

"Urban parks and open green spaces are of a strategic importance for the quality of life of our increasingly urbanised society"

Anna Chiesura

GOOD PARKS FOR LONDON 2019

Parks and health



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Foreword

As a Londoner, I am lucky enough to live and work in one of the world's greenest global cities, and regularly enjoy spending time in just a few of the many and varied parks and green spaces London has to offer. As chair of the London Association of Directors of Public Health, I am delighted that health and wellbeing is the focus for this year's annual Good Parks for London report.

The evidence base for the contribution of parks to our health and wellbeing has grown and strengthened significantly in recent years. Yet an understanding of parks as "public health assets" is not a new one. The Victorian visionaries who developed our first public parks in London were responding to the public health issues of the time - overcrowding, squalor and a polluted urban environment. Whilst the scale and nature of the public health challenges we face today in London have changed, the role that parks and green spaces play in promoting and improving the health and wellbeing of Londoners remains just as crucial.

We know that access to green spaces and the natural environment supports positive health outcomes. Partly this comes from being more physically active, taking advantage of parks to build activity into our daily lives. Contact with nature and the green environment is in itself also important for health, alongside the many opportunities that parks offer for meeting people and getting involved in community activities. Enjoyment of London's parks and green spaces should undoubtedly be seen as part of the answer to our modern-day public health challenges, such as social isolation, poor mental health and physical inactivity. Indeed, economic modelling estimates that £950 million of health care costs are avoided each year due to London's public parks, and NHS England's recent "Putting Health into Place" guide highlights green space as a key consideration for healthy place making.

In Camden and Islington, we have recently embarked on an ambitious "Parks for Health" programme, supported by the National Trust and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (see page 70). Our aim is to transform our local parks into modern-day public health assets, turning

our parks into vibrant, attractive resources for wellbeing that offer something for everyone. In particular we are focusing on those residents who are less likely to use our parks currently, but who are at increased risk of poorer health outcomes. Our approach will include new health related skills and roles for parks staff, encouraging local health, social care and third sector organisations to “think parks” in the care and support they provide, and hardwiring parks into the local social prescribing offer.

Owing to continued pressure on budgets, maintaining and sustaining London’s parks now and into the future is a key challenge for local authorities across the capital. This report offers both inspiration as well as practical tools and resources to help London Boroughs in that endeavour. Moreover, it highlights the importance of building and strengthening collaborations with a wider range of partners, sectors and policy agendas, not least with public health and the wider health and care system in London. London has a shared ambition to be the world’s healthiest

global city. I’m convinced that harnessing and maximizing the contribution of London’s parks and green spaces is an essential part of us achieving that aspiration.



Julie Billett
Director of Public Health, Camden & Islington
Chair, London Association of Directors
of Public Health

Introduction

Good Parks for London is an annual report compiled by Parks for London. It assesses each London Borough's parks service against ten criteria to enable comparison between them - it gives recognition for the great work that is happening across London, it helps improve performance and make practices more visible and open to scrutiny. Maintaining a good parks service is a complex challenge for Local Authorities, not just because of limited budgets but because parks provide so many different functions for so many people, wildlife and the environment. Getting the balance for all these different users and functions is not easy and that is why this report looks at the wide range of ingredients that go into making parks good.

Part one of the report shows how Boroughs compare against ten Good Parks criteria, detailed on page 12. The results are presented through maps and a summary benchmarking table, which reveals the top performing Boroughs and those that can improve, along with short articles from Boroughs that are performing well under each criterion. **Part two** of the report features examples of good practice and useful information from other land managers and organisations with an interest in managing London's parks and green spaces.

Health and wellbeing are golden threads that weave through our parks, often unrecognised, which is why this year's report highlights the many successful collaborations that are taking place between parks and health departments. In Part two you can find out more about how Health Parks (page 72 onwards), launched this year, can help anyone assess and improve the health benefits of their local park.

The Good Parks for London report is influencing Boroughs to share and adopt good practice and raise quality standards across London. It is gratifying to see that as Boroughs collaborate more between departments, for example with health and planning, that many have increased their scores since last year. We want to celebrate their successes and all the many good things that are being delivered by Boroughs and other organisations that manage London's green infrastructure.

Good Parks for London is supported by all London Boroughs and several other partner organisations (see Appendix 2). Once again, we are grateful to GL Hearn, part of Capita Real Estate, for sponsoring the production and launch of this report.

We hope this year's report will motivate decision makers to protect future parks budgets and stimulate more Boroughs and other organisations to work together to make parks healthier so that Londoners can benefit from having not just good parks but great ones.

Tony Leach
Chief Executive, Parks for London

Definitions: for the purpose of Part One of this report, we define **parks** as all parks and green spaces that are both publicly accessible and are owned/leased and managed by the Local Authority (either in house or outsourced); exclusions are: allotments, housing green space and land managed by non-local authority landowners such as The Royal Parks, City of London and Lee Valley Regional Park Authority.

Thoughts from our sponsor

We are delighted to continue our support for the Good Parks for London report. Not only is it a celebration of the extraordinary number and the outstanding quality of London's parks, it acts as a benchmark for the kind of London we would all like to see.



Martin Kelly

Parks are the often-hidden oases in a 24/7 city that give us all a chance to reconnect with our more social, meditative or athletic selves. The great parks have become London landmarks in their own right, of course, but the report also shines a light on the lesser-known parks and the great work that London Boroughs do, month after month, to provide green spaces that add to the quality of life of so many Londoners and visitors.

As a leading planning consultancy, we are in the business of helping to shape the urban landscape through environmental and sustainable design innovation to create memorable places in which people want to invest, live, work and play. The proximity of a park is always seen as the blue ribbon and their existence attracts interest and involvement from commercial and residential developers who bring rejuvenation to so many areas across the capital; stimulating local economies, creating employment and providing much-needed housing stock.

Martin Kelly
Head of Planning
GL Hearn



Eastcote House Gardens, Hillingdon

Notes for scoring the criteria

1. PUBLIC SATISFACTION with parks is taken from Borough public satisfaction surveys or similar that have been undertaken between April 2017 and March 2019.

2. AWARDS FOR QUALITY is assessed by the 2019 results of two independently run award schemes: Green Flag and London in Bloom. The score is made up of the percentage of directly managed parks that have gained Green Flags Awards combined with London in Bloom, gold or winner awards given for a city/town small and large parks, commons, walled gardens, cemeteries and churchyards.

3. COLLABORATION is assessed by evidence of cross boundary/Borough land management and delivery of parks services, through partnerships and alliances with other Boroughs, the voluntary sector and other bodies; river catchment partnerships or working on Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems; support of the London Tree Officers Association, the London Parks Benchmarking Group and Parks for London.

4. EVENTS are assessed by Boroughs having an events policy in place and providing a range and number of community and commercial events in parks across their Borough.

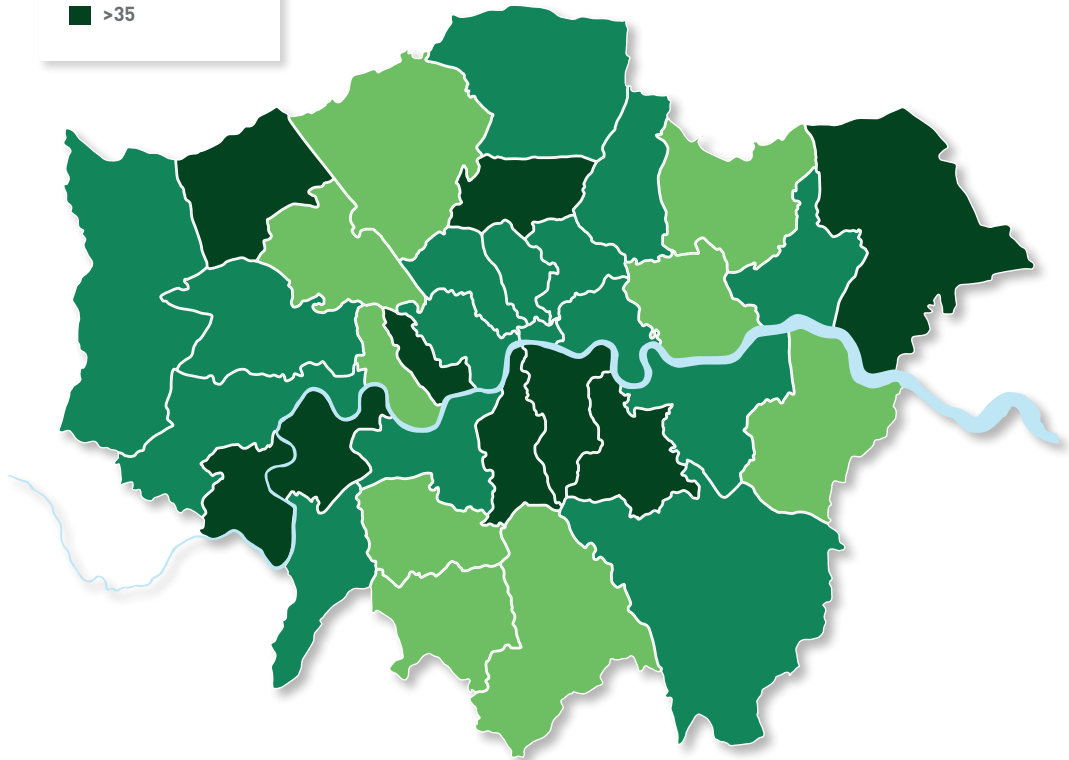
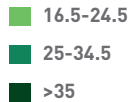
5. HEALTH, FITNESS AND WELL-BEING scores are based the numbers of parks used for social prescribing, e.g. Green Gym, Healthy Walks, etc.; provision of outdoor gym equipment with programmed activities; use of health funding in parks, such as health campaigns, etc.; community food growing areas in parks, e.g., where Capital Growth or other initiatives are supported; and provision of free drinking water (fountains, cafés and public buildings).

6. SUPPORTING NATURE is assessed by having an up to date Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in place, together with the percentage of parks that have management plans which include BAP objectives and the percentage of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in positive conservation management.

7. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT is assessed by a combination of Community Green Flag Awards and 'Our Community' London in Bloom awards (in publicly accessible parks), number of Park Friends Groups as a percentage of number of parks and whether the Borough has a Borough-wide Friends Forum.

8. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT is assessed by the number of park apprentices as a percentage of total workforce and the provision of staff development/training at all levels.

Overall Scores



9. SUSTAINABILITY is assessed by a combination of green fleet as a percentage of total fleet; use of accredited fuel-efficient route planning, battery-operated equipment as a percentage of total hand-held equipment; recycling paper/plastic as a percentage of all parks waste and having an integrated weed management policy in place.

10. STRATEGIC PLANNING is assessed by the Borough having an up to date green/open or infrastructure space strategy, with a current action plan and an asset management system in place.

The criteria are reviewed and refined annually by a working group of Local Authority parks officers. Data used to produce maps and overall scores table has been collected from Boroughs and partner organisations.

Overall scores



Scoring criteria: the darker the colour the higher the score

1. PUBLIC SATISFACTION



2. AWARDS FOR QUALITY



3. COLLABORATION



6. SUPPORTING NATURE

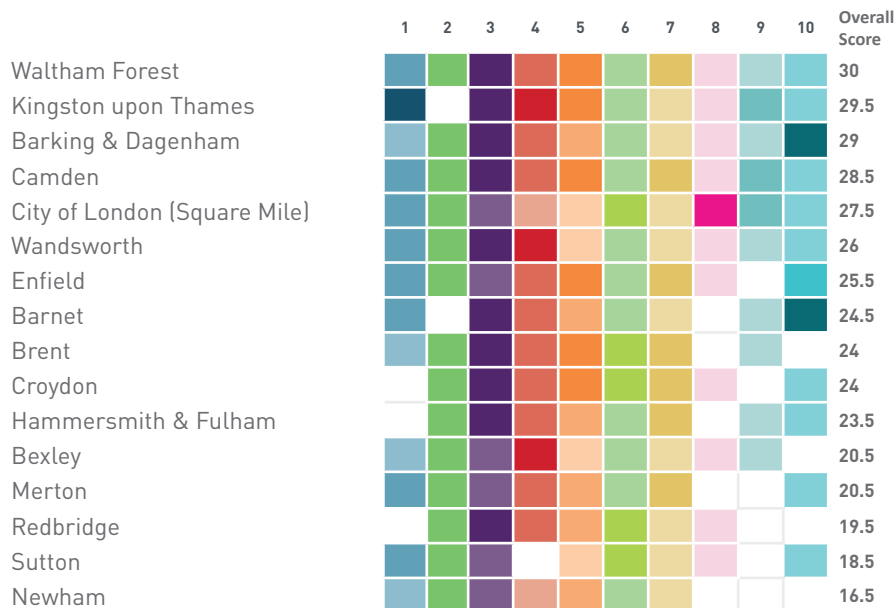


7. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



8. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT





A blank square indicates that a Borough has either not submitted data for a particular criterion or the data is not available or a score has not been achieved.

