

ESF virtual gallery of future green spaces presented by the British Ecological Society

The British Ecological Society (BES), in collaboration with SMASH-UK, will be presenting – as part of this year's Edinburgh Science Festival – a virtual gallery of art created by local artists and ecologists, predicting the green future of Edinburgh. These visions will directly contribute to work by the City of Edinburgh Council in envisioning the future of the city's green spaces.

[This free event, running from the 26 June to 11 July 2021](#) will transport visitors to a fully explorable 3D virtual gallery overlooking the iconic Arthur's Seat, displaying visions for Edinburgh's future green spaces.

Exhibition artworks include a vision of Leith, successfully defending against sea level rises and extreme rain events (now 'Leith-on-Sea'), to a resilient and renovated tree covered Nicolson St, known to be the most polluted street in Edinburgh and second-most polluted in Scotland.



Leith on Sea 2 – Sam Wilson and British Ecological Society
Local artists have collaborated with ecologists from Scottish Wildlife Trust, the City of Edinburgh Council, Nature Scot, Architecture & Design Scotland, Forest Research and Bangor

University to imagine a greener future for Edinburgh and demonstrate how problems like carbon emissions, flooding, heatwaves and even social justice can be tackled with nature-based solutions in our most familiar greens spaces. Read more about the people involved [here](#).

Visitors to the digital exhibition will also be able to contribute their own ideas for future green spaces, which will be displayed alongside the artwork in the gallery. Their visions will also inform the Council's plans for the future of Edinburgh's green spaces.

Dr Chris Jeffs, Senior Education & Engagement Officer at the British Ecological Society and curator of the exhibition said: "This cutting-edge exhibition is the first-time local artists and ecologists have been brought together to envisage the future of Edinburgh's green spaces. It offers a way for the residents of Edinburgh and beyond to have their say on how green spaces should look like in future, and how they can tackle environmental challenges in their local area.

"Ecologists are on the front lines in our battle against climate change, and nature-based solutions in our green spaces, like those depicted in the exhibition, offer enormous hope. We want everyone to understand the climate crisis and the role ecology and nature-based solutions can play in a greener, sustainable future."

On the interactive element of the exhibition, where visitors can contribute their own ideas, Chris Jeffs said: "It's important that we give people a voice in shaping their green future, so we are delighted to be working with the Scottish Wildlife Trust and the City of Edinburgh Council, giving all our exhibition visitors the chance to share their 'visions of future green spaces' directly with the council to help them in their '[Thriving Green Spaces](#)' project."



Edinburgh's Future Green Spaces Virtual Gallery Credit British Ecological Society

Donya Davidson, Ecologist and Project Development Officer at Scottish Wildlife Trust for the 'Thriving Green Spaces Project' in Edinburgh' said: "Working with local artists has been incredible. I think communicating through the medium of art is a really impactful way to demonstrate the work we are doing as ecologists. This exhibition has opened my eyes to how beneficial and exciting it can be to collaborate with artists and those outside of the environmental sector.

"Our work at the Scottish Wildlife Trust with the City of Edinburgh Council has shown that our existing green spaces already provide so many benefits to both people and wildlife and the right interventions in the right places can improve even more areas to provide these benefits.

"The artwork I collaborated on, Leith Walk on the Wild Side, shows Leith Walk, but not as people know it now! It is thriving with wildlife and residents are out enjoying all the new greenspace they now have on their doorsteps. The nationally scarce northern brown argus butterfly, previously only found in Holyrood Park, now moves freely down the street from planter to planter. Although it is an aspirational vision, I hope it is something we can see in the not-so-distant future, for a connected, biodiverse and sustainable Edinburgh."

Sarah Hannis, illustrator of 'Leith Walk on the Wild Side' said: "It was great working with Donya and learning about all the green initiatives in Edinburgh. At a time when so much news is negative it has been really uplifting to be involved in this project – learning about connecting up habitats in urban areas, and the small but significant ways that local residents can contribute.

"Leith Walk is currently one of the least green parts of

Edinburgh so I re-imagined it totally green! Green paths with wildflower areas lie to either side. Building eaves are lined with swift nesting boxes and each window has its own planter with pollinator-friendly plants. Nest boxes and bug hotels hang on every wall and there's even a small pond.

"The whole street becomes a thriving green wildlife corridor, boosting biodiversity and all the human wellness benefits that come from immersing ourselves in nature and coexisting alongside it."



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Diane Cassidy, Green Spaces Development Officer for Edinburgh's Thriving Green Spaces Project at the City of Edinburgh Council said: "We're excited to be part of this fantastic exhibition with the British Ecological Society. The artworks' inspiring visions of nature-based solutions, combined with the voices of visitors to the exhibition will be incredibly valuable to us in our ongoing 'Thriving Green Spaces' project which aims to improve Edinburgh's green spaces and ultimately the lives of local people."

Edinburgh Science Festival runs from Sat 26 June to Sun 11 July

Other BES events at the Edinburgh Science Festival

Alongside the [virtual gallery](#), the BES will be hosting five other online events and contributing to an outdoor photography exhibition, all completely free to attend.

- *12 June – 21 July. Human Nature exhibition. Experience giant images in the photography exhibition along the picturesque location of Edinburgh's Portobello Promenade, featuring contributions from the BES 'Capturing Ecology Competition'.*
- *Sunday 27 June. [Insectageddon: is global insect](#)*

- [extinction real?](#) Entomologist, broadcaster, and author Professor Adam Hart leads a panel debate of international insect experts to debate the fact and fiction behind global insect extinction.
- Tuesday 29 June. [Flea Circus: the smallest show on Earth](#). Dr Tim Cockerill talks audiences through the history of flea circuses, a genuine spectacle, made up of live fleas pulling chariots, riding tricycles and even fighting duels with miniature swords.
 - Saturday 3 July. [NatureCast](#). A family friendly interactive broadcast where participants can take part in fun activities, they can do at home or outside, while discovering fascinating connections between nature and people.
 - Sunday 4 July. [The Big Ecology Draw-along](#). Join our presenter, zoologist and science communicator Sophie Pavelle, and nature-artists Hana Ayoob and Lauren Cook to learn how to draw incredible plants, fungi and animals, following their simple step-by-step tutorials.
 - Wednesday 7 July. [ECOMedy night](#). An online comedy night where audiences can laugh and learn as you watch real scientists showcase their knowledge about animals, plants, and their interactions with our planet.

Top image – BES future-of-nature. Credit British Ecological Society