

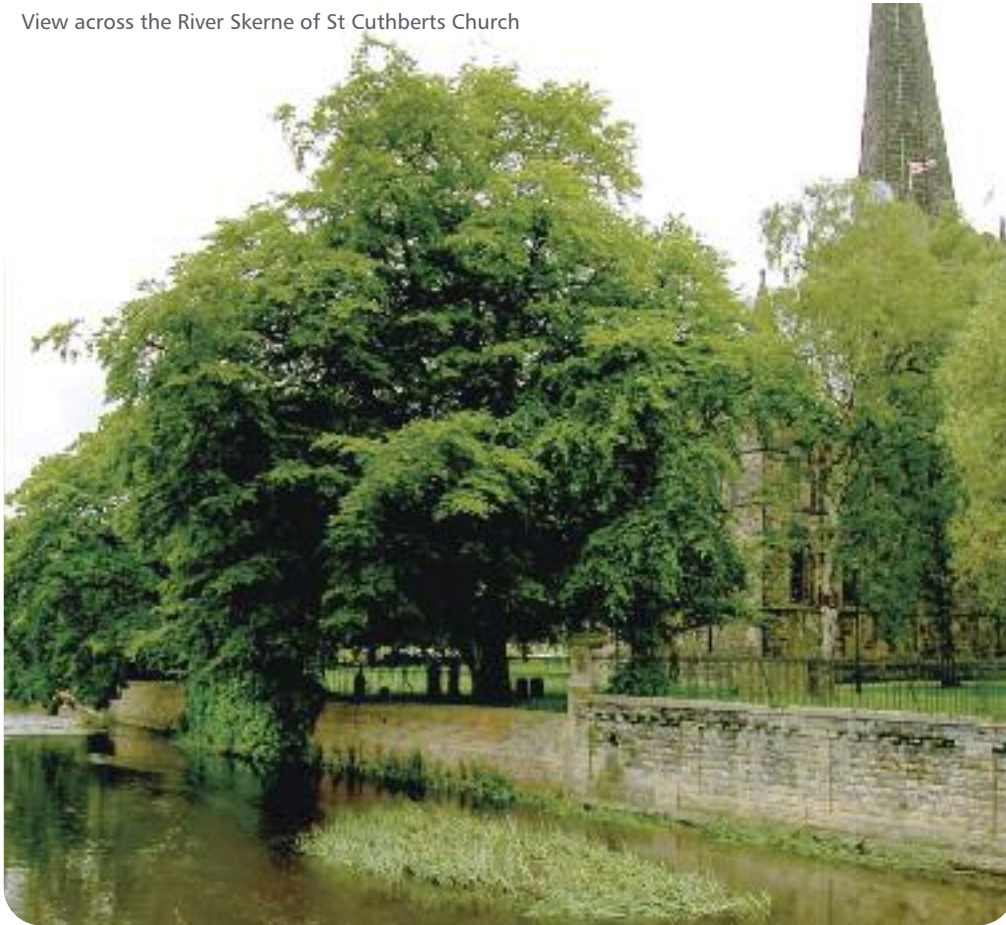


Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy

Action Plan 2013-2026

Objective 1: Create a quality, distinctive landscape and townscape

View across the River Skerne of St Cuthberts Church



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'¹.

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'² 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'² 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'³ 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. Redworth Hall

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'⁴.
- 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'⁵ 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 investment⁶, while people are prepared to pay up to 8% more for a house overlooking a greenspace than for those further away⁶ - 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 character and landscape quality of the urban fringe and the countryside.
Action 4	Create a quality environment to attract new development and promote regeneration.



