

SOUTH TEES
JSNA

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

JUNE 2024

MISSION

We will create places and systems that promote wellbeing.

GOAL

We want to create places with high quality green spaces that reflect community needs, provide space for nature and are well connected.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Mission led approach

The South Tees Health & Wellbeing Boards have agreed to a “mission-led” approach, structured across the lifecourse. Each mission is a response to a significant local challenge, one where innovation, working together and aligning resources has a big part to play in driving large-scale change. The Missions each have a set of ambitious goals that further articulate and explain the Mission.

The JSNA will provide the intelligence behind the Mission(s) – it will develop our collective understanding of the Mission(s); the issues behind and the broad contributing factors to the current outcomes experienced. We are working across the Tees Valley authorities to develop a process on that footprint that facilitates deeper engagement from the ICB.

The vision and aspirations under the lifecourse framework already exist following previous development sessions of the LiveWell Board. The lifecourse framework consists of three strategic aims – start well, live well and age well.

Vision	Empower the citizens of South Tees to live longer and healthier lives		
Aims	Start Well	Live Well	Age Well
Aspiration	Children and Young People have the Best Start in Life We want children and young people to grow up in a community that promotes safety, aspiration, resilience and healthy lifestyles	People live healthier and longer lives We want to improve the quality of life by providing opportunities and support so more people can choose and sustain a healthier lifestyle	More people lead safe, independent lives We want more people leading independent lives through integrated and sustainable support

1.2 Live Well strategic aim

There are four missions within the Live Well strategic aim. **The first mission relates to reducing the proportion of our families who are living in poverty, the second mission relates to creating places and systems that promote wellbeing, the third mission is to support people and communities to build better health and the fourth mission is to build an inclusive model of care for people suffering from multiple disadvantage across all partners.**

There are 11 goals. The second goal within the second mission is to create places with high quality green spaces that reflect community needs, provide space for nature and are well connected. See table below for all other goals and missions.

Aims	Mission	Goal
Live Well	We will reduce the proportion of our families who are living in poverty.	We want to reduce levels of harmful debt in our communities
		We want to improve the levels of high quality employment and increase skills in the employed population.
	We will create places and systems that promote wellbeing.	We want to create a housing stock that is of high quality, reflects the needs of the life course and is affordable to buy, rent and run.
		We want to create places with high quality green spaces that reflect community needs, provide space for nature and are well connected.
		We want to create a transport system that promotes active and sustainable transport and has minimal impact on air quality.
		We will support the development of social capital to increase community cohesion, resilience and engagement
	We will support people and communities to build better health.	We want to reduce the prevalence of the leading risk factors for ill health and premature mortality
		We want to find more diseases and ill health earlier and promote clinical prevention interventions and pathways across the system
	We will build an inclusive model of care for people suffering from multiple disadvantage across all partners.	We want to reduce the prevalence and impact of violence in South Tees
		We want to improve outcomes for inclusion health groups
		We want to understand and reduce the impact of parental substance misuse and trauma on children

2. What is our mission and why do we need to achieve it?

Our Mission is “We will create places and systems that promote wellbeing”.

The mission in this set of JSNAs considers some of the key wider determinants of health. These are the role of green and blue spaces, transport and air quality, housing and social capital. In the Health Impact Pyramid, these determinants sit fundamentally in the two foundation layers – Socioeconomic Factors and Changing the Context to make individuals’ default decisions healthy.

Within the socio-ecological model of systemic change, although action will be needed at all levels of the system, there is a strong focus on affecting policy, the physical environment and the response of organisations and institutions to addressing these issues.

Housing is more than a physical structure providing shelter. They are homes where people bring up families, socialise with friends, keep possessions safe and provide personal space. A healthy home is: affordable and offers a stable and secure base; able to provide for all of a household’s needs; a place to feel safe and comfortable; and connected to community, work and services.

Housing conditions impact on our physical health. For example, a warm and dry home can improve general health outcomes and specifically reduce respiratory conditions. It also influences mental health and wellbeing. For example, children living in crowded homes are more likely to be stressed, anxious and depressed, have poorer physical health and attain less well at school.

Formal, informal and natural green spaces are increasingly recognised as important assets for supporting health and wellbeing, reducing health and social care costs, tackling health inequalities, improving social cohesion and taking positive action to tackle the climate crisis. There is also growing evidence for the importance of “blue” spaces, which is significant in South Tees with our access to the coast and freshwater environment. The green and blue environment has both wider passive benefits for our wellbeing as well as providing opportunities for specific activities, such as physical activity and mindfulness. It also has a role in recovery from ill health, for example through green social prescribing.

The way in which we move between homes, work, education and recreation, including through our green and blue environment, also provides opportunities for improving our health and wellbeing. Increasing cycling, wheeling and walking particularly for shorter journeys can help tackle some of the most challenging issues we face as a society – contributing to combating climate change, providing opportunities for physical activity, enabling contact with nature, addressing inequalities and tackling congestion on our roads. For longer journeys, public transport still brings benefits in terms of physical activity.

Although it is considered in this mission under transport because of the strong association with motorised modes, air quality is also impacted by housing and also industry and commerce. Air quality is considered the largest environmental health risk in the UK. It shortens lives and contributes to chronic illness. Health can be affected both by short-term, high-pollution episodes and by long-term exposure to lower levels of pollution. Sixty-six years after the enactment of the Clean Air Act, high profile cases are demonstrating the work still to be done to address the quality of the air we breathe.

Finally, this Mission moves away from the physical environment to consider the underpinning community assets that determine the very fabric of society. Social capital is the ‘glue’ that holds societies together. It can be defined as “the extent and nature of our connections with others and the collective attitudes and behaviours between people that support a well-functioning, close-knit society.” Research shows that higher levels of social capital are beneficial and can be associated with better outcomes in health, education, employment and civic engagement. Based on the four domains

of social capital, personal relationships, social network support, civic engagement, and trust and cooperative norms, the inclusion of social capital is one of the most exploratory and innovative parts of the South Tees JSNA process.

3. What is our goal and why do we need to achieve it?

Formal and informal green spaces, including formal parks, more natural habitats, allotments and private gardens, are increasingly recognised as important assets for supporting health and wellbeing. 'Natural capital' can support our response to health and wider social issues that we face locally in South Tees, including improving health and wellbeing, reducing health and social care costs, tackling health inequalities, improving social cohesion and taking positive action on the climate crisis. There is also growing evidence for the importance of blue spaces – outdoor areas that include water, including coasts, rivers, canals and even fountains - in improving health and wellbeing, which is particularly relevant for South Tees, with extensive access to the coast, rivers, and other wetlands within the geography. "Grey spaces", such as backyards and alleyways, can also continue to improving wellbeing.

A green and blue environment can promote and protect good health, support recovery from illness and help manage poor health. Green and blue spaces are also associated with improved mental health and wellbeing outcomes including reduced levels of depression, anxiety, and fatigue, and enhanced quality of life for both children and adults. Specific initiatives, such as green social prescribing and green hubs, are now recognised as valuable in improving both physical and mental wellbeing, alongside less formal connectedness with nature. Green space can help to improve social cohesion, reduce loneliness, and mitigate the negative effects of air pollution, noise, heat and flooding. Disadvantaged groups may gain a more significant health benefit and have reduced socioeconomic-related inequalities in health when living in greener communities, so a greener environment can also be used as an important tool in tackling social and economic inequalities.

Competing land use demands and budgetary constraints are placing local accessible green space at risk. In supporting the delivery of local health, social, environmental and economic priorities, good quality green space has the potential to deliver substantial benefits for public health and for wider local priorities at a relatively low cost. Despite this potential, it can be challenging to make a compelling case for the maintenance or improvement of green space, which is often seen as a liability rather than an asset. The full extent of the benefits can be unrealised because they are difficult to measure or are accumulated over an extended time period. Natural capital accounting methodology and tools have now evolved that can support a greater understanding of the value of our green and blue spaces.

This JSNA is a beginning to an improved understanding of the significance of our green and blue spaces in South Tees, how we can begin to reimagine their role in the health and wellbeing of our communities and develop an appreciation and measure the value of the green and blue landscape within South Tees.

4. Methodology

The complexity of the work combined with limited existing knowledge and insight of the topic area has required a refined approach to creating this JSNA. The key elements of our methodology have been to work with partners to:

- Review and reframe the goal from an earlier draft in the light of the available data and engagement with partners. At this stage, this is presented within the JSNA to inform the work going forward.
- Review strategic documents in relation to green and blue space including the two local authority green strategies, Middlesbrough Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and others.
- Review existing data sets, including the Natural England Green Infrastructure dataset, local authority datasets on allotments and others.
- Hold structured interviews with individual partners or small groups of partner organisations, analysing the conversations using Sentiment Analysis.
- Utilise You've Got This's (YGT) approaches to community insight gathering, including Sentiment Analysis, Storytelling and a boosted sample of the Sport England Active Lives Survey, to build a picture of community responses to green and blue spaces.
- Facilitate a structured workshop session for partners based on the intelligence gathering phase of the work, with a particular focus on determining the key recommendations.
- Providing an opportunity for partner agencies to comment on the draft JSNA.

5. Key data and drivers for change

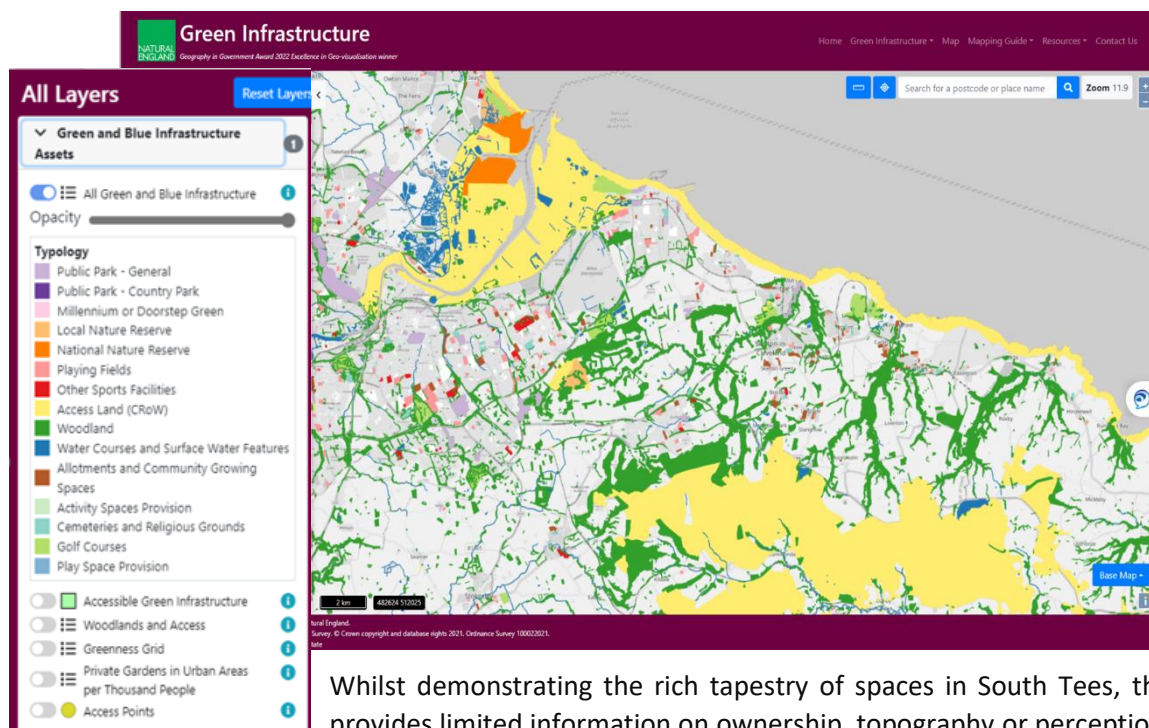
5.1 Introduction

Most of the data that is currently available around green and blue space in South Tees focuses on the physical assets, including formal parks and playing fields, as well as the physical access to natural spaces. As will be discussed later in the JSNA, this is only part of the picture. Much more needs to be understood through the conjunction of quantitative data around the use of our green and blue spaces and qualitative data that considers the perceptions of green and blue spaces and the barriers and enablers to access.

