

# NIC

## Sustainability and Social Action Strategy, and Climate Action Plan 2025-26





# Executive Summary

This strategy document sets out Northampton College’s commitment to sustainability and social action, structured around three core principles: **estates, curriculum and skills, and community and social action.**

It articulates a vision of leadership in environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and educational excellence. The strategy also presents a climate action plan aligned with Department for Education (DfE) requirements, ensuring compliance and continuous progress. By embracing proactive, collaborative approaches, Northampton College aims to create lasting value for students, staff, and the wider community. This is a one-year strategy, which will be reviewed in line with the development of the new corporate strategic plan.



# OUR MISSION

To enhance the lives of our students and other customers, maximising their potential through learning.

# OUR PURPOSE

To support students and employers through outstanding education, training and skills development, to ensure their economic and social success.

# OUR VALUES

- **Strive to always be excellent**
- **Respect and support each other**
- **Put students at the heart of our college**
- **Ensure the wellbeing of staff and students, build resilience, and celebrate differences**
- **Make sure employer needs are at the heart of our plans**

**BE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY**

## Strategic aims

### 1. Quality, teaching, learning, skills

Quality remains paramount. Our highest priority is to ensure that our students achieve well and grow during their time in college so that they are ready to move on with confidence into further study, employment or self-employment.



### 2. Be an excellent learning organisation

Our aim is to use the resources available to us in the most efficient way possible so that we develop and grow through effective planning.



### 3. Be the college in the community – drive productivity and grow the economy

We are passionate about our community. The College belongs to Northamptonshire and exists to serve the interests of local people. We will listen carefully to the communities we serve and develop our offer alongside other organisations to make sure we support wider economic prosperity and productivity.



### 4. Remain financially stable

We will focus on strengthening the College's long-term financial health by sustaining investment in resources and infrastructure, keeping staff costs sustainable through improved efficiency and utilisation, and streamlining business support functions by investing in technology.



## Introduction

Northampton College is a further education college with around 8,000 students and pass rates of 95%. It is committed to building a talent pipeline of people with the skills needed for the local and national economy by providing innovative practical and technical courses including full and part-time study options and apprenticeships.

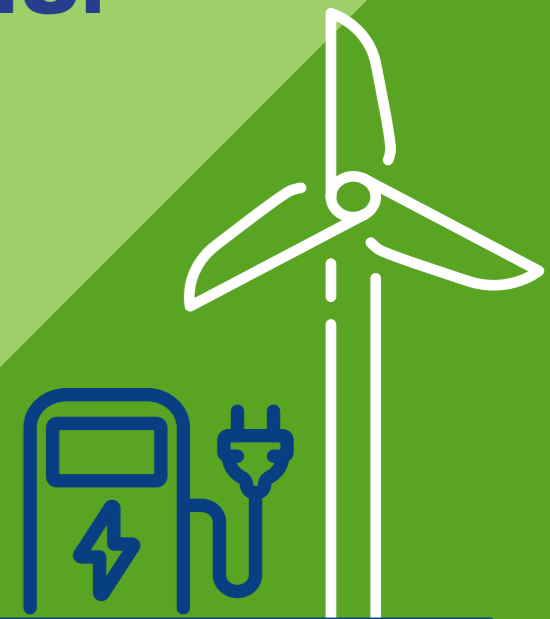
Around 94% of its students' progress to further study or employment. It works with employers and business support organisations, including Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce and the Southeast Midlands Growth Hub and other local colleges and schools, to identify and address skill needs and gaps. Its curriculum and events are also heavily influenced by publications which identify skill needs, such as the region's Local Skills Improvement Plan and the national Industrial Strategy.

Northampton College is one of the leading colleges in the country and last year it was rated Good by Ofsted which praised it for creating a 'culture of excellence'. **It has won multiple regional and national awards and been shortlisted for international awards. These include sustainability awards, including a Green Gown in 2023, Pearson awards, which are widely recognised as the Oscars of the education world, and the Teaching Excellence Framework Silver Award for its student experience and 'very high-quality' student outcomes.**



# WE SUPPORT THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL AMBITION TO CREATE A GREEN ECONOMY WITH SUSTAINABLE JOBS, ENERGY-EFFICIENT BUILDINGS, GREEN TRANSPORT, ACCESS TO NATURE AND A THRIVING CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND THE UN'S GOALS TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH CUTTING EMISSIONS.

This is highlighted through our NC Great Big Green Week, which is held at the start of the academic year providing a clear focus and ambition to all staff and students. We have mapped our provision against the UN Sustainable Goals and we continue to develop new provision in Hydrogen, EV charging and technical green skills supporting the growth of the clean energy sector.



