

The logo for 'apse' is located in the top left corner. It consists of the word 'apse' in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered within a purple oval shape.

apse

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of a bumblebee on a red flower. The flower has a dense, spherical center of red stamens, and the petals are a light pink color. The bumblebee is positioned on the right side of the flower, facing left. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting foliage.

Grounds Maintenance Specifications for the Austerity Era

Bernard Sheridan
Tuesday 9th February 2016



Presentation Purpose

- *Specifying for grounds maintenance services in the current climate of demand versus austerity*
- *Changing specifications to meet budget realities*
- *Improving the biodiversity levels of our green spaces.*
 - Long grass regimes to reduce costs and help wildlife
 - Using the National Pollinator Strategy to drive change
 - Innovative approaches to SLAs and specifications
 - Changing perceptions...
- **Sports Pitch specifications**

Specifying for the 21st Century

- **The crisis in funding for public parks and open spaces has-**
 - **Led many local councils to review the management of land with a view to reducing costs.**
 - **Driven the need to rethink the role of parks and open spaces in the twenty-first century.**
 - **Energised some new/radical approaches to the management of green spaces**
- **The role and purpose of local parks and green space is not always clear as usage declines.**
- **The prevailing gardenesque /horticultural paradigm of neatly cut grass, flowers, clipped shrubs and hedges is still locked into most people's consciousness**







Specifying for the 21st Century

- There must always be a place for good horticulture and floral displays
- There will always be a need for grass lawns for sports, ball games, picnics, sun bathing and relaxation
- But should we apply horticultural standards to all our green space?
- The majority of SLAs and specifications originate in the 1980s based on traditional horticultural practice and have not caught up with the reality of today's circumstances
- Is it really necessary to cut the whole of a park, green space or highways verge in the name of neatness?
- Probably at least a 25% of most green space is not really used for recreation or anything else
- There are very good sustainability and biodiversity reasons why we shouldn't cut it all
- Is it time now for a paradigm-shift? –it's food for thought!

Should all this grass be cut?





Not just cut but sprayed! Why?



Biodiversity

- Since WW2, in countryside areas the great extinction of wildlife and habitats has accelerated devastatingly with the expansion of agro-commerce
- Hay meadows, hedgerows, heathland, wetland, orchards were wiped out and sterile rural monoculture became the norm.
- Between 1998 and 2007 alone the UK lost more than 16,000 miles of hedgerows
- Local green spaces, especially parks and gardens, allotments, cemeteries and churchyards, have become refuges for much surviving wildlife.





