

"Investing in green space every day,
not just in times of crisis, is critical."

Dr Meredith Whitten

GOOD PARKS FOR LONDON 2020

Parks and the Pandemic



**Parks for
London**

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Contents

Foreword	4
Introduction	6
Acknowledgements	6
From the Chief Executive	8
Thoughts from our sponsor	9
Overall scores	12
Part one	
Good Parks for London criteria	
1. Public satisfaction	14
2. Awards for quality	18
3. Collaboration	22
4. Events	26
5. Health, fitness and wellbeing	30
6. Supporting nature	34
7. Community involvement	38
8. Skills development	42
9. Sustainability	46
10. Strategic planning	48

Part two

Greater London Authority and the London Green Spaces Commission	54
Signature parks and green spaces	
a) City of London Corporation Open Spaces	56
b) The Royal Parks	58
c) Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park	60
d) Potters Fields Park	62
Capel Manor College	64
Contractors	
a) Glendale	66
b) idverde	68
Case studies	
a) Parks for Health in Camden and Islington	70
b) Parklets in a pandemic	74
Thanks to our supporters	76

Foreword

From grand Victorian parks and sweeping heaths and commons, to biodiverse natural areas and picturesque green squares, green space has long been a ubiquitous part of life in London. With such a wealth of green space, it could be easy to become so accustomed to their presence that we take these spaces for granted.

Yet, London's green spaces may never have been as visible as they have in the past year. As COVID-19 emerged and the world locked down, Londoners quickly turned to parks and green spaces for refuge, as we've done in other crises.

From this, the importance of a network of local spaces has come into sharper focus. Research shows the significance of having green spaces near where we live. Local spaces are destinations for leisure, recreation and interaction with nature. Just as crucially, these spaces provide a healthy, active environment for our daily journeys. Indeed, local green spaces are as fundamental to our urban existence as other physical and social infrastructure.

While these spaces may be large, flagship parks, they also can be small or informal green areas, and increasingly they include nonconventional

green spaces, such as vegetated roofs. All of these sizes and shapes of green space are valuable. Collectively, they contribute to an interconnected, multifunctional network of green space across London that enriches both human and ecological health and is greater than the sum of its parts.

Londoners can rely on parks and green spaces because of a continued commitment by local authorities and other land managers to deliver spaces that support London's resilience. This task becomes more complicated as resources shrink, pressures on green space intensify and more people crowd into existing spaces. For example, Clapham Common, in Lambeth, is the nearest public green space for about 46,000 people, nearly 20 times the national average.

Yet, too many Londoners – particularly from disadvantaged communities and minority backgrounds – lack access to high-quality green spaces. Disparities in park access and quality not only has led to inconsistent experiences during the pandemic, they also contribute to inequities in long-term health and wellbeing. Remedying these inequities must be prioritised, including in planning and housing decisions. There is no magic bullet, thus it's imperative that all landowners continue to

improve existing spaces, while constantly striving to introduce new green spaces.

The Good Parks for London report is instrumental to achieving this. Since its inception, this annual assessment has recognised the positive and pioneering approaches occurring across London's green spaces. While the characteristics and context of each park vary, Good Parks for London identifies innovation, highlights best practices and presents opportunities to improve performance. As management of London's network of green spaces become more challenging, the need to share successful collaborations, skills development and investment is vital.

Just as importantly, the Good Parks for London report identifies where to raise quality standards, within each borough and across the city as a whole. As Parks for London takes a leadership role in securing the future of London's green spaces through the Centre for Excellence – recommended by the London Green Spaces Commission – developing new approaches and driving innovation, such as that featured in this report, will be at the forefront of seeing that every Londoner benefits from quality, safe, accessible and local green space.

To ensure London's parks and green spaces remain resilient, we can't sit passively by or rest on our laurels. Through my research, I challenge how green spaces cannot stand frozen in time, but must be responsive, dynamic landscapes. Parks and green spaces need to be actively managed and maintained to ensure they are safe and healthy and serve all of the people around them. Doing so requires investing in needed resources and skills. And, it involves recognising that parks do not exist in isolation, but are connected through a city-wide system of green infrastructure that supports the health of London and its nearly 9 million residents.

Ultimately, for London to be a resilient city, it's green spaces must be resilient, too. This year's edition of Good Parks for London demonstrates why it's so critical that we provide, maintain and invest consistently in urban green space every day, not just in times of crisis.

Dr Meredith Whitten

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Introduction

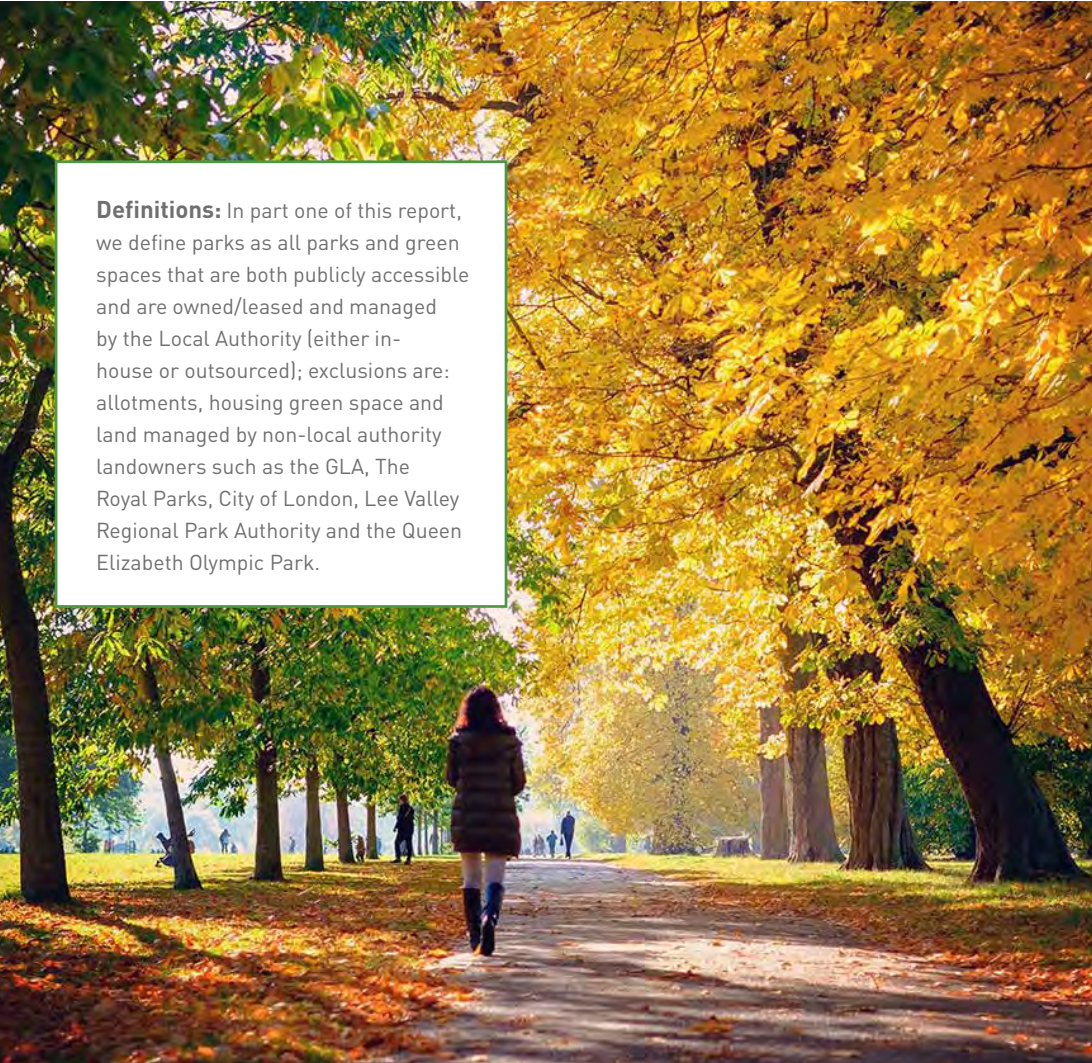
Good Parks for London is an annual report, now in its fourth year, compiled by Parks for London and sponsored by GL Hearn. It assesses each London borough's parks service (from April 2019-March 2020) against ten criteria to enable comparison between them – it gives recognition for the great work that is happening across London, it helps improve performance and makes practices more visible and open to scrutiny.

Part one of the report shows how all 32 boroughs compare against ten Good Parks criteria, detailed on page 10. 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 case studies from other land managers and organisations with an interest in managing London's parks and green spaces.

Acknowledgements

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 the boroughs that participated in this year's report and other organisations for assisting us by providing additional data and case studies.



Definitions: In 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 GLA, The Royal Parks, City of London, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

From the Chief Executive

The significance of the coronavirus is so important that we have entitled this year's edition of Good Parks for London, 'Parks and the Pandemic', even though the scores in this report relate to data from April 2019 to the end of March 2020. It is encouraging to see that 94% of boroughs improved their overall scores when compared to last year. We should therefore celebrate their achievements and promote the good work that is being delivered by councils and other organisations that manage London's green infrastructure, before and during the pandemic.

As a charity serving those that own and manage publicly accessible green space, Parks for London have been busy supporting landowners with regular updates on Covid guidance. We have all experienced huge and unpredictable workloads, yet at the same time, we have seen an amazing collaborative spirit that has kept us all going. This is the passion and perseverance that is at the heart of many individuals and organisations who work in this sector and to whom we are so grateful.

The Natural Capital Accounts for Public Green Space in London, in 2017, estimated that for every £1 spent by local authorities and their partners on

public parks, Londoners enjoy at least £27 in value. Yet, figures from MHCLG reveal that the amount of revenue funding spent by London Boroughs on their open spaces is between 0.25% and 1.62% of their total revenue budget for all council services. This exposes how insignificant the amount spent by boroughs is against overall borough spend. Yet, the benefits and value for money that parks and green spaces provide to people and the wider environment is, as seen during the pandemic, priceless. With more resources, parks would unlock even larger benefits that Londoners truly need, such as fairer access.

For this reason, I hope this year's report will galvanise decision-makers to protect and enhance future parks budgets and motivate more boroughs and other organisations to work together to keep parks well managed so that more Londoners can benefit from having not just good parks, but great ones.

Tony Leach
Chief Executive
Parks for London



Thoughts from our sponsor

For a fourth consecutive year I am pleased to be able to write in support of the Good Parks for London report.

As I write, I am reminded of what a challenging year 2020 has been, with the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting our daily lives; restricting the things we like to do and the people we love to spend time with. This report therefore serves as testament to the incredible hard work and dedication of the people who maintain London's green spaces. Together, we really can continue to raise the bar and create the much-needed green spaces people who live and who visit this great city love.

For so many of us, through summer and now through this second lockdown in England, our local parks provided space for exercise and acted as one of our most important assets, providing us with solace from the anxieties of the pandemic.

I am lucky enough to live in the heart of London, and my local park in Battersea has formed a regular place in my daily routine.

In our work, this year GL Hearn has continued to advise clients on the importance of green spaces and the pivotal role they play in relation to the built environment around them. We have supported clients to shape sustainable spaces for the future, and to secure the right investment and planning decisions so that the communities all across the UK can benefit.

Stay safe and I hope you enjoy this report as much as we have enjoyed helping to put it together.

Martin Kelly
Head of Planning
GL Hearn



Part one

Notes for scoring the criteria

1. PUBLIC SATISFACTION with parks is taken from borough-wide resident's public satisfaction surveys or similar independent survey undertaken from 1st April 2017 results (i.e. not more than two years old) scoring satisfied or above.

2. AWARDS FOR QUALITY is assessed by the results of two independently run award schemes: Green Flag (GF) and London in Bloom (LiB). The score is made up of the percentage of directly managed parks that have gained Green Flag Awards combined with London in Bloom, Large Park, Small Park, Common, Walled Garden of the Year; Heritage Parks & Gardens, Cemetery and Churchyard awards.

3. COLLABORATION is assessed by evidence of cross boundary/borough land management; 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 for the London Tree Offers Association, the London Parks Benchmarking Group and Parks for London.

4. EVENTS are assessed by boroughs having an events policy in place; providing a range and number of community and commercial events in parks; whether income generated is ring-fenced for the parks service; if events are assessed for environmental/ecological impact and if a minimum proportion of waste is recycled.

5. HEALTH, FITNESS AND WELLBEING scores are based the number of parks used for social prescribing; percentage of parks with outdoor gyms; equipment with programmed activities; have in place campaigns, outreach or concessions to promote greater participation; using Health Parks Toolkit; using health funding for parks; community food growing areas in parks, e.g., Capital Growth or other initiative; and provision of free drinking water (fountains, cafés and public buildings).

