

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT OF URBAN GREEN SPACES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Urban is defined as population centres with over 5000 residents, while green spaces include urban parks, play spaces, allotments, squares, cemeteries, woods, nature sites and informal green spaces.

A review of policies relevant to Urban Green Spaces (UGS) in Northern Ireland follows.

This review demonstrates that there are a wide range of policies and strategies that refer to the importance of green space and the environment for many different aspects of societal life. The current lack of investment<sup>1</sup> into these green spaces may suggest that policy change is not the sole issue, but the effective implementation of these policies.

### Global Context: Sustainable development goals relevant to Urban Green Spaces

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were formulated in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly. There is a very clear link between SDG 11 and urban green space futures, given that this goal aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Globally, this is an important area of focus as more than half the world's population lives in cities and the UN predicts that by the year 2050 6.5 billion people could live in cities.

Whilst the importance of green spaces in urban environments clearly links to Sustainable Cities and Communities, many of the actions in the SDGs are interlinked and overlap with the functions and benefits of urban green spaces. The diagram below shows the various SDGs that are relevant when considering urban green space.



---

<sup>1</sup> Stakeholders in Workshop 1 of Urban Green Spaces in NI future vision (Nov 2022) indicated that maintenance of existing green spaces has proven challenging due to a lack of long-term funding. The need for any funding to include the whole cycle of the initial design stages to the management and maintenance support was highlighted.

## **NORTHERN IRELAND POLICY CONTEXT**

In Northern Ireland, there is a broad range of existing central and local government policy areas that provide important context and direction on decision making for urban green and blue infrastructure. This review has been carried out at a time of political instability in Northern Ireland; some relevant policies and strategies remain in draft form, awaiting an Executive to take them forward, while several others are still in development.

Several of the policy areas below are currently in draft or design phase, and so provide important context and opportunities to align thinking to create more impactful public benefit from urban green spaces over the longer term.

### **Green Growth Strategy**

The Green Growth Strategy is currently in draft form, it has been consulted upon and is awaiting approval - it will be the Executive's multi-decade strategy, and will seek to balance climate, environment, and the economy in Northern Ireland. It sets out the long-term vision and a solid framework for tackling the climate crisis. You can view the draft Green Growth Strategy [here](#).

It will be delivered through a series of Climate Action Plans, which will set out the actions to meet greenhouse gas emission targets leading to a cleaner environment, more efficient use of our resources within a circular economy and green jobs. The first Climate Action Plan is expected to be published in 2023.

The focus of Green Growth is ensuring that our natural assets can deliver their full economic potential on a sustainable basis. Our climate and environment affect all of us and we all need to take individual responsibility and consider how our own actions impact the environment.

Green Growth is about more than just climate targets. It also considers the wider environment as well as green jobs. Northern Ireland's environment is one of its most important assets. Clean air, good quality water and the green and blue spaces are part of our 'natural capital'.

From an urban green space perspective, the Green Growth strategy will provide an important cross government focus on a better, cleaner, more climate resilient and biodiverse environment, and so will be very relevant in terms of funding and direction of travel.

### **NI Environment Strategy**

This strategy was consulted upon in January 2022 and, before the collapse of the Assembly, the Agriculture and Environment Minister announced he had a finalised version, which awaits executive approval. A new Minister may make updates to his version and take it to the Executive as one of the early actions.

The Environment Strategy is intended to be an overarching document setting out Northern Ireland's environmental priorities for the coming decades and will form part of the Green Growth agenda. It will become NI's Environmental Improvement Plan as required in the UK's Environment Act 2021. The EIP should set out the steps that DAERA, and other NI departments, intend to take to improve the natural environment, including measures needed to meet its long-term and interim targets. DAERA is required to publish its first EIP by July 2023 and make annual reports on progress thereafter.

The Environment Strategy will form the basis for a coherent and effective set of interventions that can deliver real improvements in the quality of the environment and thereby improve the health and

well-being of all who live and work here; elevate Northern Ireland to an environmental leader; create opportunities to develop our economy; and enable us to play our part in protecting the global environment for decades to come.

The draft document focuses on Strategic Environmental Outcomes (SEOs). In relation to Urban Green Spaces, SEO2 – ‘Healthy and accessible environments and landscapes everyone can connect with and enjoy’ – is particularly relevant. The priorities for this outcome are listed below:

- Protect our land and sea while encouraging everyone to enjoy and look after them
- Make it easier for people to access natural spaces like forests
- Encourage sport and exercise in the natural environment
- Promote outdoor learning opportunities
- Improve the environment in our villages, towns and cities
- Protect our historic environment such as monuments

### **NI Biodiversity Strategy**

The existing Biodiversity Strategy is out of date (2020) and is currently going through a co-design process. This will consist of workshops in 2023 to develop targets for nature’s recovery. These will have relevance to urban green spaces from an ecosystem perspective. National Trust and NI Environment Link are members of the steering group for the strategy and will participate in the co-design workshops.

From an urban green space perspective, it would be beneficial to include the below SMART targets in the Biodiversity Strategy:

- Develop a nature recovery network and local nature recovery plans for Local Authorities
- Northern Ireland Local Authorities develop and deliver plans to sustainably increase the area, quality of, access to and benefits from green and blue spaces in urban areas
- 90% of households have publicly accessible quality natural space >2ha within 400m of their home and at least one site >20ha in size within 2km by 2050
- Improved accessibility to nature
- Development of a Land-Use Strategy that balances sustainable land use, biodiversity and climate needs
- A Green Infrastructure map of publicly accessible land and trails

## Draft Programme for Government

Despite the current lack of an operational Government, the Draft Programme for Government is still used as framework for decision making – many of the draft outcomes relate to our Urban Green Spaces and their use, and many of these outcomes have also been mirrored in Local Authority Community Plans.

- Our children and young people have the best start in life
  - o Health & wellbeing
  - o Quality physical environment with space to play
- We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment
  - o Positive place making
  - o Tackling climate change
  - o Protecting natural environment
- We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect
- We all enjoy long, healthy, active lives
- Everyone feels safe – we all respect the law and each other
- People want to live, work and visit here
  - o Space for sports, arts and culture
  - o Sustainable planning



## Everyone's Involved – Sustainable Development Strategy 2010

The NI Executive launched the Sustainable Development Strategy, 'Everyone's Involved' 2010. The strategy was designed to provide a framework that can support and inform the decisions and actions taken by individuals, groups and organisations in progressing the sustainability agenda. Since then, the principles of sustainable development have been integrated into the work of all Departments and District Councils through high level policies and strategies such as the Programme for Government.

The Strategy highlights the Executive's aim to bring viability, stability and opportunity to all social, economic and environmental activities and programmes. The importance of rural and urban development in creating more environmentally and economically sustainable places is emphasised. The Strategy also identifies the role of the green economy in stimulating local jobs, developing skills and creating social enterprises.

## **Regional Development Strategy (RDS 2035)**

The 2035 RDS provides an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors in support of the Programme for Government. The RDS has a statutory basis prepared under the Strategic Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. Local development plans must 'take account' of the RDS.

The RDS promotes the link between environment, health and wellbeing and places emphasis on supporting healthy lifestyles and the promotion of health in the community.

The RDS recognises the importance of accessible green infrastructure and the benefits it can offer not only to people but to urban and rural renaissance and to improving the overall environment. The guidance set out in Regional Guidance 7 'Supporting urban and rural renaissance' promotes recreational space within cities, towns and neighbourhoods, and advises that new developments or plans should make provision for adequate green and blue infrastructure (green infrastructure includes parks and green spaces; blue infrastructure includes ponds, streams and lakes). The RDS highlights the importance of community greenways and requires these areas to be protected and enhanced as part of the network of open spaces in the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA) (Spatial Framework Guidance 5: Protect and enhance the quality of the setting of the BMUA and its environmental assets). The green network provides opportunities to link walking and cycling routes to heritage and other areas of recreational interest. These recreation and amenity networks present an opportunity for people to get active and promote the health and well-being of those living in urban areas.

## **Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)**

The SPPS sets regional strategic objectives for open space, sport and outdoor recreation proposals. These are:

- Safeguard existing open space and sites identified for future such provision;
- ensure that areas of open space are provided as an integral part of new residential development and that appropriate arrangements are made for their management and maintenance in perpetuity;
- facilitate appropriate outdoor recreational activities in the countryside that do not negatively impact on the amenity of existing residents;
- ensure that new open space areas and sporting facilities are convenient and accessible for all sections of society, particularly children, the elderly and those with disabilities;
- achieve high standards of siting, design and landscaping for all new open space areas and sporting facilities; and
- ensure that the provision of new open space areas and sporting facilities is in keeping with the principles of environmental conservation and helps sustain and enhance biodiversity.

The following statements within SPSS are also relevant to urban greening:

3.3 When plan-making and decision-taking, planning authorities must balance and integrate a variety of complex social, economic, environmental and other matters that are in the long-term public interest. This is fundamental to the achievement of sustainable development.

4.2 The core planning principles of the two-tier planning system are:

- Improving Health and Well-being;
- Creating and Enhancing Shared Space;
- Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth;
- Supporting Good Design and Positive Place Making; and
- Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment.

4.7 Networks of green spaces, commonly referred to as green infrastructure, provide a wide range of environmental benefits (in both rural and urban areas) including flood water storage, urban cooling, improved air quality and habitats for wildlife. Additionally, they can provide opportunities for social interaction by serving as a focal point for recreation and community activities. This green infrastructure should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering on a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for communities.

4.8 The protection of existing, and provision of new, quality open space within or close to settlements plays a vital role in promoting healthy living and tackling inequality through facilitating play, sporting activities, passive activity and interaction with others.

4.9 The need for adequate private, semi-private and public amenity space is a prime consideration in all residential development and contributes to mental and physical well-being and the strengthening of social cohesion. Such considerations are particularly important in mixed use or high-density schemes where unconventional solutions may be appropriate.

4.36 Planning authorities must also ensure that, where relevant, the planning process takes account of the 10 qualities of urban stewardship and design guidance set out in the 'Living Places Urban Stewardship and Design Guide'

#### Future Planning Policy

*From an Urban Green Space and climate action perspective, the new Climate Act requires that planning, like any other government function will have to show how it contributes to targets in carbon budgets etc. In this context, a more pro-active approach to urban green spaces will be needed, with Urban as an integral part of new development - not just providing the bare minimum to meet the policy requirement.*

*Currently Planning Policy Statement 8 on Open space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation sets out that in new residential developments a normal expectation for open space provision would be 10%, and has a good definition of open space. Once Local Development Plans are completed (see below) this statement will no longer be a material consideration. Councils are still in the process of completing their Local Development Plans, these should be in line with PPS8 to ensure enough high-quality open space is provided.*

#### Local Development Plans

Each council must prepare a development plan for their area in consultation with the local community.

The aim of the plan is to make sure there is enough land available for the area's housing, employment and community facilities, while protecting important landscape and environmental features (including Urban Green Spaces). The plans are an important consideration in dealing with planning applications and should help guide decision making.

The preparation of LDPs by local councils provides an opportunity for a more integrated approach between planning, open space provision and biodiversity at a local level. Despite production of LDPs becoming a requirement of the new Councils in April 2015, the LDPs are at varied stages of development, and none of the local authorities have completed their full plan.

### **Community Planning**

Since April 2015, Northern Ireland's 11 Councils have been responsible for leading on community planning. Each Local Authority has developed, in consultation with communities and statutory partners, Community Plans, many of which include environmental sustainability, place making and health as interconnected themes.

Community planning provides an opportunity for public services to work in partnership to address local problems, deliver better services and make a real difference to people's lives. Community planning also enables processes to be put in place to ensure local people and communities are genuinely engaged in decisions which affect them.

Community Planning is a natural platform to look at priorities for our Urban Green Spaces as it takes a placed-based and population outcomes approach (through outcomes based accountability) and all of the existing plans do have environmental pillars / work areas with outcome statements like 'all of the people in council area will benefit from a healthy, clean, safe and sustainable environment'.

### **Urban regeneration community development (URCD) policy framework 2013**

The Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework gives an overarching structure to the Department for Communities' urban regeneration and community development activity. It was designed to influence its partners in central and local government and in the voluntary and community sector for at least a decade.

- Policy Objective 1 – To tackle area-based deprivation.
- Policy Objective 2 – To strengthen the competitiveness of our towns and cities.
- Policy Objective 3 – To improve linkages between areas of need and areas of opportunity.
- Policy Objective 4 – To develop more cohesive and engaged communities.

Within objective 3 it states that a key action is:

"Sustainable brownfield redevelopment, including the protection and improvement of buildings and open spaces, preservation of historic and cultural heritage, and development of community gardens, allotments and green spaces".

### **Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022**

This Act includes targets for greenhouse gas emissions, active travel, biodiversity, carbon budgets, air quality and a requirement to support of nature-based solutions; all of which our Urban Green Spaces have the potential to play a role in meeting these targets.

### **Flooding: NI Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027**

The Second Cycle Northern Ireland Flood Risk Management Plan (FRMP) 2021 - 2027 is a requirement under The Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009.

The Plan focuses on the 12 Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk (APsFR), with specific measures tailored to manage flood risk in particular locations. Of relevance to urban green and blue space in terms of natural environments / green spaces as nature-based solutions.

### **Active Living - The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland 2022**

This recently published strategy (March 2022) acknowledges that “We are also fortunate to have some amazing natural land and water-based assets, otherwise known as green and blue infrastructure, which can host multiple sports and physical activities. We need to maximise usage of these assets and ensure that there is improved, safe access to green and blue spaces across the island to accommodate more activities and provide greater choices for all abilities”.

“One of the most popular forms of physical activity - walking for recreation - requires easy access to safe, shared pathways, trails and green spaces within urban neighbourhoods or rural locations. These can be factored into the design of public realm and regeneration initiatives in our cities, towns and villages or integrated into club-based projects”.

### **NI Outdoor Recreation Action Plan**

This plan was published in 2014 to cover the period until 2020 and is therefore out of date. No new strategy document has been produced but a DAERA-led consultation with key stakeholders took place in March 2021, seeking views on ‘Provision of access for outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland’.

The key themes of the existing but out of date strategy are still of relevance when thinking about supporting recreational use of Urban Green Spaces.

- Theme 1: Structures and Partnerships
- Theme 2: Legislation, Policy and Responsibilities
- Theme 3: Making the Outdoors More Accessible
- Theme 4: Investments of Time, Energy and Resources
- Theme 5: Communication, Marketing and Promotion
- Theme 6: Research and Monitoring

### **Play and Leisure Implementation Plan 2011**

Supporting a connection with nature and the environment is one of the 5 benefits listed for the individual Child which impacts upon broader society. Green spaces are also listed in places which give children and young people the opportunity to play freely in their local neighbourhoods.

### **Exercise, Explore, Enjoy – A Strategic Plan for Greenways 2016**

Published in 2016 by the Department for Infrastructure, this strategy set out a plan and directed investment in greenway route development. Its aim is to encourage a substantial increase in the number of people walking and cycling as a regular part of everyday life through the building of a connected and accessible regional Greenway Network which significantly increases the length of traffic-free routes.



The overarching objectives are:

1. To improve health and wellbeing by creating opportunities for exercise in developing greenways;
2. To increase the areas and populations that have access to and the use of greenways;
3. To increase safety for people walking and cycling;
4. To improve opportunities for social inclusion and interaction; and
5. To provide opportunities for the development of local economies.

### **Making Life Better – A Whole System Framework for Public Health 2013-2023**

This framework for public health in Northern Ireland states that:

“Health and wellbeing is also influenced by the wider physical environment. This includes the direct and indirect effects of chemical, physical and biological hazards on health and wellbeing. It also encompasses aspects of the physical and social environment that influence individuals’ health and wellbeing, such as the quality of housing and the neighbourhood environment, urban development, land use, and transport.

Physical environments can be designed to promote health and wellbeing through providing access to services and opportunities for social interaction. Numerous studies point to the physical and mental health benefits of access to green spaces and better air quality. A range of actions recognise the importance of making the most of the physical environment in promoting healthy and active living. This includes the preparation of a new single strategic planning policy statement, which will reinforce the positive role that planning can play through an approach to the development and use of land that is supportive to the health and wellbeing of people generally”.

Actions include maximising land/green space/woodlands use at local level to promote outdoor activities, allotments etc.

### **Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031**

There are three main aims outlined within the strategy:

1. Help all people to have good mental health.
2. Give the right help at the right time.
3. New ways of working.

The strategy states:

“As a society, we need to continue to provide opportunities for individuals and communities to look after their own emotional wellbeing and mental health, for example, by providing **access to green and blue spaces**, opportunities for exercise, leisure activity and social interaction, volunteering opportunities, tackling loneliness .... all of which are proven to have an impact on emotional and mental wellbeing”.

The strategy uses the benefits of the Connswater Greenway as an example.

### **'Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) Strategy 2013**

The vision of this strategy is “a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation - one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.”

The strategy states “that there is an imperative on all of us to ensure that our towns and villages are truly open and shared spaces where everyone is comfortable, safe and welcomed”. The Executive is committed to safety and open access to public space everywhere across our community so that they become places of sharing and mutual enjoyment. These open spaces will include Urban Green Space.

Sport is a common feature in many Urban Green Spaces. The strategy states that “Sport can be an integrating factor amongst people and sporting facilities can be an important aspect of social and leisure life. Some sporting facilities have already become exemplars of good practice in terms of creating shared spaces. Careful planning, alongside programmes to increase understanding and tackling misconceptions, can be used to ensure that spaces are safe and welcoming for all”.

### **The 1932 Allotments Act**

Social Farms and Gardens recently published a report (March 2023) "The Case for a Benchmark Standard for Community Growing and Allotment Provision in Northern Ireland". It outlines that the 1932 Allotments Act allows Councils to acquire and improve land for allotments, or use land already in the council's possession which is not currently needed. Preference in allocating allotments should be given to people who are in “poor circumstances”. The Act stipulates that the Allotments should be let at cost, and that tenancy agreements are required.

The Act does not make any mention of community gardens or orchards, and any future legislative reform would benefit from including other forms of community growing. The report recommends that Councils adopt a target level of provision of 1250 sqm (0.3 acres) per 1,000 households of community growing space in their Council area. This could be in the form of allotments, community gardens or orchards.

## **Potential Future Policies**

### **Land Use Strategy**

NI doesn't have a land use strategy, the need for this has been advocated by a coalition, and continues to be discussed as a potential policy development area – see [2015 report](#).

### **Coastal Management**

NI does not have a coastal management framework. This is being co-designed over the coming year, and will be of relevance in terms of the role of urban greenspaces in dealing with flooding, as well as potential new duties to plan for coastal erosion risk.

## **People's Plan for Nature 2023**

It is worth noting that the newly published [People's Plan for Nature](#) citizens have called for the following with regards to planning and urban places:

“A minimum of 12% of all space in new built infrastructure and retrofits is given to supporting biodiversity and linking people with nature for their health and wellbeing.

This is needed because everyone, regardless of where they live or work, needs access to nature to help them recharge mentally, to have a healthy lifestyle and to improve work productivity.

To achieve this Local Government must use their planning powers to enforce this minimum allocation. They also need to secure the relevant expertise, coordinate local community groups, consider how green decisions are part of planning decisions, research what local communities want for their green and natural spaces and activities, encourage walking meetings and volunteering in green and nature-based activities (with time given by employers, during working hours) and contribute to the cost of upkeep of local green spaces”.

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY POLICY LEADERSHIP**

In addition to the Regional Policy context, and some of the policy areas outlined above (Such as Planning and Community Planning) most local Councils have several policies or plans that relate to Urban Green Space. A couple of these are highlighted below.

### **Belfast City Council**

#### Belfast Agenda

The Belfast Agenda is the city's first community plan, created in 2017. A lot of the document relates to growing the economy, city development and learning. The section on 'Living here' states that “we need to work strategically to ensure that we maximise the benefit of our open and green spaces, our river and hills to achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes”.

A review of the Belfast Agenda is currently underway and is to include a new theme focusing on 'Our Environment', creating a more climate resilient city. This will include significant tree planting, helping transform Urban Green Spaces in the city.

#### Green & Blue Infrastructure Plan 2020

This plan has 5 strategic principles

- Biodiverse
- Planned, interconnected networks
- Integrated into the urban environment
- Well designed and managed
- Appropriately funded

The need for spaces to be multifunctional, assisting in management of surface water run off through SuDS projects is also highlighted. There is a recognition that blue and green infrastructure plays an

important role in place-making, social cohesion and safety, attracting investment, health and wellbeing, and tourism and visitor spending.

### Belfast Open Spaces Strategy 2019-2023

This strategy states that “the health and wellbeing benefits of parks and open spaces are not restricted to active recreation. Simply spending time in a green space with contact to nature has proven benefits in terms of mental health, wellbeing and happiness”

It also outlines the importance of improving connectivity of sites for people and nature, helping increase active travel, enabling people to get to sites of high landscape value such as Divis & Black Mountain, breaking down interface barriers, and allowing wildlife to move safely across the city.

It aims to encourage passive recreation by providing appropriate facilities (such as seating areas and shelters) across the open spaces network. As well as encourage active recreation in our open spaces; for example walking, running, cycling, outdoor gyms, growing food and outdoor play.

Partnerships, planning policy, design, funding, activity/events are key themes that relate to Urban Green Spaces.

### BCC Developer Contributions Framework 2020

Developer Contributions will be sought where they are necessary to manage or mitigate the impacts of development on the city’s infrastructure or its environment. Developer Contributions can be used to help manage the environmental impacts of new development by securing appropriate mitigation, compensation or monitoring. These can be in-kind or financial.

Belfast is currently the only Council who are using this framework of developer contributions.

### **Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council**

#### Corporate Plan 2018/22 and beyond (Our plan for growth and connecting)

The plan outlines a desire to deliver an attractive range of programmes to encourage people of all ages and abilities to participate in and enjoy regular physical activity, sustaining good physical and mental health, along with promoting sustainable tourism and use of our natural environment, open spaces, and waterways, with improved facilities.

#### Open Space Strategy 2020 – 2025

The vision for open spaces in Lisburn & Castlereagh is that ...

“The city, towns, villages and rural areas of Lisburn & Castlereagh, will provide for its residents and visitors, a range of attractive and accessible parks and open spaces. “Flagship” parks, greenspaces and play areas will draw local residents and visitors to town and village centres, providing places for social interaction, play, sport, recreation and quality of life for all.

Existing open spaces will be protected and enhanced to diversify urban habitats and improve connectivity of the green network. Where possible, open spaces will be linked by a network of paths and green corridors to encourage active travel, healthier lifestyles and exploration of the outdoors.”

Six guiding strategic principles have been set out to help achieve the vision for open space:

1. Protect and enhance open space recognising its value in promoting health and well-being
2. Provide exciting and active places for children and young people's play, recreation and education in both equipped and natural settings
3. Support and encourage access to high quality open space close to where people live
4. Safeguard key tourism, heritage and recreation assets, reinforcing local identity and civic pride
5. Protect and enhance the natural environment, helping to mitigate and adapt to climate change
6. Promote opportunities for sustainable travel through greater connectivity of open spaces

## **Derry City & Strabane District Council**

### Green Infrastructure Plan 2019 – 2032

This detailed plan defines Green Infrastructure and its many functions and benefits. The key aims of the plan are:

1. Increase awareness, appreciation and use of Green Infrastructure;
2. Integrate Green Infrastructure principles into policy and decision making;
3. Protect, improve and increase Green Infrastructure through good design, planning and asset management; and
4. Deliver Green Infrastructure's full potential for people and place, developing economic prosperity, biodiversity and responding to climate change

The cross cutting themes throughout are Health and Wellbeing; Communication and Engagement; and Natural Capital.

### Nature Capital Account of Outdoor Recreation Greenspace 2021

The natural capital assessment in this report shows that greenspaces in Derry and Strabane are significant economic assets, provide good value for money and are easily accessible to most urban residents. Key findings include:

- The District has approximately 9,000 hectares of publicly-owned and accessible greenspaces, greenways and woodlands (the annex provides a list of public greenspace providers in the District);
- 8.5 million visits were made to publicly-owned greenspaces in 2020, providing £141 million in value to residents annually; and
- Every £1 spent on investment and maintenance of greenspaces generates £21 of benefits, an increase from 2019. Mental and physical health benefits make up 97% of these benefits, with amenity value and carbon sequestration making up the other 3%.

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Draft</b>	<b>Out of date</b>	<b>Climate</b>	<b>Health</b>	<b>Nature</b>	<b>Green Space</b>
Sustainable Development Goals	x			x	x	x	x
Green Growth Strategy		x		x	x	x	
NI Environment Strategy		x		x	x	x	x
NI Biodiversity Strategy		x	x	x	x	x	x
Draft Programme for Government		x		x	x	x	
Sustainable Development Strategy	x			x	x	x	x
Regional Development Strategy	x				x		
Strategic Planning Policy Statement	x			x	x	x	x
Local Development Plans	x			x	x	x	x
Community Planning	x			x	x	x	x
Urban Regeneration Community Development	x				x		x
Active Living - The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for NI	x				x		x
NI Outdoor Recreation Action Plan		x	x				x
Exercise, Explore, Enjoy – A Strategic Plan for Greenways	x			x	x	x	x
Making Life Better –Framework for Public Health	x			x	x		x
Mental Health Strategy	x				x		x
Together Building a United Community Strategy	x				x		x
The Allotments Act	x		x				x
Play and Leisure Implementation Plan	x				x	x	x
Climate Change Act (NI)	x			x		x	
NI Flood Risk Management Plan	x			x			x
Land Use		Lobbying for					x
Costal Management		x					x
People’s Plan for Nature	x			x	x	x	x
Local Authorities Community Plans	x	x		x	x	x	x
Belfast Green & Blue Infrastructure Plan and Belfast Agenda	x			x	x	x	x
Belfast Open Space Strategy	x				x	x	x
Lisburn & Castlereagh Open Space Strategy	x			x	x	x	x
Derry & Strabane Green Infrastructure Plan	x			x	x	x	x
Derry & Strabane Natural Capital Account of Outdoor recreation greenspace	x			x	x	x	x

