

LIVING PLACES

Cleaner, Safer, Greener

October 2002

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MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



The quality of our public space affects the quality of all our lives. It affects how we feel about where we live, where we work and where our children play.

Successful, thriving and prosperous communities are characterised by streets, parks and open spaces that are clean, safe, attractive – areas that local people are proud of and want to spend their time. Tackling failure, such as litter, graffiti, fly-tipping, abandoned cars, dog fouling, the loss of play areas or footpaths, for many people is the top public service priority.

This report sets out the Government's vision for public space – everybody's local environment should be cleaner, safer and greener. It recognises that many good things are happening already in cities, towns and villages right across the country. However, we recognise that more needs to be done, especially in the most disadvantaged areas.

This report draws on the work of six Government Departments, joining up, to provide policies that link together in a sustainable way. We are determined to ensure that this cross-cutting work continues so that we do achieve a real improvement to the quality of our public space.

Government can and will take the lead but the solutions will invariably be local. We need to give local leaders and decision-makers the power to get the job done. We will set targets for improvements. We will also provide sources of advice and expertise to help get the job done. Those responsible will know what action they should take to deliver the cleaner, safer and greener public spaces that everyone has a right to expect.

Improving the quality of our public space is not about creating a sanitised, sterile, shrink-wrapped world. It is about creating living, sustainable and inclusive communities – communities where people feel they have a stake in their future.

This report represents the Government's commitment to improving public space. It is not the end, but merely the beginning of our drive to create and maintain local environments that are cleaner, safer and greener. We all have a role to play – Government, local authorities, agencies and business. Ultimately, each of us as individuals has a role to play in caring for our neighbourhoods and respecting the communities in which we live, work and play.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Prescott'.

John Prescott,
Deputy Prime Minister

SUMMARY

Public spaces are a barometer of a community. As human beings we respond positively and instinctively to places that are welcoming. We want to spend time – and money – in such a community. But all too often, we experience places that are unwelcoming, unkempt and difficult – or even dangerous – to use.

The quality of public spaces affects all of us wherever we live and work. Safe, well-maintained and attractive public spaces have a critical role in creating pride in the places where we live which, in turn, is essential to building community cohesion and successful communities. That is why the Government is committed to action to make public spaces cleaner, safer, greener places that enhance the quality of life in our neighbourhoods, towns and cities.

A Cleaner, Safer, and Greener Public Realm

This document sets out the Government's approach to making cleaner, safer, greener public spaces.

Section 1 explains why our public spaces are important. It explains the need for new thinking to sort out the complex, overlapping responsibilities for public spaces, to remove the cumulative symptoms of degradation, to tackle the problems in deprived areas and to respond to changing times. It also identifies some key components that underpin successful schemes – committed leadership, strong partnerships, active community involvement, desire for quality and innovation and better communicating and sharing of ideas.

Section 2 maps the main policies of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), the Home Office, the Department for Transport (DfT), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) that are improving the quality of local environments throughout the country. It highlights reforms, policies and initiatives that show how the Government is working with a range of partners. It also shows how these measures are working to forge stronger partnerships across the public, private and voluntary sectors, thus enabling more imaginative and better designed solutions to meet people's concerns about the places where they live.

Section 3 explains that local environments also need to be greener and healthier and details the need for a good balance of green spaces in our towns and cities. It sets out how the Government has achieved the Urban White Paper's

commitments to raise the profile and improve the quality of urban parks, play areas and green spaces. It also contains the further measures that the Government will implement to produce continuous improvements and a better future for these precious spaces. In considering how to improve service planning for parks and green spaces it shows how a general approach to improving public spaces can be applied to other elements of the public realm.

Finally, Section 4 explains how the Government will build on the successes described in the report by implementing additional measures for improving the quality of the public realm. It also sets out how the Government will act over the next five years to get the basics right – structures, legislation, policies and funding – to tackle the quality of the local environment in deprived neighbourhoods and to meet the commitments on urban parks and green spaces. It launches a new national campaign for raising awareness, stimulating debate and inspiring action for cleaner, safer, and greener spaces in all our communities.

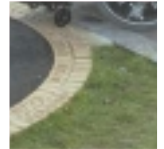
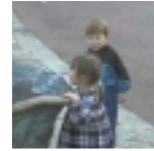
Action for continuous improvement

Evidence shows that people want action on this agenda. Spending Review 2002 saw additional investment and new targets working towards this end. The Government is committed to working with all the parties to deliver a programme of action in four key areas.

1. Getting the Basics Right:

- Establishing an inter-departmental Ministerial team for improving co-ordination of policies and programmes across Government that will deliver cleaner, safer and greener public spaces for everyone.
- Ensuring that funding for these policies and programmes is in place and delivers the outcomes required against a rigorous system of performance measurement.
- Making the legislation fit-for its-purpose – balancing rights and responsibilities with the power to deliver and the possibility of redress.
- Making sure that public spaces are accessible to all members of our society, able and disabled, young and old.

2. Tackling the Particular Problems of the Poorest Communities:
 - Better targeting of mainstream resources, along with better co-ordination of those resources with funding from both the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the Lottery.
 - Producing a review of social and environmental exclusion complete with recommendations for action.
3. Tackling the Needs of Urban Parks and Green Spaces:
 - Setting up a new unit for urban spaces attached to the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), supported by a strategic partnership, to deliver a comprehensive programme of work for improving urban parks and green spaces.
 - Implementing a clearer national policy framework and stronger planning policy guidance for open spaces.
 - Programme of work to improve information and data, good practice and higher quality standards that can be accessed by a wide range of users. Working with partners to raise standards and aspirations.
4. Communicating Ideas and Promoting Best Practice:
 - Launching a drive to raise awareness of the benefits of high quality public spaces in improving the lives of people and their communities and to promote the sharing of best practice between professionals through events and use of new technology.
 - Raising standards of design by appointing Design Champions and developing Design Quality Indicators for public space.
 - Working with partners to develop an approach to communications that will raise awareness of public space issues and encourage changes in behaviour and attitudes.



SECTION 1 – SETTING THE SCENE

“We need stronger local communities and an improved local quality of life. Streets where parents feel safe to let their children walk to school. Where people want to use the parks. Where graffiti, vandalism, litter and dereliction is not tolerated. Where the environment in which we live fosters rather than alienates a sense of local community and mutual responsibility.”

(Prime Minister, Croydon, April 2001).

Following the Prime Minister’s speech, the Government undertook an inter-departmental review of policies, funding streams and targets that have an impact on the public realm as part of Spending Review 2002. This was the first time that central Government had sought to take such an approach to the wide range of policies that directly affect the local environment. This document reflects the outcome of this review. It also draws on the work undertaken following the Urban White Paper proposals for improving local environments and sets out the Government’s response to the final report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, “*Green Spaces, Better Places*”.

Public spaces and daily life

All of us – rich or poor, young or old, living in cities, towns, villages or the countryside – use public spaces every time we leave our homes.

They are the streets and paths where we walk on the way to the bus stop, to take our children to school, to exercise the dog or to hang out with friends. They are the parks and play areas, town centres and sea fronts we visit on holiday or at the weekend. They are internal public places such as libraries and town halls. They are also the privately owned and managed spaces to which the public has free access, such as car-parks, shopping malls, leisure and business parks, airport terminals and bus or rail stations. Public spaces mean everywhere between the places where we live and work.



The quality of our experience of these public spaces has a major impact on our lives. It affects our sense of well-being and how we feel about the places where we and others live.

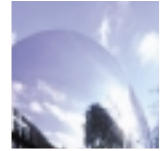
Every one of us, every day, takes decisions about which areas to use and when and how we use them. Many of our decisions and activities are influenced by our perceptions of the quality and safety of the spaces we encounter. We make decisions about the routes our children take to school or the playground because we want to ensure their safety. We make decisions about the route we take to get home from the station at night in order to avoid a badly-lit side street.

The quality of public spaces matter to people. Evidence shows (Oxford Brookes, 2002) that people are typically concerned about:

- unsafe streets and public spaces that foster anti-social behaviour, crime and the fear of crime.
- dirty streets and public spaces strewn with litter, dog mess, abandoned cars and graffiti.
- unattractive and inaccessible parks, play areas and open spaces with poor provision for children and young people, older people and disabled people.

A survey carried out by MORI (Consumer Focus for Public Services – People’s Panel Wave 5, March – April 2000) asked: “What would most improve the quality of your life in this area?” At least two of the following appeared in everyone’s top four responses:

- cleaner streets, including rubbish and dog fouling
- reducing crime
- more activities for children and young people
- improve parks and open spaces
- improving the street infrastructure including paving, lighting etc.



The survey also showed that people associate these services most closely with local authorities. It showed a decline in satisfaction on street cleaning and litter collection from around 45 per cent in 1998 to 30 per cent in 2001.



There is a growing body of research that establishes and analyses the relationships between local environmental quality, people's health, their fear of crime and the social and economic vibrancy of the community. Some of this is discussed in more detail in the literature review undertaken by Oxford Brookes University during the course of SR2002 and published alongside this document on the ODPM website (see www.urban.odpm.gov.uk/crosscut/litreview/index.htm). The 2001 British Crime Survey (as published in '*Crime in England and Wales, 2001/02*', see www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimeew1.html) shows a direct link between perceptions of visible disorder and fear of crime. It is also interesting that the majority of complaints at police consultative meetings, even in high crime areas, are often about dog fouling and other 'quality of life' issues.

Concerns about the quality of public spaces affect all areas and are bound up with the social and economic life of communities. The quality of public space, real or perceived, plays a vital role in the vicious or virtuous cycles which characterise communities on the up, in decline or in recovery. Degraded public spaces are not a sign of a vibrant community.

Dirty and dangerous places encourage graffiti, vandalism and anti-social behaviour, which in turn undermine public confidence in them and lead people to avoid them. An unattractive and threatening local environment encourages people to use their cars for short journeys and to move to a better area if they can. It can discourage investment and lead to abandonment and dereliction. A high quality local environment is a big influence in making people visit a place, spend money and invest in it. Conversely, a low quality environment can lead to places becoming stigmatised and drive people, businesses and investment away.

This sort of spiral of decline is starkly highlighted in some of our poorest neighbourhoods, where badly designed, managed and maintained public spaces combine with high crime rates, poor health, low skills, poor housing and joblessness to sustain poverty. There is a strong relationship between levels of deprivation in an area and the condition of the local environment. Child pedestrian deaths and accidents are more common in deprived areas, facilities such as parks and play areas tend to be worse and less accessible and air quality is poorer.



Poor local environmental quality, therefore, also affects the physical health of communities. Places that are strewn with litter and rotting rubbish attract vermin and disease. Noise, air and light pollution affect the physical and psychological well-being of residents, while traffic can reduce the amount of exercise people take. Increasingly, the health benefits of good local environments are being realised. For example, high quality green spaces go a long way to encouraging people to pursue healthier lifestyles through exercise such as walking, cycling and active children's play.

