

Parks

Parks and Open Space Investment Programme Falkirk Council

Contact for Enquiries

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Satisfaction in public spaces and parks have steadily decreased across Scotland between 2010/11 and 2015/16. During the same period Falkirk Council have introduced an investment programme that has increased satisfaction in parks from below the national average to above the national average.

Background

In 2010/11-2013/14 satisfaction in parks in Falkirk was below the national average of 85% at 81.4%. Falkirk council recognised that while there was an adequate number of parks available in the area, there was a need to increase the quality of these parks. With the responsibility for managing the parks and open spaces shared between different council services and other organisations including Falkirk Community Trust, Forestry Commission Scotland, NHS Forth Valley, Scottish Canals and Callendar estate Estates there was a need for a single strategic programme that would bring together these services to increase the quality of parks and open spaces.

Key Activities

The investment programme for parks and open spaces since 2010 has been guided by the Council's Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan and focussed on:

- Setting up Falkirk Community Trust to manage high profile parks.
- Creating and establishing the Falkirk Helix;
- Improving the quality of the 7 core parks previously identified in the 2003 culture and leisure strategy;
- Improving the quality of the poorest quality play areas; and
- Installing multiuse game areas at several locations around the council area.

Considerable investment was made by the council:

- Overall 13% increase in spending.
- Spending increased from £2,805,000 in 2010/2011 to £8,640,000 in 2014/15.

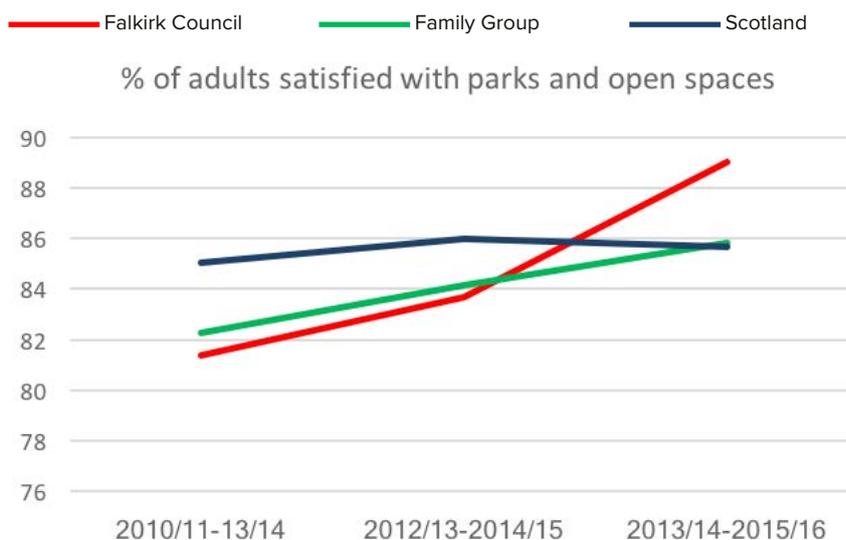
- Excluding Helix spending increase from £0.5M in 2010/11 to £4.8M in 2014/15.

To maintain momentum Falkirk Council have reorganised their service model and reviewed their Open Space Strategy.

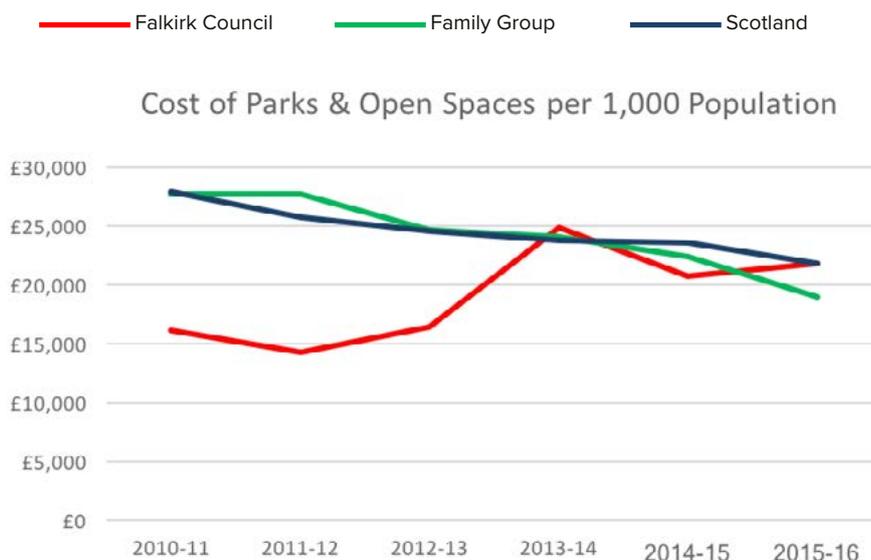
- Open space related functions became increasingly more concentrated in development services, although there are still services that sit elsewhere.
- The Open Space Strategy was reviewed by a policy development panel which involved members and officers working together to define common strategic goals:
 - Modernising our Parks and Open Spaces
 - Addressing Inequality and Fostering Community through Open Space Investment
 - Working and Investing More Efficiently
 - Generating Money for Investment in Parks and Open Spaces

Benefits and Impact

Satisfaction in public spaces and parks in Scotland has decreased between 2010/11 and 2015/16 while satisfaction has increased in Falkirk. The population in Falkirk council is more satisfied with parks and open spaces than the average in Scotland at 89% compared to 85.7% nationally. The quantitative aspects of open spaces and parks in Falkirk has remained broadly the same since 2010, however the quality has significantly improved.



Funding remains comparable to the national average and at a low level in relation to satisfaction rates and compared and similar sized councils. Although the overall spending has increased, other costs have been reduced. Front line operation staff have reduced by 30% and management staff have reduced by over 50% since 2013.



Learning

Satisfaction with public spaces and parks has increased in Falkirk to above the national average in line with a significant increase in investment in the area. Despite this increase in spending, the cost of parks and open spaces is in line with the national average. This demonstrates the value in taking a strategic approach to parks and open space investment and it is expected that the new strategic focus contained in the reviewed Open Space Strategy will reap further positive results.

Additional Information

The Falkirk Open Space Strategy received an award in the Plans category at the 2017 Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning.