periscope

Parks and the wild

Green for Victory

Issue 01
Richmond Park
Autumn 2020

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 the wild

Published: Periscope 2020

First Edition: December 2020

Authors: Kirsty Badenoch, Ilaria Catalano, Daniel Rea, Antonia Alexandru

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.

periscopestudio.co.uk

Table of Contents

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 breath 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.**

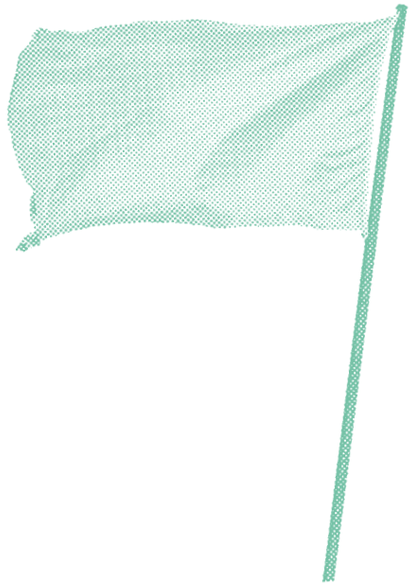
Across four issues, we tackle four core challenges that disconnect London's people from their parks, and that are not explained through stats alone. We move through scales from the citywide, to tread through four boroughs in the far North, South, East and West. Visiting the publicly 'top rated' parks 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

01 Green flags vs yellow thumbs

On putting a value on nature

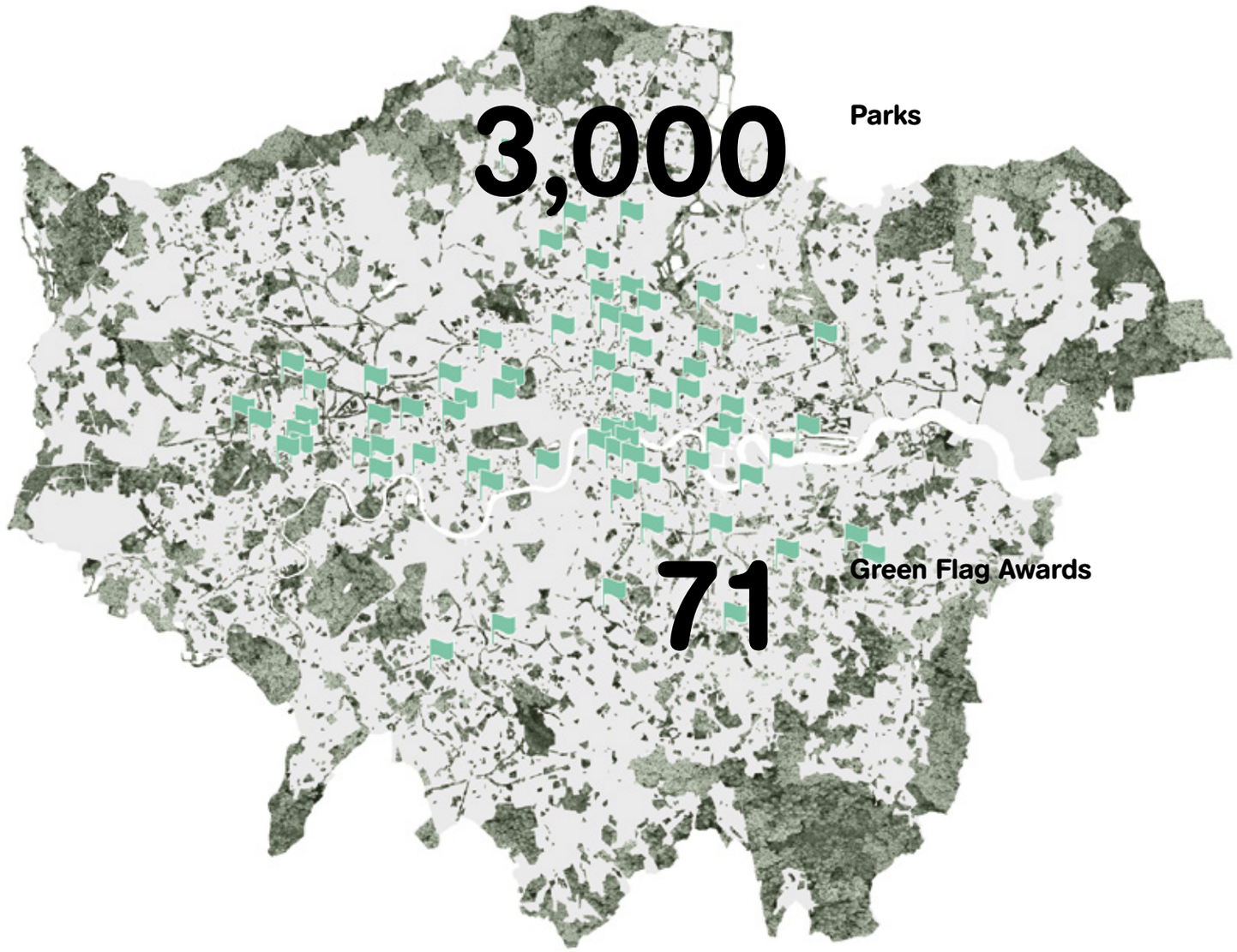


How do we assess nature in the city? The Green Flag Award is the most widely recognised standard we currently have to gauge park quality. The international accreditation rewards well-managed green spaces with an ‘international mark of quality’, assessed against an extensive set of criteria, supplemented 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

02 The 71 parks of London with a Green Flag Award

Source: London National Park City & Green Flag Awards

03

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.