4. EVENTS



5. HEALTH, FITNESS AND WELL BEING



9. SUSTAINABILITY



10. STRATEGIC PLANNING



1. Public satisfaction with parks

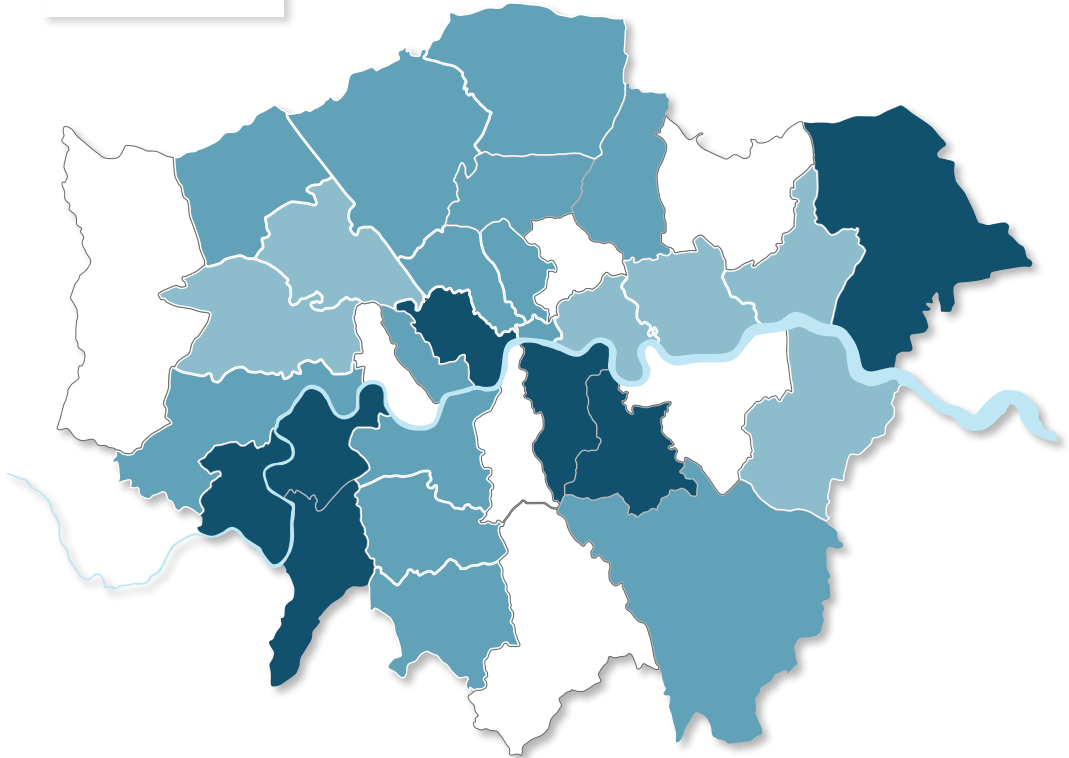
Southwark is proud to be home to 30 Green Flag parks that its residents love to use. Their most recent customer parks satisfaction survey indicated that 95% of residents were happy with Southwark's parks and open spaces. Particularly in urban environments it is important for people to have access to open spaces and research has found that areas with more accessible green spaces are associated with better mental and physical health. Within Southwark's parks there is a range of high-quality free facilities available for local residents to get active. For example, thanks to £11m worth of investment Burgess Park now boasts children's play areas, a water play feature, football pitches, outdoor gyms, tennis courts and a national standard BMX track that has bred Olympic hopefuls.



St Mary's Churchyard, Elephant & Castle

Public Satisfaction

- No data / score
- 49 - 69%
- 70 - 89%
- 90% +



The Council is part way through an ambitious ten-year investment programme of around £50 million to improve and maintain its parks with health and wellbeing a significant part of their future plans. From policy development to corporate and volunteer projects on site, working with local residents in all aspects of running parks is fundamental to providing the right services. In the past twelve months alone Southwark Council has generated 23,060 hours of engagement with local residents about what they want from their parks. This community-based approach has clearly struck a chord with the public and has helped secure the involvement of more than 50 friends and stakeholder groups.

“Working with and for the community is at the heart of what we do as a Council. Our parks have a special place in the lives of our communities so it’s important that we work together to ensure our green spaces are the best they can be. It is testament to our commitment to working with our communities that we have such an active and engaged network of volunteers. The benefits of getting outside and enjoying the fresh air are well known and we want our parks to be a place where people enjoy spending time. We want all of our residents to lead healthy lives and we want our parks to be a central part of this.”



Cllr Evelyn Akoto

Southwark Cabinet member for Community Safety and Public Health



Burgess Park play area



Southwark Park play area

2. Awards for quality

If you want to go green, go to **Hillingdon**. This west London Borough is the second largest in London as well as one of the greenest, with 200 parks and 1,800 acres of green space - five times the size of Hyde Park - featuring canals, rivers, parks, open spaces and woodland. This year, the Borough was awarded five more Green Flags, bringing its new tally to 55 - the most held for parks and open spaces nationally and internationally. Less than a decade ago Hillingdon had only six of these awards but through a winning combination of investment from the Council and community involvement the Borough has shot to the top of the Green Flag league table - where it has retained first position for six consecutive years.

The Council is proud to invest in green spaces across the Borough and will continue to work with communities and local groups to increase the number of Green Flags each year, as well as providing new facilities, maintaining existing ones, keeping areas clean and safe and promoting them to residents as the perfect places for leisure and recreation.

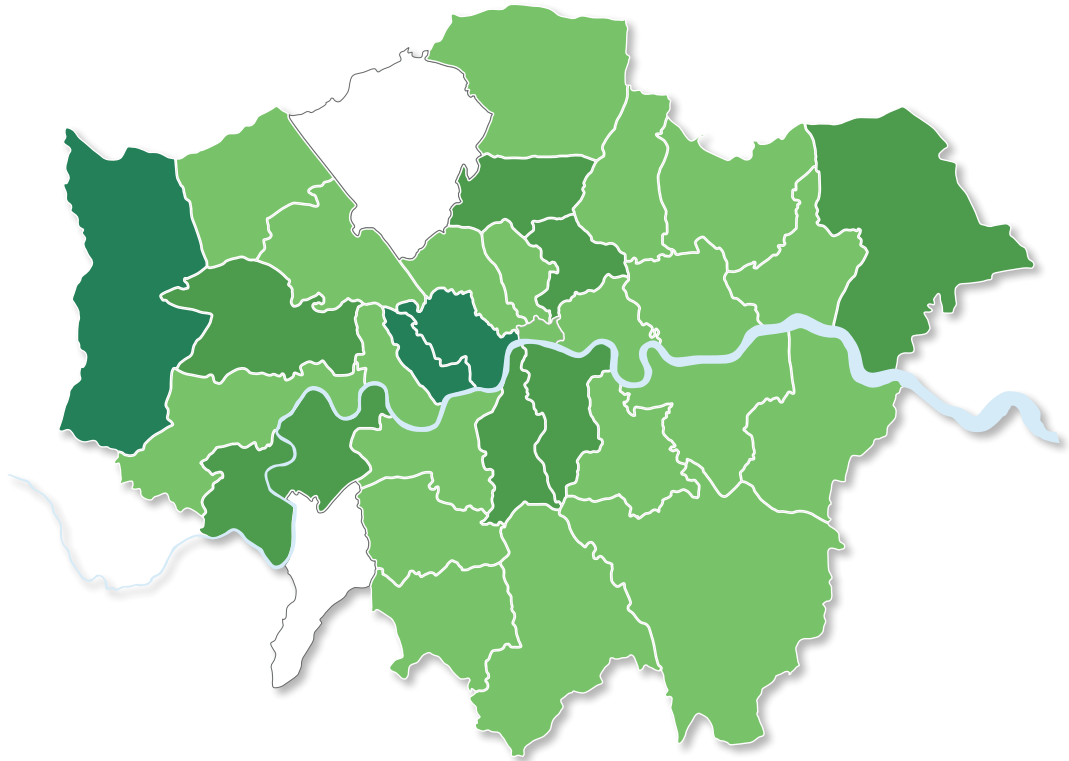
Across the Borough, there are formal gardens, town parks, informal nature conservation areas and country parks, including London's first National Nature Reserve, Ruislip Woods. There are also more than 40 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and more than 100 children's play areas, all of which are open to the public.



Southlands, West Drayton

**Awards for
quality**

- No data / awards
- 0.5-2.0
- 2.5-4.0
- 4.5+





Swakeleys Park

Many of these sites have very active volunteer groups, who meet regularly and undertake a range of tasks to support the Council's green spaces team. The time these individuals offer, whether a little or a lot, enables the Council to achieve even more, while offering residents the chance to put their skills and strengths to good use. Volunteers can broaden their knowledge, learn new skills and make friends. The Council additionally offers several practical ways that residents can apply for funds to make a difference to improve their communities.

Hanging baskets and floral displays further complement areas of natural beauty and biodiversity throughout Hillingdon's streets, supported and sponsored by local businesses.

The Borough has been successful in both the Britain in Bloom competition, winning Gold in the Large City category in 2017, and the London in Bloom competition, winning an overall Gold for three consecutive years between 2016 and 2018 and the Large City category in 2018.

Each year an increasing number of residents, businesses, community groups and schools take part in the Council's very own horticultural competition Hillingdon in Bloom. This initiative bolsters the Borough's efforts in keeping Hillingdon green whilst also encouraging communities to come together to create colourful and creative displays. Additionally, the Council holds an Autumn Show competition annually in September, which encourages residents of all ages to enter and exhibit their homegrown produce. There is also a dedicated children's section for under-15s, with the hope of inspiring the next generation of green-fingered residents.

"Green Flags are a benchmark of high quality and receiving so many gives our parks a stamp of approval and is something that our residents can feel proud of. Winning so many awards in a range of competitions in recent years also reinforces the fact that we as a Council and our local community take great care of our natural environment. What is most important is hearing the range of feedback from people about how much they appreciate our green spaces, and to that end we will continue to invest in them to provide the very best recreational facilities for residents and visitors to enjoy for years to come."

Cllr Jonathan Bianco

Hillingdon Council Cabinet Member for Finance,
Property and Business Services



Norman Leddy Gardens



Iris Garden, Holland Park

The **Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea** is responsible for 28 parks and two cemeteries, as well as a further 60 green spaces including roundabouts, grass verges, and highway planters. Within these spaces there are over 26 playgrounds, more than 20 sports facilities (with an accompanying LTA Beacon Status tennis coaching programme), three outdoor gyms, and a Learning Outside the Classroom accredited Ecology Centre in Holland Park, which runs a programme of

environmental education for all ages, throughout the year. The Royal Borough's success regarding management of its green spaces is evidenced through resident and community consultation exercises and through the Council's long history of awards for quality; the Council has been entering London in Bloom, and scoring highly, since the 1980s and received its first Green Flag award (for Holland Park) in 2001.



Kyoto Garden, Holland Park

Through a programme of continual investment, community engagement, and external accreditation the Royal Borough's Parks Service has become a widely recognised example of service excellence, a feat that would not have been possible without the support and drive of its Friends of Parks and community groups.

The Royal Borough and its stakeholders share a common endeavour to maintain and improve the condition of their parks and open spaces; the Council runs consultations on all major works in parks and uses resident and stakeholder feedback to determine how improvement budgets are spent. Recent improvements include the redevelopment of the Adventure Playground in Holland Park to improve play value and include Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs), significant improvements to one of only two grass football pitches in the Borough, and restoration of Ropers Gardens, which included restoring a run-down pergola and improving the park furniture in line with the original design for the garden.

"The Royal Borough's Parks Strategy highlights the importance of external recognition of quality; awards for quality are not just a token gesture, the added value of peer review exercises such as the Green Flag and London in Bloom awards provide a much-needed outsider view and constructive criticism that helps our services grow. They are also a valued indicator for our residents and service users that the Royal Borough's parks have been inspected and acknowledged as excellent."

Cllr Gerard Hargraves

Lead Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Safety

The Royal Borough also has a responsibility to protect and enhance biodiversity and the Council is keen to explore and promote the links between access to nature and health and wellbeing. The Parks Strategy and linking Biodiversity Action Plan have been designed to be accessible and with a clear vision that:

'All residents of the Royal Borough will have easy access to a green, open space for relaxation, a variety of leisure pursuits and quiet reflection in an area of London with a dense population and competing demands on space. These green spaces will be safe and pleasant to use.'

3. Collaboration

In order to address the local and global environmental and fiscal challenges we face, local authorities, third sector organisations and residents need to collaborate to maximise their impact. **Richmond Council** has a long and successful track-record of collaboration with third-sector organisations and residents and has developed a framework that empowers and encourages third-sector organisations to take positive action in their communities.

