

# Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

Agenda  
Item:

**A.3**

Meeting Date: 7th June 2018  
Portfolio: Environment and Transport  
Key Decision: Not Applicable:  
Within Policy and  
Budget Framework NO  
Public / Private Public

Title: GREEN SPACES STRATEGY  
Report of: The Deputy Chief Executive  
Report Number: CS 26/18

**Purpose / Summary:** The report introduces the draft Green Spaces Strategy that has been developed with the assistance of Panel members.

**Recommendations:** The Panel is asked to endorse the document as a draft for purposes of wider consultation.

## Tracking

Executive:	
Scrutiny:	
Council:	

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** At a previous meeting of the panel it was decided to establish a working group to assist officers in drafting the new Green Spaces Strategy to be adopted by the Council and to invite interested Members to join this group. Two meetings of the group were held and Members were able to participate in discussion on the themes, aims and objectives of the strategy. The resulting draft Green Spaces Strategy document is appended to this report.

## **2. PROPOSALS**

- 2.1** It is proposed that the draft strategy is now circulated for wider consultation both inside and outside the City Council.

## **3. CONSULTATION**

- 3.1** The draft strategy was partly based on previous consultations with stakeholders in respect of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and with existing partners such as Friends groups.

## **4. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1** The previous parks strategy is now well out of date and in need of replacement. With assistance from Panel members a first draft document has been prepared and it is now ready to be circulated for wider consultation.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES**

- 5.1** Carlisle's green spaces make a major contribution to the Carlisle Plan priorities:

- Health and wellbeing of residents
- Quality of our Local Environment
- Develop sport, arts and cultural facilities

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**Appendices  
attached to report:**

**Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:**

- **None**

**CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:**

**Community Services -**

**Corporate Support and Resources –**

**Economic Development –**

**Governance and Regulatory Services –**

**CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL**

**Green Spaces Strategy**

**2018-2023**

**Contents.**

**(to be confirmed)**

# Green Spaces Strategy

## Chapter 1

### Introduction – the People’s Parks

Today, healthy exercise and recreation are among the primary reasons people visit our parks and green spaces. There is overwhelming evidence of the health benefits of exercising in the fresh air and in an increasingly urbanised environment, public open spaces become an ever more valuable resource.

Carlisle’s parks and green spaces have long been recognised for their contribution to the life of the city. We can boast one of the earliest public parks in the country at Kingmoor, granted to the citizens of Carlisle by Edward III in 1352. Mary, Queen of Scots watched one of the earliest recorded football matches, played at Bitts Park in 1568 during her imprisonment at Carlisle Castle. Later generations marked Queen Victoria’s jubilee by laying out formal gardens around a bronze statue of the long-serving monarch and hosting the Royal Show in the closing years of her reign.

The city of Carlisle was also at the forefront of the movement to provide public open spaces to benefit the health of citizens. Pioneering physician, naturalist and statistician Dr John Heysham worked in Carlisle from 1778 until 1834. Dr. Heysham recognised the links between crowded, insanitary living conditions and poor health and advocated spaces for fresh air and exercise. When he died he left money in his will for setting up a public park which is now named Heysham Park in his memory.

Our parks are highly valued by residents and well-used – a 2016 survey for the Heritage Lottery\* showed that 85% of adults in the UK had visited their local park at least once in the past year and 35% use it at least once per week. However the condition and quality of the park is important, and the same study highlights the importance of keeping public parks accessible and well-maintained in order to maximise their benefits.

*\*‘State of Public Parks 2016’ – Heritage Lottery Fund*

### Purposes of the Green Spaces Strategy

The purposes of the Green Space Strategy are:

- To promote, celebrate and enhance Carlisle’s parks and green spaces and to make sure that they are protected and improved for the enjoyment of future generations.
- To help the City Council to achieve its aspirational targets for growing a healthy and prosperous Carlisle as set out in the Carlisle Plan, the Local Plan and other documents such as the Green Infrastructure Strategy (Carlisle – the Big Green City)
- To help the Council in making decisions on strategic planning and land-use that reflect the critical importance of green space to the quality of life of every

resident including better health, mitigating the impacts of climate change, flood resilience and sustainable growth.

- To assist the Green Spaces team in prioritising its assets and resources, identify options for future management of green space that offer long-term sustainability and to further develop the capacity of community partners in managing, improving and extending Carlisle's green assets.

### **Context of the Green Spaces Strategy**

The strategy focuses on the parks, cemeteries, informal green spaces, allotments, nature reserves and play areas in Carlisle district that are owned and managed by Carlisle City Council. Publicly accessible land owned by conservation bodies and private land is not covered, although there may be opportunities for the Council to influence positively the management of land adjoining its own.

It does not contain a detailed, prescriptive management plan for every park, nature reserve or green space as these will be produced on an individual site basis.

### **Links to local, corporate and service plans**

The Carlisle District Local Plan 2015-2030 was adopted after an enquiry in public during 2016. The plan sets out the blueprint for the growth and development of Carlisle district up until 2030.

If the Local Plan sets out the **policies** for protection and enhancement of our green spaces, the Green Space Strategy sets out the **actions** the Council will take to bring these improvements into being.

Local Plan policy GI 4, for example, deals with the safeguarding of public open space within developments. Policy GI 3 deals with Biodiversity. Chapters in this document describe how these policies will be put into action, creating and maintaining new green spaces for the benefit of Carlisle's people and wildlife.

Supporting the Local Plan is a separate Green Infrastructure Strategy, 'Carlisle – The Big Green City' published in 2012. This document envisages Carlisle's green infrastructure as the 'key mechanism for driving economic growth and regeneration whilst delivering improvements to public health, wellbeing and quality of life'.

The Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) takes a long-term view and the growth of Carlisle will represent a real opportunity to build on our green infrastructure assets. This document will take the aspirational vision of the GIS and use it as the template for our own Action Plan (Appendix 1)

The Carlisle Plan 2015-18 is the corporate blueprint for the city as decided by the ruling Executive. The vision is:

*To improve the health, wellbeing and economic prosperity of the people of Carlisle. We will work in partnership to further establish our position as the regional centre and focus for investment, ensuring that residents can share in the benefits through increased opportunities and greater choice of jobs, range of housing and a quality environment.*

This vision is to be realised under 5 priorities for action:

1. Support business growth and skills development;
2. Further develop sports, arts and cultural facilities;
3. Continue to improve the quality of our local environment and green spaces;
4. Address current and future housing needs to protect and improve residents' quality of life;
5. Promote Carlisle regionally, nationally and internationally.

The Cumbria Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-19 is published by Cumbria Health & Wellbeing Board to focus the efforts of all partner organisations (including District Councils) in addressing local priorities in public health. The strategy identifies a number of areas where well-managed green spaces and green infrastructure can help to reduce health inequalities – childhood obesity and adult inactivity being two examples.

Active Cumbria's 4 year plan 2017-2021 includes the aim of seeing everyone in Cumbria be physically active. The County Council-led organisation envisions increased investment into the local 'physical activity infrastructure'. Our own strategy includes the development of spaces for play, sport and outdoor recreation which will directly contribute to these aims.

The Environment Agency's (EA) plans for the future flood defences for Carlisle include a number of actions on parks and green spaces owned by the City Council. We work in partnership with the EA to enable this essential work to progress, helping to prevent and reduce future flood events.

The City Council's Play Area Review, published in 2013, identified the key strategic play areas that provide the best quality of play experiences for the greatest number of children in Carlisle. It set the standard for access to safe, high-quality play space. Since it was published the Review has provided the rationale for a programme of investment and improvements in our play areas which has seen significant improvements in quality.

Carlisle Partnership is the umbrella group for a number of local initiatives. The purpose of the partnership is to enable the partners, who all have a part to play in the development of Carlisle, to work together in providing quality services for local people and an improved quality of life for all our residents. Its aims include:

- Carlisle to be a healthy place where people enjoy long, happy and healthy lives and are able to contribute fully and support Carlisle's growth.



Natural England is the government's advisory body on conservation of biodiversity, landscape and ecosystems. It's Corporate Plan, 2014-19 focuses (among other priorities) on working with landowners to improve the condition of sites of special scientific interest (SSSI); and improving 'opportunities for people to engage with the natural environment, near to where they live, in ways that meet their needs including health, learning and recreation'. As the owner of SSSI-designated sites, a local nature reserve (LNR) and many informal wildlife habitats, the City Council is a key partner for Natural England. In addition, as a substantial landowner we receive agri-environmental payments under the Higher Level Stewardship scheme, administered by Natural England on behalf of Defra.

The Green Spaces Strategy will help the City Council to fulfil its obligations to conserving biodiversity under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006. This requires all local authorities to have regard to conservation of biodiversity in all policies and decision-making.

## Chapter 2

### **Green Spaces vision and aims.**

In order to focus our actions we have arranged the strategy around the following vision and aims. The following chapters will set out the strategic objectives we have identified in order to achieve the aims.