5.2 Overall pattern of green and blue spaces

Natural England's Green Infrastructure Tool [3] provides a significant resource to support our understanding of the distribution and typology of green and blue spaces across South Tees, as is demonstrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Distribution and typology of green and blue spaces in South Tees



Whilst demonstrating the rich tapestry of spaces in South Tees, the tool provides limited information on ownership, topography or perception. The tool does not set out to assess the quality of the green and blue spaces. Indeed, the issue of assessing quality is a complex one, often dependent on individual considerations, and is a significant issue for the development of this JSNA.

5.3 Availability of formal green space in South Tees

Fields in Trust has calculated a Green Space Index (GSI) score that is a measure of green space provision [5], although this is restricted to formal green spaces. The data released in May 2023 considers parks and play space per 1,000 people and outdoor sport facilities per 1,000 people against the benchmarks in 'Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play' (2015) to provide each area with its own GSI Score. A score of 1 indicates the area is meeting a minimum standard of green space provision. As

shown in Figure 2, currently only four nations/regions of Britain - the East of England, Scotland, the Southeast and Wales are above or at the minimum standard.

Figure 2: Fields in Trust access to green space

	Area	GSI Score (where 1 is minimum standard of provision)	Provision of green space (ha.)	Provision of green space per person (sqm)	Population not within ten-minute walking access of a green space	Green space legally protected with Fields in Trust (ha.)
Nation	England	0.82	164,164	28.5	5,216,357	5.7%
	Scotland	1.18	22,531	40.7	532,264	10.2%
	Wales	1.03	11,438	36.1	415,788	10.1%
Region	East of England	1.04	23,209	36.1	782,310	6.0%
	East Midlands	0.86	14,853	30.1	490,402	5.0%
	London	0.54	17,412	18.6	172,134	5.9%
	North East	0.84	7,816	29.2	303,148	3.1%
	North West	0.78	20,080	27.2	524,135	6.2%
	South East	0.96	31,609	33.5	1,037,107	4.9%
	South West	0.82	16,723	29.0	759,415	9.8%
	West Midlands	0.87	18,246	30.2	649,466	5.8%
	Yorkshire & Humber	0.72	14,216	25.6	498,241	3.7%
Local Authority	Middlesbrough	Does not meet minimum standards	-	18.8	18,521	-
	Redcar & Cleveland	Does not meet minimum standards	-	24.8	16,578	-

BELOW MINIMUM STANDARD MINIMUM STANDARD

Source – Fields in Trust

According to Fields in Trust’s minimum standard of green space provision, a minimum of 24 sqm of green space per individual is needed to enable everyone to participate in recreation, sport, play and reap the wellbeing benefits. The average provision per person in England is 28.5 sqm. Middlesbrough has a rate of 18.8 sqm per person, much lower than the minimum standard and England rate. Redcar & Cleveland is above the minimum rate at 24.8 but still lower than the England average.

The Ordnance Survey (OS) provide data on access to parks or playing fields which is shown in Figure 3 below [19]. Redcar & Cleveland’s population has a lower average distance to their nearest park, public garden or playing fields compared to England whilst Middlesbrough has a greater distance. However the average size of these areas is significantly lower in Redcar & Cleveland compared to England. Middlesbrough’s average size is higher than Redcar & Cleveland but still lower when compared to England. The average number of parks for the local population is lower in Redcar & Cleveland and more so in Middlesbrough compared to England. Overall the combined size of parks, public gardens or playing fields is lower in Middlesbrough compared to England and significantly lower in Redcar & Cleveland.

Figure 3: Access to parks or playing fields

Area	Average distance to nearest Park, Public Garden, or Playing Field (m)	Average size of nearest Park, Public Garden, or Playing Field (m2)	Average number of Parks, Public Gardens, or Playing Fields within 1,000 m radius	Average combined size of Parks, Public Gardens, or Playing Fields within 1,000 m radius (m2)
Middlesbrough	403	73,891	3.8	288,396
Redcar and Cleveland	308	58,248	4.1	196,728
North East	388	70,253	4.5	319,869
England	385	94,586	4.4	379,882

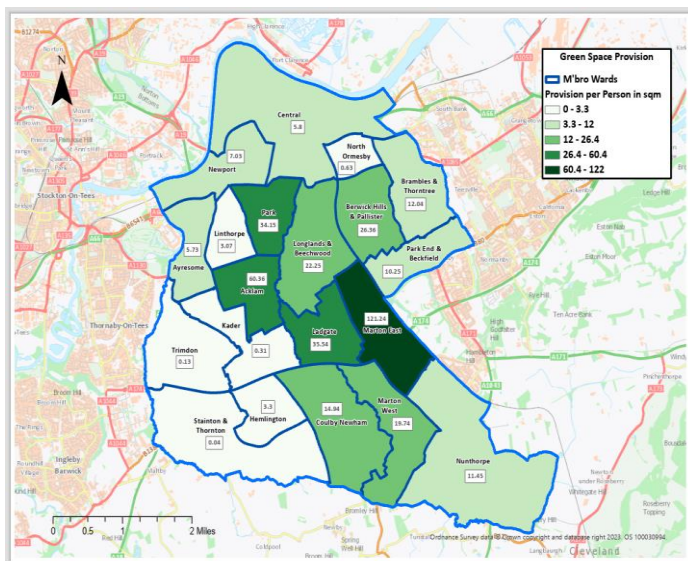
Source – Ordnance Survey

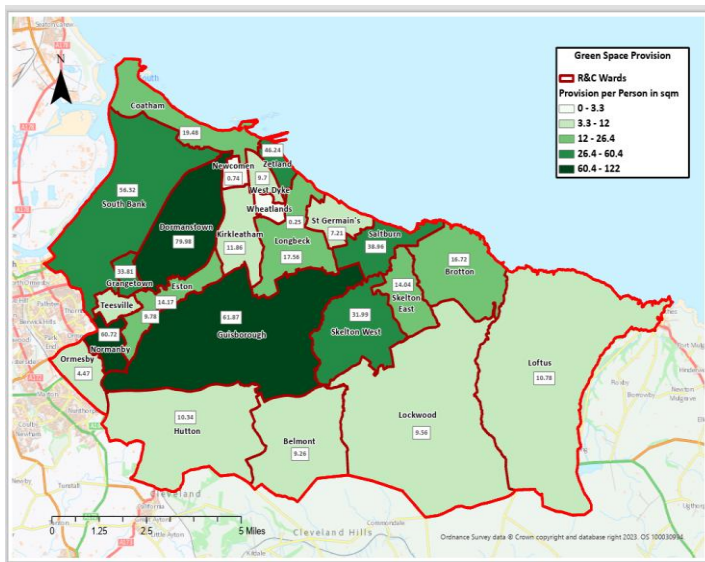
Combining the Fields in Trust GSI with population projection data highlights how the amount of public green space per person will change as communities grow or decline, based on current provision of parks and green spaces. Middlesbrough shows a slight increase in the GSI score by 2043, growing by 1% whilst in Redcar & Cleveland the provision decreases by 2.4%. However, we need to consider that Middlesbrough has a lower provision per person in 2023. The changes locally are less than the prediction for England with a decrease of 6.7%. Provision of accessible green space therefore needs to be a significant consideration in the planning and design of future developments to maintain or increase the GSI locally.

5.4 Availability of formal green space provision at ward and LSOA level

Figure 4 below maps the provision per person in sqm of the individual wards across Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland. In Middlesbrough, Marton East is the ward with the highest provision per person in sqm at 121.24sqm while Stainton & Thornton has the lowest provision per person of formal green space at 0.04sqm. In Redcar & Cleveland, the ward with the highest provision per person is Dormanstown at 79.98sqm followed by Guisborough at 61.87sqm. Wheatlands is the ward with the lowest provision per person at 0.25sqm followed by Newcomen at 0.74sqm. However, this data relates only to formal green space and spaces – it does not take into account access to natural spaces, the wider countryside or the blue spaces associated with the coastline and other wetlands.

Figure 4: Maps showing green space provision per person- Middlesbrough below, Redcar & Cleveland overleaf



