



Plessey Woods Country Park © NBP Photographer John Williamson

*Working with Wildlife*

## Recreational & Amenity Space Habitat Action Plan

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Latest version	January 2008

### Current Extent in Northumberland

The current extent and condition of recreational and amenity land within Northumberland is unknown.

### Description

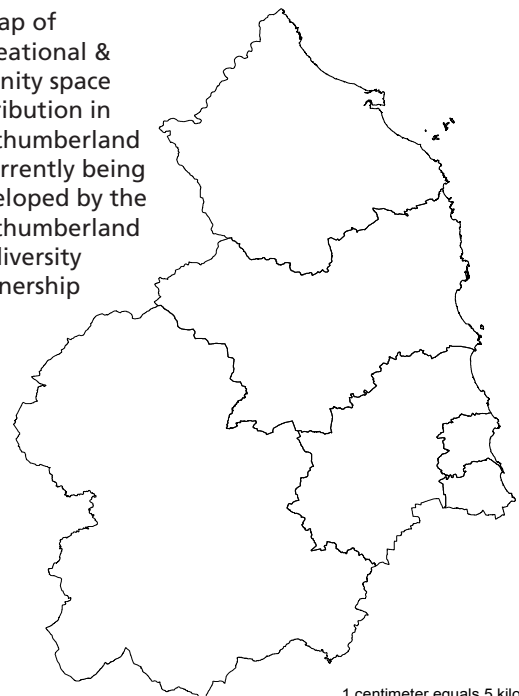
This action plan covers the following:

- Parks
- Formal gardens
- Amenity grassland
- School grounds
- Churchyards & cemeteries
- Golf courses

Recreational and amenity land largely comprises improved grassland with relatively few species. The sward tends to be dominated by Perennial Rye Grass and agricultural legumes. These areas are usually intensively managed for formal sports use or informal recreational such as dog walking or picnicking. Areas not used for formal sports may have more biodiversity interest with less intensive management and reduced chemical inputs.

In many areas the recreational and amenity land has been developed around fragments of other habitat types such as woodland, wetland and hedgerows. Such areas are generally much more valuable for wildlife.

A map of recreational & amenity space distribution in Northumberland is currently being developed by the Northumberland Biodiversity Partnership



1 centimeter equals 5 kilometers

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### Conservation Status

Recreational & amenity land is often afforded local wildlife designations such as Local Nature Reserves. It often includes elements of other habitats at its periphery which may be protected under the provisions of various Acts and Regulations, for example trees and hedgerows.

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### Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline

- Public perception that land not managed intensively is not cared for. Shifts in the way areas of parks are managed must be made slowly and with public consultation and information.
- Management practices: frequent mowing has left many areas of this habitat thin and compacted, with hardly any botanical diversity.
- Amenity value: the public requires areas for sitting, walking, ball games, etc. which in turn leads to trampling and compaction of the grassed areas.
- Contract specifications: these are often “fixed” and on tight time scales, with little scope for flexibility to incorporate “tweaking” as habitats evolve.
- Use of chemicals: herbicides and pesticides.
- Financial constraints have major implications for all aspects of amenity land management including biodiversity.
- Training: for both parks management and contractors in biodiversity management techniques.
- Pressure for increased levels of use: amenity areas are under pressure to increase their usage which in turn can impact on the biodiversity of sites. Large events create noise and soil compaction that can disturb wildlife and impact on invertebrates. Conversely if managed well then more people are offered the chance to benefit from the natural world.
- Sports intensification: modern sports facilities can change the character of small parks. All-weather pitches are sterile with no food chain base and floodlights can disturb nesting birds.
- Dog Waste

### Associated Action Plans

Tress and Hedgerows

Transport Corridors

Bats

Hedgehog

Garden Birds

Barn Owl

### Further Information

Green Space website - <http://www.green-space.org.uk/>

CABE Space website - <http://www.cabe.org.uk/>

Neighbourhoods Green website - <http://www.neighbourhoodsgreen.org.uk/ng/>

### Targets

**Increase the area of recreational and amenity land managed for wildlife in Northumberland by 2010.**

Code	Priority Actions	Date
RAS A01	Identify the current extent and condition of recreational and amenity land in Northumberland	2008
RAS A02	Use survey results to quantify the target to increase the area managed for wildlife	2008
RAS A03	Promote ‘best practice’ management of Northumberland’s recreational and amenity land	ongoing
RAS A04	Encourage the establishment of ‘Friends of’ groups to further enhance and develop areas of amenity land	ongoing