¹One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, Darlington Partnership, 2008

²Countryside Character: North East, Natural England, 2002

³Darlington Tree and Woodland Strategy, DBC, 2011

⁴Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, English Heritage, 2011

⁵1990–2009, Green Food Conclusions, DEFRA, 2012

⁶Building 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
Protect and improve the setting of heritage assets	Lingfield Point West Cemetery Rural Area Feethams Eastern Urban Fringe Blackwell Grange Town Centre Fringe 1825 Heritage Trail	Taylor Wimpey DBC Landowners DBC Bellway, Storey Homes DBC DBC Developers	Marchday English Heritage DFE, Terrace Hill Blackwell Grange, Developers Developers, Landowners	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing 2015+ 2016+ 2016+ 2018+ 2021+
Improve access to, and understanding of Darlington's heritage	Rural Area South Burdon Community Woodland Broken Scar Feethams Eastern Urban Fringe West Cemetery Town Centre Fringe 1825 Heritage Trail Piercebridge Path Neasham Path	Landowners Tees Valley Arts Groundwork DBC, Terrace Hill Bellway, Storey Homes DBC DBC Developers Landowners Landowners	Forestry Commission, DBC Developers, DBC DBC, Tees River Trust English Heritage	Ongoing Ongoing 2014+ 2015+ 2016+ 2017+ 2018+ 2021+ 2021+ 2021+
Positively manage semi natural ancient woodland	The Banks Beech Wood West Cemetery Tees Woodland South Burdon Community Woodland Red Hall Stables Skerningham Countryside Park 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 Groundwork Groundwork, DBC, Landowners DBC Developers DBC DBC	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing 2014+ 2014+ 2016+ 2021+ 2021+

Landscape and Townscape Action 2: Restore the natural watercourses and riparian features of rivers and becks

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Through the priority actions of the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan	Town Centre Fringe	DBC	EA, Developers, Landowners	Ongoing
Restore the natural course of rivers and becks	Feethams Town Centre Fringe Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve Faverdale Flood Management Scheme	DBC DBC Friends of Cocker Beck, DBC Developers	EA, Terrace Hill EA, Developers EA, Durham Wildlife Trust, EA	2015+ 2015+ 2021+ 2024+
Positively manage riparian zones	See Healthy Ecosystems Action 3			

Landscape and Townscape Action 3: Strengthen the character and landscape quality of the urban fringe and the countryside

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 Broken Scar Blackwell Grange Golf Club South Park-Teesdale Way Darlington Arena Faverdale Whin Green Corridor Baydale Beck Piercebridge Path Neasham Path A66 Corridor Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve	Landowners Groundwork Blackwell Golf Club Landowners Mowden Rugby Club Developers Landowners Landowners Developers Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust	DBC, Tees River Trust DBC Network Rail	Ongoing 2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2015+ 2016+ 2016+ 2021+ 2021+ 2021+ 2024+

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
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 2014+
Positively manage trees and woodland	<i>See Landscape and Townscape Action 1 and Climate Change Action 3</i>			
Promote environmentally friendly farming	<i>See Healthy Ecosystems Action 2</i>			

Landscape and Townscape Action 4: Create a quality environment to attract new development and promote 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	Feethams	DBC	DFE, Terrace Hill	2014+
	Lingfield Point	Taylor Wimpey	Marchday	2014+
	Yiewsley Manor	Bellway		2014+
	Central Park	Keepmoat	DBC, HCA	2014+
	Darlington Arena	Mowden Rugby Club		2014+
	Eastern Urban Fringe	Bellway, Storey Homes		2016+
	Faverdale Whin Green Corridor	Developers		2016+
	North West Urban Fringe	Bussey & Armstrong, Developers		2019+
	A66 Corridor	Developers		2021+
Restore landscape quality in the urban area	Lingfield Point	Taylor Wimpey	Marchday	Ongoing
	Feethams	DBC	DFE, Terrace Hill	2014+
	Central Park	Keepmoat	DBC, HCA	2014+
	Town Centre Fringe	DBC	Developers	2018+
	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)¹.

➔ 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'² services they deliver (food production, breaking down waste products, regulating water³ 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 their services being significantly reduced.

There is growing recognition that 'more, better, bigger and connected sites'⁴ 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'⁵ 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, such as meadows, apiaries, bird boxes 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 mammals⁶.

- changing the management and maintenance regimes at existing greenspaces, such as by extending establishing wildflower meadows, for example Rockwell LNR, or by introducing meadows, specifically at the former Blackwell Grange Golf Course will significantly improve the biodiversity value and create a more natural landscape.

Biodiversity decline on farmland is 'well-documented'⁷. 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'⁷ as they seek to maximise the use of their land for livestock and cereal.

