

Hackney Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

2021 - 2031



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Introduction

People love our parks and green spaces. They provide much needed space to breathe, exercise, socialise and play. We are proud that our parks and green spaces are well used, that local people feel passionately about protecting them, and that they are seen by many as the jewel in Hackney’s crown.

Our parks and green spaces also face challenges. The growing deficit between the cost of maintaining our parks and green spaces and the declining resources that are available to develop and manage them, the problems that affect our network of parks and green spaces as a whole and the local issues that differ from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, and the climate emergency, are all challenges we need to rise to.

In addition, from 2021 Hackney’s 295 parks, green spaces and housing green spaces will all be managed by the same team, so we will need to work hard to ensure that all our parks and green spaces look great, and are the inclusive, accessible, safe and welcoming places our communities need and deserve.

It’s difficult to predict the impact of these issues in the future, but what we do know is our parks and green spaces can’t and won’t thrive in isolation. In writing this strategy and speaking to young people, experts, user groups, staff, partners and stakeholders about these challenges, we have identified three key areas of focus to help guide our work and a set of commitments we will introduce to improve our parks and green spaces.



The three key areas of focus are:

- 1/ Getting better at working with partners and local people to maintain and improve our parks and green spaces
- 2/ Activating our spaces to bring them to life for a wider range of communities
- 3/ Responding to the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis

Thank you to everyone who contributed ideas, ambitions and solutions to this strategy. We look forward to working with you over the next ten years to ensure our parks and green spaces flourish at the heart of communities and continue to define the type of borough that we are.



Cllr Jon Burke,
Cabinet Member
for Energy, Waste,
Transport & Public Realm



**Mayor Philip
Glanville**



Hackney Youth Parliament

How we developed the strategy

A group of experts, staff and young people helped us to kick start the process. They told us who we should be speaking to, how and where we should be hearing from them, and the themes and issues we should be asking them about.

Rethinking Parks and Green Spaces Focus Group

LET'S TALK ABOUT PARKS...

"Parks are one service where we could actually reduce the carbon footprint, you could lead the way"

"Be ambitious - don't put a limit on the ambition"

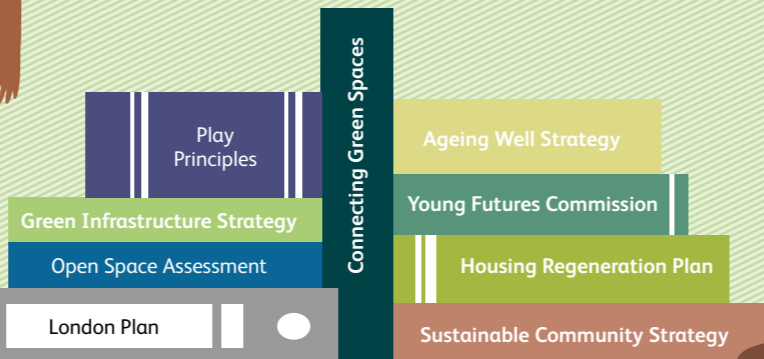
"Aim high!"

"The strategy needs to be about Hackney people and their lives"

"Make it about solutions and education, don't get stuck on problems and challenges"

We read everything that was shared with us, organised meetings and focus group sessions with the people we needed to hear from, and started to build a database of insight, feedback and ideas about Hackney's parks and green spaces.

Research



We are grateful to everyone who shared with us the ideas, ambitions and solutions that have shaped the strategy.

Engagement

23

meetings and sessions with people working in environment, conservation sustainability, planning, housing, sports, NHS, community organisations

7

meetings and sessions to gather insight from public health and recent commissions and consultations with residents, older people and young people

3

team meetings with parks staff, park managers and heads of service

8

focus groups with young people, people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and staff working in the Parks, Culture and Heritage, Events and Sports and Fitness teams

12

weeks of research using planning and insight from consultations with Hackney residents and communities and other strategies relating to green space, play development and environmental sustainability.

Writing the Draft Strategy

We used all the comments, feedback and ideas to create a vision and set of commitments to guide the work of the service over the next 10 years.

What Do You Think?

This strategy is only a draft. We now want to hear what you think about it. Do we have the right priorities? Is anything missing? We want to hear from you!

Visit www.hackney.gov.uk/parks to have your say

have **your** say



Your Vision for Parks and Green Spaces in Hackney



In the Rethinking Parks and Green Spaces Focus Group and in meetings with young people, partners, stakeholders, Hackney Parks Forum, staff and other experts, a number of key themes emerged.

You told us you wanted:

- More green spaces
- A diverse range of parks and green spaces
- Safe and welcoming green spaces
- Parks and green spaces with communities at the heart
- Financially sustainable parks and green spaces
- Parks and green spaces run in partnership with others
- A response to the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis

These priorities fall broadly under three key themes.

