



# Royal College of Art

Postgraduate Art & Design

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AT THE RCA

Staff and Student Engagement Strategy



The fernery at RCA Kensington, credit: RCA

## VISION STATEMENT

We have a responsibility, through the RCA's influence and activities, to ensure that we limit our draw on resources and have a positive impact on nature, people and the planet wherever possible in order to achieve net zero by 2035.

Through teaching, research, knowledge exchange and innovation, we will make global contributions to sustainability, climate change and the circular economy, which will be reflected in our own operational behaviours and decisions.

We are committed to guiding and supporting every member of our community so that they can contribute to the collective task of tackling the climate and biodiversity emergencies. We recognise that changes in individual practices must be accompanied by structural, institutional change.

## INTRODUCTION

The values of the RCA are Integrity, Inclusion, Collaboration and Curiosity.



These values provide a framework for the way we work and operate together to deliver our vision and strategy. We believe that these attributes and values will help shape our strategic choices, our activities and our culture.

We believe that engagement with art, design and creative skills can drive the solutions society needs, across all activities and sectors of the economy, to address its most urgent challenges in the crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. This approach underpins large parts of the structure and content of the teaching and research that happens at the RCA.

Meanwhile, the RCA recognises its responsibilities to reduce the environmental impact of its activities, and constantly improve its sustainability performance. As an organisation, we contribute to global challenges of sustainability and climate change through our behaviour and activities and via the work of our staff, students, researchers, alumni and innovation start ups.

As an organisation, we contribute to solving the global challenge of climate change through our academic mission: the work of our research department through projects including the EPSRC-funded Ecological Citizen[s], CLIMAVORE x Jameel at the RCA and New Economic Models for the Ocean (NEMO), the curriculum content within our taught Master's programmes, which include an MA in Environmental Architecture, the whole-College multidisciplinary initiative AcrossRCA, the Grand Challenge within the School of Design focusing on themes such as microplastics in the oceans and design resilience; as well as the nature and number of sustainability-focused start-up companies within the RCA's in-house incubator, InnovationRCA.

At an operational level, the institution has committed to achieving net zero by 2035 and is actively working towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving our environmental impact.

Our ambitions are to educate, inform, empower and inspire our community and, by extension, wider society in focusing intellectual curiosity, innovation and design on tackling the present and future challenges relating to the climate and biodiversity crises.

# SECTIONS

## Governance

The Environmental Sustainability Committee meets quarterly and oversees the environmental performance of the College. It oversees the development and implementation of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

Governance of the Environmental Sustainability Committee is enabled through reporting to the Executive Board, with oversight from the Audit & Risk Committee, Senate and RCA Council.

The work of the Environmental Sustainability Committee is enabled by the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group, which meets twice per term.

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## Communication

Communications designed to engage staff and students with environmental sustainability at the College are delivered in a variety of ways. A cross-College team focused on this communications workstream meets every month. The methods of engagement are supported by the results of the Annual Sustainability Survey - the latest edition of which was delivered at the end of 2025.

The results of the survey showed staff and students preferred to receive communications about environmental sustainability through the following methods:

### Staff Newsletters

The weekly staff newsletters regularly feature stories and updates relating to the College's environmental sustainability, relevant events and opportunities, and energy performance data. These newsletters have a very high engagement rate and are a popular way for staff to expand their knowledge of activities happening across the College.

### RCA Intranet

The RCA intranet features a dedicated Sustainability Hub which includes the latest Environmental Sustainability news from across the College as well as publishing regularly updated environmental data and energy performance details.

### All Staff Meetings

The Environmental Sustainability Manager gives regular presentations at All Staff Meetings, involving engaging anecdotal updates and analysis of energy performance data.

## Student Newsletters

The weekly student newsletters regularly feature stories and updates relating to the College's environmental sustainability, relevant academic and extra-curricular opportunities, and energy performance data.