### **GREEN SPACES VISION:**

**A city whose parks and green spaces are renowned for their quality; cherished and life-enhancing for every resident and helping to ensure Carlisle has a future that is healthy, prosperous and sustainable.**

In order to achieve this vision the following aims are proposed:

#### Green Spaces Aim 1

To make sure that Carlisle's reputation as a place that is enriched by its wealth of green spaces is enhanced as the city continues to grow and develop, recognising the health benefits from contact with green space and the natural environment and maintaining the current standard of 3.6ha of green space per '000 people.

#### Green Spaces Aim 2

To meet and exceed a set of challenging quality standards for all green spaces which will ensure they are safe, attractive and welcoming for everyone who visits them.

#### Green Spaces Aim 3

To make sure that all residents of Carlisle and our visitors have easy access to our inspirational green spaces, whatever their level of physical ability and that we take every opportunity to link and connect green spaces, walking and cycling routes, nature reserves and riversides.

#### Green Spaces Aim 4

To manage our green estate as a diverse and flourishing natural resource which provides a range of environmental services including resilience against future flooding, reducing the impacts of climate change and providing rich and varied wildlife habitats.

#### Green Spaces Aim 5

To nurture and support the role of our communities in caring for our green spaces and natural resources, encouraging them to take a leading role where appropriate and promoting green spaces as a primary resource in the cultural life of the city including as venues for events, play, sports and recreational activities.

The following chapters will consider each of these aims in turn.

## Chapter 3 – Carlisle, Growing Green

### Aim 1

**To make sure that Carlisle's reputation as a place that is enriched by its wealth of green spaces is enhanced as the city continues to grow and develop, recognising the health benefits from contact with green space and the natural environment and maintaining the current standard of 3.6ha of green space per '000 people.**

Carlisle's parks and green spaces are among the jewels in the crown of the city – dazzling with colour and sparkling with life. They have long been recognised as a major asset, providing residents with opportunities for fresh air and healthy exercise, play, sport and recreation. In recent years they have hosted large scale events such as the annual Carlisle Fireshow, Cumberland Show, music concerts and circuses – building on a tradition that started with agricultural shows, band concerts and even early flying displays.

This legacy of inspirational green space has been a key component of Carlisle's development – a high quality environment is widely accepted to be an essential prerequisite of economic success. As the city grows in the 21<sup>st</sup> century its prospects for success will depend on its ability to retain its reputation as a 'big green city' – where the high quality environment supports a healthy workforce and space for business to flourish.

The Local Plan includes policies for the protection of existing public open space. New developments may place an additional burden (sometimes called 'visitor pressure') on green infrastructure simply by additional wear and tear. The Council will seek to ensure through its planning policies that new developments contribute either to the improvement of existing public open space or provide new green space on-site.

*Strategic Objective 1. Maintain the present level of public open space provision across the district at no lower than 3.6ha per '000 population.*

The latest official statistics\* show that 3.1 billion visits were made to the 'natural environments' in the UK in 2016, the highest total since records began. 47% of these visits were for the purpose of health or exercise. This evidence chimes with the primary objective of the Carlisle Plan, which is to promote the health and wellbeing of Carlisle's citizens.

**\*Source: Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey, March 2015-February 2016 (Natural England)**

Parks and green spaces provide a multitude of benefits in this area:

- Parks for informal recreation and mental well-being  
Green space is extensively used for low-key activities such as walking the dog, informal play, fresh air and exercise. There is evidence that contact with green space, even at this level, has a soothing effect on the psyche and alleviates the symptoms of stress and mental illness.
- Play areas for healthy activity for young people  
Increasingly it is recognised that play is an important part of the development process in children. They learn about spatial awareness, hand-eye coordination and assessing their own capabilities in a safe environment. Play areas, equipped with either purpose-built structures or with natural materials provide these opportunities in a safe environment.
- Sports pitches for competitive sport and fitness  
Sport is important to most people at some stage in their lives and efforts to increase participation levels are recognised as an important component of the promotion of healthy lifestyles and combating obesity.
- Allotments for healthy, fresh food and community cohesion  
Demand for allotments remains strong and the benefits of allotment cultivation are various. Fresh food, fresh air and exercise and social interactions are just some of them. Older allotment-keepers may find that the contact with other people on the allotment is an important part of their social wellbeing. Younger families may find that participation in growing and sharing of the produce has learning and cohesion benefits. The sites themselves help to provide micro-habitats for bees and other pollinators.

