Sustainability Service

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Biodiversity Standard

Title	Biodiversity Standard				
Document ID	Version	Issue Date	Current Date/Time	Current User	Review Date
3556	1	12 Sep 2016	15 Feb 2018 12:07	Michael Howroyd	01 Sep 2018

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Biodiversity Standard

1. Introduction

The primary purpose of this Standard is to define the requirements and principles for managing and improving biodiversity at the University. These principles and requirements support the strategic ambition to '*become an exemplar of urban biodiversity*'. This means:

- Creating wildlife friendly urban landscapes, which are species rich and provide interconnected ecological corridors across the University Estate and into the wider city.

- Working with local partners, including Leeds City Council, to ensure our approach is joined up with local plans and to encourage the improvement of ecological corridors external to the University Estate.

- Protecting, and improving areas identified as important for local biodiversity within the University Estate, linking them to our ecological corridors, either directly or through 'stepping stone' habitats.

- Recognising the importance of our green infrastructure to students, staff and the local community and its potential to be used as a resource for teaching, research and engagement.

- Taking full advantage of eco-system services provided through green infrastructure e.g. improved well-being of our staff and students and climate change adaptation.

- Ensuring developments and landscape changes always have a net-positive impact on University habitat provision and biodiversity.

- Being bold, innovative and creative in the development of green infrastructure within areas of extensive hard landscaping and where solutions are not always obvious.

- To recognise the value of our large trees and ensure any lost are replaced with similar 'statement' trees to ensure a lasting legacy for future generations.

This Standard supports the Sustainability Strategy, Environmental Policy and all Biodiversity Action Plans and other landscape plans created for all University-managed sites.

2. Scope

The scope of this Standard includes all University owned sites.

3. Requirements

The following section is divided into general requirements, which should be followed by anyone likely to impact on University biodiversity, and specific requirements linked to areas of responsibility. Conformance with these requirements will be audited as part of the University Environmental Management System.

General requirements:

- University staff, students and contactors appointed to complete works across the University must follow the requirements of this Standard.

- Any changes to existing green infrastructure or biodiversity must have a net-positive impact on University biodiversity.

- The impact of re-landscaping or construction works that result in green infrastructure or biodiversity loss will be assessed via the University off-setting tool to decide required mitigation measures.

- Any trees lost due to disease, damage or planned removal should be replaced with 3 trees for every

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tree lost. If not possible an offsetting assessment must be completed.

Estates Project Managers will ensure:

- That the Grounds Team and Sustainability Service are contacted to assess impact and identify any mitigation or off-setting required when works or projects impact on landscaping, habitat or trees.

- That projects or development work consider the importance of green infrastructure for ecosystem services, such as flood mitigation, pollution filtration, summer cooling and improved well-being and will review opportunities to introduce or enhance these on projects.

- That budgets for any works or projects that impact on landscaping, habitat or trees will include budget for off-setting or other mitigation measures required.

- That where possible projects or developments support the local biodiversity action plan for that area.

- They are aware of protected areas and sites of localised biodiversity value. Any projects that impact on these areas must consult with the Sustainability Service at the earliest opportunity.

- That when a significant change is proposed to grounds or gardens, ecological surveys are completed and recommendations are incorporated into future plans

- That bat surveys are completed when there are changes to roof spaces and other potential habitat or in the event of a buildings demolition.

- That trees are protected during projects in line with *BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction*.

- That contractors are made aware of and adhere to their responsibilities within this Standard.

University employed contractors will ensure:

- They understand the University commitments to improving urban biodiversity and the potential impact of construction works on these.

- They are aware of protected areas and sites of localised biodiversity value and understand any mitigation or measures required to protect these during a project or ongoing works.

- They take care not to damage any trees, hedges, wildflower meadows or other habitats unless specifically requested to do so via a contract. The following standard should be followed: *BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction*.

- They contact the Estates Helpdesk in the case of a bee swarm within their site as these are likely to be from University bee hives.

- That construction works or removal of habitat avoids disturbing nesting birds as required by the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981).

- When managing areas of grounds or gardens, local biodiversity action plans will be followed.

Estates Grounds and Gardens Team will:

- Use their expertise and knowledge to actively review opportunities to improve University habitat and biodiversity. Members of the team should have opportunity to contribute and shape direction of the University Biodiversity Action Group.

