

# Aberdeen Open Space Audit: 2024 Main Report



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## INTRODUCTION

Open and green blue spaces are critical for our quality of life. Aberdeen has a variety of blue, green and open spaces that benefit both people and nature. These include open areas of land in and around communities, and include parks, gardens, playing fields, woodlands, play areas, allotments, and civic spaces as well as water features such as ponds, burns and rivers.

Open spaces can also include rain gardens and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) and other connected areas of green infrastructure that together form an important green network for Aberdeen.

Open spaces provide multiple health, wellbeing, economic, and environmental benefits. It gives the people of Aberdeen opportunities to connect with nature and each other, tackle the global climate-nature crisis, promote nature recovery and make positive environmental changes.

How we manage open spaces and the natural environment also play a crucial part in delivering the [Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap](#), [Aberdeen Adapts](#), our [Natural Environment Strategy](#), the [Council Climate Change Plan](#) and the [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#).

Aberdeen's open and green blue spaces are managed and cared for by a range of different stakeholders, such as Aberdeen City Council, community groups, volunteers, businesses and partners.

The [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)<sup>1</sup> requires planning authorities to carry out an audit of open space provision and to prepare and publish an Open Space Strategy as well as assess the opportunities for play in their area.

The planning system plays an important role in protecting and enhancing open spaces for community use, sport and recreation as well as providing high quality new spaces.

An Open Space Audit is used to assist with protecting and enhancing green spaces through the planning process and by supporting blue and green infrastructure policies in the [Aberdeen Local Development Plan](#) and [National Planning Framework 4](#), which are the spatial strategies for Aberdeen and Scotland respectively. Open spaces, natural areas and green belt designations are used to protect our most important environmental assets and areas.

A periodic audit provides key information on the types, quality and accessibility of open and green spaces in Aberdeen that are critical to directing green space policies, management of spaces and the interventions of partners, as well as to help deliver the place-based outcomes in the Aberdeen [Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026](#).

This Open Space Audit will inform a future revision of the [Natural Environment Strategy](#) which will outline how we plan and manage our blue and green spaces going forward for the benefit of people and nature in Aberdeen.

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<sup>1</sup> [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)

## KEY FINDINGS

### CITYWIDE OPEN SPACE

Aberdeen covers an area of 185.7 km<sup>2</sup> or 18,570 hectares. 3,902 hectares of open space was surveyed as part of the Open Space Audit equating to 21% of the total Aberdeen Area.

The citywide average is 300 hectares of open space per ward while the average open space quality score in Aberdeen was 14.3 out of 25.

**Public parks and gardens, amenity greenspace and sports areas** which are typically the most accessible public spaces used in daily life equate to 5%, 23% and 20% of citywide open space respectively.

**Natural / semi natural greenspaces** are the largest category of open space with 1796 hectares equating to 46% of open space.

**Amenity greenspaces** are the second largest open space type (895ha 23%).

**Sports areas** (798ha 20%) are the third largest open space type.

**Public parks and gardens** equate to 5% or 204 hectares of open space and this is followed by private gardens or grounds, which includes school grounds and institutional ground areas. These are not always fully accessible at all times but can still be important functional and usable spaces.

**Burial grounds, allotments and play spaces** cover relatively small areas with a combined total of 59 hectares or 2% of open space.

### ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE

- 63% of households in Aberdeen are within the 1500 metres of a major open space, a decrease from the 70% recorded in the previous audit. This could be attributed to new developments on the edge of the city and no new major parks having been created.
- 45% of households are within 400 metres of a natural / semi-natural greenspace greater than 2 hectares in size.
- 82% of households have access to an equipped play space, an increase from the 70% recorded in the previous audit.
- 99% of households are within 1,200 metres of an outdoor sports area.
- 49% of households are within 800 metres of an allotment site.

### CITYWIDE OPEN SPACE SATISFACTION

79% of respondents reported being satisfied, fairly satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of Aberdeen's greenspace and open space areas however some open space types had a lower satisfaction rating than others.

Allotments and community food growing spaces, walking/cycling routes and amenity spaces had the lowest citywide satisfaction rates reported by respondents:

- Allotments and community food growing spaces: 65%
- Walking/cycling routes: 64%
- Amenity spaces: 64%

Parks, woodlands and natural or semi-natural areas had the highest citywide satisfaction rates reported by respondents:

- Parks: 86%
- Woodlands: 82%
- Natural or semi-natural areas: 82%

75% of respondents were satisfied, fairly satisfied or very satisfied with children's play areas.

#### MANAGING SPACES FOR NATURE

- 82% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to see more greenspaces managed in a more natural way for the benefit of wildlife and nature.
- 49% of respondents said they would be encouraged to visit spaces more often if they were managed for wildlife and nature.

#### VALUE OF OPEN SPACE

Respondents were asked the top three reasons why they use, visit or enjoy the city's open spaces. The most common reasons given were:

1. Physical exercise or health reasons (e.g. walking or jogging etc.)	75%
2. To be in nature	71%
3. To meet friends or family or to socialise	53%
4. To get out of the house or office (e.g. for a break)	47%
5. For mental health reasons	31%

## IMPROVING OPEN SPACE

When asked what would encourage respondents to use or visit Aberdeen’s greenspace or open spaces more often the most common reasons given were:

1. If they had better facilities (e.g. benches or toilets)	49%
2. If they were better managed for wildlife (e.g. wildlife enhancements such as tree and wildflower planting, long grass, wetlands, shrubs etc.)	45%
3. If there were more adequate paths for walking or cycling	36%
4. If they had less or no dog fouling	30%
5. If they were better connected to other spaces	25%
6. If they had less or no litter	25%
7. If there was better information about them (e.g. information panels or signage)	20%
8. If they had better lighting	19%

## FOOD GROWING

- 54% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to see more food-growing opportunities within green and open spaces across Aberdeen.
- 65% of respondents reported being satisfied with the quality of allotments and community food growing spaces.

This is the third lowest satisfaction rate of all the open space types and could be attributed to the current high demand and long waiting lists for allotments.

## OPEN SPACE USE

- On average 41% of respondents visited greenspace and open space areas several times a week, 19% visited once a day and 15% visited once a week.
- 59% of people stayed on average for 1-2 hours, 26% for less than one hour and 15% for more than 2 hours.



## WHAT IS OPEN SPACE?

The [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)<sup>2</sup> broadly defines open space as space within and on the edge of settlements comprising green space or civic areas. Parks, public gardens, allotments, woodlands, play areas, playing fields, green corridors, paths, churchyards and cemeteries, natural areas, institutional land as well as civic spaces are all forms of open space.

- **Open space** means space within and on the edge of settlements comprising green infrastructure or civic areas such as squares, and other paved or hard landscaped areas with a civic function.
- **Green networks** are connected areas of green infrastructure and open space
- **Green infrastructure** are features of the natural and built environments that provide a range of ecosystem services (social, economic and environmental benefits).

As part of the [Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments Regulations Consultation](#)<sup>3</sup> carried out in 2021 the proposed amendments to section 3G(4) of the Act would see the terms defined as follows:

- **Open space** means space within and on the edge of settlements comprising green space or civic areas such as squares, market places and other paved or hard landscaped areas with a civic function.
- **Green spaces** means space which provides a recreational function, amenity function, or aesthetic value to the public such as areas of grass, trees, other vegetation or water but excludes agricultural or horticultural land.
- **Green infrastructure** means features or spaces within the natural and built environments that provide a range of ecosystem services (social, economic and environmental benefits).
- **Green networks** means connected areas of green infrastructure and open space, that together form an integrated and multi-functional network.
- **Ecosystem services** means the benefits people obtain from ecosystems.

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<sup>2</sup> [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments Regulations: consultation](#)

## OPEN SPACE TYPES

[Planning Advice Note 65](#)<sup>4</sup> sets out a basic categorisation of open space types which can be adapted to suit local circumstances and needs. This helps to identify the different types of open spaces in an area and assist with planning to ensure there is a mix of different spaces within an area to suit people's needs. This is set out in the table below:

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	SUB TYPES
<b>Allotments or community growing spaces</b>	Areas of land for growing fruit, vegetables and other plants, either in individual allotments or as a community activity.	Allotments or community growing space
<b>Amenity greenspace</b>	Landscaped areas providing visual amenity or separating different buildings or land uses for environmental, visual or safety reasons and used for a variety of informal or social activities such as sunbathing, picnics or for a kick-about.	Amenity - residential Amenity - business Amenity - transport
<b>Burial grounds</b>	Includes churchyards and cemeteries.	Cemetery Churchyard
<b>Natural/semi-natural greenspaces</b>	Areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with residual natural habitats or which have been planted or colonised by vegetation and wildlife, including woodland and wetland areas.	Open semi-natural Woodland Beach or foreshore
<b>Play space for children and teenagers</b>	Areas providing safe and accessible opportunities for children's play, usually linked to housing areas	Play space
<b>Private gardens or grounds</b>	Areas of land normally enclosed and associated with a house or institution and reserved for private use.	Institutional grounds School grounds
<b>Public parks and gardens</b>	Areas of land normally enclosed, designed, constructed, managed and maintained as a public park or garden. These may be owned or managed by community groups.	Public park or garden
<b>Sports areas</b>	Large and generally flat areas of grassland or specially designed surfaces, used primarily for designated sports (including playing fields, golf courses, tennis courts and bowling greens) and which are generally bookable.	Playing field Golf course Bowling green Other sports

<sup>4</sup> [Planning Advice Note 65](#)

## The Value of Open Space

Open spaces have multiple health, wellbeing, economic, and environmental protection benefits. They improve health and wellbeing while also giving us opportunities to connect with nature and people, tackle the global climate-nature crisis, promote nature recovery, and make positive environmental changes.

Green infrastructure and open space areas can include parks, gardens, playing fields, woodlands, river corridors, play areas, allotments, and civic spaces. The benefits of open spaces include:

- Blue and green infrastructure delivers multiple functions including climate mitigation, nature restoration, biodiversity enhancement, flood prevention, and water management.
- Green networks and corridors linking spaces promotes biodiversity and enables movement of wildlife.
- Communities benefit from accessible, high-quality blue, green and civic spaces.

### SOCIAL

Well-managed and maintained spaces can create opportunities for all sections of the community. They can promote a sense of place and be a source of community pride, and also offer opportunities for people to play an active part in caring for the local environment. Open space provides opportunities for sport and recreation, helping to promote active and healthy lifestyles, and can open up opportunities for environmental education for local groups, schools and individuals.

### ENVIRONMENTAL

Open space can define the landscape and townscape structure and identity of settlements. Well-designed networks of spaces help to encourage people to travel safely by foot or bicycle. Green networks and corridors linking spaces also promote biodiversity and enable movement of wildlife. Trees and planting provide shade for both wildlife and people. Trees also play a role in the control of air and water pollution, noise reduction and contribute to energy reduction by providing shelter for buildings. They can also help to soften the impact of development and make green and civic spaces more appealing.

### ECONOMIC

Well-designed and managed spaces can raise the quality of business, retail and leisure developments, making them more attractive to potential investors, users and customers. Areas of open space can also provide economic benefits in their own right; for example, produce from allotments, timber, and other wood crops. The quality of civic spaces undoubtedly helps define the identity of towns and cities, which can enhance their attraction for living, working, investment, and tourism.

Scottish Government Guidance [Green Infrastructure: Design & Placemaking](#) sets out further benefits of green infrastructure. These are listed below:

### PLACEMAKING

- reinforcing local landscape character
- making places more beautiful, interesting and distinctive
- giving places character and a strong identity

### ECONOMIC

- improving the image of a place
- helping developers get the most out of the site by combining uses, e.g. open space + SUDS, helping development viability
- attracting businesses and inward investors by creating attractive settings
- making it cheaper and easier to deal with surface water by keeping it on the surface
- saving energy and money for residents and end users

### CLIMATE CHANGE

- reducing CO<sup>2</sup> emissions by providing non-vehicular travel routes encouraging walking and cycling
- providing carbon storage and sequestration in vegetation
- providing shelter and protection from extreme weather
- managing flood risk: living roofs, large trees and soft landscape areas absorb heavy rainfall
- providing for storage of surface water in times of peak flow in SUDS and other water features
- cleaning and cooling the air, water and soil, countering the 'heat island' effect of urban areas
- saving energy: through using natural rather than engineered solutions
- saving energy: living roofs insulate buildings, and large trees provide shade, reducing the need for air conditioning in the summer and raising ambient temperatures in the winter, reduction in heating costs in the winter due to slowing of wind speeds in urban areas

### ENVIRONMENTAL

- reducing pollution through use of SUDS and buffer strips
- providing new and linking existing habitats or natural features, to allow species movement
- protecting aquatic species through appropriate management of waterside habitats
- preventing fragmentation of habitats
- allowing diverse habitats to be created which are rich in flora and fauna

### COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL

- creating green spaces for socialising, interaction and events
- more opportunities and places for children to play

- providing improved physical connections through green networks to get between places; and to communities, services, friends and family and wider green spaces
- providing spaces for practising and promoting horticultural skills
- creating opportunities for community participation and volunteering

#### HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- encouraging exercise and physical activity by providing quality green spaces for walking, cycling, sports and play
- providing better opportunities for active travel and physical activity
- improving mental wellbeing by providing access to nature and attractive green spaces and breathing spaces
- providing opportunities for growing food locally and healthy eating

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Aberdeen Open Space Audit has been refreshed to provide up to date information on open space within Aberdeen. The essential elements of an audit are to record the type, functions, size, condition, location and community value of spaces and to provide insight on levels of use.

Open spaces, natural areas and green belt designations are used to protect our most important environmental assets and areas.

A refreshed Open Space Audit achieves the following:

- Establish the quality, quantity and accessibility of open space in Aberdeen
- Develop an understanding of the distribution of open space
- Assess whether communities have adequate open space provision and the right types of open space
- Identify opportunities to improve and enhance open space provision
- Gain an understanding of the community value of open space
- Identify opportunities for health and physical activity
- Identify the biodiversity value and connectivity of spaces to the wider green network

### AUDIT PROCESS

A Steering Group was established to guide the Open Space Audit. The Steering Group consists of colleagues from various teams in Aberdeen City Council, as well as representatives from [NatureScot](#), [NHS Grampian](#), [Sport Aberdeen](#) and the [North East Scotland Biological Records Centre](#) (NESBReC).

Their expert knowledge in their relevant fields helped in the early stages of scoping the Audit and developing the methodology. This involved a review of the previous Audit and available mapping to identify sites for audit. An Auditor Survey Sheet and Auditor Guidance was developed along with a site biodiversity scoring methodology using NESBReC Integrated Habitat Survey (IHS) data. The Aberdeen Open Space Survey was completed in 2022 to add community value to the audit data.



## AUDIT METHODOLOGY

### SITE SELECTION AND DATA COLLECTION

Ordnance Survey (OS) Greenspace Mapping was used as the base data to identify open and green spaces in Aberdeen. This national greenspace mapping resource was developed in collaboration by government, public sector and third sector organisations and improves the understanding of national greenspace.

The dataset covers the whole of Great Britain for all settlements with a population over 500 and is updated every six months.

A combination of OS Greenspace Mapping, aerial photography, and existing local Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping identified around 1,100 sites for audit.

Greenspace Scotland's third [State of Scotland's Greenspace Report](#)<sup>5</sup> also draws on these datasets and provides a further national picture of greenspace in urban Scotland and by local authority area.

### DIGITAL AUDITS AND VOLUNTEER SURVEYORS

A team of volunteers that included students, stakeholders, the general public, and colleagues assisted in completing the physical audit of each site. Training was provided and an auditor guidance pack was given to each volunteer to ensure a consistent approach. A copy of the auditor guidance is included in [Appendix F](#).

It is recognised that scoring sites is subjective and differences between auditors will occur although use of guidance and training reduced inconsistencies as far as possible.

Auditors visited each mapped space to survey and collect information on quality, accessibility, and its main function. Initially audits were completed using an excel audit sheet but then a digital Survey123 app (pictured) for ArcGIS was developed to streamline the process. This allowed volunteers to record survey results with their smartphones and tablets whilst on site, with the data being instantly available once submitted.

The audit could not have been completed without the help of community volunteers who were able to learn new skills and get to know the city better. Certificates of achievement were awarded on the completion of the training to acknowledge the volunteers' contributions to the audit refresh.



The screenshot shows the 'My Survey' interface of the Survey123 app. It features a green header with a close button, the title 'My Survey', and navigation icons. The form contains the following fields and sections:

- Site ID \***: A text input field containing 'HWS7'. Below it, a note reads: 'Please enter Site ID in UPPERCASE letters and numbers with no spaces (e.g. BDB05)'.
- Site Name**: A text input field containing 'Society Lane'.
- Primary Land Use**: A dropdown menu with 'Residential Amenity' selected.
- ACCESSIBLE AND WELL CONNECTED**: A section with a downward arrow icon.
- Fit for purpose core paths**: A row of radio buttons labeled 'N/A', '1', '2', '3', '4', and '5'. The '3' button is selected.
- Fit for purpose other paths**: A row of radio buttons labeled 'N/A', '1', '2', '3', '4', and '5'. The '3' button is selected.
- Equal access for all, including wheelchair accessible (no adverse gradients, barriers)**: A text input field at the bottom of the section.

<sup>5</sup> [Greenspace Scotland's third State of Scotland's Greenspace Report](#)

## MEASURING OPEN SPACE QUALITY

Aberdeen Greenspace Quality Indicators were developed around key themes (as shown below) using audit quality criteria drawn from national best practice and guidance from [Greenspace Scotland's Assessing Quality Guide](#)<sup>6</sup>.

Each site received a score out of five for each of the themes. Scores are based on the surveyor's impression of the site, and this provided a broad overview of the quality of spaces including their value and areas for improvement. A copy of the full site audit survey sheet is included in [Appendix G](#).

### 1. ACCESSIBLE AND CONNECTED GREENSPACES

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- Fit for purpose paths and core paths
- Equal access for all, including wheelchair accessible (no adverse gradients, barriers to access etc)
- Connects with other transport modes e.g. public transport, cycle network, cycle parking, car parking
- No barriers to access
- Entrances are well located and safe
- Effective signage and interpretation appropriate for the site
- Mobile reception or free Wi-Fi access

### 2. ATTRACTIVE AND APPEALING PLACES

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- Welcoming entrances and attractive boundary features
- Low levels of litter and adequate bins for mixed recycling
- Clean and free from dog fouling
- Public toilets where appropriate
- Well located furniture of good quality (benches, picnic tables, shelters)
- Adequate lighting where appropriate (on paths, sports areas etc.)
- Planting such as trees, woodland, shelter belt, shrubs, open grass, flower beds, natural vegetation
- Appropriately managed vegetation (grass, trees, bushes, shrubs etc.)
- Pleasing views
- Provides intimate or secluded space
- Strong, positive character or identity
- Cultural features such as monuments, statues, artwork etc where appropriate

### 3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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- Provide places for a range of outdoor activities
- Provide diverse play, sport and recreational opportunities for a range of ages
- Provides sports pitches such as formal or informal pitches, goalposts etc where appropriate
- Provides an equipped play area where appropriate

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<sup>6</sup> [Greenspace Quality: A Guide to Assessment, Planning and Strategy Development; Greenspace Scotland & Glasgow & Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership](#)



#### 4. COMMUNITY VALUE

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- Good sense of personal security
- Absence of any signs of anti-social behaviour e.g. vandalism
- Good levels of natural surveillance
- Close proximity to community facilities e.g. shops
- Presence of food-growing activities e.g. allotments, raised beds etc.
- Identify opportunities on site for growing food in the future

#### 5. BIODIVERSITY VALUE AND HABITAT CONNECTIVITY

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- Habitat connectivity, does the space connect to the wider habitat and other green spaces
- Be part of the wider landscape structure and setting
- Connects with wider green networks
- Site biodiversity scoring used [North East Scotland Biological Records Centre \(NESBReC\)](#)<sup>7</sup> Integrated Habitat Survey (IHS) data.

Aberdeen City Council is a partner with NESBReC who collect, store, manage and disseminate biological data for various organisations including local authorities.

#### 6. ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

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- Percentage of tree, shrub and grass cover
- Percentage of open water
- Percentage of impervious / hard standing surfaces
- Percentage of site that benefits pollinators

Ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from ecosystems such as social, economic and environmental benefits. The ecosystem services indicators were collected as experimental data. Given the experimental nature of the data, it has not yet been taken forward for analysis in this report, however this can be revisited in future.

In place of this, a [Tree Equity](#) analysis has been carried out to look at the ecosystem services benefits that tree cover provides in the city. Although the Tree Equity data only takes in to account tree cover as opposed to other vegetation, its benefit is that it is a national data set that is updated regularly.

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<sup>7</sup> [North East Scotland Biological Records Centre](#)

## OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

The existing open space standards were developed as a result of the previous Open Space Audit and are presented as part of the [Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Open Space and Green Infrastructure](#)<sup>8</sup>.

Benchmarking with other local authorities, along with consultation undertaken as part of the previous Open Space Strategy and Audit process were used to identify the existing standards for quantity, accessibility and quality. The [Developing Open Space Standards Guidance and framework](#)<sup>9</sup> was also used, developed by a partnership of Greenspace Scotland, Nature Scot, and various local authorities.

The framework gives a common approach to standards development for all authorities but allows for local flexibility. The structure for local standards generally consists of:

- **An accessibility standard** - defined in terms of a five-minute walk to the nearest publicly usable open space
- **A quality standard** - defined as the minimum quality assessment score required from any new space and a target for managing all spaces
- **A quantity standard** - defined as the 'ideal' quantity of open space per 1000 people and allowing decisions to be taken on how much new space needs to be provided in any development

Guidance from Greenspace Scotland recommends that a quality standard where all publicly usable open spaces score 'good' or better on any locally used quality assessment is used.

The approaches differ in various local authorities but typically involve a rating of individual spaces against a numeric scale. The guidance recommends a threshold of somewhere between 60% and 70% which for Aberdeen equates to a quality score of 15 or higher out of 25 on our locally agreed 0 to 25 quality scale.

[Fields in Trust Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play](#)<sup>10</sup> was used for developing outdoor sports area standards. The full table of standards is outlined below:

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<sup>8</sup> [Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Open Space and Green Infrastructure](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Developing Open Space Standards Guidance and framework](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Fields in Trust Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play](#)

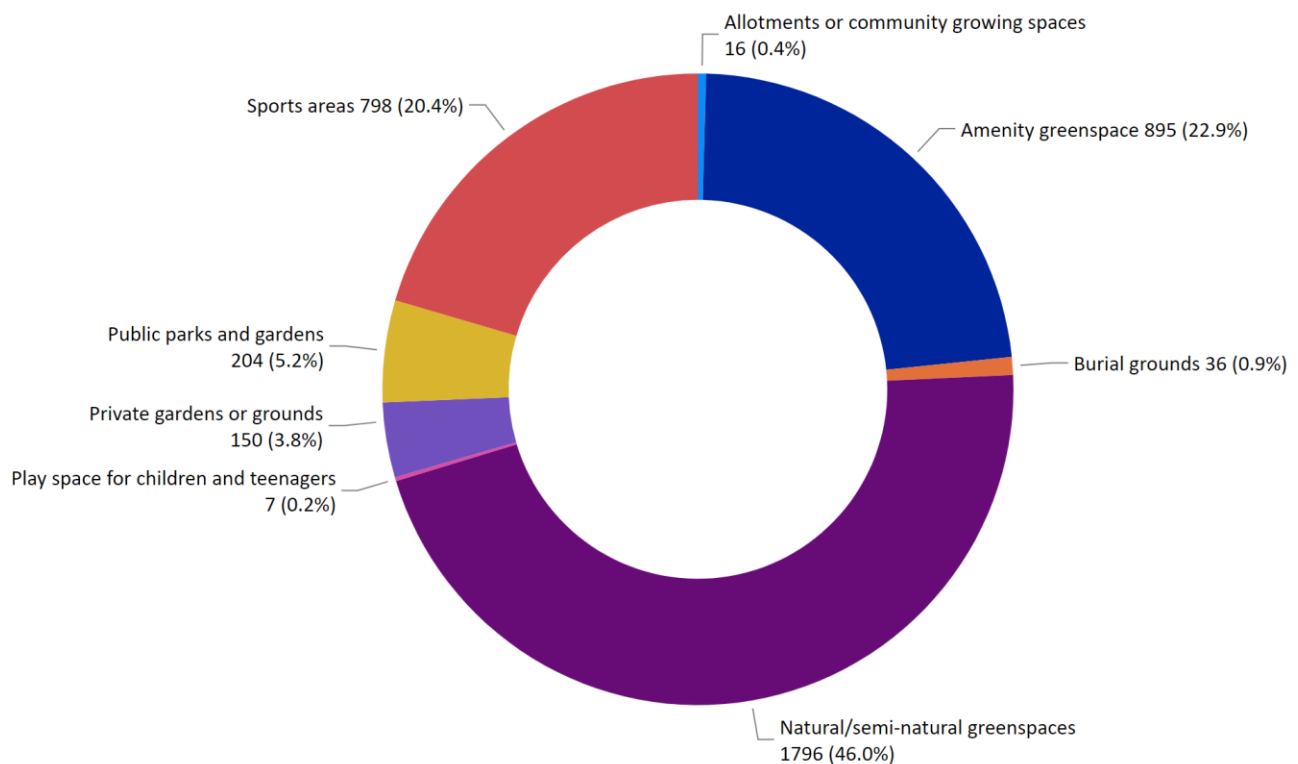
## Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Open Space and Green Infrastructure Open Space Standards

OPEN SPACE STANDARDS	DESCRIPTION	INDICATIVE SITE SIZE (HECTARES)	ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD	QUALITY STANDARD
<b>Major Open Spaces</b>	<p>Large areas of open space attracting visitors from Aberdeen City and Shire, often offering a wide range of uses, including informal recreational, sport, large scale equipped play zone, walking routes, seating, lighting, toilets, car parks etc. There may be a diversity of habitat/landscapes. Receives regular maintenance. Will usually form Green Space Network Cores.</p>	>5 ha	All residents within <b>1500 metres</b> (around 20 min walk) of a Major Open Space	<u>Green Flag 'Good' Standard;</u> and <u>Open Space Audit Quality Score of 20 or greater</u>
<b>Neighbourhood Open Spaces</b>	<p>Open spaces that provide a range of recreational uses, attracting users from more than one neighbourhood. These spaces could include equipped Play Zones, natural areas, green corridors, seating, paths/access, community event space, some formal landscape features, car park, dog waste/litter bins etc. Receives regular maintenance. May include Green Space Network cores, stepping stones or links.</p>	2 – 5 ha	All residents within <b>600 metres</b> (around 10 mins walk) of a Neighbourhood Open Space	<u>Green Flag 'good' standard;</u> and <u>Open Space Audit Quality Score of 20 or greater</u>
<b>Local Open Space</b>	<p>Smaller spaces that provide a more limited range of local recreation uses, and are spread throughout a local area. As most users will reach them on foot, they are well connected by paths to community facilities and areas. Receives regular maintenance.</p>	0.4 – 2 ha	All residents within <b>400 metres</b> (around 5 minutes walk) of a Local Open Space.	<u>Green Flag 'good' standard;</u> and <u>Open Space Audit Quality Score of 20 or greater</u>