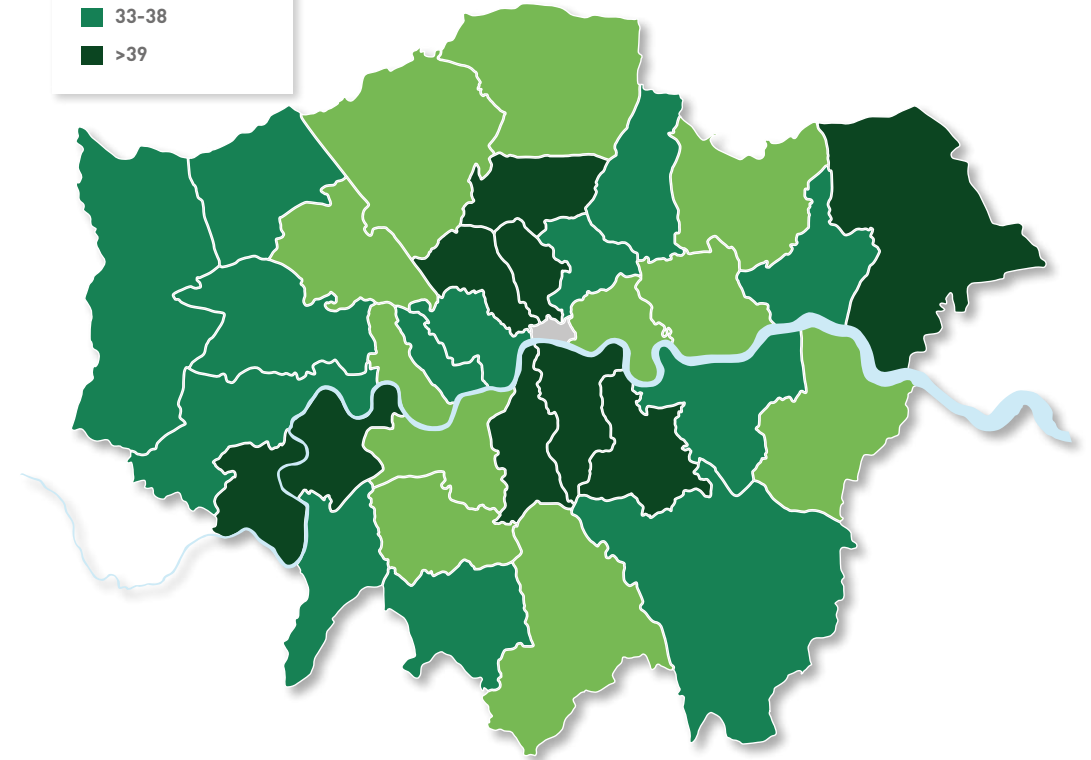
6. SUPPORTING NATURE is assessed by having an up to date Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) or similar in place, together with the percentage of parks that have management plans which include BAP objectives; the percentage of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in positive conservation management; LiB awards for conservation; supporting GiGL; hosting forest schools or outdoor classrooms and delivering biodiversity outreach.

7. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT is assessed by a combination of Community GF Awards; number of Park Friends Groups as a percentage of number of parks; having a borough-wide Friends Forum; actively supporting Friends Groups and Health Parks Toolkit is being used by Friends Groups.

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

- 28-32.75
- 33-38
- >39



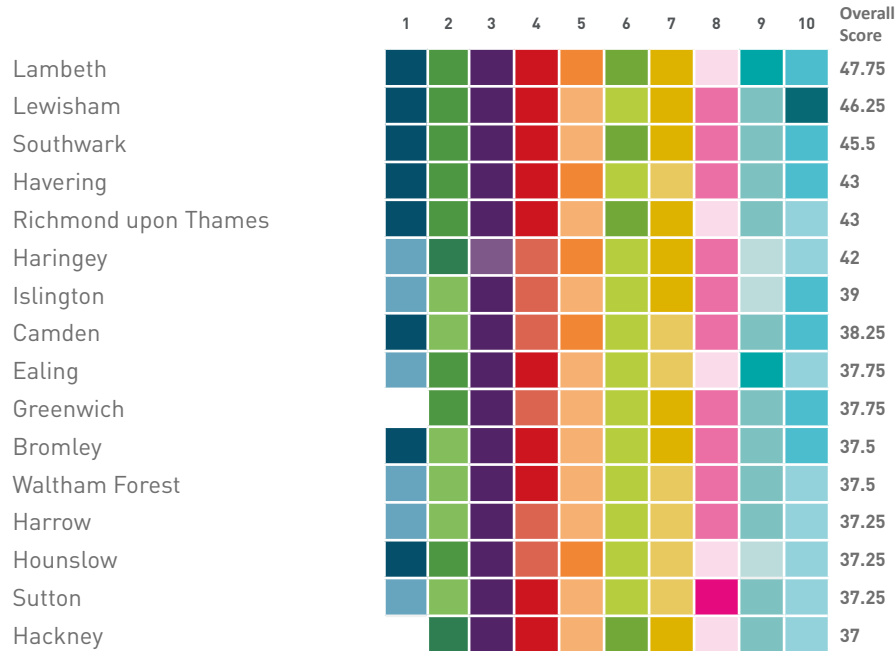
9. SUSTAINABILITY is assessed by a combination of green fleet as a percentage of total fleet; use of accredited fuel-efficient route planning, battery-operated equipment as a percentage of total hand-held equipment; recycling paper/plastic & green waste; having an integrated weed management policy and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

10. STRATEGIC PLANNING is assessed by the borough having an up to date, open or infrastructure space strategy, with a current action plan & asset management system in place and having had a scrutiny review of parks services in the last 10 years.

The criteria are assessed/reviewed annually by participating boroughs. Data used to produce maps and calculate overall scores has been collected from boroughs and partner organisations.

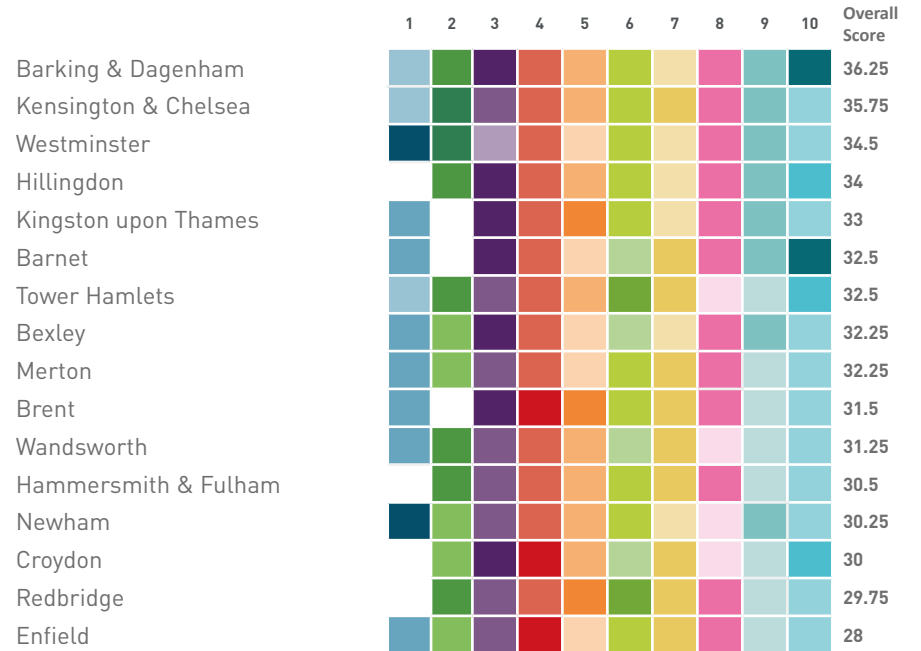


Overall scores



The City of London Gardens (CoL) has not been included in these scores as the data does not represent a comparable data set and cannot refer to the wider portfolio of work undertaken by the substantial portfolio of CoL Open Spaces run as charities outside the physical boundary of the Square Mile.

Higher scores are represented by darker shading of colour.



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



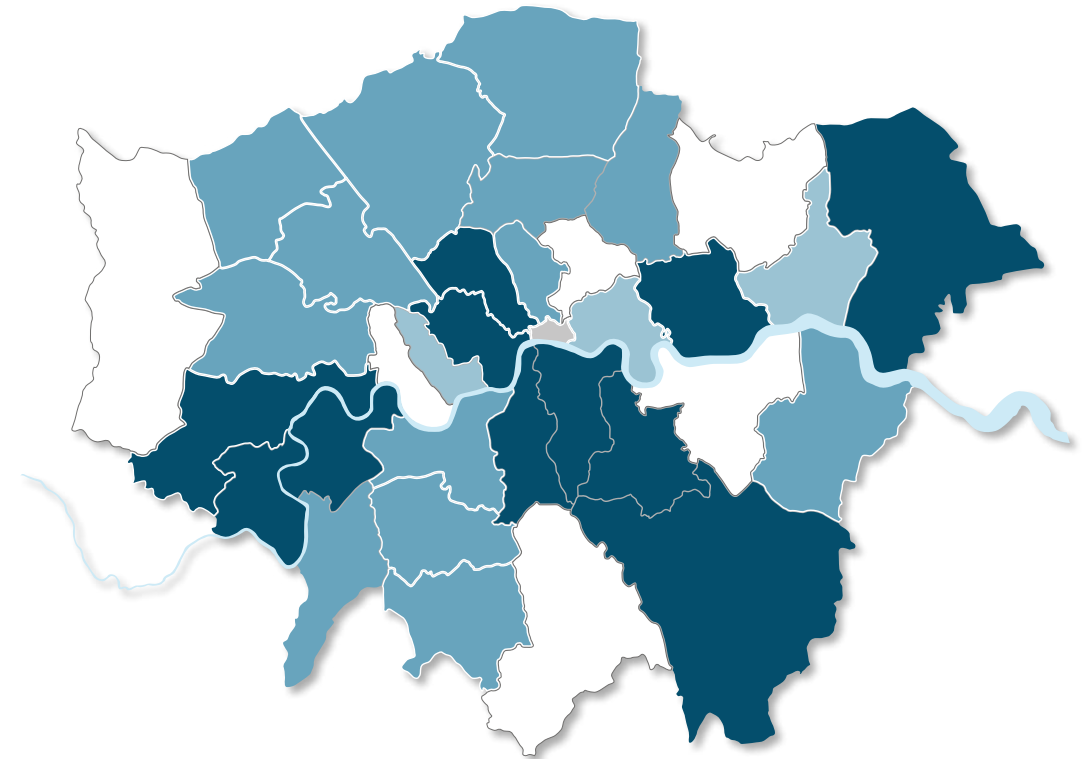
1. Public satisfaction with parks

One of the major impacts of lockdown was a huge increase in the usage of parks and green spaces, reinforcing how vital they are as a resource for residents, especially in the inner-city boroughs like **Lambeth**. The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on BAME communities, they are more likely to be living in multigenerational, overcrowded homes without gardens or balconies. Therefore, it was extremely important to keep parks and green spaces open and accessible to those families in particular. Many larger housing estates overlook parks and green spaces which offer such a vital breathing space.



Public satisfaction

- No data
- 58 - 69%
- 70 - 79%
- 80% +



“I feel it is really important that we canvas the views of our park users and respond to their concerns and priorities. I was therefore gratified to see how high user satisfaction is with Lambeth’s parks following the results of our 2019 user survey, particularly in the light of some service cuts. This really is testament to our wonderful, highly motivated staff; and to the huge amount of voluntary work put in by over 30 Friends groups and Advisory Committees.”

Cllr Sonia Winifred

Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture



In July and August 2019, 453 face-to-face surveys took place across 21 parks, in the borough with 98% of respondents classing Lambeth’s parks as satisfactory, good or excellent. In terms of horticulture, 97% considered it to be satisfactory to excellent; with cleanliness and maintenance achieving 95%. Quality of play facilities was at 92% and significantly, 96% of users felt safe in Lambeth’s parks. The area highlighted for improvements were toilets, with 48% considering them to be poor or very poor, no doubt influenced by a lack of toilets in some parks. Of those surveyed, 64% visit Lambeth’s parks every day or several times a week, with the majority there to simply enjoy them.

A major capital programme is underway across Lambeth’s parks and their Cabinet recently agreed an additional £13m of funding over the next five years. Lambeth will be taking into account the feedback received from the user survey, which will be repeated annually, to help shape investment decisions – and clearly, they will include improvements to toilets as a priority!



Brookwell walled garden, Lambeth



2. Awards for quality

The **Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea**'s success regarding management of its parks is evidenced through a 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, steadily increasing to 10 Green Flags by 2011. The Royal Borough also has a Learning Outside the Classroom accredited Ecology Centre in Holland Park and LTA Beacon Status tennis coaching programme.

