



BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT

Biodiversity and Tree Projects Progress Report

2022-November 2025

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Fulbourn Road Green Space: Scrapes and Bee Bank

Location (What3Words): each.actual.remark

Project Summary

This project focuses on transforming council-owned amenity grassland into a more species-rich chalk grassland habitat. Early trial scrapes in 2021 demonstrated the potential of the underlying chalk substrate, which informed a larger-scale intervention in February 2022. Topsoil was removed to expose nutrient-poor chalk, followed by rotavation and sowing with a chalk grassland seed mix. A substantial bee bank was created in April 2022 using arisings from the scrapes, providing habitat for ground-nesting solitary bees. The site lies close to three nature reserves, including a chalk grassland SSSI, improving ecological connectivity. Ongoing monitoring and further planned scrapes indicate long-term biodiversity gains.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	c. 200 m ² improved chalk grassland including bee bank
 Volunteer input	10 volunteers, 3 sessions per year, 4 hours each
 Monitoring	Annual Rapid Condition grassland monitoring by ranger
 Engagement / Legacy	Further scrapes planned for January 2026
 Project Dates	January 2022 – ongoing

Partners and Funders

Cambridge City Council Housing Department



Coldhams Common Pond

Location (What3Words): lobby.fumes.clear

Project Summary

A small experimental pond measuring 3m by 2m was installed by volunteers on Coldhams Common in an area that already displayed wetland potential through its vegetation. The purpose was to test whether a pond could be sustained naturally in this location. If successful, the intention is to develop a sequence of ponds across the area, each at different successional stages, to create a richer wetland system. Such a network would provide new opportunities for local residents, schools, clubs and academic groups to study freshwater ecology in an accessible setting, whilst also contributing as a stepping stone in the Cambridge Nature Network. The pilot pond also acts as a catalyst for wider habitat enhancement and community engagement with wetland biodiversity.

Quick Facts

🌿 Habitat work	6 m ² experimental pond created
👤 Volunteer input	5 volunteers, 1 session, 4 hours
🗑️ Additional features	Log pile hibernacula installed
🔍 Monitoring	Ongoing assessment of pond sustainability (experimental site)
📅 Project Dates	February 2025 – ongoing



Barnwell West LNR:

Ponds, Bee Bank, Wildflower Meadow and Willow Planting

Location (What3Words): verse.dream.trucks

Project Summary

To increase habitat diversity within Barnwell West Local Nature Reserve, a new glade was created through the removal of scrub and topsoil across an area of approximately 60 m². Two ponds were installed, and a substantial bee bank was constructed along the entire south-facing edge of the glade. The remaining ground was seeded with a wildflower mix suitable for the site's conditions. Four mature Osier Willow trees were planted to strengthen structural diversity and provide future habitat benefits. A log-round seating area was added to create an outdoor meeting and learning space for local schools and community groups, supporting the wider aim of encouraging educational use and community engagement.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	60 m ² glade creation, wildflower seeding, 2 ponds, bee bank, 4 Osier Willows
 Volunteer input	10–15 volunteers, 4 sessions per year since 2022
 Monitoring	Ongoing site condition checks (informal)
 Engagement / Legacy	Dedicated outdoor learning space established
 Project Dates	March 2022



Bee Kind Log Bee Hives

Location (What3Words):

Byron's Pool LNR (front.rice.after) & Nine Wells LNR (turkey.redouble.voices)

Project Summary

This project represents the first step in introducing more veteran tree features into two council-managed woodlands. Many of the city's wooded areas suffer from a lack of staggered age structure, which limits the availability of habitat niches for invertebrates and other wildlife. To help address this gap, hollowed log 'Bee Kind' hives were installed at the woodland edges at Byron's Pool and Nine Wells Local Nature Reserves.

These natural log hives provide suitable refuge for wild honeybees, offering an alternative to conventional managed hives. By giving colonies a place to live with minimal human interference, the project aims to support more resilient wild populations. Honeybees face a range of pressures including pesticide exposure, reduced forage availability, emerging diseases and stress from intensive honey production. The log hives offer an opportunity for wild colonies to exist simply as pollinators within a more natural ecological setting, contributing to woodland biodiversity and long-term habitat health.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	Installation of hollow log bee hives to mimic veteran tree features
 Volunteer input	3 volunteers, twice
 Monitoring	Volunteers monitor hive condition and bee activity throughout the year
 Engagement / Legacy	Supports long-term habitat diversification in council woodlands
 Project Dates	April 2022



