

Alternative funding mechanisms for green space

This report was produced in collaboration with our project partners.



Why this report matters

Since 2010, austerity has led to reduced local authority budgets and income for non-governmental organisations. As a result, there has been significant impact on the funding available for maintenance and management of [green infrastructure](#) as well as the provision of activities within these spaces. This conflicts with how, as a society, we increasingly value public green and blue spaces for health and wellbeing; something that has been particularly widely recognised during the current Covid-19 pandemic¹.

Despite some new government funding supporting pilot schemes which aim to promote these benefits², the current recession and probable future public funding restrictions

mean it is more than likely that budgets for green infrastructure will continue to decrease and be insufficient to meet rising demand. There is a growing need, therefore, to understand and access the alternative mechanisms that exist to fund green infrastructure and the activities and interventions associated with them.

Who should read this?

This information is relevant for individuals and organisations who are involved in the management of green infrastructure, particularly those who are considering the health benefits of these spaces, whether from the environmental management, urban planning or public health sectors.

What is the report about?

Responding to our partners' needs to understand and secure alternative sources of funding, the [SWEET Investing in Nature for Health project](#) developed this report. It provides a concise summary of the breadth of funding mechanisms available for green infrastructure and the activities provided in these spaces.

It includes examples of some traditional, but mainly alternative, funding streams, and presents case studies that highlight their successful application. The report also raises wider questions about what we value as a society and how we might achieve more creative, cross-sectoral and sustainable models of funding, suitable for different stakeholder groups and applicable at scale.



The report:

- defines seven categories of funding mechanisms (page 3);
- outlines different types of funding mechanism within each category (pages 4-9);
- presents case studies (pages 10-16);
- lists key resources (page 17).

Case studies were selected to show successful use of alternative funding mechanisms for green spaces. The mechanisms highlighted have the potential for wider application and long-term effectiveness^{3,4}.

¹ Day BH. (2020) *The value of greenspace under pandemic lockdown*. *Environmental Resource Economics*, 76:1161-1185.

² <https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/green-social-prescribing/>

³ *London Green Spaces Commission reports success models for parks in the 21st century*.

⁴ Nesta (2018) *Meet the Rethinking Parks innovators: Eight parks projects developing promising and innovative operating models*. London: NESTA.

Categories of funding mechanism

Alternative mechanisms for funding green space can be grouped into the following seven categories. The majority of these are suitable for funding both the development and upkeep of green space and the provision of activities within these spaces. Mechanisms within each category are explored further below.

Taxation

Standard local and national government taxation structures allocate funding to green infrastructure maintenance and interventions. There are a range of additional tax-related measures, however, that can provide specific support and additional income for these activities, such as location-specific taxes or business levies.

Income-generating opportunities and loans

Green infrastructure can be used for commercial purposes to generate income, through the provision of services e.g. sports grounds and events, or settings for cafés.

Alternative management structures

Management of green infrastructure can be moved from local authority control to structures such as charitable trusts. This opens access to new sources of funding and can allow for a more strategic approach to finance to achieve stable annual funding.

Planning and development opportunities

Wider development, often private, can fund green infrastructure, whether directly or through levies raised through planning legislation.

