Grounds Management Procedures

Responsibilities

University Sustainability Management Group	Overall responsibility for the development and implementation of a Biodiversity Action Plan.
Grounds Supervisor	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.
Facilities & Estates	Maintain grounds whilst minimising negative impacts on biodiversity and enhancing biodiversity where possible.
Projects (Facilities & Estates/ VCO)	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.
Sustainability Manager	Coordinate the biodiversity audit, maintain the Compliance Obligations Register and update procedures and training needs accordingly.

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.

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.

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.

Our **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.

Monitoring IUCN and other protected species
The IUCN Red List is a critical indicator of the health of the world's biodiversity. It is a powerful tool for biodiversity conservation and policy change, critical to protecting the natural resources we need to survive. It provides information about range, population size, habitat and ecology, use and/or trade, threats, and conservation actions that will help inform necessary conservation decisions.

Currently, there are more than 147,500 species on The IUCN Red List, with more than 41,000 species threatened with extinction, including 41% of amphibians, 38% of sharks and rays, 34% of conifers, 33% of reef building corals, 27% of mammals and 13% of birds.

The biodiversity audit is undertaken every two years, and identifies any protected species on campus, and any grounds management issues that have potential to damage biodiversity, protected species/habiats and other conservation works. The Sustainability Manager will update the relevant procedure(s), training matrices and training content in order to protect any protected species and habitats identified by the audit.

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 maintained by the Grounds Supervisor.

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

Mowing, 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.

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, planning pollinators etc. Our **Biodiversity Action Plan** includes planting suggestions to better support biodiversity.

Alien and Invasive Species
In order to reduce the potential impact of alien species, plants should be sourced from local suppliers and be non-alien 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 currently 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Waste Management

Waste is disposed of according to procedure **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).

Contractors

Contractors are managed in accordance with our Control of Contractors procedures. 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.

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 **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.

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Reviewed by: University Sustainability Management Group