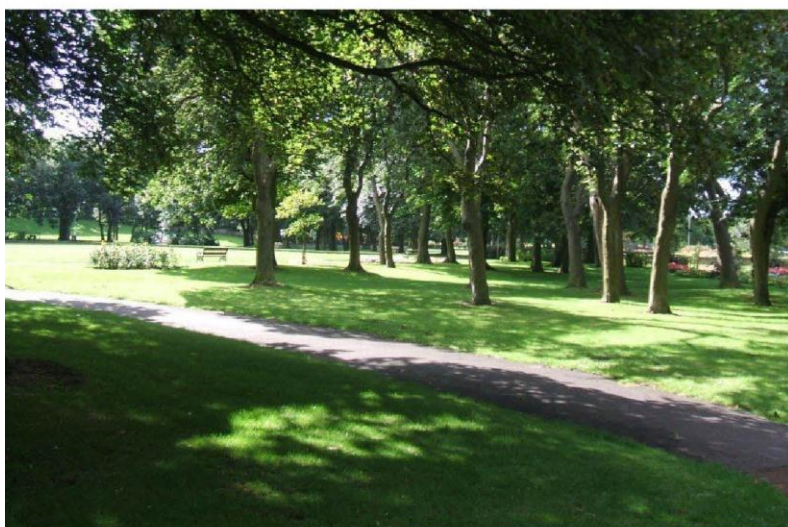


Ridley Park, Blyth

Management Plan



NORTHUMBERLAND
Northumberland County Council

www.northumberland.gov.uk

Ridley Park Management Plan

CONTENTS

SUMMARY OF THE PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION.....	5
1.1 A General Background to the Park.....	5
1.2 A Brief History of the Park.....	5
1.3 Site Details.....	8
1.3.1 Local Facilities.....	8
1.3.2 Features within the Park.....	8
1.3.3 Park Stakeholders.....	13
1.3.4 Park Activities.....	16
2. THE VISION FOR THE PARK AND POLICIES.....	18
3. SITE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	20
3.1 A Welcoming Park.....	20
3.1.1 Physical Access	21
3.1.2 Social Access	23
3.1.3 Objectives	25
3.2 A Park which is Healthy, Safe and Secure	25
3.2.1 Equipment and Facilities	25
3.2.2 Security	28
3.2.3 Health and Safety	30
3.2.4 Control of Dogs	30
3.2.5 Public Facilities	31
3.2.6 Objectives	31
3.3 A Park Which Is Well Maintained and Clean	31
3.3.1 Litter and Waste Management	31
3.3.2 Grounds Maintenance	33
3.3.3 Buildings Maintenance	34
3.3.4 Hard Landscape Features.....	34
3.3.5 Equipment Maintenance and Use – Staff	34
3.3.6 Play Area Equipment	35
3.3.7 Objectives	35

3.4 Sustainability	35
3.4.1 Pesticide Use	36
3.4.2 Plants and Materials	36
3.4.3 Pollution Reduction	39
3.4.4 Water and Energy Efficiency	39
3.4.5 Objectives	40
3.5 Conservation and Heritage	41
3.5.1 Natural and Landscape Features	41
3.5.2 Local History and Buildings	43
3.5.3 Objectives	43
3.6 Community Involvement	43
3.6.1 Friends of Ridley Park and Stakeholders	44
3.6.2 Community Facilities within the Park	45
3.6.3 Education	46
3.6.4 Community Consultation	46
3.6.5 Objectives	47
4. MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS	48
4.1 A Welcoming Park	48
4.1.1 Signage and Interpretation	48
4.1.2 Entrance Features and Access	48
4.1.3 Facilities for Children and Young People	49
4.1.4 Customer Liaison	49
4.2 A Park which is Healthy, Safe and Secure	50
4.2.1 Equipment and Facilities	50
4.2.2 Staff Training	50
4.2.3 Community Safety	50
4.2.4 Security	51
4.2.5 Dog Fouling and Littering	51
4.2.6 Play Areas and Splash Park	51
4.2.7 Other Safety Checks	52
4.3 A Park which is Well Maintained and Clean	52
4.3.1 Maintenance Operations in the Park	52
4.3.2 Waste Management and Cleansing Operations	53
4.4 Sustainable Management Operations	53
4.4.1 Chemical Use	53
4.4.2 Plants and Materials	54
4.4.3 Pollution Reduction	54
4.4.4 Water and Energy Efficiency	54

4.5 Conservation and Heritage.....	55
4.6 Community Involvement	56
4.6.1 <i>Friends of Ridley Park and Stakeholder Participation</i>	56
4.6.2 <i>Education</i>	56
4.6.3 <i>Further Community Consultation.....</i>	57
4.7 Marketing	57
4.8 Monitoring and Plan Review	58
5. APPENDICES.....	59
5.1 Key Roles and Responsibilities	59
5.2 Key objectives and timelines	61
5.3 Useful links	65
5.4 Travel directions to Ridley Park.....	66

SUMMARY OF THE PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A General Background to the Park

Ridley Park is located in an urban setting just over 0.5km south east of Blyth town centre in South East Northumberland. The Parks topography is generally flat, rising gently towards the south western boundary it shares with the Port of Blyth.

It is separated from the sea and mouth of the River Blyth by the Port of Blyth facility which provides significant shelter for the Park from prevailing adverse weather conditions.

Land to the north and west of the Park is occupied by residential housing including the attractive terraces and detached houses along Park View and Bath Terrace. A small car parking area is located on the southern boundary which serves the Park.

1.2 A Brief History of the Park

In the late Nineteenth Century an area commonly known as the “Flats and Links” was laid out to the west of land owned by the Blyth Harbour and Dock Company. This waste ground was used as an area for congregation, miner’s picnics, visiting fairs and circuses.

By 1877 this land had been leased by Blyth Council from Viscount Ridley. It was subsequently fenced off and railways lines were constructed on some of the land as part of the expansion of Blyth coal and port industries.

Blyth Town Council negotiated a loan of £1,600 in 1903 with the purpose of laying out a formal park to serve the local community. The Park Superintendent Mr. Robson took advice from the Borough Surveyor and Park Superintendent at Tynemouth who had both recently developed similar sites for their council authority.

Ridley Park was officially opened on 27th July 1904 by Lord Ridley who spoke of the development of Blyth as a seaside resort. Music was supplied by the Seaton Delaval Military Band. In 1909 a carved bust of Lord Ridley by George Skee was unveiled in the Park to recognize his contribution and support.

By 1912 Ridley Park was being promoted in the Blyth Town Guide where it was described as having fine trees, ornamental works and flower beds, two bowling greens, tennis lawn, bowls and pavilions and frequent entertainment from local brass bands.

In 1922 the Ordnance Survey provided the first survey of the Park. It showed two bowling greens in the north east corner, a bandstand located roughly in the centre of the Park close to the lodge and a glasshouse to the south west. The largest area of grass lay to the north of the small circular boating lake and an area was fenced off to the east which probably housed the children’s playground.

There were a number of other developments in the Park during the 1920s. Additional tennis courts and a pavilion were constructed in 1924 followed in 1925 by the installation of a new boundary fence and park gates. The popular boating lake was cleaned and repairs made to the ornamental features on the island.

Ridley Park continued to be a popular venue throughout the 20th Century for events and records show that a wide variety of organised activities took place. Carnivals, jazz and brass band contests, garden parties, plays and political rallies were all regularly held in the Park.

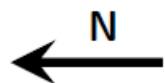
A memorial to honour the dead of World War Two was constructed on the northern boundary of the Park during the 1950s. A memorial garden was subsequently laid out and both the Boer War and World War One memorials were relocated to the site from their locations in surrounding streets.

In 1967 the bandstand was removed from the Park and replaced by a rose garden which was funded by Blyth Round Table

Ridley Park continued to see further developments into the 21st Century with the paddling pool (formerly the boating lake) being converted to a splash park together with the refurbishment of the play areas and path improvements.



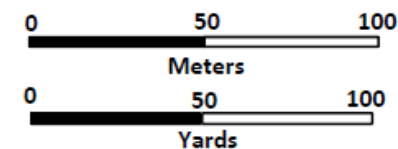
War Memorial



1. Water Play area
2. Under 10's Playground
3. 11+ Playground
4. Tennis Courts
5. Bowling Green
6. Cafe
7. Rose Garden
8. Wild Flower Garden
9. FORP Pavilion

RIDLEY PARK

General Map



This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. License no. 100049048 (2014).

Blyth
Cenotaph

- Parking
- Public Convenience
- Picnic Area
- Garden
- Non-Coniferous Trees
- Cafe



Art in the Park

- A. Silhouettes
- B. Butterfly
- C. Centenary Wheel

NORTHUMBERLAND
Northumberland County Council

1.3 Site Details

Name: Ridley Park, Blyth

Grid reference: NZ 319 810

Area: 5.5 hectares

Tenure and legal status: Ridley Park is in the freehold ownership of Northumberland County Council, the land having been given to the local council in 1903. The deed states that the land should only be used as a public recreation ground.

Access: Ridley Park is located in eastern part of Blyth and can be easily accessed from surrounding streets and is served by a good path network and Sustrans cycle route. There is a dedicated car park at the southern boundary of the Park and there is additional on street parking on the northern and eastern boundaries.

1.3.1 Local Facilities

The nearest public toilets outside of the Park are located 0.5km away in Blyth town centre.

There are no public telephone facilities located in the Park. The café can provide emergency communication during opening hours, additionally Park staff are provided with telephones. The nearest public telephone is located in Blyth Town Centre.

The Park has good public transport links with bus stops situated on adjacent streets.

Blyth Bus Station is located in the town centre and is a transport hub for South East Northumberland providing links to many of the local towns and villages as well as to Newcastle upon Tyne and the wider North East of England

There is a car park to the south of the Park with spaces for 70 vehicles. Adjacent streets allow for additional parking; however this is limited due to the requirements of local residents.

1.3.2 Features within the Park

Ridley Park provides a variety of features and recreational opportunities for the local community and visitors from further afield. All the Park features are currently managed by Northumberland County Councils Neighbourhood Services team.

The layout of the Park is based on a traditional format developed during the Nineteenth Century.

Provision of privacy was established by screening the boundary of the Park with a strong perimeter of trees and shrubs. Sporting facilities such as bowling and tennis were allocated to areas away from the central area of the Park where a winding path

network past areas of shrubbery and bedding displays were laid out. Seating was provided along these paths at locations which afforded good views of the Park and community use was enhanced by the provision of a bandstand, boating lake and children's play areas.

The Park has evolved and developed since it was first established and currently the main features are -

- **Play areas:** these have been a feature of the Park since it was opened in 1904. Current play provision was refurbished during 2007 where fenced, separate junior and toddler sites were established. At this time a splash park was also developed in the Park replacing the obsolete paddling pool. This feature proves to be a great attraction in the Park during the summer months.
- **Park pavilions:** there are currently two pavilions in Ridley Park, located next to the two bowling greens. Both buildings are of traditional park design being of timber construction with large viewing windows overlooking the greens.

The northern pavilion is now home to the Friends of Ridley Park who have funded improvements to the building and use it as a base for activities and organised events. Although there is no longer a bowls club based in the Park the Friends continue to support the sport on an informal basis providing opportunities for casual games. The Friends are considering the option of renting the pavilion out to community groups and organisations for events and meetings.

The southern pavilion has been converted into a café and is let by Northumberland County Council as a private concern. It operates every day throughout the summer and at weekends during the winter. The operators also have permission to utilise the former bowling green at the front of the pavilion as an activity and seating area for both informal use and organised events.

