

GOOD PARKS FOR LONDON 2024

Collaborative Solutions



Parks for
London

Sponsored by



Fleet Valley Pocket Park, LB Camden
Credit: Vanessa Berberian

Overleaf
Ferntower Road, Newington Green, LB Islington
Credit: Vanessa Berberian

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Contact us for further advice on the appropriate use of the report's data.

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Foreword

Having just returned from a few days walking in Cumbria, I reflected on how lucky I am to be able to access the hills, mountains, and lakes. Not only did the short trip help keep me active, but my spirits were lifted, leaving my general wellbeing much improved. But these same opportunities might be missing from the lives of those living in dense, urban areas, and especially of those with limited financial and physical means.

Our population's health is deteriorating with life expectancy for the first time on the decline, health inequalities widening, and mental health a growing problem. To complicate matters, climate change, which is now all too visible with more frequent extreme heat and flooding events, lays a heavy burden on health and public infrastructure.

Yet, ill-resourced as the green space sector is, with a decade of austerity across much of the public sector, particularly impacting councils, it is still expected to play a key role in supporting public health and mitigating climate impacts.

If our parks and open spaces are so important to the two big challenges of health and climate change, why are they not being valued more highly by national and local politicians, and what can we do to address this?

Lord Darzi of Denham recently released two reports on the state of the UK health service; the first he called the *diagnosis* and the second he called the *treatment*. Both focus on what he calls the *pivot to prevention* and the transfer of power from the national to the local places and communities. Part of the treatment is the creation

of healthy places where sport, leisure, arts, heritage, libraries, play, parks, and open spaces are all valuable partners in keeping people healthy, happy, and engaged.

I hope when the new government concludes its policy work on the cross-government missions including one on health, we see these sorts of ideas emerge along with a parallel pivot to prevention to address climate change. It is time to see these two challenges through the same lens.

Addressing these challenges requires a scale of change across public services that we have never seen before. It requires us to move out of our service and professional silos and see the world as a system that needs to work very differently. It needs us to go beyond just being good partners and become true collaborators working together to achieve a common purpose. It requires a very different style of leadership that empowers others and builds trust with politicians, fellow professionals, and the communities we serve.

Rather than blame others for undervaluing parks, we must first reflect on ourselves as leaders. Not everyone shares our passions; they have other priorities and challenges. If others fail to understand the value of parks, we must ask ourselves what we have been doing wrong; if we understand what they think is important; if we influence in ways they feel engaged, inform without threatening, and provide evidence in ways that improves understanding.

The case studies presented in this report are all local successes, achieved despite the impact of austerity on both public and third-sector landowners and managers. The challenge now is to learn from these examples and scale them across London and the UK.

The case studies capture many important learning points which I am also seeing in my work with councillors and officers working in the sport and physical activity sector, and I would like to summarise them for you:

- Be prepared to co-produce solutions with others including users, partners, and experts.
- Take time to engage properly with local communities first. Avoid listening to only the loud voices and amplify quiet voices. Remember if communities feel excluded you probably helped exclude them. Start with empathy for their needs and work hard to understand their context. Remember trust takes time to build.
- Use your own leadership to create the culture of collaboration from those around you. Be prepared to delegate and empower others, and as a leader, be prepared to also be a follower.
- Find the right skills and build the capacity and capability you need through the co-production.
- Live with the mess that multiple stakeholders and funders will create. Accept any delay with good grace if it gets you there in the end.
- Rather than implement your own solution that may fail, be prepared to test and learn as you go.
- Avoid professionally imposed decision making and replace it with data and evidence-based decision making. Kick any egos down the road.
- Be ready to measure evidence and impact from the start but do so from different perspectives; the users, funders and the partners will all see different benefits and outcomes that reflect their own needs.

I leave you with Myron's maxims, which capture the essence of system change and collaboration. Embracing these principles will be essential to succeed in making parks and open spaces central in creating healthy places.

- People own what they help create
- Real change happens in real work
- Those that do the work, do the change
- Connect the system to more of itself
- Start anywhere, follow everywhere
- The process you use to get to the future is the future you get.



Change can only happen through collaboration.



Martyn Allison

Director of Management Improvement Services,
Honorary Member of Chief Cultural and
Leisure Officers Association (CLOA)
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Introduction

The *Good Parks for London* reports, published annually by Parks for London since 2017, have helped in nudging and inspiring improvements in the quality and management of green spaces across the capital. They recognise and celebrate innovative projects and best practice, highlighting the efforts of various landowners who manage London's green spaces.

Starting in 2022, we shifted to a biennial assessment of London boroughs' parks services, allowing managers more time to reflect on feedback and implement meaningful policy and operational changes. In the interim, Parks for London provided personalised feedback to 19 boroughs, offering guidance for improvement.

This year's report will assess the performance of London's parks services for the financial year 2023–2024, and present exemplars of good practice, which will be made available on our [Resources Hub](#).

Part one of the report evaluates participating boroughs against the ten Good Parks criteria, detailed on page 28. The results are presented through maps and a summary benchmarking table, indicating how boroughs are performing along with short write-ups from those that are doing exceptional or innovative work under each criterion.

Part two of the report features case studies that present collaborative solutions to the challenges faced by parks and green space services, and the wider sector.

Definitions

In part one of this report, we define parks as all green spaces that are both publicly accessible and are owned/leased and managed by the local authority (in-house, via a Local Authority Trading Company, 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.

*You can see how grounds maintenance is managed across London borough parks on page 48.

About us

Parks for London connects, supports, and advocates for those who own, manage, and maintain London's parks and green spaces. Our vision is to create a valued, connected, and skilled green space sector which delivers quality, resilient, accessible, and inclusive green spaces for people and the environment.



Parklet on Mayton Street, LB Islington
Credit: Vanessa Berberian

Message from our Chair

It is with great pleasure that on behalf of Parks for London and our sponsor, WSP, I introduce the 8th edition of *Good Parks for London*. In this year’s edition, we focus upon collaborative solutions, highlighting nine projects that emphasise the truly tangible benefits of working in an environment of openness and cooperation to allow for outcomes and conclusions that bring about improvements for everyone.

The multifaceted nature of our green and blue open spaces demands that for genuinely sustainable improvements to be approved and implemented, the siloed working of local authority departments needs to be eliminated. No matter the sector in which we, as professionals, may operate—public, private, or not-for-profit—the management and maintenance of high-quality public spaces demands a collaborative and cooperative working environment. The case studies presented in this report evidence this in exemplary fashion.

In this year of significant change for our charity as we seek to build upon the incredible legacy of our former Chief Executive, Tony Leach, the continuation of this publication remains vital as a way to highlight and showcase everything that is important to our industry and profession, and even more so to the general public who depend on reliable access to quality public parks and open spaces.



Nigel Thorne
Chair of Trustees
Parks for London

Thoughts from our Sponsor

WSP is proud to build upon GL Hearn’s longstanding support to the *Good Parks for London* reports.

Collaboration is central to how we respond to the challenges of our time. It is through collaboration that we can amplify impact and accelerate beneficial change.

The challenges presented by the climate emergency, threats to biodiversity, the crises in public health, social equity and public funding can seem insurmountable, which is why the focus of this report on solutions is so timely and valuable.

We know that parks and open spaces matter, not only for the health and wellbeing of individuals but as critical infrastructure contributing to climate change mitigation and community integration. The case studies presented illustrate a wide range of successful responses to current challenges, showing how creative, ambitious, and joined-up thinking between partners brings together diverse skills and activates communities and people of all backgrounds and ages.

The [Dasgupta Review](#) made the case that nature is our most precious asset on which our economies and livelihoods all depend. The case studies also demonstrate how we are breaking down the conception of parks within the fence line, understanding the interwoven network of systems operating at city-scale: nature beyond the park, the city as park.

Regulatory drivers like the Water Act, biodiversity net gain in the Environment Act, social value in the Procurement Act, and the Urban Greening Factor are converging, and there is a need and demand for new approaches to accelerate investment in nature. The potential health and social benefits of nature can underpin alternative financing tools. Engaging communities in local nature stewardship aligns nature restoration and social value, amplifying the legacy to communities.

This is our call to arms:

- Bring nature and climate together in our thinking, change the perception of green space as passive and ornamental, and recognise its value as critical infrastructure underpinning society at large.
- Capitalise on nature, climate transition, and social value investment opportunities to deliver a sustained legacy of nature restoration and upskilling our communities.
- Strive for a better balance between the built and natural environment, between civic life and wildlife, so all life can thrive.



Matthew Jessop
Technical Director for
Landscape and Urban Design
WSP

From our former Chief Executive

Parks for London first developed the Good Parks assessment to protect service standards and funding across London’s green spaces and to promote a deeper understanding of the wealth of benefits they bring and the strong sense of place they offer. Each of the ten Good Parks criterion (detailed on page 28) are built around key indicators which we can use to measure the performance of London borough parks services for comparison and long-term monitoring.



Tony Leach
Former Chief Executive
Parks for London

In the absence of national performance indicators, the Good Parks assessment has served as a nudge tool for improvement and can help land managers better direct limited resources for greater impact. Thanks to the continued participation by most boroughs over the years, we are able to uncover and celebrate success stories and use the reports as a vehicle to share good practice and promote innovation and change.

It is heartening to see 25 London boroughs participating in part one of the report this year, and the breadth of work being undertaken across our green spaces, exemplars of which are provided to reflect each of the criteria and will be a valuable resource and inspiration for others to draw on.

Having recently retired from Parks for London, I am pleased to reflect on the positive impact that *Good Parks for London* has made. I am confident it will continue to go from strength to strength, and I look forward to seeing its future development.

From our Executive Director

It gives me great pleasure to celebrate the incredible work that London boroughs and other land managers do to manage, maintain, and develop London’s parks and green spaces, as showcased in this report.

As the pressures on landowners and managers continue to mount, finding collaborative solutions to tackle challenges, harness opportunities, and secure funding has become increasingly urgent. Across the public, private, and third-sectors, collaboration is no longer just a *nice-to-have*, but a *need-to-have*.

The organisations and projects featured in this report illustrate the impact that partnership working and collective thinking can have in addressing the challenges faced by parks, those responsible for their design, management, and maintenance, and the sector as a whole.

I hope this year’s report motivates, inspires, and encourages more local authorities and organisations to collaborate so that Londoners can benefit from having not just good parks but great ones.

Congratulations to the London boroughs of Lewisham, Hackney, and Lambeth who are the top three performing boroughs this year, and to Brent, Croydon, Haringey, and Wandsworth who are our big improvers of 2024.

In the true spirit of collaboration, we at Parks for London are immensely grateful to all our supporters, and we look forward to continuing our work together.

I would also like to thank WSP for their input this year and ongoing support and sponsorship of the *Good Parks for London* report.



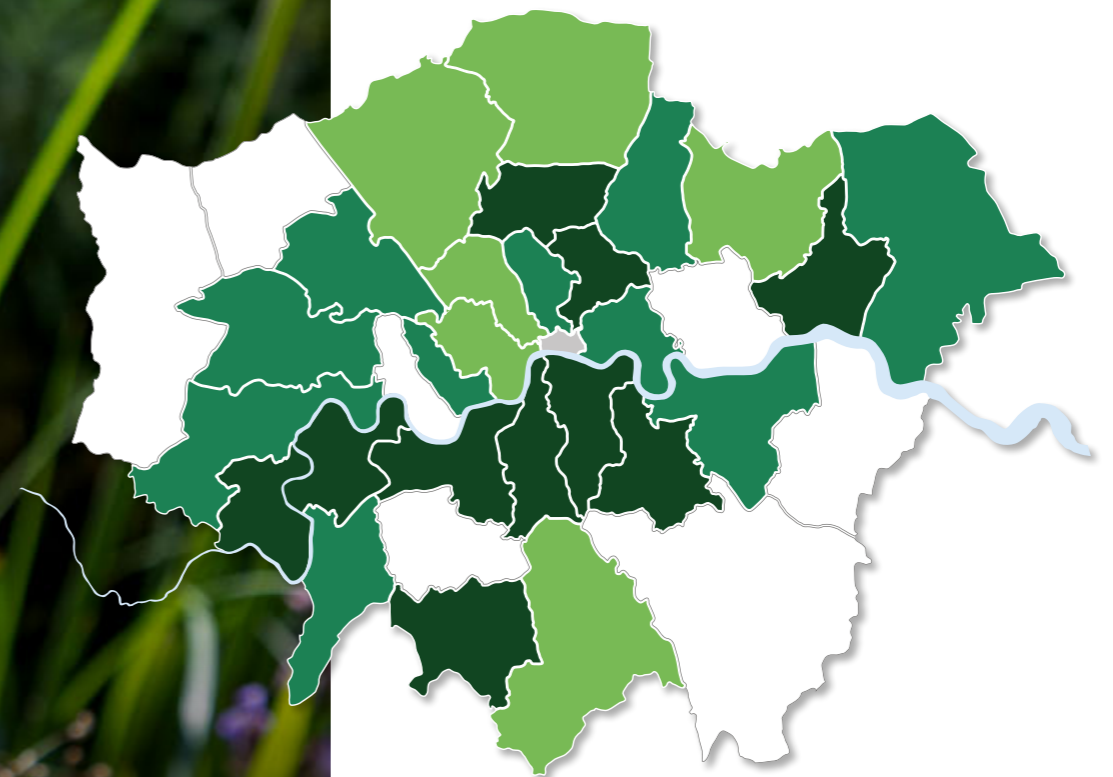
Ed Stannard
Executive Director
Parks for London



Part One

Good Parks assessment & case studies

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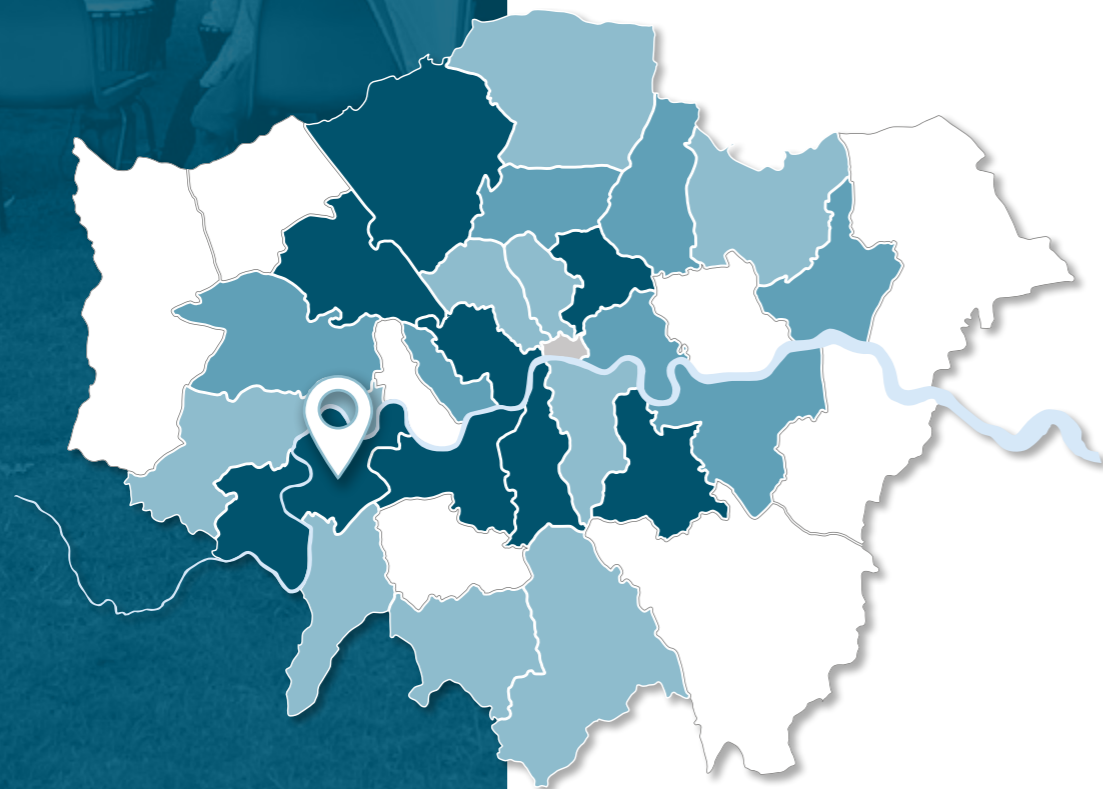
1. Public satisfaction

In summer 2023, the **London Borough of Richmond upon Thames** conducted a borough-wide *Youth Engagement Consultation* to understand how young people and children use their parks and open spaces, and to identify the barriers to access that young people face to inform improvements and future investment.

Maximising engagement

The Council's parks team consulted [Let's Go Outside and Learn](#) and the [Youth Council](#) on the best way to get feedback and the types of questions that should be asked. Following their advice, the consultation was run with an optional prize draw for Love to Shop vouchers as an incentive to boost participation.

To promote the online consultation, posters were installed on sites with play areas or sports facilities and shared through the Youth Council and the Council's network of friends groups and stakeholders, as well as regularly through the Council's social media platforms.



No data ○ ● ● ● Top score



The consultation was run across nine weeks, and halfway through the Council hosted an engagement event at Kings Field, a local park with a café, play area, skate park and tennis courts, to encourage greater participation. The half-day event, promoted through schools and local youth organisations, offered free activities like drumming, street art, and tennis and table tennis lessons, along with vouchers for ice cream for young people who completed the survey, leading to around 30 more responses.

Understanding needs of children and youths

The consultation received a total of 235 responses, through which the Council found that more than half of the respondents visited parks weekly, and around two-thirds visited parks to socialise or get outdoors. Young people also felt that local parks have an impact on the effects of climate change.



Booth for spray painting sessions at the Kings Field Fun Day
Credit: Sasha O'Neill



The key barrier to access identified was a lack of appropriate facilities, with respondents calling for more sports facilities and social activities geared towards young people.

Many of the responses for children under the age of 16 came from parents or guardians, making it harder to capture the views of children directly.

The results of the consultation can be found online [here](#).

Making informed improvements

From the consultation results, the parks team identified some quick improvements, such as:

- increasing the promotion of parks to young people;
- encouraging young people to join friends groups; and
- adding facilities to parks, such as bins and benches.



Drumming session at the engagement event on Kings Field
Credit: Sasha O'Neill

The team intends to do this by ensuring the Youth Council is provided with information regarding events in parks, joining friends groups, and consultations or upcoming projects. The Council also hopes to target the younger demographic more effectively by using its social media platforms for promotion.

In response to the call for more sports and fitness facilities, the Council has installed electric charging bikes in one park, with two outdoor gyms planned for installation in 2024. The parks team also plans to identify sites to improve play facilities for older children and enhance pitch provision, such as at Murray Park, a site where football pitches can be introduced for junior football, subject to further public consultation. Further, heeding calls for safe and sheltered spaces in parks for young people to socialise, the team is considering suitable sites for youth shelters.



