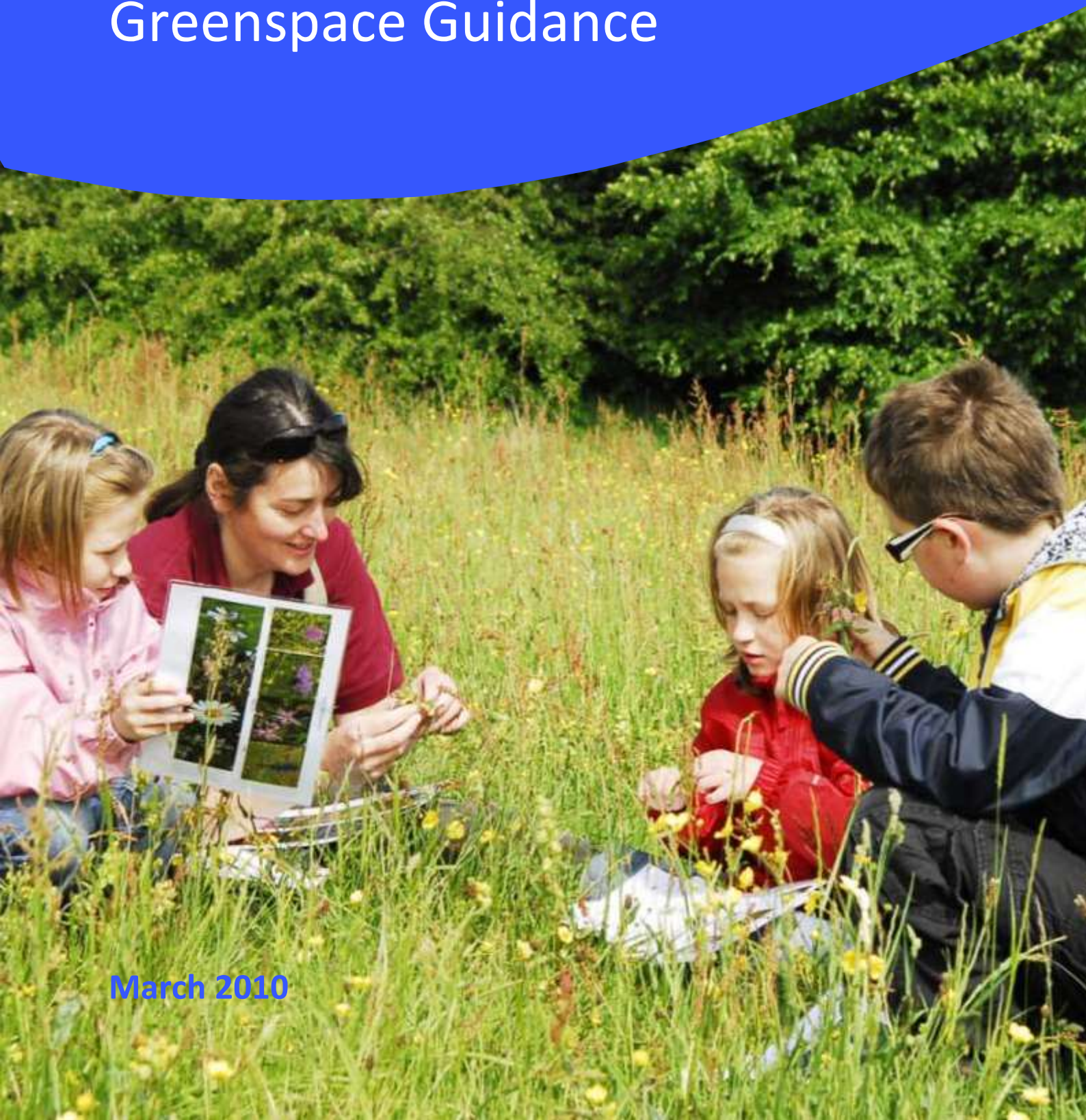
www.naturalengland.org.uk

NATURAL ENGLAND

‘Nature Nearby’

Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance



March 2010

Contents

Foreword 4

Scope and aims of the Guidance 5

Executive Summary 6

Definitions 8

1. Introduction: What is accessible natural greenspace? 9

1.1 The policy context 10

1.2 Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard 12

1.3 Visitor Service Standards 15

1.4 Quality standard for greenspace 17

2. Making the case for ANGSt in delivering Nature Nearby 19

2.1 ANGSt and open space standards 21

2.2 ANGSt: its application and its strengths 23

2.3 The wider community benefits of ANGSt 28

2.4 ANGSt in the wider green infrastructure 36

2.5 ANGSt and other agendas 38

3. Accessible greenspace and spatial planning 41

3.1 The Spatial Planning System and accessible greenspace 41

4. Delivering accessible greenspace 43

4.1 Securing funding streams through partnership 43

Conclusion 45

Annex 1 – Glossary of acronyms 46

Annex 2 – A Proxy measure when mapping naturalness 48

Annex 3 – National and local agendas 50

Annex 4 – The Spatial Planning System and accessible greenspace 52

Annex 5 – Incentive grant aid policies / funding 55

Annex 6 – Site examples 56

How to provide high quality access to the natural environment in green spaces close to home

Guidance and example sites for parks and greenspace practitioners covering ANGSt, visitor service and quality standards



Mile End Park, Tower Hamlets

Foreword

'Nature Nearby' is everyday nature, on our doorsteps.

It can take many forms. It might be a place designated for wildlife – a nature reserve, woodland or a country park. But in the majority of cases people's contact with nature takes place in local neighbourhoods – a village common, the local park, the scrap of land at the bottom of the street. And these places should be no less special than 'official' sites.

Everyone should be able to enjoy the thrill of the outdoors, feeling the seasons change, seeing the flowers bloom, hearing the birds sing. It conjures memories of forgotten childhood adventures, offers rare moments of tranquility and helps erase the stress of modern life.

We need nature nearby. We know that greener places are better places to live – more relaxing, more enjoyable to come home to after a hard day at school or work, kinder to our souls, and more likely to make us want to look after and protect them.

Evidence shows that nature's good for our health. Natural green places provide natural solutions to many 21st century diseases – obesity and inactivity; heart disease and strokes; depression and mental illness. In difficult times, they provide cost effective treatment and improve people's lives.

Green spaces are also our insurance policy against the impacts of climate change. Trees, green roofs and public parks can make urban areas cooler. They help reduce the impacts of flooding, keeping homes and businesses dry. That's carbon free air conditioning and natural flood protection for millions of people. Nature's technology makes good economic sense too.

Nearby Nature – good for people, good for wildlife, good for the environment.

That's why we want everyone to have Nature Nearby, on their doorsteps. We hope this guidance will help people come together to make it happen.

Guy Thompson

Executive Director

Scope and aims of the guidance

Welcome to Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance.

Natural England believes that everyone should have access to good quality natural greenspace near to where they live, ie. 'Nature Nearby'. This provides a broad range of benefits to people and the quality of their lives, covering all the ecosystem services we depend on.

This guidance is aimed at parks and greenspace practitioners and their partners, particularly decision makers, planners and managers of green space. It describes the amount, quality and visitor services of accessible natural green spaces that we believe everyone is entitled to, and provides advice on how they can be delivered.

Natural England's Standards for Accessible Natural Greenspace

Natural England expects that publicly accessible natural greenspace is delivered to meet:

- An **Accessibility and Quantity Standard** – to ensure equitable provision both close to home and within sustainable transport distances, ie. Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt);
- **Service Standards** – for core services and facilities for each site type; and
- A national **Quality Standard** – ie. the Green Flag Award scheme.



The guidance explains the way in which these standards can be used to deliver a wide range of benefits and be promoted amongst our partners.

Executive Summary

Natural England is proposing the adoption of three key standards by greenspace professionals that will deliver high quality and inspiring visitor experiences in green spaces close to where people live, and connect people with the natural environment. These are the:

1. Access to Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt).
2. Visitor Service Standards.
3. Greenspace Quality Standard.

1. Access to Natural Greenspace Standard – ANGSt

ANGSt was developed in the early 1990s and was based on research into minimum distances people would travel to the natural environment[1]. Natural England reviewed the standard in 2008[2] and concluded that the standard was still useful, but that further guidance was required to explain how the standard should be applied. This guidance covers that requirement.

ANGSt is a powerful tool in assessing current levels of accessible natural greenspace, and planning for better provision. It identifies those sites that might be considered natural sites, and areas within other green spaces that have a value for nature, and more importantly it identifies areas of nature deficiency where the standard is not met and where actions may be put in place to address this.

The three underlying principles of ANGSt are:

a) Improving access to green spaces.

b) Improving naturalness of green spaces.

c) Improving connectivity with green spaces.

Using these principles the standard can be applied for:

- protection, enhancement and management of existing green spaces;
- planning new spaces; and
- protecting vulnerable spaces

…. at the same time as delivering a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits.

Assessing current provision against ANGSt will help local authorities to identify where adequate provision is being made for natural green space, and where action needs to be taken to deliver appropriate levels of natural space close to people's homes.

---

[1] Accessible Natural Green Space Standards in Towns and Cities: A Review and Toolkit for their Implementation English Nature Research Report No 526

[2] Land Use Consultants 2008

Natural England is encouraging all local authorities to adopt ANGSt as their local standard because of the essential range of benefits to society that it can deliver:

- Some of these benefits will see a reduction in the cost of other infrastructure, such as land drainage, as green spaces fulfill these roles more effectively.
- Other benefits will see reductions in costs of social and health services, as a result of improvements to health and well-being.
- Conformity to ANGSt at the higher cross-boundary level will see benefits to biodiversity and the mitigation of adverse climate change effects.

Local authorities are now being asked to demonstrate evidence of the social benefits of investments. The benefits listed above can provide a framework for assessing the social value of investment in natural spaces.

2. Visitor Service Standards

Visitor Service Standards are outlined for three types of natural greenspace:

a) National Nature Reserves

b) Country Parks

c) Local Nature Reserves.

These have all been developed in partnership with managers of these sites, and are helping to secure their use and recognition by different and diverse audiences. They promote standards of provision that are equitable and raise the profile of these sites as centres of excellence for both nature conservation and recreation.

3. Greenspace Quality Standards

Natural England, as a sponsor of the Green Flag Award, continues to promote it as the national quality standard for all parks and green spaces. It is transforming the way sites are managed and the approach to service delivery across sites and in time will become as well recognised as the Blue Flag Award for beaches.

Definitions

In this document we use the following definitions:

Accessible greenspace – places that are available for the general public to use free of charge and without time restrictions (although some sites may be closed to the public overnight and there may be fees for parking a vehicle). The places are available to all, meaning that every reasonable effort is made to comply with the requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 1995). An accessible place will also be known to the target users, including potential users who live within the site catchment area.

Natural greenspace – Places where human control and activities are not intensive so that a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate. Natural and semi-natural greenspace exists as a distinct typology but also as discrete areas within the majority of other greenspace typologies. To simplify what we mean by natural when mapping natural greenspace we suggest the adoption of a proxy measure of land use categorisation under 4 levels (Annex 2).

Greenspace Quality – A recognised standard of excellence that meets the expectations of both the staff and users of a site and the wider community and neighbourhood. Such sites are visually stimulating and attractive, safe and welcoming to all sections of society, managed and maintained to the highest standards of sustainability, and provide an enjoyable and inspirational visitor experience. The Green Flag Award is the nationally accepted standard of greenspace quality supported by Natural England. Play England is also developing a play quality standard for play spaces.

Greenspace Visitor Service Standards – These cover a range of core facilities and services that visitors should expect to find at different types of park, reserve or other destination site. Natural England is promoting service standards for NNRs, LNRs and country parks.

Green Infrastructure – A strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. Designed and managed as a multi-functional resource capable of delivering those ecological services and quality-of-life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability. Its design and management should also respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area with regard to habitats and landscape types.

Multi-functionality – The ability to perform more than one function at the same time. In terms of greenspace this can mean providing opportunities for recreation whilst delivering biodiversity and contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

A glossary of acronyms used in the document is provided in Annex 1.

1. Introduction:

What is accessible natural greenspace?

Accessible greenspace, particularly in urban areas, is now becoming recognised as providing some of the fundamental needs of society, rather than just being 'nice to have'. Natural England's definition of greenspace is very broad and encompasses a wider range of spaces than those traditionally considered as either 'natural areas' or parks, gardens and playing fields. There are a number of published policy headings and aspirations for green spaces. These range from definitions based on landscape character and geological formations, to classifications based on use, agriculture, forestry, recreation etc. Within the statutory planning system, Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17 suggested a form of categorisation commonly used in assessing supply and demand of accessible green spaces, and is a good starting point for mapping what might considered to be natural greenspace.

Natural England expects that, *"People will have places to access and enjoy a high quality natural environment"*. This is often more achievable in urban communities than in rural communities, particularly in lowland agricultural England where there is often poor access to quality greenspace.

The provision of accessible greenspace within green infrastructure in and around urban areas significantly contributes to creating places where people want to live and work. The concept of green infrastructure is embodied in the Government's Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1, and it is an essential component of good planning for urban and rural areas, particularly in the face of climate change. *"Green Infrastructure enables us to re-position green space from an amenity to a necessity"*[3].

However, increased awareness of the importance of providing the right amount of accessible greenspace does not always go hand in hand with a full understanding of the range of benefits it can deliver, and how it can be promoted and delivered through existing policies and processes. This guidance will outline some of these processes, and demonstrate ways in which the acceptance of need for accessible natural greenspace can be translated into delivery.

Most green spaces provide some connection to nature, and it is creating this connection, within easy reach of where people live, that is the principle of 'Nature Nearby' that the standards, ANGST in particular, seeks to achieve. Deciding at which point a feeling of naturalness predominates may be difficult to determine, particularly in multi-functional spaces where there is often a mosaic of both formal and natural areas such as wetlands and woodlands, meadows and geological exposures. Standard audits of greenspace through GIS mapping may not pick up these differences within sites, so we are suggesting the adoption of a proxy measure for naturalness (Annex 2).

The strength of ANGSt is that it can be applied as a national benchmark against which local standards for providing accessible natural greenspace can be assessed, areas of deficiency identified and, where necessary, rectified. The Standard recognises that green spaces can deliver a range of benefits through intelligent design, location and management.

---

[3] Edward McMahon - http://www.sustainablecities.org.uk/news_and_updates/green_inspiration_from_america

1.1 The policy context

National and local policies that link to greenspace standards include:

- National indicators within local area agreements.
- Public service agreement (PSA) targets.
- Local sustainable community strategy targets.
- National planning policy statements (PPS).
- Local planning policies under each local authority's local development framework (LDF).
- Regional and local strategies.

Natural England's position is that:

> *"Natural England wants all people in England to have the opportunity to be inspired by the natural environment through outdoor activity, and especially to reach those who do not currently see it as relevant to their lives. This addresses the need for people to have places to access and enjoy a high quality natural environment."*

Natural England's position goes on to state:

> *"We believe that places where people can enjoy the natural environment should be improved and created where they are most wanted and needed: close to where people live; and where they want to visit."*

Local authorities, central government, health boards and bodies such as Natural England, are working together to deliver the environmental and community benefits defined by these policies and positions. This means engaging with the national policy context and delivering locally. For example, although each community strategy is determined locally, there are many common themes to them. ANGST, with its emphasis on providing accessible local green spaces, is a means of achieving some of the core themes such as PSA 28: *Secure a healthy natural environment for today and the future*. Others include PSA 12: *Improve the health and well-being of children and young people*, and PSA 18: *Promote better health and well-being for all*.

Appropriate levels of provision of green spaces can be central to delivering these broader environmental and social objectives. Setting local standards is a useful driver to meet the need for a network of accessible spaces connected by routes that enable visitors to choose low carbon, environmentally sustainable forms of transport to them.

The following diagram shows how the Quality, Service and ANGSt standards relate to the main regional and sub-regional strategies and to the planning framework.



A fuller account of national indicators, public service targets, strategies and planning documents is given in Annex 3 and Annex 4.

1.2 Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard

Access to the natural environment through local green spaces varies widely across the country, and even within a single local authority area. ANGSt aims to address this by setting a range of accessibility standards for natural sites and areas within easy reach of people's homes. A broad view is adopted on what constitutes 'natural'. Natural does not necessarily mean it has to be rare or notable enough to be designated. Users will find nature in wildlife, open landscapes, seasonal changes and places of tranquility.

ANGSt

ANGSt recommends that everyone, wherever they live, should have an accessible natural greenspace:

- of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home;
- at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home;
- one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and
- one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home; plus
- a minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population.

ANGSt is based on three principles:

a) Improving access.

b) Improving naturalness.

c) Improving connectivity.

a) Improving access

Improving access, and the distance thresholds used in the Standard, is based on what we know of people's behaviour. We know for example that the majority of parents are unwilling to allow their children to be unaccompanied more than 300m from home. Although local circumstances may lead to variations on this distance, adopting this as a standard would ensure that the majority of children do have a natural space near their home, which they are able to use freely. These distance requirements are set at a level that takes into account the need for local spaces, as well as larger strategic spaces. Because ANGSt takes a broad view of what constitutes natural greenspace, the requirements can be met through a wide range of different types of space, from local parks, greenways and footpaths, areas set aside for sustainable urban drainage systems, woodland and heathland. The 300 metre and 2 km standards are valuable standards to apply for new housing developments, growth areas, and in the master planning process. Natural England has piloted a number of projects that improve access to the natural environment and people's connection to it. Some site examples are provided in Annex 6.

Accessibility should not only be seen in terms of distance from people's houses and access into and within a site. People need to know where their local green spaces are, and should feel comfortable in using them. This requires active management and promotion by taking all

reasonable means to deal with any physical and social barriers that there may be to their use. Managers need to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 1995), which makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of his or her disability. It does not outline specific standards but requires that reasonable provision should be made. Public bodies should positively promote equality of access. This means that all those responsible for providing access to accessible greenspace and the wider countryside must justifiably consider provision for disabled people across a whole range of services including physical access, information, interpretation and signage.

Undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment will help to ensure that green spaces are planned to accommodate all potential users whatever their age, ability or cultural background and will help to identify any barriers to access, both physical and psychological.

b) Improving naturalness (and biodiversity)

Many locally accessible spaces, through their nature, layout and the way that they are managed, may not offer a very wide range of biodiversity. There are ways in which habitat improvement can be achieved in greenspace areas that are not rich in biodiversity. Opening culverts, naturalising streams, creating meadow areas on slopes, wild flower planting, and differential mowing around the edges of open spaces are just some of the improvements that can be made to improve biodiversity. Involving local people and schools in improving the wildlife value of open spaces will be important in making these areas richer and encouraging local ownership. It will also help to meet the Biodiversity Duty for Local Authorities (NERC Act, Section 40) and achieve National Indicator targets (NI197) for local sites. This is a duty placed on local authorities to establish systems, in partnership with others, incorporating biodiversity considerations into authority-wide services and functions. It requires that local authorities are able to demonstrate their achievements in this respect.

Further guidance can be found in *How to encourage biodiversity in Urban Parks* published by CABE Space and in the Town and Country Planning Association document: *Biodiversity by Design – a guide for Sustainable Communities*.

