater London Authority.

To get off gas and decarbonise our heat there are two main potential options:

- Replace gas boilers with heat pumps or other forms of electric heating
- Connect to a fully decarbonised district heating network.

Air source heat pumps are the most likely option in the near term. However, with the Government's heat network zoning expected to come into force in 2025, under which most of central London will be classed as a heat network zone, it is possible that the St Pancras site will be mandated to connect to a heat network unless it meets exemption criteria. The Somers Town heat network is around 300m from our St Pancras building, and so remains a future option.

Be green: Once our heating is no longer powered by gas, full decarbonisation will be achieved by ensuring the electricity we use comes from renewable sources. This starts by maximising renewable generation onsite, for example through the installation of solar panels.

Our remaining electricity needs will come from the National Grid. The grid's carbon emissions are falling as increasingly more of the UK's electricity mix comes from renewables, and so our carbon emissions per unit will naturally fall and we will track closer to net zero. It cannot be guaranteed, however, that the Grid will reach zero emissions, so options include:

- signing up for a renewable electricity tariff backed by Renewable Electricity Guarantees of Origin (REGO). While this is the easiest option, the legitimacy of REGOs is questionable
- signing up to a Power Purchase Agreement, purchasing directly from a renewable energy generator, with a proportion still provided through a standard or REGO-backed supplier
- building our own renewable generation assets on land purchased for the purpose, again with a proportion of electricity still provided through a standard supplier.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **actively seek year-on-year energy efficiency improvements across St Pancras and Boston Spa**, targeting a 4% average reduction in energy use each year, despite the growth in the collection. To include identifying and implementing quick wins, energy efficient lighting throughout both sites, improving lighting and heating controls, using an updated asset register to identify opportunities for replacing inefficient and aging or broken plant with higher-efficiency versions, increasing building fabric insulation and air tightness where viable, continuing to implement onsite renewable energy technology (e.g. solar panels) where feasible, and contributing to a review of occupancy and use of our spaces
- **create and begin to implement full decarbonisation plans for existing sites.** To include finding technically feasible solutions for replacing all remaining gas and oil boilers at St Pancras and Boston Spa, whilst maintaining the conditions required for the collection, and replacing gas used for catering. These plans must meet or exceed the targets in Section 1.1
- **seek routes to funding for the plans above**, through internal business cases and external fundraising, from available public sector funds, grant makers and private donors.

1.3. Our new spaces



The Library is growing year-on-year, because of our fundamental purpose to store, and enable access to, all published material in the UK.

We have three significant capital projects in different stages of development. While these new buildings are designed to be fully electric and highly efficient, they will still need power to heat and light, which will increase our carbon emissions.

St Pancras

The extension at St Pancras will be an all-electric building, targeting net zero carbon in operation, alongside passive measures. Embodied carbon will be considered in the choice of materials, and it has been designed to be a long-lasting and low carbon emitting building, meeting high environmental standards. Biodiversity net gain will be delivered through extensive planting, designed for public access.

We are working with the Knowledge Quarter to minimise vehicle movements in the area, with the aim of improving air quality, and the new development will provide high-quality cycling facilities to encourage active travel to the new offices.

Boston Spa

Our transformation plans at Boston Spa embed sustainability as a golden thread throughout the programme and forecasts a 34% reduction in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_{2e}) by 2050.

The new build facility, Building 33, comprises a low energy Logistics Hub including PV cells to the roof alongside a completely passive automated storage void. The building is on track to achieve accreditation as BREEAM¹ Outstanding.

The largest existing building on site, Building 6, will be partially refurbished, incorporating new curtain walling, facade repairs and improved infrastructure and staff facilities. It targets BREEAM Excellent. The scheme is further optimised by connection to the existing ground source heat pump installation.

The programme has already generated sustainability benefits by removing from site two inefficient older buildings (a third will be vacated at the end of the programme). A reorganisation of staff spaces and a consolidated logistics location for the site will improve connectivity and reduce vehicle transfers. Increased landscaping will drive biodiversity onsite and further improve staff and visitor wellbeing.

Leeds

We're aiming for our new site in Leeds to be an exemplar of contemporary sustainable design. Responsible use of materials will apply across the development – starting with our intentions to breathe new life into an existing heritage building. Retrofitting, rather than building from scratch, provides major reductions in embodied carbon.

Our fit-out design for Leeds incorporates a bespoke sustainability framework, which draws on best practice across a range of recognised standards to create a comprehensive view of the site's sustainability. A BREEAM pre-assessment demonstrates that an Excellent rating is achievable

¹ BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) is a sustainability assessment method that is used to masterplan projects, infrastructure and buildings.

and Outstanding could be possible. The UK Green Building Council framework for net zero carbon buildings has also been applied.

Engagement

We look not only at the impact of our buildings themselves, but also our potential to influence wider planning through our relationship with our local councils and communities, including extensive public and community engagement onsite.

Our staff are at the forefront of ensuring these new spaces align with our sustainability objectives. From energy conservation measures to waste reduction initiatives, we rely on the active engagement of our employees to implement and champion sustainable practices.

Achieving high environmental standards can also offer co-benefits for staff, through increased comfort, well-regulated temperatures and improved lighting.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **embed best practice in environmental performance in our new spaces;** including but not limited to achieving (i) BREEAM Excellent and PassivHaus accreditation for Boston Spa Building 33, (ii) achieving BREEAM Excellent and 40% whole life carbon savings for St Pancras Transformed, and (iii) targeting BREEAM Excellent and net zero in operation from opening (c.2030) for our new Leeds site
- **reduce lifetime carbon emissions** (embodied carbon from the build itself and operational carbon when it is running), for example by prioritising materials that have recycled materials, are locally sourced and/or have long life-cycles; utilising low carbon technology such as solar panels and air-source heat pumps; and prioritising green transport methods
- **deliver net zero carbon in operation by 2050 at the latest**, with a maximum of 10% of this achieved through offsetting, using the first full year of operation as a baseline
- **create new spaces which are nature-positive**, meeting or exceeding planning targets for biodiversity net gain while engaging our communities in growing
- **design for climate resilience**, taking into account potential climate change scenarios.

1.4. Collection management



Collection management is the set of policies, processes, technologies and people that are in place to ensure efficient and coordinated management and processing of collections, so that they are accessed by users and remain relevant. Doing this more efficiently will reduce our energy use and associated carbon emissions and reduce the materials we store and use.

We have:

- a physical collection of over 170 million physical items. Most are held in specially constructed storage facilities located at our London or Yorkshire sites
- an even larger digital collection, with multi-millions of items and individual files, sized at over 3.7 PB of data [2024], some digitised physical items and some 'born-digital'
- collection metadata; the structured information required to efficiently manage, access and preserve the collection.

The continually expanding collection therefore requires increasing quantities of storage in both physical and digital spaces. Minimising the carbon footprint of this growing collection through maintaining and upgrading spaces towards best practice can both ensure the longevity of the collection as well as enabling sustainable practice. To date environmental parameters for all storage areas has adopted a pattern of seasonal drift. In St Pancras, out-of-hours shutdowns in basement storage areas reduce energy consumption.

Implementation of a new Library Services Platform and a Digital Repository will streamline key Collection Management workflows, gaining greater consistency and efficiency in the digital areas for collections and metadata. Sustainability aspirations will influence the digital collection management and preservation processes that are built upon the new estate. The computer power required of large-scale processing of collections will be factored into decision-making and prioritisation. Risk assessments and business need will drive decision-making around retention of multiple copies of items, including access copies as well as preservation masters.

In all of this we will need to move in step with sector bodies and with those other libraries and museums with whom we regularly loan items for exhibitions.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **continue to review environmental parameters and seek further ways to reduce energy use while maintaining the collection**, including engagement with sector bodies and peers
- **implement the latest generation of Library Services Platform and Digital Repository** to gain efficiencies and consistencies in managing metadata and digital collections
- **better understand the impact of the content strategy and collection expansion** to ensure collection growth is planned and appropriately accommodated within storage capacity
- **evolve environmental practice across core library functions and practices** and test and explore new and innovative approaches and solutions for positive environmental change.

1.5. Technology infrastructure



Following the cyber-attack of October 2023, and the ongoing delivery of our *Rebuild and Renew* recovery programme, our renewal will be sustainable where possible. The increasing reliance on technology within the Library, as demonstrated by the impact on operations and services following the cyber-attack, necessitates an understanding of the climate impact of these services and how we can help reduce this in the coming years without degrading service.

The entire technology estate will rationalise the number of devices, to reduce waste and power consumption. The new computer infrastructure will be up-to-date and power efficient. Legacy systems will not be returned as they were, if not sustainable, and a combination of cloud storage and local storage will be used, to achieve reliability and ease of access while reducing carbon emissions.

Technology can help deliver sustainability by concentrating on:

- **a sustainable recovery:** Projects within the Rebuild and Renew programme will follow a set of agreed sustainability principles, where possible. Guidance and training have been offered
- **energy efficiency:** Procuring energy-efficient devices and implementing power management techniques; powering down of environments when not required, and consolidation of the physical and virtual server estate
- **cloud computing:** Cloud computing takes advantage of investment providers have put into data centre efficiency, runs our services on the same infrastructure as other organisations, and is often powered by renewable energy while reducing reliance on hardware
- **network infrastructure:** By investing in our network infrastructure and associated collaboration software, technology can help ensure that teleconferencing and virtual meetings can become as effective as onsite meetings thereby reducing the carbon footprint associated with business travel
- **software practices:** There is an emerging recognition that how we develop software can reduce our carbon footprint, e.g. by moving to event-driven architectures rather than wasteful polling, thinking about the use of data, how caching reduces data exchanges, and understanding the energy usage of the application especially during development.

There are challenges though, including the **growing use of AI, electronic waste** and **tackling digital inequality** (access to technology and digital resources, globally and within the UK, is not equitable, so the challenge is to ensure digital services help bridge this gap rather than make it wider).

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **ensure a sustainable recovery from the cyber-attack and other subsequent change programmes.** This involves rationalisation, piloting the Library's *Principles for an Environmentally Sustainable Recovery* in the Rebuild and Renew programme, and learning from this for the future
- **embed sustainability in our digital strategy and AI policy,** including understanding our digital carbon footprint, the impact of AI, and methods /protocols to reduce this while maintaining security and access
- **implement practical methods to reduce lifetime carbon emissions from technology.**

1.6. Transport and travel



Transport and travel accounted for 9% of our carbon emissions in 2023/4, however, we only gather and report certain categories currently:

- **work-related transport and travel** – data is gathered and reported.
 - Travel and transport generated 589 tCO₂e in 2023/4 (9% of the Library’s total core emissions). Reductions have already been made; emissions are down 24% from the first year of measurement (2008/9)
 - Of the travel emissions, the majority (70%) come from flights, with 20% from delivery & distribution, including the link van which delivers daily between our sites, and 10% from fleet, road and rail combined
- **object and collection transport** – the link van only is reported, couriers / loan items are not
- **staff commuting and visitor travel** – data is not yet gathered.

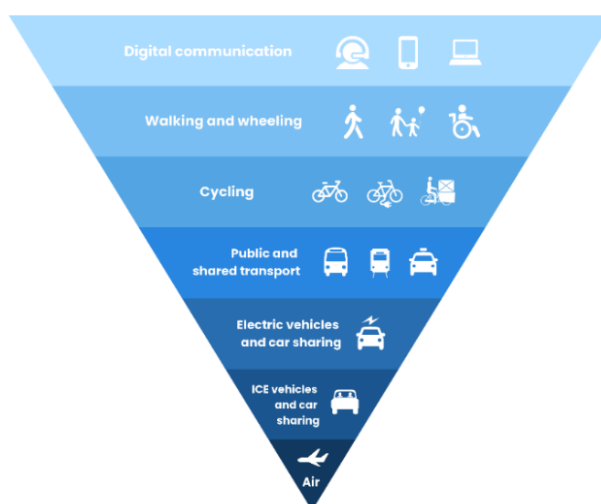
Against the mandatory Greening Government Commitments we are on track.

Greening Government Commitment	2017/18 baseline	2023/24	Progress	Status
Reduce the number of domestic business flights by at least 30% by 2025/6	28	10	-64%	On track

Travel and transport at our sites

Emissions caused by staff commuting, visitor travel and deliveries in non-Library vehicles come under scope 3 and so are not currently measured.

However, we already know our two main sites are in very different situations when considering sustainable and active travel (see sustainable travel hierarchy).



St Pancras is well-served for public transport and nearly all UK staff and visitors arrive by active or sustainable travel methods. It has cycle parking for staff and visitors and staff showers. The St Pancras extension will deliver extensive new cycle parking. Multiple deliveries come to our site and to our neighbours within the Knowledge Quarter.

Boston Spa is rural and poorly served by public transport. The vast majority of staff and visitors arrive by car. It has cycle parking and one electric vehicle car charging post. Multiple deliveries come to site, from different publishers and distributors (around 55 per week). Our two fleet cars are being replaced by electric, at end of operating life. Boston Spa Renewed includes the provision of electric vehicle charging in the loading bay for delivery vehicles.

We have 1.5 million visitors every year, of which one in four are international, the majority of whom fly to London. Many of these visitors will be visiting London for multiple purposes. For those visiting solely to access our collection, for example for research, we can reduce travel to a degree through digitisation of regularly used collection items, allowing for remote access.

Loans

We are mandated to lend collection material to institutions both within the UK and internationally. Upholding standards of care and security is vital during all parts of this process as the collection is most at risk while in transit. On average more than 200 individual items are lent to over 40 venues annually.

Since 2021 the rapid introduction of virtual installation at borrowing venues has reduced the need for air travel by couriers. Combined consignments with other London or UK based institutions demonstrates a shared endeavour across the sector to reduce impact of loans travel.

A risk-based framework is used within the Library to assess the need and mode of transport for loan consignments to embed the new practices and provide appropriate levels of care and security accordingly.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **update our travel guidance and expenses policy, applying the sustainable travel hierarchy**, prioritising active and sustainable travel over cars and flights where possible
- **reduce petrol and diesel vehicle travel to our sites** through (i) a fully electric fleet, (ii) installing electric vehicle car charging for staff and visitors, (iii) engaging with publishers and distributors to reduce the number of individual deliveries to site, (iv) working with the Knowledge Quarter to consolidate the use of delivery vehicles, and (v) seeking a new inter-site transport service (the link van) with lower carbon emissions
- **continue to reduce the emissions from international and national loans.** By 2025, we will publish a new strategy that addresses ways of making transportation for loans, exhibition touring, and public library displays greener, including the continuation of our risk-assessed approach of virtual installations and shared couriers wherever possible, reviewing the use of shipping rather than air freight (in line with the updated Bizot protocol) and consideration of new forms international touring
- **gather improved information on travel to site** (covering how staff, visitors and learners come to site) and on all forms of business travel. Continue to **reduce emissions from transporting visitors and staff to and from Boston Spa site**
- **explore the feasibility of teams having appropriate carbon budgets for business travel**, to enable decisions to consider carbon alongside purpose, cost and time.

1.7. Waste, materials and water



The Library consumes considerable materials through our purchased goods and services. Based on a desktop study in 2021, they make up the majority (80%+) of our scope 3 emissions. The things we buy have environmental impacts from their production and from the subsequent waste at end of life (see also Section 4.4 on procurement).

Against the mandatory Greening Government Commitments, we are largely on track, barring water.