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

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 were 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 ●

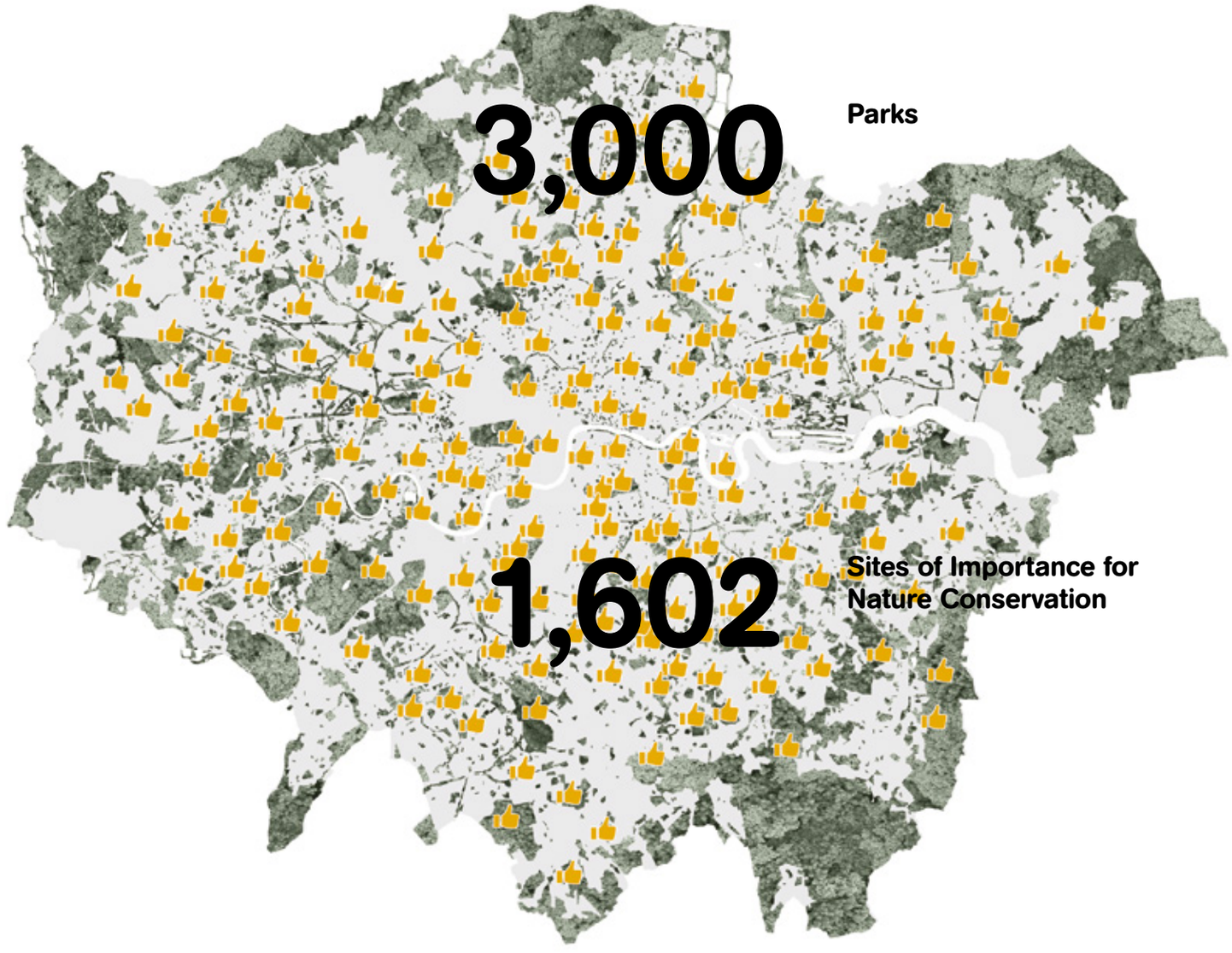
Source: Green Flag Award

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



05 The communal 'yellow thumb' value

Source: London National Park City & GiGL

02 How wild is your city?

On The Mayor of London’s official green quanta

06

The opening spread of Richmond Park’s Management Plan begins with a quote from the 20th century philosopher and Nobel Laureate, Bertrand Russell: “I grew accustomed to wide horizons and an unimpeded view of the sunset. I have never since been able to live happily without both”. Connection with nature is fundamental for human wellbeing, for thought, for life.

06 Trees accumulation, Richmond Park

In contemporary urban life, opportunities to connect with natural systems are rare. We actively seek them outside of our cities - on Bank Holiday weekends we flock to the vast expanses of the Lake District, or if we can afford it, the truly elemental geo-scapes of Norway or Iceland. We return, reconnected both with nature and with ourselves.

Why do our parks not suffice to connect us? Is it because we can still hear the underlying traffic grumble from beneath the ancient trees of Epping Forest? Because the only birds we spot in Regent's Park are the shrill neon paraqueets that have terrified off all the native birds? Or because it is near-impossible to pick a route through the carpet of picnic rugs on Hampstead Heath in August?

Urban green spaces must work hard. Far harder than their unbound, wilder counterparts. In the city, human voices quickly dominate the natural, leaving parks as shadow-versions of truly wild, truly connected landscapes.