Addressing this challenge is heavily dependent on capturing the expertise, knowledge and 'hold[ing] the trust'⁷ of farmers and landowners, and then using it to deliver maximum benefits across the Borough for productivity, biodiversity and landscape quality.

But farmers increasingly recognise 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.

But to be more successful 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'⁷ 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.

¹1ha nature reserve per 1000 people, Natural England

²UK National Ecosystem Assessment, DEFRA, 2011

³helping Darlington deliver its EU Water Framework Directive requirements by 2027

⁴Making Space for Nature, DEFA 2010

⁵Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services, DEFRA, 2011

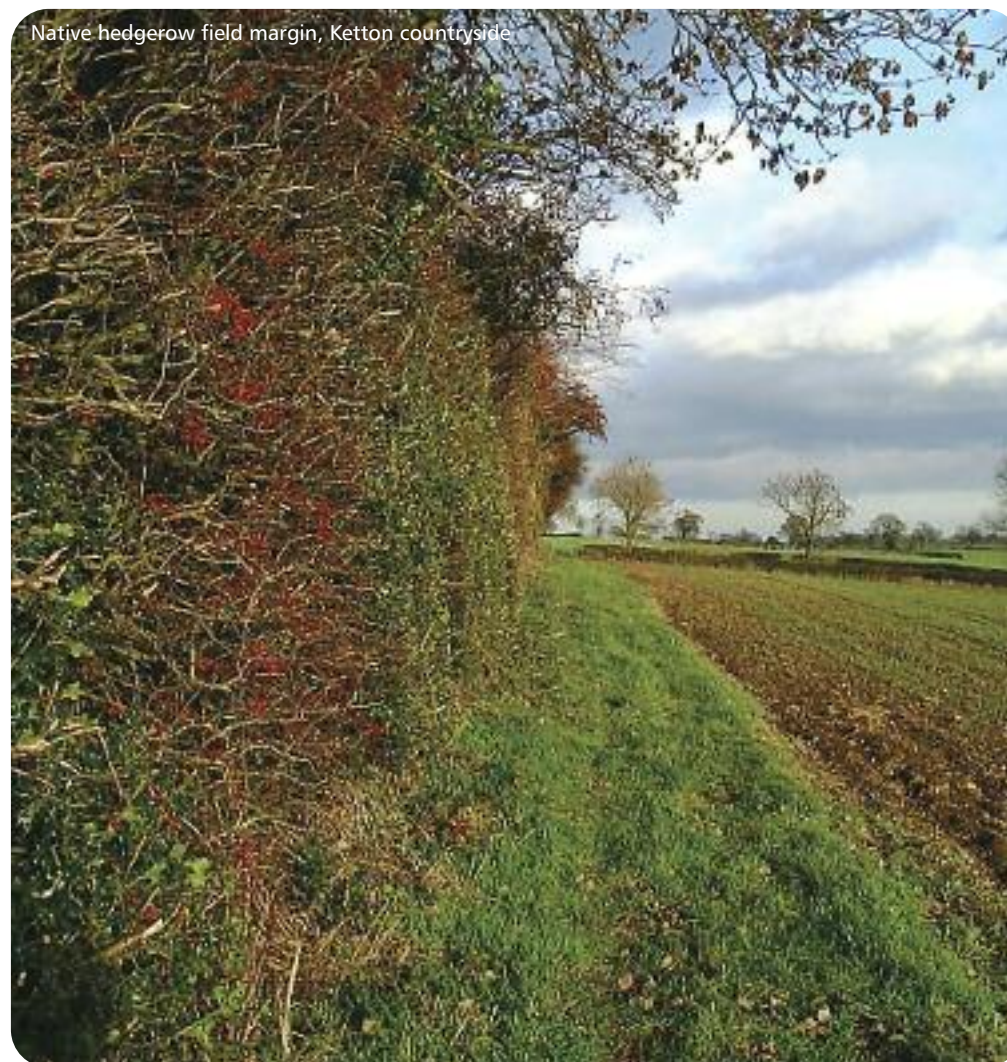
⁶The case for trees in development and the urban environment, Forestry Commission, 2010

⁷1990–2009, Green Food Conclusions, DEFRA, 2012



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 countryside.
Action 3	Provide more stepping stones and buffer zones so that wildlife can move more easily.
Action 4	Maintain and improve the Borough's air and water quality.



