

"The measure of any great civilisation is in its cities, and the measure of a city's greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, it's parks and squares."

John Ruskin

GOOD PARKS FOR LONDON 2017



Safeguarding our green spaces

Sponsored by



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Foreword

London is a paradox: at once vast metropolis and yet also famous as a green place, rich in parks, gardens and trees. Indeed, there are virtually as many trees as people. Just as rivers are essential to London's character, so are its parks and millions of private gardens which allow Londoners to enjoy their own oasis, slightly removed from the stresses of city life.

Over a third of Greater London is open space, much of it green. In New York, which admittedly covers a smaller geographical area, the figure is less than a fifth and in Berlin, barely a sixth. Richmond Park is more extensive than the entirety of Kensington & Chelsea. Private gardens in the capital cover an area half the size of inner London. Royal parks, civic parks, the Lee Valley Regional Park, squares, wetlands, marshes, allotments and city farms all contribute to the mix. For good reason, London is seen as a green city.

Why does this matter? Primarily because living in a fast-growing and densely-populated city can be a challenge. London delivers productivity, opportunity and a welcome to the world. But in doing so, it generates crowded streets, shops and public transport. On hot summer days, the intensity of city life can be overwhelming. Green spaces allow every Londoner and visitor to escape into a different world: one with lakes, wildlife, sport and, most importantly, tranquillity.

The Mayor's draft Environment Strategy opens by explaining that green space "connects every aspect of life in the city. It is the air Londoners breathe, the water they drink and the parks where they meet and spend time. The state of London's environment affects everyone who lives in and visits the city – it helps Londoners to stay healthy, makes London a good place to work and keeps the city functioning from day to day". The boroughs, for their part, have weathered significant reductions to their current spending since 2010 while simultaneously ensuring that their parks and civic spaces remain open, well-managed and accessible.

This Good Parks for London report brings a new dimension to the question of how London assesses progress being made in the improvement of green areas within the city. Its results are fascinating, with inner boroughs generally scoring above outer ones. Perhaps this result tells us something about the value people who live in the most dense and continuously urban areas place on access to green space. The opportunity an analysis of this kind provides is for councils to compare themselves with others and ask questions about how they can improve satisfaction in the years ahead.

Green spaces are a signifier of civilisation and progress. The more people read this report, the better. Better for good government and for the understanding of how a great city works. London is a wonderful place, but can always be improved.

Professor Tony Travers
Director of the Institute of Public Affairs
at the London School of
Economics & Political Science (LSE)



Introduction

Good parks are important to all of us – environmentally, socially, economically and we want to keep them thriving, accessible, safe and attractive for London’s residents, workers and visitors. The Good Parks for London report will make the capital’s parks policies and practices more visible, open to scrutiny and support the organisations and citizens that seek to make our city greener, healthier and sustainable.

Good Parks for London will be an annual report, compiled by Parks for London, the charity that is committed to safeguarding London’s parks and green spaces. **Part one** of the report shows how London Boroughs compare in their support for the Good Parks criteria. The results are presented through maps and a benchmarking table, clearly showing how Boroughs compare with each other along with some case studies.

Part two of the report includes information about other land managers, valuing our parks & green spaces and examples of good practice across London.

We want the Good Parks for London report to become an effective tool for improving good practices, raising quality standards among London Boroughs by raising awareness of important good parks schemes, of the organisations that run them and provide an incentive for London Boroughs to sign up to.

Our hope is that all local authorities will adopt the Good Parks for London process as an internal target to increase their scores year-on-year, whether to stay at the top of the benchmarking table or to climb from lower down. The report can be used as a platform to promote the importance of parks in the face of budget cuts and bring together people and organisations managing parks across different Borough departments in collaboration with the private and voluntary sector.

Our initiative to produce the Good Parks for London report is supported by most of the London Boroughs, London Councils, the GLA and partner organisations. It is sponsored by GL Hearn, part of Capita Real Estate.

Tony Leach
CE Parks for London

How Good Parks for London works

Most of the information used to score the criteria, for example, awards, is publicly available, however Good Parks for London brings it together in one report for the first time. Wherever possible, information used to produce maps and the summary benchmarking table is collected through partner organisations that either run or specialise in the criterion against which the Boroughs are assessed. Partners then provide this information to Parks for London, working centrally to compile the report and collect case studies and quotes to illustrate and celebrate Borough successes. Partners are in the best position to verify that data is provided accurately and can also help to identify initiatives that would make good case studies and individuals that can provide quotes for the report.

This approach ensures that a direct connection between local authorities and the partner organisations are maintained to support working relationships and encourage greater participation over time. The deadline of an approaching Good Parks for London report should help to galvanise action so that Boroughs gain recognition for their good work and to improve their position in the benchmarking exercise.

Errors and omissions

This first edition of Good Parks for London covers the financial year 2016/17. Considerable time and effort have gone into consultation, data collection and verification. All Boroughs included in this report have opted to participate in this publication. Scores are affected by individual Boroughs ability to provide data. This pilot edition will not be perfect but we are committed to improve the accuracy and usefulness of this document year on year through collaboration with stakeholders.

Notes for scoring the criteria

1. Public satisfaction with parks is taken from Borough public satisfaction surveys where available.

2. Awards for quality is the number of Green Flag Awards attained for parks directly managed by Boroughs (but excludes parks owned and managed by The Royal Parks, City of London, Lee Valley Regional Park and other landowners).

3. Collaboration with other Boroughs indicates that Parks for London / London Parks Benchmarking Group is supported.

4. Events for range of ages and abilities is the number of internally and externally managed events held in parks across the Borough expressed as a % of greenspace managed.

5. Health, fitness and well-being is a combination of the number outdoor gyms and food growing areas in Borough parks. An outdoor gym consists of a group of equipment in close proximity to each other. A food growing area will consist of an accessible community run project based in a park as above.

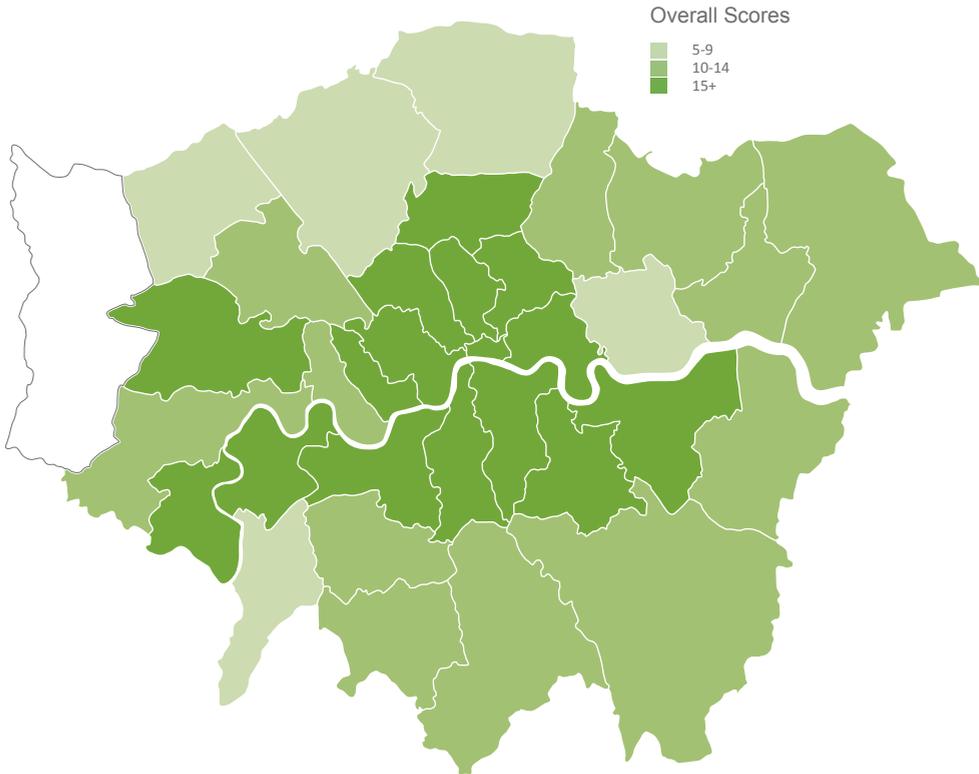
6. Supporting nature is a combination of the percentage of parks that have a management plan that includes Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) objectives (as a % of total parks) AND has a BAP. Inner London Borough scores are weighted with an addition of 1 to the score.

7. Community partnerships is a combination of Community Green Flag Awards, number of Friends Groups and whether the Borough has a Borough-wide Friends Group Forum.

8. Skills development is the number of park apprentices as a % of total workforce.

9. Sustainability is a combination of green fleet as a % of total fleet and battery-operated equipment as a % of total hand held equipment that contribute to reducing air and noise pollution.

10. Strategic planning is a combination of having a green/open or infrastructure space strategy and an asset management plan.



Overall scores

	Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Overall Score
Lambeth		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	19.5
Lewisham		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	19.5
Southwark		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	19.5
Camden		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	18.5
City of London (Square Mile)		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	18
Haringey		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	17.5
Kensington & Chelsea		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	17
Hackney		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	16
Richmond upon Thames		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	16
Tower Hamlets		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	16
Westminster		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	16
Greenwich		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	15.5
Islington		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	15.5
Ealing		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	15
Wandsworth		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	14.5
Havering		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	13.5

Scoring Criteria

1. Public Satisfaction

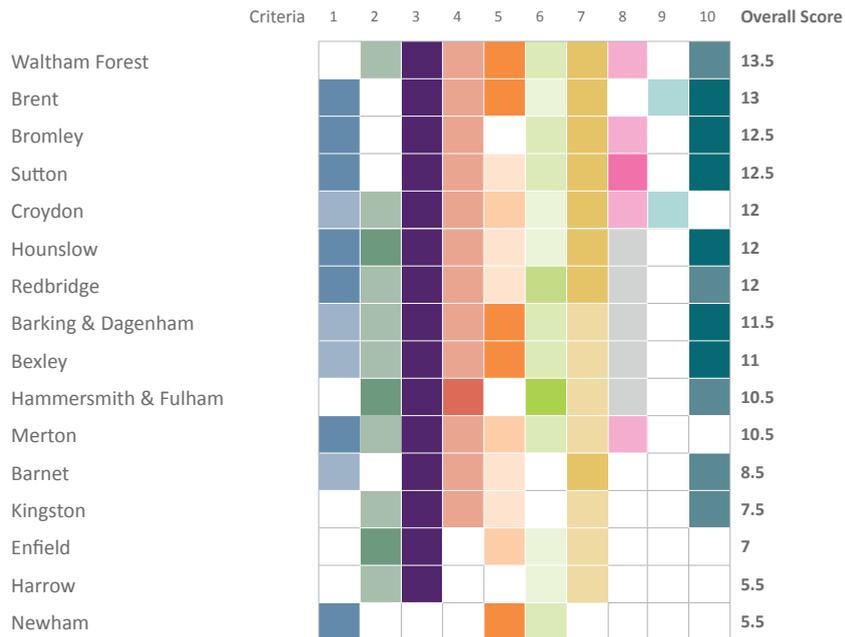
2. Awards for Quality

3. Collaboration with other Boroughs

6. Supporting nature

7. Community Involvement

8. Skills Development



Blank squares indicate no data available except for 2 which indicates no awards and 3 which indicates no support for either Pfl or LPBF

4. Events

5. Health, fitness and well-being

9. Sustainability

10. Strategic planning

1

Public Satisfaction with parks

Good quality parks and green spaces which meet local demand are essential for normal living conditions and thriving communities. Parks and green spaces which respond to local residents' needs are essential for achieving this and one way to understand if results have been accomplished is through feedback surveys.

