Bristol plans wetland network to curb floods

LEVEL B2


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I. WARM-UP

1. What places in your city help with flooding or heat?
2. Have you visited a wetland or nature reserve? What was it like?
3. How can cities make nature part of daily life?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

initiative
a new plan or programme to solve a problem or improve something

restore
to bring something back to a good condition or to its original state

habitat
the natural home where a plant or animal lives

floodplain
low land next to a river that sometimes fills with water

accreditation
official recognition that something meets a set standard

module
a unit or section that is part of a larger structure

biodiversity
the variety of living things in an area

footfall
the number of people who visit a place, such as a shopping area

III. READING

Bristol could become the UK's first 'wetland city' under a five-year initiative led by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT). The charity plans more than 200 projects to restore and create wetlands across the city.

These range from small rainwater ponds and street rain gardens to restoring river habitats, reconnecting rivers with their floodplains, and building new wetlands. The project started in September, when WWT installed floating wetlands at three sites in the city-centre harbour.

The islands use buoyant modules planted with wetland species, which quickly attracted dragonflies and birds. They also slow and store rainwater during heavy rain, cutting flood risk and reusing clean roof water.

WWT aims to gain wetland city accreditation under the Ramsar convention, which recognises cities that protect urban wetlands. There are 74 accredited wetland cities in 27 countries, including 22 in China. The insurer Aviva will fund the Bristol work with £8.9m over five years.

With about 100 miles of waterways and a strong maritime heritage, the city could boost biodiversity — and even increase mooring fees and retail footfall in the centre.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Bristol aims to become UK's first 'wetland...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who is leading Bristol's wetland city project?
2. How long will the programme run, and how many projects are planned?
3. What did WWT install in September, and where?
4. How can wetlands help during heavy rain, according to the text?
5. Who is funding the work, and how much are they giving?

V. DISCUSSION

1. What benefits could Bristol see from becoming a wetland city?
2. What concerns might residents have about adding more wetlands?
3. Should other UK cities copy this plan? Why or why not?
4. How could local people join the initiative in simple ways?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Will vs going to (prediction)

Use will + base verb for general predictions or decisions made now. Use be going to + base verb when there is present evidence or a plan.

"I think more cities ***will protect*** *their wetlands in the future."*

"With heavy rain forecast, some paths ***are going to*** *be slippery."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with will or be going to, based on the context.

1. That bird is diving into the pond! It (catch) ___ a fish. _____
2. It's busy; we (add) ___ more volunteers now. _____
3. Biodiversity (increase) ___ across the city over time. _____
4. The river is rising fast; it (burst) ___ its banks. _____
5. That box of plants looks heavy. I (carry) ___ it for you. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading, 8–10 minutes comprehension, 10 minutes grammar, 10–12 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check key terms students may not know: wetland, floodplain, accreditation, footfall. Use images of rain gardens and floating wetlands to anchor meaning.
- Run a jigsaw read: half the class highlights flood benefits; half notes community and economic effects. Pairs then exchange findings before whole-class feedback.
- Differentiate by product: higher-level students draft a two-sentence pitch for funding; others list three local actions (e.g., a rain garden) with one benefit each.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Board categories first (flood safety, nature, access) and prompt for one example in each.
2. If fears stall ideas, switch to problem–solution pairs to keep the tone practical.
3. Take a quick vote, then pair students from opposite sides to swap one strong reason.
4. Set a two-minute limit: students propose one action and one expected result.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 70-word public notice inviting residents to help build a rain garden.

Presentation: Create a 2-minute pitch to a local council on one wetland project and its benefits.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Will vs going to (prediction)

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who is leading Bristol's wetland city project?
   The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT).
2. How long will the programme run, and how many projects are planned?
   Five years, with more than 200 projects.
3. What did WWT install in September, and where?
   Floating wetlands at three sites in the harbour.
4. How can wetlands help during heavy rain, according to the text?
   They slow and store rainwater, cutting flood risk.
5. Who is funding the work, and how much are they giving?
   Aviva, contributing £8.9m over five years.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with will or be going to, based on the context.

1. That bird is diving into the pond! It ___ a fish. **is going to catch**
2. It's busy; we ___ more volunteers now. **will add / are going to add**
3. Biodiversity ___ across the city over time. **will increase / is going to increase**
4. The river is rising fast; it ___ its banks. **is going to burst**
5. That box of plants looks heavy. I ___ it for you. **will carry**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use will + base verb for general predictions or decisions made now. Use be going to + base verb when there is present evidence or a plan. (Examples constructed.)

"I think more cities **will protect** *their wetlands in the future."*

"With heavy rain forecast, some paths **are going to** *be slippery."*