

KentCOG Sustainability Strategy 2023/2024

As a Sustainability hub, KentCOG aims to demonstrate sustainability in action through both theory and practice. With this in mind, this Sustainability Strategy provides a broad framework through which a lens can be applied to both have ambition for the future of KentCOG strategically, but can also be used as a way to judge proposed activities taking place on site, through reference to how well they meet the criteria below.

KentCOG also seeks to support activities under the umbrella of the Sustainable Development Goals. You can read about our contributions to the goals on our [website](#).

The intention of this document is to be useful, transparent and practically relevant so that it can be applied to justify actions on site. There are 6 Strategic Goals:

1. Become Climate Positive

AMBITION: Demonstrate and stimulate climate-positive actions among the garden participants and those in contact with us.

- Be aware of our carbon footprint and aim to keep reducing it over time.
- Audit the energy consumption in the garden and implement strategies to reduce it to a minimum.
- Ensure the garden remains peat free.
- Continue to encourage sustainable travel to the garden through communications.
- Continue to develop an ethical plant-based food and drink offer on site and reduce animal products use to minimise the climate impacts of the food we serve.
- Continue to promote the importance of our edibles with regard to food miles, seasonality, plant based and local.
- Develop our onsite composting to become self-sufficient and begin to take waste from other sources on the University campus.

2. Promote Positive Biodiversity

AMBITION: Demonstrate, stimulate and empower biodiversity positive action by continuing to engage in activities that protect and enhance conditions on site which make space for nature.

- Continue commitment to chemical free, organic(uncertified) garden management practices.
- Continue to practise and develop no dig garden systems.
- Monitor species on site and aim to increase habitat diversity.
- Aim to plant locally grown and locally appropriate non-invasive species.
- Continue to provide opportunities to interact with biodiversity through surveys, talks etc.
- Continue to promote, engage with and encourage educational opportunities.

3. Ensure Water Conservation

AMBITION: To use less, capture, reuse and recycle water and work towards water neutral gardening practices.

- Increase effectivity in garden-watering activities.
- Encourage and work towards a shift from mains to rain for plant watering.
- Maximise opportunities to harvest and store water.
- Eliminate leaks and wastage and work to improve efficiency.
- Increase water-re-use strategies where possible, reuse and recycle water.
- Adopt principles including: avoiding irrigating grass and meadows; using watering cans not a hose as much as possible; installing water butts; right plant / right place; using mulches and compost to retain moisture; using drip trays routinely; replacing paved areas with permeable paving where possible.

4. Eliminate Plastic Use

AMBITION: We will eliminate all single-use plastic and encourage reduced plastic use, educating users on alternatives to plastic use.

We will develop and commit to a circular plastic approach on site so that we:

- Use no plastic: choose, wherever possible, alternative materials, such as paper, glass or aluminium.
- Adopt a circular-loop system for plastic: reusing plastic for as long as possible by collecting, processing and repeatedly re-using plant pots, trays and other items.
- Use less plastic: reduce and cut down our plastic use.
- Use better plastic: switch to recycled, recyclable or compostable products on site.

5. Reduce Waste

AMBITION: Work towards zero waste so that all waste produced is reduced, reused, recycled, composted or sent to energy recovery as a last resort

- Work within the garden to reduce, reclaim, reuse, recycle, repair, recover and re-invest in recycled products:
 - Reduce resources in the garden wherever possible.
 - Re-use household materials and seasonal items year on year and recycle through the community where possible.
 - Recycle garden waste, plastic, glass and metals.
 - Repair and maintain tools and garden items rather than buying new.
 - Reinvest in items made from recyclables.
- Carry out a regular waste audit on site to see what our waste is and how to eliminate it.
- Ensure our waste collection on site is educational, accessible and easy to use.

6. Ensure Positivity for People

AMBITION: Ensure that all interaction with the space is positive and empowering to improve mental, physical and social wellbeing and promote sustainability education.

- Ensure the garden continues to be community-led, diverse, inclusive, accessible and relevant.
- Continue to work to identify and remove barriers to participation and access, to nurture inclusivity, equitability and diversity.
- Continue to work to build capacity through the development, facilitation and valuing of shared knowledge and understanding throughout the garden community.
- Ensure that the garden remains locally relevant to the volunteers, empowering and ever-evolving.
- Continue to develop skills, knowledge and confidence within the young people and adults, volunteering in the space, to grow sustainably.
- Take opportunities to improve the recognition of the garden as a valuable health resource to enhance wellbeing, improve community cohesion, facilitate interactions with nature and reduce isolation.
- Continue to elevate the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion through the gardening community.

The KentCOG Sustainability Strategy will be reviewed annually by the KentCOG Management Group with progress reported as part of the KentCOG Annual Report.

KENTCOG MANAGEMENT GROUP: 22/06/2023