Ecosystem development/payment for ecosystem services

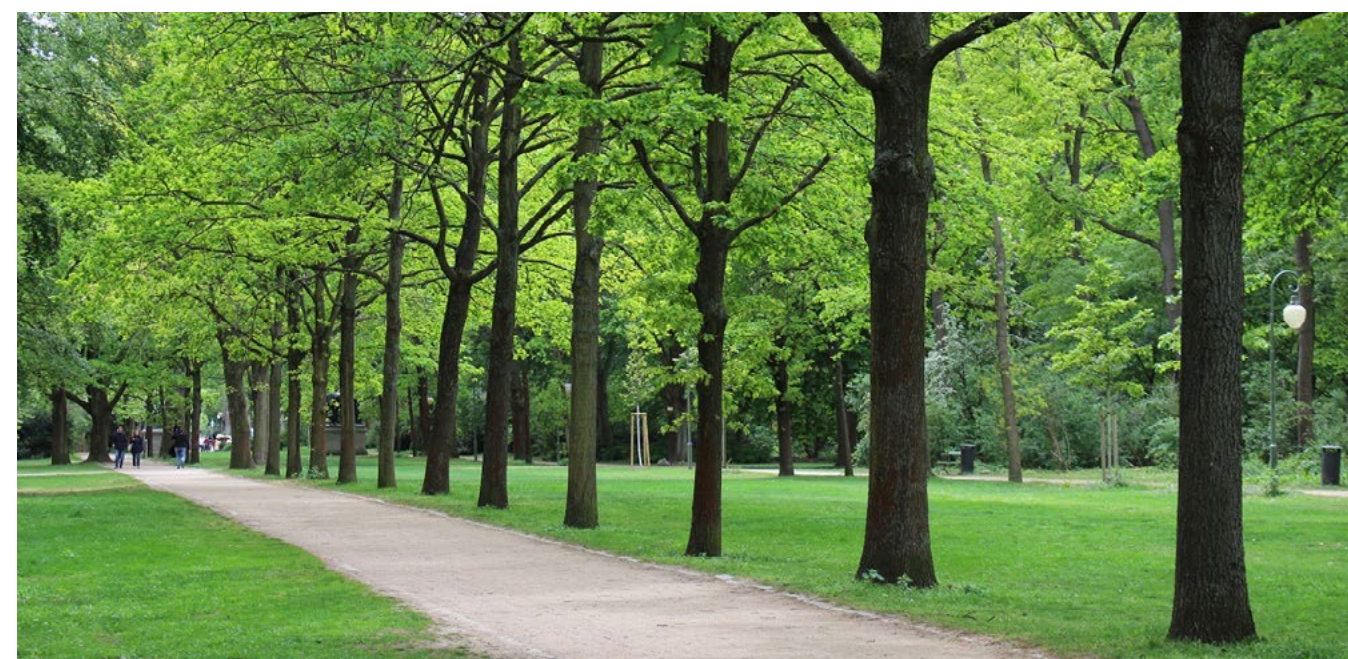
Environmental services and benefits, provided by green infrastructure, can be utilised to generate income.

Charitable giving and voluntary sector involvement

These range from small scale opportunities, such as those involving local communities as volunteers in green space, to the larger scale, including seeking out corporate or philanthropic investment.

Multi-agency opportunities

Working in partnership or collaboration, within or between organisations, offers opportunities to access specialist services and expertise, different funding sources, and achieve cost-savings.



Funding mechanism	Description
TAXATION	
Location specific tax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community tax: residents in close proximity to green space pay a small tax directly to the local authority to fund maintenance and use e.g. provision of activities. In a UK context, this is likely to be through council tax or service charges e.g. on a housing estate. 'Tourist tax': tax for use of green space.
Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) (and Park Improvement Districts)	BIDs are defined areas in which all business are charged an extra tax (or levy) in addition to normal business rates; these are used to fund specific projects, which could be green infrastructure-focused, with benefits for these businesses.
Levy	Similarly to BIDs, large employers in close proximity to a green space are charged an additional tax to fund the space.
Precepts	Precepts are another form of levy: a legally binding instruction for the levying authority to collect a certain amount of council tax. They are relevant in the case of green spaces with wider significance, where several local authorities or other organisations might contribute to their funding.
Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or local tax re-investment programmes	TIF captures anticipated future increases in tax revenues for a set period and uses these to finance the improvements e.g. new green spaces or activities within spaces, which are expected to generate those taxes.
INCOME-GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES AND LOANS	
Sponsorship/naming rights	Offering the opportunity to sponsor or name a green space, or facilities within it, can be a one-off or recurring opportunity to raise money. They may be small-scale e.g. a fee to name a park bench or tree, or large-scale e.g. annual sponsorship of a space, or event/activity in a space, by a private company.
Events or special uses	Holding one-off activities or events in green space or charging for the use of green space for specific purposes e.g. weddings, events, natural burials.
Concessions	Charging the public to use facilities such as parking, tennis courts and pools. Selling products e.g. firewood.
Rental charges	Charging rental fees for retail opportunities in green spaces e.g. agricultural/grazing licenses, cafés, or for use of the park e.g. fitness groups larger than 3 people, professional dog walkers, forest schools.
Bonds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal: issued by local authorities to the capital market to fund capital expenditure such as the construction of infrastructure; essentially a loan by the investor e.g. pension funds, insurance companies. Green/environmental impact: issued to fund projects with positive environmental benefits; in their simplest form, investors pay for the project and are repaid an amount based on the success of the project.

