

Motion on the Solar Farm and On-Site Green Energy Generation

Proposer: Oliver Robinson, President

Seconder: Tom Sutton, Student

This Union notes that:

1. Lancaster University Students' Union declared a Climate Emergency in 2019;
2. Lancaster University followed suit and declared a Climate Emergency in 2020, and divided their aspirations for decarbonisation into three scopes. Scopes 1 and 2 cover direct energy consumption, and only account for about 17% of the University's carbon impact. Scope 3 covers travel and procurement and makes up the remaining 83% of emissions;
3. Subsequently, the University divested from fossil fuels and reinvested its money into less problematic investment funds;
4. Without radical change of direction and large investment, the University will not be able to meet its targets to decarbonise its Scope 1 & 2 impacts by 2030 let alone its Scope 3 impacts by 2035;
5. The land that the University is proposing to build the solar array on is currently being used for unproductive and ecologically harmful agricultural practices – specifically silage farming and cattle farming that impact very negatively on the local waterways;
6. Solar arrays are most cost effective when they are clustered due to more optimised energy returns. Solar panels on rooves on campus would be more expensive, less efficient and unable to match the scale of the development;
7. The energy mix in the UK is still heavily reliant on fossil fuels, especially natural gas and the government is not as serious as it should be about eliminating our reliance on fossil fuels;
8. Proposals to use the land for research or social value would not have the same direct impact on the University's scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions. The current ecological condition of the land is low.

This Union believes that:

9. The climate emergency requires us to take radical and practical action as quickly as possible, and we should be looking to support projects that make meaningful steps towards reducing the ecological and environmental impact of our lives and actions. As a major institution in the district and one of the country's leading education institutions, we have a civic responsibility to decarbonise;

10. Decarbonisation is a practical exercise, not an intellectual one, and decarbonisation will not always look perfect. In the face of catastrophe, practical action to change the way our institutions use resources is the most valuable course of action. In other words, we should not let an aspiration to perfection prevent good action.
11. Given the government's unserious attitude to decarbonisation, we should not leave it to them, and welcome practical efforts in our own communities and institutions to take leadership on decarbonisation;
12. A single solar farm will not be enough to decarbonise scopes 1 & 2, let alone all of the University's carbon output, and the University must produce plans to end polluting behaviours and relationships;

This Union resolves that:

13. We will support green energy generation efforts on and off the University estate. This includes (but is not necessarily limited to): the proposed Solar Farm on the Forrest Hills site and any potential second (or more) wind turbine;
14. We will provide critical support to the University as long as they remain committed to practical efforts to decarbonise and meet the demands of the carbon emergency. We will always push for them to go faster and to implement changes sooner so that they do not rest on their laurels;
15. We will remain in opposition to all projects that the University may wish to get involved with if they run contrary to the demands of the climate emergency.