Public satisfaction with parks is about understanding how Boroughs are assessed by its residents in terms of quality of council managed parks.

This criterion uses the percentage of people satisfied with the parks services who have chosen the options: "very good" and "good" within the survey. We have combined these two scores to achieve an overall result of satisfaction for each Borough. Having achieved high scores in this survey would mean there is a general positive feedback from residents who use the parks and green spaces, meaning an overall good approach of the Council towards green spaces management and improvement.



*Festival Gardens,
City of London*



*Friends of City Gardens,
Barbican Station Pop up garden,
City of London*

"Friends of City Gardens support the City Gardens team with the objectives of making green spaces more attractive and accessible for all members of the City community and enhancing biodiversity. As a volunteer group contributing over 4,500 hours a year we help by organising activities to draw in people that might not necessarily have visited City gardens before or who may never have gardened before, such as school children."

Sarah Hudson

Chair, Friends of City Gardens, City of London

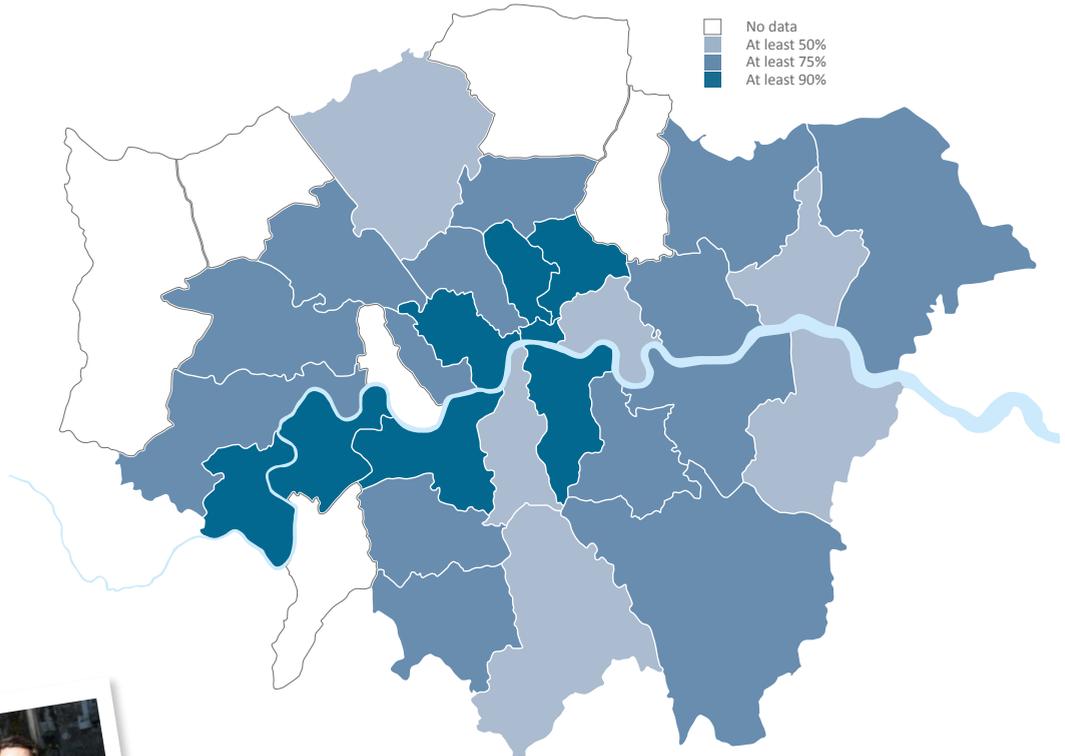


"I am delighted as the new Director of Open Spaces with the officers, partners and volunteers that are caring for the outstanding land that the City owns and the contribution that the Open Spaces make to the sense of place and wellbeing of everyone that visits them"

Colin Buttery

Director of Open Spaces, City of London Corporation

Public Satisfaction



"I know that so many of our City residents and visitors, along with the hundreds of thousands of City workers, greatly appreciate so many open spaces we have in the City of London. Though many are small and often tucked away, which adds to the maintenance challenge that our fantastic City Gardens team have, these spaces are vital to the character and enjoyment of the City, and the health and well-being of everyone here in the Square Mile."

Craeme Smith

Chairman, Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee, City of London Corporation

2 Awards for quality

Parks and green spaces need to achieve a certain standard to be able to serve the needs of a wide range of the Borough's population. This includes being accessible for everyone, have clear signage and safe equipment; provide a wide variety of good quality facilities which enable various activities, and also have appropriate maintenance and management measures.

The Green Flag Award is the national standard for publicly accessible parks and green spaces in the United Kingdom. The scheme has been awarded since 1997 and it is owned through the Department of Communities and Local Government, currently managed by Keep Britain Tidy under contract. The scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces throughout the country and the world.

The Award is open to a wide range of publicly accessible green spaces, including: universities, cemeteries and crematoria, housing associations, hospitals, retail and leisure, canals and waterways, nature reserves, traditional victorian parks, recreational parks, heritage parks, modern parks and country parks.

The purpose of Green Flag Awards is to ensure an equal access to quality green and open spaces for everybody, to ensure these spaces are managed well and they meet the current and future needs of the communities which use them daily, to set standards for good management and showcase best practice examples, and finally reward the work of park management services.

Green Flag Awards sets a benchmark for environmental excellence, judging against 27 criteria, divided into eight main sections:

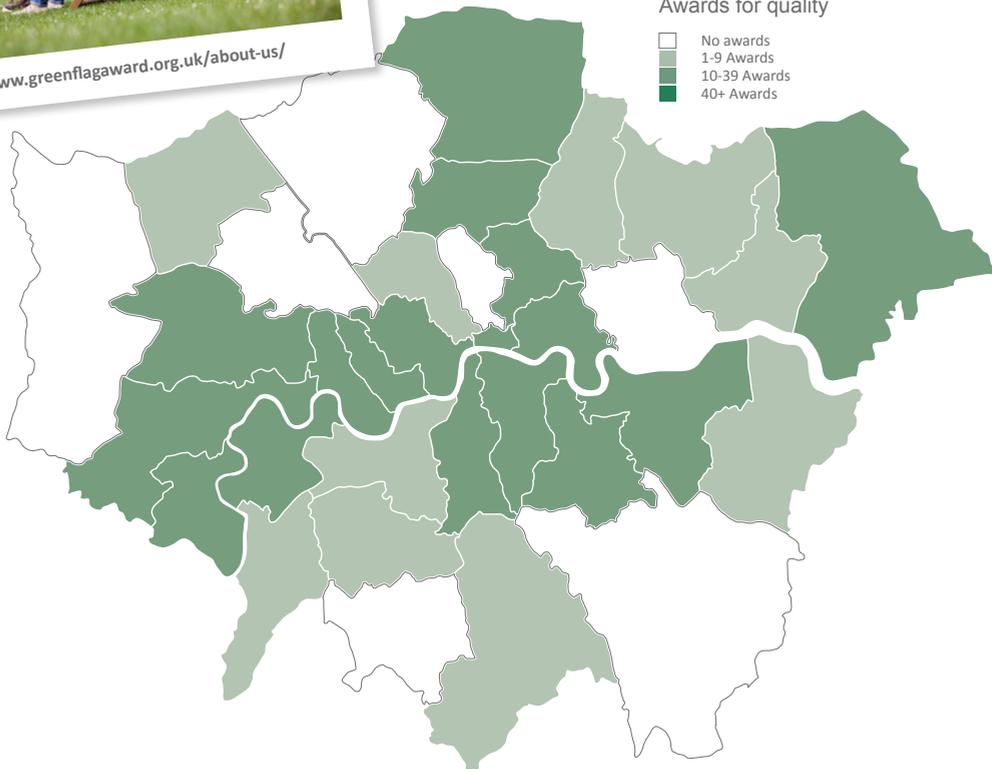
- *A welcoming place*
- *Healthy, safe and secure*
- *Well-maintained and clean*
- *Environmental management*
- *Biodiversity, landscape and heritage*
- *Community involvement*
- *Marketing and communications*
- *Management*

Having achieved a considerable number of Green Flag Awards is an indicator of a Borough's commitment towards achieving excellence in green spaces management against standards which have been nationally and internationally recognised.



<http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/about-us/>

Awards for quality



3

Collaboration with other Boroughs

Collaboration with other Boroughs and sharing of best practice & experience is essential towards achieving higher quality parks and green spaces in London. A joint approach can lead to increased awareness, opportunities for addressing issues such as waste, sustainability, accessibility and other outcomes. Collaboration can significantly improve identification of priorities, creation of shared vision and action plans for effective delivery of services.

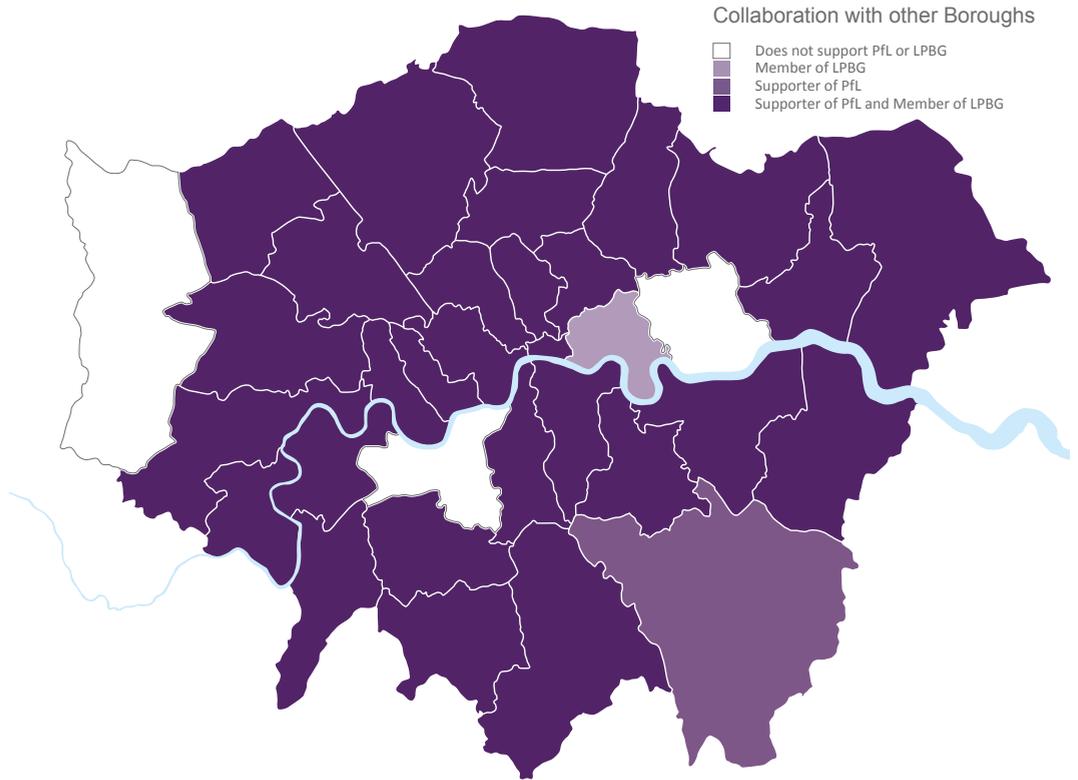
The facilitators of such collaboration are organisations and networks which bring together all interested parties. A goal for such organisations and networks is to elevate issues to the eyes of the public and the political agenda. This can contribute to finding funds for projects, raising awareness for various initiatives in the Borough and helps avoid duplication of work.