Coldhams Brook Enhancement Project

Location (What3Words): chemistry.limbs.paid

Project Summary

Coldhams Brook, a chalk stream on the east side of Cambridge, had been canalised in the 1950s and received little maintenance beyond an annual weed cut. As a result, the stream developed slow flow, reduced habitat diversity and significant sediment build-up. Despite this, water voles, kingfishers and little egrets continued to use the area, motivating a collaborative enhancement project between Cambridge City Council and Abbey People Community Charity. The project aims to improve a 600 m stretch of the brook through introducing flow deflectors, berm creation with planted macrophytes, secondary channels, backwaters and selective shade reduction. Most of the work has been delivered by volunteers, with occasional contractor support. This ambitious project remains ongoing with continued ecological monitoring.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	Flow deflectors, berms with marginal planting, secondary channels, backwaters, shade reduction
 Volunteer input	10–20 per session, ~10 sessions per year since 2022
 Monitoring	Quarterly Riverfly monitoring
 Area improved	Approx. 600 m stretch
 Project Dates	February 2022 – ongoing

Partners

Abbey People Community Charity



Substrate Experimental Mounds and Pond at Bramblefields LNR

Location (What3Words): long.poker.manage

Project Summary

Bramblefields LNR was selected for experimental habitat creation following the loss of nearby brownfield habitat to development. Initially, a large mound surfaced with recycled ceramics was constructed in 2018. Monitored by Cambridge University Zoology students, academics and volunteers, the trial proved successful for both flora and invertebrates. Building on these results, three additional 'S'-shaped mounds were created, each using a different recycled aggregate: sand, recycled concrete and recycled brick. All were seeded with a chalk grassland mix, and a pond was also excavated, with its spoil forming part of the mound bases. The project has provided diverse learning and engagement opportunities for students, schools, nursery groups, botany groups and local residents, and has been featured in Conservation Land Management and will join the Conservation Evidence library. Annual monitoring continues as part of the second-year Zoology module.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	3 'S'-shaped mounds (sand, recycled concrete, bricks), chalk grassland seeding, pond creation
 Volunteer input	10–20 volunteers, 5 sessions per year since 2018
 Area improved	Approx. 108 m ²
 Engagement	University students, academics, local schools, public guided walks
 Monitoring	Annual plant and invertebrate surveys by Zoology module
 Project Dates	February 2023



Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project (GCCSP): Evidence-Led Restoration, Monitoring and Community Engagement

Locations (What3Words): Multiple sites including spring.waters.clearly, meander.silver.riffles, brook.pathways.urban, historic.chalk.source, commons.clear.brook, industrial.runoff.channel, chalk.spring.origin, ancient.spring.head, meadow.river.habitat, farm.recharge.soils

Project Summary

The Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project is an evidence-led programme delivering ecological monitoring, restoration design and community engagement across nine chalk-stream and springhead sites in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. The project addresses long-standing gaps in hydrological and ecological data, building a robust scientific baseline for long-term chalk-stream recovery. Weekly water-quality monitoring, macroinvertebrate and macrophyte surveys, geomorphological assessments, sediment studies and citizen-science training have created one of the most comprehensive chalk-stream datasets in the region.

Urban streams such as Cherry Hinton Brook, Hobson's Brook and Coldham's Brook show nutrient enrichment, storm-driven pollution pulses and sedimentation, while rural reaches such as Linton, Abington and the springheads at Nine Wells and Giant's Grave demonstrate groundwater influences and seasonal dissolved-oxygen variability. Restoration plans for each site are now process-led and tailored to local hydrological and ecological conditions. Over sixty volunteers have been trained, new partnerships have been strengthened, and the programme has established a model for long-term chalk-stream recovery in Greater Cambridge.

Quick Facts

 Sites involved	Nine chalk streams, springheads and a regenerative farming demonstration site
 Volunteer input	60+ volunteers trained for weekly sampling, sediment monitoring and survey work
 Monitoring	Weekly water-quality sampling; sediment traps; erosion pins; biological surveys; hydro-surveys
 Key findings	Storm driven urban nutrient pulses; seasonal dissolved oxygen variation; sediment mobility patterns; groundwater influence
 Evidence use	All data now underpins site-specific, process-led restoration design
 Project Dates	January 2024 – November 2025

Quote

“Chalk streams cannot be restored through assumptions or wishful thinking. The Greater Cambridge Chalk Stream Project is the first initiative in this area to build the level of evidence we actually need... It has been refreshing to see a project led by science, not by fashion.” — Dr Steve Boreham, Geologist & Ecologist, Hobson’s Conduit Trust

Partners and Funders

Principal funder: Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA)

Supporting staffing, monitoring, restoration design, citizen science, regenerative farming, and technology trials across all GCCSP sites.