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 Feethams Central Park Town Centre Fringe Red Hall Stables 1825 Heritage Trail	Marchday, Taylor Wimpey DBC Keepmoat Developers DBC Developers	DFE, Terrace Hill DBC, EA DBC	Ongoing 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2021+
Improve the wildlife value of existing greenspaces	Red Hall Wetland Minors Crescent Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve Wylam Avenue Fitzwilliam Drive Feethams South Park-Teesdale Way Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve Baydale Beck Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve Yiewsley Manor Nunnery Lane/Cemetery Lane	DBC Esh Group Durham Wildlife Trust Durham Wildlife Trust Durham Wildlife Trust DBC Durham Wildlife Trust Durham Wildlife Trust Durham Wildlife Trust Friends of Drinkfield Maidendale Trust Bellway DBC	Branksome Community Group DBC DBC Friends of the Skerne, DBC DFE, Terrace Hill Friends of Cocker Beck, DBC DBC DBC DBC DBC DBC	Ongoing Ongoing 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2016+
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 countryside

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	Geneva Woods Local Nature Reserve The Banks Darlington Arena Eastern Urban Fringe North West Urban Fringe A66 Corridor	Friends of Geneva Wood Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area Mowden Rugby Club Bellway, Storey Homes Bussey & Armstrong, Developers Developers	Groundwork, Cummins Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC	2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2016+ 2019+ 2021+
Promote environmentally friendly farming	Rural Area Teesdale Way Skerningham Countryside Park	Landowners, Farmers Landowners, Farmers Landowners, Farmers		Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing
Reinstate landscape management features	See Landscape and Townscape Action 3			

Healthy Ecosystems Action 3: Provide more 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
Designate new and extend Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites	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	Friends of Cocker Beck, DBC DBC DBC DBC DBC	2014+ 2015+ 2016+ 2021+ 2021+
Positive management of invasive species	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 Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC EA, Landowners, DBC DBC, Developers	Ongoing 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2016+ 2021+
Extend the cover and mix of native trees and woodland	<i>See Climate Change Action 3</i>			
Positively manage riparian zones	<i>See Climate Change Action 3</i>			
Reinstate landscape management features	<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
Through the priority actions of the Northumbria River Basin Management Plan	Borough wide	EA	Landowners, Farmers, DBC	Ongoing
Diversify the mix of wetland and wet woodland habitats	Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve Tees Woodland Feethams 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	Friends of Cocker Beck Tees Rivers Trust DBC Keepmoat Barmpton Lane Allotments Association Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area Mowden Rugby Club TVLNP DBC Developers DBC Developers	DBC, EA Landowners, DBC DFE, Terrace Hill DBC, HCA Groundwork, DBC Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC DBC DBC Groundwork Landowners	Ongoing 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2015+ 2015+ 2015+ 2015+ 2016+ 2021+ 2025+
De-culverting watercourses	Town Centre Fringe West Beck Green Corridor	DBC EA	EA DBC	2018+ 2019+
Incorporating sustainable drainage	See Climate Change Action 1			

Objective 3: Continue to identify 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 Skerne¹.

➔ 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 use¹. 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 Rivers Tees and Skerne 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.

¹DBC 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 Yiewsley Manor Feethams Lingfield Point Central Park Blackwell Grange Golf Club Town Centre Fringe Eastern Urban Fringe Faverdale Whin Green Corridor North Western Urban Fringe 1825 Heritage Trail A66 Corridor	Esh Group Bellway DBC Taylor Wimpey Keepmoat Blackwell Golf Club DBC Bellway, Storey Homes Developers Bussey & Armstrong, Developers Developers Developers	Branksome Community Group DFE, Terrace Hill Marchday DBC, HCA	Ongoing Ongoing 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2016+ 2016+ 2019+ 2019+ 2021+ 2021+
Improve connectivity in the urban and rural rights of way network	Broken Scar The Banks Barmpton Lane Allotments South Park-Teesdale Way Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve Skerningham Countryside Park Piercebridge Path Merrybent Community Woodland Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve Neasham Path	Groundwork Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area Barmpton Lane Allotment Association DBC DBC Landowners DBC Landowners Landowners Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust DBC	Tees River Trust, DBC Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC Groundwork, DBC Landowners DBC Landowners Parish Council DBC Landowners	2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2015+ 2016+ 2021+ 2021+ 2021+ 2021+ 2021+ 2021+

