

**Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy  
2013-2026**

**APPENDIX 2**

**Action Plan**

**Darlington Borough Council**

**October 2013**

## Objective 1: Create a quality distinctive landscape and townscape

Darlington's green and distinctive landscape and townscape has evolved naturally and with the help of man over hundreds of years, creating a unique 'character and sense of place that people value so much'<sup>1</sup>.

Rural gaps, e.g. between Middleton St George and Middleton One Row help separate villages in the rural area, and green wedges e.g. between Red Hall and Haughton, help separate neighbourhoods in the urban area so that they keep their unique identities. Elsewhere each green corridor has its own landscape character which has been influenced by its historic and/or current use, for example some follow:

- disused railway lines e.g. the former Barnard Castle Trackbed, are relatively flat straight routes that pass through the town and villages;
- former trade routes e.g. Salters Lane, which mostly follow the original routes from countryside to market;
- watercourses - some follow a natural course e.g. River Tees, others including the Skerne have been altered;
- field boundaries.

The rural landscape is characterised by a mix of unique landforms, for example rig and furrow, ditches and cuts or the Motte at Bishopton. Many villages, such as Heighington are formed around a central green, while different farming practices influence what we see; crops grow in the higher quality, fertile soils between the River Tees and Cocker Beck, whereas in other areas livestock are more common.

Three 'rich and diverse'<sup>2</sup> national landscape character areas cover Darlington:

- Tees Lowland: broad, gently undulating, open arable farmland covers most of the Borough, with wide views to the distant hills of the North York Moors and upland Dales;
- Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau: small but 'distinctive'<sup>2</sup> upland area near Heighington;
- Durham Coalfield Pennine Fringe: rolling pastoral farmland in the north eastern area.

Other parts of Darlington are characterised by the variety of trees, plants and wildlife that can be seen. For example:

- the Durham Magnesian Limestone escarpment supports a rare ecosystem; species-rich limestone grassland including Blue Moor grass, Quaking grass and the Dark Red Helleborine Orchid attract the Durham Argus butterfly and Cistus Forester Moth, rarely seen in the North East;
- a 'dominant treescape'<sup>3</sup> distinguishes parts of the historic West End, South Park and West Cemetery;
- traditional field patterns and hedgerows, for example near Middleton St George, reinforce the rural landscape.



Darlington's designated heritage includes:

- 21 Scheduled Monuments: e.g. Ulnaby medieval village;
- 2 Registered Parks and Gardens: South Park and West Cemetery;
- 500 Listed Buildings: e.g. Darlington Memorial Hospital garden;
- 18 Conservation Areas: e.g. West End, Victoria Embankment
- 5 protected historic routes: e.g. Cemetery Lane, Nunnery Lane
- 11 ornamental parklands: e.g. Walworth Castle

Darlington is renowned worldwide for its key role in the birth of the railways; the Borough's green infrastructure bears testament to this, containing former railway buildings and features dating from the early 19th Century, for example the Skerne Bridge. Notable features from Darlington's Quaker, agricultural and Victorian heritage are also present. For example:

- South Park and North Lodge Park: their design and features e.g. bandstands, fountains, date from the Victorian period;
- St Cuthberts Churchyard and the Quakers Burial Ground: are attractive green settings for listed buildings;
- Village greens, street trees, parks and greenspaces make 'a significant contribution to the qualities and character of [Conservation] areas'<sup>4</sup>.
- Ornamental parklands have been designed and planned, in some cases from the 15th Century. Some original landscape and heritage features remain, for example rig and furrow is evident in the Walworth Castle grounds.

But over time, some areas of land next to railway lines, rivers and roads in the inner urban area have lost their landscape value, and are derelict. Natural river courses along parts of the River Skerne and Cocker Beck have been altered, while the decline of landscape quality in the rural area is ‘well-documented’<sup>5</sup> resulting in the loss of water meadows, field and farm ponds, hedgerow trees, hay meadows, spinneys and woodlands.

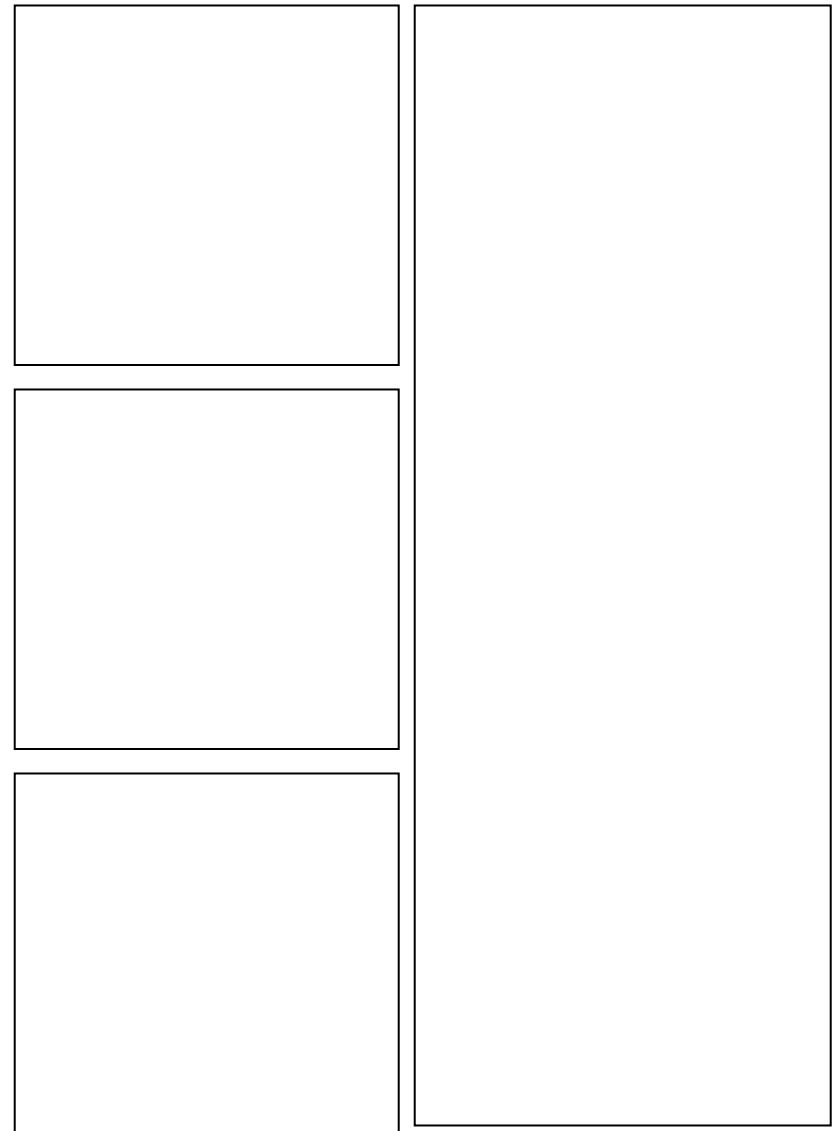
Quality green infrastructure can help attract investment to the Borough, for example, new green space at Middlesbrough’s Riverside Park Industrial Estate attracted over £1m of private investment<sup>6</sup>, while people are prepared to pay up to 8% more for a house overlooking a greenspace than for those further away<sup>6</sup> - shown by the success of the West Park development.

So properly planned, quality green infrastructure is therefore a priority to help:

- attract high value businesses and new development, particularly in the key development locations of the Town Centre, Town Centre Fringe, Central Park, North West Urban Fringe and the Eastern Urban Fringe;
- restore landscape and biodiversity quality in the inner urban area, along rivers, in parts of the urban fringe and rural area;
- re-establish natural river courses along the River Skerne in the Town Centre Fringe and at Cocker Beck;
- make better use of Darlington’s railway heritage at a local and regional level, as an educational and marketing tool.

To address these issues we aim to:

Action 1	Protect and improve natural and built green heritage assets.
Action 2	Restore the natural course and riparian features of rivers and becks.
Action 3	Strengthen the landscape character of the urban fringe and the rural area.
Action 4	Create a quality, green environment to attract new development and enhance regeneration.



