

## Green Impact 2023/24

### Evidence in Support of KN001

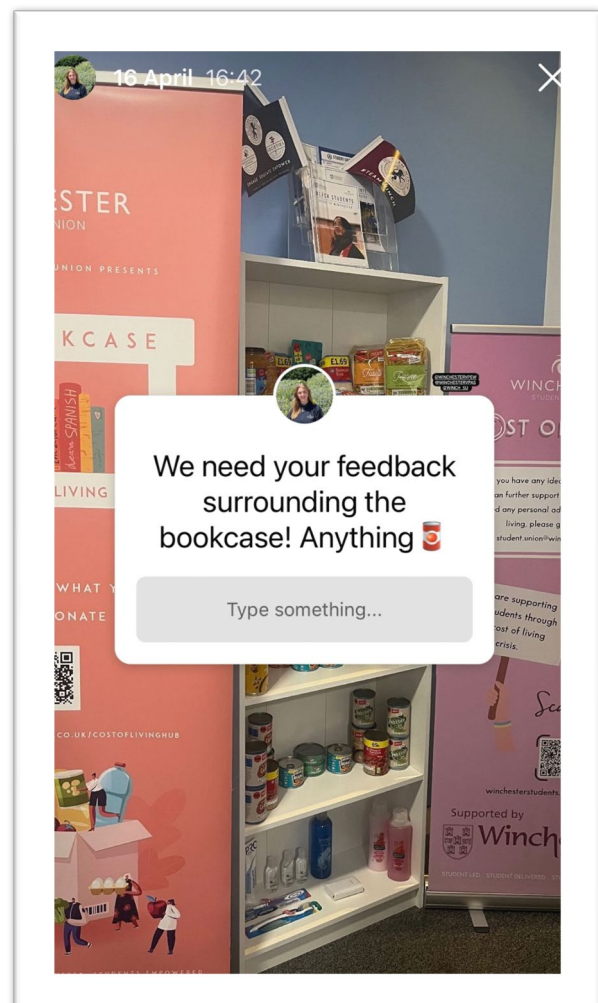
#### KN001

The union has carried out relevant primary research amongst its students to inform its sustainability work, and has published the findings.

This year marked the first time we began to take Sustainability more seriously within the Union. To inform our sustainability work throughout the year, we have carried out primary research amongst our students in several areas;

- General Sustainability
- Cost of living work
- Sustainable Fashion Consumption

This research was conducted through various online surveys, social media posts, and in-person feedback through which students shared their opinions on what was important to them, initiatives they wanted to see & enjoy, and on various other topics.



Examples of feedback-gathering

## General Sustainability

This year marked the first year since 2018 that we prioritised sustainability at the Union. Therefore, we made it a priority understand student perceptions of sustainability, and what students wanted to see, to inform our sustainability work going forward.

With this in mind, a survey was created and advertised out to students on social media (i.e., Instagram) and via posters at any pop-up sustainability events (e.g., Sustainability sessions).

Students were asked the following:

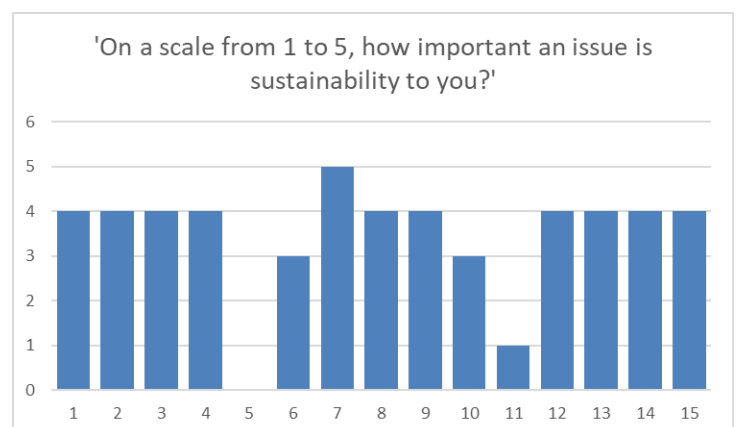
1. *What does sustainability mean to you?*
2. *On a scale from 1 to 5, how important an issue is sustainability to you?*
3. *Does the Student Union encourage you to think and act to help the environment and other people?*
4. *In your opinion, what does the Student Union do to work towards a better environment and sustainability?*
5. *What areas of sustainability would you like the Student Union to focus on going forward?*
6. *Are there any additional thoughts/comments/suggestions you would like to provide about this survey or sustainability in general?*

