



Tackling childhood obesity

What role can parks and green spaces play?

Background evidence

- Green space has been linked with reduced levels of obesity in children and young people (Liu et al 2007).
- A positive correlation between distance to green space and childhood obesity levels has been identified. Nielsen and Hansen (2007)
- Living in areas with green spaces is associated with significantly less income-related health inequality, weakening the effect of deprivation on health (Mitchell and Popham 2008).
- However, people from more deprived areas have less access; children in deprived areas are nine times less likely to have access to green space and places to play

Southampton's parks and green spaces

Formal facilities:

- 50 Parks
- 100 Play areas
- 4 Skate parks
- 24 Multi-use Games Areas (MUGA)

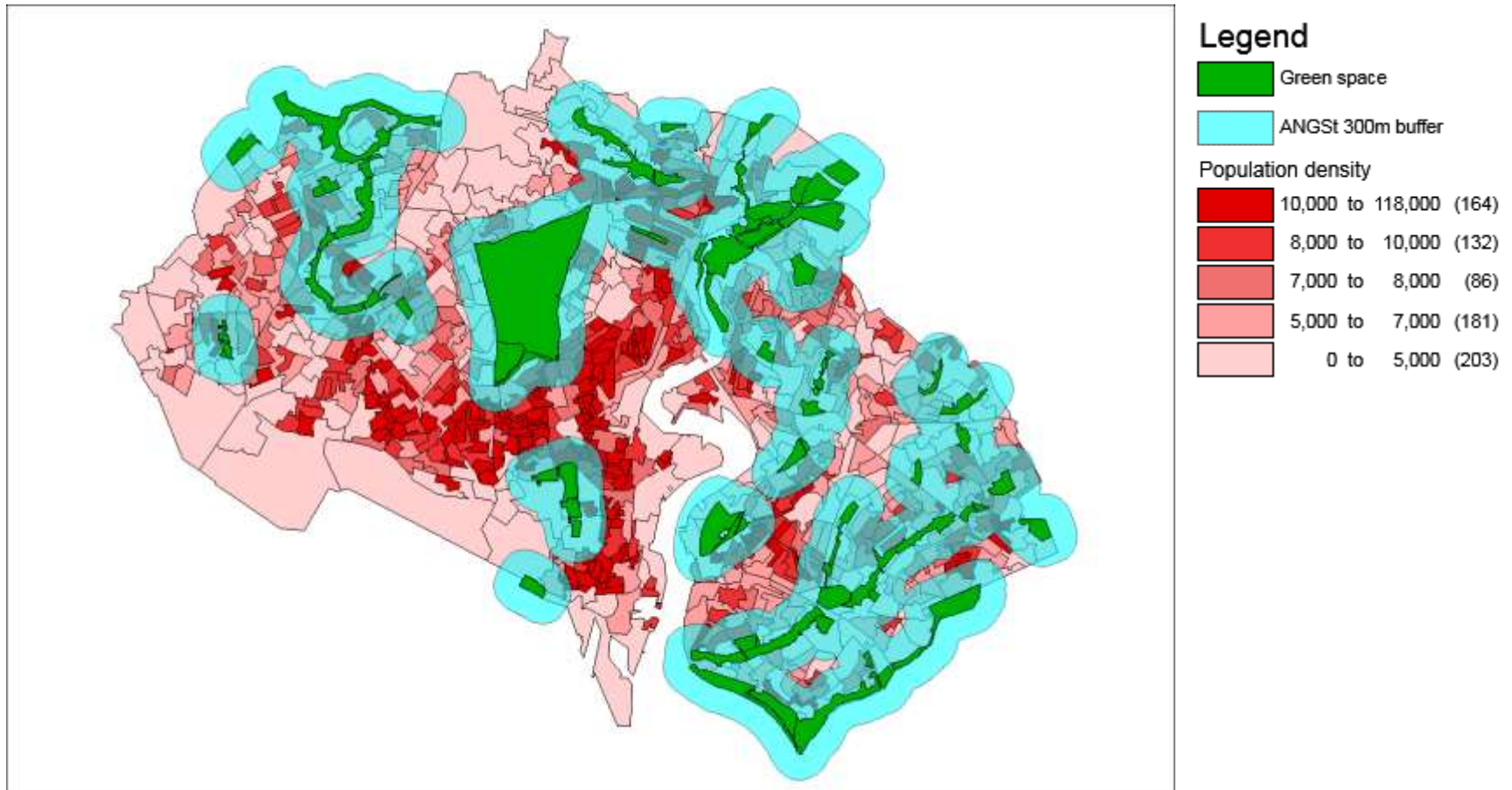
Informal facilities

- 8 Greenways
- Informal football pitches
- Cycle tracks
- Children can cycle in any park

Good distribution across the city and free to access



Population density and distance to parks



Delivery of formal activities

Sports and play

SCC generally plays an enabling role:

- Securing funding
- Providing new or upgraded facilities
- Maintaining equipment.

