

Report to the Sustainability Strategy Committee – 1 July 2024

Strategic Biodiversity Steering Group (SBSG)

Annual Report (2023 – 2024)

June 2024

Dr Kate Ashbrook (Chair)

Following the departure of Dr Duncan Westbury and the appointment of his replacement, we recommenced our meetings in January 2024. Since then, we have updated the Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan, now covering 2024 – 2027. While maintaining our established priorities and objectives, we have made progress, particularly in monitoring and data management and habitat creation during the reporting period.

Monitoring and Data Management

To better understand and manage campus biodiversity, we consolidated existing biological records from iRecord (UKCEH national dataset), NBN Atlas and eBird, to form a comprehensive biological recording dataset (objective 6.2 – monitor habitats and species that occur on all campuses). Two Green Impact projects have aimed to digitise features relating to biodiversity; one focused on digitising wildflower strips, fruit trees, hedgerows and bat and bird boxes across St John's and City campuses, whereas the other created and digitised a nature trail around Lakeside campus.

Existing biological records focus largely on St John's campus and are relatively few, therefore we aimed to increase recording activities at all of our campuses. In April 2024, we launched the [University of Worcester Campus Biodiversity Project on iNaturalist](#), a global platform for collecting biological records from citizen scientists (objective 6.1 – establish a campus biodiversity monitoring project for all university campuses). This allows anyone visiting our campuses to take a photo of biodiversity on their mobile phone and create a biological record which contributes to enhancing our biological records dataset.

In addition, we began a series of biological recording activities. We offered free workshops on moth recording and bee identification to students, staff and the general public via Eventbrite (objective 7.3 – promote awareness and education on biodiversity). Staff also carried out a day of invertebrate recording on Lakeside campus and have placed camera traps around campuses to gain information on nocturnal biodiversity, such as badgers and hedgehogs. We intend to add further biological recording related activities, including public-facing activities, over the summer subject to interest. Furthermore, we are entering discussions with Worcester City Council about taking part in the [City Nature Challenge](#) in April 2025, which is a global four-day biological recording event.



Figure 1. Clockwise from top left: A puss moth *Cerura vinula* on Lakeside campus; A smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* sheltering in a dead wood pile on Lakeside campus; a Vestal Cuckoo bumblebee *Bombus vestalis* on St John's campus; and a Red fox *Vulpes vulpes* on St John's campus.

Creating New Habitats

During the reporting period, we have added new habitats for biodiversity on three of our campuses:

St John's Campus:

- **New hedgerows (4.6):** Added 75 m of new hedgerows near to car park M.
- **Nesting and roosting opportunities (4.8):** Installed several new bat and bird boxes.
- **New deadwood habitats (4.9):** Due to safety concerns a large Poplar tree on the western boundary was removed, but the wood has been used to create a new deadwood habitat. Lunar Hornet moths (*Sesia bembeciformis*), a wood-burrowing species, were recorded around this tree in summer 2023, therefore we hope to see further emergences from the felled tree this summer.
- **New areas for woodland flora (4.10):** As part of Go Green Week 2024, 150 new bulbs of three species (English Bluebells, Wild Daffodils and Wood Anemone) were planted.

City Campus:

- **New wildflower areas (4.7):** A change in grass management is hoped to contribute 1,500 m² of new wildflower meadow around the path leading to the City campus buildings. Further annual poppy and cornflower mix wildflower areas have been added (25 m²) in verges around buildings.
- **Nesting and roosting opportunities (4.8):** Several bat and bird boxes have been installed around City Campus buildings

Lakeside Campus:

- **New hedgerows (4.6):** Added 200 m of new hedgerows to the south-east boundary.
- **New wildflower areas (4.7):** We are currently discussing plans to create further natural grassland habitats on the eastern side of the campus.
- **Nesting and roosting opportunities (4.8):** The RSPB have been granted permission to install a nesting box for Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) in the RSPB-managed habitat to the north of the campus.

The SBMG has made significant progress in both monitoring and enhancing biodiversity on our campuses over the reporting period. Our efforts in creating new habitats and increasing biological recording activities have laid a solid foundation for continued biodiversity improvements. We look forward to building on these achievements and engaging more stakeholders in our initiatives in 2024 – 2025.