<sup>1</sup>One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, Darlington Partnership, 2008

<sup>2</sup>Countryside Character: North East, Natural England, 2002

<sup>3</sup>Darlington Tree and Woodland Strategy, DBC, 2011

<sup>4</sup>Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, English Heritage, 2011

<sup>5</sup>1990–2009, Green Food Conclusions, DEFRA, 2012

<sup>6</sup>Building natural value for sustainable economic development: the green infrastructure valuation toolkit, Genecon LLP, 2011

## Landscape and Townscape Action 1: Protect and improve natural and green built heritage assets.

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
<b>Protect and improve the setting of heritage assets</b>	Lingfield Point West Cemetery Rural Area Town Centre Fringe Blackwell Grange 1825 Heritage Trail Eastern Urban Fringe	Taylor Wimpey DBC Landowners DBC DBC Developers Bellway, Storey Homes	Marchday English Heritage  Developers, landowners Blackwell Grange, developers	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing 2016+ 2016+ 2021+ 2021+
<b>Improve access to, and understanding of Darlington's heritage</b>	Rural Area South Burdon Community Woodland West Cemetery Town Centre Fringe 1825 Heritage Trail Eastern Urban Fringe Piercebridge Path Neasham Path	Landowners Tees Valley Arts DBC DBC Developers Bellway, Storey Homes Landowners Landowners	Forestry Commission, DBC Developers, DBC English Heritage	Ongoing Ongoing 2017+ 2018+ 2021+ 2021+ 2021+ 2021+
<b>Positively manage semi natural ancient woodland</b>	The Banks  Beech Wood West Cemetery Tees Woodland South Burdon Community Woodland Red Hall Stables Skerningham Countryside Park Merrybent-Baydale Beck	Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area Friends of Beech Wood DBC Tees Rivers Trust TVLNP DBC Landowners Landowners	Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC Groundwork  DBC, landowners DBC Developers DBC DBC	Ongoing  Ongoing Ongoing 2013+ 2014+ 2016+ 2021+ 2021+

## Landscape and Townscape Action 2: Restore natural watercourses and riparian features.

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
<b>Through the priority actions of the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan</b>	Town Centre Fringe	DBC	EA, Developers, landowners	Ongoing
<b>Restore the natural course of rivers and becks</b>	Town Centre Fringe Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve  Faverdale Flood Management Scheme	DBC DBC  Developers	EA, developers EA, Durham Wildlife Trust, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, The Otter Project EA	Ongoing 2021+  2024+
<b>Positively manage riparian zones</b>	<i>See Healthy Ecosystems Action 3</i>			

### Landscape and Townscape Action 3: Strengthen the landscape character of the urban fringe and the rural area.

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Reinstate traditional landscape features along public rights of way and field margins	Rural Area Teesdale Way	Landowners Tees Rivers Trust	DBC, Groundwork, landowners	Ongoing 2013+
	South Park-Teesdale Way	Landowners		2014+
	Blackwell Grange Golf Club	Blackwell Golf Club	DBC	2014+
	Darlington Arena	Mowden Rugby Club		2014+
	Faverdale Whin Green Corridor	Developers		2016+
	Merrybent-Baydale Beck	Landowners		2016+
	Piercebridge Path	Landowners		2021+
	Neasham Path	Landowners	Network Rail	2021+
A66 Corridor	Developers		2021+	
Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve	Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust		2024+	
Protect and enhance rural landscape features	The Banks	Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area	Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC	Ongoing
	Rural Area Tees Woodland	Landowners Tees Rivers Trust	DBC, landowners	Ongoing 2013+
Positively manage trees and woodland	<i>See Landscape and Townscape Action 1 and Climate Change Action 3</i>			
Promote agri-environment schemes	<i>See Healthy Ecosystems Action 2</i>			

### Landscape and Townscape Action 4: Create a quality, green environment to attract new development and enhance regeneration.

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Through the priority actions of the new Local Plan	Borough wide	DBC Planning Policy	Developers, landowners	Ongoing
Incorporate quality structural landscaping	Lingfield Point	Taylor Wimpey		2014+
	Yiewsley Manor	Bellway		2014+
	Central Park	Keepmoat	DBC, HCA	2014+
	Darlington Arena	Mowden Rugby Club	DBC	2014+
	Faverdale Whin Green Corridor	Developers		2016+
	North West Urban Fringe	Bussey & Armstrong, Developers		2019+
	Eastern Urban Fringe	Bellway, Storey Homes		2021+
A66 Corridor	Developers		2021+	
Restore landscape quality in the urban area	Lingfield Point	Taylor Wimpey	Marchday	Ongoing
	Central Park	Keepmoat	DBC, HCA	2014+
	Town Centre Fringe	DBC	Developers	2014+
	1825 Heritage Trail	Developers		2021+
Use green features in new development	<i>See Climate Change Action 1 and Outdoor Sport, Recreation and Play Action 1</i>			

## Objective 2: Provide a connected network of healthy, wildlife rich, natural ecosystems

For a Borough of its size, Darlington has an impressive 40 wildlife sites designated locally e.g. Drinkfield Marsh Local Nature Reserve and South Burdon Community Woodland, which provide different levels of protection for a growing range of protected and priority habitats and species. Despite this, in 2012 Darlington had 0.64ha of Local Nature Reserves (below the recommended national standard)<sup>1</sup>.



Darlington's 42 designated sites include:

- 4 nationally protected SSSIs: Neasham Fen, Newton Ketton Meadow, Hell Kettles and Redcar Field;
- 7 Local Nature Reserves: Drinkfield Marsh, Brinkburn, The Whinnies, Geneva Woods, Brankin Moor, Rockwell and Maidendale;
- 3 Community Woodlands: South Burdon, Skerningham and Merrybent;
- 30 Local Wildlife Sites: in the urban and rural area.

But this number of sites is a lot less than our neighbours, which makes the 300ha of other wildlife friendly greenspaces, for example, Cocker Beck and Baydale Meadows, have much greater importance. They allow wildlife to feed, disperse, migrate and reproduce and move between designated spaces, allowing them to flourish.

They also allow ecosystems and the 'critically important'<sup>2</sup> services they deliver (food production, breaking down waste products, regulating water<sup>3</sup> and air quality, and climate control) to be sustained. Otherwise, there could be a decline in their number, quality and mix, potentially resulting in habitats being lost and the quality of the services being significantly reduced.

There is growing recognition that 'more, better, bigger and connected sites'<sup>4</sup> across the Borough, linked by existing and new wildlife corridors, smaller wildlife rich stepping stones and buffer zones, will help establish a 'coherent and resilient'<sup>5</sup> network for a wide range of species, including the important Brown Trout and the Little Grebe. There are a number of specific locations where this principle will be actively promoted:

- more wildlife friendly greenspace in the College, Central, Bank Top and Lingfield wards;
- more wildlife rich stepping stones and buffer zones along watercourses, green corridors, public rights of way and railway lines;
- more wildlife features at lower quality greenspaces;
- improving the amount and quality of riparian habitats along watercourses, at ponds and at sustainable drainage schemes;
- incorporating wildlife friendly space in new development, particularly at the key development locations;
- identifying more locally designated sites;
- planting more native trees - a mature oak can host up to 5,000 different species of invertebrate which benefits birds and mammals<sup>6</sup>.

Another approach that will be actively promoted is to change the management and maintenance regimes at existing greenspaces, specifically greenspaces like Rockwell LNR with establishing wildflower meadows – by only cutting paths and small areas for recreation and leaving the meadow areas to naturally look after themselves or by introducing wildflower meadows at other spaces, specifically at part of the former Blackwell Grange Golf Course will significantly improve the biodiversity value of the area while reducing the maintenance costs for the site.

Biodiversity decline on farmland is 'well-documented'<sup>7</sup>. While 41% of the Borough's land is managed through an agri-environment scheme (which targets locations where features including hedgerows, wetlands and ponds need to be re-introduced), encouraging farmers to manage their land in an environmentally friendly way is 'a major challenge'<sup>7</sup> as they seek to maximise the use of their land for livestock and cereal.

But there is growing recognition by farmers that using more wildlife friendly methods can reduce the dependence on artificial fertilisers, which can lead to gradually improving soil quality with better natural drainage. Over time, these measures should see an increase in nesting lowland farmland birds e.g. the Yellow Hammer, and the declining bumblebee essential for crop pollination in cereal fields.

The key challenges for improving the biodiversity value of the rural area are to:

- achieve a balance between productivity, biodiversity and landscape quality;
- encourage a greater percentage of land to be managed as entry level or organic entry level agri-environment schemes.

Addressing these challenges are heavily dependent on capturing the expertise, knowledge and ‘hold[ing] the trust’<sup>7</sup> of farmers and landowners, and then using it to deliver maximum benefits across the Borough.

This means that Darlington, with its neighbours in the Tees Valley and Durham, needs to adopt a landscape scale approach to managing the rural area. Rather than each individual farm making changes in a piecemeal fashion, by using the ‘right management for the right place’<sup>7</sup> across the landscape, will ensure that the most valuable land is used for what it is best suited to, either for productivity or the environment.

To address these issues we aim to:

Action 1	Improve the amount and mix of protected and priority habitats and species in the urban area.
Action 2	Improve the biodiversity value of the urban fringe and rural area.
Action 3	Provide stepping stones and buffer zones so that wildlife can move more easily.
Action 4	Maintain and improve the Borough’s air and water quality.