Collaboration with other Boroughs has been determined using two main criteria: whether the Borough is supporting Parks for London and whether it is a Member of London Parks Benchmarking Group.

Parks for London is a London based charity, which aims to ensure that London's green infrastructure continues to thrive now and into the future, that quality is maintained and improved, services and benefits are maximised and resources are wisely used. The charity enables the managers of London parks and green spaces to share knowledge and experience, through its network with other organisations and groups involved with London's parks and green spaces.

London Parks Benchmarking Group was established in 1999 by the London Borough of Newham in response to requirements of Best Value. The Group aims to identify and share best practice through process benchmarking, ensure best value and other improvement initiatives, collect and share comparative data and work collaboratively in an inclusive manner to improve service delivery with regards to parks, green spaces and other related activities on behalf of member organisations, residents and visitors.

Being involved and supportive of these two organisations means a Borough is actively 'seeking to improve and share knowledge regarding green space management, services and resources.



4 Events



Dianne Browning



Apprentice - Make a book

"Events are a valuable way to bring the entire community together in local parks. Children, parents/ carers, pensioners, dog owners and young people - well everyone - can get to know each other and have a good time. Music, bouncy castles and home-made cakes - it's all part of the fun.

Our pop-up events in Barnard Park offer free activities for all. The events provide us an opportunity to use the space creatively. Ponies, the park keeper dressed as the Queen, a local musician playing the bagpipes? Why not?"

Dianne Browning

Chair, Friends of Barnard Park, Islington

Events within Boroughs are important for the encouragement of cohesion and better social interaction. Events are also a good opportunity for marketing and publicity for the Borough. It is a widely adopted practice to hold a range of events in parks and green spaces due to their natural environment, facilities and general appropriateness in terms of quality and amount of space.

This criterion considers a wide range of externally and internally managed events held within green spaces, excluding fitness classes. Achieving a high score reflects the Borough's ability to utilise its green space assets and promote community cohesion.

Islington is a small borough and doesn't have many big parks, but it has lots of small parks and gardens that are well-used and much-loved by residents. Our belief is that our parks are places where people can connect and re-connect, and when used creatively parks can create a huge deal of good in our community. Islington council

works hard to support a wide and varied programme of events for residents and visitors, spreading them across the Borough so as many people as possible can benefit. From forest schools and outdoor classrooms, to children’s birthday parties, art installations, funfairs, markets and much more, there is something for everyone.

Events provide an important social opportunity to improve community cohesion – Islington is one of the most economic and culturally diverse boroughs in London. We support community groups and “friends of” groups to put on events, ensuring the programme directly responds to the needs of our communities.



"Parks are a vital resource for our residents in a dense built up borough like Islington. They are a vital hub where our diverse communities can come together to relax, play and keep healthy. Events in our parks are a vital way of bringing people into parks and engaging with all parts of our community, helping to build community cohesion and reduce social isolation. We will continue to support and encourage community events in our parks that are such an important part of Islington life."

Councillor Claudia Webbe

Islington Lead Member for Environment and Transport

As well as bringing residents out of their houses to walk around in the fresh air and meet face-to-face, events create a sense of ownership and help reduce anti-social behaviour (ASB). Most ASB and criminal activity requires a degree of privacy, and a well-used park lessens the opportunity for this.

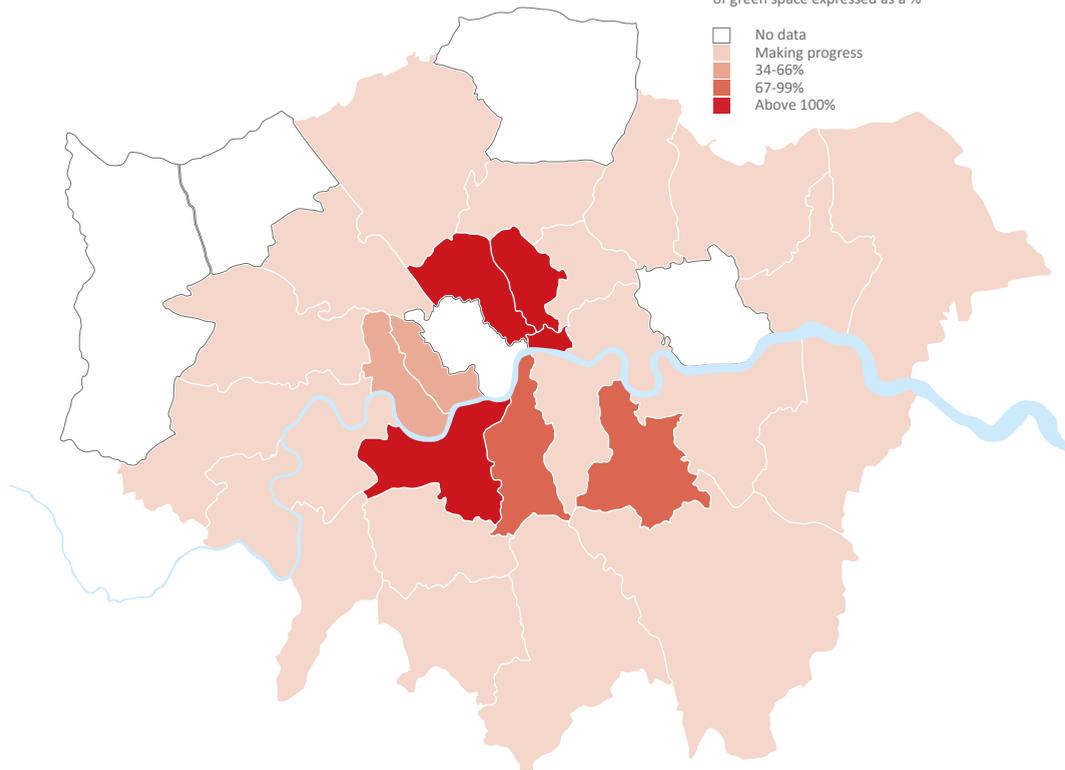
Our events provide educational opportunities across the school years with outdoor classrooms and forest schools and volunteering opportunities at community events to improve employability.

Our parks also host a number of events in parks run on a commercial basis, which bring in some commercial income. This helps us to protect core services, including parks maintenance and park-keeping, at a time when budgets face ongoing funding cuts.



Events

Number of events per managed ha
of green space expressed as a %



5

Health, fitness and well-being

Health, fitness and well-being are inevitably linked to green spaces and parks. Numerous studies point to health benefits from contact with nature, indicating a reduction in mental illnesses, lower risk of mortality and reduced rates of non-communicable diseases and improvement of overall general health and a person's immune system. The health, fitness and well-being criterion incorporates two sub-criteria for assessment:

1. Capital Growth Sites and Outdoor Gyms provision for each Borough.

Capital Growth comprises the largest food growing network in London, with over 2,500 members across all 33 Boroughs. Capital Growth aims to encourage food growing in London at all levels - at home, as part of an allotment, in a community group, a school or a park. The programme was launched in 2008 and since then it has engaged with over 100,000 volunteers, organising events and projects across London. Capital Growth provides support, training and advice for developing

skills to grow your own food in London. Joining the network is free for anyone who wishes to grow food in a plot that is at least one square metre. The network also provides support for gardens to generate income, offering training on growing enterprise, organising a bi-annual marketplace for schools which links them with local eateries. Boroughs which have Capital Growth sites are considered to be innovative in and supportive of alternative means of food production, and healthy and balanced lifestyle and diet for their residents.

2. Outdoor gyms have been rising in popularity in recent years providing a more accessible alternative to indoor membership gyms.

Outdoor exercise has been recognised to provide numerous benefits to local communities, including sunlight and fresh air, improved mental health and overall improvement in general health. Outdoor gyms are recognised by communities to be free and accessible for all social groups, due to their inherent flexibility (they are accessible 24/7). Having outdoor gym provision indicates a pro-active and responsive Borough, with green spaces which promote healthy and active lifestyles.

"The only way you can get your head away with it is to do something else to take your mind off of it, and gardening really, really does help. I've fought so many problems while I'm cutting the hazel bushes. I feel like I've had a full-blown conversation in my head, and that is helping now; otherwise I would just be sitting at home watching TV with my dog, and I would be probably doubled over. This should be given to the doctors. It should be prescribed by doctors!"

Green Gym volunteer

"My life has changed completely. I know it sounds absolutely ridiculous. There is hope out there. There is, there really is. And I've got somewhere to go."

Green Gym volunteer

"There is growing evidence that being active outdoors improves people's health and general well-being. Our Green Gym programme and other activities enable Camden residents to get the maximum benefit from the parks and green spaces we look after. I hope many more people take up this opportunity."

Councillor Adam Harrison
Cabinet Member for Improving Camden's Environment



Photo from Left to right: Councillor Harrison (Cabinet Member for Improving Camden's Environment), Alice Brock, Aglae Froment, Lily Burton and Sophie Jess

Parks and green spaces are vital for the health and wellbeing of people in Camden. We work with public health, sports and community partners, to provide a range of opportunities for individuals and groups to get active outdoors.

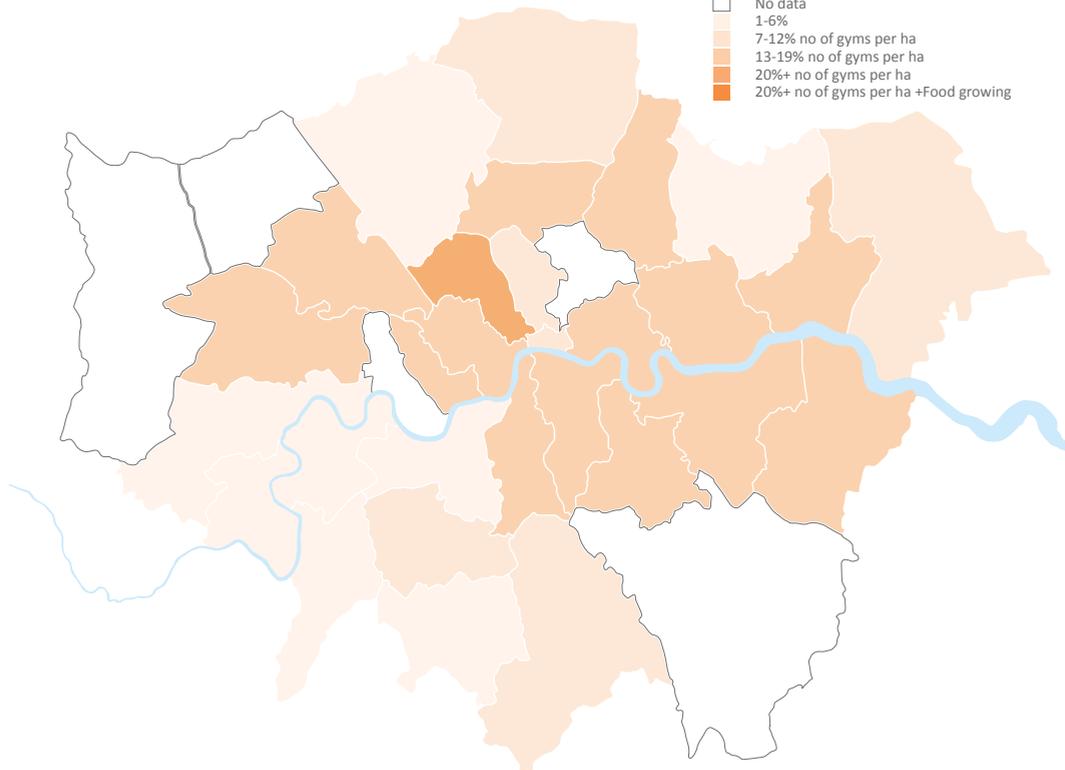
Central to this is the Camden Green Gym programme, which provides volunteering opportunities that support nature conservation as well as benefitting the health and wellbeing of participants. Working with the Trust for Conservation Volunteers, we provide activities five days a week across the Borough ranging from wildflower meadow creation to footpath repair. The Green Gym helps participants to become more independent, developing skills and confidence as well as maximising the reach of the project. Because of this work our nature reserves are now fully managed by volunteer groups. Overall, volunteering numbers in Camden have increased 10% year on year with 7,000 hours contributed last year. More than 80% of participants reported an increase in physical activity and almost 70% an improvement in their wellbeing as a result of their involvement.

