Loughborough University

R.A.I.S.E. NATURE PLAN 2026 - 2030
RECOVER-ACT-IMPROVE-SUSTAIN-EDUCATE

ENHANCING NATURE TO IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY AND TO SUPPORT LEARNING, HEALTH AND WELLBEING.

Image taken by Yang Qui

COMMITMENT

Loughborough University has always been shaped by its local and global sense of place—our exceptional campus, our vibrant community, and our shared commitment to shaping a better future. As biodiversity declines and natural systems come under increasing pressure, our responsibility to act has never been clearer. This Nature Plan marks a new chapter in our ambition to be a university where people and nature are connected, thriving side by side, and fully aligned with our University Strategy Creating Better Futures. Together.

We have long taken pride in our wonderful green campus and the rich habitats that surround our academic and sporting life. But today's challenges demand more than care; they demand leadership. Universities across the world are stepping up with bold sustainability commitments, and Loughborough is determined to play its part.

Nature is also central to human wellbeing. Access to green space, opportunities to connect with wildlife, and the restorative power of natural environments all support the mental and physical health of our students, staff, and wider community. A nature positive campus is therefore both an environmental responsibility and an investment in our collective wellbeing.

Our new RAISE Nature Plan provides a clear, structured pathway to becoming a truly nature positive university. Through it, we will restore habitats, enhance and connect our green spaces, strengthen biodiversity, manage our campus to support healthy ecosystems, and use our living laboratory to educate and inspire our community.

This plan builds on our strengths and reflects our identity as a university where sport plays a defining role. Initiatives such as BUCS to Branches, The Climate Cup, and our wider sustainability programmes show how our sporting community can mobilise action and inspire change.

Above all, this is a shared endeavour. Staff, students, partners, and local and global communities all have a role in shaping a campus and an environment that is more resilient, more biodiverse, and more inspiring for generations to come.

Professor Nick Jennings, CB, FREng, FRS
Vice-Chancellor and President, Loughborough University

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Loughborough University's 523 acre Loughborough Campus is one of the UK's largest and most biodiverse university estates, home to extensive green space, ancient woodlands, and a wide range of monitored species. This natural environment functions as both a sanctuary for wildlife and a living laboratory for research, teaching, and community engagement. The University's leadership in biodiversity was recognised in 2023 with Ark Wildlife's highest "platinum tier" award.

The London Campus, while urban, benefits from nearby green spaces such as the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, offering further opportunities for nature positive engagement.

This RAISE Nature Plan sets out the University's long term approach to protecting and enhancing biodiversity across both campuses. It focuses on ecological resilience, habitat restoration, species protection, and compliance with environmental obligations.

Biodiversity is positioned as a key contributor to the University's strategic priorities—student experience, research excellence, and sport—as well as its themes of wellbeing, climate action, and inclusive communities. The plan also supports the University's commitments under the UN SDG Accord.

The University plays an active civic role through partnerships such as the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Civic Partnership and the Leicestershire Climate and Nature Pact. As a founding signatory of the Nature Positive Universities Alliance, it commits to bold action on nature recovery and community engagement.

The RAISE framework—Recover, Act, Improve, Sustain, Educate—provides a structured approach to habitat protection, biodiversity enhancement, sustainable estate management, and learning. This will be achieved through the 12 principles of the plan along with the initial 8 broad reaching objectives which will be developed into multiple specific branches of action which will be monitored and updated annually.

We assessed our biodiversity baseline in 2023/24. This baseline provides a foundation for future monitoring and Biodiversity Net Gain planning.

Together, these commitments position Loughborough University as a sector leader in nature recovery and sustainability, ensuring biodiversity remains central to its mission and community impact.

INTRODUCTION

Our 523 acre Loughborough Campus, one of the largest in the UK, is one of our most wonderful assets. Three quarters of our East Midlands campus is open green space, populated by over 7,500 trees, in addition to which we have two ancient woodlands. It is home to a variety of wildlife including bats, badgers, butterflies and kestrels as well as an abundance of flora and fauna. Student and staff volunteers, the Gardens Team and researchers regularly monitor species on campus. As part of this monitoring we have recorded:

- 7 species of bumblebees
- 9 species of bats confirmed (2 more potentially)
- 17 species of butterfly
- 23 species of birds in Holywell Wood
- over 30 species of freshwater macroinvertebrate
- 50 species of plants in each of both our Holywell and Burleigh Woods

We are proud that in March 2023 Ark Wildlife recognised the University as one of the UK's leading higher education institutions for looking after wildlife, meeting 100% of their "platinum tier" requirements.