Refreshments are also available from an ice cream vendor whose operation is managed as a concession through Northumberland County Council.

- **Sports facilities:** the Park has two bowling greens, although only one is currently maintained for the sport. The second green provides an activity and seating area for the café.

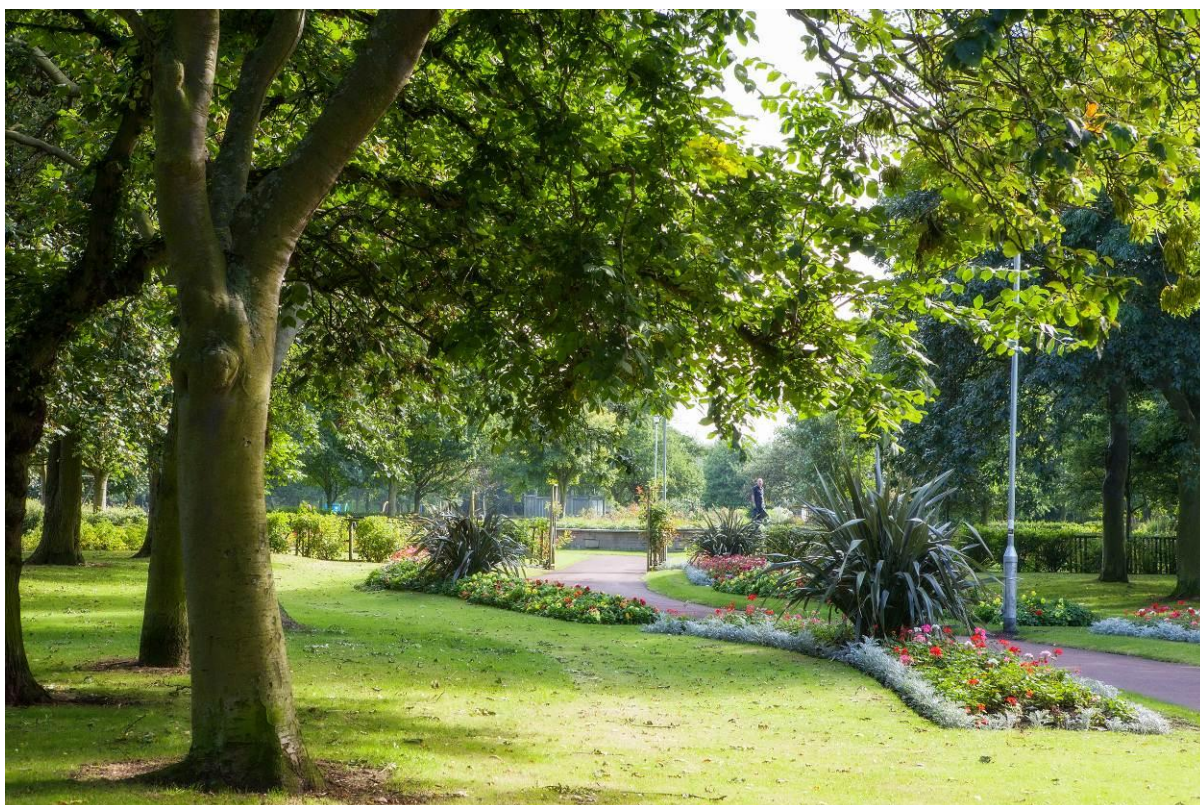
There are two hard surface tennis courts in the Park which are used by the local club and by casual users. Use of the courts is currently free of charge; there are no changing facilities on site.

- **Ridley Park Lodge:** this building is located at the Park View entrance and was constructed in the early 20th Century. It provided accommodation for the Park Superintendent; thereafter it was let to members of the Park staff. It is owned by Northumberland County Council and is now privately let.

- **Boundaries:** the western and northern boundaries of Ridley Park have been open since the traditional Park fence was removed in the 1950s to widen roads. The eastern and southern boundary fences are of metal palisade construction and act as a security barrier for the Port of Blyth facility and car park. There are a set of stone built pillars located next to Ridley Park Lodge at the Park View East entrance where formal Park gates originally hung, however these were removed a number of years ago.
- **Pathways:** the network and location of the paths in the Park have changed little since they were established in the early 20th Century. They have been repaired and upgraded over the years, the majority are now of bitmac construction, although certain sections are flagged. In 2010 a Sustrans cycle path was routed through Ridley Park and now forms part of the National Cycle Network Route One (the Coast and Castles route).
- **War Memorials:** these are located on mounding at the northern end of the Park at the junction of Park View and Park View East. The site houses memorials to the dead of the Boer War, World War One and World War Two.
- **Ridley Park Nursery:** at one time this complex of green houses and buildings provided plants and other materials for both Ridley Park and the local authority area. One of the buildings continues to serve as a base for Park staff, the main buildings are now privately let by Northumberland County Council and it continues to operate as a nursery.
- **Street Furniture:** the Park houses a large number of seats, picnic tables and bins in a variety of styles and colours. Seats are maintained by both Park staff and the Friends of Ridley Park
- **Public Toilets:** There are currently two toilet blocks located in Ridley Park both of which are managed by Northumberland County Council and are open dawn to dusk throughout the year.

The toilet block to the rear of the cafe is of brick construction with a tiled roof is in reasonable condition but is not DDA compliant. A second modular designed toilet block is located next to the splash park and play areas and provides disabled facilities to Park users.

- **Trees:** the Park has a strong and mature tree structure which helps define the other features within the Park. Much of the perimeter of the site is planted with trees creating an attractive visual and protective cover while areas within the Park are subdivided by further planting. The majority of the stock is deciduous and of a limited and traditional coastal species range (predominantly Sycamore, Swedish Whitebeam and Elm). Their age reflects the original establishment of the Park 100 years ago, the majority of the stock being mature with a strong canopy and little understorey planting. A detailed tree survey has now been completed and a programme of selective removal, pruning and replanting is now underway.



Summer Bedding

- **Annual Bedding and Other Formal Planting:** Ridley Park has always maintained a strong emphasis on quality, colourful and attractive annual bedding which upholds the best traditions of formal park horticulture. This has been recognized over the years by Northumbria In Bloom awards. The majority of the formal annual bedding is concentrated in the north and centre of the Park and consists of ribbon, round and raised beds planted up for spring, summer and winter shows. There are also a number of rose beds on the site.
- **Herbaceous Beds and Shrub Beds:** as part of a programme to diversify the horticulture in the Park a number of formal beds have been refurbished as herbaceous beds and shrub borders. These beds are more sustainable, wildlife friendly and require less maintenance over the course of the season. Of particular note is the bed established next to Ridley Park Lodge. The majority of the shrub planting is located at the southern end of the Park and mainly consists of ornamental species such as Escallonia and Brachyglottis which are tolerant of coastal conditions. In addition to these native species such as willow, elder and hawthorn have been planted in some beds.
- **Wildflower Areas:** a small area of land to the rear of the tennis courts has been sown with native wildflower meadow species, while a second area of woodland wildflower planting has been developed beneath the tree canopy between the two play areas in the south of the Park. The wildflower meadow planting is part of the Growing Wild Project which is supported by the Northumberland Wildlife Trust and the Friends group. The recent woodland

development has been funded by a local councillor and was planted by children from the local Buffalo Community Centre at Cowpen Quays.

- **Grassland:** the grassland in most areas of the Park is a typical amenity sward of ryegrass and meadow grass which is kept close mown throughout the year. The grass cover is dense in the open areas and sparser below the tree canopy. Due to the extensive network of paths there is little evidence of desire lines or damage to the grassed areas through footfall. The bowling greens are composed of fine turf species such as fescues and bents and are maintained to a standard consistent with the sport.



SUSTRANS Sculptures

- **Sculptures:** as well as the formal war memorials Ridley Park is also the home of more contemporary artworks. In 2012 SUSTRANS funded the design, manufacture and installation of a piece of public artwork located next to Ridley Park Lodge which depicts three notable residents of the town, P.C David Rathband, Guardsman Michael Sweeney and Stan Laurel. More recently a locally based arts group Northern Butterflies have been working with the Friends Group to design and instal 2 artworks reflecting the heritage and biodiversity of the Park. One sculpture of note which is missing from the Park is the 1904 bust of Lord Ridley which was stolen in the mid-2000s. The plinth remains in situ and it is hoped that a replacement bust can be cast and returned to its rightful place.

1.3.3 Park Stakeholders

Ridley Park is maintained and managed by the Neighbourhood Services team of Northumberland County Council.

The principal stakeholder groups operating in the Park are:

Northumberland County Council: Ridley Park is in the freehold ownership of Northumberland Council and is currently managed by Local Services through the NEAT (Neighbourhood Environmental Action Team) and Countryside and Green Spaces management teams.

Blyth Town Council: following LGR in 2008 the County Council created a number of parish and town councils within the south east area to provide customers with the means to manage their communities at a more local level as has been the case for many years in the rest of Northumberland. Representing the local community Blyth Town Council provides advice and support to both Local Services and the Friends group on the management and future development of Ridley Park.

Active Northumberland: the organisation was set up in 2012 to maintain and manage a number of Northumberland County Council leisure facilities. They provide practical support and guidance on event management and regularly hold community engagement activities in Ridley Park.

The Friends of Ridley Park: the group was set up in 2012 by members from the local community who were keen to become involved in improving their local Park and contributing to its future development and management. The group is made up of local residents, town and county councillors, representatives from businesses operating in the Park and local schools. They are now a constituted group and have been successful in raising funds for improvements in Ridley Park such as the refurbishment of the bowls pavilion which is now also leased to them by Northumberland County Council as a base. Their activities that support and enhance the Park include -

- Holding monthly meetings which act as a forum between stakeholders and Northumberland County Council representatives to discuss and progress future developments and improvements in Ridley Park and how they can be achieved through joint working.
- Provide practical and continued support to improve the Park through the operation of a maintenance programme with members carrying out tasks such as horticultural works, painting and litter collection duties.
- Identifying and applying for funding opportunities to improve the Park and enhance the visitor experience.
- Provide support to organisations and groups who use the Park such as local schools and special interest groups.
- Both organise and support events in Ridley Park throughout the year.

Business Operators in the Park: there are currently three businesses which are licensed by Northumberland County Council.

- Mr. Ridley's Café: this business operates from a converted pavilion building in the Park providing food and refreshments to visitors. it is privately run as part of a lease agreement with Northumberland County Council. The proprietor is a supporter and regular attendee of the Friends group and organises events throughout the year providing entertainment for Park users.
- Carnival Rides North East: traditional fairground rides and other small scale entertainments are provided in the Park by this organisation in the summer months. They operate on a franchise basis and also provide entertainments for events and support the work of the Friends through funding and advertising of their work.
- Ice Cream Van Concession: this operates in the Park during the summer months and is let on an annual basis through a tender process.

Other Groups: there are a number of other organisations which have a stakeholder interest through the development and continuing improvements in the Park. They work with both Northumberland County Council and the Friends group to enhance the environment and visitor experience in Ridley Park.



Butterfly Sculpture

- Northern Butterflies: this locally based group was set up in 2011 and provides opportunities for those with disabilities to engage and contribute to local arts projects in the community, which in turn helps members gain a variety of new

and transferable skills. Working with ideas suggested by the Friends group they have recently designed and installed two outdoor sculptures in the Park.

