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CROYDON COUNCIL

PARKS AND GREEN SPACES RENEWAL STRATEGY 2022-2025

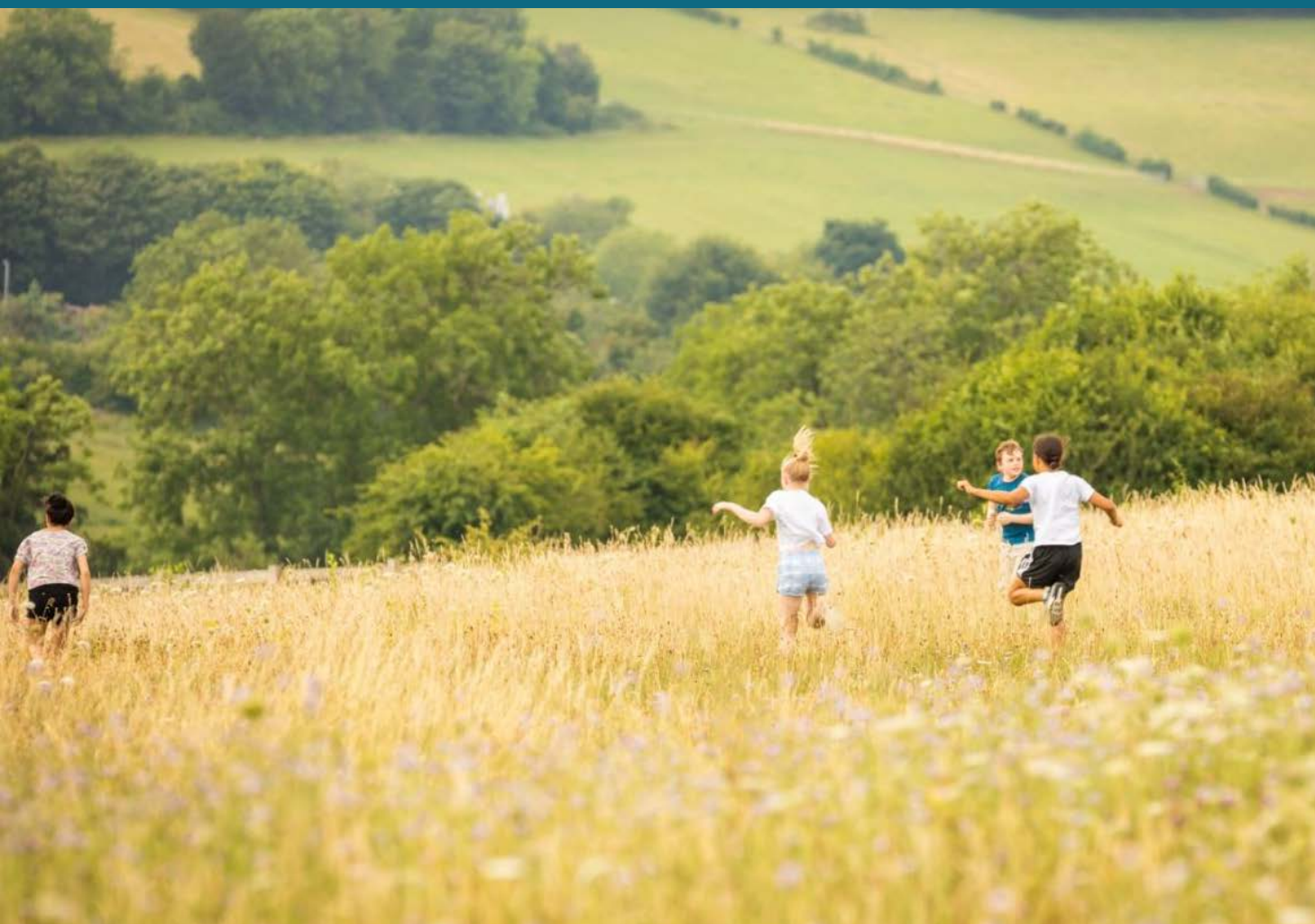




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ABBREVIATIONS AND Definitions

ALGG All London Green Grid

GLA Greater London Authority

LPR Local Plan Review

NCA Natural Capital Account

P&G Parks and Green & Blue Spaces

SUDS Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

Parks and Green Spaces

For the purpose of this document, the parks and green spaces terms are used interchangeably and refer to the parks and green and blue spaces owned and managed by Croydon Council and which are publicly accessible.