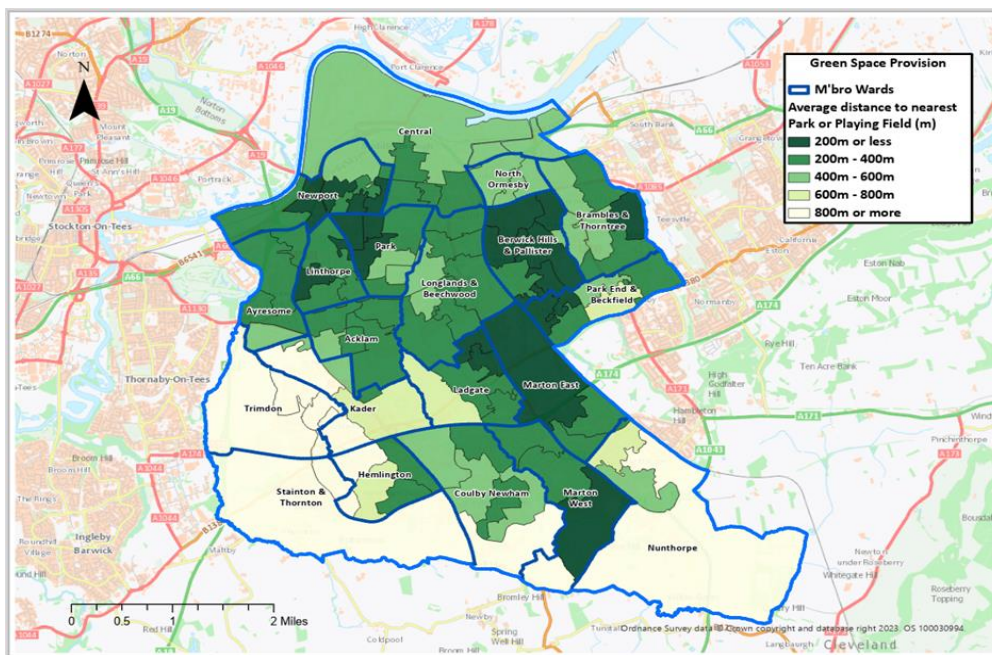


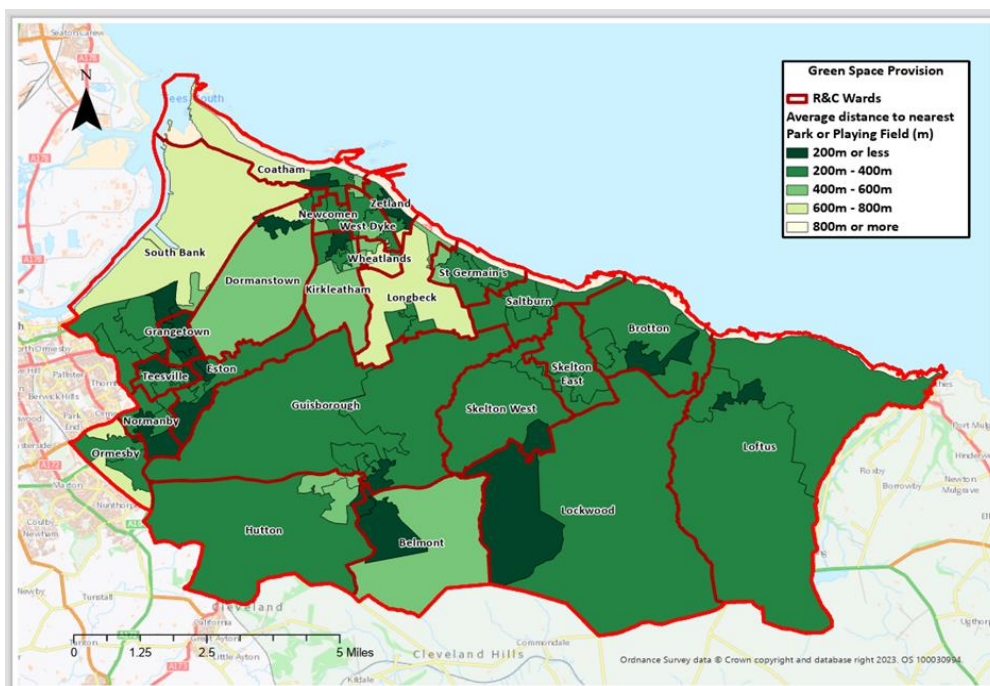
Source – Fields in Trust

Figure 5 below shows access to parks or playing fields for Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland lower super output areas (LSOAs), based on Ordnance Survey data. LSOAs are a standardised geographic area that have been created to be as consistent in population size as possible, with an average population of 1,500 people. The maps show the variation across the LSOA areas with the ward boundaries overlaid for reference.

The south of Middlesbrough has the largest average distances with LSOA in Trimdon ward the highest at 1,545m, whilst the shortest average distance was in the Berwick Hills & Pallister ward with an average distance of 87m. In Redcar & Cleveland the longest distance was in the Longbeck ward at 712m and the shortest distance was in the Coatham ward at 117m.

Figure 5: Maps showing access to parks or playing fields – Middlesbrough below, Redcar & Cleveland overlaid





Source – Ordnance Survey

5.5 Availability of Green Space and Disadvantage

Figure 6 below shows the levels of access to parks and playing fields in Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland by deprivation decile, with 1 being most deprived and 10 being least deprived. Although this fluctuates, the more deprived areas have smaller average distances to travel to parks and playing fields. The average number of parks in both local authorities are smaller in the most affluent areas.

Figure 6 – Distance to nearest park or green space and number of local greenspaces by decile of disadvantage

Area	IMD Decile	Average distance to nearest park, public garden, or playing field (m)	Average number of parks, public gardens or playing fields within 1,000m radius
Middlesbrough	1	306	4.3
	5	347	3.2
	10	591	1.2
Redcar and Cleveland	1	294	4.4
	5	330	4.0
	10	426	3.2

Source: Natural England

This data points to higher physical accessibility in more disadvantaged areas, but does not provide any indication of other barriers to access, such as perceptions of safety and quality of spaces. Nor does it take into account patterns of informal and natural spaces.

5.6 Green Flag Parks

The Green Flag Award scheme [12] recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world.

The purpose and aims of the scheme are:

- To ensure that 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 valuable role of site managers, staff and volunteers.

The Green Flag Award is a measure of quality in terms of green space, although it relies on an application process and therefore would not include green spaces that would meet the standard but have not been submitted. According to the respective Local Authority websites, the following parks and open space hold the standard:

Middlesbrough (seven spaces) [16]

- Hemlington Lake and Recreation Centre
- Fairy Dell
- Stewart Park
- Pallister Park
- Thorntree Park
- Albert Park
- Linthorpe Cemetery

Redcar & Cleveland (one space) [23]

- Guisborough Forest & Walkway

5.7 Access to Natural Spaces

Our interaction with natural places can have a significant impact on our health. Protecting nature and biodiversity safeguards health and wellbeing. Overall, people who live in greener neighbourhoods have higher self-reported health and mental wellbeing. Exposure to green spaces has been shown to improve mood, reduce anxiety, and reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. 'Green exercise', or taking physical activity in green or natural environments, may also provide additional benefits to people's overall wellbeing. It is estimated that £2.1 billion per year could be saved in health costs if everyone in England had good access to green space, due to the increased physical activity in these spaces.

Green spaces can also bring communities together, reduce loneliness and mitigate the negative effects of air pollution, excessive noise, heat and flooding. However, green space access is closely linked to health and social inequalities. The most affluent wards in England have 5 times the amount of parks and green space compared to the most deprived 10% (Public Health England, 2020) [7].

Natural England's Green Infrastructure data asset [3] includes the tool Nature Close to Home which assesses the supply of publicly accessible green spaces that are likely to be moderate to high in terms of biodiversity (nature rich) qualities and thus capable of providing a quality "contact with nature" experience on a regular, daily and local basis. It functions by creating a 300m buffer around all green spaces ranked 1 or 2 for Naturalness (Level 1 = likely to be most natural – lowest apparent levels of land management intensity; Level 2 = Likely to have mixed attributes – likely to be a mosaic of areas of low and high intensity land management). In its current form, in addition to providing data at County, LA, MSOA, and LSOA, geographies, it also provides data for populations most expected to

derive health benefits from access to the asset, namely, children and older people, at these respective geographic levels.

Figure 7 - Table showing access to nature close to home

Area	Percentage of Total Population with Access to Nature Close to Home	Percentage of Children (15 and under) with Access to Nature Close to Home	Percentage of Older People (65 and over) with Access to Nature Close to Home
Redcar & Cleveland	25.9%	24.7%	26.9%
Middlesbrough	32.2%	32.8%	27%

Source: Natural England

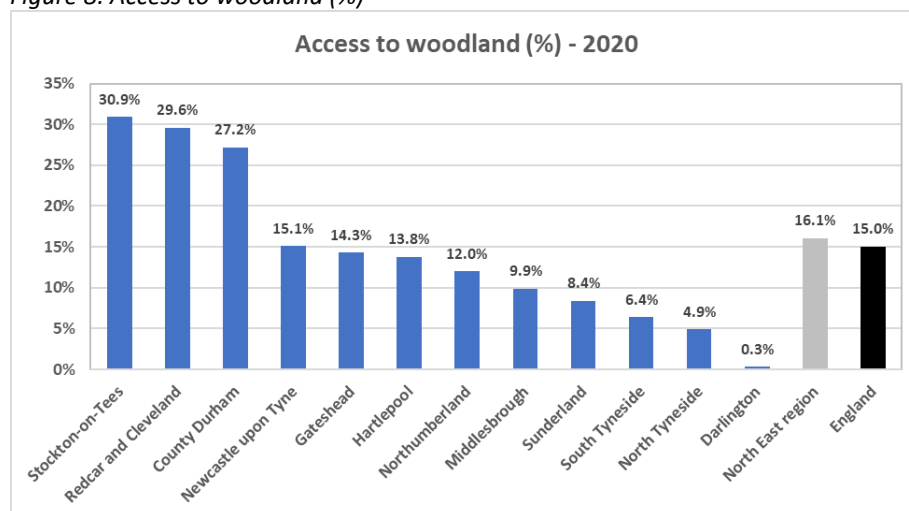
Just over a quarter of residents in Redcar and Cleveland have opportunities for regular local access to natural spaces; whereas it's closer to a third of the residents of Middlesbrough with access (Figure 7). Whilst the opportunities across both the total population and the priority groups of Redcar and Cleveland remains even, the older residents of Middlesbrough have significantly less access to natural spaces compared to the total population, and the priority group of children, of the borough. Although, by comparison, the older residents of Middlesbrough still have marginally better regular access to natural spaces than their counterparts in Redcar and Cleveland.

Given the established health benefits of regular exposure to the natural spaces, future investment in extending the green and blue infrastructure in both boroughs, but particularly in Redcar and Cleveland, that focuses resources on both nature recovery and biodiversity, would potentially yield a health dividend.

Access to woodlands supports wellbeing and allows people to engage in physical activity. Both the presence of a woodland and the number of people who can access the woodland are crucial factors. Woodlands provide spaces for community activities, social connectedness, volunteering as well as employment. The Woodland Trust defines population access to woodlands as those that have accessible woodland of at least 2 hectares within 500 metres of where they live [25].

Figure 8 below shows the percentage of people living in the North East who have access to woodland. Redcar & Cleveland has a significantly higher rate at 29.6% compared to England at 15%. This is the 17th highest nationally for local authorities in England. Middlesbrough's value is significantly lower compared to both Redcar & Cleveland and England with 9.9% of the population with access to woodland.

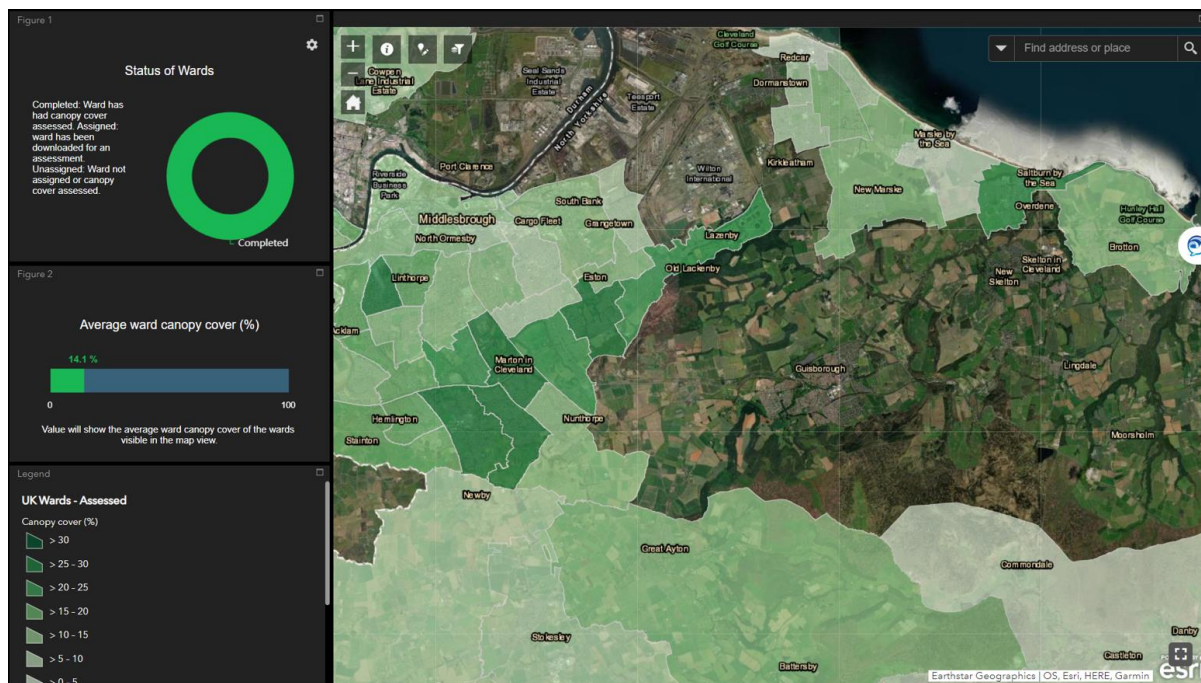
Figure 8: Access to woodland (%)



Source – Woodland Trust

This data is only at a Local Authority level and does not fully express accessibility at ward level data. Figure 9 gives an indication of variations across wards where these have been mapped. However, the caveat remains that accessibility is not fully accounted for in the data set. These data sets also do not account for value placed on street trees or individual trees within, particularly the urban landscape.

