

GREEN CHAMPIONS



Health - Naturally

November can be a very grey month and the things we do in summer to stay healthy might take a bit more conscious effort this month.

- try to get as much natural sunlight as possible – even a brief lunchtime walk can be beneficial
- make your work and home environments as light and airy as possible
- sit near windows when you're indoors
- Continue to exercise, particularly outdoors and in daylight, wrap up on colder days.
- try to keep eating vegetables, replace summer salads with vegetable soup.
- if possible, take early steps to reduce stressful situations. Make time to talk.



Noticing Nature

"In the quiet of November, let your heart gather the strength for a new journey."

"November is a time to reflect on your growth and set intentions for the future."

Learn more - about "Green" Jobs

The twin environmental crises we are facing of biodiversity loss and climate change mean that the work of those involved in the environmental sector is ever more important. Yet the sector is facing a skills shortage. To ensure that national laws and targets are met around reducing the impact of climate change and to reverse biodiversity loss, ecology and the environmental sector are going to need lots of new people working in professions that can make an impact. These are rewarding and varied careers where you can use a variety of skills across different roles which all have a benefit on nature.

<https://greencareersweek.com/green-jobs-for-nature/>



City of Nature Programme update

Green Careers Week 2024

The 4th to 9th November 2024 is “Green Careers Week”. If you search for what green careers are it may say something like this: *Green jobs are roles that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment. They can range across many industries and are typically involved in efforts to reduce pollution, conserve resources, and promote sustainability. Green jobs aim to mitigate the negative impacts of human activities on the environment and support the transition to a low-carbon economy.*

They can include jobs in:

- Environmental Conservation
- Renewable Energy
- Sustainable Agriculture and Land Management
- Energy Efficiency and Green Building
- Waste Management and Recycling
- Transportation and Electric Vehicles
- Environmental Policy and Advocacy

But what jobs does it really take to deliver the City of Nature Plan?

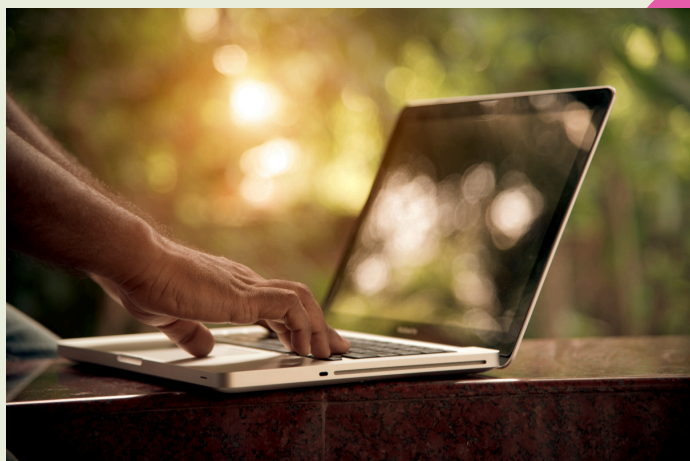
In this edition of the newsletter we are going to take a different look at delivering a city of nature by looking at the range of jobs and skills required for the actions listed in the plan. We won't be able to look at all the roles but just get a taste of how many different people are needed, all working together, to achieve what is required under the five themes of Fair, Healthy, Green, Involved and Valued.

Although the country does need Wind Turbine Technicians installing and maintaining wind turbines and green energy jobs are an essential part of the shift toward a more sustainable, eco-friendly economy and are increasingly in demand as environmental concerns grow globally. Let's start by taking a look at the work it takes to ensure our parks meet the Future Park Standard.



Please contact us at Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk if you would like to find out more about the City of Nature Programme, Green Champions, Young Green Champions, the City of Nature Alliance or the Ranger Service Wild Heart - Healthy Parks Programme.

Come and Connect with City of Nature Team



Please come and join us online on Friday 22nd November 2024 1pm - 2pm for a catch up on what has been happening in November.

If you receive this Newsletter by email you will already have been sent the link to join, please don't forget to put a note in your diary :)

If not you can get the link by emailing us on Cityofnature@birmingham.gov.uk and we will email you the link.



