

Green Society



Policies to improve the UK's urban green spaces

Dr Katherine Drayson

Edited by Guy Newey



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Foreword

I congratulate Guy Newey and Policy Exchange for this report into the benefits of Public Parks and how to renew public support for their maintenance and flourishing.

While abundant with practical suggestions that work within the parameters of utilitarian public policy analysis this report also gives expression to a tradition of civic virtue which views parks as a 'respite and refuge', as a 'commons to cherish', and indeed as an civic expression of the common good that exceeds any particular policy outcome.

Our urban parks are an important example of how what were once virtues have become rights. The political issue of how to renew a sense of responsibility for the protection and maintenance of our civic inheritance is at the core of this report.

This is particularly acute when there has been a decline in spending of around ten per cent since 2010/11.

The creation of parks as a distinctive feature of English urban development was based upon a unique combination of philanthropic endowment, public subscription and parish councils. None of those institutions exists in any substantial form today. Local families, local people and local councils were the force that created some sense of public green space (London Fields) amidst the intensity of enclosure that dominated land holdings throughout the country. Dismissed and belittled by both economic liberals and Marxists as nostalgic and futile a determined and popular effort was made to re-create the commons in the middle of cities (Clapton Common).

The resistance to enclosure and the defence of the Commons was most successful in the new urban and suburban cities, not least in London.

Through the use of endowment the relentless demand of property development was stilled. Through public subscription a sense of a common life was forged between otherwise isolated residents. These were located within the boundaries of distinct and named local parishes and formed part of its institutional and ecological identity. It is to be remembered that the creation of large borough councils only happened in London in 1964, and that parks were created in the preceding hundred years within parish councils so that Hackney for example, was previously governed by councils called Shoreditch, Clapton, Stoke Newington, Stamford Hill and Hackney. Each of them had a park.

Those political places, and people still say they live in them although they have no civic reality, were wiped out in favour of a politics of scale. That is also part of the story of how virtue became rights. People do not know how parks came into existence, they are an unquestioned part of their civic inheritance. This report looks at ways of reconnecting people to that inheritance in a participative and engaged way so that the Common Good they embody can not only be

enjoyed but maintained by the individuals, families, communities, businesses and government agencies who benefit from them.

There are many things proposed here that I would support.

The use of Endowment funds and Living Legacies are both a very good way of giving incentives to virtue and reviving a sense of philanthropic responsibility. The public health benefits are well developed through the concept of Green Prescribing.

Public participation and support are engaged with extensively and the community control and cashback idea are excellent. The 'Friends' of parks are all in place but the 'lack of power' that communities have and the forgotten art of civic self-government undermine their flourishing. This weakness in our civic life is further exacerbated by the huge public authorities for whom a range of public parks in diverse areas are just part of their responsibilities.

I would suggest that a breakdown of political power in cities to the old parish level, so that specifically local people are responsible for the protection and flourishing of a place that they love is required. The combination of endowment, leadership training and the restoration of more human scale urban politics is the way ahead. Within this the parks would sit as part of a common civic inheritance that is entrusted to genuinely local councillors. Governance could be shared with local organisers and activists as well as philanthropic trusts. It would recreate the politics of the common good which created the parks in the first place.

To restore the link with local people it is to be remembered that there can be no effective responsibility without power.

Neither the State nor the market can even understand the meaning and importance of public parks. They both have a tendency to break things down into individual or collective utility and benefit. I commend this report for moving beyond both and looking at the incentives that can be given to civic virtue that is not only a benefit but a good. Power, and the balance of power, are vital to restore the coalition of philanthropy, public contribution and local councils. This report is admirable in presenting practical ways through which that journey can be started.

Maurice Glasman, Baron Glasman

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Executive Summary

“This country will not be a permanently good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a reasonably good place for all of us to live in.”

Theodore Roosevelt, Chicago, Illinois June 17 1912

Parks are places where people come together. They provide a place to play, enjoy nature and think. Within Britain’s great cities, they provide respite and refuge. A good local park can make city life bearable, particularly for those families and people who do not have much green space at home. The history of our cities can be told through the developments of our green spaces; from the creation of the world’s first municipal park (Birkenhead Park in the Wirral) to the gradual opening of Regent’s Park in London to the public.¹ They are a commons to cherish.

The success of our cities depends on making them attractive places to live in. Parks play a central role in attracting people to our cities. High quality and well-designed urban green spaces can help to reduce crime. They reduce flooding and cool cities. They are a social, economic and environmental asset. Our research has found that there may also be a link between improving parks and increasing house prices (see Chapter 2).

Yet the benefits of our urban green spaces are not felt by everyone. Black and minority ethnic people, the disabled or chronically ill, the elderly, and people from poorer backgrounds have reduced access to high quality green spaces, and use green spaces less than other groups. For example, our analysis of urban green space (both private and publicly accessible, though not including domestic gardens) in Greater Manchester showed that people in the 25 per cent richest areas enjoy, on average, 2.7 times as much green space per head as the 25 per cent most deprived areas. In addition, we found that city-dwellers in higher socio-economic groups (A, B and C1) are more likely to have visited urban green spaces within the past seven days than those in lower socio-economic groups.

Potentially making this inequality worse, our urban green spaces currently face a range of threats. Reduced local authority budgets mean that there is less funding available for green space maintenance. Without finding alternatives, this could result in the deterioration that we saw in the 1970s and 1980s, when lack of funding caused many green spaces to fall into disrepair and become havens of crime. In combination with increased demand for housing and other development in our urban areas, there is therefore a risk that vital green spaces could be lost.

Our two-report series examines what can be done to help ensure that our urban green spaces are well maintained and that inequality in green space access and use is reduced. Our first report, *Park Land*, identified a lack of national-level data on where our urban green spaces are, what state they are in, and who has

1 Within this report, urban green space is considered to be any publicly accessible open space containing ground-level vegetation, such as grass (for example, parks, allotments, cemeteries and community gardens, but excluding street trees and domestic gardens) used for recreation within urban areas (as defined by the Office for National Statistics).

access to them. Having this data would help ensure that green spaces in deprived areas are protected, that funding is better targeted, and that policy interventions are more effective. However, data alone will not be enough.

This report explores what else our urban green spaces need to be well maintained and to meet the needs of local communities. The report considers how public sector money is spent on parks, and what other sources of public sector money may be available to support improvements to urban green spaces. It looks at how we can attract more private sector and public money into improving urban green spaces. The report then looks at what policy changes might be needed to encourage people and communities to get more involved in looking after their parks.

The thread running through both reports is how to foster a sense of responsibility for urban green spaces. Over the past three years we have seen a 30 per cent increase in the number of Friends and user groups. People care about the places that are important to them. Policymakers need to find ways to nurture that enthusiasm and ensure it flourishes, so that parks and green spaces remain at the heart of our cities' lives.

How to increase funding for green spaces

The majority of urban green spaces are owned by the public sector. However, as our *Park Land* report identified, these budgets are under huge pressure. We found that local authority spending on open spaces (not just green spaces) has been cut by an average of 10.5 per cent between 2010/11 and 2012/13. As a result (and partly because it is easier to raise funding for green space creation than for the more mundane, but crucial, ongoing maintenance of existing green spaces) there is a need to identify where maintenance funding can be drawn from other public sector budgets.

However, the public sector alone cannot, is not, and perhaps should not, financially support urban green spaces in isolation. Communities derive important benefits from access to high quality urban green spaces, from improved health to social cohesion. Green spaces also benefit the private sector by helping to create attractive places to visit, live and work in. As a result, both the private sector and civil society share responsibility to support the maintenance and improvement of the green spaces.

Our report identifies ways of supplementing local authority green space budgets and explores ways money could be more efficiently spent. We examine other potential sources of funding for improvements and maintenance of green spaces and getting people more involved in activities in their local parks, including through public health spending. Finally, the report considers different ways of encouraging civil society and philanthropic funding of local urban green spaces.

Our key recommendations are:

1. Park Improvement Districts (Chapter 6)

The first public parks were usually financed locally, whether through public subscriptions or the philanthropic donation of land. This remains true in some cases today. Wimbledon and Putney Commons are maintained by a levy collected in addition to council tax for residents within a short distance of these green spaces (a "Band D" property pays an extra £27.84 a year on top of its council tax).

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) also raise a levy, but on local businesses. Part of this levy goes towards improving the local environment, often including green spaces.

In the US, the BID model has recently been extended to improve and maintain green spaces in residential areas via Green Benefit Districts. Residents vote on whether to create a Green Benefit District and once it is established, a compulsory levy (a San Francisco neighbourhood proposal suggests a charge of \$0.951 per square foot of building or lot) is raised on residents within the area. This supports green space maintenance over and above what the local authority performs.

If introduced into the UK, Green Benefit Districts could be named Park Improvement Districts to reflect their similarity with BIDs. Park Improvement Districts would not be appropriate in every location, for example in more deprived areas. However, the advantages of this approach are that:

- those that benefit most from a green space will support it the most;
- it offers communities flexibility in the level of maintenance and management they engage in;
- it encourages communities to take greater, and potentially increasing, responsibility for their local green spaces;
- it encourages communities to become more involved in volunteering in their local green spaces.

The Park Improvement District could support a range of different initiatives, including programmes of events in parks, funding schools to open their playgrounds to the public outside school hours and in school holidays, and supporting a park keeper, or parkie.

Over time, as communities increase their skills base and take greater responsibility for green space maintenance, this could allow local authorities to transfer green space maintenance funding towards other green spaces, for example in more deprived areas.

Government should pilot the creation of Park Improvement Districts to help fund the long term maintenance and improvement of local environments and urban green spaces.

2. Living Legacies (Chapter 5)

Most people give more to charitable causes during their lifetimes than they bequeath in legacies after death. Fear of a lack of future financial security may prevent greater lifetime giving. One way to overcome this issue is the use of Charitable Remainder Trusts (CRTs, or Living Legacies).

CRTs allow donors to specify a charity or charities to be the beneficiary of assets or capital that they put irrevocably into the trust. The donor, or a named beneficiary, receives an annual income from the trust for a specified period (for example, until death), thereby providing financial security for the donor. After the specified period, the charity receives the remaining capital value of the trust. Although the income beneficiary is liable for income tax on the annual income of the gift, the capital is tax exempt (as with legacies in a will) and is partly deductible from the donor's income tax (depending on the income the beneficiary will receive).

Over more than 40 years, CRTs have become an important source of funding for US charities involved in education and the arts (distributing approximately \$1.8 billion of principal to charities in 2011). One review estimated that the introduction of CRTs into the UK “could generate an additional £400 million for charity in cash and assets each year”.

Their importance for green space charities lies in their potential to contribute to endowments, which provide a steady source of maintenance funding. In addition, by unlocking funding from new donors with smaller estates, they could help support smaller green spaces in less wealthy urban areas.

The Treasury should introduce Charitable Remainder Trusts and ensure that charities supporting green space maintenance and regeneration are eligible as beneficiaries.

3. Green Prescribing (Chapter 3)

Social prescribing is where GPs refer patients to non-clinical sources of support to improve their mental and physical health. Measures that could be prescribed include physical activity (known as ‘green prescribing’ after the colour of the prescription pads that New Zealand GPs used when pioneering this approach), taking part in a group activity, or even home improvements such as a new boiler. The aim is to address the root causes of ill health. Social prescribing is growing as a treatment and is particularly popular in dealing with mental health and obesity issues. There are several potential benefits, including improvements in patient health and wellbeing and more appropriate use of clinicians’ time.

Many urban green spaces offer a place where both green prescription and other social prescription activities can take place, such as group walking or horticulture activities to aid weight loss and/or mental health. There is therefore a considerable opportunity for public health funding to be used to support activities in public green spaces.

For example, an overweight patient could obtain a green prescription from their GP for a course of physical fitness classes. The patient would pay the standard prescription charge, if applicable, and the Clinical Commissioning Group (a group of GPs in a particular area, known as a CCG) would fund the remainder of the cost of the course. Those running the classes would monitor patient attendance and feed this information back to the GP. The class organisers would also pay the local authority a fee, as part of an agreement to hold classes in a public green space. This could then go towards the cost of maintaining the green space. As a co-benefit, such an approach may contribute to the maintenance and improvement of particular spaces (for instance, through horticultural activities and Green Gyms).

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) should conduct a social prescribing audit to determine what models are currently being used. This would help publicise the use of social prescribing amongst GPs and CCGs, enable learning from previous experience and determine which areas should be targeted for the introduction of new schemes.

NICE and CCGs should determine the success of existing green prescribing schemes. Based on the results, green prescription trials should be run to identify which schemes are most successful and why. All trials should be fully evaluated for their health outcomes.

Registers of local green prescription providers should be established by Health and Wellbeing Boards. These should include information on skills, training and expertise, location, which groups of patients they are able to support, and cost. This would allow GPs to match patients with local providers that are able to support their particular needs. It would also allow existing providers to identify ‘gaps’ in patient support, potentially encouraging further training, as well as additional and/or more cost-effective service provision.

4. Gift Aid (Chapter 5)

Currently, when donations are made to a charity by a UK taxpayer, the charity can claim up to 25p in the pound through the Gift Aid scheme. Since 2002, this also applies to Community Amateur Sports Clubs. However, it does not apply to civic improvement projects that are not run by charities, such as work to improve the local environment (not just restricted to green spaces) conducted by Friends groups or other community groups. There are no insuperable obstacles to the eligibility requirements of Community Amateur Sports Club being modified to allow community civic improvement groups to claim Gift Aid.

Central government should extend the Gift Aid scheme to community civic improvement groups, such as Friends groups, to incentivise community investment in their local area, including green spaces. We estimate that this would cost the Treasury £7–15 million a year.

5. Endowment Funds (Chapter 2)

A major problem facing public parks is the lack of stable funding for ongoing maintenance of a park. The best solution to this is using endowment funds, which generate income from a trust to pay for green space maintenance while the capital remains protected. Funding for endowments could come from a variety of sources, including Charitable Remainder Trusts (see Chapter 5). Endowments require investment expertise and management. Not all local authorities will have the capacity for this. A new model has therefore been developed to help overcome this issue. The Land Trust is an independent charitable trust that uses endowments to manage green spaces and deliver community benefits. Initially, the size of the endowment needed to maintain a site in perpetuity is calculated. This could range from £20,000 to more than £100,000 per hectare. Funding is then sourced from the public and private sectors (currently, approximately 90 per cent is sourced from the public sector) and invested.

Another way to help generate funding for green space endowments is through developer contributions. Section 106 (S106) agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) both allow local authorities to raise funds from developers for new infrastructure works (including green spaces) but suffer from a lack of transparency about where and how funds are spent.

New green spaces (for example planned as part of a built development) should be required to include a long term funding plan, which could include endowments part funded by developer contributions, as part of the planning application.

All local authorities should conduct a review to determine whether endowments would be a suitable model for the sustainable funding of any of their existing green spaces.

DCLG should require each local authority to contribute to a central open access register of CIL payments and expenditure, to improve transparency and public confidence in the planning system. This will require an amendment to The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.

6. Competition for joining up Urban Green Spaces (Chapter 4)

Prizes and competitions have long been used to encourage the development of solutions to difficult problems, such as the 1714 Longitude Prize. Extending competitions to problems facing the natural environment is a promising approach. In 2010, the Lawton review identified that our current network of wildlife sites is insufficient to maintain biodiversity levels. In response, the Government launched a £7.5 million competition to identify 12 'Nature Improvement Areas' (NIAs). The 12 projects (chosen out of 76 applications) have leveraged an additional £40 million in cash, gifts in kind, and voluntary support. The competition also helped create new partnerships and conservation approaches. However, just 14 per cent of the NIA projects by area are located within urban areas.

Urban green spaces are often fragmented. We have also found that local authority Green Space Strategies are important but currently insufficient. There is therefore a need to join up green spaces, for example by planting street trees and greening courtyards. This has happened in Berlin and Copenhagen. An NIA-style competition to address urban green space fragmentation would encourage innovation and help ensure that green space funding is well-directed.

The Government should establish a new competition, similar to the Nature Improvement Areas competition. This would ask for proposals to increase connectivity between urban green spaces at a city-wide level, as well as improve public access to urban green spaces. Like the NIA competition, this would require partnership working, drawing on local authority Green Space Strategies, nature conservation organisation expertise, Natural England and the Environment Agency, the private sector and the public.

7. Police and Crime Commissioners Helping to Fund Parkies (Chapter 3)

Neglected and derelict urban green spaces can provide a haven for crime, but well designed and maintained green spaces (particularly where local communities are involved in their maintenance) can help reduce crime. An argument can therefore be made for funding at least some urban green space maintenance and community activities from policing budgets. Some PCCs have established funds providing grants to support community safety. Similar initiatives should be offered by all PCCs, allowing communities and local authorities to apply for funding to help support a park keeper, or parkie, for those green spaces identified as particular hotspots of crime.

Police and Crime Commissioners should allow communities and local authorities to apply for funding to help support park keepers for those green spaces identified as particular hotspots of crime.

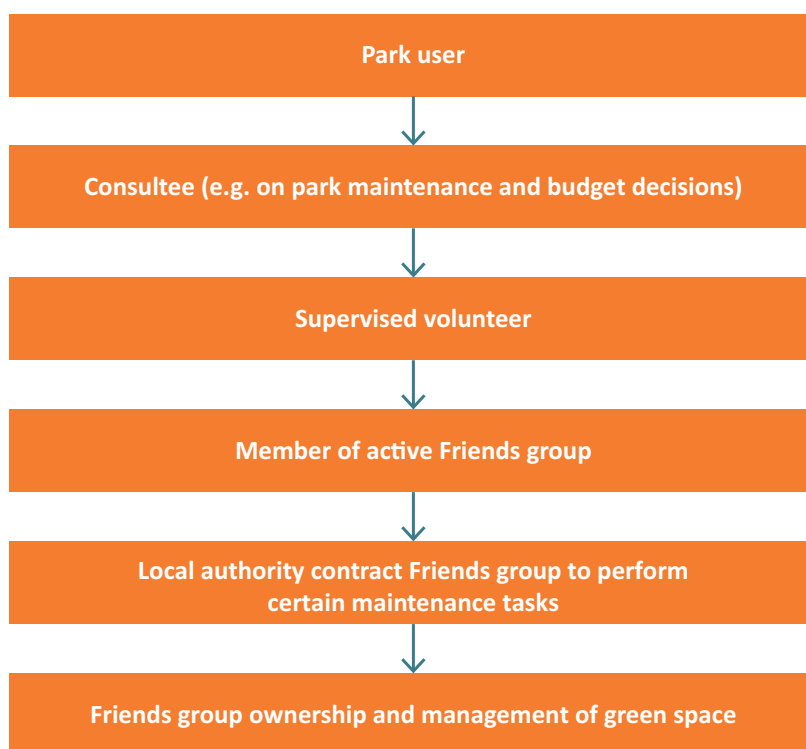
In addition to these seven key green space funding areas, we also recommend that:

- **Chapter 2:** Levies raised specifically for green space maintenance that are currently collected as part of council tax should instead be collected as a separate charge alongside council tax (for example, similarly to the Business Improvement District levy described in Chapter 6). This may require a change in legislation. This would ensure that local authorities are not penalised for freezing Council Tax when levy rates increase.
- **Chapter 2:** Local Authorities should be required by DCLG to act as Accountable Body for community projects supported by Lottery or Central Government funding, where requested by communities, to ensure that VAT does not have to be paid. All such community project funding programmes should include capacity building support, such as that provided by the Community Spaces programme facilitators, to ensure successful completion of projects.
- **Chapter 3:** NICE should conduct and evaluate trials to determine whether investing in improvements in green space access, quality, facilities and/or activities delivers measurable public health outcomes. This would also help to identify which types of improvements deliver the greatest benefits.
- **Chapter 3:** Future Police and Crime Commissioner guidance documents should increase awareness amongst PCCs that well designed and maintained urban green space can help reduce crime.
- **Chapter 3:** The Department for Education should provide guidance to schools on how to green their open spaces safely, make best use of them, and increase public access outside of school hours. DfE should also provide guidance for schools interested in working with local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups to help maintain local green spaces.
- **Chapter 3:** Central Government should create a website for Local Nature Partnerships, similar to that available to Local Enterprise Partnerships. This would enable them to share knowledge and resources, such as examples of effective collaboration with LEPs and local authorities.
- **Chapter 4:** In line with our Park Land report, a crowdsourced, freely publicly accessible urban green space map should be created, to which local authorities and other public sector bodies can add their data. This will enable more accurate analysis of where resources should be directed to improve green space quality and provision and help inform local authority commissioning.
- **Chapter 5:** A crowdsourced urban green space map, as recommended in our Park Land report, should be created. DCLG should encourage local authorities to add data on the funding available for each green space. This could, for example, take the form of an hourglass that shows the remaining funding for the financial year. This could then be linked to a crowdfunding platform to enable either one-off or regular donations to particular green spaces.

How to encourage people and communities to take greater responsibility for their local green spaces

Increased funding alone will not be enough. To ensure that communities enjoy the full range of benefits that green spaces provide and that green spaces fully meet the needs of local communities, people need to be more involved in decisions about how green space is used. They also need to have the opportunity to make improvements themselves. We have outlined a pathway of increasing community engagement with local green spaces, ranging from the recreational use of green spaces, to their ownership and management (Figure 1). Over time, communities may progress from one stage to another. We have also identified a range of barriers that prevent communities from taking greater responsibility for their local green spaces, including lack of power; risk of injury; risk of the community group failing; and lack of knowledge and skills.

Figure ES1: Potential pathway of increasing engagement with green space



Policy interventions are proposed at different stages in the community engagement pathway to make it easier for, and incentivise, communities to engage with their local green spaces. Our key recommendations include:

1. Council tax rebate (chapter 7)

Local authorities already offer a number of incentives to encourage volunteering and involvement in community life. For example, since 2013 Southampton City Council has applied a 100 per cent council tax discount to residents who serve as Special Constables within Southampton.

A similar incentive could be offered for volunteers who work as part of constituted Friends, or other community, groups to improve their local green spaces. This could help prevent Friends groups being established only in response to threats to green spaces, such as housing development (there is anecdotal evidence that this can result in a long term adversarial structure that limits entrepreneurial ability). A council tax rebate could also encourage segments of the population that are not currently well represented in Friends groups to become more involved (Friends groups tend to be dominated by white people over the age of 35).

Local authorities should offer council tax rebates for active members of civic improvement groups, such as Friends groups, who do a large amount of voluntary activity in parks. This could be based on hours spent volunteering or other measures.

2. Pilots of community control

A 2009 survey of local authorities found that 80 per cent of local authorities had completed at least one asset transfer, with parks and playing fields the second most popular asset to be transferred (making up 16 per cent of transferred assets). Yet our knowledge of what has happened to these assets, such as whether their quality has improved or declined since the move into community control, is lacking due both to a lack of a central registry and a lack of monitoring.

DCLG should conduct a randomised control trial of green spaces under community and local authority control to determine what impact this has on green space quality and what factors contribute to improvements or reductions in quality.

3. Community Cashback (Chapter 7)

In comparison with the wider public, social housing tenants have access to an additional selection of Community Rights. The most important in the context of green space management is the Community Cashback scheme. This involves the tenants' group identifying a service they wish to run that costs less than £170,000. Services could include maintaining shared green spaces or carrying out repairs. The group then approaches the landlord with a proposal, and demonstrates community backing for it. The landlord and the tenants' group enter into a Community Cashback Agreement, based on what the landlord would normally pay for the service. Any savings generated by the tenants' group are reinvested to deliver local improvements and/or community benefits.

The advantage of this approach over existing community rights for the general public is that the community are given a budget, have control over how it is spent, and any savings generated can be reinvested for further green space improvements. In addition, there is no up-front fundraising requirement for communities, and so is suitable for those in more deprived areas.

The Community Cashback scheme should be extended to community groups wishing to manage and maintain local urban green spaces. Constituted community groups (subject to similar conditions to tenants' groups) should be able to agree urban green space maintenance budgets with local authorities, with any savings generated used for community benefit. This would allow greater flexibility than the existing Right to Challenge, and potentially act

as a stepping stone towards greater management responsibilities and other community rights.

We also make other recommendations for increasing community engagement with local green spaces, including:

- **Chapter 7:** DCLG should require Local Authorities to publish all uses of the different community powers under the Local Government Transparency Code 2014. DCLG should then aggregate this data to form a publicly accessible central database of all uses of the different community powers. This would enable full evaluation of their effectiveness and highlight where funding and training is best targeted (e.g. to areas that use these powers the least).
- **Chapter 7:** The Local Government Transparency Code 2014 should be amended to mandate local authorities to submit land and property data to the Government's Electronic Property Information Mapping Service as a mandatory requirement, rather than on a voluntary basis.

1

Background and Context

Our first report on urban green space, *Park Land*, found that local authorities across England have cut their spending on open spaces by an average of 10.5 per cent between 2010/11 and 2012/13. Cuts are also likely to continue. For example, Birmingham City Council recently consulted on proposals to save up to £2.6 million annually from its parks budget (net expenditure in 2012/13 was £15.5 million).² Our report found that there is potential for budget cuts to have a negative impact on urban green spaces, but that the data is lacking that would allow us to accurately predict what effects budget cuts will have.

Our analysis of existing urban green space data across the UK found that much of it was expensive to access and none was able to provide a UK-wide picture of urban green space quantity, quality, access and ownership. We argued that without a UK-wide urban green space map containing this data, we would be unable to target interventions where they are most cost-effective and where they are most needed. In addition, we would be unable to make evidence-based trade-offs in urban land-use. We also argued for such a map to be fully and freely publicly accessible.

Box 1: Urban green space definition

In both of our reports, we consider urban green space to be any publicly accessible open space containing ground-level vegetation, such as grass, that provide recreational opportunities (for example, including parks, allotments, cemeteries and community gardens, but excluding street trees and domestic gardens) within urban areas (as defined by the Office for National Statistics).^{3,4}

This report focuses on what else would need to happen to help maintain and improve our urban green spaces and prevent a repeat of the decline in quality seen in the mid-1970s to mid-1990s.⁵ In the current context of local authority budget cuts and reduced urban green space staff and spending, other sources of public sector and private sector funding need to be found. In addition, there are opportunities for the public to play a greater role in urban green space funding, management and decision-making. To set out the case for urban green space funding, our first report described the economic and environmental benefits that urban green spaces provide to the 80 per cent of the UK population living in urban areas: this report describes the social benefits they provide.⁶

2 Birmingham City Council, "The Budget Consultation," 2013, www.birmingham.gov.uk/budgetviews.

3 Office for National Statistics, *Local Authority Classification Pre-2009*, 2009.

4 Office for National Statistics, "Rural and Urban Area Definition for Lower Layer Super Output Areas," 2005.

5 S. Harding, "Towards a Renaissance in Urban Parks," *Cultural Trends* 9, no. 35 (January 1999): 1–20.

6 T. Pateman, "Rural and Urban Areas: Comparing Lives Using Rural / Urban Classifications," *Regional Trends* 43 (2011): 1–77.

Social benefits provided by urban green space

“The more that fields and woods are closed, the more does every atom of Common land, everywhere, all over England, become of importance to the people of every class, except that which owns its own parks and woods”

Octavia Hill, *Our Common Land* (and other short essays), 1877

The social benefits of access to high quality urban green spaces discussed in the following sections include improved physical and mental health, community cohesion, reduced crime, and education.

