

Barnet Green Spaces Network

2022 *Manifesto*

A Parks and Green Space manifesto for the
Local Elections in May 2022

The Barnet Green Spaces Network is comprised of the Friends of parks and green spaces in the borough. We currently comprise about 40 groups. This manifesto has been drawn up by these groups to promote the case for green spaces to be placed at the core of the next local council elections in May 2022.

Summary Key Manifesto Points



Protect **ALL** existing green spaces in the Borough.



Increase funding and resources for Barnet's Green Spaces.



Expand the provision and extent of green spaces in the Borough.



Introduce a Borough wide ranger service to maintain our spaces.



Support and promote Friends Groups for each green space.



Increase biodiversity, aim for clean rivers and streams and develop green space skills.

Introduction

Barnet prides itself on its green spaces. They are held up by all political parties as one of the defining characteristics of the borough. We agree.

If the pandemic has taught us anything it is the importance of our green space. Public green space is recognised as essential infrastructure daily serving people of all ages, backgrounds and interests in every neighbourhood. They need to be protected, enhanced and properly maintained. Their use for leisure and recreation and physical health has long been recognised. The incredibly important role they play in supporting mental health has come to the fore more recently. The value they have in protecting us from flooding, nurturing biodiversity, improving air quality, reducing heat island effects and tackling climate change. A fair number of Barnet's parks have leisure facilities, children's playgrounds etc, and these will become more important as so much of the proposed development in Barnet comprises flats with little or no private open or green space.

It is time to think hard about how these values will be translated into firm action by the incoming new Barnet Council administration in 2022. We put forward some modest proposals which we wish to see adopted and achieved by the new Council and against which they can be held accountable.

Funding and protection

- 1.** Barnet Council will protect all green spaces in the borough, whatever their ownership, through the planning system and by working in partnership with Fields In Trust to arrange protective legal covenants. Strengthened planning policies will be adopted to prevent the destruction/development of any green space. NB Brownfield sites which are favoured for development over green space should nevertheless have to demonstrate that there will be significant net gain in biodiversity. Brownfield sites that have achieved significant biodiversity value will be protected.
- 2.** The 2016 Open Space Strategy will be reviewed as a matter of urgency and at the first new Council meeting a commitment made to remove the low value, low quality designation from the existing strategy. No green space can now be deemed to be of either low quality or low value.
- 3.** Barnet Council will work toward securing Green Flag status for all appropriate parks by 2026.
- 4.** Resource increases for green spaces will be made. There are many sources of funding including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Section 106 and partnership funding that the Council can make available for green spaces. Volunteer Friends groups can achieve a lot, including raising additional finance but they need support from experts in the Greenspaces and Tree teams, as well as from Grounds Maintenance. Friends' groups would also welcome support from a borough ecologist.

Enhancement and expansion of green space

- 5.** The new regional Park to be located in the heart of Barnet's green belt will be progressed, its boundaries identified and consulted upon with the aim of opening it in time for the Boroughs Diamond Jubilee in 2025.
- 6.** Opportunities to enhance and expand public green space provision will be sought across the borough and innovative approaches to the provision of good quality green space developed. The borough will seek out best practice in open space management from around the country.

7. Commit to turning some streets into parks – converting 'grey underused space' to 'greener open planted space' or streetparks.
8. Conserve and revitalise existing structures such as park pavilions, kiosks and sheds with uses contributing to the public's enjoyment of the green spaces.
9. All new development to seek biodiversity net gain in excess of 10 per cent along with environmentally friendly design and construction e.g. green walls, permeable surfacing especially of driveways for vehicle use.

Management

10. A Modern Parks Ranger service will be developed for the borough's parks and green spaces so that each space will have a named Ranger responsible for its maintenance and upkeep.
11. Green social prescribing will be promoted. This will be developed with the local NHS and Social care systems involving the Ranger service where appropriate.
12. Barnet will become a pesticide free borough by 2025.
13. All green space and highways management practice will be reviewed to ensure significant biodiversity improvements are achieved across the borough e.g. sensitive mowing regimes that allow wildflowers and other planting to flourish. Leaf litter removal will be restricted to cases where safety is an issue.
14. Tackling litter and fly tipping within green spaces will be a high priority

Consultation and participation

15. Barnet Council will promote and support a Friends group for each green space. The Borough Friends network will be supported both financially and with Officer time. Management plans for parks and green spaces will be prepared in close consultation and partnership with Friends groups. All proposals affecting green spaces will be discussed and consulted upon with Friends groups.

Rivers, streams and watercourses

16. Barnet Council will press Thames Water, the Environment Agency and other relevant bodies to improve water quality to good ecological status in the Boroughs Catchment area by 2026 and in particular will rigorously tackle pipe miss connections,

17. The borough will promote the naturalisation and deculverting, wherever physically possible, of all watercourses in Barnet.

Biodiversity and climate change

18. In the first two years of the new administration a series of focussed action strategies will be developed for immediate implementation. These will cover the following areas:

- a.** Local Nature Recovery Strategy – incorporating biodiversity and a rebugging and rewilding programme.
- b.** Tree and hedgerow strategy
- c.** Pollinator Strategy
- d.** Dark skies

19. Dark Skies Barnet - Barnet will tackle light pollution throughout the borough and move towards reduction in light output particularly but not exclusively across green spaces.

Skills and training

20. New skills and training for both staff and volunteers from the Friends groups and elsewhere will be required to deliver this manifesto

If you want to know more about the network please contact:

Roger Chapman, Chair, Barnet Green Spaces Network.

Email: friendsofcherrytreewood@gmail.com

Tel: 07855 304488

Thank You.