Figure 9 – Canopy cover by ward area, competed only for selected urban areas [6]



5.8 Allotments and Community Gardens

Allotments and community gardens provide spaces for food growing and recreation. Generally, responsibility for the provision and management of allotments in England sits with the lowest level of local government, which in some areas involves Parish or Town Councils. Some allotments and community gardens are managed by not-for-profit organisations or are privately owned and let. Some sites are self-managed by tenants' groups, although ownership is still vested in a Local Authority. Figure 10 below provides information for current provision and occupancy for allotments in Redcar & Cleveland and Middlesbrough, only for those managed by the Council.

As detailed in Figure 10 data is not available for Beechwood and Saltersgill allotments as these are currently self-managed sites.

There is significant variation both in distribution and occupancy levels, although the sites in more disadvantaged areas appear to have lower occupancy levels. This may create an imbalance between demand and occupancy levels. For example, the small, relatively recent sites, in Hemlington and Coulby Newham have complete or near complete occupancy, whilst long established sites in East Middlesbrough such as Town Farm and Berwick Hills have significant numbers of empty plots.

Figure 10 – Current status of allotment sites under the ownership of Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council and Middlesbrough Council

	Local Authority Area	Total Plots	Vacant	% Vacant
Berwick Hills	Middlesbrough	45	10	22.2%
Coulby Newham	Middlesbrough	29	0	0.0%
Hemlington	Middlesbrough	26	1	3.8%
Letitia Street (Newport)	Middlesbrough	14	0	0.0%
Town Farm (Cargo Fleet Lane)	Middlesbrough	295	30	10.2%
Whitehouse (North Ormesby)	Middlesbrough	99	8	8.1%
Beechwood	Middlesbrough	Currently self managed		
Saltersgill	Middlesbrough	Currently self managed		
Bankfields - Bankfields Road, Eston.	Redcar and Cleveland	64	1	1.56%
Eston Bells Field - Normanby Road, South Bank.	Redcar and Cleveland	31	1	3.23%
Eston Grange - Church Lane, Eston.	Redcar and Cleveland	82	17	20.73%
Normanby - Flatts Lane, Normanby.	Redcar and Cleveland	27	0	0.00%
Teesville - Lime Road, Normanby.	Redcar and Cleveland	109	20	18.35%
Mushroom Grove - Eastcroft Road, Grangetown.	Redcar and Cleveland	36	20	55.56%
Ambleside - Lakes Estate, Redcar.	Redcar and Cleveland	41	0	0.00%
Meggitts Lane - Meggitts Avenue, Dormanstown.	Redcar and Cleveland	47	3	6.38%
Redcar Lane - Redcar Lane, Redcar.	Redcar and Cleveland	24	0	0.00%
Redcar Racecourse - Rear of Borough Park, Redcar Lane, Redcar	Redcar and Cleveland	54	0	0.00%
Rivers Estate - Thames Road, Redcar.	Redcar and Cleveland	32	0	0.00%
The Ings - Holyhead Drive, Redcar.	Redcar and Cleveland	31	1	3.23%
Warrenby - Tod Point Road, Warrenby.	Redcar and Cleveland	84	9	10.71%
Zetland - The Crescent, Redcar.	Redcar and Cleveland	75	8	10.67%
TOTAL		1245	129	10.36%

5.9 Bathing Water Quality

A classification for each bathing water location across England is calculated annually, based on samples from the previous four years. These classifications, from best to worst, are "excellent", "good", "sufficient" or "poor".

Throughout the bathing season (from 15th May to 30th September) Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council (RCBC) takes part in the short-term pollution monitoring scheme operated by the Environment Agency. If there is an unexpected situation which could have a negative impact on water quality and bathers, health notices are displayed at the beaches. RCBC also works closely with Northumbrian Water to improve bathing water quality in the borough.

Figure 11 shows bathing water quality for sampling locations in Redcar & Cleveland [4]. Since 2018 the water quality of our bathing waters has been variable between good and excellent, with all but one of the locations, Saltburn, currently being graded as excellent quality. As a vital asset to both our

residents for a whole range of leisure activities, and our marine wildlife as a habitat, according to this nationally benchmarked exercise, our coastal waters are a high-quality blue asset.

Figure 11 – Bathing water quality at sampling locations in Redcar & Cleveland

Bathing Water Profile				
Location	2018	2019	2021	2022
Marske Sands	***	**	**	***
Redcar Coatham	**	***	***	***
Redcar Granville	**	**	**	***
Redcar Lifeboat Station	**	***	**	***
Redcar Stray	**	***	***	***
Saltburn	***	***	***	**

Key: *** Excellent, **Good, *Sufficient, - Poor.

Further detail [Bathing water quality help \(data.gov.uk\)](https://data.gov.uk)

Source: Environment Agency | Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

5.10 Private outdoor space by property type

The Ordnance Survey (OS) provides data on access to private outdoor spaces, which is shown in Figure 12 below. The table shows the percentages of houses and flats which have access to a private outdoor space in Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland, North East, and England. This includes, for example, access to “grey space” such as backyards as well as traditional gardens. The data shows that addresses in both boroughs have a higher proportion with access to private open space than nationally, but that areas are smaller than the national average.

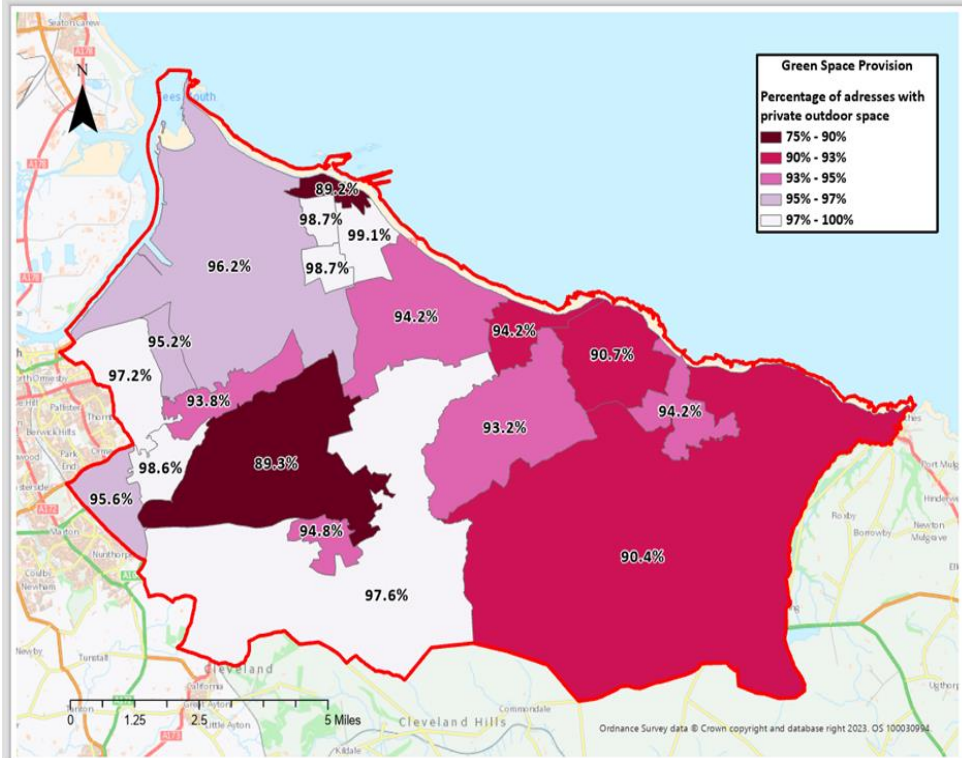
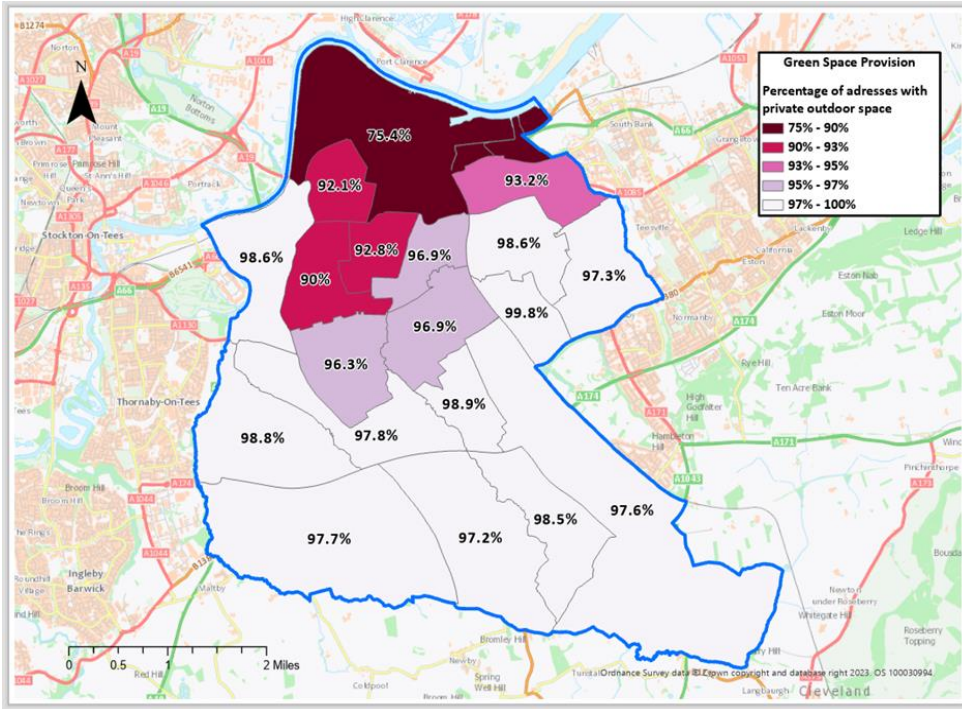
Figure 12: Access to private outdoor space

Area	Address count	Adress with private outdoor space count	Private outdoor space total area (m2)	Percentage of adresses with private outdoor space	Average size of private outdoor space (m2)
Middlesbrough	64,257	60,774	10,198,307	94.6%	202
Redcar and Cleveland	65,335	61,902	11,743,014	94.7%	212
North East	1,248,477	1,162,878	225,340,418	93.1%	212
England	24,724,905	21,851,280	6,172,433,138	88.4%	326

Source – Ordnance Survey

Figure 13 maps the private outdoor space by middle super output area (MSOA) level. MSOAs are a standardised geographic area that have been created to be as consistent in population size as possible, with an average population of 7,200 people. In Middlesbrough the north of the town, surrounding the town centre have the lowest levels of properties with private outdoor space, reflecting the dominant terraced street housing pattern. In Redcar & Cleveland areas around Guisborough and Coatham have the lowest levels of access.

Figure 13: Maps showing access to private outdoor space in South Tees



Source – Ordnance Survey

5.11 Thriving Places Index

The Thriving Places Index created by Centre for Thriving Places is a wellbeing economics framework that identifies the local conditions for wellbeing and measures whether those conditions are being delivered fairly and sustainably [28]. The index looks more broadly at what supports the wellbeing of communities and the different elements that help places to thrive. The framework is arranged into three elements which are local conditions, equality and sustainability. Within each element, there are domains and subdomains which show the elements broken down into greater detail. Each Local Authority area has a scorecard which shows the colour-coded scores for elements, domains and subdomains.