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- Check that annual works and planting plans demonstrate continual improvements of University biodiversity, through increased pollinators, native species and bird friendly planting and a general improvement of habitat.

- Work with the Sustainability Service and other stakeholders to develop Biodiversity Action Plans and will use these to inform grounds management.

- Act as guardians of the campus to leave a positive legacy for future generations through the protection of key sites and the replacement of large diseased trees with species of a similar size and eco-system function.

- Receive training on the requirements of this standard, biodiversity management and specific training and support on areas such as wildflower meadow management.

- Will conduct day-to-day activity in a way that is sympathetic to any wildlife.

Residential Services will:

- Develop, with the Sustainability Service, phase one habitat surveys and site-specific Biodiversity Action Plans for each of the University's residential sites that meet the strategic ambition, requirements and principles of this Standard.

- Ensure that any grounds maintenance contractors required to work at University residential sites are compliant with this Standard and associated biodiversity action plans.

Sustainability Service will:

- Work collaboratively with Estates Project Managers, Contractors, the Grounds & Gardens team and Residential Services to meet the requirements and follow the principles of the standard.

- Manage the biodiversity off-setting assessments when required and agree the mitigation measures with stakeholders.

- Assess training needs and provide training where required.

- Develop Biodiversity Action Plans to cover University owned grounds & gardens in collaboration with the Grounds & Gardens Team and other stakeholders.

- Ensure Biodiversity Action Plans recognise the importance of green infrastructure for wellbeing, and in the provision of ecosystem services

- Ensure that Biodiversity Action Plans recognise the value of green heritage for future generations, through the protection of large mature trees and their replacement with similar planting when lost to disease or damage.

- Work with the Grounds & Gardens Team and other stakeholders to identify protected areas and areas of importance for local biodiversity and ensure these are communicated to relevant stakeholders.

- Support the delivery of strategic plans such as the University landscape plan to ensure they reflect the objective to become an exemplar of urban biodiversity as defined in this standard.

- Ensure that strategic plans and Biodiversity Action Plans link into existing or planned regional biodiversity corridors and migration routes and support initiatives such as the national Bug life 'Urban

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Buzz and b-lines[1]' initiatives.

- Track the biodiversity value of the University estate using an internal tracking tool. This tool will monitor and measure habitat creation/loss across the estate and report annually.

- Investigate new and innovative methods of biodiversity management on University sites through living lab projects that link with undergraduate, postgraduate and academic research.

- Endeavour to share any best practices across the City, across the HE-sector and with all other relevant bodies.

- Ensure that ecological surveys of each site with a Biodiversity Action Plan are completed every five years.

4. Principles

The following principles should be used in the management, design and improvement of University landscapes that have potential to impact on University biodiversity.

Continual improvement: In order to become an exemplar of urban biodiversity all stakeholders should work towards a year on year improvement to the biodiversity and habitat value of our grounds and gardens.

Consider eco-system services: The role of green infrastructure in providing eco-system services, such as climate change mitigation and pollutant filtration, should be considered as part of the development process for any large project. Key stakeholders should ensure they develop knowledge in this area and work collaboratively together to implement effective solutions.

Off-set any biodiversity loss: When calculating off-setting requirements the following core principles must be used:

- the collective value of replacement habitat must be greater than the habitat being removed;
- replacement habitat must be as close to the area of loss as possible;
- when a habitat type of value to local wildlife is lost, off-setting should seek to replace it with habitat of a similar type;
- It should contribute to the improvement of wildlife corridors.

Creation of ecological corridors or stepping stones: Any improvement to University biodiversity should, where possible, contribute to University and wider ecological corridors or stepping stones.

Innovate - Innovative and creative solutions will be required to meet the requirements of this standard. A culture of supportive experimentation should be encouraged.

Improve well-being - The wellbeing benefits of green infrastructure should be considered within University landscaping and design works. The principles of biophilic design should be used to create spaces that are welcoming and nourishing to those that use them.

