



# The Land Trust's response to the Future of Public Parks Inquiry

September 2016



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## Introduction to the Land Trust

The Land Trust welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Communities and Local Government Committee's inquiry on the future of public parks.

To put our response into context, the Land Trust is a national land management charity that secures long term investment for managing parks and green public open spaces in perpetuity. Our business model enables us to provide a range of funding options that secure high quality and sustainably maintained open spaces that deliver economic, environmental and social benefits.

We have ownership and/or long term management responsibility for over 2,000 hectares of land with more than 60 spaces across England, and continue to grow with a pipeline of over 3,000 hectares.

Our vision is to improve the quality of people's lives by creating sustainable, high quality green spaces that deliver economic, environmental, educational, health and social benefits in local communities. We achieve this through working with developers and landowners to provide solutions for their undevelopable land.

The evidence for the value of parks and green spaces to society is overwhelming and must not be ignored.

We strongly believe that parks and other public open spaces are more than just spaces that cost money to maintain - they need be considered for all of the wider benefits and value that they bring to society, such as improved health and wellbeing, environmental protections and community cohesion.

Parks left on their own cannot deliver the benefits that society expects and needs. It is critical to ensure that a focus is given to how they function and the resources required to do this effectively. The cost to society of diminishing their role will be much greater. Therefore, they should be considered high up on the agendas at local and national government level.

As such, we feel that we are in a strong position to be able to put forward our views in response to this inquiry. Further details can be found at [www.thelandtrust.org.uk](http://www.thelandtrust.org.uk)

## **Key Messages**

1. Parks and green spaces are vital for people's health and wellbeing
2. Parks play important roles in contributing to society and local and national economies.
3. Parks are key to ensuring our environment is resilient to the impacts of climate change
4. Securing sustainable investment in parks will cost less in the long term
5. Parks are well used and highly valued by people

## Our ask

We are asking Government to move beyond questioning the need for public parks - the evidence demonstrating their value and importance exists - and to recognize the value these spaces provide to the health and vitality of society and implement policy to support them.

- Give parks priority by including them as part of a wider green space strategy.
- Recognise the value of parks and green spaces and secure and reallocate funding across sectors
- Support local authorities to set structures that protect parks, preventing them being marginalised.
- Support skills and development in the sector

## Consultation Questions

### 1. Who uses parks and open spaces, how often and for what

As a charity that owns and manages over 60 parks and green spaces across the country, we have extensive experience of how green spaces are used, how often and for what purpose.

In our experience, parks are used by people from all aspects of communities and of all ages. In the last year alone, over 57,000 people have participated in our own organised events and activities on our sites. These include families, retired people, unemployed people, young offenders, people with autism, people with mental health issues, and nearly 8,000 school children on school visits. And this does not include the hundreds of other organised activities and events taking place on our green spaces or informal visits by local people in their own time.

Parks are used for so many reasons.

In our recent survey, local people informed us of how they use our green spaces:

- Over 50% of people use our green spaces for exercise, leisure and recreation
- Nearly 50% use our green space to walk the dog
- More than a third use our green spaces to engage with wildlife and nature
- 30% use our spaces for peace and quiet
- 25% of respondents use our green spaces to relieve stress

Our parks and green spaces are also used for events and activities, which are well attended. These include woodland workouts, Green Gyms, volunteer work parties, Friends of group meetings, educational courses and training sessions, guided walks, family events and community activities. They are also used by external parties, such as scouts, autism organisations, running clubs, bird watching groups, commercial dog walkers and personal trainers.

Parks are used every day and they are extremely valuable assets to a community.

