

Charter case studies

What does our Charter for Walking Neighbourhoods look like in practice?



Throughout Britain and beyond there are many examples of projects and initiatives that have made neighbourhoods better for walking. These case studies describe briefly some of the improvements that have been achieved and how the work was done, in the hope that it will provide inspiration for others.

Charter ask 1: Make neighbourhoods green

Everyone has access to high quality green space.

Case study 1: Mab Lane Community Woodland, Liverpool

Bring derelict land into use through innovative funding arrangements and community engagement.

The 25-hectare site that is now Mab Lane Community Woodland was previously derelict land and playing fields, plagued with problems of flooding, neglect and vandalism, and many local people avoided it. Now it is a much-loved and well-used green space that has become a popular route to local shops and facilities and a desirable destination in its own right. Previously the area was widely regarded as undesirable and housing associations struggled to let nearby homes, whereas now there are waiting lists.

The area used to be two large fields that were so derelict and unwelcoming that most people kept away from them. However, Liverpool City Council decided to offset the carbon footprint of the city's 2008 Capital of Culture festival by planting trees, and as a result 20,000 trees were planted on the site

to create Mab Lane Community Woodland. In addition to the tree planting, measures were taken to prevent flooding, improve drainage, and enhance the landscape. The woodland, officially opened in June 2010, now has a network of native trees, wildflower meadows, a community orchard, seasonal wetland areas, and footpaths.

Find out more: <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=738596f0-105a-4da2-a18c-7d81fa22ef38>

Case study 2: Old Kent Road Development Area, London

Set clear requirements for development and collaborate with neighbouring areas.

The development of large sites in Old Kent Road area presented Southwark Council in London with an opportunity to think strategically how they would not only deliver new jobs, housing and schools to the area, but how they could better design the urban environment to link people with nature and encourage walking for everyday journeys.

Southwark's 'Old Kent Road Area Action Plan', sets out how the London Borough will over time create a 'Greener Belt' to link up Southwark's existing parks with those in neighbouring Boroughs and creating new green spaces and linear routes. Pedestrians and cyclists will be prioritised, trees will be retained and planted, road crossings will be improved and some existing streets will be repurposed as linear parks.

The Plan makes what is required of developers clear. All development must:

- Provide the new parks and green links shown on the masterplan and the sub areas; and
- Provide 5sqm of public open space per dwelling. If it is not feasible to deliver the open space on site, a financial contribution will be required; and
- Provide temporary routes through sites in phased developments.

Find out more: <https://oldkentroad.org.uk/plans-for-the-future/our-vision/>

Case study 3: Building with Nature, Cornwall

Set high quality standards.

Cornwall Council and Cornwall Wildlife Trust have developed a pilot programme to introduce new green infrastructure quality standards for developments. The 'Building with Nature' quality standards being piloted have been developed by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT) and the University of the West of England (UWE) to encourage a proactive approach to nature-friendly development, with accessible green areas as integral to development.

Run by the GWT, Building with Nature provides a framework of quality standards, an assessment and accreditation service, and national awards recognising the design and delivery of high-quality green infrastructure. The standards are free to use and can assist with the planning and development of new places and communities.

Find out more:

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

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/grow-nature/news/building-with-nature-a-new-development-benchmark/>

Charter ask 2: Create a network of green walking routes

A network of green walking routes connects people to the places they want to go.

Case study 1: The Deepings, Lincolnshire

Plan strategically for a green walking network,

The Market Deeping Town and Deeping St. James Parish Councils in Lincolnshire are implementing a strategic plan to create a better walking environment.

Central to the plan is the creation of 'The Deepings Green Walk' - a 15km circuit which will allow residents and visitors to easily reach local facilities, housing and green spaces on foot, reducing car journeys and boosting public health.

The plan for the Green Walk was developed by the Deepings First Neighbourhood Planning Group in consultation with local residents. The Green Walk is now a key element in the Neighbourhood Plan and the Councils have formally adopted the 'Deepings Green Walk standard' for all new developments. This means that new footpaths are required to be 'safe, accessible, attractive, and rationally linked to existing routes' and that all new housing development is integrated into the current network of paths.

Find out more:

<https://www.deepingsgreenwalk.co.uk/>

<https://deepingsfirst.org.uk/about/>

Case study 2: Manchester Green Trails Network, Greater Manchester

Link up green spaces via quiet routes.