Our London Campus is located next to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and just a short walk from Wick Woodland and Hackney Marshes. Whilst we are not directly responsible for these areas they offer a great opportunity for staff and students based at our London campus to engage with similar green spaces and one of our objectives is to understand and engage in opportunities to support nature in these areas.

This RAISE Nature Plan seeks to set out the biodiversity principles that will guide us, the objectives we are aiming for and the actions we will take to achieve these on our Loughborough and London campuses, as well as in our local community. These will improve biodiversity, protect and restore species and ecosystems as well as meet our legal compliance and obligation responsibilities. These principles, objectives and actions consider the resilience of our ecosystems and their ability to provide nature benefits in the long term. They will also therefore consider the extent, condition, connectivity, and adaptability of our biodiversity.

Image taken by Nafees

BIODIVERSITY IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR UNIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

The University's Strategy, Creating Better Futures. Together., is built on three priorities:

- Enhancing the student experience,
- Growing our research power,
- Protecting our world leading sport profile.

It is underpinned by three themes:

- Sport, Health and Wellbeing;
- Climate Change and Net Zero;
- Vibrant and Inclusive Communities.

Biodiversity supports all these priorities. By actively managing our natural environment, the campus becomes a living laboratory, demonstrates environmental leadership, strengthens community engagement, and enhances our contribution to global sustainability.

Climate change affects biodiversity, but biodiversity also helps mitigate climate impacts. Our campus ecosystems support wellbeing, inform the development of sporting facilities, and bring together staff, students, visitors, and the local community. Through the RAISE Nature Plan, we will demonstrate the central role biodiversity plays in delivering the University's strategy.

As a signatory of the **UN SDG Accord**, we are also aiming to support key SDG Goals and in particular:

BIODIVERSITY AND OUR COMMUNITY

Loughborough University is a partner in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Civic Partnership, a Civic Agreement commitment between the three Universities in Leicestershire and the city and counties of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland working together for the benefit of local people and the health and prosperity of our places. The 'Universities Partnership' combines the collective strengths of our universities and civic institutions to make a greater impact through collaboration for, with and amongst our communities. As a direct result of this we are a signatory of the Leicestershire Climate and Nature Pact, and linked to this is our support for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. We are also a founding signatory of the Nature Positive University's Alliance in which we commit to bold action to combat biodiversity loss, protect and restore species and ecosystems, while influencing others to do the same. Working with and engaging with our communities through Biodiversity is not only fundamental to these commitments but is also a great way of supporting our wider community.

This RAISE Nature Plan provides a structured approach to:

- **R**ecover – Protecting and restoring existing wildlife habitats to aid recovery.
- **A**ct – Identifying opportunities to take actions which support our strategies and meet our sustainability goals and environmental obligations and commitments.
- **I**mprove – Increasing biodiversity by enhancing existing, and creating new, areas. Linking these areas with wildlife corridors as well as contributing to wider regional and national biodiversity targets to support improvement
- **S**ustain – managing our grounds and buildings in ways that ensures our ecosystems are sustained.
- **E**ducate – using the campus as a living laboratory to educate students and staff in biodiversity conservation but also as an environment in which to educate students and our community.

THE BIODIVERSITY OF OUR CAMPUS:

Our RAISE Nature current key areas map in Appendix XX provides an overview of some of the key features of our current biodiversity. There is however much more green space with plenty of trees and mown areas which are managed to support *No Mow May* and *Let it Bloom June*. These trees, shrubs, hedges, gardens and grass areas support habitat and continuity across the central campus and provide an opportunity for further development as wildlife corridors between our sporting, academic and accommodation buildings.

During 2023/4 we assessed our Biodiversity Baseline ahead of the requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain and this will regularly be monitored and updated.

