Tomorrow's world

What does the future hold for community, health, the environment and the Land Trust?
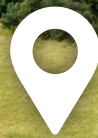
The Land Trust

Contents

...public open space is a cost-effective, widely beneficial, and relatively simple step in improving the quality of peoples' lives.

Introduction

The Land Trust
2004-2024 Celebrating 20 years

In 2024, the Land Trust celebrates its 20th anniversary.

Our society has changed substantially during this period. Twenty years ago, few of us had broadband and only trend-setters owned a Nokia phone with a colour screen. The UK had a population that was 10 million smaller. Climate change problems were a murmur at the margins.

For two decades, the Land Trust has been instrumental in enhancing local environments, promoting the importance of stewardship, bringing communities together and improving people's health through our green spaces.

There is much to celebrate in marking this milestone. However, this is an opportunity to not only look back, but also look forward to what the next 20 years may hold.

The world continues to change rapidly. The fabric of our society and communities, the landscape of public health, and our natural environment are in an increasing state of flux; our way of life must look to adapt to the challenges presented by climate change, an overburdened healthcare system, increasing social inequality and varied societal pressures.

This report sets out expected key trends over the next 20 years in relation to the Land Trust's three main areas of interest: society and community, physical and mental health, and the environment. Many of the report's findings are unsurprising but show worryingly negative trajectories. They underline that we are at a pivotal moment: the time is right to seize the opportunities to learn from these findings and shape our long-term strategy. We need to look beyond the immediate and strive to create maximum positive impact through our green spaces.[1]

The publication of this report is the first step in a series of collaborative efforts to get ahead of the

curve and weave these learnings into the Land Trust's operations as they evolve in the decades ahead.

Of course, green space is not a 'silver bullet' that can solve all the issues outlined in this report. The benefits of green spaces do not occur in a vacuum. This report recognises that green spaces are just one part of a much larger puzzle. Intersectionality is key here, and there will need to be direction from policy to fully realise these benefits. The fact remains, though, that public open space is a cost-effective, widely beneficial and relatively simple step in improving the quality of people's lives – creating better outcomes for society and supporting nature recovery. For this to happen, good design with a long-term, sustainably funded management strategy must be a priority at the outset.

We would like to thank everyone who shared their valuable time and input to create this powerful piece of collective learning. We hope this report will support the Land Trust in maximising its charitable impact over the next 20 years and galvanise positive action for our future society.

Dr Janet Dugdale,
Chair of the Board of Trustees

---

[1] It is important to note that a number of respondents highlighted these trends are contingent on the assumption that there will be no major global conflict in the next twenty years.

Methodology

This research aimed to determine the likely social, health, and environmental trends over the next 20 years, a process we term 'future scoping' in the report.

Although no one can predict the future with certainty, we have sought to anticipate it. For this, we followed a research method called the 'Delphi method'. This is a well-established qualitative research technique which is used to construct consensus forecasts from a group of experts. This method allowed us to gain a consensus view on possible future trends with the intention of applying these learnings to the Land Trust's ongoing strategy. The Trust's fundamental aspiration is to maximise the impact of our charitable activity through proactive (in addition to reactive) means.

The research study collected qualitative, descriptive primary data from a panel of 27 experts representing the environment, social value, health, education and community.[2] The invited participants included those from the Trust's advisory groups, Board of Trustees and other professional partners and used a series of broad questions designed by the Land Trust in the first instance.

The Trust carried out a thematic analysis of initial responses, identifying consensus issues and points of contention. Topics were then reissued to the panel via a second, shorter round of questions to seek clarification and further depth. The consensus results from the second round have formed the basis of this report, following a final review and reflections from our advisory groups.

---

[2] Sent to 36 experts with 27 responses (75% response rate)

Society & Community

Credit: Shaun Jackson

Social inequality will be more pronounced

The research findings identified:

- exacerbated health disparities (due to factors such as poor diet, social isolation, and lack of exercise related to socioeconomic factors, including lack of access to green space)

- a rapidly changing, complex and uncertain society

- changes to the employment landscape due to technology will further entrench social inequality.

The public sector's inability to take on long-term green space management is a trend set to continue as public finances are increasingly stretched, resulting in a greater responsibility of both the private and third sectors to plug the gaps. This will likely emerge as 'mixed models' of private-charity partnerships, much like Victorian exemplars.

