

Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy

2025 - 2030



Contents

Introduction and Context 3

Our Landscape 4

The Canterbury Campus 5

Woodlands 5

Hedgerows 7

Grasslands 8

Ponds 9

Our Commitment..... 11

Nature Positive Universities 11

2-year targets..... 11

Landscaping Principles..... 12

Green Flag..... 12

Our 15 Landscaping Principles 13

2-year targets..... 14

Case Study Project: The River 15

My Campus and Other Animals – engaging people with wildlife to support nature and wellbeing..... 16

Case study project: Kent Community Oasis Garden..... 19

Learning and Research 20

Civic Mission..... 22

Case study project: Wild Walls 23

Governance 24

Introduction and Context

We are experiencing a rapid decline in biodiversity with human action being the major cause. Biodiversity and nature's benefits to people underpin almost every aspect of human development and are key to the success of the Sustainable Development Goals. They help to produce food, clean water, regulate climate and even control disease. Biodiversity and our ability to access and engage with nature is also fundamental for our mental health and wellbeing. Yet we are depleting and degrading biodiversity and ecosystems faster than at any other point in human history. (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services).

The Lawton Review, published in 2010, aimed to review how England's wildlife and ecological network could be improved to help nature thrive in the face of climate change and other pressures. In short, it asked for there to be more, bigger, better and joined ecological networks to rebuild nature.

As a public institution, we need to consider how we can play our part in this work, engaging with conservation work happening outside of our Campus. Kent, as a county, is at the heart of some of the most exciting national rewilding and conservation projects, so as a regional University we should be at the forefront of building links, sharing resources and research, and showcasing good practice of conservation on our Campus.

The University seeks to drastically limit its impact on local and global biodiversity by joining the Nature Positive Universities scheme, setting targets that support how we manage our Campus for biodiversity, as well as reviewing our supply chains to see how the products and services we buy are impacting global biodiversity.

We are working with internal and external stakeholders through our Biodiversity Working Group (BWG) to ensure that our operations align with our world leading research and activities carried out by the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE) and their innovative [E3 Sharing Space for Nature initiative](#). You can contact the BWG via the sustainability team at sustainability@kent.ac.uk.

Our natural spaces on Campus play a role in our Net Zero ambitions, as well as mitigating against the effects of climate change. Nature based solutions such as maintaining healthy ecosystems, and restoring degraded systems can enhance carbon sequestration. These solutions can also help us adapt to cope with some of the locked in changes that climate change has already caused e.g. tree shading reducing the impact of extreme heat.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide our overarching plans to: enhance the Campus for biodiversity, engage people with our natural spaces, build links between the natural spaces on Campus and our learning and teaching activities, and communicate all of this activity clearly. The strategy will be in place for the next five years with targets being updated every 2 years during the lifetime of the strategy. Targets will reflect priority species and habitats; new learnings from what we have done so far; and areas in which we want to improve.

This strategy supports the University's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals Accord, in particular Goals 15 (Life on Land) and 3 (Good health and Wellbeing). The objectives and targets feed into the University's overarching Sustainability Strategy.

The primary scope of this strategy is the 300 acres of the Canterbury Campus, which supports ancient woodland, extensive grasslands, ponds and the formal Central Campus heart. We have limited landholdings at the Medway Campus, however, our Landscape Principles as outlined in this document are also applied at the Medway Campus to reduce impact on biodiversity and enhance the green spaces for nature.

The Biodiversity Working Group

Our Landscape

The Framework Masterplan for the Canterbury Campus of the University of Kent sets out a vision for its future evolution. The document, completed in 2019, is designed to give an understanding of the context in which the Campus may change in the coming years, covering both the short (2018 to 2021) and medium term (2021 to 2031).

In describing a spatial plan for the future of 'The University of Kent in the Garden of England', the Masterplan's title specifically reflects the desire to renew a commitment to landscape-led planning principles. It also expresses the University's commitment to conservation and environmental sustainability, and to creating a Campus that is open and welcoming to neighbouring communities, the City of Canterbury and to the people of Kent who are all actively invited to use the Campus and its facilities.

This is particularly relevant to sharing the incredible green spaces on Campus with our neighbours and inviting everyone to engage with nature on our site.

"Today the University Estate is well known as a very verdant campus with plenty of open space, located within a semi-rural landscape setting along a ridgeline overlooking Canterbury." University of Kent Canterbury Campus Masterplan (2019).



