National Audit Office

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Enhancing Urban Green Space

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PREFACE

Why urban green space is important

1 For many years the need for good-quality, well-maintained urban parks, recreation grounds and other green spaces was not regarded as a priority and decline in many neighbourhoods set in. But green space makes a vital contribution to the quality of urban life and to the achievement of a range of Government objectives. Access to green space is a powerful weapon in the fight against obesity and ill-health, especially amongst children. Neglected parks seem to attract anti-social behaviour and have the potential to undermine regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods. In growth areas, good quality parks and open spaces are one of the best ways to ensure new communities blend harmoniously with old.

2 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, supported by other Departments, has embarked upon a number of initiatives to raise the profile of green space. It has required local government to approach the planning of urban squares, parks, green corridors and nature reserves in a more comprehensive and strategic manner. It has urged local authorities to improve the quality of their open and green space and set national targets to help achieve this. And it has established a new unit within the Commission for the Built Environment to champion public space, and specifically to develop best practice and provide advice and support to local government on public and green space issues.

Value for Money

3 Our report shows that initiatives led by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister have helped to reverse the decline in the quality of urban green space in many of England's urban neighbourhoods. New sources of funds from central government and the lottery have helped to bring about the refurbishment and renewal of many green spaces. Some notable examples include Sheffield Botanical Gardens and King Edward Memorial Park in East London. And local communities have an increasing say in helping to protect and enhance green space.

4 The nation spends almost £700 million on urban green space each year. Our report identifies three main risks to value for money from this expenditure:

Resources need to be targeted better

5 Without a strategic approach there is a danger that resources will be targeted badly – for example by making a good park even better at the expense of improving a run down green space in a deprived area that desperately needs improvement. One third of urban local authorities still do not have strategies for their green space and many existing strategies are weak, particularly in identifying costs and demonstrating efficiency. Central government needs to use performance data more methodically to support poorer performing local authorities with advice and mentoring.

More modern and innovative procurement approaches are needed

6 The limited information on unit costs suggests some local authorities may spend five times as much as others maintaining their green space and there is scope for improved efficiency. Many local authorities have responded to inadequate performance by green space maintenance contractors by taking services back in-house. Fewer have tested the value for money of their existing arrangements against some of the more innovative methods of supplying green services illustrated in this report. These include shared contracts across local authorities or longer-term partnerships with the private, voluntary and community sectors.

Capacity and skills need strengthening

7 Green space is still too often treated as a Cinderella service. Its voice is often dissipated within local authorities and underrepresented in important decision-making arenas. Central government expects local green space managers to make the case for green space expenditure against other pressing priorities and to forge links with the private, community and voluntary sectors. Green space managers' training needs to be tailored to the new role expected of them. Otherwise there is the danger that when budgets are tight, the case for green space will not be made effectively, will slip down the local priority list and decline will set in again.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

1 Good quality green space plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of urban life. Urban green spaces help to make neighbourhoods more attractive to live in and provide opportunities for city dwellers to relax, take exercise, play sport, and meet friends and neighbours. The existence of high quality urban green space contributes to wider Government objectives such as improved health, more sustainable neighbourhood renewal and better community cohesion, especially in more deprived communities.

2 Urban green space includes many types of land in an urban setting from formally designated areas such as parks to more natural areas such as corridors along river banks. Such green areas account for around 14 per cent of urban space. We estimate that the cost of maintaining and renovating urban green space was about £700 million in 2004-05. Local authorities have the key strategic role in ensuring sufficient local provision of good quality urban green space, although a number of other bodies, particularly housing associations, may be responsible for managing elements of green space.

3 The quality of urban green space declined during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Reasons for this decline include the increasingly competitive demands on local authority leisure and other service budgets, inflexible and insensitive contracting out of maintenance work and a fall in the local and national political and administrative priority given to green space.

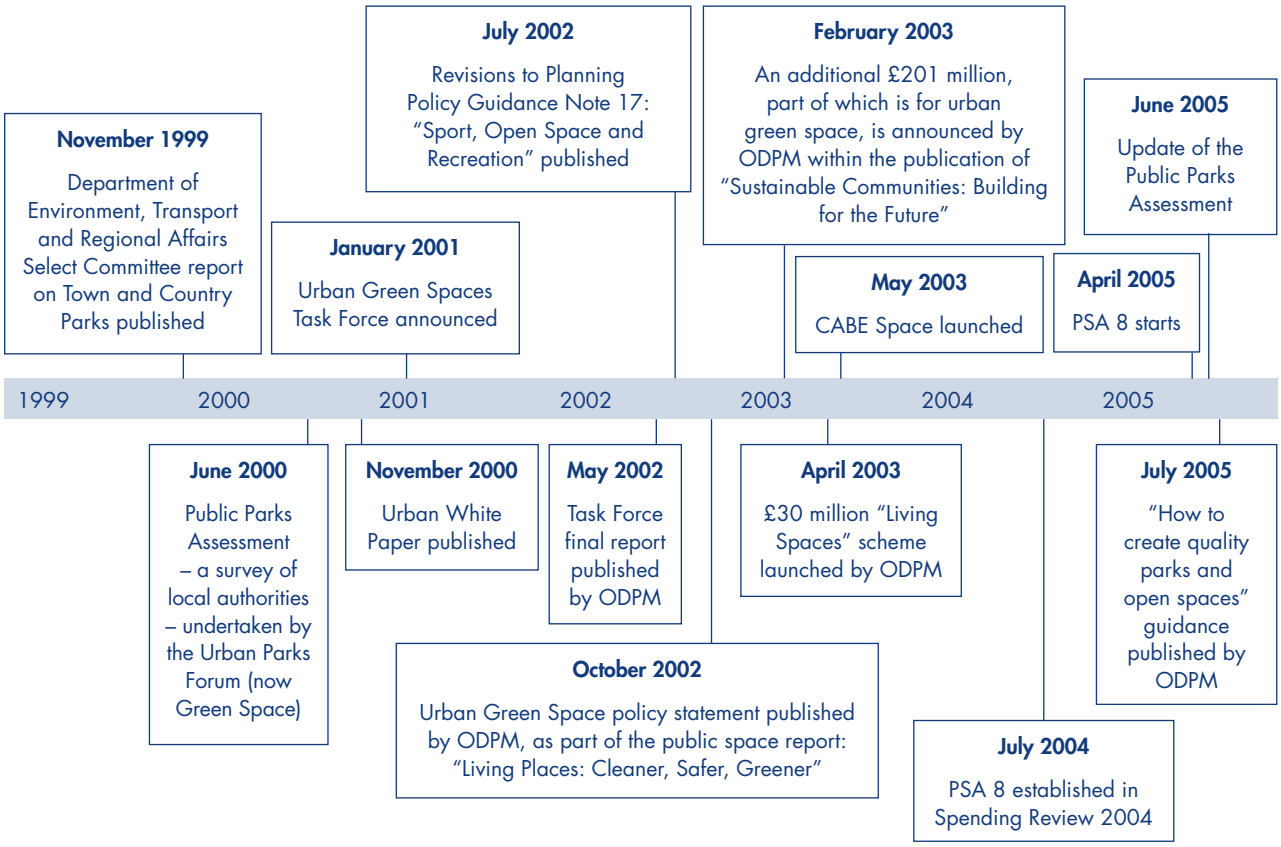
4 In 2001, the Government set up an Urban Green Spaces Task Force to advise Ministers on how to go about raising green space quality and ensure it receives the priority that its importance to local communities deserves. Improving urban green space is now part of a wider "liveability policy" which is concerned with creating high quality and attractive places. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (OPDM) is responsible for leading national policy on liveability and green space issues. The key policy initiatives and associated programmes designed to bring about improvements in urban green space together with a timeline are shown in **Figures 1 and 2 overleaf**.

1 Key national policy initiatives to enhance urban green space

- Revised **planning rules**, (Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, July 2002) calling upon local authorities to assess the existing and future needs of their communities for open space and to set local standards for the maintenance and adequate supply of facilities
- Establishment in 2003 of a separate unit within the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment – **CABE Space** to champion public spaces focussing initially on parks and green spaces
- Promotion of a **Green Flag Award scheme** to provide national standards and encourage better green space management
- Commitment of around **£201 million** of new central government direct funding for 'liveability' over 2003-04 to 2005-06
- Introduction in July 2004 of a new **Public Service Agreement (number 8)** requiring the delivery of cleaner, safer and greener public spaces in deprived communities and across the country with measurable improvement by 2008
- Development and spread of **good practice** in green space development and management
- Encouragement of **partnership approaches** between Whitehall departments, between local authorities and other local public bodies and between local public bodies and the community and voluntary sector

Source: National Audit Office

2 Urban Green Space Timeline



5 The impact of these initiatives is the subject of this report. This report examines whether the barriers to the enhancement of urban green space have been well identified, and after an introductory part (Part 1), considers the progress:

- in enhancing and tracking the quality of urban green space (Part 2)
- in improving the financial management of urban green space (Part 3)
- through the planning system to protect and enhance urban green space (Part 4).

6 We carried out a survey of urban local authorities and asked for data on the condition of their green spaces. This updated a previous survey commissioned by ODPM, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Countryside Agency and English Heritage in 2000 called the 'Public Parks Assessment'. We asked the Landscape Department of the University of Sheffield to review urban local authority green space strategies. We ran six large focus groups of community groups and green space managers, and used an expert panel. We visited the organisations involved in managing and funding urban green space, as well as working closely with the Audit Commission. We also surveyed many academic and other studies and reports. Our methodology is explained in more detail at Appendix A.

FINDINGS

Overall findings

What is working well

7 The decline in the quality of urban green space has been halted in most areas and there are signs of recovery in many places. Both those who manage and those who use urban green space agree. In 2000, managers in less than 44 per cent of urban local authorities believed the quality of their green space was stable or improving. This figure has increased to 84 per cent in 2005. And urban residents' satisfaction with green space increased by eight per cent between 2000 and 2003.[1]

8 Central advocacy by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and CABE Space has helped to raise the awareness of the importance of good quality urban green space to local communities and wider Government objectives. Around 69 per cent of local authorities now have a green space strategy completed or in development. In 2000 the equivalent figure was 53 per cent.

9 New sources of funds, especially from the lottery, have enabled local authorities and other public bodies to bring about refurbishment and improvement. Central funding has encouraged greater partnership working and helped to bring about more engagement of local communities in refurbishment programmes and schemes **(Figure 3 on page 8)**.

10 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has identified the need for local authorities to innovate and plan to ensure funding to sustain improvement is built into refurbishment schemes, and is encouraging them to do so.

What needs more development

11 The improvement in the quality of urban green space is not yet universal. Our survey of parks managers revealed that in some sixteen per cent of urban local authorities the quality of their green space was considered to be in decline. Local authority surveys of residents show that there is wide variation in the level of satisfaction with urban parks and green spaces. Some local authorities score only 54 per cent satisfaction, whilst others achieve 92 per cent satisfaction. And resident satisfaction has risen faster in authorities where satisfaction levels were already relatively high in 2000.

12 Mainstream expenditure by local authorities on upkeep required to sustain improvement over the longer term has increased, although not at the rate of increases spent on other local public services or the funding made available.

13 The lessons from central government funded projects to encourage local authorities to innovate in service delivery have yet to be fully identified and spread. And local authorities need to improve the information they collect on the cost of their green space management to provide assurance on their efficiency and effectiveness.

14 Despite the higher profile of green space, many urban local authorities have not yet reflected this importance in well conceived and well supported local strategies. There remains a need to continue to promote urban green space, and to identify and apply good practice advice to secure a more widespread and sustainable improvement.

1 The resident satisfaction survey is carried out every three years.

Part two findings: Improving the quality of urban green space

What is working well

15 Eighty four per cent of urban local authorities believe the quality of their parks is stable or improving. This compares to less than 44 per cent in 2000. In 2000 more than 55 per cent of urban local authorities considered their historic green spaces were declining in quality. We found that this had fallen to 16 per cent in 2005.

16 The Government has set targets to track and measure improvements in green space quality. Within a broader aim to enhance 'liveability' – improving the quality and safety of public spaces and local environments and people's enjoyment of them – the Government has set national targets to focus attention, track progress and measure achievement under the eighth Public Service Agreement of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Two of the sub-targets relate directly to green spaces – improving residents' satisfaction with green spaces, and increasing the number of areas with a green space which have won a Green Flag Award **(Figure 4 overleaf)** by 2008. Other indicators are generic and include green space issues but not explicitly, such as the number of local authorities whose environmental services are judged to be performing well or performing strongly by the Audit Commission as part of their Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

17 In aggregate residents' satisfaction with green space has increased. Between 2000 and 2003 the proportion of residents across England who were satisfied with their local parks and open spaces rose by eight percentage points to 71 per cent. The overall target to increase satisfaction to 75 per cent by 2008 is likely to be achieved.

18 The number of individual green spaces recognised as being of good quality is increasing. The Green Flag Award, which is administered by the Civic Trust on behalf of the Green Flag Advisory Board and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. The number of local authorities taking part in the award scheme has increased steadily, and the Civic Trust are confident that the PSA target – for 60 per cent of local authority districts to receive at least one award – will be met. The Green Flag Award scheme is well regarded by urban green space managers who believe that it has been effective in raising the profile of green space and increasing visitors.

19 Wider participation in the Green Flag Award scheme could enhance the quality of green space across an urban area. There is early evidence to suggest that better urban local authorities use the Green Flag Award as a benchmark to drive up standards across all of the spaces for which they are responsible.

3 The renovation of urban green space; the example of Sheffield Botanical Gardens

The site

A 19 acre garden, originally designed by Robert Marnock in the Gardenesque style, which dates from 1836. It contains a large collection of listed buildings including the Grade II* listed curvilinear Glass Pavilions, one of the earliest ever built.

The problem

Derelict listed buildings, dilapidated glass pavilions, overgrown planting and lost landscape design.

The plan

Sheffield City Council sought a restoration in keeping with the spirit of the original Victorian layout, but adapting it to modern-day needs. To create a centre for horticultural excellence and educational opportunities.

Phase One: renovation of Grade II listed, derelict buildings.

Phase Two: restoration of the Glass Pavilions.

Phase Three: landscaping.

The funding

The majority of the funding came from a Heritage Lottery Grant of £5.06 million (75 per cent of the required sum), to be matched by £1.22 million raised locally through fundraising and sponsorship (25 per cent). Sheffield City Council contributed £350,000 towards the project. Match funding was raised by the Sheffield Botanical Gardens Trust and the activities of the Friends group. Donations were made by businesses; charities; societies; Landfill Tax; bequests and private individuals; sponsors.

The achievement

- The only Botanical Gardens in the country undertaking a complete garden restoration.
- Derelict buildings renovated and in use.
- Restored and restocked Glass Pavilions officially opened by HRH Prince Charles, September 2003.
- Landscape restoration completed September 2005.
- Final completion of the whole project expected November 2005.

Source: National Audit Office/Heritage Lottery Fund

4 The Green Flag Award scheme assesses the quality of parks and green spaces against eight criteria

The green space must be:

- Welcoming
- Healthy, safe and secure
- Well maintained and clean
- Managed in a sustainable way

In addition the management of the park should:

- Make the most of its conservation and heritage potential
- Encourage community involvement
- Actively market the park
- Have strong management plans in place

Source: National Audit Office, based on Civic Trust information

20 Local community groups make a substantial contribution to the enhancement of urban green space. Government has launched a series of initiatives and sponsorship to support community engagement. Many community groups are 'Friends' groups **(Figure 5)**.[2] Their main role is to act as a voice for a particular park or green space, and they often act as a link between the local authority and the wider community. There are over 4,000 community groups involved in green space across the country, and it is estimated that the annual economic value of their work across the UK could be as much as £35 million.[3] Green space managers are increasingly recognising the need to engage with such groups in order to respond adequately to the changing needs and expectations of local residents.

What needs more development

21 There is wide variation in the level of satisfaction with urban parks and green spaces. Some local authorities score only 54 per cent, whilst others achieve 92 per cent satisfaction. Many local authorities would have to increase residents' satisfaction by considerable margins if the aggregate national target was applied locally **(Figure 6 overleaf)**.

22 Work needs to be done to ensure that urban communities which have endured poor quality green space for many years do not miss out on improvements. We found that this group contained many deprived communities in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds for use on green space, and others attracting no special targeting. Much still needs to be done if the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is to meet its specific target that all deprived communities attain an average resident satisfaction score of 75 per cent by 2007-08. But there also needs to be a focus on the others in the poorly performing group which are not classified as deprived and do not receive Neighbourhood Renewal Funds. Some deprived areas currently receiving Neighbourhood Renewal Funds are already achieving high quality green space, and it may be more productive to target funds more carefully, or even refine the target itself towards a national minimum resident satisfaction score.

5 The 'CV' of Friends of Southwark Park

Their 'job': Formed in 1996 to improve a very run-down but much loved park for the whole community.

Aims: To maintain and provide the local community with a green space to escape to, that they want to use, enjoy and feel proud of – the original reasons for building the park in 1869.

Activities: Involved with Southwark council in decision and policy making. Assisting with running the 'Young Friends of Southwark Park' for 8–15 year olds. Producing and implementing the Sunday summer free bandstand concerts. Applying for funding. Tours and talks for civic visitors and community groups.

Role: Everything from helping to set the budgets to sweeping the pathways! Totally involved and committed.

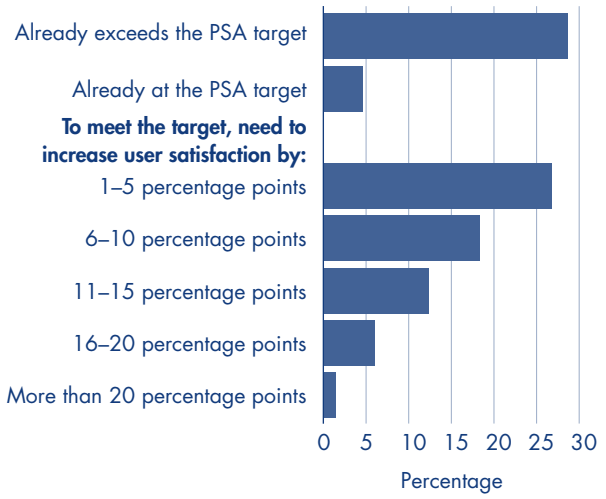
Successes: Turning around a virtually abandoned park. Helping shape the direction of the Heritage Lottery restoration project. Seeing that local campaigning can bring about positive change.

Issues: Getting more people involved with the group. Raising staffing levels and maintenance issues and ensuring that Southwark Park remains a focal point for the community.

Source: Friends of Southwark Park

2 Community Networking Project, GreenSpace, November 2003.
3 Community Networking Project, GreenSpace, November 2003.

6 Many local authorities' resident satisfaction ratings are well below the target for 2008



Source: National Audit Office analysis of 2003 resident satisfaction data

23 Despite the increasing number of authorities taking part in the Green Flag Award scheme, accredited space is still scarce. Across urban England, there are 7.3 Green Flag Award winning spaces for every million people. Participation in the Green Flag Award scheme is discretionary and the spread of awards is uneven. Urban residents in the North West have 17.7 Green Flag spaces per million people, compared with only 2.8 in the West Midlands.

24 Given the recent rapid growth in the numbers taking part, concern has been expressed about maintaining the quality and comparability of judging standards. The Civic Trust has plans in place to maintain the credibility and consistency of the award and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister should monitor this carefully.

25 There is a risk that in the short term the Green Flag Award scheme may help to widen the gap between the best parks and green spaces and the rest if it is only seen to recognise already good spaces. Authorities pursuing a Green Flag for one space may be tempted to divert resources away from others. About 40 per cent of urban green space managers told us that the pursuit of an award had been significant in diverting resources away from other green space in the area.

26 The Green Flag Award scheme may not yet have driven up the standard of the poorest parks – one quarter of the parks which managers had rated as 'good' in 2000 have been awarded a Green Flag, compared with only two per cent of parks which had been in 'poor' condition in 2000. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister recognises that such an award scheme will represent the top end of park and green space management, and the Green Flag Advisory Board is considering how the underlying principles can be used to support poor and failing spaces to improve.

27 Progress in enhancing urban green space continues to be held back by skills shortages. In 2002, the Urban Green Spaces Task Force concluded that there had been a decline in the number of experienced individuals employed in parks and other green space. Our research and work by CABE Space has confirmed the continuing widespread deficit in skills (particularly management skills) and relevant training at all levels in the sector. The Government has established a new Academy for Sustainable Communities which aims to help tackle the skills issue for the sector. Due to the wide range of organisations involved, progress on a national skills strategy has been slower than anticipated. CABE Space had planned to produce a skills strategy by 2005, but it is likely to be published in 2006.

Part three findings: Improving the financial management of urban green space

What is working well

28 We estimate that almost £700 million was spent on urban green space in 2004-05. Eighty five per cent of funding came from the public sector and the bulk of private funding came from planning gain contributions from private developers **(Figure 7)**. The majority of central government funding is channelled through the local authority revenue support grant to local authorities. Programmes supported by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs contribute £12 million. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is the main other departmental funder. The national lottery distribution bodies have made a significant contribution to revitalising parks and green spaces through sustained green space programmes.

7 Around £700 million was spent on urban green space in 2004-05

	£	%
Local authorities	482	70
Central government and European Union	106	15
National Lottery	58	8
Private sector	34	5
Third sector	13	2
Total	**693**	**100**

Source: National Audit Office

29 Additional sources of funds have been made available by central government and the lottery distribution bodies. The majority of additional funding comes via central government grants and National Lottery funded programmes. Lottery programmes are targeted at renovation or new facilities rather than for maintenance and upkeep of green spaces. Local authorities, third sector and community groups have welcomed these additional monies as they are effectively targeted at improving green space. The central allocation of these additional funds to different local groups has led to increased partnership working between local authorities and others in the delivery of green space.

30 Local authority expenditure on green space has risen. Over the last six years cash expenditure by local authorities on green space has increased by around five per cent a year on average, or around 2.5 per cent a year in real terms. Between 2002-03 and 2004-05, local authority expenditure on green space rose by 19 per cent (10 per cent after inflation).

31 Some local authorities are beginning to experiment with innovative ways of delivering green space services. For example, one local authority has developed a public-private partnership approach and another has handed the management of one of its parks to a voluntary sector organisation.

32 A number of local authorities have developed voluntary benchmarking clubs or associations to compare the economy and efficiency of aspects of green space management, either locally, or between like authorities. The data collected by these benchmarking clubs suggests a wide variation in the unit cost of managing green space. For example, the average cost of maintaining one hectare of green space varies by a factor in excess of five, suggesting there is considerable scope for improved value for money in some local authorities.

