



UNIVERSITY
OF SURREY
LIVING LAB



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What is a Living Lab?



A Living Lab at the University of Surrey

► A Living Lab enables collaboration between a range of stakeholders at local, national or international level to address various challenges, often linked with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (UN SDGs). A key feature of a Living Lab is the co-creation and live-testing approach to address local and global challenges. Stakeholders involved define the project together and **co-create** results and outputs from which they all benefit. Living Labs have been established across the world and particularly in Europe during the past decade.

The University of Surrey Living Lab (UoSLL) can provide expert advice, professional support and help identify potential funding opportunities to address project challenges. Any multi-national company, local authority or NGO may collaborate with the University of Surrey academic and student community, as well as with a wide range of partners to address real-world sustainability challenges. Our Living Lab approaches use up to date research methods and tools, facilitated through the use of the University campus and surrounding



Benefits of Living Lab projects



To Academics:

- Collaborate on genuinely cross-disciplinary research projects
- Partner with a wide range of organisations including businesses, public sector organisations and community groups
- Use your expertise to support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals locally, nationally and internationally.



To Students:

- Access opportunities to get real research experience
- Work across a wide range of subjects and departments, beyond your course and own department
- Gain new skills, broaden knowledge and enhance your employability.



To Businesses:

- Work with University experts to access expert knowledge, cutting-edge resources and additional funding
- Collaborate on research that benefits your business
- Progress along your sustainability journey and meet local, national and international goals.



To Public Sector Organisations:

- Access the latest thinking in sustainability interventions and behaviour change
- Co-create research projects that are bespoke for the region or your local area
- Use the University as a testbed to identify impactful sustainable solutions.



To Community and Climate Action Groups:

- Engage with your community using approaches tested across the UK and worldwide
- Co-create research projects with local experts to better address the local challenges and understand opportunities for climate change mitigation
- Access a cross disciplinary network of experts and partners.

What is involved in a Living Lab project?

➤ At the University of Surrey, a Living Lab project has four key elements:

1

Research & innovation:
the generation, testing or application of new knowledge research-based solutions.

3

Collaborative approach:
genuinely engaging a wide range of stakeholders to co-create and deliver a research and innovation initiative, with a key aim being to share good practices. Partners could include e.g. the University Estates, large businesses, SMEs, local charities and public sector organisations.

2

Addressing real-world challenges linked with the UN SDGs: such as climate change, crime, inequality, housing, congestion, health and care provision, air pollution, mobility, flooding, environmental degradation, unemployment, to name but a few. Research should make a difference to our lives, and a Living Lab is the practical application of research and innovation to generate a lasting impact.

4

Global solutions to local problems:
for example, testing new technology on campus or working with a Surrey community organisation to conduct research about new services or processes. For the UoS Living Lab we consider any partner based within Surrey to be 'local'. While locally tested, project outputs will often have applications both nationally and globally.







Living Lab projects in action





Active Travel in Surrey project

Walking and cycling as a form of active travel is one of the most sustainable ways of transport and active travel as an alternative mode of transport has the potential to reduce a community's carbon footprint, while simultaneously having direct health benefits for its individuals. The Active Travel in Surrey project aimed to shed light on some of the key barriers and motivators of active travel within Surrey and to support local transport planning and policies by providing key contemporary evidence.

This project, led by [Dr Nikolas Thomopoulos](#) and [Professor Birgitta Gatersleben](#), was initiated in March 2021 as a collaboration between the UoSLL and the Surrey Climate Commission. The project aimed at identifying key barriers and motivators as well as appropriate interventions in promoting active travel within Surrey. The project started with an online workshop together with local stakeholders and partners who are interested in active travel in Surrey. The workshop identified some of the key barriers and enablers for active travel in Surrey as perceived by the stakeholders and the information obtained was used to create a citizen survey with 400 responses, which was distributed from July until

September 2021. In a second stakeholder workshop, the initial results of the survey were presented, and a facilitated discussion generated further opportunities to collaborate in the promotion of active travel within Surrey.