Aerial shot of the University of Kent. Credit: University of Kent.

Some of the key principles outlined in the Masterplan that directly overlap with this strategy are as follows:

- Consolidate the Campus Heart and its environs to make best use of already developed brownfield land
- Co-locate buildings to aid energy efficiency and limit heat waste and improve conditions for cogeneration of power
- Safeguard natural habitats and nurture biodiversity to enrich the Campus and the surrounding area
- Rationalise car parking to make it more efficient, less reliant on fossil fuels and reduce impacts on air quality and noise
- Promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles, including incorporating facilities into the landscape that encourage walking and cycling, sport and play
- Incorporate appropriate renewable energy technologies within specific developments where feasible and viable

“The land on which the campus has been developed over the last half century includes three former farms: Brotherhood, Beverley and Hothe Court. The names of these farms and some of the former farmhouses and other agricultural buildings remain embedded in the University Estate as a ‘palimpsest’ or memory of past use. In addition, former field lines, tracks and paths, woodlands and evidence of agricultural workings can be seen in the open spaces of the campus. Beneath these layers of historic land use, the underlying topographical features of landform and watercourses shaped both the former agricultural use and the original campus plan, and they inform the new Masterplan too.” University of Kent

Canterbury Campus Masterplan (2019).

The Biodiversity and Landscape strategy seeks to build on our understanding of our landscape, complementing and delivering on parts of the Masterplan that aim to support biodiversity. Our work should enhance the natural spaces that encompass our built environment, providing valuable amenity space to support people’s wellbeing, the University’s overall look and appeal, and importantly conserve and boost the natural environment for wildlife.

The Canterbury Campus

The Estate is not one environment, but several, and is composed of a complex collage of land parcels. The Masterplan celebrates their variety and distinctiveness and explores what each area is capable of becoming. In this strategy, we will focus on the broader habitat designations that make up the Campus and how we seek to support and connect them to create a mosaic of healthy habitats across the site.

Woodlands

We have extensive woodlands across the site, with an estimated 40 acres of majority broadleaf ancient woodland split across three main wooded areas.

Brotherhood Wood is situated on the north side of Parkwood Road. Parkwood consists of the woodland between Parkwood Road and Giles Lane to the East of the Parkwood student housing area. Bluebell Wood is further south, to the south of the University Road, surrounded by open grassland and parkland habitats to the east and west, with the developed Campus to the north. We also have some pocket woodlands along Giles Lane that screen the Ingram building from the road.



Map taken from the 2016 Woodland Management Plan showing the how the woodland is split into coppicing coupes.

Our woodlands are managed primarily through a coppicing regime as outlined in our 2016 Woodland Management Plan. Coppicing has been taking place on Campus since 2011, and in 2016 the Woodland Management Plan formalized this process and rotation as part of the planning requirement when Sibson was built.

Coppicing is the cutting down of trees, predominantly chestnut, which mimics the natural process of retrenching. This is when trees naturally drop their limbs to extend their lives. This can look alarming, but coppicing is a traditional activity that does not kill the trees. Each coppiced tree will regrow and as part of a 15 year cycle as we make our way around all sections of the woodlands on Campus.

This rotation means we end up with a very diverse range of ages in our trees across our three main areas of woodland – Parkwood, Brotherhood Wood and Bluebell Wood.

Coppicing was traditionally done to provide a sustainable supply of timber. However, our goal for coppicing is to improve the health of our trees and create additional benefits for other wildlife.

By removing sections of canopy, we are increasing the amount of light that can reach the woodland floor. This allows other species of vegetation that are dormant in the seed bank in the soil the chance to grow and increase the diversity of that area. This increase in vegetation enhances the amount of habitat and foraging opportunities for insects, birds and mammals.

Whilst coppicing, we also take the opportunity to remove any invasive vegetation from the area and collect any litter we uncover.

We have a coppicing specification document that goes into more detail about our methodology, and this is reviewed annually before the coppicing season (winter) to ensure we are keeping up with new advice, good practice and ensuring a high standard of work.

In 2025 we commissioned a new survey of our woodlands after nearly 10 years of formal coppicing activities. This new survey seeks to determine the condition of our woodlands, assess the impact of our management techniques and provide recommendations to support the ongoing health of our woodlands.

Recommendations from the survey will be included in a new Woodland Action Plan and reported on as part of this strategy's annual report.



Bluebell Woods. Credit: Emily Mason

Our newest wood is Winkle Wood planted to the north of Campus along the Crab and Winkle pathway. It was planted in 2017 as part of the planning requirements of the Sibson building development. Eight years on, the wood has grown substantially, and the management of this wood is adapting to support its continual growth whilst maintaining access and safety. The action plan for this wood will be included in the new Woodland Management Plan once all new surveys and recommendations are completed.

Hedgerows

Hedgerows are important habitat features often providing vital corridors for wildlife to move around a landscape. They also provide useful foraging, shelter and nesting opportunities to many species.

Hedgerows have a certain amount of protection, as follows:

- hedgerows which qualify as Habitats of Principal Importance for conserving biodiversity, are covered by national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- hedgerows with nesting birds, and bats and dormice, have indirect protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act
- hedgerows which qualify as 'important' hedgerows, have protection under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997

All our non-ornamental hedgerows on Campus have been mapped as part of a 2018 survey which included identifying which of our hedgerows are defined as 'important.' These 'important' hedgerows have been added to the Campus Sensitivities Map.

What is the Campus Sensitivities Map?

The Campus Sensitivities Map is a simple map that provides key details of sensitive habitats, species or research projects on campus.

This map is only available to operational staff as it contains sensitive information about the location of certain protected species.

The map supports operational staff when planning projects that may impact on the natural environment. The map allows them to incorporate all relevant protections and legislative requirements into their project planning.

The map is collated using information from the Landscape and Grounds Team, the Sustainability Team and the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE).

To meet our legislative requirements, we have put together a list of actions to take over the next year to ensure we are compliant and demonstrating good practice.

- 1: Review sensitivities map and locations of hedgerows, cross referencing with management responsibilities. Update map accordingly.
- 2: Establish a minimum 2 m buffer zone around important hedgerows to avoid disturbances from loud noises and heavy machinery.
- 3: Restrict the use of herbicides within this buffer zone.
- 4: Trim and/or cut hedgerow to control woody plants outside of bird nesting season.
- 5: Remove or control non-native species
6. Develop a 3-year rolling survey and action plan for hedgerow management

Grasslands

We have around 80 acres of grassland across the Canterbury Campus. These grasslands are a combination of formal, amenity lawns, tussocky grasslands, leased hay meadows and internally managed wildflower meadows.

Grassland, when managed well and for plant diversity, can produce a huge amount of food in the form of seeds and pollen for invertebrates, including important pollinating species. A healthy grassland can support an abundance of invertebrate species which in turn provides food for birds, amphibians and small mammals.

It's our ambition at Kent is to enhance our extensive grasslands, using local expertise and specialists to learn more about what species make up our grasslands and how we can improve the diversity of plants within them.

We are currently managing our grasslands in accordance with our grassland management map; however, we are redeveloping this map over the next 2 years to review our mowing regimes, adapt to our new landscaping principles and meet our meadow creation target as outlined in this strategy.

We will also be looking at opportunities to change our mowing regime at our woodland edges to allow for more scrub to develop. Scrub is a vital marginal habitat that will increase our mosaic of habitats on Campus.



Grassland Management Map.

Much of our grassland management work has been directly inspired by the response we have received from the No Mow May project. We have been taking part in No Mow May since 2023 and each year we receive a large amount of positive feedback from Campus users on the impact wilder grasslands have on people i.e. seeing more life, birds, bees etc. etc.

Ponds

We have six main ponds on Campus, which the Landscape and Grounds Team are responsible for the management of: Jennison, Keynes, Beverly Farm, Lower Eliot, Upper Eliot and Woolf (not accessible to Campus users).

There are a few other smaller ponds which are managed directly by their users, e.g. The Kent Community Oasis Garden Pond and the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology research ponds.

Ponds provide a vital habitat for many invertebrates and amphibians of significance as well as a source of food and water for birds and mammals. Ponds, if not managed, will disappear over time.

The Canterbury Campus ponds have not been regularly and actively managed for many years, so they have degraded in ecological value, and some are failing to hold water for any period of time. There has been, and is, a

lack of resources for the ponds and all six ponds require restoration work before a maintenance schedule can be put into place.

It is recognised that we need to restore and produce robust long-term management plans for our ponds. At the University of Kent, we have populations of the three native newt species including the Scheduled Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) so have a duty of care to not only protect their habitats but enhance them.