The Cumbria Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2016-19), identifies the need for communities and individuals to play their part in staying healthy:

*Increasing assets within communities and enabling individuals or communities to access these increase their individual and collective resilience. It turn, increased resilience brings direct benefits to mortality, health behaviour, quality of life, as well as education and employment. By increasing resilience and self-help we can reduce demands on the formal health and care system.*

By improving our parks and green spaces and developing new assets like the green gyms, Carlisle City Council can play a key role in achieving these outcomes.

*Strategic Objective 2. To raise awareness of the range of health benefits (mental and physical well-being) provided by Carlisle's parks and green spaces and make information about them available to all our residents and visitors.*

Working with Carlisle's Healthy City Partnership and others to identify practical actions aimed at improving public health and encouraging active lifestyles.

Children's play is a significant user of green space. Whether for active games, informal play or equipped play areas our parks and open spaces see a significant presence of children and young people, even though their leisure time is perceived by many as being dominated by screen-based, sedentary activities.

Our strategic objective for play aims to build on this work and continue the programme of improvements that has been underway for the past 5 years under the Play Area Review.

*Strategic objective 3. Update and refresh the 2013 Play Area Review to make sure that we continue to provide safe and accessible play spaces for every child, and introduce mobile technology to improve our ability to inspect and record the condition of facilities, equipment and assets at all our sites.*

Allotments provide a range of benefits that are central to the Local Plan and the Carlisle Plan – physical and mental health being primary but also including sustainability, community cohesion, biodiversity and resilience. Well-kept allotments add to the colour and diversity of the urban landscape and produce tons of low-cost, nutritious food. Many allotment sites are protected by statutory designation, while others are protected by planning policy.

In recent years the City Council has pursued a policy of self-management for allotment sites, where the maintenance, waiting list management and plot allocation is done by the Allotment Association themselves. In return the Association keeps the rental income from the plots and pays only a peppercorn to the Council for the site. Evidence suggests that self-managed sites are in better condition than those which continue to be managed by the Council.

New applications continue to come forward and this supports the view that allotment gardening remains popular, no doubt helped by a societal shift towards fresh, home-grown ingredients. The economic situation may also be a factor. Our customer base has recently diversified and all sectors of our community are reflected in the plot-holder profile.

Carlisle was officially designated a 'Healthy City' in 2013 and continues to be a member of that network. One spin-off has been the Carlisle Food Group, an association of local growers and users of local fresh produce. Closer working with the group may help to promote self-management of allotments and ultimately see the creation of a federation of allotment associations, as exists in other UK cities, to maintain and administer all the sites within the city. The advantages in this approach are in efficiency and productivity – the evidence suggests that more land would be cultivated to a higher standard and producing more food under the control of a dedicated local group.

A small number of former allotment sites have been derelict for a number of years as, for a variety of reasons, they are difficult to let. Where there is sufficient demand these plots will be brought back into productive use as allotments.

*Strategic Objective 4. 100% of allotments in Council management are occupied and productive by 2023.*

## **Aim 2**

**To meet and exceed a set of challenging quality standards for all green spaces which will ensure they are safe, attractive and welcoming for everyone who visits them**

High quality is the key to keeping our visitors safe in our public open spaces and we will aim to achieve the highest possible standards in every case. Standards will be defined for the different categories of open space and our management of sites will have visitor safety as the highest priority.

Some standards are already nationally recognised, such as Green Flag. We will devise a system of standards that reflects the methodology adopted by Green Flag and apply these standards in our management regimes. Our visitors can have confidence in the quality of experience they will find in each different site.

From 2017, the City Council will refresh its customer satisfaction indicators through regular surveys in the Focus magazine that goes out to all residents. We will aim to maintain and improve these levels through our adoption of measurable standards in our horticultural practices and cleanliness.

*Strategic Objective 5. Introduce a quality standard for Carlisle's green spaces based on the principles of the Green Flag award and allowing us to clearly communicate to customers the standards they should expect from the facilities they use.*

Mapping and auditing of assets will allow us to make meaningful standards which we can define, measure and record. Defects can be quickly identified, quantified and dealt with, ensuring that high standards are maintained. The Council will be able to protect itself from risk while at the same time making sure our visitors are kept safe.

Play space is important in the development and good health of children and young people and the quality of play facilities will always be a priority. Childhood obesity is a growing health issue and good quality play spaces can provide opportunities for healthy exercise. They also develop children's motor skills, hand/eye co-ordination and ability to assess and manage risk. Our strategy will focus on access to high-quality play space for every child in Carlisle and will involve regular inspection and maintenance.