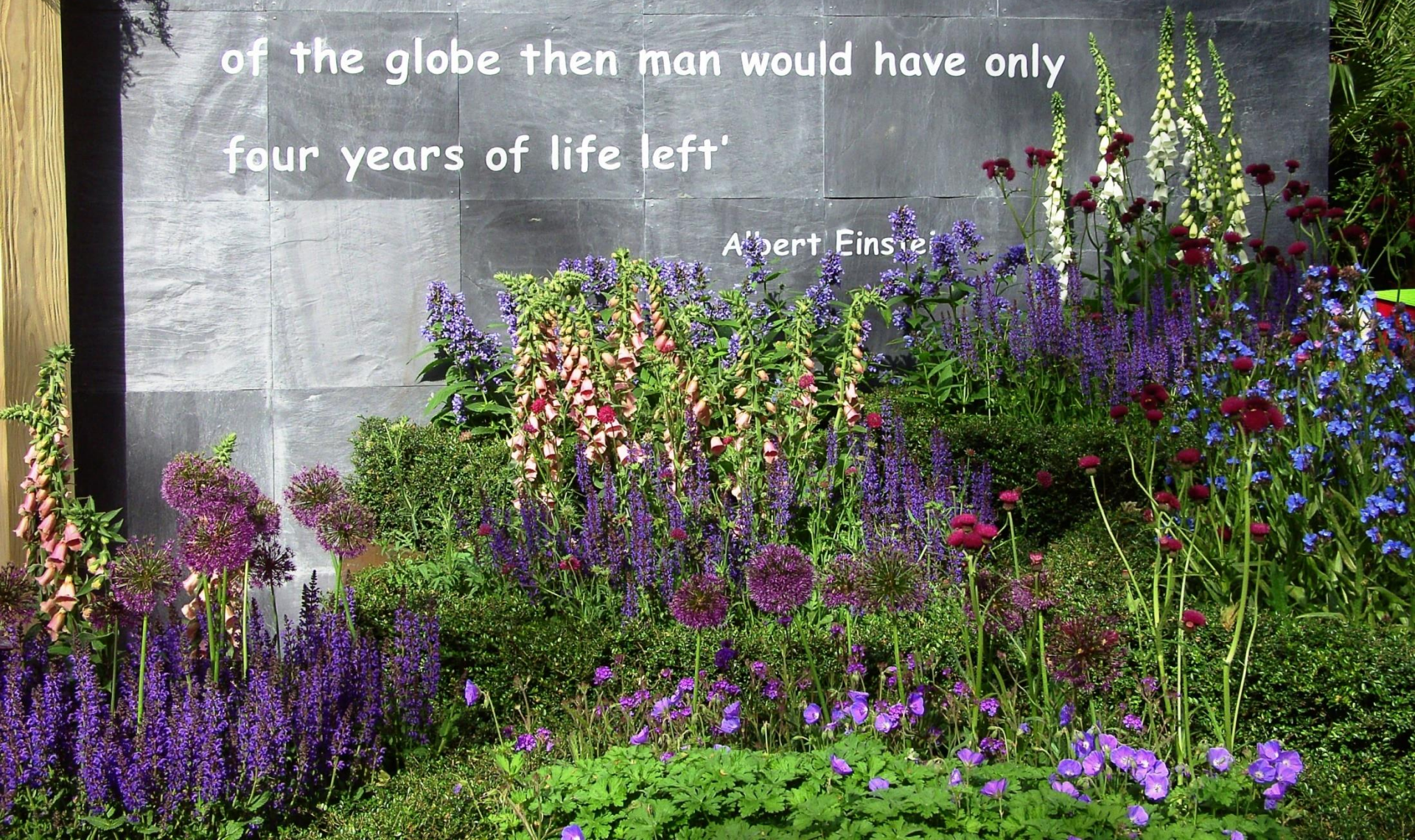






'If the bee disappeared off the surface
of the globe then man would have only
four years of life left'

Albert Einstein



National Pollinator Strategy 2014

- **Bumblebees and honeybees are seriously threatened by the way we manage and maintain land**
- **They have been in serious decline since the start of the 20th Century**
- **They are a vital part of our ecosystem, with estimates of a third of our food being solely reliant on pollination by bees.**
- **Many crops, such as oil-seed rape, broad beans, runner beans, top fruit, blueberries and raspberries are heavily dependant on bee pollination**
- **Pollinators contribute around £1 billion a year to the UK's economy.**
- **This should be a key driver to change people's perceptions and attitudes to managing green spaces**

National Pollinator Strategy 2014

- The government recently invested in a research programme on the causes of pollinator decline.
 - There had been little real data available previously
- This research informed the National Pollinator Strategy 2014, and the recently published implementation plan.
- Councils are asked to support the national and international campaign to halt the serious rapid decline in pollinating insects
- Findings from the research have identified some interesting and surprising facts.

