Reducing Crime and Anti Social Behaviour by Utilising Green Space Assets

Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy
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: Addressing Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

1. Purpose

1.1 Parks and green space are becoming increasingly valued for their social, economic and environmental benefits and the potential for improving community cohesion, well-being and quality of life. Furthermore safe, welcoming and attractive green spaces encourage high levels of use, which in turn helps to reduce any incidences of crime and anti-social behaviour.

1.2 Recent investment in the Council’s parks and green spaces has resulted in increased levels of satisfaction in these assets by local residents (from 67% in 2012/13 to 82% in 2013/14). However, more can be done to make Knowsley’s green spaces more socially inclusive and to overcome the barriers which discourage their use i.e. fear of crime or anti-social behaviour.

1.3 As part of the review of the Council’s Green Space Strategy this paper seeks to identify how Knowsley’s green spaces can reduce crime and anti social behaviour by encouraging positive behaviours that lead to community cohesion and a sense of civic pride.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Knowsley’s green spaces offer fantastic opportunities to mitigate crime and anti-social behaviour in the borough’s communities by providing a strong focus for community cohesion which facilitates intergenerational respect, friendships and civic pride. They offer local and cost effective targeted diversionary activities to preventing people, in particular younger people, from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour in the first place. Also green spaces provide the facilities and opportunities to increase community sentences i.e. community payback programmes.

2.2 Therefore it is recommended that the contribution of Knowsley’s green infrastructure to addressing crime and antisocial behaviour as outlined in this paper is incorporated as a key element in the review of the Council’s Green Space Strategy.
The Green Space Strategy will:

a) Ensure that Place Making and Target Hardening principles are adopted within the design and maintenance programme of Knowsley’s green spaces.

b) Consider the development the strategic direction for children’s play within Knowsley. Such a strategy could raise the profile of play in providing low cost opportunities for children and young people so as to keep them active, interested and instil as sense of civic pride in them from an early age.

c) Identify areas with high levels of crime / anti social behaviour and develop a programme of diversionary activities within parks and green spaces to engage local residents, noting the clear need to adopt a needs-based rather than product-led approach.

d) Explore further how green spaces can support restorative justice projects within Knowsley.

e) Develop a targeted prevention/engagement programme with partners to address behaviours and tackle anti social behaviour issues within parks and green spaces.

3. **Background**

3.1 The decline in the quality of urban green spaces in England in the last decades of the 20th century was clearly highlighted in the government publication Town and Country Parks (1999), later supported by research done by the Urban Parks Forum (formerly GreenSpace), published as the Public Parks Assessment in 2001. These documents evidenced that the deterioration in the quality of parks and green spaces was closely linked to a long-term decline in local authority capital and revenue funding. The reductions in funding resulted in a worsening of the quality of green space leading to a spiral of local environmental, social and economic decline.

3.2 It is estimated that between 1979/80 and 2000/01 the total national cumulative under spend on parks revenue expenditure was in the region of £1.3 billion and this situation led to long-term degradation and the need for substantial capital reinvestment. However, during the 2000’s this trend was reversed, the Public Parks Assessment was a major turning point for the green space agenda as it highlighted the implications of poor quality parks. It triggered a range of capital funding opportunities through programmes
such as the Heritage Lottery fund and the increase in quality standards driven largely through the introduction of the Green Flag scheme.

3.3 The current economic climate and pressures on public spending have unfortunately already begun to impact on green space management and development nationally; with concerns now being raised by the Land Trust and the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces that quality of parks will decline once again. Some local authorities, such as Liverpool, have withdrawn from the Green Flag award scheme because they no longer prioritise meeting the required standards as part of their budget setting process. Whilst other local authorities are disbanding park ranger teams, closing sports facilities and cafés, or introducing charges for services that were previously free. A number of national of reports (e.g. ‘Your Parks’ by Green Space, ‘Public Parks and Open Spaces’ by English Heritage and the ‘State of the UK’s Parks’ by HLF), issued at the turn of the millennium identify where this trend leads: to unsafe, neglected places that people choose to avoid, and the loss of the many wide ranging benefits that come from cared-for green spaces.

3.4 Good quality maintenance of parks and green spaces enables the Council and its partners to deal with the crime and anti-social behaviour that blights residents’ lives. Residents respond to their environment and there is a direct correlation between their perceptions and behaviour and the quality of their surroundings. In areas where public spaces are dirty, vandalised and visibly neglected, people are likely to move elsewhere or become less visible in their community, whilst vulnerable people may retreat to the sanctuary of self-imposed curfews which ultimately enable those with mischievous or criminal intent to thrive and dominate.

