

Conclusion

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

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

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

ANGSt is all about:

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

Using these principles ANGSt can be applied to:

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

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

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

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

Annex 1

Glossary of acronyms

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

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



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

Annex 2

A proxy measure when mapping naturalness

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

Level 1

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

Level 2

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

Level 3

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

Level 4

- Improved farmland.

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

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



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

Annex 3

National and local agendas

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

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

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

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

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

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

PPS 1: *Delivering sustainable development* (2005) states that development should ensure an appropriate mix of uses, including the incorporation of greenspace⁵.

Supplement to PPS 1: *Planning and Climate Change* (2007) states that spatial strategies and any development should help deliver, amongst other things, green infrastructure and biodiversity, as part of a strategy to address climate change mitigation and adaptation⁶.

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

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

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

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

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

A new suite of Planning Policy Statements has been published in March 2010 for public consultation. A new Planning Policy Statement: Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment⁸, has now been published which replaces PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, PPS17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, and PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.

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



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

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

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

Annex 4

The Spatial Planning System and accessible greenspace

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Using ANGSt to support developer contributions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Annex 5

Incentive grant aid policies/funding

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

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

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

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

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

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

Annex 6

Site examples

Avon Heath Country Park	Education in the South West has never been this much fun!	p. 57
Walking for Health, Carlisle City Council	It's a healthy life in the North West	p. 59
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Linford Wood, Milton Keynes	Conservation and exercise are winning in the South East	p. 71
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Sharrow School Green Roof Local Nature Reserve	It's one of a kind in Yorkshire!	p. 85
St Lawrence Park, Newcastle	It's all going green in the North East!	p. 87
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West Park, Darlington	Greenspace in the North East: a sense of pride, place and well-being	p. 95

Avon Heath Country Park



Source: <http://www.dorsetforyou.com>

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

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

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

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

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

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

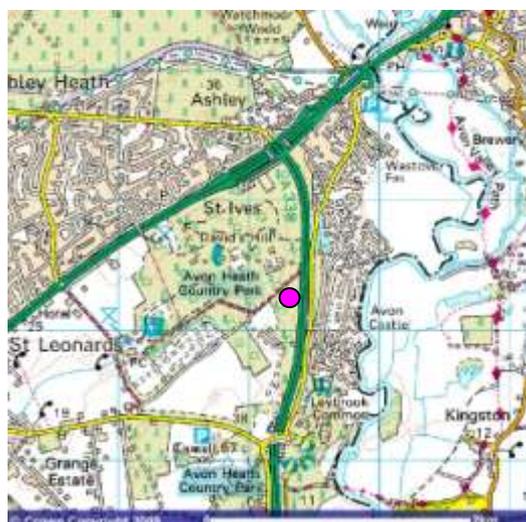
Hopefully, this very practical approach to learning will not only help in their school studies, but will inspire them to look after the Park and perhaps return as a volunteer in the future.

For more information please contact:

Avon Heath Country Park
Nr Ringwood, Dorset

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



It's a healthy life in the North West

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

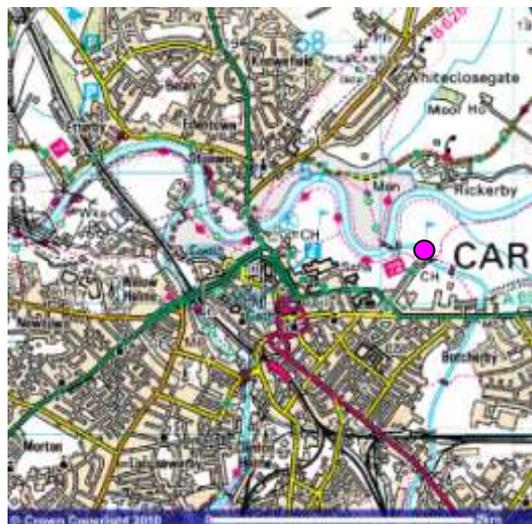
For more information please contact:

The Sport and Recreation Team
Carlisle City Council
Carlisle

Tel: 01228 817370

Email: emad@carlisle.gov.uk

www.carlisle.gov.uk



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

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

Coombe Country Park Climbing Forest



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

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

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

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

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

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

For further information please contact:

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

Ferry Meadows Country Park



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Conserving nature and the community in the East

- Community involvement
- Conservation
- Access for all

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

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

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

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

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

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Tel: 01733 234193

Email: visitor.services@neneparktrust.org.uk



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

Freemantle Lake Park



Source: www.cabe.org

Creative conservation by the young of the South East

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

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

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

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

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

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

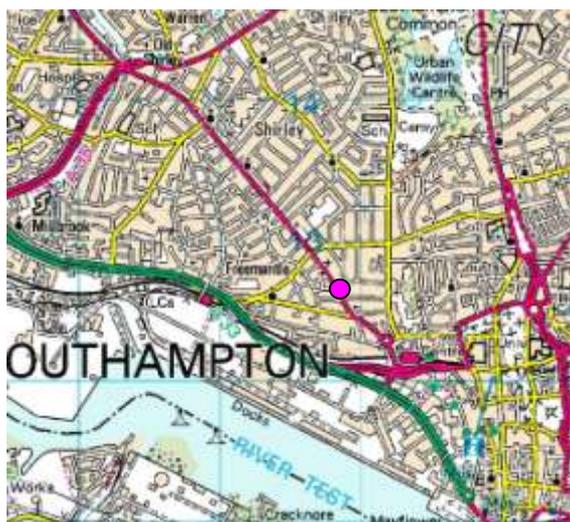
This project started out with the aim of giving young people a positive profile in the local community. It's fair to say much more has been achieved and the work continues.

