The views provided reflect our thinking at a point in time. Sustainability is a journey, and we keep adapting our approach to be as effective as possible, based on the latest research and in dialogue with the LSE community.

When will LSE become carbon neutral / net-zero?

LSE takes a systematic approach to **measure**, **reduce** and **mitigate** its carbon emissions.

We are working hard to reduce our carbon footprint, through investment in energy efficiency and other measures. We will also mitigate our carbon emissions when possible as an interim measure. We have set ourselves challenging carbon targets and continue to review those.

LSE's carbon targets

Become a carbon-neutral university from 2020/21 for all the emissions we currently measure (Scope 1 & 2 for our energy use, and Scope 3 for water, waste and business travel), using carbon reduction offsets to mitigate the emissions we have not yet reduced or avoided.

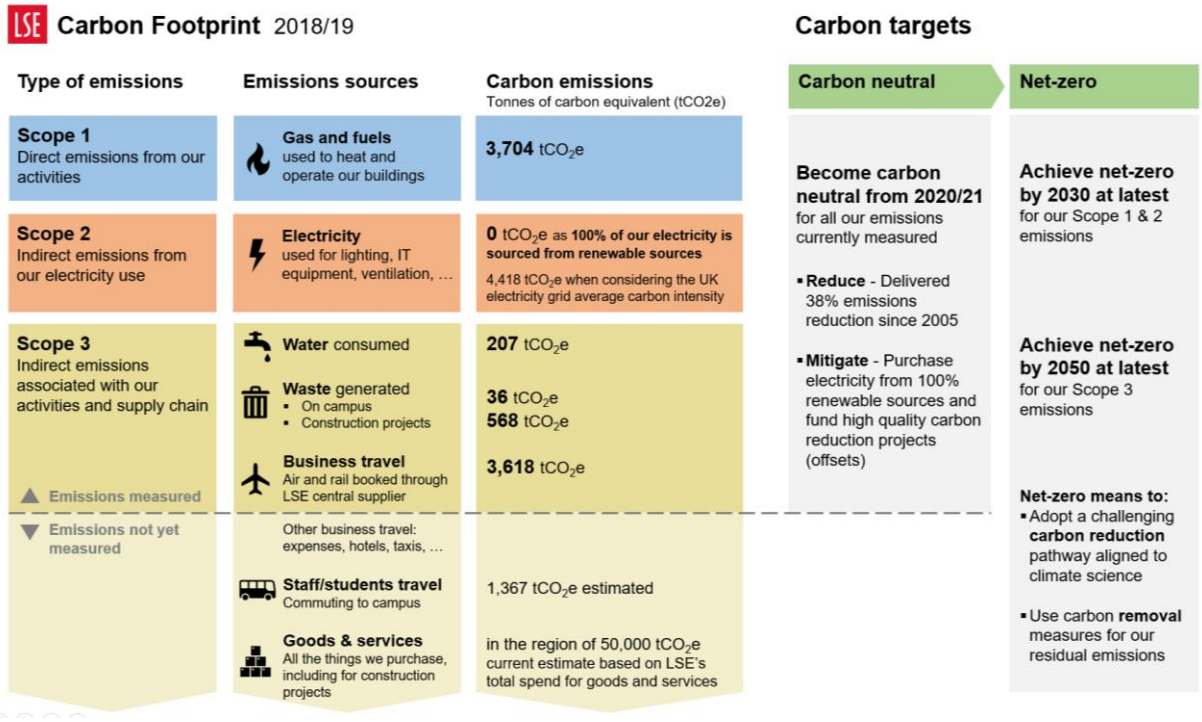
Achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest, and by 2030 for our energy use (Scope 1 & 2), adopting a challenging carbon reduction pathway aligned to climate science and using carbon removal measures for our residual emissions.

What is LSE doing to reduce its carbon emissions?

LSE has been measuring its carbon emissions since 2005, using internationally recognised methodologies and official UK Government carbon conversion factors. Accurately measuring our carbon footprint including the emissions linked to our supply chain is an ongoing project.

We have invested £4.8m since 2015 in retrofitting LSE buildings with energy-efficiency measures. We have reduced the carbon footprint of our direct emissions by 38 per cent since 2005 (Scope 1 & 2 emissions from the energy we use).

What is LSE's carbon footprint?



What is the difference between carbon neutral and net-zero?

We make an important distinction between our net-zero and carbon neutral targets.

There are several definitions for net-zero, such as provided by the IPCC. For a company it can be described as actual carbon reductions in alignment with climate science, combined with carbon removal methods for residual emissions (the 'net' in net-zero)[1]. On this basis achieving net-zero for any organisation is very challenging and will need to be supported by systemic change from all sectors of the economy.

Being carbon-neutral on the other hand is the action of mitigating the emissions an organisation currently produces, usually by purchasing carbon reduction type offsets (e.g. funding energy efficiency projects abroad), contributing to reduce emissions at a global level.

Why is LSE's net-zero target not sooner?

Our use of gas to heat our buildings and water is the main challenge to reach our 2030 target for Scope 1 & 2 emissions. While solutions are emerging for low-carbon heat, these can be very costly to adopt at scale, and most especially in a dense urban environment with limited space. We are investigating options, including for instance scope for a heat network across our buildings.

The emissions linked to our goods and services (Scope 3) rely on a vast number of suppliers. Tackling those emissions will rely on a longer process, working in partnership with our suppliers, encouraging them to make plans for going net-zero across their operations.

Why and how will LSE mitigate its emissions to become carbon neutral?

In our sustainability consultation, 86% of LSE's community agreed that *LSE should mitigate the impacts of its current carbon emissions using carbon offsets*. Carbon offsets fund carbon reduction projects (in the UK or abroad) which would otherwise be very unlikely to take place, thus supporting carbon emissions reductions at a global level. If used appropriately, carbon offsets can also be one internal tool to incentivise reductions. For instance associating a cost with carbon at business units level within LSE (as we are doing for business travel) brings more visibility to the sources of carbon emissions, and a more focused discussion on the measures needed to tackle those.

LSE will only support high-quality carbon offsetting projects which meet robust certification standards, such as Gold Standard Voluntary Emissions Reductions certified carbon offsets. Among the numerous carbon offsets standards available, the Gold Standard stands out as a high-quality option. Gold Standard is an independent, internationally recognized benchmark for carbon offset projects currently supported by 51 NGOs around the world. Gold Standard certified offsets provide robust assurance through third-party verification to ensure they deliver genuine carbon reductions, and provide social co-benefits to the communities it operates in. And we recognise the need to move to carbon removal methods over time as part of achieving net-zero. You can find more information about carbon offsets in this FAQs produced as part of the sustainability consultation.

Further resources

- LSE Sustainability team – What we do - Carbon and Energy
- LSE Sustainability consultation, March 2020– Key findings report, p10 - Offsetting
- LSE Carbon Offsets Q&As (February 2020)

[1] https://www.carbontrust.com/news-and-events/insights/net-zero-an-ambition-in-need-of-a-definition