Consider regional and national plans/projects related to biodiversity - To maximise the benefits of University work to improve biodiversity, key regional and national plans such as the Lawton Review (2010)[2]

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[1] www.buglife.org.uk/campaigns-and-our-work/habitat-projects/b-lines

[2] Lawton, J (2010) 'Making space for nature': a review of England's wildlife sites published today, London, DEFRA

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and the Wildlife Trusts 'Living Landscapes' should be considered and supported where appropriate.

Knowledge and collaboration – All stakeholders should actively look at developing and strengthening the collaboration between research, teaching and the operational management of University biodiversity. In addition by involving staff, students and the local community in the development and management of biodiversity we can help improve well-being, develop understanding of nature and help strengthen the appreciation of the University and its surroundings.

5. Biodiversity Action Plans

Biodiversity Action Plans will be developed for individual sites managed by the University. This is due to the scale and scope of activities and practices covered, and to recognise the individual characteristics within these different locations.

Implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan must meet the principles and requirements of this standard and should be reviewed every five years or earlier if required.

6. Operational management

The implementation of the Standard is shown below:
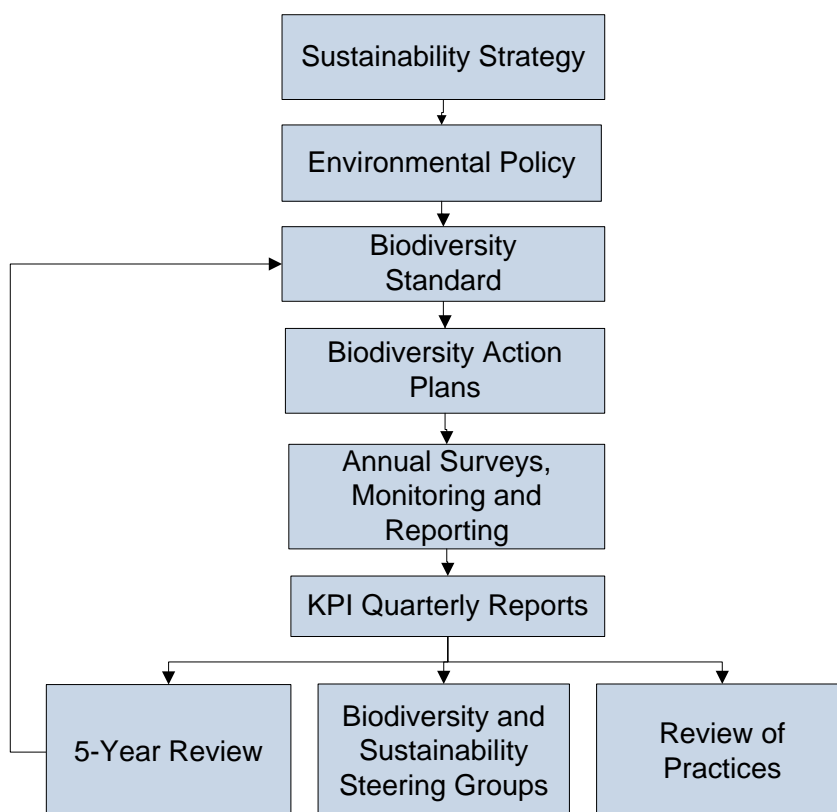
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7. Roles and Responsibilities

The **Director of Sustainability** has overall responsibility for the implementation of this Standard and will check progress via quarterly updates and the Sustainability Steering Group. The day to day management will be delivered through the Sustainability Service.

The **Director of Estates** will support the implementation of the Standard and will delegate responsibility to implement its principles and requirements through the relevant Estate Services teams.

The **Director of Residential Services** will support the implementation of the Standard within Residential Service Grounds & Gardens and will delegate responsibility to ensure specific biodiversity action plans are developed and delivered for all University owned residential properties.

The **Director of Commercial Services** will support the implementation of the Standard within University sports facilities.

Operational delivery will be managed within the Facilities Directorate via the Grounds & Gardens Team, Estates Project Managers and the Sustainability Service. Progress will be reported quarterly to the Biodiversity Group and in through the annual report

8. Review

This Standard shall be periodically audited and reviewed to determine its accuracy and relevance. In all other circumstances, it shall be reviewed no later than 2 years since the previous review.

9. Further Guidance and Procedures

Further guidance on biodiversity management at the University can be found in site-specific Biodiversity Action Plans, located on the Sustainability Service website or through the EQMS system.

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