

Clermiston Park

Improvement Plan 2020/21



Produced by the Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust

On behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council



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1.0 Site Summary

Site Name:	Clermiston Park
Site Address:	Clermiston Drive, Edinburgh, EH4 7PT
Grid Reference:	NT 197745
Size:	6 hectares (14.8 acres)
Owner:	City of Edinburgh Council

2.0 Site Description

2.1 Introduction

Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT) working in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC), have developed a new Improvement Plan for Clermiston Park, located in Edinburgh. This Plan covers the current state of the site and its aims and objectives over a two-year period, from 2020 to 2022.

The park is in a residential area and has public roads on all sides. It is bordered by several copses and individual trees with sports facilities, a pavilion and playground in the centre. Through the aims and objectives set out within this Plan, Clermiston Park is to improve its biodiversity, facilities and community engagement.

This Improvement Plan aims to:

- Determine what actions are required to meet agreed aims and objectives.
- Give focus and direction to the improvement of Clermiston Park and enable funding and resources to be allocated.
- Provide opportunities for people to be involved in the development of their local green space.

2.2 Geography and Landscape

Clermiston Park is in the north west of Edinburgh with an urban landscape in the immediate surrounding area. Further west consists mainly of fields and farms and to the north are some golf courses.

The park is within easy walking distance of several other woodland and greenspace sites. Drumbrae Park is located 250m to the west and Davidson's Mains Park is 1km to the north east. Both these sites provide open areas of amenity grassland and include woodlands planted as part of the Millennium Woods Project. In addition, the larger and more mature woodland plantation at Corstorphine Hill and Hillwood Park is 1.5km to the east.

The site is in a residential area and has public roads on all sides. Clermiston Drive forms the western boundary, Clermiston Gardens marks the eastern boundary and Drumbrae Drive is at the southern edge of the park with Rannoch Terrace at the southern boundary.

The main section of the park is to the north of Drumbrae Drive and covers one continuous area of amenity grassland with individual trees and 11 copses around its border. The site is visible from the surrounding public roads and from the surrounding residential housing. It is one of the highest parks

in Edinburgh, sloping downwards from east to west and on the eastern side of the park there are views of the West Lothian Bings.

2.3 History

In the 1930s the park did not exist; it was arable land surrounded by woodland, meadowland, permanent grassland, new housing and allotments. This was subsequently urbanised with Clermiston Park being acquired for the city in 1956 as a recreational area.

2.4 Habitats and Wildlife

2.4.1 Grassland

The main area of grassland is amenity cut and used for recreation. There are some very narrow borders of long grass surrounding the copses which provide an opportunity for other types of grass species and plants to grow such as rosebay willowherb and daisies. These areas provide habitat and food for invertebrates, small mammals, birds and amphibians.

In the late summer of 2019, small areas behind three of the benches were planted with wildflowers including red campion, foxglove, primrose, selfheal and bugle, which were donated by Buglife and the John Muir Trust. Their success will be determined in spring 2020, but unfortunately, they have suffered trampling from dogs and children.

2.4.2 Trees and Scrub

The trees in the park are generally in good condition and well established. The path coming diagonally across the park in the northern tip is lined with individual trees and include species such as oak, copper beech, cherry and Norway maple. The park also has individual trees planted around the periphery including cherry, hawthorn and whitebeam. There are large gaps between some of the trees along the periphery which suggests some did not survive and need replacing.

There are also 11 copses containing a variety of tree species such as silver birch, oak, beech, ash, wild cherry, hazel, rowan and scots pine. In previous years, some crown lifting and thinning as well as scrub clearance has taken place. In 2016, snowdrops and bluebells were planted in some of the copses and in February 2020 tete a tete and snowdrops were seen in the copse opposite the Drumbrae Library.

Presently, most of the copses' field layer is dominated by scrub, which although provides important habitat for wildlife, is outcompeting other plants.