There will be further onus on the private sector to fund quality green spaces through Section 106 (S106) payments, delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements, and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) responsibilities. Third-sector organisations (with an understanding of local need and delivery) will take up the long-term management of these spaces for in-perpetuity community benefit. Without this collaboration, there is a risk that social inequality will worsen as for-profit enterprises monetise access and privately funded spaces remain private.

Tackling inequalities will require a greater emphasis on green space in planning through a simplified planning process. Responses indicated that this may be better driven by regional and metropolitan authorities for more tailored, localised approaches, and to ensure a robust process that does not allow loopholes to restrict

real benefits to people. While it will take time to implement and see change, this shift is crucial for achieving the deep-rooted transformation needed. The new government has proposed a simplified planning process in its attempt to kickstart housebuilding in a National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) overhaul.[3]

Furthermore, as social disparities continue to develop, so too do the different types of barriers people experience in accessing green spaces, in addition to the physical and spatial ones. Not only do more deprived areas have poorer quality green spaces, but these spaces are often underutilised as they feel unsafe. Better design, funding and management could help resolve these challenges.
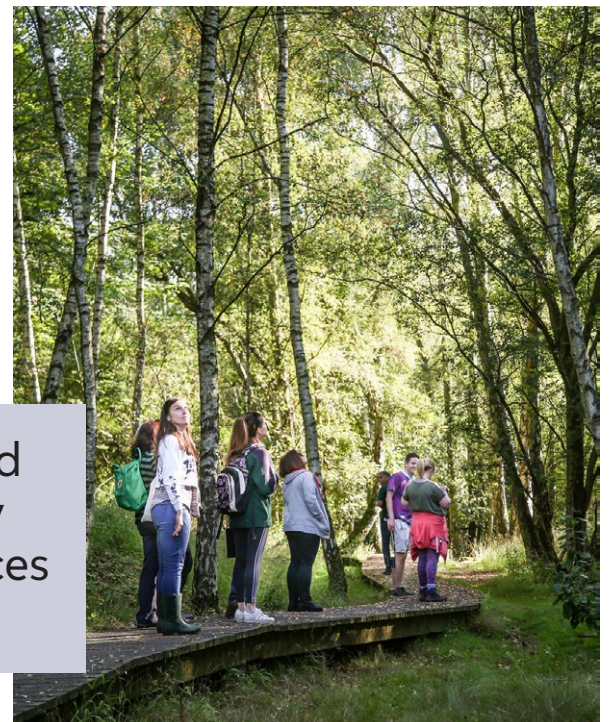
> Not only do more deprived areas have poorer quality green space, but these spaces are often underutilised.

³ Correct as of November 2024

An ageing population will put a strain on services, the economy, and social relations

The research findings identified that the combination of fewer people in work and more funding for social care will mean:

- **an overburdened healthcare system and pressure on the economy**

- **intergenerational tensions as the working population bear an increased tax burden. Younger people may feel heightened animosity towards the older generation, who they hold responsible for climate change. Older generations may resent the downgrading of their benefits and care.**

- **changes to the employment landscape due to technology will further entrench social inequality.[4]**

Responses highlighted that while there is obvious need for an overhaul of the public health and social care system, green spaces have a role to play in promoting a purposeful generation of older people who remain active both physically and in their communities. As life expectancy begins to plateau or potentially decline, ageing well will be the objective, rather than simply extending lifespan, especially as pressures on the health and social care system increase.

Alongside the well-documented benefits to physical and mental health, green spaces play a crucial part in fostering intergenerational understanding and connections via structured opportunities that allow for mixing between demographics – for example, through volunteering. This 'coming together with purpose' will likely be a key feature of social prescribing as the NHS looks to free up stretched resources and focus on acute care.

However, for older people to reap the benefits of their local green spaces, they need to feel welcome, safe and engaged with them. Design

and management must involve meaningful, direct engagement in order for green spaces to meet a range of needs and enable participation; for example, ensuring that there are enough benches, toilets and refreshment facilities so that people feel confident leaving the house. Programming can provide a variety of activities suited to the different ways people prefer to participate: some people may prefer quiet spaces and may not enjoy the usual chatter in community gardening groups, but still want to engage in structured activities.

> ...for older people to reap the benefits of their local green spaces, they need to feel welcome, safe and engaged with them.