Particular demographic groups tend to suffer disproportionately from poor quality public spaces. Children, young people and older people can be inhibited from walking to school or to the shops, from meeting friends or taking exercise. This can lead to a greater sense of isolation and poor health. Moreover, although it is commonly assumed that parks are, by their very nature, socially inclusive facilities, research demonstrates that people from black and minority ethnic communities are less likely to use them than the rest of the population.

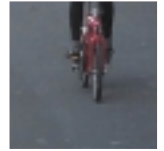
Achieving high quality public spaces

We instinctively know both good and bad public spaces when we see them but we rarely define the criteria by which we judge them. The simple fact is that most people want their neighbourhoods to be cleaner, safer and greener. Safe, well-maintained and attractive spaces have a critical role in creating the pride in the places where people live that is essential to successful and cohesive communities.

Achieving high quality spaces will require new thinking that better integrates the ways we design, create, manage and maintain our public realm. Here we pick out four main challenges:

- public space is not a single definable service;
- local environmental problems can feed off each other;
- problems need to be tackled where they are worst; and
- circumstances can change quickly.

The first challenge is inherent in the very concept of public space – it is not a single definable public service; it has a far more complex pattern, with many owners, tenants and users. It requires many different management arrangements, service providers and agencies, involving the public, private and voluntary sectors.



Responsibility for public realm policy is spread across central government departments and agencies. Although the public generally identifies local authorities as responsible for managing and maintaining public spaces, there is also a fragmented system of ownership, statutory roles and management responsibilities at the local level.

One consequence of this fragmentation is that public space issues are seldom looked at as a whole. Even when new public spaces are created the long-term maintenance issues involved are frequently overlooked.

The second challenge is symptomatic of the dynamic way in which public space develops and changes – creeping degradation. All public spaces, however well-designed initially, are prey to the simple carelessness of users, the indifference of some service providers, the misguided embellishments of others and the ravages of time. Add to this poor maintenance, neglect or, worse still, ill-conceived intervention and today's award-winning schemes can easily turn into tomorrow's neglected and rundown areas.

A streetscape can be compromised by poor air quality, noise and traffic, by inappropriate restoration of a pavement or simply by indifference and carelessness but the cumulative effect is a local environment that is threatening, unwelcoming, or even hostile.

The third challenge is to improve the quality of public spaces in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and ensure that people are not excluded from enjoying the benefits of high quality local environments. In the past, tackling such issues in deprived areas has all too often resulted in short-term, unsustainable investment in patched-up solutions rather than dealing with the underlying problem. The key to sustainable improvements in deprived areas is ensuring that mainstream providers offer decent standards of service provision – in environmental services, in policing, in local transport and other relevant areas. Additional or one-off interventions can kick-start progress but only main services can improve things in the longer term.

The final challenge is to respond to changing circumstances whilst ensuring the continued provision and maintenance of high-quality public spaces for all. Today, we face changing demands in the housing market – whether it is for new communities in the South-East or low demand and abandonment in parts of the North and Midlands. The requirements of pedestrians, public transport users and motorists are also changing and need to be balanced. We need to retain people who move out of towns and cities in search of 'nature', 'greenery' and



‘clean air’. We also need to tackle the growing fears, real or imagined, of young people, women, older people and people from culturally diverse communities about their safety.

But if there are challenges to be overcome, there is also inspiration to be gained from programmes and schemes all over the country which are addressing these issues in innovative and exciting ways. There is no blueprint for success – different solutions suit different areas.

Components for success

Five components stand out as key factors in the many successful schemes identified through the crosscutting review and the work of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce. They are: committed leadership; strong partnerships; active community involvement; the desire for quality and innovation; and better communicating of ideas.

Leadership. Committed local leadership and engagement is vital for raising the profile of the public realm and allocating resources for improving and maintaining it better. Most of the successful schemes identified during the course of the reviews were products of strong leadership. In many cases the leadership was political – resulting from the recognition of the importance of high quality local environment to residents, businesses and visitors. Community leaders, individuals and organisations such as parish councils, residents’ associations, or friends groups can also play a key role in championing local aspirations and driving forward improvements – particularly to facilities like parks and play areas and those that affect pedestrians.

Leadership of successful public realm projects can also come from outside the political or public sector. In some town centres, local businesses have emerged as champions for higher quality public spaces especially in town centres and retail environments.

Partnership. Strong leadership can be vital to delivering strong partnerships. Effective and sustained partnerships are important for managing the complex distribution of ownership and responsibilities for the public realm and achieving improvements to service planning and delivery.

Within local authorities, different departments such as planning, highways and parks need to work well together. They, in turn, need to work well with all those other agencies and local stakeholders. Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) are increasingly providing opportunities for key stakeholders to get together to discuss issues and decide and achieve priorities.



Local businesses are also more willing to work with local people and local authorities to maintain higher quality environments. Government proposals for developing Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) will provide an effective model by which businesses in an area to agree to an additional levy on rates to pay for a programme of measures aimed at improving the quality and safety of local public space. The Government is currently preparing guidance on setting up BID schemes and preparing legislation that will set out the legal and regulatory framework.

Community involvement. Community involvement with public space schemes, large and small, is essential to getting a scheme that really works and is sustainable in the long-term.

Engaging local people in schemes that improve the quality of the places where they live or work can range from the clean-up of a local pond to the pedestrianisation of Trafalgar Square. It will help them believe that they can influence the result and make them more likely to care whether the pond or square is well maintained. The benefits of active involvement of local people can outweigh the additional efforts required – active engagement of the community has been proven to bring about results that better meet users' needs. Where communities have been effectively engaged in projects the outcomes are better – and stay that way for longer. That has been shown time and time again.

Moreover, there are important benefits for local people themselves from being involved in community activity – the opportunities for meeting and working closely with other local people, for developing new skills and for building confidence that can lead to greater community cohesion. Increasingly these are being recognised and efforts are being made to build community involvement into all stages of policy and action.

Quality and Innovation. The best public realm schemes strive for the highest achievable quality. This does not always mean the most expensive solution but does imply an understanding of the principles of good design, a balancing of the sustainable over the quick fix, of quality over quantity, of innovation over the easy option. Quality tends to focus minds on design issues. Although they are obviously important, it is equally important to define quality in terms of standards of service delivery and the process by which it is created. Quality can also save money in the longer term, since lowest cost does not necessarily equate to best value. There is no point in creating a good new public space and then not maintaining it to an acceptable standard.



Many imaginative and innovative solutions have been found to the bewildering array of challenges involved in creating and maintaining high quality spaces. For example, some local authorities have sought creative solutions by:

- modernising their contractual relationships with contractors by improving the specification for services and developing stronger partnership working;
- using and enforcing legislation in order to deal with problems associated with derelict land or persistent offenders;
- using new technology, both in the delivery of front-lines services such as street cleansing or grass cutting and in office systems such as job-ordering or record-keeping; and
- involving local stakeholders in projects to improve and maintain the quality of local spaces.

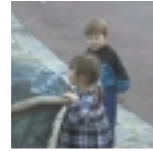
Communicating ideas. The best schemes place a real value on good communication – both listening and providing information – which clearly pays dividends in the way people feel about the finished product. Some of the most impressive schemes have emerged after extensive periods of community consultation.

There are many positive benefits to involving the community in the management and development of their parks and open spaces. Creating a shared sense of ownership of that space and the development process can help to break down some of the barriers between people of different backgrounds and circumstances, in turn leading to greater community cohesion.

Of course, communities change over time and the challenge to all public bodies is to recognise these changes and respond to the changing wants and needs of all local people.

Our priorities

The Government is committed to taking a leading role in ensuring that public spaces are fit-for-their-purpose, enhance the quality of people's lives and strengthen our communities. This requires action to make our streets and public spaces:



- **cleaner** – by improving how they are maintained and how services are managed and delivered;
- **safer** – by improving how they are planned, designed and looked after;
- **greener and healthier** – by ensuring access to high-quality parks and green spaces.

Government is realistic about how much it can achieve on its own. Our departments and agencies (and others) need to work closely together in future to ensure that we continue to promote policies and programmes that enable others to deliver high quality public spaces for all.

Summary

Every one of us should expect to enjoy places that are clean, safe and green. Poor quality spaces are visible indicators of decline and disadvantage in too many of our neighbourhoods and reduce quality of life.

The Government is determined to make towns and cities more liveable. High-quality public spaces and local environments are a big part of that agenda. We must stimulate new thinking to overcome the many challenges in providing high quality public spaces – the complex distribution of responsibilities, cumulative symptoms of degradation, poor spaces in our deprived areas – and respond to changing times.

Many successful schemes are showing that these challenges can be overcome through committed leadership, strong partnerships, active community involvement, the desire for quality and innovation and better communication and sharing of ideas.

The next section identifies the most important areas of public policy where progress has been made and how these are helping to create public spaces which are cleaner, safer and more attractive.



SECTION 2 – A CONSTANTLY EVOLVING LANDSCAPE

In the last five years the Government has introduced major reforms that are already producing better quality public spaces. In the vital areas of local government, planning, housing, policing and transport new policies are in place to ensure measurable and sustained improvement. Government is also taking action in a number of key areas that affect directly the quality of public spaces and local environments, including regeneration, neighbourhood renewal and quality design. Spending Review 2002 has delivered significant additional resources to fund the programme of reforms. (Details of the outcome of Spending Review 2002 are at Annex 1).

The Government alone cannot deliver on these policies. It must work in partnership with all those individuals, organisations and partnerships that make policy work on the ground – the police, street cleaners, neighbourhood and street wardens, community leaders, businesses, artists, contractors and local government, to name just a few.

This chapter highlights the most important areas in which progress is being made and sets out how new investment contributes to creating public spaces that are more attractive, cleaner and safer. This is not, however, a complete list of all Government policies with an impact on our local environment and we have therefore included weblinks to more detailed information where appropriate.

Local Government

Local Government is vital to the creation and maintenance of good public spaces. Many of the successful schemes to improve the quality of local environments across the country are driven by strong local political leadership, clearly defined local targets, successful local consultation and productive local partnership. These factors tie in to the principles that underpin the vision for modern local governance that are set out in the White Paper “Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services” published in December 2001 (see www.local-regions.odpm.gov.uk/sll/index.htm). To help deliver the reforms set out in the White Paper, Spending Review 2002 saw a significant increase to both local authority revenue funding and support for capital investment.



Reforms have already been introduced to enable local councils to deliver the quality of local leadership and public services that their communities need. These reforms will provide the basis for Councils to continue their drive for higher standards of performance to earn them greater freedoms and flexibilities.

A range of measures is being brought in to help local authorities co-ordinate the activities of the utilities. On 1 April 2001 Government made it possible for local authorities to fine utilities that fail to complete works within an agreed deadline. The Government is also testing powers to allow utilities to be charged “lane rental” whenever they dig up the road. In addition, new standards have been introduced that utilities will have to meet when carrying out works or restoring road and pavement surfaces.