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

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
Through the priority actions of the Darlington Rights of Way Improvement Plan	Borough wide	DBC Parks and Countryside	Landowners, Farmers, Developers	Ongoing
Improve the quality of footpaths and cyclepaths in green infrastructure	Rockwell Local Nature Reserve Broken Scar The Banks Feethams Red Hall Stables West Beck	DBC Groundwork Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area DBC DBC DBC Programmes & Projects	Tees River Trust, DBC Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC DFE, Terrace Hill Red Hall Community Partnership	Ongoing 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2016+
Upgrade public rights of way to bridleway standard for equestrians	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+

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Improve accessibility for all to existing greenspaces	Minors Crescent	Esh Group	Branksome Community Group	Ongoing
	West Cemetery	DBC	Tees River Trust, DBC	Ongoing
	Broken Scar	Groundwork		2014+
	The Banks	Friends of Middleton One Row	Middleton St George Parish Council,	2014+
		Conservation Area	Groundwork, DBC	
	Feethams	DBC	DFE, Terrace Hill	2014+
	Beech Wood	Friends of Beech Wood	Groundwork	2014+
	Red Hall Stables	DBC	Red Hall Community Partnership	2016+
	West Beck	DBC		2016+
Promote a range of trails and circular routes	Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve	DBC		2021+
	Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve	Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust		2021+
	Broken Scar & River Tees	DBC Programmes & Projects		Ongoing
	Skerningham Countryside Park	DBC Programmes & Projects		Ongoing
	Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve	DBC Programmes & Projects		Ongoing
	Rockwell Local Nature Reserve	DBC Programmes & Projects	Friends of Rockwell	Ongoing
	South Park-Teesdale Way	DBC Programmes & Projects	Friends of the Skerne	Ongoing
	West Park	DBC Programmes & Projects	Friends of West Park	Ongoing
	Brinkburn Local Nature Reserve	DBC Programmes & Projects	Friends of Brinkburn	Ongoing
	Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve	DBC Programmes & Projects	Friends of Drinkfield	Ongoing
	Red Hall Wetland	DBC Programmes & Projects		Ongoing
	South Burdon Community Woodland	DBC Programmes & Projects		Ongoing
	Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve	DBC Programmes & Projects	Friends of Cocker Beck	Ongoing
	Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve	DBC Programmes & Projects	Friends of Maidendale	Ongoing
	West Cemetery	DBC Programmes & Projects		Ongoing
	Geneva Woods Local Nature Reserve	DBC Programmes & Projects	Friends of Geneva Woods	Ongoing
	Rural Area	DBC Programmes & Projects	Archers	Ongoing
	1825 Heritage Trail	DBC Programmes & Projects		2021+
	Piercebridge Path	DBC Programmes & Projects		2021+
	Neasham Path	DBC Programmes & Projects		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 average¹, particularly important in a Borough where the life expectancy between the best and worst wards is 13 years for men and 11.8 for women².

This significant rise of 3%³ in five years 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 have been 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 places⁴ particularly for junior football. Essentially, a shortfall of 12 junior football pitches is likely to increase to 15.9 by 2026⁴ 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 primary 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 and eight local green corridors that connect a range of multi-functional 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'⁵ 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 and 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. One way to do this is to involve local people 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 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'⁶. They can also provide for a range of 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.