An Involved City

The Involved City actions in the City of Nature Plan for the next 23 years are:

- Support to children and young people to learn, play and explore the wonders of nature as part of their education, acting as Young Green Champions (I3).
- Opportunities in green spaces to explore and celebrate art and culture and work with libraries to organise book clubs in parks (I4).
- New and more flexible ways for the citizens to participate and to get involved in volunteering in green spaces; and becoming Green Champions (I5).
- A City of Nature Alliance, made up of charities and community organisations, to provide a new civic voice and engagement mechanism (I6).

Together with the hundreds of volunteers who are involved in the design, care and use of green spaces and help to involve others, there are also hundreds of people who are working to ensure that everyone can have the opportunity to be involved and connected to the natural world on their doorstep. If we look at the actions above we can easily see that there will need to be educators, artists, librarians, volunteer coordinators and community facilitators, but these are the more visible roles that we most often come in contact with. Behind the people we meet there will also be the roles that support them, the entrepreneurs, founders and CEOs running organisations, finance, human resources, and admin roles, communication and information support. To take this idea further there are also all the roles that are producing the materials and tools that everyone uses whether that is a computer or litter pickers and the people who deal with those products when they need to be disposed of through recycling or repair etc. A bit like nature all these processes are going on all the time and most of the time we don't think about all it takes to make sure all this happens. It's pretty amazing really.



Helping to weave the social fabric

The social fabric refers to the network of relationships, values, norms, and institutions that hold a community or society together. It is often described metaphorically as a "fabric" because it is woven from various interconnected threads—like family structures, friendships, social organizations, cultural practices, and shared beliefs—that create cohesion and give a society its character and resilience.

A strong social fabric helps build social cohesion, encourages collaboration, and supports emotional and material well-being. It fosters community resilience by providing informal safety nets, promoting empathy, and enabling people to work together toward common goals.

Examples of Social Fabric in Action

- Community Support Networks.
- Shared Cultural Events.
- Volunteering and Civic Engagement: Collective efforts like clean-ups, community gardening, or fundraising for local causes, all of which foster pride and belonging.

In essence, the social fabric is what gives a society or community its "woven strength," helping people feel connected and supported, creating a foundation for mutual trust, and enabling collective progress.

Environmental Educator - An Involved Park

Let's start with looking at the environmental educator role. This is a very broad term and within this there would be many different types of educators. Basically they are professionals who teach people about the natural environment, sustainability practices, and the importance of ecological conservation.

They play a crucial role in raising awareness about environmental issues and fostering a deeper understanding of how individuals and communities impact the planet. Environmental educators work in various settings, including schools, nature centres, parks, museums, and non-profit organizations. They may engage people of all ages, from young children to adults, through interactive workshops, field trips, hands-on activities, and lectures. As well as educational establishments in Birmingham the Park Ranger Service and many of the City of Nature Alliance organisations have environmental educators who work with all ages from early years to adult learners.

Key Responsibilities of an Environmental Educator

1. Curriculum Development - Creating and tailoring lesson plans or programs on topics like ecology, climate change, biodiversity, and conservation.
2. Educational Outreach - Organizing community events, workshops, and public seminars to engage local populations in sustainability efforts.
3. Hands-On Learning Activities - Leading nature walks, animal encounters, and outdoor activities that foster a direct connection with the environment.
4. Advocacy and Awareness - Providing information on current environmental issues, such as pollution, deforestation, and climate change, and encouraging responsible behaviours like recycling, reducing waste, and conserving energy.
5. Collaboration and Networking - Partnering with schools, government agencies, and environmental organizations to expand their reach and impact.
6. Evaluation and Feedback - Assessing the effectiveness of educational programs and adapting them based on feedback to improve engagement and learning outcomes.

Skills and Qualities of an Environmental Educator

- Strong Communication - The ability to clearly explain complex environmental topics to people of all ages.
- Passion for Nature - A genuine interest in the environment and enthusiasm for sharing knowledge about it.
- Adaptability - Flexibility to work indoors and outdoors in a variety of conditions, often adapting teaching styles to suit different groups.
- Knowledge of Environmental Science - A strong foundation in ecology, biology, and environmental science.
- Creativity and Problem-Solving - Finding engaging ways to teach and encourage sustainable practices.

Environmental educators are instrumental in building a more environmentally aware society. They help individuals understand their ecological footprint, motivate community action, and foster a lifelong appreciation for the natural world.



A Fair City

The Fair City actions in the City of Nature Plan for the next 23 years are:

- Good quality green spaces close to where people live, through the adoption of the Birmingham Future Parks Standard process (F1).
- Identify up to 400 more public green spaces (F2).
- Green spaces that are managed to ensure they are appealing to our diverse communities (F3).
- Green spaces that are accessible for those with additional needs and those who may need support (F4).
- A training and employment showcase of opportunities in the 'green sector' (F5).
- A green space workforce more reflective of Birmingham's diverse communities (F6).
- A children and young people strategy with City of Nature as part of that (F7).

The Fair City actions require strategy, planning and management roles they are delivered at a citywide level. The Future Parks Standard (FPS) although being trialled in the red wards applies to all parks in the city. The FPS is the mechanism that ensures the City of Nature plan is being delivered at a local level and that every park is being managed to the current specification. The roles required for these actions include politicians, directors, planners managers, designers and landscape architects. Front line people who's roles are to help ensure everyone can be involved at all levels will connect communities with these strategic roles.



Delivering Environmental Justice

Environmental justice is at the heart of what a fair city would look like. It is defined as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Birmingham City Council looked at how other cities around the world have responded to this issue of unequal access to green space; and became the first UK local authority to develop a measurement tool for Environmental Justice; based on the existing Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

The Environmental Justice score measures: Access to a green space (2 hectares or larger) within 1,000m. Flood Risk. Urban Heat Island effect. Health inequalities (through Excess Years of Life Lost). Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

BCCs Geospatial Team developed a new map that shows where in the city all these compound issues are being felt most acutely. This then provides a very useful new baseline from which to develop an evidence-based approach to levelling-up.

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/environmental-justice/>

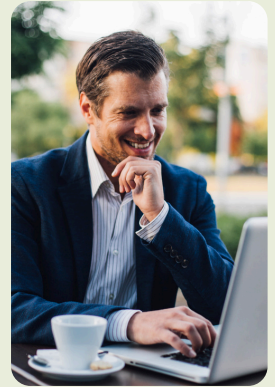
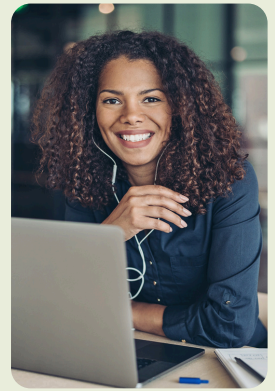
Park Manager - A Fair Park

An urban park manager is responsible for overseeing the planning, maintenance, and day-to-day operations of city parks and recreational areas. Their goal is to create and sustain green spaces that are safe, welcoming, and ecologically balanced, providing an essential resource for recreation, community gatherings, and environmental education within urban settings. Urban park managers play a critical role in enhancing quality of life by maintaining spaces where city residents can connect with nature and engage in outdoor activities.

Key Responsibilities of an Urban Park Manager

1. **Park Maintenance and Operations** - Ensuring that park facilities, trails, playgrounds, sports fields, and landscaping are well-maintained and safe for public use. This includes coordinating regular inspections, repairs, and improvements.
2. **Environmental Stewardship** - Managing the natural elements of the park, including trees, plants, water features, and wildlife habitats. This may involve invasive species control, soil conservation, and sustainability practices like waste reduction and water conservation.
3. **Budgeting and Resource Allocation** - Planning and managing budgets for park operations, including staff salaries, maintenance supplies, and project costs. Urban park managers often work with limited resources and need to maximize their budgets efficiently.
4. **Staff Supervision and Coordination** - Leading a team of groundskeepers, gardeners, park rangers, and administrative staff to ensure smooth day-to-day operations. This includes hiring, training, scheduling, and managing performance.
5. **Community Engagement and Event Coordination** - Organizing and supporting community events, educational programs, and recreational activities. The manager works to make the park a central hub for community engagement, often collaborating with local organizations, schools, and volunteers.
6. **Policy and Compliance** - Ensuring that park operations comply with city ordinances, environmental regulations, and safety standards. This may involve enforcing park rules, overseeing permits for events, and working with law enforcement when necessary.
7. **Long-Term Planning and Development** - Overseeing or participating in the planning of new projects to improve or expand park facilities, such as playgrounds, trails, or recreational centres. Managers often work with urban planners, architects, and landscape designers on park improvements.

