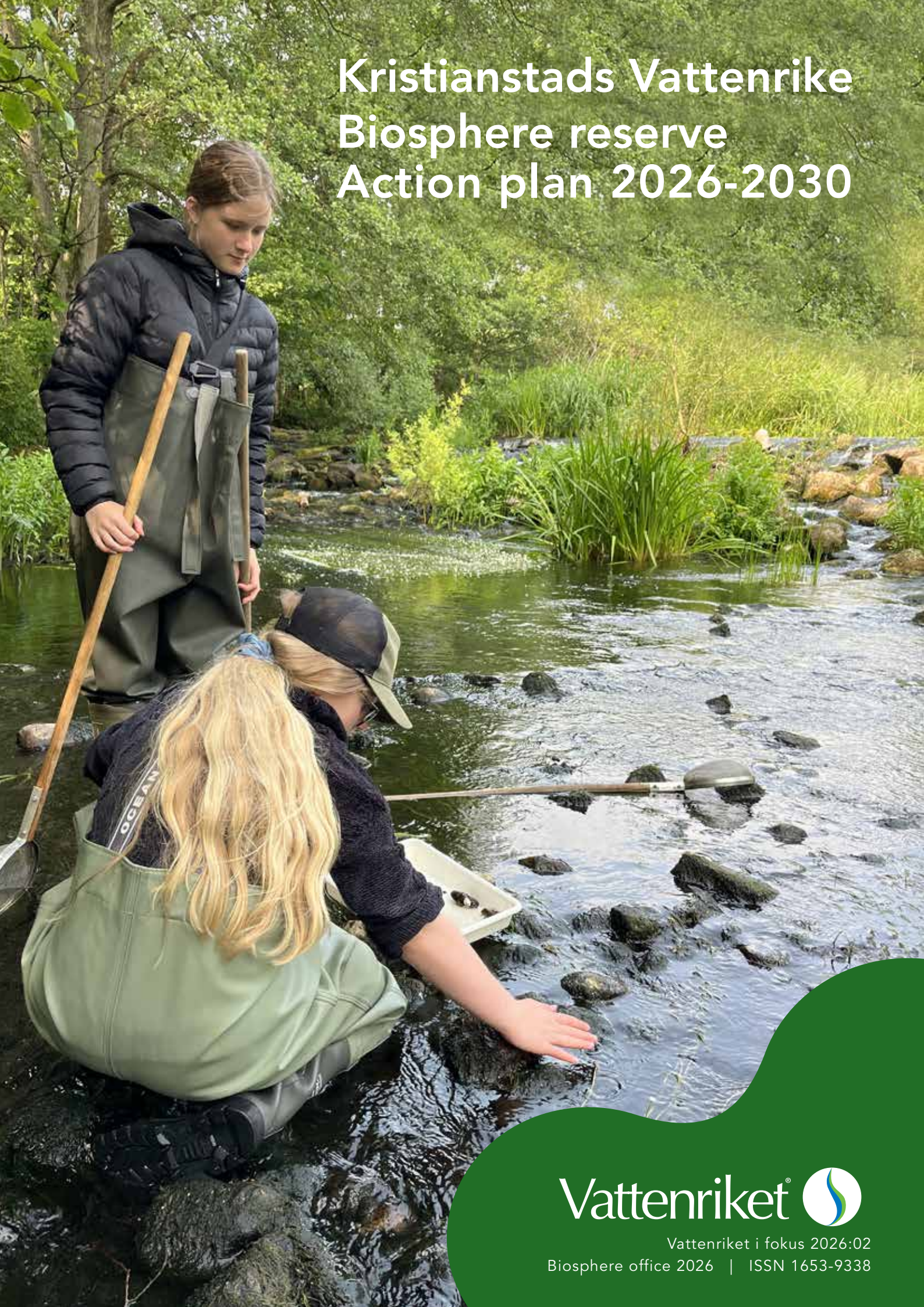


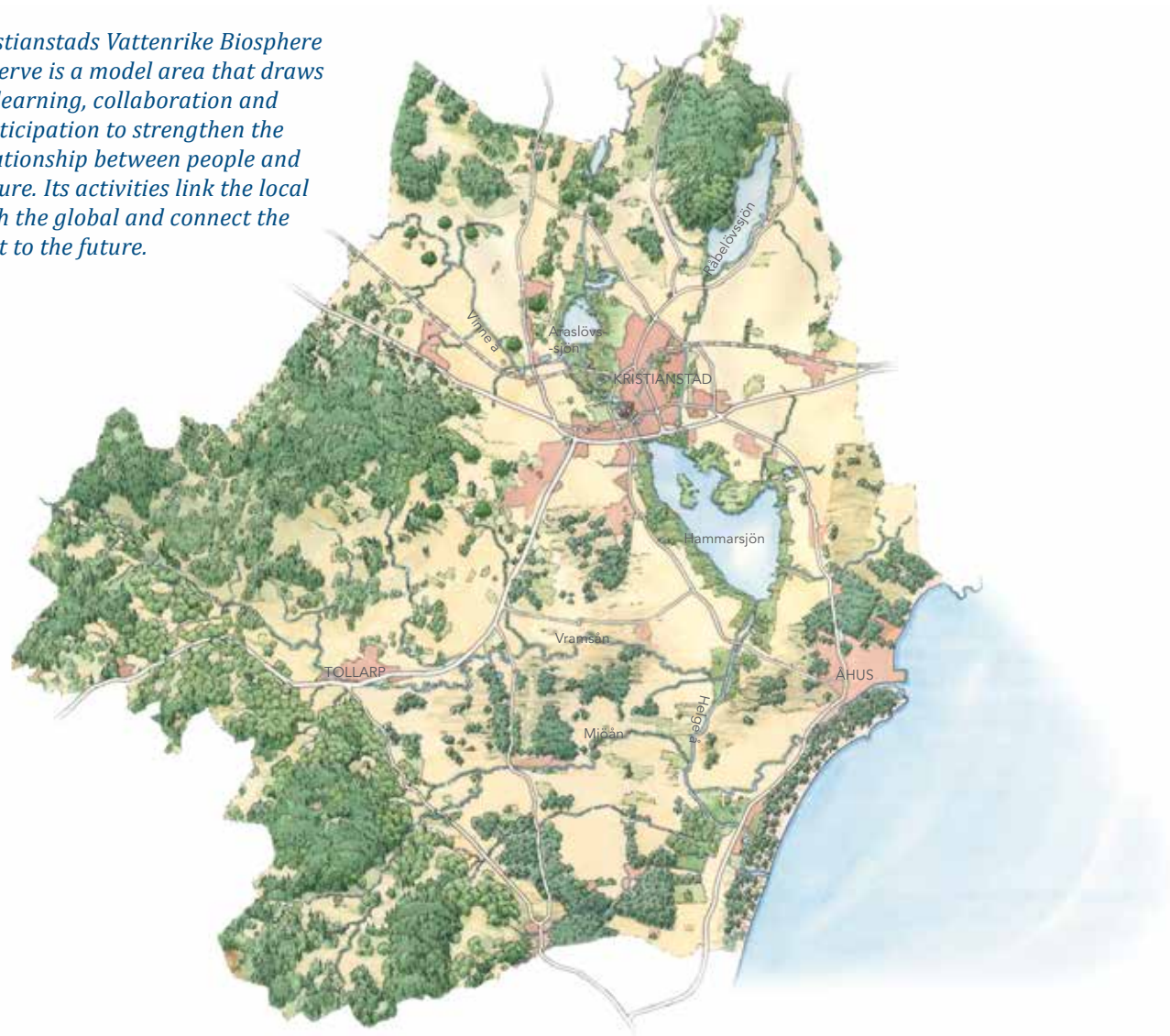
Kristianstads Vattenrike Biosphere reserve Action plan 2026-2030



Vattenriket® 

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Kristianstads Vattenrike Biosphere Reserve is a model area that draws on learning, collaboration and participation to strengthen the relationship between people and nature. Its activities link the local with the global and connect the past to the future.



