

# NHS Greenspace: Good Design for the Outdoor Estate

## 12 May 2021 Webinar - Q & A

### **1. Where does greenspace quality fit in on the summary wheel in the construction design guide?**

Greenspace is an integral factor in the elements that contribute to all three themes in the draft NHSScotland Sustainable Construction and Design Guide: Wellbeing, Circularity & Climate Change. Through the National Design Assessment Process (NDAP) we encourage and assess the optimisation of greenspace opportunities for each individual and often unique project to deliver on service objectives and sustainability. For example, options which will promote wellbeing, biodiversity, sustainable drainage, acoustics, sun and wind protection to the building etc. The Guide recognises the importance of the outdoors and contact with nature, and that high quality greenspace can provide multiple benefits for the environment and biodiversity and for the health and wellbeing of patients, staff and communities.

### **2. Were areas for secure patients included too? Sometimes this group can be excluded.**

Yes. The Green Exercise Partnership (GEP) Highland case study presented during the webinar is a good example of a successful design for a secure garden for dementia patients at New Craigs Hospital, Inverness. GEP has also been involved in supporting the optimisation of landscape for secure mental health facilities in NHS Fife, NHS Lothian, NHS Glasgow & Clyde and NHS Ayrshire & Arran. Currently a project is underway at Stobhill to improve the greenspace within a secure children's unit, which will involve upgrading secure outdoor exercise areas.

### **3. What more is needed to make this front and centre of all projects and understood at the decision-making level rather than be seen as an additional cost?**

The Queen Elizabeth University Hospital Landscape Opportunities study discussed during the webinar illustrates why landscape design needs to be a part of commissioning and not an afterthought (see Case Studies at [NHS Sustainability Action: Greenspace](#)). The GEP report '[Unlocking the Potential of the NHS Outdoor Estate for Health and Wellbeing](#)' identifies the cultural and attitudinal barriers to change, including a failure to recognise the full value of the outdoor estate. A modest investment and proper consideration of the opportunities afforded by the landscape at the outset of the design process can significantly improve outcomes.

### **4. How do we link this agenda to vacant and derelict (V&D) land within the NHS and do we know what V&D land is owned within each of the Health Boards?**

Information on vacant and derelict land owned by Boards has been shared with Boards via the Property Transactions Group in Health Facilities Scotland (HFS) and is being actively reviewed. HFS and Public Health Scotland are also working with the Scottish Land Commission to review opportunities for V&D land and its potential to provide benefits to local communities.

### **5. These are all great examples. What about the roof spaces and solar panels?**

Opportunities to incorporate green roofs, green walls, renewable energy technologies, improving building microclimate with planting and reducing the heating and cooling effect on buildings by addressing microclimate are all being actively explored. Research is ongoing and there are examples where these elements have been incorporated at sites. Solar panels are being incorporated on most NHSS new-builds. Retrofitting of roof-mounted solar panels is more problematic due to existing roof structures, but there are several examples on the NHSScotland estate, e.g. NHS Borders and NHS Highland.

**6. Do you have a series of community events and involvement opportunities to further embed these spaces into the community?**

Health Boards and specific sites have been continuing to develop their community engagement work in order to deliver a range of corporate objectives. At Forth Valley Royal Hospital a Community Ranger has worked with many local community groups, organisation and schools to encourage use of the hospital grounds for leisure, therapeutic activities and outdoor learning. As part of the GEP NHS Greenspace Demonstration Project, partnerships with voluntary sector organisations including TCV and the Cyrenians enabled programmes aimed at activating greater use of the outdoor estate to be delivered at New Craigs, Gartnavel, Ayr & Ailsa and Royal Edinburgh hospitals (see Project case studies at [NHS Greenspace](#)). These programmes included opportunities for local people to be involved in a range of volunteering roles such as environmental conservation, gardening or as support to participants in therapeutic interventions. The Cyrenians have traditionally held annual Open Days at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital's growing space to connect with the surrounding community.

**7. The presentation has highlighted the social, environmental and financial returns a high-quality and well-considered green space can provide. What measures can be put in place to ensure landscape designs have an appropriate budget from the outset and that the aspirations of the landscape design doesn't get 'value engineered' down to a minimal scheme, limiting the potential gains of the project?**

A key aspect is ensuring that a landscape architect is commissioned as part of the project team at the outset, and that a comprehensive project brief sets out the scope. Both landscape architect input and landscaping costs need to be appropriately funded from the outset. Landscaping costs tend to be based on a small percentage of a total build cost for the whole development which is insufficient to realise the potential social, environmental and financial gains. Landscape is still perceived in many instances to be a visual 'add on' at the end if funds allow rather than an essential component of sustainable healthcare delivery. Development of the NDAP should lead to better integration of good landscape design.

**8. The presentation highlighted the financial return to the taxpayer for high-quality green space. In what ways are the NHS and the public sector working together outside health care environments to ensure the environment is strategically considered for health and wellbeing?**

There are examples across the NHS where Health Boards are pro-actively working with other public and third sector organisations to assess the quality and accessibility of greenspace and active travel routes and green corridors both within the NHS outdoor estate and the communities in which they sit. An example of this is the NHS Lothian [Green Health Strategic Framework](#). There are obvious and direct links between NHS greenspace and the Community Wealth Building agenda and for the NHS as a community Anchor Organisation. Community Planning and Health & Social Care Partnerships provide a framework for collaboration and strategic and local spatial planning are key areas where local NHS Boards could have an impact. This could include contributing to the evidence informing Local Development Plans, and to informing the development and delivery of Open Space Strategies, local Transport and Active Travel Strategies and to supporting Local Place Plan development. The [Place Standard Tool](#) is a way to support communities to structure conversations around place.

**9. We are just in the process of putting in an Endowments request to our Board to improve our Greenspace area. If we are successful are there any other avenues of funding available to supplement this?**

The Green Exercise Partnership NHS Greenspace Demonstration projects have all involved range of funding sources such as Sustrans and Paths for All. There will be opportunities for match funding of projects from the Green Exercise Partnership in the form of a COVID-19 green recovery fund. Please email [anne.lumb@nature.scot](mailto:anne.lumb@nature.scot) for more details. If you work in an area that has a [Green Health Partnership](#), this may be a route to exploring wider funding sources. For therapeutic design to provide wayfinding and to connect inside and outdoor spaces, partnership funding from organisations such as Creative Scotland may be available where you have an integrated art / environment strategy. Volunteering organisations such as TCV can also help with the delivery of projects on the ground.

**10. Question regarding surface water drainage at the site. Without creating a water feature, what other options are there for retrofitting drainage solutions?**

Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) remove water from the mains sewer, reducing the risk of flooding as mains sewers are often operating at capacity, and reducing the heavy carbon footprint of treating grey water unnecessarily. SuDS follow a 'treatment train' approach meaning that surface water run-off enters a series of 'natural' water quality treatment processes both at source (e.g., permeable surfaces and green roofs) and via channels or swales, detention basins, wetlands and ponds. SuDS systems are extremely effective at reducing the risk of flooding by temporarily 'storing' the water and allowing it to soak away naturally. Well-designed SuDS also increases amenity and biodiversity value. Examples of types of SuDS including systems without a permanent water feature can be seen at [Design selection \(susdrain.org\)](https://www.susdrain.org/).

For further information, please email [anne.lumb@nature.scot](mailto:anne.lumb@nature.scot)

**June 2021**