PowerSmart bikes installed on Kings Field
Credit: Victoria Johnson

The Council will continue working with the Youth Council to gather feedback on future projects and proposals relevant to young people, such as the imminent upgrades proposed to the facilities at Castelnau Recreation Ground.

To determine if the implementations from this consultation were effective in addressing some of the identified barriers, the parks team intends to run the *Youth Engagement Consultation* again next year, on top of the biennial customer satisfaction survey which engages the wider community for feedback on park facilities.



Richmond borough is blessed with many parks and open spaces, which is such a benefit for our health and wellbeing. The Council's Youth Engagement study has helped us to learn more about how our young people like to use our parks. They have told us that they enjoy parks for fitness and socialising, but some of the parks lack the kinds of equipment and activities that they would like. As a result of the study, we will be exploring ways to make our parks more accessible and attractive for young people, so keep giving us the feedback we need to help you get more out of these open spaces.

Councillor Penny Frost
Chair of Education and Children's Services Committee



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Find more on **Yound People** in our Resources Hub

2. Quality standards

Lambeth and Havering Councils have successfully adopted Parks for London’s *Green Space Quality Manual* within their service as a benchmarking and monitoring tool to maintain and improve the standards of their parks and green spaces.

Well designed and maintained green spaces, are more sustainable and can more effectively cater for users, support biodiversity, and combat the impact of climate change and air pollution. The *Green Space Quality Manual* was developed to support those who own, manage, design and maintain parks and green spaces in setting, maintaining, and improving quality standards across all types and sizes of green infrastructure. It also provides a framework for monitoring improvements and performance.

Created in collaboration with experienced green space managers, the manual has evolved over time to include a broader range of landscape elements, which are considered across seven key sections in the 2024 edition: planting, trees and woodland, grassland, grass sports surfaces, play and sports, infrastructure, as well as water bodies and features.



Now, Lambeth conducts weekly inspections using the standards derived from the manual to measure quality against and ensure improvements are delivered to desired standards. The implementation of the manual has provided a consistent and comprehensive set of criteria to evaluate its parks.

The Council’s focus is not limited to parks; it is now working with the housing department to extend the use of the manual to housing estates. This would create a consistent quality standard across the entire borough, benefiting residents by enhancing the spaces they live in.

Further supporting quality standards, Lambeth parks officers utilise their on the ground experience of assessing other sites as judges for the *Green Flag Award*, *Green Heritage*, and *London in Bloom*, allowing them to more effectively ensure their sites meet or exceed these award standards and apply insights gleaned from good practice and innovative solutions implemented elsewhere.

Among the landowners who successfully applied the manual on the ground to improve the quality of their green spaces are the London boroughs of Lambeth and Havering. In Lambeth, the manual provides a consistent benchmark for parks and estates, while in Havering, it forms the basis of a structured and proactive monitoring system.

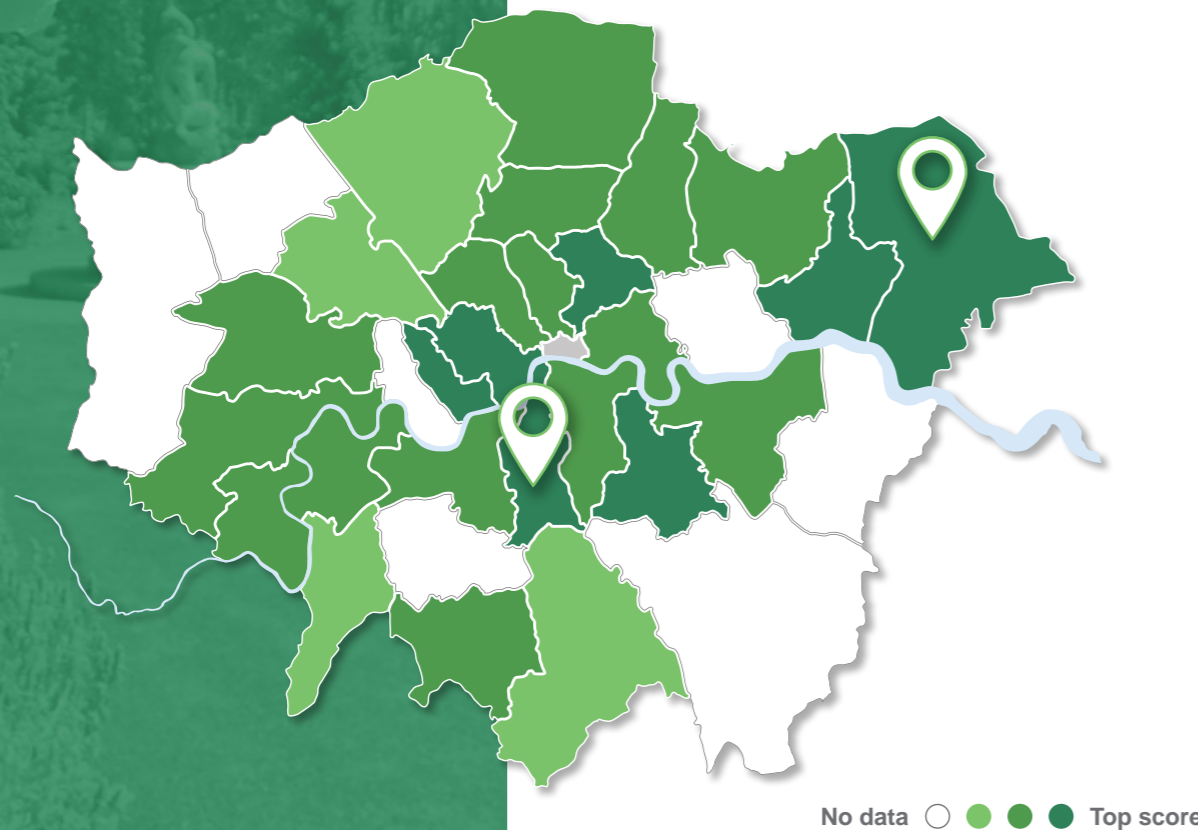
A tool for consistent benchmarking in Lambeth

Lambeth Council has adopted the *Green Space Quality Manual* in 2022 as the principal tool for assessing and benchmarking the quality of its parks and open spaces. Previously, park officers assessed parks against outdated grounds maintenance specifications, which made it difficult to grade the quality of green spaces they manage accurately.



The Quality Manual for us has been really important in terms of providing an opportunity to take a step back and assess certain open spaces. The detailed framework enables you to look at every element of the park in a lot more detail than you would normally.

Kevin Crook
Assistant Director Neighbourhoods at Lambeth Council





Meadow at Brockwell Park in Lambeth
Credit: Kevin Crook

Monitoring green spaces in Havering

The *Green Space Quality Manual* has played a crucial role in shaping the Havering’s *Parks Standards* guide. This guide is the cornerstone of the Council’s parks monitoring system, where park development officers follow a schedule to inspect and record the quality of grounds maintenance and condition of paths, furniture, fencing, and other park infrastructure.

Informed by the manual, the guide provides a graded system to aid officers in assessing the condition of green spaces, assign scores and identify corresponding actions.

This system allows Havering to prioritise resources effectively, ensuring that any high-risk areas are dealt with swiftly by the officers or contractors, while low-risk areas are monitored over time.

Grade	Standard	Risk level	Actions required
A	Good	No risk	No action
B	Satisfactory	Low risk	Appropriate action within available resources and individual site assessment
C	Unsatisfactory (minor concerns)	Medium risk	Appropriate action within available resources and individual site assessment
D	Poor (major concerns)	High risk	Immediate action to bring to a satisfactory standard and/or make the area safe



Bedfords Park Walled Garden in Havering

The visual and descriptive aids in the guide, drawn from the manual and examples from within the borough, help officers identify and address issues in a methodical way. As a ‘live’ document, it evolves with the borough’s needs, incorporating new photos and examples when necessary to ensure relevance.

The frequency of monitoring is dictated by a hierarchy of all council-managed parks and open spaces based on their use, location, and facilities. The top 25 parks are monitored monthly, while other spaces are inspected less frequently, from six-monthly for principal open spaces to a minimum of once a year. This ensures that the borough’s most popular and widely used parks receive the attention they need, while smaller open spaces are monitored periodically to maintain overall safety and quality.

Lambeth and Havering’s use of the *Green Space Quality Manual* highlights its effectiveness as a tool for assessing green space standards for maintenance and improvement. Both boroughs are setting an example for other London councils, demonstrating how the manual can be a key driver of high-quality green spaces that benefit residents and enhance local biodiversity.



As the Cabinet Member for Environment that cover Parks & Open spaces, the Havering Team must be recognised as having high standards which is helped by an effective monitoring system. This is regularly reflected by external accreditation and recently highlighted at the 2024 London in Bloom Awards where the borough won the Best City Category for the second year running, also representing London in Britain in Bloom 2024. Havering parks play a major part in making this happen, with all aspects of maintenance, infrastructure, and health and safety being monitored. Hence, Havering Council and I as Cabinet member is proud of the team in delivering award-winning parks that offer safe, quality spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Councillor Barry Mugglestone
Cabinet Member for Environment



Find more about the **Green Space Quality Manual** and download a sample

3. Collaboration

Originally conceived as a way to bring the community back on its feet after COVID-19 lockdowns, **Islington Council's Intergenerational Events**—developed in collaboration with council services, the NHS, and local charities—have grown into a popular and regular initiative.

When lockdown restrictions eased in 2021, it was clear that vulnerable individuals who had become isolated would need support to rebuild their confidence and re-engage socially, and an idea emerged to bring people of different generations together through an outdoor park event.

Coming together to support the community

Partnering with the Council's Bright Start children's service, Age UK Islington, and NHS services supporting people with long-term health conditions, Islington's parks service organised the first event in July 2021 at Islington Ecology Centre in Gillespie Park.

Families with children under the age of five, older people, and people with chronic health conditions were invited via participating partner

organisations. Staffing the event was also a collaborative effort with all partners being involved.

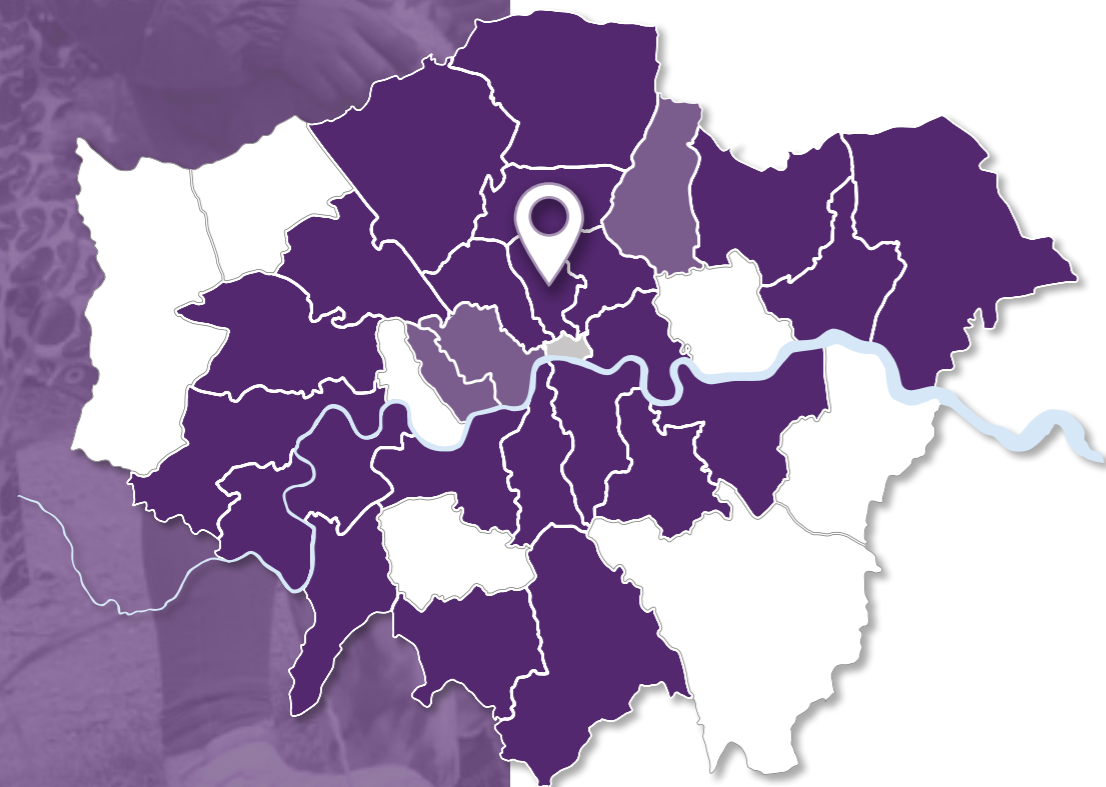
The event featured age inclusive activities such as singing, nature crafts, yoga, and pond-dipping. One attendee even gave an impromptu talk on astronomy which proved so popular that talks are now a regular feature of these events. Over one hundred people attended the first event, and participants praised the intergenerational concept, and the lunch, provided for all participants, was also very well received.



Great to see lots of people of all ages enjoying the craft and singing.



Decorating lanterns with natural materials at the Intergenerational Event in Gillespie Park
Credit: Steve Bainbridge



No data ○ ● ● ● Top score



Taking a closer look at the meadow in Gillespie Park
Credit: Steve Bainbridge



Expanding the offer

Following the success of the inaugural event, the partnership continued on to plan and deliver a series of seasonal events across the borough's parks.

Since then, the partnership has widened to include other council departments—Islington's Bright Lives and Bright Futures services which focus on older children and adults—as well as organisations such as The Garden Classroom and Finsbury Park Mosque, who have brought children attending their weekend classes to participate.

The programme has grown more ambitious and varied, and music has become a key attraction, from volunteer musicians doing a set to carol singing around a fire, bringing together people from diverse faiths and backgrounds.

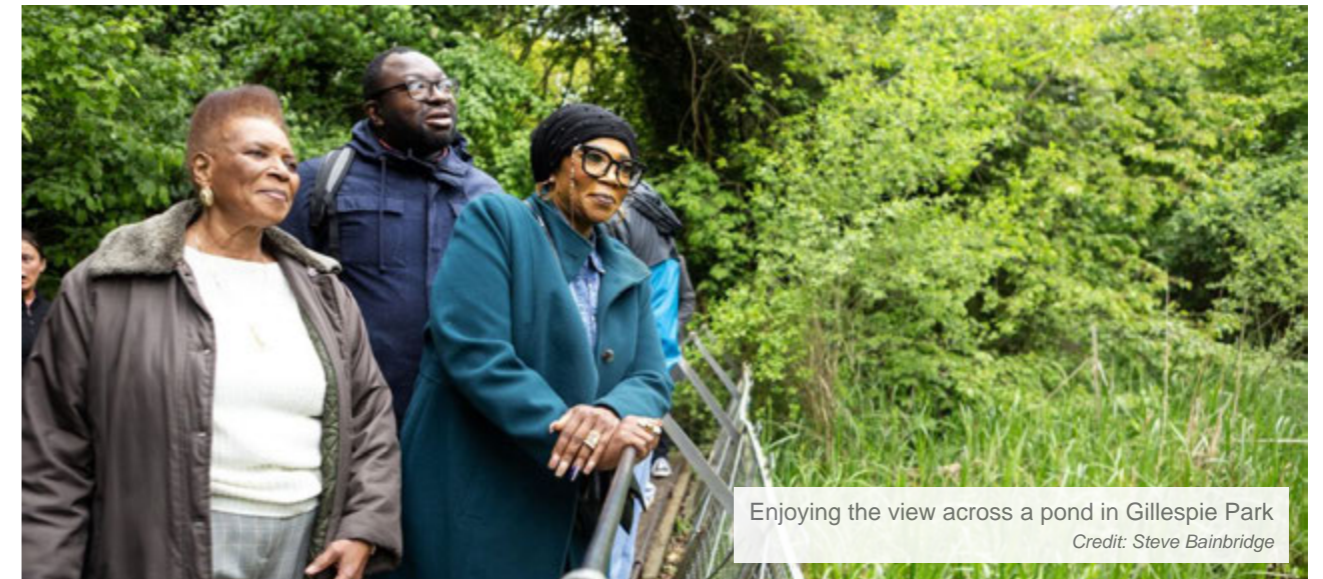
So far, 2,800 people have attended these Intergenerational Events, which are now held quarterly across three parks, and there are plans to expand to more locations in the future.



The music brought young and not so young together.



Playing with drums in Gillespie Park
Credit: Steve Bainbridge



Enjoying the view across a pond in Gillespie Park
Credit: Steve Bainbridge

Sustaining the initiative

The initial funding for the first four events came from the government's *Better Mental Health Fund* but given the success of the initiative, it is now funded from the Council's core budget and is integrated into the routine operational programming across several services, ensuring its continuation as a regular community offering.

Through the planning and delivery of these events, the Council's parks service took away learning points to support future community programming, including to:

- ensure there is buy-in and support at a senior level;
- leverage the skills of staff from various departments and partner organisations;

- welcome and engage with participation by all interested partners and from all levels;
- open events to all rather than targeting and inviting specific groups or individuals, which helps lower barriers to engagement and increase attendance;
- embrace new activities that can bring together people of different ages and backgrounds, such as talks on architecture and bats, lantern walks, and fire pits; and
- always offer free tea and coffee!



The intergenerational theme made it feel as if it was a community.

Age UK client

CONTACT

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Find more on **Outdoor Events** in our Resources Hub

4. Events

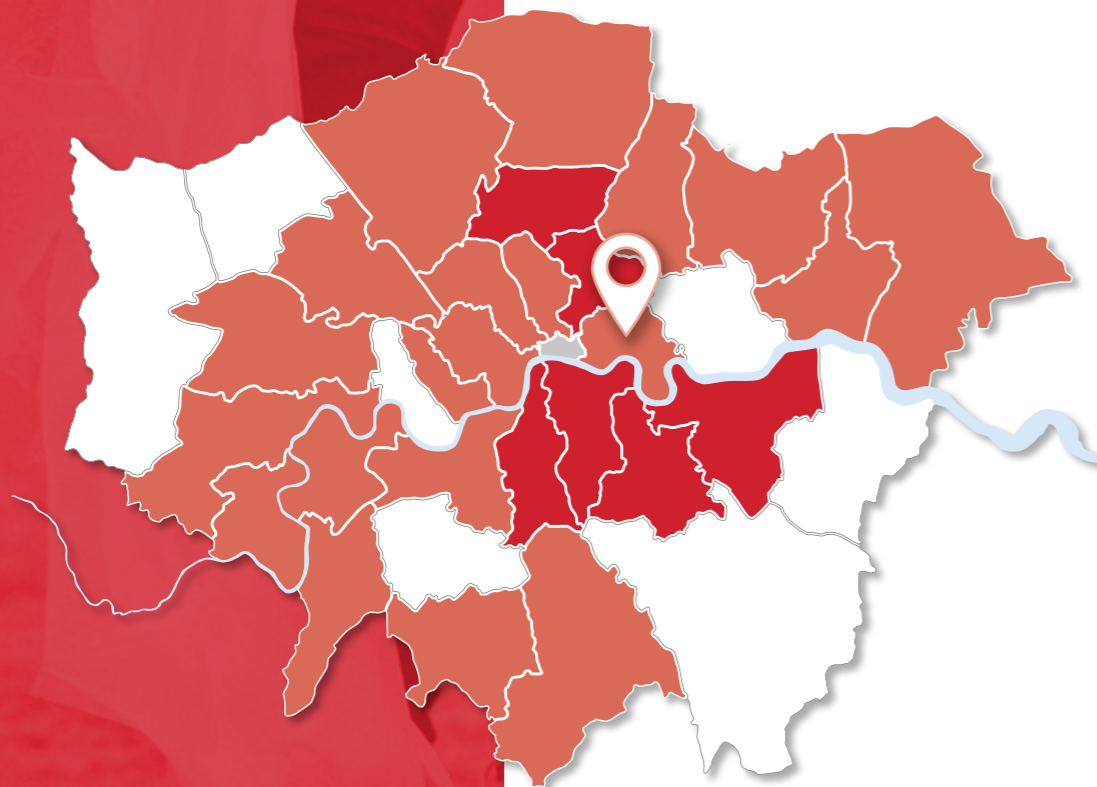
Tower Hamlets is taking significant steps toward creating more sustainable and accessible events across its green spaces. By collaborating with a range of partners and implementing innovative strategies, its Arts, Parks & Events Service is setting a strong foundation for greener events while making sure they are inclusive for all residents.

