

**Hello, and welcome to our second Green Sefton newsletter of 2020. Spring is fast approaching and we hope you are looking forward to the chance to get out and about with us in Green Sefton.**

We hope you enjoy reading about this month's focussed service area, our **Land Management Team**, and would be happy to get comments for future editions...

**Mark Shaw**  
**Service Manager – Green Sefton**



## Green Sefton - Land Management Team

**Maintenance Team** – day to day grounds maintenance of: parks & greenspaces, golf courses, sports facilities (football, rugby, bowls), litter, bins and cleansing, horticultural (shrubs, roses & seasonal planting) hands on and logistical support for Friends of Groups and volunteers. All led by Stephen Howe

**Countryside Team** – managing and maintaining our coastal sites, beaches, and designated nature reserves for habitat and species conservation, beach car parking (seasonal), beach safety, coastal partnerships, hands on and logistical support for Friends of Groups and volunteers. All led by Gordon White



**The Land Management Team aims to optimise the use of the available human and natural resources in pursuit of quality maintenance, the safe use of, and the ongoing development and improvement of all the parks, nature reserves, golf courses, beaches and other land under the care of Green Sefton:**

## **Maintenance in Green Sefton**

Grounds maintenance in Sefton is a huge undertaking with over 6,500ha of land that requires varying degrees of care, from intensive fine turf maintenance on our golf courses through to sensitive, habitat improvement and conservation work on our Local Nature Reserves & SSSI's (Site of Special Scientific Interest)

Works are undertaken by our core Land Management Team of 39 supported by additional seasonal staff (5 in the Winter & 28 in the Summer)

The Land Management Team have supported the development of the Green Sefton service plan, outlining 46 key work streams that are required to deliver our objectives and to contribute towards the Council's 2030 vision.

All maintenance tasks undertaken are recorded on site inspection record sheets. These provide an essential record of work tasks completed, which help us to evidence our progress and outputs, and to better understand how we can optimise our limited resources.

## **Winter works – Grounds Maintenance**

Winter works are normally carried out once the grass cutting season has finished. Although weather dependant, this is normally between mid-November and mid-March when we will gear up for the following season's core maintenance.

Although we aim to tidy each site, priority is given to areas that are more in focus, either through concerns raised by external bodies (police, councillors etc.) or parks & open spaces that are considered high profile. The main body of work is often shrub reduction that improve sight lines at main entrances and in areas we are aware that ASB (anti-social behaviour) occurs. We work closely with our Communities Team and offer support to the Friends of Groups during their volunteering sessions. Sites that have been highlighted this Winter include Derby Park in Bootle, Victoria & Moorside Park in Crosby, Kings Gardens, Hesketh Park & Bedford Park in Southport.

We also consider extra works to help other council teams (e.g. Tourism) or external customers (e.g. schools & wellbeing centres). This year has seen an increase in external requests which will be essential in building a commercial wing of the Land Management Team. Examples of these works are behind Matalan & Dunelm in Southport, Christ the King High School, also in Southport, and Greenacre Nursery in Bootle.

We also have ongoing core grounds maintenance works to do throughout Winter; leaf & litter clearance, and those that are related to our sports pitches (football & rugby pitch marking and repairs, and bowling green renovations)



## Winter Works – HLS Funded (Higher Level Stewardship)

Higher Level Stewardship is an external fund that enables Green Sefton to carry out essential habitat improvement work that Sefton Council is obligated to do in the protected landscapes of the Sefton Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Some areas of the SSSI are in worse condition than others and these are the areas where we concentrate the efforts of a small team of skilled staff (funded through the HLS scheme) to help conserve important species like Sand Lizards and Natterjack Toads.

Assisted by core Ranger staff from the Land Management Team, these are the small team of five people this winter, that you may have seen out in all weathers along the Coast Road with chain saws and brush cutters, selectively clearing areas of undergrowth and scrub on the important sand dune habitats.

Having spent the first half of the Winter working on Falklands Way in Ainsdale, after Christmas, the team moved onto Birkdale Local Nature Reserve at several locations where conservation and habitat improvements will be made. This will involve removing invasive species such as Sea Buckthorn and Grey Willow from the low lying areas or slacks amongst the sand dunes.