What needs more development

33 Local authority expenditure on green space, which makes up four-fifths of public sector spending, has increased by 19 per cent in cash terms since 2001-02, but has nevertheless not kept pace with the increasing level of overall local authority spending or the increasing amounts spent on other environmental and cultural services. Funding is made through formula grant[4], which is unhypothecated and its use is therefore within local authority discretion. Green space, along with most other environmental and cultural services, is non-statutory and its funding is often under severe pressure from other services.

34 Current performance reporting and assessment regimes provide limited assurance on the economy and efficiency of local authority green space expenditure. Under Comprehensive Performance Assessments, green space management is not subject to the same level of scrutiny as built environmental services. Of the 23 indicators used by the Audit Commission to assess the performance of local authority environmental, protective and cultural services, the sole indicator relating specifically to green space, measures local residents' satisfaction with green space. The paucity of measures means that green space management is not subject to the same level of scrutiny as built environmental services. And this in turn may mean that senior officers and local politicians do not give green space management the priority it deserves.

4 Formula grant is the pot of money which local authorities use to fund their services. It comprises revenue support grant, redistributed business rates and primary formula police grant.

35 Local authority budgeting and reporting on green space expenditure needs to be strengthened to enable better measurement of economy and efficiency. We found that the current budgeting, accounting and financial reporting procedures and practices of many local authorities make it difficult to devise appropriate economy and efficiency measures for green space. These weaknesses include:

- Relevant costs of different directorates or divisions within local authorities contributing to green space management are not brought together.
- External sources of funding are not brought together with mainstream expenditure in a consistent manner to demonstrate total resources devoted to green spaces.
- Costs on individual green spaces or categories of green space are not allocated or apportioned.
- Contracts with external suppliers may not provide for reporting to allow allocation of costs across different activities or areas of green space.
- At the level of detail required, expenditure is not accounted for on an accruals basis and does not include non-cash costs such as depreciation.
- Costs are not related to units of activity or outcome, such as hectares maintained to recognised quality standards.

36 A national framework for improved financial management is needed to strengthen the performance of urban green spaces. We would expect local authorities to build upon existing financial guidance and procedures so as to be able to account for expenditure for each green space so as to support improvement plans and funding allocations to achieve desired outcomes. The Annex to the Executive Summary sets out a framework for local authorities to use to improve their financial management.

37 Modern contracting practices need to be adopted more widely. We found that many authorities have responded to the service problems brought about by inflexible contracts by bringing services back in-house. Few have adopted innovative approaches. There is scope for many local authorities to consider more modern contracting practices based on flexible measures of outcome and closer partnering.

Part four findings: Planning urban green space

What is working well

38 Eighty-three percent of urban green space managers consider that the work of ODPM and CABE Space has raised the status of green space issues. This has been achieved through a combination of improved policy guidance by ODPM and better strategic information and guidelines to green space managers provided by CABE Space.

39 ODPM's revised policy planning policy guidelines have set clear objectives for planning authorities that are designed to:

- Protect open space, playing fields and green spaces in cities and towns, and
- Provide clarity for planning authorities, developers and landowners in terms of what can be expected to preserve and enhance open space, sport and recreation provision in the future.

40 CABE Space have worked closely with and supported green space managers in many local authorities. They have provided one-to-one support and guidance in key areas such as the benefits of green space and how to produce a green space strategy.

41 Achieving national objectives for urban green space depends on rigorous local assessment of need and audits of provision. Those authorities that have audited their current provision of green space as required under policy planning guidance 17 are better able to:

- Meet the current needs of residents
- Identify the quality, shortfalls and surpluses of open space, and
- Determine how best to meet future needs arising from developments.

42 Today, eighty-one per cent of local authorities have completed or are in the process of undertaking an audit of their current provision of open space as recommended in Planning Policy Guidance 17. Two-thirds of authorities have completed or started their needs assessments.

43 Green space strategies help to develop a shared vision between politicians, officers, key partners and stakeholders to support, protect and enhance green space. Nearly seventy per cent of urban authorities have produced or are in the process of developing a green spaces strategy.

What needs more development

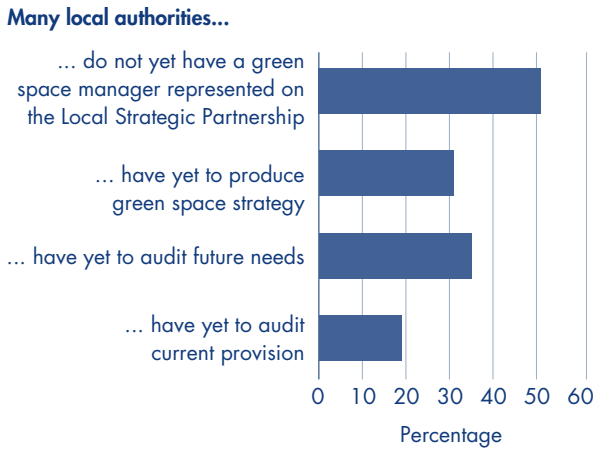
44 One in five urban authorities has yet to start auditing their current provision of green space. And some 35 per cent have yet to start examining what their future needs are likely to be **(see Figure 8)**.

45 Sixty per cent of urban local authorities have not yet formally adopted green space strategies. About 30 per cent of urban local authorities have yet to produce a green space strategy and do not expect to do so within the next year (Figure 8).

46 There is a wide range in the quality of current green and open space strategies. Common aspects that need to be improved include:

- Coverage of green space managed by bodies other than the local authority.
- Consideration of the needs of all users of green space, matched to the socio-economic profile of the area.
- Clearer allocation of responsibilities for action between different bodies.
- Setting a minimum standard for access to green space.
- Linking green space strategy with other local government service strategies.
- Prioritisation of spending options and consideration of skills and training needs.
- Providing for the monitoring and review of strategies and a timetable for implementation.

8 Many local authorities could improve the way they plan for urban green space needs



Source: National Audit Office surveys of urban local authorities

47 Local authorities need better guidance on the software tools available to map green space provision and access. We found that less than one fifth of urban local authorities had used geographic information systems in the production of the strategies we examined. We found urban green space managers had limited knowledge of the usefulness of such systems for mapping the provision of green space with demographic and other data to help develop a strategy. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is developing a green-space database for England, which will allow the sharing of a full range of green space information through a map-based internet tool. This should form the first step towards a consistent base-line that planners and managers of green spaces could use for their green-space audits and assessments. ODPM plans to launch a pilot database in mid 2006.

48 The fragmentation of green space management and its low status constrains the capacity of some urban local authorities to establish a shared vision for green space. We found that green space managers were not represented on half of urban local strategic partnerships (see Figure 8). Green space management is not usually represented at cabinet or chief officer level within local authorities. Chief Officers of parks and open space services usually report to a more senior officer within a Leisure Services or Environment Directorate. And green space management may be spread across two or more Directorates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

New sources of funds and better central government advocacy have helped to halt, and in some places reverse, a significant decline in the quality of urban green space. But the profile of green space issues in many urban neighbourhoods remains relatively low and the commitment and resources to maintain the many enhancements that have taken place in recent years are not guaranteed. More can and should be done to ensure the revival in urban green space gains momentum and is more widespread and sustainable.

1 Quality targets need to be better focused to drive up performance where it is needed and to be owned more locally

National targets to improve residents' satisfaction with urban green space and to increase the number of Green Flag Award winning green spaces can help to encourage improvement. But there are risks in the current approach that whilst success in some places will be celebrated, failure in others might be allowed to continue. Monitoring of the delivery of PSA 8 should ensure risks are managed and problems identified and tackled.

ODPM, working with **CABE Space** should:

- Use performance data to target more methodically poor performing local authorities for advice and mentoring. (See paragraph 2.14).

ODPM, working with **local authorities**, should:

- Encourage the development of locally owned green space targets within Local Area Agreements. (See paragraph 4.9).

ODPM, working with the **Green Flag Advisory Board** and the **Civic Trust**, should:

- Make sure that training standards for judging Green Flag Awards are upheld, and that judgements are of a consistent high standard; (See paragraph 2.19).
- Take action to address the regional imbalance in the Green Flag Award scheme. (See paragraph 2.22).

2 More needs to be done to improve the status and skills of green space managers

Green space management is still too often treated as a Cinderella service. Its voice is often dissipated within local authorities and underrepresented in important decision-making arenas. Improving the status and skills of green space managers will help to put green space at the heart of local authority decisions.

ODPM should:

- Encourage and support a green space champions' network; (See paragraphs 4.24 and 4.25).

CABE Space, working with **LANTRA** and others should:

- Make sure the national green space skills strategy addresses the need to equip managers with the skills to think and plan strategically and engage successfully with communities, local politicians and their fellow officers. (See paragraph 2.38).

Local authorities should:

- Address the fragmentation of green space management within their organisational structures so that a single green space champion is identified; (See paragraph 4.25).
- Consider "re-branding" the parks department in order to give proper strategic weight to the role and to attract good quality individuals; (See paragraph 4.24 and Figure 35).
- Check that green space strategies address the need to enhance skills. (See paragraph 4.19 and Figure 58).

Local Strategic Partnerships should:

- Make sure that a local green space champion is represented on the board; (See paragraph 4.26).
- Make sure their Community Plan and Local Area Agreement reflect green space ambitions. (See paragraphs 4.9, 4.14 and 4.26).

3 More practical help needs to be provided to enhance community engagement in urban green space projects

An increasing number of community and voluntary groups are helping to enhance urban green space, supported by new sources of funds. The ability of such groups to organise themselves and to quickly come to grips with dealing with public and other services is crucial to their success.

ODPM should:

- Ensure, through their web-sites in particular, that they provide good and easily accessible information on how to set up, organise and administer a community group (See paragraph 2.30 and Figure 33), and
- Provide 'one-stop shop' information on how community groups can access advice and funding that may be available to them, and present clearer and more immediate guidance on eligibility criteria for funds. (See paragraph 2.33 and Figure 33).
- Identify a nominated officer to promote and co-ordinate friends of parks groups and to act as a focal point for advice and assistance to these groups; (See paragraph 2.29 and Figure 33).
- Work with friends groups to maximise synergies between them and link them into wider community group networks and the local strategic partnership. (See paragraph 2.33 and Figure 33).

4 More needs to be done to identify the most efficient and effective ways of sustaining urban green space

New sources of funds, particularly from the lottery, have helped to bring about the refurbishment of much urban green space. Sustaining these improvements will require local authorities to commit to on-going maintenance and upkeep. The lack of a generally agreed framework for assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of green space management makes it difficult for national and local government to assess appropriate mainstream funding levels and the value for money obtained.

ODPM, working with the **Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy**, should:

- Promote and build upon the guidance, already established in the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice by relating costs to quality and outcomes; (See paragraphs 3.23, 3.25 and Figure 43). For example:
  - Aggregating all spending streams within an area to be able to account for total resources committed to urban green space. This would include all internal directorates involved within local authorities, and external streams of funding;
  - Total costs should be apportioned amongst individual green spaces and types of green spaces, and also between units of activity or output such as hectares maintained; and
  - All should be accounted for on an accruals basis.

The Annex to this Executive Summary sets out the key steps local authorities need to follow to obtain more reliable data on the costs of managing their green space.

Local Authorities should:

- Use the reliable data on costs to embed efficiency measures, such as those currently used in the work of the Association for Public Service Excellence and other benchmarking clubs, into their management of green space (see paragraph 3.25).These might include for example the cost per hectare of maintaining to quality standards:
  - different types of parks and recreational grounds;
  - land within affordable housing areas;
  - highway maintenance.
- Review current green space management contracts to ensure they take advantage of the principles of partnership working and achieve best value. (See paragraph 3.31 and Figure 45).

5 Planning for urban green space needs to be strengthened

There is no statutory requirement for local authorities to provide good quality urban green space. It frequently falls down the local political agenda, and is not planned for as rigorously as other services. Where local officers methodically identify existing and future need for green space, and determine the best way to meet that need, they are more likely to win the support and commitment of local planners, politicians and communities.

ODPM should:

- Require evidence of robust and well supported local strategies as a condition of central government grants and encourage similar requirements of other funders such as the lottery distribution boards; (See paragraphs 3.13, 4.13 and Figure 40).
- Review the adequacy of green space strategies within local community plans to inform targeting of central advice and support where it is most needed. (See paragraphs 4.19 and Figure 58).

ODPM, working with **CABE Space**, should:

- Provide a clearer lead on the types of tools that local authorities need to use in order to assist their green space planning; (See paragraph 4.21 to 4.23).
- Develop a programme to improve local politicians' awareness of the importance of green space to the delivery of community priorities. (See paragraphs 3.22 and 4.24).

Local authorities should:

- Undertake assessments, as required by Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, of existing green space provision and future need, as a precursor to developing an effective strategy; (See paragraph 4.13).
- Work more closely with other providers of green space, especially housing associations, to identify the best ways of enhancing local provision; (See paragraph 4.19 and Figure 59).
- Make sure that their green space strategies have clear and achievable objectives and timetables for implementation. (See paragraph 4.19 and Figure 58).

The recommendations in this report if implemented will result in cost savings because they will reduce waste in the local procurement of green space services and improve the targeting of resources and support where they are most needed. They will also help to avoid the costs of failure due to lack of capacity of local authorities, working with community and voluntary groups, to achieve expectations.

ANNEX

Financial Management of Urban Green Space

It is important that local authorities have a common understanding of the costs of managing their green space, and how this is essential to drive up value for money. We have set out the key stages they need to follow in order to achieve this. As part of their financial management of urban green space, each urban local authority should do the following:

Categorise each existing green space

1 **Categorise** each existing green space into one of the categories given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Annex: Definitions), namely:

- a Parks and gardens
- b Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces
- c Green corridors
- d Outdoor sports facilities
- e Amenity green space (most commonly, but not exclusively around housing)
- f Provision for children and teenagers (incl. playgrounds and skateboard parks)
- g Allotments, community gardens and city (urban) farms
- h Cemeteries and churchyards
- i Accessible countryside in urban fringe areas

With each category to be measured in Hectares.

Calculate **total costs** of green space

2 Calculate **total costs** of green space for the financial year, using the principles outlined in both the SORP *(Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom – A Statement of Recommend Practice* 2004-05 SORP 2, pages 7-10), and the BVACOP (Best Value Accounting Code of Practice 2005, England and Wales, Section 2: The Definition of Total Cost) guidance. These costs should include both direct LA costs and indirect LA costs borne through contractors, and all externally sourced spending, including:

- i Staff wages and costs, for all LA departments/ directorates involved including, for example, planning, parks, contracting, senior management etc
- ii Training costs
- iii Costs of materials
- iv Depreciation of all new and existing assets within green space
- v Cost of capital
- vi Apportioned overheads
- vii External sourced spending whether or not dependent on matched income

Allocate total costs

3 **Allocate** total cost figure in 2) to categories in 1) above, by using direct and indirect apportionment methods as outlined in guidance, and **also by function**:

- A Management and administration
- B Ground maintenance
- C Refurbishment and renovation
- D Supervision (i.e. wardens)
- E Liaison with community

And also between **capital** and **revenue**

Analyse data and use information strategically

4 With standardised total costs allocated by standard green space category, service function, and by capital and revenue, the authority will be in a position to:

- relate costs to external variables (such as head of population, number of children etc) to produce robust economy measures
- relate costs to existing quality measures (such as Green Flags and resident satisfaction) to produce robust efficiency measures
- relate costs to wider objectives (such as participation in healthy activities) to produce robust effectiveness measures
- Compare results of both economy and efficiency measures to other Local Authorities, assess relative performance and devise action plans to improve relatively weak performing areas
- Devise budgets for future maintenance expenditure, using Life Cycle Costing based on robust capital and revenue costs
- Produce credible and cogent plans for more funding from external bodies, if needed, and
- Demonstrate improvements to value for money of their urban green space

PART ONE
Introduction

Access to green space enhances urban life

1.1 Over 80 per cent of England's population lives in an "urban" environment – that is, in towns and cities of over 10,000 people.[5] Urban life can be exciting and full of opportunities. But the urban environment can also be noisy, crowded and less healthy. Green spaces offer the chance for city dwellers to find calm, be sociable, take exercise and escape the pressures of city life.

1.2 "Urban green space" includes many types of land in an urban setting – from formally designated areas such as parks, gardens, playgrounds, sports facilities and allotments, to more natural areas such as corridors along river banks, urban forests and green wasteland **(see Figure 9 overleaf)**. Taken together, these areas account for around 14 per cent of urban space.[6] These valuable resources require ongoing maintenance and repair, and we estimate that the nation spent £693 million in 2004-05 on urban green spaces.

1.3 In total, there are over two billion visits to urban parks and green spaces each year, and over 70 per cent of people claim to visit "frequently". Others enjoy green spaces just because they are there, and notice if they are well looked after. Around 85 per cent of people feel that the quality of public space has a direct impact on their lives.[7] The wider benefits of green space are summarised in **Figure 10 on page 21**.

In response to a select committee report, the Government set up a taskforce to identify the reasons for decline and recommend steps to bring about improvement

1.4 The Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Select Committee report of November 1999 on Town and Country parks concluded that it was "shocked at the weight of evidence, far beyond our expectations, about the extent of the problems parks have faced in the last 30 years. It is clear that if nothing is done many of them will become albatrosses around the neck of local authorities". The committee called for comprehensive improvement, as "parks are key features in the renaissance of our urban areas".

1.5 In response the Government set up the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce to advise Ministers on a range of issues impacting on parks and green spaces. The Taskforce was chaired by the then Minister for Regeneration, and was made up of representatives from central and local government, charities and trusts, environmental groups and private sector bodies. The Urban Parks Forum (now GreenSpace) undertook a survey of local authorities to determine the condition of green space on which the Taskforce drew (the 'Public Parks Assessment').

5 Urban White Paper – *Our Towns and Cities: the Future,* DTLR (2001).
6 *Green Spaces, Better Places,* DTLR (2002).
7 *Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces,* University of Sheffield (2002).

9 Main types of urban green space

Parks and gardens – including urban parks, country parks and formal gardens

Natural and semi natural green spaces (such as woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands and wetlands)

Green corridors – including river and canal banks, cycle ways, and rights of way

Outdoor sports facilities

Amenity green space – most commonly, but not exclusively in housing areas – including informal recreation and other spaces in and around housing, domestic gardens and village greens

Provision for children and teenagers – including play areas and skateboard parks

Allotments, community gardens and city (urban) farms

Cemeteries and churchyards

Accessible countryside in urban fringe areas

Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Planning Policy Guidance 17

1.6 In May 2002, the Taskforce published its report on the condition of urban green spaces. It concluded that there had been a "worrying decline" in the quality of many urban parks and green spaces, and that urgent action needed to be taken. More specifically, it found that:

- Many parks had declined through under-investment, loss of status and failure to meet the needs of the local community.
- Good decision-making was made difficult because of fragmented information, poor data-recording and deficiencies in the dissemination of good practice.
- There was no strategic policy framework within which all decision-makers could operate.
- Urban parks and green spaces suffered from split responsibilities in national Government **(see Figure 11 on page 22)**, and an absence of strong local champions.

The Government has taken forward a number of initiatives with the aim of enhancing urban green space, as part of a wider initiative on civil renewal

1.7 In October 2002, the Government set out its vision for public space, including its response to the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce's report.[8] It stated that parks and green spaces are as much a part of the urban fabric as its buildings. It also made clear that these spaces are vital for a wide range of local and national Government priorities, such as renewal and housing programmes, healthy living and community cohesion. Government set out its commitment to the creation of a network of accessible, high-quality parks and green spaces for all communities. Since then the Government has:

- Revised planning rules to promote sustainable green spaces in urban developments and called upon local authorities to assess the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities, and to set local standards for the maintenance and adequate supply of facilities.
- Set up a separate unit within the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment – CABE Space – to champion urban space issues, **(see Figure 12 on page 23)**.

8 *Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener,* ODPM (2002).

10 The benefits of urban green space

Carbon Sink – trees have significant capacity to absorb carbon monoxide. One hectare of woodland can absorb emissions equivalent to 100 family cars.

Trees for Cities (2003)

Pollution control – vegetation has a significant capacity to attenuate noise and filter air pollution from vehicles. Street trees can remove sulphur dioxide and reduce particulates by up to 75 per cent. Noise attenuation can be as much as 30dB per 100 metres. Wetland eco systems are also effective in filtering polluted run off and sewage.

Johnston & Newton/London Ecology Unit (1993) Building Green

Air conditioning – in urban areas the heat island effect can increase temperatures relative to open country side by 5°C. Vegetation provides natural air conditioning. A single large tree can be the equivalent of five room air conditioners and will supply oxygen for 10 people.

Hough M (1995) Cities and Natural Process; Johnston & Newton (1993) Building Green; London Ecology Unit (2003) Trees for Cities

Micro-climate control – vegetation can improve local micro climate control by providing shade in summer. It can also reduce wind effects created by streets and wind loads on buildings, potentially reducing heating requirements by up to 25 per cent.

BRE (1990) Climate and site development – parts 1-3, Digest 350

Health and well being – access to green spaces improves people's quality of life, reducing stress, encouraging relaxation, and providing a sense of freedom. Accessible green space creates opportunities for recreation and exercise, and studies have shown that it increases children's creative play, social skills and concentration span. These can also reduce healthcare costs.

Jorgenson A (2001) Why is it important to encourage nature and wildlife near the home?; RSPB (2003) Green space and physical activity promotion

Social cohesion – natural green spaces can encourage greater social interaction. The more active use of green space, including streets and communal spaces, can help contribute to a livelier public realm. Participation in the design and stewardship of green spaces can help strengthen communities. Nature reserves can create focal points for lifelong learning about nature.

Jorgenson A (2001) Why is it important to encourage nature and wildlife near the home? English Nature (2004) Nature for People, research report 56; Dunnet N, Swannick C & Woolley H, Improving urban parks, play areas and open spaces – Research report DTLR 2002

Property values – street trees and views of natural landscapes and waterways can increase property values by between 6 per cent and 18 per cent, as well as helping to sustain values over the long term and improving the image of difficult to develop brown field sites. Shoppers may also be willing to pay up to 10 per cent more to shop in tree lined streets.

Johnston & Newton (1993) Building green; National Urban Forestry Unit (1998) Trees matter! The benefits of trees and woods in towns; University of Washington (1998) Trees in business districts: positive effects on consumer behaviour; Centre for Urban Horticulture, Human dimensions of the urban forest, fact sheet 5; CABE Space (2005) Does Money Grow on Trees?

Management costs – traditionally our green spaces have been intensively managed requiring significant and costly inputs of nutrients, herbicides and pesticides. Experience has shown that ecologically self sustaining landscapes can significantly reduce the need for these inputs.