Many local authorities have set out a strong commitment to tackle their public space problems – to great effect. One example is The London Borough of Camden’s “Boulevard Project”



Camden's ambitious initiative known as the Boulevard Project is based on a Community Strategy that says:

“By 2005 the Council will make streets in Camden more attractive through better cleaning, design, enforcement and lighting. It will upgrade roads and pavements and keep them in a good state of repair.”

The project draws together a number of strands to achieve the maximum impact including streetscape design and audit, quality surfaces, new cleaning techniques, proactive enforcement and management.

A simple but effective example is that Camden has started washing its streets as well as sweeping them, bringing the benefits of the project to the whole borough not just selected areas.

This £32 million project includes a range of measures such as:

- New footway surfaces;
- Removing unnecessary street furniture;
- Improved street lighting;
- Reviewing enforcement activities;
- Improving shop frontages;
- Tackling graffiti and flyposting;
- More trees;
- Better drainage;
- Better facilities for people with disabilities

Partnership working is at the heart of the Project, developing new relationships with contractors, public utilities, across departments in the council and with local shops and businesses. However the most important partners are the residents with whom the council communicates both before and after works are undertaken.

The Boulevard Project has achieved significant improvements – reflected in the comments of external auditors and in the unprecedented customer satisfaction ratings – 81% –after works have been done. One unexpected benefit has been the dramatic reduction in insurance claims on the early boulevarded road, In three years they have fallen from 140 at a cost of £400,000 in the previous 3 years to zero.



Planning

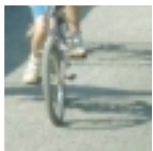
The planning system has a key role to play in ensuring high quality public spaces and local environments and creating places for people. *Sustainable Communities – Delivering through Planning (July 2002)* sets out the Government's vision for reforming the planning system to support its objectives for building more sustainable communities. It sets out plans for changing the culture of planning so that development adds value through better design. At the heart of the reforms is the introduction of local development frameworks – a new style of development plan at local level – the revision of the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) series and a programme for raising skills of planners and councillors.

The PPG series are being revisited and reissued as Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). The revisions will provide opportunities for clarifying Government objectives for creating high quality public spaces that improve local life.

In the meantime, ODPM has introduced PPG17: *Open Space, Sport and Recreation* (24 July 2002 – see www.planning.odpm.gov.uk/ppg/ppg17/index.htm). This guidance provides a new and more effective planning framework for providing, protecting and enhancing open spaces and is discussed further at pages 44 to 45 of this document.

The Government has announced a significant injection of extra resources to strengthen the capabilities of local planning authorities to improve performance on handling planning applications and to put in place local frameworks. A new planning delivery grant worth £350m between 2003 and 2006 is being introduced, targeted on authorities that significantly improve planning performance.

In addition, a review of transport planning will be carried out by the Department for Transport and the ODPM by July 2003 – proposing reforms to improve consultation, approval procedures and compensation mechanisms for faster delivery of transport infrastructure projects.



Housing

Poor housing can directly affect the quality and attractiveness of the surrounding public spaces. Run down or abandoned housing contributes to fear of crime and may in fact provide a magnet for crime. It can affect the confidence and esteem of the local community. For example, 19 per cent of homes in the 10 per cent most deprived wards are in areas suffering from high levels of vacancy, disrepair, dereliction or vandalism, compared with 5 per cent elsewhere.

New Century Family Garden

New Century Family Garden in Openshaw, East Manchester, is an example of inner-city regeneration at its most local and community-led. The site was a former drying green enclosed by terraced housing and accessed by alleyways. Blighted with fly-tipping, dog fouling, joy-riding, poor drainage and dangerous surfacing, children from the houses had nowhere safe to play.

The only time that residents left their backyards was to put out the bin. Now the area has mild steel gates at the alleyway entrances, helping to tackle crime and improve community safety.

Improved drainage, resurfacing, ornamental pots, flowers and climbers have created a safe and pleasant area, fully maintained by the residents.

The project was initiated by the residents' group. Following a number of consultation workshops, with the help of Groundwork, a brief for the project was developed and funding secured through New Deal for Communities and the private housing sector.



before



after



The Government is committed to delivering extra resources to ensure that everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home and has set itself targets to improve the condition of both the social and private sector housing stock.



As part of the reform programme, building on the £25 million awarded from the Capital Modernisation Fund in 2002 to establish nine pathfinder projects in areas experiencing low demand, new resources are being allocated to allow these projects to implement their market renewal strategies. This will benefit more than 400,000 properties in communities currently blighted by low demand and abandonment.

Policing

Tackling crime and fear of crime is essential for giving people the confidence to make full use of their local public spaces. The police and their strategic partners have a major contribution to make in improving local environments.

The White Paper “*Policing a New Century*” (www.policereform.gov.uk/whitepaper/index/index.htm) published in December 2001 set out the Government’s intentions for the future of policing in England and Wales. It included major proposals for improving the performance of the police service and for delivering support for police officers. Some of the proposals required legislation and these formed parts of the Police Reform Bill that received Royal Assent in July 2002.

Of the forty reform projects in the White Paper, three are already improving people’s experience of public space. The Street Crime Initiative, that focuses on the ten areas that account for 80 per cent of robberies nationally, is showing reductions of about 25 per cent in street robbery offences since the initiative was introduced. Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) have been tightened-up and fixed penalty fines for minor disorder offences are now being piloted in the West Midlands, Essex, Croydon and North Wales. Community Support Officers are being recruited in 27 police forces. More than 100 are already at work on the streets of Westminster and by April 2003 we hope to see more than 1,000 on our streets.



Kent Rural Partnership

Kent County Council, Kent Police Authority and the Chief Constable of Kent have set up an innovative Rural Partnership aimed at building community confidence and reassurance by reducing crime and fear of crime, deterring anti-social behaviour, improving residents' access to local authority services and fostering social inclusion.

Twelve pilot areas each have a rural community warden who works alongside a rural police constable. The County Council provides the resources both for the warden and for the constable.

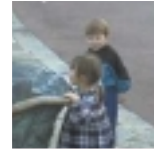
The role of the warden is to support the local rural community with a conspicuous uniformed presence based in the locality (in Minster, for instance, the warden works out of the local library). The Partnership is promoting community solidarity and is preventing and reducing crime and fear of crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Transport

The Integrated Transport White Paper, published in July 1998 (see www.dft.gov.uk/itwp/paper/index.htm) signalled a change in emphasis in transport planning and provision, encouraging a fresh view of the use of road space. The ten year transport plan (2000) set out an ambitious programme of modernisation, backed by historic levels of new investment, much of which will directly improve the local quality of life.

Following on from these and the development of Local Transport Plans, the Department for Transport (DfT) is promoting and funding a number of initiatives aimed at improving the quality of public spaces. These include:

- **Clear Zones** (www.clearzones.org.uk) that use innovative technologies to reduce road traffic, making places that are clean and safe for people to use. Nine trailblazer sites are being developed to illustrate what can be achieved.
- **Home Zones** (www.homezonenews.org.uk) are residential streets where residents and motorists share the highway. The changes to the street layout, and the use of innovative design techniques to support local residents. There are 61 successful bids across England for Home Zone Challenge funds to enable rapid dissemination of developing good practice. (see www.homezoneschallenge.com)



- **Access to Public Transport (AtPT)**, which is a joint project with Sustrans, Network Rail, Train Operating Companies and others aimed at making it easier to walk and cycle directly to and from stations.
- **School Travel:** DfT has undertaken a raft of initiatives designed to improve safety and reduce car use on the journey to school. These have included funding dedicated school travel advisers in local authorities and disseminating best practice through published guides and a free site-specific consultancy service.

Morice Town

Plymouth City Council, working in partnership with local residents, has introduced a Home Zone in Morice Town, an area with a mix of private, council and social housing adjacent to the Devonport naval base.

Residents say that being involved in the Home Zone has given the area a new feeling of community and has already begun to improve the quality of life, making local journeys safer and contributing to the well-being of the population.

There are nine gateways, each with the new Home Zone sign that alerts motorists that they are entering a different street environment. The zone has nine streets totalling more than two kilometres in length.

Key features of the Morice Town Home Zone include:

- a shared surface at one level over much of the area
- gateway features that narrow the carriageway
- introduction of planters and seating which effectively act as traffic calming
- a winding route for vehicles to ensure that speeds are reduced
- environmental enhancements
- on-street play facilities
- creation of a community space





Early next year the Department for Transport will be publishing a national strategy for creating improved conditions for walking.

The Government's ten year plan also recognises the need to address skills shortages and to remedy the lack of long term certainty of investment planning that has caused many employers to under-invest in training and recruitment. The Government is taking a number of initiatives to identify the actual and potential shortages, working with employers, the education sector, unions and professional bodies to address them. These include the Transport Planning Skills Initiative – working with the professional institutions, universities and employers to improve the number of people entering the sector (see <http://environment.uwe.ac.uk/tps/activities/tpsi/tpsi.htm>).

Rail Passenger Partnership

The Strategic Rail Authority's (SRA) Rail Passenger Partnership (RPP) scheme plays an important role in improving local station facilities to bring real benefits to passengers. These benefits can include facilities such as new bus shelters and additional cycle storage. It can also include better access for pedestrians, CCTV and improved platform facilities such as the renovation of ticket halls, toilets and waiting rooms. The SRA have recently enlarged and extended RPP to run for 10 years with a budget of £430m.

Bodmin Parkway

Bodmin Parkway Station – a principal station on the line between London and Penzance – received fastrack funding of almost £500,000 to improve facilities for passengers.

The package includes:

- New car park facilities
- Better access to the station
- New lighting
- Bus shelters and a covered cycle storage
- Toilets
- Platform and fencing
- Security surveillance by CCTV
- Improved infrastructure

One of the key benefits will be easier and safer access to the station. A new integrated transport package has been drawn up including better bus services to and from the station. There will also be CCTV and good quality lighting in the car park.



Other Key Initiatives

Over the past five years the Government has introduced a range of innovative programmes in key areas that are improving the quality of many public spaces and local environments.

Urban policy and regeneration: The Urban White Paper, *‘Our towns and cities: the future’*, (see www.urban.odpm.gov.uk/whitepaper/index.htm) set out the Government’s blueprint for an urban renaissance. It made clear that the creation of high quality towns and cities – attractive, clean, safe and well cared-for, where people can be proud to live – is crucial for this revitalisation.

The White Paper has provided a framework for ensuring that policies and programmes affecting urban areas are better co-ordinated and delivered. The importance of high quality local environments and making sure that the urban environment is better looked after is a key part of the strategy. The establishment of seven new Millennium Communities across the country by English Partnerships will set the benchmark in new standards of design, sustainability, building quality and efficiency and improving access to key public services. (www.englishpartnerships.co.uk).

