


# Inspiration in challenging times

## green space sector unites

April 2011

A woman with reddish-brown hair tied back, wearing a black headband and a dark jacket, is shown in profile from the chest up, looking upwards and to the left. She is in a park-like setting with a large, mature pine tree in the foreground and a well-maintained lawn and path in the background. The sky is overcast.

Highlights from the CABE Space  
leaders conference in association  
with GreenSpace at Kew Gardens

Also...

Analysis of the spending review on  
the sector

 GreenSpace

## Welcome

It is hoped this supplement will help and inspire green space managers as they look for new ways to fund future service delivery. It brings together just some of the views, ideas and resources shared at the popular CABE leaders conference 2011 and also looks into the interim results of GreenSpace's comprehensive spending review survey; offering you a glance at the real picture of the green space sector.

### A look inside...

#### Highlights from the CABE Space leaders conference:

Advice for a stronger sector, from Paul Bramhill and Sarah Gaventa.

Making the impossible possible: Washington's award winning parks partnership.

Effective advocacy: quick tips. Towards a Natural Health Service: Opportunities for green space managers.

Views from the ground: Leaders share strategy.

CABE head Richard Simmons reviews the political challenges. Have I Got News For You? Test yourself on the top green space stories.

Ten ways to generate more income.

Case study: Birmingham parks service's community strategy.

#### Also interesting statistics from GreenSpace's latest study:

How has the comprehensive spending review had an effect on the sector.

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**“WE ALL NEED  
INSPIRATION  
IN HARD  
TIMES.”**

## GreenSpace's Paul Bramhill urges the sector to come together

Paul, CEO of GreenSpace now for over ten years, said "As resources become more and more stretched, both for all types of government, it is vital we work together more as a green space sector; in order for us to make the case for the value of parks and green spaces."

GreenSpace is continually bringing organisations together. GreenLINK an open forum that brings central and local government together with agencies and NGO's, advocates at a national level. Through its strength as a group it has recently secured a meeting with DCLG Minister Andrew Stunell to discuss sector issues surrounding what GreenLINK can offer.

Regionally, the GreenSpace forums bring together green space managers to network, share local knowledge and advocacy. Plus through events and training, GreenSpace are also supporting managers across the country to upskill and broaden their knowledge. "We all need inspiration in hard times, coming together provides this." Paul continues "How many of you are members of your regional forum, of the IPGS, or of GreenLINK, how many of you use GreenSTAT? We've got to start sharing more, if you don't share you're not participating in our future."

Things are tough at present, but Paul urges people not to lose sight of their strategic plans and for those authorities without such plans, the need to formulate their approaches quickly.

Managers should also be looking to work in broad partnership with their Friends & Community Groups to bring them together as a complete voice and advocate alongside their internal championing. Identify key councillors and portfolio holders and make the case; "Arguments need to be set out clearly."

To be effective advocates we need standards, data and research. Green Flag gives us the national quality standard and if our parks meet this standard then the benefits identified in the Blue Sky, Green Space report can be achieved. Paul is determined that the CABE green space research continues and that any decline is measured and audited.

GreenSpace promotes setting up better links with all local partners and business and is piloting the GreenSpace Fund as a possible mechanism.

Paul's final words, "We hope that through all of these schemes, green space managers can come together, lead the sector forward, share budgets and ideas and focus resources for the greater good. We must continue to raise awareness of the benefits that parks and green spaces bring to communities and we must continue to do this together."

## Sarah Gaventa leaves leaders with rallying call

As director of CABE Space since 2006 Sarah Gaventa has chaired the leadership programme since it began, but this was to be her final year in her current role.

Sarah is one of the CABE staff whose post disappeared when government funding for the organisation was pulled, though some staff will continue working as part of a new CABE and the Design Council merger from 1 April.

Despite palpable concern from the audience at these shifts in the sector, Sarah's address was philosophical:

"News of CABE's demise has been slightly exaggerated. We will go onwards and upwards. The truth of the matter is that things are about to change and in a way we are the architects of that change. What we are going through at CABE is a reflection of things you've been dealing with in local authorities and elsewhere in the landscape sector."

Director at Pengelly Consulting and CABE Space Enabler, Len Croney, paid homage to Sarah's example as a leader saying: "It has been a privilege for the sector to have you batting for us for so long. You have always been there, always looked after us. There aren't any great teams without great leaders."

Under Sarah's leadership CABE Space has worked to encourage excellence in the planning, design, management and maintenance of parks, streets and public spaces in England's towns and cities. The body has helped 180 councils prepare green space strategies, worked in 90% of the most deprived areas of England, trained more than 350 green space leaders in local authorities and created 60 new apprenticeships in parks.

Sarah's advice for public space advocates facing the next phase of budget cuts was positive: "As you face people pulling the plug on you through serious cuts, use your weapons and helmet to your advantage. Even as we undergo change at CABE, we want to give you hope to keep the flame burning for public space."

She asked: "Do you have a parks champion on your local council? You need someone articulate and vocal to fight your corner. How many of you have applied for HLF funding? How many of your parks have names like Victoria or are responsible for cemeteries or other historic sites? There's 20 million in the pot so do look into it and do apply, that applies to Trusts and community groups too – if you don't apply they'll pull the money. Don't forget to invest in yourself."



**“WE WILL  
GO ONWARDS  
AND UPWARDS.”**



# “Making the impossible, possible”

In 1990 on 15 January, Martin Luther King’s birthday, a boy was shot dead playing on the street in Steve Coleman’s neighbourhood in Meridian Hill, Washington D.C. Shocked by the killing, neighbours rallied around. Steve Coleman recalls: “We came together and said ‘This is wrong: if there is no public space there is no community.’”

With a fundraising, lobbying and journalism background behind him, Steve decided to take action. He and other locals began a patrol of the park. Since then he has led Washington Parks and People’s award-winning alliance of community-based greening partnerships.

Before Steve’s project began the kids in Meridian Hill used to turn on the fire hydrant and play in the street. They were told not to go into the local park because it was dangerous and rates of diabetes and hypertension were high. “The park, beautiful in its way, but there was something missing from the plan: people,” Steve explains.

In five years, local volunteers and partnership organisations transformed the space at Meridian Hill from the single most dangerous park, to being one of the safest parks in Washington D.C., reducing crime by 99%. This revitalisation was honoured by President Clinton as “a shining example for the nation.”

The concept at the centre of Steve’s success was simple: “The key is to get your fingers in the dirt and make something happen. Once you start, people will be inspired by your work and help you.”

This is a technique he has used on countless parks projects since, with impressive results.

## Realising hidden assets in Marvin Gaye Park

Marvin Gaye Park is a 1.6 mile long area in north east Washington, D.C. Formally called Watts Branch Park, the area was officially rededicated as Marvin Gaye Park on April 2, 2006, on what would have been the singer’s 67th birthday. The park includes the Watts Branch stream that flows from the Anacostia River.

The site had once been a place of community, pride and leisure however, in 1970 federal funding for park maintenance was discontinued and the park fell into disrepair, a hub of illegal dumping and an open air heroin market.

In 2001, Washington Parks & People began a multi-million dollar revitalisation of the park. “When we spoke to the people that lived there we discovered the kids had a vision, they had seen parks on television and they wanted theirs to be like it. They helped collect names for a petition and told us what they wanted,” says Steve. “Trees and flowers and to ‘remove the stink’ from the water.” The project to make the children’s vision for their park became a reality.

“No one had ever done a map of what was good about the space so we made one and presented it to the city council. They were staring; they had never thought of their community constituency like this. With volunteers we pulled 13,000 hyperdermic needles out of the river in the

park. We started a job training programme for ex offenders and they helped to come and pick up the trash.”

Together they looked at the assets of the park. One of these assets was something the kids had asked for: their dream of having music in the park. They looked for a place where the topography was suited to having a stage and crowds and put a sign up saying ‘amphitheatre’ and then one saying ‘talent show’. “When you have a free mic and kids you have a show – the Washington Post (newspaper) ran a story and we got contacts wanting to invest in the project.”

The next step was to clear out the drug dealers who had been operating in the park. Officially it was prohibited to hold a market in the park but Steve thought: “If people can sell drugs, why can’t we sell the peas and carrots that we were growing in the park with the kids. We asked the City and they said ‘okay’. We set up a stall selling vegetables where the dealers had been selling drugs. When the dealers came they had a strategy to deal with the police but no strategy for dealing with kids selling vegetables.” The farmers market is still running today.

Gradually the park started to come alive. It is now a place for training and parks based learning of all kinds: there are sustainable trials and green infrastructure in use. “The City is planning to spend billions of dollars on the sewage pipe system there – imagine if some of that was spent on green infrastructure instead?” Steve said.

## Community led change

“If politicians look at how many people in their constituency value hospitals and how many value parks it doesn’t always look good. This is why we have to focus on communication and share the positive news and outcomes. We have to show how our parks have power. You cannot make communities work without parks. This is a direct relationship.”

Steve suggests the key is that this is not change which is done to people, or for people, it is done in partnership with people. Successful partnerships are led by communities.

“We don’t want to give the false impression that there’s government funding by doing the work that government should do. We want to be the lever that brings in more investment that then leverages it into the sector.

“It’s our job as green space advocates to bring everyone together and inspire them about public parks. You can’t create or sustain the landscape unless you invest in the perception of a space. Parks are a place where democracy happens.”



“A PARK IS NOT PART OF THE COMMUNITY – IT IS THE HUB OF IT.”

## Steve’s tips for advocates

1. Keep people interested: continue bringing in new groups and projects.
2. Test out ideas on site: If you are building a play area, try a temporary one first and talk to local people about it.
3. Ask for help and mean it: There is power when you work together.
4. Do something for Love Parks Week in July and don’t forget World Parks Day in September: you are part of a global movement.
5. Tell a good story to make a convincing argument: Use photographs, personal accounts, YouTube videos, anything that will bring to life the experiences of the people in your community.

Visit [www.washingtonparks.net](http://www.washingtonparks.net) for more resources and best practice examples.

## Marvin Gaye Park at a glance

- Leveraged \$30 million in new public and private funding.
- Mobilised over 500 job trainees and 60,000 volunteers.
- Created new jobs in the park.
- Removed 3000 tyres, 14,000 hypodermic needles and 55,000 bags of garbage.
- Planted 2000 native trees and shrubs.
- Dramatically reduced crime and improved park safety.
- Created Marvin Gaye Amphitheatre on what was previously the most violent site in the park.
- Briefed city and federal officials at 18 agencies, City Council and Mayor’s Cabinet on needed actions.
- Started Farm Market with fresh locally grown produce.
- Launched Heart & Soul health and fitness park programme.



**“YOU HAVE ALREADY GOT ALL THE SKILLS YOU NEED TO BE AN EFFECTIVE INFLUENCER.”**

## Improve your influencing skills

Steve Wood is a professional personal coach with an extensive 15 year track record and works with many organisations especially within the culture, sports and parks and green space sectors. He also works as a professional actor and improvisational artist and has worked as a stage hypnotist. Here he shares some of his tips for becoming a better influencer and advocate.

I know from experience that parks and green space managers are passionate about finding ways to carry on delivering services, but influencing and advocacy skills play a major role in that, so the more you can develop, the more you can shape the sector's future. Luckily there are some simple ways you can do this!

We are all social animals, we naturally want to speak to other people, so use that skill in the workplace. Show an interest in the people around you. Remember the names of people you work with, the detail about their lives. Memory is a learnt skill, look up tips to improve yours.

- Remember that 80% of what we communicate we do non-verbally through body language, tone, breathing patterns. The way you say something can be as important as the underlying message.
- People gravitate to others like them. One way to create a rapport with someone is to mirror their body language and vocal tones. This doesn't have to become disingenuous; in the acting world people do that all the time.
- Our research shows that you have already got all the skills you need to be an effective influencer and advocate. You are already fantastic at influencing and advocating with some people, some of the time – the trick is working out how to apply these skills so you can use them at will. Think back to a time when you have enthused people and try it again.
- Most people have a message; but you also need substance. Communicate the facts about your agenda and case studies and data.
- Work out who you can influence and who you can't and focus on those you can.
- To elicit change in others you can only ever change one person and that's yourself, but you can create a context to support people through their own change.
- The most skilful influencers and advocates will use a challenging situation and external environment to their advantage.

## Natural Health Service is 'one step closer'

Co-chairing the workshop 'How parks and open spaces can link to the health agenda' was health and environment specialist Jenny Bowen from Natural England.

She explains: "What we've found over the last couple of years is that the door has opened very strongly from the public health side in terms of acknowledging the link between health and the natural environment. It's a great opportunity for local authorities to link green space management and planning with the health agenda; in fact local authorities now have a public health duty. The health and wellbeing benefits of being active outdoors are now well recognised by most health professionals. The principles of the natural health service pioneered by Dr William Bird, the strategic health advisor for Natural England, are also now recognised within the public White Paper."

### Be aware of new policy

News of the health benefits of green space for communities is by no means new, but the latest changes to health policy could enable a huge shift towards creating a Natural Health Service.

Ministers propose a structural shake-up to 'make the nation healthier' and tackle everything from obesity to problem drinking. Central to this, the Healthy Lives, Healthy People White Paper: Our strategy for public health in England was published November 2010.

Under the strategy, responsibility for public health will be transferred back to local government, while primary care trusts face the chop. The Public Health White Paper contains proposals for the transfer of public health responsibilities to local government with the intention that local authorities take on a convening role at the heart of local health care. Local authorities and local communities will be empowered to develop and implement local solutions contributing to local and national priorities. Directors of Public Health will be totally contained within local authorities and should be amongst other things connected with active travel, parks and green space.

Government says it will 'nudge' people into making healthy choices and has promised extra money for poor areas to redress the health inequality gap, recorded as being at it's worst since the Great Depression. Areas with highest health inequalities often coincide with areas of lowest green space provision.

Details of how individual strands of the vision will work will come later this year. A funding framework will also be published setting out exactly how much money - £4 billion has been set as the absolute baseline - the new public health system will get from the entire NHS pot.

Meanwhile, the Health Outcome Framework will spell out the goals and ambitions for local and national government so progress can be judged. Public Health England - the arm of the Department of Health that

will support councils - will be up and running by 2012 and responsible for delivery of improvements in public health, working closely with local authorities and other partners.

A year later, councils will formally take control of public health from the NHS. However, it will be several years before the new structures come into place.

### The best time to influence decision makers

- As policy shifts, it is vital to continue to build evidence on green space use.
- In 2009 Natural England, Defra and the Forestry Commission commissioned TNS ReSearch International to undertake the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE). Fieldwork started in March 2009 and will continue until February 2012. MENE provides the most comprehensive data set available on visits to the natural environment & includes: gardening, watching wildlife, volunteering in the natural environment. Advocates can use this information to convey to local decision makers exactly how people use the natural environment in England. Natural England is committed to sharing this data and the MENE on-line cross-tabulation viewer enables the year one survey data to be cross-tabulated by a large number of variables. The year two survey data will be available on the viewer later this year.
- Collect your own data. It's important to collect the right data to be able to make the case to health commissioners. Some of that will be around volunteers use of spaces as well as more general public use.
- Understand the specific health priorities for your area and make sure any data you collect shows how green space helps to meet these requirements. There is detailed information available on this through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which tells you exactly what policy makers have highlighted as health priorities in your area – use it! It will be vital if you are to show how you can help meet those local health targets.

More info: [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

# The future for services: views from the ground

Talking to delegates this year, it was impossible to get away from the subject of cuts and fears for the future of the parks and green space sector. But between them, the delegates at this year's leaders conference have over 700 years combined experience of managing parks and green space. They are representative of a skilled and committed sector. Here we hear about some of the strategies they will consider to lead the sector through crisis.



**David Jamieson, head of parks and green space, services for communities, City of Edinburgh Council**

"The issues faced by green space and parks managers in Scotland and England at the moment are very similar. With cuts expected in Scotland soon, and given that many English local authorities have already been through significant austerity measures in recent times, I came here to learn about their experiences and views. Principally, there is universal pressure to reduce service costs whilst at the same time being increasingly responsive to the demands of individuals and communities for higher quality green spaces. Most Scottish authorities still retain most of their parks and ground maintenance services in-house, but are now having to consider greater use of external service providers. The biggest challenge we face is how to provide more for much less. Over the last few years Edinburgh has led the way in Scotland in improving its parks to Green Flag Award standard. We have 13 Green Flag Awards and have adopted the Green Flag judging criteria to performance manage the rest of our estate, which includes 145 parks and principal green spaces. The challenge now is to continue with this improvement programme at a time of reducing financial resources. Every CABE leaders conference I have attended has been excellent, particularly in highlighting issues and opportunities common to all of us 'parkies' and enabling us to come together to collectively share our problems and recognise our successes."

**"THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE WE FACE IS HOW TO PROVIDE MORE FOR MUCH LESS."**

**Tim Brooks, people and wildlife manager for Derbyshire Wildlife Trust**

"It is enlightening to see the scale and breadth of cuts for local authorities at the moment. The situation for us in the Wildlife Trusts is not as bad right now, though the public spending cuts have affected some areas such as health and youth related projects. It could also affect service level agreements we have with local authorities, but many of these are for statutory planning advice. Lottery Funding seems particularly good at the moment in the Midlands, and though we don't want to rely on one stream of funding we aren't in a comparable situation to parks and green space managers. There has been a lot of talk at the conference about partnership working – maybe conservation organisations need to look at how they establish more dialogue and partnerships in the sector. There's always been a line between formal amenity management and conservation management, but there is room for more cross over. Using conservation management techniques in formal parks could be one way to save money. For example, instead of using a close amenity cut on all areas of grass, perhaps it would be possible to skip a few cuts and let the grass grow longer in certain areas. Biodiversity could be a winner, though you would have to do the sums as conservation techniques have their own specialised requirements and equipment. The Wildlife Trusts has a concept of Living Landscapes, rather than concentrating resources on specific sites we are looking at the landscape as a bigger picture. Within that philosophy, parks and open spaces are a vital tool to communicate the responsibility we have as citizens to look after the environment. You don't get a lot of families in a remote nature reserve, but you do get them in urban parks, so it's a good place to communicate that environmental message. Maybe introducing more of a focus on biodiversity and identifying shared goals between the different disciplines in the landscape sector can help us collectively to make the most of green spaces."



**"DEVELOPING COMMUNITY GROUPS IS VITAL TO THE FUTURE OF OUR PARKS."**

**Sue Pearson, environmental management officer for liveability, North East Lincolnshire Council**

"I have always enjoyed my job. I know the importance of providing good quality, safe green spaces and the valuable contribution they make to local communities and neighbourhoods. Unfortunately though, cuts to the parks budget for 2011/2012 will bring very real challenges. We should not underestimate the difficulties ahead. The cuts are bound to have an impact on the park facilities, maintenance regimes and standards we currently provide. In the long term they could greatly damage green spaces and there is a fear that some could return to the state of neglect they fell into in the 1980s. The Big Society is being offered as the solution. Though no one can agree exactly what this means, the concept is familiar as we have been doing this already through the groups and communities we have worked with over many years. For me, this conference reiterates that working with and developing our friends of and community groups is vital to the future of our parks."

**"BELIEVE IN WHAT YOU DO AND HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT YOUR WORK IS VITAL."**



**Arne Swithenbank parks and countryside manager Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.**

"We are facing uncertain times ahead. We know definite cuts will come and from high level. We also know policy makers have their eye on us specifically so it's really important to try to convey that what we do is vital. If your service is proven to be vital you've got a good case for funding. The advocacy workshop I attended offered some useful advice. To be a good advocate for your service you need to be able to form a rapport with people and this is something you can easily learn to do better. It certainly makes you think. If you want to have a successful team your colleagues have got to trust you to do your bit. Above all you have to keep at it, believe in what you do and have some confidence that your work is vital."

**Andrew Carr, Finesse Leisure Partnership**

"Finesse Leisure Partnership is the operating name for Welwyn Hatfield Leisure Ltd, a not-for-profit Trust. It was established in 2004 by Welwyn Hatfield Council to manage and develop facilities and services at four of their established health, fitness and recreation centres in Welwyn Hatfield. We manage a diverse mix of indoor and outdoor facilities as well as the flora and fauna of the cultivated reed marshes and rivers. We have contracts in parks and community, originally this was developed by the local authority to save money and for VAT benefits but we've been able to streamline the services so they are more efficient. The move to create a Trust has been very positive. Quality and performance has also improved. Following a decision by the local council to outsource a new grounds maintenance contract to the community, which we are helping to deliver, we wanted to attend this conference and learn more about parks maintenance and the people involved."



# Reviewing political challenges to find opportunities

Richard Simmons, chief executive of CABI offers a review of the changing political and economic climate to highlight the opportunities ahead for sector leaders.



## The political scene

The foundation for politics at the moment is bottom up thinking. This comes from a belief in Whitehall that centralised government doesn't work and that community services are much better if they come from local people.

We can see this in action in planning law. There will be no more regional planning but instead there will be local neighbourhood plans. Currently there is a draft act to allow any group of three or more people to come together and start a local forum and to write a neighbourhood plan for their area.

CABI and CABI Space are disappearing altogether but some staff will carry on under the merger to become a charity. There will be 2.5 million only for the programme – current funding was at 11 million. I don't have a problem with that; it is along the lines of an idea I came up with – that you will take the baton into your local economy – but what do the public think?

## The Big Society is out there

A recent poll by MORI on changes to the way we live shows an interesting picture. The poll showed nearly nine million people want more of a say in local services and one and a half million people want active involvement. Those who do volunteer want to make a difference – 57% get involved because they want to improve things or help people but at the moment 70% of people don't feel they have influence over their public services. Most think public services are not run efficiently.

The Big Society is out there. People aren't sure at the moment that they are getting best value for money from services and they are willing to volunteer. That creates a problem if we have to argue for our services, but it's good if we want to get people involved.

## What we can do

The localism bill will challenge the way local services are run. Impacts already on local authorities include the end to most ringfencing, decreased central government funding to councils of around 26% over the next four years and a decrease in cap funding from all departments to come. Many parks services have already announced cuts: Liverpool, Harringey, Suffolk and Manchester, and there are changes due in key policy and legislation. What opportunities are there in all of this for you?

- If there's going to be a neighbourhood plan then get involved. Make sure the voice of the green space sector is heard and if you aren't allowed to talk then contact your park friends of groups
- Develop volunteer strategies
- Use tools like Spaceshaper to involve people locally
- Market your parks as the Big Society in action
- Transfer assets to the community
- Use community infrastructure levy – make sure you get a green space hook in that funding
- Share services with other authorities
- Remember to uphold the quality of parks and services: it's about the quality of our spaces, the quality of communities and the quality of our lives.

“MAKE SURE THE VOICE OF THE GREEN SPACE SECTOR IS HEARD.”

# Have I got landscape news for you

Hislop, Merton and celebrity friends might be experts on the weekly news but how would you do if they grilled you on the top landscape stories?

## David Cameron to end xxxxxx xxxxxxxx in public services

Answer: State Monopoly

David Cameron has set out plans that would enable private and voluntary groups to run almost every kind of public service. He said a “complete change” was needed to boost standards and end the “state's monopoly” over public services. Ministers are due to publish a White Paper outlining changes shortly.

## Government commits to xxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxx xxxxxxx

Answer: Community infrastructure Levy

Under new reforms Councils will now take contributions for strategic infrastructure from a single Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Infrastructure needed to support the direct local needs of developments will still be taken through section 106 agreements. Local green infrastructure is likely to include play areas and local parks and amenity green spaces. Strategic green infrastructure, to be funded through CIL, is likely to include large strategic parks, large areas of natural and semi natural habitat, allotments and playing pitch provision. Because CIL has to include all types of infrastructure, green infrastructure contributions may be lost in the need to fund schools, transport and other priorities from a limited charge per house. Get working on your elected members and make sure provisions are made for green space.

## The Big xxxxx xxxxxx

Answer: The Big Tree Plant

The Big Tree plant is a campaign that will plant one million extra trees across England in the next four years, launched by Defra Minister Jim Paice in December 2010. From April 2011, £4.2 million will be available to support community groups to plant trees in towns, cities and residential areas throughout England.

## xxxxxx xxxxxx offers hope of well being

Answer: White Paper

This is about the Public Health White Paper, The Health and Social Care Bill 2011 introduces to Parliament in January will include the transfer of Public Health responsibility to upper tier local authorities. Green spaces and sport centres will be essential ingredients in delivering the exercise element of health improvement interventions. Directors of Public Health will be employed by the local authority and ambassadors of health issues for the local population. In practice, this means they will lead discussion about how ring fenced money is spent to improve health. The Healthy Lives, Healthy People White paper report acknowledges the relationship between the quality of the environment to health and wellbeing of local populations. Under reforms to the planning system the DCLG will streamline planning policy to align social, economic, environmental and health priorities in one area.

## Whatever happened to xxxxxx

Answer: PPG17

Planning Minister Greg Clark has announced a review of planning policy, designed to consolidate policy statements, circulars and guidance documents into a single consolidated National Planning Policy Framework. The framework will be:

- Localist in approach, handing power back to local communities
- Used as a mechanism for delivering Government objectives only where it is relevant, proportionate and effective to do so
- User-friendly and accessible, providing clear policies on making robust local and neighbourhood plans and development management decisions.

The Minister has invited organisations and individuals to offer their suggestions to the department on what priorities and policies could be adopted to produce a shorter, more decentralised and less bureaucratic NPPF.



# “I don’t think it’s our job to make cuts; I think it’s our job to get more resources.”

1. There are toolkits and guides available which are well worth a read: such as paying for parks, community green and making the invisible visible by CABI and also on the Local Government Improvement and Development website: [www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk).
2. Commercial bonds and funding: Involvement in the community is hugely important for companies.
3. Heritage Lottery Funding: There will be an increase in funding for major projects from 20 to 30 million once the Olympics is over so be ready for this. The second round commissioning deadline has been abolished too so it is going to be easier to apply.
4. Taxes: Parish Councils can be a major source of income.
5. Have you thought about Giftaid, so that people are able to Giftaid your park as part of their inheritance? It’s perfectly legal and there are lots of people out there with good memories of parks. Language is crucial here, don’t focus on ‘endowment’ or ‘legacy’ but instead use the word ‘gift’.
6. If you want to get funding you have to get political. Understand strategic direction and be aware of major changes in the law.
7. Keep abreast of planning laws and their provisions for green space: The building boom will come and you need to be in there.
8. Understand the process of allocation and how opinions are formed by decision makers. If they aren’t working for you then find out where they are coming from, what’s important to them and how you can encourage them to think you are on their side.
9. Be in the know: You can’t affect funding decisions if you don’t know the current direction. Find out who’s in post, which professional bodies your senior management are members of, what their voting habits are, what are their interests. If you want to negotiate more funding you need to understand how to influence decision makers.
10. Become a good advocate for your service. For this you need passion. Think ‘what can I achieve as a result of developing and using my inherent qualities.’ Make it difficult to cut your service.

## Consultants Len Croney and Sidney Sullivan with ten ways to increase your green space funding.

Len Croney is a former chief officer in a unitary authority and has worked as an independent consultant since 2001 when he formed Pengelly Consulting, advising local authorities, private sector companies. Len is also an IDEa peer and a strategic advisor and leadership mentor for CABI.

Sidney Sullivan describes himself as “a long-term international parks and green spaces practitioner and consultant who is not sitting on my laurels” He is currently managing director of SGS Environmental and Management Consultancy.

## David Evans on...models of parks and green space management

There has been increasing recognition of the strategic importance of green space and green infrastructure over recent years. We have seen a development of voluntary sector management parks and open spaces against a climate of substantial cuts in public sector funding. New models of organising services are emerging including Trusts, with different degrees of independence, as well as Registered Social Landlords and management companies. These bring their own advantages and disadvantages. Almost by default it appears that green space management is becoming increasingly fragmented, potentially undermining attempts to take a more strategic approach as well as economies of scale. Most independent trusts have been set up with substantial endowments from well-resourced new town development corporations, or their successor bodies. In addition, parks and green space management is a service that many authorities, despite the financial pressures, appear keen to keep under their control as it is generally well-valued by local people. David Evans is a landscape and green space consultant and presented the workshop ‘Exploring every model’. He is a trained landscape architect with over 25 years experience in the green space sector.

## Martin Horton on...leading in difficult times

In times of uncertainty people want some sort of direction and idea of what is going to happen next. They’d actually feel better if they knew more about numbers. Ask yourself too, can you put a positive slant on this? Can you offer a vision of what this might look like in three or four year’s time and how can we get the need of the community met in the future? The more people can talk about these things, the more they gain a sense of control over what is happening. Inspire your colleagues: Talk to them, give them ideas, explore their ideas and work it through together. Get your staff to help you solve the problems we face. Be creative, look at different ways of doing the same job, People seek from their leaders authenticity, honesty and a sense that they are part of something valuable. One of the most powerful things we can do is remind ourselves of the things we do well to bring a sense of worth. Martin Horton is director of consultancy firm MAH Associates. His past positions include director at Improvement and Development Agency



Photo: Bulb planting and undergrowth clearance activity in Sara Park with the Friends of Sara Park and local school Holy Trinity.

# Birmingham community forums: ‘a voice for green space’

Birmingham is a complex area for service provision. There are over one million people living in the metropolitan area and a further six million within 50 miles of the centre. This year, the council has to make a £330 million saving, including 760 thousand on grounds maintenance contracts. The parks and green space service has lost 43 posts.

Head of parks, Darren Share, explains: “We have looked at the position of parks and repositioned them in the Big Society, working with friends groups and working with health groups. There is no way we could provide the same service on our own.”

The new structure is service based. Constituency parks managers go out to work with friends groups and there is a target every year to get more people involved. The council works closely with the Birmingham Open Spaces Forum, founded by Sarah Royal: “In 2005 a number of us in friends groups decided we needed to form a network and a common voice for all Birmingham’s parks and open spaces. Currently there are 130 friends of parks groups representing a diversity of spaces and we are going for charity status. We work with partners and networks including Wildlife Trusts, the RSPB, grounds maintenance groups and the council.”

The forum helps setup new friends groups, sources funding, and offers advice when sites are under threat. Says Sarah. “We are getting groups to take on ownership of a bed in the park or open space. With the cuts some beds are being grassed over so a number of groups got on it and we supply plants.

“The benefit to community groups to join a forum is if we all say the same thing we get noticed and it networks them to other groups to share best practice. The next step up is the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces; it’s just as important to get national group for community groups to create a larger voice for parks and green spaces.”

If you have a Community Parks Forum or a collection of Friends Groups, The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS) can offer help, support and guidance. Contact Sarah Royal to find out more. E: [sarah.royal09@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:sarah.royal09@blueyonder.co.uk).

# GreenSpace summarises the impacts of the Comprehensive Spending Review on the sector

GreenSpace is currently undertaking a survey of local authority parks and green space teams to better understand how the public spending cuts arising from the Coalition Government's Comprehensive Spending Review are likely to affect the delivery of their services. The survey primarily addresses the financial year 2011/2012 and looks at the impact on green space budgets, the approaches being taken to reducing expenditure, the effect of these changes in terms of staffing structures and delivery against core management objectives, as well as longer term strategies for delivering parks and green space services in the future. From the results gathered during a three week period during March, 63 responses were received; here GreenSpace analyses the findings so far.

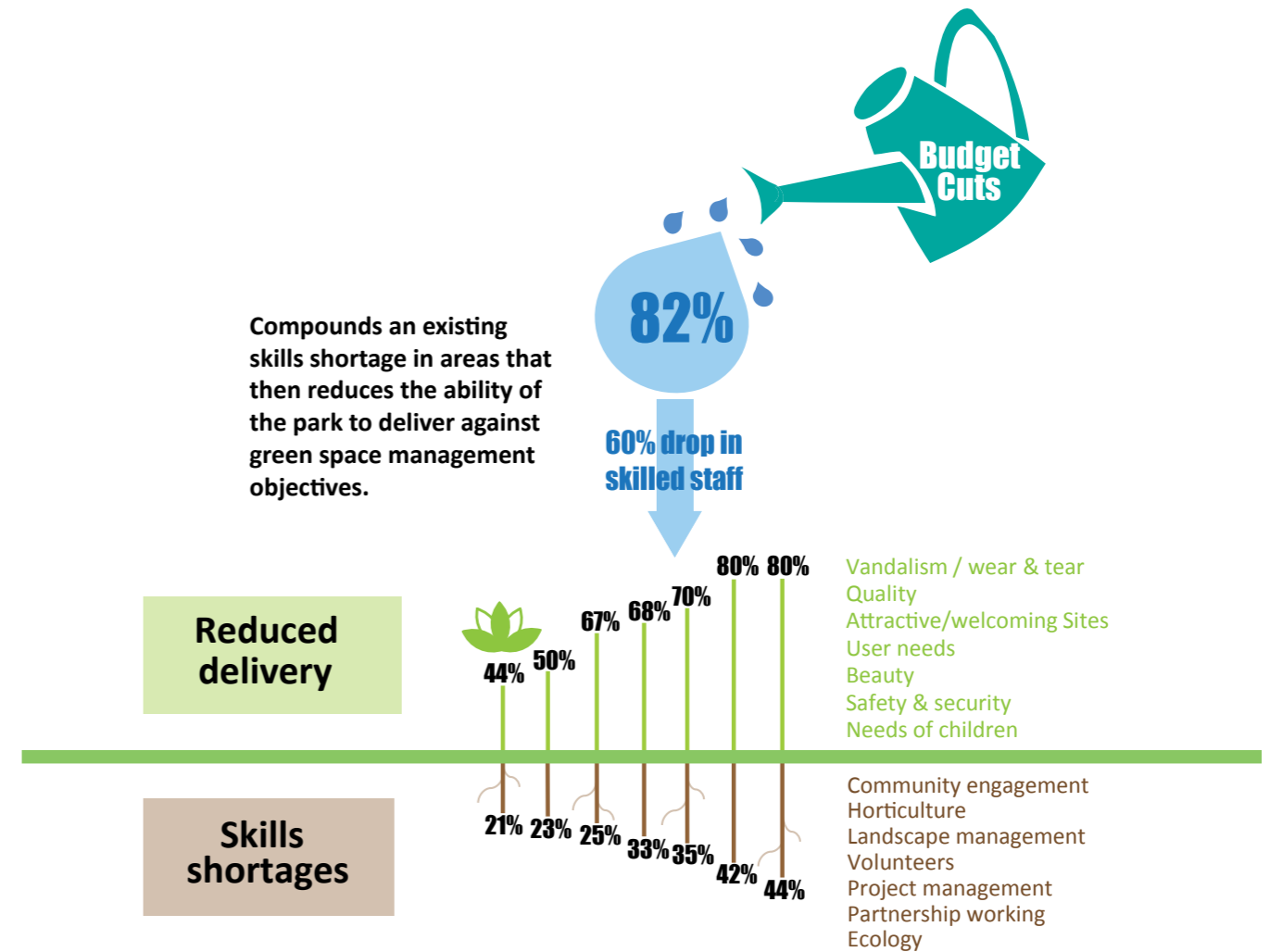
Perhaps unsurprisingly the vast majority of respondents reported that their budgets would be reduced; there are very few local authorities that do not have to find significant savings and in general most have publicly aligned themselves to a culture of sharing the pain of cuts across all service areas. Disappointingly then we find that almost half of the respondents stated that cuts to green space budgets would be greater or significantly greater than the cuts to the local authority as a whole; in keeping with recent history and despite all of the work to redefine and provide better advocacy for the social, environmental and economic value of green spaces, it appears that once again parks services are being penalised for their lack of statutory status. Almost a third of respondents who reported that their budgets would be reduced expected that the savings required in this first year would exceed 20%.

The vast majority of respondents are expecting to lose staff with job cuts identified as the primary or most effective means of achieving 'significant' savings. Whilst this may have been expected, it is worrying to see that almost a third of jobs lost were 'frontline staff' and a further 17% of job losses would be met through the loss of horticulturalists, a specialist skills area already identified as being in short supply. Other skilled specialists with a direct role in the maintenance or improvement of green spaces and ecosystem services, arborists, ecologists landscape designers, security staff and apprentices, collectively made up a further 12% of job losses. The combined data suggests that 60% of the jobs being lost involve staff who are directly involved in the maintenance and upkeep of green spaces, effectively frontline rather than backroom staff. A statistic that suggests the Coalition's claim, that budgets could be reduced without damage to frontline services, is unrealistic to green space services.

Many other budget saving approaches are also being implemented with general efficiency savings. The suspension of improvement works, increased income generation, reduction of basic maintenance operations, the loss of annual bedding and changes to procurement methods are the only other options commonly thought likely to yield more than minor savings.

The changes being made will directly impact on green space quality and the ability of teams to deliver against management objectives now considered core to providing a good service. 70-80% report that quality standards will fall, spaces will be less attractive and welcoming and wear and tear and vandalism won't be dealt with fully. 50-70% report that sites will become less beautiful, will fail to meet the needs of users and will not be as safe and secure. 37-44% report a reduced ability to meet the needs of children and young people or the needs of older people and around a third expect reduced ability to deliver against biodiversity, climate change, community cohesion, healthy lifestyle, and social inclusion objectives.

Previous studies have shown that the sector has an ageing and unrepresentative workforce, and many of the most important skill sets



are held by staff reaching the end of their careers. The responses to the budget deficit will only serve to compound these known issues with over 40% of respondents expecting significant skills shortages in horticulture and community engagement, over a third expect issues with landscape management and working with volunteers and 20-25% identify expected skills shortages in project management, partnership working, ecology and commercial acumen. Many of these skills shortages are directly relevant to the Coalition's aspirations around Big Society, localism and innovation.

Looking forward to longer term approaches to service delivery, the alternative delivery model that seems to be most likely to be applied, especially where teams are facing large budget reductions, appears to be 'merging with other service areas as part of a broader delivery unit'; effectively the green space team is subsumed within a larger service area with substantially larger budgets. At best this approach may mean that green space teams will be able to take advantage of a centralised admin function, benefit from savings through economies of scale and avoid further cuts because they are then seen as too small to be worth significant further attention. Alternatively, when the relatively small

green space team is absorbed within the larger team, usually 'Street Scene' of 'Neighbourhood' service, their lack of perceived power and importance can result in most of the green space management team, development staff and specialist staff being sacrificed in favour of the more generic management approach of the larger team. Green spaces are then managed in exactly the same way as the highways, verges and anonymous amenity areas typical of most streetscapes. With the loss of green space specialists comes a dwindling rate of return in relation to the health, environmental and community benefits derived from high quality well managed green space.

Anecdotally, it appears to be the latter of these two options that is most commonly occurring. There is a real danger that the parks and green space team will be lost and with them the skills knowledge and expertise needed to deliver the full range of potential benefits. It is ironic and fundamentally wrong that the teams who have consistently delivered the service that has been most highly used and regarded by local communities, should become the one least likely to survive the economic cull.

## The Comprehensive Spending Review

The Comprehensive Spending Review published in October 2010 set out how the Coalition Government would carry out its deficit reduction plan. As a result of the choices made by Government, its departmental budgets other than health and overseas aid would be cut by an average of 19% over four years.

The Spending Review has been underpinned by a radical programme of public service reform, with the stated intention of: "changing the way services are delivered by redistributing power away from central government and enabling sustainable, long term improvements in services." Through the Public Service Reform and Localism Bill the Government's objectives are:

- Localising power and funding, including by removing ring-fencing around resources to local
- Authorities and extending the use of personal budgets for service users;
- Cutting burdens and regulations on frontline staff, including policing, education and procurement
- Increasing diversity of provision in public services through further use of payment by results, removing barriers to greater independent provision, and supporting communities, citizens and volunteers to play a bigger role in shaping and providing services
- Improving the transparency, efficiency and accountability of public services.

The Spending Review increases local authorities' freedom to manage their budgets, but because they will now receive significantly reduced allocations they will be required to make very tough choices on how services are delivered.

## Further information

The questionnaire was first circulated during the week beginning 7th March 2011 with a three week deadline. The short response time enabled GreenSpace to gather evidence to inform a meeting with the Communities Minister Andrew Stunell MP. A total of 63 completed responses were received in that time and from those responses an interim report has been created. GreenSpace now intends to extend the deadline for responses and continue to promote the survey to its membership and the wider local authority managed green space sector. **To download the full interim report or to complete the survey visit: [www.green-space.org.uk/csrsurvey](http://www.green-space.org.uk/csrsurvey)**

## Resources at a glance

### **Blue Sky, Green Space**

A report outlining the many benefits that a diverse range of quality green spaces bring, covering health; communities; economic and environmental value, produced by GreenLINK.

[www.green-space.org.uk/resources/GreenLINK](http://www.green-space.org.uk/resources/GreenLINK)

### **CABE guide to asset transfer**

Community-led space: a guide for local authorities and community groups provides practical advice on the issues to consider.

[www.cabe.org.uk/news/public-open-space-transfer](http://www.cabe.org.uk/news/public-open-space-transfer)

### **Community Green Space and New Development**

**Guidance** produced by the Hertfordshire Countryside Management Service, Watling Chase Community Forest and the Countryside Agency.

<http://enquire.hertscc.gov.uk/wccf/publications.htm>

### **Parks Match**

A forum designed to help you find solutions to a green space or parks related problem and also share stories of your success.

[www.parksmatch.org.uk](http://www.parksmatch.org.uk)

### **Heritage Lottery Fund**

The body which distributes a share of the income from the National Lottery to projects aimed at preserving our heritage, including parks, historic places and the natural environment.

[www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

### **Institute of Parks and Green Space (IPGS)**

The UK's only institute solely dedicated to parks and green spaces.

[www.ipgs.org.uk](http://www.ipgs.org.uk)

### **Natural England**

The government's advisor on the natural environment.

[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

### **Washington Parks & People**

The campaign began 20 years ago with Meridian Hill/ Malcolm X Park, receiving the National Park Service's highest award for leading the transformation of the single most violent park in the capital region into one of its safest.

[www.washingtonparks.net](http://www.washingtonparks.net)



GreenSpace is a registered charity which works to improve parks and green spaces by raising awareness, involving communities and creating skilled professionals.

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