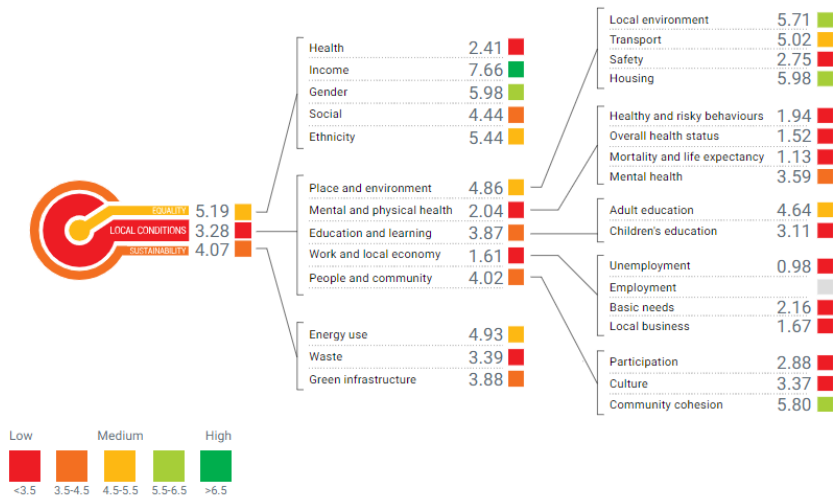
Figure 14 below shows the 2021 thriving places index. The index scores ranges from 0-10, with medium scores (4.5-5.5) coloured yellow, meaning the local authority scores the same as, or very similar to, the England average. Above or below average scores are coloured in pale green (5.5-6.5) and orange (3.5-4.5). Very high or low scores are coloured in dark green (above 6.5) and dark red (below 3.5) with these scores furthest from the England average. For Local Environment, both Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland score better than the England average, with Redcar & Cleveland in the highest category.

The measure consists of a series of indicators, which relate to grey and green space as well as other environmental indicators as follows:

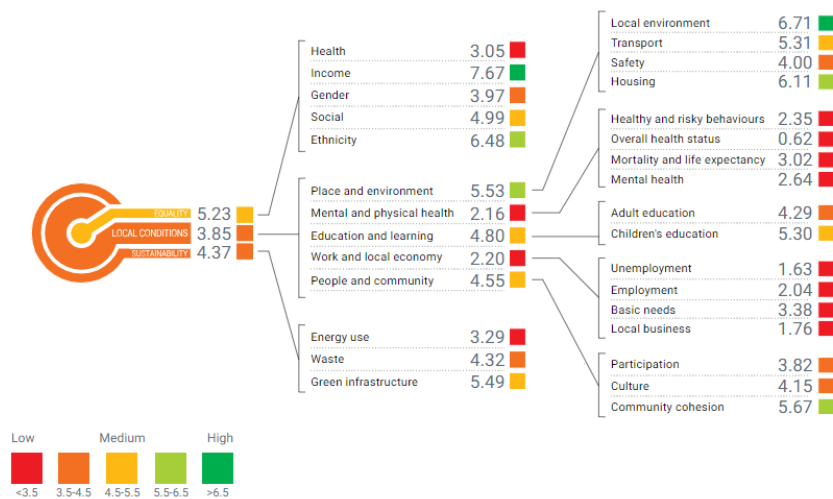
Indicator Name	Indicator Description
Private outdoor space	Percentage of addresses with access to private outdoor space.
Public outdoor space	Average distance to nearest Park, Public Garden, or Playing Field (m).
Access to woodland	% of population with access to a 2ha+ wood within 500m of where they live.
Air pollution: PM 2.5	Annual concentration of human-made fine particulate matter at an area level, adjusted to account for population exposure.
Nitrogen dioxide	Annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentrations from modelled annual mean oxides of nitrogen concentrations.
Exposure to transport related noise	The average of daytime and night-time percentages of the population exposed to road, rail and air transport noise of 65 dB(A) or more, LAeq, 16h per local authority. From modelled data.

Figure 14 – Thriving Places Index 2022

Middlesbrough



Redcar and Cleveland



6. What are we doing already in relation to this goal?

6.1 Local Plans

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council's current Local Plan (adopted 2018) has clear policy statements regarding high quality green space: Policies N1 Landscape, N2 Green Infrastructure, N3 Open Space and Recreation, and N4 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation. All address issues relevant to this JSNA goal [14]. Further, the plan recognises that the improvement of green infrastructure, and its incorporation into new developments, provides opportunities for improving the quality of life of residents, addresses health inequalities, and encourages healthier lifestyles.

Whilst Middlesbrough Council's Local Plan is still emerging (at the time of writing, November 2023), it is scheduled for adoption by the spring of 2025. In the Council's Local Plan scoping report of 2022, there is a clear recognition that green and blue infrastructure is critical in creating high quality places that promote healthy lifestyles [17]. The report states that the Local Plan will set out a strategic approach based upon the recently adopted Middlesbrough Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2037 (see below), with an overall approach that will seek to establish a network of interconnected green and blue spaces that will enhance the borough and provide better opportunities for residents to access a range of high quality public open spaces. Further, the scoping document commits the Council to devising policies and designations that will protect and manage open spaces, recreation and leisure facilities, green wedges and important sites designated for their biodiversity and geodiversity value.

6.2 Green Strategies

The One Planet Living approach was adopted by Middlesbrough Council in 2009, and, through the One Planet Middlesbrough Action Plan (2017-2025) [1] and the recently published Green Strategy (2021) [13], now provides the delivery model for the programme of environmental sustainability across the town. Several of the principles are relevant to this JSNA goal, including two of the stated priority actions, namely, 1) putting allotments into self-management; and 2) supporting volunteers and Friends Groups in the management and development of green spaces.

Redcar and Cleveland Council's Climate Change Strategy (2021-2030) covers three main objectives – becoming a cleaner, greener organisation; collective responsibility; and the bigger picture [11]. The Council recognises the important role nature plays in supporting the communities to adapt to the impact of climate change. Current work involves developing partnership opportunities to improve community open spaces, providing access to nature in urban spaces, supporting biodiversity and climate adaptation. The Council is endeavouring to work closely with the community and partners on these projects to secure the social, economic and health and wellbeing benefits that this approach offers. In addition to this Redcar and Cleveland Council have implemented the Climate Change Action Plan (2021 - 2025) to focus the strategy into tangible deliverable actions to achieve the vision of the Climate Strategy [10].

6.3 Middlesbrough Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

Middlesbrough Council has also recently adopted a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2021-2037) [15]. The strategy includes six themes: Regeneration, Heritage and Sense of Place; Biodiversity and Geodiversity; Reconnecting Communities with Nature; A Resilient Landscape; The Blue Network and Waterfronts; and Walking and Cycling. Over two documents, the strategy identifies and then prioritises the actions required to strengthen Middlesbrough's network of green and blue

infrastructure up until 2037, and, as stated above, will be central to the formulation of the Council's Local Plan. A Green and Blue Infrastructure checklist has been developed to ensure that green and blue infrastructure are at the forefront of any new developments.

6.4 Biodiversity and Nature Recovery

The role that nature plays in supporting our health and wellbeing is increasingly well recognised by the health sector. Green Social Prescribing is embedded within the NHS Long term plan and Public Health England's 2020 publication 'Improving access to greenspace' [21] recommends that Local Authorities consider local green (and blue) space to be critical assets for maintaining and supporting health and wellbeing in local communities.

Tees Valley Nature Partnership (TVNP) is the local nature partnership for Tees Valley, designated by the Secretary of State and with the vision of "More nature for more people across the Tees Valley". With over 40 organisations, TVNP works to support nature so it can support us. TVNP has four key themes to help achieve the vision:

- Restoring and creating an environment where nature thrives – supporting policies and projects that ensure the protection and enhancement of the natural environment.
- Putting nature at the heart of a vibrant economy – embedding a natural capital approach across Tees Valley.
- Reconnecting people with nature – helping more people to realise the health benefits of engaging with the natural environment.
- Leading by example and supporting partners to be leaders in their fields – creating a strong, functioning local partnership for the Tees Valley [26].

Due to the expertise of Tees Valley Nature Partnership, they are now in the process of leading the community conversations and consultation for the Nature Recovery Strategy for Tees Valley, on behalf of Tees Valley Combined Authority [2].

Natural England is working closely with partners from the public sector, research institutions and the voluntary sector in South Tees, not least as part of [Tees Valley Nature Partnership's](#) [27] health and nature group, in the following ways:

- **Working in partnership to improve access to nature in areas with the highest health inequalities.** From Natural England's conversations with partners in South Tees they understand the potential for nature to bring benefit for people's health through recreation, cleaning air and water, and reducing the impact of flooding, urban heat island effects and noise. Partners and their stakeholders have identified that green and blue spaces are not used to the same extent by everyone, with concerns around vandalism, safety and disability access putting some people off, meaning they are missing out on health benefits. Natural England supports the innovative and inclusive partnership work in the area to address these issues and have added to the exploration of these issues through projects using a range of relevant data and new work to model the health benefits of local nature with a natural capital approach alongside local insights to understand more about key opportunities in the area. In addition to this Natural England has collaborated at a local level with a range of partners to deliver a programme of work aligning to the art and culture sections, Natural Futures [18].
- **Providing expertise and advice on how to plan, deliver and embed Green Infrastructure as a health asset in South Tees.** Good quality Green Infrastructure (GI) has a huge role to play as part of health infrastructure for the South Tees. Local GI assets include street trees, green roofs and walls, parks, allotments, sustainable drainage systems, wildlife areas, woodlands, wetlands, natural flood management, roadside verges, green bridges, field margins, rights of way, access routes, and canals and rivers. Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards

outline how GI will help to create greener, beautiful, healthier, and more prosperous neighbourhoods, with a thriving nature network that can reduce air and water pollution, support sustainable drainage, and help places adapt to climate change. It gives clear targets, including tree canopy cover and access to green and blue space, all no more than 15 minutes from home. There is an opportunity to link GI development and the findings of the JSNA with relevant local authority plans.

- **Joining up nature recovery strategies with health priorities:** Local Nature Recovery Strategies [8] play a part in supporting people to benefit from the great outdoors, whether on the doorstep or further afield. Responsible Authorities (with Natural England in a supporting role) will plan, map and drive more coordinated, practical, focussed actions and investment in nature's recovery to build a national Nature Recovery Network of bigger, better and more joined up nature, including in urban areas. In the case of Tees Valley, the Combined Authority is the Responsible Authority. There is an opportunity to link the JSNA with this strategy working in partnership with local authority colleagues.
- **Growing Green Social Prescribing as a key part of the NHS Long Term Plan.** Natural England has been successful in driving the growth of Green Social Prescribing (GSP), including working in partnership with the NHS, environmental bodies and government departments to deliver a £5.77m Cross-Government programme *Tackling Mental Ill Health through Green Social Prescribing* [9]. Natural England are using the learning from this to help support Green Social Prescribing plans and strategies in the South Tees. Natural England is also working with partners locally to drive work around Green Community Hubs to coordinate which will increase opportunities for people to connect with nature for the good of both.

Tees Valley Wildlife Trust enables and supports communities to engage with nature through their local green spaces. Many sites provide opportunities to deliver more for wildlife and contribute to nature's recovery through management and planting schemes. This also makes nature and the proven benefits of regular contact with the natural world, accessible to more people. The Wildlife Trust has delivered a range of interventions that enable people to reconnect with nature at such sites and has been able to demonstrate improvements to physical and mental health as a result. It has also shown how this might be linked to health and social care through Green Social Prescribing.

