Bristol City Council

Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and

Food Growing and Allotments Strategy

It is our ambition that by 2039, all our communities feel that parks are accessible, inclusive, safe, fun and rich in nature and wildlife. We want more people than ever before to visit our parks and stay for longer, and to take part in activities which make them healthier and happier.

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

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Foreword

A quarter of Bristol is covered by over 400 beautiful parks and natural open spaces. We are lucky to live in a city so rich in parks, woodlands, areas for nature, playgrounds and playing pitches; from the expanse of The Downs to community pocket parks, over half of us enjoy a visit to a park every week. Our parks are beautiful destinations for us to exercise, socialise, relax and play, bringing proven benefits to our health, wellbeing, and life satisfaction. They also support events and festivals, food growing and organised sport. Our green spaces are rich and diverse in nature and wildlife, and key to tackling the climate and ecological emergencies. Our work to plant more trees, promote biodiversity, protect wildlife habitats and support local food production, all contribute to a healthy and sustainable city.

In Bristol, working together with partners across business, voluntary and community sectors, we have set a One City ambition that everyone should have access to an excellent quality park within a 10-minute walk of home. We are recognised nationally for our commitment to parks and green spaces, and this strategy sets out our approach and priorities for maintaining and improving these cherished places.

The value of our parks as community spaces was made clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, and now during the cost-of-living crisis. We know, however, that not all Bristol residents access green spaces equally. Overall satisfaction with parks is high across the city, but this is notably lower in disadvantaged areas. We know that factors such as gender, ethnicity and physical ability can influence how often a person visits a park in the city. This means that there are people who stand to benefit most from our parks, but currently, they do not.

We are committed to understanding and tackling the barriers that prevent some of our communities accessing the benefits our parks provide. We want everyone in our city to feel that our parks are relevant to them, that they are welcoming and that their needs are catered for.

Thirteen years of government-imposed austerity means that budgets for parks have reduced by around two-thirds since 2010. We must therefore look creatively to harness the energy and resource available in the city. Communities know their area best, and we want to work with groups to deliver a joint vision. To do this, we are committed to developing a sustainable Parks Service that is informed, collaborative, creative and responsive to the needs of Bristolians. This strategy sets out our vision for managing and improving our services to deliver multiple benefits.

I am proud to live in a city where local people value and contribute so much to our parks and green spaces. I want to take the opportunity to thank all the organisations, staff and volunteers who have contributed to this work, as well as those, including 67 Friends of Parks groups, who do so much around the city to maintain and improve our parks and green spaces.

Councillor Ellie King

Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities

Hengrove Park
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Bristol's Parks in 2023

Bristol's parks and green spaces are a significant part of the city's landscape, offering a wide variety of benefits ranging from recreation and culture, to supporting sustainable food growing and renewing wildlife habitats. Our Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (PGSS) has been developed in recognition of the added value these spaces can bring to the city, and the potential they have to support the city's overarching vision of becoming a 'fair, healthy and sustainable city, a city of hope and aspiration where everyone can share its success.'

The strategy has also been produced in recognition of the increasingly difficult financial situation that local authorities are in because of central government funding cuts. It is estimated that, nationally, parks budgets have fallen in real terms by £350m since 2011; Bristol's relatively healthy parks and green space provision also means that we have been ineligible for major grants such as the Levelling Up Parks Fund (2022). This, combined with demand for other financially restrained council services, has meant that our strategic direction has shifted from our last PGSS (2008-2023) to focus on how we work more collaboratively and creatively to ensure the benefits of parks are shared fairly across the city.

While the impact of long-term austerity and cuts to public sector funding have established a new set of barriers to delivery, there are lots of achievements and successes from the last PGSS period that we aim to build on and enhance. Since the adoption of the last strategy in 2008, Bristol has been recognised as having two of the top 10 parks in the UK for welfare value (at a combined value of £20,694,915 per year). The same research highlights that white people are 1.8 times more likely to take a trip to a recreation site than a black person, and the wealthiest individuals are 1.6 times more likely to take a similar trip than the poorest. Our strategy has a clear focus on how we address this sort of unfairness at a local level.

View over Victoria Park towards Park Street
© Boys in Bristol

The 15 year period since the last strategy was adopted has also seen nearly 100,000 trees being planted via our One Tree Per Child programme and the designation of nine new Local Nature Reserves. The parks service also played a critical role in Bristol becoming only the second city in the UK to be awarded Gold Sustainable Food City status. It is our ambition to build on these successes – and the benefits they have brought the city – alongside engagement with a range of stakeholders, that have supported us to define our vision, principles and priority themes for the next 15 year period.

Snuff Mills © BCC

Castle Park © BCC

Oldbury Court © BCC

A Vision for Parks in 2039

Our vision for Bristol is that by 2039, all our communities feel that parks are accessible, inclusive, safe, fun and rich in nature and wildlife. We want more people than ever before to visit our parks and stay for longer, and to take part in activities which make them healthier and happier.

Bristol's green spaces will be thriving places for nature and will play a significant role in tackling the ecological emergency. They will help to tackle the climate emergency and keeping Bristol cool.

Our parks will be a sustainable long-term community asset. Bristol City Council's Parks Service will be flexible and local, recognising that Bristol is made of many communities with different needs. Our parks workforce will be highly skilled and more diverse and reflective of the communities we serve. Bristol City Council will manage parks and green spaces strategically to prioritise areas of greatest need.

Our Food and Allotments Strategy (which is embedded within this strategy) will support the city's aspirations to achieve greater food equality, and will ensure that more communities – especially those from the city's disadvantaged wards – have suitable access to food growing opportunities. We will also aspire to bring more allotments in to use and support Bristol's farming social enterprises to access food growing land to support local and sustainable food supplies for Bristol.

Bristol's parks will be managed in partnership with communities. Community groups across Bristol will be empowered to improve our parks, manage areas, and deliver their local vision. The power and resilience of community groups will be improved by their access to and involvement in parks and green spaces.

Queen Square
© BCC

Our vision: **By 2039, all our communities feel that parks are accessible, inclusive, safe, fun and rich in nature and wildlife. We want more people than ever before to visit our parks and stay for longer, and to take part in activities which make them healthier and happier.**

Our vision will be guided by these **Strategic Principles:**

- Collaborative
- Creative
- Equitable and Inclusive
- Financially Sustainable
- Informed

Our principles will drive change in six **Strategic Priority Themes:**

- Nature and Climate
- Children and Young People
- Community Participation
- Health and Wellbeing
- Culture
- Employment and Skills

Food Growing and Allotments

As set out in our Food Growing and Allotments Strategy

Our work will deliver the following **benefits** for parks and green spaces

- Quality and Equity
- Accessible and Connected
- Sustainable and Resilient
- Playful and Fun
- Healthy and Active
- Educational and Inspiring
- Safe and Welcoming
- Nature

Chapter 2: Strategic Principles

In the early development of this strategy, we met with community groups and ran several workshops where stakeholders and interested groups came together (See Appendix A for a full list of stakeholders). People and organisations with a broad range of interests have helped to shape and inform this strategy's development. Our conversations have highlighted the need for us to ensure parks are accessible, inclusive, and meeting the needs of all of Bristol's diverse communities.

The feedback from these engagement sessions has informed our thinking on how we should work (our Strategic Principles) and what we should focus on (our Priority Themes) to deliver improvements on our parks and green spaces for the next 15 years.

This strategy sets out our ambition for delivering high-quality, accessible, fun, and safe parks and green spaces, while balancing the need to maintain these spaces in a sustainable and responsible manner. To achieve this, it is essential that our delivery is guided by a set of principles which reflect the views of our stakeholders, as well as the ambitions of the organisation and the city as a whole.

We believe that the following five guiding principles will create the appropriate conditions for achieving our vision for parks in 2039:

Collaboration	We will seek to engage a more diverse range of stakeholders and commit to co-designing change in partnership with communities. By delivering with – rather than to – communities, we can achieve more, deliver greater benefits, and accomplish our shared objectives.
Creativity	We will find innovative and creative ways of addressing the biggest challenges outlined in this strategy, and – using an open dialogue with stakeholders and communities – will seek to adapt to new ideas and new ways of thinking.
Equity and Inclusion	Using Bristol City Council's Equity and Inclusion Policy and Strategic Framework as a guide, we will seek opportunities to collaborate with a more diverse group of stakeholders to achieve our goal of making parks and green spaces more accessible and inclusive for people of all backgrounds. We will be mindful of the impact on equalities groups in all our service delivery.
Financial Sustainability	We will be driven by an ambition to create a sustainable and long-term future for parks, focussing on how we can make the most of our assets – both the parks estate and the communities who use them – to drive investment and generate income for future use. We'll be open to new partnerships and opportunities to secure more income for the parks service.
Informed	Our creative approach to developing new and existing spaces will be informed by a growing evidence base which includes local data, learning from the successes of other places and from proactively forming relationships with stakeholders and communities across the city.

Chapter 3: **The Bigger Picture**

This strategy sets out our ambitions for Bristol's parks and green spaces over the next 15 years, and how we aim to work collaboratively to reach our shared goals. The ambitions and actions which underpin this strategy have not been created in isolation; aside from establishing them in conversation with communities and stakeholders, they have been developed in response to relevant national, regional, and local strategies.

At a **national level**, our strategy supports the government's ambition to ensure everyone has a green space within at least a 15-minute walk. We also considered international agreements such as the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration as we think globally and act locally through strategic delivery.

At a **regional level**, our strategy will aim to align with the West of England Combined Authority's (referred to as WECA in this document) West of England Nature Recovery Strategy and the forthcoming local nature recovery strategy

At a **local level**, the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy has been primarily influenced by Bristol's One City Plan as it sets out a city-wide and shared vision for what we want Bristol to look like in 2050. This is the guiding strategic document for other key strategies such as the One City Climate Strategy, so the relevant goals within it are referenced throughout this document.