The HLS funding expires after next winter (2020-21) and at present there is no substitute for it. When it becomes clearer, we will submit an application for further funds to continue the essential work that we have been able to do during the last 9 years at those areas that are in the most demanding condition in terms of the quality of their environment.



**Natterjack Toad**

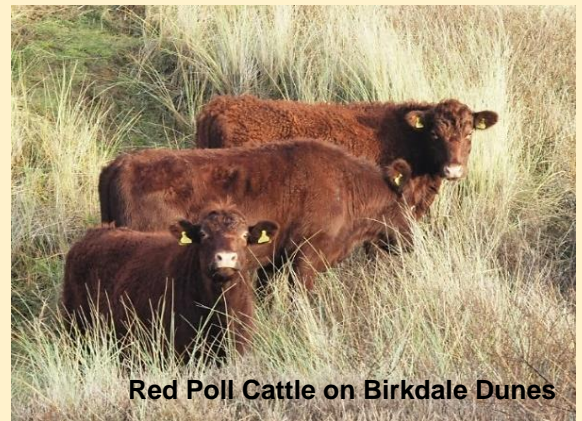
**Sand Lizard**



Further support for improving the important habitats comes from conservation volunteers like the Buckthorn Bashers and the Sefton Wood Allotment Association. These groups of volunteers work for us in sensitive habitat locations and make an excellent contribution to improving the environmental quality of the protected landscapes within the Sefton Coast SSSI, by removing biomass in line with the conservation objectives set out for the SSSI by central government.

## Grazing Animals

The HLS funds also help us to host the grazing animals that we use on the dune habitats and Ainsdale and Birkdale Local Nature Reserves. We have three separate grazing enclosures, one holds 25 Herdwick sheep – these are hardy sheep that are brought to the coast for the winter from the Cumbrian fells and are part of a much larger flock that grazes Natural England's National Nature Reserve next door. The other two enclosures both have Redpoll cattle that are part of a herd based in Cheshire.



**Red Poll Cattle on Birkdale Dunes**

During checks on animal welfare over the Christmas holidays, we discovered that one of the Redpoll cattle had died. We have had sheep die whilst grazing on our land before but this was the first time a cow had passed away. As it was just one individual, it did not suggest any wider illness that might have affected the rest of the animals within the group. Arrangements were made with Rangers from the Land Management Team to remove the carcass, which in itself was quite a challenge due to the isolated location and rough ground conditions.



## **Sports Turf and Pitches**

We have a small team of six who (on top of other core duties) are responsible for our sports maintenance;



## **Football**

The Land Management Team continues to maintain sports pitches throughout the borough, and works closely with league representatives and individual clubs with their requirements.

During the season the team maintain 62 adult/junior football pitches facilitating up to 124 fixtures per week - an amazing 4,216 games per year! Not bad considering the Premier league only manage 760...

Football is borough wide, and caters for a number of teams and leagues playing at large sites such as Buckley Hill, Deansgate Lane and Meols Park, to smaller sites such as Duke St Park, Smithy Green, Portland St etc. We are also responsible for the pitches at Litherland Sports Park and Netherton Activity Centre for Sefton's Sport & Rec. team.

## **Bowls**

We maintain 7 bowling greens throughout the borough; Botanic Gardens (x2), Duke St Park, Derby Park, Coronation Park and Hatton Hill Park (x2).

We also offer support to Kings Gardens and Sandbrook Rd bowls clubs when requested.

Bowls maintenance is paid for exclusively by the clubs to either Gold, Silver or Bronze standard. Most clubs opt for Silver standard with occasional additional works depending upon their requirements.

In addition to these, we maintain the rugby pitches at Waterloo Rd, baseball at Bootle stadium, and athletics at the LSP.

## **Golf**

We have a small team of 6 who are responsible for the Greenkeeping and grounds maintenance of our 2 municipal golf courses.

We are pleased to announce that John Peterson has been appointed as our new Assistant Head Greenkeeper, operating between Bootle and Southport Golf Courses. John has come from a sports turf background and will not only be a welcome addition to the Greenkeeping team, but also to the wider Land Management Team..