Richmond upon Thames is unique as it spans both sides of the River Thames and has the largest area of public open space (per head) of any London Borough. Instigating change and encouraging consultation at a community level helps the Council understand local priorities and identify where both local capital budgets and external funding can be utilised to achieve maximum gain. Richmond Council works collaboratively with over 60 'Friends of Park' groups in the Borough, by seeking their views and widening Council

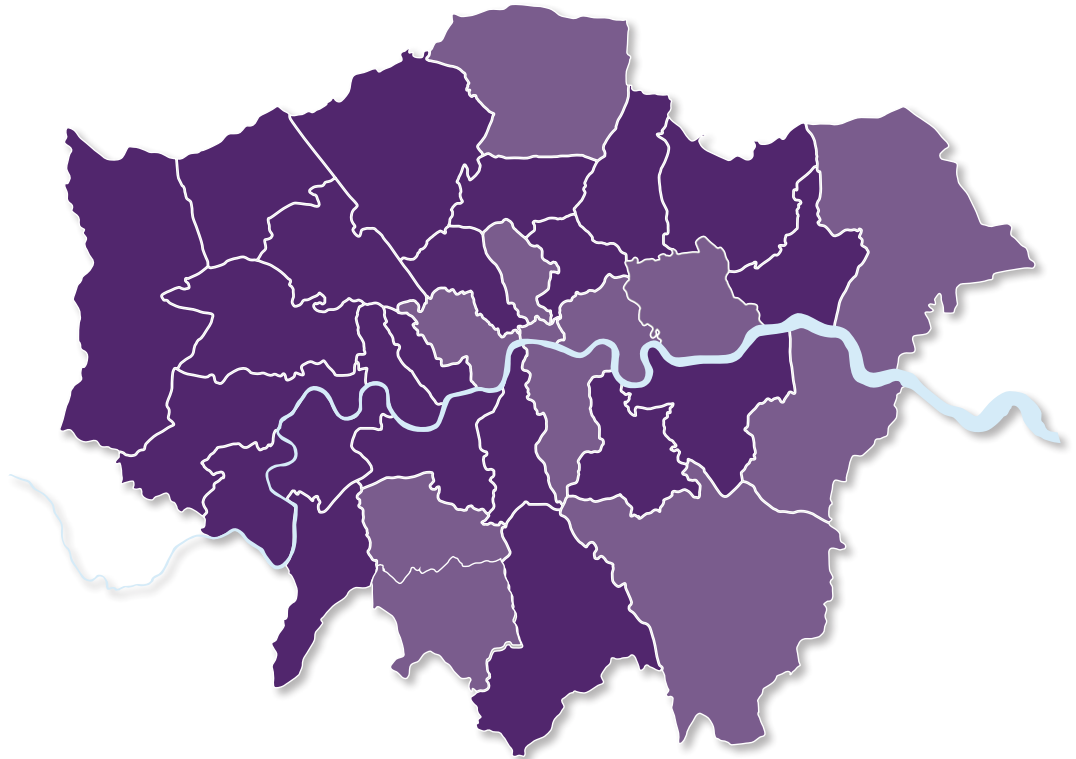
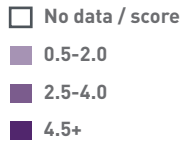
consultation engagement. The Council also commissions the South West London Environment Network (SWLEN) to enable and empower these groups, strengthening their governance, fundraising and marketing. The Council works actively with 'Friends of' groups to develop vision plans for each park, and facilitates collaboration within the local authority to develop, support and realise these visions, frequently accessing third party funding to achieve them.



“Richmond very much values its links with a range of environmental, wildlife, charitable, statutory and other public bodies, working together to make our parks excellent.”

Cllr Martin Elengorn
Chair Environment, Sustainability,
Culture and Sport Committee

Collaboration



It is well evidenced that parks are hugely beneficial for health and well-being and Richmond Council has been working on a programme of creating 'Friendly Parks for All'. These are parks that can be easily accessed and used by all members of the community, including those with dementia, people with limited mobility and those with other barriers to access. There are now three 'Friendly Parks for All' across the Borough. Richmond Council also works with and supports partner organisation, Let's Go Outside and Learn, to break-down the barriers to using parks with a number of target groups including people at risk of isolation; children who are carers; and women of different ethnicities over the age of 65.

Other important groups that the Council supports include: Thames Landscape Strategy (championing the River Thames corridor between Weybridge and Kew); Thames Strategy Kew to Chelsea (promoting the stretch of the River Thames between Kew and Chelsea); the West London River Group and the Duke of Northumberland River improvement works, which was a three phased project to improve accessibility along the river and improve the environment of the local area. This project has been delivered in partnership with several organisations, including Hounslow Council, the Crane Valley Partnership, Friends of River Crane Environment (FORCE), The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) and the London Wildlife Trust, amongst others.



DNR before access improvement works



DNR after access improvement works



Duke of Northumberland River: canalised banks before restoration After installation of coir rolls & marginal planting

“Richmond Council works closely with a variety of community groups such as the Friends of the River Crane Environment to encourage the use of parks and open space in the Borough. The partnership work has the aim of improving the quality of everyone’s experience of parks as well as encouraging biodiversity. Much of the work is strategic in nature, linking together fragmented open space to ensure ant they are managed as a whole for people and wildlife.”

Frances Bennett

Trustee of Friends of River Crane Environment
and Chair of Friends of Kneller Gardens



TCV the Green Gym at Meadway Orchard

4. Events

Art in the Park in Downhills Park; the Tottenham Flower and Produce Show in Lordship Rec; YMCA Crouch End Fun Run... There's nothing **Haringey's** parks can't handle. These are just a few examples of the hundreds of locally orientated events that take place in Haringey's parks. The Borough also hosts some of the UK's biggest live music events, from being home to the biggest grime showcase in the world, to hosting one of the most colourful and vibrant LGBTQ street parties in the Capital... there is something for every community and person.

Haringey is a place of great opportunity, with enormous potential for growth – with a growing economy and flourishing communities. Haringey

"The Friends of Downhills Park have co-ordinated 'Art in the Park' for 17 years and it is now a really popular fixture in the local community calendar. Offering a wide variety of free arts and crafts activities for young and old there is something for everyone at this event and each year it brings the community together to enjoy an afternoon in the beautiful surroundings of Downhills Park. Working with Haringey Council to secure the use of the park is straightforward and their support to Art in the Park has helped it to grow into the event it is today."

Claire Parry
Chair of the Friends of Downhills Park



The Pleasure Garden

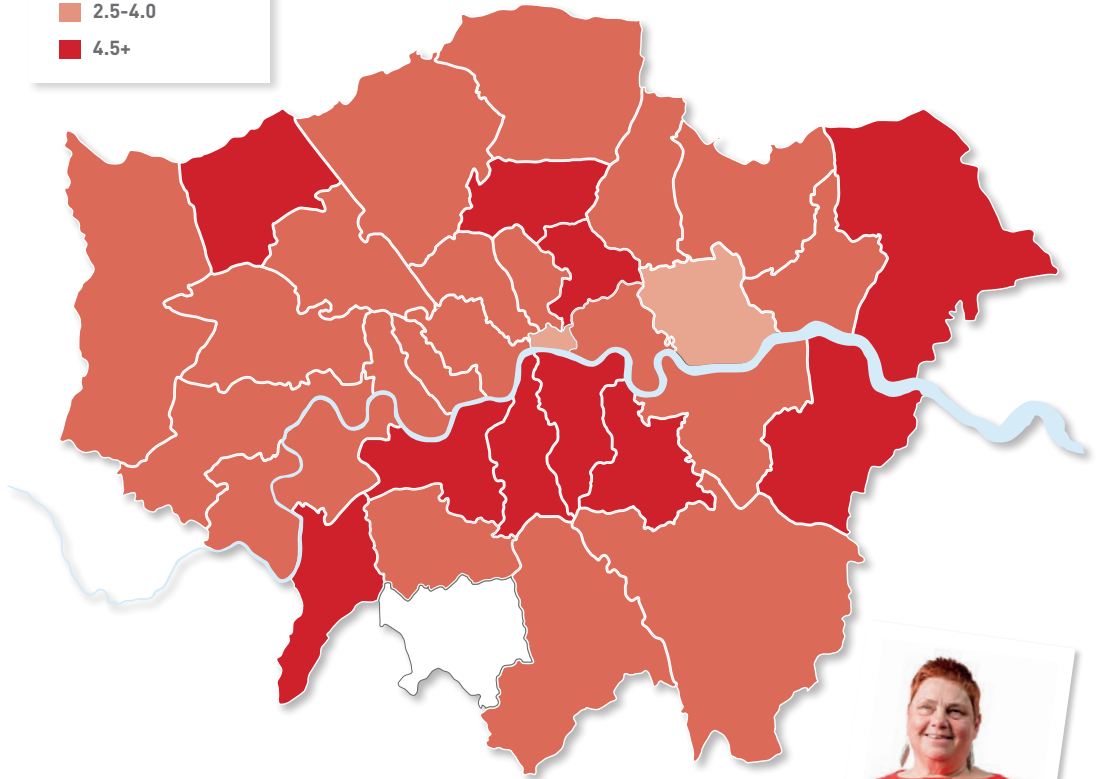
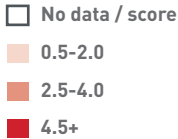
benefits from being part of one of the worlds greatest and most diverse cities and is an integral part of the cultural backbone of London.

Haringey's award-winning parks are great places to host events, and they want to see more organised events taking place in their parks. Whether they are small community led events or major music festivals, Haringey Council want their parks to be buzzing places, providing recreational entertainment and organised activities, accessible for all communities.

Their best-practice Outdoor Events Policy helps with the decision-making process behind building a sustainable and varied programme of events. It also seeks to protect the community and the parks and open space infrastructure, while minimising and mitigating any negative impacts which the larger and louder events may cause.

Their Small Grants Scheme enables and empowers communities to develop event ideas from small thoughts into reality. Events officers can provide free and practical advice, guiding those who need it through the application process and providing advice on good practice. Event management training is also provided free to community groups to help them hold their first ever event or grow existing ones.

Events



“Haringey is committed to providing excellent, quality parks. Integral to achieving this is to make our parks buzzing places, alive with activities and events. We have a clear policy in place which balances the needs of those wishing to host events, with the daily usage requirements of parks that local residents expect. We are proud of everything that goes on in Haringey, and value the part we play in making London one of the most vibrant and diverse cities to live.”



Cllr Hearn
Cabinet Member for Climate
Change and Sustainability

5. Health, fitness and well-being

GREENSPACES & ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

Croydon boasts 127 parks and greenspaces which are brimming with activity, ranging from organised activities such as Nordic walking, conservation volunteering, family outdoor adventures, and community gardening, to self-led fun across outdoor active spaces and protected areas.

The Active Lifestyles service team within Croydon Council, funded in part by Public Health, oversee the client role for parks, pulling together the key Council teams required to develop their green infrastructure into spaces that encourage residents to get outdoors, be active and live healthy lives. The team also deliver an integrated Live Well service for Croydon residents centred on smoking cessation, weight management, physical inactivity, mental wellbeing and alcohol reduction. Working together, the team can develop and share opportunities within parks directly with residents. The service was launched in April 2017 and to date has seen over 1,600 residents, to support sustainable lifestyle behaviour change.

ACTIVATION & INVESTMENT

There is a wealth of programmed activities within Croydon's parks promoting health and wellbeing, including 10 weekly health walks, the Croydon Walks campaign and the activities of Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), Croydon's Leisure Management Partner. GLL deliver several accessible outdoor sessions in Croydon's parks, such as Silverfit, tennis and the Our Parks programme which provides free weekly exercise classes.

"I am really enjoying taking part and leading the walks and seeing others' fitness levels also improve. In addition, it is a good way to enjoy our lovely parks and open spaces, along with company, which is important for our emotional and mental wellbeing too."

Ken M

Croydon Health Walks leader



Outdoor yoga

This year has seen Croydon focus on supporting different types of events across their greenspaces, both to promote activity and wellbeing as well as supporting the Cultural Officer to residents. They've been able to get active in the Croydon 10km, Race for Life, sponsored walks and three weekly Parkruns. And they've donned their citizen science hats at the Butterfly Festival, marched for Croydon Pride and danced along the River Wandle for Croydon Mela.

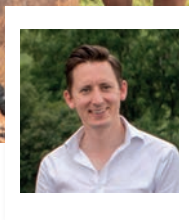


Croydon Outdoor Explorer Network

The outdoor gyms have been so popular that Croydon have had to increase them from five to ten. To activate these new facilities, Active Lifestyles has funded the Croydon Outdoor Active Space Activation Grant where community groups were supported to provide events and classes for residents.



Charcoaling in Happy Valley



PARTNERSHIPS & NATURAL CAPITAL

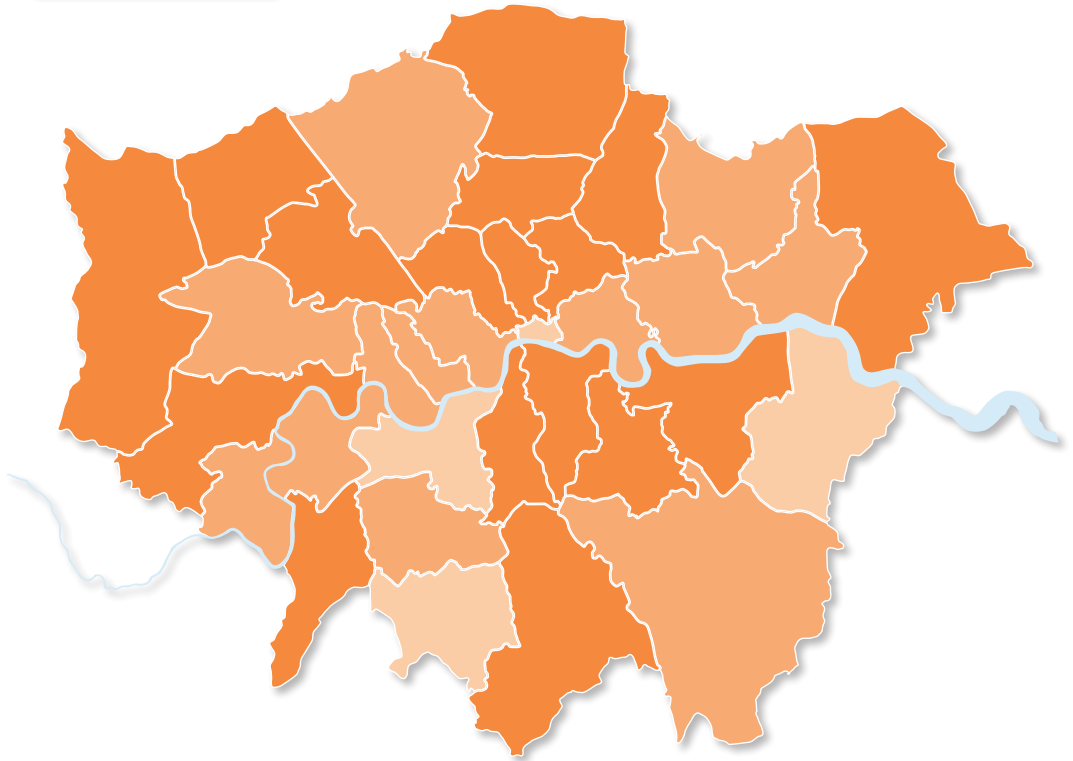
A key component of the quality of Croydon's greenspaces is strong partnership working. Embedded within these partnerships is the ambition to create health and wellbeing opportunities. Activity through nature conservation volunteering is available through over 45 Friends of Parks groups, The Conservation Volunteers and the Downlands Partnership. Across their 127 greenspaces, over 110 regular volunteers deliver more than 2,150 workdays

"I am proud of the on-the-ground work being done by council officers and partners from local residents to regular volunteers with conservation charities and others. They are helping keep our greenspaces accessible and thriving while giving residents and visitors an opportunity to keep fit and healthy."