Kristianstads Vattenrike Biosphere Reserve

Kristianstads Vattenrike (Vattenriket) is a UNESCO-designated biosphere reserve. As of 2026 there are 784 biosphere reserves worldwide, eight of them in Sweden. All serve as model areas for sustainable community development by creating, showcasing and sharing good examples of concrete initiatives that have both local and global significance.

Vattenriket occupies two-thirds of the municipality of Kristianstad, a landscape rich in cultural history and endowed with almost every type of natural habitat to be found in Sweden.

The majestic River Helge å, fed by streams from the ridges and plains and fringed by wetlands and seasonally flooded grasslands, flows through the area into Lakes Araslövssjön and Hammarsjön before reaching the sea in Hanöbukten Bay. But Vattenriket is also home to lush broadleaf forests and dry, sandy arable land. Our mission is to conserve, develop and support the values of this varied landscape.

Species-rich – values and responsibility

Such varied landscape provides numerous habitats for animals, plants and fungi. Vattenriket is exceptionally biodiverse and a true hotspot for endangered species. Covering less than one fifth of one percent of Sweden's surface, it is nonetheless a refuge for some 20 percent of the nation's red-listed species.

We want Vattenriket to be a healthy and sustainable environment for both nature and people. That is why our Biosphere Office's many projects seek to help flora and fauna to thrive, while also enabling people to benefit from nature without harming it.

Research shows that resilient, biodiverse ecosystems are essential in addressing climate change. This places a significant responsibility on us to conserve and further develop Vattenriket's species-rich diversity and valuable habitats, while strengthening ecosystem functions – for example by retaining water in the landscape and regulating flows.

Rich in knowledge – learning and research

To conserve and strengthen biodiversity and ecosystem services, we must learn more about the landscape and nature – not least, by producing and sharing new knowledge. The Biosphere Office inventories natural values, writes and distributes reports, collaborates with researchers and organises conferences, so learning and experience can lay the groundwork for long-term sustainable decisions. The naturum Vattenriket visitor centre hosts nature interpretation services, lectures, activities and school visits.

Rich in ideas – solutions and collaboration

We collaborate with other municipal units, the County Administrative Board, local associations, companies and landowners to develop and test solutions for how best to conserve, utilise and develop the landscape in a sustainable way. Examples include initiatives to safeguard threatened species by creating wetlands, restoring natural environments and rehabilitating sandy arable land. Collaboration helps turn knowledge into action, strengthening the function of the landscape and the resilience of ecosystems.

Rich in experiences – naturen som mötesplats

Making it easier to get closer to nature is an effective way to generate interest. Our 20+ visitor sites with outdoor museums, birdwatching towers and trails make nature more accessible and more engaging. The naturum visitor centre serves as a meeting place and showcase. Here visitors can learn about our biosphere reserve work and get help to explore the area for themselves.

Rich in fun – joy inspires change

Humour and joy are guiding principles in our work. We believe the way towards changing attitudes about sustainable societal development goes through the heart, by inspiring awe, curiosity and engagement.

Rich in water – nature's resources in a new light

Today our local wetlands are no longer seen as a problem but as valuable environments with rich potential. This is a testament to a new attitude towards making sustainable use of nature's resources.

The hallmarks of the Biosphere Office are a high level of expertise, good stewardship and dedicated staff. Passion, drive and a strong team spirit have made Vattenriket a strong brand and an international example of development that benefits both nature and people.



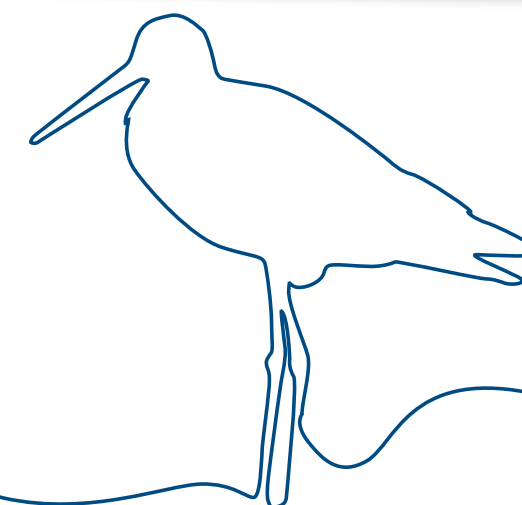
The joy of discovery! Nature educators and schoolchildren explore nature together.



Putting knowledge into action. New wetlands improve habitats for pike.



The road to change goes via the heart by inspiring curiosity and engagement.



Vattenriket

– a model area for sustainable development

In 2005 Vattenriket was designated a biosphere reserve by UNESCO. The reserve functions as a model area for sustainable development, where conservation of natural values goes hand in hand with local engagement and societal development. Vattenriket is an important driver of municipal sustainability work and a central element of Kristianstad's identity and attractiveness as a long-term living environment.

Governance and strategic direction

The 2026–2030 action plan sets the direction of work over the next five years. It is based on UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves Statutory Framework, the global Hangzhou Strategic Action Plan for UNESCO's biosphere programme, Agenda 2030, Sweden's national environmental and outdoor recreation goals, Kristianstad Municipality's Vision 2030 and sustainable development strategy, and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency's guidelines for naturum visitor centres.

Another cornerstone is Sweden's newly adopted strategy and action plan for biodiversity and ecosystem services, with new milestone goals for wild pollinators and urban green spaces. The global framework has been further strengthened by the UN's Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and the EU Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR). These guide biosphere office efforts to develop conservation work, strengthen ecosystems and contribute to halting and reversing biodiversity loss.

UN Global Goals – Agenda 2030

As learning sites for sustainable development, and neutral arenas for collaboration to connect stakeholders and maintain well-functioning ecosystems, biosphere reserves are key to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Their mission is to develop local solutions to global challenges. Green and blue values form the foundation

for ecological sustainability, which is crucial for achieving social and economic sustainability goals.

Biosphere Programme – a new global strategy

UNESCO's Biosphere Programme has combined its strategy and 2026–2035 action programme in the Hangzhou Strategic Action Plan. Its three overarching goals are to contribute to the implementation of international environmental agreements such as the KMGBF, Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030; to further develop the biosphere programme and its global network of biosphere reserves; and to advance research and share knowledge from this global network to support a life in harmony with nature. Key activities for Sweden's biosphere reserves are conserving natural habitats, promoting restoration measures, strengthening collaboration between biosphere reserves, engaging youth and optimising conditions for learning and research. Other priorities include citizen science, strategic communication and combating invasive species.

“Individuals and communities collaborate responsibly to create healthy, peaceful and prosperous societies that live in harmony with nature, with an emphasis on intra- and intergenerational justice and social and ecological solidarity.”