National Pollinator Strategy 2014

- There are around 25 species of bee in the UK, representing around 26% of pollinating insects.
- 67% of pollinators are flies, including 250+ species of hoverfly.
- Butterflies and moths represent 2%, with bugs and beetles the remainder.
- Bees appear to favour urban sites such as allotments, parks, gardens, cemeteries etc.
- Flies favour rural areas (although as many as 85 hoverfly species have been recorded in one garden alone).
- Bees flourish in less-manicured sites and neighbourhoods
- Rough grassland/ tussocky grass areas have 3 times more pollinator species than standard mown grass

National Pollinator Strategy 2014

- Un-manicured and un-raked shrub-beds, flower borders and wildflower plantings encourage pollinators.
- In general, single flowers, especially yellow, are the most visited by pollinators.
- It doesn't matter if they are UK native or not
- In addition early flowers such as daisies, dandelions, the mid-season ragwort, clover, thistles and wild carrot, and late ones such as autumn hawkbit and ivy are crucial to their survival.
- These are currently viewed more as problem weeds rather than valuable food sources and nesting/hibernating sites which are vital to pollinator survival.
- So, it appears that our fixation on the cleaning and tidying beds and borders and manicuring lawns has contributed to the decline of many of these insects.
- There is a now strong case for amending grounds maintenance regimes with a view to preventing the decline of pollinators

Grassland Regimes

- Many councils have experimented, some extensively, with ‘differential mowing regimes’, wildflower and naturalistic meadow plantings, but usually on a small scale as a percentage of their entire land holdings, often for cost-cutting reasons.
- Often mowing frequencies have been cut across the board without warning or discrimination, generating complaints from all stakeholders
- This has rarely been done in the strategic context of challenging the traditional role of open spaces and identifying clear roles for it in the 21st century.
- Little is being done strategically to prevent/halt the ‘Slaughter of the Innosects’ – *cutting grass kills pollinators!*
- The role of local green space as a mosaic of habitats and as sanctuaries for wildlife is now emerging as a major justification for the changing management of many sites -- but most are still sterile ‘green deserts’ of ‘neat’ grassland, especially in residential areas.





Neat and tidy -no complaints....



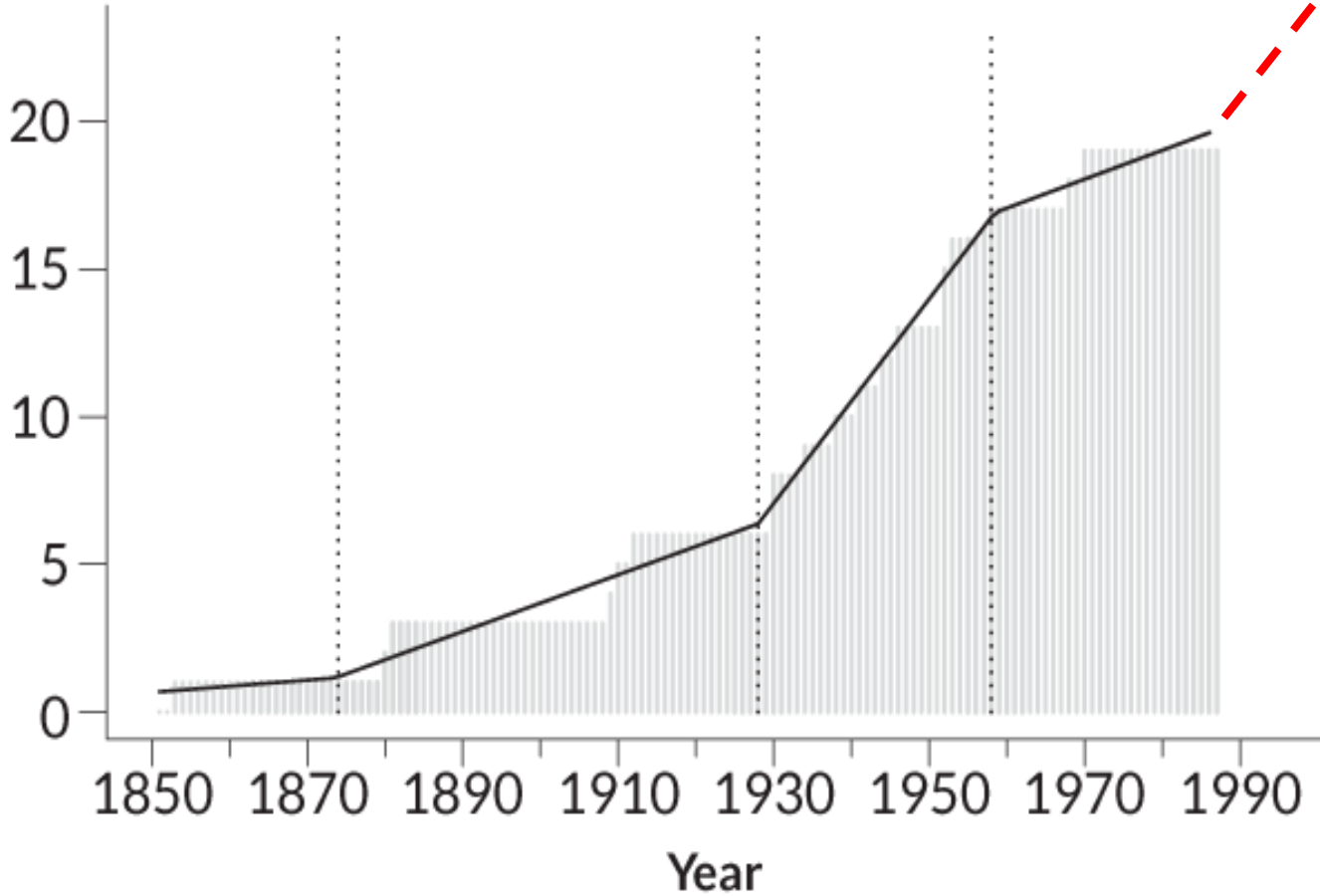
...but where's the home for wildlife?

