

EAST AYRSHIRE
**GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE
STRATEGY**

December 2025



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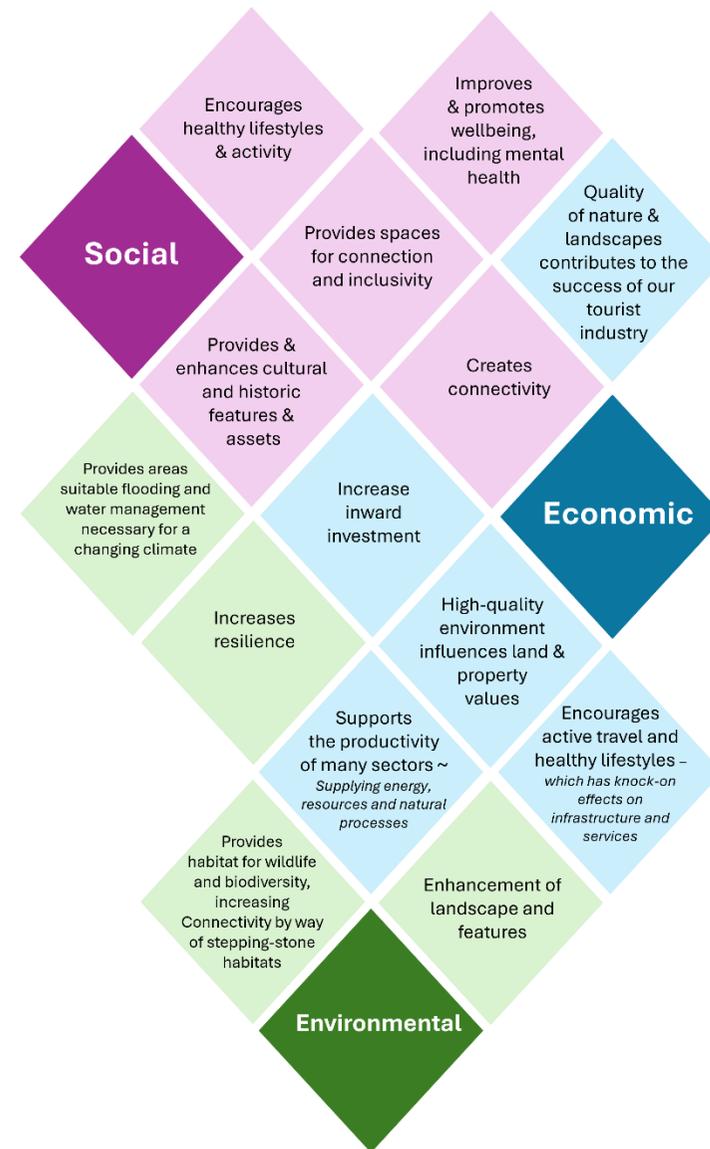
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1. Introduction

1.1. Why is green infrastructure important?

The outdoors is one of our greatest assets. Green infrastructure is important for our quality of life and brings many benefits; above all else, it makes places nicer to live in and nicer to visit. Green spaces provide a setting for social interactions and areas to experience the natural environment. They support biodiversity, natural flood management and have health and well-being benefits. Green infrastructure influences the character, setting and identity of our settlements. A high-quality environment which is well managed, will encourage people and businesses to choose East Ayrshire as a place to live, work and invest.

Green infrastructure can therefore provide many social, economic and environmental benefits, as set out adjacent:



1.2. How do we define green infrastructure?

Green infrastructure is defined in [National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\)](#) as features or spaces within the natural and built environment that provide a range of ecosystem services. Green networks are connected areas of green infrastructure and open space, that together form an integrated and multi-functional network.

