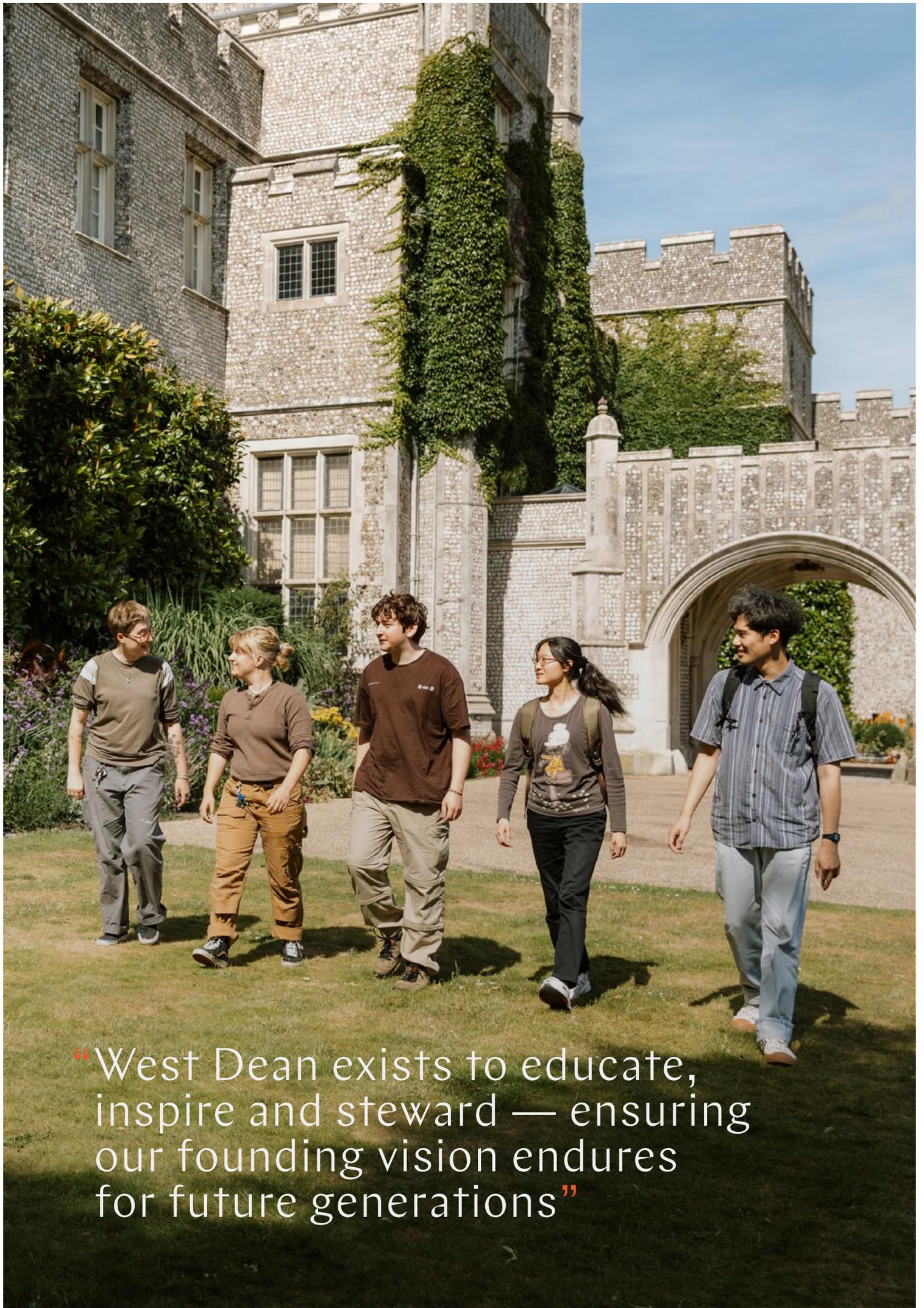


WEST  DEAN

STRATEGY

2026 — 2031



“West Dean exists to educate, inspire and steward — ensuring our founding vision endures for future generations”

INTRODUCTION BY THE CEO AND PRINCIPAL

West Dean is truly distinctive. We combine internationally recognised education in arts, craft, conservation, design and horticulture across our campuses in Sussex and Bloomsbury in London. We also steward a historic working estate and gardens that welcome tens of thousands of visitors each year, alongside the remarkable legacy and collections of our founder, Edward James.