Green energy for events and filming

As part of the Grid Project, commissioned by Film London, which seeks to reduce carbon emissions and noise pollution generated by the filming industry, Tower Hamlets worked with the Film Office to pilot the supply of green energy via the mains network at the unit base in Victoria Park. The unit base is where diesel and petrol generators are set up to power production activities, and in 2018 alone, the unit base in Victoria Park emitted an estimated 169,556 kg of CO₂.



Power cabinet supplying green energy at Victoria Park
Credit: The Film Office Ltd



No data ○ ● ● ● Top score

The installation of an electrical feeder pillar that productions can plug into will reduce CO₂ emissions and air pollutants, such as particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide, by 100% at point of use, as well as significantly reducing noise pollution. The power cabinet can also be used for events, reducing the reliance on diesel generators for energy supply.

The pilot project was funded through the Mayor's *Good Growth Fund* and supported by partners such as NBC Universal, Interreg Europe's Green Screen, and the British Film Commission. Within the first 92 days after implementation, it eliminated the use of nearly 37,300 litres of diesel and petrol by 23 productions, saving 92 tonnes of CO₂ and 251 kg of N₂O being saved.

Sustainable large-scale events

The Council has been working closely with its event operator to minimise the impact of large-scale events on the park environment by implementing sensitive, and sustainable practices, from set-up to tear down and submitting an annual sustainability report. To date, the current operator has made significant strides, achieving zero waste to landfill, a complete switch to biofuels, and appointed a dedicated Sustainability Manager.

The Council has also been working with its event provider AEG Presents Ltd to reduce the carbon footprint of the annual music festival in Victoria Park. This includes working towards industry standards and the *Greener Festival Certification* by AGF, to which the 2023 event scored highly across the 12 assessed areas.

To assess the environmental effects of the festival on the park, the Council commissioned consultants who made recommendations for restoration practices that enhance biodiversity, such as reduced mowing and planting flowers to support wildlife.

Additional on-site measures include protecting sensitive tree root zones, limiting vehicle movement on wet grass, and ensuring that trackways are used to prevent ground damage. Spill kits are available to avoid contamination, and sound consultants monitor noise to minimise disruption. These sustainable practices also support neighbouring sites, such as Hyde Park, and the Council aims to reduce emissions further through the increased use of grid power and renewable energy, along with encouraging plant-based food options at events.



Litter control at the All Points East festival
Credit: Phoebe Fox



As a designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), we are committed to improving the quality of air for residents and visitors through the installation of renewable energy technology. We are also working to protect the biodiversity and natural beauty of Victoria Park by planting new trees and greenery.

This past year, alongside partners Trees for Cities and the Sensory Trust, we delivered accessible tree planting events across Victoria Park, resulting in 126 mature trees being planted. We are pleased that our award-winning Victoria Park is setting the pace in improving accessibility and sustainability, including being part of a successful pilot project to reduce carbon emissions.

Councillor Shafi Ahmed

Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency



Plant-based food options at the All Points East festival
Credit: Phoebe Fox



Keeping events such as the All Points East festival as accessible as possible
Credit: Phoebe Fox

Making events more accessible

Ensuring accessibility is another key priority for the events team. The Council considers physical access requirements for all park events and works with the organisation Attitude is Everything to remove barriers to access and make events welcoming to everyone.

The Council has taken steps to engage hard-to-reach communities, including translating event materials into Bengali and Somali, as these communities are a significant demographic in the borough yet have been historically underrepresented at arts and cultural events.

The service also curates regular newsletters like the *Events Highlights* and *Arts Forum Online* to promote free events and provide resources for local artists and arts organisations respectively.

Through the use of social media and partnerships with other departments, the Council is further enhancing access to cultural events, particularly for the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) community and other underrepresented groups.

CONTACT

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Find more on **Outdoor Events** in our Resources Hub

5. Health, fitness and wellbeing

In **Kensington and Chelsea**, the Council is working with partners and local charities and has employed dedicated officers to promote greater use of its green spaces and enhance community wellbeing through improved accessibility, sports programmes, and nature-based activities.

Improvements to access

To ensure that all residents can enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of spending time outdoors, the Council has taken steps to make its green spaces more accessible and inclusive by:

- installing two Changing Places facilities in parks, with a third on the way;
- adding accessible play equipment for children with disabilities, including wheelchair accessible roundabouts, see-saws, and communication boards;
- providing exclusive use of water play facilities for special educational needs (SEN) groups during term time;
- installing quiet-mark hand dryers in public toilets; and
- developing sensory gardens in parks across the borough for people with sensory needs.

The borough’s first sensory garden in Holland Park provides a quiet, sensory-engaging environment and is available for exclusive use by SEN and sensory needs organisations. A second sensory garden is under development in the south of the borough, further enhancing accessible outdoor experiences.

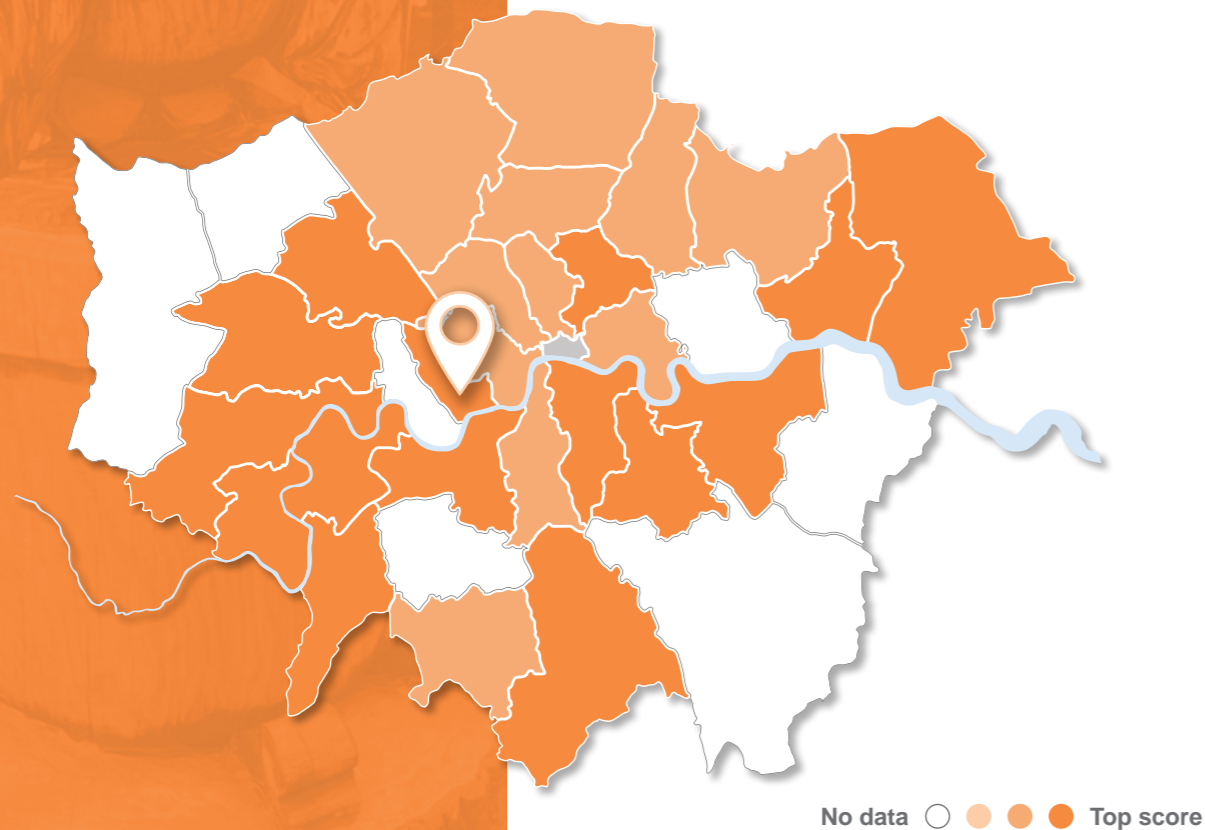
Promoting physical activity

To encourage residents to stay active, the Council employs three Sports Development Officers who run a wide range of activity programmes. These include walking groups, Zumba, Tai Chi, yoga, and table tennis sessions, as well as guidance on using outdoor gym equipment. Between April 2023 and March 2024, over 2,150 sessions were delivered for more than 20,000 attendees.



Being Greener, Safer and Fairer is at the heart of our plans as a Council: our Health and Wellbeing Strategy launched last year, a new sports strategy due in 2025, and our Biodiversity Action Plan has access to nature as a priority for supporting the wellbeing of our residents. Our parks are key to this work, parks and green spaces having known to have positive effects on our health, and we are committed to maintain these to the highest standards for everyone in the borough.

Councillor Emma Will
Lead Member for
Property and Parks



Making a leaf rainbow during an environmental education session at Holland Park Ecology Centre



Bee wood sculpture in Avondale Park

Connecting residents with nature

In addition to traditional sport and fitness, a series of nature walks and events are held throughout the year, allowing residents to access health benefits by connecting to nature. A monthly conservation volunteer group run by the Council's contractor, *idverde*, encourages residents to socialise and get active while contributing to biodiversity enhancements such as hedge planting, pond improvements, and sowing and scything meadows.

The Council's Education and Nature Wellbeing Officer also delivers nature wellbeing sessions for residents and council staff, with activities such as nature connection walks, writing in nature, and weaving. One of the 24 events run in the past year was a pilot nature wellbeing programme for resident clients of The ClementJames Community Centre, who provide education, employment, and wellbeing support to empower the North Kensington community.

The successful pilot secured funding from the Mayor's *Future Neighbourhoods 2030* programme to run for a further year, offering residents the chance to join fortnightly sessions in Avondale Park through self-referral or social prescribing.

CONTACT

Parks Team
Parks@rbkc.gov.uk

Gardening for mental health

The Council's Community Gardeners work with community groups, mental health support groups, and the NHS to provide gardening opportunities in 50 community gardens across the borough. The staff visit them weekly to offer gardening support and lead workshops that not only share useful gardening knowledge such as composting, but also provide opportunities for residents to socialise and connect with nature.

At the St Charles Centre for Health & Wellbeing, community kitchen garden plots are available for NHS staff and 16 associated groups, including Open Age and Equal People. In addition, wellbeing sessions are held at the hospital's sensory garden, which was built in 2021.

Gardening sessions are also delivered by a dedicated Community Garden and Engagement Officer, aimed at supporting adults with low-level mental health challenges across the borough's six priority wards. Since the programme started in October 2022, these sessions have benefited 136 individuals, with many participants attending regularly, and the officer currently works with eight of such groups on a weekly basis.

By making green spaces more accessible, promoting physical activity, and using nature as a tool for mental health support, [Kensington and Chelsea Council](#) is ensuring that all residents have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the outdoors, contributing to a healthier, more connected community.



Find more on
Health and Wellbeing
in our Resources Hub

6. Supporting nature

Enable Leisure and Culture's citizen science survey programme in **Wandsworth** empowers the community to play a vital role in both monitoring biodiversity on Tooting Commons and Wandsworth Common, and informing evidence-based conservation efforts.

Led by Enable's Citizen Science Officer, the citizen science initiative aims to identify key habitats for wildlife, contribute data to Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL), and inform green space management plans to improve habitats.

It also seeks to engage and equip community members with skills in surveying techniques and species identification. Many of the programme's volunteers, who started with a general interest in local biodiversity and with little experience in surveying, are now capable of supporting different wildlife surveys.

So far, the programme has been regularly monitoring amphibians, bats, reptiles, hedgehogs, plants, and biodiversity within private domestic gardens via their *On Your Street* survey. The data gathered is used by Enable to advise active management of their green spaces to protect and enhance populations of various species.

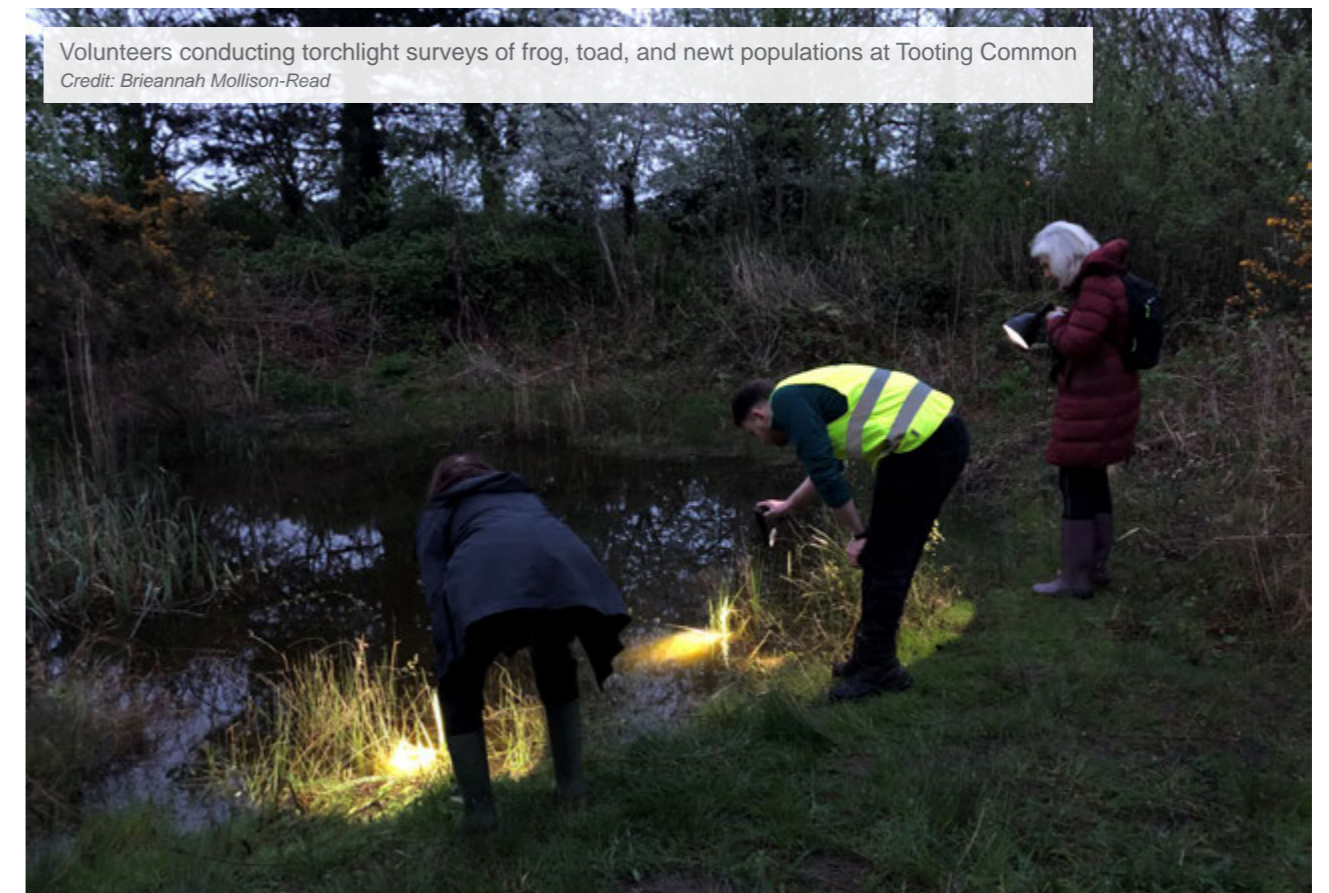
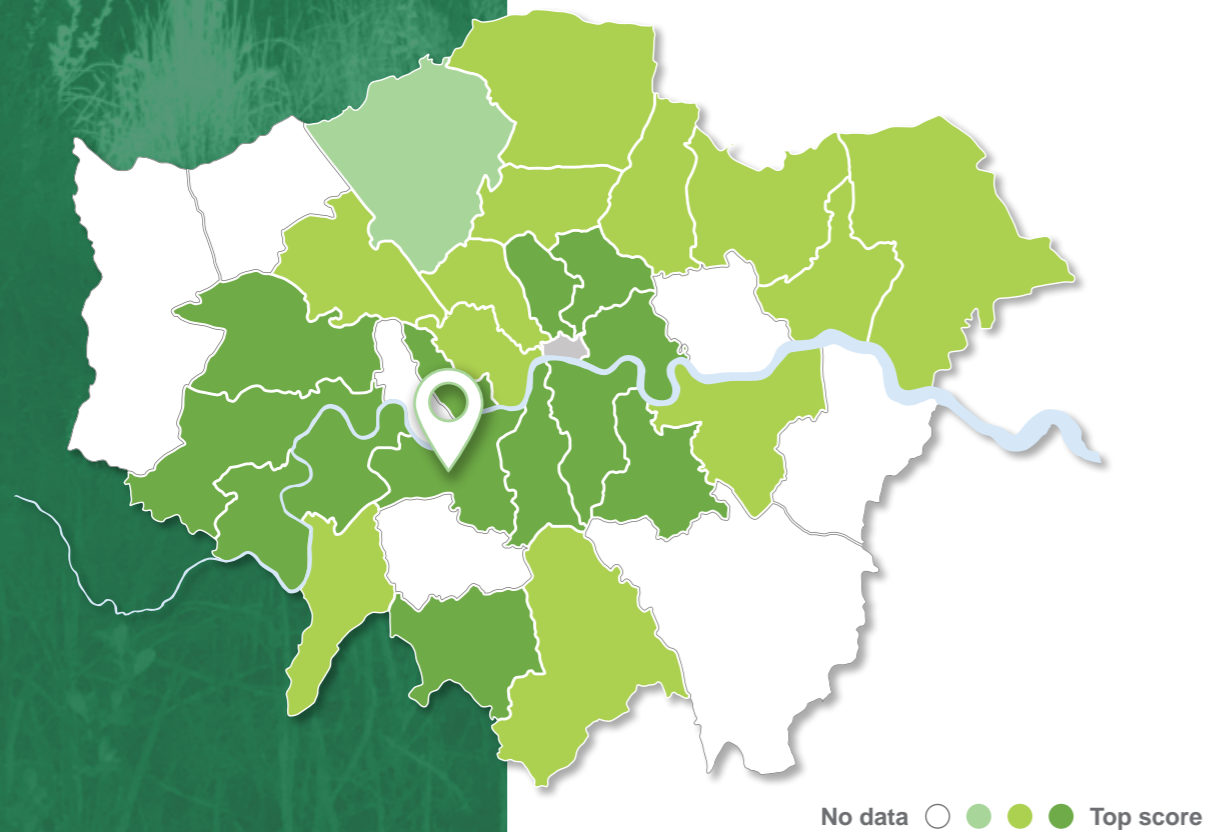
Bats and amphibians at two commons

Tooting Commons and Wandsworth Common are key study sites for amphibians and bats respectively.