## Initiatives and Events

A range of initiatives and events happening across the College's campuses helps to share knowledge and engage the RCA community with opportunities to collaborate and support environmental sustainability. Examples of initiatives and events are included below, within this strategy.

## Social Media

Feedback has indicated that students, in particular, find the RCA's social media channels a useful tool for engagement with the College's environmental sustainability activities.

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# Informal Engagement, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange

## Annual Sustainability Surveys

In 2025, staff and students were invited to complete the RCA's third annual sustainability survey.

The survey included a range of Likert, multiple choice and open text questions, and covered two main topics: general sustainability and commuting habits. Through asking the same general sustainability questions each year, we can monitor changes in perception and opinions over time.

540 staff and students responded to the survey. Key findings include:

- 49% of staff are aware of our Environmental Policy and efforts to improve our environmental impact
- 74% of staff and 81% of students believe the RCA is committed to improving its environmental impact
- 92% of staff and 93% of students say it is important to them that the RCA has good environmental sustainability credentials

The findings of the 2025/26 survey enable us to understand priorities and ensure our actions and activities are aligned to staff and student expectations. We additionally developed an updated understanding of staff and student commuting habits which informs our annual carbon footprint. .

## Community Engagement projects and visits

The Royal College of Art's [Community Engagement strategy](#) acknowledges how, as a research-led university, engagement is at the heart of all the College's academic activities – from funded research projects to individual staff and student research, knowledge exchange and local engagement with schools, neighbours, community groups and organisations.

It is the College's ambition that its engagement projects are beneficial to all those involved, acknowledging a two-way process of engagement and sharing of knowledge.

The RCA believes in the value of creativity and innovation by, with and for everyone. Through its Community Engagement work, the RCA offers events and exhibitions, outreach with schools and young people, business partnerships and knowledge exchange.

We are members of a number of external networks and groups including:

- South Ken ZEN+: we are working with our neighbouring cultural institutions as part of South Kensington Zero Emissions (ZE) Nature Positive (N+) to advance collaboratively on four key themes: Zero emissions, nature positive, circular economy and sustainable travel. Recent activities the RCA has participated in include contributing to the annual neighbourhood emissions baseline, delivering and participating in Carbon Literacy Training and developing greenwashing guidance for staff across the member institutions.
- EAUC: The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education is a member-led organisation of further and higher education institutions. EAUC supports members to share best practices and experiences through events, communities of practice and an annual conference; the RCA regularly participates in these activities.
- London Higher Sustainability Network: the network aims to share best practice across the higher education sector with regards to environmental sustainability. The RCA participates in the termly meetings, online and in institutions across London. In 2025, the RCA collaborated with representatives from London Higher, University of Greenwich and University of Roehampton to deliver an engagement workshop at the London Student Sustainability Conference.

## InnovationRCA start-ups with climate change and sustainability at their core

InnovationRCA is the Royal College of Art's centre for entrepreneurship and commercialisation, providing incubation, IP and business support. InnovationRCA helps staff, students and alumni transform compelling ideas into successful businesses. In its lifetime, InnovationRCA has launched 87 start-up companies, creating over 850 UK jobs. 34% of founders have been from ethnic minority backgrounds and, over the last 5 years, 51% of founders have been female.

Through a focus on combining art and design with tech and innovation, a number of InnovationRCA's start-ups have been tackling issues associated with environmental sustainability and the broader categories aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

These start-ups include:

- **AMPHICO**: fully sustainable and recyclable alternatives to current waterproof fabrics for the outerwear market
- **Ananas Anam**: a sustainable leather alternative using natural fibres extracted from the waste leaves of pineapple plants
- **BlueNose**: developing a solution designed to significantly reduce the fuel consumption of container ships through the use of aerodynamics improvements retrofitted on board of container ships
- **Cellment**: a bio-based patent-pending material which is strong like concrete when cured at low temperatures, which has the potential to become a sustainable alternative to current rigid composites.
- **Episod Studio**: developing Race for the Arctic, a videogame using digital storytelling to explore the future of the Arctic
- **PulpaTronics**: developing a more sustainable and cost-effective alternative to single-use radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags for inventory solutions that reduce environmental impact.
- **Pyri**: a patent-pending bio-inspired and bio-based early wildfire detection system for remote and low-cost coverage.
- **The Tyre Collective**: reducing pollution from tyre wear by capturing particulates at source
- **ZELP (Zero Emissions Livestock Project)**: a methane-reduction device and certification system that aims to reduce the environmental impact of methane emissions caused by the livestock industry.