The use of mobile technology would allow us to revolutionise the way in which data is collected, stored and analysed. Work flow and efficiency would be greatly improved leading to higher productivity. Progress in the use of hand-held devices, paperless records and cloud-based data storage is being pursued with our ICT colleagues

*Strategic Objective 6. Compile a GIS record of all assets within Carlisle's parks, play areas and green spaces to allow appropriate inspection and maintenance schedules to be implemented.*



### **Aim 3**

**To make sure that all residents of Carlisle and our visitors have easy access to our inspirational green spaces, whatever their level of physical ability and that we take every opportunity to link and connect green spaces, walking and cycling routes, nature reserves and riversides.**

Access to high-quality green space is increasingly recognised as a major, positive factor in 'quality of life' indices. People with access to parks and natural areas enjoy better physical and mental health and property values are measurably higher where trees and open spaces are present. Natural England observe that 'Natural green places provide natural solutions to many 21<sup>st</sup>-century diseases – obesity and inactivity, heart disease and strokes, depression and mental illness'. (*Nature Nearby – Accessible Natural Greenspace, 2010*)

Access means more than simply having physical means of getting to a park or green space – it includes availability of information; the condition of the pathways within the site and the range of abilities catered for. Distance travelled to reach the green space on foot is often considered to be a useful indicator of accessibility. The presence or absence of physical barriers (major roads, railway lines, water courses etc) are taken into account.

And access means access for all! We will make all possible adjustments to our facilities to make sure that everybody can have the chance to enjoy our parks and green spaces, whatever their abilities. Gates, paths and play equipment are all carefully designed to provide equality of opportunity and we will work with partners to make sure we are able to meet (and exceed) expectations.

*Strategic Objective 7. Our objective is to make sure that everyone living in Carlisle is within 1.5km of a 'city park'\*, 750m of a 'neighbourhood park'\* and 300m of a 'local park'\*. The Play Areas Review (2013) stated the objective of having an equipped play area no further than 600m from each home in the city. In all cases the park or play area will be of sufficiently high quality to meet the needs of all residents and visitors.*

\*See appendix 2 for definitions.

Where deficiencies in access are identified the solution will be sought by one or more of the following:

- Improving access where it is currently unavailable
- Creation of new green spaces (using planning gain, for example)

- Improving quality of existing green space
- Make information widely available to encourage visits

The value of green space is enhanced by connectivity – where they are linked by pedestrian or cycling routes and are easy to access from the residential areas. The Green Infrastructure Strategy takes this idea further – connected green space can be used for daily commuting on foot or bicycle – and is therefore an economic factor. Biodiversity is enhanced when urban habitats are linked, allowing birds, small mammals and insects to move around freely in search of food, shelter and nesting space.

Carlisle's unique location at the confluence of 3 rivers mean that it has an extensive network of green spaces, much of which cannot be developed due to its function as floodplain, storing water during flood events (as demonstrated graphically in both 2005 and 2015). Some of the major parks are located in the floodplain (Bitts Park, Rickerby Park, Melbourne Park)

*Strategic Objective 8. Improve the connectivity of sites within the urban area using opportunities provided by existing green space, unused land, derelict railway lines, riverbanks and public rights of way. To include improvements on land owned by the City Council in the corridors of the Eden, Caldew and Petteril (the previous '3 Rivers Strategy').*

Resources for this work may include external funding and grants. Where opportunities allow we will seek Section 106 funds from developers, as happened with the new cycleway connecting Story Homes Crindledyke development with the city centre.

## **Aim 4**

**To manage our green estate as a diverse and flourishing natural resource which provides a range of environmental services including resilience against future flooding, reducing the impacts of climate change and providing rich and varied wildlife habitats.**

Climate change has the potential for major impacts on Carlisle and its residents and it is the responsibility of the local authority to demonstrate that it has considered and made provision for the possibility of these impacts. Flooding is the obvious example but the storm that brought heavy snow to our district in March 2018 is another.

Recent summers have been unusually cool and wet with associated effects on grounds operations – weather records are being rewritten regularly and there is a cost. By managing our land in ways that reduces the reliance on mechanical and chemical interventions and reduces our ‘carbon footprint’ we can help to minimise our own contribution to the problem.

A healthy green environment helps further – it uses up carbon from the atmosphere and locks it away in plants. Trees absorb atmospheric pollutants and soak up water from the soil. Natural landscapes help to balance the worst impacts of extreme weather and by maintaining high quality, diverse green spaces we can make a contribution.

