

# Nature Positive Universities Pledge

Update: November 2025

## 1. Baseline

Between July and September 2022 ecologists undertook Biodiversity Baseline Surveys and Baseline Biodiversity Net Gain Assessments (BNGA) across the University estate. An evaluation and assessment of the ecological value of the various sites using biodiversity metric calculations was completed and recommendations for further biodiversity enhancements included.

### Methodology

Surveyed areas include Main Campus, Residential Campus' Whitworth Park, Fallowfield and Victoria Park, Broomcroft Hall and Jodrell Bank.

Biodiversity Baseline Surveys comprised ecological desk studies and ecological walkover surveys, including UKHabitat surveys, to inform an assessment of the ecological value of the sites and their potential to support, or be used by, habitats and species protected under either UK or European nature conservation legislation.

The initial BNGA was to identify sites' biodiversity baseline with regards to habitat value specifically using the Biodiversity Metric 3.1 and identify opportunities for enhancements that will result in biodiversity net gain. The Biodiversity Metric determines a proxy biodiversity value by measuring habitat type, its condition and the size of the area. The metric is designed to assess changes in biodiversity value.

### Results

Sites have potential to support common amphibians (e.g. common frog), various bat, bird and invertebrate species, badgers, reptiles (e.g. slow worms), hedgehogs and great crested newts (Jodrell Bank).

The estate baseline area habitats have produced a biodiversity value of 370 habitat units (HU) and baseline linear habitats a value of 9.67 HU. Habitat condition and ecological value varies between sites (**Figure 1**). There is very little habitat in 'good' condition.

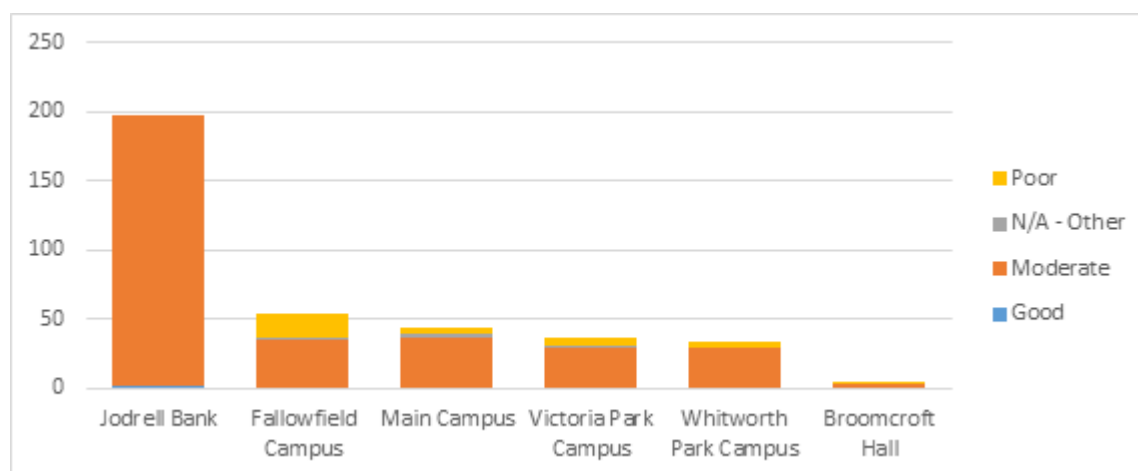


Figure 1: Habitat condition by site

Condition is a measure of the habitat quality in relation to the ecological optimum of the habitat type and allows for direct comparisons of habitat quality to be made for the same habitat type. Habitat condition is defined as either good, moderate or poor by assessment against a suite of condition criteria which are specific to the habitat type.

It should be stressed that condition in biodiversity terms is not to be confused with traditional perceptions of condition or maintenance. A grassland that might be perceived to be well maintained (e.g. regularly mown) is very likely to be in poor condition.

Almost half (**Figure 2**) of the habitat value across the estate (not including Jodrell Bank) comes from our urban trees highlighting their importance and the need to protect and manage them carefully. Modified grassland, or amenity grass, has a very low ecological score but because there is a significant amount across the estate it contributes a third of the habitat value (**Figure 2**). There is opportunity to replace amenity grass with more species rich options and improve the condition of habitats.

