



Meeting Summary:

Biodiversity Working Group Meeting – 26 Feb 2025

(previously “Wetlands Committee”)



Attendees: Hester Sharpe (HS), Ceri Williams (CW), Dave Keating (DW), Iain Webb (IW), Claire Rogerson (CR), Sabine Eckert (SE), Chris Adamson (CA), Lee Outhwaite (LO), Lena Hughes-Hallett (LHH), Neil Rawlings (NR); Carla Stark (CS)

1. General Sustainability Updates:

- **Biodiversity group focus:** HS welcomed new group members and provided an overview about the workstream and its range of attendees, highlighting that we aim to foster collaboration between different community groups and external organisations. These include the Trout Club, the Wildlife Trust & local parishes who help support our biodiversity initiatives on Campus and surrounding areas along the River Cam.
- **Governance transition update:** A new organisation called Wellcome Genome Campus Ltd (WGCL) has been set up as new Campus landlord for the existing Campus and new development over the road. Some Estates & Facilities services have therefore transferred to the new company, which includes our grounds team; and this workstream is one that naturally now falls under the remit of WGCL. Lee Outhwaite (*Head Gardener*) has therefore agreed to take on the role of 'Biodiversity Workstream Lead', with continued support from Hester Sharpe & the Sustainability Team. Lee noted that this change will not affect the group's current efforts on landscape & biodiversity, reiterating that these will remain a priority.

2. Matters Arising:

- **Wildlife sightings & data sharing:** HS reminded the group about submitting images for our internal [Wildlife Sightings](#) page on FRED, as well as an active internal [#photography](#) Slack channel. The group also discussed the possibility of encouraging use of [iNaturalist](#) for submitting sightings, to contribute to broader biodiversity records. The Grounds team have used this tool before, and it was also used to conduct the baseline surveys for our Biodiversity strategy. Group discussed whether there are any issues regarding ownership of any data submitted within the tool, and if deemed acceptable, then we could promote wider use of it.
 - **Action: LO/HS to seek any necessary approval for wider use of iNaturalist.**
- **Flea Treatment Poster:** Emma Manners (*ChEMBL*) has been working on a poster that addresses the chemical effects of flea treatments on water quality, which can be added to the wetlands display boards. The goal is to raise awareness about the potential negative effects of pet pesticides on the environment and encourage more sustainable practices in the wider landscape. The topic will be explored further, and outreach efforts will be considered.
 - **Action: EM to share poster update at our next meeting.**

3. Grounds Update:

- **Tree work & removals:** Tree removals are being carried out currently around Campus, but many of these trees were self-seeded, old or damaged, and their chippings are being repurposed across the Campus. An ecologist was brought in to confirm if any trees would make suitable bat habitats, of which one tree was identified as a good candidate and therefore excluded from removal. A total of 10 days are scheduled for removal of trees near East Lodge and behind the Hall. Some trees being removed will be replanted elsewhere, with extra trees added to improve biodiversity. The success of any replanting shall be closely monitored.
- **Wetlands Work:** Ongoing work to clear alders and willows from the River Cam. Materials from the clearing are being used to create bird-watching fencing without disturbing birds. Mill Lane work has not yet begun due to weather conditions and concerns about disturbing birds.
- **Southern Grassland:** The southern area of grassland is not being cut at present. While this will not have a significant impact, it has been noted that the grass will be cut later this year, with contractors potentially in credit for previous verge cutting, allowing a full cut of the southern area later in the season.
- **Habitat updates:**
 - **Bird Boxes:** These have been recently cleared, with 80% of them noted to have been occupied - mostly by blue tits. A few boxes contained mice or hornets' nests. Some boxes were relocated to avoid disturbance, and an updated map has been created. **Action: LO to share updated habitat map.**
 - **Snakes & Amphibians:** The old compost area was found to contain grass snake egg casings, and so a snakery has been created in the compost bay, adding material for heat to aid breeding. Evidence of toads, frogs, and lizards have also been found, particularly near the main lake and wetlands area.

4. Wildlife Trust Update:

- **Wetlands Walks:** Wednesday lunchtime walks continue to be well attended, with a significant increase in participation to around 15-20 people in attendance, which is double the numbers we used to get in 2023 thanks to increased advertising, including Slack posts & FRED Calendar events.
- **Himalayan Balsam & Hemlock Removal:** Volunteers are needed for removal of Himalayan balsam and hemlock. Dates have been set for 13th June and 11th July from 10 am to 3 pm. Participants can join for part of the day or the entire session. The Wildlife Trust will be involved, and the Sustainability team will try to encourage Campus staff to participate in these efforts.
- **Reptiles & Amphibians:** There has been an increase in sightings of reptiles and amphibians, particularly near the wetlands and south pond. There's also a continued effort to monitor the reptile refuges.