<sup>1</sup>1ha nature reserve per 1000 people, Natural England

<sup>2</sup>UK National Ecosystem Assessment, DEFRA, 2011

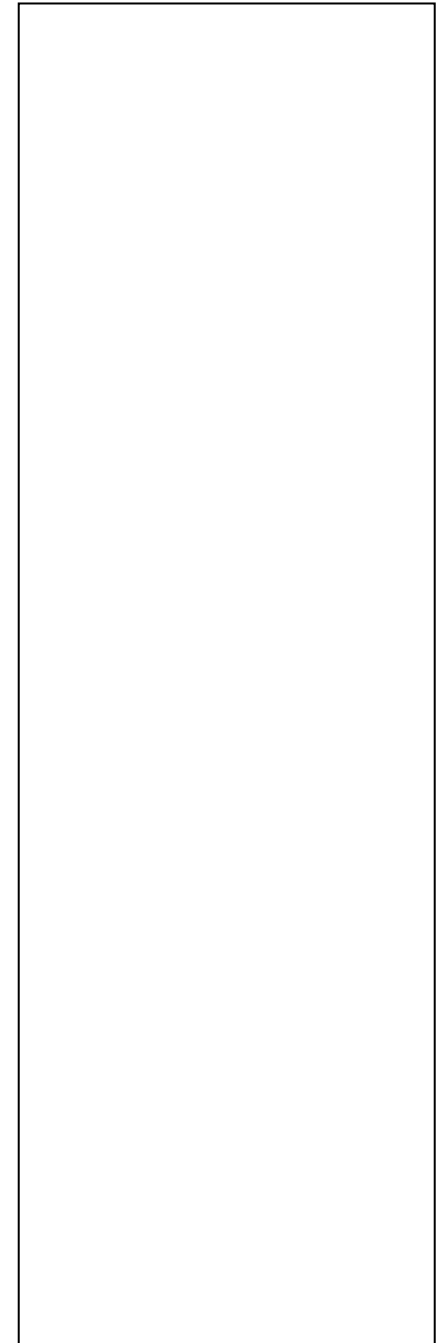
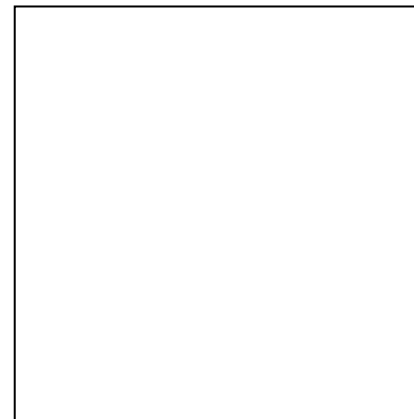
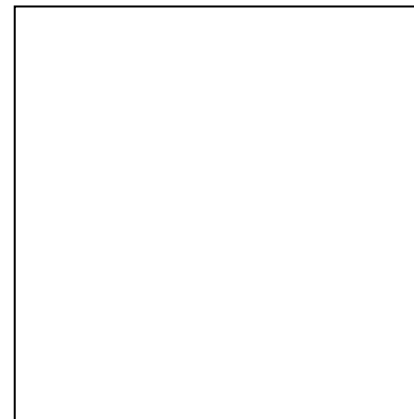
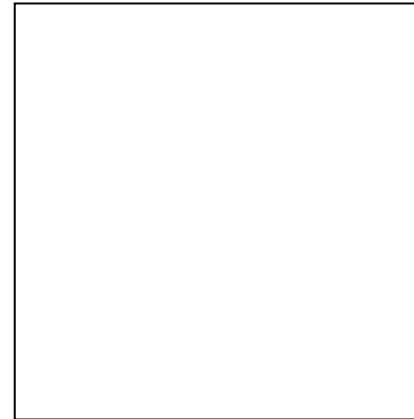
<sup>3</sup>helping Darlington deliver its EU Water Framework Directive requirements by 2027

<sup>4</sup>Making Space for Nature, DEFA 2010

<sup>5</sup>Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services, DEFRA, 2011

<sup>6</sup>The case for trees in development and the urban environment, Forestry Commission, 2010

<sup>7</sup>1990–2009, Green Food Conclusions, DEFRA, 2012



### Healthy Ecosystems Action 1: Improve the amount and mix of protected and priority habitats and species in the urban area.

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Through the priority actions of the Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan	Borough wide	TVLNP	DBC	Ongoing
Protect the mix of protected and priority habitats and species on brownfield land	Lingfield Point Central Park Town Centre Fringe Red Hall Stables 1825 Heritage Trail	Marchday, Taylor Wimpey Keepmoat Developers DBC Developers	DBC, EA  DBC	Ongoing 2013+ 2014+ 2016+ 2021+
Improve the wildlife value of existing greenspaces	Red Hall Wetland West Cemetery Minors Crescent  Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve Yiewsley Manor Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve Nunnery Lane/Cemetery Lane LWS	DBC DBC Esh Group  TVLNP TVLNP Bellway TVLNP DBC	Branksome Community Group  Friends of Drinkfield, DBC  Friends of Maidendale, DBC	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing  2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2014+
Implement new management regimes on existing sites	<i>See Management and Maintenance Action 2</i>			
Use green features in new development	<i>See Climate Change Action 1</i>			

### Healthy Ecosystems Action 2: Improve the biodiversity value of the urban fringe and rural area.

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Through the priority actions of the Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan	Borough wide	TVLNP	DBC	Ongoing
Improve the amount, quality and mix of protected and priority habitats and species	Darlington Arena Geneva Wood Local Nature Reserve The Banks  South Burdon Community Woodland North West Urban Fringe Eastern Urban Fringe A66 Corridor	Mowden Rugby Club Friends of Geneva Wood Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area TVLNP Bussey & Armstrong, Developers Bellway, Storey Homes Developers	Groundwork, Cummins Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC DBC	2014+ 2014+ 2014+  2014+ 2019+ 2021+ 2021+
Promote agri-environment schemes	Rural Area Teesdale Way Skerningham Countryside Park	Landowners, farmers Landowners, farmers Landowners, farmers		Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing
Reinstate landscape management features	<i>See Landscape and Townscape Action 3</i>			



### Healthy Ecosystems Action 3: Provide stepping stones and buffer zones so that wildlife can move more easily.

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
<b>Designate new and extend Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites</b>	Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve Red Hall Wetland Nunnery Lane/Cemetery Lane LWS Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve	Natural England Natural England TVLNP Natural England Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust	DBC DBC DBC DBC DBC	2014+ 2015+ 2016+ 2021+ 2021+
<b>Positive management of invasive species</b>	Rural Area Teesdale Way  The Banks  Tees Woodland Town Centre Fringe A66 Corridor	Landscape Solutions Tees Rivers Trust  Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area Tees Rivers Trust EA Developers	DBC DBC, Groundwork, landowners, TVRCC, EA, RSPB, Tees Wildlife Trust Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC EA, Landowners, DBC DBC, Developers	Ongoing 2013+  2013+  2013+ 2016+ 2021+
<b>Extend the cover and mix of native trees and woodland</b>	<i>See Climate Change Action 3</i>			
<b>Positively manage riparian zones</b>	<i>See Climate Change Action 3</i>			
<b>Reinstate landscape management features</b>	<i>See Landscape and Townscape Action 3</i>			


### Healthy Ecosystems Action 4: Maintain and improve the Borough's air and water quality.

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
<b>Through the priority actions of the Northumbria River Basin Management Plan</b>	Borough wide	EA	Landowners, farmers, DBC	Ongoing
<b>Diversify the mix of wetland and wet woodland habitats</b>	Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve Tees Woodland Central Park Barmpton Lane Allotments  The Banks  Darlington Arena South Burdon Community Woodland Red Hall Wetland LNR Town Centre Fringe Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve Faverdale Flood Management Scheme	DBC Tees Rivers Trust Keepmoat Barmpton Lane Allotments Association Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area Mowden Rugby Club TVLNP DBC Developers DBC Developers	EA Landowners, DBC DBC, HCA Groundwork, DBC  Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC DBC DBC Groundwork  Landowners	Ongoing 2013+ 2013+ 2014+  2014+  2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2016+ 2021+ 2021+
<b>De-culverting watercourses</b>	Town Centre Fringe West Beck Green Corridor	DBC EA	EA DBC	2015+ 2017+
<b>Incorporating sustainable drainage</b>	<i>See Climate Change Action 1</i>			

### Objective 3: Contribute to initiatives to maintain, expand and enhance an accessible green network for people

Darlington is a sustainable travel town, nationally recognised for its achievements for sustainable transport, reflecting the significant potential for walking and cycling that exists - Darlington's generally flat topography and close proximity of many shops and services, homes and places of work to each other means that 41% of car trips could be made by bike.

As a result, significant investment has been made into strategic and local cycle routes in the Borough since 2005, specifically to provide attractive, off road green leisure corridors next to rivers and roads, and along 30km of paths through parks, Local Nature Reserves and large green spaces. Popularity of cycling has risen – in 2012 300 cycle trips a day were made along the Rockwell Route next to the River Skerne<sup>1</sup>.



Darlington's sustainable transport network includes:

- Sustrans National Cycle Network route 14: connects Darlington via Middleton St George to Stockton on Tees;
- Regional Cycle Route 52: connects Croft-on-Tees to Low Dinsdale;
- 300km of Public Rights of Way, 60km in the urban area;
- Teesdale Way: long distance footpath which follows the River Tees from Cumbria to the Teesside coast

In 2012, 70% of public rights of way were open and available for use<sup>1</sup>. Sustainable access to quality countryside is more popular than ever for walking, cycling and horse riding, particularly:

- close to villages, like High Coniscliffe and Middleton One Row;
- at honeypots like Broken Scar and at green venues e.g. Walworth Castle;
- in the northern urban fringe around Skerningham community woodland;
- moving west along the Teesdale Way next to the River Tees;

- along 'promoted trails' and 'circular walks' e.g. Piercebridge Linear walk or the Sockburn Loop.

Despite this success, particular challenges for sustainable green travel include:

- Improving connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists along and between green corridors, specifically along the River Skerne, at the key development locations and between the urban area and nearby villages;
- Improving the quality and connectivity of rights of way along river corridors, specifically the River Tees and West Beck, to the urban fringe and close to villages in the rural area;
- Enhancing the quality and surfaces of paths to and through existing green spaces, especially those that are lower quality or isolated to encourage more use by older people, those with children and those with disabilities;
- Promoting more use of paths in the rural area specifically to natural and built heritage features, village services and green venues;
- Ensuring new development delivers well designed, attractive, appropriately planted and safe green corridors that connect to existing routes.