2.4.3 Hedgerow

There is a hedgerow along part of the eastern side of the park which starts just after the diagonal path linking Clermiston Drive and Clermiston Gardens. Species in the hedgerow include dog rose, maple and cotoneaster. This provides important habitat for birds and invertebrates; however, a wider variety of hedge species would create more diversity and increase biodiversity.

2.4.4 Wildlife

Birds such as long tailed tits and goldfinch frequent the area and rarer species (with a UK conservation status of red) such as redwing and mistle thrush, have also been sighted.

A range of butterflies such as small tortoiseshell, orange-tip and comma can be seen in the area and the wool carder bee, which is on the Scottish Biodiversity List, has also been seen.

Small mammals such as the western European hedgehog and wood mouse along with amphibians such as the common toad and frog are also found in the area.

2.4.5 Non-Native Invasive Species

Himalayan Balsam, although not currently sited in Clermiston Park, has been recorded in the area. It is easily spread and out-competes native species in ecologically sensitive areas, particularly riverbanks. Where it grows in dense stands along riverbanks it can impede flow at times of high rainfall, increasing the likelihood of flooding. Die back of extensive stands over winter can leave riverbanks bare and exposed to erosion.

Himalayan balsam is listed under Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow any plant in the wild outwith its native range.

2.5 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure

The park has unrestricted access from the surrounding streets with parking available at the roadside. It is used as a short cut, for dog walking, playing football and informal children's play and recreation.

A path leads across the north eastern corner of the park linking Clermiston Drive and Clermiston Gardens. There is no formal path through the southern end of the park, the widest and most used area of the park, linking to bus stops, the Drumbrae Library, the play area and surrounding streets.

There are a range of facilities well used by the community including seven a side and 11 a side football pitches in the southern area, and in the centre/northern area of the park; a pavilion, basketball court, playground and netball/basketball hoops. The netball/basketball hoops are residual, left from a previous grass court and may no longer be necessary.

The eastern side of the park is lined with a fence and hedgerow with a gated entrance in the centre. There is a surfaced footpath from the gated entrance leading to the pavilion and playground providing wheelchair and pram access.

The park has places to rest, relax and socialise mainly in the south eastern side, with five benches and one picnic table. There are also six bins located around the park to discourage littering.

To welcome and inform visitors there are two noticeboards on the east and south and two welcome signs on the north and west of the park.

2.6 Community and Events

Currently, the park is not used by the community as much as it could be. There has been some engagement from the local community expressing an interest in the park, but they have stated improvements are needed.

The sports facilities are occasionally used by young people after school, but it is mainly the football pitches which are used by the local Community Sports Club - Hutchison Vale. There are youth groups at The Drumbrae Library Hub who occasionally use the park too, but who would benefit from park improvements and more events tailored to their age group.

Anti-social behaviour also occurs which may be partly due to a lack of facilities and activities for children and teenagers in the surrounding area.

In an attempt to remedy this and engage the community and surrounding schools, events and activities were carried out as part of a project led by ELGT. These included: A free bush craft session and bat walk; school sessions which included bulb planting, shelter building, tree and leaf identification and environmental art; two Continual Personal Development (CPD) sessions with teachers which included woodland activities / forest schools; three Pilton Equality Project (PEP) sessions which included woodland management such as crown lifting and thinning and litter clearance.

Although well promoted, it proved difficult to engage the community and schools with these events with only one out of five schools attending and some events having to be cancelled due to a lack of attendance. More work is needed to encourage community involvement in the park and attendance at future events.

2.7 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

Clermiston Park is within a residential area that ranks among the highest 40% in the country on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation rankings. The surrounding areas rank in the highest 20-30% with the area to the south in the highest 10-20%. This means that the level of car ownership and health standards are relatively low. These factors combined give the park a higher status as a local amenity, providing opportunities for informal recreation with access for local people on foot.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

1. Ensure Clermiston Park is a welcoming and accessible open space for visitors.
2. Conserve and improve the wildlife of Clermiston Park.
3. Increase community engagement and encourage participation in local community events.
4. Maintain Clermiston Park as a clean, safe and secure open space.

