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Strategic Plan 2025 to 2031

AUDE

Together, for excellent university estates & facilities

ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY
DIRECTORS OF ESTATES

Introduction

Universities are under more pressure than ever to deliver on sustainability, world-class student experience and cost efficiency. AUDE's new strategy is designed to meet that challenge head-on, equipping estates teams with the tools, insights, and influence they need to thrive to 2031 and beyond. AUDE is recognised for its ability to anticipate the challenges that are to come while delivering practical support today. That blend of foresight and action is what makes AUDE indispensable, and not just for members but also for the senior bodies, within and beyond the sector, with which we partner.

This is a strategy that has been co-developed with our members, reflecting the support universities need from AUDE, and it focuses on the realities of leading estates and facilities today as well as reasonable ambitions for the ways in which we believe AUDE can develop and become ever more useful to the sector during this period.

Every £1 invested in AUDE delivers great value. Our association membership translates into sector-wide tools, sector-leading reports and guidance documents, CPD, access to conferences, strategic benchmarking, and influence that no single institution could achieve alone. If AUDE didn't exist then we in the Higher Education estates community would need rapidly to invent it. Via annual subscriptions to the association we invest in a body that can do things on our behalf because it is able to operate at the necessary scale:

- commission work or research of advantage to us all.
- lobby within the sector on issues of importance to us.
- provide professional development and learning events and the year-round flow of information that we all benefit from so much.

If we think of the AUDE projects launched so far in 2025 alone then we see practical research carried out for us on issues from social learning spaces to climate change adaptation and designing neurodiverse environments. These things are far from theoretical and instead can feed into university success in very direct ways, on measures from student experience and outcomes, to cost avoidance as we aim to reach our carbon net zero goals, and student and staff attraction and retention metrics. AUDE develops practical working tools, such as (in 2025 alone):

- the Capital Cost Database (which helps us share knowledge on the likely costs associated with some of our biggest projects as a way to make sure no-one spends unnecessarily).
- the forthcoming (Autumn 25) AUDE Self-Assessment Tool (or AUDE SAT), designed to give you a quick-fire way to understand the key measurables on estates performance to help you prioritise budgets and projects.
- our annual flagship Estates Management Report (an unrivalled place to learn about our estates' relative strengths and weaknesses to drive efficiency and innovation).
- standalone pieces of work such as the recent (spring 2025) 'Cleaning Services Benchmarking Review'.

The lifetime of this strategy will see many, many more similar interventions and support tools across themes from space utilisation to digital infrastructure, supporting career paths including for the full range and diversity of our team members, cost efficiency and many others.





The association does 'thought leadership' whilst having a firm hand on the practical realities too. AUDE members – individuals and universities – know the information AUDE provides is authoritative and credible, a foundation for decision-making that is firm and reliable. And the AUDE membership includes the whole sector, not just a part of it. All boats float on a rising tide.

We learn from our international members and partner bodies overseas too, including via our collaborations with peer organisations in the United States (APPA), Southern Africa (HEFMA) and Australasia (TEFMA). We are proud to contribute to global conversations with such partnerships to identify what 'world class' means for university estates. These relationships provide early access to the latest information and innovation and ensure we contribute to a global raising of standards from a robust and informed position. Nationally we engage with government departments, MPs and UUK amongst others to shape policies that support estate professionals.

As with many things, the more you put in the more you will get out. A full and engaged team of estates and facilities professionals, making the most of every new AUDE tool, regularly attending events and webinars, perhaps taking advantage of our coaching or work shadowing programmes, logging their CPD hours, and more – this is a team that more than justifies the subscription spend and maximises the considerable benefit AUDE brings to estates teams in this sector. In the months ahead, we invite every estates team to fully engage with AUDE's programmes, to trial the AUDE Self-Assessment Tool, to use the benchmarking reviews, to contribute to the special interest groups and wider AUDE research. The more actively we engage, the stronger the sector becomes.

As an association, AUDE is the collective strength of some of the most talented estates and facilities leaders. A community whose expertise, innovation and professionalism set the standard across the HE sector and a beacon for other sectors to follow. Our dedicated AUDE staff team meanwhile is small but formidable, consistently producing high-quality projects, events and tools that support our members' success. Their commitment to excellence means our outputs are not just credible, but genuinely sector-shaping.

