

"The limited funds available for running London's parks and green spaces are too valuable to be thrown away."

Julia Thrift

GOOD PARKS FOR LONDON 2022

Keeping Parks Clean



Parks for
London

Sponsored by



GL Hearn



Potters Fields Park, Southwark
Credit: Potters Fields Park Management Trust

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Foreword

London's parks and green spaces have never been appreciated as much as they are now—and yet, ironically, never before has so much litter been dropped in them.

For park managers, coming out of the pandemic has been a mixed blessing. On one hand, the lockdowns which forced people to live locally and rely on nearby green spaces for fresh air and contact with nature, brought renewed recognition that good local parks are vital for everyone's wellbeing. On the other hand, London's landowners now have to spend an estimated £16 million a year getting rid of rubbish left in green spaces. And that £16 million comes from budgets that have been drastically reduced in the last decade. Research shows that nationally parks budgets have been cut by £330 million¹ in real terms as a consequence of austerity policies.

This report focuses on the innovative ways that London park's teams and contractors have approached the ongoing challenge of removing larger volumes of litter, despite shrinking budgets. It illustrates the imaginative ways in which the cost of collecting litter has been communicated to local communities and the significant difference this has made in reducing litter in those neighbourhoods.

In addition to powerful communications campaigns, councils have analysed what is being dropped and where; redesigning bins and relocating them; shocking local residents by showing them how much waste was dropped in the park; introducing 'smart' bins that send a message when they are full; and working effectively with local volunteers and friends of parks groups. The energy and innovation shown by these initiatives is hugely impressive.

It is also, of course, energy and innovation that could have been spent on improving parks, instead of clearing rubbish. As more and more time and money is spent removing litter, less time and money is spent ensuring that local green spaces are improved and adapted to meet the needs of the people who visit them. That £16 million could have been spent on playground equipment, better toilet facilities, more benches, re-surfaced paths, tree planting, and the many other things that communities consistently say they want in their parks.

Time and money are not the only resources being wasted. The growing quantity of litter (mostly packaging) that is created, used briefly, and then discarded, is a complex environmental disaster

that must be tackled at source. The person in the park who picks up litter is fixing the symptoms of a wasteful economic model, not the root causes, or the misaligned incentives. Producers, distributors and consumers are all able to ignore the cost of creating and discarding valuable materials.

In Scotland, from August 2023, the first deposit return scheme in the UK will be introduced² with the aim of getting billions of bottles and cans recycled every year. Anyone buying a bottle or can will pay a 20p deposit, refunded when it is returned to one of tens of thousands of return points. The Scottish government's ambition is to achieve 90% collection rates by 2024, as part of working towards a zero-waste economy. This will, no doubt, reduce the amount of litter in Scotland's green spaces. Let's hope it inspires the Westminster Government to introduce a similar scheme in England.

So, while we celebrate the very impressive anti-litter initiatives described in this report, we should also be more demanding for change of government and industry policies. In the midst of both a cost of living crisis, and an environmental

crisis, no country can afford to produce, transport, distribute, and discard tonnes and tonnes of materials every year—let alone expect overstretched councils to pay to take it all away.

As well as a cultural shift to make littering in public spaces socially unacceptable, what is also vital is a regulatory shift, with powerful national incentives to ensure that packaging is reduced at source, and when it is discarded, that there are strong and practical incentives to motivate recycling. The limited funds available for running London's parks and green spaces are too valuable to be thrown away.



Julia Thrift

Director, Healthier Place-making
Town and Country Planning Association
Trustee at Trees for Cities
julia.thrift@tcpa.org.uk
[@juliathrift](https://www.linkedin.com/company/juliathrift)

1 www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/aug/23/funding-for-englands-parks-down-330m-a-year-in-real-terms-since-2010

2 www.gov.scot/news/scotlands-deposit-return-scheme/

Introduction

Good Parks for London is compiled by Parks for London and sponsored by GL Hearn. It assesses participating London boroughs' parks services each year, from April 2021 to March 2022 against the ten Good Parks criteria to enable comparison between them.

It also gives recognition to the great work and progress that is happening across London's parks, helps improve performance and standards, and makes practices more visible and open to scrutiny.

Part one of the report evaluates participating boroughs against the ten Good Parks criteria, detailed on page 12. The results are presented through maps and a summary benchmarking table, which indicates how boroughs are performing, along with short articles under each criterion from boroughs that are performing exceptionally well or showing innovative work in that area.

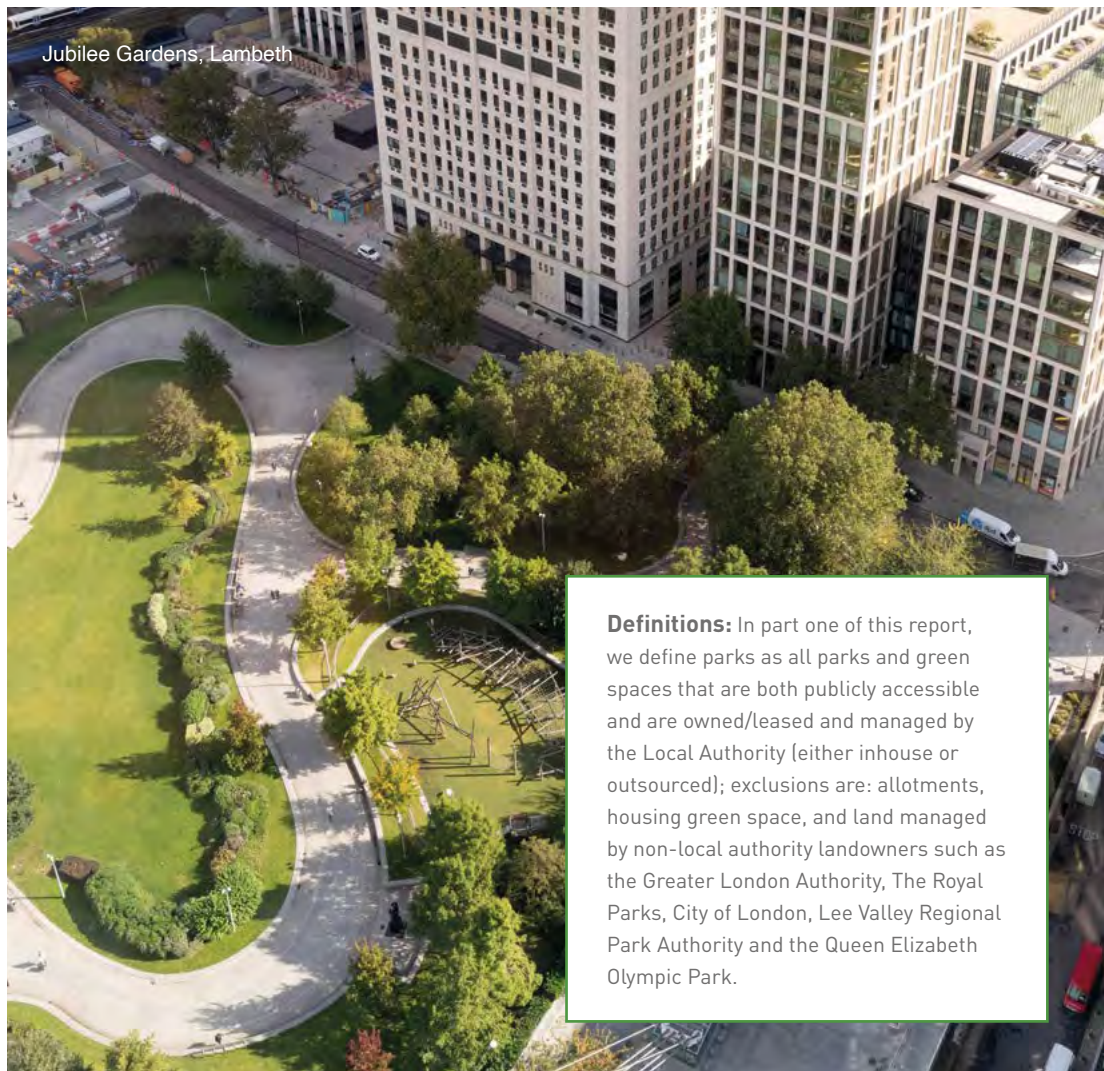
Part two of the report focuses on the exemplary work done in London's parks to manage litter and waste.

Part three of the report features examples of good practice and case studies from land managers and organisations with an interest in managing London's parks.

Acknowledgements

Parks for London would like to thank GL Hearn for their continued support in sponsoring the production and launch of the report and the Cross River Partnership for hosting and co-sponsoring the report launch. We would also like to thank all the London boroughs and land managers that have participated in this year's report and provided case studies, as well as the organisations that helped by providing additional data for part one.

Jubilee Gardens, Lambeth



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 inhouse or outsourced); exclusions are: allotments, housing green space, and land managed by non-local authority landowners such as the Greater London Authority, The Royal Parks, City of London, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

From the Chief Executive

Since the pandemic, when many people discovered and re-discovered their local parks and green spaces, these places have become busier, especially when the weather is good. People tend to dwell and relax for longer, often bringing along food, drinks, and other accessories. While it is great to see the public enjoy and benefit from London's amazing green spaces, these busier times often result in larger volumes of litter and waste. Responsible visitors will clean up after themselves and use the bins provided, or even better, take their rubbish home, but sadly some leave their waste behind for others to deal with.

This is a major concern for park managers; in fact, our research estimates that it costs London's landowners upwards of £16 million per year to collect and dispose of litter and waste in parks. This money could be better spent on making improvements to parks rather than managing unnecessary litter and waste, especially as litter in parks is bad for the environment and wildlife, a potential health hazard, not to mention very off-putting for other users.

Litter in parks has increased and changed, notably since the pandemic, which saw more people dining al fresco in public spaces, a continuing trend creating more litter. This is not helped by some shops and catering outlets using excessive packaging, along with the increasing ease of ordering and delivering takeaways into parks.

The sustainable answer to this complex problem is not just a matter of providing more and bigger bins or scheduling more collections; it will involve changing perceptions and behaviours—all of which will take time.

In 2021, Parks for London set up a Litter and Waste Management Action Group to tackle this perennial issue from a collaborative and pan-London perspective. The group aims to seek out and share good practice to achieve the following objectives:

1. Minimise the amount of waste and litter generated in parks and green spaces.
2. Maximise the amount of litter recycled.
3. Minimise the cost of collecting and disposing of waste and litter.
4. Review processes to deal with waste & litter more efficiently.
5. Encourage people not to litter and to take waste home.

6. Support litter-picking volunteers.
7. Improve enforcement to act against those who litter.

In this year's Good Parks for London report, we share a selection of case studies about litter and waste management strategies in green spaces to help council services and other landowners to develop, adapt, or refine their own strategies. Among the case studies is the Clean Parks for London initiative, a public London-wide anti-littering campaign. Launched in the spring of 2022, it is led by Parks for London and supported by the Mayor of London and 19 other landowners and organisations.

The overall scores in this report provide a snapshot of local authority park services from April 2021 to the end of March 2022, covering the ten Good Parks criteria. I am encouraged to see that over 70% of participating boroughs have improved their overall scores or maintained a similar standard to last year, and would like to highlight the Royal Borough of Greenwich who have shown significant improvement. We congratulate and thank all boroughs that have participated in this report and those who work tirelessly to maintain and improve our parks and green spaces for the benefit of all.

I also want to warmly welcome recently elected Councillors who have taken on the portfolio for parks and public realm. Insights from this report will help us to provide further guidance on the strategic direction of local authority park services to help them to continue to improve.

Thanks to the support of the Greater London Authority, we have increased our capacity to serve and expand our support to those that own and manage publicly accessible green space as a [Centre for Excellence](#). Parks for London will continue to share and capture knowledge and good practice through our website's [Resources Hub](#), as well as the [Good Parks for London reports](#).

Finally, I would like to especially thank GL Hearn for their continued support and sponsorship of the Good Parks for London report.

Tony Leach

Chief Executive
Parks for London



Thoughts from our sponsor

GL Hearn is proud to continue sponsorship of the Good Parks for London report. As a Landscape Architect, and joint UK lead for GL Hearn's Landscape Design team, I really appreciate the richness and variety of London's parks and green spaces, and the contribution they make to the perception and character of the Capital. This report, and the great work that goes on behind the scenes across London's parks and green spaces, is crucial to all our enjoyment of parks and green spaces across London.

At GL Hearn, and across our National Planning team, we understand the importance of parks and green spaces at the heart of our communities. From planning new spaces to focusing on the future of existing ones, we support our clients in creating better, greener, and more sustainable places that people want to be a part of.

London is densely populated with parks and open spaces, catering for and providing opportunities for a vast array of people. London parks must often work harder, providing much needed outdoor space for leisure; recreation; and wellbeing, as well as providing diverse and important habitats for flora and fauna across our city.

Throughout this summer, we have seen how critical green spaces are in helping to tackle the urban heat island effect, reducing temperatures to a more bearable level. This is inevitably going to be an annual trend, marvelling at how hot it is within areas of reflective surfaces and seeking refuge in spaces that provide shelter and absorb the heat.

Personally, some of the most rewarding projects I have worked on are when I have been able to work with park departments and local authorities to see their visions realised through positive planning and design.

These spaces are critically important in shaping our urban landscape. The pleasure for me, when working on these projects, is when we get to visit lots of parks to gather ideas and inspiration, reviewing their facilities and capacity within the local community. There is nothing better than standing back at the end of a project and revelling in the beauty and enjoyment that our parks and green spaces bring to our communities, and I am thrilled to be a part of their fruition at the core of a design for a new development. The real success of a design is seen in how a space is enjoyed by the community it was created for.

It is, therefore, so disappointing to see a space misused or ill-treated by some. Nobody likes to see rubbish strewn across our public spaces. There appears to be many options that designers and managers could explore to tackle these issues such as:

- devising waste management strategies to include waste collection frequencies etc.;
- optimising the location, type, and number of bins to be deployed;
- developing / utilising bins with greater capacity for waste, recycling, or compost (iceberg bins);
- removing waste bins from projects forcing/ hoping that users remove their own waste; and
- educating people to be more responsible for parks and green spaces they visit.

These are just sticky plaster solutions to a much greater problem—a problem in my opinion, that is unfairly lumped onto public space managers, park managers and maintenance teams to resolve.

We will need to transition from a throwaway culture into one that values, reuses, and recycles their goods, reducing dependency on our local authorities.

The real question is in how we shift behaviours—perhaps through a balance of incentives and fines? Fines are useful deterrents though not always practicable as they require enforcement which relies on people to oversee and act, and as for incentives—how do you reward recycling? In France this summer, people were able to take their clear plastic bottles to a vending machine in a supermarket which ‘shredded’ the bottles for reuse and provided in return a small discount on their shopping—possibly of a novelty value, but probably at the heart of any future success—some sort of reward or benefit for reducing/not creating waste in the first place.

We have a long way to go to tackle this problem, but I have been truly amazed through reading this report at the awe-inspiring hard work, time, and dedication members of the public and volunteers put into keeping our parks and green spaces clean and safe for everybody to enjoy. Huge congratulations to all involved. I hope you enjoy reading the report and are equally inspired by its contents.

Julian Woolley

National Landscape Design Director
GL Hearn



Part one

Notes for scoring the criteria

1. PUBLIC SATISFACTION levels with parks (satisfied or above) are taken from borough-wide resident's public satisfaction surveys, or similar independent surveys (less than two years old), in addition to other measures boroughs are taking to improve public satisfaction.

2. AWARDS FOR QUALITY is assessed by the results of the Green Flag award scheme and other measures boroughs are taking to maintain and improve standards such as participating in other awards schemes.

3. COLLABORATION is assessed by evidence of cross boundary/borough land management; delivery of parks services through internal collaborations; partnerships with other boroughs, the voluntary sector, and relevant bodies; working with river catchment partnerships/ improvement area group or working on Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS); and support for the London Tree Offers Association, London Parks Benchmarking Group and Parks for London.

4. EVENTS is assessed by boroughs having an events policy in place; provision of a range and number of community and commercial events in parks; whether income generated is ring-fenced for the parks service; how outdoor events are being made accessible and inclusive; and how event organisers are being encouraged to recycle waste.