It is a priority for the Biodiversity Working Group and targeted within this strategy to make a strong case for the proper resourcing for the management of the ponds on site.

Habitat profiles for each pond have been created with recommendations for restoration and management activities. If we receive the resourcing required, we hope to restore one pond each Winter and then implement a 6 year rolling management plan for the ponds.

Management of ponds will take place in November each year, as this is recognised to be the best time to minimise ecological disturbance and will ensure that the water levels are at their lowest point. Pond work will be carried out under the correct licensing from Natural England, especially when working on pond sites of the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*).

The goal of restoring the Campus ponds is to increase their ecological value, therefore it is important that the ponds are monitored and surveyed annually so the success of the restoration work can be measured. This will also allow us to monitor and remove any non-native and potentially invasive species e.g. the red eared sliders (*Trachemys scripta elegans*).



Red Eared Slider and Upper Eliot Pond. Credit: University of Kent

Our Commitment

Regenerate the ecological value of the Campuses to help reverse biodiversity loss and strengthen ecosystem services, whilst supporting the use of our natural spaces for education, engagement, and wellbeing activities.

To realise this, we have set a number of principles, priorities and targets, as well as a governance structure to ensure we stay on track.

Nature Positive Universities

In 2025 The University of Kent signed the [Nature Positive University](#) scheme, a growing network of people from over 500 higher education institutions across the world, working together to promote nature on our Campuses, in our supply chains and within our cities and communities.

Nature Positive means halting and reversing nature loss so that species and ecosystems start to recover. For a university, that means restoring species and ecosystems that have been harmed by the impacts of a university and its activities and enhancing the university's positive impacts on nature.

This refers to everything a university does, from its teaching and research work to the operations and supply chains that keep it running. So, what are we doing at Kent?

Our first steps as part of our pledge are assessing our baseline for Campus biodiversity and the impact of our activities as a university on global biodiversity.

We already have a wealth of information available about our Campus biodiversity due to extensive surveying carried out over the years, particularly by DICE. In collating that information we know we have a gap when it comes to mapping the Campus and understanding the full extent and diversity of our habitats and species on site.

We also know that we have very limited knowledge of our wider impacts e.g. how our procurement activities impact on global biodiversity. This will be a big task for us over the next two years.

2-year targets

- Map 100% of the Canterbury Campus to the UKHab standard by September 2026
- Collate all Campus survey information and provide information on how this can be accessed to support learning and research
- Complete the biodiversity impact data collection baseline, utilising Nature Positive Universities resources, by the end of 2026
- Update these targets by Spring 2027 using the data collected to inform next steps
- Produce an annual update each summer on our progress

Landscaping Principles

The external spaces of our Campus are managed by the Landscape and Grounds Team. The team are key stakeholders in supporting biodiversity on Campus, delivering new grounds projects that enhance habitats, and reducing high impact activities that negatively impact biodiversity.



Photo: Landscape and Grounds operative Amy Murray, planting on Central Campus. Credit: Emily Mason

Green Flag

Staff across Campus Services and beyond are also working towards Green Flag status and the activities of the Landscape and Grounds Team within this strategy seek to support that. In this strategy and the Masterplan, we have identified some of our major landscape features, habitats and species. This work is being furthered by our commitment to being a Nature Positive University and the baselining activities we are undertaking.

Our management principles and targets for the next two years also contribute to supporting the management of the site for our natural spaces and wildlife, contributing to our Green Flag ambitions.

Our 15 Landscaping Principles

We will:

1. Prioritise the protection and conservation of existing habitats and biodiversity.
2. Enhance our grounds for biodiversity to support greater diversity and abundance.

3. Protect every tree.

Trees will only be removed where there is a health and safety risk, and alternatives will be sought first. When a tree must be felled, two will be planted in a suitable location or alternative mitigation as required by planning conditions.

4. Reduce gapping in our hedgerows with native species planting.
5. Operate a no-peat policy.
6. Undertake all grounds management operations outside of environmentally sensitive periods such as the feeding, breeding or hibernating seasons of our campus wildlife e.g. no hedge cutting during bird nesting season.
7. Compost our green waste on site, and incorporate mulch as a soil improver on our beds across campus
8. Provide nesting sites and cover for wildlife by allowing shrub bed areas to grow to maturity undisturbed and leaving log piles for cover and food.
9. Adopt a reduced mowing regime in selected appropriate areas.