As part of the programme, the Tooting Commons ponds were registered as a survey site for the nationwide amphibian survey, and volunteers

were trained in daytime and night-time visual searches, evening torchlight surveys, and using artificial egg strips to detect newt breeding. These surveys are carried out at different times of the year during the breeding seasons of different amphibians, and at night when amphibians are most active.

Enable has established two bat transects on Wandsworth Common, where volunteers use Echo Meter Touch bat detectors to record bat species, location, numbers, and behaviour. These surveys have been highly popular, with both transects walked monthly by the volunteers who have since learnt how to use the survey equipment and the appropriate methods for data collection.





In partnership with
enable.
For happy, healthier communities.
Not for profit.

Data-driven habitat improvements

The data gathered has led to significant habitat enhancements. On Tooting Commons, three key ponds were targeted for amphibian habitat maintenance, and ephemeral pools were created to support breeding.

On Wandsworth Common, guidance documents for enhancing bat roosting sites were created, detailing specific tree management practices such as by preserving standing deadwood through monoliths. These targeted efforts aim to improve habitat complexity and connectivity for the long term.

Programme outcomes

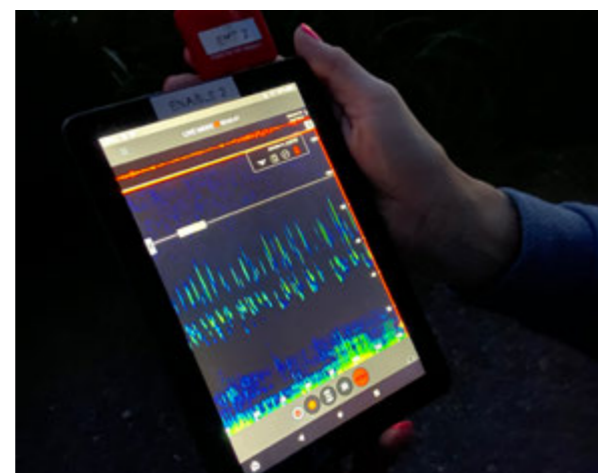
To date, the citizen science programme across the two commons has:

- increased volunteer engagement and connection with nature;
- enabled community contributions to local conservation;
- provided over 50 volunteer hours of amphibian surveying and over 140 volunteer hours of bat surveying;
- developed volunteers' skills in survey techniques, species identification, and data collection;
- encouraged curiosity and better scientific understanding within the community;
- contributed valuable data to national databases, supporting broader conservation efforts;
- directly informed future management practices for these two green spaces; and
- created a rhythm of annual wildlife surveying.

Building support for long-term projects

Engaging the community and stakeholders early is key to building support for biodiversity projects. The local residents, friends groups, and Management Advisory Committees of the two commons played a vital role in the success of amphibian and bat surveys. They were involved from the start and helped to promote the projects and participated in surveys. Enable also already had good buy-in from many participating local residents who previously contributed to improving these habitats and were supportive of the surveys.

Volunteer numbers and enthusiasm can fluctuate. To combat this, there is a programme of social media outreach and regular communication about realistic survey outcomes. For example, the bat transect surveys, which start just prior to sunset and continue late into the night, can be challenging for some volunteers so whilst they are encouraged to start the survey with staff members, they do not have to stay for the full duration of the survey. This approach allows volunteers to participate while accommodating specific needs.



Bat detectors in use during the bat transect survey at Wandsworth Common
Credit: Owen Dodgson



Bat surveys carried out at dusk at Wandsworth Common
Credit: Brieannah Mollison-Read

Supporting independent citizen science

In addition to this programme, Enable has assisted volunteers conducting butterfly and stag beetle transects in larger sites and provided support for individuals interested in starting their own surveys. In 2023, Enable organised an event at Wandsworth Common with a local moth recorder, Butterfly Conservation and Friends of Wandsworth Common, to encourage anyone who might be interested in moths to join regular recording sessions.

Through these initiatives, which also include nature walks and talks with schools, Enable continues to deepen the community's involvement in local biodiversity conservation and fostering a sense of stewardship for Wandsworth's green spaces.

CONTACT

Enable Biodiversity Team
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020 3959 0060

“
We've offered bat walks for several years, and they're very popular, but this project from Enable's Biodiversity Team, which uses volunteers to walk formal transects, has taken engagement with our members to a new level. People are so keen to help, especially when it's both enjoyable and increases knowledge in aid of nature conservation. It's been particularly heartening to see young families getting involved, alongside our older members.
.....
Richard Fox and Julia Bott
Co-chairs of The Friends of Wandsworth Common



Find more on
Biodiversity
in our Resources Hub

7. Community involvement

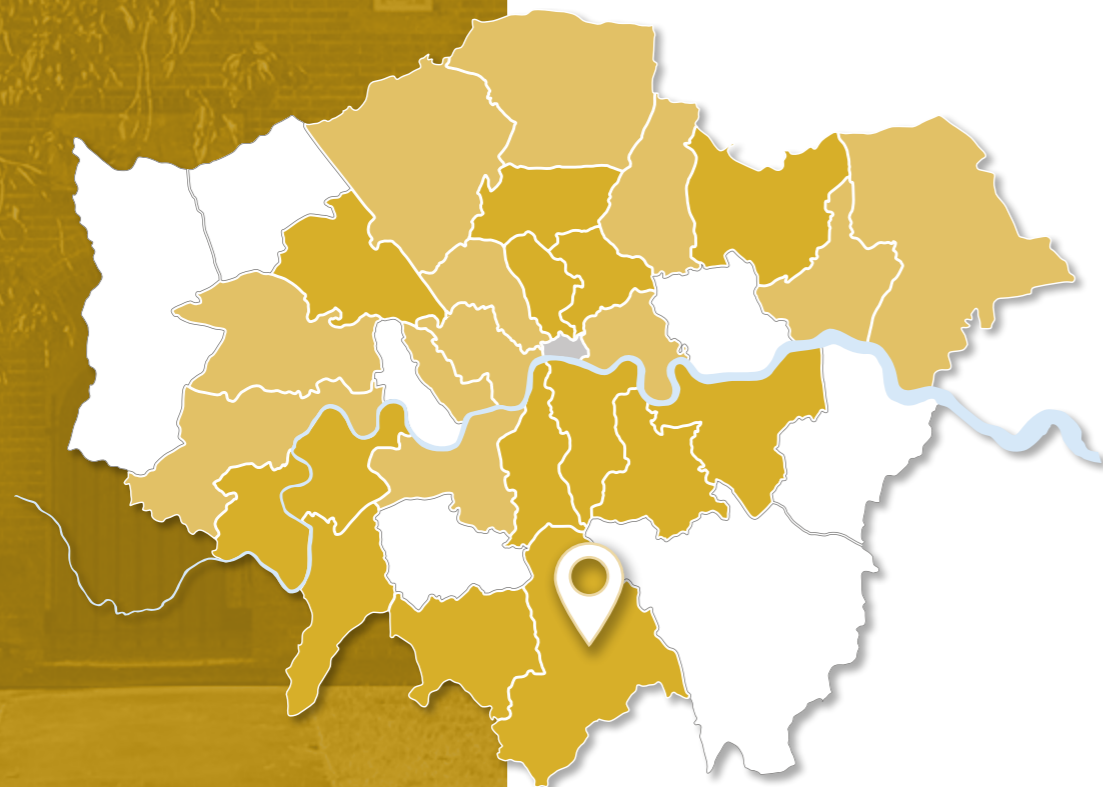
Ahead of its centenary, Ashburton Park in **Croydon** is undergoing a community-led restoration project to co-design the space through participatory engagement, with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Ashburton Park has been a cornerstone of Croydon’s community for nearly a century. The park boasts a rich history, but in recent years, it has faced several tragedies including the murder of a teenage boy in 2021.

This terrible loss galvanised the community to call for change, to make the park a safer place and a more vibrant space. With limited financial resources, Croydon Council’s parks department sought innovative solutions to restore the park in time for its 100th anniversary in 2025.

Collaborative effort for change

In 2022, Croydon Council joined forces with local residents, the [Friends of Ashburton Park](#) (FOAP), and Oasis Charitable Trust to pursue funding through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).



No data ○ ● ● ● Top score



Firs in Ashburton Park
Credit: Hannah Sayers

The £1.9 million bid submitted in November 2022 aimed to celebrate the park’s centenary and preserve its natural heritage by creating a wetland, enhancing its biodiversity, and creating safer, and more engaging spaces for park users. By April 2023, the group secured an initial grant of £304,000 to begin the development phase of the *100 Years of Ashburton Park* project, which seeks to build a case for support and recommendations on restoration to be eligible for further funding.

First foray into a shared vision

Since securing the grant, a steering group comprising of residents and community representatives was established to facilitate the co-design and management of the restoration and ensure the project’s long-term sustainability.

The funding enabled the appointment of a local resident as the dedicated project manager to carry out comprehensive investigations on site and community engagement to understand what is needed in the park. The FOAP played a crucial role in gathering community input, and Oasis Academies partnered with the Council and the community to design activities that positively utilise the park and provide educational opportunities at the [community hub](#), transformed from an old park keepers’ lodge house.

Extensive community and school engagement through pop-up workshops, events, and activities have shaped safety improvements and desired features for the park. Over 400 adults, 130 young people, and 50 teachers provided feedback across three themes: heritage and nature, green education, and safety. They provided insight into local needs that will feed into the park restoration designs to be submitted for second-stage funding in November 2024.



Transformative impact on the community

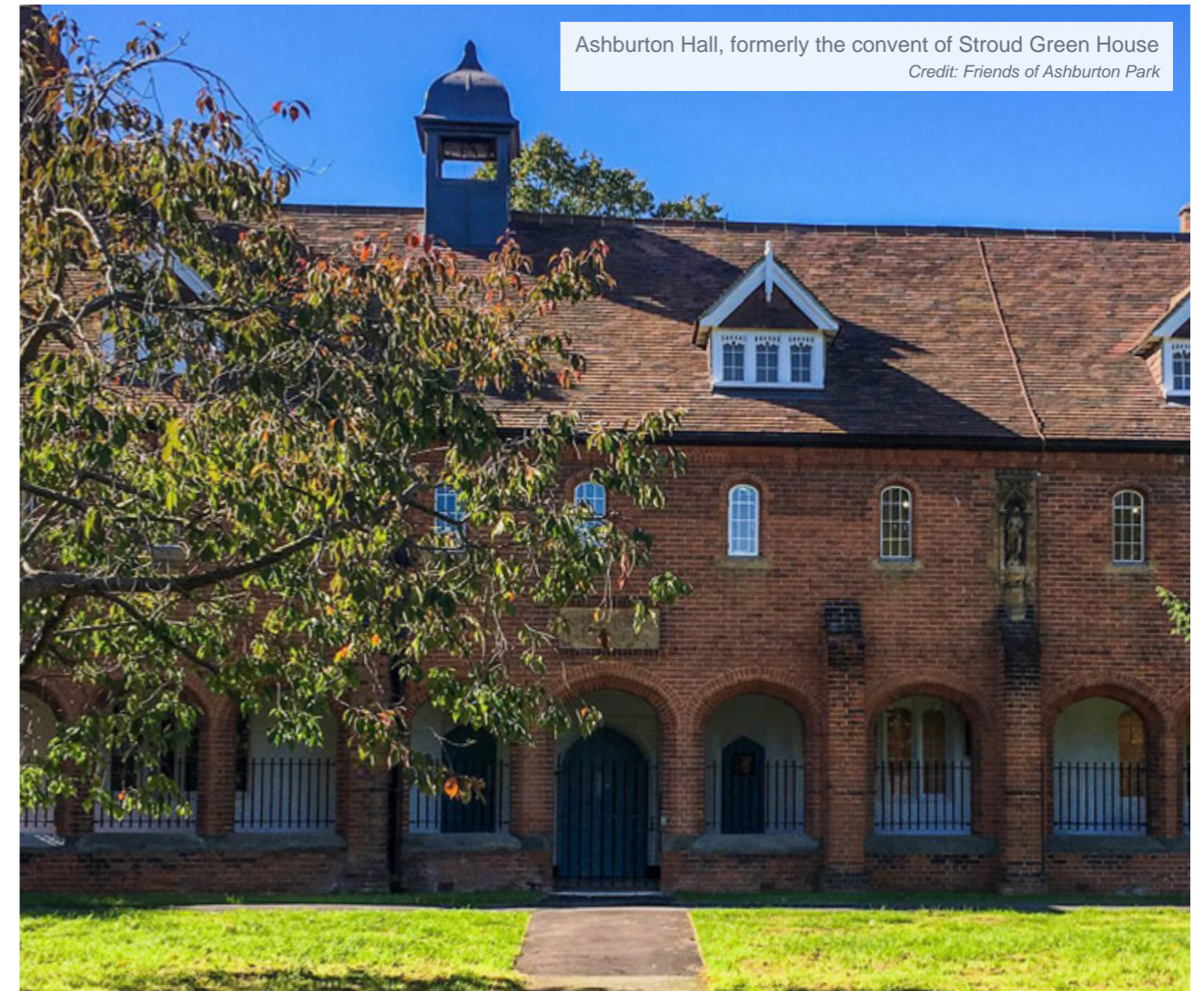
The collaborative journey has seen a real positive shift in change-making across several areas:

- **Empowering the friends group** – The project helped to promote the FOAP, resulting in nearly 100 people expressing an interest in joining, strengthening both the group and the park’s future. The next stage of the project aims to continue to support the group and utilise this enthusiastic volunteer base.
- **Harnessing community skills** – The collaborative approach allowed the Council to tap into a wealth of skills and ideas from residents, schools, businesses, and other local organisations that would not have been possible working alone. The parks department was able to gather diverse input and ideas for incorporation into the design through, for example, a focus group with girls from local schools about safety in parks.

- **Promoting green jobs** – Working with local schools, four students gained work experience with the parks department in 2024, learning about careers in green space management. Feedback from young people has shaped a larger heritage and green jobs programme which will be explored in the second stage to create employment opportunities and promote these lesser-known roles.
- **Engaging young people** – Through partnerships with Oasis Academies, young people were able to play a key role in shaping the park’s future through their own steering group and consultation activities. They also reported gaining a deeper understanding of the park and its complexities.
- **Fostering a sense of ownership** – Seeing their feedback valued and reflected in the project’s designs helped to build trust with the community, and employing a resident with local knowledge has significantly helped with the reception of the project and strengthened community ties.



Young volunteers
Credit: Oasis Community Hub



Ashburton Hall, formerly the convent of Stroud Green House
Credit: Friends of Ashburton Park

The lessons learnt from the development phase will shape the park’s next 100 years, and the Council is preparing a final funding application which will, if successful, enable them to deliver the restoration recommendations over three years starting summer 2025.

CONTACT

Parks Team
Parks@croydon.gov.uk



Find more on **Volunteer and Community Groups** in our Resources Hub

8. Skills development

Lewisham Council, in partnership with Glendale, has developed a comprehensive skills development programme to grow a highly skilled workforce in park and green space management. Central to this effort is creating meaningful training opportunities, and tailoring career development paths to recognise and realise individual potential, to ensure employees feel valued, motivated, and engaged throughout their careers.

Early career opportunities

Lewisham and Glendale's skills development programme places strong emphasis on early career opportunities through apprenticeships, traineeships, and work placements. From April 2023 to March 2024, they took on six apprentices and seven trainees, who made up 22% of their workforce. The programme is designed to provide hands-on experience in green space management, instilling essential skills and knowledge that lead to long-term career prospects.

A standout success story is Tia McNamara, who completed her apprenticeship at Beckenham Place Park and secured a permanent position with the parks team. In addition to on-the-job learning, she completed several technical courses, such as chainsaw maintenance, tree felling, and even earned a powerboat licence for lake maintenance. Her journey reflects the programme's success in providing apprentices with not only practical skills but also the confidence to advance their careers. Since joining the team, she has also been provided with training support to further her progression.

The Council and Glendale also offer work experience placements primarily to Year 10 and 11 students through school programmes, giving young people exposure to a potential career pathway in the green space sector, and an opportunity to experience new activities and learn new skills.