Green Infrastructure

The network of parks and green spaces, trees and woodlands, rivers and wetlands, and new green features in the urban environment such as roadside verges, green roofs and walls.

Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation

Locally designated areas recognised as being of particular importance to wildlife and biodiversity.

Conservation Cut

A 'conservation cut' in Croydon green spaces is when the grass is cut and the arisings collected together, once or twice annually.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.





FOREWORD FROM The cabinet member for sustainable Croydon

Since the start of the pandemic, there has been significant research into how individuals have used our local green spaces and the value they place on these spaces. In Croydon, 86% of survey respondents answered that they value their parks and green spaces more than before the pandemic.

Considering the borough's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030, the role green spaces play in this transition cannot be ignored – therefore they must remain safeguarded and enhanced where possible.

The adoption of this strategy will present the opportunity for this service to become more financially sustainable, by enabling service delivery through collaboration, innovation and partnerships.

I also take this opportunity to recognise the commitment, devotion and effort of our volunteers, 'Friends of Parks' groups, funding bodies, delivery partners, residents and officers. I want to thank them for the significant contribution they make to the enhancement, management, maintenance and preservation of our parks and green spaces for the benefit of our communities and residents.

I hope you – the reader – will join the council in helping to achieve our goals for better parks and green spaces within the borough, and to ensure they can continue to flourish for both present and future generations.

MUHAMMADALI

Councillor, Broad Green

INTRODUCTION

The abundance of diverse parks and green spaces in Croydon is one of its greatest treasures. We know that many people enjoy and benefit from visiting parks on a daily basis, now more so than ever. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, more residents have discovered more of their local green spaces, creating a greater awareness of what makes Croydon one of London's greenest boroughs, as well as just how important these spaces are to everyone.

While many have become increasingly mindful of the benefits parks can provide, they have also been made more aware of the continuing financial challenge local authorities face to maintain and protect these spaces for the future. The council will need to be creative and efficient in how it develops the financial solutions which provide the best value for money. As part of this process, parks staff are considering how best to deliver a core service – within our means – which keeps parks clean, safe and accessible for all residents and visitors, as well as preserves local biodiversity.

There are two key, interdependent stepping stones to begin with: the first is the creation of a unified and streamlined parks and green spaces service, and the second is the development and launch of this strategy. This document sets out the vision and priorities for Croydon's parks and green spaces during the next three years. The strategy will be underpinned by a delivery plan to be published in 2022. The strategy provides an overarching structure for how the service will work together during this challenging period. Local residents will have a pivotal role to play in this process.

This is an ongoing role and some residents and groups have already fed into this strategy, and helped maintain our parks throughout the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. The council greatly appreciates those efforts and is thankful in advance for the ongoing support and enthusiasm towards making Croydon's parks and green spaces thrive.

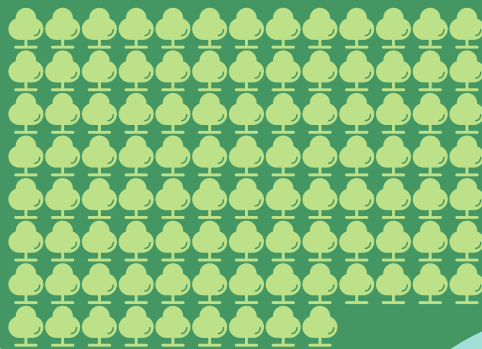


“Croydon’s green and blue spaces are clean, safe and biodiverse places for all residents to benefit from and enjoy.”

PARKS & GREEN SPACES At-a-Glance

127

**PARKS AND
GREEN SPACES**



94

**Recreational
Areas**



75

**Sites of Importance
for Nature
Conservation**

**5.5 Million
Annual
Recreational
Visits**



**Active local
community**



Croydon has active and passionate volunteers and community groups that do their bit.

**Street
Champions**

654

**Friends of
Parks & Green
Spaces
Groups**

45

**1 National
Nature
Reserve**



30

**GREEN SPACES
WITH LAKES AND
PONDS**



**5
Local
Nature
Reserves**

THE LONDON CONTEXT

London is one of the world's greenest cities and Croydon's lowland heath, ancient wood, chalk grassland, urban parks and blue spaces are an ecologically and socially important part of the capital. Understanding how the borough's parks and green spaces fit within the London landscape is important as Croydon is part of a larger green network.