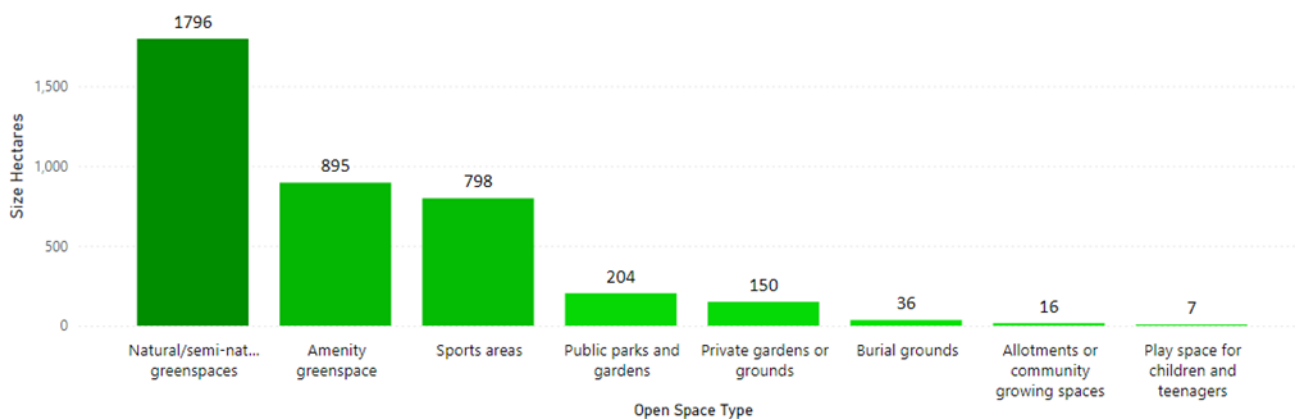
OPEN SPACE STANDARDS	DESCRIPTION	INDICATIVE SITE SIZE (HECTARES)	ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD	QUALITY STANDARD
<p><b>Play Zone/ Other Play Areas</b></p> <p><b>Large Scale Play Zone</b></p>	<p>Unsupervised areas dedicated to use by, and equipped for, children and young people. Other Play Areas may include ball courts, outdoor basketball hoop areas, skateboard areas, teenage shelters.</p> <p>Larger play zones likely to attract children from a larger area. These sites should include a larger range of play functions.</p>	<p>0.3ha per 1,000 population.</p> <p>Minimum size 1,500m<sup>2</sup></p> <p>Minimum size 2,500m<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>All residents should be within 400m of a Play Zone</p> <p>Suitable for ages 3-13</p> <p>Suitable for ages 3-18</p>	<p><u>Open Space Audit Quality Criteria</u></p>
<b>Outdoor Sports Areas</b>	<p>Natural or artificial surfaces used for sport and recreation. E.g. playing fields, pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens, athletics tracks, water sports facilities.</p>	<p>1.6ha per 1,000 population</p>	<p>All residents within 1,200m of Outdoor Sports Facilities</p>	<p><u>Fields in Trust standards and Open Space Audit Quality Criteria</u></p>
<b>Natural Greenspace and Green Corridor</b>	<p>Includes woodland, heathland, scrub, grassland, wetland, coastal areas, riverbanks, and streambanks, disused railway lines, green access routes and open water. Also includes designated areas such as Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The primary purposes include nature conservation, walking, cycling, horse riding, water sports, leisure, non-motorised travel, environmental education.</p>	<p>1ha minimum Natural Greenspace per 1,000 population</p>	<p>All residents within 400m of a natural greenspace &gt;2ha and 2000 metres of a natural greenspace &gt;5ha</p>	<p><u>Open Space Audit Quality Criteria</u></p>

OPEN SPACE STANDARDS	DESCRIPTION	INDICATIVE SITE SIZE (HECTARES)	ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD	QUALITY STANDARD
<b>Community Food Growing Spaces</b>	*Please refer to separate <a href="#">Food Growing APG</a> for more guidance on food growing spaces in new developments.			

CITYWIDE OPEN SPACE HECTARES



Open Space Hectares by Type



Aberdeen covers an area of 185.7 km<sup>2</sup> or 18,570 hectares. 3,902 hectares of open space was surveyed as part of the Open Space Audit equating to 21% of the total Aberdeen Area.

**Public parks and gardens, amenity greenspace and sports areas** which are typically the most accessible public spaces most used in daily life equate to 5%, 23% and 20% of citywide open space respectively.

**Natural / semi natural greenspaces** are the largest category of open space with 1796 hectares equating to 46% of open space, with open semi natural space (1057ha 59%) and woodland (687ha 38%) being the primary sub types.

**Amenity greenspaces** are the second largest open space type (895ha 23%) with the primary greenspace type being residential amenity (620ha 69%), followed by business amenity (191ha 21%), and transport amenity space (85ha 10%).

**Sports areas** (798ha 20%) are the third largest open space type with golf courses being the primary sub type equating to 72% of sports areas.

**Public parks and gardens** equate to 5% or 204 hectares of open space and this is followed by private gardens or grounds, which includes school grounds and institutional ground areas. Private gardens or grounds are not always fully accessible at all times but can still be important functional and usable spaces.

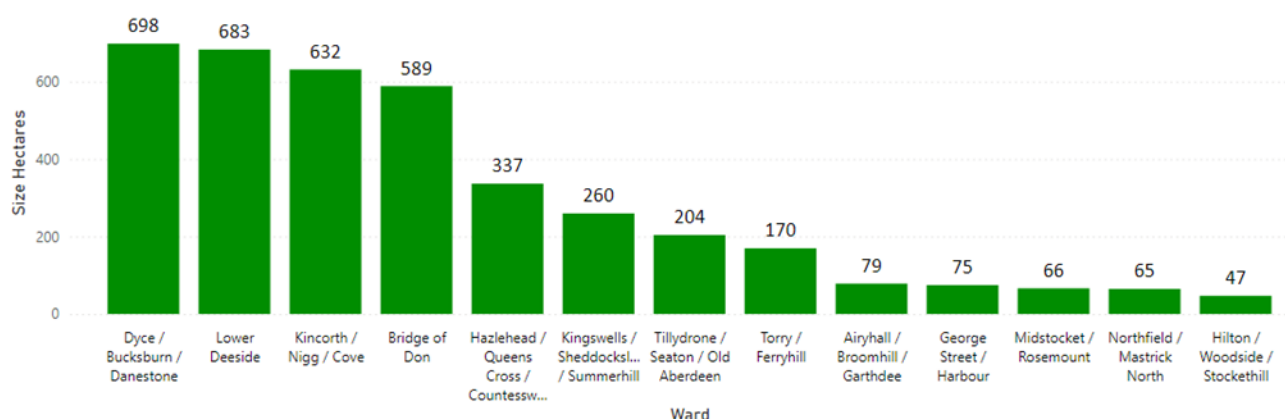
**Burial grounds, allotments and play spaces** cover relatively small areas with a combined total of 59 hectares or 2% of open space.

Auditors were asked to identify the primary function of spaces therefore the data set has some limitations due to spaces typically having multiple functions. An example of this would be play spaces which are typically a secondary function within a larger open space such as a public park or garden, however Council managed equipped play spaces and their distribution are mapped as part of the audit.

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## OPEN SPACE BY WARD

Open Space Hectares by Ward



**The citywide average is 300 hectares of open space per ward**, ranging from a high of 698 hectares and a low of 47 hectares.

The Dyce / Bucksburn / Danestone, Lower Deeside, Kincorth / Nigg / Cove and Bridge of Don wards have the highest open space provision in hectares equating to 2601 hectares or 67% of citywide open space. The remaining 9 wards have 1301 hectares in total equating to 33% of citywide open space.

The George Street / Harbour, Midstocket / Rosemount, Northfield / Mastrick North, Hilton / Woodside / Stockethill wards have the lowest amount of open space with 253 hectares in total equating to 6% of citywide open space.

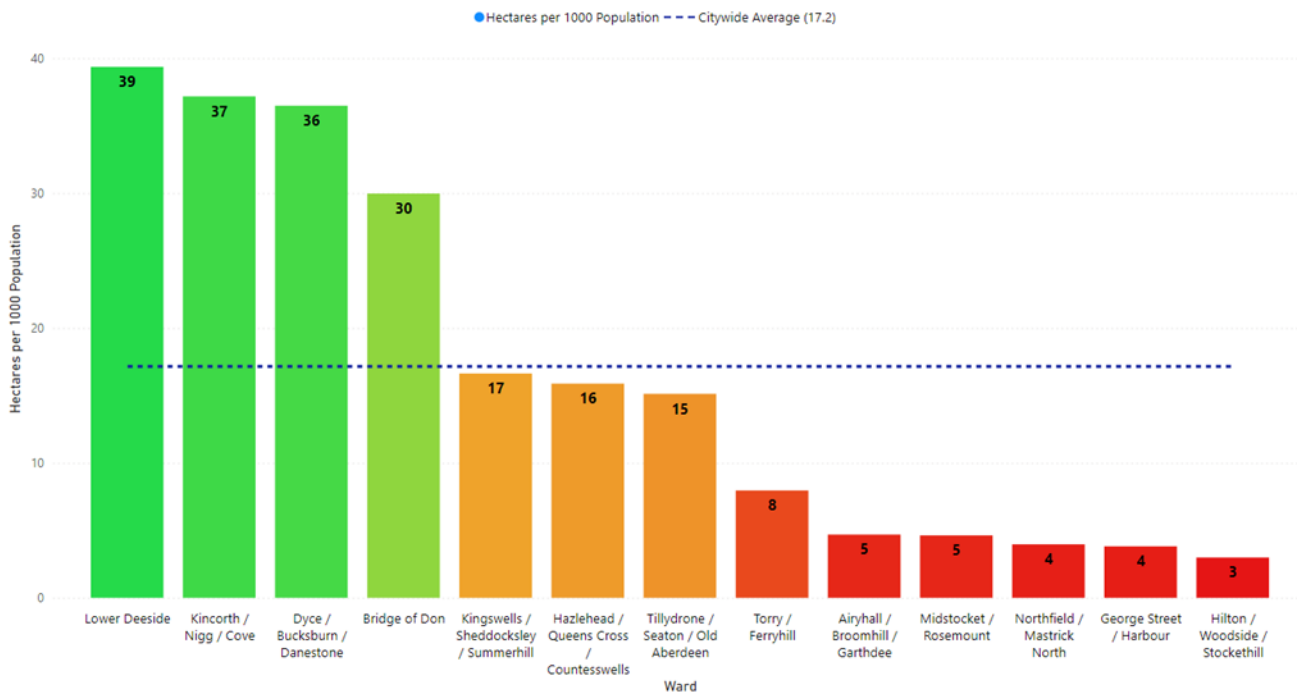
## HECTARES PER 1,000 PEOPLE

The citywide average open space per 1,000 people is 17.2 hectares a 3.6% increase from the 16.6 hectares per 1,000 people recorded in the previous audit.

69.2% of wards have provision below the 17.2 citywide average, while 30.8% of wards have provision higher than the citywide average.

Across all 13 wards the range varied from 3.0 to 39.4 hectares of open space per 1,000 people.

Hectares per 1,000 population by Ward



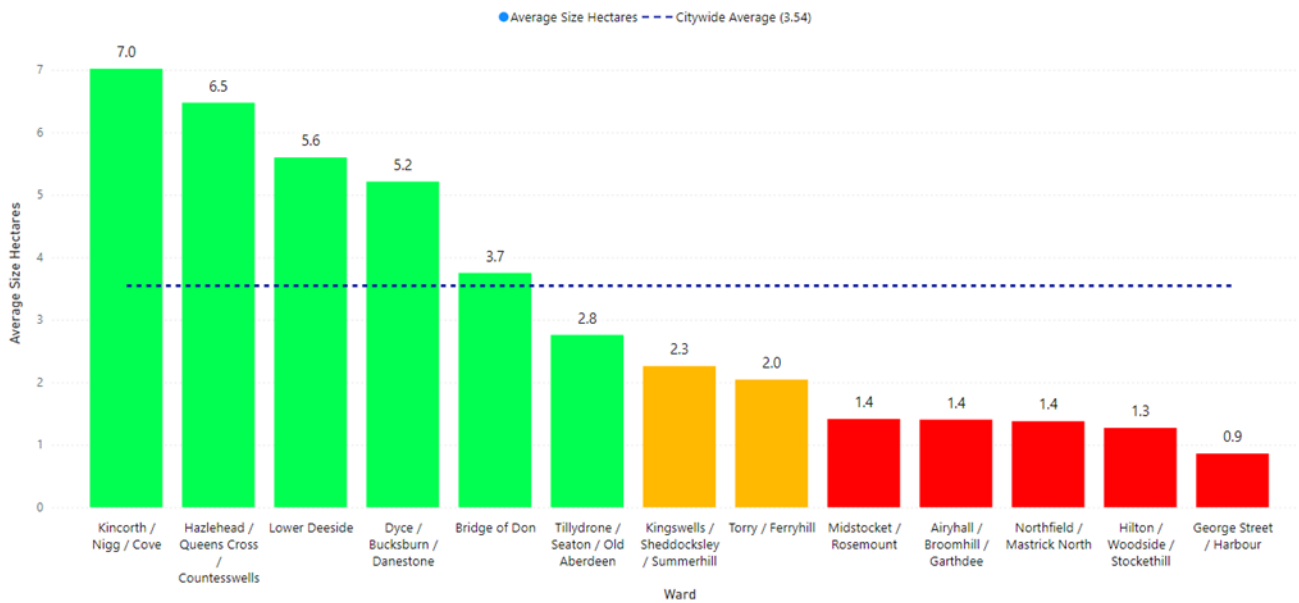


## AVERAGE OPEN SPACE SIZE

The citywide average open space size was 3.5 hectares, with 8 wards with an average open space size lower than the citywide average, and 5 with an average open space size higher than the citywide average.

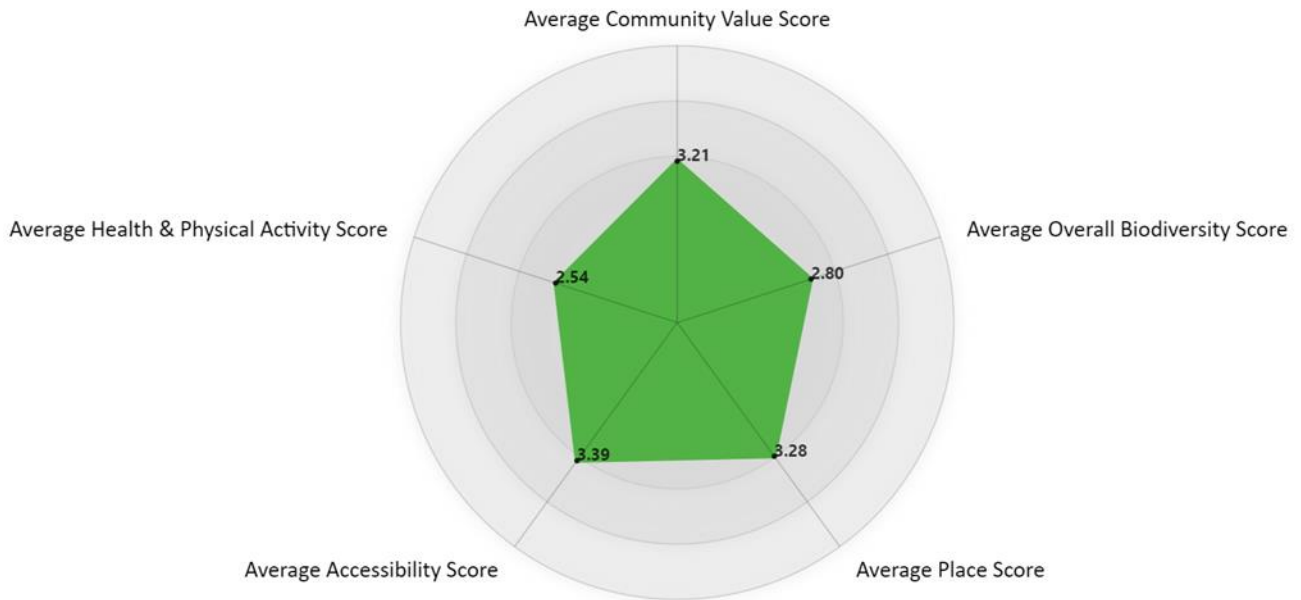
The Kincorth / Nigg / Cove ward had the highest average open space size of 7 hectares, while the George Street / Harbour ward had the lowest average open space size at 0.9 hectares.

Average Ward Open Space Size



OPEN SPACE QUALITY

The citywide average open space quality score was 14.3 out of 25, with the previous audit recording a citywide average of 14.



**Accessibility** and **Place** were the highest scoring areas with 3.4 and 3.3 respectively, while **Health & physical activity**, and **Biodiversity** were the lowest scoring areas with 2.5 and 2.8 respectively.

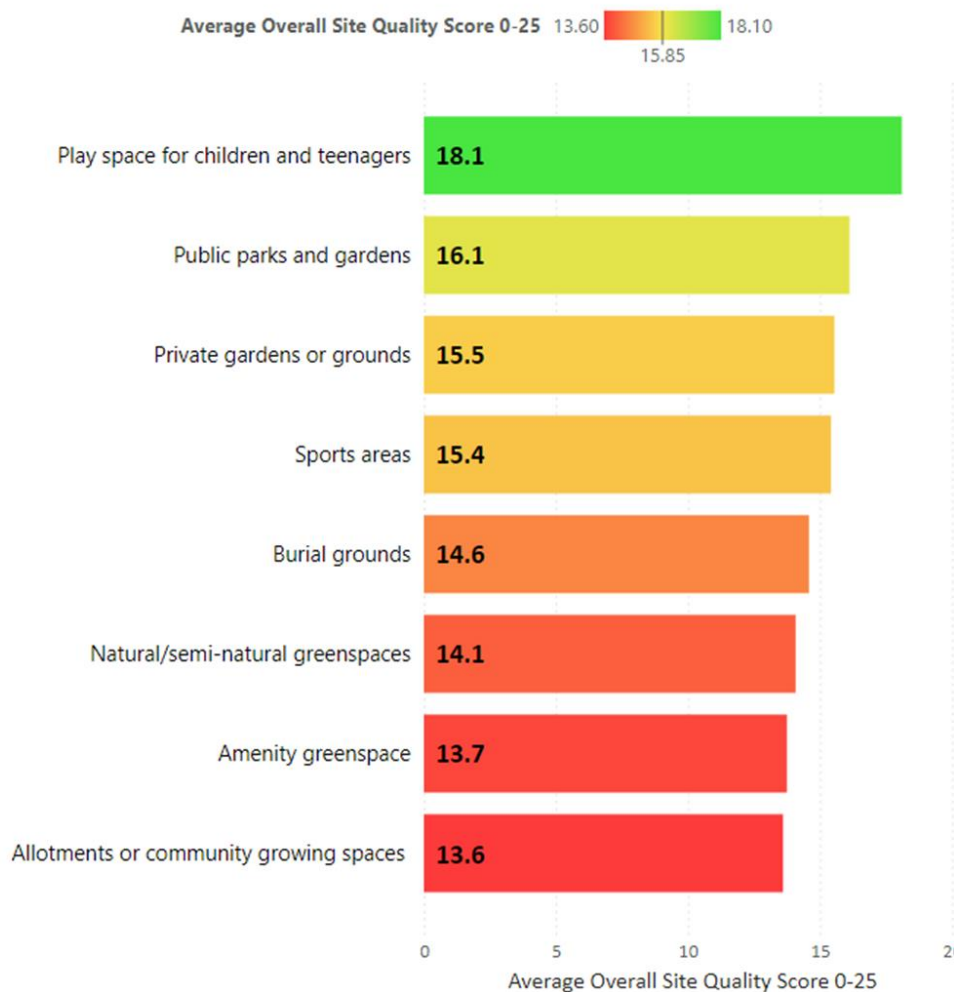
Citywide average quality scores by theme on the 0 to 5 scale were as follows:

- Accessibility Score 3.4
- Place Score 3.3
- Community Value Score 3.2
- Biodiversity Score 2.8
- Health & Physical Activity Score 2.5

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## OPEN SPACE QUALITY BY TYPE

Average Overall Site Quality Score by Open Space Type



The average open space quality scores by open space type ranged from 13.6 to 18.1 out of 25.

**Play spaces for children and teenagers** had the highest average overall quality score with 18.1 out of 25, followed by **public parks and gardens** which had a score of 16.1 out of 25.

**Allotments or community growing spaces** had the lowest average quality score with 13.6 out of 25, followed by **amenity greenspace** which had a score of 13.7 out of 25.

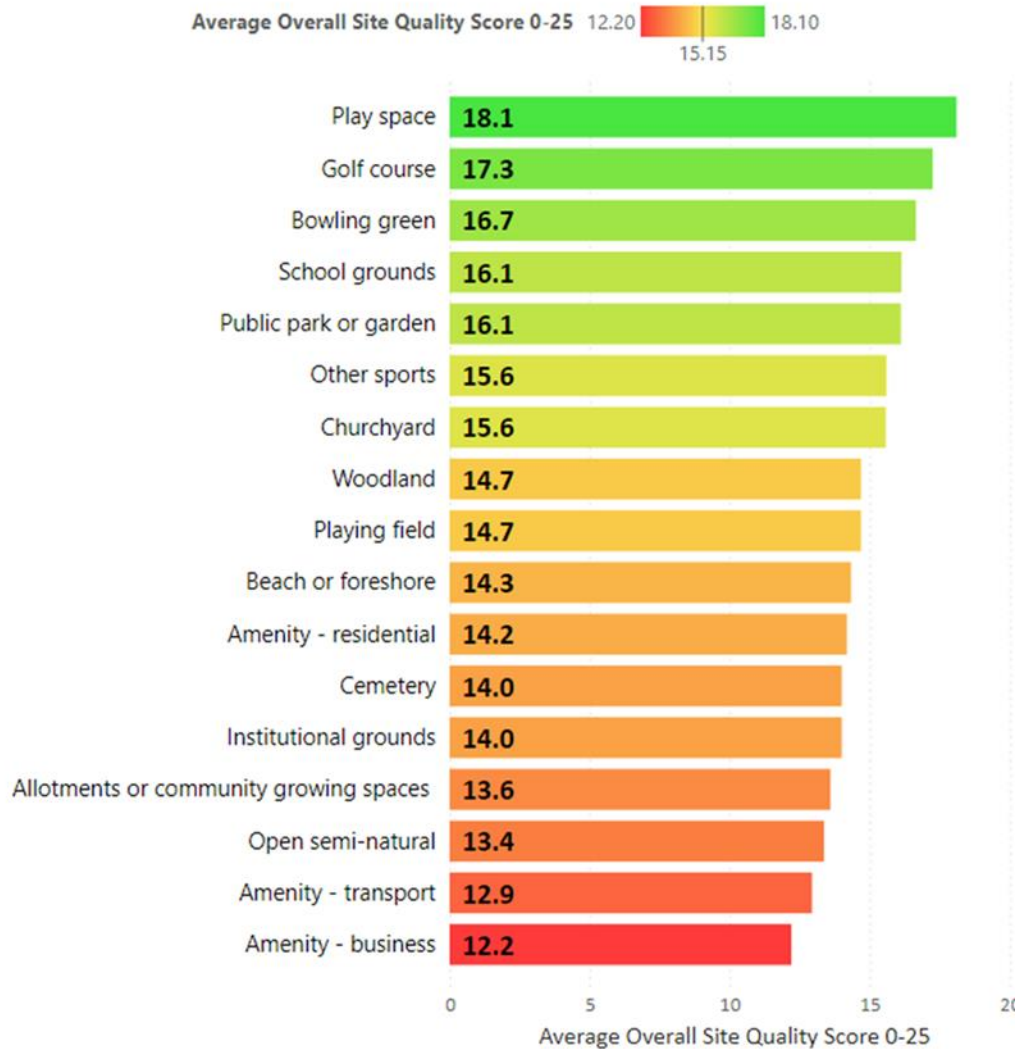
The average quality scores broadly mirror the satisfaction rates reported by open space survey respondents:

- Parks: 86%
- Children’s play areas: 75%
- Allotments and community food growing spaces: 65%
- Amenity spaces: 64%

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## OPEN SPACE QUALITY BY SUB TYPE

Average Overall Site Quality Score by Open Space Sub Type



The average open space quality scores by sub type ranged from 12.2 to 18.1 out of 25.