## RCA Staff awards

The annual RCA Staff Awards recognise the contribution and achievements of our academic, research, technical, professional services, estates and support staff, at every level. These awards are designed to not only celebrate the hard work that goes on across the RCA but also to give colleagues a unique opportunity to thank and acknowledge their peers, by nominating them for an award.

The Environmental Sustainability Champion award is given to a person who embodies environmental sustainability within their work and/or has led an initiative to improve environmental sustainability in the College. This award provides an opportunity to recognise the important impact of dedicated and collaborative practice in the environmental sustainability space beyond the College's formal Environmental Sustainability programme.

## Green Futures Group

The Green Futures Group is an informal cross-union collective, established in 2022 by RCA academic staff to gather information and swap ideas on environmental sustainability throughout the RCA community. In the face of the climate crisis, it has become imperative to make profound changes to how we conduct our working practices, and so the group welcomes input from everyone: students, academic staff, union representatives, facilities and administration staff, estates and campus operations managers, external contractors, technicians, members of the RCA Executive Board, and local organisations.

The group meets several times a term and is constantly collecting and passing on information, identifying problems, canvassing for solutions and connecting people working towards the same goal across the RCA community. Green Futures Group members are also part of the RCA's Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group and members of the Environmental Sustainability Committee, working with the operations and communications teams on a coherent strategy that is inclusive and positively productive within the community.

There is also a rolling programme of Green Futures events and projects which promote awareness and good practice among students and staff, including technical and academic staff forums, a termly repair café run by student and staff volunteers and an annual Ecolleagey! Festival, with workshops and stalls focussed on practical skills that support an equitable transition to a decarbonised and sustainable society.

## Teaching, Research and Academic Engagement

### AcrossRCA, with one of the four themes set on Climate Change

[AcrossRCA](#) is an ambitious, interdisciplinary, College-wide unit that brings together students from all RCA MAs, as well as being an elective option on other taught programmes. Situated at the very core of the RCA experience, AcrossRCA draws on expertise from within and beyond the institution, providing a unique added dimension to discipline-specific study.

Working in collaborative teams spanning the four RCA Schools encourages a peer-focused cross-fertilisation of ideas and thinking beyond the discourses in art, architecture, communication and design. Students are encouraged to develop an innovative and disruptive approach, critically reflecting on their responsibilities as creative practitioners, and demonstrating the contribution that the creative arts can make to our understanding and experience of the world.

In their teams, students will respond to one of a number of urgent contemporary themes. Each of these supports students to respond to the complexity of an uncertain, changing world. They identify their own set of critical questions that arise from their proposed inquiry, and develop the process and skills needed to participate, respond and realise project outcomes.

The subject matter, response and outcome are entirely decided by the student teams, shaped by peer feedback with tutor support. AcrossRCA is an open, ambiguous, and challenging unit without prescribed subject matter or briefs. It allows students to form friendships and networks outside of their programmes, forging relationships that span and allow them to thrive beyond graduation.

At its conclusion, students are required to disseminate project ideas and processes on [a public platform](#) for others to learn from them.

One ongoing area of focus since the launch of AcrossRCA in 2023 is the [Climate Crisis](#).

AcrossRCA is a compulsory unit for all MA programmes and an elective option for MFA, MRes, MDes, MArch and MEd programmes. It is delivered online and in person.

