



GreenSpace Yorkshire and the Humber Funding and benchmarking: Making the links between expenditure on green space and quality

07/05/2009

Helen Beck, Research and futures advisor

Commission for Architecture
and the Built Environment

The government's advisor
on architecture, urban design
and public space

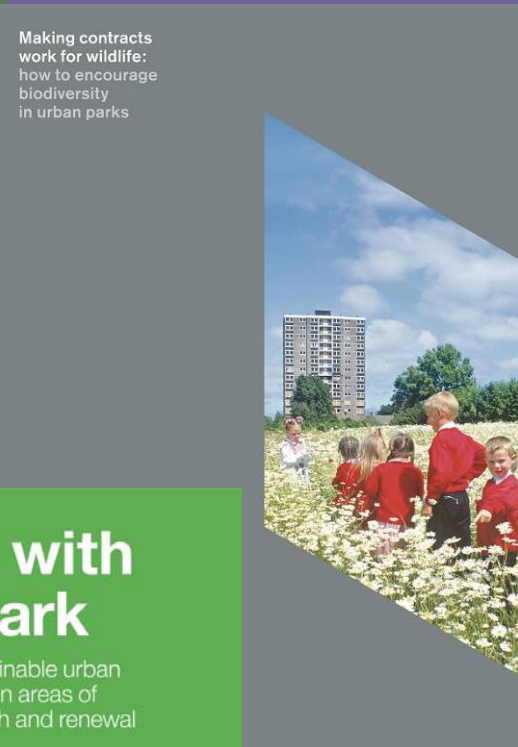
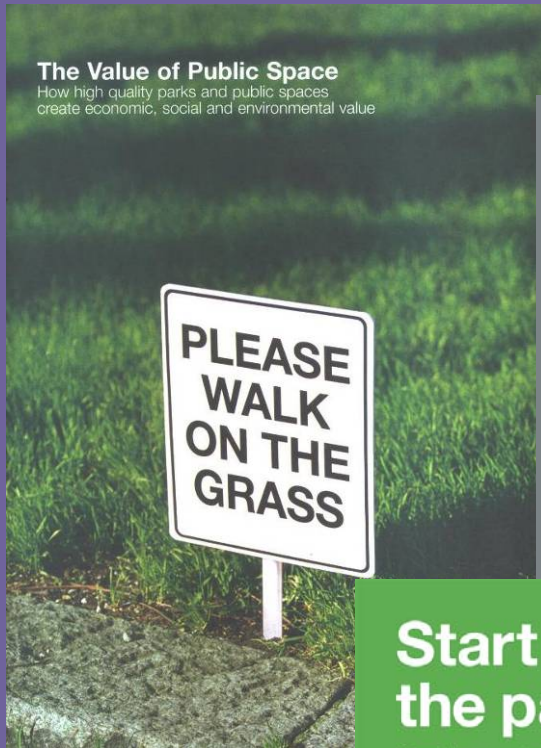
Aims of presentation?



- Brief introduction to CABE Space
- Summary of CABE Space research into links between expenditure on parks and green spaces and the quality of these spaces
- Feedback from previous seminars and web consultation. Match your experience?
- Other CABE Space work on funding?



The government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space.



- Research
- Best practice and standards
- Direct support to LA's e.g. production of green space strategies
- Campaigns e.g. Parkforce
- Skills

Funding for urban green space



- Two decades of under investment during 1970s and 1980s
- 91% of people think that parks contribute to their quality of life
- A neglected legacy at end of 20thC



Urban Parks: Do you know what you're getting for your money?