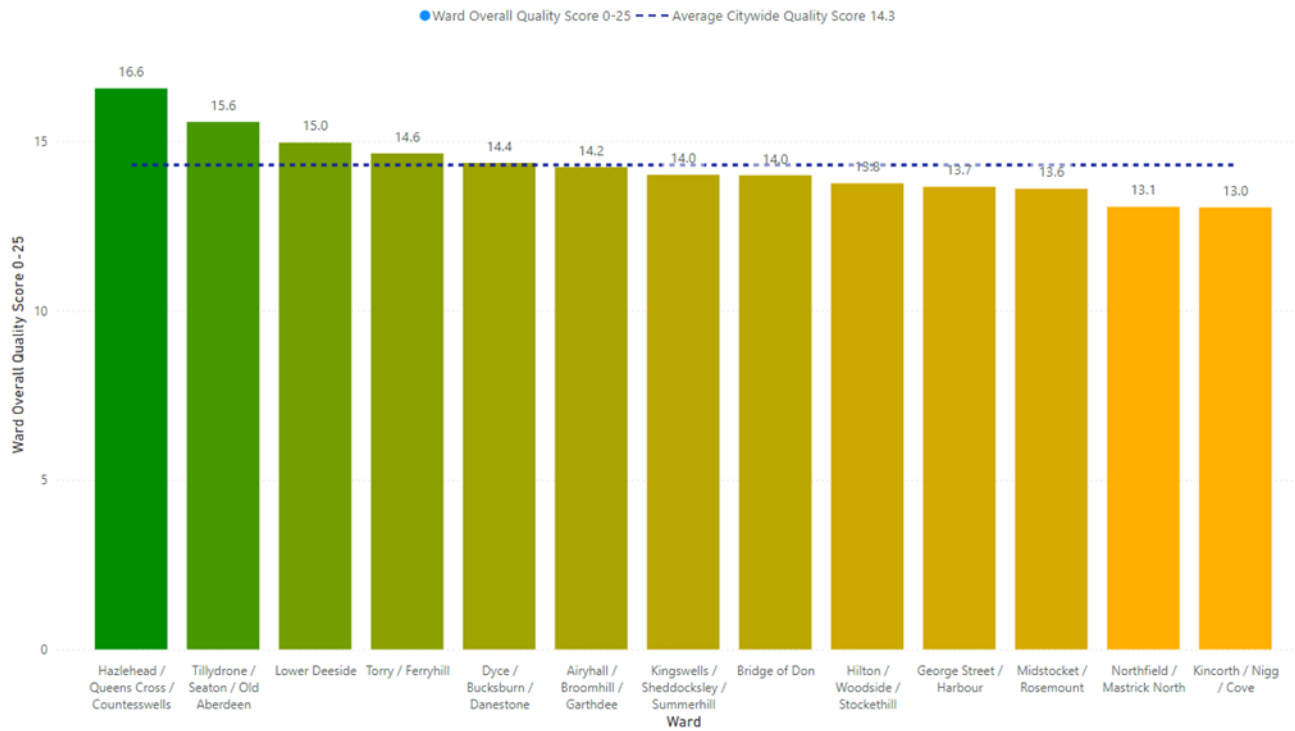
**Public parks and gardens** had a score of 16.1, **residential amenity spaces** had a score of 14.2 and **playing fields** had a score of 14.7. These are typically the most accessible public spaces most used in daily life.

**Play spaces for children and teenagers** had the highest average overall quality score with 18.1, followed by **Golf courses** with 17.3 and **bowling greens** with 16.7.

**Amenity business spaces** had the lowest average quality score with 12.2, followed by **amenity transport** which had a score of 12.9 and **open semi-natural** areas with a score of 13.4.

## OPEN SPACE QUALITY BY WARD

Ward Average Quality Score 0-25

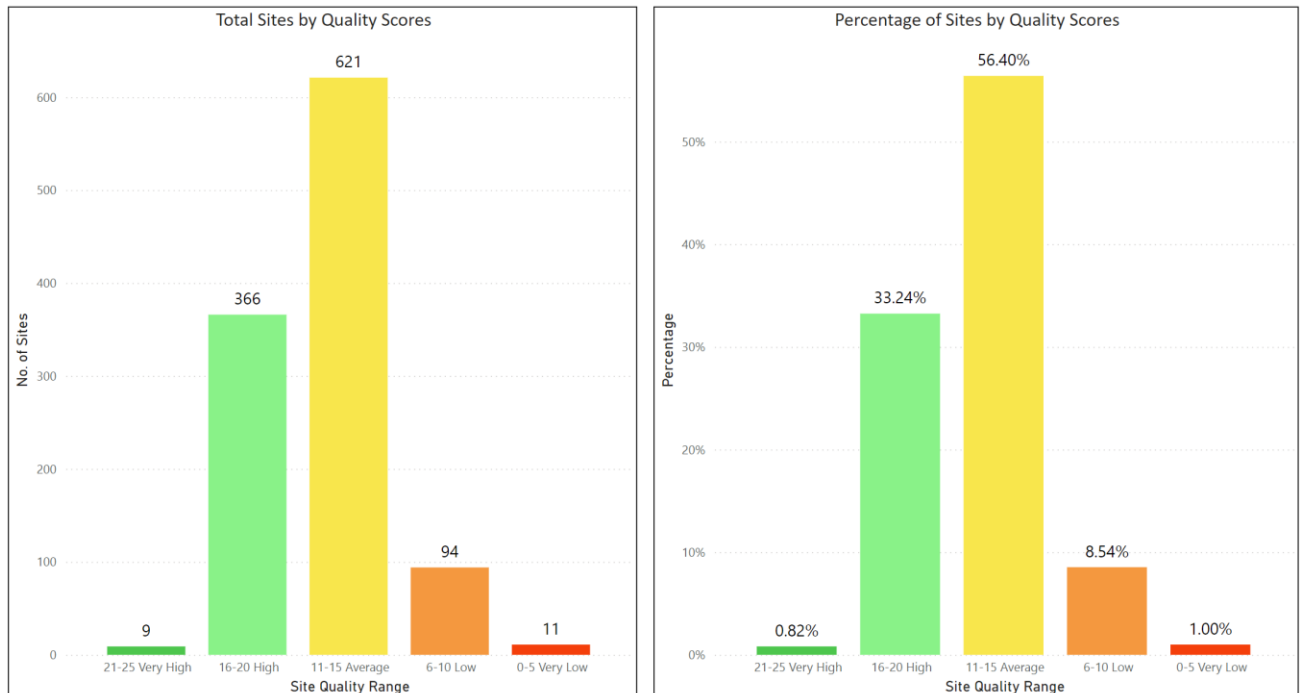


**The average open space quality scores for each ward ranged from 13.0 to 16.6 out of 25.**

62% or 8 wards had an average quality score below the citywide average quality score of 14.3, while 38% or 5 wards had an average quality score above the citywide average.

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## OPEN SPACE SITE QUALITY SCORES



- 56% of sites had an average quality score ranging between 11 to 15
- 33% of sites had a high-quality score between 16 to 20
- 9% of sites had a low-quality score between 6 to 10

**46% of sites had a quality score of 15 or higher** which is Greenspace Scotland's recommended minimum quality standard of 60% or higher. This equates to a quality score of 15 or higher out of 25 for Aberdeen on our locally agreed 0 to 25 scale.

OPEN SPACE ACCESSIBILITY

The percentage of households meeting the minimum accessibility standards in metres for different open space types was determined for different open space type across the city as outlined in the [Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Open Space and Green Infrastructure](#)<sup>11</sup>.

- **63% of households in Aberdeen are within the 1500 metres of a major open space**, a decrease from the 70% recorded in the previous audit. This could be attributed to new developments on the edge of the city and no new major parks having been created.

Open Space Type	Accessibility threshold (m)*	2024 Audit: households within thresholds (%)	2010 Audit: households within thresholds (%)
Major Open Space >5ha	1,500m	63%	70%
Natural / semi-natural greenspaces >2 ha	400m	45%	N/A
Natural / semi-natural greenspaces >5 ha	2,000m	94%	N/A
Equipped Play Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Area for Play (LAP) - 100m</li> <li>• Local Equipment Area for Play (LEAP) - 400m</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) - 1,000m</li> </ul>	82% with access to an Equipped Play Space	70%
Outdoor Sports Areas	1,200m	99%	N/A
Allotments	800m	49%	N/A

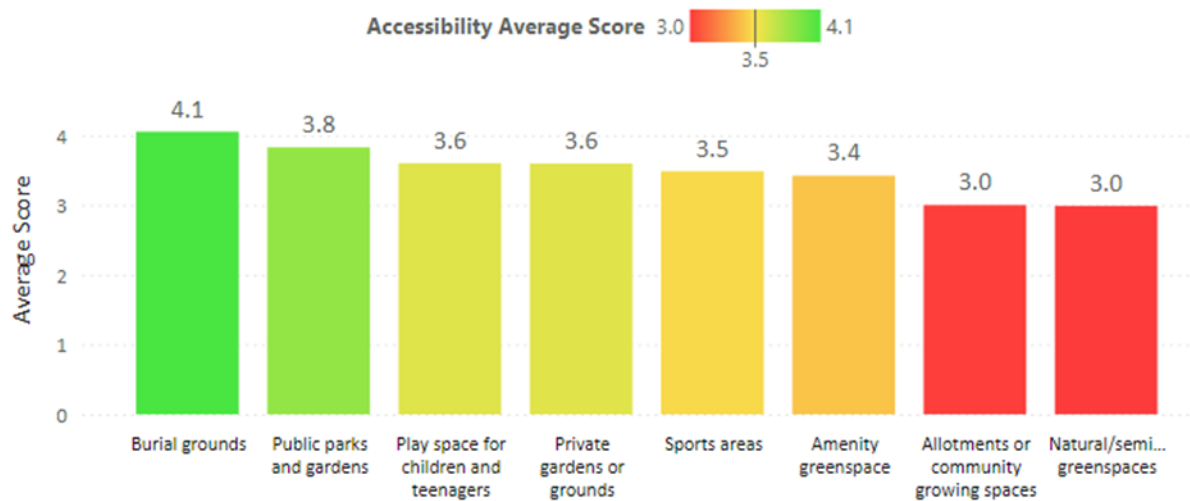
\*Note accessibility distances are approximate and are calculated as ‘as the crow flies’. This approach is not particularly accurate particularly if there are roads, railways or natural barriers to access such as rivers.

<sup>11</sup> [Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Open Space and Green Infrastructure](#)

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## ACCESSIBILITY BY OPEN SPACE TYPE

### Average Accessibility Score by Open Space Type



**The citywide average open space accessibility score was 3.4 out of 5.**

The average open space accessibility scores by open space type ranged from 3.0 to 4.1 out of 5.

**Burial grounds** had the highest average accessibility score with 4.1 out of 5, followed by **public parks and gardens** which had an accessibility score of 3.8 out of 5.

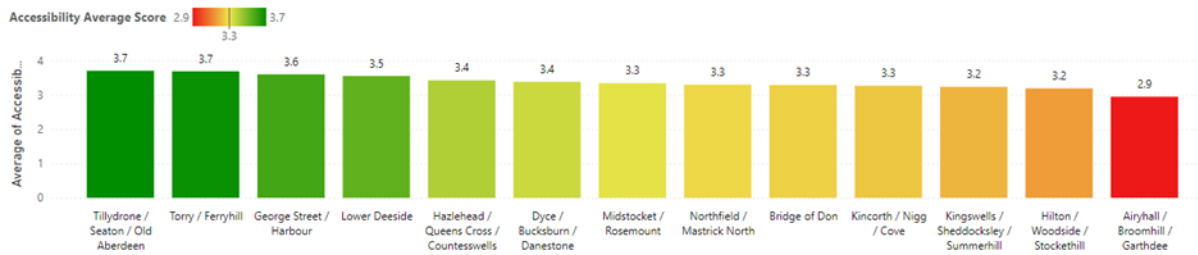
**Natural / semi natural greenspaces** and **allotment or community growing spaces** had the lowest average accessibility score with 3.0 out of 5, followed by **amenity greenspace** which had an accessibility score of 3.4 out of 5.



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## ACCESSIBILITY BY WARD

Accessibility Score by Ward



The average open space accessibility scores by Ward ranged from 2.9 to 3.7 out of 5.

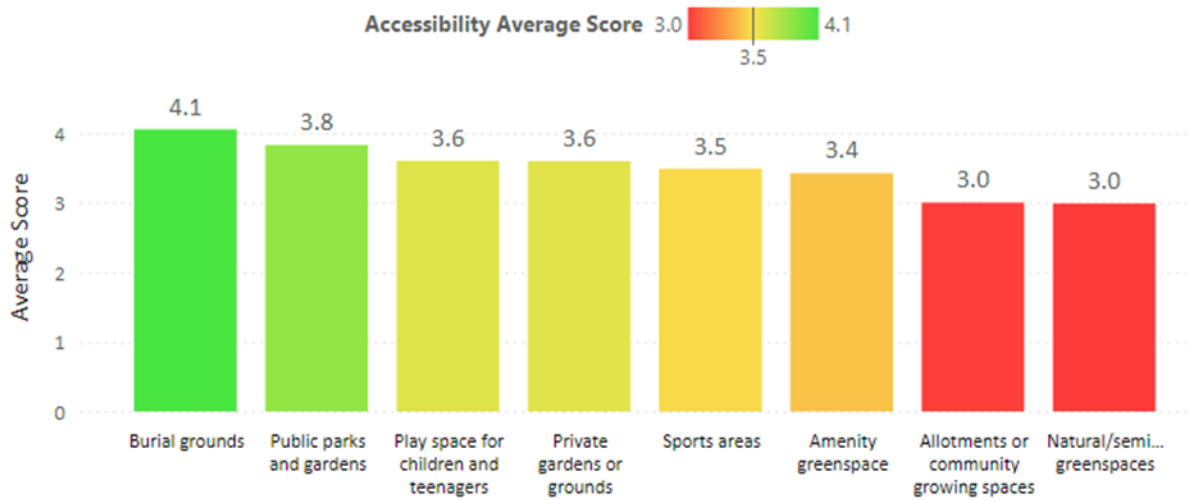
**Tilydrone / Seaton / Old Aberdeen** and **Torry / Ferryhill** had the highest average accessibility scores with 3.7 out of 5.

**Airyhall / Broomhill / Garthdee** and **Hilton / Woodside / Stockethill** had the lowest average accessibility score with 2.9 and 3.2 respectively of 5.

## OPEN SPACE QUALITY INDICATORS

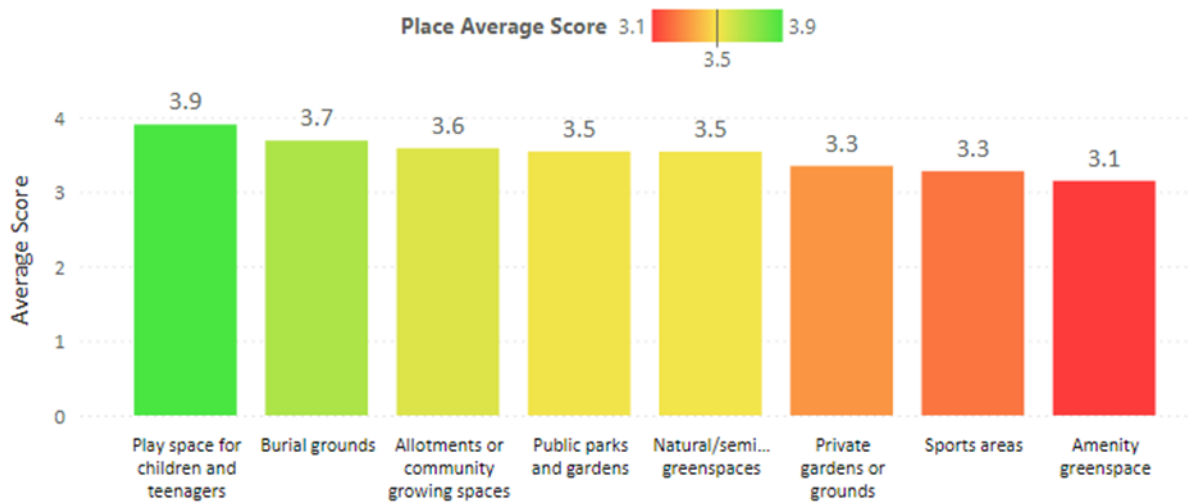
### Accessible and Connected Greenspaces

Average Accessibility Score by Open Space Type



### Attractive and Appealing Places

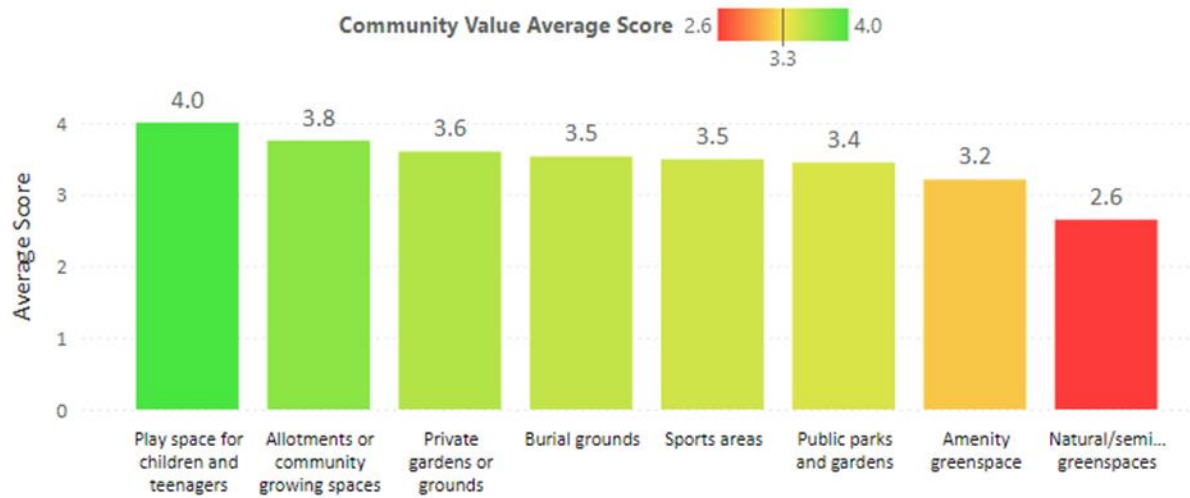
Average Place Score by Open Space Type



### Opportunities for Physical Activity

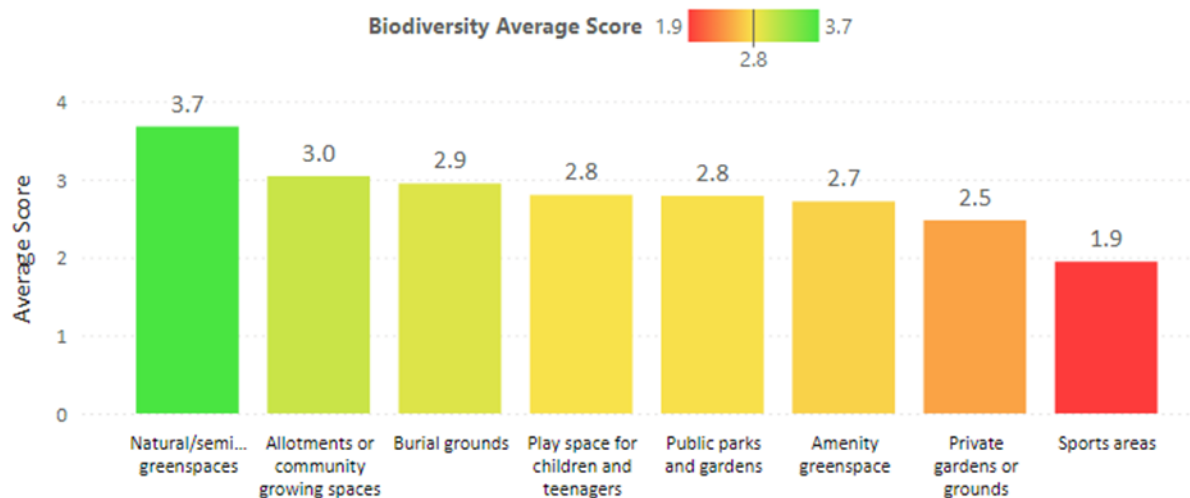
## Community Value

Average Community Score by Open Space Type



## Biodiversity Value

Average Biodiversity Score by Open Space Type



The average open space biodiversity score by open space type ranged from 1.9 to 3.7 out of 5.

**Natural / semi natural greenspaces** had the highest average biodiversity score with 3.7 out of 5, followed by **allotment or community growing spaces** which had a biodiversity score of 3.0 out of 5.

**Sports areas** had the lowest average biodiversity score with 1.9 out of 5, followed by **private gardens or grounds** which had a biodiversity score of 2.5 out of 5.

Aberdeen City includes many nationally and locally protected areas at different levels. For example, the River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC), is important for its Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel and the European otter. The city has a variety of public green and open spaces for people and wildlife which help with adapting to and reducing climate change and also improving community wellbeing.

Biodiversity scoring was included in the audit to ensure it was considered as part of the overall audit process. Habitat connectivity scores were also collected for sites which measure how well they are linked to the wider green space network and citywide green infrastructure. This will allow opportunities through project work and by working with developers to improve the connectivity of habitats and reduce their fragmentation.

[NESBReC](#) developed a biodiversity scoring system for habitats in the city to help evaluate the biodiversity value of open space sites. The data is stored in a digital format for multiple use and cross referencing with other data. The scoring system identified areas that had UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) habitats and also showed areas that could benefit from future biodiversity enhancement.

When green spaces are fragmented, wildlife movement is hindered, and this can impact on the amount of food and shelter available and limit opportunities to breed. Therefore, the consequences of restricting movement on an individual species can have far ranging impacts and can result in biodiversity loss locally.

Green corridors are ways to connect green spaces. These can include grass verges, tree rows, shelterbelts, railway embankments, watercourses, hedgerows and even street trees. These patches of green space act as stepping stones across an urban area and help wildlife move from one place to another whilst also contributing to place-making by making spaces more attractive.

## FOOD GROWING

Food-growing spaces have many advantages; they can improve the quality of places, enhance the environment, improve biodiversity and reduce the impact of climate change, as well as promote health, social, physical and mental wellbeing. Food-growing spaces are a type of open space and contribute to open space provision as outlined in the [Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Open Space and Green Infrastructure](#)<sup>12</sup>.

The [Food Growing Aberdeen Planning Guidance](#)<sup>13</sup> identifies twelve types of 'edible settings' these include allotments, orchards, therapeutic gardens, school gardens, temporary gardens, edible landscaping and community gardens.

[Granite City Growing](#),<sup>14</sup> Aberdeen's food-growing strategy, has been in place since 2020. Its implementation is being taken forward in partnership with stakeholders under the governance of the [Granite City Good Food](#)<sup>15</sup> action plan.

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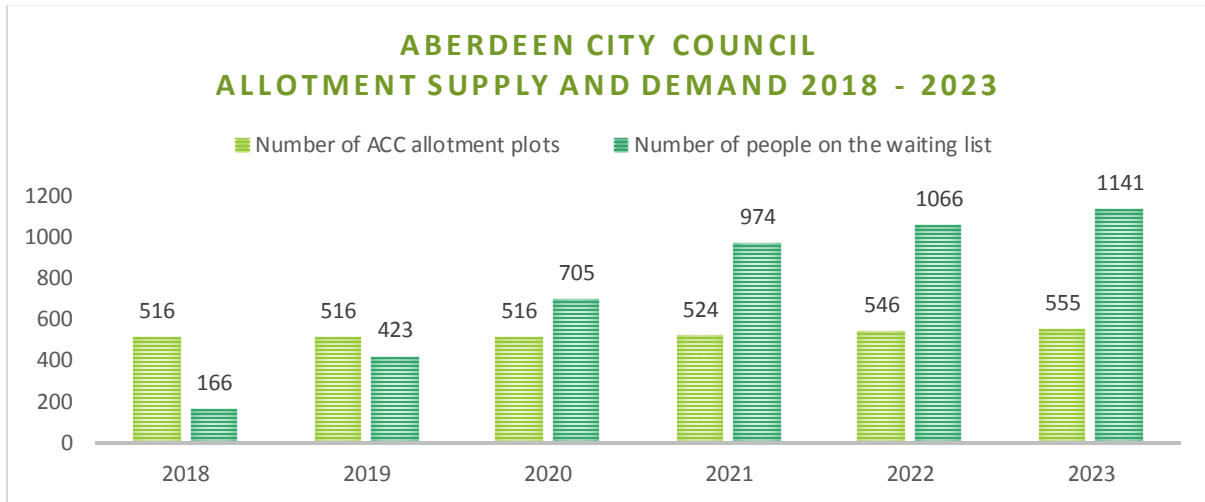
<sup>12</sup> [Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Open Space and Green Infrastructure](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Food Growing Aberdeen Planning Guidance](#)

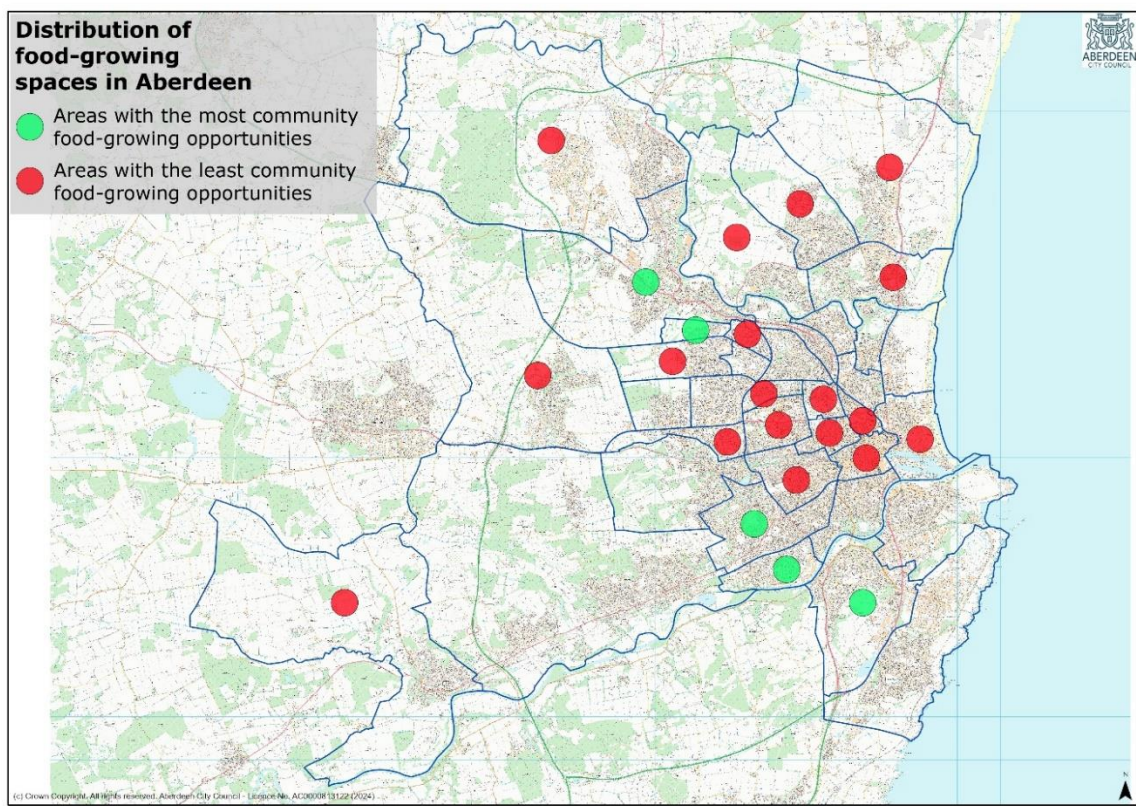
<sup>14</sup> [Granite City Growing – Aberdeen's Food Growing Strategy](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Granite City Good Food Action plan](#)

In 2020 Aberdeen had 2.85 allotment plots available per 1000 people. This amounted to 95,000 square metres of growing space. The demand for allotments has more than doubled between 2018 and 2023. During the same period, the supply of Aberdeen City Council allotment plots has increased by 8%.