6.5 You've Got This

The work of You've Got This (YGT), the Sport England funded Place Partnership in South Tees, is contributing significantly to the priorities of this JSNA, including:

- Reimagining approaches to demonstrating value, moving away from financial and only quantitative approaches;
- Demonstrating systemic approaches to tackling the issues of our place, rather than focussing solely on individual behaviour change and isolated interventions;
- Reimagining approaches to insight gathering and measurement, building qualitative methodologies to support quantitative measures and begin to address understanding of community needs and barriers in relation to green and blue spaces;
- Building collaborative partnerships to create a strategic approach to green space management in South Tees;
- Funding collaborative approaches to programmes to engage communities in green space, including programmes to engage young people and develop green social prescribing. Trusted, knowledgeable and valued organisations are supporting these areas of work along with YGT, and the collaborative approach taken will create a new way of working within this area of public health.

Groundwork North East & Cumbria is leading locally on two areas of work; one that focuses on allotment regeneration, and the other, a programme around green and open space development.

Both will improve understanding of the use and value of these spaces with communities, understanding the barriers of why these examples of green space are not used, and how we promote that open and green space has the potential to be highly accessible to residents in relation to being an opportunity for physical activity at scale.

YGT is also solely funding a new post to reconnect Public Health and Planning, specifically to bring together the demonstrable enthusiasm, energy and common purpose of planners, transport planners and public health professionals in South Tees to healthier places that will promote physical activity and demonstrate the value of green spaces in improving wellbeing.

6.6 Middlesbrough Green Spaces Forum

Throughout Middlesbrough there are already a number of active Friends of Groups who work in partnership with Middlesbrough Council and other partners. The contribution that these groups make, both to improving and managing sites and in delivering volunteering opportunities and community events is considerable. The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust is funded by Middlesbrough Council to facilitate the Middlesbrough Parks and Green Spaces Forum. The purpose of this Memorandum of Agreement is to enable a partnership between Middlesbrough Council and Tees Valley Wildlife Trust. The partnership will retain and grow an empowered and resilient network of Green Place Friends Groups in Middlesbrough.

The main functions and purpose of the forum is to:

1. Create the space for Friends of Groups to share best practice, skills, experience and resources
2. To maintain and build strong and regular links between Middlesbrough Council Area Care staff, Volunteering Officers and Friends of groups for the management of parks and green spaces.
3. To enable Friends Groups and Middlesbrough Council to access ecological and conservation management expertise from the Wildlife Trust.

6.7 Capital Programmes

There have been many capital schemes in both local authority areas, externally funded by grant sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, such as restoration projects in Linthorpe Cemetery, Albert Park and Stewart Park. These capital programmes have been complemented and great value added by the enthusiasm and commitment of community-led volunteer groups. As examples these include Friends Groups in Linthorpe Cemetery, Stewart Park and Redcar Cemetery, and the Saltburn Valleys CIO. Volunteers have also contributed significantly to the management of nature reserves, for example those supported by Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, and helped to protect the blue environment, such as through beach clean ups. This community-led action links closely with the social capital goal in this JSNA mission.

Within the Place Development Team in Redcar and Cleveland there are a number of programmes of work that align with the goal to enhance open, green and blue spaces.

The proposed Coastal Activity Hub [22] will maximise the untapped potential of Redcar's coastline, it will host a diverse range of exciting activities, sports and events. Its infrastructure and facilities will enable water, beach, and land-based activities. This will allow Redcar to position itself as a destination for coastal events and activities, whilst driving participation and activity across the Tees Valley. Opportunities for outdoor recreation will be increased, whilst promoting healthier lifestyles and wellbeing.

The Eston Recreation Ground is part of the Levelling Up Fund programme and will complement the improvements to Eston Leisure Centre to create a hub for physical activity and to meet the leisure and recreation needs of local residents. The works will provide a new skatepark, upgrades to football pitches, new outdoor trail routes suitable for all ages and ability, and ecological enhancements including tree and hedge planting, a dipping pond and board walks.

7. What do local people and green space practitioners say?

As discussed above in Section 5, there are significant data assets in terms of the physical infrastructure of green and blue spaces in our place. However, our local understanding of perceptions and attitudes to green and blue spaces is far less well developed. As part of the JSNA development, a variety of tools were used to begin exploration of this vital area of reaching our goal.

7.1 Reframing the Goal

A key finding during the development of the JSNA, particularly through one to one discussions with practitioners and also a workshop session, was that the current goal does not fully resonate with the whole group. A broader goal was explored through the workshop to be more inclusive of the wider assets of South Tees such as Grey, Blue, Green and Open Spaces to be more inclusive of all of these elements whilst also working to connect with the Social Capital JSNA to empower community ownership of these spaces. This goal is yet to be confirmed but will be developed as we move forward. The key elements developed are shown below in Figure 15.

Figure 15 – proposals to reframe the goal based on the practitioners' workshop.



7.2 Social Listening Data from You've Got This

You've Got This has commissioned Nerds with Words Ltd to utilise Sentiment Analysis, a social listening tool that harvests conversations from social media, particularly Twitter, to understand both what local social media users are talking about and the sentiment that they are attaching to their comments. Appropriate terms are introduced to the tool to provide a rich data set based on the conversations.

Figure 16 and Figure 17 below shows the volume of conversations and sentiment attached to Twitter conversations about local parks and green spaces from late June 2022 to mid July 2023 respectively. The yellow line, which is called 'locations non-geo', is quite broad and draws in conversations that mention a park or green space in the context of the whole of South Tees, Middlesbrough or Redcar and Cleveland, and/or a town in the South Tees. An example, taken from the data set, of a comment that would fall under 'locations non-geo', is a resident commenting 'That was a lovely little walk this morning (though embarrassingly slow). Along Guisborough branch railway track, quick diversion up Roseberry Topping, then looped back round to the start.' This is considered 'locations non-geo' as it mentions a green space and a town name. The green line, which is called 'locations', operates at a more granular level. It draws in online conversations that mention a park in relation to a school,

organisation, place of worship, etc. in the South Tees. An example, taken from the dataset, is a local school writing 'New junior @parkrunUK starting at Albert Park' - this comment would show up in the data as 'locations' as it was written by a local school and mentions 'park' but does not mention Middlesbrough or Redcar and Cleveland or a town in the South Tees. The blue line represents conversations that mention an active term, e.g. gardening, walking, cycling, etc, in the context of a local green space

Figure 16 – Volume of Twitter conversations about local parks and green spaces between late June 2022 and mid July 2023

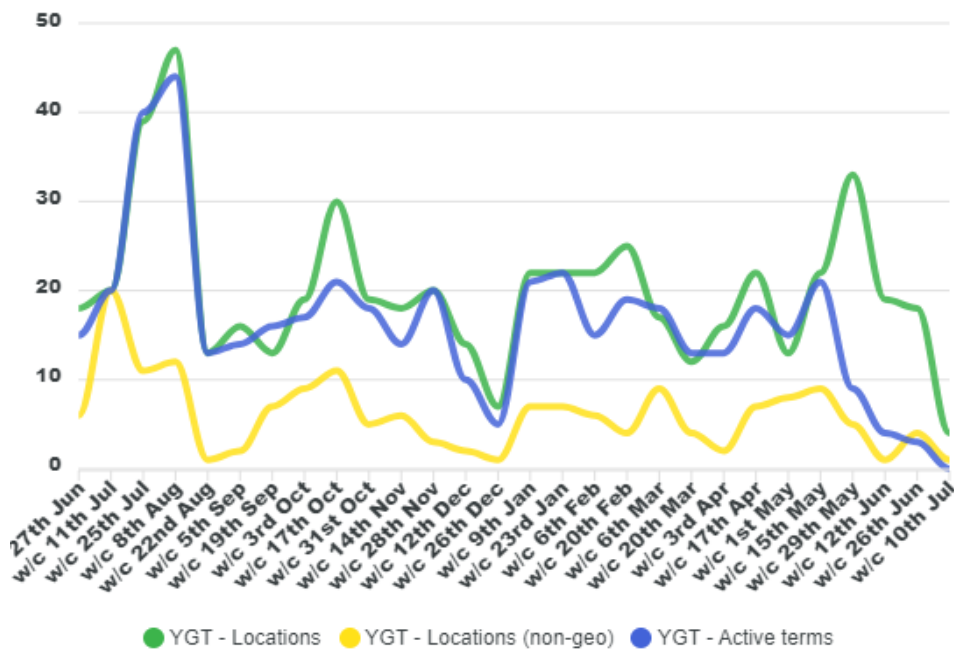
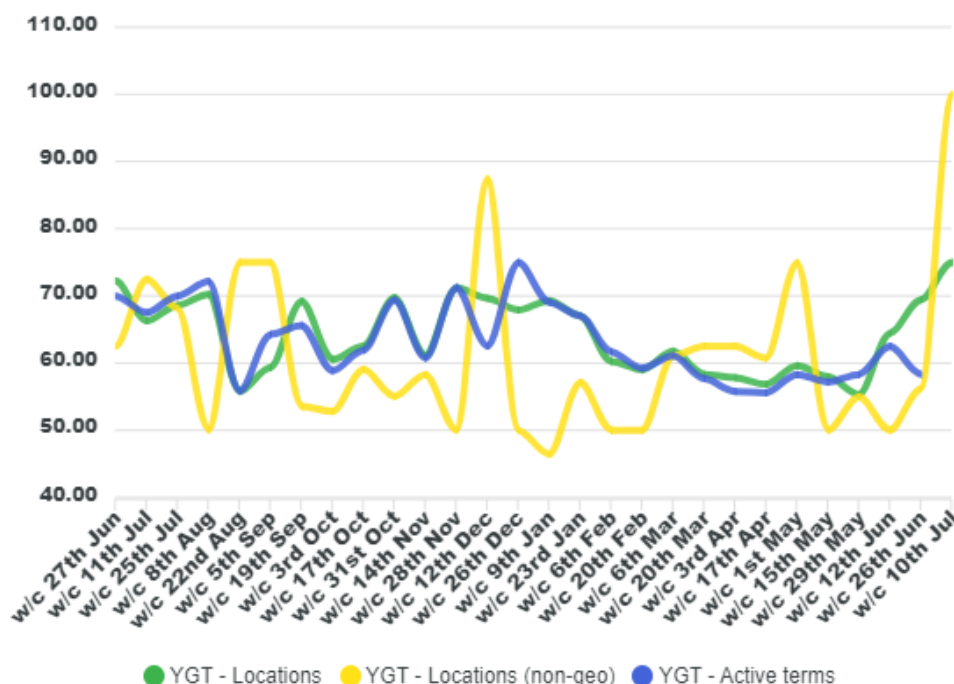


Figure 17 - The sentiment attached to Twitter conversations about local parks and green spaces from late June 2022 to mid July 2023.



The volume of online conversations about the above green spaces and parks peaked in August 2022 and decreased after that, dropping to its lowest in mid December 2022. The sentiment attached to the comments has been, in general, positive during this period of time (a score of 50% or over is considered positive).

The data for the month of December in 2022 includes Tweets from Cleveland Police warning of stolen vehicles in parks and issues such as parking charges near green spaces, have contributed to a lower sentiment score. Data from August 2022 showed people enjoying the warmer weather in local parks and green spaces, with groups using the spaces for community events. This has contributed to a more positive sentiment score. The graph also shows that many of the conversations included an active term, showing that residents were using parks and green spaces for the purpose of being active.