10. Select plants based on their benefits to wildlife.

Give preference to native species when designing planting schemes but consider the drought tolerance of non-native species when required. We will also incorporate a wider range of species to ensure longer flowering periods, pollen richness, and use berry producing species to support wildlife over winter.

11. Continue to reduce the use of chemical herbicides on campus.
12. Manage invasive plant species methodically working to eradicate them where possible.
13. Participate in the Biodiversity Working Group supporting ideas and projects with capacity, knowledge and funding where possible.
14. Seek more funding for the biodiversity budget to maximise the work we can do in this area, support other biodiversity projects on campus, and better manage landscape features that have suffered from underfunding.
15. Ensure that key biodiversity and management information that is of interest is available through our website or the sustainability pages.

2-year targets

Habitat/Work Area	Objective	Target
Woodlands and Trees	Maintain the health of our woodlands through coppicing	Achieve 80% of coppicing rotation annually.
	Commission and embed recommendations from the DICE Woodland Survey into a new woodland management action plan.	Winter 2026
	Include Trees and Woodlands with TPO status on the Campus Sensitivities Map.	Include Trees and Woodlands with TPO status on the Campus Sensitivities Map.
	Review historic maps/photos to determine loss of tree cover on the Campus. Use figure to support 'Protect every Tree' principle.	Winter 2025
Hedgerows	Carry out gapping survey for all hedgerows on Campus and infill gaps with native species where required as per the 3 year rolling action plan.	Complete hedgerow survey rotation annually and complete arising works.
Grasslands	Utilise the evolving GIS map to visualise grass cutting regime across the Campus. Use the maps in collaboration with the Biodiversity Working Group to agree upon more areas where mowing can be relaxed.	Map completion by Summer 2026. New regime put in place for Spring 2027.
	Continue to take part in 'No Mow May' on Central Campus, expanding the area where possible.	Annually.
	Building upon the meadow methodology of the River project we will install/expand our wildflower meadow areas to enhance plant diversity in our grasslands.	Increase of 5 acres over 5 years.
	Adapt mowing regime in suitable areas to increase the area of scrubland habitat.	Increase of 5 acres over 5 years.
Ponds	Completion of maintenance plan for Keynes Pond.	Winter 2026
Central Campus/Parkwood	Complete a 2 year trial of removing herbicide usage on Central Campus.	Annual update. Completion December 2026
	Map collection of leaves from Central Campus and Parkwood. Create opportunities for leaves to be broken down on Campus.	Winter 2025
Communication	Produce explainers (blogs, videos, coms pieces etc.) showcasing our work and providing clarity about why and what we are doing.	4 a year (these can be repeats on seasonal activities e.g. coppicing)
	Interpretation – Install interpretation boards that better tell the story of the landscape, habitats and species in situ.	2 a year.

Case Study Project: The River

Objective: Deliver the River project

The River is a developing walking route across the Canterbury Campus that celebrates plants for their diversity; the food they produce for us and wildlife; the habitats they provide and make-up; and their unique properties that provide us with medicine and so much more.

The River is a collaboration between the Landscape and Grounds Team and the Sustainability Team and aims to:

- Create high biodiversity value features that enhance the amenity value of Campus
- Support our invertebrates and pollinators by increasing the available food
- Provide education opportunities using our external spaces on issues such as the climate crisis
- Link up existing sustainability projects - the Diamond Anniversary Orchard on our Southern Slopes and the Kent Community Oasis Garden at Parkwood
- Provide opportunities for food foraging
- Encourage the use of external spaces for wellbeing activities

The project is in progress, and we are aiming to deliver the full route over the next 2 years.



Photos: Men of the Trees planting apples trees on Central Campus - University of Kent, KMMS students and staff planting medicinal trees - Thomas Dow, Landscape and Grounds team planting high pollen value plants - Emily Mason

My Campus and Other Animals – engaging people with wildlife to support nature and wellbeing

Objective: Plan and launch an overarching communication campaign that engages people with the wildlife and natural spaces across the University.

There is a wealth of research that shows how our relationship with, and our ability to access nature, can support our physical and mental wellbeing. Research carried out at the Mental Health Foundation shows that spending time in nature can improve our mood, reduce feelings of stress and anger, help us relax which can consequently help with anxiety and depression.

