



SRS Proposed Living Lab project brief

Enhancing the University's outdoor spaces for the for the benefit of people and nature

Description of the paper

This paper provides a brief overview of a potential project that could usefully inform the SRS Department's work.

This is a template for a potential **MSc dissertation** Living Lab project that a member of staff would like to propose and should therefore equate to no more than **600** hours work. The question and research is intended to inform and/or make recommendations to the SRS Department's work areas. It should also align with one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals (see below for more context).

Key SRS contact for this project

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Proposed SRS supervisor

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The Vision for Change

The Wild Campus programme seeks to protect and restore wildlife and natural spaces across the University's campus, whilst improving access to nature and student and staff wellbeing. To identify ways to make our campus more nature friendly whilst improving access, wellbeing and learning opportunities for students, we want to know how students engage with nature on campus, and which sites they feel most connected to. We also want to gather their ideas on how the University can further enhance these areas for the benefit of people's health and wellbeing.

Draft research question

How do outdoor spaces on the University's campus contribute to the health and wellbeing of its students and staff, and how might the University further support people to connect with nature on our campus?

Background

Through its Wild Campus Programme the University is seeking to transform its campus into biodiverse, habitat-rich spaces where people and nature can thrive side-by-side. The University's Landscape Services team is already deploying nature positive practices, such as the creation of wildflower meadows, dead-hedging and the removal of invasive species. At Peffermill, the University has installed signs to draw attention to these practices and inform visitors about ways they can get involved.

- [Biodiversity](#)
- [Biodiversity Plan](#)
- [Wild Campus](#)
- [Wild Peffermill](#)

People can participate in nature-based activities through the Big Dig initiative led by the Active Lives team at Sport & Exercise, as well as student and staff-led gardening at King's Buildings and BioQuarter, and other school and college-led initiatives on the campuses.

- [The Big Dig](#)
- [KBPGS](#)
- [BioQuarter Kitchen Garden](#)

University greenspaces and nature-related activities are not always visible or well-known to students and staff. To support more of our student and staff community to experience the health and wellbeing benefits that greenspaces can bring, we would like to understand how we can support better nature connection on our campuses.

We would like to seek the view of students and staff through this project, including which outdoor spaces they engage with most on campus and if/how they contribute to their wellbeing.

Objectives

- Identify and highlight key SDG issues related to the protection and restoration of nature alongside good health and wellbeing to highlight the importance of nature on campus.
- Gather and assess student and staff sentiment towards nature on campus and its impact on their wellbeing
- Identify specific outdoor areas on campus that add value to the student and staff experience, including wellbeing and mental and/or physical health. Ask students and staff why these areas are special, how they might be improved, and/or what could be replicated in other University spaces.
- Present results and recommendations visually, for example by collecting place-based comments using software like ArcGIS Survey 123. Identify any patterns or recurring themes in the student responses.
- Present or share your observations and make recommendations to the University's Estates and Sustainability Departments regarding student wellbeing and opinion on outdoor spaces.

Data set provision

Data needed for this project	Data sets available from and contact information
Historic student and staff sustainability surveys	Historic datasets available from SRS Department Comms team
Biodiversity plans and maps	Available from SRS Department and Edinburgh Nature Network:

	https://edinburghlivinglandscape.org.uk/project/edinburgh-nature-network/
Map of University Campus areas in scope of project	Campus maps can be provided by SRS. Scope of survey to be discussed with student at the start of the project
Comments from students and staff identifying specific outdoor areas (max 20m2 ?) which boost their wellbeing OR could be enhanced to better support nature connection	Student to conduct survey using tool such as ArcGIS Survey 123 feature, or similar, that allows outputs to be visible on a map
Sites on University campus where citizen scientists are most active	iNaturalist or iRecord data. E.g.: https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/university-of-edinburgh-species-at-easter-bush-campus

Secondary Output



The project write up or dissertation will be a researcher's own piece of research. They will decide what they think the results show and draw their own conclusions. An additional **secondary output** is required of all SRS living lab dissertation projects. This output will be shared with colleagues within and out with SRS, so that we can try to make operations changes based on the researchers recommendations.
















