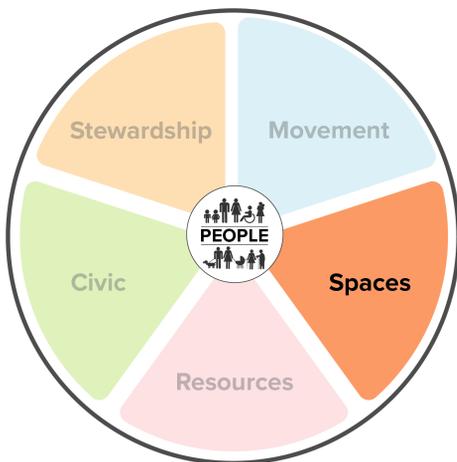


Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme

Natural Spaces: Impact on Clydebank's Community



Natural spaces can have a positive impact on people when everyone:

- Has access to good-quality natural spaces that support biodiversity and are well-connected, well-designed, safe and maintained, providing multiple functions and amenities to meet the varying needs of different population groups.
- Can be protected from environmental hazards including air/water/soil pollution or the risk of flooding.
- Can access community food growing opportunities and prime quality agricultural land is protected.

This is why it is one of Scotland's Place & Wellbeing Outcomes.

The evidence tells us¹:



Natural spaces can impact on health through increased physical activity, improved social connectedness and reduced stress.



Natural spaces can help maintain a healthy immune system.



Natural spaces can provide mental health benefits.



There is growing evidence on the links between blue space and health similar to the links with greenspace.



The type, size, quantity, quality, accessibility and proximity of natural spaces influences whether spaces are used.



The quality of local greenspaces varies between areas, with more deprived areas having poorer quality local greenspaces.



People from deprived areas, people with long term health conditions or disabilities and ethnic minorities are less likely to visit natural spaces.



Increasing natural spaces can provide environmental benefits, including improvements to noise quality, encouraging biodiversity and wildlife.

1. Source: [Evidence Behind Place Standard Tool & Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#)

Indicators for Natural Spaces in West Dunbartonshire & Clydebank²

Natural spaces include greenspaces, such as gardens, parks and woodlands, fields, greenspace alongside paths and roads, and tree-lined streets. It can also include blue spaces such as streams, canals, rivers, and the coastline.

Percentage of adults living within 5-minute walk of their local green or blue space (2019)

54% West Dunbartonshire

66% Scotland

West Dunbartonshire consistently lower than Scotland since 2013

Percentage of Adults 'Everyday / Several times a week' frequency of use of their nearest green or blue space (2019)

26% West Dunbartonshire

36% Scotland

Percentage of Adults 'Satisfied or Fairly Satisfied' with nearest green or blue space (2019)

64% West Dunbartonshire

73% Scotland

In West Dunbartonshire, the main pollutants of concern are NO₂, PM₁₀, PM_{2.5} and the source of pollutant is mainly due to the volume of traffic and congestion. Local air quality within the West Dunbartonshire Council area remains generally satisfactory. (2021)

'Water quality' of bodies of surface water in Clydebank (2022)

- Clyde Estuary categorised as Poor. This is a decrease from Moderate since 2019.
- Duntocher Burn categorised as Moderate. This remains the same since 2019.
- Forth & Clyde Canal categorised as High. This is an improvement from Moderate since 2019.

As Clydebank classified as 'Urban' in Soil Map Data, prime quality agricultural land is not relevant.

2. Data Sources: [SHS Data Explorer](https://www.scottishairquality.scot/data/mapping/data); <https://www.scottishairquality.scot/data/mapping/data>; <https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/capability-maps/national-scale-land-capability-for-agriculture/>; <https://www.sepa.org.uk/data-visualisation/water-classification-hub/>

What we heard from a range of communities, organisations and practitioners in Clydebank in 2023

Wealth of diverse natural spaces

A recognition of the wealth of diverse natural spaces across Clydebank emerged in local discussions, especially relating to parks and paths alongside both green and blue spaces.

Accompanying this was a common understanding that spending time outdoors in natural spaces is generally good for physical and mental wellbeing.

It was suggested that awareness of this grew during the pandemic and since then a notable increase in people participating in outdoor activities had been observed, particularly with walking groups.