---

[4] It should be noted that the survey sample that contributed to this report comprised of a mostly older demographic and is therefore not representative of the entire population. Younger people (under 24) were not consulted for the study, but there is research that shows that sentiment among younger people towards the older generation may not be as negative as ordinarily perceived.

Society will be more multicultural, but potentially more intolerant

The research findings identified that:

- geopolitical issues and climate change will be likely to increase immigration

- this may be unevenly spread across the country and wax and wane in line with contemporary economic policy and changes in government.

This trend could enhance diversity and togetherness or increase tribalism and intolerance as social inequality becomes more pronounced, making efforts to promote cultural understanding essential. With informed design and management and proper facilitation, green spaces can help foster community cohesion and encourage a sense of emotional ownership and belonging to a place, even if this may take a generation or two to be fully realised.

Ongoing direct community consultation is vital in understanding how spaces reflect the intersectionality of local need, especially as communities and their perspectives continually change over time. Evidence indicates that people from minority ethnic communities are less likely to visit their local green spaces, and these barriers are multifaceted, from perceptions of safety and emotional access to a lack of cultural relevance.

Many urban green spaces are a legacy of Victorian thinking about what green spaces are for and how they should be used. Green spaces need to embed fresh ideas, facilities and opportunities to cater for an increasingly diverse society, and collaborate with existing organisations who have established links with hard-to-reach communities to bridge the gap.[5]

> With informed design and management and proper facilitation, green spaces can help foster community cohesion.

---

[5] Research commissioned by the Land Trust into Beam Parklands, Dagenham, showed that usage was largely representative of the local population across protected characteristics, and respondents felt safe in using the park. These findings have been used to better understand and improve the Land Trust offering at other sites.

Technology will be more embedded in society

The research findings identified that technology will be far more prevalent in all aspects of society but will be unlikely to replace the experience of nature.

Younger generations of digital natives already largely perceive the online and the physical as a seamless set of experiences, rather than at odds with one another. This lack of distinction will likely become more entrenched as digital technology proliferates throughout society and people become more comfortable with it.

The layering of artificial intelligence (AI) and technology into nature could enhance the green experience and activate green spaces, particularly for those who typically would not visit them. Technologies such as hyper-realistic virtual reality and gamification could also help improve access. The growing trend of using technology to engage and educate people about their local environment and biodiversity is likely to expand into other areas; for example, real-time mapping and interpretation, interactive playgrounds, and new outdoor games and sports with technology components.

However, responses also highlighted that while technology will be deeply embedded in daily activity, it will not replace the experience of being out in nature and the benefits it provides. There may be some tension between technology's increased prevalence within green spaces and the need to digitally detox. Targeting children with nature-based education, outdoor classrooms and forest schools will help to cement the importance of the unfiltered natural world and 'digital detoxing' for a generation that has grown up with technology, especially as the need to protect the environment and biodiversity grows.

> While technology will be deeply embedded in daily activity, it will not replace the experience of being out in nature and the benefits it provides.

What does this mean for the Land Trust?

The Land Trust was set up to provide sustainable land management solutions for long-term community benefit and has a proven track record of 'filling in the gaps' that the private and public sectors are unable to plug.

We know that access to high-quality green spaces is linked to socioeconomic status. Increased social inequality will likely influence the Trust's strategy for new site acquisition. By prioritising less affluent areas that have the most to gain from accessible, quality green spaces, the Trust will increase its charitable impact.

New housing developments will play a vital role in the creation of high-quality public realm, especially if the government reaches its target of 1.5 million homes by 2029.[6] The development industry can have an enormous impact on the trajectory of the issues we face in the next 20 years by leveraging the power of green spaces and embedding social value at all levels, including the procurement of services. 'Mixed model' private-charity partnerships are already in motion to deliver on this front: the Land Trust manages the green space on 14 housing schemes, delivering social value at scale for both residents and surrounding areas. The management of these spaces is currently funded via an annual service charge to residents, a model which legislation may change over the next 20 years, but these sites provide a prime example of what is possible through private-sector funding.

The 'golden thread' throughout this section, and indeed the entire report, is that access is absolutely fundamental. Access goes beyond the physical; it involves removing the myriad barriers people face in accessing the benefits of green spaces. The Land Trust is steadfast in its commitment to understanding and overcoming these barriers through meaningful engagement, working directly with communities and community organisations. We emphasise collaboration and co-creation – doing 'with', not 'to' – so that communities are empowered and supported. This also means supporting communities to understand the art of the possible, so they can demand better in consultations and engagement opportunities.