The Active Travel project outputs were then used to provide local evidence to the Surrey County Council consultation in 2021, which led to the updated [Transport Strategy](#). An updated 2022 Active Travel report aims at supporting local authorities and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS) focusing on leisure travel and travel to school.

This is a great example of Surrey researchers co-creating a comprehensive citizen survey with Surrey Climate Commission and partners, which empowered the local community to influence the local travel strategy.

[More details about this project here.](#)

Surrey
Climate 
Commission







Greening Southway project

▶ Led by [Dr Eleanor Ratcliffe](#), this project is a collaboration between a number of UoS colleagues, Guildford Borough Council, local community support officers and residents in the Southway area of Guildford.

Building on the foundations of the [NW Guildford 2030 project](#), the Greening Southway project started in 2020 with Living Lab seedcorn funding with the aim of understanding the social, environmental, and health challenges facing the community in North-West Guildford. The area of Southway is characterised by a lack of high-quality green space, poor maintenance, fly-tipping, and elevated levels of air pollution. A survey of residents' views was conducted in 2020, and this was supplemented with virtual interviews and workshops in 2021. The results showed that the local community felt disengaged, and that the physical environment was only one part of their concerns and that other important matters needed to be addressed. Aiming to work with residents and members of the Southway community to understand their priorities and consider new solutions to enhance the locality,

the researchers hosted a Collaborative Café and created an informal and inviting space that facilitated conversation. Their enthusiastic contributions were captured throughout by an artist who depicted these as cartoon images.

The Collaborative Café was followed by a World Food event in September 2022 where participants from the original Collaborative Café and some new residents came together to refine the findings from the Collaborative Café. The event was more structured than previous gatherings with the intention of turning the residents' ideas into manageable projects that the community could take forward as funded projects.

The Greening Southway project has been a great example of academic researchers and the community coming together to facilitate the co-creation of local solutions to improve an area.

[More details about this project here.](#)

Is the Living Lab approach right for you?

» **Businesses, Public Sector Organisations, Community and Climate Action Groups**

We would love to hear from you if you are interested in developing, testing and applying research-based solutions with the University or would just like to join our network.

» **Academics**

If you are interested in taking your research out into the wider community, and you would like to develop external partnerships, then a Living Lab approach can be very effective. The UoSLL programme offers advice and information, support, and signposting to funding. As part of the support available we can help match your needs to students and research resources to assist with your research.

» **Students**

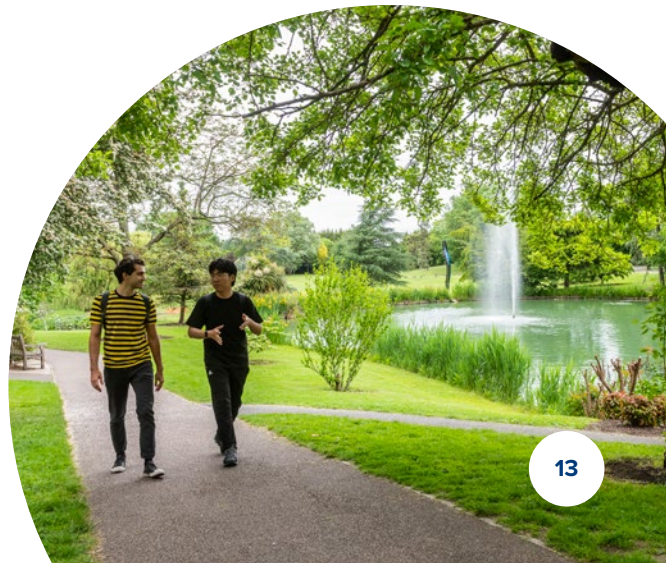
If you would like to get involved in a Living Lab project to develop your research experience and enhance your employability then consider doing a Living Lab project for your dissertation or get in touch to find out about existing projects currently available.





What to do next?

- **Look on the [University of Surrey Living Lab webpage](#) to find out more about the projects and activities that the Living Lab is doing. Does it sound interesting and relevant to your field?**
- **[Join our network](#) so you will be the first to hear about advice, information and events**
- **If you are ready to get involved in a project, [contact us directly](#)**





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