- **Sustrans:** this group has worked in partnership with Northumberland County Council creating a new cycleway through the Park as part of the National Cycle Network Route One (the Coast and Castles route). As well as providing improved access to Ridley Park it also provides a valuable link to other visitor attractions along the north east coast.
- **Northumberland Wildlife Trust:** the Trust has been working with Northumberland County Council and the Friends group to establish wildflower meadow in the Park. This is part of the Growing Wild project whose principal objective is to reverse the decline of this type of habitat across the country. There are currently two areas in the Park which have been planted up and new maintenance regimes to manage them have been established. Together with the Friends group the Northumberland Wildlife Trust continues to monitor their development.
- **Local Schools:** with the support of the Friends group and the refurbishment of the bowls pavilion local schools are now becoming more aware of the Park as a potential base for educational opportunities. Representatives from nearby schools are now regular attendees at Friends group meetings and are planning to establish stronger links with the Park.
- **Buffalo Junior Wardens** – based in the local community centre this group of young people are actively involved in environmental and horticultural improvement works in the Park. They have secured funding for improvements to feature beds and the creation of a wildflower meadow on land between the two play areas.

1.3.4 Park Activities

Since its opening in 1904 Ridley Park has always been popular with the community of Blyth as a venue for both formal and informal activities. Following recent improvements, particularly the refurbishment of the play areas and the installation of the splash park, visitors from the wider region are now visiting the Park.



Exercise and Dog Walking in the Park

Exercise: as with many areas of dedicated green space in the urban environment the Park is a very popular site for access to exercise and enjoyment of the outdoors. Walking remains the most popular form of activity in the Park providing exercise opportunities for all age ranges and abilities.

Cycling: this activity has become more common since the routing of the new cycle path through the Park. Whilst access to the Park has been improved to the wider community this activity has created new challenges to accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists.

Sporting Opportunities: tennis remains the most common sporting activity in Ridley Park with the courts being used regularly throughout the summer months. Courts are currently open for public access and free to use. Although there is no longer a bowls club based in the Park the sport is still played on an informal basis by the Friends group. The large open spaces lend themselves to other sports such as football and other ball games which are often played on an informal basis in the summer months.

Family Activities: Ridley Park continues to be a very popular with both local families and those from outside the Blyth area particularly in the summer months. The excellent play facilities, and in particular, the splash park are a major attraction for families and they will often spend all day on site enjoying the facilities. The large grassed areas next to the play facilities afford opportunities for relaxation and picnicing.

Events: organised events are held in Ridley Park throughout the year and are arranged and managed by a number of organisations including the Friends Group, Active Northumberland and local businesses. They range from traditional allotment produce shows to musical events and craft fairs.

2. THE VISION FOR THE PARK AND POLICIES

For many years Ridley Park has provided a valuable green space and recreational venue for the community of Blyth. It offers both formal and informal recreational opportunities for all age ranges and abilities in a clean, healthy and safe environment.

Northumberland County Council recognizes the historical and environmental significance that Ridley Park holds in the community of Blyth. The future management of the Park will involve the development and maintenance of these features whilst enhancing those elements which will reflect the needs of present and future stakeholders.

The value of green spaces such as Ridley Park to local residents is acknowledged in this plan and we are fully committed to further develop its potential as a focal point for both the local and regional communities. We will encourage continued public use and participation in the development of Ridley Park through partnership working. We will ensure that the local community and stakeholder groups are fully engaged in the maintenance and management of the Park.

This vision is best summed in the Northumberland County Councils Mission, Vision and Values guide whose priorities provide the impetus for this management plan. We will work with local people, local enterprises and with our partners to achieve these outcomes -

- Improve our places and our environment.
- Enable communities and families to be strong.
- Help people to be healthy and independent.
- Grow our local economy.

The priorities in this vision statement have been developed from the Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017 and the Sustainable Community Strategy which are the two key documents in the development of this document.

Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017. This document “aims to make Northumberland a better place to work, study and enjoy within the constraints of a prudent economic regime. In doing so it recognizes that Northumberland is a special place – somewhere that retains a strong local identity, stemming from the unique combination of its landscape, location and heritage.”

Sustainable Community Strategy. Aims to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of our communities and “provides members, staff, customers and partners with a clear understanding of our vision, strategic aims and policy priorities.”

Together with these two key policies this management plan is further underpinned by the following strategies.

Northumberland Green Infrastructure Strategy. Produced to protect and enhance the county's GI assets, both now and in the future. It provides the strategic framework to ensure the provision of good quality, well managed readily accessible and multi-functional green infrastructure across Northumberland

Trees and Woodlands Strategy – Growing Together. This document details how the council will meet its legal obligations in respect of the trees it owns or is responsible for, the use of best arboricultural practice together with a commitment to protect existing stock and programme in new tree planting across the county.

Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Northumberland. Details how our waste is managed in a more sustainable way and to ensure that European and UK government targets are met. It comprises a range of options including waste minimisation, recycling composting, energy recovery and limited use of landfill disposal.

3. SITE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The site aims and objectives for Ridley Park cover the management and development of the Park over the next 5 years. They are based on the key criteria outlined in the Green Flag Award Guidance Manual:

- A Welcoming Park
- A Park which is Healthy, Safe and Secure
- A Park which is Well Maintained and Clean
- Sustainability
- Conservation and Heritage
- Community Involvement
- Management
- Marketing

3.1 A Welcoming Park

There should be good, clear signage in the Park and surrounding area.

Routes to the Park should be safe and kept clean and tidy.

Access into the Park should be designed in such a way that provides an attractive and welcoming experience while there should be no physical barriers which prevents equal access to all members of the community.

3.1.1 Physical Access



Park View Entrance and House

Ridley Park is well served by the local bus network with routes running along adjacent roads together with the town's bus station situated 0.5km from the site. Bus services which pass the Park link with local communities in South East Northumberland and the major conurbation of Newcastle upon Tyne.

There is car park at the southern end of the Park which is accessed from Belgrave Crescent and has a pedestrian entrance directly onto the site. The car park has capacity for around 70 vehicles and also provides dedicated disabled parking bays. The car park is gated and is open from dawn until dusk throughout the year. Currently the car park is not well signposted from the road or adjacent streets and improvements are required.

Additional parking is available on adjacent streets subject to certain traffic restrictions. Local residents do raise concerns regarding this issue as it causes access and congestion problems particularly when the Park is busy.

Car parking is not allowed on site, although vehicular access is permitted for NEAT teams, utility companies, contractors and Park businesses for activities associated with their operations.

The majority of visitors access the Park on foot or by cycle. Paths and roads in and around the site are well maintained by Northumberland County Council. There is a light controlled pedestrian crossing on Park View close to the western Ridley Park Lodge entrance which provides a safe route into the site from adjacent streets. Adjacent streets are all 30mph although there is a speed camera on Park View which provides a traffic calming measure.



SUSTRANS Route

There is a formalized cycle route that leads directly to, and through, Ridley Park. The National Cycle Route One links up with a network of paths throughout the Northumberland and Tyneside areas and provides opportunities for access to the Park for visitors from further afield than the local community. The designated cycle path through the Park is clearly signposted with the provision of both wooden way markers and path markings along its route.

Surrounding roads and streets are well maintained and popular as link routes with both cyclists and pedestrians and are not seen as an impediment to safe access to the Park.

All four main entrances are well maintained and are easily accessible to all Park users with only one (the southern car park entrance) being gated and locked in the evening.

- East Park View – a pedestrian entrance with adjacent vehicular access on the northern boundary of the Park. It is also an access point for the Sustrans cycle path.
- Park View – a combined pedestrian and vehicular access on the western boundary next to Ridley Park Lodge. It provides a formal access to the Park and was originally gated. A pelican crossing is located outside this entrance providing a dedicated crossing to the Park and there is also a speed camera which acts as a further traffic calming measure. This entrance has been identified by stakeholders as being the main feature entrance and would be enhanced by the refurbishment of the brick structure and the replacement of the gates based on the design of the originals.
- Belgrave Terrace – a pedestrian/Sustrans cycle path entrance in the south west corner of the Park.
- Car Park Entrance off Belgrave Terrace – located to the south of the Park, there is gated access directly onto the site.

In general the Park is level with a comprehensive layout of paths which are wide and generally in good condition. The network is accessible and inclusive to park users of all ages and abilities. There is a rolling programme of patching repairs to the paths in order to eliminate trip hazards and damaged areas; however there is a need for a more comprehensive review to identify those sections of paths in need of more extensive repair and refurbishment.

There is currently little directional signage at the entrances or within the Park, this being limited to the two Sustrans entrances to the site. Additionally there is no signage to direct visitors to the Park from the town centre, adjacent streets and footpaths.

Ridley Park has been identified by Northumberland County Council as a strategic visitor attraction and a review is now being undertaken by the Tourism and

Communications team as to how it can be better promoted and what improvements can be made to guide people to the site. Although the Park is generally level with a good unimpaired visual aspect there is a need for some internal signposting and information boards to guide visitors to the various facilities on site.

3.1.2 Social Access

One of Northumberland County Councils key objectives is to ensure its assets are developed in such a way as to ensure no section of the community should feel excluded from being able to access and make full use of them.

Continued improvements to equipment and facilities ensure that as many sections of the community as possible can benefit from the Park. In general the Park is easily accessible by all social groups with a wide range of facilities available on site.



Play Facilities

The onsite play facilities underwent a major refurbishment in 2006 - 2007 providing separate, fenced junior and toddler areas. Both sites were constructed to full EN1176 and EN1177 standard, access is DDA compliant and were furnished with a mix of traditional and more innovative equipment designed to encourage interactive and social play. Both sites are gated, providing a dog free environment and are equipped with up to date signage. The play areas are subject to regular inspections and review and as such a number of further improvements have been identified and these will be programmed as funding becomes available.

The splash park is a major visitor attraction in Ridley Park and was installed in 2007 on the site of the redundant paddling pool next to the play areas. This operates

throughout the summer months and provides interactive and inclusive water play opportunities for children with a range of abilities. This feature has been identified as a key facility for the local community and an attraction for visitors from the wider north east area.

In general the path network around Ridley Park is wide and easily accessible so does not present any impediment to Park users with differing abilities and needs. The Park itself is generally flat and level with no steps or steep inclines to negotiate. Surfacing improvements are required to some routes as a result of natural wear and tear over the years and the Neighbourhood Services and Highways teams will be working to develop a refurbishment programme. The recent development of the Sustrans route in the Park has created both benefits, in terms of improved access, but also concerns from Park users in respect of shared usage of pathways. New signage has been introduced together with better markings and the situation will continue to be monitored in order to identify any future improvements that can be made.

There are currently two toilet block facilities in Ridley Park with only the modular building located next to the splash park providing DDA compliant facilities to Park users. Whilst both buildings do provide toilet provision they do not have the capacity to deal with the large numbers of visitors the Park attracts especially in the summer months. Consultation with local stakeholders has identified the provision of new, modern and robust facilities being a key improvement objective for the Park.

The privately operated café pavilion has a disabled ramp installed although access into the building is limited. A new disabled ramp will be installed in the main Park pavilion using funding raised by the Friends group and access is excellent as it is furnished with double doors throughout together with DDA compliant toilets which are available when the building is open.

Vehicular parking facilities for the site are considered to be adequate with the provision of both on street and dedicated car parking nearby. These are subject to congestion in the summer and during events so there is a need to improve signage to direct visitors to the free parking opportunities in the nearby town centre, Quayside and on the Blyth Links and Foreshore. There is good pedestrian access from these locations into the Park and access opportunities have been enhanced with the links to the National Cycle networks.