Making Space for Biodiversity

- Almost two thirds of British species have declined in the past 50 years and one in 10 faces the risk of extinction
- Many bird species, including some declining and endangered ones rely on long grass, especially on field and hedge margins.
- These include the skylark, meadow pipit, spotted flycatcher, yellow hammer, twite, song thrush and even the barn owl.
- Wildlife has been driven to the mosaic/network of habitats in urban green spaces including hedges, trees, woodlands, ditches, streams etc. as well as grassland
- More thoughtful land management can increase insect and invertebrate population to supports an enriched food chain for amphibians, reptiles, rodents, birds and mammals.

Cumulative pollinator loss in Britain since 1850

Cumulative extinctions,
bees and flower-visiting wasps



A

1800-1980



2000-2014



Bombus distinguendus

Interacting stressors on wild and managed bees

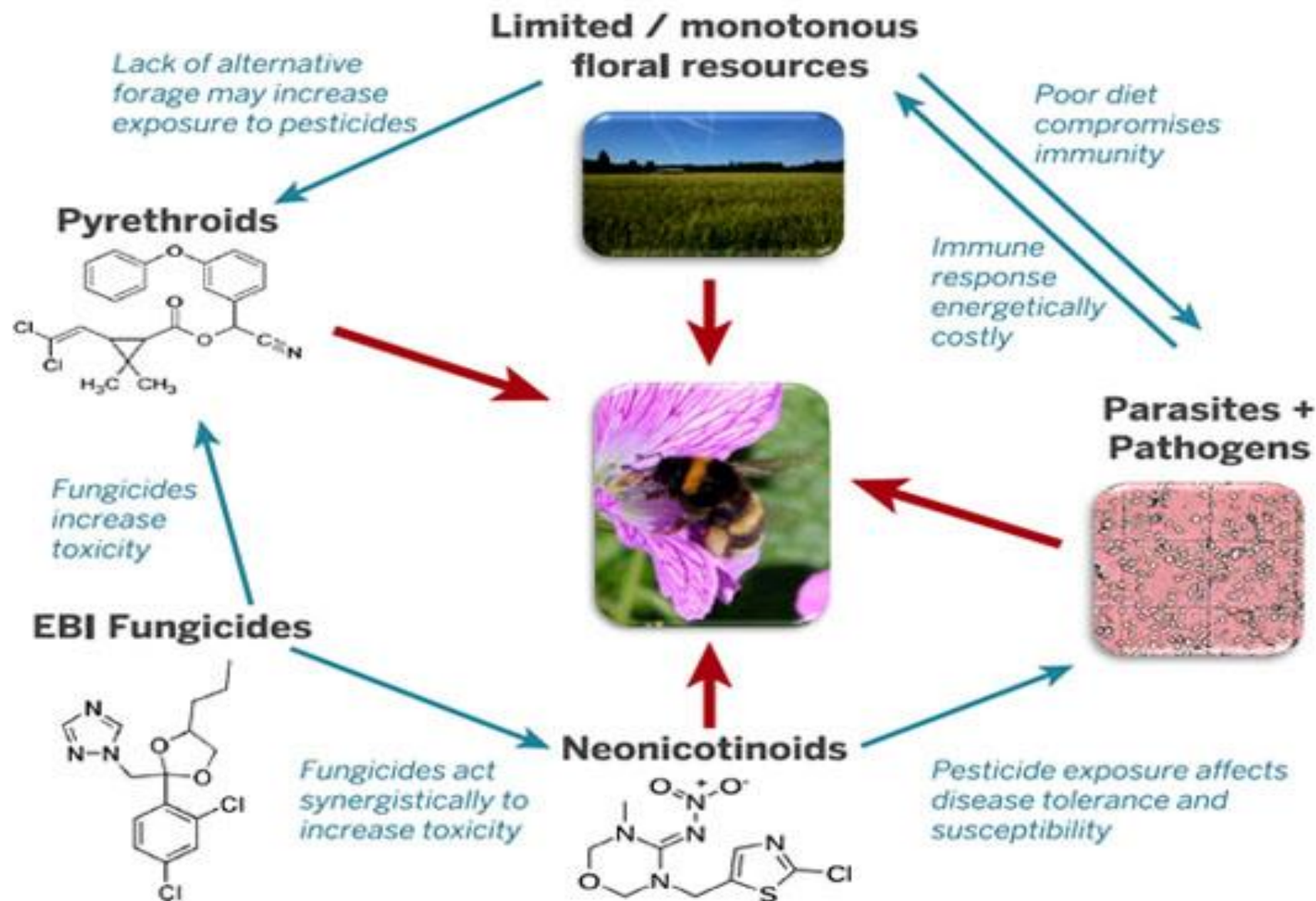
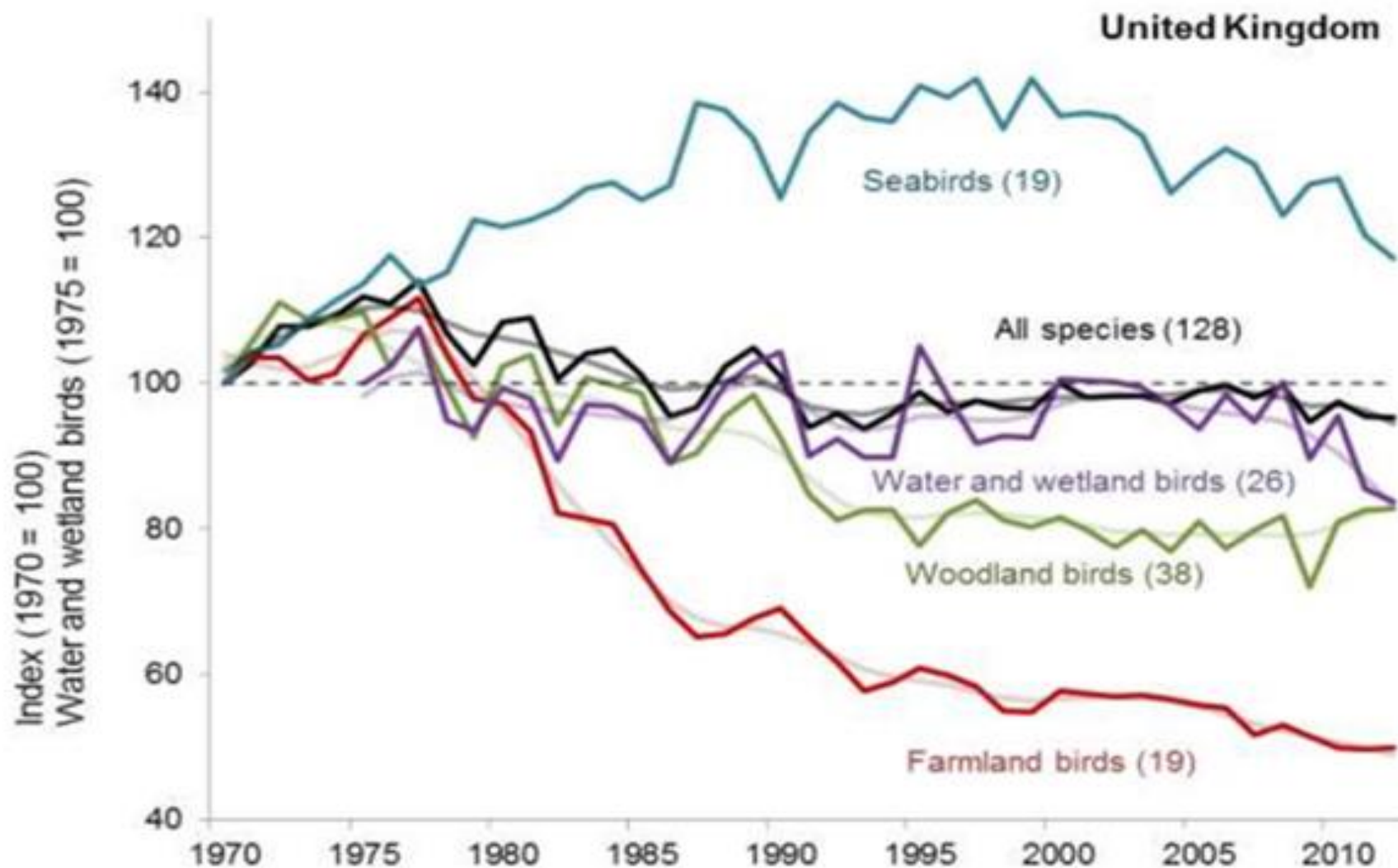


