



# STUDENTS' SUSTAINABILITY DEMANDS

SUMMARY REPORT FROM LUSU  
GREEN'S CLIMATE CONFERENCE



MAY 2025





# FOREWORD



## JACK WATSON

LVSU INTERIM PRESIDENT AND ACTIVITIES OFFICER

*This year's Climate Conference was a fantastic opportunity for students to discuss shaping the decisions that we make, and is another positive step in Lancaster's journey to a sustainable future.*



## HARRISON STEWART

LVSU EDUCATION OFFICER

*I've been really pleased to see so many voices pitching in to help shape key decisions in the sustainability space at Lancaster. Students are crucial stakeholders in Lancaster's journey and I'm excited to see how we can continue to be involved in the future.*





# INTRODUCTION



This report outlines the sustainability demands of Lancaster University's students, identified during LUSU Green's **2025 Climate Conference**.

On Tuesday 20th May, LUSU Green hosted the first Climate Conference at Lancaster University. It aimed to provide a platform for students to share their perspectives on the University's approach to **climate action** and to collaboratively generate a set of proposals for **institutional change**.

This report firstly explains the methodology behind the conference, before outlining the **Top 5 Student Sustainability Demands** students want to see implemented. After that, student attitudes towards the University's climate performance across key thematic areas: **Food, Nature and Biodiversity, Travel and Transport, Waste and Circular Economy**, along with any additional topics raised during the event, are discussed.

## TOP 5 STUDENT DEMANDS

- 1) Expansion of the “**Don't Ditch It, Donate It**” Project
- 2) Increased availability of affordable, **plant-based** food options
- 3) A **sustainability induction** for all students
- 4) Greater support for grassroots **environmental efforts** i.e., LUSU Green, Rewilding Campus and student environmental societies
- 5) **Rewilding** of campus and Forrest Hills

The report outlines the rationale behind the five demands, as articulated by the students, while also capturing the breadth of ideas and concerns expressed throughout the conference.



# METHODOLOGY

The 26 attendees were divided across four themed tables: **Food, Nature and Biodiversity, Travel and Transport, and Waste and Circular Economy.**

These themes were selected as they represent some of the University's most significant contributors to climate change, aside from Energy - a sector where Lancaster University is already making strong progress through initiatives such as the Net Zero Energy project, the solar farm, and the wind turbine. An additional table was provided to capture ideas that fell outside the main thematic categories.

Participants had **10 minutes** to discuss and respond to three guiding questions. These focused on:

**1) Current practices** - What is working well, and what isn't?

**2) Barriers to sustainability** - What challenges exist?

**3) Opportunities** - What actions could improve sustainability within this theme in relation to the climate crisis?



Once attendees had rotated through each table and shared their insights, facilitators recorded the top three ideas most frequently suggested by students for each theme. These ideas were written on A4 sheets and displayed on a wall ahead of the final voting session.

Each attendee was given **five votes** to allocate to their top 5 ideas across all themes. The five ideas receiving the most votes became the **Top 5 Student Sustainability Demands**, which form the core of this report.



# DEMAND NUMBER 1:

## EXPANSION OF "DON'T DITCH IT, DONATE IT" PROJECT

While students shared positive anecdotes towards the initiative's ability to reduce waste and create a circular economy on campus, there was an overwhelming sense of frustration at the project's contraction from previous years. Students outlined the fact that this year, there are two donation points at the ECOHub and the Waste Compound, open for set hours on certain days, compared to previously being containers at each college, open 24/7. Concerns were raised about the possibility of donations going to waste, due to the donation hubs no longer being the most convenient option.

