



BLEAN BIOPARK

The gateway to Blean's ancient woodland





Alternative Land-Use Proposal for the University of Kent

An innovative, sustainable and
place-making use of the land.

Ania Bobrowicz & Julia Kirby-Smith

The Vision





Our Approach



Parcelling the Land

Dividing land into different uses reduces risk and avoids costly mitigations of a large housing development.



Faster Revenue for the University

Some areas can be sold or start generating revenue in the next 12-18 months.



Strategic Alignment: Uni of Kent, KWT & KCC

Plan aligns with University's Research and Innovation strategy focusing on sustainability and natural resources, KWT's Blean Wildscape vision and KCC's Growth Plan.



Consultation & Co-creation



Workshop in Jan

External facilitators ran a workshop with members of STB and Kent Wildlife Trust to create the initial vision.



Consultation survey from January to April

127 responses from Canterbury residents aged under 18 to over 80.



Workshop with the Uni of Kent in March

We presented our outline ideas and spent 3 hours working out what the University thought could work and what they wanted to know more about.

Topic: What Top 5 initiatives are most important to you?

- **Over half** thought re-establishing woodlands, re-wilding/re-introducing species, promoting mental health/wellbeing & enhancing historical sites are most important
- **Nearly half** also thought preserving agricultural land for food production is important



Further detail on **Other** responses in [Appendix](#)



BLEAN BIOPARK

KEY

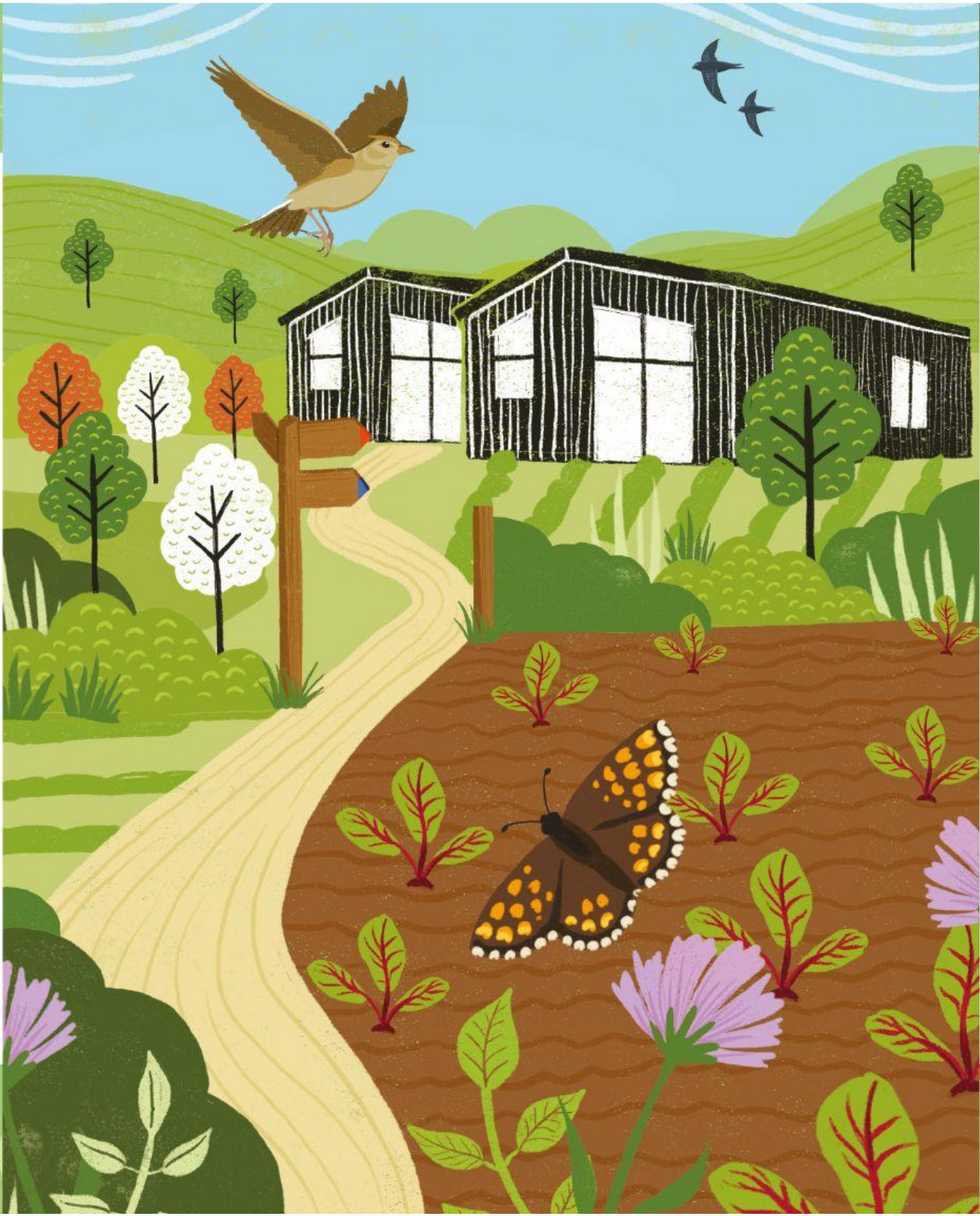
-  National Cycle Route 1
-  Accessible paths
-  Woodland
-  Hedgerow
-  Regenerative farming
-  Country Park amenities
-  Eco tourism
-  Rivers & ponds