## Curriculum content for Master's courses

Environmental sustainability is a core component of the College's Strategic Plan 2026-30. The RCA aims to ensure that sustainability and regenerative practices are embedded in our programmes, as well as in our cross-programme and cross-School units.

In addition to AcrossRCA, many of the programmes at the College have a specific focus on sustainable development, including:

- MA Environmental Architecture: a 1 year design-led and field-focused course that emphasises a transdisciplinary approach to design research, bringing together architectural and ethnographic research methods.
- MArch Design Practice: a 1 year programme that supports architects, designers, and spatial practitioners' creative and critical engagement with the design of the built environment, with climate as a central focus
- MA/MSc Innovation Design Engineering: a double Master's programme run jointly between the RCA and Imperial College London that promotes innovation through synergy between creativity, science and technology to create value for society.
- MDes Design Futures: a 1 year programme which explores how design futures can address complex social and environmental challenges, through strong research methodologies and a transdisciplinary approach.

## Major Academic Research Projects

[Ecological Citizen\(s\)](#) is a 4 year Network+ based at the RCA in collaboration with University of York's Stockholm Environment Institute and Wrexham University. Its mission is to catalyse Ecological Citizenship for positive climate action. Funding is currently being distributed through the network to develop Ecological Citizenship projects across the UK.

As an ever growing research network, Ecological Citizen(s) mobilises diverse groups of people to make impactful change through accessible technology and community-focused approaches – including citizen science, activism, collective learning, advocacy, design strategies, creative arts, manufacturing, environmental science and engineering practices. As a pro-active collaborative community, the network has the potential to cover a wide range of pressing topics from biomaterials and wildlife corridors to local manufacturing and repair, and will draw on expertise from across the RCA, as well as other academic, business and civil society partners.

Expanding the work of CLIMAVORE on food systems in the climate crisis, [CLIMAVORE x Jameel at the Royal College of Art](#) is a research initiative that reimagines foodways for drylands and wetlands. A partnership between CLIMAVORE and Community Jameel at the RCA, it advances ecological networks to produce new knowledge and action towards spatial justice. Based in the School of Architecture, the three-year partnership has two focused

research projects, Water Buffalo Commons and Monoculture Meltdown, which are complemented by two research grants - the Food Action Awards - given to researchers to develop CLIMAVORE projects worldwide.

Aligning with the RCA's [New Economic Models for the Ocean \(NEMO\)](#) project, the College has been named a [UN Ocean Decade Implementing Partner](#), working on three Ocean Decade Challenges:

- Protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity
- Develop a sustainable and equitable ocean economy
- Change humanity's relationship with the ocean

Using its strong links to the scientific community and expertise in design, participatory science, and stakeholder engagement, the RCA will generate measurable, sustainable and human-centred impact on the health of the ocean.

Running for three years from April 2025, **Circular Robot 5.0: Industry-Wide Data-Driven Circular Economy of Industrial Robots**, is funded with £1.8m awarded by UKRI's [Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council \(EPSRC\)](#). The Circular Robot 5.0 project is focused around leveraging AI-driven predictive maintenance, tamper-proof blockchain traceability, robust life-cycle assessments and more, in order to extend the operational lifespan of industrial robots, while enabling end-of-life remanufacturing and recycling of critical raw materials. In doing this, the project hopes to lay the groundwork for a truly circular economy in industrial robotics.

## Sustainability Statements of Intent

A Sustainability Statement of Intent (SSI) is a working manifesto to be discussed and contributed to by technicians, teaching staff and students. The aim is to clarify what sustainability means in the particular practical context of a given programme or medium, acknowledging the responsibility of academics, technicians and students to support and pursue sustainable practices, and to approach each programme's materials, processes and production with a critical understanding of their impact on climate and biodiversity. SSIs are a component currently used within the RCA's School of Arts and Humanities.

## The RCA Grand Challenge

Established in 2016, the RCA Grand Challenge is an interdisciplinary event that runs each year across the entire School of Design, bringing together over 500 students to tackle key global challenges through collaboration.