Through a programme of continual investment, community engagement, and external accreditation the Council'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/stakeholder groups and partnership working with idverde.

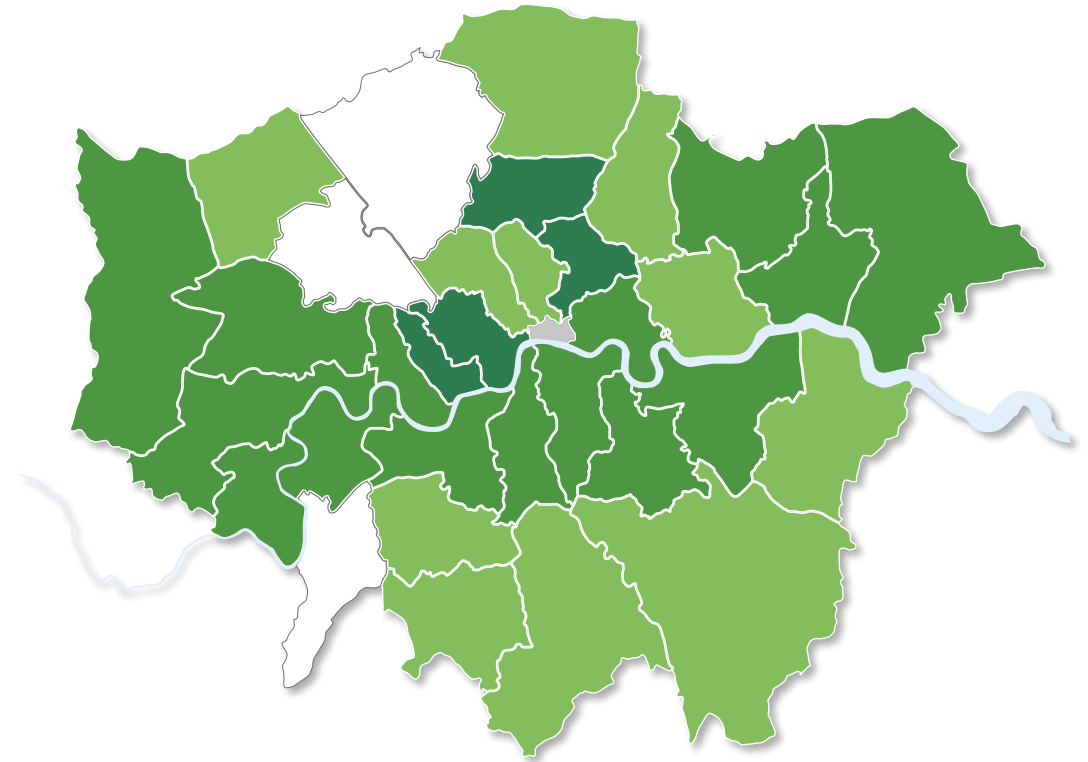


"During the Covid-19 lock down, our local community much enjoyed Holland Park, as a safe place to walk and observe the arrival of spring. It retains much of the charm of the original Holland House estate and it is pleasing that the quality of the park is recognised through external awards."

Jennie Kettlewell
Chair of the Friends of Holland Park

Awards for quality

- No data / awards
- 1 - 2
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6





Little Scrubs, Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea

“Parks are so important in densely populated areas like ours - places to relax and be part of nature. It’s vital we protect and maintain them. Our Green Flag and London in Bloom Large Park of the Year Award in 2019 are a tribute to the collaboration between RBKC and our community.”

David Hucker
Chair of the Friends of Little Wormwood Scrubs

Through the Council’s Parks Strategy, and emerging Biodiversity Action Plan, there is 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’.

“We know how loved and valued our parks are by our residents and this was particularly true during lockdown. We are committed to ensuring our parks remain outstanding and offering our residents and visitors some of the most beautiful places to see in London. External Awards for Quality are designed to keep us accountable that we are delivering on our promises. Peer review and inspection from experts help us drive up standards as well as give us important insight into what other park managers are doing.”

Cllr Emma Will
Lead Member for Communities and Culture



idverde and client staff, Holland Park

3. Collaboration

Collaboration

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6

The London Borough of **Lewisham** has a long and successful history of working collaboratively with local groups from local mental health organisations, to faith groups and Parks Friends Groups. The Parks and Open spaces team support these through practical volunteering sessions, offering advice, assisting with access to funding and collaborating on activities in their local park or nature reserve.

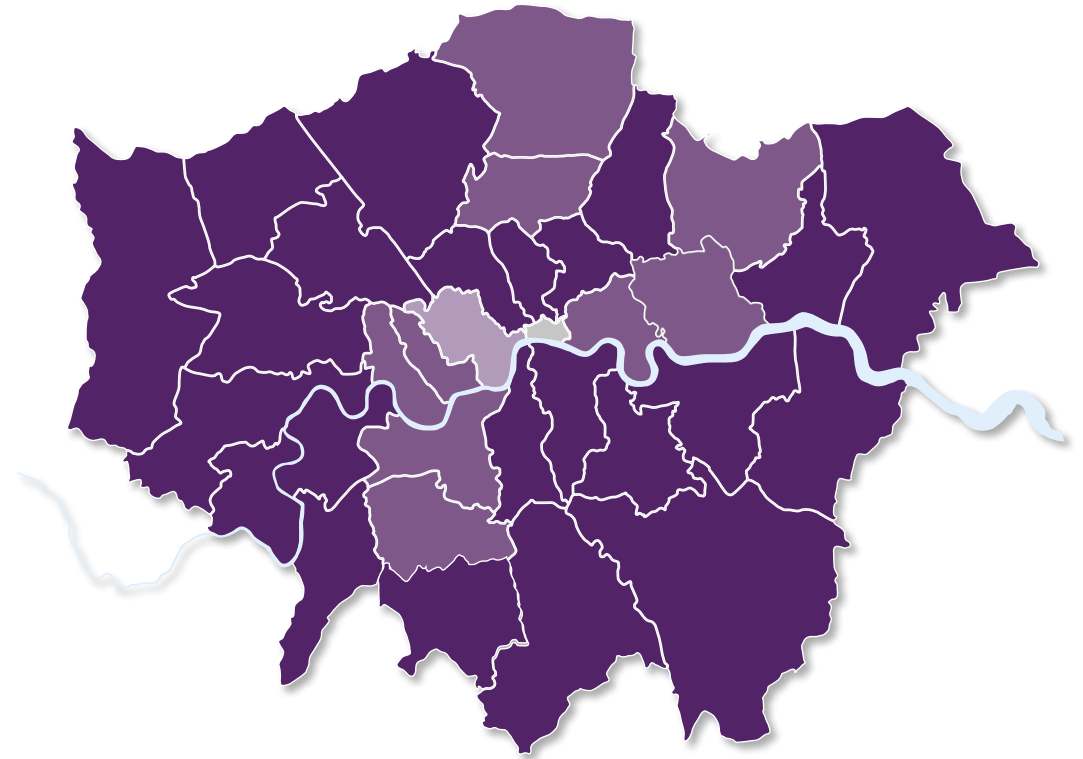
One of their most successful collaborations has been the 3 Rivers Clean Up (3RCU) - an annual series of volunteering events which aims to improve and maintain the rivers Pool, Quaggy and Ravensbourne that flow through Lewisham, Greenwich and Bromley. The events are organised by a unique partnership between the Environment Agency, environmental groups, Friends Groups and local authorities.

Now in its twelfth year the 3RCU has proved very successful. This partnership working has given volunteers the chance to discover, learn about and enjoy their rivers, and to take pride in and ownership of them.

The event also attracts local groups and businesses, including the Ravensbourne Rotary Club. This mutual collaboration saw the Nature Conservation Team lead on river clear ups and also saw the group kindly award a grant of £500 towards some new waders and storage, which has been fantastically useful!

“We recognise the hugely valuable contribution that volunteers make to parks in Lewisham, and our service is in many ways built around supporting their work. Volunteers are attracted to working in parks for lots of different reasons but they all bring knowledge, enthusiasm and love for our parks, and in doing so ensure that these precious green spaces are better for everyone.”

Cllr Sophie McGeevor
Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport



“We see our relationship with Lewisham’s Nature Conservation as part of the creation of a broader team with complimentary roles to play for the greater good of our waterways.”

Lawrence Beale-Collins

QWAG & Healthy Rivers Project

Another valued collaboration is with The Lewisham Biodiversity Partnership (LBP), consisting of a cross spectrum of partners from Parks Friends to the London Wildlife Trust and Thames 21, all with a keen interest in sharing ideas on improving and protecting Lewisham’s natural features. LBP helps them keep in touch with their groups, collectively recording all their activities and assessing the benefits this affords the borough’s greenspaces:

- From April 2019 to March 2020, 565 volunteering events were carried out in Lewisham’s parks and nature reserves by their partners.
- Over 5,000 adults and 100 children were engaged. At an average of 3 hours per session per volunteer and based on London Living Wage this is £166,281 worth of work carried out by volunteers last year

There is clearly a huge desire and a sense of responsibility from local people to help make the place where they live better.

- Aside from local volunteer projects an additional 664 educational activities took place, engaging 3,890 adults and 1,2819 children. There were 279 other engagement activities (such as bat walks) which engaged 1,2488 adults and 9,763 children.

“The weekly sessions, in the various parks and green spaces of Lewisham, have been enjoyable and exhilarating! Overall, I enjoyed getting involved in the task of the day and know that my mental health improved over this time. Their work has inspired the Friends to set up a monthly workday, to continue maintaining the Green, aiming for a balance between nature conservation and use by local residents as a small Pocket Park.”

Francis Rowe

Natures Gym volunteer and Friends of Albion Millennium Green member



Lewisham Muslim Faith Group and volunteers



Lewisham Ravensbourne Rotary Club litter pick

“Twice yearly visits from Nature’s Gym has made all the difference to us and the orchard. We are a small group of volunteers with lots of enthusiasm and ambitions which Nature’s Gym has helped us realise. We are much more aware of work going on in the rest of the borough as well as building up contact with other groups.”

Maggie Leharne

Chinbrook Community Orchard

4. Events

Prior to the onset of Covid-19, **Havering** were able to increase the number of events held in their parks throughout the borough. Their fantastic mix of green spaces from formal gardens to large country parks was reflected in the diversity of the events and activities delivered. There were a good mix of small scale community events to large scale commercial events which benefited both the local and wider community and enabled them to enjoy their parks and open spaces.

Regular events included the Langtons Gardens Summer Concert (with The Westminster Philharmonic Orchestra), the Havering Show (over the August bank-holiday weekend), Shakespeare in the Park (performances of Macbeth by Romford Summer Theatre), fun fairs, circuses and the Spitfire Scramble (London's only 24-hour off-road race, held in Hornchurch Country Park).

New events included XRace in Harrow Lodge Park, which proved to be very popular with families as they took part in various mystery challenges. There was also the Havering Half Marathon, the first run of this type in the borough for many years. Arranged by MIND as a fund raiser and supported by Havering with much of the route taking in parks in Havering.



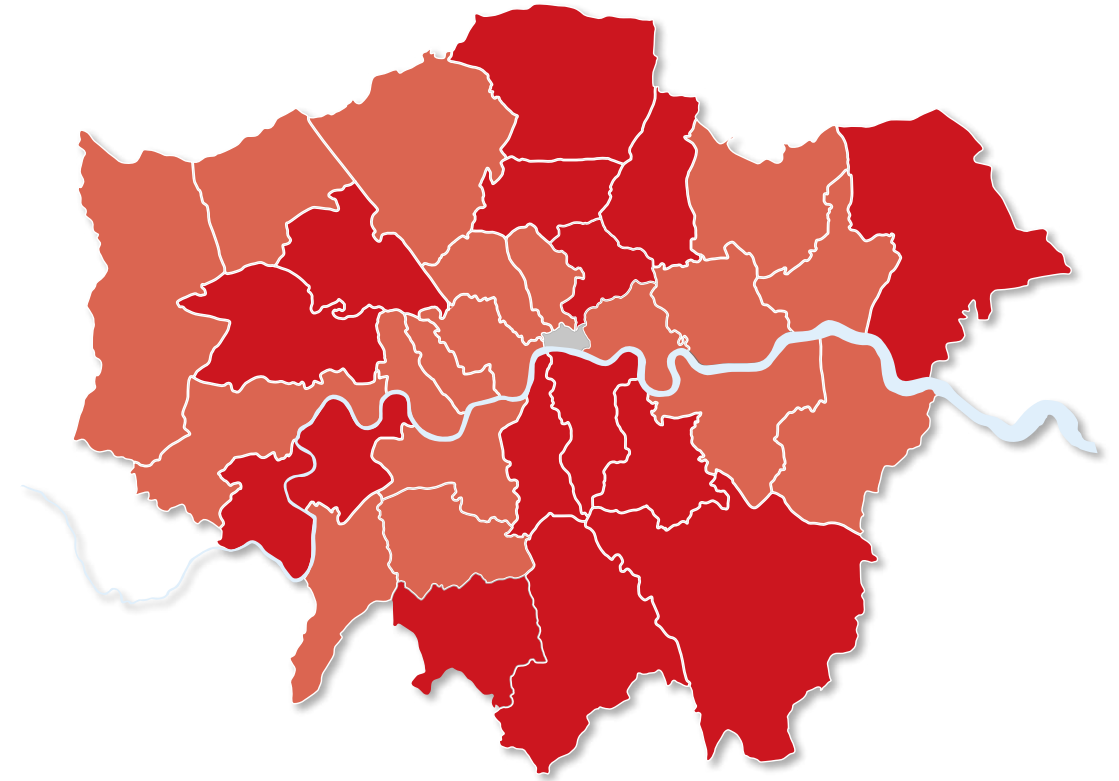
Havering Show



XRACE Harrow Lodge Park

Events

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6





Westminster Symphony Orchestra in Langtons Gardens Summer Concert



Fundraising for Lennox Children's Cancer Fund



Fundraising for Lennox Children's Cancer Fund

The improved website and streamlined application process has shown an increase in enquiries.