It is within this frame of reference that we recommend this new strategy to you.

Syd Cottle

AUDE Chair (2024-26), and Director of Estates and Infrastructure at the University of Liverpool

and

Ian Grimes

AUDE Chair-Elect (and incoming Chair for the period 2026-28), and Director of Estates at the University of Hertfordshire

Who We Are

AUDE collaborates with estates and facilities management professionals in universities across the UK and internationally. We provide a platform for knowledge-sharing, strategic support, and sector-wide advocacy, ensuring alignment with broader higher education goals.

We are an association for all those working within Higher Education Estates and Facilities Management. Whatever your role, we are an association for you.

With a strong membership base across UK universities and a growing international and European presence, AUDE serves as the collective voice for estates and facilities professionals in Higher Education. Over the next three years, we will focus on global collaboration, best practice sharing, and fostering professional development to strengthen the sector.

As an organisation, we drive discussions on critical topics including sustainability, student experience, space planning, financial resilience, and equality, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I). By working with members, industry leaders, and policymakers, we generate insights and solutions that shape the future of higher education estates management.

We are a not-for-profit organisation, funded through membership subscriptions, partnerships, and sponsorships, with a commitment to delivering value for our members and the sector at large. We are an accredited CPD awarding association.

Our work in the higher education sector supports more than 4,500 members across 200+ HE organisations and education providers.


4,500
members



AUDE's Primary Objectives

Our Main Goal:

To offer strategic support, drive innovation, and provide leadership to everyone involved in estates and facilities management within higher education.

In Pursuit of This Goal, AUDE Aims To:

Have voice and influence

- **Be the Leading Voice:** Represent higher education estates and facilities management both nationally and globally at senior strategic levels and across the profession.
- **Influence Policy:** Shape policies in the best interests of the sector.
- **Act as a Collective Force:** Serve as a credible, intelligent collective with unique insights into the provision of facilities and services for world-class learning, teaching, and research.

Lead the profession

- **Support Senior Leaders:** Assist senior leaders in managing large and diverse portfolios of operations and functions in a complex sector.
- **Promote Professionalism:** Advocate for high standards of professionalism in the strategic planning, development, operation, and management of higher education estates and facilities.
- **Promote Collaboration:** Work with organisations within and beyond the sector to foster collaboration and shared efficiencies, avoiding duplication.

Provide knowledge and insight

- **Provide Expert Guidance:** Offer expert advice and thought leadership to the sector.
- **Organise Events:** Host events and provide learning and development opportunities relevant to our members.
- **Facilitate Knowledge Sharing:** Enable the sharing of information, knowledge, best practices, and expertise.
- **Anticipate Needs:** Stay ahead of members' and the sector's needs through horizon scanning.
- **Commission Research:** Initiate research and development projects on current and emerging issues impacting higher education estates and facilities.

Have impact on people and place

- **Enhance Campus Life:** Promote the benefits of university campuses, estates, facilities, and services in enhancing the experience of students, staff, and visitors.
- **Create World-Leading Campuses:** Help members develop world-leading campuses and estates that deliver excellent student experiences, research outcomes, and great places to study and work.
- **Advocate for Financial Sustainability:** Ensure that financial sustainability remains central to the sector's strategic planning.
- **Embed EDI:** Integrate equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) at all levels of estates management, ensuring fair opportunities, accessibility, and an inclusive environment for all staff and students.
- **Grow International Membership:** Expand AUDE's international membership, sharing global insights and best practices.

Strategic Priorities for 2025-2031

1. Sustainability and Net Zero

Description:

Sustainability is at the core of AUDE's strategic agenda. As institutions work towards achieving carbon neutrality, AUDE will provide leadership, tools, and advocacy to accelerate progress. This includes supporting biodiversity, resource efficiency, and reducing environmental impact through best practices and innovation.

Objectives:

- Provide sector-wide leadership in sustainable estates management.
- Support members in achieving carbon neutrality by their desired target date.
- Enhance the Sustainability Leadership Scorecard as a benchmarking tool.
- Promote climate adaptation, biodiversity and circular economy practices in estate management.
- Encourage refurbishment over new build, where appropriate as a carbon reduction strategy.