From the vision of UNESCO's Biosphere Programme

Tools in the Municipality's Vision 2030

Vision 2030, Kristianstad's municipal sustainability strategy, identifies the biosphere reserve alongside institutions such as the university, as a driver of ecological development. It also acknowledges the stewardship responsibility conferred by UNESCO on Vattenriket, as a biosphere reserve tasked with serving as a model for sustainable societal development.

Conserve, develop and support

Biosphere reserves identify and showcase good examples of how the use and conservation of nature can go hand in hand. They are testbeds for new methods and knowledge to achieve sustainable societal development. Through dialogue, research and collaboration, biosphere reserves demonstrate how to live in balance with nature.

Biosphere reserve work is based on three core pillars of UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves Statutory Framework:

Conserve: Contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation.

Develop: Foster economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable.

Support: Facilitate demonstration projects, research and knowledge development.

Naturum – meeting place and showcase

Naturum Vattenriket is an important meeting place and a showcase for the biosphere reserve's work, where local natural values are made evident and visitors are guided to Vattenriket's 20+ visitor sites. Naturum also plays an increasingly important role in nature education, citizen science and communication about functioning ecosystems and biodiversity.

Benefiting both nature and people

The motto for our work is 'Benefiting Nature and People'. As one of 784 biosphere reserves worldwide, we demonstrate how concrete local action helps solve global challenges. Together with landowners, associations, companies, authorities and researchers, we develop, test and share best practices. Broad collaboration, local engagement and shared working methods create knowledge and inspire innovation in ways that strengthen both natural values and societal development.

Inspiring best practices

All biosphere reserves have a biosphere office that implements UNESCO's concept locally. Work is led by a coordinator, who is also head of the biosphere and naturum. Vattenriket's Biosphere Office works in dialogue and collaboration with landowners, authorities and organisations, supported by a consultation group representing local stakeholders. We operate with a landscape perspective based on thematic landscapes and value areas in projects that inspire as good examples.

Dialogue and collaboration

Our work is grounded in a strong local foundation and close collaboration with associations, municipal departments, authorities, schools, businesses and landowners at local, regional, national and international levels. Kristianstad Municipality and the County Administrative Board of Skåne have signed a memorandum of understanding with a clear commitment to continue close cooperation on Kristianstad Vattenrike Biosphere Reserve.

Towards a sustainable mindset

The overarching long-term goal of Vattenriket activities is to foster a shift in outlook that supports an economically, ecologically and socially sustainable society. Work is structured around themes that span all activities, from concrete measures and information outreach to naturum programmes. The next five years will begin with a continued focus on *Nature's Smart Solutions*, to be followed by *Biodiversity*.



THE GLOBAL GOALS

Photo: Patrik Olofsson/N

Four focus areas

Activities undertaken by Kristianstads Vattenrike Biosphere Reserve extend over four focus areas, each constituting its own chapter in the Action Plan.



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Robust ecosystems and rich biodiversity



The majestic blue artery of the River Helge å flows through Vattenriket from Torsebro in the north to Hanöbukten Bay in the southeast. This rich and varied nature, a mosaic of almost all types of Swedish landscape except mountains, has long been shaped by human use. But the biosphere reserve also hosts a unique biological diversity.

To protect and develop differing habitats that are home to many rare plants, animals, fish and fungi, while also improving opportunities for recreation, we base management and conservation measures on knowledge obtained from research, surveys and follow-ups.

Dialogue and collaboration with other actors, innovation and a holistic landscape perspective are central to conserving and developing natural values and biodiversity. Together, the UN Kunming–Montreal Framework and the new EU Nature Restoration Regulation will play a key role in shaping the future of conservation work in Vattenriket.

International agreements lay the foundations

In response to the global decline in biological diversity – a trend also reflected in Kristianstads Vattenrike Biosphere Reserve – the UN's Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) was adopted in 2022. This sets a global direction for reversing biodiversity loss and achieving the vision of a society in harmony with nature by 2050.

In parallel, the EU's new Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR) imposes a series of binding deadlines on member states to restore ecosystems and habitats on land and in water.

A common direction for Vattenriket

The KMGBF and NRR documents provide a common direction for nature conservation work in the biosphere reserve. Between 2026 and 2030 we aim to use the biosphere reserve as a testbed for translating international and European goals into practical, local conservation work.

This work will contribute to increased knowledge, collaboration and shared methods, while also strengthening local biodiversity.

To help bolster its long-term ambitions, the Biosphere Office works to link local priorities to national goals and international commitments by advocating the adoption of

a municipal strategy for biodiversity.

Focus on invasive species

One prioritised area is the development of innovative methods for managing invasive alien species. The focus here will be on species such as Canada goldenrod that are considered to pose a significant threat to local biodiversity.

In this respect Vattenriket can function as a platform for early detection, coordinated efforts and new forms of collaboration, in close cooperation with other actors within the municipality.

Valuable habitats

Work to conserve, restore and develop Vattenriket's valuable habitats and species will continue. In line with the NRR, the Biosphere Office will participate in national and international projects, including initiatives under the EU LIFE programme.

The KMGBF highlights the importance of so called Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) – areas not formally protected but which, through use and management, conserve long-term biodiversity. During the period 2026–2030 the Biosphere Office will explore the feasibility of developing Vattenriket as an OECM area.

Grazing and haymaking improve biodiversity

Pastures and hay meadows are among Sweden's most species-rich environments. They are also an important part of the nation's cultural heritage. Grazing and haymaking keep the landscape open, benefiting species dependent on traditionally managed, flower-rich habitats. However, the 20th century witnessed a sharp decline in such areas. When traditional management ceases, the land quickly becomes overgrown, impacting plants, insects and birds.

Vattenriket includes the largest contiguous area of traditionally managed, inland seasonally flooded grasslands in Sweden. The Biosphere Office works closely with the County Administrative Board of Skåne, local livestock farmers and landowners to restore and develop these grasslands. One key focus of this work is improving conditions for wading birds. We recreate breeding habitats with good access to food and take action to reduce pressure from predators during the breeding season.

Work includes other traditionally managed grasslands, such as open pastures with scattered trees, and nutrient-rich fens. Species that thrive here are supported through adaptive management, targeted clearing, controlled grass burning and veteranisation. New methods and mechanised solutions are continuously being tested to optimise management and restoration techniques.



Close collaboration and dialogue help to conserve open landscapes and biodiversity.

Tests are under way to sow greater yellow-rattle from hayfields to promote the development of flower-rich grasslands in the Ekenabben and Kvarnnäs nature reserves. We are also continuing to inventory the area to strengthen our knowledge base for monitoring and management.

These efforts help the biosphere reserve develop its role as a testing ground for work under the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, which places particular importance on conserving and developing traditionally managed grasslands.



Kunming-Montreal

GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK





Tradition and new insights in sandy grasslands

Vattenriket's species-rich sandy grasslands are of great national significance. Shaped by a long tradition of management and land use, they provide unique habitats for many specialised plants and insects. The Biosphere Office works to conserve and develop the sandy grasslands through management practices that support biodiversity and create opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Work in sandy environments often involves traditional land-use methods – ploughing, rotational systems of cultivation and fallow, growing older crop varieties, etc. – that expose sand and preserve cultural-historical values. This creates green corridors that connect core areas of value within sandy regions.