Blean Biopark is a living landscape where nature, heritage, and community come together. From ancient woods and wildflower meadows to low-impact homes and regenerative farming, the site blends conservation with sustainable living. It's a place where wildlife thrives, people stay, and ideas grow—rooted in the land's rich history, including the nearby Crab and Winkle Way.



Regenerative farming

Aligning with the University's emerging new innovation and teaching strategy, with its focus on Food, Agriculture, Life Sciences and Conservation, the area of land north of Tyler Hill Road has great potential to be used for agricultural research or a demonstration farm.



These fields are Grade 2 farmland that has been conventionally farmed for years and could be converted to regenerative and/or organic, different types of viticulture, or other innovative farming practices.

FarmED in Oxfordshire is a great example of a demonstration farm that combines world-leading research and training with public-facing education and events.

This also aligns with Kent County Council's growth and innovation strategy on Food Production and Agritech, in which the Uni is a key partner.

**BLEAN
BIOPARK**

Blean Biopark - Zones D & E

Country Park

Accessible space connecting
Canterbury and Whitstable
residents to nature

Community Engagement

Learning activities supporting
skills development and
wellbeing



Ecosystem Services

Restored habitats and
reforestation benefiting the
whole district

Heritage Celebration

Highlighting local history from
Roman to Medieval to
Industrial



Enhancing heritage

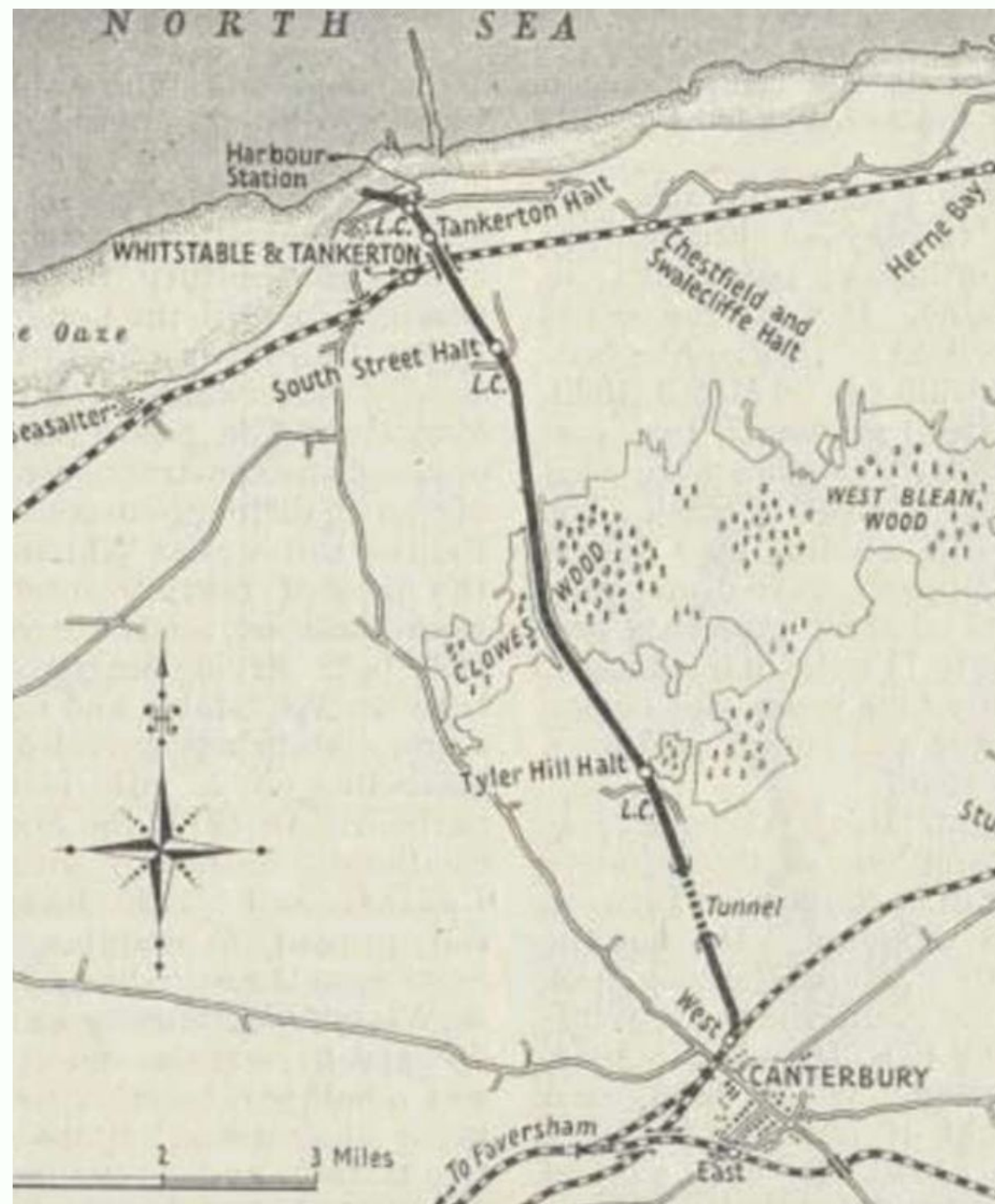
The Blean landscape and its villages have a rich mix of Roman, Mediaeval and Industrial heritage.

The Biopark will celebrate the history and heritage of the area, including the Crab & Winkle railway line. This was the first passenger railway in the world, the line and the famous Invicta locomotive both created by pioneering engineers George and Robert Stephenson.



We will encourage learning and community engagement about heritage, land skills, nature and sustainability through accessible activities that support skills development, wellbeing and mental health.

**BLEAN
BIOPARK**



Crab & Winkle Railway Line



A world first

The first passenger train line in the world, built by George and Robert Stephenson



Tourism appeal

Attractive to day visitors and overnight tourists, tying in with other attractions such as the Ancient Woods and bison



Hugely under-appreciated heritage

Great potential to increase visibility and use of the original railway route, to create a visitor centre and other attractions, and to weave this railway heritage in the Country Park.



Planting woodland

Reforestation will play a key part in the Biopark, helping to reconnect the Blean woodland and build on existing nature corridors.