We promote sustainable careers in our £550,000 Green Skills Centre and Green House Project Learning Lab which students designed and built using sustainable construction skills, and through our Ignite the Spark sustainability educational programmes attended by hundreds of school students annually. Our campuses generate a low carbon footprint through efficient building management systems including a green sedum roof, LED lighting, biomass heating and photovoltaic solar panels.

We provide electric vehicle charging points, secure cycle points, a student bus pass bursary, staff car sharing incentives and cycling initiatives. We maintain outdoor learning spaces, including The Lagoon protected conservation area, which sustains breeding birds and pondlife, and we have implemented a new market garden project for our SEND and ESOL students. We promote the circular economy through reusable bottles and coffee cup initiatives in our canteens, hundreds of paper-recycling bins, converting food waste into biofuel, recycling waste metal and Swap Shop clothing events. **All of the College's waste is recycled.**



# IN PLANNING OUR APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY, WE CONSIDER:



## ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE:

how the college is preparing for and responding to the impacts of climate change



## BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE:

efforts to protect and enhance nature and wildlife within the setting and its surroundings



## CLIMATE EDUCATION AND GREEN SKILLS:

how students are supported to understand climate change, sustainability, and develop relevant skills



## DECARBONISATION AND NET ZERO:

actions to measure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, working towards net zero

**Sustainability and social action are central to Northampton College's ethos and strategic direction. In the face of climate change, ecological degradation, and social inequality, educational institutions play a pivotal role in shaping resilient, responsible societies.** This strategy responds to national and global challenges, aligning with the DfE Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy, and reflecting both statutory obligations and our moral imperative to lead by example, following the guidance of the FE Climate Roadmap and engaging with sector organisations such as SS4FE, AoC Sustainability Reference Group and EAUC. The following plan outlines clear, actionable steps to embed sustainability across campus operations, curriculum, and community engagement.



# CORE PRINCIPLE OVERVIEW

Our approach is anchored in three interconnected principles:



## ESTATES

Managing our physical environment sustainably to minimise environmental impact and maximise resource efficiency.

## CURRICULUM AND SKILLS

Integrating sustainability into teaching, learning, and professional development, equipping staff and students with green skills for the future, needed for all roles, not just the clean energy sector.

## COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ACTION

Strengthening partnerships, outreach, and volunteering to enhance social impact and foster collaborative solutions.

# Estates Strategy

## **Sustainable Campus Operations & Development**

We are committed to undertaking a thorough review of campus operations with the ambition of developing a comprehensive Net Zero Plan.

This will involve identifying and implementing opportunities to significantly reduce energy and water consumption, enhance operational efficiency, and minimise waste across all areas. Furthermore, all new buildings and refurbishments will be designed to meet the highest environmental standards, such as BREEAM or equivalent accreditation, ensuring every aspect of our estate supports our journey towards net zero emissions.

## **Energy Efficiency**

Continue to implement energy-saving technologies (LED lighting, smart controls), invest in renewable energy sources (solar panels, heat pumps), and monitor usage to ensure continuous improvement. Once the Net Zero Plan has been developed and implemented, we can set clear targets to improve our overall energy efficiency

## **Waste Management**

Continue with our robust recycling and composting programmes, eliminating single-use plastics, and promote circular economy principles. Partner with stakeholders to ensure responsible disposal and recovery of materials.

## **Transport**

Encourage sustainable travel through improved cycling facilities, electric vehicle charging points, and incentives for public transport use. Explore the feasibility of college-owned electric fleet vehicles for operations.

## **Biodiversity**

Enhance campus green spaces, plant native species, and create habitats for wildlife. Launch biodiversity awareness campaigns and involve students in conservation projects. Implement the market garden project for SEND and ESOL students, which encourages students to develop knowledge and skills in this area.



# Curriculum and Skills Strategy

## Embedding Sustainability in Teaching and Learning

Review and revise curricula to incorporate sustainability concepts across all subject areas, ensuring that every student develops an understanding of environmental, social, and economic impacts relevant to their field.

## Staff Development

Provide ongoing training and professional development for staff on sustainable practices and pedagogies. Establish a network of sustainability ambassadors within departments to share best practice.

## Student Engagement

Create opportunities for students to participate in sustainability initiatives, including project-based learning, eco-societies, and competitions.

Recognise and reward student contributions to sustainability. Explore college wide programmes for all students, either through a bespoke sustainability literacy or environmental leadership programme. Build community initiatives into every study programme.

## Green Skills

Expand provision for green skills courses, including in-work upskilling, apprenticeships, and work placements in sectors such as clean energy industries, sustainable construction, environmental management, green finance and sustainability business skills. Collaborate with employers to align training with local and national labour market needs.



# Community and Social Action Strategy

## Partnerships

Establish and strengthen partnerships with local businesses, charities, schools, and public sector organisations to co-deliver sustainability and social action initiatives. Participate in regional and national networks to share learning and maximise impact.

