

Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2022-2038



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1. Foreword

This strategy has been written at a time of growing recognition of the deterioration of England's natural environment and reduction in biodiversity and wildlife that has occurred in the past 70 years. The distribution of UK species has declined and this has continued over the past 10 years.¹ Growing concern led the government to declare a climate and ecological emergency in 2019, with many local councils and communities declaring likewise; Portsmouth Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019.

The Portsmouth Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2030 indicates the importance of outdoor space for both physical and mental wellbeing outcomes.² Lifestyle choices and a lack of access to the natural environment are an important contributory factor in health outcomes. The coronavirus epidemic brought into focus the link between wellbeing and nature and we all witnessed an increased demand and desire for our city's parks and open spaces which has not abated since that time.

Portsmouth City Council is committed to protecting and maintaining the city's parks and open spaces. This document sets out the current offer, highlights the opportunities going forward and declares the key themes which will guide the future care of our parks and open spaces. Caring for our spaces has the potential to benefit all the residents of the city and promote the city to visitors, where *'spending time in the natural environment - as a resident or visitor - improves our mental health and feelings of wellbeing. It can reduce stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression. It can help boost immune systems, encourage physical activity and may reduce the risk of chronic disease such as asthma. It can combat loneliness and bind communities together'*³

I commend this strategy and look forward to working with officers to implement the key principles over the course of the future, so that we can continue to offer high quality open space as part of our city's footprint.

Councillor Steve Pitt

Leader, Portfolio for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development



¹ [State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf \(nbn.org.uk\)](#)

² [health-and-wellbeing-strategy-january-2022-accessible.pdf \(portsmouth.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [25-year-environment-plan.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

2. Introduction

Recent years have seen a significant upheaval in society due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Various lockdowns and restrictions on travel have witnessed a rediscovery of the local environment. There has been an increase in biophilia, the innate desire in human beings to connect with nature and the environment, which in turn supports physical and mental wellbeing.

Greater shift in seasonal change and increasing global temperatures mean that climate change is also a higher priority both nationally and internationally. For our city, Portsmouth City Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 with an aim to be net zero by 2030. Parks and Open Spaces have a key contribution to make towards climate improvement.

The previous Parks and Open Spaces Strategy covered the period 2012-2022. The strategy was comprehensive and included a consideration of all the different types of space with public access, owned by the council.

It is an appropriate time to renew the strategy, in consideration of updated policy, priorities and changing local government pressures. The strategy also considers the results of the online survey to hear from the people of the city and the results of quality audits undertaken of all the sites.

The strategy covers the period 2022 - 2038, to enable it to dovetail with the Local Plan.

National, regional and local policy supports the importance of protecting parks and open spaces and this is considered in the strategy, where applicable.

The parks and open spaces of the city are also agents of social, ecological and cultural enrichment. This is considered under several themes in the strategy which are linked to the recommended actions.



The survey undertaken as part of this strategy revealed, unsurprisingly, that 73% of respondents had visited parks and open spaces more since the pandemic. This strategy considers the current provision and future of the city's parks and open spaces and what can be done to maximise the benefits of these spaces to the city. It includes an in depth consideration of a number of sites, including a comprehensive consideration of the seafront open space. The strategy looks at what we have now as well as the journey we may take in the future, so that our city's parks and open spaces can continue to bring healthy outcomes for the city's residents.

3. National and Regional Policy

National Policy for parks and open spaces is comprised of the National Planning Policy Framework, Public Health England policy, Local Government Association, parliamentary committee and funded projects in addition to relevant legislation. The Environment Act 2021 (which became law in November 2021) comprises legislation to increase biodiversity and protect natural habitats.

The policy detail is included an appendix to this strategy.

National policy follows several themes, that parks and open spaces should:

- Promote social interaction and cohesion;
- Support healthy lifestyles;
- Promote active partnerships and community groups;
- Rethink income models;
- Promote and protect biodiversity

The Local Government Association and Department for Communities and Local Government (department name at the time) found that local government parks and open spaces budgets were under extreme pressure, whilst being of vital importance to covid recovery and wider local authority objectives.

Regional policy recognises that quality green infrastructure has a direct economic benefit to the area, recognises the importance of regional biodiversity and how nature can be harnessed to mitigate the climate crisis.

4. Local policy and operational plans

In Portsmouth, the framework for the city's development is contained in the Portsmouth Local Plan. The Local Plan is under consultation and is anticipated to be adopted in 2024, to cover a period through to 2038. The Plan includes policy for Open Space, Leisure Facilities and Green Infrastructure. Local policy is geared towards the protection of green space, (unless strictly unavoidable) due to the benefits it brings to the community, air quality and local biodiversity, together with the additional benefits where quality open space can help make the streets safer.

Local policy (via the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and Air Quality Strategy) also includes plans to develop the availability of active travel networks, thereby increasing the number of designated routes for walking and cycling through the city. Active travel both contributes to improving air quality and healthy lifestyle, as part of Energise Me Hampshire, the local cross-authority physical activity strategy.

Public Health have also piloted a 'Superzone' in an area of Portsmouth which is a place-making initiative that includes objectives towards improved green space and physical activity. The superzone includes several of the city's green spaces including Nutfield Place, Arundel Park and Landport Park.

The local operational plans for Portsmouth's parks and open spaces have a number of guiding principles, including:

- To manage the site as a quality, safe and accessible area
- To maintain and enhance the nature, value and biodiversity of the site
- To manage the site sustainably
- To promote community involvement
- To promote the site as a resource for healthy living and/or an educational resource

Further details of the local policies and and operational plans can be found in an appendix to this strategy.

5. Local authority stakeholders

The Parks and Open Spaces strategy will be shared with a number of Council directorates including:

- Public Health
- Education
- Adult Services
- Children's Services
- Regeneration
- Housing, Neighbourhood and Buildings.

Whilst parks and open spaces are not directly a statutory function, the parks and open spaces strategy plays a key role in developing Portsmouth for the future. As a densely populated urban space, parks provision has direct outcomes on physical and mental health, directly correlating to the demands on statutory functions of public health, education, adult services and children's services. The green infrastructure of the city also develops the city's environmental credentials, opening up further opportunities for investment.

Many residents of the city also live in housing structures without access to private outdoor space. It is therefore essential that the city offers greenspace within the public realm.

In their 2017 report, the Commons Select Committee for Communities and Local Government recognised calls from across the UK for a statutory duty on local authorities to provide for and maintain parks. The report recognises that reductions in local authority budgets over the past 10 years disproportionately disadvantage discretionary services such as parks. Whilst the service remains a discretionary function, the report recognises that parks and open spaces contribute directly towards wider local authority objectives cross-cutting a number of departments which have statutory duties.



6. The current position

Portsmouth is a unique city, as a considerable expanse of the city comprises an island surrounded by water. It is therefore unable to 'extend' outwards and add further green space to what already exists. It does however have a wealth of existing spaces, of great variety. The offering of open spaces includes wildlife sites, on the edges of the city boundary, such as Portsdown Hill and Farlington Triangle. There are also sites with heritage aspects, such as Victoria Park, Fort Cumberland and Hilsa Lines. Some of the sites form part of our seafront, such as Southsea Common, Canoe Lake and Eastney Beach. There are also several well provisioned parks, including: Kingston Recreation Ground, Alexandra Park, Drayton Park and Milton Park. Larger, mixed use spaces include Milton Common, Great Salterns and King George V Playing Field. Some of the sites lean more towards quiet nature spaces, whereas other sites offer informal sport activity.

Portsmouth's parks and open spaces hold Green Flag awards at the following locations: Rock Gardens, Baffins Pond and Milton Park. The Victoria Park project (chapter 12) fully engages with Green Flag criteria and therefore aims towards a Green Flag award at the project conclusion.

Sites Quality Audit

As part of this strategy, all the sites in the city have undergone a quality audit. The audit considered the following site types:

- Principal, local and pocket parks and gardens
- Natural spaces and accessible countryside
- Amenity Green space
- Outdoor sports facilities
- Cemeteries and churchyards
- Allotment sites

Principal, Local and Pocket Parks and Gardens

This includes the city's principal parks (such as Baffins Pond, Victoria Park and Canoe Lake), its local parks (such as Alexandra Park, Orchard Park and Pembroke Gardens) and its pocket parks (such as Esplanade Gardens, London Road Linear Park and Marketway Gardens).

Natural and semi-natural greenspace

These spaces include Fort Cumberland, Milton Common and Paulsgrove Chalkpit and the city's countryside sites at Farlington Marshes and Portsdown Hill.

Amenity Greenspace

This is greenspace that is designed to soften the urban fabric of an area, for example in residential areas, to provide small wildlife habitats and allow for informal leisure and recreation. Amenity greenspace should be linked wherever possible to other areas of open space by interconnected green corridors (linear verges and areas adjacent to strategic routes).

Outdoor Sports Grounds

These are included for the purpose in their use as informal outdoor spaces for recreation. They include spaces such as Anchorage Park, Bransbury Park, Great Salterns and St. Helens Playing Field.

Cemeteries and church grounds

This typology includes both the 3 main cemeteries in the city (Highland, Kingston, Milton) and the greenspaces around the churches such as Royal Garrison Church, St. Andrews Farlington and St Mary's Church.

Allotments

There are 9 allotment sites spread across the city.

Main findings from Quality Audits

Over 180 sites were audited for quality (excluding play sites which are considered separately).

The results of the quality audit score spreadsheet is included at an appendix to this strategy.

The audit scoring is affected by the different criteria:

- signage, entrances and access, inclusivity, design, health and wellbeing, safety and security, dog control, waste management, grounds maintenance, buildings, toilets, infrastructure, conservation, heritage and community involvement.

Full details of the criteria can be found in an appendix to this strategy.

As will be evident from the audit scores spreadsheet, some parks scored high in some areas and low in others, but this would be expected depending on the focus of the particular space. For example, amenity green space does not score highly on community involvement, as this criteria is more applicable for formal and semi formal public spaces.

The quality audit indicates that signage would benefit from improvement across all relevant site types.

There is a requirement for the display of contact information in the event of any issues identified by visitors, for example, particularly for principal and local parks. The audit does confirm good information available at wildlife sites and strong signage at cemeteries.

Access was found to be good across most sites. Gates are wide enough and access is clear, with entrances easy to locate. Wheelchair access was poorest at amenity sites, however due to the incidental nature of such sites, wheelchair access is not always appropriate or required. All parks were found to have sufficiently wide paths and gates for wheelchairs. The majority of the wildlife sites have radar keys for access.

Design scores vary from site to site, as the score is dependent on the variety of the planting. Cumberland Gardens is a good example of design as it has a unique sense of place as a feature garden. John Wesley Gardens is not such a good example as there is minimal consideration of planting. However, this site would score higher under different criteria; for example it has good facilities for sporting activity.

Parks scored well for health and wellbeing where they had availability for shade and shelter. Also, scores were higher where sports development activities were evident: MUGAs, tennis courts, bowls, outdoor gym, outdoor tennis tables. For example, Kingston Recreation Ground has a broad range of sports development activity on offer.

Scores were strong for safety and security where parks and spaces had open sightlines and surrounding properties. In parks and spaces where there are no surrounding properties, safety and security can be improved by CCTV and lighting, where appropriate. Some parks do have incidental lighting around the outside, courtesy of streetlights. Issues to consider regarding additional lighting are set out in chapter 9.

Control of dogs is a difficult issue as some parks are dominated by dogs. For example, on the audit of Braemar Gardens, it was found that visitors brought their dogs and chose to shut the main gates. This makes the park less welcoming; as such, some parks may be considered to have been overshadowed by professional dog walkers. Fouling however was not found to be an issue across any of the spaces, which suggests that the signage is effective and owners responsible.

The criteria for litter and waste considers bin provision, capacity and whether there is evidence of graffiti problems. During the course of the quality audit, no overflowing bins were identified and bins were easy to find. Scores were lower for pocket parks, for example Marketway Gardens did not have any bins and there was evidence of littering at the time of the audit. There were limited bins in some of the wildlife sites, but this is appropriate for the site type. In the wildlife sites, bins were appropriately out of view due to the nature of the site as an informal area. Amenity spaces scored low, but there would only be a justification for bins if there is an intention to upgrade any of these sites to parks spaces.

Grounds maintenance scored well over the variety of site types and there was no evidence of sites dominated by overgrowth, where this was not intentionally part of a rewilding scheme. Please see section on wilding in 'The role of parks and open spaces' headed 'Parks for celebrating and protecting our environment'.

Where parks and spaces had buildings on site, these scored well as they were in good condition at the time of the audit. For example, the café in Victoria Park and the buildings at the church sites were all well maintained. Where the audit revealed the buildings were in poor condition, these were sports pavilions, for example at King George V Playing Fields.

Sports pavilions are recommended as an area for future investment and current progress is set out in more detail in the sections on King George V Playing Fields and Bransbury Park.

The audit found that toilets in parks were limited, which is particularly significant for principal parks. Where there are toilets, these are in good condition and include disabled facilities, for example College Park and Kingston Recreation Ground. Some parks do not have dedicated toilets, but have toilets in the local area, for example Cumberland Gardens does have toilets in the vicinity, at Canoe Lake.

The criteria for infrastructure concerns aspects of hard landscaping, such as railings, paths and seats for example. Scores were good in many parks, however exceptions include Gatcombe House where paths and seats are in poor condition. This will be picked up as part of the annual hard landscaping inspection regime.

Where features were in existence for conservation and heritage, these were well maintained. Parks and spaces with low scores here included Gatcombe Gardens, where there is a stone folly (domed rotunda) that requires some refurbishment. There were some opportunities for designated wildlife habitats in some spaces where they would be appropriate, for example Kingston Recreation Ground is a large park with little evidence of wildlife habitat. In some parks and spaces, such as Cornwallis Crescent, wildlife areas could be better maintained should there be available resources.

Community involvement scores depend on the type of site. For example, cemeteries, by their nature, do not appeal to small children. Principal parks have more features and potential for all age ranges and groups. Ideally, to improve community involvement, all principal parks in the city would benefit from friends groups, where possible. Several local parks have capacity to address features for children, however, in many cases these are already near existing parks with good provision for children. For example, Clarendon Gardens does not have facilities for children but is very near to Wimbledon Park which is well equipped.

Allotment scores were lower where there were only grass site paths in evidence, (such as Knowsley Road and Stamshaw and Tipner) as this would affect public access. Across all allotment sites, signage scored low as there was considerable scope for improvement, such as site maps, which were absent from the majority of sites. This may be developed through collaborative working with Allotment Associations.

Hampshire Gardens Trust also undertook a quality survey of 18 urban parks in Portsmouth in 2021/2022 and the results of this exercise were positive. Further information on this survey is contained in the Regional Policy Appendix.

Sites Play Value Assessment

'Play Value' is understood as the extent to which play spaces offer open-ended and stimulating play experience for children and young people.⁴

Over 110 sites were assessed for Play Value in autumn 2022 by an independent inspector. This is in addition to the continuous fortnightly review cycle by the Council's in house RPII Operational Play Inspectors and an annual independent RPII safety inspection against playground standards.

The results of the play value assessment are included at an appendix to this strategy.

⁴ [Play value - RoSPA](#)

Each space is allocated a site type label.

Site Label	Definition	Number of sites
Door step sites	Spaces within sight of home; catered particularly towards young children	33
Local sites	Larger spaces that can safely be reached by children independently without accompanying adults	62
Neighbourhood sites	Large facilities for informal recreation for children and young people; include a wider range of play experiences	16

The play value results confirm the site type label for each space and scores them for toddler, junior and senior/young person play. Doorstep sites can be expected to show good scores for toddler play and neighbourhood sites can be expected to show good scores for all three types of provision.

The majority of **neighbourhood sites** (13 out of 16) showed high scores (over 20), indicating that there is good provision in the city. The highest scoring neighbourhood sites were Hobby Close and Kingston Park. Both these sites have had recent investment with the majority of funding coming from Big Local. In Kingston Park in 2018 the play area was completely refurbished and renewed following local consultation exercises with the residents. The designs and equipment were chosen with the local community following extensive consultation. The total project cost was £300,000. A similar process was carried out at Hobby Close in 2021 with the final result being a totally refurbished play area and provision of a new concrete skate area. The total project cost was £550,000. The high play value scores following both of these projects demonstrate how capital investment in play areas can make a real improvement to children's lives.

The neighbourhood sites with low scores that may be focussed on for future investment are Bransbury Park, Buckland Park and Knowsley Road. Bransbury Park is undergoing feasibility for a new development (see section 20) and investment in the neighbourhood play site may be considered as part of this development. Buckland Park scored low on disabled inclusion and imaginative play. Knowsley Road scored low on age variety play needs, movement and natural environment play.

