

Greenspace 10- Hetton Park

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Hetton Park is an urban park with amenity areas, sports courts and a play area. The park is in a steep sided, wooded valley, surrounded by housing on all sides. The Hetton Burn flows south to north through the valley. The park is connected to Hetton Bogs SSSI and overall, forms part of a wider Local Nature Reserve. A public consultation carried out by Sunderland City Council demonstrated local residents' appreciation of the park and that they wanted to see improvements.

1.2 There is woodland on the western side of the valley, which is semi-natural, with parts ancient semi-natural, including more interesting areas of wet woodland. Pockets of acid grassland are also present on site, but these have declined since previous surveys (DWS 2018).



2.0 Location and Accessibility

2.1 The site is located within Hetton-le-Hole and is sandwiched between housing estates to its east and west sides. To the north lies Hetton Bogs SSSI and to the south is Hetton town centre. New housing on the west will potentially increase footfall through the park. There is good pedestrian access within the site with a wide surface path running along its length. However, the Park is enclosed with limited entrance points which may deter some people from using it.

3.0 General description and observations

3.1 Hetton Park is a linear urban park set within a valley alongside the Hetton Burn. The Park includes a small children's play area and benches. Some of the sports facilities are no longer used, although the tennis courts have been refurbished and are set to reopen for public use. There is one central tarmac path running alongside the Hetton Burn with access down from the Hetton Centre and from the A182. Feedback from residents demonstrated that they value the natural aspect of the park but wanted to see facilities such as café or skate park which are outside the scope of this project. There is an issue around motorbikes and feelings of insecurity and perceptions about anti-social behaviour.

3.2 The key features in Hetton Park are the mature semi-natural woodland and the Hetton Burn. Hetton Burn is formed at the outfall of a 95m long culvert which is likely to be impassable to fish. There are two fish easements downstream that can allow fish to utilise the burn up to this barrier. Currently, Hetton Burn is constrained in a narrow channel and hidden, in some sections by ornamental shrub planting. The channel is incised and has been revetted with timbers, gabion baskets and block stone throughout. In high rainfall events, sections of the park have flooded which prevents residents using the park and is undermining footpaths and bridges.

3.3 Therefore, the Links with Nature project has the opportunity to re-naturalise some sections of Hetton Burn by creating meanders and building leaky dams using woody debris. The bank sides will be re-profiled to create areas of hold water. Green Bank Protection and repair of stone work at a bridge crossing the Burn in the centre of the park will help to stabilise collapsing banks. Large Woody Debris (LWD) can enhance channel habitat diversity and there is opportunity to meander the burn where fallen trees and land slips provide an opportunity to work with natural processes.

3.4 This approach uses natural features found within the park to manage potential flood risk by slowing water down and creating greater capacity for water storage. Green engineering techniques using willow will be used to protect and stabilise section of banks, which are beginning to erode and could undermine

the park's infrastructure. Ornamental shrubs will be removed to open out sections of water course so that it is more visible. These works will enable residents to reconnect with the Burn by making more a feature within Hetton Park and through opportunities to be involved in practical interventions.

3.5 The woodland on the western side of Hetton Burn is mix of mature semi-natural ancient and wet woodland, which are priority habitats. The quality of these habitats is being undermined by the presence of non-native invasive species, including Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed. Himalayan Balsam is particularly prevalent throughout the park and continues upstream to Hetton Bogs. Therefore, a programme to remove Himalayan Balsam is a priority to help restore the sensitive plant communities within the woodland. This needs to be undertaken along the whole section of Hetton Burn, including areas downstream of the park and link to work in Hetton Lyons Country Park. The work will be undertaken through a mix of physically removing plants (which provides opportunities for volunteer input) and chemical treatment.

3.6 To the south of the footbridge, there is a small area of acid grassland, another priority habitat, adjacent to an area of bracken, which is declining. Action is required to restore this area through vegetation management.

Access and Interpretation

3.7 Anti-social behaviour and use of motorbikes is damaging the woodland. This deters people from using the Hetton Park and continues to create the perceptions that the Park is unsafe and insecure. The motorbikes are entering the park through the woodland down steep banks and then crossing Hetton Burn. Therefore, measures to stop motorbikes, such as fencing will be considered.

3.8 Hetton Park is connected to Hetton Bogs by a continuous footpath and so signage to promote walking routes and enable residents to make those connections and links to other sites will be valuable.

4.0 Existing Management and Maintenance

4.1 Environment Services are responsible for day-to-day management and maintenance of the park, which includes grass cutting, tree work, footpath inspections and repairs, and cleansing. Watercourses are the responsibility of the Lead Local Flood Authority, who inspect watercourses to ensure that all structures are safe.

5.0 Habitat Management Proposals for Hetton Park:

5.1 Habitat Management Aims:

- To control the spread of Himalayan Balsam through a programme of removal and control;
- To erect fencing to deter motorcycles;
- To remove ornamental shrubs alongside Hetton Burn;
- To prevent further bankside erosion, including planting locally sourced willow revetment;;
- To re-naturalise and reduce flood risk along Hetton Burn;
- To implement a grassland management programme where appropriate.

5.2 Access and Interpretation

- To devise suitable signage to connect Hetton Park and Bogs to increase the attractiveness of use and appreciation of the area.

6.0 Budget

Source of Funding	Amount (£)
Section 106	13,125

Area Committee	-
NECF	-
NLHF	67,475
Total	80,600

Habitat	Project	Season Completed	Budget
Hetton Burn	Programme to create meanders, and woody debris – WRT combined costs	Meanders – May- Sept Woody debris – Oct-March	45,126
	Programme of bank stabilisation	Year round	-
	Programme of fish easement works	Summer	-
	Stone Bridge protection	Anytime	-
	Removal of ornamental bushes	October to March	1,355
	WRT Management Fees		3,217
Himalayan Balsam	Treatment of Himalayan Balsam	April – July	10,621
Acid Grassland	Cutting of acid grassland and bracken management	August – October	410
Woodland	Protective Fencing	Anytime	4,152
	Understory planting and bulbs	April – June	2,250
Access	Entrance signage and route markers	Anytime	5,411
Contingency – DWT			6,746
Contingency – SCC			1,312
Total			80,600

The specification for each area of work is outlined in the Specifications Links with Nature document and details of future maintenance and management are outlined in the Maintenance and Management Plan