To deliver your vision for Hackney's parks and green spaces by 2030 we will...



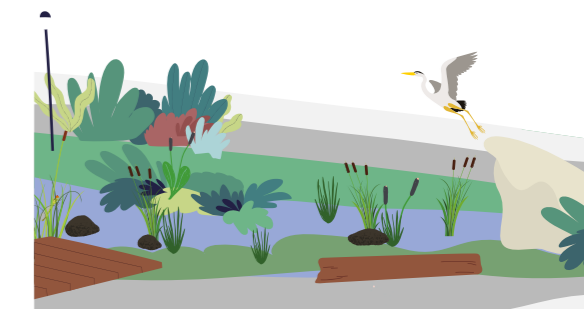
Work with communities

We will include young people and a more representative range of communities not just in decision making, but also in looking after our parks and green spaces. A comprehensive volunteering programme will improve our green spaces as well as improving people's physical and mental health.



Activate our parks and green spaces

The best way of making our spaces safer and more attractive is to activate them with positive use. We will work with partners to deliver activities that will improve people's health, as well as physically improve parks and green spaces to make them more attractive to use.



Be more environmentally sustainable

We will manage our parks and green spaces as a network, identifying opportunities to link green spaces to the wider public realm, as well as each other. This is about developing environmentally sustainable solutions that are bold and ambitious, increase climate resilience, the biodiversity of sites and the quality of life for our residents.

Communities would like more of a say in the big decisions affecting our parks and green spaces

We will work with communities

Hackney is a borough defined by its rich mix of cultures and communities. Over the next ten years we will engage with local people, partners and volunteers to develop and improve our parks and green spaces and to establish a more comprehensive volunteering programme, ensuring that our volunteers are reflective of our community.

What you told us

A wide network of Park User Groups, local partners, voluntary organisations, and local residents commit time and play an invaluable role in the improvement of Hackney’s parks and green spaces and helping to shape and deliver the events and activities within them.

We couldn’t do it without you, but many of you would like to see us including a broader range of communities and age groups in this work, for us to provide more volunteering opportunities for people to help look after their local green space, and to make it easier for local people to organise their own events.

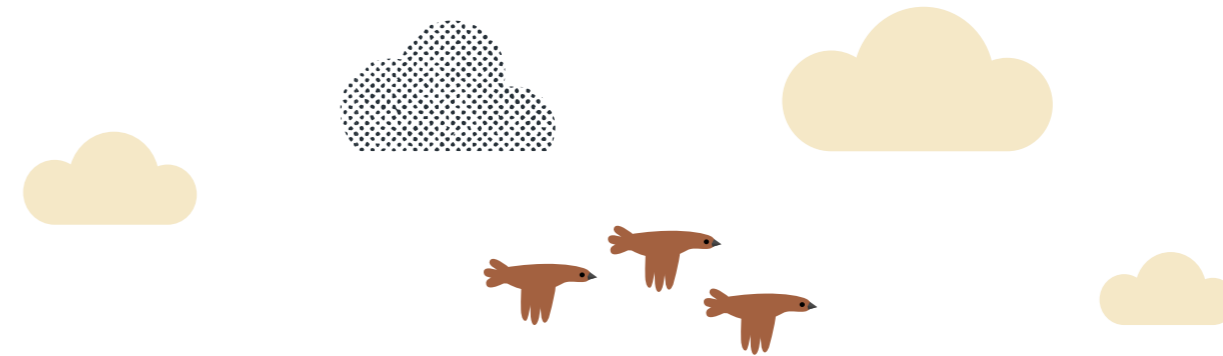


You told us a wide range of communities already use Hackney parks and green spaces, but that there are still a number of barriers we need to work with local people to understand and remove.

The biggest issues you told us about were dogs, barbecues, antisocial behaviour and safety, and many of you want us to spend more time listening to local communities and trying to find solutions that mean more people can enjoy our parks and green spaces and feel comfortable and welcome in them.

You also told us that we could do more to get children and young people involved in environmental activities in parks and green spaces and in doing so we would ensure they are more likely to care for our green spaces when they are older.

We face significant financial pressures over the next ten years, and will start exploring whether a non-profit ‘Hackney Parks and Green Spaces Foundation’ could help raise funds to support Hackney’s parks and green spaces.



To work more closely with communities we will...