Examples

- Coca Cola 'Park Lives' Scheme – SCC secured the funding but activities are delivered by Active Nation using SCC parks and leisure facilities.
- Saints Foundation delivers skate events on SCC skate parks.
- In the last five years new larger play areas have been provided in Hoglands Park, the Common, Mayfield Park and Mansel Park.
- Refurbished medium sized play areas at Veracity Park, Eddie's Play Trail and Puffin Close.

Delivery of informal activities

SCC delivers a range of wildlife focused activities on informal green spaces through the Community Engagement Officers:

- **Forest School**
- **Creepy Crawlies**
- Activity sessions at the Hawthorns
- Work with other departments, e.g. Housing, and external organisations, SO18 Big Local, to deliver specific projects.

These sessions do not involve high levels of activity but are designed to familiarise children with their environment.

Some sessions are free but for others there is a charge.

Creepy Crawlies

The Hawthorns' pre-school wildlife group for 3-5 year olds

Explore the Common and its wildlife, with your child, over the changing seasons with outdoor activities, crafts, stories and games.

Enrol for a term, one Wednesday each month
10:00-11:30am

Spring term
8 January, 12 February,
11 March

The Hawthorns Urban Wildlife Centre
The Common,
Southampton SO9 7NN
southampton.gov.uk/creep-crawlies
Tel: 023 8027552

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Where are all the children?

- Community Engagement Officers noticed that there were very few unaccompanied children playing on semi-natural greenspaces;
- Set up a joint project with the University of Southampton's School of Education
- Investigated whether children could be encouraged to use green spaces if they were introduced to them in a structured way.