**"...increase and improve green infrastructure in areas where Londoners, especially children, have the least amount of green space."
London Environment Strategy, 2018**

The All London Green Grid (ALGG) provides a framework to understand and support this green network to flourish. The ALGG is being reviewed by the Greater London Authority (GLA), and it will remain a useful regional tool to guide the council's local strategic direction to align with and support key environmental policies such as the London Environment Strategy (2018) and the new London Plan (2021).

"London's network of green and open spaces, and green features in the built environment, should be protected and enhanced. Green infrastructure should be planned, designed and managed in an integrated way to achieve multiple benefits." London Plan, 2021

The Croydon Local Plan (2018) is the council's strategic policy for planning and development in the borough, a way to enable development to deliver Croydon's Green Grid – the local network of connected and accessible green and blue spaces. Croydon's ongoing Local Plan Review will update the strategy and improve green grid guidance by focussing on: health and wellbeing, active travel, improving biodiversity and air quality, addressing the climate crisis, as well as inequality of access to green spaces and social isolation.

With new guidance, the council can create opportunities for community groups to better understand and access mechanisms and funds to improve parks and green spaces.

THE CROYDON CONTEXT



The council is confidently rising to the challenge of overcoming recent financial issues, and working to ensure a high quality of service is delivered at the best value for money. Croydon's renewal plans set out how the council will respond to this challenge by making sure that priority services are delivered effectively, sustainably and within our means.

Part of the process will focus on a small number of new priorities and ways of working during the period from 2021-24. This will be living within our means and focussing on tackling ingrained inequality – including addressing matters of inclusion and accessibility – and providing the best quality core services possible. It also means being financially prudent and transparent and honest about what the council can and cannot afford whilst involving residents in decision-making.

This renewal strategy document has been developed to align with organisational renewal plans, and sets out proposals to respond to the challenges in the context of – and provide strategic direction for – parks and green spaces. The longer term ambition is to review and re-set the strategic direction of how the council manages, protects and enhances green and blue infrastructure in the latter half of this three-year period, and in alignment with fundamental policy updates, including the Croydon Carbon Neutral Action Plan and Local Plan Review, as well as The London Plan (2021), the Environment Act 2021, including Biodiversity Net Gain legislation requirements.

“There is a need to create and conserve habitats to ensure the borough is resilient to pressures like climate change and ensures a net gain in biodiversity in order to protect and improve Croydon's ecological health and resilience.”
Croydon Local Plan, 2018

GREEN CROYDON

SSSI Site of Special Scientific Interest
LNR Local Nature Reserve



*With thanks to the Association of Croydon Conservation Societies for sharing the map

A NEW PARKS & GREEN SPACES SERVICE

During 2021 the council started progressing a long-standing ambition to unify the two primary 'parks' functions – grounds maintenance and parks development – into an integrated service; Parks and Green Spaces. These teams have always collaborated, along with other departments that operate within our green spaces, and this relationship will now be formalised. These teams have seen staff resource reductions since 2019, and this unification aims to create synergies which will help continue to deliver a quality core service.

The creation of this integrated service took place while simultaneously setting a strategic renewal strategy, intended to put in place the strongest platform for officers to best manage and develop Croydon's green and blue spaces for the benefit of all who live, work and visit the borough and for the enhancement of the natural world.

A good quality parks and green spaces service is one delivered in partnership with residents, as well as for residents and for nature. The council knows that many individuals, groups and communities want to support staff in maintaining and improving green spaces, and the organisation is incredibly grateful for that interest, enthusiasm and support. The new structure is set out to best facilitate that support as well as provide the right ecological knowledge and experience where it's needed within the borough.

Importantly, having a diverse range of residents involved in improving green spaces creates a collaborative approach to making these places more inclusive and accessible to a greater number of residents. Use of and access to green spaces is incredibly valuable for individual health and wellbeing, and the council strives to make these benefits as widely accessible for all our residents.



CASE STUDY:

Friends of Selsdon Wood

Since 2007, the Friends of Selsdon Wood (FSW) have been working to protect the popular green space that is so loved and appreciated by local residents and visitors alike.



