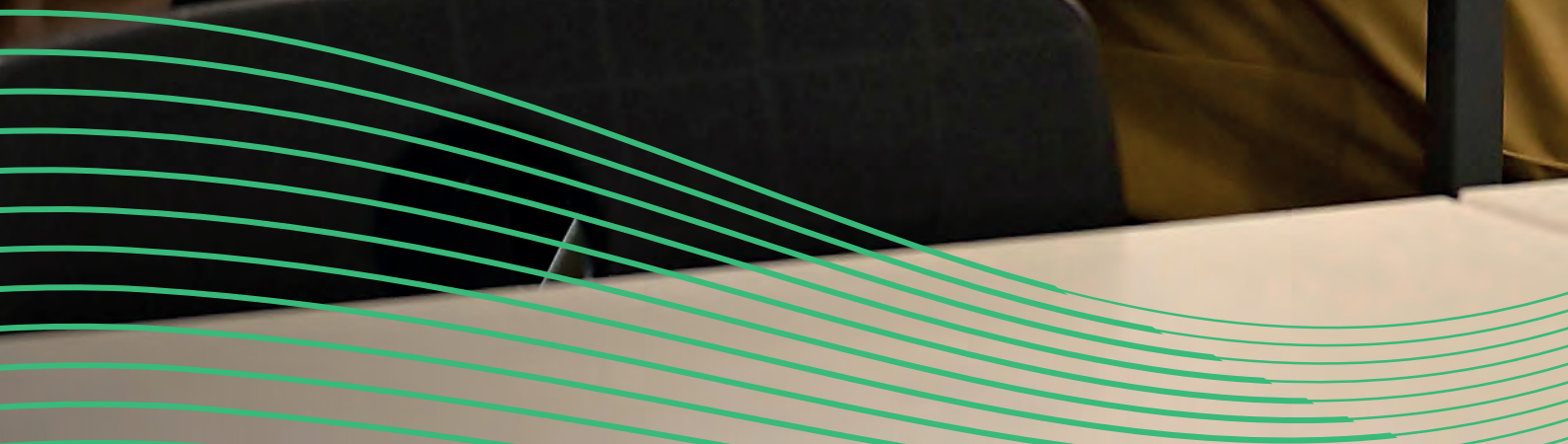


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# Sustainable Innovation Challenge 2025



# Contents.

The R&A was proud to work in collaboration with the University of Liverpool, Ulster University, Manchester Metropolitan University and the Berlin School of Economics and Law to deliver the 2025 Sustainable Innovation Challenge, linked to the 153<sup>rd</sup> Open Championship, held at Royal Portrush Golf Club, Northern Ireland.

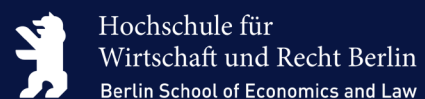
The annual event provides a unique opportunity to inspire future leaders, foster fresh perspectives from diverse backgrounds and cultivate entrepreneurial spirit.

The event, delivered over two days, brought together 90 students from four universities, along with 20 employment partners, to support future employment opportunities.

The students spent time in Portrush, learning about the impact of The Open, the opportunities and challenges faced by the community and their hopes for hosting the largest sporting event to take place in Northern Ireland.

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Delivered in collaboration with:



<b>Sustainable Innovation Challenge 2025</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Day 1</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Day 2</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Biodiversity Corridor</b>	<b>10</b>



# Sustainable Innovation Challenge 2025.



The unique event was designed to bring together students from four leading universities to tackle a real-world business innovation and sustainability challenge set by The R&A.

### The challenge

Greenlinks is committed to ensuring The Open leaves a lasting positive legacy for the communities in which it is hosted each year.

Major sporting events bring a wide range of positive benefits; however, they also pose challenges, including the perceived negative impacts on the local community.

Develop a product, service or initiative that The Open could deliver — alongside its key stakeholders — in different locations each year, to leave a lasting positive legacy for the community.

Your solution should focus on one or more priority areas of Greenlinks, The Open's sustainability programme:

- Embracing low-carbon technologies
- Moving toward a circular economy
- Promoting and protecting nature
- Enhancing social value.

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# Day 1.

Day 1 of the challenge provided context and insight into Portrush and the forthcoming 153<sup>rd</sup> Open Championship.





# Day 2.

Day 2 consisted of a fast-paced, facilitated workshop dedicated to helping diverse student groups explore the challenge, develop possible innovative solutions and create short promotional pitches.





Three finalist teams progressed to the grand finale, held at Belfast City Hall.

# The Biodiversity Corridor.

The winning solution to the Sustainable Innovation Challenge 2025.

Written by Jessica Bennett, Manchester Metropolitan University, on behalf of the winning team members: Arthur Grangeiro De Souza, Dante Stirling, Ella McNiven, Hannah Willis, Jessica Bennett, Jessica Giebler and Samawer Rehman.



This proposal utilises repurposed resources and engagement from The Open, alongside local community involvement, to foster environmental action, economic growth, youth education and the physical, mental and social benefits of connecting with nature.

The solution could be delivered at future Open Championships, as well as any other major golf or sporting events, to create a true legacy.

## The project focuses on increasing biodiversity through:

### 1. A nature pathway

Providing transitional corridors and ideal habitats for invertebrates, small mammals and migrating birds, with a focus of restoring plant species suited to the coastal setting.

This directly contributes to action on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 15.5, which targets urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats and halt the loss of biodiversity.

### 2. Recycled golf ball nest boxes

Utilising waste material from the Championship, this creative proposal – to build bird boxes out of golf balls used at The Open – could support coastal, ‘At Risk’, ground-nesting bird species such as the Red Grouse, Little Tern, Ringed Plover and Oystercatcher.

### 3. Community education and engagement

Designed by young people for young people, education and engagement is at the heart of this idea. Local schools, community groups, university students and apprentices can support the creation of The Biodiversity Corridor, gaining practical skills, career development and pride in the natural environment.

The Biodiversity Corridor solution has a strong community legacy; it presents an opportunity to link communities with nature and help them embed sustainability into their daily lives. Young participants will gain green skills applicable to any career, subject or role.

### 4. Funding and resources

The goal for this project was to develop a realistic, achievable solution. Therefore, at the core of The Biodiversity Corridor’s creation and maintenance are volunteers and charities, gaining positive results through collaborative return.

There are opportunities to collaborate with the RSPB; local conservation organisations such as Ulster Wildlife; and The Open Legacy Fund to resource the project.

The 153<sup>rd</sup> Open Championship will welcome more than 270,000 attendees – an unrivalled opportunity to engage the public through pop-up experiences, informative signage and nature-based activities. Golf fans around the world can also engage through digital short-form content, broadcast across 80 countries.

Competing golf professionals and attending celebrities and influencers can act as ambassadors for golf, nature and the community throughout the Championship. They can also feature as biodiversity ambassadors on the R&A website and social media.

This living project will continue to promote and protect nature at every course, long after The Open has moved to its next location. It will integrate nature into a major sports event, reach more diverse audiences and create an inclusive community legacy.









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