Figure 1: Populations of wild birds, 1970 to 2012

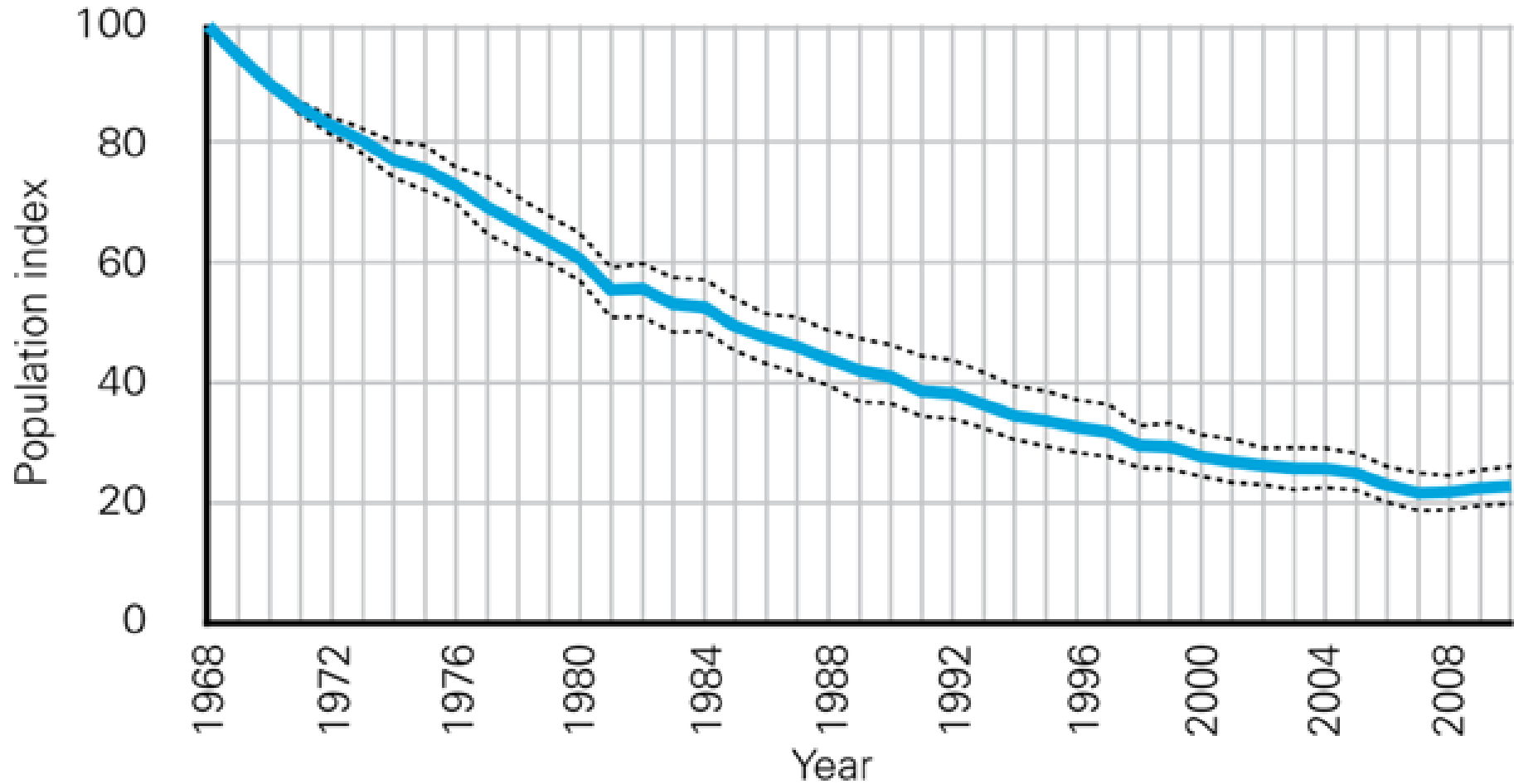


Source: RSPB, BTO, JNCC, Defra

Note:

- i) figures in brackets show the number of species within each group,
- ii) within each category, darker lines show unsmoothed data and paler lines of the same colour show smoothed trend data.

