



THE ROOTS FOR GROWTH

Thriving Greenspaces pilots projects
and building blocks - January 2025

◆ EDINBURGH ◆
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

ROOTS FOR GROWTH

Supplementary Information for the Edinburgh Thriving Greenspaces 2050 Vision and Strategy

The Thriving Greenspaces Project was established in 2019 to fashion a new vision for the city's parks and open spaces that delivers a new way of working to ensure their ongoing enhancement, protection, and care.

This project was made possible by a £1.2m Future Parks Accelerator (FPA) grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the National Trust. The funding enabled us to work with stakeholders to explore options, carry out research, studies

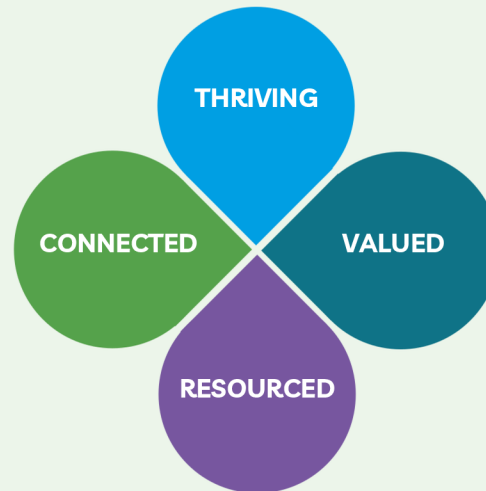
and pilots, and gather robust baseline data about our greenspaces. This informed the production of the Edinburgh Thriving Green Spaces 2025 Strategy and Implementation Action Plan.

The Roots for Growth document provides supplementary information about the pilot projects and work undertaken during the Thriving Greenspaces Project that has provided the building blocks for the delivery of the Strategy.

Edinburgh's Thriving Greenspaces 2050 Vision and Themes

Greenspaces that are at the heart of our communities and help make Edinburgh an outstanding city for wellbeing, quality of life and heritage.

Greenspaces that are connected, thriving, valued and resourced.



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The roots for growth

As part of the Thriving Green Spaces project, we have started to develop the building blocks needed to deliver the strategic outcomes. This includes the following plans, strategies and tools:



Connected

<p>Edinburgh Nature Network</p>	<p>Edinburgh’s Nature Network (formerly called the Ecological Coherence Plan) is a powerful tool that provides a strategic approach to prioritise environmental interventions and nature-based solutions to tackle the threats of climate change and biodiversity loss in the city. The Programme for Government has confirmed that every Local Authority will be required to have a Nature Network by 2026, and ours is the first Nature Network in Scotland. This action is linked to the Council’s Business Plan objective 3b</p>
<p>Natural Capital Account</p>	<p>This “Natural Capital Account”, developed by Vivid Economics, seeks to put a monetary value on some of the benefits provided by our greenspaces. Just four of the “ecosystem services” that our greenspaces provide were assessed and it was found that Edinburgh’s greenspaces generate benefits of £174m per year.</p>
<p>ParkPower and Green Heat in Green Spaces</p>	<p>Project partners greenspace scotland worked with a range of partners across Scotland to explore the contribution that urban green and blue spaces can make to decarbonising the energy system. This “opportunity mapping” has given the Council comprehensive data on the potential of our greenspaces to provide low carbon heat.</p>

Thriving

<p>Health Park Audits and Analysis</p>	<p>Parks and Greenspace staff have surveyed over 150 parks and greenspaces for their potential health and wellbeing benefits using a pioneering audit tool developed by Tisdall Associates. Analysis of the survey data will be completed during spring 2022. This analysis will feed into our Capital Investment Programme.</p>
<p>Green Infrastructure (GI) mapping tool</p>	<p>Project partners the University of Edinburgh led a pilot of a GI mapping tool. The tool records greenspace features, giving them a score for ecological value based on scoring developed by another of our project partners, the Scottish Wildlife Trust. The tool was trialled in a number of parks with the help of volunteers. The tool could be used to help manage greenspaces by providing information about landscapes and habitats to staff and to citizens and further pilots are being undertaken.</p>

