Fields in Trust is the only organisation in the UK dedicated to the permanent protection of parks, playing fields and other recreational spaces. Since our foundation in 1925 we have safeguarded 2,661 parks, playgrounds and playing fields in perpetuity totalling over 30,000 acres of formal and informal recreational land.

- 371 Local Authorities, 123 Town Councils and 65 Parish and Community Councils have at least one green space protected with Fields in Trust.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Do you consider that the Scottish Government’s health and sport budget for 2017-18 reflects its stated priorities? If not, how could the budget be adjusted to better reflect priorities?
2. For the health and sport budget for 2018-19 where do you suggest any additional resources could be most effectively deployed and where could any further savings be found? What evidence supports your views?
3. Is sufficient information available to support scrutiny of the Scottish Government’s health and sport budget? If not, what additional information would help support budget scrutiny?
4. What impact has the integration of health and social care budgets had on ensuring resources are directed at achieving the Scottish Government’s desired outcomes?

**RESPONSE**

Physical inactivity is the fourth leading factor in global mortality and costs the UK an estimated £7.4 billion a year. Intervention is undoubtedly needed, along with a focus on informal sport which needs to be augmented by support for the recreation spaces that will underpin it. Parks, playgrounds and other green spaces provide opportunities for physical activity across the spectrum of age and ability and it is by embracing activity at all its levels that we will start to address inactivity levels. Fields in Trust believe that a big part of delivering that will depend on securing access to outdoor space for recreation. We would like to see effective deployment of resource in the health and sport budget to informal green spaces such as parks and recreation grounds that provide free access to people to take part in sport and physical activity. Parks and green spaces are used by the entire community and have a cross cutting impact, we believe parks and green spaces help to address the broader public health and preventative health agendas. Rather than being seen as a maintenance drain on budgets, Fields in Trust is calling for a revaluing of these assets so they can be
deployed to achieve longer-term savings and happier, healthier more connected communities.

Fields in Trust worked with Glasgow City Council to protect outdoor recreational space for the local community as part of the Commonwealth Games legacy. In its Open Space Strategy, Glasgow City Council recognised that “effectively designed open space is vital to improving residents’ quality of life, especially in urban areas”. The Council undertook to protect 27 of its green spaces with Fields in Trust under a Minute of Agreement. Glasgow City Council developed their Open Space Strategy as part of their new City Development Plan, with the aim of creating a mechanism that “seeks to deliver multi-functional open spaces which are inclusive, accessible and fit for purpose”. One of five key priorities identified by the strategy covers ‘health, well-being and play’ – encouraging physical activity through provision of quality open spaces. Through the protection of 27 of their green spaces across the city, Glasgow City Council has created a lasting legacy from the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Fields in Trust has partnered with The London Marathon Charitable Trust to deliver a new “Active Spaces” programme in 2017-18 which will also protect recreational land from loss to development and encourage people, particularly the most inactive communities, to participate in physical activity, sport and play. This is the first UK-wide funding programme delivered by The London Marathon Charitable Trust. This new programme is not yet advanced enough to provide evidence on increased activity levels nor the long term impact on participants but we are happy to share that with the Committee as it becomes available. One example project to note is Pilton Park West, owned by the City of Edinburgh Council. The park is located in an area of multiple deprivation, (Scottish IMD 2016). A physical activity “boot camp” run by Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust will work with the recently establish parks friends group, to improve physical activity whilst building community connections – this is one of many examples where parks and green spaces provide both informal and accessible opportunities for sport, and should command recognition within health and sport budgetary decisions.

Fields in Trust has commissioned new research to evidence that link, early stage work has found evidence to suggest a positive association and statistically significant link between green space exposure and health and wellbeing. The completion of our research in the autumn will identify a robust economic and monetary value for these health benefits to help make the case to governments of the value our parks contribute to our communities and we are happy to share that evidence with the Committee.
Glasgow is Scotland’s largest city by population with over 600,000 residents, a figure that is predicted to grow by a further 15% by 2037, whilst 73% of dwellings in Glasgow are flats without easy access to outdoor space.

As part of its Open Space Strategy, Glasgow City Council recognised that “effectively designed open space is vital to improving residents’ quality of life, especially in urban areas”. The Council undertook to protect 27 of its green spaces with Fields in Trust under a Minute of Agreement.

One of five key priorities identified by the strategy covers ‘health, well-being and play’ – encouraging physical activity through provision of quality open spaces.