Manchester's Green Trail Walking Route was established in 2012 by Manchester City Council, the Ramblers, City of Trees, Living Streets and Transport for Greater Manchester.

The Green Trail is a walking circuit of 14 routes circumnavigating the City of Manchester and connecting many of the City's parks, woodlands and open spaces.

The route was developed to better link Manchester residents with the green spaces on their doorsteps. The Trail links up most of the parks and green spaces in Manchester with quieter urban streets and public transport links.

A team of Ramblers volunteers checked each section of the Trail, suggested improvements, developed maps and route descriptions as well as organising free led walks to encourage people to use it.

Find out more: <https://www.manchesterandsalfordramblers.org.uk/manchester-s-green-trail.html>

Case study 3: Duke's River, London

Upgrade and promote existing infrastructure.

In 2015, improvement works to the Duke's River corridor began; paths were upgraded, new signage was installed, maps were printed, and the vegetation and habitats were improved.

The completion of this work in 2018 has created a 10 km, circular riverside walk along the Thames, Crane and Duke's Rivers through Twickenham, Whitton, Isleworth and St Margarets.

There has been an increase in use of the key improved parts of the footpath by over 2,000% compared with the situation before the improvement works. The Duke's River green corridor is now used both as a destination and as a route to get elsewhere. It provides a link to a couple of pubs, a supermarket and two schools, and, following the improvement works which made the path feel safer, it is often used in preference to other routes (and to driving) to these places.

Charter ask 3: Prioritise pedestrians

Walking is the easy way to travel around towns and cities.

Case study 1: 20mph zones, Bristol

Introduce traffic calming measures

The introduction of 20mph zones across Bristol has reduced average speed on roads and has been estimated to save more than four lives a year and prevented 170 injuries, saving £15m a year, since 2014.

Find out more: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-43050841>

Case study 2: High Street pedestrianisation, Croydon

Trial schemes that put pedestrians first.

Croydon High Street is set to become a pedestrian zone after a successful trial lasting many months. During the trial, the street played host to a free programme of music, dance and theatre performances, as well as a play street and screenings of Wimbledon.

Find out more: <https://wp.croydon.gov.uk/newsroom/high-street-pedestrian-scheme-set-to-be-made-permanent/>

Case study 3: New Road, Brighton

Design successful shared spaces.

Brighton's New Road is England's first shared space street where cars are welcome but pedestrians have priority.

According to the designers (Gehl), traffic levels have dropped by 93%, the number of pedestrians has increased by 62%, and there has been a 600% increase in lingering activities. 86% of people would like to see more areas like New Road in the city.

Find out more: <https://gehlpeople.com/cases/new-road-brighton-uk/>

Case study 4: Replacing car parking spaces with trees, Amsterdam

Discourage car travel and green the environment.

The city of Amsterdam recently announced plans to remove around 1,500 car parking spaces in the city every year until 2025. As room for cars is removed, it will be replaced by trees, bike parking, and wider sidewalks.

Find out more: <https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2019/03/amsterdam-cars-parking-spaces-bike-lanes-trees-green-left/586108/>

Case study 5: Public London Charter

Protect the accessibility and character of the public realm.

The draft new London Plan - the spatial development strategy for London - includes a commitment to create a charter regulating the management of privately owned public spaces.

The Charter will set out rights and responsibilities for both users and owners of public spaces, public or private and will be created to address concerns about the increase in private management of previously public spaces.

Find out more: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/draft-new-london-plan/chapter-3-design/policy-d7-public-realm>

Charter ask 4: Promote walking

People are encouraged and supported to get walking.

Case study 1: Walking for Health

Support walking programmes to help individuals get started.

Since April 2019 Ramblers Walking for Health has been run with support from Sport England. Walking for Health walks are developed to be accessible to people who have done little or no

exercise before, or who need more support to stay active. The programme aims to provide everyone with access to a short, free and friendly health walk within easy reach of where they live.

The Ramblers Walking for Health team delivers strategic guidance for the overall programme and provides schemes with support and free resources such as training, insurance, and national promotion. The local schemes are run by a variety of organisations including councils, the NHS, charities and voluntary groups.

Find out more: <https://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/walkfinder>

Case study 2: Isle of Wight Walking Festival

Make walking fun.