3.5 Overall parks and green spaces do provide safe environments that are used by an estimated 33 million people a year across the country, in Knowsley 70,000 people per year regularly take part in organised activities in green spaces and even more use green spaces on an independent basis. However, as stated crime, fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour can deter people from using parks and other green spaces for relaxation and recreation. Often it is the actions of the minority of people that impact on the majority of users. The main triggers for fear and avoidance behaviour amongst potential park users are:

- Fear for personal safety; and
- Fear for children’s safety.

3.6 Appendix A provides an evidence base on the correlations between crime and antisocial behaviour and the parks and green spaces, however headline information is provided below.
4. **Knowsley’s Green Infrastructure**

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 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 review of the Green Space Strategy timely and this work is scheduled to take place during Quarters 3 and 4 of 2013/14. This review will focus on identifying how the borough’s now largely good quality green spaces and functions can contribute to the Council’s Corporate Plan Strategic Objectives. Key to this refreshed strategy will be correlating specific neighbourhoods’ crime and ASB, health, child poverty, joblessness and other key challenges set out in the Council’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessments against the green space assets in these areas to ensure that green space offer and associated services align appropriately to addressing these local trends and needs.

5. Crime and Anti Social Behaviour and Green Spaces

5.1 Recognition of the linkages between the Clean and Safe agendas has been at the forefront of much of the neighbourhood management policy and legislation of the last decade. This is most effectively illustrated by the Home Office definition of antisocial behaviour, which includes vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles; rubbish or litter lying around; and abandoned or burnt-out cars within its seven strands of antisocial behaviour. According to the Institute for Criminal Policy Research (2005), environmental antisocial behaviour comprises one of three broad categories of antisocial behaviour that deliberately or through carelessness degrades the local environment such as littering, fly-tipping, graffiti and dog fouling. Such activities are one of the first signs that a community is in a spiral of decline and at the risk of attracting more serious crime.

5.2 The Urban Green Spaces Taskforce (2002 and 2004)) remarked that antisocial behaviour, vandalism and petty damage are some of the most frequently cited complaints about the conditions of parks and green spaces. It was reported that 31% of parks have unacceptable levels of vandalism; whilst 60% of local authorities are viewed as not tackling the problem or tackling it with limited success; and 11% of parks’ maintenance budgets are spent on repairing or replacing vandalised and misused items in parks at an estimated cost of £64m a year in the UK. However, 91% of people believe that parks improve the quality of life yet one on five think they will just get vandalised.
There is a great deal of evidence that people’s behaviour is affected by their local environment and conversely areas spoiled by litter and graffiti encourage further antisocial behaviour. This is borne out by recent research by the University of Groningen in the Netherlands (Keizer et al., 2008) which showed a direct increase in trespassing, dropping litter and even stealing money if the environment is poorly managed and neglected. The reverse is also true. The research confirms the Broken Windows Theory i.e. that disorder and disobedience grow in neighbourhoods where rules are openly flouted and the environment is degraded. The concept of the Broken Windows Theory is that small problems not dealt with can spiral out of control to engender further crime in a vicious circle. Whilst there are debates around the methodology of the research it has led to the development of a number of approaches to tackle antisocial behaviour using a method of cracking down on low level crime.

For many residents the fear of crime is often the reason a park is not used. Fear of crime is influenced by the human factors such as individual age, gender, personal experiences; as well as the surrounding environment such as the presence of drug users, loitering individuals, vandalism, graffiti, litter, abandoned cars or houses, as well as the poor design and poor maintenance of green spaces. The fear of crime can, in part, be reduced through the provision of targeted intergenerational activities. Culture and sport providers are ideally positioned to lead on the development and provision of activities that permit different generations to interact and learn from each other. Bringing together older people and young people can do much to change perceptions on both sides, but is in part reliant upon ‘safe spaces’ to meet being provided.
6. The Role Green Spaces Play in Mitigating Crime and Anti Social Behaviour

6.1 Good quality, well maintained parks and green spaces make a significant contribution to the establishment and retention of stable and law abiding communities as they:

- Provide a community focus where intergenerational mixing can take place over common interests facilitating respect, friendships, civic pride and participation in wider democratic debate and action;
- Provide children with opportunities for play where the rules and protocols of healthy and positive social interaction are learnt;
- Engender within children and newcomers a sense of pride and belonging to a place;
- Provide volunteering opportunities that increase participants’ self-worth and improve their employment chances;
- Provide locations for Restorative Prison projects, probation service work programmes and young offender rehabilitation programmes;
- Divert young people from anti-social behaviour by providing:
  - Free access to the infrastructure needed for involvement in sport and active lifestyles;
  - Learning opportunities through involvement with nature conservation and volunteering, from junior rangers to Forest School programmes; and
  - Venues for youth clubs and youth outreach work, Scout and Guide associations and other club based activities.