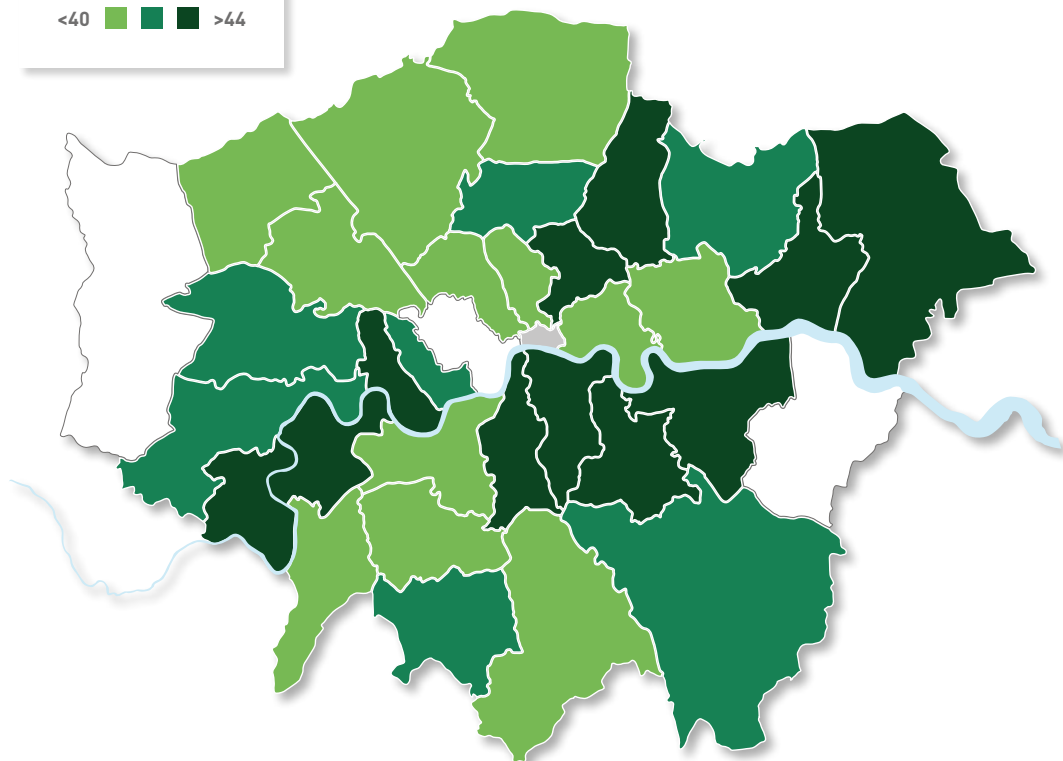
5. HEALTH, FITNESS AND WELLBEING is assessed by the number of parks used for social prescribing; percentage of parks with outdoor gyms and those with programmed activities; having in place campaigns, outreach or concessions to promote greater participation; implementing health funding for parks; supporting community food growing areas in parks; provision of free drinking water (fountains, cafés and public buildings); and initiatives to improve and enhance access and inclusion.

6. SUPPORTING NATURE is assessed by having a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) or similar in place, 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; London in Bloom awards for conservation; supporting the Greenspace Information for Greater London (or similar); and delivering biodiversity outreach.

7. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT is assessed by gaining Community Green Flag Awards; number of park friends' groups/resident groups as a percentage of parks; having a borough-wide friends' forum; actively supporting friends' groups; level of volunteering; and transfer of assets managed by the community.

8. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT is assessed by the number of park apprentices and trainees as a percentage of total workforce; approaches to improving equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workforce; provision of staff development and training at all levels; and delivering learning opportunities in parks.

Overall scores

<40 ■ ■ ■ >44

9. SUSTAINABILITY is assessed by green fleet as a percentage of total fleet and using 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; actions to reduce carbon footprint and to build more climate resilient parks.

10. STRATEGIC PLANNING is assessed by the borough having an up-to-date open space or green infrastructure strategy and action plan in place; having a costed asset management plan and system in place; and having undertaken a scrutiny review of parks services in the last ten years.

Boroughs can provide, if they wish to do so, additional information which can be factored into the overall score. 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.

1. Public satisfaction

For the past two and a half years, **Haringey Council** have been developing a new parks and green spaces strategy, which has been influenced by world events such as COVID-19, climate change, the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, and most recently the war in Ukraine.

Haringey
LONDON



Pride in the Park picnic, Ducketts Common

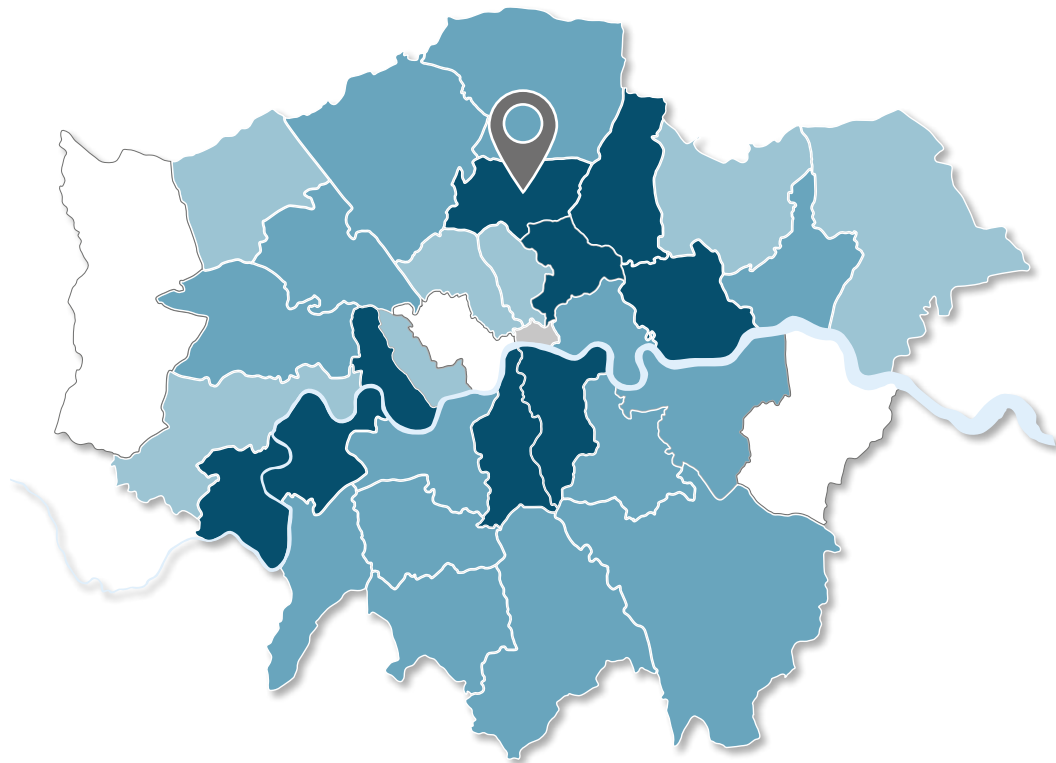
The evolving strategy has been built around three overarching aims:

1. Inclusion and wellbeing—providing inclusive parks and green spaces that all communities in Haringey can benefit from, ensuring the usage and enjoyment of our parks and green spaces reflect the communities living in Haringey and contribute to its residents improved wellbeing.
2. Climate change and sustainability—supporting the Council's declaration of a climate emergency by reducing the carbon footprint of parks and green spaces, protecting and promoting biodiversity, and helping educate everyone in Haringey about contributing towards saving the planet.
3. A quality service—securing investment, improving standards, partnerships, communications, and outcomes.

In developing these aims, the Council held a series of meetings and focus groups to engage with internal services and a range of external partners and stakeholders including faith groups; mental health charity, Mind; friends of parks groups; the local community; third sector partners; and representation from older, disabled, LGBTQI, and younger people.

Public satisfaction

No data     Top score



Their input has helped to shape and develop the strategy's actions:

- to adapt the parks workforce over time and to become more representative of those who live in Haringey;
- to recruit a community engagement officer to work with less-engaged groups so that new and diverse voices can contribute to future service delivery;
- to develop additional open space in areas of deficiency, particularly in the east of Haringey;
- to undertake annual surveys to identify the profile of park users and monitor changes in usage;
- to identify changes in the design of parks and green spaces and the facilities offered to make them more attractive, safer, welcoming, and accessible to under-represented groups;
- to support the development of new user groups, and develop a programme of activities and events that showcase and support increased usage and involvement by seldom-heard groups, around nature, health and wellbeing, and mindful behaviour;
- to develop a marketing and communications plan that supports increased usage and involvement by seldom-heard groups;

- to communicate with key partners and stakeholders to help them understand and support the priority need for more inclusive parks in Haringey;
- to holding an annual celebration of community involvement and activity in parks; and
- to review internal and external funding options for inclusive parks.

To help drive the strategy, the Council will formalise relationships with key representative community organisations to enable a co-production approach to areas such as improvement projects and the development of new policies and processes.

The Council will support the establishment of further community forums for joint working approaches towards the management of trees and nature recovery. These are in addition to existing forums for friends' groups, allotments, rivers, and climate change.

Haringey's inclusive and joint working approach seeks to further improve public satisfaction with parks and green spaces in the borough and empower a range of community groups to express their needs about parks.



“The Council’s new strategy document recognises that our parks and green spaces play a vital role in the health and wellbeing of our community. We are prioritising accessibility for all so that all our residents feel welcome in our parks and get the full benefit of these wonderful public assets. People need parks.”

Councillor Julie Davies

Cabinet Member for Communities and Civic Life



Children enjoying the People Need Parks 2022 launch event, Lordship Recreation Ground



Women’s football, Down Lane Park

2. Awards for quality

Hammersmith & Fulham is striving to be the greenest and the best borough in the country to live, work and spend leisure time in. The Council renewed their grounds maintenance contract with *idverde* in February 2022 along with a fresh approach, embracing the Council's vision for the borough; the recommendations of their independent Parks Commission; Green Flag quality targets; and the Good Parks for London report criteria.



Spring blossoms, Ravenscourt Park

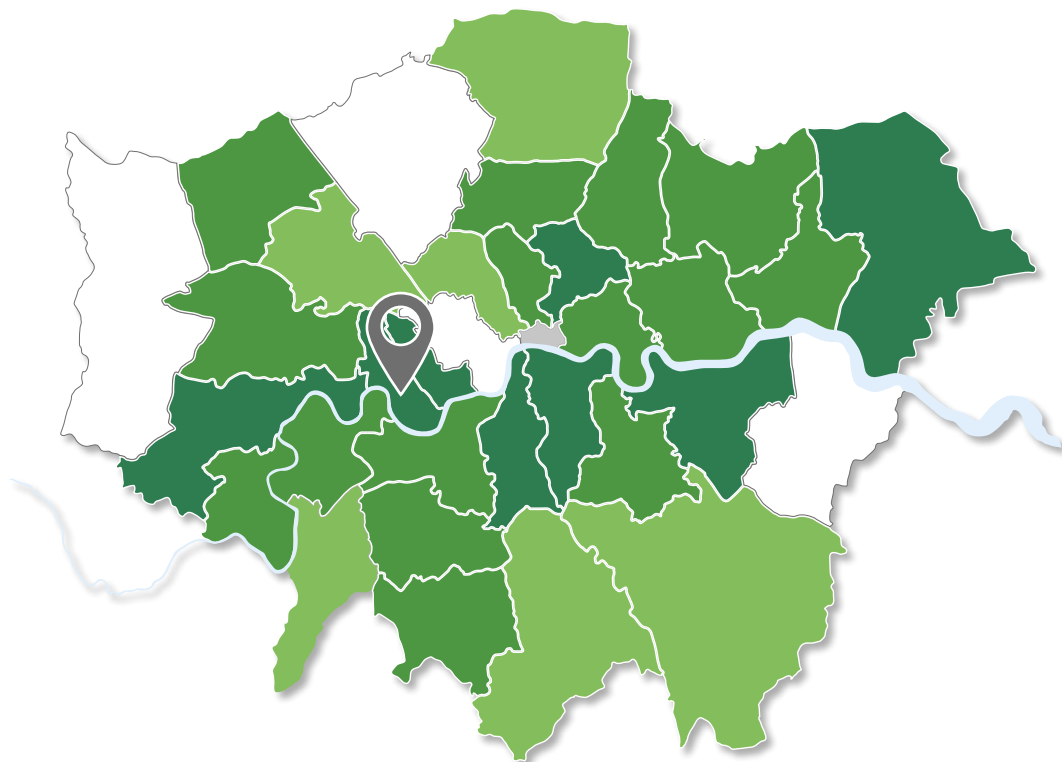
An independent Parks Commission convened by the Council in January 2020 explored how residents might get the most from Hammersmith & Fulham's parks and open spaces, how to improve and protect them, and to make them more sustainable for the future. It resulted in 22 recommendations and a three-year plan which the Council has incorporated in their parks and green space strategy and management plans.

Reflecting these recommendations, the new contract specification includes a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) to raise and improve quality standards. Performance is measured via the contractors self-monitoring IT system and associated app which is tested against weekly, monthly, and quarterly reports and ad-hoc inspections by parks staff. The contractor is also developing a standards handbook similar to the Parks for London [Green Space Quality Manual](#) so that all staff clearly understand what is expected.

Standard KPIs around monitoring and quality of service delivery have been augmented by new horticultural features such as the care and improvement of areas for biodiversity; new requirements to work within their integrated weed management policy; and minimising the use of herbicides.

Awards for quality

No data     Top score





Councillor Sharon Holder celebrates the arrival of the new electric equipment with members of the idverde team, Bishops Park

"Taking pride in Hammersmith and Fulham is a key part of the Council's vision. COVID-19 reinforced the importance of parks to everyone, and making sure we retain and improve the quality of our parks and open spaces is essential."

Councillor Sharon Holder (above middle)

Cabinet Member for Public Realm

Other initiatives in line with Council priorities include:

- conducting regular resident surveys to understand how satisfaction can be improved at a local and a borough level;
- reducing energy consumption, and introducing a green fleet to improve sustainability and address climate change;
- improving recycling including existing green waste recycling, and introducing on-site separation of recyclable waste materials;
- developing a contractor-client partnership to increase the number of green flags; and
- creating new initiatives including volunteering, added value or new ways of working.

The Council also want the organisations they do business with to share their commitment to support communities and the local economy. To encourage this, any Council contract of over £100,000 is required to achieve a social value return of at least 10% and the grounds maintenance contract is no different.

Social value themes, outcomes and measures agreed between the Council and *idverde* focus on delivering local employment, work



Daffodils bringing colour to springtime, Parsons Green

experience, community and schools engagement programmes, and volunteering. Following this, *idverde* have increased the number of apprenticeships, training and volunteering opportunities for local residents and staff.

The Council hopes to encourage residents to love their parks and is grateful to the many friends' groups and other stakeholders who want to help to make a difference alongside *idverde* and improve the borough's parks for people and nature.

3. Collaboration

Kingston Council has a strong record of collaboration with a variety of third sector and voluntary organisations who carry out a range of projects within the borough. A dedicated biodiversity officer and community development manager are integral to creating and sustaining links with the wide range of corporate and community organisations that collaborate within the borough's parks and green spaces.



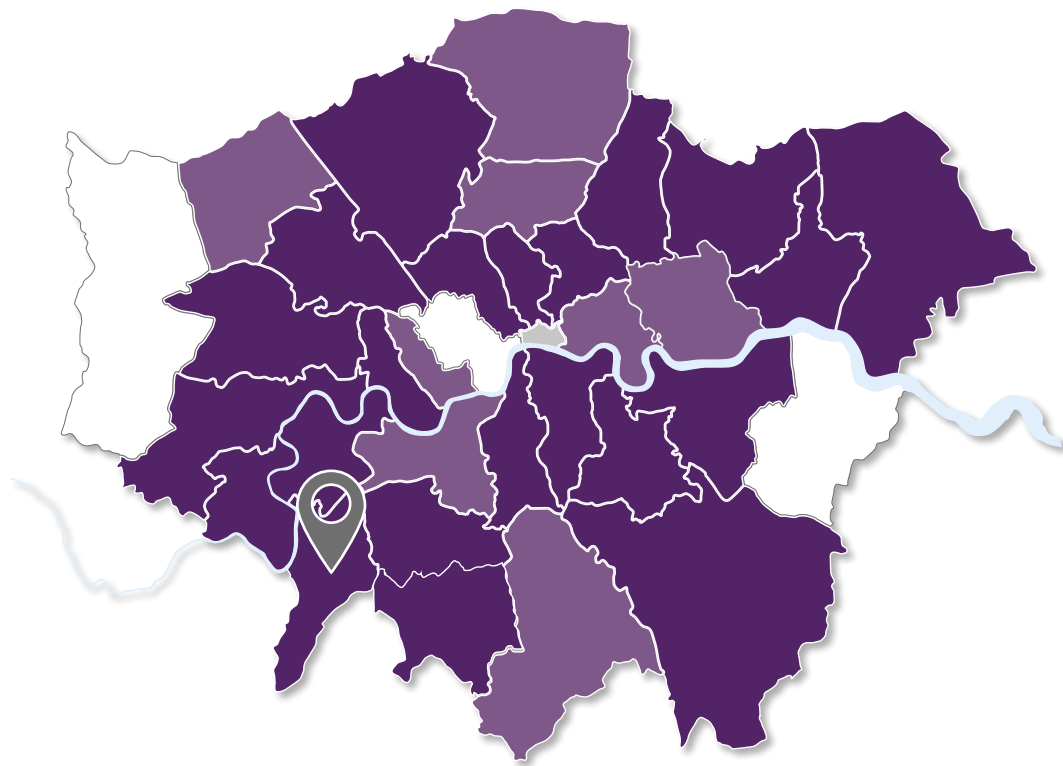
Kingston works with and supports a diverse range of groups, and forms formal cross boundary partnership arrangements with the Lower Mole Countryside Trust (LMCT), who provide specialist conservation volunteers to carry out work at sites managed in agreement with Historic England.



LMCT volunteers installing cattle fencing,
Tolworth Court Farm

Collaboration

No data     Top score





LMCT volunteers installing signposts, Tolworth Court Farm

The Council also supports local projects like SHEDx, an initiative designed to encourage communities within the south of the borough to engage with, and re-imagine, urban and green spaces.

At a strategic level, a strong partnership has been formed with South East Rivers Trust (SERT) who have worked with Kingston to identify areas of wetland that can be used to increase resilience

to flooding events by holding rain water run-off. They also have a particular interest in the Hogsmill River which runs through Kingston and is a popular recreation spot. Kingston sits on the Hogsmill Catchment Partnership hosted by SERT that brings together key stakeholders and organisations who have an impact on the health of the river. The Partnership works collaboratively to help the Hogsmill thrive, with a shared vision for it to be a clean and healthy habitat for all to enjoy.



"Kingston is so fortunate in having so many residents in local friend's groups supporting their local park. There are also environmental organisations the council can call on for expertise and support. This, plus dedicated council officers and contractors, has helped protect Kingston's much-loved parkland so that it can be enjoyed by local people, whilst also supporting biodiversity and the council's drive to combat harmful climate change."

Councillor Ian Manders

Portfolio Holder for Climate Action and Sustainable Transport

4. Events

Public parks and green spaces provide an extension to both our living and work spaces, offering places where people can enjoy and participate in cultural events, or meet formally and informally to study, relax, and develop and exchange ideas. The more these spaces are used the more attractive and welcoming they become as centres of community. **Ealing** is informally known as the festival borough and has a reputation for delivering vibrant fêtes, festivals and carnivals using its parks and outdoor spaces to great effect.



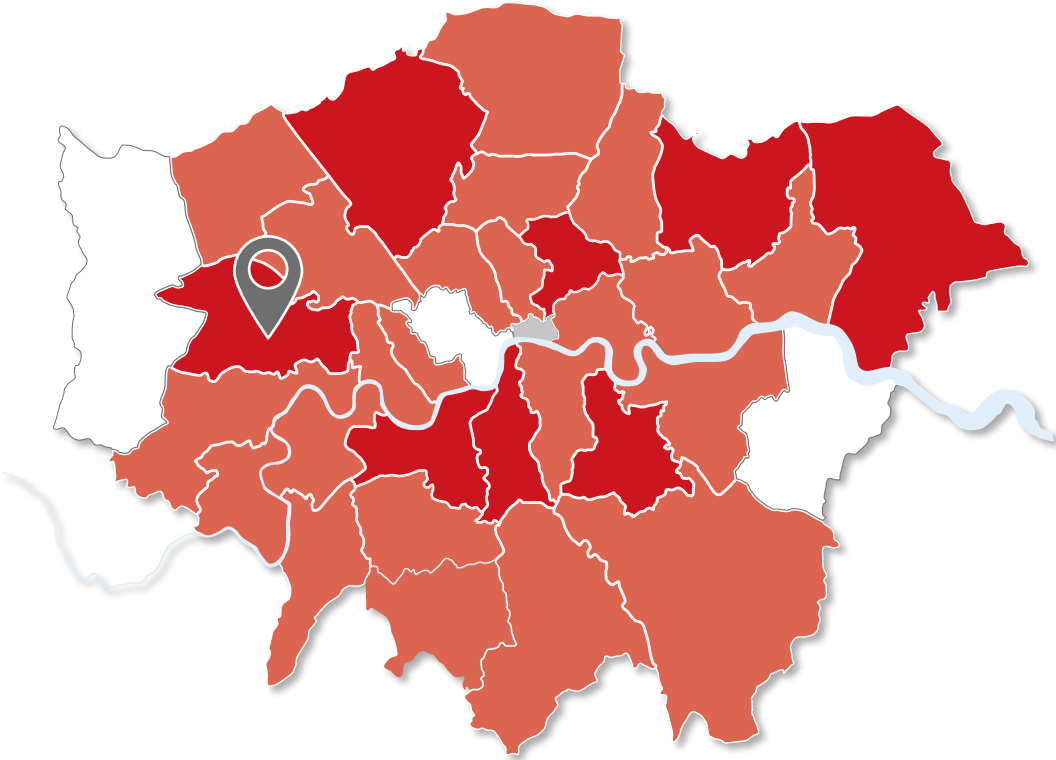
Beacon lighting at Pitshanger Manor House and Gallery to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Walpole Park

Ealing Council have recently appointed a Community Events Producer to work closely with and support local community organisations, as well as the Council, on its journey to ensure that Ealing's cultural ecology is representative of the needs and talents of its diverse community.

The Ealing Summer Festivals are west London's most exciting festivals and the borough's flagship programme. Set across five of Ealing's most magnificent parks, the regular suite of events includes the Greenford and Acton Carnivals, Ealing Comedy Festival, Ealing Blues and Jazz Festival, and the London Mela, which celebrates South Asian culture in Southall Park.

Events

No data    Top score





“Our fantastic parks and open spaces support an amazing range of festivals, fêtes and carnivals that take place across the borough and are a clear reflection of the diversity of Ealing’s population, something we are rightly proud of. These events were sorely missed in recent years due to the pandemic, but 2022 has been a bumper year which has seen tens of thousands of Ealing residents and visitors to the borough enjoy proms, comedy, jazz, a big Queen’s Platinum Jubilee lunch and much more in our beautiful parks and open spaces.”

Councillor Jasbir Anand

Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities

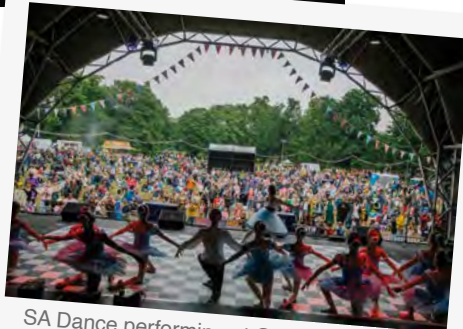
With its roots set deep in the borough’s strong music and comedic history, the festivals offer music, comedy, and culture, while bringing people together in collective appreciation of exceptional local and international talent.

The borough thrives on a culture of community and the events programme includes the Hanwell Hootie, the largest free one-day music festival in London, and the popular Ealing Half Marathon.

This summer, the borough also celebrated the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee with over 170 street parties and a range of other events, culminating in an evening of classical entertainment with the Ealing Symphony Orchestra’s sixty musicians serving up a unique programme—combining Last Night of the Proms favourites alongside pieces representing Ealing’s history and culture.



Ealing Symphony Orchestra performing at the Platinum Jubilee: Prom in the Park, Walpole Park



SA Dance performing at Queen's Platinum Jubilee Big Lunch, Walpole Park

5. Health, fitness and wellbeing

In 2012, the **Royal Borough of Greenwich** was rated 27 out of 32 London boroughs for having the least physically active adults. Since adopting a four-year Physical Activity and Sport Strategy, known as Greenwich Get Active, in 2019, the borough has shown significant improvement and is currently ranked 14th. The strategy contains a detailed action plan indicating use of resources for maximum impact to get more adults and young people active.



Opening of the refurbished ball court,
Bostall Gardens

One of the key elements of the strategy was greater utilisation of parks and open spaces, along with programming a host of offers and activities to get more people of all ages active. This has included small, but effective investments in multi-games areas, playgrounds, and resurfacing of tennis and basketball courts.

Data from Sport England surveys for the years ending May 2020 and May 2021 shows a positive increase locally in physical activity levels, whether that's doing sports, or just walking and cycling more. Survey results show a 5% increase in active people and over 1% decrease in inactive people.

Greenwich Leisure Limited, Charlton Athletic Community Trust, and a host of local community and sports clubs are crucial partners in the delivery of physical activity initiatives across the borough's parks and open spaces. Their aim is to make physical activity accessible to the people who tend to be more inactive, particularly older adults, families on low incomes, women and girls, and people with disabilities.

Examples of partnership working include:

- Walking for Health sessions conducted in various parks to improve mental health and wellbeing;
- a borough-wide sport development outreach programme in parks and housing estates focusing on more deprived areas including Abbey Wood, Thamesmead and Woolwich;
- the Families Fund programme—funded by Sport England, and working with social and children’s services—offers free multisport activities for families and free sport bags; the programme has reached 750 families over four years;
- the On Your Bike programme offers residents the chance to learn to ride and repair bikes as well as join social rides; the programme includes disability provision with adapted bikes; and
- four organised parkruns and a junior parkrun, attended by over 700 participants a week.

Greenwich continues to drive greater physical activity and sport in parks and open spaces, with more offers, opportunities, and adapted activities planned to support and encourage a more active and healthier lifestyle.



Families playing together as part of the Families Fund programme, Abbey Wood Park

“It is the Forum’s belief that the main point about parks is that they are for the refreshment of the human body and spirit. Greenwich’s parks offer many opportunities for exercise, from joggers running through the parks and to keep fit enthusiasts using the outdoor gyms to pursue healthier lifestyles. They are also a place where families can relax and recharge their batteries. Parks can truly enrich human lives.”

Terry Powley

Chair of the Greenwich Parks Forum

Councillor Adel Khaireh visiting the pond restoration works, Rockliffe Gardens



Greenwich Get Active Zone as part of the annual Together 22 event, Charlton Park

"The health and wellbeing of our residents is a priority for the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Our 100 parks and open spaces are crucial to so many of the activities we offer to encourage physical activity, so to be recognised for the quality of what we're delivering is a huge honour."

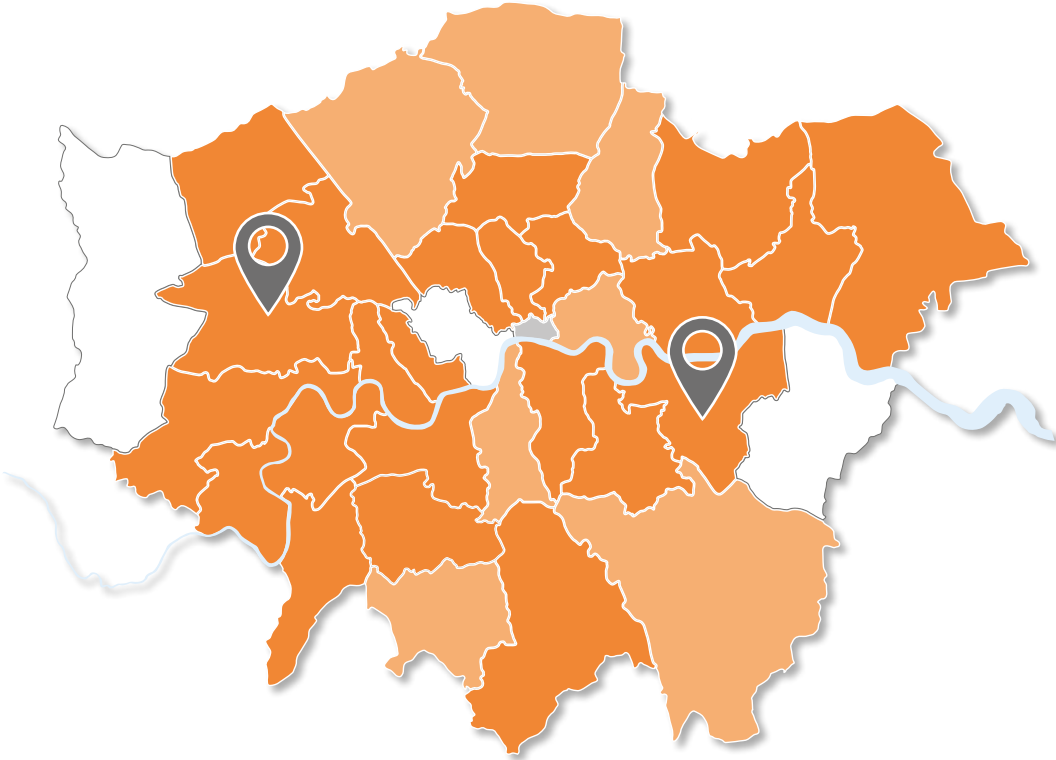
We are proud to offer activities across the borough from walking groups to our Families Fund programme. Together our goal is to help people stay active and healthy, regardless of social, physical, and economic barriers."

Councillor Adel Khaireh

Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture and Communities

Health, fitness & wellbeing

No data     Top score





New Let's Go Southall green gym, Southall Park
Credit: Let's Go Southall—Active Communities Team,
Southall residents

Ealing is a frontrunner for the provision of green gyms across its parks and open spaces, with over 45 outdoor gyms, trim trails, marked routes, and a plethora of exercise equipment, providing easy access for all residents.

Building upon this success, Ealing Council is changing the relationship that residents have with their parks and physical activity through Sport England's local delivery pilot, Let's Go Southall (LGS). This community-led pilot aims to reduce health inequalities, get people active and achieve sustained generational change.



Southall residents are embedded into the LGS team, which critically, sit in the same directorate as the parks service. This has been a game changer, creating a positive and productive working relationship between the two teams. Residents are actively encouraged to take the leadership role in the design, provision, and location of opportunities. Understanding their needs and challenges from the start of any delivery has been key in achieving ownership of Southall's activated spaces.

The LGS team have identified and tackled barriers preventing some spaces being used more, such as safety. To enable residents to enjoy and benefit from safer exercise spaces, new CCTV cameras have been installed in four of Southall's parks (Recreation Park, Spikes Bridge Park, Southall Park, and Manor House Grounds Park), covering not only the new gym equipment but the also the surrounding areas. As a result, many more women and girls are using these parks.

Creating high quality shared spaces is a key goal for Ealing. Modern state-of-the-art screens have been installed alongside new outdoor gyms to bring to life exercise routines through videos led by residents who have become outdoor gym instructors—with accompanying music. Prior to the pilot, 43% of Southall's residents did less than 30 minutes exercise a week, now up to 1,500 Southall residents are attending the sessions on offer each month.