This Strategy charts West Dean's course to 2031. It builds on West Dean's founding vision and our reputation for practice-led excellence, while responding to a rapidly changing educational, cultural and environmental landscape. Shaped through extensive engagement with colleagues, students, alumni, trustees and partners, it sets out an ambitious plan to ensure West Dean thrives for generations to come.

Over the period of this Strategy, we will grow our reputation and broaden our reach, welcoming new and more diverse learners, visitors and audiences, while strengthening our long-term sustainability across all that we do.

In education, we will deepen and diversify our portfolio, invest in teaching excellence and learner support, and strengthen relationships with our alumni and returning learners. As a visitor and cultural destination, we will enhance the experience we offer across our gardens, estate and collections, creating more ways for people to engage with us. As custodians of our heritage and landscape, we will conserve and improve what has been entrusted to us, including for those who work and live on it, embedding environmental sustainability across our work and progressing toward climate neutrality by 2030.

Delivery will depend on the things that enable success: developing our people, working in partnership with others and strengthening our technology and infrastructure.

By 2031, our ambition is that West Dean will be a sustainable, outward-facing institution, rooted in our heritage and founding purpose, equipped for the future and confident in the value we provide. Achieving this will require focus, collaboration and creativity. With our dedicated colleagues, committed Trustees, inspirational students, loyal alumni and generous supporters, I am confident we can deliver.

Professor Anna Gough-Yates

CHIEF EXECUTIVE & PRINCIPAL



**West Dean has huge strengths,
with its distinctive provision,
strong heritage, attractive
estate and a committed
community of staff, students,
alumni, trustees and volunteers
delivering excellence
across diverse educational,
cultural, environmental
and commercial activities.**



Over the coming years, we will need to ensure we harness the opportunities and challenges ahead, in a world of rapid change, greater uncertainty and technological change. Our legacy, and the plans outlined below, put us in a strong position to do so.

This document includes:

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Describing what drives us

OUR VISION 7

Outlining where we aspire to be at the end of this Strategic Plan

OUR VALUES 8

Describing our ethos bequeathed by our founder Edward James

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Setting out what we will aim to do and how

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Which will support the delivery of this Strategy

OUR MISSION

We educate and inspire people to achieve their potential, through exceptional teaching, creative practice and engagement with arts, craft, conservation, design and horticulture.

We protect and steward our extraordinary estate, ensuring it remains a sustainable and productive resource. We engage our learners and diverse audiences with our natural environment, our heritage and with one another, providing an environment that fosters creativity and wellbeing.



West Dean is a leading centre for excellence in the arts and environmental sustainability.

We are outward-facing and partnership-driven, sharing our distinctive approach with diverse audiences locally, nationally and internationally.

Through educational excellence, cultural contribution and environmental stewardship, we ensure Edward James's vision endures for future generations.

OUR VISION



OUR VALUES

Our founder, Edward James, conceived of West Dean as a community rooted in creative learning, and care for both culture and landscape. Our values derive from this vision and shape how we work today:

Creativity and independence

We nurture creative excellence and encourage independent thinking. We value innovation, experimentation and the courage to challenge convention.

Practice and making

We believe in learning through making. We see craftsmanship as a tool for self-exploration, connecting us to traditions and contemporary practice. We recognise the power of making to support wellbeing, creativity and personal development.

Community and collaboration

We foster an inclusive, collaborative environment that connects diverse communities with creative pursuits. We aim to spread culture through teaching and to preserve knowledge that might otherwise be lost.

Stewardship and sustainability

We value heritage and the natural environment, for their intrinsic worth and as spaces that inspire creativity, learning and wellbeing.





OUR AIMS AND GOALS

EDUCATION

As a provider of skills and learning, we will be a recognised authority in art, craft, conservation, design and creative education, reaching diverse audiences, while sustaining the distinctive, practice-led experience that defines West Dean.

By 2031, we aim to:

- Be a partner of choice for leading educational organisations, professional bodies and creative enterprises in art, craft, design and conservation.
- Deliver inspirational teaching that fosters creativity and builds practical skills that will endure in an era of rapid technological change.
- Serve diverse communities of learners, including those engaged in professional development, those forging new careers, and those exploring creativity for personal fulfilment and wellbeing.
- Build a sustainable educational portfolio that deepens engagement with our existing community while reaching new audiences.
- Provide the support, infrastructure and technology that enable learners to succeed.
- Create lasting relationships with alumni and returning learners, opening opportunities for mentoring, collaboration and lifelong engagement with West Dean.
- Connect those we teach with activities in our gardens and wider estate to enhance their wellbeing and enrich their experience.

