



Institute  
for  
Social  
Justice

York St. John University

**LIVING  
LAB:**

# Resilience in a Changing Climate

Your student handbook to shaping climate  
resilience through the YSJ Living Lab

**October 2024 - July 2026**

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**YORK  
ST JOHN  
UNIVERSITY**

# THE LIVING LAB

The York St John Living Lab is a network of students and staff collaborating to investigate and tackle real ecological justice issues, whether on campus or beyond. It calls on the different skills and knowledge of people from all disciplines, and links with community organisations and businesses who are developing positive solutions to difficult problems. In the past we've worked on local air quality, and the campus food system, and students and staff have been part of making real change.



Discover fellow students making real changes to campus through the Living Lab here!

In this booklet you will find an introduction to the Living Lab's focus for **2024-26: RESILIENCE IN A CHANGING CLIMATE** including:

- **Why** we are exploring climate resilience.
- **What** challenges are included in the Living Lab's four 'live briefs'. These work on four different scales: campus, city, regional, global.
- **Who** is involved, including fellow students and how you might be able to link up with them.

## Live briefs identify real, pressing questions and problems that need exploring.

You are invited to get involved with the Living Lab through a module, individually in one of our projects as a volunteer, as a researcher, or on a placement. Everyone is extremely welcome.

If you are not attached to the LL via any of your modules and would like to receive updates on what the Living Lab is doing via email and Moodle, including invitations to drop in to our friendly fortnightly Working Group meetings, email [c.heinemeyer@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:c.heinemeyer@yorks.ac.uk) or [v.pugh@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:v.pugh@yorks.ac.uk)

# WHAT IS CLIMATE RESILIENCE?

There are two sides to climate action: working to prevent climate change from happening (mitigation) and helping society to cope with the consequences when it does (adaptation).



Resilience to climate change is defined as the capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the impacts of hazardous climatic events while incurring minimal damage to societal wellbeing, the economy and the environment.



Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)



For simple definitions and helpful links visit: 'What is the difference between climate change adaptation and resilience? (LSE, Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, 2022)

## Climate resilience asks the questions: How can we prepare for, respond to and recover from climatic events?

Tackling these questions involves a lot of actions around 'adaptation', but making communities more climate-resilient also has great potential to help on the 'mitigation' side! Above all, climate resilience relies upon many factors and actors including education, activism, ecologists and policymakers. Voices from across our communities and sectors have a role to play. These are challenges that will, in one way or another, be part of most people's careers and lives. There is a call to action for everyone. And this may be a spark for building fairer and more flourishing societies.

For YSJ, questions about climate resilience challenge us to consider 'How do we (as a university) protect those who are already vulnerable from the impacts of climate change?', and 'What skills will help students and staff be part of creating more resilient communities?'

The Living Lab works closely with our Sustainability Team. Find out more about current sustainability strategies at YSJ by visiting:

[yorks.ac.uk/about/our-mission-culture-and-values/sustainability-and-environment](https://yorks.ac.uk/about/our-mission-culture-and-values/sustainability-and-environment)





# DEALING WITH OUR DAUNTING CLIMATE CRISES

It's painful to accept that we are living in a changed climate. Even if greenhouse gas emissions start to reduce, extreme weather, food and water shortages, economic instability and climate-influenced migration, will remain part of the global picture for the foreseeable future. We're no longer in the 'safe zone'.

This can be daunting. But you can make a difference while supporting your own mental health and wellbeing. Mental Health UK offers advice on dealing with Climate Anxiety, including helpful tools and resources. [mentalhealth-uk.org/blog/what-is-climate-anxiety-and-what-can-we-do-about-it](https://mentalhealth-uk.org/blog/what-is-climate-anxiety-and-what-can-we-do-about-it)



It is positive and empowering to connect with community groups who are helping to create fairer, greener local economies that are better able to cope with shocks, both here in York and around the world.



Discover what the YSJ research community is doing on the ISJ website. Or, listen to recent Conversations in Social Justice podcasts, created by YSJ students working in sustainability.



# LIVE BRIEFS: CAMPUS, CITY, REGIONAL, GLOBAL



The Living Lab developed these four briefs in collaboration with academics across the YSJ community. So, each brief builds on existing research threads at the University. This is important, as it gives your work a home and a network of committed, active individuals who can support your interests and goals.

Each of the four briefs offers alternative scales and starting points. We have included some initial questions and resources – but we welcome new ideas and individual interests. Come and share your work with others at our Living Lab events – creative, innovative ways of engaging audiences are very encouraged!

Our own university campus and community are already being affected by climate change, and action is needed to help make them more resilient. The Estates team has created a register of all the risks we can think of that climate change poses to campus life. But many challenges remain – what can your discipline contribute?

- **Engaging** people in what can seem like the dry or worrying subject of climate adaptation is a difficult task. How can we involve students and staff in imagining together what a resilient campus would be like? A Staff-Student Forum could help steer the university towards this vision, but how would such a Forum work? How can the university's policy-making draw on students' and staff's real experiences and stories?
- What is the **responsibility** of the university and campus towards the local community in meeting the challenges of climate adaptation? For example, should we make campus spaces available as a public cool hub during heatwaves?
- **Biodiversity** is growing at the Haxby Road campus wild space, including tansy beetle populations, ponds, woodlands and meadows. The next stage is to engage students (who mostly don't know the site exists) and the local community (who may object to changes in site management) in what the university is trying to achieve there. There are tensions between access and biodiversity. How can humans be present in this increasingly precious wild space as guests, or ecosystem members, and minimise our impact on biodiversity, or even have a positive impact? How can we help the public and students experience this site in positive ways?

On the Living Lab Moodle page you'll find resources to help you address any of these questions, including the YSJ Sustainability Risk Register and other relevant policies, and case studies of universities which already have climate adaptation policies.



From City of York Council (CYC) to the hospitals trust, organisations in York are having to prepare for the additional challenges posed by climate change. There's no single body in charge, and the university, its staff and students have a key role to play in helping to come up with solutions. Some of the **challenges** include:

- Understanding what the current state of **policy** in the city actually is – are organisations prepared? How can your discipline help to engage local communities in sharing their knowledge with policymakers to inform this important issue?
- How are **students** impacted by climate change, both now and in the future? Where are students' climate adaptation needs reflected in local housing, food, economic etc policy? Can we create a campus and city tour drawing on art, writing, performance etc, to share students' experiences with policymakers?
- **Flooding** has an impact on visitors, on local small/medium enterprises (SMEs), and on the community. On campus, we're addressing it through attenuation (making ponds). How are businesses adapting to flooding and other climate impacts? Can we share good practice (and bad) - perhaps in collaboration with YSJ's Enterprise Hub and Business Development teams?
- CYC is leading on trying to establish micro-woodlands and street trees to increase **tree cover** for shade and to lock away carbon. What are the difficulties and solutions?
- How will climate and environmental change impact on local people's health over the coming years, for example through heat stress, and microbial resistance?

On the Living Lab Moodle page are **resources and contacts** to help you find out more about any of these questions, including a review of York's climate policy, contacts in the council and the York Sustainability Group, a student presentation on climate adaptation in York, and information about the impacts of the 2015 floods and community efforts to cope with them.



North Yorkshire is the largest county in England and includes a kaleidoscope of landscapes, with over 40% of the area covered by National Parks. A range of stakeholders in the region, from farmers to frontline workers, tourists to moorland managers, small businesses to super tech developers, experience radically different realities. They require different resources from the land.

A major challenge can be understanding how people connect across the region in the face of climate change. There may be systems in place to represent different people's views, but how do we truly relate to each other and also our surrounding landscapes? Power dynamics and how decision-makers define 'value' are, therefore, key themes for the regional brief.

There are some big questions:

- How can North Yorkshire come together and become more resilient in this time of climate crisis when the needs, realities and values of affected communities are so diverse?
- How do we consider **climate equity** within the region and are there disparities in urban/rural provisions for effective climate resilience?
- How can alternative economic models such as **circular economies**, which focus on reuse and repair, help our region become more sustainable?

- How is climate resilience linked to who owns what land and **access to land** and resources across our region?
- How are decisions made about climate resilience across a vast region? What is the **relationship between decision-makers, landowners and local communities** and how does this shape climate resilience or vulnerability?
- How are decisions and ideas about climate change and resilience communicated across our region? How can regional and **local knowledge and skills** be channelled to support more resilient communities in a changing climate?