Local instructor-led activation at the Let's Go Southall green gym, Southall Park.
Credit: Let's Go Southall—Active Communities Team, Southall residents

The LGS team are based in Manor House Grounds Park, providing a frontline and accessible presence for residents every day of the week. This helps to create a positive, safe, and community atmosphere, encouraging and enabling residents to use the space more—whether that's for recreation, exercise, work, or for general relaxation and health and wellbeing. The park also houses a new cycle hub, supporting children to learn to cycle within the park.

"The smallest of changes can make a huge difference to people's health and wellbeing. The Let's Go Southall initiative offers local people the chance to make those small changes without having to go out of their community to access them. It isn't just about getting people to take up sports, but rather about providing ways of using our fantastic open spaces to increase daily exercise."

Councillor Jasbir Anand

Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities

6. Supporting nature

Conserving wildlife is both a challenge and a necessity. Multiple competing land-uses in urban areas, exacerbated by high population density, and recreational demand on existing parks and green spaces creates its own set of challenges. Despite these challenges, managing and maintaining these spaces is an absolute necessity. Not only is it beholden on us to provide space for biodiversity and wildlife, but we know access to these spaces vastly improves people's health and wellbeing and helps to mitigate the impacts of climate change.



The **London Borough of Hackney** has a long tradition of conserving wildlife, much of it led and delivered by community groups and volunteers. Abney Park Cemetery was declared a statutory Local Nature Reserve in 1993 and Hackney's first Biodiversity Action Plan was published in 2012.

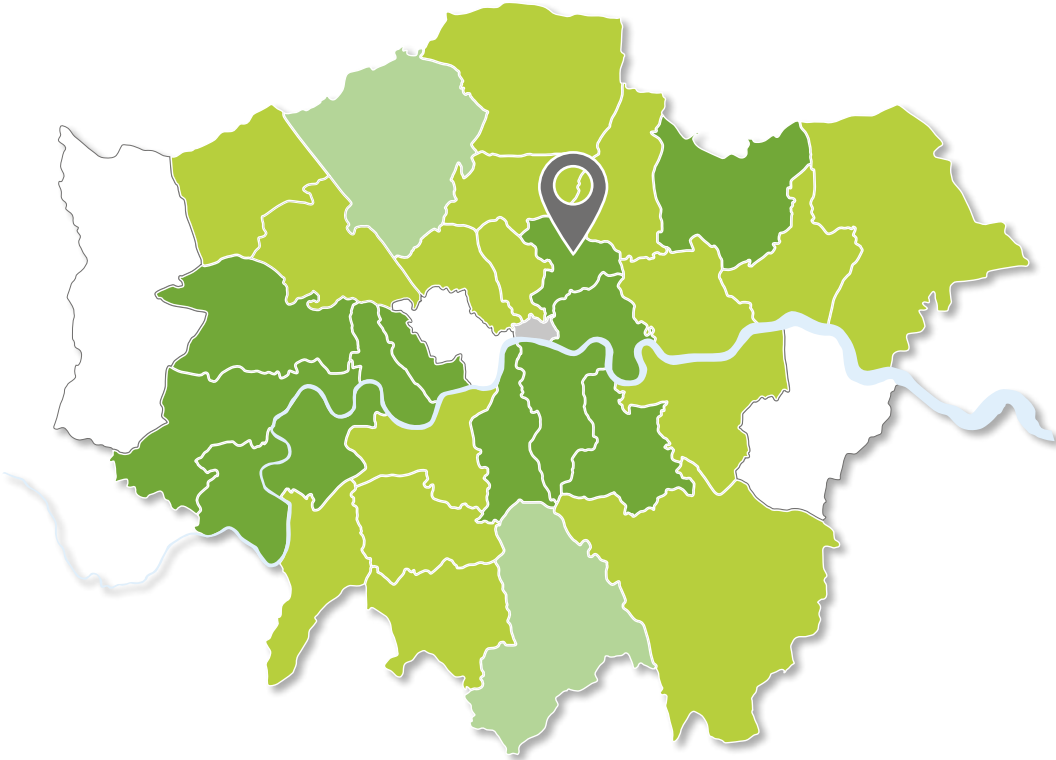
Between then and now, wildlife conservation has been bolstered by a range of projects and initiatives including changes in parks management to allow for the establishment of wildflower meadows; the creation of Woodberry Wetlands nature reserve; an extensive tree-planting programme; and many community-led projects aiming to increase opportunities for wildlife in parks and on housing estates.

Exposure to nature starts early in Hackney, which has agreements with ten Forest Schools to operate in parks across the borough. Children aged 1–11 learn about the natural world in all weathers, taking part in nature walks, creative projects, and tree climbing.

In 2022, Hackney Council started 'Little Explorers' in Springfield Park, offering free drop-in activities for the under-fives and their parents and carers, guiding children to discover the parks wildlife, water, trees, bees, butterflies, and plants.

Supporting nature

No data     Top score





London Fields User Group creating new protected loggeries, London Fields



The Wildlife Gardeners of Haggerston
planting reedbeds in the River Lea next to
Hackney Marshes

The Council also works closely with the Tree Musketeers, a voluntary organisation who grow trees from seed in a dedicated nursery in Hackney Marshes. The trees are transported to Hackney's parks, where they are planted, mulched, and guarded. Volunteers water the newly planted trees and care for them until they are established.

The Musketeers also deliver educational walks and talks to help teach others how to look after trees. In 2021/22, they helped Hackney plant 780 trees in Millfields Park, in collaboration with local school children.

In the same year, the Council undertook a review of all its Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and partnered with the London Wildlife Trust to produce a Local Nature Recovery Plan. The plan divides the borough into five nature recovery areas which identify opportunities for projects and interventions that can help make ecological connections that protect, augment, and connect the SINC network through, for example, enhancements to parks.

The plan identifies a range of plant and animal flagship species, requiring specific measures to conserve and protect them. Volunteers are now helping the Council to deliver improved habitats across the borough in line with the plan.

"Hackney's parks and green spaces have transformed in recent years, as grass has been left to grow, fallen trees left in situ as habitat and new bug hotels created to attract invertebrates. The increase in wildlife has been noticeable, and it is fantastic to see local people get on board and help us create these natural areas as enthusiastic volunteers often with a great deal of expertise and experience to share."

Councillor Caroline Woodley

Cabinet Member for Families,
Parks and Leisure



7. Community involvement

Southwark has a long history of welcoming and supporting many community volunteer initiatives across its parks and open spaces. These projects help to maintain and support many of the borough's 64 sites of importance for nature conservation (SINCs), 96 hectares of woodland, and over 300 parks and green spaces.



Hill Corporate volunteers
maintaining scrub and meadows,
Burgess Park

One such project was delivered through the council's partnership with the Friends of Burgess Park where the Council and idverde (the Council's grounds maintenance contractor), worked with the friends' group to plant a new woodland and over half a kilometre of native hedgerow. Over 370 volunteers planted 3,500 trees and hedges, helping to create new habitats for wildlife and contribute to the Council's completed target of planting 10,000 trees by May 2022.

The Council has also developed an Environment and Ecology Programme that funds and supports three charities that work with volunteers—the London Wildlife Trust, The Conservation Volunteers, and Bankside Open Spaces Trust—to help establish long-term community engagement in sites such as Sydenham Hill Wood, Dulwich Upper Wood, Stave Hill Ecology Park, and Lavender Pond. These charities offer regular conservation and gardening days, and combined they logged 17,338 volunteer hours in 2021/22.



Southwark Staff Climate Network planting trees, Southwark Park



"We are very proud of our parks and green spaces in Southwark, recognising the vital role they play in supporting health and wellbeing of our residents, and also their key role in addressing the climate emergency. We have worked hard to establish a culture that welcomes and encourages volunteer projects in our parks, and to ensure that Southwark's communities are able to gain the most they can from their local parks and green spaces."

We are thankful to the many thousands of volunteers and the charities, contractors and community groups who help us to support their work. The contribution of our volunteers is plain to see, through the new trees and hedges that are growing, the wildlife that is thriving and the healthy woodlands, lakes and ponds across Southwark."

Councillor Catherine Rose

Lead Member for Parks, Streets and Clean Air



Friends of Burgess Park planting new hedges,
Surrey Canal Walk

Volunteering provides many benefits to people such as greater social interaction and improved health and wellbeing. Furthermore, it helps foster a sense of ownership and engagement with Southwark's parks and green spaces. The borough's local wildlife also benefits from the resulting habitat creation and management.

The Council has worked with idverde to embed community engagement into their grounds maintenance contract, leading to the provision of a range of opportunities including volunteering, friends' group linked activities, and other initiatives. In total, they contributed 6,622 hours of community involvement in 2021/22.

Although volunteer numbers dropped during the pandemic, they are beginning to return to pre-pandemic levels and on average Southwark's parks and green spaces benefit from an impressive 30,000 volunteer hours every year. The Council also supports local businesses and corporate volunteers through its charitable and commercial providers, contributing greatly to habitat conservation and improving Southwark's parks for everybody.

8. Skills development

Vision Redbridge Culture and Leisure deliver culture and leisure services, including parks, for the **London Borough of Redbridge**. They have an inclusive policy and balanced workforce across their back office and frontline services. They regularly review and monitor the workforce composition ensuring their teams are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to operate at a professional standard, ranging from safe work methods to safeguarding measures.



Currently, 5% of their workforce are apprentices, involved in numerous skilled activities such as fine turf maintenance, set and sports markings, tractor operations, general horticulture, and office procedures.

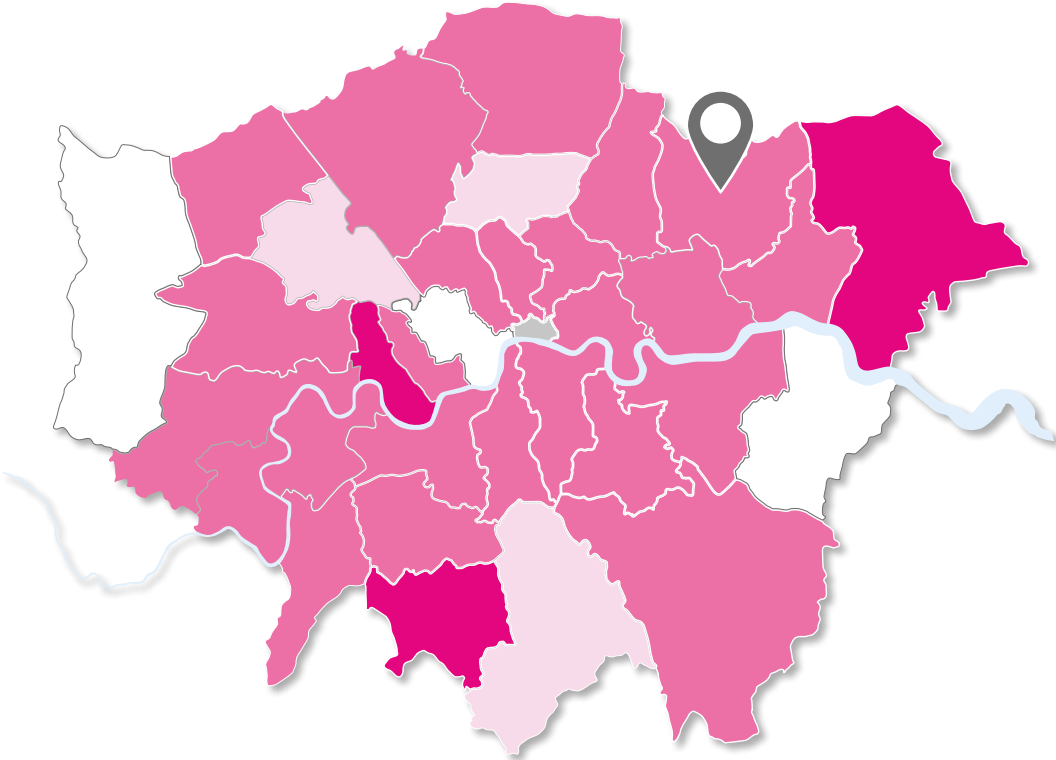
Vision Redbridge staff are also encouraged to continue their professional development—they recently promoted a Parks Ranger to Community Engagement Officer and a Parks Officer to Operations Manager. Additionally, they have introduced new tiers to provide staff with pathways for development, from operative to team leading positions through to manager posts.

Job rotation opportunities allow rangers to receive appropriate training and rotate around different grounds maintenance teams to get a more enriched and varied work experience.

They also run a three-year £600,000 training programme at Hainault Forest, as part of a National Lottery Heritage Fund restoration project, with a focus around outreach and volunteering, providing skills and training opportunities. This includes habitat and species management training, practical conservation

Skills development

No data     Top score





Volunteers making a floating island to provide habitat and refuge for wildlife, Goodmayes Park



training through The Orchard Project, NPTC (National Proficiency Test Council) and Lantra accredited courses, and soft skills training in managing people and community groups.

They have successfully connected volunteers with apprenticeships and traineeship placements with partner organisations, including the London Wildlife Trust 'Keeping it Wild' scheme. They have actively supported their volunteers into paid employment, either through help in completing application forms, CVs, preparing for interviews or recruiting directly into paid Ranger positions.

Working with the Ministry of Justice, Vision Redbridge has reintroduced Community Payback Schemes to offer people on probation opportunities to gain introductory and overview knowledge of and skills in general horticultural maintenance. The rehabilitation scheme now operates in Goodmayes Park, Seven Kings Park, and Valentines Park.

Vision Redbridge's Nature Conservation Ranger Team coordinates and runs a borough-wide volunteer programme, running across the week and on weekends. It provides the opportunity for the community to come together, learn new

skills and keep fit. In 2021 alone, 120 volunteers have joined their sessions, generating over 4,500 work hours across 96 ranger-led volunteer work days. They have helped to plant 13,000 trees, harvest 3.85 tonnes of apples, manage key wildlife habitats across Redbridge, as well as pick and clear over 3,000 bags of litter across the borough's parks and open spaces.

A volunteer campaign launched in 2018 at Loxford Park has now grown into the Friends of Loxford, a robust community involvement group that work with other organisations such as primary schools to offer outdoor learning experiences and engagement activities.

The friends' group meets over weekends to participate in gardening and nature conservation activities, sharing knowledge and expertise and helping to sustain and maintain the park, making it a welcoming place for everyone. They are also supporting an undergraduate environment student by providing primary data and first-hand experience in landscape management.

On top of their volunteer and community group programme, Vision Redbridge also offers other learning opportunities such as:

- ranger-led outdoor classroom at Ray Park;
- ranger-led outdoor classroom and forest schools at Hainault Forest;
- school holiday events programme;
- citizen-science campaigns, projects and training programme;
- bush craft and outdoor confidence building classes and workshops for both young people and adults; and
- informative walks programme, including Forest Bathing.

"Vision Redbridge Culture and Leisure is committed to the skills development of our workforce but also supporting our passionate volunteers in developing their skills and experience so we can provide better green spaces for our local communities in Redbridge."

Kevin Wackett

Head of Parks & Open Spaces

9. Sustainability

Lambeth has ambitions to be the most sustainable borough in London—something that is evident in the management of their parks and green spaces.



Wildflowers and grasses left to grow tall around Eagle pond, Clapham Common

Their Integrated Pest Management Policy, adopted in early 2019, is embedded across all parks operations and fully supported by local councillors, the Lambeth Parks Forum, and wider stakeholder groups. The policy takes a proactive approach to reducing the use of chemicals to a minimum and only in very exceptional circumstances. This approach has also been mirrored across the borough's streets and housing estates.

Lambeth's park service are rightly proud of their green credentials. They operate a fully green fleet (34% of their vehicles are electric or hybrid, and the remainder are Euro 6 compliant diesel vehicles), and all their diesel vehicles (and plant) run on hydrated vegetable oil—reducing net carbon emissions by up to 90%.

Their fleet is monitored with telematics to improve efficiency, highlight sharp braking patterns, idling, and inefficient routes—supporting the reduction of carbon emissions. They have held Logistics UK Van Excellence accreditation for several years and achieved Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS) Bronze accreditation in 2021, with the target to obtain Silver status in 2022/23.

Sustainability

No data     Top score





Lambeth's green fleet for park operations

They are replacing their handheld machinery from petrol to battery powered, which is not only much greener but also has positive health benefits for both users and residents.