To do this we will:

- Develop new partnerships with educational, cultural and industry organisations to reach new communities of learners, build our reputation and grow our reach and sustainability.
- Enhance and diversify our curriculum to meet learner demand, including expanding provision in building conservation, garden design and horticulture, and provision related to environmental sustainability and wellbeing.
- Adapt and differentiate the design and delivery of courses to meet the distinct needs of professional, entrepreneurial and leisure learners.
- Invest in staff development to ensure teaching excellence, innovation in learning delivery, and effective use of digital tools.
- Harness technology and data insight to enhance the learner journey and student support, improve retention and internal communications, and inform future course development.
- Tailor academic and pastoral support to ensure it meets diverse needs and enables student success and progression.
- Support Higher Education students to build their professional skills and networks through expanded mentoring, employer talks, and engagement with industry experts.

- Integrate opportunities within programmes and extracurricular activities for students and learners to connect with our estate.
- Launch a new loyalty scheme to deepen connections with our short course and CPD learners.
- Establish a new Friends of West Dean programme to build ongoing relationships with alumni, former learners and friends of the College, and open new opportunities for current students.
- Advocate for the value of crafts and making in supporting wellbeing, mental health, creativity and educational development, as well as their wider contribution to the economy.

We will measure and report on KPIs in the following areas:

Income	Net contribution from educational activities
Satisfaction	% of short course learners very likely to recommend West Dean
Satisfaction	% Higher Education students satisfied with teaching experience
Progression	Higher Education completion rate
Engagement	Graduates and short course learners in Friends of West Dean scheme





VISITOR AND CULTURAL DESTINATION

As a cultural institution and visitor destination, we will be recognised as a leading centre for heritage, horticulture and creativity in the South of England, inspiring and connecting diverse audiences with West Dean's expertise and heritage.

We aim to:

- Be recognised as a leading visitor destination and cultural institution in the South of England.
- Deliver an enriching and engaging experience to diverse audiences coming to explore our gardens, estate, and the Edward James Collections and Archives.
- Provide an excellent residential experience for guests visiting the estate and holidaymakers seeking to explore the South Downs and West Sussex.
- Connect visitors and guests with our wider educational mission and estates activities, showcasing our expertise and fostering ongoing relationships with them.

To do this we will:

- Engage actively with campaigns at regional and national level, to raise awareness of the range of activities available at West Dean and to promote West Sussex as a visitor destination.
- Develop initiatives in partnership with local organisations to grow and diversify visitor audiences.
- Launch a new range of paid activities for guests and visitors that draw on the estate and the expertise of our colleagues, including those connected to personal mental and physical wellbeing.
- Broaden and deepen our membership scheme to create a wider community of returning visitors, who in turn connect with our educational mission.
- Introduce and promote a diverse range of opportunities for the public to visit West Dean, including new high-quality events, craft fairs, and evening and weekend activities that work alongside our educational provision.
- Increase engagement with the Edward James Collections and Archives through new paid tours, online activities and partnerships.
- Invest in our accommodation to ensure that it meets the expectations of residential visitors, and expand provision through new sustainable, nature-based stays - including cabins, lodges and camping on the wider estate.
- Introduce new digital technology and communications approaches to enhance visitor engagement, cross-promotion of our educational activities, and improve the overall experience of our visitors and residential guests.
- Promote our courses and the creative work and outputs of our students, alumni, tutors and staff across our physical and retail spaces in both Sussex and London, to connect our visitors and guests with our expertise.