Alongside the Green Gym, we provide a range of physical activities across our sites including outdoor gyms, ball courts, play areas and skate facilities. We work alongside our partners to identify areas of need and new models for delivery to benefit residents. This includes the community managed astroturf pitch in the heart of London which uses funds from private bookings to support local youth sessions and activities.



Health, fitness & well-being

-  No data
-  1-6%
-  7-12% no of gyms per ha
-  13-19% no of gyms per ha
-  20%+ no of gyms per ha
-  20%+ no of gyms per ha +Food growing





Supporting nature

Maintaining and supporting natural environment is something recognised at a national and international level. Allocating and protecting land for natural and wildlife habitats helps to preserve biodiversity within our cities, contributing to a balanced environment and sustainability. In an increasingly urbanised environment, it is sometimes difficult for species to survive. Therefore, it is essential for land managers to adopt measures which prevent this and to ensure they provide spaces where local wildlife can thrive. Not only does this help balance the local ecological life, but it also contributes to developing learning experiences for young children from primary schools that regularly visit such sites as part of school curriculum.

Supporting nature considers four sub-criteria: Area of Borough designated as Local Wildlife, Number of Borough Local Wildlife Sites under positive management, if the Borough has a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and whether the Borough has parks with management plans with BAP objectives (as a % of total parks).

The London Plan has identified the need to protect biodiversity and to provide opportunities for access to nature. There are various sites of importance which are considered significant for wildlife and biodiversity in London; at a Metropolitan, Borough and Local level, which need to be protected. The London Wildlife Sites Board has identified a process of selection for such sites. London's most important wildlife sites are recognised by the Mayor of London and London Borough's as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). There are over 1,400 SINCs in London, covering nearly 20% of London.

For SINCs which are under positive management, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs publishes an historic list which identifies local sites which are being managed to preserve their nature conservation interest.

A BAP is an internationally recognised plan addressing threatened species and habitats and is designed to protect and restore biological systems.

Demonstrating high scores in these criteria would showcase a Borough's initiative towards preserving local wildlife and biodiversity, which is an integral step to providing a balanced natural environment which will benefit both wildlife and local communities.

"For the majority of people a park is a place to feel closer to nature. People appreciate increased biodiversity and natural habitats and the opportunity to see plants and creatures that cannot be supported by simple municipal grassland."

Ann Kingsbury

Chair of the Lambeth Parks and Green Spaces Forum



"We're an inner-city borough meaning many of Lambeth's residents have limited access to wildlife and biodiversity at home, work or school, yet we all know that access to nature can be hugely beneficial in improving quality of life, physical wellbeing and mental health. So we are fully focussed on ensuring Lambeth's parks and open spaces deliver for residents by offering access to a wide range of ecosystems and wildlife habitats. I'm incredibly proud of what we have achieved as a council and community to both realise and sustain this."

Cllr Sonia Winifred

Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture, Lambeth

Raj Mistry, Lambeth's Director of Environment, said:

"We're working incredibly hard to improve, protect and highlight Lambeth's parks and open spaces. Supporting nature isn't just about projects to boost local wildlife and maintain their habitats; it's also about creating healthy and diverse ecosystem that help deliver significant and lasting benefits for people in terms of improving air quality, reducing flooding and promoting healthy living. Our parks and open spaces are vital to how we deliver these ecosystem services right on our customer's doorsteps."

Brockwell Park

A large and valuable open space serving over 3 million visitors annually, not just from Brixton, Herne Hill, Tulse Hill and other parts of Lambeth, but equally for residents of neighbouring Southwark and even further afield in London. The park has witnessed a wide range of improvements, not only for the people who use it, but also for nature that lives there and visits it through the year. The park's impressive chain of four ponds have benefited as part of a recent Heritage Lottery-funded restoration programme, which opened them up to improve light access and ground cover, as well as improving water quality and flows. The ponds are a haven for numerous wild birds and invertebrates, as well as amphibians and fish, and have become one

of the hottest spots in Lambeth for foraging bats with over six species have been recorded over the ponds in Brockwell Park, no doubt helped by the abundance of flying invertebrates, avoidance of chemical pesticides and a high diversity of marginal and aquatic habitats.

However, the rest of Brockwell Park is equally important for nature, and a series of initiatives are in place to sustain this, in partnership with the Brockwell Park Community Partners (BPCP) and other stakeholders. This includes not only the continual planting and laying of over 200 metres of native species boundary hedging, and over 100 native trees, but also a grassland management regime which has progressively relaxed the intensity of mowing in appropriate locations. This has resulted in large areas of the park being dominated by meadow grassland favoured by insects, seed/insect eating birds like green woodpeckers, and small mammals like voles and shrews. Predatory birds such as kestrels and sparrowhawks can now be seen regularly quartering the park searching for these small mammals and other prey over meadows or along woodland edges. A charming walled Old English Garden lies in the middle of the park, which is now increasingly managed to benefit wildlife, with the increased use of native species and those that are beneficial to pollinators like bees and moths.

7

Community involvement

Communities play a significant role in parks' development and maintenance and therefore creating the opportunity for them to be involved is extremely important. Friends Groups can also play a key role in facilitating communication between communities, the public sector, businesses and civil society to create better parks and green spaces. Having the presence of such groups within a Borough can help local communities to benefit from local and national funding opportunities.

Community involvement is assessed according to three sub- criteria: Community Green Flag Awards, number of Friends Groups and having a Borough-wide Friends Group Forum.

Community Green Flag Award assesses similar criteria to the Green Flag Awards; however they are managed by community groups. This gives an indication of the involvement of local community groups in managing and maintaining local green spaces to a certain standard which can be measured and, if necessary, improved on. The London Green Spaces Friends Groups Network was

established in 2009, with around 80 Friends Groups. Today, the network has over 600+ local Friends Groups and Borough-wide Friends Forums for public green spaces across London are gradually being set up. The Network shares information, good practice and works to ensure parks and green spaces in London are adequately resourced. Some of the main aims of the network include:

- Protecting and promoting green spaces
- Improving and enhancing the quality of green spaces
- Expanding the amount of green space generally
- Improving staffing and management
- Seeking adequate resources for all green spaces (capital and revenue)
- Ensuring the involvement of Friends/Users groups as partners in the management of their parks and green spaces.

Experience has shown that Friends Groups with a Borough-wide network are more strategic in their thinking and more effective in supporting parks across their Borough. They are also helpful in sharing good practice across Borough boundaries.



"After a Borough-wide consultation, Richmond Council made parks and open spaces one of its top priorities. We work collaboratively with the community and friend's groups, as well as consulting with residents to maintain the high-standards of our parks and open spaces."

Yvonne Kelleher
Richmond Parks Services Manager

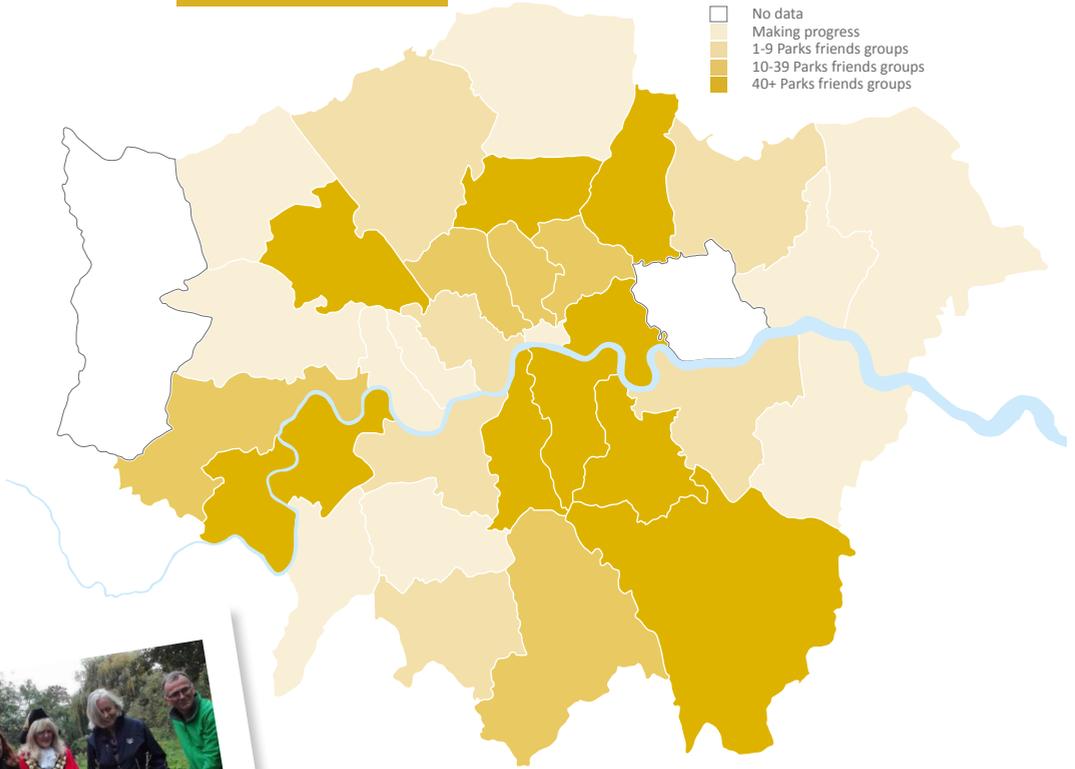


"Community engagement is integral to everything we do. We commission a charity South West London Environment Network to support friend's groups and help them achieve their aims. The Council recently consulted with friend's groups on their aspirations for their parks to help friends groups develop 'Vision Plans'. These Plans are being adopted into park management plans and supplementary planning guidance (Village Plans). We are also working with friend's groups on a 'friendly parks for all' programme with particular emphasis

Cllr P Fleming
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Community involvement

- No data
- Making progress
- 1-9 Parks friends groups
- 10-39 Parks friends groups
- 40+ Parks friends groups



*Friends of River Crane
with the mayor*

8

Skills Development

Parks staff deal with developing and maintaining high quality public gardens, sports grounds and green communal areas. Apprentices are trained in various fields of expertise including horticulture, cultivation, design, landscape management, and soil science pest control. Such training can provide young people and career changers with invaluable skills with which they can progress in life, ultimately providing a chance for a successful future career in the diverse world of parks management.

