

Quality green space

Past drivers

Investment in the creation of new green spaces
Resources for enhancing and maintaining existing green spaces
Protecting open space from development or fragmentation



Where are we now?

- Over 75% of adults are satisfied with their nearest green space in 2015, with only 9% dissatisfied.
- Around 48% of Scottish adults visited Scotland's outdoors at least once a week in 2016, roughly unchanged on the previous year. Adults in deprived areas are most likely not to have visited the outdoors in the past year compared to those in the least deprived areas (19% compared to 7%).
- While those living closer to their nearest green space are more likely to use it more frequently, satisfaction with green space does not have a significant effect on the frequency of use.
- People's distance from their nearest green space and their use and satisfaction of that space vary with the level of deprivation. In the most deprived areas of Scotland, 40% of adults visit the outdoors at least once a week in 2016, compared to 55% of adults in the least deprived areas.

Key evidence gaps

There is uncertainty as to how, when and where natural environments could be best used to improve health outcomes at the population level. Little synthesised evidence of the impacts of nature based health interventions.
Lack of monitoring to provide species trend data for urban green space.
A consistent measure of the quality of green space.

Future drivers

Revisions to the planning system.
Early years expansion will increase demand from nurseries.
Impact of climate change on quality of green space.
Demand for housing in urban areas, as well as health and associated services.



Where do we want to be?

- Everyone can access, enjoy and connect with nature. ¹



Current initiatives and their impact

Central Scotland Green Network: one of Europe's biggest green space projects, covering over 19 local authority areas and 3.5m people. An evaluation indicated a return on investment of a minimum of £2.14 for every pound spent and highlighted a central estimate of around £6 billion over the 35 years to 2050 for the benefits from the investments planned for CSGN.
Our Natural Health Service: aims to show how greater use of the outdoors can help to tackle physical inactivity, mental health issues and health inequalities.

¹ Draft outcome, Developing an Environment Strategy for Scotland: Discussion Paper

Draft Knowledge Account – Quality green space

A Introduction

1. Green space has substantial environmental and health and well-being impacts, but also links to community aspects, such as community cohesion, social connectedness and community resilience. Being able to access high quality green space can improve the health, wellbeing and confidence of people and communities. There is a significant negative correlation between self-reported stress and the proportion of green space in a local area.ⁱ
2. Evidence indicates that exposure to, contact with, and use of the natural world can bring a range of health and wellbeing benefits.ⁱⁱ Medical research from around the world demonstrates that a Green Prescription can deliver physiological and psychological benefits for patients, even if the exact mechanisms by which these accrue are not yet fully understood.ⁱⁱⁱ

B Recent trends

3. In 2016 around three-quarters of adults (75%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their nearest area of green space, while only 9% were dissatisfied.^{iv}
4. Those who describe their neighbourhood as a fairly good or very good place to live are more satisfied with their local green space than those who rate their neighbourhood as a fairly poor or very poor place to live.^v
5. While those living closer to their nearest green space are more likely to use it more frequently, satisfaction with green space does not have a significant effect on the frequency of use. People's distance from their nearest green space and their use and satisfaction of that space seem to vary with the level of area deprivation. A greater proportion of adults in deprived areas live more than a 10 minute walk away from their nearest green space compared to adults in the least deprived areas (17% compared to 11% in 2016).^{vi}
6. The vast majority of the urban population agreed strongly that, in general, green spaces should be 'good places for children to play' (70%), 'safe places to encourage physical activity' (72%), and 'places to relax and unwind in' (77%). When asked to rate their local green spaces using the same measures, fewer than half agreed strongly that their local green spaces met these expectations.^{vii}
7. Factors related to affluence appear to play a part in people's perceptions of local green space quality, with 50% of respondents from the 15% most deprived areas agreed that the quality of their local green space had reduced in the past 5 years.^{viii}
8. There has been a slight increase in the proportion of adults visiting the outdoors at least once a week between 2012 and 2016, rising from 42% to 48%. A further fifth of adults report visiting the outdoors at least once a month while 13% of adults report that they did not visit the outdoors at all in 2016 (down from 20% in 2012).^{ix}