Reference was made to recent improvements including the development of parks, gardens and food growing spaces which has further encouraged local people to access these natural spaces. Fairley Secret Garden and Growing Beardmore were some of the examples.

However, it was also recognised that the benefits of these developments haven't been experienced equally across all parts of Clydebank.

“ During covid and in ‘bubbles’ I would meet my sister for regular walks which got us out and into the park for a catch up. This experience has brought us closer together and find new walks we didn't know about.”
(Local Group member)

“ We could be doing so much with the canal if it was clean and maintained. You couldn't even get a canal boat through the town centre cause of all the shopping trollies dumped there. ”
(Local shop owner)

Some disappointment was also expressed in relation to recent developments and proposals that haven't met the aspirations of the community.

Reference was made to the accessibility and attractiveness of the canal and riverside noting that there has been no provision of water-based events and activities or amenities to support this.

Barriers to accessing natural spaces

Whilst it was acknowledged that there appears to be an increase in people accessing natural spaces, reference was also made to a range of issues considered as potential barriers to access for some local people, including:

- People in some parts of Clydebank do not live within walking distance of good quality natural spaces and the cost of public transport may prevent people on low incomes accessing spaces.
- A lack of awareness about activities available or provided within natural spaces.
- A lack of signage for routes in suitable local natural spaces.
- A lack of segregated cycle lanes on routes to natural spaces discourages active travel by bike.
- Accessibility issues within natural spaces and pathways for people with limited mobility.
- Lack of well-maintained routes to natural spaces and pathways.
- Fear around anti-social behaviour in parks and quieter natural spaces.
- Concerns relating to water safety.

“ Jaw Reservoir is a beautiful natural space that leads to great hiking trails, but it's a right muddy trek to reach. It's popular with young ones in the warmer weather and that can be off-putting, especially if they've had a drink and getting carried away. ”
(Local Group member)

Natural space for mental wellbeing

Many service providers noted concerns relating to the growth in mental health issues observed in local communities, that's associated with increasing levels of poverty. Encouraging and facilitating access to natural spaces was recognised as a useful way to address this.

Reference was made to a range of examples where accessing natural space is a vital part of activities aimed at generally maintaining mental health and wellbeing, supporting people experiencing mental health issues and those in recovery. This ranged from volunteering in outdoor maintenance activities to walking groups for people in recovery to outdoor photography clubs.

The multiple benefits of these types of activity were generally recognised as providing opportunities to connect with other people, be physically active, learn new skills, give to others and be present in the moment.

“ Walking in nature helps us create more opportunities to share knowledge of what we spot and if we're not too sure we can look through our connecting with nature resources. (Group facilitator) ”

Community involvement and collaboration

A wide range of community groups and organisations outlined their involvement or interest in making use of or developing good quality natural spaces. The most frequently referred to activities in Clydebank and wider West Dunbartonshire included:

- Community food growing
- Community gardens
- Outdoor and social activities
- Litter picking
- Volunteering
- Social interaction
- Learning
- Community action

In most instances, a combination of activities were taking places with the aim of addressing several key issues, often tackling loneliness, encouraging physical activity and improving the local neighbourhood.

Other than litter picking, very little maintenance work involving communities is taking place.

Some groups noted an interest in developing or maintaining natural spaces, but mentioned the following concerns that discouraged them:

- Lack of confidence and / or capacity to take on responsibility for spaces on a long-term basis.
- Lack of available support to develop their capacity and ensure sustainability.
- This could contribute to a reduction in council services and replacement of paid workers.

In contrast, successful activity around community food growing was referenced by numerous groups. Collaborative working was recognised as one the key factors contributing to success in this area with the development of Growing West Dunbartonshire being a strong element of this.

Concern was expressed that without the commitment to this partnership between local community groups and statutory partners that the hard work undertaken to establish and develop community growing, especially food growing will be lost and opportunities for local people to access these activities will decline.

“ We desperately need a local partner or new organisation to champion Growing West Dunbartonshire and lead the way. With The Leamy Foundation no longer operating we're missing a driving force for community growing. (Community garden volunteer) ”

Visit the [website](#) for more information on [Clydebank Project Town activity](#). Follow us on X (Twitter) [@place4wellbeing](#) to keep up to date with our latest news and place-based resources.