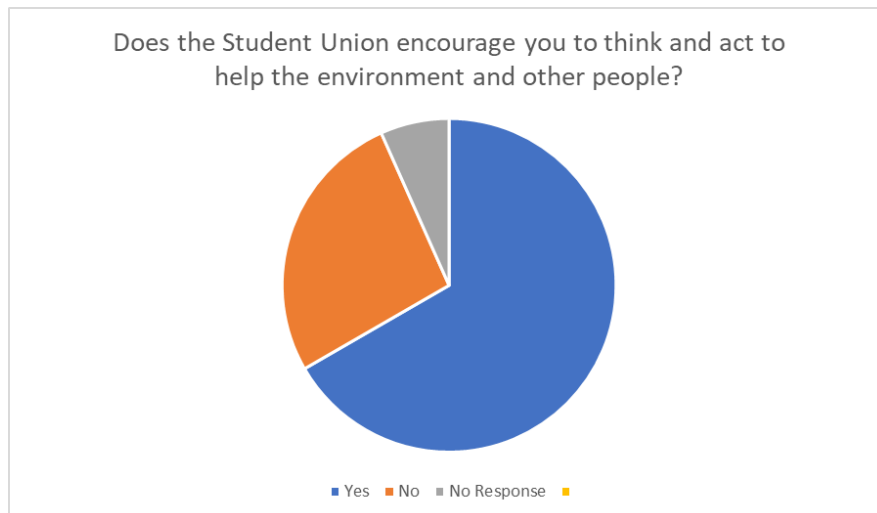
### Findings

From our research, we found that students think sustainability was **fairly important** to them (avg. 3.5 rating), with a large proportion of students (73%) thinking it was at least **very important**.

