

NORTH LANARKSHIRE OPEN SPACE STRATEGY CONSULTATION DRAFT

OCTOBER 2025



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Foreword and Executive Summary

Open spaces are important for our physical and mental health, biodiversity, and tackling climate change. North Lanarkshire Council understands this and puts a lot of effort into managing and improving these spaces. We also work with partners and the community to make the most of these benefits.

North Lanarkshire Council has undertaken a comprehensive and forward-looking review of its open spaces, culminating in this strategy that sets out a clear vision for the future of parks, play areas, sports pitches, and natural environments across North Lanarkshire. Recognising the vital role that open spaces play in supporting physical and mental health, biodiversity, climate resilience, and community cohesion, the strategy is both a reflection of current realities and a roadmap for sustainable improvement.

At the heart of the strategy lies a bold vision:

We will work with partners, stakeholders and communities to deliver a diverse range of well-maintained, connected open and civic spaces. These will be accessible, safe and support biodiversity, while meeting the needs of people who Live, Learn, Work, Invest, and Visit North Lanarkshire.

Community Engagement and Consultation

The development of this strategy was shaped by meaningful engagement with residents, stakeholders, and partner organisations. Over 1,100 responses were received through public surveys, where participants shared how they use open spaces, what they value most, and what improvements they would like to see. Children and young people also contributed through dedicated play surveys, highlighting the importance of inclusive and imaginative play environments.

Workshops and consultations were held with community boards, local groups, and accessibility advocates to ensure a wide range of voices informed the strategy. These insights were instrumental in identifying priorities such as safety, cleanliness, biodiversity, and accessibility. The feedback also helped shape the development of a prioritisation tool to guide future investment and management decisions.

Why Open Space Matters

Open spaces are more than just patches of grass or wooded areas—they are essential infrastructure. They provide places for recreation, relaxation, and social interaction. They support biodiversity, help manage flood risks, and offer nature-based solutions to climate change. They also contribute to mental and physical health, reduce pressure on public services, and enhance the attractiveness and liveability of towns and neighbourhoods.

North Lanarkshire's open space network includes:

three Country Parks attracting over four million visits annually

39 Town and Community Parks

nine Local Nature Reserves

Hundreds of amenity greenspaces, play areas, sports pitches, and civic spaces

Strategic Objectives

The strategy is built around four core objectives:

Maintain and improve quality and accessibility of open spaces.

Enhance biodiversity and connectivity through green networks.

Ensure open spaces meet community needs, promote health, and foster inclusion.

Embed inclusive, adaptable, and resilient design in new developments.

Key Actions

To deliver on these objectives, the council has committed to 12 strategic actions, including:

Developing a prioritisation tool to guide investment and management decisions.

Identifying vacant and derelict land for transformation into green space.

Ensuring 10-minute access to open space for all urban residents.

Promoting inclusive play and community involvement in open space management.

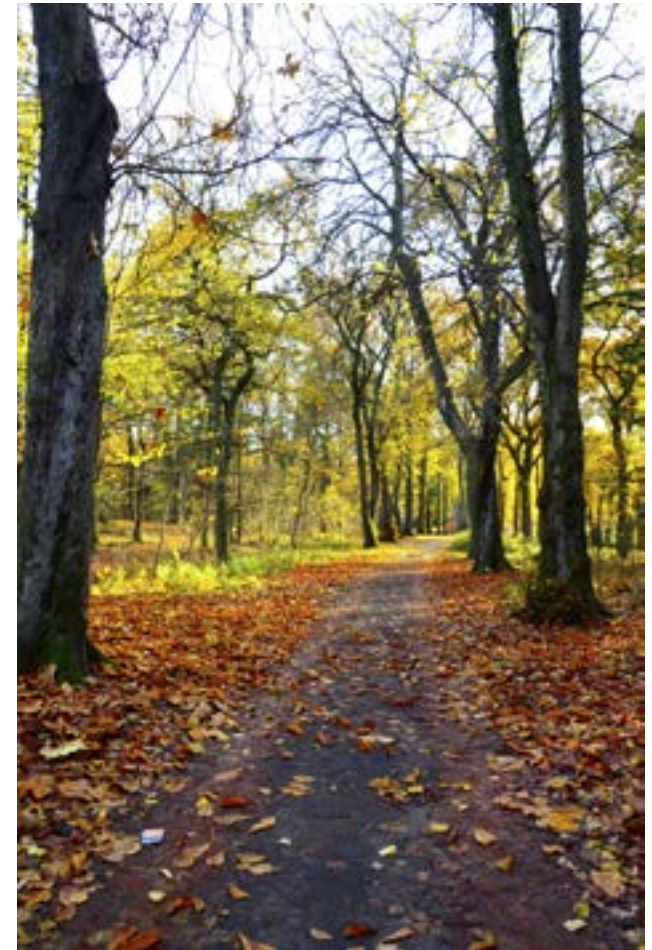
Reassessing underused sports pitches for alternative uses.

A Collaborative Approach

The strategy emphasises partnership—between council services, community groups, health providers, and environmental organisations. Initiatives like the Local Green Health Partnership, Nature Restoration Fund projects, and the Local Development Programme illustrate how collaborative efforts can deliver meaningful change on the ground.

Looking Ahead

This strategy is not a static document but a living framework. It will evolve through ongoing monitoring, community engagement, and alignment with broader council priorities such as climate action, active travel, and community wealth building. By embedding open space planning into every aspect of local development, North Lanarkshire aims to create a greener, healthier, and more inclusive future for all.



The Value of Parks and Open Space

North Lanarkshire has extensive areas of urban development, within which there is a high proportion of greenspace which is formally managed municipal parkland or mown amenity grassland. These parks and open spaces are often carefully designed and support historical value, whilst providing important features for local communities allowing them to connect with nature, enjoy sports, play and relax. All of which bring significant benefits in health and wellbeing.

We have three Country Parks attracting over four million visitors each year to enjoy a wide range of activities and attend formal and informal events. We are making significant investments in these parks through our Country Parks for the Future plan.

We have a network of 39 Town and Community Parks across the area providing multi-functional managed spaces at a more local level and these will continue to be a focus for the council.

There are nine statutory Local Nature Reserves. Places with special local natural interest, set up to protect nature, and for people to enjoy and appreciate. Other sites incorporate a variety of semi-natural habitats such as woodlands, wetlands, flower-rich grasslands, former wood pasture, tall herb and scrub and collections of old trees.

There are also other areas of maintained open space: within housing estates, industrial estates, town centres, road networks, sport pitches, formal and informal play spaces, cemeteries and land surrounding council and partner facilities.

There are several managed sports facilities including 17 sports centres and facilities, schools and pitches offering a range of activity spaces for individuals and clubs. Our Community Pitch Strategy will provide a vision for the future improvement and prioritisation of outdoor sports facilities with clear, prioritised, specific and achievable recommendations and actions to address the key issues around pitch provision and participation.

Our green and open spaces are more than just places for recreation or to help wildlife thrive - they provide important functions to society which have an economic value. Green and open spaces directly

improve our health and wellbeing, benefitting our residents and visitors and helping to reduce costs on local and wider communities, the NHS, other public sector services and local businesses. Well-managed and maintained spaces can support people to interact with each other and promote a sense of place and community pride. Green and open spaces provide opportunities for sport and recreation and support active and healthy lifestyles and sustainable choices for people wishing to grow their own food and travel safely by foot, scooter or bicycle. Green networks and corridors that link spaces also promote biodiversity and enable movement of wildlife, in conjunction with reducing pollution, tackling climate change, the nature crisis and mitigating the effects of extreme weather conditions such as flooding.

The 2023/24 Open Space Audit initially identified 1,516 sites totalling almost 5,172 hectares of land within the scope set out by the Government.

Following a further assessment of sites we carried out a qualitative audit of 1,341 of these sites via a combination of site visits (671 sites comprising 3,291 ha) and allocating sample scores (670 sites and 1,027 ha). Sample scores were based on the site visit results for sites within the same typology and with similar characteristics.

In addition to open space there are more than 180,000 private gardens and spaces including households, businesses, sheltered accommodation and other private grounds. Although not expected to be part of the audit these spaces are important in the context of offering private spaces for relaxation and recreation but also visual amenity and biodiversity networks.

Legislative Context Summary: North Lanarkshire Open Space Strategy

The development of North Lanarkshire's Open Space Strategy (OSS) is underpinned by a robust legislative and policy framework that ensures the strategy aligns with national planning priorities and statutory obligations.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 Establishes a legal requirement for local authorities to prepare and publish an Open Space Strategy.

This must include:

- An audit of existing open space provision
- An assessment of current and future needs
- Any other relevant matters the planning authority deems appropriate

The Act also introduces a duty to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities for children as part of the Local Development Plan (LDP) evidence base. This Assessment will be presented separately as part of the Evidence Report for the Local Development Plan but there is summary information and findings in this strategy. Similarly, there is commentary on the provision and management of community pitch facilities in this strategy but a separate Community Sports Pitch Review has been undertaken and deals with these matters in much more detail.

The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023, reinforce the requirement for councils to consider their OSS in relation to National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), particularly Policies 20 and 21.

The regulations require the OSS to serve as a strategic framework for the development, maintenance, and use of green infrastructure and open space.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

Places climate change at the heart of planning and outlines six key outcomes that the OSS supports:

- Improved access to green infrastructure and open space
- Creation of successful and sustainable places
- Enhanced health and wellbeing
- Greater equality and reduced discrimination
- Positive effects for biodiversity
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation

The OSS contributes to these outcomes by promoting cleaner, safer, and more accessible green spaces.



Parks and Open Spaces Setting standards, identifying opportunities, taking action

To assist us in delivering on our objectives for open spaces and play opportunities across North Lanarkshire we must assess the quantity, quality and accessibility of our open spaces and to do this the council has used public surveys and the detailed audit of over 1,300 sites.

This allows us to set a baseline identifying the average quantity (in hectares) per 1,000 population and also to compare the public view of the quality and accessibility of our open spaces with the scores derived from the audit. This does not take into account the 180,079 private gardens of various types across the council area although they are vitally important on providing space for residents and potentially biodiversity.



Types of Open Space

Open spaces can be grouped into certain typologies based on either their designation, function or characteristics. The headline groupings of open spaces are outlined below and are used to present the Audit findings for each Community Board. It should be noted that not all types of space may present across all Board areas as they were not present or were below 0.2 hectares in area or deemed not to provide an appropriate open space function, so where there is a nil return, they have been excluded from the presentation of findings.



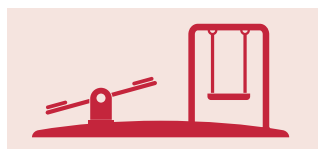
Parks and Nature Reserves



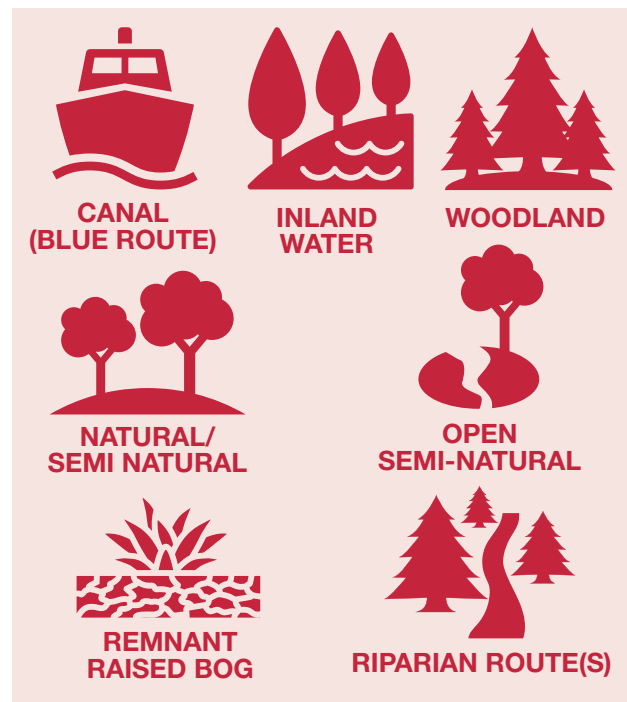
Amenity Greenspace



Playspace for Children and Young People



Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace



Functional Greenspace



Outdoor Sports



Each space has a principal purpose or function and a set of characteristics, such as the presence or absence of formal facilities and accessibility. Additionally, many spaces perform more than one function, and we considered that, under the guidance provided, most of our parks, amenity and natural and semi-natural spaces could be considered to have some functionality for play for children and young people even if their primary function or characteristics categorised them as parks or amenity pace. Equally, all spaces perform some function related to biodiversity and climate change management. There is inevitably an uneven spread of types of spaces resulting from the history of development and natural characteristics of each area. The reliance on certain types of space will require to be considered as an action arising from this strategy.

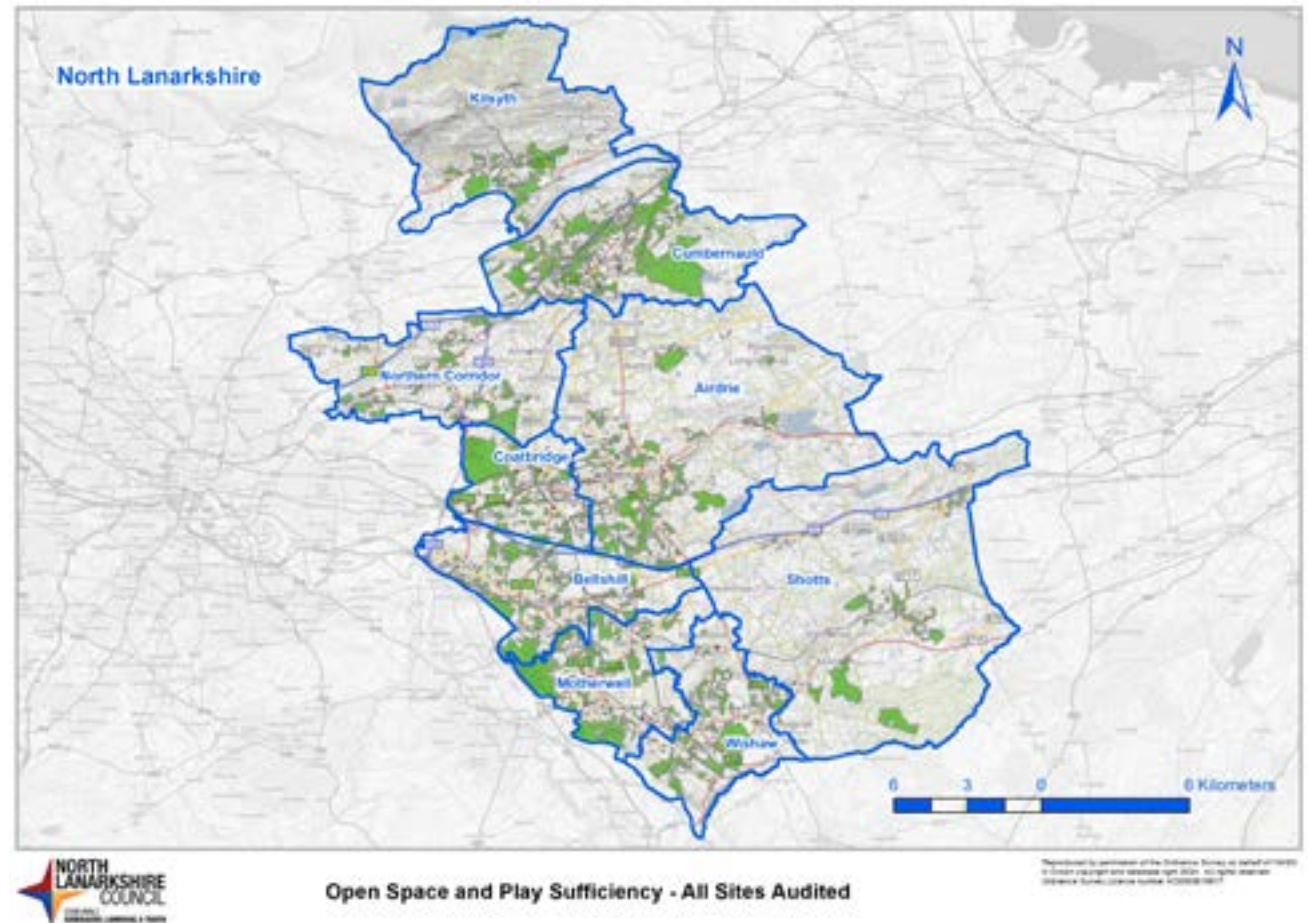
Open Space Audit: Key Findings

Parks and Open Space Quantity

Participants in our Open Space Survey were asked to pinpoint on a map a space that was important to them and tell us why they visit that space.

