



Community
Foundation

Tyne & Wear's Vital Issues 2017

Environment

Environment

3.1 Overview

Tyne & Wear tends to do rather badly against measures of environmental quality, which tend to favour rural areas. And yet, as most residents will attest, every part of the area has considerable environmental assets, including a unique urban landscape shaped by industry and civic pride and striking natural features including their green spaces, rivers and coastline.

3.2 Comparing the Tyne & Wear environment to other areas

Various composite scores are available which assess the quality and make-up of the environment and associated issues, each of which is discussed below.

The IMD Living Environment Deprivation Indexⁱ gives a very general indication of the state of the environment. Care needs to be taken in using it as it combines two measures into a single score:

- an indoor measure based on how much housing lacks central heating/fails to meet the Decent Homes standard and
- an outdoor measure based on air quality and road traffic accidents resulting in injury to pedestrians or cyclists

The relevant scores for the outdoor measures are most relevant to this theme. For Tyne & Wear these show a wide variation, with Sunderland doing worse and South Tyneside best compared to comparable districts:

Table 8 – IMD 2015 living environment scores (outdoor)ⁱⁱ

	Score	Rank	Decile
Sunderland	0.47	51	2
Gateshead	0.08	108	4
Newcastle	-0.04	123	4
North Tyneside	-0.11	135	5
South Tyneside	-0.3	178	6

A further measure is provided by the Grant Thornton Place Analytics Natural Environment and Natural Beauty Scores. The environment score takes into account housing density; road density; air quality; tranquillity; natural beauty; green space; and water quality. The natural beauty score takes into account local assets such as National Parks; Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; Heritage Coasts; 'Blue Flag' beaches; Ancient Woodland; Nature Reserves and Environmentally-Sensitive Areas.

Table 9 – GTPA natural environment and natural beauty scores (England = 100)

	Environment Score	Rank	Decile	Natural Beauty Score	Rank	Decile
North Tyneside	61.59	193	6	26.8	154	5
Gateshead	56.38	212	7	73.6	87	3
Sunderland	45.11	244	8	15.7	197	6
South Tyneside	41.03	255	8	8.6	236	8
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	32.5	274	9	5.1	257	8

The scores are poor with all areas in the bottom 50% nationally. However, the score does tend to favour more rural areas, and is hard to square with the author's – and I suspect may of our readers' – sense of the sub-region's striking natural and built environment.

3.3 Biodiversity

Key goals identified in Natural England's Tyne & Wear Lowlands plan (2013) include preserving habitats; improving water quality and reducing flood risk on the rivers and coast; developing woodlands and green space and developing an understanding of the areas unique historic landscape and heritage. Understanding and conserving biodiversity and natural habitats, both land and marine, are key priorities for the protection of the Tyne & Wear environment to which philanthropy can continue to make a significant contribution.

3.4 Vulnerability to climate change

Joseph Rowntree Foundation research has highlighted how disadvantaged communities that lack resilience are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Research undertaken in 2009 found that such vulnerability arose from:

- living in places at risk;
- experiencing deprivation;
- lacking awareness of risks and capacity to adapt;
- being less well supported by family, friends and agencies.

The research suggests that in Tyne & Wear this may be particularly relevant to coastal and riverside communities, although these are not the only places where such factors are found in high concentrations. Overall there is considerable scope to connect work on deprivation, building community resilience and adapting to climate change within Tyne & Wear.

3.5 Waste management

Residual household waste and landfill disposal are both much higher than the national average across Tyne & Wear. Residual waste is waste not recycled, re-used or composted, and is the only statistic tied specifically to the district, whereas landfill and recycling may be distorted by a wider use of locations. The latest figures we have (2013) show that recycling levels are 6% lower in Tyne & Wear than nationallyⁱⁱⁱ.

3.6 Fly tipping

DEFRA publishes local authority figures annually and below we look at those for 2014-2016.

Table 10 - Fly Tipping Incidents (number)^{iv}

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Variation 2015-2016
Gateshead	7,286	9,089	10,702	+17.7%
Newcastle upon Tyne	5,991	8,057	5,867	-37%
South Tyneside	3,156	3,368	4,723	+40%
Sunderland	10,666	5,364	4,107	-31%
North Tyneside	1,448	1,671	1,642	-2%

With the exception of Gateshead and South Tyneside, progress seems to have been achieved in reducing levels of fly tipping. However, some caution needs to be used

in interpreting this data as reporting rates vary between counties: Gateshead Council has suggested improvements to its reporting systems have skewed the figures.

3.7 Local amenities

At community level access to and satisfaction with local amenities, like shops, surgeries etc., are not that different from the national picture. However, how local open space is utilised was found to be poor in our last report. Whilst measures like the proportion of green space have not been updated, nothing that's happened in the last two or three years suggests more areas have been given over to green space. Therefore the content of the last report is still relevant:

“Environmental sustainability is also about the utilisation of local amenities. Tyne & Wear is in the bottom 20% for the percentage of green space with some areas, like Elswick, in the bottom 5% national, and changes to planning laws and other pressures will make it easier to build on green space. The maintenance of green space is critical to improving our carbon footprint, supporting climate change adaptation, and improving mental and social wellbeing”.

Potential roles for philanthropy

- Supporting local people to take responsibility for protecting and enhancing the local environment and biodiversity remains important, particularly given constraints on public funding.
- Building resilience to climate change, particularly in those deprived areas that may be most at risk from it, is an area where philanthropy could make a significant difference.

ⁱ Dept of Communities and Local Government (2015) *English Indices of multiple deprivation*, downloaded from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015>

ii **Dept of Communities and Local Government (2015)** *English Indices of multiple deprivation*, downloaded from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015>, 31/5/17 07:20

iii **Grant Thornton Place Analytics**. The figures are from DEFRA www.defra.gov.uk

iv **DEFRA (2017)** <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/env24-fly-tipping-incidents-and-actions-taken-in-england>