

STRATEGIC PLAN HOLYROOD PARK

SEPTEMBER 2024



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Holyrood Park is truly a city park like no other, a remarkable upland landscape at the heart of Scotland's capital city that shapes the City's identity and encompasses a range of habitats and heritage.

While it is recognised as a place of outstanding value and importance, it has vast potential to offer even greater benefits for people, nature, and heritage. It offers opportunities to measurably improve peoples' lives and wellbeing; to help us adapt to the ongoing and deepening climate crisis; to support the City's visitor economy; and to provide an exemplary model of integrated 21st century approaches to land management and change.

This Strategic Plan seeks to deliver on these opportunities and place Holyrood Park at the centre of Edinburgh's life. The Plan has been prepared by Historic Environment Scotland (HES), through engagement with a range of stakeholders, and through public consultation.

It is the starting point for realising the benefits that Holyrood Park can bring us all; and marks the first step on a journey that will need to be shaped with communities and stakeholders to ensure that a sustainable and bold future emerges for the Park. A future that addresses key emerging and existing challenges at the Park; and reflects and responds to national and local policy.

Central to the Plan is a new defined Purpose for the Park
– an enduring statement of intent that provides consistency
in a changing world and changing circumstances. This is
supported by a suite of Principles to guide management and
change, these situate 'people and place' at the heart of all
future decision-making.

A Vision and Objectives for the Park have also been set out to drive change over the course of the next decade, to achieve the Park's Purpose, and to deliver real benefits for the people of Edinburgh.

This Plan does not include development proposals, but does provide the high-level vision that will inform the next stages of project development.

The next steps are outlined in Section 6 below, which provides a preliminary list of key Strategies and Plans that will need to be developed to inform the project brief and development of concept designs, to achieve the Vision, meet the Objectives, and align Holyrood Park with its Purpose.

The Strategic Plan sits alongside the recently completed Holyrood Park Landscape Conservation Management Plan, which has been informed by specialist review of archaeological condition records, a preliminary ecological appraisal, a hydrological study, and an update to the landscape character appraisal.

<u>Landscape Conservation Management Plan</u> - <u>Link to StoryMap</u>

HES will continue to work with stakeholders and communities to develop strategies, plans, and proposals for a new future for the Park that reflects community aspirations, the needs of the City, and its inherent value and sensitivity.

Holyrood Park



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Holyrood Park serves the City and people of Edinburgh by delivering health, wellbeing, climate and economic benefits – it connects communities to each other, to nature, and to the City's history and identity. It is Edinburgh's 'Iconic Park', a city park like no other.

Holyrood Park is Edinburgh's iconic open space: it plays a pivotal role in the City's identity and offers residents and visitors access to a remarkable and rugged environment in the heart of the City. It shapes Edinburgh's skyline and identity with its distinctive hills and crags providing a dramatic backdrop to the City. It is Edinburgh's premier open space and a place of national and international value. It contributes significantly to Scotland's identity and visual iconography.

As the green heart of the City, Holyrood Park provides outstanding and accessible natural greenspace and a breathing space for Edinburgh's residents and visitors. It provides physical health and mental wellbeing benefits by enabling people to escape the City, engage in a range of outdoor recreational activities, meet and engage with others, and enjoy nature in a rugged outdoor environment.

As a critical and fundamental element of Edinburgh's wider green infrastructure network, the Park is vital to strengthening the resilience of the City to the global climate and ecological crisis by aiding the management of surface water, supporting nature recovery, providing carbon sequestration, and operating on a zero-carbon basis. It is an international living laboratory where approaches to integrated land management in an urban context and changing climate can be tested; a place that offers an exemplar for the future of urban green space.

Holyrood Park is an important element of the City's tourism offer and economy, worth in excess of £1.8 billion per annum¹, it provides a unique and outstanding visitor experience that engages tourists and residents with the City, the Park, and their shared history.

PRINCIPLES

- 1. Put People First
- 2. Sustain the Park's Special Qualities and Values
- 3. Strengthen Climate Action and Resilience
- 4. Be Guided by Nature
- 5. Accept Holyrood Park as a Contested Space
- 6. Experiment and Learn
- 7. Operate Sustainably

VISION STATEMENT 2024-34

Over the next decade Holyrood Park's contribution to the health and wellbeing of Edinburgh and its people will be strengthened and deepened. Its landscape will continue to evolve, combining human action and natural processes to create a fundamentally sustainable 21st century landscape that responds to the climate emergency, community aspirations, and natural and heritage conservation priorities, all while retaining and strengthening its iconic status for Edinburgh and Scotland.

At a physical level, the management of the Park will allow for diversity of habitats and landscape types, helping sustain the SSSI while enabling growing public use and access, and responding to our changing climate. Within this landscape, some areas will be more actively managed to conserve important grassland habitats and to create wetlands to manage surface water and support climate resilience.

Woven through this landscape, a completely refreshed and rejuvenated network of paths and active trails will provide access to large areas of the Park, enabling residents and visitors to engage with nature, take in the views and explore the history and story of the Park and Edinburgh. All supported by new orientation and interpretation.



Major improvements to all entrances and the co-creation of new spaces and places in the Park will encourage existing and new users to come to the Park providing a safe place for all communities, residents and visitors to gather, meet, play, and relax.

Opportunities for active travel will be expanded, and cycling and walking encouraged and enabled. Future approaches to vehicular traffic in the Park will be developed through a Movement Strategy.

All this will be delivered by partnership between the people of Edinburgh and key organisations working together to deliver an exemplar of landscape management that fully integrates communities, with climate resilience, economic benefit, and natural and historic conservation. Creating a Climate Positive asset for Edinburgh, Scotland, and the Planet.

OBJECTIVES

Objectives have been defined across five key areas to support the Vision:

FUTURE LANDSCAPE

- Objective 1: Plan and commence an integrated approach to the evolution of the landscape encompassing its natural, cultural, and social values and assets
- Objective 2: Establish baseline monitoring and feedback processes

ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

- Objective 3: Deliver a comprehensive network of paths and active travel routes across the Park for all users and visitors
- Objective 4: Create a truly inclusive park
- Objective 5: Make active travel the dominant travel mode to and through the Park

FACILITIES

Objective 6: Deliver facilities to meet user and operational needs

INCLUSIVE LEARNING AND EDUCATION

· Objective 7: Building on the existing educational offer

GOVERNANCE AND STEWARDSHIP

- Objective 8: Reduce and control operational subsidy
- Objective 9: Achieve Net Zero and Zero Waste by 2030
- Objective 10: Build on the existing volunteer programme and develop stronger community voice relationships



OVERVIEW

Holyrood Park is truly a city park like no other, a remarkable upland landscape at the heart of Scotland's capital city that shapes the City's identity and encompasses a range of habitats and heritage. While it is recognised as a place of outstanding value and importance, it has vast potential to offer even greater benefits than it currently does for people, nature and understanding our cultural heritage. It has the potential to measurably improve people's lives and wellbeing; to help us adapt to the ongoing and deepening climate crisis; to support the City's visitor economy; and to provide an exemplary model of integrated 21st century approaches to land management and change.

This Strategic Plan is the starting point for realising the benefits that Holyrood Park can bring us all. It establishes a clear Purpose for the Park to shape and guide its evolution; a purpose rooted in community, climate, and place.

Holyrood Park serves the City and people of Edinburgh by delivering health, wellbeing, climate, and economic benefits – it connects communities to each other, to nature, and to the City's history and identity. It is Edinburgh's 'Iconic Park', a city park like no other.

