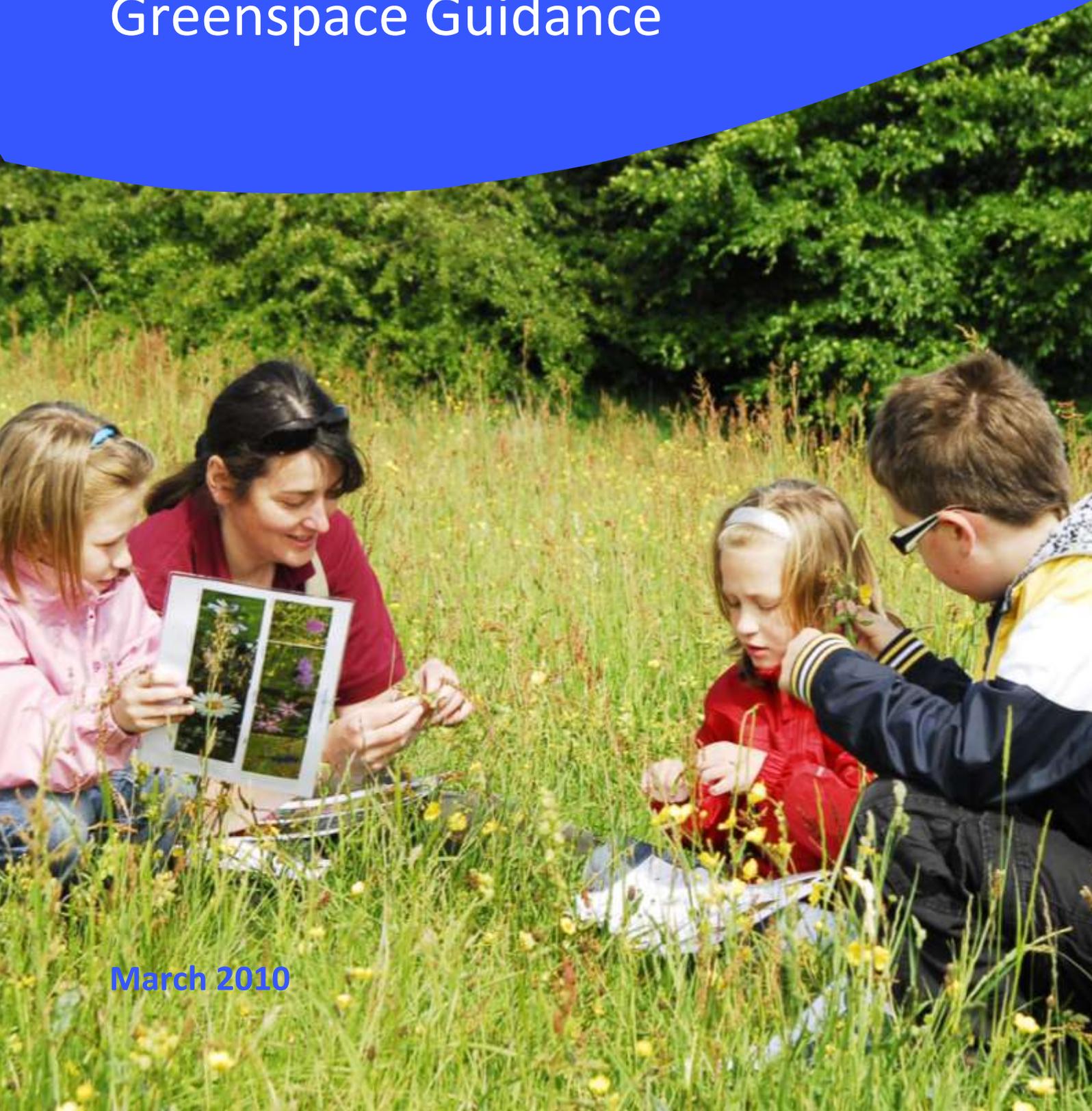


# 'Nature Nearby'

## Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance



March 2010

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

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



Mile End Park, Tower Hamlets

# Foreword

**‘Nature Nearby’ is everyday nature, on our doorsteps.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Guy Thompson  
Executive Director

# Scope and aims of the guidance

Welcome to Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance.

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

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

## Natural England's Standards for Accessible Natural Greenspace

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

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



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

# Executive Summary

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

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

## 1. Access to Natural Greenspace Standard – ANGSt

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

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

### The three underlying principles of ANGSt are:

- a) Improving access to green spaces.
- b) Improving naturalness of green spaces.
- c) Improving connectivity with green spaces.

Using these principles the standard can be applied for:

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

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> Accessible Natural Green Space Standards in Towns and Cities: A Review and Toolkit for their Implementation  
English Nature Research Report No 526

<sup>2</sup> Land Use Consultants 2008

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

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

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

## **2. Visitor Service Standards**

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

- a) National Nature Reserves
- b) Country Parks
- c) Local Nature Reserves.

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

## **3. Greenspace Quality Standards**

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

# Definitions

In this document we use the following definitions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

A glossary of acronyms used in the document is provided in [Annex 1](#).