Events in 2020 has been very different with the pandemic restricting the usual programme. However, Havering is fortunate to have the best possible outdoor venues for Covid-secure events. The council has been approached by event organisers who are planning a drive-through cinema and suitable spaces have been identified for these. Volunteers are still participating in socially distanced work parties and remote training/meetings.

Parks managers are working with event organisers and the Safety Advisory Group as guidance changes to ensure that all suitable events have Covid-secure plans in place. Havering want to encourage as many events as possible in their parks during 2021 and with all the necessary measures in place hopefully they will see this happen.

The partnerships that the council have with the community was also evident with the various events that were managed fully, or in part by these groups. These included friends group fun days, Percy's Park Keepers (free to attend monthly club focusing on natural arts and crafts), Dogs Trust health and welfare events, environmental educational events, Havering Christmas Land (A winters light spectacular organised by Havering MIND over 15 nights) and Christmas at Lodge Farm Park (joint event between council and miniature railway club).

The council is delivering a Heritage Lottery Funded Activity Plan at Langtons Gardens which has resulted in several events and activities taking place throughout the year, including a Christmas Fayre involving the on-site café.

5. Health, fitness and wellbeing

Whilst physically being an outer London Borough, **Brent** is considered to be an inner London Borough in terms of its percentage of green space and its housing density. Yet 2020 was a year that demonstrated a definite increase in the numbers of residents choosing to use their parks for fitness activities and wellbeing.

NORTHWICK PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN

Brent has taken a transformative approach, in encouraging and supporting residents who wish to undertake community activities such as the development of community gardens. The borough has two existing orchards; one of which in Roe Green Walled Garden is an awarding winning conservation site. Their newest addition is the Northwick Park Community Garden, which was funded and supported through the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The resulting charity has built an entire community garden from scratch, in a section of the park by a railway that was mainly used for sport. The area has been transformed into a thriving area of herbs, and fruit and nut trees, with seating that acts as water butts. The fruit, herbs and other edible plants are

grown without pesticides and are both local and seasonal. The impact on wellbeing for all of those involved has been inspiring.

The group also promote healthier eating practices and during the Covid lockdown have held online workshops about the planting design of the community garden, when to harvest plants, how to make use of them in the kitchen and their benefits to wildlife.

FACILITIES IN PARKS

The number of outdoor gyms in the borough has increased to 18, with another due to be installed in late 2020. The Community Wellbeing Service provided initial funding for these gyms some years ago, however, they are now funded by a mix of section 106 and CIL funds. The demand for these facilities increased like never before in June 2020, once lockdown was relaxed and indoor gyms were unavailable for people to use. Residents contacted Brent to let them know how grateful they were to have these freely available facilities.

CLASSES FOR RESIDENTS

Boot camps, yoga groups, walks, park runs and an entire programme of free workouts in several of their parks has been developed as part of an Obesity Reduction Strategy managed by the Community Wellbeing Service.

The Parks Service is also working directly with local residents in two parks to implement improvement schemes which will provide dedicated walking/jogging and cycling paths to improve health and wellbeing.

In addition, the Transportation Team led a consultation to revoke bylaws that had prevented cycling in parks. Cycling is now welcomed in all of Brent's parks and green spaces, with appropriate signage and guidance provided for shared use pathways.



Outdoor fitness classes



Northwick Park Community Garden



Northwick Park Community Garden

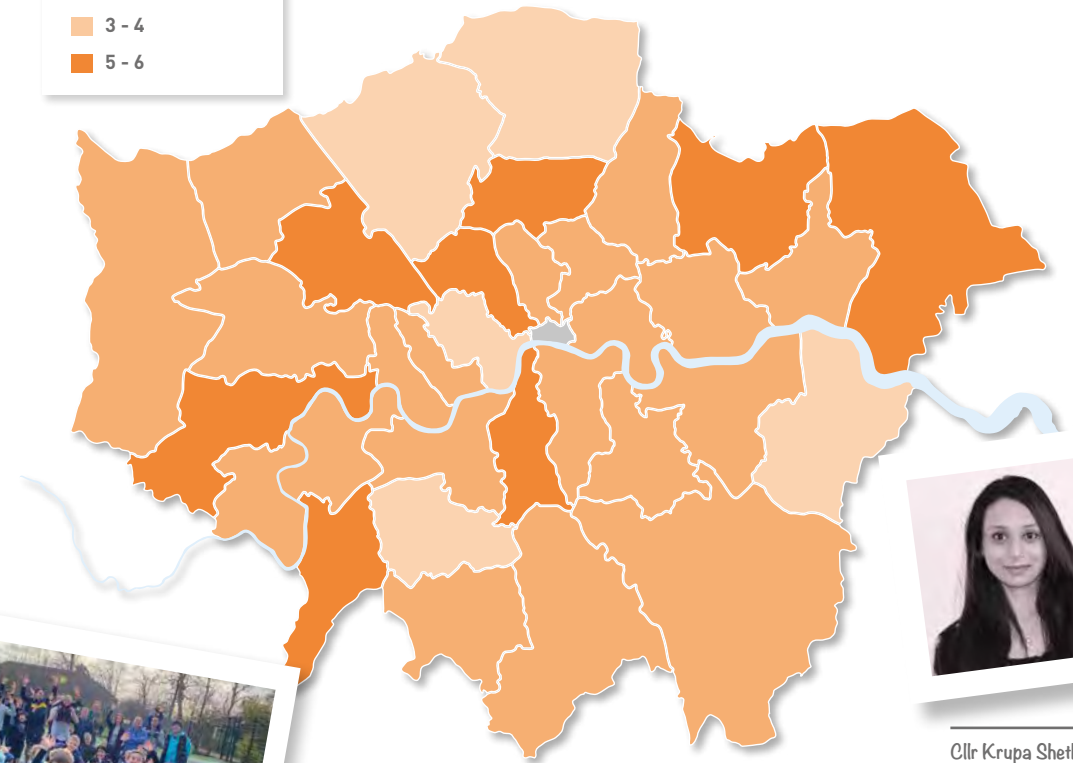
“The garden helps us to take a rest from the everyday strains of life and recharge our batteries, encouraging mental wellbeing. Thanks to the fantastic support and efforts of volunteers, we have transformed a substantial area of unremarkable grassland into a lovely open garden where anyone in the community can visit. The digging, planting, mulching, weeding, watering and pruning are all activities that support physical health.”

—
Iris

Northwick Park Community Gardeners

Health, fitness & wellbeing

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6



This year **Kingston** celebrated an 8.4% increase in residents doing more than 150 minutes of physical activity per week (since 2015, Sport England). Rather than focusing solely on traditional sports clubs and facilities, they have invested in more flexible and accessible ways to use Kingston's green spaces for exercise.

Our Parks were commissioned to run fitness events in four park locations, funded by Public Health funding. Each has 3-4 fitness classes including boxfit, circuits and yoga. All classes are carried out by a qualified fitness instructor, they are absolutely free and cater for all abilities and needs, including pre-and post-natal participants and children. Since August 2019 over 500 people have taken part.

Our Parks also run a fitness programme for two schools in Kingston's parks. These include:

1. Superhero Fitness – 3 sessions/week, 30 kids/session.
2. School Run Club – 1 session/week 8-18 parents/children a week who are new to running.

Street Tag have been commissioned to provide an app that rewards participants for physical activity challenges with tags that are converted into reward schemes (e.g. vouchers for the most steps in a month or funds for a local charity or group).

Street Tag inspires residents to get involved in challenges in local parks regardless of fitness level

and to carry out the challenges in local parks. Most participate as a family and tags are also earned by visiting different park locations and exploring new areas of the borough. During lockdown additional tags were added and bonus equipment such as balls, frisbees and cricket sets were awarded.

Good Gym operates in 3 parks, combining fitness with invaluable community projects in green spaces.

Ten Tennis Project is a new initiative aimed at getting families to spend time together being active. Ten weeks of 'in school' tennis coaching for children is supplemented with a free parent/child session at the weekends on local tennis courts within green spaces in Kingston.

T Park Tennis an initiative run by Surbiton Racket and Fitness Club have received London Marathon Trust monies to resurface courts and created an online booking system to make courts more accessible. This was one of the first facilities to reopen after lockdown, and many have taken up tennis as a result.

"It is really positive that our parks are used for activities such as Park Run, which attracts on average around 250 runners of all standards every week. As a result of their regular visits and because of their connection to the location, runners are able to also suggest improvements to the park, which benefit everyone."

Cllr Krupesh Hirani

Lead Member for Public Health, Culture & Leisure



Cllr Krupa Sheth

Lead Member for Environment

"Lockdown proved to be a time when people flocked to our parks for their daily allowance of exercise, and it was heartening to see so many people newly discover existing spaces on their doorsteps. The increase in visits for the purpose of increasing fitness and maintaining wellbeing was inspiring to see. We are really lucky to have some incredible parks in our borough."



6. Supporting nature

Southwark Council is committed to protecting biodiversity and making nature accessible for all. It has 64 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation including seven Local Nature Reserves. Several reserves are managed by third sector partners. Lavender Pond, Dulwich Upper Wood and Stave Hill Ecological Park are managed by The Conservation Volunteers while London Wildlife Trust manages Sydenham Hill Wood. These partners facilitate borough-wide community engagement with nature, delivering a range of activities from weekly volunteering opportunities, biological surveying and walks and talks. Additionally, idverde, Southwark's grounds maintenance contractor, provides volunteering opportunities for friends groups and corporates as part of their contract.

"We are proud of our innovative and long standing commitment to nature conservation. For more than 30 years we have protected, promoted and engaged with nature. We have seen new species, such as the Brown Argus butterfly, make Southwark their home and existing wildlife, peregrines and bats, for example, go from strength to strength. We have also added to Southwark's natural habitats."

Cllr Richard Livingstone

Cabinet Member for Environment,
Transport and the Climate Emergency

During the pandemic, Southwark have made changes to traditional ways of engaging, making greater use of social media, newsletters, zoom, WhatsApp groups and webinars, to enable socially distanced engagement.

Southwark Nature Action Volunteers (SNAV), formed just before the lockdown. Their aims are to promote surveying of priority species and urban greening. Not only is this beneficial for national datasets it provides a greater understanding of flora and fauna at the local level and provides volunteers with a new set of skills.



Bartlett Park Summer Meadow



Bartlett Park Summer Meadow

"One of the most important aspects of nature conservation and management is monitoring. Both Butterfly Conservation and myself have set up recording templates for birds and butterflies for use by volunteers."

"There is a growing body of evidence which recognises the importance of urban green spaces for our mental and physical wellbeing and this is another initiative which aids public engagement with nature."

