



DOUGLAS PARKS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY 2025 – 2035

Foreword

The value of parks and green spaces has never been clearer than in recent years. They offer a sanctuary for physical and mental wellbeing, a place to connect with nature, and a vital resource for our communities. Beyond their benefits to health and happiness, they play a crucial role in tackling climate change, improving air quality, fostering social connections, preserving local heritage and supporting wildlife.

This strategy outlines Douglas City Council's vision for the next decade: to maintain and enhance our green spaces, ensuring they remain high-quality, inclusive, and sustainable for generations to come. I am excited to see this plan come to life, strengthening Douglas' reputation as a city that values and invests in its natural and recreational spaces. One of the key goals is to bring all parks and green spaces up to a high standard, recognising that these are the most frequently used spaces. Access to high-quality green spaces is crucial, particularly in areas where fewer people have private gardens and where health inequalities are more pronounced.

Douglas is home to an incredible network of parks, woodlands, glens and green spaces. From the much-loved Noble's Park and Marine Gardens to cherished local spaces like Douglas Head and Summerhill Glen, these places offer something for everyone—whether it's sport, birdwatching, play or simply enjoying a peaceful walk.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to preserving and enhancing our parks and green spaces. Let us work together to create a greener, healthier and more connected Douglas for generations to come.

Councillor Andrew Bentley
Chair of Regeneration and Community Committee

Introduction

This strategy sets out the vision for Douglas City Council Park's Service, and the actions that we will undertake to deliver that vision over the next 10 years. The strategy is vital to ensure that our natural and recreational assets are preserved, enhanced, and made available to all, both now and for future generations.

Parks, open spaces, and green spaces are essential components of vibrant, healthy, and sustainable communities. They provide places for recreation, relaxation, and social interaction, while also supporting biodiversity, improving air quality, and reducing the impacts of climate change.

By addressing current challenges such as funding constraints, urbanisation pressures and environmental issues, this strategy sets out clear goals and actions ensuring that parks, open and green spaces remain valuable assets. It will guide decision-making, resource allocation and long-term planning, ensuring that our community continues to benefit from a network of open and green spaces that are not only beautiful and accessible, but also resilient and sustainable. We are keen to ensure that public spaces in Douglas continue to deliver such benefits and this strategy will help achieve that aim.

Our parks and open spaces in numbers

1,000 + hectares of green space

9 community parks (5 squares, Noble's Park, Douglas Head, Kaye Memorial Garden and Marine Gardens)

2 glens

95 council managed allotment plots

5 grass football pitches

3 multi-use games areas

14 playgrounds

1 skate park

1 Golf Course (18 hole)

2 beaches

3 bowling greens

1 plant nursery

400,000 trees

2 cemeteries and 1 crematorium

51 permanent members of staff and 3 seasonal workers

Vision

Our vision is to provide welcoming, accessible open spaces which maximise opportunities for residents and visitors to participate in a wide variety of leisure and sporting activities in a safe and naturally sustainable environment.

Priorities

In this document we have set out 10 priorities with the actions required to deliver them for Parks Service.

Quality – providing high quality parks, open spaces and beaches.

Biodiversity – increasing wildlife and ecosystem diversity.

Climate Change – Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the impact of climate change through increased biodiversity and carbon sequestration

Accessibility – ensuring that parks and green spaces are accessible to everyone.

Active Travel – providing active clear routes to promote walking and cycling throughout parks and green spaces.

Culture and Events – providing exciting diverse, interesting, and enjoyable green spaces that reflect the history and culture of their local communities.

Play and Education – providing exciting and challenging spaces that children and teenagers love to visit.

Working with the community – having a positive open, helpful, and collaborative approach.

Financial sustainability – ensuring that good quality public green space is available for the long term.

Health and Wellbeing – providing a range of opportunities for people to receive the health benefits of spending time in green spaces, contributing towards a greater wellbeing across the city.

Quality

Providing high quality parks, open spaces, and beaches.

We aim to deliver high quality parks, open spaces and beaches as measured by the International Green Flag standards and Blue Flag standards. These measures include widely accepted criteria such as ‘welcoming’, ‘clean and ‘well maintained’ and ‘healthy, safe and secure’ to assess the quality of green spaces. Over the next 10 years we

intend to work towards achieving blue flag status for at least one of our two beaches, this award signifies that a beach meets the highest standards of environmental management, safety, water quality and facilities

In Douglas we have been using the Green Flag approach to assess and improve our main community parks for several years and as a consequence of prioritising in this way, we have significantly increased the quality of our most popular green spaces.

The reasons we have decided to continue to prioritise quality green spaces are as follows:

- Health and Well-being – green spaces provide opportunities for physical activity, relaxation, and stress reduction. They improve mental health by offering a connection to nature by fostering a sense of calm and rejuvenation.
- Environmental benefits – green spaces improve air quality by absorbing pollutants and releasing oxygen. They help regulate temperatures in urban areas, providing a cooling effect and mitigating the urban effect.
- Community cohesion – parks and green spaces serve as hubs for community interaction, fostering social connections and inclusivity.
- Enhancing quality of life – access to well-maintained green spaces is a key factor in improving overall living standards. Creating a sense of pride and ownership within communities, enhancing local identity and aesthetics. Research (by CABI Space) has shown that, as the quality of green spaces improves incidents of anti-social behaviour tend to decrease.

