

periscope



Parks and responsibility

Green for Victory

This is the first of Periscope's research publications. However, this is by no means the first research project that our studio has undertaken. Research is and always has been deeply ingrained within our everyday. It is the way we think, talk, design and act.

The *Green for Victory* series stems from our work over recent years with local authorities and public bodies across London; from the increasingly frequent conversations we have regarding quantifying and qualifying green space, and the simply impossible expectation that this can be done in one succinct line. From the green 'war' we find ourselves fighting daily.

We would like to thank Dan Epstein for his infinite knowledge of London's parks, and for being our critical friend for the project; our park storytellers for their generosity and time, and finally, a big thank you to our beloved parks for their perseverance.

Green for Victory: Parks and responsibility

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Periscope is a design practice skilled in the fields of architecture, landscape and urbanism, seeking to meet the challenges of our and future generations. We design and deliver resilient projects that work for people and planet, grounding our interventions within their greater ecological, topographic and social fabric.

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Foreword

It's an ordinary Saturday afternoon and my desk seems to have morphed into a drain, slowly sucking away any scraps of motivation I have left. What would you do to seek relief? Perhaps you would open your window, sit in your garden or go for a walk?

I get up, put on a jacket (there's no pressure to fuss about how presentable I look) and leave for my local park. It's a five minute walk if I take the shortest route or about twelve minutes if I detour through the Edwardian suburbs.

For those of us who have this opportunity, this may seem mundane but our pursuit of this kind of quietness is essential. Green spaces are spaces to get away, to contemplate, to be silent or to simply be in relation with the natural environment around us. Our verdant spaces are our lungs, they help us breathe both literally and metaphorically.

Environmental activists such as Donelle N. Dreese state that place is inherent to how we nurture a sense of wellness through the establishment of a community. So what happens to a community's sense of self when there is a lack of access to nature?

It is time we start viewing our parks as necessary basic rights and not luxuries. It is obvious that the provision of adequate green space directly reflects the existing structural inequalities of a city. Contemporary urban life in cities like London is often linked to chronic stress and insufficient physical activity. So it is no coincidence that this lack of nature manifests as both mental and physical ill health and is found to be higher among those who come from low income households and vulnerable communities like refugees.

Green for Victory is a call for policy makers to take responsibility in maintaining a meaningful relationship of reciprocity with local people and their green spaces. How can we conjure emotion, meaning or memory from bureaucratic mediums like maps and graphs?

It turns out that it is the subtleties found in each of our individual stories that make a difference. The multiplicities found in personal experiences, from the honest Google reviews of Trent County Park to the sensitive care taking of Barking Park by the local cafe owner Marina Sanduleac, show us the richness of the in-between and the everyday that we as readers can find familiarity in. This intimacy is realised in local culture and is something that we can lose once we're out of its sphere.

As you make your way through this research, you may recognise that it's not just about ticking off the number of times you see the colour green on a map. Perhaps it's about reconfiguring or expanding our understanding of communal care-taking. To see green space as cultivating ecological communities using languages of care. After all, as we continue to permeate other organisms and environments, we human beings are only one component of the ecosystem. A relationship that will always be mutually necessary and sustaining.

Nasra Abdullahi
New Architecture Writers

Introduction

London is growing both greyer and greener. More dense and more intense. In our time of radical urbanisation, environmental and economic crisis, and daily battles against social, mental and physical illness, we are lucky to find ourselves living in the heart of one of the richest, lushest and most cared-for National Parks in the world.

Statistically, London claims to be the greenest major city in Europe - at 47% green it is the third-greenest of its size in the world. It is home to almost as many trees as people; it is the first National Park City, the world's biggest urban forest.

Yet Londoners still desperately lack access to nature. In 2016, government statistics reported that 1 in 9 children in Great Britain did not set foot in any natural space - park, beach, forest or likewise - for over a year; and our capital's urban growth rate continues to radically outstrip the provision of new green spaces. As the sheer demand put on parks during the COVID crisis in 2020 highlighted, however green London may claim to be we still find ourselves in a mounting green space crisis.

So how can London be so statistically green, yet the equivalent natural benefits not be felt on a personal level? If we are to transpose the claim that our capital is almost 50% green into our daily London life, then shouldn't the average rush-hour commute down Old Street be at least half as verdant as a roam across the rugged fells of the Lake District? If London is truly a mighty forest then shouldn't the air be at least a fraction as fresh and mind-clearing as a stroll across the Brecon Beacons?

Unfortunately, the disparity lies in that much of London's 67.5 million hectares of green space remains inaccessible and disparate, either over-sanitised or poorly maintained. Our urban nature is not revered with the same wonder as a truly natural landscape. It is there sure enough, but we remain disconnected.

This gap between the amount of available green space versus the actual integration of it into daily London life escapes statistical analysis. Although a multitude of initiatives exist to quantify green space through data and stats, few go so far as to interrogate or measure true landscape value - to understand what parks really mean to people, and understand our true connection (or lack thereof) to urban nature.

But how could they even begin to quantify this? Nature is not an asset, nor subject to the financial 'developer' vocabulary of urban green space. The inherent benefits of connecting with nature are subjective, personal and felt. They differ from person to person, from day to day, or are discernible across prolonged timescales - such as in health and the combatting of stress. The value of nature encompasses an entire ecosystem of issues and reasonings. As Natalie Bennett, former leader of the Green Party said, "true value is just beyond valuation".

The International Green Flag Award is currently the closest that Britain has to assessing quality or value of our green spaces. However the award focusses primarily on the provision of facilities rather than the real reasons why people love parks, or the true benefits of nature to society. If the Green Flag Award criteria were applied to a National Park, a forest or a range of mountains, they would more than likely fail. People do not visit National Parks for their toilets.

It is time to establish a planning system that understands its green spaces through a more natural and less quantified method of valuation. A system that, to paraphrase David Attenborough, acknowledges humans as ‘being part of nature’ as opposed to ‘apart from nature’. One that appreciates nuance, change, locality and specificity of place. Such subjective qualities are hugely undervalued - difficult to analyse, easy to blow away. Yet they are how we live, and to start to understand these qualities is the only way we can begin to explain the disparity between our city’s apparent abundance of green, and the absence of nature in our everyday urban life.

***Green for Victory* tackles London’s current lack of a sufficient natural value system, by interrogating the gap between the stats and the stories. It collates a multifaceted, collaborative and purposefully subjective assessment of London’s parks - a methodology that looks to embrace subjective views and individual stories on an equal footing to government statistics.**

Across four issues, we tackle four core challenges that disconnect London’s people from their parks, and that are not explained through stats alone. We move through scales from the citywide, to tread through four boroughs in the far North, South, East and West. Visiting the publicly ‘top rated’ parks of each borough, we talk with the people who know the parks best. We bridge the gap between statistics and the personal experience, to discuss what qualities our parks both have and lack, and what really keeps nature at arm’s length.

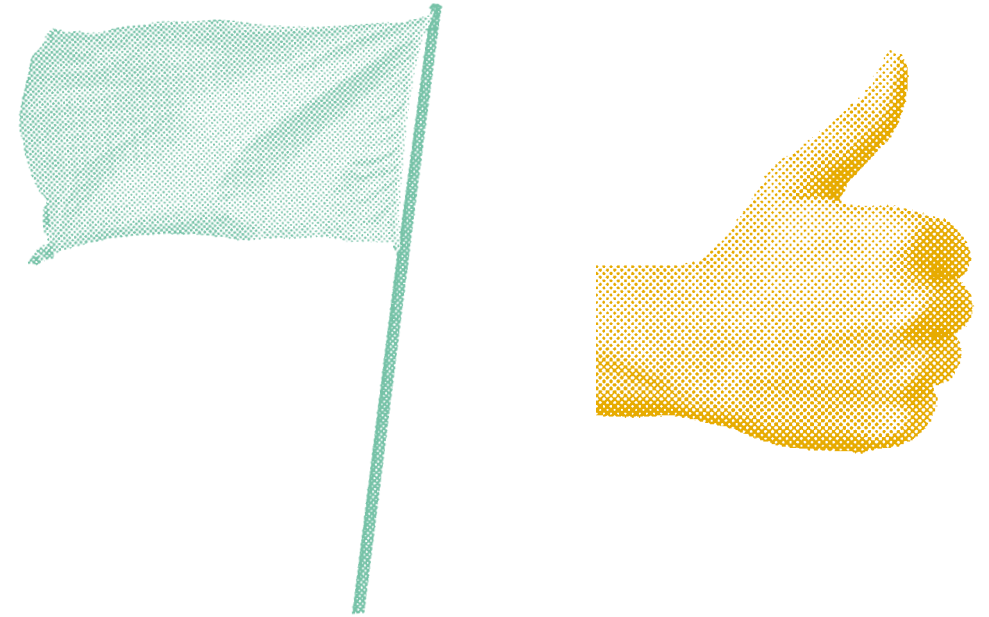
Finally, from our collected tales we take up arms, identifying the issues that the stats sweep over and perceiving our parks through the eyes of their people. In quiet protest against numeric quantification, we draw a communal portrait of each park, addressing each core issue. The park portraits reframe our relationships, calling for re-connection between people and parks, and insisting we re-establish ourselves as ‘part of nature’.