¹Sport England Active People Survey 2012

²Joint Single Needs Assessment, DBC, 2012

³From the 2005-06 baseline

⁴Darlington Playing Pitch Strategy: Update Note, DBC, 2013

⁵Urban Green Nation: Building the Evidence Base, CABE, 2010

⁶Understanding 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
Through the priority actions of the Playing Pitch Strategy and Sports Facilities Strategy	Borough wide	DBC Leisure Services	DBC Planning Policy, Sport England, NGBs, Sports Clubs	Ongoing
Through the policies of the new Local Plan	Borough wide	DBC Planning Policy	Developers, Landowners	Ongoing
Provide new greenspace to meet the recreation and play needs of new development	The Pastures Minors Crescent Yiewsley Manor Lingfield Point Central Park Town Centre Fringe Faverdale Whin Green Corridor Blackwell Grange 1825 Heritage Trail	Miller Homes Esh Group Bellway Taylor Wimpey Keepmoat Developers Developers Developers Developers	Skerne Park Community Group Branksome Community Group Marchday DBC, HCA	Ongoing Ongoing 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2016+ 2016+ 2021+ 2021+
Provide new sports facilities to meet the needs of residents	Blackwell Meadows The Pastures Lingfield Point	DBC Miller Homes Taylor Wimpey	Darlington Rugby Club Skerne Park Community Group Marchday	Ongoing Ongoing 2016+
Improve the quality of existing sport, recreation and play facilities	Minors Crescent Blackwell Grange Golf Club Rockwell Local Nature Reserve Beech Wood Wylam Avenue Fitzwilliam Drive Bylands Way Allotments The Ridgeway Allotments	Esh Group Blackwell Golf Club Friends of Rockwell Friends of Beech Wood DBC DBC DBC DBC	Branksome Community Group Groundwork, Haughton Education Village Groundwork Residents Residents	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing 2014+ 2015+ 2015+ 2016+ 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 and Sports Facilities Strategy	Borough wide	DBC Leisure Services	Sport England, NGBs, 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 Eastern Urban Fringe North West Urban Fringe Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve	Mowden Rugby Club Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area Bellway, Storey Homes Bussey & Armstrong, Developers Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust	DBC Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC	Ongoing 2013+ 2016+ 2019+ 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, 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 Feethams Lingfield Point Central Park South Park-Teesdale Way Eastern Urban Fringe Town Centre Fringe 1825 Heritage Trail North Western Urban Fringe	TVLNP TVLNP TVLNP TVLNP DBC Taylor Wimpey Keepmoat DBC Bellway, Storey Homes Developers Developers Bussey & Armstrong, Developers	DBC Friends of Drinkfield, DBC Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust, DBC DBC, Tees Valley Arts DFE, Terrace Hill Marchday DBC, HCA	2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2015+ 2016+ 2018+ 2018+ 2021+ 2021+

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

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Through the masterplan process for sites	Minors Crescent Red Hall	Esh Group DBC Strategy & Commissioning	Branksome Community Group Developers, landowners	Ongoing Ongoing
Involve community groups in developing local open spaces	The Banks Barmpton Lane Allotments Beech Wood Rockwell Local Nature Reserve South Park-Teesdale Way The Pastures West Park Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve Minors Crescent Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve Salters Lane Community Garden Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve Geneva Wood Local Nature Reserve Wylam Avenue Fitzwilliam Drive	Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area Barmpton Lane Allotment Association Friends of Beech Wood Friends of Rockwell Friends of the Skerne Miller Homes Friends of West Park Friends of Drinkfield Esh Group Friends of Cocker Beck Salters Community Garden Association Maidendale Nature & Fishing Trust Friends of Geneva Wood DBC DBC	Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC Groundwork Groundwork, DBC DBC DBC Skerne Park Community Association, DBC DBC, Bussey & Armstrong Groundwork Branksome Community Association DBC Groundwork Groundwork, DBC DBC Residents Residents	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing 2014+ 2014+

Objective 5: Create a diverse and economically 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’¹ 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’².

To achieve ‘a more competitive, profitable and resilient farming and food industry’¹ which uses resources more efficiently and uses 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 so that it becomes more joined up; between farmers and those they are selling to, between retailers, the food service sector and between farm businesses themselves;
- 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;
- 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.

Tees farmland, High Consiccliffe





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 standard³. But 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 also has 'significant potential'¹ 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 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.

¹The Future of Food And Farming, Government Office for Science, 2011

²Green Food Project Conclusions DEFRA, 2012

³20 plots per 1000 households, National Allotments Society

Diverse 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+

Diverse 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 The Ridgeway Allotments Bylands Way Allotments Eastern Urban Fringe North West Urban Fringe	Barmpton Lane Allotment Association DBC DBC Bellway, Storey Homes Bussey & Armstrong, Developers	Groundwork, DBC	2014+ 2016+ 2016+ 2018+ 2021+
Support the development of Darlington: It's Growing	Borough wide	DBC	Farmers, local food producers, local food retailers	Ongoing

Diverse 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 South Burdon Community Woodland Rural Area	Landowners, Farmers Landowners, Farmers Landowners, Farmers		2015+ 2015+ 2015+
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)¹, storms and floods.