4.0 Management Prescriptions

4.1 Habitats and Wildlife

4.1.1 Grassland

To provide more habitat for invertebrates, small mammals, birds and amphibians, the area of long grass within the park should be increased. This can be achieved by relaxing the mowing around the copses and individual trees, encouraging a wider variety of grass species and wildflowers to establish. This should include an area on the eastern side of the park between a copse and the hedgerow, as it is unlikely people walk through that area.

Bulbs could also be planted by the local community in the long grass surrounding the copses as well as other areas of the park. Areas of wildflower meadow could be established along the western and northern edges of the park. This will provide a higher quality of habitat and help to increase the parks biodiversity, as well as create an attractive feature. However, the creation of a wildflower meadow is dependent on funding and if unsuccessful, won't be possible until funding is available.

4.1.2 Trees and Scrub

Tree species including Austrian pine, Himalayan cedar, Atlas cedar and fern leaved beech will be planted in the gaps along the periphery of the park. Evergreens have been chosen as there is

currently a very limited amount of evergreen trees in the park. Also, having a variety of tree species creates a more interesting landscape and benefits wildlife.

On a rotational basis, scrub should be cleared in the copses to keep it under control and enable other plants to grow. Ensure this is done out of bird nesting season (February to August) and check there are no hedgehogs hibernating.

Once the scrub has been cleared, bulbs such as bluebells, snowdrops and crocuses can be planted within the copses by the local community or schools.

A hazard tree assessment in line with Council policy should be carried out every five years.

4.1.3 Hedgerow

Diversify the current hedge species by planting species such as hawthorn, hazel, field maple and beech. Any new sections of hedge will require a fence to prevent people walking through the gap. The metal piece of fencing which is sticking out of the hedge will be removed during this activity.

The hedgerow should be cut more frequently to ensure it does not block the adjacent path and block views across the park. However, precaution should be taken during bird nesting season (March – July).

4.1.4 Wildlife

The newly created wildflower meadows, larger areas of long grass, diversification of tree and hedge species will all help provide more and better-quality habitat for wildlife.

To give wildlife an extra helping hand, bird boxes, bug, hedgehog and frog hotels could also be made and installed in the park by the local community and schools.

4.1.5 Non-Native Invasive Species

If Himalayan Balsam is found in the park, it should be pulled up by the roots and disposed of using a registered waste carrier and sent to an authorised landfill site or suitable disposal site.

4.2 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure

A couple more benches should be installed on the western side of park in front of the copses, as there are currently none on that side.

Ensure all notice boards are kept up to date with relevant information. In the future, consider installing interpretation and orientation panels to provide more information to visitors and increase engagement.

Ensure the current playground is well maintained by carrying out weekly inspections, ensuring Landscape Quality Standards are met.

Dependent upon funding, a new path should be constructed through the southern and central areas of the park, providing a link from the surrounding streets to bus stops, the Drumbrae Library Hub and the play area. This will also improve access for wheelchair and pram users. Once a path network has been created, lighting within the park will be investigated.

Although out of the scope of this plan, the residual netball/basketball hoops should be removed and replaced with an alternative sports facility. This may be a skate park, dependent upon affordability and maintenance.

A future aspiration, also dependent upon funding, is to upgrade the entire play park as well as create a new play area for a younger age bracket. Work has already begun on producing a proposal for this and the skate park. Following this, funding opportunities will be investigated.

4.3 Community and Events

There is a need to improve community engagement with the park and in turn, help decrease anti-social behaviour. This can be done by engaging with local youth groups and holding more events for them as well as for the local community and schools. This could be done for example, by getting them involved with the park's improvements. For example, more sports which engage teenagers could be held such as boxing. More conservation events could be held, including: Making bird boxes, bug, hedgehog and frog hotels; bulb planting; a BioBlitz (biological surveying attempting to record all the living species within a designated area); and tree planting. Additionally, an event with schools could be held to create anti dog fouling and littering signs for the park to help discourage such behaviour and get schools engaged.