200 acres

The woods are a large space, frequented by dog-walkers, bird watchers, joggers, children-at-play, and anyone seeking refuge from their regular day to appreciate the natural environment in South Croydon.

Friends of Selsdon Wood

The friends group supports the council in the preservation, care, and maintenance of the woods – which are owned by the National

Trust. The group undertakes projects such as the creation of a bird-feeding area, a butterfly garden, and the curation of many guided walks, which take advantage of new technology to help visitors have a great experience.

The group has nearly 200 members, with a buzzing Facebook community of over 1,000. By promoting activities such as litter-picking events, the group helps to engage the community in positive behaviours that keep Croydon's parks and green spaces clean and safe for everyone to enjoy.



"There's nothing to be lost from simply going for a wander"
- Heather, Chair of FSW, owner of Bella (above)

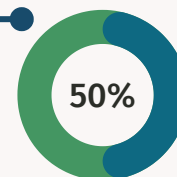
COVID-19, EQUALITIES AND ACCESS TO GREEN SPACE

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance and value of parks and green spaces like never before, and the outcry to ensure they are protected for the future has been substantial. This is particularly apparent in urban settings, such as London, where inequalities in access to green spaces is prevalent and can compound broader inequalities of those most in need.



Improving access

50% of the borough's residential areas are located more than 400m from a 'local park'



There is significant contemporary research demonstrating the link between access to and use of green space and the health benefits to individuals. Similarly, lack of provision and/or quality provision of green space and recreational areas can play a part in increasing health inequalities of local populations. A link was identified between health inequalities of residents and the provision and quality of green spaces in Croydon's 2019 Natural Capital Account (NCA) report, using data from local health providers. This data will be an important part of how resources are prioritised and shape work being done towards tackling this inequality within the borough.

Since Covid-19 restrictions started...



Nearly two thirds of Londoners think protecting and enhancing green spaces should be a higher priority after the lockdown.

ACROSS ENGLAND

34%

Wish that their child could spend more time outside in nature to support their mental health

36%

Wish that their child could spend more time outside to support their physical health

PARKS & GREEN SPACES

Survey Results

During late summer of 2020 the service conducted an online survey to capture views on the value and importance of Croydon's parks and green spaces during the Covid-19 pandemic. This was driven in part by the increased usage of these green spaces and due to the increasing awareness of how important these spaces are for people, as well as to more broadly help inform the future planning for parks during Covid-19 recovery. In just over one month, 2,333 responses were collected. The key findings are outlined below:

88% Satisfied

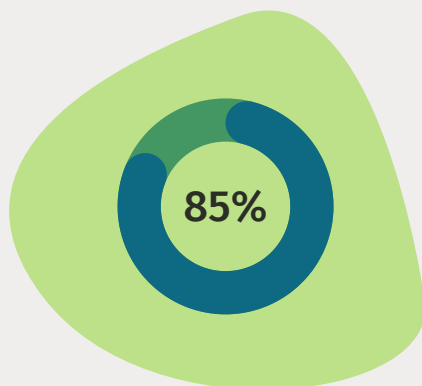
In just over one month, the council collected 2,333 responses to the survey. A large majority were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with our parks and green spaces.



86% value parks more since Covid-19

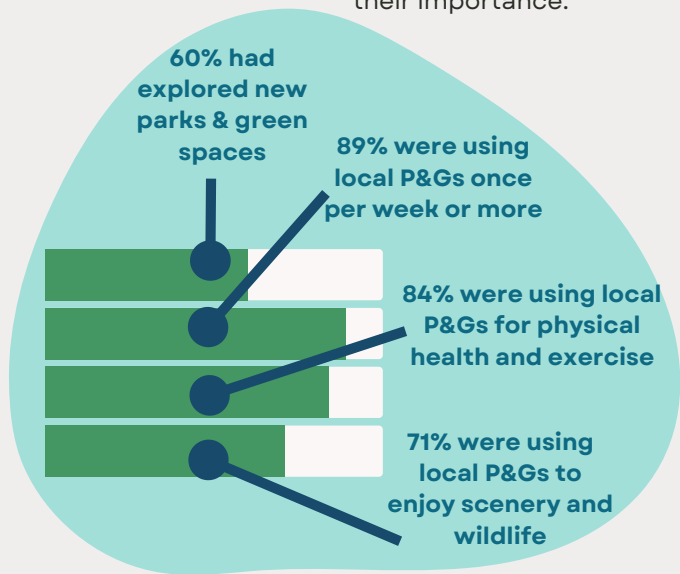
This was driven in part by the increased usage of green spaces and increased awareness of their importance.