Brockwell Hall, within Brockwell Park, was one of the first buildings in the borough to have a ground source heat pump. The heat pump was installed as part of a wider National Lottery Heritage Fund project to restore the Grade II* listed mansion house and its historic features, whilst also making use of modern technology to ensure the building is as green and sustainable as possible.

In addition, the Council, with strong support from stakeholders, has started to change the way it manages the borough's parks and open spaces with relaxed mowing regimes in some form, at most sites, and with some larger open spaces having minimal, if any, mowing whatsoever. This approach helps to support biodiversity and wildlife in the borough.



"Lambeth has big ambitions to become London's most sustainable borough and our parks and open spaces are key to delivering this. Our parks service, supported by our strong stakeholder groups, have really led by example in terms of sustainability by being innovative and pushing new ways of working and managing our parks and open spaces."

Councillor Rezina Chowdhury

Cabinet Member for Sustainable Lambeth and Clean Air

10. Strategic planning

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes the protection and improvement of green and open spaces, something that is reflected in **Lewisham's [Parks and Open Spaces Strategy](#)** (2020-2025). The strategy encapsulates a shared vision for Lewisham's parks and open spaces to be the heart and lungs for the borough, connecting active, healthy, and vibrant local communities.

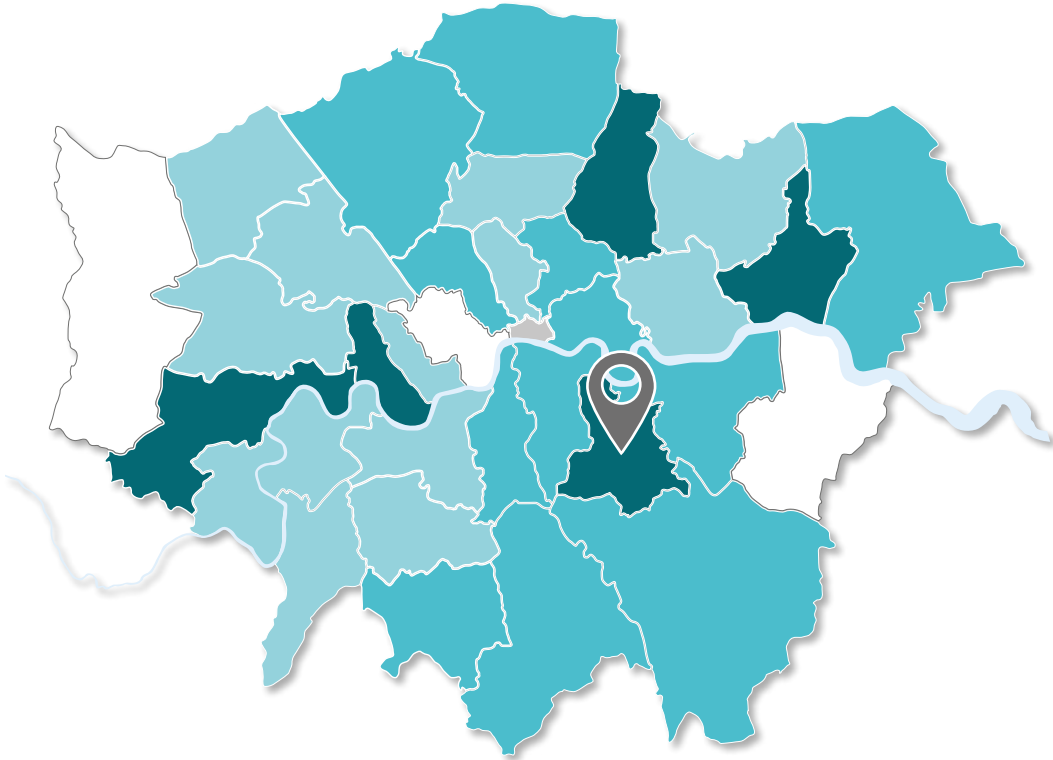


An Open Space Assessment undertaken in 2018 looked at the quality and provision of Lewisham's open spaces and identified major themes for improvement in play, access and biodiversity. Key to delivering improvements in these three areas are monitoring, funding and partnership working, with Lewisham taking the following approaches:

- Implementing a rigorous monitoring process with clear identifiable and quantifiable actions outlined in a delivery plan, incorporating social, economic, and environmental aims. An annual monitoring report is produced to show progress against milestones, such as delivering on investments or planting street trees.
- Investing £1 million in Lewisham's parks and open spaces to address play, access and biodiversity through the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy and the Mayor of Lewisham's Greening Fund (allocation of which is led by local friends' groups). To date, £360,000 worth of parks improvement projects have been successfully delivered.
- Engaging with over 26 friends' groups including carrying out parks satisfaction surveys to gain tangible feedback on the aims and aspirations of Lewisham's local communities to ensure funds and resources are targeted where they are most needed.

Strategic planning

No data     Top score



Opening of the [newly refurbished playground](#) under
Lewisham's Play Improvement project, Sayes Court Park



"Whilst Lewisham can evidence clear aims, ambitions and outcomes in our strategies, much of what is actually achieved is made possible because of the ongoing engagement and interaction both with local residents, parks and open spaces volunteer groups and the voice of our communities, who bring meaningful life to the facts and stats of our strategies."

Councillor André Bourne

Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

Lewisham is pleased to have endorsed and adopted a [Biodiversity Action Plan](#) for 2021–2026, developed by the Lewisham Biodiversity Partnership in 2021. The Council works closely all year round with the partnership, bringing together a diverse range of organisations and volunteers with a shared interest in improving and protecting biodiversity in the borough.

Progress on delivering the action plan is monitored quarterly, and between 2008 and 2022 the partnership has:

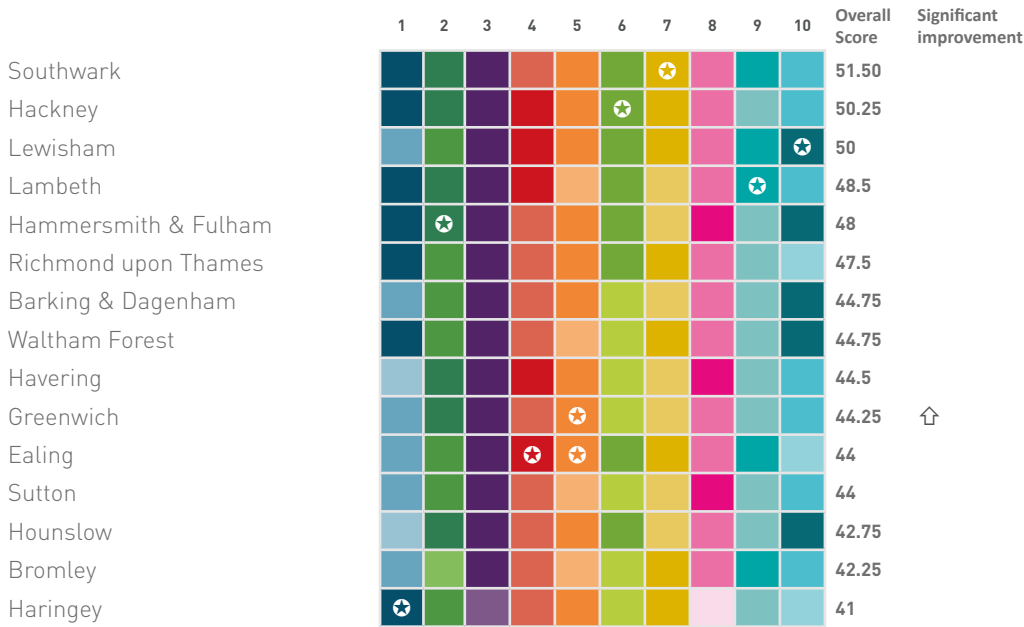
- engaged with over 328,283 individuals; and
- delivered 14,122 events including 8,356 environmental education and 5,766 nature conservation volunteer events (delivering 119,000 volunteer hours with an estimated economic value of £1.2 million).

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and the Biodiversity Action Plan also play a key role in delivering the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan, which was assessed to be the 11th best plan in the UK and 4th best in London by Climate Emergency UK.



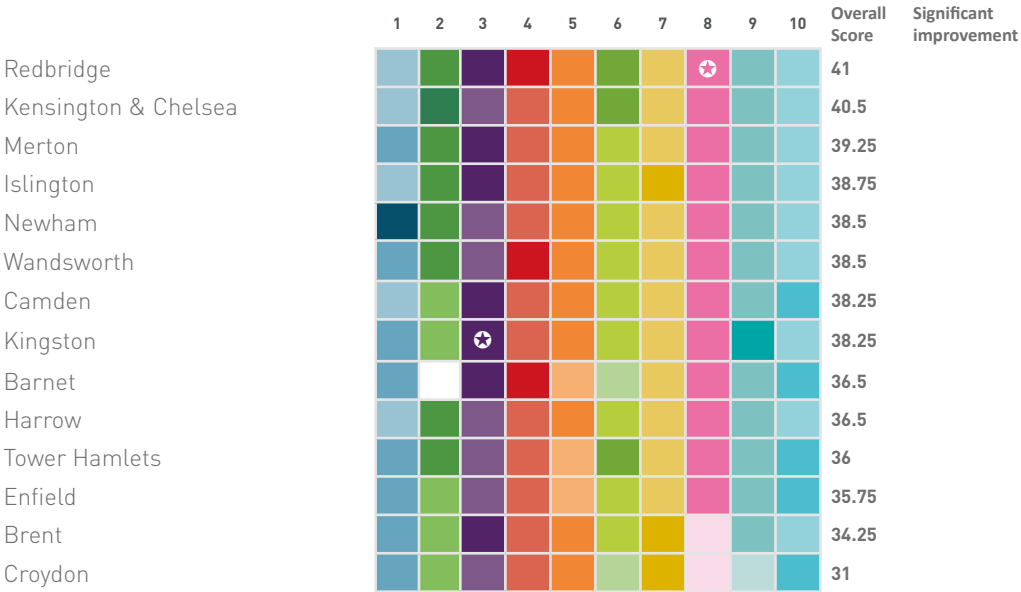
[Tiny Forest](#) tree planting by Lewisham Mayor Damien Egan and Good Shepherd Primary School children, Durham Hill

Overall scores



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. Featured case studies are marked with a ⭐, and a ⬆ represents a significantly improved score on the prior year.





This year, 29 boroughs participated in the report. 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.

4. EVENTS



5. HEALTH, FITNESS AND WELLBEING



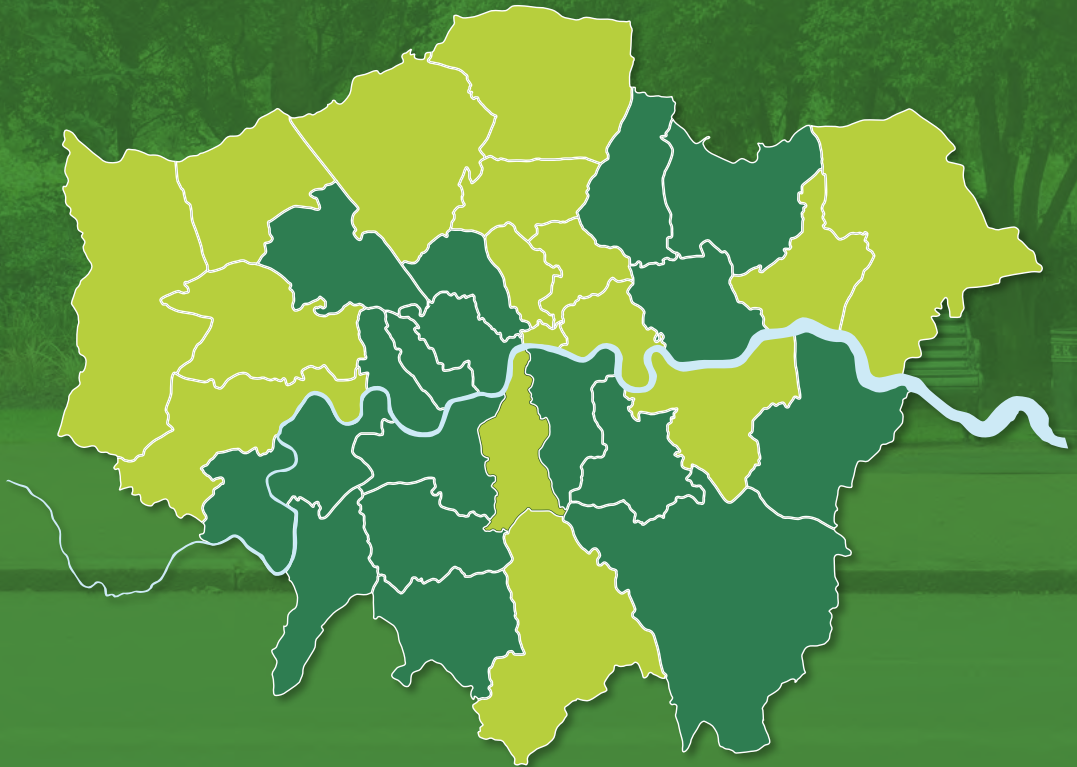
9. SUSTAINABILITY



10. STRATEGIC PLANNING



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



Part two

London boasts more than 3,000 parks and green spaces but few are spared from the scourge of litter, costing landowners millions to clean up.

Beyond the financial toll, littering also has environmental and public health implications. When litter is disposed with general waste it cannot be recycled and either ends up in landfill or is incinerated, becoming a source of environmental pollution affecting water, soil, and air. Improperly discarded litter not only attracts vermin, making it unpleasant and a health hazard, it can also find its way into waterways, rivers, and oceans, harming wildlife, people, and ecosystems.

Research shows that high levels of litter can make people feel unsafe and dissuade them from visiting public green spaces for leisure and recreation, socialising, or other activities—potentially undermining their physical and mental health and wellbeing. Further litter in public spaces attracts more litter and potentially other anti-social behaviours or crimes in what researchers refer to as ‘the spreading of disorder’. Hence, interventions that reduce littering could reap big societal benefits.



“In busy London, the Royal Parks are a haven for wildlife and there are simple things we can all do to protect it and help it thrive. Litter, and especially plastic, is a growing danger to wildlife worldwide, and we can all help by taking it home or using the bins.”

Sir David Attenborough
in support of The Royal Parks campaign,
Help Nature Thrive



Waterloo Green, Lambeth
Credit: Bankside Open Spaces Trust

Read on for a selection of case studies on litter and waste management in parks and green spaces across London. These will be made available on our website's [Resources Hub](#), showcasing a growing number of diverse interventions that are worthy of replication. If you know of other projects that would be suitable for sharing as case studies, please [contact us](#).

Case studies on litter and waste management

a. Clean Parks for London	62
b. London Borough of Haringey	66
c. London Borough of Sutton	70
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Case studies

Parks for London's pan-London campaign

In London's parks and green spaces, littering, fly tipping, and dog fouling are sadly common problems that not only pollute these vital spaces, but also sap vital resources—both financial and staff time that can be redirected to better uses.



Parks for
London

The common desire among green space landowners to tackle this perennial issue prompted Parks for London to form the Green Space Litter and Waste Management Action Group in 2021. The Group is made up of representatives from local authorities and other landowners that come together to discuss common litter issues and to share best practices and innovative strategies with the aim of reducing litter and associated costs—encouraging behavioural change by the public.

One key aim of the Group's action plan is to develop a public communications plan to help change attitudes towards littering. In April 2022, to coincide with the spring break, Parks for London launched a new pan-London campaign, [Clean Parks for London](#), to encourage Londoners and visitors to keep London's parks and green spaces clean, and to be part of the solution by simply taking home what they bring with them.



Litter strewn across, London Fields
Credit: Hackney Council



Banner showing the cost of green space litter and waste

To persuade more people to take responsibility for their rubbish, the campaign—using results from a recent Parks for London litter survey, made the public aware that the collection and disposal of litter and waste in London’s parks and green spaces costs local authorities an estimated £14.8 million a year.

The public were appalled to learn that this figure goes up to £16 million when including other landowners in England’s capital city, not to mention the indirect costs associated with impacts on business activity and tourism from sullied environments in badly littered areas.



