

Greenspace 7- Herrington Country Park

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Herrington Country Park (130ha) is a large and very popular country park, created on the site of the former Herrington Colliery. The Country Park is located opposite a regional landmark, the Penshaw Monument. Many local residents visit Herrington Country Park for informal recreation, to go for a walk, cycle and enjoy the wildlife. The Country Park hosts large-scale events such as concerts, sports events and family events. The creation of Herrington Country Park developed in the late 1990s and the park was officially opened in 2001. The mix of habitats include a series of 7 lakes and ponds, which run along the route of the Herrington Burn,



90 Ha of open amenity grassland and meadow, with 40 ha of plantation woodland. Other facilities include an amphitheatre, play area, bike and skate park, Miners Memorial Garden, sculpture trail throughout the park, community space café and toilets. The 'Friends of' Group is well established and play an active role in the park. Herrington Country Park is a Green Flag Park.

2.0 Location and Accessibility

2.1 The site is situated approximately 5km to the west of central Sunderland and the River Wear is approximately 1km to the north of the site. The Country Park is located adjacent to Penshaw Monument (to the north). The park lies within Green Belt, which stretches to the north and east of the site. To the west is Penshaw and Shiney Row, and to the south lies New Herrington and West Herrington.

3.0 General description and observations

3.1 Herrington Country Park is a 130ha site with a variety of habitats including ponds, lakes, grassland and plantation woodland. All of which were created, when the site was reclaimed, from the mid-1990s onwards. Herrington Country Park is of regional significance as a visitor attraction and a venue for many large-scale events including concerts and sports events, attracting large numbers of people. Herrington is adjacent to Penshaw Monument, which is also a regional attraction, but direct habitat connections are separated by a busy road.

3.2 Herrington Country Park is an important local amenity and can be accessed directly from housing via footpaths following Herrington Burn which connect with surrounding open space and countryside to the south and from housing surrounding the southern side of the park.

3.3 The Park attracts many visitors every day, particularly dog walkers. This does create disturbance for wildlife across the park, particularly in the lakes and ponds, where dogs are allowed to roam free, often entering the water. In addition, many people feed bread to the wildfowl, which will impact water quality and potentially attracts rats.

3.4 The habitats on site are not mature. Herrington is characterised by large areas of amenity grassland and blocks of plantation woodland. This creates a feeling of openness and allows for views across to

Penshaw and the surrounding countryside. In the southern part of the park there are corridors of amenity grassland with woodland bounded by hedges. The southern part of Herrington Country Park is very confusing with similar blocks of woodland and amenity grassland. The park would benefit from better signage for new visitors with marker posts identifying trails different routes.

New Hedgerow Creation

3.5 The boundary between Herrington Country Park and new housing would be established with a new mixed species hedge between the two sites.

New woodland and orchard

3.6 The woodland rides that lie adjacent to New Herrington (and directly west of West Herrington) will be improved, including additional occasional trees, wildflower seeding and hedgerow management. Adjacent to the access road leading to Lady Beatrice Terrace an orchard is proposed.

Existing Plantations

3.7 The southern part of Herrington Country Park, adjacent to New Herrington is characterised by large blocks of even-aged plantation woodland. These are bounded by pathways with wide verges of modified amenity grassland. The pathways lack features and the visitor feels excluded for the woodland, with little opportunity for interaction with the woodland. The proposed project would extend the woodland and soften the edge through a mixture of new tree planting within these existing grassland corridors and management of the existing plantations. The grassland has little current biodiversity interest. The new tree planting would add interest by creating more structure and areas of grass will be left uncut between the trees adding interest for invertebrates and creating pollinator corridors. Amenity grass will be scarified and over planted with wildflower seed to create greater interest.

3.8 The woodland plantations are in poor or moderate condition with stands of dying ash within it. Implementation of a woodland management programme to remove dying ash and thin-out some of the stands to allow some regeneration, create a more natural structure so less visible plantation lines, increase amount of standing deadwood and create a more natural woodland edge would be very beneficial. The focus for this work would be the mixed woodland to the south of the site.