Major co-funders: Anglian Water (Get River Positive), Cambridge Water / South Staffordshire Water

Supporting long-term water-quality monitoring, habitat enhancement and urban pollution mitigation. Match funding for sites including Linton, Abington, Cherry Hinton Brook, Coldham’s Brook and Giant’s Grave, plus springhead research and WINEP support.

Local authority partners: Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council
CCiC - Funding for Cherry Hinton Brook and Coldham’s Brook, drainage improvements, sediment mitigation, and project coordination.

SC - core delivery partner for Linton, Abington and rural Granta sites.

Project-Specific Contributors:

- Hobson’s Conduit Trust (HCT) – targeted contributions to Hobson’s Brook, Vicar’s Brook and Nine Wells; springhead protection, monitoring and research.
- Big Chalk Fund – capital funding for city habitat creation and in-channel works.
- Patchwork Education Village, Abington Woods – education, community access and habitat works.
- Private landowners at Neville & Enzo’s Meadow, Giant’s Grave and Nine Wells.

Delivery and Technical Partners

- Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) – water-quality programme, WHPT and MTR surveys, wellbeing surveys and citizen-science training.
- Keele University – geomorphology, sediment advice, in-channel process design.
- Aquamaintain Ltd – in-channel and bankside restoration delivery.
- Wildlife Trust BCN – riparian design and community engagement.
- Cam Valley Forum & local experts – long-term monitoring, historical context and citizen-science data.
- JRH Ltd – rainwater harvesting infrastructure and aquifer recharge engineering at New Shardelowes Farm.

Community and Volunteer Partners

- Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook
- Friends of Hobson’s Brook
- Abington Naturewatch

- Linton community groups
- East Cambridgeshire Farm Cluster
- Over sixty trained citizen-science volunteers supporting weekly monitoring, sediment surveys, fixed-point photography and engagement events.



Logan's Meadow LNR Wetland Creation

Location (What3Words): hits.bolt.token

Lead organisation: Cambridge City Council, in partnership with Friends of Logan's Meadow

Project Summary

Logan's Meadow Local Nature Reserve sits on the River Cam in East Chesterton and is one of the council's core nature sites within the Cambridge Nature Network. The wetland creation project has significantly extended the reserve, transforming former rough grassland into a complex of open water, reedbed, ditches and wet woodland. The design was informed by a community-led process, including a public consultation in 2020 that showed strong support for enlarging the LNR, planting more trees and adding additional wetland features.

Cambridge City Council, river restoration specialists and Friends of Logan's Meadow worked together to create backwaters, scrapes and marginal habitats that support species such as water vole, otter, reed warbler, grass snake, dragonflies and breeding fish.

The new wetlands were officially opened in June 2025 at a community event that drew several hundred visitors for guided walks, children's activities and stalls from local groups. The extension more than doubles the wetland area on site, strengthens the ecological corridor along the Cam, and showcases how urban riverside land can be repurposed for nature recovery, climate resilience and community access to blue-green space.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	Approx. 1 ha of new wetland including open water, reedbeds, scrapes and wet woodland
 Community involvement	Community-led consultation and ongoing volunteering
 Volunteer input	Around 1,000 volunteer hours across planting, management and events
 Engagement	Hundreds attended the 2025 opening event, the project has been video documented and a film is planned.
 Monitoring	Ongoing ecological monitoring by partners and volunteers
 Project dates	2022-2025

Partners

Cambridge City Council; Friends of Logan's Meadow; Cambridge Nature Network; Anglia Ruskin University.

Funders

Heritage Lottery, Green Recovery Fund, Natural England, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, S106 Contributions.



Herbicide Reduction Plan

Location: City-wide

Project Summary

Following a motion in July 2021, Cambridge City Council committed to a Herbicide Reduction Plan and herbicide-free trials, initially in two wards, with the aim of phasing out routine glyphosate use across the city. The plan tested non-chemical weed management methods in residential streets and public spaces, while monitoring costs, public perception and biodiversity outcomes.