Measurable KPIs:

- 60% of member institutions are actively using the Sustainability Leadership Scorecard.
- Provide resources to universities to help them achieve their net-zero targets or making significant improvements towards targets.
- An active AUDE-led Sustainability Advisory Group measured by number meetings, attendance at meetings and events and ideas generated for projects and outputs.



Strategic Priorities for 2025-2031

2. Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Engagement

Description:

To ensure long-term success, universities must enhance operational efficiency while improving engagement across departments. AUDE will drive initiatives that improve financial resilience, resource sharing, and international collaboration to elevate estates management practices globally. We will do this in a way that ensures best practices are inclusive and benefit diverse members, institutions and their communities.

Objectives:

- Work closely with British Universities Finance Directors Group (BUFDG) to connect Estates and Finance professionals to provide tools and guidance for financial resilience and cost-efficiency.
- Support universities with the operating ambitions for optimised resource utilisation, this may include support on shared service models.
- Strengthen IT collaboration to enhance digital estate management working with Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA).
- Expand international engagement to drive global best practices.

Measurable KPIs:

- 60% of member institutions engaging with our Capital Costs Database and other tools supporting operational efficiency.
- Increased membership of international institutions to provide a global perspective on efficiency and effectiveness.
- Growth in digital estate strategy implementation. Publication of AUDE resources to support this.



Strategic Priorities for 2025-2031

3. Innovation and Digital Evolution

Description:

Digital transformation is reshaping how estates are managed. AUDE will support institutions in adopting smart campus technologies, AI, and advanced building management systems to enhance efficiency, security, and user experience across university estates. AUDE will ensure digital innovation is accessible and inclusive for all institutions, regardless of size or financial capacity.

Objectives:

- Promote the adoption of digital transformation in estate management.
- Guide members on emerging technologies like AI and smart campuses.
- Advocate for smart campus initiatives to facilitate low-carbon energy solutions.

Measurable KPIs:

- Publication of digital transformation research and best practice guidance.
- Increase in the number of institutions implementing AI-driven estate solutions and gathering case study evidence.
- Growth in smart campus pilot projects across member institutions and gathering case study evidence to share.



Strategic Priorities for 2025-2031

4. Risk and Resilience

Description:

Finance, compliance and emergency planning. UK universities are under mounting financial strain; from shrinking income streams and soaring operating costs to fragile reserves and regulatory churn. AUDE will leverage its position alongside sector partners like BUFDG and AHUA to support members in navigating financial uncertainty, ensuring compliance, and preparing for emergencies. Drawing on data from AUDE's Estates Management Report and sector-wide financial insights, we will help institutions bolster their risk management, compliance protocols, and crisis planning.



Objectives:

- Strengthen members' skills in financial risk management and compliance: Equip estates teams with tools and guidance to identify risks, comply with evolving regulatory regimes, and inform members of the financial context in which the sector operates.
- Strengthen resilience through emergency preparedness: Develop and disseminate best practices for contingency planning in response to estate disruptions.
- Optimise estate operations under financial constraints: Promote targeted cost-efficiency measures; including energy reduction, space optimisation, and asset disposal, to maintain service delivery with reduced budgets, without compromising compliance or safety.

Measurable KPIs:

- Provide joint initiative resources for members utilising the expertise of other associations in the sector to provide education and information for members on financial sustainability for HE and the role they can play.
- AUDE will actively participate in sector wide consultations, task force and working groups to represent its members voice.
- Provide foresight on emerging risks and regulatory developments, ensuring institutions can anticipate and respond to potential future infrastructure issues (e.g. RACC-type scenarios).
- Act as a conduit for advice and update on compliance obligations through AUDE or sector partners.



Strategic Priorities for 2025-2031

5. Professional Development and Talent Growth

Description:

Attracting and developing the next generation of estates professionals is key to the sector's success. AUDE will focus on expanding training opportunities, fostering mentorship, and addressing skills gaps to build a resilient and diverse workforce. ED&I will be at the heart of this priority, ensuring that development opportunities are inclusive and accessible and importantly that our members individual personal development includes a wide range of equality diversity and inclusion topics.

