



COLLEGE HABITATS MAINTENANCE POLICY

1. Context

The Grounds and Gardens Committee were tasked by Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin (here after referred to as College) to develop a College Habitats Maintenance Policy in consultation with the Estates & Facilities Department, the Botany Department, Sustainability, and various external stakeholders. This document intends to formalise a College Habitats Maintenance Policy.

The policy was developed by examining the contents of:

1. Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2018,
2. European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Directive 2011-2015,
3. Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005,
4. Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations,
5. Building Regulations and Building Control Act,
6. Fire Services Act and,
7. Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to formalise a procedure for carrying out works whether maintenance or new works in proximity to habitats on the estate that support the Colleges Wildlife, and to ensure compliance with the current legislation governing habitats.

The policy will be supported and implemented by the development of Guidance Documents for the design, construction, refurbishment and maintenance of new buildings and landscapes, along with standard operating procedures (SOPs) to best manage and protect the wildlife habitats within the estate when carrying out maintenance (emergency, reactive or planned maintenance).

The policy, Guidance Documents and SOPs will be developed in accordance with the Wildlife Acts, the Birds and Natural Habitats Directive, Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005, and all relevant legislation including alignment with any national or EU Biodiversity Strategy.

For the purpose of the policy the estate will be generally classified as cultivated land excluding the Santry woodland which is uncultivated land.

2.1 Wildlife and Woodlands on the Estate

The College estate incorporates all its sites and is a biodiverse area. There is a diverse range of planting and wildlife present throughout the estate. There are numerous rare, native, and non-native tree species, meadows, biodiverse areas, indoor planting, green walls and roofs, herbaceous, pollinator friendly planting, woodland and arboretums, which provide habitats for



foxes, birds (including raptors), squirrels, other small mammals, feral cats and a multitude of pollinating and other insects and invertebrates.

2.2 Horticulture on the Estate

The pruning guide for the College is based on the recommendations in the Royal Horticultural Society's Pruning Guide. This Pruning guide is suitable for all plants listed in the Royal Horticultural Society Encyclopaedia of Garden Plants and those listed on their website.
www.rhs.org.uk

There are 13 pruning groups in total. These are intended to act as a general guide for the pruning of trees and shrubs affected by the Wildlife Act on the estate, some plants in the same group have different time / period requirements for pruning. The Pruning Guide is designed to be relevant for all plant species and types that fall within the restrictions of the Wildlife Act. This includes hedges, trees, climbers, and shrubberies.

The Royal Horticultural Society classifies the horticulture on the estate in the following pruning groups:

1. Group 1: Light pruning,
2. Group 2: Early-flowering shrubs,
3. Group 3: Shrubs which shoot from the base,
4. Group 4: Summer-flowering shrubs (Hydrangea),
5. Group 5: Deciduous winter and early spring-flowering shrubs,
6. Group 6: Summer or autumn-flowering shrubs,
7. Group 7: Pruning for stems and foliage,
8. Group 8: Early flowering evergreen shrubs,
9. Group 9: Late flowering evergreen shrubs,
10. Group 10: Evergreen shrubs,
11. Group 11: Vigorous climbers,
12. Group 12: Moderately vigorous climbers and,
13. Group 13: Wall trained shrubs.

A full list of the horticulture on the estate can be viewed / obtained in the appendix of the standard operating procedure.

There are some highly biodiverse areas throughout the estate, these generally compromise a mixture of trees (woodland / arboretums), ornamental wild-flower meadows along with bird and mammal habitats. The main campus has numerous ornamental wildflower meadows and small biodiverse areas, the main woodland / arboretum is known as the Chief Stewards Garden. The Dartry (Trinity Hall and the Botanic Gardens) complex has two main arboretums, with numerous other mature trees like a parkland. The Botanic Gardens has numerous trees and plants that are part of the teaching and research curriculum.

The Santry Woodland located adjacent to the Santry Sports Grounds comprises a mixture of natural and artificial sports pitches, forestry, and wild meadows. The woodland, which is



covered by a blanket tree preservation order, accounts for nearly 3 Ha or roughly 7 acres and has a mixture of broadleaf, conifer native and non-native species. This means that to carry out any works to any tree (even seedlings) a licence is required, the only exception being emergency works to make a tree safe. The woodland is currently being restocked with tree species (native oaks, beech, *Arbutus*, etc) and a comprehensive management plan is being developed to maximise its ecological value.

3. Benefits

The Guidance Documents and SOPs developed from the policy will clearly set out in detail the requirements for the design, construction, refurbishment and maintenance of new buildings and landscapes to best manage and protect the wildlife habitats within the estate when carrying out maintenance (emergency, reactive or planned maintenance) or new works.

This will include but not be limited to, permanent or temporary measures, surveys and assessments that need to be undertaken by trained personnel when undertaking any works (new or maintenance) in order not to endanger a habitat while ensuring that the Health and Safety of the College Community is not negatively affected.

4. Scope

The policy and the supporting documents apply to the Estates & Facilities Department and their external partners for the design, construction, refurbishment and maintenance of buildings and landscapes.

The policy and the supporting documents apply to any School or Department that carries out research, teaching, or activities in or close proximity to habitats to ensure compliance with the current legislation governing habitats.

5. Principles

The principle of the policy is to put a College governance procedure in place to best manage and protect the wildlife habitats within the estate during works and activities while ensuring that the Health and Safety of the College Community is not negatively affected. Overall, the policy is designed to maximise biodiversity including habitat diversity where possible.

6. Definitions

6.1 Estate

The estate is deemed to mean all the College grounds which are geographically scattered, currently comprising of the island campus site in the City Centre and various peripheral sites including Santry, the Trinity Centre at St. James's Hospital, the Boat Club Islandbridge, the Enterprise Centre, Pearse Street, Stack B, Trinity Hall student residences, Botanic Gardens in



Dartry, Trinity East (TTEC) and the Iveagh Grounds and any other property or site that is under the direct ownership or lease agreement with College.

6.2 Cultivated Land

The Acts do not provide a definition of what constitutes cultivated or uncultivated land. To provide guidance on the interpretation of the Acts and the definition of cultivated and uncultivated land, words should be given their ordinary meaning. The courts do this by referencing their normal / colloquial meaning often referring to the dictionary. The Oxford English Dictionary defines Cultivate as follows:

‘Prepare and use (land) for crops or gardening; break up (soil) for sowing or planting; raise or grow (plants) especially on a large scale for commercial purposes’, Cultivated (of land) ‘used to grow crops’.

Thus by applying the above definitions, Cultivated land would be deemed to be land that is worked on, ploughed, sowed and on which plants are raised.

6.3 Uncultivated Land

Uncultivated land is land that is not worked, ploughed, or used for growing crops.

6.4 Land use

Under the Acts *‘agriculture’ is defined as including ‘horticulture’.*

Parts of Trinity College and its estate fall under both cultivated and uncultivated land.

The correct pruning time for some shrubs falls in the spring and the summer. While these shrubs are on cultivated ground by definition, College will endeavour to only cut / trim in line with the Wildlife Act’s recommendations (see section 7 for further clarification).

6.5 Habitat

A habitat is deemed to mean not only the area the species lives, nests, or sleeps in, ponds, water features, etc. but also the surrounding area that the species depends on for its survival.

6.6 Guidance Documents

The Guidance Documents are a suite of documents that will assist project teams in the planning, design, construction, refurbishment and maintenance of new buildings and landscapes, while protecting the wildlife habitats within the estate.



6.7 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

SOPs are step by step instructions on how to carry out tasks achieving efficiency, high quality, and uniformity of performance, while reducing miscommunication and failure to comply with Legislation and Regulations.

7. Policy

The College Habitats Maintenance Policy is designed to cover the management of all wildlife habitats to ensure their continued structural and physical health and that of all living organisms associated with them. The policy sets out at high level a structure so that Guidance Documents can be developed for the planning, design, construction, refurbishment and maintenance of new buildings and landscapes, while protecting the wildlife habitats within the estate. SOP's can be developed for carrying out works to the horticulture of the estate. This is especially important during the pruning and nesting seasons and includes but is not limited to mowing, pruning, cultivating, re-planting, and maintaining soil health.

