Providing Social Value

Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy

Knowsley Council
Green Space Strategy Research Papers: Foreword

We are extremely fortunate to have a wealth of good quality parks and green open space across the borough. Every day thousands of people have fun at our local play areas, stroll through our woodlands, play sports on our recreation grounds, attend one of green space activities, grow fruit and vegetables in local allotments, visit old friends and memories in cemeteries or relax around in one of our natural habitat sites.

Without green and open spaces, life for people living in our borough would be very different. As a Council we want everyone to be able to easily use and enjoy local clean, green and open spaces. We want the right facilities and we want to encourage more and more people to use them.

We know a strategic approach is needed to help nurture and enhance our green and open spaces in the right way. We want to build on the success of our first Green Space Strategy to ensure they are managed in a sustainable way, which will ensure they will still be around for future generations to enjoy.

Knowsley’s parks and green spaces offer a significant, varied and unique contribution to meeting many of the Council’s and its partners’ strategic outcomes. To help refresh our strategy a series of research papers have been written to understand how Knowsley’s parks can be utilised to address the pressing social, health and economic challenges the borough faces.

Our revised Green Space Strategy will provide the direction, priorities and aspirations to achieve this and much more in years to come. We know we won’t be able to deliver everything included in our strategy alone. So working in partnership with local people, our communities and partners will be key to achieving our shared vision. From community actions, to partnership projects, local people and partners will be central to delivering our strategy.

Sheena Ramsey
Knowsley Council
Chief Executive
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Reviewing Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy:
Providing Social Value

1. Purpose

1.1 The social value of open space lies in the opportunities it has to facilitate the development of community ties through social interaction, intergenerational mixing and social inclusion. A public space provides an arena for the exchange of ideas, friendships, goods and skills; and through this the development of civic pride and ownership. Green spaces also provide a wealth of opportunities for social growth including involvement in decision making, volunteering and service provision.

1.2 Recent investment in the borough’s parks and green spaces has been driven through the Green Space Strategy (2010-2014) and services that place community engagement and support for volunteers at the heart of Knowsley’s green space management. A culture of sustained commitment to this approach has been created and the strength and reach of subsequent partnerships have had a real and sustained impact on service delivery which has invariably resulted in high benefits and lower costs whilst achieving the wider outcomes highlighted above.

1.3 The purpose of this research paper is to inform the review of the Council’s Green Space Strategy and in particular:

   a) Describes the policy context around social growth and social value;
   b) Identifies the linkages between green space, social growth and social value;
   c) Identifies the existing contribution that green space services are making to providing social growth opportunities and achievements in social value;
   d) Describes the current good quality offer of Knowsley’s green space asset and complementary services; and
   e) Provides recommendations for the continued provision of social growth and social value outcomes.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the contribution of Knowsley’s green spaces to social growth and encouraging community cohesion, as outlined in this paper, are incorporated as an important element of the review of the Green Space strategy.

The Green Space Strategy will:

   a) Expand the opportunities for Knowsley’s green spaces and the associated community and friends of groups to deliver against the borough’s Social Value Outcomes.
b) Ensure the continued provision of good quality, well maintained green spaces to support greater use of Knowsley’s green space assets and to encourage greater participation in green space activities to enable social interaction.

c) Improve the marketing and promotion of Knowsley Green Space Assets to demonstrate the success of existing community groups and volunteers and encourage new volunteers and groups to establish to engage in local decision making and volunteering.

d) Consider opportunities to expand the essential role of green space development officers and rangers in supporting and facilitating existing community groups in providing ongoing support to existing and new community groups.

e) Consider a capacity building approach, whereby local people take greater ownership of green spaces. In particular, if green spaces are located within residential areas, that they are made accessible and promote social interaction to encourage public use. This in turn can have the effect of stimulating local stewardship which can help reduce the demand on the Council’s grounds maintenance services.

3. **Background**

3.1 The Council is at the forefront in managing the impacts of the significant reductions to local government funding. This austerity is particularly acute when considered against the Council’s responsibilities for promoting economic growth; embedding Welfare Reform and managing its impacts; and meeting the needs of a population that demonstrates significant inequalities compared to the majority of other parts of the country.

3.2 Green spaces and associated services can play a major role in achieving social value outcomes and providing social growth opportunities. Such offers sit alongside the health, urban regeneration, education and training and crime reduction benefits that Knowsley’s natural environment offers; largely through a diverse, high quality, readily accessible and free to use green space parks and open spaces.

3.3 Partners in Knowsley including the Council, Knowsley Chamber of Commerce, Knowsley Community and Voluntary Services, Knowsley Housing Trust and the Community Federation for Merseyside are working with the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to develop an approach to using social value. This is in the context of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 which enables all partners in Knowsley to work towards contributing to social value in the work that they do. On this basis social value in Knowsley has been defined as outcomes, measures and activity that will create strong and well connected public, private and social sectors that enable communities to be more resilient.
4. Social Value Policy Context

4.1 The Knowsley Partnership’s first Sustainable Community Strategy (2008) provides a 15-year vision for residents, businesses and agencies working in Knowsley. As the overarching strategy for Knowsley, it will guide the plans of all partners. The vision is that by the year 2023, Knowsley will have:

- Attractive, sustainable neighbourhoods with a wide choice of housing and excellent community facilities;
- Vibrant and welcoming town centres;
- Residents and local communities who are able to make positive lifestyle choices;
- High quality employment areas which help to drive economic growth in the Liverpool City Region; and
- Narrowed the gap in deprivation levels, both between different parts of the borough and between Knowsley and elsewhere.

4.2 The seven drivers of the Sustainable Community Strategy carried forward into the Corporate Plan are:

- A diverse and prosperous economy,
- Increasing economic activity,
- Raising attainment and skills,
- A well connected Knowsley,
- Unlocking the potential and raising aspirations,
- Safer more cohesive communities,
- Improving the offer and quality of place

4.3 Research shows that in areas with resilient communities there are strong and well connected public, private and social sectors. The Social Sector in Knowsley is relatively weak and therefore the Knowsley Sustainable Community Strategy lists social growth as a key activity, i.e. to increase the strength of the social sector to enable the public, private and social sectors to work together to deliver social value as set out in the Council’s Community Empowerment Framework. Community empowerment has been recognised as crucial in Knowsley for a number of years and is about having the conditions in place that allow local people to make a difference to improve their localities and that encourage them to believe it is both possible and worth it.