Such issues can only be resolved through coordinated working with the delivery of the Third Local Transport Plan, developers and landowners to ensure sustainable transport provision and public rights of way improvements support green infrastructure aspirations.

To provide an accessible green network for people we aim to:

Action 1	Provide connections so that people can move easily between urban green spaces, the urban fringe and the countryside.
Action 2	Design green infrastructure for safe, positive use by people of all age groups and abilities.

<sup>1</sup>DBC figures

**Accessible Green Network Action 1: Provide connections so people can move between urban green spaces, the urban fringe and the countryside.**

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date	
Through the priority actions of the Third Local Transport Plan	Borough wide	DBC Programmes and Projects	Transport providers	Ongoing	
The priority actions of the Darlington Rights of Way Improvement Plan	Borough wide	DBC Parks and Countryside	Landowners, farmers, developers, Landscape Solutions	Ongoing	
Provide sustainable access through new development	Minors Crescent	Esh Group	Branksome Group	Community	Ongoing
	Yiewsley Manor	Bellway			Ongoing
	Lingfield Point	Taylor Wimpey	Marchday		Ongoing
	Central Park	Keepmoat	DBC, HCA		Ongoing
	Town Centre Fringe	DBC			2014+
	Blackwell Grange Golf Club	Blackwell Golf Club			2014+
	Faverdale Whin Green Corridor	Developers			2016+
	North Western Urban Fringe	Bussey & Armstrong, Developers			2019+
	1825 Heritage Trail	Developers			2021+
	Eastern Urban Fringe	Bellway, Storey Homes			2021+
A66 Corridor	Developers			2021+	
Improve connectivity in the urban and rural rights of way network	Teesdale Way	Tees Rivers Trust	Landowners, DBC		2013+
	Broken Scar	Tees Rivers Trust	DBC		2013+
	The Banks	Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area	Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC		2013+
	Barmpton Lane Allotments	Barmpton Lane Allotment Association	Groundwork, DBC		2014+
	South Park-Teesdale Way	DBC	Landowners		2014+
	Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve	DBC			2021+
	Skerningham Countryside Park	Landowners	DBC		2021+
	Piercebridge Path	DBC	Landowners		2021+
	Merrybent Community Woodland	Landowners	Parish Council		2021+
	Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve	Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust	DBC		2021+
Neasham Path	DBC	Landowners		2021+	

**Accessible Green Network Action 2: Design green infrastructure for safe, positive use by people of all age groups and abilities.**


<b>How will we do this?</b>	<b>Where will we do this?</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Through the priority actions of the Third Local Transport Plan</b>	Borough wide	DBC Programmes and Projects	Transport providers	Ongoing
<b>Through the priority actions of the Darlington Rights of Way Improvement Plan</b>	Borough wide	DBC Parks and Countryside	Landowners, farmers, developers	Ongoing
<b>Improve the quality of footpaths and cyclepaths in green infrastructure</b>	Rockwell Local Nature Reserve West Cemetery Broken Scar The Banks	DBC DBC Tees Rivers Trust Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area	DBC Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC	Ongoing Ongoing 2013+ 2013+
	Teesdale Way Red Hall Stables	Tees Rivers Trust DBC	DBC, Landowners Red Hall Community Partnership	2013+ 2016+
	West Beck	DBC		2016+
<b>Upgrade public rights of way to bridleway standard for equestrians</b>	South Park-Teesdale Way Teesdale Way South Burdon Community Woodland Piercebridge Path Neasham Path	DBC Tees Rivers Trust Forestry Commission DBC DBC	Landowners DBC DBC Landowners Landowners	2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2021+ 2021+
<b>Improve accessibility for all to existing greenspaces</b>	Minors Crescent	Esh Group	Branksome Community Group	Ongoing
	West Cemetery Broken Scar The Banks	DBC Tees Rivers Trust Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area	DBC Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC	Ongoing 2013+ 2013+
	Beech Wood Teesdale Way Red Hall Stables	Friends of Beech Wood Tees Rivers Trust DBC	Groundwork DBC Red Hall Community Partnership	2013+ 2013+ 2016+
	West Beck Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve	DBC DBC Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust		2016+ 2021+ 2021+
<b>Promote a range of trails and circular routes</b>	Teesdale Way Rural Area West Cemetery South Burdon Community Woodland South Park-Teesdale Way Faverdale Whin Green Corridor 1825 Heritage Trail Piercebridge Path Neasham Path	DBC DBC DBC DBC DBC DBC DBC DBC DBC	Forestry Commission	Ongoing Ongoing 2013+ 2013+ 2015+ 2018+ 2021+ 2021+ 2021+

## Objective 4: Promote outdoor sport, recreation, play and education

Darlington has an increasingly active population - in 2012 Darlington's participation rate in sport (24.2%) outperformed both the national and Tees Valley average<sup>1</sup>, particularly important in a Borough where the life expectancy between the best and worst wards is 13 years for men and 11.8 for women<sup>2</sup>.

This significant rise of 3%<sup>3</sup> demonstrates the importance of Darlington's growing, accessible outdoor sports network - in 2012 all three hub sites were improved:

- Blackwell Meadows: one adult and three junior football pitches are being added;
- Longfield Academy: a new synthetic turf pitch was installed and four new floodlit tennis courts are being added;
- Eastbourne Sports Complex: all weather pitch was re-surfaced.


 Darlington's outdoor sports facilities include:

- 114 adult, junior and mini playing pitches (58% accessible e.g. South Park) for football, cricket, rugby union and hockey;
- 3 synthetic turf pitches;
- 2 athletics tracks;
- 6 golf courses;
- 15 multi use games areas;
- 35 tennis courts;
- 9 bowling green areas;
- a skate park and downhill cycling track.

Despite this, there are still not enough playing pitches to meet demand, the quality of many public pitches is below average and access to school facilities out of hours is limited in some places<sup>4</sup> particularly for junior football. Essentially, a shortfall of 12 junior football pitches is likely to increase to 15.9 by 2026<sup>4</sup> unless access to existing pitches can be increased, quality improved or new provision made.

The hub sites, parks, schools and private clubs also provide for tennis, golf, bowling and athletics, either for more casual, 'pay as you play' or competitive use. Again quality varies, specifically for tennis, athletics and cycling. Other activities like horse riding and wind surfing are provided in the rural area.

Demand for sport can only be met with the right facilities available. When people want to take part in sport, easy access, cost and quality of facilities - from sports facilities themselves to changing rooms and car parking - are major considerations. Improvements to the Borough's sporting offer must make sure that these needs are met.

 Darlington's accessible open spaces include:

- 14 parks;
- 50 children's play areas;
- 42 green corridors
- 86 informal recreation spaces
- 31 wildlife friendly greenspaces
- 15 cemeteries and churchyards
- 42 landscape amenity spaces
- 4 civic spaces

One of the main attractions of Darlington's green infrastructure network are the four strategic green corridors and eight local green corridors that connect a range of multifunctional spaces for informal recreation, play, nature, movement and amenity. Most spaces, such as West Park, have more than one function.

The majority of residents have easy access to a strategic park, specifically South Park, West Park, North Park and Brinkburn Denes, providing a cost effective way to take part in sport and recreation. Over the last five years access to a complementary network of local and neighbourhood spaces has grown for recreation e.g. walking, running, jogging, Nordic walking, orienteering and Tai Chi.

For the Borough's growing number of children and young people, Darlington has an impressive play offer, aimed at encouraging active, adventurous play, risk taking and learning about nature in a managed environment. For example:

- West Park, Green Park and Broken Scar: new wood climbing frames and swing bridges, sand pits, adventure mounds, climbing nets, tunnels and water features for young children;
- Cocker Beck and Eastbourne Sports Complex: climbing boulders and climbing nets for older children;
- North Park and South Park: bike track and skate bowl for young people.

This is reflected in the level of provision - in 2012 Darlington had 4.5ha of accessible greenspace per 1000 people, appropriate for a town of its size, with associated physical and mental health benefits – people who live farthest from a park are 27% more likely to be overweight or suffer from obesity, while access to the natural environment is ‘closely associated’<sup>5</sup> with improving mental well being, reducing the risk of depression, stress and cognitive decline.

Despite this, there are a number of specific locations which would benefit from access to more quality recreational, play and wildlife friendly greenspace:

- Better access to parks in parts of the Central, South East, South West and North East urban area;
- More informal recreation space in parts of the North West, South East and South West urban area;
- Small parts of the Central, South East, South West and North East need better access to play space;
- More wildlife friendly greenspace in the Central, South East urban area.

Addressing these shortfalls is heavily dependent on improving the multi-functionality of existing spaces or providing new greenspace to provide a mix of functions that meets residents needs. This will only be achieved by better understanding the needs of local people and involving them more in the design of their local space. 30 spaces around the Borough are managed and maintained to varying degrees by community groups – their involvement helps ensure that their local greenspace is used more often, in a positive way.

For example, as part of the regeneration of the Minors Crescent area, the Branksome Community Group had extensive discussions

with the developers about the type and location of different types of greenspace in the new development. By working closely together, a scheme has been designed which meets the needs of the local people. By taking ownership of the design it is more likely that the residents will help look after the space in the future.

There is growing recognition that learning about and understanding nature can encourage people, particularly children, to use the environment positively in the future. Stimulating wildlife friendly greenspace, whether in a Local Nature Reserve, the South Park Outside In Education Centre, a school garden or a private garden, provide outdoor classrooms, helping children retain information to deliver ‘a full range of curriculum needs’<sup>6</sup> as well as nature based recreation activities for all, for example bird watching and photography. Adding space for learning, for example through community gardens or at strategic green spaces continues to be a priority.

