

National Park City

Dominic Hall

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Dominic Hall of the Glasgow National Park City initiative proposes how we can reimagine the city we live in to be greener, healthier and more biodiverse.

What if Glasgow's response to Covid was to become a National Park City?

The concept of a National Park City is intertwined with that question... What if??

What if you took the principles of a National Park and applied them to a city? What if you took the basic concept that the protection and enjoyment of a place's culture and natural heritage should be at the top of your priorities?

This is not just imagination talking: London National Park City became a World first when it was declared in July 2019, and the National Park City Foundation has an ambition for 25 National Park Cities worldwide by 2025.

Last year the Foundation published a Universal Charter for National Park Cities. The Charter sets out an overall vision – it gives guiding principles and recognises that each NPC will develop uniquely around people and communities acting together on the specific needs and priorities of their own cities in order to make them greener, healthier, fairer and more harmonious places to live.

We think Glasgow can be a frontrunner in the growing international National Park City (NPC) movement, and that Glasgow NPC can be a catalyst for a shared vision for a greener, healthier and wilder City, where people, places and nature are better connected.

In a city already suffering from huge health inequalities, faced with a pandemic which has affected the quality of life of Glasgow's most vulnerable people – can there be a more important time to work towards a greener, wilder, healthier and more equitable City that improves quality of life for everyone?

In all crises there can be opportunities and rays of light. We've seen communities pull together and people helping each other with basic needs. We've clapped for our carers, delivered neighbours shopping and taken solace in the value of simple things – a walk with family, visits to local greenspaces, daily exercise.



Whilst there's clearly so many things regarding Covid that we long to see the back of, we must reflect on these rays of light and work out how to build on those positives; to make the drive for more space for walking and cycling not a short term fix, but part of our long term way of life; to build on the increased awareness of the value of local greenspaces by building a Glasgow where every community has easy access to high quality, community spaces; to make outdoor learning so a short term fix for social distancing but an integral part of all education.

In other words we must 'build back better'.

In many ways it feels the current situation has echoes in the history and personality of Glasgow: A City gripped by decades of inequality, yet held together by a community spirit which means that 'People Make Glasgow' is not simply a slogan; it's a reality for many who experience the fierce humour and community spirit of Glaswegians. A City with a deep industrial heritage, yet clinging proudly to the tradition of our Dear Green Place.

As Covid-19 struck, Glasgow felt - like much of the World - that it was at a crucial crossroads. Preparations for COP26 were swinging into action, the City had declared a climate emergency, and new electric bikes and clean air zones were becoming a hallmark of the City.

Then there was COVID19.

What will there be next?

We believe the future of Glasgow could be as a National Park City:

- A place where everyone is engaged with nature and the outdoors.
- A City where nature is thriving, and spaces and places are connected.
- A place where every child has the chance to learn and have fun in nature every day.
- A City with clean, healthy air.
- A place where everyone feels empowered and inspired to make their city healthier, greener and wilder.
- A City where people are proud of their natural and cultural heritage.
- A place where everyone has access to green, healthy, sustainable travel.
- A City nearing the top of health and wellbeing tables instead of the bottom.
- A place where excellent design delivers buildings and spaces that respond to the needs of people and nature.

What if Glasgow was a National Park City?