Greening Government Commitment	2017/18 baseline	2023/24	Progress	Status
Reduce the overall amount of waste generated by 15% by 2025/6	457 tonnes	243 tonnes	-47%	On track
Reduce waste sent to landfill to less than 5% of overall waste	0%	0%	n/a	On track
Increase the proportion of waste recycled to at least 70% of overall waste	66%	65%	5% below target	Close to target but at risk
Reduce paper consumption by at least 50% by 2025/6	3,412 A4 reams Equivalent	1,939 A4 reams equivalent	-44%	On track
Reduce water consumption by at least 8% by 2025/6	50,699 m ³	63,960 m ³	+26%	Off target

General waste and the circular economy

We send zero waste to landfill (disposal) and are committed to maintaining this.

Our aim at all times is to minimise waste and to dispose of it appropriately. We employ the widely recognised waste hierarchy, sending the majority of our waste for recycling and the remainder for incineration. While this waste incineration is 'green' in that the heat generated is converted into energy, it still represents carbon emissions.

We are close to target on recycling; our performance is reduced because we exclude examples of re-use, such as donating furniture to local schools and community groups.



Our aim is to continue moving up the hierarchy by further reducing waste sent for energy recovery and identifying opportunities for re-use ahead of recycling, to support the circular economy.

As outlined in section 1.1, in order to widen our scope 3 emissions reporting, we will expand our waste reporting to include tCO₂e in line with the Greenhouse Gas reporting protocols.

Construction waste

The waste generated by contractors on our major building projects is a very significant source of waste, and particularly of hard-to-recycle waste streams (our own waste was 243 tonnes in 2023/4 vs 2,867 tonnes of construction waste).

As one part of targeting BREEAM Excellent or above on our capital projects, our contractors are required to have waste management plans in place. These plans ensure the separation of construction waste into different types, the reuse or recycling of materials where possible, and the measurement and reporting of waste on at least a quarterly basis.

Sustainable exhibitions and events

Over the last few years we have actively sought ways to improve the sustainability of our exhibitions and events, including reusing materials such as steel room frames and acrylic mounts.

Through our tender process we already incorporate an element focusing on sustainability of the supplier, and we are looking to weight sustainability higher when tendering for future contracts. As we progress work on our new buildings in Leeds and London (see Section 1.3), we will always think from a multi-site operational perspective, and make sure that programming, thinking and practices can be applied across all our sites.

We ask ourselves how best to balance physical and digital delivery of our cultural programme: understanding the value of encounters with our collection in physical spaces, while also acknowledging the greater carbon footprint of physical touring in particular. In recent years we have trialed digital-only displays and events, and we will work further to understand more fully the environmental impact of our programme.

Our temporary exhibitions are vital parts of our cultural offer and a key way that we make our collection accessible. They also have a carbon footprint of their own, through creating and dismantling each exhibition, and through the travel of loan items.

In summer 2025, we will use our gardening exhibition as an opportunity to pilot more sustainable ways of working, including measuring the carbon emissions of an exhibition for the first time, and learning from this experience.

In doing this, we are guided by initiatives from peers in our sector and communities. In addition to the Green Libraries Manifesto (see Appendix 2), these include: the *Somers Town Future Neighbourhood* plan to make the community around the Library in Camden more resilient to global climate change and a standardised Impact Assessment Tool, being developed jointly by the Design Museum and URGE Collective, to calculate exhibitions' carbon footprint.

Paper

We are required to measure and reduce paper consumption and are on track to achieve the target. All of our purchased paper is certified to one or more UK or globally recognised environmental standards, resulting in Green Choice product status with our supplier, Banner.

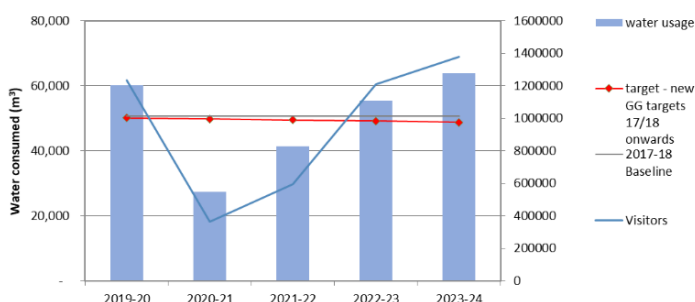
Electronic waste

The use of devices within the Library since COVID-19 has increased dramatically, at some point these devices will reach end of life. Managing the environmental impact and reducing device usage, with many people having more than one device, is a major challenge but one that needs addressing.

Water

Against the mandatory Greening Government Commitments, we are missing the target for water use. We don't think, however, that the target applies well in the Library's circumstances, where water is used mainly for cooling the Reading Rooms, collection storage areas, public exhibition spaces and the Knowledge Centre, meaning that options for reducing water consumption are limited.

We know that increasing use of the building by the public drives water consumption, but we don't yet know how much of this is **direct** (use of toilets, sinks, and catering) and how much **indirect** (through increasing air flow and warming the building, causing more cooling load).



Our next step, therefore, is to better understand the causes of water use and the potential actions we can take to reduce it.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **maintain sending zero waste to landfill and reduce waste sent for energy recovery** by incineration, in favour of recycling and, even more, reuse and the circular economy
- **ensure all major capital and estates projects have waste management plans in place and monitor against them**
- **embed more sustainable working in our exhibitions programming.** Pilot with the gardening exhibition in 2025, and the accompanying displays in public libraries; measure carbon emissions; add sustainability requirements to contractor procurement assessment; measure all materials used; increase the proportion of set works which are reused/recycled; and display a full sustainability statement. Learn from this pilot and develop future policy
- **better understand the drivers of water use and feasible, costed actions to reduce it.**

> See also Section 1.1 on Scope 3 reporting, which will include reporting of waste and water, Section 1.8 on Commercial (covering food and packaging waste from catering and shops) and Section 4.4 on Procurement.

1.8. Commercial (catering, retail and events)



We have taken increasing steps to build sustainability into the procurement of products and the letting of contracts in commercial areas.

Catering: We work closely with our catering partners who operate at the forefront of sustainability and inclusion within the sector. Social value was a key requirement in the tender specification for the contracts which were let in October 2023.

- **Origin Coffee is a B Corp accredited company** and a recipient of The Queen's Award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development. Their ethos is asking '*how we can do things better, for people and the planet?*'. For example, the coffee is Origin source and entirely seasonal, baked goods are sourced from small, local producers, food waste is reduced and then donated, composted or recycled wherever possible. Origin Coffee aim to create a circular economy, ensuring that any materials used are turned into a useful input material again
- **Graysons work with Slow Food UK** and have been named 'the most sustainable caterer in the UK' for multiple years. They have a commitment to sourcing locally and ethically, for example supporting farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises, using Fairtrade tea, coffee, sugar, bananas and chocolate, and UK-bred meat. Graysons are moving to a cyclical approach to food waste onsite, with hot composting, a wormery and wildflower planters. Food waste is monitored, action taken to reduce it, and all surplus food is redistributed through food waste charity, Plan Zeroes. Packaging is reduced, recycled or composted, with no single-use plastic front of house and 100% of the back-of-house packaging to be reusable or recyclable.

Retail: We have introduced new policies into the retail operation and are committed to reducing non-recyclable packaging, increasing sustainable products in our range, and working with accredited suppliers to reduce our environmental impact. For example, we have removed cellophane/plastic wrap from cards and gift wrap, sourced products made from plastic waste and introduced a sustainable T-Shirt partner. We use bio-degradable film-bags and reusable cotton totes. Damaged or misprinted proof copy books will be offered to staff through a book swap, to further reduce waste.

Commercial events: Menus are changed bi-annually to ensure they are diverse, seasonal and climate friendly with slow food and healthy ingredients. Next steps are working towards 'no carbon' options for menus. Graysons have partnered with Green Tourism, which enables the calculation of the carbon emissions of an event using an online tool. The client is able, via an opt-out system, to offset their impact by means of charitable donation to a forest planting charity.

Between 2024-2030 our aims are to:

- **continually seek out sustainable suppliers and partners for our retail outlets**, prioritising reusable or recyclable materials in our supply chains, including packaging for online orders
- **continually improve areas of the operation including visual merchandising, dispatch and packaging**, reducing the climate and biodiversity impacts across the whole operation
- **work with catering and events partners achieving high levels of accreditation in sustainability**, reviewing their performance via the Social Value Portal and the contract KPIs.