To address these issues we aim to:

Action 1	Protect and enhance facilities for sport, recreation and play in the urban area.
Action 2	Create a softer urban fringe and rural area for sport and recreation.
Action 3	Provide opportunities for people to learn about nature and the environment.
Action 4	Engage more people in the design or re-design of locally important open spaces.

<sup>1</sup> Sport England Active People Survey 2012

<sup>2</sup> Joint Single Needs Assessment, DBC, 2012

<sup>3</sup> From the 2005-06 baseline

<sup>4</sup> Darlington Playing Pitch Strategy: Update Note, DBC, 2013

<sup>5</sup> Urban Green Nation: Building the Evidence Base, CABE, 2010

<sup>6</sup> Understanding the Importance of Retaining Good Quality Parks and Green Spaces, and the Contribution they make to Improving People’s Lives, Green Link, 2011

## Outdoor Sport, Recreation and Play Action 1: Protect and enhance facilities for sport, recreation and play in the urban area

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
<b>Through the priority actions of the Playing Pitch Strategy</b>	Borough wide	DBC Leisure Services	Sport England, sports clubs	Ongoing
<b>Through the policies of the new Local Plan</b>	Borough wide	DBC Planning Policy	Developers, landowners	Ongoing
<b>Provide new greenspace to meet the recreation and play needs of new development</b>	The Pastures	Miller Homes	Skerne Park Community Group	Ongoing
	Minors Crescent	Esh Group	Branksome Community Group	Ongoing
	Yiewsley Manor	Bellway	Marchday DBC, HCA	2014+
	Lingfield Point	Taylor Wimpey		2014+
	Central Park	Keepmoat		2014+
	Town Centre Fringe	Developers		2016+
	Faverdale Whin Green Corridor	Developers		2016+
Blackwell Grange	Developers	2021+		
1825 Heritage Trail	Developers	2021+		
<b>Provide new sports facilities to meet the needs of residents</b>	Blackwell Meadows	DBC	Darlington Rugby Club	Ongoing
	The Pastures	Miller Homes	Skerne Park Community Group	Ongoing
	Lingfield Point	Marchday	Developers	2016+
<b>Improve the quality of existing sport, recreation and play facilities</b>	Minors Crescent	Esh Group	Branksome Community Group	Ongoing
	Broken Scar	DBC	Groundwork, Houghton Education Village	Ongoing
	Blackwell Grange Golf Club	Blackwell Golf Club		Ongoing
	Rockwell Local Nature Reserve	Friends of Rockwell	2014+	
	Beech Wood	Friends of Beech Wood	Groundwork	2014+
	Bylands Way Allotments	DBC	Residents	2016+
	The Ridgeway Allotments	DBC	Residents	2016+

## Outdoor Sport, Recreation and Play Action 2: Create a softer urban fringe and rural area for sport, recreation and play

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Through the priority actions of the Playing Pitch Strategy	Borough wide	DBC Leisure Services	Sport England, sports clubs	Ongoing
Through the policies of the new Local Plan	Borough wide	DBC Planning Policy	Developers, landowners	Ongoing
Provide opportunities for sport, recreation and play	Darlington Arena The Banks  South Burdon Community Woodland North West Urban Fringe Eastern Urban Fringe Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve	Mowden Rugby Club Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area Tees Valley Arts Bussey & Armstrong, Developers Bellway, Storey Homes Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust	DBC Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC DBC	Ongoing 2013+  2015+ 2019+ 2021+ 2021+
Promote green venues	Rural Area South Burdon Community Woodland Skerningham Countryside Park	Private providers DBC DBC, Landowners		Ongoing 2014+ 2016+

## Outdoor Sport, Recreation and Play Action 3: Provide opportunities to learn about nature and the environment

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Provide education trails	South Burdon Community Woodland Town Centre Fringe 1825 Heritage Trail	Tees Valley Arts DBC DBC	Forestry Commission, DBC Developers Developers	2014+ 2021+ 2021+
Create community wildlife gardens	Rockwell Local Nature Reserve  Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve Red Hall Wetland Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve Geneva Wood Local Nature Reserve South Burdon Community Woodland Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve	Friends of Rockwell  Friends of Drinkfield DBC Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust Friends of Geneva Wood Tees Valley Arts DBC	Groundwork, Haughton Education Village Groundwork Groundwork Groundwork Groundwork, Cummins Groundwork, Forestry Commission, DBC	2014+  2014+ 2015+ 2015+ 2015+ 2015+ 2021+
Provide public art and/or interpretation	Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve  South Burdon Community Woodland Town Centre Fringe Lingfield Point Central Park South Park-Teesdale Way Faverdale Whin Green Corridor 1825 Heritage Trail North Western Urban Fringe Eastern Urban Fringe	TVLNP TVLNP TVLNP  TVLNP Developers Taylor Wimpey Keepmoat DBC Developers Developers Bussey & Armstrong, Developers Bellway, Storey Homes	DBC Friends of Drinkfield, DBC Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust, DBC DBC, Tees Valley Arts  Marchday DBC, HCA	2014+ 2014+ 2014+  2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2015+ 2016+ 2016+ 2021+ 2021+ 2024+



**Outdoor Sport, Recreation and Play Action 4: Engage more local people in the design or re-design of locally important open spaces.**

<b>How will we do this?</b>	<b>Where will we do this?</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Through the masterplan process for sites</b>	Minors Crescent	Esh Group	Branksome Community Group	Ongoing
	Red Hall	DBC Programmes & Projects	Developers, landowners	Ongoing
<b>Involve community groups in developing local open spaces</b>	The Pastures	Miller Homes	Skerne Park Community Association, DBC	Ongoing
	West Park	Friends of West Park	DBC, Bussey & Armstrong	Ongoing
	Minors Crescent	Esh Group	Branksome Community Association	Ongoing
	Salters Lane Community Garden	Salters Community Garden Association	Groundwork	Ongoing
	Rockwell Local Nature Reserve	Friends of Rockwell	Groundwork	Ongoing
	Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve	Friends of Drinkfield	Groundwork	Ongoing
	Geneva Wood Local Nature Reserve	Friends of Geneva Wood	Groundwork	Ongoing
	Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve	Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust	Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC	Ongoing
The Banks	Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area		Ongoing	
Beech Wood	Friends of Beech Wood	Groundwork, DBC	Ongoing	
Barmpton Lane Allotments	Barmpton Lane Allotment Association	Groundwork, DBC	Ongoing	

## Objective 5: Create an economically useful and productive landscape

Darlington has a rich agricultural tradition – today 80% of the Borough remains a significant working, productive landscape. Arable farming dominates the richer soils of the lowland south and east producing grain for animal food, and a good local annual potato crop for the national market. Pastoral farming dominates the north and west; cattle and sheep are reared for food and to provide milk and dairy products for local and national markets. Horse grazing and livery operations have also increased in recent years.

In Darlington like the rest of the UK, the farming and food sector faces an ‘unprecedented’<sup>1</sup> amount of pressure - a growing population, the increasing demand for limited natural resources, loss of soil quality and the impact of climate change, means that food security is ‘seriously and increasingly threatened’<sup>2</sup>.

To achieve ‘a more competitive, profitable and resilient farming and food industry’<sup>1</sup> which uses resources more efficiently and more sustainably produced ingredients, with improving financial and environmental outputs - the particular challenges in Darlington which need to be overcome include:

- greater understanding of the supply chain to establish a more joined up and collaborative chain; between farmers and those they are selling to, between retailers, the food service sector and between farm businesses themselves;
- implementing structural changes, for example the co-location of specialist farming practices or a mix of enterprises on one farm to increase efficiency;
- promoting more varied employment opportunities so that those that rely on the rural area for employment and income can continue to do so;
- promoting more collaborative approaches, for example the farmers co-operative at Farmway, Piercebridge works to secure premium prices for locally grown, wholesale products as part of a profitable business.

Such issues can only be resolved through coordinated working with the delivery of the Darlington Economic Strategy, farmers and landowners to ensure sustainable agricultural production is part of a profitable rural economy that complements other green infrastructure aspirations.

At a local level allotments provide space for people to grow their own fruit and vegetables. In 2012 Darlington had 27 allotment sites, with 900 plots – 24 plots per 1000 households, above the national standard<sup>3</sup>. With about 300 people on the waiting list demand outstrips supply.

There is growing recognition that to meet demand we need to be more creative about how we use green infrastructure for local food production:

- Expanding the Darlington Orchard by planting more native varieties, for example Keswick Codling and Lane’s Prince Albert fruit trees in amenity space;
- Providing more allotment plots by changing the management of existing sites, for example changing full plots to half plots when they become available;
- Creating new allotment sites and/or community gardens through new development and on lower quality amenity space;
- Using raised beds in community gardens and the public realm;
- Growing fruit and vegetables in private gardens.

Darlington has a number of successful green venues (a value for money attraction that generates a second income on site), for example, New Moor Farm have created the regionally distinctive Archers Jersey ice cream brand, shops at Burtree Farm, Piercebridge Organic Farm and Hurworth Moor Farm sell quality farm grown and other local produce including jams, meat and vegetables direct to the consumer, while Ulnaby Farm also provides access to its unique medieval village. Improving access to, and awareness of, Darlington’s green venues and village services remains a priority to help sustain the rural economy.