Equality of access – making an effort

With greenspace, it is not sufficient to take the approach of "build it and they will come". A site which offers increased accessibility will need to be known to the target users. This includes potential users who live within the site catchment area.

Positive effort needs to be made, particularly for larger, strategic sites, to raise awareness of the site and its offerings. This could be through a range of media, from local newspapers, notice boards, way-marking, information posts, and, increasingly, the internet. For large sites maps, directions and, if appropriate, public transport details should be produced. Thought needs to be given to making sure that information on the site is easy to understand for people who do not read or whose first language is not English. Also see By All Reasonable Means guidance

c) Improving connectivity

Providing a welcoming atmosphere to all visitors to accessible natural greenspace, from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, will provide opportunities for individuals and communities to engage and connect with their local environment. It can provide a focus for educational activity, community events and social activities. Engaging with the environment can be at a variety of levels.

Opportunities will depend on how spaces are designed and managed and on a range of active interventions, for example:

- Encouraging users to develop an affinity with a familiar area and enjoy the changes that the seasons bring.
- Through active interpretation.
- Providing information and opportunities to give feedback through social networking.
- Encouraging participation in events such as guided walks.
- Giving people the opportunity to volunteer and become involved in management decisions, maintenance and activities.

Engagement can lead to involvement and both can increase awareness and understanding of the natural environment.

Green spaces should be managed, where possible, for multi-functionality both within a site and across a number of sites serving a neighbourhood. Green spaces may, for example, provide opportunities to play, exercise, relax and enjoy being outdoors, alongside grazing land, shelter belts and bio-fuel production. Getting the balance right between these elements demands spaces of the right size, design and management regimes.

Natural England's position on access is based on the belief that:

- There should be provision of the widest range of access opportunities for people of all abilities, ages, ethnic groups and social circumstances to actively engage in, value and enjoy the natural environment.
- Access opportunities should aid healthy activity and be integral to people's daily lives particularly close to where they live.
- Access should contribute to achieving the transition to a low carbon economy by encouraging sustainable leisure use. Integrating people with landscape and wildlife is an essential outcome for all our work.

1.3 Visitor Service Standards

Natural England has developed visitor service standards for three distinct types of natural greenspace:

a) National Nature Reserves (particularly sites with high visitor numbers under our management).

b) Country Parks.

c) Local Nature Reserves.

These cover a range of core facilities and services that visitors should expect to find at each site type. It may be possible to adapt these to apply to other greenspace typologies.

a) National Nature Reserves (NNRs)

These service standards are based on a set of essential and desirable criteria around accessibility, facilities, links to the local community, links to the wider countryside, management, activities, and information and interpretation. They are particularly relevant for highly visited NNRs, but their application will depend on the characteristics of the NNR and its capacity for access to be effectively managed.

Natural England is currently testing their application at a number of their well visited sites and is happy to share them on request.

Further information on NNRs can be found at www.naturalengland.org

b) Country Parks Accreditation Scheme

Natural England launched this scheme in August 2009 to secure the brand name of Country Parks and explain the full range of facilities and services visitors can expect to find at a site that calls itself a country park. The presence or absence of facilities and services is considered but it does not go on to give a qualitative assessment of them (the Green Flag Award quality standard does the latter, but doesn't assess that all the core facilities and services exist at a site – which is

The first Accredited Country Park

Worcester Woods Country Park

One of the best country parks in England, this ticks all the right boxes. Securing funding from a range of sources has enabled Worcestershire County Council to establish Worcester Woods Country Park. As well as an opportunity for informal recreation and learning about the countryside, community involvement is continually being improved. The Park is a leading example of how the use of greenspace can improve the physical and mental well-being of all who visit it. Already a Green Flag Award winner, the Park became the first accredited country park under Natural England`s Country Parks Accreditation Scheme In October 2009.

A particular feature of activities in the park is the contribution they make in bringing people together in the process of improving their health. The Worcester Woods Health Walks Group is now established and meets weekly for 'invigorating and rejuvenating' walks around the Park. Links with the local hospital and the Worcestershire Mental Health Network has led to the creation of opportunities for people with mental health issues to get involved in conservation activities in the park which is helping them to gain confidence and learn new skills. In addition, an orienteering trail with associated games is targeted at children in particular as a means of learning about the countryside whilst engaging in healthy activity.

The visitor centre, cafe and three community meeting rooms have recently been refurbished and there has been a revamp of the information and interpretation at the visitor centre and on the site.

www.worcestershire.gov.uk

why country park managers are encouraged to apply for both schemes). The scheme uses a set of essential and desirable criteria; sites must demonstrate all 15 essential criteria and 10 desirable. Application for Country Parks Accreditation is free. The Scheme's criteria complement those for NNRs:

- area
- accessibility
- character
- facilities
- links to the local community and neighbourhoods
- links to the wider countryside
- management
- activities
- information and interpretation.

c) Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)

Natural England is currently revising the guidance on the declaration of LNRs, and will include recommended service standards for visitors which have been tested by LNR managers and users. LNRs provide access to the natural environment close to where people live and are often managed in close cooperation with local residents. There is a wide range in the quality of management of LNRs, but some key factors that help to make them visitor destinations, secure local ownership of a site and active volunteering include:

- An active local community/friends' group that supports the reserve.
- Junior management groups including WATCH groups.
- Ongoing support to volunteers from the local authority or responsible management authority (often a county Wildlife Trust) in training volunteers across a wide range of skills, eg. guided walks and play schemes, practical conservation tasks, visitor information and interpretation, publicity, fundraising, species and habitat monitoring, arts and culture projects.
- A visitor travel plan to secure sustainable access to the LNR.
- An access plan that considers the overall physical accessibility of the site for all users.
- A visitor and education access plan that considers the diversity of its local community and potential visitor audience.

1.4 Quality standard for greenspace

The Green Flag Award has become the nationally accepted quality standard for all types of greenspace. Quality criteria are applied to green spaces to ensure that they deliver to their potential. This not only provides visitors with an assurance of quality, but can also help to assess whether the right intensity of management is matched to site requirements. For example, areas of high population density could expect larger numbers of people to visit the site, and require higher levels of maintenance.

The Green Flag criteria can be used to set the overall quality standard for all parks and green spaces within an area, town, city or region. In summary these include:

A welcoming place – The overall impressions for any member of the community approaching and entering the park or green space should be positive and inviting, regardless of the purpose for which they are visiting.

Healthy, safe, and secure – The park or green space must be a healthy, safe and secure place for all members of the community to use. Relevant issues must be addressed in management plans and implemented on the ground. New issues that arise must be addressed promptly and appropriately.

Clean and well maintained – For aesthetic as well as health and safety reasons, issues of cleanliness and maintenance must be adequately addressed.

Sustainability – Methods used in maintaining the park or green space and its facilities should be environmentally sound, relying on best practices available according to current knowledge. Management should be aware of the range of techniques available to them, and demonstrate that informed choices have been made and are regularly reviewed.

Conservation and heritage – Particular attention should be paid to the conservation and appropriate management of natural features, flora and fauna, landscape features, and buildings and structural features.

Community involvement – Management should actively pursue the involvement of members of the community who represent as many park or greenspace user groups as possible.

Marketing – There should be a marketing strategy in place that promotes the usage of greenspace and natural areas, demonstrating the benefits and explaining how to get to the most significant areas. This will need to be regularly reviewed.

Management – A Green Flag Award application must have a management plan or strategy in place that reflects the aspirations of Local Agenda 21, and clearly and adequately addresses all the above criteria and any other relevant aspects of the park or green space's management. The plan must be actively implemented and regularly reviewed. Financially sound management of the park or green space must also be demonstrated.

In addition to the Green Flag Award, there is a separate award for community-managed green spaces – the Green Pennant Award.

A review of the Green Flag Award criteria is expected in 2010/11, including an update of the guidance manual. (The Green Flag Award guidance manual *Raising the Standard* is a comprehensive guide to the scheme, both for applicants and for the volunteer judges that underpin the running of the scheme).

Play England is currently developing a quality standard for play spaces. Quality in Play is a quality assurance scheme for out-of-school play and childcare provision to ensure quality play opportunities for children. The scheme was developed by playwork practitioners and is based on established playwork values. Many play providers already use Quality in Play to demonstrate good practice and the quality of their service to parents, communities and funders.



Outdoor learning and play – Park Hall Country Park, Stoke-on-Trent

2. Making the case for ANGSt in delivering Nature Nearby

Natural England, in revising its approach to implementing ANGSt, aims to gain better acceptance of the Standard. This approach to increasing accessibility, naturalness and connectivity was successfully trialed in several pilot areas across England and particularly in the London area. Sometimes called ANGSt Plus, this new framework for applying ANGSt aims to:

- Define accessibility and naturalness.
- Provide guidance on assessing quality, quantity, accessibility and connectivity.
- Provide guidance on mapping provision, population, accessibility and connectivity.
- Identify appropriate delivery tools and partners.
- Collect information on the role of accessible natural greenspace in improving quality of life and reducing negative impacts of climate change.

In considering the last point, accessible natural greenspace can be seen to provide a range of social, economic and environmental benefits:

- **Environmental appreciation** – with opportunities to learn about nature and to help protect it in practical ways.
- **Securing biodiversity** – naturally vegetated areas help to ensure that urban and rural areas continue to function ecologically.
- **Health** – with opportunities for activities to improve health through physical activity and play, eg. Green Gym, walking, jogging, cycling, playing, wild adventures, and social interaction.
- **Development** – children require the diverse and flexible environments that are provided by natural greenspace for play; this allows them to realise their brain potential creatively and emotionally, whilst developing muscle and co-ordination skills and finding an affinity for nature.
- **Well-being (health related)** – being in a natural environment outdoors can reduce stress and mild depression, and frequent exposure to the natural environment reduces the incidence of depression. This often seems to be the case if nature is nearby and easily accessible.
- **Quality of life** – as a motivator for many people who want more from their lives than is provided by job satisfaction or consumerism.
- **Recreation** – informal outdoor recreation includes a spectrum of activities such as walking, cycling, jogging, watching nature, natural play, events and relaxation. These provide many reasons for people to visit parks and open spaces, and therefore contribute to the other benefits relating to healthy lifestyle, well-being, and environmental appreciation.
- **National heritage** – plays an important part in helping to safeguard our landscape, wildlife and geological features in towns, cities and the countryside.
- **Community benefits** – local greenspace can be a unifying element for disparate communities. It is an important part of people's mental map of an area. A greenspace project is a non threatening way of bringing groups together or uniting people from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds.

- **Climate regulation** – green spaces are often some of the few areas of shade, of particular value to children and the elderly. They are vital in reducing the health impacts of increasing temperatures and sunlight in urban environments. They also contribute to sustainable urban drainage and water storage, particularly important as we increasingly experience extremes in our climate.
- **Pollution** – green spaces can provide a filter for airborne pollutants, or screen less desirable land uses.
- **Economy** – high quality greenspace is an important and widely recognised element in successful regeneration programmes, improving the desirability of an area and increasing property values. There are also many related opportunities such as locations for childcare, education, sport and social enterprise.



House clearance providing a temporary greenspace planted with meadow mix – Parson Cross, Sheffield

2.1 ANGSt and open space standards

ANGSt was developed in 1996 to demonstrate how size and distance criteria can help define the green spaces that provide the greatest contribution to a sustainable community. Because of its broad definition of what can constitute natural areas, it does not attempt to classify greenspace by established typologies. For these reasons it is very well suited to broad assessments of existing provision, as well as determining strategic requirements for provision of greenspace for major new developments. It is one of a number of provision standards for greenspace that are available for local authorities to adopt, and can be used in conjunction with other standards to give a strategic approach to greenspace provision, including, but extending beyond, spaces in the immediate area of people's homes.

A review of ANGSt in 2003 by Handley et al recognised that *"ANGSt should be integrated into a comprehensive approach to greenspace planning, and should be defined locally to account for varying circumstances, such as existing levels of provision and community demand for additional greenspace or for change in the balance of provision"*.

Local authorities have commonly used the results of a PPG 17 assessment of open space to set standards for different typologies of green spaces, as suggested by the companion guide to PPG 17. Again these are often based on an area per typology, per 1000 people. Distance thresholds are often included, with separate distances being established per typology. Most PPG 17 assessments are now published on Geographic Information Systems (GIS). These can show areas of under-provision of the different typologies of greenspace, and can overlay other data, such as areas of multiple deprivation, to show how greenspace provision relates to other social issues. (PPG 17 set out how local authorities should assess the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sport and recreation facilities. **NOTE:** PPG 17 is to be replaced in 2010. Two new Planning Policy Statements are out for public consultation at the time of writing, namely 'Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment' (replacement for PPS7, PPS9 and PPG17), and 'Planning for a Low Carbon Future in a Changing Climate'.)

Whichever approach is adopted, standards of greenspace are needed for determining current provision, identifying gaps, and identifying the need for green spaces of different types to meet local demand. This can either mean existing demand, or demand created by population changes or growth as a result of new developments. Standards will also be used to inform an authority's approach to developer contributions through Supplementary Planning Documents. These set out the level of space, or an alternative financial contribution, that developers must make to ensure that adequate provision is made for infrastructure, including open space. This is normally expressed as area per household, or area per person, generated by a new development. Although there can be attempts to take strategic provision into account, most standards used or developed by local authorities remain essentially local in their nature.

In defining ANGSt locally, other standards need to be considered, e.g.

- Six Acre Standard.
- Towards a Level Playing Field.
- Woodland Access Standards.

A brief resume of these is given below:

Six Acre Standard

A long-standing national standard, with which ANGSt can work, includes the former National Playing Fields Association's (now Fields in Trust) *Six Acre Standard*. This was originally developed in the 1930s as part of the garden city movement. In 2008, Fields in Trust (FIT) published *Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play* (PAD), the document which updates and supersedes the *Six Acre Standard*. PAD continues to uphold the original FIT recommendation that 6 acres (2.4 ha) of recreational space is required for every 1000 people, and also provides a detailed framework relating to quantity, quality and accessibility of outdoor facilities for sport and play and the importance of local assessments and standards.

Towards a Level Playing Field

Sport England has produced a detailed toolkit for calculating the number of playing fields needed in a given area. The toolkit enables demand to be calculated for football, rugby, cricket and hockey pitches. It uses actual population figures and numbers of sports teams from ward data. The tool can forecast future demand for pitches through an assessment of the number of teams generated per 1000 population in the local area. No distance thresholds are included, but it is possible to see which areas have sufficient pitches to meet local demand, and where there are shortfalls. Overall a high proportion of urban greenspace is dedicated to natural turf pitches, which are generally poor in bringing people close to nature. Making provision for sport through artificial turf pitches can assist in releasing these areas for more effective use. It needs to be remembered that the Sport England calculations of the number of pitches needed using this model do also impact on access to nature.

The Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standards

This is based on a similar principle of accessibility to the Natural England ANGSt:

- No person should live more than 500 metres from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2 hectares in size.
- There should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20 hectares within 4 kilometres (8 kilometre round-trip) of people's homes.

The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) has also produced a national allotment standard for a minimum provision of 20 standard plots of 250 square metres per 1,000 households.

2.2 ANGSt: its application and its strengths

How ANGSt can work – Achievability

In order to integrate ANGSt into the planning documents that set the requirements for green spaces, it is important to understand its strengths and limitations.

Achievability – ANGSt sets a high level of accessibility, particularly for the level of space to be provided within 300 m of people's homes. High aspirations can mean low levels of achievement, and local authorities do not wish to associate themselves with failure.

How it can work – ANGSt needs to be understood as a long term and geographically wide-ranging benchmark, against which progress can be made over time. Use ANGST to map not only the accessible natural greenspace already present but also the potential spaces that could be improved to meet the standard. Compliance with ANGSt might be expressed in percentage terms, rather than as a straight comply / failure to comply. Policies for open space provision need to be supportive of a move towards greater levels of compliance with the Standard. In this way, ANGSt can be seen as a positive, long term strategic aim.

In 2008 Land Use Consultants reviewed 16 green space strategies and 4 green infrastructure strategies from across the nine English regions. The review indicated that many local authorities are adapting ANGSt within their greenspace strategies into locally-derived distance standards, reflecting the approach promoted by PPG 17.

A survey of 20 planning obligation documents (which determined standards for green space provision), and 15 green infrastructure strategies, undertaken as part of this study in December 2009, found that:

- Out of 20 planning documents, 7 mentioned ANGSt, (35%) and 2 applied it as a standard for provision of green space (10%).
- Out of 15 Green Infrastructure Strategies, 9 mentioned ANGSt (60%) and 7 applied it (47%).
- Whilst some planning documents used locally developed standards, NFPA's Six Acre Standard was used by more than half of the documents.

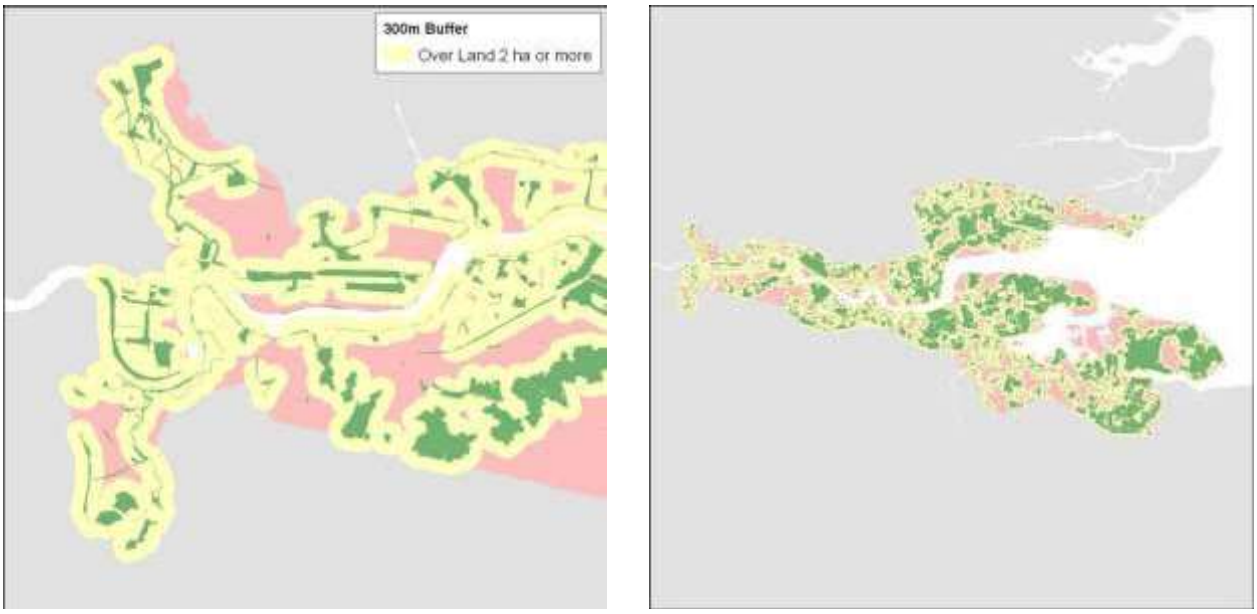
It is clear therefore, from this small sample, that ANGSt is much more widely used and understood in the concept of planning for green infrastructure, than in determining standards of greenspace provision through the development control planning system. Together these reviews confirm the need to reconsider ANGSt and how it should be interpreted to enable improved application at local level.