Here are what our survey respondents feel our parks do for them and their local area:

- 97% feel that our green spaces help wildlife and the environment
- 90% feel that our green space help make the local area more desirable, leading to economic uplift

- 90% feel that our green spaces play a positive part in their happiness and wellbeing
- 90% feel that our green spaces encourage them or others to keep fit and healthy
- 80% think our green spaces provide opportunities to learn new things
- Over 75% think our green spaces bring communities together
- One third believe our green space help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour

See our research at: <http://thelandtrust.org.uk/charitable-aims/thebenefits> and survey at: <http://thelandtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/The-Value-of-our-Green-Spaces-January-2016.pdf>

Research from CABE Space supports this message in their Urban Green Nation report, finding that almost nine out of 10 people use parks and green spaces, and they value them and the higher the quality of the green space, the more likely it is to be used.<sup>1</sup>

Research from Natural England also supports this view in their five year MENE study on how people use the natural environment.<sup>2</sup>

There is a real crisis underway- public parks are in trouble. The Heritage Lottery Fund's 2016 State of UK Public Parks report clearly demonstrates this<sup>3</sup>:

- budget cuts
- staff and skills being lost
- the quality of parks expected to decline
- park services facing increasing inequality

But it also demonstrates how well loved parks are; that they're used regularly and that communities are investing in them, fundraising and volunteering. However communities cannot and do not wish to take on the overall responsibility of managing these spaces. Parks need to have long term investment in place to be maintain, so that the communities can do what they enjoy and add value to them.

## 2. The contribution of parks to the health and well-being of communities

Parks play a vital role in the health and wellbeing of communities:

- Bringing people together, breaking down social barriers, for socialising and meeting new people and reducing anti-social behaviour
- As places of learning and development
- Improving physical and mental health
- Improving the local environment, making places more attractive, strengthening our natural assets to be more resilient to climate change as well as support biodiversity
- Contributing to economic uplift, supporting other businesses, making the wider area more attractive, leading to inward investment, alleviating pressures on other public sector budgets, such as health and social services.

<sup>1</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/urban-green-nation.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/498946/mene-report-september-november-2015.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/498946/mene-report-september-november-2015.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks-2016](http://www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks-2016)

### Improving people's health and wellbeing

There is a growing body of research linking the benefits of green space on improved mental and physical health as well as mounting evidence demonstrating the increasing costs to society and the health sector from physical inactivity.

Our research demonstrates that people using our green spaces have higher levels of satisfaction and wellbeing and lower levels of anxiety compared to the national averages.<sup>4</sup>

We know from our own experience that by providing well maintained, free and easily accessible green spaces, with networks of paths and trails, people are given opportunities to lead healthier lives and feel happier. People then feel less inclined to visit the doctor or have higher chances of not developing lifestyle related illnesses – more and more research is demonstrating that the natural environment helps combat depression, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease and some cancers. Even the Department of Health recognises that a poor physical environment can be detrimental to the public's physical and mental health<sup>5</sup>.

In turn, this helps reduce the burden on the NHS and other local services, which are becoming more and more under pressure.

As mentioned in Q1, our survey provides positive results:

- 90% feel that our green spaces play a positive part in their happiness and wellbeing
- 90% feel that our green spaces encourage them or others to keep fit and healthy
- 25% use our green spaces to relieve stress.<sup>6</sup>

At Monkton Community Woodland, one of our parks in the North East, our rangers run a health programme, funded by South Tyneside Public Health with many participants being referred by clinicians. In the last 12 months:

- 78% of participants have improved their physical health (including BMI, Blood pressure and body fat %)
- 95% of participants say they are more confident, happy and have improved self-worth.

One participant explains:

"I feel like my life is like swimming underwater – and drowning at times. These sessions are my breathing holes and keep me going."

Other research demonstrates the health benefits of green space:

- Those who live within 500m of accessible green space are 24% more likely to meet recommended levels of physical exercise (Defra 2015)<sup>7</sup>
- Just five minutes of exercise in a "green space" such as a park can boost mental health (University of Essex)<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <http://thelandtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/The-Value-of-our-Green-Spaces-January-2016.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/216096/dh\\_127424.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/216096/dh_127424.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://thelandtrust.org.uk/charitable-aims/thebenefits>

<sup>7</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/396840/pb13897-nature-do-for-you.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/396840/pb13897-nature-do-for-you.pdf)

The Local Government Association recognises the benefits of exercising outdoors, and is calling on NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups to drive forward a strategy for GPs to prescribe “green prescriptions”<sup>9</sup>.