> See also Section 4.4 on Procurement

1.9. Green spaces and biodiversity



Our green spaces offer the chance to boost biodiversity and engage our communities. When considering them, our two existing main sites could not be more different, due to their relative size and urban vs. rural nature.

St Pancras

Our St Pancras site is in the middle of the urban landscape of Camden. The site consists almost entirely of the Library buildings themselves, plus open stone areas such as the Piazza and the connecting terrace to the Centre for Conservation. There are some beds on the Piazza, Midland Road and Euston Road, and on areas of flat roof. These beds are planted with low-maintenance, non-flowering green shrubs. Some planting has been deliberately removed in the past, due to issues of rough-sleeping and drug-use equipment being discarded there.

In the short term, potential exists to introduce more areas of planting, a richer variety of flowering plants, and other wildlife friendly measures. We will begin this in tandem with the gardening exhibition in 2025. Our longer-term vision is of the Piazza as a garden; a green and biodiverse space, where people can sit and rest, and where our local community is engaged through growing.

The Story Garden, operated by Global Generation, makes temporary use of our extension site while we wait for construction to begin. Nestled within the heart of London it's an urban sanctuary for our community and a hub for environmental education. This green oasis provides a space for Camden residents, schools and organisations to connect with nature and each other. Through a variety of hands-on activities and events – from organic gardening to storytelling sessions – the Story Garden inspires local people to become stewards of the environment and champions of positive change. We are exploring ways of continuing engagement with Global Generation, once the BL Extension project commences and the Story Garden closes.

Boston Spa

By contrast to the urban St Pancras, Boston Spa covers 44 acres, much of which is green space.

It is surrounded by Yorkshire countryside and is nature rich. The surrounding fields are populated by badgers, falcons, bats, foxes and squirrels, which often come onto site. The West Yorkshire fungus group has catalogued the fungi on site, and there is an amateur naturalist staff group which catalogues the flora once a year, including rare bee orchids which Boston Spa is particularly rich in.

The landscape management plan has been in place for nearly 20 years, based on ecological and biodiversity reviews. The plan was last updated in 2015 and covers:

- managing the three Local Wildlife Areas for nature, enabling British native plants to thrive, through hand-weeding for invasive species in the spring and cutting back in the autumn
- the area of native wildflower meadow behind Building 32 being left to grow long until the seed has dropped, and then cut and cleared to encourage flower growth
- the rest is short mown grass which is actively weeded. There is the potential to use these areas more for nature, with longer, flower-rich sward and tree planting.

While we believe more can be done, some tensions do exist between letting nature in and the need from a conservation perspective for a cautious approach to introducing any new pollens or encouraging insects, plus the practicalities of a busy site with multiple deliveries each day.

Our new spaces (see also Section 1.3)

The major capital projects in St Pancras, Boston Spa, and Leeds have all had significant ecological input during their design process and are targeting biodiversity net gains.

In Leeds and St Pancras, this will be achieved through a variety of new planting around the buildings and through 'green' roofs. Community engagement with these new green spaces is also central to our plans.

The Boston Spa Renewed programme provides an opportunity to improve the overall site-wide biodiversity. Soft landscaping will be completed, surrounding the new and updated green spaces to drive improved biodiversity. The landscaping works will achieve the minimum 10% net biodiversity gain and use demolition infill.

Health and wellbeing

Improving our green spaces can also offer benefits in terms of health and wellbeing to staff and visitors, through improved access to nature and views of green spaces.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **commission ecological input to understand our current baseline and then create a Nature Recovery Plan** for our green spaces
- implement practical measures to **make our green spaces more biodiverse** while **enabling community engagement**, beginning with working with the local community to create new growing areas on the Piazza in 2024, and increase in tandem with the gardening exhibition
- [see section 1.2] **create new spaces which are nature-positive**, meeting or exceeding planning targets for biodiversity net gain while engaging our communities in growing.

1.10. Risk, adaptation and resilience



Managing risk is vital for our collection, business continuity and revenue. Sustainability and climate change is a broad topic, and within it are multiple risks. For example:

- **reputational risks** if the Library is not seen to be responding with urgency, misses mandated targets, or is seen to 'greenwash'
- the **strategic risk** that we are not fully delivering our six purposes, if we do not work to increase climate literacy, climate research, and support green businesses
- **financial risks** if we move too fast to adopt new technologies, the higher cost of electricity compared to gas, and the cost of future offsetting (if required). This sits alongside **financial opportunities** through funds like the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund plus the opportunity to save money on our energy bills
- **risks to our buildings and collection from a changing climate**, such as water ingress from heavy rain and pest infestation from warmer temperatures. As well as our own operations, these risks can affect our communities and we can play a part in mitigating them; offering a warm space in cold winters and a cool space in hot summers.

These are managed through our existing risk management framework. There are two specific risks (EST0008 on carbon reduction and EST0013 on climate change) plus part of a strategic infrastructure risk (SR0006). As with all risks, if escalated because they are outside of acceptable parameters, they are reported to the Audit and Risk Group and, if required, to the Audit Committee.

However, we know this is an area where more work is needed. The two risks above will be reviewed in time for the 2025/6 financial year, to ensure they fully cover:

- climate **mitigation** (playing our part to tackle climate change, by implementing the actions supporting this strategy and cutting our emissions)
- climate **adaptation** (ensuring our building and operations are resilient against more extreme storms, higher rainfall and flash flooding, hotter summers leading to overheating, new moulds and pests, and local infrastructure failures).

From our 2023/4 accounts onwards, we are increasingly required to report against the Taskforce on Climate-related Risk Disclosures requirements.

Between 2024-2030 our aims are to:

- detail the climate change impacts and opportunities across our estates, operations and collection from a changing climate, then update the relevant risks on our 4Risk system (mitigation and adaptation, including identifying and implementing new actions where the risks are out of tolerance), and **create a Climate Change Adaptation Plan**
- **review and update our Business Continuity Plans, Planned Maintenance Schedules and Preventative Conservation Plans** in light of the above
- [See 1.3] **design for climate resilience** in our new spaces, considering potential climate change scenarios.

Priority 2: Our purposes



Priority 2. Our purposes

We have six well-established purposes: custodianship, research, business, culture, learning and international. Our strategy, *Knowledge Matters*, sets out these purposes and the enabling priorities, including sustainability, which cut across and support them:

Our purposes:					
Custodianship	Research	Culture	Learning	Business	International
<p>Cross-cutting themes which support and enable the purposes</p> <p>People</p> <p>Access, engagement and inclusion</p> <p>Digital transformation and technology</p> <p>Finance, commercial services and fundraising</p> <p>Capital projects and estates</p> <p>Sustainability</p>					
<p>How sustainability supports our purposes</p> <p>“[our priority is to] collaborate with people to open up the collection in new and interesting ways, to support work on solutions to the environmental challenges we face – from climate research to enabling sustainable business and enterprise, and engaging people through culture and learning, to increasing climate literacy and visibility of climate science.” <i>Knowledge Matters</i>, 2023</p>					

This section shows the ways in which sustainability supports our purposes.

2.1. Custodianship and research: Opening up the collection in new and interesting ways, including supporting climate research



Why our collection matters

Our collection can inspire and inform environmental action in many and varied ways, across the breadth of our users. Covering contemporary and historical material from across the world, in many formats, people can access a variety of sources to explore their sustainability-related questions.

This might include sounds of nature, including extinct species, in our sound recordings; life stories of climate scientists from our oral history recordings; historic maps showing changing coastlines and flood plains; rainfall records from the India Office Archives and Records; personal archives of activists; the sustainability pledges of political parties and actions of councils through time, as preserved in the UK web archive; and representation of sustainability-related issues on stamps, to name just a few. This is of course in addition to the many academic papers and books, newspaper and magazine articles and novels which cover sustainability issues.