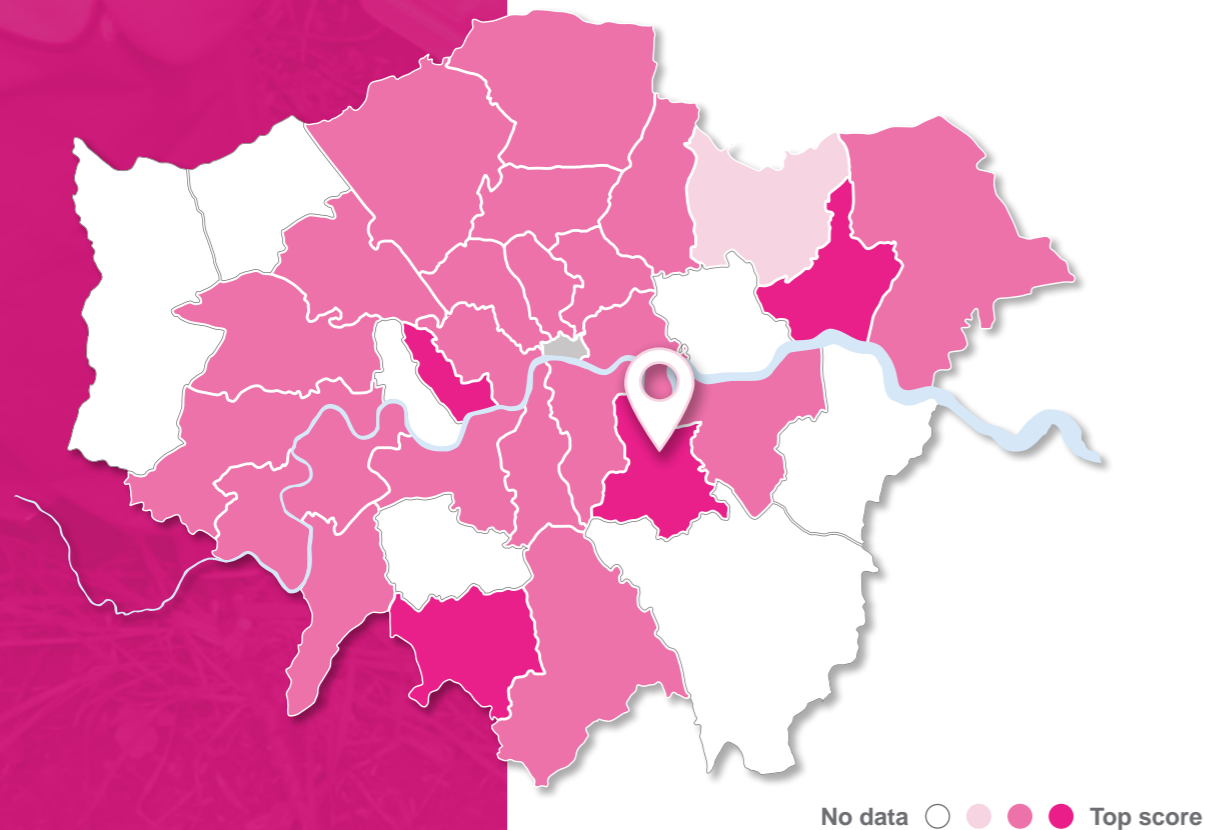
In their one-week placement, one ecology student from Capel Manor participated in habitat surveys and enhancement activities such as building loggeries, bug hotels, and planting root whips. Finding a sense of belonging with the team and fellow volunteers, the student has continued to volunteer with the *Rivers and People* project run by the Council and Glendale's grounds management team.



These courses have helped me practically to better understand what we need to do as gardeners to both help the environment but still offer appealing, high-quality planting that the public so enjoys.

I am very proud of my achievements and that of the team, particularly being awarded Gold in the 2023 London In Bloom Apprenticeship Scheme of the Year award ... I have now started my Level 3 Horticulture Supervisor course and am looking forward to further progressing my Parks career. I have learnt so much; my colleagues and I take an equal and fair approach to different ways of thinking and practically apply what we've learned from formal courses and the equally valuable informal teaching from senior colleagues.

Tia McNamara
Former apprentice





Middle to upper management development

To facilitate career progression, Lewisham has in place management development plans that include succession planning and growth opportunities throughout middle and senior management. Annual performance development reviews play a crucial role in identifying career aspirations, setting personal growth targets, and tailoring professional development plans.

The Council collaborates with other organisations for specific on-site training, aiding staff in learning and adopting the latest industry practices. For instance, Glendale staff learnt how they can manage pollinator superhighways from the Butterfly Conservation, while the Council's nature conservation officers received biodiversity net gain training from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). These partnerships ensure that staff are well-rounded and equipped to lead green initiatives more effectively.



Our valued staff are integral to providing great quality parks and open spaces in Lewisham. With a comprehensive skills programme, at all career stages, our teams are well supported to reach their full potential, gain meaningful career progression and most importantly, enjoy what they do.

Councillor Louise Krupski

Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Environment, Climate Action & Transport



Empowering the community

Beyond internal workforce development, Lewisham and Glendale are committed to educate and engage the public. Local schools can book habitat study sessions with their nature conservation officers at several sites, and request customisation to the curriculum. Resources are made freely available to schools wishing to run their own sessions in the borough's parks and nature reserves. The officers run a classroom at Manor Park as well, with river dipping and activities centred on environmental education with schools and other youth groups.

The Council also supports and encourages greater use of its green spaces by schools and other educational organisations, to enhance outdoor learning and play opportunities in nature. Pre-school groups like [Little Explorers](#) and [Muddy Boots](#) host nature exploration sessions across several green spaces, and [Forest School](#) sessions are regularly held at four nature reserves, helping children connect with the environment from an early age.

In partnership with the [Field Studies Council](#), Lewisham also offers curriculum-based learning for schoolchildren at Beckenham Place Park. This initiative extends beyond the classroom to provide family workshops and adult learning programmes, encouraging environmental stewardship across all ages.

Lewisham Council and Glendale's robust skills development programme not only enhances the capabilities of their parks workforce but also fosters community engagement and promotes sustainable park management. Through apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience placements, and a commitment to equality and diversity, the programme ensures a holistic approach to workforce development.



Preschool pupils looking for bugs in Grove Park

CONTACT

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Find more on **Green Skills** in our Resources Hub

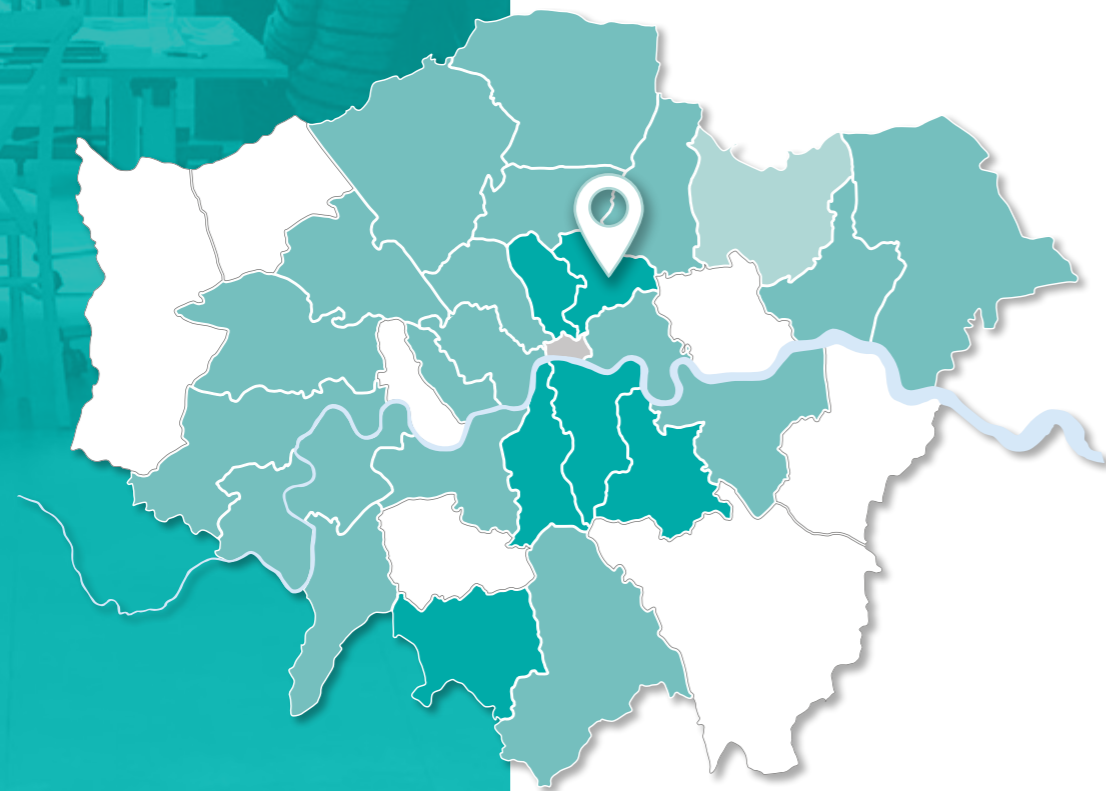
9. Sustainability

Hackney Council, which has committed to achieving net zero by 2040, commissioned a carbon audit to determine the emissions baseline of its Parks and Green Space Service and identify the most effective strategies for reducing them.

Aligned with Hackney's [2021–2031 Parks and Green Spaces Strategy](#), the Council sought a clearer understanding of its environmental impact. It engaged consultancy Buro Happold, using 2018 data from a prior council-wide carbon inventory, to assess the service's emissions and highlight areas for reduction.

Scope of the audit

With a budget of close to £10,000, the study aimed to evaluate high-level actions to reduce carbon emissions and their potential impact on the parks and green spaces baseline by 2031, to inform future plans to reduce emissions resulting from the service's activities.



No data ○ ● ● ● Top score



Carbon workshop at Springfield House in spring 2022

The process began by identifying and quantifying emissions associated with the service's activities, followed by modelling various combinations of actions to project potential emission reductions by 2031.

The study also included a scoping exercise to assess data availability and determine which emission sources the Council could feasibly influence. Emissions that were beyond the Council's monitoring capabilities or control were excluded from the analysis.

Emissions baseline

The audit revealed that in 2018, the service emitted the equivalent of 740 tonnes of CO₂, accounting for 2% of total council-wide emissions.

The top five contributors were building energy use (gas and electricity) which accounted for 70% of total emissions, energy losses from buildings, vehicle fuel consumption, park lighting, and emissions from purchased products.



Future projections

Buro Happold used scenario modelling to forecast the impact of potential carbon reduction measures in key areas. A workshop was held with the service’s staff to explore solutions and identify barriers and opportunities for emissions reduction. The outcomes informed the modelling, ensuring realistic projections based on actionable steps the Council could implement.

The resulting projections suggested that with ambitious yet feasible interventions, the service could achieve an 83% reduction in emissions by 2031. These actions encompass both physical improvements and management strategies, such as changes in procurement, building operations, and staff behaviour.



Carbon workshop at Springfield House in spring 2022

Key decarbonisation strategies

The audit recommended several priority areas for emission reduction:

- **Building energy efficiency** – retrofitting buildings and minimising heating, lighting, and appliance use
- **Building electrification** – replacing gas boilers with heat pumps, district heat networks, or electric heaters
- **Fleet route optimisation** – reducing travel distances via vehicle by 5–10%
- **Fleet electrification** – fully transitioning to electric vehicles
- **Decarbonising procurement** – prioritising refurbished or reused items, requesting Environmental Product Declarations from suppliers, and sourcing low-carbon products made from 100% recycled or bio-based materials.



Despite significant financial challenges, we’re committed to our net zero ambitions and creating a greener, healthier borough for everyone. The carbon audit that the Parks and Green Spaces Service conducted in 2022 is an important first step in identifying and quantifying their emissions so that they can focus on reducing them significantly by 2031.

Mayor Caroline Woodley



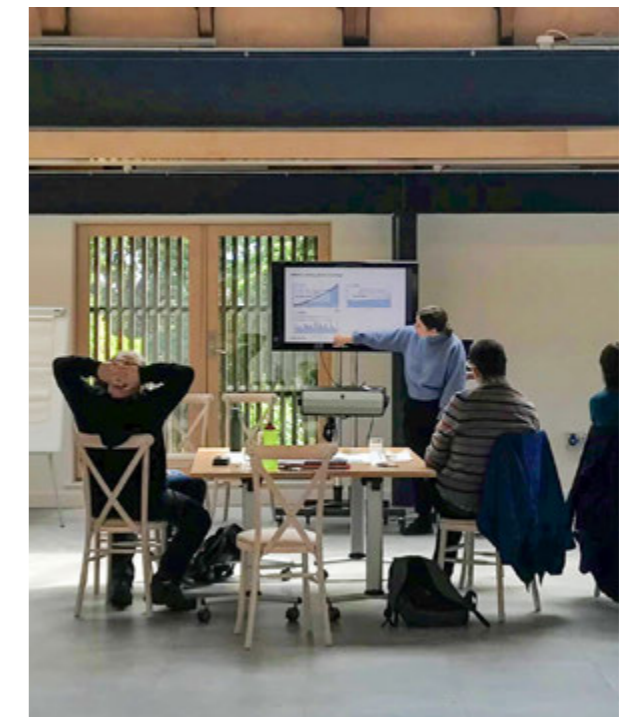
CONTACT

Aaron Myall
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aaron.myall@hackney.gov.uk

Moving forward

The carbon assessment has provided Hackney’s Parks and Green Spaces Service with critical insights into where emissions are concentrated, and which measures offer the greatest potential for decarbonisation. The service is now producing an action plan to prioritise these measures and refine its emissions reduction strategy.

This audit not only supports the Council’s sustainability goals but also enhances the accuracy of future emissions assessments, helping ensure the success of long-term decarbonisation efforts.



Find more on **Climate Change and Action** in our Resources Hub

10. Strategic planning

Haringey Council's 15-year Parks and Greenspaces Strategy was shaped through extensive consultation with friends of parks groups, local forums, schools, and user groups. The strategy aims to create more inclusive parks, mitigate climate change, enhance biodiversity, promote sustainability, and improve service quality across the borough's green spaces.

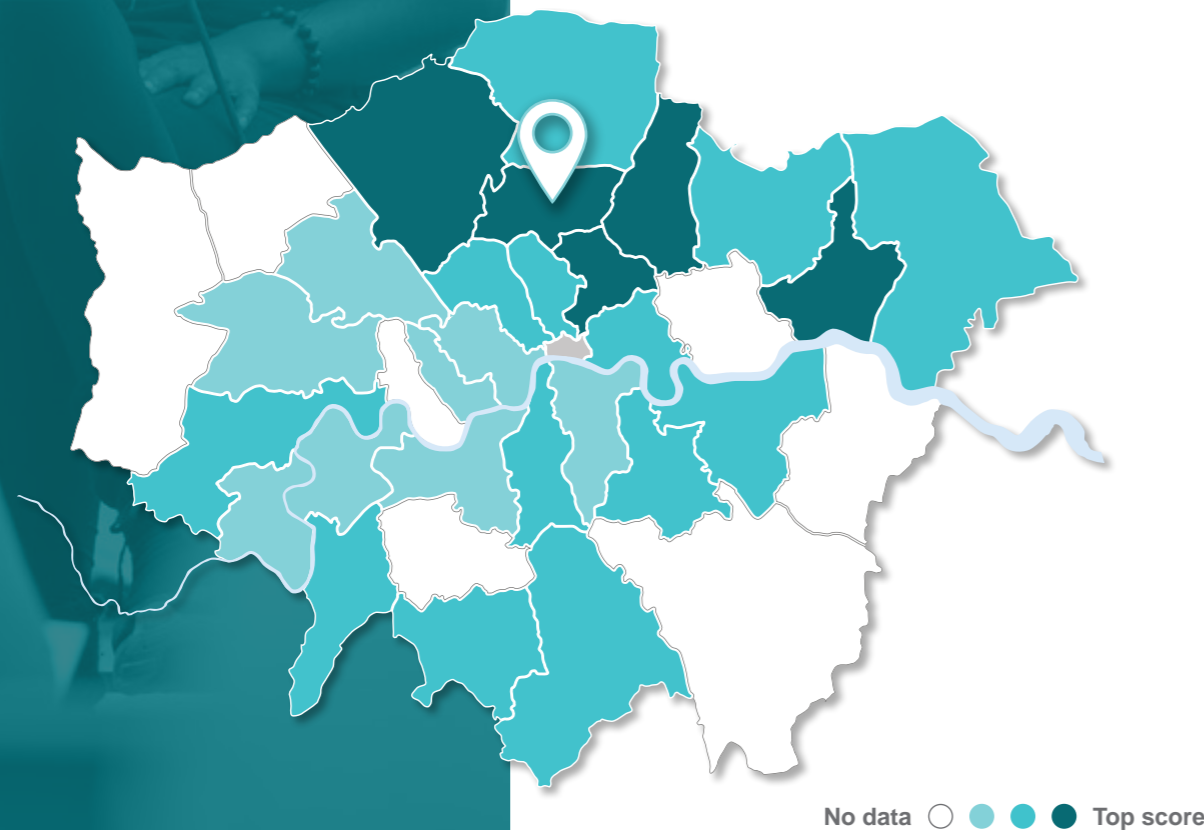
The Council's Parks & Leisure Service sought to re-evaluate their approach toward green space management in the light of concerns from local friends groups regarding the condition of the borough's parks and green spaces, budget limitations, and a call to action from the Charter for Parks to reverse the decline of public parks. Using new evidence from residents and stakeholders, the Council set out a clear vision and priorities for its 2023–2038 *Parks and Greenspaces Strategy*.

Co-production of the strategy

The Council's decision to co-produce the strategy in-house, with significant community involvement, was central to its development.



The launch event of Haringey's *Parks & Greenspaces Strategy* at Ducketts Common in September 2023



Through discussions with various partners and stakeholders, the Council identified three key aims:

- 1. Inclusion and wellbeing** – providing inclusive parks and green spaces where usage reflects the diversity of communities in Haringey and contributes to improved wellbeing
- 2. Climate change, biodiversity, and sustainability** – supporting the Council's Climate Emergency declaration by reducing the carbon footprint of parks and green spaces, protecting and promoting biodiversity, and raising awareness of environmental responsibility
- 3. A quality service** – securing investment, raising standards, and improving partnerships, communications, and service outcomes.

Extensive consultation and engagement

Through workshops, focus groups, and surveys, the Council engaged with cabinet members, ward councillors, school heads and students, friends groups, the Haringey Climate Forum, and a diverse range of communities and residents including disabled residents, older adults, ethnically diverse communities, and the LGBTQ+ community.

Feedback was gathered from 616 online responses, 40 written submissions, and various focus groups, offering:

- an overwhelming support for the vision for green spaces;
- inputs on improving safety and making parks more welcoming;
- ideas for enhancing green infrastructure and biodiversity;
- thoughts on the draft strategy, plans, policies and standards; and
- suggestions on how the Council should approach subsequent reviews and updates to keep the strategy relevant.

The consultation outcomes helped officers refine the final strategy and informed the following core plans, each with their own action plans:

- Community Engagement & Volunteering Plan
- Physical Activity & Sports Strategy
- Asset Management Plan
- Biodiversity Action Plan
- Trees & Woodlands Plan
- Watercourses & Flood Risk Plan
- Policy Pack
- Service Standards



This 15-year strategy sets out the shared priorities of our residents and the Council for Haringey's parks and green spaces and represents a bold and major step forward. The feedback and inputs we've received from those actively involved in our parks, as well as those who currently cannot use them or feel excluded from doing so, is reflected in this challenging and important document.

We are determined to make all our parks and green spaces even more accessible and welcoming and have a clear action plan of annual improvements in place which will be monitored. We have co-produced this strategy with residents, stakeholders, and the wider Haringey community and we will deliver it together.

Councillor Emily Arkell
Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure



Focus groups at the launch event

Grounding the strategy

The strategy's aims, core plans, and action plans were developed with careful consideration of the broader policy landscape, ensuring alignment with the Local Plan and Haringey's *Health and Wellbeing Strategy* for instance.

To more effectively inform its asset management plan, the Council commissioned a natural capital account for the borough which demonstrates the value and benefits of Haringey's natural assets assuming their continued upkeep. Recommendations from access audits in three district parks will also guide Haringey in making borough-wide changes to maximise accessibility across their green spaces.