Increasing the number of apprentices will inevitably help to overcome some of the skills shortage in this sector, leading to better quality parks green spaces within Boroughs.

Recent changes to the way apprenticeships are funded and developed is creating new opportunities for Boroughs to rebuild their skill sets for land management at every level.

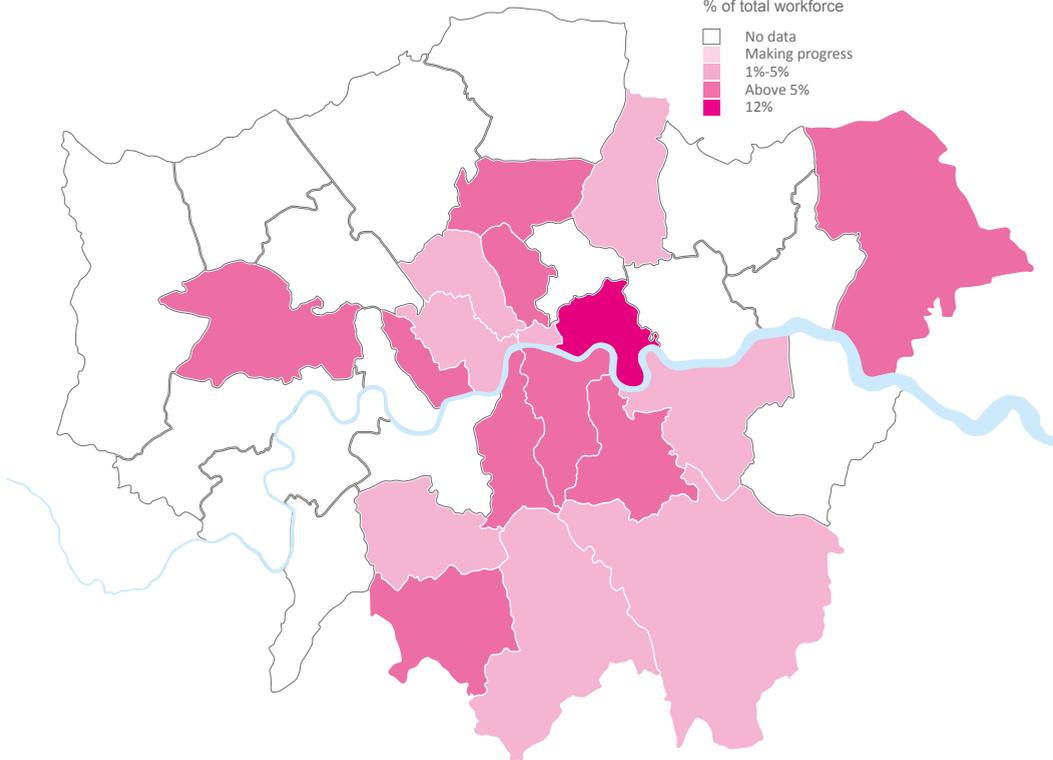
Skills development is measured by the number of park apprentices as a percentage of total workforce.

Southwark's contract with idverde places a high value on a well-trained and skilled workforce able to deliver the very best standards of landscape maintenance, currently 90% of the workforce have achieved NVQ Level 2 qualifications, 40% NVQ Level 3 and a further 20% currently working towards achieving Level 3. Within the workforce there are five apprentice posts based in the Council's major parks, working alongside the respective Head Gardener. These apprentices are recruited locally through partnerships formed with local schools and colleges, progressing through NVQ's Level 2 and 3 with many apprentices able to secure permanent roles on the contract following the conclusion of their training.

Idverde have a dedicated Community Development Manager in Southwark, supporting and developing structured volunteer opportunities across the Borough's parks and green Spaces. In 2017 idverde facilitated an impressive 18,543 volunteer hours, through work placements, Friends and Community Dig the Park sessions and corporate volunteer days.

Skills Development

Park apprenticeships as a
% of total workforce



9

Sustainability

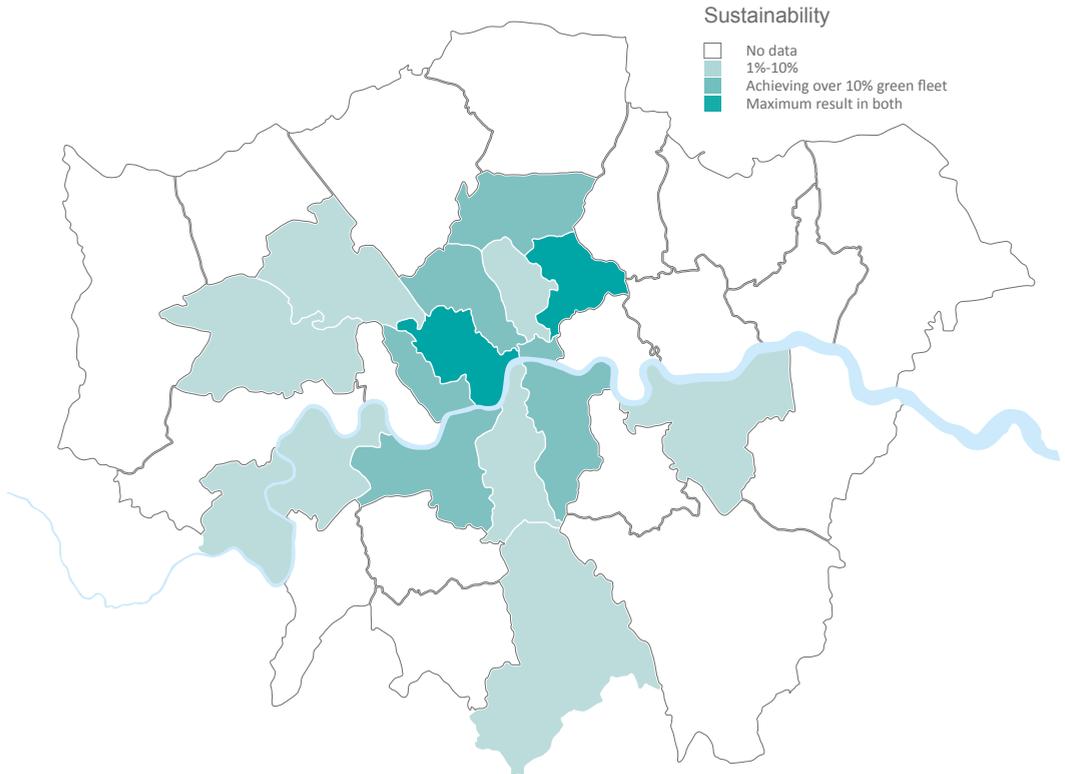
Sustainability is an important issue not only for local authorities, but for the nation and the world. Climate change is increasingly pressing us all to adopt more measures to combat future negative consequences. Parks and green spaces contribute highly towards battling climate change, often described as the “lungs” of our cities. However, diesel machinery can lead to an increase in air pollution and excessive noise so using electric kit will help to improve these problems.

Demonstrating measures to address this issue is a clear indicator that a Borough is committed to create truly sustainable parks and green spaces which can positively contribute to our city.

Therefore, this criterion assesses the percentage of green fleet and the percentage of battery operated equipment for parks in Boroughs which will contribute to reducing air and noise pollution.

Hackney Council’s hand tools are now 100% electric. This includes all hedge trimmers, strimmers and blowers. All of Hackney’s line marking is undertaken by electric vehicles, and the service operates two electric buggies. In addition, it operates an electric ice cream van in Clissold Park.





10 Strategic Planning



'Well managed, quality parks with good facilities are essential in helping to improve and maintain optimum physical health and wellbeing. Lewisham's open spaces contribute massively to the overall liveability of London; this has been achieved by effective working partnerships with its service partners and friends groups who have worked tirelessly to ensure that our parks are fit for the future and are amongst the best that London offers.'

Kevin Sheehan

Executive Director for Customer Services, Lewisham

Strategic Planning is a key criterion as it demonstrates the Borough's commitment to strategic long-term management and improvement of parks and green spaces. The two documents considered are a Borough's green/open/infrastructure space strategy and a Borough's Asset Management Plan.

The strategies look at the Boroughs' current supply of parks and green spaces with the aim of ensuring that their infrastructure reflects the shared vision of the authority and its partners. The Strategy shows the steps which are needed to ensure the provision of parks and green spaces is achieved and maintained in the long-term and details how sustainability will be accomplished for these spaces to serve future generations.

Asset Management Plans sets out a Borough's approach to managing its assets, which may include buildings, car parks, public monuments and open spaces. The document provides the connection to the technical and operational details that underpin the overall strategy of the Borough. The plan offers a framework for decision-making, delivery of resources and improving quality and value for money.

'We believe that our established working relationship with the council has improved the management of the parks and green spaces and, effective communication is helping keep the borough moving forward, producing shared goals and positive outcomes.'

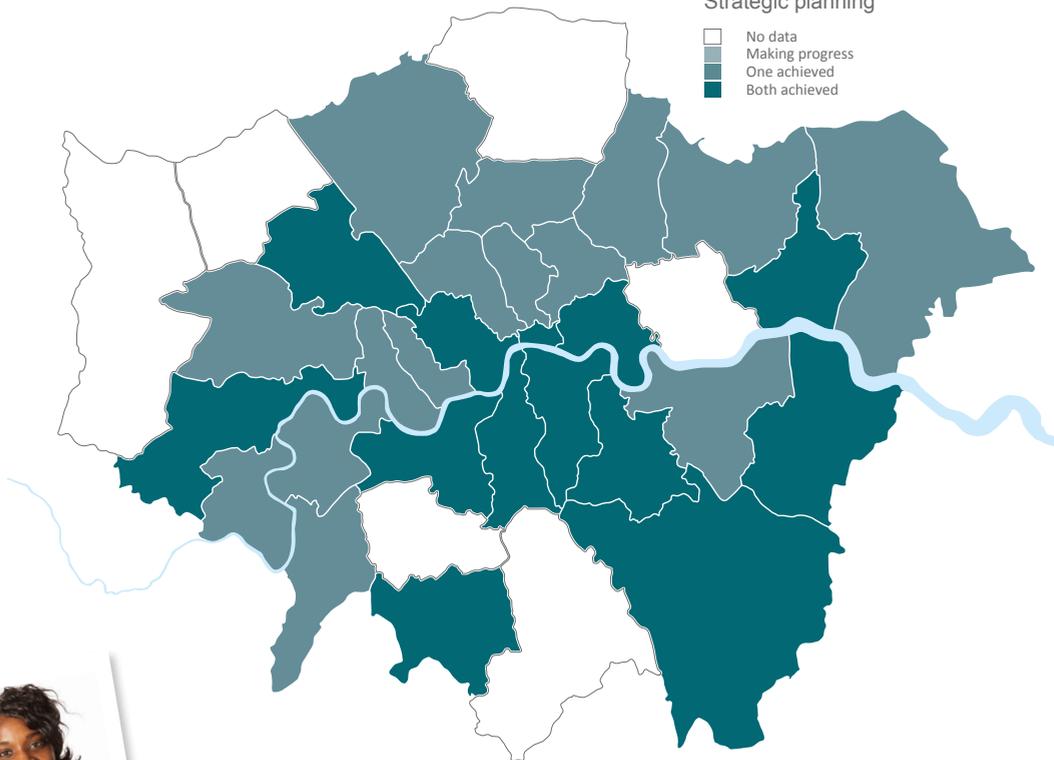


Anne Slater

Chair of Lewisham Green Spaces Forum

Strategic planning

- No data
- Making progress
- One achieved
- Both achieved



'Lewisham Council is proud of its many excellent parks and open spaces and is especially grateful for the hard work and dedication of our friends and user groups in helping manage and maintain them for the benefit of all.'