Engage with people

- 1/ Involve young people in designing our response to the climate emergency, children’s play spaces, sports provision and informal socialising spaces
- 2/ Consult people on whether Hackney’s Dog Control Orders / PSPOs / byelaws need updating
- 3/ Collate crime data from the community safety partnership to identify and tackle specific areas of vandalism, anti-social behaviour and crime
- 4/ Engage local communities, residents and tenants in improvements that affect their local parks and housing green spaces, with continued engagement from outset to delivery, with a special effort made to reach and hear from underrepresented groups
- 5/ Explore the potential for a non-profit “Hackney Parks Foundation” to help raise funds to support Hackney’s parks and green spaces

Invest in our staff and develop Volunteering

- 6/ Develop a skills/employment pathway, creating opportunities for structured career progression, and an extensive training programme for our staff
- 7/ Appoint a dedicated Volunteering Officer to oversee a comprehensive and intergenerational volunteering programme in Hackney’s parks and green spaces
- 8/ Undertake a review of Hackney Parks Forum to ensure that it is fit for purpose, representative of our diverse local communities, and a useful network for Park User Groups to share learning and ideas around parks and green spaces
- 9/ Continue to support the Tree Musketeers, and work in partnership with them to plan future tree planting
- 10/ Develop a work experience and apprenticeship programme and explore supported opportunities for people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities



We will activate our parks and green spaces

One of the best ways of making parks and green spaces feel safer and more welcoming is by ensuring that they are well used by local people.

We have limited resources to put on lots of activities and events ourselves, but over the next ten years we will work with communities and partners to assist them in hosting appropriate community activities and events in our parks and green spaces. We will activate our green spaces with more opportunities to buy food and drink.

We will also physically improve them so that they have the right balance of natural, social and active space for the communities that live around them and the wildlife that lives within them.

What you told us

You told us that these parks and green spaces were a sanctuary and respite for children and young people with additional needs and their families and carers.

You speak fondly of the opportunities you have had to help develop play, social and sports spaces, and art, play trails, murals, signage and other creative features and cultural events within our parks and housing green spaces. You told us that these parks and green spaces thrive at the heart of communities and have shaped the identity of local neighbourhoods.



You told us that protecting the character of individual parks and green spaces and having a diverse range of parks and green spaces was important, but that we also need to be more adventurous when exploring the potential of every green space (even our small estate green spaces) and think about spreading informal sports and physical activity provision and wild and natural space more evenly across the borough.

You would like play spaces to be more natural, with an element of risk, and for us to be more creative about mixing nature, play and discovery.

We could make better use of the creative and artistic talent we have in the borough and the rich history, culture and heritage of our parks and green spaces.

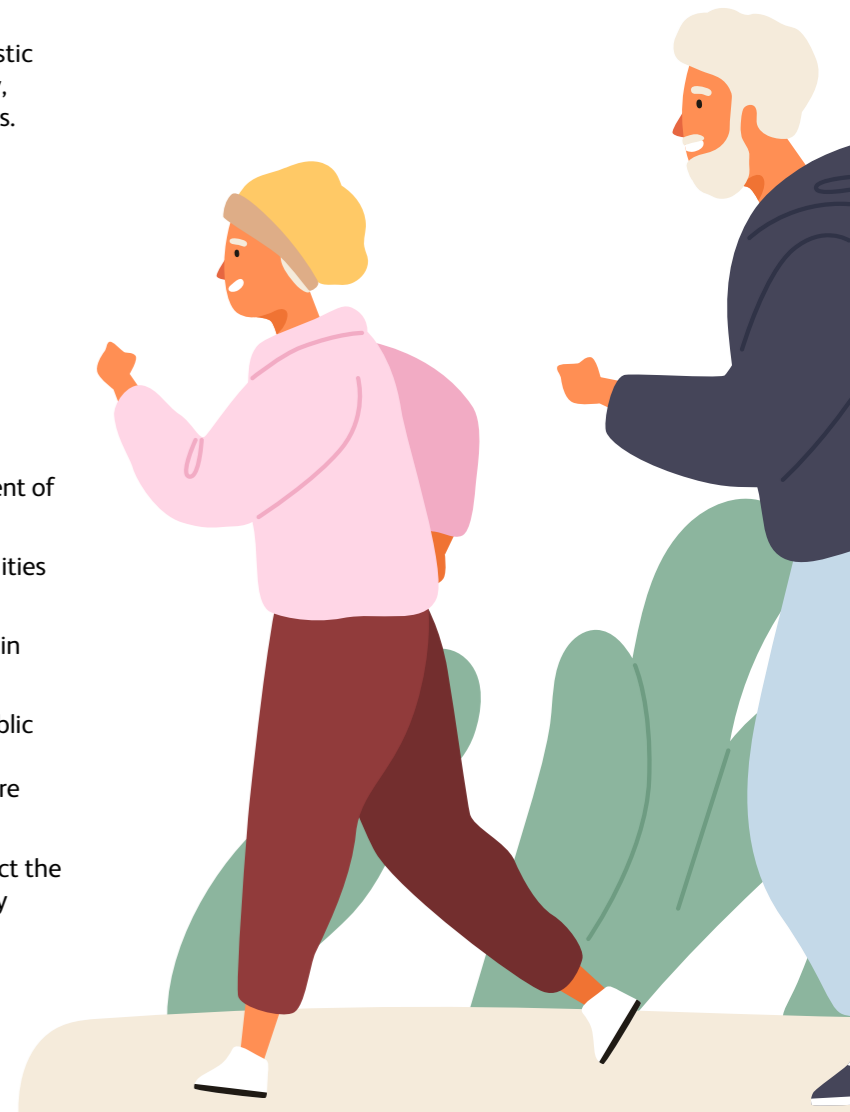
To activate our parks and green spaces we will work with partners to...