Alongside this, the Plan sets out a clear Vision and suite of Objectives to guide the management and continued evolution of its landscape over the next decade or so. The Plan provides a preliminary list of additional plans that will be developed to inform the brief and design stages to achieve the Vision and meet the Objectives.

The Strategic Plan sits alongside the recently completed Holyrood Park Landscape Conservation Management Plan, which has been informed by specialist review of archaeological condition records, a preliminary ecological appraisal, a hydrological study, and an update to the landscape character appraisal.

<u>Landscape Conservation Management Plan - Link to StoryMap</u>

METHODOLOGY AND ENGAGEMENT TO DATE

Development of the Plan has been informed by the review and analysis of a range of published and unpublished material, a review of the wider Policy and Strategy context, examination of a number of case studies, and discussion with a range of stakeholders.

Public consultation took place between October and December 2023, and almost 5,000 responses were received to the online questionnaire and at the various events held in and around Holyrood Park.

The views, thoughts, and suggestions of the public and stakeholders have informed the shape of the final version of the Plan.





OVERVIEW

Holyrood Park is Edinburgh's largest, and arguably, most important open public space. Its rugged upland environment offers residents and visitors a remarkable outdoor experience and access to nature at the heart of the City. The contrast of the Park's rugged terrain, shaped by its unique volcanic geology, rising above Edinburgh's cityscape is striking. Encompassing the highest of the seven hills surrounding the capital, the opportunity to experience breath-taking views from Arthur's Seat is cherished by the many people who visit this remarkable mountain in a city.

The Park serves a diverse range of local communities, city workers, students and visitors to the City – all of whom have their individual requirements. While no exact figure exists for the number of visits to the Park per annum, it is likely that given Edinburgh's population of c. 530,000 residents, with approx. 89,000 living within a 15 minute walk of the Park, plus approx. 65,000 seasonal higher education students, and with over 4m tourist visits to the City (equating to c. 19m staying nights) the number of visits to the Park by users will be in the many millions per annum.



Holyrood Park - Edinburgh Context

Holyrood Park shapes Edinburgh's skyline and identity with its distinctive hills and crags, particularly Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags, providing a dramatic backdrop to the Cityscape and World Heritage Site. It is an iconic and central part of Edinburgh's identity and makes a clear contribution to the City brand. Additionally, it has a wider national role along with the Parliament, Royal Mile, and Palace of Holyroodhouse as a backdrop and stage for key events.

Its landscape is founded on a dramatic volcanic outcrop. Its geology displays all the component parts of a typical strato-volcano with a sequence of the eruptions that can be traced with a continuity unique in Britain. The Park's volcanic geology has been studied for over two centuries and this study played a pivotal role in the early establishment of geological science, particularly due to the work of James Hutton. It is internationally valued and recognised for this role and the quality of its geology, and is one of the most well used geological educational locations in Britain.

Importantly, the Park is also an archaeological landscape with over 100 known sites covering millennia of human activity from Mesolithic hunter-gatherers to Bronze Age farmers and Iron Age hillforts. There is evidence of Roman activity and considerable medieval activity and agriculture.



Since its enclosure in c. 1541 by James V, the Park has been largely undeveloped (excepting some quarrying, land drainage, and military activity), with agricultural activity continuing until the 1970s. The sustained grazing of the site over the centuries created a network of grassland habitats, in particular unimproved acid and calcareous lowland grasslands. The habitats were a key reason, along with the remarkable geology, for the Park's designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1953,1972, 1986, and 2011. Since the cessation of almost all grazing in the 1970s (HES believes due to increasing conflict between the management of the sheep flocks and recreational users of the Park), these grassland habitats have been subject to different management regimes and are now in an unfavourable condition. The Park is also of exceptional interest due to the diversity of plant species present including many rare vascular species.

The Park's current boundary was largely established when it was enclosed with a stone wall in 1541 as an extension of the Royal Palace of Holyroodhouse. By the early 19th century, the role of the Park as an industrial / agricultural landscape was being challenged and quarrying eventually ceased on Salisbury Crags in the 1830s. In the mid-19th century, the Park became a public park primarily for recreation, but with some military and ceremonial functions. This period saw the various drives, gates, lodges, and St Margaret's and Dunsapie Lochs constructed, and areas of marshland drained, creating the landscape structure which survives today.

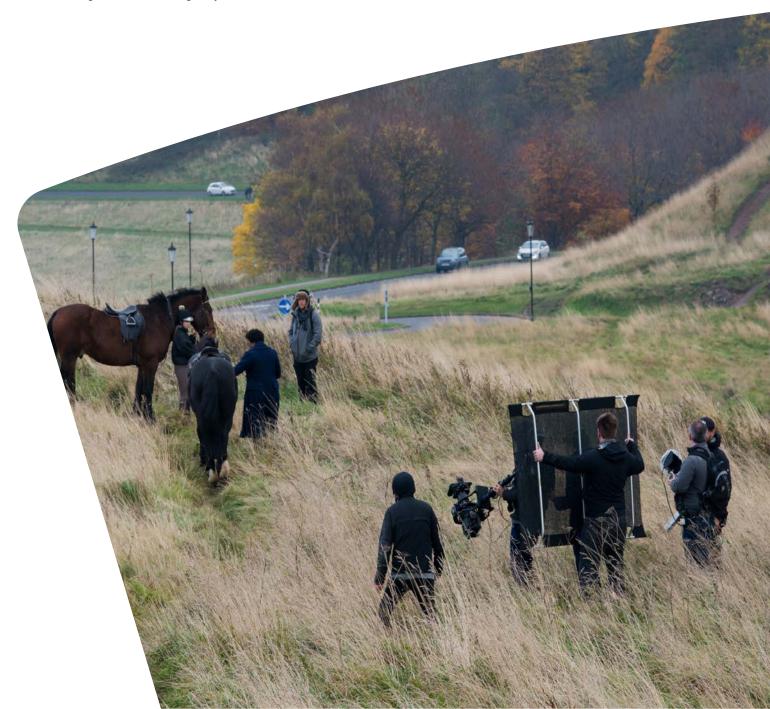
Since the 1980s, Park management has sought to blend recreation, nature conservation and access, with protection of archaeologically sensitive sites.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

Holyrood Park is a 'Property in Care' (PiC) looked after by Historic Environment Scotland on behalf of Scottish Ministers. Its staff structure includes a Ranger Team of 14 personnel, working with 7 personnel in the Parks Ground Staff team. They are supported by a number of specialist and skilled trades teams from the organisation's regional structure. These posts also support several other PiC locations across the Region. Operational costs significantly outweigh the income from car park charging, events, concessions, and filming.

There are no formalised arrangements for the involvement of key stakeholders in the management of the site although there are close working relationships with a number of organisations including the City of Edinburgh Council, the Scottish Parliament, Palace of Holyroodhouse, NatureScot, Edinburgh World Heritage Trust and the emergency services.

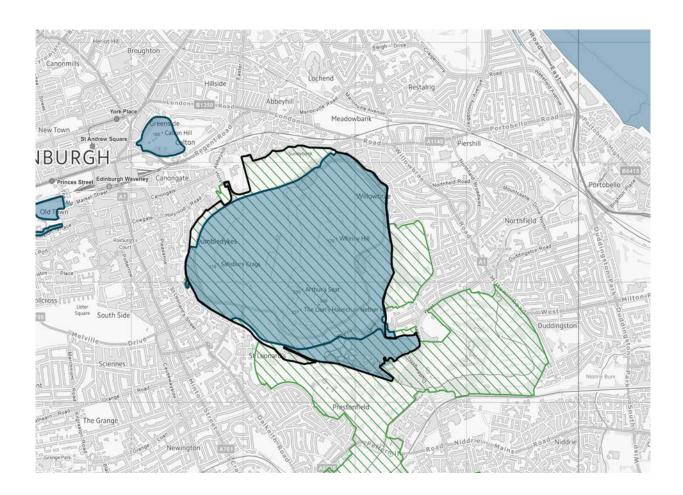
Duddingston Loch is managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust under the terms of a lease with HES.



