



Meeting Summary:

Biodiversity Working Group Meeting – 24 Jan 2023

(was Wetlands Committee)



Campus Environmental Sustainability Strategy (CESS) Update:

Hester Sharpe (*Campus Environmental & Sustainability Manager*) updated that following submission of the individual strategies in November to the Sustainability Steering Board, each workstream now enters the implementation phase for the prioritised initiatives. There has since been another board meeting in January where 2 further biodiversity business cases were submitted for funding, and both were approved; one was for an additional piece of work to be undertaken by the Wildlife Trust, and the other for a Tern raft to be installed on the main lake.

The Wildlife Trust work is to quantify the recommendations made to advise how each intervention could support our biodiversity net gain target so that we can prioritise in our long-term management plan those that will provide the biggest impact. Introducing the Tern raft to the main lake was one recommendation as we know there is a colony in Sawston that is soon to be disturbed and it is therefore quite timely to introduce this on Campus. Lee will be looking to get this in place, and it may be an opportunity to get people involved to support the installation of these as an engagement piece.

Hester updated that we are also currently writing a 'Biodiversity Policy for Campus', and are identifying what needs to be communicated about the impact any of these new biodiversity interventions may have on Campus life, such as planning of outdoor events, for example.

Grounds Team Update:

Lee Outhwaite (*Head Gardener*) said the tern raft has been something the team have been keen to do for a while and it will be great to encourage the colony onto site. Lee updated that the grounds team are currently creating insect houses, bird boxes etc, (not just log piles, but proper enclosures) for the beds and borders in various locations across the site to encourage the solitary bees and pollinators into those areas – all of these are made from reclaimed materials as well - the team are great skip divers, so nothing has been required to be brought in to make these and it reduces items going to waste!

Lee added that we now have our first habitat tree outside the grounds compound, which is a horse chestnut that was due to be completely felled. It has instead been kept at about 10 meters, and is full of good holes and crevices for wildlife. It has ivy growing up it and will have a QR code added to provide details for what we are trying to do with it.

The wetlands work is planned in March to reduce the vegetation around the main pond in the wetlands. Contractors will be clearing a lot of the trees and shrubs on the northern side - which will look quite drastic, but really needs to be done. They will also look at the small lake on the Campus which has been left for wildlife, but again requires some vegetation to be removed, as recommended by the Wildlife Trust, and it will then be put on a maintenance cycle. The team are also taking hardwood cuttings from various plants around site that are known to be good for pollinators.

A habitat map for 2023 is being put together for the team to support management of the specific areas, and details where long grass will be left longer etc so that the team will each have targets within their areas to improve biodiversity. Hester suggested perhaps the wildlife map could be used as an interactive map to explore the Campus, and a copy could be added to the policy.

Matt Midgley suggested we could do some further FRED COMMs for what we're doing with regards to biodiversity on Campus which could include things to look out for at different times of the year etc.

U&C Update:

Richard Hepworth (*U&C*) joined the meeting to share an update on the wider Campus expansion project, where they have a number of light planning applications in progress; including the works to the A1301 which should hopefully be granted by the end of the month. If it is, then works will likely commence end of April / beginning of May; but the important thing is that the current construction entrance will continue to be used for the works onsite, and while these works are spread over 12 months, in terms of general movements and affects along the corridor, these should be kept to a relative minimum.

The 'already consented' works that are commencing onsite in the next 5-6 weeks are:

- The decked carpark (Carpark E) - There will be no external compound for the carpark works, as it will be kept within the carpark itself, so no disturbance expected.
- Removal of the existing spoil heap, and reinstatement of the flood plain - This is due to start in March, weather permitting, and will continue through to July which will then kick-start the delivery of the soft and hard landscaping work in the summer.

People may have seen the planning consent for development area 2 (south fields area) where, apart from the Thornton building, everything else will be the creation of more green parkland area.

What people may not have seen is consent for a piece of work to reinstate the floodplain where there had been approximately 18000m³ of material stored over a period of around 15 years, where it shouldn't have been. This will be removed to the expansion site over the road for use as part of those works, and the floodplain reinstated.

Considerations are being made for the best approach to reinstate the floodplain, in terms of seedmix etc. The local authority have asked us to also consider a potential new footbridge (bottom right of drawing below) and Richard asked the group for general feedback on this during the meeting.



Richard added that there isn't a planning application needed for the removal of the material, but would be an application needed for the seedmix reinstatement approach and the footbridge. Iain Webb (*Wildlife Trust*) asked whether in addition to some grassland, they could consider the possibility to introduce a pond or two, as this could be really good for that area.

