

Our vision is to provide the best parks and green spaces in the UK

Priority 2: Climate and Biodiversity

Increasing wildlife and biodiversity and reducing the impact of climate change.

| Goals | Actions | Timescale | Measuring success | Progress update, Jan 2024 |
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| To plant 50 hectares of woodland each year. | Identify and design suitable sites for woodland creation each year in consultation with ward members and the local community. | Ongoing | 50 hectares identified for tree planting each year. | In 2023, 118 sites were initially identified as having potential for tree planting and, after further investigation and due diligence, 65 underwent a public consultation and, following that process, 58 were eventually planted on. |
| | Seek external funding to support tree planting. | Ongoing | External funding obtained annually. | External funding of £558k was sourced in 2023 for tree planting from external funders including the Tree Council, Trees for Climate, Trees for Cities, Northern Forest and compensatory planting for developments at Armley Gytratory and Calverley Bridge. |
| | Plant 50 hectares of woodland per year. | Ongoing | Hectares of new woodland created - Key Performance Indicator | This season we have undertaken 37 hectares of re-planting, 12 hectares of new woodland whip planting and 3 hectares of planting of standard trees (larger, 'standard' trees are planted to get good canopy cover in areas where woodland planting is not appropriate e.g. housing estates and formal parks). |
| For all our woodland management to meet the UK Forestry Standard and the UK Woodland Assurance Standard. | Manage woodlands in line with the standards and have them assessed as required. | Ongoing | % woodlands being managed to the standard. | We have UKWAS accreditation for our woodlands and work is ongoing to retain it. Our UKWAS portfolio is audited annually. |
| To increase the quantity, quality, size, variety and connectedness of wildlife habitats (e.g. woodlands, meadows, ponds, hedgerows) on our green spaces. | Management plans for community and city parks to set out minimum of 25% wildlife habitat (where reasonable). | Long | Plans on a page include 25% wildlife habitat | The 4 'Plans on a Page' newly produced in 2023 show approximately 25% of the parks' area (as viewed from above) as wildlife habitat (trees, grassland meadows, and wildflowers mainly). Wildflower meadows were introduced at Roundhay Park as part of the site conservation strategy in 2023 and further sites are being identified to be part of a related 'Wild Spaces' project. |
| | Reduce the area of seasonal bedding in our green spaces and replace them with more wildlife-friendly alternatives. | Short | Area of seasonal/wildlife-friendly bedding | Seasonal bedding was reduced by 50% and replaced by a mix of natural and pictorial wildflower meadows in 2022. ACTION COMPLETE |
| | Seek to increase knowledge and understanding of nature conservation in the Parks and Countryside team through recruitment and training. | Medium | Training sessions organised and run | Training in nature conservation has been added to the horticultural apprenticeship training programme and apprentices joined the Rangers on 2 practical nature conservation sessions in 2023 to learn about the subject and how it's applied in practice. A new Technical Officer, with a background in ecology was recruited in 2023 to lead on Biodiversity Net Gain. |
| | Produce nature conservation management plans for all our green spaces with wildlife designation (SSSIs, LNRs, LWS) | Long | Management plans complete and up to date for all sites | 28 out of our 50 designated sites currently have a management plan in place. We plan to deliver management plans for designated sites as part of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). |

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| | Work with partners and volunteers to implement management plans at designated sites. | Ongoing | | Via the Ranger service, 6,081 hours of practical work have been undertaken with groups in designated nature sites alone (Local Nature Reserves and SSSIs including Meanwood Valley, Middleton Woods, Wyke Beck Valley, Chevin Forest Park) - including tree planting, path clearance, woodland management, invasive species removal and pond clearance. This work has been carried out by roaming groups, corporates, community groups, schools and out-of-school groups. In addition our partnership with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust in the Wyke Beck, Kirkstall and Lower Aire Valleys delivered 3,197 days of nature conservation-focussed volunteer work. There is also an 'unmeasurable' number of additional volunteer hours spent at our sites led directly by independent volunteer groups e.g. Friends of Gledhow Valley Woods. |
| | Regular monitoring of designated sites to ensure valuable habitats are not being lost. | Short | Record of inspections of designated sites. | Natural England monitor SSSIs and other sites are currently monitored by our Natural Environment team & West Yorkshire Ecology on an ad hoc basis. We are currently in the process of setting up a system for delivering Biodiversity Net Gain on our sites and, if successful, this should provide resources to support the delivery of this action. |
| | Seek and use external funding to deliver the management plans from grants and developers' contributions related to Biodiversity Net Gain. | Ongoing | Number of SSSIs, LWS and LNRs in favourable condition | Of our 3 formally monitored SSSIs - 2 are in favourable condition and 1 is recovering. A partnership with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust allows us to access external funding to care for designated sites in the Wyke Beck Valley and Lower Aire Valley. We are currently working with colleagues in Planning to establish a process for securing funding to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain with over £2 million already committed for BNG in Leeds (although it is often tied to particular locations and habitats). A Technical Officer was recruited to lead on BNG for our service and commenced work on the scheme in August 2023. |
| | Develop and implement an Ash Dieback Management & Recovery Plan to ensure the loss of ash trees from the disease doesn't have a negative impact on biodiversity and the climate. | Medium | Ash Dieback Management Plan in place. | The Forestry Section has worked with a private consultancy and Council GIS colleagues to identify and categorise all ash trees within falling distance of Leeds A and B Roads (Phase 1 of a wider ambition). Using a revolutionary AI system, ash tree locations have been plotted, tree height and canopy spread measured and tree condition, in relation to % canopy loss due to Ash Dieback has been categorised. This information is being used to prioritise action and estimate costs and timescales. |
| To eliminate the use of peat in our operations | Stop selling compost with peat in it at the Arium. Only purchase plants from suppliers who don't use peat. (Peat isn't used as a growing medium at the Arium). | Complete | No peat used in our operations. | ACTION COMPLETE |
| To provide well-managed allotment sites across the city to facilitate local food growing. | Produce and deliver a Leeds City Council Allotment Management Plan | Short | Allotment management plan in place | The Allotment Management Plan is in development. |