KEY DESIGNATIONS

The following apply to all, or parts, of the Park:

- Arthur's Seat Site of Special Scientific Interest (Geological and Ecological)
- Duddingston Loch Site of Special Scientific Interest (Ecological)
- Palace of Holyroodhouse Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape
- · Holyrood Park Scheduled Monument
- The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site (partial)
- Old Town Conservation Area (partial)
- Duddingston Conservation Area (partial)
- · Seven Listed Buildings
- · Greenbelt





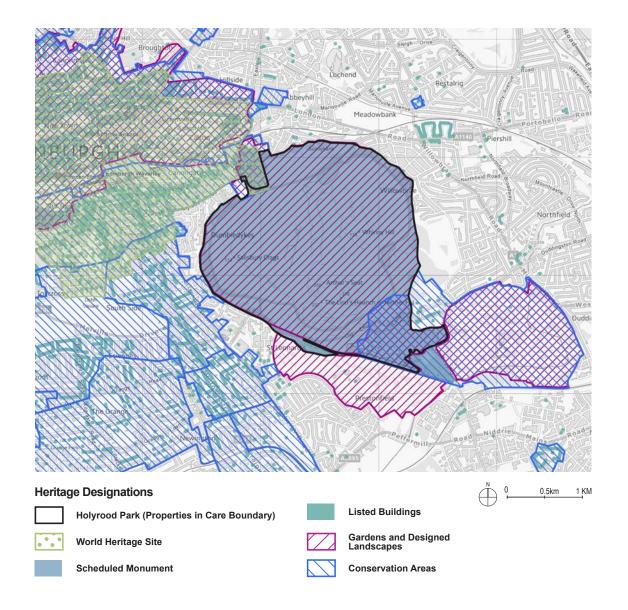
REVIEW OF HERITAGE DESIGNATIONS

Holyrood Park is covered by several national designations for both natural and cultural heritage.

The Park encompasses a wide range of archaeological and historic sites and monuments, and the entirety of the Park is designated as a scheduled monument (with some exclusions). It is also wholly designated as an Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape.

Scheduled monuments are monuments of national importance designated under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (the 1979 Act). The 1979 Act provides for the protection, conservation, and preservation of the cultural significance of scheduled monuments under Scheduled Monument Consent Policy, Designation Guidance and Selection Guidance, and through a series of consents, compliance, enforcement, and monitoring procedures managed by Historic Environment Scotland. These procedures are separate from planning and other consenting requirements such as for conservation areas.

A review of heritage designations covering the Park is currently underway. The review is expected to conclude in 2024.

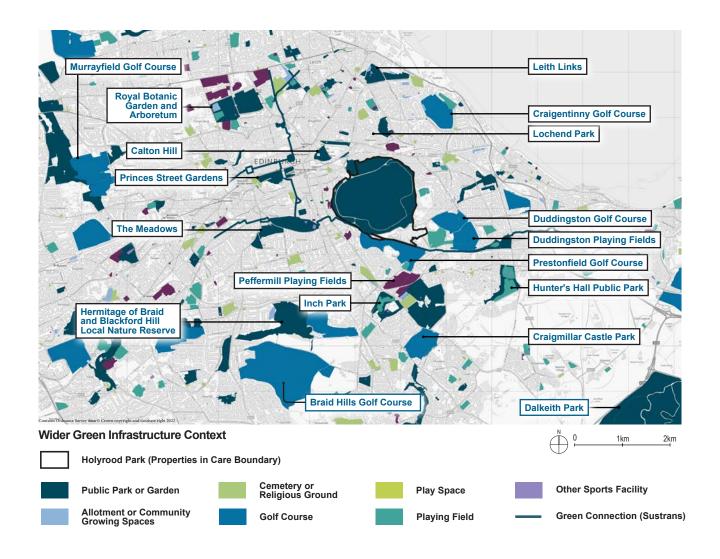


EDINBURGH'S GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CONTEXT

The City of Edinburgh Council consulted on a draft Vision and Strategy for their greenspaces 'Edinburgh's Thriving Greenspaces 2050' (October-December 2022). This encompasses all the assets managed by CEC and which form the core of Edinburgh Green Infrastructure network.

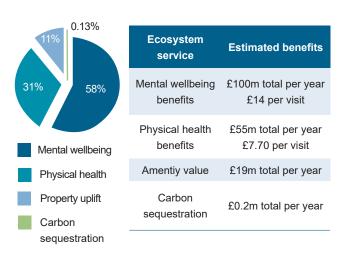
The Vision and Strategy is now under review by the Council's Culture and Communities Committee.





Holyrood Park is a fundamental component of this wider green infrastructure network and, outside of the Pentland Hills Regional Park, is the largest single accessible greenspace in the City. The Thriving Greenspaces strategy clearly articulates the value of the green infrastructure in Edinburgh setting out that a 'Natural Capital Account' by Vivid Economics estimated that Edinburgh Council's parks and greenspaces generate benefits of £174m per year, with mental wellbeing and physical health benefits being estimated at c. £22 per visit (combined), with further amenity and carbon benefits on top of that.

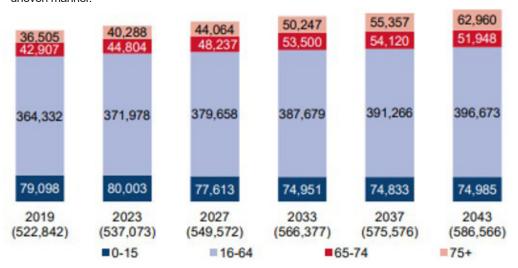
This assessment predates the COVID-19 pandemic which highlighted the value that people place on greenspaces for their own health, wellbeing and quality of life. Note, Edinburgh's Green Infrastucture network has evolved into the **Green Blue Network.**



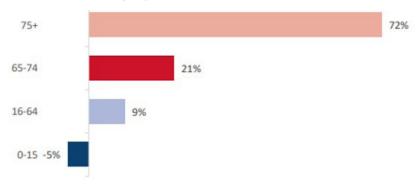
Extract from Edinburgh's Thriving Greenspaces 2050

COMMUNITY AND USER CONTEXT

Edinburgh is a growing and changing city, with the population expected to increase by 12% to over 580,000 by 2043 in an uneven manner.



Projected population of Edinburgh by age group 2019 to 2043 (2018 based on projections) Extract from Edinburgh by Numbers 2021 (CEC)



Percentage change in population from 2019 to 2043 by age groups Extract from Edinburgh by Numbers 2021 (CEC)

Edinburgh is an affluent city with relative poverty levels below wider Scotland; but it does have sustained pockets of inequality and is home to a range of excluded communities.