Using standards, like some of those above, based on a mix of population numbers and accessibility radii only, can result in the provision of disparate small spaces that serve little useful function. ANGSt is a model that can effectively provide an overarching guidance to determine where local spaces will be needed. It can ensure that spaces provided are of a sufficient size, and are close enough to people's homes to deliver the Nature Nearby concept.

If work has been undertaken on mapping green spaces as part of a PPG 17 assessment, this can be used to identify the number and distances of green spaces above 2 ha, above 20 ha, above 100 ha, and above 500 ha, and the hectarage of Local Nature Reserves per 1,000 head of

population. Because of the greater distances for the larger sites (up to 10 kilometres), mapping across local authority boundaries will normally be necessary. A good example of where this has been shown to work well is the Thames Gateway Green Grid.

Rough initial mapping of ANGSt in the Thames gateway. Areas in pink are outside the 300m buffer and signify areas of natural greenspace deficiency.



Mapping naturalness

The definition of natural space within ANGSt is *"places where human control and activities are not intensive so that a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate"*. Deciding at which point a feeling of naturalness predominates may be difficult to determine. It is often easier to recognise visually, but there is considerable room for interpretation.





The first stage to deliver more or better quality natural greenspace is to assess what is already there. To do this it is useful to overlay datasets on a Geographic Information System.

a) Map all accessible greenspace. It is helpful to use the Generalised Land Use Database which categorises green space as one of nine land use types (ref. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Generalised land use database statistics for England. London: ODPM Publications, 2005).

b) Identify which green spaces are accessible. Many local authorities have mapped PPG 17 open space, and this can be a useful starting point for identifying accessible greenspace. However the data set would need refining to remove the categories of land that are not green space (eg. civic areas such as market squares).

c) Assess which areas are natural using either survey or proxy measures, eg. land use categorisation as set out by Aleksandra Kazmierczak of Salford University (Annex 2). This should be refined to pick up on natural areas within more formal green spaces.

d) Map levels of population. It is helpful to use Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) which use post code areas to group populations of around 1,500 people.

Once this information has been compiled into a Geographical Information System it will be possible to see where accessible greenspace coincides with natural greenspace. The size of these areas can be calculated and grouped into: those under 2ha; 2 – 20 ha; 20 – 100 ha; and 100 – 500 ha. Buffer zones can then be added around the mapped areas of accessible natural greenspace at distances of 300 m, 2 km, 5 km and 10 km.

From the above it is clear that the best way to ensure that ANGSt is adopted as part of the overall planning requirements for greenspace is to work in partnership with the key players across local authority areas, and those involved in any new developments. This will include local authority departments including planners, health and educational teams, countryside/greenspace managers, and staff from any partnership companies that may have been formed and charged with overseeing major growth areas, eg. Ashford's Future (which developed the Green/Blue Grid). External organisations to bring on board might include:

- Greenspace and local access forums.
- Social landlords.
- Master planners, architects and developers, who will need to understand how to incorporate the requirements of ANGSt into their developments.
- Community volunteer groups, friends' groups, allotment associations and other local groups.
- Parish councils.
- Regional development agencies.
- Primary care trusts.
- Play scheme initiatives.
- Educational initiatives.
- Other government bodies such as Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Sport England, CABE Space, English Heritage and British Waterways.

How ANGSt can work – Applicability

Applicability – "The Standard only deals at one level with local spaces: the requirement to have a 2ha site within 300m of people's homes. It does not address the need to express quantities of different types of space in terms of population sizes. It also sets standards for the provision of strategic spaces that are often outside the remit of a single local authority to provide. It cannot therefore, provide for the full range of a local planning authority's needs."

How it can work – The ANGSt model works well when taken out of the local context, and brought into strategic planning for green infrastructure. The cross-boundary nature of regional and sub-regional GI strategies means that a broader overarching benchmark standard will be needed for strategic provision of green space. Principles of accessibility take priority over local compliance when considering developing opportunities for strategic, multi-functional spaces. ANGSt can provide the basis for a broad standard of provision better than any other available tool.

Natural England does recognise some of the challenges in meeting ANGSt, particularly in dense urban areas where there is little opportunity to create greenspace, and also in remote rural areas away from settlements. It is generally easier to meet the standards in smaller towns, the urban fringe, and in new developments. However, Local Authorities also need to consider how accessibility between rural populations and accessible greenspace can be achieved through linear access and sustainable transport routes. There is a growing recognition of the need to be more ambitious in the provision of greenspace, given the wide range of infrastructure needs that it can deliver. One of the established standards for eco-towns is to provide a minimum of 40% of the land area as green infrastructure, of which 50% should be publicly accessible greenspace. In this context ANGSt is very achievable, and it reflects a long-term aim to improve the level of natural greenspace in stages.

Applying ANGSt as a standard in master planning of growth areas and growth points is another way of raising the bar on greenspace provision. This must be done in conjunction with good design and as a means of meeting drainage and other infrastructure needs. In dense urban areas where the ANGSt criteria are not achievable in the foreseeable future, the emphasis will be on improving the quality, naturalness, usability and access of existing spaces. ANGSt is however a **minimum** recommended standard, and provision above this level should not be regarded as surplus.

ANGSt is a good starting point to ensure that sufficient greenspace is provided, but it is essential to ensure that spaces created in association with new development are designed to meet a wide range of functions. The CABE Space guide *Start with the Park* outlines the importance of designing buildings and other infrastructure around green spaces, with consideration being given to where these should be located in the context of local landscape character, and how they can contribute to the wider green infrastructure network.

How ANGSt can work – Affordability

Affordability – Many authorities, in considering the future provision of green spaces, take a traditional view of how these will be managed. They see additional provision, at the levels proposed under ANGSt, as unaffordable in terms of maintenance. They are therefore reluctant to sign up to standards that they perceive as potentially burdensome in the future.

How it can work – It is important to recognise that accessibility is not synonymous with public ownership. In considering ways of delivering the Standard, arrangements for future maintenance must be taken into account. Because of its broad approach, many of the strategic green spaces proposed under ANGSt lend themselves well to non-traditional maintenance arrangements and income earning opportunities. Community Interest Companies, trusts, partnership arrangements with the third sector, and joint infrastructure funding can all be considered as ways of funding the future management and maintenance of land provided to meet ANGSt aspirations.

How ANGSt can work – 'Additionality'

'Additionality' – The size criteria for sites under the ANGSt model can be seen as potentially additional to similar requirements for amenity open space. This can be seen as increasing the burden on developers and planners unreasonably.

How it can work – Integration of ANGSt into other standards is essential if it is to be accepted by developers and avoid difficulties that can arise when trying to interpret two potentially conflicting standards. ANGSt provides a strategic context for green space provision; other parts of an integrated standard can define in more detail how different typologies of green space can be provided.

As well as being a valuable tool for ensuring sufficient greenspace is provided from new developments, ANGSt can provide a strategic framework for identifying and protecting those brownfield sites that represent important habitats or valuable social spaces. It can be used to assess the physical and functional connectivity between existing sites at all levels and right across a town, city or sub-region, shaped by local character and distinctiveness in terms of species, habitats, landscape, geology and townscape.

ANGSt should be seen as a flexible tool which seeks to improve access to nature across the whole country, by application locally. To this end local policy makers should have some freedom to fit the model appropriately into the circumstances in which it must operate.

2.3 The wider community benefits of ANGSt

Protecting important habitats, landscapes and promoting biodiversity

ANGSt provides local opportunities to enjoy "Nature Nearby", but it is also unique in including standards specifically for natural spaces. These may be areas designated for their special landscape and/or biodiversity importance – National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Country Parks, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interests, ancient semi-natural woodland etc. Use of ANGSt will help to give priority to the protection of these areas as well as to local wildlife sites, and will provide opportunities to improve their integrity in order to enhance landscape character and protect and increase biodiversity. It will also assist in meeting NI197, which was introduced in order to ensure that biodiversity is valued, safeguarded and enhanced. It recognises that biodiversity benefits are highly dependent on local action because biodiversity is ultimately lost or conserved at the local level.

Using ANGSt to deliver strategic provision of accessible green spaces will provide opportunities to link fragmented habitats and landscape features to make them more viable; restore degraded sites and habitats; create new wildlife havens; and provide new spaces for recreation to reduce human impact on sensitive sites.

Conserving nature and the community

Ferry Meadows Country Park

Having clear strategic objectives founded on conserving the traditional landscape of the river valley, and developing and maintaining links with local community groups with shared interests, have helped the Nene Park Trust focus its resources to significant effect.

The Trust and the staff of Ferry Meadows have delivered many achievements in the park's twenty-one years of life. In the first five years over 400 different groups, including schools, youth organisations and local community groups, visited the park. In the summer of 2009 13 different groups held 27 events in the Park, helping bring even more visitors. This is clear evidence that the advice and support offered by the Trust to community groups to help run their own projects, in combination with quick responses to customer comments through its quarterly publication *Park Life*, has established Ferry Meadows Country Park as a key part of community life in the area.

By staying focused on conservation and engaging with the community, the benefits gained are easily measurable. They include improvements to facilities, infrastructure, and completion of the Willow Trail in and around the Park. The culmination of several years work to mark the significance of willow in the landscape and heritage of the area, this project has not only restored ancient willow pollards but is creating 70 new ones.

visitor.services@neneparktrust.org.uk

Health

There is increasing interest in how contact with the natural environment can improve health and well-being, with this contributing to seven of the Government's public service agreements.

The National Health Service is gradually shifting its emphasis from treatment and cure to prevention, because of the strong economic case, improved clinical outcomes for patients, and political pressure about conditions such as obesity and depression. Reducing our dependence on carbon will encourage more walking and cycling, leading to increased contact with the natural environment. Less traffic will also make the natural environment more appealing.

Green spaces for exercise

Carlisle Walks to Health

Carlisle's city green spaces have become a focus for green exercise, as the Council is encouraging everyone to improve their health by taking part in walking events as part of the city's Walking for Health programme. This initiative is about helping inactive people become active, and is supported by Natural England.

The Walking for Health programme runs throughout the year and is made up of organised walks in the city's parks, and also in and around the city itself. Good co-ordination has been the key to the success of the programme in Carlisle. In the eighteen months the co-ordinator has been in post there has been a growing demand for more walks, and also for more demanding ones. There is now a range of walks lasting from 30 minutes to 2.5 hours, each of which is risk assessed.

With the support of Natural England, the Council has also been successful in encouraging local GPs to link into the programme by referring inactive patients. Patients can also pick up Walking for Life programme leaflets in the surgery. www.carlisle.gov.uk

Older people

Staying active can reduce a person's biological age and enhance their quality-adjusted life expectancy. Elderly people who are inactive are more likely to suffer falls or other injuries. The life span of older people increases when they live near parks and tree-lined streets. Local access to greenspace increases levels of sustainable travel. For every 10% increase in greenspace there can be a reduction in community health complaints equivalent to a reduction of 5 years of age[4].

Without the benefit of accessible natural spaces these simple and cost effective outcomes cannot be realised. Adopting ANGSt helps to ensure that, through planning for greenspace, we are planning for healthy lifestyles.

Nature Nearby can provide a major health resource to help prevent obesity and rising levels of 21st century diseases such as diabetes and depression. Our Natural Health Service wants to ensure that everyone in the country has good access to greenspace and that our health services make more effective use of it to benefit the health of our people and communities.

[4] The importance of Greenspace in sustaining Good Health, Dr William Bird, Natural Fit (2004)

There are two key aims for the Natural Health Service

1. To increase the number of households that are within five minutes walk of an area of green space of at least two hectares.
2. To enable every GP or community nurse to be able to signpost patients to an approved health walk or outdoor activity programme.

Conservation and exercise are winning

Linford Woods

There's no sitting back and watching the world go by in Linford Wood! The Parks Trust, responsible for managing the wood, has introduced a Trim Track to encourage the people of Milton Keynes to get moving. Although only half a mile away from the bustle of Milton Keynes city centre, Linford Wood provides an accessible, peaceful haven for anyone who feels like exercising in a parkland setting. But this has only been achieved because of the Park Trust's focus on actively managing the wood to enhance its value for active recreation as well as wildlife conservation.

Lindford Wood is a great example of balancing the development of exercise spaces whilst conserving ancient woodland. The Parks Trust has thinned the wood to let in more light, whilst wide rides have been cut to accommodate the surfaced footpaths and woodchip riding trail. Other traditional methods of conservation have also been re-introduced. info@theparktrust.com

Communities

The participation of friends and other community groups in managing green spaces can highlight the value of greenspace to the community, allow a degree of self-determination in the community, and bring a sense of identity to an area. Activities based in or around green spaces bring people together with a sense of common purpose, and help to cement contacts between different generations.

A community at work and play

Loris Road Community Garden

Hammersmith Community Garden Association has been managing the site since 1984. Established as a local environmental charity, it is managed by a group of trustees, all of whom are local residents. Such has been the Association's success that it now manages two other sites. The Association currently employs a manager, garden manager and two school gardeners, and is also supported by other casual staff who work to deliver environmental projects in Hammersmith.

Activities at Loris Road are very much family affairs. Children's activities include arts projects as well as gardening activities. With the help of the Big Lottery Fund's Local Food Scheme, the Get Growing initiative was launched in October 2009. The Get Growing co-ordinator is now working with children, parent and toddler groups to grow their own fruit and vegetables. Mums are particularly interested in the activities that show them how to make lotions and potions from natural ingredients, while family play schemes are helping build relationships in the community.

www.hcga.org.uk

Food production

Food has the potential to play a pivotal role in the creation of communities and their long-term sustainability. Working towards meeting the ANGSt criteria can provide an opportunity to showcase the 're-localisation' of sustainable food production and consumption.

Well structured provision of accessible green spaces can create opportunities to forge supply links between residents, local food producers, processors and distributors; and they can ensure that everyone has access to an allotment, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) or other community space to grow some of their own food. As well as horticulture and cereals, local animal production will also be important in integrating the management of accessible natural spaces (for example grazing with sheep and cattle) with local food production. A focus on local food production can foster a healthy, cohesive community by helping to supply residents with their five-a-day requirement of fruit and vegetables. It can support local retailers, growers and producers, and so help to strengthen the local economy and provide a rich and vibrant food culture that promotes community cohesion.

A community garden delivering the good life

Incredible Edible Todmorden

The people of Todmorden in West Yorkshire are finding new ways to engage with the public green spaces in their town. A community-led initiative is encouraging people to 'grow your own' in a move that is not only transforming public green spaces, but also changing the way local people engage with food. The market town is aiming to be self-sufficient in vegetables, orchard fruits and eggs by 2018, thereby reducing its carbon footprint by sourcing food locally. The response to the challenges of climate change has been amazing. Everyone is involved – businesses, schools, farmers and the community are all getting their hands dirty and vegetables and fruit are quite literally springing up everywhere. It seems everyone wants a bit of the 'good life' experience!

www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk

Education and outdoor learning

Green spaces have long been recognised as having potential for education and outdoor learning, not just as places where youngsters can learn about the environment, but as outdoor classrooms delivering a full range of curricular needs. The use of ANGSt to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of local accessible green spaces can ensure that such opportunities are available to all communities. Research shows that children retain more information if they have been taught outside, and in Denmark there is a network of outside learning spaces integrated into the schools system. Utilising green spaces for learning is yet another way of making the case for accessible greenspace.

Natural England's *One Million Children Outdoors* programme aims to encourage more children to visit places such as nature reserves and environmentally friendly farms. It aims to introduce a million children to the natural world over the next three years. In its first year, the programme aims to:

- Double the number of farm visits by school-aged children to 100,000, funded through green farming schemes

- Double the number of children participating in educational visits on National Nature Reserves to 60,000
- Launch a new interactive website for children and families designed around a wildlife gardening accreditation scheme
- Deliver an innovative, nationwide Undersea Landscape Campaign promoting marine conservation to 50,000 children
- Support projects funded through the £23 million Access to Nature grant scheme that aim to connect children, particularly from deprived urban communities, with the natural world.

Putting fun back into education

Avon Heath Country Park

The Park Rangers at Avon Heath Country Park in Dorset are pulling the stops out to make learning really fun for children – even maths! They have developed a programme of activities designed around the National Curriculum which can be adapted for other groups if needed. 'Woodland Maths' and 'Fun with English' are just two of the activities that combine learning about nature with some of the more traditional subjects. The programme has been so successful that the Institute of Commercial Management (ICM) has stepped in to sponsor an exciting new project, designed to enable children to capture the site's unique features in the form of wooden sculptures. It looks as though this project will carve out even more success for the Park!

dorsetcountryside@dorsetcc.gov.uk



Photo courtesy of Timberplay

Housing and growth

Natural England's position is that:

- Necessary housing growth should be accommodated with minimum impact on the natural environment, and should deliver maximum benefits for the natural environment and people together
- The most environmentally sustainable locations should be found for new housing development
- An assessment of environmental capacity should be central to decisions on future development
- The environmental quality of all new housing development should be substantially improved

The provision of green infrastructure should be an integral part of the creation of sustainable communities throughout England.

The quality of much new housing is mediocre and needs to be substantially improved, both in terms of design quality and resource efficiency. The provision of accessible, multi-functional green spaces as an integral part of all new development can considerably enhance the quality of development, and deliver a wide range of benefits for people and the natural environment.

A new Vision for Torbay

Paignton is the 'Garden City'

As part of the New English Riviera Approach for Torbay, Paignton has been designated as the 'Garden City' for the Bay. Paignton was originally a Victorian designed town based on a grid, which the Vision looks to repair and strengthen by creating a strong framework of beautiful gardens and squares. Links with the centre, the sea and the harbour will be strengthened, and inland high quality developments within a strong green setting will create a wonderful place for people to live, work and play.

www.torbay.gov.uk

Economic benefits

Natural England's report *No Charge? Valuing the Natural Environment, 2009*, shows that investment in the natural environment is critical to long-term economic prosperity, and that natural services provide a highly cost-effective solution to growing problems like flood and coastal defence, carbon emissions, and the preservation of soil, water and air quality.

This document pulls together leading research to show that the economic value of nature now runs to billions of pounds in the UK alone, and that there are major savings to be made through looking after it.

For example, investment in schemes to deliver environmental benefits through farming reduces greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture by some 11%, delivering carbon savings estimated to be worth approximately £180m per year. With agriculture currently accounting for nearly 7% of England's total greenhouse gas emissions, the reductions are highly significant.

In the same way, improved management of lowland peat soils would help address an annual loss of carbon estimated to be worth as much as £150 million.

Regeneration in East London

Thames Chase Community Forest

Thames Chase, one of twelve community forests in the UK, is a wonderful example of how people and agencies from public, private and voluntary sectors can work together to manage and develop something truly special. This partnership project is working to achieve the goal of regenerating the land at the edge of East London and South Essex. The Thames Chase Partnership (made up of the five local council partners, the Confederation of British Industry, Country Landowners Association, Forestry Commission and the National Farmers) has ensured there are plenty of opportunities for people to get involved in all aspects of the woodland.