In 2019 the distribution of food-growing opportunities across the city was uneven. The map below shows the distribution of opportunities at that time (allotments plots and other known food-growing spaces). The areas in red had no known spaces; the areas in green had over six spaces per 1,000 people). Areas with no dot had between one to six food-growing spaces per 1000 people.

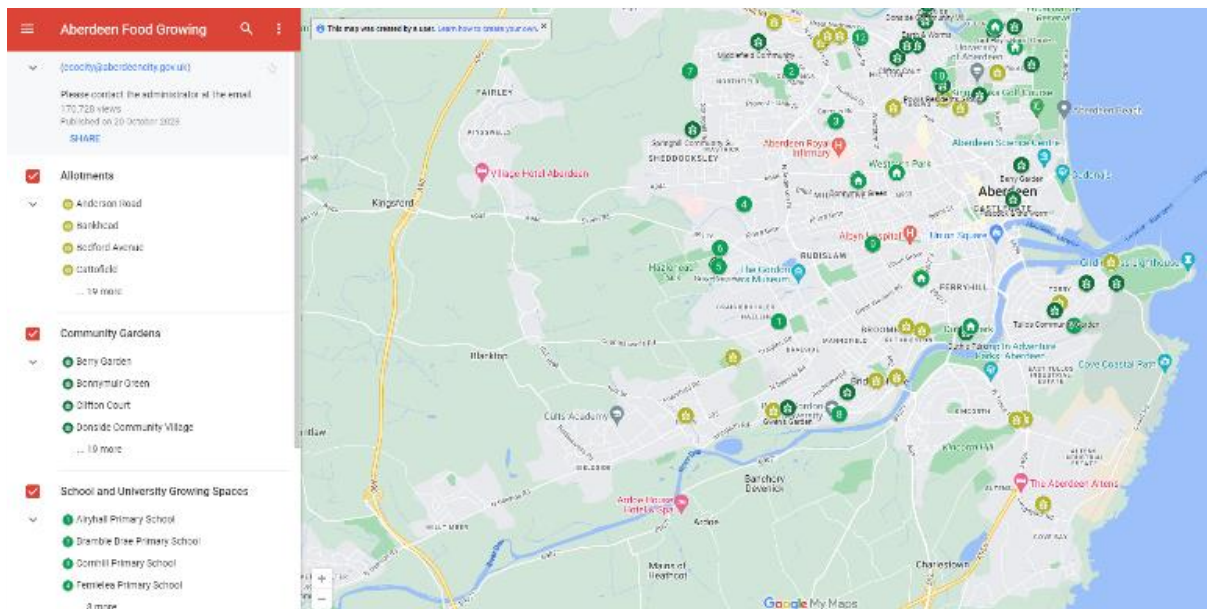


Since 2020 food-growing opportunities have been supported through an improvement project of the Aberdeen Local Outcome Improvement Plan. The [end of project report](#) in 2022 stated that 79



community food growing spaces were in existence across the city and that 45 food-growing projects were being supported in schools, communities and workplaces.

Thirty three community partnerships registered as '[Its Your Neighbourhood](#)' groups with Keep Scotland Beautiful in 2021 and many of those groups included food-growing as an activity. Additionally sixteen local schools are active in the [Eco-Schools](#) scheme and include food-growing as an option to progress through the initiative.



To support the development of Granite City Growing and to record the increasing number of food-growing spaces, an [Aberdeen Food-Growing Map](#)<sup>16</sup> was developed in 2018.

The map is regularly updated with known food-growing opportunities and is signposted to people on allotment waiting lists. In five and a half years, from going live in late 2018, it has had nearly 180,500 views.

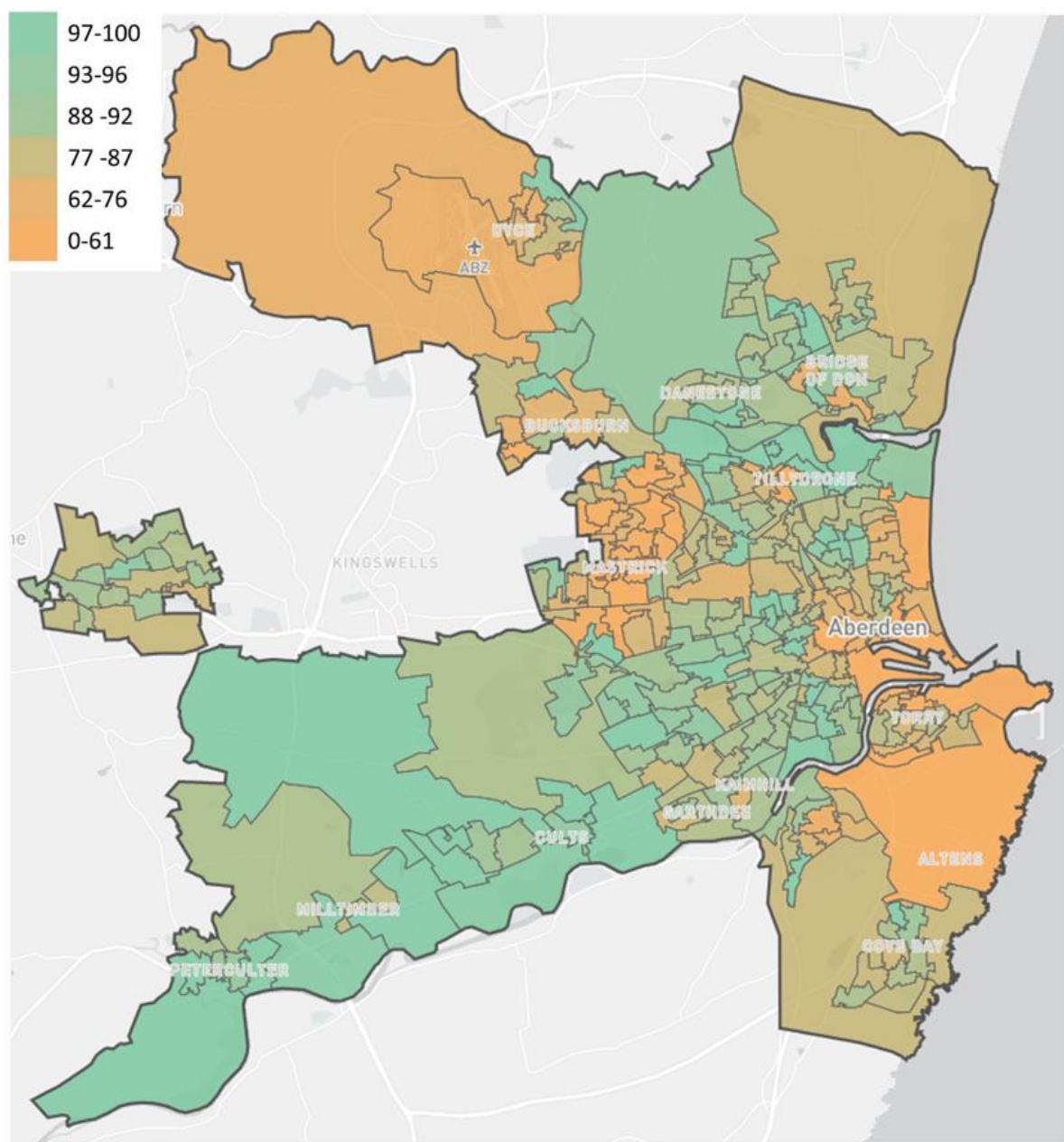
<sup>16</sup> [Aberdeen Food-Growing Map](#)

## TREE EQUITY

[Tree Equity Score UK](#) is a map-based application that was created to help address disparities in urban tree distribution by identifying the areas in greatest need of people-focused investment in trees. The tool was developed by the [Woodland Trust](#), [American Forests](#) and the [Centre for Sustainable health care](#).

The Tree Equity Score sets a national standard in the UK to help make the case for investment in areas with the greatest need.

The score ranges from 0 to 100. The lower the score, the greater priority for tree planting. A score of 100 means the neighbourhood (Data Zone) has met the standard for proper urban tree canopy and has achieved Tree Equity.



## ABERDEEN TREE EQUITY SCORES

- Aberdeen City has a composite tree equity score of 85
- Aberdeen is further broken down into 276 data zones (It should be noted that Kingswells and surrounding area is not currently covered by Tree Equity data and that Westhill has been included. Aberdeen City Council has no control over where Tree Equity Score UK covers)

Aberdeen has:

- 16 Data zones in the highest priority group scoring between 0-69
- The lowest data zone which scores 40
- 36 Data Zones which have a score of 100

**To reach 100% tree equity in each data zone Aberdeen would need to increase canopy cover by 12.6%.** This would require an area 7.47sq-km in size and would be the equivalent to planting 133,970 medium size trees.

Achieving 100% tree equity would:

- Increase the carbon sequestered from 695.6 tonnes to 2,285 tonnes
- Increase the annual ecosystem service value from £1,190,164 to £3,909,451

An interactive map displaying all the individual scores for all the data zones in Aberdeen can be found by viewing the [Aberdeen Tree Equity Aberdeen Map](#).



## TREE CANOPY COVER

Aberdeen tree canopy figures were derived from an iTree Canopy study undertaken in 2020. The study concluded that **Aberdeen has 17% tree canopy cover**, though areas of the city have a canopy cover as low as 6%. Ward level figures are noted below.

[Scotland's Forestry Strategy](#)<sup>17</sup> sets a target of 21% forest and woodland cover by 2032 and the [Tree Design Action Group](#) recommends a minimum 20% canopy cover for urban areas (15% for coastal locations) to improve human health and well-being.

In the last 100 years, forest and woodland cover in Scotland has increased from around 5% to 18.5%. This percentage is higher than the rest of the UK but is still well below the European Union (EU) average of 43% forest and woodland cover.

## WARD CANOPY COVER

Ward	Tree Canopy Cover %
Hazlehead / Queen's Cross / Countesswells	27%
Lower Deeside	25%
Kincorth / Nigg / Cove	24%
Dyce / Bucksburn / Danestone	22%
Midsocket / Rosemount	22%
Tillydrone / Seaton / Old Aberdeen	20%
Airyhall / Broomhill / Garthdee	19%
Hilton / Woodside / Stockethill	17%
Bridge of Don	13%
Torry / Ferryhill	13%
Kingswells / Sheddocksley / Summerhill	8%
George Street / Harbour	7%
Northfield / Mastrick North	6%

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<sup>17</sup> [Scotland's Forestry Strategy](#)

## ABERDEEN OPEN SPACE SURVEY

The Aberdeen Open Space Survey sought to collect the views of residents and visitors on how they use and perceive Aberdeen's open and green blue spaces.

The results are available for anyone to use to inform the shaping of policy action, including future revisions of the Council's Climate Plan and allied initiatives, along with the citywide [Net Zero Aberdeen](#) place based strategies such as the [Natural Environment Strategy](#) and other initiatives.

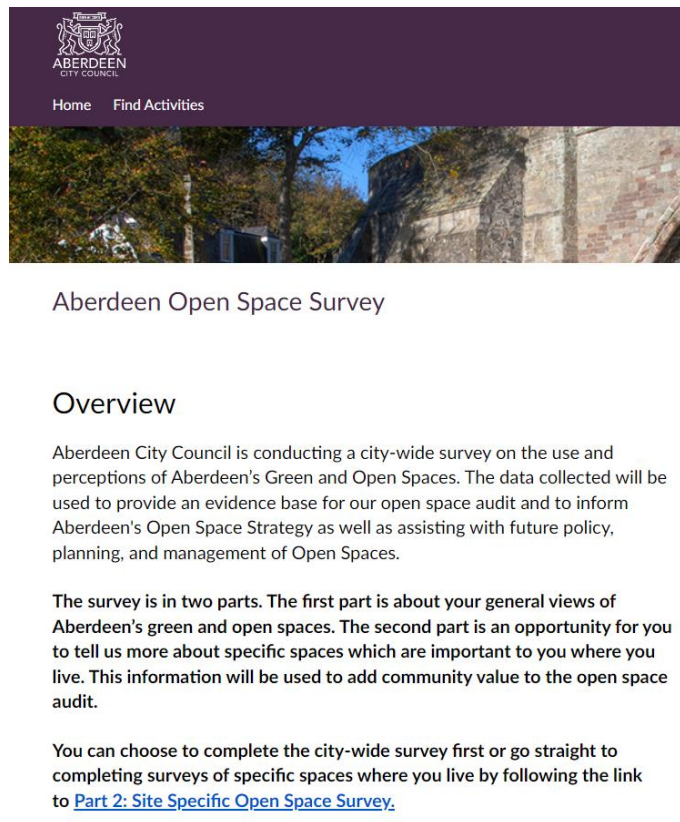
Different methods were used to engage and consult with the community to find out how they value open spaces. This engagement focused on two areas: the first part was a citywide Aberdeen Open Space Survey, the second part was a spatial Geographical Information System (GIS) map-based survey where residents could use an interactive map to say more about what they enjoyed or what could be better about specific spaces. Residents were also asked to help identify spaces that could potentially be managed for wildlife or used for food growing in the future.

Residents and visitors to the city were invited to take part in the online survey which took between 7-10 minutes to complete and was delivered via [Citizen Space](#), a digital engagement platform widely used for policy consultation and resident surveys.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions being in place during the survey period the majority of engagement and promotion was carried out online via social media, through the use of QR codes, press releases, through Community Planning Aberdeen and partners, Community Councils and various community and Friends of Parks groups.

Paper copies were also made available for completion in person in the Marischal College Customer Service Centre and in public libraries.

The survey was open from 08/02/2022 to 20/03/2022 with a total of 580 responses to the citywide survey and 783 responses to the spatial survey. Analysis of the spatial GIS map-based survey is ongoing.



Aberdeen Open Space Survey

### Overview

Aberdeen City Council is conducting a city-wide survey on the use and perceptions of Aberdeen's Green and Open Spaces. The data collected will be used to provide an evidence base for our open space audit and to inform Aberdeen's Open Space Strategy as well as assisting with future policy, planning, and management of Open Spaces.

The survey is in two parts. The first part is about your general views of Aberdeen's green and open spaces. The second part is an opportunity for you to tell us more about specific spaces which are important to you where you live. This information will be used to add community value to the open space audit.

You can choose to complete the city-wide survey first or go straight to completing surveys of specific spaces where you live by following the link to [Part 2: Site Specific Open Space Survey](#).

## KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

A total of 580 responses to the citywide survey were received.

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### OPEN SPACE SATISFACTION

#### CITYWIDE OPEN SPACE SATISFACTION

79% of respondents reported being satisfied, fairly satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of Aberdeen's greenspace and open space areas however some open space types had a lower satisfaction rating than others.

Allotments and community food growing spaces, walking and cycling routes and amenity spaces had the lowest citywide satisfaction rates reported by respondents:

- Allotments and community food growing spaces: 65%
- Walking/cycling routes: 64%
- Amenity spaces: 64%

Parks, woodlands and natural or semi-natural areas had the highest citywide satisfaction rates reported by respondents:

- Parks: 86%
- Woodlands: 82%
- Natural or semi-natural areas: 82%

75% of respondents were satisfied, fairly satisfied or very satisfied with children's play areas.

#### LOCAL OPEN SPACE SATISFACTION

When respondents were asked about local spaces approximately 400 meters (or a 5-minute walk) from their home satisfaction was broadly similar to citywide satisfaction with open space areas.

Allotments and community food growing spaces, walking and cycling routes and amenity spaces had the lowest satisfaction rates and parks, woodlands, and natural or semi natural areas had the highest satisfaction rates.

#### VALUE OF OPEN SPACE

Respondents were asked the top three reasons why they use, visit or enjoy the city's open spaces. The most common reasons given were:

1. Physical exercise or health reasons (e.g. walking or jogging etc.)	75%
2. To be in nature	71%
3. To meet friends or family or to socialise	53%
4. To get out of the house or office (e.g. for a break)	47%
5. For mental health reasons	31%

95% of respondents said local greenspace and open space areas were important or extremely important during Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and that they helped relieve stress, improve physical and mental wellbeing, and helped them to appreciate nature.

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### IMPROVING OPEN SPACE

When asked what would encourage respondents to use or visit Aberdeen’s greenspace or open spaces more often the most common reasons given were:

1. If they had better facilities (e.g. benches or toilets)	49%
2. If they were better managed for wildlife (e.g. wildlife enhancements such as tree and wildflower planting, long grass, wetlands, shrubs etc.)	45%
3. If there were more adequate paths for walking or cycling	36%
4. If they had less or no dog fouling	30%
5. If they were better connected to other spaces	25%
6. If they had less or no litter	25%
7. If there was better information about them (e.g. information panels or signage)	20%
8. If they had better lighting	19%

When asked what would encourage respondents to use or visit local greenspace or open spaces more often the most common reasons given were:

1. If it had better facilities (e.g. benches or toilets)	40%
2. If it was better managed for wildlife (e.g. wildlife enhancements such as tree and wildflower planting, long grass, wetlands, shrubs etc.)	36%
3. If there was less or no dog fouling	28%
4. If it had adequate paths for walking or cycling	25%
5. If there was less or no litter	24%
6. If it had more bins	18%
7. If it was better connected to other spaces	17%
8. If they had better lighting	15%

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### MANAGING SPACES FOR NATURE

- 82% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to see more greenspaces managed in a more natural way for the benefit of wildlife and nature .
- 49% of respondents said they would be encouraged to visit spaces more often if they were managed for wildlife and nature.

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## FOOD GROWING

- 54% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to see more food-growing opportunities within green and open spaces across Aberdeen.
- 65% of respondents reported being satisfied with the quality of allotments and community food growing spaces.

This is the third lowest satisfaction rate of all the open space types and could be attributed to the current high demand and long waiting lists for allotments.

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## OPEN SPACE USE

- On average 41% of respondents visited greenspace and open space areas several times a week, 19% visited once a day and 15% visited once a week.
- 59% of people stayed on average for 1-2 hours, 26% for less than one hour and 15% for more than 2 hours.

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## OPEN SPACE TRAVEL

- 76% of respondents walked and 51% used a motorized vehicle to travel to open spaces. 13% cycled and 11% used public transport.
- On average 31% of respondents spent 11-20 minutes travelling to spaces, 30% spent 6-10 minutes travelling and 23% spent 5 minutes or less.

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## EQUALITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Respondents were asked about any needs around open spaces in relation to disability, medical condition or age. Some respondents expressed need for better lighting, security and toilet facilities in greenspaces, particularly at night.

The issue of accessibility for people with disabilities or mobility problems was expressed, with the need for more hard surfaced paths and better maintained surfaces, suitable for wheelchair users, to improve accessibility highlighted. A need for more seating for rest including wheelchair accessible benches and handrails was also expressed.

The desire for access to exercise equipment and outdoor adult gym equipment and a variety of exercise equipment was also expressed.

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## VOLUNTEERING

66% of respondents, if given the opportunity, would be interested in volunteering in green and open spaces.

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## GENERAL OPEN SPACE COMMENTS

**COMMON THEMES AND SUGGESTIONS:** Some of the common themes and suggestions that emerged from general comments were: reducing the use of chemicals and petrol equipment used for maintaining open spaces, preserving and enhancing the biodiversity and natural beauty of spaces, providing more facilities such as toilets, bins, cafes, play areas, and cycle routes, improved maintenance and listening to local community's opinions and needs.

**POSITIVE FEEDBACK ON GREENSPACES:** A number of comments from respondents expressed views on what was liked and appreciated about green and open spaces in Aberdeen. Some of the aspects that were praised were the beach and riverside areas, the biodiversity and natural beauty of spaces, and Aberdeen's parks and gardens.

**PROTECTING OPEN SPACES FROM DEVELOPMENT:** A number of responses expressed a desire for open spaces to be protected from development. A number of concerns were also raised around the potential development of areas of St Fittick's Park, which respondents felt was a vital green space and wetland area for the residents of Torry and the wildlife that inhabits it.

CASE STUDY 1: ABERDEEN FLAGSHIP PARKS FOR POLLINATORS PROJECT

OVERVIEW

Naturalised greenspace management is being extended by improving and creating blue green habitats in Duthie Park along the River Dee and Seaton Park along the River Don. The approach has been taken in these parks to demonstrate how this can benefit both people and wildlife.



Baseline data to understand the current habitats and species currently in the parks has been gathered. Action plans are being developed to manage and improve habitats, as part of the [Aberdeen B-lines](#) project with [Buglife Scotland](#).

A Nature Restoration in Parks grant of £37K from the Scottish Government was used to survey, plan, and design work to further improve the parks for nature. This included improving the wetlands and ponds to provide a valuable habitat for a range of species. The project also created new wildflower meadow areas for pollinators and improved existing ones. Tree planting was also part of the project.

Aberdeen Flagship Parks for Pollinators also supports long-term '[B-lines](#)' pollinator work between Aberdeen City Council and the charity Buglife.

The Council has a range of initiatives to help nature and biodiversity, these include, Aberdeen B-lines, a change in grass cutting regimes to encourage wildflowers,

The Council has various initiatives to help nature and biodiversity, such as Aberdeen B-lines, changing grass cutting regimes to allow wildflowers to grow, community tree planting and planting plants that attract pollinators.



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## CASE STUDY 2: UNION TERRACE GARDENS – HISTORIC URBAN GREENSPACE WITH MULTI-BENEFITS

### OVERVIEW

In 2015 the City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) was agreed unanimously by Aberdeen City Council. This included a plan for Union Terrace Gardens:

“Enhanced connections to Union Terrace Gardens, restoration of historic features and sensitive contemporary interventions will create a more accessible, enticing and vibrant city centre destination. The enhanced urban green space will provide multi-functional benefits; strengthening urban wildlife corridors, encouraging sustainable transport choices through this enhanced green corridor and equipping Aberdeen to be more resilient to climate change effects”.



The planting proposals have respected the history and heritage of the gardens; informed by the size and species of existing plants. Suitable new plant selection, green infrastructure and soft landscaping has created space for biodiversity within the urban landscape.

### OUTCOMES

Three pavilions built in the park as commercial premises all feature sedum roofs. Lighting has also been designed to minimise impacts on wildlife. The original gardens had extensive mature tree cover but they varied in condition, with most being fair, but a significant amount in poor condition with three existing trees able to be kept as part of the final design.

The removal of existing trees was mitigated by extensive new, large, mature tree planting which saw an increase in overall tree numbers and the variety of species which will have notable benefits in terms of biodiversity and long-term resilience of the gardens. The proposals included the planting of 89 new trees of 18 different species. The inclusion of large trees has ensured that the characteristic mature tree cover of the gardens has been maintained. The tree planting is supported by a new hedge, specimen shrubs and perennial planting. Planted at a high density to ensure immediate visual interest, they were selected to provide year-round interest through colour, texture and scent.

A total of 43,160 plants were incorporated into the garden design along with 78,982 bulbs. The redevelopment of Union Terrace Gardens was finished in 2023. People are using the gardens more than before and it promises to become a new and valued focal point for the city.



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## CASE STUDY 3: GREEN ROOFS AND SOLAR PANELS ON BUS SHELTERS



### OVERVIEW

Incorporating green infrastructure within the city provides multiple benefits to people and wildlife. This project was led by the Council's Public Transport Unit who, as part of their bus shelter renewal plan, have installed bus shelters with green roofs and solar panels throughout the city.

### OUTCOMES

The new shelters have been in place since late winter of 2021 / early spring 2022. They appear to be bedding in well and have been well received by the public. The Council have secured funding for another two projects of this type through [NESTRANS](#) and have plans to support a 5-year capital budget project which should provide a further 100 new sedum and solar shelters within the city.

The provision of green roof bus shelters contributes towards the national requirement to enhance and protect biodiversity and additionally supports the Council's vision for Net Zero, ensuring that climate adaptation and biodiversity are considered at all stages of project development, management, and maintenance of the city transport infrastructure.

### GOALS

The bus shelters are essential shelter for public transport users; the sedum roofs are also providing biodiversity benefits and acting as 'stepping stones' for nature within the urban environment, helping to connect green and open spaces. The shelters use solar panels to generate their own energy, unlike conventional bus shelter structures.

13 sedum roofed shelters were installed in 2022/23 and 15 in 2023/24, with a further 15 planned in 2024/25. Case studies in other cities have shown that green roofs on bus shelters contribute towards climate resistance, absorb rainwater, capture particulates from the air, and support placemaking ambitions. Shelter suppliers have worked with experts to ensure that the species of wildflower and sedum are appropriate to support native pollinators.

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## CASE STUDY 4: GREEN FLAG AWARDS

### OVERVIEW

The Green Flag Award scheme run by environmental charity [Keep Scotland Beautiful](#) gives recognition and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, and sets the standard for how recreational outdoor spaces should be managed.

Aberdeen City Council was awarded 9 Green Flag Awards in 2023 for its quality of open spaces.



This was more than in 2022, with two new sites, Westfield Park and Cove Woodland, getting Green Flag Status.