Health benefits

“...public walks would not only promote the health and morality of the people, but be beneficial to the mere wealth of the country”

Robert Slaney MP, Hansard 21 February 1833

The physical and mental health benefits of urban green space have long been assumed. Victorian urban parks were originally conceived as ways of reducing overcrowding and disease, as well as improving public morals.⁷ The logic of increased public access to high quality urban green spaces resulting in higher levels of physical activity, lower obesity rates and improved mental health is compelling and the subject of considerable research. e.g.⁸ It is something many of us who spend time in urban green spaces know instinctively, despite the current lack of UK-wide urban green space data.^{9,10}

Physical health benefits

Access to green space is linked to reduced obesity, reduced risk of coronary heart disease, and reduced risk of developing Type II diabetes.^{11,12} The Royal Institute of British Architects’ analysis of adult diabetes in England’s nine core cities, found that the least healthy areas had a quarter less green space than the most healthy areas.¹³ The link with improved health is likely because access to green space can encourage physical activity. Natural England found that almost half of people who visit the natural environment take part in at least 30 minutes of physical activity at least three times per week. In contrast, just 22 per cent of people who never visit the natural environment engage in this level of exercise.¹⁴ There are also indications that green surroundings are linked to reduced early childhood asthma prevalence.¹⁵ Natural England estimated the economic benefits of “equitable good access to green space” to be £2.1 billion per year in terms of savings to the NHS (through reduced or avoided treatments for cardio-vascular heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes).¹⁶ As a result, improving access to high quality urban green space should be considered as an important tool to help increase physical activity and improve health.

Mental health benefits

The link between improved mental health and access to high quality green space was reflected in the design of 19th century psychiatric institutions, which included landscaped grounds specifically for patients. Hospital gardens were even

7 L. Greenhaigh and K. Worpole, *Park Life: Urban Parks and Social Renewal* (Comedia & Demos, 1995).

8 L.E. Keniger et al., “What Are the Benefits of Interacting with Nature?,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 10, no. 3 (January 2013): 913–35.

9 For example, existing research cannot tell us whether different types of green spaces deliver different health benefits or how they do this (K. Croucher, L. Myers, and J. Bretherton, *The Links between Greenspace and Health: A Critical Literature Review*, 2007). In addition, many studies are poorly designed (A.C.K. Lee and R. Maheswaran, “The Health Benefits of Urban Green Spaces: A Review of the Evidence,” *Journal of Public Health* 33, no. 2 (June 2011): 212–22).

10 K. Drayson, *Park Land* (Policy Exchange, May 2013).

11 A.C.K Lee and R. Maheswaran, “The Health Benefits of Urban Green Spaces: A Review of the Evidence,” *Journal of Public Health* 33, no. 2 (June 2011): 212–22.

12 K. Croucher, L. Myers, and J. Bretherton, *The Links between Greenspace and Health: A Critical Literature Review* (greenspace scotland, 2007).

13 Rebecca Roberts-Hughes, *City Health Check* (RIBA, 2013).

14 Natural England, *Health and Natural Environments – An Evidence Based Information Pack*, 2012.

15 Landscape Institute, *Public Health and Landscape* (London, UK, 2013).

16 Natural England, *An Estimate of the Economic and Health Value and Cost Effectiveness of the Expanded WHI Scheme 2009*, 2009.

advocated by Florence Nightingale.¹⁷ There are strong indications that access to urban green space can:¹⁸

- Reduce self-reported stress levels (the effect is greater the longer that people spend in green spaces);
- Reduce recovery times from stress;
- Improve recovery from attention fatigue and increase concentration;
- Improve mood;
- Improve levels of confidence and self-esteem; and
- Improve mental health (reducing admissions from mental illness).^{19,20,21}

There are indications that visiting woodlands and other green spaces can have significant positive mental and physical impacts for those living with dementia.²² A recent study using longitudinal data on more than 10,000 people found that “on average, individuals have both lower mental distress and higher well-being when living in urban areas with more green space”.²³ The same research group also found that people who move to greener urban areas experience a sustained and significant improvement of their mental health.²⁴ In addition, a study that used mobile EEG (electroencephalography) recorders to monitor participants’ emotions as they walked through three different types of urban setting found “evidence of lower frustration, engagement and arousal, and higher meditation when moving into the green space zone.”²⁵ In turn, this can have important economic benefits (see Box 2).

Box 2: Ecotherapy

The value of green space in the treatment of mental illness has been recognised by the charity Mind. With the support of the Big Lottery Fund, Mind funded more than 130 ecotherapy projects across England over four years, involving more than 12,000 participants. Ecotherapy is structured and facilitated work in the outdoors, and can include gardening, growing food, and environmental conservation work. An evaluation of the programme found that 60 per cent of participants went on to employment, education or training. An in-depth analysis of five typical participants found that ecotherapy saved the state £7,082 per person each year (through reduced benefit payments and NHS costs, and increased tax and National Insurance contributions).

In the UK, mental illness accounts for a third of all illnesses and costs approximately £105 billion a year.²⁶ Urban green spaces can therefore be considered as a tool to help manage and treat mental illnesses.

Community cohesion and social capital

There are indications that high quality, accessible green space can help foster and increase community cohesion by increasing interactions between different groups of people, although it is not clear how this occurs. There are also indications that access to green space increases volunteering, as well as community participation and satisfaction.²⁷

A study investigating the value of the city of Philadelphia’s park system calculated the value of community cohesion provided by parks by adding the

17 C. Hickman, “Therapeutic Gardens: An Overview of the History of Hospital Gardens in England from 1800,” in *Cultural Landscapes in the 21st Century* (UNESCO University and Heritage, 2006), 1–8.

18 Conclusions are not definitive because of the difficulties in investigating these issues

19 S. Bell et al., *Greenspace and Quality of Life: A Critical Literature Review* (OPENspace & greenspace scotland, 2008).

20 Croucher, Myers, and Bretherton, *The Links between Greenspace and Health: A Critical Literature Review*.

21 Natural England, *Health and Natural Environments – An Evidence Based Information Pack*.

22 Neil Mapes, *Wandering in the Woods: A Visit Woods Pilot Project* (Dementia Adventure, 2011).

23 M. P. White et al., “Would You Be Happier Living in a Greener Urban Area? A Fixed-Effects Analysis of Panel Data,” *Psychological Science* 24, no. 6 (2013): 920–28.

24 I. Alcock et al., “Longitudinal Effects on Mental Health of Moving to Greener and Less Green Urban Areas,” *Environmental Science & Technology*, December 2013.

25 P. Aspinall et al., “The Urban Brain: Analysing Outdoor Physical Activity with Mobile EEG,” *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, March 2013.

26 NHS Choices, *Mental Health Services: What Are Mental Health Services?*, 2013, www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/aboutnhservices/mentalhealthservices/Pages/Overview.aspx.

27 Faculty of Public Health and Natural England, *Great Outdoors: How Our Natural Health Service Uses Green Space to Improve Wellbeing*, 2010.

28 The Trust for Public Land's Center for City Park Excellence, *How Much Value Does the City of Philadelphia Receive from Its Park and Recreation System?* (Philadelphia Parks Alliance, 2008).

29 Sarah Royal, Birmingham Open Spaces Forum, *Personal Communication*, February 2014

30 Sarah Cosgrove, "Epping Forest Volunteers Clock up 2,000 Weeks of Free Work in Four Years," *Horticulture Week*, February 25, 2014, www.hortweek.com/news/login/1282461/.

31 Nottingham City Council, *Nottingham City Council Parks and Open Spaces Annual Report 2011/12*, 2012.

32 Nick Ockenden and Sarah Moore, *Community Networking Project Final Report 2003* (GreenSpace, 2003).

33 F. E. Kuo and W. C. Sullivan, "Environment and Crime in the Inner City: Does Vegetation Reduce Crime?," *Environment and Behavior* 33, no. 3 (May 2001): 343–67.

34 E. C. Garvin, C. C. Cannuscio, and C. C. Branas, "Greening Vacant Lots to Reduce Violent Crime: A Randomised Controlled Trial," *Injury Prevention: Journal of the International Society for Child and Adolescent Injury Prevention* 19, no. 3 (June 2013): 198–203.

35 CABE Space, *Decent Parks? Decent Behaviour? The Link between the Quality of Parks and User Behaviour* (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2005).

36 M. K. Wolfe and J. Mennis, "Does Vegetation Encourage or Suppress Urban Crime? Evidence from Philadelphia, PA," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 108, no. 2–4 (November 2012): 112–22.

37 James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows," *The Atlantic Online*, (March 1982): 1–9.

38 Thomas Taylor and John Watts, *Public Parks in Manchester: Address of the Operative Delegates to Their Fellow Workmen*, 1844.

39 Ian Dickie, Ece Ozdermiroglu, and Zara Phang, *Assessing the Benefits of Learning Outside the Classroom in Natural Environments* (eftec, 2011).

40 Taylor and Watts, *Public Parks in Manchester: Address of the Operative Delegates to Their Fellow Workmen*.

amount of money donated to Friends groups and other parks organisations to the value of the volunteer work donated to parks. In 2007, this came to \$8.6 million (with a population of more than 1.5 million, this equates to approximately \$5.60 per person per year).²⁸ UK-wide data is lacking to perform a similar analysis, although Birmingham City Council is making an attempt.²⁹ The City of London Corporation recently celebrated the efforts of its 227 Epping Forest volunteers, who donated more than 2,100 working weeks of volunteer work since 2010.³⁰ Nottingham City Council estimated that in 2011/12, each hour that a Park Ranger spent working directly with volunteers produced an in-kind return of more than £110.³¹ In 2003, GreenSpace conservatively estimated that the UK-wide volunteer workforce provided £17–35 million of work each year.³²

Crime

Green spaces and crime have a complex relationship that is not yet fully understood. Well-designed urban green spaces may discourage crime partly by being busier and people taking more pride in them.³³ In addition, improving the quality of urban green spaces appears to reduce the fear of crime.³⁴ There is also anecdotal evidence that, in combination with programmes for marginalised members of society, well-designed and well-maintained open space, can provide savings to police authorities and local businesses, as levels of crime and anti-social behaviour are reduced.³⁵ Conversely, poorly designed and maintained green spaces may encourage crime, for example by providing concealment or through the phenomenon that vandalised spaces appear to encourage more crime (Broken Windows theory).^{36,37}

Education

"Does not the chemistry of nature present as large and pleasing a field for study, as the chemistry of tobacco smoke, gin and inflammation?"

Extract from an 1844 poster asking working men to contribute to the creation of public parks in Manchester³⁸

Urban green spaces offer opportunities for both formal (e.g. school visits and ecotherapy) and informal (e.g. play, educational boards and posters within urban green spaces) learning about nature, the environment and society. Some of the benefits include improved behavioural outcomes and attitudes to other children, staff morale, and increased awareness of environment and natural science skills.³⁹

Inequality in urban green space provision

"Our Town is peculiarly barren of the means of out-door recreation"

Extract from an 1844 poster asking working men to contribute to the creation of public parks in Manchester⁴⁰

Urban green spaces are a truly universal resource that can enhance anyone's quality of life and increase the liveability of our cities. However, access to and use of urban green spaces is not evenly distributed. Even good access to green spaces does not necessarily correlate with high use, for example if the quality of the

green space is low (as seems to be the case in more deprived areas, see below). The following sections will focus on the main groups of people found by research to experience inequality in urban green space provision.⁴¹

Health

Natural England found that whether or not someone has a disability or long term illness is the most significant influence on the frequency of their visits to green spaces: those with a disability or long term illness are more than twice as likely to only visit green spaces three or fewer times per year.⁴²

Ethnicity

Black and minority ethnic residents tend to have reduced access to green spaces and use it less often:

- Wards in England where black and minority ethnic residents make up less than 2 per cent of the population have up to eleven times more urban green space as wards where more than 40 per cent of the population were black or minority ethnic residents.⁴³
- Large numbers of Indian communities in Leicester have restricted access to medium-sized (20 hectare) sites within a 2km radius of their homes, and lack of access to large and more distant (100 hectare sites within 5km) sites disproportionately affect Asian and black communities.⁴⁴
- More than a quarter (26 per cent) of the black and minority ethnic population in England only visit the natural environment three times or fewer per year (compared to 15 per cent of the rest of the population).⁴⁵

Deprivation

A recent investigation of health inequalities across Europe found that “People who live in areas with high levels of deprivation are more likely to...live close to hazardous waste sites, in locations where public places feel unsafe, unwelcoming and uncongenial, have less access to green spaces and fewer opportunities for healthy activities.”⁴⁶ Our own analysis of urban green space in Greater Manchester using existing and freely available (though fragmented and incomplete) green space data revealed that people in the richest 25 per cent of areas enjoy, on average, 2.7 times as much green space per head as the most deprived 25 per cent. This is a statistically significant reduction from the average green space per resident across the whole of Greater Manchester.⁴⁷

CABE Space not only identified a similar trend of reduced green space in deprived urban areas across England, but found that urban green space quality, in terms of number of Green Flag areas per local authority, was found to be “systematically worse in deprived areas and better in less deprived areas”.⁴⁸ Poor green space provision and poor quality green spaces in deprived areas may help contribute to low visit rates (although as the data is poor, we cannot know for certain). Natural England found that just 30 per cent of people living in the most deprived areas had visited the natural environment in the previous seven days, in comparison with 52 per cent of people living in the least deprived areas.⁴⁹

41 In some cases, it may be that particular groups of people (such as the more socio-economically deprived) live in more densely populated areas, which will affect access per head figures.

42 J. Burt et al., *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey (2009–2012): Difference in Access to the Natural Environment between Social Groups within the Adult English Population* (Natural England Data Reports, Number 003., 2013).

43 CABE Space, *Urban Green Nation: Building the Evidence Base*, 2010.

44 A. Comber, C. Brunson, and E. Green, “Using a GIS-Based Network Analysis to Determine Urban Greenspace Accessibility for Different Ethnic and Religious Groups,” *Landscape and Urban Planning* 86 (2008): 103–14.

45 J. Burt et al., *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey (2009–2012): Difference in Access to the Natural Environment between Social Groups within the Adult English Population* (Natural England Data Reports, Number 003., 2012).

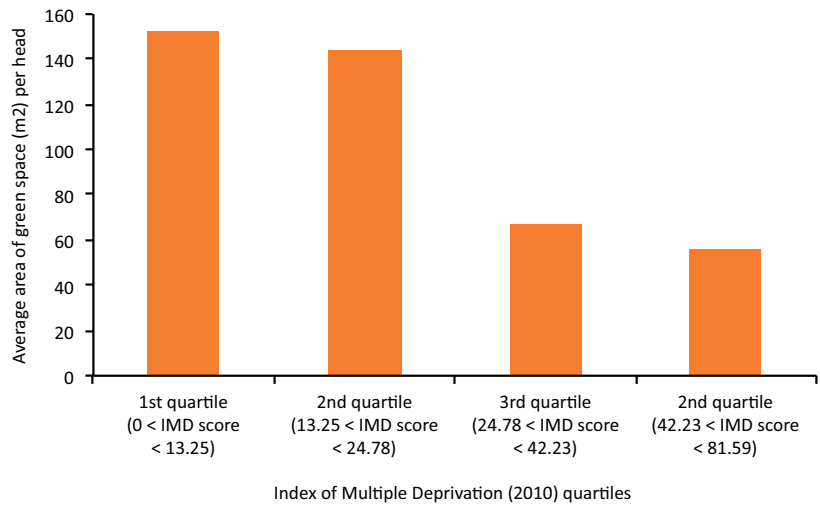
46 M. Marmot, *Review of Social Determinants and the Health Divide in the WHO European Region: Final Report* (World Health Organization, 2013).

47 (Chi square (3, n = 1425) = 72.43, p<0.001)

48 CABE Space, *Urban Green Nation: Building the Evidence Base*.

49 Natural England, *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment: Annual Report 2012/13*, 2013.

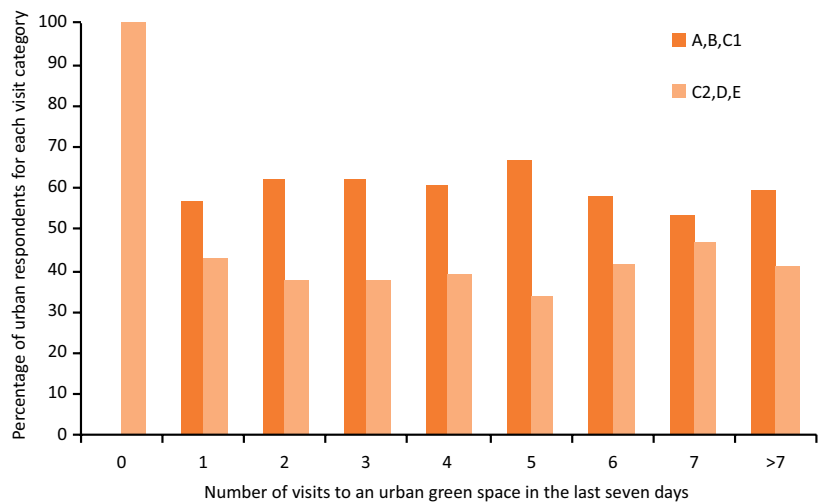
Figure 1: The change in average green space per Greater Manchester resident with increasing deprivation⁵⁰



Socio-economic status

Our analysis of Natural England data has revealed that city-dwellers in higher socio-economic groups (A, B and C1) are more likely to have visited urban green spaces within the past seven days than those in lower socio-economic groups (see Figure 2). Related to this is the finding that those in higher socio-economic groups travel further to green spaces, perhaps because of greater access to cars.⁵¹

Figure 2: The percentage of urban respondents in different socio-economic groups that visited urban green spaces, by each visit category



Based on Natural England's weighted 2012/13 data⁵²

⁵⁰ Green space area calculations were derived from Natural England's GIS boundaries, the Forestry Commission's National Forest Inventory, the European Environment Agency's Corine urban green space map and Ordnance Survey's VectorMap District woodland data. These datasets were combined and analysed using commercially available Geographic Information System software. DCLG's Index of Multiple Deprivation data was combined with ONS Lower Layer Super Output Area boundaries.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Other groups

Natural England found that those aged 65 and over were found to have significantly lower levels of participation in visits to green spaces.⁵³ CABE Space also discovered other groups of people that tend to be disadvantaged in green space access, including people who are not working because of unemployment or sickness, and people who are studying or training.

Threats to urban green spaces

“Bauflächen entstehen, auch wenn man sich nicht um sie kümmert! Freiflächen verschwinden, wenn man sich nicht um sie kümmert.”

(Construction areas come into being, even if you do not pay attention to them! Open spaces disappear if you do not take care of them.)

Fritz Schumacher, Chief Planning Officer of the City of Hamburg.⁵⁴

The main threats, including budget cuts and the loss of supporting institutions, that urban green spaces face have been summarised in *Park Land*. However, recent research has found that 45 per cent of local authorities are considering selling or transferring management of their parks and green spaces over the next three years.⁵⁵ In addition, a recent analysis found that for all cities with a population of 50,000 or more, each urban household would lose approximately £1,400 over 50 years in urban green space benefits, should green spaces continue to be lost at current rates.⁵⁶

Conclusions

High quality and publicly accessible urban green spaces provide important social benefits, from physical and mental health to community cohesion. Many of these will also have economic benefits. However, poor access to high quality green spaces (and therefore reduced visits) reduces these benefits for vulnerable segments of the population. To explore how this could change, we need to determine what is holding us back from universal access to high quality urban green space, and increasing the use of these spaces. One of the crucial factors is funding.⁵⁷ Since the majority of our green spaces are owned by the public sector, the next chapter will begin by exploring public sector funding for urban green spaces.⁵⁸

However, it is important to note that the diversity of our urban green spaces means that there is no one solution that will be appropriate for all green spaces. Our aim with this report is to increase the number of options available for green space funding and community action. Third sector organisations have a critical role to play in enabling communities to access these options. The provision of green space quality data, as recommended in our *Park Land* report, could aid this by identifying those green spaces and communities that need the greatest support.

52 Natural England, *MENE EXCEL Year 1 – 4 Unrestricted*, 2013

53 Natural England, *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment: Annual Report 2012/13*.

54 Britta Kellerman, *Die Entwicklung Des Freiraumverbundsystems Für Hamburg*, 2003, www.hamburg.de/gruenes-netz/3907750/karte.html.

55 Peter Neal Consulting and Community First Partnership, *State of UK Public Parks 2014: Renaissance to Risk?* (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2014).

56 Grischa Perino et al., “The Value of Urban Green Space in Britain: A Methodological Framework for Spatially Referenced Benefit Transfer,” *Environmental and Resource Economics* 57, no. 2 (2013): 251–72.

57 Urban Parks Forum, *Public Park Assessment: A Survey of Local Authority Owned Parks*, 2001.

58 CABE Space, *Community-Led Spaces: A Guide for Local Authorities and Community Groups* (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and the Asset Transfer Unit, 2010).

2

Local Authority Funding

The previous chapter outlined the main social benefits attributed to urban green spaces, and described the inequality of access to urban green spaces for different groups of people. Most urban green spaces in Britain are funded by local authorities from their budgets.⁵⁹ Importantly, funding for parks and other urban green spaces is not ring-fenced, as the creation and maintenance of parks is not a statutory duty.⁶⁰ This chapter covers the current status of local authority funding of urban green spaces. It explores its weaknesses, and identifies ways of improving and widening funding for urban green spaces.

It is often easier to gain funding (e.g. via external grants) for capital works, such as major regeneration or green space creation, than for ongoing maintenance in the absence of an ongoing revenue stream generated from urban green spaces.^{61,62} For example, the Mayor of London's Pocket Parks programme only provides funding for the creation of pocket parks across London, rather than their long term maintenance.⁶³ This preference for 'place-making' over 'place-keeping' has major implications for the future of our urban green spaces.⁶⁴ This chapter will look at the different funding models for both urban green space creation and maintenance, with the main focus on maintenance.

Funding on-going green space maintenance beyond local authority budgets

Urban green space maintenance funding often comes out of local authority budgets. Our 2013 Freedom of Information request (for more details, see page 13 of our *Park Land* report) revealed that, assuming all green space funding comes from council tax receipts, an average of 2.7 per cent of council tax in 68 urban local authorities was spent on horticulture in 2012/13.⁶⁵ That's an average of £11 per person for an entire year. Some councils have, however, gone further and raised specific green space levies.

Levies on top of council tax

Properties close to high quality parks and other green spaces often sell at a premium.^{e.g.66} Many benefits of green spaces are highly localised, such as good views or easy access to play areas. This means that those who can afford a property close to a park may benefit disproportionately from local authority spending on the park; local government is essentially subsidising those who can most afford to live near municipal green spaces.

Considerable research has been conducted on the 'proximate principle', i.e. the positive impact of proximity to green space on house prices. It formed part of

59 CABE Space, *Paying for Parks: Eight Models for Funding Urban Green Spaces* (London, UK: Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2006).

60 Harding, "Towards a Renaissance in Urban Parks."

61 Helen Woolley et al., *Urban Parks: Do You Know What You're Getting for Your Money?* (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2006).

62 CABE Space, *Paying for Parks: Eight Models for Funding Urban Green Spaces*.

63 Mayor of London, "Pocket Parks Programme," 2013, www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/greening-london/improving-londons-parks-green-spaces/pocket-parks.

64 Nicola Dempsey and Mel Burton, "Defining Place-Keeping: The Long-Term Management of Public Spaces," *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 11, no. 1 (January 2012): 11–20.

65 DCLG, *council tax Receipts Live Table, England, 2012 to 2013 and Q2 2013 to 2014, 2013*, www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-local-government-finance.

66 Luke M Brander and Mark J Koetse, "The Value of Urban Open Space: Meta-Analyses of Contingent Valuation and Hedonic Pricing Results," *Journal of Environmental Management* 92, no. 10 (October 2011): 2763–73.

the long-term case for funding the earliest parks, including Central Park in New York and Regent's Park in London.⁶⁷ One option is for local authorities to raise urban green space maintenance funding through a levy, or addition to the council tax. Good examples of this approach can be seen for Wimbledon and Putney Commons, and Kensington's Garden Squares (see Box 3).

Box 3: Funding of Wimbledon and Putney Commons, and Kensington's Garden Squares

In 1990, new legislation enabled the collection of a levy from properties either within the old Parish of Putney or within three quarters of a mile of Wimbledon and Putney Commons. The total levy amount is set by the Board of eight Conservators who manage the Commons. The increased council tax is calculated based on the number of "Band D" equivalent properties in each of the three Boroughs affected; Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston.⁶⁸

From 1991, this levy has been an important source of financing and its spending is directed by the Conservators, three of whom are appointed by the Government and five of whom are elected by levy payers every three years. Importantly, the levy is paid for by the main beneficiaries of the Commons (as a result of residents' proximity to the Commons) according to the value of the property. The levy is therefore, arguably, a fairer way of raising maintenance funding than a blanket increase in council tax.

In 2013/14, the levy raised £966,124, distributed between approximately 46,000 households. According to the Conservators, "No comparable open space in London costs so little to maintain in terms of cost per hectare as Wimbledon and Putney Commons."⁶⁹ A "Band D" property pays an extra £27.84 on top of its council tax.

The London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea also uses a levy based on the number of "Band D" equivalent properties surrounding its private garden squares, based on 19th century legislation. Spending for each garden square is directed by individual Garden Committees, made up of local resident volunteers. Garden levies in 2013/14, for example, range from £1,600 for Avondale Park Gardens to £75,850 for Wetherby Gardens. In terms of council tax, for "Band D" properties, the smallest amount levied is £40.34 for properties surrounding Emperor's Gate garden square, in comparison to £338.43 for properties surrounding Clarendon/Lansdowne Road communal garden.⁷⁰

The levies for both Kensington's Garden Squares and Wimbledon and Putney Commons are classified as part of council tax.^{71,72} If Central Government offer councils grants or rebates to freeze council tax (for example during the recession), yet the Garden Committees or the Commons Conservators decide to increase the levy, the Council must compensate for that increase in order to ensure that overall council tax does not increase and they qualify for the rebate. Whilst levy increases tend not to be large and so can be absorbed by the Council without detriment to other services or loss of Central Government funding for council tax freezes, this remains a delicate balancing act, particularly in the current climate of local authority budget cuts.⁷³

Recommendation: Levies raised specifically for green space maintenance that are currently collected as part of council tax should instead be collected as a separate charge alongside council tax (for example, similarly to the Business Improvement District levy described in Chapter 6). This may require a change

67 John L. Crompton, "The Role of the Proximate Principle in the Emergence of Urban Parks in the United Kingdom and in the United States," *Leisure Studies* 26, no. 2 (April 2007): 213–34.

68 Wimbledon and Putney Commons, "Facts & Figures," 2007, www.wpcc.org.uk/commons.html.

69 Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, *Press Release: Commons Levy 2013–14*, 2013, www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CDEQFJAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.wpcc.org.uk%2FDocuments%2FFinancial%2520Statement%25202013-14.pdf&ei=-B7rU56lHeHe7Abg64GQBw&usg=AFQjCNG8jXJAWKdRUPDcbikMhSiuj9Szg&sig2=VF_sLTeGg3gwbAjFTKv9Q&bvm=bv.72938740,d.ZGU.

70 The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Council Tax and Garden Square Levies www.rbkc.gov.uk/councilanddemocracy/counciltax/gardensquares/gardensquarelevies.aspx, 2013

71 Kingston Borough Council, *Personal Communication*, December 2013

72 Anita Murray, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Policy Control Manager Revenues *Personal Communication*, December 2013

73 Anita Murray, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Policy Control Manager Revenues *Personal Communication*, April 2014

in legislation. This would ensure that local authorities are not penalised for freezing Council Tax when levy rates increase.

Imposing new green space maintenance levies on existing residents can be politically difficult. As a result, the potential for residents to vote on introducing their own green space maintenance levy will be explored in Chapter 6.

Endowments and Property Portfolios

Endowments are a long term and sustainable source of green space funding. Property and/or money are donated and the interest accrued from their investment is used for the long term maintenance of green spaces, leaving the original endowment untouched (see Box 4).

Box 4: Milton Keynes' Parks Trust

Milton Keynes' green spaces are cared for by the Parks Trust, an independent charity created in 1992 by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation. The Parks Trust is entirely self-financing, as a result of the income generated from "a substantial property and investment portfolio" that the Parks Trust was endowed with when it was first established.⁷⁴ Importantly, whilst the Parks Trust has long-term leases on Milton Keynes' major parks and open spaces, the freehold belongs to Milton Keynes Council. This means that both the Council and the Parks Trust must agree before significant changes can be made to these areas.⁷⁵

Whilst recessions and low interest rates can impact on the income from an endowment for several years, over the long term they can provide a stable funding source. Advantages to using endowments for public sector owned green spaces include, for example:

- Green space maintenance budgets are no longer affected by local authority budget cuts;
- Once a site has a sustainable endowment fund, it can become easier to obtain other grants and funding, as it can act as 'match funding'; and
- In the long term, endowments can reduce public sector costs by breaking the cycle of green space deterioration requiring capital-intensive renovation.