A total of 465 spaces were identified as being important and most participants who identified spaces as being important to them cited the following reasons for visiting these spaces:

- For mental and physical health (80.65%)
- To de-stress, relax and unwind (78.91%)
- To feel closer to nature (enjoy the surroundings, see birds and wildlife) (71.4%)



Parks and Open Space Quality

Overall, we are well served, with almost 15ha of open space per 1000 people but we want this to be the best it can be for everyone so assessing the quality of that space and identifying actions, to seek improvements is an important part of this strategy.

The majority of participants in our Open Space Survey were very satisfied or quite satisfied with the quality of their local greenspace (53.84%). The most popular response was quite satisfied (39.49%).

The majority of participants also agreed that their nearest greenspace was a place where they could relax and unwind, was a safe place to visit, encourages physical activity (such as walking, cycling, sports and play), is attractive, is a good place for young people to play, they can explore nature, benefits their health and wellbeing, is welcoming and makes the area they live in / work or study in a better place to be.

When asked what, if anything, would encourage them to use or visit North Lanarkshire's greenspace or open spaces more often a broad range of responses were given. The most popular responses were:

- Low levels of litter (72.57%)
- No signs of antisocial behaviour or vandalism (72.41%)
- Well maintained paths for walking, wheeling and cycling (68.02%)
- High levels of cleanliness and free from dog fouling (66.58%)

When asked what, if anything, would make them less likely to use or visit North Lanarkshire's greenspace or open spaces of responses were given, the most popular responses were:

- Antisocial behaviour or vandalism (80.76%)
- High levels of litter (78.14%)
- Low levels of cleanliness and clear evidence of dog fouling (69.37%)
- Poorly maintained spaces (58.57)
- Poorly maintained paths for walking, wheeling and cycling (57.06%)



It is clear from these responses to the survey that maintenance and access are important areas which we can control to encourage continued and increasing use of our open spaces along with identifying actions, with partners, to limit anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

The survey results are an important view of the perception of our population about their greenspaces. In addition we also require to audit our spaces and answer questions from the viewpoint of council services, our partners and other members of society who have particular needs or barriers.

In collaboration with Greenspace Scotland, the Glasgow & Clyde Valley Green Network, and the North Lanarkshire Access Panel, a robust and consistent Quality Assessment methodology was developed. This approach ensures that every open space site is evaluated using a standardised framework.

Assessment Criteria

Each site was assessed under the following six quality headings:

- Accessible and connected
- Place quality
- Care and maintenance
- Function, use and activity
- Safe
- Biodiverse supporting ecological networks

Supplementary Questions

In addition to the main criteria, a series of yes/no questions were included to capture specific features and opportunities, such as:

- Are there picnic tables?
- Are there opportunities to increase biodiversity?
- Are there invasive species present?
- Are there play opportunities?

Scoring System

Each question within the six assessment headings was scored on a scale from 1 to 5, with an option of 0 for 'Not Applicable':

- 0 - Not Applicable
- 1 - Poor
- 2 - Below Satisfactory
- 3 - Satisfactory
- 4 - Above Satisfactory
- 5 - Excellent

Scoring Matrix and Calculation

A scoring matrix was completed for each of the six assessment headings. The process involved:

- Assigning a score (1 to 5, or 0 if not applicable) to each question within a heading.
- Calculating an average score for each heading.

- Summing the six average scores to produce a total score out of 30 for each site.

This scoring system allowed for consistent evaluation across all open space types, including those not surveyed in person, by applying average scores to unsurveyed spaces.

The full list of questions and answers for reference can be found here; [Quality Assessment format agreed after OS Tech Workshop and Ranger Catch UP. xlsx](#)

As our audit assessed a wide range of factors across the multiple functions open spaces can offer their characteristics have led to a range of scores beyond the simpler quality question asked in the survey. Considering all open space typologies across North Lanarkshire the average quality score for spaces is 18.4 out of a maximum 30.

Not all sites identified by the public were able to be included in the audit for reasons of access or current use.

Those sites which were audited with brief description of the site, a note of its overall score and if it was identified by the public or partners can be viewed [here](#).

Average Quality Scores by Open Space Typology				
Types of Open Space Surveyed/Sampled	Spaces	Lowest / Highest Score out of 30		Average Score
Amenity Greenspace	441	11.61	21.96	16.8
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	323	13.31	19.76	17.86
Functional Greenspace	38	14.36	15.83	19.8
Parks and Nature Reserves	54	17.12	24.79	21.18
Outdoor Sports	217	10.59	23.67	16.35
Playspace for Children and Young People	270	8.8	25.09	18.7
	1343			18.4

Clearly our 54 parks and nature reserves, covering over 1,700 ha, are key locations and destinations offering a range of open spaces, activities and facilities. These are also the most intensively managed spaces with greater involvement of our Ranger service. Our expectations on their quality can therefore more easily be set and we have identified the following quality standards, set out below, which we will seek to maintain.

Proposed Quality Standards for Key Open Space Types					
Types of Open Space Surveyed/Sampled	Spaces	Lowest / Highest Score out of 30		Average Score	Proposed Score
Community Parks	12	15.42	26	21.4	17
Country Parks	3	21.05	23.57	22.4	21
Local Nature Reserves	10	18.75	23.75	21.2	19
Parks	29	13.25	25.84	19.7	17

Where individual parks or reserves do not currently meet these standards, we will identify appropriate actions to improve their quality.



Other specific functional spaces, our cemeteries and institutional grounds also score relatively highly, potentially, because of their specific management regimes but not as highly in terms of a wider range of open space characteristics or functions.

Sports areas and play spaces are discussed elsewhere in this strategy and functional spaces including allotments, cemeteries, religious and institutional grounds have their own management regimes and individual characteristics that do not lend to setting an open space standard.

The remaining spaces and bulk of all spaces are amenity greenspaces and natural and semi natural greenspaces which are not as intensively managed and potentially offer the narrowest range of open space functions. It is therefore not surprising that they do not attain the high scores of other spaces. However, we wish to set an appropriate base standard of care and maintenance for those spaces of these types which are within the control of the Council. We will use information obtained through our survey and audit to set this standard and identify those spaces which would require to be either subject to an improvement plan or should be subject to a different use or management regime.

Action: *We will use the prioritisation tool to assess the appropriate future management options for sites and identify any sites which could be alternatively managed, enhanced or changed to a different type of space to support our response to climate change and the nature crisis*

Action: *We undertake to maintain or improve the quality of our different types of open spaces to standards identified using appropriate data.*

Clearly the quality of open spaces, including their range of uses, adaptability and direct accessibility does vary across and between areas within North Lanarkshire. New development will obviously impact on the need for open spaces of various types and developers should be expected to contribute to the maintenance of the appropriate level and quality of open spaces.

Action: *We will use the prioritisation tool to identify appropriate types and levels of developer contributions from new development to maintain and where required enhance the provision of open space in our communities.*



Parks and Open Space Accessibility

Accessibility takes two forms. There is proximity to an open space and almost all the urban population of North Lanarkshire is within a ten-minute walk of an open space of some type. The Scottish Household Survey (SHS) (2019) indicated that most adults (66%) lived within a five-minute walk of their nearest green or blue space, around the same proportion since 2016. Our Open Space Survey found that for participants who live or live and work/study in North Lanarkshire, the majority (53%) had a 5-minute walk or less to their nearest green or open space and over 70% were within a ten-minute walk. (1,146 answers).

The second measure of accessibility is the ability of people to move around it and use any of its facilities. These elements (entrances, paths, equality of access and ease of movement) were assessed during the audit. The performance of spaces against these measures is illustrated here.

The majority of participants in our Open Space Survey agreed that their nearest greenspace was easy to get around (82.11%).

Network analysis of accessibility to open spaces identified in the audit indicates that almost 100% of the urban population of North Lanarkshire lives within a 10 minute walk of an open space.

From the audit which included specific questions on entrances being in the right places, paths being suitable for a number of users and equal access for all (including wheelchair accessible) there are a number of sites assessed as potentially requiring improvement. Further analysis of the types of sites is required as they may be amenity spaces with no access and are important for their amenity as opposed to range of uses.

Whilst overall there is good accessibility, and the survey responses bear this out, further assessment of the potential to improve this aspect of our open spaces will be required.

Action 10: *We will use the prioritisation tool and other available data to identify opportunities to enhance the accessibility of our open spaces.*



Play

Quantity and Quality of Play

The quality of play which our residents can access is very much linked with the quantity of spaces that offer a wide range of formal and informal play opportunities. As previously indicated whilst there are 270 formal play spaces, not including private spaces, which have been audited there is a much wider definition of play than that provided by traditional fixed play parks. As an integral part of the audit a series of factors related to a wider definition of play found in Government guidance were assessed. These 25 factors included opportunities for physical play, creative play, social play and general play opportunities.

The majority of participants in our play survey agreed that their local play space has fixed equipment to play on (74.99%). However, when considering the wider aspects of play participants disagreed that their local play space had natural things to play on or move around and play with in different ways.

Not every open space can provide the full range of types of play opportunities, whether by the nature of location or size, however the results for the 671 sites audited in person are shown on the tables below confirm that there are opportunities for formal and non-formal play within many of our open spaces.

From the Audit it is apparent that 234 of our spaces not principally allocated for play offer opportunities for physical play, creative play and social play. A further 134 sites offer opportunities for a combination of two of these types of play and 108 sites offer opportunity for at least one of these types of play. Only 146 of the sites audited were considered to offer no obvious opportunity for play within the space.



Physical Play Opportunities Across Audited Sites			
Type of Play	Play Opportunity	% Yes	% No
Physical Play	Running, chasing, skipping hopping and jumping	67	33
	Swinging	19	81
	Sliding	14	86
	Spinning or rocking	19	81
	Ball games like basketball, tennis, football or rounders	38	63
	Balancing or crawling	24	76
	hang upside down, jump from high up, swing high, walk on logs	25	75
	Bike or scooter riding	55	45
	Roller skating or skateboarding	25	75
	Climbing	23	77
	Overall Average	31	69

From the Audit it is apparent that a significant number of our open spaces provide opportunities for physical play, beyond that provided in formal play areas.

Creative Play Opportunities Across Audited Sites			
Type of Play	Play Opportunity	% Yes	% No
Creative Play	Sand or soil for digging or making things	2	98
	Building dens or other structures	38	62
	Water for pouring, measuring or splashing	5	95
	Things or places for pretend play	26	74
	A place to perform, sing or act	20	80
	Chalking, drawing or painting	31	69
	Overall Average	20	80



Although there are some opportunities provided in our open spaces for more creative play they are not as widespread as for physical play.

Social Play Opportunities Across Audited Sites			
Type of Play	Play Opportunity	% Yes	% No
Social Play	Quiet places to be on your own or with a few close friends	47	53
	Places to socialise and meet friends (other boys and girls of different ages and abilities), sit around chat, laugh, shout, (generally hang out)	45	55
	Overall Average	46	54

Overall, 245 sites were assessed as having the opportunity to improve the natural play and ‘playability’ of the site.

Accessibility and Inclusivity Features in Play Spaces			
Type of Play	Play Opportunity	% Yes	% No
Play Opportunities	The play place is easy to get to by walking or cycling	66	34
	The play place feel safe from traffic, bullies or strange adults	52	48
	The play place has natural things to play on or with e.g. trees, logs, rocks.	40	60
	There are things to move around and play with in different ways.	14	86
	There is fixed equipment to play on	19	81
	There is accessible play	19	82
	There is inclusive play	1	99
	Overall Average	30	70

Clearly further analysis is required on the geography of provision to assess the need and scope for providing as wide a range of play opportunities in as many locations as practicable.



Play Accessibility

Overall, the audit supports the results of our survey in that most of our spaces for play are easy to get to by walking or cycling but further assessment and action may need to be taken with specific regard to play being accessible and inclusive, an issue also identified in both the play surveys. Accessible and inclusive play is a specific area of consideration with specific definitions.

An Accessible Play Space is a space which is barrier-free, allows users access to move around the space and offers participation opportunities for a range of differing abilities. Not every child of every ability will be able to actively use everything within an accessible play space

An Inclusive Play Space provides a barrier-free environment, with supporting infrastructure, which meets the wide and varying play needs of every child. Disabled children and non-disabled children will enjoy high levels of participation opportunities, equally rich in play value.

Source: The UK Play Safety Forum and Children's Play Policy Forum recommend the following definitions when using the terms "accessible" and "inclusive" in the context of play space. (extract from Play Scotland)

Based on the range of equipment and facilities required for a play area to be considered accessible and inclusive, it is considered reasonable that our country parks and destination sites deliver the best opportunity to meet these play needs.

A full Play Sufficiency Assessment will be prepared as part of the evidence for the Local Development Plan and this and other matters related to wider accessibility will be addressed in more detail as part of that exercise.

Action: *We will seek to identify appropriate locations where a range of inclusive and accessible play provision may be provided as part of council and partner development programmes.*



Sports Pitches and Sports Development: Community Sports Pitch Review

Sports facilities fall into a category of spaces for which a demand led approach can be followed. Private sports facilities are not within the control of the council and whilst this Strategy identifies such facilities it cannot place an expectation on them to meet public demand. There is, however, an expectation that the strategy considers any sports pitch strategy developed by the council.

EKOS Ltd carried out a comprehensive review of the council's sports pitches during 2022. The Community Sports Pitch Review for North Lanarkshire Council and its partners builds on the two previous sports pitch strategies covering 2005-2012 and 2012-2018. It remains in progress, but it is possible to include very broad summary headline figures of information, such as where the pitches are and what type of surface they are.

Outdoor pitches cover a large area of public open space within North Lanarkshire. They have a high intrinsic value and need to be well utilised to provide the greatest benefit to the authority. Underutilisation of existing provision or lack of future provision would limit the development of sport and physical activity and impact on the council's land use planning.

Sports pitches have two main functions:

- To provide quality venues for training and matchplay purposes.
- To increase the number of participants and subsequent sporting success across the Authority.

There are 293 pitches across North Lanarkshire, made up of different surfaces and sizes. This does not include the 71 red blaes (ash) pitches that are located across the authority. The 293 pitches are broken down by type, location/facility shows that the majority of pitches are community pitches that are not within school grounds or attached to a school.



Distribution of Sports Pitches by Type and Community Board						
Community Board	2G	3G	Grass	Hybrid	Athletics	Grand Total
Motherwell	2	11	40	1	1	55
Airdrie	6	7	29		1	43
Wishaw	5	9	26	1	2	43
Coatbridge	7	5	27		1	40
Bellshill	3	3	26			32
Cumbernauld	2	14	15		1	32
Shotts		1	21			22
Northern Corridor	3	1	12			16
Kilsyth	2	2	6			10
Total	30	53	202	2	6	293

Pitches are present in standalone venues (one or two pitches) and hubs (three or more pitches). Grass pitches remain the most accessible for the majority of the population with over 53% of people within 10-minute walk of such a pitch whereas it requires a 20-minute walk for the majority to reach a 2G or 3G pitch.

The Community Sports Pitch Review will address measure to increase access and availability of pitches where demand requires action.

Should the review identify pitches for which there is insufficient demand for them to be managed as lettable, one action in the Open Space Strategy will be to develop a plan to incorporate them into consideration for retention as amenity open spaces, development into a different type of open space or divestment.