Therefore section highlights the role green spaces can play in reducing anti social behaviour through the infrastructure design of parks and other green spaces and via the community development and diversionary activities that can be undertaken within them.

6.2 Green Space Design

Place making is about investing in high-quality design, attractive facilities that are well maintained thereby offering spaces that a local community will want to use, enjoy and look after. As such a well-designed park reduces the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, minimises the opportunities for people to behave anti-socially, and creates places that people want be associated with and regularly visit.

The layout, design and landscaping of green spaces can play an important role in reducing opportunities for crime and address the fear of crime. Examples of design principles to be considered include:

a) Integration - to create places where people mix, promoting community interaction and avoiding social exclusion. Designs that create a ‘fortress mentality’ are discouraged;
b) Sense of ownership and responsibility - public, private and communal spaces should be clearly separated, with clear boundaries and restricted access to rear private areas. Materials should be used that do not hinder natural surveillance or provide a canvas for graffiti;

c) Natural surveillance - where possible areas should be designed so that all public and communal areas are overlooked by properties and routes. The aim is to maximise natural surveillance by creating good sight lines, while also creating an attractive, well laid out and landscaped environments; and

d) Movement - encourage through movement of people through a park increased natural surveillance and a feeling of community, whilst restricting the ability for anonymity.

In addition ‘target-hardening’ measures can be undertaken, if carefully and sensitively applied where it is most needed. Target-hardening involves removing opportunities for criminal behaviour by, for example, securing bins and seats to the ground, coating walls in anti-graffiti paint, creating clear lines of sight and locking parks at night. CCTV, anti-social behaviour contracts and orders (ASBOs), Designated Public Places and local bye-laws have their place too, and can be useful in targeting particular trouble spots and individuals. However, over-reliance on target hardening can lead to a place being turned into an unattractive environment.

Knowsley Case Study - Improvements to Park Design
Knowsley has invested £6m in its parks and green spaces since 2008/09. 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 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 its green space infrastructure which are now amongst the best in Merseyside, if not further afield.

Such improvements have included provision of new and refurbished play equipment; walking and cycling infrastructure; attractive and Disability Discrimination Act compliant entrances, footpath and play areas; improved landscape and park furniture including directional signage; benches; and interpretation boards.

During the feasibility stages and subsequent design process the Council’s Green Space Development Team give consideration to the design of park infrastructure so as to minimise the opportunity for ASB, examples of such an approach includes:
- Inclusion of lower maintenance areas e.g. grass areas instead of flower beds, creative play instead of traditional play;
- Consideration to the location of public furniture seating i.e. not placing seating near a skate or play area and not grouped together. If required spreading seating throughout a site to discourage large groups congregating or even removing seating in susceptible areas;
- Reviewing lighting provision, although it may help people feel safe it may not always be appropriate as it can also attract young people to congregate in parks, especially if located above a seat or bench;
- Deciding on appropriate fencing schemes, noting that although it can provide security and clearly identify areas, it can also act a trap only permitting access through two gates. Consideration is also given to the style of fencing, as certain fencing can restrict sight lines;
- Appearance through keeping new or ornamental shrub beds low to prevent people from hiding and mowing strips around wild areas to give the perception that the area is maintained to discourage access and misuse; and
- Consultation is key to actively engage and involve with the local community and generate ownership of site but also to challenge perceptions of anti-social behaviour and reassure people that their local park is safe for them to use.

Appendix B provides a case study on how such improvements to Little Wood, Stockbridge Ward, has reduced crime and ASB in this area of Knowsley.

6.3 Management and Maintenance
The visual appearance of green space can impact on the surrounding area, and neglected open spaces have been found to cause a negative impact by contributing to the onset of crime and vandalism. However, the management of urban green space to ensure it is of a good standard can help to reduce the prevalence of crime and vandalism and improve the aesthetic quality of an area.

