

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Queen's University Belfast is committing to achieving net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2040. This ambitious target reflects not just critical contribution that the University makes through world-leading research and education provision on sustainability, but also through its role as a social and civic leader in the transition to net zero in Northern Ireland and more widely, on the island of Ireland.

This document sets out the key principles through which the University will deliver net zero by 2040. This will be achieved by:

- taking a holistic approach to emission reductions across the institution
- aligning this work with our university values
- improving our resilience and response to the impacts of climate change
- implementing carbon offsetting where necessary
- Working collaboratively with our civic, regional and national partners

Reaching net zero emissions will require collective effort and support from all our staff, students, and external stakeholders. To achieve this, we must ensure that we integrate climate action into all that we do, including the management and care of our staff and students, the oversight of our research and teaching, and our infrastructure, assets and operations, as well through as our engagement with internal and external stakeholders. This approach will deliver a quicker, fairer and more just transition to net zero, and at the same time, improve our working practices, enhance the experience of our staff and students and support our regional, national and international engagement and reputation.

### Our emissions and Net Zero Target

Our original Carbon Management Plan was launched in 2010 and set out a strategic commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 21% by 2021. That target was surpassed within seven years with a 23% reduction in emissions achieved by 2017-2018. Whilst significant work on carbon reduction has already begun, it must be accelerated, shaped and adapted in response to regional and national climate policies and in line with best practice within the sector.

In developing our new plan, we have used our 2018-19 emissions of 105,430 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) as the baseline for future planning. From this baseline we have modelled a comprehensive series of actions which will drive the required reductions in carbon production to reduce our emissions and achieve a target of net zero by 2040. Key high-level actions to achieve this will focus on Scope 1 (direct emissions from owned or controlled sources), Scope 2 (indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy) and Scope 3 (indirect emissions from our university activities –such as procurement, travel, waste, and water).



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The actions we will take include:

- improving the energy efficiency of our buildings
- decarbonising our heating systems
- managing the use of our buildings more efficiently
- building and retrofitting to the highest sustainability standards
- implementing renewable energy technologies across our estate
- collaborating with the organisations in our supply chain to reduce the impact of what we buy
- avoiding unnecessary business-related travel and increasing uptake of sustainable travel
- reducing our waste and increasing recycling
- using our University campus as a Living Lab
- engaging the whole University community
- working in partnership with local industry, regional and national government, and NGOs.
- ensuring we meet our targets with oversight from university leadership and transparent reporting.

The climate crisis will have a significant impact on younger members of society in years to come. As a higher education institution, we have a responsibility to limit our impact on the climate crisis and to prepare students for a changing and challenging future.

As outlined in the following sections of this document, we will achieve this through a comprehensive programme focused on:

- Reducing our energy consumption (Chapter 4)
- Reducing our Scope 3 emissions – procurement, travel, waste and water (Chapter 5)
- Offsetting our remaining carbon emissions (Chapter 6)
- Developing plans for climate adaptation and resilience (Chapter 7)

## A Just Transition and sustainable approach to net zero

One of the most significant challenges facing society is climate change. With that challenge comes a broad range of socio-economic issues which must be addressed in the process of securing a sustainable future.

As detailed in our Strategy 2030, we will work with all our stakeholders to support the transition to a zero-carbon society. Such an approach not only commits us to carbon reduction strategies but also to working in ways that are fair and that leave no one behind. Our transition must be managed both holistically and proactively and in partnership with our stakeholders and communities.

As we plan ahead and take action, ending our contribution to climate change presents a unique opportunity to improve the wellbeing of our staff, students, and the communities that we serve. Our journey must be fair and supportive of better futures for our staff, students, and wider Queen's community.