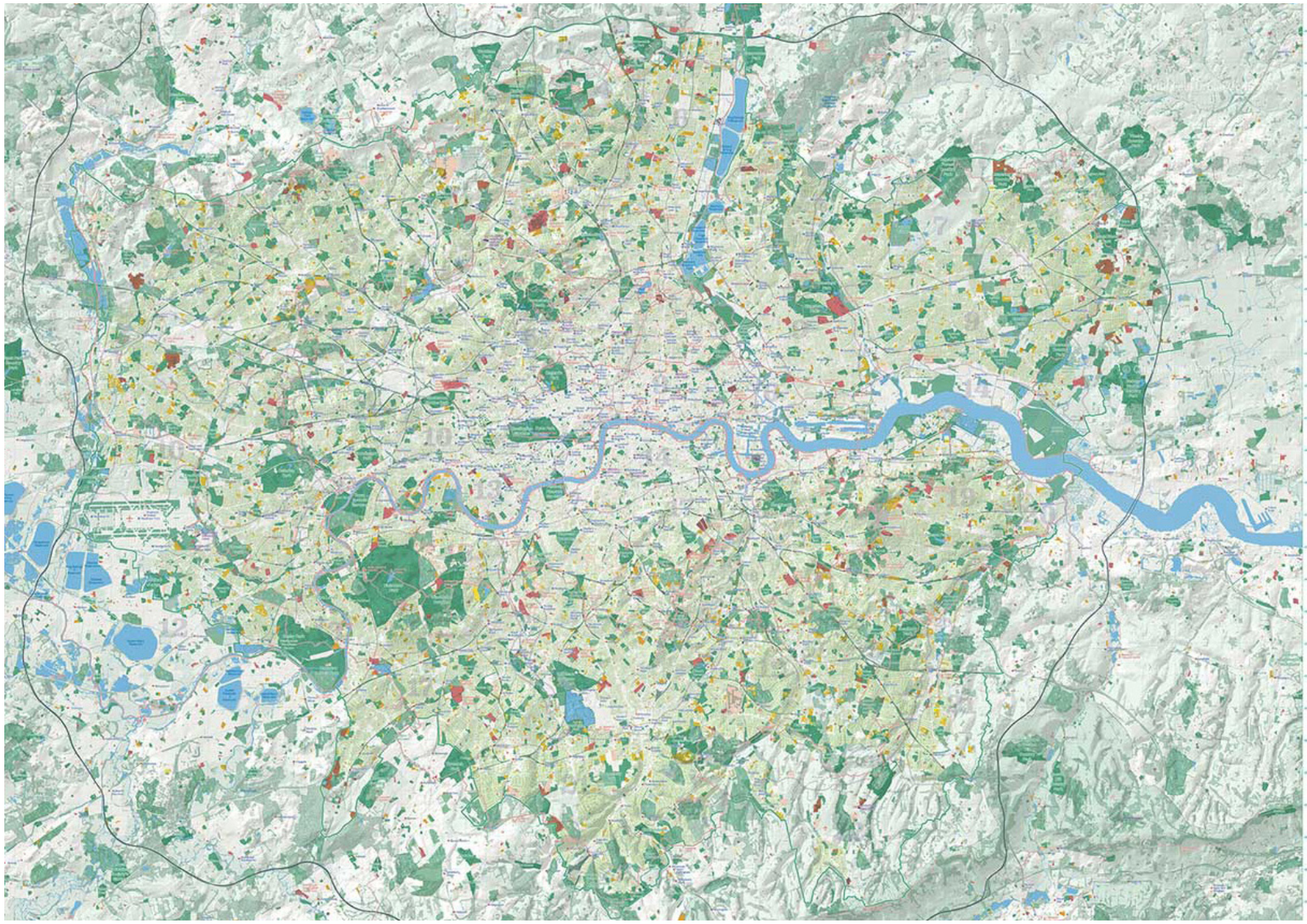
Richmond Park is one of the wildest spaces London has, and perhaps one of those under greatest pressure. It must manage a mosaic of highly delicate natural habitats alongside accommodating over 4 million visitors per year.

Within this contradiction is the need for ecological management - often requiring an absence of people, or grounds procedures culturally perceived as 'messy', 'disordered' or 'uncared for'. And it must keep up public appearance, manage litter, provide sufficient carparking and beverages, provide crucial breathing space for our super-speed lifestyles.

The challenges that Richmond Park faces epitomise the essential, delicate and often incompatible relationship between the city and its nature, between people and the wild.

It may never be deemed a true wilderness - very few places left on Earth are - but today's London contains wildness. If you know where to look, it offers wide horizons, unimpeded views of the sunset and with a little more help, all the potential ingredients to connect with nature without having to travel halfway across the world. How can we better harness these?

On 22 July 2019, the National Park City Foundation declared London the world's first National Park City. In recognition of London's already impressive green credentials, and backed by the Mayor of London, the National Park City scheme aims to make the map of London over 50% green and blue by 2050 - by which time it is expected to be home to 11 million people.



07

07 London National Park City Map, Urban Good

Source: London National Park City & GLA

London has 8.3 million trees, almost one tree per inhabitant. By the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization definition, London can already be classified as a forest: as a contiguous area with over 10% tree canopy cover. As such, London is officially the world's largest urban forest.

What if every Londoner was given responsibility for the livelihood of one tree each?

08

08 Birch, a common species in Outer London
09 Sycamore leaf, the most common species in London

0.96 Trees per person

09

Source: London National Park City & Valuing London's Urban Forest

London is one of the greenest cities in the world. But less than 16% of London's total metropolitan area is designated as natural habitat. This implies that our National Park City is 84% unnatural. As natural animals ourselves, no wonder we find city life difficult.

What if all of London's public green spaces were considered as natural habitats and why aren't they already? How would we treat a 'natural habitat' differently from an 'unnatural' one?