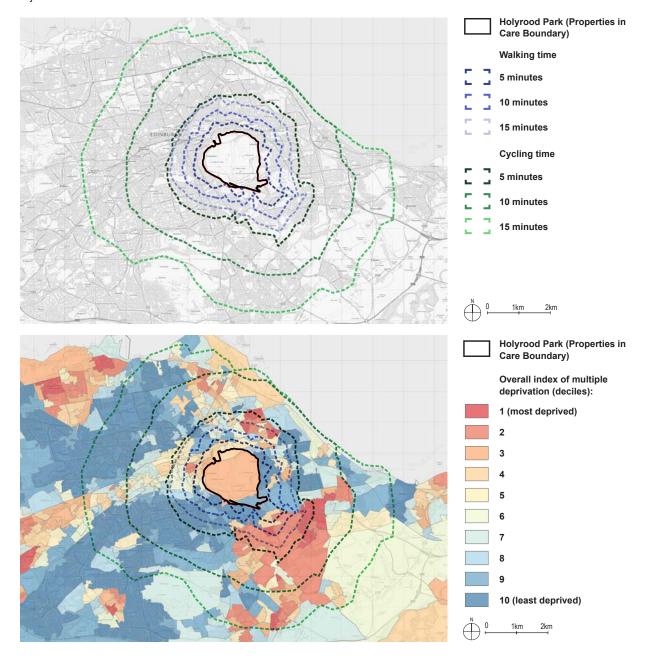
Year	Scotland	Edinburgh
2014-15	18.8%	15.3%
2015-18	19.0%	15.9%
2018-19	19.2%	15.4%
2019-20	19.3%	15.1%

Relative poverty in Scotland and Edinburgh 2014-2020 Extract from Edinburgh by Numbers 2021 (CEC) While Holyrood Park is technically within reach of every resident of Edinburgh, it has a closer relationship with communities in its more immediate environs. Based on a series of walking and cycling time analyses, the following profiles those more immediate communities (see Figure 5 and Appendix A - Population Context)

In total, there are approx. 317,000 residents in a 15 minute cycling catchment and approx. 89,000 in a 15-minute walking catchment. These populations are predicted to grow by c. 10-12% over the coming decades. The public consultation questionnaire revealed that, out of the c. 5,000 responses, 32% of people live within one mile of the Park, with 63% of the total respondents visiting at least once a week.

In terms of population ages, the closest catchment areas have a much higher proportion of 20-24 and 25-34 year olds than Scotland as a whole. Conversely, both children and people over the age of 45 are under-represented in all local catchment areas compared with the Scotlish average. The populations around the Park are also more ethnically diverse than Scotland as a whole.

In socio-economic terms, on the whole the catchment areas cover populations that generally trend above Scottish averages. There are, however, distinct areas of deprivation further south from the Park and to a lesser extent to the north, as well as local pockets adjacent to the Park.



CURRENT AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

Holyrood Park is a large, complex, and challenging place set in a mixed and changing urban environment. There are many existing challenges with further on the immediate horizon. The following briefly highlights these:

CLIMATE CHANGE

Inevitably our rapidly changing climate will affect the Park, with periods of extreme drought, flooding, heat, and cold occurring more frequently over the coming decades, alongside steadily rising temperatures. This will change the landscape, vegetation, and habitats of the Park, as well as affecting user patterns and requirements. It may also impact on the archaeology of the Park: increased waterlogging, erosion, and drought can have significant impact on archaeological remains.

There is a clear obligation and responsibility for the Park to contribute to Edinburgh's wider need for climate action and resilience. The Park has much to offer in terms of improving surface water management, ameliorating urban heat island effects, and delivering nature-based solutions, and these have to form a fundamental component of the future direction of the Park if Scotland's declared climate emergency is to be addressed.

USER NUMBER GROWTH

Edinburgh's population continues to grow³ as do tourist numbers (pre- and post-pandemic). This inevitable trend will see more people use the Park, more frequently; placing pressure on services, operations (e.g. litter, and health and safety), paths, open spaces, habitats, and archaeological sites; and also simultaneously delivering greater health, wellbeing, and economic benefits. Significant investment is required to provide facilities and information to support the growing numbers of users and visits.

DECLINING HABITAT AND WATER QUALITY

All the habitats that contribute to the SSSI designations are in 'unfavourable' condition and require intervention. While many are the result of long-defunct land management regimes i.e. extensive grazing, there is still a need to address their decline in some manner.

NATURAL REGENERATION AND RECOLONISATION

The Park's landscape is evolving and changing rapidly following the end of grazing in the 1970s. This is leading to new habitats emerging while historic habitats e.g. grasslands are changing. This process is not inherently 'wrong' or negative, but it does require consideration and management particularly in the context of the SSSI designation.

HIGHLY DEGRADED PATH NETWORK

The path network across the Park is under significant pressure from increasing user numbers and there is widespread damage and erosion across the core of the Park with user numbers far outweighing the capacity of the current paths. This is scarring the landscape, degrading habitats, damaging archaeology, and negatively affecting user safety and experience.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICT

Through traffic is a historic consequence of the Victorian remodelling of the Park. Current levels of vehicle traffic create severance and pedestrian, cyclist, and vehicle conflict leading to accidents and a perception of risk. There is a critical issue with the main visitor route along Horse Wynd from the end of the Royal Mile, past Parliament and the Palace of Holyroodhouse and into the Park.



ACTIVE TRAVEL PATTERNS

Patterns of urban movement are changing with a growing re-emphasis on active travel, i.e. by foot and cycle. The Park's location presents an opportunity to connect communities through active travel as well as providing active leisure opportunities.

USER SAFETY ISSUES

The terrain, mix of users, number of users, and urban location all result in Holyrood Park recording more health and safety incidents than any other Properties in the Care of HES. In 2023 the Ranger Team was involved with over 314 incidents, including missing persons, fires, graffiti, rock falls, vandalism, threats of suicide, Park-user disagreements, damage to property, drug use, as well as vehicle and cycling accidents. Incident numbers include those collated by HES or reported to HES by other organisations.

ROCKFALL

The closure of the Radical Road and the management issues associated with Samson Ribs above the Low Duddingston Road both highlight the continuing and, ultimately, permanent challenge and risk that exist in the Park with regards to rock fall.

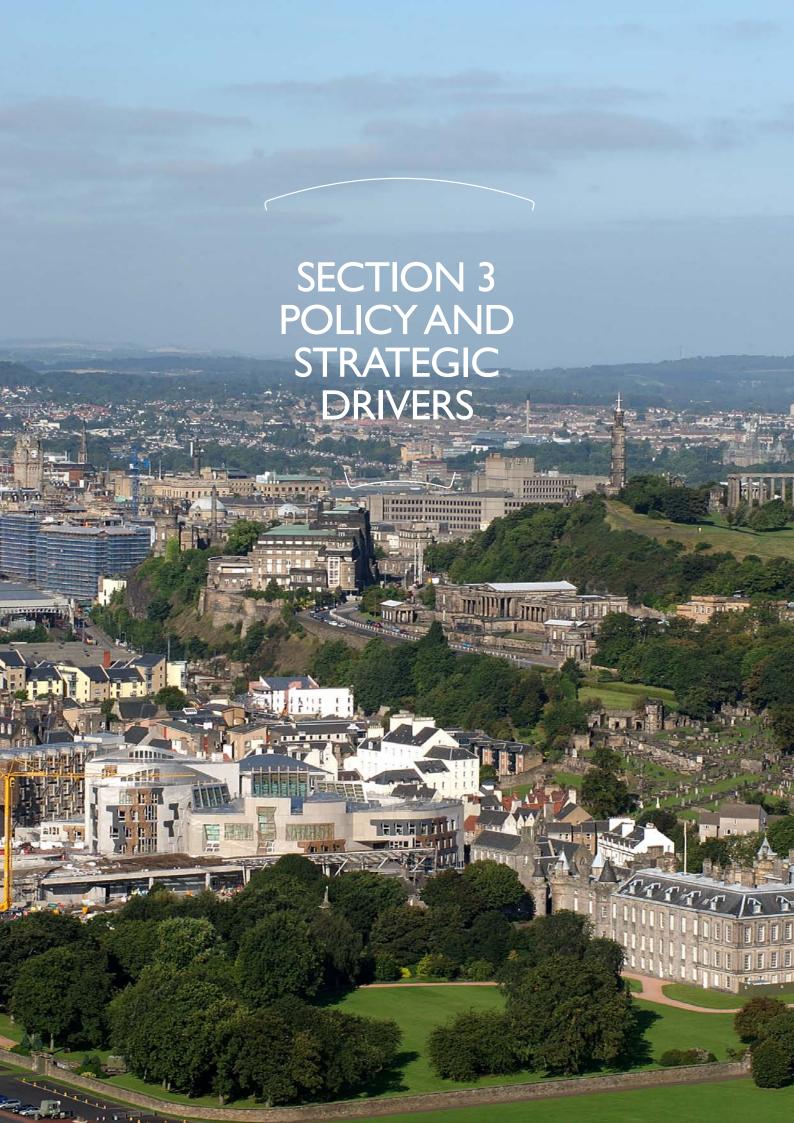
An exercise is currently underway with specialists, to determine how to assess and manage rockfall risk safety and how to best strike a balance between the current risk from rockfall and allow access that will provide benefit for all, whilst meeting HES's statutory obligations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Opportunity exists to work closely with a range of communities around the Park, to shape the future of the Park. This will require a long-term commitment to build on the existing contacts and work with local communities and schools.

