

Natural Kirklees - A Strategic Action Plan - Synopsis

The Scope of the Action Plan

The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework and support that enables us to make the best use of the natural environment within Kirklees. This framework will also provide a means to make volunteering more effective and encourage further volunteering in the outdoors. There is an urgent need to manage and develop our natural environment to reverse the decline of biodiversity as well as make better use of our natural assets such as woodlands and waterways to benefit local communities, particularly in the light of public sector cuts.

Aims of Natural Kirklees

1. Explore a more sustainable model for the development and management of green space and green space networks within Kirklees.
2. Protect and enhance areas of green space and green space networks for biodiversity within Kirklees, incorporating and integrating beneficial management where biodiversity may not currently be a consideration.
3. Protect and enhance areas of green space and green space networks for amenity, recreation and economic benefit within Kirklees.
4. Create a strategic partnership for the development and management of green space and green space networks.
5. Ensure that the wider benefits of a green space network are enjoyed by all, contributing to the health and well being of residents, supporting the local economy alongside enhancing biodiversity.

Natural Kirklees Themes

A number of themes have been defined.

Themes	Scope/Description
Parks and Formal Open Spaces	Includes parks and areas that are generally more intensively managed, often around residential areas.
Waterways	Includes rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies and their environs.
Active Travel	Includes rights of way and permissive footpaths, bridleways and greenways that provide non-motorised opportunities for getting about.
Informal Open Space	Includes semi-natural areas such as woodland, moor, grassland, ponds, scrub, etc.
Wildlife & Biodiversity	Any site can be improved for wildlife and although we need to protect and manage the best sites, managing all sites with biodiversity in mind would help wildlife.
Outdoor Recreation	Outdoor recreation can include more organised team activities or individual adventure sports.
Local Food	There are many opportunities for growing local food from gardens, allotments, school gardens and the planting of fruit trees in the wider environment to help wildlife.

Developing the Action Plan

In developing the Action Plan:

- We need to recognise that there is already much volunteer activity within the Kirklees district. We also want to learn from the good practice and extend this across the board.
- We acknowledge that people have differing interests that will inspire them and draw them into volunteering.
- Much of the baseline information about biodiversity priorities within the district has been established and mapped as part of the Local Plan.
- If more people are to volunteer to help look after green spaces then they need to have a mechanism by which they have a say in how the network is managed.
- The other aspect to this process is that of resourcing the development of the green space network.
- In this regard it is important to look at how we use the existing and shrinking resource base – can it be used more effectively and if so how?

Strategic Actions

1. Establish a framework for volunteering (including corporate volunteers) in the green space network that reflects and attracts different interest groups and provides a one stop shop for volunteering in the outdoors.
2. Promote, encourage and facilitate volunteer input into green space management and development, including that from private landowners, to integrate biodiversity into their programmes of work whilst recognising and accounting for other uses such as recreation.
3. Establish a public facing information system of the green space network across Kirklees. The system should provide information about all spaces, how to access them, what they offer and how to get involved to contribute to their management and development. An interactive one-stop shop for information about green space use and management.
4. Strategic Action 4: Establish an appropriate governance mechanism for the management and development of the open space network in Kirklees, which has representation by all stakeholders.
5. Strategic Action 5: Establish a means of generating income to help sustain the green space network infrastructure and management systems in the long term, along with a means of holding and allocating funds amongst partners to deliver the action plan.