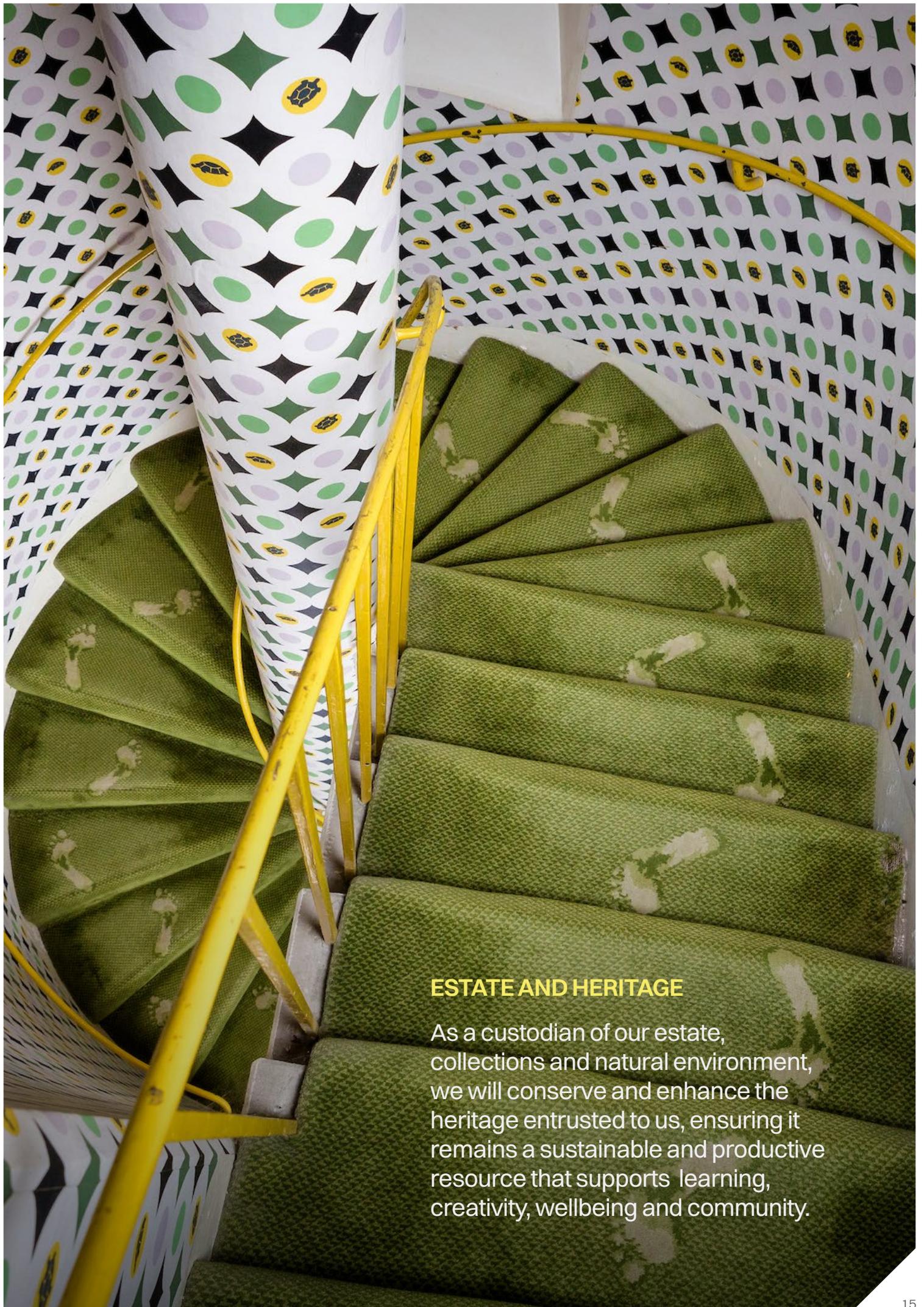
We will measure and report on KPIs in the following areas:

Income Income from commercial activities

Loyalty Membership volume and value

Engagement Edward James Archive - reach





ESTATE AND HERITAGE

As a custodian of our estate, collections and natural environment, we will conserve and enhance the heritage entrusted to us, ensuring it remains a sustainable and productive resource that supports learning, creativity, wellbeing and community.

We aim to:

- Ensure our estate and its rich heritage, archives, collections and natural resources are open to a wide and diverse range of audiences and communities, inspiring and educating them, and enhancing their wellbeing and physical and mental health.
- Utilise our estate to its full potential, making it a resource for makers, creators, designers and entrepreneurs, as well as for businesses and the local community.
- Be known as an innovator in heritage and environmental conservation, actively stewarding our natural environment and historic assets so they are protected, preserved and able to thrive.
- Achieve climate neutrality by 2030, embedding environmental sustainability across our activities.
- Ensure we provide a physical environment that serves the needs of those who work and live with us, including our staff, students, and tenants.
- Foster collaborative partnerships with national and regional organisations engaged in heritage conservation and environmental sustainability.