In addition to continuous management and restoration, we act to mitigate threats to the biological values of sandy

environments, as in Degeberga, where work is taking place to combat overgrowth and range-expanding species.

Between 2026 and 2030 we will invest in scaling up various monitoring and evaluation measures. These include identifying indicator species and developing programmes and methods to track the ecological development of sandy habitats. Inventories and knowledge gathering provide an important basis for future management.

Collaboration is central to these efforts. The Biosphere Office is continuing to develop partnerships with associations, authorities and landowners – for example at Åsumsfältet, site of the scout jamboree and other major events – as well as groups such as motorcyclists, who use their bikes to assist with nature conservation. The Biosphere Office also participates in sand bed projects together with the Rural Economy and Agricultural Society.

Developing nature close to urban areas

We work to strengthen, develop and connect natural environments in and near urban areas. Focusing on ecological functionality, accessibility and long-term management, we aim to promote biodiversity, outdoor recreation and everyday nature experiences, and to support environmental education programmes in schools and local associations.

Continuous management, development work and monitoring are carried out in peri-urban environments, such as the Piggastan sand dunes. Green infrastructure links urban areas with surrounding natural and cultural landscapes. The Biosphere Office therefore works to create species-rich verges along footpaths and cycle paths, and develops green corridors, as at the approaches to Åhus.

In addition we develop and, where appropriate, expand the protection and management of nature close to urban areas, for example by establishing nature reserves. We also integrate long-term conservation objectives with improved public accessibility on land supported by the Nature Conservation Fund – for example, in Färlöv and Mansdala.



Working together to manage verges and green spaces promotes biodiversity.

Between 2026 and 2030 we will continue to build on established best practices while testing innovative approaches. We will share knowledge, promote voluntary engagement to manage range-expanding species and support municipal efforts to control invasive species. We will also strengthen blue-green infrastructure linked to urban waters and canals, focusing on water quality, tree environments and recreational values.

Long-term sustainable tree environments

Ranging from extensive forest areas to individual trees, Vattenriket's diverse tree environments support biodiversity, shape landscape character and enrich people's experience of nature.

The Biosphere Office continues to create and develop tree environments with a focus on long-term sustainability in both protected and unprotected areas, including urban settings. Work aligns with strategic frameworks such as the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, which recognises urban trees and canopy cover as key ecological values. Research also shows that urban trees improve air quality and reduce surface temperatures.

Continuous management and targeted interventions include habitat piles, veteranisation, conservation burning, forest grazing, selective thinning and new planting. Work to protect valuable species such as oak and to identify veteran trees—retained until natural collapse to provide habitats for multiple species—safeguards resilient ecosystems for species that depend on old and dead wood. Inventories and monitoring, for example at Näsby fält, provide an evidence base for management and development going forward.

Between 2026 and 2030 the Biosphere Office will explore opportunities to engage private landowners and the forestry sector in sustainable forest management strategies.



Veteran trees and varied forest environments provide habitats for a wide variety of flora and fauna.

Outreach and dialogue with forest owners will address priorities such as landscape hydrology, biodiversity, climate adaptation and continuous-cover forestry.

To strengthen long-term sustainable tree environments across the biosphere area, the Biosphere Office initiates collaborative projects focused on valuable trees in partnership with landowners, golf courses and other stakeholders.

New life for streams, rivers and lakes

In recent centuries the lower drainage basin of the River Helge å, which today forms Kristianstads Vattenrike Biosphere Reserve, has undergone huge changes. While large floodplains remain around the lakes, the landscape has been largely drained and is now dominated by productive farmland and extensive urban areas.

As climate change exacerbates the risk of both flooding and drought, wetlands have become increasingly important for retaining water in the landscape. Slowing water flows higher in the drainage basin is key not only for maintaining high biological values in tributaries to the River Helge å, but also for increasing groundwater recharge.

Integrated approach to water in the landscape
The Biosphere Office works from a landscape perspective, addressing water issues across the entire area – from valuable protected areas to urban environments and intensively farmed agricultural land. Between 2026 and 2030 the River Helge å Water Council will employ the equivalent of 1.5 full-time positions to focus on reducing nutrient inputs from the drainage basin into the Baltic Sea. The Biosphere Office will be administratively responsible for this work.

We will continue to establish multifunctional wetlands, often in collaboration with the agricultural and forestry sectors. The emphasis here is on water retention, biodiversity and irrigation benefits.

Measures to revitalise watercourses
We strengthen local biodiversity by creating habitats for aquatic organisms. In cooperation with the Lower Helge å Fishery Conservation Association, brushwood bundles are installed and reed channels created to support fish populations. In waters where brown trout reproduce, spawning habitats are improved and dead wood is added. Wetlands created to support the reproduction of pike, an ecologically important predator, are continuously monitored and evaluated. Between 2026 and 2030 we will also

continue to optimise large areas of natural floodplains to promote biodiversity.

New tools for understanding life in the water
The Biosphere Office's new fish camera enables us to easily show fish and other aquatic organisms in the biosphere reserve, while eDNA technology provides new knowledge about watercourses and life in them. This technology will now also be used for educational purposes.

We will continue to monitor the development of habitats and species such as catfish and pike, accumulate new knowledge and evaluate measures through test fishing, inventories and scientific collaboration. The Biosphere Office is supporting and monitoring development of the Nosabyviken wetland area together with Kristianstad University and the municipal Public Works Department. Efforts are also ongoing to reintroduce club-rush to Lake Hammarsjön and to work with researchers to increase knowledge about this species.



Multifunctional wetlands. The area in the foreground is for irrigation; other areas are optimised for biodiversity.



Water is retained in the pike wetlands sufficiently long for fry to grow big enough to survive in the river and lakes.



eDNA is an effective way to investigate biodiversity. DNA traces in the water reveal which organisms are living there.

Measures to support life in the Baltic Sea

The Baltic Sea is the world's largest inland sea. It has, however, long been impacted by eutrophication and overfishing, which has led to oxygen depletion, habitat degradation and the loss of natural spawning and nursery areas for predatory fish.

How we treat land-based ecosystems has a direct impact on the sea. For many years the Biosphere Office has been recreating wetlands and restoring watercourses, improving both freshwater and marine environments while also increasing public awareness and engagement among society at large.

Initiatives for a more resilient Baltic Sea are undertaken at several levels, together with non-profit organisations and divers with local knowledge. At regional level we participate in the Hanöbukten Bay Municipal Network, and internationally in the John Nurminen Foundation and the Biosphere for Baltic network. We are also developing new projects alongside these collaborations.

Over the next five years, efforts to restore marine habitats will continue. This includes planting and monitoring eelgrass off the coast of Åhus, with the goal of increasing its coverage in Hanöbukten Bay. The work also extends to bladderwrack, which, like eelgrass meadows, creates important habitats and nursery areas for fish.

Biosphere areas around the Baltic Sea collaborate in the Interreg project Supported by Nature. In Vattenriket, we are establishing a stone reef off Åhus and installing textured slabs in Åhus harbour. We are also improving spawning grounds for brown trout migrating up the River Mjöån, a project that will result in learning sites to demonstrate how nature-based solutions contribute to greater biodiversity.



A portal to nature – learning and engagement



Naturum is the natural meeting place and showcase for biosphere reserve activities, spreading knowledge and helping people to explore the area. Strategic communication plays a key role in fostering a shift in attitude towards sustainable societal development in line with Agenda 2030, so Vattenriket's 20+ visitor sites provide information in addition to boardwalk trails and bird-watching towers.

