

Parks and Countryside

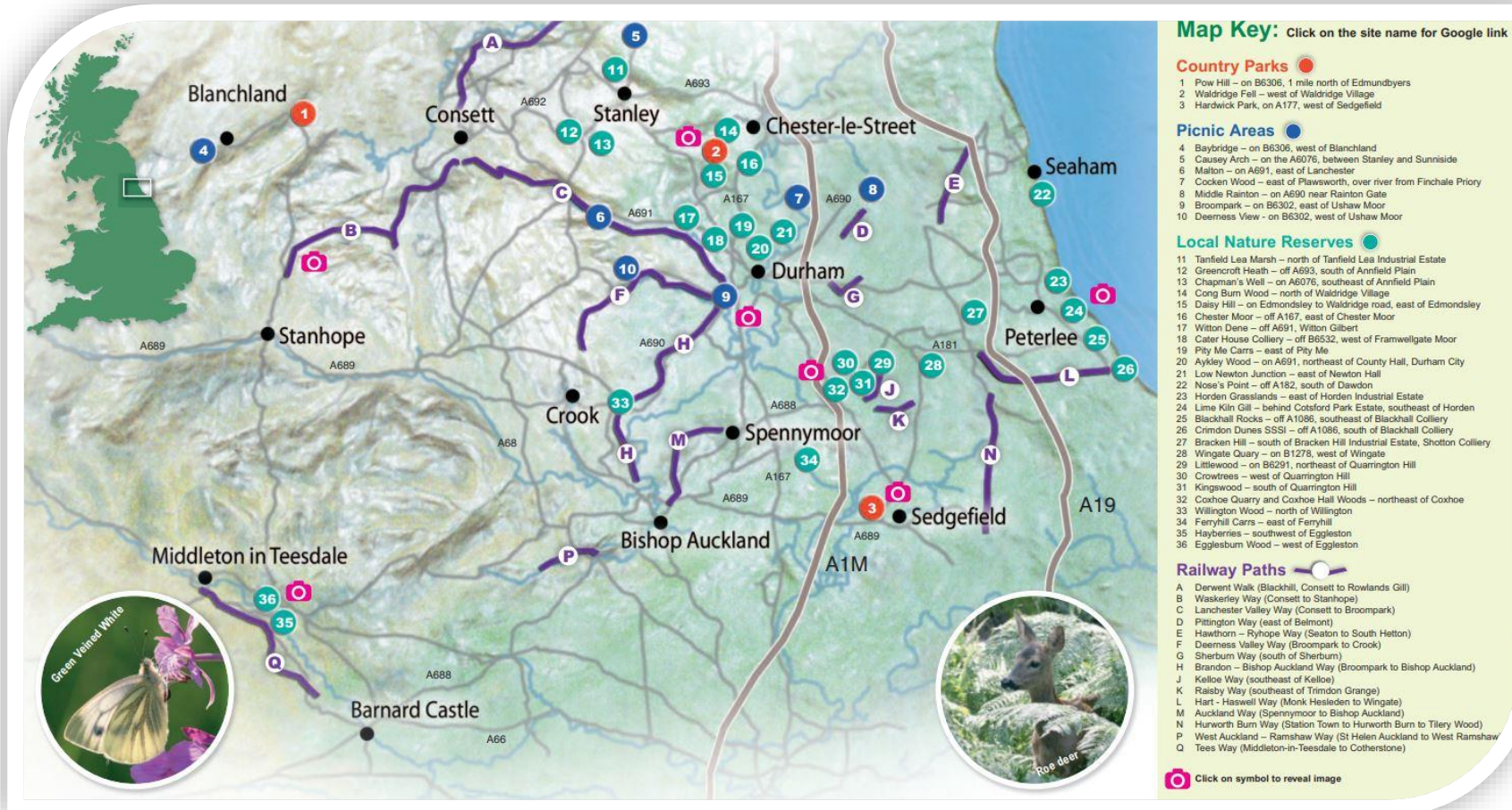


Parks and Countryside Estate

➤ 63 sites (1,300Ha) SSSI, LNR, LWS, picnic areas.