Both golf courses continue to be maintained to a high standard within the resources available, which is a credit to the greenkeepers and artisan volunteers.



Golfers enjoying a competition at Bootle Golf Course

## **Recruitment**

*'Seasonal staffing increases the core workforce in the Land Management Team by 46% each summer'*

### **Seasonal staff 2020**

We are now ramping up our efforts in relation to recruiting the 2020 tranche of summer seasonal staff. Adverts went out in mid January and by the time this newsletter is available, we will have done the shortlisting and be close to the interviews/gathering references phase, so that we are able to get people into their summer roles for the 1<sup>st</sup> April. Anyone who might be interested in working for Green Sefton should keep a close eye on Sefton's vacancies page at [Sefton MBC Vacancies page](#) for further information.

The summer seasonal staff are essential to the teams as they provide support when our sites are busiest: for site presentation, grass cutting, collecting litter and emptying litter bins and also collecting income from the beach car parks. As we all know, the coast can get extremely busy whenever the weather is good. This does not only apply to the summer but also to the Spring, sometimes right through to October and also at winter holiday times like Christmas, Easter and half terms.

### **Apprenticeships**

The Green Sefton Land Management Team has been able to support four apprentices since Green Sefton's inception. One of our first apprentices, Joe Kennedy, has progressed into a full time job with us as a tractor driver working throughout the borough on parks, sports pitches and other areas of amenity grassland, like those at Crosby Coastal Park. After Joe was appointed to his new job, we recruited another apprentice, Mark Purcell, onto the scheme. He starts to study for a Level 2 qualification in Horticulture with support from ourselves and Myerscough College, and alongside the other two apprentices – Craig Halsall and Dave Bartlett.

A new round of apprentices are soon to be appointed to the Land Management Team's operations across all the work areas.

They will spend time and gain experiences with the coast teams, the green keepers at the golf courses and the parks grounds maintenance teams. Again if you know anyone who might be interested in these Apprenticeships, please ask them to keep an eye open on the Council's vacancies page at [Sefton MBC Vacancies page](#) for further information.

### **Pathway work experience**

The Land Management Team took on a Pathway Placement during the early part of winter 2019. This was a short placement, but one with a lot of promise. The young placement worked really well with all the teams. He spent time with the HLS Ranger team and at Ainsdale Discovery Centre as well as with the Ranger team for Hightown, Crosby and Rimrose Valley. The experience that he gained by spending time with us has helped him to gain confidence and expand his skills so that he can look forward to future successes in the world of employment.

We are pleased to announce that the next phase of this programme will see another 6 placements joining the Land Management Team in the spring which has been coordinated to coincide with the seasonal staffing recruitment. It is hoped that a number of these placements may go on to become future team members.

The placements will be across the Borough working from Hesketh Park, Ainsdale Discovery Centre and Cambridge Road and will work alongside the core maintenance team and apprentices on a range of basic maintenance duties.

We are delighted that one of our full time members of staff (who has worked through from being a volunteer, to seasonal employee, to apprenticeship and now full time member of staff), will be acting as a mentor providing valuable insights into his experiences.

## Projects

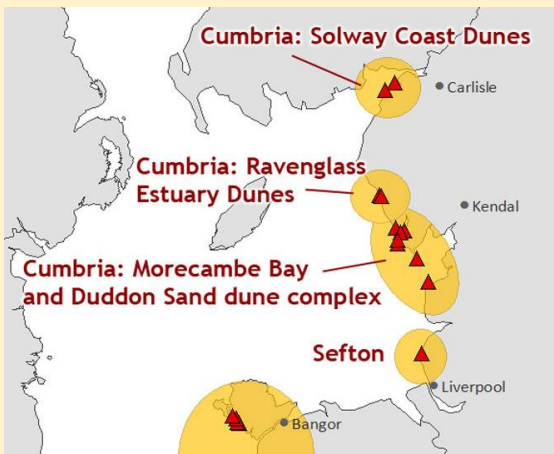
### ECP – England Coast Path

The England Coast Path is a new national trail being created by Natural England. For the first time people will have the right of access around all our open coast both along the England Coast Path, and usually, over the associated 'coastal margin'.