Activities in nature, particularly as part of a group, can help build our confidence, self-esteem and make us feel more connected to our community and nature which reduces loneliness. By connecting with and learning about nature we also can feel more empowered to help protect it.

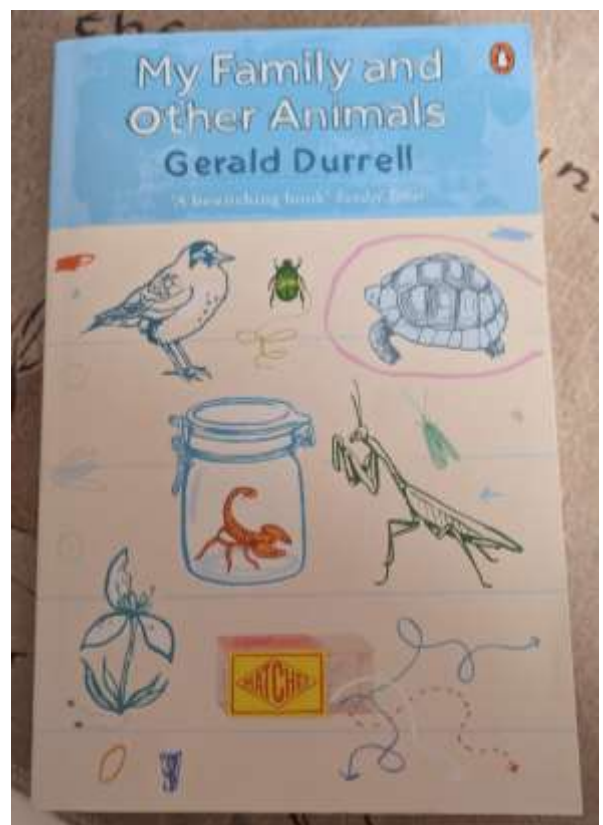
We are extremely lucky to have the Campus that we do, but how many of us are fully benefitting from having all of this green space on our doorstep?

My Campus and Other Animals aims to support more people in accessing this green space and engaging with it in a more meaningful way.

My Campus and Other Animals is play on the book title *My Family and Other Animals*, an autobiographical book by British naturalist Gerald Durrell. The book is a humorous look at the life of his family on the Greek Island of Corfu.

The Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE) at the University of Kent is named in recognition of Gerald Durrell's lifelong commitment to conservation. His widow, Lee Durrell, continues to be a DICE Advisory Board member, and the Institute maintains strong links with the Durrell organisation based in Jersey.

The book 'My Family and Other Animals,' by Gerald Durrell, 2017 Penguin Edition. Credit: Emily Mason



To celebrate our link to Gerald Durrell and engage people with nature, we aim to do the following:

- Engage students, staff and visitors with the amazing species on Campus, utilising various communication channels
- Run walking tours to engage people with wildlife and get them out and about
- Highlight conservation research and action happening on Campus and beyond
- Highlight species and deep dive into their 'secret lives' inspired by the Kent Community Oasis Garden 'Secret Life of...' Instagram series
- Create an accessible trail route, highlighting species found around Central Campus
- Increase the amount of onsite interpretation
- Run citizen science events such as mini seasonal BioBlitz, and iNaturalist workshops and guidance
- Build up a resource bank of photos, videos and 'talking heads' that showcase the wildlife and habitats on Campus
- Support other projects that seek to engage people with nature e.g. Kent Community Oasis Garden, the annual BioBlitz.
- Continue to build links between nature-based activities and supporting good health and wellbeing



Hedgehogs have suffered a rapid decline over the last 20 years. We are monitoring their presence on campus and working to create better connected habitats for them.



As one of the most recognisable mushrooms, Fly Agaric, often forms mycorrhizal associations with birch trees. We aim to host a mini BioBlitz in autumn to log more of our fungi species.



The University of Kent is home to one of the largest and best studied populations of Great Crested newts in the world. The site on the s is home to over 300 breeding individuals.



We are adding areas of high orchid density to our Campus Sensitivities Map so we can adapt our mowing regimes to allow for flowering. Can you spot any of our Bee Orchids over summer?



There are 24 types of bumblebee in the UK. The Kent Community Oasis Garden have so far counted 8 different species on site as part of their monthly surveys, including the Common Carder Bee and the Tree Bumble Bee.



There are Nightingales present across Canterbury but there have not been any recorded on campus for a long time. By understanding their ecology we can make some changes to encourage them back.