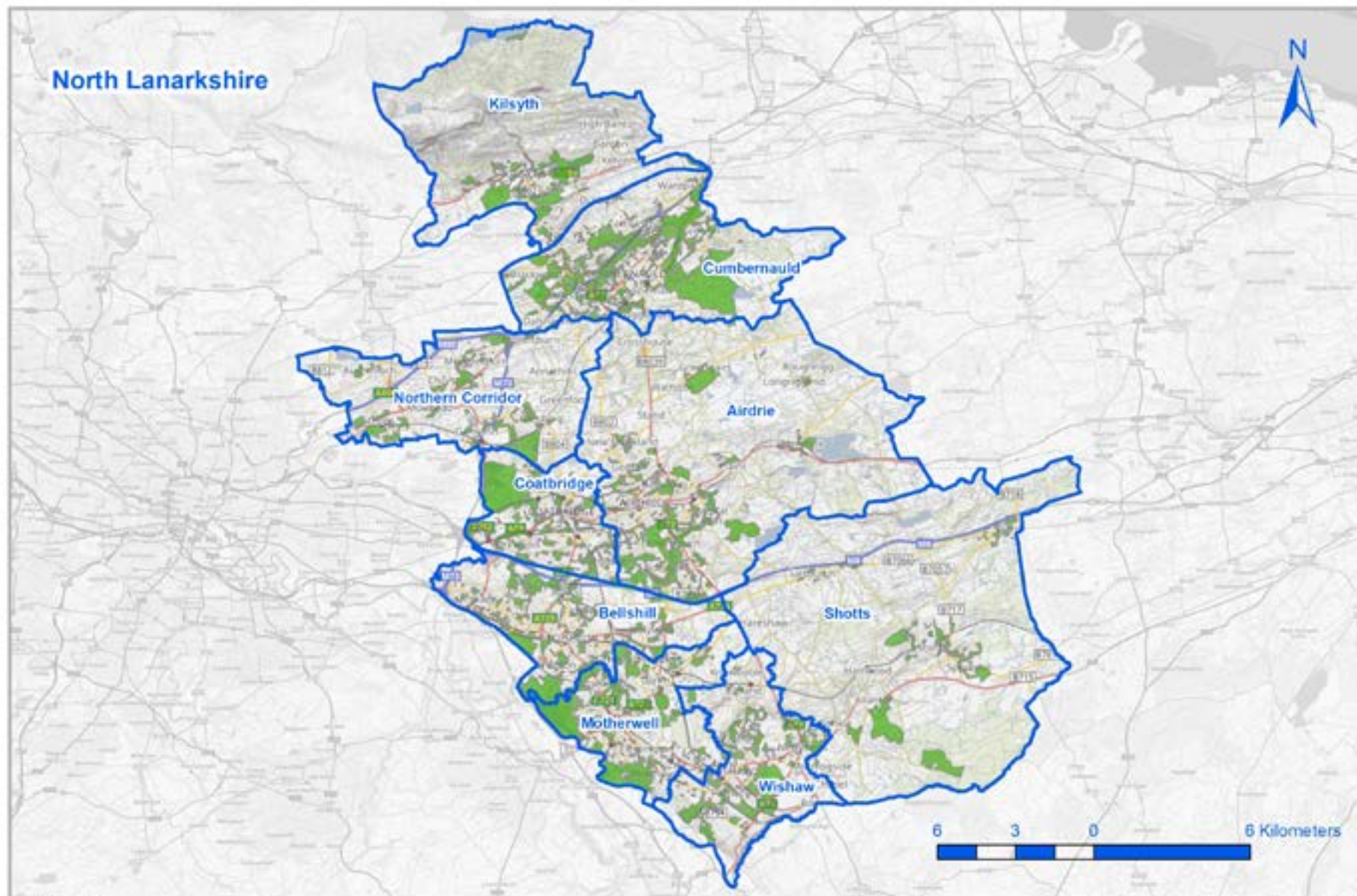
Action: *We will use the prioritisation tool to identify the most suitable alternative use for any sports pitches identified as surplus to requirements.*



Community Board Profiles

In this part of the strategy, we share the results of our audit for each Community Board Area in North Lanarkshire. We also include maps showing the sites we looked at. Some sites are on the borders between areas, so they might appear in more than one table. You can find detailed information and average scores for the sites we audited or identified through our surveys [here](#).





Airdrie Community Board

Airdrie Community Board is made up of three wards: Airdrie North, Airdrie Central and Airdrie South

This section shows what the Open Space Audit and Play sufficiency Assessment found for the area, giving information on the number of each different type of space.

Notable parks and nature reserves in this area include Centenary and West End Parks, Central Park, Katherine Park, Mavisbank Park, Wheatholm Park and Brownsburn. Notable sports facilities include Airdrie Leisure Centre and the Albert Bartlett Stadium Complex. There are a number of other smaller facilities including Springwells Tennis Club and Airdrie, Airdrie Central, Calderbank, Caldercraig, Clarkston, Glengowan, Caldercruix, Glenmavis and Airdrie bowling clubs.

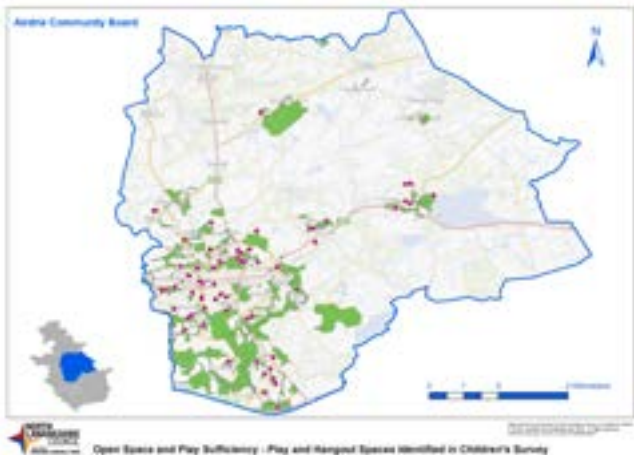
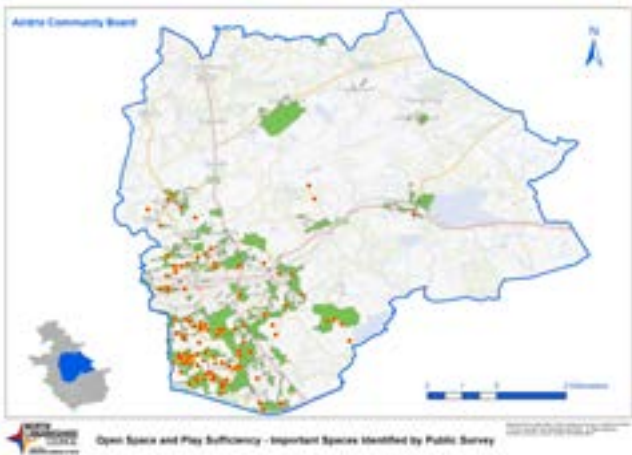
242 locations, equating to 841.17 hectares of open spaces, were identified as part of the audit and 210 across the six main typologies were audited or sampled.

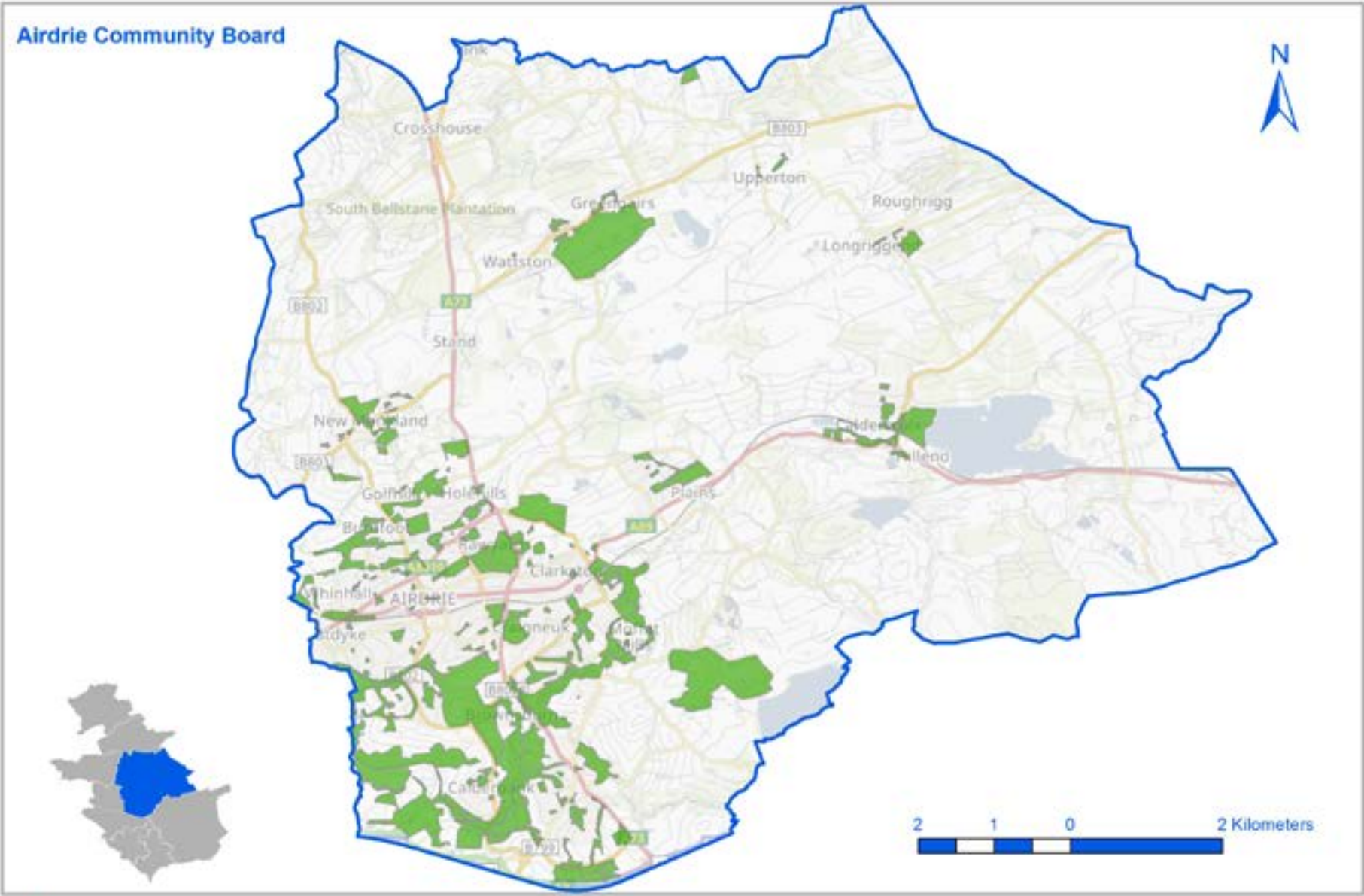
There were 116 responses from members of the public regarding sites in this community board area being important to them and there were 81 responses from children or groups of children marking sites in this community board area as play and hang out spaces.

There were 2 responses from partner organisations regarding spaces in this community board being important to them.

This community board has population of 56,317 and a total of 25,829 households and 29,406 private gardens.

Average Quality Scores by Open Space Typology				
Types of Open Space Surveyed/Sampled	Spaces	Area (ha)	ha per 1,000	Average Score
Amenity Greenspace	82	118.48	2.11	16.13
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	49	411.83	7.31	16.73
Functional Greenspace	6	16.04	0.28	18.75
Parks and Nature Reserves	9	169.78	3.02	21.78
Outdoor Sports	33	72.46	1.28	16.25
Playspace for Children and Young People	31	24.82	0.44	18.3
	179	788.59	14	17.99





Open Space and Play Sufficiency All Sites Audited

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Bellshill Community Board

Bellshill Community Board is made up of three wards: Mossend and Holytown, Thorniewood and Bellshill.

This section shows what the Open Space Audit and Play sufficiency Assessment found for the area, giving information on the number of each different type of space.

Notable parks in this area include King George V Park, Mossend, Holytown Memorial Park, Holytown, Legbrannock Urban Fringe Park, Holytown, Orbiston Park, Bellshill and Viewpark Gardens, Viewpark. Notable sports facilities include the Sir Matt Busby Leisure Centre, private football facilities at Bellshill Athletic FC, Caledonian Braves FC, and Thorniewood United FC, Viewpark. There are a number of other smaller sports facilities including Bellshill & Mossend, Burnhead, Viewpark and Orbiston, bowling clubs.

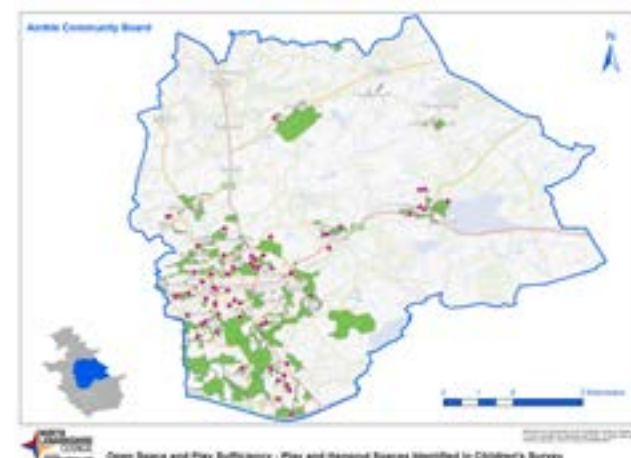
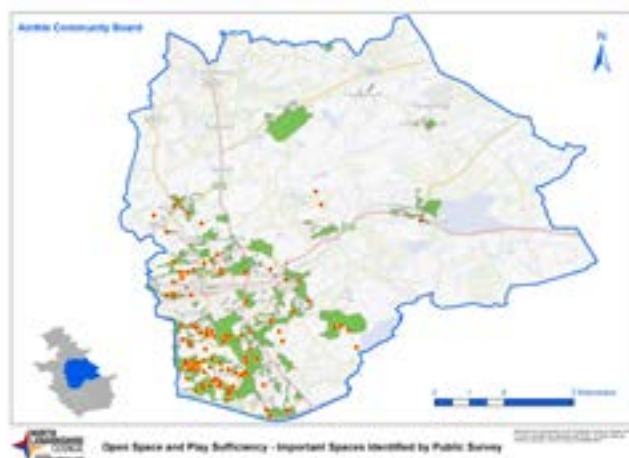
187 locations, equating to 579.52 hectares of open spaces, were identified as part of the audit and 170 across the six main typologies were audited or sampled.

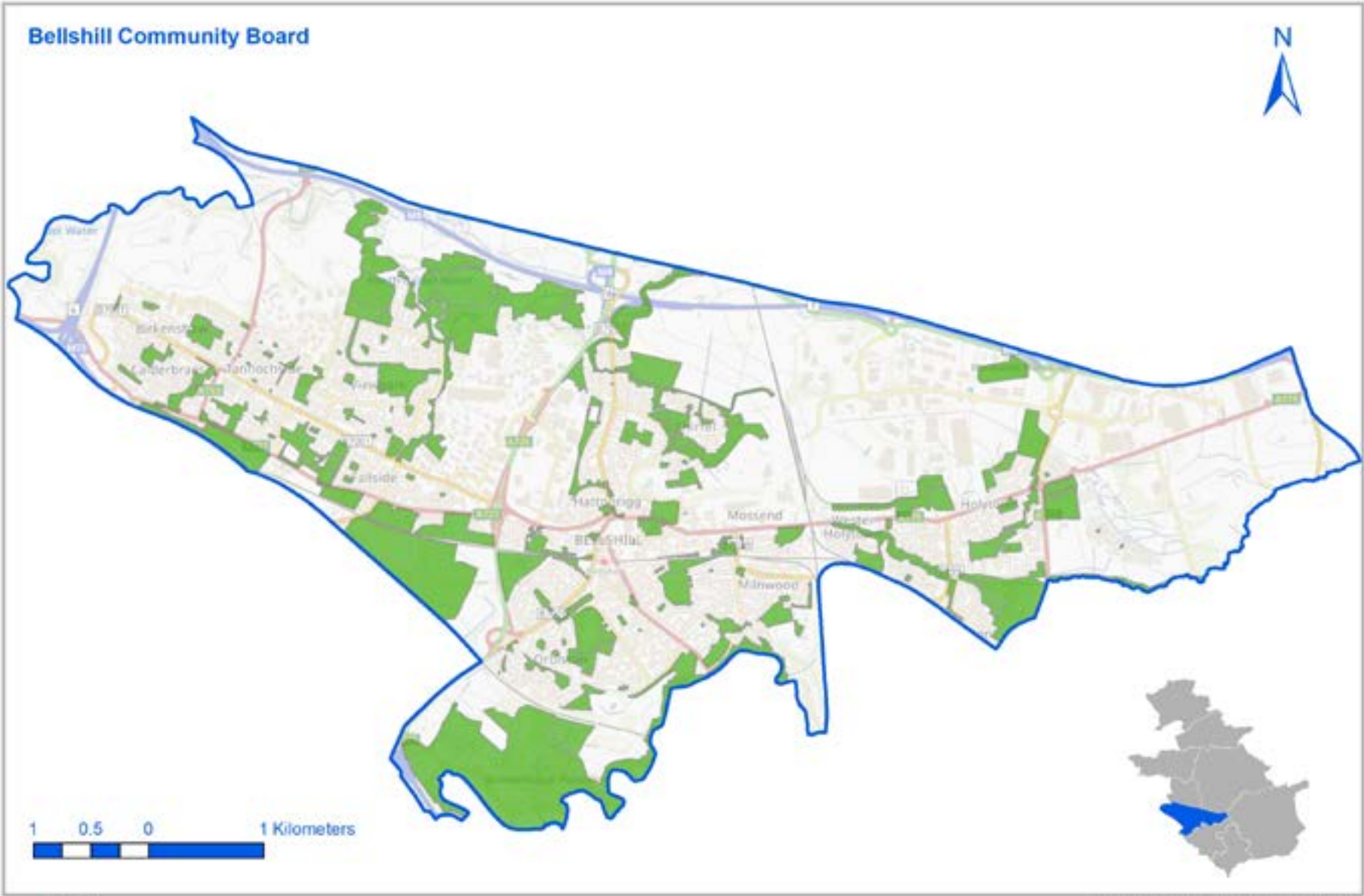
There were 35 responses from members of the public regarding sites in this community board area being important to them and there were 52 responses from children or groups of children marking sites in this community board area as play and hang out spaces.