Hough M (1995) Cities and Natural Process

Source: Adapted from Town and Country Planning Association – Biodiversity by design

11 An indication of the complexity of responsibility for urban green space at national level, as set out in the Taskforce report

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as part of its Sustainable Communities programme, is responsible for developing the Government's policies and strategic framework on urban parks and green spaces. Through its local government and land-use planning functions, it is responsible for the adequate provision, management and improvement of quality parks and other public spaces, and for policies for the management and improvement of these spaces. It administers a number of programmes which impact on green spaces, including the Living Spaces scheme, green space fund for growth areas, Special Grants Programme; Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. ODPM also sponsors key organisations and programmes to deliver better green spaces, including CABE, Groundwork, and the Green Flag Award scheme.

Department for Media, Culture and Sport is responsible for formal playing fields, sporting, and recreational and children's play spaces. It sponsors Sport England, which has supported the Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities scheme. DCMS has responsibility for the historic environment and sponsors English Heritage and the National Heritage Memorial Fund, through which the Heritage Lottery Fund – which has supported an Urban Parks Programme – operates. In addition, DCMS is responsible for the care and management of the Royal Parks, which is carried out by the Royal Parks Agency. CABE, sponsored by both DCMS and ODPM, contributes to green spaces throughout its Design Review and enabling programmes.

Department for Education and Skills' interests include how urban green spaces contribute to education across the National Curriculum, including science, PE and school sport, sustainable development education, citizenship and geography, and to personal and social development and play both within and beyond school hours. DfES is also responsible for approval of any sale of school playing fields. The inter-departmental Children and Young People's Unit based in the DfES aims to ensure that all Government policies impact positively on young people.

Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs has responsibility for informal countryside recreation and landscapes, common land, town and village greens, country parks, and rights of way. It is also concerned with the promotion of safe routes to green spaces and promoted policies for protecting urban green spaces for their wildlife interest and the wider biodiversity benefit. DEFRA is also concerned with Community Forests and various aspects of the management of green spaces, such as litter and dog fouling. It sponsors the Countryside Agency, English Nature and the Environment Agency, all of which have programmes of work which have links to urban green spaces. DEFRA also has a policy interest in the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme for which the Treasury has overall responsibility.

Urban Green Space

Home Office. The Active Community Unit provides strategic and project funding to voluntary and community organisations that support the development of strong and active communities. In addition, the Race Equality Unit has responsibility for the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The strengthened legislative framework will help public authorities provide their services, including green spaces, in a way that is fair and accessible to all. The Home Office also has responsibility for reducing crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour which will improve the safety and preserve the attractiveness of all public space, including urban green spaces.

The Forestry Commission is particularly concerned with the sustainable management and expansion of natural green spaces, greening of urban, vacant and derelict land and private green spaces which benefit the public. It also has expertise in techniques for the restoration of previously developed land for sustainable public use.

Department for Work and Pensions. The Environment Task Force (EFT) is one of four options available under the New Deal for Young People. It aims to help young people back to work and improve their skills base whilst improving the environment by helping to regenerate deprived, mostly urban, areas through a variety of projects.

Source: Adapted from Urban Green Spaces Taskforce (2002) Green Spaces, Better Places, Annex Two

12 CABE Space: a national champion for green space

Following the recommendations of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, CABE Space was established in 2003 as a separate unit within the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment.

CABE Space organises its work into five themes: enabling and delivery, standards and best practice, policy and research, campaigns and advocacy, and skills development.

It has committed itself to:

- Supporting the delivery of quality spaces through the expanding Green Flag programme.
- Developing a new Public Consultation Tool to allow everyone to evaluate the state of public spaces.
- Providing good practice and free expert advice to local authorities to develop a strategic approach to green space management and project delivery.
- Working with partners to deliver exemplar projects.
- Achieving a better understanding of how we measure and evaluate risk in designing our spaces, particularly in respect of children's play.
- Publishing a single skills development programme for the green spaces sector, and beginning delivery of that programme.
- Assisting the public in campaigning for higher quality green spaces within their neighbourhoods.

Source: National Audit Office

- Promoted a Green Flag Award scheme to encourage best green spaces administration. The scheme is now managed by the Civic Trust on behalf of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Green Flag Advisory Board.
- Committed around £201 million of new central government direct funding over 2003-04 to 2005-06, including sponsorship of CABE Space, Groundwork, Living Spaces and the Liveability Fund.
- Given the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister responsibility to "lead the delivery of cleaner, safer and greener public spaces" in deprived areas and across the country, with measurable improvement by 2008. This PSA was agreed in 2004 and introduced in 2005.
- Continued to work with the Improvement and Development Agency to support performance improvement and action learning, including lessons derived from the Beacon Councils and the Liveability Fund pilots.
- Encouragement of partnership approaches between Whitehall departments, local authorities and other local public bodies and between local public bodies and the community and voluntary sector.
- Working with local authorities through the 'How to' programme to raise the quality of green spaces. The 'How to create quality parks and green space' guide was published in July 2005.

1.8 These programmes are part of the wider Government agenda to create cleaner, safer, greener communities, providing high quality places with attractive and sustainable public spaces for all. Creating better neighbourhoods is part of the overall drive for sustainable communities, and specifically civic renewal – a cross-departmental initiative to empower people to take part in the democratic life of their community and help shape their local public services. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has worked with several other Departments in pursuit of a number of Public Service Agreements **(see Figure 13 overleaf)**.

Many bodies manage urban green space but local authorities take the lead in enhancing its provision and management

1.9 Many local bodies manage urban green space **(see Figure 14 on page 25)**. However local authorities play a key strategic role. They are responsible for the upkeep and enhancement of the vast majority of urban green space and for over 90 per cent of national public sector spend. In their planning and community leadership roles, local authorities have a wider responsibility for enhancing green space provision and management within their areas. Within a local authority, many departments have an interest in green spaces and often there is no single lead.

1.10 Around £693 million is currently (2004-05) being spent on enhancing and maintaining urban green space each year. Around 85 per cent of funding (£588 million) comes from the public sector. Of this, the Revenue Support Grant to local authorities accounts for 82 per cent and 11 per cent comes from grants and programmes supported by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The bulk of other funding comes from programmes supported by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Other services such as the Police and health professionals provide an important contribution to sustaining green space (see Figure 11).

13 The green space initiatives supported by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister have helped deliver benefits to other Government departments with which it shares outcomes, Public Service Agreements or commitments

Department	PSA Number and Aim	Joint initiative
Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	1 Promoting sustainable development across Government and in the UK and internationally	Living Spaces With OPDM funding, 600 community spaces have been transformed over the last three years. Projects have ranged from woodlands and wildlife areas to pocket parks. Applications for funding were expected to consider the long term maintenance of the finished resource, and to show that the design addressed local needs. This programme is managed by Groundwork with the support of GreenSpace.
Home Office	2 To reassure the public, reducing fear of crime and anti-social behaviour and building confidence in the Criminal Justice System without compromising fairness	Operation Gate It Operation Gate It aims to deliver physical environmental improvements to areas which are run down, badly designed or poorly maintained and have become magnets for anti-social behaviour. The scheme helps local residents take action on areas such as alleyways behind houses, bin stores, garages and derelict land near housing estates. This programme is managed and delivered through Groundwork.
Department of Culture, Media and Sport	3 Increasing take up of cultural and sporting opportunities by adults and young people	Barclays Spaces for Sports This programme is mainly funded by Barclays and aims to work with communities to deliver more than 150 new or improved sports facilities, to help increase physical activity in those areas, and encourage young people to take part in positive activities. The scheme is delivered by a partnership between Groundwork (partly funded by ODPM) and the Football Foundation.
Department of Health	4 Halting the rise in obesity among children and the population as a whole	Green Gyms Green Gyms address personal health issues through practical environmental conservation activities that have a proven impact on health and wellbeing. Many Green Gyms aim to address some of the health inequalities that exist in areas with high levels of social deprivation. This programme is delivered by BTCV which works in partnership with a range of agencies, including Primary Care Trusts, local authorities and others, with grant funding from ODPM.

Source: National Audit Office

We examined whether progress has been made in enhancing urban green space

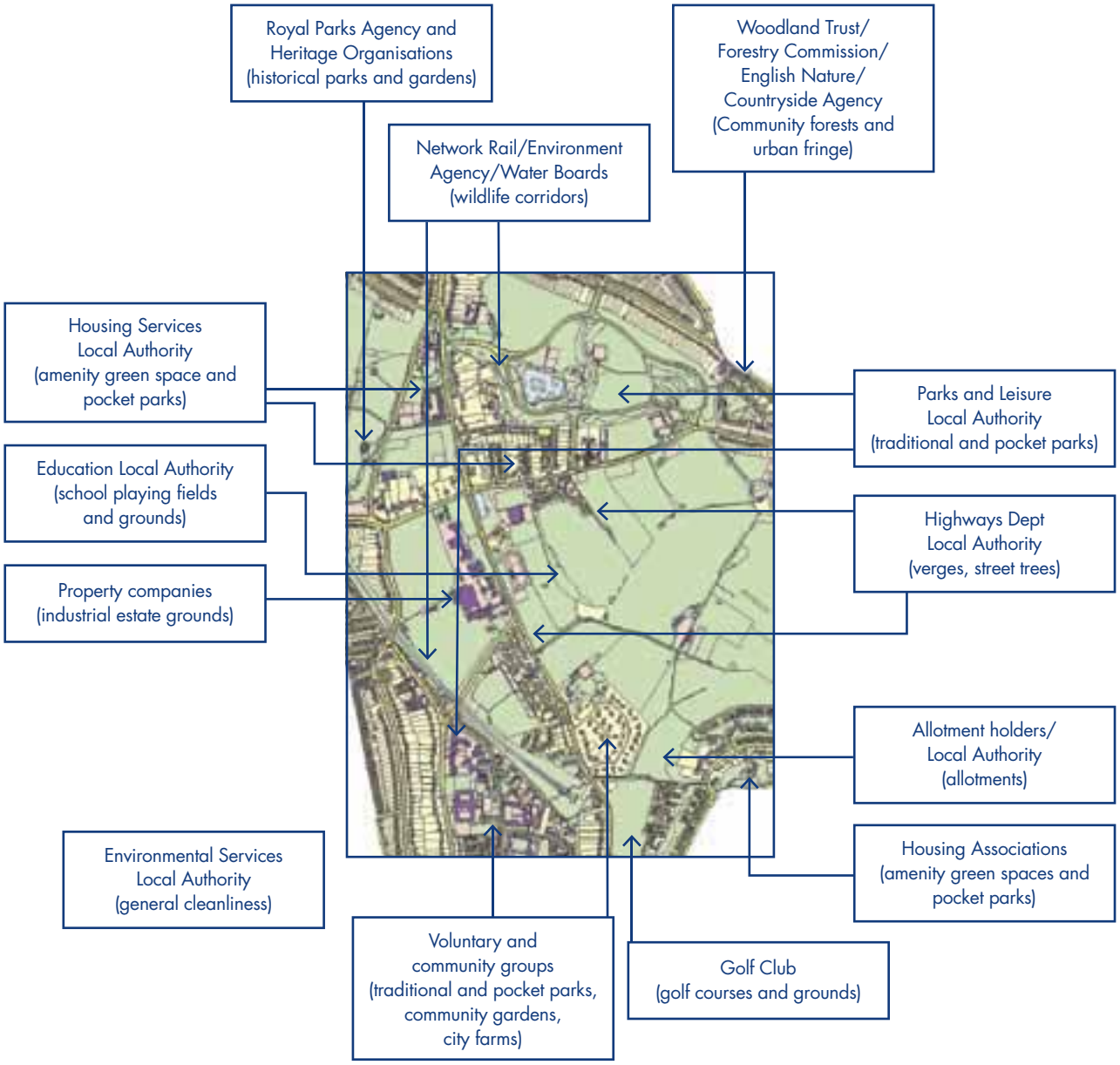
1.11 This report examines whether the barriers to the enhancement of urban green space have been well identified and the progress:

- Part 2 in enhancing and tracking the quality of urban green space;
- Part 3 in sustaining urban green space by funding it efficiently and effectively;
- Part 4 through the planning system to protect and enhance urban green space.

1.12 Our methodology is set out in full at Appendix A. Our work included:

- surveying parks managers in 154 urban local authorities, to generate information about the condition of urban green space in 2005 and trends over the last five years. This survey built upon the 'Public Parks Assessment' survey of 2001, and was expanded to include a greater range of information about parks departments' strategic priorities and involvement in decision making;
- comparing the data from the survey with a variety of existing sources of data on parks and open spaces, including spend and outcomes;
- holding five workshops in the English regions, bringing together 100 urban green space managers and representatives of urban parks and open space user groups;

14 Many local bodies manage urban green space



Source: National Audit Office. GLUD basemap produced by PLUS1, Planning & Land Use Statistics Division, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

- commissioning the Department of Landscape at the University of Sheffield to review urban local authorities' green space strategies;
- appointing a panel of five experts to help determine the most important issues, advise on the direction of the research and review preliminary findings; and
- interviewing stakeholders from a wide range of organisations that contribute towards funding and managing urban green space.

PART TWO

Improving the quality of urban green space

2.1 Parks and green spaces can become neglected if not well managed. Spaces with broken seats and shelters covered with graffiti, grass covered with dog dirt and litter and bedraggled shrubs and dead flowers are less likely to be visited, more likely to be unsafe and a spiral of decline can set in **(Figure 15)**. Spaces like these become depressing and can drag neighbourhoods down.

15 The ideal urban green space

Researchers asked focus groups of both users and non-users what they considered would be in their ideal urban green space. The most frequently mentioned component was vegetation, followed by water, play opportunities, comforts like seating, toilets and shelters, good access – particularly an issue for people with disabilities – sport, and events. Refreshments of a good quality and reasonable price, environmental quality issues such as litter bins, lighting and vandalism, and specific features such as sculptures and mazes were also mentioned. Animals were considered to be important for children, opportunities for wheeled activities were desired by women and young people while the presence of identifiable and approachable staff, was also a feature of the ideal urban green space. People with disabilities mentioned sensory stimulation.

The improvements that people want to see in urban green spaces are related to: good design and management focused on meeting people's needs, overcoming barriers to use and providing a high quality and varied experience for the whole range of different groups in the community as a whole. People showed considerable awareness of the needs of others and wanted the ideal green space to be inclusive – a space for all.

Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Focus Group Research, Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Open Spaces, Urban Research Paper, DTLR, May 2002

2.2 Following the report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, the Government acknowledged that in general the quality of green space had declined in recent years. The Government committed to a vision of a network of quality green spaces for all communities and a programme of work to bring about improvements. In 2005, it committed itself to national targets to achieve measurable improvement in public and green spaces by 2008. The Government sought to encourage greater community engagement to bring about more sustainable improvements in the quality of urban green space **(Figure 16 overleaf)** and acknowledged the need to improve skills.

2.3 This Part of the report examines:

- the extent of improvement since 1999 in the quality of urban green space reported by local authorities;
- the success of the national target framework in helping to bring about and track improvement in the quality of urban green space and in particular the performance measures for:
  - residents' satisfaction
  - Green Flag Awards.
- progress on two key factors necessary for driving up quality:
  - improved community engagement
  - enhanced green space skills.

16 Turning around the quality of urban green space

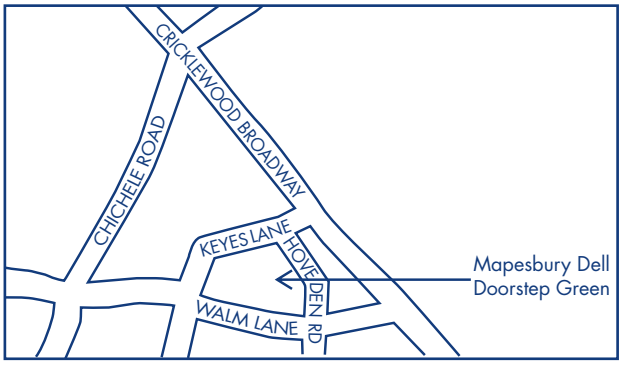
Tucked behind Cricklewood high street, up until recently Mapesbury Dell Doorstep Green was one of those patches of green space that had the potential to drag a neighbourhood down. Surrounded by high garden fences, the area was under lit and underused. Fear of crime meant it was a no-go area for families, and it was mainly used for drug-dealing, a dog-toilet and a scrappy 'tag' display.

The well-established local residents' association saw the site's isolation as a strength rather than a problem and envisioned a tranquil 'secret garden' that could be discovered and used by the whole community. A separate special purpose community Trust (Mapesbury Dell Conservation Area Trust) was constituted by residents to find funding and renovate the Dell. The Trust was awarded a project preparation grant in 2002 by the Countryside Agency's Doorstep Green programme. Luckily an award-winning landscape designer lived locally, and after full public consultation with locals delivered a blue-print of what the area could be. Doorstep Greens followed up with a project completion grant in 2003.

Fully supported by London Borough of Brent's Park Services, the Trust then successfully bid for a 'Living Spaces' grant. With top ups from Brent's capital budget and an injection of Section 106 ('planning gain') money, work began in 2004.

Mapesbury Dell is still owned by Brent. The Council covenanted to the Trust the site as a local park for 80 years. It is now jointly managed by the Council and the Trust under an 80 year framework agreement.

The park reopened in November 2005 and now hosts community events and has a pond, ship-themed play area, stylish but vandal proof seating, exciting planting and fully accessible pathways. The Trust has been nominated for a Queen's Award for Services to the Community.



Source: National Audit Office/Mapesbury Dell Conservation Area Trust

NOTE

Full details from www.maplesbury-dell.org

In general, the quality of urban green space has improved

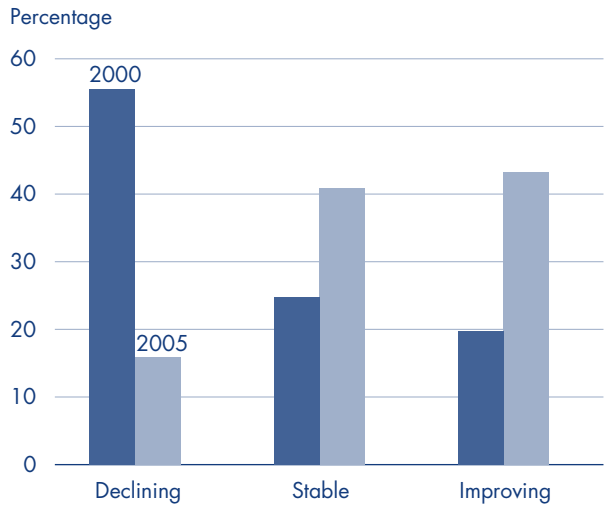
2.4 We updated the results of the 2000 Public Parks Assessment survey for urban local authorities by asking parks managers for their views on progress. In 2005 84 per cent of urban local authorities believe the quality of their parks is stable or improving. This compares to less than 44 per cent in 2000. In 2000 55 per cent of urban local authorities considered their green spaces were declining in quality. We found that this had fallen to 16 per cent in 2005 **(Figure 17)**.

National targets and indicators have been set which aim to help bring about and track improvement in the quality of green space

2.5 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, working with other Government departments and local authorities, is responsible for delivering Public Service Agreement 8, to:

"Lead the delivery of cleaner, safer, greener public spaces and improvement of the quality of the built environment in deprived areas and across the country, with measurable improvement by 2008".

17 Parks managers believe that the decline of their parks has been reversed



Source: National Audit Office survey of urban local authorities

2.6 This Public Service Agreement target was introduced in April 2005 to cover the period to 2008. It addresses the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's contribution to the Government's wider *'Cleaner, Safer, Greener Communities'* strategy to enhance "liveability" – improving the quality and safety of public spaces and local environments and people's enjoyment of them.

2.7 Overall performance and success against the Public Service Agreement target is measured and assessed using evidence from surveys, data sources and indicators. They are designed as a package to measure progress against the target as a whole.

2.8 Many of these indicators are not specific to the quality of green space but measure other issues of "liveability", such as the number of abandoned vehicles. Others are generic and include green space issues but not explicitly, such as the number of local authorities whose environmental services are judged to be performing well or performing strongly by the Audit Commission as part of their Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

2.9 Two indicators cover green space explicitly. These indicators, their data sources, baseline, trends and success criterion are summarised in **Figure 18 overleaf**.

Residents' satisfaction with urban space varies widely

2.10 Satisfaction is a relative and subjective measure. Local authorities maintain green and open spaces for the enjoyment of their communities but different communities will have different levels of need and expectation. However satisfaction levels offer a useful yardstick for measuring the progress of local authorities in enhancing urban green space in their areas, especially over time.

2.11 The Public Service Agreement target is set for the proportion of citizens across England that is satisfied with their green and open space. The local level of satisfaction with urban parks and open spaces varies widely. When surveyed by local authorities in 2003, less than 54 per cent of Bristol's residents were satisfied compared to 92 per cent of the residents of Cambridge. One in ten urban local authorities have satisfaction levels of less than 60 per cent. Nearly half of these are London boroughs. One in ten urban local authorities have satisfaction scores of 85 per cent or above **(see Figure 19 overleaf)**. Many urban local authorities would need to increase residents' satisfaction levels by considerable margins if the aggregate national target was applied locally **(see Figure 20 on page 31)**.

Satisfaction levels have risen since 2000 but the increase is not evenly spread

2.12 Between 2000 and 2003 the proportion of residents across England who were satisfied with their local parks and open spaces rose by eight percentage points to 71 per cent.

2.13 This improvement in resident satisfaction is not evenly spread. Residents in deprived communities[9] have not shared equally in the improvement seen. We compared the progress between 2000 and 2003 in those areas with the highest and lowest resident satisfaction in 2000 **(Figure 21 on page 32)**. We found that satisfaction levels had increased the most in those areas where satisfaction was already relatively high in 2000. Local people thought the condition of parks in the poorest performing authorities had not improved.

9 As measured by the 'Index of Multiple Deprivation'.

18 Indicators used to measure improvement in green space for Public Service Agreement 8

Indicator 1

To increase the percentage of residents satisfied with local parks and open spaces by four percentage points nationally, and by six percentage points overall for residents living in local authority districts in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds, above the baseline year 2003-04.

Data Source	One of the user satisfaction survey Best Value Performance Indicators (BV119e) measures the percentage of residents satisfied with local authority parks and open spaces in their area. BVPI user satisfaction surveys are carried out every three years, through a sample survey within each local authority district, using a methodology and timetable agreed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minster. The achieved sample in each area is at least 1,100.
Baseline	In the baseline year 2003-04, 71 per cent of residents nationally and 69 per cent in the local authority districts in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds were satisfied with local parks and open spaces.
Trends	The previous survey was carried out in 2000-01, when 63 per cent of residents nationally and 62 per cent in the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund districts were satisfied with parks and opens spaces. Satisfaction has increased by eight percentage points nationally and seven percentage points in Neighbourhood Renewal districts between 2000-01 and 2003-04.
Success criterion	To achieve success on this indicator, the aggregate level of satisfaction of residents nationally with local parks and open spaces, as measured by BV119e, will have increased to 75 per cent by 2006-07. The aggregate level of satisfaction of residents across local authority districts in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds will also have increased to 75 per cent by the BV119e 2006-07 survey, thereby closing the gap between them and the rest of the country.