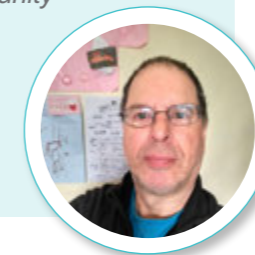


Feedback and discussion from key stakeholders at the launch event



Haringey's local green spaces are vital to every community. The 65 local green space friends groups and their many volunteers throughout the borough work hard to champion and improve such spaces. To achieve this, our network is committed to working alongside and in partnership with the Council's Parks & Leisure Service and their dedicated staff, most recently around strategic policies, communications, funding bids, and promoting community engagement and activities.

Dave Morris
Chair of Haringey Friends of Parks Forum



Moving forward

Haringey Council has produced an overarching action plan for the strategy, supported by individual action plans for each of the core plans, and is committed to updating action plans annually and reviewing progress every five years.

Hand in hand with the strategy's development and formal adoption in July 2023, the Council also undertook a service-wide restructure, which created new roles and aims to provide training for staff and partners to support the strategy's implementation.

CONTACT

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Find more on **Green Space Strategies** in our Resources Hub

Notes for scoring



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



2. QUALITY STANDARDS are assessed by the results of the *Green Flag* and other award schemes, as well as additional measures boroughs are taking to maintain and improve quality standards.



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



4. EVENTS are assessed by a borough having formally adopted an events policy; provision of a range of community and commercial outdoor events; whether income generated is ring-fenced for the parks service; actions to make outdoor events more accessible and inclusive; and how event organisers manage recycling 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; encouraging engagement with physical and wellbeing activities; utilising health funding; supporting community food growing areas; provision of free drinking water; provision of toilets; and initiatives to improve and enhance access, safety, and inclusion.



6. SUPPORTING NATURE is assessed by formally adopting a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) or similar; the percentage of parks that have management plans which include BAP objectives; the percentage of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) in positive conservation management; supporting the Greenspace Information for Greater London (or similar); and delivering biodiversity outreach.



7. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT is assessed by *Community Green Flag Awards*; the percentage of parks with park friends groups; having a borough-wide friends forum; actively supporting friends groups; levels of volunteering; and transfer of assets managed by the community.



8. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT is assessed by the percentage of park apprentices and trainees; approaches to improving equality, diversity, and inclusion within the workforce; provision of staff development and training opportunities; working with training bodies to attract and upskill staff; and provision of learning opportunities in parks.



9. SUSTAINABILITY is assessed by the percentage of green fleet and using accredited fuel-efficient route planning; the percentage of battery-operated equipment; recycling in parks; 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; using an asset management system and having a costed asset management plan; implementing actions to protect green space; and having undertaken a scrutiny review of parks services in the last ten years.

Overall scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Overall Score	
Lewisham	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	★	●	●	55.50	↑
Hackney	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	★	●	54.25	
Lambeth	●	★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	52.75	
Barking & Dagenham	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	48.50	
Richmond upon Thames	★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	48.00	
Haringey	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	★	47.50	↑
Southwark	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	46.25	
Wandsworth	●	●	●	●	●	★	●	●	●	●	46.00	↑
Sutton	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	45.00	
Greenwich	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	44.50	
Waltham Forest	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	44.00	
Ealing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	43.75	
Islington	●	●	★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	43.75	
Kensington & Chelsea	●	●	●	●	★	●	●	●	●	●	43.75	
Hounslow	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	42.75	
Brent	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	42.00	↑
Havering	○	★	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	42.00	
Tower Hamlets	●	●	●	★	●	●	●	●	●	●	41.00	
Kingston	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	40.50	
Redbridge	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	39.25	
Camden	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	38.75	
Westminster	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	38.75	
Barnet	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	38.25	
Croydon	●	●	●	●	●	●	★	●	●	●	38.25	↑
Enfield	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	35.75	

This year, 25 London boroughs participated in part one of the report. City Gardens managed by the City of London Corporation (CoL) is not included in this section as the Square Mile does not offer a comparable data set, and the wider portfolio of open spaces managed by CoL are run as charities outside the physical boundary of the Square Mile.

A blank circle indicates that a borough has either not submitted data or the data is not available, or a score has not been achieved, for that criterion. Featured case studies are marked with a ★, and a ↑ represents a significantly improved score on the prior assessment.



Ferntower Road, Newington Green, LB Islington
Credit: Vanessa Berberian

Part Two

Case studies on collaborative solutions

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Barking & Dagenham

Rewilding the Rom

The River Rom restoration project, led by **Barking and Dagenham Council** in partnership with Thames21, successfully reconnected the river to its natural floodplain, creating new wetland habitats and improving flood resilience. The project also provided a valuable research site for studying biodiversity and disease mitigation.

The River Rom, a tributary of the Thames, flows through the east London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham and Havering. In recent years the river's water quality had deteriorated due to sewage misconnections and overflows, and the dredging and straightening of the river channel has resulted in habitat loss. Further, historic manmade earth mounds in the Chase Local Nature Reserve prevented the river from naturally flooding into its floodplain, hindering its ecological function.

To address these issues, the Barking and Dagenham Ranger Service saw an opportunity to remove these earth mounds, allowing the River Rom to flood its natural floodplain once more. This restoration would not only support aquatic and semi-aquatic wildlife but also improve flood protection for nearby communities by slowing the flow of water downstream and storing it on the floodplain.



Through this collaborative effort, we have reconnected the River Rom to its floodplain, developed a wetland, and helped to transform the river into a healthy environment for wildlife, whilst reducing the flood risk for local residents, which is desperately needed in light of the climate emergency.

Together, we have not only restored this reach of the River Rom, but also initiated change to create lasting positive environmental impacts for people and for biodiversity.

Carolina Pinto
River Restoration Manager at Thames21

Combining expertise

Recognising the complexity of the project, the Council formed a partnership with a range of expert organisations through the [Roding, Beam and Ingrebourne Catchment Partnership](#). This collaborative approach was essential to ensuring the restoration would be successful without causing unintended flood risks or ecological damage.

Thames21, a charity dedicated to improving rivers and waterways, worked alongside the Council to design the project. This combined expertise allowed for the breaching of the earth mounds and the creation of interconnected wetland habitats, enhancing biodiversity and restoring the floodplain's natural function. The Environment

Agency provided vital guidance to ensure the work did not increase the risk of flooding to nearby properties.

Volunteers from the Thames Chase Trust and Eastbrookend Country Park also played a significant role in the project, helping to deliver it on time and within budget. Financial support came from multiple sources, including the [Kusuma Trust](#), the Mayor of London's [Rewild London Fund](#), and Essex and Suffolk Water, demonstrating the broad support for this ambitious initiative.

Getting the right partner organisations from the start helped make this project both successful and a rewarding experience for all involved.



Aerial view of the Rom wetlands



Aerial view of the Rom wetlands

Informing research

With the restoration of the River Rom’s wetland habitats completed in spring 2023, the project opened up opportunities for research on how biodiversity changes from ‘time zero’ after rewilding interventions.

The partnership expanded to include the European Union’s Horizon Europe [BEPREP Project](#), which aims to collect evidence on how nature restoration targeting biodiversity recovery can serve as a major tool to mitigate disease risk. The project’s research partner, Fondazione Edmund Mach, collected environmental samples from the site, focusing on disease reservoirs and vectors such as mosquitoes and ticks, as well as water and soil quality. These samples were collected four times over a two-year period and will be used to compare with data from 11 other rewilding sites globally to provide valuable insights into the connections between nature restoration and public health.



Kusuma Trust is happy to have partnered with Thames21 to help restore and rewild the River Rom and to see this extraordinary place become a key natural resource for the local community and all Londoners.

Spokesperson of Kusuma Trust



We’re so pleased this fantastic project has been recognised with the UK River Prize Award. The restoration will benefit the area for years to come thanks to flood risk reduction and an improvement in biodiversity. A huge well done to our Barking and Dagenham Park Rangers, Thames21 and everyone else involved in bringing this fantastic project to life.

Councillor Saima Ashraf
Deputy Leader of Barking and Dagenham Council

A successful model

The [Rewilding the Rom project](#) has been awarded the [UK River Prize](#), which celebrates the achievements of those working to improve the natural functioning and ecological integrity of the UK’s rivers and catchments.

Following the project’s success, the Council has continued its partnership with Thames21 to clean up and improve the Gores Brook and restore a significant stretch of river currently buried under Parsloes Park in Dagenham, helping to enhance local biodiversity and increase flood resilience in the area.

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Find more on **Water Management** in our Resources Hub

Barnet

Playground for all

Fair Play Barnet, opened at Victoria Recreation Ground in January 2024, is the UK's first maximum accessibility and inclusive playground. The purposefully designed playground was born from a three-way collaboration between **Barnet Council**, expert parents and the Council's play contractor, Kompan.

In early 2022, the Council was approached by a local resident who was keen to build a playground where people of all abilities could play together. The Council identified Victoria Recreation Ground as an ideal location due to its proximity to a leisure centre with essential supporting facilities such as Changing Places toilets, parking, and a café.

Co-designing with experts and users

The design process began with a thorough review of accessible and inclusive equipment available in the market. The team focused on compatibility, usability, and long-term maintenance. Parent expert Deborah Gundle, who has firsthand experience with accessibility issues through her disabled son, provided invaluable insights.

The initial designs were shared with various disability networks to garner feedback such as to include equipment for climbing and for multiple users to enjoy a shared experience. In a separate public consultation in 2023, a draft design of the playground and images of potential equipment were provided in the questionnaire, which was promoted widely to gather a wide range of views.

The consultation received 118 responses from professional experts, residents with disabilities, as well as parents and carers with a range of experience in different disabilities. The feedback was vital in informing the design, such as ensuring there would be one entrance and exit to ensure users will not leave unnoticed by their carers, and equipment that can be used by both children and adults.



Thoughtful design

The project team put together a matrix of the proposed equipment based on the age range it is suitable for, the type of movement it involves, its ease of use for individuals in wheelchairs or lying down, if it has back support, and if it could be enjoyed by multiple users simultaneously.

The team also considered other aspects of the space: solid safety surfacing for complete accessibility across the entire playground; differently coloured textured paths weaving through the play area to support the visually

impaired in navigation; large picnic tables to allow three wheelchair users along with other people to be comfortably seated at any one time; and communication boards specially developed to be placed around the playground to facilitate non-verbal communication between users.

During the final stages of construction, the team tested the equipment from perspectives of a wheelchair user and an adult non-wheelchair user, adjusting the height of key elements and ensuring proper spacing under play panels for better wheelchair access, and placing the five communication boards at two different heights.



Key success factors and lessons learnt

The project began as an explorative effort, allowing the team to research and evaluate a range of equipment options without strict limitations. However, the project team found that it had to adopt a more focused approach and establish a project budget to deliver a playground on site.

A significant factor in the project's success was the Council's framework contract with Kompan, which allowed a playground contractor to be involved from the outset to evaluate the feasibility of the project.

The ability to purchase third-party equipment through the contract allowed the project team to consider a wider range of options. The use of standard, non-bespoke equipment also simplified maintenance, with no additional costs for repairs or parts replacement.

Collaboration was at the heart of the success of Fair Play Barnet. Each party brought unique perspectives and experiences, from the Council and Kompan's experience in playground development to parents' insights on accessibility. The team will continue working together to promote the playground and advocate for more inclusive play spaces.



Communication board at Fair Play Barnet
Credit: Kompan UK



Multi-play unit at Fair Play Barnet
Credit: Kompan UK

Community impact

The £500,000 project was primarily funded by independent donors, with the Council contributing £100,000 and undertaking its future maintenance. Today, Fair Play Barnet is a popular space, used by a wide range of people, including special schools bringing their pupils during the day and parents and children using the space to meet up. The Council is exploring offering quiet times with supervision in response to community requests.

Fair Play Barnet not only sets a new standard for accessible playgrounds but also highlights the importance of community involvement and collaboration in creating inclusive public spaces. The playground's success is a testament to what can be achieved when local authorities, parents, and contractors work together to create environments that welcome everyone.

CONTACT

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This is life changing for me, I can come and meet parents of other children with disabilities.



Wheelchair accessible roundabout at Fair Play Barnet
Credit: Kompan UK



Fair Play Barnet has enabled my son to interact with friends and family on an equal level. Powerchair users are often forgotten when parks say they are inclusive. Fair Play Barnet has ensured that he can swing, go on roundabouts, climb the slopes and seesaw – things he has not done since being confined to a wheelchair and too heavy for carers to lift him. Thank you for making this park truly inclusive to all.



Find more on **Play** in our Resources Hub

Camden & Islington

Highways Greening Accelerator

With limited space for green areas, London boroughs **Camden** and **Islington** worked together on a skills and capacity building project to better equip the councils in delivering highway green infrastructure at scale and target areas of greatest need.

The *Highways Greening Accelerator* (HGA) was a two-year partnership between Camden and Islington Councils, as part of the *Future Parks Accelerator* programme. With space for traditional green areas limited in these densely populated inner London boroughs, the project sought to improve councils' skills and capacity to deliver green infrastructure along highways.

Focusing on the internal processes of the two councils, specifically on how they plan, deliver, and maintain new green infrastructure, the HGA aimed to deliver, among other objectives:

- **In-house training and development** – a year-long programme for council officers in highways greening to address skills gaps identified from over 100 survey responses, culminating in a [practical guidance document](#)
- **Green infrastructure mapping tool** – a review of the councils' green infrastructure mapping data and internal processes, and how these interact with decision making, to inform data-led, evidence-based decisions on where new green infrastructure would have the greatest impact
- **Cross-authority learning** – capturing and sharing lessons from a range of greening schemes across London, the UK, and abroad.



An informal community gardening group helping with long-term maintenance at Hartland Road, Camden
Credit: Vanessa Berberian

To understand the benefits and challenges of this cross-borough project, we spoke with project leads Joe Lewis from Camden Council and Maddy Gunn from Islington Council.

How did Camden and Islington come together for this project?

“ Camden and Islington are neighbouring boroughs with many of the same challenges. We are both highly urbanised, with areas lacking in green space and nature access. Many pockets of our boroughs are also vulnerable to extreme weather events like surface water flooding and urban heat, which can be dangerous for vulnerable residents. Recognising these shared issues, we have developed a long-standing collaborative relationship. Our *Parks for Health* initiative, which redefined parks as public health assets, was a key example of this partnership.

The idea for the HGA came from our desire to integrate more green infrastructure into public spaces, particularly streets, which make up 80% of the public realm. Together, we explored innovative ways to use highways land to address the unequal distribution of green space and the growing need for climate resilience in our boroughs.

What lessons from *Parks for Health* informed your approach to HGA?

“ One of the biggest takeaways was ensuring senior leadership buy-in. Having directors and senior representatives at board level gave the project credibility and helped resolve challenges more easily. This strong mandate for change allowed different council departments to work together effectively.

How did the councils benefit from collaborating?

“ The HGA project drew on expertise from both councils, with input from a wide range of departments and external consultants. As lead officers, we acted as the main liaisons within our respective boroughs, and the unique understanding we each had of our council's internal processes were helpful in facilitating internal communications with other departments.

The project also facilitated new relationships between officers in both councils. Officers who engaged in the training programme found it beneficial to meet with counterparts in the other borough to discuss shared challenges and opportunities.

It was valuable to see how the other borough operated and learn from each other's approaches. The differences in our political contexts, funding mechanisms, and delivery structures were as useful to the project as our similarities, helping us think beyond 'business as usual,' and identify areas for improvement.

What were the key challenges you faced?

“ Reaching a wider audience within the councils was difficult. We wanted to engage colleagues across different departments, especially highways and transport, but getting their attention was tricky as they were often occupied with ongoing projects. Working together allowed us to refine our engagement strategies, ensuring the project was tailored to their needs.



Internal procurement processes posed another challenge to meeting the funding's delivery timetable. However, close collaboration between the councils, especially in developing briefs and tendering, helped us streamline the process. Governance and sign-off procedures also differed between Camden and Islington, so we had to plan carefully to avoid delays.

It was great to have presentations by experts in SuDS, planting design, and green infrastructure. The site visits to other London boroughs really helped us reflect on what we are currently doing.
Richard Walter
Camden Transport Design Engineer

Any advice for others embarking on a similar project?

If we could do it again, we would establish a cross-departmental steering group from the outset. This would ensure broader support and streamline internal communications. Early buy-in from senior leadership is crucial for maintaining momentum and securing internal support.

What's next for the Camden-Islington partnership?

We will continue collaborating on the green infrastructure mapping tool, refining it based on joint feedback. We are also sharing our learnings through national webinars, so other boroughs can benefit.

We would recommend thinking early about how the project outputs will be applied. Aligning trial work with live projects helps ensure continuation of the work into real life once the funded part of the project ends.

Looking ahead, we will apply the standards and guidance developed through HGA to major highways projects along the borough boundary. We are also feeding into the planning phase of the Nature Towns and Cities project led by the National Trust and Natural England, and funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, to help councils and community organisations bring nature into every neighbourhood.

Encouraging interaction between officers from both councils is important too. Providing opportunities for them to meet, discuss and learn from each other helps with forging stronger working relationships and enabling more effective cross-borough collaboration.

We would also recommend working with partners who have a good understanding and experience of working with the public sector. This was key to the smooth working with our training partner, UDL, who could tailor and perfectly pitch its content to officers based on its understanding of the challenges they face and the way that different internal departments run.



Greening scheme at Charlton Place, Islington
Credit: Vanessa Berberian



The Best Practice and Lessons Learnt document produced by LDA Design
Credit: LDA Design

The HGA programme has produced guidance and case studies that can benefit any local authority seeking to improve its approach to green infrastructure on highways.

The programme and guidance documents will help to unlock the potential within the council for delivering excellent, multi-functional, climate resilient streets, and address the multiple challenges we face as a borough and city from a changing climate.
Adam Harrison
Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden

Funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the National Trust, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and supported by the Greater London Authority, the project offers a blueprint for other councils looking to create climate-resilient streets.

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Find more on Nature-based Solutions in our Resources Hub

Chiswick House & Gardens Trust

Revitalising the Kitchen Garden

In recognition of the importance of accessible outdoor space and participation in outdoor activities to support physical and mental wellbeing, the **Chiswick House and Gardens Trust (CHGT)** partnered with the community, schools, and other charities to co-develop their derelict Kitchen Garden and co-create a thriving community programme.

Shaping the garden with the community

Inspired by the potential of the walled Kitchen Garden as a space for learning, sanctuary, and inspiration, CHGT embarked on an extensive consultation process across Hounslow with community groups. The focus was on engaging underrepresented and underserved communities to understand their needs and explore how the garden could provide meaningful support. These consultations led to wider conversations with various stakeholders, including local councillors, cultural organisations, and heritage bodies like English Heritage and Historic England.

The insights gained shaped the objectives of the resulting *Growing Together at Chiswick House* community programme, initiated in 2021 and funded by The Linbury Trust. The initiative focuses on supporting those who face barriers to engagement, enhancing physical and mental wellbeing, and fostering connections to nature. It does this by offering opportunities to come together regularly to garden, cook, be creative, and co-develop a wide range of nature-based projects.