Overall seating provision in the Park is good; however there is a need for more accessible picnic facilities particularly around the splash park and play facilities. There is no consistent style to the street furniture in the Park and it would be beneficial to review current provision and consult with stakeholders on a more uniform design which can be rolled out as items need to be replaced.

3.1.3 Objectives

- Assess current signage provision in the Park and surrounding area. Implement a programme of signage improvement to direct visitors to the Park from surrounding main roads and car parks. Improve signage and information boards within Park to direct visitors to facilities.
- Refurbish the main Park View entrance to Ridley Park. Replace the gates and repair the brickwork with reference to historical records.
- Provision of a DDA compliant ramp outside the main pavilion to make the building fully accessible. Review the access to the café building to ascertain whether it can be made more DDA accessible.
- Develop a programme of works to repair and, where required, resurface the path network in the Park.
- Monitor cycle traffic in the Park to identify any further suitable safety improvements to minimise concerns from different user groups.
- Develop a programme for improvements to the play facilities and the installation of new, innovative items
- Evaluate current toilet provision in the Park with a view to providing more centralized and modern facilities designed to cope with increasing visitor numbers.
- Provide more accessible picnic facilities around the play areas. Adopt a style of street furniture for the Park and develop a replacement programme

3.2 A Park which is Healthy, Safe and Secure

The key to a healthy, safe and secure Park is ensuring it is well maintained, well used and well respected.

This requires the active participation of all stakeholders to monitor the Park, ensure good lines of communication between staff, agencies and users and to address any issues or problems promptly and efficiently.

Equipment and facilities should be well maintained and safe to use. The Park should be clean, graffiti and litter free and dog fouling should be dealt with promptly.

Overall the Park should feel safe to be in and to use.

3.2.1 Equipment and Facilities

Northumberland County Council is responsible for maintaining and ensuring the safety of Park equipment and facilities. This is supplemented by external contractors who are responsible for any specialist facilities on site such as fire equipment, security provision and water systems.

All the play facilities in the Park have been upgraded and installed to full EN1176 and EN1177 standards by recognized contractors.

The play areas are visually inspected and cleaned on a daily basis by members of the Neighbourhood Services team while a formal inspection is carried out on a

weekly basis by a qualified play area inspector. Repairs are carried out as soon as they are reported; if this is not possible the equipment is disabled and fenced off until remedial works can be completed. The play facilities are also subject to an annual inspection by Council appointed inspectors. Any recommendations or repairs highlighted are dealt with immediately.



The Splash Park

The daily operation of the splash park is managed by qualified members of staff who are trained in both pool plant and water hygiene operations. Their work is managed and supported by the Neighbourhood Services and Statutory Maintenance teams, Active Northumberland and a local specialist pool contractor who provides all necessary technical services for the safe operation of the facility. The park operates throughout the summer months and during the winter the area is converted to a toddlers play area. The splash park currently has no fencing or barriers to regulate access onto the facility. Whilst this has the benefit of allowing free movement it is a concern that this allows animals to roam onto the splash zone at all hours of the day with the resulting potential health hazard problem. It is therefore planned that the splash zone area will be fenced off to prevent unauthorized access and to minimize the risk of contamination. A recent review of the plant room and associated machinery by the Property Services team has highlighted the need for a new building and updated utilities if the splash park is to continue as a visitor attraction for Ridley Park. Northumberland County Council is currently investigating funding opportunities to carry out the necessary upgrades to the facility.

The main Park pavilion is managed by the Friends of Ridley Park whose responsibilities include the opening and cleaning of the building. The group use the pavilion as a base for their activities and events and there may be an option to let it

out to external groups and organisations. The facility remains in the ownership of Northumberland County Council and as such the responsibility for the maintenance of the building and the utility systems lies with the local authority. Recent improvements have been carried out to the building after consultation between the Friends group and Northumberland County Council. Since the group formed in 2011 they have been successful in securing funding to improve the building including new double glazing, doors, heating and repainting.



Ridley Park Cafe

The Ridley Park Café pavilion and Ridley Park Lodge are leased to private individuals who are responsible for the general upkeep of the buildings and ensuring that they are kept in a clean and tidy condition. The buildings continue to be in the ownership of Northumberland County Council who retains the responsibility for any major or structural repairs required.

Northumberland County Council currently employs seasonal staff who provide park keeping duties in Ridley Park during the summer months (April to October). This provision allows for a recognisable council presence throughout this period with staff working until dusk seven days a week. The Park Keepers provide all necessary routine duties associated with the maintenance of the grounds and the general upkeep of the site ensuring it is kept both clean and tidy and that all facilities are maintained in a safe condition. This work is coordinated by the Senior NEAT Team Leader who ensures that all routine maintenance tasks are programmed into work schedules.

The aboricultural features of Ridley Park are managed by the Northumberland County Councils Trees and Woodlands Officer who has a dedicated and trained

squad to carry out all required maintenance operations. All trees are surveyed every two years and results are recorded on the central Treewise database. In addition to this the local Neighbourhood Services staff that operates in the Park are encouraged to visually check the trees and report any issues they observe. From this information the Trees and Woodlands Officer formulates an annual maintenance and selected removal programme as well as manages the planting of new tree stock.

The hard landscaping is subject to regular inspection by the Neighbourhood Services team and annual inspection by a qualified highway inspector. Any remedial works are programmed into a schedule of works based on these inspections.

3.2.2 Security

Ridley Park is open to the public every day throughout the year. Despite this the Park is not subject to significant anti social behaviour and vandalism.

The Park is popular with visitors throughout the year and appropriate landscaping works have ensured that no areas seem isolated and vulnerable. Overall the Park has a very open feel and sightlines in most areas are good. The emphasis for new planting has been to incorporate low growing shrubs so as to reduce the fear of crime associated with dense, overhanging vegetation.



New Street Lighting

A recent improvement to the street lighting through the Park has helped to reduce

fear of anti-social behaviour and crime associated with dark places. It has also encouraged legitimate park users to access the park at times when they otherwise may have not felt comfortable doing so. At the present time the northern section of the Park is not lit with the only illumination coming from lamp standards along the road. Funding is being sought to extend the network of street lights into this section of the Park.

Ensuring that the Park is well maintained, clean and tidy has also enhanced a community spirit among stakeholders who are keen to work with the Neighbourhood Services team and other enforcement bodies to keep the site secure and safe. The recognizable daily presence of Neighbourhood Services staff in the Park particularly during the summer months provides visitors with a line of communication for any concerns they may wish to raise and to provide a visible deterrent for anti-social behaviour.

The sense of community involvement is enhanced by the work of the Friends of Ridley Park, local businesses, Northumberland County Council and Active Northumberland who involve users of all ages and backgrounds in regular Park activities and events.

The Friends of Ridley Park and Neighbourhood Services team stay in regular communication with the Police Community Support team and Council enforcement staff exchanging information relating to crime and anti-social behaviour.

Any incidents that do occur are dealt with through close liaison with Northumbria Police, the local Community Beat Manager and Community Safety Team and through Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Group (LMAPS) meetings.

3.2.3 Health and Safety

As part of Northumberland County Council those working in Ridley Park follow all relevant health and safety policies and regular risk assessments are carried out for management and maintenance operations.

Within Neighbourhood Services there is a rolling programme to train Park staff. Training includes the following:

- Chainsaw use.
- Pesticide use.
- Correct operation of machinery.
- Manual handling.
- First aid.
- Customer care.
- Dealing with difficult situations.

All Neighbourhood Services staff are qualified to a recognized standard where applicable.

3.2.4 Control of Dogs

Ridley Park is popular with dog walkers and the byelaws allow dogs in the Park provided they are under control.

Section 4 (1) of the Dog Fouling of Land Act 1996 requires that owners pick up and dispose of dog faeces in appropriate receptacles.

There are dog waste bins located in the Park but all bins are classed as dual use so can be used to deposit both litter and bagged dog waste.

The play areas are fenced and designated as dog free areas indicated by signage on the gates.

Northumberland County Council has established a programme to PACE (Police and Criminal Act) train additional members of staff who are empowered to issue fixed penalty notices for both dog fouling and litter offences. Northumberland County Council regards such training as a vital component in efforts to make parks and green spaces clean, healthy and safe. These trained staff now regularly patrol Ridley Park as part of their duties to deter such anti-social behaviour.

Northumberland County Council also recognizes the importance of education in reducing dog fouling in its parks. The Neighbourhood Services team works closely with Animal Welfare Officers who patrol the Park and arrange open days educating dog owners on their responsibilities and providing a free chipping service for their pets.

3.2.5 Public Facilities

Emergency first aid and phone facilities are available from the Neighbourhood Services team. The majority of staff are first aid trained and act as first point of contact in the Park for any visitors who may require further information or support. They also maintain regular contact with the Senior NEAT Team Leader and other members of the Neighbourhood Services team.

3.2.6 Objectives

- Maintain current inspection regimes for the Park, pavilion and play facilities.
- Secure funding to carry out improvement and upgrading works to improve existing play and splash park facilities.
- Continue regular meetings with the Friends of Ridley Park and other stakeholders so that maintenance, health and security issues can be raised and resolved.
- Continue the programme of horticultural improvements in the Park to redesign or remove shrub beds may be dense or encroaching on public areas to minimise the fear of anti-social behaviour.
- Work with Northumberland County Councils Street Lighting team to provide additional, sustainable lighting in the Park.
- Retain the relationship with local enforcement agencies such as Northumbria Police and Community Safety Team to keep anti social behaviour in the Park to a minimum. Develop a programme to train key Neighbourhood Services staff in enforcement of dog fouling and litter offences.
- Work with Friends of Ridley Park and other key stakeholders to make more use of the pavilion and Park by local schools and youth groups engendering a sense of ownership and pride.
- Continue to provide appropriate training for all Parks staff.
- Through joint working with the Animal Welfare team continue to raise awareness among dog owners of their responsibilities regarding care of their animals.

3.3 A Park which is Well Maintained and Clean

A pre-requisite of a well used, healthy and safe Park is a high standard of maintenance and cleanliness.

3.3.1 Litter and Waste Management

The Neighbourhood Services team are responsible for emptying bins and clearing litter from the site on a daily basis throughout the year. During the summer months the Park Keeping team carry out collections on foot regularly and rubbish is stored

on site in bulk wheelie bins where it is removed to the Northumberland County Council managed Cowley Road waste transfer station in Blyth. From here the rubbish is removed to landfill by Northumberland County Councils approved contractor (currently G O'Brien's Waste Management Services). In winter this procedure is carried out on daily basis in the Park by vehicle rather than on foot and rubbish is removed directly to Cowley Road.

Currently there is no provision for the separation and recycling of reusable materials in Ridley Park. This will be addressed by the installation of dedicated recycling bins at strategic locations on site. The separated, recyclable items will be removed to the Cowley Road depot for transfer by G O'Brien's Waste Management Services for processing and reuse.

During the course of the year a significant amount of green waste is produced by horticultural operations in the Park. Grass clippings from larger areas are left where they fall to mulch away naturally. Arisings from fine turf areas together with plant and leaf material are removed to the green waste transfer facility at Cowley Road where they are subsequently transferred to a recycling facility. Savings in transport and disposal of the green waste can be made by the provision of onsite composting facilities. There are a number of areas within the Park which may be suitable subject to consultation with Park stakeholders.



Tree Works in Ridley Park

Green waste derived from tree operations is dealt with according to the size and composition of the materials produced. Where possible arisings are chipped on site and utilised as mulch for shrub beds. Larger branches and logs are removed from site where they are recycled principally for use as firewood. Currently this is carried out free of charge as it is regarded as a saving in waste disposal, there are proposals that this could be carried out as part of a commercial operation to act as a revenue stream for the authority.

Incidents of fly tipping are infrequent in Ridley Park but when they do occur they are investigated by the Neighbourhood Services Environmental Enforcement Officer. Legal action may be pursued if the perpetrator can be identified.

3.3.2 Grounds Maintenance



Our Original Grounds Maintenance Team Now Enjoying A Well Earned Retirement!

The majority of grounds maintenance operations in Ridley Park are carried out by the local Neighbourhood Services team of Northumberland County Council.

The focus of grounds operations is to provide the local community with a Park which is clean, tidy, safe and displaying the best horticultural and maintenance standards that Northumberland County Council has to offer. This dedication has recently been recognized with a Best Park 2014 award from Northumbria in Bloom.

The Park displays a variety of horticultural features each requiring different skills to

manage successfully. In addition both changing economic and climatic conditions has required the Neighbourhood Services team to review and adapt both the soft landscaping and the maintenance operations to continue to provide a quality Park.

There is now interest from local community groups, schools and Park users to play a greater role in future practical management of horticultural features. In consultation with these groups the Neighbourhood Services team will encourage the community to develop and take ownership of existing features as well as creating new horticultural opportunities in the Park.

3.3.3 Buildings Maintenance

The buildings in Ridley Park are maintained by Northumberland County Council through their Property Services and Statutory Maintenance teams who carry out regular inspections of the facilities. The buildings are also subject to regular visual checks by Neighbourhood Services where any repairs required are notified to the Property Services Maintenance Helpdesk.

Small repairs and maintenance works are carried out by local contractors while large scale works are tendered by the Councils approved contractor ESH Facilities.

3.3.4 Hard Landscape Features

The paths, walls, seats, bins and other hard landscaping features in the Park are managed and maintained by Northumberland County Council. Any repairs are carried out by local contractors or the NEAT teams.

Paths are regularly checked and where necessary swept of debris by the Neighbourhood Services team either by hand or mechanical means.

Seats and bins are regularly inspected by Neighbourhood Services staff who also carry out maintenance and repainting works. The Friends of Ridley Park and other stakeholders have also developed small scale maintenance programmes as part of their work in the Park.

3.3.5 Equipment Maintenance and Use – Staff

All staff who operate in the Park are trained in the use and maintenance of small machinery and hand tools as a basic requirement. Staff who use specialist tools such as chainsaws and spraying equipment are trained to the required standard for their safe operation.

Large plant and machinery are currently housed at the Cowley Road Depot (approximately 1 mile from the site). The depot also houses a chemical store where all materials are secured in accordance with COSHH regulations.

The Park Keeping team have joint use of a building opposite the nursery complex where small items required for daily use such as pedestrian mowers and hand tools are stored in containers. Because of space restrictions and security there are no plans to increase the storage capacity or use of this area.

All machinery is maintained and repaired by qualified employees or by Council approved external contractors.

3.3.6 Play Area Equipment

The play area is visually inspected daily by a member of the Neighbourhood Services team and on a weekly basis by the Councils qualified play area inspector.

An annual inspection is carried by the Council appointed insurers.

All repairs are carried out by qualified persons using manufacturer supplied replacement parts.

Regular inspections and robust maintenance practices by the Park Keeping and Neighbourhood Services team mean that graffiti is not a major issue in Ridley Park. Any that appears is removed with propriety cleaning agents or painted out as soon as it is identified to deter future occurrences.

3.3.7 Objectives

- Locate and develop a composting area for green waste produced in the Park.
- Maintain the current high standard of cleanliness with regular bin emptying, litter sweeps and graffiti removal.
- Introduce recycling bins in the Park allowing for the collection of reusable materials.
- Investigate commercial possibilities of tree arisings.
- Work with Ridley Park stakeholders to establish practical community involvement in horticultural improvements and practical grounds maintenance.
- All play equipment to be regularly inspected, maintained and painted.

3.4 Sustainability

Those who administer parks and green spaces have a responsibility to manage and maintain them in an environmentally sustainable way.

Such facilities should also educate and inform the wider community of the benefits and necessity of adopting a more sustainable lifestyle.

Northumberland County Council is committed to sustainability by finding a balance between best environmental practice and available budget and resources.

3.4.1 Chemical Use

Neighbourhood Services and Northumberland County Council recognizes the importance of reducing chemical use to protect the health of Park users, staff and the biodiversity of the Park.

Changes to working practices and new legislation have led to a reduction in the application of chemicals in Ridley Park.

The Neighbourhood Services team use chemical means to suppress weed growth in path surfaces and around tree bases. Pesticides and herbicides are also used for bowling green maintenance, where possible non residual chemicals are utilised. While this limited use is considered necessary for the present the Neighbourhood Services team are committed to explore innovations in new sustainable chemical treatments and methods for weed suppression.

Water treatment for the splash park facility is currently maintained through chemical means as was the standard method at the time of installation. The water is then recirculated through the system which means that consumption is kept relatively low. However it does require the removal of contaminated water through the drainage system on a daily basis. With the current proposals to upgrade the plant room building and machinery there is an opportunity to install a UV system which will provide a more environmentally friendly and sustainable method for water purification.

At the present time weed encroachment through path surfaces is dealt with by chemicals as mechanical means would cause significant damage. The use of chemicals for this purpose will be significantly reduced with the development of the path improvement work programme.

Chemical use on herbaceous and shrub beds has now been eliminated by the introduction of a mulching programme to deal with weed suppression. Much of the mulch is produced on site from green waste from the Park. The introduction of a mulch storage area alongside the proposed composting facility will ensure that this sustainable practice can continue

3.4.2 Plants and Materials

Annual bedding for Ridley Park is grown at the Northumberland County Council horticultural unit based at Stakeford where plants are brought on from commercially sourced plugs or seed. At the present time peat is the favoured medium for growth as it remains both cost effective and reliable in ensuring quality plants. As the unit is only 5 miles away from Ridley Park transport costs are kept to a minimum.



Herbaceous Planting

Additional bedding, herbaceous and shrub plants are purchased from the privately managed nursery which is located next to Ridley Park, again ensuring transport costs are kept to a minimum. In addition the managers of the nursery are committed to minimum use of peat and growing plants from cuttings and seed gathering.

In preparation for planting of the annual beds conditioners such as mushroom compost are now regularly used and during the growing season any fertilizers applied are organically based.



Annual Bedding

Traditional annual flower and rose displays continue to provide colour in the Park. A number of beds have now been redesigned to provide more sustainable, insect friendly and diverse species in the Park. New herbaceous borders and shrub beds, together with wild flower areas and a wider range of tree species more tolerant to changing climatic conditions have increased the potential for biodiversity in Ridley Park.

Native and specimen tree species which offer a sustainable habitat for native wildlife will be introduced and purchased where possible. Arboricultural works are programmed in the autumn and winter to minimize disruption to the local wildlife.

Neighbourhood Services will continue to investigate alternative growing mediums in order to reduce the dependence on peat while ensuring that the current high standards in horticultural management in Ridley Park are maintained. In addition green waste produced in the Park will, where possible, continue to be recycled and reused. Local contractors and suppliers will be used to provide goods and services to minimize transport costs, reduce pollution and sustain the local economy.

3.4.3 Pollution Reduction

Because of the size and location of Ridley Park engine pollution from vehicular use is not considered excessive. In the summer months the majority of maintenance work is carried out using non motorised transport such as barrows and carts. There is a requirement for vehicles to be in the Park to drop off larger supplies of plants and materials and in most cases the deliveries are from the local depots at Cowley Road and Stakeford. Due to the requirements of efficiency and economy grass cutting operations will continue to be carried out by powered machinery.

The Park Keeping staff are located in a small depot next to the Park where the majority of the tools, equipment and materials required for grounds maintenance operations are stored. Staff start and finish work from the Park meaning that there is no requirement to transport manpower to work on a daily basis. This means that regular vehicular journeys are kept to a minimum for grounds maintenance operations.

All machinery in the Neighbourhood Services fleet are regularly maintained and serviced to ensure they operate efficiently and economically. In the majority of cases machinery is serviced at the local Council depot or by a local contractor. All staff are trained in the correct use of machinery including proper filling techniques and how to properly deal with spillages should they occur.

Northumberland County Council are currently trialling the use of electric vehicles and a recent project has seen the introduction of charging points at a number of depot and office facilities. At the present time usage is limited to smaller vehicles, as the technology develops there may be scope to invest in larger electric powered vans and machinery.

3.4.4 Water and Energy Efficiency

As with all parks of this age the water systems in Ridley Park have been modified and altered over the years with little or no documentation to track the changes. While water consumption can be monitored through regular billing it is more difficult to identify wastage through leakage from the old pipe systems.

All new or replacement pipe works are carried out in accordance with current regulations and guidelines to ensure that future water loss is minimized. In addition recent surveys and work to the splash park have identified and removed a number of obsolete pipe systems and dead legs. Buildings are regularly inspected by qualified contractors and members of the Property Services team who ensure that all above ground water systems are properly lagged and operating correctly.

The horticultural features in the Park are currently watered in the traditional manner by hosepipe using water points located throughout the Park. With the decommissioning of the second bowling green and the refurbishment of beds to more sustainable and drought resistant planting a reduction in water consumption can be achieved. The remaining bowling green at Ridley Park is currently irrigated using the traditional hosepipe method which is both time consuming and wasteful. The Neighbourhood Services team will seek to secure funding for an automated

sprinkler system which allows for the more efficient use of the water resource to irrigate the green.

Both the pavilions and the toilet blocks in Ridley Park are metered for electrical consumption and their systems are regularly inspected to ensure they are operating as efficiently as possible. Currently the utility bills for the café are paid for by the proprietor while Northumberland County Council has a low cost tariff negotiated to ensure payments are kept low. There is a requirement to survey these buildings and identify further potential savings together with simple ways in which the use of existing energy can be made more efficient. This work has begun with the refurbishment of the old windows and doors in the Friends where new double glazed units have been fitted throughout. An opportunity exists with the proposals for a new centralized toilet block to design and build a new building incorporating the latest water and energy efficient systems. The removal of the old obsolete toilet buildings will also represent a further significant saving in costs and efficiency.

The latest street lighting in the Park has been installed using LED lamp units. These units have a longer operating life, require significantly less power to operate and are controlled electronically ensuring they switch on and off only when required during the hours of darkness. Future improvements to the lighting in the Park will specify this new design of illumination.

3.4.5 Objectives

- Continue to minimize use of pesticides in the Park.
- Develop the path improvement programme to reduce need for weed suppression through chemical means.
- Continue the programme of horticultural improvements in the Park to encourage biodiversity and sustainable planting.
- Design and construct a new plant room for the splash park with UV water purification, modern water and energy efficient operating system.
- Investigate alternative mediums to peat as a plant growing medium.
- All Fleet and Grounds Maintenance machinery to be maintained regularly to ensure optimum performance.
- Reduce pollution and improve energy efficiency by introduction of electric powered vehicles.
- Continue to monitor water and energy bills for unnecessary consumption.
- Continue with regular inspections of buildings and facilities to ensure they are operating efficiently.
- Survey existing buildings to identify any improvements that can be made to water and energy efficiency.
- New buildings to incorporate latest sustainable utility and operating systems.
- New street lighting to incorporate latest LED innovation to reduce overall costs. Convert older columns to LED lighting.

3.5 Conservation and Heritage

Particular attention should be paid to the conservation and appropriate management of

- flora and fauna
- landscape features
- buildings and structural features

3.5.1 Natural and Landscape Features

The Neighbourhood Services team, working with our stakeholders have begun to develop Ridley Park as a site which would be attractive as a habitat for native flora and fauna. The Park has a range of natural environments from areas of mature woodland to close mown amenity grassland. Relatively simple low cost measures can be taken to provide an attractive and diverse environment for local wildlife.

We will commission an audit of the flora and fauna prior to drawing up a conservation enhancement programme for the Park. This audit will be carried out by Neighbourhood Services in collaboration with local environmental organisations and stakeholders, for example Northumberland Wildlife Trust or Groundwork North East and will provide a good opportunity to involve local schools as part of their curriculum. From this audit a conservation plan can be drawn up which will emphasise education opportunities and community involvement in the implementation of the programme.



Wildflower Meadow Planting

Habitat creation works are now underway and one of the first projects has been the establishment of two wildflower meadows in the Park supported by the Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Friends of Ridley Park and the Buffalo Centre Youth Partnership. Through continued consultation the Neighbourhood Team plan to extend this project to include further areas of less used grassland which are currently close mown and have little amenity value.

The majority of the trees in Ridley Park are now mature or semi mature so there is an opportunity to further develop a programme of selective pruning, removal and replanting which will provide a more diverse and sustainable canopy. Newly planted trees will be selected which provide a valuable food and shelter resource for native flora and fauna. Thinning out the existing tree stock together with pruning works will allow for the development of the understorey and provide opportunities for spring bulb planting and the introduction of woodland flower species.



Bird Feeding Stations Installed by the Friends Group

The introduction of bird boxes and feeding stations in the quieter parts of the Park by the Friends Group has proved successful and there are plans to expand this programme into other areas and include provision for bat roosting.

The landscape layout of Ridley Park remains unchanged since the site was first developed in the early 20th Century. The hard landscaping features and buildings remain in the same locations as when the Park was first designed while the path network remains largely unaltered. This also applies to the soft landscaping features although a change in design and plant selection is evident reflecting changes in horticultural tastes and management.

Northumberland County Council regards it as important to retain the original character of Ridley Park to ensure the history and tradition of the site is retained. We also recognize the need to make considered changes to the landscape with improved accessibility and recreational opportunities which also reflect the demands of current and future Park users.

3.5.2 Local History and Buildings

Ridley Park was created in the 1900's to provide recreational opportunities for the local community of Blyth. Since then the Park has seen many social and physical changes but it has remained at the centre of community life.

There is a wealth of archived material and photos relating to the history of Ridley Park which has not been collated together as a single resource. The Neighbourhood Services team will initiate a project to bring this information together which can then be used to provide an educational resource for the local community and schools. It will also provide the basis for the design of interpretation boards and materials for the Park. There is also the opportunity to provide Park history displays in the two Park pavilions. A key to the project will be the support of stakeholders in researching the history and bringing together the information from the various sources. Additionally this resource will be made available online through the Northumberland County Council website.

It is planned that the existing original buildings on the site will be retained and any improvements will be in keeping as much as possible with their original design. Neighbourhood Services will seek to encourage further use of the buildings with the aim of encouraging those marginal groups in the community who are not currently regular Park users to make use of them.

5.5.3 Objectives

- Produce an environmental audit of the Park which will provide the basis for the development of a conservation plan.
- Develop a programme of environmental improvements and nature conservation works in the Park. Engage with local stakeholders in projects.
- Continue with the tree management programme with an emphasis on improving habitat opportunities for native flora and fauna.
- Develop a project to research the history of Ridley Park and establish a resource for use by the local community and education groups.
- Design interpretation boards and materials and publish the information as an online resource.
- Ensure that future improvements to Park buildings and features are sympathetic to their original design.

3.6 Community Involvement

Community involvement will provide the driving force for the future development and management of Ridley Park.

Successful involvement can make the Park a focal point for the local community and ensure that it is well respected and used to its full potential.

Community involvement can be developed on a number of levels and involve all Park users.

3.6.1 Friends of Ridley Park and Stakeholders



The Friends at Work!

A close and effective working relationship between the Friends group and Northumberland County Council is a key to the future development of the Park. The Friends provides a vital link by which the local authority can successfully consult with the local community on the future direction of the Park. The group also provides the means by which other stakeholders in the Park can be represented and supported in their activities. Because the Friends group is independent it is able to tap into funding streams not available to the Council for further improvements in the Park. The Neighbourhood Services team will continue to support the group ensuring that their vision for the future of Ridley Park is represented at a strategic level and where appropriate implement their aspirations.

While recognizing the importance of our stakeholders in the continued successful management of Ridley Park our consultation with them has highlighted the need for a steering committee which can oversee future developments at a more strategic level and provide the means by which larger funding streams can be unlocked. Both the Friends and stakeholders will have representation on this group together with those from the wider local government and economic communities.

3.6.2 Community Facilities within the Park

Northumberland County Council is committed to the future of Ridley Park as a centre for community involvement and activity in Blyth and as such we will maintain all the community facilities to the highest standard. These facilities will be either free, or if charges are applicable, will be low cost to ensure that continued public usage is not compromised.



Ridley Park Friends Pavilion

Through the fund raising and support of the Friends of Ridley Park the main pavilion has been refurbished with the aim of providing a permanent base for the group and to provide a venue for community organisations to use. The group now have a lease agreement with the authority and are keen to make the pavilion available for use for community and educational purposes. The Neighbourhood Services team will provide support for this by ensuring the building is maintained to the required standard and that future improvements adhere to the latest regulations.

The play facilities will remain open throughout the year while the splash park will continue to operate during the summer months. We will work to secure funding to improve the current play facilities and to refurbish the plant room and operating system of the splash park ensuring their long term future as facilities for the local community.

Formal sporting activities in the Park centre on the bowling greens and tennis courts.

The demise of the bowling club has meant that the sport is no longer a regular feature in the Ridley Park. One green is now used by the café and as an activity area; we will continue to manage the second for the sport with the aim of re-establishing the game as a community activity in the Park. The tennis courts were refurbished in 2007 and are popular during the summer months. They are currently free and mostly used on a casual basis. They have the potential to provide a base for coaching and as a home to an established club. Recent consultation with Blyth Ridley Tennis Club based at Bath Terrace has been encouraging and they have indicated their desire to make the Park a more permanent base.

3.6.3 Education

Ridley Park has great potential to provide educational facilities to the local community and schools. At the present time these opportunities have not been fully explored or implemented. Representatives from local schools are regular attendees at Friends group meetings and are keen to establish Ridley Park as an outdoor classroom and educational resource. This aim is fully supported by both the Neighbourhood Services team and the Friends group with the newly refurbished Park pavilion proposed as an indoor venue and base for educational activities.

Through the establishment of links with local schools and community groups we will encourage participation in the conservation and heritage objectives of the management plan. This will be achieved through practical work alongside the Neighbourhood Services team and community organisations together with establishing local history and conservation research projects linking in with current school curriculums.

3.6.4 Community Consultation

Community consultation and participation is central to the future development of Ridley Park and the success of the management plan. These priorities are outlined in Northumberland County Councils mission, Vision and Values Statement in which emphasis is placed on working with local people, local enterprise and with our partners to achieve our aims.

We need to ensure consultation and engagement reaches a diverse range of stakeholders and importantly those marginalised groups who do not currently participate in Park activities. In order to achieve this a framework for community consultation and engagement will be developed supported by other Council departments and external organisations.

3.6.5 Objectives

- Support and promote the work of Friends of Ridley Park.
- Investigate ways to increase community participation in the group and the Park.
- With the support of other Council departments and linking with external organisations develop a robust framework for future community consultation and engagement.
- Increase community awareness and use of the Park by holding events and promoting the facilities through websites, the local press and promotional materials.
- Encourage educational groups and volunteers to make more use of the Park.
- Promote the newly constructed pavilion as a venue for groups and events.
- Encourage local schools to make use of the Park and offer work opportunities to students.
- Develop a website dedicated to the Park providing a range of educational material to students and the local community.

4. MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

This section covers Neighbourhood Services proposals for the development and management of Ridley Park for a period of 5 years and how it will be achieved. It will be reviewed annually to reflect works carried out and any changes implemented.

4.1 A Welcoming Park

4.1.1 Signage and Interpretation

- The site is not identified as a destination through the provision of brown tourist signage, while the nearby Blyth Links and Foreshore is. Work with Northumberland County Councils Sustainable Transport Traffic and Tourism teams to evaluate current road signage for Ridley Park. The programme will focus on providing clear directional tourist signage from nearby main roads and the Blyth Links to the Park and to guide visitors to designated parking areas. New signage will be provided and installed by the NCC Sign Shop and Highways teams.
- Install new fingerpost signage and information boards in Ridley Park directing visitors to the facilities. Design will be traditional and uniform to give the Park an identity. Work will be carried out by the Neighbourhood Services team in consultation with the Friends group. Where possible local companies will be commissioned to manufacture and install.

4.1.2 Entrance Features and Access

- Engage with local schools and stakeholders in the design and refurbishment of the main Park View entrance. Identify funding opportunities to implement the project and final commissioning will be carried out following consultation with Northumberland County Council Property Services and Procurement teams.
- Provision of a new disabled access ramp for the refurbished pavilion using funds raised by the Friends of Ridley Park. Manufacture and installation will be carried out by the Property Services team.
- The Property Services team will be commissioned to carry out an audit of the Ridley Park café to identify any future improvements to accessibility. Any identifiable improvements will be carried out in full consultation with the leasee.
- Carry out an audit of the path infrastructure with Highway Inspection officers to identify those in need of upgrading. Where possible repairs will be carried out from existing NEAT budgets, a larger project will require securing funding from the NCC Capital Programme.

- Cycle traffic in Ridley Park will be monitored by periodic checks and counts from the Neighbourhood Services team supported by feedback from Park users to assess whether further safety measures are required. The cost implications of any further identified improvements will be met from existing budgets or from application to Sustrans.
- The provision of new, modern toilet facilities has been identified by consultation with the Friends group and Park users as a priority for customer needs. We will commission the Property Services team to develop and cost up the project for inclusion in Northumberland County Councils Park Improvement Capital Programme.

4.1.3 Facilities for Children and Young People

- Continue to maintain all play equipment to current high standards.
- The Neighbourhood Services Team will liaise with Active Northumberland, local schools, Surestart and Children's Services to develop a programme to upgrade existing play facilities in Ridley Park.
- Work with the Property Services team and external professional companies to establish costs for upgrading of the splash park plant room and to provide fencing around the activity zone. All commissioned works will be carried in accordance with current financial regulations.

4.1.4 Customer Liaison

- Neighbourhood Services will work with the Friends group and other partners to ensure the aspirations of the community are represented and fulfilled in the development and management of Ridley Park.
- Work with Northumberland County Councils Human Resources section to develop a training package covering good customer practice for all Neighbourhood Services staff.
- The Neighbourhood Services team will ensure that Park information is kept up to date on notice boards and on the website. Clear lines of communication (contact names, phone numbers and e mail addresses) will be displayed at all times.