Indicator 2

Increase to 60 per cent the proportion of local authority districts nationally, and to 60 per cent the proportion of local authority districts in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds, with at least one park or green space that meets Green Flag Award standard.

Data Source	Green Flag Awards provide a nationally and locally recognised standard of excellence in managing and maintaining parks, green spaces and play areas. The scheme is administered by the Civic Trust, who publish the results of the annual awards scheme.
Baseline	In 2003-04, there were 25 per cent of relevant local authority districts with at least one park or green space with a Green Flag Award. Of the local authority districts in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds, 40 per cent had at least one park or green space with a Green Flag Award.
Success criterion	By the end of September 2008, 60 per cent of relevant local authority districts nationally and 60 per cent of those in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds, should have at least one park or green space with a Green Flag Award.

Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

19 Satisfaction with local parks and open spaces varies widely among urban local authority

Proportion of local residents who were satisfied or very satisfied with parks and open spaces.

Less than 60 per cent	85 per cent or more
Barking and Dagenham	Cambridge
Bolsover	Cheltenham
Bristol	Crawley
Harrow	Eastbourne
Hillingdon	Kensington and Chelsea
Hounslow	Oxford
North East Lincolnshire	Poole
North Tyneside	Richmond upon Thames
Redcar and Cleveland	Westminster
Sandwell	
Tower Hamlets	

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Best Value Performance Indicator data

2.14 There is a risk that the resident satisfaction national PSA indicator may be met through further improvement in those areas in which residents are already relatively satisfied with the quality of their green and open space such as Worthing and Oxford whilst satisfaction levels stay the same or decline in the areas where satisfaction is relatively low such as Bristol and Bradford. The performance data could be used by ODPM and CABE Space to target more methodically poor performing local authorities for advice and mentoring.

2.15 To contribute to the levelling up of relatively deprived areas, the Public Service Agreement target requires a higher percentage increase in the aggregate level of satisfaction with green and open space of residents in local authorities in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds. But we found that some of the urban local authorities with the poorest satisfaction levels such as Darlington, Havering and Hounslow were not in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds, and some deprived areas currently receiving Neighbourhood Renewal Funds are already achieving high quality green space. It may be more productive to target funds more carefully, or even refine the target itself towards a minimum national resident satisfaction score.

20 Many urban local authorities would have to increase residents' green and open space satisfaction levels by considerable margins if the aggregate national target was applied locally

Per cent of local authorities	Distance to be travelled	Urban Neighbourhood Renewal Areas	Other urban authorities
1	Needs to increase satisfaction by more than 20 percentage points	Bristol	North East Lincolnshire
6	Needs to increase satisfaction by 16-20 percentage points	Barking and Dagenham; Bolsover; North Tyneside; Redcar and Cleveland; Sandwell; Tower Hamlets	Harrow; Hillingdon; Hounslow
13	Needs to increase satisfaction by 11-15 percentage points	Barnsley; Bradford; Coventry; Hammersmith and Fulham; Knowsley; Oldham; Rochdale; Salford; Stoke-on-Trent; Wakefield; Walsall; Waltham Forest; Wolverhampton	Corporation of London; Gloucester; Havant; Havering; Slough; Thurrock
19	Needs to increase satisfaction by 6-10 percentage points	Birmingham; Bolton; Brent; Doncaster; Dudley; Ealing; Hackney; Haringey; Kirklees; Lambeth; Lewisham; Luton; Mansfield; Newcastle upon Tyne; Newham; Sedgefield; Sefton; Southwark; St. Helens; Stockton-on-Tees; Tameside; Wigan	Darlington; Merton; North Lincolnshire; Redbridge; Rushmoor; Worcester
27	Needs to increase satisfaction by 1-5 percentage points	Blackburn with Darwen; Blackpool; Croydon; Derby; Gateshead; Greenwich; Halton; Islington; Kingston upon Hull, Leeds; Leicester; Liverpool; Manchester; Nottingham; Preston; Rotherham; South Tyneside; Sunderland	Amber Valley; Barnet; Bromley; Broxtowe; Bury; Durham; Gedling; Gosport; Harlow; Kettering; Kingston upon Thames; Medway; North East Derbyshire; North Somerset; Norwich; Oadby and Wigston; Reading; South Gloucestershire; Stevenage; Sutton; Tamworth; Telford and Wrekin; Trafford
5	Already at the PSA target	Lincoln; Sheffield	Calderdale; Redditch; Solihull; Stockport; West Berkshire
29	Already exceed the PSA target	Brighton and Hove; Camden; Enfield; Hartlepool; Kensington and Chelsea; Middlesbrough; Plymouth; Portsmouth; Southampton; Wandsworth; Westminster; Wirral	Bath and North East Somerset; Bexley; Bournemouth; Bracknell Forest; Cambridge; Cheltenham; Chesterfield; Chorley; Crawley; Eastbourne; Eastleigh; Epsom and Ewell; Exeter; Guildford; Ipswich; Isle of Wight; Milton Keynes; Northampton; Oxford; Peterborough; Poole; Richmond upon Thames; Southend-on-Sea; Swindon; Taunton Deane; Torbay; Warrington; Watford; Windsor and Maidenhead; Wokingham; Worthing; York

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Best Value Performance Indicator data

21 Residents' satisfaction with parks and open spaces in 2000 and 2003

	By 2003, parks were better %	same %	worse %	Net change
Areas with lowest resident satisfaction in 2000	18	65	18	None
Areas with highest resident satisfaction in 2000	19	69	11	Overall increase

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Best Value Performance Indicator data

The Green Flag scheme recognises and helps to drive up the quality of individual green spaces

2.16 The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. The discretionary award scheme began in 1996 as a means of recognising and rewarding the best green spaces in the country **(see Figure 22)**. It was also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas.

2.17 The scheme is administered by the Civic Trust on behalf of the Green Flag Advisory Board and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, with support from a number of other bodies. The Trust makes Green Flag Awards to individual green spaces. Judging, by peer-review, takes place once a year. Awards are given on an annual basis and entrants must apply each year and be re-assessed to renew their Green Flag Award status. The awards recognise excellence in eight key areas **(see Figure 23)**.

2.18 The scheme has grown. The increasing number of entries and awards made under the scheme is shown in **Figure 24**. In 2005-06, about two in five local authorities have received a Green Flag Award for one or more of their spaces. The number of organisations gaining more than one award has increased from 17 per cent to 45 per cent of winning organisations since 1997-98. In 2005-06 about 46 per cent of applications came from sites which had also applied in 2004-05.

22 Trafford Ecology Park: A Green Flag Award Winner

When it comes to conservation of natural features, wild fauna and flora, Trafford Ecology Park within one of Europe's largest industrial estates in Manchester has excelled.

Green Flag Award judges praised the 4.5 hectare site as making 'outstanding use of a former derelict site in an unpromising industrial location' with 'outstanding conservation policies and practices.'

Since opening to the public in 1990 under the management of Groundwork Salford and Trafford in partnership with Trafford Council and several other organisations, the park, which was previously built on derelict land in the 1970s, has become a haven for visitors, comprising a broad range of habitats co-existing across a relatively small area. Part of the site is a designated Site of Biological Importance and the park as a whole boasts an outstanding array of flora and fauna species. The success of this is through an actively maintained and monitored partnership approach.

The aquatic life is probably the most outstanding feature of the site. All three species of British newts – the Smooth, Palmate and Great Crested Newts – were introduced to the site in 1989. Management of the site ensures undisturbed breeding, foraging and hibernation areas to complete their full life cycle.

Grassland areas were established and sown with wildflower seeds. Ecology staff constructed three of the ponds using differing lining material, which are important for newt colonization and at varying stages of maturity. One of the ponds underwent enlargement, providing a more useful habitat for aquatic invertebrates. Pioneer plant species found in this pond includes water mint, water forget-me-not and yellow iris. A sensory garden comprising raised beds located near a sun gazing machine is planted with herbs. Lavender and buddleia have also been planted, attracting a plethora of butterflies and insects.

Following on from the creation of woodland glades, a woodland wildflower nursery is being established this year, with planting of seeds in March and April. Rabbit proof fencing has already been installed to protect the area. A full time head gardener has completed an NVQ level 2 in Environmental Conservation, paid for by Trafford Council.

Green Flag judges said Trafford Ecology Park was successful by a 'significantly large margin' gaining exceptionally high marks for its clear and positive management plan which details the area, sets out aims and determines how they are to be achieved over a five-year period.

Source: Civic Trust

23 Green Flag Award criteria

The green space will be a **welcoming** place, with good and safe access, effective signs, and offering something to everyone.

It will be a **healthy, safe and secure** space. The equipment and facilities must be safe to use, the site must be secure for all members of the community and dog fouling must be dealt with. Proper health and safety policies must be in place, used and reviewed. The park should have toilets, drinking water, first aid, phones and any necessary emergency equipment either in or near the park, and these facilities should be well signposted.

The park will be **well maintained and clean**. Litter and waste will be dealt with, the grounds, buildings and equipment will be well maintained. There must be an active policy on tackling litter, vandalism and maintenance.

The space will be managed in a **sustainable** way. The Green Flag standard is exacting on the use of pesticides and peat. Parks managers must make sure that green waste is recycled, and that the trees and plants are carefully chosen and well cared for. The Park Manager is expected to stay abreast of the latest environmental techniques, for example in energy conservation, reducing pollution, and conserving resources.

Conservation and heritage will be to the fore. The park will look after its wildlife, landscape features, buildings, etc.

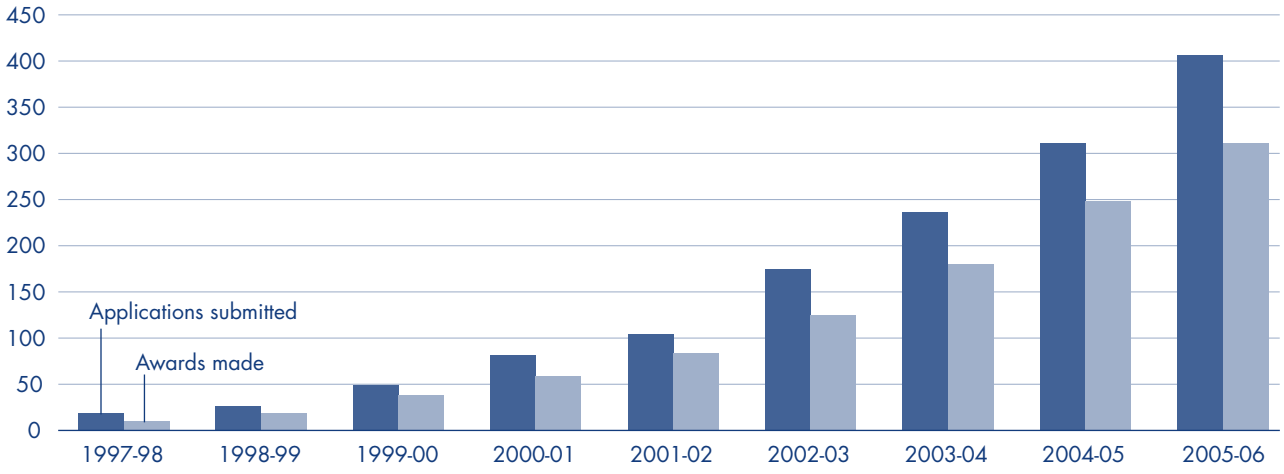
Community involvement will be actively encouraged. The Park Manager will know about the local population and who uses the park, and will ensure that park users are involved in developing and managing the space.

What the park offers will be actively **marketed**. Information will also be provided to park users about the way the space is managed, and how they could get involved.

Strong **management** plans will be in place, to set out the priorities for the park. The plan will make the most of partners' contributions, have a realistic time scale and show how the park will contribute to the neighbourhood as a whole. The plan will demonstrate good financial management and will be regularly updated.

Source: National Audit Office based on Civic Trust publications

24 The Green Flag scheme has grown rapidly and in 2005, 400 applications were received



Source: National Audit Office analysis of Civic Trust data

2.19 The Civic Trust has contacted all local authorities about their intentions to participate in the Green Flag Award scheme. Their results suggest that the PSA 8 target for 60 per cent of local authority areas to have a Green Flag Award winner by September 2008 will be achieved **(Figure 25)**. The Civic Trust has expanded the number of judges to service the significant recent and predicted growth in participation in the Green Flag Award scheme. With more individuals involved in judging, there is a risk that the standards applied may lack consistency, and the award loose credibility. Urban green space managers attending our workshops expressed concern about comparability of standards. However, the Civic Trust in consultation with the Green Flag Advisory Board is actively addressing these concerns with more detailed assessment of applicants for judging positions, and by improving the training arrangements for new and existing judges.

2.20 We found that the Green Flag scheme was well regarded by urban green space managers. Almost 90 per cent of award-winning, urban green space managers believed that the scheme has been successful at raising the profile of green space with local politicians. About 60 per cent believed it had also raised the profile amongst the general public and 40 per cent believed it had led to increased numbers of people visiting green space.

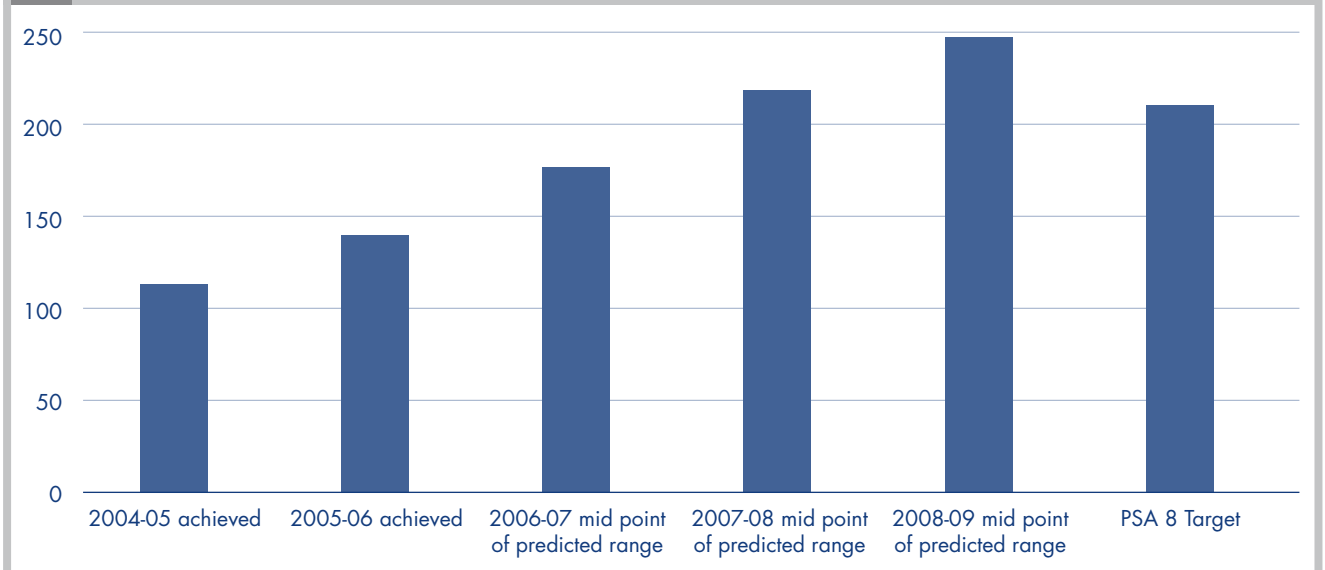
The Green Flag Award scheme is discretionary and the spread of awards is uneven

2.21 Green Flag accredited space is rare. Across urban England, there are only 7.3 Green Flag Awarded green spaces for every million people. The Green Flag Award scheme covers around 17 per cent of historic parks and recreational spaces and less than one per cent of the total hectarage of green space.

2.22 Across the country, urban people have uneven access to Green Flag Awarded space **(Figures 26 and Figure 27 overleaf)**. The North West is particularly well endowed with Green Flag space, and the West Midlands has relatively few. The Civic Trust believes that a number of factors may lie behind the North West's higher involvement, namely:

- A good network of parks managers
- Rivalry between local authorities
- A number of large authorities with a significant numbers of parks
- Higher levels of local marketing, as the Green Flag Award team is based in Liverpool.

25 The Civic Trust data indicates that the PSA 8 target to increase the number of Green Flag awards made to local authority districts will be met



Source: National Audit Office analysis of Civic Trust data

26 In 2005, 15 authorities won over 100 Green Flag awards between them

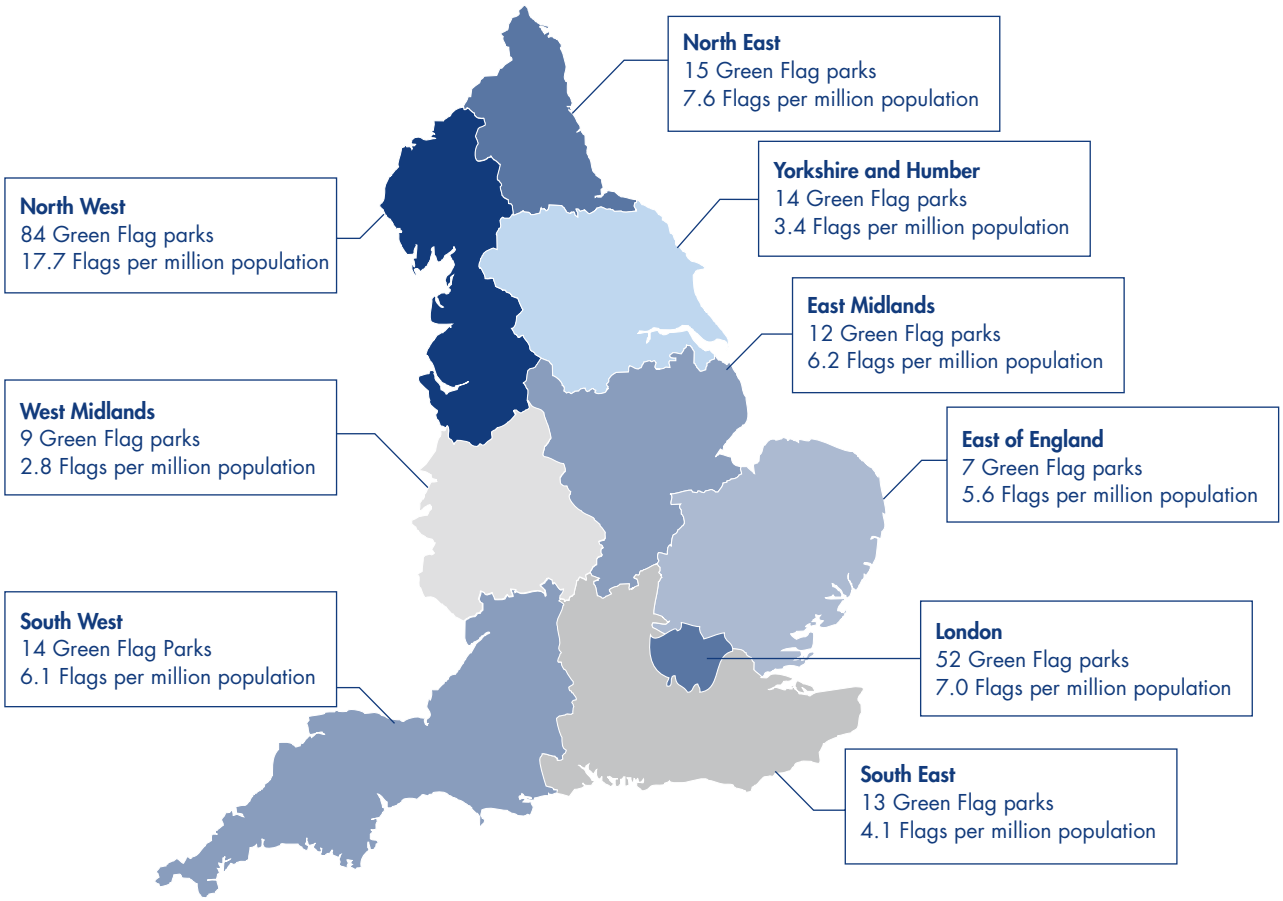
Source: National Audit Office analysis of Civic Trust data

There is a risk that in the short term the Green Flag Award scheme will concentrate resources on particular green spaces and widen the gap between the best and the rest

2.23 The Green Flag Award scheme is designed to reward well managed, good quality individual urban green spaces. It is not necessarily a good indicator of the general quality of urban green space in a particular area. We found there was no correlation between the number of Green Flag Awards a particular urban authority had won and the levels of resident satisfaction with their green and open space **(Figure 28 on page 37)**.

2.24 There is a risk that the Green Flag Award scheme may help to widen the gap between the best parks and green spaces and the rest, at least in the short-term. About 40 per cent of urban green space managers told us that the pursuit of an award had been significant in diverting resources away from other green space in the area. One quarter of the parks which were rated as 'good' by their managers in the 2000 Public Parks Assessment have been awarded Green Flags. But only two per cent of the parks which were rated as 'poor' in the same survey have applied for and been awarded Green Flags.

27 Local authority urban green space with Green Flag awards is not evenly spread



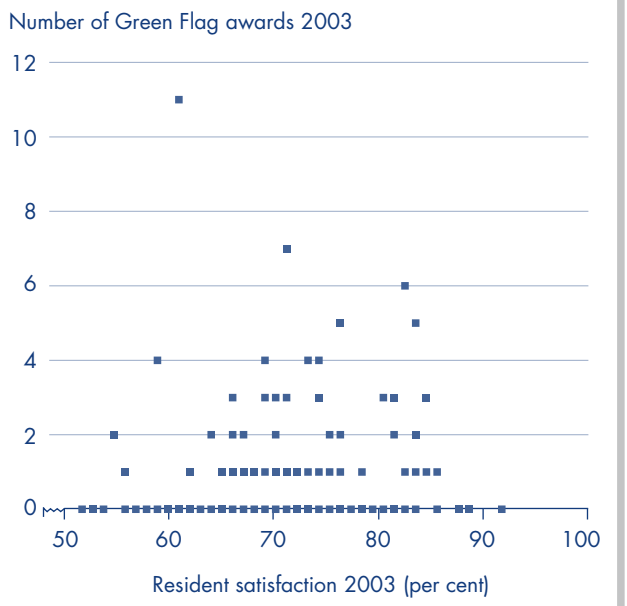
Source: National Audit Office analysis and Civic Trust data

2.25 Better local authorities will use a Green Flag Award as a benchmark to raise standards across the space for which they are responsible. We found a high proportion of urban green space managers thought that winning an award could improve practices across a local authority. In the longer-term if additional local authorities apply for awards, and local authorities with awards nominate green spaces that are less obvious candidates, the scheme will have a wider impact. Next year (2006-07) a further 106 additional local authorities intend to nominate green space for an award.