Dave Clark

SNAV member and local birder

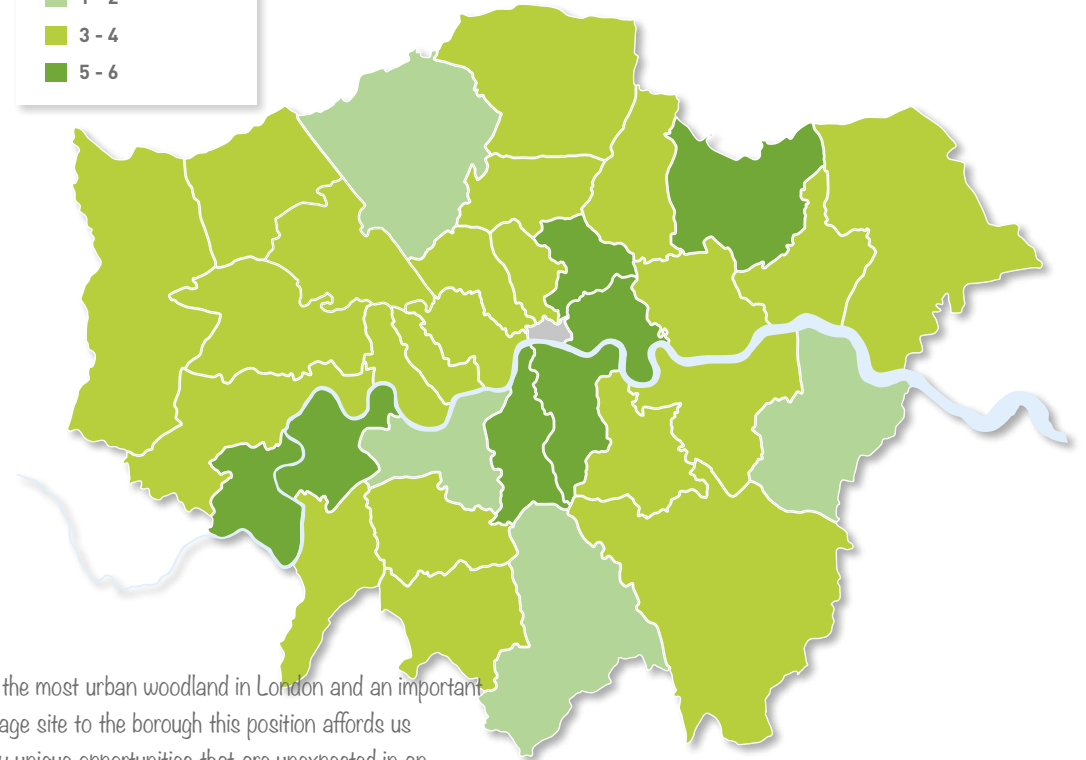
"At least 22 species of butterfly can now be seen in Burgess Park, which is remarkable, given its urban location. That's a great success story."

Simon Saville

of Butterfly Conservation, who leads regular Butterfly walks in Burgess Park.

Supporting nature

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6



Cemetery Park - Credit Fr. of TH Cemetery Park

Cemetery Pk - Credit Fr. of TH Cemetery Pk

Supporting nature in an inner-city area is a fundamental aspect of **Tower Hamlets'** parks service. One of the core aims and ambitions of the service is to connect residents to their local natural environment. Covering over 140 parks and open spaces across a compact borough, comprising eight square miles, Tower Hamlets aims to provide a range of natural learning opportunities and increase the variety of plant and animal life that can be seen and explored.

Central to the success in this area is both their Local Biodiversity Action Plan and a dedicated Biodiversity Officer, whose role, from advising the parks service on practical implementation and maintenance of a range of features, to supporting forest school projects and Housing Associations is fundamental to Tower Hamlets performing well in this area.

"We have some fantastic wildlife in our parks, and both the Parks Service and the Green Team are really supportive of initiatives to enhance biodiversity and provide better access to nature for our residents. During the pandemic, these spaces have been discovered for the first time by residents."

John Archer
Biodiversity Officer

Park-specific management plans have ensured that conservation, biodiversity, and natural learning can be embedded into the aims of some of the most iconic parks in the borough. Victoria Park, Mile End Park and Meath Gardens all provide unique natural spaces to explore, designed into site specific management plans and forming part of an overall Green Grid strategy to create access to nature, natural play, and educational opportunities.

Tower Hamlets also benefits from partnerships with a range of charities that provide a variety of natural locations to explore. Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, in the heart of the borough, is worth a special visit, it offers a range of events, volunteering opportunities and woodland to explore.

Tower Hamlets understands that the next generation will play a key role in the sustainability of natural habitats, so if you are visiting Tower Hamlets you are likely to see a forest school in full flow. Tower Hamlets, whilst one of the most populated inner city boroughs, is very proud of the natural opportunities the borough offers.

"As the most urban woodland in London and an important heritage site to the borough this position affords us many unique opportunities that are unexpected in an urban borough like Tower Hamlets. Alongside working with volunteers to help manage and care for THCP as a woodland nature reserve, we are also able to offer activities and events that are unexpected in an urban context that share the natural world and rural crafts and skills, such as green wood working, bushcraft, and

foraging. 7,000 children visit annually to engage in pond dipping and minibeast safaris and we're able to share the rich history of east London through the sharing of stories discovered from those buried in the Cemetery Park."

Kenneth Greenway
Cemetery Park Manager with The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park



7. Community involvement

The **Royal Borough of Greenwich's** active network of park friends' groups, and the overarching Greenwich Parks Forum, help them care for and improve their parks and open spaces.

This community engagement approach doesn't just help to develop Greenwich's green spaces in line with community use and aspirations, it's also highly valued by the leadership of the council. The borough believes it is important that parks reflect the needs of park users and that park users reflect all communities. The care and passion that local people are prepared to put into their local green space is a visible demonstration of what these spaces mean to them and their families.

Key to fostering a relationship with residents is the parks team's Community Engagement Officer (CEO), who works to encourage and support existing groups as well as the formation of new ones. Listening to friend's groups helps inform their service priorities and priorities for improvement.

Additionally, the CEO facilitates links between the groups, local schools and the wider community. Last year the Friends of Shrewsbury Park worked with Plumcroft Primary School to plant new trees



Pupils from Plumcroft Primary School planting tree whips with Friends of Shrewsbury Park

in Shrewsbury Park and the Friends of Queenscroft Park created a community orchard with the help of Eltham Hill Secondary School and Haimo Primary School.

Working in partnership with friend's groups, the council provides support to arrange planting and workdays; organise and deliver events; and apply for and secure funding for improvements. Group volunteers also help provide a reassuring visible presence for other parks users and this complements the work of parks staff to help make Greenwich's spaces welcoming and safe.



Pupils from Haimo Primary School planting spring bulbs with Friends of Queenscroft Park

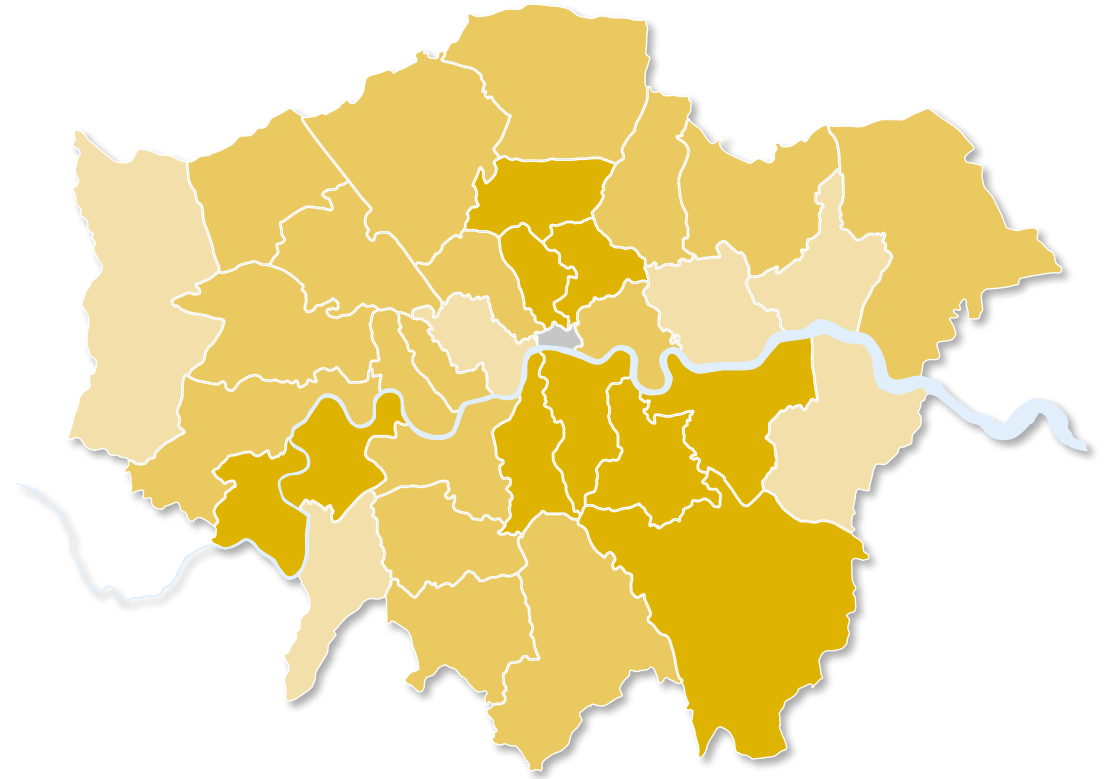


Community involvement

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- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6

Several groups have been proactive in developing proposals to plant more trees and hedgerows, securing funding from the Mayor of London's Greener City Fund and contributing to the council's climate change objectives. Groups are also encouraged to apply to the Royal Greenwich Neighbourhood Growth Fund, and ward budget scheme. Successful bids have ranged from installation of new drinking water fountains to major improvements to park play facilities and the complete refurbishment of tennis courts.

The Greenwich Parks Forum plays a strategic role and is a representative voice for groups on issues affecting their parks. The Forum has also helped deliver Parksfest, an annual programme of summer events in parks. The council provides a grant to the Forum and works with the groups to organise and deliver a programme of cultural and community events.



8. Skills development

As **Sutton** has changed over recent years, and the Parks Service has adapted to different ways of working and staff have taken on roles previously not associated with parks; so training and development have become crucial.

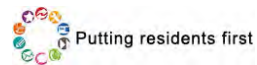
The council's priority is always the safety of staff and the public who use the services and visit its open spaces. Sutton works with contractors too, to ensure that staff are trained to the appropriate level to carry out inspections covering playground safety, building and site condition, fire risk, legionella and asbestos. Moreover, most of the Parks Team staff are IOSH (Institute of Safety and Health) qualified. All staff complete Information Security and Prevent Duty (anti-terrorism) training and a wide range of arboriculture, biodiversity & conservation, and horticultural training is pursued.

Tree officers are qualified to at least Level 4 (Arboriculture), and the biodiversity team receive a range of machinery, first aid, and ecology training, with one completing ongoing Continuing Professional Development to maintain membership of the Chartered Institute of Ecologists (MCIEEM).

Training for officers such as project management, MA Management, and Diploma in Management Studies, has assisted with career development within the council and allowed the whole team to deal with the complex changes and challenges over recent years and to successfully manage larger projects.

The council works with its grounds contractor, idverde, offering a range of occupational training and support including: use of machinery; first aid; cemetery headstone topple testing; as well as providing horticultural apprenticeships within Sutton's parks.

The arboricultural contractor, Beeches Tree Care, recently won the contract partly based on their commitment to added social value. The Parks Service is working with them to provide placements for young people leaving council care and those not currently in employment, education or training. They also support ex-service personnel with job opportunities.



Putting residents first

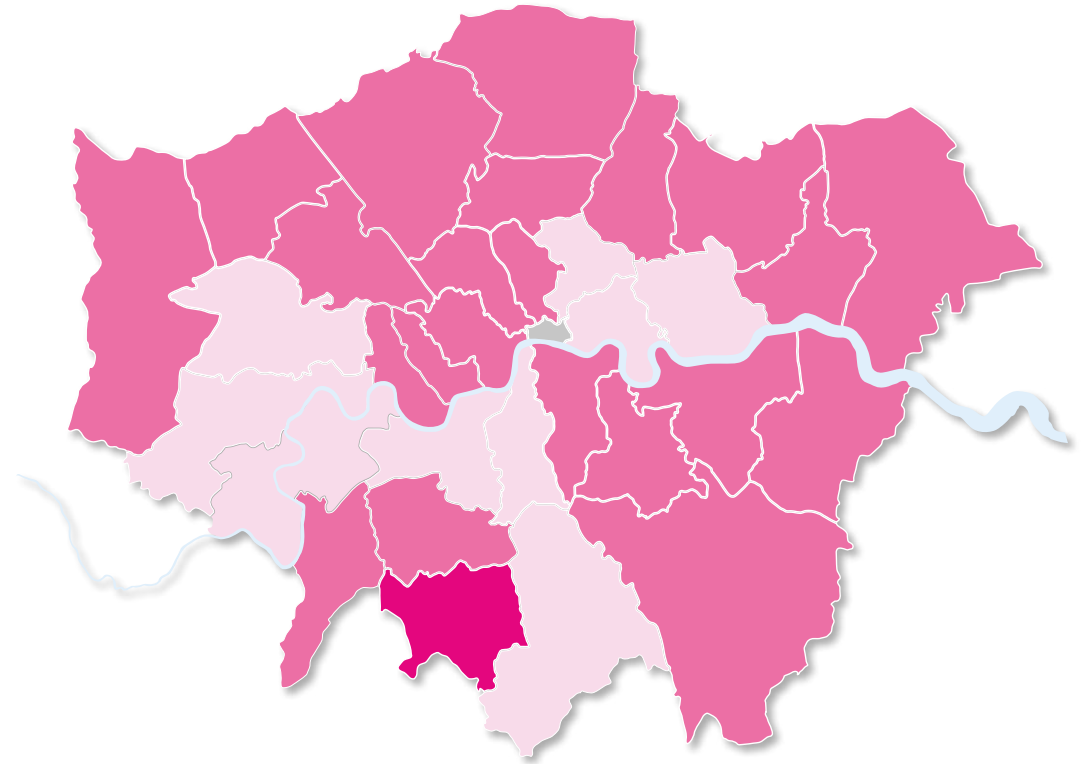


Beddington Park Churchyard extension.
Credit photo LUC



Skills development

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6



“Sutton is a great place to live, work, and raise a family, and the borough has always been known for its leafy streets and high quality parks. Achieving high quality parks doesn’t happen by accident and in Sutton we have always understood the importance of developing our staff, to ensure they have the required competencies to carry out their role in a professional manner that reflects well on the council. The correct training not only allows individuals to develop new skills, but improves confidence and professionalism, which in turn allows them to take on more complex tasks or projects that benefit the whole borough.”