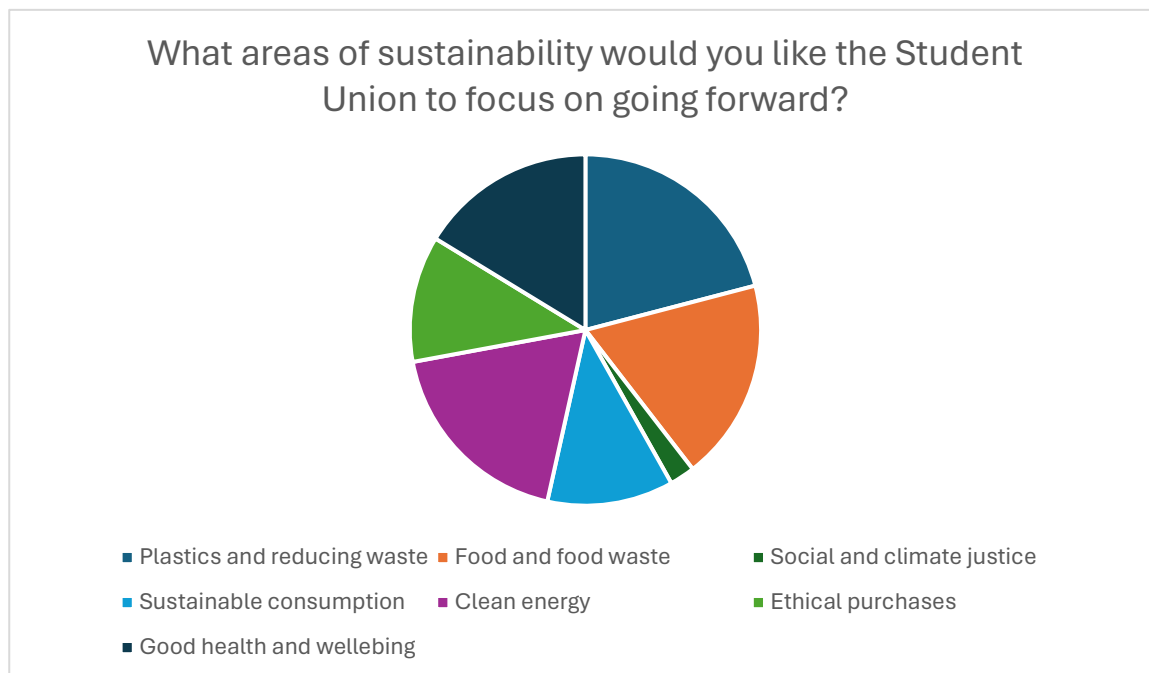
- 66% of

Moreover, two thirds (66%) of students thought that the Student Union encouraged them to 'think and act to help the environment and other people'. In particular, students noted our use and promotion of sustainable products, particularly our '**cup tax**' for hot drinks (33%). Although, 13% of students identified sustainable initiatives or actions that were undertaken by the University, not the Union. Whilst this is not a majority percentage, this suggests that some students may not have a clear awareness of the Union's own initiatives to promote sustainability.





When considering what areas of sustainability the Student Union should focus on going forward, students' opinions were split evenly amongst many different responses. Primarily, students identified **'good health and wellbeing'**, **'clean energy'**, **'food and food waste'**, and **'plastics and reducing waste'** as the main areas of focus, with each topic gaining between 47%-60% of responses.



This gives the Union a clear picture of areas to target going forward. There are areas of work in which the Student Union's activities, and student priorities are aligned, such as **Food and food waste**. The Union runs several 'food' related initiatives such as the Bookcase (food swap shop), Food Drives, an Aldi Shuttle Bus, and Meal Tote Bags (free meals).

Similarly, this confirms that the Student Union's work towards '**Good health and wellbeing**' are aligned with student values, with work such as our Wellbeing Café, Recharge Days, and Advice Centre working to achieve this.

The key finding from this research is students' desire to see the Union focus on **clean energy** (53%). Currently, the Student Union encourages staff members to turn off appliances, lights, and electrics when not in use, but does not have a dedicated policy or guidance widely published for student consumption. This year the Union has worked to improve students' literacy surrounding Energy Efficiency (through pop-ups and physical resources) but does not yet have the results regarding the impact of this intervention. Whilst the focus this year has been on Energy Efficiency to reduce energy consumption, the findings from this research can give direction to further work in order to educate students on clean energy and adopt clean energy practices within the Union itself.



*Examples of our energy efficiency resources, given out to students*

## **Cost of Living Work**

Following the national Cost of Living crisis, we as a Union run several initiatives to tackle poverty within our student body and beyond. Throughout the year, we have been canvassing student feedback to ensure that these initiatives remain helpful to students, and to direct our work where possible.

### Aldi shuttle bus

As part of our 'Cost of Living Tuesdays' (along with Breakfast Club) the Union runs a shuttle bus to Aldi for students. Students can book on online (for free) and be taken to Aldi, which is other wise a 30min walk.



We were pleased to hear that all respondents to our survey **enjoyed the Aldi shuttle bus**, with the majority of students (78%) mentioning how **helpful** they found it.

Whilst we received limited responses to how we could improve the bus some responses mentioned reducing our **one-bag limit** (students are encouraged to only bring one bag-for-life to ensure the bus is not too cramped).

The positive responses seen in this research will be useful in informing our Cost of Living work next year. This is clearly something students find useful and would like us to continue: '**I think this should carry on**'.