But as land continues to be under pressure for development; 'increased emphasis'² 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 2050s¹, 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 area¹ 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%³. Tree planting, specifically native, mature trees, will therefore continue to be promoted in the Borough.

sustainable drainage ponds, Morton Park





There is growing recognition that climate change will be the 'dominant driver of biodiversity loss by the end of the century'⁵ making it difficult for wildlife and plants to migrate, for healthy ecosystems to establish and survive, and for ecosystem services to be useful. Particular issues⁴ 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 and which would reduce water quality;
- the loss of priority habitats e.g. reedbeds, Mixed Lowland Deciduous trees which reduce 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.

¹Climate Change Action Plan for the North East, Sustaine, 2008

²Darlington Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, JBA Consulting, 2009

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

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

⁵Making 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 Eastern Urban Fringe North West Urban Fringe Faverdale Whin Green Corridor	Keepmoat Taylor Wimpey Developers Bellway, Storey Homes Bussey & Armstrong, Developers Developers	DBC, HCA	2014+ 2014+ 2019+ 2016+ 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	DBC	Darlington Rugby Club	Ongoing
	Eastern Urban Fringe	Bellway, Storey Homes		2016+
	Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve	DBC	EA, Developers	2016+
	Town Centre Fringe	Developers		2018+
	Faverdale Flood Management			2025
Incorporate sustainable drainage systems in new development	Yiewsley Manor	Bellway	DBC, HCA	2014+
	Lingfield Point	Taylor Wimpey		2014+
	Central Park	Keepmoat		2014+
	Darlington Arena	Mowden Rugby Club		2015+
	Eastern Urban Fringe	Bellway, Storey Homes		2016+
	Blackwell Grange	Developers		2017+
	Town Centre Fringe	Developers		2018+
	North West Urban Fringe	Bussey & Armstrong, Developers		2019+
	Faverdale Flood Management	Developers		2025+

Climate Change Action 3: Provide for species adaptation

How will we do this?	Where will we do this?	Lead Partner	Key Partners	Date
Extend tree cover	Brinkburn Local Nature Reserve West Park Central Park Lingfield Point The Banks Nunnery Lane-Cemetery Lane Eastern Urban Fringe Town Centre Fringe North West Urban Fringe Faverdale Whin Green Corridor	Friends of Brinkburn Friends of West Park Keepmoat Taylor Wimpey Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area DBC Bellway, Storey Homes Developers Bussey & Armstrong, Developers Developers	DBC Bussey & Armstrong, DBC DBC, HCA Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC	Ongoing Ongoing 2014+ 2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2016+ 2018+ 2019+ 2019+
Positively manage riparian zones alongside watercourses	Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve Rural Area Broken Scar The Banks Barmpton Lane Allotments Eastern Urban Fringe Town Centre Fringe Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve Faverdale Flood Management	DBC Landowners, Farmers Groundwork Friends of Middleton One Row Conservation Area Barmpton Lane Allotment Association Bellway, Storey Homes Developers DBC Developers	EA Tees River Trust, Landowners, DBC, EA Middleton St George Parish Council, Groundwork, DBC, EA Groundwork, DBC DBC, EA Developers	Ongoing Ongoing 2014+ 2014+ 2015+ 2016+ 2018+ 2021+ 2025+
Reinstate traditional landscape management features and field margins	<i>See Landscape and Townscape Action 2</i>			
Promote agri-environment schemes	<i>See Landscape and Townscape Action 2</i>			
Restore the natural course of the Borough's rivers and becks	<i>See Landscape and Townscape Action 3</i>			

Objective 7: Engage partners and promote initiatives to manage and maintain green spaces in the long term

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 spaces¹. Other space is maintained by the public, private and voluntary sector - parish councils own and manage the most spaces in the rural area.