Norman Cobley shared that he has walked the area a lot over the years and it used to be a skylark habitat, so recreating that would be great, and also noted with regards to the additional bridge that there used to often be a kingfisher nest along the sweeping bank, and this could be an opportunity to maybe enhance that area.

Richard then talked about further work required, where there is a move to re-open one of the old water courses adjacent to the River Cam which could prevent flooding to Hinxtton village. They are doing a study with the Environment Agency to survey the area and see if that scheme could be brought forward as well.

It would need technical approval, rather than planning application, but they would like to bring these two pieces of work together and get them completed since they will have a positive impact on flooding in the area.

After extensive consultation with the local authority, U&C are also about to submit a planning application for the two bridges that will connect the existing & expanded Campus - the original consent was for paths across roads only which would have had some high health & safety risks.



The bridges won't be built any time soon but require the concept of the bridges to be approved before the Master Plan can be developed further on the East side.

The proposed bridge locations for cyclists and pedestrians and located within the tree canopy as shown left, and a visual representation below.



North & South bridge proposals below.



Wildlife Trust Update:

Iain Webb (*Wildlife Trust*) updated that the wetland walks have now moved to monthly on a Wednesday, and have had a bit more traction lately. New attendees said they saw it on FRED, so that's great. The next walk falls on 'World Wetlands Day' so it is quite apt and we can use it to highlight the event while having a walk. Iain updated that volunteers from the Wildlife Trust are coming to site in February to do some wetlands work.

Hester confirmed that the wetland walk dates are all on FRED and the Campus Calendar, and Lorraine is circulating them to the local villages as well. For volunteering, it is possible for GRL staff to use their Campus Volunteering Days to support work in the wetlands, so we will try to get that established a bit more as a recognised opportunity for staff that people could sign up for.

Action Tracker Update:

The Master Action Tracker was reviewed by the group and updates captured with the tracker. Please see the updated tracker shared within appendix 1 of these Minutes.

A.O.B:

Dave Keating updated that the aggregate processing facility withdrew their appeal and have submitted a new application and is now awaiting a council decision. The railway crossing at Ickleton has works ongoing currently, where Network Rail are installing miniature stop lights for safety, and these should finish at the weekend. Dave confirmed he is continuing to add the wetland walks into the 'Icene' for Ickleton.

Violeta Munoz Fuentes (*EBI*) asked U&C if we could perhaps be more ambitious with the site bridge proposal to include connectivity for wildlife habitats better. Violeta has some examples she's willing to share if of interest, but noted she is unsure whether they would be acceptable in terms of cost or whether they would be 'in keeping' with the overall design.

Matt Midgley suggested the wetlands walks could be further promoted on the Campus socials as well as intranet. Posters on noticeboards were another suggestion, to point people to FRED and share their sightings etc (*no dates need to be included to keep them current*). Sanger-Global Slack channel is another option.

Next Meeting:

28th March 2023 at 13:00

Item Ref	Date Raised	Group Responsible	Where to raise:	Item Category	Item Details	Related Actions	Priority Change	Priority	Updates / Progress Commentary	Action Owner
SS_066	22/09/2021	02. Biodiversity WG	BIO	Ideas to consider	Access to binoculars		▼	3. Low		Group Members
SS_067	22/09/2021	02. Biodiversity WG	BIO	Engagement / Promotion	Information for delegates on signboards	make wildlife information available on Campus	◆	2. Medium	24/01/2023 This one will link into the comms action & nature trail for engagement and promotion - to be developed further - could include additional social media posts, Slack, etc	Group Members
SS_072	22/09/2021	02. Biodiversity WG	BIO	Engagement / Promotion	Increase awareness and visibility of current biodiversity	Increase awareness and visibility of current biodiversity inc. possibility for staff to record wildlife sightings	◆	2. Medium	24/01/23 Dates for Wildlife walks have been updated and are on FRED, soon to be on TV screens. Possibility to use Instagram or Slack as alternative methods for communicating/capturing sightings, images etc	Group Members
SS_074	22/09/2021	02. Biodiversity WG	BIO	Engagement / Promotion	Nature Trail Project	A walk around to look at areas for signs/features for the trail Signage and identification of biodiversity - using different languages	◆	2. Medium	14/07/2022 Introduce Campus walks with the grounds team and further promote wetlands walks with Iain from the Wildlife trust, and potential team build events to walk the nature trail 24/01/2023 Still in progress, hoping to tie in with the wetlands work - update next mtg. 07/11/2022 James & Briony to work with grounds team to identify potential costs Members of the group met 1/12/2021 to advise on positioning/content of signs Get a connecting science member to sit on the group for joint venture - links in with EMBL/EBI nature trail	James Blackshaw
SS_078	22/09/2021	02. Biodiversity WG	BIO	Ideas to consider	Map route of owl boxes, hides etc on campus	incorporate into biodiversity map of campus	◆	2. Medium	24/01/23 to link into Biodiversity policy. Build on the habitat map for communicating to Campus. Lee to update next mtg.	Group Members
SS_079	22/09/2021	02. Biodiversity WG	BIO	Ideas to consider	Web cam link- in owl boxes?		▼	3. Low		Group Members
SS_108	08/03/2022	02. Biodiversity WG	BIO	Project	Biodiversity Strategy Action	U&C to share proposal regarding the spoil pile following survey, and results of tree surveys.	◆	2. Medium	24/01/23 U&C gave an update today on the floodplain reinstatement and proposal for bridges. U&C will continue to keep us updated at future meetings.	Urban & Civic
SS_109	08/03/2022	02. Biodiversity WG	BIO	Project	Biodiversity Strategy Action	Jan 23: Planning has started for the plaza lighting to be upgraded and I have asked for Biodiversity to be considered in planning and design. External Lighting Strategy to be circulated to the group	◆	2. Medium	24/01/23 project in progress to upgrade lighting 15/03/22 CR shared Campus expansion lighting strategy with the group from U&C - there is no existing campus strategy yet but it is in progress. Will request sight of first draft once available for information.	Claire Rogerson
SS_183	12/07/2022	12. Water & Effluent WG	BIO, WE	Ideas to consider	Ideas raised by grounds team: Review Water Capture methods Throughout the summer months, this year June, July and looking like most if not all of August, two water bowser are going out at least three times a day, five days a week. The bowser holds 250L, which means each week we are 75,000L at least of clean tap water. Whilst tap water is ideal for seedlings, for older established plants however, they are sensitive to the chemicals that are used in the treatment of fresh water, such as fluoride, chlorine etc. These chemicals can clog up roots of plants so they are less able to take up any nutrients from soils they are in. Also if used over a long period of time, tap water can actually damage the bacteria in the soil which is essential for the biodiversity.	To review rain water capture across site (link into water strategy)	◆	1. High	24/01/23 Captured in the Water Strategy. 12/07/2022 (Info provided by ground team member): At the gardening compound buildings, our rain water capture system is inefficient (pretty non-existent). East Lodge has at least three down pipes from the roof guttering that go straight into drains. There is a new holding tank for rain water at the conference center that never been used. At Willow Court there is a rain water butt that needs replacing, and numerous other buildings that we could capture rain water from. CR - Information provided to ARUP for consideration in Water Strategy	Group Members
SS_184	12/07/2022	12. Water & Effluent WG	BIO, WE	Ideas to consider	Ideas raised by grounds team: Review Water Capture methods Throughout the summer months, this year June, July and looking like most if not all of August, two water bowser are going out at least three times a day, five days a week. The bowser holds 250L, which means each week we are 75,000L at least of clean tap water. Whilst tap water is ideal for seedlings, for older established plants however, they are sensitive to the chemicals that are used in the treatment of fresh water, such as fluoride, chlorine etc. These chemicals can clog up roots of plants, so they are less able to take up any nutrients from soils they are in. Also if used over a long period of time, tap water can actually damage the bacteria in the soil which is essential for the biodiversity.	Consider pumps and natural bore holes around different areas of the grounds, near the orchard or in the back of the hall gardens. Maybe something to consider for the community garden. (link into water strategy)	◆	1. High	24/01/23 Captured in the Water Strategy 12/07/2022 (Info provided by ground team member): Throughout the summer months, this year June, July and looking like most if not all of August, two water bowser are going out at least three times a day, five days a week. The bowser holds 250L, which means each week we are 75,000L at least of clean tap water. Whilst tap water is ideal for seedlings, for older established plants however, they are sensitive to the chemicals that are used in the treatment of fresh water, such as fluoride, chlorine etc. These chemicals can clog up roots of plants, so they are less able to take up any nutrients from soils they are in. Also if used over a long period of time, tap water can actually damage the bacteria in the soil which is essential for the biodiversity. CR - Information provided to ARUP for consideration in Water Strategy	Group Members
SS_218	16/01/2023	02. Biodiversity WG	BIO, CON	Ideas to consider	Linked to Biodiversity Policy and Sustainable Construction - introduce a re-instatement policy or requirement for projects/contractors onsite to put back better than found. I.e. tree removed, 3 trees to be planted.	To raise at Construction meeting, and look at incorporating into project process	◆	1. High		Hester Sharpe