



A Green Recovery for Parks and Green Spaces

During the COVID-19 lockdown, parks and green spaces had a high public profile, and were rightly championed as crucial assets to maintaining people's physical and mental health. They became a vital part of the national response to the pandemic.

As we come out of the pandemic, we have the opportunity to make parks and green spaces a central part of the nation's economic and social recovery, recognising their role in improving public health – as well as addressing climate change and restoring nature. To seize this opportunity, they need to be built into the Government plans from the outset. The UK should:

Take a natural capital approach to new infrastructure and decision making

- Provide economic stimulus packages which accelerate the transition to a low carbon, resilient economy.
- Take a natural capital approach to investment decisions, ensuring the returns on investment from parks and green spaces are properly recognised.
- Require all publicly funded infrastructure and large-scale housing to meet high standards of environmental and social benefit, including targets for healthy parks and green spaces.
- Re-orientate targets and incentives for Local Planning Authorities towards a broader set of place-making outcomes including quality parks and green spaces.

Invest in maintenance and retrofit of existing parks and green spaces

- Acknowledge the importance of investing in the maintenance of new and existing green infrastructure, like parks and green spaces. Cutting maintenance results in the diminution of these assets and hence their benefits.
- Address the maintenance investment deficit in the Autumn Statement, and in UK local government finances, by providing adequate resources to maintain parks and green spaces to a high standard.
- Rebalance infrastructure spending from capital to revenue spend to ensure places and buildings can be retrofitted, managed and maintained where appropriate.
- Increase devolved powers to local areas to take landscape-wide approaches to managing and maintaining green infrastructure, enabling the pooling of resources and the raising of finance.

Set higher and fairer standards for green space

- Set national standards for quantity, quality, and accessibility of green infrastructure, including parks and green spaces, including measures of equity ensuring the needs of local communities are at the heart of their design.
- Prioritise green infrastructure investment, especially parks and green spaces, in those places which have the greatest need and exhibit the greatest inequalities.
- To ensure that the national standards drive improvement in green infrastructure, including parks and green spaces, provide improvement support to local places that helps secure the benefits that flow from good quality green infrastructure and parks and green spaces.

Invest in natural solutions to climate change

- Invest in nature-based solutions to climate change that can deliver for jobs, nature and the economy.
- Ensure the forthcoming Agriculture Bill and Environment Land Management Schemes provide a framework for delivering positive environmental outcomes and also support investment into green spaces on the edge of urban areas.
- Pass a strong Environment Bill which includes ambitious targets that are legally binding and measurable.
- Sets targets for long-term establishment of quality trees, rather than simply quantity, recognising the need for integration into local green infrastructure plans.

Deliver a step-change in skills for the parks and green space sector

- Invest in green skills to allow those most affected by the economic downturn to reskill for a low carbon economy and delivering the health and environmental benefits of parks and green spaces.
- Work with professional bodies to deliver training, apprenticeships and education with a focus on parks and green space management.
- Promote the National Retraining Scheme, National Skills Fund, and the Apprenticeship Levy at local level to support reskilling, and education towards a resilient green economy.

This paper on parks and green spaces is a supplement to the Landscape Institute's report on delivering a sustainable recovery from COVID-19 whilst tackling climate change.

For further detail on each of these areas, more information about the Landscape Institute, and acknowledgements, please see the full paper, available at <http://www.landscapeinstitute.org>