The trees, woodlands and green spaces of Thames Chase Community Forest have brought people together who continue to work in partnership to the benefit of the environment and of their local community. Their efforts have created almost two square miles of new woodland, and almost fifty-six miles of new or upgraded paths.

Tel: 01708 641880

ANGSt and climate change

Accessible natural greenspace has a role in reducing the predicted negative impacts of climate change on people within urban environments. The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution report on the urban environment identifies urban areas as especially vulnerable to climate risk, eg. areas of London where the elderly are at increased risk during heat waves. Accessible greenspace can provide an important respite from the highest temperatures. Adequate levels of green spaces are vital in urban areas to mitigate the effects of climate change. They provide an opportunity to conserve habitats and species as well as important reference sites for monitoring change. They play an important part in the natural processes, referred to as "ecosystem services" that maintain air, soil, and water quality, that reduce the effects of flooding and pollution, and provide cooling and amelioration effects in urban areas. Allocations of green space in urban areas will help alleviate flooding by providing storage areas at times of flood or heavy rainfall.

Green links provide opportunities to increase the use of sustainable transport, thereby reducing road congestion, air pollution, and CO_2 levels, and therefore climate change. The use of sustainable transport such as cycling will also be beneficial for people's health and well-being.

Adaptation Strategies for Climate Change in the Urban Environment (ASCCUE) has identified four roles of greenspace in adapting to climate change:

- Flood water retention
- High infiltration capacity
- Evaporative cooling
- Shading by tree canopy.

Applying ANGSt can ensure areas where shade and cooler conditions will be created, in anticipation of hotter summers resulting from predicted climate change impacts. Trees and woodlands will also provide shelter to ameliorate increasingly stormy conditions, and give opportunities for renewable energy generation.



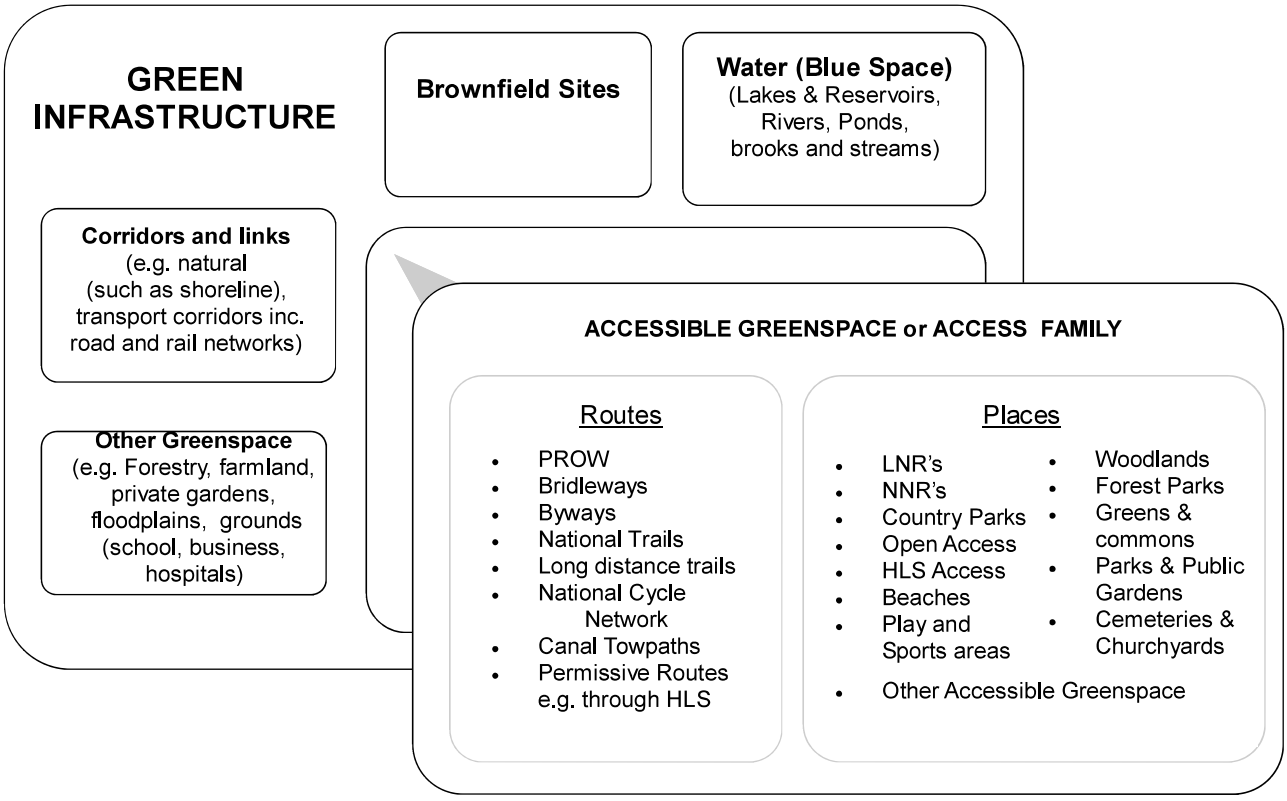
A shady avenue, Clifton Park, Rotherham

2.4 ANGSt within wider green infrastructure

The definition of green infrastructure, approved by the Natural England Board, is:

> *"A strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features, designed and managed as a multi-functional resource, capable of delivering those ecological services and quality of life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability. Its design and management should also respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area with regard to habitats and landscape types."*

There is a clear distinction between open/green *space* strategies, and green *infrastructure* strategies, although sometimes these distinctions can appear subtle. All green spaces can form part of green infrastructure networks, but the scope of open/green space strategies and green infrastructure strategies are quite different. Open/green space strategies work within the typology of recreational, amenity and public open spaces that was identified by PPG 17: *Planning for open space, sport and recreation* (2002). They evaluate publicly accessible open space provision within these typologies at the local authority scale, noting issues in relation to condition, quality and access, often to inform a strategy and action plan that sets out future management and regeneration policies. They form a complementary strategy to rights of way improvement plans. Open Space Strategy Guidance is provided by CABE Space.



Green infrastructure strategies go beyond the site-specific, considering also the 'big picture' of landscape context, hinterland and setting, as well as strategic links of sub-regional scale and beyond. Green infrastructure considers private as well as public assets and provides a multi-functional, connected network delivering ecosystem services. See our Strategy Guidance.

ANGSt is of particular relevance to green infrastructure planning and is being used widely and to good effect in establishing benchmarks for accessible green spaces.

Peterborough Green Infrastructure Strategy

In building Peterborough's Green Grid Strategy, the following GIS analysis was undertaken against 8 **Accessible Green Space Applications**, derived in part from the ANGSt model:

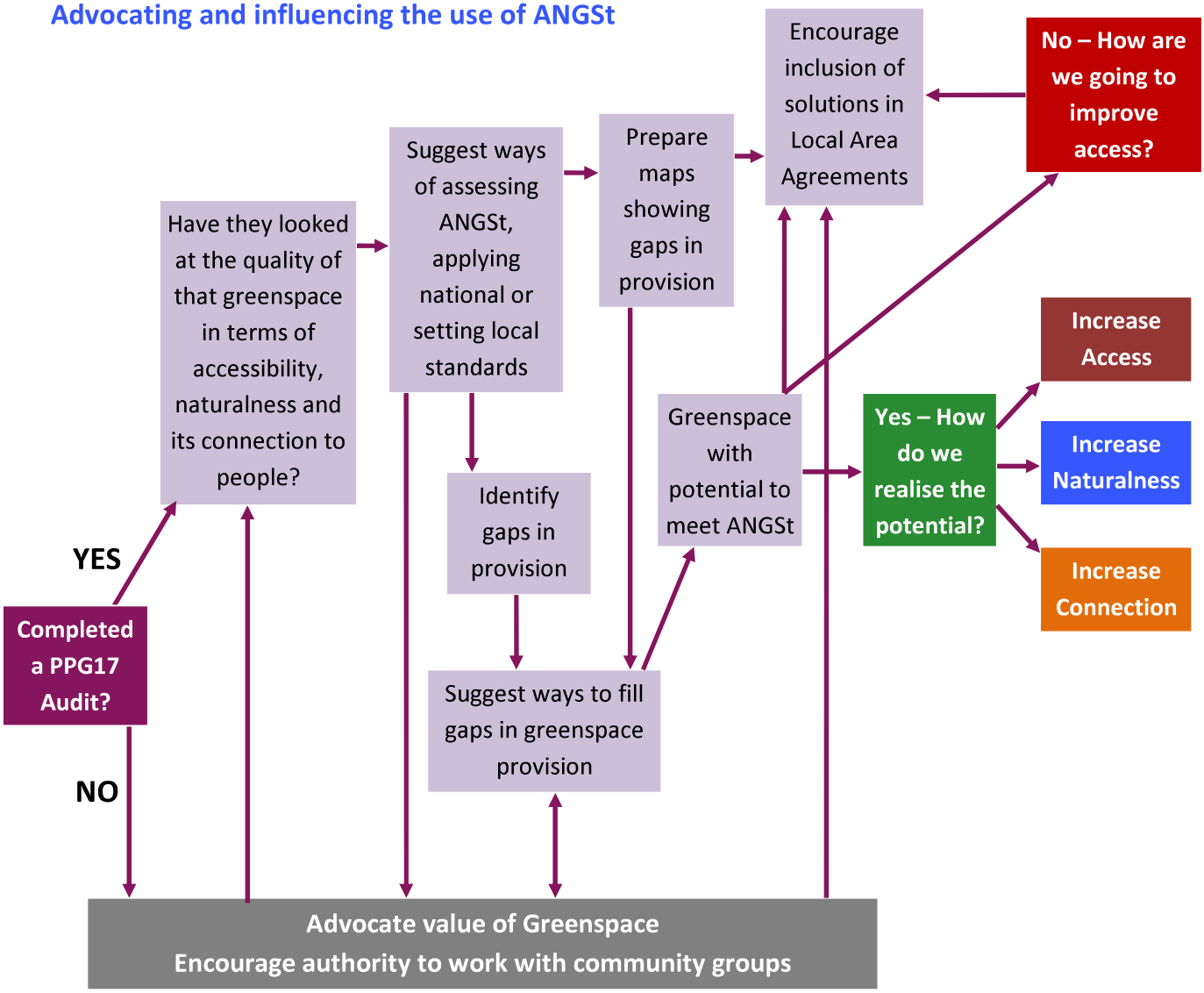
1. City-scale open space: to indicate the catchment areas at 5km from the identified existing green infrastructure sites in excess of 100 ha.
2. District-scale provision: to indicate the catchment areas of 2km from all identified green infrastructure sites in excess of 20 ha.
3. Neighbourhood-scale provision: to indicate the catchment areas of 300m from all identified green infrastructure sites in excess of 2ha.
4. Country Park provision: to indicate the catchment areas of 5250m straight-line distance from all identified Country Park sites, as identified in the Atkins *Peterborough Open Space Strategy*.
5. Neighbourhood Park provision: to indicate the catchment areas of 560m straight-line distance from all identified Neighbourhood Park sites, as identified in the Atkins *Peterborough Open Space Strategy*.
6. Quantity of green infrastructure: population based on the population figures from Peterborough City Council for all wards (both rural and urban) within the authority to assess the existing provision of areas of accessible green infrastructure for the 2004 population. There is no size threshold in this application and it therefore applies to all areas of accessible open space.
7. Analysis of heritage and culture: to identify accessibility to, and the potential visual influence of, important heritage and cultural features. To indicate a 1km buffer of Registered Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas.
8. Analysis of linear corridors: to identify accessibility to the strategic ROW network using the following categories of facility:
   - Published Strategic Routes
   - Sustrans Routes and the Green Wheel cycle network
   - Footpaths, bridleways and permissive routes.

Establishing standards for accessible greenspace is especially relevant to the housing and economic growth agendas (particularly the Growth Areas and Growth Points) and to the regeneration of urban areas. Here green spaces will provide opportunities for development to go hand-in-hand with the protection and enhancement of existing environmental assets, and the creation of new ones.

Taking the ANGSt approach puts the environment right at the centre of the planning process, and can produce a strategic and linked, multi-functional network of spaces with benefits for people and wildlife. It underpins the sustainability of a town or city, including making it resilient to the effects of climate change, and enables local authorities to meet their duty to conserve biodiversity under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006.

2.5 ANGSt and other agendas

Advocating and influencing the use of ANGSt



A strategy for generating political support for a good accessible greenspace network needs to be based on the wider benefits that green spaces can bring to the community. This can evolve from the leverage power of the health agenda, local area agreements, rights of way improvement plans, greenspace and green infrastructure strategies etc. Policy hooks for accessible greenspace will include the delivery of ecosystem services, health services, education, cultural services, and reducing crime and disorder.

This evidence base will demonstrate the social and economic needs and benefits of the designation of land for health, leisure and physical activity. It will explain how they need to be sufficiently robust to be used as part of the planning rational for this type of use, against other, more commercially attractive alternatives. Examples of elements to be addressed will include:

- Identifying common agendas with the authority and with external bodies; mechanisms for delivery of shared agendas through the green infrastructure. Shared agendas will include health, community safety, environmental management, housing growth, economic prosperity, education, recreation, tourism, and children's play.
- Examination of current partnerships; identification of potential partners; developing better mechanisms for working together and influencing in key policy areas. Recommendations for engagement with community groups, particularly how the Strategy will address issues of community empowerment through asset transfer in accordance with the *Communities in Control* White Paper, and the role of Community Land Trusts in green infrastructure delivery.
- Developing and promoting the use of green infrastructure for all suitable forms of creative entertainment, and events that provide an alternative access to learning and entertainment, and facilities for physical and informal recreation and play for all ages.
- Promoting community involvement, particularly through existing partners and developing a framework of user groups to recognise the community who will use these spaces. The form of partnerships at local, sub-regional and regional levels that will champion multi-agency problem solving to address the identified issues within green spaces and wider social aspects.

The **Sustainable Community Strategy** (SCS) is the overarching strategy for promoting and improving the well-being of a local area, and provides the vision to inform the spatial planning process (including the Local Development Framework). It is therefore imperative that standards for the provision of green spaces are incorporated in the SCS. The standard community consultation regularly undertaken by local authorities may not identify green infrastructure as a priority. Lead officers within the local authority and other stakeholders should therefore actively engage with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to ensure that the importance of adopting standards for accessible green spaces is understood.

Local area agreements (LAAs) set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and a local area (represented by the LSP). These priorities are translated into a set of LAA targets. LSP partners choose indicators that will best help achieve the agreed priorities, and set targets for each indicator, for each year of the LAA's three-year time frame. The current round ends in March 2011.

LAAs contain designated and non-designated targets. Designated targets are selected from the set of 199 National Indicators, and there is scope for local authorities to link accessible green spaces to a variety of these (for example those related to health, climate change, flood risk management and improved local biodiversity). Non-designated targets, also called local targets, are chosen by LSP partners to achieve priorities considered not to be addressed by the National Indicator set. These can be more directly linked to the benefits that local and strategic green spaces can deliver.

There are many opportunities to engage other partners in the benefits that adopting ANGSt will bring. For example, providing cycle routes within green links could help to meet objectives within a local transport strategy for more sustainable travel, and objectives within a local health strategy to increase the amount of exercise taken by local people. This further highlights the importance of ensuring that the need for accessible spaces that provide opportunities to enjoy 'Nature Nearby' are embedded in the SCS as well as in the Local Development Framework (LDF), and that they are reflected in LAA targets.

Social return on investment

Local authorities need to be able to put a meaningful value on accessible greenspace. They need to demonstrate to their members and to the electorate that green spaces add value to their area, more so than many other areas of service provision. SROI can be used to provide a range of quantitative measures that place definable values on activities previously accepted as 'good for our quality of life'. For instance, carbon reduction within a local authority area can now be given a cash value. Especially significant is the ability of SROI to calculate the true value of volunteering, and of the health benefits derived from access to greenspace. SROI may offer a medium to long term approach to ensuring ANGSt is adopted (and sustainably funded) as a national standard.



Trees in close up, Westonbirt Arboretum

3. Accessible greenspace and spatial planning

3.1 The Spatial Planning System and accessible greenspace

Planning Policy Statement 12 defines green infrastructure as "a network of multi-functional greenspace, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities". It goes on to state that the local planning authority's core strategy should be supported by evidence of what physical, social and green infrastructure is needed to enable the amount of development proposed for the area, taking account of its type and distribution.

The standards set out under ANGSt can provide a national set of criteria, against which these local standards of provision for greenspace can be set. Planning policies likely to arise from such documents will include:

- Application of standards of provision by typology in the spatial planning context
- Green infrastructure provision in the urban extension areas
- Application of standards of provision in the context of developer contributions
- Design guidance on provision by outcomes, biodiversity, climate change, health opportunities, crime reduction, flood alleviation, climate change mitigation, ecosystem services, social development, and community cohesion.



SUDs scheme providing natural greenspace - Upton urban extension, Northampton

In planning terms, green infrastructure includes established green spaces and new sites, and should thread through and surround the built environment and connect the urban area to its wider rural hinterland. Consequently, it needs to be delivered at all spatial scales, accommodating both accessible natural green spaces within local communities and often much larger sites in the urban fringe and wider countryside. Delivering the requirements of green infrastructure is only part of the story; unless a sufficient quantity of greenspace is accessible to the public, the needs of local people will not be met.

Thames Chase Community Forest www.designforlondon.gov.uk/uploads/media/ELGGarea3.pdf

This important distinction, between overall provision of green areas and provision of publicly accessible space that is connected, and which delivers "naturalness", can be illustrated through the use of ANGSt.

For significant sites of accessible natural greenspace, provided under ANGSt as part of a wider planning process, Natural England recommends that concept statements are prepared. These are written either by local authorities or by developers, prior to submitting a planning application. They are effectively development briefs for sites, and can distil the high level green infrastructure principles in a green infrastructure strategy to influence site planning and design.

ANGSt can be used to demonstrate to planners a means of:

- Securing sufficient accessibility and quantity of natural greenspace
- Improving the quality of people's experiences in visiting any greenspace, and
- Delivering the benefits of a 'Natural Health Service' close to home, and Natural England's 'One Million Children Outdoors' programme.

Concept Statements can be valuable in setting a framework for high quality development that fits with the green infrastructure approach. They can also be used as a basis for Design and Access Statements, which explain the design intention and concepts of application schemes. These statements can make it clear that the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards for provision of on- and off-site open space will be applied to the development.