Urban park managers enhance community well-being by creating and maintaining green spaces that offer residents a respite from urban life. Through their work, they help support physical and mental health, promote environmental conservation within city, and strengthen social bonds by providing spaces where people of all ages and backgrounds can gather and connect.



A Valued City

The Valued City actions in the City of Nature Plan for the next 23 years are:

- Provide information demonstrating the wider environmental, social, and economic value of green space through a Natural Capital Account (V1).
- Deliver Biodiversity Net Gain and improved access to good quality green spaces using the planning and development process (V2).
- Develop a diversity of income and funding streams for green spaces from supporting communities to crowdfund and secure grants, through to large scale business contributions (V3).
- Increased Council income through commercial activity (V4).
- Added social value to our green spaces through our procurement processes (V5).
- Education and Skills commissioning done through a green lens (V6).

When we think about the city's green infrastructure being able to support a valued city the actions here show us we need another skill set around economics, data, analysis, report writing and research.

Some of the roles will need to have specialist knowledge in relatively new systems like natural capital accounts and biodiversity net gain which would require people to retrain. Like a lot of professions jobs in the environmental sector are changing at a fast pace and people in these roles will be expected to keep up with these changes.



The issue of future funding

One of the greatest challenges facing the long term maintenance and recovery of the natural environment and parks and green spaces, is the issue of funding.

The 2016-17 Parliamentary Inquiry 'The Future of Public Parks' found that the value of parks and green spaces was well documented but not well understood; so not fully protected in policy. The inquiry found that as a non-statutory service they have often been seen as non-essential services and have suffered disproportionately with budgets reductions imposed following the 2008 global financial crisis and subsequent austerity measures.

Nationally, there are challenges in terms of finding long term management and sustainable funding solutions that prompted the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government and the National Trust to fund the programme to explore these issues and develop learning across the sector, through the Future Parks Accelerator programme.

In addition, BCC is developing a Sustainable Finance Framework with external green investors allowing for the long-term investment into the city's blue and green infrastructure.

Bid Writer - A Valued Park

A bid writer for nature projects is a specialized professional responsible for creating compelling proposals and applications to secure funding, grants, or contracts for environmental and conservation initiatives. They play a crucial role in enabling organizations—such as non-profits, governmental agencies, and private companies—to obtain the necessary financial support to implement projects aimed at preserving natural resources, promoting sustainability, and enhancing ecological well-being.

Key Responsibilities of a Bid Writer for Nature Projects

1. Research and Identification of Funding Opportunities

- **Prospecting:** Identifying potential funding sources, including government grants, private foundations, corporate sponsorships, and international agencies that align with the organization's mission and project goals.
- **Eligibility Assessment:** Evaluating the suitability of funding opportunities based on criteria, deadlines, and the specific requirements of each grant or contract.

2. Proposal Development

- **Content Creation:** Writing clear, persuasive, and well-structured proposals that outline the project's objectives, methodologies, expected outcomes, and alignment with the funder's priorities.
- **Budget Preparation:** Developing detailed and accurate budgets that reflect the financial needs of the project, ensuring compliance with funder guidelines.
- **Supporting Documentation:** Compiling necessary attachments, such as letters of support, organizational information, resumes of key personnel, and proof of past successes.