Case study project: Kent Community Oasis Garden

The Kent Community Oasis Garden (KentCOG) is a partnership project between the University and East Kent Mind. The three pillars of the project are:

- Growing sustainable food with nature, not against it
- Improving habitats for biodiversity and building surveying skills
- Supporting the wellbeing of our users by engaging them in nature-based activities and creating a safe and welcoming community of people

KentCOG aims to create meaningful connections through engaging with nature with the aim of improving wellbeing and encouraging pro conservation and climate action behaviours.

KentCOG is made up of students, staff and community members who all volunteer their time to keep the garden running, take part in activities, and support the aims of the project.

KentCOG grows around a metric tonne of food each year using a no dig system, without any inorganic pesticides or fertilisers. This food is distributed amongst volunteers with any excess being sold into the University's catering outlets.

The group survey bumblebees monthly, as well as birds, butterflies, moths, trees and more. The project has its own [iNaturalist](#) page where all their observations are recorded.

To support wellbeing, KentCOG run Nature Dose sessions that encourage people to slow down and connect with nature in a focused and guided way. The project is also home to the student-led Climate Cafés that support students through how they feel about the climate crisis.



Photos: Student volunteers at the garden - Simon Dolby, KentCOG houseplant hospital - Debi Adams, Students and community members gardening together - Debi Adams

Learning and Research

The external spaces of the Canterbury Campus offer a huge array of opportunities for learning and research. The Biodiversity Working Group want to foster more uses of the natural spaces as teaching space, case studies and research opportunities.

One of the actions we are taking to support this is collating what information exists about the natural spaces on Campus and opening this up to students and staff. This is part of our commitment under the Nature Positive Universities commitment.

The more research that happens on Campus about our Campus wildlife, the more information we have to better understand our Campus and make more informed decisions on our management techniques. Annual monitoring carried out by students can and does directly impact managerial decisions.

The working group is also fostering more collaborations between academic and operational staff. The first major collaboration is between the Sustainability Team, Landscape and Grounds and the [E3 Innovation Team](#) within DICE. We are mapping the Campus to the UKHab standard which is being led by the Innovation Team through training and guided facilitation. The Innovation Team are also carrying out Woodland Condition Assessment Surveys for the University with direct recommendations for how we can manage the woodlands better for biodiversity.

What is the E3 project?

DICE were awarded funding by Research England's Expanding Excellence in England (E3) for a five-year project titled "Sharing Space for Nature: enhancing the role of conservation areas in tackling current environmental crises".

The E3 'Sharing space for nature' initiative stems from new Convention on Biological Diversity targets, which commit every country to nearly double the area of land and sea managed for nature to 30% by 2030.

Their work generates the high impact interdisciplinary research needed for informed decision-making, operating across three spatial scales: Wilding East Kent; Southeast Nature Recovery Networks; and Meeting Global Conserved Area Targets.

The working group will also support student-led activities that support extra curricula learning. This could be providing space for practical conservations skills; expertise from operational staff to support student-led land-based projects; or resources for small and large projects e.g. the annual BioBlitz.

Activities focused on biodiversity additionally feed into recruitment and teaching on our BSc in Ecology and Conservation and MSc in Conservation Science. We also know from feedback on open days that the Campus green spaces, and how we manage them feed into student's decisions to come to Kent, no matter the degree program.

It is important that as a university we are outward about how we are supporting biodiversity, not only because it is important, but on how it can support recruitment activities of a generation that cares about the planet.



Photo: Great Crested Newt. Credit: Adam Mason

The University of Kent campus is home to one of the largest and best studied populations of Great Crested newts in the world. The site on the northern edge of the campus is home to over 300 breeding individuals, which are each individually identified via their unique belly markings.

Over 20 years of research over 1000 individual great crested newts have been catalogued. Surveys happen every week throughout the year.

Case study project: BioBlitz

The University of Kent BioBlitz is an interactive, participatory, one-day event bringing together families, school groups, and local community members to engage in nature-based learning with University of Kent students, scientists, and local wildlife experts (e.g. Kent Wildlife Trust; Butterfly Conservation; Kent Moth Group).

The main aim of the event is to record as many species of wildlife as possible on Campus, but BioBlitz is more than just a scientific survey; it's a celebration of life in all its forms. As everyone races against the clock to uncover and document as many species as possible within the University of Kent Campus, they are uncovering the secrets of our natural world and gaining invaluable insights into the intricate web of life.