4.4 The Community Empowerment Framework informs how the Council will empower, engage with, consult, communicate with and develop Knowsley’s communities and includes five key themes namely:

- Forging a New Relationship;
- Understanding the Community Narrative;
- Local Leadership;
• Shaping Services; and
• The Community Conversation.

4.5 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 came into full effect on 31st January 2013. The Act, for the first time places a duty on public bodies to consider social value in procurement related activity. The Act applies to the provision of services or the provision or the provision of services together with the purchase or hire of goods or the carrying out of works. Local authorities must consider:

a) How what is proposed to be procured might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area, and
b) How in conducting the process of procurement, it might act with a view to securing that improvement.

4.6 The Knowsley Corporate Plan 2013-16 also includes social growth as a local policy with the narrative to reduce dependency on public services by growing the social sector and providing a wider range of ways that residents and communities can solve their own problems. This can only be secured by ensuring community:

• Happiness;
• Wellbeing;
• Health; and
• Inclusion and empowerment.

4.7 Social value in Knowsley has been defined as outcomes, measures and activity that will create strong and well connected public, private and social sectors that enable communities to be more resilient. In order to ensure social value is an integral part of the Council’s work, a social value policy statement, together with a social value model identifying the outcomes and measures, has been produced. Many of these measures relate directly to green spaces and green space services these are shown in more detail in Appendix A. In summary the six key social value outcomes from the Knowsley Model are:

a) An increase in community resilience including the development of local skills and jobs;
b) A reduction in the demand for public services;
c) An increase in the number of, and impact volunteers make in communities;
d) An increase in the number of new community businesses developed and the impact they have on communities;
e) An increase in the level of private sector investment and the impact this has in communities; and
f) An increase in the quality amount and type of socially responsible decisions that residents make that have a positive impact in their community.
4.8 Knowsley’s green spaces and the associated community and friends of groups can certainly help deliver these key social value outcomes. The number of Friends Groups and associated activities is one of the Council’s corporate indicators and can be correlated to investment in an area or the improvement of an area (e.g. external funding secured to improve a green space).

5. Green Spaces and Social Growth

5.1 If parks and green spaces are well managed, research has shown that communities use their local spaces more, have better relationships with their local councils and take some pride in the area where they live. Green spaces provide communities with a sense of place and belonging, opportunities for recreation, health and fitness, events that reinforce social cohesion and inclusive society and offer an escape from the stresses and strains of modern urban living which can feel compounded by the built environment.

5.2 Parks and green spaces are an integral part of daily life: from taking a walk in the local park and enjoying the fresh air and the surrounding wildlife; participating in sports at the local recreation ground; a family trip to the playground or a picnic with old friends or new neighbours; parks and green spaces offer something for everyone.

5.3 Evidence also shows that green spaces offer opportunities for people who may not normally interact to come together, and help develop social ties and community cohesion. This is particularly useful in areas of high deprivation and for groups in society who are more vulnerable to social exclusion, such as older and younger people, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

5.4 During times of economic hardship the range of freely available activities and opportunities provided by parks and the diverse range of other informal and community managed green spaces becomes particularly important, especially for less well off individuals and families. Such evidence of the social value of green spaces includes:

- Nationally over 50% of people visit a park at least once a week, to improve physical and mental health, to enhance our closest relationships, to relax, to interact with our communities and to have a good time;
- Nationally 91% of the public believe that parks and public spaces improve people’s quality of life; and
- The number one ranked issue for good parks and public spaces is that they give a sense of community.

5.5 Green spaces are also well suited as a catalyst to support residents to take an active role in their communities. The rise of community groups, friends of groups and parks trusts who aim to take over control and maintain parks and green spaces is not a new concept. For example the National Trust,
formed in 1895, has been managing land since 1899. The Wildlife Trusts (formerly the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves) first acquired responsibility for land in 1919.

5.6 Community managed / supported parks and green space are particularly important as they are generated directly from a need identified within the community. As they are created by local communities, for local communities, they help empower local people to take more control of their environment and give them an opportunity to become more active in their neighbourhood. Often community farms, gardens, developed allotments and newly established growing areas, are created in areas of deprivation, enabling those without easy access to formalised green space or parks, somewhere pleasant and productive to visit or volunteer. Such evidence includes:

- It is estimated there are around 5,000 city farms, community gardens, allotments, school farms, orchards and related groups in the UK, engaging with as many as five million people a year; and
- In 2003 the annual economic value of the work of community groups in parks and green spaces across the UK ranges somewhere between £17m and £35m.

5.7 Green spaces also play an important role in enabling communities to become more resilient. Resilience is the capacity of people to confront and cope with life’s challenges; to maintain their wellbeing in the face of adversity. Three key factors that affect resilience:

- Activities that promote wellbeing;
- Building social capital; and
- Developing psychological coping strategies.

5.8 Further evidence of the important role green spaces play in promoting social growth and encouraging community cohesion is provided in Appendix B.

6. The Green Space Contribution to Social Value in Knowsley

6.1 Wider Citizen Involvement and Civic Pride
In Knowsley community partnerships have enabled the development of a more comprehensive vision for green spaces; have increased accountability; and achieved a wider basis of support for efforts. There has been a reduction in conflicts and disagreements caused by unrealistic expectations, inaccurate information and lack of trust. In addition the community advocacy for green spaces has increased as people sustain what they help to create.
Community groups, volunteers and partnerships are valued and deliberate consideration is given by the Council to express gratitude. For example, a celebration event for volunteers took place in 2012 to herald achievement and this provided opportunity for groups to share experience, forge links and develop new ideas.