We will be working with Groundwork over the next three years to help expand its network of Trusts and work with more local communities, businesses, local authorities and others to produce sustainable environmental improvements. We will also be working closely with CABI (www.cabi.org.uk) to support them in their work in promoting excellence in urban design, as well as to help establish the new unit for urban spaces (see page 41 – box). In addition, significant extra resources will be made available for the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) who have an important role to play in tackling deprivation and supporting urban renaissance (see Annex 1, paragraphs 1.2 and 2.5).

Social exclusion and Neighbourhood Renewal: The *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (2001) sets out the Government’s approach to regenerating the country’s most deprived areas. The Strategy aims to ‘narrow the gap between the most deprived and the rest so that within 10-20 years no one is disadvantaged by where they live’. Key priorities are outcomes in health, education, crime, jobs and housing and the physical environment. Central to the strategy are better minimum standards of service provision. Better targeting of large mainstream funding programmes is essential for these improved outcomes. ‘Floor’ (minimum standards) targets were introduced for the first time in Spending Review 2000 to ensure departments focused on deprived areas and disseminate that message to service deliverers. These targets have been brought forward and strengthened in Spending Review 2002.



The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU), based in the ODPM, works alongside the range of Whitehall departments so that the right structures are in place to ensure main programmes deliver on minimum targets. It is also providing seed money for a number of pilot schemes and initiatives that will allow communities to trial radical and innovative solutions to their problems.

In each local authority area, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are bringing key partners together to draw up local neighbourhood renewal strategies, detailing how main services and funding will be better targeted.

As part of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood renewal, the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme was set up. It is delivering £2 billion over the next 10 years to 39 neighbourhood partnerships. These partnerships are acting as a test bed for discovering ‘what works’ in neighbourhood renewal. The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) also provides 88 eligible deprived local authorities and their Local Strategic Partnerships with funds to improve services in the most deprived neighbourhoods. The Spending Review 2002 has extended the original £900 million fund with an additional £975 million: eligible authorities will now receive £300 million in 2002/03, £400 million in 2003/04, £450 million in 2004/05 and £525 million in 2005/06.

Kingsmill Corner play areas at Marl Hole Park in Sandwell

One example where NDC funding has supported the improvement to public space is in Sandwell.

This play area had been neglected for many years. A grass mound surrounded it, so parents could not watch their children playing from houses nearby.

Now the scheme is a flagship environmental improvement for Sandwell NDC, developed in partnership with environmental agency Groundwork Black Country. Children at the Guns Village primary school next to the site inspired the design. They chose play items from a catalogue – the climbing frame proving to be the most popular. A safe rubberised surface was necessary but it didn’t have to look boring. The children asked for an ocean floor look, with pictures of a giant octopus, sharks and sea creatures.

Some of the images were based on drawings by pupils at the school. The children now feel it is “their” playground in a way they never did before.

The NRU will also be expanding the **Neighbourhood and Street Wardens programmes** across the country that are achieving impressive results – cutting crime, tackling problems of fly-tipping and graffiti and providing a reassuring presence for local residents (see www.odpm.wardens.gov.uk). For example,



wardens in Hull installed ‘Sharps Bins’, resulting in the 250 needles being found on the streets each month reduced to a more manageable 30. The warden scheme in Knowsley in Liverpool runs a “walking bus” to get primary school children to school. In the East Manchester New Deal for Communities (NDC) area a 30 per cent reduction in crime was recorded following the introduction of a community-driven package to tackle crime that included a number of wardens schemes.

Blackthorn CASPAR Project

A neighbourhood warden played a key role in an award-winning project on the Blackthorn Estate – an estate of 2,200 houses on the outskirts of Northampton.

The local Community Safety Partnership (CASPAR) had produced a Crime and Disorder Strategy that included as a Personal Safety Target:

“To identify and implement an estate action community programme specifically aimed at reducing crime and disorder.”

The aims of the resulting CASPAR project were:

- to make the estate a safer place;
- to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, without simply moving it to surrounding areas;
- to co-ordinate more effective joint working by all agencies; and
- to fully involve the community.

The objectives were to provide innovative solutions to:

- overcome environmental factors contributing to crime;
- divert young people from involvement in crime and disorder;
- protect and support victims;
- reduce burglaries by 30 per cent by December 2001;
- increase the community ownership; and
- have a sustainable crime and disorder strategy.

Three project managers were appointed from the police, the Borough Council and the Country Council to work closely with the Residents Association. They surveyed every household to identify specific issues.

A neighbourhood warden was employed to target and prevent repeat dwelling burglaries (a problem identified by earlier research). Landscaping was altered to give greater protection and peace of mind – CCTV, fencing of alleyways, improved lighting, motorcycle barriers, installation of alarms and locks. Trees and shrubs pruned and abandoned vehicles and graffiti removed.



Sally Scott, a resident and chair of Blackthorn workers forum, said: “...*the general feeling is of people now choosing to live here. It is considered to be safer, cleaner, and nicer and that people are more accessible for advice and support. There is also more respect for the two Community beat officers, all of which is strengthening the community spirit.*”

Won the Tilley Award in 2001 for piloted best practice in community safety projects for the Home Office and has won one of the Deputy Prime Minister’s Awards for Urban Renaissance, presented at the 2002 Urban Summit.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) has introduced the “*Learning Curve*” to set out the Government’s strategy for providing the skills and knowledge needed to renew the most deprived neighbourhoods (see www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/nswardens.asp). It aims to tackle shortages of skills, experience and knowledge within the organisations and amongst the professionals responsible for designing policies and delivering regeneration and renewal initiatives. It also targets the skills needs of residents and communities for providing greater access to local jobs, as well as supporting their own regeneration initiatives.

Quality design: The Government set up the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in 1999 to create a national focus for raising the quality of design in the built environment. CABE promotes high standards in the design of buildings and the spaces between them. Earlier this year CABE produced a useful report on England’s streetscapes called “*Paving the Way*” (available on-line at www.cabe.org.uk/ynR31Rv8pnj=B0XYgx3JW_-publications/index.html).

Funding from the Crime Reduction Programme enabled the Design Council to work up a strategy for increasing the contribution that design can make to crime reduction. One strand of this is a Royal Society of Arts Student Design Award “*Less Crime through Design*” (see www.rsa-design.net/sda_cfe_2002/htm/cfe_2002_20.htm).



Designing out crime

Incorporating crime prevention measures at the design stage can have crucial role in delivering and creating a sense of safety and security; once a development has been completed, the main opportunity to incorporate these measures will have been lost.

A practical example can be found in South Yorkshire where bus shelters were re-designed to tackle problems of vandalism and passenger safety. A new ‘see and be seen’ design offers an attractive, illuminated, glass-panelled shelter that has proved popular and, with improved maintenance, is helping to develop a sense of passenger ‘ownership’ and reduced levels of vandalism.



The Government is addressing the shortage of skills for urban design and regeneration by implementing the recommendations of the report and action plan of the ‘Urban Design Skills Working Group’, chaired by CABI. (see www.cabi.org.uk/9B-IVmpz7OK=i2xTdWTman-/publications/index.html). RDAs are developing proposals for centres of excellence to raise capacity in all sectors and at all levels across the full range of regeneration and neighbourhood renewal activity. The Government will take action to address the skills gap by establishing a national centre of excellence to increase urban regeneration skills of professionals.

The Government is working with the Construction Industry Council to develop the Design Quality Indicator (DQI) system that was launched in July 2002. DQIs will assist those involved in the development or redesign of buildings, the space surrounding those buildings and the building’s contribution to the wider neighbourhood. This work should be completed by May 2003. The Government is also working with the CIC and other partners to develop DQIs for the public space.



Rural Policy: The provision of high quality public space is vital to sustaining thriving rural communities and many of the key issues around safety, cleanliness and attractiveness of the local environment apply equally to rural areas as to urban. The Rural White Paper published in November 2000 (see www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ruralwp/index.htm) announced new funds to support parish and town councils wishing to improve service provision to their local communities, either through their own direct action or by articulating their communities' needs.

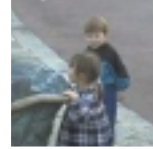
Parish Plans Grant, part of the "Vital Villages" scheme administered by the Countryside Agency, funds the preparation of action plans that will cover social, economic and environmental issues for villages. The Countryside Agency has published interim guidance to help some of the first parish councils who would like to produce a Parish Plan (see www.countryside.gov.uk/vitalvillages/whatis/parishplans.asp).

The Rural White Paper also announced the Market Towns Initiative, with £37 million of funding over the three years from 2001-02. Its aim is to regenerate small rural towns as vital and thriving centres able to provide a range of employment and high quality services for their own residents as well as for those of their hinterlands. RDAs and the Countryside Agency work with each town to create local partnerships, whose role is to engage the community with a view to agreeing an action plan for the town. The quality of the local environment, including public spaces, is considered as part of this process. For example, Downham Market and Ely are working to improve public spaces as part of their action plans.

The Department for Transport is assisting the Countryside Commission and local authorities to develop ideas as part of the Quiet Lanes initiative that is encouraging measures to make selected country lanes more attractive for walking, cycling and horse riding.

Rough Sleeping: Since 1998 the Government has reduced the number of people sleeping rough from 2000 to around 600. Work continues to help those sleeping rough, whose problems are complex and difficult to solve, and homeless people who use the streets during the day to beg for money to sustain a drug habit.

Many local authorities, police forces and voluntary agencies are now starting to work together to address these problems and ensure that streets are not used in this way and that vulnerable people are directed towards services. Action to address crime and fear of crime in town centres, by tackling begging, drug dealing and street drinking has – in some areas – also helped to reduce the number of people sleeping rough.



Oxford – Street Scene Task Force

Tackling begging, street drinking and rough sleeping

When Oxford was found to have one of the highest concentrations of rough sleepers outside London, the Street Scene Task Force was created – bringing together representatives from Oxford City Council, Thames Valley Police, Oxford City Primary Care Trust, social services, the Drug and Alcohol Action Team and the voluntary sector.

With a clear mandate to make Oxford's streets safer places to be, and to help those vulnerable people who are using them during the day or night, the aims of the Street Scene Task Force were to reduce the number of:

- rough sleepers;
- street drinkers;
- begging incidents; and
- drug related incidents from these client groups.

During the life of the Street Scene Task Force the number of rough sleepers fell from 23 in April 2001 to seven in January 2002. The number of people begging in the city has fallen dramatically, along with the number of street drinkers. The success of the Street Scene Task Force continues to be built on and the group has now developed to become part of a wider Homelessness Task Force.

In addition, the task force ran a public awareness campaign on the impact of giving money directly to beggars. This aimed to let people make an informed choice – and offered them the alternative of giving any donations directly to a local voluntary organisation that helps people away from the streets. Currently, the police are actively discouraging both the begging and street drinking scene with a combination of street intervention and ASBOs and with civil injunctions on the more aggressive individuals. These measures, alongside a soon-to-be-approved no drinking zone and an effective wet centre, provide a comprehensive approach to tackling street nuisance whilst helping the vulnerable.

