

SOUTHAMPTON COMMON STRATEGY 2019 – 2030 (Draft 3.2.3)

THE VISION: A COMMON FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The Common will be an inspirational example of an attractive, green urban space dedicated to the benefit of all Southampton’s citizens.

A place where residents and visitors come together for recreation; enjoy its natural beauty, sustain and appreciate its plants, wildlife and cultural heritage.

Citizens, public and private organisations will be united in their care of it for present and future generations.

WHAT OUTCOMES DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

Outcome	Why is this important?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase usage & enjoyment of The Common. 	This will improve the benefits of The Common as a shared amenity space for all the citizens of Southampton.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the facilities for recreation & education. 	This is in keeping with the primary purpose of The Common as recreation for the citizens of Southampton enshrined in the 1865 Southampton Marsh & Markets Act.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the proportion of open and accessible space. 	This will expand the space available for recreation, create long vistas and improve safety.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create new habitats to increase biodiversity whilst enhancing the protection of species deemed nationally to be in need of special protection. 	This will enhance the flora and fauna of The Common, building on the SSSI.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve paths, access and safety. 	This will make The Common more accessible for everyone.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Outcome	Priorities	How will we measure success?
<p>Increase usage & enjoyment of The Common.</p> <p>Delivered by a Community Engagement Plan</p>	<p><i>a. Improve the quality of the experience of visitors to The Common.</i></p> <p><i>b. Increase the number of users of The Common compatible with sustaining its natural character.</i></p> <p><i>c. Increase the awareness of the benefits and amenities of The Common.</i></p> <p><i>d. Increase the involvement of Southampton citizens in the governance of The Common.</i></p> <p><i>e. Increase voluntary non-financial contributions by Southampton citizens, community groups and businesses.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular surveys of Southampton citizens about their use and experience of The Common. • Estimates of number and home location of users. • Number and nature of voluntary contributions (e.g., total hours) per annum, including the number of volunteer days.
<p>Improve the facilities for recreation & education.</p> <p>Delivered by a Recreation & Education Plan</p>	<p><i>a. Improve the play facilities for children and their families.</i></p> <p><i>b. Establish the Hawthorns as an attractive modern hub for education and information about The Common and the natural environment.</i></p> <p><i>c. Increase the opportunities across The Common for learning about its historical features and the natural environment.</i></p> <p><i>d. Improve the facilities for eating and drinking.</i></p> <p><i>e. Improve the facilities for exercise, well-being and quiet contemplation.</i></p> <p><i>f. Improve the benefits and reduce the detriments of organised events.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular surveys of Southampton citizens about their use and experience of The Common. • Regular assessment of the nature and quality of facilities.
<p>Increase the proportion of open and accessible space.</p> <p>Delivered by a Landscape & Heritage Plan</p>	<p><i>a. Increase the amount of grassland to improve safety, expand the space available for recreation and create long vistas across and beyond The Common.</i></p> <p><i>b. Diversify woodland and grassland and enhance their mutual contrast and with indigenous tree specimens to increase visual interest.</i></p> <p><i>c. Enhance the landscape contribution of the main bodies of water and the natural streams and artificially created 'drains'.</i></p> <p><i>d. Identify and secure the health and longevity of specimen trees and plants that have the potential make a significant landscape contribution.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular assessments of trees and plants. • Regular assessments of heritage and cultural artefacts. • Regular surveys of Southampton citizens about their use and experience of The Common. • Proportion of The Common that is high quality woodland. • Proportion of The Common that is open and accessible space.

<p>Create new habitats to increase biodiversity whilst enhancing the protection of species deemed national to be in need of special protection.</p> <p>Delivered by a Biodiversity Plan</p>	<p><i>e. Ensure the effective conservation of heritage artefacts, including the medieval boundaries, Victorian features and wartime relics.</i></p> <p><i>a. Enhancing the benefits of The Common's SSSI status.</i> <i>b. Increase the diversity of habitats and species on The Common.</i> <i>c. Work with partners who have an interest and expertise in biodiversity on The Common, e.g., Natural England.</i> <i>d. Increase public awareness and engagement in the importance of biodiversity to The Common.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular surveys of Southampton citizens about their use and experience of The Common. • Regular surveys of flora and fauna. • Assessment by English Nature of status of SSSI's.
<p>Improve paths, access and safety.</p> <p>Delivered by an Amenity Plan</p>	<p><i>a. Improve the safety of users of The Common, especially after dark, through increasing both the natural light and street lighting along the main paths.</i> <i>b. Make the entrances more welcoming, open and accessible and improve and secure The Common's boundaries against encroachment.</i> <i>c. Improve accessibility across The Common for disadvantaged users.</i> <i>d. Improve signage and information, including a Code of Conduct for users to improve the amenity of the Common for everyone.</i> <i>e. Improve the facilities for green travel and ensure better separation of cyclists and pedestrians.</i> <i>f. Improve waste management on The Common.</i> <i>g. Increase the toilet facilities on The Common.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular surveys of Southampton citizens about their use and experience of The Common. • Estimate of users involved in green travel. • Regular statement of the nature and quality of facilities.

THE OUTCOMES WILL BE:

Enabled by:

- Sustainably increasing the total resources available for the maintenance and the improvement of The Common.
- Making governance and management more transparent and more directly accountable to users and stakeholders.
- Sustainable environmental policies and best practices for managing The Common (Annex 1 provides further information).

Delivered through plans for:

- Community Engagement
- Recreation & Education
- Landscape & Heritage
- Biodiversity
- Amenity
- Sustainable Resourcing

WHAT DO SOUTHAMPTON RESIDENTS SAY ABOUT THEIR COMMON?

In 2017 nearly 2,200 residents from across the City said¹:

- **They appreciate The Common as a natural green space in the heart of the City, which they use for a wide variety of activities important to their physical and mental well-being.**
- **They want better:**
 - Children's play facilities²
 - Provision of public toilets
 - Litter and waste management
 - Street lighting and personal safety
 - Quality of the footpaths
 - Maintenance and resources
 - Condition of the lakes and Hawthorns Urban Wildlife Centre
 - Management of biodiversity
 - Management of organised events
 - Eating & drinking facilities
- **They want measures to reduce conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and dog walkers.**

¹ Southampton Common Survey 2017, Southampton Common Forum, <http://www.southamptoncommonforum.org/survey.html>

² The new children's play area was under construction during the period of the survey.

KEY FACTS & FIGURES:

- **The people of the City own the Common; its trustees are Southampton City Council.**
- **The Common is a valued amenity accessible to the great majority of Southampton residents:**
 - It is appreciated and used (at least once a month) by residents who live within 3.58 km (2.2 miles) of The Common who mostly use it on a weekly basis.
 - It is readily accessible to the 162,000 city residents (63% of the city's population) who live within 3.58km.
 - It is not the preserve of the residents in its immediate vicinity.
- **The users of The Common reflect the overall ethnic diversity of the City, as measured in the 2011 census.**
- **The Common is most popular with City residents from 30 to 69 years old:**
 - 30 to 39 year olds are the largest user group often comprising young families with children.
- **The Common significantly supports green travel in the City:**
 - The second most popular activity (after walking) is commuting by foot or bike.
- **The Common is larger than Hyde Park, with an area of 365 acres.**
- **The Common has existed for over a millennium.**
- **221 acres (61%) of The Common was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1987 in recognition of its national nature conservation importance.**
- **The Common is protected by legislation including:**
 - The 1844 Southampton Marsh Act states that The Common should be public land for public advantage of the inhabitants of Southampton. The Southampton Marsh and Markets Act 1865 provided that the Common be devoted and kept exclusively as a park, garden, pleasure ground, playground and other open space for the general and public advantage of the inhabitants of Southampton.
 - Southampton Corporation Acts of 1910, 1931 and 1971 establish the byelaws that govern public use of The Common: Including placing constraints on closures to a maximum of 21 consecutive days, a maximum of 60 days and a maximum of 50 acres; prohibiting the erection of buildings, and severely restricting vehicles on The Common.
 - The Hampshire Act 1983 and Law of Property Act 1925 also restricts the use of The Common.
 - The Commons Act 2006 requires that Common land should be open and accessible to the public.
- **The Common, as the largest open space in Southampton, attracts 10,000's of people each year from across the City and beyond to enjoy a range of large events including pop concerts, fairs and races that together generate significant revenue for the City.**

