

# 2023-2026 SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGY

## OUR VISION

*“A World Class Leisure Destination”*

## OUR MISSION

*“A park that delivers a range of high-quality interventions that encourage people and communities from all walks of life to enjoy the benefits of an active lifestyle”*

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## OUR SERVICE

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As we enter a new strategy cycle, inequalities across the region continue to exist, with many communities and people even further marginalised from society and meaningful opportunities to engage in physical activity. The pandemic has significantly contributed towards this, with the current cost of living crisis exaggerating this even further. Whilst this presents great challenges, it also provides the service with an opportunity to impact local people and the region positively and significantly through high quality, targeted physical activity interventions. As a Sport and Active Recreation team (S&AR), we remain very much committed to providing opportunities for all to enjoy the benefits of an active lifestyle and believe that physical activity must be an everyday choice. Our venues and green spaces play a key role in supporting these ambitions, providing safe, accessible, and inspiring environments for people to be active.

Our 2023-2026 strategy very much aligns to Sport England and the focus of 'Uniting the Movement', which is evident through the strategic objectives that are embedded within.

As referenced by Sport England, we strongly believe that sport and physical activity has a major role to play in improving the physical and mental health of the nation, supporting the economy, reconnecting communities, and rebuilding a stronger society for all. The challenge for our service is ensuring that we operate innovatively and efficiently to allocate resources to the areas of greatest need, at a time when budget constraints are greater than ever. If we can do this successfully, we can support our mission of encouraging people and communities to enjoy the benefits of an active lifestyle.

The launch of our 2023-2026 strategy also comes at a time when the Authority has recently entered a new 10-year leisure services contract with leisure operator Greenwich Leisure (GLL). Managing a portfolio of six venues, including three Olympic/Paralympic Legacy venues, GLL colleagues will play a key role in supporting the service to achieve its strategic objectives. This relationship, and associated partnership work, will be a key priority for the S&AR team over the next four years.

***"We remain very much committed to providing opportunities for all to enjoy the benefits of an active lifestyle and believe that physical activity must be an everyday choice"***

# OUR ACTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Lee Valley Regional Park expands across parts of London, Essex and Hertfordshire, and serves a population of nearly 12 million people. The region is diverse, with different cultures, extremes of deprivation, and varying levels of health inequality, resulting in different barriers to getting physically active. As a service, we have historically focussed heavily on our sporting venues and engaging people and communities within a traditional sporting environment, however, this must change if we are to reach new audiences and those who are furthest away from physical activity. Over the next four years, we will therefore focus greater attention and resource on our 10,000 acres of green space and the opportunities for people to get active in informal and untraditional settings. We must do this whilst also supporting (and not neglecting) our sporting venues and associated community commitments, which will continue to be critical to our service and what we can collectively achieve.



## OUR SPORTING VENUES

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- Lee Valley Athletics Centre
- Lee Valley Golf Course
- Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre (2012 Legacy Venue)
- Lee Valley Ice Centre
- Lee Valley Riding Centre
- Lee Valley VeloPark (2012 Legacy Venue)
- Lee Valley White Water Centre (2012 Legacy Venue)

## OUR PRIORITY GREEN SPACES

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- Leyton Marshes and Walthamstow Marshes
- Gunpowder Park
- River Lee Country Park
- Three Mills
- Tottenham Marshes



## OUR TARGET AUDIENCE

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As referenced by Sport England ‘...For too long, people with the most to gain from being active have been the least able to take part’. As a S&AR team, we are looking to address this, and specifically focus our attention on those who are inactive or less active, working closely with people and communities that are marginalised from society at a local level – whether that be a result of social, political, economic or cultural reasons. To achieve this, and ensure our resources are allocated to the areas of greatest need, we will adopt a place-based approach, working with community partners to identify priorities at a local level, which will be unique and vastly different across the 26-mile Lee Valley Regional Park. By taking this approach, we can focus our attention on the local health inequalities that exist and offer targeted interventions to ensure that we can actively contribute towards levelling up society. Health sector colleagues and those that sit outside of the traditional sport and physical activity sector will be critical if we are to make our impact. We will also utilise regional and national insight, including Sport England Active Lives data to influence our decision-making process and to better understand the localities across the region that we serve.

## OUR STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

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To achieve the park’s vision to be a world class leisure destination, the service has five strategy objectives, which are underpinned by our leisure service contract with GLL, venue specific development plans and various community commitments. Each strategic area has been developed with extensive local, regional, and national insight to ensure each aligns to the priorities of Sport England, Public Health priorities, as well as local partner objectives. We must continue to listen, learn, and adapt. An in-depth review of our 2019-2022 strategy has greatly influenced and helped to shape our objectives for the next four years.



# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE ONE

## Opening up and creating active green spaces and environments

The pandemic and imposed government lockdowns shone a light on the importance and benefits of utilising green spaces to be active. Having recently appointed (May 2022) a Community Health and Wellbeing Officer, with a remit focusing on getting people active in our green spaces, we are even more committed to this strategy objective, and in turn ensuring that people and communities can enjoy the benefits of green exercise across the 10,000 acre Lee Valley Regional Park.



### To achieve objective one, the S&AR team will commit to;

- Expanding our open space offer to provide a programme of low-cost (including free) physical activity opportunities for people to access their local green space. This will involve connecting with health sector colleagues to develop a programme of activity that is accessible, affordable, and engaging for people that are in most need of targeted intervention. As part of this process, we will engage with the local Integrated Care infrastructure (in and around Lee Valley Regional Park) to develop referral pathways from social prescribers, and other relevant services, into green exercise
- Investing in technology and innovative approaches to getting people active. We will proactively embrace technological developments to enhance our physical activity interventions. This will enable us to reach new audiences and encourage people to be active in different ways
- Better connecting our sporting venues with our green spaces. It is widely acknowledged that social engagement is a major driver behind being physically active. We are committed to and will support our venues to become vibrant social hubs (particularly in the case of Lee Valley White Water Centre and Lee Valley Ice Centre) which provide easy access to the park. We will embed this into our programming planning and design

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE TWO**

### ***Creating and sustaining strong and diverse partnerships***

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As referenced within the Park Development Framework pandemic ‘...The Authority can only achieve its goals and vision for the park by working closely with key partners’. As a regional organisation, with a core team of three officers, this is even more prevalent as we continue to provide access to high quality interventions for all 56 boroughs across London, Hertfordshire and Essex. As we enter a new strategy cycle, we will continue to engage with a broad range of traditional and non traditional local, regional and national partners, working innovatively to diversity and extend our trusted networks. The service already has several very successful long-standing partnership agreements with organisations including London Youth, Core Arts and the East London NHS Foundation Trust. We will replicate and enter similar agreements with other community partners to ensure that our reach and impact can be felt even further across the region, whilst also looking to strengthen further our relationship with key strategic partners across the physical activity sector, including the Active Partnership network and Sport England.

#### **To achieve objective two, the S&AR team will commit to;**

- Diversifying our network of trusted partners that have priorities that align to the Authority and service. We will connect with partners, including, charities, community groups, social enterprises and youth groups, which sit outside of the traditional sport and physical activity sector. This will support our service to develop programmes and initiatives that are demand led and meet the needs of the diverse regional community that we serve. Importantly, we will listen, learn and work collaboratively with partners that understand and have built up trust within their local communities
- Building stronger, impactful relationships with health sector colleagues. We are committing to developing our relationships with health sector colleagues at a local level, notably Primary Care Networks, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Social Prescribers . This will ensure that we can reach people that are facing daily health inequalities, and are in many cases, the furthest away from physical activity, with the most to gain
- Developing long-lasting partnerships that achieve long lasting change. We will commit to working in partnership with community organisations over an extended period of time, to achieve meaningful change. This will involve the coproduction and codesign of future interventions which utilise already existing assets within the community setting (Asset Based Community Development) and meet the needs of the target audience. If applicable, this will include the introduction of formal partnership agreements or service level agreements (subject to the nature of the partnership)

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE THREE

### *Improving the health and wellbeing of our regional community through a range of physical activity interventions*

The benefits of regular physical activity are widely acknowledged, helping to reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 30-40%, the risk of a range of medical conditions, including cancer, dementia, strokes, heart disease and depression. Our Park Development Framework reinforces our commitment to this, noting '...A Park that helps people improve their wellbeing'. Our work in this space has never been more important as people become further detached from physical activity, due to the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis.



#### **To achieve objective three, the S&AR team will commit to;**

- Driving forward the key performance indicators that are embedded into our sport-specific development plans, ensuring that a formal review process is followed, and a flexible approach adopted which enables us to adapt to local, regional and national influences. All applicants to our internal funding streams will also be required to demonstrate how projects improve the health and wellbeing of our regional community
- Supporting and growing our already existing community programmes which bring great value to local communities. This includes, but is not limited to, older people tennis and paddling programmes, mental health tennis programmes, led cycle rides and walking initiatives. We will also support our network of more traditional sports clubs and providers, such as Lee Valley Paddlesport Club, helping to grow and diversify their respective participation bases. Our leisure services operator will play a key role in their continued progress and we will therefore robustly monitor, challenge and support the operator to provide a diverse programme of venue-based activity to compliment our service and what we are collectively aiming to achieve
- Co-designing projects with community partners to create innovative interventions (which also embrace technology). This will involve thinking differently as to how we get people active and how we utilise spaces within our venues and park in a less traditional way



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FOUR

### *Utilising physical activity as a vehicle for positive change*

Research commissioned by Sport England evidences that ‘...Every £1 spent on community sport and physical activity generates nearly £4 for the English economy and society’. As an Authority and service, it is essential that we channel our resources into projects that achieve wider social benefit. This will include utilising the power of sport and physical activity to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, develop a sense of community belonging and build social confidence (plus much more).