## Outreach

Deliver community workshops, campaigns, and events to raise awareness of sustainability issues and promote positive behaviour change. Continuing to be the 'College in the community', instilling that ethos in all internal and external stakeholders.

## Volunteering

Develop structured volunteering programmes for students and staff, focusing on projects that deliver measurable social and environmental benefits.

## Social Impact Initiatives

Support and scale up initiatives addressing social challenges such as food poverty, digital exclusion, and mental health, ensuring that sustainability is embedded in all social action, linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and NC Skills.



# Climate Action Plan

## DfE Requirements

The climate action plan meets DfE Sustainability and Climate Change requirements, including:

- Establishing a Sustainability Lead and governance structure
- Setting clear, measurable targets for carbon reduction
- Integrating sustainability into decision-making processes
- Reporting annually on progress and outcomes
- Engaging staff, students, and stakeholders in climate action

## Monitoring and Reporting

Implement robust systems for data collection and analysis.

Publish annual sustainability reports, which are scrutinised by the Corporation and hold regular review meetings with the leadership team.

Use feedback loops to refine actions and ensure transparency.

## Continuous Improvement

Embed a culture of continuous improvement, encouraging innovation and responsiveness to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Regularly review policies, practices, and progress against targets.

## Implementation and Governance

Assign clear roles and responsibilities, with oversight from a Sustainability Steering Group chaired by the Sustainability Lead.

Develop a detailed implementation timeline, with annual milestones and periodic reviews. Ensure that sustainability is integrated into strategic planning, budgeting, and risk management.

**TO ENSURE ROBUST DELIVERY OF OUR SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENTS, NORTHAMPTON COLLEGE HAS IDENTIFIED NINE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES WITHIN ITS CLIMATE ACTION PLAN. EACH OBJECTIVE IS SUPPORTED BY TARGETED ACTIONS, CLEAR ACCOUNTABILITY, DEFINED TIMELINES, AND TRANSPARENT PROGRESS MONITORING.**

Objective	Actions	Responsibility	Timeline	RAG Rating
<b>Appoint a Sustainability Lead</b>	Recruit and designate an ELT member to oversee sustainability and social action	Principal & CEO	Completed (Q1 2025) Deputy Principal – Curriculum and Success has been appointed	●
<b>Engage External Consultants for Net Zero Plan</b>	Commission specialists to audit carbon footprint and develop a Net Zero roadmap.	Head of Estates	Completed (Q3 2025)	●
<b>Promote Sustainability &amp; Green Skills via NC Great Big Green Week</b>	Theme week implemented and all teams have undertaken activities	Deputy Principal – Curriculum and Success	Completed (Q3 2025)	●
<b>Appoint a Lead Governor for Sustainability and Social Action</b>	Review all curriculum, identifying core green skills and social action opportunities	Chair of Governors and Principal and CEO	Completed (Q3 2025)	●
<b>Invest in Green Skills Centre &amp; Renewable Technology</b>	Upgrade training facilities and equipment; secure OfS funding to support expansion.	Deputy Principal – Curriculum and Success	Ongoing (Phase 2: Q4 2025)	●
<b>Communicate, celebrate and share evidence of best practice – internally and externally</b>	Develop either digital or printed portfolio of evidence which supports annual report	Deputy Principal – Curriculum and Success	Planned (Q4 2025 and Q1 2026)	●
<b>Improve Sustainability Awareness and Training for Staff</b>	Deliver mandatory sustainability training and workshops for all staff members.	Deputy Principal – Curriculum Success	Planned (Q4 2025 and 2026)	●
<b>Develop Employer-Responsive Courses &amp; Programmes</b>	Design and launch new curriculum aligned with industry needs and sustainability priorities.	Deputy Principal – Curriculum and Success	Planned (2026)	●
<b>Sustainability and Social Action Lead</b>	Create and appoint a new post to support with the operational implementation of this and further strategies	Deputy Principal – Curriculum and Success	Planned (2026)	●
<b>Net Zero Targets</b>	Set clear Net Zero Targets based on the development and implementation on the new plan	Deputy Principal – Finance and Resources	Planned (2026)	●

Progress against these objectives will be reviewed annually, by the student parliament, executive leadership team and the corporation, with RAG ratings updated to reflect achievements and areas for improvement.

**This transparent approach ensures accountability and drives continuous advancement in sustainability across the College.**

## Conclusion

**Northampton College reaffirms its commitment to sustainability and social action through this comprehensive strategy and climate action plan.** By working collaboratively across estates, curriculum, and community engagement, and aligning with DfE requirements, the College will drive meaningful change and deliver lasting benefits for students, staff, and the wider community. The leadership team is invited to endorse and champion this strategy, ensuring Northampton College remains at the forefront of sustainability in further education.





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