For more information please contact:

Youth Support Service
Southampton City Council

Tel: 023 8091 7755

Email: youth.enquiries@southampton.gov.uk



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

Incredible Edible Todmorden



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

It's the 'good life' in West Yorkshire

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

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

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

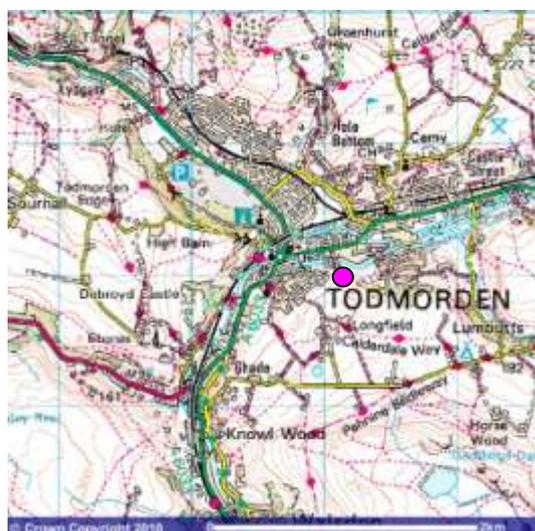
The movement began with a vision for the future of Todmorden as a town that cared about its food and environment. It has developed into a town-wide initiative supported by local people, businesses, farmers, schools, health services, the probation service and the local authority. Now all sorts of collaborations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

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

For further information please contact:

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

Email: iet_hothouse@btinternet.com.



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

Jeskyn's Community Woodland



Source: Forestry Commission

Transforming the South East

- Conservation
- Community Involvement
- Natural Play

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

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

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

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

A total of 130,000 trees and shrubs and 5km of new hedgerows have been planted to transform Jeskyns into a remarkable accessible greenspace for the local communities. The involvement of local community groups, schools and youth groups in the continuation of this conservation work is ensuring that the benefits of this project will continue for future generations.

For more information please contact:

Jeskyns

Forestry Commission

Care of: Shorne Wood Country Park

Brewers Road

Shorne

Kent

DA12 3HX

Tel: 01474 825118

Email: jeskynsranger@forestry.gsi.gov.uk



Situated in Cobham, Kent, Jeskyns can be found just off the A2 exit marked Gravesend East and Sole Street. The 146 hectare woodland serves the urban population of Gravesham as a whole (98,000 residents) alongside the rural parish population of Cobham (1300).



Conservation and exercise are winning in the South East

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

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

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

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

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

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

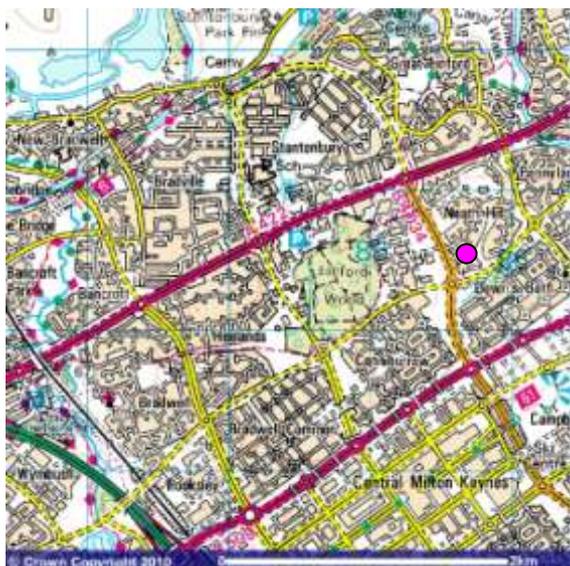
For more information please contact:

The Parks Trust
Milton Keynes

Tel: 01908 233600

Email: info@theparkstrust.com

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



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

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

Loris Road Community Garden



Source: www.keepbritaintidy.org

A Community at work and play in London

- Community engagement
- Conservation
- Environmental education

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

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

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

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

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

For more information please contact:

Hammersmith Community Gardens Association
London

Tel: 07890 514 050

Email: info@hcga.org.uk

www.hcga.org.uk



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

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



Volunteer managers in the South West

- Effective partnerships
- Community involvement
- Conservation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For further information please contact:

Alison Forward
Friends of Maningham Wood
Illogan

Tel: 07880 948791

Email: alison.forward@hotmail.co.uk



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

Mersey Vale Nature Park



Source: Stockport Borough Council

Conservation at its best in the North West

- Community involvement
- Conservation
- Masterplanning

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

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

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