Community engagement is key to sustainable enhancement of urban green space

2.26 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister sees the voluntary and community sector as having a vital role to play in the delivery and management of good quality, well designed, safe public spaces. They regard the sector as a major source of skills, knowledge and expertise, and believe it can facilitate community engagement and empowerment.

28 There is no correlation between the satisfaction of urban local authorities' residents with local green and open space and the number of Green Flags Awards it has won



Source: National Audit Office analysis of BVP1 119e and Civic Trust data

NOTE
Correlation co-efficient 0.07.

2.27 Both community groups and voluntary sector organisations play an important role in improving the local environment. The involvement of community groups can:

- help identify the need for new facilities, and suggest appropriate sites for renovation (Easter Gardens, Figure 32);
- design or redesign green space so that it is appropriate to local needs (Mapesbury Dell Doorstep Green, see Figure 16);
- bringing new life to green spaces by encouraging a wider range of uses (Friends of Southwark Park, see Figure 5);
- encourage a greater sense of ownership by local people (Mapesbury Dell Doorstep Green, see Figure 16);
- help to generate greater social cohesion – for example by including all members of the community in the design and use of green spaces (Spring Boroughs Park and Carter Community Park, Figure 39);
- facilitate the involvement of young people in decisions about their green space (Friends of Southwark Park, see Figure 5);
- keep a watchful eye on the standards of maintenance and staffing levels in a green space (Friends of Southwark Park, Figure 5);
- raise funds to which Local Authorities do not have access (Sheffield Botanical Gardens Trust, Figure 3);
- address very local environmental problems – for example anti-social behaviour ('Operation Gate It', Figure 13); and
- provide volunteer labour (Sheffield Botanical Gardens Trust, Figure 3).

2.28 In addition, voluntary sector organisations can play a number of roles which overlap. They can articulate the desires of local people, they can support public service delivery, directly deliver services or projects and, like community groups, raise funds to which Local Authorities do not have access (see King Edward Memorial Park, Figure 47).

2.29 The need to reach out and engage with local communities and relevant user groups is widely accepted as being a prerequisite to effective and sustainable enhancement of urban green space. Green space managers need to engage with communities in order to respond adequately to the changing needs and expectations of people and their communities for urban green space. Key Government initiatives and sponsorship that supports community engagement are set out in **Figure 29**.

2.30 We found that more than 90 per cent of urban local authorities had involved the community to some extent in drawing up green space strategies. However only 12 per cent could be understood to have undertaken this consultation in a manner that fully reflected the social-demographic context of the authority. Less than 15 per cent had involved partners, such as 'Friends of Parks' groups or Groundwork, to a great extent while 49 per cent had to a lesser extent and 37 per cent had not at all (see Figure 58 part 4).

29 Central government support for initiatives to promote community involvement in urban green space

Sponsorship of the Federation of Groundwork Trusts whose local partnerships and projects include the community-led creation and improvement of green space, both larger areas of neglected and derelict land as well as small areas in neighbourhoods.

Support through ODPM's Special Grants Programme for voluntary organisations engaged in environmental action. Including British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the Wildlife Trusts and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens in working with communities to improve green space.

A Community Enablers (Living Spaces) scheme – an open grant scheme providing practical support and expert advice to local groups and local volunteers engaged in creating and improving local green space and environmental projects.

Support for GreenSpace (formerly the Urban Parks Forum), including the development of a register of community and friends' groups involved in local projects.

CABE Space have provided guidance and support to local authorities on best practice in community engagement.

The 'How to' programme promotes community engagement and empowerment and sets out some of the tools available to practitioners for involving communities.

Source: National Audit Office

Local community groups make a substantial contribution to the enhancement of urban green space

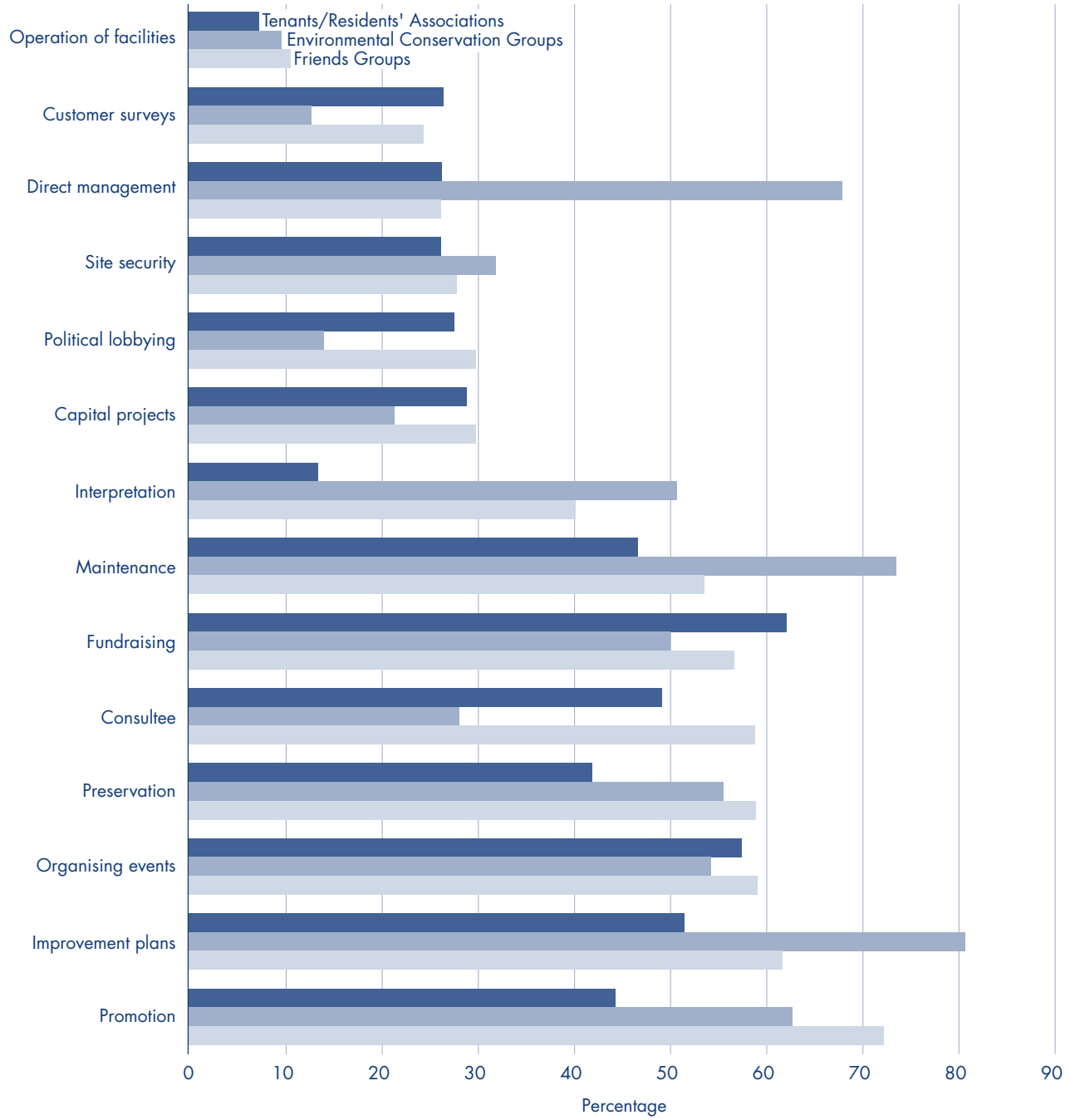
2.31 There are over 4,000 community groups with an average membership of 135 involved with parks and green space across the country. More than 70 per cent of these groups have been formed since 1990 with the largest numbers forming between 1998 and 2001.[10] GreenSpace has estimated that the annual economic value of their work across the UK is between £17 million and £35 million. The types of work conducted by these groups are shown in **Figure 30** and illustrates the range of benefits that they can and do contribute to improving urban green space.

2.32 About 40 per cent of these community groups are "Friends Groups" whose primary remit is to act as a voice for a particular park or green space and frequently act as a link between the local authority and the wider community. They are commonly involved with the larger more traditional civic parks. We found that parks with Friends groups were more likely to have been awarded a Green Flag Award and to be rated in good or improving condition by urban green space managers, **see Figure 31 overleaf**. About one third of community groups are environmental conservation groups whose main objective is to improve the local environment with an ecological bias to their work. The Green Pennant Award scheme acknowledges the achievement of the voluntary and community sector, **see Figure 32 overleaf**. Many tenants and resident associations also have an interest in green space but their focus is usually on the broader interests of a residential area.

2.33 We held focus groups with members of urban community groups and green space managers to identify the hurdles to improved community engagement and how they might be overcome. Our findings are summarised in **Figure 33 on page 41**.

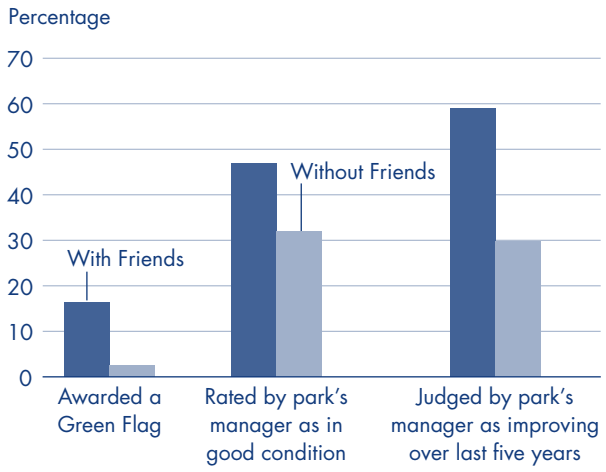
10 Community Networking Project, GreenSpace, November 2003.

30 Type of work conducted by voluntary and community groups involved in green space



Source: GreenSpace, 2003

31 Friends groups are associated with better quality parks



Source: National Audit Office survey of urban local authorities

32 The Green Pennant Award scheme acknowledges the achievement of the voluntary and community sector

Launched in 2002 the Green Pennant Award recognises and rewards the high quality green spaces managed by voluntary and community groups.

In 2004, 27 awards were made to community gardens, city farms and other green spaces. The award is part of the Green Flag Award scheme, and is judged in a similar way. The criteria used to assess applicants have been adapted from the Green Flag scheme, to reflect the voluntary nature of managing groups and the type of site involved.

Easter Garden in Bristol (above) has won three consecutive Green Pennants. This small park was created by the community on derelict and disputed land in 1997. Located in a busy area of town, the terraces of trees, shrubs and flowers offer visitors a green and peaceful retreat.

Source: National Audit Office based on Civic Trust material

Progress in enhancing urban green space continues to be held back by skills shortages

2.34 The 2002 Urban Green Spaces Taskforce concluded that there had been a decline in the number of experienced individuals employed in parks and other green space. Employer-led apprenticeship schemes aimed at producing skilled crafts people were largely phased out following the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering. Companies brought in to manage landscape contracts failed to maintain support for employer or college-based training and apprenticeship schemes.

2.35 In April 2004 the Government published The Egan Review - Skills for Sustainable Communities. It acknowledges that these skills need to include those that will help to deliver urban places which offer, amongst other aspirations, 'well-maintained, local, user-friendly public and green spaces with facilities for everyone including children and older people'. In response, the Academy for Sustainable Communities, funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, was launched one year later to create a new national skills centre for sustainable communities, and to help tackle the skills issue for the sector.

2.36 CABE Space is responsible for leading on the promotion and development of skills and training needs for delivering and supporting improvements in green space. This aspect of the unit's work relies on close partnerships with the relevant professional institutes, as well as local government bodies, sector skills councils and the Chief Culture and Leisure Officer Association. The unit is already supporting skills development through its advisory scheme, good practice and training seminars, and latterly its 'Parkforce' campaign to encourage staff into parks. This has been reinforced by the Government's 'How to' programme which provides information and guidance for practitioners on issues such as leadership, strategic planning and working in partnership. In addition it plans to establish a leadership programme for senior strategic managers of public space and recognises the need to raise awareness and develop skills amongst those service sectors that often inadvertently erode public space quality through their actions in other areas, such as utilities, highways and housing. Supported by a wide range of partners, it also plans to publish a strategy for addressing the national green space skills problem. CABE Space had planned to produce a national skills strategy by 2005, but it is likely to be published in 2006. Due to the wide range of organisations involved, progress on a national skills strategy has been slower than anticipated.

33 Hurdles to community engagement and how they might be overcome

Hurdles	How they might be overcome
Limited support and development of community groups	**Advice point.** Local authorities should have an advertised and consistent point of contact for liaison and consultation with community groups on green space issues.
	Governance of community groups. ODPM or CABE Space should provide sign-posts to sources of information covering the governance of community groups including simple committee procedures on, for example, how to run a meeting and how to collate formal minutes.
	Green space management skills. Managers need new skills to liaise and engage with friends and other groups.
Complexity and plurality of funding streams	**A green space funding portal.** A single website should have links to each of the potential green space enhancement fund providers.
	Simpler eligibility assessments so that friends groups do not waste time building business cases that would never achieve funding requirements.
	More standardisation and consistency between funds. Applications should be standardised and language/terminology made consistent. The amount of detail required for each application would be dependent upon the size of money requested.
	Feedback. All funders should provide simple feedback to groups whether or not they get their funding.
Managing the tension between representative and participative democracy	**Local authorities need to encourage friends groups to widen their base** and take account of the wider views of local residents.
	Convening authority-wide forums of community groups help such groups understand competing green space priorities.
	Friends groups need to be pro-active in encouraging diversity in their membership.
	Friends groups need to promote active councillor involvement by inviting them to attend meetings, awards, open days, events, etc. and attending councillors' meetings.
Turning negative motivation to positive	**Local authorities need to engage groups in decision-making where appropriate.** Many groups come into being for negative reasons, because of a gap or shortfall in local authority provision. Engaging groups in decisions over blueprints for improvement helps such groups to understand local authority constraints and develop positive shared agendas.
Reluctance for public bodies to relinquish power	**Direct funding helps to put local groups more in control.** Where local groups raise funds directly they are more likely to have real influence. Match funding with local authority resources helps to create better partnerships between local authorities and community groups.
Sustaining community interest	**Continually improve green space.** Many community groups come into existence for a particular reason and disband when immediate issues are addressed. Continuous modest improvement is often better than one-off spectacular improvements for sustaining community pressure.
	Providing goals and timetables of works so that local people have positive outcomes to which to work.
	Find an issue the community can engage with which will promote community interest and involvement.
	Promote the positives. Increase the number and variety of events and school use in green space.

Source: National Audit Office workshops

2.37 Recent CABE Space research (with English Heritage, the Countryside Agency, Sport England, English Nature and LANTRA[11]) identified the continuing widespread deficit in skills and relevant training, even among authorities with exemplary green space services **(Figure 34)**.

2.38 Our survey of urban green space managers and the focus groups of members of community groups and green space managers confirmed CABE Space's findings. Skills shortages were identified as one of the most significant barriers to the improvement of green space by green space managers. The need for a strategic approach to addressing the skills gap and improving the career structure of those employed in parks was a common theme in suggestions for tackling the problem **(Figure 35)**. We found support for training that was not centred exclusively on horticultural skills, but which equipped green space managers with the skills to think and plan strategically and engage successfully with communities, local politicians and officers.

34 The continuing skills shortage in the parks sector

Research published by CABE Space in 2004 found that, even among the seven 'Beacon Councils' – those local authorities recognised for achieving exemplary green space services – parks departments are struggling in the face of a serious skills shortage and lack of relevant training. Their findings, based on 36 in-depth interviews and 64 replies to a detailed questionnaire, included the following:

- Successive local government restructurings have led to a loss of status of parks departments. In most cases, they are now a sub-section of a larger department, making it more difficult to compete for funds. Parks' staff are also often not entirely aware of how they fit into the council's management structure.
- The Beacon Councils are typically reliant on a small number of highly skilled and dedicated staff, beyond whom there is a deficiency in specific skills at all levels.
- At the operational and supervisory levels, this is attributed to the lack of apprenticeships or the provision of anything more than basic, mandatory (e.g. health and safety) training.
- At the managerial level, there is a clear need for training in strategic thinking, vision and leadership.
- Career prospects are rated as poor, very poor or non-existent by 54 per cent overall. Around 60 per cent of staff have been in the same post for more than 10 years.
- Low pay and a poor public image of the work add to the difficulties for departments seeking to recruit new staff.

Source: Parks Need People Need Parks, CABE Space, 2004

35 Green space managers' suggestions for addressing the skills gap

"Strategic and co-ordinated approach to training and development at a national, regional and local level that is appropriately resourced and funded"

"Focus on quality and use this to drive recruitment and training needs. Build up esteem and recognition of parks and green space-related employment as a career"

"Develop good pay and career structures"

"Comprehensive Performance Assessment reference and targeted funding to address this issue"

"Apprenticeship scheme – less reliance on short term employees"

"G/NVQ for parks management or revamp of ILAM Continuing Professional Development scheme"

"Consider formal requirement to link training scheme to outsourced maintenance contracts"

"Invest in staff to help them realise potential"

"Career structure in landscape/horticulture to attract high calibre people"

"New courses, containing elements of horticulture, countryside recreation and management, landscape design and leisure management"

Source: National Audit Office survey of urban local authorities

11 The Sector Skills Council for the Environmental and land-based sector.

PART THREE

Improving the financial management of urban green space

3.1 In 2002 the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce[12] reported that under-investment in green space had resulted in a serious decline in the infrastructure and condition of parks and green spaces in many areas. Resources for parks services were spread thinner as local authorities acquired greater amounts of green space to manage whilst funding was constrained. The taskforce estimated that there was a cumulative underspend on infrastructure over the preceding twenty years of around £1.3 billion and that around £100 million extra would be needed over the following five years to begin to make a real impact. The taskforce also estimated that there was an annual maintenance funding deficit of around £126 million.

3.2 In response the Government committed to taking further steps to focus more resources to improve the quality of local environments, especially in deprived areas. It pointed out that a range of new funding opportunities were available to complement local authority expenditure on green space including contributions from Government departments, lottery programmes, developers and local businesses. It called on new investment for parks and green spaces to focus on making more effective use of the funding available. The Government's stated approach has been to support local authorities and others to find better ways of targeting existing resources and to help them develop the skills and provide support to secure resources from a variety of sources.

3.3 This Part of the report examines how effectively current funding systems sustain urban green space and in particular covers:

- National spend on green space
- Local authority spend on green space
- The impact, advantages and disadvantages of newer funding methods
- Making more effective use of funding.

We estimate that almost £700 million was spent on urban green space in 2004-05

3.4 Estimating the total spend on enhancing and maintaining urban green space is difficult because of the large number of different sources of funding across the public, private and community sectors, the large number of different programmes and the variability in methods of reporting and quality of information on expenditure between these programmes. For these reasons only a broad estimate is possible **(Figure 36 overleaf)**.

3.5 We estimate that almost £700 million was spent on urban green space in 2004-05. Around 85 per cent of funding, £588 million, came from the public sector, four-fifths of which (£482 million) came from local authorities through the formula grant[13]. ODPM programmes

12 Final Report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, Green Spaces, Better Places.
13 Formula grant is the pot of money which local authorities use to fund their services. It comprises revenue support grant, redistributed business rates and primary formula police grant.

36 We estimate that about £693 million was spent on urban green space in 2004-05

Sector	Department	Organisation/Programme	£m
Public Sector	Urban local authorities		481.5
	ODPM	Liveability Fund	15.0
		Living Spaces	10.4
		Regional Development Agencies	6.5
		CABE Space	6.0
		Urban Design Fund	5.7
		Housing Corporation	5.0
		Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	5.0
		New Deal for Communities	5.0
		English Partnerships (incl. Land Restoration Trust)	5.3
		Special Grants Programme	2.3
		Civic Trust (Green Flag Award scheme)	0.5
	DCMS	Sport England	3.5
		English Heritage	0.2
	DEFRA	Countryside Agency (Doorstep Greens)	3.5
		Forestry Commission[1]	4.5
		English Nature	0.3
	HM Treasury	Landfill Tax Credit Scheme	20.3
	European Union	European Regional Development Fund	7.7
National Lottery		Heritage Lottery Fund	30.0
		New Opportunities Fund	28.0
		Big Lottery Fund (Jan 06)	0.0
Private Sector		Planning gain contributions	30.0
		Sponsorship	3.0
		Private Finance Initiative	1.0
Third Sector		Local Voluntary and Community groups	11.0
		Groundwork[2]	0.0
		GreenSpace	0.0
		ENCAMS	1.5
Total			**£692.7**

Source: National Audit Office

NOTES

1 The Forestry Commission is a separate Government department whose vote is funded from the DEFRA settlement.

2 Groundwork spent £26 million, and GreenSpace just under £1m, on urban green space in 2004-05. These monies are accounted for in the table under the several organisations which fund these two bodies.

contributed nearly 10 per cent (£66 million). Programmes supported by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs accounted for £12 million (two per cent). The Lottery Distribution bodies made a large amount of funds available to green space projects, granting around £58 million in 2004-05. The bulk of private funding came from planning gain contributions from private developers (£30 million).

3.6 Local authorities have discretion to use their formula grant in accordance with national and local priorities. Other funds are provided to support community and voluntary sector work or to help fund specific green space projects or programmes.

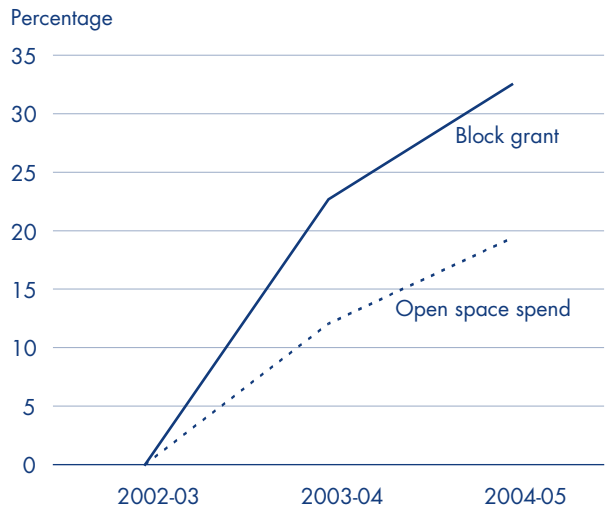
Local authority expenditure on green space has risen, but more slowly than spending on environmental, protective and cultural services as a whole

3.7 Local authorities' expenditure on green space is in part supported by central government through the revenue support system. There is no specific funding for parks and green spaces, although traditionally spending is measured as part of the environmental, protective and cultural services block. This block covers a wide range of services, in addition to parks and green spaces. These include, for example, libraries, museums, consumer protection, refuse collection and disposal, concessionary fares, and planning control and implementation.