Riana Development Project x Mindfood participants harvesting salad
Credit: Harvinder Bahra, CHGT



Hackney School of Food workshop for William Hogarth Primary School
Credit: Harvinder Bahra, CHGT

To revitalise the space, CHGT collaborated with a diverse group of community groups self-identified through the consultation, which has now grown to include over 50 local partners and schools. The co-design approach has not only empowered residents to shape the space and its use, but also lent a unique and dynamic character to the garden and provided opportunities for knowledge exchange between all participants. For example, with input from partners [Trinjan](#) and [The Masbro Elders Project](#), the Tea Garden was expanded in 2024 to feature 54 different plant species, enriching the garden's biodiversity.



Our groups often think that we are sharing our skills with them, but the learning goes both ways. We have learnt as much from them about the meaning of plants, how they are used, their cultural and medicinal importance, and the stories they hold.

Rosie Fyles
Head of Gardens

A community resource

The programme has allowed its partners to develop meaningful activities that address the identified needs and gaps in local services by:

- engaging over 3,000 individuals from underrepresented and underserved communities;
- developing the skills, experience and social networks of over 200 volunteers, who contributed 6,000 hours in 2023 alone to the maintenance, development, and presentation of the House and grounds;
- donating half of the garden's produce to local food charities, supplying 1.2 tonnes of food in 2023, equivalent to 2,600 meals, for vulnerable individuals and low-income households; and
- providing apprenticeship opportunities to local residents, offering pathways to employment.



The collaboration has not only revitalised the garden but also strengthened CHGT’s organisational resilience, by fostering a strong network of community partners, dedicated volunteers, and local organisations. Increased community engagement has attracted new funding streams, so ensuring the programme’s financial sustainability.



(The Growing Together at Chiswick House programme) gave them a sense of belonging and appealed to migrant communities who were yearning for their metaphysical home. They gained knowledge of growing, plants, and horticulture, and it was extremely beneficial.

Community Group Leader



Trinjan ladies inspecting the kale harvest
Credit: Sarah Eastabrook, CHGT

The power of partnership and patience

CHGT’s experience with working with the community through the programme has provided valuable learnings and insights:

- **People over activity** – CHGT found success by focusing on building long-term relationships rather than the delivery of activities, letting themselves be led by the changing needs of their partners. For instance, as the community groups’ confidence grows with time, CHGT moves away from developing in-depth projects, to supporting more self-led activities and facilitating jointly funded projects.
- **Good co-design takes time** – Collaborative projects require patience and time to build partnerships, develop trust, and encourage shared decision making. While this process can be slow, it leads to more meaningful and impactful outcomes for all involved.
- **Continued consultation is key** – Keeping an open channel with stakeholders is essential to ensuring that the Garden remains vibrant and relevant to the community. Regular feedback helps CHGT adjust activities to meet the evolving needs of participants.
- **Building strong relationships** – Strong, sustained partnerships are built on regular contact, clear communication, and shared goals.
- **Minimising conflict** – Early identification of each group’s unique needs helps prevent challenges later on and ensures that everyone involved feels supported. CHGT’s alignment with local council priorities has also helped to ensure smooth project execution.

Expanding and sustaining the collaborative work

As demand for collaboration at the garden continues to grow, CHGT is embarking on a new capital development project to expand their facilities and accommodate more community-led activities.

There are also plans to broaden the programme’s volunteer offerings, encouraging people from diverse backgrounds to engage in ways that suit their needs, such as less frequent or less physically demanding tasks.

CHGT will continue to foster its relationships with local groups and extend its reach to schools in neighbouring boroughs to offer both facilitated and self-led resources.

The lessons and experience from the community programme will inform work to maintain, expand, and pilot activities at the new Cedar Yards Community Development & Creative Campus, which aims to improve community wellbeing, confidence, and connection to nature.



Find more on **Place-making and Place-keeping** in our Resources Hub



Greenspace Information for Greater London

Biodiversity Net Gain support

The capital's local environmental records centre, **Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC (GiGL)**, is no stranger to collaborating with others to arrive at innovative solutions to tackle some of the city's biggest biodiversity challenges. When biodiversity net gain (BNG) was introduced under the Environment Act 2021, GiGL sought to assist local planning authorities (LPAs) with the new requirements.

Breaking ground with Sutton

In spring 2022, Sutton Council's biodiversity team approached GiGL to see if it would be possible to replicate the mapping work GiGL did for another partner and determine a BNG baseline for a larger area as an indication of the area's biodiversity value. Sutton Council's strong foundational work in preparing for the onset of BNG requirements as an early adopter of BNG through the 2018 *Sutton Local Plan*, on top of its longstanding partnership with GiGL, made it an ideal collaborator for GiGL to explore ways in supporting stakeholders with BNG.

The pilot project unfolded in two phases: mapping a small trial area, then expanding to the entire LPA. To calculate the baseline scores, GiGL utilised its [legacy habitat data](#) from London-wide surveys conducted in the 80s, 90s and 00s, supplemented by recent site data where available, including ecological surveys and the Ordnance Survey MasterMap.

Where habitat data appeared not to show the whole picture, Sutton's strong in-house ecological expertise proved vital in identifying areas in GiGL's outputs where ground-truthing surveys were needed. The feedback and new data from the Council enabled GiGL to update the BNG outputs accordingly.

More information on the methodology is available online [here](#).

Refining methodologies

Following the pilot with Sutton, GiGL collaborated with the London boroughs of Bexley, Southwark, Camden, Bromley, and the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames in early 2023. Some were approached by GiGL due to the quality of their habitat data or having previously shown interest, and others approached GiGL upon hearing about the initial pilots.

Sutton's expert inputs allowed GiGL to refine the methodology for the ensuing pilot projects and for all of GiGL's partner LPAs, for example, in assigning reasonable default scores for values such as condition of habitats, which can only be known when detailed condition assessments are performed on site by a qualified ecologist.

The diverse mix of habitats and land-use types in the subsequent pilot projects further ensured the project outputs would be reflective of London's diversity. The wider collaboration with a range of LPAs allowed GiGL's team to test methodologies in various local contexts, considering different levels of expertise and urbanisation.

Challenges and lessons

The BNG pilot projects concluded by March 2024, with GiGL working to expand the mapping to all of London and provide this service to all its Service Level Agreement (SLA) partners.

While all projects completed phase one, only four proceeded to phase two. Challenges included staff changes within LPAs leading to a gap in expertise and capacity, and concerns over the currency of existing habitat data.



The London Borough of Sutton now, thanks to the partnership with GiGL, has a baseline biodiversity score for the whole borough. We know that this score is not accurate, due to a variety of factors (including the translation of legacy data into the new UKHab system and the fact that OS Mastermap does not capture biodiverse roofs, for instance) but it does provide a starting point for identifying data gaps and collecting and refining data to improve the granularity and resolution of where we have high biodiversity levels, and where we need to make interventions. This way, we can chart our gains and losses of biodiversity through data collection, rather than anecdotal information.

The collaboration has produced indicative information for our Local Plan review and has provided the Council with significant gains in mapping biodiversity, to work on, at the cost of some staff time. Thus, the benefit cost ratio to Sutton by working with GiGL has been extremely high and it has been a pleasure to be at the forefront of this important work.

David Warburton
Senior Biodiversity Officer
at Sutton Council



Subsea7 biodiverse roof atop Sutton Town Centre
Credit: David Warburton



GiGL Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC
the capital's environmental records centre

Several key lessons emerged from these pilots: the ecological expertise within LPAs varies significantly, necessitating more resources to strengthen in-house teams, especially with new BNG requirements. Additionally, LPA teams are often overstretched and need support and training to improve biodiversity outcomes.

The pilot projects underscored the importance of current and accurate habitat data. There were assumptions that high-level maps from PDF reports could be easily incorporated into GiGL's data, which is not always feasible and, where possible, is time-consuming.

If the data shared, by LPA contractors for example, are in appropriate formats following GiGL's [data standards](#), it can enhance the London-wide databases and create a more accurate picture of an area. GiGL is also advocating for BNG data to be shared with Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs) so the information is not lost, can inform other projects and allow the assessment of the effectiveness of BNG further down the line.

Future applications

The outputs from these projects can serve as a high-level baseline to aid borough-level discussions and inform LPAs' evidence base when reviewing Local Plans for borough-specific BNG policies. At a development project level, the data can provide an indication of potential

habitats, though on-site assessments are necessary for more granular data and site-specific calculations.

GiGL's collaboration with stakeholders enables informed, evidence-based decisions in policy and practice. Such partnerships are crucial to achieve better biodiversity outcomes, and capacity building in LPAs. GiGL is grateful for its partners' willingness to contribute their expertise and local knowledge, which helps develop useful methodologies and outputs for other organisations.



The guidance we received from GiGL was invaluable. The project provided us with a comprehensive baseline of the various habitat types throughout the borough and their likely distinctiveness. This exercise has been instrumental in preparing us for BNG and improving our understanding of where biodiversity units could be allocated. We believe this work will enable the Council to monitor habitat improvements and changes over time. Furthermore, it will assist in identifying future areas for SINC reviews and developing effective strategies to enhance biodiversity in Kingston.

Elliot Newton
Biodiversity Officer at Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

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Find more on **Biodiversity** in our Resources Hub

Harrow

Revisiting the Headstone Manor Park project

Three years after **Harrow Council's** impressive multi-stakeholder project at Headstone Manor Park, which was featured in the *Good Parks for London 2021 report*, the project manager reflects on the key challenges faced, the importance of collaboration, and lessons learnt.

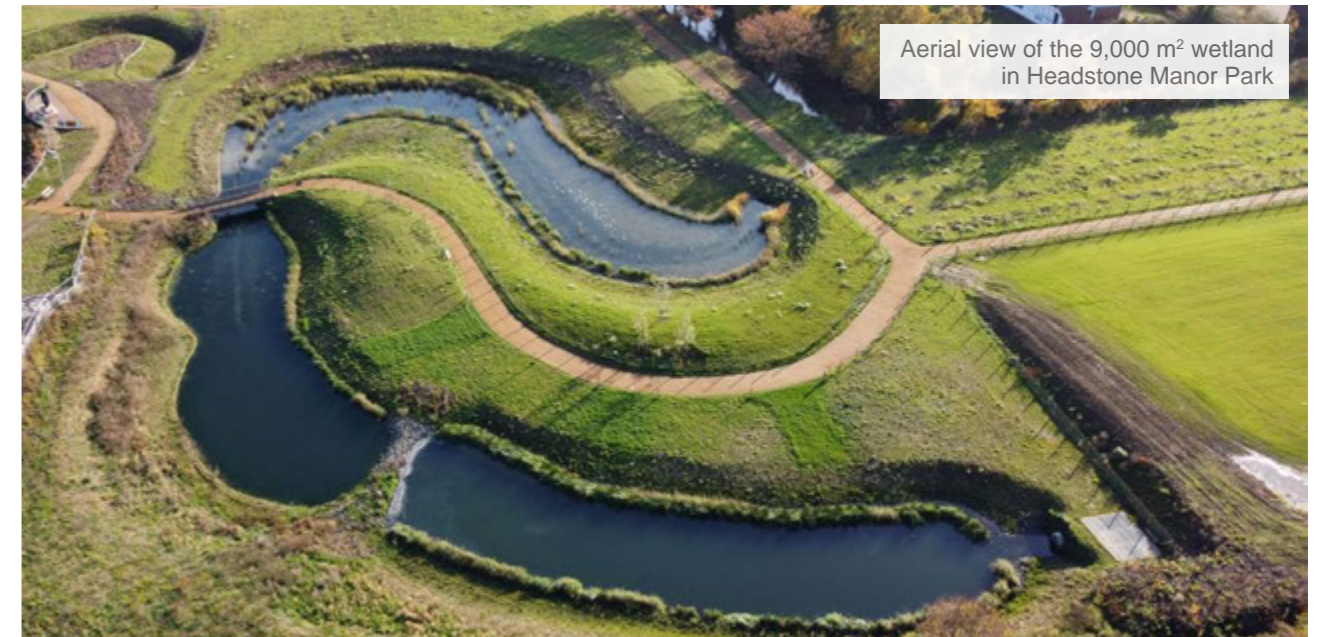
Between 2016 and 2021, Harrow Council, alongside partners Thames21, the Friends of Headstone Manor Park (FoHMP), and the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum, led the transformation of Headstone Manor Park. The [project](#) featured the de-culverting of 120 m of Yeading Brook and the creation of wetlands to manage flood risk and improve water quality.

Three years on, we hear from Michael Bradshaw, Harrow Council's Flood Risk Manager, on where the partnership is in the continued management of the park and learnings from the project.

Why was collaboration so important in this project?

“ This was not merely a typical park improvement project—it spanned heritage preservation, river and flood management, and community engagement. Collaboration was key because the project involved a wide array of disciplines: landscape design, ecology, engineering, heritage conservation, and more. This was why the project had as many as 11 stakeholders and multiple funders, to bring together experts from various fields to guide us.

The real standout for me was the community engagement. We consulted residents through surveys, play days, workshops, visitor observation studies, and online consultation to name a few. This feedback shaped our two-year activity plan, which offered educational events and volunteering opportunities led by our Outdoor Learning Officer in partnership with Thames21, FoHMP, and other stakeholders.



Aerial view of the 9,000 m² wetland in Headstone Manor Park

Our co-design approach also influenced physical improvements in the park, such as new paths, footbridges, the restoration of the river, and the creation of wetlands. Our partnerships with the Crane Valley Partnership and Thames21 continue to flourish, bringing in new partners and funding, such as from ZSL and the Smarter Water Catchments initiative.

What were some of the challenges?

“ With so many stakeholders, differing opinions were inevitable. There were times when ideas clashed, but we always referred back to the 11 project objectives outlined in the funding agreement to ensure alignment.

Although we were met with some opposition from the FoHMP when a beloved willow tree growing over the culvert needed to be removed, we were able to convince them by explaining the logical reasons behind the removal and sharing the Council's wider plans to plant trees and an orchard.

Weather also presented issues. Prolonged wet spells and consecutive COVID-19 lockdowns delayed the project, impacting costs and timelines. We had to adjust by tapping into contingency funds, seeking extra match funding, and realigning our activity plan. In June 2021, we faced a funding shortfall of £265,140, but the National Lottery Heritage Fund approved our request for additional funding, and we were granted a three-month extension to complete financial reporting.

What key lessons did you learn?

“ Having an experienced project manager with insight into environmental engineering or landscape architecture is vital. As the in-house landscape architect and I have been working in the borough for a long time, we have strong local knowledge of the rivers, trees and landscape. We could also provide the institutional knowledge and learned experience of which consultants and contractors to engage to fill any gaps in-house expertise.



Internally, it was helpful to secure buy-in from local politicians, finance, and procurement teams, ensuring smooth budget management and payment processes. Monitoring and evaluation were equally important—we created a framework and toolkit to track project progress and regularly submitted reports, culminating in a final evaluation.

The community engagement during the project was invaluable. It not only strengthened our relationships with local groups but also raised awareness about the park's transformation. This engagement led to a growth in volunteer groups and showcased the power of collaboration between the Council and the Harrow Parks Forum.

On the practical side, working with the natural environment brought its own challenges. For instance, choosing the right plants that could thrive in both drought and flood conditions was crucial for the success of the wetlands.

Where is the project now?

“ We are working hard to maintain the park with limited resources, but collaboration across borough departments has helped tremendously. The project has strengthened our relationships not only within the parks team but also with the infrastructure, community engagement, and planning policy teams. This inter-Directorate approach means we can tap into different budgets and expertise, helping us secure future funding.

The FoHMP has grown beyond our expectations and now collaborates with catchment hosts on activities like water quality testing and biodiversity monitoring. The Council will continue supporting this group through our Community Engagement Team to keep the momentum going and preserve the park for future generations.

Is Harrow Council planning to replicate this project elsewhere?

“ Absolutely. Building on our strong relationship with Thames21, we are working with them, Thames Water, and Barnet Council on the *Action for Silk Stream* project, which will deliver 25 nature-based solutions for flood management in the Silk Stream catchment.

Funded by DEFRA, the project will see solutions implemented at Chandos Recreation Ground in Harrow and Watling Park in Barnet. We are sharing the lessons learnt from Headstone Manor Park to ensure even better outcomes for these new projects.

Overall, this project has shown us how successful a multi-stakeholder, community-driven approach can be, and we look forward to applying these lessons elsewhere.

“ *During the project, Thames21 worked closely with Harrow Borough Council, the Friends of Headstone Manor Park, the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum, and the Museum. The purpose has been to develop residents' understanding of their local waterway, its wildlife, and its role in the wider network of waterways. Sessions have included exploring personal water usage and impacts. For example, how dog flea treatment can end up in waterways, as can silt, oil and toxic metals washed off roofs and roads.*

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Vicky Duxbury
Outdoor Learning Officer at Thames21



Touring the site at the open day of Headstone Manor Park



Combining environmental education with play for school children at Headstone Manor Park

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Find more on **Water Management** in our Resources Hub

Hounslow

Inspiring residents to take green action

In a span of three years, **Hounslow Council**, in partnership with Lampton Greenspace and Greentalk, distributed 2,000 trees to residents as part of a borough-wide initiative to increase tree coverage and enhance green spaces.

The *Free Trees for Hounslow* project was launched in 2021 as part of the Council's target to become net zero by 2030 and its pledge to plant one tree for every child born annually to significantly reduce the borough's carbon footprint.

The primary goal of the project was to enhance green infrastructure on private land, not just public spaces, while boosting public engagement with the borough's green spaces. The initiative, initially set up for residents to pick up a fruit or non-fruit tree to plant in their garden, turned into a giveaway of fruit trees to not just residents, but also allotment holders, schools, community, and faith groups.



Thank you for involving schools in this. It is a wonderful idea to get kids healthy and learning about gardening.

Teacher who runs a gardening club at school



Fruit trees at the 2023/24 giveaway



Fruit trees for the giveaway in 2022

Partnership working

The project was a collaborative effort, with Hounslow's parks team leading and coordinating operations (marketing, communications, and tree giveaway events), with delivery partners, the Council's parks service provider, Lampton Greenspace, managing tree stock, and Greentalk offering a web service to facilitate tree orders.

Between 2021 and 2024, the project brought together a team of seven staff from the three partners to deliver the project and provide technical and communications support. Each year, the team convened in August–September to plan that year's giveaway tree species, collection dates and locations. Ahead of the tree orders in late October through early November, Greentalk charted out the necessary updates to the website, and made improvements after analysing what worked and what didn't in the year prior.

Throughout the giveaway events in December and January, Lampton Greenspace's experts offered guidance on planting the right trees in the right locations at the right times, to ensure they could thrive. After each planting season, the team reflected on improvements for the next year, from giveaway locations to refinements to the website or booking process.