These types of events are great for getting people outside, active and socialising, improving their physical and mental wellbeing whilst also engaging them with the park and helping to increase community engagement and its biodiversity.

Such events should be promoted online, through social media, neighbourhood partnerships and in community buildings.

Additionally, with support from the Park Rangers, a Friends of Clermiston and Drumbrae Park could be established. Having a Friends group will help increase engagement with the park, give ownership back to the community, create community cohesion, give the park more of a voice and help improve its management. Although in the past attempts to form a Friends group were not successful, with increased interest through community engagement activities and with support from the Rangers, hopefully this attempt will prove successful.

5.0 Action Plans and Maps

Abbreviations:

PGO = Parks and Greenspace Officer, P&G = Parks & Greenspace, PR = Park Ranger

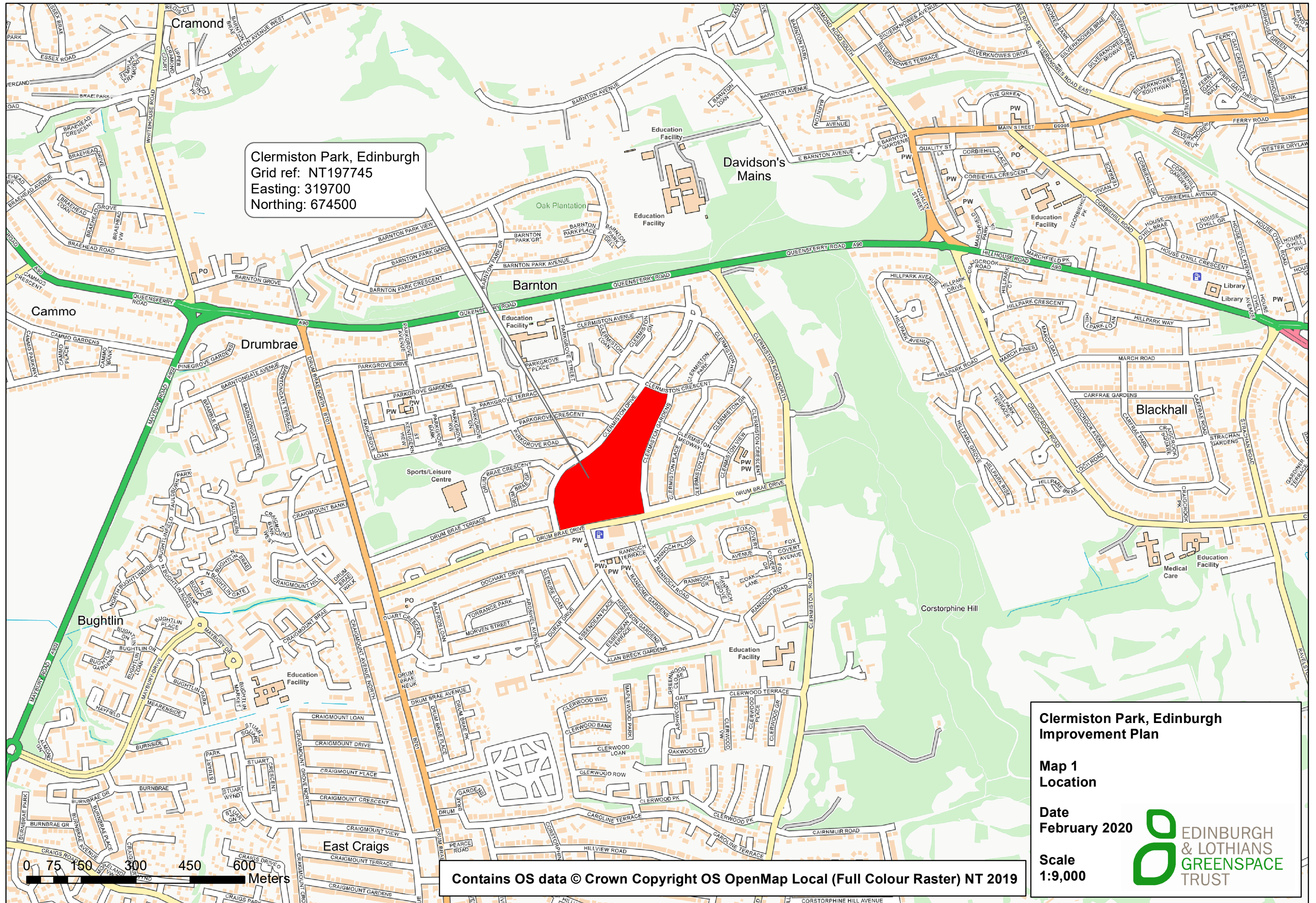
GM = Grounds Maintenance, ELGT = Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust, FD = Forestry Department, W&C = Waste & Cleansing