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| <p>To minimise any negative impact the Parks and Countryside Service has on the environment</p> | <p>Continue to review Parks and Countryside operations (including those of external providers) and implement all viable means to minimise impact on environment e.g. by using electric vehicles where possible, minimising the use of pesticides, stopping using single-use plastic cups and straws at our cafes.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> | <p>Improvements made</p> | <p>We are reviewing the opportunities to use electric vehicles where practicable and increasingly use them (this is coordinated by the Council's Transport service). We are also working on replacing diesel-powered machinery such as strimmers, hedge cutters and mowers with electric versions. New EV chargers for our work vehicles were installed at the Arium in 2023 and are planned for Lawnswood Cemetery and Kirkstall Abbey. A new ground source heat pump has been installed at Temple Newsam to power the new playbarn (which is under construction). Tropical World, Golden Acre and Temple Newsam cafes have now replaced plastic bags with paper bags and introduced paper-based takeaway containers for food and drink. All stirrers and takeaway spoons are wooden and straws are now paper. Salads are served in recyclable tubs. Some (as is practicable at this time) plastic bottled drinks have been changed to either glass bottles or cans.</p> |
| <p>For our zoos to retain the BIAZA (British Association for Zoos and Aquariums) accreditation for conservation of the natural world and education.</p> | <p>Continue to manage zoos at Lotherton and Tropical World to BIAZA standards.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> | <p>Achieving BIAZA standard at regular inspections</p> | <p>Both zoos passed their last BIAZA inspection and are constantly working to ensure we retain this accreditation. A native butterfly conservation project (involving wildflower creation, education, training and research) was launched this year in partnership with the charity, Butterfly Conservation at Roundhay park & Tropical World and there is a tansy (endangered, local) beetle conservation project currently underway at Lotherton. Lotherton also introduced an 'Adopt a Penguin' scheme in 2023 of which 10% of the profits go to the Ocean Conservation Trust.</p> |
| <p>To provide activities (including school visits) for over 5,000 children and adults a year to inspire them about nature and teach them about local wildlife, climate change, and how they can help (including anti-litter message).</p> | <p>Continue to promote and deliver education programme</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> | <p>Number of children taking part in an educational event/activity.</p> | <p>10,067 children have taken part in led education workshops themed around nature and wildlife across our sites during 2023: 1,959 at Lotherton Wildlife World, 6,248 at Tropical World, 391 on the wider Lotherton Estate and 60 at Temple Newsam. 1,115 children took part in tree seed gathering sessions in a range of other parks and green spaces and 30 children took part in a nature exploration workshop. A further 85 secondary school children, 226 primary school children and 45 out-of-school club children took part in practical nature conservation tasks in local green spaces.</p> |
| | <p>To promote wildlife-friendly gardening and local food growing at the Arium through selling relevant seeds and plants and providing associated educational information.</p> | <p>Medium</p> | <p>Items available in shop at Arium</p> | <p>There is an area of the Arium shop allocated to promoting wildlife-friendly gardening and the 'grow your own' and 'little growers' sections were expanded in 2023.</p> |
| | <p>When planning new developments, consider ways to integrate environmental improvements and environmental education into the scheme.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> | | <p>Educational interpretation about local nature and wildlife has been produced and installed this year for new site improvement schemes at Meanwood park, Gledhow Valley Woods, Farnley reservoir and Roundhay park.</p> |

Timescales: Short = 1-3 years, Medium = 4-6 years, Long = 7-10 years.