There were 2 responses from partner organisations regarding spaces in this community board being important to them.

This community board has population of 41,591 and a total of 21,096 households and 26,637 private gardens.

Average Quality Scores by Open Space Typology				
Types of Open Space Surveyed/Sampled	Spaces	Area (ha)	ha per 1,000	Average Score
Amenity Greenspace	68	61.66	1.24	17.78
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	36	262.29	5.29	14.53
Functional Greenspace	5	19.48	0.39	20.2
Parks and Nature Reserves	3	121.15	2.45	16.93
Outdoor Sports	21	46.05	0.93	15.85
Playspace for Children and Young People	37	36.31	0.73	18.7
	170	546.94	11.03	17.33





Coatbridge Community Board

Coatbridge Community Board is made up of three wards: Coatbridge North, Coatbridge South, Coatbridge.

This section shows what the Open Space Audit and Play sufficiency Assessment found for the area, giving information on the number of each different type of space.

Notable parks in this area include Drumpellier Country Park, Dunbeth Park, Langloan Park, West End Park and Whifflet Park. Notable sports facilities include Coatbridge Outdoor Sports Centre, Albion Rovers FC, Drumpellier Golf Course and Drumpellier Cricket Club. There are a number of other smaller facilities including Coatbridge, Coatdyke, Dunbeth Park, Gartsherrie, Victoria CB, West End and Whifflet bowling clubs.

168 locations, equating to 575.8 hectares of open spaces, were identified as part of the audit and 140 across the six main typologies were audited or sampled.

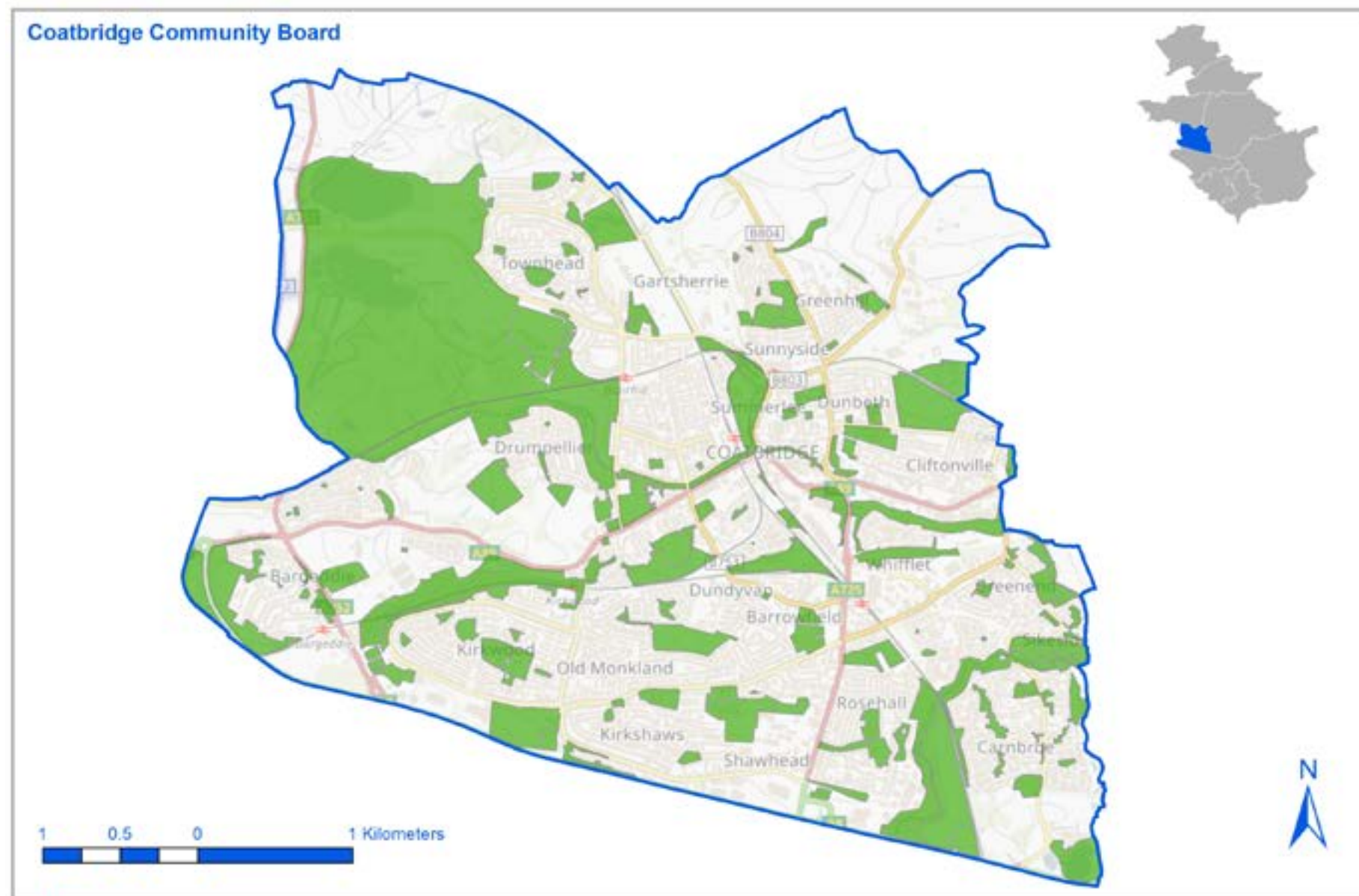
There were 50 responses from members of the public regarding sites in this community board area being important to them and there were 80 responses from children or groups of children marking sites in this community board area as play and hang out spaces.

There was one response from partner organisations regarding spaces in this community board being important to them.

This community board has population of 46,593 and a total of 22,712 households and 24,160 private gardens.

Average Quality Scores by Open Space Typology				
Types of Open Space Surveyed/Sampled	Spaces	Area (ha)	ha per 1,000	Average Score
Amenity Greenspace	38	29.69	0.57	17.95
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	101	612.29	11.74	20.58
Functional Greenspace	4	14.77	0.28	20.65
Parks and Nature Reserves	10	416.98	7.98	22.4
Outdoor Sports	33	70.93	1.36	16.65
Playspace for Children and Young People	45	31.3	0.6	19
	231	1175.96	22.53	19.54





Cumbernauld Community Board

Cumbernauld Community Board is made up of three wards: Cumbernauld North, Cumbernauld East and Cumbernauld South.

This section shows what the Open Space Audit and Play sufficiency Assessment found for the area, giving information on the number of each different type of space.

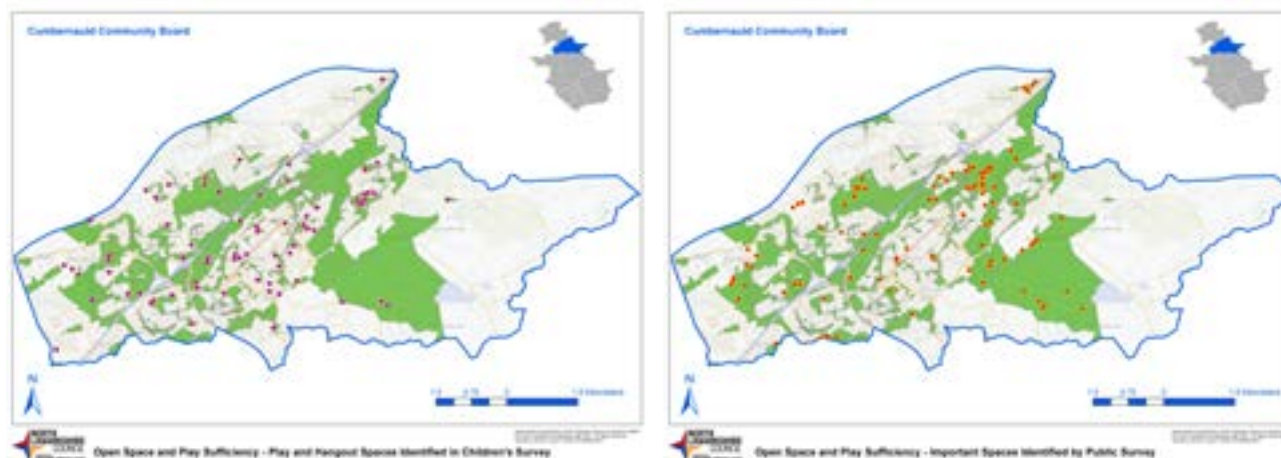
Notable parks and nature reserves in this area include Palacerigg Country Park, Broadwood Loch, Orchardton Woods, Craiglinn Park/St Maurice's Pond, Mosswater and Ravenswood Local Nature Reserves and Cumbernauld House Park. Notable sports facilities include Broadwood Stadium Complex, Greenfaulds High School and golf complexes at Dullatur and Westerwood. There are a number of other smaller facilities including Abronhill, Condorrat, Cumbernauld, Dullatur and Greenfaulds bowling clubs. 259 locations, equating to 1292.13 hectares of open spaces, were identified as part of the audit and 231 across the 6 main typologies were audited or sampled.

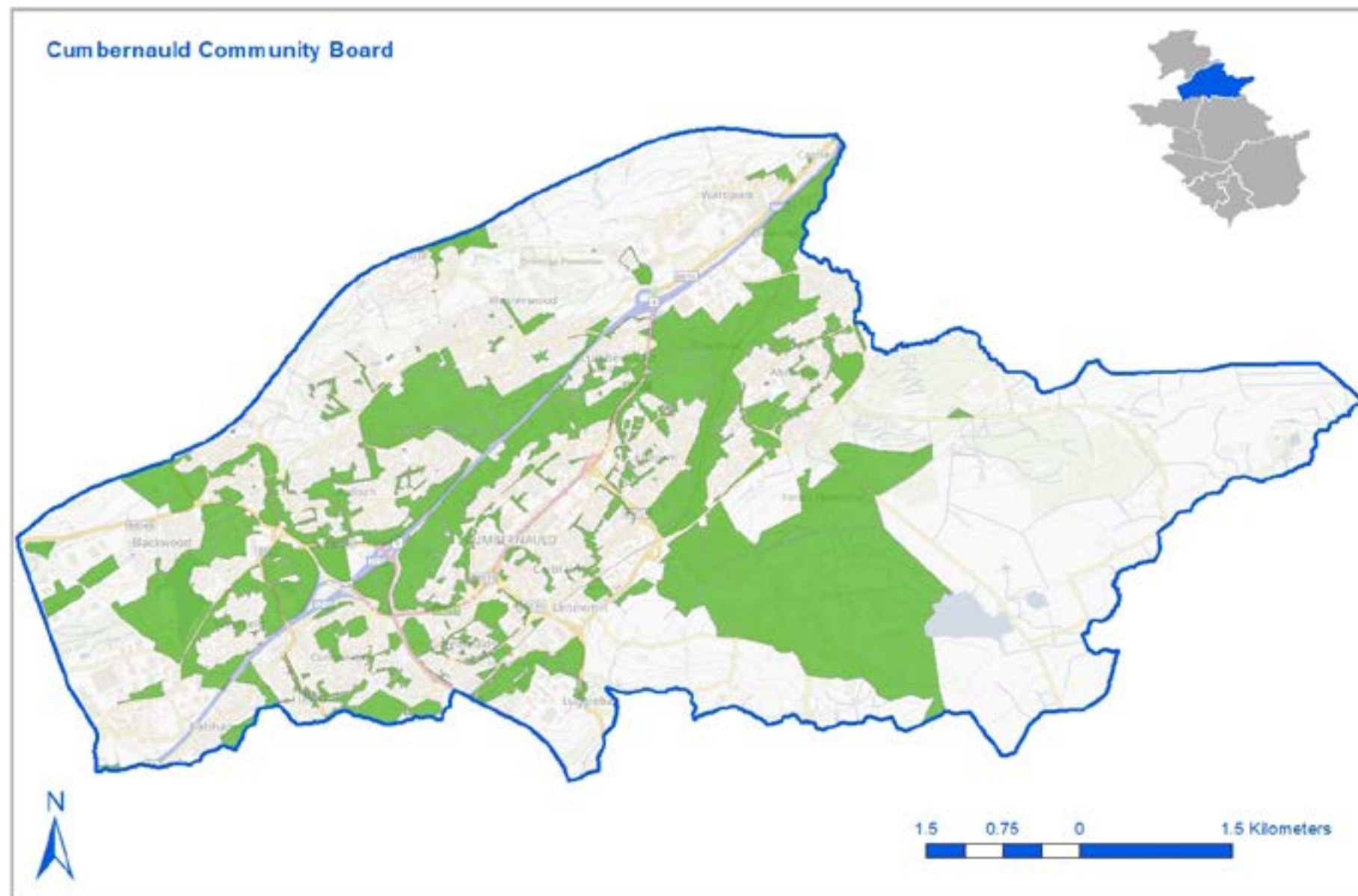
There were 108 responses from members of the public regarding sites in this community board area being important to them and there were 98 responses from children or groups of children marking sites in this community board area as play and hang out spaces.

There were five responses from partner organisations regarding spaces in this community board being important to them.

This community board has population of 52,187 and a total of 24,072 households and 25,915 private gardens.

Average Quality Scores by Open Space Typology				
Types of Open Space Surveyed/Sampled	Spaces	Area (ha)	ha per 1,000	Average Score
Amenity Greenspace	38	14.85	0.29	17.95
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	101	153.07	2.94	20.58
Functional Greenspace	4	7.39	0.14	20.65
Parks and Nature Reserves	10	416.98	7.98	22.4
Outdoor Sports	33	35.47	0.68	16.65
Playspace for Children and Young People	45	31.3	0.6	19
	231	659.06	12.63	19.54





Kilsyth Community Board

Kilsyth Community Board is made up of the Kilsyth Ward.

This section shows what the Open Space Audit and Play sufficiency Assessment found for the area, giving information on the number of each different type of space.

Notable parks and nature reserves in this area include Colzium Estate and Museum, Burngreen Park Auchinstarry Quarry, Bogside Park, and Dumbreck Local Nature Reserve. Notable sports facilities include Kilsyth Rangers Football Club and Burngreen Park. There are a number of other smaller facilities Croy and Kilsyth bowling clubs and Kilsyth Lennox Golf Club.