Output format	Insert not applicable or Yes (with further detail)
Presentation to a number of stakeholders	Yes, presentation to the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability
Mixed media resource for reuse	Visual representation/map of campus to illustrate the outdoor areas that students engage with most.
Report with operational recommendations	Yes
Resources for staff/student behaviour change	N/A
Resources for staff/student training	N/A
Other, please specify	
OR To be decided with student	

Transformational change with the SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals showcase 17 things humanity must do to ensure peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. This project contributes to the following SDGs.

The information in this table was obtained with permission from the UN sustainable goals website, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

The Sustainable Development Goals for 2030	Yes (x), sub-SDG (s)	The Sustainable Development Goals for 2030	Yes(x), sub-SDG (s)
 1 NO POVERTY Economic growth must be inclusive to provide sustainable jobs and promote equality.		 2 ZERO HUNGER The food and agriculture sector offers key solutions for development, and is central for hunger and poverty eradication.	

	Ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being for all at all ages is essential to sustainable development.	S		Obtaining a quality education is the foundation of improving people's lives and sustainable development.	S
	Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.			Clean, accessible water for all is an essential part of the world we want to live in.	
	Energy is central to nearly every major challenge and opportunity.			Sustainable economic growth will require societies to create the conditions that allow people to have quality jobs.	
	Investments in infrastructure are crucial to achieving sustainable development.			To reduce inequalities, policies should be universal in principle paying attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalised populations.	
	There needs to be a future in which cities provide opportunities for all, with access to basic services, energy, housing, transport & more.	S		It's about doing more and better with less and decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation.	
	Climate change is a global challenge that affects everyone, everywhere.			Careful management of this essential global resource is a key feature of a sustainable future.	
	Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss.	X		Access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.	
	Revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.				

The University of Edinburgh Strategy 2030

Strategy 2030 can be found here:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/strategy-2030>

The Social and Civic Responsibility Delivery Plan.

To deliver Social and Civic Responsibility at the University of Edinburgh, we have chosen three strategic objectives and one cross-cutting theme. The project's alignment with these is outlined in the table below.

The Social and Civic Responsibility Delivery Plan can be found here:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/social_and_civic_responsibility_delivery_plan_2020.pdf

Social and Civic Responsibility Delivery Plan – Objectives and one cross-cutting theme	Briefly describe the project's link to the objectives, how it is relevant and how this project works towards those objectives.
We will become a zero carbon and zero waste university - Increasing opportunities and raising aspirations by making education and employment an achievable goal for more people in Scotland and globally.	It will identify the actions the University can take to enhance nature on campus, supporting climate and environmental sustainability goals, and improving the experience and wellbeing of student, staff and local communities.

<p>We will widen participation in higher education and support inclusion - Increasing opportunities and raising aspirations by making education and employment an achievable goal for more people in Scotland and globally.</p>	<p>The project will identify opportunities to make nature friendly practices more visible, inclusive and accessible for local communities, students and staff.</p>
<p>We will work together with local communities - to contribute to improve the lives of people across the Edinburgh City Region and beyond.</p>	<p>The project will draw on the knowledge and partnership working of the Edinburgh Nature Network to produce ideas and best practice for inclusive nature positive activities that benefit University stakeholders and local communities</p>
<p>Cross cutting theme: In our operations, research and teaching we will engage critically with, and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals - including the promotion, protection and respect for human rights.</p>	<p>This project will provide an experiential learning opportunity for a student to identify campus areas where nature can be enhanced for the benefit of student and staff wellbeing. Part of this objective concerns accessibility and inclusivity. This will involve considering ways to inform and educate people about wildlife and nature. The project will provide useful recommendations to the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability, and the Estates Department, to improve nature-positive practices on the University's Estate for the benefit of people and nature.</p>