

Why is this issue important?

There is growing evidence of the health benefits of accessing good quality green spaces. These include better self-rated health; overweight and obesity levels; improved mental health and wellbeing and increased longevity.

Nationally there is unequal access to green space, with people living in deprived areas less likely to live near green spaces and have the opportunity to experience the health benefits.¹

The Marmot Review noted the indirect health and wellbeing benefits. Green spaces encourage social contact and integration, provide space for physical activity and play, improve air quality and reduce urban heat island effects.²

Key outcomes

- **Utilisation of outdoor space for exercise/health reasons (Public Health Outcomes Framework)**

Impact in Brighton & Hove

Our city is bounded by green and open space: the South Downs National Park and the seafront. Overall there are 1,279 hectares of open space in the city (5.1 hectares per 1,000 population), including:

- 98 parks and green open spaces, including 36 parks and recreation grounds of significance
- eight nature reserves spanning 7.4% of the land within the city
- two sites of Special Scientific Interest (Castle Hill and Marina to Newhaven cliffs).

Brighton & Hove owns about 6,000 hectares (14,000 acres) of countryside around the city: most of the land from Saltdean to Ditchling Beacon and around Hove towards Southwick Hill. Most of this land is in the South Downs National Park, amounting to over 40% of the city. This includes a portfolio of farmland.

¹Public Health England and UCL Institute of Health Equity. Local action on health inequalities: Improving access to green spaces. Health equity briefing 8: September 2014.

²Marmot M. Fair Society, Healthy Lives: The Marmot Review – strategic review of health inequalities in England post 2010. 2010. Available at: <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report> [Accessed 06/08/2015]

The Health Counts Survey 2012 reported that 54% of the survey population used parks and open spaces in the city at least once a week.³

The way people access open spaces is influenced by a range of social and physical factors. Roads and railways are significant barriers to accessing green and open space (e.g. the A27 limits pedestrian access between the City and the National Park).⁴

Allotments have great potential to contribute to health and wellbeing. Allotment gardening enables people to be physically active, provides access to healthy and affordable food, has a wide range of social benefits and supports sustainability by reducing 'food miles'. In July 2015 there were 3,019 plots in the city and 1,237 people on the waiting list. In July 2015, 11 waiting lists were closed, so demand for a plot is likely to be higher than the number of people on the waiting list.⁵

Respondents to the local Biosphere consultation said they most valued accessibility to the local environment; nature conservation of varied features and promotion of health and wellbeing through nature.⁶

Where we are doing well

Provision of parks and gardens is generally good.⁴ In 2008, 91% of residents reported having used a local park or open space in the previous six months.⁷ This is higher than reported for the South East and England (83% and 81% respectively). In 2014, 71% were satisfied with parks and open spaces in the city. 38% in BN1 were very satisfied, in BN2 25% were very dissatisfied.⁸

Brighton & Hove has an above average number of parks with Green Flag awards, a scheme which recognises and rewards the best examples in the country. In 2015 seven flags were awarded for The

³NHS Brighton & Hove and Brighton & Hove City Council. Health Counts 1992-2012. 2013. Available at: <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/surveys> [Accessed 01/09/2015]

⁴Brighton & Hove City Council. Open Space Study Update report; 2011 <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1187994> [Accessed by 06/08/2015]

⁵Brighton & Hove City Council. Allotments Service. City Parks. July 2015. <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/leisure-and-libraries/parks-and-green-spaces/allotment-availability>

⁶Howarth R. Summary Report of the Public Consultation on the Biosphere Proposal September 2013. <http://biospherehere.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Biosphere-public-consultation-2013-summary-report.pdf>

⁷Brighton & Hove City Council. Place Survey 2008.

⁸Brighton & Hove City Tracker. 2014. Available at: <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/surveys> [Accessed 06/08/15]

6.4.7 Green and open spaces

Level, Easthill Park; Hove Park; Preston Park; Kipling Gardens; Stoneham Park and St Ann's Well Gardens.⁹

Effective management is important to maintain, and where necessary improve, the quality of local green spaces. The city has many active 'friends' groups who work with the council Ranger Service to manage green spaces across the city.

