Grounds Management Policy Procedure

Brief Description & Purpose:	This Policy Procedure outlines the University's official plan for maintaining the aesthetic appeal, functionality and safety of our green spaces. The Policy Procedure is overseen by the University Sustainability Management Group. It is reviewed on an annual basis and reported on via the Sustainability Annual Report.		
Applicable to (list cohorts):	**Staff:** Grounds Staff	**Students:** NA	**Third Parties:** Waste Contractors
Date Created:	16 June 2021	**Last Review Date:**	24 June 2025
Approval Authority:	University Sustainability Management Group	**Approved:**	24 June 2025
Executive Owner:	Prof John Woodward	**Business Owner:**	Dr Paul Steadman
Next Review Date:	June 2026	**Publication External Y/N**	Yes

1.0 Introduction

This document outlines how the University manages its grounds in order to:

- Identify and address the risks and opportunities associated with grounds management,
- Reduce negative impacts and enhance positive environmental outcomes from grounds-related activities,
- Ensure sustainability considerations are integrated, including biodiversity protection and the responsible use and storage of pesticides and herbicides, and
- Maintain compliance with all relevant environmental legislation.

2.0 Grounds Management Policy

This policy is part of the University's sustainability framework and underpins our Biodiversity Action Plan. The University is committed to ensuring, as far as reasonably practicable, that our grounds are managed in a way 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.

3.0 Procedure

3.1 Biodiversity Action Plan

The University's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) provides a structured approach to protecting and enhancing biodiversity across campus. It sets out clear objectives, actions and monitoring requirements that ensure the University not only maintains existing biodiversity but also contributes to measurable biodiversity gains.

Key features of the BAP include:

- Long-term ecological planning: The BAP details how habitats will be created, maintained and improved across the estate to ensure sustainable biodiversity management.
- Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP): The HMMP defines how our habitats on will be managed and maintained to achieve ecological targets.
- Alignment with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG): The BAP is designed to meet or exceed UK BNG requirements by delivering measurable increases in biodiversity value.
- Integration with University operations: The BAP informs decision-making for campus development, maintenance, and landscaping activities, ensuring biodiversity considerations are embedded into planning and daily operations.
- Monitoring and reporting: The BAP establishes indicators and benchmarks for biodiversity and requires regular reviews to assess progress against objectives. Results are integrated into estate-wide audits and reported to relevant internal and external stakeholders.
- Student and staff engagement: The plan actively involves the University community through student research projects, volunteering opportunities, and awareness campaigns that support habitat enhancement and species monitoring.

3.2 Biodiversity Audits and Mapping

The Sustainability Manager oversees a comprehensive, estate-wide audit every two years to assess biodiversity and identify opportunities for improvement (the next audit is scheduled for 2026). As part of this process, the EF12 A Biodiversity Map is updated. In addition, annual student-led projects contribute to monitoring and enhancing biodiversity across the University estate.

The EF 12 A Biodiversity Map is accessible to Facilities & Estates and Project teams and must be consulted before undertaking activities such as demolition, construction, landscaping, mowing, or planting. Where proposed works could negatively impact areas of high biodiversity value, one of the following actions will be taken:

- The proposed works will be stopped or modified to prevent damage; or
- Additional surveys will be carried out by accredited consultants, with agreed actions implemented in consultation with relevant bodies (e.g., Natural England).

Any permits or licences obtained in relation to biodiversity management must be copied to the Sustainability Manager for inclusion in the EF 04 A Compliance Obligations Register.

3.3 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 maintained by the Grounds Supervisor (Facilities\Grounds\Trees).

Where a tree is to be felled, the Grounds Manager or the Project Manager will consult with the Local Authority's Arborist as required.

3.4 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 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.

3.5 Monitoring IUCN and Other Conservation Species

We have established practices to ensure the identification, monitoring, and protection of any IUCN Red Listed species or species included on national conservation lists that may be affected by University operations. As part of any development activities, we conduct biodiversity audits to identify protected and endangered species present on or around campus.

Our wider programme of work, guided by the Biodiversity Action Plan, focuses on enhancing grasslands, woodlands and ponds across our estate. In addition, all construction and

refurbishment projects are required to deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain, helping to minimise ecological impact while actively supporting local wildlife.

3.5.1 Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs, listed on the IUCN Red List, are a key priority for our biodiversity work. As part of our Hedgehog Friendly Campus Gold Award, our Hedgehog Action Group leads initiatives to protect and support hedgehog populations on campus, including:

- Establishing and maintaining nest sites
- Delivering awareness and education programmes for staff and students
- Collaborating with conservation partners to monitor and safeguard local populations

These targeted actions help ensure that hedgehogs are protected on campus while also contributing to the long-term recovery of the species in the surrounding environment.

Hedgehogs are known to be living across the campus, in particular at Coach Lane. Areas of long grass or scrub must therefore be inspected for hedgehogs prior to conducting any strimming works.

Following the construction of new all-weather football pitches, a mound of topsoil was 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 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

3.6 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, planning pollinators etc. The Biodiversity Action Plan includes planting suggestions to better support biodiversity.

3.7 Alien and /or Invasive Species

The BAP includes a goal to remove invasive species from Campus by the end of 2029. The discovery and removal 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.

3.8 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.

3.9 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 within in accordance with the **EP 15 Emergency Preparedness & Response Procedure** and should be reported to Health & Safety using the **Incident Report Form**.

3.10 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.

3.11 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).

3.12 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.

4.0 Related Documents

- **Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2029**
- **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**
- **Tree Records, audits and surveys** (see ***Grounds*** folder accessed via the Grounds Supervisor)

5.0 Document Control

Version No.	Reviewer	Date	Changes
1.1			Pre-2022 guidance version
1.2	P Steadman	20.06.24	BAP updates
2.0	P Steadman	24.06.25	Format review