Studying historical events, such as past climate challenges and societal responses, can provide valuable insights into humanity's resilience in the face of current climate challenges.

Opening up our collection in new and interesting ways

Given the multiple ways our collection and content can be used, it is unlikely that any one researcher will know to make best use of this for their purposes and needs, and we need to find ways to open up the collection so it can be used now, and in the future, to the benefit of all.

The broad scope of the collection also means that it can be used by many types of people with different goals, from climate scientists looking for the latest research, visual artists, musicians or poets looking for inspiration, climate activists looking for information, or citizens looking to delve deeper into the background around one of the key issues of our time.

Our approach to opening up the collection is three-fold:

- understanding the needs of our user communities, including those people who could benefit from using our material but do not yet do so
- ensuring that we share the most relevant materials for their needs through information literacy activities
- ensuring that our collection and content responds to the changing needs of users.

Embedding sustainability in our content strategy

Our content strategy for contemporary published content governs decisions about what we collect, why and for whom. The overarching priority is to provide access to information. This can be done in many ways, some of which have a better sustainability impact than others.

Guiding Principle 5 of the content strategy states that decisions about archival intent (what we hold and preserve permanently) will be based on criteria that include sustainability and life cycle costs. This means that beyond Legal Deposit material, which we have to hold and preserve in perpetuity by law, we can make choices informed by the sustainability impact of each option.

Alongside this the content strategy drives usage of the collection by making usage an explicit part of the evidence by which we assess the success of our activities. The principles, therefore, guide decisions towards providing the widest possible access, and using methods that achieve this result in the most efficient and sustainable ways possible. The principles also prevent duplication

of content and effort internally and encourage collaboration with external bodies to avoid duplication.

Supporting climate research

Our collection and expertise can significantly contribute to both supporting researchers in their continuing work in climate science, as well as providing a space where researchers, communities, industry, policy makers and other key stakeholders can come together to discuss and advance our journey towards best solution for our planet and people.

This collaborative work will extend to both specialist and non-specialist researchers, fostering an environment of inclusivity and knowledge-sharing across disciplines. By expanding our collection areas, we will deepen our impact and foster greater understanding of the action required.

We will prioritise supporting climate scientists and researchers by providing them access to our collection. We will actively engage with researchers to develop resources that enhance accessibility and utilise the range of our collection. This collaborative approach not only enhances our collection but also serves to increase staff expertise in climate research, while attracting funding to further our sustainability goals.

We will support the full cycle of climate research, especially ensuring that we are contributing to impact and dissemination of climate science by widening its reach, and fostering collaborative interdisciplinary research, idea sharing, open dialogue and the exploration of different viewpoints.

Making our own research sustainable

We will ensure the sustainability of research processes and infrastructures by embedding climate-friendly practices into our own research and leadership endeavours. This involves advocating for minimal computing on research projects, promoting the reuse of data and research infrastructures, and championing sustainability principles at every level of our organisation. Distinct from our support for climate scientists and researchers, this aspect of our strategy focuses on the sustainability of research processes themselves. By adopting innovative approaches and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility, we will contribute to the long-term sustainability of research practices while advancing our collective understanding of pressing global challenges.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **fundraise for a Climate Change curator and then write and implement a content development plan for climate change and sustainability** that reflects user and community needs and Content Strategy Guiding Principles, with actions to improve the range we collect (and connect out to) in the in the areas of climate change and sustainability
- **design and conduct user and community research** to understand the needs of our audiences in the areas of sustainability and climate change
- **create new sustainability-focused collection resources for users and communities**, to help raise awareness of relevant materials held in our collection
- **embed sustainable research practices** and create new knowledge using our collection by **undertaking collaborative research** (both Library-sponsored research, such as PhD studentships and staff-led projects, and work with external research bodies and universities).

2.2. Public engagement: Engaging people through **culture and learning**, including increasing climate literacy and the visibility of climate science



Our wide and varied programme of culture and learning

Our public engagement programme is well placed to draw from our rich historical and contemporary collections to inform, inspire and challenge audiences, and ourselves, on the topic of sustainability.

Our work reaches people of all ages, from families to older people. We have a special emphasis on centering the voices of children and young people, often from local communities, in line with the emphasis of the Green Libraries Manifesto (Appendix 2).

We programme not only at our site in London, but also through touring and partnership events across the UK and internationally. Our online audiences for our digital learning resources exceed 10 million unique users every year.

We run our own events, but also join in as one part of larger events reaching a wider audience, for example running a successful families' day as part of Earth Fest in April 2024. Green Libraries Week, run by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), will be a key point in our events calendar each year.

Centering sustainability in our cultural programme

In recent years we have tried to centre sustainability in our work, both significantly increasing the reuse and recycling of physical materials in the production of our exhibitions [see section 1.7] and in the programme's themes, including exhibitions such as *Animals: Arts, Science, and Sound* that addressed debates around conservation, climate change and extinction.

As part of our exhibition selection process, we will review the opportunities for all exhibitions to communicate messages on sustainability and climate change; for some this will be a major theme, for others a minor one, and all exhibitions will include a sustainability statement which explains what we have done to reduce the impact of the exhibition itself.

Working with our users and communities to increase climate literacy

Information literacy is a key activity for libraries and a priority in our strategy, *Knowledge Matters*. By providing people with access to information and the skills to critically evaluate the information they find, we will empower people to learn more about climate change and make their own informed decisions about the actions they might choose to take about it.

Work on sustainability will make a powerful pilot of the new ways of working set out in our Information Literacy Strategy. This will include co-creating with our users and communities new activities that develop climate literacy skills. Impact assessment will be key; for example, do participants make changes in their lives to reduce their carbon footprint that could be attributed to self-directed learning stimulated by attending a climate literacy workshop.

One key audience is the education sector. We will expand upon our current schools programme, supporting anticipated changes in the National Curriculum for Key Stage 1-4 science and geography.

Increasing the visibility of climate science

Scientific evidence is essential to understanding climate change and developing effective strategies to address it. Scientists have been studying climate change for decades, and their work has provided us with a wealth of information about the causes, impacts, and potential solutions to this problem.

While the scientific evidence on climate change is clear and compelling, the challenges remain in building trust in scientific evidence, ensuring deeper understanding of science by non-experts and actively using scientific evidence in addressing the climate emergency.

Engaging different communities helps raise awareness and understanding of climate science. When people from various backgrounds and walks of life are involved in discussions and initiatives related to climate change, they become better informed and equipped to advocate for action. This increased awareness can lead to a groundswell of support and a collective commitment to addressing the climate crisis.

Equality and inclusion

As free and inclusive spaces libraries can play a vital role in their communities. This can be through sharing resources (books, toys, tools and equipment through Libraries of Things, and plants or seeds) but also through offering warm spaces in winter and cool spaces in summer, and through the information that can be shared to enable people to become active and well-informed citizens.

In all our work, we need to be conscious of the interconnected and complex issues around climate change, equality and fairness. Climate change affects most the poorest in society, who have contributed least to the problem. Those on lower incomes cannot generally afford the kinds of climate action people need to take such as insulation, heat pumps and solar panels for their homes, electric cars, and buying locally-sourced food. Our public engagement always needs to be conscious of this.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **embed sustainability and climate change within our exhibition and events programme.** For this to include, in spring/ summer 2025, a major exhibition and season of programming on gardening
- **co-create with our users and communities a new strand of programming on climate literacy skills, increases the visibility of climate science and empowering positive climate action by adults and families and young people,** in and outside of formal education, as part of our wider Information Literacy Strategy. For this to include workshops featuring collection items and sources as well as external sources, guides, and online resources
- through our hyper-local community engagement in Somers Town, and through our national partnerships with public libraries in our Living Knowledge Network, **support community-centred sustainability projects and engagement** that are connecting people to their sense of place and environment at a local level
- **take an active part in Green Libraries Week events and activities each year,** using this as a key moment in our calendar to raise awareness, inform, and encourage climate action by a variety of audiences (including staff)
- **develop ways to measure the success of these activities,** particularly impact assessment in terms of changes to participants' knowledge and behaviour over time.

