

State of Scotland's Greenspace report published

Scotland's towns and cities are more green than grey

The State of Scotland's Greenspace report published by greenspace scotland today [Thursday 1 February 2018] shows that Scotland can rightly claim to be a nation of green towns and cities. Urban Scotland is more green than grey, with greenspace covering over half (54%) of the urban land area.

The total area of greenspace in urban Scotland is 1,593 square kilometres – that's equivalent 22 Loch Lomonds or one-third of the area of the Cairngorms National Park. At a more human scale, that translates into a tennis court sized area of 'publicly accessible' greenspace per person.

The State of Scotland's Greenspace report provides data on the amount and type of greenspace for all of urban Scotland. It also examines changes and trends in people's use and attitude to greenspace, and looks at the resourcing of Council parks and open space services.

Key findings include:

- Scotland's towns and cities are more green than grey – 54% of the urban land area is greenspace
- The total area of urban greenspace is 1,593 square kilometres – equivalent to 22 Loch Lomonds
- This equates to 27 hectares of greenspace per 1000 people (excluding private gardens) – equivalent to a tennis court size of greenspace per person
- 28% of greenspace is classified as private gardens and grounds, with amenity greenspace making up a further 37% - together these two types account for two-thirds of Scotland's greenspace
- public parks and sports areas (which are the accessible public spaces most often used in daily life) account for 4% and 9% of greenspace respectively
- Scots love their parks and greenspaces - with over 90% saying it is important to have greenspace in their local area
- Urban greenspaces are popular outdoor destinations - with nearly half (43%) of urban Scots visiting their local greenspace once a week or more often (but frequency of use has fallen from a peak in 2009 when nearly two-thirds (63%) visited weekly)
- Whilst most respondents (74%) were satisfied to some extent with the quality of their local greenspace, 40% agreed or agreed strongly that 'the quality of my local greenspace has reduced in the past 5 years' (up from 33% in 2011 – and rising to 50% for respondents from the most deprived areas)
- The falls in greenspace quality and use, mirror falls in expenditure – with Council expenditure on parks and greenspace falling from £27,814 per 1000 people in 2010/11 to £21,794 in 2015/16

Speaking on the launch of the State of Scotland's Greenspace Report, **Local Government and Housing Minister Kevin Stewart said:**

"I am pleased that we have been able to fund this report, which provides an up to date picture of the state of our greenspace and shows the huge potential for Scotland to capitalise on our vision for the Central Scotland Green Network and to fully realise the potential of green networks and infrastructure.

"Scotland is an environmental leader and the importance of greenspace is widely recognised in our policy – from health to regeneration, early years to planning, biodiversity to climate change.

"Our towns and cities boast a wealth of greenspace and, through Scottish Planning Policy, we've set out how planning should protect and promote that as part of successful placemaking. We will reflect on the findings of this report and consider how we can fully realise the potential of greenspace to deliver for Scotland."

Julie Procter, Chief Executive of greenspace scotland said:

“It’s great to see that urban Scotland is more green than grey, but Scotland must not rest on its green laurels; this study raises important questions about the quality of greenspace in our towns and cities. It shows that Scotland’s greenspace is not delivering to its maximum potential for our people and our places. Whilst many of our parks and greenspaces are still in good heart, the Report shows we are rapidly approaching a tipping point leading to the downward spiral of reduced maintenance, poorer quality greenspaces and lower levels of use – meaning we are at risk of losing the wonderful health, social and environmental benefits that quality greenspaces provide.

With the publication of the State of Scotland’s Greenspace report, we call on our national and local politicians to reflect and to reassess whether the right investment and management decisions are being made to fully realise the potential of Scotland’s greenspace to deliver for Scotland.”

David Jamieson, Chair of greenspace scotland said:

“Scotland is blessed with a wonderful natural environment. We are fortunate to be able to enjoy greenspace on our doorstep even if you live in a town or city. Studies repeatedly show the positive impact that greenspace can have on our quality of life and particularly on health and wellbeing. Parks are our natural health service: greenspace is good for us – a daily dose of vitamin G could be just what the doctor ordered to keep us active and provide tonic for the soul.

Parks and greenspaces are one of our national treasures, but we mustn’t take them for granted. Greenspace is a classic example of ‘preventative spend’, where spending money now saves money later. Recent research by the City of Edinburgh Council shows that the social and financial benefits of greenspace outweigh the costs of looking after them by a ratio of at least 12:1. The State of Scotland’s Greenspace Report highlights the need for urgent action to reverse the declines in greenspace quality and use – and the negative impacts they are having on our health, our communities and our environment.”

Notes for editors:

1. **greenspace scotland** is an independent charitable company. Our goal is that everyone living and working in urban Scotland should have easy access to quality greenspace which meets local needs and improves their quality of life. We work with a wide range of local and national partners to support the planning, development and sustainable management of greenspaces and green networks as a key part of the infrastructure of our towns and cities. www.greenspacescotland.org.uk @greenspacescot
2. The State of Scotland’s Greenspace Report was prepared by greenspace scotland, with funding support from the Scottish Government. It draws on data from the new Ordnance Survey Greenspace product <http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/1scotlands-greenspace-map.aspx> and the 2017 Greenspace Use and Attitudes Survey <http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/greenspace-survey-2017.aspx>
3. The **full report** is available here <http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/state-of-scotlands-greenspace.aspx>
4. An extensive body of **research** shows how quality greenspace impacts positively on people’s physical and mental health and wellbeing; children’s development and learning; community safety and community development. greenspace scotland has published a comprehensive literature review of this research <http://greenspacescotland.org.uk/greenspace-and-quality-of-life.aspx>
4. A range of studies show the **financial benefits of parks and greenspaces**, for example, the City of Edinburgh Council published a Social Return on Investment study which demonstrated that every £1 invested in the city’s parks provided a return of £12 in social, economic and environmental benefits, with health and wellbeing benefits alone being worth around £40.5million http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20064/parks_and_green_spaces/1300/the_value_of_city_of_edinburgh_councils_parks More recently, a Natural Capital Account prepared for London revealed that London’s public greenspaces have a gross asset value of more than £91 billion, providing services valued at £5 billion per year; for each £1 spent by local authorities and their partners on public greenspace, Londoners enjoy at least £27 in value <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/parks-green-spaces-and-biodiversity/green-infrastructure/natural-capital?source=vanityurl#acc-i-49961>
5. The Improvement Service **Local Government Benchmarking Framework on Parks and Open Space Services** indicates that over the six-year period from 2010/11 to 2015/16 average net council spending on parks and open spaces per 1000 population has reduced in real terms by 21.6%, from £27,814 to £21,794. There has been a year-on-year reduction across the period, with the rate of reduction accelerating in the last 12 months <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/cultureleisure.html>

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