Increasing emphasis on green technologies means that space needs to be found, specifically in the rural area and urban fringe to supply or accommodate renewable technologies. Several single wind turbines can be seen near Sadberge, Archdeacon Newton and Coniscliffe Grange while planning permission has been granted for six turbines at Moorhouse in the north east of the Borough.

While the capacity of the landscape to accommodate more wind turbines is limited in places, agricultural land has 'significant potential'<sup>1</sup> to grow crops for fuel, particularly important to supply the CropEnergies AG Biofuels plant on Teesside.

The challenge facing Darlington is to exploit the opportunities that growing fuel crops can have without compromising the capacity to continue to meet food production needs or landscape quality.

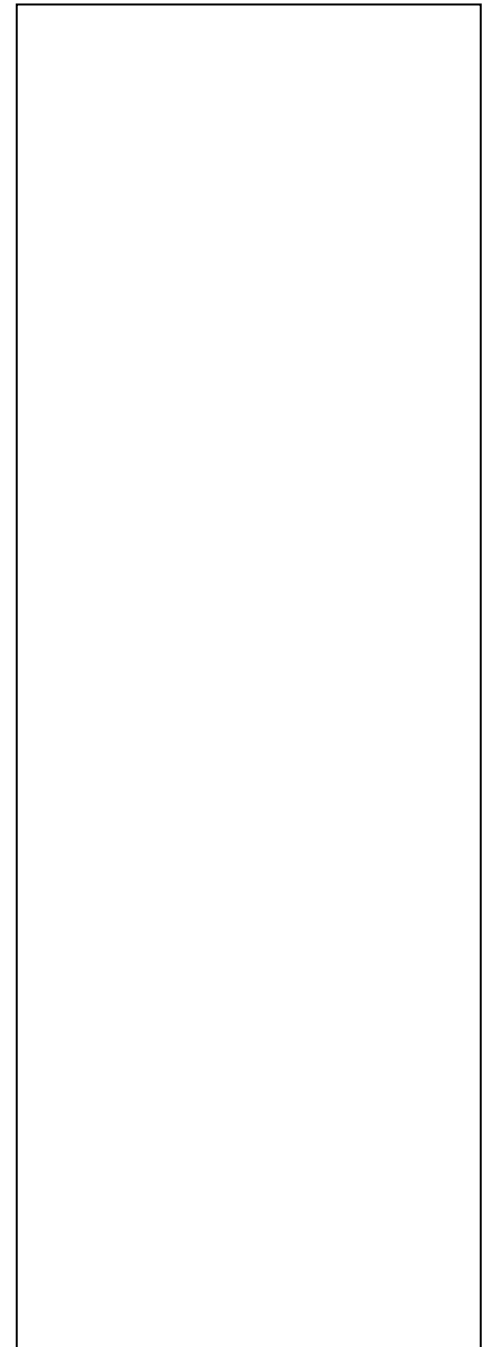
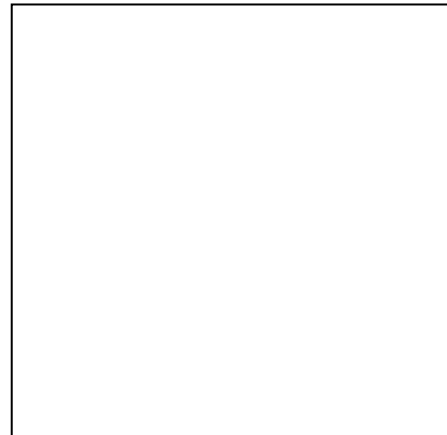
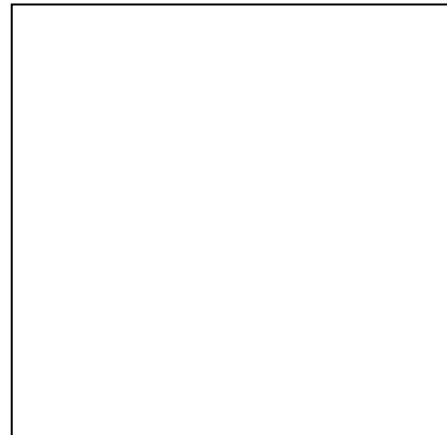
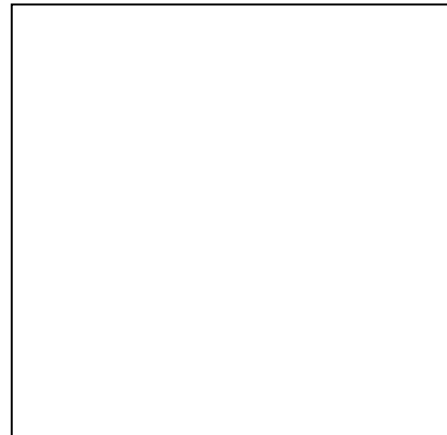
To provide an economically useful and productive Borough we aim to:

Action 1	Support initiatives for maintaining and expanding the farming sector.
Action 2	Promote initiatives that expand local food production.
Action 3	Support initiatives for expanding the renewable energy sector.

<sup>1</sup>The Future of Food And Farming, Government Office for Science, 2011

<sup>2</sup>Green Food Project Conclusions DEFRA, 2012

<sup>3</sup>20 plots per 1000 households, National Allotments Society



**Economically Useful and Productive Landscape Action 1: Support initiatives for maintaining and expanding the farming sector.**

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Through the priority actions of the Darlington Economic Strategy	Borough wide	DBC Economic, Housing and Transport Strategy	Businesses, landowners	Ongoing
Support more farmers to set up co-operatives	Teesdale Way	Farmers	Tees Valley Rural Community Council, DBC	Ongoing
	Rural Area	Farmers	Tees Valley Rural Community Council, DBC	Ongoing
Improve grazing regimes and land management	Teesdale Way	Farmers, landowners	DBC	Ongoing
	Rural Area	Farmers, landowners	DBC	Ongoing
	Skerningham Countryside Park	Farmers, landowners	DBC	Ongoing
Supporting appropriate diversification initiatives	Teesdale Way	Farmers, landowners		Ongoing
	Rural Area	Farmers, landowners		Ongoing
	South Burdon Community Woodland	Farmers, landowners		2015+
	Skerningham Countryside Park	Farmers, landowners		2018+
	Piercebridge Path	Farmers, landowners		2019+
	Neasham Path	Farmers, landowners		2019+

**Economically Useful and Productive Landscape Action 2: Promote initiatives that expand local food production.**

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Create new allotment space	Barmpton Lane Allotments	Barmpton Lane Allotment Association	Groundwork, DBC	2014+
	The Ridgeway Allotments	DBC		2016+
	Bylands Way Allotments	DBC		2016+
	North West Urban Fringe	Bussey & Armstrong, developers		2019+
	Eastern Urban Fringe	Bellway, Storey Homes		2021+
Support the development of Darlington: It's Growing	Borough wide	DBC	Farmers, local food producers, local food retailers	Ongoing

**Economically Useful and Productive Landscape Action 3: Support initiatives for expanding the renewable energy sector.**

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Promote production of biomass and bio-fuels	Skerningham Countryside Park	Landowners, farmers		2014+
	South Burdon Community Woodland	Landowners, farmers		2014+
	Rural Area	Landowners, farmers		2014+
Support renewable energy development, appropriately	<i>See Climate Change Action 1</i>			

## Objective 6: Minimise the impact of, and adapt to the effects of climate change

Situated to the north of the River Tees, with the River Skerne splitting the Borough in half and other smaller rivers and becks feeding them, substantial parts of Darlington sit within a natural flood plain. These large areas of green infrastructure, whether agricultural land, parks or green space provide space for water to flow and be stored during increasingly wetter winters (up to 20% more winter rainfall is expected in future)<sup>1</sup>, storms and floods.

But as land continues to be under pressure for development; 'increased emphasis'<sup>2</sup> will be given to protecting and restoring green infrastructure as flood plains, specifically in the key development locations of the Town Centre Fringe and Eastern Urban Fringe.

Darlington has already delivered an impressive mix of multi-functional sustainable drainage systems in new development (which reduce surface water run off, provide for wildlife and access to nature), for example:

- biodiverse balancing ponds at West Park, Morton Palms, Park View and the Eastern Transport Corridor;
- swales and infiltration trenches at North Road-Whessoe Road junction.

Ensuring that sustainable drainage is multi-functional will continue to be a priority.

Burning fossil fuels could see annual temperatures rise by up to 1°C in the 2020s, and by up to 2.5°C in the 2050s<sup>1</sup>, leading to hotter, drier summers and an increase in the number of heat waves. Trees help circulate and cool the air and provide shade, important in the urban area, where, without trees, it could be at least 5°C hotter than the rural area<sup>1</sup> making life more difficult for young and older people. By storing carbon, trees also help to reduce the amount in the atmosphere – a mature tree can reduce carbon emissions by 2-3%<sup>3</sup>. Tree planting, specifically native, mature trees, will therefore continue to be promoted in the Borough.

There is growing recognition that climate change will be the 'dominant driver of biodiversity loss by the end of the century'<sup>5</sup> making it difficult for wildlife and plants to migrate, for healthy ecosystems to establish and survive, and for ecosystem services to be useful. Particular issues<sup>4</sup> in Darlington that need to be managed are:

- an increase in invasive species e.g. the Great Hogweed, which makes it difficult for native plants to flourish;
- more pests and diseases which could affect bud, flower and fruit production and the availability of food for wildlife;
- more algae and weeds in rivers which would make it more difficult for wildlife, such as salmonid fish to spawn and live;
- the loss of priority habitats e.g. reedbeds, Mixed Lowland Deciduous trees reducing the Borough's ecological value.