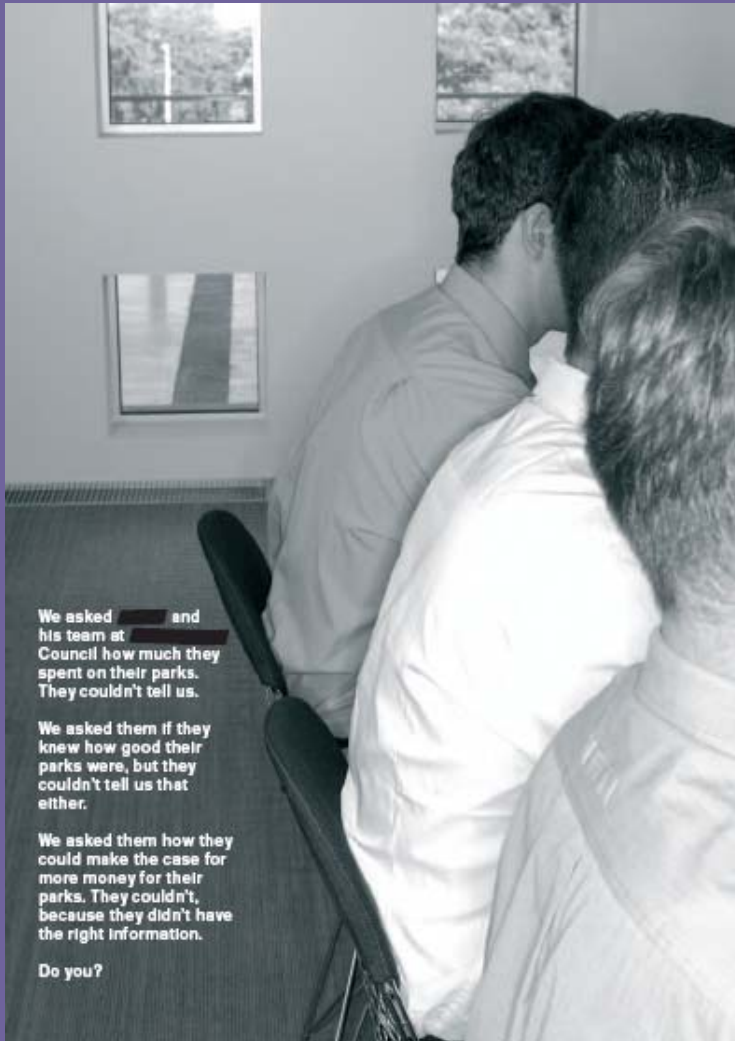
- Does a 10% increase in funding equal a 10% increase in quality?
- Do some councils deliver better parks for their money than others?
- 8 local authority case study authorities

Making the most of what you have...



- To define and understand the relationship between local authority spending decisions and priorities and the consequent quality of parks and urban green spaces
- To identify the potential ways of **optimising existing resources** to deliver high quality green spaces
- To **identify priority needs** for additional resource allocation that will contribute greatest added value to parks and urban green spaces and green space quality
- Additional urgency due to current economic climate – those services that have the best data on their worth will do best

What did we discover?



- Most did not have comprehensive figures showing how much they were spending on their park
- Few of them had a clear idea of what quality they were trying to achieve

What did we discover?

- Some authorities do not separate their expenditure on the parks service from spending on other public service delivery areas.
- Most of the local authorities did not have much information on the quality of individual sites
- Very difficult to compare different local authorities due to different accounting practices. Lack of benchmarked data

Missed opportunity?



The NAO report *Enhancing Urban Green Spaces* states....

“current budgeting, accounting and financial reporting procedures and practices of local authorities made it difficult to devise appropriate economy and efficiency measures for green space.....the potential of benchmarking to drive up efficiency is not being realised...”

Challenges in assessing the spend and quality and therefore performance!



- **Lack of tools:** Currently there is no statutory national quality standard for parks and urban green spaces.
 - Green Flag Award
 - capturing people's perceptions of a space via user surveys, CABE Space's Spaceshaper
- **Methodology issues:** e.g. simple spend per hectare not appropriate
- **Data issues:** Best Value now replaced by New Place Survey and lack of LAA indicators

It is possible!



- Some local authorities are gathering useful data and managing strategically, key benefits from learning from other LA's systems. E.g. Bristol
- Green space strategies and parks management plans key to setting vision, identifying political and financial support needed.

Does this snapshot of eight local authorities reflect your own experiences?



- You broadly know how much is being spent: 79% of respondents knew how much money they currently spend across the whole of their parks & green space service and 71% could track income and expenditure for the whole of the green space service over the last 5 years
- Less site level data: 29% of people could tell us how much was spent per site but 29% told us they didn't know the information for any sites
- Lack of quality information: 79% of people couldn't track the level of quality achieved for the whole green space services for the last 5 years

-
- Green Flag is the main tool for measuring quality
 - Data collection methods need to be simple, easy to understand and to apply and take data protection into account
 - Issues around capacity of local authorities to collect data
 - Opportunity to link into Local Area Agreements but still lack relevant indicators that relate to parks
 - Sustainability of revenue funding still a big issue

Paying for parks: are there better funding arrangements?



- Reviews alternative mechanisms of funding urban green spaces
- Considers 8 broad models and tests them against a context of low and high housing demand scenarios

Parks in the credit crunch: making the real value of park assets explicit



- **New CABE Space research**
Making the invisible visible: the real value of park assets
- **Aims to produce more accurate calculations of the value of parks and green spaces**
- **Facilitate well evidenced arguments for adequate funding and negotiate confidently in a climate of tightening budgets**



Thank you.

Helen Beck
hbeck@cabe.org.uk

**Commission for Architecture
and the Built Environment**

**The government's advisor
on architecture, urban design
and public space**