

ADEPT President's Awards 2026

Entry form

Award category

Shaping Places for People

Project Title

Urban Greening: Community-Led Nature Recovery for Healthier Lives

Local authority

BCP council

Partner/s if applicable

The Parks Foundation

Headline summary (150 characters max.)

An innovative Urban Greening programme with community-led action to reduce health inequalities and support nature recovery.

Shaping Places for People: How was this project an innovative response to a significant local challenge? (150 words max.)

Urban Greening takes a whole-place approach to improving residents' wellbeing. By transforming grey spaces into green, the programme delivered improvements that support:

- physical health: through active travel, increased walking and outdoor activity
- mental wellbeing: through nature connection and calm spaces
- social health: through community action, volunteering and reduced isolation
- environmental health: through improved air quality and reduced heat and flood risk

What sets this programme apart is its focus on people, not just environmental enhancements. Every intervention aims to make nature more accessible for those who benefit the most.

Prioritising the wards that need most help to be more climate resilient, piloting projects and work to create urban greening where there is less access to green space, fewer gardens; but more floods and greater heat. Addressing this environmental justice approach is part of being a Nature Town and City.

Shaping Places for People: Please give evidence of the quality of outcomes obtained from the project (for example improved/more efficient services, increased inclusivity for residents, futureproofing the service). (150 words max.)

A defining feature of the programme is its commitment to co-production. Residents were not passive recipients of environmental improvements—they shaped ideas, took part in delivery and are becoming long-term stewards of their local spaces.

Through The Parks Foundation's on-the-ground engagement, residents were invited to join:

- guided walks
- wildlife talks
- nature-based volunteering
- gardening and habitat creation
- mindfulness and wellbeing activities

This resulted in:

- reduced loneliness and isolation
- greater social connection and community pride
- increased physical activity
- improved perceptions of safety

In some parks, antisocial behaviour fell by up to 40% as community activity increased.

More than 660 people participated in hands-on "back to nature" events, gaining skills such as composting,

pond creation and wildlife gardening—knowledge that supports healthier lifestyles at home as well as in public spaces.

- 460+ downloads of nature guides
- 660 participants in practical events

Shaping Places for People: Please give evidence of the level of collaboration between place and people services (both within the council and with external partners/providers). (150 words max.)

Working in partnership with the Parks Foundation, the Council green spaces teams and local community centres, the project has a co-produced ethos to ensure interventions are valued and developed with residents.

The programme aligned green space improvements with wider council priorities, demonstrating how environmental work can deliver significant health benefits.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) were installed within parks removing 150m² of tarmac, reducing surface water flood risk while creating new wetland habitat in an urban park.

Schools: By planting 3,000 trees and 720 metres of hedgerow across three school sites, this project enhanced an important active travel route. The improvements encourage walking and cycling, reduce pollution exposure and had children planting the trees and being out in nature.

This holistic alignment of transport, flood management, education and green infrastructure showcases genuine innovation in reducing inequalities.

Twelve schools participated in tree planting, pond creation, bird boxes and wildflower areas.

Shaping Places for People: Please give evidence of the level of buy-in to the project or its goals from members of the local community, health and social care, and external organisations. (150 words max.)

Working with communities to encourage their support and involvement in urban greening, but also much deeper education to create lasting change, so that people are enabled to use knowledge, pass this on to neighbours and undertake much wider benefits for nature recovery and climate resilience.

The Project stems from our Future Parks work, in partnership with the National Trust, Heritage Fund, Public Health and local community partners.

- 220 residents involved in awareness events
- 13 semi-mature trees planted
- 100m² of perennial meadow created
- ponds created across multiple sites
- 24 street planters improved
- over 3,200 online video views
- 460+ downloads of nature guides
- 660 participants in practical events

Shaping Places for People: Please give evidence of the use or consideration of new sources of investment to fund projects. (150 words max.)

This is a pilot programme delivered in partnership with The Parks Foundation, a dedicated local charity specialising in community activation and nature-based wellbeing. Together, the partners secured £375,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the National Trust, unlocking external funding to deliver work that would have been impossible through core budgets alone.

Crucially, investment was targeted using health inequalities data, green space access assessments and climate vulnerability mapping. This ensured that the programme focused on neighbourhoods with the poorest health outcomes, lowest tree coverage and the greatest exposure to environmental risk and summarised as a Tree Equity Score (TES). This data came from the Council's Urban Forest Strategy. Building on the programme's success, BCP Council is developing ward-level Nature Neighbourhood plans targeted initially at areas with the lowest tree equity. These will contribute to an investible pipeline of opportunity from investors and using blended finance in the future.

All categories: please add anything else that supports your award entry

BCP Council's Urban Greening programme demonstrates how imaginative funding, cross-sector

collaboration and deep community involvement can directly reduce health inequalities. By improving access to nature where it is needed most, empowering residents to take action and creating greener neighbourhoods, the programme delivers measurable benefits for people, places and wildlife—even in the most challenging financial climate