As development continues in Douglas it is important to ensure that amenity spaces continue to support the growth of the residential population. Where commuted sums are provided by developers when these amenities cannot be provided on site, we will use them to improve the public open space estate.

As part of this quality aspiration and to support the delivery of the other priorities, we also intend to develop a management plan for each community open space. These plans will establish a clear vision for each open space and will be used by the Council and partners to help us deliver our 'Best Parks' vision. The larger, more complex parks (like Noble's Park and Marine Gardens) will continue to have full management plans set out in the format required by the Green Flag Award.

| Goals | Actions | Timescale* |
|---|--|------------|
| To retain all current green flags for the life of the strategy. | Continue to use the Green Flag criteria as a best practice guide to managing Noble's Park, Marine Gardens, Douglas Head, Douglas Golf Course, Hutchinson Square, Douglas Borough Cemetery, Summerhill Glen, Derby Square and Kaye Memorial Garden. | Ongoing |
| To undertake a detailed appraisal of each park and | Parks Service operational teams to appraise all sites and prepare | Long |

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| open space to identify targets for securing more green flags during the life of the strategy. | management plans for new proposed green flag sites. | |
| | Continue to target S13 and other suitable funding on parks where possible by establishing an investment plan to improve the parks and open spaces. | Medium |
| | Ensure all relevant staff have a good understanding and training of the Green Flag standards. | Medium |
| For all parks and open spaces to have a 'plan on a page' | Produce a 'plan on a page' for each park, setting out a vision for each site based on the opportunities in relation to each of the 10 priorities. | Long |
| For Douglas beach to work towards reaching Blue Flag standards during the life of the strategy. | Parks Service operational teams to appraise the beaches and set out a programme of works and management plan to work towards Douglas beach achieving blue flag status. | Long |
| To reduce anti-social behaviour and ensure people feel safe in our public green spaces. | Develop an evidence-based approach to tackling issues with dogs to be targeted at problem sites, as necessary. | Medium |
| | Develop an evidence-based approach to tackling litter to be targeted at problem sites, as necessary. | Short |
| | Work with Police to target anti-social behaviour hotspots as necessary. | Ongoing |
| To ensure commuted sums resulting from Section 13 agreements are used as effectively as possible to improve the public open space estate. | Develop a catalogue of improvement projects across the city that can be delivered independently as monies become available. | Short |
| *Timescale for delivery: Short = 1-3 years, Medium = 4-6 years, Long = 7-10 years | | |

Quality case study: Marine Gardens

The Marine Gardens are considered as the jewel in Douglas City's crown. The six gardens are laid out in a similar style to that of the original 1930's plan, with a mixture of formal bedding, accessible paths and benches, rockeries, a children's play area and a central fountain. The gardens are currently set out around the following themes:

Garden 1 – Celebration

Between garden 1 and 2 statue – Bee Gees

Garden 2 – Rockery

Garden 3 – Fountain

Garden 4 – Play area (under redevelopment)

Garden 5 – Formal (under redevelopment – incorporating wheeled sport apparatus within the landscaping)

Garden 6 - Archibald Knox Garden (to celebrate the work of a revered Manx artist)

The Marine gardens are popular with both visitors and locals throughout the day. The gardens provide beautiful areas for the community to engage and feel safe. Along with the facilities at the gardens they help to improve social cohesion by bringing people together.

We are currently working to improve the gardens whilst maintaining the quality level; by ensuring they stay relevant for present and future generations.



Biodiversity

Increasing wildlife and ecosystem diversity.

We aim to provide green spaces that are full of nature and wildlife. We will do this by protecting, enhancing, and creating wildlife habitats such as meadows and hedgerows.

The reasons we have decided to prioritise biodiversity are as follows:

- Parks and green spaces in Douglas provide homes, food, and connectivity for much loved wildlife, plants, and fungi, from more common species like many native birds, butterflies, and bluebells to rarer, more threatened species such as glow worms, harvest mice and bats. We believe we have a responsibility to

manage our sites in a way that not only protects wild plants and animals but allows them to thrive.

- Wildlife and biodiversity are threatened across the globe (e.g. over 54% of all flowering plant species have been lost in Great Britain since 1970's, 19% of UK terrestrial and freshwater species have declined in abundance since 1970 and 13 species of seabird has fallen by 24% since 1986).
- Birds like yellowhammer, only 10 years ago, were common on the Isle of Man but are now absent and 10% of plants that have called the Isle of Man home since the last Ice Age have vanished.
- Wildflower planting creates essential habitats for pollinators such as bees, butterflies and other insects which are crucial for plant reproduction and overall ecosystem health. These habitats support birds and other wildlife, fostering greater biodiversity.

We will minimise pesticide use and continue to implement council-wide efforts to reduce carbon use and air pollution, save energy, minimise waste (particularly single-use plastic) and recycle.