The event showcases our incredible students, our beautiful Campus and allows students to engage with the community directly sharing their knowledge, skills and passion for nature.

In 2025, students, staff and community members recorded 310 different species across the day including grasses, bats, hedgehogs, birds, invertebrates, trees, moths and more!

Photos: Identifying moths - William Turrell, Meadow survey - Abdul Rahman Shinan Mohammed Kunhi, Hedgehog Survey - Holly Atkinson



Civic Mission

Universities should play a leading role in their communities, and recent discussions about the sector have highlighted the importance of civic activity and the role of the sector in ensuring health, wellbeing and prosperity of the region.

The Biodiversity Working Group believes that a healthy and vibrant ecology should be part of this vision. This strategy aims to deliver on creating a Campus environment that is welcoming and can be enjoyed by all, engaging our community in the incredible wildlife and green spaces we have on Campus.

Activities such as the Kent Community Oasis Garden and the annual BioBlitz are already supporting this civic mission, and we hope to build on these with our 'My Campus and Other Animals' campaign.

As an institution we also seek to support others delivering in this area. The University of Kent is proud to host the Canterbury District Biodiversity Network, providing space and administration support. We commit to maintaining this support and going forward, providing webspace for the network, so they can continue to build links between conservation organisations and other interested parties in the local area.

The Canterbury District Biodiversity Network (CDBN)

The Canterbury District Biodiversity Network was set up as a community initiative in 2020 with the aim of bringing together representatives of Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), the University of Kent, Canterbury City Council, Kent County Council, statutory agencies, conservation organisations and local community groups to share information and encourage joint working on biodiversity-related issues.

The Network formed to facilitate the exchange of information between groups, promote nature-based solutions to climate change and encourage local, regional, and national action to address the biodiversity crisis. As well as learning about local projects and events, members can participate in site visits where they can see different conservation projects in action.

The network also leads on the Wild Walls Project which brought the Bison mural to the Canterbury Campus.

This strategy also seeks to support other civic mission activities at the University, in particular the Right to Food Project.

Through operational work and projects, we will seek opportunities to increase the amount of food grown on Campus. This is already happening through the Kent Community Oasis Garden, the 60th Anniversary Orchard and is part of the design of the ongoing River project. By incorporating food in our planting plans we create more food for wildlife as well as providing more encouragement for people to get out and about on Campus, exploring, foraging and engaging with nature.

Case study project: Wild Walls

The Wild Walls project is delivered by a collective of individuals from the Canterbury District Biodiversity Network. The objective of the project is to bring street art to Canterbury that celebrates local species and conservations wins.

The Bison Mural near the Gulbenkian marked the start of the project in 2022 as the first in series of murals that would appear over the next few years.

The Bison mural celebrates the Wilder Blean Project, a ground-breaking initiative by Kent Wildlife Trust and the Wildwood Trust which aims to restore biodiversity to the Blean Woods with Bison acting as ecosystem engineers. This project is on the doorstep of the Canterbury Campus.

There are now 3 murals in total with a 4th one of a Beaver coming soon. Along with the Bison there is now a White-spotted Sable Moth and the Heath Fritillary Butterfly at the Westgate end of the High Street, and a Red-Billed Chough at Canterbury Christchurch University.



Photos: [Moth and butterfly mural](#) - RSPB Canterbury, [Bison mural](#) - Emily Mason, [Red-Billed Chough Mural](#) - CCCU

Governance

This strategy has been developed by the Biodiversity Working Group (BWG), which is a subgroup of the University Sustainability Steering Group (SSG).

The SSG is the overarching decision-making group for sustainability at the University and is chaired by a member of the University's Executive Group. Five sub-groups were set up to provide focused delivery on some of the key sustainability challenges facing the University and society more broadly.

The Biodiversity Working Group is made up of students and staff representing key stakeholders, including the Estates Department, the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), the Sustainability Team, the Sustainability Champions Network, and the Kent Community Oasis Garden.

The Biodiversity Working Group provides quarterly updates to the Sustainability Steering Group and will produce an annual report each summer on our progress towards our Nature Positive Universities Pledge commitments, our targets set out in this document and updates on key projects that have happened throughout the year.

You can contact the BWG via the sustainability team at sustainability@kent.ac.uk.



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