Green for Victory

- Issue 01 Parks and the wild
Richmond Park, Richmond upon Thames**
- Issue 02 Parks and open doors
Barking Park, Barking and Dagenham**
- Issue 03 Parks and responsibility
Wandle Park, Croydon**
- Issue 04 Parks and money
Trent Park, Enfield**

01 Green flags vs yellow thumbs

On putting a value on nature



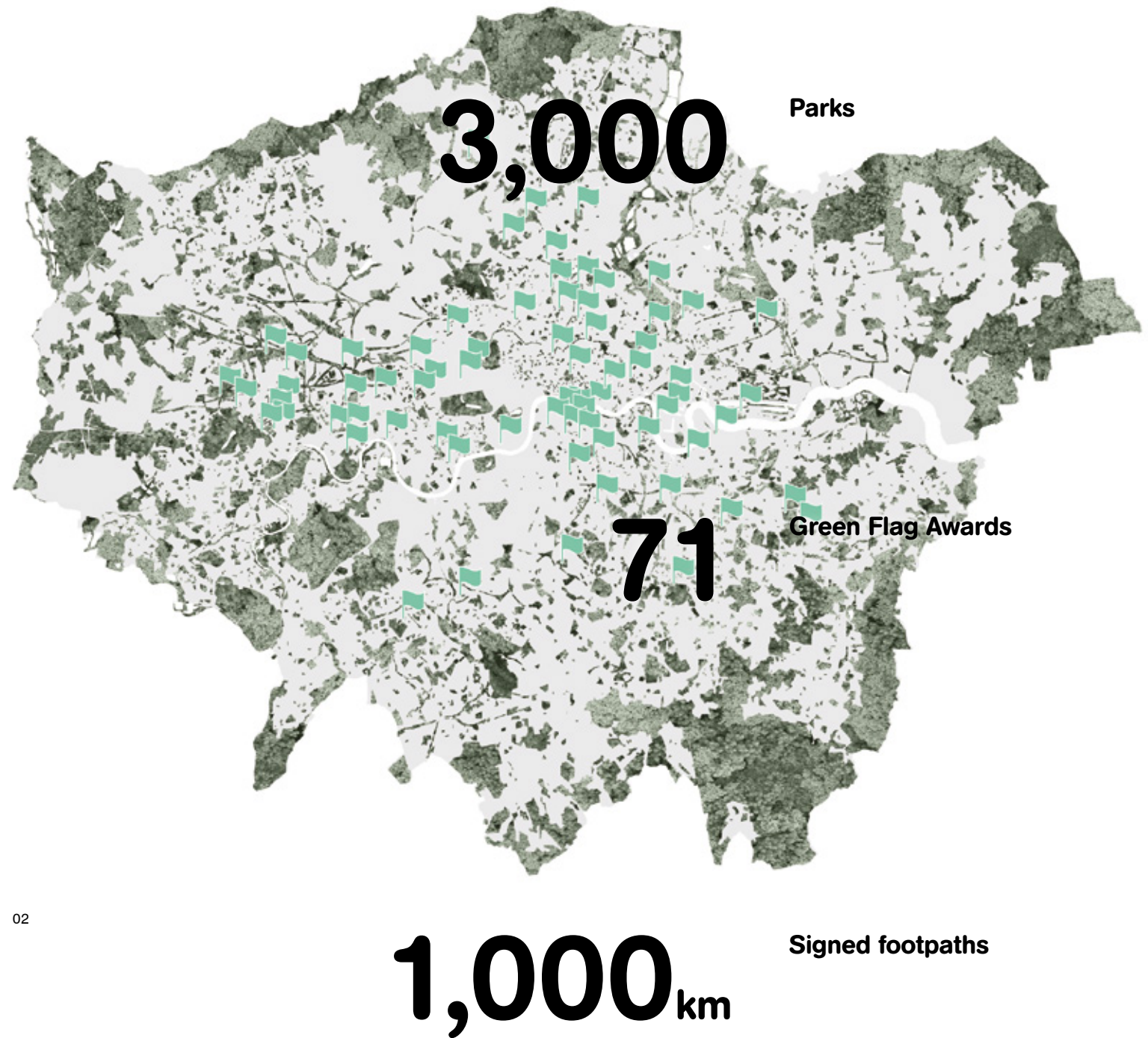
01

How do we assess nature in the city? The Green Flag Award is the most widely recognised standard we currently have to gauge park quality. The international accreditation rewards well-managed green spaces with an ‘international mark of quality’, assessed against an extensive set of criteria, supplemented by a management plan. Green Flags have recently been awarded to university campus lawns clipped and mown on a bi-weekly basis, and retail spaces with an abundance of litter bins and fairground rides.

The Green Flag award focusses on facility provision rather than natural, experiential or ecosystem values. It is primarily a tick-box exercise, the same criteria being applied locally as they are nationally as they are globally.

- Control of dogs/dog fouling
- Personal security
- Play and exercise equipment
- Bins
- Policy on chewing gum
- Marketing plan

Are these the parameters through which we really wish to value our landscape? Would the Lake District, the most visited National Park in Britain, win a Green Flag Award?



02



03

03 The Lake District, England
04 Snowdonia National Park, Wales



04

The Green Flag award may be extensive but it does not go far enough. If we are to take seriously that London really is the first National Park City, we need to approach it with the same mindset and set of expectations as we do a true National Park. This does not focus on quanta or provision of facilities, but rather on the inherent qualities of place. Measuring value through a universal list of tick-boxes is simply not an appropriate approach. It is not how nature works. Similarly, a single uniform measure cannot be used across the whole globe, without relating to local conditions, cultures and contexts.

A WELCOMING PLACE

● **Welcome** ● All major entrances should be visited, and all of the facilities where possible. For large sites such as country parks and waterways, judges should be shown a representative variety of entrances and facilities, and during each subsequent visit their tour should take in a different cross-section ● The welcome given should be appropriate to the site ● Every element of management combines to give a sense of welcome, or otherwise ● Well considered and innovative, yet practical, design features can really encourage people to enjoy using the site. Incorporate elements such as interesting planting, varied textures, and natural and built features that can be explored in play and used for relaxation ● **Good and Safe Access** ● Presence of clear sightlines in and out, and welcoming entrances (but practical ones – vehicular barriers can be used) ● Public transport links and whether they can be improved ● Pedestrian routes – whether they are logical, useful and suitable for the whole range of users. For example, are they wide enough for the likely combinations of cycles/pedestrians/prams/wheelchairs/children/dogs to use safely together? ● Cycles within the site – whether to encourage them with appropriate provision or provide safe storage at entry points. Are cycle routes designed to be complimentary and minimise conflict? ● Vehicles on site (including service vehicles), appropriate signage, control and safety measures, including how shared access between vehicles and pedestrians is managed ● Car parking – if provided, appropriate provision for the quantity and range of visitors ● Equality of access including disabled access – the site should adhere to relevant national legislation and the standards set in the UK Equality Act 2010 as a minimum. On site and online as appropriate, provide clear information on the accessibility of the various routes and areas to different users. Where appropriate, an access statement, a marketing document providing detailed information on the accessibility of your site, could be drawn up and published ● Public access and the safety of residents either on the site (e.g. canals, housing estates, hospitals) or local residents in the immediate vicinity ● **Signage** ●

Sites attracting visitors from a distance may benefit from installing signs from major routes; for others with mostly local and repeat visitors a sign at or near the entrance is enough; for some rural sites, very minimal signage may be appropriate ● Signs should be placed only where needed, for example at entrances, or ‘honeypot’ sites ● Consideration should be given to where they are sited, for example at what angle to approach routes and at what height, so that they can be seen and read easily ● Sign design should be coherent and complement the overall ‘feel’ of the green space ● The information should help users to have an enjoyable visit ● Knowing your visitors, use appropriate maps, accessibility information, infographics, other languages, and display lists of events and activities, by-laws, regulations, and interpretation boards. All of the information should be current ● Messages should be friendly, welcoming and clear ●

● **Equal Access for All** ● Consider the whole community – who is using it now? Are they well served? Who might use it but currently are not? How can it be made safer for them? Are there cultural issues that need to be considered? One of the ways of assessing this is to invite different groups to visit and use the site and provide feedback ● Is the placement of facilities well thought out with a range of busy and quieter areas if the space allows? Are there areas where dogs are prohibited? ● Not all areas have to be made physically accessible to all visitors – but provide information on site where appropriate as well as off-site so that visitors can look up accessible areas in advance. You may consider publishing an access statement, a marketing document providing detailed information on the accessibility of the site ● Staff and contractors on site should be identifiable, helpful and courteous ●

HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE

● **Appropriate Provision of Quality Facilities and Activities** ● Play and exercise equipment, trim trails, active volunteering programmes, health and fitness activities and suitable sporting facilities ● Provision of seating: for contemplation, physical rest, solitude, and enjoyment of nature ● Healthy eating options in the cafe ● Life-rings by open water (if deemed appropriate) ● First aid facilities ● Appropriate toilet provision – toilet facilities should be provided where the size of the site or extent of the facilities demands them, and should comply with national disability access regulations ● **Safe Equipment and Facilities** ● This criterion examines whether the equipment and facilities provided on site are safe to use, and that any events or activities held on the site are safely managed ● This might include policies and records on health and safety, risk assessments, food hygiene, noise and pollution levels ● **Personal Security** ● Consider the need for on-site staff presence. Where appropriate, and in line with good practice, there should be permanent staff on site at least during peak hours. Contact details should be clearly provided on signage for out-of-hours problem reporting. Staff should be readily identifiable, approachable, trained and with the responsibility to deal with security situations. Ideally, each staff member should be in telephone or radio contact with base. Where possible, organise grounds maintenance activity to ensure that the same staff are present at particular times, making them familiar to the community ● Consider whether there are clear sightlines and views in and out of the site. Ensure that shrubbery and trees are properly maintained or removed where necessary to avoid creating secluded areas or pathways, and where possible have paths connect with places where people congregate. Consider installing lighting along paths and in car parks used by the public when it is dark. Play areas should be informally visible where possible and ideally overlooked by housing ● Review issues that cause fear for different members of the community – for example, inclusivity, racism, drugs, bullying, vandalism, and vagrancy ● Risk assessments should consider the site as a whole and movements around it, not individual areas ● Carry out disclosure checks on staff where necessary ● Where possible, incorporate the green space into a Police or Community Support Officer beat;

seek powers for designated local authority officers to deal with statutory nuisance from individuals; build safety inspections into the regular staff walk-round; and set up a “watch” group with a monitored telephone number to enable Friends’ and Residents’ groups to report problems easily and provide an early warning of increases in anti-social behaviour ● Any hazards should be clearly marked and adequate steps taken to protect the public ● An Incident Log should be maintained and reviewed on a regular basis, and should form the basis for future decisions ● **Control of Dogs/Dog Fouling** ● Maintain a sound understanding of relevant national legislation and use it as necessary to control dogs on the site. Good practice is to keep dogs out of children’s play areas and off sports’ pitches, and consider making fenced and gated dog-free zones on grass so that children can sit and play with confidence ● Dogs can be excluded or requested to be on a lead at certain times of the year if it has an adverse effect on wildlife ● Consider holding events aimed at dog owners ● Are there strategies in place to handle dog walkers with multiple animals if they cause a problem? ● Liaise with local authority dog wardens and engage with local dog walking groups ● Consider using legislative powers where appropriate ●

WELL MAINTAINED AND CLEAN

● **Litter and Waste Management** ● Both users and staff have a responsibility in keeping a site free of litter and fouling ● An organisational culture should be developed whereby every staff member is prepared to pick up litter when they see it rather than waiting for the routine visit of a maintenance team ● Managers should study the patterns of littering throughout the day, week and year, and should deal with them accordingly ● Consider a specific policy on chewing gum – once it hardens it is costly and difficult to remove, detrimental to wildlife and a blight on the area – and smoking litter, if required ● Where appropriate, bins should be provided on site, with consideration given to providing separate recycling facilities, cigarette stub plates and dog fouling bins. Managers should regularly evaluate the overall provision, location, position, maintenance and emptying of bins. Bins should be carefully and securely positioned and emptied regularly to encourage proper use by the public ● Campaigns and events could be used to reduce particular problems, if appropriate ● Managers should understand and use relevant national legislation to tackle problems ● Managers should be aware of their legal duties under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to keep their relevant land clear of litter and refuse, and the Waste Management Licensing Regulations. These standards apply internationally as a minimum requirement for any Green Flag Award site ● Site waste storage areas should be positioned out of sight of the public and arrangements made to ensure that waste is transported off-site as quickly as possible ● Consider composting horticultural waste for use as a replacement for peat-based products. For example, can you chip clippings and use them as mulch? ● **Horticultural Maintenance** ● There should be evidence that good standards of horticultural practice are being maintained across all areas of the site, e.g. shrub beds, flower beds and grassed areas ● Sites must demonstrate appropriate management of other features, such as water bodies ● Work specifications should emphasise the quality of the end product and new tenders should include assessment of horticultural expertise and staff experience as well as cost ● If not done in-house, smaller contracts could be awarded for specialised items of grounds maintenance, such as shrubberies, lakes and ecology areas ● Can you involve volunteers (through, for example, Friends’ or Conservation Groups, Tenants and Residents’ Associations or green gym programmes) in looking after small areas of a site? It is vital that a dedicated, skilled member of staff is present to provide assistance and oversight and to ensure safety as well as the quality of the finished job ● **Arboricultural and Woodland Maintenance** ● Zoning the site according to levels of use to inform likely levels of risk ● Establishing regular informal inspections (by individuals familiar with the site) and formal (expert) observations at an appropriate frequency. Any problems should be reported, acted upon and these actions recorded ● Identifying any potentially problematic trees and developing an action plan to ensure safety and effective maintenance ● Making plans for replacement of the tree stock over time ● Site managers should have knowledge of key specimen trees and understand how to ensure their upkeep ● Taking suitable biosecurity actions relating to tree stock and measures to avoid the spread of tree diseases, including thorough cleaning of equipment and reputable stock sourcing ● What to do with dead wood on the site – for example, where and when it is left to provide a habitat for bats, hole nesting birds and invertebrates, where and when it is taken away for health and safety or aesthetic reasons ● **Building and Infrastructure Maintenance** ● This section broadly includes the buildings, fences, gates, paths and roadways on site. They should be well maintained and clear of graffiti, flyposting, weeds and potholes as relevant. The management plan should refer to schedules for maintenance, repainting and renewal, and policies for dealing with vandalism, fly-tipping, graffiti and fly-posting. ● **Equipment Maintenance** ● This criterion looks at the policies and procedures in place to carry out checks and maintenance on: the equipment used by staff, the equipment used by the public ●

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

● **Managing Environmental Impact** ● Judges will be looking to see that, where possible and where relevant, measures have been taken to reduce impact on the environment as the opportunity arises – usually when replacing old features or creating new ones ● Water efficiency – installing features to reduce water consumption and reuse rainwater where possible, in building, infrastructure and water bodies whether that be across whole canal systems, large water bodies or individual ornamental water features ● Energy saving or efficient features installed within buildings, in new vehicles and machinery ● Renewable energy generation on site or procurement of off-site power ● Measures taken to improve air quality ● Measures taken to stop pollution into water ● Measures taken to reduce noise pollution ● Purchasing choices give equal consideration to sustainable and socially and environmentally sound sources, alongside value for

money ● **Waste Minimisation** ● Have all facilities on the site been considered – cafes, concessions, sporting facilities, site operations? ● How is green waste handled? Is it mulched and put back on site? Is compost made from clippings? ● Recycling facilities should reflect the collection facilities available locally and be suitable for the type of litter generated and for the site itself ● **Chemical Use** ● Where are pesticides and fertilisers used? ● What would happen if there was no treatment? Is there a problem? ● Is there a way of altering the environment to prevent the problem? ● What physical or mechanical control methods are available? ● What biological control methods are available that can supplement the environmental, physical and mechanical methods in use? ● What are the least toxic chemical controls available that can supplement environmental, physical, mechanical and biological methods ● **Peat Use** ● Avoid purchasing plants grown in peat or products containing peat. Request relevant information from your suppliers ● Use alternatives to peat such as appropriate recycled waste, or coir ● Make your own compost from cuttings ● **Climate Change Adaption Strategies** ● Likely impacts of climate change and some of the mitigating factors ● **Torrential Rain: Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)**, re-naturalising of modified water courses and flood plains and other flood reduction strategies, soil binding ● Drought: adaptive vegetation, rain water harvesting and soil mulching ● Wind: tree layout and design, and public safety ● Heat: suitably tolerant vegetation, shade and waterbodies for cooling off ● Opportunities to enhance ecological networks and habitats or populations of species so that they are better able to adapt to a changing climate through, for example, choices for planting or their positioning ●

BIODIVERSITY, LANDSCAPE AND HERITAGE

● **Management of Natural Features, Wild Fauna and Flora** ● Potential for sites to form part of a network for wildlife, as natural floodways or open spaces, to buffer and enhance ● The presence of any ancient trees, or historic tree or plant collections and how they are identified, managed and promoted ● Local historical or social links with types of biodiversity or particular habitats ● Links to wider local and national strategies – including Local Nature Partnerships, National Pollinator Strategy, health and wellbeing and nature, natural play, forest schools, involving people in ‘growing their own’, green infrastructure and climate change adaptation ● **Conservation of Landscape Features** ● The management plan should contain a statement, recognising: ● what landscape features are present and their relationship to each other (natural and landscaped features; trees – individual, groups, avenues, plants and planting; geological; important view lines; open areas) ● where they came from (social and cultural importance) ● what has come since ● specific reference to any conservation designation applied to the landscape (registered park or garden, conservation area, scheduled ancient monument and local designations) ● **Conservation of Buildings and Structures** ● The entirety of the estate is important and managers should recognise the whole setting even if it isn’t within their remit. For cemeteries, canals, areas of social housing and large campuses for example, the buildings and structures physically dominate the site and they should be part of the management plan, even if only to ensure ongoing consultation with the relevant stakeholders ● Key developmental stages in the history of the place can be represented through enhancing structures and buildings from different eras ● Buildings should be in use where possible, ideally by groups involved in the life of the site ● Friends’ groups could be encouraged to take over or look after some of the heritage features and improve or extend their use ● Buildings or structures identified as in need of maintenance or restoration should have a vision and a plan to maintain them. The site should be safely contained, kept unblighted, and signage erected to let the public know what is happening ● Ruins shouldn’t be allowed to be dangerous but they can be managed appropriately. For example, cemeteries often contain memorials that are in a ruinous condition. The approach to management is important. Heritage England publish guidance on managing ruins ● Not all buildings have to be kept: ongoing community consultation is important, and even if it is a relevant part of history but the community are happy if it goes and is either replaced with a better alternative or it is no longer needed, then it doesn’t need to stay. Judges will be interested in the decision-making process and appropriateness of the outcome for the people using it, rather than the outcome itself ●

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

● **Community Involvement in Management and Development** ● A variety of methods could be used to involve communities, including: forums, questionnaires, surveys, as well as outreach work to schools, youth organisations, faith groups and organisations that represent people with disabilities. Particular consultation should be aimed at the 13–19 age group, often one of the hardest groups to engage with ● Providing evidence of active engagement with, and understanding of, communities might be the analysis of survey results or outcomes or decisions made at community forum meetings, ideally summarised and referenced in the management plan ● It is important that groups are fairly represented and conflicting demands are equitably balanced when decisions, particularly those involving significant redesign and investment, are made ● It can be better to approach representative groups individually, rather than try to bring them together. However, where groups are disproportionately interested in one part of the site, a quarterly meeting of all interested parties can be useful. Use methods as appropriate to seek to identify and resolve conflicts between user groups ● Groups should be approached and supported in developing their vision for different use of the space. Where it is unachievable, clear feedback should be given and alternatives explored where possible ● ‘Friends’ Groups’ are often an indication of community engagement, but there doesn’t have to be one – judges are looking to see regular engagement across the whole community – those geographically local to the site and its existing users ● Some sites will have obvious bodies for consultation, such as allotment associations, student bodies, residents’ groups, sporting committees, historical societies or friends’

groups. Also involve others with impact on or who are impacted by the site – other site departments or contractors, local residents, businesses, faith or interest groups and people running events or facilities on the site ● Reflect the local multicultural community – try to get representation from all groups in the locality. It may mean going out to some groups as they wouldn’t engage with more traditional techniques ● Properly supervised by a dedicated member of site staff, groups can be involved in the day to day running of the site, and can sometimes leverage additional funding, providing great benefit to all ● Community involvement in some sites, such as cemeteries and crematoria still in use, may not comprise the traditional groups. It might be better to engage with users through feedback via funeral directors. Friends’ groups could be established for historic cemeteries and may be able to carry out supervised works on the site ● **Appropriate Provision for Community** ● Is there potential for any conflicts between user groups that need to be managed? Could the area be better zoned? ● Is there fair provision – for all ages, sectors of the community, and all types of activities that the site encourages? ● Play equipment should be physically challenging, functional and imaginative, catering for a range of ages and physical abilities, located in a safe area away from main roads, dogs excluded. Opportunities for wild and free play are equally valuable and develop imagination, connection to nature and stimulate senses. Can you link better to existing facilities, events and programmes already underway to encourage wider engagement with them? ● Would it help to make a study of patterns of use across the day, week or year? ● Have you considered what people do when they visit the site? ● Can the site provide informal space for community events or social get-togethers? ●