However, endowments require investment expertise and management, as well as sufficient initial capital. Not all local authorities will have the capacity for this. A new model has therefore been developed to help overcome this issue (see Box 5).

Calls for using endowments to pay for parks are not new.⁷⁶ Yet little progress has been made on this, with the exception of a few examples, such as The Land Trust and Milton Keynes' Parks Trust. However, this may change with increasing recognition by Central Government of the importance of long term, sustainable funding. For example, the four-year Endowment Match Challenge strand of the Community First programme aims to raise £100 million from philanthropists, whether individual or corporate. This will then be matched with £50 million of Central Government funding to form an endowment fund (managed by an investment company rather than a charitable trust) to support community projects in the long term.⁷⁷ However, initial findings suggest lower than expected

⁷⁴ www.theparkstrust.com/about-us/about-us

⁷⁵ www.theparkstrust.com/about-us/frequently-asked-questions

⁷⁶ CABE Space, *Paying for Parks: Eight Models for Funding Urban Green Spaces* (London, UK: Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2006).

⁷⁷ Community Development Foundation, "Endowment Match Challenge," 2013, www.cdf.org.uk/content/funding-programmes/community-first/endowment-match-challenge.

Box 5: The Land Trust

The Land Trust was formed in 2004 as a partnership between the Homes and Communities Agency, Groundwork, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency to help remedy the general lack of consideration of long term green space maintenance, in both the public and private sectors. Now an independent charitable trust, The Land Trust owns and manages more than 1,000 hectares of public space in perpetuity to deliver community benefits, including inner city parks and community woodlands.⁷⁸

Their funding model relies on first calculating the amount of money required to form a sustainable endowment fund for a site, based on an agreed management plan. Depending on the type of green space and facilities present, the endowment calculation could range from £20,000 to more than £100,000 per hectare.⁷⁹ Funding is then sourced from the public and private sectors (currently, approximately 90 per cent is sourced from the public sector), and may be enhanced by revenue from commercial uses of the site, such as car parking.⁸⁰ The funding is invested and the interest earned is intended to cover the maintenance of the site in perpetuity.

donations from the public.⁸¹ One potential source of funding for green space maintenance endowments could, however, be developer contributions (see later in this chapter). With many District Councils unwilling to adopt new green spaces created as part of development schemes, developers have an important role to play in funding the long term maintenance of green spaces.⁸²

Recommendation: All local authorities should conduct a review to determine whether endowments would be a suitable model for the sustainable funding of any of their existing green spaces.

Recommendation: New green spaces (for example planned as part of a built development) should be required to include a long term funding plan, which could include endowments part funded by developer contributions, as part of the planning application.

Rents, events, fees and charging

For a few urban green spaces, the collection of fees, rents or the sale of leases may be a useful funding stream for maintenance. For example, the Royal Parks Agency estimates that it will receive almost a fifth (18.3 per cent) of its 2013/14 income from a combination of licences, rents, catering and car parking.^{83,84} Bath's Parade Gardens require intensive management to create and maintain the floral displays. Open between Easter and the end of September, Bath and North East Somerset residents have free entry to the Gardens.⁸⁵ However, other visitors must pay a small entrance fee.⁸⁶ Recent research has found that 85 per cent of green space managers intend to increase fees for facilities such as sports pitches over the next three years.⁸⁷

The majority of green spaces may not have the facilities to become self-sufficient. However, there are several disadvantages to charging for access to green spaces. Charging may result in a green space becoming ineligible for grants, for example from the Landfill Communities Fund and the Lottery Funds. In addition, there is also a balance to maintain between raising revenue and encouraging public use of green spaces; introducing new charges for existing facilities can

78 The Land Trust, *The Land Trust Annual Report 2012–2013*, 2013.

79 Suzanne Hughes, The Land Trust Head of Communications and Marketing, *Personal Communication*, April 2014.

80 Euan Hall, Chief Executive, The Land Trust, *Personal Communication*, January 2014.

81 Cabinet Office, Cabinet Office Annual Report and Accounts 2012/13, www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-office-annual-report-and-accounts-2012-to-2013, 2013.

82 Annemarie Naylor, Common Futures Director, *Personal Communication*, July 2014.

83 The Royal Parks Agency, *The Royal Parks Business Plan 2013/14*, 2013.

84 The Royal Parks Agency, Unpublished Data, 2014

85 Bath and North East Somerset Council, Discovery Card, www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/tourism-and-heritage/discovery-card, 2014.

86 Bath and North East Somerset Council, Parade Gardens, www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/sport-leisure-and-parks/parks-opening-times-and-locations/parade-gardens, 2014.

87 Peter Neal Consulting and Community First Partnership, *State of UK Public Parks 2014: Renaissance to Risk?*.

raise strong public reactions (see Box 6). Alternatives that have been investigated in the US include ‘sweat equity’ and ‘workreation’, where the full market rate is charged for those who can afford it, but the most vulnerable can exchange volunteer work for their use of sports facilities.⁸⁸ ‘Fee free days’ and ‘fee free hours’ have also been investigated and there is potential for these to become more widely used in the UK.

Volunteering in return for access to a facility or event has been successfully demonstrated. For example, the US RockCorps concerts have encouraged more than 150,000 people worldwide to donate four hours of their time to

volunteering, in return for a ticket.⁸⁹ In the UK, two RockCorps volunteering events at North Hulme Adventure Playground, Manchester, attracted nearly 300 volunteers to help decorate it.⁹⁰ However, care needs to be taken in utilising this approach for access to sports facilities; sport provides considerable

public health benefits and so should be encouraged by making it as inexpensive and easy to access as possible. There may, however, be a role for football leagues and other sports teams to gain discounted fees over a season in return for volunteering.

Voluntary fees can also be introduced; museums, for example, already encourage visitors to donate. The City of London’s Burnham Beeches site previously employed voluntary donations at its car parks. Interestingly, when car parking charges at weekends and bank holidays were introduced, with voluntary donations at other times, the voluntary donations increased.⁹¹

“Transferring green space management to communities could therefore help ensure that funds raised within a park are spent on the park”

88 Peter Harnik, *Local Parks, Local Financing Volume Two: Paying for Urban Parks Without Raising Taxes* (Trust for Public Land, 1998).

89 RockCorps, *4 Hours*, www.rockcorps.com/?page_id=10, 2014.

90 RockCorps, *Hulme Adventure Playground, Manchester*, www.rockcorps.com/?p=478, 2014.

91 Sue Ireland, Director of Open Spaces, City of London Corporation, *Personal Communication*, February 2014.

92 Leo Visconti, “The Royal Parks: Stop Hyde Park from Charging People to Play Sport,” 2013, www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/the-royal-parks-stop-hyde-park-from-charging-people-to-play-sport.

93 Royal Parks Agency, “The Old Football Pitches Consultation Open Day,” 2013, www.royalparks.org.uk/press/press-releases/2013-press-releases/the-old-football-pitches-consultation-open-day.

94 The Royal Parks Agency, *The Royal Parks Business Plan 2013/14*.

95 Nesta, *Funding for New Round of Digital R&D Art Projects Revealed at Annual Forum*, www.nesta.org.uk/news/funding-new-round-digital-rd-art-projects-revealed-annual-forum, 2014.

Box 6: Charging for sports in the Royal Parks

In 2013, the Royal Parks Agency announced that they had introduced a booking and charging system, operated by a private company, for the use of the Old Football Pitches in London’s Hyde Park for ‘formal sport’, such as leagues, matches and events. Previously, the area had been free to use and a high profile campaign from a charity softball league that had used the pitches for ten years led to a suspension of the charge pending the results of a public consultation.^{92,93}

Events, such as races and music concerts, can also help raise significant revenue for some appropriate green spaces. For example, the Royal Parks Agency estimates it will receive almost a fifth (18.3 per cent) of its 2013/14 income from event fees and permits.⁹⁴ However, events can also be controversial as they can generate noise, litter and damage, and exclude local residents from all or part of the green space. Even where a public green space is conducive to generating income from rents or events, that income will often go into a central local authority pot, rather than being ring-fenced for green space maintenance and improvement. Transferring green space management to communities could therefore help ensure that funds raised within a park are spent on the park (see Chapters 6 and 7). This could help encourage novel and innovative fundraising efforts, such as digital art exhibitions.⁹⁵

Funding new green spaces and regeneration of existing ones

Making a case for public sector funding of green space regeneration can be challenging. This is partly due to a lack of data on the impact that changes on green space quality, access and use can have on the local area, such as on mental and physical health (see the Public Health section later in this chapter) and on the local economy. To help highlight this issue, we have conducted our own analysis of the effect of improving existing green spaces on house prices. Many urban parks have been awarded Heritage Lottery Fund grants for major capital works since 1996. Our analysis of property transactions around Southwark Park in London (see Box 4) reveals that there may be a link between green space quality and property prices, but that more detailed research is needed to be able to demonstrate this conclusively.

Box 7: Changes in property prices with changes in park quality

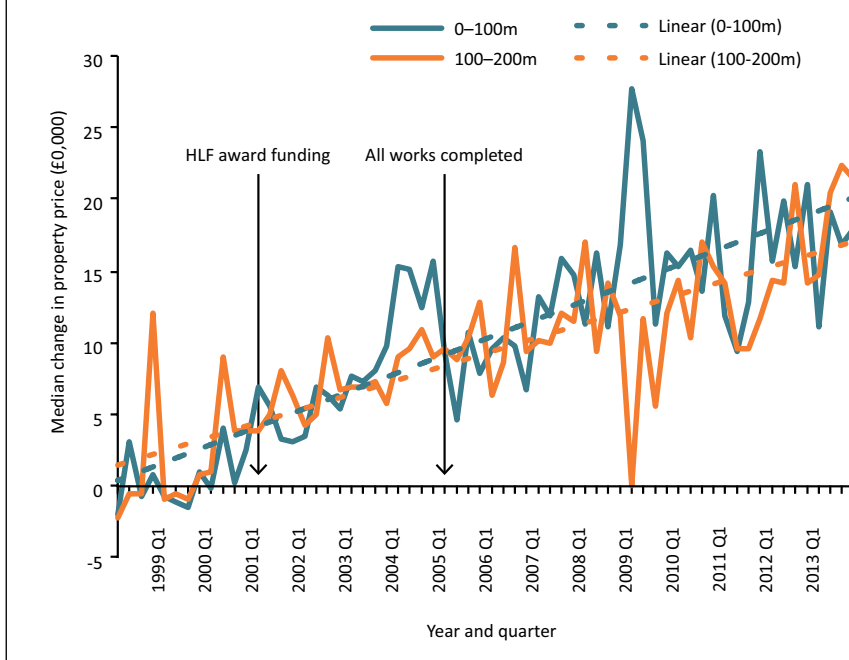
The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) provided data on grants given for the regeneration of urban parks. We analysed property prices surrounding Southwark Park in London, using free Land Registry price paid data from 1995 to 2013. Using commercially available Geographic Information System (GIS), we calculated the median price for properties (houses and flats) between 1995 and 1997 in two zones; within 100 metres of the park, and between 100 and 200 metres of the park. This provided a baseline from which to assess median changes in property price within the two zones for each quarter between 1998 and 2013.

Plotting this data (see Figure 3) reveals that between 1998 and mid-2002, the median increase in property prices between 100 and 200 metres of Southwark Park was 1.75 times higher than the median change in property prices within 100 metres of the park. However, this trend reversed in the second quarter of 2002. The HLF awarded a £2.7 million grant for the regeneration of the park in 2001 and the main works were conducted between 2002 and 2004. After mid-2002, the median change in property prices within 100 metres of the park was 1.1 times higher than that for properties between 100 and 200 metres of the park. The median change in property price within 100 metres of Southwark Park increased by 645 per cent between the periods 1998 to mid-2002 and mid-2002 to 2013, compared to 286 per cent for properties between 100 and 200 metres of the park.

It is not possible to conclude that renovation works resulted in an increase in property prices with this analysis.⁹⁶ This is particularly the case since a repeat analysis on two other HLF-funded parks (Handsworth Park in Birmingham and Leazes Park in Newcastle-upon-Tyne) did not reveal a similar relationship. However it does suggest that the link between green space quality and property prices bears further investigation.

⁹⁶ This is a crude analysis, not taking into account property characteristics (such as size and number of bedrooms), or other factors that could affect property prices (such changes in demography, etc.). However, to our knowledge, it is the first time an attempt has been made to assess the impact of changes in park quality on property prices, and this is therefore an important first step.

Figure 3: Median change in property prices within 100m and between 100 and 200m of Southwark Park, using the median property price between 1995 and 1997 as a baseline. The trendlines are shown as dashed lines. These trendlines cross approximately two years after Southwark Park was awarded funding (i.e increases in house prices closer to the park overtook those further away from the park)



97 John L. Crompton, *The Impact of Parks and Open Space on Property Values and the Property Tax Base* (Ashburn, Vancouver: National Recreation and Park Association, 2000).

98 Scott Fallon, *Deadlock over State Funding Threatens N.J. Open Space*, 2014, www.northjersey.com/news/Deadlock_over_state_funding_threatens_open-space_preservation.html?c=y&page=1.

99 NJ Spotlight, *Bill Earmarking Funds for Open-Space Preservation Clears Committee*, www.njspointlight.com/stories/14/03/17/bill-to-make-open-space-preservation-a-constitutional-amendment-clears-committee/, 2014.

100 Mark Sandford, *Tax Increment Financing* (House of Commons Library, 2013).

101 James Pickford, "London Project to Use Risky Funding Model", *Financial Times*, April 2013, www.ft.com/cms/s/0/fcda4910-9f64-11e2-b4b6-00144feabdc0.html#axzz36mbr0iP2.

Bonds and tax increment financing

The US offers a greater range of local government taxation measures to incentivise support for new open spaces than the UK, such as Special Assessments.⁹⁷ New Jersey, for example, recently considered two funding streams; one of which proposes a \$200 million bond issue, whilst the other proposes diverting a proportion of the state's sales tax revenues to open spaces preservation.⁹⁸ As a result of legislative deadlock, it is now considering using 6 per cent of corporate business tax revenues to fund open spaces.⁹⁹

In 2012, tax increment financing for infrastructure projects was introduced into the UK. It works by "allowing local authorities to borrow money for infrastructure projects against the anticipated increase in business rates income expected as a result of the said infrastructure project."¹⁰⁰ However, this will only be suitable in areas where reliable and sufficient rates income will be generated as a result of urban green space improvement, either through fee-charging facilities or raising a green space levy from nearby businesses. The Nine Elms development in Battersea will be part-funded through tax increment financing.¹⁰¹

Alternatively, a local authority bond issue could raise the capital for green space creation (or regeneration, once the link between property prices and regeneration has been fully explored, see Box 7). The difficulty with bond issues is that they are a debt that must eventually be paid with interest. This is relatively straightforward where fee-charging facilities exist: a five-year bond issue by a sports charity has

successfully raised £5 million to redevelop and open two Olympic Park venues (the Copper Box Arena and the Aquatic Centre) to the public.¹⁰² However, for those green spaces that will be unable to generate sufficient revenue, a green space levy on council tax for properties in proximity to green space could help to repay the bond issue and interest. This approach could be used for smaller green spaces. A variant of this (using bonds as part of a tax increment financing scheme) is often used in the USA.¹⁰³

Developer contributions

Capturing the benefit of development is a key method for raising funding for the creation of new urban green spaces. For example, Section 106 (S106) agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) both allow local authorities to raise funds from developers for new infrastructure works (including green spaces). In the case of CIL, funds cannot be used to remedy existing infrastructure deficiencies. They are instead intended for the creation, operation and maintenance of new infrastructure.¹⁰⁴

Table 1: Comparison of the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 Agreements^{105,106,107}

S106 Agreements	CIL
Can include tariff payments, as well as variable, negotiated payments	Flat rate tariff depending on development type and gross internal area
Restricted to the infrastructure needed to directly mitigate the impact of a proposal	Can be used to provide infrastructure anywhere within the local authority's boundaries
From April 2014, S106 funds can no longer be pooled to deliver infrastructure projects	Funds from multiple developments can be pooled
Only 7 per cent of developments include S106 agreements	Can be raised against a wide range of development types
There can be time limits imposed for spending funds	There is no time-limit for spending funds

A further major advantage of CIL is its capacity to be used by local communities. 15 per cent of CIL revenue, up to a maximum of £100 per council tax dwelling, can be given to the Parish (these can now be created in urban areas that lack them) and Town Councils affected by the development, to be spent on local infrastructure.¹⁰⁸ For those communities that have a neighbourhood plan in place, the funding increases to 25 per cent of CIL revenue (the potential impact of this will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7). In theory, both CIL and S106 funds could be placed in a trust to provide an endowment to ensure the long term maintenance of urban green spaces.

Finally, CIL payments can be made not only in cash but in land. The potential for this to provide new urban green spaces, or asset-based endowments to support existing green spaces, could be important (see Box 8 for an example of CIL revenue being used to fund urban tree planting and maintenance). In addition, neighbourhood funding could be used for green space maintenance works, for example as part of an endowment. We currently have no way of testing how effective land donation and CIL spending on urban green spaces will be,

102 The SIB Group, *Bond Funding will help Leading Social Enterprise Build on Olympic Legacy*, www.sibgroup.org.uk/news/news/2014/bond-funding-will-help-leading-social-enterprise-build-on-olympic-legacy/, 2014.

103 Mark Sandford, *Local Government in England: Capital Finance* (House of Commons Library, 2014).

104 DCLG, *The Community Infrastructure Levy: An Overview*, 2010.

105 The Planning Officers Society, *Section 106 Obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy: An Advice Note*, 2011.

106 DCLG, *Community Infrastructure Levy: Guidance*, 2013.

107 G Burgess et al., *The Incidence, Value and Delivery of Planning Obligations in England in 2007–08: Final Report* (London, UK: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010).

108 DCLG, *Community Infrastructure Levy: Guidance*.

particularly since neighbourhood planning is currently concentrated in more rural areas.¹⁰⁹ There is also potential for developer contributions to establish or supplement endowment funds for the maintenance of urban green spaces (see the earlier section on endowments).

Box 8: Birmingham Tree Bond

Birmingham City Council has proposed the creation of a 'Tree Bond' to support the maintenance and expansion of Birmingham's urban tree population. A 1 per cent levy of the Council's annual energy procurement contracts, matched by 1 per cent of the Council's CIL revenue would produce an estimated £500,000 annual income for tree planting and management, and wood fuel production and distribution. This would enable larger numbers of Council buildings to be eligible for the Renewable Heat Incentive.¹¹⁰

A major criticism of S106 agreements is their lack of transparency.¹¹¹ As our Nurturing Nature report identified, the planning system is opaque, with access to planning documents, including S106 agreements, difficult for most members of the public.¹¹² This is particularly the case when attempting to collate S106 agreement information across a particular geographic area (planning applications are rarely shown in map format). Given the community emphasis of CIL, there should be no such lack of transparency over CIL payments and expenditure.

Currently, each local authority is required to publish annual reports on how much CIL has been collected and spent, and what it has been spent on. However, each local authority uses a different template for this information and can be difficult to locate on Council websites. In addition, there are no publicly available figures for the amount of CIL collected and spent across the UK. Allowing the public to clearly identify which communities are benefitting most (or least) from CIL could, for example, motivate the creation of a neighbourhood plan. It would also enable the public to hold local authorities to account for CIL expenditure, increasing confidence and trust in the planning system.¹¹³ In line with our recommendations to create a register of Environmental Statements and biodiversity offsetting schemes, a similar register should be created for CIL payments and expenditure.

Recommendation: DCLG should require each local authority to contribute to a central open access register of CIL payments and expenditure, to improve transparency and public confidence in the planning system. This will require an amendment to The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.

The ability of green spaces, or 'green infrastructure', to provide several of the services that traditional 'grey infrastructure' provides (such as flood defence) should, in theory, increase the chance of securing CIL funding. In practice, lack of recognition of the many benefits we derive from urban green spaces may mean that, green spaces will be unable to compete with other infrastructure demands. Until appropriate natural capital accounting (including analysis of long term benefits and costs) is adopted as the norm by the Treasury and other public sector bodies, green spaces will likely continue to lose out to other infrastructure

109 Planning Portal, *Existing Neighbourhood Plans*, <http://neighbourhoodplanner.org.uk/map>, 2014.

110 Trees & Design Action Group, *Trees in the Townscape: A Guide for Decision Makers*, 2012.

111 Burgess et al., *The Incidence, Value and Delivery of Planning Obligations in England in 2007–08: Final Report*.

112 G Newey, *Nurturing Nature: Policy to Protect and Improve Biodiversity* (London, UK: Policy Exchange, 2012).

113 Christopher Swain and Malcolm Tait, "The Crisis of Trust and Planning," *Planning Theory & Practice* 8, no. 2 (2007): 229–47, no. 2 (2007).

sectors that appear to deliver greater economic gains.¹¹⁴ The Treasury's Green Book is undergoing a review process but it is not clear when or if natural capital accounting will be included.¹¹⁵

Grants

Local authorities may be able to access a combination of external grants and partnership funding for green space creation. These could be from a variety of sources, ranging from the Heritage Lottery Fund to charities and other public sector bodies. For example, the regeneration of Burgess Park in Southwark was funded with capital from the Greater London Authority (£2 million), Southwark Council (£2 million) and a partnership between Southwark Council and the Aylesbury Estate's New Deal for Communities (£4 million).¹¹⁶ However, aside from the time and resources required to complete grant applications, grants can, in some circumstances, create unanticipated difficulties (see Box 9). In addition, grants are rarely available for long-term maintenance funding.

Recommendation: Local Authorities should be required by DCLG to act as Accountable Body for community projects supported by Lottery or Central Government funding, where requested by communities, to ensure that VAT does not have to be paid. All such community project funding programmes should include capacity building support, such as that provided by the Community Spaces programme facilitators, to ensure successful completion of projects.

This section has found that there are several opportunities amongst existing commonly used funding streams to help ensure long term urban green space maintenance. However, both public sector funding and developer contributions are likely to be most abundant during periods of high economic growth, potentially leading to a reliance on grants during recessions. Given the numerous social, environmental and economic benefits that urban green spaces provide, what other sources of public sector funding could be unlocked to help create new, and most importantly maintain existing, urban green spaces (private sector and civil society funding streams are explored in Chapters 5 and 6)?

Box 9: The Community Spaces programme

The Community Spaces programme was launched in 2008 and was funded by the Big Lottery Fund, managed by the charity Groundwork and delivered by a partnership of organisations. Over six years, the £46 million was awarded to more than 900 community projects in order to improve local environments and increase community involvement in their local environments.¹¹⁷

In common with most green space funding schemes, this programme provided 'development grants', which enabled communities to buy professional advice and convert ideas into a viable project. However, the programme also provided a free consultancy service to guide communities through applications and project development. This helped improve skills and ensure that only three groups failed to complete their projects. In addition, 'sustainability grants' were available to help support long term project maintenance, underlining the importance of providing long-term support. An evaluation study conducted by Hall Aitken identified numerous benefits

114 Natural Capital Committee, *The State of Natural Capital: Towards a Framework for Measurement and Valuation*, 2013.

115 HM Treasury, "The Green Book: appraisal and evaluation in central government" 2013, www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-government.

116 Southwark Council, *Southwark Council to Welcome the Local Community at Burgess Park Opening*, www.southwark.gov.uk/news/article/868/southwark_council_to_welcome_the_local_community_at_burgess_park_opening, 2012.

117 Groundwork, *Community Spaces*, 2014.

Table 2: A selection of the benefits of the Community Spaces programme¹¹⁸

Category	Benefit
The Public	9.3 million residents benefit from the improved environment and facilities 1,734 schools were involved
The Environment	Almost 800 hectares of land were improved Almost 85,000 trees were planted Improvements in rates of dog fouling, anti-social behaviour, litter, and vandalism
Community Groups	93 per cent of groups will continue after the programme's end 84 per cent of groups are more confident 79 per cent of groups gained new skills 75 per cent of groups think their communities are now stronger

The evaluation did, however, identify several barriers to the successful implementation of projects. Two of the most important were:

- The planning system was a costly and complex barrier for 27 per cent of groups, despite the advice and help of the facilitators. Jargon and lack of engagement from planning officers were particular issues.
- Approximately 10 per cent of community groups found that local authorities were unwilling to act as Accountable Body (it is not known what the figure for other Big Lottery funded projects is). This meant that groups had to pay VAT, i.e. one fifth of Big Lottery funding for these projects was returned to the Treasury. It also meant that groups often had to pay contractors in advance of receiving grant funding.

118 Rob Shipway, *Community Spaces Evaluation: End of Programme Evaluation* (Hall Aitken, 2014).

3

Other Potential Public Sector Sources of Funding

The previous chapter explored funding sources that local authorities can already use to help supplement urban green space budgets. Green spaces deliver a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits. There is therefore an argument for at least partly cross-subsidising green space maintenance using other sources of public sector funding, which will be explored in this chapter. In order for green spaces to compete with statutory duties for limited public sector funds, however, a more rigorous and coherent evidence base is required.

Public health

Green spaces and public health budgets

In 2013, full responsibility for public health, including the ring-fenced public health budgets, was devolved to local authorities.^{119,120} Green spaces are linked to important public health benefits, including reduced obesity and improved wellbeing (see Chapter 1). This has been recognised by the NHS (see Box 10), within Defra's 2011 Natural Environment White Paper, and by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).^{121,122} There is therefore a potential case for local authority public health budgets to directly support urban

Box 10: Natural Choices for Health and Wellbeing

One example of public budgets being used to directly improve green spaces is the Liverpool Primary Care Trust (PCT) funding the 'Natural Choices for Health and Wellbeing' programme in Liverpool. This programme aimed to reduce inequality in health and wellbeing, increase engagement with the natural environment and provide opportunities for disadvantaged people. In 2011, community groups in particularly disadvantaged areas and areas lacking in green infrastructure were invited to apply for grants to increase wellbeing through improving their local environment. From 112 expressions of interest, 38 projects were awarded between £1,000 and £38,000 (£380,000 was spent in total). More than 3,200 people participated (including 135 paid employees). An evaluation revealed an increase in wellbeing of up to 18 per cent (as measured using a scale developed by the Universities of Warwick and Edinburgh). In addition, despite participants having average wellbeing scores lower than the average for Liverpool at the start of the programme, participants had higher wellbeing scores than the Liverpool average by the end of the programme.¹²³

119 Whilst the NHS provides clinical health services, public health involves disease prevention, health promotion, improved life expectancy and the reduction of health inequalities.

120 HMG, *Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our Strategy for Public Health in England*, 2010.

121 Defra, *The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature. CM 8082* (London, UK: Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, The Stationery Office, 2011).

122 National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, *Physical Activity and the Environment*, 2008.

123 Carly Wood, Rachel Bragg, and Jo Barton, *Natural Choices for Health and Wellbeing: A Report for Liverpool Primary Care Trust and The Mersey Forest* (University of Essex, 2013).

green space maintenance and improvement. Indeed, this is already happening in some local authorities. Sunderland City Council is using public health funds, released by combining existing services into one contract, to support services such as “parks, green spaces and allotments”.¹²⁴ Sunderland has one of the highest physical inactivity levels in the country and existing green spaces are under-used by the public. As a result, Sunderland will be consulting residents to find out what would encourage them to use existing green spaces more. This could include installing facilities as simple as picnic benches or outdoor gyms, or connecting green spaces with cycle routes.¹²⁵

NICE acknowledges that there is a lack of evidence on the “impact that changes to the physical environment have on physical activity levels”, as well as their cost-effectiveness.¹²⁶ The current absence of data on green space access and quality (see our *Park Land* report) limits our ability to draw firm conclusions about the effects of improvements in green space access and quality on public health. In addition, encouraging healthier use of green spaces, for example through creating gardening and sports activities, could potentially be as important for public health as improving access and/or quality (for example, a Big Lottery Fund evaluation of its wellbeing projects discovered that participant life satisfaction scores increased by three times more than would be expected if the person had doubled their income).¹²⁷ Yet there is little evidence available on which local authorities can base spending decisions. This could discourage local authorities from directly funding urban green spaces with their public health budgets. As a result, trials are needed to determine the evidence for public health outcomes as a result of different types of green space improvements.