St George's Park
© Boys in Bristol

Relevant City Strategies and Goals

Bristol's One City Plan - In 2050, Bristol is a fair, healthy and sustainable city. A city of hope and aspiration, where everyone can share in its sucess.

One City, Climate Strategy	One City, Ecological Emergency Strategy	Bristol Health and Wellbeing Strategy	One City, Food Equality Strategy	Bristol Good Food 2030
'In 2030, Bristol is carbon neutral and climate resilient. We have collectively achieved a fair and inclusive transition; capturing the opportunities of new jobs and investiment, improved health, wellbeing and education, and a better environment for local people. We have helped lead the way to a safer global climate.'	'From today, we will work together as a city to ensure that 30% of Bristol's land is managed for nature. We will create space for nature, and unite to find new, fair and inclusive ways to reduce and elimate the threats to habitats and wildlife. Together we will take action for nature so that both people and wildlife can benefit.'	'... Citizens to thrive in a city that suppports their mental and physical health and wellbeing, with children growing up free of 'Adverse Childcare Experiences', and the gaps in health outcomes between the most economically-deprived areas and the most affluent areas of Bristol significantly reduced.'	'Food equality exists when all people, at all times, have access to nutritious, affordable and appropriate food acording to their social, cultural and dietary needs. They are equipped with the resources, skills and knowledge to use and benefit from, which is sourced from a resilient, fair and environmentally sustainable food system.'	'As well as being tasty, healthy, affordable and accessible, the food we eat should be good for nature, good for workers, good for local communities, good for local businesses, and good for animal welfare.'

Bristol City Council - Green Infrastructure Strategy: To be developed in 2024 to form the council's wider approach to its network of green infrastructure (for which the Parks and Green Spaces will form a part).

- West of England Tree and Woodland Strategy
- One City Tree and Woodland Strategy
- Bristol City Council Food Growing and Allotments Strategy (contained in this strategy)
- Bristol City Council Managing for Nature Plan
- West of England Nature Recovery Strategy

In development

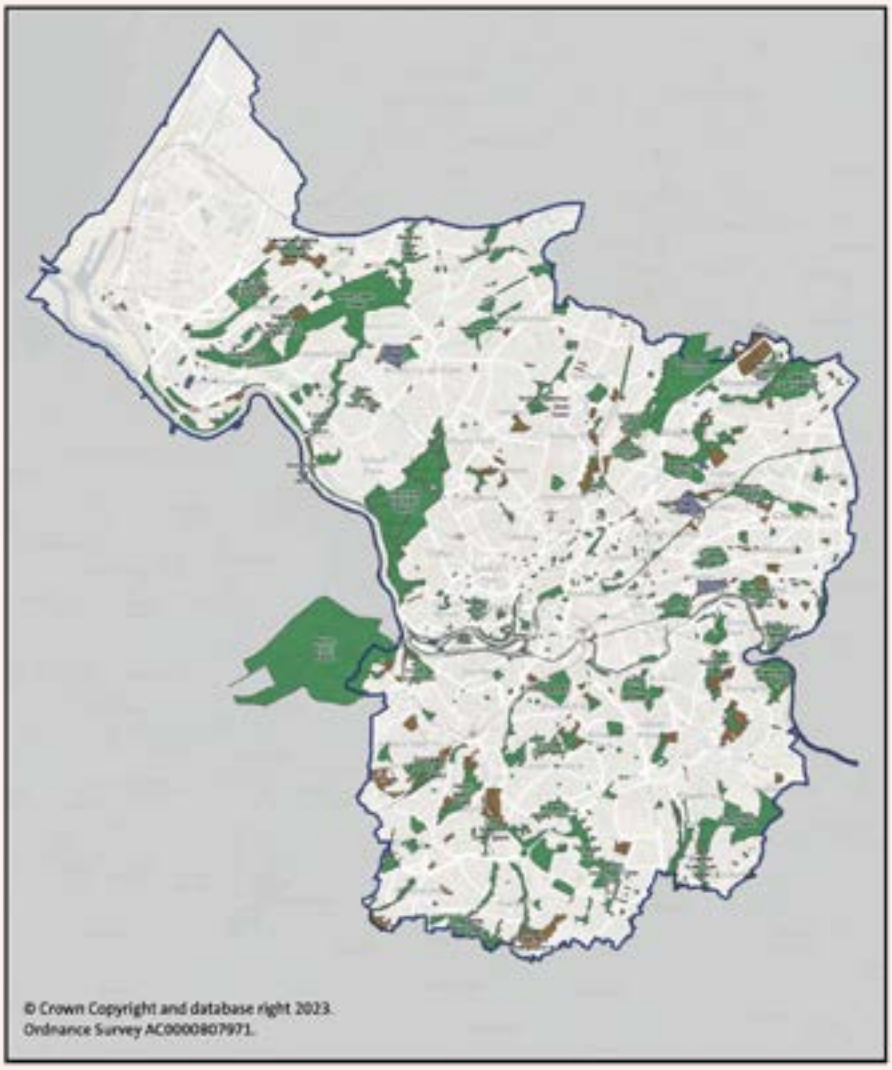
But as well as being driven by – and contributing towards – the goals of the One City Plan, the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy also anchors other important strategic work. As the diagram above shows, this strategy influences and integrates with other work being delivered in the future.

Chapter 4: **What Space is Included in this Strategy?**

The commitments, actions and standards contained in this strategy apply to:

- Public parks and green spaces,
- Allotments and other food growing land,
- Closed burial grounds and active cemeteries,
- Most of the land used for grazing in the city.

Most of this land is managed by the council's Parks Service, but includes some sites managed by others when they offer full public access. There are other green spaces managed by the council that are not included because they do not offer full public access for recreation, such as green space on housing estates, roadside verges and school playing fields. However, where appropriate, we will consider opportunities to use these green spaces in a way that achieves our strategic aims. We have also included commitments to working collaboratively with city partners where they are responsible for accessible green space. Doing so will help us achieve our shared goals and support the delivery of our overall vision for Bristol.



Map of green space considered by the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

Recreational green space
Food growing or grazing land
Cemeteries and churchyards with access for recreation

Green Space Provision Standards: Quality, Quantity and Distance

The Parks and Green Spaces Strategy proposes to update minimum standards for publicly accessible open spaces for recreation in Bristol, previously established in the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy 2008 - 2023.

The purpose of setting standards is to help to ensure that residents across the city have sufficient and equitable access to high quality open space that meets their needs. Like all cities with a densely populated urban centre, it is not realistic to expect equal supply of green space across the whole of Bristol. These standards help to guide decisions by setting out city-wide provision, while also highlighting areas where the focus should be on ensuring enhanced quality of open spaces to meet the demands placed on them by higher levels of population.

The standards and approaches set out in this section of the strategy support three key aims:

- That we are able to deliver a net gain of green space for the whole city.
- Opportunities are taken for the creation of new open spaces for recreation in the Central and Inner Urban areas of the city, where the amount of open space in proximity to residents' homes is more limited than other parts of the city, and
- That investment will be used to drive up the quality of parks and green spaces in areas with the highest levels of inequality and in a way that is defined and co-designed with communities.

The standards for open space for recreation are applicable to defined types of space. These include the city's public parks, playing fields and children's play spaces and formal spaces which have become recreational such as historic burial places. They are open spaces which are always publicly accessible and available for use by anyone in the city.

The standards we propose to adopt relate to:

1. **Quality:** What is the quality residents should expect from open spaces.
2. **Distance:** How far individuals travel to different types of open spaces.
3. **Quantity:** How much open space is available.

Quality

Our engagement shows quality is the most important factor for people visiting our parks and green spaces. We know from Bristol's Quality of Life survey that satisfaction with local parks is lower for people from the most disadvantaged areas of Bristol, as well as disabled people, and single parents. Establishing a more equitable spread of quality parks and green spaces in the city is a significant priority for this strategy. This strategy outlines our ambition for more community ownership, management, and control over green spaces in the city and we recognise that delivering better quality can only be achieved by working with communities and partners.

We will therefore seek to develop a revised quality standard, using the following commitments as a guide:

- We will recognise that quality does not mean the same to everyone and that we cannot assume we know what people's perception of quality is.
- We will work proactively with different communities – especially those who have lower satisfaction levels with parks and green spaces – to determine what quality means for people.

- We will use nationally recognised standards, such as the Green Flag Standard, as a guide to ensure our quality standards are robust and measurable.

We will use this revised quality standard to drive up standards across the city and realise our One City ambition of having an excellent quality park within a 10-minute walk of home. Our strategic aim is to prioritise raising the quality of parks in areas of higher deprivation and where satisfaction is currently low.

Distance

The aim of distance standards is to:

- Protect and promote an accessible network of green space.
- Support communities and decision makers (such as Area Committees) when it comes to investing in parks and green spaces, particularly children's play areas.

The distance standards are based on research as to how far Bristol residents feel is reasonable to travel to get to different types of space that have a specific function, and on analysis of Bristol's layout to ensure the standards are credible.

Our distance provision standards are:

Distance to the nearest:	Minimum Standard:
Green Space	400m
Children's Play and Young Peoples Space	450m
Formal Green Space	600m
Informal Green Space	550m
Natural Green Space	700m

Distance standards do not apply to sports space, as the council's Playing Pitch Strategy determines provision based on a detailed calculation of supply and demand.

Quantity

Like similarly sized cities across the UK, the amount of green space varies as you move from the outskirts of Bristol towards the urban centre of the city. As we look forward to 2039, we are also anticipating that the population of the urban centre will grow faster than the outskirts of Bristol.

In line with our wider commitment to equity throughout this strategy, our desire is to achieve a fairer spread of parks and green spaces across the city. Differences in space and population growth mean that it is not possible to achieve the same supply of quantity everywhere, but it does mean that our quantity standards should:

- Continue to ensure there is a sufficient supply of parks and green space for all areas of Bristol as they grow in population size.
- Helps us to focus our resource on delivering new parks and green spaces in the areas that need them the most.
- Leads to an overall net gain of recreation spaces across the city.