1. Duthie Park - Green Heritage award and 10th anniversary of being awarded a green flag
2. Hazlehead Park
3. Seaton Park
4. Johnston Gardens
5. Victoria Park
6. Slopefield Allotments
7. Garthdee Field Allotments
8. Cove Woodland
9. Westfield Park

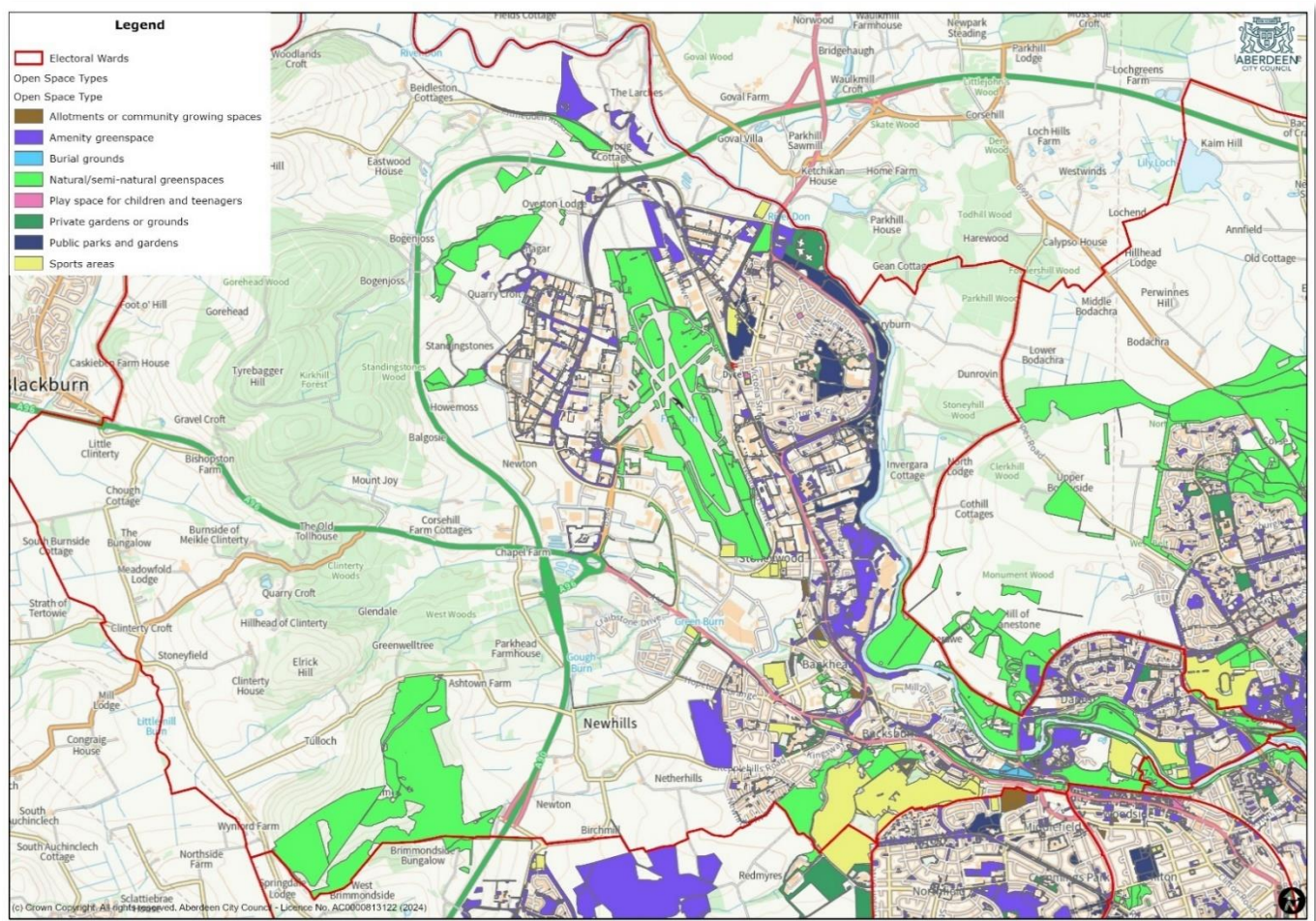
This was the most ever achieved, with Aberdeen being the first local authority in Scotland to have an allotment site awarded with a Green Flag, with two allotments now achieving this award.



## WARD INFORMATION

Please note that information will be provided in the below format for all wards in the final published version.

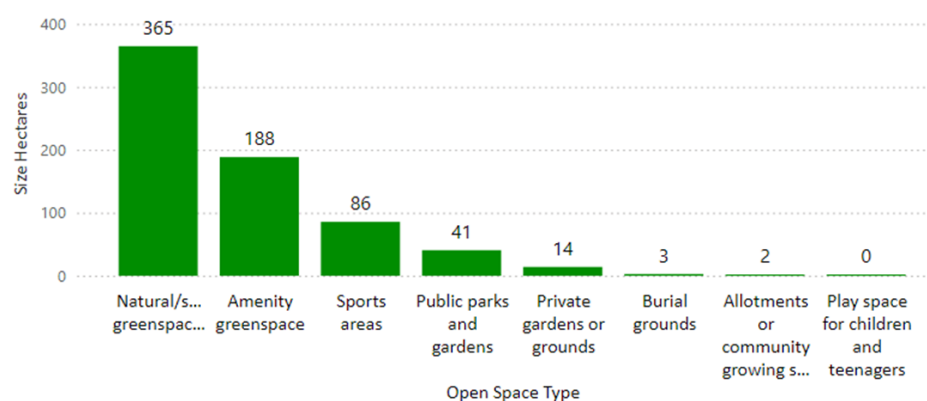
## DYCE / BUCKSBURN / DANESTONE



## QUANTITY

The Dyce / Bucksburn / Danestone ward has an estimated population of 19,139 with 698 hectares of open space and 36 hectares of open space per 1,000 people. The ward is well provided for in terms of the overall quantity of open space compared with other wards.

Open Space Hectares by Type



The primary open space types were Natural/semi-natural greenspaces (365Ha), amenity greenspace (188Ha) and sports areas (86Ha).

## ACCESSIBILITY

The ward has limited access to major open spaces / a major park and limited access to allotment provision. 64% of residents have access to a natural / semi natural greenspace over 2 hectares. Open space is not equally distributed across the ward and some residents are lacking in certain types of provision.

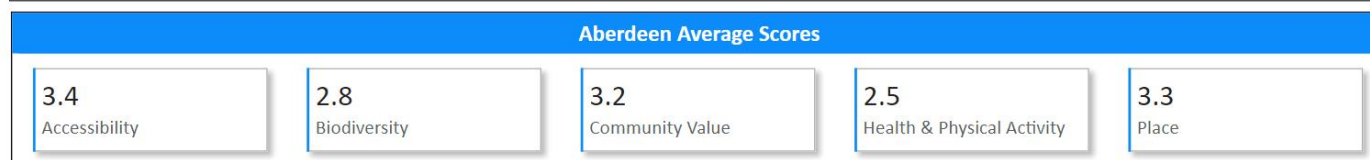
The table below shows the accessibility of open space in relation to households in the ward:

Open Space Type	Major Open Space >5ha	Natural / semi-natural greenspaces >2 ha	Equipped Play Spaces	Outdoor Sports Areas	Allotments
Percentage of households (%)	5%	64%	84%	98%	39%

## QUALITY

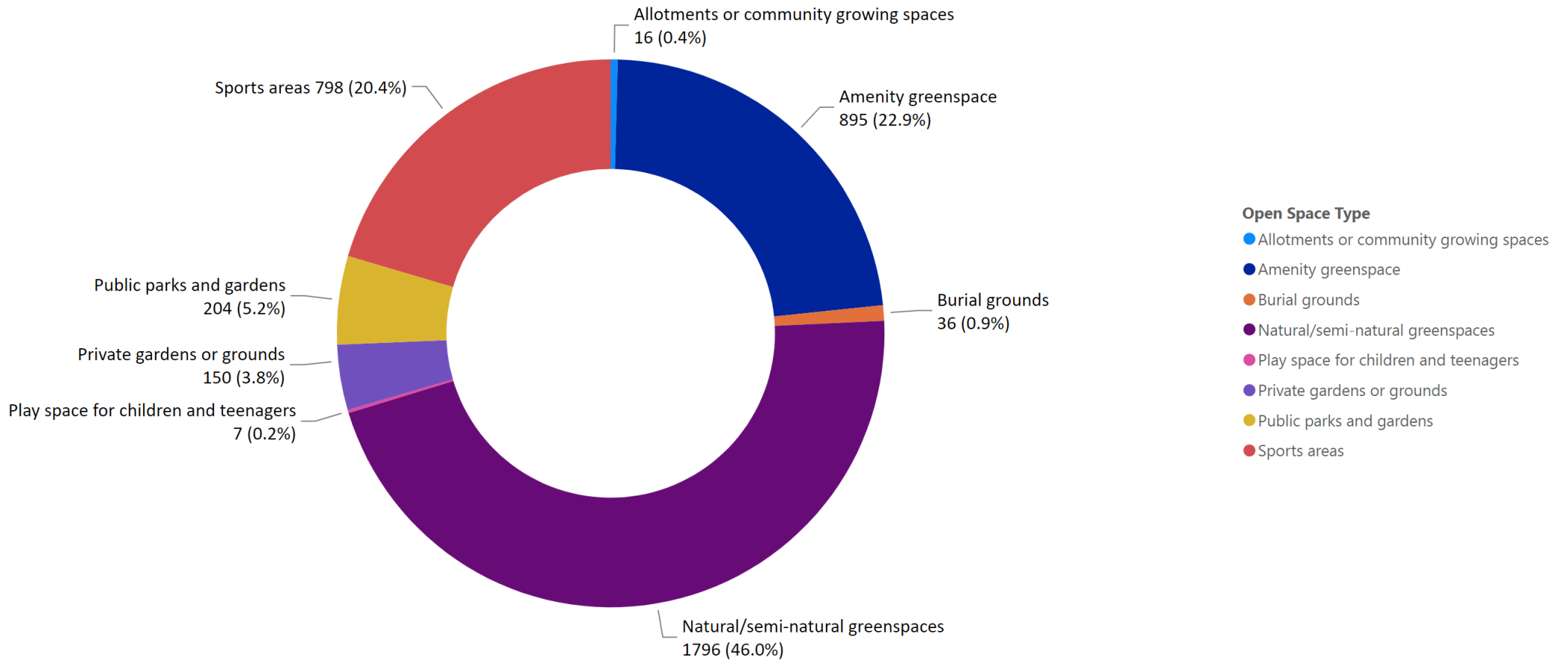
The audit shows that Dyce / Bucksburn / Danestone ward had an average open space quality score of 14.4 out of 25, with the lowest scoring open space types being allotments with a score of 13 and amenity greenspace with a score of 14. The highest scoring open space types were Play space for children and teenagers with a score of 17 and public parks and gardens with a score of 15.7.

Open space in the ward scored poorest in the health & physical activity and biodiversity categories, and highest in the accessibility and community value categories.



APPENDIX A – QUANTITY OF OPEN SPACE

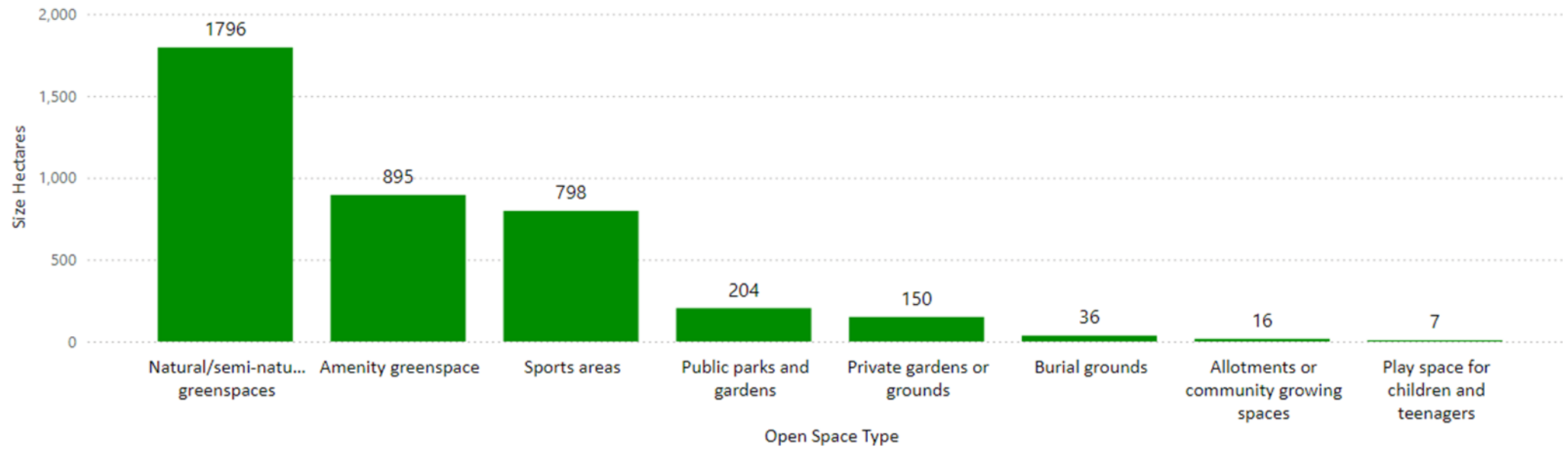
OPEN SPACE – HECTARES CITYWIDE



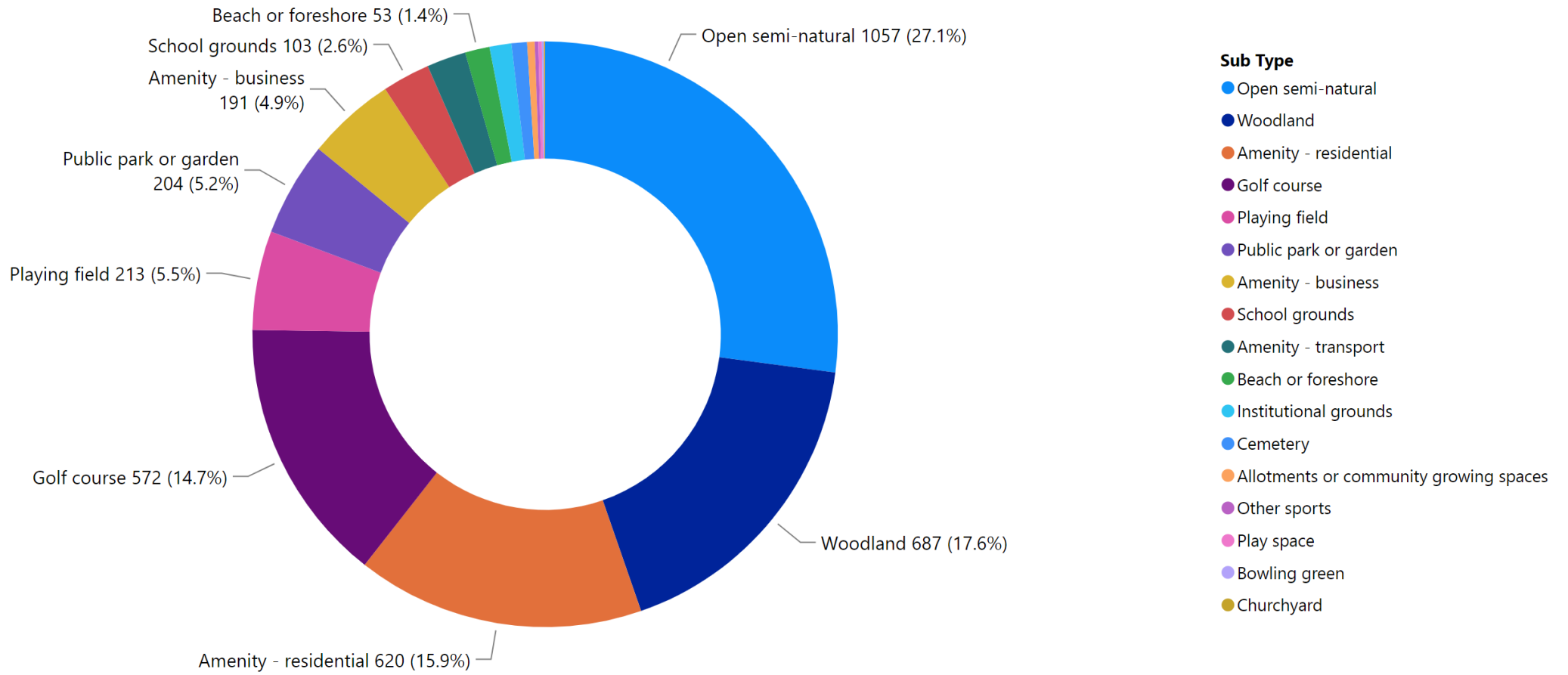
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## OPEN SPACE – HECTARES BY TYPE

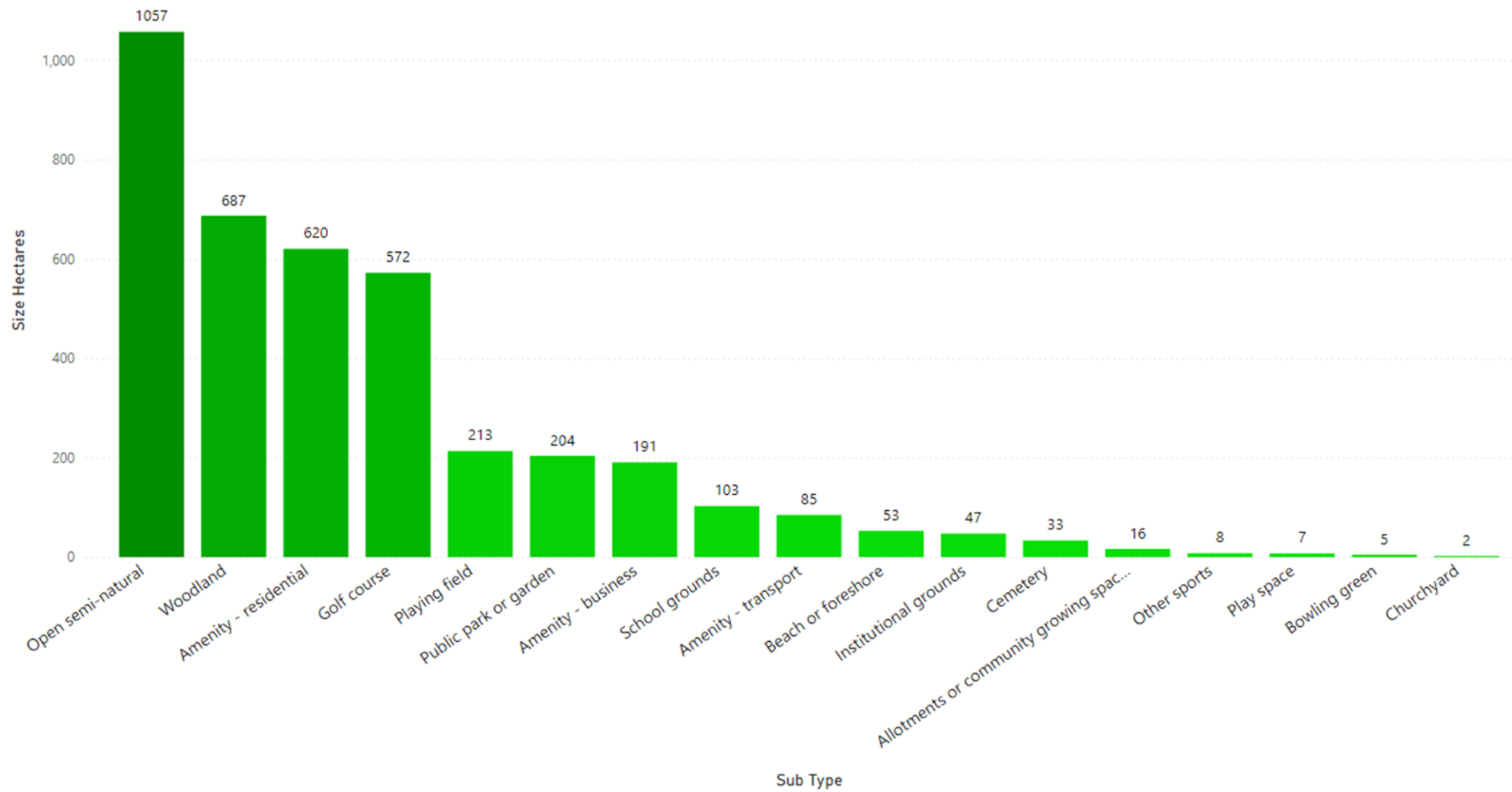
Open Space Hectares by Type



OPEN SPACE – HECTARES BY SUB TYPE

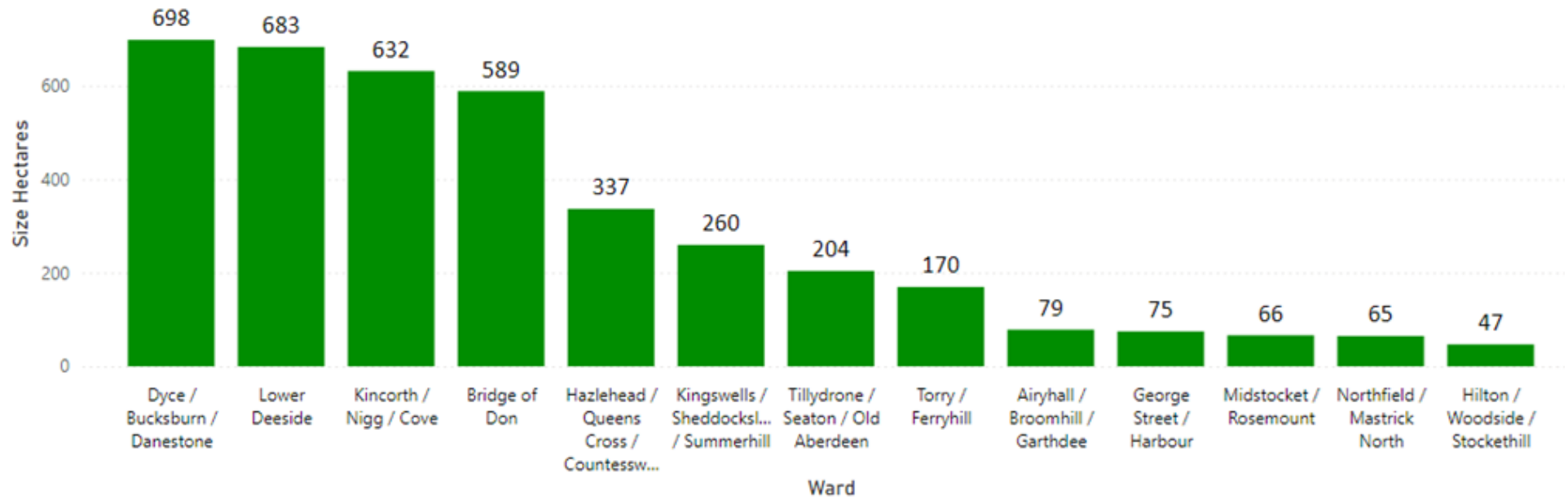


Hectare Profile by Sub Type



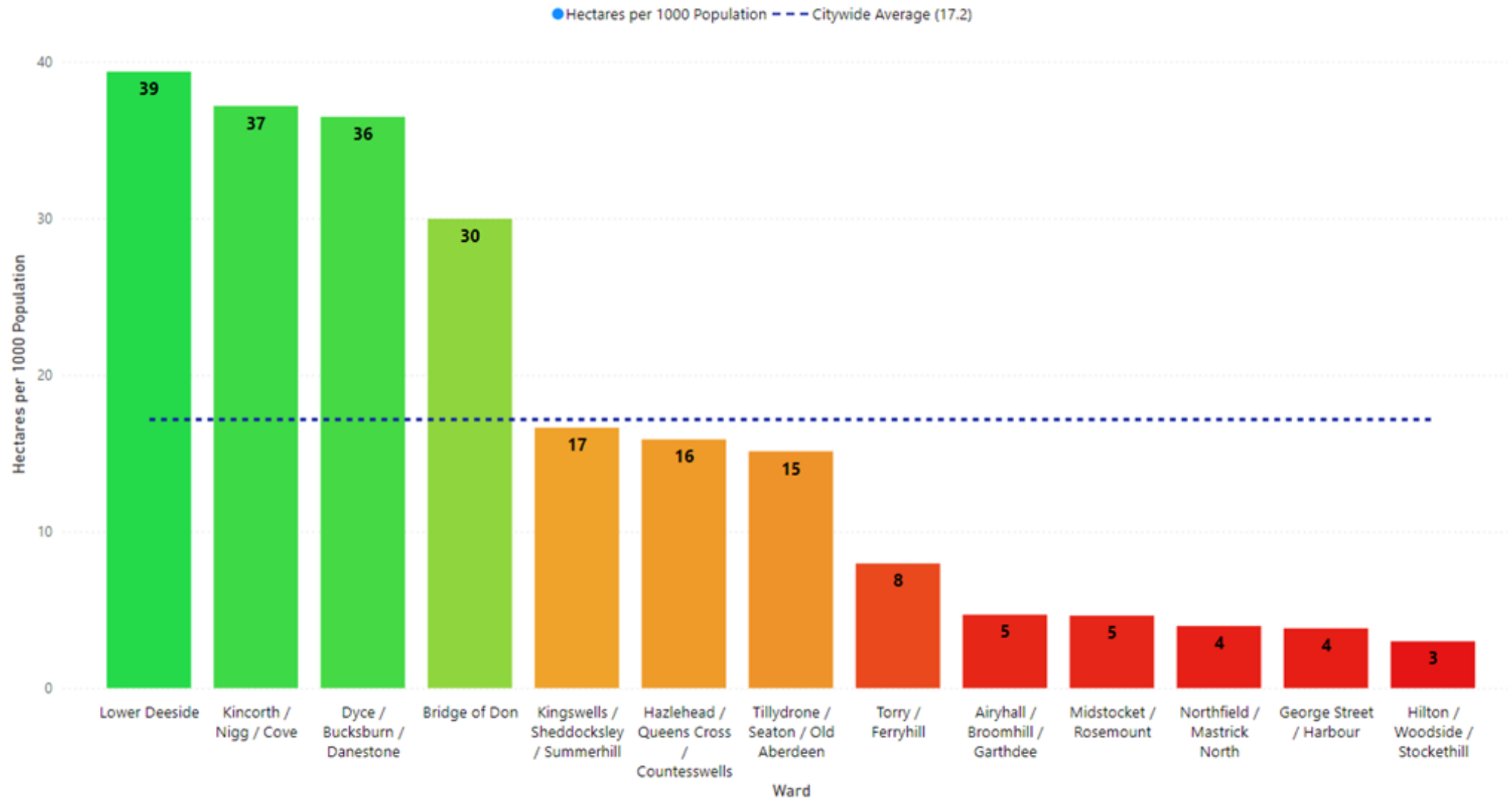


Open Space Hectares by Ward



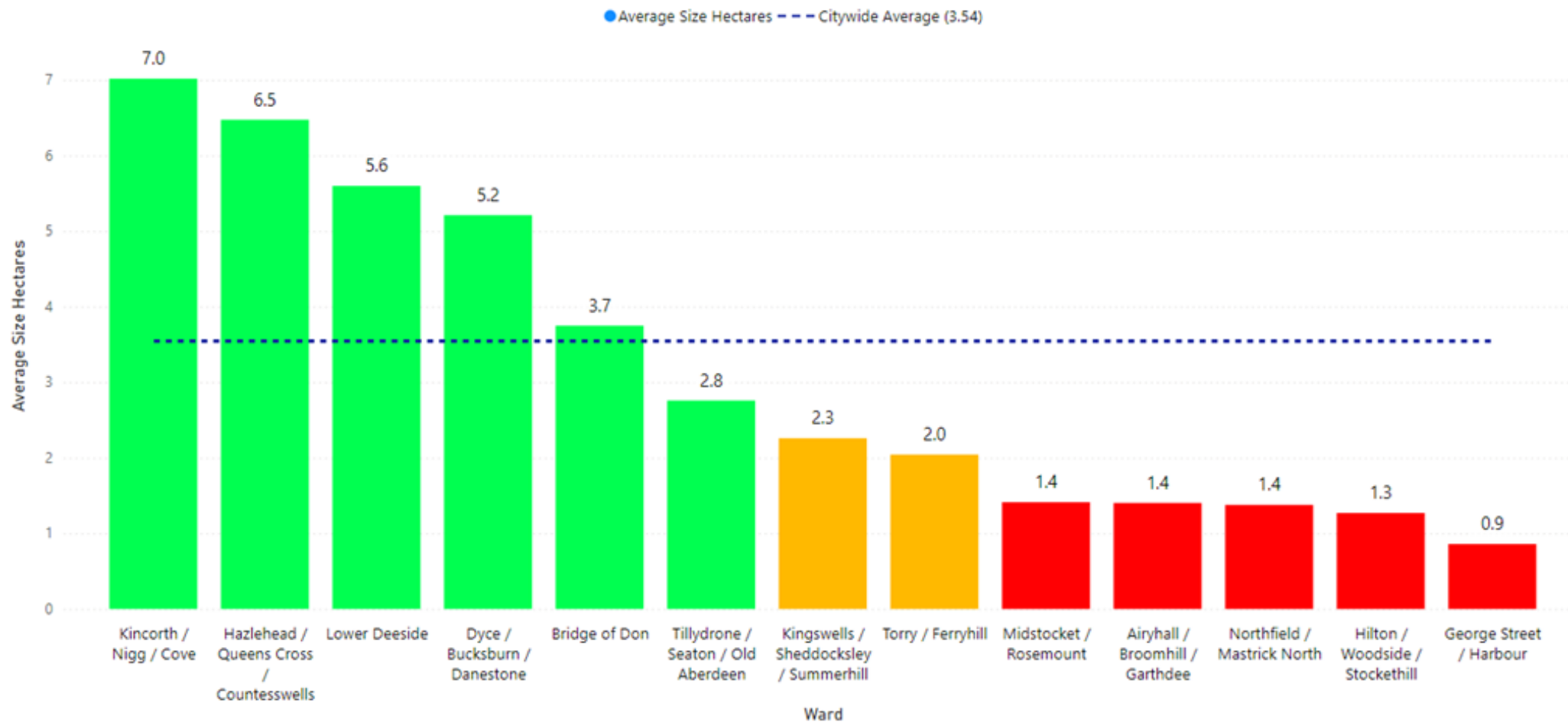
## OPEN SPACE – HECTARES PER 1,000 PEOPLE

Hectares per 1,000 population by Ward



OPEN SPACE – AVERAGE WARD OPEN SPACE SIZE

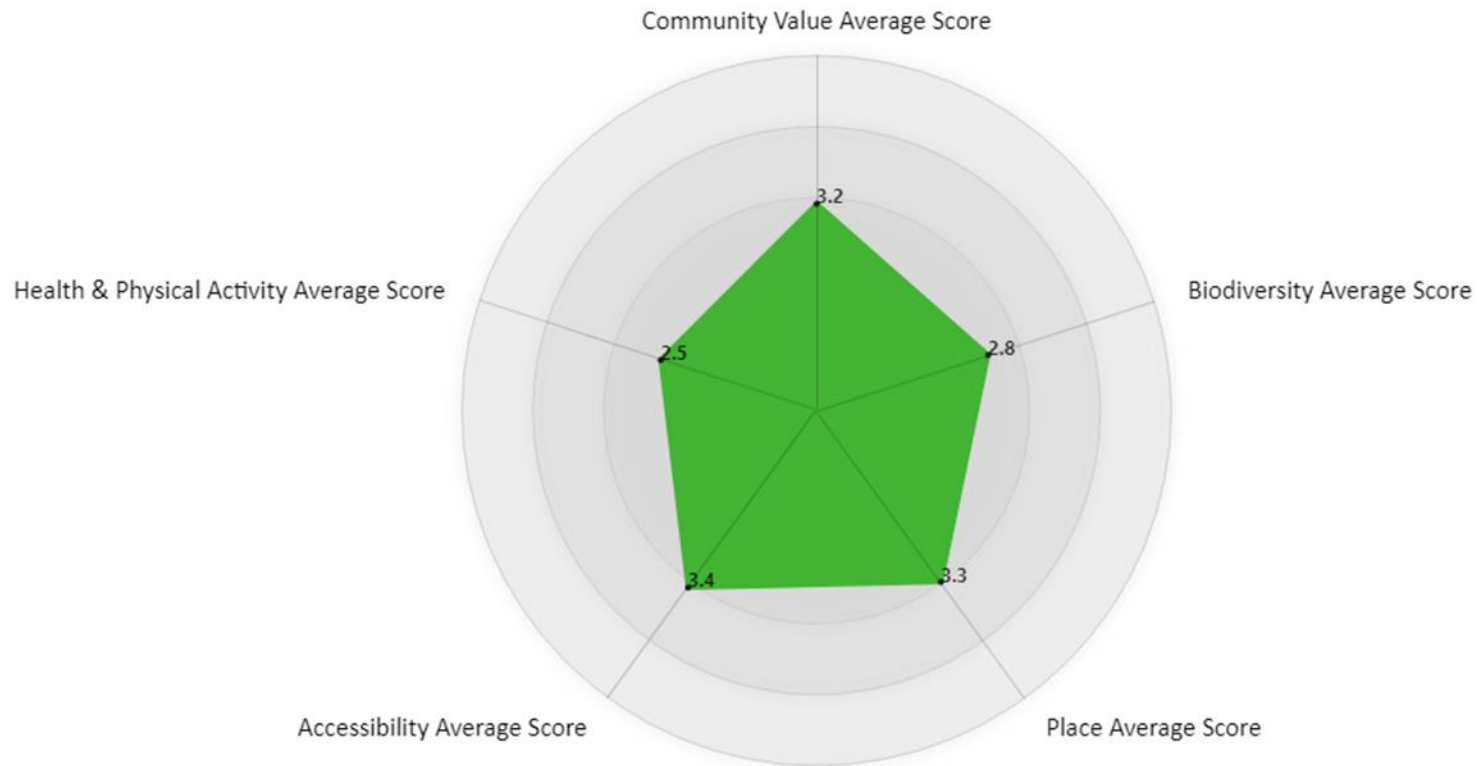
Average Ward Open Space Size



OPEN SPACE – QUALITY

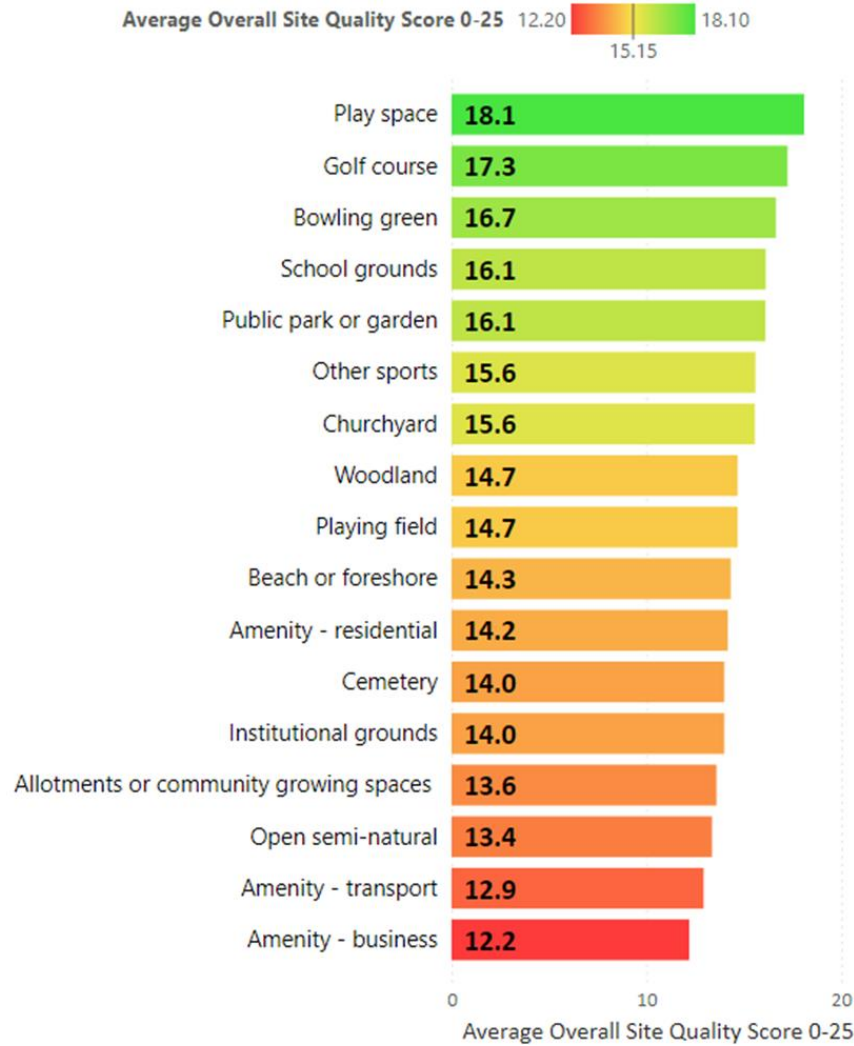
Open Space Audit Scoring 0-5 by Theme, Aberdeen City

Aberdeen City ● Aberdeen City

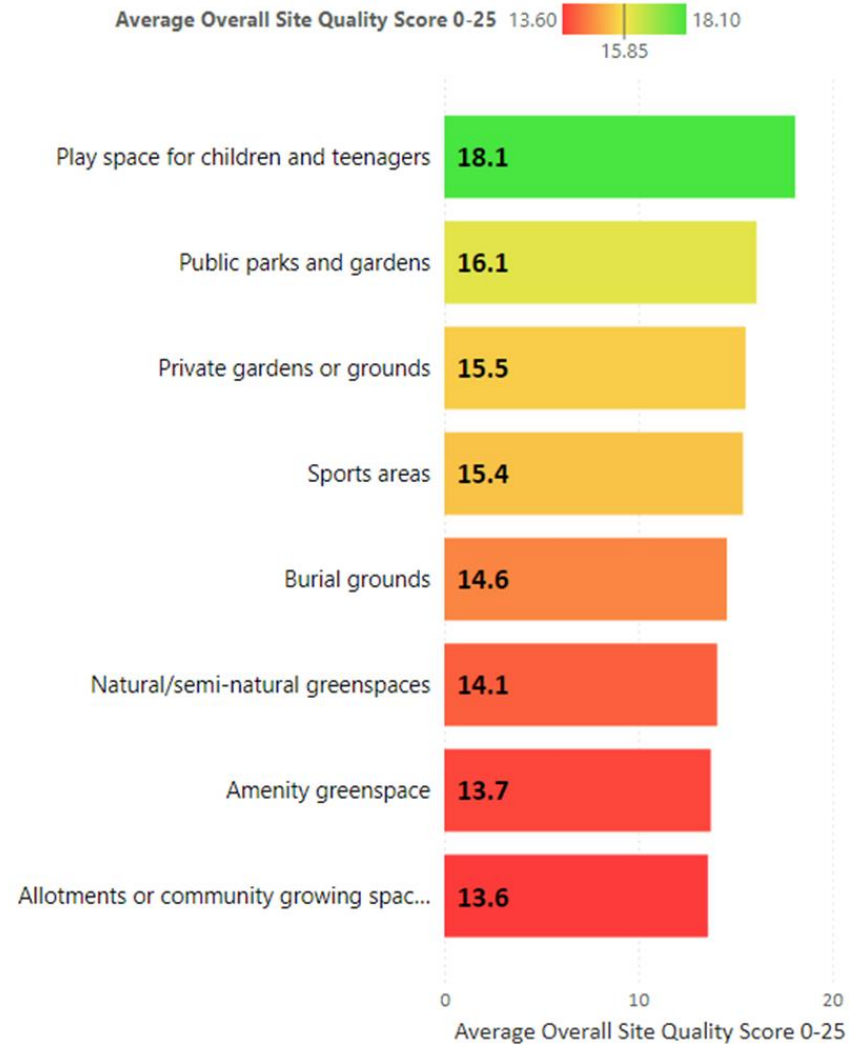


OPEN SPACE – QUALITY BY TYPE

Average Overall Site Quality Score by Open Space Sub T...

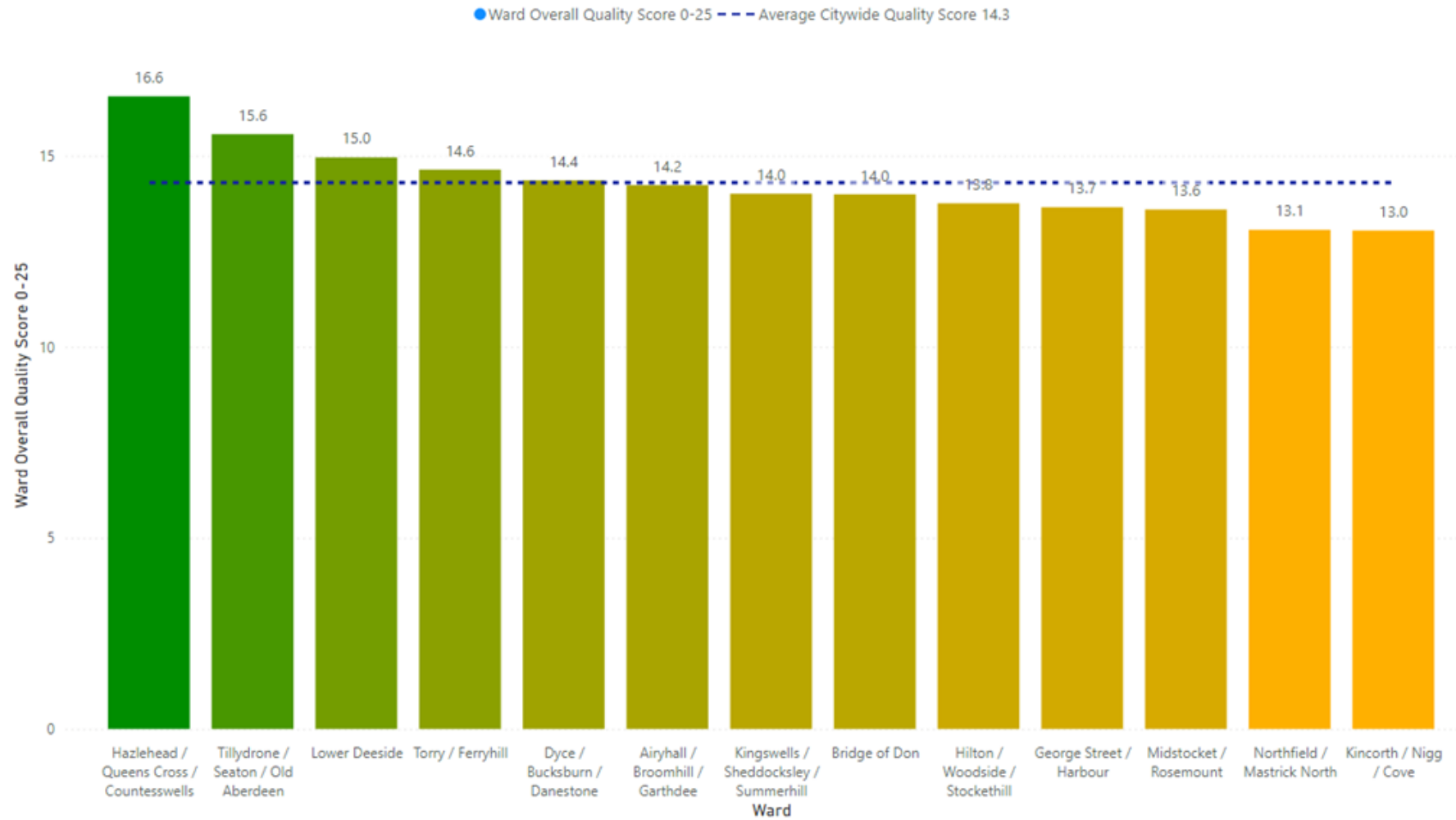


Average Overall Site Quality Score by Open Space Type



## OPEN SPACE – QUALITY BY WARD

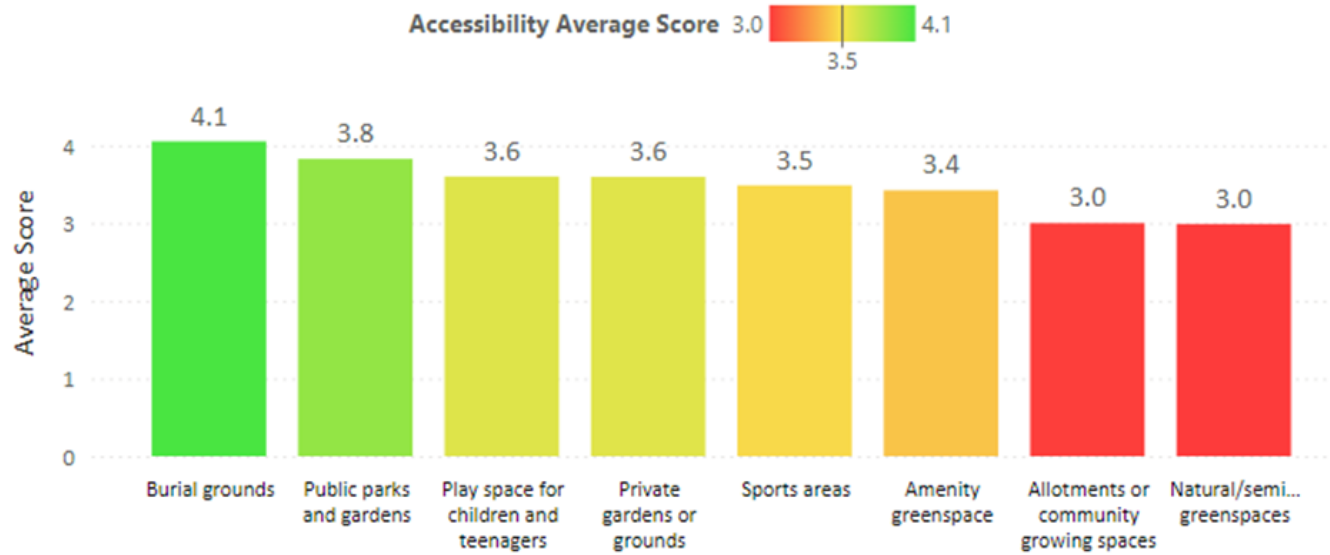
Ward Average Quality Score 0-25



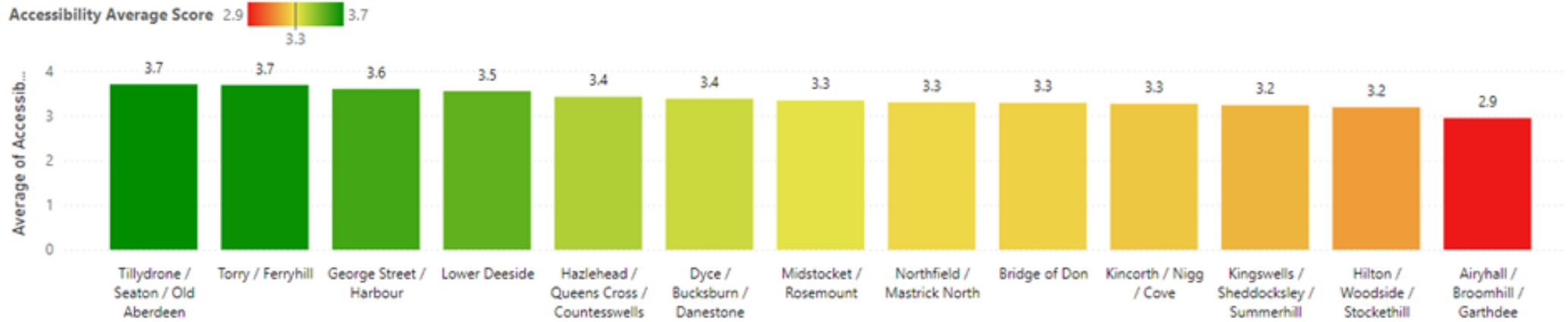
APPENDIX C – OPEN SPACE ACCESSIBILITY

ACCESSIBILITY BY OPEN SPACE TYPE

Average Accessibility Score by Open Space Type

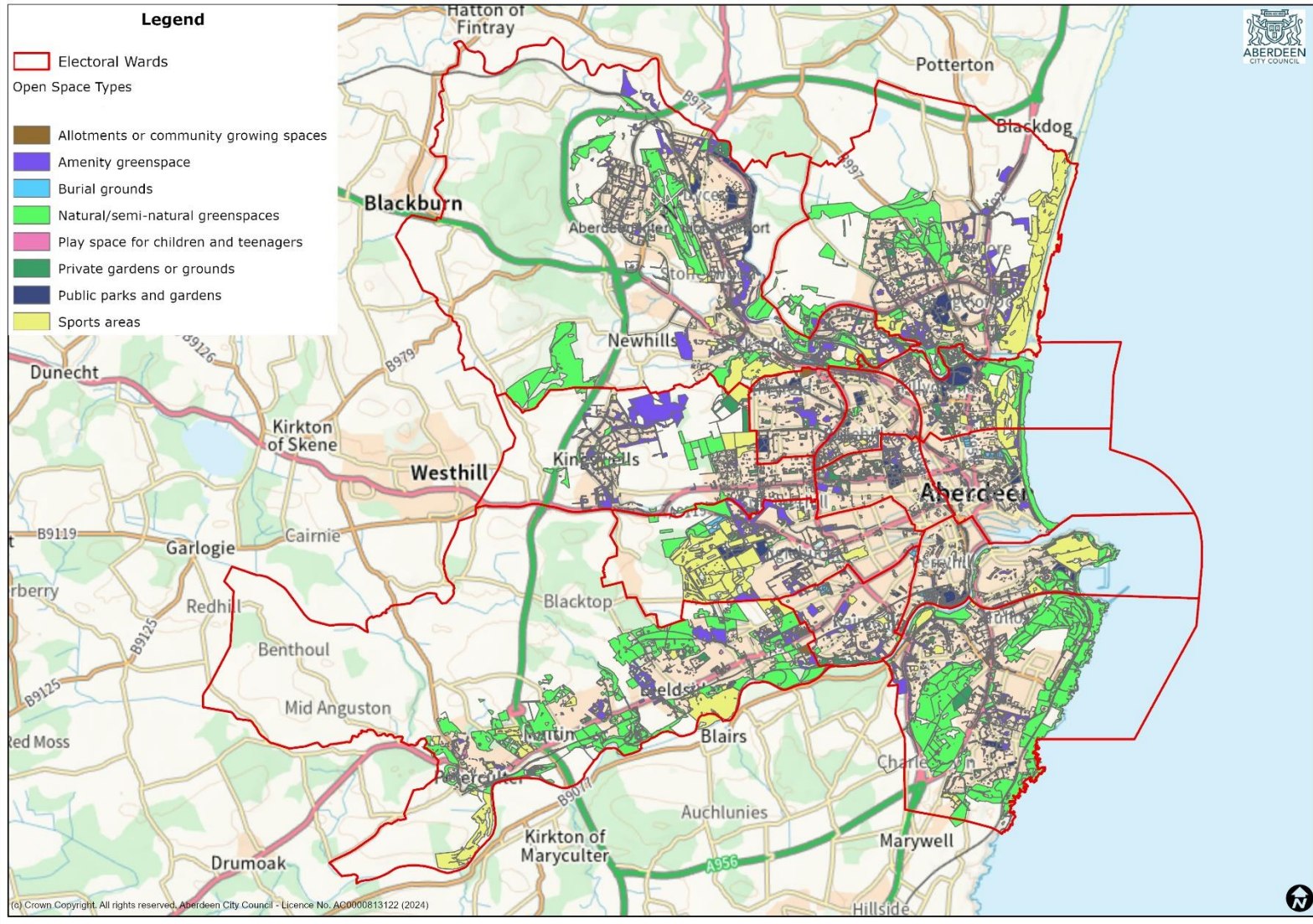


Accessibility Score by Ward

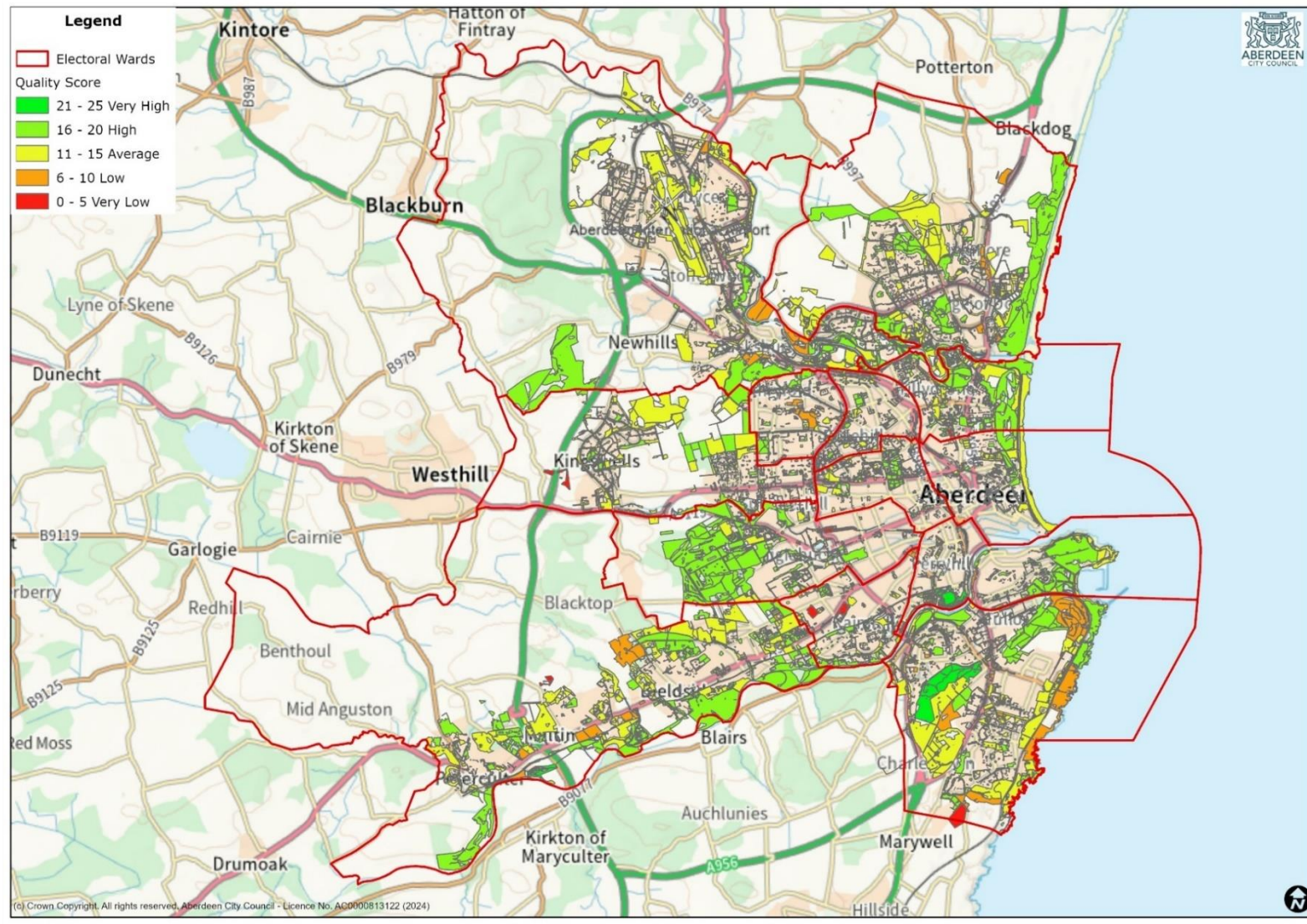




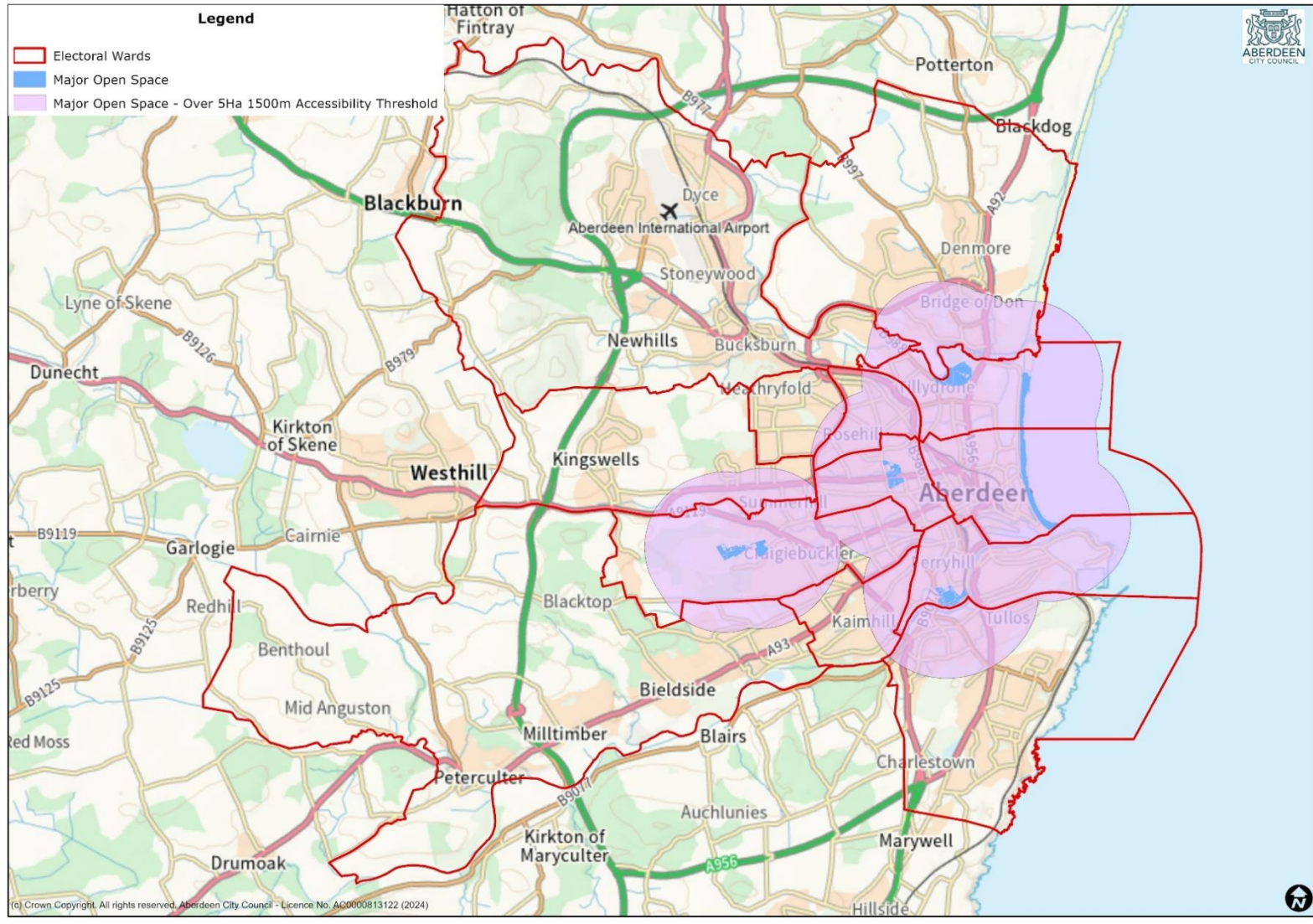
OPEN SPACE TYPES



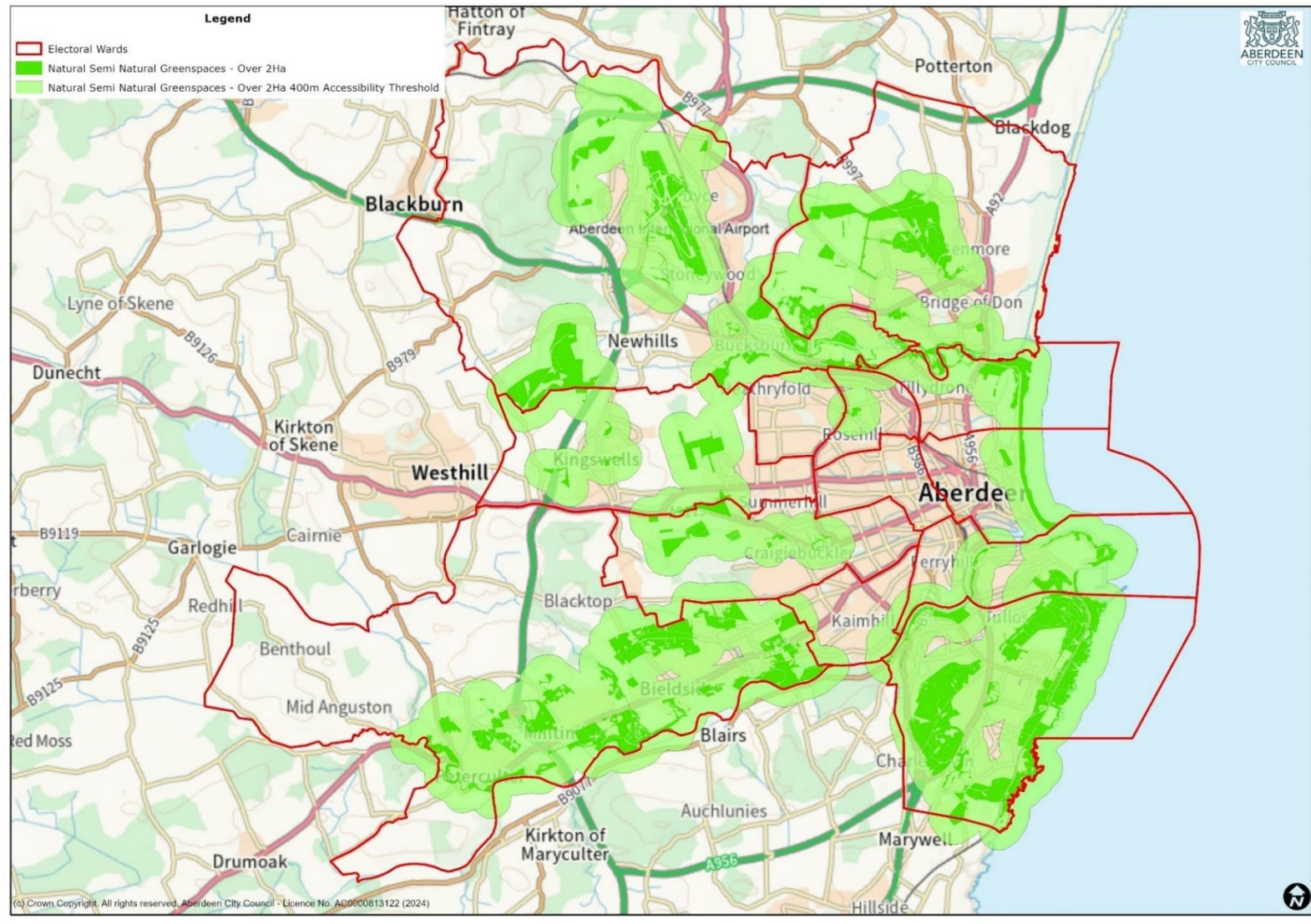


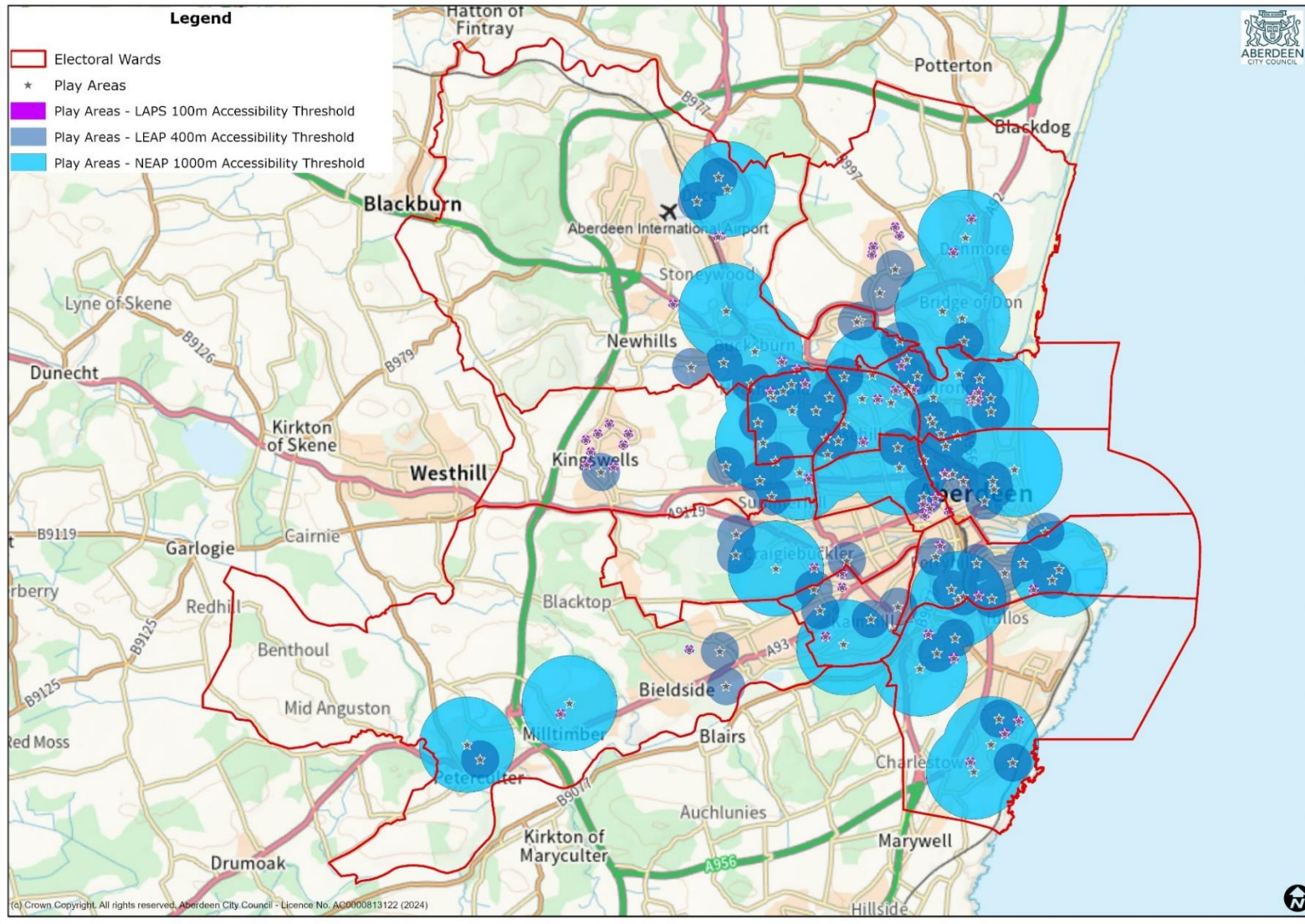


MAJOR OPEN SPACE



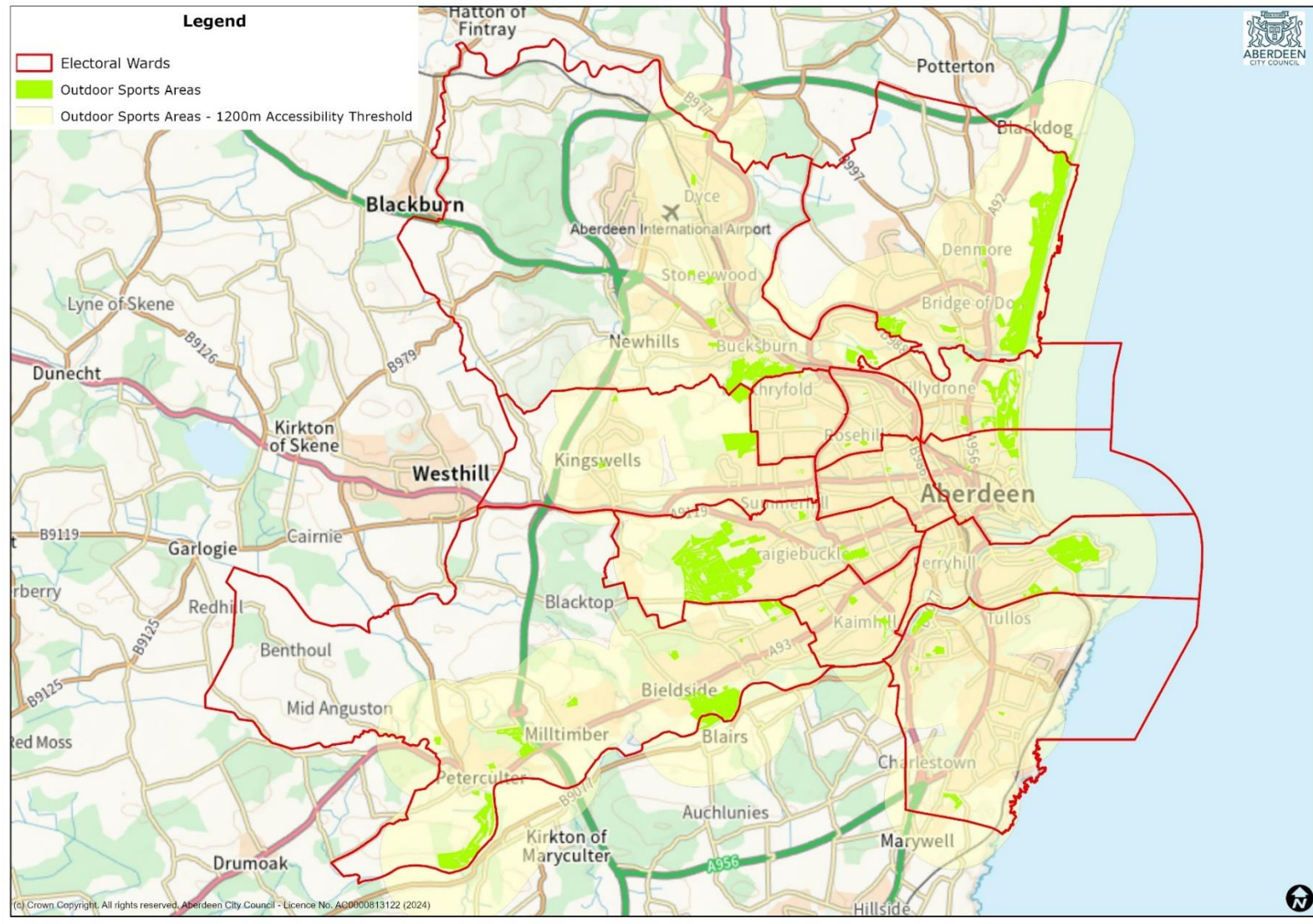


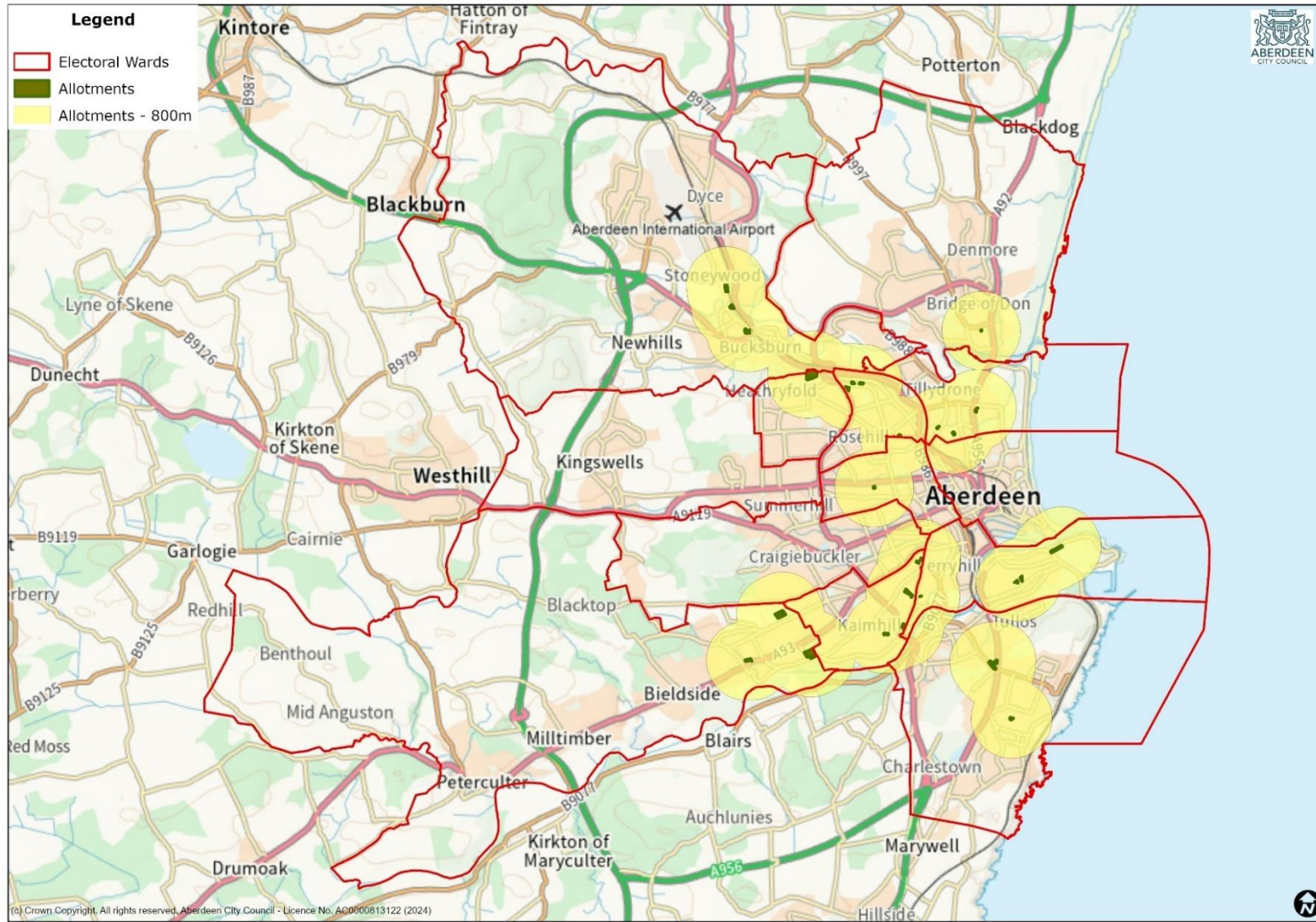






# OUTDOOR SPORTS AREAS

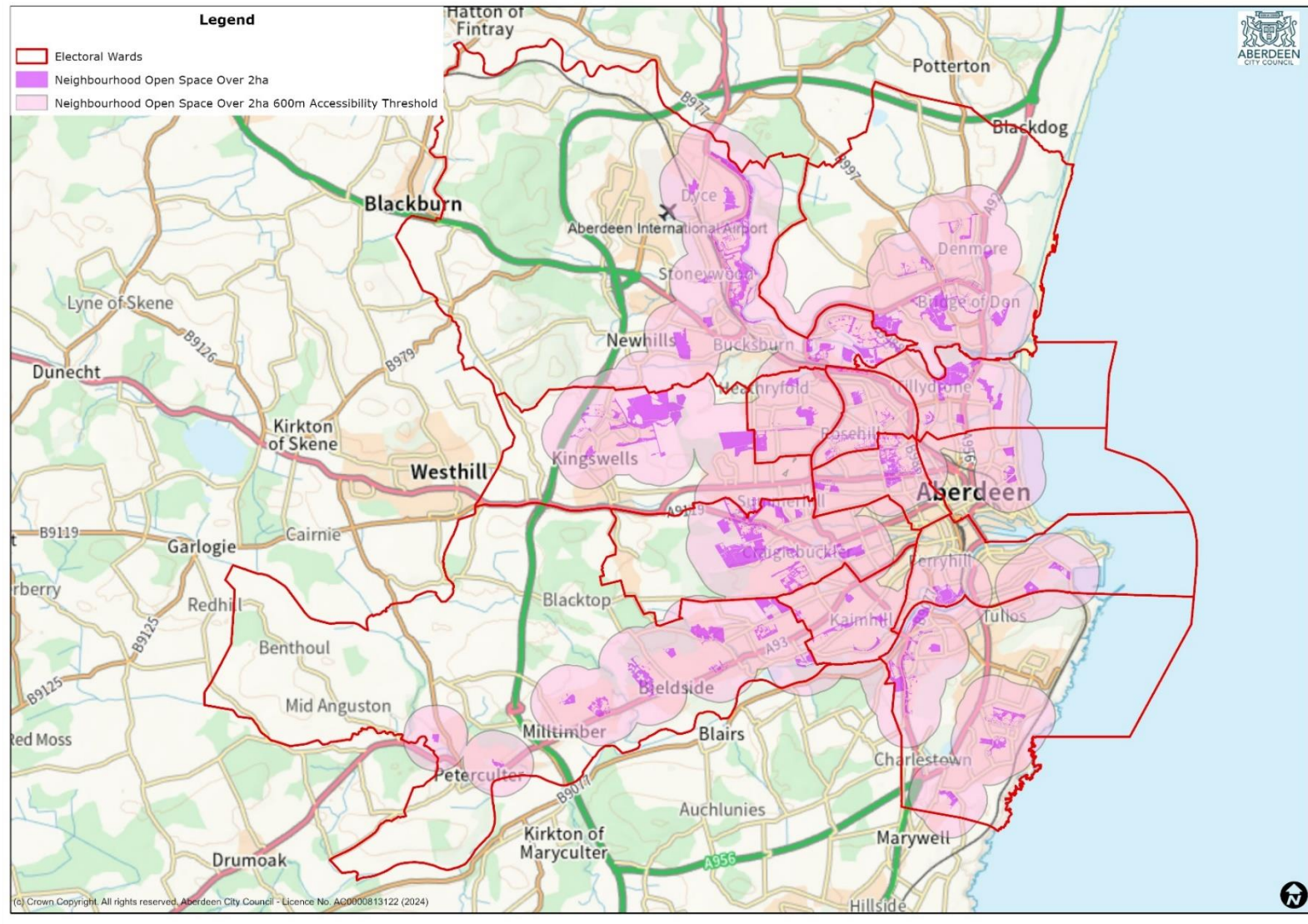












**General notes for surveying a site**

- Walk around/ view the whole site before starting to score the site, taking any notes as you see fit
- Take photographs of the site – to give a general overview of the site and to show strong points, issues, and opportunities of the site
- Keep in mind the weather conditions and how these may be affecting your perception of the site
- When totalling the score for a site a Y (yes) scores 3 and N (no) scores 1
- If N/A (not applicable) has been selected then no score should be recorded, this means that it will not affect the average score for that section
- 5 is the highest/ best score available, and 1 is the lowest/ worst score
- To calculate the score for a section of the questionnaire add up all the scores you have given and divide this by the number of questions answered (in other words ignoring any questions which you have marked as N/A). Round this number to the nearest whole number, round up for 0.5

**Introduction Section**

1	Name of Surveyor(s)	Full name of the surveyor(s) completing this site survey.
2	Date & Time of Survey	Date and time the survey was commenced at.
3	Weather Conditions	This should be kept general, nothing too detailed is required. This is simply to help make it clear weather conditions may have affected the survey of a site e.g. frequency of use may appear to be low due to adverse weather.
4	Site ID & Site Name	This field will either be pre-populated, or this information will be provided to you prior to going on site. Please ensure this is clearly filled in either way, so it is clear which site the form is for.
5	Primary Land Use	From the Function types list (overleaf) select the one which is most appropriate for the site. If you are unsure fill in two or more function types but give an indication as to the order of prominence.