5.1 Annual and Regular Actions

Ref no.	Action	Objective no.	When	Delivery
1.1	Keep all notice boards up to date with relevant information	1 & 3	All year	PR, ELGT
1.2	Promote volunteer and community events	3	All year	P&G, PGO, ELGT, PR
1.3	Cut amenity grassland	1	Sep - May	GM
1.4	Amenity cut football pitch grassland	1	Sep - May	GM
1.5	Relax mowing around copses and individual trees	2	All months except Jul & Sep/Oct	GM
1.6	Cut and maintain hedgerow. Check for nesting birds in summer.	1 & 4	Feb & Aug	GM & PR
1.7	Cut and lift long grass areas	2	Jul & Sep/Oct	GM
1.8	Once established, cut and lift wildflower meadows	2	End of July or start of August	GM
1.9	Asses condition and manage current tree stock	2 & 3	February & June	FD
1.10	Clear scrub in field layer of two copses per year to prevent overgrowth	1 & 2	Nov	PR, FD
1.11	Ensure all facilities and park furniture are safe and defects reported	4	Every week/month	PR
1.12	Address dog fouling problems	4	When necessary	PGO, PR
1.13	Regularly empty bins	4	Every day	W&C
1.14	Remove rubbish and fly tip	4	Every week	W&C, PR

5.2 Actions 2020 - 2021

Ref no.	Action	Objective no.	When	Delivery
2.1	Plant trees in gaps along park periphery	2 & 3	March 2020	ELGT, PGO, PR
2.2	Replace and plant different hedge species in existing hedgerow. Whilst doing so, remove metal fence sticking out	2 & 4	March 2020	ELGT, PGO, PR
2.3	Wildflower meadow creation	2	September 2020	P&G, PGO, ELGT, PR
2.4	Install two additional benches in west of park	1	May 2020	Contractor, PR, PGO
2.5	Identify if there are additional signage requirements and if there is scope for the installation of interpretation and orientation panels in the future.	1 & 3	November 2020	PGO, PR
2.6	Community event - bulb planting	2 & 3	October 2020	ELGT, PGO, PR
2.7	Community event - building bug, hedgehog and frog hotels	2 & 3	May 2020	ELGT, PGO, PR
2.8	Community event - BioBlitz	2 & 3	July 2020	ELGT, PGO, PR
2.9	Community event - bird box creation	2 & 3	December 2020	ELGT, PGO, PR
2.10	Erect bird nesting boxes	2 & 3	January 2021	PR
2.11	Community/schools event – create anti dog fouling and littering signs	1, 3 & 4	April 2020	ELGT, PGO, PR
2.12	Start up event tailored for teenagers	3	August 2020	ELGT
2.13	Investigate funding avenues for skate park and play park upgrades	1 & 3	April 2020	ELGT, PGO
2.14	Construct a path network linking up key areas surrounding the park	1	2020	P&G, PGO, ELGT, PR
2.15	Investigate lighting along path	1 & 4	2021	P&G, PGO, ELGT, PR



Clermiston Park, Edinburgh
 Grid ref: NT197745
 Easting: 319700
 Northing: 674500