To achieve this, we have developed a minimum standard of provision for the city as a whole and separate standards for the 'Inner Urban' and 'Central' zones of the city respectively. This is covered in more detail in the Minimum Provision Guidelines below.

This strategy is being adopted at a time when significant parts of the inner-city and the centre of the city are undergoing transformational regeneration. This series of regeneration projects offers us the opportunity to deliver new, high-quality parks and green spaces for the new communities who will live and work in the Inner Urban and Central zones. The aspiration for delivering new green spaces reflects the importance parks and green space play in the creation of successful and high-quality urban regeneration.

Minimum provision guideline – Central and Inner Bristol

As well as maintaining an overall citywide quantity standard, we are introducing standards for a specifically defined Central and Inner Urban zone:

Area/Zone	Supply of open space with current population (m^2 per person)	Supply of open space because of predicted population increase (m^2 per person)	Minimum provision standard (m^2 per person)
Central	12.02	7.28	7.75
Inner Urban	13.13	11.48	11.53
Citywide	33.37	29.17	29.25

The standard is set as a minimum amount of open space a resident should have access to and therefore is expressed in m^2/person. We have set a standard based on the expected population growth in Bristol over the next 15 years, aiming to introduce new green space in areas where this growth will be highest.

To reach our minimum standards, we have established the following aspirations for new open space in these zones:

Area/Zone	Combined new open space for recreation provision
Central	2.9 hectares
Inner Urban	1 hectare

This strategy seeks to encourage and guide the development of new spaces in regeneration areas – identified in the Local Plan – rather than specifically outline sites for development. It is most likely that opportunities will be created in parts of the city centre, Temple Quarter, St Philip's Marsh and Frome Gateway.

Chapter 5: Priority Themes

While we continue to commit to delivering a broad range of services and improvements to our parks and green spaces, we acknowledge that there are some specific areas and benefits that we will focus our resource and ideas on. We have called these our Priority Themes.

These six Priority Themes, including food growing and allotments which is contained in its own strategy, have been developed in consultation with stakeholders and communities to ensure that our plans for delivery meet the needs and aspirations of local communities. They have also been chosen because each one supports and compliments each other. Aside from delivering placed-based benefits, focussing on these areas will also contribute to the delivery of wider local and national strategic aims.

Priority theme: Nature and Climate

Our vision: Our parks and green spaces are rich in nature that is accessible to all. Parks and green spaces provide a networked habitat for wildlife and play a significant role in keeping Bristol cool and help to tackle the climate emergency.

Benefits:

Relevant One City Goals/Targets

- By 2030, Bristol will be carbon neutral and climate resilient.
- By 2030 - 2031, 30% of land in the city is managed for nature, and pesticide use has reduced by at least 50%.
- By 2033 - 2034, Bristol is supporting a wider range of wildlife, with the complete return of species such as pine marten, red kite and beavers, as a consequence of Ecological Emergency activity.
- By 2045 - 2046, tree canopy cover in the city, including public, private, and residential land, has increased by 795 hectares, giving a total tree canopy coverage of 24%.

Why is Nature and Climate a priority?

- We are facing an ecological crisis. The latest State of Nature report shows that over half of all UK wild species are in decline. To reverse this decline, we need to restore habitats and create new spaces for nature. We need to move from a patchwork of isolated habitats to a connected ecological network, defined by the West of England Nature Recovery Network.
- Bristol has declared an ecological emergency, calling for 30% of the city's land to be managed for nature by 2030. Our Managing for Nature Plan shows that 31.6% of land covered by this strategy is currently being managed for nature, but the figure for all council land is 15%. In response, we have identified the potential to create or enhance 830 hectares (ha) of natural habitats on council land, of which 771 ha are on PGSS land. With the land already managed for nature this would be a significant contribution, achieving over 70% of PGSS land managed for nature and 31.4% overall for all council land.
- Whilst we are looking at nature recovery to maximise the benefits for wildlife, we also recognise how important it is for people to experience nature close to home. Contact with nature plays a vital role in our emotional, psychological, and physical health and wellbeing.
- Many of the city's rivers flow through our parks and are a source of interest for communities. More natural rivers and watercourses will sustain more wildlife including fish and birds.
- Bristol's city-wide One City Climate Strategy sets out how the city aims to become a carbon neutral and climate resilient city by 2030. Our parks are already contributing to these goals in many ways, but we recognise that there are further opportunities to use our land to support the city's goals.
- Given the likely increase in temperatures during the summer, it is vitally important that parks are utilised as 'cooling spaces' – spaces that themselves are cooler but can also reduce peak temperatures within neighbourhoods. Comfortable shaded areas in parks can acts as places of respite during heatwaves. Innovative ways of creating green spaces must be developed to offset new developments within the densest urban areas of our city.
- The role of trees in our city will be pivotal in delivering protection against higher temperatures. Extensive research has highlighted an imbalance in the tree coverage across the city, particularly in certain areas of high deprivation, where tree canopy is just 9% compared to 26% in some neighbourhoods. The One CityTree and Woodland Strategy will address this inequality and ensure the benefits of trees can be enjoyed everywhere.

Plants for bees and other pollinators © BCC

Our Commitments

Nature

- We will deliver actions from our Managing for Nature Plan to support the city's ambition to ensure at least 30% of the city's land is managed for nature. We will work together with partners, communities, and parks groups to support the delivery of a further 771 hectares of new or enhanced natural habitat.
- We will work towards meeting the One City target of reducing pesticide use in the city by 50% through changes in our parks operations and by working with our allotment and food growing tenants.
- We will establish at least 50 hectares of new trees and woodland within 10 years of the adoption of this strategy by identifying new sites for tree planting, continuing our successful grant funding programme and planting trees through our One Tree Per Child programme and other volunteering activities.
- We will pursue all forms of funding to support our nature recovery programme including new opportunities such as Biodiversity Net Gain.

Climate

- Using the Keep Bristol Cool mapping tool, we will identify priority areas where the provision of more natural vegetation, including trees, would help keep communities cooler as we expect more extreme hot weather due to climate change. We will also explore how we can ensure there are accessible, comfortable and shaded places of respite and cool corridors for movement in parks, particularly in areas classified as highly vulnerable in the Keep Bristol Cool mapping tool.
- We will ensure that our habitats are designed to thrive in changing climate conditions and we will develop nature corridors as set out in our Managing for Nature Plan.
- Through the City Leap partnership, we will consider how parks and green space can be used to host low carbon energy infrastructure (such as ground source heat pumps) in a way that maintains the other benefits of our spaces.
- We will identify opportunities for parks and green spaces to provide flood protection such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) like the one in Fonthill Park.

National Strategies

Environment Act 2021
Environment Improvement Plan
National Air Quality Strategy
England Trees Action Plan (2021-2024)

Local Strategies

One City Climate Strategy
One City Ecological Emergency Strategy
Bristol City Council Ecological Emergency Action Plan
Keep Bristol Cool Framework
Local Plan
Bristol Blue Green Infrastructure Strategy (In development)

The case for change :
Fonthill Park Sustainable Drainage Scheme.

The Fonthill Park Sustainable Drainage Scheme (SuDS) in Southmead, reduces the impact of flooding in one of the high-risk areas identified in Bristol City Council's surface water management plan and improves the ecological and aesthetic value of the park.

A flood in November 2012 confirmed the park as high-risk, flooding properties and causing disruption to the local road network. The flooding was primarily caused by the drainage system not being able to cope with the amount of water running from further upstream.

By designing SuDS that complemented the park's natural topography, the design team were able to transform the whole park into a multi-functional, interesting and engaging landscape as well as an important flood mitigation tool during periods of intense and prolonged rainfall.

"Without the Fonthill Park scheme we surely would have had a repeat of the flooding we last saw in 2012 if not worse... several residential properties were likely saved from flooding as a result." Susdrain project report

Completed in November 2016, the SuDS basins use green infrastructure to protect the area from the adverse effects of excessive storm water, increasing communities' resilience to climate change whilst also delivering multiple additional benefits including improvements in biodiversity, improvements to the area's visual appeal, play provision and air quality.

Sustainable Drainage Scheme providing new greenspace

Sustainable Drainage Scheme with new wildflower meadow

Priority theme: Children and Young People

Our vision: Our parks and green spaces provide exciting and diverse play spaces that ensure all children and young people can flourish, develop, have fun and feel safe and included.

Benefits:

Relevant One City Goals/Targets

- By 2041 - 2042, due to cross-sector investment, everyone, across the city, has access to excellent quality green space within a 10-minute walk from their home.
- By 2045 - 2046, there is virtually no childhood obesity or malnutrition in the city.

Why are Children and Young People a priority?

- Bristol's Belonging Strategy outlines a vision that every child and young person in Bristol has the best start in life, accesses education that is inclusive and values diversity, and is given opportunities to grow with support from their community. The opportunities for socialising, play, learning and healthy development that parks and green spaces offer make this strategy vitally important to realising the vision of the Belonging Strategy.
- There are over 80,000 children and young people in Bristol who could use parks and green spaces for recreation, social opportunities and many other benefits that these spaces provide. As the city's population grows, it is important that we have a creative mix of parks and green spaces to meet this demand.

- We know that park facilities for children and young people are not evenly provided throughout the city, particularly for those who do not have access to private gardens. Our approach to parks delivery will be informed by the principle that every child and young person should have a high quality and spacious place to play.
- It is not just the physical spread of parks and green spaces which impacts unfair access. We are also aware of how the layout and design of these spaces can create barriers to girls feeling safe and welcome in them. We want to capture the voice and views of girls when delivering changes to our service in the future.
- Another key strategic aim of the Belonging Strategy is that children and young people 'own the whole city'. We want to ensure that the voices and influence of children and young people are included when making plans to improve our facilities.
- Activities and educational sessions such as Forest School, provided by our partners, are an important element in our offer to children and young people. We would like to see more of these types of activities taking place where there is local demand.