These issues can only be resolved through well-functioning green infrastructure. Priorities in Darlington are to:

- protect, improve and extend wildlife corridors, stepping stones and buffer zones particularly through the urban area;
- create resilient landscapes particularly at designated sites, green corridors and wildlife friendly greenspaces to protect and enhance the variety of species and improve soil quality, so that plants and trees can establish more easily;
- use green features, specifically green roofs and green walls in new development, as at Northwood School - where the softer needs of biodiversity have been incorporated into sustainable design.

Climate change is a cross cutting theme; other objectives for cycling and walking, growing food locally, accommodating renewable energy and fuel crops will also help mitigate the impacts of climate change.

These issues can only be delivered by working with the Environment Agency, Northumbrian Water, developers, landowners and residents to make sure that green infrastructure plays its part in mitigating climate change.

To mitigate the impact of, and adapt to the effects of climate change we aim to:

Action 1	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and minimise the use of resources
Action 2	Minimise the risk of flooding and pollution.
Action 3	Provide for species adaptation.

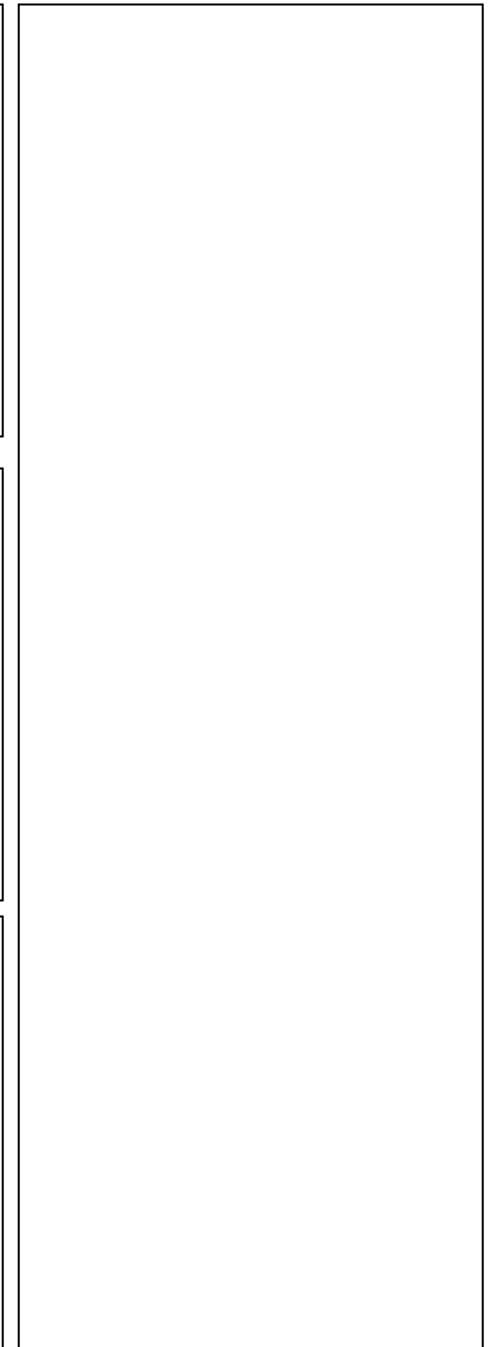
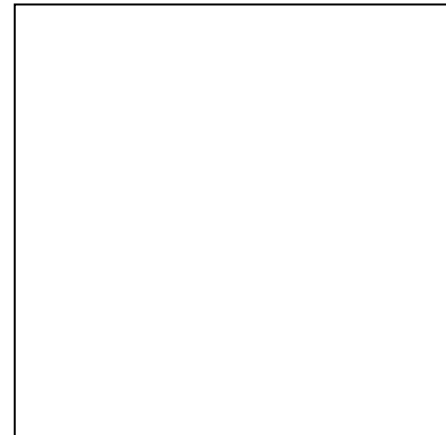
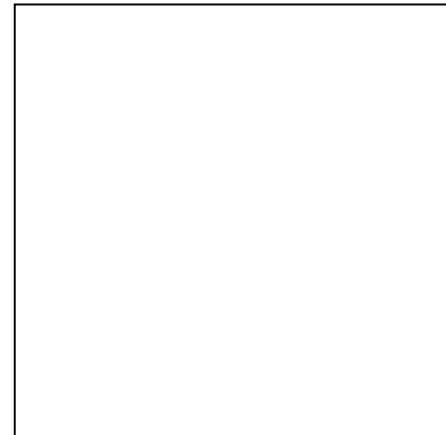
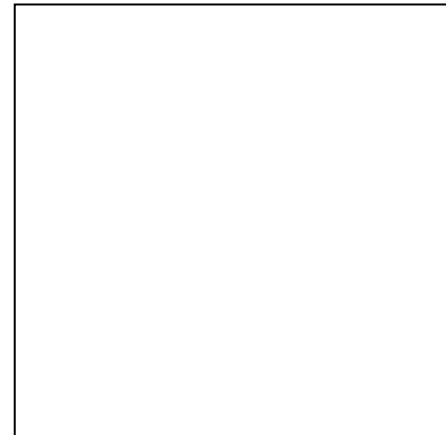
<sup>1</sup>Climate Change Action Plan for the North East, Sustaine, 2008

<sup>2</sup>Darlington Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, JBA Consulting, 2009

<sup>3</sup>Understanding the Importance of Retaining Good Quality Parks and Green Spaces, and the Contribution they make to Improving People's Lives, Green Link, 2011

<sup>4</sup>An assessment of the impact of climate change on the natural environment of the Tees Valley, Tees Valley Climate Change Resilience Group May 2012

<sup>5</sup>Making Space for Nature, DEFA 2010



## Climate Change Action 1: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and minimise the use of resources

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Through the priority actions of the Darlington Climate Change Action Plan	Borough-wide	DBC Programmes and Projects	Developers, landowners	Ongoing
Through the priority actions of the new Local Plan	Borough-wide	DBC Planning Policy	Developers, landowners	Ongoing
Use green features in new development	Central Park Lingfield Point Town Centre Fringe Faverdale Whin Green Corridor North West Urban Fringe Eastern Urban Fringe	Keepmoat Taylor Wimpey Developers Developers Bussey & Armstrong, developers Bellway, Storey Homes	DBC, HCA	2014+ 2014+ 2018+ 2018+ 2019+ 2021+
Create new allotment space and community gardens	<i>See Economically Useful and Productive Landscape Action 1</i>			
Re-use vacant, disused brownfield land	<i>See Landscape and Townscape Action 4</i>			

## Climate Change Action 2: Minimise the risk of flooding and pollution

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Protect and extend flood storage areas	Blackwell Meadows Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve Town Centre Fringe Eastern Urban Fringe Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve Faverdale Flood Management	DBC DBC DBC Bellway, Storey Homes DBC Developers	Darlington Rugby Club  EA, developers	Ongoing 2016+ 2016+ 2021+ 2021+ 2021+
Incorporate sustainable drainage systems in new development	Yiewsley Manor Lingfield Point Central Park Darlington Arena Town Centre Fringe Blackwell Grange North West Urban Fringe Eastern Urban Fringe Faverdale Flood Management	Bellway Taylor Wimpey Keepmoat Mowden Rugby Club Developers Developers Bussey & Armstrong, developers Bellway, Storey Homes Developers	DBC, HCA	2013+ 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2017+ 2017+ 2019+ 2021+ 2021+

### Climate Change Action 3: Provide for species adaptation.

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
<b>Extend tree cover</b>	Brinkburn Pond Local Nature Reserve	Friends of Brinkburn	DBC	Ongoing
	West Park Tees Woodland Central Park Lingfield Point The Banks	Friends of West Park Tees Rivers Trust Keepmoat Taylor Wimpey Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area	Bussey & Armstrong, DBC DBC, Groundwork DBC, HCA Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC	Ongoing Ongoing 2014+ 2014+ 2014+
<b>Positively manage riparian zones alongside watercourses</b>	Nunnery Lane-Cemetery Lane LWS	DBC		2015+
	Town Centre Fringe Faverdale Whin Green Corridor North West Urban Fringe Eastern Urban Fringe	Developers Developers Bussey & Armstrong, Developers Bellway, Storey Homes		2016+ 2018+ 2019+ 2021+
<b>Reinstate traditional landscape management features and field margins</b>	Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve Rural Area	DBC Landowners, farmers	EA	Ongoing Ongoing
	Teesdale Way Tees Woodland The Banks	Tees Rivers Trust Tees Rivers Trust Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area	Landowners, DBC, EA Landowners, DBC, EA Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC, EA	2013+ 2013+ 2013+
	Barmpton Lane Allotments	Barmpton Lane Allotment Association	Groundwork, DBC	2014+
<b>Promote agri-environment schemes</b>	Town Centre Fringe	Developers	DBC, EA	2016+
	Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve Faverdale Flood Management	DBC Developers	Developers	2021+ 2021+
<b>Restore the natural course of the Borough's rivers and becks</b>	<i>See Landscape and Townscape Action 3</i>			



## Objective 7: Promote initiatives to engage partners in the long term management and maintenance of green spaces

66% of Darlington's public space and grass verges (522ha) are owned, managed and maintained by the Council, a lot more per resident than our neighbours. But the Council do not have a statutory duty to maintain most parks and green spaces<sup>1</sup>. The remaining space is maintained by the public, private and voluntary sector groups - in the rural area parish councils own and manage the majority of public spaces.