Grasslands

3.9 Herrington Country Park has vast tracks of modified and neutral grassland, the majority of which will be designated as an area for Biodiversity Net Gain. However, there are some areas smaller areas of neutral grassland, particularly around the smaller ponds which could be managed as separate units to increase the diversity of the grassland. These would be areas that could be cut and have arisings removed and be manageable for local volunteers. There will also be the opportunity to cut and re-seed with yellow rattle and other plants to increase diversity.

Ponds, Fens and Reeds

3.10 Management of smaller ponds to remove encroaching reeds and manage surrounding ruderal vegetation. Invasive species have also been identified on site – programme of removal is priority for action.

Herrington Burn

3.11 The Herrington Burn, which flows through Herrington Country Park, has been modified to create a series of large lakes and ponds. These wetlands have an important amenity value and are visited by thousands of people each year. The Wear Rivers Trust have identified a series of interventions to slow flows creating ponds and reducing the amount of silt being deposited into the main lakes. This should help with some localised flooding.

Access and Interpretation

3.12 Herrington Country Park is well-signed in places and has interpretation boards around the site at key entrance points. However, some of the boards have faded and been subject to vandalism. Therefore, Link Together will provide an opportunity to replace and upgrade the interpretation boards.

3.13 The southern half of Herrington Country Park can be confusing to new visitors due to similar layouts and planting. By improving the diversity of the planting blocks this may help visitors navigate the park. In addition, additional signage and some new walking trails that set out routes of varying lengths can encourage visitors from the surrounding conurbations to visit the park.

4.0 Maintenance

4.1 Herrington Country Park is a flagship country park which hosts multiple events and activities with various facilities such as a playground, buildings, Skate Park as well as open spaces. The focus of Link Together is on one small area within the country park.

A team of three staff are based in Herrington Country Park. They are responsible for day-to-day management and deliver functions such as amenity grass cutting, cutting back over hanging woodland vegetation, cleansing and site maintenance of facilities. There is a planned maintenance programme as well as reactive maintenance. The Friends of Herrington Country Park are a very active and proactive group who support work in the country park with litter picks, community activities and keen to develop more opportunities for volunteering with support from other organisations.

5.0 Habitat Management at Herrington Country Park

5.1 Management Aims

- To maintain and enhance the variety of habitats in Herrington Country Park, focusing on wetlands around the Herrington Burn and woodlands.
- To improve the habitats along the Herrington Burn
- To manage woodland plantations to create diversity of age structure, woodland edge and increase diversity of ground flora.
- To create additional woodland, orchard and hedgerows
- To manage non-native invasive species e.g., Himalayan Balsam.

5.2 Access and Interpretation

- To give identity to a series of woodland trails through plantation woodland with installation of suitable interpretation/signing.
- To replace and upgrade existing interpretation boards in profile and self-policed locations.

Proposed locations are shown on the map further below.

6.0 Budget

Source of Funding	Amount (£)
Section 106	-
Area Committee	40,355
NECF	48,644
NLHF	22,645
Total	111,644

Habitat	Project	Season Completed	Budget (£)
Woodland Existing	Carry out two year a programme of woodland management by thinning, removing dying ash and creating woodland edge.	October – February	14,400
Streams	Treatment of Himalayan Balsam	April – June	4,618
	Instream treatments to be specified by WRT – could include creating meanders, vegetation management	Anytime	11,645
	WRT Management Fee		3,217
Neutral Grassland	Additional cutting and raking of parcels of grassland	August – October	900
New woodland	Woodland edge, orchard and boundary hedge planting. Grassland rotavating, orchard soil treatment, replacement of tree failures (beating-up) and general maintenance, planting with wildflowers	November - March	40,630
	Design	-	3,150
Interpretation	Trails - Development of series of trails with marker posts and leaflet	Anytime	10,778
	Design and Installation of 6 interpretation boards	Anytime	11,141
Contingency DWT	-		2,265
Contingency SCC	-		8,900
Total			111,644

The specification for each area of work is outlined in the Specifications Link Together document and details of future maintenance and management are outlined in the Maintenance and Management Plan document.