Evidence suggests that investing in creating good-quality parks and green spaces, which are well staffed and provide a range of attractive facilities for the local community, can be a far more effective use of resources than, for instance, the blanket use of CCTV cameras.

Knowsley Case Study – Green Space Maintenance Programme
The Council’s Green Spaces Team comprises of Parks and Cemeteries (34fte posts), Green Space Development (3fte posts) and the Green Space Rangers (5.8fte posts). The Parks team are responsible for the grounds maintenance and specialist horticulture works across the boroughs green spaces including daily play ground checks and weekly playground
inspections. 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.

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 diversionary activities with a focus on health and well being, education and training, family / community activity and supporting volunteering.

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, commencing 2011/12. This ensures that volunteers are adequately resourced to undertake maintenance and enhancement operations.

6.4 Play Provision
The opportunity and space for children’s play is in decline; 90% of adults played out regularly in their street as children, but one in three of today’s children say they don’t play out in their street at all. Furthermore children’s playtime at school has substantially reduced over the last 15 years.

Play has a key role in children’s individual lives and development, whilst community play is an important element of the public realm for families, enhancing the liveability of shared space. It helps to improve children’s capacity to learn, whilst strengthening community cohesion and helping to reduce anti-social behaviour and crime.

When it comes to children’s wellbeing, parents are now just as concerned about crime and bullying and the commercialisation of children in the virtual world as they are in the real world. Many of these anxieties could become
less acute if a child’s free time was better utilised, i.e. tempting them away from computer screens with engaging real-world activities, and reconnecting them with a safe, welcoming environment beyond home and school.

**Knowsley Case Study – Play Pathfinder Programme**

Knowsley Council was one of 20 local authorities across England awarded Play Pathfinder Status on 2nd April 2008. The allocation of Play Pathfinder Status provided a significant opportunity for Knowsley to meet the adopted quantity, quality and accessibility standards for children’s play spaces. A capital grant of £2.159m was awarded which in consultation with the community, provided new open access play facilities at 28 identified priority green space sites across the Borough. The programme provided innovative, creative, safe and attractive places for play with a strong emphasis on ‘natural play’.

6.5 **Community Pride**

There are nearly half a million people across the UK who are members of a parks or green space community group and the important contribution that community involvement can make to these assets has been recognised for some time. There are many examples of voluntary community groups who have been involved in the management and maintenance of their local parks and green spaces for ten or twenty years.

Engaging and empowering communities and voluntary organisations are important to develop play opportunities, support mechanisms for volunteering and create ownership of areas; furthermore their involvement is often an essential component of funding bids. An example of volunteering is through establishing Friends of the Park schemes which can empower ‘friends’ to undertake projects to develop or enhance a park’s environment. This can also play a vital role in reducing the risk of anti-social behaviour through being the ‘eyes and ears’ of a park, reporting any incidents or criminal damage to appropriate community safety partners before they escalate.

**Knowsley Case Study – Community Involvement**

The Council has established a culture of community engagement, volunteer support and partnership working. By challenging and changing management practices, mutually beneficial relationships have been fostered where individuals work together to produce extraordinary and creative results. Evidence of this success includes:

- 52 proactively supported green space community groups;
- 27,000 volunteer hours at an economic value of £0.310m;
- Significant wider citizen involvement and increasing civic pride;
- Substantial increase in capacity and skills amongst groups; and
• Over 70,000 residents participated in green space events in 2012/13.

Knowsley volunteers are extremely proactive organising community task days, litter picks, arranging events and fun days and in some instances undertaking maintenance operations. Appendix C provides a case study demonstrating how a community group provides diversionary activities for younger people at Jubilee Park in Huyton in the form of football coaching.

6.6 Restorative Projects
The police and the courts, along with local authorities have a crucial role in working with prison and probation services to improve the criminal justice system. Credible and rigorous community sentences can be an effective way to punish and rehabilitate some offenders. Community Payback, where the offender completes unpaid work such as bringing derelict areas back into public use, clearing litter and removing graffiti, is the most common community sentence requirement used by the courts. The sentence provides punishment and reparation and helps instil the routine of hard work. Nearly nine million hours of free labour are provided to communities every year. Green spaces provide the basis upon which a variety of community sentences can be delivered.