4. Delivering accessible greenspace

4.1 Securing funding streams through partnership

This can be done through planning obligations, planning conditions and strategic infrastructure tariffs, but councils must also recognise that much more can be achieved by working together on greenspace issues with neighbouring areas. Existing regional partnerships provide clear governance structures for sub-regional working, and cross-boundary greenspace working should follow this approach. By working together and pooling resources and expertise, partners are in a stronger position to obtain greater commitment and investment from government, helping them to deliver the major greenspace improvements that the area needs. The remit of such bodies will include:

- Securing alternative funding streams through multi-agency working, attracting inward investment; continued use of the planning process to make effective contributions to maintain and develop parks and greenspace; a targeted bidding process for government/ agency funding; landfill tax credits funding and commercial income.
- Developing new and innovative ways to manage greenspace including the potential of new and existing trusts and partnerships options. To expand, where feasible, established successful models such as countryside management, regeneration partnerships and friends' groups, and expand new initiatives such as an urban forestry programme where practical.

Delivering accessible green spaces at a sub-regional level

South East Dorset

Six local authorities in South East Dorset have recently come together to address issues relating to RSS growth figures and the requirement for developer contributions towards accessible greenspace. The key to this is the development of a standard for green infrastructure. Following on from this will be how to deliver on this standard, including opportunities for funding.

Infilling will be a major contribution to new growth and generally there has been, and will continue to be, decreasing private space, which will require a corresponding increase in publicly accessible open space. There is also a need to increase the capacity of existing public open space. Proposed urban extensions will require planned green infrastructure within each extension. There may also be a range of measures needed to reduce pressure on heathlands. The provision of new accessible green spaces will be very important to ensure that these help to reduce pressure on heathlands.

As well as public sector partners, many local and national organisations have an interest in biodiversity and geological conservation, and the GI partnership approach needs to draw upon these established partnerships. Councils will provide leadership in establishing and maintaining partnerships and systems to identify and manage green infrastructure. Partners might include representatives from the voluntary and community sector, such as Wildlife Trusts, who are actively involved in the area, or statutory agencies and bodies, such as Natural England, Environment Agency and Forestry Commission, which can provide information and expertise and have an important role in practical input to greenspace delivery and development. Landowners, both private and public, can contribute significantly to the partnership, and their

engagement has been mapped through environmental stewardship schemes, access agreements etc.

Partnerships aimed at delivering accessible green spaces can also provide a framework for establishing and administering a Local Sites system to meet the requirements of NI 197. Councils will need to work with a Local Sites Partnership to report on this indicator, and this could be a function of any proposed delivery partnership. Information relating to the positive management of all Local Sites selected will be 'owned' by the Partnership, and will be managed by one of the partners such as the local council, Wildlife Trusts, National Trust, Forestry Commission RSPB (as in the case of Basildon) or private landowners.

The nature of the management activity appropriate to interest features of a site will commonly be defined within one, or more of the following:

- A site management plan.
- Management schemes – agri-environment or conservation management agreement or scheme.
- A relevant Biodiversity Action Plan (including habitat action plan, species action plan or local biodiversity action plan).

Sustainability through partnership

Wat Tyler Country Park

Through the collaborative efforts of Basildon Council, supported by 10 key partners, Wat Tyler Country Park has been developed as an example of how sustainable technology can be used to bring new and exciting opportunities for the local community to learn about the natural environment. Several refurbished buildings are now carbon neutral and are part of an exciting development delivering new opportunities for education and learning. This programme of restoration, landscaping and interpretation is transforming Wat Tyler Country Park into one of the most popular and dynamic visitor attractions in the Thames Gateway.

info@wattylercountrypark.org.uk

The role of partnerships in delivering accessible green spaces might include:

- To actively promote and support site management.
- Co-ordinate funding provision and/or identify and promote the taking up of funding opportunities.
- Promote educational use of green spaces where appropriate.
- Establish a process for monitoring the condition of important sites.
- Promote the role and importance of green spaces at a strategic level (for example in delivering BAP targets, targeting of agri-environmental schemes).
- Promote the enhancement of sites through buffering and increasing connectivity.

Conclusion

The Concept of Nature Nearby is one of providing inspiring green spaces with high quality access to the natural environment. This can be achieved through the application of the three Natural England standards:

a) An **Accessibility and Quantity Standard** – to ensure equitable provision both close to home and within sustainable transport distances, ie. Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt)

b) **Service Standards** – for core services and facilities for each site type, and

c) A national **Quality Standard** – ie. the Green Flag Award scheme.

ANGSt, as a quality and accessibility standard, is a powerful tool in assessing current levels of accessible natural greenspace, and planning for better provision.

ANGSt is all about:

- Improving access to green spaces.
- Improving naturalness of green spaces.
- Improving connectivity with green spaces.

Using these principles ANGSt can be applied to:

- protection, enhancement and management of existing green spaces;
- planning new spaces; and
- protecting vulnerable spaces.

Adopting ANGSt will help local authorities to demonstrate whether they have enough natural green space, and where action needs to be taken to deliver more natural space close to people's homes.

ANGSt is already being used in strategic planning and in green infrastructure planning. It combines a robust standard of greenspace provision with the principles of maximising the value of accessible greenspace, and demonstrates social return on investment (SROI) from green spaces.

The range of environmental, social, health and economic benefits that adequate provision of green spaces can bring is being increasingly widely recognised and accepted. Local authorities need to demonstrate how they can meet their Sustainable Community Strategy objectives. Nearly all of these objectives can be delivered through green spaces, and making the case for green spaces, using ANGSt as a nationally accepted standard, is vital in delivering national benefits locally.

Annex 1

Glossary of acronyms

ALSF	Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund
ANGSt	Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard
CABE	Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DPD	Development Plan Documents
EWGS	England Woodland Grant Scheme
ELS	Entry Level Scheme
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
FIT	Fields In Trust
GI	Green Infrastructure
GIS	Geographic Information System
GLA	Greater London Authority
HLS	Higher Level Scheme (this a funding programme for agricultural support for environmental objectives)
ICM	Institute of Commercial Management
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LDF	Local Development Framework
LSOA	Lower Super Output Areas
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
MAA	Multi-Area Agreement
NHS	National Health Service
NSALG	National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners
NERC Act	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act
NI	National Indicator
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPFA	National Playing Fields Association
PAD	Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play

PPS7	Planning Policy Statement Note 7 *Planning for sustainable development in rural areas*
PPS9	Planning Policy Statement Note 9 *Planning for biodiversity and geological conservation*
PPG 17	Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 *Planning for open space, sport and recreation*
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
PSA	Public Service Agreement
PROW	Public Rights of Way
RIGS	Regionally Important Geological Sites
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
SANGS	Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy
SINC	Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
SNCI	Sites of Nature Conservation Interest
SPD	Supplementary Plan Document
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest



Park Hall Country Park, Stoke on Trent taking part in 'One Million Children Outdoors'

Annex 2

A proxy measure when mapping naturalness

The definition of natural space within ANGSt is *"places where human control and activities are not intensive so that a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate"*. When using this definition, actually deciding at which point a feeling of naturalness predominates may be difficult to determine, and it can be argued that there is considerable room for interpretation. Therefore, in practice some form of proxy for a feeling of naturalness will be necessary, particularly where GIS is used for identifying accessible natural greenspace. Recent research by Aleksandra Kazmierczak of Salford University has used land use categorisation as a proxy measure for naturalness, creating a four stage rating. All land should be mapped to indicate its naturalness using the four levels below:

Level 1

- Nature conservation areas, including SSSIs
- Local sites (including local wildlife sites, RIGs)
- LNRs
- NNRs
- Woodland
- Remnant countryside (within urban and urban fringe areas).

Level 2

- Formal and informal open space
- Unimproved farmland
- Rivers and canals
- Unimproved grassland
- Disused/derelict land, mosaics of formal and informal areas scrub etc
- Country Parks
- Open access land.

Level 3

- Allotments
- Church yards and cemeteries
- Formal recreation space.

Level 4

- Improved farmland.

Levels 1 and 2 are proxy indicators of natural greenspace. The distribution of land use types has been adapted for Natural England purposes. It is important that the groupings of land use types are adjusted to account for local management regimes. For example, if local policy/management regimes manage areas of church yards and cemeteries for nature conservation, this would move these areas from Level 3 into Level 2. This is particularly true of many closed cemeteries and also disused/abandoned allotments.

The ideal situation is that full ground surveys are available so that an accurate measure of natural greenspace can be mapped. In practice most greenspace managers have sufficient knowledge of their sites to be able to classify them into the above levels through a desktop exercise, supported by habitat surveys where available. Where this is not the case a proxy measure (adjusted using local knowledge, site management plans and policy) should be used.



Creating wildlife habitats – a minibeast hotel at Mile End Park, Tower Hamlets

Annex 3

National and local agendas

These benefits can be measured through a series of national indicators (NIs), of which there are 199. In each local authority area, public bodies work together to deliver these benefits through a selection of public service agreements (PSAs).

The most appropriate of these targets to the Nature Nearby agenda is PSA 28: Secure a healthy natural environment for today and the future. Others include PSA 12: Improve the health and well-being of children and young people, and PSA 18: Promote better health and well-being for all.

This guide, and the example sites annexed, can be used to demonstrate how these targets can be delivered through providing sufficient accessible greenspace.

As well as national policies, there will be a raft of local policies delivered through the local Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). These are more specific, and are translated into local actions that are delivered through the Local Strategic Partnership. These SCS objectives address both physical infrastructure through transport plans, playing pitch strategies, regeneration strategies etc, and social infrastructure, such as the local Health Strategy and Crime and Disorder Strategy.

Appropriate levels of provision of green spaces can be central to delivering these broader physical and social objectives. However, to do this, standards have to be established to meet the need for accessible spaces; standards which will provide an integrated network of easily accessible green spaces, connected by routes that enable visitors to choose low carbon, environmentally sustainable forms of transport to them.

As part of the approach to more sustainable living and climate change adaptation, green infrastructure is increasingly recognised not just as 'nice to have', but as a 'must have'. This is now being reflected in various aspects of national planning policy.

PPS 1: *Delivering sustainable development* (2005) states that development should ensure an appropriate mix of uses, including the incorporation of greenspace[5].

Supplement to PPS 1: *Planning and Climate Change* (2007) states that spatial strategies and any development should help deliver, amongst other things, green infrastructure and biodiversity, as part of a strategy to address climate change mitigation and adaptation[6].

PPS 12: *Local Spatial Planning* (2008) requires local planning authorities to assess green infrastructure requirements. It notes in para 4.8 that: *"... core strategies should be supported by evidence of what physical, social and green infrastructure is needed to enable the amount of development proposed for the area, taking account of its type and distribution. This evidence should cover who will provide the infrastructure and when it will be provided. The core strategy*

[5] Planning Policy Statement 1: *Delivering sustainable development*, ODPM (2005)

[6] *Planning and Climate Change* – Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1, CLG (2007)

should draw on and, in parallel, influence any strategies and investment plans of the local authority and other organisations"[7].

PPS 12 also notes that *"Good infrastructure planning considers the infrastructure required to support development, costs, sources of funding, timescales for delivery and gaps in funding…. The infrastructure planning process should identify, as far as possible: infrastructure needs and costs; phasing of development; funding sources; and responsibilities for delivery"*.

A new suite of Planning Policy Statements has been published in March 2010 for public consultation. A new Planning Policy Statement: Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment[8], has now been published which replaces PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, PPS17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, and PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.

It is important, when promoting the provision of green spaces based on ANGSt, to utilise existing national planning policy as a 'hook', to ensure development plans incorporate policies and objectives that support greenspace provision.



River Quaggy, Lewisham restored from culverting and naturalized improving biodiversity, access to nature and flood prevention

[7] Planning Policy Statement 12: *Local Spatial Planning*, CLG (2008)

[8] Planning Policy Statement: Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment, CLG (2010)

Annex 4

The Spatial Planning System and accessible greenspace

Planning Policy Statement 12 defines green infrastructure as "a network of multi-functional greenspace, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities". It goes on to state that the local planning authority's core strategy should be supported by evidence of what physical, social and green infrastructure is needed to enable the amount of development proposed for the area, taking account of its type and distribution.

In order to comply with this requirement, local authorities will need to look at the overall supply of greenspace and the benefits that this can deliver to the new communities. ANGSt is a good starting point for comparing existing provision with a standard that would deliver many of the green infrastructure needs. This evidence should cover who will provide the infrastructure and when it will be provided, and will also need to consider funding for future management. The core strategy should draw on and, in parallel, influence any strategies and investment plans of the local authority and other organisations. This will include being influenced by the standards of greenspace established, again through reference to ANGSt.

The Natural England Policy Planning Statement: *Housing Growth and Green Infrastructure* describes work on the related concepts of environmental capacity, ecosystem services, and the cumulative impacts of development needs.

To this end greenspace must address the following in the planning context:

- Necessary housing growth in the Growth Points within sub-regions should be accommodated with minimum impact on the natural environment and deliver maximum benefits for the natural environment and people together
- The most environmentally sustainable locations should be identified for new housing development
- An assessment of environmental capacity that will be central to decisions on future development in sub-regions
- A framework to ensure that the environmental quality of all new housing developments will be substantially improved
- The provision of green infrastructure will be an integral part of the creation of sustainable communities throughout sub-regions.

Greenspace will need to deliver policies and practices that will enable valued environmental assets to be conserved. This will require a thorough assessment of the environmental capacity of the area to inform decisions made on locations for future development. The work will involve identifying networks of multi-functional green infrastructure that provide a wide range of environmental and quality-of-life benefits, to be identified in the sub-regional strategy, which can then be designed into all major development and regeneration schemes from the outset. Included in this assessment will be the need to consider any requirements for alternative provision to protect environmentally sensitive areas from the impact of development. This

might take the form of providing Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) as part of the development proposals.

The multi-functional nature of green spaces means that a number of development plan policies can support the implementation of the standard (eg. landscape policy, flood risk policy, open space policy). An overarching policy should ensure that the provision of green spaces is prioritised in planning decisions, and proposals should be identified on the key diagram or proposals map.

With the publication in 2008 of a revised Planning Policy Statement 12: *Local Spatial Planning*, the Government no longer regulates the precise details of how a local authority should prepare a local development plan. There is a new emphasis on the Core Strategy, which becomes more specific, detailed, spatial and focused. With the new opportunity to allocate 'strategic sites' in the Core Strategy, a Site Specific Allocations DPD may not be required.

Each local planning authority will need to decide how it wishes to address greenspace provision within the LDF, for example whether an Area Action Plan or SPD is required to set out site-specific detail. Given the need to integrate the requirements for greenspace provision at the earliest stages of the LDF, it is likely to be appropriate to address such provision within an SPD, setting out infrastructure requirements and the level of developer contributions to meet these. This could also provide detailed guidance on implementation, delivery and design.

Using ANGSt to support developer contributions

The recent government proposals for a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which could provide opportunities to fund the development of greenspace, have been delayed and, at the time of writing, it is uncertain if these will be brought into force. The proposals for use of the CIL currently require the Core Strategy to have been approved, and not all local authorities are in this position. Delays in implementation may now mean that other forms of funding for green spaces need to be considered. One approach is to pursue Section 106 (Town and Country Planning Act 1990) planning gain contributions for local green spaces, and fund strategic green infrastructure through a broader Strategic Infrastructure Tariff. National Planning Policy Guidance states that planning obligations can be used as a means to remedy local deficiencies in the quantity or quality of open space and recreational provision (this extends to situations where new development increases local needs (PPG17, Sect. 33)).

Shortfalls in greenspace provision could thus be addressed through such a tariff. It is important therefore to have a strong evidence base to support such an approach, and the inclusion of ANGSt in developing local standards, as national policy guidance, would help to meet this need.

A new Planning Policy Statement: Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment, has now been published which replaces PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, PPS17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, and PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas. This includes in more detail the spatial planning role of natural greenspace and green infrastructure. This is supported by two new related Planning Policy Statements, PPS Planning for a Low Carbon Future in a Changing Climate and PPS 25 Supplement: Development and Coastal Change. Published in March 2010, these are currently out for public consultation at the time of writing.

A range of Regional Spatial Planning policies and local policies, to be delivered through each authority's Local Development Framework, will impact on the development and accessibility of greenspace. Feeding into these planning documents will be the need for policy hooks for accessible greenspace, eg. planning policy guidance and statements. The need for accessible

greenspace, based on the provisions of ANGSt, must be established within local development frameworks. Central to this will be recognition of the need for greenspace provision in the Core Strategy, in area action plans, and in other development plan documents and supplementary planning documents.

Green/open space strategies have traditionally provided the evidence base for the requirement for green spaces associated with new developments. Increasingly, green infrastructure strategies, which take a much wider view of green spaces, more in line with the Natural England approach, are also being used in master planning for strategic green infrastructure. Natural England is successfully promoting ANGSt in green infrastructure strategies, particularly for growth areas, growth points and urban extensions, and in responding to strategic planning issues. A better adoption of ANGSt within open space and green space strategies would bring huge benefits, particularly for healthy communities.

These green infrastructure strategies incorporate all types of greenspace into development plans. ANGSt will be key in setting requirements for accessible greenspace at both greenspace / public space strategy level, and in developing green infrastructure strategies.

Each local authority's development plan documents (DPDs) or supplementary planning documents (SPDs) should articulate their policies on strategic planning for greenspace. There is normally within these sets of planning documents one that deals with planning obligations in accordance with national and regional policies, whilst taking into account local needs. The standards set out under ANGSt can provide a national set of criteria, against which these local standards of provision for greenspace can be set. Planning policies likely to arise from such documents will include:

- Application of standards of provision by typology in the spatial planning context
- Green infrastructure provision in the urban extension areas
- Application of standards of provision in the context of developer contributions
- Design guidance on provision by outcomes, biodiversity, climate change, health opportunities, crime reduction, flood alleviation, climate change mitigation, ecosystem services, social development, and community cohesion.

On an individual site basis Natural England recommends that concept statements are prepared, either by local authorities or developers, prior to submitting a planning application. These are effectively development briefs for sites and can distil the high level green infrastructure principles in a green infrastructure strategy, to influence site planning and design. They can therefore be valuable in setting a framework for high quality development which fits with the green infrastructure approach. They can also be used as a basis for design and access statements, which explain the design intention and concepts of application schemes. These statements can make it clear that the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards for provision of on- and off-site open space will be applied to the development.

Annex 5

Incentive grant aid policies/funding

Some of Natural England's grant schemes, for example Countryside Stewardship, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Environmental Stewardship (specified options within Entry Level Scheme (ELS) such as EK3, EK4, EL3 and 4, and under Higher Level Scheme (HLS) the Access and Education options), Forestry Commission's England Woodland Grant Schemes (EWGS) (a suite of grants that offer incentives for sustainable woodland creation and management) may have some relevance to the provision of green spaces under ANGSt.

Other grant schemes may be species/habitat/site-specific and could be administered by a lead council, a local trust, or charities such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and linked to national funding streams such as Landfill Tax Credit, National Lottery, and the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF). These grants are generally for capital works and do not address the issue of future management and maintenance.

To qualify, the grant or funding scheme for individual sites must, within its objectives, include maintaining, restoring or enhancing the nature conservation value of the local site and the features for which it was selected. These objectives could be defined within the grant scheme, an associated management plan, or the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Grant aided funding will need to demonstrate that it will provide support for the ongoing management of the site. Sites in receipt of capital grants (for example for fencing), which can be shown to have facilitated specific ongoing management objectives (for example grazing) for a sustained period of at least five years after the grant, would also qualify.