The majority of **local sites** (43 out of 62) reflected scores (12 and above) illustrating provision for toddlers and juniors. The local sites with the top three scores are Allaway Avenue, Milton Park and Tunstall Road. All three of these sites scored well on play needs for different ages.

Local sites with the lowest scores which may be a focus for future investment are Binsteed Road, Church Road and Claremont Road. Binsteed Road scored low on movement, which is an important part of exploratory play (see below). Church Road and Claremont Road both scored low on provision for ball games.

Regarding **doorstep sites**, (24 out of 33) reflected scores of 6 and above, suggesting good provision for toddlers. The highest scoring sites were Denmead House and Privett House. Denmead House scored well as it has a unique ball games area as part of the site and Privett House also scored for ball games provision.

Doorstep sites with lowest scores include Providence Place, Boxgrove House and Bournemouth House. These sites had low scores for toddlers in terms of movement and play value.

The identified elements in the play assessment scores will provide the direction of future investment in these play spaces. The Play Safety Forum identifies that when designing play spaces, a balance should be made between risk and benefit. It is important that fear of litigation does not detract from the design of dynamic play spaces. High value play provision offers children the opportunity to engage with risk as part of a controlled learning environment. This is no different to other leisure activity for children, for example in football and other child sports which are perceived as positive to child development and incur a greater risk of injury than that of playground participation.⁵

New installations in the city's play spaces therefore seek to increase play value through dynamic equipment that engages the child to take decisions, for example on balance and movement. Where design seeks to eliminate risk, children and young people will seek out risks elsewhere in uncontrolled environments. Without challenge, children and young people seek alternative stimulation which can lead to vandalism of equipment and anti-social behaviour.

The Council aims to increase play value in all open access play areas as often as budgets allow, further developing and improving sites where possible.

Sites Quantity and Accessibility Audit

A review of quantity and accessibility was last undertaken in 2018 and a copy of this audit is appended to this strategy. *Quantity* considers how much green space is available in the city and *accessibility* considers the walking distance to a type of open space. Summary findings are set out below, with details of the assessment appended to this strategy.

The quantity and accessibility is assessed under the same headings as for the quality audit. The review findings are as follows:

Typology	Key finding based on population numbers	Comment
Amenity greenspace	Quantity shortfall	Difficult to increase due to city's geography; priority given to improve quality of existing space
	Accessibility - shortfall in Cosham, city centre north and central south	New development must provide for amenity greenspace and green travel options
Public parks and gardens	Quantity shortfall	Difficult to increase due to city's geography; priority given to improve quality of existing space
	Accessibility - good - population falls within catchment	
Natural and semi natural greenspace	Quantity shortfall	Difficult to increase due to city's geography; priority given

⁵ [mrpp-position-statement-2021.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](#)

Typology	Key finding based on population numbers	Comment
		to improve quality of existing space
	Accessibility - good - population falls within catchment	
Allotments	Quantity shortfall	Difficult to increase due to city's geography; priority given to improve by introducing community gardening
	Accessibility - shortfall in south-west and north-east corner of city	
Cemeteries and churchyards	Quantity - not applicable	No quantitative standard as outdoor space is secondary purpose of this typology
	Accessibility - not applicable	No accessibility standard as outdoor space is secondary purpose of this typology
Outdoor sports grounds	Quantity - not applicable	No quantitative standard as primary use is for formal sports activity
	Accessibility - not applicable	No accessibility standard as primary use is for formal sports activity

7. What you told us

As part of this strategy, public consultation has taken place online and in person.

Focussed Events: A Parks Conversation

Two focussed events were held at the north and south of the city, in the city's libraries. Both events were publicised on the library social media feeds and community boards.

The objective of the focussed events was to undertake brainstorming with members of the public, find out what they love about the city's parks and what changes and improvements they would like to see.

Cosham Library Event

The Cosham Library Parks Conversation was held on 12 January 2022. The results of the conversation can be summarised in the below wordcloud:



The following themes and priorities became apparent during the conversation:

- Safe play equipment, accessible to all users;
- The swings, monkey bars and freedom to play football was important to children;
- The parks are well looked after, it is good to see the shrubs neat & trimmed;
- Parks are important so that I can exercise, especially since the pandemic;
- The Council must protect its open spaces;
- More signage would be helpful to alert pedestrians regarding cyclists/ cycleways;
- Littering was mentioned as a problem on Portsdown Hill

Favourite parks in the north of the city were identified as Drayton Park and Portsdown Hill. Although Farlington Marshes was enjoyed as a space for wildlife, in terms of peace and calm users found that they were disturbed at that location by traffic noise, therefore Portsdown Hill was preferred as a natural open space.

Users also mentioned how clean and well looked after the parks were and a common response was *'keep doing what you are doing'*.

Southsea Library Event

The Southsea Library Parks Conversation was held on 19 January 2022. The results of the conversation can be summarised in the below wordcloud:



The following themes and priorities became apparent during the conversation:

- The importance of parks as the 'city's lungs' and their contribution to environment sustainability and climate care;
- The importance of spaces as opportunities for walking and exercise, especially since the pandemic;
- Some respondents were worried about space being built on;
- Parks and open spaces were mentioned as improving positive mental health;
- It was important to aim parks at different ages, some for young children - for play, some for teenagers - to hang out;
- Key parks such as Canoe Lake Park and Victoria Park should be promoted - updated signage;
- Enjoyment of trees, birds and animals in the parks;
- Concern expressed about financial pressures on Parks - bring back Park Rangers;
- The ability to enjoy photography in Parks and possibility of a photography group.

One respondent made a particular point about mental health:

'Without Portsmouth's parks, we'd all be on anti-depressants'

Favourite parks in the south of the city were identified as Milton Park, Southsea Common, Victoria Park, Canoe Lake Park, Rock Gardens and Wimbledon Park.

Online survey

A Parks and Open Spaces residents survey was held between 8 October and 24 November 2021. 1330 responses were received to the survey. The survey comprised 7 questions. Full results are found in an appendix to this strategy.

The survey found that the majority of respondents were now visiting parks and open spaces more than before the pandemic, highlighting their importance to the city. Respondents thought that the main focus for Portsmouth's parks and open spaces should be as green havens: to protect biodiversity and wildlife. The most popular reasons for using parks and open spaces were found to be enjoying a quiet space and visiting nature. This aligns with the focus of parks as green havens and is supported by the other reasons given for visiting parks, which included birdwatching, photography and wildlife observation, mental health and mindfulness. The wheeled sports community also expressed their desire for using the parks as did dog walkers.

The main reason identified from the survey as discouragement from using parks and open spaces was inadequate toilet facilities. As identified in the quality audit, consideration needs to be given whether capital budget can be allocated to provide further toilet facilities in all principal parks. Competing users was also identified as a cause for not using parks; consideration needs to be given to dog designation.

The most popular improvements identified for parks were planting, wildlife habitats and cleanliness. The quality audit did not find extensive evidence of dog fouling, which would suggest that cleanliness refers to general littering, which is constantly monitored by the council's parks and cleansing teams.

In terms of investment, the most popular responses were bins and dog bins, sensory gardens, seating areas and café/concessions. The quality audit found good provision of bins and dog bins, however perception may be affected by usage at particular times of the year. Sensory gardens and seating align with the focus of parks as green spaces and quiet havens. Children's play areas were also ranked as an important area to continue to maintain and invest in.

The most popular parks as selected by respondents were Canoe Lake, Castle Field and Southsea Common.

The majority of survey respondents (35%) came from the Milton and Eastney area, were female and spread across the age ranges. Most were White British and 12% confirmed that they had a disability.

8. The role of parks and open spaces

Research into policy and parks across the UK shows that local authority parks and open spaces have a number of distinct roles. These are:

- Parks as community spaces
- Parks for celebrating and protecting our environment
- Parks as spaces for lifelong learning
- Parks for our health and wellbeing

Parks as Community spaces

The Diversity Review by the Countryside Agency⁶ has considered underrepresentation and barriers to different communities to access to public open space. The review concluded that several factors needed to be considered in parks and open space design.

People with disabilities may feel that they have limited use regarding the city's parks.

⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/63060>

Research referenced in the Diversity Review has suggested that people with mobility restrictions have a preference for wooded areas over wide open spaces. However, either landscape would be preferable where unimpeded motion was available - smooth and unobstructed pathways are important.

Cultural factors may prevent some minority ethnic groups from using the city's parks.⁷ Some communities may be more disposed than others to use outdoor space, due to cultural background or dress codes. Certain groups may feel alienated from the landscape which may be perceived as 'white landscape'. There may be a lack of appropriate activities for particular cultural groups. Groups may fear for their personal safety and have concern about verbal abuse.

Young people have high participation in parks as children but the transition to adulthood is known to reduce use by this cohort. This can be caused by a frustration at not being included in design decisions for spaces and/or negative experiences when young.



Gender can also play a factor. The Diversity Review noted that countryside use is significantly higher for men than women. Women, particularly from ethnic minority groups, feared being alone, particularly in woodland areas.

All different communities therefore need to be considered, when changes are implemented, so that opportunities are available for them to use their local parks and open spaces.

Parks and open spaces provide an opportunity for Men's Sheds communities⁸. These communities are an opportunity for practical interests to be pursued, things made and repaired and skills developed. They provide an opportunity for social connections to be developed, rather than solitary pursuit.

⁷ <https://www.futureoflondon.org.uk/2020/10/20/parks-and-green-space-does-everyone-feel-welcome/>

⁸ <https://menssheds.org.uk/>

Men's Sheds often get involved in community projects such as the maintenance of parks and green spaces. They are also sometimes engaged to help young offenders in the community. There are Men's Sheds in Portsmouth at Drayton, Portsea and Southsea.



The **Commons Select Committee for Communities and Local Government** reported in 2017 that **community groups** may have conflicting demands for the use of parks. Events, particularly in the summer season, are key income generators for Parks budgets, however this could create a nuisance for local communities, cause disruption and damage to the Park. The requirement for events must, whilst establishing exclusive use for an event, continue to allow general access at certain times of the day. On the other hand, greenspace has a part to play in bringing communities together over shared objectives and building a sense of local pride.

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Under-representation by minority ethnic groups, particularly women	Engage with communities, community focussed events
	Make safety a priority
Ease of access for those with mobility challenges	Ensure pathways meet suitable design and quality standards
Young people's engagement	Work with Friends Groups to engage young people in open spaces; continued development of use of spaces with Community Engagement Officers
Reduce social isolation amongst men	Engage with Men's Sheds Association.

Parks for celebrating and protecting our environment

As an island city, Portsmouth has a limited number of natural open spaces. As set out in the policy section, these are protected to enable them to support several different habitats and species.

Urban green space in the city has a key role to play in mitigating **climate change**. Exposure to pollutants can be significantly reduced through strategically placed green infrastructure, which includes the correct species of plant and enables barriers and distance between the source of pollution and individuals. This can be assisted by urban greening schemes and wildlife friendly landscaping, such as restricting the mowing of urban pockets of green space and encouraging wildflower seeding between the months of March/April until August/September. The Grounds Maintenance team have different mowing plans depending on the location and type of grass and mowing has decreased from 16 mows annually to between 9 and 12 for amenity spaces to 1 or 2 cuts per year where wild havens are being encouraged. The wildflower growth, in turn, encourages small mammals and invertebrates.

Where it is possible to rewild verges and /or create green corridors, this must be undertaken with a view to public safety. For example, at traffic junctions, edges require mowing to prevent any obstruction to visibility, but central pockets may be left for rewilding.

Where rewilding is an option in parkland, the area can be left for rewilding and paths mown through for access and enjoyment.

Greenspace also mitigates **noise pollution**, through absorption and dispersal of sound. It also refocuses attention away from urban noise.

Cities have concentrated areas of tarmac and asphalt together with heat produced by heating to buildings and from cars. In comparison to rural areas, higher temperatures in urban areas are known as the **urban heat island effect**. The impact of heat exposure increases risk of illness to the population. Green space has a strong association with heat reduction, providing much needed shade and associated cooling effects from water and wind.⁹

Mitigation of the urban heat island effect is possible through landscape softening, such as depaving schemes. In addition to softening the landscape, incorporating sustainable drainage designs and depaving can assist with flood management and climate enhancement. Leaving small unpaved areas as part of street layout changes was referenced in the Biodiversity Enhancement Scrutiny Report which was formally considered at Scrutiny Panel on 22 March 2022¹⁰.

Trees are an essential component to climate mitigation by helping flood prevention, reducing air temperatures, reducing pollution by absorption of carbon and contributing to a nutrient rich soil. The Council inspects trees regularly and only removes them when they present a risk to public safety or property, are dying or diseased, or are required to be removed to meet a development objective in line with planning policy.¹¹ There is also a commitment to replacement of trees to prevent net loss. The Council encourages residents to inform the Council of proposed planting, water trees planted near private property, suggest new sites for tree planting and report any damaged trees.

⁹ [Improving access to greenspace 2020 review.pdf](#)

¹⁰ [Agenda for Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel on Tuesday, 22nd March, 2022, 4.00 pm Portsmouth City Council](#)

¹¹ [Greening%20Portsmouth%20Strategy%20appendix.pdf](#)

As part of the 'Queen's Canopy: Plant a tree for Jubilee' campaign, the Council is supporting legacy planting in the city in 2022.¹²

The government launched Urban Tree Challenge Fund Round 4 in Spring 2022¹³. This is an avenue for capital funding for urban tree planting. The grant is based on Forestry Commission standard costs, where the Fund will cover 50% of these costs, provided the council can match fund the other 50%.

Trees for Cities is a UK charity and not for profit company which aims to plant thousands of urban trees worldwide each year to help fight climate change. Trees for Cities will compile a block bid for this fund, including submission from Portsmouth. This will be for the planting season winter 2022/23 and winter 2023/24.



Regarding tree planting, great care is taken. Strimmer guards are used unless a protective cage is fitted. Mulch is also used to suppress 'weed'¹⁴ and grass growth in the immediate planting area of the tree. Mulch also assists with moisture retention to help the trees become established.

¹² [Queens%20Platinum%20Jubilee%20Report.pdf](#)

¹³ [Urban Tree Challenge Fund application form round 4 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁴ 'Weeds or 'weed', where used in the strategy, refers to any plant growing where it is not wanted or considered undesirable.

Sustainability is an important part of climate and environment care. The Parks Service have several decarbonising measures including:

- Operational work schedules follow routes to minimise travel and fuel emissions whilst carrying out required activities. Operatives are instructed not to leave engines idling whilst stationary
- Species rich grassland is subject to a reduced maintenance regime
- Fleet vehicles being replaced by electric vehicles at lease renewal where this is feasible
- Bicycles are available for grounds maintenance staff
- Battery powered tools are replacing petrol powered options for grounds maintenance
- 90% of tree arisings generated are recycled for biofuel for woodchip for landscape use
- Green waste is gathered, stored and collected by a local company (for a fee) who operate an Environment Agency permitted site for compost production.

Pesticide Use

The increased interest and usage of open spaces as a result of the pandemic has brought further debate around environmental concerns and biodiversity, including how open spaces are managed and maintained. This includes the work by organisations such as Pesticide Action Network UK <https://www.pan-uk.org/> which aims to reduce use of pesticides and eliminate where possible. Council policy, as set out in a report to Cabinet (22 March 2022) is to restrict pesticide use to a minimum and integrate pesticide free solutions such as mulching, overplanting and reduced mowing.

The Council's limited use of pesticides is guided by several factors:

- Herbicide is only used to control 'weed' on hard surfaces where road users visibility is affected, drainage is impacted or 'weeds' on pavements create a trip/slip hazard.
- Selective herbicides are used for 'weed' control on fine turf and sports areas, to maintain a safe and level playing surface. Fungicides are only used to prevent and remove fungus on high quality surfaces such as golf greens.
- Council staff involved in the use of pesticides work to the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012. This legislation imposes a number of requirements on users, including minimal and controlled use as appropriate.

To minimise use, the Council undertakes alternatives to the use of pesticides including the use of 'weed' suppressants (e.g. mulching of shrub beds and use of recycled wood chip) and overplanting to reduce opportunity for 'weed' growth.