2.3. Enabling sustainable business and enterprise



Helping businesses to innovate and grow is one of our six core public purposes. Enabling more green business to flourish will have widespread environmental impacts, as well as creating new green jobs and economic benefits.

Since 2006 our Business & IP Centre (BIPC) has created a unique model, providing targeted help to aspiring entrepreneurs and early-stage businesses, and helping established small and midsize enterprises (SMEs) to scale. We also support the BIPC National Network (21 library authorities and 85 local hubs in 2024), run in partnership with local authorities and library service providers in other parts of the country.

Purpose-driven businesses

With the impact of the climate and environmental crisis being felt globally and locally, research has shown that consumers hold companies most responsible – more responsible than governments or themselves – for a host of environmental and social targets and standards.

No matter how small the business or what industry it is in, a commitment to sustainability could make a real difference – to the planet, to customers and to their running costs. Small businesses will soon be asked to commit to cutting carbon emissions in half by 2030, reaching net zero by 2050. A BIPC survey revealed that over half (55%) of surveyed businesses indicated they were driven by a social impact and over one quarter (27%) an environmental impact.

In response to customer need, BIPCs across the Network have established programmes and support services for small businesses that wish to make a positive environmental or social impact, such as BIPC Greater Manchester's *How to start a business that makes a difference* and BIPC North East's *Green Business Guide* and accompanying activities offered by their green business experts.

Many BIPCs have also become co-signatories of the Green Libraries Manifesto (Appendix 2), outlining a sector wide commitment towards a shared vision: to lead by example through our own environmental actions and use our power and reach to inform and inspire people to take positive action and build resilience in the diverse communities we serve.

Looking forward, the BIPCs need to articulate to our audience more clearly that, while sustainability is a challenging prospect, it also provides business opportunity. This includes how sustainability can be good for business and how it offers a range of benefits including cost savings, improved reputation, brand development and increased customer trust.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **ensure awareness and actions on sustainability is a core part of the BIPC service**, integrating sustainability in our programmes, resources and industry guides
- **showcase and signpost our green collection for users**, including our IP collection
- **include sustainability questions in annual survey**
- **offer sustainability training for staff** in Information Specialist and Reference Librarians
- **reduce travel while improving accessibility** through improving online resources and ensuring that most of our workshops are hybrid.

2.4. International collaboration



Climate change and sustainability were introduced as core topics of focus in the International Strategic Framework, signed off by the British Library Board in November 2021, and then subsequently embedded under the International Purpose in *Knowledge Matters*.

The framework outlines that our international engagement work is affected by several significant geopolitical and societal changes, such as climate change and the urgent need for large public institutions to contribute to actions to reduce carbon emissions (p.2 *A changing world*). It further notes that a shift towards actions on climate change is on many governments' agendas, making it a key engagement topic for cultural and public institutions who may benefit from support and funding opportunities (see sections in the framework on South Asia and Africa).

Under the section of professional leadership and dialogue the framework suggests *“increasing visibility and engagement on key topics of debate in the international library world, including sustainability, climate change, diversity and inclusion, and cultural property. So far, for instance, the British Library has not actively participated in international library networks which collaborate around the UN Sustainable Development Goals, nor on many of the areas of focus described within them. It is, however, intrinsically well placed to contribute on broad common objectives dynamically through its projects and portfolios, including Everyone Engaged and Everything Available, promoting open access to information for everyone.”*

The Library has been formulating several emerging priorities which match key aims of the Strategic Development Goals (SDGs) (see Appendix 1), including number 13 Climate Action. We believe that organisations such as the British Library can only benefit from participating in exchanges of ideas, experiences and challenges with others across the world, to tackle these issues together.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- through programmes such as the Endangered Archives Programme, **work with institutions worldwide whose collections are at risk from climate change**
- use this and other work with international partners to **amplify the voices of libraries and their communities already at risk due to climate change**
- use our convening power to **programme discussions with international partners on a variety of topics**, as well as **enabling staff to join international networks and working groups** to participate in exchanges including sustainability and climate change.

Priority 3: Our partnerships



Priority 3. Our partnerships



Climate change is a complex and urgent issue that requires a global response. No single country, organisation or sector can address it alone. That is why partnerships are essential to fostering climate action.

Throughout this strategy, partnerships and collaboration have been mentioned regularly; they are a core part of how we will achieve our objectives and support others to achieve theirs.

Our partnerships will help us to facilitate sharing of knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned across different regions, institutions and stakeholders. By building capacity and fostering a global, national and local communities of experts, citizens and organisations, we will enhance our collective understanding of climate change and promote effective action.

International partnerships

Section 2.4 has set out our extensive work around the world, through supporting individual countries libraries and archives. This also includes the International Library Leaders Programme and contributing through membership of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and other international bodies.

UK partnerships

The Library has strong partnerships in England and the wider UK, including the Green Libraries Campaign, the National Museum Directors Council, and Fit for the Future Network.

Through these networks, we will convene thought leaders across the library sector to tackle shared challenges at a strategic level, and to enhance the positive impact of our work and theirs. We will use our spaces and networks to convene groups to discuss and take action for planet and people.

The Green Libraries Campaign

As a founding partner of the Green Libraries Campaign we have undertaken a commitment to support cross-sector capacity-building work with other libraries and related stakeholders to enable positive climate action in relation to library buildings, operations, community engagement and communications.

Green Libraries Campaign began with the Green Libraries Partnership, and has gathered unprecedented momentum across the UK. Hundreds of libraries have signed the Green Libraries manifesto (Appendix 2), 15 have been funded to take environmental action, the Green Libraries Conference was a sell-out success, and Green Libraries Week turned 250+ libraries green in October 2023.

The aim of the Green Libraries Campaign is to ensure that **every library in the UK becomes a green library**. To this end the Green Libraries are currently working on expanding their membership to higher education, research and health libraries, strengthening the processes that enable us to know what it means to be a green library in practice, and broadening a range of its engagement activities.

We coordinate the Living Knowledge Network (LKN); a vibrant network of library peers across the UK. Through this, we are well-placed to provide space for discussion to inspire collective progress, improving sustainability practice across the sector and supporting community environmental awareness in libraries, in accordance with the principles established by the Green Libraries Manifesto (Appendix 2).

Through this work, together with our BIPC network and our partnership with CILIP, we can share positive stories about the role of libraries in sustainability, raising the sector's profile.

To support research and subsequent action, we are an excellent position to bring together a range of research partners, such as The Alan Turing Institute, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Aria, the Knowledge Quarter (home to world-leading research institutions in climate science and climate response including Nature, University College London and the Wellcome Trust), and many different university partners, with a range of local, national and international communities, as well as other cultural organisations, industry and policy makers.

Local neighbourhood partnerships

Through active local community engagement with Camden and Leeds-based charities, organisations and forums, our insight and knowledge into sustainability-focused initiatives are amplified and enriched (see section 2.3 on public engagement).

By partnering with these local neighbours we gain access to community expertise, resources and networks, fostering grassroots involvement and empowering us all to drive lasting change.

Membership in alliances such as the Camden Climate Alliance and the Knowledge Quarter Net Zero Advisory Group facilitates cross-sector collaboration, knowledge exchange and collective advocacy, accelerating progress toward shared sustainability goals. For example, we will contribute as a major local organisation to Camden's Climate Action Plan.

Additionally, engagement with Leeds Anchors enables initiatives to draw inspiration from successful practices elsewhere and advocate for systemic change at the city and regional levels, ultimately positioning the community as a key driver of positive environmental impact in the local landscapes.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **support and amplify the work of the Green Libraries Campaign with the aim that every library in the UK becomes a green library embed sustainably in the work of the Living Knowledge Network**, including a touring exhibition linked to gardening in 2025; sharing successes and knowledge, including hyper-local insights which can inspire new initiatives for libraries nationally; and creating training initiatives, toolkits, and frameworks that encourage participatory events
- **contribute to local neighbourhood partnerships in Camden, Leeds and the wider Yorkshire region**, to share knowledge and jointly foster climate solutions
- contribute to, share and amplify a **briefing note for policy makers** on the fundamental sustainability of libraries, and the positive role of local libraries in delivering sustainability.