Since the pandemic started...



Willing to support their local park or green space

There is a large, passionate majority that want to get involved and join the active volunteer network.



Barriers to using parks more often

Respondents also mentioned maintenance as a barrier (28%).

Anti-social behaviour	30%
Lack of facilities within the parks & green spaces	29%
No barriers	30%

Potential Improvements

Respondents discussed issues such as toilet upgrades, park cleansing, and refreshment facilities as options to make local parks and green spaces more enjoyable.



VISION AND PRIORITIES

Sustainable Croydon

Our green and blue spaces are an important part of our ambition to be a 'sustainable Croydon'. Quality green infrastructure for people and for nature can deliver for our economic, social and environmental targets set out in current and future strategies, policies and targets on climate action.



As one of London's greenest boroughs, there is a great opportunity to grow Croydon's green potential and reputation across London. The service will focus initially on getting the basics right and providing a good quality core service for people and for nature. Beyond this, the next steps are to ensure sustainable development of green infrastructure to achieve broader ambitions, such as climate crisis mitigation, social cohesion and a health and wellbeing approach for a growing population.

Understanding this ambition, two guiding sources have been used to create the current vision and set priorities.

The council's renewal plans set our prioritising of efforts and, secondly, the public input received from 2,300+ residents as part of a parks and green spaces survey in summer 2020.

A strategy was drafted with these two guiding sources, which were shared with key parks stakeholder groups – the 45 'Friends of Park' groups and their members from across the borough – to receive their thoughts and comments. A draft was also shared with all local councillors. All feedback was used to finalise this strategy.

VISION

During the next three years the new parks and green spaces team will adapt to deliver and enable a core service that ensures Croydon's green and blue spaces are clean, safe and biodiverse places for all residents to benefit from and enjoy.

PRIORITIES

CLEAN, SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACES FOR ALL

Our parks are for everyone and for people to feel welcome in them we need to get the basics right. Through listening to residents we will make improvements for people and nature.

Our aim is for parks to serve as places for health and well-being, social integration and interaction with the natural world.

A COLLABORATIVE SERVICE TO ENRICH AND EMPOWER CROYDON'S GREEN AND BLUE NETWORK

With our newly unified parks team we will build on our connections with the community to create more, new ways for residents to take part in the management and development of our parks.

Our aim is for parks that reflect our thriving, diverse communities through activities that showcase why we are the London Borough of Culture.

SUPPORT AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE CROYDON

Our parks and green spaces are important places where we support biodiversity by protecting habitats and creating spaces for residents to connect with nature.

Our aim is for parks and green spaces that show our commitment to connecting the green grid and building climate change resilience.

A SERVICE WORKING TOWARDS FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH COMMERCIALISATION, INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIP

This financial priority is a core focus that will underpin the delivery of the overall vision and priorities during this period. Progress towards this ambition will then enable the expansion of a service team delivering for the sustainable future of Croydon's parks and green spaces.

CLEAN, SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACES FOR ALL

Perhaps now more than ever, people are relying on parks and green spaces as places that are integral to their overall health and wellbeing. With increased usage of these spaces comes increased demand on related services, such as cleansing and infrastructure maintenance. The council will focus on doing the simple things well.

Creating parks and green spaces which benefit everyone will require input from communities of residents who haven't traditionally been involved in parks development. The council wants to change that and enable a more inclusive parks service.

Clean

- With the new P&G team structure, the cleansing team will be resourced to play their part in keeping parks clear of litter and continue installation of new bins where possible.
- The popular and fast-growing Street Champions volunteer litter-picking programme will continue, following its successful launch in 2014. The growing group of over 630 Street Champions and 'Friends of Parks' volunteers' litter-picking can continue to keep local green spaces clean, and encourage positive behaviour change.
- The popular Love Clean Streets app is under review, and a communications strategy is in development. The service will call on residents to get involved to help shape our campaigns to reduce littering and fly-tipping and to promote positive behaviour change.