Knowsley Case Study – Memorial Park
In 2011, Lance Sergeant Mark Burgan, a soldier from Southdene in Kirkby was killed whilst serving in Afghanistan. Mark’s family organised a lantern ceremony at Wignall Park to commemorate Mark’s life. Using social media, such as Facebook, this event was organised in a matter of days which gave it an immediacy and sense of spontaneity that added to the heartfelt sadness and sympathy of those who attended. The turnout for the event was truly staggering with over 4,000 residents filling the park to pay their respects. This was a true example of community spirit and pride. Following on from this event, requests were made to the Council to re-name Wignall Park in honour of Lance Sergeant Mark Burgan. Wignall Park was subsequently re-named Memorial Park, In Memory of Lance Sgt. Mark Burgan, existing entrance panels were removed and new signs provided and memorial trees were planted by the Burgan family.

In order to support ongoing improvement at the newly named Memorial Park a new friends group was established for the site. In its short history the group has been instrumental in securing funding for the creation of a wetland area and the provision of new toddler play facilities and associated landscaping. The group has also delivered its first fun day at the Park in summer 2013. The day attracted over 3,000 people and again affirms Memorial Park’s importance as a place associated with community identity and pride. Example photographs are provided in Appendix C.

6.2 Increased Capacity and Skills
Increased capacity and skills amongst groups and individuals has enabled the independent delivery of a series of green space activities and services. Examples include; walking groups, ongoing football pitch maintenance arrangements and the running junior rangers clubs. Activities are not reliant on Council staff and as such internal resources are able to be reallocated and services extended.

Knowsley Case Study – Little Woods of Stockbridge Association
The Little Woods of Stockbridge Association are a friends group of local residents working with the purpose of engaging the local community in protecting, conserving and enhancing Little Wood. The group has developed over the past ten years and now has a membership of over 40 local residents as well as strong partnerships with the Council, Mersey Forest, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and local schools and organisations. The group work with the Council to influence the site’s positive management and development and also run a large programme of community activity and volunteering. This includes delivery of conservation task days including tree planting, pruning, litter picking, wildflower and bulb planting and pathway
maintenance works. Other activities include the delivery of a programme of community events including bird and bat box making, nature-based site visits, Easter, summer and Halloween fun days. The majority of these events are organised directly by the group and delivered with funding secured directly by the group. One of the primary functions of the group is the running of the Stockbridge Junior Rangers, a 30 strong group of local children and young people who take part on regular education and volunteering programmes within the woodland.

In order manage these activities, group members all possess CRB checks and have obtained a rich diversity of specialist skills and qualifications. These include; Level three National Open College Network (NOCN) in Woodland Management Planning, Certificate in Education (University of Central Lancashire), The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Risk Assessment Qualifications, Wildlife Trust conservation training, Emergency First Aid and AQA qualifications in Habitat and Access Management, Woodland Management Theory, and Dry Stone Walling.

The group won the national Observer’s Ethical Kids Award in 2009 which was presented by Sir David Attenborough. Photographs are provided in Appendix D.

6.3 Community Groups
There has been a 73% increase of proactively supported community groups with a dedicated or partial remit for green spaces from 30 in 2007/08 to 52 in 2012/13. The level of support provided by the Council’s Green Space Team has enabled the establishment and sustainability of these groups who are dedicated to the provision and improvement of green space assets and services.

Knowsley Case Study – Friends of Park Groups
At the heart of the Council’s Green Space Strategy (2010) was the intent to engage communities and create partnerships to foster local interest and support in each of Knowsley’s green spaces to provide the best quality standards possible and to ensure their maximum use and on-going sustainability. The outcome of this engagement is a collaborative culture that:

- Pools resources, eliminates duplication and increases efficiency;
- Provides access to more talents, approaches and local knowledge;
- Is open to new and innovative ways of working;
- Aligns the needs and aspiration of local people;
- Supports but does not replace local democracy;
- Creates relationships based on trust and shared interest; and
- Places a high value on the success of the community.

The Council currently works with 18 dedicated friends groups; nine dedicated allotment associations; four dedicated park walking groups; three dedicated park cycling groups; one dedicated park play
organisation; five sporting organisations; four Parish and Town Councils; and a further twelve residents associated, neighbourhood networks and committee organisations.

This success has been fostered through the effective shaping of Council staff roles, work programmes and practices. Green Space Development Officers and Green Space Rangers have a primary remit to establish and support green space community groups including: friends of groups; allotment associations; residents groups; walking clubs; sports clubs; athletics organisations; and voluntary play organisations. A broad range of other partnerships are proactively fostered with training providers, businesses and charitable organisations.

In the early stages of a community partnership considerable time and energy is required and this commitment is sustained in order to maintain and improve the partnership over time. Working with community volunteers is therefore planned with an approach that is long-term and effective. Flexible working practices are employed with Green Space Development Officers and Green Space Rangers working evenings and weekends on a weekly basis. In a period of significant financial pressure financial investment continues to be dedicated to the support and engagement of community partnerships demonstrating the strength of conviction and evidenced business case for this way of working as it builds civic pride and community resilience; which over the medium / longer term will pay dividends back to the Council through delivery against a range of strategic outcomes and the financial austerity agenda. This is in positive opposition to the reactive short term reduction in investment witnessed in many other local authorities.

Attitudes and approach focus on creating relationship of equality between community members and professionals and Council staff identify with local residents and community groups. Staff training has ensured proficiency in a variety of community engagement methodologies including participatory appraisal and has cultivated patience and a willingness to learn and compromise. Staff are open and responsive and are prepared for community members to bring ideas to the process. Voluntary groups are also supported to work at a level appropriate to their skill, interest and aspiration. This approach is mirrored by senior management staff allowing for greater overall responsiveness and flexibility in the shaping of green space services.

6.4 Volunteering
In 2012/13, 27,000 volunteer hours focused around Knowsley’s green spaces provided an economic value equivalent to £0.310m. Volunteers assume a variety of roles and activities including: shaping strategies and plans; acting as a consultative body; carrying out practical park improvements; and planning and delivering a broad range of activities and events. Volunteer support has allowed more events to take place and as such participation rates have increased by 100% from 35,000 in 2008/08 to over 70,000 in 2012/13. In 2013/14 the number of larger community events was extended
again, particularly in the Kirkby. This included provision of community fun days (attracting over 3,000 each) at Webster Park and for the first time Memorial Park.