Glasgow has the lowest life expectancy of all Scottish cities; 3.7 years fewer than Scotland as a whole for men and 2.4 years fewer for women. Just 40% of Glaswegians achieve the recommended weekly levels of physical activity whilst just under a quarter (24%) of adults are classified as obese. Open spaces are vital to ensure the health and well-being of future generations of Glaswegians.

Indeed, the Council’s Open Spaces Strategy quotes research by the NHS and Natural England that shows people are 24% more likely to be physically active where they have good access to green space. They further estimate the cost-saving to the health service per annum could be as much as £2.1 billion were everyone afforded equitable good access to green space.

Social cohesion is also identified as of clear benefit to health, with placemaking another of the five key priorities identified by the Strategy. An aim to make “places more beautiful, interesting and distinctive” gives a stronger sense of identity and improves efforts at community organising.

Further priorities include climate change and adaption – reducing air pollution, managing flood risk and saving energy; expanding and enhancing connectivity – encouraging walking and cycling by providing non-vehicular travel routes; and biodiversity – providing new habitats, protecting the soil and preventing the fragmentation of habitats.

Through the protection of 27 of their green spaces across the city, Glasgow City Council have met a significant number of their strategy goals as well as creating a lasting legacy from the 2014 Commonwealth Games and safeguarding the city’s reputation as a “Dear Green Place”.

“This landmark protection ensures Glasgow will continue to live up to its name, which literally translates as “Dear Green Space”, for generations to come, a commitment which was recognised in a motion to the Scottish Parliament by Patrick Harvie MSP in August 2016.

Glasgow City Council developed their Open Space Strategy as part of a new City Development Plan, with the aim of creating a mechanism that “seeks to deliver multi-functional open spaces which are inclusive, accessible and fit for purpose”. Sites across the city were chosen to safeguard equity of provision of green space for all Glaswegians. At present two-thirds of the city’s population fall within the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland and there is a strong association between poor quality green space and deprivation.

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“It’s widely acknowledged that having access to outdoor space and undertaking some level of activity has numerous mental and physical benefits for individuals and families. We were delighted to take part in this scheme to guarantee areas for people to use and enjoy now and in the future.”

Cllr. Frank McAveety,
Leader of Glasgow City Council,
speaking at the launch of the 27 sites protected

Glasgow City Council’s green space guarantee
a case study
Fields in Trust’s protection mechanism

Pressure for development of both urban and rural open space has never been greater. Glasgow City Council protected 27 of their parks and playing fields through a Fields in Trust Minute of Agreement. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland this mechanism is called the Deed of Dedication. These are a robust way of safeguarding the future of a space and are a legally binding document to ensure each site covered is protected for generations to come. Each individual site’s protection is specified in its own deed and the flexibility of this means that subsequent amendments can be made through the change request process.

Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play

Fields in Trust has published benchmark guidelines for open space provision since the “Six Acre Standard” was first published in the 1930s. The current Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play, outlines a minimum quantity guideline of 0.6 hectares of amenity green space and 1.6 hectares of spaces for outdoor sport per 1,000 population. A full copy of the Guidance is available to download as an interactive PDF.

Protecting Glasgow’s dear green spaces

As part of their creation of a public legacy from hosting the 2014 Commonwealth Games Glasgow City Council protected 27 of their green spaces under the Queen Elizabeth Fields Challenge. Located across the city, at least one space is protected in 15 of the city’s 21 wards.

“Glasgow City Council are leading the way by protecting, forever such a significant proportion of its public green spaces with Fields in Trust. At a time when there is pressure on land for housing and commercial development we applaud the decision to safeguard recreational space for future generations and provide opportunities for families and the wider community of Glasgow to enjoy time outdoors. Access to parks and playgrounds contributes to physical health, mental wellbeing and community cohesion resulting in more active and longer, healthier lives.”

Brian Samson, Chair of Fields in Trust Scotland, speaking at the launch of the 27 sites protected

The work of Fields in Trust

Fields in Trust currently safeguards over 2,600 sites a total of 30,000 acres of land including playgrounds, playing fields, and formal and informal parkland across the UK.

Further reading and references

- Understanding Glasgow – The Glasgow Indicators Project (www.understandingglasgow.com)
- Glasgow City Council – Open Space Strategy (www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?ArticleId=17192)
- Glasgow City Council – New scheme to protect outdoor areas gives everyone the advantage (www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?ArticleId=19792)
- Fields in Trust – Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play (www.fieldsintrust.org/guidance)
- Fields in Trust – How To Secure? (www.fieldsintrust.org/how_to_secure.aspx)