

Becoming a climate-positive organisation

An overview of our strategy



CREATING MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES

Introduction

The world's climate is changing rapidly, and the consequences are already visible around us. As a university of applied sciences with a mission to shape a better world, BUas has a responsibility - and an opportunity - to respond. This document sets out how we intend to do that.

In 2025, BUas launched the Climate-Positive Organisation (CPO) project. This is our commitment to go beyond compliance and beyond doing less harm, and to actively contribute to the health and vitality of the living world. We see this not as a project with a fixed end date, but as a long-term, ongoing change in how we think and act as an institution.

Climate-positive is not only about striving to become carbon negative or about doing less harm. At BUas, it means empowering stakeholders to make a positive contribution to the health and vitality of all life on our campus and beyond.

Technically speaking, 'climate-positive' means going beyond 'net zero': not just reducing greenhouse gas emissions to the point of balance but removing more emissions than we produce. This applies across all three emissions scopes as defined by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol: our direct emissions (Scope 1), our indirect emissions from purchased energy (Scope 2), and the emissions across our wider value chain - including how our staff and students travel, and what we procure (Scope 3). A baseline measurement carried out by Haskoning in 2024 showed that Scope 3 currently accounts for around 96% of BUas' carbon footprint, which is why our procurement (especially food & beverage, printing and ICT) and mobility choices matter so much.

But we have deliberately chosen to interpret 'climate-positive' more broadly than just carbon. Our campus touches many living systems - the soil beneath our feet; the insects, birds and other animals that visit our grounds; the air quality our students and staff breathe indoors. We believe that creating the conditions for all life to thrive, human and non-human, is not separate from our climate ambition, it is central to it.

We also recognise that we cannot achieve this alone. Becoming climate-positive requires collaboration across our entire community - staff, students, partners and suppliers - and a genuine cultural shift in how climate considerations enter our everyday decision-making. Beyond our own campus, we know we can achieve even more by collaborating with other educational institutes, organisations and initiatives.

This document introduces the six interconnected topics that together form our CPO strategy, and it sets out what we are doing and what you can expect to see in the years ahead. The full CPO strategy is set out in the accompanying PDF 'Our path to becoming a climate-positive organisation'.

Our approach: six topics, one connected ambition

Our CPO strategy is organised around six topics, each of which represents a significant aspect of our campus operations. These topics do not stand alone - they are deeply interconnected. A more biodiverse campus creates richer opportunities for nature connection, which in turn supports the health and wellbeing of everyone on campus. Climate adaptation measures such as a natural pond and green spaces also enhance biodiversity, while sustainable procurement of food affects both our carbon footprint and the health of our community. Reducing mobility emissions contributes to both our climate goals and cleaner air for the people and other living beings around us. Our Zoöp governance model (see below) runs through all six, asking us to consider non-human life in every significant decision we make.

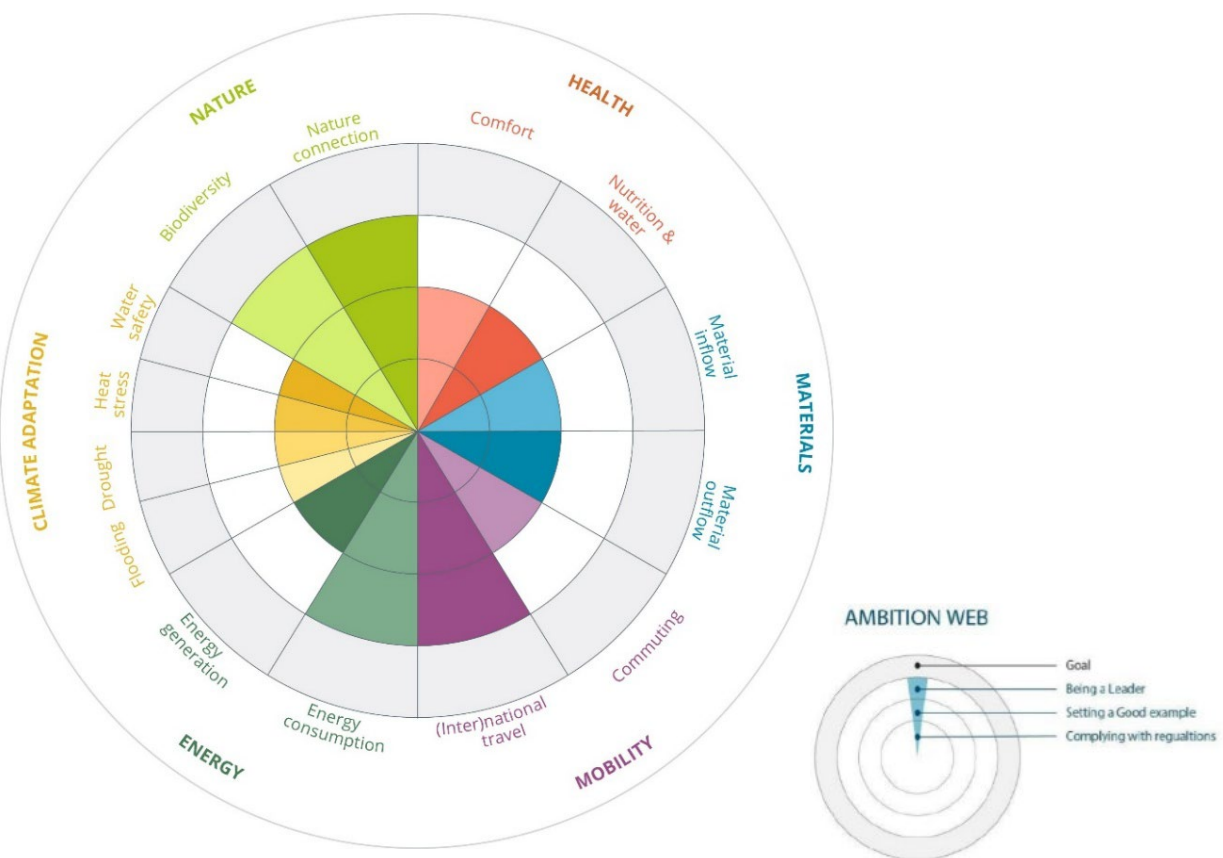


Figure 1: BUas ambition web (original source: Haskoning b.v.)

Energy

Energy is one of the most immediate areas where we can make a measurable impact. Our goal is for all three of our campus buildings to meet the Paris-proof standard for energy consumption (defined as below 70 kWh per m² per year) by 2032. One building (Ocean) has already achieved this. To reach our goal, we are implementing a series of energy-saving measures across our buildings through the FastLane programme, and we are exploring a significant investment in a heat-cold storage system (WKO) as a major step toward fossil-free heating and cooling. We also recognise that BUas' growing use of AI technology generates additional energy and water consumption - primarily at the external data centres that power these tools - with direct

implications for our Scope 3 footprint. This is a tension - and also an opportunity - that we are taking seriously, and we are working with our ICT, facilities, and AI teams to understand and address it.

Materials

Around 96% of our carbon footprint sits in Scope 3 (which is predominantly made up of the emissions generated by the goods and services we buy, and by how we travel). This means that what we procure, and how we procure it, is one of our most powerful levers for change. Our ambition is to reduce our overall consumption, prioritise goods with a lower environmental footprint whilst maximising their ecological value, and where possible choose suppliers who share our values.

In our buildings, we aim to use circular materials where technically feasible. For everyday goods and services, we are developing a procurement decision framework that makes climate-positive choices easier and more systematic. We are starting with food and beverages, since this is where our greatest environmental impact lies.

We also want to reduce the waste we produce and, guided by the R-ladder framework, ensure that unavoidable waste is handled as high up the hierarchy as possible - prioritising reducing and repairing over recycling. In line with circular economy principles, BUas sees waste as a raw material first and foremost, rather than as a disposal problem. As a first step, a baseline measurement will be undertaken via a waste audit (with students), with the goal of improving our waste management separation infrastructure.

Nature

BUas is already home to a variety of species, and we want to go further. Our ambition is to create thriving, biodiverse ecosystems on campus that connect to the wider ecological network of Breda and the surrounding region. A full baseline biodiversity assessment was carried out by ecological consultants (Spring 2026), giving us a solid foundation for measuring progress over time.

Initial plans include implementing a new mowing schedule, establishing a food forest on campus, creating a natural rainwater pond/wadi with habitat for amphibians and other wildlife, planting (perennial) flowering bulbs, installing wildlife infrastructure and exploring how we can contribute to the green corridor connecting the BUas campus to the Mastbos and Breda city centre.

It is well established that regular contact with nature supports human wellbeing - reducing stress, improving concentration, and strengthening a sense of belonging. But beyond the benefits to people, we also believe that deepening our connection to the natural world changes how we relate to it. People who feel connected to nature tend to make more ecologically considerate choices.

On campus, this means creating more opportunities for meaningful encounters with living systems: sensory paths, biophilic design in indoor spaces, communal green areas, and educational elements that link our physical environment to what students learn in the classroom. We are tracking progress through the Nature Connection Index (NCI), and we aim to show a significant increase in scores across our community by 2029.

Health

A comfortable, healthy indoor environment is the foundation for good learning and working. Our focus here is on thermal comfort, ventilation, and lighting - the basics that have an outsized effect on how people feel and function. Our immediate priority is the third floor of the Frontier building, and our longer-term ambition is to achieve a comfortable and healthy indoor climate across all our buildings.

We also recognise that buildings can support the wellbeing of non-human life, not just human occupants, and we are exploring what this means in practice - for example, through the design of facades, green walls, and the careful management of light and noise.

Nutrition and water also form part of our health ambition. Rather than duplicating existing efforts, we align with the BUas-wide Vision on Catering and Banqueting as our guiding framework in this area, working closely with Sibelicious to ensure that healthy and sustainable (local/seasonal/organic) food and drink choices are prioritised wherever possible, and a connection made to the BUas Community Garden.

Mobility

The ways in which our staff and students travel to and from campus is a significant contributor to our carbon footprint and BUas already implements a solid commuting policy. In terms of business travel, BUas already encourages sustainable modes of transport, but there is more to do - particularly around long-haul business travel and international study trips, where the emissions per journey are highest. We are committed to developing a comprehensive travel policy that reflects our climate-positive values, recognising that the development of BUas' global hubs will support this work.

Climate adaptation

We need to understand the climate risks to our campus and how to minimise these, whilst maximising ecological value, positioning ourselves ahead of regulatory requirements wherever possible and implementing measures as far as we can.

A heat stress baseline assessment is planned as a first priority in assessing how the campus can best be adapted for the changing climate. Potential partners and funding for baseline assessments for flooding, drought, water safety and water management will also be sought.

Becoming a Zoöp: giving voice to non-human life

Woven through all six of our CPO topics is a commitment that makes BUas' approach genuinely distinctive: we have become a Zoöp (within the scope of campus operations).

A Zoöp (from the Greek 'zoë', meaning 'life') is an innovative governance model that gives formal voice to non-human life in organisational decision-making. In practice, this means we have appointed an external Speaker for the Living - an independent figure who actively represents the interests of plants, animals, soil, water, and air in our strategic discussions about campus operations. The Speaker participates in relevant meetings, challenges proposals from an ecological perspective and helps us consider impacts that go beyond human interests.



Figure 2: BUas as Zoöp (picture from Patricia de Ruijter, mediakaal.nl)

The decision to become a Zoöp reflects a genuine conviction: that the health of the living systems around us is not a secondary concern, but a primary one. More life creates healthier conditions for all life, including our own.

BUas was recognised for its Zoöp commitment at the 2026 SustainaBul awards, receiving a best practice award in this category. We are proud of this recognition and aware that it comes with a responsibility to continue developing our practice sincerely and transparently, with the intention to inspire and support others in following our example.

Our wider context: why this matters beyond campus

BUas does not operate in isolation. Our CPO project sits within a broader regulatory, societal, and institutional context that gives it added urgency and significance.

At an international level, the Paris Agreement provides the foundational framework for global climate action, and it is to this that our energy targets are anchored. At a European level, the European Green Deal sets the overarching strategy for the EU's transition to climate neutrality by 2050, and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) is raising the bar for how organisations report on their environmental impact.

At a national level, the Dutch Climate Act (Klimaatwet) mandates at least 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, and climate neutrality by 2050. Within the Dutch higher education sector, the Handreiking Vrijwillige Duurzaamheidsverantwoording provides a framework for voluntary sustainability reporting, and the SustainaBul ranking offers a useful point of comparison for how Dutch HEIs are performing on sustainability (across education, research and operations).

Within BUAs, the CPO project connects directly to our Strategic Direction 2026-29 and its emphasis on a caring community where everyone can flourish. It connects to several other ongoing initiatives, including the Professorship in Sustainability Transitions, the development of the new Game and Tech Centre, our Meaningful AI Endeavours programme, the Smart Campus project and the Vision on Catering and Banqueting. Connecting and navigating these synergies thoughtfully is part of our work.

Our students and staff increasingly expect their institution to practice what it teaches and to set a good example. Many students actively seek out institutions with strong environmental credentials when choosing where to study. And staff members want their workplace to align with their values. The CPO project is BUAs' response to that expectation - grounded in genuine ambition rather than appearance.

What to expect in the years ahead

The current CPO project plan covers the period to 2029, with our most significant energy target - Paris-proof status for all campus buildings - set for 2032. Rather than presenting a rigid list of performance indicators, we want to describe what you can expect to see happening across the organisation in this period, and to be honest about where we are still building the foundations.

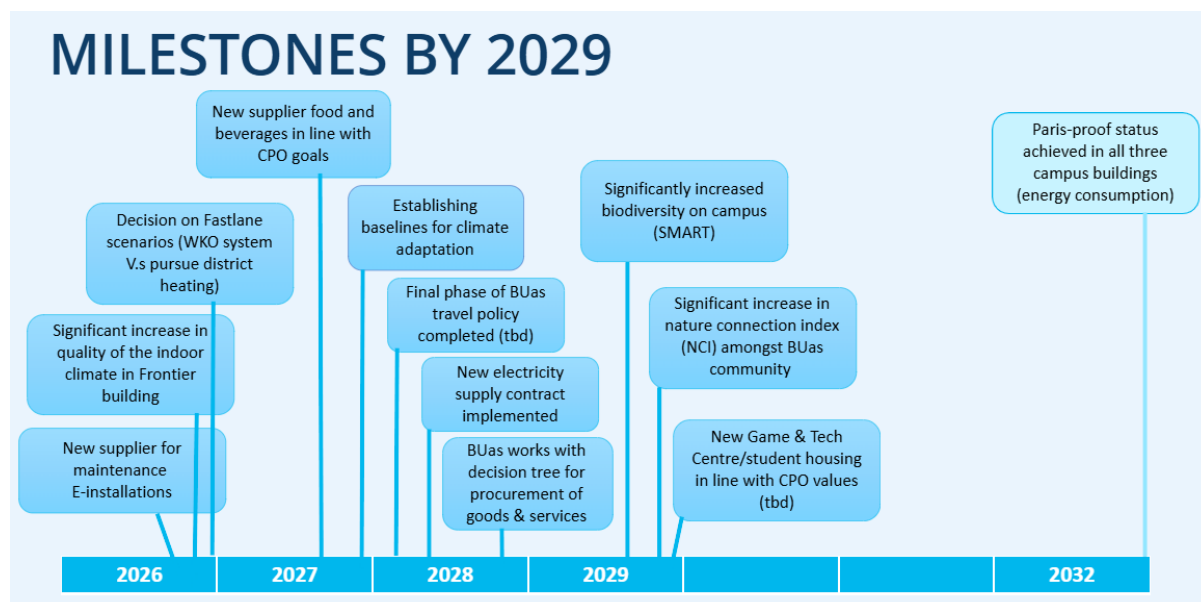


Figure 3: Milestones by 2029, as set out in project plan 2026-29

In 2026, the work is largely about laying solid foundations. We expect to decide on our energy system (WKO or district heating); we are improving the indoor climate on the third floor of the Frontier building, completing a baseline biodiversity assessment, launching the development of the campus food forest and reviewing our procurement of food and beverage. We are also completing our first full zoöconomic annual cycle as a Zoöp.

In 2027 and 2028, we will build on those foundations. This is the period in which we expect to make further progress regarding energy reductions measures, expand our procurement review to new product categories, begin the natural pond/wadi project on campus, and advance our travel policy. We will also be developing our monitoring framework more fully - so that our progress becomes visible and verifiable.

By 2029, we aim to have increased biodiversity on campus, have seen a meaningful increase in our community's connection to nature, to have a food and beverage supplier aligned with CPO goals, and to have the Game and Tech Centre designed and built (or be well on its way) in line with CPO values. We will also be well on our way toward Paris-proof energy performance.

Cutting across all of these areas is the work of stakeholder engagement, communications and monitoring – as well as our commitment in our role as a Zoöp. We also plan to connect with ambassadors (staff and students) within the academies and services.

To conclude

This is an ambitious programme, and we are a small core team. We will continue to report honestly on our progress, including where things are taking longer than planned or where we have learned something that requires us to adjust our approach.

The full CPO strategy document, which this covering document accompanies, provides the detailed background, definitions, frameworks, and topic-specific information for those who want to go deeper. We hope this introduction provides a clear sense of what we are doing, why it matters, and what the coming years will bring.

We do not consider 'climate-positive' as a final destination. We see it rather as a direction of travel – a way of approaching everything we do – and we are committed to keeping that direction consistent, honest and ambitious through our milestone-based approach.

Ultimately, we can consider our climate-positive ambition a success when we are accelerating climate-positive action across (and beyond) campus by inspiring and empowering our community and stakeholders through awareness raising, collaboration and exemplary practice, actively contributing to the health and vitality of all life.

For more information about the CPO project, please contact sustainability@buas.nl.

The full CPO strategy document (February 2026) and project plan 2026-29 (April 2026) are available on request.



Games



Leisure & Events



Tourism



Media



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Hotel



Logistics



Built Environment



Facility

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