International cooperation, research and youth participation are three key focus areas in the new global strategy for UNESCO's biosphere programme and the Biosphere Office. Citizen science is one way to bring these aspects together.

We will continue to work with biosphere reserves around the Baltic Sea and across Europe through various networks. To better develop and share relevant knowledge, we will prioritise closer collaboration with researchers and students at more educational institutions. At the same time young people will be an important target group, as we strengthen local engagement and develop our work with nature education.

Naturum – meeting place and showcase

Naturum Vattenriket, with its exhibitions, auditorium and restaurant, is the biosphere reserve visitor centre. Located in urban wetlands in the heart of the city of Kristianstad, its mission is to point the way out into Vattenriket for visitors, communicate what biosphere work involves and strengthen people's connection to nature and their confidence in the role nature plays in a sustainable future.

Naturum is a key element of Kristianstad's profile as a visitor destination and an asset during major events. Activities contribute to the attractiveness and quality of life in Kristianstad. Free admission draws a broad audience. Skilled nature guides inform visitors about the biosphere reserve, its projects and how best to explore Vattenriket. Also important is the educational programme, which supports lifelong learning about nature and sustainability.

Accessible, welcoming, inspiring

A licensing agreement with the Swedish EPA, owner of the naturum brand, requires the centre to be operated in accordance with EPA guidelines, including criteria for activities and the quality of exhibitions. Work to develop operations, guided by the core values of accessibility, inclusiveness and inspiration, is ongoing.

Broad programme increases interest in nature

Generating interest and engagement in Vattenriket's natural environments, recreational potential and projects is fundamental to our mission. We offer a broad palette of nature encounters and first-hand experiences: guided walks, qigong, forest bathing, lectures, experiments, history, art, music, etc. – all in all, around 500 programme activities each year, some in collaboration with local associations. Nature interpretation, educational work and exhibitions are continuously developed to reflect various themes, among which biodiversity will be a central focus in the coming years.

Generous opening hours and much to offer

Opening hours are generous and admission is free. Guided tours and lectures may be booked for groups. The auditorium may be rented as a meeting venue. A shop sells nature-related products, and Bistro Årum serves food and refreshments on the second floor. In the immediate surroundings quizzes and treasure hunts complement self-guided nature interpretation.

A constantly evolving exhibition

Continuous renewal ensures the exhibition remains dynamic and engaging. A major overhaul 2025–2027 includes an external makeover for the Opteryx attraction and a new film with a historical storyline. The aquarium, modules about the species-rich Vattenriket, biosphere work and information about visitor sites and biosphere



Naturum's location in urban wetlands is a key factor behind its success.



The visitor centre's exhibition offers fun experiences and new insights.

reserve activities will be updated, and the exhibition expanded with geological and historical information.

Collaboration across multiple networks

Local associations offering outdoor activities in the biosphere reserve are part of naturum Vattenriket's programme committee and among its many network partners. Current partnerships include those with Kristianstad University, local primary schools, the children's cultural network and municipal departments. Together with the Swedish Centre for Nature Interpretation and Sweden's other naturum centres, collaboration will continue around phenology and climate communication, with a new focus from 2026 on biodiversity through the *Nature Lift* initiative.



Nature education for all ages

Meeting pupils and educators, from preschool to higher education, is a key focus. The naturum educator has worked with 1,200 school groups and over 26,000 pupils. Each year 20 Biosphere Camp children aged 10–13 become 'Vattenriket Messengers'.

With Vattenriket as a classroom, educational activities breathe life into curriculum goals, inspiring sustainable mindsets and building pupils' capacity to act and make informed choices about education and future careers.

Each year from 2026 to 2030 the naturum educator will meet some 70 school groups and teachers. The Naturligt-Vis project (part of the Näsby Urban Development initiative) places particular emphasis on nature experiences for children from socially vulnerable areas who have little prior exposure to nature. Other priorities include engaging upper secondary schools to collaborate with Vattenriket ecologists, serving as a resource for teacher training at Kristianstad University and collaborating with Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) programmes.

We envisage several areas for development over the next five years. At biosphere reserve project sites we aim to develop pedagogical concepts for nature-based solutions, such as bladderwrack and watercourse restorations. We will also develop ideas to help schools work with biodiversity and invasive species, using new technologies such as eDNA. Citizen science projects – Algae Research Summer, phenological studies, etc.—will also continue, ideally in collaboration with schools in other European biosphere reserves.

In addition, we plan to digitise teaching materials for the biosphere classrooms to make them more accessible, and to collaborate with researchers on learning and engagement linked to the biosphere concept.



Crane spotting at Pulken is part of the NaturligtVis project at Näsby to bring children closer to nature in Vattenriket.



The Algae Research Summer project gives school students practical experience of citizen science.

We guide people out into Vattenriket

Making it easy for people to experience the varied, species-rich nature of Vattenriket is central to biosphere work. It sparks curiosity, strengthens a desire to conserve nature and contributes to a shift in attitudes towards sustainable societal development.

Visitor sites – learning by exploring

Visitor sites make nature more accessible and spread knowledge about local natural and cultural history. Together with the naturum visitor centre, our 20+ visitor sites with their information boards, birdwatching towers, boardwalks and picnic areas are starting points for exploring Vattenriket. Seven sites serve as outdoor museums with exhibitions, interactive features and audio guides. The municipal Public Works Department, which is responsible for infrastructure, has made some locations more easily accessible for people with disabilities.

Project sites and collaborations

Some local project sites also highlight the Biosphere Office's nature conservation efforts. As part of the Inter-reg project Supported by Nature, we are establishing three learning sites to inform and inspire schools, associations and public-sector actors about local nature-based solutions.

In addition we will continue to develop opportunities for hiking, paddling, cycling, fishing and birdwatching

in collaboration with the Public Works Department, the Culture & Leisure Administration and the Communications & Business Development Unit. We are also expanding cooperation with the Swedish Anglers' Association, other nature organisations and Friends of Vattenriket.