Host events and activities

- 11/ Introduce a series of skills sharing opportunities, gardening talks, lessons and workshops for communities
- 12/ Expand provision and increase activities for young people in our parks, facilities and green spaces
- 13/ Make it easier for residents to plan and host appropriate community and cultural events in parks and green spaces
- 14/ Identify food growing opportunities on housing estates
- 15/ Prescribe activities across parks and green space to improve people's health and wellbeing

Physically improve our green spaces

- 16/ Create a design guide to inform the development of parks and green spaces, including play areas
- 17/ Create criteria for investing in parks, sports facilities and play improvements
- 18/ Expand the provision of cafes and food outlets in parks and green spaces
- 19/ Develop a Hackney Parks and Green Spaces Public Art and Culture Strategy and Policy to secure investment to deliver more public art and culture
- 20/ Involve older people in designing and improving our parks and green spaces to reflect the recommendations of the Ageing Well Strategy



We will be more environmentally sustainable

Over the next ten years, we will treat our parks and green spaces as one interconnected green network as part of our 'Connecting Green Spaces' programme. We are proud of the proactive steps we are already taking to reduce our carbon footprint and tackle climate change across our green spaces.

This section is about going further, making our parks and green spaces more connected, more environmentally friendly, reducing our carbon footprint, engaging people with nature, increasing natural areas and supporting a healthy ecosystem.

What you told us

Hackney's Youth Parliament, the children in our schools, and a wide variety of interest groups, voluntary and charity organisations already contribute a great deal to improving the environmental sustainability of our parks and green spaces across the borough and would like to work with us to make these spaces even wilder, more resilient, and more biodiverse.

You told us you wanted more green space and shared some really exciting ideas about spilling parks and green spaces out into neighbourhoods, creating more informal and natural play, making roads and paths and park entrances and boundaries greener, connecting up parks and green spaces better, improving housing estate green space, and planting more trees to improve air quality.

Many of you told us that access to nature was also really important to your physical and mental health and you'd like to see a more inclusive and accessible range of environmental activities and green and social prescribing initiatives in parks and green spaces.

Many of you would like to see us providing more opportunities for community food growing, gardening, and tree planting and more support for people to get involved in looking after these spaces as volunteers.

To be more environmentally sustainable we will...

Respond to the Climate emergency...

- 21/ Work towards becoming a Zero Carbon service by 2031
- 22/ Aim to re-use more green waste within parks and green spaces
- 23/ Eliminate single use plastic from all of our park cafes and kiosks
- 24/ Replace all single use bins with dual use recycling bins by 2031
- 25/ Introduce new sustainable drainage solutions in parks and green spaces

And the Biodiversity crisis

- 26/ Increase biodiversity across Hackney in line with the emerging Local Nature Recovery Plan, creating more wild areas across all parks and green spaces
- 27/ Eliminate all annual planting and replace it with more sustainable and drought tolerant planting schemes
- 28/ Significantly reduce the use of Glyphosate, and continue to explore alternatives
- 29/ Follow the recommendations of the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy where they relate to parks and green spaces, including identifying opportunities to connect parks and green spaces together
- 30/ Develop and deliver an extensive training programme for staff around biodiversity and sustainability




The next ten years...

As we look ahead to the next ten years we remain committed to meeting the challenges and exploring the opportunities presented to us by better working with our communities, activating our green spaces and becoming more environmentally and financially sustainable.

...and we're off to a good start. Our staff and volunteers are already rising to many of these challenges, thinking differently about how services are developed and delivered, addressing climate change in parks and green spaces, finding opportunities to generate income to reinvest back into the service, and continuing to explore the role partners, volunteers and young people can play in helping to look after and develop our parks and green spaces.

This strategy is dedicated to our hard working parks and green spaces staff and volunteers, who work so hard in all weathers to keep our parks and green spaces looking as amazing as they do. None of this would be possible without their dedication, and they will be key to delivering this strategy over the next ten years.

 The 30 commitments we have made in this strategy will help us to develop and improve Hackney's parks and green spaces over the next ten years.

Each year we will produce annual action plans to outline how we will deliver the commitments, and annual reports that will update you on progress. All annual reports will be published on the Council's website.