Councillor Manuel Abellan

Deputy Leader with special responsibility for environment & climate change



9. Sustainability

In 2020, **Ealing's** existing environmental services contract was expiring and a new council owned company, Greener Ealing Limited (GEL) was established to deliver all waste, streets and grounds services for its residents, which is the result of a £5.35million investment in the long-term improvement of the service. This provided a new fleet of trucks to support a more consistent, responsive and reliable service that will build on the borough's recycling rate, which is the second-highest in London.

In line with objectives being reviewed as part of Ealing's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and the need to change their fleet in advance of Ultra Low Emission Zone restrictions, all supervisor and Park Rangers vans are electric and all other GEL vehicles are Euro 6 compliant. Furthermore, more than half (56 items) of grounds staff power tools are now electric with reduced sounds and vibration for operatives.

This, in tandem with creating localised green-waste compost areas in a growing number of parks, will see fewer numbers of trips away from sites and thereby minimise carbon output. Ealing



GEL staff using battery operated hedge cutter

Council and GEL are committed to working and promoting more sustainable approaches across all services and are excited by the opportunity to showcase good practice to the residents of Ealing.

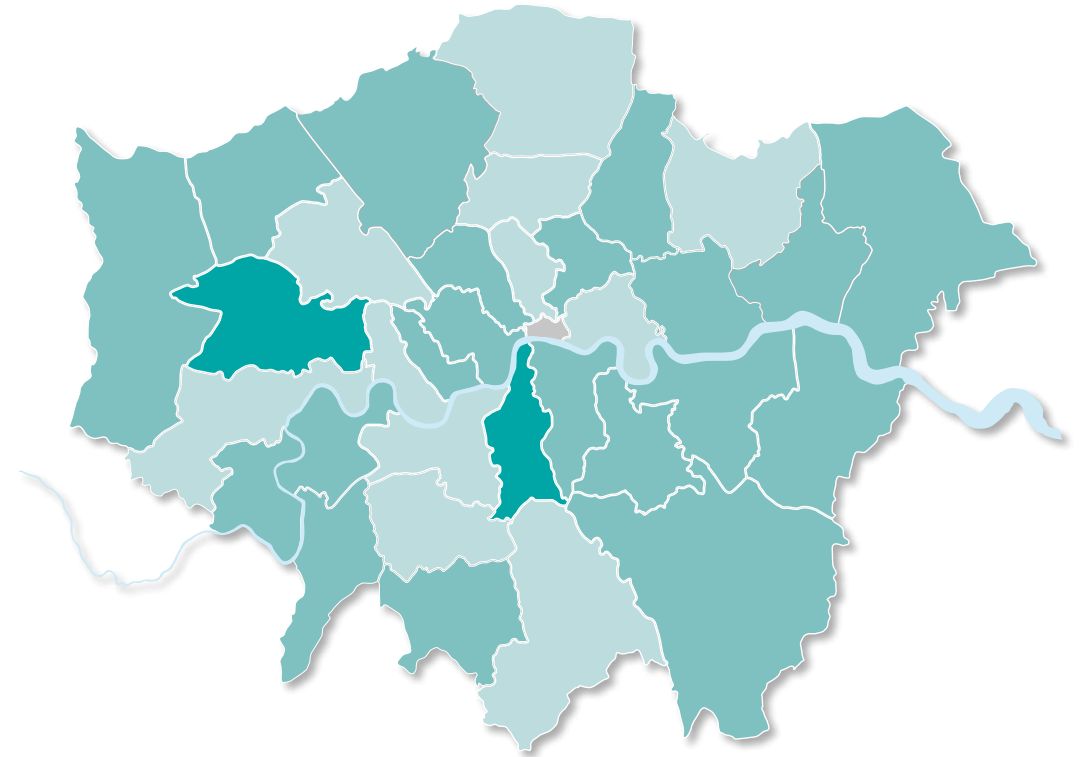
“The creation of Greener Ealing provided us with the opportunity to explore all advances in green fleet and equipment technology, which has come on a long way in recent years. Not only can we lead by example in our practices and the equipment we use, our staff are also much safer whilst maintaining Ealing's green spaces to the highest standard.”

Kevin O'Leary

Managing Director of Greener Ealing Limited

Sustainability

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10. Strategic planning

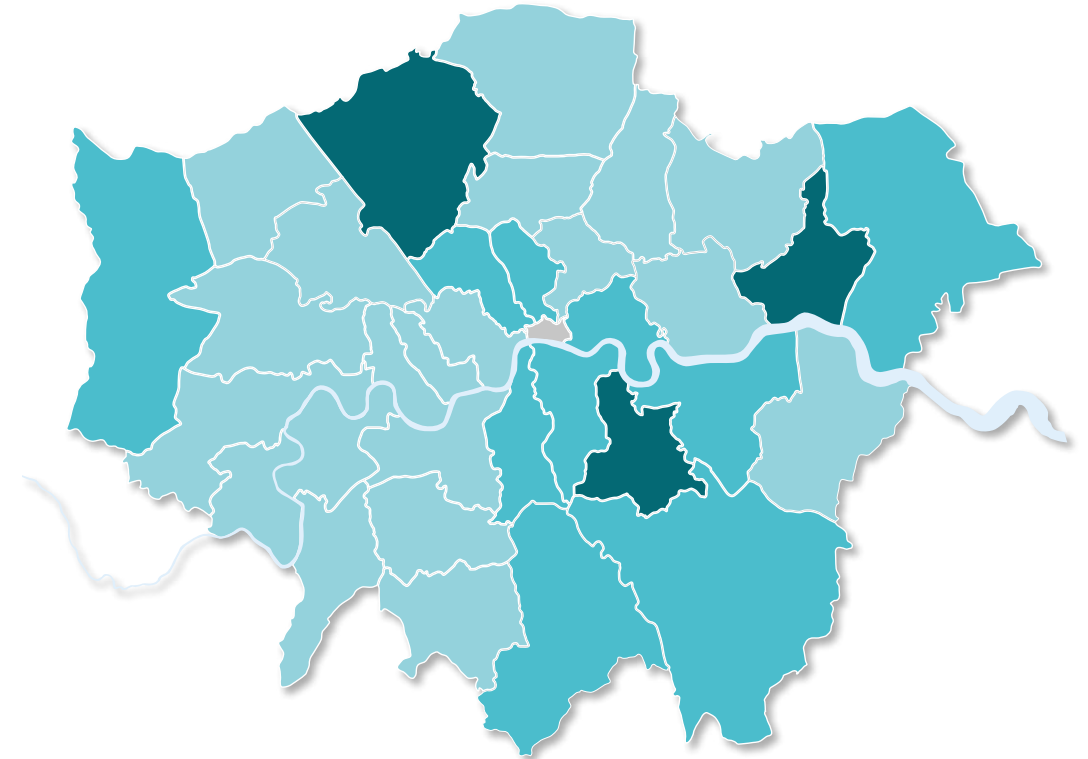
Strategic planning

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- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6

Barking and Dagenham has twenty-eight parks and open spaces and the council's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (POSS) recognises that these spaces are a vital part of the fabric of the borough delivering multiple benefits and positive outcomes for residents. Throughout the pandemic all parks have remained open, and there is now greater awareness of the importance of the borough's green spaces for improving the health and wellbeing of residents and promoting increased social cohesion within communities.

The POSS is a statement of the overall aims, objectives, and key green space issues which the council plans to address over the next 10 years. It sets out the authority's vision for reinvigorating the borough's parks with features, facilities and activity which will make them cleaner and safer and help build thriving, cohesive communities.

It makes sense to target resources where they are most needed, and one of the great benefits of the borough's parks strategy is that it is supported by extensive public consultation.



Improved footpath network outside the Discovery Centre, Eastbrookend Country Park



Visitors enjoying the new picnic tables and benches, Eastbrookend Country Park

So, they know what residents consider to be important and can act, with their support, to deliver improvements that are focused on the needs of park users.

The Strategy enables long-term and structured planning and management. It sets out their commitment to delivering the borough's Manifesto and Corporate Plan objectives and communicates what they are aiming to achieve to all involved. Therefore, having a strategy makes it easier for other council departments and other partners to understand and integrate easily with parks and open space issues and vice versa.

Since the POSS was adopted in July 2017 it has helped secure investment in the borough's green spaces and over the past three years the parks service has delivered a range of improvements. However, since lockdown their focus has been the creation and maintenance of park environments which are not only welcoming and safe, but provide a critical lifeline for residents and especially those that do not have access to a private garden. For example, at Eastbrookend Country Park the Ranger Service has delivered phase 1 of its 'Access for All' initiative during lockdown. Whilst the Centre and café are closed, to promote physical

distancing, footpath improvements, installation of new bench seating, picnic tables and signage have removed barriers and helped make the site accessible to the whole community. It provides a Covid-secure place where people can escape the confines of their homes, meet with family and friends and get some fresh air!

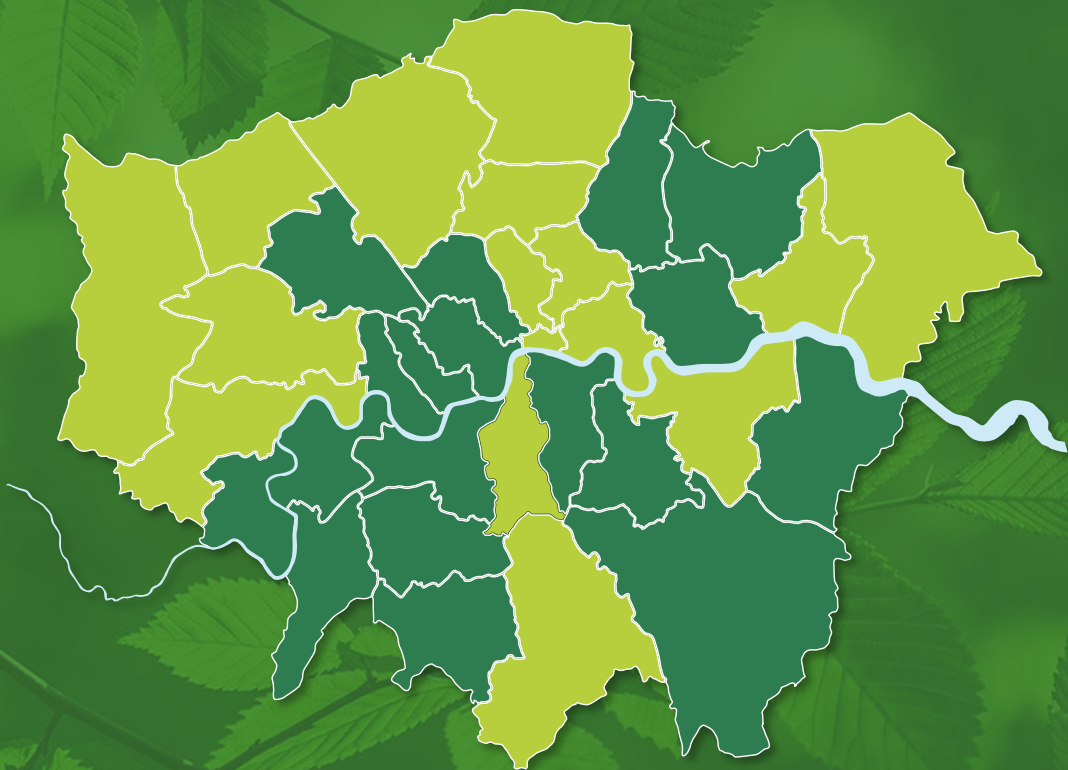
The pandemic will have lasting effects, but hopefully the renewed interest in parks and continued investment in them will be sustained. And, if they can match the new visibility and public appreciation with the strategic planning, management and resources that their parks need, then hopefully future generations will be able to access and enjoy green spaces which are high quality and well used. The POSS provides the joined-up thinking needed to make this happen and ensure that the borough's parks benefit everyone.