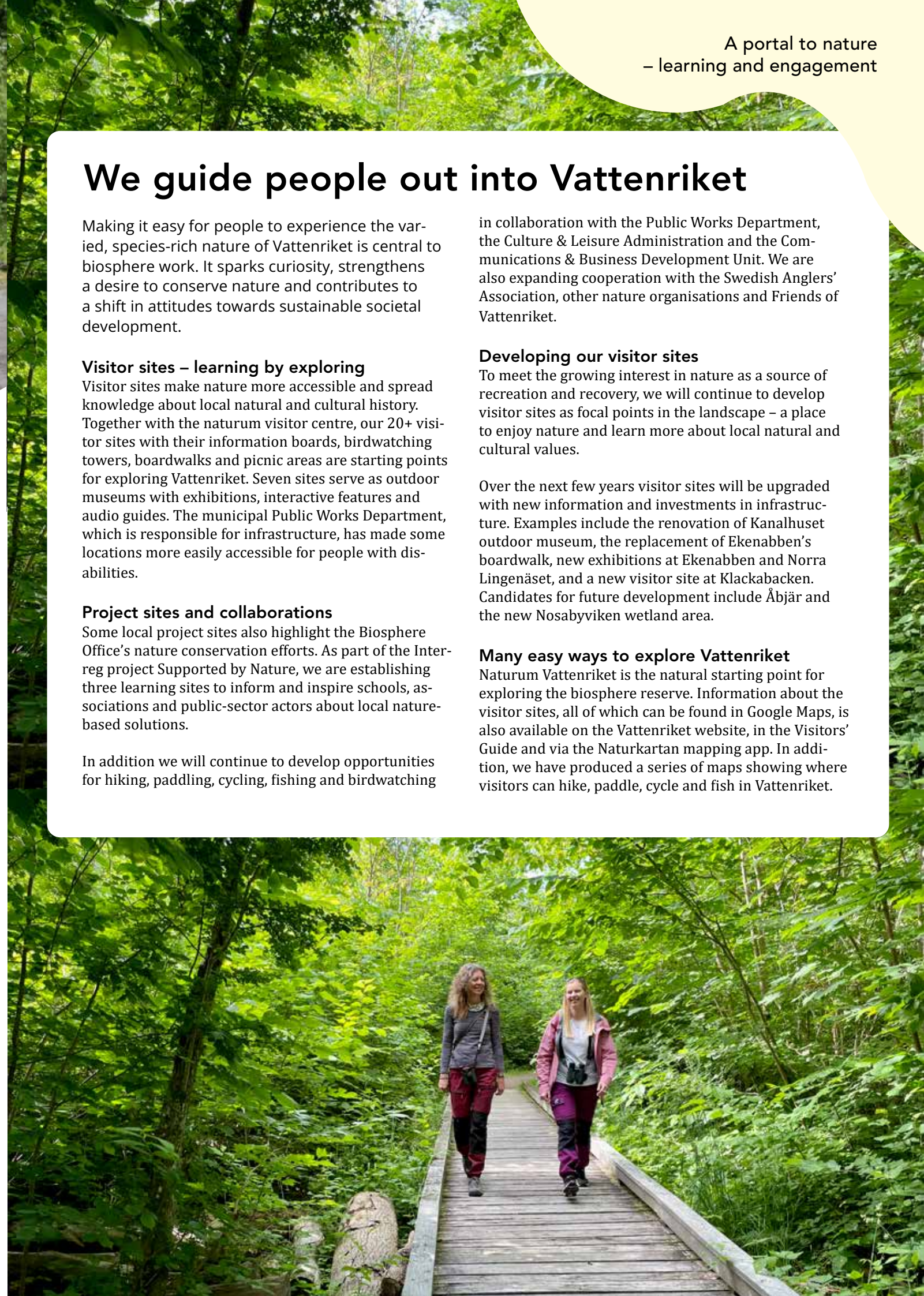
Developing our visitor sites

To meet the growing interest in nature as a source of recreation and recovery, we will continue to develop visitor sites as focal points in the landscape – a place to enjoy nature and learn more about local natural and cultural values.

Over the next few years visitor sites will be upgraded with new information and investments in infrastructure. Examples include the renovation of Kanalhuset outdoor museum, the replacement of Ekenabben's boardwalk, new exhibitions at Ekenabben and Norra Lingenäset, and a new visitor site at Klackabacken. Candidates for future development include Åbjär and the new Nosabyviken wetland area.

Many easy ways to explore Vattenriket

Naturum Vattenriket is the natural starting point for exploring the biosphere reserve. Information about the visitor sites, all of which can be found in Google Maps, is also available on the Vattenriket website, in the Visitors' Guide and via the Naturkartan mapping app. In addition, we have produced a series of maps showing where visitors can hike, paddle, cycle and fish in Vattenriket.



Communication for sustainable development

Biosphere reserves are tasked by UNESCO with sharing successful models of sustainable development. The emphasis of the new global strategy for this is open, inclusive and innovative communication that supports learning, knowledge exchange and collaboration between biosphere reserves. Work should combine digital and physical channels to reach local, national and international target audiences.

The Biosphere Office works strategically and systematically, adapting information to different target groups to inspire and engage people in sustainable development. Reports, guidebooks, information boards, social media and newsletters share good examples, highlight the area's natural and cultural values and inspire visits to naturum Vattenriket and other Vattenriket sites. A dedicated website is an important knowledge base. Press releases and press meetings reach traditional media, while guided

tours, study visits, meetings and educational activities play an important role in direct dialogue.

Between 2026 and 2030 work will focus on raising awareness of current biosphere projects and shared themes, clarifying the links between biodiversity, ecosystems and climate adaptation, engaging young people through targeted messages, channels and meeting places, raising the biosphere reserves' profile at municipal events, and developing methods to involve the public and stakeholders at an early stage in projects.

Increased international cooperation within UNESCO's biosphere programme requires communication across more channels and in English. The Biosphere Office also monitors AI developments with the potential to streamline project management, education and communication.

Research promotes sustainable solutions

The focus of several objectives in UNESCO's new global strategy for biosphere reserves is to promote research on sustainability and biodiversity. In this respect Kristianstad University plays an important role as a research hub in Vattenriket.

Sustainable Multifunctional Landscapes (SMULA) is the university's multidisciplinary research environment. It maintains regular contact with the Biosphere Office, runs workshops and co-organises the annual Biosphere at Naturum conference to present research findings of relevance to the area.

Key research collaborations over the next five years focus on geese and swans, wetlands, ecosystem services, local conservation efforts, biodiversity in sustainable food systems and nature-based solutions.

In addition, the Biosphere Office is strengthening coopera-

tion with the Stockholm Resilience Centre, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the universities of Lund, Stockholm, Halmstad and Bergen. We are also seeking new collaborations with other universities and researchers in Sweden and beyond.

Contacts are being initiated with more courses and new higher education institutions regarding degree projects and other student research. There will also be continued collaboration to monitor and assess the area's natural and cultural values, together with citizen science projects to involve the public in data collection.

New knowledge is integrated into the work of the Biosphere Office and disseminated to create engagement and provide a basis for sustainable decision-making. Communication channels include our website and social media, publications in the Vattenriket in Focus series, conferences, meetings, guided tours and lectures.

From local to global engagement

The Biosphere Office works to strengthen knowledge, participation and engagement for sustainable societal development. Information, collaboration and citizen science make use of local and traditional knowledge while also involving new groups.

Working together for a richer Vattenriket

Our trained Biosphere Ambassadors play a key role, sharing knowledge about Vattenriket and assisting in nature conservation. Local associations engage volunteer crane wardens at Pulken, and collaboration with local scout troops enables more young people to learn about the biosphere reserve and become 'Biosphere Heroes'. Inspired by other biosphere reserves, the focus from 2026 to 2030 will be on expanding the scope of voluntary hands-on conservation efforts.

Local engagement

A consultation group of more than 20 stakeholders serves as an advisory body and a platform for securing broad support for our work. Naturum's Programme Committee engages local associations, and the Friends of Vattenriket do great work, for example by ensuring Lillö Castle is open to visitors during summer weekends.

Over the next five years we will also explore how knowledge about Vattenriket can be strengthened within the municipality through training for employees and politicians.

Youth and international networks

Young adults are a priority target group in UNESCO's global strategy. We work with *Biosphere for Baltic – Future Generations* and other networks to strengthen young people's engagement in biosphere work locally, nationally and internationally.

The Biosphere Office is active in international biosphere networks such as Biosphere for Baltic, NordMAB and EuroMAB, as well as projects such as *Watsups* and *Land4Climate*. We will continue to develop international collaborations and will host NordMAB 2027.