## WHAT DO STUDENTS WANT TO SEE CHANGE?

BRING BACK  
CONTAINERS

KITCHEN &  
BEDDING PACKS

24/7 OPENING  
TIMES

1 KITCHEN PACK PER FLAT (AVOID UTENSIL REPLICATION)

As well as bringing back containers, 24/7 opening times and kitchen and bedding packs, a new idea was to have one kitchen pack per flat. Each pack would contain utensils and crockery to share - gathered from the project - rather than each student buying new on arrival



# DEMAND NUMBER 2:

## INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE, PLANT-BASED FOOD

Students praised the Cheap Eats options at Pendle Brew and Marketplace - affordable, plant-based meals that are both nutritious and budget-friendly. However, beyond these locations, students felt that healthy, tasty plant-based options were limited. There was a clear appetite to see the success of Cheap Eats replicated in every college and food outlet on campus.

In fact, one of the most popular long-term ideas was for Lancaster University to transition to fully plant-based catering. Students saw this as a bold but necessary step to align the University's food services with its climate goals. They emphasised that expanding plant-based meals also promotes health, reduces food costs, and supports ethical food systems.

## WHAT DO STUDENTS WANT TO SEE CHANGE?

100% PLANT-BASED CATERING

CHEAP EATS IN ALL OUTLETS

AFFORDABLE PLANT-BASED FOOD

BETTER ADVERTISEMENT OF HEALTH & ENV BENEFITS



# DEMAND NUMBER 3:

## A SUSTAINABILITY INDUCTION FOR ALL STUDENTS

Students wish to see the creation of a sustainability induction for all new students and staff, aimed at raising awareness of sustainable practices, resources and expectations on campus and in the local community.

This idea emerged from the Waste and Circular Economy table, where there was a growing frustration with the continued use of single-use plastic and unclear recycling guidance across campus.

Students felt that the induction could inspire students to engage in sustainable behaviours through clear guidance and monetary incentives e.g. 20p off hot drinks when using your own cup scheme, as well as sign posting environment volunteering opportunities

## WHAT DO STUDENTS WANT TO SEE IN THE INDUCTION?

SUSTAINABLE  
SHOPS GUIDE

GUIDANCE ON RE-  
USE, RECYCLING  
AND WASTE

SUSTAINABLE  
ORGANISATIONS,  
GROUPS, SOCIETIES

HOLD OUTLETS TO ACCOUNT E.G. COSTA, GREGGS



# DEMAND NUMBER 4:

## GREATER SUPPORT FOR GRASSROOTS ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORTS

Students praised the work of the Grounds Team, as well as grassroots efforts by LUSU Green, Rewilding Campus and Edible Campus in enhancing biodiversity across campus.

Despite this, students argued that to meet the University's net zero plan, there is a need for increased funding and resources for these groups. With better support from the University and LUSU, these groups could undertake larger projects and engage a wider demographic.

Students expressed a strong desire to see more visible promotion of the events by these groups via the University channels such as Instagram and the Student Portal to help increase awareness, student involvement and climate action.

## WHAT DO STUDENTS WANT TO SEE CHANGE?

MORE  
ADVERTISEMENT  
FROM UNI

INCREASED  
FUNDING FOR  
GROUPS

MORE  
COLLABORATION  
BETWEEN GROUPS

CROSS-SOCIETY ANIMAL MONITORING SCHEMES



# DEMAND NUMBER 5:

## REWILDING OF CAMPUS AND FORREST HILLS

While there was praise for the tree planting undertaken at Forrest Hills by LUSU Green, and previously Green Lancaster, students believed that this action alone will not be enough to achieve the University's net zero targets. Some students also pointed out how the net zero energy project removed trees ahead of construction (which the University has already declared they more than compensate for).

Given the extensive land the University owns at Forrest Hills, students wish to see the University embark on a comprehensive rewilding strategy, viewing this as a key opportunity to enhance biodiversity, sequester carbon and reduce flood risk.