FUNDING AND FINANCE

In common with all public parks, a significant operational subsidy is required for the day-to-day management of the Park. Regular capital funding is also required to improve facilities and maintain paths etc. For Holyrood Park, a very significant injection of capital is required to address the current condition of the site.



INTRODUCTION

Holyrood Park operates within a broad legislative and policy framework that reflects current and emerging priorities for Scotland and its communities. This framework has been reviewed during the development of this Strategic Plan to understand and highlight key policy and strategic driver considerations and the direction of travel for policy and legalisation. The following summarises aspects of this policy context, with further information in Appendix B - Policy and Strategic Drivers Context.

Key elements of the legislative framework include:

Legislative Context

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATION:

- Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014
- Historic Environment (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2011
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997
- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
- Scheduled Monument Consent Policy

ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION:

- Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
- · Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994
- Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009
- Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019
- Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005

OTHER LEGISLATION:

- The Parks Regulations Acts 1872 to 1974
- · The Holyrood Park Regulations 1971 (as amended 2001 and 2005)
- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)
- Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act of 1997
- The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019
- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- Scottish Land Commission, Community Engagement
- Equalities Act 2010
- Relevant Health and Safety legislation
- Roads Traffic Acts



NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 places a legal duty on public bodies to have regard to the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework and its National Outcomes in carrying out their functions. To help achieve its Purpose, the Framework sets out 11 National Outcomes that reflect the values and aspirations of the people of Scotland, and are aligned with the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) as listed:





At the national level, the National Performance Framework includes a number of outcomes that are key drivers for shaping the approach to the sustainable management of Holyrood Park. These are:

Health – we are healthy and active

Outcome focussed on healthy and active lives, with health and wellbeing prioritised at a national level. Based on a whole system approach to address harmful behaviours from a number of angles, including through sport and exercise. All these are aspects relevant to the use of Holyrood Park by local communities.

Environment – we value, enjoy, protect, and enhance our environment

Outcome that recognises both the inherent value of natural landscapes and their value to Scotland's way of life and identity. Strong focus on safeguarding and managing natural habitats and enabling access to nature and heritage. Also emphasis on resource and carbon management. Future management of Holyrood Park can address these outcomes.

Communities – we live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient, and safe

Focus on quality of communities, with a priority for access to greenspace and nature, which is noted as enhancing health and lives in general. Provides encouragement for volunteering and highlights the need for engagement with communities when planning change and making decisions. In this context, community involvement and benefit is a priority for the future of Holyrood Park.

Economy – we have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive, and sustainable economy.

Focus on driving a competitive and fair economy, with a strong ecological and social responsibility theme. Opportunity for the development, management, and conservation of Holyrood Park to contribute to job creation, skills development, and economic outcomes.

Other elements of the national policy and strategy context include:

- Place Principle
- · Historic Environment Policy for Scotland
- Climate Ready Scotland: Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme, 2019-2024
- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)
- Biodiversity Strategy (consultation)
- Land Reform in a Net Zero Nation (consultation)
- Scotland Outlook 2030: Responsible tourism for a sustainable future
- Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation



LOCAL CONTEXT

At an Edinburgh level, the emerging City Plan 2030 sets out the Council's approach to becoming a sustainable and net zero city, and achieving greater wellbeing and equality. This is supported by:

- The Draft 2030 Climate Strategy which is leading the actions for change across Edinburgh by identifying what actions the city needs to take to improve resilience as well as achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.
- The City Centre Transformation Strategy that aims to change the future way people move around the city and city centre. Proposals for Edinburgh's Low Emission Zone came into effect from June 2024 and will be an important part of improving the city air quality.
- The City Mobility Plan which promotes walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and car sharing in preference to single occupancy car use to help meet targets for a reduction in car kilometres by 2030; the national target is 20% by 2030 and for people to travel with zero emissions by net zero transport infrastructure.
- The Vision for Water Management in the City of Edinburgh – which sets out key principles of how the city should manage its water environment, considering the increasing severity and complexity of challenges facing Edinburgh arising from the climate emergency.

- The Edinburgh's Nature Network and Green Blue Network project – which is developing a coordinated network of multifunctional green blue infrastructure to serve the City of Edinburgh and new development.
- The Edinburgh Open Space Strategy which identifies opportunities to improve provision and access to Edinburgh's open spaces.
- The Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan which raises awareness of the City's biodiversity and the opportunities for positive actions to protect and enhance this, reflecting national objectives set out in the Scottish Forestry Strategy 2019-2029, Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the Scottish Pollinator Strategy 2017-2027. Holyrood Park plays a significant role in this plan.
- The City Plan 2030 which proposes a place-based policy approach to delivering greater equality in health, wellbeing and sustainability outcomes through the delivery of 20-minute neighbourhoods.
- The Future Streets Circulation Plan for Edinburgh

 which sets out an approach to how space is allocated
 on the city's streets, focusing on neighbourhoods, key
 transport corridors and the city centre. This will help to
 deliver the aims and objectives of the City Mobility Plan.



HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CONTEXT

The 2020 Historic Environment Scotland (HES) 'Heritage for All: Corporate Plan 2022 Onwards' is a key driver for shaping the approach to future sustainable management of Holyrood Park. The Plan promotes an aspirational vision for Scotland's historic environment that is '...cherished, understood, shared, and enjoyed with pride, by everyone.' Drawing on earlier work, the Park's potential to support the Corporate Plan's five outcomes is summarised below:

- Outcome 1: The Historic Environment makes a real difference to people's lives – future management of the Park should make a tangible difference to people's lives in terms of increased wellbeing (health, happiness, and life satisfaction), increased engagement with a greater diversity of people, and increased integration into city place-making activities.
- Outcome 2: The Historic Environment is looked after, protected and managed for generations to come – management of the Park should ensure its cultural and natural significance is sustainably managed, including championing delivery of the HES Climate Action Plan (see below) and protecting the environment through enhancing biodiversity and improving sustainability.
- Outcome 3: The Historic Environment makes a broader contribution to the economy of Scotland and its people – management of the Park should ensure potential economic benefits to the City of Edinburgh are recognised and enhanced in terms of its role as a venue for events, supporting health and wellbeing, and supporting tourism.