Sea Mills © BCC

Windmill Hill Play Park © BCC

St Pauls Park
© BCC

Our Commitments

- For children and young people, we will seek to provide a children's play space within 450m of home. For young people and young adults, we seek to provide a muti-use games- area (MUGA) within 1 km of home and a good quality 'wheels park' within 2 km of home.
- We will involve children and young people in decision-making about play provision and play experiences, aiming to be inclusive and relevant to the needs of the communities that we serve.
- We will seek to collaborate more strategically with the city's children and youth representatives and organisations to ensure future developments are co-designed with children and young people in mind.
- We will do more to meet the needs of disabled children and children with an impairment, children from black and minoritized ethnic backgrounds, and recognise that girls' use of play facilities, particularly multi-use games areas, drops off in adolescence as they feel that these facilities are not for them. We will work towards Green Flag's Safer Parks guidance 'improving access for women and girls', which outlines how changes to park design and management will help women and girls – and all park users - feel safer and more welcomed in our parks and green spaces.
- We will explore ways of integrating play, education and learning into all aspects of our parks and green spaces to release pressure from our existing playground infrastructure. Where possible, we will work with local councillors and communities to commit resource to improving play facilities where they are most needed.

National Strategies

Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision

Children's Social Care Implementation Plan

SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan

Local Strategies

One City Belonging Strategy

Bristol's Safer Options Approach 2020-2030

Community Safety Partnership Plan

Bristol Impact Fund 2: Growing the Power of Communities

The case for change :
One Tree Per Child at May Park School.

May Park School is a local authority run primary school in the Eastville Ward. It is an area of high deprivation, low tree canopy cover and has a high proportion of pupils from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and with English as a second language. One Tree Per Child has worked with the school over the last five years to plant over 500 trees on and around the school, including the planting of a rare Bristol whitebeam tree (supplied by University of Bristol Botanic Gardens), hedgerow planting and the improvement of the forest school.

The success of the project has largely come down to the involvement and active participation of pupils. During one stage of the project, over 200 pupils were involved in hedgerow planting to cover up a metal fence and provide privacy for pupils during lunch and breaktime.

Pupils were also actively involved in deciding on which areas of the school should be prioritised and specific designs for planting. This involvement then extended to designing tree planting projects in a nearby housing estate, where pupils continue to water and maintain the trees planted.

The project is not just about planting trees, but about giving children and young people confidence and knowledge about the natural spaces that surround them. The pupils involved have had the opportunity to engage in assemblies and workshops, and were one of the first groups to trial new online learning resources developed by One Tree Per Child.

Children tree planting
© BCC

Priority theme: Community Participation

Our vision: We will empower park users, volunteers, and community groups to engage in park management and development. We will work collaboratively with local partners to support communities to make the most of their park.

Benefits:

Relevant One City Goals/Targets

One City Plan Goals

- By 2038 - 2039, the ongoing Many Neighbourhoods One City work has increased the percentage of people who volunteer or help out in their community at least three times a year to 80% (68% in 18/19)
- By 2048 - 2049, all Bristol's parks and open spaces are used every day by community organisations for mental and physical health benefits.
- By 2048 - 2049, food system governance and citizen participation mechanisms are well understood, well used, and fully integrated into the operations of Bristol and the surrounding city region.

Dame Emily Park Community Garden
© BCC

Why is Community Participation a priority?

- We are extremely proud of the work many of Bristol's residents, community groups and organisations carry out to fundraise for our parks, and the work they do to keep our spaces looking good and inclusive for everyone. We recognise the value this brings to our parks and green spaces; without this support, Bristol's parks and green spaces would struggle to sustain the level of service provision it maintains today.
- We know that there is even greater demand from Bristol residents to support parks and to contribute to their communities through parks. To meet the ambitions of this strategy we will be looking at ways in which we can grow the support from community groups, volunteers, and other organisations across the city.
- Parks and green spaces should be safe and welcoming for all, but we know that this is not the case. We know that for women and girls particularly, their experience of going to a park or green space can be impacted by the threat of harassment and violence. We will use guidance and best practise from organisations such as Make Space for Girls to improve safety in our spaces.
- Due to budgetary constraints the Parks Service has not been able to continue to provide the community support it has provided previously. In developing the strategy, we have listened to communities and stakeholders who have told us the impact this is having and the practical barriers they now feel exist that can prevent some communities achieving what they want to see in green spaces.

Redcatch Park tree planting
© BCC

Our Commitments

- By working with others, we will develop stronger links between our service and communities. Improvements and change will better respond to local needs, be better designed, and be delivered at a faster pace. By providing more opportunities to take part and volunteer, we can generate opportunities for people to develop new skills and become more connected to their local community.
- We will work collaboratively with other council services and community partners to ensure our work is done with, not to, communities. Developing opportunities to engage a more diverse range of decision makers will be key to our service delivery in the future. We will establish more effective working relationships with the city's 'anchor organisations' and the many other organisations and services that share an interest in supporting citizen's access to parks and green spaces.
- We will continue to develop projects together with Your Park Bristol and Bath, a key charitable organisation and partner, that can help support volunteering, community grant funding and help grow the capacity in our communities to make green space management decisions.
- We will invest in our workforce and develop our service in terms of the skills, processes and structures needed to engage with communities who want to improve, invest in and develop their local spaces. We will seek to design and deliver ways to devolve responsibility for the management of spaces to communities.

National Strategies

Integrated Communities Strategy

UK Resilience Strategy

Community Development Framework

Local Strategies

One City Belonging Strategy

Bristol's Safer Options Approach 2020-2030

Community Safety Partnership Plan

Bristol Impact Fund 2: Growing the Power of Communities.

The case for change :
Carolina House and Dove Street, Kingsdown.

During the first COVID-19 lockdown, a Carolina House resident created a small 'guerrilla garden' (named Dove Garden) in an unused corner of the estate, and soon other residents joined in to help plant and water. From this, the Growing Green Carolina WhatsApp group was set up and more residents got involved in planting up containers, running informal gardening sessions and holding family social events.

Working together with local community-led initiative 'Friendly Neighbours' (which also started in the lockdown to support isolated neighbours), residents began to discuss how the park could be improved and made more inclusive and safer for all residents and users. Their passionate community organising meant Love Your Park funding was secured to make initial improvements (such as planting bulbs), sessions were established to ensure the park was tidy and attractive, children produced posters which encouraged dog walkers to access the park in a safe and inclusive way and community picnics and family activities took place through the year.

The resident's community-led initiative is not only a good example of how community participation can impact parks, but it also an example of how residents can work with the council to improve these spaces. Friendly Neighbours and Growing Green Carolina worked with councillors and officers from Parks, Housing, Specialist Projects and Community Development to secure Community Infrastructure Funding which supported the transformation of the concrete terrace to a greener and more welcoming space with areas for children's play, seating and more greenery as well as further improvements in the park. The success of the project has led to residents from neighbouring Armada House and Freemantle House beginning discussions about what they would like to make happen in their outside spaces.

Carolina House
© Dr. Bernardita Muñoz

Priority theme: Health and Wellbeing

Our vision: Our parks, green spaces and allotments provide a range of health benefits to all communities and contribute towards greater wellbeing across the city.

Benefits:

Relevant One City Goals/Targets

One City Plan Goals

- By 2030 - 2031, the design of the built and natural environment contributes to improving public health and reducing health inequalities as standard.
- By 2031 - 2032, people living in the 10% most disadvantaged areas of Bristol are as satisfied with where they live and the quality of parks and green spaces, as people living in the most affluent areas of the city.
- By 2050, everyone in Bristol has the opportunity to live a life in which they are mentally and physically healthy.

Why is Health and Wellbeing a priority?

- Parks play a key role in supporting communities to live healthier lifestyles and preventing ill-health. Simply being in a park or green space makes us feel better. The main reasons people give for visiting parks in Bristol are, 'fresh air', 'exercise' or 'to relax and unwind' (34.1%). These responses describe the essential health and wellbeing benefits people get from visiting our parks and green spaces.
- But the physical and mental health benefits from parks are not shared equally across the city. Each year around 17 million visits are made to Bristol parks, but nearly half the population (44%) don't visit parks, or do so rarely, rising to 70% not using parks in the most disadvantaged areas of the city (Quality of Life Survey). We can address this unfairness and deliver significantly more health and wellbeing benefits to our citizens.
- Parks provide a solution to key city health and wellbeing needs, including maintaining a healthy weight through sport and general physical activity, and good mental health as people can relax and make a positive contribution to their neighbourhood through volunteering. Parks are particularly important in providing safe places for children and young people to explore, play and be physically active.
- Parks and green spaces are identified as important places for sport and healthy activity. Bristol's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy sets out plans for supporting people to be more active.

Our Commitments

- We will conduct research to understand why some people don't use parks, or only do so occasionally, and support work to increase active recreation within our parks and green spaces.
- We will use this evidence to make the health benefits of parks more within reach for all people across the city and target health interventions for those who would benefit most.
- We will take a partnership approach to attract funds and expertise from a variety of sources. By rolling out our 'Wild and Well' approach we will build essential relationships between the health sector, community organisations, parks groups and green social prescribing practitioners and sport providers.
- We will continue to work with the council's Sport Development Team to maintain the current provision of playing pitches and work to improve the quality of these pitches and related facilities, such as changing rooms.
- We will expand the number of allotments and increase the number of people experiencing the significant health benefits of food growing, and we will provide collective and supported food growing opportunities in different parts of the city. We will also increase the number of people that can apply for a discounted allotment space, supporting people on lower incomes who rely on benefits and tax credits.

National Strategies

National Planning Policy Framework

NHS Long Term Plan

Public Health England Strategy (2020-2025)

A Strategy for Tackling Loneliness

Local Strategies

Bristol Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Our Future Health (Integrated Care) Strategy

Local Plan Review

Thrive Bristol Approach

Built Sport and Active Recreation Strategy

The case for change :

‘Wild and Well’ - Opening parks for health.

To achieve our aspirations of creating green spaces that offer multiple health benefits, we have worked proactively with communities to support health intervention programmes across the city. Our main way of trialling this has been through the Wild and Well programme.

Wild and Well is a programme aimed at promoting the use of parks for people’s health and wellbeing. The initiative connects organizations and communities to make it easier for people to take part in health programs in their local park, which ultimately results in more people using parks. It is led by Your Park Bristol and Bath, and aims to build essential relationships between health professionals, community organizations, parks friends of groups, and green social prescribing practitioners to support people’s health.

The Wild and Well project worker, along with community development workers, applied this approach to Hartcliffe and Withywood and demonstrated tangible results. A network has now been set up to raise awareness of the array of organisations, relationships, and individuals involved in opening up parks, and various park-based health interventions have been piloted to test and develop partnerships and referral mechanisms. Our focus has been to support effective partnerships that lead to positive health outcomes for communities.

Running in Stoke Park Estate
© BCC

Priority theme: Culture

Our vision: Our parks and green spaces reflect the diverse cultural heritage of our local communities, and develop into vibrant, welcoming and creative cultural hubs for their communities.

Benefits:

Relevant One City Goals/Targets

One City Plan Goals

- By 2031 - 2032, as part of the 'Many Neighbourhoods One City' work, every neighbourhood in Bristol has a thriving and sustainable community anchor organisation and everyone has access to a cultural/creative opportunity within their neighbourhood.
- By 2033, city sporting and cultural facilities are internationally recognised and capable of hosting international events raising Bristol's profile and bringing associated economic benefits.

Bristol Kite Festival on The Downs
© BCC

Why is Culture a priority?

- The West of England Cultural Plan and Bristol's One City Plan both identify the importance of the region and city's cultural heritage and its potential to drive inclusive growth throughout the area. Parks and green spaces play a pivotal role in driving Bristol's cultural offer.
- Whether it is Castle Park's medieval buildings or Brandon Hill's Cabot Tower, our parks hold historical significance and contribute to the city's cultural identity. Preserving and celebrating these spaces will ensure we contribute to the city's rich cultural legacy.
- Bristol is a city renowned for its cultural diversity, and our parks serve as a platform for celebrating and embracing this diversity. From music festivals to food markets, parks such as Eastville Park and The Downs host events that showcase the city's multicultural fabric.
- Regular engagement with parks and their cultural offerings has been linked to improved mental health, reduced stress levels, and increased overall well-being.
- The council has an obligation to ensure that listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered parks and gardens are maintained and preserved for future generations. We need to be realistic about our ability to maintain heritage going forward and design solutions accordingly. We will need to prioritise what and where we invest based on not only highest need but also what will deliver the most benefit to residents of Bristol.

Troopers Hill
© BCC

Our Commitments

- We will continue to build on the 'Our Spirit of Place' approach, working with a city-wide network of stakeholders to ensure our decision-making around cultural offerings in parks is aligned to the needs and aspirations of our communities.
- We will secure external funding and co-design plans with stakeholders and communities to enhance the benefits of existing historic and cultural sites such as St Peter's Church and Ashton Court Mansion.
- We will explore opportunities to develop infrastructure so that a larger range of parks sites can be used for medium to large sized cultural events. Our current event programme will be guided by more ecologically conscious practises.
- We will conduct a review of our permission processes to ensure our parks and green spaces are more accessible and inclusive to community-led cultural initiatives.
- We will work internally and with community partners to improve the way we monitor our historic sites, will strategically invest in sites in need of greatest maintenance and will ensure information about these sites are accessible to all.

National Strategies

Levelling Up the United Kingdom

The Culture Strategy

The Civil Society Strategy

Local Strategies

WECA Cultural Strategy

Bristol Culture Strategy

Bristol Equity and Inclusion Policy and Framework

St Peter's Church
© BCC

The case for change: **Blaise Castle Estate.**

In 2021, as part of the Bristol Future Parks project, the council trialled a new approach to community engagement which brought together the councils existing "Our Place" community mapping programme and The National Trust's "Spirit of Place" approach. We trialled this new approach at five sites across the city one of which was Blaise Castle Estate.

Central to this process was collaborative engagement between the local community, friends of groups and council officers. Through surveys and immersive workshops, participants shared perspectives, memories, and feelings about the estate. Discussions centred around features like the dramatic landscape, hidden caves, and mythical tales that evoke strong emotions.
Three themes emerged highlighting the important elements of the Estate:

1. The community stressed the importance of preserving the allure of the Estate's rich **history** of mythical stories and intriguing natural formations, while safeguarding the estate's inherent natural beauty.
2. The Estate's **geology** and **ecology** were identified as precious resources requiring maintenance through collaborative partnerships.
3. The community emphasised the need to respect the **range of experiences** offered by the Estate, from quiet tranquil areas to vibrant family activities. It was agreed that maintaining these areas and promoting eco-friendly modes of transportation between areas is important.

These themes will guide future decisions, preserving allure and ecological vitality while embracing diverse experiences. The Spirit of Place process produced a shared vision and guiding principles. Shared documents enable broader conversation, shaping responsible development while respecting the site's significance.

Blaise Castle Estate
© BCC

Priority theme: Employment and Skills

Our vision: The Parks Service workforce will reflect the communities we serve and have the skills and experience to help us achieve our ambitions for vibrant and inclusive parks and green spaces. Communities will be empowered with the skills necessary to support their parks through volunteering, fundraising and wider representation.

Benefits:

Relevant One City Goals/Targets

One City Plan Goals

- By 2033 - 2034, all communities in Bristol can participate in the development and delivery of city-wide and local learning and skills programmes.
- By 2038 - 2039, food skills for sustainable, healthy living are embedded throughout the education system and accessible, community-based skills opportunities exist citywide.
- By 2050, everyone in Bristol can contribute to a sustainable, inclusive, and growing economy from which everyone benefits.

Why is Employment and Skills a priority theme?

- The Parks Service has always required a highly-skilled and multidisciplinary workforce, but this requirement has been intensified due to the growing need to improve our community engagement and partnering skills, and our business and marketing capabilities to support our goal of making the service financially sustainable.
- At the time of writing, 70% of our employees are over 50 years old, 84% are white-British males and 68% do not identify as disabled. While our current workforce is highly skilled, there is a need to ensure these skills are passed on to a workforce which more closely reflects the diversity of our city.
- The skillsets for our operational staff have changed, with more of an emphasis on high volume and machine-based work as opposed to traditional gardening and horticulture. This shift has made recruiting and retaining staff more challenging, so there is a need to ensure operational staff have the right development opportunities in the future.
- Delivering our strategic vision for parks and green spaces will require a collaborative approach which enables partners and communities to take more ownership of their spaces. The Parks Services plays a strategic role in providing skills to these individuals and groups.

Our Commitments

- We will prioritise improving quality and accessibility of parks for all, alongside providing targeted health interventions for those who would benefit most. We will also conduct research to understand why some people don't use parks or only do so occasionally and feed this into action to address barriers.
- We will take a partnership approach to attract funds and expertise from a variety of sources. By rolling out our 'Wild and Well' approach (see case for change on page 31) we will build essential relationships between the health sector, community organisations, parks groups and green social prescribing practitioners and sport providers.
- We will work with the council's sport asset team to maintain the current provision of playing pitch supply and work to improve the quality of these pitches and ancillary facilities, such as changing rooms. How we will do this will be set out the new Playing Pitch Strategy, which will be developed over the next two-years.
- We will expand the number of allotments and increase the number of people experiencing the significant health benefits generated through food growing and we will provide collective and supported food growing opportunities in different parts of the city. We will also increase the number of people that can apply for a discounted allotment space, supporting people on lower incomes who rely on benefits and tax credits.