By March 2024, the council had closed the original Herbicide Free Plan and trials, and approved a new city-wide weed control methodology that significantly reduces herbicide use and restricts it to exceptional circumstances where alternatives are not viable. In March 2025 a new herbicide-free weed management work programme was approved, following the decision to discontinue herbicide use (restricted to exceptional circumstances) across all council-owned sites, including parks, car parks and housing areas.

Alongside operational changes, the council has developed communication and engagement initiatives to help residents understand why verges and pavements may look less “tidy” and to promote manual and mechanical weed control. This includes the “Happy Bee and Butterfly Streets” community weeding scheme, which supports local groups to manage verges in ways that benefit pollinators and public health. The Herbicide Reduction Plan is now a cornerstone of the council’s approach to reducing harm to pollinators, improving air and water quality and delivering the Biodiversity Strategy.

Quick Facts

 Scope	City-wide shift away from routine herbicide use
 Implementation	Trials from 2022; revised method adopted 2024; discontinuation confirmed 2025
 Community engagement	Collaboration with Pesticide-Free Cambridge and volunteers
 Happy Bee Streets scheme	Supports community weeding for pollinator benefit
 Dates	2021–2025

Partners

Cambridge City Council; Pesticide-Free Cambridge; local residents; volunteer groups.

City Services Operatives Biodiversity Training

Locations: Multiple council-managed sites

Project Summary

City Services operatives manage a large proportion of Cambridge's public realm, including parks, verges, housing land, watercourses and local nature reserves. To embed biodiversity into day-to-day operations, the council has worked with BCN Wildlife Trust and the University of Cambridge to develop bespoke biodiversity training for operational grounds and streets staff.

Three bespoke training events were delivered, alongside university college gardening teams, to increase understanding and practical skills in biodiversity, grassland and watercourse management. The University's operational grounds team joined Cambridge City Council and BCN Wildlife Trust for biodiversity training as part of a wider commitment to enhance biodiversity across the estate.

Training has covered topics such as recognising priority habitats and species on sites, tailoring mowing regimes, managing banks and ditches for wildlife, and communicating changes (for example, relaxed mowing) to residents and park users. This programme supports the council's Biodiversity Strategy actions to build staff capacity, reduce unintentional harm to habitats and ensure that operational decisions contribute positively to nature recovery.

Quick Facts

 Training delivered	Three bespoke biodiversity training events
 Focus areas	Grassland, verge and watercourse management; habitat recognition
 Collaboration	Joint delivery with BCN Wildlife Trust and University of Cambridge teams
 Strategic context	Supports delivery of the Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Duty commitments to equip staff with the skills needed to manage LNRs, commons and green spaces for nature.
 Dates	2023–2024, further sessions proposed for 2026-2031 as part of the Biodiversity Strategy action plan.

Partners

Cambridge City Council; BCN Wildlife Trust; University of Cambridge; partner colleges.

Great Crested Newt Pond Restoration at Bar Hill Crematorium

Location: Cambridge City Crematorium near Bar Hill

Project Summary

Cambridge City Crematorium supports an important population of protected great crested newts within a network of breeding ponds. Restoration work under Natural England license has focused on desilting, re-profiling pond margins, fish removal and improving aquatic vegetation to enhance breeding habitat quality.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	Desilting, re-profiling, vegetation improvements, fish removal
 Monitoring	Ongoing population monitoring by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Amphibian and Reptile Group (CPARG)
 Strategic role	Part of District Level Licensing and amphibian conservation work
 Dates	2013–ongoing

Partners and Funders

Cambridge City Council; CPARG; Natural England.

Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Planning area: Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire

Project Summary

The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD provides detailed guidance to support the biodiversity policies of the Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans. It sets out how new development in Greater Cambridge should protect, enhance and restore biodiversity, and how planners and applicants should interpret requirements around habitat creation, ecological networks, mitigation hierarchies and biodiversity net gain. The SPD underwent public consultation in 2021 and was formally adopted by Cambridge City Council in January 2022 and South Cambridgeshire District Council in February 2022. It is now a key material consideration in planning decisions, helping to secure better designed green infrastructure, more joined-up habitats and improved access to nature within and around new developments.