Cllr Rachel Onikosi

Cabinet Member for Public Realm, Lewisham



A vibrant green-tinted photograph of a park. In the background, a tall, modern building with a distinctive top section is visible. The middle ground is filled with various trees, some with bright yellow-green foliage. In the foreground, a black metal fence runs along a path, and a person is walking on the path to the left. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

PART TWO

Local authorities are not the only organisations that manage parks & green spaces in London. Read on to find out more about:

1. London's signature parks & green spaces
2. Landscape contractors
3. Capel Manor College
4. Valuing our parks & green spaces
5. Good practice examples

Signature parks & green spaces

City of London

Green space beyond the square mile

Over 23 million people visit our 11,000 acres of nationally and internationally recognised green spaces in and beyond the City of London each year, including Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches. Along with managing the conservation of these incredible and diverse spaces, we concentrate on making a positive and meaningful impact on the communities and visitors who use them. We also create engaging opportunities to connect people, particularly from deprived and urban communities more powerfully to their local green spaces.

We are concerned that London's children are becoming increasingly disconnected from the natural world, and we know children from deprived areas of London face more barriers than most to accessing nature. Our green spaces are often located near areas of high deprivation which makes us uniquely placed to tackle this challenge head on. Our goal is to get people outdoors to experience the great feeling of being in green spaces and the vast range of health benefits this brings.

Our range of school visits, play programmes, community engagement projects and volunteer opportunities have reached over 40,000 people in the last year alone.

- 900 volunteers have contributed over 50,000 hours this year
- 41,857 children and young people have engaged with our spaces
- 32,681 families have visited and taken part in activities

Wild East Project

Working at our East London green spaces – West Ham Park and Wanstead Flats, we want to create a sense of place and ownership of green spaces in the community. Inspiring people to be involved, engaged and active in championing and shaping these green spaces is our aim. Often people use green spaces but don't know the stories behind them or how important they are to the communities and wildlife. Through the project we bring communities and families using green spaces close to those stories to inspire a deeper connection.

We tell these incredible stories using mobile interpretation tricycles (think ice cream bike with fun activities instead) and include themes like 'The last skylarks in London' and 'East London's toughest bird'. This approach flips traditional interpretation on its head by bringing green spaces and their stories to people, rather than people coming to them.



Beech Gardens, the Barbican Estate



St Andrew Holborn Garden

Signature parks & green spaces

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

The 10,000 acre Lee Valley Regional Park has a variety of green spaces which stretch 26 miles, from the heart of east London and into Essex and Hertfordshire. Of the 7.1 million annual visits to the park, the majority are to these green locations where diverse communities get to enjoy the great outdoors and the very best in nature.

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority which runs the park has been focusing on how it can maximise the potential from its open spaces by generating commercial revenue from them and at the same time attract more visitors.

Ten spaces within the park are being specifically promoted as outdoor event venues available for hire. This year for example, external events within the park's open spaces included:

- Cancer Research UK's Race for Life women's only competition, the first in a new three-year contract with Cancer Research UK which saw 454 participants take part.
- Percolate, a dance music festival which attracted 3,000 people, the majority of them in the 18-30 year old category. The Authority's events team is currently in negotiations about an even bigger music event for next summer, which is expected to attract up to 8,000 young visitors.
- Lee Valley Bank Holiday Country Fair, which took place in August in partnership with Oakleigh, an organisation which specialises in rural events.

The Authority's drive to generate revenue from its open spaces forms part of its wider commitment to reduce its reliance on the taxpayer, which partly funds its work. Over the last 50 years, it has utterly transformed what was a neglected and contaminated valley into a world class leisure destination. An Act of Parliament on 1 January 1967 led to the creation of the Authority and included the provision of a levy on all households in London, Essex and Hertfordshire. This was originally through rates and is now through council tax. It works out to 88p per person per year. Through the adoption of a community focused and commercially driven

business philosophy, the levy has decreased for seven consecutive years while it was frozen a year before that. Five years ago the Authority relied on the levy for 65% of its budget but following consecutive reductions, this figure is now only 35%. However, keeping in mind its business ethos, income from the hire of open spaces is reinvested into the park by the Authority to ensure that these treasured sites can continue to be enjoyed and improved for the future.

Countryside Live

For the past 15 years, the heart of east London has hosted one of the capital's most unusual events which turns an urban part of London into something of a bustling country village with farm animals, markets and traditional activities on display. The annual Countryside Live event, which takes place at Leyton Marsh, is a unique coming together of town and country, giving Londoners a taste of rural life in their own back yard. It also forms a key part of the work of Lee Valley Regional Park Authority to give people across London and the wider region opportunities to experience the great outdoors in as many ways as possible and benefit from the related health benefits that this can bring.

Countryside Live is divided into two sections. The first two days are for schools. This year, 2,600 primary school aged children attended for free and had an opportunity to take part in hands-on activities such as willow weaving, wood work and mini beast hunting. They also got the chance to get close to farm animals and watch displays involving dogs and falcons and even a sheep-shearing show.

The final two days are open to the public attracting a range of ages and communities, many of whom do not get opportunities to sample country life. In addition to the rural activities and displays on offer this year's event saw a drive to increase the range of visitors that attend by offering attractions such as a farmer's market, a bar and stalls selling a variety of local produce.

The event is run in partnership with Countryside Learning, a national charity that aims to bring engage communities with the countryside, particularly those living in urban areas. New attractions are already being considered for next year to increase the reach of this event so that even more people can sample rural life in the heart of the city.



Countryside Live Schools Event
- Cubit Town

Signature parks & green spaces

Thamesmead

London's Largest housing landscapes

Located in SE London and east of Woolwich lies Thamesmead. Developed by the GLC in the 1960's as a visionary approach to solving the housing crisis of the time Thamesmead is now undergoing a renaissance as London's New Town. Thamesmead has many striking characteristics such as brutalist architecture, scale (central London would fit into its boundaries), an extensive Thames frontage (including basking seals at low tide) and an early history of armaments dating back to the Napoleonic era.

Perhaps its strongest and best loved feature is its extensive as a key feature and seen as vital in creating a healthy and attractive living environment. Today there are 150 hectares of greenspace including five neighbourhood parks and 14 sites of nature conservation interest. Within this there is an extraordinary network of canals and lakes that runs through Thamesmead and manages most of the surface water runoff from buildings, roads and landscape. The seven km of canals and five lakes act as a huge Suds system and have the

potential to become true blue infrastructure working in tandem with the greenspace creating opportunities for recreation, biodiversity and connectivity.

In 2014 Peabody acquired Thamesmead and has been working up proposals to regenerate the town including building 20,000 new homes. An area of focus is its green and blue infrastructure with Phil Askew leading for Peabody as Director of Landscape and Placemaking. Phil will be leading the development of a green infrastructure strategy that guides development, regeneration and management of this asset in the future.

The future landscape of Thamesmead will be its defining feature and provide one of the greenest living environments in London.

Dr Phil Askew,
Director Landscape & Placemaking, Peabody



Signature parks & green spaces

The Royal Parks

Hyde Park Nursery

The Royal Parks (TRP) charity look after eight of London's largest open spaces; Hyde, The Green, Richmond, Greenwich, St James's, Bushy and The Regent's Parks, and Kensington Gardens. We also manage other important parks in the capital including Grosvenor Square Garden, Brompton Cemetery, Victoria Tower Gardens, Canning Green and Poet's Corner.

In 2017, they took over the role of managing the parks from The Royal Parks Agency – a former executive agency of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), as well as fundraising and some education from the Royal Parks Foundation. The two organisations joined forces to create our charity and bring together the best of fundraising, education and park management.

The parks are owned by the Crown with their responsibility resting with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The Royal Parks charity manages the parks on behalf of the government.

The Royal Parks has just completed the construction of a new plant nursery production unit in Hyde Park. Each year TRP require some 500k plants of up to 2,000 varieties for seasonal and permanent planting across their eight parks.

This £5m capital investment has arisen because the existing nursery facilities built in the 1960's had become dilapidated and production of much seasonal planting was being grown off site. Most commercial nurseries grow a maximum of 100 varieties compared to the 2,000 varieties we require. TRP were simply not prepared to sacrifice the exacting standards and variety of horticultural excellence that millions of visitors each year have come to expect. The decision was therefore to either completely outsource growing in the knowledge that commercial nurseries could only supply a relatively limited range of plants or to rebuild the Hyde Park nursery and concentrate all production on a single site.

The nursery has been constructed by Deforche Construct NV and Climate Controls Ltd. It will be the first major glasshouse production facility in the UK to use Deforche Cabrio technology which, much like the roof at Wimbledon, can open and close dependent on the fickle British weather.

The nursery will continue to be operated by the same experienced team led by Steve Edwards and Mike Jones who have together been responsible for TRP plant production for a combined total of more than 60 years!

The new nursery will deliver many additional benefits:

- As well as growing about 98% of our plants, it will also help reduce lorry movements (carbon footprint) and reduce our need to buy-in plants from elsewhere in the UK.
- It will save TRP an estimated £200,000 per year through energy efficiency and wastage, and reduced transportation costs.
- 99% of materials from the demolished nursery were recycled and the space currently occupied by the vacated Regents Park nursery will be used for a new purpose.
- The opening roof will help acclimatise young plants, so they don't have to be moved outside for hardening off, saving on labour and maximising space. Thermal screens reduce night time heat loss.
- The internal mobile bench layouts significantly increase the growing space by 50% allowing production to be delivered from a single site.
- Other features of the glasshouse include a rainwater recovery system, LED lighting throughout, and modernised boilers to make them more energy efficient.
- The glasshouse is split into 14 different sections all with the latest climate control technology so plants can have the climate tailored to their needs.
- It will provide education opportunities for Royal Park's apprentices and the local community through workshops and open days.



Hyde Park Nursery – roof open
Photo credit Mike Jones



Hyde Park Nursery – Buckingham Palace geranium standard production. Photo credit Mike Jones

Signature parks & green spaces

Queen Elizabeth
Olympic Park

Free to enter and open all year round, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park now attracts over five million visitors a year. The 560 acre Park has received a Green Flag Award every year since 2014, with a summer 2017 public satisfaction rating of 9/10.



South Park Gardens & Stadium

South Park Gardens and Stadium

Home to many of the iconic buildings from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games – such as the London Aquatics Centre and the ArcelorMittal Orbit - the Park's award-winning transformation now includes playgrounds, fountains, pleasure gardens, woodlands, meadows, waterways and a wide range of places to eat and drink. Walking and boat tours of the Park are available, as well as a range of free trails, the world's longest tunnel slide at the ArcelorMittal Orbit, and even swan pedalo hire in the summer!