Environmental Campaigns (ENCAMS) is an environmental charity that aims to achieve litter-free and sustainable environments by working with community groups, local authorities, businesses and other partners; it also runs the Keep Britain Tidy Campaign. The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has asked ENCAMS to develop a voluntary Code of Best Environmental Practice for the Fast Food Industry that will enable operators – together with local authorities, other major land managers and enforcement



agencies – to reduce litter and waste in the local environment, without significant extra cost to the industry. A clear communications strategy will promote the efficient and effective implementation of the voluntary code across the fast food industry.

Rats and Dogs

Communicators can sometimes get their message across by use of hard-hitting themes.

Recently, in a Keep Britain Tidy survey 95 per cent of respondents said that the amount of dog mess in public places worried them. This was the second biggest concern and finished well above other local issues.

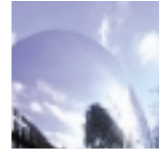
ENCAMS knew their target audience; therefore the campaign was launched specifically with the tabloid media in mind. Ricky Tomlinson, aka Jim Royle from BBC comedy *The Royle Family*, agreed to launch the campaign with a photoshoot at Clapham Common in London.

The pictures and words were very direct, too much so for one local authority that insisted on covering up what they saw as offensive images. But the ‘shock’ pictures and basic tabloid language worked – in test areas, dog fouling was reduced and the industry reported a prompt and large increase in the sales of dog-mess related products. It would appear that public behaviour was challenged and changed in a campaign that cost less than £130,000.

A similar approach was taken a few months later when ENCAMS launched a campaign to make people – young men especially – aware of the increase in the rat population, encouraged in large part by fast food waste and litter.

A see-through ‘rat run’ was erected in London’s Soho Square to confront passers-by and to illustrate just how rats devour waste food. This was combined with other media opportunities.





The impact was considerable and immediate – the campaign was in every national newspaper, made at least two-pocket cartoons and even featured in that week’s edition of BBC Radio Four’s ‘The News Quiz’.

Hard-hitting copy and tactics can and do work, used sparingly they can be a telling contribution to communicating messages and changing behaviour.



Summary

The reforms, policies and initiatives highlighted in this section show how the Government is working with a range of partners to deliver improvements to the quality of local environments. They show how Government policies, backed by additional funding, are delivering safer and cleaner streets and places by providing a stronger presence through police, special constables and wardens. They also show how Government is forging stronger partnerships across the public, private and voluntary sectors and enabling more imaginative and better-designed solutions to the concerns of people about the places they live in.

Local environments also need to be greener and healthier. They need to have a good balance of parks, play areas and green spaces and imaginative use of tree-planting. The Urban White Paper recognised the special case for examining the state of urban parks and green spaces and for developing proposals for raising their profile and their quality. The next section sets out how the Government has met the UWP’s commitment, the objectives for urban green spaces and the further steps that will be taken to achieve continuous improvements. The section will also help to show how a general approach to delivering higher quality public spaces can be applied.



SECTION 3 – URBAN PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

The Urban White Paper explained the need for focused action to improve urban green spaces. It challenged all involved to think more imaginatively to find ways to make parks, play areas and green spaces cleaner, safer and more attractive places that people will want to use for play and rest, exercise and sport, or entertainment and lifelong learning. It gave the Minister for Regeneration responsibility for developing proposals for improving the quality of urban parks and green spaces and announced the setting up of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce to advise in this process. The Taskforce was established in January 2001 and published its final report, *Green Spaces, Better Places* in May 2002.

The Government shares the aims of *Green Spaces, Better Places* and commends its principles for ensuring that parks and green spaces play their full role in creating a better quality of life in our towns and cities. We encourage all those involved in providing and caring for urban parks and green spaces to adopt the good practice the report promotes.

The final report contains 52 recommendations for achieving a better future for urban parks and green spaces. The Government's response to each recommendation is set out at Annex 2. In considering the recommendations the Government has given priority to identifying those for which immediate action is necessary in order to achieve sustained improvements and the longer-term objectives of *Green Spaces, Better Places*. This section sets out the Government's objectives for parks and green spaces, and the proposals it will implement for achieving continuous improvement in their quality.

Our objectives

Good parks and green spaces make neighbourhoods, towns and cities attractive and appealing. They are an integral part of the wider public space network and as much a part of the urban fabric as its buildings. They bring many benefits that make places more liveable and sustainable and enrich the quality of peoples' lives and communities. Good parks and green spaces are therefore vital for a wide range of Government priorities, such as regeneration, renewal and housing programmes, supporting healthy living, fostering neighbourhood pride and community cohesion.



Everyone has a right to good parks and green spaces close to his or her home or place of work. The needs of all people should be served, especially children and young people, older people, those with disabilities, minorities and people in disadvantaged areas. Over time the needs of people and their communities change. Today people want a more diverse range of green spaces that cater for their social, educational and physical needs and changing lifestyles. They want city farms and community gardens, wildlife areas and woodlands, allotments and tree-lined streets, as well as parks, sports grounds and play areas. At the end of life, they want cemeteries to provide a dignified resting place for themselves and those they love.

The Government is committed to the creation of networks of accessible, high-quality parks and diverse green spaces in all our towns and cities. Achieving these aims will require imaginative, new approaches that integrate policy and action for parks and green spaces with the Government's agendas for improving public spaces, neighbourhood renewal and an urban renaissance.

Building on success

The Urban White Paper initiatives are promoting action across the country for improving the quality of parks and green spaces. There is now increasing public appreciation of the benefits of parks, play areas and green spaces in creating sustainable neighbourhoods and communities. More local authorities are also achieving these benefits and giving priority to providing good quality green spaces. People are recognising these improvements and the differences they make to their local area and lives.

Over the last five years action across the country has led to many new parks and green spaces – for example, there are now 245 new millennium greens and major new parks such as Mile End Park in London and Exhibition Park in Newcastle are being created as part of regeneration programmes. Many parks and green spaces have been given a new lease of life by networks of 'friends' and local groups and by local businesses, working together on projects to improve them. For example, more than 500 green space projects have been supported by the New Opportunities Fund's Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities Programme and Groundwork, through the Barclays SiteSavers scheme, has transformed more than 600 derelict or underused sites into community spaces and play areas. The Heritage Lottery Fund's Urban Parks Programme has provided new investment to more than 200 historic parks and gardens.



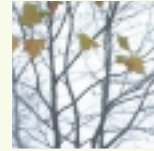
Leadership, structures and co-ordination

Green Spaces, Better Places identified a need for strategic thinking and better co-ordination of policy and programmes across government that have an impact on urban green spaces. It explains why action is needed at the national and local levels to give parks and green space services equal status to other services.

The Government agrees that parks and green spaces need more visible champions and clearer structures for co-ordinating policy and action better, and at all levels. These changes could significantly raise their profile and achieve better outcomes, which would also be promoted by the added focus that a national body could bring. The Government is not convinced, however, that the setting up of a new dedicated agency for parks and green spaces, as recommended by the Taskforce, would be the most effective way to achieve these objectives and the aim of a more integrated approach.

Several existing national bodies have responsibilities or programmes with impact on various aspects of urban green spaces – including English Heritage, Sport England, Groundwork, English Nature, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), the Countryside Agency, and the Forestry Commission. Each could do more to promote and support aspects of urban green spaces. It is likely, therefore, that a new body would overlap or compete in areas already covered, or that it would need to specialise in the areas that are not covered. Neither of these outcomes would be desirable and both would work against Government objectives for a more integrated approach.

Instead of setting up a new body the Government will take action on three levels to improve co-ordination of policy and action for urban parks and green spaces. It will provide a clearer national policy framework, invite CABE to set up a new unit for urban spaces, and encourage a strategic partnership to support the work of the new unit and inform national policy and local delivery. Proposals are set out in the boxes below.



Clearer national policy

Over the next five years the Government will lead in developing an effective national framework for urban parks and green spaces. It will implement new planning policy that puts green spaces at the heart of our objectives for achieving a renaissance of towns and cities. The Minister responsible for urban parks and green spaces will work collaboratively across government in developing our objectives and co-ordinating initiatives and complementary programmes. The Government will also set up a Joint Agency Group, involving Government Departments and agencies to advise this process.



Better organisational focus for urban spaces.

The Government will invite CABI to set up a new Unit for ‘urban spaces’. It believes that CABI has the potential for developing the new, integrated approach which should be encouraged – one that unites thinking about the open and built environments. In relation to parks and green spaces, the Unit will:

- i). Champion the vital role of urban parks and green spaces in improving quality of life and delivering urban renaissance.
- ii). Work closely with relevant government departments and agencies, voluntary organisations and funding providers to improve co-ordination and delivery of programmes and initiatives.
- iii). Advocate the need for higher priority and resources for parks and green spaces at national, regional and local levels, and provide advice on funding issues.
- iv). Strengthen existing and promote and stimulate new partnerships for improving green spaces involving the voluntary and private sectors and local groups.
- v). Promote and develop skills and training needs for delivering and supporting improvements.
- vi). Carry out research and develop information, quality standards and good practice.



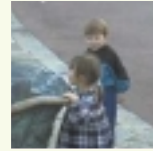
The Unit should focus in its initial years on developing its expertise in the field through a programme of work that carries forward action recommended by the Taskforce. Its early priorities will include:

- launching an awareness raising campaign to promote the value and importance of quality parks and green spaces.
- commissioning a research and information development series – to include work on funding needs for urban parks and green spaces and their economic and social benefits and opportunities.
- launching a good-practice programme and develop networks for sharing information.
- implementing and managing an enablers scheme.
- working with key partners to develop quality standards and measurable targets.

Strategic Partners

The Government will continue to work closely with the four organisations set out below, and will encourage the new CABE Unit to form a strategic partnership with them as well as the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management.

- **Groundwork:** developing community-based approaches and partnership working, to create practical projects which develop a sense of local ownership, improve people's quality of life and contribute to the wider regeneration of an area.
- **Urban Parks Forum:** developing information and good practice for professionals and community groups.
- **Green Flag Award scheme:** developing quality standards and the Award scheme to reward excellence in the provision, management and care of parks by professionals and community groups.
- **Improvement and Development Agency** for local authorities (IDeA): disseminating good practice in service improvement, based on Best Value and Beacon Council principles, to local authorities.



A more supportive information base

Green Spaces, Better Places documents the adverse effects of the lack of information on all aspects of parks and green spaces provision, management, maintenance, and funding. It also identified the urgent need for better information to support policy and action, funding decisions and good practice.

The considerable body of information generated by the Urban White Paper initiatives provides a good start. This includes the information gathered by the Taskforce and its six working groups; revision of PPG17; research by Sheffield University (2002); Beacon Councils theme on improving urban green spaces; the *Public Parks Assessment* (2001); and partnerships with the Green Flag Award scheme and the Urban Parks Forum.

The Government will take further action to build on this work and develop a more supportive information base. Proposals are set out in the box below.

Improving information

The Government will work with the new CABE Unit and strategic partnership, the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, the Countryside Agency and Sport England to develop and broaden the scope of the *Public Parks Assessment* to cover a fuller range of green spaces, including:

- updating the survey of local authority parks to achieve a 100% response.
- updating the English Allotments Survey 1996 to ensure current and thorough information regarding allotment provision is available. This will be expanded to include community gardens and city farms.
- carrying out a survey of cemeteries and burial grounds as part of a review of burial law, policies and practices.
- developing national data on playing fields and pitches (as part of a wider survey of the supply of, and demand for, sports and leisure facilities).



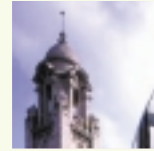
- assessing urban forests and woodlands. Revisiting the Trees in Towns survey 1993 to provide up-to-date information on the composition and condition of urban trees and woodlands. This will be expanded to provide insight into the resources and processes that local authorities use in managing urban trees.
- ensuring greater compatibility in the collection of survey data on various types of green spaces for the purposes of data integration and development of Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

The new CAGE Unit will commission a research programme based around the issues recommended by the Taskforce, with an early focus on improving evidence of funding needs, ways of making more effective use of existing funding streams, and the social and economic benefits of good quality provision.

The Government intends to ensure that all data about urban green spaces are collected using consistent approaches that enable the results to be assimilated and mapped to give a complete national picture. Part of this approach will be to ensure that survey data is geo-coded. The Government will explore the feasibility of using Ordnance Survey's MasterMap product to assist in the identification and collection of data on urban green spaces. This electronic dataset provides a detailed map of the country with all land parcels categorised according to their type (eg: buildings, roads and railways, land). It also plans to disseminate resulting national datasets through map-based internet applications, building on the Maps on Tap infrastructure that is being developed by ODPM. This will allow data providers, planners, managers and users of urban green space to access and analyse up-to-date quantitative and qualitative information about these spaces.

Local strategic planning

Strong local leadership is essential for improving parks and green spaces. There is growing belief that because parks services are not mandatory they are often at a disadvantage compared with other council services. This has led to concerns that parks services have been taken for granted, and have lost local support and priority, skills and investment.



Improving the parity of parks and green spaces with other local authority services will require a shared vision, integrated approaches and strategic planning at the local level. Transferable lessons from the Beacon Council areas show how this can be achieved – see box below.

Beacon Council – principles for quality parks services delivery

The following principles underpin the parks and green spaces services of councils that gained Beacon Council status for this theme:

- commitment to address the needs of all sections of the community including the young, older people, disabled people and other disadvantaged groups and targeting areas of deficiency and social exclusion.
- strategies for identifying and achieving improvements to local green spaces. These are linked to corporate objectives and broader strategies and priorities such as community strategies, sustainable development plans, regeneration and planning.
- a consultative approach, working in close partnership with local people, local business and national partners to develop and implement projects for improving urban green spaces.
- imaginative approaches to planning, designing and creating urban green spaces as well as attracting funding.
- a focus on improving management and maintenance to tackle issues such as crime and safety, dog fouling, litter, vandalism and graffiti, by using sustainable management techniques and materials, tree planting and soil management.
- clear and measurable standards and mechanisms for continuous monitoring and review of service delivery.

Evidence from the Beacon Council process shows that preparing local parks and green space strategies is effective in developing a shared vision for service planning – see also research carried out by Sheffield University (2002) and the *Public Parks Assessment* (2001). A strategic process considers how all aspects of local green spaces could be improved – how provision is planned, designed, managed, used and maintained. By bringing together officers from parks and other services within the council, local stakeholders, users and non-users of



green spaces, the process helps to raise awareness and identify local aspirations and priorities. It can also create links to other local programmes that can help to meet green space objectives (including regeneration, neighbourhood renewal, crime reduction, promoting cycling and walking), or whose objectives might be met through a better strategy for green spaces (such as combating obesity, promoting preventative healthcare, providing safer routes to school and building citizenship and neighbourhood pride).

Strategic green space planning need not be complex or costly. In most cases the information needed should already exist within the local authority and community (e.g. from preparation of community strategies, local development plans and plans for biodiversity, sport and culture).

Strategic planning for high quality urban green spaces

The Government has announced the urban green spaces **strategic enablers scheme** to assist local authorities and partnerships to develop integrated approaches to planning and managing green spaces. The scheme will allocate ‘enablers’ – expert advisors – to assist local authorities to develop strategies for improving local networks of green spaces. An outline of the scheme is at the end of **Annex 2**.

Effective land-use planning and design

Achieving high quality public spaces underpins the Government’s approach to planning, regeneration and renewal. *Sustainable Communities – Delivering through Planning* (July 2002) sets out a programme of reforms for improving the planning system to support its objectives for building more sustainable communities. The Government will take opportunities to reinforce the importance of parks and green spaces in implementing the reforms – see Section 2.

The new Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) note 17: *Open Space, Sport and Recreation* (2002), sets out how the Government expects local authorities to plan for the delivery of high quality open spaces. The policies it contains are crucial in ensuring that everyone has access to high-quality green spaces. The guidance provides a new strategic framework within which local authorities will be better able to plan for delivering new provision and enhancing and protecting existing spaces.



PPG17 introduces a new needs-based approach. At the heart of the guidance is the requirement for local authorities to assess current and future needs of local communities for a range of types of open spaces, as well as the quality of existing open spaces by undertaking audits of provision. These assessments should identify areas of deficient provision (in terms of quality and quantity) and opportunities for improving that provision. They should prepare planning strategies that are linked to the local authority's Community Strategy, develop appropriate policies in development plans, and set locally derived standards for provision. The Government has also published *Assessing Needs and Opportunities; A Companion Guide to PPG17* (September 2002), which sets out how the approach could be applied in practice.

Raising standards

Strategic planning for managing and maintaining local green space should be tied to service level agreements, quality standards and targets. By setting appropriate quality standards based on measurable outcomes and then monitoring service performance, local authorities will be better able to demonstrate to local people that they are delivering good parks, play areas and green spaces.

The requirement of Best Value for continuous improvements in delivering services is having a positive influence on the performance of local authority services. Parks and green spaces, recreation and cultural services are represented within the national suite of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPs) that supports the best value management framework. They are also included in the best value 'general satisfaction surveys' (BV119) that are carried out every three years to assess the levels of local satisfaction with a basket of quality of life indicators. The next survey will be in 2003/04.

The proposed Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework for district councils will also take explicit account of local authority management of its green spaces. Further information about CPA can be found in Annex 1 (paragraphs 2.21 to 2.25).

Many local authorities have developed a range of standards and indicators that reflect their own circumstances and priorities. Greater consistency in the number and types of indicators and measures being used by local authorities is needed to both aid comparison of their performance and data aggregation at regional and national levels.



Raising Standards

Over the next three years the Government will work with the new CABE Unit and other partners to develop nationally and locally recognised quality and performance standards. It will:

- (i). work with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to:
 - disseminate best practice in parks and green spaces services based on best value and beacon council principles; and
 - establish an appropriate set of local indicators that can be shared by authorities and support continuous service review.
- (ii). work with the Audit Commission on the development of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment frameworks.
- (iii). establish nationally respected standards and measures for good quality parks and green spaces, drawing on the Green Flag Award scheme by April 2003. Our development objective will be for every local authority to have parks and green spaces that meet those standards by 2005. Our targets are to:
 - increase the annual number of Green Flags awarded to 500 by 2005;
 - increase the annual number of Green Pennants awarded for local community-led projects to 250 awards by 2005; and
 - introduce a special commendation for excellence in the provision of children's play areas and facilities by 2004.

Involving Local Communities

Green spaces are predominately owned, managed and maintained by local authorities. However, local people, business and the voluntary sector are increasingly taking action to improve the quality of the spaces and places where they live.

Effective partnership working and engagement of local people have been proven to achieve results that better meet users' needs and increase the sense of local ownership. Partnership working also makes more effective use of resources, facilitates the sharing of expertise and skills and can help to meet a range of community priorities.



The community was a key partner in the development of Clarefield Park in the London Borough of Barnet. The council worked in partnership with local people in planning the development of the derelict land near Brent Cross Shopping Centre. Designs were developed through a Planning for Real exercise with the local community. Council landscape architects and recreation officers helped to collate ideas and agree a final design and name for the park. The involvement of a range of local people from the beginning has helped to ensure the park meets the needs of all users, developed a greater sense of local ownership, and helped to build relations between different members of the community. The park is now an attractive, accessible and well-used green space with a range of facilities for young people, families and the elderly.

The Government encourages the involvement of local people, groups and partnerships in practical initiatives that create and care for local green spaces. Proposals are set out in the box below.

Promoting partnerships and local involvement

The Government will encourage local initiatives and partnerships which promote greater involvement of local people and stakeholders, optimise the capacity of communities, foster a greater sense of individual responsibility and citizenship and give communities a sense of ownership of their local spaces, all leading to more cohesive and sustainable communities. It will:

- (i) give greater support through its sponsorship of the Federation of Groundwork Trusts, for local partnerships and projects that create and improve local spaces, especially small spaces in urban areas such as those around housing estates, play areas and ‘hang-out’ spaces, and derelict spaces.
- (ii) continue support for voluntary organisations engaged in environmental action, including the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the Wildlife Trusts (funding already committed through the Environmental Action Fund until 2005) and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens in working with communities to improve green spaces.



- (iii) launch a new Community Enablers scheme to support local groups such as ‘friends’, and local volunteers that are actively engaged in improving local green spaces and environmental projects. Further details of the scheme are provided at the end of Annex 2.
- (iv) promote greater involvement and partnership working through a new CABE Unit. It will develop information and good practice, including the role of local trusts in delivering sustainable management and care of urban green spaces.
- (v) support the Urban Parks Forum, including the development of a register of community and friends’ groups involved in local projects, and a network for gathering and sharing good practice.

Good Practice

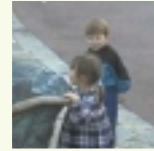
Greater sharing of good practice is essential in improving the accessibility and quality of urban parks and green spaces. *Green Spaces, Better Places* summarised evidence of good practice in all aspects of local authority parks and green space planning, management and service delivery, in particular, the many innovative schemes and partnerships that have been established across the country. It sets out the transferable lessons and offers principles for achieving good practice.

The need now is to share those lessons and principles more widely, and for good practice to be adopted by all mainstream service providers. This will require better networks for collecting, analysing and disseminating good practice. The Government will work with CABE and the strategic partners to develop national networks for disseminating good practice to local authorities, professionals and community and user groups. Proposals for further action are set out in the box below.

Developing good practice networks

The Government will encourage good practice by:

- (i) developing advice on the needs of particular groups of people for a diverse range of local green spaces, including:
 - preparing guidance on accessible play spaces.