National Strategies

Creative Industries Sector Vision

Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth

Build Back Better High Streets

Local Strategies

One City Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy

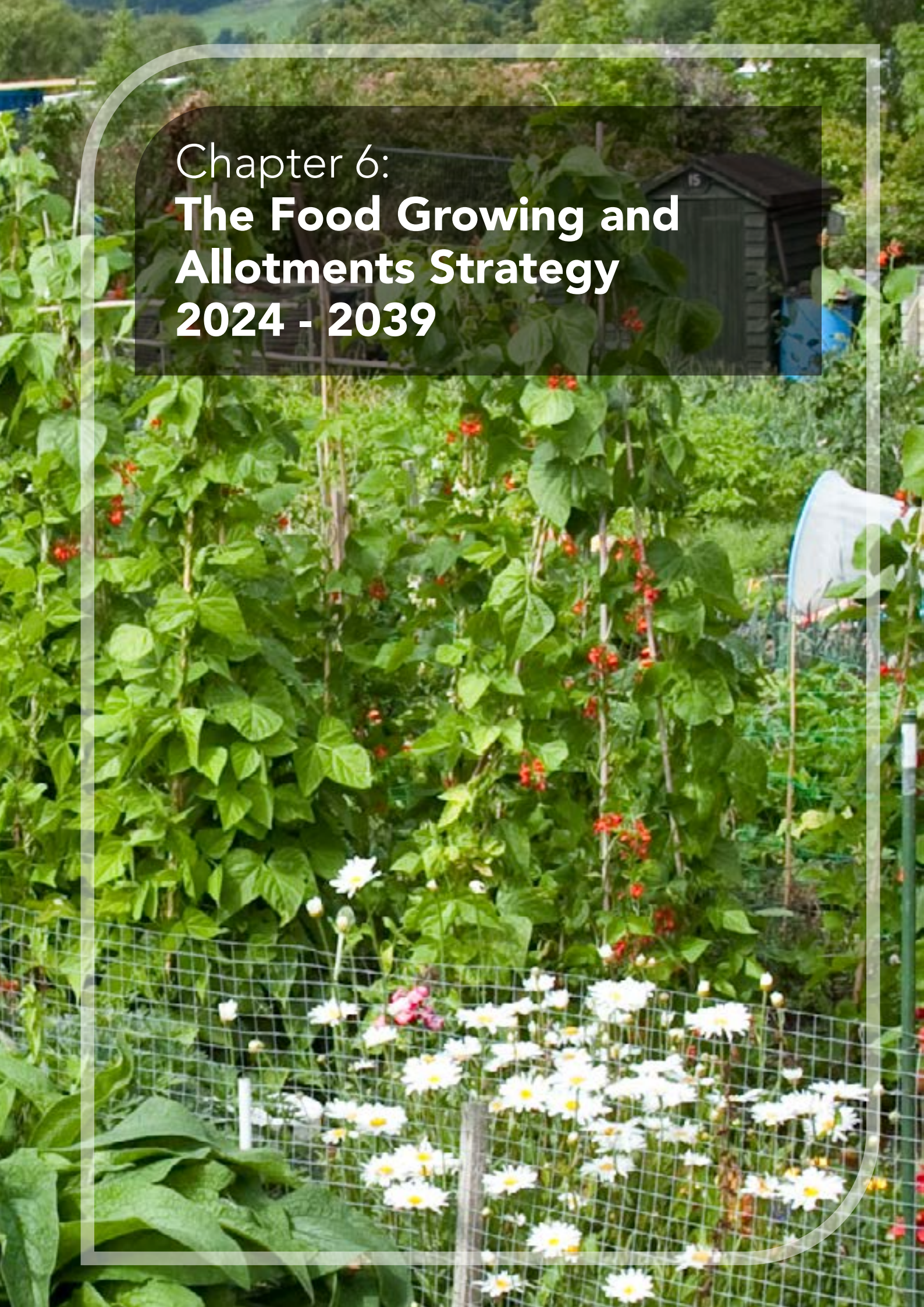
Bristol Employment and Skills Plan (in development)

The case for change: **ParkWork.**

ParkWork is a project established by Bristol Parks Forum (and subsequently managed by Bristol City Council) to improve parks and green spaces in Bristol by carrying out specialist conservation, and maintenance work alongside the local community. ParkWork supports over 3,500 hours of volunteering in parks and green spaces each year and provides a safe, practical base for vulnerable volunteers to meet, gather tools, and have access to facilities. The project offers skills training to the unemployed and individuals with poor mental and physical health, working closely with Job Centre, Ways-2-Work, Princes Trust, and City of Bristol College.

The programme engages young people from diverse backgrounds and adapts the experience according to their needs and interests. The activities are park-focused, aiming to support park management and provide work-based skills training and education around conservation. The outcomes of the programme include individuals feeling confident to apply for jobs and learning skills to help them with that, with some individuals going on to further education and employment, including two who are employed in the council's parks department.

Hengrove Park
and Cafe
© BCC



Chapter 6:
The Food Growing and Allotments Strategy 2024 - 2039

Chapter 6:
Food Growing and Allotments

Our vision: The city will provide a thriving network of accessible spaces for local people, communities and social enterprises to grow healthy and sustainable food. This network will tackle food inequity, strengthen food resilience and support community cohesion and wellbeing.

Benefits:

The Strategic Context

Our strategic approach to food growing and the use of allotment space in the city has been guided by significant national and local strategies.

Nationally

The UK's National Food Strategy highlights the critical and negative role the food industry has played in driving food poverty, health inequity, climate change and biodiversity loss. It sets out the following objectives to supporting a healthier, more equitable UK food system:

1. Escape the junk food cycle to protect the NHS.
2. Reduce diet-related inequality.
3. Make the best use of our land.
4. Create a long-term shift in our food culture.

Our Food Growing and Allotments Strategy is influenced by these principles, as well as the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact and the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration. Bristol City Council became signatories of both international agreements in September 2018 and November 2021 respectively, committing to developing a more strategic approach to supporting local and sustainable food systems.

Our approach to allotments has been shaped and guided by the Allotments Act 1950, which sets out the council's statutory duties in relation to the provision and protection of food growing land. It is the primary legislation which informs our approach to tackling our allotment waiting list.

Locally

Bristol's One City Plan outlines the city-wide approach to achieving a 'fair, healthy and sustainable' city by 2050. It includes several goals which this strategy contributes to, alongside individuals, communities and organisations across the city:

- By 2033 - 2034, community food distribution is recognised and sustainably funded to enable better access to local food; supporting stable, environmental food system change.
- By 2033 - 2034, 20% of food consumed in the city comes from sustainable producers in the city region.
- By 2037 - 2038, there is a significant increase in the number of urban farmers (using residential, public and business land) and volume of urban food produced for local markets and communities.

Off the back of becoming only the second city in the UK to be awarded Gold Sustainable Food City status, we have developed a strategic approach to achieving equitable and sustainable food growing across Bristol. Our approach to allotments is primarily driven by two documents and their aims:

- **Bristol Good Food 2030:** By 2030 the volume of land used for growing increases significantly with 100% of suitable, council owned land used for growing.
- **Bristol Food Equality Strategy 2022 - 2032:** Champion food equality when considering land use within the city, including equitable distribution geographically. This will include the need to review access to and management of allotments and smallholdings as part of the new Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and wider issues of city planning.

Bower Ashton Allotments
© BCC

Why is Food Growing a priority theme?

Many people recognise the benefits that allotments and food growing provide, including the opportunity for a year-round healthy lifestyle which is active, socially inclusive and which supports sustainability and well-being.

Bristol City Council's Parks Service manages 227 hectares of food growing land (much of which is protected under the Allotments Act). Within this land, the council manages over 4,000 allotment plots, with an additional 1,500 plots managed by five Allotment Associations on behalf of the council. The significant potential for growing healthy and sustainable food makes it an important priority. The table below outlines the food growing land in scope for this strategy.

Allotment Plots – BCC managed	72.87ha (4,000 plots / 97 sites)	Of which: 0.02ha is designed for use by disabled people. 2.23ha is for Collective Food Growing
Allotment Plots – Allotment Association managed	30.29ha (1,500 plots / 19 sites)	
Community Orchard	2.60ha (6 sites)	
Market Garden	10.20ha (8 sites)	
Small Holding production area (mixed use)	6.04ha (19 sites)	
Grazing (and other non-food growing use)	105.4ha (33 sites)	

Since the adoption of our last Allotments Strategy in 2009, interest in food growing – both nationally and locally – has surged; a trend which accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. This rise in interest has seen allotment waiting lists grow to nearly 8,000 people. This increase requires a shift from predominantly focussing on the improvement of allotments sites, to considering how we can increase access to food growing opportunities.

Whether it is strengthening our approach to sustainable food growing or ensuring that more communities can access food growing opportunities, the Food Growing and Allotments Strategy plays a critical part in delivering the six other strategic priorities outlined in the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.

The case for change: **Alive Activities.**

Alive Activities run a community allotment in Brentry, Bristol, to help those living with dementia and their families. The gardening space gives older people the chance to enjoy the benefits of having an allotment without the pressure of having to keep it maintained.

Alive Activities took on the overgrown and neglected plot just days before the nation was plunged into the first lockdown and created Bristol's first dementia-friendly allotment. The gardening team at Alive first tamed the land and made it suitable for growing, they then turned the space into a safe, user-friendly, engaging and stimulating space for the participants they were soon to welcome through the gates.

Following the opening of the allotment by the Mayor of Bristol in July 2021, the site received a lot of attention. The plot was featured on Gardener's Word as an example of the difference that gardening in general, and therapeutic horticulture, can make to people's lives. A second allotment has just opened in Talbot Road, South Bristol.

Brentry Allotments © Alive Activities

Our Commitments

The successful delivery of this Food Growing and Allotments Strategy will be driven by three key commitments:

1. Reducing the number of people who are waiting to access Bristol City Council owned food growing spaces.
2. Delivering new spaces for food growing while maintaining the balance of land outlined in the wider Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.
3. Working to ensure people and communities from every area of the city can access suitable food growing opportunities.

We will deliver on these commitments by focussing on four key priorities:

1. Effective Use of Existing Space
2. Collective Food Growing
3. Repurposing Land
4. Investment and Sustainable Funding

Effective Use of Existing Space:

Our extensive mapping of council allotment land has highlighted the potential for increasing the number of plots on sites by supporting existing tenants to use their plots more efficiently and effectively. We also know that establishing more efficient tenant management systems will help us to reduce the number of plots being left dormant and unused.

By establishing a stronger tenancy agreement, engaging more proactively with our Allotment Associations, and improving the information and guidance available to tenants, we will support a greater number of plots to be used for their full benefit, and adapt sites, so they make the most of the space available.

Collective Food Growing:

Collective growing plots are a great way to enjoy the benefits of an allotment plot without having to commit to an individual allotment tenancy or join the waiting list for a plot. These have been established by a group or organisation to satisfy a particular community need and interest in food growing, providing social interaction and community cohesion.

There is great opportunity for these initiatives to encourage the participation of under-represented groups, and to be a stepping- stone for everyone to progress from an interest in food growing to taking on their own allotment plot. Increasing opportunities for collective food growing will require a collaborative and creative approach, but it has the potential to reduce pressure on our allotment waiting list and ensure the benefits of food growing are accessible.

Repurposing Land:

Our allotment spaces sit alongside a network of small holdings, market gardens and land for grazing livestock. While we will continue to keep some land for these uses, we are aware that they have limited benefit beyond the individual users; and whilst allotment tenants are required to cultivate 75% of their plot during the summer months, many small holdings tend to use less than 10% of their site for food growing.