The Grand Challenge gives postgraduate designers the opportunity to work together across a range of disciplines – including Design Products, Fashion, Innovation Design Engineering, Intelligent Mobility, Service Design and Textiles – as well as with leading industry partners, such as Logitech and CERN.

For the 2025/26 Grand Challenge, themed around Design Resilience, students explored ways to enhance and improve ecological and equitable societies to create more positive outcomes and greater flourishing for all. This concerns socio-economic and ecological

improvements such as advancing solutions for climate restoration, improving health outcomes, and reducing social & economic inequalities.

Find out more about the winning designs on the dedicated news page: The Grand Challenge 20225/26: Design [for Betterment](#).

## Staff Development

In 2025/26, we used findings from the Annual Sustainability Survey to identify training needs and established a sustainability training plan for staff at the RCA. We launched an introductory training for new starters and existing staff; this "Intro to Sustainability at the RCA" training is available on Moodle and covers what sustainability means for the RCA and how staff can play their part. We have additionally piloted Carbon Literacy Training sessions, with 19 staff members certified as Carbon Literate so far.

In May 2026, the RCA hosted an all-staff development day, called *Communities in Practice*, which featured a session entitled "Sustainability in Pedagogy and Practice". This session aimed to encourage staff to reflect on how they bring sustainability into their pedagogy and practice, in order to support our education for sustainable development strategy.

## Staff Sustainability Network and Lunch & Learns

The RCA has a Staff Sustainability Network which is open to all staff to join. Termly Sustainability Lunch & Learns are organised for the Network. Sustainability Lunch & Learn is a series of informal talks on the topic of sustainability at the RCA - from operations and teaching to research.

Since its launch In 2024, topics have covered:

- Ecological Citizen[s]
- AI-Fixer
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- CLIMAVORE x Jameel
- Growing Colour Garden
- Centre for Materials Science & Culture

## Student Engagement

### SustainLab

SustainLab is a society of the Royal College of Art Students' Union.

SustainLab is a collaborative and cross-disciplinary platform for all RCA students to engage with, in exploring what sustainability is and how it can be embedded as part of their creative practice. It is a forum for ideas to be investigated, challenged, and shared with the intention of facilitating experimentation and knowledge-building with our creative practices.

SustainLab organises talks, open-crits, workshops and conversations for students to develop their knowledge of sustainability and how to incorporate it into their creative processes. Some of these events are also open to the public.

SustainLab was founded in September 2017 by RCA students, with the intention of supporting and inspiring the work of fellow students who have an interest in sustainability.

SustainLab hosts regular exhibitions, showcasing the work of its members.

## Environmental Sustainability Student Network

In 2023, the RCA Students' Union launched the Environmental Sustainability Student Network in partnership with the Environmental Sustainability team, aiming to empower the student body to champion environmental sustainability on campus and beyond. The SU and Environmental Sustainability team share regular updates on events and activities with the Network.

## Annual SU Green Week

The RCA Students' Union organises an annual Green Week, with events across all three campuses celebrating the role that art and design universities like the RCA can play in addressing the climate emergency. The events vary each year, and 2025's edition included:

- Pollination FreeBee - a pop-up potting day in celebration of World Bee Day where participants were provided with plant pots, soil and seeds to grow their own plants and gave away potted sunflowers to create habitats for bees.
- Swap Shop - a chance for students to refresh their wardrobe and give pre-loved items a second life.
- Growing Narratives Exhibition - led by the Gardening Society, this exhibition celebrated personal stories, journeys, speculations and relationships with plants, floral design and the natural world.
- Giveaways - tickets to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew were won by 5 lucky students.

## SU Newsletter

The weekly RCA Students' Union newsletter frequently features a Sustainability segment, to share details of materials exchanges, clothes swaps, sustainability initiatives, events and other activities across the student body.

It also includes details of academic and non-academic opportunities relating to sustainability, and encourages students to take part in the annual Student Sustainability Survey to support the RCA's data collection around its environmental impact and College-wide priorities.