We are keen to protect and increase our local wildlife within Douglas city.

| Goals | Actions | Timescale* |
|--|---|------------|
| To increase the quantity, quality, size, and variety of wildlife habitats (e.g. woodlands, meadows, ponds, hedgerows) on our green spaces. | Management plans for community parks to set out goals to increase wildlife habitat (where reasonable). | Long |
| | Reduce the number of mown areas in our open spaces and replace them with more wildflower and naturalised areas. | Short |
| | Work with partners (i.e. Manx Wildlife Trust) and volunteers to implement management plans at designated sites. | Short |
| To provide activities and events for children and adults to inspire them about nature and teach them about local wildlife. | Continue to promote and deliver our National Bee Day programme. | Ongoing |
| *Timescale for delivery: Short = 1-3 years, Medium = 4-6 years, Long = 7-10 years | | |

Biodiversity case study: Noble's Park Dog Walking Area

In response to demand from dog owners and a curtailment of dog exercising within a number of areas across Douglas, a dog walking area was created within Noble's Park on an area formerly used for pitch and putt. Noble's Park dog walking area is 400 square metres providing a mixture of trees and pollinator friendly naturalised grassland

and wildflower areas, that promote biodiversity. It is a great location combining recreational space for dog owners that naturally supports local fauna and flora which can be enhanced without major disruption. The area comprises a variety of foliage lengths, with native plants, shrubs and wildflowers that support local wildlife. Trail pathways are cut through and a boardwalk has been created to assist with access to an area which is occasionally marshy.

Creating this natural habitat dog walking area offers a valuable community resource while contributing to biodiversity conservation and environmental awareness.

To promote further works we produced a Pollinator Action Plan 2024- 2027 to pledge our commitment to action further biodiversity projects on all our sites across Douglas.



Climate Change

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the impact of climate change, through increased biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

The main reasons we have decided to prioritise climate change are as follows:

- As well as trees and other plants absorbing carbon, green spaces will increasingly be required to play a role in mitigating extreme weather events caused by climate change such as flooding and high temperatures (vegetation slows down water flow and rainwater can be captured in rivers and ponds; trees and shrubs can provide much needed shade in hot weather).
- We will ensure that our habitats are designed to thrive in changing climate conditions.
- We will consider how parks and green space can be used to host low carbon energy infrastructure, by prioritising low carbon cremation, we will address a rarely discussed but meaningful contributor to climate change, demonstrating

that even traditional practices can evolve to support a more sustainable future. We will contribute to fighting climate change by reducing carbon emissions by installing photovoltaic cells (solar cells) at our Nursery site, minimising its dependency on fossil fuels and reviewing its supply chain.

- We will review vehicles and plant equipment for low carbon fuel alternatives including potential electrification as advancement in battery technology, charging infrastructure, and electric motors are making EV's and battery powered plant and tools more practical across various vehicle types and heavy equipment.

We are keen to provide opportunities for people, children, and young people to learn about the benefits of green space for the environment (e.g. for climate and clean air) and how they can help, with the aim of ensuring our commitment to climate change and sustainable development for future generations. We will continue to do this through information signs and events.

Lastly, we recognise the benefits of local food-growing for the environment, food security, health, and wellbeing so we are going to produce within our park management plans ways to support local community food-growing projects by identifying suitable spaces for them in our green spaces wherever possible.

| Goals | Actions | Timescale* |
|---|---|------------|
| To reduce carbon emissions. | To investigate and implement the installation of lower carbon cremation at one of our Cemeteries. | Long |
| | To install photovoltaic cells (solar cells) at the Parks Nursery. | Medium |
| | Continue to review using low carbon fuel alternatives and electric vehicles and all powered equipment. | Long |
| To control the spread of ash dieback within our parks and open spaces. | Develop and implement an Ash Dieback Management & Recovery Plan to ensure the loss of ash trees from the disease does not have a negative impact on climate change. | Medium |
| To minimise any negative impact the Parks Service has on the environment | To carry out a feasibility study on the Nursery to review the operational activity and viability of the infrastructure on the site for the future. | Medium |
| | Continue to review Parks operations (including those of external providers) and implement all viable means to minimise impact on environment. | Long |
| To provide activities for children and adults to inspire to learn about climate change. | When planning new developments, consider ways to integrate environmental improvements and environmental education into the scheme. | Ongoing |

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| *Timescale for delivery: Short = 1-3 years, Medium = 4-6 years, Long = 7-10 years | | |

Climate Change study: Nursery

Over the next 12 months a feasibility study will be carried out on the Nursery to review its role within Park Services addressing its aims and objectives in the ever-changing climate.

Climate change is shifting seasonal patterns, impacting plant growth cycles, and requiring adjustments in mowing and landscape maintenance operations.

Longer growing seasons lead to increased mowing frequency due to warmer temperatures. This increases labour, fuel, wear on plant and operational costs. Extended growing seasons means mowing in times of the year when low or no growth was the norm, like early spring and late autumn.

Increased drought conditions, higher levels of rainfall and dips in temperature are affecting plant health, which can stress plant life, slowing growth or causing dieback. Rising levels of CO₂ can enhance photosynthesis and speed up plant growth. While this may seem beneficial, it often results in more rapid and uneven growth that requires additional trimming and management.

The feasibility study will focus on reviewing the current management systems at the Nursery, the development of the existing Nursery and further options for plant supply.

The infrastructure at the Nursery will be reviewed to reduce emissions by switching to renewable energy sources, ensuring the greenhouses are well insulated to reduce heating and cooling needs and consider installing energy efficient windows, improved ventilation systems to promote better air quality.

These initiatives not only reduce emissions but promote sustainability and potentially reduce long-term operating costs.



Accessibility

Ensuring that parks and open spaces are accessible to everyone.