3.8 From 2002-03 to 2004-05 cash spending on the environmental, protective and cultural services block (which contains green spaces) rose by 32 per cent (22 per cent after inflation). Spending on green space rose by only 19 per cent (10 per cent after inflation) during the same period **(Figure 37)**. Over the last six years cash expenditure by local authorities on green space increased by around five per cent a year on average, or around 2.5 per cent a year in real terms.

3.9 The majority of the services covered in the environmental, protective and cultural services block are statutory but spending on parks and green spaces is not mandatory as there is no statutory duty to provide them. Local Authority spending on green space has lost out to other services within the revenue support block.

37 Local authority spending on Environmental, Protective and Cultural Services has increased by 32 per cent since 2001-02 while spending on green space has increased by 19 per cent

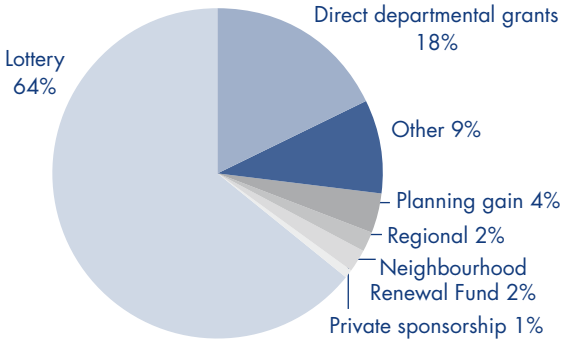


Source: National Audit Office analysis of Office of the Deputy Prime Minister data

Additional sources of funds have been made available by central government and the lottery distribution bodies

3.10 Additional sources of public sector funds have been made available for green space projects by central government departments and lottery distribution boards (See Figures 36 and 41). Some 17 per cent of parks in our survey received additional funds. The additional monies, some £26.5 million, matched the local authority estimated gross spend on these parks in 2004-05. The lottery contributed almost 65 per cent of the supplementary funding urban local authorities had been able to raise to support green space in 2004-05. The private sector provided about five per cent of additional funds, the great majority of which was provided by developers through planning gain agreements **(Figure 38 overleaf)**. Further funds are available to support green space improvements in deprived areas through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

38 Relative contribution of different supplementary sources of funds to urban local authority expenditure on green space



Source: National Audit Office survey of urban local authorities

NOTE
Base: parks that received Government funding.

3.11 Many programmes make funds available directly to community groups for their local projects. For example, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's 'Living Spaces' fund was set up in 2003 to run for three years with a budget of £30 million in total. Groundwork, which is partly funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, working with GreenSpace, administers the fund on behalf of ODPM. Community groups apply to Groundwork for funding and their project ideas are assessed against criteria such as the level of community engagement, specificity of need and value for money. If granted, the monies are allocated to the community project with advice and supervision from the charity Groundwork. The scheme has been very popular with applications outstripping funds available.

3.12 Another aspect of much of the new funding is the emphasis on partnership working. Many of the schemes require organisations to work together with grant making authority delegated to an umbrella group of partners working on a project. For example the Big Lottery Fund's programme, Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities, launched in January 2000, appointed 11 organisations, often operating as part of a wider partnership, to manage grant programmes and/or umbrella schemes. For the Countryside Agency's 'Doorstep Greens' programme, voluntary and community groups must match the funding provided by the scheme, by using their own funds or monies from other funding streams **(Figure 39)**.

3.13 We found that in general local authorities welcomed the increased number of funding streams recognising that they had removed some of the funding burden from them, helped to increase overall funding and stimulated community engagement. There were concerns over the long-term sustainability of many of the improvements funded, that objectives set by funding bodies nationally often did not accord with local priorities making it more difficult to adopt a local strategic approach and over the time and resources that were required to establish and support partnerships. The advantages and disadvantages of direct, ring-fenced funding schemes are summarised in **Figure 40 on page 51**.

It is easier to find funding for renovation or new facilities than for routine maintenance and upkeep

3.14 We found that most of the direct funding schemes provided capital monies to purchase, renovate or refurbish green space. Revenue expenditure was often allowed but to support operating and running costs of the refurbishment schemes. Very few provided revenue for ongoing future maintenance and upkeep of the refurbishment. Some new funding, available to community groups, requires match funding from local authorities, but these too were for capital funds **(Figure 41 on page 52)**.

3.15 Both urban green space managers and members of community groups expressed concern that it was much more difficult to identify and secure funds for long-term, routine maintenance than for major refurbishment or new capital projects. Local authorities told us there were some steps they could take to ensure their capital investment lasted longer, such as using stainless steel rather than wooden benches, to prolong the life of assets and reduce maintenance costs. Despite an increase in mainstream expenditure, concerns were expressed about the additional pressure that new capital projects place on the maintenance budget in the longer term. Inadequate maintenance can lead to asset decline and the risk that green spaces fall quickly into disrepair, perhaps to a point where further substantial capital investment is required. (Figure 41 and **Figure 42 on page 53**).

39 Examples of the different central funds available to support green space

Public Parks Initiative

Fund administrator: **Heritage Lottery Fund**

Duration of programme: **Ongoing**

Value: **£400 million to 2005**

The Heritage Lottery Fund has supported the regeneration of over 270 urban or rural public parks, gardens, squares, promenades and historic cemeteries across the UK.

A park may trace its history back to an older private estate or garden, or may have been designed and built for the purpose of public enjoyment and recreation in the 19th or 20th centuries.

Funding is available for planning and development projects, for capital works, revenue activities, support for new staff, and cost of increased management and maintenance.

In 2005 the programme will be extended with an extra £90 million over three years from the Big Lottery Fund for regeneration of public parks in England to support more local parks, encourage community partnerships, and increase volunteer and training opportunities.

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund

Sustrans

Fund administrator: **Sustrans**

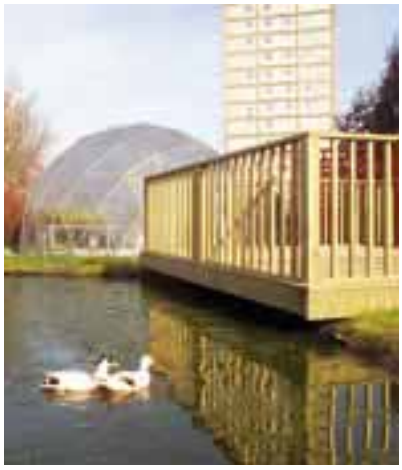
Duration of programme: **2001-2004**

Value: **£7.4m**

Delivered a programme of 170 sustainable transport projects. The project has worked mostly in partnership with local authorities. Schemes considered include Green Transport Corridors – creating safe walking and cycling routes to and within green spaces.

Example of funded projects: Doncaster Greenway – A 5.5 km long traffic-free green corridor joining Doncaster to Scawthorpe, Highfields and Woodlands, in association with Doncaster Council.

BIG LOTTERY FUND



People's Places

Fund administrator: **BTCV and supported by English Nature and Rio Tinto**

Duration of programme: **2001-2006**

Value: **£6.5m**

The programme provides an opportunity for local people to make a difference to their community by transforming a derelict, under-used or unsightly building or area of land into an environmental resource for everyone to enjoy, and continue to be involved in its sustainable development.

Grants of between £3,000 and £10,000 have been made available, for project costs, training, community consultation, insurance, mentoring and other support ranging from tools to childcare.

Example of a funded project: Spring Boroughs Pocket Park, Northampton – Awarded £9,740.

The area to be rejuvenated is a Pocket Park within a tower block estate. The aim is to improve the quality of life for local residents by making the park more accessible and people friendly. This will be achieved by improving access with a textured path for wheelchairs, and by thinning vegetation to discourage anti-social behaviour. Biodiversity of the site will be improved through planting a wildlife garden, sensory area and herb garden.

BIG LOTTERY FUND

39 Examples of the different central funds available to support green space *continued*

Wildspace!

Fund administrator: **English Nature**

Duration of programme: **2001-2006**

Value: **£7m**

The Wildspace! scheme helps local communities to improve the quality of the local environment by creating and improving local nature reserves.175 grant awards have been made.

Example of a funded project: Green spots for jobs black-spot.

Middlesbrough is one of the 10 most deprived boroughs in England and did not have a single local nature reserve. Over the next few years, Middlesbrough Council's Wildspace! will be working to make sure that every resident will be no more than a kilometre away from a Local Nature Reserve.

Playing Fields and Community Green Spaces

Fund administrator: **Sport England**

Duration of programme: **2001-2006**

Value: **£28.5m**

Sport England administers the fund to enable communities to improve access to playing fields, green spaces, and community play areas. In addition they are funding School Playground improvements through the Learning Through Landscapes "Grounds for Improvement" scheme.

The scheme has funded 226 playing field improvement schemes, 29 community young peoples' play schemes, 61 playing pitch strategies and 326 playground improvements. Half of the 651 projects funded are located in deprived communities.

Doorstep Greens

Fund administrator: **Countryside Agency**

Duration of programme: **2001-2006**

Value: **£33.6m**

(38% Big Lottery Fund; 11% Countryside Agency; 51% Partnership Funding)

The Countryside Agency, with the help of Lottery funding from the Big Lottery Fund is helping 200 urban and rural communities in England improve their quality of life. By creating or enhancing green spaces near to people's homes, they are helping people who experience disadvantage, and places where regeneration of the local environment is crucial.

Example of funded projects: Carter Community Park. In a deprived area with little informal recreation or meeting space, the West Lane Neighbourhood Community Association, with Middlesbrough Council and the help of Groundwork Middlesbrough have created a landscaped park from derelict land. The renovation set out to involve all generations, and the park now showcases local arts and skills.

Source: National Audit Office

40 The advantages and disadvantages of direct funding from central government

Advantages

Funding is dedicated to aspects of green space enhancement – unlike revenue support grant it cannot under the terms of grants be diverted to other local services

Funding is in many cases made direct to the voluntary and community sector and encourages community engagement in green space enhancement

Many funders require match funding from a number of partners as a condition of the grant. This encourages partnership working

The application processes impose rigorous objective setting and planning disciplines on applicants. For many local authorities these may be of a higher standard that they might otherwise adopt

Disadvantages

Many of the funds are time limited for three to five years. This encourages short-term projects and initiatives

Scheme objectives set nationally may not accord with local priorities and make it more difficult for local authorities to adopt a strategic approach to green space

Having a range of potential funding sources each with their own application and validation requirements increases bureaucracy and administrative costs with adverse implications for efficiency

Funds are limited and a first come first served approach may not always be equitable

Time and resources need to be put into forming and supporting partnerships

Source: National Audit Office

3.16 As part of its strategy to engineer positive change in the way in which local authorities deliver public space services, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister introduced a pilot programme called the Liveability Fund. Whilst £77 million was earmarked for capital improvements, a further £12 million in revenue funding was made available to support changes in service delivery methods. Local authorities were required to identify and implement innovation in their approach to tackling public spaces and local environmental issues and to put in place service delivery mechanisms to sustain improvements.

3.17 In total, 27 projects, spread evenly across the regions were selected. They range from the creation of nine Neighbourhood Greens in Blackburn to improving Havant town centre. The service improvements promised ranged from creating a not-for-profit organisation to manage the parks and open spaces in Leicester to funding of street inspectors in Coventry. The lessons from the Liveability Fund, CABE Space and Groundwork projects to encourage local authorities to innovate in service delivery have yet to be fully identified and spread. Evaluation of the success of the Liveability Fund should start later in 2006.

Some local authorities could make better use of private sector funding

3.18 We found that on average only five per cent of the additional funding local authorities had been able to raise to support green space came from the private sector (Figure 38). The bulk of this came from Section 106[14] levies from developers as a contribution to benefit the area in which a development occurs.

3.19 Many authorities use money from developers to create or refurbish green space only within new housing developments. Some prefer to use the funding to improve neighbouring existing parks or green spaces, rather than creating new spaces which would become a maintenance liability in future years. Others, such as Wigan, require developers to consider both options. In Wigan, for developments of 100 dwellings and above, amenity open space and play space is normally required on site but for smaller developments contributions are expected for off site spaces. Capital contributions to off-site play space are required at £517 per new build dwelling, whilst ongoing revenue requirements presented by the new capital are captured through a commuted sum of £258 per dwelling. A contribution of £413 per dwelling is also required for off site amenity open space. All contributions rise each year against the retail price index.

14 Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

41 Few funding streams offer money for routine maintenance and repairs

Scheme	Capital funding available?	Revenue funding available?	Intended to support routine maintenance?
ODPM:			
■ Liveability Fund	Yes	To encourage 27 pilot authorities to implement service reforms to sustain capital improvements, and to concurrently identify and disseminate good practice for all local authorities	No
■ Living Spaces	Yes	For development and implementation grants. Though no funds were available for routine maintenance, the application process sought to ensure that responsibility for maintenance was agreed	No
Heritage Lottery Fund:			
■ Public Parks Initiative (from 2006, new joint programme with Big Lottery Fund)	Yes	■ For park activities which encourage greater involvement by local communities in their park	No
		■ For new staff in the park	Yes, if relevant to improved standards
		■ For increased cost of management and maintenance for up to 10 years after project complete	Yes, for upkeep of refurbishment
Big Lottery Fund:			
■ Awards for All	Yes	Activities that promote education, the environment and health in the local community	No
■ Living Landmarks	Yes	Revenue or endowment funding may be granted to help towards operating costs for example development and running costs	Yes, limited to 10% of the total capital funding
■ People's Places (with British Trust for Conservation Volunteers)	Yes	Costs of training for group members to develop their skills, expertise and knowledge as well as for community consultation, expert mentoring, and other support ranging from tools and equipment to childcare	No
Countryside Agency:			
■ Doorstep Greens (with Big Lottery Fund)	Yes	Community consultation to develop a Project Preparation Plan and support for local community management	Yes, limited to 3 years
English Nature:			
■ Wildspace! (with Big Lottery Fund)	Yes	Towards the management of local nature reserves	No
Sport England:			
■ Playing Fields (with Big Lottery Fund)	Yes	For the development of playing field strategies	No

Source: National Audit Office

42 The need for long-term plans to sustain green space enhancement: the case of Liverpool International Garden Festival

Early 1980s Dereliction	The Merseyside Development Corporation decided to regenerate the old South Docks – a derelict and polluted area of Dingle, Liverpool.
1982 The Plan	A Garden Festival aimed to revitalise Liverpool and create unique riverside parkland gifted to the city and available to all. The festival was billed as 'a five month pageant of horticultural excellence and spectacular entertainment'. The Merseyside Development Corporation invested £20 million.
1984 The Festival takes place	The site opened in May 1984. It had sixty individual gardens, a Festival Hall, public pavilions, a miniature railway, and a Pathway of Honour crediting local celebrities. Over three million people visited in five months.
1985-2003 Decline and dereliction	After the festival the gardens closed to the public in 1986 and became derelict. The site was leased to several organisations in the late 1980s and 1990s. Ventures like theme parks tried and failed. Housing was built on part of the site as planned. Various plans were put forward for the remaining land. Residents created a campaign group in 2002 in response to proposals for redevelopment.
2003-2005 Finding a new use	The site is currently leased to developers. CABE Space gave advice and expert assistance to the Land Restoration Trust and Liverpool City Council regarding proposals from developers.
2006 onwards The future	The Land Restoration Trust is negotiating a public/private agreement to take responsibility for renovating and managing the site, including the restoration of the Chinese and Japanese gardens. The plans include access to some of the green space, and an endowment to secure long term maintenance money.

Source: National Audit Office

3.20 Local authorities often have to manage the tension between using Section 106 levies for the benefit of the community as a whole and what developers want to provide in terms of commercial attractiveness of new developments. Where local authorities had conducted a robust assessment of current provision and need and had developed a more strategic approach they were able to take a more creative approach to the use of planning gain. Local authorities such as Brent diverted funding to areas where under-provision of green space had been identified. Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council used Section 106 monies as the match-funding required to secure National Lottery funding, and have created a well used and widely acclaimed skateboard facility at Victoria Park, Tipton which draws users from across the borough and beyond.

Current performance reporting and assessment regimes provide limited assurance on the economy and efficiency of local authority green space expenditure

3.21 Under "Best Value"[15] local authorities are required to seek to achieve continuous improvement by having regard to the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of their service delivery. To see if local authorities are achieving Best Value, central government departments set measures of performance against key service delivery areas. The Audit Commission examine these indicators as well as other evidence in making their comprehensive performance assessment of each local authority.

15 Came into effect under the Local Government Act 1999.

3.22 Of the 23 indicators used to assess the performance of local authority environmental, protective and cultural services under Best Value, all but one concentrates on local authorities' performance on the built environment. The indicator relating to green space measures local residents' satisfaction with green space (Figure 17, Part 2). There are no indicators that measure economy by relating resources to activity or efficiency by relating activity to outputs. A number of urban green space managers told us that the lack of measures meant that green space management was not subject to the same level of scrutiny as built environmental services under comprehensive performance assessment. And this in turn meant that senior officers and local politicians did not give green space management the priority it deserved.

3.23 We found that the current budgeting, accounting and financial reporting procedures and practices of many local authorities made it difficult to devise appropriate economy and efficiency measures for green space **(Figure 43)**. And recent CABE Space research[16] has found that lack of data meant that it is hard to establish a link between expenditure and quality. A framework for cost accounting at a more detailed level is provided by the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice, which has been developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and has recently been given statutory backing.[17] Applying BVACOP is an essential first step in improving financial management, although in apportioning costs to individual green spaces, providing detailed contract reporting, and relating costs to outcomes, local authorities should go further than strict adherence to this code (See Annex on page 17).

The potential of benchmarking to drive up efficiency is not being realised

3.24 Despite the weaknesses identified in Figure 43, a number of local authorities have developed voluntary benchmarking clubs or associations to compare the economy and efficiency of aspects of green space management. One of these clubs is run by the Association for Public Service Excellence and has 51 district authority members from around England. But most of the clubs are informal, regional or involve neighbouring authorities and membership by some authorities is sporadic. In London for example, 27 authorities take part in these clubs. There is little contact or co-ordination between the different clubs.

43 Weaknesses in local authority budgeting and reporting on green space expenditure that prevent better measurement of economy and efficiency

Relevant costs of different directorates or divisions within local authorities contributing to green space management are not brought together.

External sources of funding are not brought together with mainstream expenditure in a consistent manner to demonstrate total resources devoted to green spaces.

Costs on individual green spaces or categories of green space are not allocated or apportioned.

Contracts with external suppliers may not provide for reporting to allow allocation of costs across different activities or areas of green space.

Expenditure on individual sites is not accounted for on an accruals basis, and does not include non-cash cost such as depreciation.

Costs are not related to outcomes, such as hectares maintained to a specific quality standard, in line with needs of the community.

Source: National Audit Office

3.25 The data that the Association for Public Service Excellence collects suggests a wide range of efficiency between local authorities **(Figure 44)**. But the potential for local authorities to test and demonstrate their efficiency is being held back by the lack of a more widely agreed framework for collecting and analysing performance data in this way.

Modern contracting practices need to be adopted more widely

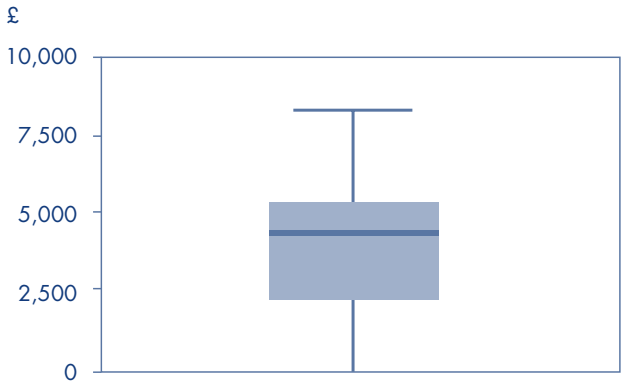
3.26 Once local authorities have decided what services need to be delivered on their green spaces, they must decide how best to deliver them – for example, the balance between using their own staff to carry out the work and buying them in from outside, what the work should consist of, and how performance should be measured.

16 Yet to be published.
17 Regulation 31 of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 (Statutory Instrument 2003/3146).

44 Examples of green space data collected by benchmarking clubs

Economy measures and data

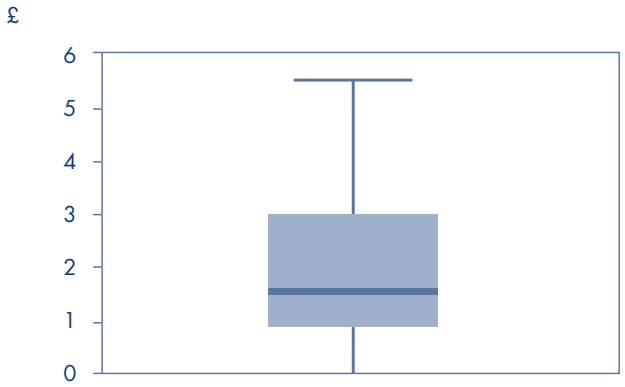
Spend on green space, per hectare maintained



Commentary

The average Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) local authority spends £4,100 per hectare, but this hides great variation. A quarter of local authorities spend less than £2,500 per hectare, and the same proportion spend over £5,100. (APSE members tend to include a greater proportion of metropolitan councils, and it has better representation in the east of the country than the west.)

Spend on parks per head of population

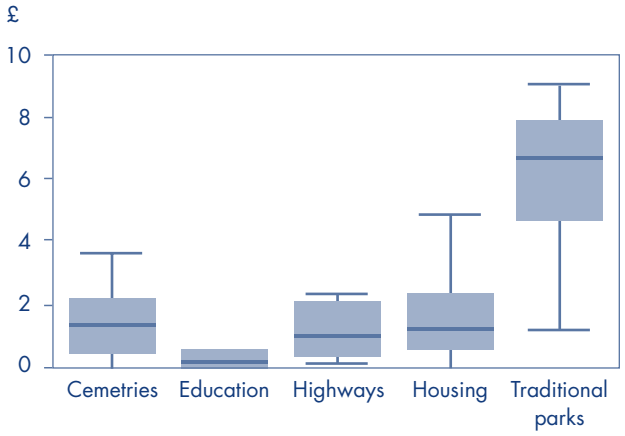


The amount spent on green space on behalf of each local resident also varies greatly.

On average, APSE local authorities spend £1.53 per person to maintain parks. In some cases though, authorities spend three times this amount.

It seems likely that these differences reflect, in part, the wide variety of parks. This highlights the need to collect benchmarking data which relates closely to the type of space being maintained – for example, a prestige Victorian park is likely to cost more per hectare to maintain than a simple recreation ground.