The Isle of Wight Walking Festival is one of the UK's longest running walking festivals. The festival was first set up by the Isle of Wight Council in 1999. It offered 39 walks and had over 5000 walkers take part. In 2018 almost 100 walks were on offer, all led by volunteers, many from the local Ramblers group who are knowledgeable about the Island and its landscape and scenery.

In 2016 the Isle of Wight Council made the decision that it could no longer afford to run the festival. Visit Isle of Wight – the Island's Destination Management Organisation stepped in to keep the festival going.

Find out more: <https://isleofwightwalkingfestival.co.uk/about/>

Case study 3: Walk Brighton wayfinding

Invest in mapping and signage.

In 2008 Brighton and Hove City Council commissioned a study to develop a wayfinding system for the city. A unique map and on-street signage system was introduced, along with a free to use WalkBrighton iPhone app.

A unique map for Brighton was created to reflect the character of the city and to provide a ubiquitous mapping style for the town. The base map has been used to develop on-street signage system and a range of printed and downloadable walking maps.

Find out more: <http://appliedwayfinding.com/projects/walk-brighton/>

Charter ask 5: Reclaim places for communities

Green routes and spaces are designed and maintained with communities and open to all.

Case study 1: The Capital Ring Rangers and London Loop Leaders schemes

Volunteer maintenance and promotion of leisure routes.

In co-ordination with the Greater London Authority, local Ramblers' groups in London have launched new volunteer schemes to help maintain, improve and promote two of the most popular walking routes in London - the Capital Ring and the London Loop.

Over 100 volunteers have put themselves forward to be guardian rangers or leaders for sections of these long-distance orbital footpaths around London. The volunteers will highlight improvements that can be made to the routes to borough councils and will work to publicise them more widely both locally for each section and across London.

Find out more: <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/news/news/2019/july/launch-of-new-london-volunteer-schemes.aspx>

Case study 2: Incredible Edible

Encourage community gardening.

Incredible Edible is a local gardening initiative. It started with the simple idea that taking control of local streets and public spaces through gardening could help build stronger communities. Growing vegetables and fruit trees in public spaces created a new way for people to connect with their neighbours and gave a welcome boost to the identity and economy of Todmorden.

Starting with small herb gardens and community plots in Todmorden, Incredible Edible went on to work with local businesses, the health centre and schools. It has led to an increase in tourism, local food start-ups and new research and innovation initiatives. It has influenced the thinking of housing associations, which have changed their rules to allow tenants to keep chickens, as well as the local council, which now allows anyone to apply for a licence to plant on council land.

The outcome is free veg, less waste, less unemployment and a stronger community.

Find out more: <https://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/>

Case study 3: 'Wijkwandelingen' - neighbourhoods walks

Support community maintenance of neighbourhood routes.

In a town near the Hague in the Netherlands, local residents come together every 3 months for a *wijkwandeling* – a neighbourhood walk. Together, they visit problematic areas and discuss what action should be taken. Any resident can turn up and take part, and about ten to fifteen participants of all ages and social groups usually come along.

If possible, problems like straightening a crooked signpost or fix or a request for action is sent to the municipality via a community action list. The walks have helped to build community cohesion and combat loneliness.

Find out more: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/nov/14/the-dutch-cities-using-walking-to-tackle-issues-from-vandalism-to-broken-streetlights>

Further resources

Further ideas, practical guides and evidence about the benefits of walking neighbourhoods can be found here:

Town and Country Planning Association - Green Infrastructure research database

a database of documents, case-studies, videos, tools and other information about green infrastructure and its benefits:

<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/green-infrastructure-research-database>

Natural England – Green Infrastructure guidance

A practical framework of green infrastructure standards, designed to be easy to use for planners, designers, local authorities and communities (coming soon)

Place Alliance - The Ladder of Place Quality

A tool for decision-makers to use when considering the quality of places:

<http://placealliance.org.uk/research/place-value/>

Place Alliance – Place value wiki

A collaborative resource for robust evidence that makes a convincing and powerful case for investing in place quality: <https://sites.google.com/view/place-value-wiki/the-evidence>

Public Health England – Improving access to green spaces

An evidence review was commissioned by PHE, intended primarily for directors of public health, public health teams and local authorities:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/357411/Review8_Green_spaces_health_inequalities.pdf

National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence - Physical activity: walking and cycling, Public health guideline

Guidance on encouraging walking and cycling as forms of transport and for recreation:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/PH41/chapter/1-Recommendations#policy-and-planning>