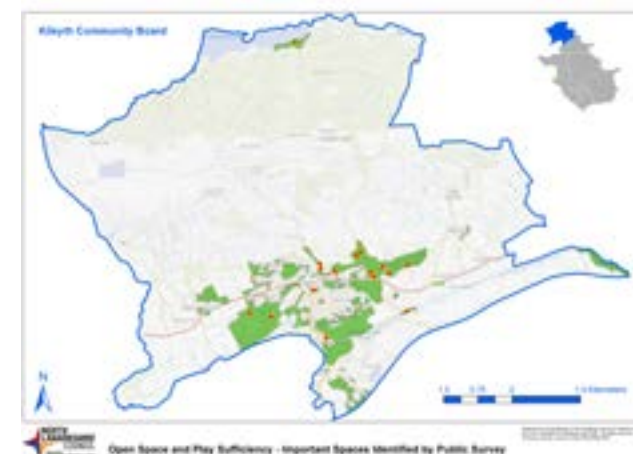
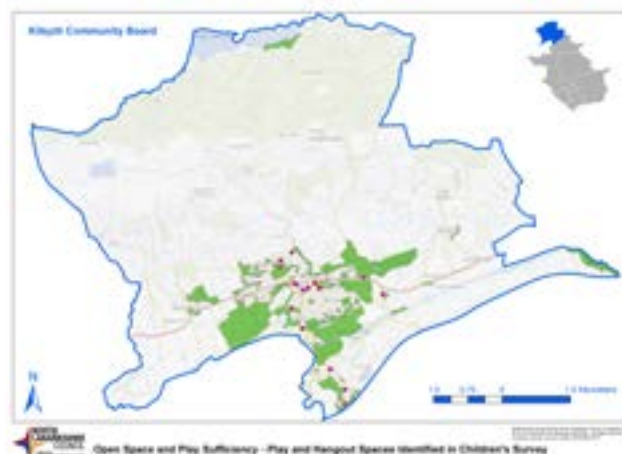
84 locations, equating to 366.79 hectares of open spaces, were identified as part of the audit and 76 across the six main typologies were audited or sampled.

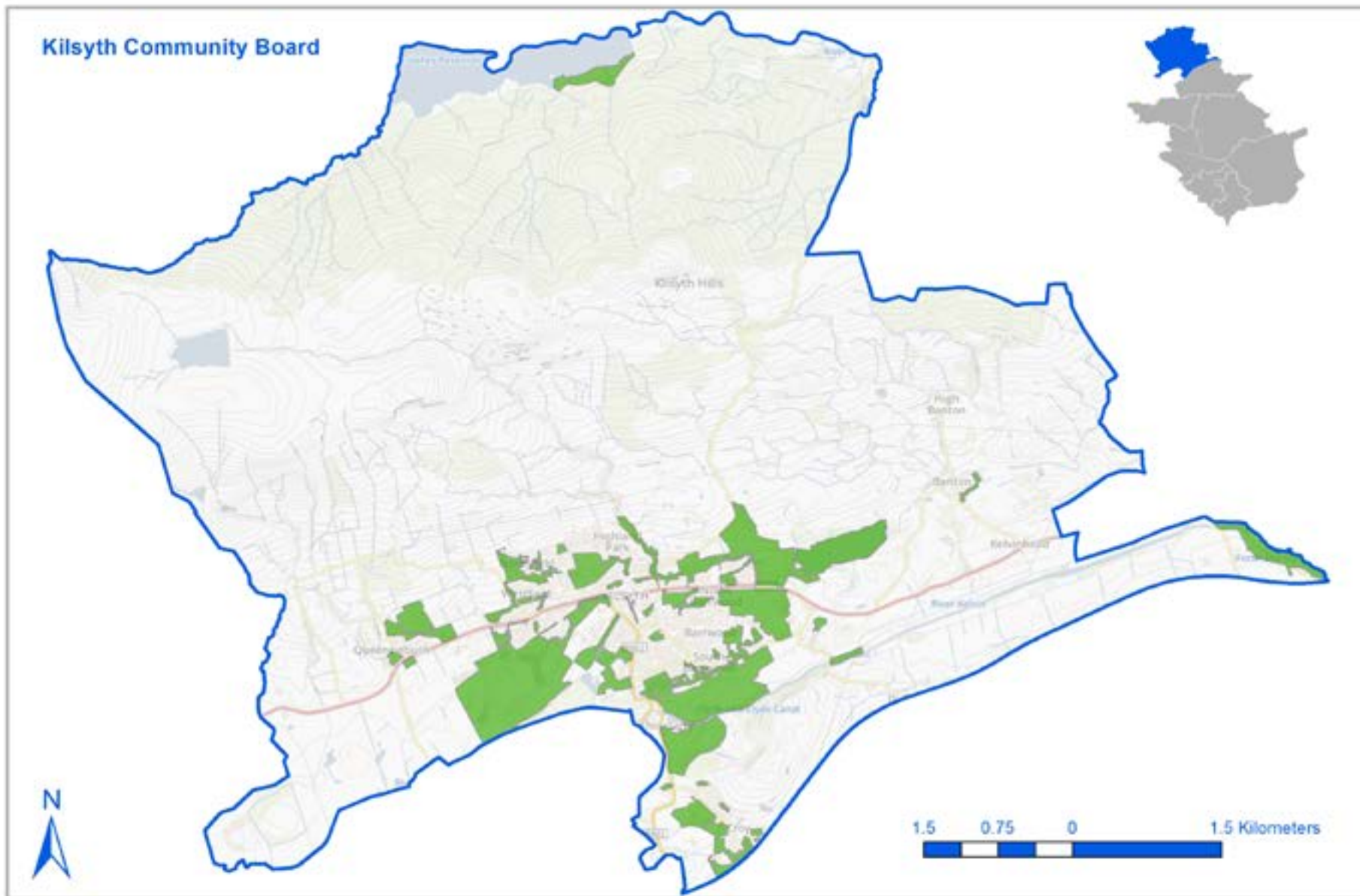
There were 18 responses from members of the public regarding sites in this community board area being important to them and there were 22 responses from children or groups of children marking sites in this community board area as play and hang out spaces.

There was one response from partner organisations regarding spaces in this community board being important to them.

This community board has population of 11,837 and a total of 6,337 households and 6,165 private gardens.

Average Quality Scores by Open Space Typology				
Types of Open Space Surveyed/Sampled	Spaces	Area (ha)	ha per 1,000	Average Score
Amenity Greenspace	22	19.34	1.63	17.35
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	26	192.25	16.25	19.65
Functional Greenspace	2	5.21	0.44	20.17
Parks and Nature Reserves	4	103.2	8.71	22.6
Outdoor Sports	11	21.22	1.8	17.35
Playspace for Children and Young People	7	6.94	0.59	20.9
	72	348.16	29.42	19.67





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Motherwell Community Board

Motherwell Community Board is made up of three wards: Motherwell North, Motherwell South East and Ravenscraig, and Motherwell West.

This section shows what the Open Space Audit and Play sufficiency Assessment found for the area, giving information on the number of each different type of space.

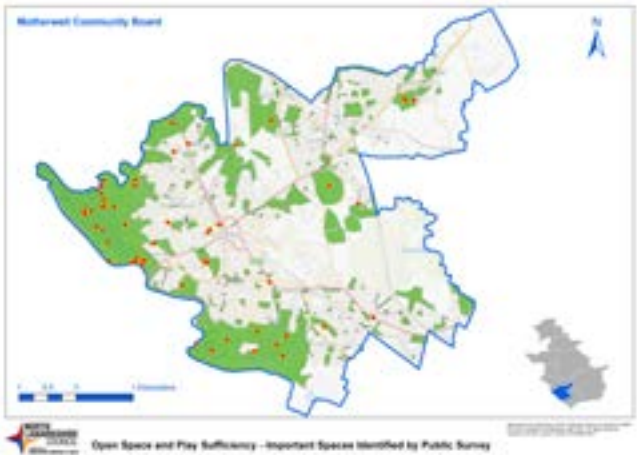
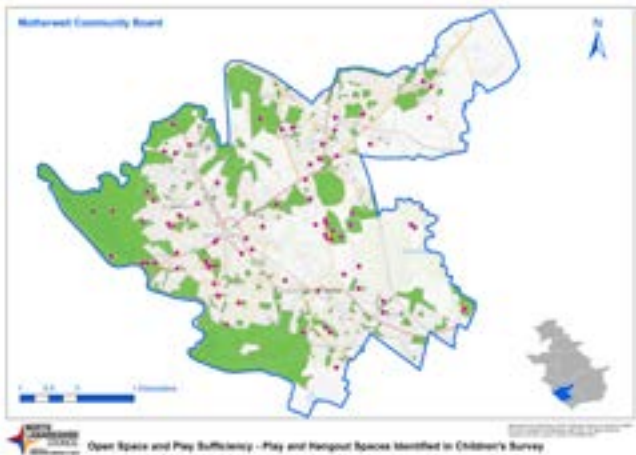
Notable parks and nature reserves in this area include Strathclyde Country Park, Duchess of Hamilton Park, Ravenscraig Park, Ailsa Crescent Park, Calder Park, Chapelknowe Park, Carfin, George Street Park, Jerviston Street Park, Kether Street Park, Newarthill Park and Baron's Haugh RSPB Reserve. Notable sports facilities include Ravenscraig Regional Sports Centre, Dalziel Park and Motherwell Football Club. There are a number of other smaller facilities including Newarthill, Colville Park, Dalzell, Motherwell, Motherwell MW and Wrangholm Hall bowling clubs as well as Colville Park Golf Club.

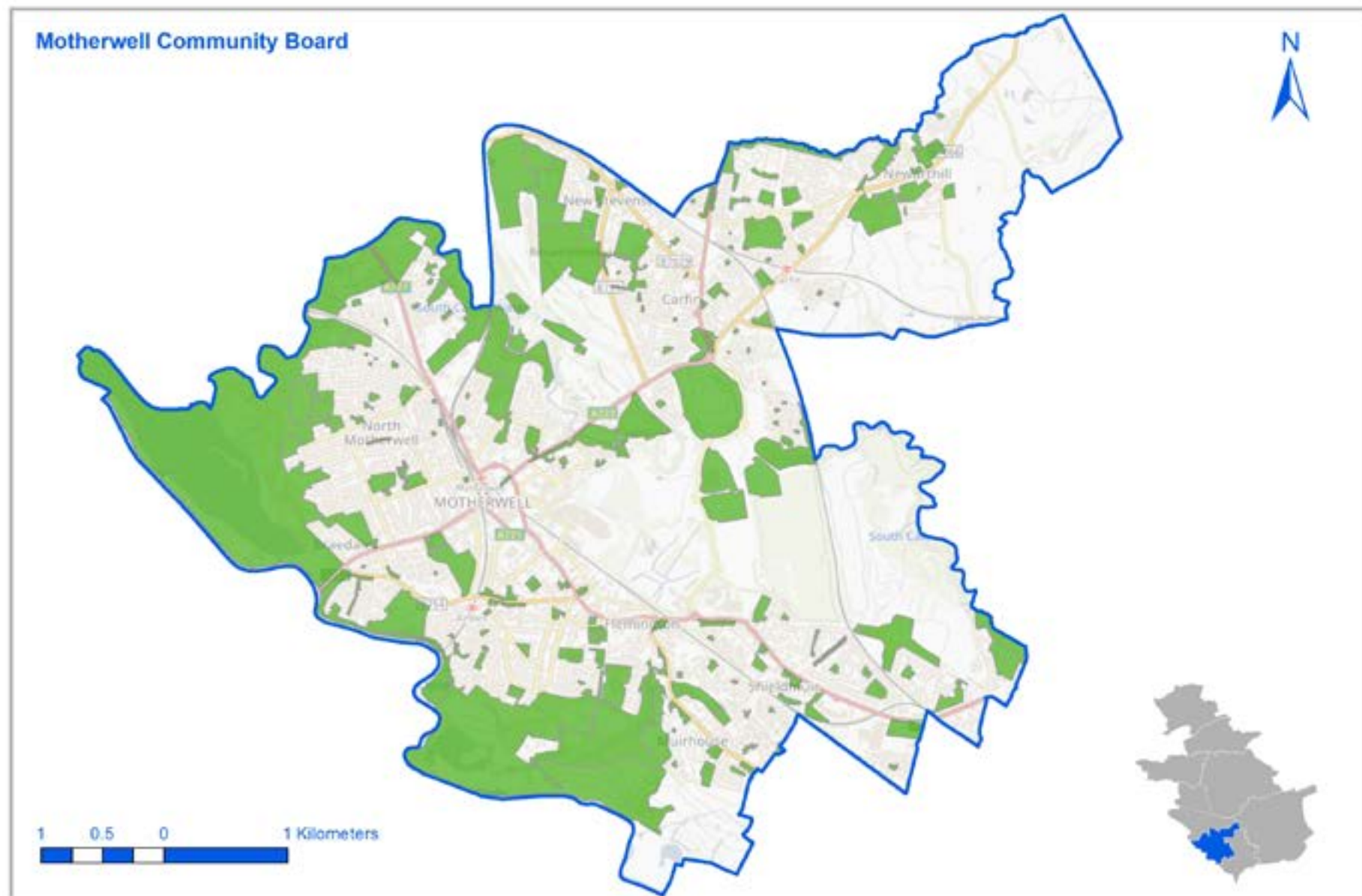
220 locations, equating to 737.36 hectares of open spaces were identified as part of the audit and 184 across the 6 main typologies were audited or sampled.

There were 61 responses from members of the public regarding sites in this community board area being important to them and there were 108 responses from children or groups of children marking sites in this community board area as play and hang out spaces.

This community board has population of 54,023 and a total of 28,171 households and 24,634 private gardens.

Average Quality Scores by Open Space Typology				
Types of Open Space Surveyed/Sampled	Spaces	Area (ha)	ha per 1,000	Average Score
Amenity Greenspace	69	49.29	0.91	16.27
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	23	183.86	3.4	14.8
Functional Greenspace	7	23.87	0.44	19.7
Parks and Nature Reserves	9	326.99	6.05	19.73
Outdoor Sports	31	67.04	1.24	16.45
Playspace for Children and Young People	65	43.52	0.81	18.8
	204	694.57	12.85	17.625





Northern Corridor Community Board

The Northern Corridor Community Board is made up of two wards: Stepps, Chryston and Muirhead and Gartcosh, Glenboig, and Moodiesburn.

This section shows what the Open Space Audit and Play sufficiency Assessment found for the area, giving information on the number of each different type of space.

Notable parks and nature reserves in this area include Glenboig Village Park, Moor Park and Stepps Park as well as Gartcosh Local Nature Reserve. Notable sports facilities include Crow Wood Golf Club and there are a number of other smaller facilities including Auchinloch, Chryston & District, Gartcosh, Stepps and Stoneyetts bowling clubs.

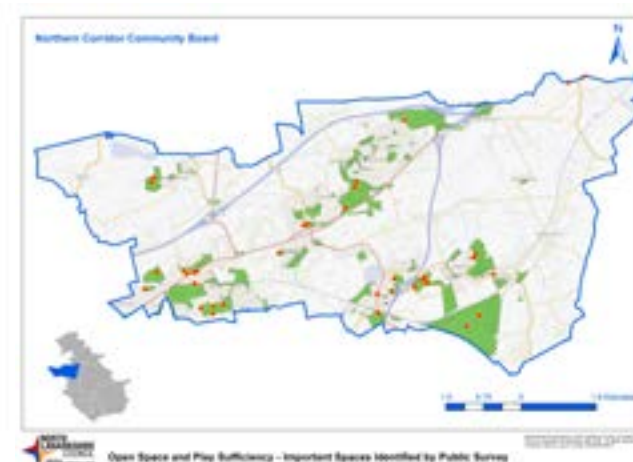
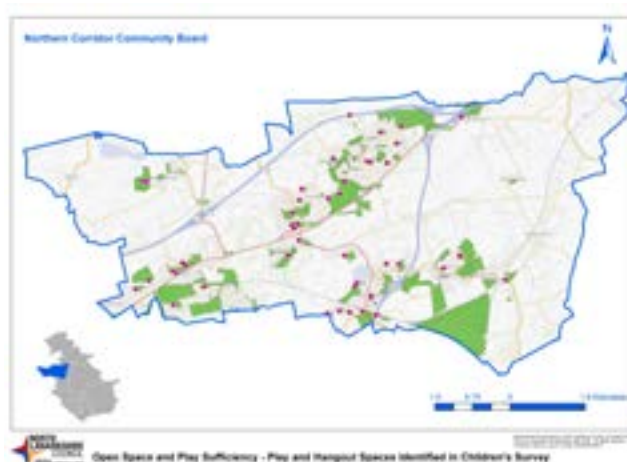
112 locations, equating to 374.77 hectares of open spaces were identified as part of the audit and 96 across the six main typologies were audited or sampled.