Recommendation: NICE should conduct and evaluate trials to determine whether investing in improvements in green space access, quality, facilities and/or activities delivers measurable public health outcomes. This would also help to identify which types of improvements deliver the greatest benefits.

Social prescribing and green prescribing

Social prescribing is where GPs refer patients to non-clinical sources of support to improve their mental and physical health.¹²⁸ Measures that could be prescribed include physical activity, taking part in a group activity, or even home improvements, such as a new boiler (see Box 11 for an example of how social prescribing is being used to improve the wellbeing of elderly patients).¹²⁹ The

Box 11: Voluntary Action Rotherham

A pilot social prescribing service for the elderly is being delivered by the charity Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), with £500,000 annual funding from the NHS Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).¹³⁰ Once the GP has made a social prescription, specialised VAR employees accompany patients to the first few sessions of the prescribed activity to help build patient confidence. The CCG funds between 10 and 20 weeks’ worth of activities per patient, and offers support to access affordable transport where possible. After the initial 10–20 week programme, patients are offered the option to continue the activity via self-funding (typically at a cost of £2 to £3 per session). However, patients with low incomes are given help if it is still needed. On average, the cost is around £300 per patient.¹³¹

124 Gareth Iacobucci, “Raiding the Public Health Budget,” *British Medical Journal* 348 (2014): g2274.

125 Nonnie Crawford, Sunderland City Council Director of Public Health, *Personal Communication*, April 2014.

126 NICE, *Individual Research Recommendation Details*, www.nice.org.uk/proxy/?sourceUrl=http%3a%2f%2fwww.nice.org.uk%2fresearch%2ffindex.jsp%3faction%3dresearch%26o%3d833, 2014.

127 Cles Consulting and New Economics Foundation, *Big Lottery Fund National Well-Being Evaluation* (Big Lottery Fund, 2013).

128 Janet Brandling and William House, “Social Prescribing in General Practice: Adding Meaning to Medicine,” *British Journal of General Practice* 59, no. June (2009): 454–56.

129 Emily Gosden, “GPs to ‘prescribe a boiler’ to patients living in cold homes” *The Telegraph*, www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/energy/10842297/GPs-to-prescribe-a-boiler-to-patients-living-in-cold-homes.html, May 2014.

130 Chris Dayson, Nadia Bashir, and Sarah Pearson, *From Dependence to Independence: Emerging Lessons from the Rotherham Social Prescribing Pilot* (Sheffield Hallam University, 2013).

131 Linda Jarrold, Voluntary Action Rotherham Adult Health and Social Care Development Officer, *Personal Communication*, April 2014.

aim of such an approach is to address the root causes of ill health. For example, if the root cause of depression is isolation and loneliness, rectifying that via social prescribing will be more beneficial in the long term to both the patient (through earlier intervention) and the NHS (via avoided medical costs) than simply prescribing anti-depressants. Social prescribing is growing as a treatment and is particularly popular in dealing with mental health and obesity issues. Social prescribing can also operate within the system of personal health budgets for people with long term health conditions introduced in 2014.¹³² The potential benefits (though as will be explored later in this section, long term, comparative data on its benefits is lacking) of social prescribing include:

- improvements in patient health and wellbeing;
- a reduction in inappropriate prescribing of anti-depressants and other medications;
- a reduction in the number of visits by frequent attenders to GPs;
- more appropriate use of clinicians' time;
- improvements GP practice links with the local voluntary and community sector; and
- an increase in the range of services offered by the GP practice, allowing more holistic care.^{133,134}

'Green prescribing' is a subset of social prescribing and involves GPs prescribing physical activity that may be based outdoors (confusingly, the term originally referred to the colour of the prescription pads that GPs in New Zealand, where this approach was pioneered, used to prescribe physical activity).¹³⁵ Activities could range from intense physical exercise to horticultural work, depending on the needs and abilities of the patient.

Many urban green spaces offer a place where both green prescription and other social prescription activities can take place, such as group walking or horticulture activities. For example, the Sydenham Garden community project, in collaboration with Lewisham CCG and the charity MindCare, provides therapeutic sessions in horticulture and arts and crafts for patients with early-onset dementia.¹³⁶ Green prescribing therefore offers a considerable opportunity for public health funding to be used to support activities in public green spaces. As co-benefits, such an approach may contribute to the maintenance and improvement of particular spaces, and attract people who have previously used parks either rarely or not at all (as has been the case in TCV's Green Gyms, see Box 12).

For example, an overweight patient (with no complicating conditions preventing physical exercise) could obtain a green prescription from their GP for a course of physical fitness classes. The patient would pay the standard prescription charge, if applicable, and the Clinical Commissioning Group (a group of GPs in a particular area, known as a CCG) would fund the remainder of the cost of the course. Those running the classes would monitor patient attendance and feed this information back to the GP. The class organisers would also pay the local authority a fee, as part of an agreement to hold classes in a public green space. This could then go towards the cost of maintaining the green space.

Social prescribing has been identified as a potential way of treating a range of medical conditions for several years. The 2006 *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say*

132 NHS England, Personal Health Budgets, www.personalhealthbudgets.england.nhs.uk/About/faqs/, 2014.

133 Age Concern and Age UK, *Social Prescribing: A Model for Partnership Working between Primary Care and the Voluntary Sector*, 2012.

134 Brandling and House, "Social Prescribing in General Practice: Adding Meaning to Medicine."

135 Ruth Jepson, Heather Cameron, and Roma Robertson, *Green Prescription Schemes: Mapping and Current Practice* (NHS Health Scotland, 2010).

136 Sydenham Garden, *Referrals*, www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk/index.php?page=referrers, 2014.

Box 12: TCV Green Gym

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) established the first Green Gym in 1998 in Oxfordshire. Since then, it has become a nationwide programme.¹³⁷ By 2008, approximately 10,000 volunteers had helped improve more than 2,500 green spaces as part of 95 Green Gyms across the UK.¹³⁸ Green Gyms are led by trained project leaders, who show volunteers how to do a range of physical activities that improve green spaces. This includes hedge laying, vegetation clearance, pond construction and path creation. Where vulnerable people are recommended to attend by health professionals, they are accompanied by carers who can provide the necessary health and social care expertise. A national evaluation of 52 Green Gyms revealed that 36 per cent of responding participants had heard about the Green Gym from health and social care professionals and providers. The study also found that those participants who scored lowest in terms of health, wellbeing and physical activity before getting involved improved the most. An important co-benefit of this scheme was attracting new green space volunteers.

White Paper supported existing social prescribing schemes and encouraged more use of the technique.¹³⁹ The 2010 Public Health White Paper indirectly supports social prescribing by advocating public health services delivered in partnership with communities and the voluntary sector.¹⁴⁰

However, there is a mismatch between policy and practice: whilst a Nesta survey of more than 1,000 GPs found that 90 per cent considered that social prescriptions would benefit patients, just one-sixth of GPs regularly offer social prescribing.¹⁴¹ This may be due to several different barriers.

The first barrier is lack of data. There is currently no comprehensive data on how many, where, or what type of, social prescribing schemes are in place in England and Wales, or how successful they are. Whilst there are several studies evaluating individual schemes (see Box 12 for an example) there are few comparative or long term studies. There is also little data available on the number of green prescription schemes in the UK, although Scotland has helpfully ‘mapped’ the 170 green prescription schemes that involve outdoor activities, such as walking and horticulture.¹⁴²

This lack of data may explain why some CCGs are less convinced than others by the existing evidence on the public health benefits of green spaces. For example, a recent survey of GPs and CCGs found that half of respondents considered ecotherapy (see Box 2, Chapter 1) as “a valid and suitable treatment for common mental health problems” such as anxiety and depression. Yet “56 per cent wanted to know more about the evidence for the benefits of ecotherapy.”¹⁴³ This suggests a need for a more coherent, rigorous and targeted evidence base. This could be achieved through adequately designed and evaluated trials.

Recommendation: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) should conduct a social prescribing audit to determine what models are currently being used. This would help publicise the use of social prescribing amongst GPs and CCGs, enable learning from previous experience and determine which areas should be targeted for the introduction of new schemes.

137 The Conservation Volunteers, *Start a Green Gym*, www.tcv.org.uk/greengym/start-green-gym, 2014.

138 Paul Yerrell, *National Evaluation of BTCV's Green Gym* (Oxford Brookes University, 2008).

139 Department of Health, *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say: A New Direction for Community Services*, 2006.

140 HMG, *Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our Strategy for Public Health in England*.

141 Katharine Langford, Peter Baeck, and Martha Hampson, *More than Medicine: New Services for People Powered Public Health* (Nesta, 2013).

142 Jepson, Cameron, and Robertson, *Green Prescription Schemes: Mapping and Current Practice*.

143 Ecominds, *Feel Better Outside, Feel Better Inside: Ecotherapy for Mental Wellbeing, Resilience and Recovery*, 2013.

Scotland's green prescription mapping exercise included a survey of scheme providers, which identified further barriers. These include health and safety issues (particularly amongst those involved in horticultural work) and the longevity of providers (will they remain in place for several years). There is also the issue of whether providers can offer the specialist staff needed for some mental and physical health conditions. The provision of ongoing funding and support for providers would likely help to overcome these issues. One way in which that support can be provided is being piloted in Rotherham (Box 10). Here, the focus is on social prescribing for the elderly but a similar model could be expanded to include green prescribing.

Finally, there is a suggestion that lack of knowledge about suitably qualified providers, i.e. civil society groups that are willing and able to support referred patients, may be discouraging GPs from social and green prescribing.¹⁴⁴ Being unable to easily compare costs and service provision may also hinder green prescription. A website of green prescription providers could therefore encourage the use of green prescription by GPs.

However, such problems are not insurmountable. Results from the questionnaire sent to green prescribing schemes in Scotland identified a range of characteristics shared by successful schemes:

- a GP or health professional with responsibility for strategy and scheme promotion;
- ongoing and sustainable funding;
- a simple referral process; and
- feedback to the health professionals (e.g. ensuring that participants have attended and that providers are legitimate and effective).¹⁴⁵

Recommendation: NICE and CCGs should determine the success of existing green prescribing schemes. Based on the results, green prescription trials should be run to identify which schemes are most successful and why. All trials should be fully evaluated for their health outcomes.

Health and Wellbeing Boards seem well-placed to create, or expand on an existing, register of the potential green prescription activities on offer in a local area that meet the required standard. Such a register would also allow easy scrutiny by civil society and others that the schemes were legitimate. To help ensure these registers reflect changes in green prescription providers over time, consideration should be given to crowdsourcing green prescription provider information, i.e. allowing providers to register and amend their details.

Recommendation: Registers of local green prescription providers should be established by Health and Wellbeing Boards. These should include information on skills, training and expertise, location, which groups of patients they are able to support, and cost. This would allow GPs to match patients with local providers that are able to support their particular needs. It would also allow existing providers to identify 'gaps' in patient support, potentially encouraging further training, as well as additional and/or more cost-effective service provision.

144 Brandling and House, "Social Prescribing in General Practice: Adding Meaning to Medicine."

145 Jepson, Cameron, and Robertson, *Green Prescription Schemes: Mapping and Current Practice*.

146 William H Whyte, *City: Rediscovering the Center*, 1988.

147 Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, *Role of the PCC*, <http://apccs.police.uk/role-of-the-pcc/>, 2014.

148 Home Office, *Have You Got What It Takes? Your Role as Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)*, 2012.

149 Edward C Burks, "Hoving to Upgrade Bryant Park Area; Hoving Has Plan for Bryant Park," *New York Times*, June 24, 1966, <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=FB071EFA3C55117B93C6AB178DD85F428685F9>.

150 "Hoving Calls a Meeting to Plan For Restoration of Bryant Park; Cleanup Is Urged for Bryant Park," *New York Times*, June 22, 1966, <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=FB0910F3C55117B93C0AB178DD85F428685F9>.

151 American Society of Landscape Architects, Bryant Park, www.asla.org/2010awards/403.html, 2010.

152 Project for Public Spaces, Bryant Park, www.pps.org/great_public_spaces/one?public_place_id=26, 2001.

153 Alison Gregor, "Bryant Park Office Rents Outperform the Rest of Midtown Manhattan," October 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/10/03/realestate/commercial/bryant-park-office-rents-outperform-the-rest-of-midtown-manchattan.html?_r=0&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1398171679-VVVKbT72v6JbCs22B3Srs6g.

154 Project for Public Spaces, Bryant Park, www.pps.org/great_public_spaces/one?public_place_id=26, 2001.

155 National Recreation and Park Association, *Creating Safe Park Environments to Enhance Community Wellness*, 2012, www.nrpa.org/Grants-and-Partners/Recreation-and-Health/Healthy-Communities/.

156 Nottingham Post, £1.6m to kick off new sports zone at Forest, www.nottinghampost.com/pound-1-6m-kick-new-sports-zone-Forest/story-18685905-detail/story.html, 2013.

157 Eddie Curry, Nottingham City Council Head of Parks and Open Spaces, APSE Parks Seminar Presentation, 20 March 2014.

158 Matthew Ellis, Commissioner's Community Fund, www.staffordshire-pcc.gov.uk/fund/, 2014.

Crime

"The best way to handle the problem of undesirables is to make the place attractive to everyone else."

William H. Whyte¹⁴⁶

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) were established in 2012 and took control of police force area budgets worth a combined £8 billion.¹⁴⁷ An important responsibility of PCCs is to deliver a more cost-effective police service that will both improve community safety and reduce crime.¹⁴⁸ One way in which this can be delivered is through urban green spaces. As discussed in Chapter 1, neglected and derelict urban green spaces can provide a haven for crime, but well designed and maintained green spaces (particularly where local communities are involved in their maintenance) can help reduce crime (see also Box 13).

Box 13: Bryant Park, New York City

In 1966, a *New York Times* article described Bryant Park as attracting "drug addicts, prostitutes, winos and derelicts".¹⁴⁹ The park's supervisor, Andrew Petrochko, claimed that "It's the worst I've seen it in my 25 years here".¹⁵⁰ By the early 1970s, police barricades were necessary at the park's entrances after 9pm.¹⁵¹ In 1979, Bryant Park was the scene of 150 robberies.¹⁵²

However, by the late 1990s, the park had been transformed into "an urban oasis".¹⁵³ Critical to this transformation was the redesign of the park: new entrances were added, visual barriers were removed, and paths, lighting and signage were improved.¹⁵⁴ The management and maintenance of the park by a new Business Improvement District (see Chapter 6) ensured the introduction of kiosks, a theatre ticket stand and a restaurant to not only raise funds for maintenance but also attract public activity and scrutiny. In turn, this "reduced crime by 92 percent and doubled the number of annual park visitors".¹⁵⁵

An argument can therefore be made for funding at least some urban green space maintenance and community activities from policing budgets, and this has been taken on board by some PCCs. For example, Nottingham's Forest Sports Zone is a project to improve sports facilities in The Forest recreation ground, including the creation of a "new pavilion, changing rooms and [football] pitch".¹⁵⁶ The £1.7 million project will be partly funded (£150,000) by the Nottinghamshire PCC.¹⁵⁷

In addition, some PCCs have established funds providing grants to support community safety.e.g.¹⁵⁸ Similar initiatives should be offered by all PCCs, allowing communities and local authorities to apply for funding to help support a park keeper, or parkie, for those green spaces identified as particular hotspots of crime.

Recommendation: Police and Crime Commissioners should allow communities and local authorities to apply for funding to help support park keepers for those green spaces identified as particular hotspots of crime.

Although some individual PCCs may realise the crime reduction benefits of investing in urban green space, others will be unaware of the link. Whilst emphasising the importance of communities in reducing crime, current PCC guidance makes no mention of the importance of the local environment. Future

guidance documents should therefore highlight the relationship between well designed and maintained local environments and reductions in crime.

Recommendation: Future Police and Crime Commissioner guidance documents should increase awareness amongst PCCs that well designed and maintained urban green space can help reduce crime.

Education

The 1943 County of London Plan, written in the wake of severe bomb damage, emphasised the importance of allowing the same space to serve different needs. For example, “The provision of playing fields for adults and school-children might with advantage be considered as a single problem, for usually the school-children’s games periods are arranged during school hours, when adults are at work, so that it is possible, subject to the maximum intensity of use to which pitches can be put, for the same playing fields to be used for both purposes”.¹⁵⁹ Seventy years later, Rotherfield Primary School won a two year campaign to use an adjacent green space. This space was owned by the council for the use of nearby housing association residents. Now, the school has exclusive access to the space in school hours during term time and residents have access the remainder of the time.¹⁶⁰ The area has even been spruced up using money from the local CCG.¹⁶¹

Box 14: Schoolyards to Playgrounds, New York City

The \$117 million (£70 million) ‘Schoolyards to Playgrounds’ programme was adopted in New York in 2007, as part of Mayor Bloomberg’s strategic plan for the city.¹⁶² The aim was to open schoolyards to the general public in the evenings, at weekends and during the school holidays, to help address poor access to green space in the city. A mapping exercise identified 290 schoolyards potentially suitable for the scheme. Of these, 69 required no capital improvements and could simply be opened. However, in many cases, schoolyards comprised only asphalt, lacking play facilities and not being used for recreation but, for example, for car parking. Renovations of these sites, costing between \$400,000 and \$1.2 million, were undertaken. As of April 2013, 229 schoolyards were open to the public. Three-quarters of schoolyard visitors walk to reach it and more than two-thirds exercise in the playground either ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’.

The Department of Education owns the schoolyards and employs the school custodial staff responsible for site operation and maintenance for all the playgrounds. The custodial staff ensure that the schoolyard gates are open between 8am and dusk when the school is not in session. The Department of Education makes reimbursement for maintenance costs conditional on the submission of monthly use surveys. By comparing the use of the site with the amount charged by the custodian, the Department can decide which schoolyards to close in favour of opening others that are likely to be more heavily used. Community concerns about anti-social behaviour, noise and loss of car parking were addressed through a series of meetings.¹⁶³

Conversely, schools can also green their existing outdoor areas and open them to the public (see Box 14). Such a move will require considerable consultation, the provision of maintenance funding, as well as staffing agreements to open and close the gates. The UK’s cities are considerably greener than New York, and so fewer urban areas are likely to require this intervention. Nevertheless, opening

159 Patrick Abercrombie and John Henry Forshaw, “Chapter 3: Open Spaces and Park System,” in *County of London Plan, 1943*, 36–47.

160 Syma Mohammed, *School Wins Two-Year Fight to Use Parkland*, 2013, www.islingtongazette.co.uk/news/school_wins_two_year_fight_to_use_parkland_1_2264615.

161 London Borough of Islington Council, “Islington Active Spaces,” 2013, www.islington.gov.uk/services/children-families/cs-things-to-do/Pages/Islington-Active-Spaces.aspx.

162 Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, *planNYC: A Greener, Greater New York (Update April 2011)*, 2011.

163 New York City Global Partners, *Best Practice: Converting Schoolyards to Community Playgrounds*, 2013.

school playgrounds can be an effective way to increase access to green space and recreation areas, and should be considered in areas deprived of green space where land prices are too high or space too limited to allow the creation of a new park.

With the rise in School Farms, the success of the Growing with Schools programme and the positive impacts of Forest School programmes, there is increasing recognition that outdoor learning is an important part of a child's education.^{164,165,166} Schools could, therefore, begin to play an important role in green space creation and maintenance by:

- Greening their own land;
- Increasing public access to their own green space (e.g. during weekends and holidays); and
- Supporting the maintenance of local green spaces where schools have no access to their own.

This could be done in partnership with local authorities and other public sector bodies, such as CCGs (as in the case of Rotherfield Primary School). In some cases, this has already happened. For example, the caretaker at Watford's Central Primary School locks the gate to the school buildings at the end of the school day and opens the gates to the ball park and pocket park. This allows full public access after school hours, at weekends and during school holidays. The pocket park is maintained by Watford Borough Council and a committee of nearby residents monitor the pocket park and ball park on an informal basis.¹⁶⁷

Recommendation: DfE should provide guidance to schools on how to green their open spaces safely, make best use of them, and increase public access outside of school hours. DfE should also provide guidance for schools interested in working with local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups to help maintain local green spaces.

Leps, Inps, city deals and growth deals

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are partnerships between local authorities and businesses. Established in 2011, there are now 39 LEPs covering the whole of England. Like the City Deals (see below), the intention is to “drive sustainable economic growth and create the conditions to increase private sector jobs in their communities.”¹⁶⁸ LEPs now have access to considerable funding resources, including the £730 million Growing Places Fund, the £15 million Rural Growth Networks, and £5 billion of EU Structural Funds between 2014 and 2020.¹⁶⁹

LEPs have the potential to direct funds to improve urban green space provision. For example, applications for the EU Structural Funds require consideration of green space.¹⁷⁰ Should the revised Treasury Green Book include natural capital accounting, this would help LEPs to make the case to Central Government for incorporating green infrastructure (including green spaces) into their programmes. In addition, LEPs are key partners in developing City Deals and the more recently introduced Growth Deals.^{171,172} Both schemes provide funding for initiatives that benefit the local economy, although City Deals go further and also involve the devolution of certain powers to cities.

Good quality green spaces contribute to the attractiveness of cities to investors, residents (see Box 7 for our analysis of how green space quality can affect property

164 FCFCG, “School Farms Network”, 2013, www.farmgarden.org.uk/education/school-farms-network.

165 FCFCG, “Growing with Schools”, 2013, www.farmgarden.org.uk/education/growing-with-schools/.

166 Liz O'Brien and Richard Murray, “Forest School and Its Impacts on Young Children: Case Studies in Britain,” *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 6, no. 4 (2007): 249–65.

167 Central Primary School, *Personal Communication*, May 2014.

168 Michael Heseltine, *No Stone Unturned in Pursuit of Growth*, 2012.

169 National Audit Office, *Funding and Structures for Local Economic Growth*, 2013.

170 HMG, *The Development and Delivery of European Structural and Investment Funds Strategies: Supplementary Guidance to Local Enterprise Partnerships*, 2013.

171 HMG, *Unlocking Growth in Cities – Wave 1*, 2012.

172 HMG, *Growth Deals: Initial Guidance for Local Enterprise Partnerships*, 2013.

prices), and tourists. They also contribute to their resilience against climate change and flood events (see our *Park Land* report) and provide important social benefits (see Chapter 1). The maintenance and creation of green spaces should therefore form part of a city's economic growth strategy. Yet while the first wave of City Deals were being used as a way of supporting low carbon development, our analysis has found that all eight first wave City Deals failed to consider their green spaces as opportunities for investment (although Liverpool did focus on the cleanliness of the River Mersey).^{173,174} In addition, the Growth Deals for the five most populous urban areas in England (Greater London, Greater Manchester, Greater Birmingham, Leeds and Liverpool) revealed that only Liverpool considered the natural environment as playing a role in economic growth.¹⁷⁵

This highlights the critical role that Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) should be playing in raising the profile of the natural environment in urban areas and its potential contribution to the local economy. However, in contrast to the LEPs, the 48 LNPs have gaps in their coverage of England and limited access to funding beyond an initial £1 million capacity building fund.^{176,177} This compromises their ability to effect long term change in the local environment. In addition, there is no requirement for LNPs and LEPs to collaborate, and no way of monitoring where this is or is not happening.

Recommendation: Central Government should create a website for Local Nature Partnerships, similar to that available to Local Enterprise Partnerships. This would enable them to share knowledge and resources, such as examples of effective collaboration with LEPs and local authorities.

Conclusions

This chapter has identified existing sources of funding that could supplement local authority green space maintenance and creation budgets. It has also explored potential changes to those funding sources to help ensure longer-term funding, with a focus on levies on top of council tax, endowments, and grants. However, there are also other potential sources of public sector funding beyond local authority green space budgets that could be harnessed for green space maintenance, such as public health and education. Of these, the most important is likely to be public health; green spaces offer a wide range of public health benefits (see Chapter 1), despite there being no statutory duty to maintain them. Each of these will be appropriate in a specific range of different circumstances.

Yet given the current focus on austerity, public sector funding must be spent cost-effectively, i.e. deliver the greatest green space improvements and benefits, in the areas where they are needed most, for the least money. This will be explored in the next chapter.

173 Faye Scott, *Green Cities: Using City Deals to Drive Low Carbon Growth* (Green Alliance, 2012).

174 Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership, *Liverpool City Region Deal*, 2012.

175 Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership, *Liverpool City Region Growth Deal*, 2014.

176 Defra, "Map of Local Nature Partnerships," 2013, www.gov.uk/government/publications/map-of-local-nature-partnerships.

177 Defra, "Local areas are keen to form Local Nature Partnerships," 2011, www.gov.uk/government/news/local-areas-are-keen-to-form-local-nature-partnerships.

4

Public Sector Spending

The previous chapter identified a variety of potential new funding sources for urban green space maintenance, ranging from public sector budgets for health and education, to taking advantage of existing local structures and schemes, such as City Deals and local Enterprise Partnerships. However, whilst raising public sector funding for urban green spaces is one important obstacle to overcome; spending that funding effectively is another.

Green space strategies

“All forms of open space need to be considered as a whole, and to be co-ordinated into a closely-linked park system”

Abercrombie & Forshaw, County of London Plan, 1943

A green space strategy (or open space strategy) is a document created by a local authority to establish its “vision for using its green space and the goals it wants to achieve, plus the resources, methods and time needed to meet these goals”.¹⁷⁸ Ideally, green space strategies can help to better target existing resources and make the case for maintained or increased funding. The National Audit Office (NAO) found that “over 70 per cent of green space managers thought they had helped to strengthen support for green space amongst other officers and local politicians”.¹⁷⁹

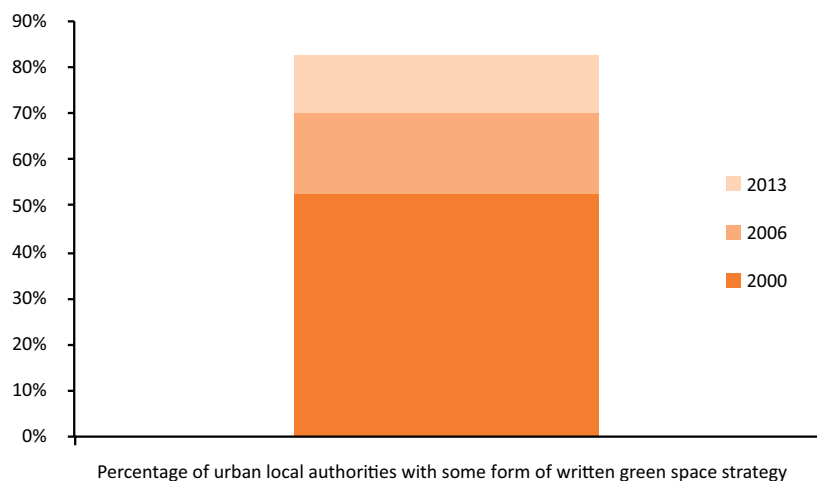
Although there is no statutory requirement for local authorities to create a green space strategy, our Freedom of Information request found that almost 83 per cent of local authorities have at least some form of written green space strategy (see Figure 4).

The content and quality of existing urban green space strategies varies enormously. Of the 116 urban local authorities that said they had an open space strategy, only 74 could be located for analysis. Of these, 40 per cent failed to include any measureable targets for the quantity of green space in their area. In addition, 40 per cent failed to include measureable targets for the quality of their green spaces, and more than one third failed to include any measureable targets for public access to green space. Compounding this problem, 54 per cent failed to indicate any timetable for improvements and 55 per cent failed to include a monitoring strategy to ensure targets had been reached. There are also issues surrounding the survey work required to inform green space strategies. When these were first created, funding issues meant that smaller sites, (typically those less than 0.4 hectares in area), often along with green spaces belonging to schools, highways and housing

¹⁷⁸ CABE Space, *Green Space Strategies*, 2004.