Knowsley Case Study - Restorative Justice
The Community Payback Service is a partnership agreement between the Council and the Probation Service for offenders to carry out unpaid work which will benefit their local communities. Knowsley’s parks and green spaces provide a range of sites and activities that can support the programme. In addition the Youth Offending Service has worked with young people delivering reparation activity in parks and open spaces.

6.7 Diversionary Activities in Green Spaces
It has long been recognised that recreational and sport based activities have an important role to play in preventing people, in particular younger people, from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. Recreational and sport based activities can engage young people in a wide range of positive activities, targeting those at risk of offending, helping promote community safety initiatives and assisting with wider community cohesion programmes.

Preventative activities are often referred to as diversionary activities and operate at three levels:

• To offer preventative activities in areas of high crime/high deprivation;
• To offer preventative activities for those young people who are known to be at specific risk; and
To offer diversionary activities to young people who are currently in the system to prevent them re-offending or developing a criminal career.

As the pressure on public finances has grown the ability to invest in the preventive agenda has become more important, but also more challenging. The new financial climate has already led to an even greater focus on efficiency and finding new and innovative ways of providing services that deliver better outcomes.

Positive green space interventions can also reduce the costs associated with crime and ASB such as reducing vandalism, keeping individuals out of the criminal justice system and reducing the costs of victim support. Knowsley’s green space assets have the opportunity to make a major contribution, demonstrating real value for money. Focused work with young people on the cusp of offending or involved in low level offending can significantly reduce enforcement costs. For example, Government agencies within England and Wales spend an estimated £3.4 billion a year dealing with ASB issues. The cost of placing one young person in custody for a year is £45,000 and enforcement does not necessarily address the underlying reasons why people commit crime.

Knowsley Case Study - Diversionary Activities in Green Spaces
The Council undertakes a variety of prevention initiatives with a range of partners which includes education and awareness raising, providing advice and frameworks for action, diversion initiatives and environmental actions. Prevention initiatives contributing to reducing anti-social behaviour in parks and open spaces include:

7. Other Green Space Crime and Anti-social Behaviour Interventions in Knowsley

7.1 Knowsley’s green spaces provide a wealth of opportunities to reduce crime and fear of crime within the borough. In addition to the examples highlighted in section 4, Knowsley has undertaken a number of interventions to create safer parks and green spaces including:
7.2 Improving Quality
Knowsley’s parks and green spaces have received significant investment and as a result the quality of the parks and green spaces have drastically increased. To promote and demonstrate this improvement, the Council participates in a national independent award scheme. Green Flag awards are a national standard recognising excellence and good practice in the management and development of parks and open spaces in England and Wales. Awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status. The latest assessment of Knowsley Council’s parks and green spaces has resulted in twelve sites being awarded Green Flags in 2013, a 100% increase from 2008. The awards reflect the high standards of maintenance needed to keep the sites looking good and also the involvement of local communities. The Council actively promotes this achievement to members of the public to encourage greater use and reduce fear of crime.

7.3 Street Lighting Project
In August 2011, the Council embarked on a multi-million pound project to improve street lighting across the borough through a PFI contract with SSE. Although no additional new lights have been installed within the parks, improved lighting has or will be installed at park entrances and along streets bounding the parks. The installation of the new white light improves visibility making the area feel safer for users.

7.4 Enforcement
In addition to behavioural change campaigns, the Council actively enforces environmental crimes in green spaces. In 2012 the Council appointed an external company, Kingdom, to undertake enforcement for environmental crimes. Fixed penalty notices are an opportunity for an individual to discharge their liability when they accept they have done something wrong and wish to avoid getting a criminal record. The Council uses fixed penalty notices for a wide variety of environmental crimes that can impact on parks and open spaces; these include littering, dog fouling, and fly-tipping. Fixed penalty notice use is based on a zero tolerance approach. Where an individual commits an offence or fails to comply with a legal notice related to such offences, they will receive a fixed penalty notice on both the first and any subsequent occasion. Any individual who fails to pay the fixed penalty notice will be summonsed to court.

Since November 2012, 2,901 Fixed Penalty Notices have been served across the Knowsley as detailed below:

- 823 FPN’s issued within Huyton;
- 635 FPN’s issued within Kirkby;
8. Conclusion

Knowsley’s parks and green spaces provide a forum for community events, cultural events, music, sport and play. They are accessible and affordable for all, providing a platform for lives to be shared; broadening knowledge and awareness and often reinforcing or reintroducing civil society. Therefore, their significant contribution to promoting community cohesion and civic pride behaviours must be recognised so that their subsequent role in mitigating crime and antisocial behaviour can be extended.