All local authorities have an obligation to protect and promote biodiversity under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, which states that:

*“Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”*

Interpreting the Act for local authorities, DEFRA identifies a range of duties and responsibilities which it places on them. Among an extensive list are:

- Incorporating the conservation of biodiversity and its benefits into relevant strategies of the local authority.
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity on the local authority estate.
- Using the benefits of access to biodiversity in the delivery of services to the public such as social care, community development, health, and recreation.
- Raising awareness of biodiversity to the public

Carlisle has very high value natural assets both in terms of habitats (River Eden SSSI and SAC) and individual species (otter; barn owl; red squirrel to name a few high-profile ones). The City Council is an important landowner in this regard – the rivers Eden, Caldew and Petteril and their banks are extensively owned by the Council as are sites such as Kingmoor Woods Local Nature Reserve and Talkin Tarn Site of County Wildlife Importance. Rare wildlife species are included in national lists known as ‘red data books’ and many red data book species from all classes of organisms (plants, birds, fish, amphibians, mammals, insects and reptiles) are found in the district. A significant number of these species are found on Council land or water bodies.

Most people’s daily contact with nature involves species that are more commonplace but no less interesting for that. This strategy will aim to conserve all of our natural assets and resources, which provide opportunities for all residents to maintain their relationship with the natural world. The benefits flow in both directions – conservation of habitats enables all species to thrive; contact with wildlife close to home has positive health benefits for residents, particularly in the area of mental well-being.

*Strategic Objective 9. Conserving biodiversity by adoption of plans, policies and practices that protect designated sites of biodiversity interest (Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves and Sites of County Wildlife Importance) and protect threatened or endangered species; by creating new habitats where appropriate and improving management of sites and landholdings so they may qualify for designation, and taking the opportunity to link up existing and new habitats in order to improve the connectivity of natural resources, and ensuring wildlife corridors are protected and managed in a way that encourages the development of semi-natural habitats and assists the movement of species.*

*Strategic Objective 10. To manage the City Council’s riverside land in order to conserve and enhance the riparian habitats and species it supports, always looking to promote native species at the expense of exotic colonisers, taking all opportunities to improve safe public access to the river corridors and to interpret and promote the significance of the rivers to the history and natural history of Carlisle and manage our floodplain land in a way that helps to alleviate the impact of flooding on the residential area of the city ie by creating, not reducing, storage capacity*

*Strategic Objective 11. To minimise our own impact on the environment by using clean technologies, minimising consumption of carbon-based fuels and using only sustainably sourced and certified materials.*

The city of Carlisle benefits from an extensive stock of trees and woodland which contribute to the enhancement of landscape and biodiversity and help to ameliorate the extremes of climate. They also improve the appearance of the city and make the environment attractive to residents and visitors. Studies have demonstrated the economic benefits accruing from healthy tree stocks, including the consistent premium property values in tree-lined streets. Trees in urban environments play an important role in moderating the effects of the changing climate. They intercept, store and transpire rainfall which would otherwise run off into drains and watercourses to add to flooding. On hot days they provide shade and cool the air. They strip carbon dioxide from the air

and store carbon in their structures, helping to slow the increasing concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (the most important 'greenhouse gas').

To assist with the management of our tree stock the City Council has adopted 'Tree Management Principles' - our own handbook of best practice and decision-making guidelines. The document aims to clarify our position especially in regard to requests to fell or prune trees that residents perceive to be causing a nuisance such as leaf drop, sticky residues, shading or interference with TV reception.

*Strategic Objective 12. To maintain the City Council's stock of trees in all parks and green spaces in a healthy and regenerating condition, based on the principle of an urban forest where there is a continuous cover of trees of varying age classes and where dead or dying trees are replaced by saplings.*

## **Chapter 7 – Building partnerships for success**

### **Aim 5**

**To nurture and support the role of our communities in caring for our green spaces and natural resources, encouraging them to take a leading role where appropriate and promoting green spaces as a primary resource in the cultural life of the city including as venues for events, play, sports and recreational activities.**

Carlisle City Council recognises the benefits of volunteering in the conservation sector, both to the volunteer and the organisation. Volunteers gain benefits in terms of health and wellbeing, work experience, training and social contacts.

Community groups have played an invaluable role in the management of Carlisle's parks and green spaces over many years and this relationship continues to develop. In many cases, significant capital investment in the parks has come about largely thanks to the participation of a 'Friends' group or resident's association. Perhaps the most striking example of this was the £1m Heritage Lottery grant awarded to Chance's Park after a successful campaign by the Friends.

