

Greenspace 9- Hetton Lyons Country Park

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Hetton Lyons Country Park opened to the public in 1991. The 50-hectare Country Park was created on reclaimed land, which had been used for a variety of industrial purposes including the former Lyons Colliery, associated gasworks, and part of the Sunderland and Murton to Pitlington and Durham Railway plus areas of rough grassland. The land was in a derelict state and the Hetton Burn, which flows through the site, was filled with rubbish and in poor condition. The main lake marks the start of Hetton Burn, which flows through Hetton Park and Hetton Bogs. The site was landscaped to create a variety of different features and habitats include three lakes - the main lake, Blossom Pond and Stephenson's Lake, woodland planting, hedges, and open areas of grassland. The grassland is of varying quality and includes remnants of lowland meadow, acid grassland and neutral grassland. There is a network of footpaths and trails leading around the country park, which link up with the wider footpath network. The Stephenson Trail (an 11-mile promoted route which follows the route taken by coal wagons on their way from the Elemore and Hetton Collieries to the River Wear), also passes through Hetton Lyons Country Park.



1.2 This country park is used for various outdoor sporting activities, including water sports, angling, football, cycling (including BMX), jogging, walking, horse riding and general recreation. Stephenson's Lake is used for angling with an active club. There is parking on site at the main entrance and adjacent to Stephenson's Lake. There is a play park and outdoor gym equipment. The building on site has visitor facilities including toilets, changing rooms and a café along with office and training rooms. Hetton Lyons County Park has Green Flag status, and it is an aspiration to maintain this award year on year.

1.3 Sunderland City Council own Hetton Lyons Country Park. Springboard and Sunderland City Council manage it jointly. Springboard has day to day responsibility for the condition of the park and carry out some management operations. Sunderland City Council carry out specialist tree work and cut larger areas of amenity grassland.

1.4 Springboard delivers land-based qualifications approved by LANTRA and certificated by C&G from NVQ Level 1 to NVQ Level 3 whilst completing duties to support the site's Management Plan. Students range from years 9, 10 and 11, attending from local Secondary Schools, Foundation Learners aged 16-19 and Adult Students aged 19 to 65. Springboard manages the woodlands with work being carried out by the course learners.

1.5 There is an active Friends Group, who have been consulted during development of Link Together.

2.0 Location and Accessibility

2.1 Hetton Lyons Country Park lies to the east of Hetton-le-Hole. It is sandwiched between housing estates to its west side, businesses to its south, and farmland to the north and east, with a quarry also to the north. Pedestrian and vehicle entry is available from Downs Pit Lane at its northern boundary and Colliery Lane at its south boundary.

3.0 Existing Management and Maintenance

3.1 Springboard Adventures and SCC manage Hetton Lyons Country Park each having different responsibilities jointly, Springboard have a service level agreement with SCC. Each have specific roles related to park management as set out in the Hetton Lyons Country Park management plan. This is due for a review in 2024. Any changes following Links with Nature will be integrated into the Management Plan.

3.2 SCC's Environment Services Team inspect facilities including the play area and footpaths, carry out grounds maintenance, and inspect and manage tree work. Springboard clear weeds, remove graffiti, litter pick and empty the waste bins, carry out repairs internally to fencing, replace bark chippings in the play park and carry out some approved tree work. Springboard Adventures carry out visual inspections of footpaths and report defects to SCC. Springboard Adventures and SCC Community Services staff also provide onsite presence throughout the year, which gives Hetton Lyons Country Park a welcoming and friendly atmosphere.

4.0 General description and observations

4.1 Hetton Lyons Country Park has multiple uses and is used regularly by local people for informal recreation and individuals and sports clubs who visit for organised events. Springboard work with a wide cross section of the community to deliver training and involve them in outdoor sports and environmental activities.

4.2 There are numerous habitats at Hetton Lyons, which are either in poor or moderate condition. Links with Nature provides the opportunity to enhance those areas, protect them and give the greater resilience for the future by increasing their area and enhancing their diversity. Links with Nature will target specific habitat types including acid, neutral and lowland grassland, water courses and woodland.

Access and Interpretation

4.3 Hetton Lyons already has a strong identity with regular use by local residents and sports clubs to organised events. There is the opportunity to promote the site to a wider audience for walking and informal recreation. There is also potential to create some additional marked out woodland trails around the Country Park.

5.0 Proposed works:

5.1 Management Aims

- To maintain and enhance an existing variety of habitats, particularly the distinctive grassland types in Hetton Lyons Country Park;
- To create additional woodland and hedgerow on open space within Hetton Lyons Country Park;
- To manage woodland plantations to create a more diverse age structure and encourage a mixed ground flora;
- To improve habitat for water vole;
- To manage for non-native species.

5.2 Access and Interpretation

- To create a series of woodland trails through plantation woodland with installation of waymarkers and signage.
- To build a 15 boardwalk alongside woodland edge.

6.0 Budget

Source of Funding	Amount (£)
Section 106	79,599
Area Committee	3,538
NECF	42,631
NLHF	18,517
Total	144,285

Habitat	Project	Season Completed	Budget
Lowland Meadow	Cut and remove arisings from grassland.	August/September	3,994
Neutral Grassland	Cutting of neutral grassland & planting of grassland herbs e.g., yellow rattle.	August/September	-
	Removal of non-native Montebrei species	July/August	4,956
Acid Grassland	Cutting and removing arisings of acid grassland.	July	54
	Management of adjacent ruderal vegetation and removal of rosebay willowherb.	June/July	1,868
Fenland	Management of adjacent scrub to maintain fenland herb vegetation	October - March	-
Existing Woodland	Deliver woodland management programme, including thinning, woodland edge and glades	October – February	12,227
	Purchase Machine		45,000
	Under plant with woodland ground flora to create diversity of woodland plants	April – June September October	- 7,115
New woodland	New hedgerows and heavy standard planting	October – February	27,342
	SCC Design Fees for new planting scheme	-	3,600
Water course	Treatment of Himalayan Balsam and remove		4,500
	Habitat management along eastern watercourse to improve conditions for water vole. This includes management of bramble and rank species and cutting back shrub	April – October	1,292
Access	15m Recycled plastic "timber effect" boardwalk	Anytime	9,000
	Development of series of woodland trails Installation of way markers and post for new trails		8,907
Contingency – DWT			1,853
Contingency – SCC			12,577

Total			144,285
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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 document.