To do this we will:

- Widen opportunities for our staff, students, and wider communities to connect with our natural and heritage assets, and engage externally to raise awareness of our work in biodiversity and environmental sustainability.
- Develop new schemes that promote volunteering on our estate and recognise and celebrate the value they provide.
- Provide working and exhibition spaces, facilities, events and other uses of the estate that welcome external makers, creatives and businesses to engage with us and grow our reputation and revenue.
- Generate innovative uses for the London campus through new initiatives and partnership.
- Introduce new innovative measures to protect our natural environment in Sussex, progressively creating new priority habitats, expanding woodland and wildlife corridors, while supporting productive, sustainable and regenerative farming operations.
- Introduce practical measures to improve energy efficiency and resource utilisation as we work toward climate neutrality, promoting awareness of environmental sustainability among colleagues, students and visitors.
- Ensure there is an ongoing focus on utilising produce and natural resources from the estate in our catering, retail, workshops and other activities.

- Implement measures to protect and promote our heritage and historic assets and promote the value of the conservation and traditional building skills that West Dean delivers in supporting these activities.
- Invest in our estate sustainably to support those who live, study and work on it, seeking opportunities for external funding and revenue generation to support this.
- Ensure our estate is accessible, inclusive and optimally utilised - removing physical barriers while maximising the educational, creative and commercial potential of our spaces.
- Deepen partnerships with national bodies such as Natural England, Historic England and local partners including the South Downs National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission, to remain at the forefront of innovation in environmental sustainability, biodiversity, and heritage management.

We will measure and report on KPIs in the following areas:

Income	Income from estate activities
Sustainability	Reduction in scope 1 & 2 carbon emissions (location and market)
Biodiversity	% of estate transformed into priority habitats



OUR STRATEGIC ENABLERS



To achieve our strategy, we will:

Develop our people

We will build an engaged, collaborative culture where colleagues are developed professionally, connected to our mission and strategy, and equipped to contribute to West Dean's success. To do this we will:

- Implement a staff development programme that builds capabilities in operational effectiveness, teaching excellence, digital skills and financial literacy - equipping colleagues to contribute to organisational transformation.
- Foster cross-departmental collaboration and communication, breaking down silos between education, commercial, estates and visitor operations to drive innovation.
- Create an inclusive community that draws on the widest range of perspectives and creative talents.
- Connect individual roles and development to our shared mission and strategic goals by introducing annual business planning and enhanced internal communications.

Embrace partnership and engagement

Partnership and engagement will be embedded across all our strategic priorities. We will build and deepen engagement internally and with external organisations aligned to our values to broaden our reach, reputation and sustainability. To do this we will:

- Implement structures and activities to ensure that the voices of learners, colleagues, tenants and visitors are reflected in how we deliver our services, through improved internal communications, feedback mechanisms and service co-design.
- Develop external partnerships that support and expand our educational delivery, including organisational training, co-delivery and joint branding.
- Build partnerships with craft makers, creatives and businesses to raise awareness of West Dean and to enable us to deliver our services more effectively.

Invest in technology and infrastructure

We will strengthen our underlying digital infrastructure. We will utilise technology, including artificial intelligence, to improve our learning and teaching, including augmented and hybrid delivery. We will develop systems that support how we engage with our learners and prospective students, enhance how we deliver our commercial and estates activities. To do this we will:

- Implement measures to enhance our data and insight capacity, introducing new metrics to assess how well we are retaining core loyal learners and visitors and diversifying and reaching new audiences.
- Introduce new systems to improve how we engage with prospective students and learners, connect with our garden visitors, and support our retail and commercial activities.
- Utilise technology and data to improve space and accommodation planning and utilisation.
- Invest in our core IT infrastructure and estate to enhance our resilience and improve the experience of our students, visitors, guests, and those that work for us.
- Ensure IT and technology training is a central part of ongoing staff development.

Secure financial sustainability

We will deliver annual operating surpluses by the end of this strategy, to provide the capacity to invest for the future and ensure our mission endures.

- Diversify income sources through portfolio development, commercial activity, partnerships, and philanthropic giving, and legacies.
- Innovate to deliver our operations and activities more efficiently and sustainably.
- Introduce an annual business review process to prioritise and direct resources to the areas that best support delivery of our strategy and mission.
- Embed financial literacy in our staff development and communications.

We will measure and report on KPI:

Sustainability	Sustained operating surplus
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WEST  DEAN