Crane wardens help thousands of people to enjoy visiting Pulken outdoor museum.



Business serving nature and people



Kristianstads Vattenrike Biosphere Reserve works to promote sustainable ecological, economic and societal development. We seek to strengthen relationships between people and nature by conserving, using and developing local natural resources responsibly and sustainably, in line with UNESCO's latest biosphere strategy.

The biosphere reserve plays a key role in Kristianstad Municipality's work to support sustainable business growth, particularly in tourism and agriculture. The Biosphere Office brings together the business community, public sector and academia to promote innovation, knowledge sharing and learning.

Over the next five years we will build on this work through new initiatives to support knowledge exchange on sustainability for local businesses. The Biosphere Office will continue to promote biodiversity, sustainable farming practices and efficient resource management in agriculture. We will also develop crane management activities at Pulken in close partnership with stakeholders.

Farming in a thriving agricultural landscape

Agriculture is a central feature of the landscape in Vattenriket. A thriving agricultural sector that combines production with respect for nature and the environment is essential for biodiversity, food security and preparedness.

Between 2026 and 2030 the Biosphere Office will continue to promote biodiversity and safeguard species that are beneficial for agriculture, for example through a second *Let Sweden Blossom* initiative. One practical example of effective initiatives in everyday farming is flower-rich environments in farmland that sustain pollinators and other wildlife.

To show how biodiversity, production and business development can be integrated, we are working with farmers and other stakeholders to explore how model farms might incorporate small-scale biotopes into agricultural landscapes.

Sustainable solutions for geese and cranes

In spring tens of thousands of cranes migrating from southern Europe to breeding grounds in Scandinavia rest in Vattenriket. To reduce the risk of crop damage on newly sown fields, supplementary feeding has been carried out for many years at the Pulken outdoor museum.

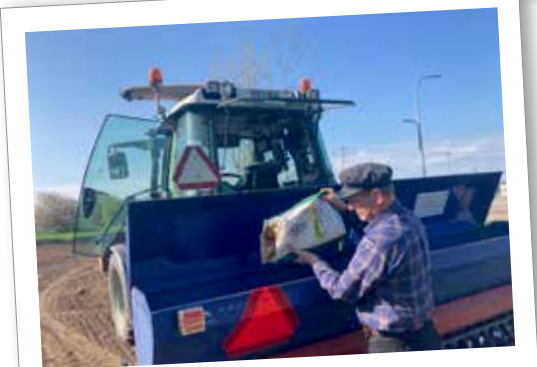
Crane management is a well-established routine involving the Biosphere Office, the County Administrative Board of Skåne, KLF Grain Association, farmers and the Northeast Skåne Ornithologists' Club. Visitors eager to see the dancing cranes up close are welcomed on site by volunteer crane wardens who share information about the birds, the natural surroundings and Vattenriket's other visitor sites.

This initiative is being developed in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders, while continuously monitoring the crane population to maintain a careful balance between conservation, agriculture and tourism. We aim for Pulken to continue to serve as a 'bed & breakfast for cranes' that benefits farmers, birds and visitors alike, while evolving as a sustainable visitor destination.

To mitigate damage caused by grazing geese, the Biosphere Office works with farmers, authorities, associations and other stakeholders to explore various landscape-based measures – trial plantings, variations in vegetation, etc. – that have the added advantage of strengthening biodiversity.



Feeding cranes at Pulken reduces crop damage on newly sown fields.



Sowing patches of flowers in farmland benefits pollinators and other animals.

Economy, circularity and resource efficiency

The Biosphere Office works to increase insights into how to reconcile biodiversity and economic performance in agricultural businesses, for example through collaboration linked to the EU Nature Restoration Regulation. We are also active in project applications to convert green biomass into biogas, helping to support circularity and boost local energy production.

Work to share knowledge about water management and agricultural resilience will continue, drawing in part on experiences from *Water Meetings in Vattenriket* held in collaboration with Climate-Neutral Kristianstad 2030 and Skåne's Rural Economy and Agricultural Society. We intend to further develop our collaboration with the latter, for example with initiatives around perennial crops.



Growing knowledge with companies

A sustainable business sector is a cornerstone in the future development of Kristianstads Vattenrike Biosphere Reserve. Strengthening the ability of companies and organisations to contribute to ecological, economic and societal sustainability requires knowledge, dialogue and shared learning.

Between 2026 and 2030 the Biosphere Office will work together with other departments within the municipal executive office on targeted initiatives to develop skills in sustainability issues. One possible approach is a local version of *The Course – Ten Lessons for a Sustainable Business Sector*, featuring examples from Kristianstad Municipality and Vattenriket. Meetings and various forums for dialogue give local businesses an opportunity to exchange experiences, reflect on their operations and explore how to integrate sustainability issues into business processes and day-to-day activities.

Parallel with these initiatives, work is under way to develop innovative blue-green solutions based on natural processes and ecosystem services in order to address societal challenges such as water management, climate adaptation, food production and circular flows. The Biosphere Office is actively involved in networks such as Sustainable Business Hub's blue-green innovation group to share experiences, build networks and contribute to co-development.

Skills exchange is linked to interdepartmental cooperation within the municipality, such as the Sustainability Unit's work with Climate-Neutral Kristianstad 2030 and initiatives from the Communications and Business Development Department. Training, networks, forums for dialogue and collaboration help foster a business sector that actively contributes to sustainable development in Vattenriket.

Developing sustainable destinations together

We work to conserve, use and develop the natural resources in Kristianstads Vattenrike Biosphere Reserve sustainably and responsibly, in line with the global Hangzhou Strategy for UNESCO's biosphere programme.

Biosfärområdet med naturum lockar omkring 250 000 besökare om året och är en viktig del i kommunens utveckling som turistdestination, samt för att uppmuntra och skapa förutsättningar för hållbar naturturism och företagsutveckling.

The biosphere reserve, with its 20+ visitor sites and naturum, attracts some 250,000 visitors annually. It is important for the municipality's development as a tourist destination and for encouraging and creating conditions for sustainable nature-based tourism and business growth.

The 140-kilometre SL6 subtrail of the Skåne Trail links half of the area's visitor sites and opens up new opportunities for the hospitality industry and other actors in the tourism sector. The Skåne Trail, the Southeast Cycling Trail and canoe routes enable visitors to experience Vattenriket's natural and cultural environments, as well as its rich traditions of eel-fishing, on foot, by bike and from the water.

Over the next five years the Biosphere Office will continue to develop the area as a sustainable destination through collaboration with the municipality's tourism and outdoor recreation strategists, Visit Skåne and other stakeholders. Supporting local entrepreneurs helps develop sustainable business ideas and nature-based tourism that utilises ecosystem services and local values. By training biosphere ambassadors, we expand knowledge about the area's natural values and biosphere work among both nature enthusiasts and tourism entrepreneurs.

Alongside their importance for recreation and attractiveness, golf courses represent significant natural and cultural values. Between 2026 and 2030 we will cooperate more closely with golf clubs to increase biodiversity, improve water management and promote long-term sustainable land management.



Photo: Pär Lindholm

Societal development, resilience and climate benefit



Biosphere reserves serve as models for sustainable development. The Biosphere Office's work has been consistently characterised by efforts to advance climate action and strengthen societal resilience – matters of ever greater urgency for society at large and our own activities. Collaboration, long-term perspectives and early engagement in societal processes are crucial for a holistic approach to these complex issues.