3. Collaboration and Coordination

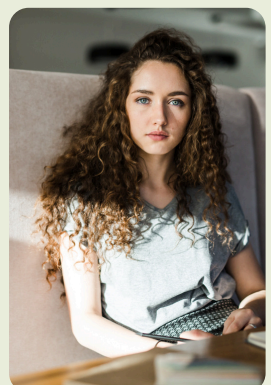
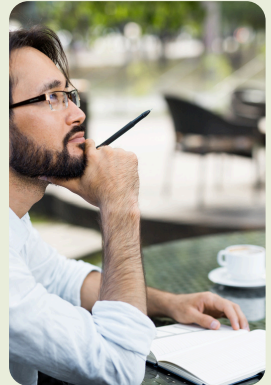
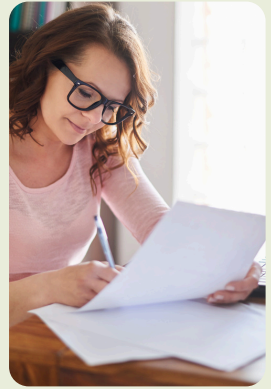
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Working closely with project managers, scientists, educators, and other stakeholders to gather essential information and ensure that proposals accurately represent the project's scope and impact.
- **Review and Feedback:** Coordinating internal reviews of proposals to incorporate feedback and make necessary revisions before submission.

4. Compliance and Quality Assurance

- **Adherence to Guidelines:** Ensuring that all proposals meet the specific requirements and formatting guidelines set by funders.
- **Timely Submissions:** Managing deadlines effectively to ensure that all applications are submitted on time, avoiding late submissions that could disqualify the proposal.

5. Monitoring and Reporting

- **Follow-Up:** Tracking the status of submitted proposals and responding to any additional requests for information from funders.
- **Reporting:** Assisting in the preparation of reports on funded projects, detailing progress, outcomes, and financial expenditures to maintain transparency and accountability.



A Green City

The Green City actions in the City of Nature Plan for the next 23 years are:

- A complete change in how we build all our public realm, providing improved connectivity and supporting the restoration and viability of urban areas (G1).
- Green corridors that are easier to find and use, helping citizens to use them for active travel and so improve air quality (G2).
- An enhanced network of green space and green infrastructure that are safe, clean, sustainably managed and meet the Birmingham Future Parks Standard (G3).
- The restoration of green spaces, nature, and the environment (G4).
- Greener development bringing natural landscapes or features into every place and neighbourhood (G5).
- Opportunities to help citizens make better use of green space outside of their home for food growing or communal gardens (G6).
- The Nature Recovery Network, stretching right across the city and linking with all our West Midlands neighbours, forming part of the West Midlands National Park (G7).
- An increase to the tree canopy coverage across the city to 25%, through the Birmingham Urban Forest Master Plan (G8).
- A change to the city's governance structures that oversee the city's natural environment across the full 25 year term (G9).



The big one - Nature Recovery

It is probably no surprise that the City of Nature theme with the most actions is the Green City theme. From desk based jobs to gardening work, monitoring butterfly numbers to emptying bins, planting trees to identifying pests and diseases it is probably where the greatest diversity of roles and skills is needed. These jobs are often where we work alongside nature making sure it can recover.

Land management as it is sometimes called is even wider outside the urban environment producing a list of roles too long to replicate here. But the Lantra website provides a good overview:

<https://www.lantra.co.uk/careers/Land-Professions-Industry-Explorer>

No jobs are more or less important, some may appeal to you more than others but they all need someone to do them. On the ground the day to day maintenance of parks and green spaces is carried out by the grounds maintenance teams. Out in all weathers their work is often physically demanding but vital.



Grounds Maintenance Operative - A Green Park

A grounds maintenance operative is responsible for delivering the upkeep, care, and improvement of outdoor spaces, including parks, gardens, sports fields, and other landscaped areas. They ensure that these areas are safe, attractive, and well-maintained for public use. Grounds maintenance operatives perform a wide range of tasks related to landscaping, gardening, and routine upkeep, often working in various weather conditions to keep grounds clean and visually appealing.



Key Responsibilities of a Grounds Maintenance Operative

1. Lawn Care and Grass Maintenance
 - Mowing and Edging.
 - Weeding and Fertilizing.
2. Plant and Tree Care
 - Pruning and Trimming.
 - Planting and Mulching.
 - Watering and Irrigation.
3. Grounds Cleaning and Litter Control
 - Debris Removal.
 - Litter Picking.
4. Soil and Turf Management
 - Aerating and Seeding.
 - Soil Amendment.
5. Pest and Disease Control
 - Managing Pests.
 - Monitoring Plant Health.
6. Maintenance of Grounds Equipment
 - Equipment Operation and Maintenance.
7. Safety and Compliance
 - Adhering to Health and Safety Standards.

