

# QUALITY GREENSPACE

## Past drivers

- Investment in the creation of new greenspaces.
- Resources for enhancing and maintaining existing greenspaces.
- Protecting open space from development or fragmentation.
- Local authority open-space strategies.

## Where are we now?

- 74% of adults are satisfied with their nearest greenspace in 2017, with only 10% dissatisfied.
- Around 59% of Scottish adults visited Scotland's outdoors at least once a week in 2018, up seven percentage points from 52% in 2017.
- 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 (18% compared to 5%).
- While those living closer to their nearest greenspace are more likely to use it more frequently, satisfaction with greenspace does not have a significant effect on the frequency of use.
- People's distance from greenspace and their use and satisfaction of that space vary with the level of deprivation. In the most deprived areas of Scotland, 45% of adults visited the outdoors at least once a week in 2018, compared to 68% of adults in the least deprived areas.
- Total area of greenspace in urban Scotland is 1,593 square kilometres – that's equivalent to a tennis court size of greenspace per person.

## Where do we want to be?

- We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment.<sup>1</sup>

## Current initiatives

- 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.

## Future drivers

- Revisions to the planning system and management approaches.
- Early years expansion will increase demand from nurseries.
- Role for greenspace in supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation; impact of climate change on quality of greenspace.
- Urban demand for housing as well as health and associated services.
- Green infrastructure's role in placemaking, and supporting healthy lifestyles.

## Key evidence gaps

- Continued research needed to better understand how, when and where natural environments could be best used to improve health outcomes.
- Little synthesised evidence of the impacts of nature based health interventions.
- Lack of monitoring to provide species trend data for greenspace.
- A consistent measure of the quality of greenspace.

<sup>1</sup> National Performance Framework

### A. Introduction

1. Greenspaces, such as public green or open spaces in your local area, for example a park, countryside, wood, play area, canal path, riverside or beach, have substantial environmental and health and wellbeing impacts. They also link to community aspects, such as community cohesion, social connectedness and community resilience. Being able to access high quality greenspace 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 greenspace in a local area.<sup>i</sup>
2. Evidence indicates that exposure to, contact with, and use of the natural world can bring a range of health and wellbeing benefits.<sup>ii,iii</sup> 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.<sup>iv</sup>

### B Recent trends

3. In 2017 around three-quarters of adults (74%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their nearest area of greenspace, while only 10% were dissatisfied.<sup>v</sup>
4. Those who describe their neighbourhood as a fairly good or very good place to live are more satisfied with their local greenspace than those who rate their neighbourhood as a fairly poor or very poor place to live.<sup>vi</sup>

5. While those living closer to their nearest greenspace are more likely to use it more frequently, satisfaction with greenspace does not have as strong an effect on the frequency of use. People's distance from their nearest greenspace 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 greenspace compared to adults in the least deprived areas (14% compared to 10% in 2018).<sup>vii</sup>
6. The vast majority of the urban population agreed strongly that, in general, greenspaces 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 greenspaces using the same measures, fewer than half agreed strongly that their local greenspaces met these expectations.<sup>viii</sup>
7. Local greenspace is perceived to be of a lower quality in deprived areas, with 50% of respondents from the 15% most deprived areas agreeing that the quality of their local greenspace had reduced in the past 5 years.<sup>ix</sup>
8. There has been a substantial increase in the proportion of adults visiting the outdoors at least once a week between 2012 and 2018, rising from 42% to 59%. A further sixth of adults report visiting the outdoors at least once a month while 11% of adults report that they did not visit the outdoors at all in 2018 (down from 20% in 2012).<sup>x</sup>

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, 45% of adults visit the outdoors at least once a week, compared to 68% of adults in the least deprived areas in 2018.<sup>xi</sup>
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 (69% compared to 57% in 2016). There was no significant difference in the proportion of men and women visiting the outdoors at least once a week in 2018.<sup>xii</sup>

### **C Past drivers of change**

11. The key drivers include the level of investment in the creation of new greenspaces, resources available for enhancing and maintaining existing greenspaces, and the policy framework in terms of protecting open space from development or fragmentation. The level of resource available for investment in greenspace may depend on wider economic factors and development cycles. This could affect the funding available from the various sources that can support or deliver greenspace: agencies; local authorities; greenspace and green network partnerships; and from developer contributions associated with new developments towards greenspace.
12. In order to be effective, greenspace needs to be viewed as suitable for use by the local population. If individuals feel that greenspace 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**

13. Revisions to the planning system and the implementation of green and blue infrastructure in urban planning, including new statutory duties on planning authorities to prepare open space strategies and play sufficiency assessments.
14. The expansion of government funded early learning and childcare is likely to result in more nurseries using local woods and greenspace. Similarly, Education Scotland's Vision 2030+ recommends progressive and curriculum-led approaches to outdoor learning. Outdoor learning fosters improvements in attainment and health and well-being, and connects pupils with nature.
15. Climate change will impact the quality of greenspace across Scotland in a number of different ways. Across Scotland, climate change will generally mean that we have warmer and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers, rising sea levels and more extreme weather.<sup>xiii</sup> There are opportunities to develop greenspace and blue-green infrastructure to support climate change adaptation and mitigation.
16. The growing demand for housing in urban areas is likely to place greater demands and pressure on urban greenspace but there are also opportunities to ensure that masterplans include high quality greenspace and blue-green infrastructure.
17. As the health and well-being benefits from greenspace become more widely recognised, this is likely to result in increased demand for the provision of quality greenspaces.

## E Current initiatives

18. Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN): Is one of Europe's biggest greenspace 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.<sup>xiv</sup>
20. Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention:<sup>xv</sup> Will create better places and enhance the quality of life by improving the quality, accessibility and quantity of green infrastructure in our major towns and cities. £15 million of ERDF money is available to target urban areas in Scotland that have a deficit of good quality greenspace, and suffer from multiple-deprivation and an excess of vacant and derelict land. As funding is provided at a maximum intervention rate of 40%, the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention will deliver a total value of £37.5m of investment throughout the course of the programme.
21. 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.

## Endnotes

- 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 Evidence Statement on the links between natural environments and human health 2017 <https://beyondgreenspace.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/evidence-statement-on-the-links-between-natural-environments-and-human-health1.pdf>
- iii Urban green spaces and health. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2016 [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/321971/Urban-green-spaces-and-health-review-evidence.pdf?ua=1](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/321971/Urban-green-spaces-and-health-review-evidence.pdf?ua=1)
- iv A Dose of Nature Addressing chronic health conditions by using the environment [https://nhforest.org/sites/default/files/Dose\\_of\\_Nature\\_evidence\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://nhforest.org/sites/default/files/Dose_of_Nature_evidence_report_0.pdf)
- v Scottish Household Survey, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2017-scottish-household-survey/>
- vi Scottish Household Survey, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/>
- vii Scottish Household Survey, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/>
- viii The Third State of Scotland's Greenspace Report, 2018 <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/statistics>
- ix The Third State of Scotland's Greenspace Report, 2018 <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/statistics>
- x Scottish Household Survey, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/>
- xi Scottish Household Survey, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/>
- xii Scottish Household Survey, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/>
- xiii Developing the role of greenspace in climate change mitigation and adaptation, Greenspace Scotland 2011 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lBUcnirsyBkU7oYiu6JjGGcQufH\\_O\\_n/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lBUcnirsyBkU7oYiu6JjGGcQufH_O_n/view)
- xiv <http://www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org/delivering/costing-valuing-and-resourcing-the-csgn>
- xv <https://www.greeninfrastructurescotland.scot/>