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

● **Marketing and Promotion** ● There should be an appropriate marketing plan for the site, referenced in the management plan, which at its most basic level ● The extent and depth of this plan should be appropriate to the type of site. For example, a major heritage attraction drawing visitors from across the globe would have a very different marketing plan to that relating to the grounds of a housing association or campus, small local park or recreation area, a sensitive nature site, or an active cemetery or crematorium ● It could be part of a larger organisational strategy, but there should be specific detail on this particular site - understanding the site and it’s current and potential users ● Events are not always the best idea. There might be better ways engage visitors. It may be best to take expertise out of the site, for example into schools or local groups, especially those that would otherwise hesitate to engage, perhaps because of age or culture ● **Appropriate Information Channels** ● There are a range of methods for marketing green spaces, which might include: ● Publication and distribution of annual reports and management plans (have these available to leaf through in the cafe, reception or other public buildings) ● Online visitor information sites; those with facility for reviews and comments make a good monitoring tool ● Social media ● Events calendars – on notice boards, online, in newsletters ● Local and free press ● Local radio ● Well trained and approachable staff – rangers, contractors or other staff, all of whom should be clearly identifiable ● Printed media – posters, banners, leaflets, flyers or reverse sides of parking/bus tickets ● Links to Green Flag – use your achievement of a prestigious international award to promote the site. Fly the flag and use the Green Flag Award website to promote the site; a free, fully updatable web page is available for every winning site ● Share others’ communication channels, for example those of the managing organisation, and partner organisations ● Local noticeboards – physical and online ● Sometimes, marketing is done practically by taking the experience of the site to others – for example taking plants or animals, giving talks on growing vegetables or wildflowers, or on the history of the site, to schools or local groups rather than them coming on to site ● The marketing of cemeteries and crematoria has to be carried out in a very sensitive way and might comprise a leaflet detailing the history of the site and any interesting historical features. It should also contain useful numbers – where to go for support after a bereavement, how to register a death and a list of local Funeral Directors, for example. This could be completely financed by an Undertaker ● Sensitive sites that are actively seeking to control visitor numbers, for example to protect the environment, could decide their marketing strategy was to approach schools or other groups to arrange scheduled visits and promote events taking place at other sites ● **Appropriate Educational and Interpretational Information** ● Signage and interpretation boards on site and online information detailing the social and built heritage and unique biodiversity features of the site ● Nature walks, green gym programmes, healthy activities, creative conservation, or links with local history or other interest groups ● Welcoming or providing Forest Schools or equivalent outdoor learning experiences for local schools ● Promoting growing your own food – allotment provision or healthy eating areas or guidance on growing at home ● Establishing links with local groups for people with disabilities

MANAGEMENT

● **Implementation of Management Plan** ● Applicants need to have a management plan and be using it. Judges will be looking for evidence that it is used in practice. They will be interested to know how familiar people are with the management plan and may ask members of staff and community representatives, as well as assessing overall how well-run the site appears to be ●

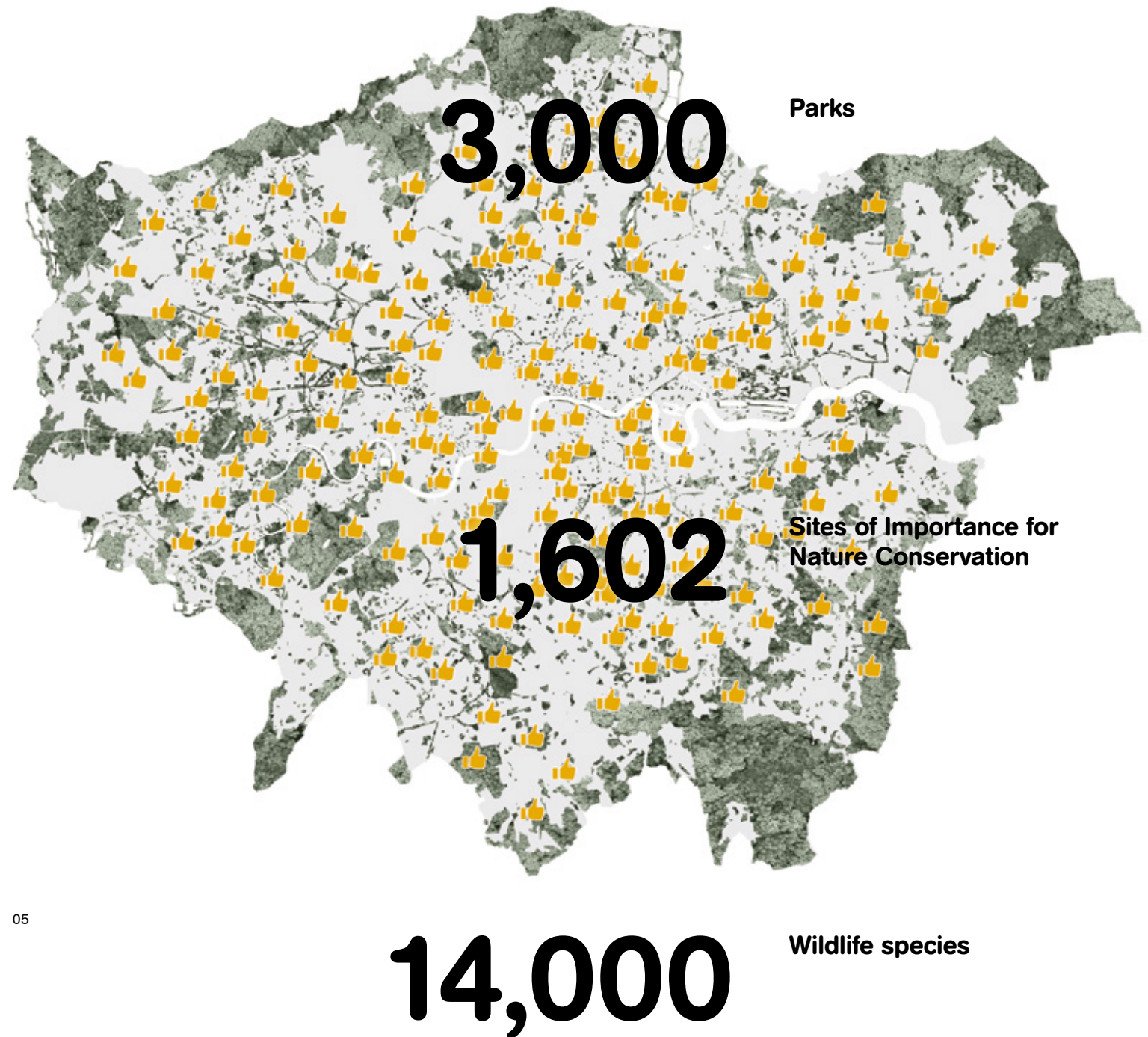
A fundamental shift in perspective is vital in order to take nature seriously within an urban context, and to evaluate its potential. We need to develop an approach similar to that adopted when immersing ourselves in true, vast natural spaces, rather than reducing nature to numeric standards, or treating urban parks as imitations of the 'real thing'.

A truly natural value system would be subjective, personal, communal. It would be formed from the voices of plants, animals and histories as well as from human voices. It would not be an architectural structure, it would be an ecosystem of which, it would recognise, humans are only one part.

The following chapters begin to evaluate parks through a set of more natural values, replacing the dictatorial, finite methodology represented by the 'green flag' with a communal, multi-perspectival concept of the 'yellow thumb'. We look towards understanding parks as a piece of the wild as equally as they are a piece of the city. To values beyond valuation.



05



02 Who tends to our city parks?

On the authority vs the individual



06

A park is a living creature. It has physical needs, but to ensure it remains happy and healthy it requires a continuum of care. The 2020 ‘Space to Thrive’ report - an academic review of 385 green space papers by The Universities of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam and the National Lottery Heritage Fund - found maintenance and social engagement to be the most influential factors contributing to the success or failure of parks, and also the most in need of investment.

Of the 3000 parks in London, the majority are owned by local authorities. Many of these were entrusted by private benefactors for the benefit of local people. Theoretically there should be huge advantages to parks being owned publicly - this should be the most democratic way to ensure green spaces remain open to all and serve the needs of their local community, as well as protecting land from development and contributing to a coherent city-wide ecosystem. However, due to government budget cuts over the last decade, local authorities are not able to provide the support they ought to, and London's parks are suffering as a result.

It is becoming increasingly common for local authorities to transfer their sports facilities and parks over to local community groups - in the last decade over 50% UK local authorities have done so. Such community groups primarily run off voluntary support and the goodwill of local people - requiring a great deal of time, organisation and personal investment. However, freed from quarterly spend reporting and top-down management chains, the benefits of community management mean that a park can more directly understand and react to the needs of its people.

Park 'friends' groups are instrumental in defining needs, priorities, sourcing funds and overseeing the daily upkeep of a local park. The very act of setting up a friends group in itself nourishes the relationship between a park and its community, increasing daily surveillance and decreasing crime. Friends groups instigate a social order that transforms a municipal park into a shared community garden.