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 the 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 Association²;



Meadow cutting, Cocker Beck

- 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'³ will be 'increasingly important' in future (on average, Darlington's greenspace volunteers provide the equivalent of three full-time members of staff each year)³ - 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 greenspace volunteer network includes:

- Darlington Green Space Forum;
- 7 Friends Groups in parks; South Park, West Park, Green Park, Beech Wood, North Park, North Lodge Park, Eastbourne Park and also at Cocker Beck and for the Skerne;
- 7 Friends Groups – one for each Local Nature Reserve;
- Six self managed allotment associations: Barmpton Lane, Bellburn, Dodmire, Glebe Road, Smithfield Rd and 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 or 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 at 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; either by taking over full maintenance responsibilities in partnership with other specialist organisations e.g. the Durham Wildlife Trust, or with the Council performing specific maintenance responsibilities e.g. refuse collection, identified in a joint management plan;
- 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.

But maintaining quality is important - site management plans and annual action plans will become an 'increasingly' important part of this process⁴ - 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;

- 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 developments 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 the West Park development started 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	Encourage more community groups to 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

¹Council 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

²the Council only maintaining the green in South Park

³Helping community groups to improve public spaces, CABE Space, 2009

⁴Community led spaces, CABE Space, 2010

Management and Maintenance Action 1: Encourage more community groups to 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
Develop the Green Spaces Forum as a 'one stop shop'	Borough wide	DBC Parks & Countryside	Groundwork, Friends Groups	2013+
Establish a framework for site management	Borough wide	DBC Parks & Countryside	Friends Groups, Groundwork, Durham Wildlife Trust, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust	2014+
Create new Friends Groups and allotment associations	Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve	DBC Parks & Countryside	Residents	2013+
	South Park-Teesdale Way	DBC Parks & Countryside	Residents	2013+
	West Cemetery	DBC Parks & Countryside	Residents	2014+
	Red Hall Wetland	DBC Parks & Countryside	Residents	2014+
	The Ridgeway Allotments	DBC Parks & Countryside	Residents	2016+
	Bylands Way Allotments	DBC Parks & Countryside	Residents	2016+
	Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve	DBC Parks & Countryside	Residents	2016+
	Town Centre Fringe	DBC Parks & Countryside	Residents	2021+
Establish management plans for wildflower meadows and newly designated sites	Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve	DBC Parks & Countryside	Friends of Cocker Beck	2013+
	South Park-Teesdale Way	DBC Parks & Countryside	Friends of the Skerne	2013+
	West Cemetery	DBC Parks & Countryside	Friends Group	2014+
	Red Hall Wetland	DBC Parks & Countryside	Friends Group	2014+
	Fitzwilliam Drive	DBC Parks & Countryside	Friends Group	2015+
	Wylam Avenue	DBC Parks & Countryside	Friends Group	2015+
	Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve	DBC Parks & Countryside	Friends Group	2016+
	The Ridgeway Allotments	DBC Parks & Countryside	Allotments Association	2016+
	Bylands Way Allotments	DBC Parks & Countryside	Allotments Association	2021+
	Town Centre Fringe	DBC Parks & Countryside	Friends Group, Developers	2021+
Establish pilot 'handover' sites	Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve	DBC Parks & Countryside	Friends of Drinkfield	2014+
	Maidendale Nature & Fishing Reserve	DBC Parks & Countryside	Maidendale 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
Transfer the management of amenity greenspace	Salters Lane Community Garden	Salters Community Garden Association	Groundwork, DBC	Ongoing
	Red Hall Stables	DBC	Red Hall Community Partnership	2016+
	The Ridgeway Allotments	DBC	Allotment Association	2016+
	Bylands Way Allotments	DBC	Allotment Association	2016+
Implement new management regimes on existing sites	Brinkburn Local Nature Reserve	Friends of Brinkburn	DBC	Ongoing
	West Park	Friends of West Park	DBC	Ongoing
	Blackwell Grange	DBC		2014+
	Nunnery Lane/Cemetery Lane	DBC		2014+
Create new allotment space and community gardens	<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 Eastern Urban Fringe Town Centre Fringe North West Urban Fringe	Taylor Wimpey Keepmoat Bellway, Storey Homes DBC Bussey & Armstrong, developers	Marchday HCA, DBC Developers	Ongoing Ongoing 2016+ 2019+ 2021+



