

High Peak Borough Council
Parks Strategy
2021-2031

Executive Foreword

We are delighted to bring forward this strategy which brings together our ambitions together with the hard work and contributions from a wide range of sources including those from our officer team, partner organisations, community groups and councillors who each play an important and valuable role in maintaining, developing and improving the amazing parks in the High Peak.

The High Peak is a beautiful place to live with so many valuable parks and green spaces on our doorstep. The challenge over the coming years is to protect, maintain and improve these wonderful assets to ensure they meet the current and future needs of our residents, whilst also delivering on some of the Councils wider aspirations such as ensuring our biodiversity can respond to climate change.

We are up to that challenge, and this strategy will be used as a framework to prioritise how we manage our parks and green spaces in the future. It will inform work with our service partners, be used as a reference point to guide discussions and help develop new initiatives in our parks by working cooperatively together with community and interest groups so that our parks and green spaces become even better.

Having a Parks Strategy will help the Council focus its internal resources to help attract additional resources and funding to enhance our parks and green spaces further and to deliver projects detailed in the individual park management plans which accompany this strategy.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank once again those who have contributed so positively and generously towards the development of this strategy and look forwards to delivering our shared aspirations together in the years to come so that our Borough's parks are better community spaces at the end of this strategy's implementation.

Cllr Damien Greenhalgh and Cllr Jean Todd

Introduction

High Peak has a population of approximately 92,000 (census 2011) and covers an area of 208 square miles. The Borough has a fantastic array of parks and green spaces which are enjoyed by communities for a vast array of different reasons. We are extremely proud of our parks and the value they bring to communities from a wide range of perspectives including biodiversity, economic, education, heritage and health and wellbeing and in developing this strategy, we wish to recognise these benefits and develop clear priorities which will protect and enhance them in the future.

The list of parks below is defined as formal parks and each of these will have an individual park management plan which reflects their size, key features and complex maintenance regimes. Each management plan also includes a bespoke action plan to identify where local improvements can be made and that recognises the ongoing contribution of community groups and partners in delivering some of these actions with us. The parks strategy and management plans will also be particularly useful when planning for or recovering from any large scale or significant events which affects our parks, such as the incident in 2019 involving Toddbrook Reservoir in Whaley Bridge.

Formal Parks

Buxton: Pavilion Gardens including Serpentine Walks, Ashwood Park (to be completed in 2021/22)

Glossop: Howard Park, Manor Park and Bankswood Park (to be completed in 2021/22)

Whaley Bridge: Memorial Park

Neighbourhood Parks and Green Spaces

Our smaller neighbourhood parks and informal green spaces are extremely valuable assets and contribute individually to the broad benefits already highlighted. They play an important part in community life and are extremely important to the people that use them.

Each of our neighbourhood parks and green spaces will be managed and developed using the guiding principles within this strategy and via existing maintenance regimes that are specific to each site.

As in many cases these spaces often contain their own natural features, have unique heritage value and in some cases, play facilities for children. Whilst they may not require detailed management plans, it is important to state that these are vitally important assets for local communities we are committed to improving these to ensure they remain that way.

Why have a Parks Strategy?

Parks and green spaces have such a major part to play in community and family life. They are places for us to socialise, enjoy being active, connect with nature and wildlife, relax and reflect. Many contain heritage features which tell a story about the past. They also play an important part in providing a more sustainable future, contributing towards climate change and biodiversity aspirations.

Because of their wide variety of uses and benefits, it is important that their management and ongoing development is recognised and prioritised in a way in which everyone can understand and support.

The reason for developing this Parks Strategy is to;

- Set the overarching context and direction for the management and development of our parks and green spaces.
- Outline the approach for managing, protecting and developing parks and green spaces which is considerate to the Council's resources, management and maintenance responsibilities and the contributions made by community and interest groups.
- Highlight a set of principles which guide future maintenance, investment, community engagement decisions and actions regarding our parks and green spaces.

- Agree a set of priorities and objectives which focus effort, resources and decision making to ensure that parks and green spaces remain high quality spaces for everyone to enjoy.
- Help secure additional investment and external funding to enhance the parks infrastructure, facilities and opportunities for the benefit of the community.

Strategic Context

For this strategy to focus on the future effectively, it is important to recognise the key influencing documents and evidence base which frame the provision, protection and development of our parks and green spaces. It is also equally important for people to understand the current context in which these spaces are managed and maintained as this will play a part in decision making and the delivery of future projects.

Corporate Plan (2019-2023)

In 2019 a 4-year Corporate Plan was approved which identifies the main priorities which the Council will focus its resources on.

The Parks Strategy makes a positive contribution to the four main aims of the plan highlighted below;

Aim 1: Supporting our communities to create a healthier, safer, cleaner High Peak

Aim 2: A responsive, smart, financially resilient and forward-thinking council

Aim 3: Protect and create jobs by supporting economic growth, development and regeneration

Aim 4: Protect and improve the environment including responding to the climate emergency.

An objective under Aim 4 is to provide “Effective provision of quality parks and open spaces” and in order to deliver this objective a commitment was given to Develop a Parks Development Plan to support the widest community use of parks and support community / friends of the park groups.

High Peak Local Plan (2016)

Local Plans are documents which ensure Councils deliver sustainable housing development. They should, as far as possible, reflect the aspirations of local communities and should strive to contribute towards their wider social, economic and environmental objectives.

The five points below are taken from the High Peak Local Plan and the aspirations of this Parks Strategy contributes towards a number of them.

Housing - setting the scale, distribution and mix of housing to be developed to support a changing population, identifying sufficient land to meet requirements and supporting policies

Business - supporting the economy by providing sites for existing and new businesses, supporting the sustainability of town centres and specifying policies that address changing business needs

Environment - helping to mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects and conserving the natural and historic environment

Health and wellbeing - supporting the needs of local people by enabling opportunities for leisure and recreation

Infrastructure - enabling the provision of new infrastructure such as education, transport, health care and water supplies

High Peak Open Space Study (2017)

The High Peak open space study provides an evidence base that is used to help protect parks and open spaces, inform the future provision of parks and open spaces and helps to secure improvements to parks and open spaces. Using the evidence base contained in the study, the Council can secure investment from housing developments via Section 106 agreements which is then used to provide new or enhance existing facilities locally.

Movement, physical activity and sport strategies

Parks play a huge part in encouraging active lifestyles for the whole population. Our aspiration is for parks to be places which contain a range of facilities and opportunities where people will be inspired to move more and realise the physical and mental benefits this is proven to bring about. Each management plan contains actions that encourage this and build on the existing offering contained within parks. Facilities such as skateparks, pump tracks, tennis courts and multi-use games areas will be maintained to a safe standard. We will work with communities to enhance these facilities, develop new facilities where appropriate and encourage activities within the parks which attract people of all ages to be more active.

Play and outdoor sports facilities

Council play areas and outdoor sports facilities in parks are important assets that help children, young people and adults keep active, build confidence, improve physical literacy and social skills. We aspire to ensure our facilities are fun, accessible and free, helping to make parks an inviting destination for recreation and family time.

It is important these facilities are provided, maintained and developed effectively and to ensure this happens, the open space study includes a quality assessment of all children's play provision across the Borough that the Council is responsible for. This evidence base is used to identify where future provision or improvements are required and will support the business case for investing in these facilities in the future.

Existing Council play facilities are maintained and repaired by the Council's service provider Alliance Environmental Services (AES). The Council leads in developing new play areas or the replacement of existing facilities. Projects to improve or develop play and outdoor sports facilities are included within park management plans and are specific to the needs locally.

High Peak Tree Strategy (2016)

The High Peak Tree Strategy sets out how the Council will manage trees, both on its own land and private trees protected by legislation. The policy outlines the Council's approach to tree management and is supported by detailed Good Practice Guides. These guides detail how tree works decisions are made and implemented by and summarises how we manage risk and undertake inspections of trees.

In situations where works to trees within our parks are required, or when projects are developed which propose to add new trees to our parks, the Council's Arboricultural Officer will be consulted with and their recommendations implemented accordingly.

Climate Change

In 2019 the Council declared a climate change emergency and is committed to become carbon neutral in its internal operations and the services it delivers, by 2030. The environmental impacts of all planning and decision making relating to delivery of this strategy will be considered, so that our parks and green spaces contribute towards the Council's targets for zero carbon emissions.

High Peak Biodiversity Strategy

The Council is developing a biodiversity strategy which will summarise how the Council will enhance biodiversity, a key contributor towards tackling climate change. Once this strategy is finalised, priorities from it will feed into the Parks Strategy relevant action plans within Park Management Plans.

Green Flag

The Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces. The Council is proud to have one Green Flag Award, at the Memorial Park in Whaley Bridge and we have a commitment to retain this award each year.

The purpose and aims of the Green Flag Award are:

- To ensure everybody has access to quality green and other open spaces, irrespective of where they live.
- To ensure that these spaces are appropriately managed and meet the needs of the communities that they serve.
- To establish standards of good management.
- To promote and share good practice amongst the green space sector.
- To recognise and reward the hard work of managers, staff and volunteers.

Other related priorities

In addition to these strategies and plans, parks and open spaces contribute to many other priorities which the Council, partners and communities share including economic, regeneration or preventing crime and antisocial behaviour. Links will be made to these through park management plans and in the delivery of their respective action plans.

Management Responsibilities

High Peak Borough Council is responsible for the overall management of the parks listed in this strategy along with a range of other smaller parks, pocket parks and open spaces across the borough that are not listed. In addition to having the overall management responsibility, we work proactively with service providers, partners, community and interest groups to develop and deliver projects that protect, maintain or improve parks.

Alliance Environmental Services (AES) is responsible for maintaining each of the Council's parks and open spaces across the Borough. Park management plans and their associated action plans detail an agreed schedule of maintenance standards undertaken in each park, where no management plan exists for a park or open space, pre agreed maintenance schedules are adhered to. AES support the Council and community groups to deliver agreed projects that help protect and enhance parks for the benefit of the community.

Community and interest groups including 'Friends of the Parks' are a vital and valued support network which play an important role in assisting the Council and AES in undertaking specific maintenance tasks and development projects. These groups are also viewed by the Council as the formal voice for the community to bring forwards ideas, energy and act as a mechanism to attract additional funding to protect, maintain or enhance aspects of the parks.

**A diagram will be included to show this relationship in pictorial format rather than in text*

Vision

Our parks and green spaces will be vibrant, attractive and actively maintained spaces for the whole community to enjoy for a wide range of benefits.

Key Priorities

- 1) Make investment in parks and green spaces a priority
- 2) Use resources effectively and sustainably
- 3) Increase the use and accessibility of parks and green spaces for all
- 4) Work cooperatively with our communities and effectively with partners through positive community engagement

**Priorities will be displayed using a diagram rather than in text*

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles will be used when considering any changes that affect the current or future management or maintenance of parks and green spaces. The reason these principles have been developed is to make sure that any changes that are made to these spaces are appropriate, affordable, sustainable and deliver clearly against the aspirations of this strategy.

- 1) To use key strategies and industry recognised evidence to inform decision making so that any changes, improvements or projects are the right thing, in the right place and for the right reason.
- 2) To ensure that any projects to protect or enhance our parks are in keeping and proportionate with the overall purpose and heritage of our parks and deliver against one of the priorities listed in this strategy.
- 3) Any projects or improvements are developed with accessibility in mind, ensuring that wherever practical our parks are accessible to all.
- 4) Any new projects which have an impact on the ongoing maintenance of our parks are both affordable and financially sustainable.

Objectives

- Objective 1** We will review maintenance regimes to ensure our parks and green spaces are maintained to a high standard, in an affordable and sustainable way and make improvements to increase and enhance biodiversity and positively affect climate change. (addresses priorities 1, 2 and 4)
- Objective 2** We will ensure that infrastructure and heritage features are protected and well maintained, in accordance within the resources available to the Council. (addresses priority 1, 2, 3 and 4)
- Objective 3** Encourage and enable positive physical and mental wellbeing by developing strong partnerships with community groups, sports clubs and other stakeholder groups to ensure parks fulfil their potential for enabling healthy lifestyles for all ages. (addresses priority 3 and 4)
- Objective 4** Ensure parks are safe, welcoming and accessible places for the whole community and that the highest possible standards of health and safety are maintained by our service providers, event organisers and when engaging the community in projects. (addresses priority 3 and 4)
- Objective 5** Actively encourage community engagement and involvement in the protection, maintenance, development and positive environmental impacts of our parks. (addresses priority 3 and 4)
- Objective 6** Effectively manage internal budgets and attract external funding wherever possible towards the ongoing maintenance and the future development of our parks. (addresses priority 1,2,3 and 4)
- Objective 7** We will review park management plans and their associated actions plans annually to ensure these objectives are being delivered against effectively. (addresses priority 1,2,3 and 4)

Objective 8 We will create a Parks Development Fund to be used to make improvements to our parks and green spaces. (addresses priority 1,2,3 and 4)