## Student Induction

Sustainability forms a crucial element of students' induction to life at the RCA. Students are invited to learn more about sustainability at the College, including the Environmental Policy,

before arrival on the [Welcome Page](#). An introductory e-learning on sustainability is available to students and a more detailed induction takes place during Welcome Week delivered by the Environmental Sustainability team, which is publicised to incoming students over the summer.

## Case Studies

### Materials Exchange and Technical Services Materials Showcase

It's the nature of art and design to create and iterate, but there are ways to limit our use of precious natural resources. The RCA has been trialling Materials Exchange pop-ups to try to save materials from the bin and give them a second life. Students are encouraged to bring along any materials they no longer need and discover new items to use in their practice. Items exchanged range from paper and card, to fabric and even a projector screen.



A snapshot of the items available at the Materials Exchange

In March 2024, we combined the Materials Exchange with Sustainable Showcase from Technical Services. Our passionate and knowledgeable technicians ran a showcase of sustainable materials and processes. Our technicians are a font of knowledge when it comes to how to make your practice more sustainable - from alternatives to MDF to natural dying.

Based on these pilots, the Sustainable Showcase has now been built into the delivery of multiple programmes, while permanent Reuse Stations have been established at RCA Kensington and Battersea.

## SustainLab Annual Exhibition

SustainLab hosts an annual exhibition of work by its members, focusing on environmental sustainability. *Following Following* is the 2026 edition of the society's annual exhibition which took place between 28 March and 9 April 2026 at the RCA Battersea campus.

In a contemporary era defined by productivity, speed, and measurable outcomes, stopping is often perceived as a sign of stagnation. Yet the agricultural practice of following, the intentional resting of land to restore its vitality, maintain ecological balance, and prepare for future cultivation, offers another perspective.

*Following Following* draws on this principle to reconsider the relationship between rest, creativity, and sustainability. Rather than framing rest as withdrawal or inactivity, the exhibition positions it as a fundamental condition for making, a generative interval through which ideas mature, systems recalibrate, and practices renew themselves. In doing so, it asks: What might creative resilience look like if we valued cycles of pause as much as cycles of production?

Bringing together artists, designers, and creative practitioners from the Royal College of Art, the exhibition engages following across diverse media, including painting, photography, sculpture, interactive installation, and video. Through material choices, temporal processes, and spatial interventions, the participants explore cycles of depletion and regeneration, labour and latency, presence and withdrawal. Rest is approached not as a temporary interruption but as a methodology, one embedded within ecological, intellectual, and artistic systems.



SustainLab's 2023 Annual Exhibition, *Legacy*, at RCA Kensington.

## Terra Carta Design Lab 2023 / 2024

His Majesty King Charles III, in his former role as HRH The Prince of Wales, and Sir Jony Ive launched the Terra Carta Design Lab in 2021, in partnership with the Royal College of Art.



The winning teams of the inaugural Terra Carta Design Lab

The four winners of the 2022 Terra Carta Design Lab - Aerseeds, Amphico, The Tyre Collective and ZELP - have already raised £18 million in investments and grants to date and have been supported by the RCA's centre for entrepreneurship and incubation, InnovationRCA. In addition, projects from the 20-strong shortlist have gone on to make impact: most notably Notpla, packaging made from seaweed, winning the prestigious £1m Earthshot Prize in December 2022.

For 2023/24, the Sustainable Markets Initiative's [Terra Carta Design Lab](#) returned for a second time, with the Royal College of Art participating again, alongside three other higher education institutions from around the globe to contribute innovative design solutions to the climate crisis.