Several factors affect the elimination of use of pesticides, including:

- Exposure to Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) from the use of hand-held power tools which might be used for mechanical 'weed' removal
- The environmental benefits of pesticide free solutions may be outweighed by the increased use of fossil fuels and emissions from machine use.
- The Parks Service (and other Council services) have limited resources to transfer to various alternatives.¹⁵

At a Council meeting on 19 July 2022¹⁶, the Council resolved further action with regard to pesticides and agreed to:

- Commission further trials of a range of non-chemical and mechanical alternatives to weed treatment;
- Involve local communities in becoming a pesticide-free city by inviting residents to take part in alternative methods of weed management
- Deliver a phased withdrawal from the use of all pesticides over a period of three years

Departments across the Council continue to engage with the work programme around pesticide reduction, with the most recent recommendations having been presented to Cabinet in January 2024. ([Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 9th January, 2024, 2.00 pm Portsmouth City Council](#))



¹⁵

<https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s37325/Use%20of%20Pesticides%20on%20City%20Council%20Land.pdf>

¹⁶ [Agenda for Full Council on Tuesday, 19th July, 2022, 2.10 pm Portsmouth City Council](#)

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Increase biodiversity across the city	Implementation of the wildlife spaces management plans recommendations
Wildflower planting and 'no mow'	Reseeding of grassed areas as pollinator friendly corridors and relaxed mowing regimes across the city's open spaces
Increase tree coverage	Plant new trees in parks and open spaces in accordance with tree replacement programme. Submit bids to national Tree Funds where available / applicable.
Encourage residents regarding greening opportunities	Waterfront Garden Centre - provision of plants at low cost
Bring green waste recycling in house	Seek capital investment for green waste recycling plant via Council capital bid process (implementation subject to approved bid)
Use of pesticide alternatives	Continue to work towards minimal use of pesticides and pesticide phased withdrawal over 3 years
Consideration of secondary or low use Solent Wader and Brent Geese sites	To be considered within ongoing wildlife management plans for sites.

Parks as spaces for lifelong learning

Green and outdoor spaces are ideally placed as an education resource for the benefit of all ages.

The city's parks and greenspaces are an ideal resource for the city's schools and children. They provide direct experience with nature and motivation to explore in a health promoting, physically active way. There is potential for these spaces to close the educational achievement gap between communities, where some communities do not have access to private green space. There is an opportunity to bring environmental concerns into education programmes. This is particularly relevant with regard to Forest Schools. By focussing learning in a woodland or natural environment, the forest school enables the learner to develop a lifelong relationship with the natural world and develop a connection with the community environment. In a densely populated city such as Portsmouth, the city's parks and green spaces can also offer children a sense of place, self-identity and belonging as a remedy to hard urban spaces.

Opportunities continue beyond compulsory education. With the reductions in Parks Service budget there is an opportunity to bring in young people on a placement basis through the government's Kickstart programme.¹⁷ This scheme commenced in autumn 2020 through to the final application deadline in December 2021. It offered six month job placements to young people at risk of long-term unemployment. Individuals had to be 16-24 years old and in receipt of Universal Credit.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme>

The scheme gave an opportunity to those not in current employment to be engaged learning skills and gaining experience.

The Parks Service was able to utilise the Kickstart Scheme. Two Kickstarts were placed in Grounds Maintenance for a six months' placement in May 2021 and subsequently, due to the experience they gained, were given the opportunity to apply for Horticulture Apprenticeships and seasonal Grounds Maintenance operative positions.



Such schemes may assist Parks Services to develop a workforce with the requisite skills. Nationally there is a skills gap in horticultural skills and green space management and there cannot be a reliance on casual untrained staff. The use of modern apprenticeships can be used to meet this gap, where the Kickstart Scheme was an interim measure.

The Council offers an Apprenticeship Level 2 in Horticulture/Landscape Operation.¹⁸ This apprenticeship covers planning and maintaining large gardens, parks and other green spaces. The course includes soft landscape skills such as the establishment and maintenance of plants and cultivated areas, plant propagation and plant growth.

Work is undertaken outdoors throughout the year. The apprentices learn practical tasks together with specialist skills. This includes learning how to use a wide range of machinery and tools relevant to the role and applicable health and safety legislation, policy and procedure.

¹⁸ <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/horticulture-or-landscape-operative-v1-0>

The course also includes learning about the industry - the benefits of green space and the different types of horticultural skills dependent on the setting. It also considers environmental sustainability and best practice.

The Parks Service is also able to provide for voluntary placements and volunteering opportunities. Many of the open spaces in Portsmouth already have Friends Groups which provide an ideal opportunity for people across communities to work together for a common goal. Volunteering might include those who have no access to private outdoor space. Work placements enable new skills to be learnt and increases employability for disenfranchised groups.



The Council's Countryside Officers have a great depth of knowledge that could be used to advise communities on planting desires and greening initiatives. Additional funding into this team could help increase the availability of resource to educate and inform land management choices.

In terms of lifelong learning, the open spaces of the city can be used for nature walking trails. Signage is important both in a traditional style and in digital format. Digital technology can enable further information to be accessed beyond the content of the physical signage. This enables information to be updated sustainably.

Through partnership working, there is opportunity for parks and open spaces to have 'pop up' education opportunities or hubs. This may be via the Mobile Library Service or in Parks with adjacent suitable buildings, such as Canoe Lake park which is adjacent to Cumberland House Museum.

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Maximise usage of the city's parks and green spaces by local schools	Make contact with local schools to encourage greater community involvement; Cross Service involvement with Education Service
Provide voluntary opportunities and work placements	Kickstart Scheme Friends and Community Groups for Parks
Learning opportunities via information points.	Improved positive signage and information about plants and ecosystems.
Maximise opportunities for environmental education	In conjunction with the Education Service, to develop new programmes of environmental education
Developing a skilled workforce	Using apprenticeship models for recruitment practices.
Development of educational hubs	Pop up learning hubs and shared services between Parks, Museums and Libraries.

Parks for our health and wellbeing

The Public Health England report considered earlier in this strategy identifies the primary value of parks and open spaces in improving health outcomes, both in terms of physical health and mental health. This was highlighted during the pandemic when Portsmouth's parks and open spaces saw more activity and use than prior to the introduction of lockdowns.¹⁹ Google mobility data at that time showed that the city's parks and open spaces remained busier than before the pandemic even when social distancing measures were relaxed.

Mental health benefits of green space include improved emotional wellbeing and reduced stress, reduced depression, anxiety and fatigue. The community benefits of greenspace provide mitigation to social isolation which can be a contributory factor to the above mental health conditions. A sense of connection with nature can enable a broader and more balanced mental outlook.

¹⁹ [How has lockdown changed our relationship with nature? - Office for National Statistics](#)



The importance of reducing social isolation and increasing community cohesion are evident through the government's decision to appoint a Minister for Loneliness, particularly following the Covid pandemic and lockdown periods.²⁰ Research by the Scientific Reports journal also found that when people were able to see trees or hear birds, feelings of loneliness fell by 28% and contact with nature reduced feelings of loneliness by 18%.²¹ This is understood to be because natural places in cities enhance attachment to a place and provide an opportunity for social interaction.

Green spaces in urban settings provide places for people to come together to engage in social activities, enable connection between communities, including between minority groups contributing to improved mental health outcomes by increasing social cohesion and belonging.

The natural environment is also able to provide for sensory environments; different types of planting and scented trails can enable people to interact with nature. This is a growing area of interest; green bathing or forest bathing is a form of ecotherapy which credits the benefit of spending time in green spaces to human health. The NHS have updated their advice on social prescribing to include green prescribing. Green social prescribing will link individuals under NHS care to nature-based interventions and activities which might include walking for health groups and community gardening projects.²² This includes a £4 million investment by the government (under Environment Secretary George Eustace) to the NHS and Sport England to embed green social prescribing into communities to improve health outcomes. Public Health and Parks will be working more closely together to develop green social prescribing models and referral pathways.

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/loneliness-minister-its-more-important-than-ever-to-take-action>

²¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-03398-2>

²² <https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/green-social-prescribing/>

To that end, Public Health has already met with social prescribers based in general practice and are in the process of initiating a project which does develop green social prescribing models and referral pathways in collaboration with health partners.

The city's parks and open spaces provide an ideal environment for outdoor fitness. This can take the form of outdoor exercise classes which became more popular during the pandemic due to the issues concerning indoor air circulation. The city continues to accommodate outdoor fitness classes and outdoor fitness equipment at several parks.

There are shared routes for walking and cycling journeys through green spaces, for example at Victoria Park, Bransbury Park and Hilsea Lines, enabling active travel connections between different parts of the city as provided for on Pedal Portsmouth online²³. The Parks Service recognises the commonalities with the Portsmouth Transport Strategy 2021-2038 in working towards sustainable travel and travel between spaces through the increasing network of micromobility hubs (such as bicycle and e-scooter stands). Additionally, it may be possible to provide measured miles routes as part of the Portsmouth Transport Strategy. Measured miles provide for both independent and organised walking, cycling and jogging routes.



To encompass the demographics of the city, other types of exercise may also be catered for in the city's open spaces, such as yoga and tai chi.

Contemporary exercise models need to be inclusive for all social groups. There is opportunity in the city's open spaces to include activities such as PramActive or BuggyFit. These classes provide both an opportunity for exercise, develop social networks and improve mood.

The city's natural open spaces provide an idyllic environment for trail walking.

²³ [Pedal Portsmouth walking and cycling map](#)

Tree trails are available for Victoria Park and Milton Park and there are several links to self-guided walks on the Council website. Spotter sheets are available from the Parks Countryside team and flora to spot is also promoted via the Nature of Portsmouth Instagram site. The Council offer Wellbeing Walks in conjunction with The Ramblers Association and Portsmouth walks can be found on their website. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Portsmouth 2023-2033 also references several promoted routes in the city.

Other local organisations offering walks include Portsmouth Ramblers, Portsmouth Friends of the Earth and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, in addition to the Council's own Hilsea Lines and Portsdown Hill Countryside team.

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Providing opportunities for green social prescribing initiatives	Partnership with Public Health to assess opportunities within services
Alternative outdoor fitness initiatives - yoga, tai chi	Explore with local providers as per current fitness trainer delivery model
Measured miles for walking and cycling routes	To be progressed as part of the Portsmouth Transport Strategy
Active Travel	Engagement with Transport to consider active travel opportunities (whether by foot, public transport or micro-mobility options)

9. The limitations on parks and open spaces

Research into policy and parks across the UK shows several limitations constraining the opportunities for parks and open spaces. These are:

- Access
- Safety
- Financial resources

Access

Access to greenspace is not equal for everyone. Some residents will need to travel further than others to access their nearest green space. Individuals on low incomes and with inadequate green space may experience 'green deprivation'. This was exacerbated by the pandemic lockdowns. Inability to access a local green space may have an effect on health outcomes caused by reduced physical activity and mental health strain.

The Quantity Assessment considers access in the city regarding each typology (chapter 6).

Access to green space is directly affected by planning policy. The Local Plan provides for urban centre greening on the west side of the city where there is less green infrastructure. This means that where planning applications are submitted within the urban greening areas, an assessment will be undertaken to compare green infrastructure pre and post development.

Green infrastructure is central to development design and must include attractive routes for walking and cycling. Portsmouth's Transport Strategy 2021-2038 notes that traffic free cycle routes and high quality walking routes are required to reduce traffic in the city and contribute to improved air quality. The Parks Strategy can assist in this development by providing linear natural infrastructure, such as trees and plants to link up green and open spaces to form green networks. These green networks provide both opportunities for active travel and habitats for urban wildlife.

As an island city Portsmouth is limited in terms of its ability to create more green space. Where it is not possible to create further green space, qualitative improvements should be made to existing spaces. This might include improvements to access such as better quality footpaths and improved entrance points to parks.

The government's National Disability Strategy²⁴ includes widening access to outdoor space. It identifies that individuals with health conditions are 25% less likely to have enjoyed nature and the strategy refers to the investment by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to support green social prescribing initiatives (see section on Health and Wellbeing). It also highlights the need for opportunities for disabled children to access inclusive play space. The new National Model Design Code published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in 2021 includes planning and design considerations for local planning authorities to emphasise the importance of providing accessible and inclusive play spaces.

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Green active travel options	Development of green corridors to provide traffic free cycle routes and high quality walking routes.
Inclusive facilities for all	Mobility access improvements. Subject to planning, development of inclusive play spaces.

²⁴ <https://disabilityunit.blog.gov.uk/2021/07/28/leisure-national-disability-strategy-explained/>



Safety

Anti-social behaviour is an unfortunate problem in parks and open spaces. This can include vandalism to facilities which discourages use, together with graffiti, flyposting, flytipping and alcohol / substance use.

Play facilities in parks and open spaces need to cater for both young children and teenagers. Young adults need environments for social spaces, including protection from bad weather. There is also a demand for wheeled community use, this can be either outdoor or indoor provision.

Play areas for children are best provided in formal park settings, where there is a higher level of management and there are adjacent facilities such as toilets, clear paths and entrances, seating and access to public transport. Play spaces can build into sustainable design, taking into account the historic and natural environment.

Dog fouling exists nationally although it is an offence to leave dog mess on the ground in a public place. Whilst most dog owners are responsible, the problem is created by a minority. It is desirable to provide adequate dog bins for owners to dispose of waste. The majority of the city's open space allows owners to exercise their dog off-lead, aside from areas designated for play and sport or where wildfowl may be disturbed and collectively offer a wide range of opportunities for owners.

Pembroke Park provides a secure training area for owners who do not yet have confidence in their ability to call back their dog, before being let off lead in designated off lead areas elsewhere.

Safety can be both an issue of direct impact and that of perception. Perception of safety is enhanced where users can clearly see around them and identify focal points. It can be affected by poor lighting and visibility, confusing layout, physical isolation, concealed areas and poor maintenance.²⁵

²⁵ <https://www.pps.org/article/what-role-can-design-play-in-creating-safer-parks>

These factors may be considered when restoring existing parks spaces, such as Victoria Park and mitigations can be made in circumstances where complete redesign is not possible within existing budget frameworks.

People feel safer in parks where there are opportunities for informal surveillance. Whilst it is no longer possible to resource Park Wardens, Community Wardens are available to target particular issues such as anti-social behaviour, fly tipping, dog nuisance, littering and graffiti.

Visibility needs to be considered for public parks spaces and can be enhanced by clear pathways, identifiable entrances and exits and non-obstructed sightlines. Lighting can emphasise pathways and focal points and may be co-ordinated with signage.

When determining whether lighting is appropriate, several factors should be considered. In some instances, lighting can attract anti-social behaviour by increasing the hours of use after dusk, or by creating separate dark pockets adjacent to a lit space if poorly designed or inadequately lit. Artificial Light at Night (ALAN) has many negative impacts on the natural world, such as:

- disturbing flight trajectories of migratory birds;
- affecting the breeding of glow worms;
- disrupting the feeding patterns of bats;
- changing the times of birds' singing patterns;
- disorientating moths and nocturnal flying birds.

Portsmouth has all these groups in our open spaces. Different parts of the light spectrum are more disruptive than others - short wavelength (UV, blue, green) is less wildlife friendly than long wavelength light (orange, red, infra-red).²⁶

Additional lighting also increases energy use and overall maintenance costs and is therefore often most appropriate around the perimeter of the park, courtesy of existing street lit routes, although may be through a park if serving as the primary pedestrian route. There is an inherent paradox in parks design. Whilst visibility is important, natural landscape such as wildflower meadows, shrubbery and wooded areas are also valued. In such natural areas, potential safety concerns can be mitigated by clear signage and layouts.

Signage may be used to encourage pride in a park and open space rather than to solely impose restrictions. Maps may be used (at each entry point) to illustrate the parks layout and facilities.

Whilst barbeques may be incorporated as part of the facilities on offer, they must be planned in such a way that does not affect the amenity of the park or open space. The city provides several dedicated barbeque zones on Southsea Common which include open space and bin provision.

²⁶ [Garden lighting: effects on wildlife / RHS Gardening](#)

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Development of natural play spaces	Play spaces designed using natural materials; rocks, tree stumps, trees
Minimise conflict between dog walking areas and spaces for formal and informal recreation	Dog free spaces / dedicated dog spaces
Safety as inherent in parks design and remodelling	Clear layouts and pathways underpinned by grounds maintenance programmes. Strategically positioned lighting, where appropriate Clear positive signage
Toilet provision	Subject to capital funding, improved toilet facilities where buildings are already in existence and therefore no loss of open space.

Financial Resources

The austerity programme since 2010 has impacted the Parks Service particularly hard. National public policy lacks a long term financial and political commitment to parks and green space provision. There is no 'golden age' for public park provision; in austerity they are subject to the earliest cuts and in times of growth they are subject to pressure from development. Without statutory protection, parks and open spaces do not attract investment.²⁷

Whilst this strategy can set out actions and objectives for the next period going forward, if this is not matched by funding and staffing levels then progress will be slow.

Funding from external bodies

National Lottery Heritage Fund ("NLHF") and Big Lottery invest £34 million in parks annually across the UK however both organisations are concerned about sustainability. In the context of falling budgets Parks Services increasingly rely on grants support for parks and open spaces provision. The NLHF (with Big Lottery) is a significant stream of project grants for parks and open spaces. The investment focuses on capital projects where applications are required to focus on people and community outcomes (learning, volunteering, skills development, and community participation) with accompanying management plans. It needs to be considered that Parks Services require the resources and skills to take advantage of grants schemes.

The limitation of the grant funding approach is that it risks a focus of resources on one specific park. This has the potential to create parks disparity over the longer term. On the contrary the invested park or space can be a flagship example for aspirations for the future. For example, Kingston Park has been transformed in partnership with Fratton Big Local and users of Victoria Park will benefit from a £2.27m grant from NLHF.

²⁷ <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/20-2016>

Section 106 Planning Obligation contributions

Section 106 under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 enables the local authority to negotiate contributions from developers to support infrastructure that may be required as a consequence of the development. Under the Planning Act 2008, the Community Infrastructure Levy means that local authorities can use development to deliver infrastructure, and this can be used as capital for parks improvement. For example, the housing development at Goldsmith Avenue enabled a financial contribution towards improved play equipment and ball court at Orchard Park.

Income from concessions and events

Whilst access to Parks events is traditionally free, pressures on budget mean that local authority parks services may consider ticketed fee paying events.



There is an inherent conflict when restricting public access when events take place and there can be public dissatisfaction with exclusion from public access parks or open spaces. However there is a requirement to consider the relative financial and social benefits. Where parks and open spaces are used for events, consideration of the impact on the landscape needs to be considered.

Leasing of concessions within parks can provide both refreshments and activities which in turn provides a revenue stream to feed into parks maintenance. The monies from such facilities need to be ring-fenced for investment in the sites concerned.

Consideration of alternative management models (Trusts, charities and Community Interest Companies)

In recent years alternative management models for parks and open spaces have been under consideration. These include Community Interest Companies and trusts which, whilst they have political independence and the ability to attract alternative sources of funding, are realistically unable to fund parks due to the financial reality regarding long term maintenance, investment and management requirements. It needs to be considered that many parks are multi-functional spaces, including ecological, sporting and leisure facilities.

If the local authority pursued the trusts model, this would potentially disintegrate the city's park's portfolio, as it would result in multiple trusts across the city with differing priorities.

Bournemouth established an independent charitable organisation to support its parks and open spaces. The charity works alongside the Council to raise funds to improve and enhance what the council is able to provide.²⁸ Bournemouth was also one of nine areas across the UK selected to be part of the Future Parks Accelerator, a collaborative project between National Lottery Heritage Fund, National Trust and Ministry of Housing and Local Government. The project enabled three pilot parks to trial health and community initiatives.²⁹

Rethinking Parks project

The Rethinking Parks programme (a joint Nesta and Heritage Lottery Fund project) operated between 2012 and 2020.³⁰ The remit of the project was to look at innovative ways to manage and finance public parks so that they are sustainable for local communities in the future. The project found that there was a need to diversify income streams towards blended models (a mix of public income, contributions from private and voluntary sector and commercial income).

The project supported two projects to test voluntary donations to parks via contactless donation technology.³¹ This followed a successful approach that had taken place in museums. Key takeaway points from the project were that a support grant was necessary for the initial outlay of the project and that any contactless donation technology should be implemented as part of a wider fundraising strategy (e.g. online donations).

A survey and subsequent report by Fields in Trust found that on being presented with a hypothetical scenario of cuts to local government funding, respondents (including those in lower socio-economic groups) were willing to pay a subscription to an independent not for profit organisation set up to maintain and preserve parks and open spaces in their local authority area.³²

²⁸ <https://parksfoundation.org.uk/about-us/>

²⁹ <https://www.futureparks.org.uk/bournemouth-christchurch-poole>

³⁰ <https://www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks/>

³¹ <https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Contactless.pdf>

³² <https://www.fieldsintrust.org/revaluing>

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding could offer local community groups (external to the Council) the opportunity to raise funds to improve the city's parks and open spaces. It is often used to raise funds for creative projects.³³ There are three main types of crowdfunding:

Investment based crowdfunding - individuals invest their money and receive a share and perks.

Donation based crowdfunding - individuals donate their money to the fund.

Loan based crowdfunding - individuals lend money via a platform in exchange for an interest rate.

Crowdfunding is a possible way to support a local cause and the amounts involved can be small. In Portsmouth, it has been successful, for example raising £50k towards the Orchard Park basketball court development.³⁴

Budgets and savings

The Council's Parks Service has been under pressure to achieve savings for a number of years. In 2016 the Council made the decision to transfer grounds maintenance for the north, east and south contracts in house with effect from 1 January 2017.

The projected savings from this decision were £230,000 in the first year which contributed to the savings target of the Culture, Leisure and Sport portfolio. It should be noted that the savings were not ring-fenced for the future development of the parks and open spaces in the city due to corporate financial pressures.

Greenspaces and Natural Capital

Natural capital accounting considers the aspects of the natural environment from an economic perspective. It provides an economic value to natural assets including greenspaces and woodlands according to the reliance placed on them by society.³⁵

A recent study by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has valued UK green spaces at £25.6 billion.³⁶ This is calculated by the Outdoor Recreation Value Tool (Orval), which calculates the value of Portsmouth's green spaces to be £36 million on the basis that 9 million visits are made each year, at a value of £4.00 per visit.³⁷

Currently the worth of natural space to society is not reflected in market prices because many greenspaces are open to all with no financial charge. The 2021 paper for the UK Treasury, The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review, argues that there is an overreliance on produced capital to the detriment of natural capital.³⁸

³³ <https://www.fscs.org.uk/news/investing/crowdfunding>

³⁴ [#ProjectSwish: First look at Portsmouth's new-look Orchard Park court | Basketball England](#)

³⁵ <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/focus/climate-change/natural-capital>

³⁶ [Top 10 green spaces in England and Wales for 'welfare value' named in study | Green space | The Guardian](#)

³⁷ [ORVal Outdoor Recreation Valuation \(exeter.ac.uk\)](#)

³⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review>

As illustrated elsewhere in this strategy, natural capital has a direct bearing on areas of public spend elsewhere: contributing towards healthier lifestyles, physical health and mental health thereby mitigating spend in those areas. It also contributes to the economic growth of the city by making the city a more attractive investment.

This provides an opportunity to the Council to evaluate its natural capital assets and invest accordingly, in proportion to the positive effect the parks and open spaces of the city have on the city's residents and businesses through the green infrastructure.

Investment from other stakeholder services in the Council and the city

In consideration of the wider benefits of natural capital to the city as a whole, it needs to be considered whether a financial contribution is made to the parks and open spaces budget from other departments in the local authority, such as the Public Health budget. The Fields in Trust report calculated that being a parks or green space user is associated with significant savings to the NHS via reduced GP visits³⁹. This does not include savings in onward costs such as reduced referrals, operations and social care costs.

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Budget savings	Transfer of contracted grounds maintenance services complete, giving greater control of operations not influenced by re-tendering and contract inflation.
Development of voluntary donations	Consideration of online giving or mobile contactless donation points at pop up events hosted by the Parks and Countryside team.
Develop interest in a Portsmouth Parks Foundation	Explore Parks Foundation models
Community Infrastructure Levy	Develop proposals for capital investment to identified infrastructure improvement schemes.

³⁹ <https://www.fieldsintrust.org/revaluing>

10. Action principles

The Council commits via this strategy to embed the following action principles into its future planning.

Parks as Community Spaces

We will ensure that no-one is excluded from using parks and open spaces on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, age or disability.

Example

Victoria Park - the masterplan includes an overarching community objective to ensure the park is open and welcoming to all. As a community space it will be safe and inclusive for people of all ages, backgrounds, abilities and requirements. The associated activity programme will support all different types of visitors.

Southsea Common - Autism Board. This board is a critical information tool for children with autism spectrum disorders. As a visual support, it can encourage development and independence in the open park setting.



Parks for celebrating and protecting our environment

We will protect biodiversity, increase tree coverage, increase wildflower habitats and restrict pesticide use to a minimum.

Examples

The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre surveys record extensive species present at Farlington Triangle and Milton Common including butterflies, moths, invertebrates, birds, mammals and flora.

In the last 4-5 years, 24 wildflower meadow areas have been created covering an area of 2500 square metres.⁴⁰

There are 27,000 trees logged on the Council's network, crossing many different departments including cemeteries, parks and property.

A successful funding award from the Tree Council enabled 400 whips to be planted on Great Salterns field.

Commitment via Biodiversity Scrutiny Report, March 2022⁴¹

Parks as spaces for lifelong learning

We will support Parks Friends, volunteering and opportunities for children.

Examples

Friends Groups - Portsmouth has a number of active Friends Groups which enable regular volunteer working groups including at: Southsea Rock Gardens, Baffins Pond, Milton Common, Victoria Park Portsdown Hill and Hilsea Lines.

Voluntary placements - Hilsea Lines - this open space offers work and school placements including for students, long term unemployed and the disabled.

Forest School is available at Hilsea Lines being the only wooded area on Portsea Island.

'Wild in the Park' event - this has been held as a joint venture between the Council and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. It provided wildlife themed activities in Tamworth Park, Milton Park and Victoria Park, animal storytelling and opportunity to visit the mobile library.

Apprenticeships - 3 current apprenticeships being undertaken in Horticulture and Landscape Operation.

Interpretation material - Information boards at wildlife sites and parks to explain about the heritage, flora and fauna.

Parks for our health and wellbeing

We will provide opportunities for outdoor fitness and to enjoy flora and fauna.

Examples

Community garden scheme - the Victoria Park masterplan includes a plan for community growing spaces to provide opportunities for gardening and horticulture.

⁴⁰ Traffic, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel, 22 March 2022.

Horticulture projects - the Waterfront Garden Centre provides therapeutic and social support opportunities via horticulture for adults with additional support needs such as learning disabilities and mental health needs.

Trail walking - Hilsa Lines green corridor includes several interpretation boards providing for self-guided walks through the area. The Millennium Trail provides for an urban trail between Spur Redoubt and The Hard, including several different environments.

Outdoor gym equipment is available in Kingston Recreational Ground, Mountbatten Centre, Southsea Common, Drayton Park, Baffins Pond and Cosham Park.



Fitness training sessions are held across Southsea Common and other park spaces, operated by permitted providers.

Parks as accessible and well-designed

We will provide welcoming entrances for all users.

Example

The Victoria Park masterplan includes improvements to the park's entrances to make the park more welcoming and improve accessibility. Each entrance will also have a distinct name to help visitors find their way around the park.

The entrance at Bishop Crispian Way is currently narrow and a wider entrance will include double gates and a wide path.

The north-west entrance at Anglesea Road / Queen Street will include a new welcome arch with new wording.

Maximising safety and facility provision in our parks

We will provide safe parks facilities for all users

Examples

Adventure Playgrounds: 6 supervised sites at Buckland, Landport, Paulsgrove, Portsea, Somerstown and Stamshaw which are accessible to people with disabilities.

Skating - older children: the Council offers 9 facilities across the city for skateboarding, inline skating and BMX riding (not including the charity Southsea Skatepark).

Enclosed dog training area at Pembroke Road / Pier Road provides a safe enclosed space for training dogs that cannot be let off the lead.

Parks well provided for

We will financially resource our parks

Examples

Sports grants - working with Football Foundation to secure funding and deliver replacement pavilion, improved public facilities and new artificial grass pitches at King George V playing field for community use and to improve football opportunities and health outcomes.

Heritage Lottery Fund Grants - Victoria Park regeneration encompasses a £2.96 million investment into the park including the support of a NLHF grant £2.27m).

CIL monies - these have been used to enable parks infrastructure improvements, including the examples below:

Project	Year	Amount
Milton Allotments improvements	2018/19	£19,362
Bransbury Park gardens lighting replacements	2018/19	£4,148
College Park CCTV	2019/20	£1,500
Contribution towards inclusive roundabout at Kingston Park	2021/22	£4,057
Provision of 3 benches at Pembroke Park	2021/22	£600
Contribution towards Victoria Park project	2021/22	£30,800
Provision of outside exercise area with associated landscaping at Cosham Park;	2021/22	£40,000
Installation of nature trail rubbing posts at Cosham Park and Portsdown Hill	2021/22	£10,000

11. Individual sites' plans

This chapter takes a closer look at the current and future plans for the following key open space sites across the city:

- Victoria Park
- Seafront and Canoe Lake
- Baffins and Milton
- Hilsea Linear Park
- Portsdown Hill
- King George V
- Bransbury
- The city cemeteries and allotments

12. Victoria Park

Victoria Park sits in a key location in the city of Portsmouth, adjacent to the commercial centre (traditional 'high street'), civic buildings, the University and the Royal Navy. The entrances to the park reflect its central positioning to these various points. The park is a heritage asset through its designation as Grade II Registered Park and Garden and it sits within the Guildhall and Victoria Park Conservation Area. The lease for Victoria Park was granted to the Council by the War Department in 1876 and the park opened in 1878. It is significant, for the current project, that it was at this point that the War Department referred to the park in the lease as the 'People's Park'.

Once the lease had been agreed, the Council commissioned Alexander McKenzie to design the park. He had designed several of the London parks and had a particular style which involved central tree lined routes with curvilinear paths, plants that tolerate the British climate and have interest throughout the year and floral beds - all of which are evident - and survive - in the Victoria Park design.

An aviary in the park has existed since 1910. The current aviary opened in 1988. Throughout the history of the park, the aviary has been one of the most popular attractions. The park has also hosted public and private events throughout its history.

The park, with trees, shrubbery and short grassland is an important urban ecological habitat for birds and invertebrates. Within the city centre, it provides an important greenspace and is highly valued by its users (local residents and those who work and study in the city) in contrast to the surrounding 'hard' urban environment.



Current management

Delivery of the grounds maintenance has been carried out by the in-house team since 2017, alongside the other service delivery functions of tree and scrub management, infrastructure, play equipment inspections, maintenance and repair of memorials and monuments and buildings maintenance.

Future development

Victoria Park was awarded National Lottery Heritage Funding in 2019 for a Round 1 Heritage Grant for consultation and feasibility studies to be undertaken. This enabled the Council to work with the public to co-design the future of the park, including an activity and management plan for the period 2022-26, after which the park would be funded through a combination of parks budget and contribution to management from Friends and volunteers

Consultation with the local community took place via an online survey, face to face survey in the park and local ward, meetings with focus groups and stakeholders, representatives from community centres and local organisations. The aim of the consultation was to listen to what the community wanted and assess feasibility of options in consideration of the space and its heritage, to bring a holistic approach to design.

The main reasons cited for visiting the park were to see the aviary, to exercise, to experience nature and use the play area. Respondents also advised that the park was in need of renovation and further provision was needed for events in the park. There is currently limited community involvement or volunteering at the park.

An assessment of the park by LUC commissioned by the Council, together with consultation findings revealed a number of issues and opportunities to feed into the future design, activity and interpretation plans for the park. These included:

- Improve sense of safety and welcome, enhance sightlines, improve entrances including lighting (Design)
- Introduce clear signage and information at all entrances (Interpretation)
- Increase provision for informal recreation (cycle stands, play, quiet space, wildlife walks) (Design and Activity)
- Enhance play area to include natural / sensory features (accessible to all users & ages) (Design)
- Improve the aviary to enhance visitor perception and engagement (Design)
- Enhance environmental sustainability and climate change mitigations (recycling and energy efficiency) (Design)
- Improve natural landscape (Design)
- Provide interpretation & educational activities to share the heritage value of the park and its assets (Interpretation)
- Expand community involvement through volunteering programmes, training and events and activities (establish a Friends group and collaboration with local charities and stakeholders) (Activity)
- Explore the opportunity for local food growing in the park (Activity)



Park Designs

The central area of the park currently contains greenhouses in disrepair and is used as a maintenance compound. The design specification proposes that a **new community hub building** is constructed including public toilets, a large open space for community use, a volunteer office, a kitchenette for community and volunteer use and an external covered area adjacent to the building for educational and group use, providing year round shelter.

The hub is to be complemented by improved and enhanced entrance points including a metal arch feature at the 'Portsea entrance' off Anglesea Road. The entrance at Bishop Crispian Way will be made wider. The tunnel entrance from the War Memorial will include lighting and public art. The entrance opposite Portsmouth and Southsea train station has a new mural and will be better lit from outside the park (not NLHF funded).