Clr Oliver Lewis
cabinet member for culture, leisure and sport

**Health, fitness
& well-being**

- No data / score
- 0.5-2.0
- 2.5-4.0
- 4.5+



6. Supporting nature

Hackney Council places a high priority on supporting nature by improving the biodiversity of its parks and green spaces. Its Biodiversity Action Plan has ambitious targets to increase the amount of wildflower meadows, hedges, water bodies and deadwood in Hackney's parks and green spaces. The plan is supported by Hackney's Biodiversity Partnership, chaired by the Parks & Green Spaces Service.

The Partnership provides an opportunity for local groups and individuals to network, share ideas, meet and plan biodiversity improvements in the Borough. It also organises regular public walks and talks on biodiversity to educate local people on the benefits of promoting nature in Hackney's green spaces. Recent events have included a grass snake walk in the Middlesex Filter Beds, a tour of the wildflowers in Clapton Park Estate, and most recently a talk on how amenity grassland can be managed for wildlife.



Cllr Feryal Clark (2nd left) visiting the tree nursery

During the year a series of new targets were put together to promote biodiversity in the Borough. These included installing owl boxes in parks and housing estates, planting several new hedgerows and implementing a series of training sessions with Parks and Green Spaces staff. The installation of a series of dead hedges in Haggerston Park and London Fields at this time promoted significant increases in the number of insects and frogs in the parks, which in turn has led to a dramatic increase in the number of birds present on site. As well as providing valuable habitat for wildlife, the dead hedging enables gardeners to retain dead branches, logs and twigs on site instead of transporting them elsewhere to be chipped or composted.



Hackney also launched a programme called 'Connecting Green Spaces' to better connect Hackney's green spaces to the wider public realm, and to each other. It is hoped that improved connections between green spaces will make it easier for wildlife to move between them. As part of the initiative, Hackney launched 10xgreener - a partnership project with Friends of the Earth to encourage wildlife into one street in Hackney by making it as green as possible. Community planting days were held, new beds were planted in

the street and a crowdfunding campaign enabled a postcode gardener to be employed. Hackney is now building on the success of the project by launching a trial 'no spray' zone in the area. The trial, which encompasses streets, estates and a green space in the Daubeny area of Homerton will demonstrate the effect of allowing these areas to grow naturally, so that decisions can be made about the future use of herbicides and other methods of removing weeds.

“Hackney is one of the greenest Boroughs in London, and its 58 parks and green spaces are much loved by the people who live, work and visit here. I am proud of the fact that we are doing so much to encourage nature in these green spaces, which in turn makes them more attractive for the people who use them.”

Cllr Feryal Clark

Deputy Mayor and Cabinet member for Health, Social Care, Leisure and Parks



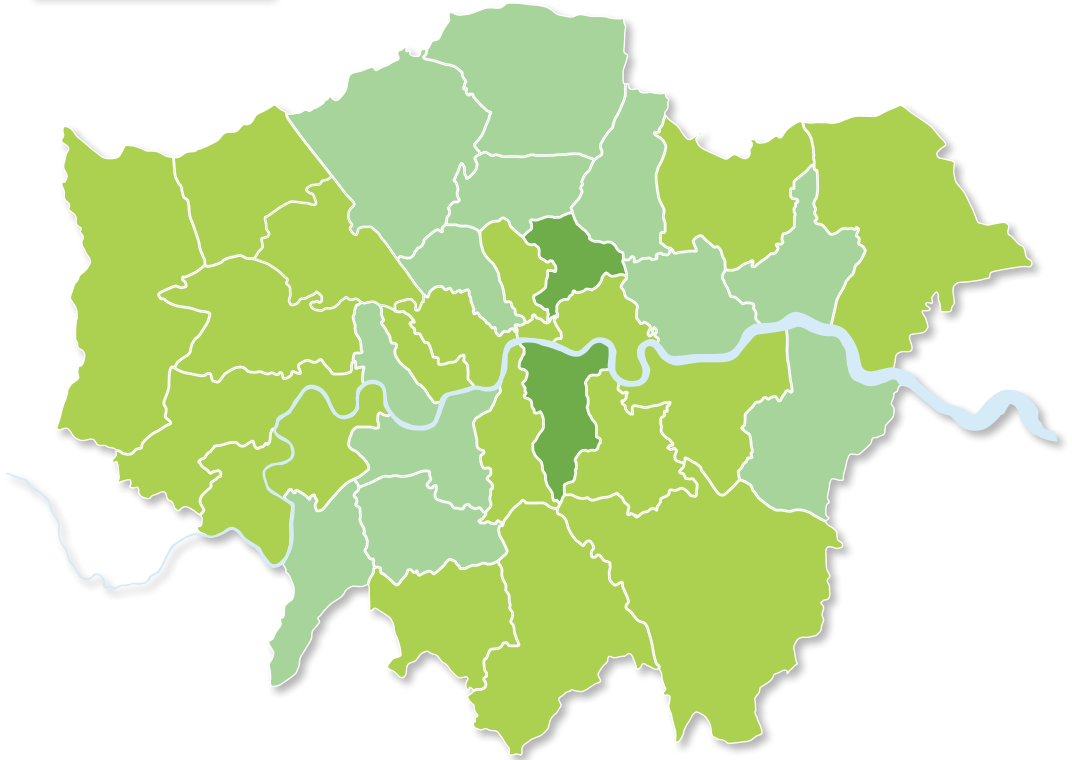
London Fields hedge planting



Bat box installation

Supporting nature

- No data / score
- 0.5-2.0
- 2.5-4.0
- 4.5+



7. Community involvement

Haringey parks wouldn't be award winning for the quality that they are if it wasn't for the valuable contribution made by local communities. Haringey are immensely proud of the community participation within their parks and recognise that there is no one-size fits all approach when it comes to encouraging, facilitating or nurturing that involvement. Haringey is proud to have one of the largest networks of Friends Groups in the country helping with practical tasks, fundraising for improvements and holding the Council and its partners to account when needed, for the sake of improving the provision of green open space within Haringey.

Friends Groups are made up of local people, all sharing a passion for their local park. Some have been instrumental in winning funding from both the Council and external bodies for improvements to their green spaces. Many others organise lots of the exciting activities that take place in the parks throughout the year.



Friends of Downhills Park: Art in the park!

Haringey's partnership approach to managing nature conservation areas is something the Council is incredibly proud of. Haringey's key partner, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), is based at one of London's prettiest and most unusual Local Nature Reserves, Railway Fields. TCV manage this site to an incredibly high standard and run educational and training programmes from here. They facilitate roaming nature conservation outreach tasks in many of the Borough's award-winning parks and bring in much appreciated funding and valued volunteering, benefiting Haringey and London as a whole.

One of the Borough Plans (2019 – 2023) main objectives is for local residents to have every opportunity to be physically and mentally fit and healthy; and Haringey's parks and open spaces play an integral part in this. The Council's Parks Operations Team do a great job of keeping the playing pitches in good condition for the Borough's grassroots sports teams to use on a weekly basis. The Parks operations team work very closely with local sports teams and even attend football forum meetings to discuss how both parties can help each other.

"TCV really value the support they get from Haringey Council to develop community groups in the parks and greenspaces around the Borough. It's a long-standing partnership that has ensured that many local people have a chance to make a real difference to where they live."

Alan Marchant
The Conservation Volunteers

The Council have also developed strong working relationships with local organisations that use parks to help increase participation in sports and physical activity. The Council works in conjunction with The Bridge Renewal Trust to deliver an annual health promotion event - 'Chestnuts Park Fest'. This event not only helps to engage the local community in physical activity (through taster sessions, health checks and nutritional workshops) it has also been awarded £140k of funding from the Greater London Authority and Laureus, by raising awareness of the rich appetite the Borough has for developing an infrastructure that supports residents to become healthier.

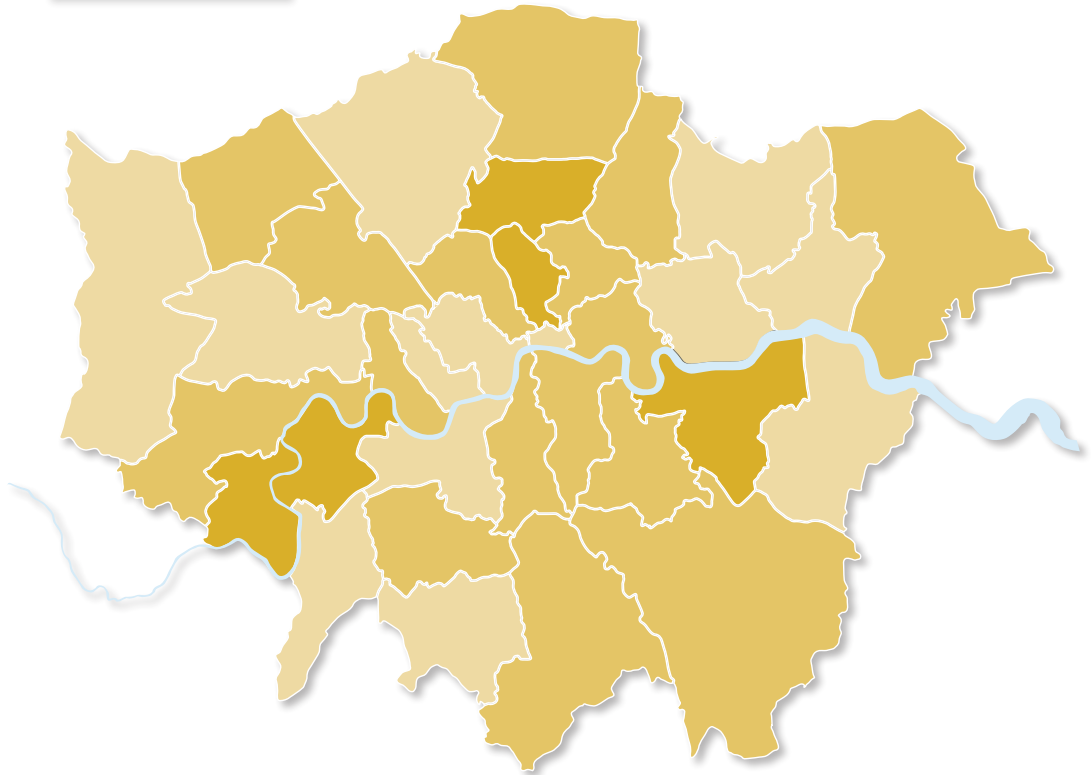
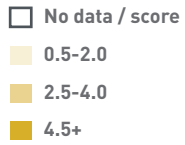


Wind in the willows

"The Haringey Friends of Parks Forum is the independent umbrella network linking and representing around 45 Friends Groups covering most of the public green spaces in the Borough. Founded in 2001 by the groups, we have been meeting bi-monthly ever since to share good practice, support each other, encourage new groups, take up strategic issues, work in partnership with the Council, and to champion, promote, protect and improve Haringey's greenspace now and forever!"

Dave Morris
Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

Community involvement



8. Skills development

Investing in parks staff is essential to have high quality parks for residents to enjoy. **Southwark** Council is three years into a seven-year contract with their grounds maintenance provider *idverde* and the Council work closely with them to keep up the high standards their residents expect from parks. Contract arrangements support the Council's broader values and objectives, which include the payment of London Living Wage, provision of an apprenticeship programme and investment in staff through training.

Apprenticeships and helping people into employment is a key Council commitment; often they provide people with a key first step in their careers. Southwark's current five apprentices are now nearing the end of their programmes and all have performed well with 80% being offered full time roles with *idverde* working on the Southwark contract. Beyond this, current and past apprentices make up 15% of the workforce.

The park attendant service has received significant investment as well as refocusing the role to incorporate support of a growing play infrastructure. The new play attendants recently completed RoSPA training and as well as specific water hygiene training.

“As a Council we are incredibly proud of our parks and our parks wouldn’t be what they are without the hard work of our maintenance colleagues. We are heavily invested in



supporting professional and technical learning.

We are committed to creating a skilled, talented and diverse workforce across the Borough as a whole.

