

Biodiversity Policy

Background

Since its move to Strawberry Hill in 1923 St Mary's has always valued its unique environment and position in the arm of the Thames that flows past the historic houses of Marble Hill House, Pope's House and Walpole House. Situated between unique sites of outstanding natural beauty such as Richmond Park, Ham Common and Bushy Park the University College grounds act as an important corridor for migrating and wetland species. In a recent survey over 55 species of bird and 10 species of butterflies were observed on the grounds. The grounds also possess some outstanding specimens of British woodland trees including the magnificent 'Walpole Oak', over 250 years old. Consequently the University College takes its commitments to maintaining biodiversity in its precincts very seriously. From this flows the key elements of its Biodiversity Policy.

Accordingly, the University College will:

- Encourage annual mapping and recording of habitats and species
- Promote staff and student awareness of the importance of biodiversity within the University College and encourage members of the University College to conserve and, where possible, enhance this and explore ways in which it can be used as an educational resource
- Seek to support relevant projects and programmes that will conserve and, where possible, enhance biodiversity including opportunities to conserve and create new biodiversity habitats, with particular focus on native species and wildlife paths and areas throughout the campus
- Undertake an assessment of the impact on biodiversity in relation to campus developments so that they do not reduce existing biodiversity and, if there are situations where that is not possible, make its best endeavours to ensure compensation additional biodiversity elsewhere

- Incorporate the principles of conservation into estate planning and management, preserving and enhancing existing habitats where possible. In particular, operations should be timed to minimise impact on breeding, feeding and hibernating species.
- Introduce sympathetic management techniques to avoid disturbing wildlife, to stimulate natural habitats and to encourage native species.
- Engage as appropriate with the local community, businesses and organisations, on biodiversity enhancing projects
- Comply with relevant biodiversity legislation and official Advisory Codes of Practice.

Key actions will include:

- Appointment of a Biodiversity Champion to oversee the biodiversity of the University College campus.
- Reducing chemical pesticide use where possible and implementing new methods of pest and weed control. This will include making safe fallen timber and leaving it in-situ.
- Identification of reduced intervention and wildflower areas.
- Removal and management of dominate or invasive species.
- Maintenance of bird and bat boxes.
- Dead timber will be left standing to act as a habitat for vulnerable species such as bats, owls, and woodpeckers.
- Tree felling and estate operations will be timed carefully to reduce the impact on breeding, feeding and hibernating species.

In order to achieve this commitment, staff and students at all levels will work together as partners on various initiatives. An overview will be maintained by the University College Sustainability Committee to which the Biodiversity Champion will report.

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