The Friends of Hammond's Pond have been consistently excellent at finding grants for children's play equipment especially and have supported many development projects in the park, both with fundraising effort and 'hand's on' assistance.

Our Countryside Volunteers meet weekly to carry out a range of conservation tasks in different locations. Volunteer walk leaders help with our Health Walks programme, encouraging people of all abilities to take gentle exercise in Carlisle's parks and green spaces.

*Strategic Objective 13. To support existing Friends and community groups in helping with management, fundraising, development and enhancement of our parks and open spaces and encourage more people to get involved.*

The Green Spaces Strategy is based on evidence and data gleaned from a number of sources and this is intended to provide a degree of robustness and resilience for the strategy. It may not be possible to find evidence or data in every case and we may have to rely on the prior knowledge and experience of our staff to make sound decisions. The plan will be subject to modification throughout its lifetime and therefore we will be open to revisions and improvements that may be suggested by organisations or individuals at any stage.

*Strategic Objective 14. To collect, analyse and use data and customer consultation feedback as a tool for decision-making.*

Parks are not a statutory service for local authorities and financial (and other) resources have been under extreme pressure in recent years. Initiatives such as the ‘Rethinking Parks’\* project led by Nesta in partnership with the National Lottery have brought together innovative ideas for the funding of parks and green spaces at a time of austerity in public services. While commercialisation of parks may carry risks, there seems to be widespread acceptance of the idea that parks can be developed successfully as revenue-generating assets if done sensitively.

\*‘Rethinking Parks’ – Nesta, 2016

In Carlisle we have responded to the challenge of raising revenue from our parks and green spaces in a number of ways. Large scale events are one opportunity and the recent open-air pop music concerts have generated significant income to be re-invested in Bitts Park. In addition, concert promoters themselves have directly invested in improving the park infrastructure.

Income from refreshments and concessions is another potential revenue stream and we will be considering the options and opportunities presented.

Much of the land owned and managed by Carlisle City Council qualifies for agri-environmental payments. We aim to maximise this opportunity by entering all eligible sites into the Higher Level Scheme.

## Appendix 1 - Parks and Green Spaces Specification

The specification defines the standards within which we aim to deliver the high quality parks and green spaces that are the primary objective of this strategy. The specification covers a range of operational activities and applications – these are summarised according to the various types of green assets for which we have responsibility: Parks; Cemeteries; Amenity Open Space; Play Areas; Allotments; Trees.

### Litter and bin emptying

- Litter is picked daily in the 5 main parks and bins emptied at the same time. In other parks the frequency of waste management is dictated by demand – greater frequency at times of high usage. Litter picking and bin emptying is a 7-day activity throughout the year in the ‘destination’ parks.

### Grass Cutting

- Verges in residential areas and along main arterial roads are cut from Easter to October on a 15-day rota. Variation can be caused by adverse weather conditions (wet ground prevents safe machinery operation). Cuttings are left to decompose on-site.
- Amenity grass areas are cut from late March to October on a fortnightly cycle – again, cutting intervals may be hampered by adverse weather. Cuttings are left to decompose on-site.
- Conservation grassland is cut according to the recommended management regime. Wild flower grasslands are cut from July onwards and may be cut only once per season. Where recommended the cuttings may be removed off-site.
- Slopes and embankments are cut according to need and some are left uncut.
- Rickerby Park and other sites within our Higher Level Scheme are ‘topped’ to control thistles and nettles from July in accordance with the management prescription.

### Sports pitches

- Sports pitch turf is maintained to a standard suitable for local amateur leagues.
- Pitches are marked out according to the rules of the relevant governing body.

### Shrub Beds

- Shrub beds are cleaned regularly according to location and need.
- Pruning of shrub beds is carried out from November to March according to a schedule. Not every shrub bed will be pruned every year.

### Hedges

- Hedges are cut by tractor flail, once per year.

### Trees

- Tree maintenance inspections are carried out on a prioritised basis (those in heavily-visited sites and locations are inspected more frequently).

- Customer service requests are dealt with on a prioritised basis with dangerous occurrences heading the list of priorities.
- Our contractors carry out remedial work and preventative tree surgery on a prioritised basis according to inspection reports or service requests.
- Our Tree Management Principles document sets out the City Council's approach.

#### Playground Maintenance

- Children's play areas are inspected weekly and all inspection records stored.
- Repairs and maintenance work carried out weekly on a prioritised basis as evidenced by the inspections.
- Independent qualified inspector reports undertaken annually.