As part of the environmental sustainability objective, the roof to the new hub building will incorporate a green roof and photovoltaic solar panels. The heating to the building will be powered by an environmentally friendly air source heat pump (a form of low carbon heating).

The design plan includes the restoration of the Aviary, which incorporates the following improvements:

- Addition of viewing panels at different heights to allow improved visibility,
- additional features of interest for the birds and mammals,
- interpretation panels for visitors to learn about the birds and mammals.

Improvements to the ecological habitats will be made by creating two areas of natural planting, including wildflower and wetland areas. 6 impaired trees will be felled and replaced with healthy specimens and a further 27 new trees planted. The 200 year old Poplar tree will be a feature of the new hub area (the tree is currently located within the Council depot). Planting designs for the park include selections to encourage bees and butterflies. Work to enhance the ecology of the park will be undertaken together with Cumberland House Natural History Museum, local wildlife groups and schools. Wildlife activities will include wildlife photography workshops, tree and nature trails, bird and bug workshops.

Enhancements to the play area will include a new area for younger children. The play area will link to the heritage of the park with a design based on historic Portsmouth fortifications and will include sensory planting and accessible play.

Improvements to facilities within the park include sheltered spaces, cycle stands, recycling bins and rest areas for those with limited mobility.

Opportunities for informal recreation in the park will encompass classes such as tai-chi, yoga, personal training, junior park runs and community gardening.

Activity Plan

The activity plan for the park can be summarised by the following headings and themes.

Activity themes	Activities
Volunteering to build the community	Community gardening Friends group School & College 'takeover' days Park tidy up and litter pick days
Events to build the community	Pop up community events e.g. crafts Dickens Festival Outdoor & board games days Family fun days Exercise classes for physical & mental health
Increasing aspirations	Coffee mornings Taster sessions

Activity themes	Activities
	Work experience for people with learning difficulties HIWWT workshops for schools Apprenticeships in horticulture
Events to profile the park	Free and paid for music & performance festivals Open air cinema and opera in the park Fairs & Festivals

Friends of Victoria Park

A friends group was set up during the early project stages, to provide an opportunity for the community to get involved and shape the parks future. Current Friends are interested in historical research, wildlife care and community growing, environmental education and conservation, children's activities, community group engagement.

The Interpretation Plan

This plan proposes that interpretation of the park should include both the history and how the park is used today. Including the use of modern technology, graphic panels will provide a transition to online trails and further information on Victoria Park's website. Interpretation might also include visual interpretation such as animal sculptures and a display of community art in response to the park.

Interpretation points will be available at all main entrances of the park as part of the welcome to the park. To help with the interpretation of the park, it is proposed that the entrances are renamed with reference to the history and local area.

Round 2 Heritage Lottery Funding will cover implementation of agreed design and delivery.

13. Canoe Lake

Canoe Lake Park is one of Portsmouth's larger parks, comprising just over 10 hectares.

It includes a number of features:

- Pedal boats and Lake café
- Lumps Fort Model Village
- Southsea Rose Garden and Japanese Garden
- Cumberland House Museum
- Children's play areas
- CourtX Ltd (formerly Canoe Lake Leisure Ltd) including Café Fresco

The area forms a natural location for a lake as it is low lying and the boating lake was completed in 1886, after the Navy drained and reclaimed what was marshland.



Lumps Fort was constructed originally in approximately 1545 as part of the land forts to defend the coast from French attack. It was used in the Second World War as training ground for the Cockleshell Heroes. The Fort was transferred by the Ministry of War to the Council after the war. The fort wall, gun emplacements and embankments are not currently in use.

Cumberland House Natural History Museum is a grade II listed building which is used today as a natural history museum. In addition to natural history displays, it includes a butterfly house and observational beehive. The Museum is supported by a Friends group who support and raise funds for the museum.



The Canoe Lake area is managed as a cross service site between the Parks Service, Property Service and Museum Service.

The Council does not have sufficient funds to improve the site without the support of external funding. In 2012 the Council made a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund which was unsuccessful. The aim of the project was to:

- Restore the historic features of the site
- Improve interpretation of the park
- Improve the catering offer

Forward vision

Canoe Lake is a key open space site in the city, as it links history, the natural environment and the seafront. There are a number of issues at the site that could be addressed via a future funding bid.

- Interpretation of the site heritage and ecological significance
- Improved catering offer
- Educational opportunities
- Improved signage and connection for the 'hidden' features of the site
- Better quality site infrastructure, such as the lake perimeter and environs

Interpretation of the site heritage and ecological significance

Currently the different aspects of the site are not linked together. A walking trail could be developed to include all the historical aspects of the site so that visitors to the west side (Canoe Lake) also include Lumps Fort, the Rose Garden and Japanese Garden on their visit.

The site's heritage also provides an opportunity to use the site for events, although this would need to be carefully managed so that footfall did not cause damage to the green or historic infrastructure of the site. Events over the course of recent years have included outdoor cinema, live music and light festivals.

Currently part of the Lumps Fort buildings are used as stores and workshops. Restoration could repurpose this venue for community events or as a high-end tea room within a heritage setting. Military imagery / interpretation could be displayed as part of the specification.

Catering offering

There are a number of catering leases operating in the area of Canoe Lake. A review of the leases is in the process of being undertaken, although it should be noted that any renegotiation has to be undertaken within due process. Catering options should be sustainable and promote healthy lifestyles. There is an opportunity to build these requirements into future tender process.

The Lumps Fort stores are not currently let and there is an opportunity, subject to the Council's needs and requirements, to offer a lease of these premises which could tie in with the site heritage.

Catering options are currently sited to the north-east side of the lake. Consideration may be given to a future concession site to the south-west end of the lake, to operate during the summer season.



Expanding the offering at Cumberland House

Cumberland House Museum provides a family friendly experience for natural history education. Currently there is a permanent display and it could be possible to have a rota/redisplay of cases and art reflecting both the natural history and ecological significance of Canoe Lake and Eastney area. A small section could also be used to reflect the military history of the Canoe Lake site.

The ground floor of Cumberland House could provide a hub and base for volunteers and friends. Southsea Green group <https://www.southseagreen.uk/aboutus.html> currently have a garden adjacent to Cumberland House. This community greenspace includes skills workshops for crafts and gardening and volunteering to grow and maintain a community orchard.

The area could also focus on the ecological importance of Eastney Beach which could include a sustainable natural play space for children to learn about the environment. If a separate education and volunteer hub was constructed separate to the Museum, this could incorporate an architecturally sympathetic reflection of the history and significance of the area.

A separate centre has the potential to engage with youth through the setting up of a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) to develop opportunities for young people to gain work experience and training. A CIO would allow access to different streams of grant funding.

Improved signage and access

A number of interpretation boards could be installed at the site. These could highlight the different features on offer. Signage to the Rose Gardens and Japanese Garden could be improved, with information regarding these features being displayed at Canoe Lake, thereby encouraging the visitor transition to further explore the space. There is an opportunity to enhance the entrance to the Rose Gardens and Japanese Gardens.

There are many juvenile swans at Canoe Lake, and signage has been installed to help education regarding their feeding habits, to improve their health and help manage the lake water quality.

The signage installation was accompanied by an education and activity programme for families run by the Cumberland House Museum in conjunction with the Countryside Officers.

14. The Seafront

Time spent by 'blue space' (near water) is understood to improve our mental and physical health. Blue space therefore needs to be considered as part of the Parks and Open Spaces strategy, as another aspect of the natural environment. Blue space includes the sea, coastline, rivers, lakes canals, waterfalls and fountains.⁴²

The island of Portsea offers 49km of coastline including the seafront which runs for 6km from Portsmouth Harbour to Langstone Harbour. This is a real asset for the city as it offers a large open space without built up development and is therefore a key contributor towards positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

The seafront offers heritage assets, such as the Round Tower, Long Curtain Moat, King's Bastion, Southsea Castle, Fort Cumberland and the many memorials in the area. It also offers natural environment space such as Eastney Beach and Fort Cumberland. It also includes two beaches that have excellent Environment Agency tested water quality and RNLI coverage during the school holidays.

The Southsea Coastal Scheme defence works, which incorporate the seafront from Old Portsmouth to Eastney, are currently scheduled to complete in 2026 and offer an opportunity to reconsider the seafront offering.

Seafront Masterplan

The Seafront Masterplan was adopted by the Council in March 2021. The plan includes the following proposed objectives for the seafront:

- Increase vibrancy and diversification of offer
- Take into account heritage when improving the public realm
- Protect heritage and biodiversity

Vibrancy and Events

Redevelopment is encouraged by the Seafront Masterplan of existing sites which have leisure and tourism uses such as South Parade Pier, Clarence Pier and Canoe Lake.

Small scale cafes and other activities are welcomed, where they may enable the diversity of cultural offer, for example through catering offerings from other cultures.

Lighting is important in terms of the vibrancy of the seafront. It provides for a cohesive identity and distinct sense of place. It can also make the seafront more distinctive and make the area feel safer. LED festoon lighting is being trialled in Avenue De Caen. LED lighting is more energy efficient and more able to withstand outdoor temperature changes and therefore longer term is a preferred option.

⁴² Public Health England, Improving Access to Greenspace, a new review for 2020

Subject to capital funding provision and a maintenance plan being agreed, it may be possible to replace the current lighting on the seafront with LED lighting in partnership with the changes being initiated by the Coastal Defence Scheme.

The culture and events offer across the seafront also adds to the vibrancy of the open space. Most recently, the addition of the Landing Craft Tank 7074 provides a critical point at the centre of the seafront.

The Events Team provide several events on the seafront including Southsea Food Festival (with Economic Growth Team), International Kite Festival, Car Boot series and Live at the Bandstand series. The events contribute both directly and indirectly to the city's economy as part of the visitor offer and the income raised is reinvested to provide further events to engage the local community.

Greener Transport

The Council's Transport Service funded a Park and Ride bus service to Southsea Seafront in recent summer years. This route allowed passengers to travel to the seafront and enjoy its key destinations at the same time reducing the amount of traffic in peak season. The Park and Ride service is in addition to existing bus services to the seafront from Portsmouth and Southsea station and The Hard. It may be possible to run a further Seafront Park and Ride in future years, this will be dependent on Portfolio decision and availability of funding.

The Department of Transport funded Solent Transport in 2021 to run a trial of rental e-scooters in the Solent region as part of a national trial. As part of the Solent Transport partnership, the Council were also successful in receiving funding for the new Beryl bicycles and Breeze app. Together with the open top bus service, these micromobility options have the potential to replace short car journeys, improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion.



Health & wellbeing outcomes

The seafront provides opportunity for informal and formal exercise by offering open space, space for play, recreation space and sport and leisure facilities. Examples of activities available include: running, walking, cycling, beach volleyball, outdoor gym, tennis and mini golf.

As the interest in positive mental health outcomes grows, the seafront is an ideal location for reflective activities, such as yoga, tai chi and pilates to take place outside when the weather allows.

The various attractions on the seafront are accessible via walking routes which can incorporate sites of interest. For example, Southsea Castle is a 10 minute walk from Southsea town centre. There is opportunity to develop connection and transition in the Avenue de Caen area, to provide a link from Southsea town centre to the seafront.

The seafront is also mostly flat, which provides cycling opportunities. The seafront can be cycled safely from Eastney Point to the Hotwalls via a combination of cycle routes, low traffic routes and shared cycle/foot ways. Providing further active travel routes is part of the city's Transport Strategy to improve connectivity, incorporating the broader objectives to commit to cleaner air and reduced carbon emissions. <https://travel.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Local-Transport-Plan-2021.pdf>

Mobility access

The promenade provides access along the seafront from Eastney to Clarence Pier. There are also three mobility access points to the beach, two with access matting and one with a wooden ramp. During 2021 trials were conducted for a floating wheelchair to provide access into the sea. Due to the steepness of the shingle it is difficult to get back out of the water, however it is envisaged that the coastal defence works may enable a longer term solution.

The Seafront Environment

The seafront has a key role to play in improving our environment, as it provides a cooling effect on the city. Together with green space, urban blue space removes key pollutants from the atmosphere by affecting the flow and distribution of air pollution. It also has a positive effect on health outcomes by attenuating noise pollution. In addition, blue space mitigates against the urban heat effect (built up areas of asphalt).⁴³ Together with green space, blue space contributes to the biodiversity of the city.

Nature sites at the seafront

Eastney Beach and Fort Cumberland are both designated Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs) due to their important contribution to biodiversity. Fort Cumberland includes species such as the Dartford Warbler and Stonechat, the Great Green Bush Cricket, together with several flowers within the gorse and heathland.

Eastney Beach comprises an area of 125,600 square metres. It is distinguishable from the beach to the west as the shingle contains vegetation. Vegetated shingle is a rare habitat and supports plants such as Sea Holly, Sea Kale and Sea Radish.

⁴³ Public Health England, Improving Access to Greenspace, A new review for 2020



In addition to protecting such habitats, development of the seafront needs to take every opportunity to both reduce carbon and incorporate sustainable alternatives as integral features of design.

For example, new developments and refurbishments might include low carbon energy generating technology such as solar photovoltaic panels and incorporate green roofs.

Watersports (city wide)

Activities such as surfing, wakeboarding and kite surfing have become more popular in recent years. Watersports have had a particular association with the city due to the recent history of the Americas Cup and base at the Camber for Ben Ainslie Racing. Whilst the America's Cup Team have moved out of Portsmouth, the 1851 Trust remains based in Portsmouth, engaging with young people through sporting initiatives <https://1851trust.org.uk/our-mission/>.

Development for watersports activities in Portsmouth might include:

- Developing a watersports activities network in the city for clubs to share ideas
- Tie in watersports development with the development of the Hilsea Linear Park project, announced as part of the Levelling Up Fund spend. This includes the refurbishment of Hilsea Lido which could incorporate paddleboarding opportunities
- Further development of watersports programmes with local schools
- Extension of the buoyed adult swim zone
- Introduce a buoyed zone for children, clearly marked with large yellow buoys

Current provision of watersports includes the **Andrew Simpson Watersports Centre** on the Eastern Road facing Langstone Harbour. The centre is a centre of excellence for schools and RYA training centre. The Andrew Simpson Foundation (ASF) operate similar facilities in the UK in Reading, Portland, Birmingham and overseas in Mossel Bay, South Africa, Lake Garda in Italy and the Turks and Caicos Islands in the Caribbean.

The centre enables all Portsmouth children to get on the water whether they have low or no income through the support of the **Andrew Simpson Foundation**. Similarly, through the Foundation, further training is available and RYA qualifications can be achieved.

There are opportunities for our Events Team to support and promote blue space activities such as the Sea Angling Classic Tournament in summer 2022. The team are in regular discussion with UK Sport regarding opportunities to bid for watersports and similar events.

Portsmouth Sail Training Trust also works with the Andrew Simpson Foundation to raise the confidence of young people and provides regular sailing training to Portsmouth Schools which includes the opportunity to gain RYA qualifications.

A capital bid is being put forward for the **Andrew Simpson Centre** as the building is in urgent need of further investment. This restricts the ability of the centre to run activities and it becomes dependent on pop up facilities. The intention is to make the centre more sustainable and photovoltaic panels were installed for this purpose in 2019. Longer term, it is hoped to improve the environmental credentials of the centre. This would include replacing the building maintenance system with a ground heat pump system. In addition, the future model for the centre includes the installation of sleeping pods so that overnight accommodation can be offered with watersports courses over several days.

Watersports activities at Eastney Beach

Licences for personal trainers include training for kite boarding, paddle boarding and open water swimming. The licences are provided on a risk assessment and qualification basis.

There is opportunity to develop plans for improving watersports infrastructure in the city. This could encompass both short term and long term facilities in the vicinity of Eastney Beach, within the context of the environment. The Eastney area is an ideal location for another watersports activities centre for the city, as it is relatively sheltered from the Solent and Isle of Wight and therefore has ideal prevailing wind conditions. A small development could encompass a watersports café, shop and storage facility for watersports equipment. Beach showers could also be installed adjacent to the current public toilets at Eastney. Such developments would be subject to receipt of capital and maintenance funding.

Seafront & water safety

The seafront is a popular area for dog walking and this needs to be undertaken safely, with an understanding of other seafront users' safety. Between the end of April until the end of September (peak season) it is not permitted to take dogs on the foreshore at the section of beach between the Royal Marines Yomper Statue and Southsea Castle, and Hotwalls foreshore. The restrictions do not apply to those using dogs who are registered blind, or require use of an assistance dog from Dogs for the Disabled, Support Dogs, Canine Partners for Independence or Hearing Dogs. A dedicated dog training area is also provided for all year round at Pier Road.