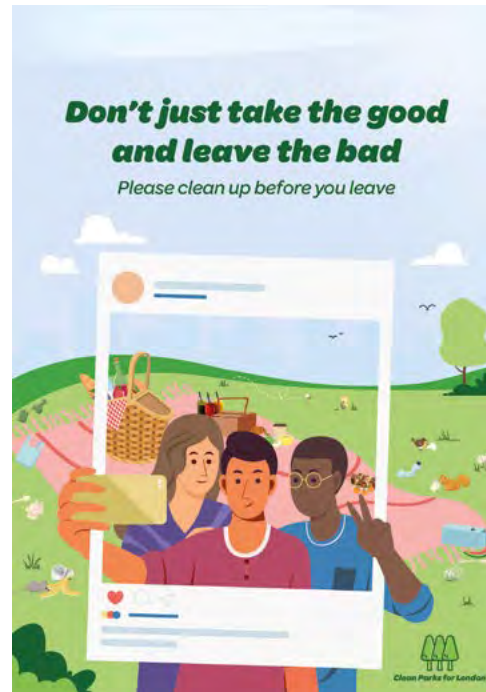
One of eight sticker designs

Case studies

The campaign is planned to run over several years, ramping up during spring and summer seasons and will cover various aspects of litter and waste management such as: curbing general litter; dog fouling; encouraging greater recycling rates; galvanising community action through litter-picking activities; and other topical concerns.

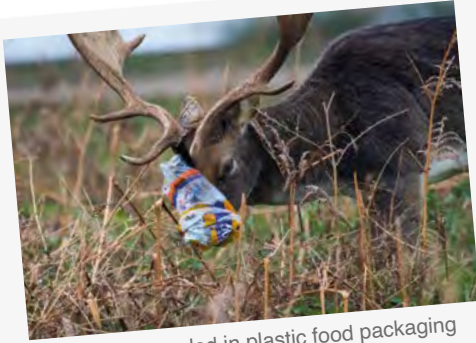
Since the pandemic, there has been a rise in the popularity of outdoor gatherings and al fresco dining, such as picnics and barbecues in parks and green spaces. Sadly, the aftermath is not a pretty sight. These spaces are often left strewn with litter, single-use plastics, and food packaging combined with food waste, often accumulating more rubbish around our already overflowing bins.

Even prior to the pandemic, [research](#) by Keep Britain Tidy and Parks for London in 2017 identified 'abandoned picnics' as a particularly prevalent form of litter, especially over warmer periods. So, this summer the campaign asked park users to enjoy these shared spaces in a more sustainable and kinder way through a guide to having litter-free, sustainable, and safe picnics.



Litter-free picnic guide poster design

The '[Picnic in, Pack it out](#)' guide included suggestions on reducing food, packaging, and single-use plastic waste on picnics, and planning for waste by preventing accidental littering and taking rubbish home. It also shared useful resources from the Greater London Authority on how to stay cool and hydrated during the summer heatwaves, and advised users to avoid barbecues and open fires to prevent fires in valued green spaces.



Wild stag tangled in plastic food packaging
from picnic scraps
Credit: The Royal Parks



Social media graphic

Supported by the Mayor of London and 19 other organisations and landowners including ten local councils, the campaign aims to provide supporters with various communication resources such as digital content for websites and social media, and designs for bin stickers, posters and signages, allowing campaign supporters to adopt a unified message on litter under the campaign.

Parks for London hopes to extend the campaign's scope beyond parks and green spaces, to transport, streetscapes, and housing. The simple message of keeping shared areas clean can go beyond the confines of green spaces and be interweaved throughout the journey Londoners make every day between the places they live, work and play.

"Bankside Open Spaces Trust is delighted to be part of Clean Parks for London. A city-wide campaign focusing on litter and waste is invaluable to teams managing parks and gardens – reducing waste means less time litter picking and more time gardening! Our staff and volunteers build litter picking into our regular park maintenance and we work closely with our local authorities to address waste issues too. Litter reduction is a collaborative effort and we'd love Londoners join us in working on Clean Parks for London."

Team at Bankside Open Spaces Trust

Supporter of the campaign

Case studies

Haringey

develops own initiatives following 'Abandoned Picnics' pilot

In 2017, Keep Britain Tidy partnered with Parks for London to research and trial new behavioural interventions to address litter from picnicking. The trial took place in four London parks, including Finsbury Park, the largest park in the London Borough of Haringey.



The [Abandoned Picnics](#) project aimed to illustrate the cost of cleaning up litter in parks to those using them using posters displayed around the park during summer 2017. By the end of the intervention phase, litter in Finsbury Park was reduced by 32%.

Following the pilot, Haringey Council's parks service worked with counterparts at the North London Waste Authority to review how waste is recorded and dealt with so as to refine the methodology.

Upon closer inspection of the figures for load amounts, types of waste, and how the data is recorded, the parks team redesigned their standard bins to include capacity for recycling and accepting dog waste along with general waste.

To encourage use of the new bins, they removed the old dog waste bins and found that the new bins were used more than the old bins. This could suggest that people might have found lifting a potentially dirty lid on the old bins off-putting. Perspex panels were used in the design to aid the



Newly designed bins for general waste, dog waste, and recycling, Ducketts Common

public in identifying the recycled elements already in the bin and adding to it rather than be confused and not recycle at all.

As part of an action plan, Haringey provided training for waste operatives to identify the level of contamination of recycled waste, which determines which waste processing facility it is sent to. The plan will culminate in the purchase of electric vehicles with dedicated sections for

general and recycled waste to simplify disposal at the designated waste centre.

The parks service also invested in eight 1,100-litre bins in Finsbury Park, which usually experiences a high volume of waste, particularly from picnics. Despite an initial increase in fly-tipped waste and household waste appearing in these bins, a review of their locations has seen a marked reduction in the amount of litter left in the park.

Case studies

Other issues with using these large capacity bins include:

- charcoal from barbecues not fully extinguished before being thrown in, causing fire damage to the bins;
- rough sleepers using the bins as additional shelter;
- graffiti defacing the bins; and
- being used for horseplay by young people.

The pilot also inspired the Council to develop their own campaign, Bin it or Take It Home, during the lockdown in 2020 when waste increased exponentially across all the borough's parks and green spaces.

The campaign slogan was printed on banners erected at all key entrances and locations, and printed on stickers designed for all styles of bins with an additional request to not leave bagged waste next to bins. While impactful at the start, the team reflected on the need to use multi-lingual signage and posters in the publicity during future campaign runs.

The campaign also included the installation of five skips in the middle of one of their key parks, Ducketts Common, with each skip filled with one day's worth of waste collected from neighbouring parks over a five-day period. This was a visual demonstration of some of the volume of waste that the parks operation team was dealing with on a daily basis, and many members of the public were dismayed by the revelation that 85 tonnes of waste were moved in just five days—the equivalent of 12.5 adult African elephants!

Within this time, the Council formed a Waste Management Reduction Working Group, tasked to enact the action plan set out in Haringey's new Parks and Greenspaces Strategy, due to be ratified in spring 2023 and covering the next fifteen years. This has highlighted a need for increased staffing and resources.

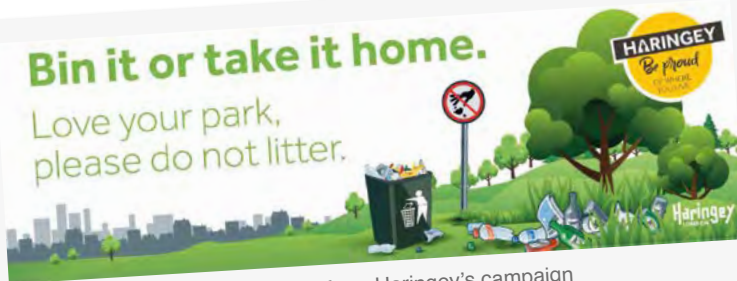
The pilot has encouraged Haringey to continually test new ideas, the latest of which being the installation of 1,100-litre bins in key parks over the summer in 2022 as well as the installation of grit-style bins for litter and bagged picnic waste.



Installation of five skips demonstrating amount of waste collected from some Haringey's green spaces, Ducketts Common



New 1,100-litre bins, Finsbury Park



Banner design from Haringey's campaign

Case studies

Sutton's holistic litter trial

Sutton Council's corporate strategy 'Ambitious for Sutton' provides a vision for the borough aimed at making it a great place to live, work, and raise a family. The Council encourages its residents to be active citizens and aims to reduce litter and fly-tipping by effectively managing the borough's street cleaning contract. The strategy aims to deliver a programme of education to encourage people to look after and take pride in their local area, backed up with appropriate enforcement measures.



WHAT WERE THE ISSUES IN SUTTON?

In 2020, the Council found that there was increasing concern about the standard of street cleansing and litter in parks, in part due to increased demands on already busy parks and contractor performance being negatively impacted by COVID-19.

Sutton's residents and park users were increasingly frustrated and concerned about littering and fly-tipping. Overarchingly it was seen as the Council's job to deal with these problems.

In the past, the Council's response to reports of litter, recently compounded by household waste being deposited in park litter bins, was to increase bin provision. This approach, however, meant that the contractors were struggling to complete their collection rounds, leading to reports of overflowing bins and more litter.

It was clear that a new approach was needed, with the following key objectives:

1. Improve cleanliness of streets and parks.
2. Improve resident satisfaction and reduce complaints.
3. Increase residents' awareness of street cleansing standards and reporting methods.
4. Develop effective communications and engagement materials to encourage residents to pride in the borough.
5. Take targeted action to tackle offenders.

A parks volunteer coordinator was employed to work with residents and user groups to encourage participation, and the Council ran various cleanliness campaigns, with messages such as "Don't be a tosser" and "No more crap excuses".

In addition, a more strategic approach to bin location was adopted. Some bins were removed completely and new covered-style bins prevented wind and wildlife pulling litter out of them. 'Smart' compactor bins (which report on fill levels) were also installed in targeted locations.

On the streets, digital solutions were installed, such as sensors in bins that monitor capacity and pass information to managers and contractors, and new types of enforcement contract were trialled.



Examples of social media activity from Sutton's public campaign

Case studies



Banner placed on site, Rosehill Park

TRIALLING VARIOUS APPROACHES

In 2019, ten 'smart' bins were trialled on Sutton High Street, replacing 21 standard bins. Whilst the levels of street cleanliness have not been affected, the results have been impressive:

- in the first four weeks of the trial, 43,949 litres of waste were collected, representing a 90% reduction in collections; and
- the street scene was improved and decluttered.

Sutton also trialled new ways of litter and waste enforcement in parks through a contract with WISE (Waste Investigations Support & Enforcement) that started in May 2021, and similarly on streets with Kingdom Services Group in autumn. These trials had the following expectations:

- It would be a zero-cost model.
- The main focus of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) would be on littering.

- 5,000 FPNs to be issued in a 12-month period, equating to 12-fold increase.
- Five to eight dedicated officers for streets.
- Commuter hubs to be targeted at peak footfall times.
- Litter hotspots and remote locations to be targeted.
- Dedicated monthly blitzes in hotspots.

Between an eight-month period, 1,254 FPNs were issued for littering with 880 of them paid immediately, generating around £132,000 from environmental fines towards enforcement costs. In addition, Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued between June 2021 and January 2022 generated £16,500 of income. It was, however, deemed not financially viable for WISE to continue the contract.

The contract with WISE covered these main areas:

- Providing guidance, signage, and permits for using Sutton's free car parks. Enforcement focused on ensuring that cars parked in designated bays.
- Providing education and penalty issuing for littering and fly-tipping in parks.
- Enforcing sports pitch bookings, model aircraft flying byelaws, dog fouling, and dog control.
- Patrolling of all parks within the borough.

Key learning points from the trial with WISE were:

- to check the legislation your Council has in place and the level of fines that have been set by committees;
- complaints, disputes and review of cases should be handled swiftly by the contractor;
- to keep the public on board and ensure tickets issued for offences are fair and reasonable and decide in advance which offences are to be ticketed and at which sites;
- to provide clear signage on what is allowed and what will result in a ticket;
- to focus the contractor on agreed outcomes and methods, by ensuring the Council has the final say on whether any ticket stands; and
- to consider the scope of the contract—self-financing contracts might benefit from a wider scope.

OUTCOMES AND LEARNING POINTS FROM THE TRIAL

Due to a lack of clarity about the legislation status, the byelaw and dog fouling was not enforced during the trial. There were fewer fines issued than expected, with four FTE (fixed-term equivalent) officers on shifts at peak season.

Case studies

Wandsworth controlling waste during the pandemic

Litter in parks is the source of one of the main complaints received by the London Borough of Wandsworth's parks team, which sits within Enable Leisure and Culture, a social enterprise which manages the leisure, sports, arts, and cultural services for the borough.



enable.
For happy, healthier communities.
Not for profit.

During the pandemic, parks were one of the few places where people were allowed to visit and socialise, and provided much needed mental and physical support during tough times. However, this led to exceptionally high footfall across Wandsworth's parks and green spaces, resulting in significant increases in litter. This was not only unsightly, but also placed huge pressures on the park service and had detrimental effects on the delicate environment and biodiversity of these spaces.

RESPONDING TO THE 'WASTE-DEMIC'

Large capacity wire bins, usually brought out in the summer months, were deployed from late April 2020 to help with the increase in waste. The use of larger park bins was also trialled. This involved distributing 42 kilolitre Eurobins across the larger green spaces to mitigate the number of overflowing standard-size bins.



The parks contractor adjusted the times and frequency of the litter collections to adapt to the changing ways the parks were being used, which was vital during weekends and public holidays when waste levels increased.

The parks team also developed a joint litter campaign between Enable, friends of parks groups, and the Council, to raise awareness of littering in parks and to educate visitors on how to treat their parks respectfully. Launched in July 2020 as part of Keep Britain Tidy's Love Parks Week, the campaign provides a week of action for parks to run events and information sharing activities in their local area.

A large component of the campaign was placing several engaging and educational posters in the borough's major green spaces across, supported by a corresponding push on social media and friends' groups platforms, to engage a younger and wider audience, as well as coverage in the local press.

In the first few months of the campaign, feedback from park user groups suggested that the campaign was very well received, and the parks operations team and friends' groups, that run regular litter picks, observed a reduction in littering.



Subsequently, many user groups noticed an opportunity for increasing recycling, so Enable employed a contractor to measure waste collected and provide data on the rates of contamination and recycling. Following this, the parks team also consulted friends' groups to determine the best locations to place the bins for dry mixed recycling and for glass. A recycling pilot then began in the summer of 2021, with bins installed on Wandsworth Common and then in Battersea Park.

Up until February 2022, 52 tonnes of recycling waste have been collected from both sites, providing environmental savings in carbon emissions and landfill space. Positive feedback has been received from friends' groups and the public and Enable now plan to put recycling bins in more sites in 2022.

Case studies

Alexandra Park & Palace Trusts’ phenomenal community response

Covering 196 acres of parkland in north London and home to the historic Alexandra Palace, the Alexandra Park welcomes around 3 million visitors each year. When the pandemic hit, the park surpassed that number by mid-July and saw a 92% increase in visitors, on the three-year average, between May and August during the first lockdown in 2020.



During this time there was a shift in the traditional audience seen at the park, which embraced a wider age range and mix of cultures. It was wonderful to see so many people enjoying the historic parkland, but unfortunately the increased numbers brought along a tsunami of waste, just as the park’s management team were facing budget cuts to help cope with the financial impact of the pandemic.

The impact on the heritage site and visitor experience was devastating and the team braced themselves for what they expected to be thousands of complaints. However, local residents rallied to help without being asked. Wonderfully, they quickly understood that this was a heritage site in distress without the resource to cope.

In what can only be seen as a true voluntary community response to care for their treasured park, more than a hundred (or possibly over twice as many) volunteers organised themselves in family groups, neighbourhood street groups, and groups of friends, some on their own schedule and some as part of sessions that were swiftly arranged by the Friends of the Park.