The policy will be used in connection with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and the Campus Pollinator Plan which supports the reduced use of pesticides and herbicides, including a ban on using Glyphosphate except where necessary. Where essential we aim to use organic pesticides and fertilisers and biological pest and weed control methods.

The College Habitats Maintenance Policy covers the following areas, this is not an exhaustive list but are examples:

- Trees,
- Creepers on physical structures, trees etc.,
- Shrubbery including hedges,
- Wildflower / grassland meadows,
- Water bodies including ponds, streams and other water courses,
- Sports grounds including grass pitches,
- Building facades, building interiors and walls and,
- Green walls.

The estate is a residential campus, which is the home (full or part time) to staff, students, and guests. College has a duty of care to the residents which requires compliance with separate pieces of legislation (i.e. Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005). The duty of care owed to the residents of the College can from time to time be in apparent conflict with the Wildlife Legislation. This may require emergency intervention during the nesting season to reduce the risk of injury or loss of human life. For example, it may be discovered during the nesting season that a creeper has grown over the emergency exit or is causing a trip hazard when exiting a building. Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act and support Regulations, emergency exits must be free from obstruction so the creeper would need to be pruned during the nesting period.



The Royal Horticultural Society sets out ideal pruning recommendations for trees and shrubs during the year, some of this pruning should occur during spring / summer for various reasons such as flowering periods, promoting fruiting and tree / shrub health. The foundation of the Wildlife Acts is *'the conservation of wildlife (including game) and for that purpose to protect certain wild creatures and flora'*. Accordingly, College will not perform any hedge cutting or tree pruning during the nesting season bar some exceptions due to exceptional circumstances.

The few exceptions (examples listed below) that will apply include:

- In emergency scenarios, various works (including pruning) may have to be undertaken outside the recommended season as per the Acts. Such threats would include a threat to or injury to life (human or animal),
- Serious notifiable diseases requiring immediate action,
- Tree health, where a tree may bleed to death or risk serious infection from pruning in the winter / dormant period. All trees falling under this category are listed in the SOP,
- Exemptions as per Section 40(1) of the Wildlife Act and,
- Creeper pruning around windows, lights, alarms etc.

The Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005 and Regulations formed because of the Act take precedent over the Wildlife Act and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Directive 2011-2015 due to the duty of care owed to residents and the College Community.

If such works must be undertaken outside the recommendations of the Royal Horticultural Society, Wildlife Act, and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Directive 2011-2015, College will develop SOPs to deal with this eventuality.

The SOPs will clearly set out the survey type and risk assessment that needs to be carried before undertaking the works. It will also detail what measures are to be taken if a habitat is found, who to consult within the College Community and statutory authorities.

8. Responsibility and Implementation

8.1 Grounds and Garden Committee

The Grounds and Garden Committee are the owners of the policy, and the Committee has overall responsibility to ensure the College Community and their external partners are made aware and adhere to the policy. The Chair of the Grounds and Garden Committee has delegated the responsibility of the Policy Controller to the Committee member Environmental Operations Manager.

8.2 Policy Controller

The Environmental Operations Manager from Estates & Facilities will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the policy and the SOPs. The Environmental Operations Manager will be responsible to developing the SOPs are carrying out a minimum of an annual review of the SOPs.



8.3 Breach of Procedure

Grievances regarding the implementation of policy and SOPs should be informally lodged with the Campus Maintenance Manager in Estates & Facilities. The Campus Maintenance Manager will carry out an informal investigation and respond to the complainant.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they can escalate formally to the Environmental Operations Manager who will carry out a formal investigation and respond to the complainant.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they can appeal the outcome to the Chair of the Grounds and Gardens Committee for examination.

9. Related Documents

The policy will be supported by Guidance Documents for the design, construction, refurbishment and maintenance of new buildings and landscapes, along with standard operating procedures (SOPs) to best manage and protect the wildlife habitats within the estate when carrying out maintenance (emergency, reactive or planned maintenance).

10. Document/version Control for New Policies

The policy was approved by the Grounds & Garden Committee in 2021, the Executive Officers Group in 2022 and Estates Policy in 2023 and Board in April 2023 and will be due for review in 2028.

Approved by: Board

Date policy approved: 26 April 2023

Date of next review: 2028

Officer responsible for review: Chair of Grounds and Garden Committee