Hospitals are also seeing the benefits of parks, not only aiding patient recovery, but for staff to use for their own health and wellbeing.

Our work with the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is a great example of where Senior NHS leaders see the multiple benefits our adjacent park brings.<sup>10</sup> Kevin Eccles at the Countess of Chester Hospital said “In particular, staff use it for ‘walk and talk’ meetings, clinicians use it to have breaks and feel refreshed and patients use it to help them with their recovery”.

#### Contributing to economic uplift and the wider economy

In terms of how our parks contribute to economic uplift in a local community, local contractors are used to undertake maintenance and construction works, our parks create jobs and they also help people find employment through volunteering and attending training sessions in our parks.

Our Big Lottery funded educational programme – [Green Angels](#) – delivered at one of our parks to boost community cohesion and opportunities, resulted in nearly 70 people participating, and of those seeking work, 44% found employment.<sup>11</sup>

Our social return on investment study calculated that our own 2,000 hectares of well managed green space contributes the equivalent of £53.2m per year of benefits to the health and welfare sector and £40.9m per year towards the social sector.<sup>12</sup>

This alleviates financial pressure on multiple public services. External research also demonstrates this:

- Increasing access to parks and open spaces could reduce NHS costs of treating obesity by more than £2 billion (The King’s Fund ,2013)<sup>13</sup>
- The health benefits of living near green space are worth up to £300 per person per year. (National Ecosystem Assessment 2011)<sup>14</sup>
- Green Infrastructure helps combat mild and moderate depression and can be more cost-effective than traditional treatments. This could help Wales save the £16m it spends on the 3.8m anti-depressant prescriptions issued per year (Wildlife Trust Wales 2016)<sup>15</sup>

As our study demonstrates, 90% of survey respondents said that our green spaces help make the local area more desirable, which leads to economic uplift.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>8</sup> [www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8654350.stm](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8654350.stm)

<sup>9</sup> [www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/media-releases/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/7944615/NEWS](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/7944615/NEWS)

<sup>10</sup> <http://thelandtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Countess-of-Chester-Country-Park-Health-for-Life-Sept-2016.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://thelandtrust.org.uk/charitable-aims/education-and-learning/green-angels-2/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://thelandtrust.org.uk/charitable-aims/thebenefits>

<sup>13</sup> [www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field\\_publication\\_file/improving-the-publics-health-kingsfund-dec13.pdf](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field_publication_file/improving-the-publics-health-kingsfund-dec13.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/news/hidden-value-of-nature-revealed-in-groundbreaking-study](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/hidden-value-of-nature-revealed-in-groundbreaking-study)

<sup>15</sup> [www.wtwales.org/sites/default/files/green\\_infrastructure.pdf](http://www.wtwales.org/sites/default/files/green_infrastructure.pdf)

Property prices can increase as well – a study in the UK showed that green infrastructure can contribute up to 34% uplift in property values (Wildlife Trusts Wales 2016)<sup>17</sup>.

Santander Mortgages also identified that people are prepared to pay an average of 35,969 more for a property close to green space and access to green spaces for leisure.<sup>18</sup>

Having more attractive areas contributes to inward investment, attracting businesses to because businesses like locations that provide well managed public places. In turn, this creates jobs, improves a business' CSR and also attracts and retains customers, generating further opportunities for local communities.

#### Local environmental benefits

By conserving and enhancing our green spaces, we can increase our resilience to climate change and reduce our vulnerability.

Parks and green spaces can help us achieve this and improve the local environment through the ecosystem services they provide, such as providing shade and shelter, reducing the urban heat island effect, improving air quality by reducing pollution, helping to alleviate flooding, storing water, reducing noise and reducing contamination.

