



## Service Area Factsheet

# Parks and Green Infrastructure

## How will our parks and green infrastructure be impacted by climate change?

Our climate is changing. We each need to understand our role in addressing this challenge and work together to increase the resilience of our organisations and society. Cutting carbon emissions is vital as we must reduce the severity of climate change. However, it is equally important to begin preparing for the increase in extreme weather which we are already experiencing, and which is projected to increase substantially in intensity and frequency in the coming decades. We call this act of preparation 'Climate Adaptation.'

Local councils will play a pivotal role in the implementation of any measures, and so require a collaborative approach from different service areas in order to address the impacts of climate change. Every service has something to offer to increase resilience for the council and communities it represents, from overall strategies to daily decisions and management.

This brief is not designed to provide a comprehensive overview, but rather to initiate discussion on the role of waste management in addressing climate change impacts as part of a wider suite of documents for other services.

## What are the climate risks posed to parks and green infrastructure?

Parks, play provisions and public green spaces provide vital services to local communities. The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)<sup>1</sup> suggests that the inclusion of green infrastructure can help to improve resilience to climate change, providing important ecosystem services that reduce the effects of flooding and the urban heat island. Some of the expected climate change risks to parks and green infrastructure include:

- Changes in climate will continue to raise numerous issues for the maintenance and management of these public green spaces, from the concept of landscape designs to delivery and maintenance
- Damage and/or loss of green space due to extreme weather events and increased costs of clean up and maintenance following these events.
- Increase in cost for maintenance including protection of natural species from potential increase of invasive species, pests and diseases

- Pressure on local council assets and resources during warmer and longer summer periods from increased usage of park assets
- Closure of important assets due to severe weather events e.g. Parks and greenways

## What actions could you take?

Adaptation to climate change means making towns and cities more resilient. Well-designed, flexible public spaces that are considerate to existing habitats and wildlife will be the best chance to adapt to these threats<sup>2</sup>. You could take action by getting involved with your council's adaptation planning process, which should outline short to long-term impacts, implications and recommended actions for parks and green infrastructure including:

- Incorporating into budgets an emergency fund for extreme weather conditions when additional resources may be needed.
- Consider climate resilient planting that could also reduce frequency of maintenance but include ongoing management to enable it to continue to function effectively.
- Strategic planning and implementation of blue-green infrastructure including:
  - Alleviate flood risk through: SuDs, green roofs and, bioretention
  - Use trees to create natural shaded areas
  - Increase rainwater harvesting
  - Use natural irrigation systems
  - Encourage wildlife corridors to enable natural species migration
- When planning any green infrastructure, the issues of scale, design and multi-functionality are important factors to consider<sup>3</sup>.

## Additional Resources

Natural England and RSPB - Climate Change Adaptation Manual 2020: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5679197848862720>

## References

<sup>1</sup>Department of Environment (2015) 'Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)- Planning for sustainable development' Available online: <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/strategic-planning-policy-statement>

<sup>2</sup>CABE Space (2008) 'Public space lessons Adapting public space to climate change' Available online: <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/fileadmin/uploads/dc/Documents/adapting-public-space-to-climate-change1.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Natural England (2020) 'Climate Change Adaptation Manual' (2nd) Available online: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5679197848862720>