

7. The Living Estate (Biodiversity)

Our Living Estate acts as the breathing space for nature within the built environment; a place which increasingly operates as a civic university to visitors and where our staff and students can live, work and play. The living estate fulfils many functions, two important ones are: to provide a green environment for people to 'recharge their batteries' and improve their mental wellbeing; and to increasing biodiversity in support of a healthy and therefore sustainable ecosystem.

Aim

The Living Estate plan will enrich habitats in support of regional and local conservation priorities; develop green infrastructure to include water sensitive designs; increase the number of key indicator species whose function, population, or status can reveal the qualitative status of the environment; develop multi layered tree canopy cover and conserve the existing natural environment for the benefit and mental welfare of University students, visitors and staff as well as a visual response to the climate challenge. The Botanic Garden conserves some of the South West's rare and threatened native flora; forming part of the University commitment to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation.

Objectives

1. Maintain the established habitats held within, or supported from, University grounds. Bristol City and North Somerset Council Biodiversity Action Plan: Rivers; Woodland; Hedgerows; Species Rich Grassland; Standing Open Water; Open Mosaic Habitats on previously developed land. University recognised habitats: Green roofs; Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces
2. Maintain or improve current tree canopy cover levels for all sites
3. Develop the rich flora and fauna in Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces
4. Work with the appropriate conservation organisations, as well as local communities, to play our part in district wide initiatives to establish, conserve and improve links that make up a network for nature.
5. Map habitats and have a program of surveys for existing biodiversity. Use mapping and survey information as quantifiable data to enhance existing biodiversity.
6. Raise awareness of the living estate and the biodiversity it contains.

Actions

1. Work with students, volunteers and staff to actively support and enrich our living estate
2. Establish a 'Living Estate Group' to increase coordination, engagement and awareness of the estate with the Student Union and support groups, such as 'Student Conservation' & the 'Roots Community', to collaborate on projects such as: The Hedgehog friendly campus, Incredible edible, Green Flag Awards, Bee's needs, etc.
3. Continue to deliver biodiversity through good land management, the BREEAM process and 'Building with Nature' for new developments.
4. Make full use of technologies and social media to monitor, display and communicate a narrative regarding the Living Estate.

Benefits

1. Volunteer (Staff, student and external) involvement in the development and management of grounds supports several objectives found in the 'University Vision and Strategy'
2. The University will be recognised for high standards in estate management; and as a long-standing contributor to Bristol and North Somerset's natural environment.
3. Being active and taking notice of your surroundings are two of the five main ways to improve mental health (source: Mind.org.uk). Our green spaces offer open areas for exercise, collaboration, observation of wildlife and reflection.
4. Developing flora and fauna for the benefit of plant pollination supports the food supply chain.
5. Growing trees and allowing their canopies to develop naturally reduces Co2, heat island effects, and removes particulate pollutants from the air (40% tree canopy is the ideal percentage for a site)

Sustainable Development Themes

14 – Life below water

15 – life on land