Water Safety is a critical consideration for the seafront as it is for the rest of the city as we are the UK's only island city. This is managed by Seafront Services.

They also support a joint authority Water Safety forum which includes representatives from Portsmouth City Council, Gosport Borough Council, Langstone Harbour Board, the Queen's Harbour Master and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), Portsmouth and Southsea Voluntary Lifeguards as well as representatives of groups who regularly use the water for leisure activities. Meetings are held regularly throughout the year to address topical issues such as:

- Designated swim zones
- Use of personal watercrafts
- Anti-social behaviour
- Changes in legislation

Anti-social behaviour includes 'tombstoning' off South Parade Pier and Hotwalls sites. There are also strong tides effected by the shipping movements.

The RNLI have established which are the safest areas for sea swimming and through their 3 yearly review of signage, ensure that public water safety signage reflects this at regular intervals all across the seafront. There are also a number of defibrillators recently installed along the seafront for first aid provision.

Heritage assets

The seafront offers a wide range of heritage assets including the historic fortifications at Portsmouth Harbour such as the Square Tower, Round Tower and Point Battery, together with Long Curtain Moat, Spur Redoubt and King's Bastion. The Council's Heritage Strategy⁴⁴ identifies the benefits of such assets, which *'enhance the look and feel of a place, contributing to a sense of identity in a landscape. This in turn can support positive lifestyle behaviours that contribute to other outcomes - getting out and walking about the local environment'*.

There are also various key landmarks along the seafront, which provide the seafront's distinct character. These can help orientate people and can be used as a meeting point for social connection. Significant examples include Hotwalls, Royal Garrison Church, Royal Naval Memorial, Southsea Castle, Landing Craft Tank 7074 and Lumps Fort.

⁴⁴ [Portsmouth Heritage Strategy 2021](#)



In 2021 the Culture & Leisure Directorate obtained funding for a Waterfront Welcome Team during peak season. The Welcome Team were on hand from Old Portsmouth to Eastney, to provide assistance to members of the public with regard to attractions and heritage, and orientation between sites. The Welcome Team served again in summer 2022, funded from within cash limits.

Sea Defences

Part of the city's climate change mitigation includes taking steps to build resilience against rising sea levels. The Southsea Coastal Scheme is a significant development to affect the seafront along 4.5km over the next period. The project is primarily funded by Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) with contributions from the Council and Solent LEP. It covers the seafront from Old Portsmouth to Eastney, to reduce flood risk to over 8000 homes and 700 businesses and will be delivered in six phases / frontages. Whilst it will cause some disruption, it also provides an opportunity to regenerate the seafront through public realm improvements. Between Pyramids and Eastney the beach will form part of the flood defence and beach materials will be imported to widen the beach (the new beach will be similar in width to the existing Eastney Beach).

The Scheme offers an opportunity to engage with the community as the work develops. There is a Project Information Centre at the Scheme site office on Pier Road and the team also engage with the local residents through regular newsletter updates, together with schools visits, stands at events, such as Victorious and exhibitions in the city's libraries.

The public realm improvements include an opportunity to source artwork which can subsequently be incorporated into the landscape design (e.g. artwork embedded into new structures). Where there are expanses of concrete as part of the design (e.g. replacement promenade surfaces and flood walls), the artwork can be used to provide variety and engagement.

The Scheme commissioned a public art strategy to be undertaken in conjunction with the detailed design to assist in delivering this opportunity alongside the flood defence works. The artwork of 20 local artists was subsequently showcased to the community in autumn 2021.

A key part of the design of the sea defences is to ensure sensitive integration into the natural and historical environment at the seafront. As the Scheme interfaces with several scheduled ancient monuments (frontage 1 and frontage 4), Historic England are consulted on the material selection, to ensure that the design and construction within these frontages is sympathetic to the heritage.

The Scheme will deliver a new promenade between Saluting Platform and Eastney (St Georges Road) which will be two tiered at Southsea Castle and Long Curtain Moat. It will also include new lighting, new seating, additional planting and two replacement bridges, at Long Curtain Moat.

During the construction of frontage 1 - Long Curtain Moat, seventeenth century historic walls were discovered. These have subsequently been repaired and are showcased in the finished Scheme alongside the other historic structures. New lighting and interpretation panels have been installed to illuminate the heritage features and improve/ update the historical interpretation. New interpretation panels are also included in other frontages and will cover other topics such as ecology in addition to the heritage aspects.



Biodiversity net gain is a key consideration of the design. Tide pools, seed rocks, bee bricks and wildflower planting will be installed across the six frontages. The planting design will mimic the existing vegetated shingle at Eastney Beach but will include both native and non-native plants to increase biodiversity. The planting will attract bees and enable self-seeding and self-colonising. Evergreen plants will be included to provide year round colour. The seasonal planting will include plants that already exist on the seafront beach and the wildflowers will provide a sea of colour similar to the wildflower planting elsewhere in the city.

The species are chosen with the coastal environment in mind and are subject to minimal maintenance. There is also some proposed new tree planting as part of the design.

The defences will allow for a broader route around the tip of Southsea Castle. They will improve the walking and cycling infrastructure particularly at that section of the seafront. The Scheme are also working with the Active Travel Team, to appropriately position cycle lanes ensuring the seafront highway layout integrates with the wider cycling network, both now and in the future. The design for frontage 3 (Southsea Common) will result in significant changes to the highway layout. The road will become single lane (east to west), parking will change from chevron to parallel and a two-way cycle lane installed.

The Serpentine Square hardstanding and promenade adjacent to Blue Reef will be raised and include terracing. This will create a new functional space which could be used to host small events such as a community market / art exhibition / pop up kiosks.

Specific Seafront Sites

The following section considers specific areas on the seafront and the unique character and opportunities they present.

Old Portsmouth to Clarence Pier

Old Portsmouth dates back to 1180 and contains many historic attractions such as Royal Garrison Church, Portsmouth Cathedral, the Square Tower and the Round Tower. The success of the Hotwalls development, located in the Grade I listed and scheduled Point Battery, is a prime example of heritage reimagined. The area houses gallery spaces for artists together with a quality café and includes use of the Round Tower as an exhibition space. It is now fully known as the creative quarter in the city. Further funding is required to fully weather and waterproof the Round Tower.

King's Bastion was originally constructed as part of the city's defences, forming part of the curtain wall, in the sixteenth century. At King's Bastion, there are four magazine bunkers which could be developed in a similar manner to the Hotwalls. Whilst this is a listed historical structure, a redevelopment undertaken sympathetic to the heritage of the area could encompass a café, bar, restaurant and / or arts and cultural space within the magazines. A seating area atop of the Bastion would offer magnificent views across the Solent. Events could then take place at this location to tie in with the resident artists.



Southsea Common is the city's key historic park on the waterfront. It is a Grade II listed Registered Park and Garden within the seafront conservation area and Old Portsmouth conservation area. The Common is a crucial part of the city's green infrastructure. It is utilised for recreational and leisure space and key events are also run here. This is balanced with the need to protect the environment, through initiatives such as tree planting schemes. As a listed park, there is also the requirement for any development to be sensitive to the area's heritage.



Southsea Castle sits at the furthest point south. Key attractions in this area, in addition to the Castle, include: Blue Reef Aquarium, the Bandstand, D-Day Story and Landing Craft Tank, Southsea Splashpools. The volleyball court is currently located opposite the Landing Craft Tank, however due to the proximity to the coast there is daily sand movement and overspill. There could be opportunity to relocate the volleyball court to the north of the city as part of the Hilsea Linear Park and Lido proposal.

Speakers Corner is situated directly on the seafront. In the past it has been associated as a place for public speaking. It has great views over the Solent and has recently been adopted as a key site for our wheeled sports community (skateboarders, longboarders, roller skaters, roller bladers, BMX and scooter). Following the success of Sky Brown at the 2020 Summer Olympic Games for skateboarding and her award of BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year 2021, the sport is becoming ever more popular. In addition, Portsmouth-born Declan Brooks also brought home a medal from the 2020 Olympic Games for BMX Park Freestyle. Portsmouth has its own Skating Group https://www.instagram.com/portsmouth_skating_group/?hl=en in recognition of the growing popularity of these sports.

The area is also currently used as a start and end point for the Southsea Park Run. It has occasionally been used as an event space with previous artist markets occurring and in 2021 it was used to support a skateboarding event. The sound impact of any performance needs to be considered due to the proximity of the space to residential areas.

The area also has the potential to host a small food festival in conjunction with the adjacent food outlets.

On the seafront side of the Speakers Corner shelter, redevelopment could encompass beach shower facilities.



Canoe Lake as referenced earlier in this chapter.

Eastney Beach (St George's Road to Henderson Road) is a protected area due to its rare vegetated shingle habitat (as referenced above). This restricts development opportunities in the area. However, the Canoe Lake area case study considers a development of the offering at Cumberland House to include interpretation of the ecological significance of this site. It could also include light interpretation of the heritage assets in the area, such as Eastney Batteries East and West.

Fort Cumberland and Ferry Point

Fort Cumberland is both a Scheduled Ancient Monument due to the 'Star Fort' on site and also a Site of Importance to Nature Conservation due to the biodiversity of the habitat. The monument is managed by Historic England. It may be considered that the importance of the biodiversity at this site could also be promoted via the development of the educational and visitor offering at Cumberland House.

Aside from Fort Cumberland, the land to the east of Henderson Road leading to Ferry Point is currently under the Portfolio of Planning and Regeneration. There have been several issues in this area in the past including abandoned watercraft, permanent campervans and discarded litter. To manage the amenity of the area in the future, a small parking charge might be introduced, with an exception to those with permits (such as for licensed fishing). This would discourage vehicles from being left in the area over the long term. A Parking Restrictions sign has been installed to assist with abandoned vehicles in this area.

The Council could work with the Langstone Harbour Board to manage access to Eastney Slipway. In addition all houseboats in the area would need to abide by the Harbour licence conditions. Seasonal staff could be engaged to keep Eastney Slipway clear, receive permit payments for use of the Slipway, manage parking and provide information to users of the area.

Seafront Aspirations

Where the seafront aspirations are able to be delivered, consideration will be given to the wider context in which they sit, including waste management and traffic management.

Aspiration	Responsibility	Term/ progress/ dependencies
Replacement of current seafront lighting with LED lighting	Seafront Manager	Initial work underway; further areas will be reviewed considering coastal defence works.
Park and Ride Bus to Southsea Seafront during summer season	Transport Manager	Dependent on funding.
Active Travel routes	Transport Manager	See Local Transport Plan
Mobility access from shingle to sea	Seafront Manager	Wooden ramps now installed on seasonal basis. Longer term solution and access out of the sea only likely through coastal defence scheme.
Watersports Activities Network	Leisure & Sports Facilities Manager	2 years

Aspiration	Responsibility	Term/ progress/ dependencies
Watersports Programmes with Schools	Leisure & Sports Facilities Manager	2 years
Extend buoyed adult swim zone & introduce children's buoyed zone	Seafront Manager	Completed
Beach Shack development at Eastney	Seafront Manager	Challenging due to drop on shingle, however other options being considered e.g. sauna.
Installation of beach showers at Eastney	Seafront Manager	Dependent on funding.
Improve wayfinding signage, and linkages between key areas/gateways.	Seafront Manager	Ongoing as part of coastal defence scheme.
Small events space at Blue Reef	Seafront Manager	Dependent on coastal defence works.
Development of Kings Bastion heritage space	Seafront Manager	With Regeneration team.
Relocate volleyball court as part of Hilsea Linear Park.	Leisure & Sports Facilities Manager + Hilsea Project Manager	Linked to development of Hilsea Linear Park
Develop transition connection gateway between Southsea town centre and seafront in area of Avenue de Caen	Seafront Manager	10 years - dependent on capital funding and development opportunities
Pop up sites for high quality concessions	Seafront Manager	Improved options and expanded sites in operation. (coastal defences allowing)
Speakers Corner Beach Showers	Seafront Manager	Not currently part of design schedule for coastal defence works.
Introduction of parking charges & limitations at Ferry Point	Seafront Manager	2 years Transfer of land to Culture & Leisure Portfolio
Management of Eastney Slipway with Langstone Harbour Board	Seafront Manager	2 years Transfer of land to Culture & Leisure Portfolio
Increase wildflower planting & biodiversity	Coastal Defences	Integral to coastal defences design
Increase wildflower planting & biodiversity on Southsea Common	Parks Manager	2 years

15. Milton Park

Milton Park is one of the city's urban parks, comprising 5.25 hectares.

It includes the following features:

- Play area
- Tennis courts
- Multi-use games area
- Skate park
- Bowling greens
- Community centre including café and toilets
- Library
- Barn Studio Theatre (Portsmouth Players)

The Bowls Association at the park is an association of bowling clubs that use the greens in the park. In 1997, a successful lottery grant bid by the Bowls Association enabled an extension to the pavilion, to improve the facilities, irrigation and fencing.

The café in the community centre opened in 2012 and is a very popular facility in the park.

The tennis courts were refurbished in 2013; local residents can play free by borrowing equipment from the café.

The Friends of Milton Park and Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens are keen supporters of the park and undertake community garden sessions.

History

Milton Park is a visible reminder of Portsmouth's rural past. Records of medieval Milton go back to the fourteenth century, when the area was a manor with fishing rights. The name Milton is thought to come from the old English for 'middle tun' or Middle Farm. By 1722 the manors of Eastney and Milton became the property of John White, the then Mayor of Portsmouth. By the nineteenth century, whilst the growth of the dockyard brought change to much of Portsea Island, Milton remained a rural area, dominated by small market gardens.

The Goldsmiths are the most prominent family in the history of Milton, acquiring land in the area in 1755. The family built up several farms and resisted the sale of the land for urban development. Goldsmith Avenue, running alongside Milton Park, was named after James Goldsmith in 1896.

Following the acquisition of Milton Farm by what was then known as the Portsmouth Corporation, in 1912, the ground was arranged as a park and formally opened in July 1923, with Milton Bowls Club forming later that year. The thatched barn in the park today, home of Portsmouth Players, is one of the original Milton Farm buildings.

Further information regarding the park can be found at the Portsmouth History Centre.

Forward Vision

The future of Milton Park may sit within the following themes:

- Biodiversity
- Wildlife and heritage education
- Community events
- Physical wellbeing

The park contains several sustainable planting beds. Choice of trees (replaced where trees have died) maintains a balance between native and non-native species. Wildflower meadow areas will continue to be introduced within the amenity grass areas where possible, to maximise the opportunity for visitors to experience sensory environments and planting will give consideration to plants that can provide food to wildlife (berries, seeds), attract insects (bees, butterflies) and provide nesting habitats for birds. Hedges in the park continue to be cut outside bird nesting times.

Work will continue in partnership between libraries and parks services to develop events partnership in the Milton Park space. This work will be developed following the appointment of the new Countryside Officer to focus on open spaces in Baffins and Milton Wards. The focus of this role is to increase community engagement and participation in how the sites are managed and access to information and interpretation on the wildlife present.

Future education opportunities in Milton Park may take a joint approach to both promote the ecology and heritage of the park, referencing the importance of the thatched barn for example and the Goldsmith family. Education could take the form of modern interpretation boards and/or open day community events at the park. There are a number of mature trees in the park which may form the basis for an ecology trail walk.

Opportunity for exercise by different users will continue to be encouraged in the park in several ways. There is provision for dog walkers who are welcome to use the park, in conjunction with the dog control order (which disallows dogs from the play area, bowling greens, tennis courts and skate park).

The tennis courts (refurbished in 2013), play area infrastructure, multi-use games area (MUGA), skate park and bowling greens encourage physical exercise by a broad variety of users. It is intended these features will be maintained. Pathways are also accessible for wheelchair and buggy users.

Centenary Year

2023 is the centenary both of the park and Milton Bowls. A celebration event was held in July involving the community and friends of the area following the success of the 75 year celebration held in 1998.

16. Baffins Pond and Milton Common

Baffins Pond

Baffins Pond is one of Portsmouth's larger parks, comprising over 18 hectares.

It includes the following features

- Large open parkland (Tangier Field)
- Copse & natural areas important for wildlife
- 1.7 hectare pond and recreational fishery
- Facility for 5 a side football
- Local library
- Children's play facilities area
- Facility for daytime parking
- Community centre, garden and café
- Bowling green, tennis court, multi use games court and outdoor gym facilities

The importance of this area is evident from its history. The area was originally farmland which was encroached by housing development in the 1930s. In 1938 following public pressure the pond and land adjacent was sold to the Council with the specified objective to preserve the site.