Skills and Qualities of a Grounds Maintenance Operative

- Physical Fitness
- Knowledge of Horticulture and or Arboriculture and Conservation
- Equipment Proficiency
- Attention to Detail
- Time Management
- Teamwork and Communication

Grounds maintenance operatives play an essential role in creating pleasant, safe, and inviting outdoor spaces. Their work contributes to the beauty of public and private landscapes, enhances biodiversity, and supports public well-being by providing well-kept spaces where people can relax, play, or gather.

They are instrumental in maintaining the aesthetic and functional aspects of outdoor areas, which helps improve quality of life and foster a sense of community pride.

A Healthy City

The Healthy City actions in the City of Nature Plan for the next 23 years are:

- Nature connectedness - whereby citizens understand the benefits of using green space and having contact with nature for physical and mental health (H1).
- Safe and attractive routes for walking and cycling (H2).
- An increased number of parks offering health and wellbeing services and green social prescribing (H3).
- To work with fitness providers to offer health and wellbeing activities in parks and other green spaces (H4).
- Support to citizens living in council housing to make communal gardens where they live (H5).
- To establish at least one Community Growing Space in every ward (I7).

For the Healthy City theme we obviously need roles that support physical and mental health through the delivery of nature based health interventions. These are activities that use a connection to the natural world as a therapy. Although there are health benefits to walking in a park we know that if you use all your sense to deliberately notice and think about the trees, plants and animals around you the health benefits of the activity increases.

Walking and cycling routes need to be maintained by Highways maintenance teams and cycling trainers can help people who have never ridden a bike before to learn to cycle and how to maintain and mend their bikes.

Social Prescribing Link Workers can help people find wellbeing activities in their green spaces through green social prescriptions. Fitness Providers can deliver group activities like Tai Chi and yoga or Couch to 5K and cross training. Gardeners can help community growers get started growing vegetables or creating a sensory garden.



Nature Connectedness

The value of parks, green spaces and nature is not just defined by numbers. The health benefits of green spaces have been intuitively known by communities for a long period of time. In recent years there has been an explosion of evidence which comprehensively supports the idea that green spaces are integral for both our physical and mental health. Green space has been demonstrated to improve physical health in the following ways:

- Studies have shown that for children and young people access to green space helps regulate emotional and behavioural activity, specifically inattention and hyperactivity; encourages prosocial behaviour; and is the most significant factor to influence the reduction in childhood obesity.
- For adults, access to green space brings significant benefits in terms of reducing the likelihood of cardiovascular diseases, type two diabetes, hip fractures, bowel, and breast cancers. Older adults also benefit from reduction in levels of obesity, numbers of fractures and reduced death from cardiovascular diseases.
- Access to green space can also bring significant benefits in terms of mental health with evidence suggesting higher levels of life satisfaction; lower levels of self-reported stress; and lower levels of anxiety and depression.

Health Intervention Provider - A Healthy Park

A nature-based health intervention provider is a professional who uses natural environments and outdoor activities as therapeutic tools to improve physical, mental, and emotional well-being. This role is rooted in the growing recognition of nature's positive impact on health, with interventions designed to reduce stress, boost mood, enhance physical fitness, and foster a stronger connection with the natural world. Nature-based health interventions are increasingly used in therapeutic settings, community programs, and healthcare to address a range of conditions, from mental health challenges to chronic illnesses.

Key Responsibilities of a Nature-Based Health Intervention Provider

1. Program Development and Planning

- Customized Program Design: Creating nature-based programs that suit the needs and goals of each participant or group, taking into account factors like age, fitness level, and health condition.
- Activity Selection: Choosing appropriate activities such as nature walks, forest bathing, gardening, conservation work, or animal-assisted therapy based on therapeutic goals and participant preferences.

2. Guiding Therapeutic Experiences

- Outdoor Therapy Sessions: Leading individuals or groups through nature-centered exercises, which might include mindful walking, sensory immersion, breathing exercises, or reflective journaling in a natural setting.
- Physical and Recreational Activities: Incorporating physical activities like hiking, gardening, or gentle exercises that improve fitness while reducing stress and promoting relaxation.
- Ecotherapy Techniques: Implementing therapeutic approaches like forest therapy (shinrin-yoku), horticultural therapy, or wilderness therapy to facilitate healing and self-discovery.

