



## Grounds Management Policy

The policy forms part of the University's sustainability framework and supports the Biodiversity Action Plan. The University commits to, as far as reasonably practicable, our grounds are maintained in a manner that:

- Provides an environment which helps to enhance the University's academic, business and social activities.
- Maintains the distinct character of the individual campuses.
- Retains and enhances the University's parkland.
- Retains the varied specimen tree stock.
- Promotes a variety of uses for the grounds, e.g. academic, sport and recreational.
- Creates a safe environment for all students, staff and visitors address the risks and opportunities relating to grounds management.
- minimise negative and maximise positive, environmental impacts resulting from grounds management activities.
- ensure appropriate consideration of sustainability issues when undertaking grounds management works, including reference to the requirements of the University's Biodiversity Action Plan.
- ensure compliance with relevant environmental legislation.
- minimise the use of pesticides & herbicides.
- undertake monitoring of protected species on campus e.g. bat surveys and monitoring ahead of works on our campuses.
- monitor and protect any IUCN Red Listed species and national conservation list species.
- ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems on our campuses.
- reduce the impact of alien species on our campuses eg Japanese Knotweed.
- When sourcing plants, select locally grown, non-alien species.
- Provides a cost effective and professional grounds maintenance service.
- Ensures grounds maintenance practices are safe and comply with relevant legislation.
- Focuses available resources on the areas that are most highly used.
- Adopts a risk-based approach to the prioritisation of workload.
- Uses sustainable practices where possible, subject to budgetary constraints.

**Reviewed: June 2024**

**Next Review Date: June 2026**

**Reviewed by: University Sustainability Management Group**



# Grounds Management Procedure

## 1.0 Purpose

This document is to explain how grounds are managed at the University in order to:

- address the risks and opportunities associated with aspects relating to grounds management;
- minimise negative, and maximise positive, environmental impacts resulting from grounds management activities;
- ensure appropriate consideration of sustainability issues, including biodiversity and the use and storage of pesticides & herbicides;
- ensure compliance with relevant environmental legislation.

## 2.0 Scope

This procedure covers all grounds management activities across the University.

## 3.0 Responsibilities

<b>University Sustainability Management Group</b>	Overall responsibility for the development and implementation of a Biodiversity Action Plan.
<b>Grounds Supervisor</b>	Oversee all gardening and grounds maintenance work and the Grounds Management Team. Coordinate tree inspections. Support activities identified within the Biodiversity Action Plan. Consult with the Local Authority/ Natural England as required e.g. when felling trees. Complete COSHH for all chemicals and oils/fuels used, ensure safe storage, spill management and spill response.
<b>Facilities &amp; Estates</b>	Maintain grounds whilst minimising negative impacts on biodiversity and enhancing biodiversity where possible.
<b>Projects (Facilities &amp; Estates/ VCO)</b>	Identify a proposed project's potential impacts on biodiversity, act in accordance with relevant legislation and to minimise negative impact. Consult with the Local Authority/ Natural England as required e.g. when felling trees. Considering biodiversity enhancing opportunities within project design.



<b>Sustainability Manager</b>	Coordinate the biodiversity audit, maintain the Compliance Obligations Register and update procedures and training needs accordingly.
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## 4.0 Process

Grounds management activities include:

- tree management;
- maintenance of grassed areas including sports fields;
- maintenance of planted areas including flower beds;
- the clearing of litter and detritus;
- monitoring and maintenance of onsite roads and paths to ensure they are free of obstruction and in good condition;
- use of pesticides.

### 4.1 Management of flora, fauna, wildlife and habitats

A University-wide audit is undertaken every two years in order to identify the biodiversity value of areas of the estate. Findings are shown on the **EF 12 A Biodiversity Map**.

The map is available to Facilities & Estates and Projects teams before undertaking proposed activities such as demolition, build, re-landscaping, mowing and planting. Where the proposed activity would be detrimental to an area of the University of high biodiversity value, either:

- the proposed activity will be halted or amended to avoid the impact;
- or further surveying will be conducted by accredited consultants and actions agreed with any relevant bodies e.g. Natural England.

Where permits or licences are issued, a copy should be sent to the Sustainability Manager for inclusion in the **EF 04 A Compliance Obligations Register**.