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Appendices:
Appendix A: Evidence Base
Appendix B: Little Wood Case Study
Appendix C: Huyton Juniors Community Football Club
Appendix D: Dog Fouling Campaign – ‘Flag it and Bag it’
References:
Keep Britain Tidy ‘Making the Links The Importance of Cleaner, Greener Places’ Manifesto evidence paper 2
CABE Space (2004c) Policy Note – ‘Preventing Antisocial Behaviour in Public Spaces’,
GreenSpace (2004) ‘The Links Between the Quality of Parks and Behaviour’
‘Breaking the Cycle: effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders’ – Ministry of Justice Report
Public Park Assessment – A survey of Local Authority owned parks undertaken by the Urban Parks Forum (2001)
Appendix A: Evidence Base

The impacts of environmental antisocial behaviour

In London a link was discovered between the cleanliness of an area and the levels of safety felt by local residents (ENCAMS, 2009). The research divided London boroughs by Best Value 199 scores for 2007/8 and Indices of Multiple Deprivation. The perceived safety and appearance of an area was equally important with almost all interviewees across the four groups responding that they felt it was extremely important how an area looks, although it was more important to those over 55. Furthermore, residents in affluent boroughs were more satisfied with their local area and felt safer than those residents living in deprived areas.

Those residents living in the cleanest boroughs were also most satisfied with the appearance of their place and felt their area was safer compared to those living in deprived areas (ENCAMS, 2009). There is a correlation between residents’ views of the appearance of an area and their feelings of safety (ENCAMS, 2009). Furthermore, correlation analysis revealed that the more concerned people are with the appearance of their local area, the more concerned they are about violent crimes (ENCAMS, 2009).

Perceptions of safety are important to users of space. CABE Space notes ‘Children and young people, for example, are often prevented from using parks or streets because of their parents’ fears about crime, whilst women often also face particular concerns. Physical changes to, and the better management of, public space can help to allay these fears’.

An analysis of the Place Survey 2008/9 illustrate how the seven strand antisocial behaviour index shows the strongest relationship with area satisfaction (satisfaction with the local area improves with reduced concern about antisocial behaviour) (Ipsos Mori, 2009).

Figure 1 - Satisfaction with local area Vs ASB (Ipsos Mori, 2009)
Fear of crime and the safety and security of green spaces are also the biggest concern of users, although it is argued that parks and green spaces are no more dangerous than the surrounding streets. The perception of danger concerns users and keeps potential visitors away (DTLR, 2002). Dog fouling, litter and graffiti is also a major issue for park users and are the most evident signs of decline. This has not been helped by the divisions of labour and responsibilities for managing public spaces within local authorities (DTLR, 2002).

Tackling environmental antisocial behaviour
The view of Urban Green Spaces Taskforce (DTLR, 2002) is that prevention is better than cure. Greater usage can help tackle safety fears and other daily nuisances. Thus cleaner and well maintained spaces offering a range of activities are more likely to be populated and therefore safer. The role of design in tackling many issues can remove the opportunities for vandalism. For example, the use of sight lines to visible park exits can all enhance feelings of safety (CABE Space, 2005). In order to reduce antisocial behaviour in parks and open spaces, CABE Space (2005) recommends that all designs are of a high standard and include the views of all relevant professionals and value the contribution of users. Furthermore, the communities should be involved early in the process and should include ‘problem’ groups and provide activities and facilities for young people.

Good quality green spaces can increase community cohesion
Many people spend a good deal of their daily lives in their neighbourhoods, which can be a key source of relationships1. The presence of trees and grass in a neighbourhood has been shown to support both the presence of people2 and social interaction3, contributing to a sense of community and enabling people to form emotional connections with others4. Indeed, the density of trees and grass can be linked to the strength of neighbourhoods5, views to nature also reduce residents’ concerns about noise and over-crowding6. Certain groups in society are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, including people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, young people, older people, and those at an economic disadvantage. Evidence shows that the potential that green space has for enhancing social cohesion is especially pertinent for these groups7.

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This is because these spaces near our homes give us valuable places to socialise with our neighbours and more people engage in social activity in green spaces as opposed to concreted ones. Local green spaces provide a forum for community events, cultural events, music, sport and play. These are often accessible and affordable for all, providing a platform for lives to be shared; broadening knowledge and awareness and often reinforcing or reintroducing civil society which can so easily become lost in the constant evolution of urban areas.

Increasing cohesion can reduce police costs by around £361 million per annum. Various studies show that the more that an area that is at a disadvantage economically has a strong community, the greater its capacity to combat crime. This is because community cohesion acts as a form of social control which influences the behaviour of individuals within the community. The estimated annual potential cost savings from a reduction in crime in England and Wales, as a result of a one unit increase in sense of community, is £361 million. Improved cohesion also has a knock-on effect on the other areas that green spaces affects, reducing even further the likelihood of them suffering certain types of health ailments, such as depression, loneliness, and the probability of committing suicide.

High quality, well maintained parks and green spaces make a significant contribution to the establishment and retention of stable and law abiding communities. There is a direct correlation between the quality of people’s surroundings and their behaviour. Having well maintained green spaces reduces the prevalence of litter, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour. The resulting improved visual appearance and security has a knock on effect on businesses in the area and house prices and helps encourage people to use green spaces for relaxation and recreation. Costs of clearing up vandalism, graffiti and litter are reduced, estimated to cost England £863 million a year. Anti-social behaviour is estimated to have cost business £9.8 billion in 2011.

Environmental anti social behaviour - The changing balance of enforcement and prevention
The Government’s policy has already led to a shift from enforcement towards support and prevention. Agencies were encouraged to focus on the social and economic forces that can lead to criminal behaviour and work together to prevent it occurring.

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10 The midpoint estimate quoted in CLG (2009), The Economic Case for Cohesion,
11 Carnegie Trust (2012), Pride in Place: Tackling Incivilities
12 http://www.theaccountancy.co.uk/anti-social-behaviour-having-negative-effect-on-uk-businesses-1634.html
The Youth Crime Action Plan 2008 identified that the approach to ASB should be:

- Tough enforcement where behaviour is unacceptable;
- Non-negotiable support to address the underlying causes of poor behaviour; and
- Better prevention to tackle problems before they become serious or entrenched and to prevent problems arising.

In 2009 the Audit Commission undertook a national study into the role culture and sport could play in the issue of crime and anti-social behaviour prevention and published their findings in their report – ‘Tired of hanging around’.

The summary findings were:

- Sport and leisure can engage young people, attracting those at risk of ASB into more intensive developmental projects;
- Anti-social behaviour cannot be isolated from other social problems; resources must target deprived areas where perceptions of anti-social behaviour are highest;
- Preventive projects are cost effective. A young person in the criminal justice system costs the taxpayer over £200,000 by the age of 16, but one given support to stay out of the system costs less than £50,000;
- Projects must be accessible, reliable and relevant and reflect the diversity of young people’s needs; and
- Young people value approachable project staff who take an interest in them and offer advice and support.

Additionally the report identified six key messages for local and national government:

1. Sport and leisure have an important role in preventing anti-social behaviour;
2. Whilst councils and many other local agencies provide or commission some good targeted activities, there is little evidence of comprehensive area based approaches;
3. Lack of data on costs and performance undermines commissioning decisions;
4. Young people want activities that are accessible reliable and relevant, but are all too rarely consulted when planning new activities;
5. National funding arrangements can be inefficient. Projects have to deal with unreliable short term funding that can be expensive to administer; and
6. Effective solutions are targeted and delivered through local joint working and where national and local funding is coordinated.
Appendix B: Little Wood Case Study

The Woodland
Little Wood is an eight hectare mature Oak and Ash woodland that originally formed part of the estates of Lord Derby and Croxteth Hall. The woodland is situated within Stockbridge Village, an estate struggling with the highest deprivation indices. In the past Little Wood suffered from fly-tipping, vandalism, fire damage, anti-social behaviour and organised criminal activity.

Management Objects
Little Wood is part of the Knowsley Council Community Working Circle and benefits from a 25 year management plan developed in consultation with the Mersey Forest and the Little Woods of Stockbridge Association.

Vision
The woodlands will be managed in partnership with associated community groups to provide safe and attractive woodland for the enjoyment of local users. Conservation potential will be maximised within the context of safe public access and opportunities will be taken to maximise economic return from the woodlands where appropriate.

Long Term Objectives
Through the management partnership, a programme of woodland regeneration will replace dying trees to maintain a native woodland of natural character. A strong sense of community ownership of the woodland will ensure its continued use as an important amenity resource and will help mitigate the social problems associated with the site.