**Knowsley Case Study – Friends of Eaton Street Park**

The Friends of Eaton Street Park was formed at the end of 2010 by local residents following a community consultation and engagement process initiated by the Council to devise a Master Plan for improvements to the park.

A group of local volunteers came together as a team to proactively implement the priorities outlined in the park’s master plan. A major issue with Eaton Street Park was the approach, which was made up of an un-adopted road in poor condition. The Friends quickly influenced the re-surfacing the road up to the main entrance (as well as inside the park), the re-installation of new street lighting and the repairs to the rear boundary wall of the park. They also supported with tree planting, wildflower sowing, garden planting schemes as well as the creation of a mosaic in collaboration with local residents and school children, through funding they secured.

Perhaps one of their main challenges was the issue of dog fouling within the park. The Friends have delivered a range of activities as part of a campaign to rid the park of dog fouling. As well as influencing Council and the Police to focus enforcement patrol in the park the Friends have also themselves carried out extensive awareness raising campaigns, such as Flag It and Bag It, to promote responsible use by dog walkers. They have even designed their own dog bag dispensers which are regularly being used by visitors and have proved a great success.

The ongoing efforts of the Friends of Eaton Street Park were recognised when the Park was awarded Green Flag Award status in 2013. This would not have been achieved without the time and dedication of this close knit group of volunteers who have put their heart and soul into making Eaton Street Park the high quality and vibrant public Park that is now bringing much improved quality of life to the north Prescot community.

6.5 **Corporate Social Responsibility and Training**

Provision of corporate responsibility opportunities have attracted a range of national and local businesses including: Balfour Beatty; McDonalds; Jaguar Land Rover; ASDA and United Utilities to undertake work within Knowsley’s green spaces. Partnerships with training organisations such as Myerscough College have also enabled woodland management works to be accomplished.

**Knowsley Case Study – ASDA Huyton**

The Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge was a grassroots legacy programme to mark the two great events that were taking place in the UK in 2012, namely Her Majesty the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and the London 2012 Olympics. The Friends of Jubilee Park secured funding from the QE2
Challenge programme for entrance improvements, entrance features, path improvements, benches and notice boards. A condition of the fund was to organise a community day and it was agreed that this would be undertaken in partnership with ASDA a sponsor of the QE2 Challenge; ASDA had pledged to give staff time to local projects. The Friends made contact with the ASDA at Huyton and were designated an ASDA Community Life Champion and as such ASDA representatives attended the Friends meetings and helped organise park improvement events. The project was also promoted to staff from ASDA, Huyton who were encouraged to volunteer for these events which led to 15 ASDA staff joining 40 community members over two weekends to paint 40 meters of fencing around Jubilee Park.

6.6 External Funding Procurement
Over £6m of external investment has been secured for green space infrastructure improvements between 2008/09 and 2012/13. Partnership working with community-led voluntary groups has enabled green spaces and associated services to make the most of funding opportunities. The majority of this funding would not have been available to the Council working alone. Table 1 below provides examples of the broad range of external funding secured either directly by green space groups or in partnership with the Council.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green Space</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Funder</th>
<th>Amount of funding</th>
<th>Purpose of funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memorial Park</td>
<td>Friends of Memorial Park</td>
<td>South Kirkby</td>
<td>Veolia Trust (landfill tax)</td>
<td>£0.058 m</td>
<td>New toddler play area, football area and landscaping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwood Forest Hills</td>
<td>Northwood Allotment Association</td>
<td>North Kirkby</td>
<td>Setting the Scene for Growth (NWDA)</td>
<td>£0.185 m</td>
<td>Woodland creation scheme.</td>
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<td>Eaton Street Park</td>
<td>Friends of Eaton Street</td>
<td>Prescot</td>
<td>St Modwen (landfill tax funding)</td>
<td>£0.011 m</td>
<td>Rose garden project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delaware Allotments</td>
<td>Delaware Allotment Association</td>
<td>South Kirkby</td>
<td>Awards for All (Big Lottery Funding)</td>
<td>£0.010 m</td>
<td>Communal accommodation building and toilets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court Farm Woods</td>
<td>Court Farm Woods Association</td>
<td>Halewood</td>
<td>Forestry Commission</td>
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<td>Woodland Management Works</td>
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<td>The Pasture</td>
<td>Cronton Parish Council</td>
<td>Cronton</td>
<td>Coalfields Regeneration Trust</td>
<td>£0.043 m</td>
<td>New toddler play area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jubilee Park</td>
<td>Friends of Jubilee Park</td>
<td>North Huyton</td>
<td>Queen Elizabeth II</td>
<td>£0.025 m</td>
<td>Entrances and pathways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund</td>
<td>Fund SITA Trust (landfill tax)</td>
<td>Footpaths, entrances, signage, interpretation and sensory garden.</td>
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<td>Henley Park</td>
<td>Whiston Community Spaces (Big Lottery funding)</td>
<td>£0.050 m</td>
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<td>Woolfall Heath Meadow</td>
<td>North Huyton Ibstock Cory (landfill tax funding)</td>
<td>£0.020 m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Halewood Park</td>
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<td>£0.025 m</td>
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7. Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy and Assets

7.1 Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy

Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy (2010-2014) describes the borough’s publicly accessible green space asset in terms of its quantity, quality and accessibility across a variety of green space typologies:

a) Parks and gardens of which there are 28 urban parks, formal gardens and country parks;
b) Natural and semi-natural green spaces including 28 woodlands, grasslands, and wetlands with open and running water;
c) Children and young people’s facilities which offer 39 equipped play areas, multi use games areas and skate parks for different age groups;
d) Allotment gardens of which there are nine statutory sites;
e) Outdoor sports provision providing 20 natural and artificial sports provision including playing pitches and bowling greens; and
f) Green corridors of which there are four.

7.2 The Strategy was prepared to act as a reference point for all matters relating to the freely accessible green space realm and to provide a framework to ensure that this important public resource is promoted so that local people utilise its wide ranging offer and to ensure that it is managed in an accountable, sustained and consistent manner. Good quality green spaces contribute to the achievement of prosperous, vibrant and sustainable neighbourhoods yet conversely low standard green spaces can be correlated with community deprivation, poor health and disadvantage. The Strategy’s objective is to address these challenges and so allow green spaces to deliver their spectrum of benefits to communities and the natural environment.