Expenditure by green space service area, per head of population



Benchmarking data can also be used to look at differences between aspects of the service delivered within an authority.

This chart is drawn from the London Benchmarking Group data set. It shows that its member authorities spend a greater amount on maintaining parks than they do cemeteries.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Association for Public Service Excellence and London Benchmarking Group data

NOTE: Box plots

The thick horizontal line shows the median – exactly half of all local authorities sit either side of this line.

Half of all authorities fall between the top and bottom limits of the blue area (this is the inter-quartile range).

The "whiskers" show highest and lowest authorities.

3.27 During the late 1980s Compulsory Competitive Tendering was the main instrument by which central government required local authorities to demonstrate value for money in green space services. Grounds, horticultural, grass cutting and other maintenance services were submitted to competitive tendering. The inflexible implementation of competitive tendering can have a disproportionately damaging influence on the capacity of local authorities to deliver and manage green spaces. In many cases it can lead to the loss of site-based staff and can favour contractors that are prepared to bid low and survive by disregarding the specified level of maintenance.

3.28 Within many local authorities "client" functions of management, policy and strategy were separated from "contractor" or "operational" functions of grounds maintenance and service delivery. Not only did this result in a conceptual separation of parks functions, but in many instances the client and contractor roles were physically separated in different divisions of the local authority.

3.29 The introduction of the Best Value approach to service delivery in the 1990's encouraged local authorities to give greater weight to factors other than price in their choice of contractor. The new approach promoted flexible methods of delivery rather than prescriptive solutions, and the emphasis on outcomes, such as the expected standard of cleanliness **(Figure 45)**. Some local authorities are developing longer term partnerships with external suppliers. This can be done across authorities, so that contracts are 'shared', as, for example, is happening in Manchester and other parts of the North West, where a group of authorities have joined together to explore the possibility of shared contracts in such areas as arboriculture and weed control.

3.30 We found that many local authorities have abolished the client-contractor split, and three quarters of authorities do not sub-contract their community parks and open spaces at all, many bringing former contracted-out services in-house. Data collected by the Association for Public Service Excellence suggests that very few authorities use external contractors for more than 30 per cent of their green space.

3.31 However there is still some way to go in many local authorities to adopt better procurement and contract management practices. Problems still occur where local authorities fail to adopt more modern contracting practices. Best Value inspections by the Audit Commission show that in one authority for example the range of maintenance work specified in contracts was so limited and restrictive that local authority staff had been unable to get the contractors to remedy a range of problems reported

45 Developing contractual partnerships for green space management

Traditional approach	Partnership approach
Specifies activities to be undertaken by the contractor and their frequency, for example how often grass is to be cut or litter-bins emptied	Specifies output or outcome expected, for example how short the grass should be kept or the standards of cleanliness expected
Provides for formal separation of duties between local authority and contractor's staff, for example so that grass cutting is the responsibility of the contractor but litter collection the responsibility of park wardens	Encourages joint working between local authority and contractor's staff and frequent communication, for example so that park wardens and contractors are jointly responsible for maintaining standards
Compliance with terms of contract has to be monitored on a regular basis by local authority green space managers	Contractor's and local authority staff encouraged to work together in self-directed teams
Contractor is accountable and responsible to the local authority, not local residents	Contractor has discretion to respond to requests made directly by local residents
Contract has to be renegotiated in the light of changing needs	Contract builds in flexibility to allow contractor to change working practices in the light of the local authority's changing requirements
Encourages contractor to do the least to meet standards specified in the contract and pass risk of local resident's dissatisfaction to local authority	Local authority and contractor share risk and work together to meet standards expected by local residents
Provides only for protracted legal resolution to any disagreements over responsibilities	Provides for immediate resolution of potential conflicts through active engagement of contactor and local authority staff

Source: National Audit Office from examination of local authority maintenance contracts

by local residents, including the emptying of dog and litter bins. And a recent review by the Countryside Agency of its Doorstep Greens programme found examples of inflexible delivery – in one case gang mowing grass not yet grown, creating clouds of dust. Only one local authority has adopted a full public-private partnership approach **(Figure 46)**, and another has given over the management of one park to a voluntary sector organisation **(Figure 47)**.

46 Recent innovative initiatives to enhance urban green space – Lewisham

The London Borough of Lewisham is in year five of a 10 year public-private partnership with Glendale Grounds Management for the management and maintenance of the council's 43 parks.

The contract is innovative in approach in that it covers the total management of the parks service including parks patrols and the events programme.

The contract brought with it £1.5 million of up front investment to be spent on parks within the first three years. This has resulted in new facilities in the parks, improved signage and improvements to park infrastructure including footpaths, walkways and play areas.

The Council set the contractor objectives to achieve success in the London in Bloom and subsequently the Britain in Bloom competition as well as securing Green Flag status for a number of the parks.

The authority has since achieved Gold status in the London in Bloom competition and Bronze nationally as well as securing Green Flag status for five parks.

Council surveys show that user's satisfaction ratings have improved from 36 per cent before the award of the Glendale contract to 52 per cent in 2003.

The Parks team informed us that the commitment to the contract from local politicians and officers has helped bring about a long-term improvement plan and an associated green space maintenance budget.

Source: National Audit Office/London Borough of Lewisham

47 Partnering to enhance urban green space – the example of King Edward Memorial Park

King Edward Memorial Park is a traditional town park in Shadwell, East London. Since the summer of 2004, this park has been managed by a charity, Trees for Cities. The local authority, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, approached the charity to take the park over, following ten years of collaboration on projects throughout the borough. Tower Hamlets pass the budget they would have spent on the park to the charity. The agreement represents a move away from input specifications to outcomes, through the development of a mutually agreed management plan for the park. For example:

- Increased funding for the park: As a charity, Trees for Cities have drawn in tens of thousands of pounds in funding from the private sector to invest in the park and its maintenance. Contributors include Thames Water, Deutsche Bank and News International.
- Increased training: Addressing the skills shortage, Trees for Cities uses the park as a base for practical training in landscaping, horticulture and arboriculture. Courses are offered to NVQ1 and NVQ2 levels, and participants include those on the New Deal programmes.
- Staff presence: During the day Trees for Cities staff are visible in the park.
- Tailored management: The two partners are putting together a management plan for the park.
- Higher standards: Trees for Cities have put in place an intensive maintenance programme, and they have used their expertise in ecology and arboriculture to make the park an even greener place.
- More consultation with park users: Trees for Cities are facilitating the involvement of local people through user surveys, events and other activities so that the management of the park reflects local needs and desires.
- Wider use: A number of community based events have taken place in the park since the agreement was established, helping to build a stronger sense of local pride.
- Good practice: Trees for Cities are now presenting the lessons from the King Edward Memorial Park arrangement to other London boroughs.

Source: National Audit Office/Trees for Cities

PART FOUR
Planning urban green space

4.1 The planning system has a key role in ensuring there is sufficient high quality urban green space. The pressure for additional housing and business in towns and cities makes existing urban green space attractive as potential development sites **(Figure 48)**. Planners not only need to ensure green space is protected and enhanced where appropriate but also to help to ensure suitable opportunities are taken to provide new green space when development and regeneration schemes go ahead.

4.2 To help balance the needs of urban development and green space provision, planning authorities need to develop a vision of the value and role of green space which is shared by local key partners and citizens and is clear to local developers. This in turn needs to be based on a rigorous assessment of the adequacy of existing green space provision and the ways it might if necessary be improved.

48 Weavers Fields – The competing demands of urban green space and housing provision

Tower Hamlets is an inner city East London borough, which, as part of the Mayor of London's 'London Plan', has a target of creating 42,000 new homes within the Borough by 2016. While some of the new housing can be achieved by redeveloping existing housing blocks more intensively, pressure will fall on existing open space and amenity land. The Borough currently has 1.2 hectares of open space per 1,000 population, and wants to maintain this ratio if it can. With the new housing this would mean creating at least 29 hectares of new open space over the next 10 years.

To address the tensions arising from these competing demands, the Council has declared that as a minimum there should be no overall loss of green play or recreational space on new housing sites, and indeed existing sites must be improved. But with such ambitious house creation plans in a limited space, some tensions are bound to surface as the following example shows.

Two housing associations within the Borough have recently applied for planning permission to enlarge an existing sheltered hostel for homeless young people. The proposed development site is currently part of Weavers Fields District Park which is classified as a site of nature conservation importance. The Borough's policy, as mentioned above, is that in general open space sites such as Weavers Fields should be protected.

However the new development would help to improve the authority's ability to house a group who find it difficult to obtain accommodation in the Borough.

A local community action group has formed to object to the development on the grounds of the loss of recreational facilities and the precedent planning approval would represent for further development encroachment on the site or other sites in the borough.

The first application for planning permission was rejected but a subsequent application has been made. A decision on the second application has not yet been made.

Source: London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Weaver's Fields Action Group

4.3 This part of the report examines how well planning policy on urban green space is being implemented. In particular it examines:

- The requirements of national planning policy guidance on urban green space
- How urban green space policy is delivered locally
- Local progress in assessing current provision of urban green space and future need
- The quality of current local green space strategies
- The capacity of local authorities to develop a vision for green space locally.

Planning Policy Guidance sets out national policies on planning for green space

4.4 To safeguard the countryside from encroachment and check the unrestricted sprawl of built-up urban areas a number of green belts were established in 1955. These areas have generally been protected and sometimes extended as part of a strategic planning approach over the last 50 years by local planning authorities. Within urban areas, planning authorities decide on urban land use and the proportions of it that should be used for housing, open space, business needs or other uses.

4.5 The Government's national planning policy guidance is set out in planning policy statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs). This guidance needs to be taken into account by local planning authorities in the preparation of development plans and as a guide in making decisions on individual planning applications. The guidance most relevant to urban green space is set out in **Figure 49**.

4.6 The planning guidance acknowledges that open spaces can make a major contribution to ensuring that towns and cities are places in which people will choose to live. Other supporting guidelines **(Figure 50)** confirm this applies particularly in growth areas and areas of low demand. The main role of the planning system is to ensure there are sufficient open spaces and that they are in the right places. Planning guidance acknowledges that this is not enough though. There is also a need to ensure these open spaces are of high quality, attractive to users and well managed and maintained. Critically, planning guidance provides important protection for green spaces, especially playing fields, by requiring an evidence-based approach to planning in respect of open spaces. The Government's desired long-term outcomes from the planning system for urban green space are set out in **Figure 51**.

49 National planning guidance sets out the expectations of the planning system for urban green space

Planning Policy Statement/Guidance	Relevance to green space
PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development – January 2005	This sets out the overarching planning policies for delivering sustainable development. It confirms that planning should ensure that new development is of high quality and well designed whilst protecting, maintaining and improving the environment. It should do this through positive policies on issues such as the provision of public space.
Draft PPS 3 Housing (proposed to replace PPG3 Housing) – December 2005	Advises planning authorities that new dwellings should have access to sufficient open space (including play space) of good quality.
PPS 9 Biodiversity and geological conservation – August 2005	Expects planning to contribute to a better quality of life and to people's sense of well-being by enhancing biodiversity in green spaces.
PPG 17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation – July 2002	Requires authorities to plan for open space by undertaking robust assessments of the needs of their communities and by auditing existing provision. Where authorities have not yet completed this work, open space may only be built upon where it has been demonstrated that it is surplus to requirements.

Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

50 Advice on open space planning issues in growth areas

The Government's 2003 sustainable communities plan, launched by the Deputy Prime Minister, sets out a long-term programme of action for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. It aims to tackle housing supply problems in south-east England, low demand in other parts of the country, and the quality of public spaces. The plan makes clear that new neighbourhoods must be of a higher quality, higher density, and more sustainable than many recent housing developments.

Between 2003 and 2008 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will be spending £38 billion delivering the plan. Investment in housing on this scale is unprecedented since the 1960s. The achievements of that time were accompanied by some dramatic failures, where some housing layouts and urban planning approaches proved to be disastrously misconceived. Failures in the design and maintenance of green spaces were a major part of this.

To help avoid the planning mistakes of the past, CABE Space produced a general guide for practitioners, 'Start with the Park', that provides good examples of what has worked and lessons learned from the past. The Government's publication 'Greening the Gateway' seeks to establish a vision and action plan for green space in the Thames Gateway.

Source: CABE Space guidelines "Start with the Park" July 2005

Local authorities play the key role in delivering national green space policy at the local level

4.7 Local authorities play the key role in delivering national green space policy at the local level. As planning authorities, local authorities are required to draw up local development frameworks to guide the delivery of the spatial planning strategy for their area. They should build on policies set out nationally and regionally, taking into account local needs and circumstances. Where relevant, local green space strategies should be taken into account when authorities prepare local development documents.

4.8 Local authorities are also required to take the lead in partnership with other local public sector agencies in developing wider community strategies for improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas, and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. These strategies are often prepared and implemented by local authorities through local strategic partnerships which bring together the different parts of the public sector such as the police, National Health Service and employment service as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors.

51 The long-term objectives that PPG 17 aims to deliver are:

- Networks of accessible, high quality open spaces and sport and recreation facilities which meet the needs of residents and visitors, are fit for purpose and economically and environmentally sustainable.
- An appropriate balance between new provision and the enhancement of existing provision.
- Clarity and reasonable certainty for developers and land owners in relation to the requirements and expectations of local planning authorities in respect of open space and sport and recreation provision.

Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Assessing needs and opportunities: Planning Policy Guidance 17 companion guide

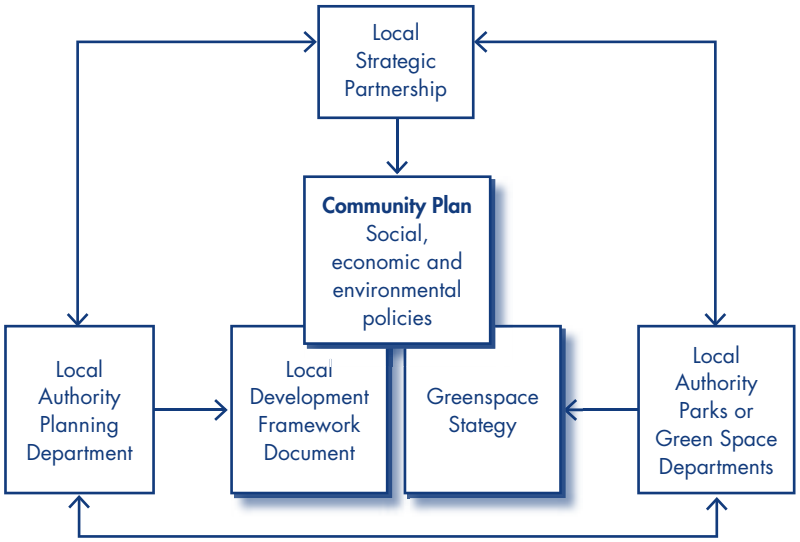
4.9 Local authorities may also adopt Local Public Service Agreements, an approach that is supported in the new Local Area Agreement process. A Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) is a voluntary agreement negotiated between an authority and the Government. LPSAs often address issues pertinent to successful green space provision, for example minimising anti-social behaviour or increasing cleanliness. However, in the small sample of agreements that we examined, explicit links between LPSA aims and green space's role in delivering these objectives had not been made. Government has issued guidance as part of the Local Area Agreement process which includes an example of a green space related target that local authorities could adopt as part of their Local Area Agreement.

4.10 **Figure 52 overleaf** summarises how urban local authorities should work with key partners to ensure green space policy is reflected in local development framework documents and community plans. Local Development Frameworks are scrutinised by Government Offices in the regions, and are open to public examination.

Achieving national objectives for urban green space depends on rigorous local assessment of need and audits of provision

4.11 Planning Policy Guidance makes clear that achieving the desired outcome of the planning system for green space depends on local authorities first undertaking assessments of need and audits of provision in respect of open space, sport and recreation. One purpose of local assessments of need is to plan positively, creatively and

52 Green space policy should be reflected in local development framework documents and community plans



Source: National Audit Office

effectively to ensure that there is adequate provision of accessible high quality green spaces to meet the needs of local communities and visitors.

4.12 Assessments and audits are intended to allow local authorities to identify specific needs and quantitative and qualitative deficiencies or surpluses of green space and recreational facilities in their areas. They would then form the starting point for establishing effective strategies and for effective planning through the development of appropriate policies in plans. A companion guide to the Planning Policy Guidance suggested a five step process to developing assessments **(Figure 53)**. Local authorities are able to take an alternative approach provided it is compliant with the national policy requirement to assess need and provision, set standards and develop local policy.

Local authorities have made slow progress in undertaking assessments of need and audits of provision

4.13 We found that in general urban local authorities have made slow progress in undertaking the assessment of need and audits of provision required under Planning Policy Guidance 17 which was issued in July 2002.

Forty five per cent of urban local authorities have completed an audit of their current provision, and 36 per cent have a review in progress. Nineteen per cent have yet to start. Local authorities that have not yet started told us that this was because of the need to pursue other priorities or because they wanted to undertake an audit as part of a future wider strategic review. Thirty per cent of urban local authorities had completed an assessment of the future need of their communities for green space, with another 35 per cent stating that an assessment was in progress **(Figure 54 on page 64)**.

Green space strategies should help to articulate a local authority's vision for green space

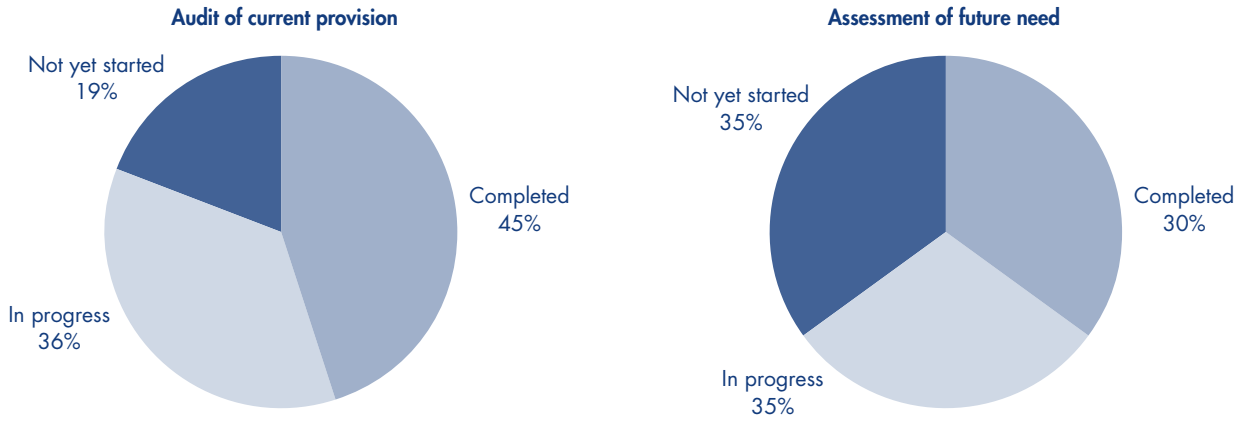
4.14 Green space strategies play a key role in ensuring a local authority meets the expectations of national green space policy, in both its roles as community leader and planning authority. Strategies should help to articulate an authority's and its community's vision for green space, the contribution that green space makes to other services (such as health, social care, safety, education) and the goals the authority wants to achieve, plus the resources, methods and time needed to meet these goals **(Figure 55 on page 64)**.

53 The Companion Guide's recommended approach to local assessments

Step 1 Identify local needs	■ Review the implications of existing strategies ■ Review existing policies and provision standards ■ Consult local communities and prepare a vision
Step 2 Audit local provision	■ Decide the scope of the audit and identify existing information ■ Plan and undertake the audit ■ Analyse the audit
Step 3 Set provision standards	■ Determine quantity standards ■ Determine quality standards ■ Determine accessibility standards ■ Determine minimum acceptable size standards ■ Determine site area multipliers ■ Determine normalised costs ■ Determine design standards
Step 4 Apply the provision standards	■ Identify deficiencies in accessibility ■ Identify deficiencies in quality ■ Identify surpluses and deficiencies in quantity
Step 5 Draft policies	■ Identify strategic options ■ Evaluate the strategic options ■ Draft policy ■ Consult relevant stakeholders

Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Planning Policy Guidance 17 companion guide

54 Many urban local authorities have completed an audit of current provision or an assessment of the future need of their communities, but some have yet to start



Source: National Audit Office survey of urban local authorities

55 The purpose of a green space strategy

- Generate political and inter-departmental support for parks and green spaces and establish clear lines of responsibility
- Develop a vision shared by politicians, officers, key partners, stakeholders and communities
- Define the value and role of parks and green spaces in meeting corporate and community aims
- Create a comprehensive policy framework for the protection, enhancement, accessibility and use of parks and green spaces
- Make sure that green spaces enhance the quality and diversity of the environment and promote social inclusion
- Ensure that the green space network meets the needs of local people now and in the future
- Provide a framework for resource allocation that maximises funding to support improvements
- Create a framework for voluntary and community groups to participate in green space provision and management

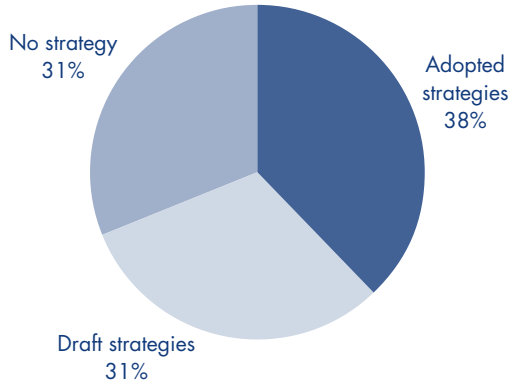
Source: Guide to Green Space Strategies, CABE Space

4.15 There is no statutory requirement upon local authorities to produce a written green space strategy. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has told us that this would create an undesirable burden on local authorities. Nor does Planning Policy Guidance include an explicit requirement for such a document. But it is expected good practice. In May 2004 CABE Space issued a guide to help local authorities develop strategies. CABE Space also provide direct expert advice, free-of-charge, to local authorities to help them develop a strategic approach to managing green spaces.

An increasing percentage of local authorities have green space strategies

4.16 We found that about 40 per cent of urban local authorities had formally adopted green space strategies and about 30 per cent had drafted strategies which had not yet been formally adopted. In 2000, only 53 per cent of urban local authorities had a written strategy for their green space. Whilst these strategies may be stand alone or be included within other strategies about 30 per cent of urban authorities do not yet have green space strategies **(Figure 56)**. About half of the authorities that had not yet compiled a strategy did not expect to do so within the next year.

56 Nearly 70 per cent of urban local authorities have adopted or drafted a green or open space strategy



Source: National Audit Office analysis of review of strategies undertaken by the University of Sheffield, Department of Landscape

4.17 In line with the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce's findings, we found that, where urban local authorities had compiled space strategies, over seventy per cent of green space managers thought they had helped to strengthen support for green space amongst other officers and local politicians.