- working with the Sensory Trust to promote greater awareness of the barriers preventing or dissuading use and participation by disabled and elderly people.
 - working with the Black Environment Network to prepare advice on the participation of minority groups in environmental action that reflects their social and cultural aspirations
- (ii) ensuring that the CABE Unit works with the Urban Parks Forum to develop a good practice programme and networks for disseminating information and good practice to professionals, and voluntary and community groups. This should include advice on:
- preparing and implementing urban green space strategies;
 - planning and design solutions for improving quality of new provision and transforming poor spaces;
 - managing and maintaining networks of green spaces; and
 - development and applications of quality standards.
- (iii) monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce demonstration projects in delivering good practice. The performance of each project will be closely monitored and evaluated two years following its completion.

Better use of resources

Green Spaces, Better Places explained that resources for parks services have been spread ever more thinly as local authorities have acquired greater amounts of green space to manage, and increases in funding have been constrained. It also explained the long-term impacts of this process on the quality of these spaces, especially in disadvantaged areas that face a backlog of maintenance and repairs, vandalised facilities and degraded spaces. The Taskforce report estimated that around £500m of capital investment is needed over five years to make significant improvements and that this should be delivered through a range of sources external to local authority budgets.

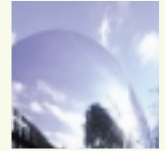
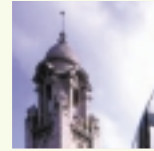


Total resources available to urban parks and green spaces have significantly increased over the last five years. Central Government revenue funding to local authorities for parks and green space services is provided as part of the ‘environment protection and cultural services block’ (EPCS). Allocations to the EPCS have increased by 15.7 per cent in cash terms (5.4 per cent in real terms) in the period 1998/99 to 2002/03. Local authority budgets for parks services have also increased by 11.8 per cent in cash terms (2.4 per cent in real terms) over the same period. Spending Review 2002 saw additional real term increases in EPCS allocations for the years 2003 to 2006. Extra funding available to parks and green spaces is now being delivered through mainstream routes. Other areas of local authority funding have also received substantial uplifts in recent years that will relieve some of the pressures on local authorities to use EPCS funding to absorb other pressures.

In addition to direct central funding, a range of new funding opportunities are complementing local expenditure. Central government provides significant funding through regeneration and renewal programmes. At a regional level the Regional Development Agencies support improvements to urban green spaces through their target to deliver urban renaissance and excellence in design and through projects funding local regeneration activity. A big contribution is being made to improve the quality of urban parks and green spaces by Lottery programmes, in particular, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the New Opportunities Fund. New development is also creating new parks and green spaces either as part of regeneration projects or through contributions from developers through s106 planning agreements. Many local businesses are also engaged in a variety of local partnerships with local authorities, voluntary organisations, friends and user groups. Taken together these contributions are considerable and have helped to create and restore thousands of parks and green spaces across the country.

A fuller account of Government funding for public spaces is at Annex 1: Funding and Targets.

New investment for parks and green spaces should focus on making more effective use of increases in main funding available to local authorities alongside the range of funding sources that are available (e.g. Lottery). Opportunities should also be sought for drawing on additional investment, for example, from partnership with the private sector (e.g. through the adoption of Business Improvement Districts, commercial sponsorship and contributions to local projects).



If local authorities make good use of their own resources to capture investment opportunities, they should be able to improve delivery and achieve better standards of provision and maintenance. Not all local authorities, however, are benefiting from the many funding opportunities. In order to take these opportunities, local authorities and others involved in providing and managing green spaces will need better information and clearer measures for demonstrating the quality of outcomes that new investment would deliver. Better monitoring of service performance will therefore be important.

More work needs to be done, especially in relation to targeting new resources to disadvantaged areas where quality of local environments are worse. Further work is also needed to develop mechanisms capable of delivering a better balance of capital and revenue resources for parks and green spaces, and which reflect the many ways in which services are provided and the needs of the diverse parties involved.

The Government will take further steps to focus more resources to improve the quality of local environments especially in disadvantaged areas. It will also consider the issues and conclusions of this report in deciding how to make best use of Lottery funds to support sustainable improvements to local environments, including the particular funding calls of local parks and green spaces in the next formal round of New Opportunities Fund Initiatives in 2003 – see section 1 of Annex 1.

Summary

The Government is committed to the creation of networks of accessible, good quality parks and diverse green spaces in all our towns and cities. The implementation of the Urban White Paper's initiatives and the work of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce are having positive effects that are helping to produce improvements.

Further measures will be implemented to provide more effective organisational arrangements at the national level for parks and green spaces. This will include the creation of a new unit for urban spaces attached to CABE. Working with strategic partners, the new unit will lead a programme of work to implement many of the recommendations of the Taskforce for improving planning and design, information, quality standards and measures, partnership working and community involvement, and good practice.



There is no magic wand that can instantly turn around the decades of under-investment in urban parks and green spaces. It will take time for all poor parks and green spaces to attain the quality of the best. Although total resources available to parks and green spaces have significantly increased, further action will be needed to make better use of them and to ensure continued increases in investment. If local authorities make good use of their own resources to take advantage of available investment opportunities, they should be able to improve delivery and achieve the better standards of provision and maintenance that local communities want.

The proposals contained in this section will provide a better focus and building blocks for all those involved in planning, managing and maintaining green spaces to identify the important issues and develop consensus and priorities for further action.



SECTION 4 – CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Government is determined to make a step-change in the quality of the public realm by better integrating the development and delivery of policies that affect local environments. It is determined to build on the successes described in this report and to implement its proposals for making continuous improvements.

Over the next five years the Government will work through new arrangements, with all the parties involved, aimed at getting the basics right. It will mean action in four areas:

- organisation, legislation, policy and funding;
- improving the quality of the local environment in deprived neighbourhoods;
- improving the quality of urban parks and green spaces;
- and gathering and sharing ideas and good practice.

Getting The Basics Right

Better organisational arrangements: The first priority is to improve across government the ways in which policy and action with an impact on public spaces are organised, developed, co-ordinated and implemented. The Government will address this in three ways.

First, it will establish an inter-departmental team of Ministers, under the leadership of Barbara Roche, to assist this process and make improvements. To begin with, the Ministerial team will represent the Home Office, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Transport, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. As the agenda develops, Ministers from other Departments will also be involved. The Ministerial Group will be supported by an inter-departmental team of officials who will be based in their Departments – thus ensuring that they remain connected to the mainstream of Departmental business – but who will work as a team across Departmental boundaries.


Second, the Government will provide a more effective national framework for urban parks and green spaces by implementing stronger planning policy guidance that places open spaces at the heart of our objectives for achieving a renaissance of towns and cities. The Minister responsible for urban parks and green spaces will work collaboratively across government in co-ordinating initiatives and complementary action. The Government will also set up a group Joint Agency Group, involving Government Departments and agencies to advise this process.



The new CAFE unit will champion these issues, develop intelligence and advice and carry out the programme of work contained in Section 3 and Annex 2 of this document for improving the quality of local environments.

Legislation: The rights and responsibilities of all those who have a stake in the quality of public spaces are enshrined in a vast array of statutes and regulations. Many of these are complicated and out-of-date and may be inhibiting, rather than supporting, improved performance. Some pieces of legislation may simply not give those with responsibility for action the necessary powers to act.

ABANDONED CARS



Progress has been made in improving powers to act in some areas, such as tackling abandoned cars. Abandoned cars are an obvious blight and potential hazard in many streets and public spaces. The notice period after which many abandoned vehicles can be removed – usually by local authorities – has been reduced from seven days to 24 hours. £2.7m has been made available over three years for the Invest to Save budget to improve links between local authorities and DVLA to help trace the owners of abandoned vehicles. Further reforms to the vehicle registration system will ensure that all vehicles can be traced to the correct keeper.

The Government has already changed legislation to increase the levels of fines for litter and dog-fouling offences and is committed to allowing local authorities to retain money raised in this way for spending on enhancements to the local environment. The Government is also committed to bringing forward legislation to encourage local authorities and local business to enter into agreements for providing additional services. This will support proposals for introducing Business Improvement Districts.



BIDS

The government is supporting the development of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), whereby businesses in an area agree to an additional levy on rates to pay for a programme of measures aimed at improving the quality and safety of local public space.

Local Business Improvement District schemes have begun to emerge. In order to support their development, Government is working with regeneration practitioners, local authorities and property developers to prepare guidance on setting up BID schemes. The government is also currently preparing legislation that will set out the legal and regulatory framework for the setting-up of contracts between local service deliverers and local businesses for additional services and improvements.

The Government has also undertaken a detailed examination of the responsibilities, powers, freedoms and enforcement mechanisms currently available to local authorities for affecting the quality of local environments. The findings are at Annex 3 and an audit of the main powers and responsibilities is at Annex 4. In addition, a consultation paper setting out 27 options for reform is published alongside this report.

The Government hopes that a wide range of organisations and individuals will respond to this consultation exercise www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv. It plans to publish its response to the consultation by mid 2003.

Options for reform include:

- extending local authorities' powers for dealing with litter to include other aspects of local environment quality (eg: graffiti, fly-posting and minor acts of vandalism).
- empowering local authorities and the police to set the level of existing fixed penalty notices within a prescribed range and an option for early payment discount.
- creating a new duty on the owners of street furniture to keep their property clear of graffiti and fly posting.
- extending the existing powers and duties for litter clearance to include beaches, rivers and canals.

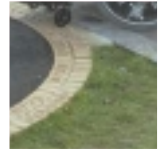
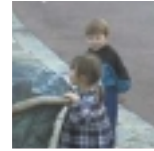


- creating new powers for local authorities to deal with the detrimental impacts of light pollution.
- overhauling the powers available to the police and local authorities for dealing with beggars, rough sleepers, peddlers, buskers and others who are threatening or who engage in anti-social behaviour in public areas.
- introducing new restrictions on the continual use of fireworks and noise-making devices that can cause distress to vulnerable members of the community, pets and wildlife and generally diminish the quality of life in neighbourhoods.
- making it easier for people with a legitimate grievance about the state of their local environment to obtain meaningful redress.
- improving communication to the public about the ways in which they can use legislation.

Policy, Funding and Targets: It is important to ensure that mainstream policies and funding streams that affect public space are coherent. Chapter 2 provided a snapshot of the policy developments that are already making an impact. The Government will be doing more to tackle crime and poverty; more to revive the countryside and increase the productivity of our towns and cities; more to improve both access and efficiency in the transport system.

The recent Spending Review White Paper (see www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/Spending_Review/spend_sr02/spend_sr02_repindex.cfm) sets out the range of increased funding which will be available for the period 2003-06. Work continues beyond the Spending Review to simplify the way funding is delivered. For example, the Home Office, the Government Offices for the Regions and the Regional Co-ordination Unit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister are working together to help further simplify the allocation of money to, and monitoring of, crime reduction Area Based Initiatives.