7.3 Many key priorities and projects contained within the Green Space Strategy have been delivered providing a substantial step change primarily in the
quality and accessibility of all green space typologies. Such success is demonstrated through:

a) A 100% increase in Green Flag Awards from six in 2009 to twelve in 2013 with such a park now being readily accessible to all of Knowsley’s communities;
b) A 100% rise in the average quality score of parks from 32 in 2008 to 64 in 2013;
c) Over £6m of external investment secured for green space infrastructure improvements between 2009 and 2013;
d) An increase of 73% proactively supported green space community groups from 30 in 2008 to 52 in 2013;
e) Additional 27,000 volunteer hours at an economic value of £0.310m per annum;
f) 100% increase in participation in green space events and activities from 35,000 in 2007/08 to over 70,000 for 2012/13;
g) Significant wider citizen involvement and increasing civic pride; and
h) Substantial increase in capacity and skills amongst groups and individuals secured through the delivery of successful and highly valued Green Space Assets.

7.4 These achievements coupled with the compilation of a new Green Space Audit (2012), as part of the evidence base to support the ongoing preparation of the Council’s Core Plan, make a refresh of the Green Space Strategy timely and this work is scheduled to take place during Quarters 3 and 4 of 2013/14. This refresh will focus on identifying how the borough’s now largely good quality green spaces amenity and functions can contribute to the Council’s Corporate Plan Strategic Objectives.

7.5 Knowsley’s existing green space assets and their offer
As highlighted Knowsley’s green space assets have been proactively developed to enhance their quantity, quality and accessibility so as to maximise their use and the programming of events / activities. The latest Green Space Audit, undertaken in 2011, provides a thorough overview of the progress made at them all. The audit identified 735 sites based on the definition of public open space in PPG17 each of which have been assessed individually. The number of sites that fulfil the PPG17 definition of a park have increased through recent investment in enhancements prioritised in the Green Spaces Strategy from 16 in 2008 to 34 in 2011. The Audit and further quality monitoring for 2013 will be utilised to provide up to date standards data for parks and green spaces within Knowsley. This data will be utilised to provide strategic priorities for the ongoing improvement of green spaces in Knowsley.

7.6 Significant attention has been placed on providing a readily accessible, safe and welcoming environment to those using Knowsley’s parks and green spaces. Furthermore, it is recognised that by providing a variety of facilities and different spaces layered onto a park very much enhances their popularity with people with diverse interests and skills. This in turn
encourages a well used, active park that self-generates community engagement, pride in the local area and therefore ownership and care of the facilities on offer. It is on this basis that the Council has invested in Knowsley’s green space infrastructure which are now amongst the best in Merseyside, if not further afield.

7.7 Green space management is targeted using Knowsley’s Green Space Asset Management Plan. The Asset Management Plan is a first of its kind management tool that establishes the cyclical maintenance and replacement costs of green space assets over a 25 year period. The Asset Management Plan defines four main works categories: maintenance operations; asset renewal; augmentation and asset disposal. Work categories are then assigned to a variety work programmes and resource options including: external funding procurement; volunteer tasks; training scheme providers and social justice schemes. This groundbreaking system has influenced the Council to invest £0.500m in green spaces over a five year period. This ensures that volunteers are adequately resourced to undertake maintenance and enhancement operations.

7.8 Knowsley’s Green Spaces Team is made up of Parks and Cemeteries (27 FTE), Green Space Development (3 FTE) and the Rangers (5.8 FTE). The Parks team are responsible for the grounds maintenance and specialist horticulture works across the boroughs green spaces. There has been a continual renewal and investment in skills at management and operational levels. In order to provide a dynamic, responsive and reliable customer focused service, the Team have implemented a quality system achieving ISO9001:2008. Maintenance schedules are in place for each site and are managed through the CONFIRM asset management system.

7.9 The Green Space Development Officers and Green Space Rangers have a primary remit to establish and support green space community groups including: friends of groups, allotment associations, residents groups, walking clubs, sports clubs, athletics organisations and voluntary play organisations. In addition, a broad range of other partnerships are proactively fostered with: training providers; businesses and charitable organisations. The Ranger programme delivers a range of activities with a focus on health and well being, education and training, family/community activity, supporting volunteering and social growth.

8. Conclusion

The social value benefits of green spaces are substantial and are being demonstrated in Knowsley. Such contributions, to what is one of the Council’s priority outcomes, must be recognised and extended. Therefore it will be considered as an important element of the Green Space Strategy review.
Providing Social Value

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Appendices:
Appendix A: Local Policy
Appendix B: Evidence Base
Appendix C: Memorial Park Case Study Photographs
Appendix D: Little Wood Case Study Photographs

References

BTCV. (2008). Inspiring People, Improving Places: The positive impact and behavioural change achieved through environmental volunteering with BTCV
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Appendix A – Local Policy

**Social Value Statement**

Knowsley Council is required to consider how economic, social, and environmental well-being may be improved by services that are to be procured, and how procurement may secure those improvements under the provisions of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 (the Act).

The council wants to use the opportunity the Act presents through procurement and other related activities to enable communities to become more resilient and reduce demand on public services. The council aims to provide the delivery of services which are innovative, provide employment opportunities for its residents, make its communities stronger and more effective, and keep its residents safe.

The Knowsley Partnership is fully committed to this approach and endorsed it at the Knowsley Partnership Executive Board in January 2013. The borough-wide approach also includes the development of the “Knowsley Social Value Model” that defines social value and identifies social value outcomes and measures specific to Knowsley.

Knowsley Council’s definition of social value is:

> Outcomes, measures and activity that will create strong and well connected public, private and social sectors that enable communities to be more resilient”.

The council’s social value outcomes and measures have been developed with social sector organisations working in Knowsley and representatives of the public, private, social enterprise, voluntary and community sectors.

