



ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

Introduction

It is a well-established fact that good quality open spaces, trees and woodland have a positive effect on the mental and general health and well-being of people and on how local people feel about the area in which they live. They also help to support biodiversity and wildlife, are good for the environment and contribute to the economic vitality of an area.

I am very pleased to have played an active role in the development of this important strategy at this critical time for our health, climate and environment and thank fellow councillors and everyone else who has helped in its development.

St Austell Town Council took responsibility for parks and open spaces in St Austell parish at the end of 2016 and has made tremendous progress in improving the management and maintenance of the parks. We have a very dedicated workforce but are always pleased to hear from community groups and volunteers who would like to contribute to the upkeep of our parks and open spaces.



Councillor Crystal Pearce
Chairman
Community Committee

Vision

The Town Council aims to work closely with partners and local communities to provide a range of parks and open spaces across St Austell with a balance of natural, formal and recreational areas which will enhance St Austell's status as a garden town, contribute to the health and well-being of the local community and visitors and generate pride in the area.

The Council will seek to improve the standard and range of parks and open space provision and encourage greater biodiversity across St Austell while enhancing and developing recreational spaces which are welcoming, clean, fun, safe, within easy reach and environmentally sympathetic.



Objectives of this strategy

This strategy aims to protect and establish public open space for recreation, play, sport, health, biodiversity, heritage and climate change mitigation and to ensure that public open space is appropriate to need, well located and adaptable to future requirements. The strategy will improve understanding of where we are now, agree where we want to get to (our Vision) and how we will get there. The strategy will help to identify funding needs and opportunities for attracting funding.

The strategy will influence, guide and support the work of St Austell Town Council and other organisations (including community groups and

individual volunteers) in the provision of and management of parks and open spaces throughout the town. This will include the development of new parks and open spaces and new and improved play provision alongside the proper maintenance of existing facilities. This includes the management and protection of trees, the introduction of measures to support the St Austell garden town or greening project (Austell Project - [Homepage - Austell Project](#)), the promotion of a greener more biodiverse St Austell and the provision of facilities that residents and visitors to St Austell will value and feel proud of.

Background

Cornwall is blessed with fine countryside, much of it open to the public, but people of all ages and backgrounds need open spaces close to where they live. Attractive, safe and convenient parks and open spaces contribute positive social, economic and environmental benefits. Open spaces are valued community assets which improve public health, wellbeing and quality of life and bring regeneration benefits to an area.

Open space is defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as land laid out as a public garden or used for the purposes of public recreation or land which is a disused burial ground.

The legislation in relation to parks and open spaces is contained within a number of statutory provisions. These include:

- The Public Health Act 1875 as amended, which describes the establishment and the maintenance of land for use as public walks and pleasure grounds;
- The Open Spaces Act 1906 defines open space and contains provisions for open spaces to be transferred to the management of local authorities;
- The Public Health Amendment Act 1907 allowed for the enclosure and equipping of areas within parks for organised games and charging for the use of this apparatus;
- The Physical Training and Recreation Act 1937 redefined the duties of the Public Health Act by empowering Councils to provide and equip playing fields and provide the first open spaces intended purely for the playing of games;
- The Town and Country Act 1990 defined open space and the methods by which it should be made available as part of a housing development.

The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019, recognises the importance of access to high quality open spaces and sports fields to the health and wellbeing of communities. The NPPF requires that

planning policies be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open spaces, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision.

The Cornwall Local Plan includes policies relevant to the provision, protection, use and design of open spaces. To support the Cornwall Local Plan, Cornwall Council has adopted a Cornwall Green Infrastructure Strategy and an Open Space Strategy for Larger Towns in Cornwall. The latter was adopted in July 2014 and identified that the St Austell area has shortages of formal open space, allotments, facilities for teenagers and football pitches. These documents can be found at:

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/parks-and-open-spaces/open-space-strategy-standards/>

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3623031/Designed-Green-Infrastructure-Strat.pdf>

The parks in St Austell transferred to the Town Council from Cornwall Council in two tranches in November 2016 and February 2017.

