



## University of Bristol

The University of Bristol is one of the UK's most prestigious institutions, consistently ranked among the country's top universities and internationally recognised for research excellence, academic innovation, and its contribution to global scholarship. Its estate features a diverse mix of historic, modern, and specialist buildings spread across the city of Bristol, including complex academic environments, public facing facilities, and extensive external landscapes that together support a world class teaching and research experience.

The University employs a significant number of staff within its Estates, Campus Operations and external service teams, delivering hard and soft FM functions across a wide portfolio of buildings, gardens, and grounds. Services support thousands of students, academics, professional staff and visitors every day. The estate includes heritage assets, modern learning spaces, laboratories, administrative environments and ecologically important external features, all with unique operational and compliance requirements. The University continues to invest in improving its infrastructure, developing innovative learning environments and enhancing sustainability across the campus.

The Estates and Gardens & Grounds teams provide a critical service to the University community, maintaining safe, stimulating and high quality spaces that support teaching, research and student wellbeing. The institution's sustainability strategy underpins all elements of its operations, with a strong commitment to environmental stewardship, biodiversity, and the long term preservation of historically and ecologically significant areas. These principles are embedded in the wider estates vision, enabling the University to balance operational performance with a forward looking commitment to climate responsibility and user experience.

## Background

The University identified a need to review the delivery arrangements for elements of its Estates and External Services portfolio, including Gardens & Grounds and wider operational FM areas. Questions had emerged around resilience, performance consistency, value for money and the ability of the current model to meet future strategic needs. The University also recognised the importance of aligning services with its sustainability goals, operational priorities, and wider institutional values. As part of the review, an external and objective assessment was required to determine where improvements could be achieved and how best to future proof the service model

In addition, the University sought clarity on operational structures, role definitions, and how effectively resources were deployed across a geographically distributed estate. With growing demands on service quality, student expectations and financial accountability, the Directorate acknowledged the value of independent insight in validating current performance and identifying opportunities for service enhancement and cost efficiency.

## Brief

Litmus FM was appointed to undertake a comprehensive review of Estates related services, including operational efficiency, compliance, service quality, cost performance and structural resilience. The scope included reviewing Gardens & Grounds operations, assessing performance across all relevant external environments, and analysing the wider service delivery arrangements used by the University. The work required Litmus FM to:

- Assess operational effectiveness, resource deployment, productivity and service outcomes.
- Evaluate whether service standards, working practices and delivery methods aligned with institutional needs.

- Review compliance with statutory, environmental and FM specific requirements.
- Provide advice on governance structures, team roles and the sustainability of the operating model.
- Deliver actionable recommendations and a phased improvement plan aligned with best practice.

A further component of the programme included a detailed review of the External Estates function, examining how the service supported the University's academic mission, student experience and long term campus strategy. This included stakeholder engagement, data analysis and comparison against peer institutions.

## Approach

Litmus FM deployed a structured methodology based on recognised FM standards and sector benchmarking. The consultancy team engaged with key University stakeholders, carried out site assessments across academic and external environments, reviewed documentation, analysed current processes and explored performance across all service lines. The approach combined qualitative and quantitative evaluation, enabling a balanced view of operational strengths, improvement opportunities and strategic risks.

The assessment was informed by industry frameworks including RICS, BCIS, BICSc, and relevant technical standards, complemented by the extensive Litmus FM benchmarking database. Detailed exploration of the University's gardens, grounds, horticultural assets and external environments enabled the identification of improvements in resource deployment, specialist expertise, productivity and environmental performance. Additional work examined operational frameworks, governance, team structures, financial controls and the alignment of service design with institutional priorities.

Comprehensive stakeholder engagement provided further insight into how services were perceived, delivered and measured. This ensured that the review

reflected both strategic and operational perspectives, supporting a holistic, evidence based set of recommendations for the University.

## Outcomes

All findings were consolidated into a detailed, evidence based report, providing:

- A clear understanding of performance across all reviewed services, highlighting areas where standards were met or exceeded, and where improvement was required.
- A competitive understanding of how the University's service model compared with peers, supported by benchmarking and operational metrics.
- A structured framework for delivering change, enabling the University to compare current delivery with alternative options and future ready models.
- Tactical and strategic recommendations designed to strengthen resilience, enhance operational efficiency and support the University's sustainability and campus experience goals.

The assessment was endorsed by sector leadership, with Caroline Wynn, Associate Director of Campus Services at the University of Bristol, providing the following testimonial:

●●● *"I highly recommend Litmus FM for their exceptional work on the comprehensive review of the External Estates department at Bristol University. Led by Dee Cooper, Gerard Horrigan and Kate Davis, their meticulous approach combined thorough document analysis with insightful stakeholder engagement. The resulting report offered a detailed assessment with actionable recommendations that addressed key challenges and strategic opportunities. Litmus FM demonstrated a deep understanding of the department's complexities, and their focus on fostering collaboration, enhancing commercial viability and optimising operational efficiency will be invaluable for the department's future success."* ●●●



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