#### **To achieve objective four, the S&AR team will commit to;**

- Utilising our internal funding streams (or equivalent of) to target people and communities that are marginalised from society. We will place even greater focus on engaging at a local level with community partners that are well-connected and have an awareness of the actual issues that people are facing and how physical activity can help to address some of these
- Utilising new facility (and green space) developments and programming opportunities to support this strategy objective. For example, the re-development of the Lee Valley Ice Centre will commit to the development of community programmes that achieve wider social benefit, notably, improving mental health, addressing anti-social behaviour and providing employment opportunities for local people in their local community
- Allocating our resources to partners and projects that can successfully achieve the greatest impact (maximising the potential of our online portal Views). This will include focusing on corners of the community that have been most affected by the Pandemic, including women, young people aged 16-34, older adults, people with a disability, people with long term health conditions and those from Black, Asian and other ethnically diverse communities



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FIVE

### *Opening up our world class venues and using major events to inspire long term legacy*

As referenced Our world class venues continue to host world class major events, providing inspirational platforms for people to volunteer, spectate and engage in legacy activity. Whilst the pandemic has caused numerous events to be postponed and cancelled, a list of major events that have taken place over the past four years can be seen below (this also includes events that are planned in 2023):

- 2018 Vitality Hockey Women's World Cup
- 2018 UCI Track Cycling World Cup
- 2019 Canoe Slalom World Cup
- 2021 Hockey Pro League
- 2021/2022/2023 UCI Track Champions League
- 2022 Commonwealth Games Track Cycling
- 2023 Hockey Pro League
- 2023 Canoe Slalom World Championships

#### **To achieve objective five, the S&AR team will commit to;**

- Actively supporting key partners, notably National Governing Bodies of Sport, in the bidding process for hosting events of national and international significance. Legacy activity will be fully embedded into this process, with time and resource allocated to ensure that the long-lasting impact of hosting major events is evident. This will continue to help raise the profile and regional awareness of the park amongst our regional community
- Ensuring that all legacy activity embedded into the hosting of major events is tangible, measurable, and sustainable. A key focus will be on utilising events as a catalyst to engage new audiences and more specifically people and communities that are unrepresented in the chosen sport, activity, or venue. Failure to achieve long-lasting change will be scrutinized
- Utilising major events as an opportunity to tackle issues and priorities at a local level by working in partnership with local authority colleagues and other relevant partners. Again, all initiatives must be sustainable to ensure long lasting change



## OUR PILLARS FOR SUCCESS

Embedded within our 2023-2026 strategy are five 'Pillars for Success' – these are themes which run through all strategy objectives and remain critical to our work.

***Investing in the right people, places, and projects*** – we will carefully and efficiently allocate our limited resources to projects that directly align to our strategy objectives and achieve the greatest impact. This will ensure that we can maximize our return on investment

***Embracing technology*** – we will be flexible to, and embrace new technological developments, which enhance our service and the impact that we can make

***Interventions that are insight led and co-designed with specialist providers that are representative of the communities that we serve*** – we will learn from others and use the expertise of specialist providers across different sectors to develop interventions that meet the needs of local people and communities

***Embed equality, diversity and inclusion into all aspects of our work*** – we will continue to champion equality, diversity and inclusion and ensure that our principles, practices and interventions strive to achieve meaningful change

***Measuring impact and continuous improvement*** – we will effectively measure and evidence the impact of our interventions on a project-by-project basis. Both physical activity habits and the wider social impact of our work will be measured through the implementation of a robust data capture procedure which is closely aligned to the Sport England Evaluation Framework



## SUMMARY – OUR STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

**Strategic Objective One:** Opening up and creating active green spaces and environments

**Strategic Objective Two:** Creating and sustaining strong and diverse partnerships

**Strategic Objective Three:** Improving the health and wellbeing of our regional community through a range of physical activity interventions

**Strategic Objective Four:** Utilising physical activity as a vehicle for positive change

**Strategic Objective Five:** Opening up our world class venues and using major events to inspire long term legacy