Sections of the Biopark will be used to deliver ecosystem services which will benefit the wider area, through improved water quality, restored habitats and biodiversity, and providing the landscape with the ability to be more resilient to changes in climate.



These will be financed through innovative green finance solutions, such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), Nutrient Neutrality, and carbon offsetting and voluntary biodiversity credits via Wilder Carbon (a nature-based carbon and biodiversity scheme, established by Kent Wildlife Trust Group).

Access in these areas will be managed with boardwalks or fencing, to protect biodiversity while retaining the Public Rights of Way. In this way we can create a space that is truly shared by people and nature.

BLEAN BIOPARK



Restoring habitat

The Blean Biopark will be an area of habitat restoration and biodiversity, accessible to both Canterbury and Whitstable residents, and a gateway to the Blean Ancient Woodland.



Dedicated to protecting and enhancing the habitats surrounding Blean's unique and precious woodland complex, this will enable the reintroduction of species such as beavers, white storks, red squirrels and pine martens. This aligns with Kent Wildlife Trust's wider strategy for the landscape – the Blean Wildscape.

BLEAN BIOPARK



Green Finance - Zone D



Nutrient Neutrality

Credits sold to developers to meet planning conditions. High demand in Canterbury area.



Biodiversity Net Gain

Mandatory 10% gain for developments. Canterbury proposing 20% threshold.



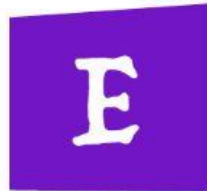
Carbon Credits

Wilder Carbon scheme selling at premium price of £100 per unit.



Estimated Income for Uni of Kent

£2,918,400 - £4,975,400 over 50 years after management costs.



Country Park

The Country Park area of the Biopark will be an accessible, thriving space where local residents and tourists can connect with nature, explore cultural heritage and enjoy meaningful outdoor experiences.

A play area will include a miniature version of the Crab & Winkle Railway Line with winches and wooden 'trains'.



It will be an amenity space with cycle paths, walking/wheeling routes and picnic areas set within a landscaped park, all planted in a naturalistic style with native trees and plants.

There will also be a natural play area for children, a bird hide overlooking the Sarre Penn valley and stream, and toilets and other facilities.

BLEAN BIOPARK



Blean Biopark Vision

An open, thriving space connecting people, nature, culture, heritage and education. Combining biodiversity restoration, innovative ecological solutions, local history and heritage, and activities that foster community wellbeing and access to nature.

Collaboration with local partners will underpin our vision, to maximise impact and establish financial resilience.



A **Regenerative farming**

Land north of Tyler Hill Road suits research in food, farming, and conservation.

D **Restoring habitat**

A restored habitat and gateway to Blean Woodland, accessible from Canterbury and Whitstable.

D **Enhancing heritage**

Celebrating local heritage, including the world's first passenger railway: the Crab & Winkle line.

D **Planting woodland**

Green finance will fund nature recovery, with managed access that protects biodiversity and rights of way.

E **Country Park**

Amenity space with native planting, walking and cycling routes, play, and wildlife experiences.



Benefits for University and Canterbury District

350+

Additional Students

Annually through distinctive
green curriculum

£9.7M

Student Revenue for Uni

Over three years from
increased recruitment

£4M+

Research Funding

Estimated new grant
opportunities

BLEAN BIOPARK

KEY

-  National Cycle Route 1
-  Accessible paths
-  Woodland
-  Hedgerow
-  Regenerative farming
-  Country Park amenities
-  Eco tourism
-  Rivers & ponds

Blean Biopark is a living landscape where nature, heritage, and community come together. From ancient woods and wildflower meadows to low-impact homes and regenerative farming, the site blends conservation with sustainable living. It's a place where wildlife thrives, people stay, and ideas grow—rooted in the land's rich history, including the nearby Crab and Winkle Way.



Thank you - any questions?