47% **of London is designated as green space**

33% **of which is designated as natural habitat**

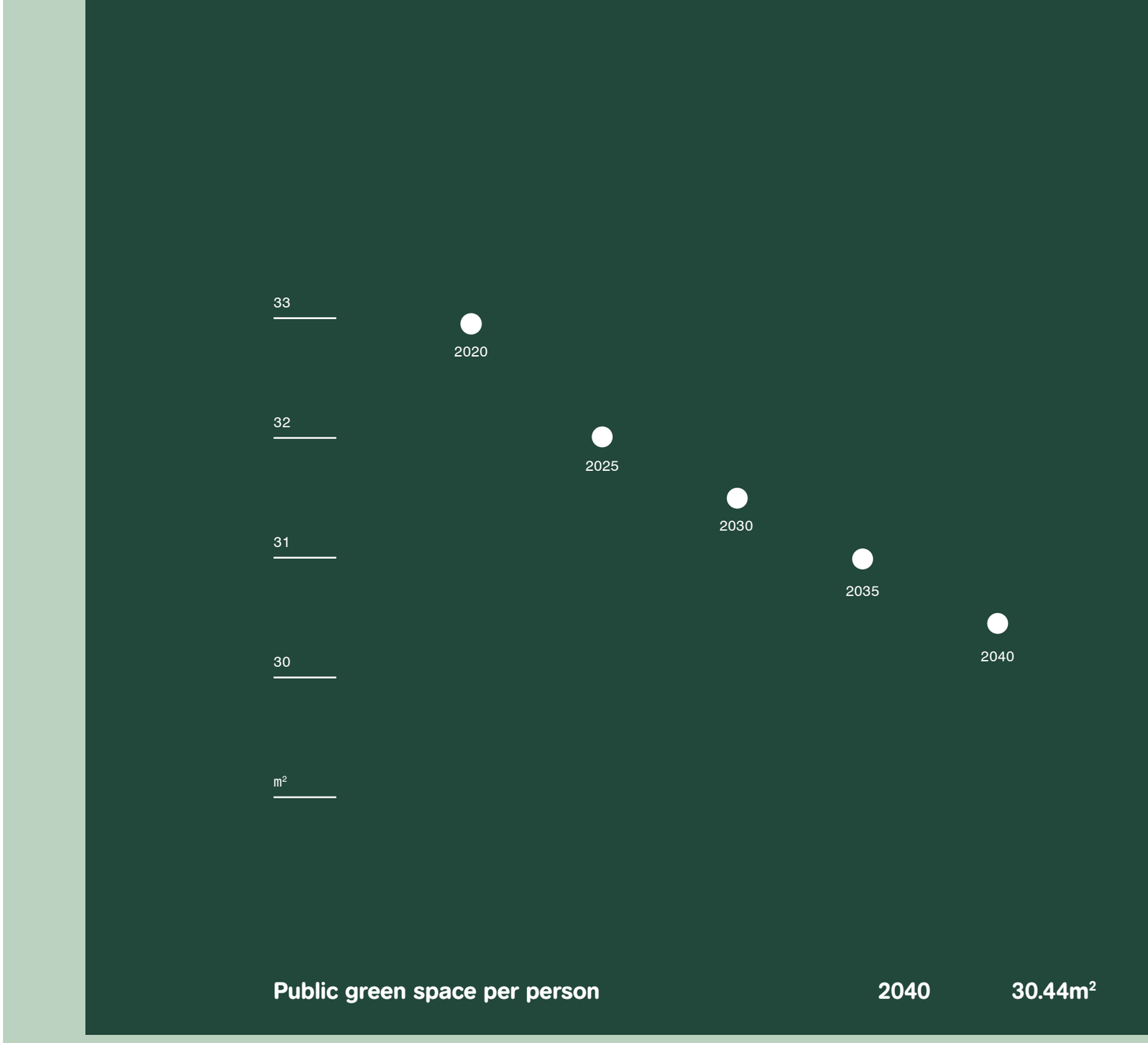
Source: GLA

If all the designated public green space in Great Britain were shared out equally amongst the population, each person would get 32.94 m^2. According to the British green space charity Fields in Trust, this is deemed inadequate.

On top of this, Britain's population is increasing. To retain today's population: green space ratio, we would need to create about 14,000 hectares of new parks across Great Britain by 2040. This is not happening.

On the contrary, provision of new parks is far outstripped by urban development rates, and by 2040 the ratio of public green space per person in Great Britain is predicted to shrink by 7.6% of what it is now.

Why is there not an enforced ratio of green space per person in Great Britain?



10

10 Prediction decrease in green space provision per person in Great Britain

Source: Fields in Trust

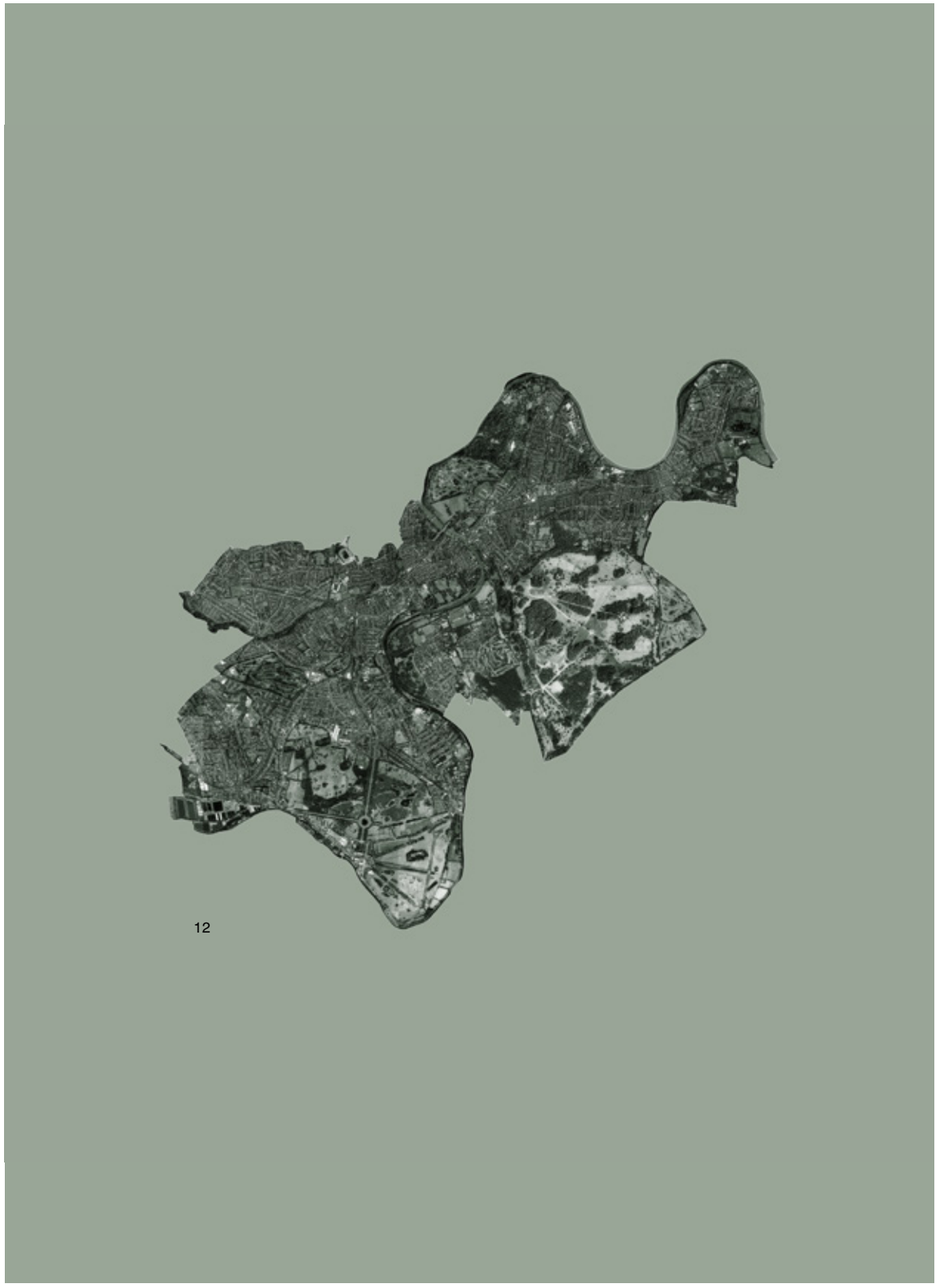
03 How wild is your borough?

On our relationship with our local green network

11

London’s green spaces are not evenly spread across the city: not everyone has the same ability to access nature. As mapped, Richmond upon Thames is the greenest of all of London’s boroughs, with 128 parks and 21 miles of water frontage. If Richmond is as green as our city gets, how green really is it? How do current national standards assess our relationship with nature, and does this go far enough?