- Outcome 4: The Historic Environment inspires a creative and vibrant Scotland future management could aim to ensure that the Park's intangible value as a place of creative inspiration, events, inclusive learning, and outdoor recreation activities continue to be recognised, and the Park's visitor experience enhanced in innovative ways.
- Outcome 5: The Historic Environment is cared for and championed by a high-performing organisation

 effective governance, operational structures, resources, and funding requirements will need to be in place to meet this outcome, including the potential to increase partnership working and funding, implement new ways of working and increase the diversity of income sources.

Other key National and Historic Environment Scotland documents include:

- 'Our Past, Our Future' (Scotland's new strategy for the historic environment)
- · Historic Environment Policy for Scotland
- · HES Climate Action Plan
- · NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland Landscape Position Statement and Action Plan
- HES Responsible Tourism Framework (consultation closed 30 November 2022)
- Climate Ready HES
- Green Recovery Statement for Scotland's Historic Environment
- · Skills Investment Plan for Scotland's historic environment sector
- Scotland Outlook 2030: Responsible tourism for a sustainable future
- Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation

Further information is provided in Appendix B - Policy and Strategic Drivers Context.



INTRODUCTION

A 'Purpose' is an enduring statement of intent that provides consistency in a changing world and changing circumstances.

Through engagement with stakeholders and the public, it has become clear that Holyrood Park's purpose has become clouded and undefined. The changing population of Edinburgh (in terms of size and demographics), shifting economic priorities, the growth of tourism, ongoing and worsening climate change dynamics, and a resurgence of interest in the value of green space during the COVID pandemic, have all shifted the world within which the Park now operates.

A clarification of its purpose in this changing world is therefore required to shape and guide the next stage of the Park's evolution. Critically, this needs to reflect the fact that as a major public open space, Holyrood Park is not a typical HES property, and its purpose will consequently differ from other properties in its care.

The following Statement of Purpose should be read in conjunction with the Principles. If the Purpose is to be achieved, then long-term physical and operational change is required.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Holyrood Park serves the City and people of Edinburgh by delivering health, wellbeing, climate, and economic benefits – it connects communities to each other, to nature, and to the City's history and identity. It is Edinburgh's 'Iconic Park', a city park like no other.

Holyrood Park is Edinburgh's iconic open space: it plays a pivotal role in the City's identity and offers residents and visitors access to a remarkable and rugged environment in the heart of the City. It shapes Edinburgh's skyline and identity with its distinctive hills and crags providing a dramatic backdrop to the City. It is Edinburgh's premier open space and a place of national and international value. It contributes significantly to Scotland's identity and visual iconography.

As the green heart of the City, Holyrood Park provides outstanding and accessible natural greenspace and a breathing space for Edinburgh's residents and visitors. It provides physical health and mental wellbeing benefits by enabling people to escape the City, engage in a range of outdoor recreational activities, meet and engage with others, and enjoy nature in a rugged outdoor environment.

As a critical and fundamental element of Edinburgh's wider green infrastructure network, the Park is vital to strengthening the resilience of the City to the global climate and ecological crisis by aiding the management of surface water, supporting nature recovery, providing carbon sequestration, and operating on a zero-carbon basis. It is an international living laboratory where approaches to integrated land management in an urban context and changing climate can be tested; a place that offers an exemplar for the future of urban green space.

Holyrood Park is an important element of the City's tourism offer and economy, worth in excess of £1.8 billion per annum. It provides a unique and outstanding visitor experience that engages tourists and residents with the City, the Park, and their shared history.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles have been established to guide the future management and development of the Park as it evolves to meet its defined Purpose. They represent the Ethos or Values inherent in the future management of the Park.

They will shape decision—making at both strategic and operational levels, ensuring that decisions of every scale and impact are aligned in their ethos and approach and contribute to the Park's Purpose:

- 1. Put People First
- 2. Sustain the Park's Special Qualities and Values
- 3. Strengthen Climate Action and Resilience
- 4. Be Guided by Nature
- 5. Accept Holyrood Park as a Contested Space
- 6. Experiment and Learn
- 7. Operate Sustainably

PRINCIPLE I – PUT PEOPLE FIRST

Holyrood Park's primary purpose is to serve the people of Edinburgh by providing accessible green space, access to nature, and climate resilience benefits. To achieve this purpose, the needs and requirements of people must be central to all decisions and plans for the Park. This should drive investment priorities and key management decisions with the aim of strengthening the relationship between people and the Park. It is critical that residents, interest groups, and local communities play a leading role in shaping the future of the Park, and that the shape of its future use and development is created in partnership with them through a people-centred approach.

This does not mean that other values and factors should not influence and help decision-making (see Principles below), but a primary focus should be on the aspirations, drives, and needs of people, particularly park users and communities of Edinburgh.

PRINCIPLE 2 – SUSTAIN THE PARK'S SPECIAL QUALITIES AND VALUES

Holyrood Park is a landscape of outstanding value, for its geology, habitats, and heritage; and for the role it plays in the City's identity. As such there is a clear need to sustain, safeguard, and enhance the unique character and special qualities of Holyrood Park as a mountain in the city; this includes conserving key heritage assets, enabling positive nature conservation outcomes, and creating a landscape setting at the heart of the City.

When deciding on investment and management actions, these factors need to inform the balance between change and conservation – the aim is to achieve the Park's Purpose without harming the very qualities that makes it '...a city park like no other'.

PRINCIPLE 3 – STRENGTHEN CLIMATE ACTION AND RESILIENCE

Scotland has declared a climate emergency and Edinburgh is targeting becoming a Net Zero City by 2030. It is critical that all actions and decisions relating to Holyrood Park seek to make a positive contribution to these vital goals. Climate resilience must be at the very heart of everything that is achieved in the Park.

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PRINCIPLE 4 - BE GUIDED BY NATURE

Historically, the landscape of the Park was largely shaped by pastoral agriculture which created a series of grassland habitats. Grazing ceased in the 1970s and since then the grassland habitats recorded in the SSSI designation have been managed by mowing and scrub clearance. Additionally, 19th and 20th century developments in land drainage, road building, and the creation of the lochs also changed and shaped the landscape of the Park.

Moving forward, the management of the Park's landscape will need to reflect the need to sustain the SSSI designation, while ensuring that the wider public benefits and climate resilience requirements are met. This will require an integrated approach to land management that balances a range of values and benefits, but that, critically, still puts people first. In this approach, natural habitat conservation and creation, through both human intervention and natural process / regeneration, should be given clear consideration and should inform all decision making and planning.

PRINCIPLE 5 – ACCEPT HOLYROOD PARK AS A CONTESTED SPACE

Holyrood Park is not a homogenous space, valued and used by everyone in the same way – it is a contested space with often competing views on the appropriateness or acceptability of different actions, whether that be actions of protest, management, or daily use. This will continue and future management decisions should acknowledge the fact that Holyrood Park will continue to be a 'contested space' at the centre of everyday life in Edinburgh.

Decisions should be taken accepting that not all parties will accept or welcome the decision, but in a manner that is open and transparent and encourages communication and discussion.

PRINCIPLE 6 – EXPERIMENT AND LEARN

There is no template or fixed manual for the future of Holyrood Park. There should be a readiness to experiment with different approaches, monitor outcomes, and learn from them. Management should embrace the potential for Holyrood Park to become a 'living laboratory' for developing, testing, and sharing innovative ideas around the role of urban green spaces in addressing contemporary urban living challenges associated with adapting to climate change, reversing biodiversity loss, managing habitats, and improving health and wellbeing.

PRINCIPLE 7 – OPERATE SUSTAINABLY

All decisions should contribute to the environmental and operational viability of Holyrood Park by moving towards a net zero operational model, and increasing revenue to support investment and reduce subsidy requirements.