The Living Lab can offer support in navigating such large questions about our region. This may include narrowing things down to a case study or drawing from your own experience. As a network of researchers and climate action advocates, the Living Lab has useful contacts and ongoing links with regional stakeholders, including the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority and North York Moors National Park.

We also invite anyone working on the regional brief to contact Thomas Ratcliffe ([t.ratcliffe@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:t.ratcliffe@yorks.ac.uk)), whose research focuses on land management and exciting ways to engage local voices in research.

Ecological justice is about understanding that the most vulnerable suffer the first and worst consequences of climate change. Extreme weather and biodiversity crises are disrupting entire cultural practices, livelihoods, and histories. Now more than ever, we need innovative, inclusive approaches to our planet. This includes challenging our own assumptions about knowledge-making itself.



- How are other countries and cultures, including indigenous peoples, approaching climate resilience? How can a deeper understanding of their **knowledge** and approaches to climate resilience inform our own in the UK and at YSJ?
- How do we reconcile **commonalities or differences** in global political/ecological approaches to climate resilience?
- Is there a difference between rightsholders and stakeholders – who defines this?
- How can we make space for new **knowledge/global voices** at YSJ as we consider climate challenges?

In this brief, you will have opportunities to engage with global perspectives through the ongoing work of academic staff involved in the Living Lab. This includes:

- Climate refugee work: York St John engages with refugees in York through multiple projects, including a regular Wednesday coffee morning and community allotment gardening.
- Links with global partners and Universities. We are also working with our YSJ Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion adviser, Jake Furby, to find informed ways of involving diverse voices in climate resilience.

If you are interested in this brief and want further information, email [v.pugh@yorks.ac.uk](mailto:v.pugh@yorks.ac.uk)

You will find additional resources on the Living Lab Moodle page. You can also explore research underway on the ISJ's Research Theme page.

# EMPLOYABILITY

The Living Lab works closely with our Careers, Placements and Student Opportunities team here at YSJ to ensure student involvement with the Living Lab works towards your future. If you are working on a live brief in a module, you will be building employment skills (think teamwork, research, advocacy, communication skills, organisation) and developing the YSJ Graduate Attributes.

In addition, throughout 2024-2026, we will be posting paid positions through the Internship Team and Research Office. There are also many casual but effective voluntary opportunities for you to contribute and enhance your CV by supporting an event or writing a blog. Whatever your level of involvement, we aim to support your development in much needed skills in cross-disciplinary collaboration, wide stakeholder engagement and leadership.



## LIST OF PARTICIPATING MODULES

The Living Lab is a dynamic network and changing all the time – but here are some of the modules which are participating across Semesters 1 and 2:

<b>Biosciences</b>	Clinical Biochemistry and Biology of Disease
<b>Business</b>	Business Ethics and CSR
<b>Education</b>	Secondary Mathematics PGCE; Learning Outside the Classroom
<b>Fine Art</b>	Professional Networks and other modules
<b>Geography</b>	Exploring Human Geography; Society and Space; Sustainability: Global Environmental Management;
<b>Graphic Design</b>	Various opportunities offered
<b>History</b>	History, Community and Culture
<b>Humanities</b>	MA Environmental and Social Justice
<b>Linguistics</b>	Analysing Texts
<b>Literature</b>	Science Fiction for Survival; MA Publishing; Literature at Work
<b>Marketing</b>	Marketing; Digital Marketing
<b>Occupational Therapy</b>	Various modules
<b>Performance (Acting/Drama)</b>	Politically Engaged Practice 1 and 2; Performance in Social Contexts; Performance Methods; Theatre and Ecology
<b>Performance (Music)</b>	Perspectives on Music 1; Musical Explorations
<b>Politics and International Relations</b>	Various opportunities offered
<b>Psychology</b>	Qualitative Methods
<b>Tourism</b>	Events Tourism; Responsible Tourism

# Know your SDGs?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

The 17 SDGs help us align our work – to place it in the bigger picture of global action to tackle climate change.



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