**Clermiston Park, Edinburgh
 Improvement Plan**

**Map 1
 Location**

**Date
 February 2020**

**Scale
 1:9,000**



EDINBURGH
 & LOTHIAN'S
 GREENSPACE
 TRUST

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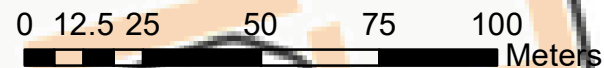


Legend

- Picnic bench
- ▲ Bench
- Notice board or sign
- Bin
- Fence
- Tree
- Hedgerow

Feature

- Amenity grass
- Copse
- Pavilion
- Playground
- Sports facilities
- Surfaced path



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**Clermiston Park, Edinburgh
Improvement Plan**

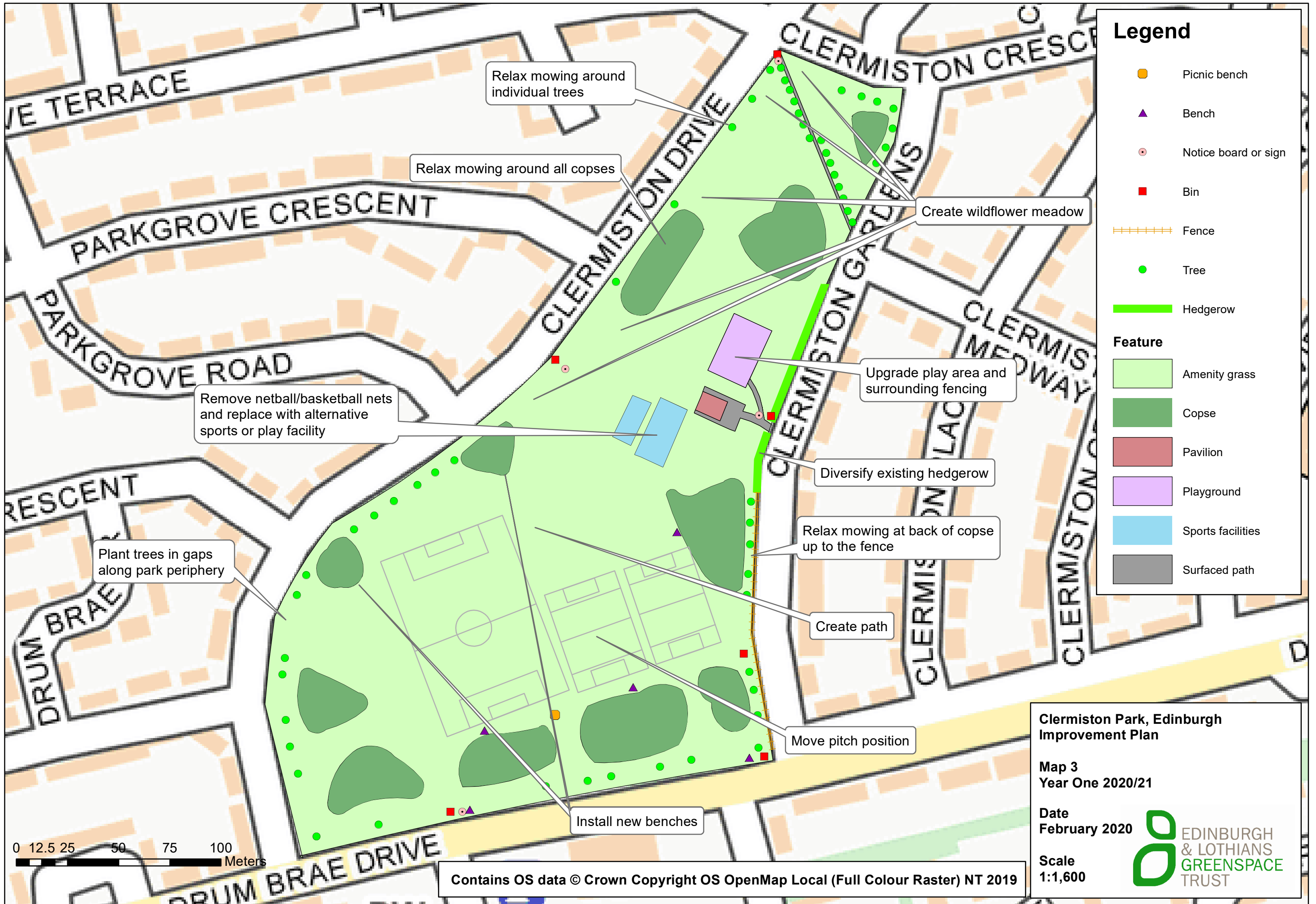
**Map 2
Site Description**

Date
February 2020

Scale
1:1,600



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GREENSPACE
TRUST





6.0 Specifications

Hedge planting

Preparation

Careful planning is required in order to establish a healthy hedge. Consideration should be given to existing ground vegetation and the general condition of the ground along the proposed hedge line. It is recommended that the existing vegetation growth is flailed or strimmed and that any remaining weeds and grasses are sprayed with a suitable herbicide prior to planting. This will provide a clean bed for the plants, improve the quality of the planting and reduce weed growth during the following spring and summer.

Planting

Planting of bare rooted whips can take place between November and the end of February but is ideally done before Christmas. Use plants approx 45- 60cm in height. Plant four to six plants per metre in two staggered rows 30cm apart. Notch plant bare-rooted stock and insert the supporting cane approx 25cm into the ground, alongside the plant, and use 0.6m tubex tree tubes or similar around both the plant and the cane.

Prior to and during planting, always keep plants in bags to prevent roots drying out. Bags should be stored under cover. Heal plants in the ground for storage if unable to plant within two weeks of collection. When planting, ensure the roots of plants are firmly healed into ground to avoid air pockets. Tree protection should be securely fitted as per manufacturer's recommendations.

Once planted, apply a mulch of well-rotted manure or equivalent along the length of the hedge. The mulch should be the width of the hedge plus 0.5m either side. This will help retain moisture and reduce competition from weeds. Take care to leave a collar of 10cm (4in) around the woody stems that is free of mulch, to prevent the risk of rotting to the bark.