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:

Greater London Authority and the London Green Spaces Commission	54
Signature parks and green spaces	
a) City of London Corporation Open Spaces	56
b) The Royal Parks	58
c) Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park	60
d) Potters Fields Park	62
Capel Manor College	64
Contractors	
a) Glendale	66
b) idverde	68
Case studies	
c) Parks for Health in Camden and Islington	70
d) Parklets in a pandemic	74
Thanks to our supporters	76



London Green Spaces Commission

London's first Green Spaces Commission has published its report. Set up last year by the Mayor in partnership with London Councils, the Commission was tasked with recommending how boroughs could be supported in transforming how their parks services are managed and funded. The Commission was a commitment in the London Environment Strategy and supports the Mayor's vision for London as the world's first National Park City.

SUPPORTED BY
MAYOR OF LONDON

The Commission was informed by a Parks for London review, written and oral evidence from organisations and individuals, targeted research, councillor conversations and two borough workshops.

Alongside highlighting the need for substantial long-term investment to maintain and enhance the capital's parks and green spaces the report makes two major recommendations. Firstly, establishing a Centre for Excellence, to champion the many benefits of high quality and accessible green spaces, develop funding mechanisms, share good practice and promote more inclusive use of parks. Secondly, the Commission recommend a future greenspace skills programme, setting out the need to widen skills training and improve workforce diversity.

Although the work of the Commission took place before the COVID-19 pandemic its recommendations have only become more relevant and their implementation, which is already underway, will help support the city's green recovery.



Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, with the London Green Spaces Commissioners



Workshop at the Ecology Pavilion,
Mile End Park, Tower Hamlets

Signature parks and green spaces

City of London Corporation Open Spaces



Access to open spaces became a lifeline to millions of people across the nation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The City of London Open Spaces played a vital role during these challenging times, by providing Covid-safe spaces to exercise, engage with nature, meet family and friends or to participate in sports and leisure once the lockdown restrictions were relaxed. Visitor numbers more than doubled during lockdown and public appreciation of the parks and open spaces has been great. Communities have been impressed by the level of care and maintenance of these spaces, as well as the health and wellbeing benefits for users.

RECORD DEMAND FOR SPORTS FACILITIES

West Ham Park in Newham, reopened its tennis courts in May and saw a significant increase in play with over 6,500 online bookings, almost 100% increase in activity from last year. Cricket net bookings also online saw an increase of 150%, even with one net closed to allow social distancing.

Over 3,000 members have found the booking system on the sport management software easy to use and engage with the sports facilities available including coaching.

Charity partner, Capital Kids Cricket were able to launch their summer camp, helping youngsters across London get active and learn new skills. Feedback has included "Mentally and physically, being able to play cricket is important for me after lockdown, it makes you feel better and can be great fun. One child said: "I'm elated [to be playing cricket again], because I couldn't play cricket for such a long time."

For the swimming facilities at Hampstead Heath a new online booking system was launched to allow Covid-safe swimming from July, adhering to government guidance on swim facilities, including test and trace requirements to record participants contact details. There was exceptional demand from day one and all the sessions sold out rapidly. The number of sessions available has gradually



Epping Forest litter pick up



Cricket in West Ham Park, Newham

increased and demand remains exceptionally high. Eventbrite has worked in partnership to deliver the online booking system for swimming and athletics at Hampstead Heath.

CHALLENGES OF THE LOCKDOWN

On average visitor numbers across Epping Forest since lockdown has increased by a staggering 350% with some parts of the Forest experiencing a 525% increase!

A combination of great weather, people spending a lot of time outdoors meant additional challenges for the site and staff. Since lockdown Epping Forest's litter waste tonnage has increased by over one third compared to previous years with a comparable increase in the cost of disposal. There have been numerous high profile Unticensed Music Events (raves) with associated clear ups and very disappointingly, there has been a 54% rise in fly tipping during lockdown.

Signature parks and green spaces

The Royal Parks creates car-free spaces

In August 2020, following months of consultations and engagement with park visitors and key partners, The Royal Parks charity launched five trials designed to reduce cut-through motor traffic on its park roads.

Reducing cut-through traffic has long been an aspiration for the organisation but Covid-19 has heightened public awareness of the importance and role that parks and green spaces play in our city. Over the past six months, they have been a lifeline for Londoners and have been vital for people’s mental and physical wellbeing, so the charity felt that this was the right time to move forward with these trials, and protect and enhance these parks for its existing, new and future visitors.



“People come to the parks to escape the busy city. These trials will help us create new, car-free spaces for Londoners to soak up the natural environment on their doorstep.

“The health and happiness of Londoners has never been more important. Parks play a crucial role in boosting the physical and mental wellbeing of city dwellers who are looking to escape the hustle and bustle for a breath of fresh air, and to enjoy the wonderful wildlife and landscapes.

“Our role, as the charity that cares for the 5,000 acres of historic parkland, is to protect and preserve these parks. And we hope that these important first steps will go a long way to enable increasing numbers of visitors to walk and cycle in the parks safely and peacefully, now and into the future.”

Tom Jarvis
Director of Parks at The Royal Parks

The trials follow the adoption of The Royal Parks’ Movement Strategy in July, which set a coherent framework for how people access, experience and move within the parks. The trials include:

Greenwich Park: A full-time closure of the Avenue to vehicle traffic.

Bushy Park: A full-time closure of part of Chestnut Avenue between Teddington and Hampton Court Gates to motor vehicles.

Hyde Park: A full-time closure of North Carriage Drive. An additional trial of an extended closure on South Carriage Drive (between Prince of Wales Gate and Queen Elizabeth Gate) on Saturdays, in addition to the current Sunday closures.

St James’s Park and The Green Park: Closing The Mall and Constitution Hill to traffic on Saturdays until dusk, in addition to the regular Sunday and Bank Holiday closures. There is no public parking at these parks.

Richmond Park: On weekdays, restricting all through-traffic between Broomfield Hill Car Park and Robin Hood Car Park and a full-time closure of the vehicle link between Sheen Gate and Sheen Cross. Additionally, on weekends the trial will restrict all cut-through traffic between Roehampton, Sheen and Richmond Gates to create a quiet zone on the north side of the park.



Hyde Park, South Drive



St James's Park, looking towards Buckingham Palace

Signature parks and green spaces

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

Coronavirus has reminded everyone of what many of us already knew: that parks are invaluable and irreplaceable.

Our research on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park provides the evidence to back this up: in a survey of 1,000 Park users undertaken during the crisis and published on World Urban Parks day in June, more than 70% said the open space has had a positive impact on their physical and mental health.

Parks have been an invaluable lifeline for many people struggling during lockdown: 37 per cent of respondents to our survey said lockdown had a negative impact on their physical health and 47 per cent say it affected their mental health. Our research shows that parks have had a positive impact on improving physical health for 70 per cent of respondents and mental health of 73 per cent. Only 23 per cent of those surveyed felt the risk of infection was a drawback to visiting a park.

As the lockdown restrictions are eased, six out of ten people said they will continue to visit their



QEOP towards the London Aquatics Centre

local parks more than they did before Covid-19 hit. Younger people in particular are discovering the benefits of park life with 72 per cent of 25 to 34 year olds surveyed saying they will visit more than they did before the pandemic.

It is this connection, between parks and their local communities, which is one of the undisputed positives to come out of the pandemic crisis. When asked about Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park specifically, 73 per cent said it was at the heart of the community and an important asset for London



QEOP ArceurMittal Orbit and London Stadium

during lockdown, and I am immensely proud of the role our 560-acre park has played during this crisis.

People had taken parks for granted and perhaps forgotten what incredible spaces they are. We welcome millions of visitors each year but there are still local people who don't think these gardens, wetlands and pastures are for them. Many have discovered parks like ours during lockdown and will continue to use them in the future.

We know the positive impact that parks can have on physical and mental health, additionally they save the National Health Service millions of pounds and

help build community. Therefore, it is essential that we continue to invest in our parks and open spaces and maintain that connection with our local communities.

Mark Camley

Executive Director of Park Operations and Venues, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park



Signature parks and green spaces

Potters Fields Park Management Trust



The Trust was founded in 2005 as a not-for-profit organisation to manage and maintain Potters Fields Park (PFP), between City Hall and Tower Bridge, for recreation, leisure and enjoyment. In 2017, the Trust also assumed the management of St. John's Churchyard, SE1.

The Board represents local stakeholders including the GLA, Southwark Council, Team London Bridge (the Business Improvement District), More London (the neighbouring landowner), Shad Thames Residents' Association and Fair Community Housing Services.

Most income is generated from hiring out PFP for events on a limited number of days each year. With high footfall and spectacular London views, the park is in demand for commercial, cultural and community events, including food festivals, arts activities, product launches, charity runs, PR stunts, marketing activations and location filming. Commercial hire rates are charged, with discounts

for charities and occasional reductions for other events delivering tangible community benefits.

Summer 2020 should have seen the park host the London Football Village for Euro 2020, now postponed until 2021. With other events also cancelled, the Trust have had to call on its reserves and find savings without compromising on maintenance quality. Lockdown rules and warm early summer weather were challenging, as its depleted team dealt with packed (and parched) lawns, overflowing bins and visitors having to be reminded that setting up deckchairs and opening beers was not exercise!

However, the summer was not all about lockdown and litter.

As well as launching the Trust's new website, the charity completed long-planned improvements to St. John's Churchyard, situated just down the road from PFP. This small community park re-opened



Potters Field Park looking towards City Hall



Cheongsam Runway event at Potters Field Park

in June with new wildflower and wetland planting, boules and table tennis facilities and a renovated children's playground, providing welcome recreation space for local residents without private gardens.

As Metropolitan Open Land, PFP operates events under temporary planning consent, which was renewed for five years, to October 2025. There were no objections to the planning application, testimony to surrounding neighbours' support and recognition of the need for well-managed commercial activity in order to provide award-winning parks for everyone to enjoy.

As autumn sets in, there are green shoots of recovery. The Trust's Event Manager, furloughed since April, has returned part-time to manage an increase in enquiries, with small events and location filming already taking place. The charity is working closely with organisers to encourage suitable events and promote the message that the park is open for business - business which will ensure that the Trust survives and thrives for many more years.

Sheila Benjamin

Chief Executive,
Potters Fields Park Management Trust

Capel Manor College

Capel Manor College has been providing courses in gardening, horticulture, agriculture, land-management, wildlife conservation and many others that promote, enable and provide healthy and sustainable lifestyles for over 50 years. Although COVID-19 has meant we have had to make some adjustments to the way we teach, it will never alter who we are, what we do and what we offer our students.

It takes a range of skills to run sustainable green spaces and land-based businesses, and climate change, globalisation and COVID-19 continue to present new challenges for everyone. Managing land, public open spaces, gardens and wildlife reserves requires creativity and flexibility to ensure that all opportunities for generating income are explored, and people power is activated to best protect and sustain our most valuable green assets.

Land managers frequently move beyond traditional land management techniques to maximise the benefits from recreation, education, tourism, events, therapeutic activities, and more. On top of the wide range of technical skills required

to diversify land management and land use, practitioners also increasingly need people skills to enable them to manage visitors, service users and volunteers.

Education is key to successfully developing these skills in the first place. Land and management skills can be gained through full and part time courses, alongside extensive work experience or apprenticeships and on-the-job learning.

At Capel Manor College, we place practical skills and learning at the heart of everything we do because it provides the best understanding of the applied theory. It also makes people better managers, technicians and specialists. All our teachers have a passion for, and experience of, their specialist areas, as well as a drive to share this with others. We are committed to creating opportunities and careers that have never been more important to our shared futures. We should always value the land and nature around us as it supports our mind, body and soul – especially after six months of lockdown.

Capel Manor College



Arboricultural students

Capel Manor College is London's leading environmental college 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 in Waltham Forest, Crystal Palace Park in Bromley, Enfield main campus, Gunnersbury Park on the border of Ealing & Hounslow, Mottingham on the border of Bromley & Greenwich and Regent's Park, in Camden – 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.