In Darlington, like the rest of the UK, costs of maintaining open space (depends on the size of the area and the level of intervention required) are increasing (£2m for Council owned space in 2012/2013) at a time when Government funding to the Council and our partners is being significantly reduced.

In response, a mix of innovative management techniques have been introduced to reduce maintenance costs of Council owned land, while ensuring its quality and attractiveness is retained. Many involve a dedicated network of local people who enthusiastically help look after their local environment. This includes:

- implementing new grass cutting regimes across 25ha of green space to create wildflower meadows e.g. Rockwell Local Nature Reserve - so less space needs to have frequent cuts;
- transferring maintenance of 6 of the 7 bowling greens in the Borough to the Darlington Parks Bowls Association<sup>2</sup>;
- establishing maintenance levies for green spaces in large new development e.g. West Park, where maintenance is delivered in accordance with a management plan in partnership with residents, or through a greenspace management company e.g. Central Park;
- creating 15 Friends Groups to help manage and maintain parks and Local Nature Reserves;
- establishing allotments associations to manage and maintain 6 allotment sites.

Despite this, there is growing recognition that getting more local residents to become 'even more actively involved'<sup>3</sup> will be

'increasingly important' in future (on average, Darlington's greenspace volunteers provide the equivalent of three full-time members of staff each year)<sup>3</sup> - successful open space management happens when local people are involved, as they care most deeply about it, and spot opportunities or problems first.



Darlington's existing community groups that help manage and maintain local spaces are:

- Darlington Green Space Forum;
- 7 Friends Groups in parks; South Park, West Park, Green Park, Beech Wood, North Park, North Lodge Park, Eastbourne Park;
- 7 Friends of each Local Nature Reserve;
- Six self managed allotment associations: Barmpton Lane, Bellburn, Dodmire, Glebe Road, Smithfield Rd, West Cemetery;
- Darlington Parks Bowls Association.

Bringing together a wide range of volunteers with many practical and professional skills can create better quality spaces. In many cases making sure residents have the right support and skills e.g. ecology, landscape design, helps with management so that the quality of each space is not lost. As a result a number of priority measures will be introduced:

- Establish a framework of policies and procedures to ensure the safe and effective self management of appropriate spaces;
- Pilot this through two 'handover' schemes (via licence, lease or service level agreement) with well established Friends Groups, specifically Maidendale and Drinkfield Marsh, to encourage the handover of other spaces in future;
- Investigate with partners the potential for securing revenue funding to support staff in delivering training and other support services for Friends Groups and to coordinate funding bids;
- Encourage community groups to licence or lease their space from the Council with only identified maintenance responsibilities e.g. refuse collection, identified in a management plan being retained by the Council;

- Encourage community groups to licence or lease the space from the Council and take over full maintenance responsibilities in partnership with other specialist organisations e.g. the Durham Wildlife Trust;
- Establish Friends Groups for all wildflower meadow initiatives, specifically Cocker Beck, Mill Lane, Skerne Park and Red Hall, community woodlands and river corridors;
- Continue to develop grass cutting regimes - as the quality of meadows improves, they will begin to naturally look after themselves, requiring fewer or no cuts a year e.g. Red Hall Wetland;
- Provide community fruit and vegetable gardens in areas with a high proportion of amenity greenspace, under management agreements with tenant boards or community groups;
- Investigate the potential for transferring open space maintenance outside the urban area to Parish Councils.

- providing temporary catering for visitors at peak times for a set fee to be used to improve the space;
- leasing greenspaces for community events and fun days and sports facilities to community teams and other groups with a proportion of the revenue recycled into the maintenance of the space;
- encouraging community groups to bring in new sources of grant income unavailable to the Council e.g. through the Heritage Lottery or the Dulverton Trust to improve the quality of the space so more people use it positively.

Establishing appropriate management and maintenance for new greenspace, trees, woodland and sustainable drainage ponds in large new development is also important, specifically in the Town Centre Fringe, the North Western Urban Fringe and the Eastern Urban Fringe. In these cases a levy will be secured from each home/business and used by a management company to look after the new space, for example the innovative West Park Levy is continuing to deliver quality greenspace 10 years after being built. Smaller developments will make a financial contribution towards the upkeep of any space provided.

These issues can only be delivered by closely working with community groups, the private sector, developers, landowners and residents to make sure that quality green infrastructure can be provided in a cost effective way in the long term.

To manage and maintain parks and greenspace efficiently in the future we aim to:

Action 1	Ensure more community groups provide the long term management and maintenance of local green spaces
Action 2	Promote initiatives to make better use of lower quality amenity greenspace
Action 3	Support initiatives to generate income from green space

<sup>1</sup>Council must maintain land acquired by the Open Spaces Act 1906, the previous Public Health Acts, through conveyance where there is a covenant relating to future maintenance, grass verge that forms part of the public highway

<sup>2</sup>the Council only maintaining the green in South Park

<sup>3</sup>Helping community groups to improve public spaces, CABA Space, 2009

<sup>4</sup>Community led spaces, CABA Space, 2010

But maintaining quality is important - site management plans and annual action plans will become an 'increasingly' important part of this process<sup>4</sup> - these ensure that the vision for a site is 'owned' by all partners, a key requirement for any funding body. The Green Spaces Forum (consisting of representatives from each Friends Group) will agree a template management plan so that each space is managed to at least the same minimum standard - the level of detail will vary according to the size and complexity of issues at each space, with the type of conflicts monitored and areas for improvement identified.

There is also a need for a more commercial mindset - maximising opportunities for revenue generation to contribute to long term management and maintenance objectives of each larger greenspace will remain a priority. Groups will be encouraged to be innovative in attracting new revenue streams including by:

- securing sponsorship from businesses for shrub beds and other key features;
- charging for educational visits – widening the approach used by Outside In, South Park to other spaces e.g. Local Nature Reserves;

## Management and Maintenance Action 1: Ensure more community groups provide the long term management and maintenance of local green spaces

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
<b>Develop the Green Spaces Forum as a 'one stop shop'</b>	Borough wide	DBC Parks & Countryside	Groundwork, Friends Groups	2013+
<b>Establish a framework for site management</b>	Borough wide	DBC Parks & Countryside,	Friends Groups, Groundwork, Durham Wildlife Trust, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust	2013+
<b>Create new Friends Groups and allotment associations</b>	West Cemetery	DBC	Residents	2014+
	Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve	DBC	Residents	2014+
	Red Hall Local Nature Reserve	DBC	Residents	2014+
	The Ridgeway Allotments	DBC	Residents	2016+
	Bylands Way Allotments	DBC	Residents	2016+
	Town Centre Fringe	DBC	Residents	2020+
	Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve	DBC	Residents	2021+
<b>Establish management plans for wildflower meadows and newly designated sites</b>	West Cemetery	DBC	Friends Group	2013+
	Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve	DBC	Friends Group	2013+
	Red Hall	DBC	Friends Group	2013+
	Fitzwilliam Drive	DBC	Friends Group	2015+
	Wylam Avenue	DBC	Friends Group	2015+
	The Ridgeway Allotments	DBC	Allotments Association	2016+
	Bylands Way Allotments	DBC	Allotments Association	2016+
	Town Centre Fringe	DBC	Friends Group, Developers	2016+
Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve	DBC	Friends Group	2021+	
<b>Establish pilot 'handover' sites</b>	Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve	DBC Parks & Countryside	Friends of Drinkfield	2014+
	Maidendale Local Nature & Fishing Reserve	DBC Parks & Countryside	Maidendale Local Nature & Fishing Trust	2014+

## Management and Maintenance Action 2: Promote initiatives to make better use of lower quality amenity greenspace

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
<b>Transfer the management of amenity greenspace</b>	Salters Lane Community Garden	Salters Community Garden Association		Ongoing
	Red Hall Stables	DBC	Red Hall Community Partnership	2016+
	The Ridgeway Allotments Bylands Way Allotments	DBC DBC	Allotment Association Allotment Association	2016+ 2016+
<b>Implement new management regimes on existing sites</b>	Brinkburn Local Nature Reserve	Friends of Brinkburn	DBC	Ongoing
	West Park	Friends of West Park	DBC	Ongoing
	Blackwell Grange	DBC		2013+
	Nunnery Lane/Cemetery Lane LWS	DBC		2014+
<b>Create new allotment space and community gardens</b>	<i>See Economically Useful and Productive Landscape Action 1</i>			

### Management and Maintenance Action 3: Support initiatives to generate income from green infrastructure

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Secure more corporate sponsorship of green features	Borough-wide	DBC Environmental Services	Businesses	2013+
Establish charging schedules for educational visits and community events	Borough wide	DBC Parks & Countryside	Friends Groups, community groups, educational facilities	2014+
Establish management levies at new strategic developments	Lingfield Point Central Park Town Centre Fringe North West Urban Fringe Eastern Urban Fringe	Taylor Wimpey Keepmoat DBC Bussey & Armstrong, developers Bellway, Storey Homes	Marchday HCA, DBC Developers	Ongoing Ongoing 2016+ 2019+ 2021+

