

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Director of Housing, Operations and Development
to Cabinet
of 27 August 2024**

Subject: Open Space Strategy 2024 – 2029

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the finalised Open Space Strategy for 2024-2029.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet considers and approves the Open Space Strategy 2024-29 for South Ayrshire Council.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Scottish Government Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 requires each Authority to create and publish an Open Space Strategy which outlines our vision for the provision, maintenance and use of green infrastructure including open space and green networks within South Ayrshire.
- 3.2 The Strategy has been built on, and developed from, the 2012 Open Space Strategy and Audit. In 2012, 1100 sites of over 500m² were individually inspected and assessed, the Audit looked at the quality and distribution of public open space in South Ayrshire. For the 2024 - 29 Strategy a sampling exercise was undertaken of the current South Ayrshire Council owned sites. 133 sites were surveyed across South Ayrshire, this equates to just over 10% of the original 1100 sites of over 500m².
- 3.3 Since 2012 South Ayrshire Council has continued to work to develop and maintain meaningful public open space for residents of and visitors to South Ayrshire.
- 3.4 While research evidenced the importance of good quality public open space to peoples physical and mental health, the Covid pandemic showcased the vital role that open space plays in people's lives, on their health and the social value of providing space for people to participate in passive and active recreation.
- 3.5 Additionally open space plays a vital role in protecting and enhancing biodiversity, providing food and habitat to a wide range of species. Our woodland and public areas are also key in assisting with mitigations and adaptations relating to climate change.

3.6 In 2015 we gained our first Green Flag Award from Keep Scotland Beautiful; this is an internationally recognised award which reviews a range of elements from horticultural standards and cleanliness to community involvement. We currently have 6 Green Flags:

- Belleisle Estate, Ayr;
- Newton Park, Ayr;
- Fullarton Estate, Troon;
- Orchard Gardens, Girvan;
- Knockcushan Gardens, Girvan; and
- Ayr Cemetery.

3.7 South Ayrshire Council has in recent years invested £1.995million improving a range of elements within its open space including play areas, football pitches, bowling greens, golf facilities and walking trails. This work and investment is continuing with the assistance of Scottish Government funding for play areas and biodiversity, together with the Council's financial commitment to each ward providing funds for a range of projects which will continue to see the development and improvement of open space within South Ayrshire.

4. Proposals

4.1 This Strategy works to deliver on three strategic outcomes:

- To assist in creating attractive, safe and sustainable environments;
- To support outdoor leisure and recreation; and
- To generate a positive image for South Ayrshire's towns and villages.

4.2 The Open Space strategy 2024-29 links to several key Council documents including the Local Development Plan, Climate Change Strategy, Physical Activity & Sports Strategy. Additionally, the Strategy links directly to the delivery of the Sports Pitch Strategy, the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, the Food Growing Strategy and to the forthcoming Play Strategy.

4.3 It should be noted that as in the 2012 audit, 42% of Council's current open space is delivered by golf courses and the school estate, both of which have restricted access. When you remove these two elements three wards fall below the Fields in Trust standard of 6.55ha per 1000 people, those being Kyle, Prestwick and North Ayr. In these three Wards it is recommended that open space sites should be protected from development and any planned residential developments must provide meaningful open space within the red line site.

4.4 Appendix 1 of the Strategy provides, on a Ward basis, a breakdown of open space in hectares and of type, together with a table of suggested initiatives that could be delivered within each Ward to continue to improve our public open space.

5. Legal and Procurement Implication

5.1 There are no legal or procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Any proposed initiatives will only progress where budget has been identified.

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 There are no human resource implications related to the content of this paper.

8. Risk

8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations*

8.1.1 There are no risks from adopting the recommendations.

8.2 *Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations*

8.2.1 That the Council is not compliant with the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

9. Equalities

9.1 The proposals in this report have been assessed through the Equality Impact Assessment Scoping Process. There are no significant positive or negative equality impacts of agreeing the recommendations and therefore an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required. A copy of the Equalities Scoping Assessment is shown in Appendix 2.

10. Sustainable Development Implications

10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. Options Appraisal

11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. Link to Council Plan

12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Priority 1 of the Council Plan: Spaces and Places/ Moving around and the environment (Outcome 1).

13. Results of Consultation

13.1 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Martin Kilbride, Portfolio Holder for Buildings, Housing and Environment and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

Background Papers **Report to Leadership Panel of 4 September 2012 – [Finalised South Ayrshire Open Space Strategy](#)**

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