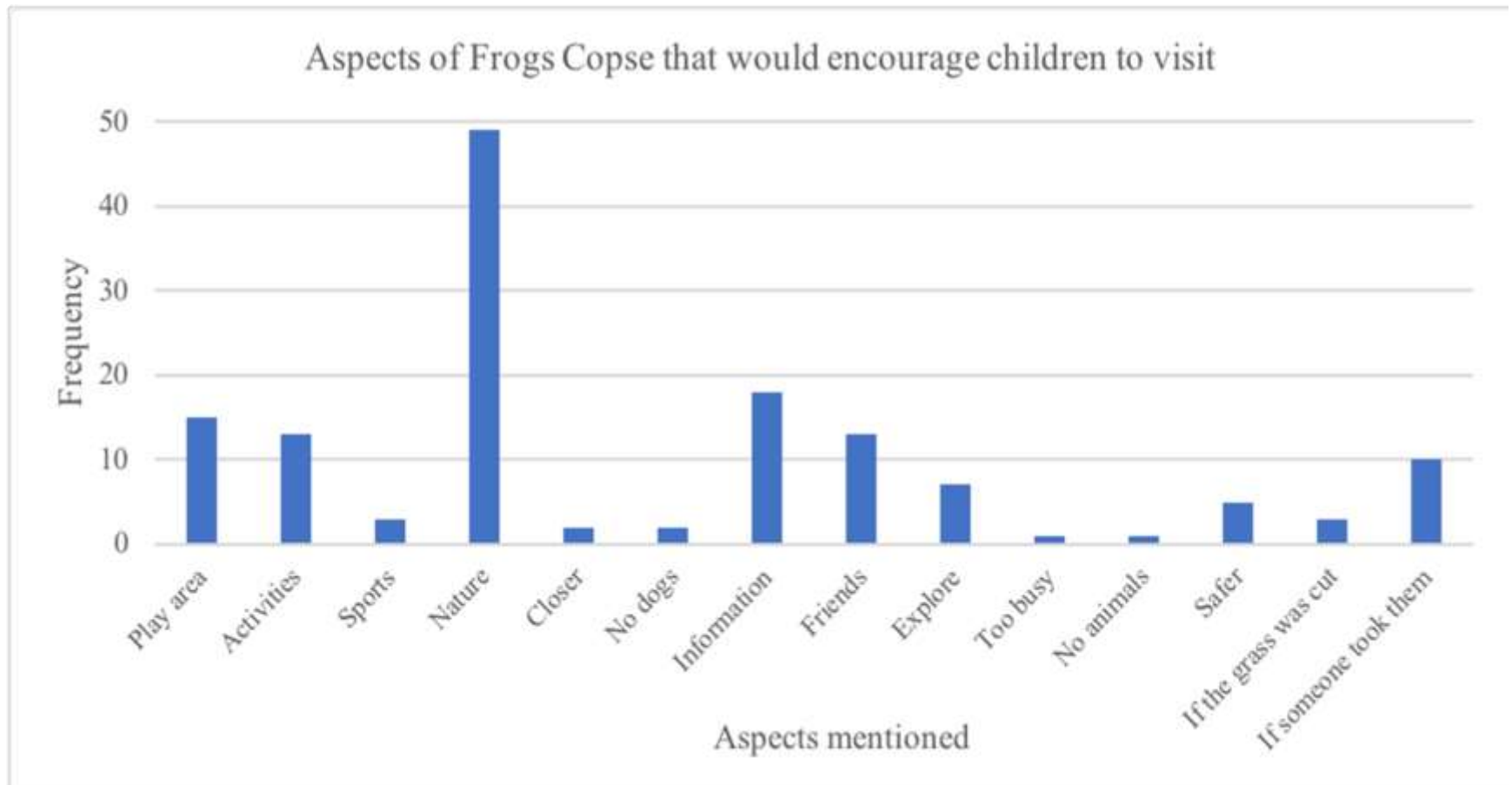




Townhill Park Project

- 160 Year 4 and 5 pupils from Townhill Junior School taken out for a 2 hour lesson about Frogs Copse.
- Before visiting Frogs Copse the children did a questionnaire and a quiz.
- Follow up activity sessions on a Monday morning with nature themed activities.

What would make you go there?

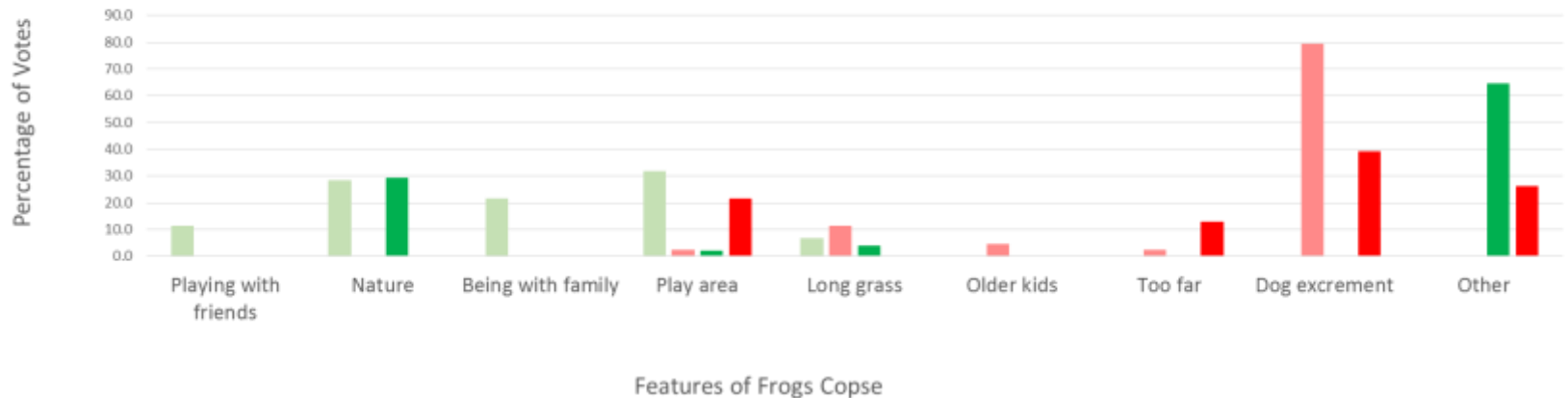


Summer holiday activities



Children's picture board results and final question of parent questionnaire

Child and Parent views on Frogs Copse



■ Percent of positive votes from Children
 ■ Percent of negative votes from Children
■ Percent of positive votes from Parents
 ■ Percent of negative votes from Parents



Research recommendations

- Encourage residents to visit their local wildlife in their free time.
- Tailored interventions which increase the interest in green spaces for disadvantaged areas.
- Improving the perceived quality of local green spaces.



A city of opportunity where everyone thrives