Green Sefton's Land Management Team are working in close partnership with Natural England and other departments of Sefton Council to deliver the infrastructure of the England Coast Path in Sefton, the only Authority in the UK to do so!. We hope that this will involve being able to act like a contractor to prepare and install all the way markers and fingerposts associated with the path throughout the Borough. We are well placed to do this with our workshop at Ainsdale, our Apprentices and also the Natural Alternatives team based at Ainsdale.

### Dynamic Dunescapes

Dynamic Dunescapes is a fantastic new project to restore sand dunes across England and Wales for the benefit of people, communities and wildlife. The Dynamic Dunescapes project is big and ambitious – targeting some of the most important sand dune systems across England and Wales, including the Sefton Coast. The project will work with schools and local groups, volunteers and visitors of all ages and abilities to create more bare sand which will breathe life into the dunes and allow the threatened wildlife to flourish.



Dynamic Dunescapes key project locations - NW

The project aims to:

- Restore sand dunes by carrying out pioneering conservation actions to create areas of remobilised open sand and to remove invasive non-native species like Japanese Rose and Sea Buckthorn
- Raise awareness that healthy dunes need moving sand
- Encourage more people to explore, enjoy, and help protect the dunes through a programme of innovative public engagement and citizen science events and activities
- Develop skills to manage dunes better, both now and in the future



Dynamic Dunescapes will launch in 2020 and there will be plenty of opportunities to be involved so you can help bring our sand dunes back to health. Follow them on Twitter or sign up to their mailing list to keep updated on progress. There is lots more information at [Dynamic Dunescapes](#)





## Site Inspection and Monitoring

Monitoring has always been an integral part of Land Management.

We do not have the capacity to return to how we monitored previously, the intention is to site visit a number of parks every other month. Any concerns resulting from these visits are then forwarded to the respective teams, and work requests issued. At the same time, a basic scoring method is used, and quality can be gauged from this. This will also help with any claim mitigation that is presented to us, as it would also detail any notable defects to non-Land Management Team work areas.

Parks identified at present to be monitored are those higher profile/ most visited sites across the borough:

- Southport - Botanic Gardens, Hesketh Park, Lord St Gardens, Kings Gardens and Promenade, Crossens Community Park, Bedford Park and Ainsdale Village Park
- Formby – Duke St Park and Deansgate Lane
- Crosby & Waterloo – Moorside Park, Victoria Park, Coronation Park, Seafront Gardens and Potters Barn
- Litherland, Seaforth and Netherton – Hatton Hill Park, Marian Gardens and Bowersdale Park
- Bootle – Derby Park, North Park & South Park

In addition to this, we will continue to monitor sites as and when possible, as well as responding to specific issues raised.

The coastal teams have adopted a similar task / site inspection recording systems used by the grounds maintenance teams, generating very useful monitoring data about what, how and where our teams carry out their work.



## Incident reporting

In 2019, the coast teams within the Land Management section of Green Sefton recorded over 750 incidents. From fly tipping to missing persons, medical incidents and wildlife disturbance, visitors giving abuse to staff, other antisocial behaviour and fires, to name just a few of the categories. We are expanding the incident reporting system to include the wider green spaces throughout the borough during 2020. Incident reports are not only used to record unfortunate events, accidents or other occasions that might be described as negative, they also record important positive events, for example: helping to talk someone out of committing suicide, reuniting people with lost children or dogs, or other lost property like keys and phones.



## Health & Safety

In 2019, Green Sefton recorded over 250 separate actions relating to health and safety. The entries in this task record are many and varied and include: writing and reviewing risk assessments, developing incident reporting procedures, undertaking training and coaching for staff or volunteers, carrying out urgent repairs as preventative actions, recording first aid training, auditing, altering systems of work and communicating changes to staff.

In November 2019, several Rangers in the Land Management Team attended training sessions on carrying out risk assessments for work and projects that they are involved with. As a result of this, these key staff have been contributing to reviewing the on file risk assessments that we hold for all our generic tasks and work activities. In addition, two members of the LMT management team also successfully completed the Institute of Safety and Occupational Health training course 'Managing Safely'.

### Next LMT Edition.....

Update on core work activity  
Cemeteries Insourcing  
Beach car parking 2020  
Recruitment update



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