CLEAN, SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACES FOR ALL



Safe

- Parks assets, such as playgrounds and paths, vary in age and quality, so the council will continue to monitor and respond by repairing, replacing or removing items, starting with assets in most need.
- The service will encourage diverse use of parks, while also encouraging park users to be responsible and respectful of other users and neighbours to reduce antisocial behaviour. Parks and Community Safety service colleagues will continue working collaboratively with the community and local police to jointly understand and address these issues.

Accessible

- The Local Plan and NCA report identify and detail links between access to quality green space and health inequalities, such as adult obesity, within the borough. The service will focus on improving the quality and accessibility of green spaces in the areas of most need.
- Local green spaces need to be places where all diverse communities feel welcome. To achieve this the service will seek to include a broader range of groups in matters of green space development and activation, including events and recreation and sports provision.

CLEAN, SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACES FOR ALL

ACTIONS

- 1** Review communication approach to co-create a call to residents to promote positive behaviour changes in 2022.
- 2** The Play Investment Programme will restart and see five new community-designed playgrounds in 2022.
- 3** Assess how the service engages with the public to better enable engagement with diverse communities.

CHALLENGES

Park Toilets

The council recognises the desire for more toilets in parks, however installing new facilities will not be possible at this time due to the up-front and ongoing cost implications. Instead, the service will aim to maintain existing facilities in good working order and seek to increase access to facilities through broader activation of existing pavilion facilities.



OPPORTUNITIES

Active Lifestyles

The council recognises that green infrastructure is also critical for the health and well-being of residents. The service aims to support opportunities for public health initiatives such as green social prescribing, active travel – including new cycling and walking routes – and to maintain and improve provision of sport facilities and recreational areas where financially feasible.

A COLLABORATIVE SERVICE TO ENRICH AND EMPOWER CROYDON'S GREEN & BLUE NETWORK

The council is reshaping the parks team to enable delivery of a more streamlined service for the health of local green spaces and residents. At the same time, consideration has been given as to how best to structure this team to empower local green-minded communities to improve the network of green spaces across the borough.

Key groups such as 'Friends of Parks', Street Champions, conservation volunteers, and more will be supported to not only continue all their great work, but to also creatively collaborate with the service to deliver more for green spaces, above and beyond our grounds maintenance duties. This means thinking about new partnerships and ways of working as well as improving existing successful partnerships with organisations including The Conservation Volunteers, Surrey County Council, City of London and the London Wildlife Trust.

Enrich

To help more people enjoy, respect and protect green spaces, more people must be able to connect with green spaces.

- Through enabling use of parks by community groups representing a broader range of residents, the service will encourage events and activities that will attract new residents, as well as be able to raise revenue to invest back into parks.
- Croydon has been named the 2023 London Borough of Culture and local green spaces can host cultural programming, from small scale to large scale events, demonstrating the borough's green communities, providing opportunities for social integration and generating income for parks.
- Making significant park improvements can take significant financial investment. Existing 'Friends of Parks' groups have successfully sourced funding for projects through bid-writing and crowdfunding and the service will focus building on those successes whilst also utilising internal funding sources such as S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

A COLLABORATIVE SERVICE TO ENRICH AND EMPOWER CROYDON'S GREEN & BLUE NETWORK

Empower

There is even more community interest to get involved in parks – around 1,700 of the survey respondents said they are willing to support their local green space – and the aim is to facilitate this to happen. How can communities contribute?

- Keeping parks clean and bio-diverse – it is something to be proud of.
- Join a ‘Friends of Park’ group, or mobilise the community to create one where it’s needed.
- Join the council’s partners to increase nature conservation volunteering across the borough.

PARTNERSHIPS

Croydon has a green network of partners – from empowered individuals and community groups to environmental charities and neighbouring councils – who are all playing their important parts in supporting green spaces to thrive. Through these partnerships, the council can achieve so much more, and thus it is crucial to continue to strengthen this network.