Wandle Park is a small, historic green space in the heart of Croydon's commercial centre. After years of vandalism and neglect to the point where the park was considered dangerous and physically avoided, a few local people instigated a movement and applied for funding that led to a complete transformation of the park into one of the borough's most cherished spaces.

If such radical change can be brought about by just one or two local people, we ask who truly 'owns' our public parks, and who has the power to make them change. If green spaces really do belong to all of us, is there any difference between a public park and a private garden?

1 in 8
households

have no access to a private or shared garden in Great Britain



07

- Dark green represents a high % of dwellings without outdoor space
- The intensity gradually fading indicates a lower %

07 Access to gardens in Great Britain, 2020

08 Access to gardens in London, 2020

1 in 5
households

have no access to a private or shared garden in London



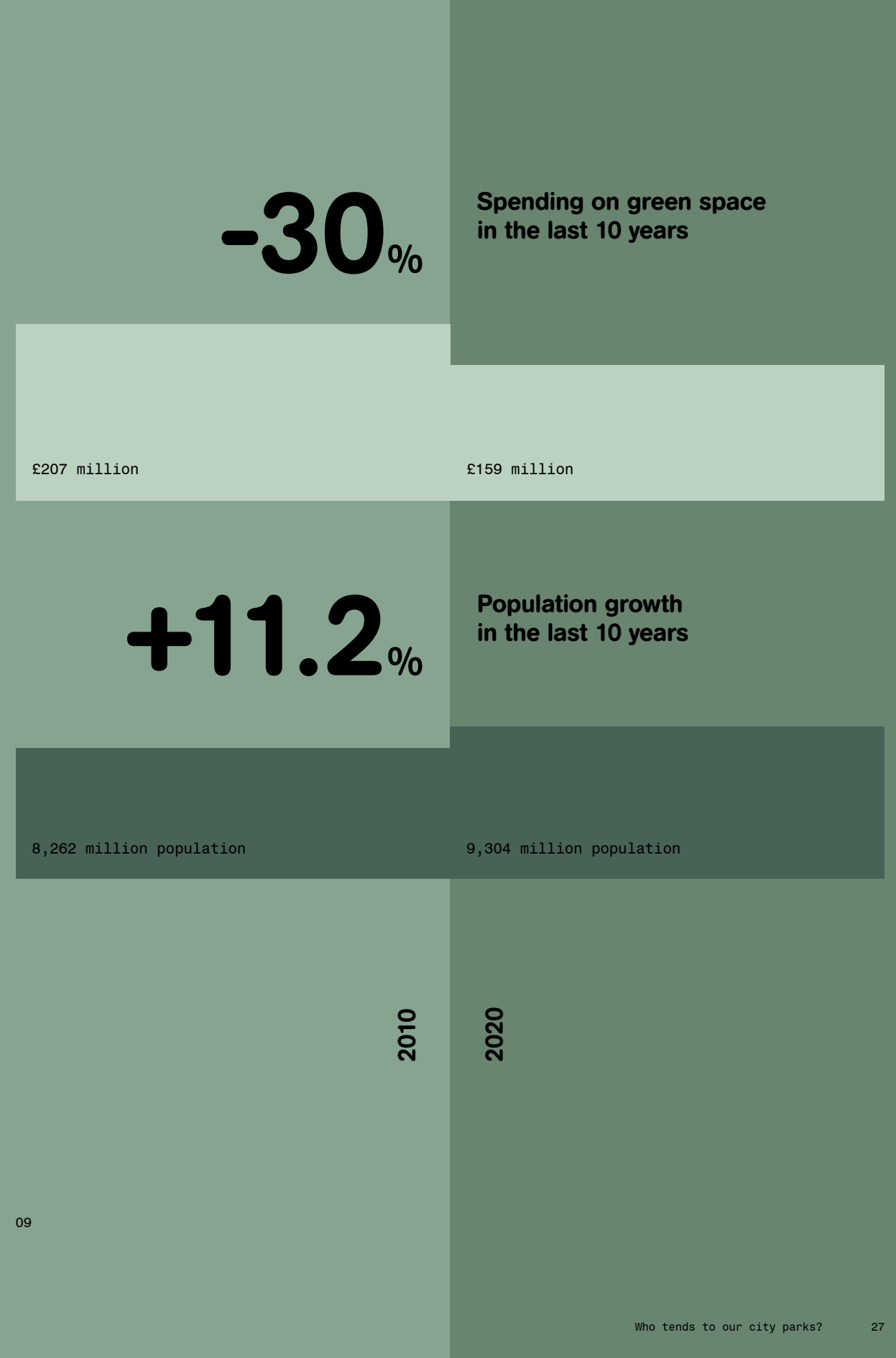
08

A research paper conducted by the Office for National Statistics in 2020, examines the percentage of homes in London without a garden, patio or balcony. This data, coupled with the fact that London's private gardens are 26% smaller than the national average, reveals just how reliant Londoners are on public green space for their access to nature.

What if it was deemed a basic human right that every city-dweller must have access to a private or shared garden?

According to the 2020 London Green Space Commission Report, London's population has grown by 11.2% over the last ten years, whilst public spending on green space has decreased by over 30%. These trends are set to continue, putting a huge pressure on urban parks to accommodate more people with less investment and active management.

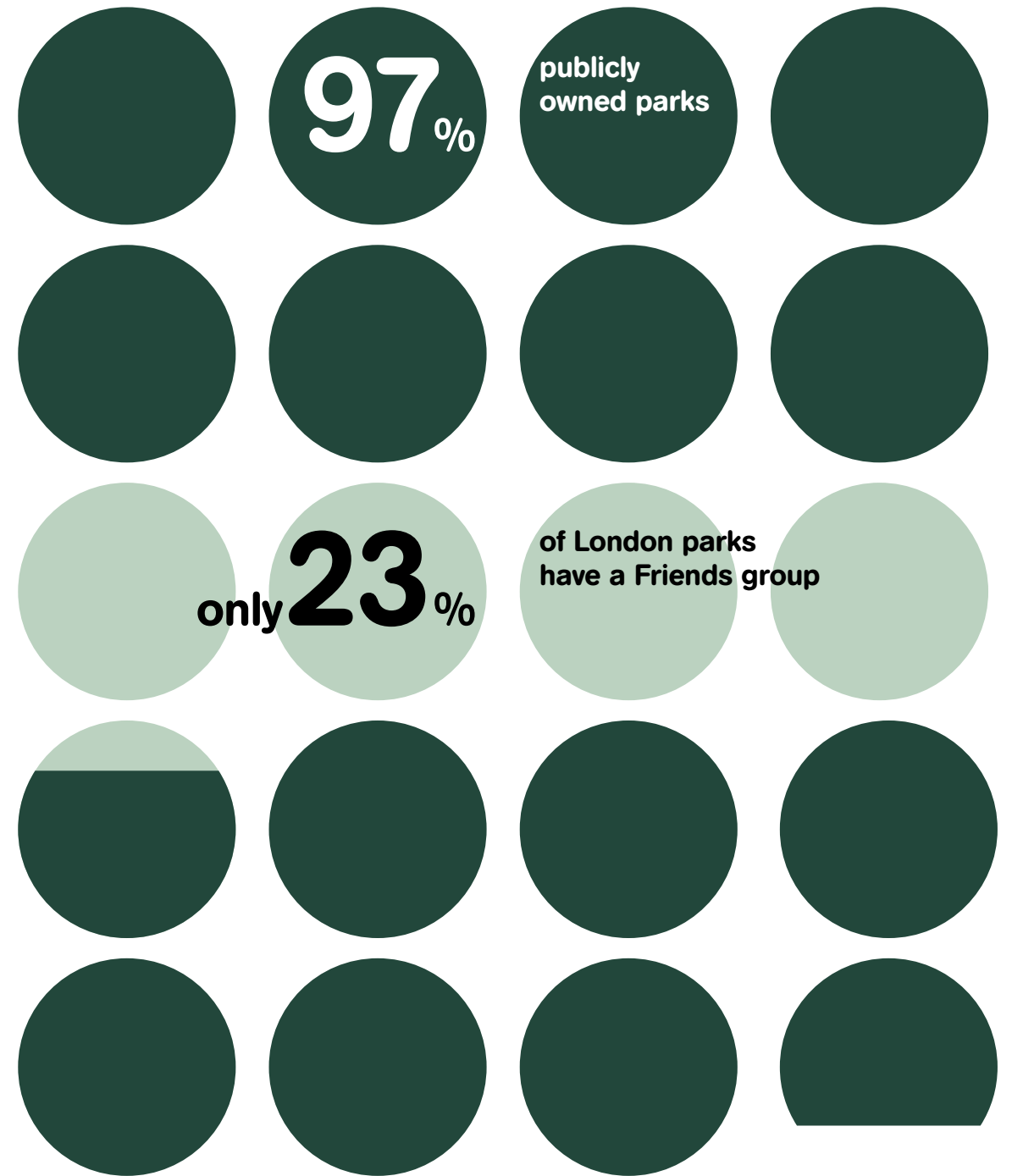
If everyone who set foot in a park contributed to it through either time or money, could we together safeguard them, and transform them into the places we wish they were?



The vast majority of London parks are owned by local authorities, yet less than 1 in 4 has an active 'friends' group.

Friends groups are vital in connecting communities with their parks, and instigating action. An estimated £50m is raised by friends groups in the UK every year for their local parks, on average fundraising an approximate £9,000 each per year.