➤ Two major destination parks – Hardwick Park and Wharton Park, including catering outlets. Over 600k visitors annually

➤ 80 miles (120km) of Railway Path network.



Conservation, Biodiversity, and Access

➤ Managing high value nature conservation sites.

- Species rich grasslands – improving
- Ancient Woodlands – monitoring
- Secondary Woodlands - management
- Mosaics – mixtures of grassland/scrub/developing woodlands
- Wetlands – ponds/swamp/fen/reservoir/streams
- Heathland – improving



➤ Improving access to the countryside.

- Developing RP network
- Extra 5 miles of NCN1 Network
- Maintaining routes to encourage appropriate use



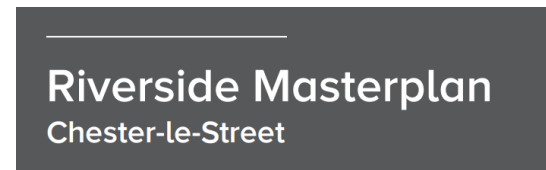
Outdoor Learning, Events, and Community

- Increase in number of volunteers and volunteer hours.
- Schools engagement and specialist learning
 - Further focus on relevant themes.
 - Increased engagement numbers.
 - Support for LNRS.
- Successful community engagement and partnership projects.
- Guided walks programme, health and wellbeing, and informal recreation.
- Site based interpretation projects and digital platforms for public information.



Added Value

- Additional Resource = Additional Funding
- Development Projects
- Partnership Development



Challenges and Opportunities



Challenges:

- Potential loss of temporary staff.
- Budget pressures and effects to site management, revenue budget loss.
- Development ability/capacity.
- Lack of Resource for surveys and monitoring.
- Cost of living impacts.



Opportunities:

- Increased delivery through new investments.
- BNG/NN Working Group
- Continued progress within CERP and EEAP, and LNRS.
- Opportunities through wider initiatives.

Parks Outside of the Countryside estate

- There are a number of parks that are not managed by the Countryside team, and instead fall under the management of clean and green. These include (but are not limited to):
 - Chester-le-Street Riverside Park (under the authority of Leisure, but maintained by C&G)
 - Consett and Blackhill Park
 - Annfield Plain Park
 - Allensford Park
 - Bishop Auckland Town Rec



Parks Outside of the Countryside estate



- These parks exist and are maintained for public amenity, providing a public health benefit to the communities.
- There are currently no plans to change the management of these parks, as they are well used green spaces specifically designated for recreation.
- However, most if not all of these parks, already have 'wild areas'.
 - Riverside park has an extensive woodland a riverbank walk
 - Annfield plain has wild woodland
 - Consett and Blackhill Park has a woodland area

Clean and Green Open Space Management for Biodiversity

- **Moving toward a biodiverse approach**
 - Increasing spaces which are allowed to 'grow wild'
 - Trialing rich grass mix meadows to promote pollinators and habitats for small mammals
 - Development of a rewilding strategy to link meadow sites to national biodiversity mapping such as Bug Life's 'Bee lines' – Draft expected in Spring
 - The strategy will dovetail with the LNRS and BNG when they are fully developed, and so is unlikely to be fully finalized until they are more developed.



Clean and Green Open Space Management for Biodiversity

- **Use of Herbicides in public spaces**

- Use of Glyphosate is still widespread across the county and is the current primary herbicide. Whilst Many studies show it is safe for long term use, there is a growing concern around its use.
- C&G have undertaken trials and examined other UK trials and determined that currently there is viable alternative to glyphosate for use in the public realm.
- C&G also trailed ceasing all herbicide use on green spaces – allowing natural species to grow around trees, beside hedges and other peripheral locations around green spaces (does not extend to all open spaces). This has lead to no complaints and has promising results, however, the trial has been extended for a year to fully understand its efficacy.



Any Questions?