Quick Facts

 Adoption	Adopted by Cambridge City Council (Jan 2022) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (Feb 2022)
 Scope	Applies to all new development across Greater Cambridge, supporting Local Plan biodiversity policies
 Purpose	Provides practical guidance on delivering biodiversity net gain, habitat creation and ecological connectivity
 Role in decisions	Used as a material consideration in planning decisions and to guide pre-application discussions
 Consultation	Subject to public consultation in 2021, with broad support for stronger biodiversity requirements

Partners

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning; Natural Cambridgeshire; biodiversity stakeholders who contributed through consultation.

Nofence Collar Trials on Cambridge Commons

Location: Coldham's Common and other grazed commons

Project Summary

Conservation grazing on Cambridge's commons is vital for maintaining species-rich grassland, but conventional fencing can fragment access and constrain where livestock can graze. The Council has therefore trialled Nofence virtual fencing technology on a section of Coldham's Common and other grazed areas. Solar-powered collars on cattle create GPS-defined grazing cells without the need for physical fencing, allowing more flexible targeting of areas with grassland and scrub encroachment while maintaining open access for people and dogs. The trials are being used to evaluate animal behaviour, public perception, grassland response and operational feasibility. Early findings suggest that Nofence collars can help improve sward condition and reduce manual cutting in difficult-to-access areas, while supporting the Council's wider climate and biodiversity goals.

Quick Facts

 Habitat focus	Improving condition of grazed common grasslands such as Coldham's Common
 Trial area	Coldham's Common and selected compartments on city commons
 Approach	Use of GPS-based Nofence collars to create virtual grazing cells without physical fencing
 Aim	Target grazing where it delivers greatest biodiversity benefit while retaining public access
 Timeline	From 2023 onwards

Partners

Cambridge City Council City Services; local graziers; Natural Cambridgeshire partners; technology provider Nofence.



Woodland Management Plans for Byron's Pool and Nine Wells Local Nature Reserves

Location: Byron's Pool LNR and Nine Wells LNR

Project Summary

Byron's Pool and Nine Wells Local Nature Reserves contain important riparian and spring-fed woodland habitats that have developed dense, even-aged canopies in places. To secure their long-term ecological value, the Council has prepared woodland management plans for both sites, funded in part through Section 106 ecological mitigation.

The plans set out a phased programme of selective thinning, regeneration felling and coppicing to diversify age structure, create open glades and promote natural regeneration. At Byron's Pool this includes several hectares of light thinning and small areas of coppice and regeneration felling, while at Nine Wells the focus is on heavier thinning and coppice to restore structural diversity around the rare chalk springs. Arisings are retained as habitat piles wherever practical, supporting deadwood invertebrates, fungi, bats and woodland birds, and improving resilience to climate change and recreational pressure.

Quick Facts

 Habitat work	Phased thinning, regeneration felling and coppicing across woodland blocks at both LNRs
 Scale	Several hectares of light thinning and smaller areas of coppice and regeneration felling
 Deadwood	Arisings stacked as habitat piles where possible to increase deadwood resource
 Objectives	Improve structural diversity, light levels, natural regeneration and habitat quality around springs and river
 Status	Woodland management plans approved, with implementation procured and phased from 2024 onwards

Partners

Cambridge City Council; Wild Trout Trust (linked works at Byron's Pool); local volunteer groups; contractors delivering woodland works.



Hobson's Park County Wildlife Site Designation

Location: Hobson's Park, south Cambridge (near Trumpington)

Project Summary

Hobson's Park is a large, recently created greenspace in south Cambridge, designed alongside new development to provide multifunctional public open space and high-quality habitats for wildlife. The park includes extensive grassland, balancing ponds, reedbeds and ditches, and forms part of a wider green corridor linking the city to the surrounding countryside. In recognition of the site's ecological importance, particularly for breeding birds, approximately 35.7 hectares of grassland and wetlands at Hobson's Park have been designated as a County Wildlife Site, and are also recognised by the City Council as a City Wildlife Site. Management focuses on maintaining a rich mosaic of sward heights, wet features and scrub while balancing recreation. The designation secures stronger planning protection and underscores the success of biodiversity-led design in new urban extensions.

Quick Facts

 Area	Around 35.7 ha of grassland and wetland designated for biodiversity value
 Habitats	Species-rich grassland, balancing ponds, reedbeds, ditches and scrub
 Key interest	Notable assemblage of breeding and wintering birds associated with open farmland and wetland
 Status	Designated as a County Wildlife Site and recognised as a City Wildlife Site within the Green Belt
 Timeline	Habitat creation delivered with new development; CWS status confirmed in early 2020s

Partners

Cambridge City Council; BCN Wildlife Trust; County Wildlife Site Panel; local bird and natural history groups.