The Little Wood Partnership
Whilst owned and managed by Knowsley Council, success has been dependent on a strong partnership with the Little Woods of Stockbridge Association. The Association was established in 2000 and have enabled local people to be fully involved in the planning and management of the woodland. Other key partners include the Friends of Stockbridge Village, social landlords, local schools, local businesses and Merseyside Police.

Little Wood; A Community Success
Those involved in the management of Little Wood have achieved:

Funding Success
• In 2011/12, over £110k was secured from the Big Lottery, Forestry Commission and Landfill Tax funders.
• In 2012/13, a further £32k was secured from landfill tax funders, British Gas and Villages Housing Association.
A Physical Transformation
- Removal of litter and fly-tipping including 33 burnt out cars
- Five improved entrances
- Establishment of a community area
- Woodland thinning and regeneration planting
- Path network installation
- Natural and fishing pond restoration works
- Site furniture installation (bins, benches, signage and interpretation)

Wider Community Engagement
Delivery of a range of community activities including the following events and activities:
- Regular volunteer task days.
- Halloween, Christmas and Easter events.
- Health Walks

Education
- The Littlewoods of Stockbridge Association run the Stockbridge Junior Rangers. Seven leaders each with CRB and first aid certification facilitate children aged 8-13 to study nature, work in the woodland and take educational trips. The group won the Observer’s Ethical Kids Award 2009.
- St Albert’s School now utilise the site for weekly Forest School Programmes.
- Knowsley Council Rangers provide a series of educational opportunities for the whole family including; pond dipping and mini-beast hunts.

A Pride in the Local Area
- Reduced litter, fly-tipping and vandalism.
- Increased awareness.
- Increased sense of place.
- Increased positive use.

The following photographs demonstrate the improvements that have been seen at Little Wood.
LITTLEWOOD BEFORE IMPROVEMENT WORKS

Uninviting entrance off Boodecroft Doorstep Green (before works)

Access path from Boodecroft Entrance blocked by burnt log and flytipping

Main Avenue Path with Dense Woodland and Poor Sight Lines

Deteriorated dipping platform on Western Pond
New Entrance and Signage off Hollowcroft

Pond restoration works carried out on Western Pond

Main avenue path at eastern end with new seating

Entrance improvements off Boodecroft Doorstep Green
Community Action in Littlewood

Stockbridge Junior Rangers Group Members

Community Clean-Up Day

Forest Schools Activities

Community Halloween Event
Appendix C – Community Involvement - Huyton Juniors Football Club (Jubilee Park)

Huyton Juniors Football Club

Huyton Juniors are a community ran football club located at Jubilee Park in Huyton. Established in 2008 with one Under 7’s team, the club has grown significantly and is now home to 15 teams ranging from Under 7’s to Under 12’s. The club also runs an academy for three, four and five year olds.

The club has approximately 200 footballers on its books playing league matches on a Saturday and Sunday at Jubilee Park. Each team also trains in the park during the light mid-week evenings, whilst utilising the local Christ the King School during the winter months. The club is supported by 30 adult volunteers who help manage the teams and run training sessions.

In addition to the matches held during the season, the club also held its first summer football tournament this year attended by 20 clubs from Knowsley, Liverpool, Aintree, St Helens and Wirral. Free football coaching was also available on the day, alongside bouncy castle and stalls selling refreshments. The tournament was hailed a success and is expected to grow to include a greater number of teams next year and if funding becomes available, the club would also like to hold ‘Soccer Schools’ during the school holidays.

Huyton Juniors Football Club is an excellent example of how a community ran initiative provides diversionary activities for young people in the area.

The photographs below demonstrate the popularity of the events organised by the group.
Appendix D – Dog Fouling Campaign

‘Flag it and Bag it’ Campaign

The Council run a ‘Flag it and Bag it’ campaigns to tackle the issue of dog fouling in the borough parks and green spaces. The aim of the campaigns are to highlight the number of dog walkers who fail to clean up after their dogs, council officers visit parks and place flags at every spot where dog fouling has taken place.

During a recent campaign at Saxon Green in Kirkby, more than 150 flags were placed in the popular park. It is hoped the initiative will encourage local dog walkers to dispose of their dogs waste in a safe and responsible manner, reducing the amount on Knowsley’s streets and open spaces and reinstalling local pride. The scheme has been a success in a number of parks, with local volunteers participating in the flagging.