Green infrastructure encompasses all the natural environmental features of an area. Table 1 below outlines the different types of open spaces described in [Planning Advice Note \(PAN\) 65](#) which make up East Ayrshire’s ‘green infrastructure’:

Table 1 – Types of Open Space (Green Infrastructure)

Type	Description
Public parks and gardens	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.
Private gardens or grounds	Areas of land normally enclosed and associated with a house or institution and reserved for private use.
Amenity greenspace	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 kickabouts.
Play space for children and teenagers	Areas providing safe and accessible opportunities for children's play, usually linked to housing areas.
Sports areas	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.
Green corridors	Routes including canals, river corridors and old railway lines, linking different areas within a town or city as part of a designated and managed network and used for walking, cycling or horse riding, or linking towns and cities to their surrounding countryside or country parks. These may link green spaces together.
Natural/seminatural greenspaces	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.
Allotments and community growing spaces	Areas of land for growing fruit, vegetables and other plants, either in individual allotments or as a community activity.
Civic space	Squares, streets and waterfront promenades, predominantly of hard landscaping that provide a focus for pedestrian activity and can make connections for people and for wildlife.
Burial grounds	Includes churchyards and cemeteries.
Other functional greenspace	Maybe one or more types as required by local circumstances or priorities.

1.3. The purpose of the Green Infrastructure Strategy

There are many elements and workstreams that contribute to green infrastructure across East Ayrshire. The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Set out the Councils overall vision for green infrastructure across East Ayrshire.
- Illustrate how the vision will be implemented, through a number of different workstreams driven by the Council and its partners.
- Support the East Ayrshire Local Development Plan 2, by providing detail on the implementation of open space standards and the results of an open space audit.
- Support delivery on the ground through community green infrastructure profiles (and associated action plans) and by providing an evidence base for future funding bids.

1.3.1 Our vision for green infrastructure:

East Ayrshire will host a web of high-quality, well-distributed, multi-functional green spaces that are interlinked to form networks and corridors, benefiting communities and nature. East Ayrshires' green infrastructure will be accessible to wide variety of users, designed to cater to the needs of the community, providing a safe and pleasant environment within a short walking distance from residents, civic spaces and services.

¹ See LDP2 policies SS3, DES1, OS, OS2, NE1, NE4 and NE8.

² See policy PLAY1 of [LDP2](#).

1.3.2 Our aims for green infrastructure:

Our aims directly relate to the vision and achieving the aims will help realise the vision for green infrastructure. All work that is carried out under the umbrella of the green infrastructure strategy must be aligned with all or some of the aims below:

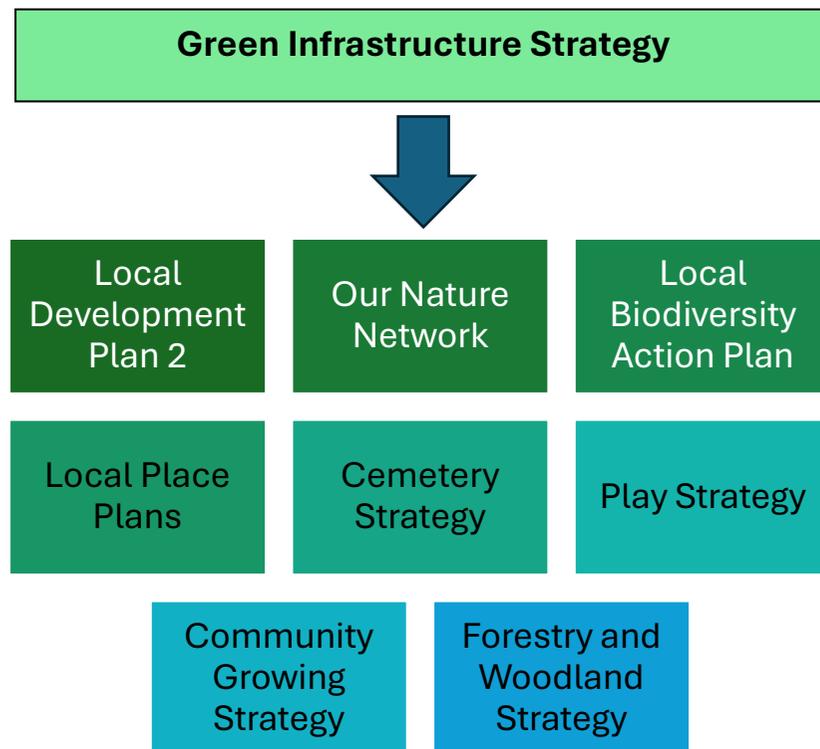
- ❖ Ensure our communities benefit from high quality and accessible open spaces, supporting the overall health and wellbeing of our communities.
- ❖ Support nature, by building nature networks and increasing biodiversity, both at a local level in our communities and more strategically, contributing to the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN)¹.
- ❖ Ensure our young people have opportunities to play and enjoy the outdoors².
- ❖ Increase tree planting and support proposals for woodland creation³
- ❖ Support natural water management and climate mitigation, to increase our flood resilience in a changing climate.
- ❖ Accelerate urban greening, including supporting restoration of vacant and derelict land and community growing, through either temporary or permanent projects⁴.