When planting bare-rooted stock it is not unusual for natural losses to occur. Always budget for a small percentage of failures to be replaced ('Beat-up') in the first two years following planting.

Aftercare

Weeds and other vegetation intercept water before it reaches the roots of newly planted trees and shrubs. Weed competition to the base of plants must therefore be eradicated during the first three growing seasons. In addition to application of the mulch, this may be done by chemical means or by hand weeding / hoeing. Lack of weeding is the biggest single killer of young planted trees.

Count losses to be replaced in the summer following planting when the plants are in leaf. Mark the planting station where a replacement is required. This makes losses easier to identify in the winter when all plants have shed their leaves.

Check at least twice a year that protective sundries are securely fitted, such as tubes and stakes.

Replace where necessary. Protection should be maintained for at least five years. Replace trees and hedging plants during the following winter period.

Wildflower meadow creation

Seeding

1. For best establishment, wildflower seeding should be undertaken in the autumn, ideally late September, while the grass is short and before the first frost.
2. The total area to be seeded is 3,265m² (0.33ha)
4. The ground within the sowing area should be scarified using a mechanical scarifier (i.e. a power harrow), and approximately 60-70% of the soil should be visible once scarification is complete to create a suitable habitat for sowing wildflower seeds.
5. Across the prepared area, a native wildflower seed mix should be surface sown thinly at approximately 3gms of seed per square metre (or as per manufacturer's instructions), by hand or mechanically. Damp sand can be mixed with the seed to act as a carrier and identify where seeds have been spread.
6. The seed mix to be used must be native, similar to Scotia Seeds – Urban Pollinator Mix <http://www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/shop/urban-pollinator-mix/>
7. Do not incorporate or cover the seed but immediately after sowing, firm in with a roll, or by treading, to give good soil/seed contact.

More detailed management information (from Scotia Seeds website)

Pre-Sowing

Remove existing vegetation (by spraying or by ploughing or digging it in – cutting it short first may help). Even existing grass should be removed, although if this is not possible, over-sowing the grass to introduce wildflowers can be undertaken, although this is less effective.

