



Biodiversity Policy

Estates / June 2026

Biodiversity policy

Introduction

The Open University (OU) is committed to a sustainable estate by conserving and improving biodiversity across all areas of the national estate. This includes working towards our Net Zero Carbon commitment whilst also maintaining our green spaces to promote biodiversity and habitat improvements.

Scope

The OU operates sites across the four nations, England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The Biodiversity policy applies to all OU sites.

Objectives

The Open University recognises and accepts its ethical and legal responsibilities in the stewardship of biodiversity, both on our land holdings and where our activities may have an impact.

The University will take action, whilst continuing to ensure that business objectives are being met to:

- Protect and conserve existing habitats
- Create a variety of habitats to encourage a diverse range of species
- Comply with relevant legislation and statutory codes of practice.
- Assess the biodiversity implications of new or emerging legislation to ensure that business operations align with new standards.
- Manage our land and water holdings to conserve and, where reasonably practicable, enhance biodiversity.
- Plan and manage our grounds and gardens activities to avoid loss and where possible improve biodiversity.

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- When commissioning and undertaking projects (including capital works schemes, other projects and maintenance schemes) likely to result in disturbance or other impact to land and/or water, endeavour to avoid damaging wild species and their habitats and, where appropriate, create opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.
- Collect and use significant biodiversity information, to inform planning and operational activities.
- A Grounds Management Plan and Tree Management Plan are in place to help meet these objectives.
- Engage with staff, students and the local community through the Go Green programme and provide volunteering, educational and academic opportunities to be involved.

Targets

The plans to improve management and biodiversity across the campus are:

- Add an additional pond to the Michael Young Meadow for the Great Crested Newt colony during 2027 (from 6 to 7 ponds).
- Increase the areas given over to meadow grass and wilding by 20%.
- Maintain wildflower meadow areas by using sheep to graze the meadows.
- Review planting schemes to increase the planting of drought resistant species.
- Support the Living Lab project with additional tree planting in or close to the research area.
- 80% of lawn areas to be allowed to grow during the 'No Mow May' period.
- Introduce additional bee keeping to campus by summer 2027.

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Nature Positive Universities

The OU is a member of the Nature Positive Universities partnership. This biodiversity policy supports the Nature Positive aims and activities to restore species and ecosystems that have been harmed by the impacts of the university and our activities and enhancing the university's positive impacts on nature.

Achievements and initiatives

- Establishment of the Weston Open Living Lab to offer an immersive educational and community space to investigate environmental issues and explore human-nature connection in the physical, digital, and virtual worlds. The Living Lab will regenerate the ecosystem of a floodplain woodland and adjoining habitats at Walton Hall campus to form a living science laboratory for hands-on teaching and learning.
- Transformed the rooftop of the Stuart Hall building into a state-of-the-art green roof research lab. In collaboration with green roof specialists, the project brings together research, education, and sustainable urban development.
- Bee hives introduced early 2025 and an additional site is proposed for 2026/27.
- Introduction of Walton Hall campus biodiversity tour.
- The OU was presented with a Gold Award in the Regional 'Thames and Chilterns in Bloom, large parks' category 2025. 'Britain in Bloom' is the largest horticultural campaign in the United Kingdom which assesses three core pillars: Horticultural Excellence, Environmental Responsibility and Community Participation.
- No Mow May and reduced mowing to allow more habitat for our insects and pollinators
Sheep grazing pilot, started in 2024, is now extended and continues on an annual Licence. The number of meadows have been increased from 2 to 3 reserved for sheep grazing as a sustainable and effective way to manage and maintain grasslands and keep habitats in good condition for wildlife.

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Linked policies, strategies and plans

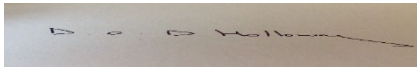
Policies, strategies, and plans linked to the Biodiversity policy include:

- Grounds Management Plan
- Tree Management Plan
- Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Net Zero Carbon 2030 Policy and Net Zero 2030 Plan
- Waste and Resource Policy and Management Plan
- Sustainable Food and Catering Policy
- Water Policy

Monitoring and review

The Biodiversity Policy is owned by OU Estates. The policy will be reviewed annually, and targets reported to the OU Executive Sustainability Steering committee.

Signed By



Dorian Holloway, Director of Estates

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Version History

Version Number	Date of change	Originator of change (title)	Description of change
1.0	May 2023	Head of Infrastructure	New Biodiversity Policy
1.1	June 2024	Energy Manager	Added Nature Positive Universities section Added Achievements and initiatives section
1.2	August 2024	Head of Infrastructure	New land management and biodiversity targets
1.3	June 2025	Energy Manager	4 new projects added to achievements and initiatives sections
1.4	June 2026	Head of Infrastructure	Additional meadow for sheep grazing. Newt pond target date revised. Additional bee keeping.

Next review date: June 2027

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