There is a wide range in the quality of urban green space strategies

4.18 One quarter of urban local authorities were able to provide us with a copy of their written green or open space strategy. A summary of one strategy submitted to us is at **Figure 57**. We asked the Department of Landscape at the University of Sheffield to review the strategies against good practice criteria, including those of CABE Space. The results of this review are shown in detail in **Figure 58 overleaf**.

57 An example of a green space strategy

Barking and Dagenham 'Parks and Green Space Strategy'

In 2001 factors ranging from the need to introduce continuous improvements under Best Value, the increasing profile of green space generally and poor public perception of the quality of parks in Barking and Dagenham prompted the Parks Department to develop a long term strategy for green space improvements. The strategy was adopted by the authority in June 2003.

The strategy sets out a 20 year vision with planning developments centred around an integrated open spaces framework for the borough. The authority expects to deliver the strategy through partnerships:

- internally – to develop the potential of parks and green spaces with health, education and welfare; and
- externally – with central government, regional agencies, local communities, business and voluntary organisations.

To engage with and demonstrate the value of green space to partners, the strategy highlights the evidence that supports the contribution green spaces make in key areas such as education, health and social welfare. It highlights those areas where parks and green spaces can contribute to other authority targets.

Open spaces and parks were audited in accordance with PPG 17 guidelines to identify any surpluses or deficiency in provision. Levels of access and connectivity to neighbourhoods were mapped. The condition of each park was assessed against a range of criteria including the condition of entrances, general facilities, landscape character and quality, and how it catered for different sections of the community such as the young, disabled, and elderly.

Building on this evaluation, individual park plans were developed identifying the capital investment that would be needed to take the changes forward, where the necessary monies would come from, and timetables for implementation for each park and for the wider strategy.

Source: National Audit Office review of London Borough of Barking and Dagenham strategy

58 Analysis of urban local authorities' green or open space strategies

Green space strategy good practice features	Percentage of strategies (rounded to whole number) where the University of Sheffield consider requirement addressed:			NAO conclusion:
	fully	partially	not at all	
Detailed analysis of local need				
Consideration of the socio-economic profile of the local population	39	–	61	Few authorities had systematically matched provision and future need against the profile of their communities, though many had made an attempt to address the needs of particular groups. The standard of analysis varied between authorities.
A comprehensive assessment of the needs of specific groups in the wider community	10	49	41	
A comparison of needs against provision	27	56	17	
Identification of resources to plug the gaps	22	61	17	
A strategy built on information about supply, demand and resources	27	54	20	
An understanding of existing supply				
Including:				
The quantity	44	37	20	Most authorities have audited their own provision of green space, but nearly half had not considered the green space offered by other organisations.
The quality	32	34	34	
Accessibility	29	27	44	
Usage	27	34	39	
Inclusion of green space owned by other organisations	51	–	49	
Wide coverage				
Including the full range of green spaces, for example				Local authorities have not included the full range of open space available to their residents.
Parks	93	–	7	
Amenity green space (for example space around houses)	37	–	63	
Provision for children and teens	34	–	66	
Wide and effective consultation				
Consultation with users	42	49	10	Generally, authorities appear committed to user consultation, but could widen their consultation, and structure it better.
Alignment of user consultation with socio-demographic profile	12	32	56	
Inclusion of both individuals and community groups in user consultation	27	46	27	
Working with others				
Involving partner organisations in formulating the strategy	15	49	37	Local authorities could do more to include partner organisations in formulating strategy. Two thirds of strategies contain unclear allocation of responsibilities.
Opportunities for joint action translated into action	12	32	56	
Reference to partnership working agreements/ frameworks/protocols	7	24	68	
Designated responsibility assigned to specific people/ organisations	5	27	68	

58 Analysis of urban local authorities' green or open space strategies *continued*

Green space strategy good practice features	Percentage of strategies (rounded to whole number) where the University of Sheffield consider requirement addressed:			NAO conclusion:
	fully	partially	not at all	
Clear objectives				
A local standard for the supply of accessible green space	61	–	39	Though many authorities have set a minimum standard for supply of green space, a sizeable minority have yet to do so. Few authorities perform well against the 'SMART' criteria for effective objectives. In particular, few authorities have a timetable for implementing their strategy.
Objectives that are specific	10	75	16	
Objectives that are measurable	5	73	22	
Objectives that are achievable	0	88	12	
Objectives that are relevant	7	83	10	
Objectives that are timetabled	2	35	63	
Alignment with other policies				
Links with corporate plan	24	66	10	Green space strategies show better vertical than horizontal integration of policy objectives. The majority have linked their green space strategy with their corporate plan for example. But 'sideways' links with the strategies of other local government services are much less strong.
Links with community plan	24	71	5	
Links with national policy	42	51	7	
Links with early years strategy	2	15	83	
Links with play strategy	15	42	44	
A way of managing the delivery of the strategy				
An action plan	59	–	42	Action plans, monitoring systems and reviews are not universal, raising questions about the effectiveness of delivery. Without monitoring and review, poorly performing authorities cannot take early corrective action.
Monitoring of progress	53	–	47	
A schedule for regular review of the strategy	56	–	44	
Development/introduction of performance indicators	73	–	27	
Identification of funding opportunities and requirements				
Plans to attract external funding	17	54	29	Local authorities need to identify funding opportunities. Few authorities have prioritised their spending options, and even fewer have costed their priorities.
Identification of funding for specific objectives	10	24	66	
Identification of funding for general usage	2	37	61	
Assessment and incorporation of Section 106 opportunities	7	54	39	
Priorities for action	27	20	54	
Costed priorities	7	10	83	
An assessment of skills and training needs				
Identification of staff roles	7	54	39	Local authorities demonstrate a poor understanding of their staff development needs, and how they might go about enhancing capability.
Identification of work skills needed	10	34	56	
An analysis of training needs	10	46	44	
An addressing of human resourcing issues	27	–	73	
Utilisation of 'good practice' knowledge	10	56	34	

Source: National Audit Office analysis of review of strategies undertaken by the University of Sheffield, Department of Landscape

4.19 There is a wide range in the quality of the strategies. Common aspects that need to be improved include:

- coverage of green space managed by bodies other than the local authority **(Figure 59)**;
- consideration of the needs of all users of green space, matched to the socio-economic profile of the area;
- clearer allocation of responsibilities for action between different bodies;
- setting a minimum standard for access to green space;
- linking green space strategy with other public service strategies;
- prioritisation of spending options and consideration of skills and training needs; and
- providing for the monitoring and review of strategies and a timetable for implementation.

Local authorities need better guidance on the software tools available to map green space provision and access

4.20 The Urban Green Spaces Task Force identified the information deficit on green space as a major factor in parks' decline. Without basic data locally about urban parks and green spaces, including how many there are, their total area and quality, and their uses, parks managers are not well placed to make the case for green space.

4.21 In response the Government committed amongst other things to ensuring greater compatibility in the collection of survey data on various types of green spaces for the purposes of data integration and development of Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is developing a green space database for England, which will allow the sharing of a full range of green space information through a map-based internet tool. This should form the first step towards a consistent base-line that planners and managers of green spaces could use for their green space audits and assessments. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister plans to consult local authorities as the database is being developed, and intends to launch a pilot database in mid 2006.

59 Local authorities need to work closely with other bodies such as housing associations

Residents of affordable housing are more likely to live in areas of poor environmental quality. They are less likely to have easy access to green space, whether a private garden or a public park, within a five minute walk.

About 1.3 million affordable homes are now managed by housing associations. Where affordable housing stock has been transferred from local authorities, responsibility for maintenance of green space may be transferred to the housing association. Ensuring residents of affordable homes have access to good quality open spaces is important and local authorities need to work closely with their own departments and in partnership with housing associations to ensure that residents' quality of life is improved.

A conference was held in 2003 to showcase how some affordable housing landlords had begun to involve their communities, in partnership with others, to transform open and green space within their estates. This has developed into the 'Neighbourhoods Green' project through which Notting Hill Housing Group and the Peabody Trust, supported by ODPM, CABE Space and English Nature, in partnership with Groundwork London, are taking forward work to:

- evaluate the status and profile of green space within affordable housing in London;
- prepare a tool-kit, training and further guidance to aid affordable housing providers and residents in the design, management and safe use of their green space;
- establish a support network of champions and expertise within the affordable housing sector to strengthen internal capacity and understanding; and
- advocate for appropriate policies, incentives and resources to enhance green space quality.

Housing associations embarking on new affordable housing schemes are being required to consider the impact of their development on the whole neighbourhood including open and green spaces.

Source: National Audit Office review of Notting Hill Housing Group and Peabody Trust information

NOTE

Further details from www.neighbourhoodsgreen.org.uk.

4.22 We found that only half of the urban local authority green space strategies included a map of the green space in their localities with a further 22 per cent stating that they aimed to produce one. Only one fifth of local authorities had used geographic information systems. In our workshops with managers we found little awareness or experience of using these tools to help map provision and aid more strategic thinking.

4.23 The Forestry Commission with other partners including the North West Regional Development Agency, has developed an innovative way of using a GIS software tool – the Public Benefit Recording System (PBRS). The PBRS approach encourages holistic appraisals by advocating the joint mapping by cross-sectoral partnerships of economic and environmental variables such as indices of multiple deprivation, economic criteria and land use. The outcome is an aide to strategic planning and investment in green space; (see www.pbrs.org.uk).

The fragmentation of green space management and its low status constrains the capacity of some local authorities to establish a shared vision for green space

4.24 Establishing a shared vision of the importance of urban green space requires support from local politicians and senior officials within local authorities and the bodies they work with **(Figure 60)**. Much of ODPM and CABE Space's work aims to help green space managers make the case for green space locally. More than eighty per cent of park managers in urban authorities told us that ODPM and CABE Space's work had helped to raise the national profile of green space issues. However, less than half told us that they had been able to use their work to raise the profile of green space issues within their own local authorities.

4.25 We found that in many urban local authorities management responsibility for green space issues was fragmented across the organisation. Within a single park, one section of the council might be responsible for repairs to infrastructure such as paths and fencing, another for buildings and facilities, another for grass cutting and maintenance, another for litter collection and another for environmental health issues. Amenity green space such as sports fields is often managed by a Department other than the Parks Department, and the Education Department is likely to take the lead on provision for children and young people. Green space managers told us that this fragmentation was one of the key barriers to the development of a shared vision, **Figure 61**.

60 The influencing requirements for creating a shared vision for urban green space

- Senior support, with a political champion at cabinet and chief officer level.
- Work with the members of the Local Strategic Partnership to help meet core objectives for green space.
- A cross-departmental partnership team responsible for preparing and then implementing a green space strategy.

Source: CABE Space

61 Many urban local authority green space managers told us the fragmentation of responsibilities was a barrier to creating a shared vision

"Strategy and maintenance functions are in separate departments which makes effective communication very difficult. It also means our ability to change to meet local community needs is slow or non-existent"

"Lack of positive inter-connectedness within local authority structures"

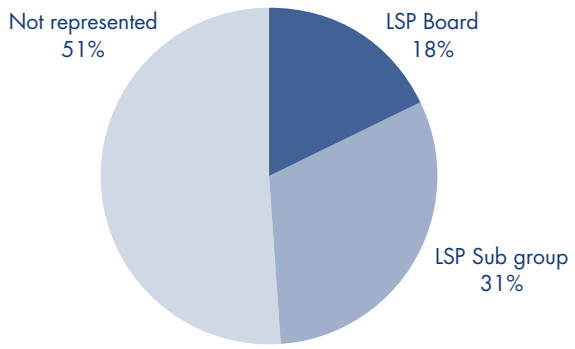
"Structure of delivery is at present not ideal – grounds maintenance budgets are held and spent by in-house direct service"

"Poor internal structure prevents efficient management especially the position of grounds maintenance – now independent and self monitoring"

Source: National Audit Office survey of urban local authorities

4.26 Green space management is not usually represented at cabinet or chief officer level within local authorities. Chief Officers of parks and open space services usually report to a more senior officer within a Leisure Services or Environment Directorate. Green space management may be spread across two or more Directorates. We found that green space managers were not represented on half of urban local strategic partnerships **(Figure 62)**. Many managers told us they had less influence than they would like over planning processes and decisions **(Figure 63)**.

62 More than half of green space managers are not represented on local strategic partnerships (LSP)



Source: National Audit Office survey of urban local authorities

63 Many urban green space managers consider that they have less influence than they would like over planning processes and decisions

"We have insufficient involvement in the planning process and little importance is attached to priorities of open space facilities by developers – it is a low priority for planners"

"The need for built facilities is not always balanced alongside the softer and more subtle aspects of open space, and this has sometimes led to inappropriate or unsustainable improvements"

"The need for housing in the borough – without sufficient support in protecting the existing green space and providing green space for the future"

"Lack of coherent and continuous guidance from planning department"

"Ineffective control over open space at the planning stage"

"Development pressure – any under used open space is often seen as surplus and ripe for development."

Source: National Audit Office survey of urban local authorities – barriers to development of green space

APPENDIX A

Our methodology

Identifying *urban* local authorities

1 There is no generally accepted classification of local authorities into urban, suburban or rural. We have concentrated on 154 local authorities, which we believe are more 'urban' than rural. They include all of the London Boroughs, Metropolitan Boroughs, and Unitary Authorities, so covering all the eight Core Cities and other authorities with a largely urban population.

Secondary data analysis

2 We analysed and triangulated a number of forms of secondary data:

- Performance and financial data from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
- Local authorities' expenditure returns to ODPM (RO5)
- Benchmarking data from the Association for Public Service Excellence and the London Benchmarking Group
- Best Value performance indicator 119e data
- Data from the Civic Trust on Green Flag Award winners
- Data on the projects funded under the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Nature, Countryside Agency and English Heritage.

Survey of urban local authorities

3 Green Space conducted the survey of urban local authorities on our behalf. We asked local authorities to update the data which they had originally provided to the Public Parks Assessment in 2001. Local authorities were asked about the condition of their parks and the facilities within them, the involvement of parks management in local strategic partnerships, progress on implementing PPG 17 assessments of need and future provision and development of green space strategies, the impact of Friends and other park user groups, and the continuing barriers to the enhancement of green space. We received replies from 93 authorities, covering 914 parks in total.

Review of urban local authority green space strategies

4 We wrote to each of the 154 local authorities asking them to send us a copy of their green space strategy in July 2005. Sixty three authorities responded (a 41 per cent response rate). Of these, 41 strategies were reviewed in detail, and a further 18 authorities advised that they did not have a strategy. Four more arrived too late to be included. We commissioned the Department of Landscape at The University of Sheffield to evaluate the merits of the green space strategies of our 154 'urban' local authorities. They carried out this work between June and August 2005.

Workshops with user groups and green space providers

5 We held a series of five one-day workshops in urban areas across the country (London, Leeds, Leicester, Bristol, and Manchester) in June and July 2005. We invited committee members from Friends of parks groups and other parks/open space user groups, to meet representatives from local authorities and the managers of other green space, for example Trusts, Housing Associations. The workshops generated qualitative evidence on the roles of the different parties, successes so far, obstacles overcome, and the nature of difficulties which remained to be addressed.

Consultation with stakeholders

6 Throughout the preparation and planning for this examination, and during the fieldwork stages, we consulted widely with ODPM, key interest groups and stakeholders. The interviews were designed to determine the roles and activities of each group, key issues and further sources of information. Those consulted included:

- Alan Barber, writer and consultant
- Peter Bembridge, Civic Trust
- Mark Bramah, Association for Public Service Excellence
- Paul Bramhill, Green Space
- Sean Faulkner and team, London Borough of Brent
- Terry Finney, London Benchmarking Group
- Euan Hall, Land Restoration Trust
- Jeremy Iles, Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens
- Keith Jones, Forestry Commission
- Brian Johnson, ENCAMS
- Pete Johnstone, Countryside Agency
- Andy Kerr, Birmingham City Council, Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management
- Professor Paul Lawless, New Deal for Communities Research Manager, University of Sheffield
- John Long, East of England Regional Development Agency
- Ken McAnespie, KMC Consulting
- Lorna McRobie, Heritage Lottery Fund
- Richard Sharland, Groundwork
- Graham Simmonds, Trees for Cities
- Julia Thrift and colleagues, CABE Space
- Malcolm Tungatt, Sport England
- Mark Wheddon and team, Living Space
- Jennifer White, English Heritage.

7 We also visited a number of local authorities to discuss green space issues with local managers and to see green spaces managed by them.

Expert panel

8 We organised an expert panel to comment on our terms of reference, methodological approach and preliminary findings. The members of the panel were:

- Bob Ivison, London Borough of Enfield
- Professor Ade Kearns, Department of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow
- Peter Morgan, Land Programmes Manager, Groundwork
- Mark Rodgers, Friends of Kennington Park
- Andy Walford, Service Head for Environment, the Audit Commission.

64 The 154 'urban' local authorities

Amber Valley
Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Barnsley
Bath and North East Somerset
Bexley
Birmingham
Blackburn with Darwen
Blackpool
Bolsover
Bolton
Bournemouth
Bracknell Forest
Bradford
Brent
Brighton and Hove
Bristol, City of
Bromley
Broxtowe
Bury
Calderdale
Cambridge
Camden
Cheltenham
Chester-le-Street
Chesterfield
Chorley
City of London
Corporation of London
Coventry
Crawley
Croydon
Darlington
Derby
Derwentside
Doncaster
Dudley
Durham
Ealing
Eastbourne
Eastleigh
Enfield
Epsom and Ewell
Exeter
Gateshead
Gedling
Gloucester
Gosport
Greenwich
Guildford
Hackney
Halton
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Harlow
Harrow
Hartlepool
Hastings
Havant
Havering
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Ipswich
Isle of Wight
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Kettering
Kingston upon Hull
Kingston upon Thames
Kirklees
Knowsley
Lambeth
Leeds
Leicester
Lewisham
Lincoln
Liverpool
Luton
Manchester
Mansfield
Medway
Merton
Middlesbrough
Milton Keynes
Newcastle upon Tyne
Newham
North East Derbyshire
North East Lincolnshire
North Lincolnshire
North Somerset
North Tyneside
Northampton
Norwich
Nottingham
Oadby and Wigston
Oldham
Oxford
Peterborough
Plymouth
Poole
Portsmouth
Preston
Reading
Redbridge
Redcar and Cleveland
Redditch
Richmond upon Thames
Rochdale
Rotherham
Rushmoor
St Helens
Salford
Sandwell
Sedgefield
Sefton
Sheffield
Slough
Solihull
South Gloucestershire
South Tyneside
Southampton
Southend-on-Sea
Southwark
Stevenage
Stockport
Stockton-on-Tees
Stoke-on-Trent
Sunderland
Sutton
Swindon
Tameside
Tamworth
Taunton Deane
Telford and Wrekin
Thurrock
Torbay
Tower Hamlets
Trafford
Wakefield
Walsall
Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
Warrington
Watford
West Berkshire
Westminster
Wigan
Windsor and Maidenhead
Wirral
Wokingham
Wolverhampton
Worcester
Worthing
York

APPENDIX B

Photograph credits

Front Cover

Chuckery Green, Walsall, West Midlands (The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space).

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Sheffield Botanical Gardens, Sheffield *(Meg Jullien)*

Ockment Centre Doorstep Green, Okehampton *(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)*

Jubilee Gardens, Canary Wharf, London *(Sue Jackson)*

Hawthorn Road Doorstep Green, Bacup, Lancashire *(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)*

Preface

The Square, Bournemouth *(Bournemouth Borough Council)*

Executive Summary

Appletree Court, Manchester *(Mark Ellis, Ashley Bingham, ICD Ltd)*

Findings

Pages 6 to 7, from left to right:

Victoria Park, Bramley, Leeds *(David Woodfall)*

Bellvue Park, Wrexham *(Steve Hotson)*

Templars Doorstep Green, Witham, Essex *(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)*

Location unknown (www.alamy.com)

Clapham Common Bandstand, Clapham, London *(www.alamy.com)*

Figure 3: The renovation of urban green space

Sheffield Botanical Gardens, Sheffield *(both by Meg Jullien)*

Figure 5: The 'CV' of Friends of Southwark Park

Southwark Concert Band, Southwark Park, Southwark, London *(Gary Magold, Friends of Southwark Park)*

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Barking Park, Barking, London *(London Borough of Barking and Dagenham)*

Alexandra Park, Hastings *(David Cowlard)*

Queen Square, Bristol *(CABE)*

Sheffield Botanical Gardens, Sheffield *(Meg Jullien)*

Part One

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Mapesbury Dell Doorstep Green, Brent, London *(Mapesbury Dell Conservation Area Trust)*

National Route 62, Doncaster, Bentley South Yorkshire *(J Bewley/www.sustrans.org.uk)*

Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester *(EDAW)*

Henry Barber Park, Birmingham *(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)*

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Preston Manor Walled Garden, Preston Park, Brighton *(Brighton & Hove City Council)*

Fairy Dell, Middlesborough *(Paul Glendell/English Nature)*

National Route 62, Doncaster, Bentley to Highfield, South Yorkshire *(J Bewley/www.sustrans.org.uk)*

Location unknown *(Sport England)*

Biglands Estate Doorstep Green, Tower Hamlets, London *(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)*

Peter Pan Park Doorstep Green, Islington, London *(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)*

Ockment Centre Doorstep Green, Okehampton *(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)*

Oswin Road Doorstep Green, Braunstone, Leicester *(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)*

Oswin Road Doorstep Green, Braunstone, Leicester *(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)*

Figure 10: The benefits of urban green space

Sheffield Botanical Gardens, Sheffield *(Meg Jullien)*

Ockment Centre Doorstep Green, Okehampton *(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)*

St Paul's Green, Hammersmith, London *(Sue Jackson)*

St Paul's Green, Hammersmith, London *(Whitelaw & Turkington)*

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Carter Park Doorstep Green, Middlesbrough *(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)*

Ockment Centre Doorstep Green, Okehampton *(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)*

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Mapesbury Dell Doorstep Green, Brent, London *(Mapesbury Dell Conservation Area Trust)*

Mapesbury Dell Doorstep Green, Brent, London *(London Borough of Brent)*

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(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)

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Highfields Lake, National Route 62, Doncaster,
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Appletree Court, Manchester
(Mark Ellis, Ashley Bingham, ICD Ltd)

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Location unknown *(Sport England)*

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Location unknown
(The Countryside Agency/Doorstep Greens/CABE Space)

Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester *(EDAW)*

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Buckhurst Field, Swindon
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King George's Field, Dagenham, London
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Sk8topia skating and BMX course, Castle Green, Dagenham,
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Newlands Play Park, Barking, London
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Figure 59: Local authorities need to work closely with other bodies

Stamford Street, Waterloo, London
(Matthew Frith, Peabody Trust)

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