Wildlife

A number of species of birds are found at Baffins Pond including Canada Geese, Barnacle Geese, Mallard and Tufted Duck. In the winter season Brent Geese use Tangier Field as a habitat when they migrate to the UK during the winter season. It is rare for the geese to choose an urban environment in which to make their home for the season.

They travel from northern Russia to western Europe and stay together in groups across multiple breeding seasons. Brent Geese pair for life and search for coastal grassland or farmland to graze, rest and feed.

Brent Geese are protected as in the 1950s their global population had fallen to 16,500. It is important that their overwintering sites are not destroyed by development.⁴⁵ To protect the species, the eastern side of Tangier Field is fenced off between October and March and no dog walking is permitted in the enclosed area.

Ecological issues

As a contained body of water (no in or outflow), water quality management is of key importance at this site. There are a number of interdependencies:

- Water quality is affected by nutrients in the water. High levels of nutrients encourage algal blooms, which reduce oxygen levels in the water as part of its cycle and consequently may impact on the conditions aquatic life needs to survive.
- During summer season there is significant build up of sediments within the pond, highlighted by low water levels in hot climatic conditions.
- The pond is an important site for wildfowl, however wildfowl contribute droppings into the pond which contribute to the nutrient level.
- The main fish stock in the pond is carp, which are a bottom feeder and constantly disturb the sediments. The pond is currently overstocked and excess disturbance means nutrients cannot be "locked" into the sediments and are constantly being thrown into the water column. A fisheries plan is in place to resolve this issue in conjunction with the Environment Agency.
- In recent years marginal planting has taken place to create wetland areas around the pond, this enables removal of nutrient from the water and also ammonia and other toxic compounds.
- Increasing instances of extreme weather caused by climate change will continue to cause low water levels and threaten oxygen levels in the water. Aeration devices are installed in the pond to help maintain dissolved oxygen and prevent fish death during extreme weather.
- Water quality is checked weekly to check whether any further actions are required.

Ongoing and future management of the pond relies on careful balancing of these differing requirements.

The fish stock in the pond are managed by the local angling society.

The woodland area, with the support of Baffins Pond Association, boasts 848 trees planted with the involvement of the community. The orchard area includes 13 fruit trees donated, planted and cared for by the community.

⁴⁵ <https://healthylifeessex.co.uk/articles/outdoor-life/wildlife/birds/brent-geese/>

Forward vision

The future of Baffins Pond and Tangier Field sit within the following themes:

- Wildlife education
- Increase biodiversity
- Site infrastructure
- Physical activity
- Community events and initiatives

Wildlife education

The ecological issues regarding the pond are complex. It would benefit the community and care for the site if these were more widely known and understood.

A communications strategy plan would include updated information available easily online. For example, it would tell the public what action to take if they came across a sick animal or bird. A Countryside Officer has been appointed to further develop work with the Baffins Pond Association including providing further support for their events.

In 2021 the Council's Library Service, together with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, held *Wild in the Park* events to allow children to take part in wildlife education activities. This could be introduced to Baffins Pond as a joint initiative between the Countryside Officer, HIWWT or similar organisation, Baffins Library and Baffins Pond Association. Particular activities could focus around the Brent Geese habitat.

The Sword Sands Road entrance to Tangier Field is directly opposite Milton Common. Linkage between these green spaces could be improved in terms of signage and information made available on active travel routes at the Baffins Pond Community Centre and Baffins Library.

Increase biodiversity

The wetland reed beds will continue to be planted and maintained to allow improvement to water quality. This will prove challenging due to sporadic mass disturbance by waterfowl. However, further sectional segregation may prove effective. The plant selection is made based on water levels and to improve the aquatic habitat by removing the nutrient. Sustainable planting has been introduced in the bedded areas to the south side of the pond. There is an opportunity to increase the wildflower areas on the north side, adjacent to Tangier Road. Similarly, wildflower strips could be added to Tangier Park Field.

A new Countryside Officer has been appointed to focus on the conservation of open spaces in Baffins and Milton Wards, increasing community engagement and participation in the way the sites are managed and access to information on the flora and fauna found within.

In conjunction with the Council's Greening Strategy, 200 whips and 1 standard tree were planted in Staggs Wood in the year 2020/21. In year 2021/22 6 standard trees were planted around the pond area. Moving forward there could be further whip planting and planting of trees at marginal gaps around the circumference of Tangier Field. These would be broad leaf trees for their benefit in improving air quality. However, any planting needs to take account of the Brent Geese flight path, and would benefit from specialist ornithological advice prior to further planting, as an open grassland habitat is required.



Site infrastructure

The site has a number of access points particularly for Baffins Pond and these are all mobility friendly. There is scope for further investment to be carried out to the pathways which could be funded by a community infrastructure levy (CIL) payment on new development in the area, or other funding source such as an Environment Agency grant.

The timber log wall around the pond also needs further investment to maintain the infrastructure which would also need to be funded via CIL or other funding source. The site furniture surrounding the pond needs further consideration as to its layout and the memorial seating could be rationalised.

Baffins Pond Association have made information signs for the woodland and orchard areas in Tangier Field.

Physical activity

The site contains a number of opportunities for physical exercise. Capital funding previously has allowed for outdoor fitness to be installed for the benefit of local clubs, residents and visitors.

There is a children's play area and by extension, natural play available for children in the copse woodland. The Baffins Pond Association continue to work on a dipping pond development adjacent to Stagg Woods on the north of Tangier Field for children to provide further opportunity to explore the natural environment as part of their play.

When the Brent Geese are not in residence, Tangier Field is accessible for further activity and is used by Solent Softball which is open to all abilities. The north-eastern end of the field is home to Swordsands Bowling Green and Naismith Bowling Club.

There is a ball court in the Baffins Pond area that is available for multi-use games together with a tennis court. Surface improvements could be made in the future via a CIL payment or other funding source.

Community events and initiatives

The site lends itself well to community events. There is an annual programme of events run by Baffins Pond Association (BPA). Previous events have included: nature based activities for children, Easter Egg hunt, Community Fun day, Teddy Bear picnic, Conker Bash, Santa Visit and Litter Picking.

Moving forward a community liaison officer might work with BPA together with the Council's Events Team to expand and build on the events offer.

Littering is a challenge for the park. This can only be mitigated in part by enhancing the educational and community offer. BPA include regular litter picks as part of their events offer and the Council will be providing long armed litter pickers in the near future to assist with littering in the wetlands areas.

Milton Common

This site is comprised of reclaimed intertidal land and provides a broad diversity of almost 200 species recorded within the site. It includes nationally scarce and county scarce species. The site has been awarded a Higher Level Stewardship grant from Natural England for its management and is managed in accordance with the environmental aims set out in the grant. The site was previously used as a municipal refuse dump until the late 1960s, which generates particular requirements with regard to managing the area.



Future planning for the site includes:

Visitor experience

The visitor experience to this site could be improved by a broader education outreach to the public, improved interpretation and signage to include linkage with the surrounding sites Baffins Pond and Great Salterns Recreation Ground. The role of the new Countryside Officer at Baffins and Milton includes the development of volunteer and community interest at this site and promoting the area as an educational resource.

Habitat protection

Monitoring of species continues at this site with reporting to Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre. Improving the quality of the habitat includes restoration and management of the grassland for target species.



Site infrastructure

A longer term objective is to divert recreational pressure away from the coastal path by developing the inland footpaths and cyclepaths, to minimise disturbance to species such as wildfowl, whilst at the same time, developing green travel routes.

17. Hilsea Linear Park

The Hilsea Linear Park project was submitted as part of the Portsmouth North Levelling Up Fund bid. In November 2021 the government confirmed this bid had been successful in securing project funding via the Levelling Up Fund.

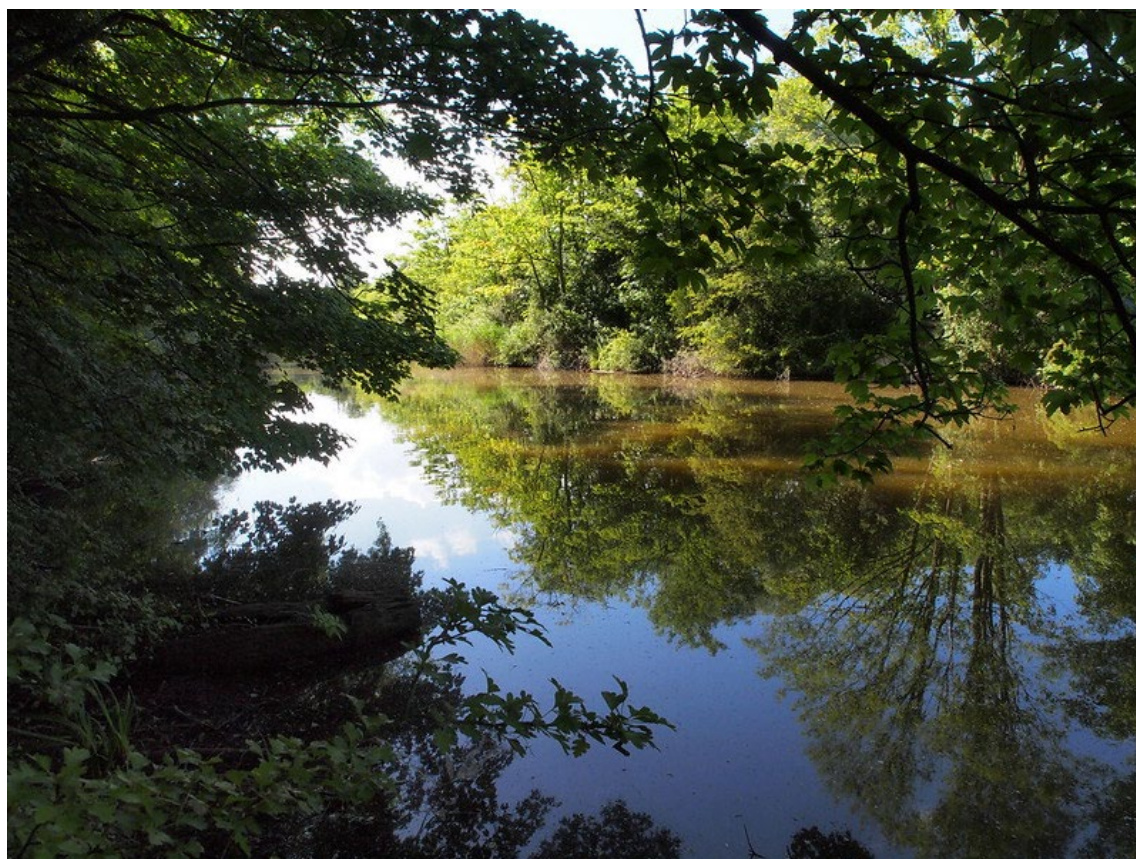
Connection

The plan for this park is to further enhance the existing green infrastructure at Hilsea Lines. The Linear Park will improve walking and cycling routes around the northern tip of the city. Coastal defence works in this area have already improved the walking and cycling route from the Mountbatten Centre to Hilsea Lido and there will be further integration of active travel routes. A new bridge will then link the east and west sides of Hilsea Lines and further connectivity will link Anchorage Park to Farlington Marshes and Drayton, thereby extending active travel across north and south by improving cycle and footway access.

Heritage and Ecology

Hilsea Lines is a natural area which has developed from a previous military base. The current line defences, a scheduled Ancient Monument, were constructed in 1871, but previous defences had existed since Tudor times.

Some of the bastions are in use and there is opportunity to open up more of them. There is also a diverse range of wildlife at the site, as the varied woodland benefits many plants and animals. Development of the linear park will include signage and interpretation for the ecology and heritage in the area.



Play and Recreation

The Linear Park development will incorporate further opportunities for high quality play areas and outdoor exercise, with refurbishment to the existing Lido, the ever popular splashpool and play park and maximise the potential of the space for the community, whilst focussing on accessibility for all. There will be active travel opportunities, which may include bicycle hire for example.

18. Portsdown Hill

Portsdown Hill is of great ecological significance, due to the calcareous (chalk) grassland which forms one of the most diverse habitats in Great Britain. Around 55 hectares of Council managed land is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). A similar area is open space and supports a variety of habitats from woodland and scrub to grassland. The grassland varies from intensively used amenity grassland to a species rich community. The non-SSSI sites are managed sympathetically for wildlife to complement and extend the wildlife of the SSSI. Calcareous grassland is a Priority Habitat as recognised by the Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). It enables a diversity of plant life, which in turn, supports a great variety of invertebrates. Several other Priority Habitats (e.g. hedgerows) both on and off the SSSI, add visual and biological diversity to the area.



The SSSI, although directly north of an urban city, is comparable to other sites further up the Meon Valley. It is unusual to have a site of such rich biodiversity directly adjacent to an urban population and local residents would usually need to travel much further afield to access the flora and fauna this site contains.

The Hill offers the residents of Portsmouth excellent views on a clear day of the city, the Solent, Hayling Island, Gosport, the Isle of Wight and Butser Hill and an ideal starting point for an interest in wildlife and ecology.

History

Evidence of flint working has been found, illustrating that the site has been in human occupation since prehistoric times. Between 1860 and 1875, five hillforts were built to protect Portsmouth Harbour from invasion from the north - the concern was that an invading army would land in another area, progress to the top of Portsdown Hill and attack Portsmouth from that point; Hilsa Lines were not considered a strong enough defence.

Centuries of extensive grazing produced large areas of chalk grassland. In the 60 years leading up to the end of the last century this was reduced in extent through land use change such as intensive agriculture and an absence of management and development. The most diverse chalk grassland habitat is restricted to the SSSI with isolated fragments elsewhere on the hill.

Management

To maintain the calcareous grassland, grazing and scrub control is required. Some scrubland is beneficial as there is value in scrub to insects and birds, but this must be balanced against the biodiversity richness of the grassland habitat. Management of scrubland also makes the site more accessible for visitors.

Management of Council maintained public open space on Portsdown aims to maintain the variety of calcareous grassland types, scrub habitats and intermediate communities in a mosaic of optimal proportions for wildlife that also enables easy public access. This requires scrub control, mowing and grazing informed by the distribution of notable species over a range of sites ranging from high value chalk grassland to amenity open space with a high visitor presence.

Whilst some scrub brings benefits in terms of shelter and habitat variation it will inevitably spread into grassland and restrict visitor access if left unmanaged. Ongoing control is therefore required. It is not currently possible to use grazing animals such as goats, therefore mechanised techniques are used, notably flail mowing. Species rich grassland requires annual defoliation to maintain it, which involves either mowing or grazing.

Further consideration of the relative climate change effect of the different scrub and grassland management techniques must be borne in mind as grazing animals produce methane and mowers are reliant on fossil fuel for power. A balance must be struck between maintaining biodiversity and climate impact.

The approach taken is to estimate and regularly re-evaluate the carbon footprint of the management regime. An initial assessment would suggest that fuel usage is more than offset by carbon storage in the soil and woody vegetation. It compares favourably with recreational or agricultural land uses.

Forward vision

The future vision for Portsdown Hill can be summarised by the following themes:

- Maintenance, connection and expansion of Portsdown's characteristic diversity
- Agricultural modelling
- Partnerships with adjacent sites / landowners
- Ecological education and learning
- Equality of access
- Corporate sponsorship

Preferred outcomes

With further funding, management of the site could be incorporated into a sustainable biodiversity model incorporating other sites on the escarpment that are managed by other bodies. Incorporating Portsdown Hill's extensive but low level productivity into nearby equine and agricultural systems will achieve the desired outcomes of site management for biodiversity and reduction of the environmental consequences of conventional fodder production in the locality.

Conservation haymaking on Portsdown Hill can yield a product of use to farms and equestrian centres, thereby reducing their environmental impact arising from bought in fertiliser grown hay. Fertiliser is a particularly carbon invasive product.

The impact of keeping animals is further reduced by grazing them on Portsdown Hill, again reducing the amount of fodder called into existence with its attendant fertiliser requirement.

A potentially valuable source of compost is produced by both the conservation management and the animal keeping operations. Scrub control and mowing operations on Portsdown Hill generate organic material in the form of a variety of shredded plant material. This is currently incorporated into tree planting areas. Stables produce a considerable amount of high fertility waste which has the undesirable consequences of excessive soil nutrient levels and atmospheric pollution when formed into dung heaps. A considered and resourced waste management system could produce a flow of valuable growth material, whilst minimising adverse consequences of handling the material.

Biodiversity and habitat connectivity across Portsdown Hill is an important consideration. The most significant areas of Portsdown's remaining biodiversity lie within the Council's boundary and the majority of this is managed by the Parks Service. It is therefore appropriate that the strategy for reconnecting biodiversity across Portsdown Hill, through ecologically viable corridors, comes from the City Council.