The six key social value outcomes from the Knowsley Social Value Model are:

- An increase in community resilience including the development of local skills and jobs;
- A reduction in the demand for public services;
- An increase in the number of, and impact volunteers make in communities;
- An increase in the number of new community businesses developed and the impact they have in communities;
- An increase in the level of private sector investment and the impact this has in communities;
- An increase in the quality amount and type of socially responsible decisions that residents make that have a positive impact in their community.

The council will, where relevant, seek to achieve these key social value outcomes and the associated measures through a range of its functions and activities in addition to its duties under the Act. More detail about the 29
measures and how these will be applied by partners in the borough can be found in the accompanying document ‘Knowsley : An Emerging Approach to Social Value.’

The council’s Corporate Plan 2013-16 states:

“We have been developing a Social Value model with partners which will ensure that factors that improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area are taken into account in a range of activities including commissioning and procurement of goods and services. The indicators and measures within this Corporate Plan will enable us to know how well we are progressing with this policy including the amount of Social Value we deliver as a council.”

In procurement activities this will include the council using any of its social value outcomes and measures that are proportionate and relevant to the specification for the service required and evaluating tenders in accordance with those social value outcomes and measures and that specification.

Where appropriate, the council will ask bidders to detail and demonstrate the social value outcomes and measures that they can deliver when providing the service. Where appropriate, the council will include an appropriate weighting in our tender evaluation model to assess the social value offer submitted by bidders.

Social Value is integrated into our Economic Regeneration Strategy, Procurement Strategy and City Region work on securing employment and skills through procurement.

Accompanying this Statement is the document Knowsley: An Emerging Approach to Social Value dated 31 January 2013. This model is subject to change and an up-to-date version along with this statement is available on the council’s website. The council’s approach to social value will be evaluated and reviewed at regular intervals - at least annually. This review will involve social sector organisations and representatives of the public, private, social enterprise, voluntary and community sectors.

For further information about Knowsley Council’s approach to social value, email Ian Bancroft at ian.bancroft@knowsley.gov.uk
**Knowsley: An Emerging Approach to Social Value**

Partners in Knowsley including Knowsley Council, Knowsley Chamber of Commerce, Knowsley Community and Voluntary Services, Knowsley Housing Trust and the Community Foundation for Merseyside are working with the public, private, social, voluntary and community sectors to develop an approach to using social value. This is in the context of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, and aim to use this legislation as a way of enabling all partners in Knowsley to work towards contributing social value in the work that they do. It is an emerging piece of work to be added to and finalised once the Act is fully in place which is anticipated to be early in 2013.

Social Value in Knowsley is being defined as

*“Outcomes, measures and activity that will create strong and well connected public, private and social sectors that enable communities to be more resilient”.*

Initial outcomes and measures have been identified as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Value Outcome</th>
<th>Social Value Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Increase in Community Resilience</td>
<td>(1) Proportion of working age population in work (2) Proportion of residents at skills levels 2,3,4 and with a formal qualification (3) Median weekly income of residents (4) Reduction in social isolation and specific increase in confidence of individuals (5) Number of offenders who gain / retain employment (6) Number of offenders who gain / attend training (7) Number of new constituted groups (8) Number of young people achieving accredited awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reduction in demand for public services</td>
<td>(9) Number of people supported to live independently (10) Reduction in permanent admissions to residential or nursing care (11) Reduction in avoidable hospital admissions (12) Reduction in household waste and waste to landfill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Impact of volunteers</td>
<td>(13) Numbers of new volunteers (14) Number of volunteers placed with community groups (15) Number of offenders who gain / retain volunteer opportunities (16) Increase in the number of Friends of Parks Groups and as a result green space usage (17) Number of young volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Impact of Community Businesses</td>
<td>(18) Number of new community businesses (19) Number of community businesses with their social purpose linked directly to geographical communities or communities of interest (20) Number of play activities led by volunteers (21) Number of constituted groups developing into community businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Private Sector Investment in Communities</td>
<td>(22) Level of private sector investment as part of their CSR. (23) Reductions in fuel poverty by private sector investment in energy efficiency and residents behaviour change (24) Number of private sector companies including local community businesses and constituted groups in their supply chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Residents making socially responsible decisions</td>
<td>(25) Increase in numbers of people in receipt of a direct payment or personal budget (26) Number of offenders who are engaged with mentors 6/12 weeks after release from custody (27) Increase in recycling rates for household waste (28) Number of services / assets that communities take lead responsibility for (29) Number of young people involved in peer education programmes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partners in Knowsley will be working to:

(1) Apply these outcomes and measures to specific procurement exercises in the public sector to see how they can be used in tender specifications and evaluation.

(2) Encourage partner organisations to use the outcomes and measures as part of their procurement exercises.

(3) Identify the best way that the private and social enterprise sector might donate the social value that they deliver through the Knowsley Foundation and hence receive recognition for the social value they deliver.

(4) Identify the best way that the voluntary and community sector might donate the social value they deliver through Knowsley Community and Voluntary Services and hence receive recognition for the social value they deliver.

(5) Identify the best way the public sector can collect the social value it delivers and publish and receive recognition for the social value delivered.

As partners we are keen to hear your views about social value, its intended use in Knowsley, and how this might best be achieved for the benefit of all.
Appendix B – Evidence Base (Green Spaces and Social Growth)

The literature demonstrating the social benefits of green spaces is fast developing as shown by the rising numbers of studies and reviews that have been commissioned in the past five years.

Green spaces can provide a neutral space within which people come together, social interactions occur (that include people from different backgrounds), and relationships or partnerships take form. While personal goals or desires are achieved, community building and increased social capital also emerge, particularly if people share work on a project or goal. Individual benefits, improved public health, and social resilience are potential positive outcomes.