Valued

Built Infrastructure Condition Survey	Built infrastructure condition surveys are being carried out across the whole of our greenspace estate. The data is helping to inform our priority capital investment programme and the next step is to use this data to establish a regular maintenance programme and enable more accurate forward planning.
Asset Management Strategy	To guide and inform our priorities for managing our greenspace assets, an Asset Management Strategy has been drafted. It sets out policies and principles for how we will prioritise new projects and roll out maintenance standards to ensure that the social, natural and economic benefits delivered by sites do not degrade.
Capital Investment Programme	We have drafted a capital investment programme, which uses robust and diverse data sets to identify needs and opportunities along different outcome areas to prioritise where we should focus resources. This programme will support us in delivering against the Council's Business Plan objective 3b.
Spirit of Place	In exploring approaches to placemaking we piloted the use of the National Trust's 'Spirit of Place' process. This process uses a collaborative approach to capture what is special and unique about a place. This engagement can inspire community stakeholders to explore the potential of their greenspace and can help inform Management Plans and future developments.
Volunteer Strategy and Action Plan	As part of our aim to offer high quality, impactful and memorable volunteering experiences, we have been collaborating with staff, partners and the Edinburgh Green Space Forum to draft a Volunteer Strategy with an action plan which will set out guiding principles along with key priorities. It is highlighted as an action in the Council's Business Plan objective 3b.
Marketing and Communications Strategy	A Marketing and Communications Strategy has been drafted with the aim of creating a coherent identity across parks and greenspaces. It identifies key objectives and key messages, along with target audiences and channel recommendations.

Resourced

Financial Model

In order to facilitate the range of actions identified as required to deliver the strategic aims, there is a need for a revised approach to how the Council's Parks and Greenspace service is funded. The financial model proposes a combination of existing and new income streams, a range of innovative capital funding mechanisms and grant funding linked to national or international public policy priorities and estimates the financial impact to our service.

Income Generation Strategy Proposals

An Income Generation Strategy proposal has been completed. This has identified opportunities for increased income generation, calculated potential income and expenditure over 10 years and includes recommendations for staffing structures and other changes that need to be in place in order to generate the income. These proposals are subject to further analysis and development before it can be implemented.

Ground Maintenance Service Review

This review is being undertaken by the Association for Public Service Excellence. The review will ascertain the staff, fleet and machinery resource needed to deliver ground maintenance service to high standards, to be resilient to change, and to respond to the strategic vision and aspirations set out in the Thriving Greenspaces Strategy. The output of this review will inform the proposed operational structure for our greenspace maintenance and development.

Operational Structure

We need to ensure that we have the appropriate organisational structure and workforce in order to deliver the strategy

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is a way of looking at organisational change which focuses on identifying and doing more of what is already working, rather than looking for problems and trying to fix them. We have conducted conversations with staff to test out this approach, and so far, the conversations have been very enlightening and will help us to make our service even better.

The Thriving Green Spaces Project undertook a number of pilot projects to try out different approaches, concepts and tools.

Masterplan Projects

During the past year we and one of our bid partners, Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust, have been developing concept masterplans for four sites around the city – Inch Park, Inverleith Park, Leith Links and West Pilton Park.

Conceptual masterplans seek to guide development of these sites and to ensure a coherent and inclusive vision for each. Placemaking and engagement approaches, such as the National Trust's Spirit of Place tool, have been used and have helped to capture what is unique and important about each site.



Image of what Inverleith Biodiversity Area could look like.
(Inverleith Park Concept Masterplan Report produced by rankinfraser, 2022)

A week long programme of activities for well-being in Saughton Park

Green Heart Parks

It's a lot lot more than a walk in the park!