- Grass surfaces exposed to sun may be 24°C cooler than concrete (University of Cardiff, 2016)<sup>19</sup>
- Tree shade may lower air temperatures by 5 – 7 °C (University of Cardiff, 2016)
- Urban parks are on average 1°C cooler than built-up areas (University of Cardiff, 2016)
- Planting trees can slow the flow of water and reduce surface water runoff by up to 62% compared to asphalt. (Woodland Trust 2015)<sup>20</sup>
- Trees also increase the interception of water as it falls, increasing the infiltration of water into the soil and lowering the risk of surface water flooding. (Woodland Trust 2015)
- Planting trees could reduce the height of flooding in towns by up to 20% (Woodland Trust 2015)

This also has economic impacts, such as reduced costs from flood damage but also the preventative measures:

- Green infrastructure provides flood alleviation and water storage, which costs less to construct and maintain than built flood defences (Natural England 2012)<sup>21</sup>

Green spaces also support vital biodiversity, such as threatened pollinators, which are key to our food supply, and as such supporting our food economy.

<sup>16</sup> <http://thelandtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/The-Value-of-our-Green-Spaces-January-2016.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> [www.wtwales.org/sites/default/files/green\\_infrastructure.pdf](http://www.wtwales.org/sites/default/files/green_infrastructure.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Santander Mortgages 2015 <http://tinyurl.com/pkmhbdz>

<sup>19</sup> [www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14649357.2016.1158907](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14649357.2016.1158907)

<sup>20</sup> [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/mediafile/100631140/pg-wt-300615-residential-developments.pdf?cb=093f261286fd4fdc8befda998e4b7c11](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/mediafile/100631140/pg-wt-300615-residential-developments.pdf?cb=093f261286fd4fdc8befda998e4b7c11)

<sup>21</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6692039286587392>

Whilst measures used in research vary in the proxies used, all demonstrate an overwhelming positive correlation for how valuable green spaces are.

### 3. The impact of reductions in local authority budgets on parks

Reducing budgets for parks will be extremely detrimental - the impacts will be felt throughout the community, having subsequent negative effects on other budgets and areas of society.

At a time when we are seeing more and more evidence on the value parks bring to society, it is deeply concerning that there are further declines in the resources being made available to parks. Left on their own, parks cannot deliver the benefits society expects. Therefore it is critical to ensure that a focus is given to how they function and the resources required to do this effectively.

Reduced budgets for parks will mean they will not be as well maintained. They will then become derelict, becoming hubs for anti-social behaviour and contribute to community breakdown. This leads to blight, not only of the site, but of the wider neighbourhood.

We have seen this for ourselves with the derelict land that we have acquired before transforming it into thriving green public spaces. Liverpool Festival Gardens is a prime example of where public funding was used to create a park, but did not consider the long-term maintenance costs.<sup>22</sup>

People will not have the opportunity or be less likely to use parks that are not maintained as a result, reducing space for people to lead healthier lives, using the spaces for walking, running, unwinding and other elements which contribute towards positive health and wellbeing.

Less maintenance of different habitats will also have negative impacts on biodiversity and environmental services that parks and other green infrastructure can provide, such as combating the urban heat island effect, improved air quality, reducing pollution and managing flood risk.

As we have demonstrated with our own research, green spaces contribute in excess of £90m per year towards the public purse for health and social benefits.

CABE Space research suggests that there are 69,500 hectares of urban green space in England.<sup>23</sup> If all of this green space was managed in similar ways and if similar calculations were done across all of this public open space, this would not be an insignificant contribution to the economy when physical inactivity costs the economy £8.3bn in England<sup>24</sup> alone and mental illness costs the UK economy £26bn per year.

<sup>22</sup> [http://liverpoolfestivalgardens.com/news\\_details.html?NID=710](http://liverpoolfestivalgardens.com/news_details.html?NID=710)

<sup>23</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/urban-green-nation.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Department of Health - [http://www.sthc.co.uk/Documents/CMO\\_Report\\_2009.pdf](http://www.sthc.co.uk/Documents/CMO_Report_2009.pdf)



To back this up further, the University of Exeter has just published results from its own research which has valued England's green spaces at £2.2bn to public health.<sup>25</sup>

The UK Natural Environment Assessment found that if the UK's ecosystems are properly cared for, they could add an extra £30bn a year to the UK's economy, but if they are neglected, the economic cost would be more than £20bn a year<sup>26</sup>.