The **EF 12 B Biodiversity Action Plan** includes a set of general principles to be followed by Grounds and Projects teams in order to support flora, fauna and habitats and to maximise biodiversity value across the estate.

### 4.2 Ongoing grounds management

The biodiversity audit undertaken every two years will identify any grounds management issues that have potential to damage biodiversity on campus. The Sustainability Manager will update the relevant procedure(s), training matrices and training content in order to address any issues identified.



### **4.3 Tree management**

There are currently no Tree Preservation Orders for trees on the University estate.

The Grounds Supervisor coordinates the completion of tree surveys by an appropriately qualified consultant as required. The **Tree Survey** is stored by the Grounds Supervisor (Facilities\Grounds\Trees).

Where a tree is to be felled, the Grounds Manager or the Project Manager will discuss with the Local Authority where required.

### **4.4 Trees - trimming and cutting**

It is an offence to destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built or to disturb nesting birds. The Grounds Team must always inspect for evidence of nesting birds before undertaking any trimming of hedges or trees. If such activity is necessary within this timeframe, the hedge/tree would first be checked for any signs of breeding activity.

### **4.5 Hedgehogs**

Hedgehog populations are under increasing pressure and numbers are declining. As a Hedgehog Friendly University, with hedgehogs known to be living across the campus, in particular at Coach Lane, areas of long grass or scrub must be inspected for hedgehogs prior to conducting any strimming works.

Following the construction of new all-weather football pitches, a mound of topsoil has been created along the rear boundary of the Coach Lane East Campus. The mound is well away from the car park/roadways and has been set aside as a wildlife area, with the hope of encouraging more hedgehogs onto campus. To create the preferred habitat for hedgehogs and encourage the spread of the existing brambles and scrub across the mound, the area is not to be grass seeded or strimmed. Vegetation and branches have also been piled around the base of the mound to provide nesting materials for hedgehogs. This material should not be moved/disturbed. Insecticides and slug pellets must not be used in this area.



Coach Lane East soil mound along rear boundary



Brambles along edges of Coach Lane East soil mound



Piles of vegetation – nesting sites





#### **4.6 Planting**

Planting options are determined by the Grounds Manager and Facilities Manager based on financial, logistical, aesthetic and biodiversity considerations. Wherever suitable, planting options are chosen which support biodiversity e.g. through creating wildlife corridors, planting pollinators etc. The **EF 12 B Biodiversity Action Plan** includes planting suggestions to better support biodiversity.

#### **4.7 Invasive Species**

The discovery of invasive species (such as Japanese Knotweed) will be managed by the Grounds Team.

Japanese Knotweed does not necessarily need to be removed from University land but it must be controlled to ensure that it does not spread to the wild or anyone else's property.

Treatment and disposal of the invasive species must adhere to the following requirements:

- Any chemicals used would need to be an approved pesticide, sprayed only by someone with a certificate of competence of herbicide use, not be undertaken near water or a protected area and a COSHH assessment should be completed.
- Burying and burning of invasive species onsite is not permitted.
- Any specialist contracted to remove and dispose of Japanese Knotweed must demonstrate their competency to do so and a registered waste carrier must be used to take the knotweed offsite. Japanese knotweed *must not* be disposed of as garden waste or composted under any circumstances. A copy of the consignment note received on removal of injurious weeds must be sent to the Sustainability Manager who will retain the record for a minimum of three years.

#### **4.8 Injurious Weeds**

The discovery of injurious weeds (Common Ragwort, Spear Thistle, Creeping or Field Thistle, Curled Dock and Broad-Leaved Dock) will be managed by the Grounds Team.

Injurious weeds must be controlled and action taken to prevent spread of the weeds. The risk of spread shall be assessed by the Grounds Supervisor and shall include consideration of any proximity to livestock/animal grazing.

Any specialist contracted to remove and dispose of injurious weeds must demonstrate their competency to do so and a registered waste carrier must be used to take the injurious weed offsite. Injurious weeds *must not* be disposed of as garden waste or composted under any circumstances. A copy of the consignment note received on removal of injurious weeds must be sent to the Sustainability Manager who will retain the record for a minimum of three years.