5. Trout Club Update:

- **Collaboration with Grounds Team:** The Grounds team are in contact with the Trout Club, with a focus on unifying tasks related to landscape management, particularly in the wetlands and river areas. **Action: LO to share details on future collaborative work with the Trout Club.**

6. Bird Survey Update:

- **Survey Participation:** The bird survey for this year is due to start. Volunteers are needed to assist with plotting bird sightings and sounds. The survey is simple and doesn't require prior experience, so it's a great way to get involved and learn more about local birdlife. The survey will typically involve three trips per person, either early morning or late evening, in the wetlands area.
- **Survey Planning:** NR noted that there were still some outstanding maps from last year's survey. He is organising this year's survey and seeking volunteers to participate. Access issues related to ongoing work were raised, and the team is being asked to notify the group in advance of any changes that may impact the survey.
- **Map Updates:** SE shared that the map has been updated with the new building locations, and those wishing to get involved with the survey should contact NR for further information.

7. AOB (Any Other Business):

- **Campus Walks:** IW raised that there has been local interest in attending standalone walks around the general Campus, focusing on ponds, oak trees, and the area near the Carpark D portacabins. A proposed walk around the Campus in late May for parishioners and Campus staff would be good. The event will highlight the rich biodiversity on Campus. CW offered to assist promotion of this event through the parish magazine.

8. Next Quarterly Meeting:

- 28th May 2025

9. **Post meeting update Rocio Ruiz de la Chica (Urban & Civic)**

There are 2 major landscape related projects on site at the moment:

1. DA2 Landscape Phase 2:

- Landscape works to enhance the areas around Thornton Building. Whittings started on site last week of February and the planned completion for these works is end of May 2025. The works include soft and hardworks, including footpaths, platforms and tree planting.

2. Tree Removal works ahead of construction of pedestrian Bridges:

- The tree removal works started end of February with completion date expected by mid-March. These works are required ahead of the construction of the bridges, which is anticipated to start on site in August. The attached comms (*Appendix A*) were provided to the Campus ahead of the works taking place which provides a better understanding of why this is required and the measures in place for a replacement strategy.
- A Tree Replacement strategy, based on ratio 2:1 tree canopy cover replacement is in place, which will be completed following the construction of the bridges (anticipated completion summer 2026). The landscaping works to the bridges will include the construction of the Serpentine Wall, the tree planting, and the soft works around bridges and connecting footpaths. Belos is also a link with the tree removal drawings, tree replacement strategy and the planting schedule.

Apart from the above, there are no other major projects within the Campus that may have an impact on biodiversity.

Preparatory works for the landscaped bridges

This week we start preparatory works for the two pedestrian and cycle bridges that will connect both sides of the Campus.

The landscaped bridges will create a connection between the woodland area on the current Campus and the elevated Green on the expansion with ramps designed to weave and rise through the trees. The bridge access ramps have been carefully designed to minimise tree removal by integrating existing trees into the design while allowing space for new plantings after construction.

As we prepare for the installation of the bridge landings and supporting infrastructure this summer, preliminary work is required to remove certain trees, hedges, and undergrowth. However, no healthy trees with a long remaining lifespan will be removed - only those in poor condition that contribute the least to the woodland's overall quality. Additionally, some trees will be pruned or crown-lifted (removing lower branches to raise the canopy) to accommodate the bridges and pathways while preserving the woodland's integrity.



Illustrations of the northern bridge (top) and southern bridge (bottom), showing the ramps passing through the tree canopies

Once completed we will more than compensate for the trees removed by planting over 100 new trees, effectively doubling the size of the tree canopy. A substantial understorey of ground cover, wildflowers and grasses will also be introduced, further contributing to the rejuvenation of the woodland area.

Reflecting the Campus-wide biodiversity strategy, the replanting will include a mix of native and non-native species to enhance climate resilience and support our commitment to a 25% net gain in biodiversity across the site.

The overall result will be an improved tree canopy allowing more sunlight to penetrate, promoting healthier tree growth and creating a richer habitat for birds, bats and populations of invertebrates.

Throughout the bridge design process, we have collaborated closely with key stakeholders. This includes working with Historic England to preserve the heritage setting of Hinxtton Hall, Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum to support inclusive access and Camcycle to enhance cycling provision. We have also worked closely with arboriculturists, ecologists and tree surgeons to carefully survey and plan the work minimising its impact on nature. Ecological surveys confirm that no protected species will be affected, and a watching brief for bird nests will be maintained throughout.

When the main bridge works begin later in the year, hand-dug trial holes and a ground-penetrating radar will be used to survey tree roots. If needed, minor adjustments will be made to reposition the ramp legs and prevent damage to larger roots. A low level, sensitive lighting system along the woodland paths and bridges will ensure minimum impact on the wildlife. The new landscape design prioritises a low-maintenance woodland strategy while maximising biodiversity opportunities.

Examples of native tree species to be planted



Field Maple



Hawthorn



Wild Cherry

Examples of non-native tree species to be planted



Quaking Aspen



Persian Ironwood



Sargent's Cherry

The tree works will take place during the day from **24 February to 13 March, Monday to Friday, 8.00 AM - 6.00 PM**, at the eastern edge of the Campus grounds, between the main entrance and New Road. The work area will be fenced off and woodland paths closed until the works are safely completed. Dates and times may change due to weather or unforeseen circumstances.

If you would like any additional information or have any queries, please contact us at hinxton@urbanandcivic.com or call 01799 934766.
