

OUR PARKS, OUR PLAN

2025-28



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FOREWORD

We know from talking to our residents just how much they care about Manchester's parks. In our initial consultations, we learned that more than 90 per cent of those responding to the consultation regularly use the city's green spaces. A huge number of people also responded to tell us how they think they should be improved in the future.

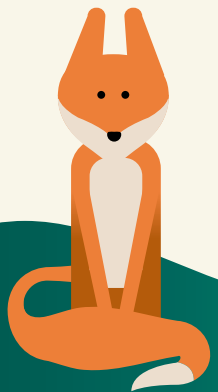
We know how much parks add to the life of our communities. People love to live near them because of the connection with nature they offer. Parks make us healthier, happier and keep us active. Importantly, they are places where friends and families can meet, and where children can play. The benefits they bring to our city are not just social, but also environmental, through the reduction in carbon pollution that these 'green lungs' provide. In short, our parks play a key role in helping to make Manchester a truly great place to live and work.

We have listened to residents and have heard clearly that they are keen to take more ownership and responsibility for what happens in the city's parks. I therefore look forward to working with everyone who wants to play their part. I pledge to help and support our communities to continue to improve their parks, so they become even cleaner, greener and safer places for everyone to enjoy.



Cllr Lee-Ann Igbon
Executive Member for
Vibrant Neighbourhoods

“Together, we want our parks and green spaces to be the heart, lungs and soul of Manchester, by providing the conditions for our people, our environment and our city to flourish.”



STRATEGIC THEMES

PARKS AT THE HEART OF NEIGHBOURHOODS

- Supportive of the diverse range of wildlife: conserving natural habitats, improving air quality, mitigating climate change and flooding, and allowing people to engage with and learn about nature.
- Valued highly by local people, organisations, visitors, and the people who work in them. Parks make a positive difference to people's lives and are a source of pride for everyone.
- Valued and understood through education, communication and effective partnerships, where local people and organisations are involved in creating spaces where people can relax and feel safe.

VIBRANT PARKS, VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

- High-quality assets where people meet and the community flourishes, providing high visitor satisfaction and promoting Manchester as a place to live, work and visit.
- Good for physical and mental health: a natural health service where people can relax and feel safe, as well as a space for sport and culture, with the relevant infrastructure in place for this to happen.

MANCHESTER QUALITY STANDARD

- Net contributors to the city: reducing the effects of pollution; producing food and plants; as well as providing learning, skills, training and job opportunities.

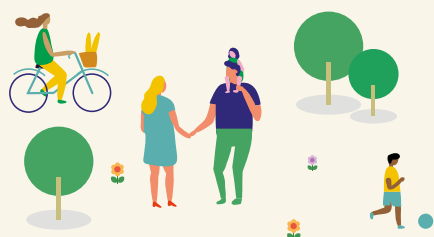
- Well managed, in partnership with internal Council departments and external partners working together to ensure sustainable operation – both financially (by closing the gap between income and expenditure) and environmentally.

PRODUCTIVE PARKS IN PARTNERSHIP

- Fully accessible, welcoming and visually appealing, with some truly world-class destinations, a great heritage, and horticultural and tourist attractions.



WHAT'S BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR



9.2million annual visitors to parks in 2024.

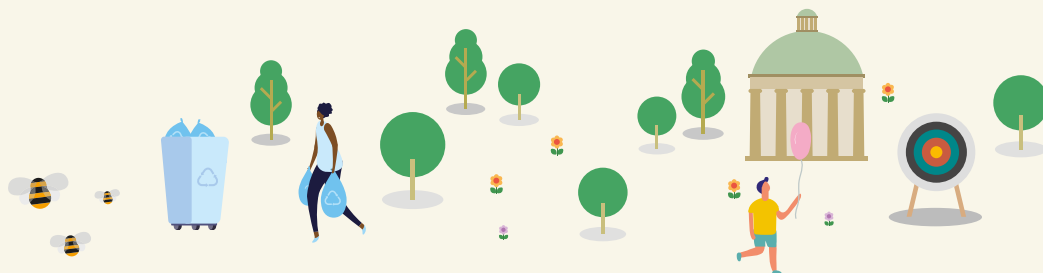
50% increase from pre-pandemic levels of 6.1million visitors