The Town Council has established a new grounds maintenance and parks and open spaces service and has undertaken tree surveys and surveys of the play areas and generally tried to address a number of years of under investment in the parks to raise the standards of each park with some parks identified initially as priorities such as Poltair Park, Truro Road Park and The Meadows.

Regular inspection regimes have been put in place and, in response to safety concerns, the children's play area at The Meadows has been completely replaced.

Responsibility for parks and open spaces and health and safety in relation to the parks lies with the Town Council's Operations Manager who employs consultants to provide expert advice on health and safety and to undertake annual independent inspections of play equipment.

Along with many other public authorities the Town Council has declared a climate emergency and is working to reduce its carbon footprint and increase biodiversity by challenging the way it works and taking advantage of opportunities to plant trees and plants which support pollinators.

We also seek to work with other organisations with similar goals such as Cornwall Council and the St Austell Bay Economic Forum (SABEF). Projects that we are supporting currently are described briefly below.

Making Space for Nature

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding has been secured to invest in urban green spaces as part of the Making Space for Nature project. St Austell has been selected as one of a number of towns in Cornwall for this project which is being managed by Cornwall Council in partnership with Exeter University. The Town Council has identified sites at Cemetery Park, the Meadows, Trenowah Road and on the A391 bypass which will be improved in terms of its value for pollinators, wildlife and health. Projects commenced in 2020.



St Austell Bay Economic Forum Greening Project

The Town Council has been working closely with St Austell Bay Economic Forum (SABEF) on a Greening Project.

This recognises and seeks to build on the potential for St Austell to be a garden town with improved links to the Eden Project, Heligan, Pinetum Lodge and other renowned gardens. It is acknowledged that there is a tremendous amount of expertise within these organisations upon which we can draw.

St Austell as a town has a very green feel to it with a myriad of interesting mature trees, attractive formal planting around the town centre, well maintained parks and flourishing wildflower and nature areas.

Further details of this exciting project which will be delivered in 2020 onwards can be found at [Homepage - Austell Project](#)

South West in Bloom It's Your Neighbourhood

The Town Council supports a number of residents' associations and community groups to enter their communal areas and planting schemes in the South West in Bloom It's Your Neighbourhood awards scheme. Any groups with communal gardens or open spaces who are interested in joining this scheme should contact the Town Council.



South West in Bloom Pride in Parks

Each year the Town Council enters one or more of its parks in the South West in Bloom Pride in Parks awards. In recent years Poltair Park and the Meadows have been entered. Any community groups who regularly use or who would just like to help with improving one of our parks or this awards scheme should contact the Council's Operations Manager.



Flowers blooming opposite the library July 2020
Photo: Paul Williams

Our Parks and Open Spaces

The Town Council owns the following parks and open spaces:

- Bethel Park
- Chapel Field Park
- Chy Pons
- Jubilee Meadows
- Landrew Road Play Area
- Linear Park
- Polmarth Close Open Space
- Lostwood Community Garden
- Manfield Way Open Space
- Penmere Road Open Space
- Poltair Park
- Prince Charles Park
- Sandy Hill Park
- The Meadows Park
- Thornpark Road Park
- Truro Road Park
- Woodland Close Park
- Woodland Road Park

A “green space audit” has been undertaken for each of these sites and a “site management plan” has been prepared. These can be found at *Appendix 1*.

In addition to the above sites, the Town Council maintains the following on behalf of Cornwall Council:

- Mount Charles roundabout
- Asda roundabout
- Urban village roundabout
- Edgcumbe Triangle
- Cemetery Park
- Holy Trinity Church grounds
- Eastbourne Road Cemetery
- Chipponds Quarry
- Highways flower beds
- Various highways grass verges

Accessibility

By their nature, not all of our parks can be accessible. The Council when improving and investing in its parks will explore how it can make them more accessible by reviewing the play equipment provided, paths, furniture and gates.

To date accessible play equipment has been installed by the Town Council in Poltair Park, Truro Road Park, The Meadows, Sandy Hill Park, Woodland Road Park, Prince Charles Park and Chapel Field.

Accessible picnic tables have also been installed in some of the Council's parks.