The most significant source of capital funding for accessible green spaces is that associated with new developments. This could be direct growth area funding for infrastructure, which can be used to acquire and develop green spaces; strategic tariffs levied on developments, a proportion of which can be used for greenspace provision and development; and Section 106 contributions for specific green spaces needed as a direct result of the impact of the development.

Even if these sources can be used for new, or improvements to existing, green spaces, many local authorities are now reluctant to agree to their provision on the basis of ongoing maintenance costs. Outside the traditional local authority adoption model, recreation and greenspace trusts, community land trusts, community interest companies and charitable partnerships can all potentially be used to secure ongoing maintenance arrangements through self-sustaining income-generating activities by the managing body. These activities may include rental income from land holdings, trading activities, or energy generation companies.

Such arrangements are emerging and, with the exception of a few examples like the Milton Keynes Trust, few are well established. However, promulgating improvements to provision of accessible green spaces, without a clear understanding of how future management and maintenance will be financed, is likely to result in failure to deliver in the short and long term.

Annex 6

Site examples

Avon Heath Country Park	Education in the South West has never been this much fun!	p. 57
Walking for Health, Carlisle City Council	It's a healthy life in the North West	p. 59
Coombe Country Park Climbing Forest	It's all fun and lots of play in the West Midlands	p. 61
Ferry Meadows Country Park	Conserving nature and the community in the East	p. 63
Freemantle Lake Park	Creative Conservation by the Young of the South East	p. 65
Incredible Edible Todmorden	It's the 'good life' in West Yorkshire	p. 67
Jeskyn's Community Woodland	Transforming the South East	p. 69
Linford Wood, Milton Keynes	Conservation and exercise are winning in the South East	p. 71
Loris Road Community Garden	A Community at Work and Play in London	p. 73
Maningham Community Woodland	Volunteer Managers in the South West	p. 75
Mersey Vale Nature Park	Conservation at its best in the North West	p. 77
Paddington Recreation Ground Nature Area	Learning with a difference in London	p. 79
Rushcliffe Country Park	The Benefits of Active Friends in the East Midlands	p. 81
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes NNR	Healthy Conservation in the East Midlands	p. 83
Sharrow School Green Roof Local Nature Reserve	It's one of a kind in Yorkshire!	p. 85
St Lawrence Park, Newcastle	It's all going green in the North East!	p. 87
Thames Chase Community Forrest	Long-term relationships in the East	p. 89
Wat Tyler Country Park	Everything is green in the East	p. 91
Watchtree Nature Reserve	Nature in the care of the young in the North West	p. 93
West Park, Darlington	Greenspace in the North East: a sense of pride, place and well-being	p. 95

Avon Heath Country Park



Source: http://www.dorsetforyou.com

Education in the South West has never been this much fun!

- Making conservation education fun
- Access to greenspace
- Encouraging social cohesion amongst young people of mixed abilities

The Park Rangers at Avon Heath Country Park are really pulling the stops out to make learning fun children – even maths! They have developed a programme of activities designed around the National Curriculum which can be adapted for other groups if needed. Woodland Maths and Fun with English are just two of the activities with combine learning about nature with some of the more traditional subjects. The programme has been so successful that the Institute of Commercial Management (ICM) has stepped in to sponsor an exciting new project that is designed to enable children to capture the site's unique features in the form of wooden sculptures. It looks as though this project will carve out even more success for the Park!

The education programme is made up of workshops lasting 30 minutes or 1 hour. What makes these workshops so much fun is that as well as learning about the natural environment from the Ranger, children are also challenged to develop their knowledge in other subjects. For example, in the Woodland Maths class the challenge is to measure the circumference of three trees, then count the tree rings to work out which tree grew fastest.

The Institute of Commercial Management sponsored project is involving children in the design process which will lead to the creation of two or three large wooden sculptures in the shape of the wildlife native to the Park. Creative workshops have been designed specifically for the children who come from a variety of backgrounds and educational stages. Older children will work with younger children and able bodied children will work with some who have profound learning difficulties. By working together these children are not only learning about conservation and the environment but also about responding to people with different needs.

There are other attractions for children in the Park. There are competitions, treasure trails, family activity trails and a children's play area. The Visitor Centre also has plenty of activities where children can take a hands-on approach to find out more about the Park's wildlife such as using interactive buttons to match birds to their songs.

Hopefully, this very practical approach to learning will not only help in their school studies, but will inspire them to look after the Park and perhaps return as a volunteer in the future.

For more information please contact:

Avon Heath Country Park
Nr Ringwood, Dorset

Tel: 01425 478082

Email: dorsetcountryside@dorsetcc.gov.uk



Located near the south coast of England, 25 miles north west of Southampton and 10 miles from Bournemouth, the Park can be accessed 2 miles west of Ringwood on the A31. The park has nearly 243 hectares of heathland with stands of Pine trees, and Birch woodland

Walking for Health, Carlisle City Council



It's a healthy life in the North West

- Green exercise
- Effective working across Council services
- Developing volunteers

There's no sitting around in the parks in Carlisle - it's a case of putting on your shoes and getting walking! The City's green spaces have become a focus for green exercise as the Council is encouraging everyone to improve their health by taking part in walking events which are part of the City's Walking for Health programme. This initiative is about helping inactive people become active and is supported by Natural England. This is one of several initiatives that helped earn Carlisle City Council's open spaces an astounding six green flag awards in 2009. Amongst the accolades this scheme has received is accreditation by Natural England. It has also featured in "Let's get Moving: A new physical activity care pathway for the NHS". (DoH, 2009)

The Walking for Health programme runs throughout the year and is made up of organised walks in the City's parks and also in and around the City and district itself. The walks are on good paths so many are suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs. They are also of different lengths and are graded so people can choose a walk to suit their level of fitness and mobility.

Good co-ordination has been the key to the success of the programme in Carlisle. In the 18 months the Physical Activity and Health Development Officer has been in post, there has been a growing demand for more walks and also for more demanding walks. There is now a range of walks lasting between 30 minutes to 2.5 hours and all have been risk assessed. Carlisle's local community can now enjoy the attractions of the natural environment with the knowledge that their safety is assured and meeting new friends is guaranteed!

There are usually around five walks planned each week, three in winter, and over 40 walkers regularly join the organised walk on a Wednesday morning. Such is the success that there are plans to introduce another walk on a Wednesday afternoon because the morning group is getting too big.

With the support of Natural England, the Council has also been successful in encouraging local GPs to link into the programme by referring inactive patients. Patients can also pick up walking for health programme leaflets in the surgery.

Getting fit is not the only benefit of the walking for health programme. There are a number of volunteers who have completed Natural England's volunteer health walk leader training and are now leading the walks organised by Carlisle City Council. Their help is essential in the on-going development of the programme.

Carlisle City Council's walking for health programme is a superb example of how the natural environment and effective co-ordination and promotion can inspire people to get out and enjoy being outdoors whilst getting active and making friends in the process!

For more information please contact:

The Sport and Recreation Team
Carlisle City Council
Carlisle

Tel: 01228 817370

Email: emad@carlisle.gov.uk

www.carlisle.gov.uk



Located not far from the M6 and M74, Carlisle is also easily accessible from the east via the A7 and A69 and from the north west via the A75.

There are 66 parks, children's play areas and nature reserves in and around the City serving a local population of just over 100,000. Carlisle accounts for just under one third of the population of North Cumbria.

Coombe Country Park Climbing Forest



Printed by kind permission of Timberplay

It's all fun and lots of play in the West Midlands

- Play opportunities in a forest setting
- Innovative design
- Effective planning

A unique and innovative play space has been created at Coombe Country Park, near Coventry, in the West Midlands. Attracting over 400,000 visitors every year, this new Climbing Forest structure has helped Play become one of the key visitor attractions. The Park's proximity to Coventry means that the demands placed on it are similar to those of urban parks which explains why creating opportunities for children's play is so important. It's not just the youngsters who are making use of it though. Adults have also been spotted playing. This goes to show that open spaces really can help people relive their childhood! The Park has become one of the first Accredited Country Parks in England, under a new Country Parks Accreditation Scheme.

The 'Climbing Forest´ structure, also known as the 'Coombe Play Forest´ took 12 months to design and involved the City of Coventry, Coombe Country Park and Timberplay. The challenge was to provide a high use play concept that fitted into a historic landscape and woodland setting, to challenge the general concept of play in the UK, and to create something exciting where the children need to be 'risk aware´. The aim was to deliver a play facility that was attractive to older children (10+ years) but could also help young children develop skills. Many children (and adults!) have had lots of fun and enjoyment in the three years since it was installed.

This is the second installation completed by Timberplay at Coombe Country Park, the first one being a play area for 4-10 year old children located near the Visitor Centre. The whole park offers lots more opportunities to play. Open spaces, trees and grassy areas give children lots of places to explore and to be active. The management team at the Park is actively promoting it as a place for play. The fun being had in the climbing forest just goes to show that through careful planning and

management children can express themselves in the outdoors in an equipped space which complements rather than dominates the natural landscape.

For further information please contact:

Coombe Country Park
Binley Nr Coventry
Warwickshire

Tel: 024 7645 3720

Email: coombe.countrypark@coventry.gov.uk



Located in the rural Warwickshire countryside at Binley on the B4027, the Park is just 5 miles east of Coventry and 15 miles from Rugby, Hinckley and the Birmingham Conurbation. Around half of the visitors to the 200 hectare Park come from the Coventry area which has a population of just under 310,000.

Ferry Meadows Country Park



Image Copyright Michael Trolove. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic License.

Conserving nature and the community in the East

- Community involvement
- Conservation
- Access for all

Having clear strategic objectives founded on conserving the traditional landscape of the river valley and developing and maintaining links with local community groups with shared interests have helped the Nene Park Trust focus its resources to significant effect. Ferry Meadows is a place where everyone and those with special needs in particular, can experience the attractions of the countryside and participate in a wide range of conservation and recreation activities. Established in 1988 and funded by the invested proceeds from the sale of its endowment portfolio, the Nene Park Trustees have established Ferry Meadows as a valued resource where people can enjoy recreation activities in a countryside setting. Ferry Meadows Country Park fills the void for people for whom the wider countryside is inaccessible.

The Park offers a wonderful array of recreation opportunities. The lake and the watersports centre provide opportunities for sailing and other water-based activities as well as tuition leading to Royal Yachting Association (RYA) certificates. There is also open space for informal games and seven miles of marked routes which people can follow on foot, bicycle and horseback. These link with routes in Nene Park and provide access to the city and to the surrounding countryside. Orienteering and archery are also on offer as well as three play areas, one of which is particularly suited to younger children.

Learning and recreation is blended into a fun-filled organised events programme including guided dog-walks, cycling with a ranger, and discovering tree walks. The Trust has gone to great lengths to ensure it fulfills its objective of enabling access to these activities and to the park for those with particular needs. All buildings are accessible to disabled visitors while most paths are hard surfaced and suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs. A useful additional service is the availability of electric scooter and wheelchairs for loan by arrangement.

The Nene Park Trust and the staff of Ferry Meadows have delivered many achievements in the park's twenty one years of life. By staying focused on conservation and engaging with the community, the

benefits gained are easily measurable. They include improvements to facilities and infrastructure and completion of the Willow Trail in and around the Ferry Meadows Park. The culmination of several years work to mark the significance of Willow in the landscape and heritage of the area, this project has not only restored ancient willow pollards but is creating 70 new ones. Even more impressive is the social impact of the Park's activities. In the first five years over 400 different groups, including schools, youth organisations and local community groups, visited the park. In the summer of 2009 thirteen different groups held 27 events in the Park helping bring even more visitors. This is clear evidence that the advice and support offered by the Trust to community groups to help run their own projects in combination with quick responses to customer comments through its quarterly publication 'Park Life' has established Ferry Meadows Country Park as a key part of community life in the area.

For more information please contact:

Nene Park Trust
Peterborough

Tel: 01733 234193

Email: visitor.services@neneparktrust.org.uk



Located in a large meander of the river Nene 3 miles west of Peterborough and 2 miles to the east of the A1, Ferry Meadows is the 200ha (500acre) Country Park at the heart of Nene Park. Visitors are attracted to the lakes, meadows, woodlands and riverside within the Country Park because of its accessibility and great setting.

Freemantle Lake Park



Source: www.cabe.org

Creative conservation by the young of the South East

- Engagement of young people
- Partnership working
- Reducing anti-social behaviour
- Improving accessibility
- Developing play opportunities in greenspace

The relief of tension in the Freemantle Lake Park area of Southampton is almost tangible thanks to the efforts of the Freemantle Youth Forum, a group of young people from the area. With nowhere to hang-out, many young people were seen as a nuisance by adults so they persuaded the City Council that a specially designed pavilion located in the Park would provide a solution to the problem. Since the project was completed in 2003, the Pavilion has come to be seen as a catalyst for the regeneration of the park. These young people have not only helped themselves, they have provided a valuable resource for the wider community and renewed interest in improving the local environment.

Working with an artist from Southampton's City Arts, the Freemantle Youth Forum designed their own pavilion and saw their drawings translate into scale models and eventually the real thing. Along the way the young people started to think about the needs of other park users. Through consultation with the local community, it became clear that there was also a need for better facilities for younger children. The Youth Forum also felt that it was difficult for wheelchair users and parents with pushchairs to access the park.

Addressing these issues became part of the project and the pavilion was designed with both ramped and stepped access. With support from youth workers and the artist, the young people were able to secure funding from Hampshire Constabulary, the local Neighbourhood Partnership and from Orchard Homes, a local property developer. They applied for and succeeded in getting planning permission and the rest, as they say, is history.

This project delivered many tangible improvements in the Park. The Pavilion was commissioned by the Council's Public Arts Officer and was opened in 2003. Thereafter, improvements were made to the play area for under-eights, including the installation of new equipment. The play area is within viewing distance of the pavilion, which means that parents can gather in the pavilion for some shelter while their children play. New pathways were also constructed and better lighting placed in the park creating a more accessible, brighter and safer environment for everyone.

Another improvement project is currently managed by Groundwork Solent, supported by Southampton City Council.

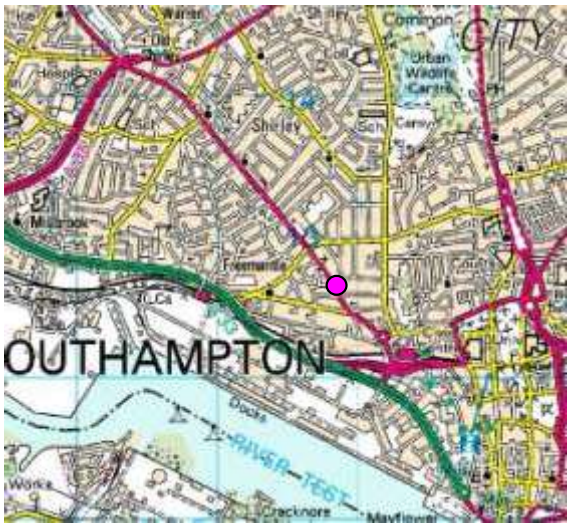
This project started out with the aim of giving young people a positive profile in the local community. It's fair to say much more has been achieved and the work continues.

For more information please contact:

Youth Support Service
Southampton City Council

Tel: 023 8091 7755

Email: youth.enquiries@southampton.gov.uk



Located in the centre of Southampton, not far from the docks and the A33, the one hectare Freemantle Lake Park is situated in the west of the city serving a population of approximately 14,000.

Incredible Edible Todmorden



Source: http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/pictures

It's the 'good life' in West Yorkshire

- Community-led development of greenspaces
- Conservation and education
- Effective local partnerships
- Development of healthier lifestyles

The people of Todmorden are finding new ways to engage with the public green spaces in their town. A community-led initiative is encouraging people to 'grow your own' in a move that is not only transforming green spaces but also changing the way local people engage with food. The market town is aiming to be self-sufficient in vegetables, orchard fruits and eggs by 2018 thereby reducing its carbon footprint by sourcing food locally. The response to the challenges of climate change has been amazing. Everyone is involved - businesses, schools, farmers and the community are all getting their hands dirty and vegetables and fruit are quite literally springing up everywhere. It seems everyone wants a bit of the 'good life' experience!

Incredible Edible Todmorden is a loose coalition of local people, businesses and schools who are working together to increase the production and consumption of local food in the town.

The movement began with a vision for the future of Todmorden as a town that cared about its food and environment. It has developed into a town-wide initiative supported by local people, businesses, farmers, schools, health services, the probation service and the local authority. Now all sorts of collaborations are reaping all that they sow! The local church is working with children from the local primary school to cultivate raised beds in the cemetery, while the local secondary school now has two commercial size poly tunnels and has integrated growing into the curriculum. The local health centre is turning its flowerbeds into allotments so that patients with long term mental health problems can participate in gardening as part of their treatment. Pennine Housing is providing its tenants with land to grow food and offers gardening packs to encourage them to grow their own. All kinds of vegetables are now appearing in people's gardens.

Incredible Edible Todmorden succeeds because it connects people in the town through the shared growing, picking and eating of food. It challenges people to think about public green space and helps them take responsibility for it. It is also breaking down barriers between people by focusing on something we all need and like – food. Local growing is now part of everyday life in education, health and business in the town. It's a bottom up approach to tacking wider issues of climate change which is truly inclusive, fun, educational and healthy.

For further information please contact:

Incredible Edible Todmorden,
c/o The Bear Co-op,
Todmorden, Lancs.

Email: iet_hothouse@btinternet.com.



Located on the A646 to the south east of Burnley in West Yorkshire, Todmorden can be easily reached from several motorways: the M62, M1, M6 and M65 (junctions 9, 10 or 11). Situated within the Metropolitan Borough of Calderdale on the Calderdale rail line, the market town is part of the Uppder Calder Valley. Covering an area of 14.4 square miles it has a total population of approximately 11,800.

Jeskyn's Community Woodland



Source: Forestry Commission

Transforming the South East

- Conservation
- Community Involvement
- Natural Play

The remarkable transformation of Jeskyns community greenspace has enabled local people to enjoy a wealth of natural features set in a diverse landscape. Purchased by the Forestry Commission with Office of the Deputy Prime Minister funding, the former Jeskyns farm has been transformed into an invaluable natural resource for the benefit of communities and the protection of wildlife. With five distinct areas offering mixed woodland, fields of wildflowers, grassland, hay meadows and a traditional Kentish orchard, Jeskyns has something for everyone.

The aim of the redevelopment of Jeskyns was to provide accessible greenspace on the doorstep of the local community and also to add value to existing conservation projects and link to neighbouring sites such as Ashenwood, an Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and Site of Special Scientific Interest and owned by the Woodland Trust.

Opened in 2007, the site offers visitors lots of opportunities to be active, including walking, cycling or riding along the 18.4km of paths and using map-reading skills to find their way around the orienteering course. A particular feature is the creation of natural play features such as a tree house, a cone pool which uses pine cones instead of balls and a sandpit all of which encourage children to use their imagination while they play.