The Park continues to host high profile international events, including the IAAF World Athletics and Para Athletics Championships in 2017. The London Stadium is the home of West Ham United FC and UK Athletics, as well as major music concerts; and future events across the Park include the 2018 International Table Tennis Federation Team World Cup, the Hockey Women's World Cup 2018 and the Six Day Cycling event. The Park also hosts a range of smaller events, including free community get togethers in the summer.

An ideal place to keep fit, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is a regular venue for outdoor running and cycling challenges, and has eight Santander Cycle docking stations, as well as free outdoor gym equipment. The state-of-the-art facilities inside the Park's venues include 50m and 25m swimming pools; a Community Athletics Track; two gyms; a diving pool and dry-diving facilities; a velodrome, BMX and mountain bike trails and a road cycling circuit; two hockey pitches; and ten tennis courts.

Those not interested in sport may enjoy spotting the 60 species of bird or 250 types of insect which live in the Park's nature reserves, or one of the Park's 29 permanent artworks. The Park is also a test bed for a range of innovative technologies – from being the first urban Park to offer all visitors free wifi, to trialling autonomous vehicles. It is designed to high sustainability standards – for example, almost half of the Park's water demands are met by reclaimed or recycled water.

Accessible to all, the Park has step-free access, hard-standing surfaces, regular seating and Blue Badge car parking for each of the venues. Our Park Champion volunteers run a daily mobility service on the Park allowing visitors to hire a wheelchair, mobility scooter, have a sighted guide or take a ride on the Park Mobility buggy.

The first residents have already moved into Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park's new housing, with 24,000 homes to be created in and around the Park by 2031. Two new business districts have also opened on the Park, which will be home to 40,000 jobs by 2025. In transport Zone 2, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is less than 10 minutes from central London, with excellent public transport links. **For more information, visit QueenElizabethOlympicPark.co.uk.**



Landscape contractors

idverde

A whole system approach

A new way forward for parks services?

idverde is Europe's largest specialist green service provider, offering grounds maintenance, landscape construction, arboriculture, street cleansing, cemeteries management, waterways management and other related services. What many don't realise though, is that idverde also delivers biodiversity management, consultancy and landscape design, and even fully-managed, whole system parks services for public sector clients.

Facing the pressures of continued budget cuts to parks services alongside our clients - and reaching the point where it's hard to envisage cutting back any further on what's considered 'essential' - we've looked for new ways of working, and created a model which could revolutionise the way that we all manage our parks. Nowhere else in the country is this new model better represented than right here in the capital, in the London Borough of Bromley.

London's largest and possibly greenest borough has a long history of finding innovative solutions to asset management. In 1969 Bromley introduced its first computerised grounds maintenance work sheets; in 1975 it ventured into self-management for its allotments and by 1992 Bromley had placed all its in-house gardening services within the private sector. Throughout the next decade it delegated control of its sports pitches to local clubs and transferred all 52 allotments and leisure gardens to individual plot-holder management committees. Mid-way to the Millennium, all the Council's 10 bowling greens and buildings were handed over to their long-loyal clubs.



idverde - Grounds Maintenance



CREATING AND MAINTAINING LANDSCAPES

idverde has delivered traditional grounds maintenance services in Bromley since 2007. When faced with significant further cuts to services in 2015, the Council and idverde identified an opportunity to take an approach to greenspace management which would improve quality and community involvement, whilst reducing costs. The result was the creation of a comprehensive parks management service which formed a partnership between contractor and council across all elements of parks services.

This new approach gives idverde day-to-day responsibility for the management and development of a diverse estate of 165 urban parks, country estates, woodlands and commons – each with their own unique challenges. The remit spans everything from play provision, landscape architecture, hard surface assets, events, environmental education, biodiversity, fundraising, outdoor sports, allotments, friends' groups and just about everything else with the prefix 'stakeholder' in between!

Initially some stakeholders were sceptical that idverde could deliver such a prospect. There were concerns about whether it could be done well enough, and worries that all the good relationships, goodwill and pragmatic enterprise in the Borough would get lost in pursuit of the dreaded profit margin.

Two and a half years on, the initial nervousness has morphed into a realisation that a publicly-acclaimed, more effective, leaner, (and cheaper) service has evolved. There are now ever-quicker responses, since

the contractor is the listener, the empathiser, the procurer and the deliverer. The Council has saved £0.5m a year and nearly 50% of stakeholders agree that quality of service has improved.

With the appointment of a Business Manager, burgeoning income generating strategies have evolved and new stakeholder activities emerged. Working with partner agencies, a Parks Strategy has been penned along with an Action Plan – **all of which are available to view through www.bromleyparks.co.uk**. A Volunteer Development Strategy is encouraging the entire community to take an interest in their local greenspaces. idverde has partnered with the RSPB to provide a staff member supporting biodiversity and working with local communities.

Tools, PPE and training have long been provided – but by building on a partnership of Council, stakeholders and contractor seeking to engage and empower a younger, broader audience – this might just make the news soon!



Bromley – community activities

landscape contractors

Glendale

A partnership in practice

Glendale's partnership with Lewisham Council began in 2000 and was the first of our contracts to combine events management and sports development with traditional grounds maintenance. This year, to date we have held 76 key events in Lewisham's parks and open spaces, including the Blackheath fireworks display, one of London's most popular bonfire night celebrations, with an average attendance of 85,000.

In addition, the annual OnBlackheath Festival welcomes 75,000 people over the course of the three-day event which comprises music, food and entertainment. Of the revenue generated from this event, £15,000 of funding is secured and put towards improvements in the park.

Through our volunteer conservation programme Nature's Gym, residents of Richmond and Lewisham are invited to take part in free educational sessions to participate in nature conservation activities, while socialising and keeping active. Activities range from planting trees to building bug hotels, and provide benefits for both the green spaces and those volunteering.



Ladywell Fields

Volunteering at Ladywell Fields

Every Saturday, over 200 children take part in the Lewisham Primary School Football League in Blackheath, which was established to provide sporting opportunities for young people. We have also refurbished abandoned buildings to provide venues for independent cafes, which has led to a reduction in anti-social behaviour. To safeguard the future of parks it's critical that we capitalise on opportunities to increase visitors, and raise funds that can be put back into the parks to ensure they remain sustainable places for people to enjoy using for generations to come.



Lewisham Nature Conservation



London's land based college

Capel Manor

Capel Manor, London's leading land-based college, offers outstanding and inspirational land-based learning opportunities to Londoners. Capel has study centres at Enfield; Brooks Farm, Leyton; Crystal Palace Park, Bromley; Gunnersbury Park, Acton; New Covent Garden Market and Regents Park in central London.

Its Foundation Degree in Urban Green Space management, wide-ranging Apprenticeships and full and part-study provides Londoners with the essential knowledge and skills needed to enhance and conserve wildlife habitats, improve accessibility to green space and widen participation in outdoor activities and enjoyment of the outdoors.

London's green infrastructure needs to be planned, managed, funded and shared by an increasingly diverse population. The Urban Green Space Management Foundation Degree was devised in collaboration between the College and the green space industry and is supported by employers. The programme embeds employability with key skills such as finance, people

management and events, with bio-security at its core. An integrated approach to study combines advanced horticultural knowledge and green space management skills with practical projects and work experience. Students graduate equipped with wide-ranging and up-to-date skills, practical experience of working in the green space arena and with transferrable skills needed to be employable. This makes them highly effective and well-placed to meet the future challenges of delivering the green spaces that London both needs and deserves.

Capel Manor College's Chair of Governors, Roger McClure, says *"The Mayor's vision of a green metropolis, fit to live in, is going to require a lot of people with 'green' and 'nature' skills of every kind, and in abundance. Skills to maintain and develop the stock of trees, the vast expanses of grass and flowers, to design and renew the planting of gardens, to carry out research on the best ways forward and on new techniques, for example in curbing pollution and growing food in London, to look after the capital's animals whether at home, in special reserves, in breeding or in veterinary practices."*



Capel Manor College Foundation Degree student

Valuing our parks & green spaces

Natural Capital in practice

Unlocking the value of London's greenspace assets

We've known for some time that parks are good for people. We have a welter of evidence to demonstrate the economic social and environmental benefits that accrue from good quality green space. Parks are places of employment and entrepreneurialism and are places where people acquire new skills; parks are places to stay healthy and act as the glue that binds communities together; parks moderate flood risk, pollution and urban warming and support bio-diversity.

But up to now, we haven't been able to describe the financial value of these benefits. This is important because pressures on public sector funding are making it increasingly difficult for parks asset managers to continue to deliver these important outcomes. The Corporate Natural Capital Accounting (CNCA) reports that we have prepared for Barnet and Barking and Dagenham Councils provide the evidence that public asset managers in both boroughs need to make the case for investing in green infrastructure.

The CNCA process assesses the quality of greenspace assets and the value of outcomes that they support. These outcomes include the impact of greenspace on property values, employment, current and future health costs and variety of environmental indicators. The values are combined into a Natural Capital Balance Sheet that compares the value of outcomes with the costs of sustaining these outcomes over time. For the London Borough of Barnet, the CNCA demonstrates a return on investment in green infrastructure in excess of 10 to 1.

In Barking and Dagenham, where the population will increase by over 45% over the next 20 years, the CNCA was able to quantify potential avoided health costs across the borough based on increasing rates of engagement with green space services over the same period. The study also demonstrates a significant correlation between obesity levels and the quantity and quality of green space provision across the borough.

The funding available to green space services will remain under considerable pressure for the foreseeable future. The value of the CNCA process lies in creating an evidence base that can inform outcomes-based decision-making around scarce resources and the strategic alignment of greenspace services with the statutory (as opposed to discretionary) responsibilities placed on public authorities. Equipped with this data, we can be more confident that parks can be even better for people in future.

Jon Sheaff is the Director of Jon Sheaff and Associates Landscape Architects

Valuing our parks & green spaces

Natural Capital Accounting

'Natural' capital is made up of the elements of the natural environment that benefit people directly or indirectly. These include ecosystems, species, fresh water, land, minerals, the air and oceans, as well as natural processes and functions. Benefits can include goods (such as timber and food), services (such as clean air and water) and less tangible benefits such as the better health resulting from access to nature.

In an urban context, natural capital assets are our parks, rivers, trees, and features such as green roofs that collectively form an essential green infrastructure designed and managed to:

- promote healthier living
- lessen the impacts of climate change
- improve air quality and water quality
- encourage walking and cycling
- store carbon
- improve biodiversity and ecological resilience

Natural capital accounting

Although natural capital has intrinsic value, the services and benefits it provides can be described in economic terms through a process known as natural capital accounting. A **natural capital account** is a way of representing the value of natural capital alongside more traditional economic statistics by measuring its physical quantity or quality, quantifying the flow of services it provides and identifying beneficiaries from these services. A **Natural Capital Account for Public Green Spaces in London** has been published to illustrate the approach and identify the significant economic value of London's parks and green spaces.



Young Greater Spotted woodpecker
in Brockwell park

Why do we need a natural capital account for London?

- Public green spaces are essential for maintaining a good quality of life, especially in urban areas. Protecting our natural heritage and public green spaces for sport and recreation is a cornerstone of city planning policy.
- All London Boroughs maintain a network of public green spaces, even though this is a discretionary service.
- Public sector funding constraints mean all local authorities need to cut costs. The impact of this has been investigated and summarised in the **State of UK Public Parks 2016 report (PDF)** published by the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- A natural capital account can help to inform and improve decision-making by framing public green spaces as economic assets, and highlighting the range and value of benefits that they provide. This approach is supported by a national and London policy framework.

