

University of Leicester

Biodiversity Policy (January 2013)

What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is short for 'biological diversity' and means the variety of life on earth. This includes all species on our planet, their habitats and the interactions that occur between them.

The Leicester Context

The University owns and manages over 300 acres of land. This includes the Botanic Gardens and a Local Wildlife Site – Blackthorn Manor. There are 9,000 trees and a number of protected or rare species to be found on University grounds.

Underlying Principles

The University of Leicester aims to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of its land and buildings by "protecting natural habitats and encouraging local wildlife" (Environmental Sustainability Policy, 2010) in line with local and regional action plans. Wherever practical to do so Leicester will avoid or limit the use of environmentally-damaging substances, materials and processes. Leicester will work with adjacent partner organisations to maintain the existing proportion of 'green space' to developed land across the environs of the University.

The University of Leicester commits to:

1. Undertake habitat and species surveys to ascertain the University's biodiversity baseline including:
 - a. Phase I habitat survey
 - b. Surveys of protected species (bat roosts and feeding territories, newts)
 - c. Production of a species inventory
2. Compliance with all relevant nature conservation legislation e.g. Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) as amended; NERC Act (2006); Conservation of Habitat & Species Regulations (2010);
3. Implementation of a Biodiversity Action Plan (with guidance from the Biodiversity Working Group);
4. Mitigate for disturbance to habitats or species from delivery of Development Plans including:
 - a. Ecological surveys to be undertaken where relevant;
 - b. Habitat creation through Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SuDs)/green roofs/walls/bat or bird boxes or other means;
 - c. Retain topsoil from development projects where possible;
5. Minimise negative impacts of grounds management (reduction of pesticides and phasing-out peat use) and maximize positive impacts (replacement planting with native species or plants that are recognised to benefit wildlife, compost creation, making safe and leaving dead timbers in situ etc.);
6. Engage as appropriate with University stakeholders to raise awareness of biodiversity issues through:
 - a. Development of teaching, learning, research and volunteering opportunities;
 - b. Interpretation and 'point of use' information on species and habitats;

- c. Agreed grounds management practices with contractors that conserve and enhance biodiversity;
 - d. Partnerships with environmental groups and local authorities sharing knowledge and resources;
 - e. Encouraging appropriate groups and individuals to consider the impacts on biodiversity in relation to purchasing, investments and developments;
7. Review this policy and set SMART objectives and targets annually for next steps delivery.

Objectives/Targets for 2012/13 – 2013/14

- 1. Completion of the Biodiversity Business Case
- 2. Production of a University-wide Biodiversity Action Plan
- 3. Establish the peregrine project
- 4. Continue wildlife surveys and include a great crested newt log
- 5. Complete bat surveys for all outstanding properties of relevance
- 6. Continue implementation of the Blackthorn Manor Action Plan