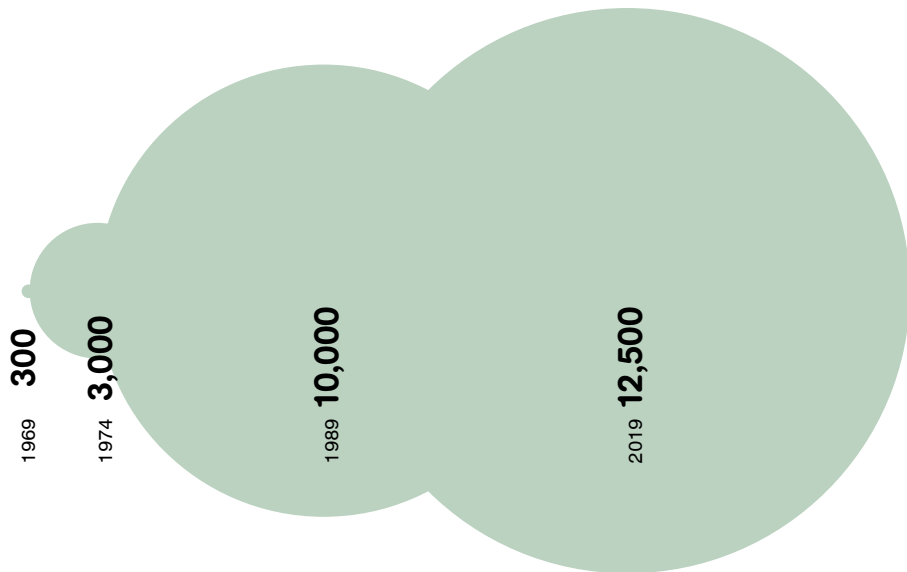
What if it was mandatory for local authorities to ensure that every park has an active friends group, rather than the council having to physically maintain parks themselves?



The estimated value of volunteering in the UK is around £70million per year, with numbers of community or friends groups increasing annually.

The Conservation Volunteers, a UK-wide environmental community charity, has seen membership increase by almost 400% over 40 years. This is a common trend across many environmental and community charities, implying an increasing public appetite not only to protect, but also to take control over green spaces.

With the growing awareness of collective environmental responsibility, what if the UK government gifted every Londoner one paid day a year to contribute to their local green space, and increased volunteer numbers up to 9,304,000 in one hit?

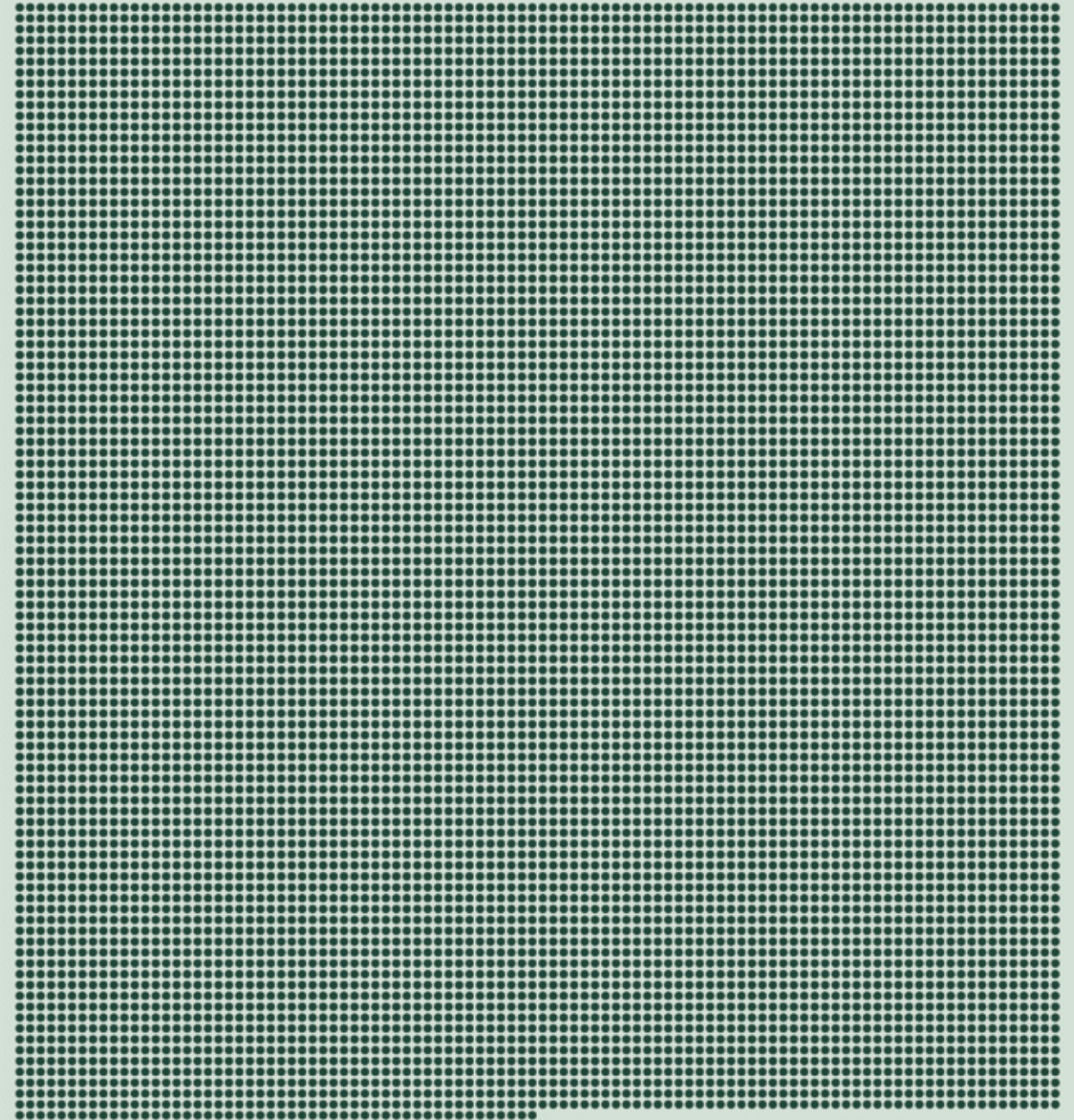


11

11 The Conservation Volunteers membership growth over forty years

12 The Conservation Volunteers in 2019

There were 12,500 Conservation Volunteers in the UK in 2019



12

Source: TCV

03 Who tends to our local parks?

On our relationship with our local parks



13

London's green spaces do not always feel like home. The larger the park, the further it is from your house, and the more diverse groups it accommodates, the less like 'yours' it will inevitably feel. The concept of where one's own home ends and where the wider city starts is related to a number of social, political and ownership influences. Croydon is London's largest borough by population, the second largest by area, and comprises over 3,000 acres of parkland, countryside and open space. How does a sense of community, localism and responsibility manifest itself in such a vast sprawl?



14

14 London Borough of Croydon

386,710

Population estimate, 2017

44.7

Population density per hectare

15/33

London deprivation rank

75.4%

Employment rate, 2015

36

Average age

80.3-84

Life expectancy (years)

69.9%

Green space

32.8%

Private gardens

Are parks or gardens greener?

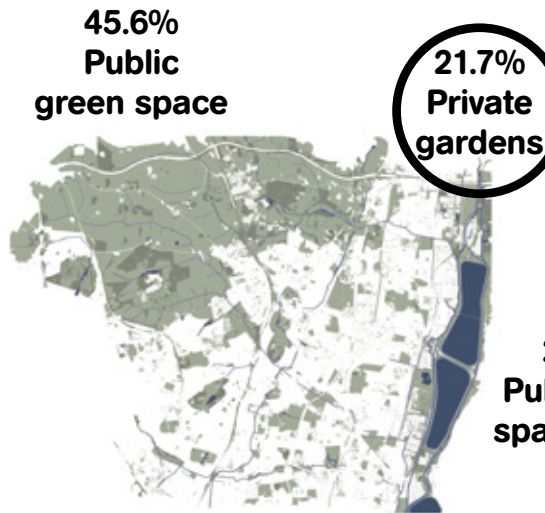
Comparing provision of public versus private green spaces across four boroughs in the North, South, East and West of London shows the reliance, or lack thereof, that local communities have on their parks.

As mapped Richmond-upon-Thames - one of London's greenest and most affluent boroughs - has a total of 70.1% green area, closely followed by Croydon at 69.9%. Yet population density means that Richmond-upon-Thames has almost six times the green space per person than Croydon. Croydon's parks are under a far greater population pressure.

Of Richmond-upon-Thames' total green space area, the ratio of public parks to private gardens is 4:1. Although well-served by both, the communities of Richmond-upon-Thames rely greatly on public parks for their access to nature. A larger ratio of public to private green space means that although not directly on people's doorsteps, provision is generally far larger and more immersive.

Croydon's ratio of public to private green space is almost 1:1. This implies that what is lost in lack of public parkland may be gained back through private gardens. Indeed Croydon's residents benefit from an average of 70m² of garden each, while Richmond, Barking and Enfield have 54m², 45m² and 48m² per person respectively. Croydon's residents may depend less on their local parks than in other boroughs. This in turn suggests that access to nature in Croydon is likely to be more domestic, brief and immediate - a cup of tea in the sun or a spot of weeding, rather than a day-long hike.

It must be appreciated that these averages are indeed averages, and as explored in 'Green for Victory Issue 2: Parks and open doors', the actuality is not equally distributed.

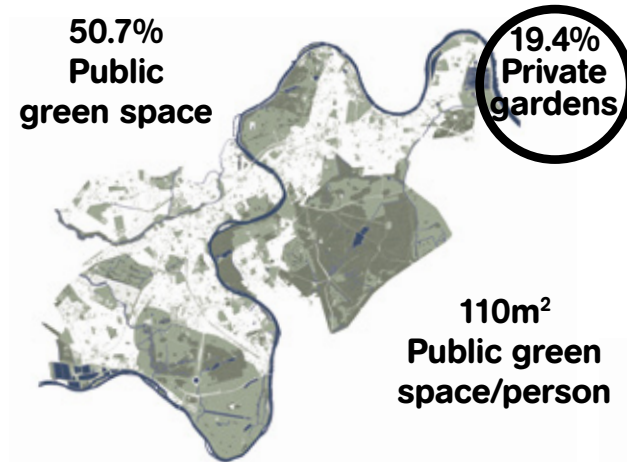


22.2 m²
Public green
space/person



33.6%
Public
green space

23.8m²
Public green
space/person



110m²
Public green
space/person



37.1%
Public
green space

20.3m²
Public green
space/person

15

Where do our doorsteps meet the street?