¹⁷⁹ National Audit Office, *Enhancing Urban Green Space* (London, UK: The Stationery Office, 2006).

Figure 4: The cumulative percentage of urban local authorities with at least some form of written green space strategy. 2000 and 2006 data was taken from the National Audit Office, 2013 data was from the 116 urban local authorities that responded to our own Freedom of information request



estates were not included.¹⁸⁰ This meant that areas could be highlighted as deficient in open space, which in actuality had good provision.

In addition, this could impact on the way that local authorities commission public projects and services, such as building schools and highways maintenance. Without an accurate and comprehensive green space strategy and data on green space quality, it is difficult to include green space maintenance in public project and service delivery contracts.

Recommendation: In line with our Park Land report, a crowdsourced, freely publicly accessible urban green space map should be created, to which local authorities and other public sector bodies can add their data. This will enable more accurate analysis of where resources should be directed to improve green space quality and provision and help inform local authority commissioning.

Competitions

Prizes and competitions have long been used to encourage the development of solutions to difficult problems. For example, in 1714 the British Government introduced a competition for a reasonably accurate method of determining longitude at sea. This was crucial for Britain to maintain its maritime advantage. The prize was £20,000 (approximately £4 million in 2012 terms) and the unexpected winner was John Harrison, a carpenter and watchmaker.¹⁸¹ There are several advantages to the use of competitions and prizes rather than, for example, grants:

- The prize money is only paid out based on success.
- Greater capital can be raised for the task. For example, the 26 teams competing for the \$10 million Ansari X PRIZE collectively spent \$100 million.

¹⁸⁰ Sue Morgan, Around the Block Ltd Director, Personal Communication, March 2014.

¹⁸¹ H. Quill, "John Harrison, Copley Medallist, and the £20 000 Longitude Prize," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 8, no. 2 (1963): 146–60.

182 Erika B. Wagner, "Why Prize? The Surprising Resurgence of Prizes To Stimulate Innovation," *Research-Technology Management* 54, no. 6 (November 2011): 32–36.

183 J H Lawton et al., *Making Space for Nature: A Review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network* (Defra, 2010).

184 Defra, *The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature*. CM 8082.

185 Collingwood Environmental Planning, *Monitoring and Evaluation of Nature Improvement Areas: Year 1 (2012–13) Progress Report*, 2013.

186 John Lawton, *Nature Improvement Areas One Year on: A Guest Blog by Professor Sir John Lawton*, 2013, www.rspb.org.uk/community/ourwork/b/martinharper/archive/2013/03/27/nature-improvement-areas-one-year-on-a-guest-blog-by-professor-sir-john-lawton.aspx.

187 Greater London Authority, All London Green Grid, www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/greening-london/improving-londons-parks-green-spaces/all-london-green-grid, 2014.

188 Scottish Natural Heritage, Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network, www.snh.gov.uk/land-and-sea/managing-the-land/spatial-ecology/case-studies/glasgow-clyde-green-netw/, 2014.

189 Richard D. Knowles, "Transit Oriented Development in Copenhagen, Denmark: From the Finger Plan to Ø Restad," *Journal of Transport Geography* 22 (May 2012).

190 Annika Kruuse, *GraBS Expert Paper 6: The Green Space Factor and the Green Points System*, 2011.

191 City of Hamburg, *Grünes Netz Hamburg*, 2012, www.hamburg.de/contentblob/3908156/data/erlaeuterungen-freiraumverengl.pdf.

192 City of Hamburg, *Gesamtprojekt: Häufig gestellte Fragen*, www.hamburg.de/a7-deckel/faq-gesamtprojekt/, 2014.

- A greater range of approaches can be trialled and tested. For example, when Netflix offered a \$1 million prize for an improved prediction algorithm, more than 400,000 entries were generated.
- A prize opens the field of participants, allowing innovative non-experts (such as John Harrison and the Longitude Prize) to take part.
- They increase public awareness of the problem that the prize is hoping to solve.¹⁸²

Extending competitions to the complex problems facing the natural environment is a promising approach. In 2010, the Lawton review identified that our current network of wildlife sites is insufficient to support biodiversity given continuing environmental change and human pressures. In response, the Government launched a £7.5 million competition to identify 12 initial 'Nature Improvement Areas' (NIAs).^{183,184} In total, 76 applications were received and the 12 final projects have leveraged an additional £40 million in cash, gifts in kind, and voluntary support.¹⁸⁵ The competition also helped create new partnerships and conservation approaches.¹⁸⁶

A few British cities have also made attempts to improve green space connectivity, including the All London Green Grid, and the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network.^{187,188} However, many urban green spaces remain fragmented, and some urban areas are deprived of access to green spaces (see Chapter 1). We have also found that Green Space Strategies are important but currently insufficient (see the previous section). In addition, we have found that 86 per cent of NIAs by area are located outside of areas classified as urban by the Office for National Statistics. There is therefore a need to address green space fragmentation in cities.

Some German and Scandinavian cities have also begun to address the issue of urban green space connectivity, including Copenhagen ('Green Fingers'), Berlin ('Biotope Area Factor', also taken up by Southampton) and Hamburg (Green Network, see Box 15).^{189,190} The US city of Milwaukee's entry to the 2012–13 Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayor's Challenge attempted to plant derelict land (from foreclosures) with orchards, gardens, and small farms to improve

Box 15: Hamburg's Green Network

Hamburg's Grünes Netz (Green Network) plan involves the completion of an almost 100 year old vision. In 1919, Fritz Schumacher developed the axial concept for Hamburg, which involved Hamburg's development being concentrated in radial axes from the centre, separated by areas of green and open space (similar to Copenhagen's 'Green Fingers' concept). Over time, the concept of 'green rings' was also introduced. Green and public open spaces now form approximately half of Hamburg's area, but many are isolated from other green spaces. Existing spaces will therefore be linked by "Narrow green corridors and footpaths in the shape of green streets with reduced traffic". The city has also identified several areas that are deficient in open and green space (as London also has). As a result, "Greening courtyards and multiple or different use of school grounds, sports grounds, car parks or streets will be used to increase the supply of open space in areas where it is impossible to create new public open space".¹⁹¹ Bigger projects include a green canopy over the six to eight lane A7 motorway. Financing this scheme will require a mixture of public sector and private sector funding.¹⁹²

Figure 5: Schematic representation of the two green rings and radial axes of Hamburg's Green Network¹⁹³



community nutrition.¹⁹⁴ These approaches help to create a cohesive network of urban green spaces: connecting existing green spaces and increasing green space provision. The benefits include improved public access to green spaces, and a range of environmental benefits.

In addition, there is a growing need for new partnerships to help address the public sector funding gap that urban green spaces are facing (see our *Park Land* report for further details).

Recommendation: The Government should establish a new competition, similar to the Nature Improvement Areas competition. This would ask for proposals to increase connectivity between urban green spaces at a city-wide level, as well as improve public access to urban green spaces. Like the NIA competition, this would require partnership working, drawing on local authority Green Space Strategies, nature conservation organisation expertise, Natural England and the Environment Agency, the private sector and the public.

Community budgets

Under the traditional government (whether local or central) system, urban green spaces have slipped through the gaps in terms of policy and funding. At a Central Government level there is no Minister, department, team, or even individual, solely responsible for urban green spaces. At a local government level, parks and green spaces are often the responsibility of larger Leisure, Streetscene and/or Environment

193 City of Hamburg, "Die beiden Grünen Ringe verbinden die Landschaftsachsen," 2014, www.hamburg.de/gruenes-netz/3907110/die-gruenen-ringe.html.

194 Tom Barrett, "Mayors Challenge Finalist: Milwaukee (Video, Vote)", *Huffington Post*, www.huffingtonpost.com/tom-barrett/mayors-challenge-milwaukee_b_2711353.html?utm_hp_ref=mayors-challenge, 2014.

teams with multiple maintenance contracts. Outside of government, there is no single, coherent voluntary or industry sector voice for green spaces.¹⁹⁵

Community Budgets are intended to help break down the silos of government policy and spending. They pool budgets from local authorities and other public sector bodies for spending on people and places rather than government functions.¹⁹⁶ In the UK, they have been used in various forms since the early 1990s. The aims are to avoid duplication of effort by sharing local knowledge, and make savings by using community assets and volunteer effort. This is aided by relaxing or removing any central rules and regulations that prevent more flexible public spending.¹⁹⁷ As a result, community budgets have the potential to deliver better outcomes more cost-effectively (although robust evaluation data is often lacking).

In 2011, the Government launched Whole Place community budget pilots in four areas, at a cost of £4.8 million. The aim was to conduct cost-benefit analyses of reforms under four themes: including health and wellbeing, economic opportunity, community safety, and families with complex needs.¹⁹⁸ For example, the Greater Manchester area identified the number of young children not ready for school by the age of four or five as a particular issue. As a result, it proposed early risk identification and effective support provision. These would be achieved through a ‘whole family’ approach from public services and the introduction of common terms and conditions for childcare workers.¹⁹⁹ The pilot programme ended in 2012 with the publication of the business cases. Ernst & Young calculated that if the estimated benefits from the four pilot areas were scaled up across the country, the net benefit for the taxpayer could be between £4 and 8 billion each year.²⁰⁰ These plans are currently being implemented. It is imperative that proper assessment of the pilots is done.

There are two main mechanisms by which green spaces could benefit from community budgets. The first is the maintenance (rather than continued decline) of existing green space budgets as a result of the cost savings achieved by the community budget. The second is the potential increase in green space budgets: breaking down existing public sector silos through community budgets could enable the recognition of the multiple economic, environmental and social benefits green spaces provide. The widespread use of community budgets could, therefore, help secure long term improvements in urban green space funding.

However, community budgets are not a panacea. They require upfront investment and resources to establish, and the resultant savings and benefits take time to develop. In addition, outcomes need to be measured, and savings and benefits need to be harnessed and reinvested fairly. This can be aided by the sharing of knowledge and experience.

Participatory budgeting/neighbourhood community budgets

Whilst community budgets provide a more holistic framework for public sector spending, that spending remains directed by the public sector, often with little community engagement. Participatory budgeting, in contrast, provides local people with a direct say in how their local authority’s funds are spent. Citizens are provided with information that “enables them to be engaged in prioritising the needs of their neighbourhoods, propose and debate new services and projects and set budgets in a democratic and transparent way”, without the responsibility

¹⁹⁵ Drayson, *Park Land*.

¹⁹⁶ Mark Sandford, *Community Budgets and City Deals* (House of Commons Library, 2014).

¹⁹⁷ DCLG, *Community Budgets*, www.gov.uk/government/policies/giving-local-authorities-more-control-over-how-they-spend-public-money-in-their-area-2/supporting-pages/community-budgets, 2014.

¹⁹⁸ NAO, *Case Study on Integration : Measuring the Costs and Benefits of Whole-Place Community Budgets*, 2013.

¹⁹⁹ HM Government and Local Government Association, *Local Public Service Transformation: A Guide to Whole Place Community Budgets*, 2013.

²⁰⁰ Ernst & Young LLP, *Whole Place Community Budgets: A Review of the Potential for Aggregation*, 2013.

of project delivery.²⁰¹ In practice, there are many ways this can be achieved, from top-down consultation to various forms of intensive participation process. Participatory budgeting was first invented in Porto Alegre (Brazil) in 1989. Participatory budgets are now used in more than 100 European cities, including London (Box 16 describes how participatory budgeting works in Chicago).²⁰²

Box 16: Participatory budgeting in Chicago's 49th ward

The City of Chicago is split into 50 wards, each of which is represented by an elected alderman. Every year, each alderman is allocated more than \$1 million to spend on infrastructure improvements in their ward.²⁰³ Spending decisions are entirely at the discretion of the aldermen. In 2009, Alderman Joe Moore used participatory budgeting to engage ward residents in the spending of his funding. The four-step process was designed by a steering group comprising representatives of various civic, religious and community organisations in the ward. Advice and guidance were provided by a variety of institutes and organisations. Various green space projects have been voted for, including a playground replacement, tree planting, path creation, and the creation of community gardens.²⁰⁴ All residents of the ward aged 16 or over are eligible to vote. However, turnout remains relatively low (1,500 of the more than 40,000 residents).²⁰⁵

201 PB Unit, "What is Participatory Budgeting?", 2007, www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/about.

202 Yves Sintomer, Carsten Herzberg, and Anja Röcke, "Participatory Budgeting in Europe: Potentials and Challenges," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, no. 1 (March 2008): 164–78.

203 City of Chicago, *Capital Improvement Program*, www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/obm/provdrs/cap_improve.html, 2014.

204 Joe Moore, *Participatory Budgeting*, www.ward49.com/participatory-budgeting/, 2014.

205 Joe Moore, *Participatory Budgeting*, www.ward49.com/participatory-budgeting/#intro, 2014.

206 Robert Rutherford et al., *Neighbourhood Community Budget Pilot Programme: Research, Learning, Evaluation and Lessons* (DCLG, 2013).

207 Communities and Local Government Select Committee, *Community Budgets*, 2013.

208 ODPM, *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter* (London, UK: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005).

209 DCLG and LGA, *Our Place!* (London, UK: Local Government Association, 2013).

210 LGA, "Our Place Neighbourhood Community Budgets", 2013, www.local.gov.uk/community-budgets/-/journal_content/56/10180/3691921/ARTICLE.

211 Rachel Edwards, CLG Big Society & Community Rights Division, *Personal Communication*, July 2014.

212 Eddie Curry, Nottingham City Council Head of Parks and Open Spaces, APSE Parks Seminar Presentation, 20 March 2014.

As with community budgets participatory budgeting is not a silver bullet.²⁰⁶ Different approaches will be needed in different contexts, requiring upfront investment in outreach and engagement. Their savings and benefits are also likely to take longer than those of community budgets.²⁰⁷ However, the benefits of the participatory budgeting approach have been recognised by Central Government: "Where it has been tried internationally it has enhanced participation in local democracy, improved the delivery of local services, and enhanced the roles of local councillors."²⁰⁸ The ten Our Place pilots between 2012 and 2013 resulted in the creation of neighbourhood level community budgets co-designed with local residents, as well as operational plans for delivery in 2013/14. Although the impact of these budgets cannot yet be evaluated, initial actions include the creation of London's first parish council in 10 years and the creation of e-democracy tools to engage citizens in decision-making.²⁰⁹ The scheme has now been rolled out to 100 further communities.²¹⁰ Local evaluations will be conducted, with funding and support from DCLG. DCLG are also collating and sharing the lessons learned from the pilots.²¹¹

Conclusions

This chapter focused on the spending of public sector green space funding. Green Space Strategies are one useful tool to help achieve targeted and cost-effective funding, but are currently inadequate. Pooling public sector funding (via community budgets) and devolving decision-making to communities (through participatory budgeting) are also important. Complementing this, there remains considerable scope for urban green space funding from civil society and the private sector (for example, every £1 of Nottingham City Council's Parks and Open Spaces funding generates £10 of external funding), and this will be explored in the following chapter.²¹²

5

Civil Society and Private Sector Philanthropy

The previous chapter covered the existing methods the public sector can use to raise funding for parks and other urban green spaces. It also explored potential new funding sources that could help make up the shortfall in local authority budgets and how these could be more effectively spent. However, the public sector alone cannot, is not, and perhaps should not, financially support urban green spaces in isolation.

As described in Chapter 1, communities derive important benefits from access to high quality urban green spaces, from improved health to social cohesion. Green spaces help to make our cities attractive places to live, benefitting not only civil society but also the private sector. As a result, both the private sector and civil society have some responsibility to support the maintenance and improvement of the green spaces. This represents a considerable opportunity, since local authority green space managers have seen a more than 30 per cent increase in the number of friends and user groups.²¹³ Partly as a reflection of this, in 2013, the charity Nesta launched its Rethinking Parks programme to support innovation in sustainable parks funding. Charities and voluntary organisations were invited to apply for a share of £1 million funding.

This chapter therefore examines how existing civil society and private sector funding methods can be strengthened or improved, as well as exploring new methods of funding (as part of this research, we have also considered Community Shares and Social Impact Bonds but consider that there are few policy opportunities associated with these).

Philanthropic and charitable donations

Donations from wealthy individuals provided some of our earliest public green spaces, perhaps as a result of slow government action in the 19th century (despite the impetus of an 1833 Select Committee report on public walks, its “recommendations were only implemented very slowly, and at first by means of private munificence”).²¹⁴ Britain’s first publicly accessible and deliberately designed park was created in 1840. A wealthy mill owner commissioned an arboretum on land that was formerly a summer retreat, and donated the completed park to Derby Town Council and the public.²¹⁵ This example also illustrates a problem noted in the previous chapter; it is often easier to attract large donations for capital works rather than ongoing maintenance (although this issue is starting to be addressed: see Box 17). Private donations remain an important part of park creation, improvement and maintenance.

213 Peter Neal Consulting and Community First Partnership, *State of UK Public Parks 2014: Renaissance to Risk?*.

214 J. Mordaunt Crook, “Book Review: The Park and the Town, Public Landscape in the 19th and 20th Centuries by G. F. Chadwick,” *Victorian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1967): 241–43.

215 BBC Derby, *Derby’s Arboretum Park*, 2003, www.bbc.co.uk/derby/features/tours/parks/derby/arboretum_history.shtml.

Box 17: The Royal Parks Foundation

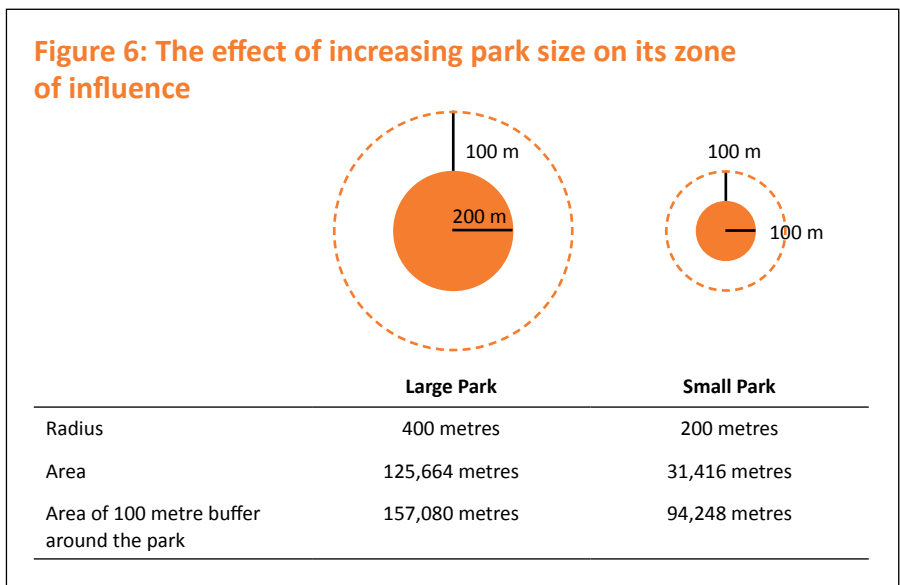
The Royal Parks Foundation was established in 2003 in response to reduced government funding for the Royal Parks Agency (the delivery body for the eight Royal Parks in London, including Hyde Park). The Foundation is an independent charity (allowing it to claim Gift Aid) that has focused on large projects, as well as sports and education provision, i.e. typically those things for which the Royal Parks receive little or no government funding. In 2011/12, the Foundation made grants of approximately £1.8 million to the Royal Parks.²¹⁶ The Foundation’s running costs are covered by the funds raised from the annual half marathon that it organises. Its main sources of funding include charitable grants, public donations and the private sector.

Members of the public can make one-off or regular payments of varying amounts to the Royal Parks. Small donations (£25 each) can also be made for particular natural features (including deer, ducks, trees and stag beetles) within the Royal Parks via adoption programmes. Major donations can also be made specifically to a particular project or park and the gift can be acknowledged. Independent schools located close to the Royal Parks have also been targeted to help fundraise.²¹⁷

High profile philanthropic organisations have also provided funding to the Royal Parks via the Foundation. For example, an Esmée Fairbairn Foundation grant in 2006 helped to create wetlands in Bushy Park.²¹⁸ The Tiffany & Co. Foundation also pledged \$1.25 million for a two-year programme to restore water features across the eight Royal Parks.

The Foundation has also encouraged corporate donations. Deutsche Bank funded an expansion of the Foundation’s science programme to 100 of the most disadvantaged secondary schools in London, and the Halcyon Gallery has supported classes for primary and secondary school children at the Foundation’s education centre.^{219,220}

There is one important difficulty in relying entirely on donations to parks and other urban green spaces. Donations are usually highly location-specific; most people donate to their local park.²²¹ This can mean that parks in more deprived areas receive fewer donations than those in wealthier areas. It can also mean that larger parks can attract a greater number of potential donors than smaller green spaces simply by virtue of their geography (see Figure 6).



216 The Royal Parks Agency, *The Royal Parks Annual Report and Accounts 2011–2012*, 2012.

217 Sara Lom, Royal Parks Foundation Chief Executive, *Personal Communication*, August 2013.

218 The Royal Parks Foundation, *Our First Ten Years*, 2013.

219 The Royal Parks Agency, *The Royal Parks Annual Report and Accounts 2012–2013*, 2013.

220 The Royal Parks Foundation, *Support the Centre*, 2014, www.supporttheroyalparks.org/explore/isis_education_centre/what_is_the_isis_education_centre/support_the_centre.

221 Sara Lom, Royal Parks Foundation Chief Executive, *Personal Communication*, August 2013.

These effects can be clearly seen in New York (see Box 18) and is likely to also be the case in the UK.²²² This means that smaller and/or less popular green spaces may be more reliant on fluctuating public sector budgets.

Box 18: Central Park, New York

One of New York's largest parks, Central Park is managed by both the City's Parks & Recreation Department and a conservancy (a private, non-profit organisation dedicated to the conservation of the park) via a management agreement. Central Park is relatively well funded in comparison with other, smaller, New York parks. Donations to the conservancy are tax deductible. Arguing that this means park donations deprive the New York government of tax revenues, the new mayor, Bill de Blasio, is supporting a controversial proposed Bill. The Bill would redistribute 20 per cent of the funds from those park conservancies with an operating budget of more than \$5 million to less well-maintained parks (usually managed by the city's Parks & Recreation Department).²²³ The difficulty with this Bill is that, like taxation it redistributes funds, but unlike taxation it redistributes voluntary donations rather than income. This could reduce overall civil society donations to parks since there is less control over what donations support and there is no guarantee that the redistributed funds will be well managed, or managed in the way that donors wish their gifts to be used for. Donations to high profile parks free up public sector spending on other areas. Similar proposals to redistribute voluntary donations should not be extended to the UK. Nevertheless, there is a need to encourage donations to smaller green spaces and/or green spaces in more deprived areas.

One potential solution to the problem of donations being given primarily to larger sites in wealthier areas with active Friends groups and/or charitable trusts, is the creation of advocacy groups for all the green spaces in a neighbourhood, rather than for a single green space. New York's Open Space Alliance for North Brooklyn provides an example of this approach, by fundraising for and improving more than 100 green spaces.²²⁴ The Wildlife Trusts and the National Trust are successful examples at the regional and national levels, where collective fundraising benefits many sites. However, there are few organisations in the UK that fundraise for green spaces at a neighbourhood (as opposed to a single-site) level.

There are approximately 50 existing Friends group forums (networks of Friends groups in the same area) in the UK.²²⁵ However, these currently tend to only offer support for Friends groups, rather than collective fundraising. One exception is London's Bankside Open Spaces Trust, which not only supports existing community groups, but also conducts its own fundraising activities and improvement activities. For example, the Trust is attempting to raise £137,000 to create a sunken garden in the ruins of Winchester Palace.²²⁶ However, a potentially important existing vehicle for green space philanthropy at a neighbourhood level is the community foundation (see Box 19). Community foundations could be a potentially pivotal source of funding for small green spaces in more deprived areas that are unable to attract large donations from residents in their immediate surroundings.

222 This cannot be absolutely determined as we have no national-level data on green space funding (see our *Park Land* report).

223 Michael Saul & Melanie West, "De Blasio Parks Stance Unsettles Some", *Wall Street Journal* (13 October 2013), <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304520704579130051128993582>.

224 Open Space Alliance for North Brooklyn, *About OSA*, <http://osanb.org/learn/about-osa/>, 2014.

225 National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces, *Membership*, www.natfedparks.org.uk/membership-1.html, 2014.

226 Bankside Open Spaces Trust, *Winchester Palace Appeal*, www.bost.org.uk/future-projects/winchester-palace-appeal/, 2014.

Box 19: Community foundations

Community foundations were originally developed in the US but there are now 46 community foundations across the UK. Donors can establish bespoke endowed funds with community foundations for particular purposes, such as youth or environment work, in a particular place. The community foundation will administer the fund, carry out due diligence on applicants, and prepare a portfolio of potential projects or organisations for the donor to support. Community foundations also help measure the impact of a donor's funding. As an alternative to a bespoke fund, community foundations can also provide information for new donors about existing charities and community groups that meet their requirements. As a result, a donor could provide funds for several different Friends groups and/or green space charities within a particular neighbourhood without having to replicate existing provision. The success of community foundations across the UK can be seen in the number of donors they attract (more than 15,000) and the size of the endowments they manage (£380 million).²²⁷ A further advantage is that Gift Aid (see later in this chapter for more detail) can be claimed for donations to community foundation funds, increasing their size.

Legacies

Donations of money or property in a will are known as legacies. The types of charities that benefit from legacies are relatively limited: more than two-thirds (65.3 per cent) of UK bequests are for cancer research, medical research, hospitals and hospices.²²⁸ In the year to September 2013, just 61 UK charities received approximately £1.1 billion from legacies.²²⁹ In addition, relatively few people leave charitable legacies. A 2012 poll suggested that 58 per cent of the UK adult population do not have a will. Of the 250,000 estates notified for probate in 2009, only 16 per cent included charitable legacies (in comparison with approximately 30 million people who give to charity during their lifetime).^{230,231}

Legacies are most commonly (87 per cent) left as a percentage of an estate's final value, rather than as a fixed cash gift (this prevents charities from benefitting at the expense of other beneficiaries, such as family members).²³² This has two main implications:

- in an economic downturn, the value of charitable legacies may decrease; and
- as people live longer, there is potential for the cost of care to erode the value of legacies.

Legacies currently play a variable, yet potentially significant, role in funding urban green spaces. The National Trust, for example, obtains 20 per cent of its income from legacies.²³³ However, the Royal Parks Foundation obtained only £15,000 (0.4 per cent) from legacies in 2013/14. As with other donations, legacies tend to be restricted to specific parks, or areas of parks. For example, in the case of Richmond Park, legacy gifts enabled the restoration of the Pembroke Lodge fountain and contributed to the restoration of the Isabella Plantation.²³⁴

227 UK Community Foundations, *Helping Build Thriving Communities*, <http://ukcommunityfoundations.org/>, 2014.

228 Anthony B Atkinson, Peter G Backus, and John Micklewright, "Charitable Bequests and Wealth at Death," 2012

229 Legacy Foresight, "The Fastest Growth for Five Years," *Legacy Bulletin*, no. 4 (2013).

230 Unbiased.co.uk, *Write a Will Week*, www.unbiased.co.uk/advice-on/write-a-will-week, 2014.

231 John Micklewright et al., *Giving to Development: Full Research Report – ESRC End of Award Report, RES-155-25-0061* (ESRC, 2009).