11 Enfield, Barking and Dagenham, Croydon and Richmond upon Thames



12

12 London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

198,019

Population estimate, 2017

33.4

Population density per hectare

33/33

London deprivation rank

79.6%

Employment rate

38.8

Average age

82.4 - 86

Life expectancy (years)

61.9%

Green space

19.3%

Private gardens

Source: GLA

How green is green enough?

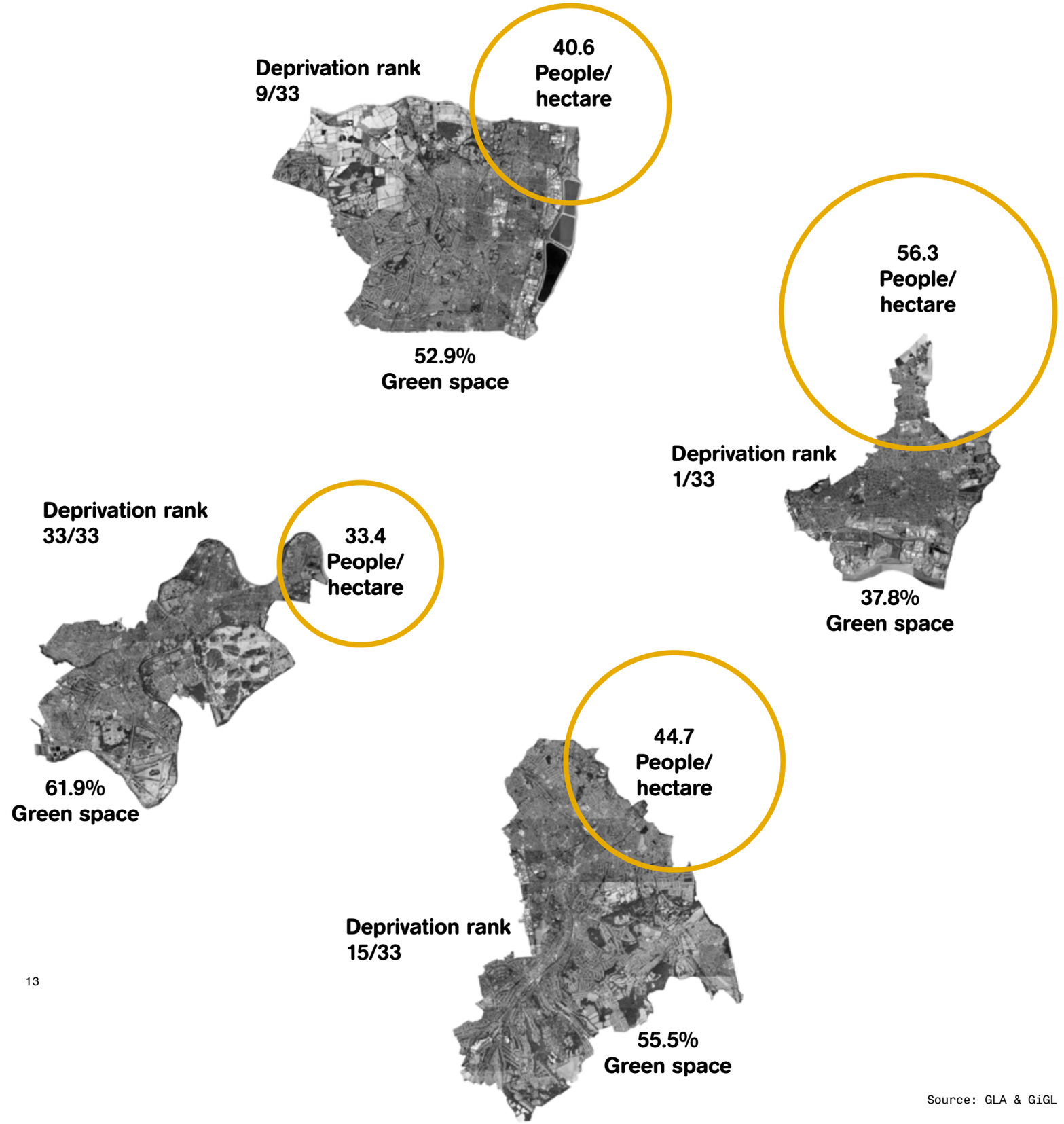
Comparing boroughs in the North, South, East and West of the city, it is clear that there is a direct correlation between population density, amount of green space and deprivation ranking.

Relatively low density, lush and affluent, Richmond upon Thames scores well above London's average of 47% green cover, with almost two-thirds its land area designated as natural open space.

Not only is Richmond upon Thames far more green than grey on plan, but its parks are also shared between fewer people than those in other boroughs.

If we were to distribute Richmond's parks, open spaces and nature reserves between its inhabitants, each person would get a whopping 184m² each to run, jump and play in. If we were to do the same for Barking and Dagenham, London's most deprived borough, each person would get only 67m² each.

There is currently no official standard that determines a minimum acceptable allocation of green space per person. If there was, it would act as a huge constraint and similarly a huge step forward for city planning. It would place natural development on a par with urban development, seeing it as positive, additive space as opposed to useful for filling in the gaps left over.