## 4.9 Use of chemicals and oils

COSHH assessments and Risk Assessments and Method Statements should be undertaken for all pesticides, fertilisers, herbicides, fuels and oils used onsite. For such materials relating to grounds management, these assessments will be produced by the Grounds Supervisor and identified measures put in place e.g. spill kits.

Pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers are stored within a chemical cabinet within the grounds maintenance store located at Glenamara Compound (City Campus) and in the locked store near Manor House at Coach Lane Campus (West). Safety data sheets for all pesticides used are kept within the stores.

Pesticides remain in their original packaging during use i.e. the box is connected to the sprayer kit for use. Discharge of the pesticide therefore only occurs when the trigger of the spray is pulled. This minimises risk of any spills. Only Grounds Teams members who hold PA1 PA6 qualifications for pesticides use are allowed to undertake jobs involving pesticides.

All chemicals and oils are stored securely on drip trays/bunds to minimise risk of spills. Chemicals and oils should be stored away from drains, waterways or permeable ground.

Spill kits for chemicals and oils used within Grounds Management are identified, procured and maintained by the Grounds Supervisor and all Grounds Management Team members are trained in spill management.

Spills, near misses and other environmental incidents should be dealt with in accordance with the **EP 15 Emergency Preparedness & Response Procedure** and should be reported to Health & Safety using the **Incident Report Form**.

## 4.10 Use of water

No vehicle washing is permitted on the University estate.

No discharges should be made to drain unless permitted via a Discharge Consent. The University's current Discharge Consents are listed in **EP 10 Discharge to Water Procedure**.

Where a process requires discharge to drain, an additional Discharge Consent may be required from the Environmental Agency (for discharge to surface water) or Northumbria Water (for trade effluent). Where an additional Discharge Consent is obtained, a copy shall be sent to the Sustainability Manager. They will add the details to the **EF 04 A Compliance Obligations Register** and update any relevant procedures accordingly.



## 4.11 Waste Management

Waste is disposed of according to procedure **EP 08 A Waste Management Procedure**. Fertiliser, pesticides and fuel are to be disposed of as hazardous waste – as is packaging of such items.

All green waste is disposed of via a Garden Waste skip - located at Glenamara compound and at the back of the corner of the car park near Manor House at Coach Lane (West).

## 4.12 Contractors

Contractors are managed in accordance with process **EP 13 Contractor Control for Environmental Management**. This includes contractors completing COSHH assessments, ensuring safe storage and use of chemicals, removing waste/ unused material and assessing the need for permits.

When required, onsite pest control is carried out by an appointed contractor arranged by the Facilities Team.

## 4.13 Supporting Biodiversity

Biodiversity is promoted and protected by the following:

- the use of herbicides is minimised to small areas and paths;
- physical removal of weeds is used to control weeds where possible;
- work is not carried out when or where it would disturb species protected by law, e.g. bats. The Project Lead and/or Grounds Supervisor are responsible for appropriately advising contractors whose work may disturb animal species;
- no animals are trapped/snared whereby doing so would contravene the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 i.e. stoats, badgers, pine martens and common otters.
- certain native flower species are planted in borders to actively encourage insects,
- mulching mowers are used when cutting grass.

The Sustainability Manager coordinates an estate-wide biodiversity audit every two years in order to identify current biodiversity and areas for improvement. This includes the development of the **EF 12 A Biodiversity Map**. In addition, a number of student projects each year help to support and monitor biodiversity on the University estate.

The University Sustainability Management Group has overall responsibility for developing and implementing **EF 12 B Biodiversity Action Plan** for both campuses. The **EF 12 B Biodiversity Action Plan** updated every two years in accordance with the findings of the biodiversity audit.





## 5.0 Related Documents

- **EF 04 A Compliance Obligations Register** (access via the Sustainability Manager)
- **EP 08 A Waste Management Procedure**
- **EP 10 Discharge to Water Procedure**
- **EP 13 Contractor Control for Environmental Management**
- **EP 15 Emergency Preparedness & Response Procedure**
- **[Incident Report Form](#)**
- **EF 12 A Biodiversity Map**
- **EF 12 B Biodiversity Action Plan**
- **Tree Records, audits and surveys** (see *Grounds* folder accessed via the Grounds Supervisor)