

Environmental Maintenance Standards.



Date: March 2019



North Tyneside Council

Introduction

Our aim as a Council, is to ensure the borough has a pleasingly aesthetic and tidy appearance, providing a safe environment for the public.

Floral displays, shrub planting, biodiversity, cut grass, healthy trees and a litter and graffiti free environment can make a positive impact to the image of the borough.

It is important that our environment is managed to the highest standard possible. This document sets out how we will do this.

Floral Displays

There are a variety of floral displays throughout the borough including planted beds, floral containers and barrier planting.

Spring bedding displays:

- Planting (of 104,000 bedding plants) commences in October
- Plants start to be removed the following May
- In terms of maintenance we carry out: weeding, litter removal, deadheading, watering (as necessary)

Summer bedding displays:

- Planting (of 115,000 bedding plants) commences in June
- Plants start to be removed the following September
- In terms of maintenance we carry out: weeding, litter removal, deadheading, watering (as necessary)

Floral containers and barrier plants:

- We will site floral planters at strategic locations across the borough:
 - 198 floral containers
 - 136 barrier planter liners

Bulb areas (when not considered a biodiversity area):

- Cut down in July, arisings are left and included in mowing programme from August

Grass cutting

Across North Tyneside there is approximately 13.5 million square metres of grass, which includes open spaces, highway verges, cricket fields, sports pitches and bowling greens.

Due to climatic influences, grass is cut from March to October with the option to extend into early November if required. The main growing season for grass falls within the months of April, May, June and July. The rate at which grass grows depends on many factors, such as rainfall, sunshine and soil quality:

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- Grass cutting will be carried out in a safe and professional manner.
- Prior to all grass being cut, it will be cleared of litter and other debris
- The collection of grass cuttings is carried out based upon priority, for example older peoples bungalows and sheltered accommodations
- Grass cuttings are not removed from any other area. To collect all cuttings throughout the borough would be extremely labour intensive and increase the cost of grass cutting five fold
- When excessive quantities of grass cuttings are left on hard surfaces they will be blown back onto grass areas
- Grass cutting will cease during periods when the ground conditions are too wet, to prevent any damage occurring. Operations will recommence as conditions permit
- Local Authority's have a statutory obligation to consider wild flora, fauna and wildlife habitat when planning our maintenance operations. Therefore we have identified areas of bio-diversity importance. These areas will be maintained in accordance with the guidance set out in the North Tyneside 'Bio-diversity Action Plan'. This document contains a suite of plans with objectives and targets in order to help protect important species and habitats

There are different grass standards applied depending on the location and purpose of the grassed area:

Sports pitches:

- Up to 21 cuts (weather dependent)
- Average of every 14 days

Bowling / Golf Greens / Cricket Squares:

- 2 cuts per week
- Cut from 3rd week of April – 1st week of September

Parks, open spaces and amenity grass:

- An average of 13 cuts (weather dependent)
- Average of every 20 days

Biodiversity areas:

- 1 cut per year in October

Back up strimming:

- 1 per year

Weed spraying around obstacles:

- 1 per year between April and May

Edging of grass:

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- Every 4 years, October - March

Hedges and Shrubs

Shrub bed maintenance:

- Pruning once per year
- Weeds are removed once per year
- Shrub areas are treated with herbicide once per year
- Mulched with recycled chipped arisings once per year

Some shrub areas will be reviewed to consider alternative maintenance e.g. replanted with more sustainable planting, removal and grassed over.

Hedges:

- 1 cut per year

Shrubs and hedges will be faced off more regularly if there is a need for the health and safety of the public. Maintenance of hedges and shrubs takes place between October and February outside of bird nesting season which is March to August.

Weed spraying in the street environment

The Department for Environment, Food and rural Affairs Weed Level Scale Criteria is used to set the standards of weed control on pavements. Our aim is to treat weeds before reaching level 4 or above. (Refer to appendix 1).

- 3 rounds of treatments are planned each year
- There is an option to carry out a fourth treatment, when considered to be appropriate.

Trees

North Tyneside Council recognises the importance of trees in making the borough a great place to live, work and visit. The benefits are enjoyed not only by today's residents, but future generations.

For every referred tree, an assessment will be carried out by the Arboricultural Officer to determine whether any remedial works are required.

Pruning to council owned trees will be carried out:

- Where branches or twigs cause obstruction to a public highway and public right-of-way or footpath
- If the Arboricultural Officer considers a tree to present a threat to the public or property
- Where trees are causing legally actionable nuisance to an adjoining property e.g. Trees that are physically in contact with buildings or roofs
- Where roots are causing disruption to pavements and kerbs. In such cases this would be referred to the Council's Highway Department for advice
- Parts of trees preventing repairs or maintenance of property
- Trees obstructing signage or obscuring essential sightlines on the highway
- Trees interfering with street lighting

- Where unapproved rope swings are installed, the swing will be removed for reasons of safety, and pruning works may be carried out to prevent reinstallation of the swing
- Where the loss of light is having a significant impact upon a resident, for example if they are house bound

The following reasons will not constitute grounds for pruning healthy trees:

- Interference with satellite dish TV reception
- To enable installation or maintenance of solar panels.
- The tree is perceived to be too large
- The obstruction of non-strategic views. (Strategic views are identified in site specific management plans)
- Issues caused by insects or birds
- Problems associated with fruit / pollen / leaf fall

Tree removal will only be considered when a tree is:

- Dead, dying or diseased (account of the individual species will be taken into consideration e.g. Oak, which has significant amounts of natural deadwood)
- The Arboricultural Officer considers the tree to be a danger to public safety
- A major contributor to serious structural damage to main buildings or infrastructure
- In an area designated for development or redevelopment

The tree team will return to do further remedial work after 4 years has elapsed from a previous visit.