Opportunities	Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of effective use of location specific taxes and TIF in other countries e.g. USA, Australia. Could be considered investment by businesses e.g. if green infrastructure improvement leads to increased footfall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persuading local businesses that investment in green space would be beneficial to them. Some mechanisms e.g. precepts have limited application or require tax-raising powers. Risk of excluding those who would benefit most from living near green space and increasing inequalities in health.
Key resources Tax Increment Funding Social Market Foundation – Recreating parks: securing the future of our urban green spaces Financing for a future London report	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can offer substantial long-term funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires skill and expertise to develop a business model and generate income. Risk of excluding people from using green space or increasing inequalities in access.
Key resources UK Municipal Bonds Agency	

Funding mechanism	Description
ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES	
Endowments	An endowment is a legal structure used by an organisation to manage investments (financial, property or other) for a specific purpose.
Non-profit distributing organisations (NPDOs)	The transfer of the operation, delivery and maintenance of green infrastructure from a local authority to an NDPO; this can include ownership of these spaces. NPDOs can be: unincorporated charitable trusts; charitable incorporated organisations e.g. a parks foundation; companies limited by guarantee; industrial/provident societies; community interest companies (CICs)/social enterprises.
Community asset transfers	The transfer of a piece of land or building from public ownership to community ownership. In most cases this involves a local authority transferring the ownership of an asset to a community organisation such as a Development Trust, CIC or social enterprise.
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES	
Property assets and investment portfolios	Property assets are property e.g. land, buildings, with monetary value. 'Passive' ownership of property assets in an investment portfolio assumes that they will earn a return or grow in value over time. Investment can be strategic i.e. buying with long-term aims, or tactical, active buying and selling for short-term gain.
Private sector investment models	Funding from the private sector to support the development/maintenance of green space or provision of activities within spaces e.g. through land sales, corporate social responsibility, or levies and contributions after new development, including Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
Land sales	Selling land for development by private developers to raise funds for creating green infrastructure or its maintenance e.g. through investment of funds in investment portfolios.
Section 106 Planning Gain/CIL	Legal agreement between a planning authority and a developer, or linked to a specific project or development, ensuring that certain extra works or procedures e.g. creation of green space, take place and/or are maintained in the future; essentially a levy.
ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT/PAYMENT FOR ECOSYSTEM SERVICES	
Renewable energy tariffs	Renewable energy sources in green space, such as wind turbines or ground source heat pumps, can be used to generate or save income. This might be through selling energy to nearby buildings, electric car charging points, or using the energy in green space facilities such as cafes to reduce costs.
Utility and rights-of-way leasing	Payment/service charges for infrastructure/equipment in green space e.g. for electricity from residential dwellings or commercial properties.
Offsetting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon credits: buying and selling greenhouse gas emission allowances to reduce an organisation's environmental impact. Ecological: market-based conservation tool that measures negative impacts on biodiversity, replacing the loss through environmental improvements, usually nearby.

Opportunities	Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land ownership can remain with the local authority. Access to new funding sources. Management boards can bring together skills and expertise. Opportunities for long-term and strategic thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited oversight by local authority. Lack of control over some aspects of green infrastructure e.g. if local authority retains ownership. May be harder to work strategically/in partnership with delivery of other services.
Key resources Creating a Trust for Newcastle's Parks & Allotments Community Assets and Ownership	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land sales can provide revenue generating opportunities, with reinvestment supporting maintenance of other green space. Investment offers long-term funding for maintenance of green infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land sales unlikely to be permitted in many areas. Community opposition either to land sales or fees as a result of Section 106/CIL. Section 106/CIL may create green spaces which are difficult to fund in perpetuity e.g. maintenance.
Key resources Community Infrastructure Levy – An Overview Milton Keynes Parks Trust	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost reduction e.g. in energy costs of green space facilities. Income generation e.g. through electric vehicle charging. Contribution to reducing carbon emissions and climate resilience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producing a viable case for investment e.g. there have been reductions in public subsidies for renewable energy. Cost of initial investment, from identifying sites with greatest potential to installing infrastructure. Some e.g. offsetting are usually a one-off payment and may require national markets and regulatory frameworks.

Funding mechanism	Description
Water management	Funding for water management can be used to invest in green space e.g. flood risk reduction through Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs).
CHARITABLE GIVING AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR INVOLVEMENT	
Subscription schemes	Voluntary payment of a regular, annual membership by the public. This may confer some benefits e.g. priority access to park events but is generally in addition to the space being free and open to use.
Investment crowd funding	Requesting donations from the public, either one-off or regularly (as with charities), often to fund a specific project; whether an improvement to the space or an activity.
Donations and philanthropic partnerships	Funding from e.g. charitable trusts.
Community/volunteer groups	Management/maintenance of green space, or activities within it, by volunteers e.g. Friends of groups, either with or without coordination or partnership with the local authority/green space owner.
Corporate volunteering	Volunteer groups from local businesses or organisations, often as part of corporate social responsibility.
MULTI-AGENCY OPPORTUNITIES	
Grant funding	Funding obtained by applying to organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund or European Regional Development Fund, usually for specific projects e.g. green space regeneration or social prescribing schemes (see case study below).
Innovative use of public budgets	Funding from public health e.g. through Health and Wellbeing Boards or clinical commissioning groups CCGs, typically for activities such as social prescribing schemes (see case study below) within green space. Other possibilities include police budgets, as well-maintained and used green infrastructure can reduce crime, and education.
Shared-use agreements	Fees/financial contributions towards maintenance in return for use of the space e.g. by schools for sports.
Special designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation: areas for the conservation and protection of natural resources e.g. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Historic structures: registering green spaces or structures within them on the Historic England register.

Opportunities	Issues
Key resources Greenspace Scotland – ParkPower POSTNOTE – Biodiversity Offsetting UK Government Guidance – Biodiversity Offsetting ForestCarbon – Carbon Credits and Offsetting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donations can be effective in funding specific projects e.g. regeneration. Community involvement promotes a sense of ownership which can contribute to long term sustainability of green infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unpredictable and location-specific. Requests for donations may be off-putting for some visitors. Require resources e.g. infrastructure to take donations, a volunteer coordinator to organise activities. Reliant on motivated individuals. Community groups think locally, making strategic approaches to management difficult. Volunteers often unwilling to perform tasks seen as council responsibilities.
Key resources Nesta Rethinking Parks – Heeley People’s Park CABE SPACE - Helping community groups to improve public spaces	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities to create large change e.g. through regeneration or infrastructure development. Shared-use and special designations can allow access to alternative funding sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding is often for specific short-term uses and rarely funds core capacity. Budgets are limited in other sectors too. Challenging to access: requires commitment of time, detailed applications, may need co-funding. The evidence base to justify and support these activities is growing but still has limitations e.g. difficult to demonstrate return on investment.
Key resources Heritage Lottery Fund European Regional Development Fund (Environmental) designated areas (Historic) conservation areas	



Case studies

The following case studies are examples of the successful use of alternative funding mechanisms for green spaces. Where there are specific routes to access or engage with these funding sources, this has been noted in the relevant case study.

Creating robust and sustainable future funding models for investing in green space for health outcomes will involve adopting different mechanisms, for different purposes, at different scales. Diversifying income streams, or blended finance models, have been recognised as essential to ensuring long-term financial sustainability, and case studies which use multiple funding mechanisms have been highlighted below. However, the development of sustainable funding models that meet the needs of different stakeholder groups, and can operate at scale, will require further thinking and discussion amongst those working in this area, to inspire innovation that informs and strengthens policy and practice.

Why not join the discussion on our Forum, and review our alternative funding mechanism Q&A webinar, on the SWEEP Investing in Nature Hub at www.sweep.ac.uk/healthwellbeing.

(*Indicates where multiple funding mechanisms have been used.)