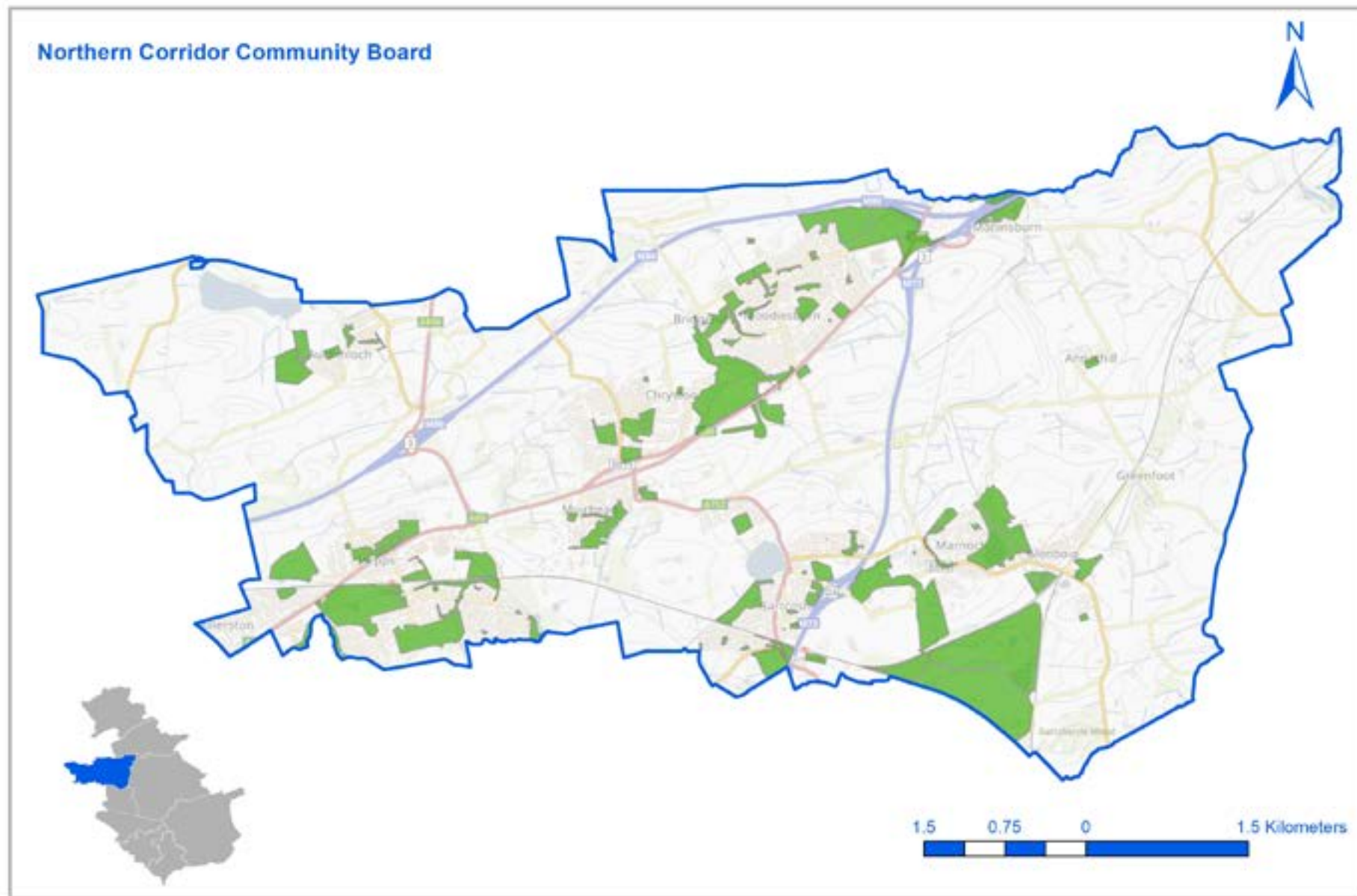
There were 41 responses from members of the public regarding sites in this community board area being important to them and there were 59 responses from children or groups of children marking sites in this community board area as play and hang out spaces.

There were two responses from partner organisations regarding spaces in this community board being important to them.

This community board has population of 26,868 and a total of 13,251 households and 14,138 private gardens.

Average Quality Scores by Open Space Typology				
Types of Open Space Surveyed/Sampled	Spaces	Area (ha)	ha per 1,000	Average Score
Amenity Greenspace	21	13.62	1.13	15.1
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	27	210.23	17.52	16.73
Functional Greenspace	2	3.9	0.33	22.78
Parks and Nature Reserves	5	47.33	3.94	22.85
Outdoor Sports	18	28.89	2.41	16.25
Playspace for Children and Young People	23	11.11	0.93	18.6
	96	315.08	26.26	18.72





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Shotts Community Board

Shotts Community Board is made up of the Fortissat Ward.

This section shows what the Open Space Audit and Play sufficiency Assessment found for the area, giving information on the number of each different type of space.

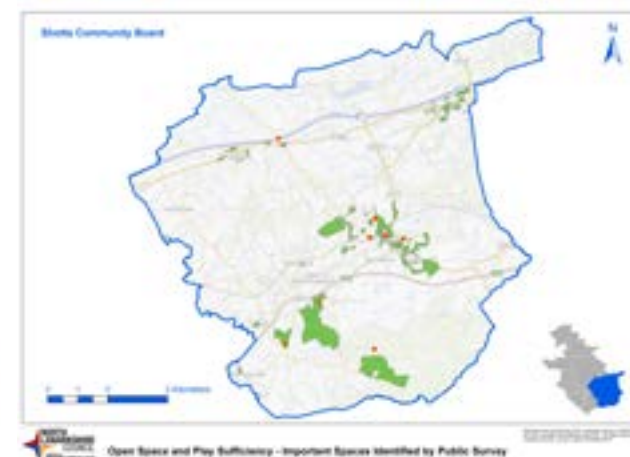
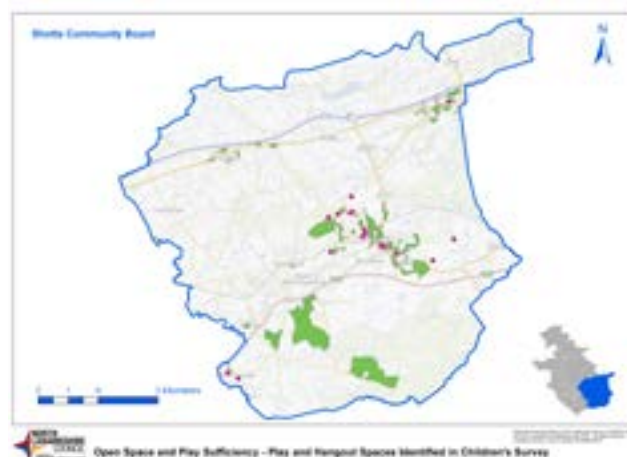
Notable parks and nature reserves in this area include Allanton Public Park, Brandy Park, Shotts, Eastfield Public Park, Morningside Park and Kingshill Park Local Nature Reserve. Notable sports facilities include Shotts Golf Club and Shotts Bon Accord FC as well as Shotts IW, bowling club.

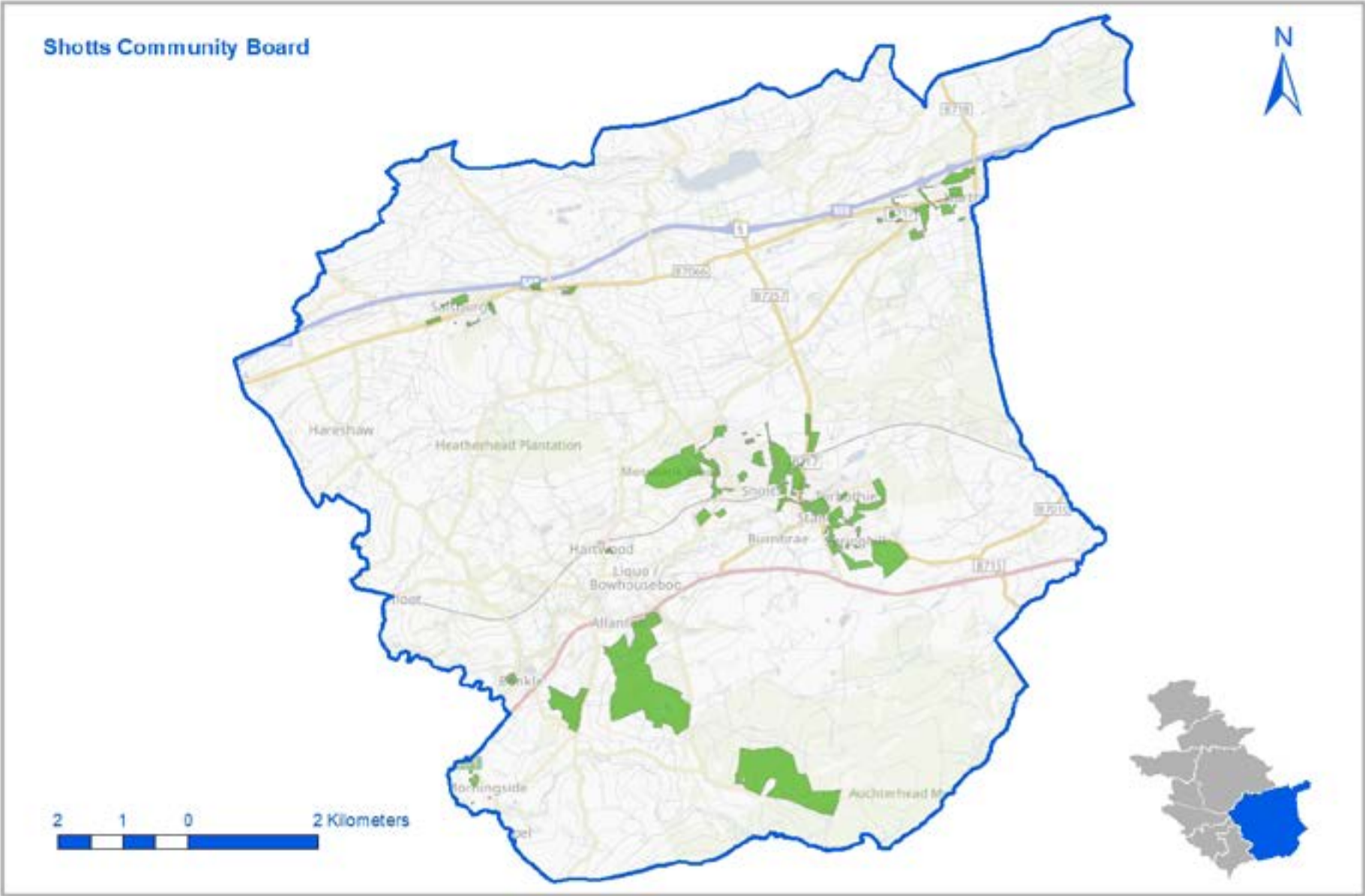
88 locations, equating to 407.73 hectares of open spaces were identified as part of the audit and 77 across the six main typologies were audited or sampled.

There were eight responses from members of the public regarding sites in this community board area being important to them and there were 22 responses from children or groups of children marking sites in this community board area as play and hang out spaces.

This community board has population of 15,680 and a total of 7,772 households and 9,082 private gardens.

Average Quality Scores by Open Space Typology				
Types of Open Space Surveyed/Sampled	Spaces	Area (ha)	ha per 1,000	Average Score
Amenity Greenspace	20	16.83	2.32	17.6
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	22	200.2	27.62	16.02
Functional Greenspace	5	5.85	0.81	19
Parks and Nature Reserves	4	124.21	17.14	20.84
Outdoor Sports	14	25.65	3.54	16.5
Playspace for Children and Young People	12	13.37	1.84	18.5
	77	386.11	53.27	18.08





Wishaw Community Board

Wishaw Community Board is made up of the Wishaw and Murdostoun wards.

This section shows what the Open Space Audit and Play sufficiency Assessment found for the area, giving information on the number of each different type of space.

Notable parks and nature reserves in this area include Bellhaven Park, Coltness and North Branchal Woods, Cambusnethan Memorial Park, Hawthorne Park, Newmains, Overtown Park, Overtown, Stewarton Street Park, Wishaw and Braedale Hill, Cambusnethan Woodlands, Overtown and Greenhead Moss Local Nature Reserves. Notable sports facilities include Wishaw Sports Centre, Dalziel Park, Wishaw Golf Course and Wishaw and Newmains Football Clubs. There are a number of other smaller facilities Beltane, Houldsworth, Newmains, Overtown and Wishaw South bowling clubs.

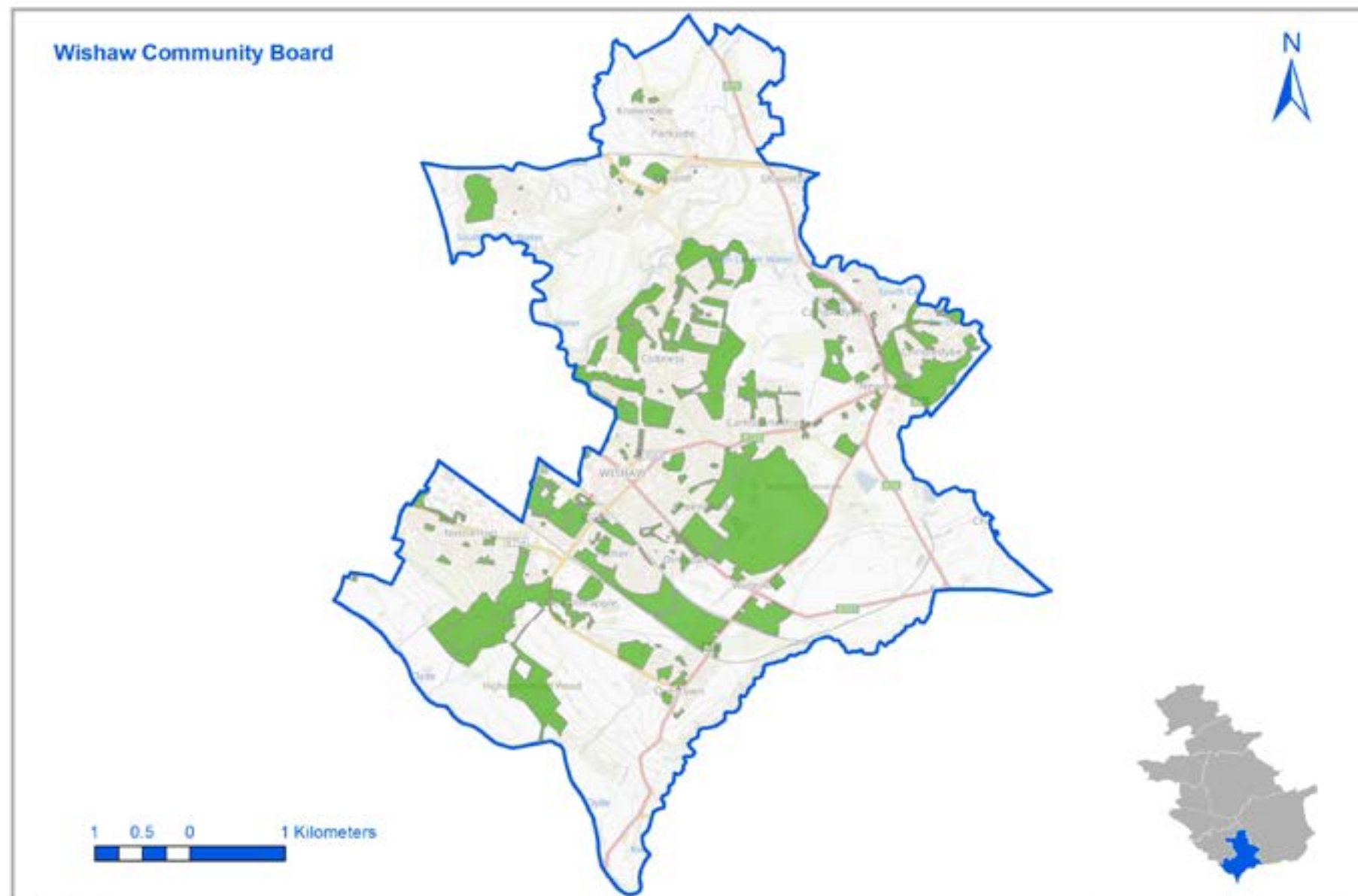
175 locations, equating to 527.41 hectares of open spaces were identified as part of the audit and 161 across the six main typologies were audited or sampled.