3. Assessment and Goal Setting

4. Promoting Connection to Nature

5. Safety and Risk Management Collaboration and Community Engagement

- Partnering with Healthcare Providers: Working with mental health professionals, occupational therapists, or community organizations to integrate nature-based interventions into broader wellness programs.
- Community Outreach: Organizing events or workshops that promote the benefits of nature-based therapy and encourage wider participation in outdoor activities for health.

These professionals foster a stronger connection between individuals and nature, offering a pathway to improved mental, emotional, and physical health through engaging with the outdoors.

Their work helps alleviate stress, reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, enhance resilience, and even improve immune function. By offering accessible, nature-focused interventions, they empower individuals to cultivate mindfulness, appreciate the natural world, and incorporate outdoor activities into their overall wellness routines.



Birmingham's Parks and Open Spaces

Park in Focus: Newhall Valley Country Park

Wylde Green Road , Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, B76 1NL

New Hall Valley Country Park is a breath taking, award-winning green open space and wildlife haven. It is just a mile from the centre of the Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield and extends towards Pype Hayes Park.

The former farmland officially opened as a country park in 2005 and covers an area of around 200 acres. The park is named after New Hall - a 13th century manor house located on its boundary.

As well as being a perfect spot to enjoy walking, running or relaxing, the park is also an important nature reserve. It consists of historic wetland, grazing meadow and Plants Brook stream, which is a haven for insects and wildlife.

Facilities at the park

- Two children's playgrounds (near to Elm Road and Meadow Cross entrances)
- Picnic area
- Trim Trail exercise equipment - an exciting outdoor trail of activities for children and adults to walk, climb, and more, to get along the trail to the other side

Toilets

There are no toilets on site.

Points of interest

- Privately owned New Hall Hotel and Spa. This 13th century Grade I listed property is England's oldest inhabited moated manor house.
- Privately owned 18th century New Hall Mill. This Grade II listed building is one of only two surviving water mills in Birmingham.
- The oldest site discovered at the park is a burnt mound which dates back to between 1700 BCE and 1000 BCE. It was possibly used for cooking or sauna type bathing.

Other features

- Numerous paths (many surfaced)
- Open grassland
- Woodland
- Cycle routes linked in to the National Cycle Network
- 2km jogging route
- Wetland boardwalk
- The wide range of animals, birds and insects that can be seen in or around the Plants Brook stream include kingfishers, heron, dragonflies, water voles and brook trout
- Near [Sutton Park](#) - a 2,400-acre nature reserve and site of special scientific interest

Park friends group

[Friends of New Hall Valley Country Park](#)

For further information, or to get involved, visit the [group's Facebook page](#).

Parks friends group activities

The working corn mill is operated through the friend group who open it to the public on a limited basis.

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory_record/9136/new_hall_valley_country_park



November wildlife watching

After bonfire night you may feel November is a pretty quiet month, but there is still plenty going on with nature throwing in a few of it's own "fireworks".

Ivy often has some sprays of flowers that bloom deep into autumn, lit by rays of golden sunshine they look like tiny bursts of light. Later the berries high in fat, are an avian superfood. Weight for weight, the juicy, bursts of navy blue or black fruits are comparable to a bar of a well-known brand of chocolate, so the RSPB says. No wonder birds love them. The berries appear between October and December, and don't rot as quickly as most fruit, so are a useful food late in the year, when supplies of other berries have been exhausted. Blackbirds can be seen sitting amongst the glossy green leaves snacking through out the day.



Some of Britain's strangest looking fungi erupt from the ground in this month. Collared earthstars bide their time under the leaf litter in the form of vast numbers of fungal threads called hyphae then burst forth as onion-shaped fruiting bodies that soon split, peeling back to expose a central dome. The slightest touch – rain, for example – releases the dust-like spores inside.



For most of the year, this small native tree is not much to look at. It is easily overlooked in hedges and scrubby woodland, unnoticed among the more obvious and straightforwardly identified trees such as hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple and ash.