OUR PRINCIPLES FOR NATURE STRATEGY MANAGEMENT:

Our approach to nature and biodiversity will seek to support our strategic themes whilst also working with the leads in these areas to seek opportunities to improve nature in return.

Supports Act & Educate.

Our green Loughborough Campus is a defining part of our identity and as such we will take a whole institution approach to Biodiversity, aligning delivery with the 5 pillars of the Sustainability Strategy.

Supports Act & Educate.

Supporting Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland

As we improve our green spaces and develop our campus we will seek to adopt the opportunities set out for local nature recovery in the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy combining this with our requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain by working with key stakeholders.

Supports Recovery, Act & Improve.

As a leading academic institution we will shape and connect this evolving plan through Objectives and Actions that reach across our campus, community, and wider national and global spheres, including contributing to biodiversity efforts across the HE sector, by pursuing off-campus research opportunities that support RAISEing Nature and align with our academic strengths.

Supports Improve & Educate.

Monitoring and measuring onsite biodiversity through surveys underpins this RAISE Nature Plan and requires long-term commitment to track progress and shape future Objectives and Actions. This sustained approach will also create ongoing learning opportunities connected to teaching and research.

Supports Sustain & Educate.

NATURE POSITIVE UNIVERSITIES

This RAISE Nature Plan will require clear Objectives and Actions, developed to meet our legal obligations (BNG) and our commitments as a Nature Positive University. These Objectives and Actions will be structured around these commitments, alongside engagement opportunities and the toolkits available to us.

Supports All elements of RAISE.

Managing Planting for Climate Change and RAISEing Nature will prioritise native species while considering how climate change affects our planting choices and how those choices can help mitigate its impacts, such as providing natural shade or reducing flood risk.

Supports Improve & Sustain.

We will support and promote the Charnwood Forest GeoPark monitoring for any impact and action which may inform local objectives.

Supports Act.

Loughborough University hosts three UNESCO Chairs —in Sport, Physical Activity and Education for Development; Informatics and Multi-hazard Risk Reduction; and Storytelling Education for Sustainability. The University is committed to using these Chairs to address major global challenges. Nature and biodiversity intersect with all three, and we will actively seek opportunities to support their work.

Supports Act & Educate.

We will support student societies and Art based activities, such as our Landscaping and Gardening Society, and Fruit Routes, which offer opportunities for our staff, students and community to engage in nature based activities.

Supports Act & Educate.

We will maximise the co benefits of nature, health, and wellbeing by adopting an integrated approach that recognises how people and the natural environment depend on one another, through access to green spaces, clean air, and biodiverse ecosystems supporting physical health and also strengthening mental wellbeing by reducing stress, encouraging social connection, and stimulating creativity.

Image taken by Matthew Baddock

Supports Sustain & Educate.

We will communicate the value of nature through clear, compelling messages that resonate across all audiences. Embedding nature's importance into our culture to inspire stakeholders, partners, and communities by showing its benefits for health, wellbeing, prosperity, and climate stability.

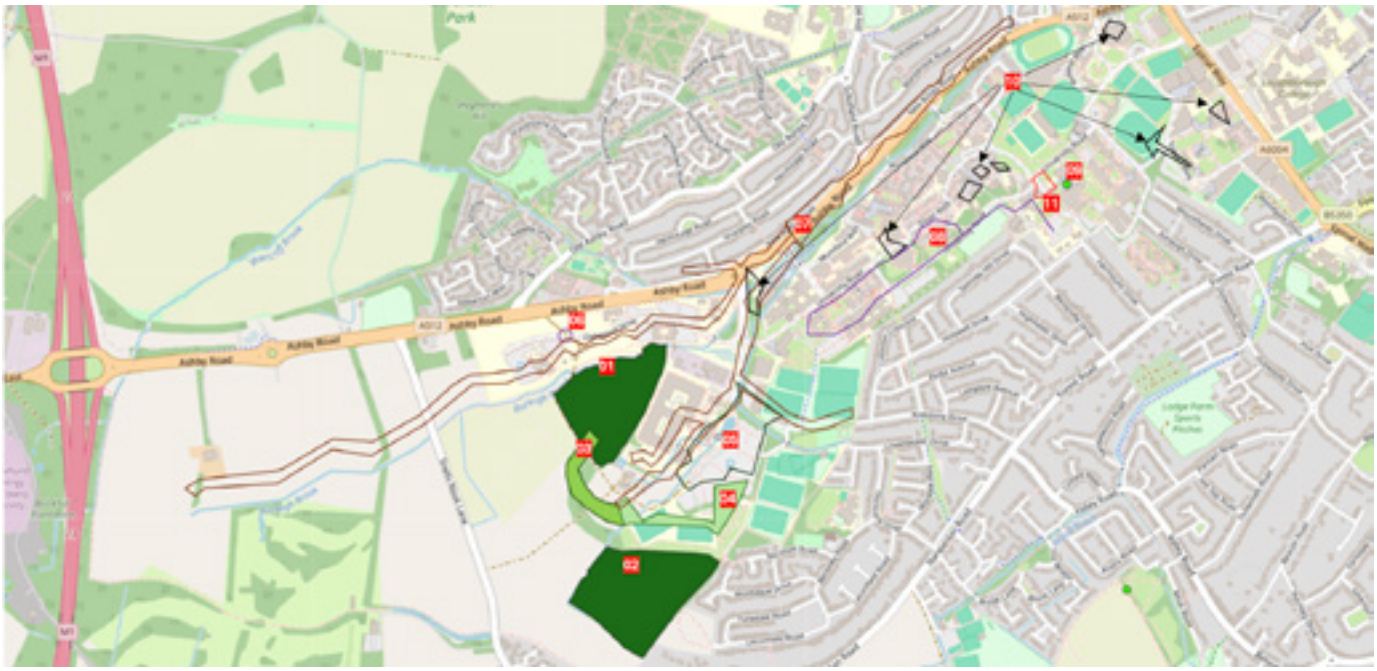
Supports Sustain & Educate.

OUR KEY OBJECTIVES ARE:

Compliance	Evidence-based approach	Toolkits	Local Strategy
Improve	**Recover**	**Act**	**Recover**
Develop a comprehensive plan by Dec 2026 to ensure the University meets its legal Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, using identified key actions to shape and inform this work.	Establish priority habitats and species and develop a biodiversity survey plan by July 2026, creating the foundation for ongoing monitoring and for guiding the principles, objectives, and actions of the RAISE Nature Plan.	Deliver measurable progress on our Nature Positive commitments by achieving Nature Friendly Grounds Bronze status by Summer 2026 and Silver by Summer 2027, using the NFG toolkit to guide actions and provide evidence for annual reporting to the Nature Positive Universities Network.	Develop an LNRS LU RAISE Nature Opportunities Register using LNRS maps, priorities, and improvement measures to guide master planning, inform development projects, and identify additional nature actions outside BNG requirements. The register will be completed by the end of April 2026, with further actionable priorities agreed and approved by the end of July 2026.
Nature Volunteering	**Woodland Management**	**Engaging in Nature**	**Nature improvement Partnerships**
Recover & Educate	**Recover, Act & Improve**	**Act & Educate**	**Act, Sustain & Educate**
Expand on and off campus nature based volunteering to enhance biodiversity awareness, support local initiatives such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Canal & River Trust, and promote wellbeing through connection with nature. We will actively encourage participation from students, staff, and where appropriate tenants, and provide at least 12 volunteering opportunities in 2026, increasing annually for the duration of this plan.	We will monitor and maintain our Woodland Management Plan to ensure we are on track to deliver its requirements by 2033 through a series of identified actions tracked alongside this RAISE Nature plan.	Develop a stakeholder engagement plan by April 2026 that raises knowledge, awareness, and education around nature, covering staff, students (on and off campus), sports groups, societies, LSU, and tenants, with key actions delivered annually throughout the RAISE Nature Plan. In addition, there will be a specific London Engagement and Action Plan.	As a partner with Trash Free Trails we will identify and host a minimum of 4 events per annum for each year of the RAISE Nature plan / whilst the partnership is in place ensuring the data from these events is provided to Trash Free Trails. We will develop a partnership agreement with the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust by June 2026 to identify opportunities for Wildlife Improvement both on campus and in the community.