13

13 Boroughs' density and deprivation comparison

Source: GLA & GiGL

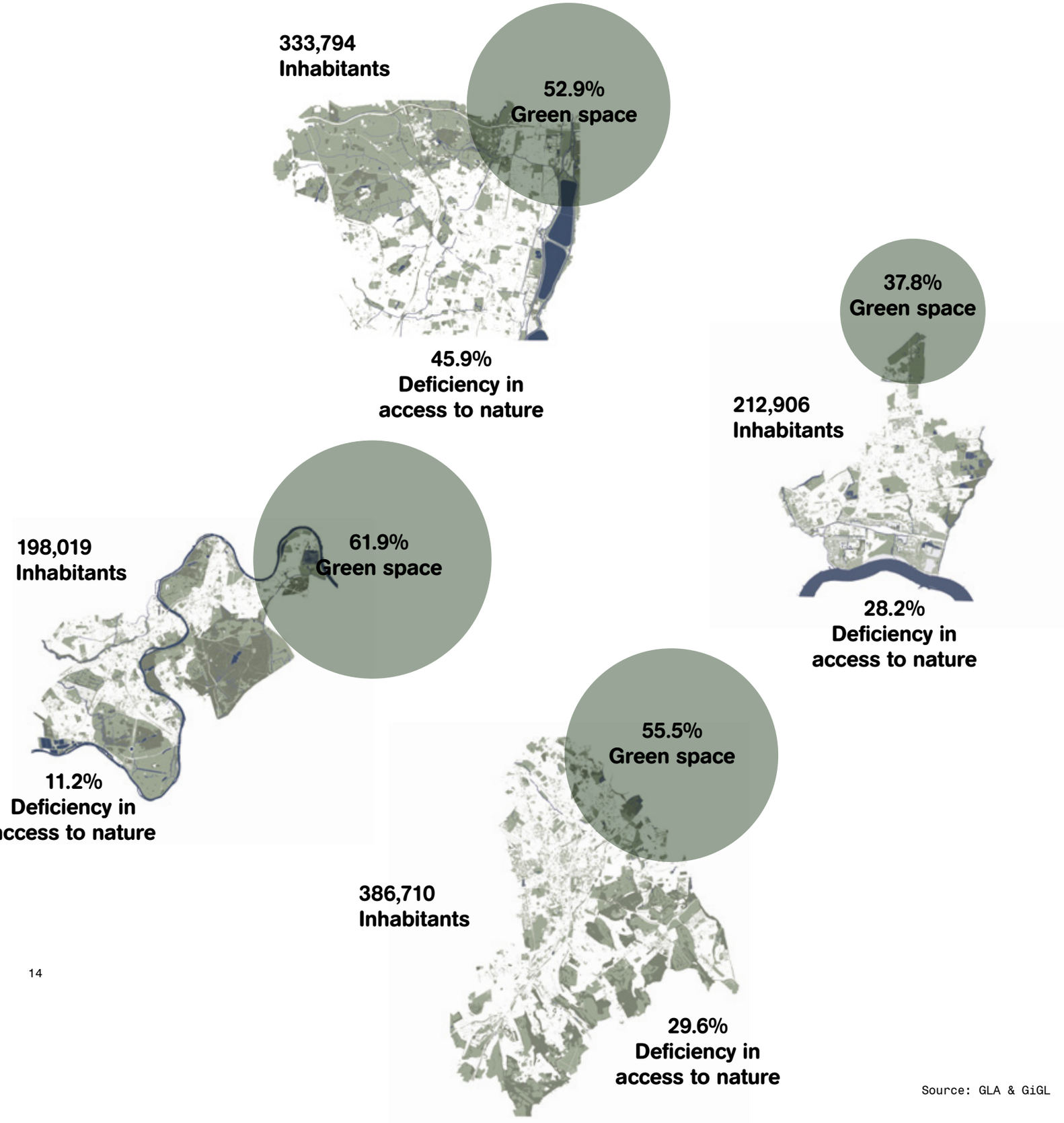
Sufficiency in nature

Areas of Deficiency in Nature (AoD) is London's measure for identifying parts of the city where people lack good access to green spaces with significant natural value. In policy terms, these are defined as 'areas where people have to walk more than one kilometre to reach an accessible Metropolitan or Borough Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC). This is calculated as actual walking distance, equating to a ten minute walk. To be designated a SINC, areas must comprise of habitats of inherent wildlife value, or support rare or scarce species.

AoD reveals something of the proximity of animal species to human communities, and how frequently they might encounter one another. It assesses the ease and likelihood of interaction between people and nature in everyday local London.

By current standards, Richmond has some of the most accessible nature in London, yet 21,782 local residents are still considered 'deficient' or living too far away to benefit on a daily basis. The greenest borough in London is still not green enough to support its population by current government standards.

AoD is a method for evaluating how well a green space serves it community. It comes from a perspective of parks as fulfilling of human needs - of nature being subservient to people. What it fails to address is how well a community serves its green space, and how much green space is needed for non-humans. To re-assert nature as an equal inhabitant of our cities, a second measure needs to be introduced and applied to our government London data profiles as standard. A measure of AoP, or 'Areas of Deficiency in People.'



14

14 Boroughs' green space comparison

Source: GLA & GiGL

04 Tales from the community

On community values and the wild

15

Google reviews are often overlooked within data collection, in favour of more formal or controlled questionnaires. But Google provides a safe space for the free and equal expression of opinion, representative of community demographics that people trust to help them make daily decisions. According to the online community, Richmond Park is Richmond upon Thames' most loved park. What qualities do people truly value about it?

15 Bench, Richmond Park

16

16 Oak tree, Richmond Park
17 *Polypodiopsida*, Richmond Park

17

★★★★★ a week ago
A wonderful park with massive grounds that afford the city dweller plenty of opportunities to get lost and forget that they are in a city.

18

★★★★★ 6 days ago

Came here with a few friends to hangout, it's a little long walk to the lake in the park but totally worth it. Saw a few blue dragon flies that I've never seen before, a couple of deers, the local swans and ducks or whatever. This place is worth the visit, especially during the summers.

18 Chiaroscuro, Richmond Park

19

20

★★★★★ a month ago -

Went to visit this place yesterday. A beautiful place with breathtaking views. Such a good place for cycling and just spending a day for picnic. You can see Deers and many other animals. It's a very soothing place, a bit far away from central London.