Aerial view of Alexandra Park and Palace

Budget cuts for grounds maintenance due to the pandemic resulted in the untimely cessation of the weekend litter collection service just as restrictions were relaxed, and the park team had to pull from other budgets to reinstate the service.

The dedication and commitment, frequency, and in particular the months-long duration of the volunteers' efforts were critical in supporting

the staff to keep the parkland safe and clean for everyone to enjoy. In a space of a year 195 tonnes of rubbish were collected, a 73% increase on previous years. The volunteers were instrumental in preventing a backlog of waste that high volume of visitors was leaving behind.

Deserving of recognition and appreciation from the park team and the wider community, the

Case studies



Ash tree in the setting sun at the old Alexandra Park Racecourse, Alexandra Park

litter picking volunteers were nominated for and won the Heritage in Lockdown Hero Awards for stepping up when Alexandra Park and Palace needed them most.

The park team have worked hard to combat litter even before the pandemic. When the exceptionally warm May Bank Holiday in 2018 made the news for creating a sea of litter all over Britain's beaches, countryside and parks, Alexandra Park was not spared from this. The team had to put out new temporary bins and work overtime.

Not eager to be caught unprepared again, in 2019 the park team rolled out a campaign to convey the negative impact of litter on site and encourage people to act more responsibly within the parkland. Cheeky messages were placed on signs within the park, designed to be creative and attention grabbing.

These signs attracted interest from other park managers at the time and helped show the public that the management team was aware of and actively working towards resolving the issue of litter.



Young litter pickers, Alexandra Park

Picking up
your litter
since 1863!

*"Please pass on my sincere thanks for the two chaps
having to litter pick the whole park this morning. It
was in a shocking state, I can't believe people still
act like this, in this day and age and in these times.
Please thank everyone for their hard work."*

Compliments from a park user in May 2020

694 Species
of animal &
plants call the
Park home!

WILL YOU BE APOLOGISING
TO ALL OF THEM FOR
DROPPING YOUR LITTER?

Fun signs placed around Alexandra Park
Images on p77–79 Credit: Alexandra Park and Palace

Case studies

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority's 'no bin' policy

The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA) manages its open spaces with a 'no bin' policy. This approach was based on various studies, coupled with on-site evidence, which show bins attract more litter. For example, it was found that a dog bin in a prime location was attracting as much as a trailer load of litter daily. Upon relocating the dog bin to a less prominent spot, littering at the original location stopped, with no increase in litter at the new dog bin location.



The frequency of litter picking by the contractor ranges from zero-tolerance twice a day, to once every quarter. The frequency changes seasonally with more frequent picks in summer and fewer in the winter. Sites are assessed regularly using ParkTracker, which not only monitors contractor performance, but also highlights litter hotspot sites, allowing litter pick frequencies to be adapted accordingly.

During the first year of the pandemic, the number of visitors to LVRPA's open spaces increased by 87%. Whilst numbers fell in 2021/22, they are still over 50% higher than pre-pandemic levels. Like many other open spaces, the Lee Valley Regional Park experienced a dramatic increase in litter during lockdowns. Their grounds maintenance contractor Glendale went from using two skips a week to seven skips at a cost of over £75,000 and they are still seeing an overall increase of 20% in waste and collections compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Crowds gathering in June 2020,
Waterworks Field



Increased litter during lockdowns in 2020,
Waterworks Field

Case studies



Rangers picking up litter, Waterworks Field

To combat the unprecedented levels of litter during this time, Glendale had to redeploy staff to focus on litter during May and June 2020, whilst ranger staff tackled hotspot areas and extra resources were brought in to help elevate the ranger service and support Glendale.

At the same time, LVRPA set up a successful campaign requesting for litter picking volunteers. As a result, in 2020 over 2,000 volunteer hours were recorded—a fourfold increase from 2019. Volunteers were also provided branded T-shirts to reinforce messaging for park users to take their



Signage placed on-site, Lee Valley Regional Park

rubbish home while promoting volunteering at the same time. Many volunteers have continued their support and over 1,600 hours were recorded in 2021. WhatsApp groups were set up for both Glendale and litter picking volunteers to help ensure litter issues could be located and dealt with more quickly.

To reinforce the messaging on taking rubbish home, LVRPA have continued to develop and improve its social media communications and on-site signage. They work with partners including Hackney Council to incorporate this message into youth and schools' programmes, as well as run various Keep Britain Tidy campaigns and activities on particular days.



Litter picking volunteers wearing provided T-shirts, Tottenham Marshes

Visitor numbers are likely to continue to increase with surrounding new developments, so LVRPA are developing community packs to improve awareness for new visitors on responsible behaviour in their open spaces, including to take their rubbish home.

LVRPA consider this multi-pronged approach to litter not only cost effective (the cost of emptying bins is more than four times more expensive than arranging weekly waste collection on site), but also helping to keep on top of litter and reduce related complaints with only five recorded in 2021/22.

Case studies

The Royal Parks modernises its bin infrastructure

Regents Park and Primrose Hill alone regenerate around 600–830 tonnes of general waste every year, with more waste in the summer than winter. The Scavenge Team performs daily sweeps of the park to collect litter and bin waste via a single four-tonne refuse truck.



The historic bin infrastructure of the park consisted of 236 bins, mainly made up of smaller capacity 100-litre bins that would need backing up with a 1,100-litre wheely bin.

In 2020, The Royal Parks looked to modernise the infrastructure, retaining only the historic cast iron bins in more formal areas of the park. They replaced many of the smaller bins with 38 higher capacity, 1,100-litre housed bins, located strategically at points of high traffic and use. This resulted in a 19.5% increase in capacity to 47,460 litres across the park, whilst reducing the number of bins to just 97.

These changes have resulted in savings in several areas. The previous system used over 120,000 black plastic bags a year, at a cost of approximately £21,6000. In addition, these bin bags, weighing around ten tonnes, would cost a further £1,250 per annum to dispose of. A near 50% reduction in collections accounted for around £10,000 in savings, not to mention the positive environmental impact.

Where previously an additional transit van was required to collect from all bins, the refuse truck could collect from nearly all bins given its bin lift's compatibility with the 1,100-litre bins. This reduced vehicle movements, collection time, and manual handling and labour by approximately 50%.

The Scavenge Team did not detect an increase in litter since the reduction of bins, even in remote areas. Although they observed rubbish placed where an old bin used to be in the initial stages, the problem resolved itself after a month or so as park goers became used to the new bin locations. Despite experiencing graffiti on some of the new bins, there is now fewer bins that could be subjected to the ongoing issue of graffiti and vandalism in the parks.

During peaks in visitor numbers in summer, when the bins can still experience overspilling, waste is piled in fewer locations than before, and mostly on the main paths that the refuse truck can directly access. The reduction in capture points has also lowered the spread of waste across the park via wind or scavengers.

Help keep Primrose Hill beautiful by putting your rubbish in the bin.

 The magic of Primrose Hill is priceless, but it doesn't come for free.

Can you help The Royal Parks charity to protect your green spaces?

To support The Royal Parks, scan the QR code above or visit: royalparks.org.uk



Poster encouraging visitors to bin their litter



The magic of Primrose Hill is priceless, but it doesn't come for free.

Can you help The Royal Parks charity to protect your green spaces?

 To support The Royal Parks, scan the QR code or visit: royalparks.org.uk

11,000

It takes 11,000 hours every month for our staff to pick up litter across The Royal Parks
Thank you for putting your waste in the bin

Bin sticker installed on new 1,100-litre bins

Case studies

Eco Green Communities working in tandem with Local Councils

Eco Green Communities (EGC) have been working with local authorities and landowners across the UK since 2015 to provide environmentally friendly waste-bag dispensing stations for green spaces for dog waste and litter.



Dog waste bag dispensing station along a footpath close to a primary school, Darreck Wood, Bromley

Founded in Sweden in 2000, EGC have installed more than 8,000 Eco Green Stations across five countries, mostly funded by sponsorship, direct purchases of the bags and stations from councils, and grants. To date, there are over 900 stations across the UK that dispense compostable bags free of charge to the community.

Apart from providing a plastic-free, environmentally friendly solution to dealing with waste in green spaces, EGC also work with TreeSisters and Carbon Footprint to plant trees for every station installed and every case of compostable bags dispensed.

These stations come with signage which double as valuable advertising spaces for community signposting, or to support Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) or branded messaging. They are typically positioned where passers-by have time to stop, think and absorb the message shown.

If used for outdoor advertising the revenue can help fund the operating costs of many of these stations, allowing the councils to maintain them under contract with no hit on their budget. In Bromley, 66 of these stations are sponsored by

local and national businesses, making them cost effective for the Council to maintain and free for the public to use.

All stations are fitted with QR codes to allow users to scan and report vandalism, damage or need for refilling. With each scan, an email is sent to the asset owner or park officer, providing real time feedback usage, status or other issues for action.

A user survey of a single eco dog station conducted in July 2022 providing the following insights:

- 80% thought the stations had decreased dog fouling.
- 40% used the stations daily and 40% weekly.
- 60% also used the dog waste bags for litter picking.

At the same time, another survey with EGC's council partnerships revealed:

- 47% of stations are council-funded (direct purchase of stations and bags);
- dog fouling reduced by 40%; and
- a 100% recommendation rate for EGC.



Signage design for Thanet District Council funded by community group RISE UP CLEAN UP

EGC also work with communities to install the stations. Thanet District Council's fifth year with EGC will be jointly partnered with RISE UP CLEAN UP, a community initiative to clean Margate's beach, to install more stations. The new locations are chosen by the community, community groups, and the Council's Dog Warden, later assessed to ensure appropriateness and that they are on the Council-managed property.

Case studies

LAGER Can

making a difference in Warren Farm

Warren Farm is a 61-acre urban meadow in the London Borough of Ealing's Norwood Green ward, which until 2010 was a council-run sports facility with a variety of outdoor sports pitches and a cluster of changing huts. Since its closure, conservative management of the meadow has resulted in its colonisation by more than 2,000 wildlife species, including red-listed skylarks.



Like other parks in Ealing, Warren Farm's popularity grew during the lockdowns. Sadly for members of the Litter Action Group for Ealing Residents (LAGER Can), the beauty of the meadow was spoilt by vast quantities of rubbish. In the area surrounding the derelict huts, fly-tippers had dumped everything including broken furniture, builders' waste, car parts, toys, tyres, and kitchen appliances. The old tennis courts were repurposed into a council-managed wheelie bin store, but had been set fire to twice in 2017. It became known as the Wheelie Bin Graveyard, a mess of burned tarmac, melted plastic, and other rubbish.

On 20th June 2020, LAGER Can held its first clean-up event at Warren Farm. Twelve volunteers came and easily filled the 50 rubbish sacks provided by Ealing Council. Over the following weeks a further seven clean-up events, involving 40 volunteers, saw an estimated 1,200 bags filled with rubbish.

This volunteer activity inspired and motivated Ealing Council to step in and clear the fly-tips and the Wheelie Bin Graveyard. After just a few weeks, Warren Farm was largely rubbish-free and felt like a safer place to visit.



Khalsa Primary School students picking litter fortnightly, Norwood Green

Case studies



The endangered skylarks (*Alauda arvensis*) on Warren Farm. Credit: Malcolm Bowey

Throughout the summer of 2020, LAGER Can cleared historic rubbish concealed in the bushes around the meadow and obtained permission from the Earl of Jersey to clear a large fly-tip, that some thought looked like an art installation from his adjacent field.

Members started to inspect new fly-tips in the car parks for evidence that led to several offenders being fined. When LAGER Can's request for CCTV in the main car park was granted, the fly-tipping ceased.

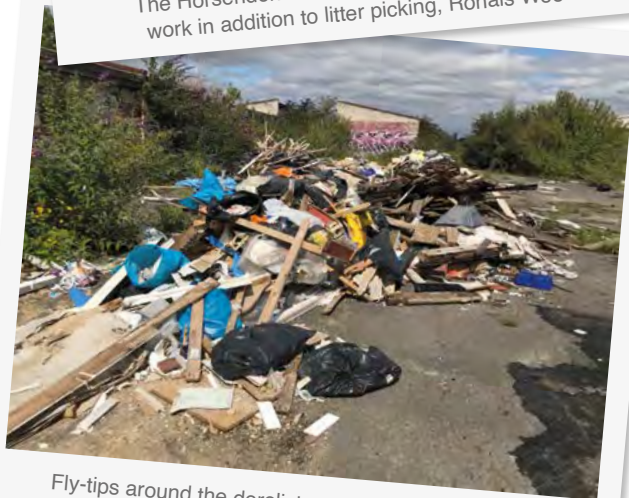
The success of the Warren Farm project was reported in the local press, and requests started to pour in from residents desperate for help to clean many other derelict open spaces across the borough.

Prompted by the need for data to support its nomination for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in November 2020, LAGER Can launched a data gathering system which automatically calculates the amount of rubbish collected and the number of volunteer-hours worked in any given period. Impressively, in 2021 members spent a total of 17,796 hours collecting 270 tonnes of rubbish, by either attending some of the 262 group events or working independently.

Following a recent public consultation on the future of Warren Farm, Ealing Council is now working with multiple landowners to increase the area that can be turned into a nature reserve and the largest rewilding site in the borough.



The Horsenden Hillbillies carry out regeneration work in addition to litter picking, Rohais Wood



Fly-tips around the derelict sports huts, Warren Farm

"Exactly two years after our first Warren Farm event, this special urban meadow is teeming with wildlife, giving joy to the many people who've grown to love it, and is no longer ruined by rubbish. Littering and fly-tipping have stayed at levels manageable mainly by volunteers. Unfortunately, anti-social behaviour around the derelict buildings remains an issue and there is an ongoing conversation about the need for bins."

LAGER Can now has 2,000 members who have cleaned, and are maintaining and regenerating, dozens of spaces throughout the borough. In May 2021 the group was awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary Service and Warren Farm was the case study used for its assessment. It is testament to what can be achieved by a group of volunteers with a shared vision, working in partnership with council stakeholders."

Cathy Swift

Chair of LAGER Can

Case studies

idverde's joint effort on Hayes Common

Throughout 2022, a recurring issue reported through the Fix My Street app, has been litter near to the main roads that cross Hayes Common in Bromley. To pre-empt further incidence, *idverde* have organised a group from the Countryside Team to litter pick the main hotspots once a month, irrespective of the number of reported cases.



The Friends of Hayes Common (FoHC) were keen to help to keep their Common clean, supporting the Countryside Team with up to ten additional helpers armed with litter pickers, greatly reducing the amount of time staff had to spend on-site. During a one-hour session, a record twenty-seven bags of litter were collected.

While litter clearance is an ongoing issue and people still throw litter from their cars, the Countryside Team, with support from the friends' group, is able to keep on top of the litter—even removing waste that has been there for years.

The FoHC also hold bi-weekly sessions addressing other tasks on the Common such as clearing invasive plants like holly and gorse alongside tackling litter as needed. The friends' group is well supported, with as many as thirty people attending a session to clean up the Common along Commonsides.



Volunteers with the haul of an hour's picking,
Hayes Common



Friends' group volunteers assisting idverde staff in
cleaning up Hayes Common

Part three

Read on for more case studies of exceptional projects across London led by boroughs and other land managers.

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Volunteer in Red Cross Garden, Southwark
Credit: Bankside Open Spaces Trust

Case studies

Barking & Dagenham's Eastbrookend Country Park Tea Room

Throughout the pandemic, Barking and Dagenham's parks and open spaces remained open, providing a much-needed lifeline for residents and communities.

**Barking
&
Dagenham**

As England began a phased exit from lockdown in March 2021, Barking and Dagenham Council was committed to reopening its leisure and recreation venues for residents as soon as it could. The borough's ranger service was able to reopen Eastbrookend Discovery Centre and a partnership was quickly established with a local hospitality business—later that spring, the Eastbrookend Country Park Tea Room opened its doors to customers.

Located in the Eastbrookend Discovery Centre, the dog-friendly and wheelchair-accessible tea room is a place where visitors can enjoy a cup of tea and indulge in something from the menu, which includes cakes, Cornish ice-cream, paninis and Brick Lane bagels... there are even treats for doggy visitors!