³ Policy NE9 of [Local Development Plan 2 \(LDP2\)](#) supports proposals to enhance, expand and improve woodland across East Ayrshire (*page 84*), while Policy SS12 supports proposals that contribute to the Strategic Woodland Creation Pilot Project (*page 56*).

⁴ See policy OS1 of [LDP2](#).

1.3.3 Our green infrastructure building blocks:

The vision and aims will be implemented by the following pieces of work that sit under, or will in time sit under, the umbrella of this green infrastructure strategy:



A co-ordinated approach that brings all of these workstreams together and under one strategy brings a number of benefits that will guide the future of East Ayrshire’s Green Infrastructure:

- Establishing a vision and identifying targeted actions can address issues of deficiencies in open space provision / facilities, and protect areas that are valuable and valued.
- Effective links between green infrastructure planning, design and management, and the involvement of local communities, can ensure long term viability of open space that meets current and future needs.
- Participation of a wide range of partnership agencies, stakeholder groups and community groups in the decision-making process ensures the Framework considers the views of all interested parties.

The workstreams are described in more detail below:

Workstream	Summary
Local Development Plan 2	Local Development Plan 2 was adopted in April 2024. The Green Infrastructure Strategy provides an important part of supporting guidance. In particular, the strategy supports the open space requirements of the Plan, and the open space audit (Section 3 of this strategy) demonstrates where there are deficits and surpluses of quality open space. New development can therefore be designed and implemented to benefit both newly formed and existing communities. Anticipated timeframe – Complete. LDP3 anticipated to be adopted in 2028
Play Strategy	The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced a new requirement for Local Development Plans to be informed by Play Sufficiency Assessments; required to assess the quality, quantity and accessibility of play facilities across all authorities. Significant work has been carried out as part of early LDP3 work to map, visit and assess play facilities. Alongside this, an online survey, supported by in-person school sessions, has captured the views of children, parents and carers. This work will be finalised to form a standalone play strategy and form part of the evidence base of LDP3. Anticipated timeframe - Complete by end of 2026
Local Place Plan	The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced a new statutory right for communities to produce Local Place Plans which, if produced in line with regulations, must be

	taken into account in the production of Local Development Plans. Supported by the Vibrant Communities team of East Ayrshire Leisure Trust, communities throughout East Ayrshire are producing Local Place Plans, many of which will identify priorities for green space improvements. Anticipated timeframe – ongoing
Forestry and Woodland Strategy	Section 53 of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 inserts a statutory requirement for a planning authority to prepare a forestry and woodland strategy. The Ayrshire and Arran Forestry and Woodland Strategy was produced and adopted by all Ayrshire authorities in 2014. It sets out, at a strategic level, areas across Ayrshire with potential for woodland expansion. The Strategy remains relevant – however, given the passage of time and legislative updates, it will require to be reviewed and updated, to ensure it remains fit for purpose and reflects current government targets. At present, there is no agreed timescale to update the Strategy, either individually or in collaboration with North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire to produce an Ayrshire-wide strategy. This will, however, be taken forward as part of work on LDP3. Anticipated timeframe – Complete by mid-2027