Funders

Countryside Properties and partners involved in park creation.



Conservation Grazing at Netherhall School Chalk Slope

Location: Chalk slope adjacent to Netherhall School, south-east Cambridge

Project Summary

A steep chalk slope on land associated with Netherhall School provides one of the few remaining examples of chalk grassland in this part of Cambridge. To secure its long-term condition, the Council has worked with Netherhall School, a local grazier and partners to introduce conservation grazing as the primary management tool. The aim is to maintain a short, herb-rich sward and prevent scrub encroachment, supporting characteristic chalk grassland flora and associated invertebrates. The site also functions as an outdoor learning resource for pupils, illustrating the links between land management, biodiversity and climate resilience. Conservation grazing here complements other chalk grassland projects in the Cambridge Nature Network and demonstrates how school land can contribute to city-wide nature recovery.

Quick Facts

 Area	Approximately 1.5 ha of chalk grassland under favourable management
 Grazing	Conservation grazing introduced with a local grazier to manage sward height and scrub
 Education	Used as an outdoor classroom by Netherhall School to support curriculum and nature connection
 Strategic role	Adds to the limited chalk grassland resource on the south-eastern edge of the city
 Timeline	Conservation grazing in place during the 2020s, with ongoing monitoring of grassland condition

Partners

Cambridge City Council City Services; Netherhall School; local grazier; partners in the Cambridge Nature Network.

Byron's Pool Fish Pass Enhancement

Location: Byron's Pool Local Nature Reserve, River Cam, Trumpington

Lead organisation: Cambridge City Council, working with the Wild Trout Trust and specialist contractors

Project Summary

Byron's Pool weir on the River Cam historically posed a barrier to fish migration and altered natural river processes. To address this, the Council has worked with the Wild Trout Trust and river engineering specialists to enhance the existing nature-like fish pass, which takes the form of a bypass channel around the weir. Detailed designs have improved the channel's gradient, flow patterns and in-channel features so that it functions both as an effective route for fish movement and as additional habitat for juvenile fish and other wildlife. The project has been funded through Section 106 developer contributions, with input from local volunteers and river groups. It sits within a wider programme of ecological mitigation at Byron's Pool, including amphibian pond improvements and access upgrades, and supports the health of the wider Cam catchment.

Quick Facts

 Intervention	Enhancement of a nature-like bypass channel functioning as a fish pass around Byron's Pool weir
 Objectives	Improve upstream and downstream fish passage and create habitat for juvenile fish
 Additional works	Works linked to amphibian pond improvements and ecological mitigation on the reserve
 Funding	Supported by Section 106 contributions with technical input from river specialists
 Timeline	Fish pass concept developed in 2010s; enhancement works delivered in the early 2020s

Partners

Cambridge City Council; Wild Trout Trust; 5Rivers Environmental and other technical consultants; Cam Valley Forum; local volunteers.

Parks Biodiversity Toolkit: St Thomas Park Enhancement

Location: St Thomas Play Park, Queen Edith's ward, Cambridge

Project Summary

The Parks Biodiversity Toolkit was developed by Cambridge City Council to help local groups plan and deliver small-scale biodiversity interventions in parks and open spaces. St Thomas Play Park in Queen Edith's ward is a leading example of the toolkit in action. Inspired by the guidance in the Toolkit, local residents worked with the Council's Biodiversity and Tree Teams to design and consult on a set of enhancements that would improve habitat for pollinators and other wildlife while keeping the site welcoming for play. Changes have included installing bird and bat boxes, creating a bee bank and drilled logs for solitary bees and other invertebrates, reducing but not removing ivy on taller trees to stop encroachment but allowing habitat for bats, adjusting mowing regimes to allow areas of longer grass and flowers, and developing a new wildflower border. The project is now referenced in the Council's Biodiversity Duty reporting as an example of community-led park enhancement.

Quick Facts

 Toolkit	Local application of the city-wide Parks Biodiversity Toolkit
 Habitat changes	Sand bank and bee features, selective ivy removal, relaxed mowing, new wildflower border, installation of bat and bird boxes
 Community role	Design and consultation led by residents working with City Services
 Timeline	Toolkit launched in early 2020s; St Thomas Park enhancements developed and delivered 2025

Partners

Cambridge City Council City Services; Birdwood Area Residents Association; Butterfly Conservation's Wild Spaces initiative (mapping and inspiration).