Terra Carta Design Lab exhibition showcasing 10 RCA finalists at RCA Battersea, September 2024

In December 2024, eight global winners from the RCA, Rhode Island School of Design (USA), Dubai Institute of Design and Innovation (UAE) and National Institute of Design (India), were selected by the judges to receive £100,000 to scale their projects and take them to market. The RCA's two winning projects were **Pyri** - an innovative solution to managing the ongoing increase in wildfires that are destroying ecosystems, harming human health and releasing emissions that exacerbate climate change, in a compounding cycle. It features a low-cost wildfire detection system designed with remote and vulnerable communities in mind - and **BlueNose** - developing a solution designed to reduce fuel consumption of containerships by up to 5% through the use of aerodynamic improvements retrofitted on board. The shape of these aerodynamic structures are found through the use of iterative processing algorithms.

In early March 2025, the Sustainable Markets Initiative hosted the Terra Carta Roundtables and Exhibition at Hampton Court Palace. RCA faculty member Nick de Leon led a 90 minute plenary session to present some of the Terra Carta Design Lab projects from 2022 and 2024. This was accompanied by an exhibition of Terra Carta Design Lab projects, including 2024 winners BlueNose and Pyri, as well as 2022 finalists Notpla and Shellworks. The exhibiting companies had the opportunity to meet delegates from the SMI's global network, as well as His Majesty The King who visited the exhibition and spoke with the teams about their innovations.

## Community Engagement project - Climate Crisis Awareness with Wandsworth Primary Schools

Our Community Engagement programme has an ongoing collaboration with Wandsworth Council's Arts Service on a series of projects with primary schools across the borough that have all aimed to inspire climate change awareness through the use of art and design.

Commissioned by Wandsworth Council and the RCA as part of the Welcome to Wandsworth schools programme for The Mayor's London Borough of Culture 2025, *Our Beautiful Neighbourhood* set out to explore local biodiversity through visual art. A team of seven artists led creative workshops with over 50 primary, secondary and SEND classes between October 2025 and January 2026, engaging more than 1,300 children and young people. Pupils explored their local habitats, discovering the plants, animals and insects living alongside them, and developed observational skills through drawing and collage. Their work was brought to life in five public banner exhibitions, accompanied by an original sound piece and a downloadable colouring-in map

The work was photographed and turned into vibrant collage banners, which were displayed across Battersea Power Station, Putney Exchange, Southside Shopping Centre, Tooting Market and Wandsworth Town Hall.

Projects like *Our Beautiful Neighbourhood* demonstrate how creative education in the community can spark curiosity about the world around us. They are also part of a much longer tradition at the Royal College of Art of working beyond the walls of the institution, connecting students and alumni with outside communities.



Banners on display at Battersea Power Station as part of Our Beautiful Neighbourhood

The previous project in the RCA's collaboration with Wandsworth Council's Arts Service, Weaving Out Waste, was selected as a finalist in the "Benefitting Society" category of the Green Gown Awards 2025.

## Growing Colour Garden

The RCA created the Growing Colour Garden in 2025 in collaboration with the Design Museum. We are growing dye plants which can be used for dying and experimentation in the RCA Textiles workshops.

The Growing Colour Garden emerged from a pilot project to establish a dye garden in the Kensington campus. As part of this project, a team of Textiles technicians grew a range of dye plants in small planters; this included indigo which was then harvested and used to dye yarn.

The Growing Colour Garden builds on the pilot project to create a dye garden in five large planters in the Design Museum garden in Kensington. There are three core objectives for the project:

1. To grow plants which can be used for dyeing and experimentation in the RCA Textiles workshops
2. To educate students about the end-to-end process of growing and using plants for dyeing
3. To provide a wellbeing opportunity for staff and students through community gardening

An RCA Gardening Club has been established and members will work together, alongside the Design Museum Urban Gardener and community volunteers, to maintain the Growing Colour Garden.

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## Measuring progress

The Royal College of Art uses a range of different metrics to measure progress in relation to staff and student engagement. These metrics vary between activities, and include: attendees to events, survey response, newsletter open rates and intranet clicks.

## Members of staff responsible for this strategy

Environmental Sustainability Manager  
Senior Communications Manager

**This strategy will be reviewed every 12 months.**

**Last updated April 2026.**