

Plants and Pollinators: Code of Practice and Policy

“The University is committed to protecting, creating and enhancing space for a diversity of human and non-human life” – *Leicester for Life, Estates Vision Statement*

Our vision: For our local environment to support the needs of our UK wildlife by connecting our diversely planted and flower-rich campus to the City of Leicester, creating healthier spaces for people and wildlife.

Aims:

- Follow and build-upon relevant strategies and policies to make sure wildlife needs are represented
- Retain and create wildlife corridors using trees, hedgerows and habitats to maintain essential connectivity from our campus to valuable nature areas
- Protect, increase and enhance the amount of pollinator habitat to prevent extinctions and improve the status of any locally threatened species
- Engage and educate, through independent and partnership work, to increase awareness of wildlife and their habitats amongst our staff, students and other stakeholders
- Improve our knowledge and understanding of local wildlife species on and around our owned land

Introduction

This policy acknowledges the importance of biodiversity on campus for students, staff and the wider public providing significant social, wellbeing, capital, economic returns, wildlife and environmental benefits. It does so by recognising how trees and other vegetation types can create valuable habitat, as well as identifying the significance of pollinator species to UK economy. This document sets out safeguarding measures for “trees and bees” by listing a set of standards and expectations for the University to follow. In addition to this, it also calls on partners, stakeholders and other associates to strive for the same aims.

Background

People, Planet and Pollinators

By having different types of vegetation and green spaces on our campus, the University can contribute to both local and wider biodiversity gains. We should act as responsible landlords to our wildlife tenants and seek to connect diverse habitats to provide essential feeding, breeding and sheltered spaces. Our student and staff research has shown how vegetation, in particular broad leaf species, helps to sequester carbon emissions by absorbing CO₂ from the atmosphere and contributing to our action on climate change. Green areas in outside and indoor environments have been shown to have an immensely positive impact on health and wellbeing. Over 4000 species of insect in the UK carry out pollination of our wild plants and food crops and has an estimated financial value of £691 million annually. Without pollinators we would struggle to grow many vegetables and fruits including apples, pears, strawberries, beans and peas.

Practice

First and foremost, existing habitats in and around the University should be retained and a high level of care observed to ensure their continued wellbeing and ecological functions. Where removal has to occur, natural materials should be kept on site to create new habitats e.g. log piles. Any personnel either within or external to the University acting with neglect, particularly during works or maintenance, should be reported to Estates for appropriate action. Areas used for biodiversity offsetting, such as Stoughton Road Playing Fields and Blackthorn Manor should be maintained as a valuable asset for ecosystem services.

There should be Net Gain in development projects for biodiversity; habitats both in and around the University should be connected to create wildlife corridors appropriate for a range of species. A diverse and varied habitat trialling different shapes, sizes, species and approaches is considered best practice and –

whilst aesthetics are a factor, should not take priority over biodiversity. Pesticides are not permitted to be used on University grounds. Fungicides and Herbicides e.g. Glyphosate, should be limited and natural alternatives should be utilised when possible. This practice should be guided by most up-to-date research.

Trees and shrubs

- 30% of [trees](#) planted should be 'larger' species for greater wildlife value
- A Tree inventory to be compiled by 2020, using a tree management software, to keep track of all significant vegetation at the University. In-house protection against removal (VeTO) should be applied to those meeting criteria
- Considerable effort should be made to retain trees and replace like-for-like on site. However, replacing mature with young trees is not considered an acceptable mitigation technique

Planters and Beds

- 80% of all plant and tree species should be planted for pollinators using the [RHS Perfect for Pollinators](#) list (excluding invasive species). Plants not on this list should be agreed with Gardens.
- 100%*¹ of all plant and trees species native to the UK or if non-native, should have evidenced value for British wildlife
- More herbaceous planting should be used instead of expensive annuals for bedding plants
- Work should be done to maintain and expand the "Edible Campus" initiative to encourage sustainable consumption and healthy living

Grassland and Meadows

- 5-7cm minimum mowing height for lawns that are species-rich with minimum 20 flowering species
- 50% of lawns should be [grass-free](#) within the next three years, where footfall is not high or sporting activities take place
- Long grassland borders should be created with exposed, sunny banks for nesting bees
- 30% increase or enhancement of wildflower spaces; existing meadows should be protected and maintained using natural management techniques where possible
- Amenity grassland cutting and mowing to be reduced by 50%

Hedgerows

- 70% of [hedgerows](#) should be planted with 5 species or more for increased diversity
- Thick hedgerows with wide bases that provide plenty of cover are best
- They should be a variety of shapes and sizes to cater for different species, some may be shaped hedgerows and others lines of woods.
- Should be cut every 3 or more years and should not be cut annually unless there are access issues
- Should be connected to other habitats to create wildlife corridors and under-planted with grass, wildflowers or herbaceous plants

Links to University and Government Strategy

<i>External</i>	<i>Internal (see website)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Planning Policy Framework NPPF• Space for Wildlife, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan 2016 – 2026 Part 1 & Part 2• United Nations Sustainable Development Goals• LCC Tree Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biodiversity Action Plan• Biodiversity Design Guide• Leicester for Life• Biodiversity Policy• Social Impact Strategy

Vegetation and Tree Order (VeTO)

VeTO is a University of Leicester, in-house designation given to trees of significance where their removal would represent a major loss. Those listed are recognised to be of exceptional value to the University for

either historical, ecological or visual value. Steps should be taken to ensure they are maintained, as well as suitably protected if in close proximity to nearby developments. Persistent lack of care or intentional damage should be treated as serious malpractice. VeTOs are separate to designated Veteran, TPOs or Notable Trees, but any tree on University land recognised as such should be given a VeTO. By using a tree management software, for example Arbortrack, there can be a specific VeTO layer to easily identify and monitor trees recognised as VeTOs.

The only reason considered acceptable for their removal would be:

- Tree health and degradation
Where they are coming to the end of their life, are failing due to disease or have been damaged leading to failure
- Health and Safety
Where a tree has been identified to be of considerable risk to health and safety. This needs to be approved and recognised by a licensed Arboriculturist and Safety Officer

Appendix list of KPI table

	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target	By When
1	Plant / Tree species should be good for pollinators and taken from the RHS Perfect for Pollinators list (excluding invasive species)	80%	Summer 2019
2	All plants and trees to be native to the UK or if non-native, should have evidenced value for British wildlife	100%* ¹	April 2019
3	New trees planted should be 'larger' species for greater value	30%	April 2019
4	Trees and vegetation recorded and those of significance designated a VeTO, taking guidance from Council TPOs and Notable Trees	100%* ²	January 2020
5	Use a tree management software to compile a full tree inventory	100%	January 2020
6	Hedgerows planted with 5 species or more and min. 30m in length	70%	April 2019
7	5-7cm minimum mowing height for lawns that are species-rich with minimum 20 flowering species	50%	2021
8	Increase use of grass-free lawn approach	50%	2022
9	Increase of enhancement of wildflower meadows	30%	2020
10	Increase herbaceous planting as bedding plants	50%	2021
11	Hedgerows cut every 3 years or more	30%	Autumn 2019
12	50% increase in grassland border or under planted hedgerows	25%	2021

*¹ – Excluding Botanic Garden and Attenborough Arboretum, and dependent on tree orders

*² – Dependent on tree management software (KPI5)