Nature Network	<p>There is no statutory requirement to identify a ‘nature network’, however, doing so is important in order to be able to implement the requirements of NPF4.</p> <p>The primary purpose of a Nature Network is ecological connectivity. This connectivity is required for fully functioning and healthy ecosystems. Nature Networks will ensure that sites contributing to 30 by 30 and other important areas for biodiversity are well-connected and provide maximum benefits to biodiversity. Scotland’s Nature Network will underpin the resilience and health of species and habitats at a national, regional and local scale.</p> <p>Initial work has been undertaken to build a picture of East Ayrshire’s Nature Network. This was completed in-house utilising AECOM’s / CivTech’s Nature Network Tool to connect our Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCSs). The Nature Network will be finalised and consulted on, with multiple iterations to tweak and fine-tune the network to appropriately reflect potential projects on the ground, habitats, and deliverability.</p> <p>Anticipated timescale – Draft nature network to be published January 2026, with further iterations anticipated to progress 2026/2027.</p>
Biodiversity duty and Local	<p>The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 states that all public bodies have a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities, otherwise known as the Biodiversity Duty. Every public</p>

Biodiversity Action Plan	<p>body in Scotland is required to produce a report every three years on the actions which they have taken to meet this Biodiversity Duty. An important means of meeting this duty is through the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).</p> <p>East Ayrshire’s latest LBAP is the: Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan covering the years 2007-2010. The Ayrshire LBAP 2007 identifies habitats which are priority action (lowland raised bog) as well as species which require specific action plans (water vole; farmland birds). The need for an updated LBAP has been identified as a key gap in knowledge and supporting information which needs to be addressed in advance of production of LDP3.</p> <p>Anticipated timeframe - Complete by mid- 2027.</p>
Cemetery Strategy	<p>East Ayrshire’s Cemetery Strategy forms part of the Green Infrastructure Strategy. It seeks to provide a clear vision for the future development of cemetery services across East Ayrshire for the next 10 years. This includes current service standards and cemetery/lair availability, associated service quality issues and an action plan based on usage trends.</p> <p>Anticipated timeframe – Included with this strategy</p>
Community Growing Strategy	<p>A Community Growing Strategy for East Ayrshire will provide a framework/strategy to support community allotments in order to provide local people with the</p>

	opportunity to take ownership of land and food production, reducing 'food miles' and in-turn bringing positive physical and mental health benefits.
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	Anticipated timeframe - Complete by end of 2027.
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This overarching strategy is intended to stimulate the regeneration and enhanced management of green infrastructure, ensuring that people and communities have ready access to a hierarchy of open spaces that address local and district needs, are fit for purpose and fulfil a broad spectrum of physical, social, health, local amenity and environmental interests. The Framework seeks to ensure that open space throughout East Ayrshire is strategically managed to deliver meaningful benefits to local communities, whilst securing best value and providing a clear and prioritised framework for further investment and management.