Hobson's Brook and Hobson's Conduit Bioblitz

Location: Hobson's Brook, Hobson's Conduit and associated greenspaces (including Hobson's Park and Brookside)

Project Summary

The Hobson's Brook and Conduit Bioblitz is a long-running citizen science initiative designed to build a detailed record of the wildlife associated with Hobson's Brook, Hobson's Conduit and their green corridor through Cambridge. Launched in 2017 as a ten-year programme, the Bioblitz brings together local experts, community groups and families for intensive survey sessions along different sections of the watercourse, including Hobson's Park and the Brookside gardens. Events typically run over a weekend, covering birds, mammals, bats, fish, aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, plants and fungi. The resulting species lists contribute to understanding of the ecological value of the Conduit corridor and inform management discussions between the Trust, the City Council and other partners. The Bioblitz has also become an important engagement event, and as part of the annual Cambridge Nature Festival introducing residents to the history and biodiversity of this historic water supply system.

Quick Facts

 Programme	Ten-year Bioblitz programme initiated in 2017
 Surveys	Multi-taxon surveys including birds, mammals, bats, fish, invertebrates, plants and fungi
 Coverage	Different sections of Hobson's Brook and Conduit surveyed in successive years, including Hobson's Park and Brookside
 Participation	Events open to families and local residents, supported by expert naturalists and volunteers
 Use of data	Species records feed into ecological understanding and management of the Hobson's Conduit corridor

Partners

Hobson's Conduit Trust; Cambridge City Council; local natural history societies; schools and community groups; Cambridge Nature Network partners.

DiversiTree Project

Location: Cambridge (10km stretch and 100m wide of the river Cam from Baits Bites to Grantchester Meadows)

Project Summary

DiversiTree is a Cambridge City Council initiative launched in September 2023 to promote the importance of diversity within the city's urban forest. A particular focus is on identifying, understanding and improving the management of veteran trees along the River Cam by creating a Charter for veteran tree managers to sign up to. The project forms part of the River Cam Climate Action through Nature programme delivered by the Cambridge Nature Network partnership and is funded through the National Lottery's Climate Action Fund.

As well as the Charter, another core element of DiversiTree is community engagement. The project works with Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination to involve children, families and under-represented groups in creative and educational activities that connect people with veteran trees and their wildlife. Professional storyteller Studio Places has led participatory storytelling sessions, including 'Weaving Words with Willows', helping communities explore the cultural and ecological significance of veteran riverbank trees through storytelling and creative workshops.

Quick Facts

 Project focus	Urban forest diversity, focusing on veteran riverbank trees (including veteran willows), community engagement
 Programme dates	September 2023 – spring 2026 (legacy actions expected to continue)
 Key actions	Identifying veteran trees, improving long-term management approaches, raising awareness of veteran-tree biodiversity
 Community engagement	Targeted engagement to involve under-represented local people and communities, as well as stakeholders that manage veteran willows
 Funding	National Lottery Community Fund – Climate Action Fund

Partners and Funders

Cambridge City Council; Cambridge Nature Network; National Lottery Community Fund; Local stakeholders involved in riverbank stewardship; Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination; Studio Places.



Cambridge Butterfly Trail

Location: Cambridge City (30 parks and open spaces across every ward)

Project Summary

The Cambridge Butterfly Trail is a self-guided nature trail launched by Cambridge City Council in August 2025. It uses eye-catching marker posts placed across 30 parks and open spaces, spanning every ward of the city, to help residents and visitors explore Cambridge's green spaces and learn about butterflies and moths found locally.

Each marker post features a species-specific plaque with a QR code linking to information about the featured butterfly or moth, alongside an outline designed for 'rubbings' using a pencil or crayon. Participants can start anywhere, use a downloadable collection sheet (also available from community centres), and submit a photo once completed. The first 20 people to complete the full set of 30 rubbings can win a pair of entry tickets to the University of Cambridge Botanic Garden.

The trail supports the council's commitment to become a more 'butterfly-friendly' city, reflecting the wider concern about declines in butterflies and moths highlighted by Butterfly Conservation's declaration of a national 'Butterfly Emergency'. It also links with actions in the council's Biodiversity Strategy, including improving habitat quality in parks and encouraging residents to create 'wild spaces' for pollinators at home.