Everyone is encouraged to get involved in Jeskyns. Opportunities are available for volunteers to help out with conservation, whilst everyone can learn more about caring for the environment from the interpretation panels which are dotted around the woodlands providing information about the biodiversity of the area. An education pack is available to encourage schools to use the woodland as an outdoor classroom.

Over 140,000 plants and 120,000 trees and 5km of new hedgerow was planted to transform Jeskyns into a remarkable accessible greenspace for the local communities. The involvement of local community groups, schools and youth groups in the continuation of this conservation work is ensuring that the benefits of this project will continue for future generations.

For more information please contact:

Jeskyns
Forestry Commission
Care of: Shorne Wood Country Park
Brewers Road
Shorne
Kent
DA12 3HX

Tel: 01474 825118

Email: jeskynsranger@forestry.gsi.gov.uk



Situated in Cobham, Kent, Jeskyns can be found just off the A2 exist marked Gravesend East and Sole Street. The 146 hectare woodland serves a local parish population of 1300 and the wider communities in south east Kent.

Linford Wood, Milton Keynes



Conservation and exercise are winning in the South East

- Introducing green exercise
- Development of greenspace for active recreation as well as conservation

There's no sitting back and watching the world go by in Linford Wood! The Parks Trust, responsible for managing the Wood, has introduced a trim track to encourage the people of Milton Keynes to get moving. Although only half a mile away from the bustle of Milton Keynes City Centre, Linford Wood provides an accessible, peaceful haven for anyone who feels like exercising in a parkland setting. But this has only been achieved because of the Park Trust's focus on actively managing the Wood to enhance its value for active recreation as well as wildlife conservation.

Anyone can make use of the trim trail. It has a number of exercise stations set out along a circular route so people can choose just how active they want to be. The jogging routes are measured out so people might be encouraged to set themselves the challenge of running further as their fitness improves. The trim track is not the only way to exercise in the Wood. Horseriding and cycling are also popular.

Linford Wood is a great example of balancing the development of exercise spaces whilst conserving ancient woodland. The Parks Trust has thinned the wood to let in more light whilst wide rides have been cut to accommodate the surfaced footpaths and woodchip riding trail. Other traditional methods of conservation have also been re-introduced.

There are no toilet facilities within the Wood but this isn't deterring people from enjoying all this natural and ancient woodland has to offer. Walkers, joggers, people enjoying a picnic or watching birds or other wildlife throng to this little haven especially at the weekend.

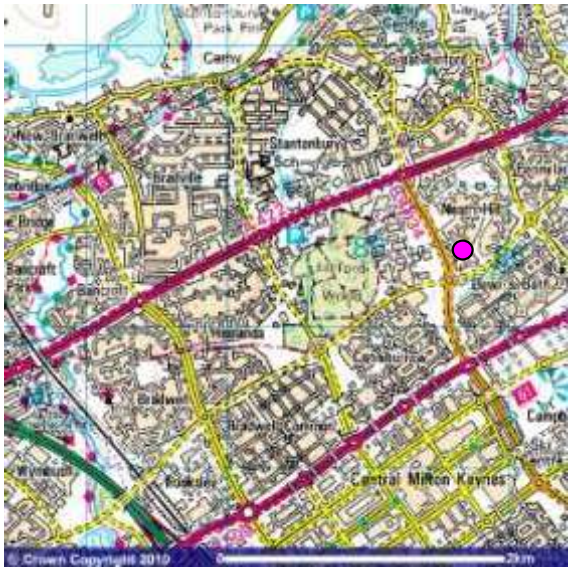
The local population are not the only people who value the woods. Renowned for their wildflowers and wildlife, these ancient Linford Woods are now recognised as being important for conservation on an international scale.

For more information please contact:

The Parks Trust
Milton Keynes

Tel: 01908 233600
Email: info@theparkstrust.com

Web: http://www.mkweb.co.uk/parks-trust/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=33104



Located in North Milton Keynes, Linford Wood is nestled between the A422 and B4034. It can be accessed from the northern end of Linford Wood West Industrial Estate.

Linford Wood is named after an ancient wood south west of the village of Great Linford. It covers over 40 hectares and services the needs of the 30,000 people who live within one mile of it.

Loris Road Community Garden



Source: www.keepbritaintidy.org

A Community at work and play in London

- Community engagement
- Conservation
- Environmental education

It's almost impossible to imagine that a fairly large area complete with a new playground, grass, a wildlife pond, mosaics and a large eco-shed could exist between the rows of terraced houses that surround it. But that's exactly what the local council and Hammersmith Community Gardens Association (HCGA) have achieved at Loris Road. This is a gem of a tiny wildlife garden and a green haven in London's suburbia. Already winners of a Green Pennant, the volunteers of the HCGA are hoping to gain a Green Flag award in the not too distant future.

Although owned by Hammersmith and Fulham Council, the Hammersmith Community Garden Association has been managing the site since 1984. Established as a local environmental charity, it is managed by a group of trustees, all of whom are local residents. Such has been the Association's success that it now manages two other sites. The association currently employs a manager, garden manager and two school gardeners and is also supported by other casual staff who work to deliver environmental projects in Hammersmith.

Activities at Loris Road are very much family affairs. Children's activities include arts projects as well as gardening activities. With the help of the Big Lottery Fund's Local Food Scheme, the 'get growing' initiative was launched in October 2009. The 'Get Growing' co-ordinator is now working with children, parent and toddler groups to grow their own fruit and vegetables. Mums are particularly interested in the activities which show them how to make lotions and potions from natural ingredients while family playschemes are helping build relationships in the community.

The commitment of the community to managing and volunteering is crucial to maintaining the Loris Road garden. Volunteers have opportunities to help out several times a week if they wish.

Many people in the area live in flats. The garden in Loris Road now gives them a lovely, maintained green space where they can just relax or get their hands dirty helping in the garden. A few years ago Loris Road was plagued by street drinkers. Now it's a place where parents can sit on the grass and watch their children playing in the new play area, made possible by a Big Lottery grant. This really is a community garden in every sense and the Hammersmith Community Garden Association, the local council and the residents of Loris Road are doing everything they can to make sure it stays that way.

For more information please contact:

Hammersmith Community Gardens Association
London

Tel: 07890 514 050

Email: info@hcga.org.uk

www.hcga.org.uk



Located in the Hammersmith and Fulham area of London, Loris Road Community Garden can be found just off the A13, Shepherds Bush Road, and not far from Goldhawk Tube Station.

The 0.3 hectare gardens are in the Addison ward of the borough which has a population of just over 11,000, but the main users are the local residents who devote so much time to maintaining and developing the gardens.

Maningham Community Woodland



Volunteer managers in the South West

- Effective partnerships
- Community involvement
- Conservation

After much effort to turn a derelict piece of land into accessible woodland, Maningham Wood was officially opened in 2004 as a Community Doorstep Green. This was a remarkable achievement in itself since the area had been hidden behind locked and rusting gates for decades after Maningham House, to which the land belonged, fell into disuse. The local community did not stop there. With the help of the National Lottery, and under the stewardship of Illogan Parish Council, the Friends of Maningham Wood have continued to develop the area. The combined efforts of these volunteers and Parish Council have been rewarded in the form of a Planting Places Award for Best Practice for Biodiversity from Sustainability South West.

Maningham wood is a small woodland in the centre of Illogan and the Friends of Maningham Wood group was formed to help the Parish council steer the management of the woods as a community nature conservation initiative. The group organises regular community events throughout the year to encourage local people to get involved with and enjoy this beautiful habitat on their doorstep. They meet monthly to discuss the work that needs to be done either by the group itself or by other organisations contracted by the Parish Council.

This direct action by the local community has produced many benefits. Through their programme of maintenance, conservation and planting the volunteers have enhanced the biodiversity of the woodland. Not only that, it has encouraged the community to do their bit to reduce the carbon footprint of the village: the woodland is now being used as a route to walk to school instead of

children being driven there. The woodland canopy is maintained to absorb some of the carbon dioxide too.

The Parish Council is continuing its efforts to raise awareness of the environment by encouraging families to get involved in regular litter-picking events and bulb planting while the village primary school, Cubs, Scouts and Brownies all get involved in fun, educational activities.

Before the Community Woodland was created, the area was a wilderness, hidden behind locked and rusting gates, used only by younger people at night and often the site of arson and drug and alcohol abuse. Since its development, the area has become a natural space for all to enjoy and has suffered less and less from anti-social behaviour.

The site is leased by the Parish Council for the next 99 years, so with the help of Friends of Maningham Wood and local community its future is secure!

For further information please contact:

Alison Forward
Friends of Maningham Wood
Illogan

Tel: 07880 948791

Email: alison.forward@hotmail.co.uk



Located in the village of Illogan, a large village to the north of Camborne and Redruth in Cornwall, Maningham Wood can be accessed from the A30 using the A3047. The woodland serves the village population of approximately 5,500.

Mersey Vale Nature Park



Source: Stockport Borough Council

Conservation at its best in the North West

- Community involvement
- Conservation
- Masterplanning

Until recently, the area along the River Mersey was neglected and seen as unsafe by the local residents. But with lots of hard work the Mersey Basin Campaign, Stockport Council and the local community have transformed the area into a green and pleasant park that can be enjoyed by people and wildlife. The park is now a focus for activity with the local community engaged in hosting fun days and developing a community orchard. A real sense of local ownership means this high quality physical environment will continue to be used and maintained. In 2008 the project won top honours in the Waterways Renaissance Awards, awarded by the Waterways Trust and the British Urban Regeneration Association in recognition of the Council's approach to strategy and masterplanning. It is one of the first parks recognised in the Accredited Country Parks scheme run by Natural England.

Mersey Vale Nature Park is one of the most significant open space development and regeneration projects Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council has undertaken. The former bleach works site, has been transformed from derelict, private land to a clean, safe environment which offers all sorts of opportunities for recreation and for people to get involved in maintaining the Park.

It's fair to say that the success of the project is down to the high level of involvement the local community has in the management and development of the park. Local primary school pupils worked with the artist in residence to create a landmark sculpture at the main entrance to the park. Called the 'seeds of change' the sculpture will be a reminder to everyone of how a shared vision and spirit of partnership has helped improve the quality of life for everyone in the area. The local council, community, developers, land owners, and regional agencies have created something they can be very proud of.

If that wasn't enough more benefits are being delivered from the project. As well as being able to enjoy the natural attractions the park has to offer, there is plenty of opportunity to be active be it walking the three and half miles of paths in the park itself, or riding, walking or cycling along part of the 211 mile Trans Pennine Trail which runs alongside the Park.

Although the major redevelopment project is complete, the local community is not resting on their laurels. They are still helping maintain the park by getting involved in conservation task days organised by the Council. Funding from other sources is continuing to support the on-going development of the park and the benefits can be seen as the wildflower meadows thrive and the Sidings Orchard takes shape.

The project was successfully delivered as a result of genuine commitment from all parties. The commitment of the Council and the local community are now conserving Mersey Vale Nature Park for future generations.

For more information please contact:

Parks and Recreation
Stockport Borough Council

Tel: 07800 617863

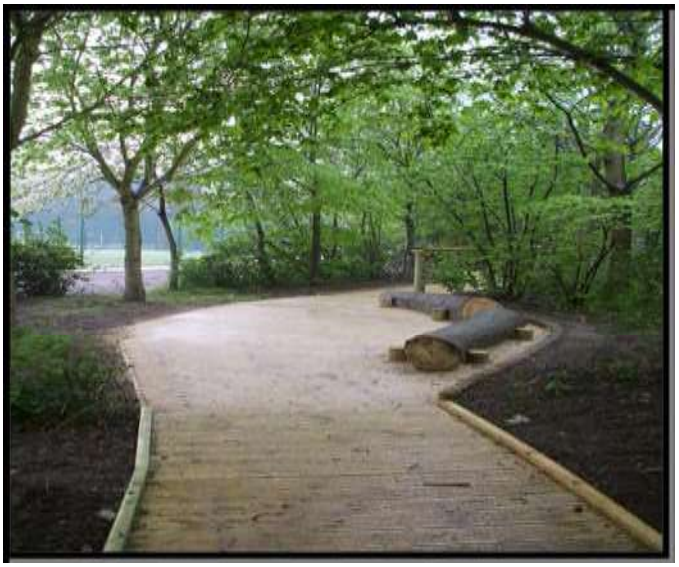
Email : parks@stockport.gov.uk



Located in the Heaton Mersey area of Stockport just south of Manchester, Mersey Vale Nature Park can be accessed from J1 of the M60, heading towards Didsbury on the A5145. The Park is near Burnage Rugby Club where visitors will find car parking.

The 23 hectare park services the local population of approximately 14,000 people although it attracts visitors from the wider Borough, which has a population of around 284,000.

Paddington Recreation Ground Nature Area



Learning with a difference in London

- Conservation
- Innovative education experience
- Social inclusion
- Encouragement of volunteering

How classrooms have changed in London! In 2007 Natural England awarded Groundwork £5000 to create an outdoor classroom including log benches, the construction of a stag beetle loggery, signage and surfacing for entrance to the area of woodland tree planting. This was part of the first phase of a three-phased project at Paddington Recreation Ground Maida Vale, in the City of Westminster. Now visitors to the park are learning about conservation and experiencing the attractions of the nature area at the same time. What better way to make learning interesting and fun?

The entire three-phase project will deliver a wide range of recreation facilities to the local area but it's the redevelopment of the environmental area located in the north west section of the park close to the Carlton Vale entrance and new sports pitches/playground which has had such an impact. The site is designated a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and lies in an Area of Deficiency in Access to Nature as defined in the Mayor of London's Biodiversity Strategy. The City Council has translated their commitment to the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy by adopting Areas of Deficiency in the Unitary Development Plan and Open Spaces Strategy.

This first phase of the project has, with Natural England's help, delivered clear benefits to the area. The new outdoor classroom is bringing new excitement to science and geography lessons as well as increasing opportunities for environmental education. An unused area of the park which was previously a children's playground and a yard for park maintenance is now transformed into a vibrant area filled with plants and wildlife that are easily accessible to all. People in the ethnically diverse local community are connecting with each other and re-connecting with the area through being encouraged to get involved in planning future work. Interest in volunteering in conservation activities has increased as a consequence.

In 2009 the project won first place in the 'National Environmental Project of the Year' 2009 Awards organised by the Institute of Groundsmanship in recognition of its outstanding achievements.

For more information please contact:

John Tweddle
Principle Parks and Open Space Manager
Westminster City Council

Tel: 0207 641 6307

Email to: jtweddle@westminster.gov.uk



Located in Maida Vale in the north west of London, an area which includes areas of high deprivation, Paddington Recreation Ground is Westminster's largest and principal park occupying a beautiful 11 hectare site. It has a wide range and mix of facilities and services that are heavily used by local residents and visitors alike attracting approximately 1 million users annually.

Rushcliffe Country Park



Source: Garth Newton at http://www.ilkcam.com/2006/061105/Ruddington.html

The benefits of active friends in the East Midlands

- Conservation
- Innovative education experience
- Encouragement of volunteering
- Children's Play

Attracting over 250,000 visitors a year, Rushcliffe Country Park is a Green Flag Award winner. While managed by Ruschliffe Borough Council, the park benefits greatly from the activities of the Friends of Rushcliffe Park Group, a voluntary group formed in October 1997 and now a registered charity. The group meets regularly and carries out conservation work as well as improvement projects. This is a wonderful example of accessibility to greenspace giving the local community opportunities to help conserve and enhance their local environment.

The objectives of The Friends of Ruschliffe Park group are to promote the park and improve its facilities. The relationship between the Friends Group and the Country Park Ranger Service is close thereby enabling the Borough Council to manage development in the park effectively. The Council promotes the Friends Group on its website as a means to encouraging people to volunteer for conservation activities whilst the Friends Group website evidences its strong support of the Country Park staff and of their work. This partnership has been fundamental to the sustainability of the volunteering effort through the Friends Group and the positive benefits to the park's conservation and facilities.

The Green Flag Award recognises the work of the Council and the achievements of the Friends Group citing their conservation work such as hedge laying and tree planting. Recent activities saw the completion of the National Heritage Project to restore an area of the park to how it was believed to be in the 1930s and has included the design and installation of new interpretation boards and trail leaflets. The Environmental Education Centre, officially opened in 2005, is available to schools and other parties. The centre is designed to be 'energy neutral', using wind and solar power and a

biomass boiler. Schools and other groups are able to take advantage of environmental education lessons, which may be ranger-led, or self-led using the teachers' site specific resource book.

Rushcliffe Borough Council continues its focus on creating a fun environment for all the family and where children and young people, in particular, can play or be physically active. Fundraising efforts by local teenagers helped to deliver a new skateboard ramp in 2000 and the park's play area, built in 1996, underwent a £60,000 refurbishment in spring 2008 bringing in extra equipment for children whatever their needs.

This focus was reflected in activities of the Friends Group too which saw them build a new tyre maze in 2009. Project managed in consultation with the Council, the new maze is yet another benefit created out of 'friendship' in Rushcliffe Country Park.

For more information about the Park and the Friends of Rushcliffe Park Group please contact:

Rangers' Office,
Rushcliffe Country Park,

0115 921 5865

countrypark@rushcliffe.gov.uk



Located on Mere Way on the A60 just south of Ruddington , in the borough of Ruschliffe,Nottinghamshire, the 85 hectare Park comprises over 8 km of footpaths, conservation woodlands, grasslands, a 2-hectare lake with reed bed and wildflower meadows, a children's play area,

Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes NNR



Healthy conservation in the East Midlands

- Accessibility
- Creating opportunities for conservation volunteers
- Improving health

A management partnership with Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and the Ministry of Defence has enabled Natural England to create an environment which encourages people of all ages and abilities to be active and to get involved in conservation activities through volunteering in this NNR. Rather than leaving users to merely react to the environment, Natural England has been proactive in improving access to the reserve and by organising a varied programme of activities that help improve the health of users and encourages involvement in conservation management activities through volunteering opportunities.

A major factor contributing to the success of the reserve is the resources put into reducing barriers to access, not only to the reserve itself but also the programme of activities run by Natural England throughout the year. Access to the reserve is provided from seven car parks, including one which provides facilities for wheelchair users. An easy access trail, with display boards, has been constructed at Rimac to allow less mobile visitors to see much of the habitat described. A free interpretive leaflet is available in the Rimac car park and a free audio tape is available for loan with tape player from the pub on the B1200, 1¼ miles west of Sea View for those who are visually impaired. There are three viewing platforms at the Reserve which are accessible for wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments.

A programme of activities runs all year round and includes cultural events such as poetry readings. However, the majority of events focus on getting people walking whilst learning about the environment or participating in conservation activities. Working in partnership with other agencies and initiatives has enabled a wide range of activities to be offered which contribute to the delivery of a wider range of objectives than those of the reserve itself. For example, events have been organised as part of national initiatives such as Beachwatch, whilst others are part of wider local

initiatives such as the Lincolnshire Wold Walking Festival and the East Lindsay Heart Support Group which encourages people to walk their way to health. These are complimented by educational talks. A programme for children encourages them to learn about nature through play activities.