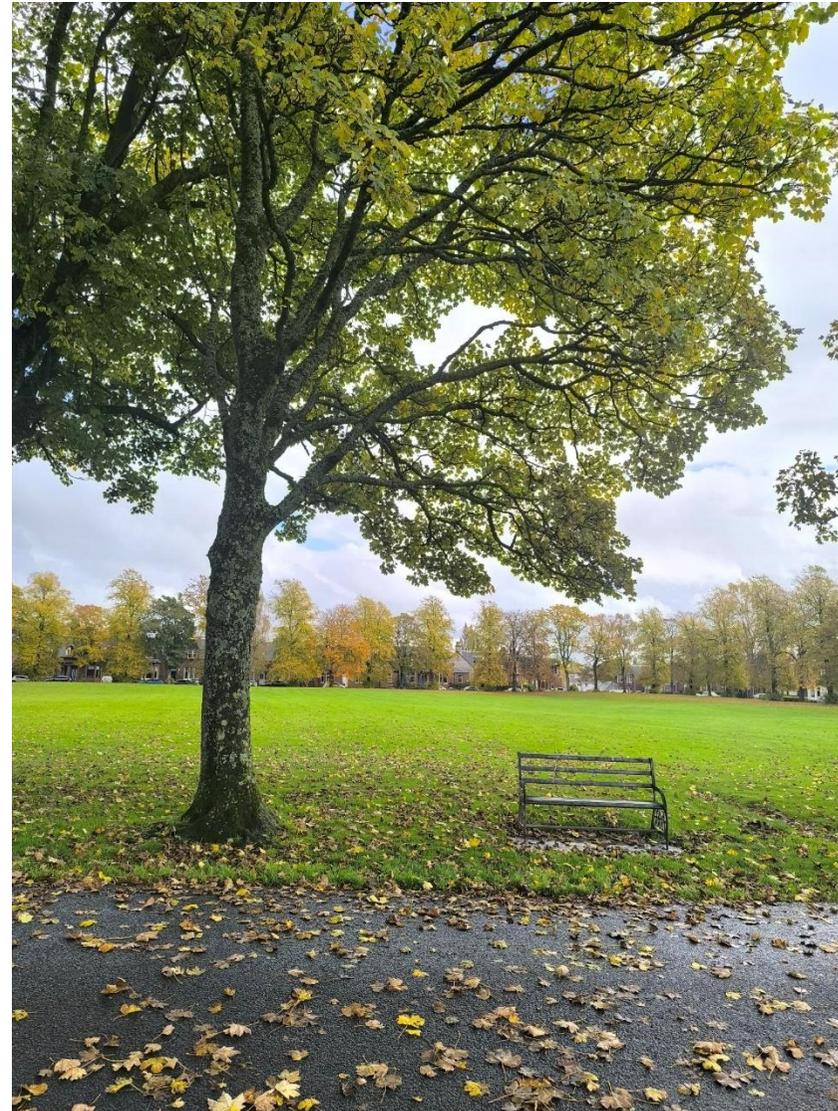


Image: Kay Park, Kilmarnock

1.4. Key actions to deliver the strategy

The actions set out in Table 2 below will help to drive the delivery of the vision and aims of this strategy. These detailed actions are in addition to, but in many ways interlinked with, the strategic building blocks outlined above. These Council actions will be monitored on an annual basis to ensure that progress is being made in the delivery of the vision and aims of the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Table 2 - Green Infrastructure Strategy: Key Actions

Action	Short Term (1-5 years)	Medium term (5-10 years)	Long term (10+ years)	Action Lead
Development of a localised Land Audit Management System (LAMS) database linked to GIS to improve maintenance and standard of open space and parks	X			Greener Communities
Development of localised accreditation mark to raise the profile of high-quality open spaces	X			Greener Communities
Development of Design and Management Plans for larger public parks which contain a range of facilities and landscape features requiring protection and improvement;		X		Greener Communities
Development of a Play Sufficiency Assessment for East Ayrshire to assess the quantity, quality and accessibility of play spaces available for children to determine how well children's play needs are being met and identify any areas for improvement.	X			Development Planning and Regeneration
Development of method statements and implemented maintenance programmes by all privately owned spaces to cover management techniques. This will ensure a composite approach to management and maintenance of open spaces dependant on typology and size.	X	X	X	Developers
Development of long-term management plans for areas of woodland in and around towns		X		East Ayrshire Woodlands

Continue to safeguard our smaller open spaces (below 0.2ha) from encroaching development (such as garden extensions, driveways) and introduce rewilding into green corridors.			X	Development Planning and Regeneration
Review of Recreation Plan		X		East Ayrshire Leisure
Establishment of Biodiversity Action Group as a mechanism for updating the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and producing a Biodiversity Strategy	X			East Ayrshire Leisure
Support communities in developing their own projects including those outlined in the Community Action Plans, Greening Action Plans and Local Place Plans.	X	X	X	East Ayrshire Leisure
Develop a programme of Nature Network projects linked to Nature Conservation Sites		X	X	East Ayrshire Leisure
Create small areas of biodiversity around trees and obstacles to reduce damage from strimming and reduce use of chemical application in green spaces	X	X		Greener communities
Encourage communities to be involved in areas of rewilding, looking at ways to reduce maintenance but also encourage better community use for these areas	X	X		Greener communities
Identify areas of green space which could be used to encourage wellbeing within communities and to allow quiet and safe spaces for reflection	X	X		Greener communities
In consultation with community groups, identify campaigns to support local, regional and national events e.g. No More May / Green Your Neighbourhood	X	X		Greener communities
Create friends groups to link and implement decision making action plans within parks/open spaces/cemeteries and churchyards which would allow partnership working in deciding where wildflower areas would be created and encourage community volunteering	X	X		East Ayrshire Leisure
Create and maintain an allotment audit which will record a demand audit and waiting list to further support the Community Growing Strategy.	X			East Ayrshire Leisure