232 Legacy Foresight, "The Fastest Growth for Five Years."

233 National Trust, *How Legacies Help*, www.nationaltrust.org.uk/get-involved/donate/ways-of-giving/leaving-a-gift-in-your-will/the-difference-your-gift-could-make/, 2014

234 Grace Enright, Royal Parks Foundation Development Officer, *Personal Communication*, February, 2014

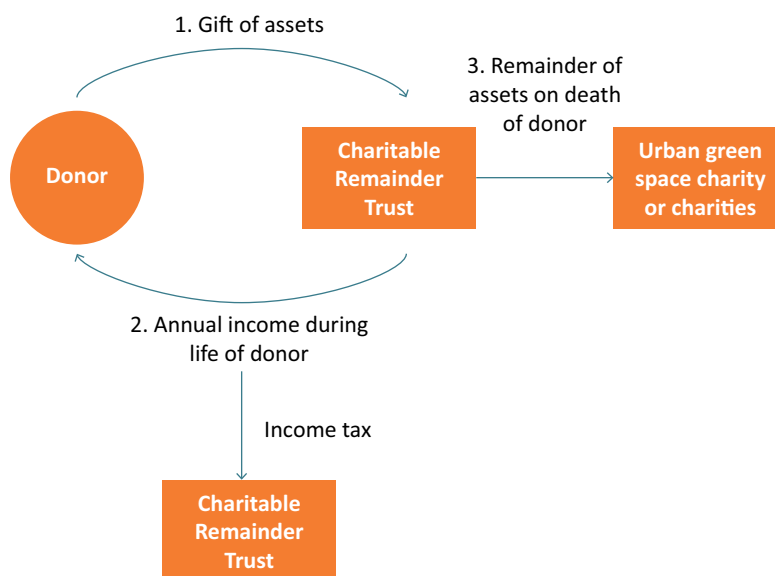
Living legacies

Whilst legacies are a useful tool for charitable giving, most people give more during their lifetimes than they bequeath in legacies after death. Policies to encourage more lifetime giving are therefore attractive. Gift Aid (see the following section) is one of the most well-known tax incentives, as well as Payroll Giving (particularly for higher rate taxpayers).²³⁵ However, both of these forms of donation are limited by the donor’s perception of risk: lack of future financial security was identified as a barrier to giving amongst high earners.²³⁶ One way to overcome this issue is the use of Charitable Remainder Trusts (CRTs, see Box 20). In the US, CRTs are an important source of funding for charities involved in education and the arts.²³⁷ They are also used in Canada and Germany, and are known in the UK as ‘Lifetime Legacies’ or ‘Living Legacies’ but have not yet been introduced here.

Box 20: Simplified description of Charitable Remainder Trusts

CRTs (see Figure 7) allow donors to specify which charity or charities should be the beneficiary of assets or capital that they put irrevocably into the trust. The donor, or another named beneficiary, receives an annual income (usually either a fixed amount or a percentage of the trust’s assets) from the trust for a specified period (usually up to 20 years or until death). Any additional income generated from the trust is either given to the designated charity or reinvested. After the specified period, the charity receives the remaining capital value of the trust. Although the income beneficiary is liable for income tax on the annual income of the gift, the capital is tax exempt (as with legacies in a will) and is partly deductible from the donor’s income tax (depending on the income the beneficiary will receive).^{238,239}

Figure 7: Schematic of asset flow with a potential UK Charitable Remainder Trust model



235 Rhodri Davies, *Give Me a Break: Why the UK Should Not Aspire to a “US-Style” Culture of Charitable Giving* (Charities Aid Foundation, 2014).

236 Ledbury Research and Barclays, *Barriers to Giving*, 2010.

237 Davies, *Give Me a Break: Why the UK Should Not Aspire to a “US-Style” Culture of Charitable Giving*.

238 Ibid.

239 Philanthropy Review, *A Call to Action to Encourage More People to Give and People to Give More*, 2011.

In addressing donor fears of financial insecurity in old age, this model has several advantages over a standard legacy:

- Unlocking funding from smaller estates;
- Enabling closer links between the donor and the charity, potentially resulting in further giving by volunteering (e.g. trusteeship), in kind contributions, or lifetime donations eligible for Gift Aid; and
- A guaranteed and irrevocable lump sum for the charity at the closure of the trust (which could potentially be used to leverage additional funding or loans).²⁴⁰

The importance of CRTs in overcoming barriers to giving can be seen in the US, where CRTs have been used for more than 40 years.²⁴¹ In 2011, US CRTs had a net value of \$94 billion, with \$124 million of income and approximately \$1.8 billion of principal distributed to charities that year. Despite the difference in the respective sizes of the US and UK economies and the very different cultures of giving, a review of potential changes to charitable giving in the UK estimated that the introduction of CRTs into the UK “could generate an additional £400 million for charity in cash and assets each year”.²⁴²

The importance of CRTs for green spaces lies in their potential to contribute to endowments, which provide a sustainable source of green space maintenance funding (see Chapter 4 for details). In addition, their capacity to unlock funding from new donors with smaller estates increases their potential to support smaller green spaces in less wealthy urban areas.

Current UK legislation means that gifts made with the reserved right to use it (for example a house given to children but where the parent remains in the house without paying market rent) are subject to Inheritance Tax. This would need to be changed (via a Finance Bill) to allow the introduction of CRTs, which are, essentially, gifts made with the reserved right to use part of it each year, but without the capital value being subject to Inheritance Tax.

However, there are three main objections to overcome for CRTs to be introduced into the UK. The first, and strongest, is the potential cost to the Treasury. Let us first assume that the UK is only capable of donating a certain percentage of GDP each year to charity, and that CRTs will only provide a different way to give to charity (rather than attracting new donations). In this case, the Treasury would not lose inheritance tax or capital gains tax payments, as charitable legacies are already exempt from these taxes: the difference would be the immediate tax relief of CRTs in comparison with the deferred tax relief of legacies. In addition, outright gifts of land, property, shares and cash can also be eligible for income tax relief and so there would, potentially, be no additional loss from the introduction of CRTs.

However, the appeal of CRTs for the charitable sector is their ability to attract new donors and potentially generate additional giving from existing donors. For example, potential new donors in the UK could include pensioners, who under new rules are no longer restricted to buying an annuity with their pensions, but can cash in as much or as little as they wish. In this case, the Treasury would forego tax payments on the value of the assets in those CRTs that act as donations over and above what would previously have been donated to charity by legacies, Payroll Giving and outright gifts. This is a difficult amount to estimate given the very different economic and cultural circumstances of those countries that already use CRTs.

240 Charity Tax Group, *Lifetime Legacies: Proposals from Charity Sector*, 2004.

241 Michael I Sanders, “Charitable Remainder Trusts under the Tax Reform Act of 1969,” *Boston College Law Review* 12, no. 3 (1971): 409–29.

242 Philanthropy Review, *A Call to Action to Encourage More People to Give and People to Give More*.

A second concern is the potential for abuse of CRTs for donor financial gain. In the US, CRT abuse led to the 1969 Tax Reform Act.²⁴³ This formalised the type of trust that tax deductions could be claimed for and more closely linked the tax deduction with the benefit received by the charity at the end of the trust period. Learning from the experience of the US should enable the UK to avoid CRT abuse.

Finally, there is a concern that CRTs could ‘cannibalise’ existing charitable legacy or other donations. However, as we have demonstrated, whilst existing tools for charitable giving are useful, they do not address a major barrier to giving, namely fear of financial insecurity. In addition, a large proportion of the population lack wills, and a small proportion of those who have made wills make charitable legacies. CRTs would therefore help to generate donations additional to those from legacies.

Recommendation: The Treasury should introduce Charitable Remainder Trusts and ensure that charities supporting green space maintenance and regeneration are eligible as beneficiaries.

Gift Aid

Currently, when donations are made to a charity by a UK taxpayer, the charity can claim up to 25p in the pound through the Gift Aid scheme (see Table 3).²⁴⁴ Since 2002, this also applies to Community Amateur Sports Clubs. However, it does not apply to civic improvement projects that are not run by charities, such as work to improve the local environment (not just restricted to green spaces) conducted by Friends groups or other community groups.

Table 3: Benefit limits for donations, for both charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs²⁴⁵

Amount of donation	Maximum value of benefits
£0–£100	25% of the donation
£101–£1,000	£25
£1,001+	5% of the donation (up to a maximum of £2,500)

To be eligible to claim Gift Aid, Community Amateur Sports Clubs must fulfil certain conditions. Table 4 outlines the applicability of these conditions to community civic improvement groups: there are no insuperable obstacles to the eligibility requirements of Community Amateur Sports Club being modified to allow community civic improvement groups to claim Gift Aid.

Extending the Gift Aid scheme to community civic improvement groups could, in theory,

- help to address the long term decline in local authority funding of urban green spaces identified in our *Park Land* report;
- encourage community groups to take more responsibility for their local environment; and
- ensure that green spaces are well maintained and reflect the needs and requirements of the local community.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Sanders, “Charitable Remainder Trusts under the Tax Reform Act of 1969.”

²⁴⁴ HMRC, *Tax Efficient Giving to Charity: The Basics*, www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/giving/basics.htm, 2014.

²⁴⁵ HMRC, *Gift Aid: The Basics*, www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities/gift_aid/basics.htm, 2014

²⁴⁶ Chris Gourlay, *Tax Breaks for Civic Crowdfunders?* <http://spacehive.com/Blog/Details/1058>, 2014.

Table 4: Community Amateur Sports Club eligibility conditions and their applicability to community civic improvement groups

Community Amateur Sports Club Eligibility Conditions ²⁴⁷	Applicable to Community Civic Improvement Groups, such as Friends groups?
Formal constitution	✓
Membership must be open to all, without discrimination	✓
Fee levels must not pose a significant obstacle to membership	✓
Organised on an amateur basis, i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● non-profit ● providing only the ordinary benefits of an amateur sports club ● on dissolution, net assets must be used for approved sporting or charitable purposes 	✓ although would require rephrasing
The main purpose of the Club must be to provide facilities for, and encourage participation in, one or more eligible sports	✓ although would require rephrasing
The Club must <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● be established in an EU Member State or relevant territory ● provide its facilities in a single EU Member State or relevant territory 	✓
Managers must be fit and proper persons	✓

An estimate of the cost to the Treasury of extending the Gift Aid scheme is included in Box 21.

Box 21: Estimated cost to the Treasury of allowing Gift Aid on civic improvement projects

The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces estimates that there are approximately 5,000 Friends groups across the UK.²⁴⁸ A recent analysis suggests that Friends and other community groups raise £30 million each year for their parks and green spaces (suggesting that the 5,000 groups raise an average of £6,000 each per year).²⁴⁹ Assuming that the whole £30 million would be eligible for 25 per cent Gift Aid, this would cost the Treasury £7.5 million each year. Assuming that this figure could be doubled to take into account those community groups raising funds for their local environment excluding parks and green spaces, this could cost the Treasury up to £15 million per year. In comparison, in just over 10 years, the more than 6,200 registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs have claimed approximately £12 million in Gift Aid.^{250,251}

247 HMRC, *Community Amateur Sports Clubs: Detailed Guidance Notes*, www.hmrc.gov.uk/casc/casc_guidance.htm, 2014.

248 National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces, *Membership*, www.natfedparks.org.uk/membership-1.html, 2014.

249 Peter Neal Consulting and Community First Partnership, *State of UK Public Parks 2014: Renaissance to Risk?*.

250 HMRC, *Community Amateur Sports Clubs Consultation Document*, 2013.

251 CASCIInfo, *The Definitive Guide for Community Amateur Sports Clubs*, www.cascinfo.co.uk/, 2014.

Recommendation: Central government should extend the Gift Aid scheme to community civic improvement groups, such as Friends groups, to incentivise

community investment in their local area, including green spaces. We estimate that this would cost the Treasury £7–15 million a year.

Subscriptions and Crowdfunding

Subscriptions are a form of donation and they have been used to pay for goods or services for centuries. They are a voluntary advance payment (one-off or regular). Subscriptions were used to help fund the creation of some of the first public parks in Britain and tended to be short term donations. The land to create Peel Park, Queen's Park and Philips Park in Manchester was purchased from private landowners in the mid-19th century, largely by local public subscription. Mark Philips MP and the then prime minister Sir Robert Peel both had local connections and each contributed £1,000 towards the purchase price of the land, which was subsequently named for their efforts.^{252,253}

The internet has helped to transform the funding of individual projects by public subscription. Crowdfunding platforms reach a wider audience (for example through social media), can provide more detailed information on the project (for example, in videos and images), and pledged funds are only taken from subscribers once the funding target for the project is met. The platforms are themselves funded by taking a percentage of the total sum raised.

Crowdfunding has now started to expand from the arts and commercial products (for example on popular online crowdfunding platforms, such as Kickstarter and IndieGoGo) to include civic projects. For example, the charity GreenSpace established the Green Places Fund to support green space renovations.²⁵⁴ This crowdfunding platform allowed local authorities to list green space projects that communities and businesses could fund. Pilots with Birmingham City Council and Nottingham City Council were established, but the demise of GreenSpace in 2013 meant that the Green Places Fund website was sold by its administrators in 2014 (the purchaser is not yet known).²⁵⁵ However, a UK project has taken crowdfunding for urban green spaces a step forward and created a platform that allows community groups, as well as local authorities, to propose projects (see Box 22).

Box 22: Spacehive

Spacehive's online platform was launched in 2012 to make it easier for communities to improve their local areas, including parks and other urban green spaces. Once a project has been submitted to Spacehive (most are proposed by local communities), it has to be verified before fundraising can begin.²⁵⁶ A range of different organisations, such as Locality and Manchester City Council, act as verifiers to make sure that project proposals are viable.²⁵⁷ Once a project is verified, project delivery managers are contractually obliged to deliver the project if it reaches its funding target. Project delivery managers do not need to be professionals, so long as there is sufficient expertise to be able to deliver the project.²⁵⁸

Typically, crowdfunding is used for one-off capital projects with a finite timeline, i.e. creation or renovation rather than ongoing maintenance.²⁵⁹ However, in 2013 new platforms were created that allow 'subscription crowdfunding' (including Subbable and Pozible).^{260,261} These operate in a similar way to paying for using

252 Parks & Gardens UK, *Peel Park, Salford*, 2014, www.parksandgardens.org/places-and-people/site/6250.

253 Medlock Valley Project, *Philips Park: Past & Recent History*, 2009, www.philipspark.org.uk/MedlockValley/Medlock_Valley_Places/Philips_Park/Default.aspx.

254 GreenSpace, *Green Places Fund*, www.green-space.org.uk/GreenPlacesFund/index.php, 2013

255 Kevin Counihan, Winterhill Largo Associate Director, *Personal Communication*, January 2014

256 Chris Gourlay, Spacehive Chief Executive, *Personal Communication*, November 2013.

257 Chris Gourlay, Spacehive Chief Executive, *Personal Communication*, March 2014.

258 Spacehive, *FAQs: How can we help?*, <https://spacehive.com/Home/Faqs>, 2014.

259 Ibid.

260 Subbable, *About*, <https://subbable.com/about>, 2014.

261 Pozible, *Say Hi to Subscription Crowdfunding*, www.pozible.com/blog/article/index/137, 2014.

a private gym; with upfront monthly payments. Funders can pay regularly for as long as they wish, which could help generate sustainable funds for maintenance. As yet, there is no subscription crowdfunding model for urban green spaces, and no evidence base that can show the community which parks or other green spaces need the most support.²⁶² As with traditional subscription, thought needs to be given by communities and platforms to the creation of incentives to donate.

Recommendation: A crowdsourced urban green space map, as recommended in our Park Land report, should be created. DCLG should encourage local authorities to add data on the funding available for each green space. This could, for example, take the form of an hourglass that shows the remaining funding for the financial year. This could then be linked to a crowdfunding platform to enable either one-off or regular donations to particular green spaces.

Match funding

Match funding involves one organisation (often, but not always, a public sector body) offering a donation to match one provided by another individual or organisation. This can either be in various ratios, such as a 1:1 match, or up to a certain value. Interestingly, Manchester's three public parks (see the Subscriptions section later in this chapter) are also an early example of match funding. After the 1833 Select Committee report on public walks, the Government released £10,000 (approximately £880,000 in 2012 terms) in 1841 for the creation of public parks across the country, contingent on match funding from "political bodies wishing to benefit from this fund".²⁶³ Manchester secured £3,000 (approximately £264,000 in 2012 terms) of this Central government funding but raised more than £25,000 (more than £2 million in 2012 terms) from the city's poor quarters, large factories and mills, as well as from wealthy citizens and businessmen.²⁶⁴

The Mayor of London has pledged match funding for the creation of 100 pocket parks (small areas of public space that are predominantly green) by 2015.²⁶⁵ The latest round of funding offers up to £50,000 of capital funding, together with specialist project support. Maintenance funding is not provided but projects must demonstrate that the park will be maintained. Applications can be made by local authorities, communities, or creative, cultural or business groups, although evidence of partnership collaboration is required. Importantly, each grant must be at least 100 per cent matched by external funding. This can be raised through crowdfunding, and Spacehive (see Box 22) has a dedicated page of projects eligible for the Pocket Park Programme.

The examples of Manchester's public parks and London's pocket parks show how important match funding can be in raising funds for capital projects. However, it has not yet been harnessed for maintenance, which is a major omission.

Conclusions

There is considerable capacity for private sector and civil society philanthropy to fund urban green space maintenance. However, Central Government can make it easier and more tax efficient for people and organisations to donate, for example by extending Gift Aid to civic improvement groups, and introducing Charitable Remainder Trusts (living legacies).

²⁶² Drayson, *Park Land*.

²⁶³ John W Henneberger, "Origins of Fully Funded Public Parks," *The George Wright Forum* 19, no. 2 (2002): 13–20.

²⁶⁴ Peter Neal, "The Past, Present and Future of Victorian City Parks" (BA (Hons), Manchester Polytechnic, 1985).

²⁶⁵ Mayor of London, *Pocket Parks Prospectus*, 2013.

6

Civil Society and Private Sector Funding

The previous chapter investigated historic patterns of philanthropic giving to parks and other green spaces by civil society and the private sector. It also explored new ways of giving. This chapter, however, covers non-philanthropic funding of green spaces by civil society and the private sector, primarily through service charges and levies (paid by both the private sector and civil society) and private sector sponsorship.

Sponsorship

Corporate and citizen sponsorship can play a significant role in raising funds for green spaces, whether for events, facilities, or branded products. Sponsorships are “investments in causes or events to support corporate objectives (for example, by enhancing corporate image) or marketing objectives (such as increasing brand awareness).”²⁶⁶

Events

The most familiar form of sponsorship to regular users of UK urban parks is sponsorship of events. For example, the 10 day summer festival in Hyde Park is sponsored by Barclaycard and the ‘parkrun’ events are sponsored by adidas, Sweatshop and PruHealth.^{267,268} Coca-Cola Great Britain has also begun its ParkLives programme of free sessions of youth and family activities in parks: Coca-Cola Zero will provide the equipment.²⁶⁹

Facilities

Sponsored facilities, such as fountains, buildings and sports facilities, are typically named after the sponsor. This leads to the major advantage that once a facility is named after a sponsor, that sponsorship can last for many years. However, the commercialisation of public green spaces, made visible through corporate logos and branding, can be controversial amongst park users.²⁷⁰ In some cases, this has led to restrictions. For example, although a \$5 million contribution to Chicago’s Millennium Park cycle centre to support its operations for 50 years resulted in the centre being named after McDonald’s, their famous logo is absent.²⁷¹ In other cases, branding is an integral part of the facility provided. For example, in Stamford Bridge in London, collaboration between adidas and Chelsea Football Club (FC) Foundation has provided four free all-weather pitches. The pitches are Chelsea blue and branded with the adidas and Chelsea FC logos.²⁷²

266 Meryl Paula Gardner and Philip Joel Shuman, “Sponsorship: An Important Component of the Promotions Mix,” *Journal of Advertising* 16, no. 1 (1987): 11–17.

267 The Royal Parks, *Barclaycard presents British Summer Time Hyde Park*, www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/hyde-park/hyde-park-attractions/barclaycard-british-summer-time-in-hyde-park, 2014.

268 Parkrun, *Our Sponsors and Supporters*, www.parkrun.org.uk/sponsors/, 2014.

269 Liz Lowe, Coca Cola Great Britain Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Manager, *Personal Communication*, 2014.

270 Harnik, *Local Parks, Local Financing Volume Two: Paying for Urban Parks Without Raising Taxes*.

271 Chicago Tribune News, “McDonald’s to Sponsor Bicycle Center”, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2006-06-10/news/0606100216_1_cycling-bike-endowment, 2006

272 Chelsea FC Foundation, *Adidas Blue Pitches*, www.chelseafc.com/foundation-article/article/2732579, 2014.

Branded products

In the US, companies can buy the right for their products to be exclusively sold at food and drink concessions and kiosks across parks and park systems.²⁷³ For example, the Cleveland Metropark system is sponsored by Coca-Cola and Kraft Foods, amongst others.²⁷⁴

In some cases, sponsorship will be a useful way to raise funding for green spaces and should be welcomed. However, it will not be appropriate in all cases: other sources of funding will also be needed.

Service charges and levies

Local authorities are not the only bodies that can raise levies (whether in the form of service charges or tax levies, as described in Chapter 2) for the long term maintenance of green spaces. Levies and service charges are different from subscriptions in that they are not voluntary. One major advantage for green spaces is that compulsory levies and service charges provide a more predictable and long-term supply of maintenance funding than donations and sponsorship. They also mean that those who benefit most from easy access to green spaces (i.e. those that live nearest them) are those that pay for their upkeep.

New developments

Service charges and levies are relatively easy to impose on new built developments, simply because there are no existing residents to object. The London Legacy Development Corporation, a public sector not-for-profit, has taken advantage of levies to raise funds for the ongoing maintenance of the newly created Olympic Park (see Box 23).

Box 23: Queen Elizabeth II Olympic Park, London

The London 2012 Olympics presented an opportunity for the creation of “the most significant urban park in the UK for well over a century” with more than 45 hectares of green space.²⁷⁵ With the emphasis of the 2012 Olympic Games being on ‘legacy’, long term maintenance funding for the park will be required. Initially, events will be an important source of funding, but as the residential plots within the Park are built, the frequency of events will decrease. As a result, long-term funding will be provided by a £1 per square foot service charge on many of the 6,800 nearby residential units granted planning permission. In addition, nearby commercial occupiers will be charged £1.50 per square foot, which will be collected directly by LLDC.²⁷⁶

Private developers can also raise funds for the maintenance of green spaces from the surrounding properties that benefit most from. For example, approximately 40 per cent of the new 67-acre mixed use site at King’s Cross will be public realm, including squares and public parks.²⁷⁷ The largely private estate will be managed by the specialist on-site King’s Cross Estate Services. The cost of this service is paid for by estate occupiers through a service charge, with any shortfalls (until the estate is completed) picked up by the landlord, King’s Cross Central Limited Partnership. The aim is for the Estate Services team to be fully funded through the service charge.²⁷⁸

273 Harnik, *Local Parks, Local Financing Volume Two: Paying for Urban Parks Without Raising Taxes*.

274 Cleveland Metroparks, *Our Sponsors*, www.clevelandmetroparks.com/Main/Our-Sponsors.aspx, 2014.

275 Olympic Park Legacy Company, *Creating the Queen Elizabeth Public Park: Post-Games Transformation*, 2012.

276 Mark Camley, LLDC Executive Director of Park Operations and Venues, *Personal Communication*, November 2013.

277 King’s Cross Central Limited Partnership, *Overview: King’s Cross*, 2013.

278 Anna Strongman, Argent LLP Senior Projects Director, *Personal Communication*, March 2014.

Existing Developments

It is more politically difficult to introduce compulsory levies and service charges on existing residents or occupiers. In the private sector, this has been overcome by the introduction of Business Improvement Districts.

Business Improvement Districts

“Shopping and business districts are much more attractive when green infrastructure – for example, living walls, roof gardens, and trees – is included. Together they provide the perfect combination for improving vibrancy within the local economy.”

Victoria Business Improvement District Vibrancy Report, 2014

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have a long history in Canada and the US.²⁷⁹ The Local Government Act 2003 (Part 4) paved the way for their introduction in the UK.²⁸⁰ BIDs are private organisations (in some cases, non-profit) that “supplement public services within geographically defined boundaries” by taxing businesses within those boundaries.²⁸¹ There are 174 formal BIDs in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, the majority of which (141) are in town centres.²⁸²

To create a new BID, a BID proposal must describe the extra services it would provide, the levy rate (including discounts and/or exemptions), and the length of time the BID will operate (out of a maximum of five years). A ballot of all non-domestic ratepayers in the BID area is then held (and paid for by the billing authority where turnout is more than 20 per cent). Once a BID has been voted for and created, all businesses within its geographical area must pay the BID levy. The levy is collected by the local authority and held in a separate BID revenue account. After the maximum term of five years, a new ballot must be conducted,

279 Kevin Ward, “Policies in Motion”, Urban Management and State Restructuring: The Trans-Local Expansion of Business Improvement Districts” 30, no. 1 (2006): 54–75.

280 Business Improvements Districts (England) Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/2443) and Business Improvement Districts (Wales) Regulations 2005 (SI 2005/1312).

281 Lorlene Hoyt and Devika Gopal-Agge, “The Business Improvement District Model: A Balanced Review of Contemporary Debates,” *Geography Compass* 1, no. 4 (2007): 946–58.

282 British BIDs, *BID Locations*, www.britishbids.info/BIDLocations.aspx, 2014.

283 Victoria Business Improvement District, *The Victoria Vibrancy Report 2014*, 2014.

284 The Rubens at the Palace, *The Living Wall*, www.rubenshotel.com/about-us/the-living-wall, 2012.

285 Nigel Dunnett, *John Lewis Head Office, Victoria Street, London*, www.nigeldunnett.info/Raingardens/JohnLewis/, 2013.

Box 24: Victoria Business Improvement District

Victoria BID was established in 2010. It is funded by a BID levy of 1 per cent of businesses’ rateable value. The Victoria BID administers these funds according to the goals set out in the Victoria BID proposal document, through a board of levy payers and a management team.

Shortly after the Victoria BID was established, it commissioned a green infrastructure (covering all green spaces, such as street trees, green roofs, etc.) audit of the area, in partnership with the Environment Agency and Natural England. This was the first such audit to be completed by a UK BID. The aim was to identify how surface water flood risk could be reduced and biodiversity enhanced, through improvements to existing green spaces and the creation of new green spaces. As a result of this exercise, the Victoria BID worked with the owners of The Rubens at The Palace hotel to create one of London’s largest green walls at 350 square metres. The wall comprises over 20 plant species that are intended to capture rainfall and improve air quality, as well as support biodiversity. A rainwater harvesting function has also been integrated into the design to capture rainwater from the hotel’s roof and top up the mains supply to the wall.^{283,284} An ongoing project is the creation of central London’s first street-side rain garden. This will involve the conversion of 75 square metres of raised cobbled paving into a sunken garden that will collect runoff from the building and street.²⁸⁵

presenting an opportunity to close the BID, or make any required changes in the levy rate and/or services provided.²⁸⁶

Our *Park Land* report identified some of the economic and environmental benefits that high quality green spaces can provide. Many of these benefits can be felt by businesses; green spaces make places more attractive to visit and spend time in, ameliorate the ‘urban heat island’ effect, and can reduce the risk of flooding. BIDs across the UK have recognised this and are creating and improving green spaces within their boundaries (see Box 24).

BIDs can raise large amounts of money from both the BID levy and a combination of grants, commercial activity and council investment. A 2013 survey found that the levy and additional income provided 129 BIDs across the UK with an annual income of £96 million.²⁸⁷ Partly as a result of this, BIDs are playing an important role in greening town and city centres; from the creation of an urban forest in central London (Better Bankside BID) to hosting an urban gardening festival as part of Manchester’s garden city initiative (Heart of Manchester BID).^{288,289} BIDs may also play an educational role for those businesses not previously aware of the benefits of urban green spaces. BIDs are well placed, in partnership with the Environment Agency, Natural England and water companies, to develop and implement green space solutions to local flooding issues, such as rain gardens, ponds and swales (see Box 24). An important co-benefit of this would be increased local biodiversity. One potential green space maintenance funding opportunity is for water companies to offer rebates for Business Improvement Districts that create and manage green spaces for flood prevention.

However, there are concerns about the way that public access to publicly owned yet privately managed spaces is managed in BIDs. Claims that specific groups of people, such as the homeless, are excluded from public space in BIDs raises the issues of accountability and democracy.^{290,291} BIDs are also not necessarily suitable in highly residential areas, where communities of residents may be best placed to effect change in their local green spaces.