Technology becoming more embedded in everyday life will facilitate a more data-driven approach to community engagement, with a better understanding of how our green spaces are used and changing user needs in individual communities. Technology will also enable many community members who are unable to participate in traditional community consultations to have their voices heard.

Getting children out into nature, both in school and outside, is part of the Land Trust's long-term strategy to create a new generation who value, appreciate and understand their local environment, and continue the legacy of looked-after green spaces.

Structured community engagement opportunities are pivotal in getting people involved in their green spaces in a meaningful way and establishing a sense of ownership and connection. This work is already underway across the Land Trust portfolio. Last year saw over 30,000 regular volunteer sessions and 33,000 people taking part in one-off community events, with a new programme of art and cultural events rolling out this year. We see the tangible benefits this has on people's health and overall community cohesion. As multiculturalism increases, so too will the diversity of green spaces and the type of community engagement. It is not enough to simply build it and hope people will come; something there must appeal to them to spark that connection with their green spaces.

---

[6] The Land Trust have calculated that 300,000 new homes a year could unlock £1 billion in social value from the green infrastructure and public open space alone.

Obesity and related health issues, along with mental ill health, will be the major concerns

The research findings identified that:

- obesity and related health issues will continue to present a major challenge to public health, along with chronic stress, social isolation and their impact on mental health

- how these issues intersect with socioeconomic status and poor diet, access to green space and education around health will need addressing.

Access to green space is part of a much wider conversation in public health. Research shows that those with poor access to green space usually live in more disadvantaged communities. This tends to correlate with poorer access to healthy food and health education. Quality of diet is a wicked problem, inextricably bound to social deprivation and food insecurity, and consequently higher levels of stress, chronic inflammation and associated illnesses. Unpicking and addressing this problem will require much more than medication or access to green space alone, although advances in AI and big data could help to unravel some of the complexities and provide new intelligence on evolving approaches.

Similarly, mental health is a multifaceted and complex element of human wellbeing, but it exists within a clear and undeniable social context. The last few years have seen unprecedented turmoil – the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple conflicts, the cost-of-living crisis, and climate change, to name just a few events. Everything is cyclical, however, and cannot continue to worsen exponentially. We are now potentially at the peak of the chronic stress and anxiety fallout, which has fed into people wanting to withdraw from the world, integrate less and be more suspicious of others.

Encouraging people to go outdoors and interact with nature will play an enormous role in reversing the effects of chronic stress and anxiety and reducing social isolation. Natural environments will become much more vital as technology creates increased siloing of people and traditional settings of social interaction decline. Nature acts as a touchstone, providing an opportunity to form the 'micro-connections' and neighbourhood social ties that are so important in helping people feel a part of the world (and thereby healthier and less isolated). This impact is amplified even further in green space-deprived urban areas.

Effective incorporation of quality green space can complement the NHS and address the factors behind these health challenges in many different ways. Typically, these might include partnerships that enable bespoke, creative interventions – for example, working with schools on nutrition education, providing community allotments and markets, and collaborating with health boards for impactful green social prescribing.

> Encouraging people to go outdoors and interact with nature will play an enormous role in reversing the effects of chronic stress and anxiety

There will be increased personal responsibility for one's own health

The research findings identified that as the NHS is increasingly overburdened through lack of funding, greater chronic illness and an ageing population, there will be a greater awareness of the importance of self-care and preventative healthcare.

This is strongly linked to the increased prevalence of technology in everyday life, which will aid people in monitoring their health and making data-driven decisions. Social and green prescribing will be more commonplace as part of the NHS's Long-Term Plan to reduce health inequalities, specifically looking at early disease detection and support for people taking their own action to better health through supported self-management. This will likely be underscored by a newer generation of doctors who focus more on lifestyle and place less emphasis on medication. They will better understand that obesity is a marker of deeper societal issues, including the availability of healthy places to live. Localism will also play a key role here, as communities begin to take the initiative rather than always waiting for top-down action.

Green space will play a fundamental role in supporting this shift towards health self-management via initiatives such as those outlined above and through greater societal appreciation of the broad spectrum of health and wellbeing benefits these spaces provide. There will be a need to increase urban greening for better incidental access to nature and encourage active travel.

However, responses emphasised that the ability to take responsibility for one's health largely depends on people already having the agency and interest to do so, along with access to health education and available resources. All of these factors are dictated by socioeconomic status.