Concerns were also raised about the proliferation of invasive species on campus e.g. Himalayan balsam and rhododendron. Students said that rewilding efforts should seek to remove these species to preserve local ecology

## WHAT DO STUDENTS WANT TO SEE HAPPEN?

TREE PLANTING AT  
FORREST HILLS

REMOVAL OF  
INVASIVE SPECIES

SCHEME TO  
OFFSET RESIDUAL  
EMISSIONS



# THEMES:

This next section has outlines the findings from each theme: Food, Nature and Biodiversity, Travel and Transport, Waste and Circular Economy, plus other feedback on climate action beyond these themes

## FOOD:

Students praised the value of initiatives like **Supper Club** and the **LUSU Pantry**, and many praised the affordable, plant-based "**Cheap Eats**" options at Pendle Brew and Marketplace. These were seen as both accessible and sustainable. However, beyond these examples, students felt that **healthy vegan options were still too limited** across campus. Given the popularity and success of "Cheap Eats", there was a strong desire to see its expansion across the University (see Demand Number 2).

A recurring concern was the lack of clear information, with many students unaware of sustainable options, health benefits, or the environmental impact of food choices. Students argued that **misconceptions** around sustainability - such as the belief that sustainable or plant-based food is always more expensive - also hindered wider adoption

Students also expressed frustration with practical barriers, such as **poorly advertised communal kitchens** and a **lack of hot water taps**, arguing that these further restrict students' ability to cook or prepare their own meals sustainably.



Picture: Students want to see the Cheap Eats scheme implemented at every outlet



# IDEAS TO MAKE FOOD MORE SUSTAINABLE AT LU

- **Expand affordable plant-based options** across all campus eateries
- Improve education and awareness, including clearer nutritional and sustainability information, and better promotion of facilities such as hot water points and shared kitchens.
- Tackle food waste by **expanding the Too Good To Go scheme** and encouraging cafes and restaurants to donate unsold food
- Introduce a **deposit-return scheme for cups**, improve compostable bin provision, and **better advertise incentives like the 20p discount for using reusable cups**.
- **Expand composting facilities** beyond ECOHub and offer educational workshops to engage students in waste reduction.
- **Launch educational campaigns** on issues such as food miles, potentially using a ranking or rating system to highlight lower-impact options.
- Reimagine Forrest Hills as a vegetable farm to support local, sustainable food sourcing.
- Create **college vegetable patches and community gardens**, with produce sold at farmers' markets and used for sustainability workshops.
- Develop a clear and accountable **ethical food procurement policy** for large suppliers and corporations.
- **Incentivise plant-based choices** through pricing strategies -such as a "meat tax" - and rewards for sustainable food decisions.
- Replace large chains such as Costa with University- or SU-run outlets that prioritise ethical and sustainable practices.



# NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY:

As outlined in Demand Number 4 and Demand Number 5, students wish to see more support for grassroots efforts and for rewilding to take place at Forrest Hills.

There was overall a **positive impression by students** on the nature and biodiversity of the University. **Although, most said a lot more could be done**, with **more resource for grassroots groups** (see Demand Number 4), and **rewilding Forrest Hills** (see Demand Number 5) being the most popular ideas.

**Students praised the amount and care of the green spaces on campus**, albeit many mentioned the sheer number of invasive species across campus, specifically **Himalayan balsam and rhododendron**, which are **inhibiting biodiversity**.

**Students praised the work of Rewilding Campus, LUSU Green,** the **Similarly, students felt that there could be a lot more advertisement from the University** for these events, enhancing knowledge of students and cultivating a sense of care for the campus. There were anecdotal stories of students getting too close to the otters and nesting birds, with further information such as **QR codes along the woodland walk** and cross-society animal monitoring schemes being suggested as possible management solutions.



Picture: Forrest Hills. Students want to see more reforestation and rewilding taking place here



# IDEAS TO ENHANCE NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY:

- **Increase funding and promotion** of environmental groups and events (e.g., LUSU Green, Edible Campus, Rewilding Campus)
- Utilise University-owned land for rewilding, especially at Forrest Hills - enhancing biodiversity, sequestering carbon and reducing flooding
- **Highlight local partnerships** like Leighton Moss and Fairfield Nature Reserve
- **Use QR codes along woodland walks** to educate on local wildlife and biodiversity
- Include woodland walks and **nature-focused mindfulness in Welcome Week**
- Promote awareness of proper interactions with wildlife (e.g., not disturbing nesting birds or otters)
- Appoint a **College Environmental Leader** in each college e.g., JCR
- Launch a **ranger scheme** (Wildlife Champions) for biodiversity monitoring and education
- Set up **collaborative animal monitoring projects** between societies
- Expand growing spaces beyond the ECOHub (e.g., college allotments)
- Establish **natural wildflower meadows** across camps to support invertebrate populations