In autumn, however, spindle comes into its own. Its foliage turns a deep red, but the real attraction is its beautiful fruit. Spindle berries are bubble-gum coloured, a shade of pink that seems almost shockingly bright in an autumnal British hedgerow. But it gets even better each berry has four lobes, which when ripe burst open to reveal an orange 'seed'.



Strictly speaking, the real seed is hidden inside: the orange part is a soft covering known as an aril. Botanical technicalities aside, the orange and pink colour clash is spectacular. A few birds, such as blackbirds and robins do eat the berries, but they take care to reject the poisonous seeds.

National Tree Week - Starts 23rd November

National Tree Week, is brought to you by The Tree Council and partners, brings together the conservation sector, volunteers and tree-lovers to mark the start of the annual tree planting season.

There are tree planting events big and small taking place all over the country during NTW - all you need is enthusiasm, warm clothing, and a love for creating new life from the soil.

Why not host your own Tree Party?

The Tree Council has created lots of resources, from activities for little ones; to advice on choosing the 'right tree for the right place'. They are available for download through the National Tree Week webpage.

<https://treecouncil.org.uk/seasonal-campaigns/national-tree-week/#involved>



Park Ranger Role - Linking people and nature

Park rangers play a crucial role in preserving public lands for future generations, helping ensure that natural spaces remain accessible. Through education and stewardship, they help foster public respect and appreciation for the environment, encouraging sustainable use and conservation of natural resources. By protecting these areas and supporting biodiversity, park rangers contribute directly to the health and well-being of ecosystems, local wildlife, and human visitors alike.

Educational Outreach and Interpretation

- **Guided Tours and Programs:** Leading educational programs, nature walks, and talks to help visitors understand and appreciate the park's natural and cultural significance.
- **Environmental Education:** Teaching visitors about local flora and fauna, conservation efforts, and how they can minimize their environmental impact.



Earth Stories - Memories, Hopes and Happenings

Health and Environment Higher Officer role at Natural England

My role in the West Midlands exists to support and create connections between Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprises, health practitioners, Community Wellbeing Roles, or local authorities interested in increasing the offer of Green / Blue Social Prescribing; i.e. connecting people with nature for their health and wellbeing.

Natural England want to increase the offer of nature-based activities within communities to improve health and wellbeing and pro-environment behaviours, especially in areas with poorer health outcomes and lower access to nature.

My role is to form the connections necessary to make this happen.

The main skills I need to fulfil this job (I think) are:

- Stakeholder engagement skills: building partnerships, networking, community outreach
- Project management skills: planning, budgeting, monitoring and stakeholder communication
- Influencing and behaviour change skills: advocating, storytelling, impact reporting, community development skills, inclusivity
- Fundraising: securing funding
- Mental Health Awareness: knowledge of how nature-based activities can support health and wellbeing.

Amber Marquand
Health and Environment Higher Officer role at Natural England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england>



Birmingham's Route to Zero - What is a Behaviour Change Officer

Other green jobs can be about helping to change the way we do things to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide we produce.

A Route to Zero Behaviour Change Officer is a role focused on promoting sustainable behaviours and supporting communities and organizations to reduce their environmental impact to achieve “net zero” carbon emissions. This role involves raising awareness, developing programmes, and engaging the public to encourage eco-friendly actions, such as reducing energy use, minimizing waste, and embracing sustainable transportation. Behavior Change Officers typically work with local governments, non-profits, or organizations to design initiatives that help people and businesses adopt sustainable practices that align with carbon reduction goals.

To find out more about BCC's Route to Zero Plan you can contact the team on:
routetozeroarbon@birmingham.gov.uk



Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust

Works with us for nature's recovery across Birmingham and the Black Country; protecting, restoring and creating wildlife-rich, accessible spaces that benefit people and wildlife. Get involved and find out more about their events in Birmingham and the Black Country.

<https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/>



BOSF - Find you local Friends of Open Spaces Group

BOSF offers opportunities for groups and individuals interested in open spaces to share knowledge and experience. You can register your group to receive regular updates about funding sources, training opportunities, events in open spaces and lots of useful information. If you want to start a group to care for a green space near you they can support you to do that. Get in touch with the team.

<https://bosf.org.uk/>



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Check our website: <https://naturallybirmingham.org/>