In addition to the above, a review was made of specific issues raised by residents regarding parks and green spaces in the South Tees from April-July 2023, to demonstrate the breadth of views.

Issues raised by residents included:

- Smell and use of recreational drugs in Albert Park
- Hogweed in Albert Park
- Lack of maintenance and grass-cutting in Stewart Park
- Benches in Albert Park in poor condition
- Play park in Eston Rec vandalised.

Similarly, residents have reported to enjoy about South Tees's parks and green spaces from April-July 2023:

- Activities in Albert Park (Let's Rock Concert, picnicking, and bowling)
- Walking in Stewart Park
- The Eid celebrations at Albert Park
- Feeding the ducks at Stewart Park
- Linthorpe Community Primary School visited Teessaurus Park for a geography lesson.
- The cygnets in Albert Park

Activities residents said they did in South Tees's parks and green spaces from April-July 2023 included:

- Walking
- Tree planting
- Cycling
- Nature spotting/photography
- School trips
- Picnicking
- Spending time with friends/family
- Attended a group or concert

7.3 Data from YGT Measuring Our Outcomes: Adapted Active Lives Survey

Data from YGT's Adaptive Active Lives, run annually in their Community Focus Area (CFA) this is made up of four wards, North Ormesby, Brambles & Thorntree, South Bank and Grangetown, and its control group in Stockton, showed that the percentage of people visiting outdoor spaces and parks in the last 7 days has stayed between 26-32% from 2020 to 2023:

In response to the question **"During the last week (past 7 days) did you make any outdoor visits to parks, gardens, open-spaces, play-areas etc.? (this includes those in your local area, your local town or further away)"** 32% of respondents from YGT's geographical area of focus said yes they had (35% and 26% answered "yes" in 2022, 2020 respectively). 35% of respondents from the control group responded "yes" to the same question in 2023, 3% more than respondents from the CFA.

7.4 Insight regarding greenspaces and parks from YGT's Storytelling Team

YGT commissions a small team of researchers to collect stories from community members, both to gain insight into community needs and aspirations and also to demonstrate the impact of the programme. Most of the stories are currently collected as videos, although there are plans in place in the future to use techniques such as Most Significant Change.

A number of stories were collected from organisations such as Grangetown United, Kidz Konnekt, Green Shoots and Middlesbrough Environment City which related to the involvement of young people in the development of, or activities in, green space. The stories show how the involvement of young people local to an area can encourage the engagement of parents/carers and neighbours, develop skills and self-esteem whilst at the same time providing young people with life enhancing experiences.

The story of the development of Jade Green, Grangetown, is an example of the process by which this can be achieved. It required: an initial catalyst, specifically a person or organisation already respected and known to the community; meaningful consultation; involvement by the community in the design and production which led to continuing local ownership, protection and maintenance of this public space.

More about this example can be found at: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuZ2KDPUs4s>)

7.5 RCBC Open Space Assessment

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council is currently preparing a review of the Redcar & Cleveland Open Space Assessment which was last completed in 2016 [24]. That assessment includes audits of open space provision in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility, consultation and analysis and formed part of the evidence base supporting the 2018 local plan. The assessment covers easily accessible and traversable open spaces of typically at least 0.2ha. within or adjacent to residential areas. The assessment includes site surveys of the following types of open space: parks and gardens; equipped and other formal play areas; informal play space; playing fields; informal amenity spaces; civic hard spaces; and natural or semi-natural areas.

The review of provision has been carried out against the backdrop of several common themes and issues which are impacting generally on, and have implications for, the availability of public space, its quality and what it is being used for.

A modified approach has been taken in order to achieve a deeper, more settlement-based assessment of provision and needs. Having now completed observational surveys of most sites in the borough, some of the broad emerging issues:

Increased Usage

The most noticeable and overriding issue that the observational surveys have picked up is that the open spaces are generally being used more during the working week. This applies across the country, and it reflects the following interconnected factors:

- The significant growth of the canine population since Covid.
- More homeworking.
- An increasing retirement population.

- Playing fields and other large sites being more heavily used by dog owners and dog walking businesses.
- Growth of commercial dog exercise areas on agricultural land.

Expansion of Organised Children's Football

- Reduced accessibility through the installation of perimeter fencing.
- Improved quality through accessing funds from the Football Association etc.
- Conflict with dog owners and ASB, particularly off-roading, as drivers of 'semi-privatisation'.

Ongoing Decline of the Weekend 'Pub' Football Team

- Openly accessible pitches abandoned.
- Fewer local leagues.

Changing habits and provision of equipped play spaces

- Private gardens being used as equipped play areas.
- Commercialisation: continuing growth of provision on family pub sites and indoor soft play areas.
- Volume housebuilders provide very limited, token play facilities.
- Reduced provision (reflecting a national trend).

Increased Tree Planting, Rewilding and Natural Areas including (some) developers' SUDS infrastructure

- Positive implications for managing flood risk.

Off roading and other anti-social behaviour

- Noticeable that sites in more deprived areas (including South Bank and Grangetown wards), and social rented or lower value market housing areas are generally more likely to exhibit major problems with vandalism, off-roading and fly-tipping.
- Increased off roading reflects a nationwide trend.

Public Realm Improvement and Place Investment Programme / Reduced Local Authority Funding and Ongoing Budget Pressures

- In the mid-2010s, phase 1 implemented and later phases aborted.
- PIP play area replacement and other projects.

Site Furniture and Signage

- Dog Control and Enforcement: conflict and behavioural responses (vandalised signs, Locke Park campaign, use of unmonitored low key sites with good off-site parking).
- Noticeably less prevalent in Greater Eston.

Expansion of Community Activism

- Growth of environment themed CICs, for example.

7.6 Conversations with green and blue space practitioners

Conversations were held with eleven green space practitioners either individually or in small groups. These conversations took place on Teams and Sentiment Analysis was used to identify the key areas of conversation and the sentiment attached to them. Following this process, the key areas were sense-checked with a wider group of strategic stakeholders through a structured workshop to determine if these key areas resonated with their role and experiences and to unpick the causes of these issues further to gain greater understanding of the systemic barriers causing these blockers.

Connectivity, in the context of how groups/organisations do or not work together around parks and green spaces, was frequently mentioned by practitioners. The visualisation in Figure 18 below shows

the frequency connectivity was mentioned (the number at the top of each circle) and its overall sentiment score (the number in the centre of each circle) by organisation. Although the sample size is small there is a suggestion that partners from housing associations and the nature sector were less satisfied with connectivity than those from the Local Authorities. The overall sentiment score from all four categories is negative, suggesting that connectivity between organisations and ways of working around green spaces and parks could be improved.

Through the workshop the discussion centred around the importance of enhancing connectivity among our partner organisations for more consistent collaboration. The creation of a sense of common purpose was discussed and highlighted as an area for improvement, enabling partners to lead on their strengths and collaborate with other to support them where needed. Identifying decision-makers emerged as a critical step to streamline communication and decision processes and connecting them to the common goal that is trying to be achieved, however, as an initial step the significance of fostering shared understanding through clear communication and a common vocabulary was identified as paramount.

Figure 18 – Key findings from sentiment analysis on conversations with key green space practitioners – sentiment around connectivity.



Figure 19 below shows the volume of types of green space mentioned during the conversations by practitioners and their attached sentiment scores. Allotments were mentioned most often by practitioners (showing up in 57% of the data) and it had one of the lowest overall sentiment scores attached to it (50%), along with 'woodland', 'wetland' and 'countryside'. Some of the practitioners' work is directly linked to allotments, which has contributed to the higher volume of mentions. Some of the issues discussed in relation to allotments, which have contributed to a lower sentiment score, are lack of resources and the poor condition of many allotment sites. The visualisation also shows that the definition of a 'green space' in place covers a multiple of different spaces, each with its own challenges and opportunities.

Through the workshop, it was identified that clarity was required on what is meant by accessibility and what it looks like in practical terms for communities. The session highlighted the need to comprehensively know our place, understand local cultures, and dig deeper to uncover the realities and perceptions that shape people's interactions with green spaces. The importance of skill development and community capacity building was an area that lacked the current capacity and focus but was discussed to be important to enable community ownership.

Figure 19 – Volume of types of green space mentioned during the conversations with practitioners

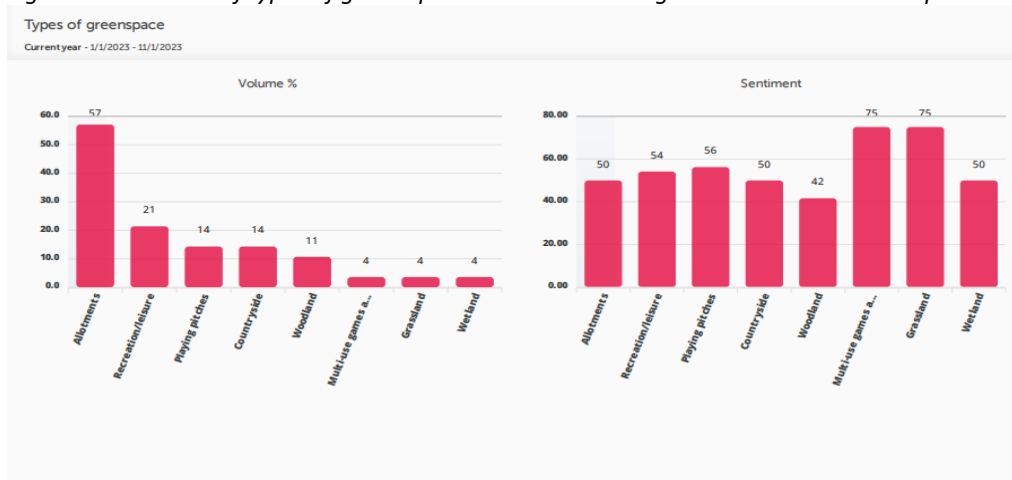
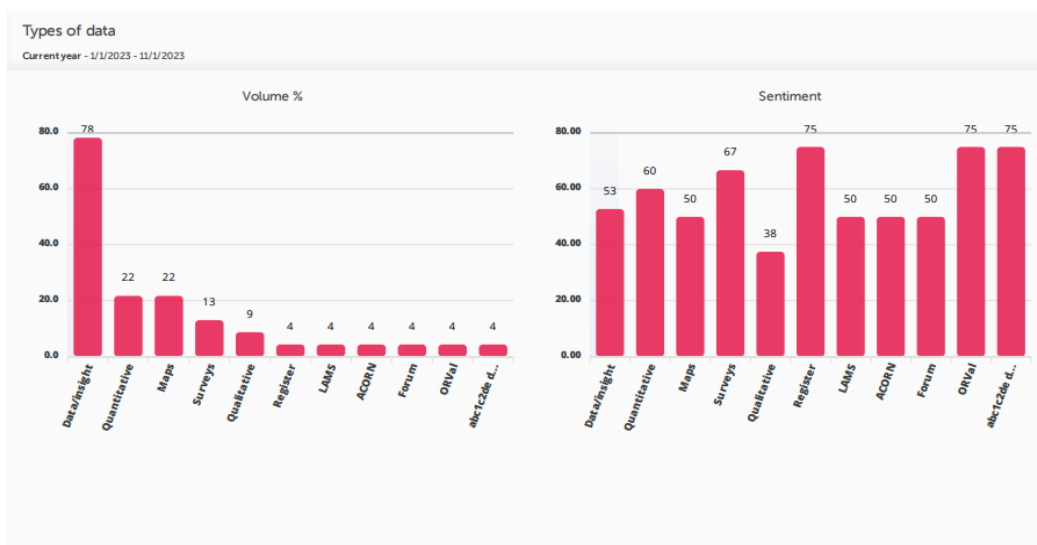