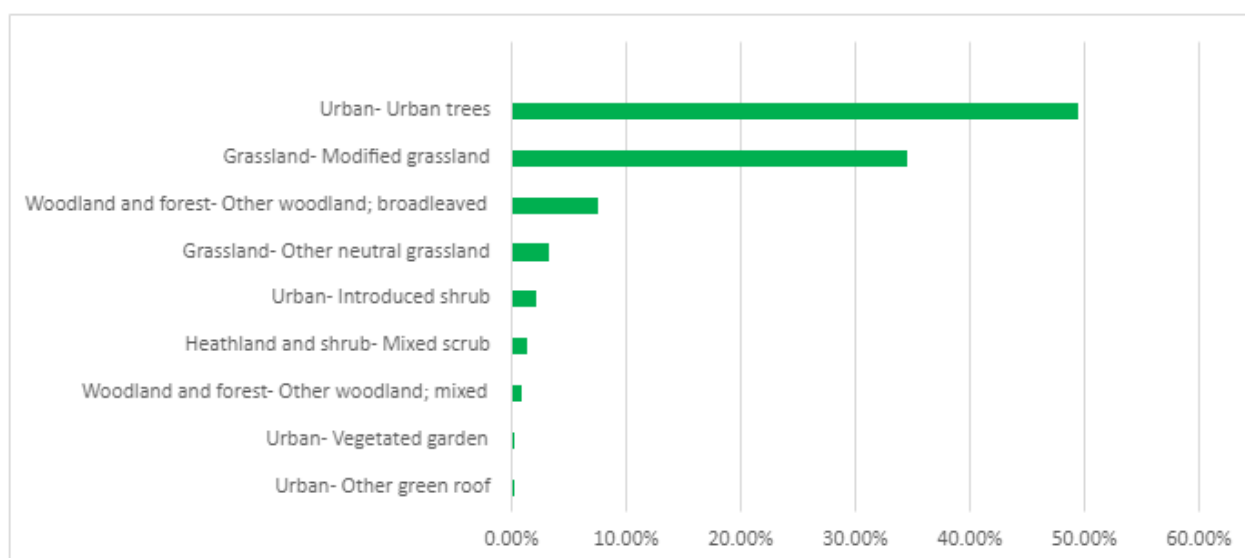


**Figure 2: Percentage of habitat value by type across estate (not including Jodrell Bank)**

| Habitat Type            | UK Habitat Definition                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Urban trees             | Trees within constructed, industrial and other artificial habitats.                                                                                       |
| Modified grassland      | Vegetation dominated by a few fast-growing grasses. Frequently characterised by abundance of rye-grass e.g. amenity grass.                                |
| Woodland - broadleaved  | Land with more than 25% cover of trees more than 5m in height. Broadleaved mixed and yew woodland.                                                        |
| Other neutral grassland | Rye-grass likely to be present at <30% with between 9 and 15 further species also present e.g. wildflowers.                                               |
| Urban introduced shrub  | Non-native shrubs planted within constructed, industrial and other artificial habitats.                                                                   |
| Mixed scrub             | Dense scrub comprising a mixture of species without a single species dominant.                                                                            |
| Woodland - mixed        | A mixture of broadleaved and coniferous trees in which neither make up more than 80% of tree cover.                                                       |
| Urban vegetated garden  | Garden that is principally vegetated, for example with large areas of grass and flower beds within constructed, industrial and other artificial habitats. |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Urban green roof | A roof or deck onto which vegetation is intentionally grown or habitats for wildlife are established in constructed, industrial and other artificial habitats. |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Recommendations

Key ecological management objectives following the mitigation hierarchy:

- Retain existing key habitat areas for use by foraging/commuting bats and birds, and potential wildlife corridor links for invertebrates and small mammals.
- Enhance existing habitat features, where appropriate, with native species to enhance the existing flora with appropriate management measures.
- Create new habitats to benefit bats, birds, amphibians, invertebrates and small mammals through the provision of foraging and sheltering opportunities. This includes replacing areas of modified grassland with more distinctive grassland and scrub.
- Pond creation and associated sensitive landscaping
- Incorporate features to support specific species e.g. log and brash piles, hibernacula, etc.
- Green roofs and walls
- Signage and promotion to increase awareness
- Involve staff/students/local community in enhancement/maintenance work and specific species survey work.

## 2. Targets

[Our Sustainable Future, the University's Environmental Sustainability Strategy](#), sets out our “Valuing Nature” objective and commitments.

Objective: Our campus is an environment where people and wildlife thrive together.

Commitments:

- Work with our academics, staff and students to develop biodiversity priorities to enhance wildlife and public spaces on campus.
- Identify opportunities to increase green, cooling and absorbent spaces as an adaptation response to climate change.
- Integrate biodiversity themes into current and future Estates strategy, with nature and green spaces an integral part of planning.
- Eliminate the use of peat-based compost by 2023.
- Continually seek to reduce the use of synthetic chemical herbicides on campus.
- Increase the quality and quantity of existing green space, achieving a 10% increase in urban green space by 2028, from 2018 levels.
- Calculate a baseline and set a target to provide a measurable improvement in biodiversity by 2030.
- Continue our work with academics to measure wellbeing outcomes and improve the staff and student wellbeing scores associated with campus green space by 25% by 2028 from a 2018/19 baseline.
- Maximise opportunities to integrate learning and teaching with our estate's biodiversity.
- Zero reportable pollution incidents to air, land and water across the University estate.
- Achieve 20% biodiversity net gain on all major construction and refurbishment projects.