We aim to help people by creating more ways to find great jobs and

support local businesses with the skilled workers that they need. Our parks service is a great example of where apprenticeships and training opportunities are delivering tangible outputs for local residents in partnership with our external grounds maintenance provider.”

Cllr Stephanie Cryan

Southwark Council Cabinet Member for Jobs,
Business and Innovation

In addition to play attendant training, *idverde*’s general workforce have also benefited from three bespoke first aid courses throughout the year to ensure all staff were up to date. Furthermore, all staff have had the opportunity to build further on their NVQ qualifications.

idverde say:

“We continue to invest in our workforce to improve standards across the contract, each year we conduct employee development reviews to identify training needs and requirements i.e. NVQ, Level 2 and 3, Team Leader, Supervisor and Management qualifications.”

idverde's partnership working methods and approach has meant that they have built on the existing relationship with London Borough of Southwark and improved standards across all their parks, open spaces and cemeteries.

idverde have also achieved their FORS Silver accreditation this year and will be continuing to improve their fleet of drivers, on an annual basis. All drivers complete several FORS e-learning modules to keep them up to date with best practice.

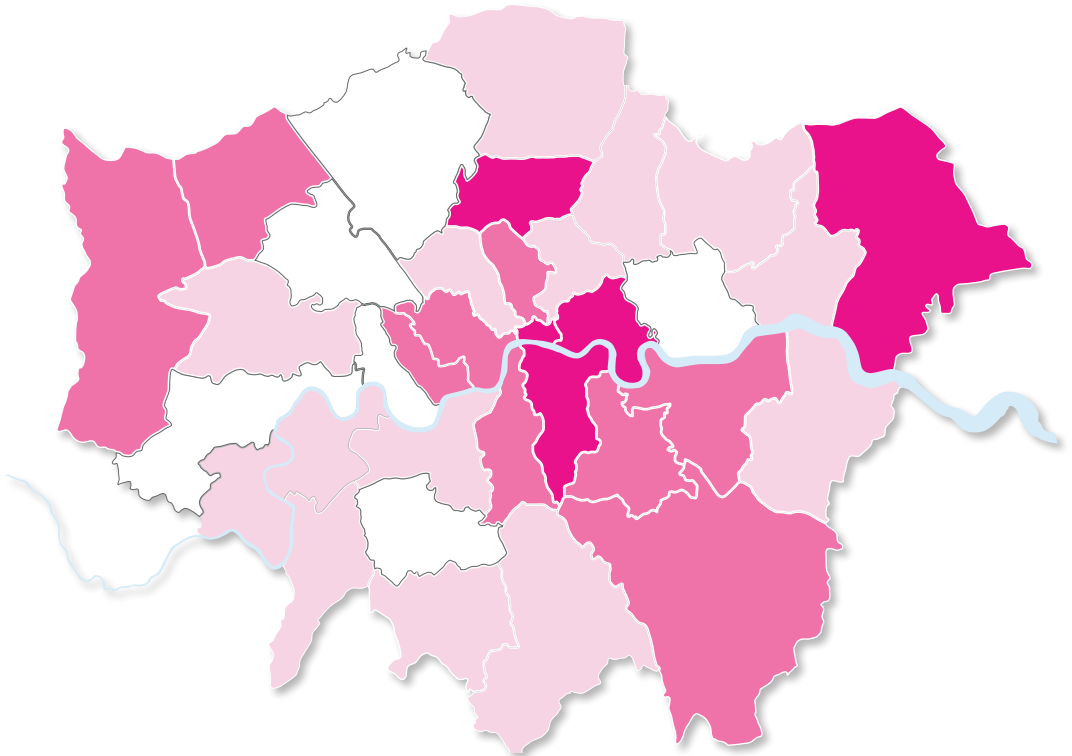
As part of their wider corporate investment *idverde* have also rebranded their work force in the new uniforms, which has gone from being emerald green and black to a lighter new tan colour, which is much more recognisable and sets *idverde* apart from its competitors.



Southwark apprentices

Skills development

- No data / score
- 0.5-2.0
- 2.5-4.0
- 4.5+



9. Sustainability

In 2019 **Lambeth** declared a Climate Emergency and is determined to make all its services more sustainable. The Council has recently completed a £1.5m investment programme in a new green fleet for its parks and tree maintenance services – purchasing electric and hybrid vehicles wherever possible. The Parks service has achieved accreditation under the FTA Van Excellence scheme which reflects systems in place to reduce the environmental impact of fleet operations, including using telematics to improve route-planning and identify inefficient driving practices. Lambeth is also steadily increasing the amount of battery-operated hand-held equipment its staff use, and this will continue to grow as the technology improves.

Lambeth is committed to ending the use of herbicides and pesticides and this has now been achieved across the management of parks and green spaces, except for the treatment of Japanese

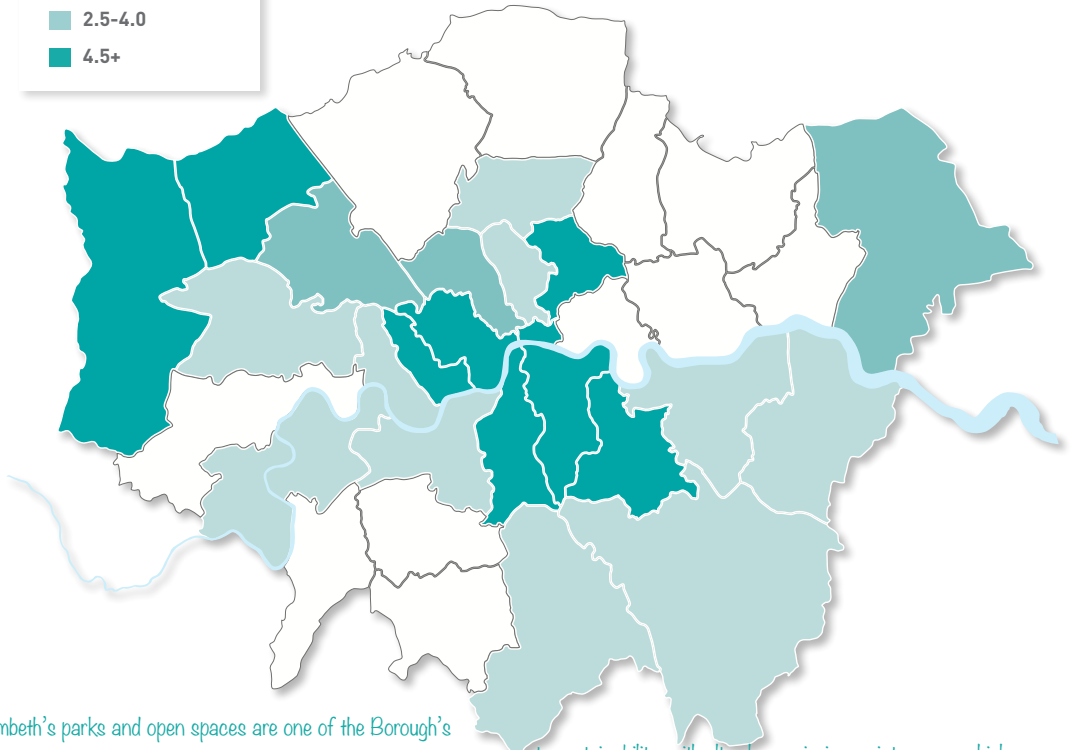
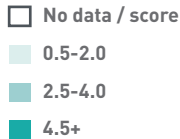
Knotweed. An Integrated Weed Management Policy was written in 2018 and documents the alternatives to herbicides used to treat weeds – primarily weed burners, hot water systems, weed-rippers, strimming and hand-weeding.

Improving the sustainability of waste management operations is also a key part of the service, with large recycling bins installed at all larger parks in 2018 and numbers set to be increased during 2019. New composting facilities are being created to ensure all green waste can be managed and used within parks; and no grass-cuttings are collected for disposal. Larger conservation areas which used to be subject to an annual cut and collect are now being permanently left to re-wild, in order to improve biodiversity and reduce the amount of waste needing to be managed. During autumn/winter, fallen leaves are now mown in situ to encourage quicker decomposition, rather than being collected



Cllr Sonia Winifred

Sustainability



"Lambeth's parks and open spaces are one of the Borough's finest assets - enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people every year. They offer a space to play, relax, learn and be entertained and throughout Lambeth there is so much diversity in our parks, from children's playgrounds, exercise equipment, fishing ponds, wildlife, bandstands, sports areas etc. We are very proud of all of them and are committed to protecting and improving them all the time. I'm delighted we have been recognised for our commitment

to sustainability, with ultra-low emission maintenance vehicles, cutting the use of herbicides and pesticides, better recycling and composting facilities and even larger conservation areas. We will keep working to ensure our excellent parks continue to be among the best in London."

Cllr Sonia Winifred

Lambeth Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture

10. Strategic planning

Barking and Dagenham has a great collection of parks and open spaces, urban and rural. This network of multi-functional greenspace is a vital part of the Borough and together they help define the different places that characterise it. Parks are great places to get fit and healthy, to play, to walk the dog, to meet and make friends or simply enjoy nature.

Barking and Dagenham is experiencing a period of rapid housing growth with over 35,000 new homes being provided over the next 20 years. New public open space will be at the centre of these new developments. However, Barking and Dagenham must ensure that all the Borough's existing parks and greenspaces continue to benefit local communities as much as possible. The Council want their parks to deliver positive outcomes for the economy, for communities and for the environment. To help the Borough plan and achieve this in 2017 the Council adopted its new Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (POSS).





The Chase Local Nature Reserve



Beam Valley Country Park

The Council considers the best way to improve parks is to work in partnership with local communities and organisations. To prepare the POSS, they consulted widely across the Borough, gathering the views of residents, whether they use parks or not. The strategy recommendations and action plan are informed by the responses received and the Council is committed to maintaining this level of community involvement and engagement through creating Friends of Parks Groups, providing opportunities for volunteering and training.

In response to the financial challenges facing the Council they are also looking at new ways of funding parks and delivering and sustaining the benefits that residents want to see.

These are exciting times for Barking and Dagenham and the Council want parks and open spaces to be a key part of the Borough's future just as they have in the past. By committing to the POSS and Action Plan they are confident that the Borough's greenspaces will continue to tell a great story about Barking and Dagenham as a healthy and attractive place to live and work.