<b>Function types</b>
Public park or garden
Private garden
School grounds
Institutional grounds
Amenity – residential or business
Amenity transport
Play space

Playing field	
Golf course	
Tennis court	
Bowling green	
Other sports	
Natural	Woodland
	Open semi-natural
	Open water
	Beach or foreshore
Allotments or community growing spaces	
Churchyard	
Cemetery	
Camping or caravan park	
Areas undergoing land use change	
Unknown	

### Accessible and Well Connected

A1	Fit for purpose core paths	<p>Any Core Paths running through a site will be marked on the site map, if a path is not marked as a Core Path then it should be scored under A2. If there are no Core Paths within the site, then mark this question as N/A.</p> <p>The main points to consider as to what a path should score are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the path surface in good condition (i.e. is it even, no potholes, no standing water/ drainage issue)?</li> <li>- Is the path level, of a gentle gradient or is it steep?</li> <li>- Are there any obstacles on the path which could make access difficult (i.e. gates, barriers, narrow widths, steps)?</li> </ul> <p>It should also be considered whether the type of path is appropriate for the open space that it is in. For instance, in a busy, formal park you would expect the main paths within this space to be of high quality and a tarmac surface. However, in a less well used, or more informal or rural open space an informal, unbound/ gravel path, or even a grass path, is probably suitable for that location. Therefore, the score given should take this into account.</p> <p>Any specific issues that are spotted on the paths should be noted.</p>
A2	Fit for purpose other paths	<p>If there are no paths in the site, or none which haven't already been covered under A1, then mark this question as N/A. However, if there are no paths whatsoever and it is felt that the site should have path(s), then the site should score a 1.</p> <p>The main points to consider as to what a path should score are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the path surface in good condition (i.e. is it even, no potholes, no standing water/ drainage issue)?</li> <li>- Is the path level, of a gentle gradient or is it steep?</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are there any obstacles on the path which could make access difficult (i.e. gates, barriers, narrow widths, steps)?</li> </ul> <p>It should also be considered whether the type of path is appropriate for the open space that it is in. For instance, in a busy, formal park you would expect the main paths within this space to be of high quality and a tarmac surface. However, in a less well used, or more informal or rural open space an informal, unbound/ gravel path, or even a grass path, is probably suitable for that location. Therefore, the score given should take this into account.</p> <p>Any specific issues that are spotted on the paths should be noted.</p>
A3	Equal access for all, including wheelchair accessible (no adverse gradients, barriers to access etc.)	<p>Consider how accessible, and useable, the site is for the less able bodied. Consider issues a wheelchair user may face. Think of issues such as steps, steep gradients, difficult surfaces/ conditions underfoot, trip hazards etc.</p> <p>Features such as dropped kerbs are useful both for wheelchair users and for pushchairs. Flat sections (resting platforms) within a steep gradient path allow users to rest if required. Handrails on steep sloping paths can also be beneficial. Consider these mitigating features when scoring the site.</p> <p>Those with visual and/ or hearing impairments should also be considered. Features such as tactile paving, braille signs etc. can be of benefit to such individuals.</p> <p>Also consider how accessible the site is for other user types than pedestrians alone e.g. cyclists and horse riders who also have the right to access most land and inland water, just like pedestrians, under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.</p>
A4	Connects with other transport modes e.g. public transport, cycle network/ cycle parking, car parking	<p>A site should score highly the closer/ easier to access transport modes are from the site. The more modes that can be easily accessed the higher the score should be. Base this simply on what you can easily spot from the site (i.e. bus stops, cycle paths etc.) as if these cannot be easily found from the site then they do not actually link up.</p>
A5	No barriers to access	<p>A site should score highly here if there appear to be no barriers to access. If the site is closed off and difficult to get to it should score lowly. Barriers which isolate a site and make it more difficult to access such as railway lines, roads, waterways, walls, fences etc. would be examples of this.</p>
A6	Entrances are well located and safe	<p>Things to consider here are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are there any entrances?</li> <li>- Are entrances easy to find?</li> <li>- Do they bring you into a logical location within the site (i.e. a location where a path exists, not a cut-off part of the site)?</li> <li>- Is the entrance safe – i.e. any structures (such as gates) are in good condition, the entrance has good visibility and lighting etc? This is simply about the safety of the infrastructure itself,</li> </ul>

		not the general perception of how safe you feel using the site, that is covered in C1.
A7	Effective signage/ interpretation appropriate for the site	<p>This covers both directional signage (waymarkers, fingerposts etc.) and interpretation panels. This includes both signage within the site as well as any signage out with the boundary of the site, but which directs people into the site or through it.</p> <p>This question is only applicable for some sites i.e. you would expect signage at major open spaces such as large public parks and along popular routes. However, you wouldn't necessarily expect or require signage at smaller, amenity sites. If you think signage is not required at the site, then mark this question as N/A.</p> <p>The surveyor should make a note if they think (extra) signage is required, regardless of how you have scored the site.</p>
A8	4G/ free Wifi access/ mobile reception	<p>Is there either 4G access available or access to a free to use Wifi service (such as 'Aberdeen-city-connect') or mobile reception?</p> <p>This is simply a Yes or No question as to score on a 1-5 basis would require going into strength/ speed of connection etc. This would be too complicated and too dependent on an individual surveyor's phone.</p>

### Attractive and Appealing Places

P1	Welcoming entrances and attractive boundary features	<p>This question is only for formal entrances (i.e. clearly marked entrances such as gates etc., not simply anywhere you can enter a site), otherwise mark this question as N/A. This question does not cover access to the site/ whether there is an entrance or not, that is covered in A6. This question instead focusses on the quality (particularly aesthetically) of what entrances there are.</p> <p>The score here should be based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How easy any entrances are to find, i.e. not hidden – signage can help to make an entrance obvious</li> <li>- If the entrance is attractive, it shouldn't put you off entering the site</li> <li>- Also look at site surroundings such as walls and fences. Do these enhance the look of the site or detract from it and discourage use of the site, for instance high industrial fencing tends to be unattractive and may make a site less appealing to enter</li> </ul> <p>If there is an entrance opportunity/requirement this should be noted.</p>
P2	Low levels of litter	<p>A site should score highly here if there are low levels of litter. The more litter there is the lower it should score.</p> <p>Remember that cigarette butts are forms of litter.</p>
P3	Clean and free from dog fouling	<p>A site should score highly here if it is largely/ entirely free from dog fouling. The more dog fouling that is present the lower it should score.</p>



		<p>Note that you are not expected to survey every part of the site in detail for evidence of dog fouling.</p> <p>It should be considered where any dog fouling is. If it is on the paths and any areas of mown grass/ sports pitches which will be heavily used by the public this is an issue. If, however, any dog fouling is restricted to peripheral areas this is not such an issue.</p>
P4	Are there general waste bins/ dog waste/ mixed recycling	<p>The wider the provision of bins is the more a site should score. Remember that a formal park for instance should have good provision of bins, of all types. However, smaller, amenity or rural sites would not be expected to have as many, if any bins so take the type/ size/ popularity of the site into account before giving a score.</p> <p>In rural sites bins are normally not required and it is actually better not to have bins as this encourages people to take their rubbish home with them. If the site seems to fall into this category, then mark this question as N/A.</p> <p>Consider the quality of the bins when deciding on your score. If bins are in poor condition this can put off use. Also, people often don't like to have to physically lift lids on bins for hygiene reasons so would rather have open apertures to put rubbish through or have foot operated lids.</p> <p>If there are no bins and there is litter (and/ or dog fouling), this is an issue that can potentially be resolved by installing relevant bins. If there are bins but there is still littering (and/ or dog fouling), then this is more difficult and is likely a behaviour issue.</p> <p>If there is a clear need for bins (further bins) the surveyor should note this.</p>
P5	Public toilets	<p>This question will be Not Applicable (N/A) for the vast majority of sites as public toilets clearly cannot and should not be expected in all sites. Formal parks would generally be expected to have publicly available toilets and these sites therefore should be scored on a 1-5 basis.</p> <p>If this question is applicable to the site it should be scored based on if there are publicly available toilets within, or in close proximity to, the site and what condition these toilets generally appear to be in.</p> <p>If there are no toilets, and no toilets would be expected in the site then mark this question as N/A. If, however, there are no toilets and it is felt the site should have toilets then this would score a 1, and the need for toilets should be noted.</p>
P6	Well located furniture of good quality (benches/ picnic tables/ shelter)	<p>Benches/ picnic tables/ shelter are often common pieces of furniture to have in a site. These are not always required but are often of benefit to a site when they are in place. A more formal site (such as a public park) would be expected to have furniture of this type whereas a less formal or smaller space would be expected to require, and have, less furniture or even none. Scoring should be done with this in mind.</p>

		<p>If a site has no furniture, but it is felt none would be expected or required then mark this question as N/A.</p> <p>A site's score should be based on what furniture is there as well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The quality of said furniture, i.e. how fit for purpose and well maintained it appears to be</li> <li>- Whether the furniture is well located within the site – i.e. a picnic bench on a steep slope is not much use, neither is a bench which is difficult to access. Also, does the seat take advantage of views, is it located in the sun?</li> </ul> <p>Note any furniture which is required to improve the enjoyment of the site.</p>
P7	Does there appear to be lighting (e.g. of paths, sports areas etc.)	<p>As the surveys will be carried out during daylight hours the quality etc. of any lighting will not be able to be assessed. Therefore, this is simply a yes or no question asking whether there appears to be any lighting within the site i.e. lighting columns, lighting bollards, solar studs, floodlights etc.</p> <p>Rural sites generally do not need lighting, and in fact, lighting can have a negative impact on wildlife. Therefore, if you think that lighting wouldn't be needed at all in the site then mark this question as N/A rather than No.</p>
P8	Planting such as trees, woodland, shelter belt, shrubs, open grass, flower beds, natural vegetation	<p>Appropriate planting is one of the main attributes of a site which can make it attractive and appealing to the public. The variety of planting should be proportional to the size of and range of functions of a site. Planting functions include habitats for wildlife, or for colour during summer, for example. Often on larger sites, it is possible to achieve a variety of planting which performs a range of functions without it being confusing. Smaller sites with a wide variety of planting may have a fussy, overly complex and confused appearance. Therefore, consider the scale of the site and what it can accommodate, without it becoming overly confused and a mish mash of planting, before scoring it.</p> <p>Also consider the surrounding environment. For instance, in a heathland or woodland environment there may be less variety of planting, but this should still score well if it is felt this is appropriate for the site.</p>
P9	Appropriately managed vegetation (grass, trees, bushes, shrubs etc.)	<p>The type of site should be considered here before scoring it. Is it formal or informal, urban or rural? A formal, urban public park would be expected to have most of its vegetation well managed, unless there is an intentional wild area or natural habitat, or there are areas of grass intentionally left long under trees. However, less formal and most rural sites may be less intensively managed, or may appear to not be managed at all, and this is perfectly acceptable.</p> <p>The score here should be based on appropriateness of how the vegetation is managed within the specific site.</p>

		<p>It may be that you feel the site is overly managed, in which case you can give a lower score because of that.</p> <p>Please note any particular issues which you spot regarding management of the space, even if they haven't affected the score given. This can be issues of a site being under or over managed.</p>
P10	Pleasing views	<p>Does the site provide pleasing views either within the site itself or to features outwith the site? This could be of buildings, the wider green/ open space, rivers, open water, the wider landscape/ townscape etc. Is the site important in views from a gateway route into the city, such as from a major road, railway-line or core path?</p> <p>Try not to let your individual opinion affect this score. Try to think about what other people may appreciate in a view which you may not.</p>
P11	Provides intimate/ secluded space	<p>Does the site provide an intimate/ secluded space, this could be the site as a whole or simply be a part of the site?</p> <p>Open/ green spaces can sometimes be the only places to provide a calm place away from the busy city and this is an important function of open spaces. Therefore, factors such as how quiet this area is, how few manmade features (buildings, roads etc.) you can see should be considered when scoring. Basically, how peaceful or detached from busy areas does the area feel?</p>
P12	Strong, positive character/ identity	<p>Does the open space have a strong character/ clear identity to it? This means, is there a visual consistency throughout the site which helps to give the space a character of its own. Is there a clear style and intention in the design of the space? Does the site design relate well to the site's function (e.g. formal or informal) and its surroundings (built, historic, natural)? This can be achieved by the arrangement of built structures/ planting/ enclosure and use of materials (e.g. walls all of the same style/ scale appropriate to the location), also through planting (such as hedgerows/ trees) or absence of planting appropriate to the area. For example, coastal open spaces are exposed and wouldn't characteristically contain trees but may have important coastal grasslands. If the site does have a strong character/ identity to it then it should score highly.</p>
P13	Cultural features such as monuments, statues, artwork etc.	<p>This is a yes or no question (if there is no feature mark as N/A). As not all sites can be expected to have this it would be unfair to score it, however, if a site does have such a feature it can enhance the site and should therefore boost its score by marking as yes.</p> <p>If it is felt that the site could have a cultural feature, make a note of the fact that you feel a feature could be present here.</p> <p>Such features include: monuments, statues, memorials, fountains, artwork (including graffiti art) etc.</p>



## Opportunities for Physical Activity

H1	Is there a sport pitch such as formal/ informal pitch, goalposts etc.	<p>This covers pitches/ courts/ goalposts/ bowling greens etc. which could be used for, football, rugby, basketball, tennis, bowls etc.</p> <p>SportAberdeen are carrying out their own playing pitch survey which will be used to ascertain the quality of pitches etc. Therefore, this is simply a yes or no question.</p>
H2	Is there an equipped play area	<p>This refers to play areas for young children, older children and adults. Score this based on the amount and variety of equipment that is available. Also consider the apparent quality and maintenance of the equipment when scoring.</p> <p>Examples of play equipment you may expect to see are: swings, roundabout, see-saw, slide, climbing bars/ rope/ nets, springing seats etc.</p> <p>Make a note of any serious issues you may spot with any equipped play area. However, play areas are also separately assessed by the Environmental Services team under their Play Area Review which considers safety of equipment etc.</p>
H3	Provide for a diverse range of play, sport, outdoor activities and recreational opportunities for a range of ages	<p>Remember that goal posts, basketball hoops etc. are not the only way to provide for physical activity. A grassed area can allow for many activities (e.g. yoga, frisbee etc.), trees can provide opportunities for children to play in, paths can potentially allow for walking, jogging, cycling, equestrian use etc., and streams/ rivers can allow for water-based recreation (kayaking).</p> <p>Try to think about what range of opportunities may be available here, not just what you yourself would be interested in.</p> <p>This is site dependent and should be scored accordingly. It would generally be expected that less formal sites would provide less of a range, however that is not to say that various activities may not be catered for. More formal sites, such as parks, would be expected to have more opportunities available.</p> <p>Different age groups require different things to allow them to engage in physical activity in a space. For instance, for a space to be useable by the elderly, even just for walking, the provision of benches to rest at could be important. For younger users, actual play equipment is often desirable.</p>

## Community Value

C1	Good sense of personal security	<p>How safe do you feel safe in the space? Do you feel comfortable being in the site or do you feel that you shouldn't be there? Is there an easy escape route, are exit locations clear? Are there any narrow areas between buildings, walls or vegetation, or underpasses where you could feel trapped? Think about how users might feel vulnerable and</p>
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		<p>how the space might feel at different times of day or the year – use this to reach a balanced score for the site.</p> <p>This question excludes natural surveillance, that is scored in C3.</p>
C2	Absence of any signs of anti-social behaviour e.g. vandalism	<p>A site should score highly here where there are little or no signs of anti-social behaviour. If there are signs of anti-social behaviour the site should score lower dependant on how common and severe these issues are.</p> <p>Examples of anti-social behaviour would be: vandalism, negative graffiti, litter, fly tipping etc.</p> <p>Any forms of anti-social behaviour which are found should be noted as they may require to be reported.</p>
C3	Good levels of natural surveillance	<p>Natural surveillance is where crime is deterred in a space because the site is easily visible to the public, especially from outwith the site.</p> <p>A site should score highly if there is good visibility into the site from areas where other members of the public are likely to be i.e. a road, housing, other public place etc. A site should also score well where lots of people are using the site itself as these fellow users provide the natural surveillance. The less visible the site is, and by less people, the lower it should therefore score.</p> <p>This is considering the site in general, i.e. a corner of a site may have poor natural surveillance, but this shouldn't overly affect the score if the majority of the site is easily visible.</p>
C4	Close proximity to community facilities e.g. shops	<p>This is simply asking how close the site is to facilities which the public are likely to be using. These will likely make the site busier and may mean that the site forms part of an important network/ hub of local, publicly used spaces and facilities which are important to communities.</p> <p>Community facilities include places such as: schools, community centres, shops, health centres etc.</p>
C5	Presence of food-growing activities e.g. allotments, raised beds etc.	<p>This is a yes or no question, mark as yes if food-growing is present on the site, no if it is not.</p> <p>Food-growing could be taking place in the following ways: allotments, orchards, community gardens, in borders, large containers, against walls or in raised beds for example. Look for clues such as wooden edges to raised beds, lines of vegetables, containers or borders which contain herbs, fruits and vegetable plants.</p> <p>Make any relevant notes about what food-growing is available on the site.</p>
C6	Would this site be good for growing food in the future	<p>If it is already a food-growing site could it be expanded or enhanced?</p> <p>This is a yes or no question. Mark as yes if this site would be good for food-growing (or for expanding food-growing) in the future, no if it wouldn't. Please consider if the site is accessible and could have the physical attributes needed for food growing when answering this; for</p>

		<p>example, does it receive good sunlight and is it sheltered from the wind? Make any relevant notes about why this could be a good food-growing site in the future.</p> <p>Please note this question is being asked to gather information for separate work relating to food-growing and will not be included in the overall scoring for the site.</p>
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## Biodiversity

B1	Does the space connect to the wider habitat/ other green spaces	<p>If this open/ green space is totally isolated from any other open/ green space or any green corridors then it should score low. If the space is well connected either directly to other open/ green spaces or well connected to green corridors then it should score highly.</p> <p>If green spaces are connected, via green corridors, this provides a means for wildlife to move from place to place. It can also provide a more attractive visual link. When green spaces are isolated wildlife are restricted and this can limit biodiversity of an area. Examples of green corridors would be railway embankments, watercourses, grass verges, tree rows, shelterbelts, hedgerows etc., even street trees can provide some habitat connectivity.</p> <p>The larger and more diverse the connections the higher a site should score, i.e. a continuous thick hedgerow would score more than separate street trees.</p> <p>The aerial photograph/ map of the site should help you to identify if there are any green corridors and/ or other open/ green spaces that this space connects with.</p>
B2	NESBReC Biodiversity Score – double weighted	NESBReC (North East Scotland Biological Records Centre) will be surveying the sites to provide this biodiversity score, the surveyor does not need to complete this score therefore. It is double weighted to ensure the NESBReC score provides the bulk of the score for this category and will be added later.

## Ecosystems Services

### What are Ecosystem Services?

The natural environment provides a wide range of benefits to people. The term ecosystem services is defined as the benefits human populations derive, directly or indirectly, from ecosystem functions (Costanza et al 1997).

OR

The multiple benefits people derive from ecosystems are known as ecosystem services.

## Ecosystem Function

Ecosystem function is an intermediate between process and service. For example, if a tree intercepts air or water borne pollutants it is an ecosystem function. If that function improves local air and water quality, then the air and water quality improvement is the Ecosystem Service. Similarly, the role of woodlands in slowing down the passage of water is a function which has the potential of delivering a service (water flow regulation which reduces flood risk).

## Scoring

In this audit we are looking to identify what benefit a site is providing to the following Ecosystem Services: air purification, carbon storage and sequestration, run-off reduction, temperature regulation, noise reduction and benefit to pollinators. Other than benefit to pollinators which has its own criteria the rest shall be determined by ascertaining what the site is physically covered with. A desk-based study using these figures will then determine the Ecosystem Services score a site shall receive. Therefore, you should approximate the percentage site coverage of the following (**please also note what percentage coverage you thought there was for each criterion**, it is accepted this won't be exactly accurate):

		<b>Approximate percentage site coverage</b>	<b>Score</b>
E1	<b>% Tree cover</b>	75-100% of the site	<b>5</b>
		50-74% of the site	<b>4</b>
		25-49% of the site	<b>3</b>
		10-24% of the site	<b>2</b>
		0-9% of the site	<b>1</b>
E2	<b>% Shrub cover</b>	75-100% of the site	<b>5</b>
		50-74% of the site	<b>4</b>
		25-49% of the site	<b>3</b>
		10-24% of the site	<b>2</b>
		0-9% of the site	<b>1</b>
E3	<b>% Grass cover</b>	75-100% of the site	<b>5</b>
		50-74% of the site	<b>4</b>
		25-49% of the site	<b>3</b>
		10-24% of the site	<b>2</b>
		0-9% of the site	<b>1</b>

E4	<b>% Open water cover</b>	75-100% of the site	<b>5</b>
		50-74% of the site	<b>4</b>
		25-49% of the site	<b>3</b>
		10-24% of the site	<b>2</b>
		0-9% of the site	<b>1</b>
E5	<b>% Impervious surface cover</b>	0-9% of the site	<b>5</b>
	An impervious surface is something which water cannot freely drain through and will instead run-off to other areas. Examples are tarmac, concrete, buildings etc.). <b>As this is a negative in terms of ecosystems services the percentages are flipped over so low coverage scores best.</b>	10-24% of the site	<b>4</b>
		25-49% of the site	<b>3</b>
		50-74% of the site	<b>2</b>
		75-100% of the site	<b>1</b>

E6	<b>Benefit to pollinators</b>	If 75-100% of the site is covered by woodland, trees, long grass and flowers (excepting rhododendrons and azaleas)	<b>5</b>
	Many plants and flowers can benefit pollinators, therefore the percentage of the site covered by habitat for pollinators is used to score this question.  Rhododendrons and azaleas are generally accepted as not being good for pollinators, bees in particular, therefore please discount these from the percentage cover which you are scoring from.	If 50-74% of the site is covered by woodland, trees, long grass and flowers (excepting rhododendrons and azaleas)	<b>4</b>
		If 25-49% of the site is covered by woodland, trees, long grass and flowers (excepting rhododendrons and azaleas)	<b>3</b>
		If 10-24% of the site is covered by woodland, trees, long grass and flowers (excepting rhododendrons and azaleas)	<b>2</b>
		If 0-9% of the site is covered by woodland, trees, long grass and flowers (excepting rhododendrons and azaleas)	<b>1</b>

## Final Section

6	Site Description	This should be a general, fairly high-level description of the site, highlighting any key features and uses of the site which stand out.
7	Problems	This is for any obvious issues which it appears are negatively affecting the space.  For example: signs of anti-social behaviour, vandalism, litter, lack of access, locked gates, poor drainage etc.
8	Suggested Improvements	In your opinion what improvements could be made to the site based on your findings whilst carrying out this survey.  Key things to note here may be if the site has a clear opportunity for improvements/ additions to be made in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Biodiversity – e.g. trees, woodland, water; better connection to habitats to reduce fragmentation</li> <li>- SUDs – e.g. de-culverting, de-canalising, low or wet areas suitable for water retention</li> <li>- Design improvements</li> <li>- Access/ recreation (informal)</li> <li>- Access/ activities (formal)</li> <li>- Play spaces</li> <li>- Sport pitches</li> <li>- Any other</li> </ul>
9	Frequency of Use	Whilst you have been on site, has the usage of the site by the public been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High (H)</li> <li>- Medium (M)</li> <li>- Low (L)</li> </ul> Consider the type of space and how busy you would expect it to be (i.e. you would expect a public park to be busier than a rural site).  Note any obvious reasons which may have increased or decreased this compared to the norm whilst you were there, i.e. weather conditions, time of day, special event being held etc.
10	Priority for Action	In your opinion, from viewing the site, is improvement to this space of High (H), Medium (M), or Low (L) priority.
11	Further Comments	Note any further comments you may have from surveying the site that have not been noted elsewhere in the questionnaire.

APPENDIX G – OPEN SPACE AUDIT SURVEYOR SHEET

1	Name of Surveyor(s)			
2	Date & Time of Survey			
3	Weather Conditions			
4	Site ID & Site Name			
5	Primary Land Use			
<b>ASSESSMENT CRITERIA</b>		<b>SURVEYOR'S ASSESSMENT</b>		
<b>ACCESSIBLE AND WELL CONNECTED</b>		Score		Comment
A1	Fit for purpose core paths	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
A2	Fit for purpose other paths	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
A3	Equal access for all, including wheelchair accessible (no adverse gradients, barriers to access etc)	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
A4	Connects with other transport modes e.g. public transport, cycle network / cycle parking, car parking	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
A5	No barriers to access	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
A6	Entrances are well located and safe	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
A7	Effective signage / interpretation appropriate for the site	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
A8	4G / free WiFi access / mobile reception	N/A Y / N		
<b>ACCESS SCORE (1 = low, 5 = high)</b>		1 2 3 4 5		
<b>ATTRACTIVE AND APPEALING PLACES</b>		Score		Comment
P1	Welcoming entrances and attractive boundary features	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
P2	Low levels of litter	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
P3	Clean and free from dog fouling	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
P4	Are there general waste bins / dog waste / mixed recycling	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		

P5	Public toilets	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
P6	Well located furniture of good quality (benches / picnic tables / shelter)	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
P7	Does there appear to be lighting (e.g. of paths, sports areas etc.)	N/A Y / N		
P8	Planting such as trees, woodland, shelter belt, shrubs, open grass, flower beds, natural vegetation	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
P9	Appropriately managed vegetation (grass, trees, bushes, shrubs etc.)	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
P10	Pleasing views	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
P11	Provides intimate / secluded space	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
P12	Strong, positive character / identity	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
P13	Cultural features such as monuments, statues, artwork etc	N/A Y / N		
	<b>PLACE SCORE (1 = low, 5 = high)</b>	1 2 3 4 5		
	<b>OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b>	Score		Comment
H1	Is there a sports pitch such as formal / informal pitch, goalposts etc.	N/A Y / N		
H2	Is there an equipped play area	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
H3	Provide for a diverse range of play, sport, outdoor activities and recreational opportunities for a range of ages	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
	<b>HEALTH SCORE (1 = low, 5 = high)</b>	1 2 3 4 5		
	<b>COMMUNITY VALUE</b>	Score		Comment
C1	Good sense of personal security	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
C2	Absence of any signs of anti-social behaviour e.g. vandalism	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
C3	Good levels of natural surveillance	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
C4	Close proximity to community facilities e.g. shops	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
C5	Presence of food-growing activities e.g. allotments, raised beds etc.	N/A Y / N		



C6	Would this site be good for growing food in the future - Y/N, not scored	Y / N		
	<b>COMMUNITY SCORE (1 = low, 5 = high)</b>	1 2 3 4 5		
	<b>BIODIVERSITY</b>	Score		Comment
B1	Does the space connect to the wider habitat / other green spaces	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
B2	<b>NESBReC Biodiversity Score - double weighted</b>	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
	<b>BIODIVERSITY SCORE (1 = low, 5 = high)</b>	1 2 3 4 5		
	<b>ECOSYSTEMS SERVICES Approx. %</b>	Score		Comment
E1	% Tree cover %	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
E2	% Shrub cover %	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
E3	% Grass cover %	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
E4	% Open water cover %	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
E5	% Impervious surface cover %	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
E6	Benefit to pollinators %	N/A 1 2 3 4 5		
	<b>ECOSYSTEMS SERVICES SCORE (1 = low, 5 = high)</b>	1 2 3 4 5		
	<b>Total Score for the Site - out of 25:</b> (Note Ecosystem Services was experimental data and not included in overall site scoring)			
6	Site Description:			
7	Problems:			
8	Suggested Improvements:			

9	Frequency of Use	H M L
10	Priority for Action	H M L
11	Further Comments	



**Climate & Environment Policy Service**

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