Over **£10million** investment across 100 parks service sites



20% (352 activities and events) increase in parks programme



62% (65,004 bags) increase in the number of rubbish bags collected annually

Parks work with **339** stakeholder group partners – a **100%** increase through the strategy



Parks generate **£2.4million** per annum – a **150%** (£1.5million) increase since 2017, helping the service become increasingly self-funded.

WHAT'S BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR

1. PUTTING MANCHESTER'S PARKS AT THE 'HEART' OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, PROVIDING PEOPLE WITH ACCESS TO GREEN SPACES AND NATURE

Parks work in partnership with over two hundred community groups and thousands of volunteers each with a passion for their local area. This ensures Parks remain at the heart of their communities providing vital resources.

Case study:

Working in partnership with Sick Festival and Lakeside CIC, Boggart Hole Clough plays hosts to the annual Sick Festival providing essential information and support for mental health in North Manchester.



2. ENSURING THAT MANCHESTER'S PARKS ARE VIBRANT, ACTIVE PLACES, REFLECTING AND COMPLEMENTING THE DIVERSITY AND ACTIVITY IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Since the introduction of the strategy, events and activities have more than doubled across our parks. This has resulted in significant diversification, including the city's first-ever 'Tent Pegging' event taking place in 2023, the very well-attended Mental Health Awareness festival at Boggart Hole Clough, and other attractions.

Case study:

Eid in the Park at Platt Fields has become the second-largest Eid gathering in the UK, attracting some 15,000 participants.



3. ESTABLISHING A MANCHESTER QUALITY STANDARD, WHICH WILL DELIVER SAFE, HIGH-QUALITY PARKS AND GREEN SPACES FOR ALL RESIDENTS ACROSS THE CITY

Fifty-five park sites currently have or will soon have some form of alternative ground management implemented, such as differential mowing, wildflower meadows or similar, supporting the city's climate change objectives.

Case study:

One innovative example is West Gorton Sponge Park, created in partnership with the local community. At its point of opening, it was one of only five such facilities across the UK and is a brilliant example of sustainable drainage systems.



4. HAVING PARKS THAT ARE RESOURCED EFFECTIVELY AND SUSTAINABLY THROUGH ACTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH RESIDENTS, ORGANISATIONS AND BUSINESSES

Since the strategy was launched, we have invested 6.6 million pounds in improvement projects across the city in areas that have supported the service to move towards a more long-term sustainable approach.

Case study:

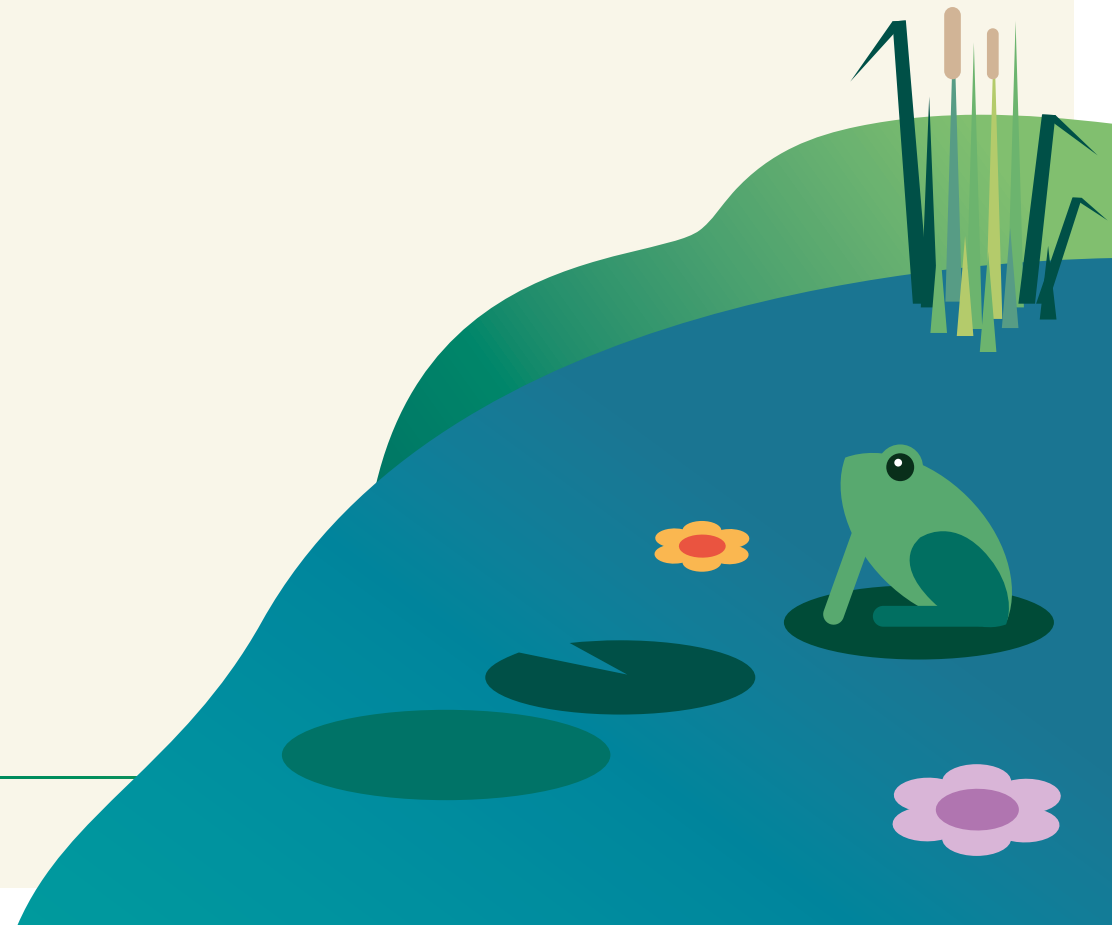
The cycle track and hub at Wythenshawe Park, a state-of-the-art £1.55 million investment.



APPROACH: WHAT'S CHANGED

Given the significant changes since the strategy's launch seven years ago, it is now an appropriate time to review and update it. This review, involving senior management and key stakeholders, confirmed that the fundamental themes and direction of the Parks Strategy remain relevant and effective. The strategy has positively impacted service delivery, and we are committed to it. Recognising the need to adapt to current challenges and opportunities, the action plan has been updated; it now includes new actions, clear reporting and review mechanisms, and uses simplified language to make it more relatable and adaptable to future influences.

The plan also draws inspiration from the recent Our Manchester survey, which further highlighted the value of parks in our community and how importantly they are viewed by park visitors. Many of the key areas our residents asked us to focus on are covered within the original Parks Strategy; however, using the feedback, this action plan seeks to further embed these values to direct service delivery.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Since 2017, new challenges have emerged for the city, and challenges that were already present have gained greater recognition or have been further exacerbated through the impacts of COVID-19.

HEALTH INEQUALITY

Manchester has some of the poorest health outcomes in the country. Residents in Manchester are more likely to face early death from cancer, heart and lung diseases, and men and women alike have a healthy life expectancy of less than sixty years. This is uneven in terms of geography and population, there being particular challenges in north Manchester and for our Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities and population.

Our commitment

Parks provide a well-established positive impact for our residents' physical and mental health. The service has a specific focus on increasing and promoting the provision of good-quality facilities and activities that help deliver better health outcomes. This links closely to our theme

on partnership working to improve our parks' facilities to increase walking, running and wheeling through improved infrastructure. We will have a baseline for the current level of activities to support physical and mental health, such as sports and wellness activities across parks. We will actively seek to increase opportunities and track progress against the baseline. We will analyse local data, directing resources and support to the worst affected areas.



Park Run, Philips Park

INCLUSION AND EQUALITY

Manchester continues to be one of the most deprived local authority areas in the country. Inclusion and inequality have been critical issues in the city for many years, but they have been exacerbated by the disproportionately negative

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the city, particularly on our most vulnerable residents.

Our commitment

We will work with groups and stakeholders to further develop bespoke park plans to meet the needs of their local communities. Further to this, we will continue to develop affordable event and activity programmes, targeting resources to the worst affected areas. We will embed and improve our age-friendly standard, removing accessibility barriers. We will increase our engagement to ensure that we are speaking with a wide variety of stakeholders, measuring progress through participation in partner groups and event-delivery statistics. We will ensure parks accessibility standards are met through park and play inspections, reporting findings.



Basketball at Hulme Park

POVERTY

Poverty has been increasing in the city over the past five years, creating significant challenges for those in insecure or low-paid jobs. It has also had a cumulative impact on the health and inclusion of residents from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds.

Our commitment

We will work with key partners, including community groups and residents, to ensure the service plays a central role in supporting residents through hardship, targeting resources where required. We will ensure we maintain, support and increase the number of free and low-cost activities delivered to our residents through parks. Where paid facilities are available, we will ensure through robust contract management and reporting there are a suitable range of affordable activities and facilities within the estate that are open to everyone.



HAF Activity

ZERO CARBON

In July 2019, Manchester declared a Climate Change Emergency in recognition of the serious risk of climate change to Manchester's future. A commitment for Manchester to become zero carbon by 2038 followed.

Opportunities have also emerged with the changed environment, and the Council and its partners have responded by reshaping their approach to engagement, collaboration and delivery.

Our commitment

Through the Parks Climate Change Action Plan the service has made several commitments. We and our partners will remove the use of single-use plastics across the estate. We will actively monitor adherence to this policy. The service will continue to expand the number of sites and land area under active alternative land-management methods, such as differential mowing, wildflower meadows and tree planting. Performance data on the number of sites and square metres of alternative land management in place across the service will be collected.

We will work with partners to implement a sustainable programme of tree planting, measuring the number of trees planted. Parks

will also use sustainable fuel methods to support service delivery, such as a phased move to electric vehicles across the estate, encouraging and influencing partners such as contractors and event providers to do likewise. We will measure the carbon footprint of parks' day-to-day operations, such as power usage, waste arrangement and use of consumables. At parks events, we will measure the use of power supply, food miles and waste and recycling, setting targets to reduce the impact on the environment.



Wildflower Meadow, Didsbury Park

THE VALUE OF PARKS

The Office for National Statistics has reported that there was a shift in personal behaviour and corporate attitudes towards parks during the pandemic; it also said this would likely result in society placing more value on the provision of parks and a greater scale of interaction than before the pandemic.

Our commitment

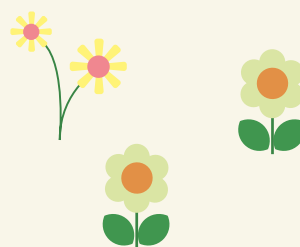
The global pandemic focused attention on the value of parks. Profile and usage have never been higher, and this creates increased opportunities for collaboration with partners on new projects that will increase the quality of services delivered.

The service collects data on park footfall and will continue to track growth to direct service provision and develop new opportunities to further improve standards. We will set and monitor quality standards for all parks that deliver a guaranteed Manchester Quality Standard that matches the value our residents have in our parks.

This will be measured and reported through Park and Play inspections. We will also work to develop new opportunities and partnerships that are mutually beneficial and deliver improvements to the service.



Hulme Park



CHILD FRIENDLY CITY

Building on the success of 2022 Our Year, Manchester joined UNICEF UK's Child Friendly Cities programme with the ambition to ensure that children have the chance to benefit from and have a meaningful say in the decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives.

Our commitment

We will continue to support the approach that has already delivered significant investment in play provision, ensuring a commitment to make it accessible for all. We will ensure that the service meets the requirements of the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities programme. To support this, we will track and measure engagement with young people to ensure they have a say in future service development. We will also track and continue to prioritise investment in services and facilities used by our young people.



Play Area, Wythenshawe Park

WOMEN AND GIRLS

In 2022, the Council committed to taking action to improve the safety of women and girls, with an initial focus on the night-time economy. The scope of this work has expanded in response to the research and guidance published in May 2023 by Keep Britain Tidy on the safety of women and girls in parks.

Our commitment

The service will continue to ensure that all staff are trained to identify, report and tackle incidents of violence or intimidation against women and girls.

Training levels will be monitored and reported to ensure success. We will continue to improve the safety of sites by providing better park infrastructure, such as wayfinding information, signage, lighting, clearance work, as well as pathways, entrances and exits. All incident of violence and intimidation toward women and girls will be accurately recorded and investigated, helping to inform future service delivery.

We will also promote and actively encourage projects that increase the amount of female participation in volunteer groups and activities across the service. To support this, we will

measure and set targets for female participation. Through the creation of a women and girls working group, the service will also create and implement a range of actions to further support work in this area.



White Ribbon Campaign, Wythenshawe Park



Cycling group activity, Heaton Park

CAPITAL OF CYCLING

In December 2023, Manchester announced that it would be the first European Capital of Cycling. This announcement celebrated the city's investment in cycling infrastructure and activation of parks, and it gives a platform to work collaboratively to deliver opportunities for residents, organisations and businesses to pedal more in 2024.

Our commitment

We will pursue investment opportunities that help improve cycle-friendly facilities across our venues. We will also explore what opportunities this might create for several of the cycling groups that support the service.

We will record data on the number of sites and projects that currently support cycling provision and use across the service, including those directly supported by Capital of Cycling activity, working to increase opportunities.

We will work in partnership with colleagues, both internally and externally, to measure cycling usage in and through our parks, improving facilities and support to drive further increase. Keeping the Action Plan on track



GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING

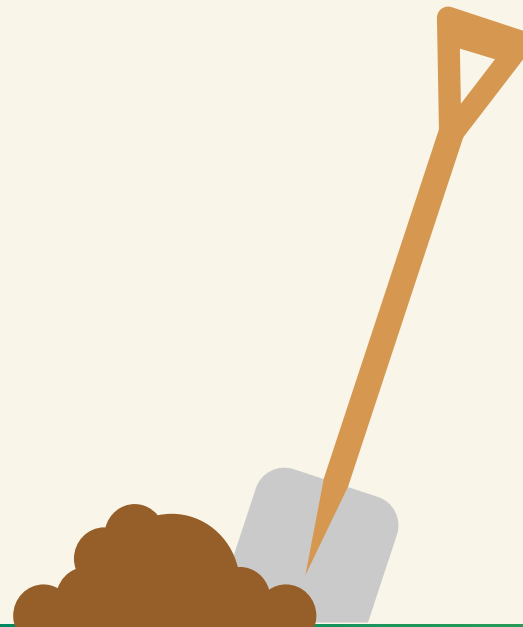
Delivery of the plan will be monitored through the Park Strategy Board, chaired by the Executive Member for Vibrant Neighbourhoods. There will be an annual review through the Clean and Green Board, with specialist activity in areas such as carbon reduction reviewed through the relevant governance structure; in the case of carbon reduction this would be the Zero Carbon Co-ordination Group.

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

There are over twenty performance measures where data is collected in relation to parks. These are being reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant and sufficient to describe and measure the progress made. Great importance is being placed on celebrating achievements. These can be evidenced through figures, but equal measure will be placed on telling the story in terms of changed outcomes that can be heard through the lived experience of people.

VOLUNTEERING

If you feel inspired to support your local community and help others, you can volunteer in one of our parks. You can find volunteering opportunities by speaking to your local Ranger or by visiting [mcrvip.com](https://www.mcrvip.com)





MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