Prepare a fine seed bed. In projects where soil is being added, a mixture of topsoil and subsoil (about 50:50) to a depth of about 10-30cm over existing subsoil is ideal, as long as topsoil is not weedy (especially with docks and other perennial weeds). Subsoil alone can be used but if soil structure is poor and fertility low, establishment is slow and may be dominated by plants such as clovers which require nitrogen in the soil for their growth.

If perennial weeds are, or have been present, a 'stale seed bed' technique can be used before sowing to prevent perennial weeds such as docks dominating the meadow. This technique involves preparing the soil and allowing weed seeds to germinate then killing them, repeating the process once or twice more.

Sowing

The mixture should be sown in autumn (mid-August to late September) or spring (March to June), on or very close to the soil surface. Mix the seed at the start and keep mixing whilst sowing as the seeds of different species vary in size and can separate out. As the sowing rate is low you can use an equal amount of dry sand to bulk up the seed so that it is easier to spread and can be seen on the soil surface.

If sowing by hand, divide the site up into at least four equal areas. Divide seed into the same number of equal volume lots. Seed can be spread by hand from a box or bag using a wide swinging action (to

cover up to 2m width). If you can, use half of the seed for each area sowing in one direction and then use the other half sowing at right angles.

If sowing mechanically, broadcast by seed or fertilizer spreader. Cut the rate down to a very low level to start with and sow twice as above. A seed drill can be used but it must be set to allow the seed to be sown on or very close to the surface.

Roll or trample the ground after sowing; any method that will press the seed into the soil surface so that it makes better contact with the soil and absorbs water from the soil more effectively. A light raking or harrowing before rolling can help to settle the seed into the soil. The seed should not be buried.

Managing the meadow

Meadow mix species grow and mature at different rates. In the first summer season after sowing there should be fairly open growth. Occasionally a very few of the quickly maturing perennial plants will flower in the first season but most will begin to flower in subsequent years. Native plant species compete well on land that has low fertility, so fertilizer should not be added. Finding ways of reducing fertility, including removing any cuttings, will preserve and improve the diversity of the meadow (leaving cuttings will add fertility and smother plants). However, if fertility is extremely low, growth, including grasses, might be slow.

Meadows also require cutting to prevent them from turning into rank grass then scrub or woodland.

An early (after about eight weeks) cut in the first year can sometimes be useful if unwanted annual weeds from an existing seed bed appear and grow rapidly. Cutting down unwanted annual weeds opens the sward to light and removes competition. Some judgement is required to decide whether and when a cut is helpful but when annual weeds grow to around 30 cm (1 foot) tall they can usually be cut to about 10 cm (4"). Meadow grass seedlings can often be seen at this stage and the cut should remove most weed growth without cutting the meadow grasses and wildflower seedlings. Cuttings should be removed. Cutting should not be necessary if there is little growth.

Once established, meadows should be cut and the cuttings removed once a year at the end of the growing season (normally September). Often this is the only management required. Cutting for hay earlier in the season is possible as long as the yellow rattle has finished flowering and shed its seed. Grazing with animals may be used for managing at the end and/or beginning of the growing season but it is vital to leave the meadow ungrazed during the middle of the season. Heavier grazing over a very short period of time is preferable to light grazing for a long period as there will be less selection by the animals.

Any perennial weeds such as docks, nettles and ragwort should be pulled out or spot sprayed although if the site is free of these weeds, then they are not usually a problem once the meadow is established.

Making wildlife hotels

See here for detailed information on how to make and install bird boxes:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/nestboxes/nestboxes-for-small-birds/making-and-placing-a-bird-box/>

How to build a hedgehog hotel: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-hedgehog-home>

How to build a bug hotel: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/give-nature-a-home-in-your-garden/garden-activities/build-a-bug-hotel/>

How to build a frog and toad abode: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/give-nature-a-home-in-your-garden/garden-activities/makeafrogandtoadabode/>