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.

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.

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”.
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.

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

Fields in Trust currently safeguards over 2,600 sites

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. We will soon be launching a new and uniquely Scottish version of Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play and we will be in contact with Scotland’s 32 Councils to invite them to a launch event. A full copy of the Scottish Guidance will be made available to download as an interactive PDF.

Further reading and references

Understanding Glasgow – The Glasgow Indicators Project (www.understandingglasgow.com)
Glasgow City Council – New scheme to protect outdoor areas gives everyone the advantage (www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=17972)
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)