Park Improvement Districts

In the US, Community Benefit Districts are local areas where residential property owners tax themselves to fund projects that benefit the entire district (similar to BIDs but for community rather than business benefit). The funds are administered by a non-profit organisation established by the residents. Multiple BIDs and Community Benefit Districts can exist in the same city. For example, Oakland, California, supports six BIDs and three Community Benefit Districts.²⁹² Similar structures, known as Neighbourhood Improvement Districts, are used in Germany.²⁹³ However, this model can be taken a step further for the support of urban green spaces (see Box 25).

If introduced into the UK, Green Benefit Districts could be named Park Improvement Districts to reflect their similarity with BIDs. Their design should consider a variety of circumstances, for example how long they can last for, which residents would be exempt from paying the levy (for example, those receiving benefits), the turnout required to make a vote valid, and the percentage of votes required to implement the levy. Park Improvement Districts would not be appropriate in every location, for example in more deprived areas. However, the advantages of this approach are that:

286 Mark Sandford, *Business Improvement Districts (SN/PC/04591)* (House of Commons Library, 2013).

287 British BIDs, *Nationwide BID Survey 2013*, n.d.

288 Better Bankside, *Bankside Urban Forest*, www.betterbankside.co.uk/buf, 2012.

289 CityCo, *Manchester Garden City*, <http://cityco.com/project/manchester-garden-city/>, 2013.

290 Anna Minton, *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First-Century City*, 2nd Edition (Penguin Books, 2012).

291 Ward, “‘Policies in Motion’, Urban Management and State Restructuring: The Trans-Local Expansion of Business Improvement Districts.”

292 Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, *Oakland’s Business Improvement and Community Benefit Districts*, www.oaklandchamber.com/pages/businessimprovementcommunitybenefitdistrictsbidcbd/, 2012

293 Frank Friesecke and Silja Lockemann, “Neighbourhood Improvement Districts in Germany – A New Form of Urban Governance for the Improvement of Residential Areas,” in *Integrating Generations* (presented at the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) Working Week, Stockholm, Sweden, 2008).

- those residents benefiting most from a green space support it the most;
- there is flexibility in the level of maintenance and management a community engage in;
- it encourages communities to take greater, and potentially increasing, responsibility for their local green spaces;
- it encourages communities to become more involved in volunteering in their local green spaces.

Box 25: San Francisco Green Benefit District

In 2012, a group of residents from the San Francisco neighbourhoods of Dogpatch and Northwest Potrero Hill (in collaboration with a local non-profit organisation) took the US Community Benefit District model and modified it to raise funds for the ongoing maintenance of their green spaces.

The proposed Green Benefit District requires the owners of commercial, residential and industrial properties within the democratically determined boundary to pay a tax, to be used specifically for the maintenance of the green spaces within the boundary. The tax would be collected via the City Tax collector and the funds transferred to the Green Benefit District. Importantly, the City would remain responsible for providing an agreed level of baseline maintenance. The Green Business District levy would then be used to support enhanced maintenance works, as well as provide seed capital for small green space projects and build local capacity for green space maintenance and creation.²⁹⁴

An initial survey found only 6 per cent of residents against the idea of forming a Green Benefit District.²⁹⁵ A proposal for the Green Benefit District tax level suggests a charge of \$0.951 per square foot of building or lot, depending on the use of the land. Industrial properties and properties used for non-profit activities would be charged half this rate.²⁹⁶ The next stage of the Green Benefit District project is 'petition'. Of those property owners that would be required to pay the tax, 30 per cent + 1 must sign a petition of support in order for the project to progress to the next stage. The final 'ballot' stage is an official ballot, in which 50 per cent + 1 affected property owners that vote must be in favour of the project before the Green Benefit District can be formed. This was scheduled for June or July 2014.²⁹⁷

In addition, as communities take greater responsibility for green space maintenance over time, this could allow local authorities to transfer maintenance funding to other green spaces, for example in more deprived areas. As with BIDs, partnership with the Environment Agency, Natural England and water companies could help to deliver local solutions to flooding and improve biodiversity. Water company rebates could also be offered to Park Improvement Districts where green spaces are managed for flooding.

Initiatives that the Park Improvement District could support include programmes of events in parks and supporting a park keeper, or parkie. In addition, funds could be given to local schools in areas deprived of green space to open their playgrounds to the public outside school hours and in school holidays. This could be through paying staff to open and close playground gates, or installing a fence so that the school buildings can remain locked whilst the playground is left open.

²⁹⁴ The Dogpatch/ NW Potrero Hill GBD, Improving and maintaining public open space www.phd-gbd.org/index.html, 2014

²⁹⁵ Potrero Hill / Dogpatch GBD, *Green Spaces Survey*, 2013, www.phd-gbd.org/survey-phase.html.

²⁹⁶ Potrero Hill / Dogpatch GBD, *What's My Annual GBD Assessment?*, 2014, www.phd-gbd.org/formation-phase.html.

²⁹⁷ Potrero Hill / Dogpatch GBD, *Ballot*, www.phd-gbd.org/ballot-phase.html, 2014

The introduction of Park Improvement Districts would require either new legislation (both the Kensington Garden Squares and Wimbledon and Putney Commons council tax levies required new legislation) or changes to existing legislation (BIDs are currently enabled via an amendment to the Local Government Act 2003). An amendment to the Local Government Act, for example, could extend BID powers to communities, allowing them to raise funds to maintain and improve their local environments and green spaces to the standard they require. Importantly, this should not necessarily mean that communities take over basic maintenance unless they are willing to do so. As with the San Francisco Green Benefit District, a legal agreement (through negotiation between communities and local authorities) detailing the responsibilities of the local authority with regard to basic maintenance should be permitted.

Recommendation: Government should pilot the creation of Park Improvement Districts to help fund the long term maintenance and improvement of local environments and urban green spaces.

Conclusions

The ability of businesses to tax themselves and regenerate the local environment with the proceeds is helping to transform several urban areas in England. This ability should be extended to allow communities to tax themselves to maintain their green spaces to the standard they want. Yet funding, whether from the public sector, private sector, or civil society, will not be sufficient to ensure that urban green spaces meet the needs of their surrounding communities. Civil society engagement and activity will also be required.

7

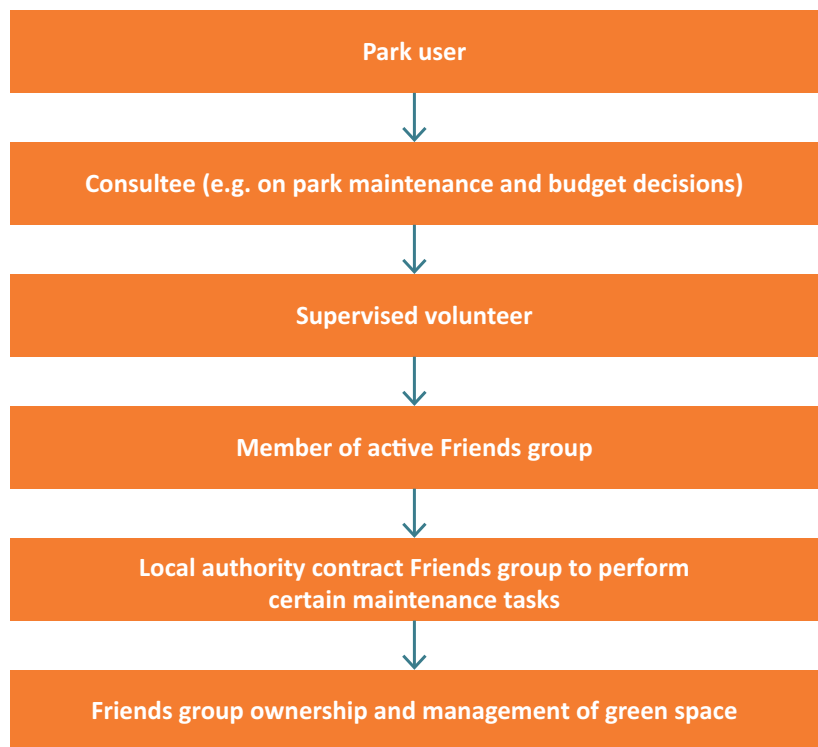
Community Action

“...optimising the use of public assets is not the primary objective: the over-riding goal is community empowerment.”

The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets, 2007²⁹⁸

The previous two chapters explored the different sources of existing and potential funding from the public sector, civil society and the private sector for the maintenance and creation of urban green spaces. However, funding alone will not be enough to ensure that our urban green spaces meet the needs of their surrounding communities. Funding will also not be sufficient to ensure that communities enjoy the other benefits that green spaces provide, such as increased physical activity and an opportunity for making friends. The active involvement of communities with their local green spaces can help to deliver this.

Figure 8: Potential pathway of increasing engagement with green space²⁹⁹

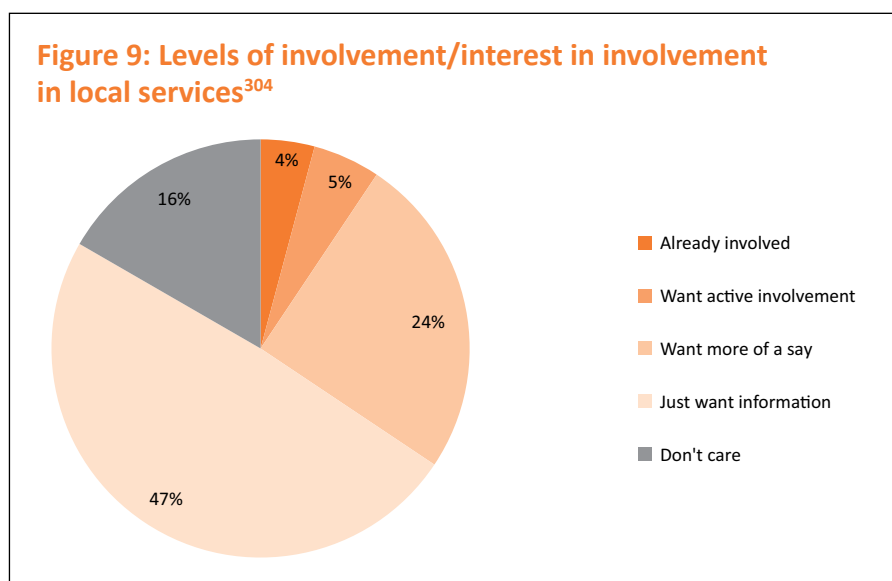


298 Barry Quirk, Stephen Thake, and Andrew Robinson, *Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets*, 2007.

299 Sherry R. Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (1969): 216–24.

Community engagement can take many forms, from consultation and supervised volunteering, to active management and ownership. A simplified pathway of increasing engagement with a local green space is shown in Figure 8. Over time, communities may progress from one stage to another and could begin at any stage in the process depending on the skills and time available. Community engagement can change over time, for example as a result of the evolution of a group over time, or changing circumstances or populations.³⁰⁰

Not all communities will currently have the inclination, skills and resources to take over the full ownership and management of urban green spaces. However, the 2007 Quirk Review (investigating community involvement with public assets) identified the need for the public sector to empower communities to take on the management and ownership of public assets, rather than focusing solely on asset optimisation.³⁰¹ There are encouraging signs that communities are already becoming more involved in their local green spaces: 47 per cent of Friends groups have seen an increase in their membership over the last three years.³⁰² There is also a wider unsatisfied appetite to get more involved in directing local authority services: according to an Ipsos Mori survey, almost a quarter of the adult population want more of a say in local services. Moreover, five per cent of the adult population want more active involvement in local services (see Figure 9), which would more than double current 'active' participation.³⁰³



Through stakeholder interviews and a literature review, we have identified four main barriers to increasing community engagement with their local urban green spaces (in addition to lack of time):

- A perceived lack of community powers;
- Risk of injury on site;
- Risk of the community group failing; and
- Lack of knowledge and skills.

The following sections explore these barriers, discuss existing solutions and identify new ways to overcome them.

300 B. W. Tuckman, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," *Psychological Bulletin* 63 (1965): 384–99.

301 Quirk, Thake, and Robinson, *Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets*, 2007.

302 Peter Neal Consulting and Community First Partnership, *State of UK Public Parks 2014: Renaissance to Risk?*.

303 Ipsos MORI, *Do the Public Really Want to Join the Government of Britain?*, 2010.

304 Ibid.

Community powers for greater involvement in urban green spaces

There is widespread uncertainty and misunderstanding about existing powers that communities have to become more involved with, or take over the ownership of, their local urban green spaces.³⁰⁵ This section will focus on powers that offer communities a greater say in decisions affecting their urban green spaces, or the opportunity for communities to manage their local green spaces. The following section will focus on powers that offer communities the chance to own their local green spaces. A diagram showing how community powers relate to the community engagement pathway (Figure 8) can be found in Figure 11.

Neighbourhood planning

Neighbourhood plans are planning documents drawn up by communities with the support of local authorities. On approval by an independent inspector, a community referendum must be held (more than 50 per cent of the community must vote in favour for the plan to pass).³⁰⁶ Plans should consider not only what already exists in the area, but also what is missing. As a result, there is scope for green space creation, as well as preservation and enhancement.³⁰⁷ Ideally, these should be supported by strong local authority green space strategies. This would help to ensure green space connectivity across neighbourhood plan areas. However, as identified in Chapter 4, green space strategies are often lacking in measurable and/or timetabled targets.

Neighbourhood plans could become increasingly important as their number increases; more than 1,000 neighbourhood planning areas have been designated and 17 have passed the referendum stage.³⁰⁸ The Inner East Preston neighbourhood plan, for example, considers four main policy areas, one of which is green spaces.³⁰⁹ The importance of the neighbourhood plan in securing the neighbourhood funding element of the Community Infrastructure Levy was discussed in Chapter 2. However, the process of creating a neighbourhood plan can also increase community engagement with their local area, including green spaces.

Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting (see Chapter 4) is another important step in engaging communities with their local green spaces, particularly in areas that lack particular skills or have a poor sense of community.

Meanwhile use

Meanwhile use, i.e. the temporary use of under-used buildings or land by civil society, can be an important way of making sure a neighbourhood's assets are being fully used. Meanwhile use of derelict land, so long as communities are fully aware that their use of the land is temporary, offers several advantages for landowners:

- insurance and security costs are paid for by the occupiers;
- a used site can be more attractive to potential buyers than a derelict site.³¹⁰

Our analysis of Homes and Communities Agency 2009 Site Level Data reveals that there were approximately 10,700 hectares of vacant or derelict brownfield

305 Quirk, Thake, and Robinson, *Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets*, 2007.

306 DCLG, *Revenue Spending Power 2011–12 and 2012–13 Including NHS Support for Social Care*, 2010, www.gov.uk/government/news/a-fair-deal-for-local-taxpayers-freezing-council-tax-and-protecting-the-vulnerable.

307 DCLG, *National Planning Policy Framework*, 2012.

308 Rachel Edwards, DCLG Big Society & Community Rights Division, *Personal Communication*, June 2014.

309 Friends of Fishwick & St Matthew's, *Neighbourhood Plan Formal Consultation*, <http://friendsoffishwickandstmatthews.org.uk/?p=770>, 2014.

310 Meanwhile Project and SQW Consulting, *Meanwhile Use: Benefits to Landlords*, 2010, www.meanwhilespace.com/users/landlords/have-space-needing-meanwhile-use/.

land (with or without buildings), in urban areas in England.³¹¹ Although not all of this land will be suitable for meanwhile use as green space, this covers an area almost the size of Manchester. There is currently no data available to determine how many sites, or the area they cover, have been temporarily converted into urban green space. However, it is likely that the vast majority of these sites will not be 'greened'. What is preventing landowners from actively encouraging meanwhile use of derelict sites as green space?

One major barrier is uncertainty of ownership. Some sites may be vacant or derelict precisely because ownership is complex or confusing; since meanwhile use requires permission from the landowner, this will make meanwhile use more difficult.³¹² A register of public sector land (see later in this section) would allow communities to identify public sector land potentially suitable for meanwhile use as urban green space.

Community Right to Challenge

For communities willing and able to take on long term responsibilities for their local urban green spaces, the 2011 Localism Act enshrines two important Community Rights: the Right to Challenge and the Right to Bid (described later in this section).³¹³

The Community Right to Challenge gives voluntary and community groups (as well as charities, parish and town councils, and two or more local authority employees) in England the right to submit an expression of interest to run a local authority service on its behalf, without any transfer of assets. Urban green space management is included within the services eligible for Right to Challenge. For example, Bradford Community Environment Project are conducting a pre-feasibility study to use the Right to Challenge to provide an alternative allotment service model.³¹⁴ Community groups can submit expressions of interest in partnership with commercial organisations, as well as with charities and councils.³¹⁵ Once an expression of interest is accepted by a local authority, the procurement process is open to private sector bids, as well as community groups.³¹⁶

Effectiveness of the Community Right to Challenge

There have been 36 expressions of interest under the Right to Challenge; six of these have been accepted.³¹⁷ However, there is no publicly available database identifying the types of services or the local authorities involved. This makes it difficult to evaluate how effective this Community Right has been, or will be, in promoting and enabling community engagement with their local green spaces.

Community powers to own urban green spaces

“Many of the benefits of transferring land to community groups exist precisely because the people who live closest to the space care most deeply about it, and they usually spot opportunities or problems first.”

Asset Transfer Unit & CABE Space, 2010³¹⁸

The powers described earlier allow communities to have a greater say in the protection, location, spending decisions and management of their green spaces. However, there are several powers available for those communities with the skills

311 Homes & Communities Agency, *2009 Site Level Data*, www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/nlud-pdl-results-and-analysis, 2009.

312 David Taylor, *Public Space Lessons – Land in Limbo: Making the Best Use of Vacant Urban Spaces* (CABE, 2008), <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/land-in-limbo>.

313 HMG, *Localism Act 2011*, 2011.

314 MyCommunityRights, *BCEP – A Force for Change where it has Proved Previously Difficult*, <http://mycommunityrights.org.uk/case-studies/right-to-challenge-a-force-for-change-where-it-has-proved-previously-difficult/#sthash.EN0R60cr.dpuf>, 2014.

315 Mark Sandford, *Localism Act 2011: The Community Right to Challenge* (House of Commons Library, 2014).

316 Locality, *The Social Investment Business, and Third Sector Leaders ACEVO, Community Right to Challenge: Understanding the Community Right to Challenge*, 2012.

317 Rachel Edwards, DCLG Big Society & Community Rights Division, *Personal Communication*, June 2014.

318 Asset Transfer Unit and CABE Space, *Community-Led Spaces: A Guide for Local Authorities and Community Groups*, 2010.

319 Compulsory Purchase for Communities will not be relevant for the majority of urban green spaces, which are owned by the public sector and so will not be covered in more detail in this report. The Right to Contest focuses on the sale of currently used public sector sites that “could be put to better economic use”, such as housing or business expansion, rather than necessarily green space creation.

320 N Dunnett, C Swanwick, and H Woolley, *Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces* (Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2002).

321 Nesta, *The 11 Projects that are Rethinking Parks*, www.nesta.org.uk/blog/11-projects-are-rethinking-parks, 2014.

322 Asset Transfer Unit and CABE Space, *Community-Led Spaces: A Guide for Local Authorities and Community Groups*.

323 HMG, *Localism Act 2011*.

324 Locality, *The Social Investment Business, and Local Government Regulation, Community Right to Bid: Understanding the Community Right to Bid*, 2012.

325 Pinterest, *DCLG Community Rights*, www.pinterest.com/communitiesuk/community-rights/, 2014.

326 Kingston Borough Council, *Community Right to Bid*, www.kingston.gov.uk/info/200162/doing_business_with_kingston_council/122/community_right_to_bid/2, 2014.

327 Rachel Edwards, DCLG Big Society & Community Rights Division, *Personal Communication*, June 2014.

328 ODPM, *Circular 06/03: Local Government Act 1972 General Disposal Consent (England) 2003* (Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2003).

329 Locality, *The Social Investment Business, and Local Government Regulation, Community Asset Transfer: Understanding Community Asset Transfer*, 2012.

330 ODPM, *Circular 06/03: Local Government Act 1972 General Disposal Consent (England) 2003*.

and inclination to own and manage their local green space: the Community Right to Bid, Asset Transfer, and the Right to Reclaim Land.³¹⁹ The advantage of transferring or selling public sector assets, such as parks and other urban green spaces, to community-based organisations is that they have access to skills, capacity, and sources of funding not available to councils.³²⁰ They may also be better able to enthuse community efforts, such as volunteering and fundraising (see Box 26 and the projects being supported). Finally, communities may be better placed to develop novel and innovative fundraising methods, such as those being supported by Nesta’s *Rethinking Parks* competition.³²¹ However, a good business case is required if the asset is not to become a liability. This could include using money generated from other assets, such as buildings, or using money generated on site, for example through charging for sports facilities.³²²

Community Right to Bid for Assets of Community Value

The Right to Bid allows community groups to take on the ownership of urban green spaces under certain circumstances. The first stage involves local community groups identifying potential Assets of Community Value. These can be buildings or land where the main use “furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community”.³²³ Given the social benefits that urban green spaces provide (see Chapter 1), they are likely to fulfil this requirement. Once identified by a community, the asset may be entered onto the local authority’s list of Assets of Community Value.

The second stage occurs once the owner of the Asset wishes to sell it (at which point owners must inform the local authority). A six week moratorium on the sale is initiated to allow the community group to decide whether or not it wishes to bid for the Asset. If the community group does decide to bid for the Asset, it has a further 4.5 months to “develop a proposal and raise the money required”.³²⁴

Effectiveness of the Community Right to Bid

As with the Community Right to Challenge, DCLG has made funding available to community groups to exercise their Right to Bid. More than 1,200 assets have now been listed as Assets of Community Value, including urban green spaces such as Grove Park in Weston-Super-Mare, and Madingley Green in Kingston-upon-Thames.^{325,326} Eight of these 1,200 assets have now been taken over by communities.³²⁷ Whilst asset lists are available from local authorities, there is as yet no publicly available central database of registered assets or successful acquisitions under the Right to Bid. This makes it difficult to track the effectiveness of this Community Right over time.

Asset transfer

Asset transfer has a longer history than the Localism Act’s Community Rights, being enshrined in 2003 legislation.³²⁸ Although sometimes confused with the Right to Bid, Asset Transfer is quite distinct (see Table 5). It enables local authorities to transfer public sector land or building management and/or ownership (usually via long leasehold) to community-based organisations such as community interest companies.³²⁹ Importantly, the transfer can be made at less than market value, so long as it promotes economic, social or environmental well-being.³³⁰

Table 5: The main differences between the Community Right to Bid and Asset Transfer³³¹

Criterion	Community Right to Bid	Asset Transfer
Asset owner	Public sector and/or private sector	Public sector
Mechanism	Purchase via open market competition	Transfer at less than market value
Framework	Pre-emptive legal right for communities	Voluntary for public bodies

Box 26: Marchmont Community Garden, London Borough of Camden

An award-winning public garden was created by community groups on a sunken and vacant site identified as an eyesore in 2004/5. Following a failed attempt in 2009 to create key-worker housing on the site, Camden Borough Council offered the Kings Cross-Brunswick Neighbourhood Association a ‘peppercorn’ lease agreement for the site.³³² Design ideas for a public garden were then sought from local residents. A steering group of local organisations secured a £100,000 grant from Big Lottery, along with funds from Camden Council.

The management of the garden is the responsibility of the Marchmont Community Garden Partnership, which has organised regular events. The garden also benefits from free waste collection for seven years and the garden gates are opened and closed by Camden’s Parks contractor.³³³ In its first year, the garden was awarded first prize in the Camden in Bloom 2012 competition, for the ‘Best Community Run Garden’.

A 2009 survey of local authorities found that 80 per cent of local authorities had completed at least one asset transfer, with parks and playing fields the second most popular asset to be transferred (making up 16 per cent of transferred assets).³³⁴ Yet our knowledge of what has happened to these assets, such as whether their quality has improved or declined since the move into community control, is lacking due both to a lack of a central registry and a lack of monitoring.

Recommendation: DCLG should conduct a randomised control trial of green spaces under community and local authority control to determine what impact this has on green space quality and what factors contribute to improvements or reductions in quality.

Effectiveness of Asset Transfer

As with the Community Right to Challenge and the Community Right to Bid, there is no central database of assets transferred to communities. This makes evaluation difficult, for example determining what proportion of transferred assets remains in community ownership or have reverted to the public sector, difficult. This data would be useful to rebut the claim that asset transfer would result in assets reverting back to the public sector in a worse condition than when they were transferred.

331 Locality, The Social Investment Business, and Local Government Regulation, *Community Asset Transfer: Understanding Community Asset Transfer*.

332 Kings Cross – Brunswick Neighbourhood Association, *Annual Report 2011/12*, www.kcbna.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/KCB-Annual-Report-2012.pdf, 2012.

333 Ricci de Freitas, Marchmont Community Garden Project Board Chair, *Personal Communication*, October 2013.

334 Luke Delahunty, *Asset Transfer Unit Evaluation: Baseline Report for the Development Trusts Association* (SQW Consulting, 2009).

Community Right to Reclaim Land

The 2011 Right to Reclaim Land enables anyone to apply to the Secretary of State to investigate why public sector land or buildings are vacant, under-used or derelict. It then empowers the Secretary of State to force the sale of such land or buildings on the open market, providing communities with an opportunity to purchase them.³³⁵ This power was previously known as Public Request to Order Disposal (PROD), but was only successfully used once in more than a decade. This was partly due to the difficulty of identifying whether land or properties were publicly owned; datasets were fragmented and not readily accessible to the public.³³⁶ It may also have been partly due to a weakness of this Community Right, in that it only applies when the “council has no plans to bring it into use” regardless of whether those plans will be carried out.³³⁷

The evidence base for community powers

As described earlier in this chapter, there is no publicly available central database of uses of the different community powers. This makes it difficult to evaluate their effectiveness and target resources where they are most needed.

Recommendation: DCLG should require Local Authorities to publish all uses of the different community powers under the Local Government Transparency Code 2014. DCLG should then aggregate this data to form a publicly accessible central database of all uses of the different community powers. This would enable full evaluation of their effectiveness and highlight where funding and training is best targeted (e.g. to areas that use these powers the least).

In addition, the difficulties of identifying land suitable for Meanwhile Use and the Community Right to Reclaim Land (for example, due to lack of data) hampers community groups’ ability to take greater responsibility for their local area. As argued in our *Park Land* report, providing a simple, searchable map of urban green spaces is a critical step forward in increasing community interest in, and engagement with, urban green spaces. Taking this a stage further by allowing communities to identify potentially available land in the local area could help increase engagement further. The power of providing communities with data on their local environment is illustrated with Birmingham City Council’s maps of ecosystem service provision across the city. When provided to the residents of one district as part of a pilot study, residents raised a total of £1.5 million of external funding through seven different community-led funding bids to improve their neighbourhoods.³³⁸ This demonstrates the determination of communities to improve their local environments and the ability of communities to access sources of funding unavailable to local authorities if they are given the right incentives.

A ‘demo’ map of public sector assets, from 87 councils and central government, was published in 2011 by DCLG. However, it was discontinued in December 2012 and is no longer available to view, although the data behind the map remains available to download.³³⁹ More up-to-date Central Government data on land and property information is available to download as spreadsheets from the data.gov.uk website, and to view as an online map.^{340,341} However, this data does not include local authority owned assets.

The new Local Authority Transparency Code requires local authorities to “publish details of all land and building assets”. However, it only recommends

335 DCLG, *Community Right to Reclaim Land*, www.gov.uk/government/policies/giving-people-more-power-over-what-happens-in-their-neighbourhood/supporting-pages/community-right-to-reclaim-land, 2014.

336 DCLG, *Communities to be given a Right to Reclaim Land*, www.gov.uk/government/news/communities-to-be-given-a-right-to-reclaim-land, 2011.

337 Annemarie Naylor, Community Futures Director, *Personal Communication*, July 2014.

338 Birmingham City Council, *Green Living Spaces Plan*, 2013.

339 DCLG, *First Public Property Map – Councils Could Save Billions*, www.gov.uk/government/news/first-public-property-map-councils-could-save-billions, 2011.