Friends groups can also provide healthy volunteering opportunities. Other opportunities include Brighton Conservation Volunteers, South Downs Volunteer Rangers, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Health Walks, Green Gym and various community gardens, allotments and farm volunteering.¹⁰

The local Health Walks programme is designed to help people get the most out of walking for their physical and mental health.¹¹ Walks are led by Volunteer Walk Leaders and groups targeted include those who are getting little or no exercise, recovering from illness, or lacking in confidence. Education can play an important role in encouraging engagement with local environment. The Sussex Wildlife Trust Forest Schools Programme offers children, young people and participating schools opportunities to enjoy their local woodlands.¹²

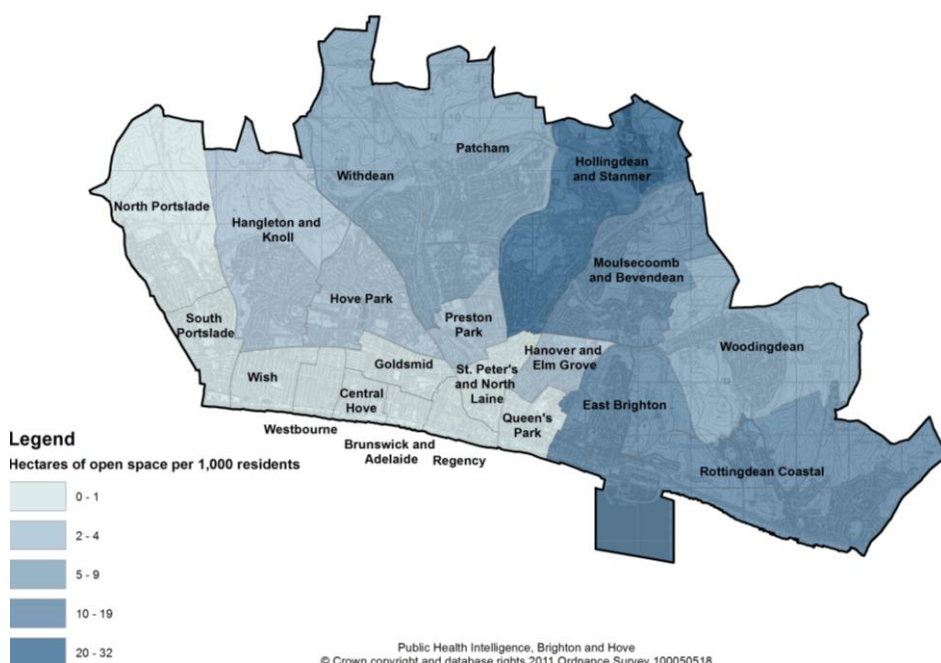
Brighton & Hove is the world's first designated One Planet City. The City's Sustainability Action Plan was given accreditation by BioRegional in 2014. This plans to enable residents to live well within a fairer share of the earth's resources. Including by reducing the carbon footprint of the city, an area in which green and open spaces can play an

important part in reducing "greenhouse gases" through the uptake of CO₂ by mature trees.¹³

Local inequalities

At the city-wide level, current provision of natural and semi-natural green space is judged to be relatively good. However the majority of green space is located on the edges of the city, and at the more local level there is unequal access to green and open space. The cartogram shows the relative size of wards based upon the amount of open space available to the residents.

Figure 1: Amount of open space in hectares per 1,000 residents (2007 open spaces mapping and 2012 population estimates)¹⁴



Source: Brighton & Hove City Council. Council (open spaces figures), Office for National Statistics 2012 Mid-Year Estimates and Association for Public Health Observatories weighted Index of Multiple Deprivation Scores for wards.

In 2006, access to natural and semi-natural green space was measured by Natural England using the ANGst model.¹⁵ The majority of residents' access does not meet the ANGst standard at the local level (the local picture was similar or slightly better than the South East average).

⁹ Brighton & Hove City Council. Green Flag Award Winning Parks. <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/leisure-and-libraries/parks-and-green-spaces/green-flag-award-winning-parks> [Accessed 6/08/15]
¹⁰ Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, Community Gardens Volunteering <http://www.harvest-bh.org.uk/volunteering> [Accessed 06/08/2015]
¹¹ Brighton and Hove Health Walks <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1115507> [Accessed 06/08/2015]
¹² Sussex Wildlife Trust. Environment Education. Forest School <http://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/what-we-do/environmental-education> [Accessed on 06/08/2015].

¹³ Faculty of Public Health. Great Outdoors: How our natural health service uses green space to improve wellbeing. 2010.
¹⁴ Brighton & Hove City Council and NHS Brighton & Hove. Look inequality. Annual Report of the Director of Public Health Brighton & Hove 2014-15. Available at <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/reports>
¹⁵ Mckernan and Grose. An analysis of accessible natural greenspace provision in the South East. 2006 <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infod-7d4mgd> [Accessed on 06/08/2015].

6.4.7 Green and open spaces

Unlike the national picture, residents in the more deprived areas of the city do have access to green spaces, but are less likely to access them. In 2008, people living in more deprived areas, especially around East Brighton, and residents renting from the council, were less likely to have used a park in the previous six months, at 79% and 75% respectively, compared with 91% across the city.¹⁶

The Health Counts Survey 2012 found people from more deprived areas continued to be less frequent users of parks and open spaces, with 46% of the sample using them at least once a week in East Brighton. This is despite the relatively good physical access to green and open spaces in East Brighton.

This may in part be due to the quality of the open spaces they have access to. A 2007 audit of amenity green space found that in East Brighton, Moulsecoomb and Bevendean just under half were ranked as poor – they may be small areas of grass verge or a small green in a private residential area.¹⁵

The 2012 Health Counts Survey also found that:

- Men and women were equally likely to use parks or open spaces at least once a week. However, women aged 18-44 years were more likely than men of the same age to use parks and open spaces at least once a week. Those aged 65 years or over and men were more likely than women to use these spaces at least once a week.
- There was no difference in use for White British and BME residents, however only 8% of the 26 Black or Black British respondents had used a park or open space in the last week (compared with 54% of all respondents). National evidence shows that people from BME communities can feel disengaged from the natural environment.¹⁷ Despite representing 10% of the national population, ethnic minorities represent only 1% of visitors to National Parks.¹⁸

- Similarly there was no difference in use between heterosexual and LGB, unsure or other respondents.
- Those renting from a Housing Association or council were less likely to have used parks or open spaces in the last week (38%).
- Use was similar for carers (56%) and non carers (55%).
- Those who are unable to work due to disability or ill health are less likely to have used parks or open spaces in the last week (32%).
- As are those without qualifications (33%) compared with 64% of those with a degree level qualification or higher.³

A 2015 report from Speak Out on the views of people with learning disabilities about parks within Brighton & Hove made the following recommendations:

- Develop sensory gardens in a number of parks throughout the city. They should include at least smell and touch.
- Improve park lighting and ensure there are plenty of pathways suitable for wheelchair users.
- Where possible, if disabled toilets are accessible by the use of radar key only, keep a key at the café so that disabled people who do not have keys can access them.
- Make sure all parks have toilets.
- Ensure that all parks provide free parking for blue badge holders.
- Set aside some areas in parks where people can go to have picnics which are dog free.
- Make sure that any fly-tipping/ litter and dog mess are cleaned up.
- Have a greater community police presence in parks. Possibly have a regular set time when community police officers are present so that people know they are safe to go to parks.
- Improve the bus service to Stanmer Park.
- Hold more events in parks that people can get involved in.

¹⁶Brighton & Hove City Council. Place Survey. 2008 reported in the State of the City Report. Available at:

<http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/reports> [Accessed 01/09/2015]

¹⁷Black Environment Network. Engaging Ethnic Communities in Natural and Built Heritage. 2005. Llanberis: Black Environment Network

¹⁸The Mosaic Model. Engaging BME communities in National Parks. Natural England.

6.4.7 Green and open spaces

- Develop more projects like the allotments near the orchard at Stanmer but ensure they are accessible for wheelchair users.¹⁹

Predicted future need

Modelling indicates that the city will need to increase the amount of open space by approximately 108 hectares by 2030 to maintain current levels of access (based on a ratio of residents to hectares) (Table 1).

Table 1: Brighton & Hove open space: 2006 provision and future requirements

	2006 provision (hectares)	Approx additional space required (hectares) by 2030 applying recommended standards
Natural / semi-natural	709	60
Parks and gardens	232	20
Amenity green space	149	11
Outdoor sport	118	10
Allotments	59	4
Children and young people	12	3
Total	1,279	108

Source: PMP 2009 and applying the 2030 population forecast (i.e. 274,165) indicated in the Housing Requirements Study and Supplementary Papers (GL Hearn) (2011 and 2012)

Having green space available doesn't necessarily mean people will use it – the challenge is to promote behaviour change by helping people to become actively involved in their local environment. This should focus on the least active and/or those with poorest access to green space.

One of the aims of the city's Biosphere Reserve is to increase health of residents and visitors by increasing the use of the outdoors. The Biosphere covers the South Downs National Park, a marine

conservation area, the city itself and parts of Wealden. Its functions include conservation, development and knowledge.²⁰

The city is in the process of updating the Open Spaces Strategy by September 2016. This includes developing a masterplan for the majority of formal parks over the next ten years, mapping key projects and activities to be delivered.

Part of this includes the development of a health and wellbeing plan, to show how parks will be maximising their potential to provide restorative, physical and emotional wellbeing for park users.

Other elements which should have health benefits include the involvement of volunteers in the development and delivery of park activities; Building connections with education, heritage, sports and leisure to increase opportunities for residents to visit parks and open spaces and be physically active; Increasing accessibility by upgrading and expanding the information provided online, on route to open spaces and on site.²¹

What we don't know

We don't know a great deal about how parks and open spaces are being used by some equalities groups – other than the information available through the Health Counts Survey. We do not for example have voice evidence from equalities groups about the city's green and open spaces.

Key evidence and policy

PHE and UCL Institute of Health Equity have published a briefing paper for local authorities on how they can improve access to green spaces. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/355792/Briefing8_Green_spaces_health_inequalities.pdf

NICE has produced guidance on physical activity and the environment (PH8); this is targeted at professionals who have a direct or indirect role in, and responsibility for, the built or natural environment.

<http://publications.nice.org.uk/physical-activity-and-the-environment-ph8/recommendations#public-open-spaces>

¹⁹ Speak Out. Parks and Open Spaces Consultation with people with learning disabilities. January 2015. Submitted as part of the Call for evidence for the JSNA

²⁰ Biosphere Project Brighton & Hove City Council <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=b1159364> [Accessed 06/08/2015]

²¹ Brighton & Hove City Council. Open Spaces Strategy Review. April 2015

6.4.7 Green and open spaces

The Defra White Paper is the first on the natural environment for over twenty years.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/>

The Faculty of Public Health published a report in 2010 on “Great Outdoors: How our natural health service uses green space to improve wellbeing;” highlighting the physical and mental health benefits of using green spaces.

http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/bs_great_outdoors.pdf

Recommended future local priorities

1. Use healthy urban planning principles to build green and open space into new developments.
2. Increase access to existing green and open spaces across the city through partnership working and involvement of local communities in the design and operation of living environment initiatives, to reduce inequalities.
3. Improve connectivity between different green and open spaces (encouraging walking and benefiting wildlife).
4. Incorporate use of green and open spaces (including the new South Downs National Park) into design of initiatives to improve health, particularly focusing on the least active.
5. Build the health and wellbeing benefits of good access to and use of, green and open spaces into the Open Spaces Strategy.

Key links to other sections

- Road safety
- Good nutrition and food poverty
- Air quality
- Climate change
- Happiness and wellbeing
- Volunteering and active citizenship
- Physical activity and active travel (children and young people)
- Healthy weight (children and young people)
- Physical activity and active travel (adults and older people)

- Healthy weight (adults and older people)
- Diabetes
- Coronary heart disease

Further information

Brighton & Hove Parks and Countryside

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=b1161284>

City Wildlife: Council website for wildlife in

Brighton & Hove <http://www.citywildlife.org.uk/>

South Downs National Park Authority

<http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/>

Brighton & Hove Healthwalks

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1115507>

Open Space Access Study 2008/09 and 2011

Update <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1187994>

Natural England. Summary of evidence: Access and engagement. March 2015.

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/search?q=summary+of+evidence&num=100>

Last updated

September 2015