Inequitable access to green space currently limits its value as a levelling agent. It will require policy direction and a shift in financing to enact a widespread, forward-thinking programme of overhauled public health, which places quality urban and urban fringe green spaces as a focal point. This encompasses greater regulation within planning to guard against the formation of 'ghettos': areas starved of quality green spaces that exacerbate existing health inequalities.

> Green space will play a fundamental role in supporting this shift towards health self-management.

Credit: Shaun Jackson

There will be movement towards the private sector

The research findings highlighted that as publicly funded healthcare becomes increasingly overburdened, other measures for healthcare will become more prevalent. The general theme suggests that there will be more onus on the private sector.

Large corporations are likely to implement intensive health and wellness programmes for employees to remain competitive in a shrinking labour market. This is an area that may need regulation. The desire to retain staff, promote reputation within the industry and drive ESG scores will be the private sector's primary motivations.

The private sector already perceives the link between health and the environment as a major issue – a trend which will likely continue. Many corporate volunteering events each year focus on improving green spaces, particularly site-based businesses who are increasingly keen to demonstrate their support for the wider social and environmental infrastructure in the places where they operate. There is an opportunity to formalise this approach into effective corporate partnerships with non-profits and grassroots organisations for maximum community impact, incentivised through ESG.

> Many corporate volunteering events each year focus on improving green spaces, particularly site-based businesses who are increasingly keen to demonstrate their support for the wider social and environmental infrastructure in the places where they operate.

Credit: Andy Reeves

What does this mean for the Land Trust?

The health challenges that society faces are complex, multifaceted and intersectional, and significant political impetus will be required over the next two decades to enact widespread change to the public health system. Green spaces play a central role in a holistic and preventative public health approach and will be increasingly leaned upon in the coming years for their extensive health benefits.

The NHS will continue to be a crucial public resource, but it is not capable of providing long-term care. Accessing the NHS can also be, in itself, a stressful experience and detrimental to health, and this will likely become more prevalent as the system becomes increasingly overstretched. The public health system will have to look to mobilise the vast power of community partners to relieve the burden of long-term care. It will still act as a safety net and provide acute treatment, but with a greater emphasis on tackling chronic illness at the cause rather than firefighting the symptoms.

While this will require major direction from policy and widespread buy-in from integrated care boards, there is significant potential to make meaningful progress on the ground in the meantime. The Land Trust has already begun collaborating with community organisations to understand local health challenges better and develop strategies for effectively utilising green spaces to address these issues. Green social prescribing trials have shown huge success and have demonstrated that community models are where intervention for chronic conditions, including mental ill health, should lie; this will form a major part of the Land Trust's focus over the next 20 years.

The healthcare vacuum caused by the NHS dialling back could lead the private sector to step up and fill the gaps, and not just for employees. There is potential to incorporate health benefits into marketable opportunities on new housing developments as some people (who are able to) actively seek out healthier places to live. However, the health benefits unlocked by the public open space on these sites should be leveraged for the entire community, not just those who live there.

There will always be some tension between development and better health outcomes – just look at the creation of the Green Belt and the work of Victorian pioneers, who recognised the need to address health concerns stemming from a lack of adequate green spaces. The revision of the NPPF presents a fantastic opportunity to tackle health inequalities. Effectively aligned policy can place green space at the core of new developments and make healthy, thriving places to live the norm rather than the exception, while avoiding exacerbating social and health inequalities and widening the social divide.

To deliver on the ESG agenda (which is likely to be a major motivator, as outlined), the private sector will require a trusted partner to feed into this process early on and deliver social value (including preventative health outcomes) for communities on the ground. Cooperation with organisations such as the Land Trust, which already works extensively in communities and understands how to leverage resources for long-term community benefit, will enable this approach to have the widest reach and most significant impact.

For green space to be an effective measure in supporting public health, the importance of collaboration cannot be overstated. Although access to green space is not a silver bullet in overcoming these complex, entrenched issues and cannot replace a decent, functioning healthcare system, it is a central part of this conversation – in quantity, quality, and accessibility. Green space will play an increasingly prominent role in the health self-management agenda over the next 20 years. This will require a joined-up approach across sectors and throughout policy for maximum effectiveness.

---

[7] National Evaluation of the Preventing and Tackling Mental Ill Health through Green Social Prescribing Project: Final Report – March 2021 to June 2023

Environment

There will be increased demand for and pressure on green spaces

The research findings identified that green spaces and the passive benefits they provide will be in greater demand as the realities of climate change become more evident, especially in urban areas.

This means people will likely expect more from their green spaces as they spend more time in them, including greater tree cover, multifunctional spaces, swimming facilities and an array of environmental services. The UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries, and its green spaces will continue to be crucial for nature recovery, especially in urban areas where opportunities for wildlife are already scarce.

With competing pressures on our green spaces as we rely on them to do more, the need for high-quality management and appropriate expertise will be imperative to ensure these spaces continue to deliver benefits in perpetuity. The widespread need for these services will make it even more essential to ensure green spaces are accessible for all members of the community. A changing climate will also require us to adapt how we manage these spaces, with greater flexibility and innovation necessary to mitigate the effects.

As demand for the environmental services provided by green spaces grows, tensions could arise around how land is valued, with a need to account for its multiple benefits beyond traditional valuation methods. Accurate measurement of this broader value offers a more comprehensive understanding of land's potential and enables more precise resource allocation to maximise positive impact. Progress has already been made at a policy level towards recognising and quantifying the value of natural capital and environmental services, complemented by the burgeoning field of social value accounting. However, this work must go much further, requiring standardisation, better integration, and a more granular, widespread understanding of what this means in real terms.

> As demand for the environmental services provided by green spaces grows, tensions could arise around how land is valued, with a need to account for its multiple benefits beyond traditional valuation methods.

Awareness and concern around climate change will grow across the population, but disparities will remain

The research suggested that location, education and socioeconomic status will influence how aware and concerned people are about the impacts of climate change.

These issues feel less pressing for groups who have more immediate concerns and do not have the luxury of considering the planet's future when their priorities include housing, food and safety, etc. The ability to insulate buildings and adapt to the realities of climate change will prove vital and divisive, as well as informing voting intention. Programmes to tackle social inequality, including the provision of quality urban green space, can help address these concerns.

Nevertheless, there will likely be a shift in mainstream thinking as the younger generation (that has grown up amid the climate conversation) matures, resulting in a wave of highly informed adults who can hold government, businesses and the media to account.

There will likely be a shift in mainstream thinking as the younger generation (that has grown up amid the climate conversation) matures.

Bold action now can help the UK meet the needs of a changing environment

Respondents were asked to put forward suggestions of 'bold actions' that organisations could take now to mitigate runaway climate change and allow better adaptation to a changing climate:

Stricter legal duties

A departure from the voluntary, private sector-led approach to nature recovery, net zero and carbon reduction, etc.

Building nature recovery into every planning application would be an example.

Shift away from GDP being the only arbiter of success

A greater focus on quality of life rather than material gain, with people rich in leisure time, health, wellbeing and access to resources. This is already happening with the increased prevalence of social value requirements in most public sector procurement and more focus on the additional effects of projects outside of the financial.

More education and ownership of environmental issues

A programme of 'myth-busting' and empowering information, educating people to be more discerning.

For example, what 'greenwashing' is, how to spot it, and the truth behind the headlines.

What does this mean for the Land Trust?

Our existing and future green spaces have immense potential to help us adapt to climate change challenges. For this reason, we need to rethink what 'green space' means, beyond simply destinations. Large, landscaped city parks, nature reserves and country parks will always have a place and an important role to play, but so does green infrastructure on housing developments, pocket parks, the urban fringe and urban greening as we look to address these challenges through nature-based solutions.

Again, this comes down to access. Incidental access to nature is powerful – regular interaction with green space and nature should be an everyday experience for people to feel connected to their local environment. Additionally, the nature of this incidental access will look different depending on the area: some spaces will be well suited for intensive urban greening measures, while others may respond better to bringing more traditional urban green spaces up to standard. This is why quantifying the broad spectrum of value provided by land is crucial, as it allows us to better appreciate what measures have the most impact.

As already mentioned, green space provision (in all its forms) needs to be more solidly embedded in planning to overcome the spatial barriers, but there also needs to be a better understanding of the emotional and mental access barriers that different groups experience. The Land Trust and similar organisations are uniquely placed to make a tangible difference in breaking down these barriers. They can facilitate getting people out into nature and empower them to understand, value and engage with their local environment.

