

## Naturally Birmingham: FPA - Introduction and Overview

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### What is the FPA addressing?

Birmingham is one of eight urban areas part of a unique multi-million-pound initiative formed jointly by the National Trust, National Lottery Heritage fund, and the Ministry for Communities, Housing and Local Government; designed to enhance and secure the future of the UK's green spaces.

The goal of our FPA programme goes beyond simply funding and maintaining parks. The programme seeks to embed the value of green spaces across all areas of the Council and ensure that Birmingham's substantial green infrastructure is well utilised, sustainable, and valued in the face of austerity. By testing a range of proposals across key themes, including finance; governance; volunteering; children's; health and wellbeing; employment; and the built environment, we aim to generate valuable networks and learning that can be taken forward by the wider Council in the future to fundamentally shift the way we work to a more sustainable, inclusive model.

Our aims are:

1. **Promoting a step-change in how people engage with their parks in order to maximise public benefit, local potential and innovation;**
2. **enabling new cross-sector partnerships that bring together knowledge and expertise from outside the traditional parks sector, embedding new skills;**
3. **catalysing and blending new sources of funding to enable diversified and sustainable business models that are attractive to new donors, funders and investors;**
4. **adopting a systemic approach so that a whole place's portfolio of public green space is protected and enhanced, delivering a fair, quality and free service to all.**

### Why is it needed now?

Whether our green spaces are parks, allotments, nature reserves, country parks, public open spaces, parts of our homes, cemeteries, wildlife corridors, woodlands, playing fields, community gardens, the bit of grass at the end of the road or two planters greening a grey street, their importance has always been recognised by the individuals that use them. This has become even more apparent during the Covid-19 pandemic, where parks and other green spaces often remain the only source of exercise or social contact for some groups. Despite this, the funding available for our green spaces has been consistently reduced over recent years, meaning councils and associated partners are increasingly struggling to preserve and maintain green spaces; having neither the time nor resources to properly enhance and promote their value. This is leading to growing inequality in access to quality green spaces and their associated benefits to wellbeing and prosperity, particularly amongst minority populations.



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Green spaces and nature are also key to the long-term realisation of our goals to tackle the issues of Climate Change and biodiversity loss. Alongside the direct positive impacts of vegetation cover to local CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and air quality, green space also helps to protect against the unavoidable effects of Climate Change that will occur in coming years; acting as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) during increased rainfall events, and reducing the severity of the urban heat island effect. Green spaces must therefore be integral to our response to these global issues and will require a fundamental shift in our approach to finance and perceived value.

### What are our frameworks?

Birmingham's FPA programme is complex and wide reaching, involving a huge variety of partners and stakeholders across the city. The programme is split into 5 frameworks:

- **A New Governance Model for Birmingham's Green Space:** Under Joseph Chamberlain, Birmingham was seen as the birthplace for modern municipal government, it was at this time that the city's parks took pride of place amongst its newest city assets. 150 years later we are living in very different times and the City's green spaces now need to respond to global climate and ecological emergencies, as well as the current Covid-19 pandemic. To do this effectively Birmingham now needs to take the lead again and change its current governance approach to put nature at the centre of its decision-making. This is why our FPA programme is called 'Naturally Birmingham'.
- **Environmental Justice:** We know that people living in more deprived areas have poorer health and wellbeing, poorer educational outcomes, poorer access to work, and suffer more from the impact of climate change. These are the same groups of people who are struggling more from Covid-19 and have less access to good quality green space. This thread connects the impacts from climate change, ecological decline and the Covid-19 pandemic to environmental justice. We know that green space offers huge benefits to health and wellbeing and by making sure those in more need of it, can access it, we will go some way to achieving environmental justice.
- **A Healthy City:** Birmingham aspires to be a healthy city as well as a green city. In the great Victorian era, city parks came out of the 1848 Public Health Act. This recognised the overwhelming health benefits of the natural environment on all people's lives. Our Healthy City Framework will re-connect these agendas once again in Birmingham so that we clearly link health and wellbeing to green space nature, helping our residents to live healthier lives.
- **Sustainable Finance:** Any change or improvement we make to parks and green spaces has to be financially viable. Our new finance framework will re-calculate all the benefits green space brings to the whole City. We will look at ways to bring extra money in where possible. By focussing on money and budgets, we will grow a greener future with confidence.
- **Citizen Involvement:** The world's greenest cities make it very easy for their citizens to make a difference through contributing their ideas, their endeavour, and their time. Birmingham needs such a support system for its citizens and under FPA we intend to create such a platform - where everybody's voice can be heard.