Proactive management has delivered many benefits for all concerned. Partnerships between Natural England and local community groups continue to grow and strengthen which have helped the community identify strongly with the nature reserve. A more significant benefit, however, has been the recognition by users that Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes National Nature Reserve is a place where they can improve their well-being by being physically active and learning about conservation through getting involved in conservation activities. Several of the patients from the East Lindsay Heart Support Group have signed up as volunteers for example. The Lincolnshire Conservation Group are supporters of the reserve and play a part in encouraging more people to 'get volunteering'.

For more information please contact:

Roger Briggs
Natural England Office
Lincolnshire

Phone: 01507 338611

Email: roger.briggs@naturalengland.org.uk



Located close to the A1301 between Saltfleet and Mablethorpe, Saltfleetby – Theddlethorpe Dunes stretch for 8 km along the north-east coast of Lincolnshire, covering 952 hectares of coastal habitats (dunes, ponds, saltmarsh, beach and grassland meadows).

Sharrow School Green Roof Local Nature Reserve



Acknowledgement: Melbourne School of Land and Environment

It's one of a kind in Yorkshire!

- Innovation in greenspace development
- Conservation and education

Local Nature Reserves (LNR) do not get more local than the one at Sharrow School in Sheffield. The school's unique green roof is the first to be declared as an LNR. With the support of Natural England, Sheffield City Council was able to announce the declaration in October 2009 given in recognition of its importance in attracting local wildlife and the education of the pupils at the school. Working closely with Sheffield University and Groundwork Sheffield, Sheffield City Council has created a wonderful example of how future generations can be involved in looking after the environment. There's no stopping the Council now! So far the Council has encouraged the creation of 120 green roofs across the city.

The green roof habitat has developed well in the two years since it was established and a colourful display of flowers is a haven for butterflies and bees. Just like Sheffield's hilly landscape, the roof has rolling hills and valleys formed out of locally sourced recycled materials. Designed to reflect the habitats around the City, there are areas of limestone grassland, wildflower meadows, a wetland area with a small pond and even a dead tree for insects to burrow in! Other areas have been left just to grow and small trees are already beginning to appear, enhancing the biodiversity of the area.

Inner city pupils now have the chance to learn about the environment right on their doorstep (or on top of their roof!) This unique resource is a wonderful outdoor classroom where bird tables and insect feeders attract wildlife. A weather station and webcam provide opportunities for the research to continue regardless of the weather.

The benefits of the roof are obviously not just educational. The impact of climate change is also reduced by keeping the building cool in summer, soaking up heavy rainfall and absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. It has also strengthened the identity of the area and the local community. Pupils and local volunteers are working with Sheffield City Council and Green Estate, a

local not-for-profit social enterprise, to deliver the management plan for the roof. Visitors are also encouraged through tours round all the City's green roofs organised by The Green Roof Centre.

Without doubt Sheffield has introduced a novel way of supporting wildlife in the city that has definitely captured the minds of young pupils in Sharrow School!

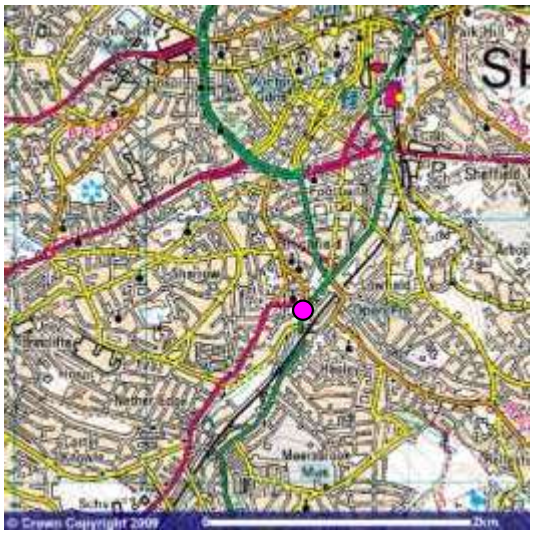
A this is a green roof on a school building, it is not accessible without special permission so it's best to visit it as part of an organised green roof tour.

For further information please contact:

City Ecology Service
Parks and Countryside
Sheffield City Council

Tel: 0114 273 6951 or 0114 273 4481

Email: parksandcountryside@sheffield.gov.uk



Located in the Sharrow area of Sheffield to the south-west of the City, the School is situated in Sitwell Road not far from the A621 and B6081. The roof offers 2000 square metres of green habitat whilst the school accommodates 420 primary school pupils and also has a 52 place nursery unit and 30 places early years centre.

St Lawrence Park, Newcastle



Image Copyright Mark Smiles. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic License

It's all going green in the North East!

- Community engagement
- Green exercise
- Conservation and regeneration

The St Lawrence Park project is a great example demonstrating how pro-active activity on a greenspace can unlock a multitude of benefits for community and wildlife alike. It also shows the value of community engagement in designing, managing and maintaining good quality attractive parks. St Lawrence Park is part of a network of green spaces stretching across the City and along the River Tyne contributing to a wider Green Infrastructure network within the Newcastle-Gateshead Growth Point. Started with £8,000 from Natural England and further supported by £4,000 funding from Newcastle City Council , the project is part of the New Leaf New Life Portfolio funded by the Big Lottery Fund and hosted by the North East Strategic Health Authority. The efforts of Green Gym volunteers and the Friends of St. Lawrence Park group co-ordinated by the environmental organisation Groundwork are transforming what was a neglected park into a valued greenspace.

Located in a socially deprived area, the St. Lawrence Park project aims to deliver benefits for the local community and biodiversity through improving the quality of the park and turning an area with overgrown vegetation and anti-social problems into a focus of community pride and well-being. This is being achieved through the involvement of community groups such as the Friends of St. Lawrence Park group and the "Green Gym" volunteers. The Green Gym encourages people to improve their physical and mental health through participation in conservation and horticulture activities; whilst improving local community areas.

Since the project started in March 2009 these volunteers have been working on improving the environment and helping manage the four hectare habitat and parkland. To date they have carried out a survey of the plants growing in the wildflower meadow by the Byker cycle path and also turned

an overgrown flowerbed into an attraction for bees and butterflies. Future plans include wildflower planting, clearing woodland and maintaining the footpaths.

Although still in its infancy, this first phase of the project has encouraged the local community to get active whilst undertaking environmental and conservation work. The environmental benefits are clearly visible and the social benefits are evident in the growing numbers of volunteers working in the park: the group of volunteers has grown to fifteen since the project began.

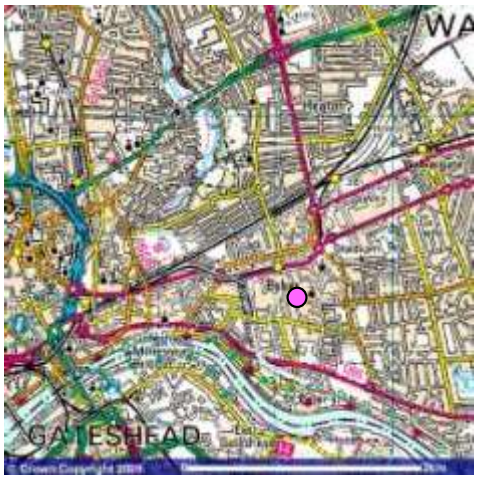
Without the initial funding from Natural England this project would never have got off the ground. The achievements to date are providing a solid foundation upon which to plan the next two phases which will provide green exercise facilities and focus on the health benefits of open space. Moreover, the achievements have strengthened the case for additional funding in the future. With this kind of good management the project can look forward with optimism to further enhancing the social and economic welfare of the community through improved health and wellbeing.

For more information please contact:

Alene Jauncey
Groundwork South Tyneside and Newcastle Green Gym

Tel: 0191 428 1144

Email: alene.jauncey@groundwork.org.uk



Located in the south west corner of Byker, this site is approximately 1.5km from Newcastle City Centre. The elevated, southerly sloping site has easy access to the River Tyne and the East Quayside. The site is bounded by Walker Road to the south, Albion Row to the west, St. Michael's Road to the north and Rodney Street to the east.

Thames Chase Community Forest



Source: http://www.designforlondon.gov.uk/uploads/media/ELGGarea3.pdf

Long-term relationships in the East

- Effective partnership working
- Conservation
- Developing volunteer groups

Thames Chase, one of twelve community forests in the UK (founded by the former Countryside Agency), is a wonderful example of people and agencies from public, private and voluntary sectors working together to manage and develop something truly special. This partnership project is working to achieve the goal of regenerating the land at the edge of east London and south Essex. The work done so far is testament to just how well this partnership approach is working. With the goal of increasing the woodland cover in the area from just 8% to 30% by 2030, the partnership has already planted 1.3m trees to increase the woodland cover to 13%. There's still a long way to go but it seems this partnership is definitely up to the challenge.

Community Forests are all about involving local people in the regeneration of the areas and places that make them up. The Thames Chase Partnership (made up of the five local council partners, the Confederation of British Industry, Country Landowners and Business Association, Forestry Commission and the National Farmers Union) has ensured there are plenty of opportunities for people to get involved in all aspects of the Woodland. Advice from the Arts Council, Natural England and Sport England continue to help the Partnership develop new projects and opportunities for the community.

Volunteers are helping out with conservation work, giving some time to help the Thames Chase education service and wherever else they are needed. The education service volunteers have helped many people feel valued in their community through helping young people learn to care about their environment whilst the conservation volunteers have learned new skills and made new friends in the process of enhancing the woodland. There are now several volunteer warden or 'friends of' schemes operating across the woodlands in Thames Chase and they are always looking for more help.

The trees, woodlands and green spaces of Thames Chase Community Woodland have brought people together who continue to work in partnership to the benefit of the environment and of their local community. Their efforts have created almost two square miles of new woodland and almost 56 miles of new or upgraded paths.

20 years since its inception and with £9 million Government funding for woodland planting since 2000, there is no doubt that this is one project that is delivering!

For more information please contact:

Thames Chase

Upminster, Essex

Tel: 01708 641880
http://www.thameschase.org.uk/



Located to the east of London, Thames Chase is not far from Junction 28 of the M25. Heading towards Cranham and Upminster on the B186, the Thames Chase Forest Centre can be found in Pike Lane. There are many access points to the many different woodland areas within the 10,400 hectare area.

Wat Tyler Country Park



Everything is green in the East

- Effective use of sustainable technology
- Environmental Education
- Effective partnership working

This ambitious project in Pitsea, Essex, is a wonderful example of how sustainable technology can be used to bring new and exciting opportunities for the local community to learn about the natural environment. Several refurbished buildings are now carbon neutral and are part of an exciting development which is delivering new opportunities for education and learning. This programme of restoration, landscaping and interpretation is transforming Wat Tyler Country Park into one of the most popular and dynamic visitor attractions in the Thames Gateway. Being green has definitely brought many benefits to the local community!

The new heritage centre, the Wat Tyler Centre, boasts some great technology to enhance the low carbon credentials we all seek to achieve. It's powered by a woodchip boiler using home-grown fuel. Rainwater harvesting is used to flush the toilets, a passive ventilation system saves electricity and the spaces have been designed to capture lots of natural daylight. It is also home to an exciting interactive exhibition that lets people explore the explosives factory heritage of the park and its future as a space for nature at the heart of developments in the Thames Gateway region. State of the art classrooms are available for school visits and offer a great all-weather base for education visits exploring the park

Many partners are collaborating to establish the park as a central hub for visitors to the area as part of a wider plan. This has been recognised by the Government's Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), in their construction of a 'Parklands' concept that will put green spaces and the connections to them at the heart of the Thames Gateway strategic development.

Thanks to the collaborative efforts of many organisations and businesses and schools and the support of The National Lottery and Heritage Lottery Fund visitors to the Park are now able to access and enjoy a much wider range of facilities and experiences within this Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The innovative use of sustainable technology has not only created an energy efficient facility, it is a focus of learning and also a constant reminder to every visitor of the importance of environmental conservation. This project is now regarded as a model for other sustainable development programmes.

For more information please contact:

Wat Tyler Country Park
Pitsea,Basildon,Essex

Tel: 01268 550 088

Email to: info@wattylercountrypark.org.uk



Located 15 minutes from the M25, 10 minutes from Basildon Town Centre, Essex, the 50 hectare park can be accessed just off the A13 towards Pitsea railway station. Situated within the **South Essex Marshes**, the features of its landscape such as grazing meadows, ancient hedgerows, blast mounds, tidal waterways, sea walls and field boundaries are evidence of the way people used the area. Over 350,000 people now visit the Park every year.

Watchtree Nature Reserve



Nature in the care of the young in the North West

- Environmental education
- Volunteering
- Access management

Watchtree Nature Reserve is a DEFRA (Department of the Environment Food and Rural Affairs) owned site which is managed by a charitable trust, Watchtree Nature Reserve Ltd, through a Land Management and Funding Agreement with a twenty-five year lease on the land. The Trust's environmental education work with young people is developing a wonderful legacy of future generations of adults who understand the value of the natural environment and the need to conserve it. In addition, an out of hours restricted access policy which requires membership of the Friends of Watchtree group and participation in an induction programme is further ensuring frequent users are accepting responsibility for securing the future of the Reserve.

The Watchtree staff are using a range of approaches to getting young people interested in the environment. With the National Curriculum in mind, staff are able to meet the needs of Primary, Junior and Secondary pupils through subjects including Science, Geography, Art and Local History.

Education is not limited to schools however. Watchtree also works with young persons' organisations and universities. For example, work is on-going with staff and students of the University Of Central Lancashire in Penrith (UCLAN) which is focusing on ways of enhancing grassland and grazing management at the reserve.

Whilst the focus on educating young people about the environment is delivering many social and economic benefits to the local community, the work of the Friends of Watchtree group makes a tangible contribution to the management and development of the reserve. Some group members help out with office-based work whilst others tackle practical conservation tasks in the weekly volunteer work parties. The satisfaction members get from being involved in the friends group must

be contagious for there are now over one hundred and fifty 'Friends' some of whom have become Directors and are now involved with decision-making and project management in the reserve. Such enthusiasm and commitment is a real boon to the work of the Watchtree Nature Reserve trust.

No one is left out at Watchtree. The nature reserve is home to the Watchtree Wheelers, a cycling club for elderly, disadvantaged and disabled cyclists. The 'Wheelers' used winnings from ITV Border People's Millions to establish a cycle exercise area and wide cycle track network for use by specially adapted cycles that enables access for all to the many attractions that the reserve offers. Adapted cycles, including tricycles, quads, wheelchairs and tandems are available for use every Friday.

Effective communication has been a major contributing factor to getting people of all ages involved in looking after the reserve. Blog-tree, the Watchtree weblog, is a particularly innovative way to tell people what's going on at the park. Maintained by Tim Lawrence, the reserve manager, the blog keeps people up to date with recent achievements, seasonal changes in the environment and forthcoming events. In addition the reserve's website includes a 'kid's page' containing sheets and workbooks which can be downloaded. What better way to engage young people and to keep people involved in the life of the reserve?

For further information please contact:

Tim Lawrence
Watchtree Nature Reserve Management

Tel: 01228 712539

Email: wnr@watchtree.co.uk



Located near Great Orton to the south of Carlisle, the 24 hectare Watchtree Nature Reserve is not far from the A595 and is easily accessible from all directions. Routes to the reserve are clearly signposted.

West Park, Darlington



Greenspace in the North East: a sense of pride, place and well-being

- Access to natural greenspace
- Promotion of healthy lifestyle
- Sense of place/ local pride
- Environmental education

Before West Park was developed, this area was Darlington's only significant remaining area of industrial dereliction. In only seven years it has made a significant contribution to the sustainability and well-being of the local community. A multi-partnership approach between local authorities and developers is bringing to life a ten year plan for a sustainable new community. Assisted by funding from Natural England, the development of Greenspace has become a key feature in creating a sense of place for this new community and a focus for learning and improving health and well-being. The West Park development has already won several prestigious awards, including the RICS Gold Award for Regeneration and, last year, the LCG Sustainable Community Award.

Each partner contributing to the promotion of the park in combination with a levy-based funding scheme applicable to all properties in the park has helped establish some of the elements of sustainability in a fairly short period of time. As well as a strong focus on art and sculpture, Darlington Borough Council has actively encouraged use for recreation and green exercise. The site is strongly linked with the surrounding area. It is well connected to existing neighbourhoods via waggon ways, a network of paths along which horse drawn wagons were used to transport coal in the 17th and 18th centuries, while the West Park bike track was opened in 2007 and supported initially by North East Community Forests (NECF), is now supported by Groundwork West Durham and Darlington and Hamsterley Trailblazers. The Borough Council's Sport Development team also

delivers a full programme of training activities on sports cycling and work with local schools to help children learn about mountain biking. A planning application has now been submitted for the development of a children's play area within the park.

The West Park Friends Group is now established and plays a major role in the development of the park. Membership is open to anyone who pays the West Park levy (currently £50) thus reinforcing the place of West Park in the identity of the local community. The NECF volunteers also work closely with Darlington Borough Council's Countryside Team to maintain the park and help out at events.

The Park is also a valuable resource in helping the rehabilitation of adults with acute mental health problems. A partnership between the Ranger Service and West Park Hospital has established a programme in which patients are taken out walking in the park which not only helps their fitness, but also helps them to interact with other people and learn more about nature and conservation. Patients also participate in gardening activities in the Park.

West Park is a wonderful example of a Greenspace serving multiple functions and delivering multiple benefits to multiple user groups. It is not surprising that the park contributes significantly to Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) and the more rigorous ANGSt+ for connectivity to other areas.

For further information please contact:

Parks and Countryside Team
Darlington Borough Council

Phone: 01325 388648/ 388637

Email: countryside@darlington.gov.uk



Located just off the A68, close to junction 58 of the A1(M), West Park is a hill top, partially wooded parkland covering 12 hectares within the 49 hectare West Park development between the Cockerton and Faverdale areas of Darlington.

Photo credits:

Front cover, Pages 18, 47 – ©Natural England/Indigo Photography

Pages 3, 20, 41, 49, 51 – ©Natural England/Lucy Heath

Page 24 – ©Natural England/David Knight

Pages 32, 61 – ©Timberplay

Pages 35, 40 – ©Lucy Heath

Page 57 – ©Dorset County Council website

Page 63 – ©Michael Trolove. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic License

Page 65 – ©CABE website

Page 67 – ©Incredible Edible Todmorden website

Page 69 – ©Forestry Commission

Page 73 – ©Keep Britain Tidy

Page 77 – ©Stockport Borough Council

Page 81 – ©Garth Newton

Page 83 – ©Natural England

Page 85 – © Melbourne School of Land and Environment

Page 87 – © Mark Smiles. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic License

Page 89 – Design for London website

This guidance document was prepared by Pengelly Consulting and draws from a number of internally developed Natural England guidance notes and position statements.

During the development of the guidance, advice was sought from both an internal advisory group working both on people and access and on green infrastructure planning bringing the two together to make a coherent voice. Comments were also sought and noted from external partners within the parks and greenspace sector.



Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings.

© Natural England 2010

NE265

www.naturalengland.org

Natural England publications are available as accessible pdfs from:
www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications

Should an alternative format of this publication be required, please contact our enquiries line for more information: 0845 600 3078 or email enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk