



Media Release

Thursday 21st June

PARKS AND GREEN SPACES IMPROVE OUR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Park Life report's findings endorsed by MIND and Glasgow Centre for Population Health

To coincide with **Love Parks Week**, which runs until 24th June, parks charity **GreenSpace** has released the **Park Life** report, the first ever public satisfaction survey of Britain's parks and green spaces. The research underlines the central role that parks and green spaces play in boosting people's health and wellbeing.

Almost 20,000 people have contributed their opinions on parks and green spaces to the **Park Life** report, with 700 of these responses coming from children under 16.

Opinions were gathered via **GreenSTAT**, the visitor survey website that gives people throughout Britain the opportunity to comment on the quality of their local parks and green spaces, how they use them and how well they feel they are managed and maintained.

The **Park Life** report reveals that:

People visit parks and green spaces to improve their physical and mental health:

- 25% of people visit parks and green spaces to relax and think
- 22% visit to get some peace and quiet
- 31% visit to enjoy the beauty of the surroundings in parks and green spaces
- 44% visit to get some fresh air
- 46% of respondents reveal that they visit parks and green spaces merely to take a walk

Parks and green spaces encourage us to exercise

- More than 7 out of 10 people visit their local park or green space on foot or by bike, which helps them to exercise before they even reach the green space.
- This is countered by a quarter of people (25%) who still travel to their local park or green space in a car which obviously is not beneficial for the environment.

Parks are broadly safe but more could be done to ensure people's safety

- Nearly two thirds of respondents (65%) of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement that they feel safe when they visit their local park or green space
- Worryingly, 16% disagree with the statement, suggesting that they therefore feel unsafe

Parks play a big role in benefiting children's physical and mental health

- Children who responded to GreenSTAT reported a wide range of reasons as to why they visit parks and green spaces:
 - Over a fifth (21%) of children visit to relax or think
 - Almost a third (32%) of children visit for fresh air
 - A quarter (25%) of children visit to ride a bike
 - Almost half (48%) of children visit to meet friends

- Almost half (49%) of children visit to play sport or games
- A fifth (20%) of children visit to keep fit

The full **Park Life** report is available from **GreenSpace** (www.green-space.org.uk)

Paul Bramhill, Chief Executive of GreenSpace said: "Parks and green spaces truly are the Natural Health service and offer substantial benefits to physical, mental and spiritual health."

Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of MIND said: "Parks and green spaces aren't just important for physical health; they can be very beneficial for our mental health, too. Research has repeatedly shown that being close to green space has a positive effect on people's mental wellbeing, and taking exercise in green space has been found to be successful in alleviating some common mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression.

"Walking in green environments gives people a significant boost in their self-esteem and energy but there are wide disparities in access to these therapeutic natural environments, with many socially excluded groups less likely to be able to get to high quality green spaces. This is an issue we hope local authorities will address in their work on parks and green spaces."

Dr Russell Jones, Public Health Programme Manager at the Glasgow Centre for Population Health said: "Evidence suggests that accessible and safe parks and green spaces have a positive influence on all levels of physical activity.

"They are most valuable as a resource for physical activity when used by high volumes of people, therefore spaces need to be accessible, diverse, of sufficient size, and connected to residential areas. As outlined in this report, efforts need to be made to ensure that high quality green space is available to all."

The **Park Life** report has been released to coincide with **Love Parks Week** which is taking place until Sunday 24th of June.

Love Parks Week is a national campaign to raise awareness of the central role that parks and green spaces play in communities across the country. **Love Parks Week** encourages people to get out and discover just what is on offer at Britain's 29,000 and more parks and green spaces and a range of events have been scheduled to take place during the week. For more information go to www.loveparksweek.org.uk

GreenSTAT is an ongoing piece of live research from which snapshots can be taken to give an illustration of public opinion. **GreenSpace** intends to release annual reports based on the **GreenSTAT** data to illustrate trends in public opinion towards parks and green spaces.

Act now to improve your local **Park Life** - people are encouraged to go to the **GreenSTAT** website (www.greenstat.org.uk) at any time to answer questions about what they think of their local parks or green spaces.

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Notes to Editors

GreenSpace is a registered charity which works to improve parks and green spaces by raising awareness, involving communities and creating skilled professionals. For more information please go to www.green-space.org.uk

GreenSTAT enables UK residents to let **GreenSpace** know what they think of their local parks and green spaces. This information will result in a national snapshot of public satisfaction.

Comments about how parks and green spaces could be improved will be passed on to the authority that is responsible for their upkeep, management and maintenance.

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