Nature-based solutions are one way forward. Here the Biosphere Office has long been at the forefront, as evidenced by our work to restore seasonally flooded grasslands and create multifunctional wetlands. We also take part in local and international projects to develop and share knowledge on climate action and nature-based solutions. Our work on biodiversity, business development, learning and local engagement also promotes resilience and contributes to societal development.

Nature-based solutions for improved resilience

Nature-based solutions address various societal challenges by harnessing or mimicking naturally evolved processes. Resilience is a system's ability to resist, adapt and recover after disturbances. A resilient society, built on healthy ecosystems with high biodiversity and functioning food webs, also strengthens preparedness and long-term sustainability. Perspectives like these have consistently shaped the work of the Biosphere Office from the outset.

Examples include our work to conserve and develop seasonally flooded grasslands and restore wetlands. This regulates water flows and provides many other ecosystem services. Retaining more water in the landscape increases resilience and supports climate adaptation. Between 2026 and 2030 the Biosphere Office will collaborate with researchers to monitor how climate change impacts seasonally flooded grasslands and other valuable habitats.

Our work also includes rewetting peatlands to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and planting eelgrass and bladderwrack to stabilise seabeds, reduce erosion and create important marine habitats.

The Biosphere Office will continue efforts to reduce the leaching of iron and aluminium from embanked land in the municipality, and collaborate with researchers to monitor and share results from the wetlands construction at Fredriksdalsviken. This may inspire additional facilities to reduce iron and aluminium run-off from embanked areas into the River Helge å.

As a member of the Interreg project Supported by Nature, we apply and share knowledge on nature-based solutions in various ways. We are creating habitats for aquatic organisms in Åhus harbour and constructing artificial reefs offshore. We are also implementing climate-adapted measures to support brown trout reproduction in the River Mjöån.

In nutrient-rich lakes phosphorus leaching from deep basins under oxygen-free conditions contributes to harmful algal blooms. We aim to explore the potential of using nature-based solutions to remove phosphorus from the deeper areas of Lake Råbelövsjön.

A key part of such work is to demonstrate how biodiversity, ecosystem services, water management, climate adaptation and resilience are interlinked. Through awareness-raising initiatives, nature-based solutions and a holistic landscape perspective, we can strengthen the resilience of both people and nature.



Photo: Patrik Olofsson/N

Drier weather in the spring breeding season limits food for wading birds. Retaining water in the landscape helps solve their needs.

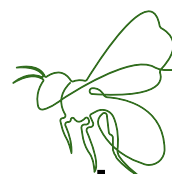


Planting eelgrass and bladderwrack and building stone reefs creates important marine habitats.



Photo: Patrik Olofsson/N

The wetlands facility at Fredriksdalsviken facilitates the sequestration of iron and aluminium.



We safeguard blue-green values in urban development

Biosphere reserves are model areas for sustainable societal development. Urban development and spatial planning are important elements of biosphere office work. Using and developing peri-urban nature, strengthening ecosystem services and mitigating the effects of climate change in newbuilds, all contribute to sustainability and quality of life.

Requirements set by the EU Nature Restoration Regulation and the UN Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework for restoring and strengthening ecosystems apply also to urban environments. Between 2026 and 2030 we will work towards integrating these guidelines into municipal planning processes. This means assigning natural values, green infrastructure and ecosystem services a clearer role in spatial planning and land use. We aim to increase the proportion of green and blue infrastructure – parks, rain gardens, green courtyards, etc. – in detailed development plans: to create green corridors between urban green spaces and surrounding nature; and to restore wetlands and stormwater environments to enhance biodiversity and improve stormwater management during heavy rainfall.

The Biosphere Office participates early in municipal spatial planning processes, contributing ecological expertise and advocating for a landscape perspective to protect, conserve and develop natural assets. The work spans comprehensive plans, detailed development plans, as well as projects such as the Näsby urban development initiative, city centre development, planning of flood protection embankments and Tivoliplatsen, the former site of the swimming pool.

In the future, we aim to integrate ecological compensation measures into urban planning, designing them to strengthen natural values and ecosystem services in urban areas.

Climate benefits through local initiatives

Mitigating and managing climate change is essential for a sustainable society. The Biosphere Office develops local solutions to global challenges.

Examples include increasing the number of trees in the landscape and promoting biogas production from green biomass. Collaboration, not least with the municipality's Sustainability Unit, is key to success. *Climate Neutral Kristianstad 2030* is an initiative within the *Viable Cities programme* to accelerate the climate transition. Projects such as *Focus on Farms* and *Municipal Tools for Increased Local Carbon Sequestration* are developing measures to increase carbon storage and manage conflicting objectives within municipal operations.

Climate action in the landscape is about managing both too much and too little water, reducing surface run-off and rewetting drained peatlands. Water should be retained longer during dry spells, while floodplains are needed to handle excess water in wetter periods. Wetlands in production forests high in the upper watercourses are also important for groundwater recharge and reducing the risk of forest fires. In farmland circular systems enable drainage water to be used for irrigation during drier periods.

Drained peatlands decompose when exposed to oxygen, releasing large amounts of carbon dioxide. Raising the water table to ground level restores anoxic conditions, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Biosphere Office also coordinates the Interreg Land4Climate project for climate adaptation and rewetting of peatlands up to 2027, which involves 16 partners in Sweden and Denmark. The aim is to rewet more areas, develop multifunctional solutions and share knowledge between participants and external stakeholders.



Rewetting Fjällmossen's peatlands is one example of an initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



Actors in Sweden and Denmark exchange experiences from their rewetting of peatlands in the Land4Climate project.

Action Plan 2026–2030

This action plan describes the main priorities of Kristianstads Vattenrike Biosphere Reserve. Worldwide, there are 784 biosphere reserves designated by UNESCO, with eight in Sweden. They serve as model areas for sustainable development by creating, testing and sharing examples of practical measures that have both local and global significance.

Work builds on collaboration with municipal departments, government agencies, researchers, associations, businesses and landowners. Together, we develop solutions to conserve and make sustainable use of landscape resources. Making nature accessible fosters participation and engagement.

Our action plan is based on UNESCO guidelines, the Hangzhou Declaration, Agenda 2030, Sweden's national environmental and outdoor recreation goals, and Kristianstad Municipality's Vision 2030 and strategy for sustainable development.

Through research, surveys and monitoring we will collaborate closely with many stakeholders to continue landscape-based nature conservation between 2026 and 2030. The Kunming–Montreal Framework and Sweden's biodiversity strategy provide direction for this work.

We will continue to develop naturum Vattenriket as a meeting place and showcase for activities. Vattenriket's 20+ visitor sites offer information, boardwalk trails and birdwatching towers. International collaboration, research and youth engagement remain key priorities.

The biosphere reserve already has a central role in business development in Kristianstad Municipality, particularly in tourism and agriculture. We will strengthen this through knowledge exchange and collaboration to enhance biodiversity, support sustainable resource management and develop crane management at Pulken.

Climate initiatives and nature-based solutions have long been integral to our work. We engage early in societal planning processes and participate in local and international projects to develop and share knowledge. Together we are shaping a living landscape, where people and nature coexist in mutual balance.

Read more on our homepage, complete with contact details:
vattenriket.kristianstad.se



Kristianstads
kommun