MAINTAINING AND MONITORING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

HOW TO...

Establishing a Landscape Habitat Management Plans for a property involves input from a range of specialists during the process of undertaking an ecological survey. The process will usually be coordinated by a property manager with support and input from a facilities manager.

Establishing a Landscape Habitat Management Plans involves consideration of the following elements as part of undertaking an ecological survey:

AM PM

1. LANDSCAPE HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN SCOPE

It is recommended that a LHMP is provided for newly installed green spaces, any retrofitted green spaces, and existing spaces which have undergone significant redesign.

For newly installed spaces, a LHMP should be prepared as part of the detailed design stage, ahead of the construction stage, to accommodate the arrangements for the long-term management of the green space. The LHMP should be updated post-completion to ensure alignment with the delivered installation.

For newly installed green spaces, a Landscape Habitat Management Plan (LHMP) should cover a minimum five-year period following the completion of installation.

As many green space installations, for example planting schemes, can be susceptible to failure in the first five years of the installation, a LHMP can respond to any defects from the installation or poor species selection during this initial period.

LHMPs should be prepared in accordance with section 11.1 of British Standard BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity Code of Practice for Planning and Development and should include the following information, some of which will be produced during the ecological surveys:

- A description and evaluation of the features to be managed.
- Ecological trends and constraints on site that could influence management.
- Aims and objectives of management.
- Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives.
- Prescriptions for management actions.
- Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period).
- Body or organisation personnel responsible for implementation of the plan.
- Monitoring and remedial measures.
- Funding resources and mechanisms to ensure sustainable long-term delivery of the proposed management.

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2. IDENTIFY POTENTIAL MAINTENANCE RISKS

It is important to consider any risks associated with the maintenance of green space. The following questions may be useful when considering maintenance risks:

- Has sufficient budget been planned for the long-term maintenance of the green space?
- Do maintenance activities include any unusual risks? These may include, for example, health and safety risks for maintenance of green space at roof level.
- How can invasive species be identified, and what should the response to positive identification include?
- How should maintenance operations be undertaken around wildlife, and who is suitably qualified to undertake such maintenance?
- Who has responsibility for the maintenance of green space installations?

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3. ENABLING A CONSISTENT APPROACH TO MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE

It is important to deliver continuity of maintenance so that green spaces provide continual value throughout their lifespan.

For new installations, it is recommended that the landscape contractor who installed the space is retained for a minimum of one year, preferably three to five years for more significant projects, to maintain the scheme. This will help to ensure successful establishment of the planting.

When any change in maintenance contractor occurs, it is important to ensure that an appropriate handover period is arranged, and that the new contractor has access to the relevant information, including access to an up-to-date version of the LHMP.

Where multiple green spaces are maintained as part of a larger development or wider portfolio, a strategic management plan could be developed to enable consistency in maintenance across all features.

A strategic management plan can support the strategic objectives of the portfolio or property by:

- Creating a consistent approach towards monitoring, maintenance and management across multiple assets. This can facilitate cost efficiencies, as well as enabling the sharing of lessons learned and preparation of best practice guidance as shared resources.
- Providing templates and guidance for reporting processes to enable a coordinated approach across properties and projects.
- Streamlining monitoring and maintenance activities to ensure efficiency in scheduling and management.

4. MONITORING

Monitoring and reporting provide opportunities to assess the ongoing state of green space installations, and to and present findings to management for action.

Daily monitoring

Day-to-day checks on green space installations should be encouraged. Regular checks on condition and functionality of the space can help to identify any potential issues early, and before they become a greater problem.

Monthly monitoring

Other checks should be carried out on a monthly basis, for example:

- General condition of planting, hard landscape and equipment.
- Records of wildlife sightings including species using nesting boxes or other habitat features. Wildlife should be observed from a safe distance, and nesting boxes and other habitat features should not be disturbed.
- Use of the space by people, for example, frequency, activities or purpose for the visit, specific locations.
- Any unexpected activities or events.

Any concerns noted during these visits should be raised with the landscape maintenance contractor or ecologist.

Specialist monitoring

Specialist monitoring can be undertaken to provide further information and expert guidance or recommendations. This may include more detailed species monitoring, for example:

- Bird and bat box checks, undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist.
- Green space audits to determine the existing value and provide recommendations for improvement.

General maintenance

General maintenance activities, such as checking and cleaning drainage outlets for green roofs, should be undertaken by the landscape maintenance contractor on a regular basis to the timings set out in the LHMP.

User feedback

Feedback from users of a green space can be valuable to ensuring the success of the installation. This could be done in the format of user questionnaires or by providing a named contact for users to provide any informal suggestions.

Reporting and review

Information collected through monitoring a property's biodiversity or green spaces should be fed back to the property manager as part of the overall maintenance plan for a property. Findings relating to biodiversity risk should be captured within the environmental risk register.

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5. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Sharing management and maintenance responsibilities with stakeholders and users of the green space can be a good way to engage on the long-term objectives and to review the continued value of the installation.

Some examples of engagement opportunities include:

- Provide information to building users about the objectives and benefits of the green space and how they can expect the space to grow and develop. By engaging with users on the management of green space installations they will be properly informed and know what to expect throughout the seasons.
- Engage with local businesses in a mutually beneficial agreement regarding the provision and upkeep of publicly accessible green space.
- Provide opportunities for research and educational opportunities to local groups and building occupiers, including data sharing.
- Support the upskilling of the local community through engagement in relation to management and maintenance of green space for both public and private spaces.
- Considering engaging local stakeholders, for example local authority environment teams, to share information which may inform the ecological baseline of the surrounding area.