Priority 4: Embedded in our work



Priority 4. Embedded in our work



4.1. Leadership, governance and reporting

By including sustainability within our organisations strategy, *Knowledge Matters*, the Board and senior management have recognised the climate crisis and the need for the Library to take action.

This Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy was agreed by the Board in July 2024.

Our work in this area is coordinated by the Sustainability and Climate Change Steering Group, made up of senior managers and relevant specialist staff, chaired by Liz Jolly, and reporting to the Executive Group. Progress on the action plan delivering this strategy will be reviewed at the Steering Group twice a year, and their agenda plan focusses on the highest priority actions for that year.

There is an active Staff Sustainability Group, with members from across the Library. The co-chairs of the Group are members of both the Senior Leadership Team and of the Sustainability and Climate Change Steering Group, which allows for issues to be raised and information to flow.

Our Performance Group reviews sustainability KPIs (although the KPIs need to be expanded and strengthened), with performance reported quarterly to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) against the Greening Government Commitments and reported annually to Board through the report and accounts.

Sustainability has been integrated within our business case process from 2024 onwards. All directors will be expected to have a relevant sustainability objective against which they report.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- through the creation of this strategy, the delivery of the associated action plan, and the inclusion of goals within our corporate and departmental operational plans we will **push for ambitious, credible and publicly communicated environmental commitment and action by all teams within the Library**
- **report progress against this strategy and the associated action plan** twice a year to the Sustainability and Climate Change Steering Group, and annually to Direction Group and Board
- **bring environmental sustainability to the heart of decision-making, through embedding it in our strategies, policies, and processes as they come up for review.** This will include, but not be limited to, our strategies for Content Management, Information Literacy, International, Digital, Technology, People, Estates, and Ethical Fundraising, our business case process, and our Supply Change Management policy
- **ensure our fundraising and investments align with our sustainability objectives as far as possible**, through reviewing major new donations through this lens, as part of our existing ethical screening process, and ensuring robust ESG criteria are in place for the funds in which we invest, at the next contract review point for the Library’s investment manager
- **ensure that by financial year 2025/6 all Directors have at least one relevant performance objective against which they report and that sustainability KPIs are strengthened**
- **include sustainability within the new Leadership Programme for Director.**

4.2. People

We recognise that our staff play a pivotal role in driving positive environmental change.

To fulfil our commitment to sustainability and climate action, we have developed a comprehensive strategy focused on staff engagement, knowledge growth and empowerment. In alignment with the Green Libraries Manifesto (Appendix 2), we envision a staff-centric approach to environmental stewardship.

Our commitment to growing and sharing knowledge is not just a statement; it is a call to action for our staff. To foster environmental understanding, training and sustainable practices, we must invest in our most valuable asset – our people.

Through these objectives, we will not only grow and share environmental knowledge but also to create an organisational culture where sustainability is embedded in every aspect of our workforce. We will empower our staff to be champions of positive environmental change within the Library and beyond. The existing staff Sustainability Group will be central to this change.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **develop customised learning initiatives**, aligned with the unique roles of staff members, ensuring that learning is relevant and impactful. To include **offering Carbon Literacy Training to staff each year and becoming a Carbon Literate Organisation (Bronze) by March 2025**
- **integrate sustainability training** into existing induction and development programmes, providing staff with the tools they need to embed sustainable practices into their daily work
- **establish an engagement and recognition framework** that empowers staff to propose and implement sustainable practices. This includes creating platforms for idea-sharing, recognition and support
- **include sustainability within our values and behaviours framework**, which forms part of our performance management process
- encourage line managers to **include relevant parts of the sustainability action plan within PMR goals** for staff
- as existing role profiles are revised and new roles created and advertised, **review role descriptions, job adverts and interview questions** to ensure sustainability is referenced where relevant to the role
- **explore the potential for sustainability apprenticeships**, both internal and external.

4.3. Communications and marketing

We are an institution that has long-term sustainability at the heart of our mission. Until now this has involved our enduring purpose of collecting and preserving the national collection – a self-replenishing resource that only grows and, in turn, feeds into new and published knowledge. This long-term mission and perspective is central to our purposes and reputation.

To date the environmental and sustainability aspects of our work have been communicated as and when noteworthy in their own right, and without an overarching strategic imperative and vision. The onset of the climate emergency and the central importance of sustainability in the *Knowledge Matters* strategic vision means that we need to engage and communicate on these issues in an a more active and coherent manner.

The Sustainability Strategy presents an opportunity to do this and will also depend upon sustained and constructive engagement from staff, users and stakeholders.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **devise and implement a communications plan for the Sustainability Strategy**, including a developing suite of key messages on our approach for the next six years
- **highlight our sustainability progress and practice** through cases studies, features and other content, focusing on key moments in the development of the capital projects, substantive milestones in the delivery of the strategy itself, and opportunities to engage with peers, partners and stakeholders to share best practice
- **inform and engage staff through a parallel internal communications plan**, ensuring that colleagues are aware of sustainability as a strategic priority, and feel empowered to provide feedback and suggestions, and to align their own work and expertise with the objectives of the Sustainability Strategy.

4.4. Procurement

Procurement is vital in achieving this strategy; we know we can only have the impact we want through engaging our supply chain.

The Supply Chain Management (SCM) team will, as a principle embedded within the SCM policy, promote and encourage procurement based on necessity, buying only what the Library really needs, in order to maximise value for money and avoid unnecessary environmental impact.

The Supply Chain Management team will include a supplier selection question relating to the SCM Policy areas set out below in all Selection Questionnaires (SQ) published in relation to High Value/Over Threshold tenders where pertinent to the subject-matter of the contract.

Social value

The SCM team will promote the inclusion of the Social Value Act¹ and its associated principles in procurement activity wherever possible and will comply with the relevant and future PPNs on this topic. As set out in PPN 06/202 Social Value should be explicitly evaluated in all procurement where the requirements are related and proportionate to the subject-matter of the contract.

Sustainable procurement

Our strategy, *Knowledge Matters*, states that all our work takes place against the backdrop of profound and damaging changes in the earth's climate and its ability to support diverse eco systems. The Library is, therefore, committed to increasing the sustainability of the organisation, through adapting out behaviour, systems and buildings. This includes embedding sustainability into our procurement processes. This should take a broad view, covering for example energy use, transport, material use, water use, waste and recycling.

All government departments, including the British Library, must make sure that they meet the minimum mandatory [Government Buying Standards \(GBS\)](#)³ when buying goods and services. The SCM team will promote the inclusion of these minimum standards in procurement activity wherever possible and encourage sustainable procurement – the process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that benefits not only the organisation, but also society and the economy, while minimising damage to the environment – where it is pertinent to the subject-matter of the contract.

Practical examples of sustainable procurement

- The procurement of our catering contract had a 20% weighting on social value, including carbon reductions, savings on car mileage, plastic reduction, biodiversity gains, recycling and waste reduction
- The recent procurement of the gardening exhibition design contract assessed designing with sustainability in mind, as part of the 35% weighting for experience. The design brief included waste reduction, reuse of existing materials, and use of natural and sustainable materials
- The St Pancras extension project is calculating the whole life carbon of the extension, targeting a 40% reduction
- The specification for the plastic storage crates at Boston Spa Building 33 stated that reground plastic, rather than virgin plastic, was the preferred material and asked suppliers to state the operational life of the crates, with the aim of achieving longevity and minimising the need for replacements.

Net zero

The combined carbon footprint of the goods and services purchased by the Library each year were estimated in a 2021 study to be greater than the combined carbon footprint of running all our

buildings. The UK Government has a commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. This commitment requires suppliers bidding for government contracts for goods, services or works (anticipated contract value above £5 million per annum) to commit to achieving this target and publish a Carbon Reduction Plan. We are going further than this, applying these principles where possible to all procurements over threshold (currently £138,000). The SCM team will promote consideration of in all procurement where the requirements meet the stated commitment.