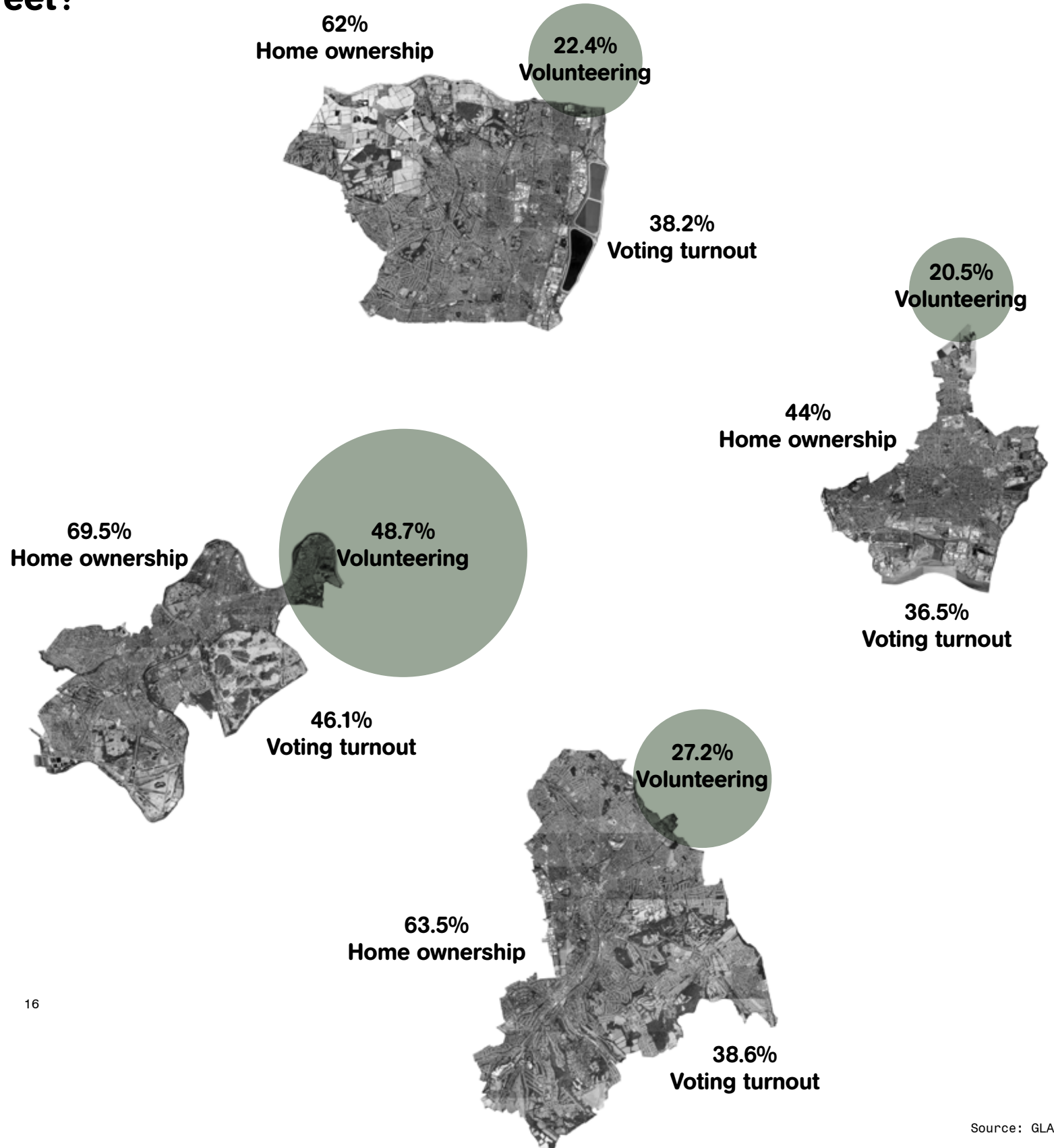
How active a contribution people make to the bettering of their local area is dependant on a host of socio-economic factors, such as disposable income, free time and how long people see themselves staying in one place for.

Home ownership can act as a gauge for understanding people's long-term attachment to their borough. If you own a home, you are more likely to take interest in your local area and thus invest time, money and support into it - be it because you want to live there yourself, or to make a financial profit. The percentage of home ownership is similar in Richmond-upon-Thames as Croydon, implying that local residents may be similarly as active in participating in their surroundings.

Another way in which engagement can be assessed is through looking at voting turnout, as a signifier of how politically active and engaged with wider community issues people are. Again, voting turnout is significantly higher in Richmond-upon-Thames compared to other boroughs.

Finally, volunteering is a signifier of how much people care about and engage with issues, people and spaces around them that are not their own. In Richmond-upon-Thames, the percentage of residents who volunteer is almost double than in Croydon as well as other London boroughs.

From previous issues of 'Green for Victory', we know that wealth and demographic have a huge part to play in these differences, as both bring with them choice. Beyond willingness =, it may be lack of choice that inhibits communities from fully engaging with or taking responsibility for their local environment.



04 Tales from the community

On community values and responsibility



17

Google reviews are often overlooked within data collection, in favour of more formal and controlled questionnaires. But Google provides a safe space for the free and equal expression of opinion, and is a powerful platform representative of communal demographic that people trust. According to the online community, Wandle Park in Croydon is a ‘hidden gem’ amidst the urban noise. What qualities do people truly value about it?



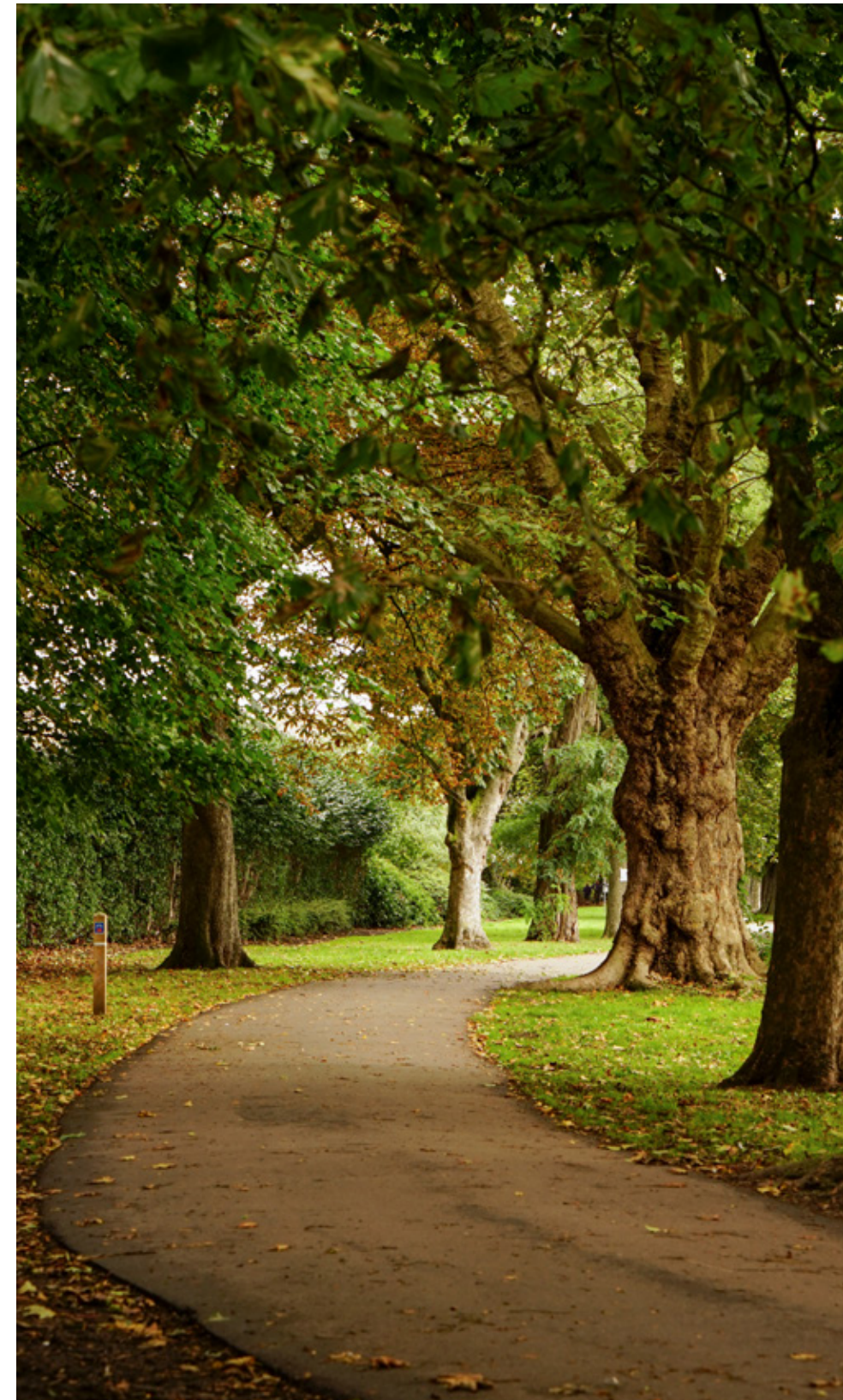
18

★★★★★ a year ago

Wandle Park is a short hop and step from Croydon Minster. On a Sunny day you will hear the tweeting of birds and laughter of children as they each play. The park was quite recently restored by volunteers and is now a brilliant openair space for families and anyone who enjoys the open air. Accessible by tram as well as car and bus,

18 New planting, Wandle Park

19 Avenue, Wandle Park



19



20

★★★★★ 2 months ago

Get the Wimbledon Tram and look out as you go over the main railway line, for the Park. **Its been nicely done up and the River Wandle has once again emerged.** Childrens play are is nice. Watch local adverts for things happening in the Bandstand in the Summer - we attended a CODA Gilbert and Sullivan evening. Lastly you get an unusual view of the cranes and the towering blocks in central croydon

20 Tree stump, Wandle Park



21

21 Skate park, Wandle Park
22 Playground, Wandle Park



22

★★★★★ 3 days ago - 

Great outdoor space with playground area for children. You can relax there, enjoy green scenery and a little pond. Perfect for family time, morning run, walk with a dog, picnic on the grass, summer sunshine and winter walk. Full of wild birds and other small creatures. For all ages, small and big, for everyone. One of the places that you must see when visiting Croydon.