### Breakfast Club

As part of our drive to support with cost of living we have implemented a regular Breakfast Club to students, free of charge. The club provides a variety of hot or cold drinks to students, alongside breakfast items such as croissants, cereal, and breakfast bars.

We were pleased to see that all valid responses positively received Breakfast Club, noting its usefulness in **combating food poverty** (15%), a **good variety of stock** (25%) and as a chance to **socialise with other students** (6%).

We are pleased to see this is being well-received by students, as this is a new initiative for the 23/24 academic year. To inform our work going forwards, we received some feedback on increasing the 'frequency' of Breakfast Club, and providing more 'healthy options' such as fresh fruit.





## Food Drive

Several times a year, the Union hosts 'Food Drives' to encourage students and staff to donate unwanted/surplus food, as well as offering food out to students and staff.

Again, 100% of responses on Food Drives were positive, with students highlighting how it helps **mitigate the cost of things** (41%) and with several students noting how it helped their diets, such as providing a chance to consume vegetables (as fresh vegetables were expensive) and to make fuller meals.

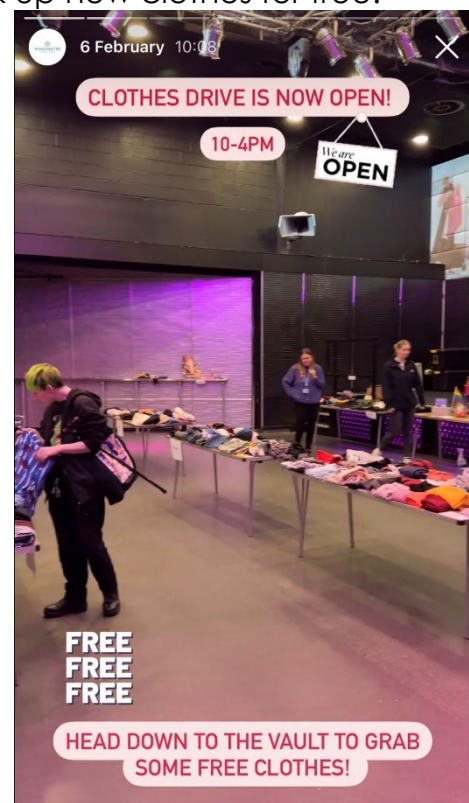
New to our Cost of Living provision this year was offering bath and body items, and this was noted by a student: '**great there were bath and body items as well as those can be so expensive to buy**'. Overall, we are pleased that this new initiative has been well-received by students, and that the cost of living crisis/reducing poverty is still a priority for students.



## **Sustainable Fashion Consumption**

The Union provides 'Clothes Drives' throughout the year, which enable students to donate unwanted clothes, and pick up new clothes for free. Whilst this aims to tackle sustainable fashion, it also provides students with a cheaper way to obtain new clothes.

Of the students who provided feedback that attended the Clothe Drives, more than half of students (53%) highlighted that they had **gained new clothes** from the Clothe Drive, with 18% of these stating that this provided a way for them to obtain new clothes that they otherwise could not afford. Most students (94%) agreed that the Clothes Drive helped with **tackling fast fashion** and these results align with the Union's aims to provide an initiative that helps reduce the impact of cost



of living whilst also encouraging responsible consumption.

Students noted that the main impact the Clothes Drive had on them was in providing new clothes (53%) with some highlighting it's usefulness in mitigating the cost of new clothing (18%) especially for '**clothes which had broken beyond repair**' or by not '**worrying about cost**'.

Interestingly, some students highlighted the impact Clothes Drive had on their professional lives, with some (12%) stating it assisted them in a professional capacity. The Union's Clothes Drives aim to provide a wide variety of clothes (for nights out, parents, children, etc...) but will continue to consider the use of Clothes Drives in assisting with professional development of students in the future.