Grass Cutting and Maintenance Standards

The Council's grass cutting and maintenance regime has been reviewed looking at each site individually to identify opportunities to plant wildflowers, formal flowers, bulbs, shrubs and trees taking into account the benefits of each option. There has been a significant shift away from regular grass cutting of all open spaces to a more considered and tailored approach with areas being set aside for wildflowers or allowed to go wild to create wildlife corridors and encourage biodiversity and pollinators where appropriate. Detailed proposals for each site and the standards adopted by the Council are available at *Appendix 2*.



Dogs in Parks

St Austell Town Council's parks are largely dog friendly. We ask that dog owners act responsibly, clean up after their dogs and ensure the safety of other park users at all times. Dogs are permitted in all of our parks with the exception of any fenced off children's play areas and the whole of Woodland Road Park where dogs are banned.

Not cleaning up after your dog is an offence in any of our parks. The Town Council's staff are authorised to report any offences to Cornwall Council who can issue fixed penalty notices of £100 for each offence. The Town Council will from time to time review the Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) in place and enforcement arrangements. Failure to pay a fixed payment notice within 14 days could lead to prosecution and a fine of up to £1,000.

Drinking in Parks

Picnics and responsible drinking are permitted in all of our parks, but they are covered by Cornwall Council's Public Spaces Protection Order <https://safercornwall.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/PSPO-Sealed-Order.pdf> which permits Police Officers to confiscate alcoholic drinks and to move on gatherings if they consider it necessary. Please clear up any litter and take it home or place it in one of the many bins provided.

Waste Management

We do our best to keep our parks free of litter and dog mess. Currently we have over 50 litter bins strategically placed around our parks. We undertake litter picks and empty bins on a variable frequency depending on usage. With effect from March 2020 the Town Council has managed this service with its own staff and hopes to see an improvement in service quality and value for money as a result. If members of the public become aware of any fly-tipping or litter problems in one of our parks, please contact the Council's Operations Manager.

Dropping litter in the Council's parks is an offence which can lead to a fixed penalty of £150. The Town Council's staff are authorised to report offences to Cornwall Council's Environmental Enforcement Team who administer fines.

Play Equipment

The Town Council is committed to providing good quality and safe play equipment to encourage children and teenagers to exercise and play. Some of the play equipment inherited from predecessor authorities is now several years old. The replacement cost of the play equipment owned by the Town Council is estimated to be over £700,000 to provide like for like replacement. There will be additional costs of improving the accessibility of the play equipment provided. The Council has started to replace the oldest of the play equipment owned and to create a reserve to help replace equipment as it reaches the end of its useful life. Details of the play equipment owned can be found in *Appendix 3*.



Trees

Trees are a highly valued feature of St Austell; they make an enormous contribution to the character and beauty of the town landscape and create and maintain environments rich in biodiversity.

St Austell Town Council values its trees and recognises both the human and environmental benefits of having a healthy and sustainable tree population. The Town Council has planted almost 400 trees since taking over the parks and is committed to both planting more trees and responsibly managing the trees that exist on the Council's land.

Details of the Town Council's Tree Policy can be found in *Appendix 4*.



Cycle and recreation trails

The Town Council has identified that significant regeneration, environment and health benefits could be created by improving the recreational trails within and outside of St Austell. The Council will seek to improve the cycling facilities within its parks and the paths and trails through the parks to ensure better links throughout the town to encourage more cycling and walking and less use of the motor car. It is hoped that in September 2021 the Tour of Britain will visit Cornwall and race through St Austell. The Town Council will consider the creation of a cycling legacy following this event.



Creation of new Parks and Open Spaces

The Town Council acknowledges Cornwall Council's research findings which identify a need for more formal open space, allotments, facilities for teenagers and football pitches in St Austell. The Council will seek to identify opportunities for addressing these shortages by influencing developers through the planning system. It will also seek to protect, maintain and improve the existing facilities where and when possible.

Appendix 1

Green Space Audit and Site Management Plan

Approved: 22nd March 2021

Appendix 2

Grass Cutting Policy

Appendix 3

Play Equipment

Appendix 4

Tree Policy