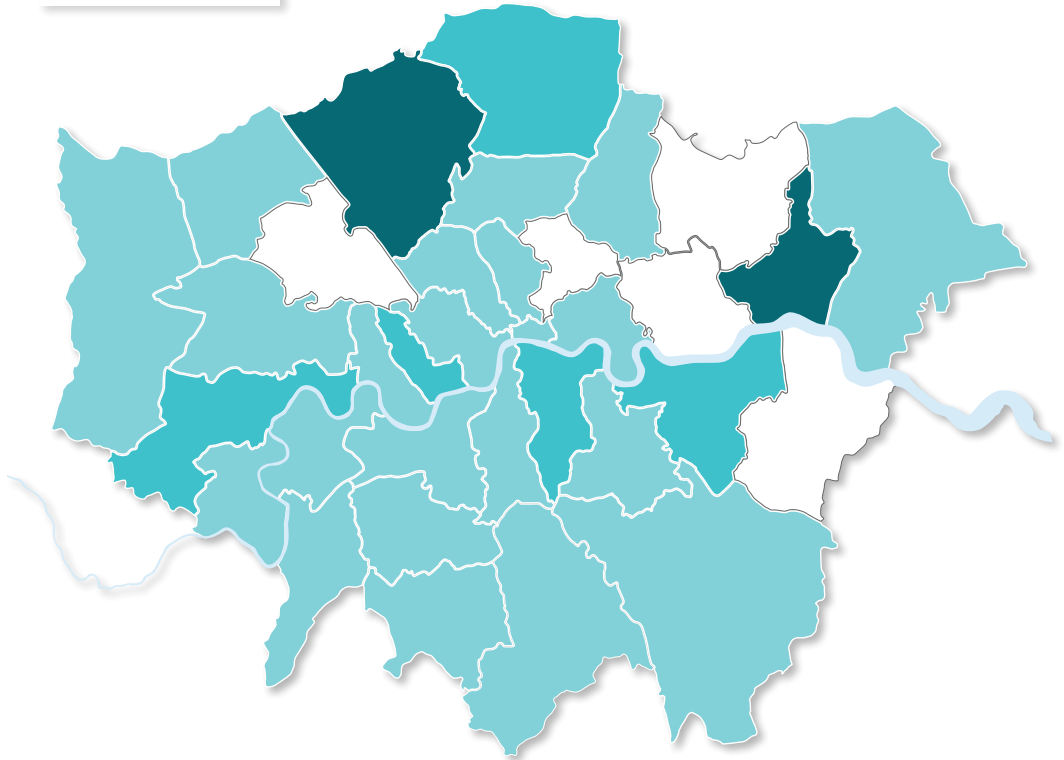
Pondfield Park community orchard



Eastbrookend Country Park

**Strategic
planning**

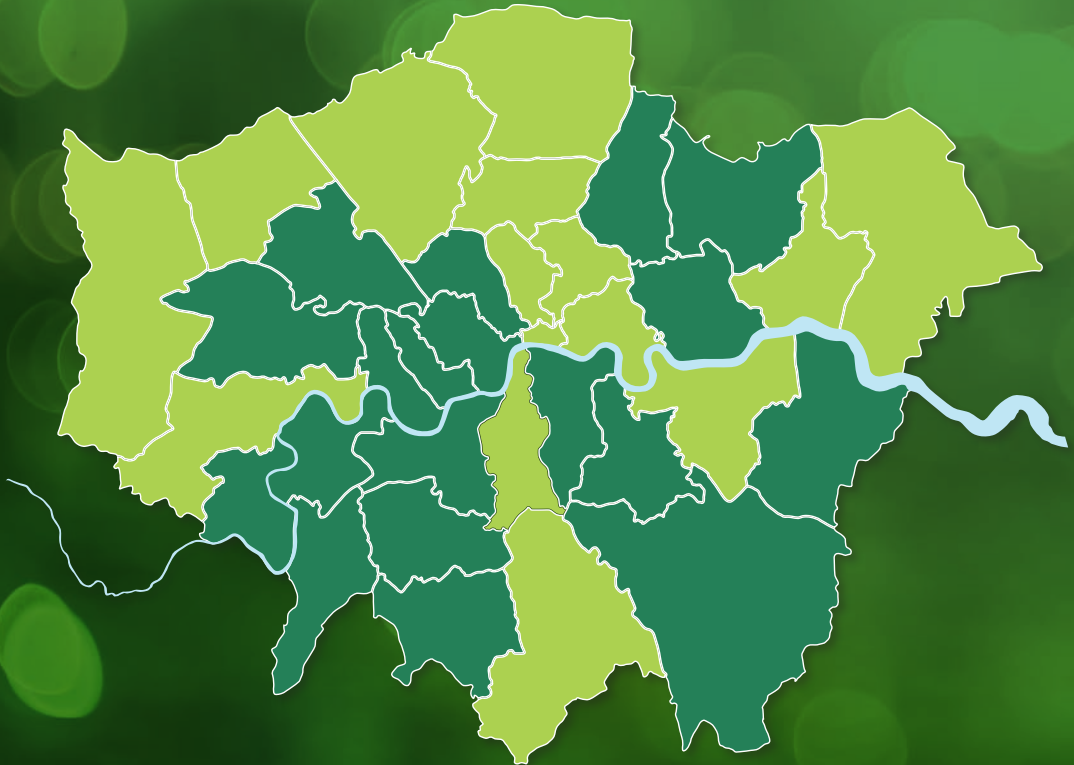
- No data / score
- 0.5-2.0
- 2.5-4.0
- 4.5+



**Park
maintenance
providers**

- In-house
- Outsourced

Parks in London are either managed in-house or outsourced to contractors



Part two

Local Authorities are not the only organisations that manage or have an interest in London's parks. Read on to find out more about:

1. Signature parks and green spaces

- a) Open Spaces - City of London Corporation
- b) Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
- c) The Royal Parks
- d) Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

2. Thamesmead

3. Capel Manor College

4. Commonwealth War Graves Commission

5. idverde

6. South West Environment Network

7. Collaborations

- a) Amenity Forum
- b) Health Parks

8. Case Studies

- a) Single Park Health Strategy, Ruskin Park, Lambeth
- b) Islington and Camden Future Parks Accelerator Bid

Signature parks and green spaces

Open Spaces City of London Corporation

Over 24 million people visit our 4,451 hectares of nationally and internationally recognised open spaces and heritage attractions in and beyond the City of London each year, including Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest, Burnham Beeches, Tower Bridge and Keats House. Along with managing the conservation of these incredible and diverse spaces, we focus on making a positive and meaningful impact on the communities and visitors who use them. Most of our sites are held in trust and are registered charities.

Young carers take a break and enjoy the great outdoors

The City of London Open Spaces Department offers a range of programmes, events and activities to help encourage and promote health and well-being. 'Green Spaces, Learning Places', an innovative learning programme, supports Londoners to explore nature and use their local green spaces. The programme has been developed to enhance wellbeing, improve equality and inclusion in education, exploring nature and building connections with green spaces. Over the first three years of delivery (2016-2019), over 120,000 people have participated in the programme.

A bespoke programme for young carers has resulted in some glowing outcomes. Participants who may struggle to juggle their education with their caring responsibilities took part in a variety of activities which provided respite, an opportunity to re-charge and reconnect with being a young person and socialise with other carers.

The green spaces setting and informal activities such as outdoor conservation tasks at Hampstead Heath helped them build confidence and self-esteem. Sharing food around an open fire was the focal point for free-flowing conversations, building peer-relationships and taking a break from being a carer.



"I've really enjoyed being involved in this programme, it has given me the chance to take a much-needed break from caring, meeting other young carers and learning new skills. We've all really enjoyed this opportunity more than we thought we would. It has also been a great boost for our mental well-being".



Accessible health walks on Riddlesdown Common

For some, getting out and reaping the benefits of being in nature can be a difficult task, especially if they have accessibility needs. Rangers at Riddlesdown Common, in south Croydon are introducing health walks to help increase accessibility to the site, reduce isolation and increase confidence to those who do not often get the opportunity to explore the great outdoors.

Working in partnership with St Edmund's Care Group and Riddlesdown Resident's Association, the short stroll across the common will give people the chance to experience the beauty of nature and explore great heritage features along a flat and accessible path.

These health walks have been designed to help people stay active, healthy, meet new people and enjoy a dose of nature.

Signature parks and green spaces

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

Each year the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority's Youth and Schools Service provides outdoor learning for over 20,000 young people from primary to university level, including programmes specifically for special needs.

The sessions are conducted in Lee Valley's over 4,000 hectare outdoor classroom which stretches from rural Hertfordshire to the banks of the River Thames in east London.

The environmental and heritage activities link to the national curriculum and exam syllabuses and aim to engender a sense of ownership and understanding of the natural world, drawing on internationally important nature reserves and a wide array of species and habitats.



Through their work, the Youth and Schools Team have witnessed first-hand the positive impact spending time in a natural environment can have on a young person's emotional wellbeing, physical health, social skills and learning.

As a result, this year they announced the launch of a new Mindfulness and Natural Art Discovery Day. Aimed at primary school students in Hertfordshire, Essex and London (KS1 & 2), these new sessions will introduce young people to mindfulness and wellbeing through a range of outdoor experiences and natural art techniques.



During the Discovery Day pupils will learn to focus on their senses and stay in the moment as they work in teams to observe the park's surroundings and wildlife and create art with natural artifacts. Children will leave the sessions with a greater awareness of mindfulness and wellbeing and the natural world as well as learning vital team building and social skills.

The launch comes at a time when the links between wellbeing and outdoor learning have become more widely recognised. It is proven that spending time in the natural environment can improve mental health and feelings of wellbeing. It can reduce stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression, wellbeing and reduce stress.

Signature parks and green spaces

The Royal Parks

The Royal Parks encompass over 2,000 hectares of historic parkland and green space across London. Managed by The Royal Parks charity, the eight parks welcome over 77 million visitors each year, making them one of the UK's most popular visitor attractions. The estate includes listed landscapes and bio-diverse environments, as well as iconic buildings, memorials and statues.

The Royal Parks provide many opportunities for sport and exercise. This includes annual events such as Swim Serpentine and The Royal Parks Half Marathon which inspires over 16,000 people to run for charity every year, taking in some of London's world-famous landmarks along the way. Several parks offer facilities for swimming, yoga, tennis, football, rugby and other team games. And people who prefer a more leisurely pace can join a variety of monthly guided walking tours.

As well as promoting physical wellbeing, The Royal Parks runs a learning programme to encourage people to spend more time outdoors connecting with nature and learning something new, to help improve their mental health. Last year, the programme engaged over 30,000 people of all ages, inspiring them to discover and enjoy nature and improve their wellbeing. People can also benefit by joining The Royal Parks' volunteering programme, working on conservation or education projects, or as part of a new Volunteer Ranger service to help raise awareness of the parks' rich history and wildlife.



Volunteer Ranger Service

Recent research reveals that 79% of people think that green spaces help them keep fit and healthy. It also shows that people living in greener urban areas have fewer signs of depression and anxiety. This is supported by a recent Royal Parks survey, showing that two thirds of park visitors come for sports, exercise and relaxation.

Community allotments across the parks help provide training, learning and volunteering opportunities for local schools, families and community groups. In Kensington Gardens, the 'Learn to Grow' project enables young people with learning difficulties to develop practical skills in gardening and food growing, helping to increase their employability, social and life skills.

The Royal Parks continues to invest in improving its facilities and its programmes for people. Thanks to funding from the London Marathon Charitable Trust, two playgrounds will be revamped and re-designed to be fully inclusive by the end of 2019, and a play programme which inspires children to play outdoors and reconnect with nature will be developed. The charity is also exploring ideas for a new wellbeing programme and innovative ways to evaluate the impact it makes on people's lives.



'Learn to Grow'



Schools at The Royal Parks



The Royal Parks Half Marathon

Signature parks and green spaces

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park has welcomed more than 27 million visitors since it opened in 2014. It is a green magnet attracting people to its 226 hectares of parkland and open space, 12 hectares of woods with 13,000 trees, 6.5km of waterways and two amazing playgrounds as well as its five world-class sporting venues.

It offers something for everyone from thrill-seekers wanting to ride the Slide at the ArcelorMittal Orbit or watch a fantastic event to those just wanting to soak up the views, beautiful parkland and wonderfully diverse environment.

It is free, safe and open every day of the year providing a wonderful green link between the River Thames, Lee Valley Regional Park and Hackney Marshes creating an ecological corridor and providing a haven for wildlife.

Local people make up the bulk of the more than 6 million visitors who come to the Park each year. Visitors also come from across the country and



overseas in large numbers, drawn to the world-class events and venues. Our many one-off and temporary events – both paid-for and free – means there's always something to do.

Thousands of schoolchildren use the Park as an open-air classroom while careful landscaping with few steps, gentle slopes and ample benches encourage less agile visitors. 450 Park Champions give their time freely to support events, help visitors and run the Park Mobility Service.

We've put a lot of effort into improving the connections into the surrounding neighbourhoods to make sure areas that were once cut-off are now connected, it's easy to get onto the Park by foot or bike.



There is a lot of scientific and medical research that shows how parks and green spaces are beneficial for physical and mental health - reducing blood pressure, levels of stress and allowing you to enjoy nature and big skies. As we create a new part of the city in east London, the Park is a vital part of our urban lifestyle helping local people to cope with the pressures and strains of life, switching off from the rat race and switching on to a calmer, more peaceful environment.

Our gardeners, designers, volunteers and visitors care deeply and passionately about the Park. Our people and our parkland are the glue that bind our new and existing communities together, creating a safe environment where people can meet, relax, share and enjoy the things that are most important to them.

Thamesmead

Peabody Housing Association came to Thamesmead in 2014 and are now engaged on a 30-year plan to complete London's New Town, work started by the GLC in the 1960's in north Greenwich and Bexley.

Thamesmead's history is of a new town for London designed to provide high quality housing for people who, at the time, would have often been living in slums. One key part of Thamesmead's offer was its generous provision of parks, greenspace, lakes and canals all intended to provide amenity for the new residents. In the 50 years since Thamesmead was founded these assets have endured but their upkeep and purpose has deteriorated. Landscape is a key focus for Peabody in

Thamesmead for several reasons. It exists on a scale that helps define Thamesmead, it has characteristics such as canals and lakes that are unique in London, but it also has the potential for Thamesmead being a great place to live and visit. To underpin our approach to landscape Peabody have commissioned a Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy to guide investment and design over the next decade and beyond. Key drivers for this move are that a well-designed and managed landscape can provide multiple benefits for people and place. There is now overwhelming evidence that access to greenspace can have very significant benefits for peoples physical and mental wellbeing and so a key aim in Thamesmead is to lever this benefit for a population some of which have significant health issues.





The Infrastructure Strategy will do this in several ways:

- Connectivity and destination – Thamesmead is a confusing place more orientated to the car than the pedestrian or cyclist. The landscape can hold Thamesmead together and become the active connective tissue that runs through it.
- Play, sport & recreation – The green and blue spaces of Thamesmead are relatively underused yet provide multiple opportunities for activity. Play is a key theme with an emphasis on 'Play on the Way' to engage all ages along routes through Thamesmead.
- Food & farming – a productive landscape will encourage people to engage in the landscape and with each other. Opportunities from window boxes to urban farming exist and these can help foster healthy eating.
- Biodiversity – Thamesmead has a wealth of habitats and species; however a Biodiversity Action Plan will focus attention on certain species and on a net gain approach. Access to nature has been shown to improve health outcomes.

For Thamesmead 'Living in the Landscape' will be a key characteristic and this will bring multiple benefits with health being a key outcome.

Capel Manor College

Capel Manor College is London's leading specialist land-based education provider, offering a diverse range of full and part-time courses for young people and adults. Students across the College's six campuses are immersed in a hands-on, creative and practical outdoor learning environment, with exceptional, industry-experienced tutors who are experts in their fields.

With six campuses across London – Brooks Farm (Leyton), Crystal Palace Park, Enfield, Forty Hall Farm, Gunnersbury Park and Regent's Park – Capel Manor College plays a vital role in the green agenda for the capital. To further encourage Londoners to enjoy the outdoors and make the city greener and healthier, the College is working with the National Park City Foundation, a valuable movement designed to improve city life.

A greener future is essential to the Mayor of London's vision and skilled workers are crucial to maintaining and protecting the city's many parks and green spaces. The College supports the capital's growing demand for land-based skills and teaches the importance

of environmental sustainability through its wide range of courses in horticulture, countryside management, garden design, environmental conservation and arboriculture.