340 Cabinet Office, *Central Government Property and Land including Welsh Ministers estate*, <http://data.gov.uk/dataset/epims>, 2014.

341 Cabinet Office, *Find me some Government Space*, www.epims.org.gov.uk/FMSGSPublic/Home.aspx, 2014.

that they “publish all the information possible on [the] Electronic Property Information Mapping Service” (a database of Central Government properties and land).³⁴² As a result, this data tends to be located on local authority websites, and can be difficult to find. For example, Lancashire County Council holds a list of its own surplus land and properties under the Environment section of its website, whilst four of Lancashire’s district councils hold this data under the Business or Property for Sale sections of their websites.³⁴³

There is therefore a need for a publicly accessible centralised database of both Central Government and local authority property and land assets, in spreadsheet and interactive map formats. This would enable communities to more readily identify public sector land suitable for Meanwhile Use, the Right to Bid, Asset Transfer or the Right to Reclaim Land.

Recommendation: The Local Government Transparency Code 2014 should be amended to mandate local authorities to submit land and property data to the Government’s Electronic Property Information Mapping Service as a mandatory requirement, rather than on a voluntary basis.

A new community right

The existing community planning, consultation, management and ownership powers described in the previous section are important tools for community engagement with their local green spaces. However, with the exception of the Right to Challenge (and potentially asset transfer if it includes an endowment), none of these powers involves the transfer of local authority green space maintenance budgets to communities. Yet, since many green spaces are unlikely to generate enough income to be self-sufficient (see Chapter 2), the transfer of local authority maintenance budgets could be crucial in making sure communities have genuine power over how they look after green space and enough money to ensure they have a fair chance of maintaining its quality.

Whilst the Right to Challenge is an important new community right and entails lower risk for community groups than, for example, asset transfer, it is relatively inflexible. For example, it does not allow for a public sector service to be run for a trial period, and the formal procurement process must comply with public sector and EU procurement rules, since it involves bidding on the open market.³⁴⁴ It also does not require the community group to be involved in the design of the service specification.³⁴⁵ These factors may help to explain the low take-up of the Right to Challenge by communities. However, a new scheme for social housing tenants has the potential to provide a useful new model.

Community Cashback

Social housing tenants have access to an additional selection of Community Rights. The most important, in the context of green space management, is the voluntary Community Cashback scheme.³⁴⁶ This involves the tenants’ group identifying a service that costs less than £170,000 that they wish to run, for example to better meet community needs or to achieve efficiency savings. Services could include maintaining shared green spaces or carrying out repairs. The group then approaches the landlord with a service delivery proposal, and demonstrates community backing for it.

342 DCLG, *Local Government Transparency Code 2014*, 2014.

343 Lancashire County Council, *Surplus Public Sector Land and Buildings*, www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/?siteid=6116&pageid=36821&e=e, 2014.

344 Enfield Council, *Right to Challenge*, www.enfield.gov.uk/info/200003/council_contracts_and_procurement/1922/right_to_challenge, 2014.

345 John Raine and Catherine Staite, *The World Will Be Your Oyster?* (University of Birmingham, Institute of Local Government Studies, 2012).

346 DCLG, *Putting Communities in Control: Giving Social Tenants More Power*, www.gov.uk/government/news/putting-communities-in-control-giving-social-tenants-more-power, 2013.

The landlord and the tenants' group enter into a Community Cashback Agreement, based on what the landlord would normally pay for the service. Any savings generated by the tenants' group are reinvested to deliver local improvements and/or community benefits. Small start-up grants of up to £3,000 are available, through DCLG, to support scheme establishment, for example through advice and training.³⁴⁷ In order to participate, groups must demonstrate that they are competent to manage health and safety risks. The issue of insurance can be dealt with either through the landlord or through the tenants' group itself. The advantage of this model is that it requires no up-front fundraising for communities, and so is suitable for those in more deprived areas. Some of the benefits of transferring urban green space budgets to local communities can be seen in Box 27 and Figure 10. Figure 11 illustrates how Community Cashback fits in with other existing community powers.

Box 27: Penn Road Gardens, London Borough of Islington

In 2003, the Islington Borough Council's Parks Team renegotiated its grounds maintenance contract. The new contract allowed the Council to add or remove entire parks, certain areas within parks, or particular services within parks from the contract at any time. In 2005, the Penn Road Residents Association signed an agreement with the Council to undertake some horticultural work in the gardens.³⁴⁸ The Council pay the Association the same price as would have been paid to the grounds maintenance team for the horticultural work (see Figure 10). Key to this initiative was the signing of the Friends Charter, an agreement between the Council and Friends groups.³⁴⁹ It requires Friends groups to be as inclusive and transparent as possible in their membership and activities, and to work in partnership with the Council, for example by informing it of events. In return, groups will gain benefits, such as: public liability insurance for practical work on site; no site hire charges for community events; and loan of tools and equipment.

Figure 10: Photographs of Penn Road Gardens before (left) and after (right) the Service Level Agreement between Islington Borough Council and the Penn Road Residents Association



Before the Service Level Agreement was signed, the Gardens were "unloved".³⁵⁰ This photograph was taken in 2004.³⁵¹



After the Service Level Agreement was signed, horticultural complexity increased and the site was given a Green Flag Community Award in 2011/12. This photograph was taken in 2014.

347 National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations, *Community Cashback*, www.nftmo.com/content/content_numo?id=5&idas=37, 2014.

348 Jerry Gutwin, Islington Borough Council Performance & Improvement Manager, *Personal Communication*, May 2014.

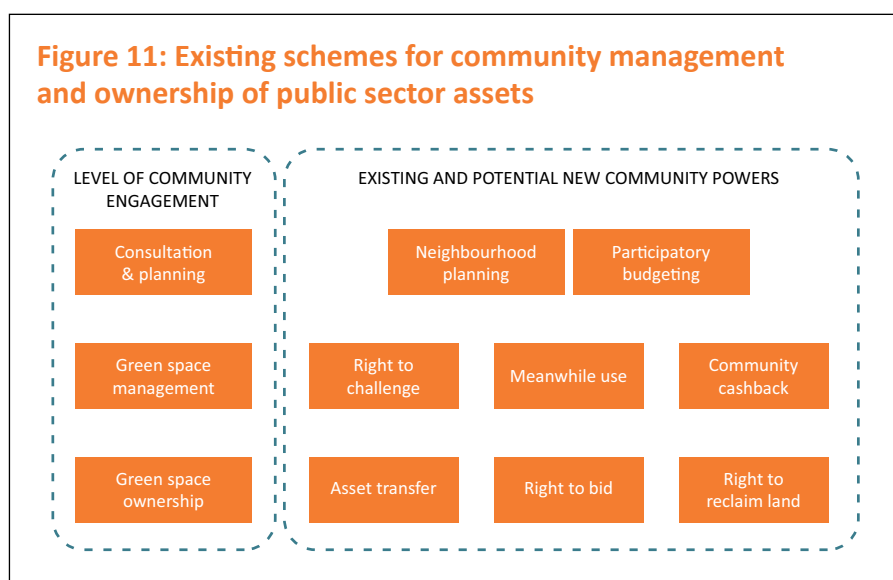
349 Islington Borough Council, Friends of Parks, www.islington.gov.uk/services/parks-environment/parks/getting_involved/Pages/friends_of_parks.aspx, 2014.

350 Community Green Flag Award, *Field Assessment Comments*, www.pennroadn7.co.uk/download/i/mark_dl/u/4012540214/4607383453/PennRoadGardensFeedback%202011.doc, 2012.

351 Provided by Jerry Gutwin, Islington Borough Council Performance & Improvement Manager, June 2014.

Recommendation: The Community Cashback scheme should be extended to community groups wishing to manage and maintain local urban green spaces. Constituted community groups (subject to similar conditions to tenants' groups) should be able to agree urban green space maintenance budgets with local authorities, with any savings generated used for community benefit. This would allow greater flexibility than the existing Right to Challenge, and potentially act as a stepping stone towards greater management responsibilities and other community rights.

In conclusion, there is a suite of existing community powers to engage communities in their local green spaces, from consultation and planning to ownership (Figure 11). However, the evidence base to evaluate these community powers is lacking, and local authority building and land data is not readily available to the public. In addition, few existing community powers involve the transfer of local authority green space maintenance budgets, which may require the creation of a new Community Right.



However, whilst the 2007 Quirk Review identified that there are “no substantive impediments to the transfer of assets to community management and ownership”, it also found that “...people...are often not sufficiently equipped to understand, assess and manage the risks that are inherent in the process of asset transfer and asset management.”³⁵² These risks include the risk of injury on site and the risk of the community group failing.

Risk of injury

A 2007 survey found that 47 per cent of people who would like to start volunteering are worried about risk and liability.³⁵³ A key way to encourage greater involvement by community groups in managing and owning their local green spaces, therefore, is to allay fears surrounding liabilities in the case of injury. Should the Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism Bill become law, for example, this would provide community groups with some security from lawsuits.³⁵⁴

352 Barry Quirk, Stephen Thake, and Andrew Robinson, *Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets*, 2007.

353 Natalie Low et al., *Helping Out: A National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving* (Cabinet Office, 2007).

354 Catherine Fairbairn and John Woodhouse, *Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism Bill* (House of Commons Library, 2014).

Where local authorities are unwilling to offer insurance to community groups, there are community insurance schemes available. For example, Endsleigh offer insurance packages for members of the National Federation of Community Organisations (with a minimum premium of £250 per year).^{355,356} In addition to bespoke insurance packages for small charities and community groups (costing from £100 per year), Zurich Insurance also offers a free online toolkit that offers guidance on legal, health and safety, insurance and planning issues, and allows the creation of a personalised starter pack.^{357,358} Insurance does, therefore, require some time, thought and expense for community groups, but is not an insurmountable barrier to community management or ownership of green spaces.

Risk of the community group failing

Local authorities may be unwilling to transfer green space budgets, management or ownership to communities because of the risk of a community group failing, for example if key individuals move away or if the group is captured by unrepresentative interest groups.^{359,360} Without effective management, parks and green spaces can become a liability requiring potentially costly intervention from the local authority. However, a DCLG report highlighted that “**Not** transferring an asset to a community-based organisation may mean that the local community risks missing out on the social, economic and environmental benefits that can result.”³⁶¹ The Quirk Review made pragmatic suggestions for managing these risks using existing local authority powers, including:

- Local authorities should signpost community groups to organisations that can provide support and advice, for example in developing a sound business plan;
- Covenants and ‘asset lock’ to ensure the asset is used for the public interest;
- Incremental asset transfer (for example giving communities control of a playground within a park before giving them control of the entire park) to give groups time to adjust and raise further funding;
- Transfer asset/s to a larger organisation (such as a community land trust) on behalf of smaller community-based organisations, which can intervene if necessary (instead of the local authority);
- Assets could be transferred with an endowment for long term maintenance (see Chapter 2).

Another strategy for reducing the risk of community groups failing is to offer a series of options with different degrees of community involvement.³⁶² This approach is being taken by Lambeth Borough Council as part of its Cooperative Parks programme (see Box 28).

The risk of community groups failing and green spaces declining can also be reduced through partnerships. These can develop in many different ways between varying combinations of local authorities and civil society. For example, the Friends Charter described in Box 27 is a formal partnership agreement between Friends groups and Islington Borough Council, whilst Telford & Wrekin Borough Council has encouraged existing Friends groups to form the Telford Green Spaces Partnership and plays an active, though informal, role in the Partnership (Councillors are on the committee of all of Telford’s Friends groups).^{363,364}

355 Endsleigh Not-for-Profit Team, Personal Communication, June 2014.

356 Community Matters, *Insurance*, www.communitymatters.org.uk/content/351/Insurance, 2014.

357 TCV, *Community Group Insurance*, www.tcv.org.uk/community/join-community-network/community-group-insurance, 2014.

358 Zurich Insurance, *My Community Starter*, www.mycommunitystarter.co.uk/, 2014.

359 Kazuaki Tsuchiya et al., “The Potential Of, and Threat To, the Transfer of Ecological Knowledge in Urban Areas: The Case of Community-Based Woodland Management in Tokyo, Japan,” *Ecology and Society* 19, no. 2 (2014): 25.

360 Quirk, Thake, and Robinson, *Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets*, 2007.

361 DCLG, *Managing Risks In Asset Transfer: A Guide*, 2008.

362 Asset Transfer Unit and CABE Space, *Community-Led Spaces: A Guide for Local Authorities and Community Groups*.

363 Telford Green Spaces Partnership, *About TGSP*, www.tgsp.org.uk/about.html, 2014.

364 John Trubshaw, Friends of Telford Town Park Chair, *Personal Communication*, March 2014.

Box 28: Cooperative Parks Programme, Lambeth Borough Council

Lambeth Borough Council manage 60 parks and open spaces, with a net budget of £4.6 million. However, the parks and open spaces budget must find £400,000 of savings by the start of the 2014/15 financial year, with a potential requirement for further savings in line with the decline in public sector expenditure. To achieve this, the Council is deliberately seeking greater community involvement with their parks and green spaces. In 2013, the Council launched a consultation to determine community interest in three different levels of park management:

- **Council-led management** exists in the majority of Lambeth's parks and green spaces and involves little community involvement in decision-making or service delivery.
- **Cooperative management** would involve a partnership between the Council and a civil society group, with shared decision-making responsibilities. The civil society group would "be responsible for setting outcomes, raising sponsorship and funding and assessing where funding is and should be allocated"
- **Community-led management** is the most devolved model, where the Council would retain ownership of the green space, but would set and monitor standards, and intervene if necessary. A local board would be solely responsible for the budgets and maintenance of the park.³⁶⁵

1,400 responses were received, with 89 per cent of respondents supporting greater use of community decision-making.³⁶⁶ The Council also received 19 expressions of interest from community groups to take over at least some green space management responsibilities. For example, Woodmansterne Primary School is interested in managing the Stockport Playing Fields, and the Streatham Common Cooperative may be commissioned to manage the Rookery, Streatham Common and Memorial Gardens.³⁶⁷ These ideas will be further developed with the Council.³⁶⁸

The Council also launched the Lambeth Parks Challenge in 2014. This is an interactive online tool that allows members of the public to design a new park and make maintenance decisions for it. As well as informing the public about the maintenance decisions that have to be made, the designs and comments will be used to inform future park and green space planning.³⁶⁹

365 Natalie Thomsen, *Lambeth Cooperative Parks Programme: Information Booklet* (Lambeth Borough Council, 2013), www.lambeth.gov.uk/consultations/cooperative-parks.

366 Lambeth News, *Lambeth Set to Approve Plan for UK's first Cooperative Parks*, <http://lambethnews.wordpress.com/2013/12/04/lambeth-set-to-approve-plan-for-uks-first-cooperative-parks/>, 2013.

367 Natalie Thomsen, *Cooperative Parks Programme* (Lambeth Borough Council, 2013), <http://modern.gov.lambeth.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=3250>.

368 Angela Li, Lambeth Borough Council Senior Parks Officer, *Personal Communication*, February 2014.

369 Love Lambeth, *Love your Park? Try Running One with the Lambeth Parks Challenge*, <http://love.lambeth.gov.uk/love-your-park-try-lambeth-parks-challenge/>, 2014.

370 Gensler and Urban Land Institute, *Open Space: An Asset without a Champion?*, 2011, www.gensleron.com/cities/2011/3/9/who-will-champion-open-spaces.html.

The private sector can also play an important role in green space partnerships and collaborations. A good example is the Jealott's Hill Community Landshare (see Box 29). The private sector has the potential to play a much greater role in supporting the maintenance of urban green spaces. A 2011 survey of 350 real estate developers, investors, consultants and public sector workers across Europe found that 95 per cent "not only believe good open space adds value to commercial property, but are prepared to pay at least 3% more to be in close proximity to it".³⁷⁰ Business Improvement Districts are an important mechanism for capturing this (see Chapter 6).

Box 29: Jealott's Hill Community Landshare, Berkshire

A television documentary on young offenders and gardening inspired an employee from Syngenta, an agriculture research and technology firm, to release part of its Jealott's Hill site for a community landshare scheme. The site ownership remains with Syngenta but the community now has access to it to grow fruit, vegetables and other plants. In collaboration with Bracknell Town Council and others, public meetings were organised to determine local interest. The local authority made a capital donation of £7,700, but there is no guarantee of long-term funding. The group was able to complete the equivalent of around £50,000 of construction work for nothing, by attracting private sector volunteers as well as the public. A range of companies also provided materials including fencing, a polytunnel and new saplings. In 2013, the Jealott's Hill Community Landshare won a National Certificate of Distinction at the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals Awards.

Lack of knowledge and skills

Taking on even a minimal level of responsibility for parks and other green spaces needs confidence and a certain range of skills. This either requires considerable time or is the serendipitous result of the existing skills, social connections and experience of a community.³⁷¹ As a result, there is a danger that more disadvantaged communities will be left behind.³⁷² Formal training may be one solution to this problem. For example, a 2014 report on the impact of volunteering with TCV (see Box 12) found that the greatest improvements in health and wellbeing were reported by those volunteers provided with training and who progressed into positions of responsibility.³⁷³

Formal training is important, but there is some evidence that small community groups also learn from similar groups and social networks, and that relationships tend to develop between community groups and individuals, rather than the organisations those individuals belong to.³⁷⁴ Local authorities could therefore play a key role as a convener by helping to develop connections between similar community groups, as well as linking community groups with key individuals within the local authority and relevant NGOs.

Incentivising community engagement

The provision of knowledge and skills through training and community networks (see the previous section) will help to overcome the perception that risk of injury, risk of failure, or lack of community powers are considerable barriers to community involvement with local green spaces. However, there is potential for incentives (not necessarily financial) to help harness the additional skills and resources of the 1.5 million people wanting more active involvement in local services, such as green space management.³⁷⁵ As part of this research, we investigated Beat the Street, the range of existing volunteer recognition systems (such as the honours system and Points of Light awards), community payback, and time banking.^{376,377,378} However, while worthy and helpful, we consider that there are few policy opportunities associated with these initiatives. As a result, the focus of this section is on council tax rebates.

371 Coin Street Community Builders, *About Us*, <http://coinstreet.org/who-we-are/about-us/>, 2014.

372 Julian Dobson, *Community Assets: Emerging Learning, Challenges and Questions* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2011).

373 Mike King, *Volunteering Impacts* (The Conservation Volunteers, 2014).

374 Angus McCabe and Jenny Phillimore, *Seeing and Doing: Learning, Resources and Social Networks Below the Radar* (Third Sector Research Centre, 2012).

375 Ipsos MORI, *Do the Public Really Want to Join the Government of Britain?*

376 Beat the Street, www.beatthestreet.me/, 2014.

377 HMG, *The Honours System*, www.gov.uk/honours/overview, 2014.

378 HMG, *New UK Points of Light Award Names Flood Heroes as First Winners*, www.gov.uk/government/news/new-uk-points-of-light-award-names-flood-heroes-as-first-winners, 2014.

Council Tax rebate

Local authorities offer a number of important incentives to encourage volunteering and involvement in community life, For example:

Since 2013, Southampton City Council applied a 100 per cent council tax discount to residents who serve as Special Constables within Southampton.³⁷⁹

Northampton Borough Council's 'Community Contribution Priority Scheme' recognises the importance of volunteering when deciding housing allocations. Council housing applicants who volunteer (with a not-for-profit organisation or charity for at least 10 hours a month for 6 months prior to application and point of offer) are given increased priority for a home, so long as the applicant already has 'Reasonable Preference' status.³⁸⁰

A similar incentive could be offered for volunteers who work as part of constituted Friends, or other community, groups to improve their local green spaces. This could help prevent Friends groups being established only in response to threats to green spaces, such as housing development (there is anecdotal evidence that this can result in a long term adversarial structure that limits entrepreneurial ability).³⁸¹ A council tax rebate could also encourage segments of the population that are not currently well represented in Friends groups to become more involved (Friends groups tend to be dominated by white people over the age of 35).

Recommendation: Local authorities should offer council tax rebates for active members of civic improvement groups, such as Friends groups, who do a large amount of voluntary activity in parks. This could be based on hours spent volunteering or other measures.

Conclusions

This chapter has identified and evaluated the main existing tools for community management and ownership of their local urban green spaces (dependent on the extent to which communities are willing and able to take on greater responsibility). We propose the extension of the Community Cashback scheme to the general public to fill a gap in existing mechanisms. The chapter has also identified the barriers preventing communities from taking up existing tools and preventing local authorities from encouraging community action, which can primarily be overcome through the provision of publicly accessible data. This would allow the uses of the different community powers to be determined and evaluated, and allow communities to identify land suitable for Meanwhile Use and the Community Right to Reclaim Land. Incentives for community engagement are also discussed, with a proposal for local authorities to offer a council tax rebate for active green space volunteers.

379 Southampton City Council, *Council Tax Discounts For Persons Over The Age Of 65 And Special Constables*, www.southampton.gov.uk/moderngov/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=9637&Opt=0, 2013.

380 Northampton Borough Council, *The Housing Allocation Policy Explained*, www.northampton.gov.uk/info/200183/apply-for-housing/1713/the-housing-allocation-policy-explained/10, 2014.

381 Emma Frost, LLDC Regeneration and Community Partnerships, *Personal Communication*, December 2013.

Summary and Conclusions

Urban green spaces are a critical part of community life in our cities. They improve our mental health and provide a free outdoor space for exercise, socialising and relaxation. However, this report has identified that there is inequality in access to the social benefits that urban green spaces offer, in terms of where green spaces are, the state they are in, and who uses them. In addition, our *Park Land* report identified that long term maintenance funding for urban green spaces is at risk as a result of local authority budget cuts.

One critical tool to ensure that existing spending is more effectively targeted would be the creation of a crowdsourced urban green space map, as recommended in our *Park Land* report. However, this alone will not be sufficient to ensure that all communities can benefit fully from their local urban green spaces. This report therefore examined the potential for new sources of public sector, private sector and civil society funding to help ensure high quality urban green space maintenance. It also investigated existing and new methods for encouraging community engagement with their local urban green spaces.

Summary of recommendations

Local authority funding

- All local authorities should conduct a review to determine whether endowments would be a suitable model for the sustainable funding of any of their existing green spaces.
- New green spaces (for example planned as part of a built development) should be required to include a long term funding plan, which could include endowments part funded by developer contributions, as part of the planning application.
- DCLG should require each local authority to contribute to a central open access register of CIL payments and expenditure, to improve transparency and public confidence in the planning system. This will require an amendment to The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.
- Levies raised specifically for green space maintenance that are currently collected as part of council tax should instead be collected as a separate charge alongside council tax (for example, similarly to the Business Improvement District levy described in Chapter 6). This may require a change in legislation. This would ensure that local authorities are not penalised for freezing Council Tax when levy rates increase.

- Local Authorities should be required by DCLG to act as Accountable Body for community projects supported by Lottery or Central Government funding, where requested by communities, to ensure that VAT does not have to be paid. All such community project funding programmes should include capacity building support, such as that provided by the Community Spaces programme facilitators, to ensure successful completion of projects.

Other public sector sources of funding

- The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) should conduct a social prescribing audit to determine what models are currently being used. This would help publicise the use of social prescribing amongst GPs and CCGs, enable learning from previous experience and determine which areas should be targeted for the introduction of new schemes.
- NICE should conduct and evaluate trials to determine whether investing in improvements in green space access, quality, facilities and/or activities delivers measurable public health outcomes. This would also help to identify which types of improvements deliver the greatest benefits.
- NICE and CCGs should determine the success of existing green prescribing schemes. Based on the results, run green prescribing prescription trials should be run to identify which schemes are most successful and why. All trials should be fully evaluated for their health outcomes.
- Registers of local green prescription providers should be established by Health and Wellbeing Boards. These should include information on skills, training and expertise, location, which groups of patients they are able to support, and cost. This would allow GPs to match patients with local providers that are able to support their particular needs. It would also allow existing providers to identify 'gaps' in patient support, potentially encouraging further training, as well as additional and/or more cost-effective service provision.
- Police and Crime Commissioners should allow communities and local authorities to apply for funding to help support park keepers for those green spaces identified as particular hotspots of crime.
- Future Police and Crime Commissioner guidance documents should increase awareness amongst PCCs that well designed and maintained urban green space can help reduce crime.
- DfE should provide guidance to schools on how to green their open spaces safely, make best use of them, and increase public access outside of school hours. DfE should also provide guidance for schools interested in working with local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups to help maintain local green spaces.
- Central Government should create a website for Local Nature Partnerships, similar to that available to Local Enterprise Partnerships. This would enable them to share knowledge and resources, such as examples of effective collaboration with LEPs and local authorities.

Public sector spending

- The Government should establish a new competition, similar to the Nature Improvement Areas competition. This would ask for proposals to increase connectivity between urban green spaces at a city-wide level, as well as improve public access to urban green spaces. Like the NIA competition, this would require partnership working, drawing on local authority Green Space Strategies, nature conservation organisation expertise, Natural England and the Environment Agency, the private sector and the public.
- In line with our Park Land report, a crowdsourced, freely publicly accessible urban green space map should be created, to which local authorities and other public sector bodies can add their data. This will enable more accurate analysis of where resources should be directed to improve green space quality and provision and help inform local authority commissioning.

Civil society and private sector funding

- Government should pilot the creation of Park Improvement Districts to help fund the long term maintenance and improvement of local environments and urban green spaces.
- The Treasury should introduce Charitable Remainder Trusts and ensure that charities supporting green space maintenance and regeneration are eligible as beneficiaries.
- Central government should extend the Gift Aid scheme to community civic improvement groups, such as Friends groups, to incentivise community investment in their local area, including green spaces. We estimate that this would cost the Treasury £7–15 million a year.
- DCLG and the Treasury should pilot the creation of Park Improvement Districts to help fund the long term maintenance and improvement of local environments and urban green spaces.
- A crowdsourced urban green space map, as recommended in our Park Land report, should be created. DCLG should encourage local authorities to add data on the funding available for each green space. This could, for example, take the form of an hourglass that shows the remaining funding for the financial year. This could then be linked to a crowdfunding platform to enable either one-off or regular donations to particular green spaces.

Community action

- DCLG should conduct a randomised control trial of green spaces under community and local authority control to determine what impact this has on green space quality and what factors contribute to improvements or reductions in quality.
- Local authorities should offer council tax rebates for active members of civic improvement groups, such as Friends groups, who do a large amount of voluntary activity in parks. This could be based on hours spent volunteering or other measures.

- The Community Cashback scheme should be extended to community groups wishing to manage and maintain local urban green spaces. Constituted community groups (subject to similar conditions to tenants' groups) should be able to agree urban green space maintenance budgets with local authorities, with any savings generated used for community benefit. This would allow greater flexibility than the existing Right to Challenge, and potentially act as a stepping stone towards greater management responsibilities and other community rights.
- DCLG should require Local Authorities to publish all uses of the different community powers under the Local Government Transparency Code 2014. DCLG should then aggregate this data to form a publicly accessible central database of all uses of the different community powers. This would enable full evaluation of their effectiveness and highlight where funding and training is best targeted (e.g. to areas that use these powers the least).
- The Local Government Transparency Code 2014 should be amended to mandate local authorities to submit land and property data to the Government's Electronic Property Information Mapping Service as a mandatory requirement, rather than on a voluntary basis.



Our urban green spaces provide free outdoor areas where we can relax, exercise, and socialise. They help clean our air, cool our cities in the summer, support biodiversity and reduce flooding. Green spaces also help make our cities attractive places to live in, visit and work in.

Yet reductions in funding, the loss of green space institutions and the lack of data on green space quality and location means that our urban green spaces are at risk of deteriorating.

Our first report in this series, *Park Land*, examined the state of urban green space data and recommended the creation of a crowdsourced urban green space map and the release of existing datasets from expensive paywalls.

This report explores existing methods of public sector funding, such as endowments, and how they can be improved. It also identifies new potential public sector funding sources, including public health budgets. New ways of civil society contributing to green space funding are described, such as Living Legacies. Finally, we explore how communities can be encouraged to become more involved with their local green spaces.

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