VISION STATEMENT 2024-34

Over the next decade Holyrood Park's contribution to the health and wellbeing of Edinburgh and its people will be strengthened and deepened. Its landscape will continue to evolve, combining human action and natural processes to create a fundamentally sustainable 21st century landscape that responds to the climate emergency, community aspirations, and natural and heritage conservation priorities, all while retaining and strengthening its iconic status for Edinburgh and Scotland.

At a physical level, the management of the Park will allow for diversity of habitats and landscape types, helping sustain the SSSI while enabling growing public use and access, and responding to our changing climate. Within this landscape, some areas will be more actively managed to conserve important grassland habitats and to create wetlands to manage surface water and support climate resilience.

Woven through this landscape, a completely refreshed and rejuvenated network of paths and active trails will provide access to large areas of the Park, enabling residents and visitors to engage with nature, take in the views, and explore the history and story of the Park and Edinburgh. All supported by new orientation and interpretation.

Major improvements to all entrances and the co-creation of new spaces and places in the Park will encourage existing and new users to come to the Park providing a safe place for all communities, residents, and visitors to gather, meet, play, and relax.

Opportunities for active travel will be expanded and cycling and walking encouraged and enabled. Future approaches to vehicular traffic in the Park will be developed through a Movement Strategy.

All this will be delivered by partnership between the people of Edinburgh and key organisations. Working together to deliver an exemplar of landscape management that fully integrates communities, with climate resilience, economic benefit, and natural and historic conservation. Creating a Climate Positive asset for Edinburgh, Scotland, and the Planet.



KEY OBJECTIVES

Delivering the Vision and meeting the Purpose will involve action across five broad areas:

- (1) Future Landscape
- (2) Access and Movement
- (3) Facilities
- (4) Inclusive Learning and Education
- (5) Management and Regulation

Key Objectives have been defined for each of the five areas. Section 7 provides a preliminary list of Plans that will be developed to inform the brief and design stages to achieve the Vision, meet the Objectives and align Holyrood Park with its Purpose.



FUTURE LANDSCAPE

OBJECTIVE 1: Plan and commence an integrated approach to the evolution of the landscape encompassing its natural, cultural, and social values and assets

First and foremost, the evolution of the landscape in the Park will be planned; change will be directed through a combination of human management and natural processes reflecting the Purpose and Principles set out above. It will create a mosaic of habitats and landscape types that will deliver ecological, climate, heritage, and experiential outcomes including:

- · Improved resources and spaces for amenity and leisure designed with, and for, communities
- · Key vascular / grassland habitats safeguarded, sustained, and expanded
- Significant adaptations to watershed management to help safeguard Edinburgh and extend wetland habitats for ecological benefit
- · Greater variety and complexity of terrestrial and aquatic habitats across the Park
- · Increased carbon sequestration through vegetation and soils
- · Climate resilient vegetation and habitat to respond to the environmental risks of climate change and promote biosecurity
- Conservation improvements for archaeological and built heritage resources with assets fully integrated into the landscape, access, and wider management proposals
- · Maintenance of the dramatic form of Salisbury Crags and Arthur's Seat in views from the City, and
- · Accommodating the functioning of the Palace of Holyroodhouse and The Scottish Parliament.

OBJECTIVE 2: Establish baseline, monitoring, and feedback processes

Critically, the evolution and development for the Park will be closely monitored and lessons learnt as change progresses. This will require the development of robust baseline information e.g. habitat surveys, landscape characterisation, surface water modelling, etc, followed by a process of monitoring and feedback to guide the development of management actions.

This should include open and transparent publication of data and information to support best practice elsewhere. Opportunities for collaboration and information sharing with other organisations should be sought.



ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

OBJECTIVE 3: Deliver a comprehensive network of paths and active travel routes across the Park for all users and visitors

Movement across the Park will be transformed to improve human experience and safety, and provide new opportunities for all residents and visitors to explore the landscape, while safeguarding and sustaining habitats and heritage. Key outcomes to be delivered include:

- Ease of user movement around the Park significantly enhanced with improved access to the majority of the Park, with attendant experience and safety benefits.
- Active travel needs for less able users and those with mobility requirements including manual and powered wheelchairs and other mobility devices, integrated into proposals with significant access improvements (also see Objective 4).
- Visitor / tourist experience diversified and improved to reduce pressure on Arthur's Seat and offer a wider range of experiences to reflect the diversity of the visitor population.
- Visitors and users have an enhanced understanding of the Park, its history, its environment, and its offer, while also encouraging dispersal and appropriate behaviours.

Additionally, as part of wider access proposals, entrances to the Park will be improved, signage will be implemented, and offsite information revised and improved.

OBJECTIVE 4: Create a truly inclusive Park

Safe, easy, and attractive access to the Park for all communities and users around the Park is vital to ensuring that it is a welcoming place that supports residents and communities. Access for All will be facilitated across the Park through appropriate measures based on a robust Access Audit that unlocks barriers to access and helps develop a truly inclusive Park.

This will address physical and non-physical disabilities, as well as barriers associated with social, cultural, and economic aspects. Analysis will identify which groups of people with Protected Characteristics⁴ are particularly under-represented in the Park user base and these harder to reach groups will be engaged in decision-making regarding the development of the Park.

OBJECTIVE 5: Make active travel the dominant travel mode through and to the Park

Active travel will be encouraged, enabled, and supported to ensure that it becomes the most desirable method of movement within the Park, and a key option for access to the Park. This will improve the quality of the Park users' experience and support Access for All.

Accessibility and active travel will be key drivers for all future proposals for the Park, reflecting wider societal trends towards an active travel based urban environment. This change will also need to ensure that access for those with mobility limitations or disabilities (of any form) is fully addressed and enabled.

Future approaches to vehicular traffic in the Park, will be addressed through the development of a Movement Strategy. This will appraise a number of approaches to traffic management, assess the needs of park users and road users, and consider the wider implications on the city transport network. We are working in close collaboration and liaison with City of Edinburgh Council on the development of a Movement Strategy for the Park.

FACILITIES

OBJECTIVE 6: Deliver facilities to meet user and operational needs

Current facilities across the Park do not meet user requirements and do not support a high-quality visitor experience.

Opportunities exist to address this shortfall and improve operational viability through the delivery of new / refreshed built facilities. Investment will be made to address the following key areas:

- · Educational facilities
- Orientation spaces
- Interpretation spaces
- Toilets, including disabled and Changes Places⁵ provision
- · Office and back-of-house provision

All new / upgraded facilities will minimise or, ideally, avoid construction and operational carbon emissions, and improve sustainability of operations (both financial and environmental).



INCLUSIVE LEARNING AND EDUCATION

OBJECTIVE 7: Building on the existing learning offer

Continue to develop and enhance a broad range of formal and informal educational / learning opportunities that are open and accessible to all will be developed and delivered using the Park's nature and landscape, ecology, environment, history, and built heritage as key resources. These will deliver positive learning and skill-based outcomes that reflect national and local needs and policy agendas, and working in partnership across sectors will be a key factor. This will encompass:

- · Learning at nursery, primary, secondary school, and higher education levels
- · Bespoke opportunities and support for children and young adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- · Lifelong learning opportunities for residents and visitors e.g. guided walks and talks, lectures, etc
- Physical conservation activity and training without formal certificates or outcomes e.g. vegetation management, ecological surveys, path maintenance, etc
- · Apprenticeships with external partners and contractors, and
- Accredited technical and skills training leading to qualifications at a variety of levels as part of developing local career pathways.

The approach outlined above supports the aims of the HES Outreach and Learning Framework 'Making Sense of Scotland' and its objective to make Scotland's historic environment a valued national resource for lifelong learning by reaching out to more diverse audiences. Within this context Holyrood Park should be viewed as a significant national learning hub.