A COLLABORATIVE SERVICE TO ENRICH AND EMPOWER CROYDON'S GREEN & BLUE NETWORK

ACTIONS

- 4** Review 'Friends of Parks' processes in 2022 for how to make efficiencies and best support active residents.
- 5** Start the Sustainable Croydon Fund in the 2022/23 financial year – supporting projects and initiatives that promote environmental protection, green living and sustainable lifestyles.
- 6** Prepare for implementation of the new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements and develop park improvement projects.

CHALLENGES

Staff Resource and Community Power

While the newly reshaped parks team has seen a reduction in staff resource, the council has also aimed to create a structure that can better enable and empower existing 'Friends of Parks' groups and new groups from local communities. These changes will take time to settle, during which the service will be open about what is and isn't possible, as well as how communities can collaborate to overcome challenges.



OPPORTUNITIES

Green Space Activation

There are many benefits that come from community activation of green spaces. Simple yet critical cleansing jobs, nature conservation works, and park development proposals – there is much that can be done and the council needs committed individuals who can lead, manage and mobilise our residents.

SUPPORT AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE CROYDON

Croydon must support green and blue infrastructure for the benefit of local flora, fauna and residents, and as part of the response to building climate change resilience. This will take a holistic approach that goes beyond just focusing on traditional green spaces to include all trees, woodlands, water courses, allotments, and green in the public realm. Adopting a green grid approach set out in a future green infrastructure strategy will be a key step to becoming an environmentally sustainable Croydon.

Croydon has a long established heritage of supporting locally important habitats and biodiversity as well as working on a cross-borough, landscape level. The council is proud to work with many conservation groups and landholders in Croydon and national organisations including the Environment Agency and Natural England. This relies on committed and qualified staff to support communities and collaborate with partners, and the new service structure will ensure this tradition continues.

Grounds Maintenance

In 2021 the grounds maintenance team had to reduce grass-cutting frequency. Increases were made to the number of naturalised areas where 'conservation cuts' are prioritised. This type of cut, done once or twice a year, will help benefit local habitats for native pollinators such as bees and butterflies. The aim is to achieve a balance of cuts in green spaces which provide more pockets of healthier habitats and maintain areas for recreational use. Meanwhile, the council remains committed to maintaining countryside areas to support access to nature, such as in the South London Downs National Nature Reserve.



SUPPORT AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE CROYDON

Nature Conservation

It is crucial to continue to protect 'Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation', including achieving the right balance of public access. The council will encourage residents across the borough to 'get their hands dirty' and help nature thrive, both directly and through local partners. Those interested in supporting can email: biodiversity@croydon.gov.uk

Trees & Woodlands

The council's trees and woodlands team champion and care for the tree canopy, including specimens within parts of the ancient Great North Wood, as well as important street trees providing valuable ecosystem services. The council will continue to deliver the five year street tree planting programme which commenced in 2018. In 2021, Croydon joined the Trees for Streets project which enables individuals to sponsor trees on streets and in green spaces.



Allotments & Food Growing

There are many benefits to having a productive landscape including reducing food miles, healthier lifestyles, boosting local economies and supporting nature. There is a large demand for allotments in Croydon and the service will do its best to make the best of every inch of existing growing space and explore opportunities for new urban farming and growing, such as community garden initiatives in parks to make food-growing more accessible.

SUPPORT AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE CROYDON

ACTIONS

- 7 Review and update the Biodiversity Action Plan by the end of 2023.**
- 8 Target to plant 3,500 street trees by 2023.**
- 9 Start the process of developing a full green and blue infrastructure strategy by 2024.**

CHALLENGES

Creating New Green Spaces

In densely populated urban areas like Croydon, creating new green spaces is a significant challenge. The initial focus is to ensure existing spaces are managed as well as they can be, including highway verges and housing land as well as traditional parks and green spaces.



OPPORTUNITIES

Climate Change & Ecological Crisis Priorities

The Croydon Climate Crisis Commission report, published in June 2021, identified priorities with interconnected themes for action, including 'greening our neighbourhoods' and 'getting people and businesses involved'. The council will coordinate efforts with the actions and resources being outlined in the delivery plan for the report (due in 2022), which addresses important interventions such as SUDS, air quality improvements, recycling and carbon efficiency improvements to grounds maintenance machinery and vehicles which will also enable greater biodiversity support.

A SERVICE WORKING TOWARD FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH COMMERCIALISATION, INNOVATION & PARTNERSHIP

The Parks and Green Spaces service has played its part in delivering tangible savings for the council and by starting to live within our means. Moving forward, the service must continue to think creatively about the financial foundations of its offer.