Social impact bonds (SIBs)

SIBs have been used for around 10 years and tend to target complex social problems such as social prescribing.

How do SIBs work?

Usually there are four parties involved in a SIB:

- Commissioners, either central or local government bodies, responsible for the provision of public services.
- Service providers, who are responsible for implementing the commissioned public service. They are often non-profit organisations.
- (External) social investors, who cover the upfront running costs of the commissioned public service.
- Intermediaries, such as investment managers, who may be involved in securing contracts as well as public service development or delivery.

Commissioners commit to repay investors their initial investment and a return, if pre-defined target outcomes are achieved, so repayment depends on the success of the project.

Case study: Healthier Devon

Location: Devon

Partners: Big Lottery Better Outcomes Fund/Devon County Council (commissioner), Westbank (provider), Bridges Social Impact Fund (investors)

Funding: £657,068 (Big Lottery Commissioning Better Outcomes), £117,000 (Devon County Council)

Aims

Healthier Devon was commissioned by Devon County Council, with support from Bridges and Big Lottery Fund, and is being delivered by the charity Westbank. It provides two years of support for those in Devon most at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. People are referred by their GP surgery through the Devon Referral Support Service. The programme involves lifestyle changes around diet and physical activity.



Outcomes

Devon County Council will only make payments to the investors if individuals enrolled on the programme show a sustained drop in their weight, their waist circumference and their HbA1c (blood sugars) reading.

How to access

SIBs are issued by the public sector (although the private sector can access them in theory). Further support and information is available from organisations such as [Social Finance](#) and the [Government Outcomes Lab](#); there are also several central government funds e.g. the [Life Chances Fund](#).

Key resources

- Carter, E., FitzGerald, C., Dixon, R., Economy, C., Hameed, T. and Airoldi, M. (2018) [Building the tools for public services to secure better outcomes: Collaboration, Prevention, Innovation.](#)
- Davies, R. (2014) [Social impact bonds. European Parliamentary Research Service briefing.](#)

Working with corporate partners

A range of mechanisms can be used to work with corporate partners to manage and improve green space. Corporate social responsibility can include both donations (monetary or direct contributions e.g. to develop or use spaces within parks) and volunteers from local businesses, whilst business improvement districts can levy funds to develop green space from local businesses.

Corporate social responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the efforts made by a company to improve society and contribute towards sustainable development.

*Case study: The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)

Location: UK

Partners: TCV and businesses

Funding: Businesses

Aims

Corporate partnerships to improve the environment, motivate workforces, and enable businesses to meet CSR aims.

Outcomes

TCV offers package and bespoke corporate partnerships. Successful examples include:

- I Dig Trees – a national tree planting programme with OVO Energy, who fund the trees, with TCV carrying out planting via volunteer programmes. This has distributed and planted over 1 million new native trees across the UK since 2015.
 - Opportunities to sponsor Green Gyms or outdoor spaces run by TCV.
 - Corporate volunteer days - 3,500 employees from 20 employers in 2013/14, from companies including RBS, Mondelēz, PwC, Asda, HSBC, CISCO, Intu and Blackstone Group.
- Every £1.00 spent with TCV on Corporate Community Partnership activities produced a Social Return on Investment of almost £4.00, with a positive impact on employee wellbeing and business reputation.

Key resources

- NEF Consulting and TCV (2015) [TCV's impact: Organisational Social Return on Investment summary findings.](#)



Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

Businesses in a defined area vote on a business plan in a ballot to decide whether to implement a BID. If successful, they pay an additional business levy.

Only businesses with a rateable value above £150,000 pay the BID levy; charities are exempt. The levy is used only for the specific projects set out in the business plan. BIDs are governed by a voluntary board of business levy payers representing all sectors in the area. Observers also attend to represent public sector service providers and local charities. The board leads and guides the work of the BID and is supported by the executive team which implements, delivers and measures mandated programmes and projects.

*Case study: Victoria BID

Location: London

Partners: Local businesses, Natural England, Greater London Authority and Westminster City Council

Funding: £2 million per year



Aims

One theme of the Victoria BID is 'Public realm and greening', with one aim being enhancing green infrastructure in Victoria to:

- Promote use of these areas and create a sense of place, improving workforce satisfaction.
- Provide environmental benefits such as a reduction in flooding and climate and temperature adaptation.
- Increase land value.