MANAGEMENT AND PARK REGULATIONS

OBJECTIVE 8: Reduce and control operational subsidy

As with all public parks, a degree of operational subsidy will be required, now and into the future. The scale of this subsidy will be managed, and steps will be taken to significantly increase revenue from the Park to offset and reduce subsidy levels and support long term investment in the management and development of the Park and its facilities.

OBJECTIVE 9: Achieve Net Zero and Zero Waste by 2030

- Holyrood Park can contribute to both Scotland's 2045 ambitions of reaching net zero, and transitioning to a fully circular economy. Ensuring the Park becomes a Climate Positive force, will require a range of actions and initiatives including:
- · Better understanding and managing carbon captured and sequestered in soil and vegetation
- · Undertaking more detailed climate risk assessment
- · Embedding climate adaptation into all plans to increase resilience against risks
- · Improving the measuring of carbon from operations, and decarbonise in stages
- · Transitioning Park management to a circular economy model
- · Procuring using sustainable design, specification, and supply chains.

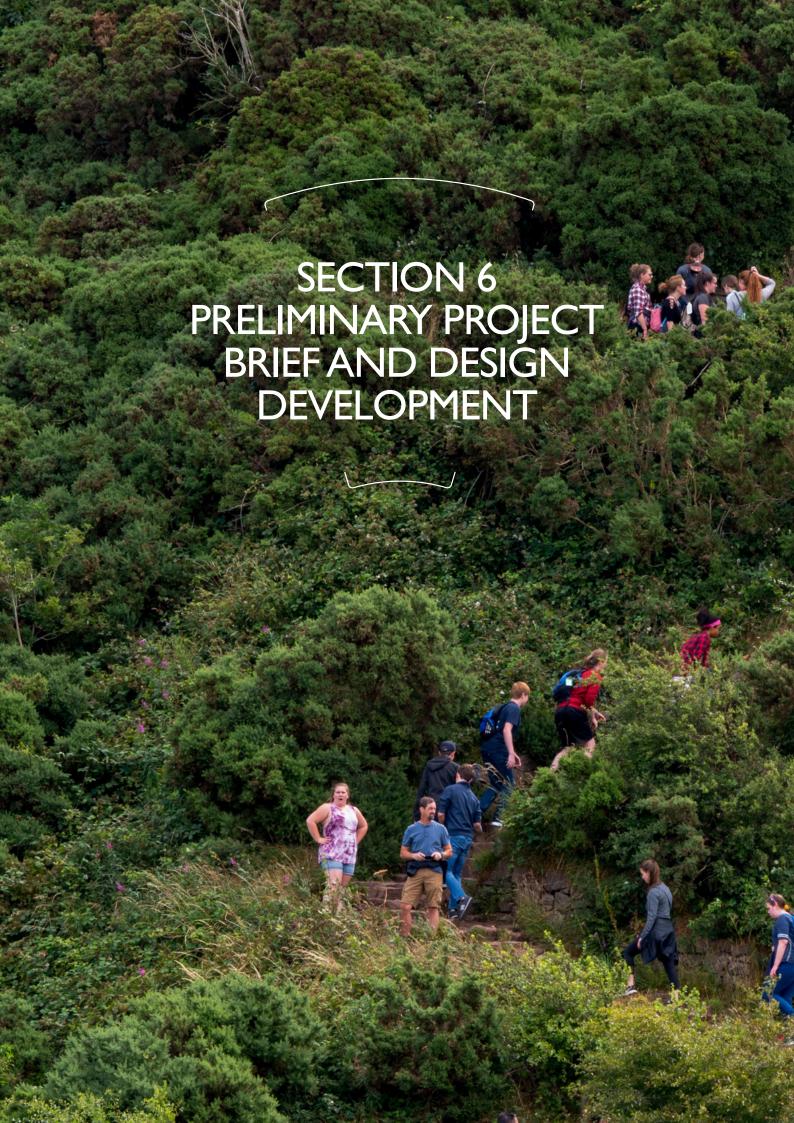
OBJECTIVE 10: Build on the existing volunteer programme and develop stronger community voice relationships

Offer flexible and diverse volunteering opportunities that make the most of conservation, visitor connections, and community participation, and develop a community voice model that will ensure varied opinions and ideas are heard and considered. Initiatives could be modelled on the Parks Foundation in Bournemouth, the Friends of Edinburgh greenspace groups, and the Witton Lodge Community Association Community Voice Forum. This approach will provide an avenue for skills and learning, and support health and wellbeing, while also supporting activities across the Park.

Consideration of Holyrood Park Regulations

Holyrood Park is subject to the Holyrood Park Regulations 1971 (as amended), and as such HES will review the Park's refreshed Purpose and current operational needs in light of the existing Regulations and will regularly review the alignment of the Park's management, future operations, and overall objectives with the Park Regulations.





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INTRODUCTION

This Plan does not include development proposals, but does provide the high-level vision that will inform the next stages of project development.

The Strategic Plan sits alongside the recently completed Holyrood Park Landscape Conservation Management Plan, which has been informed by specialist review of archaeological condition records, a preliminary ecological appraisal, a hydrological study, and an update to the landscape character appraisal.

<u>Landscape Conservation Management Plan - Link to StoryMap</u>

This section provides a preliminary list of key Strategies and Plans that will need to be developed to inform the project brief and development of concept designs to achieve the Vision, meet the Objectives and align Holyrood Park with its Purpose.

Engagement will shape how the project develops and what the outcomes might be. The visions and objectives set a bold direction of travel for the Park, with fundamental landscape change envisaged over the coming decade. The physical interventions required to achieve this may be relatively subtle and management-led.

KEY STRATEGIES AND PLANS

Conservation Management Strategy, including:

- Landscape Conservation Management Plan: Understanding the Cultural, Historic and Natural Significance of the Park; Biodiversity Assessment and Protected Species Surveys
- Conservation Plan: Conservation of Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Boundary Walls; Utilities and Services Survey; Erosion and Rockfall Assessments; Archaeological Investigations
- Biodiversity Action Plan: Habitat Assessment; Species Survey; Threats; Opportunities; Management; Monitoring

· Climate Action Strategy, including:

Climate Risk Assessment; Climate Adaptation Plan; Ecosystem Services Appraisal; Carbon Sequestration Assessment;
 Low and Zero Carbon Technologies Feasibility Study; Whole Life Carbon Assessment

· Master Planning and Design, including:

- Master Planning and Design: Park Overview; Design Brief
- Place Plan: Place Principle Alignment; Historic Environment Policy for Scotland; Stakeholder Engagement
- Movement Strategy: Visitor and Traffic Surveys; Access Audits; Road Safety Reviews and Audits; Carparks, Roads and Paths Options Appraisal; Visitor Flow and Desire Line Mapping; Movement Strategy and Implementation Plan
- Interpretation and Orientation Plan: Cultural, Historic and Natural Significance; Wayfinding; Interpretation; Communications and Branding; Digital Strategy; Equality Impact Assessments; GDPR Privacy Impact Assessments

Business Plan, including:

- Business Plan: Organisational Resilience; Economic Benefits; Local Economy; Income Generation; Skills and Training; Risk Appraisals; Options Appraisals; Costs and Funding
- Operational and Maintenance Plan: Infrastructure; Lodge Use Appraisal; Toilets; Drainage; Power; Lighting; Erosion and Rockfall Strategy; Operational Structures and Resources; Park Regulations

· Activity Plan, including:

- Activity Plan: Stakeholder Engagement Plan; Learning Plan; Skills and Training; Inclusion and Wellbeing



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