### 3. Actions

#### *Implementation of “Valuing Nature” Objectives: Actions and Progress*

The Nature Action Group, comprising both Professional Services (PS) and academic staff, has developed a comprehensive action plan designed to achieve the “Valuing Nature” goals outlined in the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. This action plan details specific actions and the corresponding metrics that will be used to monitor progress, with the overarching aim of enhancing biodiversity across the University estate.

#### *Ongoing Projects to Increase Green Space*

Active projects are underway to expand the quantity of green space on campus. Notably, the Ellen Wilkinson space, which was referenced in last year’s submission, has now been revitalised with the installation of planters. These planters are tended by both staff and students, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and community involvement in the maintenance of green areas.

#### *Bicentenary Tree Planting Initiative*

In late November 2024, the University commenced its bicentenary celebrations with the launch of the ‘200 Trees for 200 Years’ initiative. This project is delivered in partnership with City of Trees, an independent charity dedicated to tree planting throughout Greater Manchester. The primary objectives are to provide cooling for urban environments, improve air quality, and bring people together. As part of this initiative, twenty trees are being planted in each of the ten Greater Manchester boroughs by the City of Trees team, with support from University of Manchester staff volunteers.

#### *No-Mow May and Wildflower Areas*

This year, the ‘No-Mow May’ campaign was expanded to cover a greater proportion of campus than ever before, enabling approximately 65% of the campus to grow freely for a month. This provided a vital boost for wild plants and wildlife. Plans are in place to further increase the extent of this initiative in future years. There are now nine wildflower areas established on the Main Campus, as well as species-rich turf outside Nancy Rothwell. The University continues to maintain eight green roofs and has used 40,000 litres of peat-free compost. In addition, all grounds maintenance machinery is now battery-operated, thereby eliminating pollution and emissions from fuel use.

#### *Enhancing Habitats for Wildlife*

An ecologist from Northwest Ecology has recently produced a report documenting the current enhancements implemented on campus, such as bird, bat, and bug boxes. Five ‘bug hotels’ have been constructed by students using recycled wood and brown vegetation recovered by the Landscaping Team. The campus also features 24 bird boxes, of which half are currently occupied, and eight bat boxes. The ecologist has recommended optimal new locations for these enhancements and identified sites for additional installations, supporting the University’s target of achieving a 20% increase in bird, bat, and bug boxes on campus by 2028.

#### *Student Engagement and Sustainability Champions*

The University remains committed to student engagement through the Student Sustainability Champion programme. Thirty-two student volunteers are involved in delivering projects spanning several themes, including Nature and Biodiversity, Energy and Carbon, Food, Travel, Reduce Reuse Recycle, and Hedgehog Champions. Each group selects a sustainability area to focus on each

semester. Recent activities have included a step count challenge to promote green travel, a litter pick near student residences, and a campus food stall raising awareness about plant-based alternatives. Champions are encouraged to take the Nature Positive Pledge, affirming their commitment to minimising the impact of themselves and the University on nature.

### *Societies and Volunteering Opportunities*

The University of Manchester supports at least ten student societies focused on sustainability, including Rootable Student Action, Mcr. Botanists, and Tree Musketeers. Students participate in volunteering opportunities such as peatland and hedgerow restoration, and community events including talks and nature-focused social gatherings. These activities foster reflection, improvement, and preservation of nature within and around the campus.

### *Green Spaces for Learning and Volunteering*

UoM is home to the Firs Botanical Gardens, Jodrell Bank, and Prospects House Allotment—three green spaces that provide students with local volunteering opportunities and a chance to deepen their understanding of campus biodiversity.

### *Living Labs and Partnerships*

Guided by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, students collaborate with organisations to deliver positive change through Living Labs projects. Currently, there are 119 projects available for study. For instance, a partnership with Ardwick Climate Action has helped illustrate the risks of air pollution and led to the creation of the 'Green Routes' initiative, which offers walking routes that steer pedestrians away from highly polluted areas, reducing their exposure to air pollution and heavy traffic. Another project, in collaboration with the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), focuses on reducing beef consumption in cities.

### *Academic Opportunities in Nature-Positive Approaches*

The University now offers a [new](#) MSc, developed in collaboration with industry leaders in nature recovery, restoration, and rewilding. This course enables students to pursue their interests in nature-positive approaches and prepares them for careers in this vital field.