Objectives:

- Create training and career development opportunities for members.
- Address skills gaps in estates management through tailored programs or signposting to other opportunities (we will never duplicate what others are already doing).
- Strengthen mentorship, networking, and leadership development.
- Improve accessibility to development funds, coaching, and shadowing schemes.

Measurable KPIs:

- 15% increase in participation in AUDE training and mentoring programs measured via awarded CPD hours.
- Higher engagement from underrepresented groups in estates leadership roles.
- Expansion of international knowledge-sharing initiatives.



Strategic Priorities for 2025-2031

6. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I)

Description:

AUDE is committed to embedding ED&I principles across all aspects of estates and facilities management. We will work with members to create more inclusive workplaces, ensure fair access to development opportunities, and foster a culture that values diversity. This will be integrated into all other strategic priorities to create a more equitable and inclusive sector.

Objectives:

- Develop resources and initiatives to support inclusive leadership in estates management.
- Working with Universities Human Resources (UHR) promote best practices in diverse hiring, retention, and progression.
- Establish ED&I benchmarks and track improvements across the membership.
- Ensure all AUDE-led initiatives embed ED&I considerations.

Measurable KPIs:

- 60% of member institutions engaging with AUDE's ED&I training and resources.
- Increase in the number of AUDE members willing to share their ED&I information with us to better inform our work (data collection is anonymised and voluntary).
- Creation and embedding of an AUDE association statement on our ED&I beliefs and behaviours.



This plan reflects our commitment to supporting estates and facilities professionals through collaboration, innovation, and strategic leadership in a rapidly evolving sector, with ED&I embedded throughout our work

AUDE Strategic Roadmap 2025-2031



SUSTAINABILITY AND NET ZERO

- Provide sector-wide leadership in sustainable estates management.
- Support members in achieving carbon neutrality by their desired target date.
- Enhance the Sustainability Leadership Scorecard as a benchmarking tool.
- Promote climate adaptation, biodiversity and circular economy practices in estate management.
- Encourage refurbishment over new build, where appropriate as a carbon reduction strategy.



EFFICIENCY, EFFECTIVENESS, AND ENGAGEMENT

- Work closely with British Universities Finance Directors Group (BUFDG) to connect Estates and Finance professionals to provide tools and guidance for financial resilience and cost-efficiency.
- Support universities with the operating ambitions for optimised resource utilisation, this may include support on shared service models.
- Strengthen IT collaboration to enhance digital estate management working with Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA).
- Expand international engagement to drive global best practices.



INNOVATION AND DIGITAL EVOLUTION

- Promote the adoption of digital transformation in estate management.
- Guide members on emerging technologies like AI and digital twins.
- Advocate for smart campus initiatives and low-carbon energy solutions.



RISK AND RESILIENCE

- Strengthen members skills in financial risk management and compliance: Equip estates teams with tools and guidance to identify risks, comply with evolving regulatory regimes, and inform members of the financial context in which the sector operates.
- Strengthen resilience through emergency preparedness: Develop and disseminate best practices for contingency planning in response to estate disruptions.
- Optimise estate operations under financial constraints: Promote targeted cost-efficiency measures; including energy reduction, space optimisation, and asset disposal, to maintain service delivery with reduced budgets, without compromising compliance or safety.



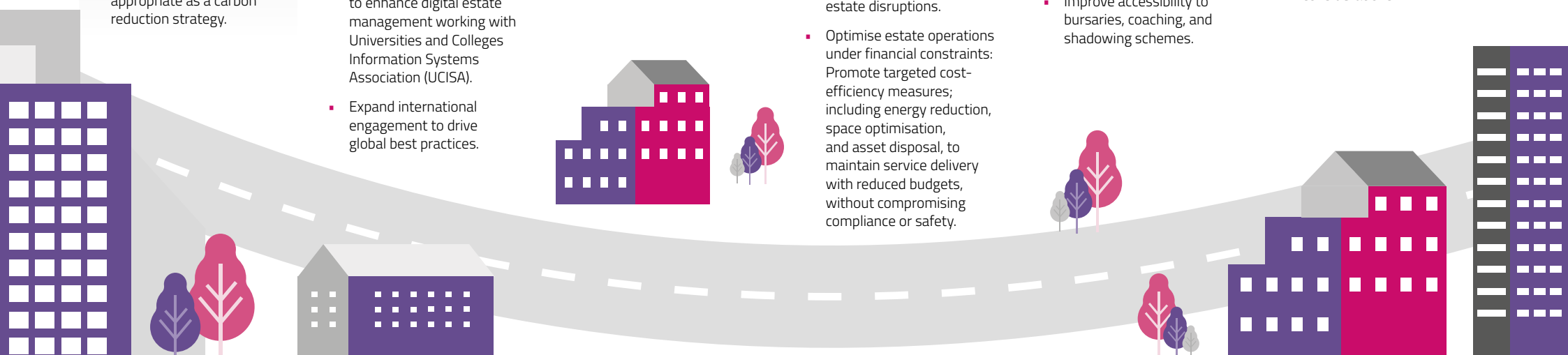
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TALENT GROWTH