Understanding the Contribution Parks and Green Spaces can make to Improving People’s Lives Report identified: “From playgrounds to sports fields to parks benches to chessboards to swimming pools to ice skating rinks to flower gardens, parks offer opportunities for people of all ages to communicate, compete, interact, learn and grow”

While well managed parks and green spaces can encourage visitors, and enhance social inclusion and cohesion, poor quality spaces, scarred by the evidence of vandalism and neglect, dominated by single groups and anti-social behaviour, can be a blight on any community. It is a measure of peoples’ commitment to green spaces and belief in their importance that there are so many examples of communities working together to transform their local space. “Perhaps more significantly, the acts of improving, renewing or even saving a park can build extraordinary levels of social capital in a neighbourhood”

- Over 30 million people in England use parks, making around 2.5 billion visits in total each year. Nearly 70% of people use their parks frequently, and many go every day.2
- Over 50% of us visit a park at least once a week, to improve physical - and mental - health, to enhance our closest relationships, to chill out, to interact with our communities and to have a good time3.
- 87% of the population have used their local park or open space in the last year, and 79% have used it in the last six months. Parks and open spaces are the most frequently used service of all the public services tracked. This compares with 32% who have visited concert halls, and 26% who visited galleries4.
- 91% of the public believe that parks and public spaces improve people’s quality of life.5
- The number one ranked issue for good parks and public spaces is that they give a sense of community6.

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2 Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. (2002).Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces
3 Keep Britain Tidy. (2010). People, Places and their Green Spaces
4 CABE Space. (2010). Urban Green Nation: Building the Evidence Base
6 CABE Space. (2004). Manifesto for Better Public Spaces
• Only 3% of 5,826 respondents disagreed with the statement: ‘Parks and open spaces are a focal point for local communities’. 
• If people are satisfied with local parks, they tend to be satisfied with their Council.
• In a survey of 5,866 respondents, 97% agreed with the statement: ‘Parks and open spaces can make this a nice place in which to live’.
• If parks and green spaces are well managed, research has shown that communities use their local spaces more, have better relationships with their local councils and take some pride in the area where they live.

Building Community Cohesion
The ‘Benefits of Green Infrastructure’ Report to Defra identified that the opportunities for social interaction which green spaces offer have wider ramifications beyond individual social well-being through social contact; social interaction also helps to build social ties and community cohesion. For example, an epidemiological study by Kim and Kaplan (2004, cited in Tzoulas et al. 2007: 170-1) suggested that open spaces and natural features play an important role in the attachment of people to the area they live in and the local community, and have an effect on their interactions with other residents.

Sullivan (2005, cited in Davies and Deaville, 2008: 12) undertook a study looking at strength of community, domestic violence and crime on a housing estate. Social ties were found to be stronger the greener the neighbourhood, overall reported domestic violence levels were lower in greener areas, and crime levels were significantly lower in residencies near natural spaces. The author suggested that green space may encourage social interaction which in turn increases social ties and decreases aggression. Such impacts are more likely to be the case if the quality of the green space is high and carefully designed projects are initiated.

Some societal groups suffer from social exclusion more than others. Of particular concern are groups such as the elderly, young people, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and those of a lower socio-economic standing. Good quality green spaces can bring people together, creating community cohesion as people from different social groupings engage with each other. A Chicago-based study (Kweon et al., 1998) looked at older adults in deprived areas, living in public housing, and found that access and exposure to green space is related to social integration, which is an important factor in well-being. At the other end of the age spectrum, in a Swiss study, Seeland et al. (2009) examined the role of green space in social inclusion of youths from different cultures.

They concluded that public urban green spaces played a positive and significant role for children and young people in making friends across cultures, which can be considered a prerequisite for social inclusion. Green space is also beneficial in

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7 GreenSpace. (2010).GreenSTAT visitor survey system
8 CABE Space. (2010). Urban Green Nation: Building the Evidence Base
9 GreenSpace. (2010).GreenSTAT visitor survey system
10 CABE Space. (2010). Urban Green Nation: Building the Evidence Base
11 The ‘Benefits of green infrastructure’ Report to Defra and CLG October 2010 Prepared by Land Regeneration and Urban Greenspace, Centre for Forestry and Climate Change
terms of childhood development, allowing children to be creative and interact with one another and with adults, which ultimately assists them in being socially integrated in society in later life. A study (Taylor et al., 1998) of inner city children in Chicago found that there were significantly higher levels of creative play when the children played in the green spaces around their apartment blocks rather than in the barren areas. Children playing in the green spaces also had more opportunity to be with adults, a factor that can aid the development of interpersonal skills.

Volunteering and Community-Led Management

The rise of community groups, friends of groups and parks trusts who aim to take over control and maintain parks and green spaces is not a new concept. The Box Moor Trust has been managing green space in Bovingdon and Hemel Hempstead since 1851. The National Trust formed in 1895 has been managing land since 1899. The Wildlife Trusts (formerly the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves) first acquired responsibility for land in 1919. The Woodland Trust has been managing land now for nearly 40 years and the city farm and community gardening movement has been in existence for more than 40 years and its federation celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2010. The Warley Woods Community Trust was established in 1997 and took over full responsibility for the land in 2004, The Penllergare Trust has been managing Penllergare Country Park since 2000, and The Bankside Open Spaces Trust in London has also held full responsibility for a number of sites for the past ten years.

Community managed parks and green space are particularly important as they are generated directly from a need identified within the community. As they are created by local communities, for local communities, they help empower local people to take more control of their environment and give them an opportunity to become more active in their communities. Often community farms, gardens, developed allotments and newly established growing areas, are created in areas of deprivation, enabling those without easy access to formalised green space or parks, somewhere pleasant and productive to visit or volunteer. There is also much community development inherent in community managed projects.

- There are approximately 4,000 community groups with an average membership of 134 involved with urban green space across the UK, total membership may be approaching 500,000 across the UK.\(^{12}\)
- It is estimated there are around 5,000 city farms, community gardens, allotments, school farms, orchards and related groups in the UK, engaging with as many as five million people a year.\(^{13}\)
- The annual economic value of the work of community groups in parks and green spaces across the UK ranges somewhere between £17 million and £35 million.\(^{14}\)
- The turnover of the city farm and community garden movement is estimated at £50 million a year.\(^{15}\)

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\(^{13}\) Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens. (no date). Membership Survey


\(^{15}\) Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens. (no date)
• Over 7000 community based groups improved biodiversity and the local environment at over 50,000 places, and enriched the lives of over 660,000 people.¹⁶

• In one year alone (2007-2008) BTCV volunteers put in 540,178 workdays. If these are valued at a typical unskilled labour rate of £50 a day, the total contribution amounts to over £27 million.¹⁷