19 Ancient oak tree, Richmond Park
20 Understorey, Richmond Park

21

★★★★★ 2 weeks ago -

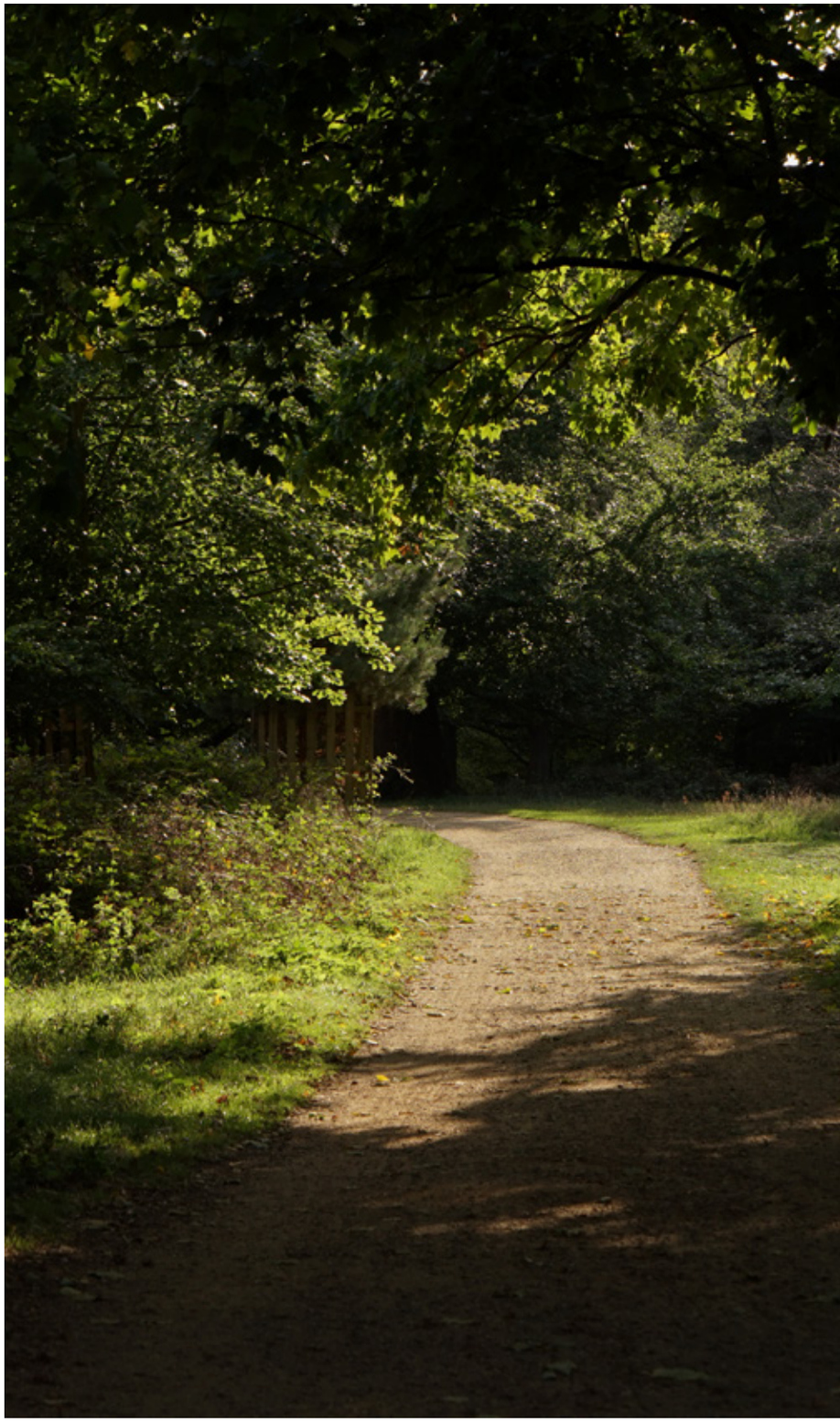
Amazing, stunning, nice place for a long walk, location is great, easy access, I could have spent the whole day there, I will probably go back again soon, bring your food and drinks in.

21 Pruning, Richmond Park

22

★★★★★ 3 weeks ago

Excellent place to take the family or friends for a break from city life.
Photographers and artists will LOVE the acres of inspiring woodland, the wildlife and the architecture.



23

22 Hill, Richmond Park
23 Path, Richmond Park

05 Joanna’s Tale

On the value of a park to a person

24 Descending Richmond Park’s undulating grasslands with Joanna and Safi

A regular of Richmond Park for over 35 years, Joanna Jackson published her first photography book, ‘A Year in the Life of Richmond Park’ in 2000. Over the course of more than 24,000 walks, Joanna and her dogs have experienced a slow and radical shift in balance of the park’s human and natural ecologies. We set off on a hike together to talk, touch and smell the fragile wilds of Richmond Park.

Source: London National Park City & GLA

A hike through the grasslands

Walking transcript

Date	17.09.2020
Time	16:35 - 17:20
Location	Richmond Park
Interviewers	Kirsty Badenoch
	Ilaria Catalano
Interviewee	Joanna Jackson

25

25 Woodpecker nest, Richmond Park

Joanna Jackson: We moved here when I was expecting my son, he's now thirty five. We moved to a house right next to Richmond Park and I've been coming here on a daily basis ever since. When I got pregnant I thought well I might as well get a dog.

These days the park is struggling like a lot of places, with the death of the budget -

I think I'll have to pick that poo up, I'm sorry.

It's a Royal Park, but does get some funding from the government, and it's been cut like everything else. Which is why it's becoming more commercial, because now they have to manufacture their own income. It's a fine balance between encouraging more and more people to come and spend money - they have little cafés at every car park now - but at the same time, if you get too many people, then you're really at risk of losing the Park's nature status. It's an SSSI as well as a European Special Area of Conservation. I think it's...

Safi! Come here! Come here. Don't go up there. That's a stag! Safi, Come here!

Periscope: Wow, he's huge - I thought she was barking at a squirrel. Are we OK to be so close to him?

J: Well the rut's just about to begin so I wouldn't get too close. He's marking that as his territory. Normally the males are completely passive, it's the females who'd be aggressive. But at this time of year you don't mess with the males.

P: You must have gotten to know their behaviours very well?

J: Yes, absolutely. They're mating - the males fight each other for the females. You'll hear them bellowing, they wee in water and roll in it so they stink. He's marking with his antlers now. When a male finds a female, there'll be a lot of other males gathered around trying to sneak in. They don't often come to blows, it's mostly posturing.

P: And the stags don't worry about being so close to people, it felt quite dangerous back there?

J: The problem is that people don't respect the distances the deer need. At Bushy Park, it's much smaller and they have a lot of incidents of people being gored. One of those antlers can go right into your stomach. They're perfectly alright as long as you give them space. Normally they just sit around doing nothing, but at the moment they're on the move and once they start running they'll cover a lot of ground very quickly.

P: So Richmond Park is obviously pretty wild. Its vastness and scale of wildlife feel very unique to be within London.

J: There are three reasons why the park's got its nature statuses. One of them is the ancient oaks. There are a lot of oaks that are over 600 years old. An oak aged over 200 years has an extraordinary biodiversity compared to other trees. As they get older and when they die, the bark inside dies and that becomes a habitat for stag beetles, which are a very endangered species. And there's also an area of special grassland, which makes it unusual. So those are the three factors.

How far do you want to go?
We could go up here and cross over and do a loop circle round?

P: We'd love to, we've been stuck behind our computers all day and it's a beautiful evening. So have you noticed a big rise in people coming to the park since you moved here?