- Create training and career development opportunities for members.
- Address skills gaps in estates management through tailored programs or signposting to other opportunities (we will never duplicate what others are already doing).
- Strengthen mentorship, networking, and leadership development.
- Improve accessibility to bursaries, coaching, and shadowing schemes.



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (ED&I)

- Develop resources and initiatives to support inclusive leadership in estates management.
- Working with Universities Human Resources (UHR) promote best practices in diverse hiring, retention, and progression.
- Establish ED&I benchmarks and track improvements across the membership.
- Ensure all AUDE-led initiatives embed ED&I considerations.



AUDE's Primary Objectives

Our Main Goal: To offer strategic support, drive innovation, and provide leadership to everyone involved in estates and facilities management within higher education.

Strategic Priority	Description	KPI	Target
Sustainability and Net Zero	Leading sector progress on carbon neutrality, biodiversity, resource efficiency, and climate adaptation.	% member institutions using Sustainability Leadership Scorecard	60% by 2031
		# universities accessing AUDE resources/help for net-zero target achievement or improvement	Increase by 20% between 2026 and 2031
		# AUDE-led Sustainability Advisory Group meetings/events/projects	Total number to grow year on year
Efficiency, Space Optimisation, and Engagement	Improving operational efficiency, financial resilience, digital collaboration, and international engagement.	% member institutions engaging with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capital Costs Database ▪ Sustainability Leadership Scorecard ▪ EMR Digital 	60% of HEIs to be using each tool by 2031
		# international member institutions	Total number to grow year on year
		Growth in digital estate strategy implementation and publication of resources	Total number of resources published to assist members to grow year on year
Innovation and Digital Evolution	Enabling smart campus technologies, AI, and advanced management—making digital transformation accessible and inclusive for all institutions.	# digital transformation research/best practice publications	Total number of resources published to assist members to grow year on year
		# institutions implementing AI-driven estate solutions/case study evidence	Number of case studies collected and shown to members
		# smart campus pilot projects/case studies across member institutions	Number of case studies collected and shown to members
Risk and Resilience	Supporting members in financial management, compliance, emergency planning, risk anticipation, and guidance through collaboration.	# joint initiative resources delivered with educational and informative content regarding the sectors financial sustainability for AUDE members	Total number of resources published to assist members to grow year on year
		# sector consultations/task force/working groups AUDE actively contributes to	Total number
		Evidence of foresight on emerging risks & regulatory developments	Total number of resources shared with members
		AUDE acting as a conduit for compliance advice/updates to members	Total number of resources and updates shared with members
Professional Development & Talent Growth	Fostering training, mentoring, networking, and international knowledge-sharing, with EDI embedded to build a resilient, diverse workforce.	% increase in participation in training/mentoring (CPD hours awarded)	15% increase by 2031
		# international knowledge-sharing initiatives	Total number of initiatives
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I)	Integrating ED&I into all estates work via benchmarking, resources, inclusive leadership, and sector partnerships for lasting culture change.	% member institutions engaging with AUDE's ED&I training/resources	60% of institutions to have accessed 1 or more resource by 2031
		# AUDE members sharing anonymised ED&I information	Total number to increase year on year
		Creation and embedding of AUDE association statement on ED&I beliefs & behaviours	Statement created and published Y/N Statement embedded measured by # of page views and awareness measured via pulse survey annually

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