There were 16 responses from members of the public regarding sites in this community board area being important to them and there were 50 responses from children or groups of children marking sites in this community board area as play and hang out spaces.

This community board has population of 36,044 and a total of 17,920 households and 19,966 private gardens.

Average Quality Scores by Open Space Typology				
Types of Open Space Surveyed/Sampled	Spaces	Area (ha)	ha per 1,000	Average Score
Amenity Greenspace	62	74.7	2.07	17.67
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	27	149.97	4.16	16.7
Functional Greenspace	3	11.8	0.33	18.04
Parks and Nature Reserves	7	166.04	4.6	19.8
Outdoor Sports	27	80.10	2.23	16.3
Playspace for Children and Young People	33	16.05	0.45	18.4
	159	498.7	13.84	17.82





Strategic Vision and Objectives

Developing a New Vision for our Parks and Open Space

In developing our strategy, drivers and actions it was important to involve as wide a range of views as practicable, including those of council services, partner agencies, open and green space experts, North Lanarkshire Access Panel and our communities. Under the direction of a multi service and partner steering group we carried out a series of workshops and consultations to allow us to identify the main factors driving a vision and action for the maintenance and management of our open spaces.

The North Lanarkshire Local Development Plan 2022 provides a solid policy framework for the for this strategy through thematic policies related to Promoting Development Locations and Infrastructure, Protecting Assets and Development Constraints and Environmental and Design Qualities.

Our Programme of Work to 2028 recognises the importance of greenspace and our Sustainable Futures theme focusses on a programme to mitigate climate change through nature-based restoration, biodiversity enhancement, flood reduction, community empowerment, better asset design and effective water management. However, we understand there is inequity of access to and engagement with quality greenspace across our communities and a need for diversification to succeed.

Our vision, based on this work is:

We will work with partners, stakeholders and communities to deliver a diverse range of well-maintained, connected open and civic spaces. These will be accessible, safe and support biodiversity, while meeting the needs of people who Live, Learn, Work, Invest, and Visit North Lanarkshire.



Four main drivers were also established through these forums.

Budget

In an ever-tightening fiscal environment we and our partners must identify opportunities to more creatively use and manage our open spaces.

Health

The direct health benefits to the communities and individuals are an increasingly understood driver, from individual physical and mental wellbeing to reductions in the burdens and strains placed on health care provision by such increased personal wellbeing.

Environment and Climate

Open spaces contribute much needed green lungs within our predominantly and tightly packed urban communities. They give an opportunity for wildlife to flourish and enhance the ecosystems around us. They also offer nature-based solutions in managing factors that are contributing to climate change, the consequences of climate change and the nature crisis.

Community Involvement

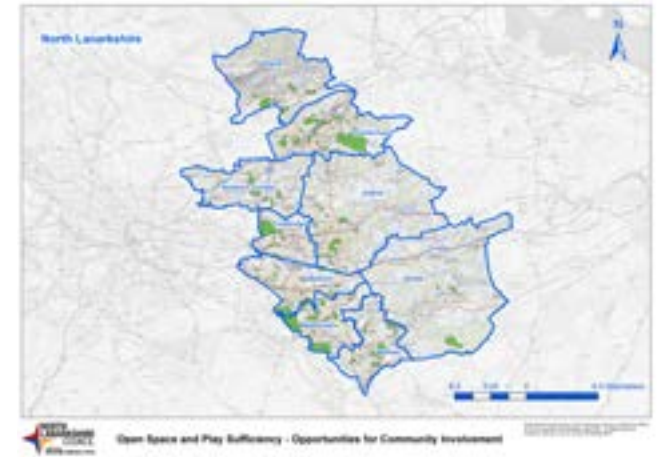
We believe working with people and local organisations within our communities is vital to ensuring that North Lanarkshire fulfils its ambition as the place to Live, Learn, Work, Invest, and Visit.

Our Community Wealth Building Statement commits us and our partners to grow the social, ecological, financial, and economic value that local communities gain from land and property assets through proactively supporting local community and voluntary sector organisation to use or develop assets and continuing to seek opportunities to tackle vacant and derelict land. We are also committed to engaging with local communities on the co-production of local services and projects.

Community boards enhance and support community involvement and provide a single approach for local community-led decision-making. Community and voluntary groups have a major role to play in making sure this approach contributes towards this shared ambition. This includes a range of actions led by our Local Outcome Improvement Plans and a range of community inspired and led projects, including the development and enhancement of play and open spaces, delivered through our Local Development Programme and with our partners.

In our audit 263 sites were assessed as affording the opportunity for community involvement in management and decision making.

Action: *We will develop a community involvement protocol*



Action: *To enable communities to maintain and enhance open spaces in co-operation with council and partner services within their area.*

Outcomes and Objectives for Open Space

These drivers align with the Governments outcome-based approach which identifies six outcomes: improving access to green infrastructure, open space and green networks, creating successful and sustainable places, improving health and wellbeing, advancing equality and eliminating discrimination, securing positive effects for biodiversity, and mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

These drivers and outcomes assist us in developing a set of objectives that could be delivered through a programme of action and development to deliver on our Vision.

Outcomes and objectives for open space	
Maintain or improve the quality and accessibility of open space	This recognises that there should be enough open space which meets local needs but that this should also be provided to the highest possible quality, accessibility and value.
Improve links within and between the open space network to enhance biodiversity	This emphasises the importance of seeing open spaces not as individual oasis but as part of a wider network in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
Ensure that open spaces meet the needs of communities and promote good health, greater social inclusion and enhance the quality of the local environment	Open space can provide quality areas to promote biodiversity, adapt to the effects of climate change, contribute to air pollution reduction and if well-managed improve the appearance of areas which in turn will generate a positive impression that North Lanarkshire is a place where people live, learn, work, invest and visit. Working with partners and all communities we will determine what they want from open spaces and ensure that every individual has access to spaces that are of a sufficiently high quality.
Ensure the design principles of creating safe, accessible, adaptable, resilient and inclusive places are followed in new developments	This seeks to promote open spaces within and around built developments as an integral part of the design and development process provided in a scale and manner that is safe and accessible.



Strategic Actions

With the aim of maintaining and creating a network of high-quality, accessible, and biodiverse open spaces that meet the needs of our communities and support environmental sustainability this strategy sets out several actions to help us meet our objectives, as summarised below. By investing in our parks and open spaces, engaging the community, and using data-driven tools, we aim to create a vibrant and resilient open space network for all.

Maintain or improve the quality and accessibility of open space
We will continue to invest in our parks and open spaces through the range of Council strategies and plans and seek further opportunities to develop future programmes of investment with our partners and communities.
We will develop a prioritisation tool, based on the identified drivers and a range of open space audit and related data.
We will develop a process to re-assess sites which have been subject to investment or change to maintain the currency of the audit data.
We will seek to ensure that all residents in the North Lanarkshire Urban Area have access to an open space within 10 minutes of their home.
We undertake to maintain or improve the quality of our different types of open spaces to standards identified using appropriate data.
We will use the prioritisation tool and other available data to identify opportunities to enhance the accessibility of our open spaces.



Improve links within and between the open space network to enhance biodiversity
We will use the prioritisation tool to identify vacant and derelict land sites which could be incorporated our network of open spaces.
We will use the prioritisation tool to assess the appropriate future management options for sites and identify any sites which could be alternatively managed, enhanced or changed to a different type of space to support our response to climate change and the nature crisis.

Ensure that open spaces meet the needs of communities and promote good health, greater social inclusion and enhances the quality of the local environment
We will develop a community involvement protocol.
We will seek to ensure that all residents in the North Lanarkshire Urban Area have access to an open space within 10 minutes of their home.
We will seek to identify appropriate locations where a range of inclusive and accessible play provision may be provided as part of council and partner development programmes.
We will use the prioritisation tool to identify the most suitable alternative use for any sports pitches identified as surplus to requirements.

Ensure the design principles of creating safe, accessible, adaptable, resilient and inclusive places are followed in new developments
We will use the prioritisation tool to identify appropriate types and levels of developer contributions from new development to maintain and where required enhance the provision of open space in our communities.



Managing and investing in our Open Spaces

The management, protection and enhancement of open spaces across North Lanarkshire is shared between various council services, partner bodies, private operators and community groups. Where in our ownership the majority of our parks, open spaces and nature reserves are managed by the council, through Land Management, together with investment by Greenspace & Country Parks teams through our Country Parks for the Future plan setting out an ambitious future for our three Country parks, along with a Forestry & Woodland Operational Plan and a Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

In relation to sport and recreation there is a Community Pitch Strategy. North Lanarkshire Council has made a commitment to ensure our residents have access to a range of services and venues across the authority which support their ability to maximise health and wellbeing and give access to areas where they are able to work with others to participate in activities or take part in projects which seek to provide overall community benefit. Other sport and leisure facilities are part of our ongoing review of the provision of the council's sports, culture, leisure and community facilities.



Investment in open space

The council recognises the value of its parks and open space and since 2020 has delivered:

- Country Parks for the Future.
- Creating and establishing the £3.7 million Ravenscraig Park.
- The Bellshill Gateway project at Strathclyde Country Park delivered, in total, £1.6million of investment, focussed on cycling facilities including a floodlit pump track, mountain bike skills loop, mountain bike trails and Scotland's first public Trials Bike Park. The gateway also includes art installations, a children's adventure play area and upgraded walking routes including a family-friendly nature trail. Supporting infrastructure includes new CCTV cameras, seating and signage.
- Delivering Local Development Programme projects to a value of over £4.5 million including:
 - 58 Play projects
 - three Open space related surfacing projects
 - 11 Heritage projects
 - 14 Environmental Improvements projects
- Investing £4million on re-meandering the Garrell Burn at Dumbreck Marshes LNR, this project is a nature-based adaptation to mitigate the impacts of climate change, allowing the burn to flood at times of high-water levels and recharge the wetland habitat, therefore improving that land for the benefit of wildlife.
- North Lanarkshire Council Hubs programme: This programme is committed to promoting green and active travel connections around community hubs, ensuring they are well linked to communities they serve.
- A total of 12.07 kms of active travel infrastructure has been created, including:
 - Newhouse to Salsburgh (Strategic Network Route 8)
 - Alexander Street, Wishaw (Strategic Network Route 3)
 - Ravenscraig Active Travel Link Phase 2 (Strategic Network Route 3)
 - Motherwell Station Active Travel Phase 1A (Strategic Network Route 10)
- Installing Multi Use Games Areas at several locations around the Council area, investing in green links and supporting allotment initiatives
- £1.2million of Nature Restoration Funding (allocated by the Scottish Government) projects that address the biodiversity and climate crisis by putting Scotland's species, woodlands, rivers, and seas back on the road to recovery. Nature Restoration projects contribute to an increase in habitat protection, maintenance and creation, deliver against our Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Over 1,000 hectares have been improved through projects including tree planting, planting native wildflower meadows, surveying and treating Invasive Non-Native Species. Trials of No Mow on council owned amenity grassland will lead to more spaces being cut only at the end of the growing season to allow nature to flourish.
- Branching Out therapeutic programmes and health walks take place in our Country Parks and greenspaces, continuing to facilitate participation in activities in local greenspaces that help to reduce the burden on NHS services. Greenspace Scotland's 2023-2028 strategy describes the power of greenspaces in the cost-effective contribution that high quality, nature-rich and multi-functional greenspaces and blue-green infrastructure can make across the policy spectrum to:
 - Tackling the climate and nature emergencies;
 - Enhancing our lives, improving our health and wellbeing; and
 - Creating places

Maintaining our open spaces

Council owned open spaces are primarily maintained through our streetscenes operations. Their primary focus is grass cutting, which is conducted from the first week of April through mid-October each year. Our grass cutting schedule varies in frequency:

- Grass Areas: Cut 14 times annually, approximately every 14 days.
- Less Frequent Areas: Cut seven times annually, approximately every four weeks.
- Biodiversity Areas: Seeded with wildflowers and cut at the end of the growing season.
- Football Pitches: Cut 21 times annually, approximately every nine days. Additional maintenance includes pitch lining, fertilizer treatment, goal post painting, and regular inspections.

Other maintenance in parks and open spaces includes:

- Post-October, we transition to our winter programme, which primarily involves the maintenance of shrub beds. This includes pruning, weed control, and hand cultivation of shrub beds in prominent locations
- Tree maintenance: as required
- Leaf clearance of footways: November
- Furniture: as required on identification by streetscene teams

Year-round, we perform weed control along the edges of grass where it meets footpaths, fences, or walls. Additionally, we ensure areas are kept free from litter and regularly empty litter bins.

We also deploy budgets for addressing issues related to the management of drainage and flood risk, including maintenance of watercourses, trash screens and culverts some of which will impact on our open spaces. We carry out maintenance of Strathclyde Loch, Broadwood Loch and Forrestburn Reservoir, which can have the effect of protecting adjacent open spaces. The appropriation of this spend directly to open space maintenance and management is not possible.¹

Maintenance of private open spaces and those not adopted by the Council remains the responsibility of the owners, whether directly or through management or factoring arrangements.



¹ [Ambitious for the Future - Strategy 2023-2028 | Greenspace Scotland](#)

Our Open Space Partnerships

We work in partnership with a diverse range of organisations to advance projects to enhance our open spaces and access to them. Our key initiatives include:

Local Green Health Partnership: This initiative links NHS Lanarkshire with leisure and greenspace colleagues across North and South Lanarkshire. Successful projects include 'Get Walking Lanarkshire', celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, and other initiatives like the King George V Garden in Wishaw, Clydesdale Community Initiatives (CCI) working with the NHS to implement a community garden and working across eight hospital sites to run gardening sessions for both in and outpatients.

City Nature Challenge and National Nature Conservation: In partnership with Scottish Wildlife Trust, The Conservation Volunteers, Glasgow Clyde Valley Green Network and Sanctuary Housing, we work to improve greenspaces for people and wildlife. These multimillion pound projects in the Cumbernauld area aim to connect people with the nature on their doorstep.

Nature Restoration Funding: Supported by the Scottish Government, this funding aims to protect and restore Scotland's biodiversity through initiatives such as wildflower meadows, bog restoration, tree planting, no mow areas, and enhancements in cemeteries and town parks. These projects involve maintenance changes so consultation is important to involve communities and to shape public perceptions.

At a strategic level we are members of the Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Green Network, which has developed a range of blueprints and strategies identifying opportunities for further developing our nature and habitat networks.



Future Investment in Open Space

Through the Plan for North Lanarkshire the Council has developed several strategies and action plans which, in their delivery, will influence or will be influenced by the network of open spaces across the council area. Our overarching **The Place the Vision** sets out how we will invest in creating town and community hubs, our country parks, and in essential infrastructure and housing to help create a sustainable future that will benefit people and communities across North Lanarkshire.



Strategy/Plan	Purpose and objectives
Town and Community Hubs	Given the ambition to replace every school not replaced or remodelled since 1996, our vision is to make these places for the whole community rather than only the school community. To do this, hubs will be places where education is delivered alongside other council and community services. Hubs will have a form and facilities based on the needs of the local community.
Country Parks for the Future	Initially focussing on Strathclyde, Drumpellier and Palacerigg Country Parks. Ensuring further development of the use of greenspace to improve health, wellbeing, and social outcomes as the council recognises the value of both green and blue space in the future health outcomes of its residents.
Town Visions	Although individual to each place, each Town Vision is based on principles of locality, diversity and accessibility to be places to Live, Learn, Work, Invest and Visit. We'll achieve this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in town centre housing, creating great places to live locally. • Investing in education, schools and colleges to provide opportunities for young people and for life-long learning. • Investing in jobs and skills to ensure we have strong and competitive people and places to embrace opportunities provided by local businesses. • Investing in people, health and wellbeing and encouraging private and Third-Sector investment in our local areas. • Promoting our towns as quality places as appealing leisure, day visit and tourism destinations.
Local Development Programme	The LDP is supported by funding allocated for each of the nine community board areas to provide community-led local projects. These projects are developed as a response to the local needs such as heritage features, entrance features, play areas, additional off-street parking, and a variety of other community led projects.
Active Travel Strategy	North Lanarkshire has a high quality, accessible active travel network which supports the well-being of our residents and visitors, enhances social inclusion and improves the ability of people to walk, wheel or cycle for any journey purpose in our area.
Vacant and Derelict Land Fund	The Vacant and Derelict Land Fund (VDLF) aims to tackle long-term vacant and derelict land in Scotland. Its objectives are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to stimulate economic growth • create jobs • promote environmental justice and improved quality of life • to support communities to flourish and tackle inequalities
Climate Plan ACT2030	The Climate Plan ACT2030 is the first of a series of climate-related documents to be published that encompasses the council's own climate emergency declaration and its target of net-zero emissions by 2030. In it you will find information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The climate and biodiversity emergency • North Lanarkshire and its emissions • Planned policy that will facilitate area emission reductions • North Lanarkshire Council emissions, its specific targets and carbon management • Next steps
Food Growing Strategy	North Lanarkshire Council will continue to work alongside communities, partners and other stakeholders to increase the quantity and quality of growing opportunities available.
Biodiversity Action Plan	To maintain and enhance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The populations and natural ranges of native species and the quality and range of wildlife habitats and ecosystems. • Internationally and nationally important and threatened species, habitats, and ecosystems. • Species, habitats, and managed ecosystems that are characteristic of North Lanarkshire or are of local importance. • The biodiversity of natural and semi-natural habitats where this has diminished over recent decades. To increase community awareness of and involvement in conserving biodiversity. To work with the development industry to identify opportunities for biodiversity enhancement within development proposals. To identify priorities for habitat and species conservation in North Lanarkshire and set realistic targets and timescales for these.
Core Paths Plan	The Core Paths Plan identifies a network of paths that gives people reasonable (non-motorised) access within North Lanarkshire. The core path network provides opportunities to link communities and to help the people of North Lanarkshire to lead healthier lifestyles by taking regular exercise.