AUGUST 2021

THURSDAY 26TH AUGUST	2pm to 3.30pm	Writing workshop with Wana Udobang - Nigerian writer, poet, journalist, film maker and TV personality
MONDAY 30TH AUGUST	12pm to 1pm	Ecotherapy by Stephen from Health All Round
TUESDAY 31ST AUGUST	11am to 12pm	Meditation in the park with Edinburgh Community Yoga
	2.30pm to 3.30pm	Community orchard tour with Shona and Sarah from The Friends of Saughton Park
	2pm to 3.30pm	Writing workshop with Victoria McNulty - Poet and spoken word artist focusing on the lives of young women in urban communities
WEDNESDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER	11am-12.30pm	Photography workshop with Jassy Earl
THURSDAY 2ND SEPTEMBER	10am to 11am	Tour of physic garden with the Friends of Saughton Park
	11am to 12pm	Low level health walk through Saughton park by Edinburgh Leisure.
	2pm to 3pm	Weed and tidy session of the seating areas around the park perimeter with a Park Ranger (either Scott or Andy) Meet at the entrance to the Courtyard.
FRIDAY 3RD SEPTEMBER	11am to 12pm	Ecotherapy by Stephen from Health All Round
	1pm to 1.30pm	Storytelling in the park by Stephen from Health All Round
SATURDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER	10.30am to 12.30pm	Art in the Park - outdoor canvas painting with Yvonne from Gorgie Collective (beginners welcome, materials will be supplied).

All Events FREE

Green Heart Park Pilot

In considering how we can ensure our greenspaces are delivering the best they can for health outcomes, we have developed the idea of recognising high performing greenspaces with a 'Green Heart' award. We also envisage that Green Heart Parks could become a standard or indicator of a space with suitable facilities for health and wellbeing activities and provide a celebratory focus around the value of greenspaces in the post-Covid period. To explore this further, we worked with Health All Round to run a 'Green Heart Park' week in August 2021 – a week of free wellbeing activity at Saughton Park, testing what attracted and engaged people.

This was a first step in piloting and developing further activities with health practitioners and communities, under a 'Green Heart Park' banner. This will help guide and assess how we develop our greenspaces in the future, how we work with health practitioners to support green health prescriptions and how we develop park activity programmes to animate and activate parks to benefit everyone.

Taking forward these initiatives means we are in a strong position to play a key role in preventative health measures, including helping to facilitate the increase in green health prescribing in Edinburgh.

Edinburgh Nature Network Pilots

We have already piloted the Edinburgh Nature Network tool to direct and maximise improvements to Edinburgh's biodiversity. For example, bid partners Scottish Wildlife Trust have been working with Lloyds Banking Group Edinburgh to create a stepping stone habitat for the northern brown argus butterfly at their office at the Mound. In Edinburgh, the northern brown argus is only found in Holyrood Park. By creating small areas of habitat, such as at the bank's office at the Mound, it will allow the butterfly to move around the city and perhaps find significant areas of suitable habitat such as at Calton Hill.

We have also used the Edinburgh Nature Network to inform the Lauriston Farm Agroecology project, Pentlands to Portobello Green-corridor project and the Wee Forests project as well the four Thriving Green Spaces masterplan projects.



Calton Hill

Fast Followers Pilot

In 2021, Scotland's Park Managers Forum became a "Fast Follower" network for the Future Parks programme, and specifically the Edinburgh Thriving Green Spaces project, to share information and emerging learning with colleagues across all Scottish local authorities.



Northern brown argus butterfly (photo by John Bridges)

This pilot programme was led by bid partner greenspace scotland and during the programme they ran monthly workshops on themes as diverse as income generation, ash dieback, participatory budgeting, using data and nature-based solutions.

Thank you

The Thriving Green Spaces project team would like to thank the Parks and Greenspaces staff, City of Edinburgh Council colleagues, elected members, our bid partners and all the organisations and citizens of Edinburgh who have joined the conversation, shared their vision and contributed to the project.

The Thriving Green Spaces project was made possible by the funding from the 'Future Parks Accelerator' programme and we thank the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the National Trust and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for supporting our project.



Walking under the autumn canopy at Inverleith Park

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