9. There is substantial variation in the proportion of adults making visits to the outdoors by level of area deprivation. In the most deprived areas of Scotland, 40% of adults visit the outdoors at least once a week, compared to 55% of adults in the least deprived areas in 2016.^x
10. Adults living in rural areas are more likely to visit the outdoors at least once a week compared to adults living in urban areas (55% compared to 47% in 2016). There was little difference in the proportion of men and women visiting the outdoors at least once a week in 2016.^{xi}

C Past drivers of change

11. The key drivers include the level of investment in the creation of new green spaces, resources available for enhancing and maintaining existing green spaces, and the policy framework in terms of protecting open space from development or fragmentation. The level of resource available for investment in green space may depend on wider economic factors and development cycles. This could affect the funding available from the various sources that can support or deliver green space: agencies; local authorities; green space and green network partnerships; and from developer contributions associated with new developments towards green space.
12. In order to be effective, green space needs to be viewed as suitable for use by the local population. If individuals feel that green space is unsafe, unclean and difficult to access or otherwise not fit for purpose then people may be less likely to make use of it.

D Future drivers of change

13. Revisions to the planning system and the implementation of green and blue infrastructure in urban planning.
14. The expansion of government funded early learning and childcare is likely to result in more nurseries using local woods and green space.
15. Climate change will impact the quality of green space across Scotland in a number different ways. For example, drier and warmer summers will lead to lower river flows and increased frequency and severity of droughts.^{xii}
16. The growing demand for housing in urban areas is likely to place greater demands and pressure on urban green space.
17. As the health and well-being benefits from green space become more widely recognised, this is likely to result in increased demand for the provision of quality green spaces.

E Current interventions and their impact

18. Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN): is one of Europe's biggest green space projects, covering over 19 local authority areas and is home to 3.5 million people. This supports the restoration of ecosystems through upland habitat management and woodland creation and management.

19. An evaluation of the CSGN indicated a return on investment of £2.14 for every pound spent (based on conservative estimates of the benefits generated from the CSGN). Specifically, the evaluation produced a central estimate of around £6 billion over the 35 years to 2050 for the benefits from the investments planned for CSGN. This includes £742 million from the physical health benefits and £1,290 million from the mental health benefits of providing high quality green space within a 5-minute walk of all homes.^{xiii}
20. Our Natural Health Service: aims to show how greater use of the outdoors can help to tackle physical inactivity, mental health issues and health inequalities. The action programme is led by Scottish Natural Heritage, working in partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland, NHS Health Scotland and a range of other national and local organisations across environment, transport, sport, education and health sectors.

ⁱ Ward Thompson, C., Roe, J., Aspinall, P., Mitchell, R., Clow, A. and Miller, D. 2012. More green space is linked to less stress in deprived communities: Evidence from salivary cortisol patterns, Landscape and Urban Planning, 102, 221-229.

ⁱⁱ <https://beyondgreenspace.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/evidence-statement-on-the-links-between-natural-environments-and-human-health1.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ [https://nhsforest.org/sites/default/files/Dose of Nature evidence report 0.pdf](https://nhsforest.org/sites/default/files/Dose%20of%20Nature%20evidence%20report%200.pdf)

^{iv} Scottish Household Survey, <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/09/9979/345329>

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^{vi} Scottish Household Survey, <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/09/9979/345329>

^{vii} The Third State of Scotland's Greenspace Report, 2018

http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/Data/Sites/1/media/docs/sosgreport/3rdstateofscotlandsgreenspace-report_010218.pdf

^{viii} The Third State of Scotland's Greenspace Report, 2018

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^{ix} Scottish Household Survey, <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/09/9979/345329>

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^{xi} Scottish Household Survey, <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/09/9979/345329>

^{xii} <http://greenspacescotland.org.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=133&mid=129&fileid=295>

^{xiii} <http://www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org/delivering/costing-valuing-and-resourcing-the-csgn>