## Appendix 2 - Definitions of City, Neighbourhood and Local parks; Formal and Informal

City Park	Significant size (more than 5 hectares); secure boundaries and well-marked entrances; known by a recognised name; a range of facilities that may include play equipment, multi-use games area sports facilities, space for informal games, car park, formal gardens, extensive site furniture, public toilets. Examples: Bitts Park; Hammond's Pond
Neighbourhood Park	Well-known in the local community, reasonable size (more than 2 hectares); fenced with prominent entrances, formal landscaping or gardens; a range of facilities that may include play equipment, sports pitches, multi-use games area, space for informal games, site furniture. Examples: St James Park; Keenan Park; Chances Park; Heysham Park
Local Park	Serving a localised need for access to green space, may be fenced with entrances, usually containing play equipment and space for informal games and often containing sports pitches, site furniture, formal landscaping. Examples: Clark's Field; Richmond Green; Dale End Field
Formal	Parks (all), children's play areas; sports pitches, landscaped gardens; civic spaces and floral bedding; cemeteries; allotments
Informal	Nature reserves; riversides; woodlands; semi-natural habitats

Strategic objectives					
What do we want to achieve?	How are we going to do it?	Milestones	Completed by:	Who will lead the work?	Cost/Resources
<b>Strategic objective 1</b> Maintain 3.6ha per '000 pop.	Work with planners to make sure that the Local Plan provisions are met.	Meetings with planners. Meetings with developers. S106 agreements signed off	2018	Green Spaces team. Development Control team.	Officer time (existing resource)
<b>Strategic objective 2</b> Raise awareness of health benefits	Implement outdoor exercise projects. Work with partners.	Schemes identified Funds in place Tenders Procurement Review	2023 and ongoing	Green Spaces team. Carlisle Partnership 'Healthy City' Group	Capital funds External grants Officer time
<b>Strategic objective 3.</b> Play Area Review updated	Review the existing Action Plan. Evaluate the assets Publish a revised Action Plan. Execute.	Evaluation report complete Priorities identified Revised Action Plan produced	2018 and ongoing	Green Spaces team	Officer time (existing resource) S106
<b>Strategic objective 4.</b> Allotments 100% occupied	Awareness-raising. Promote self-management options. Promote self-service online	Complete audit of plots Percentage plots into self-management	2023	Green Spaces team. Allotment Associations	Officer time (existing resource)
<b>Strategic objective 5.</b> Introduce quality standards	Assess the assets Decide appropriate standards Implement and report outcomes Review	Standards agreed Report performance against standards Review	2019	Green Spaces team.	Officer time (existing resource)
<b>Strategic objective 6.</b> Mobile technology to improve efficiency of inspections	Evaluate the need Identify appropriate requirements Procure	Identify requirements Specify equipment needed Procurement	2019	Green Spaces team. ICT	Officer time
<b>Strategic objective 7.</b> Accessibility standards	Map the current position Define the access ratios	Plot the radii	2023	Green Spaces team	Officer time
<b>Strategic objective 8.</b> Linking green spaces together	Map the assets Map the linkage routes Develop the links as resources allow	Maps produced (Connect2 updated) Funding secured Projects implemented	2023 and ongoing	Green Spaces team City Engineer	Officer time
<b>Strategic objective 9.</b> Conserving biodiversity	Protect designated sites and protected species Create new habitats Raise awareness	Protected sites mapped	2023 and ongoing	Green Spaces team	Officer time External funds/S106
<b>Strategic objective 10.</b> The three rivers	Assess the asset and opportunities. Identify projects, implement Review	Previous '3 Rivers Strategy' updated Project plans Funding sourced	2023 and ongoing	Green Spaces team	Officer time

<b>Strategic objective 11.</b> Sustainability	Vehicle and fuel use monitoring Purchasing policy Operational changes Review	Assessment of existing fleet Identify sustainable options Procurement plan	2023 and ongoing	Green Spaces team Garage manager	Officer time (existing resource)
<b>Strategic objective 12.</b> Tree management and reducing the impacts of climate change	Implement current tree policy Continue regular inspections Tree planting as opportunities present	Inspections Tree planting opportunities identified Implementation	2023 and ongoing	Green Spaces team	Officer time (Existing resource)
<b>Strategic objective 13.</b> Building partnerships		Annual meeting of voluntary partners Identify opportunities for new partnerships	Ongoing	Green Spaces team	Officer time (existing resource)
<b>Strategic objective 14.</b> Consultation and communicating with our customers		Consultation procedures Carlisle Focus	Ongoing		Officer time