4.2 A Park which is Healthy, Safe and Secure

4.2.1 Equipment and Facilities

- Through in house induction training we ensure that all staff working in the Park are familiarized with equipment and facilities and the reporting procedures for damage and vandalism. This will provide staff with clear lines of communication and familiarisation with the management structure to ensure rapid response and remedial action.
- All equipment and facilities will be maintained by in house teams to the highest standard and under the supervision of qualified Northumberland County Council staff. When required only external contractors and companies which have been approved and registered through the Councils compliance and procurement system will be employed

4.2.2 Staff Training

- All training requirements will be managed by the Human Resources Training and Development team who will arrange for both external and internal training. NEAT Managers and Team Leaders will identify ongoing specific training needs.
- Through regular toolbox talk sessions from NEAT Team supervisory staff and external training all employees working in the Park will be appropriately trained in the use of tools and equipment.
- All staff responsible for inspections will be properly qualified and trained. Where appropriate training will be provided by external agencies to a recognized qualification standard.
- Staff training records will be regularly reviewed to ensure their qualifications and training are up to date.

4.2.3 Community Safety

- Neighbourhood Services Officers will attend meetings and maintain close links with Northumbria Police, Community Support Officers, NCC Community Safety Team, Council enforcement teams and LMAPS (local multi agency problem solving group).
- Neighbourhood Services staff will seek to implement any relevant recommendations from Northumberland County Councils Community Safety Policy.
- The Park pavilion will be made available to Northumbria Police and other public safety services for community awareness and information events.

- All Park staff will be kept up to date on community safety issues through meetings and training.

4.2.4 Security

- Neighbourhood Services will put into action a programme of works to redesign or remove shrub beds which are dense or encroaching on public areas.
- The programme of installing street lighting in Ridley Park will be completed by the Highways Technical Services team.

4.2.5 Dog Fouling and Littering

- The South East Area Dog Warden will attend community events and make site visits to educate dog owners of their responsibilities regarding their pets.
- Northumberland County Council will continue to PACE train staff in the enforcement of dog fouling legislation and littering and the issuing of fixed penalty notices for persistent offenders.
- All trained officers will be familiar with and operate in accordance with the Northumberland County Council Corporate Enforcement Policy
- Neighbourhood Services staff will regularly inspect and maintain all dog signage in the Park.

4.2.6 Play Areas and Splash Park

- Play area Inspectors will be trained to ROSPA standard and carry out weekly inspections of all the play facilities. All staff who operate the splash park will receive regular water hygiene awareness training and have qualified to Pool Plant Operators standard. Training to be managed by the Councils Human Resources team.
- Neighbourhood Services staff will ensure weekly inspections are documented and all records stored for the required length of time.
- Weekly inspections will be backed up by a general daily visual inspection of the play facilities. Any damage or vandalism will be reported to the Play Area Inspector for further action.
- An annual inspection of all equipment will be made by the Councils insurer and any recommendations will be carried out as required. All remedial actions will be carried out by the manufacturer or a qualified contractor using genuine parts.
- If equipment that cannot be repaired immediately will be disabled and fenced off until remedial works can be completed.

4.2.7 Other Safety Checks

- All statutory safety checks and maintenance to buildings will be carried out through the Property Services team and their approved sub contractors. All records of inspection to be retained centrally for reference when required.
- Tree inspections will be carried out by the Trees and Woodlands Officer or his team. There will be a full survey every two years with all results being recorded on the Treewise database. The Trees and Woodlands Officer is responsible for ensuring all staff are fully trained and qualified and that all work is carried out in accordance with latest regulations. All training will be carried out by properly registered training organisations.
- Paths will be checked daily by Park staff and inspected annually by a qualified Highways inspector. All defects will be recorded and any required remedial works will be carried out by the Highways team or their chosen sub-contractor.
- COSHH registered materials will be stored in an approved secure container at the Cowley Road depot with the NEAT Team Leader being responsible for the issuing and recording of all chemicals used. Only staff who are qualified to PA1 and PA6 standard will use COSHH registered materials.
- Risk assessments will be regularly updated by Neighbourhood Services officers supported by the internal Health and Safety team. Documents will be made available on the NCC intranet for staff access and incorporated into regular health and safety talks.
- All mechanical equipment to be maintained and serviced by qualified members of the Fleet Management team at County Council workshops.

4.3 A Park which is Well Maintained and Clean

4.3.1 Maintenance Operations in the Park

- Continue Neighbourhood Services commitment to provide high quality, sustainable grounds maintenance in the Park.
- The Neighbourhood Services team will consult with stakeholders through regular Friends group meetings to ensure that they are kept fully informed of planned horticultural improvements and works. This will provide the opportunity for stakeholders to contribute and participate in future developments and works.
- Through the consultation process the Neighbourhood Service team will facilitate the implementation of improvement works funded by community groups.

- Where appropriate local schools and Park user groups will be encouraged to assist in horticultural improvement works.
- Neighbourhood Services will work with external partners (e.g. Groundwork North East and the Probation Service) in providing horticultural opportunities and experience to excluded social groups.
- The Neighbourhood Services team will engage with Park user groups to develop a programme of small scale maintenance operations which they can implement. Tools and materials will be supplied from existing NEAT budgets.

4.3.2 Waste Management and Cleansing Operations

- Neighbourhood Services staff will continue to empty bins regularly and carry out litter sweeps of the Park during busy periods.
- Neighbourhood Services will remove graffiti as soon as it appears. Incidents will be reported to the South East Area Environmental Enforcement Officer who will attempt to identify and prosecute offenders.
- Identify a suitable location in Ridley Park for the siting of composting facilities. The location is to be agreed in consultation with stakeholders. The NEAT team will construct and manage the facility with all suitable green waste from the site being utilised. The composted materials will then be reused in the Park.
- Secure funding for the introduction of recycling bins at strategic locations in the Park. Train staff in the correct separation of collected materials and use of recycling facilities at the Cowley Road waste transfer station.
- Implement any recommendations in Northumberland County Councils Waste Management Strategy appropriate to the Park environment.
- Through trained operatives from the NEAT teams Northumberland County Council will continue to be responsible for ensuring that all play equipment is regularly inspected, maintained and painted.

4.4 Sustainable Management Operations

4.4.1 Chemical Use

- Neighbourhood Services will continue to minimize the use of pesticides in Ridley Park. We will keep in regular contact with suppliers to ensure we remain fully informed and use the latest biological and organic control methods which have a reduced impact on the environment.
- NEAT teams will use non chemical methods for weed removal and suppression. The introduction of on-site green waste recycling facilities will eliminate the need for chemical use by providing composting and mulching

material for horticultural use. Where practical weeds will be removed from hard surfaces by mechanical means.

- The Highways and Neighbourhood Services teams will develop a path improvement programme where paved and damaged tarmac paths are replaced eliminating environments which encourage weed growth.
- Neighbourhood Services will commission the Property Services team to design and provide full costings for a new plant room for the splash park. Integral to the project will be an upgrade to an ultra violet water filtration and hygiene system. This will eliminate the need for the use of chemicals to ensure the safe operation of the splash park making it more sustainable and economic. Funding opportunities will be sought through the Park Improvement Capital Programme and Section 106 from housing developments.

4.4.2 Plants and Materials

- Neighbourhood Services Officers working with NEAT staff will carry out an audit of the horticultural features in Ridley Park and develop a selective programme of refurbishment. Emphasis will be on the introduction of planting which is sustainable, drought resistant and attractive to native animals and insects. Stakeholders will be encouraged to participate in the project providing support in design ideas and practical help with planting. Where possible plants will be provided by local suppliers who are able to provide evidence of sustainable propagation methods.
- Through regular monitoring of the horticulture industry and contact with suppliers we will continue to follow the latest developments in alternatives to peat as a growing medium.
- The selection of external suppliers for the street furniture replacement programme will favour those companies which can demonstrate the use of sustainable and recycled materials in the manufacture of their products.

4.4.3 Pollution Reduction

- Work with the NEAT teams and Fleet Transport team to evaluate current vehicular requirements for the management of Ridley Park. From this information assess whether the provision of an electrically powered vehicle would be a viable option.

4.4.4 Water and Energy Efficiency

- Neighbourhood Services will work with the Councils Energy team to monitor all utility bills for the Park to identify areas of high consumption. Investigate whether reductions in high usage can be achieved through effective maintenance works or removal of unnecessary services. Negotiate with utility companies to ensure we receive the most economic tariffs for consumption.

- Commission the Property Services and Energy and Sustainability teams to audit condition of the buildings and examine options for cost effective improvements to improve their efficiency. Identify external funding sources to facilitate works.
- Explore funding options for the installation of an automated sprinkler system for the bowling green and whether water can be harvested from buildings to operate it.
- In liaison with the Councils Highways team complete the street lighting throughout the Park incorporating the latest LED operating systems to reduce costs and consumption.

4.5 Conservation and Heritage

- The Neighbourhood Services team will invite external conservation bodies such as Northumberland Wildlife Trust and Groundwork North to carry out an environmental audit of Ridley Park. We will encourage the Friends Group and local schools to be involved providing a practical research role in facilitating the project.
- From this study Neighbourhood Services will work with stakeholders, conservation groups and local schools to develop a programme of environmental improvements and nature conservation works in Ridley Park. These groups will be involved in the implementation of the works.
- We will work with the Friends group to identify little used areas in the Park which would be suitable for wildflower planting to enhance those already being developed. NEAT team maintenance regimes will be altered to support these improvements.
- As part of the audit of the horticultural features in Ridley Park we will redesign beds to accommodate insect friendly species such as buddleias, asters and sedums.
- Where arboricultural works are required the Tree teams will leave trunks standing to provide habitat poles for native fauna. We will favour native trees which provide food and shelter opportunities for wildlife.
- Neighbourhood Services will work with stakeholders, local historians and external organisations such as the Woodhorn Archives to develop a Ridley Park history database which will be made available as a public resource. It will provide a useful source for education purposes and to inform the development of interpretation boards and materials for the Park. We will work with the Councils IT team to provide the information online to the public.

4.6 Community Involvement

4.6.1 Friends of Ridley Park and Stakeholder Participation

- Northumberland County Council will continue to support the work of the Friends of Ridley Park by regular attendance at meetings and ensure they are fully consulted in the future development and management of the Park.
- The Neighbourhood Services team will continue to support and work with the Friends group to encourage wider community participation in the management of Ridley Park.
- We will support the work of the group by implementing agreed projects on behalf of the group. Where required we will engage approved external contractors and companies to facilitate works.
- Northumberland County Council will engage with Blyth Town Council to establish a steering group whose aim will be to guide the future development of Ridley Park at a more strategic level. The proposed group will also include officers from Active Northumberland, Leisure and Tourism teams together with external development organisations such as Arch and the Port of Blyth Authority. The group will also include representation from the Friends other groups from the local community.

4.6.3 Education

- Work with Northumberland County Councils Education Services to promote the Park in local schools and educational establishments.
- The Neighbourhood Services team will work with the Friends of Ridley Park to encourage school groups to utilise the facilities for educational purposes and to participate in projects which will further the aims of this management plan.
- We will support the work of the Friends in developing environmental and historical educational opportunities through the development of Park, history and tree trails on the site. This will incorporate the design of interpretational materials and signage in the Park.
- We will work with other government agencies such as the Department of Work and Pensions to find placements and training for the long term unemployed.
- Northumberland County Council will actively support the training of young people in horticulture and associated skills through the Apprentice Scheme which also provides the opportunity for permanent employment with the authority

4.6.5 Further Community Consultation

- The Neighbourhood Services team will utilise Northumberland County Councils consultation system to gather feedback and views about the future development of Ridley Park.
- We will engage with the Peoples Panel which comprises members of the local community to canvas views on the current management of Ridley Park and their thoughts on its future direction. Panel members are volunteers and consultation exercises are carried out through focus groups, workshops, forums and one off surveys.
- Further consultation will be facilitated through the Young People in Northumberland (YPiN) process. This group has been set up by Northumberland County Council to represent the views of younger members of the community and comprises representatives from a number of partner organisations including Connexions, the Youth Cabinet and Positive Futures.