- **Each Saturday morning over a 1,000 people run on The Common; the second largest in parkrun in the UK.**
- **121 species of birds have been observed on The Common in the last 30 years.**
- **23,000 birds have been ringed at The Hawthorns; 3,600 Blackcaps being the most numerous.**

ANNEX 1: Environmental Policy & Practices

1. Overview

The following overview of Park and Recreation Sustainability Practices are condensed from a report by The National Recreation and Park Association³. This is a brilliant foundation for an environmental plan for The Common. It supports activities that improve sustainability within communities. These activities can span from educating and connecting the public with nature, to reducing negative impacts on the environment.

Parks are key community stakeholders when it comes to addressing the effects of climate change. From protecting water resources via green infrastructure practices, to reducing urban heat island effect through city wide forest restoration - parks play a critical role in ensuring that our communities successfully adapt and thrive in light of a rapidly changing planet. People who are exposed to nature and have experiences in nature are more likely to act responsibly toward it.

Protect and manage wildlife and habitat:

- Controlling and managing invasive species
- Promoting activities that lead to the creation and conservation of habitat
- Managing human-wildlife interaction while fostering human-wildlife coexistence
- Protecting species in need of conservation
- Conducting regular inventories of species, habitats and communities

Responsible land management:

- Planting native and regionally appropriate species
- Managing the tree canopy appropriately
- Controlling invasive plants with less toxic means
- Following sustainable turf management practices
- Following Integrated Pest Management practices

³ See : <https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/f768428a39aa4035ae55b2aaff372617/sustainability-survey-report.pdf> for further details.

Reduce landfill waste:

- Recycling/Upcycling
- Recycling electronics
- Providing special event recycling bins and collection
- Conducting public education and offering recycling stations
- Composting
- Reducing the use of plastic bottles and other single use products

Environmentally friendly building practices:

- Using LED lighting
- Using Energy Star-rated appliances
- Using low-flow plumbing fixtures/water stations/water recycling
- Using environmentally friendly cleaning supplies
- Using recycled construction materials
- Sensitively rehabbing and reusing historic buildings

Foster sustainability through public engagement and education:

- Offering environmental education opportunities
- Setting up educational kiosks, displays and bulletin boards in public areas
- Entering public/private partnerships that promote sustainable practices
- Adult classes
- Youth workforce training

Green infrastructure practices:

- Constructing rain gardens
- Constructing bioswales
- Conserving existing and increasing permeable surfaces
- Using natural systems to reduce erosion
- Constructing wetlands Using rain barrels

- Installing green roofs on agency buildings

Cultural resources protection:

- Protecting cultural resources and historic sites
- Committing resources and/or developing partnerships that enable cultural education and conservation
- Following a management plan for cultural resource protection

Adopt greener equipment and transportation methods:

- Purchasing fuel-efficient vehicles
- Following anti-idling practices
- Purchasing fuel-efficient machinery

Renewable energy usage:

- Solar
- Geothermal
- Wind
- Biomass

Implement adaptation strategies/mitigation activities for climate change:

- Implementing adaptation strategies for climate change conditions
- Mitigating actions for sea-level rise, extreme weather events, flooding, etc.
- Using carbon sequestration

2. Management of Events.

An overview of best practice for planning and delivering environmentally sustainable events is published by Resource Efficient Scotland⁴. It indicates the the issues and best practices against the various elements of event organisation, including the venue itself, catering, overlay and dressing, energy, water use, waste management, transportation, communication, legislation and accreditation.

⁴ <http://www.resourceefficientscotland.com/sites/default/files/How%20to%20plan%20%26%20deliver%20environmentally%20sustainable%20events.pdf>