Principal, Malcolm Goodwin says, 'Capel Manor College is a unique and very special College that provides outstanding and inspirational learning opportunities for young people and adults to get into land-based and environmental industries. We believe there is nowhere else quite like us in terms of our facilities, activities, staff and students. The College provides fantastic career opportunities by showing its students how to create beautiful gardens, produce food from the land and look after countryside, trees and wildlife to create a healthier, more attractive, productive and accessible environment for everyone'.

If you're interested in learning about nature, animals and the environment, find out more at www.capel.ac.uk

**Capel Manor
College**

Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)

Tasked with honouring 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the First and Second World Wars, the CWGC maintains cemeteries and memorials in 23,000 locations in more than 150 countries and Territories. Its value and aims laid out in 1917 are as relevant now as they were 100 years ago.

The work of the CWGC is well known on the great battlefields of Flanders and the Somme, the Lutyens designed memorial at Thiepval and the Menin Gate in Ieper have hosted major events from the 1914-18 centenaries and in June 2019 the D Day commemorations were focused on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial and Bayeux Military Cemetery where there were unforgettable images of veterans from the battles laying wreaths in memory of their fallen comrades.

Of equal importance for the CWGC are the 306,000 commemorations in the UK in over 12,400 different locations most of which are owned, operated and maintained by local authorities, churches and private individuals. Each site has a unique programme of inspection and care and for an



ageing historic estate, these sites also have planned inspection and maintenance programmes. The majority of these are in small groups or as individual scattered headstones.

Many of these sites are in London where our gardening and structural maintenance teams work with contractors and local authorities to ensure that our rigorous standards of care are upheld.

With over a century of experience we are now adopting a conservation-based approach to caring for our headstones and memorial structures, exploring more sustainable ways of maintaining turf and ornamental plantings and also developing a volunteer network to help with our work which as at our creation in 1917 remains 'in perpetuity'.

idverde

The health benefits of access to good quality green spaces are proven beyond doubt. These include better self-rated health; lower BMI, improved mental health and wellbeing and increased longevity [Public Health England]. London is blessed with many beautiful green spaces, *idverde* and its clients maximise these benefits in the areas where we work.

In Bromley, where *idverde* manages the Borough's parks and green spaces, we offer a range of health and wellbeing sessions through our BEECHE (Bromley Environmental Education at High Elms) programmes. This year we're providing weekly sessions to boost the health and wellbeing of both children and adults through yoga, mindfulness and outdoor activities. These include inclusive Yoga sessions, a 'Relax Kids' programme and workshops to help children feel happy, calm and confident.

These techniques can then be taken home to improve emotional wellbeing for the whole family. Our Summer programme offers a health and wellbeing Open Day providing free yoga, Nordic walking and nature walks. BEECHE works with Bromley's Clinical Commissioning Group and is listed in the Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing Directory of Services for Children and Young People in Bromley.



Bromley Environmental Education at High Elms



In Wandsworth, idverde works within an innovative partnership between Enable Leisure & Culture, Wandsworth Council, and the charity Thrive, who use gardening to bring about positive changes to disadvantaged or vulnerable residents. Thrive clients maintain key areas of Battersea Park in Wandsworth through a unique horticultural therapy programme. Together, the partners developed a model to help people living with disabilities or ill-health maintain areas of Battersea Park. Not only does this provide valuable work experience, but candidates also work towards a recognised horticultural qualification. Now in its 3rd year, Thrive's Working It Out programme supports up to 32 client gardeners to participate in the Pathways programme with over half progressing on to Level 1 Horticulture Qualification while maintaining the wonderful Dan Pearson designed Winter Garden in Battersea Park.

idverde takes every opportunity to promote the benefits of green space to health and wellbeing, and our last two gardens at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show have been centred on these themes. In 2017, our Gold Medal winning 'Mind Trap' garden focussed on the importance of speaking up about mental health.



Winter Garden, Battersea Park

This year, our garden in partnership with Family Action was called the 'Family Monsters' garden. This communicated the importance of bringing family issues in to the open, in order to make them less 'scary'. As well as winning a Gold Medal, this garden was also chosen as Best Artisan garden. The public response to both entries was incredibly moving, demonstrating how green space is interwoven with our health and emotional wellbeing.

idverde will always support schemes to protect precious green space and provide wider benefits to local communities. Our Community Investment Fund is open to any community group in areas where we operate, and we'll continue to explore further opportunities to promote health and wellbeing in our cherished green spaces.

South West London Environment Forum

South West London Environment Network (SWLEN) is a charity set up in 2011 to promote community involvement in parks and biodiversity. It now works across the London Boroughs of Richmond upon Thames, Hounslow, Ealing and Wandsworth.

SWLEN's core work is to support Friends of Parks Groups so that they can be as effective as possible, but it also works with other environmental groups including community gardening, litter picking and waste reduction initiatives.



Litter picking at Old Deer Park



Strawberry Hill House
Carers and over 75s come together for gardening and conversation!

The support SWLEN offers is wide ranging and includes:

- advice on setting up a group, agreeing a constitution and recruiting volunteers
- training to set up websites, social media and mailing lists
- organising regular Friends of Parks Forums for networking and discussing best practice, and feeding back issues to local authority staff and contractors
- regular newsletters about developments in the sector, consultations and funding opportunities
- advertising groups' events and volunteer vacancies on SWLEN's website and social media
- support with fundraising, events, and managing change in a group
- a crowdfunding platform on SWLEN's website enabling money to be raised direct from the public to fund parks' improvements
- a library of equipment, ranging from speakers and tea urns, to litter pickers and bat detectors
- representing the community environment sector at local and London wide network meetings and initiatives, including the London Friends of Greenspaces Network and Capital Growth.

Many of the activities organised by SWLEN's groups focus on improving the mental and physical health of their participants. The local office of The Conservation Volunteers' has set up 3 Green Gym groups in the area and hopes to expand further. Strawberry Hill House runs several weekly sessions in its community garden, including those for carers and over 75s who enjoy coming together for gardening and conversation, sometimes ending in an open-air singsong!

SWLEN also chairs and acts as the secretariat of the Richmond Biodiversity Partnership and co-ordinated the recent update of its Biodiversity Action Plan which contains 20 individual species and habitat action plans all led by volunteers. Time spent in open spaces appreciating nature is beneficial to health. A programme of public outreach aimed at getting residents to make improvements to their own gardens to help wildlife on the back of the launch is proving very popular. A Nature in Richmond Borough Facebook group, set up to encourage residents to share photos and appreciation of local nature, parks and outdoor life, has also been a huge success. Newer groups for residents of Hounslow and Wandsworth are also gaining followers.

Funding for SWLEN's work comes from local authorities, charitable foundations and consultancy work which is carried out in circumstances where SWLEN has expertise to offer outside South West London or to charities and not for profit organisations outside the environment sector.

Collaborations

Amenity Forum

The Amenity Forum is the voluntary initiative for the sector promoting best practice in all aspects of weed, pest and disease management.

It is independent of any commercial interests and was set up for two key reasons:

Firstly, it brings the sector together to promote best practice and demonstrate to Government that voluntarily the sector can continue to drive up professional standards and ensure amenity management can be undertaken to produce safe and healthy amenity spaces.

Secondly, it is charged by the UK Government to help deliver the UK National Action Plan arising from the Sustainable Use Directive implementation. Each year the Forum reports on how the sector is doing in meeting the targets.

Whilst having these roles, the Forum receives no Government funding and so it levies from organisations in the sector, an annual membership fee to help undertake its objectives. Organisations supporting the aims cover all aspects of amenity management including Parks for London, which is bringing a growing number of local authorities into associate membership. In 2019, the Forum is collaborating with Parks for London to produce a comprehensive Integrated Weed Management Guidance, template policy and plan.

Specific guidance notes are also available for local authorities to help answer questions on glyphosate and other matters. Each year the Forum runs a series of free Updating events across the UK covering policy issues and current topics of interest. These act as valuable networking events and in 2019, a very successful event was held at City Hall.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nC9Q38IHTaw&feature=youtu.be>

The Forum also organises an annual conference and Exhibition. This year's conference is being held at Burton on Trent on October 10th and will focus on new innovations in the sector and integrated management planning.

This year the Forum will also launch the new sector-wide Assurance Standard, akin to the Red Tractor in the food producing industries. Display of the logo in parks and all public spaces will be a sign that all operations in amenity management are of the highest standard and fully comply with a recognised assurance scheme. The wording on the logo will be 'Safe, healthy public spaces fit for purpose'. Such a standard has long been needed and is fully supported by all concerned, key stakeholders and policy makers. The formal launch will take place in October at the Amenity Forum conference.



Collaborations

Health Parks

Tisdall Associates, as a registered practice of the Landscape Institute, advises on the development of health promoting parks and green spaces. It has created the online Parks for Health Toolkit, in co-operation with Parks for London. Launched in May 2019, the Parks for Health Toolkit has been used by Lambeth Borough Council, and forms part of the successful Islington and Camden Future Parks Accelerator Bid delivered by the National Trust and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Set within the context of Primary Prevention and from a perspective of Public Health, the Parks for Health Toolkit has been developed from a detailed review of original research. That research demonstrates the association between the quality and use of parks and green spaces, and health benefits. These benefits include the prevention and treatment of non-communicative diseases (diabetes, CHD, cancers, stroke, and hypertension), mental ill-health (anxiety, stress, depression and dementia; some leading to suicide), obesity, and environmental risk factors (pollution, temperature extremes, UV radiation, noise). Notwithstanding the benefit to health in terms of reduced personal suffering associated with physical and mental illness, such improvements will also have a bearing upon the future cost of clinical treatment, Adult and Social Care, and Mental Health Services across the community.



Parks for Health Toolkit

The Parks for Health Initiative

The Parks for Health Initiative allows the preparation of Green Space Health Audits, and Green Space Health Strategies; adding an invaluable "Health" dimension to current audits and strategies, not previously available. Each can be used in isolation, or as part of an integrated approach. These are as follows:

1 The Parks and Green Space Health

Framework: In placing parks and green spaces within the context of Primary Prevention, the Framework allows a holistic approach to creating healthy communities. It allows an integrated approach including parks and leisure, public health, planning, environment and regeneration, clinical commissioning groups and community and friends' groups. The Framework allows parks and green spaces to be used to address health targets and provides a context for interdepartmental collaboration and joint funding initiatives.

<https://www.tisdallassociates.co.uk/parks-for-health-strategy-framework>

2 The Parks for Health Toolkit: From a detailed review of research, it has been possible to identify key elements in the natural environment which have a bearing upon health and wellbeing. The findings have been interpreted in landscape terms and categorised within five Primary Criteria: (health promotion, accessibility, mental wellbeing, physical activity, and environment and biodiversity) some 17 Secondary Health Criteria, and over 80 elements and activities. In practical terms, the Toolkit includes a series of objective online surveys. These are the shorter Free Survey, and three levels of Audit; the Basic Audit, the Evaluation and the Appraisal. These identify, at increasing levels of detail, two categories of information. The first, practical interventions represent physical improvements and new opportunities; the determinants of health. The second, health promotion initiatives, and those which can be used within Social Prescribing, include facilities which provide a context for activities linked to mental wellbeing, reducing social isolation and improving community cohesion, encouraging physical activity, as well as opportunities for education, interest and volunteering.

By completing an online questionnaire, the Toolkit analyses the answers, and produces a bespoke Assessment Report for a park or green space. The report provides data on the current health status of the park and identifies potential improvements and new interventions within each of the five Primary Health Criteria. In addition, it identifies the improvements and new interventions which have been associated with the prevention and treatment of obesity, non-communicative diseases, mental ill-health and environmental risk factors.

- 3 The Green Space Health Strategy:** The Parks Health Strategy is developed for a park (or parks) around the Parks for Health Framework. It allows a park, or groups of green spaces, to be set within Primary Prevention. It identifies practical interventions and health promotion initiatives, it demonstrates how the development and use of parks can be linked with social prescribing, Public Health and Workplace Wellbeing, and it identifies clear opportunities for park-based health interventions.



The Appraisal Report, providing a detailed health Audit of your Park

The Parks for Health Initiative

4 Multiple Park Analysis: Where participants wish to ascertain the health status of parks and green spaces across an area (e.g. City, Town, Borough or Ward), assessments can be carried out, and results analysed to obtain an overview of the health status of parks in that wider area. In addition to producing an Assessment report for each park, the Multiple Park Analysis demonstrates the health status of parks within each of the five health criteria. It indicates an average of the health status of the parks, it identifies parks which lie above and below this average, both overall, and within each of the Health Criteria, and it recommends practical interventions to resolve consistent shortfalls across the region. From this information it is possible to explore associations between the health status of parks across and within districts, and to compare them for example, to levels of deprivation. It also allows population wide interventions to target medical conditions prevalent across the wider community.

In conclusion, the reduction in avoidable ill-health is essential to reduce personal suffering to individuals and across society. It is also important to reduce the costs of avoidable ill-health to the NHS, to Adult and Social Care and to Mental Health. The creation of health promoting parks and green spaces allows them to be integrated within Primary Prevention, alongside other health initiatives. In addition, the data gained from the Parks for Health Initiative can be used to strengthen integrated working and associated funding applications to target avoidable ill-health in the local population.