During the next three years, the Parks and Green Spaces service will explore and implement measures which achieve value for money, increase income generation, and successfully and efficiently use both internal and external funding streams with local communities. The long term aim is to develop a financially sustainable service and to achieve this, begin with the following three focus areas:

Income Generation

- The sustainable future of parks and green spaces will depend on how well Croydon can generate income to become a self-sufficient service, and to reinvest back into the management and development of these spaces.
- There are established income streams, such as fees and charges for events, allotments, sports bookings and business rent income, and the service will continue ongoing reviews. Meanwhile, it will be important to explore new alternatives, such as corporate sponsorship, parking fees and charity funding models.

Alternative Funding Streams

- The use of internal and external funding streams will enable the service to invest in P&G whilst placing less pressure on the council's general funds. Officers will utilise S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy to enable capital works to be delivered with and by the community.
- The service will aim to leverage these funds – with additional drive and support from the community – to seek external funding streams, such as through the GLA, National Lottery Heritage Fund and opportunities from other organisations as and when they become available.

Value for Money

At the core of Croydon's new ways of working is the need to provide value for money, and so the service will consider reductions in areas that are not meeting this expectation.

COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

The council's communications team will deliver messaging that encourages all people to enjoy local parks in a safe, responsible and sustainable way through targeted campaigns. The mission is to:

- Listen to and inform park users
- Involve and engage the community in decision-making
- Celebrate and appreciate our parks and green spaces through positive promotion of their benefits to the community and local activities
- Recognise the staff and volunteers who maintain, protect and enrich Croydon's parks and green spaces



This will be accomplished through:

- The council's social media channels
- 'Friends of Parks' bulletin
- Behaviour change campaigns (anti-littering/fly-tipping, safety, etc)

The council recognises the importance of keeping people up-to-date on local parks and green spaces. There is a dedicated network of residents online that would be interested in this information. Key Facebook groups such as 'Friends of Parks' and local residents' associations are valuable spaces to share content. The council will also continue to use print advertising for key messages, including banners and stickers in parks, and flyers in public spaces where necessary.



THE PATH AHEAD

Croydon is very fortunate to have such a wealth of parks and green spaces and the council must do its utmost to maintain, protect and enhance them for people and for nature. This strategy comes at an important time, one that aligns with significant local action already happening, including vital work in the form of the Croydon Carbon Neutral Action Plan as well as the Local Plan Review. Also at a regional and national level with the new London Plan and the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements. Croydon must use all of this action to maintain momentum and positivity towards the long term sustainability of the borough's parks and green spaces.

During the next three years Croydon will adapt to delivering a core service with a new unified Parks and Green Spaces service team in place, one that will focus on keeping green spaces clean, safe, accessible and biodiverse. Following this strategy will be a delivery plan which will provide more detail on the actions to be taken to achieve the vision and priorities. The council won't be looking to do this alone though, and is calling on the ongoing effort of the borough's existing green network as well as the many residents who are ready to support their local parks.

As the end of the three year period approaches, planning will take place for a more holistic resetting of the strategy for green and blue infrastructure across the borough, and the council will again be calling for residents' valuable input into this process. In the meantime, the council will be working to achieve the priorities identified within this document and report back on them through the parks pages on the website.

Finally, a profound thank you to everyone – staff and volunteers alike – whose continued care, effort and enthusiasm for a green Croydon is greatly appreciated.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Thank you!

Our specific thanks for their thorough contributions to creating this strategy go to:

Friends of Selsdon Wood
Friends of Marlpit Lane Bowling Green
Friends of Purley Beeches
Friends of Littleheath Woods
Addiscombe and Shirley Park Residents' Association
Friends of Wettern Tree Garden
Friends of Norbury Park
Friends of Spring Park Wood
Friends of South Norwood Lake
The Conservation Volunteers

Friends of South Norwood Country Park
Friends of Haling Grove
Friends of Norbury Hall Park
Friends of South Croydon Recreation Ground
Friends of Grangewood Park
Friends of King's Wood
Friends of Park Hill Park
Friends of Grange Park OC
Association of Croydon Conservation Societies
Croydon Street Champions