• 287,000 volunteers gave 540,178 workdays. Their work on 15,420 sites involved 4,301 communities, improving local environments, both rural and urban, and enhancing biodiversity.¹⁸

• Volunteering is an overwhelmingly positive experience for young people. Nine out of ten young volunteers said they learnt something new, and 98% said they wanted to do it again.¹⁹

• Environmental volunteering is an ideal way to encourage active integration. Socially disadvantaged groups BTCV works with include young people at risk, people with health problems, travellers and homeless people.²⁰

• 44% of all people involved in BTCV’s activities came from under-represented communities.²¹

• Last year, nearly 8,000 people received training through our Employment Programme, and almost 2,000 of these went into full-time work.²² This resulted in:
  o Increased earnings of £20m
  o Reduced benefits of £5m

• Social Return on Investment research that shows £1 invested in environmental volunteering can lead to a return of up to £4.²³

Urban Parks/ Green Spaces and Social Cohesion
Urban parks have been viewed as an important part of urban and community development rather than just as settings for recreation and leisure. Urban parks have been suggested to facilitate social cohesion by creating space for social interactions (e.g., Coley et al., 1997; Kuo et al., 1998; Van Herzele and Wiedemann, 2003; Parr, 2007; Maas et al., 2009).

Social cohesion is defined as the extent to which a geographical place achieves ‘community’ in the sense of shared values, cooperation and interaction (Beckley, 1995). Public spaces such as urban parks are potentially of importance because they cater the opportunities for high levels of interaction between persons of different social and ethnic background (Lofland, 1998; Fainstein, 2005). For the

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¹⁸ BTCV. (2008). Inspiring People, Improving Places: The positive impact and behavioural change achieved through environmental volunteering with BTCV
¹⁹ BTCV. (2008). Inspiring People, Improving Places: The positive impact and behavioural change achieved through environmental volunteering with BTCV
²⁰ BTCV. (2008). Inspiring People, Improving Places: The positive impact and behavioural change achieved through environmental volunteering with BTCV
²² BTCV. (2008). Inspiring People, Improving Places: The positive impact and behavioural change achieved through environmental volunteering with BTCV
²³ BTCV. (no date). Inspiring People, Improving Places: The positive impact and behavioural change achieved through environmental volunteering with BTCV
development of local communities and social ties people have to be able to meet to establish relationship (Völker et al., 2007). In addition, interacting with others helps people to participate in society and to create feelings of acceptance (Putnam, 2000).

Globalization has resulted in increasing levels of migration over the past decades. This means some of the old, formerly rather homogenous nations are becoming more and more multicultural (Kærgård, 2010). This has raised political questions related to integration and social cohesion.

Most of the contacts between people will occur in places like local recreation facilities, schools, churches and parks (Kuo et al., 1998; Völker et al., 2007). The presence of trees (and shade) and grass in common spaces compared to barren spaces may attract residents to outdoor spaces, which enhances opportunities for the people to get connected (Coley et al., 1997).

Urban parks as contributors to social inclusion and cohesion
Recent studies\(^\text{24}\) agreed that urban parks have more potential for social inclusion to occur than anywhere else because the easy access compared to other places in a town / city. Urban parks also provide facilities for leisure activities which attracts people to come. Social cohesion is enhanced when the people are engaged in an activity which connects them together e.g., organising an event, cycling, football.

Nevertheless, the social interaction which stimulates social cohesion among the people is mainly cursory and comprises informal interactions. Most of the people in the park have only a short chat with or just greet strangers. Most of the time people visit the park with someone they know beforehand, e.g. friends or family members.

Most of the studies were based on observations of how people interact in urban parks, or on interviews which are focusing on finding out about the intention of social interaction and the meaning of the behaviour towards other people in the park. Only one study (Fan et al., 2011) used some form of indicators for measuring social cohesion, such as loneliness, feeling disliked and people being unfriendly, and subsequently generated models to explain the relationship between physical activity, social support and stress.

Green Spaces and Resilient Communities
Resilience is the capacity of people to confront and cope with life’s challenges and to recover from, or adapt to, adversity. The Young Foundation describe resilience as
‘*dynamic, taking into account the past and the future; a person can build resilience before they hit crisis and be more likely to cope with problems that may be around the corner*’.

Resilience can be learned and improved, as well as eroded or worn down by difficult circumstances, so a person’s resilience may vary over their lifetime.

In addition to providing the right services, facilities and resources to increase people’s resilience, it is important that local communities have the capacity and infrastructure to be able to support people to access them. In particular availability of information, good connections between local services and accessibility of support are essential.

Figure 1 – Resilience Model

As providers of local services and infrastructure, from schools to parks, libraries and children’s centres, local authorities are well placed to take a broad approach to mental health and wellbeing and the transition presents an opportunity to address the impact of all of the local authority’s work on wellbeing and resilience. The Office for National Statistics states that ‘social capital describes the pattern and intensity of networks among people and the shared values which arise from those networks. Local Authorities, community groups and other local stakeholder play an important role in helping to build resilience by supporting people to increase their networks and build connections.

In 2008 NEF set out their Five Ways to Wellbeing, figure 2; five actions that people can take to promote wellbeing. They have been widely adopted by a large number of groups, organisations, local authorities and people as practical, evidence-based steps that can be taken to improve wellbeing. Green spaces underpin the majority of these actives. Feelings of reciprocity, or giving back to others, have been shown to promote wellbeing for people of all ages. Research has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period

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is associated with an increase in wellbeing. Active participation in community life has been associated with feelings of happiness and is an important predictor of life satisfaction. Volunteering in particular has been found to increase peoples’ sense of purpose, improve self-worth and wellbeing, and reduce anxiety\textsuperscript{26}.

Figure 2 – Five Ways to Wellbeing.
Appendix C - Memorial Park

New signage at Memorial Park (In memory of Lance Sgt. Burgan)

Memorial Park Fun Day 2013
Appendix D - Littlewood

Halloween Event at Littlewood

Junior Rangers serve older people at the tea dance and picnic
Community Task Day at Little Wood

Members of the Little Wood Association and Sir David Attenborough