For further information on the Parks and Green Spaces Health Framework and Parks for Health Initiative please go to:
<http://www.tisdallassociates.co.uk/>
OR contact us by email at:
info@tisdallassociates.co.uk

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Director

Optimising parks and green spaces for public health and wellbeing

Introduction

Scientific research has identified the importance of parks & green spaces and the natural environment for health, and today this is broadly accepted. At the same time, an aging population and increasing incidence of avoidable physical and mental conditions is putting immense pressure on health services. Financial pressures have reduced the ability of many Councils to maintain and develop their parks to the standard they would like; and in some cases, open spaces have been lost to development. In a more positive light however, there is a growing appreciation of the importance of addressing avoidable ill-health at source, within the context of Primary Prevention.

To this end, in January 2019 the Government announced funding of £4.5 Bill per year for the next five years, to be used by CCGs, Public Health and community groups to reduce the prevalence of avoidable ill-health.

Many charities and community groups are also working hard alongside Local Authorities to raise the profile of parks; Parks for London, The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces, Fields in Trust, Thrive, to name but a few. There is also increasing co-operation between Parks Departments and Public Health, and a growing awareness of the benefits of using parks within Social Prescribing.

"The Health Parks Assessment Toolkit is the missing key to understand and unlock the health benefits of local parks and green spaces."

Tony Leach
CEO Parks for London



Emotional restoration through natural environments



Access for all



Parks provide colour, variety and interest

Key benefits from the Parks for Health Assessments:

- Highlights health benefits already available in parks and green spaces.
- Provides tangible evidence to the public that Local Authorities are committed to their health and wellbeing.
- Acts as a catalyst to bring multiple services together to target a broad range of issues, e.g., air quality, inactivity, modal change, etc through sports, planning, health, environment, sustainability, etc.
- Opens funding opportunities through collaboration with Public Health and CCGs
- Reduces (long term?) cost of treatment to the NHS for avoidable health conditions.
- Cost reductions to Local Authorities for Adult and Social Care and Mental Health Services
- Helps local authorities to identify key needs/areas for targeted interventions so that scarce resources can be used more effectively.

The Missing Key

Whilst many of the components to utilise parks for health are in place, what has been more elusive is the ability to link the findings of scientific research to practical interventions; on the ground, and to answer the question; **What does a health-promoting park look like?** The Parks for Health Toolkit offers an answer.

The Parks for Health Initiative offers a range of outputs, each tailored to address a goal. These are the Audits (Basic Audit, Evaluation and Appraisal) the Single Park Health Strategies, Multiple Parks Health Strategies including a multiple park data analysis, and Health and Activity Maps. These can also form the basis for Landscape Health Masterplans to identify existing health-based provision, and to identify new opportunities on the ground.

These documents provide the following opportunities:

- To establish objectively, the baseline health status of a Park against (i) Five Primary Criteria [Community Initiatives, Accessibility, Mental Wellbeing, Physical Activity and Environment] (ii) 17 Secondary Criteria, and (iii) some 80 individual elements. In so doing the Audits provide quantifiable data for each Park.
- As an objective, evidence based replicable model, parks can be celebrated, compared and contracted across an area, a Ward, a Borough, and a County.
- To identify improvements and new opportunities in each of the health criteria.
- To link these improvements and new opportunities to address Obesity, Mild mental Ill-health, Non-Communicative Diseases, and Environmental Factors affecting health.
- To identify the availability of facilities which could be used within Social Prescribing; opening both opportunities for funding in co-operation with CCGs.
- To enhance biodiversity, and optimise parks to reduce pollution, and environmentally related health conditions.
- To develop Green Space Health Strategies, to target health conditions and to reduce health inequalities.

Conclusion

The Parks for Health Toolkit provides a mechanism to optimise the use of Parks for Health by identifying practical improvements, and opportunities for Health Promotion and Social Prescribing. The Toolkit is available on an individual cost basis. Alternatively, where multiple parks are to be assessed, and where re-assessment may be required to weigh the health benefits of varied interventions, unlimited assessments can be undertaken under License. For more information please explore our website and contact us to discuss how you would like to improve your parks for health.

Tisdall Associates, is a Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute, promoting sustainable development, embracing Landscape, Biodiversity and Health. Richard Tisdall, Director of Tisdall Associates is co-author of the Landscape Institute's Policy Statement "Public Health and Landscapes" Tisdall Associates is proud to acknowledge the contribution made by Parks for London in the evolution and testing of the Parks for Health Toolkit, and to contribute to this Good Parks for London report.

<https://www.tisdallassociates.co.uk/about-health-parks>

Case Studies

Single Park Health Strategy, Ruskin Park, Lambeth

Commissioned by Lambeth Borough Council and undertaken with the co-operation of Friends of Ruskin Park

"Members (of our Friends of Ruskin Park) feel passionately about the blindingly obvious causative link between our health and the environment for the public park of this urban area... It's quite a struggle to make consistent improvements. We want a more systematic and effective approach to deciding on priorities for the park and ensuring that they're implemented."

Lucy Hadfield
Chair of Ruskin Park's Friends Group.
London Borough of Lambeth



The Ornamental Garden



Community Activities



A Range of Habitats and biodiversity

Case Studies

Motivated by the Local Labour Party Manifesto Pledge in 2018; to roll out the health benefits of parks across Lambeth, Tisdall Associates were commissioned by the London Borough of Lambeth to prepare a Parks and Green Spaces Health Strategy for Ruskin Park. The survey of the park was undertaken in February 2019 and was developed in consultation with Public Health and The Friends of Ruskin Park. The local Health Profile identified several conditions in Lambeth which were significantly worse than the average for England. These were: Life expectancy, mortality rates, cardiovascular disease, diabetes (17+), stroke, all cancers and obesity in children at reception year, year 6 and aged 10-22.

The aim of the Strategy was to identify (i) the current health status of the Park, improvements and new opportunities across the five primary criteria, (ii) opportunity for health promotion, (iii) opportunities, to address the identified medical conditions, and how the Park could be used within a context of Social Prescribing. The proximity of Kings College Hospital and Maudsley Hospital, and work which was being undertaken between the Friends of Ruskin Park, and local GPs suggested a good opportunity to expand the use of the park within Social Prescribing.

"A lot of it's common sense and a lot of it we know, but what the strategy report does is bring some specific expertise and objective analysis and statistics around a whole range of health data, which just helps guide us in terms of priorities and also provides a document that we can show to funders."

Kevin Crook
Assistant Director Environment London
Borough of Lambeth

The analysis indicated that the park exhibited a good standard across many of the Health Criteria, but with opportunity for improvement and new interventions. Ruskin Park already provided several valuable health-based activities and facilities. These included community gardens, walks, volunteering and the natural environment. Discussions with local health providers on the use of the park were underway, as were early links with the local hospitals. However, based upon this objective evidence-based assessment it was apparent that there were opportunities for improvement and new interventions across four of the five Primary Health, and several secondary health criteria which a typical Green Space Audit would not have identified. These included improved health-based media and educational opportunities for the public, improved health-based signage and interpretation, a wider range of physical activity such as a trim trail, or low impact activity route, and greater development and use of the park through Social Prescribing.

Case Studies

The Islington and Camden Future Parks Accelerator Bid

This project is funded by the GLA, the Boroughs of Islington and Camden, London Sport, National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the National Trust.

Tisdall Associates are working with the London Boroughs of Islington and Camden as part of the Future Parks Accelerator programme, to develop a Multiple Park Strategy for the 168 Parks across both Boroughs. As part of this project it is proposed

"To map out the health benefits of parks using the Parks for Health toolkit to understand the baseline position and opportunities for improvements. We would look to develop this in conjunction with the locality model for delivering health services based around GPs."

The Islington and Camden Future Parks Accelerator Bid

To deliver on this, the Strategy will include the following elements:

- A full appraisal of each park.
- Lists of key improvements and interventions for each park within each of the health criteria.
- The current health status of each park, for the parks and green spaces across each Ward, Borough and both Boroughs.
- An analysis of park data indicating the strengths and weaknesses of parks across each Ward, both in terms of the scale of park, and within each of the health criteria.
- It will identify the Wards with the highest and lowest health status of parks and identify practical improvements and new interventions to strengthen weaker parks.
- An analysis of the Health Profile to ascertain the areas of avoidable ill health prevalent in the local communities.

- List of improvements and new opportunities to address those physical and mental conditions as identified by the Health Profile.
- It will ascertain the current level of Social Prescribing across the Boroughs,
- It will identify the current potential of each park to contribute to Social Prescribing.
- It will identify which parks have the potential to be improved for Social Prescribing
- It will set out a Borough-wide Parks Health Strategy embracing improvements to physical elements, Health Promotion, and Social Prescribing.
- It will provide the basis for liaison between Parks, Public Health and CCGs, and
- It will provide a basis for joint funding for health-based park projects.

In developing the Strategy, Tisdall Associates will liaise with Parks, Public Health, Friends Groups, Social Prescribers and other stakeholders.

"We see this funding as an exciting opportunity to help crystallise and implement the thinking that has been developing for some time and to accelerate that thinking into a tangible project that will genuinely transform the service and look to unlock for Parks services the holy grail of Health funding. It will enable the development of new relationships between Parks, Leisure, Public Health and the CCG and leave behind a lasting framework and mechanism to deliver new funding and resources to support the future development and management of our parks."

The Islington and Camden Future Parks Accelerator Bid



Growing together

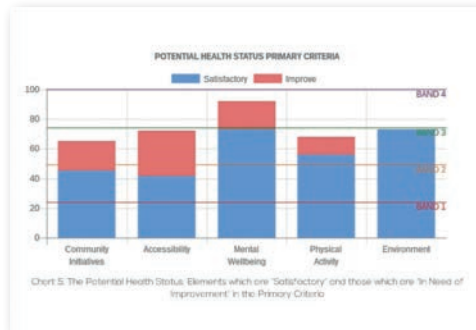


Figure 1 Analysis of data to identify current health status and potential for improvement

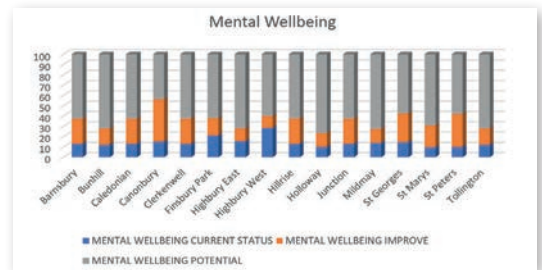


Figure 2 Average Current and Potential levels of elements promoting Mental Wellbeing by Ward

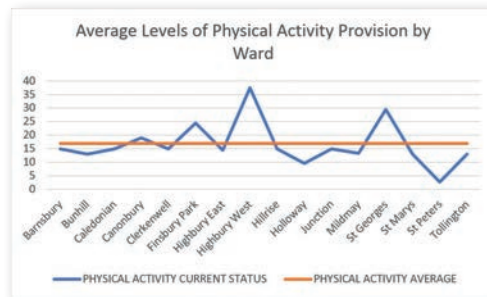


Figure 3 The Level of Physical Activity Provision by Ward compared with the overall average

The Parks for Health initiative introduces a new way to explore the health benefits of parks and green spaces. It places parks at the centre of Primary Prevention, alongside Public Health and clinical interventions. These case studies represent an important stage in the redefinition of what constitutes a healthy green space and how we should value them.

Appendix 1

Parks for London are grateful to the following London Boroughs and other organisations that gave their support in 2018-19:

Barking & Dagenham
Barnet
Bexley
Brent
Camden
City of London Corporation
Croydon
Ealing
Greenwich
Hackney
Hammersmith & Fulham
Haringey
Harrow
Havering
Hounslow
Islington
Kensington & Chelsea
Kingston upon Thames
Lambeth
Merton
Redbridge (Vision Redbridge)

Richmond upon Thames
Southwark
Sutton
Waltham Forest
Westminster City Council

Other organisations

Alexandra Palace and Park Charitable Trust
Capel Manor College
Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Glendale Lewisham
idverde (for Bromley)
Lee Valley Region Park Authority
London Legacy Development Corporation (QE Olympic Park)
The Peabody Trust
Potters Fields Park and Management Trust
South West London Environment Network
The Royal Parks
Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Appendix 2

Parks for London would like to thank [GL Hearn](#) for their continued support in sponsoring both the production and launch of Good Parks for London.

We would also like to thank all London Boroughs and the City of London Corporation for participating in this years report; and to thank the following organisations for assisting us by providing additional data and case studies:

Click on name to find out more

[Amenity Forum](#)

[Capel Manor College](#)

[Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#)

[Green Space Information for Greater London](#)

[idverde](#)

[Keep Britain Tidy](#)

[Lee Valley Regional Park Authority](#)

[London in Bloom](#)

[London Tree Officers Association](#)

[Peabody](#)

[Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park](#)

[South London Environment Network](#)

[Sustain](#)

[The Royal Parks](#)

[Tisdall Associates for Health Parks](#)

Parks for London is an independent charity whose remit is to safeguard London's parks - ensuring that the city has a vibrant network of high quality parks and green spaces that are safe & accessible, stimulating & innovative and support the health & wellbeing of Londoners.

We want to keep our parks and green spaces thriving now and into the future to make London a healthy and sustainable world city.

Find out more about us:

www.parksforlondon.org.uk

 @ParksforLondon

Errors and omissions

This 2019 edition of Good Parks for London covers the financial year 2018/19. Considerable time and effort have gone into consultation, data collection and verification. If you think you have found any errors or omissions, please let us know.

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Further advice on the appropriate use of these data can be obtained by contacting Parks for London at <https://parksforlondon.org.uk/contact/>.



Safeguarding our green spaces