Having conducted extensive land mapping we now need to review our current landholding agreements so that we can start to explore opportunities to repurpose land to diversify our food growing spaces and ensure land is being used effectively to meet Bristol's food growing targets. Doing so will increase our allotment capacity and the land available for larger scale food producing through collective food growing, social

enterprises, semi-commercial and commercial food producers. Once suitable land has been identified we will review how these opportunities are promoted to ensure that the system of securing land is fair and equitable. We are particularly interested in opportunities that will not only ensure land is being sustainably and efficiently managed but that also delivers social value and benefits the residents of Bristol.

Investment and Sustainable Funding:

Against a backdrop of growing demand for allotments and a national decline in funding for parks services, it is essential that our allotments service can run sustainably and can secure suitable investment to enable changes to our infrastructure. We estimate that £3.5m of capital investment will be required to support the needed infrastructure changes.

Using allotment plots more efficiently and repurposing land will support cost savings, but to reach the levels of funding required to operate sustainably and ambitiously, we will also:

- Implement a fairer and more sustainable approach to tenancy fees.
- Work with communities to identify strategic funding opportunities.

A fairer approach to tenancy fees

The Allotments Act requires the rent charged for allotment plots to be a "reasonable amount" and what the "tenant would expect to pay". Bristol City Council has always applied the same rental rate to tenants for a plot, regardless of whether they have access to enhanced on-site facilities.

The quality of – and access to – food growing space should not be dependent on where you live in the city. Driving investment to improve infrastructure and create new allotment spaces requires us to implement a fairer approach to tenancy fees. Our proposed new fees approach will take three main factors into consideration:

1. The variation in size of plots
2. The variation in on-site facilities (e.g. toilets, car parking)
3. The approach that comparable local authorities take to fees.

Aside from maintaining financial sustainability, there are several benefits we intend to deliver through this new approach to fees:

- Investment in the infrastructure and facilities available at existing sites
- Investment in food growing opportunities where allotment spaces are less numerous across the city,
- Investment in creating more accessible allotment sites for disabled people and people with additional needs
- Expanding the offer of reduced fees to people on low incomes. In 2022, 13% of allotment tenants benefited from a 50% discount,
- Increasing the skills and capacity of the parks service team,
- Delivering the wider priorities linked to the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.

Working with communities to identify funding opportunities.

Since the adoption of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy 2008-2023 and Allotments Strategy 2009-2019 respectively, the way local government services are funded has changed significantly. With evidence showing that the value of central government grants has declined, become more numerous, competitive, short-term and smaller, it is essential that we take a more strategic approach to applying for funding.

We will prioritise funding opportunities which enable us to deliver progress against the strategic priorities outlined in the One City Plan and Bristol City Council's Corporate Strategy 2022 - 2027.

We will also ensure that we develop funding bids against priorities identified by local communities. One way we will do this is by working closely with communities and local organisations to develop Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) bids.

In Bristol, a proportion of CIL funding is devolved to Area Committees made up of local councillors. We will provide support and advice to groups to produce successful bids which support allotment infrastructure improvement.

Bower Ashton Allotments. ©BCC

The case for change:

Blaise Nursery: Communities Growing Project.

In 2020, at the start of the pandemic, many garden centres were forced to close. At Blaise Plant nursery they were determined that the thousands of fruit and veg plants they had wouldn't go to waste, and so many were given away to households across the area. This gesture of support for the local community was so successful it marked the beginning of a pioneering project.

The Parks Volunteer Coordinator joined forces with Blaise Nursery to create a food growing network that would supply food banks and communities across the city. The overall aim is to get healthy, locally grown and sustainable food on to tables in communities where that may not currently be happening.

Three years on and the Communities Growing Project has become a huge success. Blaise Nursery is at the heart of the operation as plug plants (small plants grown from seed) are delivered right across Bristol to allotments, schools, community gardens and community groups who grow them on ready for harvest.

Almost 60 growing groups across the city are supported through the project, and Bristol City Council Parks staff give their time voluntarily to make deliveries and offer support. Not only does the scheme provide healthy, locally grown food, but it also brings people together to learn about growing and where their food comes from.

Once grown, the food is collected and sorted by volunteers ready for distribution through local food bank schemes like 'Family Food Action' that runs from Ardagh Community Trust, supporting about 1,500 people a week. Some of the food goes on to support projects like the afterschool cooking and growing club run at The Vench in Lockleaze, which teaches kids how to take food from plot to plate.

Alive Activities at Charlton Rd Allotments - A dementia-friendly allotment to allow people to use the space for gardening therapy.
©Alive Active Activites

Chapter 7: Implementing Our Strategic Vision – Key Actions

The development of our strategic principles and prioritisation of key areas of work has been driven by the challenging context we face as a city, local authority, and parks service. While there are significant challenges on the immediate horizon, we remain ambitious about achieving our vision of enabling all communities to feel that parks are accessible, inclusive, safe, fun and rich in nature and wildlife.

Looking further ahead, there is uncertainty about the future of local government funding and public spending as a whole. With this in mind, we have:

- Identified a set of key actions which will deliver the overall vision and commitments within each Priority Theme, including our wider commitment to financial sustainability and investment.
- Focussed most actions on the short-term (1-5 years) and medium-term (6-10 years).
- Outlined what success 'by 2039' looks like to link actions to wider city goals and service objectives.
- Committed to reviewing the strategy after five years so that longer-term (11-15 years) actions are aligned to national policy and reflect the political, climate and budgetary position our parks operate in.

Financial Sustainability and Investment - Key Actions:	
Short-term	• Successfully deliver our current £7m parks capital programme to upgrade parks and play facilities across the city, providing new facilities and improving access for all residents. • Invest £2m to increase our allotment and food growing capacity that will generate income annually through fees. • Work with the council's funding lead to develop central government and other funding bids. We will focus on attracting funding to deliver on this strategy's priority themes. • Review our land and property agreements to generate the appropriate amount of revenue, both through rental income and commercial opportunities.

Financial Sustainability and Investment - Key Actions:	
Medium-term	• Work with partners to establish new, commercial enterprises to generate income to support well managed green spaces. We will identify opportunities for both BCC and local voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations to establish these projects. • To explore the potential for more commercial activities in parks that improve the recreational offer to residents and generate income that will support well-managed green spaces. • Building on the success of the Community Resilience Fund, we will work across the council to develop a more participatory approach to distributing CIL funding to community-led parks development.
Long-term	• Invest in smaller sites – particularly in areas where there are greater levels of disadvantage and cultural diversity – to ensure they more closely meet the needs of our diverse communities and respond to what is locally defined as a good quality park. • Ensure that our most visited sites and destination parks receive the investment needed to provide a high-quality experience and offer a range of facilities including toilets, cafes and play areas. • Invest in increasing the number of sites that can host medium to large sized events that are organised by not for profit organisations.

St George's Park
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Nature and Climate - Key Actions:	
Short-term	• Begin to implement our Managing for Nature plan, which sets out opportunities to meet the council's objective to manage 30% of its land for nature by 2030. • Identify priority sites to support the delivery of the Keeping Bristol Cool Framework – the city's plan to adapt to rising summer temperatures – through tree planting, and identifying potential cool corridors and places of respite. • Work with communities and stakeholders to design an online information hub where residents can access information about parks services, including our nature and climate actions. • Tenants on our land, including allotment holders, will be encouraged (through education, training, and changes in tenancy agreements and management) to reduce their use and reliance on pesticides in line with the city's aspirations. We will support tenants to collectively vote on whether to assign their site as pesticide free.
Medium-term	• Identify sites for tree planting (or natural regeneration), aiming for five hectares per year. • Subject to funding and demand, we will provide Electric Vehicle charging facilities at parks where there is scope to do so.
By 2039:	• The use of pesticides in Bristol's parks and green spaces will be reduced, as a result of actions taken by the park service, contributing to the councils target to reduce the use of pesticides by at least 30% by 2030. • Bristol will be a more nature rich city with its green spaces actively managed to support both new and improved habitats that cover at least 30% of council land. • Bristol's tree canopy on public, private and residential land will have significantly increased, in line with the goals established by the One City Tree and Woodland Strategy.

Children and Young People - Key Actions:	
Short-term	• Develop a more inclusive consultation approach for when we develop and invest in play provision. Our processes will bear in mind the added barriers experienced by disabled children, girls and other minoritised groups. • Review how permission is sought and given to provide play and education services in parks so that applicants are more informed, and the process is as straightforward as possible.
Medium-term	• Work with local communities to develop 'playable landscapes' in areas of parks not currently designated for play, ensuring places are accessible and safe for all children and families. • In line with the Food Equality Action Plan (2023 - 2026), we will support an increase in the number of schools, nurseries and children's centres that have access to food growing spaces.
Longer-term	• Provide new children and young people's playgrounds where there is a deficit.
By 2039:	• Every child across the city has access to a quality green space within a 10-minute walk from their home. • A multi-use-games-area will be accessible within 1km of every home, and a good quality 'wheels park' within 2km of every home. • Children and young people, particularly girls and those from marginalised groups, can influence the management of their parks and outdoor play spaces.

Hengrove Park
© BCC

Community Participation - Key Actions:	
Short-term	• Work collaboratively with the council's Neighbourhoods and Communities service to engage and empower communities to have an influence in the way parks develop. We will focus on communities who currently face barriers to being involved in council decision making. • Design and trial our new approach to assessing the quality of our parks in partnership with community groups and park users. • Improve the perception of safety in parks and green spaces through targeted site planning, maintenance and investment, particularly for women and girls
Medium-term	• Continue to support the network of 67 Friends of Parks Groups and focus on supporting new groups in areas of high deprivation. • Work with organisations and communities who represent disabled people to deliver and trial 'inclusive recreation spaces', a recommendation made in the 'More Than a Checkbox' report. • Develop capacity within the parks service to support the growth of volunteering in the city. We will do this in collaboration with the council's Neighbourhoods and Communities service and organisations such as Your Park.
By 2039:	• We will support more community led volunteering and have grown staff-led volunteering so that volunteer hours are doubled from their 2023 level. We will target areas of greater disadvantage where satisfaction in parks is lower by supporting communities (friends of groups and parks groups) to be active volunteers for their park. • A community or volunteer celebration event will be held at least every two years to acknowledge the contribution of the voluntary and community sector. • There will be joint action and management plans for implementing the changes required to deliver on quality assessments.

Health and Wellbeing - Key Actions:	
Short-term	• Conduct research to understand who uses our parks, how they use them and the barriers to use. We will develop a targeted response plan.
Medium-term	• Support groups to deliver nature-based health and wellbeing activity programmes, through the framework of Wild and Well, focusing on areas of greatest need. • Work with existing Friends of Parks groups to develop a publicly accessible template plan to deliver community-led health interventions for destination and neighbourhood parks. • Work with healthcare providers to support green social prescribing to support the health of residents. • Improve access for women and girls, using guidance from Make Space for Girls and Green Flag's Safer Parks to increase our parks' appeal, safety, and relevance.
By 2039:	• Our parks and green spaces contribute to improving public health and reducing health inequalities as standard. • By 2032, people living in the 10% most disadvantaged areas of Bristol are as satisfied with where they live and the quality of parks and green spaces as people living in the most affluent areas of the city. • More people visit our parks and use them more consistently for active recreation.

Park running
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Culture - Key Actions:	
Short-term	• Work with the City Events Team to help develop an events and activities programme that will support and contribute to the financial sustainability of the park's service and promote a good range of year-round events at a wider variety of sites. • Work with the City Events Team to review future event fees and the community application process to create a system that makes it easier for a wider range of community groups and organisations to plan and run events and to look at using a wider range of under-utilised sites at a lower hire fee. • Continue to preserve the historic environment and work to remove assets from the Heritage at Risk Register. • Develop promotional activities, as well as digital and onsite material, to make it easier to access information about the culture and heritage in our parks.
Medium-term	• Support industry partners to deliver their events in line with the city's climate and ecological aspirations, by working to secure 'Greener code' or the equivalent sustainable accreditation. • Create a publicly accessible tool kit and guidance explaining how to carry out 'Our Spirit of Place' assessments of sites. • Trial ways of enabling the VCSE sector and community groups to monitor our historic environment with a clear route for reporting maintenance requests.
By 2039:	• Bristol's parks support a programme of year-round activities across a variety of sites. • Every neighbourhood in Bristol has access to a cultural/ creative opportunity within their neighbourhood parks and green spaces. • Bristol's sporting and cultural facilities are recognised as capable of hosting international events. • There will be no parks based historic assets on the Heritage at Risk Register.

Employment and Skills - Key Actions:	
Short-term	• Strengthen relationships with city partners to connect community groups to accessible training opportunities. • Undertake a staff skills audit to identify skills gaps, opportunities for development and ways to diversify the workforce. • Coordinate the development of training materials for parks volunteers, with input from existing groups. • Develop capacity and skills within the parks staff team to support volunteering.
Medium-term	• Develop and begin to deliver a service-wide Learning and Development Plan to support the appropriate skills development for our future service. • Continue to work with the council's Employment, Learning and Skills service to offer parks roles to underrepresented groups in the city.
By 2039:	• Our workforce will be more diverse and more representative of Bristol's communities, • All communities in Bristol can participate in the development of local parks-based learning and skills programmes.

Oldbury Court Park & Cafe
© BCC

Food Growing and Allotments - Key Actions:	
Short-term	• Develop policies and support for tenants so that food growing across council-managed sites become more environmentally sustainable and nature friendly, supporting Bristol's Climate Friendly Grower's Pledge. • Work with Bristol's disability groups to develop an exemplar accessible allotment plot and deliver across several sites by 2026. • Reduce food waste by encouraging all food growers to redistribute locally grown surplus food through local food bank networks. • Carry out an audit into who uses existing BCC allotment space and engage with stakeholders to understand the barriers that underrepresented groups (including those at risk of food inequality) face to accessing food growing. Using this data and learning, we will work with food equality partners to develop a food growing priority list, developing specific interventions including offering collective food growing opportunities.
Medium-term	• Work with city partners to ensure communities at risk of food inequality have access to food growing land and opportunities to develop growing and cooking skills. • Develop a place-based approach in partnership with the food growing community to determine what type of food growing initiative would achieve the best outcomes for that space in that area. • Create registration processes for collective food growing groups and larger scale food producers, working in partnership with Bristol Food Producers to help identify and match appropriate growing space with local food producers, as land becomes available.
Longer-term	• Where possible, we will pilot the repurposing of council-owned land for food growing in areas of high deprivation and food inequality. This will include allotment space, collective food growing and commercial food growing space respectively.
By 2039:	• All suitable growing land in the city-region is identified with the best land protected for growing. The volume of land used for growing [commercial, social enterprises, communities] increases significantly with 100% of suitable, council owned land used for food growing. • 20% of food consumed in the city comes from sustainable producers in the city region.

Chapter 8: **Glossary of Terms**

Anchor Organisation	Organisations who are based within a specific community or geographic area and have a significant role in how that community or place develops over time. Most often from the voluntary and community sector.
Community Resilience Fund	A capital grant fund delivered by Bristol City Council to support community and voluntary organisations to: • recover from the pandemic • increase their sustainability • continue the vital work they do for the long term.
Climate Friendly Grower's Pledge	A local pledge created by the Avon Wildlife Trust to support more sustainable food growing practises in the area. Developed in partnership with Bristol City Council.
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	Is a financial contribution which local authorities receive from developers to make improvements to important infrastructure such as roads and schools. Bristol City Council uses 15% of its CIL funding for schemes which are decided by residents in partnership with local councillors. These local schemes can include parks and green spaces.
Destination park	A park which, due to its size or amenities, attracts larger number of visitors from across the city.
Food equality	When all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.
Food Growing Priority List	A list of individuals in Bristol who face additional barriers to accessing food growing opportunities (e.g. because of limited or no private garden space). The council will work with partners to support individuals on this list to access opportunities through collective food growing.
Grazing land	A field covered with grass or herbage and suitable for grazing by livestock.
Green social prescribing	Green social prescribing is the practice of supporting people to engage in nature-based interventions and activities to improve their mental and physical health.
Greener code	An internationally recognised award, created by Vision: 2025, to support outdoor live events run more sustainably and with less of an environmental impact.
Gold Sustainable Food City	Awarded by the UK partnership programme, Sustainable Food Places. The award recognises the positive work undertaken across the city's food system. Bristol is only the second city in the UK to achieve the status, after Brighton and Hove was awarded it in 2020.

Heritage at Risk Register	An annual Heritage at Risk Register is published by Historic England. The survey is used by national and local government, a wide range of individuals and heritage groups to establish the extent of risk and to help assess priorities for action and funding decisions.
Market gardens	A place where fruit and vegetables are grown for sale.
Neighbourhood park	A smaller park which serves the population of a neighbourhood and is accessible by walking or cycling.
Our Spirit of Place	An approach that works with local communities to understand the unique qualities of a park or green space taking into account physical features, cultural aspects, heritage and aesthetic qualities – that together define the 'spirit of place'.
Place-based	Place-based approaches consider the opportunities and challenges within a specific location and work with local people to plan and deliver improvements in the area.
Playable landscape	Is the process of designing park or green space (outside of a formal play area) to make the space more inviting and playful for children and young people.
Small holding	An area of land that is used for farming but is much smaller than a typical farm.
Social enterprise	A business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.
Social value	Social value is defined through the Public Services (Social Value) Act (2013) which requires all public sector organisations and their suppliers to look beyond the financial cost of a contract to consider how the services they commission and procure can improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of an area.
Sustainable Drainage Scheme	A way of managing surface water to reduce the risk of flooding and deal with any pollution in the water.
Typography	A breakdown of the different types of parks and green spaces.
Welfare value	The value a place may bring someone in terms of the benefits to their physical, emotional, social or mental wellbeing. This could include improvement in physical fitness or opportunities to connect socially.
Wheels park	A dedicated space for people to use for activities such as skating or scooting.

Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement

The following organisations have been consulted as part of the development of the strategy.

Age UK,

Avon Wildlife Trust,

Bristol Allotments Forum,

Bristol Disabilities and Equalities Forum,

Bristol Food Network,

Bristol Food Producers,

Bristol Tree Forum,

Bristol Parks Forum,

Feeding Bristol,

Forest of Avon Trust,

Friends of Badocks Wood,

Friends of Hengrove Mounds & Hawkfield Meadow,

Green Futures,

Knowle West Health Park,

Knowle West Alliance,

Learning Partnership West,

Natural England,

NHS,

SHINE,

Street Goat,

Sustrans,

University of Bristol,

Up Our Street,

West of England Centre for Inclusive Living (WECIL),

West of England Nature Partnership,

Your Park Bristol and Bath

Documents available in other formats:

You can request alternative formats of this document
by email: **parksconsultation@bristol.gov.uk**
or call **0117 922 2100**

Our parks and green spaces in numbers

117
Listed buildings and structures

700
Hectares of woodland

£330,000
per year of stored carbon

5
Registered parks and gardens

235
Members of staff

17million
annual visits to parks and green spaces

15 cafes

1,364 hectares
of grass mown each year

129 Playgrounds

1 plant nursery

14,000
Trees planted in 2023

60
Sites of Nature Conservation interest

25
cemetery and crematoriums

34
Multi-use games areas

14
Wheels parks

440
Parks and green spaces

4,000
council managed allotment plots

67
Parks groups

£361m per year
the monetary value of physical and mental health benefits

13,000 per year
Hours of staff led volunteering in parks

£12.3m per year
Revenue generated