Outcomes

Victoria BID was started in 2010, in response to a report that the area was in a critical flood zone. It was renewed in 2015 and has recently been renewed for a third 5-year term, with a levy of £2.5 million per year for 5 years.

In terms of green infrastructure:

- An initial green infrastructure audit showed that existing green infrastructure diverts 112,400m³ of storm water run-off from the local sewer system every year, resulting in between £20,638–£29,006 of annual CO² and energy savings. Further development could reduce peak temp by 5.1°C and reduce flooding further.
- A series of seminars were run on green roofs, SuDS and biodiversity management, they were popular and engaged businesses, as they understood the strategy of the BID, meaning they were more willing to contribute.
- The green infrastructure audit encouraged BID members to invest in urban greening as part of their long-term regeneration strategies.
- Led to Victoria BID being awarded a £15,000 grant from a Natural England fund administered by the Cross River Partnership to produce a guide aimed at all BIDs in 2013.

How to access

BIDs can be set up by local authorities, business rate payers or people/companies who have an interest in the land in the area. There is a [£500,000 loan fund](#) available from the government to help communities with initial start-up costs.



Renewable energy

Renewable energy could help green spaces become more financially sustainable by:

- creating new sources of income (particularly long term)
- reducing operating costs.

It also contributes to a greener, more sustainable economy, helping reduce carbon emissions and providing an example of the transition to net zero for individuals and organisations. Urban green spaces are ideal because they have the resources (land, water, wind) to generate energy and the location (they are situated in areas with high energy demand).

Case study: Powering Parks

Location: Hackney

Partners: 10:10 Climate Action (charity using public engagement and participation to create solutions to climate change), Hackney Council (manages all of the greenspaces and will play a key role in delivering the demonstration project), Scene Consulting (experienced energy consultants focusing on community scale solutions, responsible for system design)

Funding: Nesta Rethinking Parks

Aims

Heat pumps collect ambient heat stored in the ground, bodies of water, or the air and concentrate it so it can then be pumped into buildings. The aims of Powering Parks were to:

- Install heat pumps in a Hackney Park and use these to supply energy to nearby buildings
- Demonstrate the feasibility of the use of heat pumps
- Provide resources for others to use to do this.

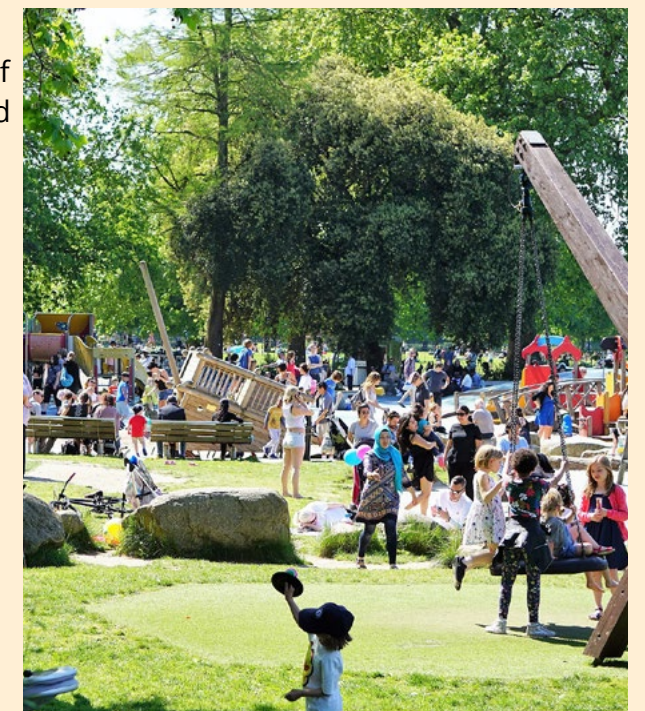
Outcomes

The project assessed the opportunity to use ground source heat pumps across the whole of Hackney's parks and greenspaces and matched these spaces to nearby council or third party buildings.

A suitable site, Abney Park Cemetery, was selected and a business case was developed for consideration by the council.

As well as building and installing the infrastructure, there was a focus on engaging local people from the start to make sure they were on board.

Powering Parks created a replication package for other parks managers - including an online early-stage feasibility tool - and are running dissemination events for local authorities and others to attend to find out more.



Key resources

- Nesta (2020) [Harnessing renewable energy in parks](#). London: Nesta.
- Waters and Robinson (2019) [Powering Parks](#).

Payment for ecosystem services (PES)

Ecosystem services are the benefits to society provided by the natural environment. The concept of PES involves creating a market for these services, with voluntary market-like transactions between buyers (e.g. businesses, recreational visitors, water companies) and sellers (e.g. landowners) of ecosystem services. This might involve asking the beneficiaries of services to pay for them and providing incentives to manage land for their provision. In the case of urban green infrastructure, beneficiaries may include local residents, local businesses, developers, and local authorities.

PES can vary in scale from international to catchment or local. There are three types of scheme:

- public payment schemes - the government pays land or resource managers to enhance ecosystem services on behalf of the public;
- private payment schemes - self-organised private deals in which beneficiaries of ecosystem services create a contract directly with service providers;
- public-private payment schemes - these draw on both government and private funds to pay land or other resource managers for the delivery of ecosystem services.

The most successful so far have been around carbon and water management, where pathways and actions are clear. PES includes offsetting, where organisations which are creating an environmental impact e.g. through their carbon emissions, or by building on green field sites, can pay to improve the environment elsewhere. Examples include habitat restoration schemes, sustainable urban drainage systems, or projects to remove carbon from the environment such as tree planting or peat land restoration.

The DEFRA PES pilot scheme created a process for PES development: (i) identify a saleable ecosystem service and prospective buyers and sellers; (ii) establish PES scheme principles and resolve technical issues; (iii) negotiate and implement agreements; (iv) monitor, evaluate and review implementation; and (v) consider opportunities for multiple-benefit PES.

Case study 1: River Lyd NatureBid

Location: Devon

Partners: Westcountry Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, Sylva Foundation, Channel

Payments for Ecosystem Services (CPES) Interreg EU-funded project

Funding: Tamar Water Stewardship Business Board



Aims

Farmers and landowners in the River Lyd catchment submitted bids to an online auction to obtain grant funding for projects aimed at improving water quality. Examples of projects include woodland planting, aeration or sub-soiling of grassland, cover crops for arable areas, watercourse fencing, field buffer strips, installing ponds or wetland features. Whilst aimed at water quality improvement, they offer additional benefits such as flood risk reduction and carbon sequestration. This project began in 2017 and will run until 2021.

Outcomes

The Water Stewardship Business Board is made up of organisations who have direct or indirect interests in the local area due to their operations and supply chains, including ABP, Kepak, Premier Foods, Saputo Dairy UK, Arla, and South West Water. It contributes to improving the longer-term resilience of river catchments in the area and contributed the funds for the auction.

Bids were assessed based on their effectiveness in improving water quality and their cost-effectiveness, to ensure value for money. Demand outstripped supply, indicating that farmers and landowners are interested in implementing measures for environmental protection if they support the farm business, and that a clear and simple application process encourages greater uptake.

Data from a pilot targeted auction (funded as part of the government PES pilot scheme) found that the method significantly increased the value for money with which funds can be allocated to projects (environmental improvements per £). These were estimated at between 20-40% greater value for money compared to a fixed-price, advisor-led scheme.

Case study 2: Nurture Lakeland

Location: Lake District

Partners: Nurture Lakeland

Funding: Visitors to the area



Aims

Nurture Lakeland trialled a Visitor Payback Scheme as a part of a pilot PES in the Bassenthwaite catchment in 2009. The scheme took an integrated approach to managing the area for multiple outcomes as the area is an important cultural landscape (for scenery and outdoor recreation) and has high visitor numbers (over 2.5 million per year).

Tourists were asked to contribute to landscape management through a small donation. Business could join the scheme and collect donations if they had a customer base of over 1000 per year. They then chose one of three projects to donate the money to: 'Fix the Fells' which focuses on the protection and restoration of footpaths; 'The Osprey Project' which supports the re-colonisation of the area by this rare species; and 'Love your Lakes' which is working to improve Lakeland water quality. All are run by existing charitable organisations.

Businesses collect money from their customers using either an opt-out system via the bookings systems; donation envelopes; or sponsored products. Nurture Lakeland then distributes money to the charitable organisations. Payment is conditional on receiving annual monitoring data and the submission of a work plan, costings, and other background information.

Outcomes

The scheme is one of the few existing PES mechanisms that allow tourists who benefit from the natural environment to directly support it. Nurture Lakeland has raised almost £2million in donations over an 18-year period through the scheme. It created a sense of ownership of the landscape among businesses and all but one continued with the scheme.

This type of scheme could be set up anywhere with a significant tourism industry. It does involve some time: Nurture Lakeland found initial funding needs to be in place to set up infrastructure e.g. donation websites for businesses which takes around 3-6 months, with significant fundraising taking 1 to 2 years.

Key resources

- DEFRA (2013) [Payments for ecosystem services: a best practice guide. Annex – Case studies.](#)

Social prescribing

Social prescribing schemes allow medical professionals to refer people to non-clinical activities which could support their health and wellbeing. In green infrastructure, these might include activities such as horticultural therapy or walking groups. A recent report on social prescribing identified the lack of movement of funding between sectors as being a key problem in its provision. Current sources of funding for general social prescribing come from:

No funding (10%)	Local Authority (19%)	Clinical Commissioning Group (26%)
Lottery (13%)	Primary Care Networks (9%)	VCSE (7%)
NHS (3%)	Privately funded (3%)	Other (12%)

Projects cannot rely on funding from the health service. The report recommended that any organisations that take referrals from social prescribing link workers should receive funding.

Case study: Natural Health Service

Location: Merseyside and Cheshire

Partners: The Mersey Forest, The Community Forest Trust, landowners, delivery organisations, policy and academic partners and strategic partners

Funding: National Lottery Community Fund

Aims

The Natural Health Service began in September 2013, with £400,000 of funding. It offers a single point of access to a range of well-developed and evidence-based services in natural green spaces. It coordinates activities and is also involved with delivery of some nature-based interventions.

Project partners lead on delivering programmes as a whole rather than by number of participants. Programmes last six to eight weeks and include nature walking, horticultural therapy, forest school, green volunteering, green gym and mindful contact with nature. They are open to everyone but intended mostly for participants with mild to moderate mental health problems, who are signposted to other services as required following participation. They can self-refer or be referred by any qualified health provider (primary and secondary).

Outcomes

Evaluation of Nature4Health, a Natural Health Service programme, found that it led to a significant improvement in mental wellbeing (12 points on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, with 3-8 points being considered significant) for participants in its first year. Physical activity also increased as a result of the programme.

A Social Return on Investment (2016) study into an expanded Natural Health Service, working with around 6,000 people a year who are at high risk, predicted a return on investment of £6.75 social return for every £1.00 invested in the service.

How to access

Most social prescribing is still project-funded e.g. Big Lottery, though there is some central funding and use of public health budgets. The National Academy of Social Prescribing is a source of further information and support.

Key resources

- Cole, A., Jones, D., Jopling, K. (2020) [Rolling out social prescribing](#). London: National Voices.
- Natural England (2017) [Good practice in social prescribing for mental health: the role of nature-based interventions](#).
- The Conservation Volunteers (2020) [Enabling the potential of social prescribing](#).



General Resources

This section contains research and reports, additional to those linked to specific funding mechanisms above, which were reviewed to produce this report. These are general resources with further detail on a range of funding mechanisms for green space outlined in this report.

- [CABE SPACE Is the grass greener?](#)
- [CABE SPACE Does money grow on trees?](#)
- Communities and Local Government Committee [The Future of public parks](#)
- Dobson, J., Harris, C., Eadson, W., and Gore, T. (2019). [Space to thrive: A rapid evidence review of the benefits of parks and green spaces for people and communities](#). The National Lottery Heritage Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund, London.
- Good Parks for London 2020 [Parks and the Pandemic](#)
- [Greater Manchester Natural Capital Investment Plan](#)
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