# 1. Introduction:

## What is accessible natural greenspace?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>3</sup> Edward McMahon -

[http://www.sustainablecities.org.uk/news\\_and\\_updates/green\\_inspiration\\_from\\_america](http://www.sustainablecities.org.uk/news_and_updates/green_inspiration_from_america)

## 1.1 The policy context

National and local policies that link to greenspace standards include:

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

Natural England's position is that:

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

Natural England's position goes on to state:

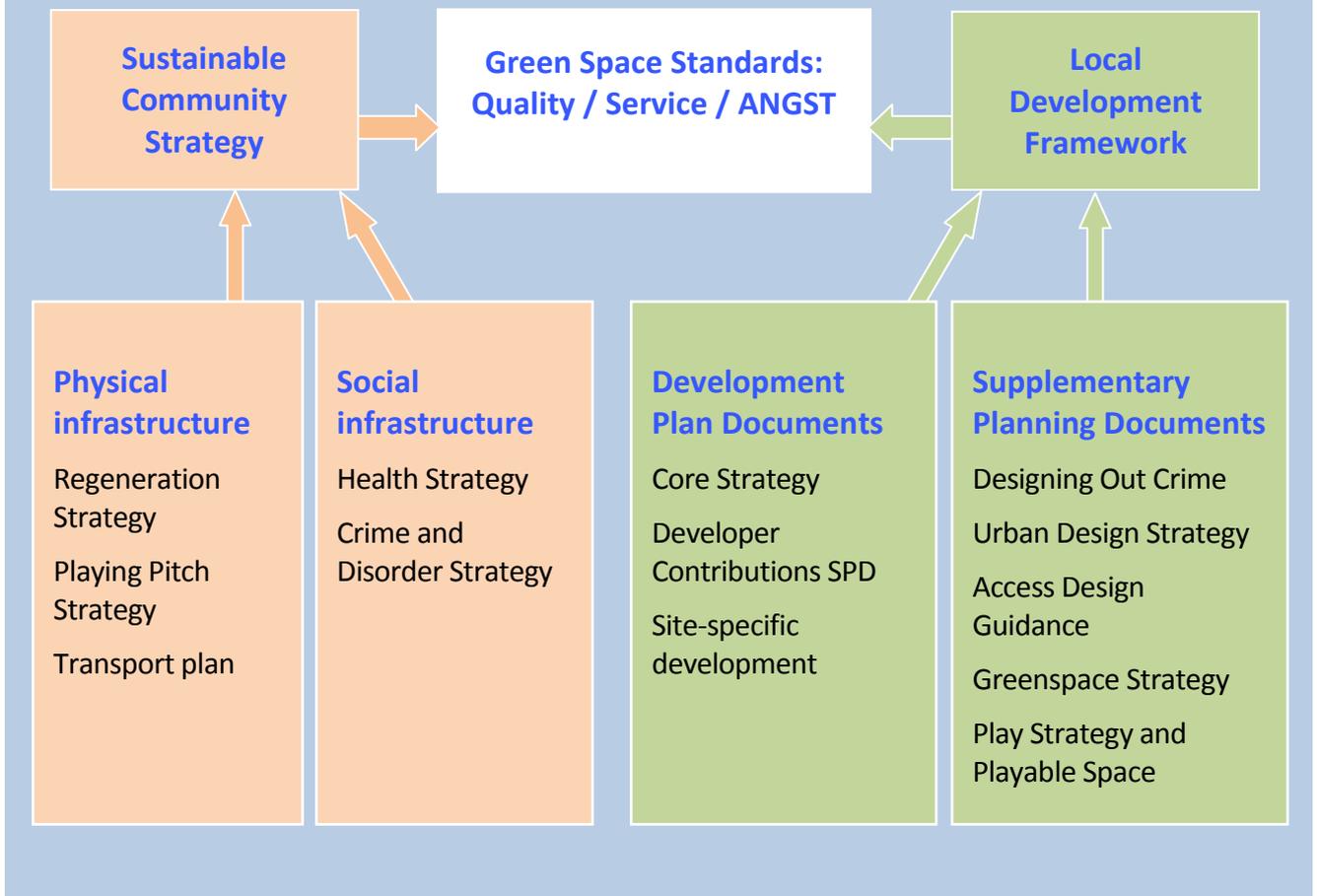
*"We believe that places where people can enjoy the natural environment should be improved and created where they are most wanted and needed: close to where people live; and where they want to visit."*

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

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

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

## Strategies and Development Plan Documents



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

## 1.2 Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard

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

### ANGSt

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

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

#### ANGSt is based on three principles:

- a) Improving access.
- b) Improving naturalness.
- c) Improving connectivity.

#### a) Improving access

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

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

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

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

## b) Improving naturalness (and biodiversity)

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

Further guidance can be found in [How to encourage biodiversity in Urban Parks](#) published by CABI Space and in the Town and Country Planning Association document:

[Biodiversity by Design – a guide for Sustainable Communities.](#)

### Equality of access – making an effort

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

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

### c) Improving connectivity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 1.3 Visitor Service Standards

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

- a) National Nature Reserves (particularly sites with high visitor numbers under our management).
- b) Country Parks.
- c) Local Nature Reserves.

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

### a) National Nature Reserves (NNRs)

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

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

Further information on NNRs can be found at [www.naturalengland.org](http://www.naturalengland.org)

### b) Country Parks Accreditation Scheme

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

### The first Accredited Country Park

#### Worcester Woods Country Park

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

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

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

[www.worcestershire.gov.uk](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk)

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

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

### c) **Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)**

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

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

## 1.4 Quality standard for greenspace

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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