



Cambridge
Climate
Society

The Freshers' Climate Guide

Connect, Educate & Empower

cambridgeclimatesociety.com



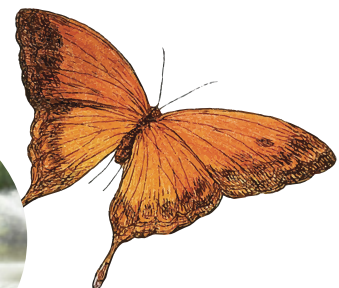
Welcome to Cambridge, and *congratulations* on making it here!

We are the *Cambridge Climate Society (CCS)*, the student forum for all things climate in the city. Our goal is to connect, empower and educate students, staff and the wider Cambridge community to tackle one of the greatest challenges of our generation. Through our diverse program of exciting events, workshops, socials and mentorship opportunities, we welcome everyone. Whether you have years of experience in climate-related sectors or are simply curious to learn more, CCS caters to all levels of knowledge, interest and engagement!

This guide is designed as a *crash course* to Cambridge's climate scene, offering an overview of the science behind global warming, the local context and plenty of ways to get involved. We hope it starts conversations, sparks questions and helps you plug in to the Cambridge climate ecosystem.

If you'd like to get involved, ask questions, or simply say hi, please don't hesitate to reach out! Don't forget to sign up to our weekly newsletter and check out the up-to-date term card on our website at cambridgeclimatesociety.com.

All the best,
Niklas, Kaden & Lea
President and Vice-Presidents





About CCS

Cambridge Climate Society (CCS) is the student forum for all things climate in Cambridge. We bring people together, encourage new ideas and inspire action on the most important issue of our time by connecting students to climate initiatives, networks, resources and projects.

Our work builds on *five* pillars of change:

→ Knowledge Exchange

We connect students and academics to the climate expertise they need. From research to on-the-ground insights, we make knowledge actionable.

→ Community Building

We're building a network of committed climate advocates. Our community connects and supports engaged students and stakeholders to amplify their voices and multiply their impact.

→ Global Engagement

We engage with international partners to connect the dots and contribute to a worldwide movement for systemic change.

→ Career Development

Your climate journey starts here. We link students with meaningful roles and alumni networks, ensuring their climate journey continues beyond university.

→ Local Action

We turn ideas into impact. By working with our partners and putting pressure on the university, we bring about tangible policy change, making a real difference.

Our Committee consists of 9 teams:

Action

Careers

Communications

Education

Events

Operations

Partnerships

Policy

Research

There's always something going on! Make sure to check out our *Term Card* at cambridgeclimatesociety.com.

The Science

The Greenhouse Effect

The **sun's radiation** reaches the Earth's surface and is then re-emitted as **infrared radiation** into the **atmosphere**. **Greenhouse gases (GHGs)** like carbon dioxide and methane absorb and re-emit this infrared radiation, trapping heat in the atmosphere. Excess GHG emissions from human activity cause damaging long-term shifts in Earth's temperatures and weather patterns. The primary source of anthropogenic emissions is energy consumption, which occurs through all types of activities, including transportation, consumption of manufactured goods, and household energy use. Land-use changes, such as deforestation and certain farming practices, also contribute substantially to emissions.

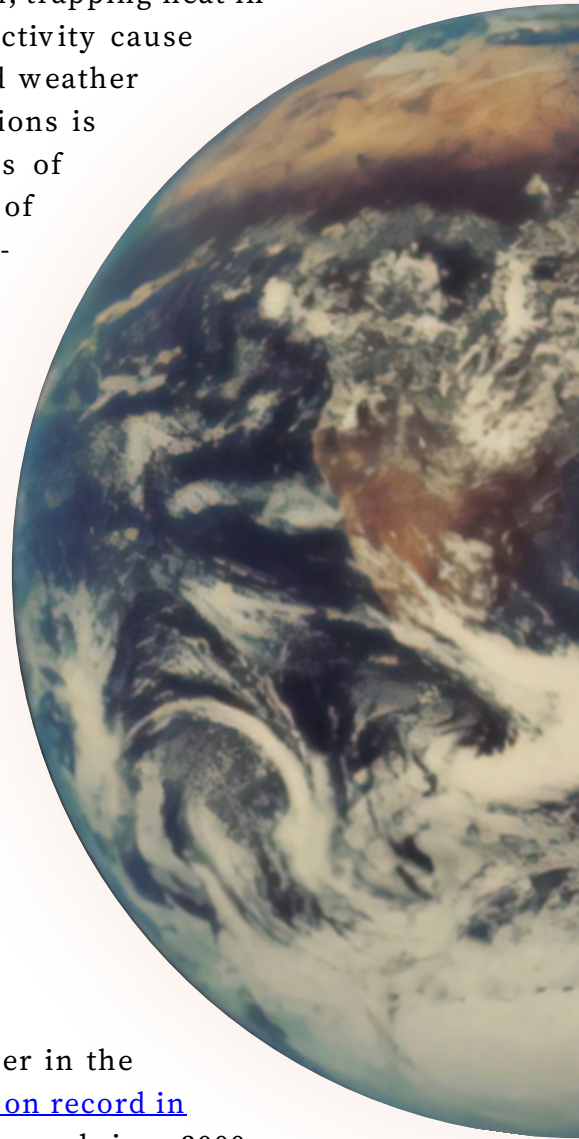
The Impact

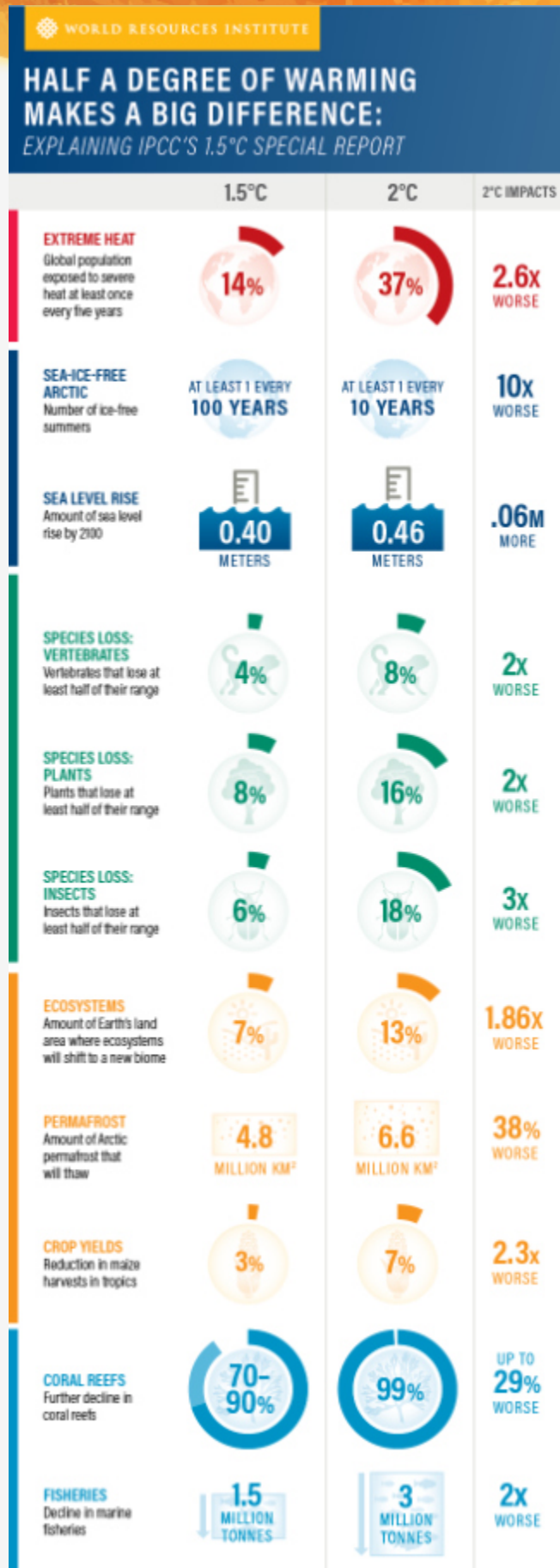
Some impacts of climate change include: hotter temperatures, more frequent and intense extreme weather events, increased chronic drought, rising sea levels due to melting ice and thermal expansion, loss of biodiversity and ecosystems, threats to food and water security, increased health risks, poverty and mass displacement! These impacts post an existential threat to many species, including us!

Find out more [here](#).

Impact on the UK

Climate change has had a noticeable impact on weather in the UK, with the country experiencing the [hottest summer on record in 2025](#), meaning that the five hottest summers have all occurred since 2000. Similarly, [droughts](#) are becoming more common, resulting in an increase in the frequency of wildfires, and severely affecting biodiversity, water security, food production, and the economic growth of the agricultural sector.





Social Impact

Climate Justice

Climate justice addresses inequality by recognising that high-emitting countries are responsible for reducing emissions and supporting vulnerable states through compensating for the damages caused by climate change. A 2023 study projects that by 2050, the Global North will owe [\\$192 trillion](#) in fair reparations to the Global South, even if global warming is limited to 1.5°C. Legacies of colonialism must be confronted to achieve true climate justice. Ethnic minority communities disproportionately suffer from the climate crisis: for example, almost half of the [waste-burning incinerators](#) in the UK are in ethnic minority communities.

Disinformation

Disinformation campaigns may deny climate change or aim to portray climate action as ineffectual ([‘climate doomism’](#)), suggesting it’s too late to act, which discourages meaningful engagement. It’s important to be aware of misinformation and its [prevalence on social media](#), especially when sharing articles with others. You can read more about spotting disinformation [here](#).

Activism

Climate activism is a powerful social force driving political, corporate, and social change worldwide. Movements such as Fridays For Future, which mobilised around [14 million people across 7,500 cities in 2019](#), have shifted public debate and pressured governments to act. In the UK, groups like Extinction Rebellion have also spurred parliamentary debate and contributed to the government’s declaration of a [climate emergency in 2019](#).

Indigenous Voices

Indigenous communities are on the frontlines of the battle against climate change. The land they inhabit is [uniquely vulnerable](#) to the impacts of climate change, including erosion, salinisation, sea-level rise, wildfires and pestilence; the communities themselves face [forced relocation](#) and other human rights violations as a result of these hazards. At the same time, Indigenous and [other Fourth World actors](#) have been central to valuable and meaningful climate action, including the International Court of Justice’s recent opinion on the international law applicable



Image: Cambridge Climate Strike

Global Treaties

The **Kyoto Protocol (2005)** was the first legally binding climate treaty requiring countries to reduce emissions by 5% below levels in 1990; however, it was never ratified by India, China and the US.

With the **Paris Agreement (2015)**, states agreed to hold ‘the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels’. But these pledges are voluntary and currently insufficient, resulting in an [estimated 2.7°C increase by 2100](#) without further action.

During **COP26 (2021)**, states created the Glasgow Climate Pact, the Global Methane Pledge, and the Declaration on Forests and Land Use. However, with the last there was widespread dissatisfaction over the treaty’s lack of ambition and implementation efforts.

COP27 (2022) established a historic Loss and Damage fund to establish compensation for vulnerable nations, but failed to strengthen emission reduction targets and faced criticism over continued fossil fuel influence.

COP28 (2023) explicitly acknowledged the need to transition away from fossil fuels and mobilised \$85 billion in climate finance, but lacked specific phase-out commitments and was criticised for ongoing fossil fuel deals and insufficient concrete action.

COP29 (2024) introduced the Baku Climate Unity Pact, setting a new climate finance goal by mobilising at least \$300 billion annually by 2035 for developing countries, but failed to address fossil fuel production and faced criticism for not accounting for inflation in the finance target.

UK Climate Policies

The [Climate Change Act 2008](#) legally binds the UK to reduce emissions in 2050 by 80% from 1990 levels. In 2022, the [High Court ruled](#) that the government had failed to implement the act’s requirements by failing to set out how the proposals would achieve the emission reductions. This ruling challenged the government’s climate change policies and implementation of the Paris Agreement.

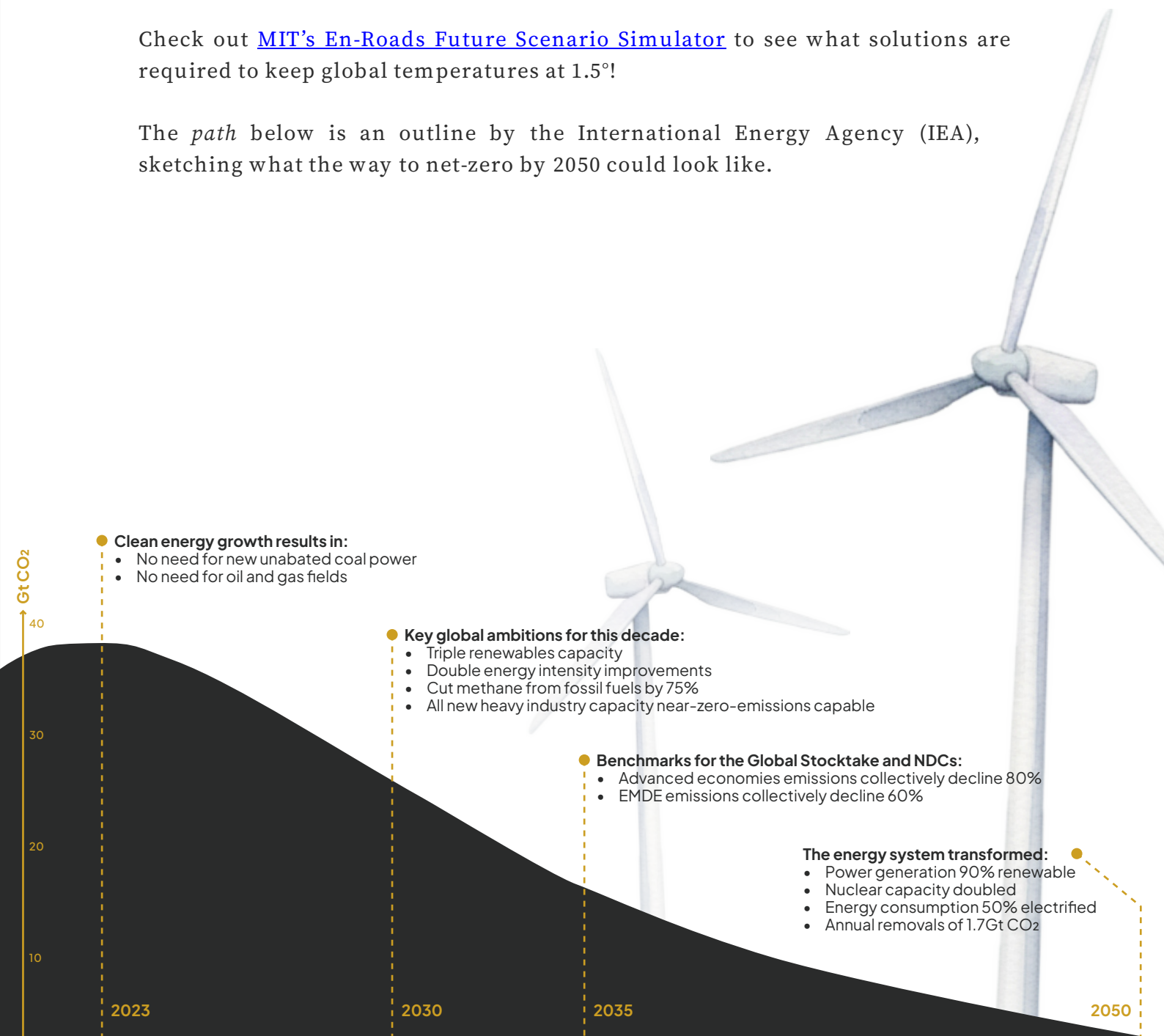
A *Path* Forward

Almost three-quarters of global emissions come from energy, so transitioning to a low-carbon economy will rely on renewable energy and technologies that clean out our energy grid. Transportation and heating for buildings will transition to near-total electrification.

However, we need to become more energy efficient, as [reports](#) estimate that in 2050 a net-zero economy could support a doubling of economic output while using 8% less energy than today. Other solutions are also crucial to effectively combatting climate change, such as carbon pricing, transforming transport infrastructure, and halting deforestation.

Check out [MIT's En-Roads Future Scenario Simulator](#) to see what solutions are required to keep global temperatures at 1.5°!

The *path* below is an outline by the International Energy Agency (IEA), sketching what the way to net-zero by 2050 could look like.



Climate in Cambridge

Cambridge students significantly contribute to the University's carbon footprint, but we also *hold real influence over its direction*. In 2020, after sustained student campaigning, the University of Cambridge pledged to fully divest from fossil fuels by 2030 and committed to reaching net zero emissions by [2038](#).

Progress across the colleges, however, remains limited: in the [2024 Climate League](#) of Oxford and Cambridge, *all 31 Cambridge colleges scored below 50% for sustainability*, though some have made modest advances.

Student life can also impact the environment negatively, with large-scale events such as May Balls and C-Sunday generating significant waste. At the same time, there are signs of improvement, as the University's total annual waste fell to around 3,500 tonnes in 2023-24, down from nearly 7,000 tonnes in 2020-21.

The activities of Cambridge students and local residents are often quite separate, but there are projects that bring the two together – from community gardening schemes to citywide climate strikes. By engaging with local sustainability efforts and supporting collaborative projects, students can help make Cambridge a more environmentally friendly place for everyone.

Over the next couple of pages, you will discover how you can make a difference during your time here.



Carbon Footprint

Let's start from the beginning. What does Cambridge's carbon footprint actually look like? The University of Cambridge has set the following *emission reduction targets*:

- *Reduce* its energy-related (scope 1 and 2) emissions from the operational estate to absolute zero carbon by 2048.
- *A mid-term target* of a 75% reduction against 2015-16 levels by 2030-31.
- *Reduce* per capita emissions from business flights by 25% against 2014-15 levels by 2024-25.

You can find out more at the [University's official website](#). These targets relate to the following emission figures:

Scope 1 & 2: GHGs directly emitted at the campus and related to the electricity and heating consumed.	30,141 CO ₂ e tons
Scope 3: All the emissions that are emitted indirectly by the University, for example, the energy used to manufacture the equipment at the labs.	365,961 CO ₂ e tons

What does the average person's footprint look like?

Find out what your carbon footprint is by using either the [Cambridge Carbon Footprint Calculator](#) or the [UN Carbon Footprint Calculator](#)! By having an overall picture of your carbon footprint you can identify what areas of your life produce the most CO₂ and start to take action by following useful tips mentioned in this guide! Think about setting some goals – the first tool allows you to do it very easily.

Energy

Total electricity consumption by the University was *136.9 GWh* in 2017/18. That's equivalent to 78% of the whole of Cambridge's domestic electricity demand!

Renewable Energy in Cambridge

80% of the energy used by all the Cambridge colleges is now generated by local solar power farms that are only located within a 30-mile radius based on a 3-year [SmartestEnergy](#) supply energy agreement. SmartestEnergy is certified by Carbon Trust and the two local generation areas are based in Ely and Huntingdon.

This year, a major project was completed to build an anaerobic digestion (AD) plant at the Cambridge University Farm in Madingley, and it's already generating electricity for the farm.

Energy-related emissions in our buildings account for [18%](#) of emissions globally and saving energy is a great way to mitigate climate change. The more energy demand is reduced, the more that renewable supply can be used to replace other fossil fuel demands. Here are some tips to save energy:

- Turn off lights when leaving the room.
- Turn off lights during the day and rely on sunlight.
- Unplug computers and appliances when fully charged.
- Turn off the power switch for plugs that are not being used.

Heating

Almost 50% of CO₂ emissions in the UK come from both heating and cooling buildings! Just a 2-degree temperature increase in an office produces the amount of CO₂ required to fill a hot air balloon! (The Carbon Trust).

Cambridge University's [Thermal Comfort Policy](#) provides information on temperature expectations in University buildings and suggests means to minimize CO₂ emissions. The University aims to maintain temperatures between 19-21 degrees in the heating season (September-May).

Some colleges and faculties regulate temperatures centrally while at other times you can control the heating in your room. Wearing more layers and using less heat is more sustainable, and make sure not to leave your window open when your heating is on.

Waste System

The University has updated its waste management system for 2025, collecting its waste in *four* streams:

Mixed recycling

(glass, metal, plastic)

Sorted at a Materials Recovery Facility for onward recycling.

Food waste

Processed at an anaerobic digestion facility, converting it into fertiliser and biogas.

Paper and cardboard

Sent directly to a specialist paper recycling facility.

Non-recycling

Sent to an energy-from-waste facility.

Some colleges have a compost system, so it's good to check what your college specific waste system is! You can also find advice on how to reduce your food waste in Cambridge [here](#).

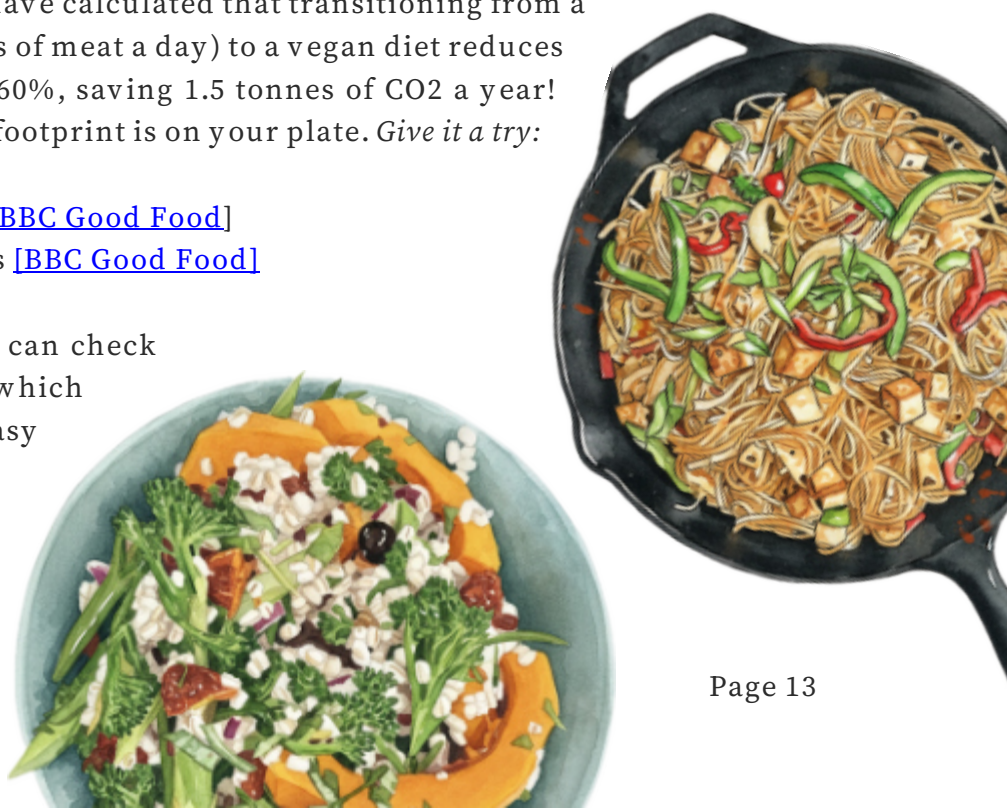
Cooking

Livestock and deforestation account for 8% of humanity's carbon footprint. Being conscious about your dietary decisions can help us lower this.

Plant-based meals are one of the most important ways to significantly reduce your carbon footprint. Studies have calculated that transitioning from a meat-based diet (100 grams of meat a day) to a vegan diet reduces your carbon footprint by 60%, saving 1.5 tonnes of CO2 a year! The power to reduce your footprint is on your plate. *Give it a try:*

- Squash & Barley salad [\[BBC Good Food\]](#)
- Easy Singapore noodles [\[BBC Good Food\]](#)

For more inspiration, you can check out [Ailsa's IG](#) account which offers affordable and easy vegan cooking at uni!



5 Climate Friendly Product Swap *Tips*

1. Technology

The metals used to produce our phones, such as gold are one of the main causes of deforestation in the [Amazon](#)! You have the consumer power to opt into sustainable technology options.

Refurbished devices are a sustainable and cheaper alternative, available at retailers like [Back Market](#) or other [retailers](#). Need a new phone? Consider B-certified phones such as [Fairphones](#) made from 100% recycled plastic and fairtrade metals.

2. Period Products

Did you know that [studies](#) estimate that a single disposable pad can take between 500-800 years to decompose? Swapping out disposable tampons and pads for [reusable menstrual cups](#) or [pads](#) is a simple way to reduce plastic waste.

3. Produce

Food packaging and plastic pollution are major issues! There are plenty of options to purchase plastic-free produce. Cambridge has a market that is open every day (10am- 4pm) located in Market Hill in the City Center and it sells fresh produce such as veg and fruit without plastic packaging!

Supermarkets also have non-wrapped veg and fruit options but it is better to purchase produce that is in season. You can find a seasonal fruit and veg guide [here](#). For more information, you can also visit [Cambridge's Sustainable Food Directory](#).

4. Shopping bags and clingfilm

Instead of buying plastic Sainsbury shopping bags, you should bring a cloth bag to reduce your plastic consumption. Avoid cling film by purchasing or making [beeswax wraps](#), which act as a sustainable alternative for food packaging.

5. Reusable Cups

Thirsty for a hot beverage in the morning? Swap your paper cups for a [reusable coffee cup](#) which reduces your daily paper waste. Thirsty for water while you study? Instead of buying a plastic bottle buy a B-certified and sustainable water bottle such as [Klean Kanteen](#).

Fashion

The fashion industry currently emits 10% of annual GHG emissions. That is more than all international flights and maritime transport together.

Every year, £140 million worth of clothing is thrown into landfills in the UK alone. The annual household footprint for newly bought clothes is estimated to require 1,000 bathtubs of water and creates carbon emissions equivalent to a car driving 6,000 miles. The best way to support sustainable fashion involves the three R's:

Reuse

Buying clothes second-hand in charity shops is an effective means to reduce your carbon footprint. [Here](#) you can find charity shops in Cambridge close to you.

Recycle

Want to get rid of old clothes? Don't throw them away - consider donating them to a clothing bank! [Here](#) you can find clothing banks to donate your clothes like Salvation Army.

Repair

Want to get your ripped clothes fixed? [Here](#) you can find tailors that can mend your salvageable garments in Cambridge.



Banking

Considering setting up an ethical and green student bank account in Cambridge? It's important to avoid banks that finance fossil fuels and to choose banks that invest in protecting the environment.

Banks Financing Fossil Fuels

According to the [Banking on Climate Chaos 2021 Report](#) since the 2016 Paris Agreement 60 of the biggest banks have financed \$3.4 trillion into fossil fuel infrastructure and extraction.

The two most unsustainable banks that finance the fossil fuel industry are *Barclays* (funded \$145 billion into fossil fuels) and *HSBC* (funded \$111 billion). Other less ethical banks include; *Lloyds Banking Group*, *Santander*, *Tesco* and *Citigroup*.

[Here](#) you can learn more about bank investment in fossil fuels.

Switching to a Sustainable Bank

Here is a list of sustainable banks to consider when setting up a student account in Cambridge:

- **Triodos:** A certified B-Corp bank. They only finance companies involved in environmental or cultural projects, and they have loaned \$8.2 billion to European initiatives that benefit the planet.
- **Monzo:** pledged not to invest in fossil fuels, tobacco or arms companies and to reach net zero by 2030.
- **Nationwide:** not listed on the stock market & prioritises members' benefits over shareholder benefits.
- **Starling Bank:** no investments in tobacco, arms or fossil fuel extraction companies; debit cards made from 75% recycled plastic; pledge to be a NetZero company.

For more information on sustainable banks visit [Ethical Consumer](#)!

Getting Involved

Greenbridge

Make sure to sign up for the [Greenbridge Facebook page](#) to get in touch about upcoming green opportunities at the University of Cambridge.

Societies

Below is a non-exhaustive list of other climate-related student societies in Cambridge to get involved with:

Local organisations:

- Cambridge Carbon Footprint
- Cambridge Climate Justice
- Cambridge Sustainable Food
- Cambridge Young Greens
- Engineers Without Borders
- Extinction Rebellion Cambridge
- FoodCycle Cambridge
- Friends of the Cam
- On The Verge Cambridge
- ORCA
- Pesticide-Free Cambridge
- Resilience Web

University wide:

- Centre for the Study of Existential Risk
- Cambridge Bird Society
- Cambridge Centre for Climate Change Mitigation
- Cambridge Climate and Sustainability Forum
- Cambridge Green Week
- Cambridge SU Ethical Affairs
- Cambridge University Energy Network
- Cambridge University Environmental Consulting Society
- Cambridge University Social Impact and Sustainability Society

- Cambridge University Vegan Society
- Cambridge Zero
- Carbon Literacy Project
- Centre for Climate Repair
- Plant Based Cambridge

College specific:

- Churchill College Green Team
- Clare Goes Green
- Emma Green Ducks Society
- Fitz Green Goats
- Girton Green Society
- Homerton Environmental Society
- Hughes Hall Centre for Climate Engagement
- Jesus College Green Society
- Lucy Cavendish Sustainability
- Murray Edwards Green Society
- Newnham Green and Social Justice Society
- Pembroke Climate Society
- Queens' College Environmental Society
- Trinity Ethical Green Affairs
- Wolfson College Sustainability & Conservation Research Hub

Visit cambridgeclimatesociety.com to find our up-to-date climate society registry.

Our Favourites!

Here are some recommendations from our committee of places to visit in Cambridge. *We hope you enjoy them as much as we do!*

Food

- Arjuna Wholefoods
12 Mill Road, Cambridge, CB1 2AD
- Cambridge Market Square
Market Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom, CB1 0SS
Taste of Cambridge, Vegan Bites
- Namaste Village
45-47 Castle St, Cambridge CB3 0AH
- Stir Cafe
253 Chesterton Rd, Cambridge CB4 1BG
- Thrive
5-7 Norfolk Street, Cambridge, CB1 2LD

Green Parks

- Botanical Gardens: (Mon-Fri, 10:00-17:00; season dependent)
1 Brookside Cambridge CB2 1JE
- Grantchester
Village accessible via foot
- Paradise Local Nature Reserve
Cambridge CB3 9JJ

Contacts

Green Officers

Do you have any college-specific questions about sustainability? Visit this [spreadsheet](#) and you'll be able to find the contact details of the college green officers.

Faculties

Check out this [spreadsheet](#) (it's the same as above) if you have any faculty-specific questions about sustainability.

Cambridge Climate Society

Want to reach out to us? Send us an email (cambridge.climate.society@gmail.com) or an Instagram DM (@cambridge.climate.society). Make sure to check out our term card on cambridgeclimatesociety.com.

Climate Anxiety

Climate anxiety means feeling overwhelmed or fearfully about the planet's future - something many students experience, as highlighted by a [2023 Student Minds report](#) that revealed 90% of students feel climate change negatively impacts their mental health.

However, there are ways to relieve climate anxiety. Studies, [such as this one by Yale](#), have found that being involved in collective environmental action projects, such as strikes, campaign groups, and community projects, can help combat the sense of hopelessness.

[The Resilience Project](#) and [Cambridge Climate Therapists](#) run workshops on Climate Anxiety and can help equip you with the tools to better deal with it.



Thank you very much for reading this Freshers' Guide. We hope it inspires climate-friendly student living and action in Cambridge.

If you have any questions about the guide or would like to get involved with CCS, please feel free to contact us at cambridge.climate.society@gmail.com.

You can also find us on *LinkedIn*, *Instagram* and *Facebook*. Don't forget to visit our website at cambridgeclimatesociety.com.



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