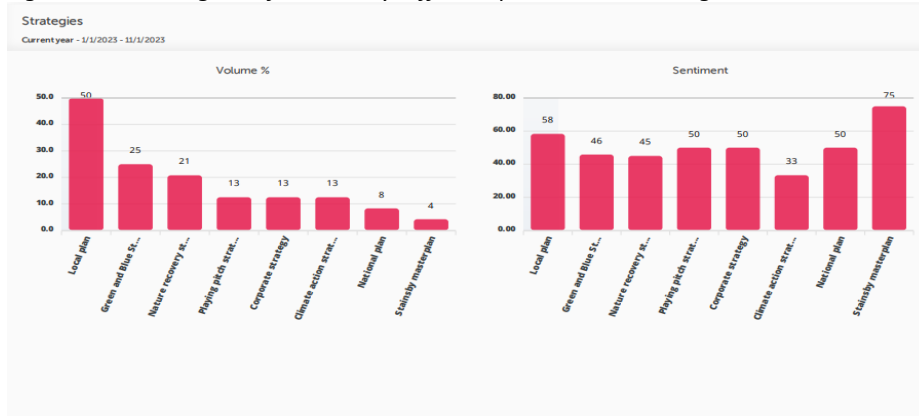
Figure 20 below shows the data collection methods that were mentioned in the eleven conversations. The graphs show that practitioners are using various methods to collect data and evaluate work around green spaces and parks (where practitioners only mentioned that they were collecting insight and/or data without specifying the tools/methods employed, this shows up in the 'data/insight' bar). Quantitative approaches (in 22% of the data) and mapping (also in 22% of the data) were mentioned most frequently, followed by 'surveys' (which is kept separate and surveys can be quantitative or qualitative, or a combination of both) and qualitative approaches. There are also a number of other methods and tools mentioned in the conversations. This data demonstrates that there is currently no standard method being utilised by practitioners to capture insight and learning.

Figure 20 – Data collection methods used by different practitioners



In the conversations, practitioners discussed the strategies that inform their work. Figure 21 below shows the strategies identified by the practitioners and their attached sentiment score. The most often mentioned strategy was 'Local Plan' (mentioned in 50% of the data), followed by 'Green and Blue Strategy' (in 25% of the data) and 'Nature Recovery Strategy' (in 21% of the data). Overall, there were eight strategies mentioned by practitioners during the course of the conversations.

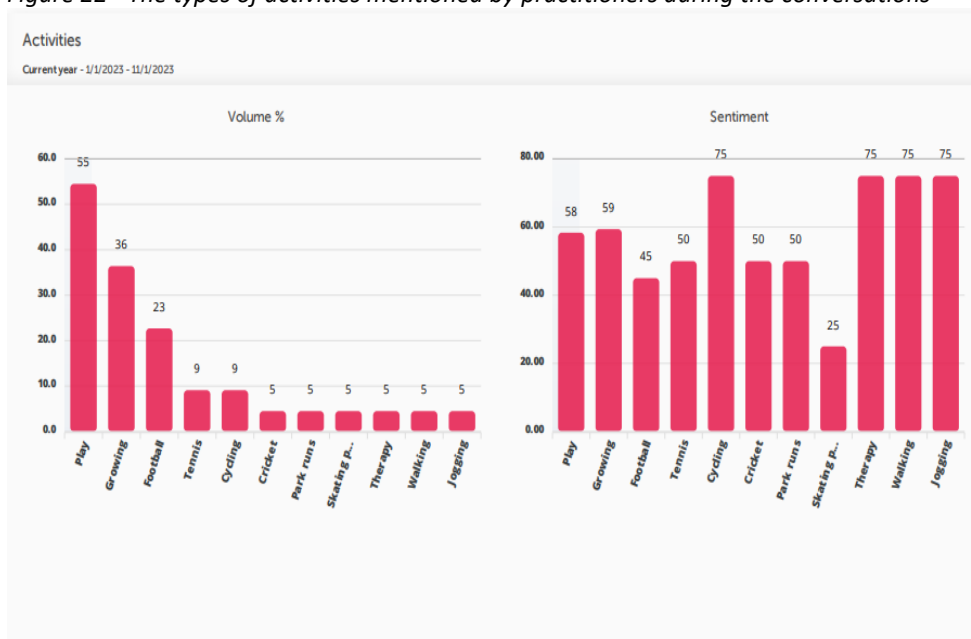
Figure 21 – Strategies referred to by different practitioners during conversations



In our workshop segment focusing on strategies establishing a clear direction with a long-term vision emerged as a common theme, emphasising the need to know when to pass the baton to other stakeholders due to their skill sets. The strategies were valued however, the connectivity between strategies was something that needed improvement, it was suggested that 'Golden Threads' woven through documents should be seen to show the common purpose we are trying to work towards. The workshop also highlighted the importance of incorporating the community voice into our place-based strategies, ensuring that our big picture aligns with the needs of the people. Through this it was identified as a culture of "us" vs "them" and that this could be challenged through embedding a community voice approach.

Figure 22 below shows the types of activities mentioned by practitioners during the conversations. 'Play' was mentioned most often (appearing in 55% of the data), followed by 'growing' (appearing in 36% of the data) and 'football' (appearing in 23% of the data).

Figure 22 - The types of activities mentioned by practitioners during the conversations



The data shows that there is an interest in how green spaces offer opportunities to play, whether that's playing sport or informal play. The volume of mentions of 'growing' is perhaps not surprising given that allotments were the most mentioned type of green space. However, the graph shows the variety of different activities that practitioners are exploring or wanting to explore, such as 'cycling', 'park runs' and activities that are not physical, such as 'therapy' opportunities in green spaces.

Figure 23 below shows the types of barriers when working with green spaces and parks that were identified by practitioners (note that 'general' includes any mention of keywords, such as 'challenge', 'barrier', etc.).

Figure 23 – Barriers mentioned by practitioners during conversations



The most common barrier identified by practitioners (appearing in 45% of the data) is 'barriers relating to ways of working and working conditions'. This barrier includes mentions of issues around workload and capacity. Many practitioners mentioned that they struggled with the volume and scale of work they had to do and did not feel adequately supported in their role. The next commonly mentioned barrier was 'budget/funding barriers'. This includes conversations around lack of financial support and working to a too tight budget. 'Geographical/environmental barriers' were the next most mentioned. This includes conversations about green spaces being prone to flooding, green spaces/parks being situated where there is heavy motor vehicle traffic, etc. The fourth most commonly mentioned barrier is 'anti-social behaviour'. This barrier includes conversations about vandalism in parks and green spaces, spaces being used in criminal activity, and/or to drive prohibited vehicles. Fifth on the graph, we have 'development barriers'. This barrier includes mentions of issues relating to the accessibility of parks and green spaces. 'Resident behaviours', which is the sixth most commonly mentioned barrier, includes conversations around residents' perceptions of local parks and green spaces, e.g. avoiding them due to them believing they are unsafe. Overall, nine barrier categories were identified, which highlights the scale of the issues facing practitioners working in parks and green spaces.

8. What are the key issues?

Based on the review of the datasets available, discussions with partners and the use of insight tools to gain community views, the following have been identified as the key issues in relation to quality green and blue spaces in South Tees:

- There was a clear passion from those engaged in the development of the JSNA for their work and the importance and value that green and blue spaces have in South Tees.
- There is significant information available on the types and designated use of formal, informal and natural spaces across South Tees, as well as data on physical access to these spaces by communities. Whilst techniques such as Storytelling and Sentiment Analysis point to a value placed by communities on green and blue spaces within South Tees, there is little insight available regarding how communities are using green and blue spaces locally and the barriers to their use. The quantitative data points to low physical barriers; little is known about how issues such as quality and perception impact on accessibility.
- There are complex data sets making comparisons challenging, with different organisations utilising different data sets.
- Whilst there are many committed partners contributing to the green and blue space agenda locally, often the efforts are not well coordinated.
- Practitioners mentioned many challenges associated with their work in supporting the achievement of this goal, including resources and the value placed on the green and blue environment, crime and antisocial behaviour.
- The definition of quality is not well understood. Green Flag status provides a high level definition, but may not be appropriate for all types of green space. There is a need to better define what is meant by quality in terms of local green and blue spaces in South Tees.
- There is currently no clear methodology for placing a value on green and blue spaces in local decision-making. They are recognised as valuable within key local documents, such as the Local Plans and green/climate strategies, but currently no methodology for expressing this value or understanding of how decision-makers may value green and blue space assets.

9. What are the recommendations?

The following recommendations are made based on the data asset available, consideration of relevant local strategies and plans and conversations with green and blue space practitioners locally.

1. Build a more comprehensive and meaningful set of data assets that expand our understanding beyond the physical assets of green and blue spaces. It has been recognised through a review of the existing data assets, there is a good understanding of the range and diversity of green spaces in South Tees, but far more limited knowledge of how they are used by communities and what the barriers to use are. Expanding particularly the collation of qualitative data using techniques such as Sentiment Analysis, storytelling and Most Significant Change, when combined with quantitative measures, will create a more comprehensive data set that better demonstrates the value of green and blue spaces to communities. Quantitative measures can be deepened using methodologies such as ORVAL and Active Xchange. Also, the ability to test national resources at a local level such as Natural England's Health Wellbeing Nature and Sustainability tool. Greater collaboration between agencies would also benefit the sharing of data assets.

2. Building a value of green and blue spaces locally to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing, addressing and mitigating the climate crisis and creating liveable neighbourhoods. This may involve a multi-faceted approach, including better articulating the value of green space, defining quality of green space and liaising with decision-makers over the importance of green space, particularly within the urban environment. Articulation of this value could be through documents such as Local Authority green and climate change strategies and the Local Plan and also through the democratic process. As part of this process, building a common understanding of the meaning of open space, greenspace and blue space is needed. An opportunity to maximise the impact and use locally of the Green Infrastructure Process Journey could be explored [29].

3. Promote a greater level of strategic coordination to green and blue space provision across South Tees. It has been recognised through the JSNA process, that management and development of particularly green spaces tends to be reactionary or based on current practice. Greater strategic coordination will enable limited resources to be used effectively and also enable the creation of more imaginative approaches, such as nature-based solutions to the management of green space. Enabling and facilitating a cross sector partnership would support this, but this must be rooted in influencing the decision-making process. A deeper understanding and network built on a value of the creation of a common purpose, to enable greater connectivity of strategies and ways of working.

4. Increase local social capital and community power in relation to the goal. Empower the community to spearhead and drive impactful projects, fostering a collaborative environment where local residents actively contribute to the planning, development, and implementation of initiatives that enhance the well-being and sustainability of their community and decision-makers work alongside the community, enabling them to be the core of decisions and direction.

5. To maintain or improve on the current level of provision by planning for future developments to increase the amount and diversity of green space available. Ensure that the value of green space is recognised in new developments, so that as development takes place the Fields in Trust Green Space Index remains constant or is improved.

6. Develop a holistic and inclusive goal that extends beyond the initial scope to embrace the broader assets of South Tees, encompassing Grey, Blue, Green, and Open Spaces. This evolved objective aims to address the diverse elements present in the region and is designed to be more resonant with the entire place. Concurrently, aligning this overarching goal with the Social Capital Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) will empower communities to take ownership of these spaces.

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