Further cross service work could be undertaken with the Museum Service, in particular working with Cumberland House Natural History Museum. The aim would be to increase biodiversity awareness to run joint walks and activities that could be advertised in the city's community centres. This work could be enabled by a Countryside Education Officer who could also expand the current schools offer. Many children in the city do not have access to private gardens therefore Portsdown Hill is a key environment for schools activities.

The topography of the site precludes open access for all however there are pockets of opportunity where access could be broadened. There are a number of viewpoints at the north and south of the site, where persons with mobility requirements could have access to clear views across the area, within the constraints of the environment.

Currently the Countryside Officer is discussing with Queen Alexandra Hospital to enable patients and staff to have direct access to Portsdown Hill without leaving the hospital at the main entrance. This will allow for safe, healthy walks in the section of Portsdown Hill adjacent to the hospital site.

NHS staff working at Queen Alexandra Hospital currently park at Fort Southwick. The Countryside Officer is undertaking a clearing of the route so that the staff can walk through the reserve to the hospital (instead of taking the shuttle bus).

There is a constant pressure with regard to anti-social behaviour at the site, including burnt cars, littering, flytipping and prohibited motorcycle use. There is an ongoing relationship with the Police and it is hoped that further investment into education programmes and signage might provide some level of mitigation. Communication continues with agencies on adjacent land with regard to their responsibilities for litter clearance.

At the present time the wildlife work at Portsdown Hill is funded in entirety via a Countryside Stewardship agreement.

This will be replaced by the Environmental Land Management Scheme. It may be possible to explore corporate sponsorship towards meeting the environmental objectives at the site from local companies as part of their corporate social responsibility models.

The Countryside Officer works collaboratively with colleagues across the Council, who have Council budgets to achieve general management outcomes. Care for the wildlife rich land such as Portsdown Hill is achieved via external funding streams. However, management of the more conventional 'parks' functions is shared, e.g. amenity grass cutting, rubbish bin collection, together with infrastructure requirements such as car parking, signage and seating. Additionally, work is undertaken by the Council's Highways contractor regarding verge maintenance.

19. King George V Playing Fields

This site in Cosham is part of the city's provision for sports facilities for football. The site is protected in perpetuity by Fields in Trust.

The Football Association, Premier League and Sport England have developed a strategy to target areas of the country where there is pressure on provision.⁴⁶ This strategy provides investment into facilities for local communities and is known as the Parklife Football Hub Programme. The programme prioritises local authorities with populations exceeding 200,000 and Portsmouth meets this criteria. The purpose of the programme is to make sure local areas have a sustainable model for football provision, based on artificial grass pitches at key sites.

Implementing the Parklife model in Portsmouth included consideration of a number of sites, including Farlington, Langstone, Rugby Camp and Alexandra Park, together with looking into the feasibility of partnership models. The assessment concluded that King George V Playing Fields (KGV) was the most appropriate site, as reflected in the Portsmouth Playing Pitch Strategy 2018-2034.⁴⁷ As part of the model, it is important that undue pressure is not put on ancillary facilities (changing rooms and social facilities). At KGV, the changing rooms were good quality but were damaged by arson in 2017.

The Council made a submission for funding to the Football Foundation (which now incorporates the Parklife Programme) as part of the Local Football Facilities Plan. The Council also committed funding via their capital programme. The scheme incorporates a new pavilion (changing facilities, café space and toilets) in addition to two artificial grass pitches (AGP) which provide a variety of pitch options. The advantage of smaller pitches is that they can provide for youth football and training and encourage children and young people to take part. The toilets and café will also be of benefit to other users of KGV and the AGPs, by providing all weather provision, will help prevent overplay of other grass pitches. The plan allowed for the appointment of an operator for the facility through open tender. Residents' feedback was sought regarding the scheme in autumn 2021.

⁴⁶ <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/parklife-football-hub-prospectus-july-2017.pdf>

⁴⁷ [Final Draft Portsmouth City Council Stage D -PPS - V7 - 08.03.18.pdf](#)



The Council is continuing to work with the Football Foundation, Hampshire Football Association and local clubs towards delivery of the enhanced pavilion and pitch provision for the site. Planning consent has been granted for the development and having successfully received financial support from the Football Foundation, the hub is due to open in within the next year.

Additionally, KGV is a key events space for the north of the city, having previously hosted fireworks celebrations and one of the Big Lunch destinations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee 2022.

20. Bransbury Park

Bransbury Park is a popular park to the south of the city at Eastney. Current facilities include playing pitches, hard courts, a model railway, children's play area, café and formal garden. Eastney Community Centre is also based here.



In 2020 it was established that Eastney Swimming Pool and Wimbledon Park Sports Centre required major capital expenditure and significant ongoing subsidy to keep them open. Feasibility studies established that the wet and dry provision at Eastney and Wimbledon Park respectively should be combined into a new facility, a community sports hub at Bransbury Park. A city consultation in 2020 established that 63% of respondents were supportive of this proposal and 78% of respondents intended to use the new facility. A more focussed consultation in 2021 targeted local residents and existing users of the community centre. This found that in the PO4 postcode which includes Bransbury Park, 80% of respondents said they would be likely or very likely to use the facility.

The facility mix is currently being developed and will include a swimming pool, a learner pool, a sports centre (studios and gym) and a GP surgery. The addition of the learner pool at the site will be a significant improvement on the Eastney Pool provision, which in addition to requiring ongoing subsidy did not include a shallow/learner pool provision, meaning it was not suitable for stages 1-3 of the learn-to-swim programme.

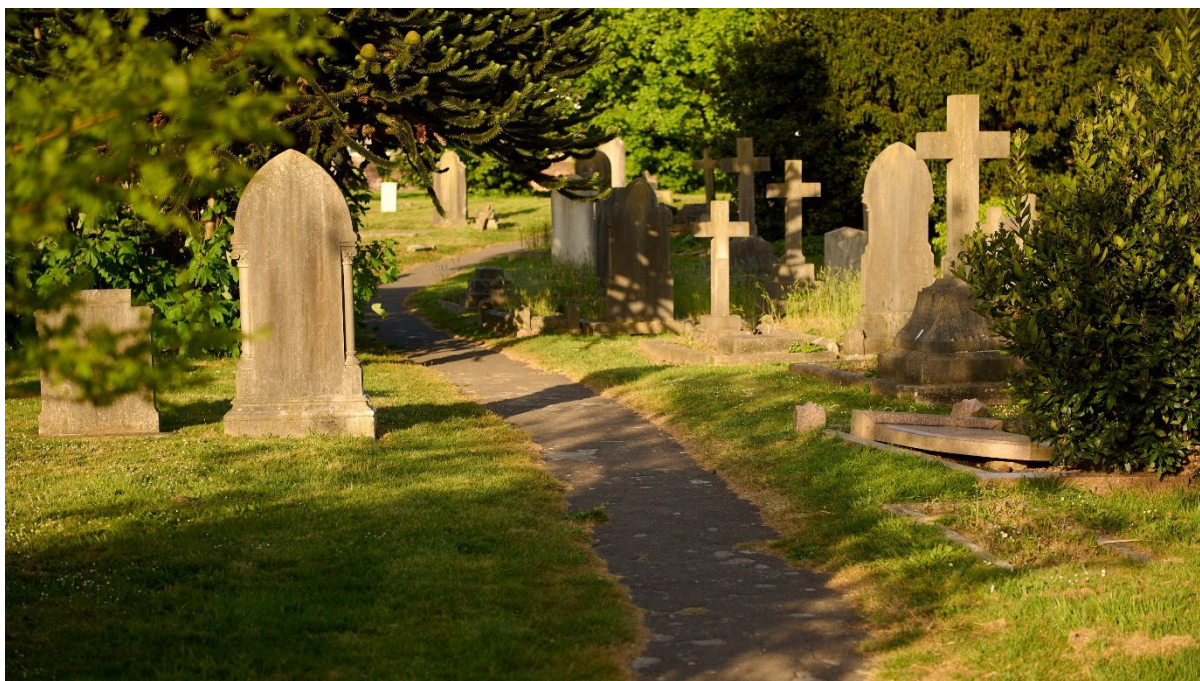
The planning application will focus on how and where the current hard courts can be re-provided elsewhere and on the planning case for loss of court space. It is important to note that the loss of space would be relatively unused hard court space rather than playing fields or 'green space'.

21. Cemeteries and Allotments

Cemeteries

Portsmouth has three cemeteries: Milton Road, Kingston and Highland Road.

Although their primary function is as burial sites, cemeteries provide multifunctional space. Members of the public can walk, run and dog walk through these areas and they also provide much needed biodiversity and wildlife space. They provide a quiet space for reflection. There are opportunities to increase community engagement with these spaces, either in terms of wildlife or historical interest.



The cemeteries strategy considers how to manage existing cemeteries space to meet current demand and plan for future requirements. It notes their secondary function as referred above.

The strategy considers several issues for future consideration, including:

- Increasing capacity for burial space;
- Designating areas for particular communities;
- Improving and enhancing cemeteries as areas of public value for green space;
- Options for long term sustainability.

Improvements to cemetery green space include tree and biodiversity management. The strategy notes that there is also opportunity for community engagement, such as the possibility of Friends groups for each or all the cemeteries.

Allotments

There are 9 allotment sites of varying sizes across the city.

A total of 1851 allotment plots sit under the council, spread across the following sites: Horsea Lane, Knowsley Road, Longmeadow, Milton sites (Milton Piece, Eastney Lake, Hope Cottage), Moneyfields, North Harbour, Salisbury Road, Stamshaw and Tipner, and (outside the city) Durrants (Rowlands Castle).

Waiting list times vary across the sites from approximately 1 year to 4 years. To increase the number of plots, larger plots (over 253 square metres) are now divided into 2 or 3 plots.



Allotment sizes provide several benefits to their users:

Sustainability

Allotment gardening contributes towards biodiversity health through organic gardening (free of pesticides), green waste recycling, water retention and working in harmony with nature.

Physical and Mental Health

Gardening provides restorative benefits to those with physical and mental health challenges and encourages physical activity for those living inactive lifestyles. It provides a sense of fulfilment by growing and consuming self-grown produce. They provide an opportunity for outdoor recreation space in a densely populated city where many households do not have a private garden.

Community building

Allotments can be utilised by everyone in the community. They can draw groups of people together across the age groups and social groups. Whilst they may be registered with one person, they can be used by family groups and groups of friends.

Education

Allotment growing introduces principles of cultivation and plant growth to child development. A number of schools in the city have allotment sites and this also provides opportunity for nursery groups and youth groups. Schools may also choose to create their own plots within their school grounds.

Each allotment site has an allotment association. The associations are a great source of support and knowledge for tenants, who may choose to be members. New allotment holders are provided with information on the processes and requirements of taking on an allotment by the allotment association, at the start of their tenancy.

The Council provides tenants with a copy of the terms and conditions that must be adhered to, in particular, allotment holders should always ensure that the plot site is left secure.

It is permitted for 25% of a plot to be left uncultivated for the purposes of rewilding but this must not be so wild that 'weeds' cause problems for adjoining plot holders.

Allotment inspections are carried out regularly, if uncultivated a dirty plot letter is issued and if not resolved, a notice to quit issued and ultimately the tenancy will be terminated. Inspections are undertaken between March and September.

Maintenance issues and addressing untended 'dirty' plots is required to be undertaken from within a tight revenue budget, together with dealing with security issues where there is not sufficient budget for CCTV monitoring, without a capital investment. Since 2018 over £30,000 capital investment has been made to the allotment sites, in the form of new fencing, gates, repairs and new access locks.

Subject to land becoming available, new allotment sites may be considered, particularly in areas of the city which are currently furthest away from any allotment sites.

However, any decision to provide new allotment sites is made in consideration of other demands on public land. An assumption of refusal of any application for planning permission is made where it would result in a net loss of publicly accessible open space.

An alternative to allotment spaces is community garden projects. A community garden project allocates a growing and garden space to a community group to enjoy and look after together. The space can be used to grow flowers and vegetables and encourage wildlife in the area. It also provides a pleasant environment for the community to meet and provides health and social benefits to participants. A community garden space is included in the plans for the regeneration of Victoria Park. Landport Community Garden is an example of a successful current space, where all are welcome to participate.

There are 6 pantries and 3 larders in the city shown on the [Portsmouth Food Support Network](#). Some pantries are already connected to allotment sites for receipt of community produce and it is intended that this connection continues.

22. Delivery and Monitoring of the strategy

The strategy will be taken to Cabinet for approval following consultation. The plan will be monitored over the course of its term, through regular project reports added to the Members Projected Work Programme and project corporate performance monitoring.

There are several audits that take place regularly, including for play equipment, pitch provision and plant machinery. Grounds condition is continually assessed via annual and season renovation schedules as part of operational plans.

Greening reporting is taken to Cabinet as a cross portfolio item, which includes updates on greening and biodiversity for parks and open spaces.

The action principles in this strategy will be considered in more detail via service operational plans.

The directorate works closely with portfolio holders and opposition spokespersons. All Members are encouraged to take an interest in the work to protect our Parks and Open Spaces and are welcome to have site visits.

Key projects, such as Victoria Park, are subject to consultation with the community. Customers are also able to make contact by service enquiry and the directorate has a strong network of volunteers via existing Friends Groups who are encouraged to feedback.

23. Resources to fund the strategy

As illustrated in chapter 9, Parks Service budgets are extremely tight. All day to day spending must be managed by a balanced budget and cash limits are increasingly stretched to cover rising costs, which means there is little surplus, as the budget is for the most part taken up by maintenance requirements for existing spaces.

The full implementation of the projects highlighted in this strategy depend on either capital funding or grant funding. The service may apply for capital funding from the council and it is the council's decision as to how capital funding is allocated across all directorates. Not all schemes will be approved for capital funding, as there are only limited funds to utilise. The decision to award capital funding will be dependent on the current administration's priorities.

As at the 2023/2024 budget, the following schemes have been allocated capital funding by the Council for the period 2018-2024⁴⁸:

Scheme	Council contribution⁴⁹
Allotment Security Grants	31,787
Binstead Play Area	15,000
BMX Track (Baffins)	125,000
Bransbury Park Pavilion	150,000
Canoe Lake De-Silting	25,000
College Park Play Equipment	10,000
Contribution to roof at Southsea Skatepark	10,000
Disabled Beach Buggies and Access Mats	20,000

⁴⁸ Resources have also been committed towards Greening The City, as part of the Environment and Climate Change Portfolio.

⁴⁹ Where applicable, this includes section 106 and CIL funding.

Scheme	Council contribution⁴⁹
Farlington Pavilion Refurbishment	274,262
Gatcombe Park Play Area	15,000
Hilsea Basketball Court refurbishment / resurfacing	60,000
In-House Parks equipment ⁵⁰	104,571
Investment in Football Facilities including Changing Facilities	2,699,867
Milton Park Barn Thatched Roof	138,518
Outdoor Fitness Equipment	40,743
Parks and Open Spaces Boundary Protection Measures	65,032
Parks and Open Spaces Protection Measures to prevent incursion	12,840
Paulsgrove Football Club Fencing	30,000
Portsmouth Watersports Centre	709,830
Provision of a Dog Exercise and Training Area	23,883
Repair/ refurbishment of Southsea Splashpool	101,736
Renewal of skate ramps (Milton)	25,000
Re-provision of Leisure Centre, Pool and Community Centre ⁵¹	13,566,919
Seafront Litter Management	35,000
Southsea Common & Town Centre Litter Management	43,360
Victoria Park Heritage Lottery Fund	497,944
Total	18,831,292

External grant funding may come from several sources. The Levelling Up Fund was applied to for the successful Hilsea Linear Park bid. This fund is a £4.8 billion central government fund, for investing in infrastructure that improves everyday life outcomes, regenerates local centres and invests in cultural and heritage assets. The project could therefore demonstrate eligibility against the funding criteria.

New projects increasingly look towards external funding partners. The Victoria Park project has been funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). This looks to fund projects that connect people and communities to the UK's heritage. The Victoria Park project meets the criteria as it seeks to improve habitats, help people connect to nature, conserve a historic park and develop activities to engage the community.

The service can also take advantage of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This money is raised from developers when undertaking new building projects and can be used for required infrastructure resulting from the development. In addition, the CIL Transformation Fund allows for residents to raise money for community improvements and apply for match funding for half the project, up to £5000. This can include planting schemes and open space improvements.

⁵⁰ This is calculated as an annual average, based on the contributions for the period.

⁵¹ This sum includes borrowing of £1,223,129