We aim to provide public open spaces that are welcoming and easy to visit so that everyone can use them. We also aim to provide something for everyone, no matter what their interests so that everyone can enjoy spending time in our open spaces.

The reasons we have decided to prioritise 'accessibility' are:

- Douglas City Council manage parks and open spaces as a public service and, as such, it is important to us to provide facilities for all the people of Douglas, no matter what their abilities, backgrounds and interests are. This fits with the Council's core value of 'Delivery of services to support the community and local economy.'
- By providing shared spaces where a wide range of people can spend time in each other's company; evidence suggests that public open spaces can help reduce social isolation and improve community cohesion, contributing to one of Douglas City Council's priorities of creating 'Sense of community.'
- We are committing to provide good levels of accessibility as a minimum at all our city and community parks, cemeteries, and crematoria. Providing 'something for everyone' in terms of facilities ranging from specialist gardens to playgrounds, squares to beach, glen to bowling greens (and so on) is a theme throughout this document and is covered under a number of priorities, especially Health and Wellbeing.

| Goals | Actions | Timescale* |
|--|--|------------|
| All parks and cemeteries & crematoria to be judged | To develop a process for auditing the accessibility of our sites | Short |

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| as 'good' (score 7) or higher in 'equal access for all' Green Flag criteria | | |
| | To undertake an access audit of all city and community parks every 5 years and provide accessibility information for users. | Medium |
| | Design all new developments to be fully accessible. | Ongoing |
| To ensure our parks and green spaces are welcoming and accessible for less mobile people | Review number of disabled parking bays , and bench numbers, locations and configurations when putting together plans on a page | Long |
| | To ensure good quality information about our sites is available on the Council website/internet so people can easily find out what is available and plan their visits. | Short |
| *Timescale for delivery: Short = 1-3 years, Medium = 4-6 years, Long = 7-10 years | | |

Accessibility case study: Noble's Park

Noble's Park is an accessible park offering non-slip pathways wide enough for wheelchairs or mobility scooters, leading to several different play areas.

The Council recently installed a wheelchair-accessible roundabout in the main play area to promote inclusivity by allowing children with a mobility aid to fully participate in play activities alongside their peers. The ability whirl is on level ground surrounded by a rubberised flooring to increase safety and accessibility.

The facility helps engage children in inclusive play, encouraging children to use the ability whirl together. By educating and teaching children the importance of inclusive play, builds a positive attitude towards sharing space and supporting each other.



A study is underway to produce a Noble's Park masterplan, this will involve a site analysis to understand the park's current condition and potential. It will develop design concepts and options for consideration, improving the legibility of the park and functionality of the individual park spaces.

Active Travel

Providing active clear routes to promote walking, cycling, running, and skating throughout parks and green spaces.

We aim to incorporate active travel into daily routines through parks and green spaces to promote personal well-being and help connect the community. These forms of travel offer a range of health, environmental, social and infrastructure benefits:

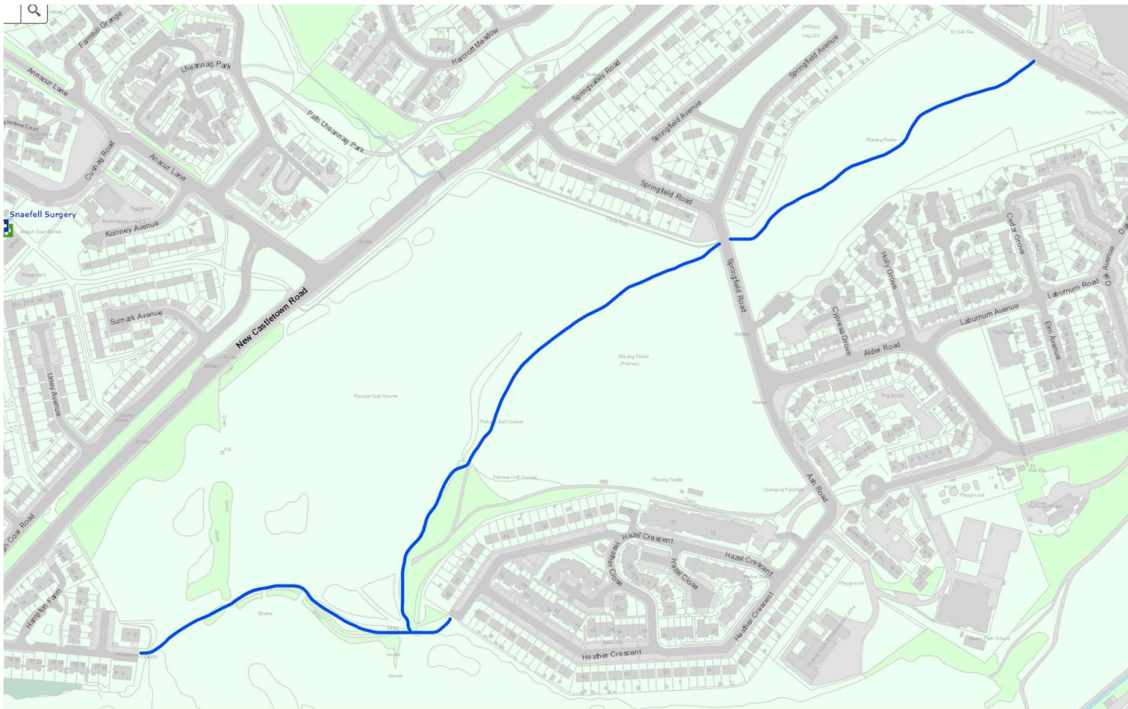
- Engaging in active travel helps individuals increase their daily physical activity levels, improving muscle strength and overall fitness.
- Exposure to natural environments can reduce stress, improve mood, and enhance cognitive function.
- By using active modes of transport instead of motor vehicles reduces air pollution and lower carbon emissions, supporting environmental sustainability.
- Encouraging active travel through parks promotes environmental awareness, motivating people to protect and preserve these green spaces.
- Active travel in parks fosters a sense of community, as people share public spaces for recreation, socialising, and commuting.

- Parks and green spaces often link residential areas with workplaces, schools and commercial hubs promoting a more sustainable urban layout.

| Goals | Actions | Timescale* |
|---|--|------------|
| Increase accessibility and connectivity | To develop multi-use pathways | Long |
| | Improve Park entrances | Medium |
| | Provide clear wayfinding and signage that indicates trail distances, difficulty levels and travel times. | Short |
| Enhance safety and comfort for all users | Provide traffic calming measures, speed bumps or raised crossways to protect users. | Medium |
| Promote environmental sustainability | Use permeable materials for pathways to reduce runoff and enhance water absorption, | Long |
| Educate and engage | Install new signage and line markings on site to help navigate around parks. | Medium |
| *Timescale for delivery: Short = 1-3 years, Medium = 4-6 years, Long = 7-10 years | | |

Active Travel case study: Pulrose

In 2018, a new travel route was constructed linking new Castletown Road into the Pulrose area, this serves as a vital corridor for sustainable transportation. Designed for both cyclists and pedestrians it ensured accessibility for a diverse range of users. It provides connectivity between Anagh Coar residential area and Pulrose, fostering easier commutes and reducing reliance on cars. In 2025/26 the Council is preparing to carry out a masterplan on the Pulrose area to improve active travel routes further by exploring the potential to link the route completed in 2018 to the National Sports Centre on Groves Road, providing a pathway from Upper Pulrose to Hampton Farm estate and a further pathway from Upper Pulrose passing between the Pulrose golf course and Pulrose football pitches joining with the existing link from New Castletown Road.



Culture and Events

Providing exciting diverse, interesting, and enjoyable green spaces that reflect the history and culture of the local community.

Culture is the distinctive character of a city, created by what people do there, like art, music, events, and sport. The aim is for our parks and green spaces to be cultural hubs, centres of interest, and provide enjoyment and activity that bring the community together and attract visitors from further afield to benefit the economy through tourism.

We believe that having a good cultural offer makes the city a more interesting and exciting place to live in and visit, and that parks and green spaces can contribute to that through their visitor attractions, events, specialist gardens, cafés, historical features, walking and cycling routes, play and sports facilities, education, and interpretation etc.

The main reasons we have decided culture and events should be a priority are:

- Culture is a priority in Douglas City Council's Corporate Plan, and we believe parks and green spaces can make a significant contribution to 'ensuring that culture can be created and experienced by anyone' because they are local, accessible, free, and almost everyone uses them.
- We believe we can contribute to the Council's goal of 'support[ing] events to promote business, community, investment and enjoyment within the city' by hosting events within the parks. For example, Noble's Park Fun day, Beach Day, Circus, TT and MGP.
- Evidence suggests that good parks can boost the tourist economy of a city - Visit Britain found following a survey that over a third visit a park or garden.

| Goals | Actions | Timescale* |
|---|---|------------|
| Foster Community engagement and social interaction | Continue to host regular community events using unbudgeted Parks income where possible. | Short |
| | Encourage local participation with local artists, musicians, and performers to showcase their work. | Short |
| Engage local businesses | Partner with local vendors and develop sponsorship opportunities | Short |
| To provide exciting and diverse spaces that reflect history and culture. | Consider context and history when planning new developments and ensure signs include appropriate interpretive material. | Ongoing |
| *Timescale for delivery: Short = 1-3 years, Medium = 4-6 years, Long = 7-10 years | | |

Culture and Events case study: Noble's Park

Noble's Park is a beautiful park, located in upper Douglas. It has several activities and facilities on site to keep everyone entertained from barbeque areas, sports courts, bowling greens, children's splash zone, maze, children's play areas - tots and juniors, BMX track and skatepark. The park also features gardens and a Victorian style bandstand.

The North of the Park comprises of motor sport facilities including Tourist Trophy (TT) Grandstands and paddock area. The TT grandstand in the park is not owned by Douglas City Council but owned and maintained by the Government. All the adjacent grounds are owned and the responsibility of Douglas City Council. During the motoring events, parts of the park are handed over to the Department for Enterprise (DfE) and the Motor Sport section under licence prior to major motor sporting events. These events include:

- TT – End May / Early June annually
- MGP – End August annually

In addition to events the Council hosts itself such as the Noble's Park Fun Day, Parks Services works with many organisations to hold third party events in public parks and open spaces around Douglas. Third party events held in Nobles Park are bowling competitions held twice a year, annual circus shows, and a Parkrun event, held every Saturday. In the past, the park has also held several music concerts, e.g. Elton John, Tom Jones etc.

These events are popular with people of all ages.



Play and Education

Providing green spaces that children and teenagers love to visit.

Creating child-friendly parks and green spaces that integrate play and education is essential for promoting children's physical, mental and social development. These spaces need to inspire curiosity, creativity and learning while offering safe, engaging environments for play.

Parks and green spaces are essential in the upbringing of children, they provide hours of entertainment for young people whilst drawing them out into the fresh air, being physically active with friends and family. We aim to provide safe welcoming environments where young people feel safe and love to visit.

The benefits of outdoor facilities include:

- Child Resilience – outdoor play in natural environments can reduce stress.
- Child Socialisation - outdoor play facilitates socialisation with peers, the community, and the environment.
- Child Health – active outdoor play helps address issues associated with cholesterol, blood pressure, body composition, bone density, cardiorespiratory and musculoskeletal fitness, and aspects of mental, social, and environmental health.
- Family Wellbeing – outdoor play can help children eat better, sleep better, be happier, become more engaged in family life and encourage family use of the outdoors without formal learning.

- Environmental Care - contact with nature allows embedded learning and understanding, helping support the mindset that the outdoors is a place to enjoy and cherish.

In more recent times has been a temptation for children and young people to stay inside on their computers. This can be to the detriment of their physical and mental health, for example, cases of obesity and anxiety are rising in under 18's. By providing great parks and green spaces for children and young people we know we can get them outside, being active, having fun and socialising – all things that contribute to reducing these health and wellbeing issues and feelings of social isolation

| Goals | Actions | Timescale* |
|--|---|------------|
| To have child-friendly parks and green spaces. | Continue to review our Play Policy to allow us to assess the quality and accessibility of our playful spaces | Short |
| | Audit quantity, location, and quality of play facilities across the city so we can prioritise effectively. | Short |
| To have a wide range of good quality play facilities for children of all ages and abilities across the city. | Seek funding for the creation, improvement and maintenance of green spaces and related facilities for children and teenagers. Prepare a programme of capital improvements to play areas and implement a maintenance regime. | Ongoing |
| To ensure all new developments in the city incorporate well-designed play areas. | Ensure S13 development funding is used to support community play areas and recreational projects. | Ongoing |
| Provide clear information on the internet about facilities for children and teenagers in our parks and green spaces. | Provide information about what is available for children and teenagers on green spaces across the city on the internet. | Medium |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timescale for delivery: Short = 1-3 years, Medium = 4-6 years, Long = 7-10 years | | |

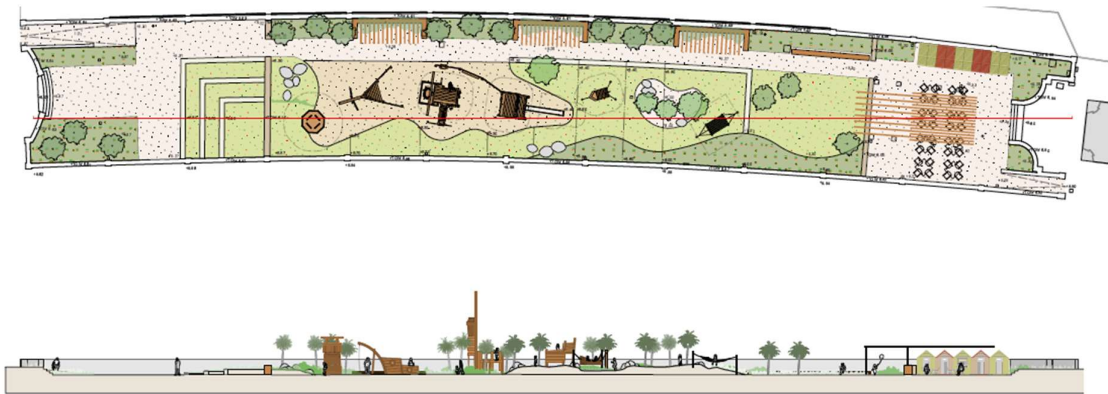
Play and Education case study: Marine gardens play area

The play area in Marine gardens on Loch Promenade was damaged beyond repair in December 2021 by Storm Barra. Works have been progressing on the planning, design and procurement of a replacement play facility in the Marine gardens which is inclusive to all.

Public consultation is a crucial phase in ensuring the new play area meets the community's needs and expectations, we have held two events during the planning

phase, taking into account all comments. The following sketches provide detail of the ongoing consultation taking place.

Following planning approval and capital expenditure approval works are planned to commence on site early 2026.



Working with the community

Having a positive open, helpful, and collaborative approach.

We aim to work with the community to deliver great parks and greenspaces by using communication and consultation. Fostering local ownership encourages sustainable solutions and community engagement and empowerment to care for parks and green spaces.

The main reasons are:

- As a public service we are keen to ensure that service-users can obtain the most from the work that we do, so we aim to provide good, clear information about our facilities and be as helpful as possible in our interactions with the public.
- Public parks and green spaces are there for the benefit of the people of Douglas so it is important we communicate and let them have their say on how they are managed and developed – that way we can ensure we are providing what users want from the parks.
- We recognise that local people, other Council departments and organisations outside the Council (e.g. Manx Wildlife Trust) have valuable skills, knowledge, and experience and it is likely we can achieve a lot more by working with them. We already have great partnerships with several other organisations, and we are keen to build on them.
- ‘Sense of community’ is a core value of Douglas City Council and can contribute towards achieving the Council’s priorities to enable and support diverse

community groups in local activities relating to heritage, culture and creativity and to promote and encourage engagement in two-way communication with the public regarding services by bringing people together to make positive changes to their local environment.

- Providing volunteer opportunities has a range of benefits for the volunteers, as well as the green spaces they are volunteering at, including work experience, exercise, learning new things, improved mental health, and meeting new people.

We aim to provide friendly and helpful customer service whenever we interact with the public in our parks and when people make enquiries online, over the phone and in person. We understand that our Bereavement Services team are often working with people at a difficult time in their lives, so we are committed to using the Charter for the Bereaved as a best-practice guide for our work in this area. The Bereavement team cover a wide range of work, providing good, clear information, responding to enquiries efficiently and providing a range of options for bereaved people to meet the varied needs of our diverse community.

We are lucky to benefit from working with several organisations outside the Parks service including Dragonfly Den groups, local businesses, third sector organisations, educational institutions, allotment association and other Council departments. We look forward to continuing to work with them and developing new partnerships to deliver great parks and green spaces over the next 10 years.

We will explore volunteering and make sure any volunteer experience of working with us is enjoyable, so people will want to work with us and volunteer engagement increases over the life of the strategy.

| Goals | Actions | Timescale* |
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| To provide good customer service. | To provide customer care training for staff who have public facing roles (includes gardeners, bereavement, admin teams) | Medium |
| | To provide clear and accessible information about Parks services and any changes that might affect service-users. | Medium |
| | To install clear signage across all parks and open spaces | Short |
| To provide parks and green spaces that are valued by residents. | To develop and implement public consultations when changes to green spaces are proposed. | Short |
| To work in partnerships with Dragonfly Den groups and other relevant community organisations | Ensure all community groups with an interest in green spaces have a contact in Parks service who can support them to achieve shared goals. | Ongoing |
| To promote volunteer engagement within Parks | Including a section in each park management plan to explore the potential | Medium |

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| Services and provide opportunities. | for volunteering opportunities in a strategic way to engage communities and enhance park stewardship. | |
| *Timescale for delivery: Short = 1-3 years, Medium = 4-6 years, Long = 7-10 years | | |

Working with Communities case study: The Dragonflies Den

In 2023, a joint venture between Douglas City Council, Manx Wildlife Trust and UNESCO Biosphere IOM was launched called The Dragonflies Den initiative. This was to encourage people to suggest and develop wildlife friendly ideas, for example, community gardens, orchard, wildlife ponds or wildflower areas. The initiative was a success with five projects being delivered, creating amazing new spaces for our community and wildlife within the city.



Financial sustainability

Ensuring that good quality public green space is available for the long term.

This priority is about ensuring we have sufficient funds to be able to deliver our goal of providing the best parks and green spaces in the Isle of Man and sustain them for future generations to enjoy.

Public green space has been shown to benefit the local economy by attracting residents, businesses, and visitors to an area (for example, Noble's Park hosts approximately 60,000 visits a year).

There is a great deal of evidence for the value of public green space, but, of course, there is inevitably a cost to maintaining it. Douglas City Council is committed to providing funding for the care of parks and green spaces, but people will be aware, we have been facing challenging financial times in recent years.

Over the last 5 years, Parks Services has made efficiency savings by strategic planning and innovative approaches to reduce costs while maintaining a quality service. This has involved reviewing staff schedules to maximise productivity and minimise overtime with training employees for flexibility in roles. Sharing equipment across departments, investing in plant to reduce labour and optimising vehicle use, by consolidating trips. Parks Services review third party revenue generation annually to increase rental income from park facilities for community events, whilst funds from Section 13 residential developments are invested into community parks to benefit present and future generations.

Further works are taking place to invest in energy-efficient heating, solar panels, and water savings.

| Goals | Actions | Timescale* |
|---|--|------------|
| Public parks and green spaces to continue to be managed and core funded by DCC as a public service, for the benefit of the people of Douglas. | Review costs, fees, and charges regularly and utilise modern technology where possible to ensure best value. | Ongoing |
| | Ensure new developments are sustainable before investing. | Ongoing |
| | Successfully deliver our current parks capital programme to upgrade parks and play facilities across the city, providing new facilities and improving access for all residents. | Ongoing |
| | To promote third party involvement in parks and open spaces for the benefit of the community. | Ongoing |
| To balance the budget whilst achieving the aims of the strategy over the next 10 years. | Continue to explore and develop the income generating opportunities of our service with a view to reinvesting unbudgeted income back into improving parks infrastructure and facilities as well as events. | Ongoing |
| To invest in key areas | To allocate S13 residential development funding to provide first class facilities for all residents where they cannot be provided on the development site. | Ongoing |

*Timescale for delivery: Short = 1-3 years, Medium = 4-6 years, Long = 7-10 years

Financial Sustainability case study: Ballaughton Nursery

The plants used in parks, flower beds and hanging baskets around Douglas are grown and supplied by Douglas City Council Parks Service at our plant nursery at Ballaughton.

Growing our own plant stock in park services offers numerous advantages that go beyond cost savings. By producing plants in-house, parks can enhance biosecurity, stock security, and environmental sustainability.

Growing plants in-house reduces the risk of introducing pests, diseases or invasive species often associated with external suppliers. Knowing the origin of plant material ensures its compatibility with local ecosystems and reduces risks from unknown sources and reduces waste.

In relation to stock security, external suppliers may face shortages or delays during transportation or quality issues which can disrupt planting schedules. In-house production ensures a consistent and reliable supply of plants.

The nursery has invested in modern technology to sow and grow the plants, a substantial number can now be sown and grown with less input from staff, which makes it cheaper to run.

The nursery has also started creating its own compost by transforming organic waste materials into nutrient rich soil through a controlled decomposition process. This process involves collecting organic materials, plant debris, pruning, discarded plants, old potting soil, and the Council's own garden waste combining these with materials like shredded paper. By producing our own compost, the nursery reduces waste, lowers costs, and creates a sustainable supply which contributes to environmental sustainability. This is a perfect example of closed loop recycling where material is grown in Douglas, is processed in Douglas and is used in Douglas.

As a result of both changes, we have reduced costs making the production of our plants much more financially and environmentally sustainable for the future.

A future project for the Nursery is to install solar panels to support reducing our reliance on grid electricity and move towards self-reliance.



Health and Wellbeing

Providing a range of opportunities for people to receive the health benefits of spending time in green spaces, contributing towards a greater wellbeing across the city.

Parks play a key role in supporting the community to live healthier lifestyles and preventing ill-health. Being in green spaces has significant benefits for people's mental and physical health. We aim to provide good quality parks and green spaces that incorporate a wide range of opportunities for people to be active, so that everyone can enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of spending time in the great outdoors.

The main reasons health and wellbeing is a priority:

- Research shows that regularly spending time in green spaces dramatically reduces incidence and severity of conditions that are a real concern in modern life, such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, anxiety, and depression in people of all ages and backgrounds.
- We are responsible for managing several popular outdoor sports and play facilities (including sports pitches, outdoor gym, splash park, playgrounds, bowling greens, tennis courts and a golf course) and we need to ensure they are fit for purpose and cater for everyone.

We are committed to providing a wide range of opportunities for people to be physically active in our green spaces so everyone can enjoy being active outdoors, no matter what their abilities or interests. To deliver this, we will adopt a strategic approach to

investing in facilities, so they are as varied and accessible as possible whilst providing good value in terms of cost to the Council per user. We will work with local and national partners such as football and bowling clubs, Parkrun, and Golf Club to promote, care for and improve the facilities.

The Council allotments provide a wide range of health and well-being benefits:

- physical exercise by gardening activities, such as digging, planting and weeding offering moderate physical activity.
- Growing your own fruits and vegetables encourages healthier eating habits and ensures access to fresh, organic produce.
- Stress reduction from spending time in nature and engaging in gardening.
- Social interaction, allotments are community spaces where people can connect, share knowledge and form friendships. We recognise the value of walking as a free, accessible, simple, and effective form of exercise so we will create and promote signposted 'healthy walking' routes within our parks.

| Goals | Actions | Timescale* |
|---|--|------------|
| To provide good quality public green space that people want to visit. | Prioritise investment in green spaces focusing on accessibility, sustainability, engagement, and maintenance. | Ongoing |
| | To review and update our methods of carrying out audits and record keeping on the condition of playgrounds and other sports facilities (football pitches, bowling greens, golf course) | Short |
| To provide a range of opportunities for people to be physically active in green spaces, so everyone can enjoy the outdoor spaces no matter what their level of ability. | To create accessible pathways, signage and wayfinding features and promote walking route schemes in our parks and green spaces. | Medium |
| | To work with other organisations to accommodate health activity, including new sports on our sites. | Ongoing |
| For our green spaces to be used for active travel around the city. | Develop and promote walking routes connecting green spaces and the community across the city. | Long |
| | Create and promote signposted 'healthy walking' routes within our parks. | Medium |
| *Timescale for delivery: Short = 1-3 years, Medium = 4-6 years, Long = 7-10 years | | |

Health and Wellbeing case study: Parkrun

A free, fun, and friendly 5k community Parkrun event takes place in Noble's Park weekly. In addition to the walking and cycling routes, the park hosts a range of sports facilities including an outdoor gym, multi-use court, tennis courts, bowling greens, football pitch and a skate park.



Implementing the Strategy

Parks Services will focus on the actions set out above over the next 10 years. We will also consider the priorities outlined whenever changes are proposed. When we receive funding, we will consider how it could be used to increase quality, accessibility, and biodiversity. Ensuring any changes to a park or green space are financially sustainable.

Parks Services will continue to report into the Regeneration and Community Committee, on policy development, strategic planning, approval of projects, funding, community engagement, economic development and compliance issues ensuring that Council decisions are proactive, inclusive, and aligned with the community's long-term needs and aspirations.

The strategy will be reviewed annually, and a further detailed review will be carried in 5 years to check the priorities, goals and actions are still relevant.

Glossary

Accessible: Able to be easily visited and enjoyed by everyone.

Biodiversity: The existence of a wide variety of plant and species living in their natural environment.

Community parks: Parks focusing on a range of facilities including playgrounds and sports facilities and open space needs.

Green Flag: The *Green Flag Award* is the benchmark national standard for publicly accessible parks and green spaces in the United Kingdom. Parks (and other types of public green spaces) and their management plans are assessed against a set of criteria by independent judges from across the UK.

Interpretation: When it comes to public spaces, the word *interpretation* refers to a way of providing information about something, for example, a sign about the history of an area or a leaflet about the wildlife on a site.

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