The Council, through its Programme of Work and in conjunction with our partners and communities, will continue to invest in the management, maintenance and enhancement of our open spaces. We will seek funding from a range of sources, both public and private, to support these activities to ensure our open spaces deliver on the vision and outcomes set in this strategy.

Our Programme of Work established the priorities for delivery in support of The Plan for North Lanarkshire including:

- **Transforming Places** – To better plan and co-ordinate public and private sector investment to deliver transformational change across town centres and local communities at pace.
- **Sustainable Futures** – Focus commitments to Net Zero Carbon and climate resilience and the associated energy solutions and investments required to make it a reality.

These priorities are supported by a significant investment programme including:

Programme	Revenue Spend	Capital Spend	Spend Period
Streetscene operations	13,248,829	449,820	Annual
Country Parks for the Future	£100,000	£3,000,000	multi-year programme
Greenspace and Biodiversity (Nature Restoration Funding)		variable (£274 - £556k	Allocated annually by SG
Active and Creative Communities (golf courses and sports surfaces)	£610,000		Annual
Local Development Programme		£10.369 million	5-year programme
*Drainage and flood risk management		£2.5 million	5-year programme
*Water course maintenance		£165,000	Annual
*Reservoir management		£100,000	Annual
Active Travel Strategy			multi-year programme
*Potentially involving works to or in adjacent open spaces			

Our spend is supplemented by developer contributions where a need for open space or play facilities are identified as required due to the impact of the delivery of new houses. These contributions are on a case-by-case basis and the delivery of the facilities can be dependent on development delivery triggers being met so programming the spend to any year or time period can be difficult.

Action: *We will continue to invest in our parks and open spaces through the range of Council strategies and plans and seek further opportunities to develop future programmes of investment with our partners and communities*

Future management of our open spaces

The data gathered on the quantity, quality, and accessibility of open spaces gives us a strong foundation for informed decision-making. While the range of possible actions is naturally focused, there are still meaningful choices to be made. Broadly, open spaces can either be maintained in their current form or considered for alternative uses through responsible development.

Within these two broad directions, there are a variety of more specific options each shaped by key factors we've identified. For open spaces not currently prioritised for investment or development, we will take a balanced and collaborative approach. By combining the findings from the Open Space Audit with insights from our partners, guided by four key drivers, we will develop a prioritisation tool. This will help us make thoughtful, transparent decisions about how best to manage, enhance, or adapt these spaces for the benefit of our communities.

Action: We will develop a prioritisation tool, based on the identified drivers and a range of open space audit and related data

- to assess the appropriate future management options for sites and identify any sites which could be alternatively managed, enhanced or changed to a different type of space to support our response to climate change and the nature crisis

- to identify vacant and derelict land sites which could be incorporated our network of open spaces
- to identify appropriate types and levels of developer contributions from new development to maintain and where required enhance the provision of open space in our communities
- to identify opportunities to enhance the accessibility of our open spaces
- to identify the most suitable alternative use for any sports pitches identified as surplus to requirements

The Community Greenspace Team have recently made use of the Open Space audit data, which together with existing datasets (Indices of Multiple Deprivation and other environmental data, including information on flood risk and existing nature networks) was analysed to support the development of a funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (Nature Towns & Cities Programme). An early analysis of data focussed on some of the open space sites bounding areas of highest deprivation. This identified 183 sites (776 ha), receiving quality scores from 6-27 out of 30, equating to 14% of the total open space in the authority. These sites include school grounds, amenity residential sites, cemeteries, civic spaces, Local Nature Reserves and playing fields.

The application was successful, and the project (to March 2028) will be continuing to use the Open Space data to produce an Environmental Justice Map to show where the areas of greatest need are, enabling us to identify areas of focus for the project. The revenue funding will allow us to co-create a 10 year Greenspace Infrastructure Plan (with projects outlined for each Community Board area), to improve

equity of access to quality greenspace across the most deprived communities in North Lanarkshire. Sustainable management mechanisms that could introduce improved regimes across our green and open spaces, enhancing them for people and wildlife will also be researched through this programme of work. Opportunities to upskill local 'Greenspace Ambassadors' will also be established to allow communities to have a greater involvement and ownership of their local spaces.



Considering all open space typologies, including any additional spaces identified in the public survey, North Lanarkshire benefits from over 1,500 identified spaces, the equivalent of almost 15 ha of open space per 1,000 people.

Open Space Provision by Typology			
Types of Open Space Surveyed/ Sampled	Spaces	Area (ha)	ha per 1,000
Amenity Greenspace	441	456.06	1.05
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	323	2346.6	6.89
Functional Greenspace	38	116.01	0.34
Parks and Nature Reserves	54	1586.19	4.65
Outdoor Sports	217	485.79	1.42
Playspace for Children and Young People	270	181.6	0.53
	1343	5172.25	14.88

Based on the community consultation and our audit we judge this is sufficient at this juncture however where we identify a site that is surplus to the operational requirements of a service or are approached by an external party about the availability of a site the drivers, audit and survey information along with existing project delivery plans will be used to inform the surplus land decision making process.

Action: *We will seek to ensure that all residents in the North Lanarkshire Urban Area have access to an open space within 10 minutes of their home.*

We will do this by developing a GIS based tool to identify areas of reliance on particular sizes or types of open space to ensure that any change to an open space is assessed to maintain this coverage.

North Lanarkshire by virtue of its proud history of mining and manufacturing also has a significant amount of vacant and derelict land which unfortunately has an effect, not only on visual amenity but also the mental health and wellbeing of the communities where it is present. Identifying appropriate uses for this land has traditionally involved seeking employment uses to replace those jobs lost through the demise of our industrial base. It is now, however, as important to identify potential sites, often ones which have regenerated naturally, which can contribute to our open space networks and afford opportunities to adapt to climate change and increase biodiversity. We will use the prioritisation tool to assist us in this task.

Action: *We will use the prioritisation tool to identify vacant and derelict land sites which could be incorporated our network of open spaces.*



Identifying opportunities for change

In assessing the quantity and quality of its open spaces the council has decided to use the audit as a baseline identifying the average quantity (in hectares) per 1,000 population and an average quality score for the council area. This does not take into account the 180,079 private gardens of various types across the council area although they are vitally important on providing space for residents and potentially biodiversity.

There is inevitably an uneven spread of types of spaces resulting from the history of development and natural characteristics of each area. The reliance on certain types of space will require to be considered as part of the strategy.

Analysis of the amount of open space has shown that almost 100% of the urban population of North Lanarkshire lives within 10 minutes of some form of open space, bearing out the findings of the public survey. There is, however, a spread of types and quality of open space, some of which by its natural characteristics or primary typology cannot be changed or will be difficult to improve or alter. Following discussion between partners and consideration of feedback from the survey exercise, it was decided that certain categories will automatically be retained. It is therefore proposed that the following types of space should be retained with the aim of maintaining all spaces to at least the average North Lanarkshire quality score identified in the audit for the allocated typology.



Parks & Gardens: *Community Parks, Country Parks and Parks:* Recognised places with a range of facilities, features and open space services

Natural & Semi-Natural: *Canals, Inland Water, Local Nature Reserves, Natural/Semi Natural, Open Semi-Natural, Remnant Raised Bog, Riparian Routes and Woodland:* These categories play a vital role in the promotion and realisation of health improvements, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and climate adaptation. There is a national requirement for tree planting. Retaining/maintaining/enhancing these categories helps the Council to meet those requirements along with its obligations in respect of Clyde Climate Forest, Green Network Blueprint and Central Scotland Green Network. It should be noted that these spaces will be reviewed as part of separate Forest and Woodland Strategy and Local Biodiversity Action Plan/Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation Review.

Playspace for Children and Young People:

Considering the legislative requirements for a Play Sufficiency Assessment and the findings of both the public surveys and audit it would be inappropriate to consider divesting any of the facilities that do exist under anything other than exceptional circumstances and in line with specific advice from the Community partnership Teram and Streetscene services and following a prioritisation exercise and methodology.

Cemeteries: The retention of cemeteries and their removal from consideration for divestment is obvious and whilst they can offer some of the benefits of open space they require to be maintained and managed in a way that respects their primary function.

For other types of managed spaces, where required, a prioritisation exercise informed by the drivers, audit, public survey findings and other factors such as climate mitigation opportunities and funding availability will identify spaces which could be enhanced or changed to better meet expectations and need. In seeking to maintain or improve all types of open spaces to meet the NL average score for quality communities and community groups will have an important role and this should be further explored.

There are 3 potential outcomes for those spaces we are committed to retaining.

Maintain: Keep the open space for its current function, including it in routine maintenance schedules and monitoring of condition. This includes repairs to surfaces, planting and equipment.

Enhance: Commit to improvements to the open space by way of additional resources allocated for maintenance, for planting and other greenspace initiatives, for the installation of additional equipment in play areas, or improved access infrastructure and information boards.

Change Type: Change the function of the open space or develop it into a different type of space through different management or enhancements e.g. climate mitigation.

It is important to note that not all sites can be retained. This can be for a range of factors, including, but not exclusively budgetary. Divesting of council open space requires a process to be followed to declare a space surplus at which time it can be transferred to:

To Community: Via mechanisms such as Community Asset Transfers using the “Friends of...” network or community groups set up specifically for the purpose of owning, enhancing and maintaining the open space.

To a developer (internal or external): Land can be diverted within Council ownership for a variety of alternative uses, such as the continuation of the council’s successful and transformative house-building programme. Alternatively, land can be sold to private sector developers. It is vital that in both instances, any alternative developments are for land uses that fit in with and are supported by the aims, objectives and intended outcomes of National Planning Framework 4, North Lanarkshire Local Development Plan and the council’s Economic Regeneration Development Programme and this strategy.

Action: *We will develop a process to re-assess sites which have been subject to investment or change to maintain the currency of the audit data.*



North Lanarkshire Open Space Prioritisation Tool

Factors which may be considered in deciding on the suitability of a site for an enhanced or alternative use include:

Quality Assessment Scores

Derived from the six assessment dimensions:

Accessible and Connected

Place Quality

Care and Maintenance

Function, Use and Activity

Safety

Biodiversity

Total score out of 30 used to benchmark and compare sites.

Community Value

Public survey responses identifying spaces as important.

Frequency and type of use (e.g. relaxation, play, nature connection).

Opportunities for community involvement in management.

Typology and function of the space

Type of open space (e.g. park, play area, sports pitch, natural greenspace).

Primary and secondary functions (e.g. biodiversity, recreation, drainage).

Accessibility of the space

Proximity to residents (e.g. within a 10-minute walk).

Physical accessibility (paths, entrances, inclusive design).

Network connectivity (links to green corridors and active travel routes).

Environmental and climate resilience potential

Potential for nature-based solutions (e.g. flood mitigation, tree planting).

Contribution to biodiversity and ecological networks.

Suitability for climate adaptation projects.

Deprivation and inequality

Location in relation to areas of high deprivation.

Potential to address health inequalities and improve wellbeing.

Vacant and Derelict Land Status

Identification of underused or surplus land.

Opportunities for transformation into functional green space.

Development pressures and opportunities

Potential for developer contributions.

Suitability for alternative uses (e.g. housing, community assets).

Alignment with Local Development Plan and National Planning Framework 4.

Maintenance and management capacity

Current maintenance regime and resource availability.

Potential for community-led or co-managed models.

How the tool will be used

Based on the factors outlined in this strategy the prioritisation tool will guide strategic decisions about whether an open space should be retained, enhanced, repurposed, or divested.

1. Start: open space site

This is the entry point for evaluating any open space—whether a park, play area, sports pitch, or natural greenspace.

2. Is the quality score of the space above or below a set threshold?

Each site is assessed using a scoring system (out of 30) based on six dimensions: Accessibility, Place quality, Maintenance, Functionality, Safety, and Biodiversity. If the site meets or exceeds the expected standard, it moves to the next step. Otherwise, it may still be retained if it has high community value or may be considered for enhancement or change.

3. Does the space have recognised community value?

This considers public survey responses, frequency and type of use, cultural or historical significance, and community involvement or stewardship. If the site has high community value, it is likely to be enhanced to improve its quality or accessibility.

4. Is the space suitable for alternative use?

This evaluates whether the site could be repurposed for another open space function, used for development, or integrated into climate resilience strategies. If suitable, the site may be changed or divested depending on strategic fit.

5. Outcomes

Based on the above decisions, the site is assigned one of four outcomes:

- **Retain:** Continue current use with routine maintenance.
- **Enhance:** Invest in improvements.
- **Change:** Repurpose for a different open space function.
- **Divest:** Considered surplus and potentially transferred to community or sold for development.



Strategic Actions from the North Lanarkshire Open Space Strategy

Below is a list of the actions referred to throughout this strategy.

The council will continue to invest in parks and open spaces through existing strategies and plans, while seeking new opportunities for future programmes in collaboration with partners and communities.

A protocol will be developed to support community involvement in the maintenance and enhancement of open spaces, encouraging co-operation between local groups and council services.

A prioritisation tool will be created using audit data and strategic drivers to guide decisions on investment, management, and enhancement of open spaces.

A process will be established to re-assess sites that have undergone investment or change, ensuring audit data remains current and relevant.

The council will aim to ensure that all residents in urban areas have access to an open space within a 10-minute walk from their home.

Vacant and derelict land sites will be identified and assessed for potential incorporation into the open space network.

The prioritisation tool will be used to assess future management options for sites, including enhancement, alternative use, or reclassification to support climate and biodiversity goals.

The council will maintain or improve the quality of different types of open spaces using appropriate data and defined standards.

The prioritisation tool will help determine appropriate types and levels of developer contributions to maintain and enhance open space provision in new developments.

Opportunities to improve the accessibility of open spaces will be identified and acted upon using available data and the prioritisation tool.

Locations will be identified where inclusive and accessible play provision can be developed, particularly through council and partner development programmes.

The prioritisation tool will be used to determine the most suitable alternative use for sports pitches identified as surplus to requirements.



Consultation

Have Your Say on the Future of Open Space in North Lanarkshire

We are inviting residents, community groups, and stakeholders to take part in a consultation on the draft Open Space Strategy. Your views will help shape how we prioritise investment, management, and enhancement of open and civic spaces across North Lanarkshire.

As part of the consultation, you can:

Complete the online questionnaire to share your views on the strategy's vision, objectives, and proposed actions.

Explore an interactive map showing open space sites across the area.

Review background documents, including the full draft strategy, audit dashboard, and public survey reports.

Access the consultation materials and questionnaire at: www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/working-communities/consultations/live-consultations/open-space-strategy-consultation

Consultation closes on: 6th February 2026

Your feedback is vital in helping us create a more inclusive, sustainable, and connected open space network for everyone in North Lanarkshire.



This document can be made available in a range of languages and formats, including large print, braille, audio, electronic and accessible formats.

To make a request, please contact Corporate Communications at: corporatecommunications@northlan.gov.uk

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