Picture: LUSU Green & Grounds Team delivering a volunteering session removing Himalayan Balsam



# TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT:

Travel accounts for **21,309 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e**, making up **28.9%** of Lancaster University's total carbon footprint - highlighting a significant area for reduction. This is broken down into three main categories:

- 14.9% from student travel to and from the UK
- 7.6% from staff and student commuting
- 5.8% from business and academic travel

While the **free Sainsbury's shuttle bus was appreciated**, students **expressed frustration with Stagecoach** services and the **lack of viable cycling infrastructure** on and around campus. The main concerns with Stagecoach were **unreliability and poor service**, making public transport a less attractive option.

**Views on the campus bike hire scheme were mixed** - some students praised it, while others found it **too expensive**, with many **unaware the scheme even existed**.

When informed about the subsidised bus travel available to University staff, **students expressed strong frustration**, arguing that financial support should prioritise students, who typically face tighter budgets and greater transport barriers.

One student also questioned the accuracy of the University's reporting on student travel emissions, claiming that **most international students travel during the year** (not just at the start and end) - suggesting a larger figure than the 14.9% figure provided.

**Students also wanted safer cycling routes to the University**. While the University's ability to influence infrastructure like the A6 is limited, students felt there is still significant room for the institution to lead on sustainable transport initiatives.



# IDEAS TO IMPROVE TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT:

- **Introduce discounted student bus passes** to make travel more affordable.
- **Discourage driving** by implementing a frequent-use parking fee.
- Organise more **university-sponsored bus trips to nearby national parks** and local destinations
- **Extend bus pass access** to employees of campus-based companies.
- Establish a **university-operated bus service to challenge Stagecoach's monopoly**, offering a student-friendly alternative similar to the Sugarbus or Sainsbury's shuttle. Consider a student-led boycott of Stagecoach.
- Create a **dedicated on-campus hub for bike rentals and purchases**
- **Guided cycle tours into town** to teach safe and efficient routes.
- Launch an **incentive program for sports clubs to travel sustainably** to matches, with refunds or rewards for eco-friendly transport choices.
- Explore the feasibility of a train station nearer to campus to eliminate the need to backtrack into Lancaster.
- **Advocate for a dedicated cycle lane along the A6** for safer and more accessible bike commuting.
- **Adjust academic timetables so that second- and third-year students have fewer, more concentrated in-person days on campus** (e.g., five-hour blocks once or twice a week rather than daily short sessions).



- Develop a **carpooling scheme** specifically for students to reduce solo car journeys and emissions.

Picture: Stagecoach bus. Students expressed frustration at their expensive service



# WASTE AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY:

When discussing waste and the circular economy, **students expressed strong support for the University's 20p discount on drinks purchased with a reusable cup and praised ReStore.** However, they felt both lacked visibility and suggested that **increased promotion**, alongside the introduction of **more refill-style programs**, could enhance their impact.

Students also appreciated **LUSU Green's Sewing Cafés** but wished they occurred **more frequently** and better advertised.

The **Don't Ditch It, Donate It** project received **positive feedback**, though **many voiced frustration over its reduced presence** since 2023. Concerns were raised about the **limited number of donation points** and **shorter operating hours**, which risked donations being wasted due to inconvenience (see Demand Number 1).

There was also **clear dissatisfaction with the continued use of single-use plastics on campus** - one student claimed continue use of polystyrene packaging at Barker House Farm - and a **lack of clear guidance on recycling**. Students urged the University to hold campus retailers like Spar and Sultans more accountable for **unsustainable practices**. Many noted the **absence of Tetrapak recycling** as a particular disappointment.