High-quality intervention will be fundamental to ensure our green spaces deliver a plethora of benefits for both the environment and the community. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) landscapes (or similar legislation in Scotland and Wales), for example, need careful ongoing management to deliver the mandated 10% net gain and also the significant other added value. This is why green space and its ongoing management must be considered early in the planning process so that it can cater for competing demands and increased pressures placed upon it.

Conclusion

Access to quality green spaces that are well managed and sustainably funded is essential for building healthier, more resilient communities. This is nothing new – the benefits of green spaces, particularly as they intersect with health, communities and the environment, have long been understood. Many thought leaders (some of whom have contributed to this report) have advocated for these benefits in public forums for years.

However, the gap is yet to be bridged between research and discussion, and decisive action.

The change in government in 2024 marks a golden opportunity to reset the system. The answer is not to simply throw more money at the problem but to seek a new and better approach that aligns national policy with local decision making, harnessing the untapped potential of green spaces and the vast expertise that already exists within communities. As the findings in this report have shown, the problems of the next 20 years will require intensive cross-sector collaboration and significant political will, supported by policy, to drive meaningful change. This commitment to embedding green spaces and wider quality placemaking will continue to be felt far beyond 2044.

For the Land Trust, the next 20 years are ripe with opportunity. Through cultivation of meaningful partnerships and community initiatives, the Trust is steadfast in its commitment to understanding and dismantling barriers to access to ensure everyone enjoys the wide spectrum of benefits that green spaces provide. The findings in this report mark the beginning of a wider piece of work to inform the Land Trust's future strategy as we anticipate the trends of the next two decades.

Acknowledgements

i Appendix Round 1 questions

Society & Community

What will society look like in 2044?

What impact will an ageing, increasingly multicultural population have on the economy? What will be the social impact?

How will communities interact with each other in 20 years? What role will technology play in this?

What will be the role of innovative housing developments in fostering community and mitigating the impact of climate change?

What effect will climate change have on communities, and how will they use their local green space to mitigate or take advantage of these effects?

How will the use of homes and green space change due to the use of technology and AI?

What impact will AI and increasing technology have on anti-social behaviour in green spaces?

How will views on community differ between different socioeconomic, cultural and age groups by 2044?

Health

What could the main health problems be in 20 years? How will this relate to the lack of access to green space?

What would the health and wellbeing implications be of business as usual – i.e. continued poor access to quality green space in disadvantaged communities?

Will anxiety about climate change be a pressing health problem in 20 years? If so, in what way?

What will be the impact of nature on health and wellbeing in 20 years' time?

Will people have to take more responsibility for their own health in 20 years? What are the implications of this for the Land Trust?

How will access to green space support with health problems related to an ageing population?

Regarding obesity and muscular-skeletal health, what one change could the Land Trust make to help reduce obesity/diabetes and improve muscular-skeletal health (and mental health) through greater access to green space with more physical exercise?

Will the government's and the NHS's focus have shifted from disease management to prevention? If so, what are the implications for organisations like the Land Trust?

What involvement will employers have in the preventative agenda for their employees, and are they likely to pay significant sums for preventative actions for their employees?

What will be the impact of stress and other mental health issues on the UK economy in 20 years' time?

How will technology help us track and measure our physical and mental health (e.g. counting steps, monitoring heart rate, etc)?

ⓘ **Appendix** Round 1 questions

Environment

To what extent will the implementation of the Environment Act have an impact on: the quality and quantity of green space; how green space is valued in society; biodiversity, and the provision of environmental services?

How will urban greening support the achievement of environmental targets?

How will the UK look in terms of environment/biodiversity if we carry on with business as usual? How could it look if we took bold action now? What one bold action should be taken?

What impact will climate change have had on the UK's environmental integrity in 20 years' time? What changes will we see to biodiversity, flooding, urban heat maps, food security, etc?

What critical UK species, habitats and ecological processes (which span various habitats) (e.g. nutrient cycling) will be in decline or at significant risk in 20 years' time?

What new habitats and species (which will not negatively impact established UK species and habitats) could be indigenous in 20 years' time?

What will the perspectives of young adults towards nature and the environment be by the year 2044, and how will these future perspectives differ from the environmental attitudes of young adults today?

What role will technology and AI play in how we access, experience and understand green space?

How will views on the environment differ between different socioeconomic, cultural and age groups by 2044?