Capel student mastering hedge cutting

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.

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

“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.”

Malcolm Goodwin
Principal

Contractors

Glendale Lewisham



Friends groups play a vital role to improve the parks in Lewisham. They represent the views of the community and local residents that use the parks. They volunteer their time to continually improve facilities, raise funds and address any concerns from park users. Glendale work closely with these community groups, listening to their requests and meeting their needs.

A partnership between us as the parks contractors and the friends groups enables the visions of the community to come to life, creating an engaging environment for relaxation and recreation in their local green spaces. The friends groups have helped raise thousands of pounds for park improvements, including playgrounds, sports facilities, community gardens and wildlife projects. They organise events and festivals that raise the profile of the parks and encourage residents to get out into their green spaces. A Glendale representative attends park friends group meetings and is a point of contact for any issues that may arise or to support activities and friends group's aspirations.

During these uncertain times, the parks have been crucial for people to get outdoors. This is especially true for people living in London, who may not have the luxury of a garden. The parks have provided a place for people to exercise and have been important in maintaining mental health and wellbeing during lockdown. Glendale have been working hard in Lewisham to keep parks in top condition for people to enjoy. It's great to see so many people using their local green spaces, though this increased usage has unfortunately seen increased littering and bins filling up quickly.

With organised events, including formal volunteering days, being cancelled, friends groups have been playing their part in helping to keep the parks at their best. They have been carrying out their own socially-distanced small group sessions, clearing litter from rivers and parks, watering plants and placing notices to encourage park users to support front line staff by taking litter home with them and avoid filling up park bins. Rivers that run through parks have become more littered without regular organised volunteer river clean-up sessions taking place. This has been helped by friends groups getting into the rivers and clearing



Planting up a raised bed



River Quaggy clean-up



Friends of Manor House Park

up the litter. The Friends of Manor Park, for example, have had their own litter clear ups and have removed sacks of rubbish from the Qwaggy river that runs through the park. They have also kept up with watering fruit bushes, trees and flowers. Park users really care about their local parks and do their bit to help keep them tidy. This is testament to how much these local green spaces mean to people in an urban environment, especially during this pandemic.

Contractors

idverde

In 2020, London's parks became more important than ever as the country faced the threat of Coronavirus. As we became accustomed to new rules on social distancing and limits on time spent outdoors each day, parks became vital in helping to preserve our mental and physical health during a time of crisis.

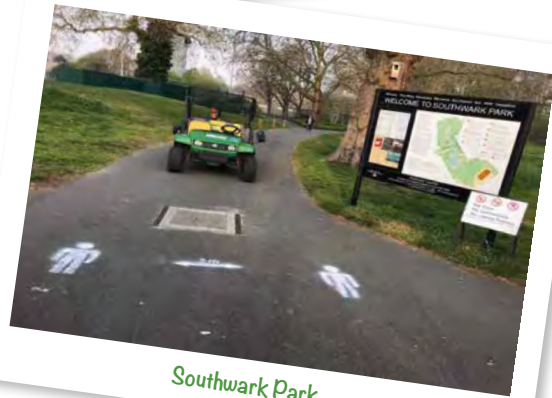
idverde is proud to be involved in the management and maintenance of over 500 of London's parks and green spaces, and our colleagues found themselves on the front line as they worked to support our local authority clients in ensuring their parks and green spaces remained open, accessible, and safe.

idverde colleagues had to quickly adapt their working methods to meet these challenges, ranging from changing the way they travelled to work to avoid multiple vehicle occupancy, to adding installing social distancing signage to their list of maintenance tasks.

Members of the public were mostly very supportive of the teams' work, and on those occasions when a small minority objected to our colleagues working



Social distancing signage at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park



Southwark Park



The Bromley Mayor thanks *idverde*'s Bromley team for keeping Bromley's parks open and accessible during the Corona crisis

during lockdown, or did not fully comprehend the necessity of measures such as closing play areas, *idverde*'s teams reacted professionally, explaining the reasons for their actions and referring to official guidance.

As lockdown measures eased, coinciding with a spell of good weather, people returned to their local parks in even greater numbers, in many cases resulting in unprecedented levels of litter. Once again, further adaptations to services were required, with many of *idverde*'s litter collection teams making their first rounds before dawn, before sites became too busy, and undertook extra

litter picking throughout the day, all the while being careful to maintain social distancing from those who were enjoying spending time in their local green space.

idverde is proud to have played its part in helping to ensure Londoners had access to safe, clean, green spaces throughout this extremely difficult time. We hope that the role played by parks at this time will ensure they are recognised as vital to the wellbeing of Londoners, and that they continue to be protected and cherished for the benefit of future generations.

Case studies

Parks for Health in Camden & Islington

2019's Good Parks for London report featured Health Parks among its collaborations and the Islington and Camden Future Parks Accelerator bid among its case studies. Here is an update.

The successful bid, called Parks for Health, is one of eight projects across the country and the only one in London as part of the Future Parks Accelerator programme. The programme was established by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the National Trust with additional funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Parks for Health project is also funded by the Greater London Authority, London Sport and the three lead partners: Camden Council, Islington Council and Camden and Islington Public Health. The project started in June 2019 and is due to finish in May 2021, which may be extended.

Camden and Islington's vision is a world where its 168 public parks and green spaces are used, enjoyed and maintained as public health assets for the local community. They are working to change

parks and green spaces so they have a central role in:

- increasing physical activity levels
- improving mental health and wellbeing
- increasing social cohesion
- reducing social isolation and loneliness

The boroughs jointly want to ensure parks are inclusive, attractive and accessible for all; reaching those with greatest needs and building partnerships with the wider health and voluntary sectors, to ensure parks and green spaces are much more central to their collective vision of a healthy Camden and Islington.

Anticipated outcomes include:

- A systems transformation so that parks and green space become central to local strategies for promoting health and wellbeing.
- Greater use of parks and green space by those communities who are currently making least use of them and those that are the least active.
- A sustainable future business model for the delivery of parks as public health assets for the 21st century.



Outdoor fitness in Camden & Islington

Case studies

Central to delivering our vision and outcomes is engagement with the health sector. Camden and Islington want to create borough-wide and local governance models that link the health sector strategically and locally to parks. They also want to make the health case for parks to the health sector so it becomes part of corporate strategies and work, and may secure future funding for parks.

So far, a green social prescribing action plan for how parks can improve the health and wellbeing of patients referred by GPs and social prescribing link workers has been developed. This was achieved in partnership with community organisations and GPs who, even with the additional work pressures they have because of Covid-19, were very involved. It was funded by Defra and the two boroughs. Activities are about to start in two parks for groups most affected by Covid-19 and then this will be rolled out in additional parks. The health of participants will be measured to evaluate the success of these activities.



Caledonian Park, Islington

168 parks have been assessed using the Parks for Health Toolkit to show the current health benefits of each and how this can be improved. The recommendations, near completion, will be invaluable in making each park a health asset in the councils' investment plans.

The project team has engaged with the local health sector and others involved in health, such as, lead officers for mental health, disability and older people, and those indirectly involved like community organisations and sports teams.

The vision and concepts of the project has been shared with the council's workforce, which has



Talaere Gardens, Camden

generated a range of ideas for identifying required skills and future roles, and with friends of parks groups, how they can mutually benefit each other. Furthermore, a consultant has started to map the community infrastructure.

The most positive aspect of the work to date is the number of people from a variety of sectors who have wanted to be involved, whether it is a GP, a community organisation, the workforce or other colleagues. The principal aim is the creation of a strategy based on this engagement and its findings. It will contain:

- The borough-wide and local governance models that link the health sector strategically and locally to parks
- The future funding strategy and model to

secure and sustain our parks as public health assets

- A detailed framework for future capital investment in parks that will be embedded in the council's funding processes
- Methods for future community involvement in parks and potential tools to do this
- A marketing toolkit to improve promotion of our parks
- A new structure for the workforce

Once the strategy is agreed the next step will be to implement it.

For more information contact:
Project Manager: john.thorne@islington.gov.uk

Case studies

Parklets in a pandemic

What's a parklet?

Although more of us have enjoyed the benefits of parks and walking during the pandemic, not everyone has access to a park nearby and not all of our streets in London are great places to walk through. We need to make sure our streets are safe and attractive places so that people want to spend time there – walking, cycling and socialising – and that's where parklets come in.

Parklets can transform a parking spot or road space into a place the whole community can use, making it safer for walking and encouraging people to get out of the house for some fresh air, greenery and a chat with a neighbour.

Parklets have been popular in the US since the 1990s, and in the UK, one of the first of its kind appeared in Hackney in 2015. Since then, parklets have popped up across the capital, helping communities in London reclaim their local area. At Living Streets, we'd love to see more.

Why do we need parklets?

Many city streets and pavements are dominated by cars, which takes up valuable space and doesn't create a welcoming environment for people who want to walk or cycle.

- Parklets open up our streets and transform them into free community spaces where people of all ages can sit, play or chat.
- Parklets provide places to stop and rest, meaning that people who might normally struggle to get around have the confidence to walk further than usual.
- They're a great way for people without gardens to spend time outside, which is especially important during the pandemic. Meeting new people can reduce the risk of social isolation and mental health problems.
- You never know who you might talk to. People from all walks of life come together at parklets, from those who live nearby, to people who live and work nearby.



What's happening in London?

During the pandemic, communities across London continue to benefit from parklet schemes and they provide some much-needed urban greening and cheer during these difficult times. Residents are careful to practise safe physical distancing when they use the parklets and in areas where pollution, idling and parked cars are rife, it lets people enjoy some fresh air.

Parklets are just one way in which we can transform our streets for the better – in fact, they act as filters for the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods which are being introduced to parts of London. These schemes reduce congestion and air pollution on residential and main roads and should lead to speed reduction, safer crossings, protected cycle lanes and other incentives to reduce car ownership.

If you'd like to find out more about Living Streets' parklet schemes [click here](#) or view the parklets [toolkit here](#).



Thanks to our supporters

Parks for London is grateful for the voluntary annual partnership contributions from London's local authorities and other organisations with an interest in supporting and developing London's green infrastructure, received in 2019-20.

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Other organisations

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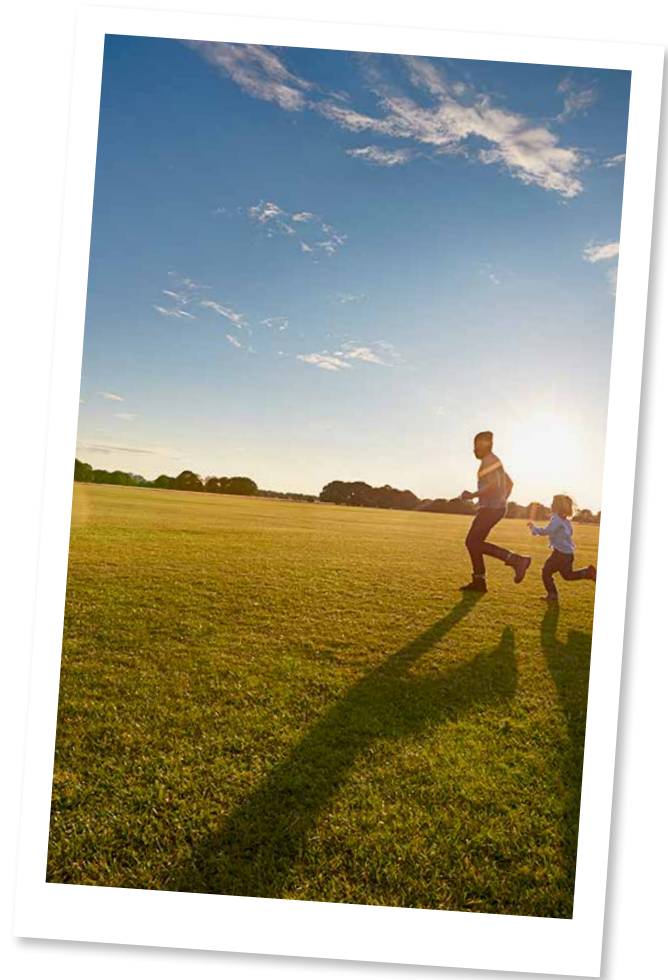
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Charity number: 1156063

Designed by Nicola Cockerell

Parks for London, registered as a charity in 2014, has grown to be the leading strategic voice and champion for London's green space sector, advocating to ensure that the true value of its green estate is recognised. We are the only pan-London body working with and supporting all London Boroughs and other land managers, to share and develop good practice, improve standards and maximise resources.

Find out more about us:

www.parksforlondon.org.uk

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Errors and omissions

This 2020 edition of Good Parks for London covers the financial year 2019-20. 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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