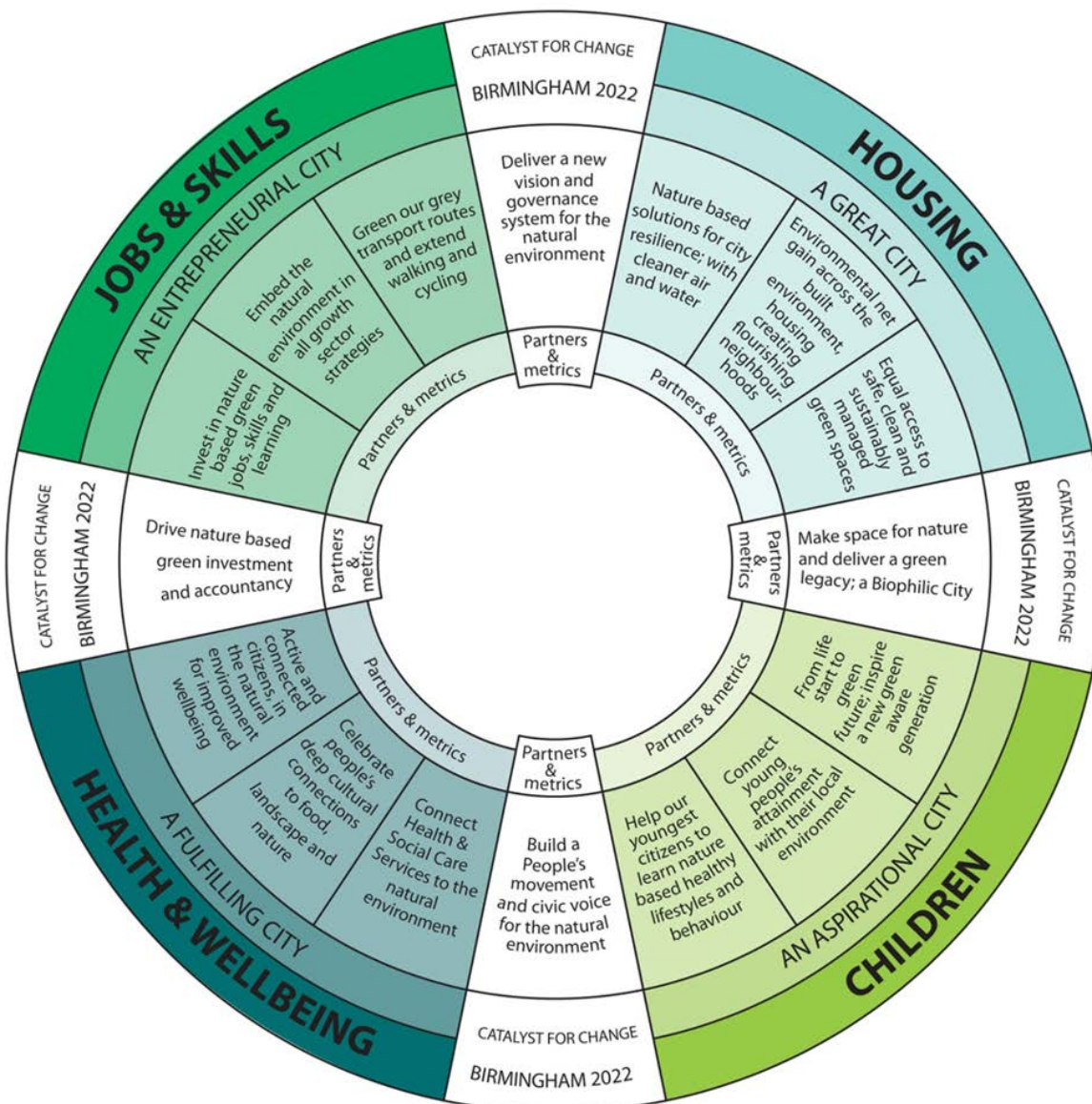


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Due to the complex, cross-cutting nature of these frameworks, we are also testing the principles of the FPA on a smaller scale, using pilot sites to test proposals in four key areas: Children's (Dawberry Fields Park, Cotteridge Park); Jobs and Skills (Ward End Park); Health and Wellbeing (Witton Lakes, Perry Common Recreation Ground); and Housing (City-wide).

The wheel diagram below displays how our pilots and the wider FPA are integral to the City's priorities in the City Plan:



## Links

- [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)
- [Project Website](#) (work in progress) – includes our monthly newsletters
- [National Trust: Our vision for the future of parks](#)
- [Heritage Fund: HLF and National Trust join forces to improve parks](#)