Like the Discovery Centre has been for several years now, the tea room is also a learning hub for Barking and Dagenham College students. Through work placements, the tea room provides enriching work experience in a country park setting to students with special education needs who are studying for a recognised qualification in customer service and hospitality.

"Over the last two years council has been investing in Eastbrookend Country Park and the Discovery Centre to make it a destination site for all the family. Having a quality tearoom open seven days a week is the icing on the cake."

Gareth Winn

Ranger Service Team Leader

Eastbrookend Discovery Centre

Case studies

The tea room has quickly established a reputation for its friendly staff, quality of service, and family friendly menu options, increasing footfall significantly—with new customers and regular customers visiting more frequently and staying longer.

This accessible space, where all are welcome, provides an opportunity to not only relax, but to learn about and enjoy the wildlife and nature inhabiting the park. With plenty of indoor and outdoor covered seating, visitors can relax and enjoy the views out across this beautiful country park, and even catch a glimpse of the wild rabbits grazing and various wildfowl across the grasslands and trees.

The staff also encourage visitors to engage with the natural world, promoting the park's various nature trails, as well as the environmental education and outdoor activities coordinated and delivered by the ranger service, including Forest School, bushcraft courses, and guided walks, many of which start and finish at the tea room.

An adjoining classroom space also serves as a venue for a wide range of outreach and community activities including amphibian and reptile identification and survey workshops delivered in partnership with Froglife, and similar sessions on butterfly identification conducted by Butterfly Conservation. Aside from generating a valuable income stream for both the ranger service and the tea room through venue hire for private events, the additional facility supports programmes that aim to cultivate a greater understanding and respect for the countryside and wildlife.

Reviews and feedback about the tea room have been extremely positive, with the facility taking second place in the 2021 readers' poll run by the Dagenham Post newspaper ahead of National Hospitality Day to crown Barking and Dagenham's Hospitality Heroes. The tea room's popularity has also continued to attract in many new visitors to this beautiful country park in the heart of Barking and Dagenham.



Internal seating area of the Eastbrookend Country Park Tea Room

"For us, it's great to be based in a park where people can escape into the green space. We knew it could have been a challenge to begin with, but we've worked our way through the last year with amazing feedback and we are creating a community heart in the centre of the Country Park."

Kelly Rosevear

Director of Eastbrookend Country Park Tearoom



Christmas decorations in the Eastbrookend Country Park Tea Room

Case studies

Enfield's ecological restoration

Enfield Council are developing ambitious plans to rewild hundreds of hectares of greenbelt land around Enfield Chase as part of a large-scale landscape restoration project located in the north-west of the borough.



The long-term vision of the project is to restore a mosaic of woodland, grassland and wetland habitats. This will be linked by a network of footpaths and cycleways to create a new publicly accessible outdoor destination, with a range of nature themed recreational, educational and cultural activities.

On top of improving biodiversity, these measures will deliver a huge range of benefits for people and the local environment, such as improved health and wellbeing associated with access to nature, improved air and water quality, and the mitigation of climate change impacts.

This area was once part of the Enfield Chase royal hunting forest that stretched northwards from Enfield Town. Remnants of this ancient forest still exist within some of Enfield's large country parks including Trent Park, Whitewebbs Park and Forty Hall. This project provides the opportunity to recreate ecological connections between these parks and up north towards the Lee Valley and Epping Forest.

The Council is working with a wide range of organisations to deliver the project including the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Natural England, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, and Greater London Authority.

Another key delivery partner is river charity, Thames21, who have worked with the Council on several elements of the project. Since 2020 the project has delivered the planting of 100,000 trees to establish 50 hectares of new woodland, created dozens of small ponds and wetland scrapes, and upgraded a 3km long section of the London Loop footpath that links this area in the east of the borough to the west.

In addition, the Council recently pledged to support a significant and ambitious increase in the scale of tree planting in relation to the project. This reflects not only the success of its initial phase, but also the Council's aim and commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030.

One of the project's key aspect is to implement Natural Flood Management (NFM) measures on the Salmons Brook, a local river that flows south-eastwards across the borough towards Edmonton.



Woodland creation, Enfield Chase

Whilst this natural resource provides a valuable nature corridor, linking urban and rural parts of Enfield, it also represents a major source of flood risk and it is estimated that up to 2,000 properties could be flooded in an extreme rainfall event.

The NFM approach involves slowing the rate of rainfall runoff in rural areas to reduce peak flood flows downstream. The primary measures proposed to achieve this are:

- woodland creation—trees slow runoff and increase infiltration;
- river restoration—restoring natural features such as berms, meanders, and riffles, and re-connecting the river to the floodplain; and
- sustainable drainage—creating a multitude of small attenuation features including ponds and wetland scrapes.

Case studies

Computer aided visualisation of the rewilded Salmons Brook site, Enfield Chase



Reintroducing beavers into Enfield Chase

A major step towards the natural restoration of rivers and of wetlands was taken in March 2022 when Enfield, in partnership with Capel Manor College, became the first London borough to reintroduce beavers. This involved constructing a bespoke 6-hectare enclosure for them, and careful monitoring of the impact on the landscape.

Based on other successful beaver projects around the UK, it is hoped that the project will demonstrate the benefits beavers can provide in flood water attenuation and habitat creation for a wide range of other wildlife, through the dams and ponds they construct.

Beyond flood risk mitigation, NFM measures can help minimise the impact of droughts by storing more water on and below the surface, and increasing baseflow, making rivers more resilient during dry periods. They also improve water quality by reducing and filtering out pollutants, and are highly compatible with the overall rewilding approach as they involve integrating natural processes back into the landscape. The ponds and wetlands that have been created over

the last two years are already providing habitats for insects and amphibians, as well as encouraging birds and bats to populate the landscape.

The Council is keen to maximise the opportunities this project offers to strengthen and diversify the rural economy and create employment opportunities. Making this part of Enfield a new visitor destination will create opportunities for businesses such as cafés and campsites. Other potential commercial opportunities include restoring regenerative farming practices such as wood pasture, and building on Enfield's rich heritage of market gardening, by producing locally grown fruit, salad, and vegetables.

It is hoped that these proposals will have a huge impact on the greenbelt in the coming years, making Enfield Chase a great place for people and wildlife.

Case studies

Sutton Council

connecting people and parks

London Borough of Sutton is connecting existing and new users to the borough's parks and green spaces through a range of volunteering activities, events, and programmes set up by their Project and Volunteer Coordinator.



Sutton has over twenty friends of parks groups, engaged in everything from bulb planting and guided walks, to organising dog shows. Two priorities have emerged from the borough-wide friends' groups forums.

The first was for the Council to provide help with the promotion of friends' events, which are now championed under the [Sutton Parks Festival](#) banner. In addition, the Council is supporting friends' groups participation in the Sutton Parks [Landscape Artist of the Year award 2022](#)—a free competition taking place across park which will culminate in an exhibition and provide artwork for future interpretation.

The second was the unanimous interest from all friends' groups to participate in the Queen's Green Canopy, with tree planting planned this winter in every park to celebrate the Jubilee. The Friends of Oaks Park, for example, are creating a copse sponsored by local park users and others from the community.



Attendees of the Garden Advisor Training course, Beddington Park

The Council also encourages volunteering across the borough. The Project and Volunteer Coordinator co-leads the Sutton Tree Wardens Network who carry out weekly tree work in the parks. The group organises community tree planting, tree maintenance, and events including guided walks. Regular training is offered to the volunteers on subjects such as tree identification, tree surveying and tree pests and diseases.

In 2021, the Sutton Tree Wardens Network organised the Sakura Cherry Tree Project, planting 60 trees in Beddington Park and providing beautiful spring blossom this year. They have also planted a new 130-metre native hedge as part of the [Close the Gap](#) project, run by the Tree Council who oversee tree wardens nationally. Though the borough is running out of space to plant new woodlands, there are many locations to establish hedgerows, creating new habitats, wildlife corridors and providing other environmental benefits.

Case studies

In the summer of 2021, The Project and Volunteer Coordinator developed a successful Garden Advisor training course offered to people keen on supporting gardening within the borough's community green spaces. The course included 12 sessions covering gardening fundamentals and a practical workshop on propagation. Attendees went on to set up new community gardening groups and support existing ones. They also inspired the creation of a 'In Bloom' high street group for Carshalton village to participate in the annual Sutton In Bloom competition.

In the past year, the Council have run a range of events and activities in their parks. A number were focused on wellbeing and were promoted via social prescribing, such as Forest Bathing (meditation in the woods) and Forest Schools (outdoor children's activity). There was also a free Park Life Choir, walking and running groups (developed to help improve people's mental health), and an outdoor Storytime for 2-5-year-olds on the theme of nature and looking after the planet, followed by a litter pick which the toddlers excelled at.

During lockdown, the Council ran a poetry competition on the theme of the community coming together, remembering those that were lost and giving thanks to key workers. Selected poems have now been included in lecterns to be installed in a new Reflection Garden opposite St Helier hospital.

To encourage schools to use Beddington Park, the Council developed an education pack for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 students, covering a wide range of topics including habitats, mapping, and river dipping. The pack has been circulated to all schools in the borough.

In partnership with Sutton's heritage team, the parks service also organised a museum exhibition on the history of Beddington Park traced through the Romans, Tudors and Victorians to the present day. Following from this, friends' groups held a park-focused day at the local archive library to learn more about the history of the park.



Outdoor storytime session, Beddington Park



Litter-picking by toddlers, Beddington Park

Case studies

Wandsworth's wildflower meadow creation

Wandsworth Park is a highly popular park on the south bank, with multiple areas of amenity grassland great for recreation and sports; a playground; mini golf; and a heritage tree avenue which provides a dark space for bats, birds, and other wildlife.



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The park has become increasingly popular since the pandemic, highlighting not only the importance of connecting people with nature but also the need to ensure that habitats in this Grade II listed heritage park can withstand additional human pressures.

Wandsworth's recently published Biodiversity Strategy forms one strand of their wider response to the Climate Emergency within the borough. It provides vital guidance for Enable Leisure and Culture (a social enterprise managing leisure, sports, arts, and cultural services for the borough) on the creation of biodiversity rich habitats that are of sufficient quality and quantity so that when joined up, they can provide improved borough-wide resilience.

Enable aims to enhance the biodiversity value of Wandsworth Park by creating new wildflower meadows and diversifying existing ground flora for invertebrates, using sustainable implementation techniques. By improving the quality of existing parcels of land and creating new areas of habitat, resilience to climate change for a range of species can be better supported. Through the creation of more natural landscapes, it is hoped that the project will also benefit the local community by offsetting the impact of urban heat islands.



Informative talk with Hurlingham School, Wandsworth Park



Maintaining amenity grassland using Shire horses, Wandsworth Park

IMPLEMENTATION

The key activities include:

- mowing, raking and rotovating existing amenity grassland, done using Shire horses, reducing the carbon footprint and minimising disturbances to the existing soil and wildlife;
- sowing native grasses and wildflower seeds;
- installing temporary fencing to aid establishment;
- monitoring and removing unwanted vigorous species; and
- keeping meadows well-watered during the establishment period.

A total of 2,500 m² of new species rich grasslands has been created through soil stripping, providing bare soil habitats for invertebrates as well as for planting wildflower and grass species.

The planting palette was guided by advice from Butterfly Conservation to ensure that the project addressed actions for pollinators, also a focus for the biodiversity strategy. These target species include the tawny mining bee, the green woodpecker, and over 20 pollinating butterfly species such as the marbled white, meadow brown, brown argus, ringlet and speckled wood.

The use of Shire horses proved exceptionally popular with local schools and visitors to the park, providing a way for Enable to increase engagement with visitors through a series of informational talks and educational signage.

Additionally, a temporary buffer was formed around the site using chestnut wood paling fences to minimise physical disturbance from the public during habitat establishment.

The site has been carefully monitored by Enable's Park Operations Teams and managed with the cut and collect method. In September more native wildflower seeds were sown to increase the diversity of the site.

As of March 2022, the meadow is flourishing with a large variety of new flora species thriving in the wildflower meadow. Following the project's success, Enable has secured further funding to replicate the project at another site in 2022.

Case studies

City of London's green space financing model

The City of London Corporation invests around £38 million a year to protect over 11,000 acres of open space in London and South East England, including Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest, Burnham Beeches, and over 200 smaller sites in the Square Mile.



These spaces include important wildlife habitats, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and National Nature Reserves, which offer vital recreational and wellbeing benefits to the diverse communities using them.

The majority of these spaces are managed by charitable trusts that rely on public income to maintain and run them to the highest possible standards. Most of them are subject to charity law and governance frameworks that pre-date the 1900s. Whilst this governance model can sometimes limit opportunities for income generation and activities, it can also open-up additional initiatives that are not easily applicable to local authorities.

Some income opportunities are comparable to local authorities, such as leases and licences, fees and charges and income from leisure facilities, use of rental space, events, and car park charging. The latter is becoming particularly important in London and busy areas where the City Corporation encourage environmentally friendly practices including using public transport, walking, and cycling.

However, charities have adapted to new ways of generating funding via social responsibility. Income raised from donations, campaigns, sponsorships, legacies, and merchandise are reinvested back into these spaces.

The film industry also presents a good opportunity to raise additional income for the charities. Although this can be difficult to predict on a year-by-year basis, and the high conservation value of these sites rightly present natural limits as to what can be accommodated.

Many natural sites rely, to a greater or lesser extent, on DEFRA grants to supplement habitat management and biodiversity projects. Community Infrastructure Levy and section 106 agreements are currently being agreed with local authorities to mitigate the impact of their local development plans on sites designated as SACs.

It is also hoped that through the Biodiversity Net Gain approach, the Environment Bill will begin to provide financial support for the sites.

To further enhance the biodiversity and social benefits of their natural sites and maximise resources, the City Corporation are building closer working partnerships with neighbouring landowners, local authorities, and other interested parties, and promoting volunteering opportunities.

In the last decade, income generation has grown from less than 5% of the City Corporation's annual budget to approximately 30%. This is a major achievement and one they hope can be developed further for the benefit of all their visitors.



The Temple, Wanstead Park



Autumn Oak, Barn Hoppit
Credit: Yve Woodhouse, City of London Corporation

Case studies

idverde painting a rainbow at Tillingbourne Green

In 2021, *idverde* was approached by Poverest Primary School to include the playground adjacent to the school at Tillingbourne Green in a school project to enhance the local community.



After a productive meeting on-site between the school, *idverde*'s Community Manager, Parks Development Manager, and the Chairman of The Cray Forum (a community group for the Cray Valley), the idea of a colourful mural that the children could design and paint at the playground emerged.

It was also hoped that having local children take ownership of a playground can improve community cohesion and cultivate a great sense of pride.

Volunteers from The Cray Forum joined *idverde* to ready the wall for the mural painting and when the day arrived the Poverest Primary School children rose to the occasion, happily decorating away on the bright sunny day.

Over 20 children and their families contributed to the bright and colourful mural for over three hours—the result of which can be seen from all around Tillingbourne Green.



Poverest Primary School children contributing to the mural, Tillingbourne Green



The community coming together for the painting, Tillingbourne Green

The project is a work in progress and the school will continue with adding painted flowers and bugs in the next school term.

The project was also supported through funding from Biggin Hill Airport secured by several local councillors, as well as Crown Paints who provided a discount for the paints to support this project. All in all, this was a beautiful example of a community working together at its best to liven up a shared public space.



Newly painted mural, Tillingbourne Green

Thanks to our supporters

Parks for London is grateful for the [voluntary annual partnership contributions](#) received in 2021–2022 from London’s local authorities and other organisations.

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Jubilee Gardens, Lambeth
Credit: Jubilee Gardens Trust

Charity number: 1156063

Designed by Nicola Cockerell

Parks for London is an independent charity and provides the leading strategic and representative voice for the green space sector in London. We have been recently chosen by the Greater London Authority to become a Centre for Excellence to champion and support London's publicly accessible green infrastructure, ensuring that our parks and green spaces continue to thrive to help create a sustainable world city with green infrastructure at its heart, supporting Londoners and the wider environment.

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Errors and omissions

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