These objectives will result in multiple specific branches of action which will be monitored and updated annually.

RAISE NATURE CURRENT KEY AREAS MAP



Symbol	Key Areas	Description
1	Holywell Wood – LNRS Identified ASNW1	The University possesses two ancient woodlands (NVC W10) towards the west of the Loughborough campus. Burleigh Wood has an area of approximately 10ha, whereas Holywell Wood is slightly smaller, at about 8ha. Both woodlands are good representations of the UK's most biodiverse terrestrial habitat with excellent ground flora and fungal communities. Burleigh and Holywell Wood are old coppice woodlands, with this management ceasing relatively recently in both. There extent has been little changed over their long history and Burleigh, particularly, shows archaeological features of medieval period woodland management.
2	Burleigh Wood – LNRS Identified ASNW1	
3	Horseshoe Wood	Linking Burleigh and Holywell Woods is a woodland strip called Horseshoe Wood. Whilst the aerial shape of the wood looks like a horseshoe, the wood was named as a result of a horseshoe discovered during planting in the early 1990s. The woodland was established with saplings grown from seed by children at Holywell Primary School. This wood has a diverse canopy but in common with other new woodlands on former agricultural land the ground flora is species poor but it provides a vital connection between our two ancient woodlands.
4	Carbon Offset Wood	Adjacent to Burleigh Wood is another young woodland called the Carbon Offset Wood. This has an eclectic range of native and non-native shrub and tree species that provide good scrub habitat suitable for various bird species including willow warblers. Whilst the ground flora is poor, areas adjacent to old hedgerows can show good diversity with greater stitchwort being particularly abundant in early spring.
5	Holywell Car Park	Holywell car park, despite its function, is structurally diverse in terms of vegetation and this creates good opportunities to support invertebrate and bird populations. This nicely provides continuity between the less developed landscape around the two ancient woodlands and the Burleigh Brook Wildlife Corridor.
6	Holywell Cottage The Bathaus	Adjacent to Holywell Wood is Holywell Cottage which is also known as the bathaus. This name refers to the population of Brown long eared bats that historically roosted in the buildings. Whilst confirmation that the species continues to use the cottage has not been determined recently, a bat survey in 2023 confirmed the species foraging in the grounds surrounding the house along with 8 other bat species.
7	Burleigh Brook Wildlife Corridor (incl Shortcliff Brook)	The Burleigh Brook Wildlife Corridor which follows the south side of Ashby Road, includes several tributaries from different areas of the campus and adjacent land including the Shortcliffe Brook. This stream has a well-developed riparian boundary mostly composed of wet woodland species such as common alder and white willow. The brook is mostly shallow with a gravel bottom supporting a diverse invertebrate community. The habitat is excellent for supporting bat and bird species.
8	Fruit Routes	Fruit Routes was established in 2011 as a unique project and art installation made up of over 150 trees providing an enriched habitat for people, plants, insects and animals, as well as a location for cultural activities and outdoor learning as part of the campus' living lab.
9	Cedar of Lebanon – LNRS Identified Ancient Trees	The Cedar of Lebanon, which sits between the EHB and Herbert Manzoni buildings, is between 250-300 years old and was part of the original Burleigh Estate. It distinctive shape (previously much taller) is as a result of heavy snow in 1990.
10	Small areas of interest	These areas include a mature oak copse adjacent to the Student Union provides nesting sites birds in the dense undergrowth and good invertebrate pickings to support rearing young. Butler Court Nature Reserve is a small area most scrub with the only freshwater (non-ornamental) pond on site and Brockington Wildlife Area provides a surprising number of different habitat types for such a small space, including woodland, scrub and meadow.
11	Walled Garden	The walled garden, which is also part of the original Burleigh Estate which dated from the 1600's, and which was sold in 1958 to Loughborough College of Technology (before becoming a University in 1966) is of special interest. This flower rich space provides forage opportunities for many species of pollinator between spring and autumn.

1 ASNW - Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

For Further details or information
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