4.7 Marketing

- The Neighbourhood Services team will promote Ridley Park and events through the Council's website and free magazine.
- Produce a promotional pamphlet for the Park for distribution in Council offices and at Council marketing events.
- Ensure that the Parks contact details and information is kept fully up to date on notice boards and in literature.
- Promote the Park more fully in the town with posters and promotional literature in local shops and Council buildings.
- Develop an events programme with the support of the Friends of Ridley Park and organisations such as Active Northumberland and the Play Ranger Service.
- We will retain close links with the local press and utilise the services of the Councils Communications teams to ensure that a high profile is maintained within both the local and regional community.

4.8 Monitoring and Plan Review

- This management plan has been drafted in 2015 and will act as a working document for the development of Ridley Park over the next five years.
- The development and management of the park will be regularly monitored by the Neighbourhood Services team, Friends of Ridley Park and other stakeholders.
- The plan will be reviewed annually to reflect developments and improvements in the Park.
- Monitoring will be achieved through the consultation process with stakeholders together with a regular internal audit of this management plan by the Neighbourhood Services team

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 5.1 Ridley Park Key Roles and Responsibilities

Activities	Staff	Frequency
Supervision of Park Keepers and Neighbourhood Services staff	Senior NEAT Team Leader	Daily
Emptying litter bins throughout Park	Park Keepers and Neighbourhood Services staff	Daily
Litter pick throughout Park including play areas and woodland areas	Park Keepers and Neighbourhood Services staff	Daily
Checks/removal of graffiti	Park Keepers and Neighbourhood Services staff. Tags photographed by Environmental Enforcement Officer for identification. Small amounts removed by Park Keepers, large amounts by NCC Graffiti Removal team.	As required
Fly tipping removal	All fly tipping reported to local Environmental Enforcement Officer for investigation. Small amounts of fly tipping removed by Park Keepers, larger amounts by area NEAT teams.	As required
Dog Fouling Enforcement duties	NCC Public Protection team	As required
Check footpaths and maintenance	Park Keepers and Neighbourhood Services staff. Major repairs carried out by Highways team.	Daily/As required
Inspection of play equipment	Daily inspection by Park Keepers and detailed inspection by Play Area Inspector	Daily/weekly
Play equipment repairs	Play Area Maintenance Operative and external contractors	As required
Operation of the Splash Park	Qualified members of the NEAT staff supported Active Northumberland Team and Green Spaces Officer	Summer
Inspection of Park seats and bins	Park Keepers and Neighbourhood Services staff	Daily
Painting of seats and bins	Friends of Ridley Park supported by NEAT teams	Annually
Grass cutting throughout Park	Park Keepers and Neighbourhood Services staff	10 working days
Bowling green maintenance works	Park Keepers and Neighbourhood Services staff	Twice a week in summer, otherwise as required
Tree Surveys and arboricultural operations	Trees and Woodlands Officer and Arboricultural team	As required – winter works

Activities	Staff	Frequency
Pavilion opening and closing	Friends of Ridley Park	Daily
Toilet cleaning duties	NEAT Team Staff	Daily
Facilities Bookings	Green Spaces Officer South East/Friends of Ridley Park	As required
Coordination of Green Flag Award application	Green Spaces Officer South East	Annually
Liaising with partner agencies and user groups including Friends of Ridley Park	Green Spaces Officer and Countryside and Green Spaces Manager	As required
Event planning and facilitation	Active Northumberland, community groups and partner organisations	As required
Interpretation, promotion and marketing	Green Spaces Officer South East and NCC Communications team	As required
Friends of Ridley Park support	Green Spaces Officer South East and NEAT Team Leader	Monthly
Secure external funding to develop Ridley Park	Countryside and Green Spaces Team supported by user groups	As required
Maintenance and repair of Park buildings	NCC Property Services team	As required
Annual Legionella testing programme	NCC Property Services team	Monthly
Fire equipment inspection	NCC Property Services team	Annually
Pavilion Fire Risk Assessments	Senior NEAT Team Leader	Annually

Useful Contacts

Name	Position	Contact
Terry Garnick	Neighbourhood Services Area Manager	01670 623457
Jimmy Reith	Senior NEAT Team Leader	01670 622058
Steve Johnson	Green Spaces Officer (South East)	01670 620048
Mike Jeffrey	Countryside and Green Spaces Manager	01670 623020
Leon Savage	Trees and Woodlands Officer (South East)	01670 542468
Paul Long	Play Area Maintenance Team	01670 542433
NCC	Property Services Team	01670 534840
NCC	Public Protection Team	01670 534605

Appendix 5.2 Ridley Park Management Plan 2015 – 2019
Summary of Key Objectives and Timelines

TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 - 2020
CONSULTATION							
Development and support for Friends of Ridley Park	NCC Officers, Stakeholders	FORP constituted and self-financing	Complete	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Regular meetings and activities with FORP	FORP	FORP	Complete – meetings now held monthly	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Set up a strategic steering group for the future management of Ridley Park	NCC Officers, Blyth Town Council, Active Northumberland, stakeholders	NCC		X	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Develop plan to introduce a Parks consultation process with stakeholders	Green Spaces Officers NCC Senior Management and Communications team	NCC		X	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES							
Investigate both internal and external funding opportunities to develop Ridley Park	NCC and Active Northumberland Officers FORP Stakeholders	NCC and external funding organisations	X	Ongoing	Ongoing		

BUILDINGS							
Refurbish the splash park plant room and update equipment	NCC Neighbourhood Services and Property Services teams	NCC	X				
Develop a replacement programme for the public toilets in Ridley Park	NCC Neighbourhood Services and Property Services teams. Consultation with FORP and other park users	NCC, Active Northumberland and external funding	X		Estimated completion date		
Establish usage of water and electricity in Park and pavilion	Green Spaces Officer and Energy and Efficiency Team	NCC		X then annually to 2019			

Investigate energy and water reductions options and implement	Green Spaces Officer Climate Change and Sustainability Officer	NCC			X		
Paint exterior features of pavilion and buildings	NEAT Team Staff FORP	NCC, FORP		X		X	
Paint interior features of pavilion	NEAT Team Staff FORP	NCC	X		X		X

INFRASTRUCTURE							
Survey directional signage in and around Park. Implement improvement programme	Neighbourhood Services team/Highways and Tourism teams from NCC	NCC	X	Completion			
Survey path network in Park and develop a programme of improvements	NCC Neighbourhood Services and Highways teams	NCC	Survey works	Implementation – subject to funding	Implementation – subject to funding	Estimated completion date	
Complete the street lighting programme in the Park – introduction of efficient LED columns	NCC Street Lighting teams	Secure funding from existing NCC budgets and Members Improvement schemes		X			
Refurbish the entrance at Park View to develop a gateway feature	NCC Neighbourhood Services in consultation with FORP and local schools to provide design ideas	Seek external funding opportunities	Design works implemented		Estimated completion date		
Install new dog proof fencing around splash park	NCC Neighbourhood Services team	NCC/Active Northumberland budgets	Secure funding		Complete installation		
Paint Park furniture	FORP and other stakeholders	Materials supplied by NCC	X	X	X	X	X
Improve information and interpretive signage within the Park	NCC Officers Graphics Design team FORP				X		
Replace the bust of Lord Ridley in the Park	Neighbourhood Services team, local artists, FORP	Possible FORP and NCC Arts and Culture funding				X	

SOFT LANDSCAPING AND ASSOCIATED WORKS

Establish a green waste recycling facility in the Park	NCC NEAT team staff and Green Spaces Officer	NCC		X			
Introduce recycling bins in the Park	Neighbourhood Services and FORP	FORP		X			
Survey existing horticultural features within the Park and draw plans for redesign and improvements	Green Spaces and NCC Officers Friends Group External landscape design team	NCC/Active Northumberland budgets – investigate external funding opportunities	Survey				
Carry out improvements to horticultural features within the Park	Commissioned landscape contractors NCC staff	As above		Implementation	Implementation	Completion date	
Carry out full tree survey of the Park	NCC Trees and Woodlands Officer	NCC	X		X		X
Implement tree management works from survey	NCC Trees and Woodlands Officer and team	NCC		X		X	

NATURE CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION

Carry out flora and fauna surveys of the Park	Green Spaces Officers NCC Staff Friends Group Local Schools	NCC		X and continuing to 2019			
Develop nature conservation strategy from survey works	Local Conservation Groups Green Spaces Officer	NCC			X		
Develop educational resources for the Park and establish an outdoor classroom facility	Green Spaces Officer, FORP, local schools, research with local historians and Woodhorn Archives	NCC		X	Ongoing	Completion	
Develop wildflower meadowland in Park	Northumberland Wildlife Trust, FORP, NEAT teams to implement	Existing NCC budgets	X	X			
Locate bird boxes and feeding stations in the Park	FORP, local schools, Neighbourhood Services teams	FORP, local businesses and schools	X				

MARKETING AND STRATEGY							
Review the Parks information on the existing NCC website. Redesign site to provide external links, survey forms and feedback opportunities	Green Spaces Officer NCC IT team	NCC		X			
Develop new map for Park and new promotional leaflets and information booklets	Green Spaces Officer Friends Group Graphic Design team Woodhorn Museum	NCC	X	X			
Review management plan and implement layout changes	Green Spaces Officer						X

Appendix 5.3 - Useful Links

Green Flag Award Scheme	http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/
Keep Britain Tidy	http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/
Northumberland County Council Website	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/
Ridley Park Webpage	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=16484
Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=11021
Northumberland County Council Sustainable Community Strategy	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=10150
Northumberland County Council Service Plans	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1451
Northumberland Council Trees and Woodlands Strategy	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=721

Appendix 5.4 – Travel directions to Ridley Park, Blyth

The nearest postal address to Ridley Park is:–

Ridley Park Lodge
Blyth
NE24 3AZ

1. From the **A1** north or south leave at the Seaton Burn roundabout onto the **A19** heading east.
2. Continue east along the **A19** to the Moor Farm roundabout where the **A19** meets the **A189**.
3. Turn second left onto the **A189** heading north.
4. After 1.5 miles leave at the **A1061** exit to the Shankhouse, Cramlington roundabout.
5. Turn right at this roundabout to head east on the **A1061**.
6. Drive straight on at the next roundabout continuing to head east into Blyth.
7. Continue east along the **A1061** until you reach the Blyth roundabout.
8. Take the second exit onto the **B1329** Links Road
9. Continue north along Links Road for around 1 mile to Belgrave Crescent where the car park for Ridley Park is located on the right.

Ridley Park, Blyth
Management Plan

Steve Johnson,
Green Spaces Officer (South East),
Ridley Park
Blyth
Northumberland, NE24 3AZ
Phone 01670 620048
Fax 01670 620041
Steve.Johnson@northumberland.gov.uk

NORTHUMBERLAND
Northumberland County Council

LOVE 
Northumberland
Caring for our county.....