ℹ Appendix Round 2 questions

Social & Community
Consensus issues

RESPONSE:	QUESTION 1:
Respondents broadly agreed that social inequality would be more pronounced. The reasons for this included: • **An increasingly complex society of rapid change and uncertainty.** • **Exacerbated health disparities (poor diet, lack of exercise, etc, related to socioeconomic factors, including lack of access to green space).** • **Changes to the employment landscape due to AI.**	When it comes to providing quality green space, will the role of private businesses and/or the charity sector increase over the next 20 years? When thinking about your response, you may wish to consider the following: • Will planning regulations put more emphasis on green space? • Will privately owned green spaces become more accessible to the public via the planning process? • Will the charity sector take on increasing responsibility for the management of public open green space? • How will the public sector address social inequality relating to access to green spaces?

RESPONSE:	QUESTION 2:
It was agreed that an ageing population will put a strain on the economy, social relations, the welfare system and the NHS.	What must happen to ensure society has, or creates, a purposeful generation of older people who remain active members of society, both physically and within their communities? What role do green spaces play in this?

Non-Consensus issues

RESPONSE:	QUESTION 3:
It was generally agreed that society will be more multicultural, though this may be unevenly spread across the country and wax and wane in line with contemporary economic policy.	What is the role of local green spaces in fostering community cohesion and emotional ownership in an increasingly multicultural society? When responding to this question, you may wish to consider: • How can they enable access to community and support people to feel embedded in and responsible for their local area? • What measures should be taken to ensure these spaces can be accessed inclusively and safely by all members of the community?

ⓘ Appendix Round 2 questions

Technology

RESPONSE:	QUESTION 4:
It is generally agreed that technology will be far more prevalent and embedded in all aspects of society, from employment to health to leisure, but opinions vary on the extent.	How should/can society leverage the benefits of AI and technology to ensure that it complements and enhances human experiences without replacing human interaction and connection to nature? When responding to this question, you may wish to consider: • How can green spaces foster this complementary relationship between people and technology? • How can society continue to highlight the importance of physical connection to nature in an age of increasing digitisation?

Health
Consensus issues

RESPONSE:	QUESTION 5:
There is a general consensus that there will be an increased personal responsibility for one's own health as the NHS is increasingly overburdened, with greater emphasis on self-care and preventative health care.	Please comment on the following: • How does increased personal responsibility look for all members of society? • How can we level the playing field and avoid leaving people in more disadvantaged communities behind? • How important is equitable access to green space in supporting this?

RESPONSE:	QUESTION 6:
In addition to increased personal responsibility for health, there was agreement that private sector employers who want to remain competitive are likely to become more involved in the healthcare agenda as public health provision continues to be stretched.	Please reflect on the following • To what extent will this be the case? For example, will it be all employers or particular types? What about the public sector and small businesses? • Will these health and wellbeing benefits be isolated to employees only, or will a shift from the state to the private sector mean these benefits are felt more widely by the local community where a company operates – for example, investment in local green spaces, community groups and resources?

RESPONSE:	QUESTION 7:
Life expectancy was a topic in dispute.	• Will life expectancy begin to plateau, or will it continue to increase as science advances? • Will quality, rather than length, of life (remaining healthy and active, rather than 'life at all costs') become the aim?

ⓘ Appendix Round 2 questions

Environment
Non-Consensus issues

RESPONSE:	QUESTION 8:
Climate change itself was not in dispute during the first round of responses, but there were divergent views on the universality of its importance in people's lives.	Will concern around climate change be more evenly spread through society as the effects become more evident in everyday life, or will there still be disparities between demographic groups?

QUESTION 9:

Please select three of the below statements (suggested in the first round) which you feel would be most impactful in addressing how the UK meets the needs of a changing environment:

- More education and ownership of environmental issues. A programme of 'myth-busting'/empowering information, educating people to be more discerning of information they see. For example, what greenwashing is, how to spot it and the truth behind the headlines.
- Shift away from GDP being the only arbiter of success – greater focus on quality of life rather than material gain; people rich in leisure time, health, wellbeing and access to resources.
- Introducing children to the outdoors and the value of nature early.
- Stricter legal duties – a departure from the voluntary, private sector-led approach to nature recovery, net zero, carbon reduction, etc.
- Empowering people to feel like they can make change – especially for younger generations.
- Greater focus on nature recovery – build it into every planning application and dedicate portions of all land to nature recovery.

The
Land Trust