Additionally, the SCM team will, as part of the supplier selection process, seek to gather information on the scope 3 emissions generated by our goods and services supply chains and promote engagement with suppliers and contractors to measure, report and reduce these emissions in the material areas, as identified in section 1.1 earlier.

SMEs

SME means an enterprise falling within the category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises as defined by the UK Government. Where proportionate to the subject-matter of the contract the SCM team will promote the provision of increased contracting opportunities for a diverse range of suppliers, including SMEs (and including promoting the inclusion of SME sub-contract opportunities in contracts with a total value in excess of £5 million), to recognise and harness the innovation that supplier diversity can bring to our procurement requirements. Supplier SME status will be recorded at contract award stage to support reporting to DCMS and benchmarking against Central Government SME spend targets.

Between 2024–2030 our aims are to:

- **develop environmental sustainability principles**, which we pilot through the Rebuild and Renew programme, with the intention to learn from this and then apply them to other activities and programmes
- **embed sustainability in Supply Chain Management policy and guidance**, as a minimum all procurement above a certain size (currently £138,000) must have a sustainability criteria of at least 5% (generally in addition to the 10% social value weighting), with new suppliers asked to commit to carbon reporting and providing a carbon reduction plan (smaller contracts would be encouraged, but not required, to have a sustainability criteria)
- **engage our existing supply chains**. We will start with a small group of our contractors (based on value and duration), aiming by end 2025/6 to have carbon emission reports for their Library-related activities plus meaningful carbon reduction plans. We will learn from these pilots and begin to ask for carbon data annually through our updated Contract Management Platform. From financial year 2027/8 onwards, for projects requiring multiple tenders, we will aim to procure only from organisations who carry out carbon reporting and have carbon reduction plans in place (2028/9 for SMEs)
- use the **re-procurement of the Estates Facilities Management contract** as a key opportunity to embed sustainability and drive energy reductions across both sites
- **include sustainability, climate change, and carbon reporting within Supply Chain Management training** for Library staff on contract management.

Funding the strategy

To deliver the sustainability ambitions contained in *Knowledge Matters* and expanded on within this strategy will require additional resource over coming years, particularly for decarbonising our buildings and for a Climate Change curator to add curatorial and public engagement resource.

Sources of funding

1. Existing budgets, such as the maintenance budget, major capital projects, and exhibitions budget will fund some actions. Budgets can be repurposed where actions are high priority
2. We can spend-to-save money into future years, from energy savings reducing our utility bills
3. Some required capital works will pay back over time (for example LED lighting, solar PV, and better lighting/heating controls), and internal invest-to-save business cases can be created for these (our plant and equipment will need replacing at the end of their operational life, and government policy is to phase out gas, so it is a question of when not if)
4. Some capital works, such as replacing the gas boilers with heat pumps, are unlikely to pay back in their lifetime. For these, a combination of grant-in-aid and external funding will be needed; currently the main route we aware of is the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, but we will investigate other avenues, such as the Smart Export Guarantee, Industrial Energy Transformation Fund, Retrofit Accelerator Workplaces, and UK Clean Heat Grant
5. Some stand-alone projects or activities may be fundable through philanthropic or corporate funding, particularly where there are co-benefits for the community or the collection.

To implement everything in the action plan sitting below this strategy, we estimate c. £6.8 million will be needed between 2024-2027, across internal and external sources, of which £3 million is secure, leaving;

- **c. £2.5 million of new Grant in Aid**, with the majority used for invest to save projects plus the match-funding needed to support successful bids to external funders, such as the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme
- **c. £1.3 million aimed to be targeted from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and other external funders**, to replace gas or oil heating with heat pumps, install more solar PV, and a range of other efficiency works, plus increased resource to work on opening up the collection and climate literacy. This funding is highly competitive and there is no guarantee of success, but we need to the preparatory work, to even be in the running.

These are ambitious targets. The reality is that, if external funding applications prove unsuccessful, new capital works will either not be possible or will wait until existing plant reaches the end of its operational life, whilst new projects will not commence. Meantime, we will maintain momentum through those actions funded through existing budgets and invest-to-save business cases.

Tracking progress and future review

As mentioned earlier, progress against this strategy will be tracked through the actions in the associated action plan. The Steering Group will review progress every six months, with an annual report to Direction Group and Board. The strategy itself will next be updated in 2027.

We will have learned much by then, both from our successes and our failures in implementing this, our first Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.

Appendix 1: UN Sustainable Development Goals

In this strategy, we have primarily referenced the Global Reporting Initiative topics. However, we have also been mindful of the internationally well-established UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



SDGs are another useful lens with which to look at our work, especially when engaging internationally. We used them to shape our major capital programme and know our work can impact positively on them. There are seven where we believe this strategy will make the **most** impact.

We can influence this goal through:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> our role, collecting and giving access to the UK's documentary heritage supporting research by multiple universities, in the UK and abroad our learning programmes for schools and families our diverse cultural events and exhibitions programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> decarbonising our existing buildings in St Pancras and Boston Spa generating renewable electricity onsite embedding high environmental performance in our new spaces
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support new sustainable businesses to form and grow procuring from sustainable businesses, including SMEs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supporting climate action in Camden and Leeds through our community engagement programme acting as convener of the Knowledge Quarter in St Pancras
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> embedding sustainability in our procurement, including our catering and cleaning contractors and the suppliers to our shops the choices of reusable and renewable materials for exhibitions and events careful management of waste onsite
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in our work on information literacy, enabling people to understand climate change and nature loss and take informed decisions embedding information about climate action across our learning programmes, cultural events, exhibitions and business advice
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> showing sector leadership through the Green Libraries Campaign, Living Knowledge Network, and other UK and local partnerships contributing actively to IFLA's international work on sustainability and amplifying the voices of those already impacted by climate change through the Endangered Archives Programme, and sharing knowledge.

Appendix 2: Green Libraries Manifesto

The British Library is one of the founding signatories to the Arts Council funded [Green Libraries Manifesto](#), and have committed to:

- **bring environmental sustainability to the heart of decision making.** We pledge to work towards making environmental thinking and values central to what we do. We will work with decision-makers in our organisations to push for ambitious, credible and publicly-communicated environmental commitment and action, aligned with local environmental and climate change ambitions, targets and plans where relevant. Where possible, we will work with others to learn from and share best environmental practice
- **innovate and evolve.** We will work to evolve environmental practice across core Library functions and practices and to test and explore new and innovative approaches and solutions for positive environmental change
- **work with our communities.** We will learn from and support local green initiatives and work with them and others to empower our local communities to take positive environmental action. We will provide a safe and open environment for learning, sharing ideas and discussing the climate and environmental crisis and how we can work towards a better future for planet and people. In doing so, we will use creative and innovative approaches to connect with diverse and under-represented groups
- **use our voice for more impact.** We will use our unique reach and position of trust to share and help people find verified information, to combat climate disinformation, improve climate and environmental literacy and understanding and help develop critical thinking for all ages. By providing up-to-date and accurate information, we will help people navigate the often-complex language and concepts around climate and environmental issues and make better-informed environmental choices
- **work in partnership.** We will form partnerships with other like-minded organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors to enhance the positive impact of green programmes and initiatives. We will use our spaces and networks to convene groups to discuss and take meaningful action for planet and people
- **grow and share our knowledge.** We will continually expand our environmental understanding. We will prioritise training and professional development that empowers staff to take positive action and develop environmentally sustainable practices in their own sphere of work. We will support collective, sector-wide environmental action, including promoting the role of libraries in supporting positive change
- **support young people.** We will support children and young people to be leaders in a green and just transition and to take action at home, at school, in communities, and in the workplace. We will assist them to participate in environmental debate and ensuring that their voices are heard.