Where a tree or group of trees make significant visual impact on their local surroundings, the council can declare a Tree Preservation Order. This is not only intended to prevent their unauthorized removal, but also to allow control of their maintenance and replacement. It is important to note consent is required prior to any works taking place on the tree(s).

Cleansing Standards

The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse explains how clean an area or zone should be after cleaning and how quickly you can expect an area to be restored to a Grade A if it should fall below the acceptable standard.

Local Authorities are assessed nationally by the amount of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting. The dirtier and densely populated areas are cleaned by allocating dedicated resources and an overall cleansing framework (e.g. twin shift teams operating in town centre locations from 6am until 10pm).

Standards are as follows:

- Primary retail areas with high intensity of use – swept and bins emptied daily
- Secondary retail areas with medium intensity of use – swept and bins emptied three times weekly
- Housing areas located within secondary or primary retail areas – bins emptied/swept weekly

- Low intensity housing areas – bins emptied/swept fortnightly (areas subject to low or infrequent levels of pedestrian and vehicular activity)

Litter/Dog Waste Bins

- There are approximately 2250 litter and dog bins sited across the borough
- We aim to empty litter and dog waste bins at a frequency that prevents them from overflowing
- Reports of overflowing bins are responded to within 1 working day

Leaf and Blossom Fall

Leaf fall and blossom are removed as part of our regular street-cleansing regime. We will wherever appropriate, redirect staff from various sweeping programmes to deal with areas that are affected by leaf fall as priorities dictate.

High priority areas include routes around schools and older people accommodations.

Graffiti Removal

- Our policy is to remove graffiti within 3 working days of being reported from council and private property
- Private property owners are required to sign a disclaimer
- Offensive and racial material removed within 1 hour or as soon as practicable

Fly Tipping

- Our policy is to remove fly tipping within 1 working day

Removal of Spillage's, Dead Animals and Drug Related Litter

- Assist with the removal of glass and debris from road traffic accidents or oil spillage, usually in response to a call for assistance from the Police or Fire Brigade as soon as practicable
- Removal of dead animals from the public highway within 1 working day. Details are recorded and owners notified where they can be traced
- Removal of drug paraphernalia within 1 working day

Education and Campaigns

We currently deliver a number of educational campaigns, as part of a proactive approach towards keeping our streets clean including:

- Waldo Youth Education Campaign - aimed to persuade and educate students to sign up to "Waldo the Warden Dog Pledges" in keeping their environment clean and litter free
- Love your Street
- Autumn Campaign
- High School Presentations – carried out in high schools, focusing on the detrimental effect litter can have on the environment and the laws associated with dropping litter

Enforcement

- We will issue on the spot £50.00 fixed penalty notices to people who drop litter or for dog fouling offences. We will actively seek public awareness through our publicity and our zero tolerance approach by prosecuting repeated offenders

Community working

Many residents and friends of groups assist in the management of their local area. Where possible, we will continue to engage and work with residents, volunteers, 'friends of groups' and partners to improve local environments. This will include maintaining trees, plants, litter and spaces across the borough. Community led long term management plans will be developed to assist with this process.

How to get involved

To find out more about our environmental standards or if you want to arrange a community event to improve your environment please contact us at Envirolink on telephone number 0345 2000 103.

Appendix 1 – Weed level scale - Taken from DEFRA’s Best practice Guidance Notes for Integrated and Non-chemical Amenity Hard Surface Control

Weed Level Scale criteria for Slabs (see examples below)

Score each criterion separately and add together to determine the overall score and weed level.

Slab - within pavement rule; >20 cm length within pavement area, >30 cm height, downgrade by 1 classification (i.e. add 3 points to total score).

Criteria			Score	Level	Description
Height (mm)	Weed diameter or length (mm)	Joint coverage (%)			
<10	<50	<10	<3	1	No noticeable weeds
10-50	50-100	0-20	4-6	2	Occasional small weeds
50-100	100-150	20-30	7-9	3	Patchy weed growth with some flowering weeds
100-150	150-200	30-40	10-12	4	Numerous weeds, many flowering, view annoys or irritates public
150-200	200-300	40-50	13-15	5	
>200	>300	>50	16-18	6	

In this example green is acceptable, yellow indicates that action is required, red is unacceptable. Levels of acceptability and unacceptability will differ depending on local circumstances.



Weediness Scale for slabs

		Level 3
		Level 4
		Level 5
		Level 6

Weed Level Scale criteria for asphalt (see examples below)
 Score each criterion separately and add together to determine the overall score and weed level.

Criteria		Score	Level	Description
Height (mm)	Weed diameter or length (mm)			
<10	<50	2	1	No noticeable weeds
10-75	50-100	3-4	2	Occasional small weeds
75-150	100-150	5-6	3	Patchy weed growth with some flowering weeds
150-200	150-200	7-8	4	Numerous weeds, many flowering, view annoys or irritates public
200=300	200-300	9-10	5	Numerous large weeds, risk to slip or trip
>300	>300	11-12	6	Numerous large weeds, many tall and flowering, causing obstruction

In this example green is acceptable, yellow indicates that action is required, red is unacceptable. Levels of acceptability and unacceptability will differ depending on local circumstances



Weediness Scale for asphalt

		Level 3
		Level 4
		Level 5
		Level 6