Picture: Many praised the Don't Ditch It project, while also sharing major concerns about the impact of this year's project's reduced donation points and opening times



# IDEAS TO REDUCE WASTE AND CREATE A CIRCULAR ECONOMY:

- Hold **weekly repair cafés** to promote a repair and reuse culture, including opportunities to repair electrical goods
- Run **Don't Ditch It, Donate It year-round with 24/7 donation points**, including in Alexandra Square.
- **Promote the 20p discount** for reusable cups and **encourage “bring your own box” habits**. Place a reusable cup in every flat to promote the scheme.
- **Encourage “refill, don't recycle”** for refill items sold in ReStore e.g. shampoo, shower gel, washing up liquid
- **Add a 20p charge for disposable cups**, introduce compostable options, and a deposit-return scheme for cups.
- **Ban plastic bottles on campus** and **install more refill stations** with a public refill map.
- **Encourage on-campus retailers like Spar to stock more sustainable products** and follow eco standards.
- **Expand food waste bin access in college kitchens and campus eateries.**
- **Upcycle old furniture** instead of purchasing new.
- Provide all new students with an **induction pack** highlighting sustainability projects, groups, and ethical businesses.



Picture: Reusable cups. Students love the 20p discount on hot drinks for using a reusable cup, but wish it was advertised better



# ADDITIONAL CLIMATE CONCERNS AND IDEAS:

This section captures feedback and ideas related to climate action that fall outside the previously covered themes. Many of the comments reflect wider ethical and political concerns, particularly around the University's partnerships and financial choices, with a significant focus on Lancaster University's relationship with BAE Systems, especially in the context of the ongoing conflict in Gaza. Students expressed a strong desire for the University to **end financial and research ties with arms manufacturers** such as BAE Systems

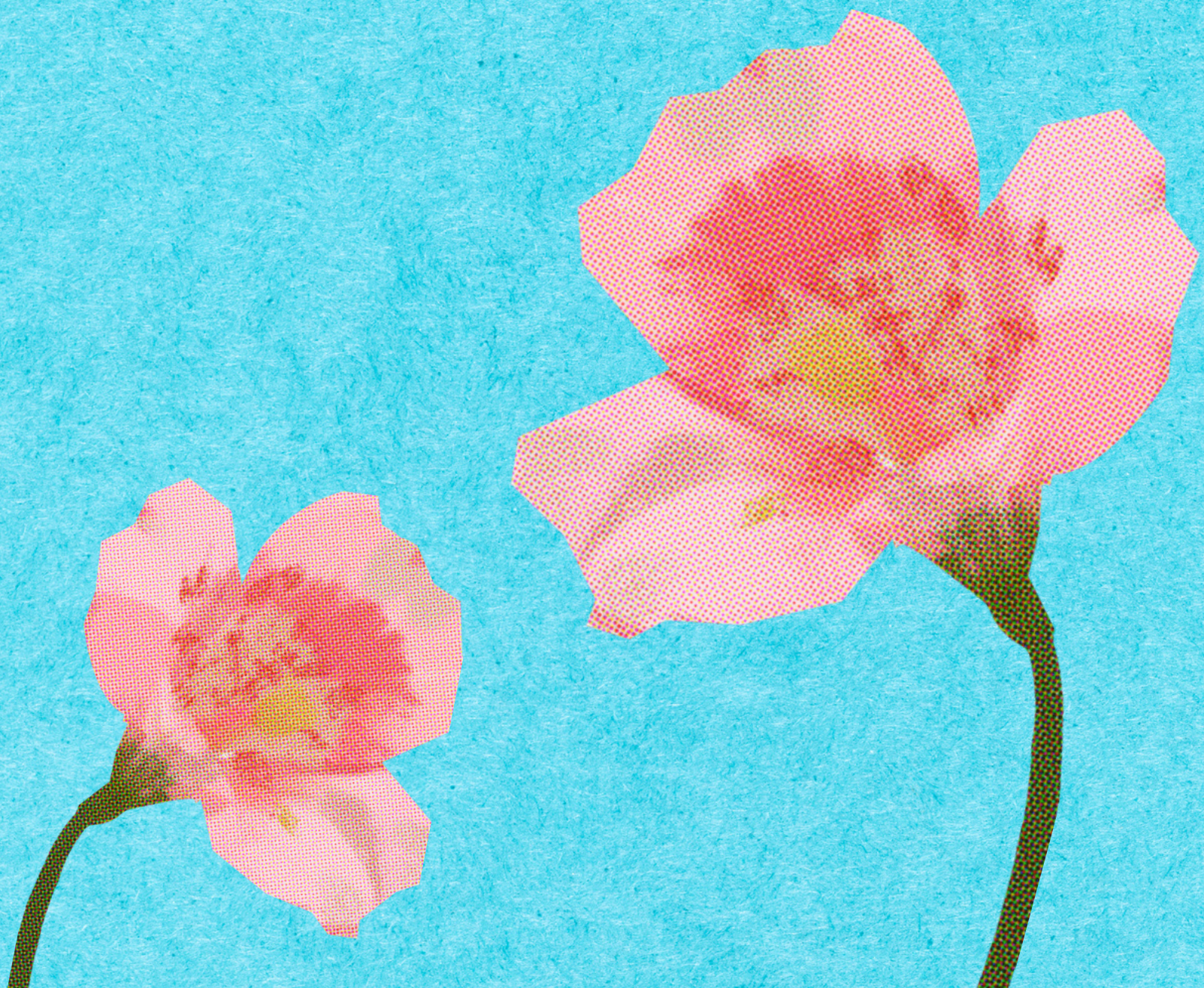
Beyond this, students raised a number of broader sustainability and justice-oriented suggestions:

- **Stop promoting careers in the fossil fuel industry** and instead provide platforms for sustainable companies
- Redirect funding away from senior management salaries toward sustainability improvements on campus
- **Install rainwater harvesting systems** for use in facilities like cooling processors or window cleaning
- Develop **inclusive teaching approaches for sustainability**, specifically tailored to disabled students and those with physical or mental health needs
- **Support and promote local sustainable businesses**, e.g. by featuring one at each Farmers' Market
- **Create interdisciplinary meet-ups for students** interested in climate and sustainability



# ADDITIONAL CLIMATE CONCERNS AND IDEAS CONTINUED:

- Create **interdisciplinary meet-ups** for students interested in climate and sustainability
- Foster **awareness and critical understanding of AI**, including its environmental impacts
- Encourage **more sustainable practices in sports**, by:
  - Ranking clubs by their carbon footprint
  - Offering funding incentives for low-impact clubs
  - Promoting carbon offsetting initiatives for travel, such as volunteering in exchange for high-emission trips.
  - Framing environmental action positively through campaigns like “Be a Champion”.





# CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this report has outlined students' sustainability views and demands to the University, captured at LUSU Green's Climate Conference. The top 5 sustainability demands from students are as follows:

- 1) Expansion of the "**Don't Ditch It, Donate It**" Project
- 2) Increased availability of affordable, **plant-based** food options
- 3) A **sustainability induction** for all students
- 4) Greater support for grassroots **environmental efforts** i.e., Grounds Team, LUSU Green, and student environmental societies
- 5) **Rewilding** of campus and Forrest Hills

We thank all of the contributors to the Climate Conference, including Dr Mirian Calvo (Lecturer in Participatory Architecture), Susanna Dart (Climate Change Policy Officer at Lancaster City Council), Natalie Bauer (Sustainability Team Marketing), Jack Watson (LUSU Interim President) and Harrison Stewart (LUSU Education Officer). Scott, Anna, Phoebe and Laura from LUSU Green look forward to working with the University to try and get these ideas implemented.

## NEXT STEPS:

- LUSU Green to meet with Sustainability Team to discuss implementation
- LUSU Green to meet with LUSU Interim President to discuss ideas LUSU can implement

If you have any feedback, please give LUSU Green an email at [lusugreen@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:lusugreen@lancaster.ac.uk). If you have any questions for the Sustainability Team, their email is: [sustainability@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:sustainability@lancaster.ac.uk)