

# Edinburgh's Thriving Green Spaces Project: INFORMATION BRIEFING

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The City of Edinburgh Council's Parks, Greenspace and Cemeteries service is leading on a project to fashion a new vision for the city's green spaces, to be captured in an ambitious 30-year strategy which aligns with Edinburgh's 2050 City Vision and that delivers a new way of working to ensure their on-going enhancement, protection, and care. We will establish a sustainable funding model that enables us to resource a green space service relevant for 21st century urban living and take a lead on delivering many of the capital's aspirations on place-making, health, sustainable energy, active travel, and biodiversity. To achieve this, we will harness the enthusiasm, skills and wherewithal of communities and partners, exploring new ways of working together that allows our green spaces to grow, thrive and adapt over the next three decades. Our work will focus on six change categories, which collectively have the potential to revolutionise our green spaces: Community; Ecological; Commercial; Technological; Governance; and Sharing.

## Future Parks Accelerator grant

The Thriving Green Spaces Project is being made possible by a £899,500 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and the National Trust (NT), who have joined together to provide funding to local authorities to enable them to develop bold and innovative financial and management solutions for their green spaces against a backdrop of financial uncertainty. The Council is match-funding this and providing £100,000 worth of officer time.

## Project summary

The bid partners for this project are: City of Edinburgh Council, as lead partner; greenspace scotland; Scottish Wildlife Trust; Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust; University of Edinburgh; and Edinburgh Green Space Forum. They along with the National Trust for Scotland will sit on the Project Board.

The project runs for two years commencing in June 2019 with the funding being used to recruit a project team and buy in professional expertise where necessary to carry out the necessary research and develop proposals for a new Thriving Green Spaces

Vision and Strategy for Edinburgh. It is also funding a widespread and comprehensive public communications and engagement programme, along with opportunities for volunteering.

There will be two main phases of work:

*The Co-Design Phase*, where we work closely with the NLHF and NT to research and develop proposals. This is expected to last for 16 months.

*The Transition Phase*, where we prepare for the implementation of the proposals for the new vision and strategy. This is expected to last for 8 months.

David Jamieson is the Project Sponsor and Chair of the Project Board and Cllr Karen Doran is Project Champion. Linda Anglin is the Project Manager.

## Why this project is important

Our environment is under threat as we deal with global issues such as climate change, species extinction and biodiversity loss, and air and water pollution. Our green spaces have an important role in addressing these issues along with other key issues such as poor health and wellbeing.

At the same time Edinburgh's green spaces are under threat as budgets for green space management and maintenance have declined markedly since 2012 due to UK-wide austerity, and are likely to continue declining.

It is therefore critical that we develop a sustainable funding model which protects the city's public green spaces and develops them to better meet the needs of today's and future generations and respond to the various environmental, social and health challenges we face today.

## Scope of the Project

The project will cover all the publicly accessible green space network managed by the Council for a resident population of 513,200 people, 92,000 daily commuters and 4.26 million annual tourists. This green network extends over 1600 hectares and includes: 3 botanic gardens; 142 public parks, mature woodlands, and major recreational green spaces; 8 nature reserves and country parks; 99 school grounds; 186 sports pitches; 39 cemeteries, historic burial grounds and kirkyards; 425 housing

amenity areas; 109 allotments and community gardens; 213 local play spaces; 202km of active travel route; 620,000 trees; 66km of riversides and burns; and the 10,000 ha Pentland Hills Regional Park. We will also encourage other major public green space owners/managers in the city to engage in the project and align priorities.

## What will be done

We will work with our funders and other grant cohorts, bid partners, staff, members of the public and other stakeholders to explore options, carry out research and studies, initiate pilots, and gather robust baseline information which will inform the creation of a new vision for our green spaces and the production of a Thriving Green Spaces 2050 Strategy for the city.

This project will determine what Edinburgh's green spaces should look like in 2050, what benefits they need to deliver and how people want to use their green spaces. In essence, it will determine what we need to do to ensure we continue to have thriving green spaces in the next 10, 20 and 30 years and how these spaces can help to grow thriving communities.

We will be considering what operational model we need to have in place to enable us to deliver our Thriving Green Spaces vision and we will also be determining how our future green spaces should be governed, and in particular how the citizens of Edinburgh can be more involved in the strategic decision-making and operation of our green spaces. Finally, and critically, we will be developing a sustainable funding model which will protect our green spaces and allow them to be developed so we can maximise the benefits they can deliver now and in the long term.

Our activity will focus across six change categories:

### 1. Community Change

We will strengthen the relationship between people and place by encouraging and supporting residents, tourists and businesses to engage more with their local green spaces and contribute to their upkeep and enhancement. This will include working with the public and other stakeholders to understand their needs and aspirations for their green spaces, defining what our Thriving Green Spaces should look like and what benefits they need to deliver and building an operational model which will deliver these changes.

### 2. Ecological Change

We will quantify the ecosystem services provided by Edinburgh's green spaces, identify what needs to be done to improve these further, and use this information to prioritise actions to deliver continuous environmental benefits. This will build our case for generating appropriate levels of cross-sectoral funding and ensuring that our green spaces are recognised as being fundamental to delivering the Edinburgh 2050 Vision of a sustainable, biodiverse and healthy city.

### 3. Commercial Change

Creating new relationships between the private, public and third sector, we will explore fresh ideas that cut across and remove existing policy and delivery silos, building a sustainable financial model which enables us to realise a direct financial return from our assets and services and ensures that our green spaces are properly resourced for current and future generations.

### 4. Technological Change

We will test and introduce new technologies to augment existing service delivery, realise operational efficiencies and bring about social and environmental benefits; in the process linking into Edinburgh's techno-expertise and spirit of innovation, unlocking investment, and better-connecting people to their green spaces.

### 5. Governance Change

We will instigate a new model of governance for our green spaces which will give users and other stakeholders greater opportunities to advocate for and influence their care and management.

### 6. Sharing Change

We will work alongside, and share outcomes with, other bodies and across sectors to build knowledge and better influence relevant policies and decision-making at the local authority, Scottish Government, and UK levels.

## For more information

Log on to the project website  
[www.edinburgh.gov.uk/thrivinggreenspaces](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/thrivinggreenspaces)

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