J: It's just crazy, there's been an absolutely massive increase. I was actually tempted to revisit, because it's been 25 years since I wrote the book. It might be interesting to redo it from an ecological point of view, to see what's happened.

For instance, I was taking some photos last year and had this picture of a stag. What they do is they rummage around in the undergrowth and cover their heads in ferns, building a huge hat of ferns on their antlers. This one stag was completely surrounded by people watching, and because it's completely fascinating, they're getting closer and closer.

P: Has the park closed any areas off from the public?

J: No, they can't really.

A flock of parakeets swoop between the branches above us.

P: You have parakeets down here too?

J: Yes there've been more of those recently. They're becoming a bit of a pest - they're quite aggressive and take the nests of other birds.

P: Have you noticed a significant shift in ecology over the last years?

J: Yes, it seems like there's just... less of everything..

We could go down this way,
it's a little longer.

Have you read the book on Wilding, by Isabella Tree? The thing about nature is that it does recover, given the right environment and a bit of help. I mean if you look at a place like Chernobyl and how that's become a really quite an amazing area. With all the people having to leave so suddenly, the bears and wolves have all come back.

P: I mean it's a little like lockdown, seeing our cities become suddenly more wild.

J: I feel really guilty about saying it but I loved lockdown. I live on the river and there were no boats, no cars. It was so peaceful and beautiful.

P: It felt like a massive moment for natural recovery.

J: There were so many people out on paddleboards and wild swimming. And you've got to think that hopefully a percentage of people will have changed their attitudes to nature. I think people have definitely started to appreciate it more.

P: How about in Richmond Park, did you notice any changes during lockdown?

J: Oh it was awful!

Laughs.

It's so difficult! People came in their droves and then left was rubbish left everywhere. The rubbish bins were overflowing with plastic and the animals come along - in the morning there was rubbish ripped apart and scattered everywhere. I don't know if it's just education?
Most people stayed on the edges near the car parks and didn't walk very far - it was still empty in the middle of the park, it was pretty good because it's a big park.

I mean, it's like everything, isn't it? It's a balance between people enjoying the place, but not wrecking it at the same time.

P: As you say, this balance really is so important. In our line of work, we're trying to embrace people's need for nature in the city as an opportunity to encourage and support natural and biodiversity needs, but it's an incredibly sensitive thing to get right. A lot of the time they can counteract one another.

J: I mean if you live in a flat, what a fantastic place to hang out at the weekend! A lot of people come in from the city centre for the weekend. You get a trillion cyclists, they're maniacs. Someone was clocked at sixty miles an hour going down the hills. We're really incredibly lucky with parks.

P: So what started your interest in documenting Richmond Park?

J: I started to get into photography a long time ago, but not with any sort of training. When I got the dog and had my first son, I was in the park every day. And as they grew up, I started to do a scrapbook of the park for them, so that when they left home they'd have a memory of where they grew up - a year in the life of the park. And a friend came round and saw it and said, you know, you should try and get that published. And now I've done nine of them. I mean I'd go for a walk every morning, and I'd be working. But I didn't make a lot of money.

P: Did the project change your perception of the park?

J: To be quite honest, it didn't. If you have your camera with you often enough and are in the park often enough then you naturally get amazing moments. It's mainly about being in the right place at the right time, I think that's a lot of what landscape photography is about. The important bit is that you have to know the place.

P: I guess you build up a slow relationship with the landscape, through watching.

J: Yes - look here, this was a woodpecker. They make nests in the same place every year so you'll find one tree with loads of holes in it. See, these are two different years. When they're knocking it out, there will be a lot of fresh wood on the floor so you know to look for the wood. A dead silver birch is perfect, just before it falls down because it's quite easy to hollow out.

P: It sounds almost like a form of tracking, to read these behaviours and understand how the forest is working.

J: Yes, that's exactly what it is. I'll come back year after year knowing a pair of kestrels are always nesting in the same tree. It wasn't great photography, more animal field craft. Then once you get to know that, you just sit and wait. As you walk the dog, you see this stuff and think I'll come back again at the right time of year. Like with the dog, you look at how she behaves and you know that as she's looking at squirrels she's going to run at any minute. That's how you look at the wild animals, you get to know what they're going to do next.

P: They keep going despite the threatening changes.

J: If we do something now, we can still change things. Did you watch David Attenborough on Sunday? It's amazing, it was all about biodiversity. We're in a massive phase of extinction at the moment and I'm passionate about things like rewilding. When I was a kid, we would go to places like Richmond Park and run through the grass with a net and it would just explode with butterflies. You've grown up without that - you don't know what's gone in the last fifty years. The grasshoppers used to just be leaping up and the noise would be deafening. You don't get that any more. So it's happening incredibly quickly. It's turned in a generation.

But to keep on doing the things we're doing is so important, to build on that green awareness. It's never been more important.

06 A call to arms

Towards the new wild

The communal voices that advocate Richmond Park treasure its vastness, its abundance of wildlife and ability to get completely lost so close to the city centre. To its community, Richmond Park embodies the awe of the wild.

Yet we know both from government statistics and from Joanna's tale that the wildness of Richmond Park is only a shadow of what it was a few years ago. Joanna's call for a rebalance between people and nature is a common one, one that is echoed across London, the UK and the world. It is an echo that is getting louder but is still not loud enough to be obeyed as law.

Nature's true value may be impossible to quantify yet we must try. Because unfortunately, numerics are still the dominant vocabulary of our current age, of urban development and of city planning.

To ingrain green value in law, amendments must be made to national planning policy to include nature-facing standards - such as the re-designation of open spaces as natural habitats, an enforced minimum square metres of green space per person, and the securing of 'areas of deficiency in people'.

These amendments must work to give London ‘National Park’ equal rights with London ‘City’. They must acknowledge nature as part of London as much as humans are, and they must be made now.

Yet in the long term, quantification, rules and regulations are not enough, and can often miss the true picture. Nature is not an asset, its reach goes beyond statistics. To truly make change, nature’s own language must be employed, and must be remembered to be akin to our own human language. As David Attenborough said, “It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living.”

Ultimately, we must embrace subjective valuation - we must take our individual stories, senses and experiences as seriously as statistics. This is the only way we will be able to bridge the gap between ourselves and nature, to re-establish our own natural values, and to aid the battle of London’s wild.

26

26 The antler is mightier than the hamper

Index

01

02

03

04

05

06