What does the natural capital account tell us?

- Reducing funding for parks and green spaces is a false economy
- London's public green spaces have a gross asset value of more than £91 billion, providing services valued at £5 billion per year
- for each £1 spent by local authorities and their partners on public green space, Londoners enjoy at least £27 in value
- Londoners avoid £950 million per year in health costs due to public green space
- the value of recreational activities is estimated to be £926 million per year
- for the average household in London, the monetary value of being near a green space is over £900 per year

Public green spaces offer other services too, such as temperature regulation and carbon storage. Green spaces in urban areas counter higher temperatures in summer months that can lead to ill health.

However, the economic benefits are not spread equally across or within London Boroughs. The account also indicates that there is a fairness and equality agenda that must be addressed in future funding and investment.

How can we act on the natural capital account?

London Boroughs face significant budgetary constraints while the demand for the services they must provide is increasing.

The boroughs, and other owners and managers of public green space, have made cost savings and implemented other efficiencies (such as shared services) to address tighter budgets. However, more needs to be done to reorganise the 'parks service' as local authorities and their partners prioritise their statutory obligations.

The Mayor has set out the ways in which he, in partnership with others, intends to help.

Promoting the natural capital accounting approach

The Government has committed to including natural capital accounts in the UK **Environmental accounts** by 2020. This means natural capital accounts can be used alongside other key indicators of economic performance.

The Natural Capital Committee has flagged the development of natural capital accounts as a signal to

decision-makers that monitoring and valuing natural assets is important. The Office for National Statistics has been charged by Government to **develop a roadmap** to enable this. They have also produced a **natural capital overview** of the work towards this objective.

The natural capital account for London's public green spaces report contributes to this work by showing that natural capital accounting makes sense in an urban context and can be applied effectively to urban green infrastructure.

Establishing a London Green Spaces Commission

The Mayor will establish a Green Spaces Commission to work with London boroughs to explore more sustainable ways of managing their parks and green space services.

The Commission will:

1. **promote the socio-economic value of London's public green space asset as a coherent and functioning infrastructure for London (for example, promoting the London Natural Capital Account)**
2. **examine the existing model of service delivery for public green spaces; highlight innovative thinking about the purpose and function of public green space; and, propose alternative approaches**
3. **determine the most suitable future models to secure long-term funding and investment for London's public green spaces**

The London Green Spaces Commission will expand upon and provide a London focus to initiatives such as **Future Parks** and **Rethinking Parks**.

Influencing Government policy

The Government has established a **Parks Action Group** following the public parks inquiry by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee. The group will make proposals to address some of the issues faced by public parks across England.

The Mayor expects his Green Spaces Commission will work closely with the Parks Action Group to ensure the best ideas and proposals are brought forward to protect public green spaces in an increasingly urbanised population.

Making London a National Park City

The natural capital account demonstrates that London's green spaces are a highly valuable asset, and investment in them provides good value for money. We know also that Londoners appreciate and demand good quality green space.

London is set to be home to over 11 million people by 2050. We will have to adapt and innovate policy, practice and the way in which we make investment decisions, to ensure we maintain and improve London's public green space.

London as a National Park City provides an opportunity to promote why and how a more integrated approach to the planning, design and delivery of a 'green infrastructure' works to bring the economic, social and environmental benefits the city and Londoners need. It will also help individuals, communities, businesses and institutions appreciate their potential to contribute to making London a greener, more resilient city.



Valuing our parks & green spaces

Green space quality manual

The green space quality manual has been designed by Parks for London to be a guide towards setting, maintaining and improving quality standards across parks, green spaces and green infrastructure. It is not intended as a technical manual, nor has it been designed to replace site management plans or specific manufacturer's instructions for maintenance. The elements of planting, infrastructure, buildings and equipment will vary from place to place and so this manual has been designed so that you can easily switch between landscape elements whilst on site.

The quality manual is presented as a tool which can help green space managers to retain their focus on quality, enabling managers to define their quality objectives and more easily and effectively monitor achievement against those objectives. By focussing on the visible evidence associated with quality outcomes, rather than the methods by which quality is achieved, the manual is intended to be equally useful to the lay person or the experienced professional. The intended audience for this manual is therefore as diverse as the potential delivery mechanisms likely to be adopted by landscape managers.



The quality manual is a living pdf document that will be updated annually. It is available digitally, allowing you to access it on the go and across different devices. Use this link to see a preview: <https://parksforlondon.org.uk/publications/quality-manual/>

Good practice examples

Ealing

The community is a key part of park life in Ealing. We are looking to expand all aspects of community involvement. Six parks with active 'Friends of' Groups have been active for over 20 years and are great example of how long term successful community partnership working and engagement helps support the management of parks and conservation areas in the Borough. Our groups have helped us:

- Apply for external funding and grants to develop and improve the parks they support.
- Support us through countless hours of volunteering. e.g. tree planting, practical work, wildlife
- surveying and clean ups.
- Leading, talks, walks and events.

The help of Corporate volunteers in Lammas Park is vitally important to our service and helps us to continue to develop our parks and nature areas. 'Friends Of' groups have been a fantastic success story for our service and during these tough times we are keen to

further support and strengthen links with our groups to improve community involvement in the future of our green spaces. In addition, we have links with a wide range of other groups and residents associations who are actively involved in their local parks.

Bubble is a website/portal which is the hub for a whole range of projects and ideas (**do something good**). It's where residents can suggest projects and be put in touch with people who can help deliver them. The 'Transfrom Your Space' initiative is part of this.

We also have local Ward forums groups run by ward councillors and officers. This is a valuable resource as each group has a budget that can be used for projects with the decision and ideas coming largely from residents. Funding is often directed at parks projects.



Good practice examples

Greenwich

The Royal Borough of Greenwich grant funds the Greenwich Parks Friends Forum to manage a summer programme of cultural events and activities (Parksfest) in parks and open spaces. This annual programme of events is co-ordinated by the Greenwich Parks Forum and is delivered by individual Friends Groups.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has developed close ties with the local community through working with Friends groups to provide this annual programme of Parksfest events which help develop a vibrant parks environment and help encourage people to revisit and enjoy their local environment.

The Parksfest events help create community cohesion by bringing local residents together to organise and enjoy outdoor events in a park setting. It also provides residents with access to cultural activities and provides opportunities for local talent to perform and develop.

The Parksfest programme provides opportunities for great free days out for local residents and visitors alike, making important contributions to our local economy and helping reinforce local connections with The Royal Borough of Greenwich.



Good practice examples

Hounslow

Green Gyms: there are a number of green gyms in Hounslow parks run in partnership with The Conservation Volunteers. A University study showed that Green Gym participants reported higher levels of well-being and lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

Working with third sector to increase skills: Hounslow is working with a social enterprise that train disadvantaged and unemployed young people in horticulture and landscape gardening and let them manage and design some of our flower beds.

Signage and interpretation joining up with physical activity: Several wooden markers are in place across Hounslow Heath, with images and facts and visitors can follow detailed maps so they walk and discover at the same time. An activity challenge encouraged over 300 visitors to tap the golden beat box to get bonus points. The trails have been created by Hounslow Council in partnership with Friends Groups, Green Gym, Nature Links, Intelligent Health and One You Hounslow.

Active Spaces: The project is part of Hounslow's Council's commitment to enhance its network of parks and green spaces and create active, healthy communities. Active Spaces is an exciting new project which aims to promote the benefits of outdoor play and physical activity on health and wellbeing. By creating high quality Active Spaces with innovative playgrounds

"Parks and open spaces play a very important role in promoting healthier living. I am delighted to see how Hounslow is at the forefront of this concept with our parks programme joining up with Public Health and the third sector to increase well-being and tackle physical inactivity".

Councillor Samia Chandhary
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Hounslow Council

and outdoor gyms, we aim to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing and increase opportunities for families to get active in their parks and green spaces. The project will be shaped by five key principles,

- Supporting residents to be more active
- Better connecting people to place, promoting healthy lifestyles, community involvement and participation in parks
- Encouraging residents and stakeholders to participate in the development of spaces which encourage physical activity
- Enhancing our network of parks and open spaces
- Monitoring and evaluation

Beat the street: Beat the street is a fun free game for the communities of Hounslow boroughwide to see how they can walk, cycle and run around their area. Parks have been included in the game.



Hounslow outdoor gym

Good practice examples

Vision Redbridge

Vision Redbridge Culture & Leisure Trust encompasses sports facilities, sport and health services, cultural facilities and services, parks and open spaces and halls for hire; offering a broad spectrum of leisure services to those that live in, work in or visit the London Borough of Redbridge.

We opened the first allotments site for many years at Wanstead Park Road Allotments and all plots were quickly rented. The site is self-sufficient as the water is powered by solar panel and wind turbine and rain water harvesting. Toilets are environmentally sustainable as they are compostable. This is one of the first eco-friendly sites in Redbridge. Wanstead Park Road Allotments, offers brilliant support for people with disabilities and raised beds have been put in to accommodate wheelchairs. Toilets have been adapted for wheelchair access and parking.

At Clayhall Park, the redundant sports pavilion was converted to provide a Dog Day Care centre which brings in a rental income each year. This is the first type of enterprise that has been seen in parks and the organisation is working with dog charities and PDSA promoting responsible dog ownership management.

Redbridge secured funding from Transport for London for bridge replacements at Valentines Park and Ray Park. Ray Park bridge in particular is especially poignant given it has been closed for almost 2 years and provides an incredibly important strategic link for cyclists and pedestrians on the Roding Valley Way and Roding Valley Park.

Parks and gardens continue to be a major focal point in Redbridge and have a significant role in building stronger and more sustainable communities with various local residents leaving monies to Valentines Park and gardens. An example of this is a resident who left a Legacy of around £250,000 for maintenance and ongoing improvements to the Tree collections and improving the water quality of the ponds.



Improving the skills of our communities through participation and learning

Our volunteers continue to be an important component in Redbridge's service delivery and underpins the engagement and participation within the local community. There are many advantages for our volunteers to gain and learn new skills, improving individual health and well-being. Opportunity for personal development and strengthening their connections within the community, as well as increasing the cleanliness and helping to maintain our parks and green spaces and engaging with the wider community through events and day to day activities. The Nature Conservation service for example clocked up over 3,400 hours this year (from 162 volunteers).

Ranger schools programme saw 45 classes visit parks and green spaces for curriculum based outdoor activities on wildlife. The outdoor classroom in the walled garden at Ray Park is the most popular destination; it is also very popular with local groups such as the Redbridge Forum and the local Brownie's. Also working with delivery partners such as Thames 21, we have supplemented the learning offer, facilitating specialist subject school trips such as river survey.

Valentines Park and Gardens continued to work in partnership with Capel Manor College to facilitate their NVQ Horticultural student work placements.

Iford war memorial is now a Centenary Field in trust which means it is a protected site from any future development. Vision Redbridge also managed to get 3 sites designated as Local Nature Reserve status. These are Hainault Forest Country Park, Fairlop Waters Country Park and Claybury Park.



Hainault Forest Country Park



Valentines Park

Contributors



Safeguarding our green spaces