23

★★★★★ a year ago

This is a spacious park ideal for walking along the river Wandle. **It beats most parks in the area in terms of scenery and space.** It is also a place where you can regularly see albino squirrels. There are facilities for bbq's and it is extremely popular on a sunny day. Thoroughly recommended.

23 Tree trunk, Wandle Park



24

★★★★★ 3 years ago

For a long time I knew about the existence and location of this park but I thought it's just some abandoned piece of land. Couldn't be more wrong. It looks stunning and has beautiful view on Croydon skyscrapers. There are a lot of fun things for kids to play with, a brook, skatepark and more. This park is also right next to the tram stop.

24 Weeping willow, Wandle Park

25 Bench, Wandle Park



25

05 Abigail's Tale

On a Friend of Wandle Park



26

Since Wandle Park was left without a park warden, community groups have stepped back in to reinvigorate and care for their beloved green space. A local resident for over 20 years, Abigail John volunteers with The Friends of Wandle Park, who work to improve the fauna and flora, increase people's enjoyment and well-being, and maintain the park quality and cleanliness. We set off on a stroll around Wandle Park with Abigail and her young son.

A swing through the playgrounds

Interview transcript

Date 06.10.2020
Time 10:20 - 11:40
Location Wandle Park
Interviewer Ilaria Catalano
Interviewee Abigail John



27

27 Swings, Wandle Park

Abigail: I wouldn't say I'm a hugely active member of the 'Friends of Wandle Park', but I follow the news on them. I think the friends group is just starting up and lockdown has hit it a bit, because the group has only been going for a couple of years. We did have a park warden before who was able to promote events. The Friends were set up by the park warden initially. When the park was redeveloped they had funding for 4 or 5 years, which finished either last year or the year before. There are about 400 people on the site.

Remy: I want another biscuit

A: Another one? OK last one.

There is a little community garden over there, they've done some clean-ups in the park. So I know I'm connected with the council and in a different way, I'm part of the Street Champions scheme.

Periscope: So do you maintain it?

A: Yes, there are lots of little groups that do picks and things. So this summer, like lots of parks, it took a real hit. Lots of dog walkers just do it. It's a double-edged sword because the more time you spend cleaning it, the more depressed you get about the state it gets in. But then it's a small park in a very densely populated area. And the usage is huge. In the summer, there are a lot of people here a lot of the time. It's empty here now as it's term-time. But from lockdown up to the end of the summer holidays it's been incredibly busy.

The landscape has really improved here. When I first moved here, the river was underground - it was culverted. And it was basically a field that was used for sport, some of the local schools used it. There was a consultation and some lottery funding.

P: When did the deculverting happen?

A: It would have been around 2012-2013. It was partially closed for a year or so. You could go round the edge of it but most of it was cut off. The bit over there is mainly the same, but they put in an astroturf wicket. It's used quite a lot. The big change was that people wanted toilets and a cafe. It's not as used as I would like, it's open quite sporadically. Other parks have much more successful cafés.

R: Look mummy, there's one over there!

A: Oh yes, it's escaped!

We live right next door to the park so we use it like an extension. As you can see it's not really set up for very small children. Where the skatepark is over there, it was next to the playpark and it wasn't a good mix. So the idea was to separate the teenagers and kids. But because it's quite a big kids playground, with climbing and stuff then they still come. It's not perfect..

R: Catch it catch it!

A: We've got it!

We go to parks where the playgrounds for him are better, but it's great for cycling so it depends. We're lucky here in that we have several parks to choose from. If you walk a few minutes we have Waddon Ponds which is a teeny tiny park with swans and ducks, so we do have a choice.

P: So this park has been through a lot of changes. From looking at the historical maps it seems it was a lot bigger?

A: There used to be more water. The willow trees mark where the old boating lake was.

Do you want me to hold it while I go up the climbing frame?

R: I want you both to catch it!

A: How do we do that, do we need two stones then? Got it! Sorry.

This park is a bit romantic - it's very loved, very busy during the day. But at night there is a real issue.

R: We're going to catch the stones!

A: So we've had a few fights after dark, and when the police moved people on then they spread out into the neighbourhood. One of the things they've recently done is on the tramline, and they cut down some of the trees around the edge, which I hated, but at the same time it does have a positive effect in that there are no bushes to lurk in. While it was a thoroughfare for the tram it was ok, but I think it was one of those services that got cut.

P: Is it a behaviour you experience during the day, is it a safe park?

A: Most of the time yeah. We feel safe but I don't know how other people who don't know the park coming through would feel when there's an obvious amount of antisocial behaviour.

I think it was probably easier for the 'friends group' to function when there was a park warden, they did have a very positive effect and there were a lot of events. But it's a luxury to have that in such a small park.

*A: Remy, let's go for a cycle round!
Shall we go round to the bridge?*

I have a friend who came to live with me, and she just loved this park so much. She said it was just so beautiful. I think you get a bit blasé when it's right on your doorstep. So we would choose to go out to a different park to

go for an adventure or go somewhere new. When it's your local park you kind of forget about that. In Croydon there's an enormous amount of green spaces, and a lot of it is really easy to get to by car.

Very loud child screeching.

P: What animal was that supposed to be?!

A: I think it was a baby crow.

We even have some ducks here now and then. Let's go inside the bandstand. It's a very important part of the park. They have a theatre company that uses it for quite classic English summer plays. They had an outdoor cinema for a bit, organised by the park warden at the time. They have festivals, fireworks displays. It's a very very well used space. Which is positive and negative when you live right next door - I try to go away during the summer! It's less the actual events but more the set-up of them. We love the bandstand.

P: How often do you use the park?

A: When I used to live here, before it was redone I lived a couple more blocks away. I would only ever come here to use the tram and never actually the park. Which is funny because I lived in a flat at that point without a garden, so you'd have thought I would use the park more. We walk through the park over the railway bridge to his nursery, so yes we do use it daily. And it's much nicer to go through. But in the winter it's locked at the time we need to go through so it changes your journey.

We do love the park, don't we Remy? Certainly at the moment if you're a parent with a young one, a park is your lifeline. There's not an awful lot else you can go to right now.

06 A call to arms

Towards a collective responsibility

For Abigail and her son Remy, Wandle Park is a peaceful haven in which to watch the birds, test out your new toys, and eat your favourite snacks away from the computer screen. It is a garden of respite. But it is also a cacophony of firework displays, outdoor cinemas, summer plays and evening concerts. And like any living room, sometimes it needs a bit of a clean-up.

The transformation of Wandle Park ignited a re-investment in the area, and a realisation amongst local and visiting communities of what they already have right on their doorstep, if they choose to rise to claim it. The Friends of Wandle Park creates an open platform for endless groups, schools and individuals to advertise and execute their ideas. They provide an invitation and a loose structure for anyone to get involved. This has taken years of hard work, and will continue to do so.

Government policy does not recognise friends groups as vital to parks, yet its own research proves that councils with an elected 'Parks Champion' have significantly better quality and more loved parks. Such a figure provides a vital link between the park and its people, and can effectively manage a green space to a degree a council never could.

For Wandle Park, a key spending from their renovation funding was on a Park Warden. A continuing programme of events, engagement with groups outside the normal visitor demographic, and an ability to react to the evolution of the local community are arguably more crucial to the success of a park as providing trees and benches.

The last years have shown that it is almost impossible for councils to afford to maintain public parks alongside their statutory obligations, and that this gap can be better filled by a community group. But this does not absolve councils of their obligations, for the two must work together. As it stands, the government does not fully recognise or invest in the value of community management, thus it does not reap its benefits. Gardening has been shown to improve mental health and physical well-being, yet our parks do not fully advertise this. If we are truly to take ownership over our parks, we need a long-term political investment, and measures built into statutory regulation.

For a park to be there for its people, the people need to be there for the park.



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Green flags vs yellow thumbs
Image by Periscope

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The 71 parks of London with a Green Flag Award
Image by Periscope
Data Source: Greater London Authority, Green Flag Awards

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The Lake District, England
Photograph by Rodney Topor
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[[/www.flickr.com/photos/r_topor/31041479537/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/r_topor/31041479537/)]

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Snowdonia National Park, Wales
Photograph by Mike Peel [www.mikepeel.net]
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Modified by Periscope
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snowdonia#/media/File:Llyn_Llydaw_from_Crib_Goch_2.jpg]

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The communal 'yellow thumb' value
Image by Periscope
Data Source: National Park City

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Stairs, Wandle Park
Photograph by Ilenia Catalano
Periscope © 2020

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Image by Office for National Statistics
Modified by Periscope
Data source: Office for National Statistics

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Modified by Periscope
Data source: Office for National Statistics

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Diagram by Periscope
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Image by Periscope

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Imagery © 2020 Bluesky, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, Maxar Technologies, The Geoinformation Group, Map Data © 2020
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Source: Greater London Authority, Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC

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Imagery © 2020 Bluesky, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, Maxar Technologies, The Geoinformation Group, Map Data © 2020
Modified by Periscope
Data source: Greater London Authority, Greenspace Information for Greater London CI

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Fallen fence, Wandle Park
Photograph by Ilenia Catalano
Periscope © 2020

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New planting, Wandle Park
Photograph by Ilenia Catalano
Periscope © 2020

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Avenue, Wandle Park
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Abigail and Remy in the bandstand, Wandle Park
Photograph by Ilenia Catalano
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Figure 27 p. 54
Swings, Wandle Park
Photograph by Ilenia Catalano
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Figure 28 p. 61
Your park needs you!
Image by Periscope

