

SERVICE UPDATE

Name of Cluster:	Strategic Place Planning
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Title of Update:	Aberdeen Open Space Audit: 2024
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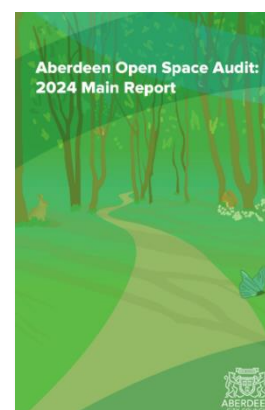
UPDATE:

This Service Update is to inform Members about the successful publication of the [Aberdeen Open Space Audit: 2024 Main Report](#) and [Public Survey Report](#), including publicly accessible [Audit Mapping](#) and [Audit Data Dashboard](#). Further information can be found on the [Council's Open Space webpage](#).

This Service Update was instructed by Members at the [Net Zero, Environment and Transport \(NZET\) Committee on 11 June 2024, report number CR&E/24/162](#)

Actions that were instructed have now been completed, as follows:

- The Main Report and Public Survey Report have been finalised and circulated via this Service Update to NZET Committee Members
- The Reports have been published on the Council's website
- A public map of the Open Space Audit geographic information system (GIS) mapping has been made available on the Council's website
- Promotion of the Reports and findings is taking place with communities, partners and our networks, through [press releases](#) and social media
- Options for the development of a GIS StoryMap version of the Audit were considered. However, a Power BI dashboard presenting the Audit data in a high-quality interactive format was developed to align with existing Council approaches to data analysis. This approach also ensures partners and the wider community can analyse and visualise the data according to their needs, at ward or citywide level



Background

A periodic Audit provides key information on the types, quality and accessibility of open and green spaces in Aberdeen that are critical to directing greenspace policies, management of spaces, and the interventions of partners as well as help to deliver the outcomes in the [Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap](#), [Aberdeen Adapts](#), our [Natural Environment Strategy](#), the [Council](#)

[Climate Change Plan](#), the [Aberdeen Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026](#), and the [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#).

Moving forward, it is important these results and findings are used by Aberdeen City Council, community groups, volunteers, businesses and partners to help inform the future activities, interventions and the management of spaces.

Stakeholders should be encouraged to use the findings to identify projects and secure funding for environmental improvements at site, ward, and city level that address areas for improvement such as the quality, quantity, and accessibility of open spaces.

New Geographic Information System (GIS) Network Analysis functionality is also being tested to potentially develop enhanced accessibility data, taking into account additional accessibility barriers such as roads, railway lines and watercourses, using the Open Space Audit data set.

Open Space Audit Key Findings

Aberdeen's open spaces, including parks, gardens, and natural areas, are important assets for both people and nature, providing various health, wellbeing, economic, and environmental benefits. These spaces are managed by various stakeholders, including Aberdeen City Council, community groups, volunteers, businesses and partners.

Aberdeen covers an area of 185.7 km² 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 used in daily life equate to 5%, 23% and 20% of citywide open space respectively. Accessibility and quality scores varied across different wards and types of spaces.
- **Access to Open Spaces:** 63% of households are within 1,500m of a major open space, 75% are within 710m of a public park or garden, and 45% are within 400m of a natural greenspace over 2 hectares, indicating a need for improved access in certain areas.
- **Quality Indicators:** Open space quality indicators showed that health and biodiversity scored the lowest, while accessibility and place quality scored the highest, reflecting areas for potential improvement.
- **Satisfaction and Use:** 79% of respondents were satisfied with the overall quality of open spaces, with parks and woodlands receiving the highest satisfaction. Most people reported using these spaces for physical exercise, enjoying nature, and socializing.

- **Managing Spaces for Nature:** 82% of respondents said they would like to see more greenspaces managed in a more natural way for the benefit of wildlife and nature.
- **Improvement Suggestions:** Respondents suggested that better facilities, spaces being better managed for wildlife, and more paths would encourage more frequent use of open spaces.
- **Food Growing:** 54% of respondents supported having more food-growing opportunities in open spaces, satisfaction with allotments was low, this could be attributed to long waiting lists and high demand.
- **Case Studies:** Initiatives such as the Flagship Parks for Pollinators project, Union Terrace Gardens and award-winning parks demonstrate some of the work being carried out to improve spaces and enhance biodiversity.
- **Ward Information:** A high-level Ward information summary is available on page 57 of the Main Report providing information on the quality, quantity and accessibility of open space at Ward level.

Summary

It is noteworthy that 82% of respondents in the Audit Public Survey wish to see more green spaces managed for wildlife and nature and that 79% of respondents were satisfied with the overall quality of open spaces, reflecting similar findings in the latest [City Voice Survey](#).

Respondents also highlighted the critical role that green spaces play in promoting overall health and well-being, with physical exercise or health reasons, to be in nature or to socialise given as the top three reasons why people use open spaces.

The results indicate that the awareness of the many benefits of green spaces and access to nature is increasing, along with better understanding that the responsibility for the effective management of these spaces is a collective effort.

The Audit does however highlight areas for potential improvement, with the accessibility, quality and quantity of open space varying across different sites, wards and open space types.

The Audit findings and publicly available Audit mapping are encouraged to be used by all to help drive positive environmental changes, identify projects and secure funding for environmental improvements at site, ward, and city-wide levels.

It should be noted that the Audit is a snapshot in time and how spaces are used and their quality can change over time. However, periodic updates to the Audit mapping will be made.