Quick Facts

 Trail scale	30 marker posts in 30 parks and open spaces, across every ward of Cambridge
 Species featured	30 butterflies and moths found in Cambridge and surrounding areas
 Interpretation	QR codes on plaques link to species information and trail locations
 Interactive element	Rubbing plaques and a downloadable collection sheet (also available at community centres)
 Incentive	First 20 completions receive a pair of tickets to Cambridge University Botanic Garden
 Accessibility	Posts located on accessible paths suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs
 Launch date	August 2025

Quote

"The new Cambridge Butterfly Trail is a wonderful way for people to get out and explore some of our parks and open spaces, and to learn more about the many different species of butterfly and moth which live in and around our city." – Cllr Martin Smart (Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Space and City Services)

Partners and Funders

Cambridge City Council; Butterfly Conservation (context and 'Wild Spaces' programme); University of Cambridge Botanic Garden (trail completion prize partner); Cambridge community centres (collection sheets).



Cambridge Microwoods (Nuns Way and Five Trees)

Locations: Nuns Way Rec and Five Trees, Cambridge

Project Summary

Cambridge City Council has established a series of microwoods across the city to increase urban tree cover, improve biodiversity and strengthen climate resilience. Microwoods are small, densely planted areas of trees and shrubs designed to grow rapidly into woodland habitat, delivering ecological and environmental benefits even in constrained urban spaces.

The Nuns Way microwood was planted in 2025 by Cambridge City Council and local residents, supported by the Coronation Living Heritage Fund. It provides shelter, food and nesting opportunities for wildlife, improves air quality, absorbs rainwater and helps cool the urban environment.

The Five Trees microwood, established as part of the Tiny Forest programme on 26 March 2022, covers approximately 201 m² and was planted with a diverse mix of native species including oak, birch, hazel, hawthorn and guelder rose. Delivered in partnership with Earthwatch Europe and funded by the Forestry Commission's Local Authority Treescape Fund, the site was created with community volunteers and supports citizen science monitoring. Together, these microwoods form stepping-stone habitats that contribute to the Cambridge Nature Network, helping wildlife move through the city while engaging communities in nature recovery.

Quick Facts

 Habitat creation	Dense planting of native trees and shrubs to create mini woodland habitat
 Key sites	Nuns Way microwood (planted 2025) and Five Trees Tiny Forest (planted March 2022)
 Biodiversity benefits	Provides habitat, nesting sites and food for birds, insects and other wildlife
 Climate benefits	Improves air quality, stores carbon, reduces urban heat and absorbs rainwater
 Community involvement	Community planting, volunteering and citizen science monitoring
 Strategic role	Supports Cambridge Nature Network and city-wide urban nature recovery
 Funding	Coronation Living Heritage Fund and Forestry Commission Local Authority Treescape Fund

Partners and Funders

Cambridge City Council; Cambridge Nature Network; Earthwatch Europe; Forestry Commission (Local Authority Treescape Fund); Coronation Living Heritage Fund; local community volunteers.



Free Trees for Babies Scheme

Location: Cambridge (city-wide residential planting scheme)

Project Summary

The Free Trees for Babies Scheme is a long-running Cambridge City Council initiative that provides a free tree to residents to plant in their garden to celebrate the birth or adoption of a child. The scheme helps grow the city's urban forest, supports biodiversity and strengthens connections between families and nature. By encouraging tree planting on private land, the scheme contributes to wider efforts to increase tree canopy cover and climate resilience across Cambridge.

Eligible Cambridge residents with a child or grandchild aged four or younger can apply to receive a tree. Applications typically open in early November and close the following August, with trees distributed during the winter planting season. Participants are provided with guidance and materials to support successful planting and establishment. Trees may also be planted in other suitable locations within Cambridge, such as schools or community spaces, where residents do not have access to a garden.

The scheme supports the Cambridge Canopy Project and Biodiversity and Trees Strategies by increasing habitat availability, helping store carbon, improving air quality and contributing to long-term environmental resilience.

Quick Facts

 Purpose	Celebrate births and grow Cambridge's urban forest
 Eligibility	Cambridge residents with a child or grandchild aged four or younger
 Biodiversity benefit	Creates habitat and food sources for wildlife in residential areas
 Timeline	Annual scheme with applications typically open November–August
 Support provided	Free tree, planting guidance and establishment materials
 Strategic role	Supports Cambridge Canopy Project and Biodiversity Strategy
 Community impact	Encourages residents to actively participate in nature recovery

Partners and Funders

Cambridge City Council; partner tree nurseries; local residents participating in the scheme.