Government and local authorities need to recognise the wider social benefits that parks generate, rather than thinking purely about the specific costs of maintaining them.

Edinburgh local authority's Social Return on Investment study<sup>27</sup> of its green spaces is also an excellent example of how they contribute to the area...

- For every £1 invested in City of Edinburgh's parks, there is about £12 return in social, environmental and economic benefits.
- Individuals will gain health and wellbeing benefits worth around £40.5m
- The impact on social inclusion and community capacity is worth over £6m
- Local businesses will gain additional money from visitors to parks in the region of £51m.
- Schools, nurseries and colleges are able to provide outdoor learning experiences of just under £1 million.
- The awareness and understanding gained by visitors of their local environment is valued at just under £5 million.

Further to this, another consequence of budget costs is loss of frontline skills and knowledge within the sector, such as horticulture, landscape design and ecology. Budget reductions result in job losses and interest in the sector from younger generations. HLF notes that already '41% of park managers report horticultural skills have fallen over the past three years'.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4. What the administrative status of parks should be in light of declining local authority resources for non-statutory services

Parks and the value they bring to local areas need to be recognised and their long term management taken seriously.

There is much evidence to demonstrate that derelict or unmanaged public open spaces contributes to blight, a downward spiral, generating anti-social behaviour and as such be costly, but managing these spaces well, brings so many opportunities and can generate further benefits.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-37403915>

<sup>26</sup> [www.mind.org.uk/media/43719/EMPLOYERS\\_guide.pdf](http://www.mind.org.uk/media/43719/EMPLOYERS_guide.pdf)

<sup>27</sup>

[www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20064/parks\\_and\\_green\\_spaces/1300/the\\_value\\_of\\_city\\_of\\_edinburgh\\_councils\\_park](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20064/parks_and_green_spaces/1300/the_value_of_city_of_edinburgh_councils_park)

<sup>28</sup>

[www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks-2016](http://www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks-2016)

As mentioned, the UK Natural Environment Assessment has found that if the UK's ecosystems are properly cared for, they could add an extra £30bn a year to the UK's economy but if they are neglected, the economic cost would be more than £20bn a year.<sup>29</sup>

Local authorities need to be encouraged to consider different delivery models, such as working with local trusts and charities, such as the Land Trust to identify long-term investment in sustainable parks management. It is important to remember that it must not be about commercialising parks and green spaces, but having innovative investment and management models, so that they remain free and accessible to use and valuable sources of recreation and relief.

We have been working with a number of local authorities, such as Knowsley Council, Lancashire Council and Barking and Dagenham District Council, all of which recognise the importance and wider value of their green spaces.

The Land Trust is potentially a valuable model for learning how parks might be preserved and the functions they fulfil utilised, whilst reducing the burden on local authorities. However it must be recognised that such an exercise must not be regarded as a cost cutting exercise. Whilst we believe there may be opportunities to manage parks more effectively and productively, they still must be given funding commensurate with the values they provide, albeit more closely aligned with the outcomes that parks deliver.

#### 5. How new and existing parks can best be supported

Securing the long-term investments of parks and other green spaces is vital, so that they can be managed in perpetuity and therefore have sufficient funding to be maintained and adapted over time.

The Land Trust's model for investing in and managing green spaces in perpetuity can be used as an example.

We only take on green spaces with a long term financial strategy in place and we have developed our model over many years to be flexible and adaptable to different types of land and landowners. This includes investing up front endowments and Section 106 payments, service charges from commercial and residential sectors, a mixture of both and other income which can be generated from our land, such as licences. We are then able to ensure there is income attached to each green space to protect it long term, whilst generating an annual maintenance budget to ensure each green space is well maintained for the benefit of local communities.

For new parks, there needs to be more emphasis on the long term management because creating green spaces and green infrastructure without a long term maintenance plan is a waste of money.

For existing parks, local authorities should consider how to better use Community Infrastructure Levies to contribute towards maintaining existing parks.

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.wtwales.org/sites/default/files/green\\_infrastructure.pdf](http://www.wtwales.org/sites/default/files/green_infrastructure.pdf)

Councils should think about other land holdings that they have and explore what income can be generated from selling other land, which can then be used to create endowments, so that a sustainable park fund can be set up. Another suggestion would be to consider a parish precept, which could be applied.

The Land Trust has considerable experience in creating, managing and owning parks, and generating the long term funding to support them, working with developers, the HCA and many other clients. We would be happy to provide further detail and offer our experience.

6. What additional or alternative funding is available and what scope is there for local authorities to generate revenue from park users

Parks and other green spaces and green infrastructure need to be considered at the same level as grey infrastructure, taken seriously and have the political support. Currently, there is no political will to champion the importance of parks. If this does not change, society and the national economy will pay the price.

The opportunities of well managed parks and other green spaces and green infrastructure are endless and the positive effects ripple out across all of society.

Government must recognise that funding parks is a cost effective means of delivering a range of its wider objectives relating to health, well-being, housing, economic development and more, and must therefore be supported for their continued evolution accordingly, as well as having greater synergy with the evolving public health and wellbeing agenda.

Alternative funding

Central Government needs to endorse cross departmental collaboration to identify the solutions for managing parks in the long term and then set the structures and policies to secure their protection.

Locally, local authorities and councils need to look across all their departments, as well as working with other public services to identify other budgets which can be applied to parks, exploring inter-department cross funding.

Parks are used more and more by other departments' and this need to be recognised.

As such, Government needs to lay out the structures in order for local authorities to demonstrate how parks are benefiting other areas of society and provide the evidence, such as health services benefitting from green spaces helping improve health and wellbeing, social services benefitting from green spaces contributing to reducing social isolation.

Therefore, public services and local authority departments which will be benefitting from well-maintained green spaces include:

- Leisure, sports, recreation departments

- Planning and regeneration
- Environmental services
- Crime & Anti-social behaviour services
- Public health services
- Social services
- Street services
- Youth services
- Transport services
- Clinical commissioning groups
- Police and Crime Commissioners

#### Generating additional revenue

Explore options for a green tax, service charges from residents or other innovative ways to generate support, financial or time from park users.

Using lottery funding to support parks maintenance projects, which can also be successful at improving community cohesion. (Our Big Lottery funded [Green Angels programme](#) demonstrates this).

The Land Trust has successfully taken forward a new financial model for managing its green spaces within new developments, where each household has a service charge to specifically contribute towards the maintenance of the public open space in and around the development.

The Land Trust would be happy to provide further information about this.

The Land Trust is also currently working closely with Liverpool City Council to identify solutions for the long term management of one of its parks. We would be happy to provide information about this as well.

#### 7. What the advantages and disadvantages are of other management models, such as privatisation, outsourcing or mutualisation

As a land management charity, which manages and owns green spaces and parks, for the benefit of local communities, we can be seen as a private organisation with our own successful management model for the long term investment in parks and green spaces. Therefore we can see the advantages of having the right type of organisation manage parks, as long as they are established properly and the green spaces are safeguarded. It is important to remain cautious of the commercialisation of public parks and open spaces, since they provide the significant benefits when they are free and accessible, well maintained and managed.

Our model is about securing investment in each green space, such as managed endowments, services charges or hybrid models, which then enables us to appoint a local organisation and park ranger, to deliver the day to day maintenance of the park.

This then allows the ranger to be embedded into the community, work with and involve them in looking after the park. This helps foster an emotional ownership by the local community, which in

turn helps maximise the park's value and provides significantly wider benefits.

For example, learning new skills, creating community cohesion, providing other educational opportunities, hosting health activities, encouraging the space to be a hub of positive community activity and be well used by different groups across the community.

However, local authorities need to be certain that they outsource to the right type of organisation, one which has community interest at its heart and where it will be adding value rather than having any negative impact.