The 2002 Spending Review also introduced a number of new targets for Central government that will enable us to judge how well these policies and funding streams are working. A new Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) target has been introduced on reducing people's perceived experience of anti-social behaviour as measured by the British Crime Survey. This target is shared between the Home Office, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), while a new SDA target has also been developed by Defra on street and local environmental cleanliness. This target will contain a "floor" (minimum standard), reflecting the need to provide a particular focus on improving the poorest local environments.



Home Office has a strengthened Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to reduce crime and fear of crime, narrowing the gap between high crime areas and the rest, with a particular emphasis on cutting robbery rates in ten ‘Street Crime Initiative’ areas.

A new Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) target has been introduced on reducing people’s perceived experience of anti-social behaviour as measured by the British Crime Survey. This target is shared between the Home Office, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), while a new SDA target has also been developed by Defra on street and local environmental cleanliness. This target will contain a “floor” (minimum standard), reflecting the need to provide a particular focus on improving the poorest local environments.

The Department for Transport has also adopted a Public Service Agreement (PSA) setting specific targets for reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents, with a separate target for child casualties. Again, there will be a particular focus on those communities where such incidences are higher; these are, for the most part, in areas where people suffer from other disadvantages.

Annex 1 of this document provides more detailed information about funding streams, measures and targets, including the National Lottery and performance measurement.

Tackling The Problems Of Deprived Areas

The Government will give priority to action in the most disadvantaged communities. The key to this is better minimum standards of mainstream service provision – key local services like local authority environmental services, local transport and the police taking responsibility for achieving better results in areas where improvements are most needed. A great deal has already been done through better targeting, the added focus of Government targets with in-built minimum standard (floor) elements, alongside additional programmes like the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) and the Single Regeneration Budget.



The Government is determined that these communities should also benefit from Lottery funding. Historically, many deprived areas have received less than their fair share of lottery funding. To redress this trend, the Government launched “Fair Share” – a joint Community Fund/New Opportunities Fund (NOF) initiative worth £170m – focusing on these communities. As part of this the Government will work with NOF to target £38.75m at 51 deprived areas in England to support projects that will assist local communities to make their local environment cleaner, safer and more accessible.

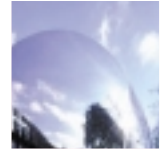
The relationships between local environmental quality, social exclusion and economic decline are complex. Whilst much is being done to tackle their causes and effects, the Government believes that more can be done to understand these relationships and identify and promote practical solutions. It is therefore committed to undertaking further work, building on that already done during Spending Review 2002 and by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, to inform the future work of Government Departments, local authorities and agencies.

A two-stage review is proposed. The first phase, which will begin in January 2003 and be completed by May 2003, will examine environmental exclusion, drawing on Government and external sources to establish the extent to which poor local environmental quality is:

- correlated to areas and households experiencing multiple deprivation; and
- a significant factor in maintaining social exclusion and perpetuating cycles of deprivation by identifying impacts on health, employment, quality of life and educational development.

The second phase, which will be completed by November 2003, will:

- develop policy and propose mechanisms to meet identified gaps; and
- suggest ways to add value to existing activity through effective co-ordination, communication, measurement and dissemination.



Improving the Quality of Urban Parks and Green Spaces

The Government will take the steps set out in Section 3 of this report to ensure a better future for urban parks and green spaces. Through the new arrangements (see page 53) it will implement a better national policy framework and stronger planning policy guidance.

The Government will enable CABI to set up a new Unit charged with implementing a comprehensive programme of work for improving green space. The Unit will help to provide greater leadership and develop a shared vision for urban parks and green spaces that will deliver:

- better planning, design, management and maintenance of parks and green space services;
- better information on the quantity, condition and use of urban green spaces and sharing of good practice; and
- better partnership working involving communities and local public, private and voluntary stakeholders.

Promoting Best Practice

Central government can also play an important role in promoting best practice. There is a need for greater dialogue between professionals and organisational groupings about the particular challenges of managing and improving the public realm. The Government and its agencies, such as CABI, can play an important role in bringing some of the key players to the table and ensuring that information about what works – and what does not – is recorded and shared. The Government intends to develop a website that will enable the exchanges of information and advice to continue.

The Government is committed to improving the quality of design, for major new-build projects – such as key-worker housing – and for smaller scale schemes and routine refurbishment. The Government endorses the “Design Champion” model that is working well in Government Departments and some Local Authorities. By April 2003, to help them achieve their objective to promote excellence in urban design, all Regional Development Agencies will have a Design Champion in place and by April 2004 the Government would like to see all major agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies follow suit.



Design

Since the Ministerial Design Champions Group was established some Government Departments have taken giant strides in pushing forward the design agenda in the development of new public buildings.

NHS Estates, for example, have adopted their own version of the Design Quality Indicators test that has made a huge difference to the design standards of new hospitals around the country.

At the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital the grounds have been improved with a new state-of-the-art medical complex that includes the use of gardens and courtyards to improve the space and allows a lot of natural sunlight to filter through. This project has been short-listed for the Prime Minister's Better Building Award.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has used some of the best British architects for British Embassies and residencies around the world, putting forward the message that Britain is at the heart of good design. In Warsaw for example, a new British Embassy and Ambassador's residence – sponsored by design champions – is currently being built.

The Government is also working with the Construction Industry Council to develop the Design Quality Indicator (DQI) system that was launched in July 2002 to assist those involved in the development or redesign of public spaces.

Communicating Better

Public space – as has been demonstrated elsewhere in this report – affects many different audiences and embraces a number of themes and ideas.

To bring these together requires not only a political and managerial impetus but also good two-way communications to ensure that all the messages are received and understood by all the audiences.

A common theme of those successful public space projects identified during the course of the review is the value placed upon communication to inform and to influence residents and partners.



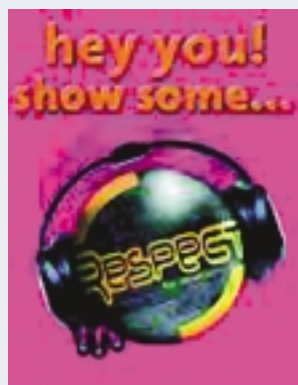
Respect, Newham

Respect is a campaign to reduce crime and disorder and improve the quality of life for people in Newham. It brings together all those in the fight against anti-social behaviour – including the council, police, the probation service, voluntary organisations, health workers, local businesses and community groups – for a targeted blitz on every kind of anti-social behaviour in the area.

Respect will include action to crack down on graffiti, abandoned vehicles, truancy, crime, harassment and noise nuisance.

Members of the Respect team wear distinctive orange Respect jackets. These participants will also be working with young people to give them a safe and stimulating alternative to hanging about in the street.

Communication plays a major part in keeping local people informed and enthused. To publicise the work of Respect, residents received a leaflet explaining the campaign at the time of the launch and regular articles have appeared in the local community papers. There is a hotline number and a website (<http://www.newham.gov.uk/respect>) for people in the community to report any concerns.



Respect posters are displayed on notice boards at various places such as youth centres.



The value of building communications into public space activity is found in clarity, the management of expectations and in the engagement of the public – the people that will use the space and the facilities within it.

But communication is as much about listening as it is talking. Local Strategic Partnerships, New Deal for Communities boards and other locally-based partnership initiatives have shown the way. All those responsible for public space should now follow their example and do even more not just to canvass the views, hopes and aspirations of local people but to have in place the structures that translate those views into action.

Sharing best practice, sharing key messages are ways to ensure that local people are engaged with – and enthusiastic about – the changes they expect to see in public spaces.

Through good two-way communications, more community involvement, more and better partnerships and greater community cohesion can be encouraged and fostered.

This is not a job just for Government, central or local. All the professional associations, pressure groups and campaigners have a role to play – in the area of public space more almost than any other, the third-party supporter and activist has a vibrant and valid voice.

Volunteering with the Experience Corps in Newcastle

The Experience Corps – the Home Office-funded company that encourages people aged 50 and over to put their skills and experience to community use – is running Our Park, a scheme in which local volunteers transform inner city parks and play areas.

Action Day at Nun's Moor Park

More than 80 people proved that they weren't prepared to let the grass grow under their feet when they took part in a two-day clean up of one of Newcastle's most historic parks as part of celebrations to mark the 40th anniversary of Community Service Volunteers (CSV).



Volunteers, staff from the Parks and Countryside Training section of Newcastle City Council, members of the Newcastle branch of CSV and Experience Corps volunteers took part in the clean-up of Nun's Moor Park.

Gifted to the people of Newcastle by the city's Freemen more than 130 years ago, Nun's Moor is now at the heart of a major regeneration scheme being spearheaded by Westgate New Deal for Communities.

Working with all partners, the Government will develop and implement a co-ordinated approach to communications across public and green space issues to:

- be responsive to individuals and communities;
- emphasise the importance of good quality public spaces in social and economic terms;
- make the connections between cleanliness, safety and community cohesion;
- work at a national, regional and local level;
- involve public, private and voluntary sector partners.

This will include the setting up of a website to allow the public, local authorities and others to access information quickly.

What Next?

This report shows the good progress that has been made in delivering high quality public spaces that are cleaner, safer and greener. It also shows that there is much more to be done. Over the next five years the Government is determined to improve delivery, building on the successes described in this report and to implement the proposals it contains for continuous improvement in the quality of the places where we live.



It is important to maintain the momentum that has been generated by the cross cutting review on public spaces and the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce.

Everyone should act now to build on this, raising awareness and continuing debate, to deliver new solutions. Local government will have a key role in this process. Planners, police, transport planners and engineers and designers will also play a big part, as will neighbourhood wardens, park keepers and maintenance contractors, to name just a few.

The Government will continue efforts to turn around disadvantaged neighbourhoods, make better use of mainstream resources, to involve local people and build local capacity, to develop links with education, health and sports. It will also take immediate steps to examine funding available for public spaces, in particular, the need for additional capital investment in urban parks and green spaces.

The Government will work through the new inter-departmental Ministerial Team and supporting arrangements to get the basics right, tackle the quality of local environments in deprived neighbourhoods and to deliver promises on urban parks and green spaces. It will need to do all of this in partnerships with the public, private and voluntary sectors. It will also need the help of good designers and the involvement of local people in order to deliver imaginative and high-quality schemes.

The Government will take steps to raise awareness, promote debate, exchange of ideas and to inspire actions that improve the quality of public spaces and local environments. The Urban Summit provides a timely springboard to raise awareness and promote the importance of clean, safe and green spaces in our daily lives and in improving the “feel” of the places where we live.

Greater appreciation of the role of the importance of high-quality local environments in supporting the health and well-being of people will also inform the Government’s thinking in developing its plan for more attractive and sustainable communities throughout the country.

The renaissance of our towns and cities requires that where new developments create public spaces they are of high quality. It also requires sustained improvement in the quality of the existing environments and the places where people have to live and work – now and for many years to come. The range of reforms, policies and measures already being implemented and the further proposals set out in this document will continue to improve public spaces and local environments and contribute to a real transformation in the quality of life in our towns and cities.