

King's College London Statement on Decarbonisation and the role of Carbon Offsetting

February 2025

Summary

This statement sets out King's College London's position on reducing carbon emissions and the role of carbon offsetting. We anticipate that offsetting may play a role in achieving our goal for decarbonisation of our estates and operations but that our current focus should be on emissions reduction of our own activities.

Context

A carbon offset is a way to compensate for emissions by funding an equivalent carbon dioxide reduction or removal elsewhere. King's is responsible for substantial emissions of greenhouse gases through our everyday operations, mainly by consuming energy to heat, cool and light our buildings and facilities, through our travel and the waste we generate, and through the goods and services we purchase. The University has had a strategy for reducing its carbon emissions since 2006 and has worked on the assumption that carbon offsetting would likely play a role in meeting any net zero objective by 2030. As we approach 2030, we want to clarify our position on carbon offsetting and the contribution it could make to our overall net zero strategy.

In line with the [Oxford Offsetting Principles](#) (2024 revision), our approach to offsetting will be transparent, reported on internally and externally and will avoid negative social impacts. We recognise that if not managed well, offsetting can simply transfer the problem and cause harm elsewhere. Equally, we believe that responsible offsetting can play a role in compensating unavoidable residual emissions while driving co-benefits in social value, improving biodiversity and catalysing positive change in value chains.

The Carbon Offsetting Working Group was commissioned in February 2024 by the King's Climate & Sustainability (KCS) Steering Group to develop a clear approach to carbon offsetting for the whole University.

King's statement on decarbonisation and the use of carbon offsetting

We recognise that high quality carbon emissions offsetting will play a future role in King's achieving its decarbonisation plans. In common with others, we believe that the use of carbon emissions offsets should be limited to residual emissions – those operational emissions which cannot be reduced with current technologies and ways of doing things.

While we continue to have substantial carbon emissions which we could reduce using available technologies and practices, we believe our focus should be on decarbonising the University's activities, whether in our own operations or by working with more sustainable suppliers.

Carbon offsetting should not be part of climate action by King's until we have made further progress with our own emissions reduction efforts, except where our funders require it. This means that we will:

- Recommit to strengthened decarbonisation actions at King's.
- Develop a fully costed decarbonisation pathway for King's and keep this under review, including on-going assessments of our residual carbon emissions and subject to affordability.
- Integrate carbon reductions ambitions into our investment and operational decisions.
- Work towards the introduction of an internal carbon price and carbon budgets across King's to inform decision making and enhance transparency.

- Enhance our carbon reporting, aiming to be fully transparent about our emissions and pathway to net zero.
- Regularly review our approach and impact and consult our community on any substantial changes.
- Decide on the appropriate time to begin offsetting residual emissions no later than 2030.
- Strengthen our collaborations with partners to promote decarbonisation, standardised reporting, internal carbon pricing, carbon budgeting and high-quality offsetting.

Action on decarbonisation at King's

We have been working on decarbonisation at King's since we adopted our first Carbon Management Plan in 2006. We set a target then of reducing Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 50% by 2020, achieving a 53% reduction by 2019/20. In 2023, King's published its first [Climate & Sustainability Action Plan](#), setting new, more ambitious targets for sustainability, including on carbon emissions. A headline target was to reduce Scope 1 and 2 emissions by a further 50% by 2030, from the 2018/19 baseline. The action plan is reviewed annually, as we monitor our progress and adjust our actions.

Recent climate action includes increasing energy efficiency through technology upgrades including LED lighting upgrades and chiller controls, alongside behaviour change campaigns and decarbonising our electricity supply. In 2019, King's was one of 20 universities to sign a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with onshore wind farms in Scotland and Wales, the first deal of its kind in the country. We are also investing in more sustainable energy sources on campus, including solar panels on the roofs of some of our buildings.

We are investigating new approaches to our capital allocation processes to take account of lifetime carbon costs. Investments in our estate will be assessed on future return on investment, in terms of cost savings, income value, revenue or offset value from carbon credits, providing King's with a financial model enabling more rapid decarbonisation.