A crucial element of the project was the creation of a bespoke online platform by Greentalk, funded by the Council with an investment of just under £17,350. The *Hounslow Greentalk* platform provided a streamlined system for residents to request their trees and was refined each year to improve the ordering process. Additional features were added over time, such as a map of newly planted and adopted trees, a tree planting and care guide, and a space for users to share their own tree walks.



London Borough of Hounslow

Lampton Services Greenspace

greentalk

Outcomes

The project received an overwhelmingly positive response from the community, with signups increasing year-on-year. It successfully achieved its key objectives of greening up the borough, raising environmental awareness and increasing public engagement—it connected with hundreds of residents, schools, and community groups, empowering them to contribute to the Council’s sustainability and climate resilience goals.

The team dealt with the recurring challenge of unclaimed trees from giveaways by redistributing them to allotment associations, for later planting in council-managed parks as orchards once the trees have become more established. The Council plans to monitor the success of the planted trees by contacting participating residents for updates annually.

Additional benefits included:

- **Promotion of healthy food** – the switch to fruit trees sparked interest in food growing
- **Arboriculture education** – participating residents acquired new skills in tree planting and care through briefings and hands-on involvement
- **Improving health** – tree planting activities encouraged physical exercise and helped improve mental health
- **Increased park awareness** – holding tree collection points at various parks throughout the borough promoted Hounslow’s green spaces.



Residents planting their trees at the ROWE Community Centre



Great project, hope there is more like this in the future.

Local resident



The 2023/24 giveaway at Boston Manor Park

Success factors

Underpinning the success of the project is the alignment with Hounslow’s Nature Recovery Action Plan and Green Infrastructure Strategy on collaborative tree planting approach.

The project developed each year, engaging new audiences and strengthening the partnership with delivery partners. By allowing anyone in Hounslow to pick up a tree for free and plant it in their gardens, any resident could engage with nature and play a direct role in creating a more sustainable borough.

The development of an easy-to-use booking system, adequately resourced, helped ensure all requests were responded to and orders tracked. Its continual refinement and improvement, as well as the provision of a comprehensive set of frequently asked questions, boosted orders and reduced the number of queries.



Love the idea, great for the community.

Faith group community member

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Find more on Trees and Woodlands in our Resources Hub

Peabody

Reinvigorating Gallions Lake

The restoration of Gallions Lake highlights the impact and importance of collaboration and community engagement in creating healthier, sustainable urban spaces. **Peabody** and its collaborators successfully integrated ecological restoration with community involvement, helping to raise awareness and deepen residents' connection to their surrounding natural environment.

Peabody is a custodian of five lakes and seven kilometres of canals in Thamesmead including Gallions Lake, which had long suffered from pollution and silt build-up. The lake, popular with anglers, was compromised by chemicals such as nitrates and phosphates entering through surface runoff, leading to poor water quality and harmful algal blooms.

Guided by its [Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) and [Biodiversity Action Plan](#), which focus on enhancing natural spaces and create healthier and more social places, Peabody formed a collaborative partnership to restore the lake.

With the environmental charity Thames21 and the Environment Agency, Peabody embarked on a £160,000 project between 2023 and 2024 to improve water quality, create new wildlife habitats, and deliver social benefits for the local community at the site. The [Marsh Dykes and Thamesmead Catchment Partnership](#) (MDTCP), established to improve local water quality, also supported this effort. By drawing on the expertise of its members, the team devised innovative and cost-effective ecological solutions while keeping community engagement at the forefront.

Ecological restoration through natural solutions

To tackle the water pollution, the team came up with a cost-saving solution: a natural filtration system at the lake's inlet using an interconnected series of three pools. These pools, shaped by large revetments made from silt dredged from the lakebed, slow the flow of surface runoff and capture suspended solids and pollutants before they can enter the lake. The revetments were planted with fast-growing, resilient species that not only enhance biodiversity, but also help filter out harmful nitrates and phosphates.

The resulting 2,500 m² urban wetland also includes two floating islands, planted with help from the locals. The islands' submerged roots provide a vital habitat for aquatic life while also contributing to water purification.

In addition to the wetlands, 2,000 m² of neighbouring parkland was transformed by planting native meadows, further boosting the area's biodiversity and improving the overall ecological health of the blue and green space.

Community engagement and education

From the outset, Peabody and Thames21 focused on involving the community in the restoration process. They worked together to create an engagement plan that informed local stakeholders, including residents, anglers, school groups, and park users, about the project's goals and invited them to participate in the process.

Engagement methods included surveys, door-to-door questionnaires, and letter drops to explain the project and gather feedback. Initial responses showed that while locals had a positive connection to the lake, there was a misconception that the lake was clean due to its green appearance, when in fact, pollution was a significant issue. Educating the community about these challenges became a delicate yet essential part of the engagement strategy.

Community involvement was further encouraged through events where residents could help mark out areas for meadow planting, select plants for the floating islands, and participate in planting activities. Walking tours and citizen science opportunities, such as water quality sampling, were also offered to deepen the community's understanding of the lake's restoration.

Gallions Lake before planting began





Success factors and challenges

The success of the project at Gallions Lake relied heavily on the expertise of its partners. Thames21 brought invaluable experience in improving water systems and connecting communities with waterways, while also helping secure additional funding. The Environment Agency provided both financial support and expert advice on water quality, fisheries, and conservation. The MDTCP facilitated collaborative working across the catchment area to maximise environmental, social, and economic benefits.

One early challenge was overcoming initial scepticism from the local angling club, which feared the project might limit fishing activities. However, once the club understood that the restoration aimed to improve water quality and fish health, they became strong supporters of the initiative.

Similarly, a misunderstanding about the wetland system led to complaints from a resident about the 'terrible' state of the first pool, which prompted Peabody to explain its function of filtering out pollutants to ensure cleaner water entered the rest of the lake. Clear communication and education became key components of the project to help the community understand the interventions and their long-term benefits.

While the restoration of Gallions Lake has been a significant success, reducing pollutants at their source remains a challenge. The project team, along with the MDTCP, is actively exploring solutions to minimise pollutants entering the lake from runoff. Peabody will continue to work with Thames21 to monitor water quality through regular testing, while the Environment Agency will assist in assessing the health of the fish when necessary.



Planting carried out in February 2024



A system of interconnected pools built by June 2024

A key ongoing challenge is engaging hard-to-reach communities in Thamesmead. While the project successfully connected with existing groups, such as the fishing club and local schools, Peabody is committed to build stronger connections with residents who may not have the time or inclination to engage with environmental projects. By continuing to foster community involvement, Peabody hopes to encourage more people to take an active role in caring for the natural spaces around them.

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Find more on **Water Management** in our Resources Hub

WSP

Urban renaturation in Liverpool

In Liverpool, a series of nature-based interventions were implemented under an urban greening and monitoring research project through a collaboration between **WSP**, Liverpool City Council, Mersey Forest, and the University of Liverpool.

Funded by the European Union's *Horizon 2020* programme for research and innovation, the *URBAN GreenUP* project aimed to develop and validate methods for renaturing urban environments. By piloting various nature-based solutions (NBS) and collecting data, the project aimed to build a strong case for greater investment towards nature-positive action.

Addressing urban challenges

As one of eight partner cities in the project, Liverpool sought to use NBS to tackle key urban challenges such as fragmented urban systems, poor pedestrian and cyclist connectivity, urban flooding, and biodiversity loss.



Habitat improvement at Otterspool Park
Credit: WSP



Green wall along Parr Street
Credit: WSP

The project partners came together to design and test a variety of interventions aimed at linking strategic sites and increasing biodiversity, while closely monitoring the environmental, social, and economic impacts. From 2017 to 2023, WSP developed detailed designs and supervised the installation of green infrastructure corridors across the city, contributing to the implementation of over 40 NBS within the business and commercial district of the city centre, the Baltic Quarter, and the Jericho Lane and Otterspool areas.

The green corridor in the Baltic Quarter included the creation of a 130 m² green wall and a floating island in Wapping Dock to recreate salt marsh and estuarine habitats. The other corridor enhanced pedestrian links between parks in the Jericho Lane and Otterspool areas, with more interventions along the route such as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) installed to manage localised flooding, native trees planted for cooling and natural filtration, and pollinator verges added to boost biodiversity.

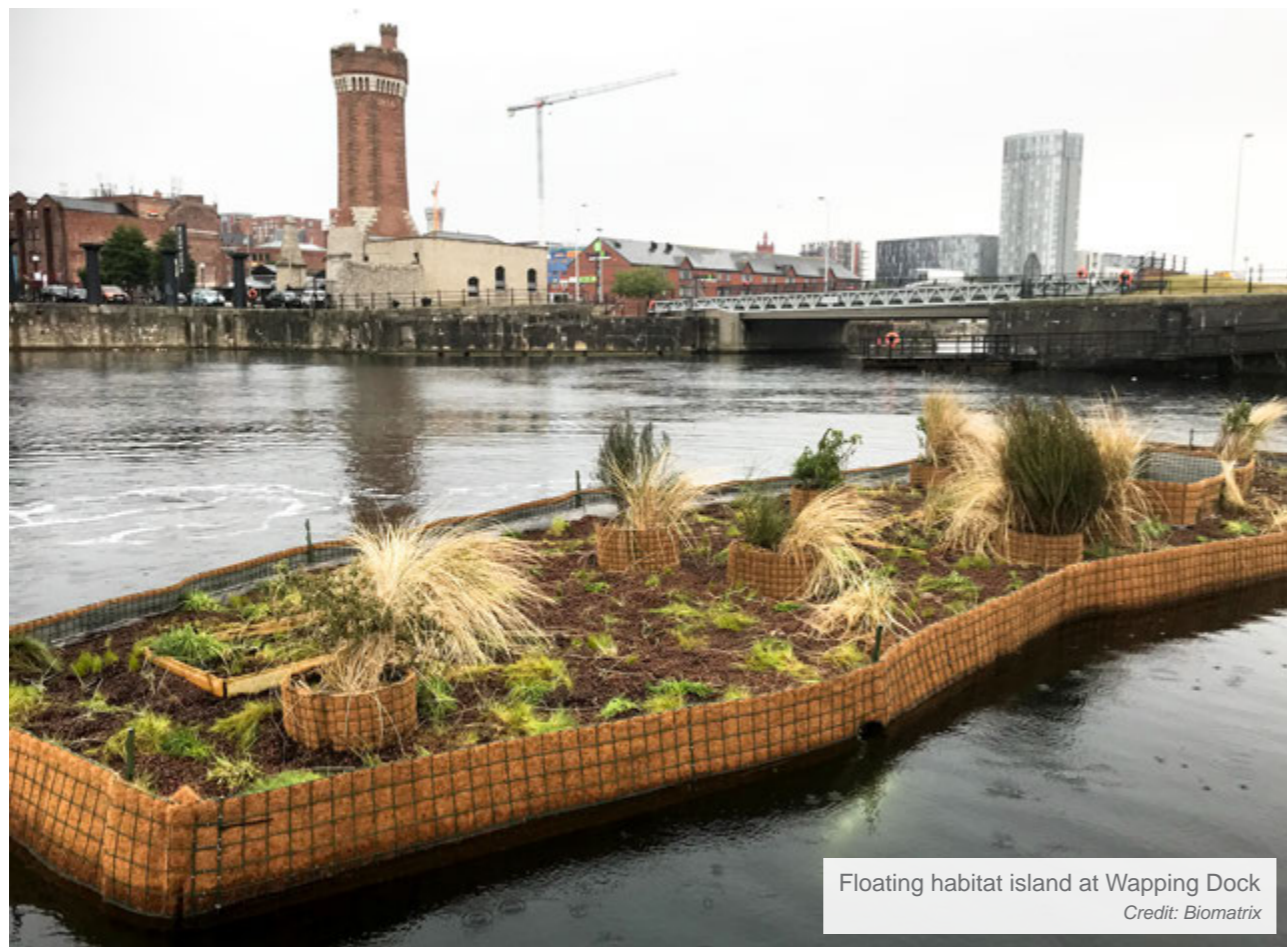


Measuring impact

A central aim of the URBAN GreenUP project was to document and evaluate the benefits of these interventions against a range of defined criteria with a well-established baseline. A feasibility study was conducted, followed by a 12-month monitoring period to establish baseline data. In order to measure the effects on air and water quality, biodiversity, socio-economic factors, and community perception, a further two years of monitoring is being carried post installation.

This extensive monitoring allowed the project team to capture a range of positive outcomes, including:

- the sequestration of 5,032.8 tonnes of CO₂;
- the reduction of surface temperatures by 7.5°C due to the shade provided by newly planted trees;
- energy and carbon savings from reduced stormwater entering sewers valuing £4,799 annually;
- a 13.9% increase in walking levels across the city; and
- improved access to green spaces for 11,700 households and 23,500 residents.



Floating habitat island at Wapping Dock
Credit: Biomatrix

Long-term benefits and future potential

The project demonstrated the value of NBS in urban environments, showing measurable environmental, social, economic benefits. To help inform future urban greening initiatives and strengthen the business case for NBS, the collected data has been made publicly accessible through an online database. It is hoped the evidence will be instrumental in fostering greater confidence for investment in green infrastructure to address urban challenges.

The project's success also underscored the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration. Each partner brought unique strengths, significantly enhancing the project's impact and long-term legacy. Liverpool City Council

led the initiative, WSP contributed technical expertise, Mersey Forest provided input in green infrastructure and data monitoring, and the University of Liverpool helped in data analysis. The University's Department of Geography & Planning also played a pivotal role by offering advice and support in monitoring the community and environmental impacts. The partnership approach was further enriched by the international exchange of experiences and best practice with other GreenUP partner cities such as Valladolid in Spain and Izmir in Turkey.

WSP is committed to leverage its expertise, learnings, and broad client base to support the ongoing development of more resilient, sustainable cities.



Rainwater garden along Pitt Street
Credit: WSP



WSP have been a valuable and important project partner. WSP shared their expertise and experience to gently guide Liverpool through the design, tender and delivery of several innovative nature-based projects aimed at increasing resilience, demonstrating adaptation and reducing the future impacts of climate change for the city.

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Find more on
Nature-based Solutions
in our Resources Hub

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Parks for London is grateful for the voluntary annual partnership contributions from the London's local authorities and other organisations currently supporting us.

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- [City of London Corporation](#)
- [Lee Valley Regional Park Authority](#)
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Independent green space managers

- [Alexandra Park & Palace Charitable Trust](#)
- [Bankside Open Spaces Trust](#)
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- [Coin Street Community Builders](#)
- [Crystal Palace Park Trust](#)
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- [National Trust London](#)
- [Potters Fields Park Management Trust](#)
- [Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators](#)

Grounds maintenance contractors

- [Continental Landscapes](#)
- [Ginkgo Gardens](#)
- [Glendale \(for London Borough of Lewisham\)](#)
- [iverde \(for London Borough of Bromley\)](#)

Other organisations

- [Capel Manor College](#)
- [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#)
- [Habitats and Heritage](#)

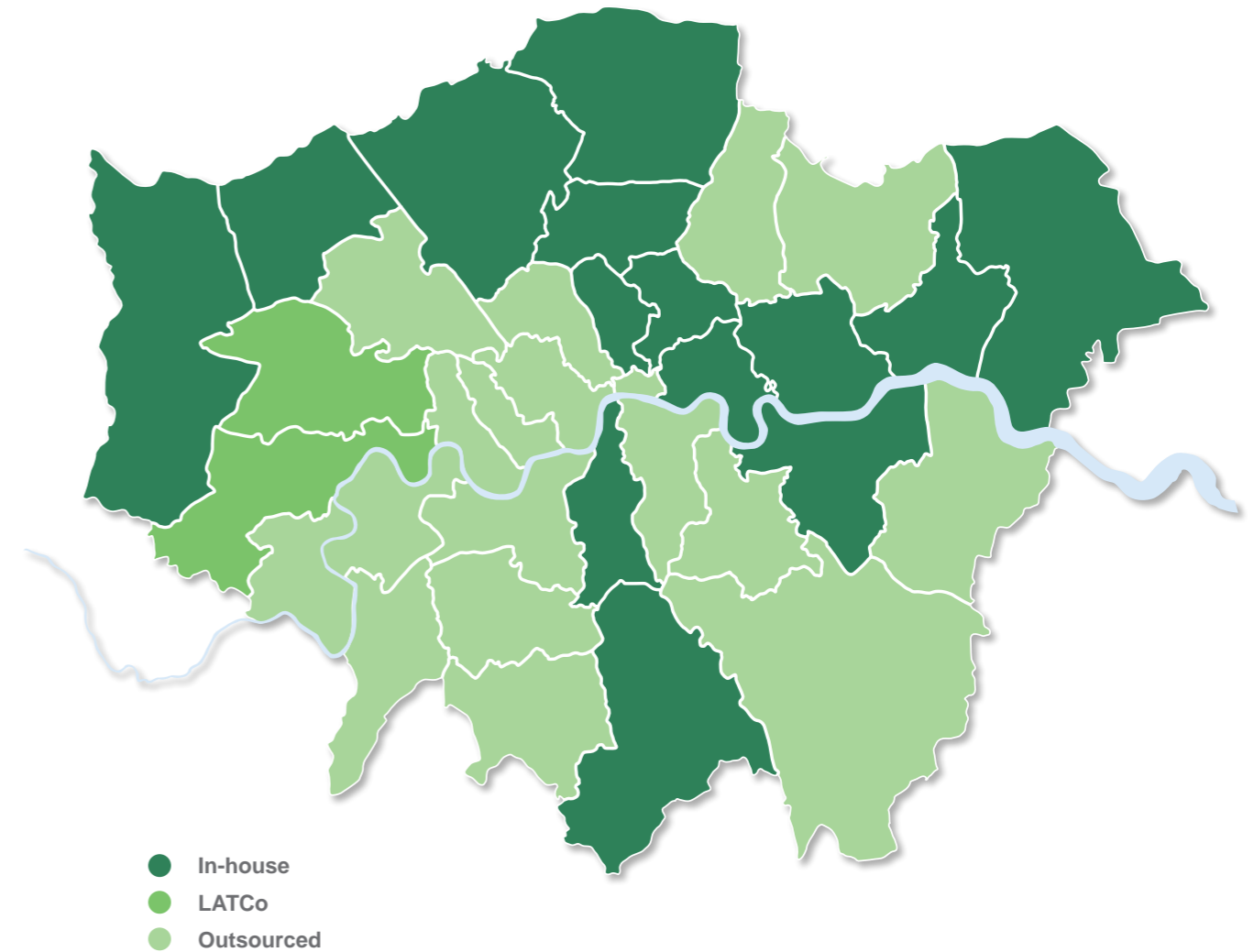
Housing

- [Notting Hill Genesis](#)
- [Peabody](#)

Health

- [Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust](#)

Grounds maintenance provision



The map indicates how grounds maintenance is managed across London borough parks, either in-house, via a Local Authority Trading Company (LATCo), or outsourced to contractors.



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