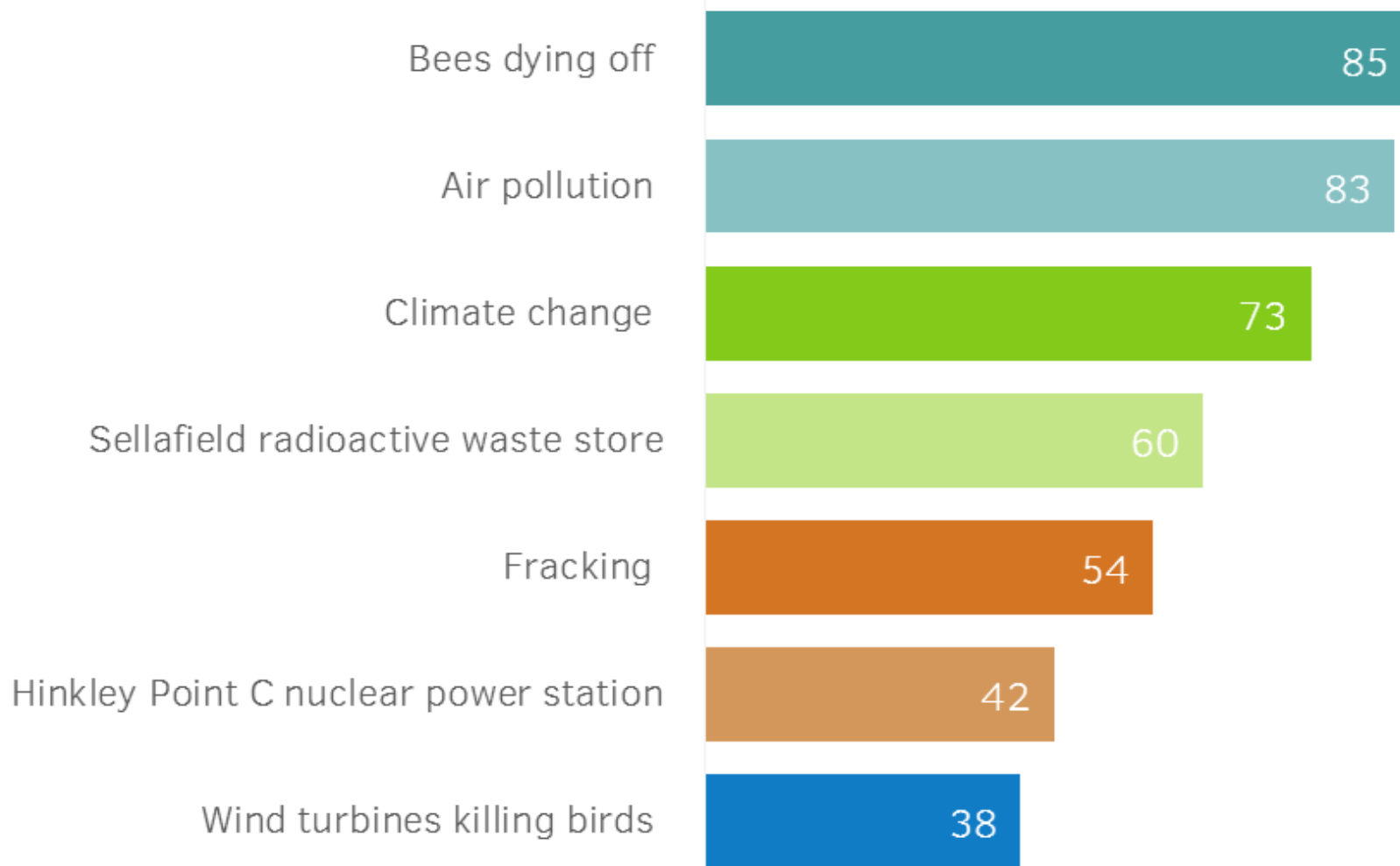
The Watchlist Indicator



Watchlist Indicator showing the average population trend for 77 moths, 19 butterflies, 8 mammals and 51 birds listed as UK BAP priorities, 1968-2010.

The most serious environmental issues

How serious, if at all, do you think each of these environmental issues are? % who choose 'very' or 'fairly' serious.



Local Greenspace as Nature Reserve

- Many green spaces have a clear primary purpose –play areas, allotments, cemeteries ...
- Many green spaces are SLOAP, used as dog-walking areas but little other purpose
- Local green space, or sections of it, can now have a clearly defined purpose as formal or informal ‘nature reserves’ or refuges
- The significance of urban green space is largely ignored by biodiversity and countryside management professionals despite its importance to pollinators
- Defining the purpose of each green space is crucial for parks management
- Old strategies need rapid revision
- No time for nostalgia, or gloom about cuts –this is the challenge for this generation
- But are we equipped to cope with new working methods?

A brave new world of long grass regimes...





...but do we have mowers that can cope?

A New Equipment Mix?

- Grass mowing often represents around half of a local authority's grounds maintenance costs, each cut could be worth £20-30k, so, understandably, this has been the focus for savings in many areas.
- Over the next few years it is likely that even the wealthiest authorities will find it necessary to consider reducing these costs.
- It has been a long-held belief that cutting grass regularly, usually fortnightly, is the cheapest annual cost option for maintaining land.
- However, most local authorities, and the commercial sector, have not really tested other models and geared themselves for long grass regimes.
- Councils and contractors need to invest in the right machinery and composting facilities to bring long grass costs down to those of regular cutting.





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power
CONTRACTOR





Rotary mower clippings



Mulching mower clippings



Gearing up for composting/disposal

What Next?

- Is it now time to seriously consider having ‘no-mow’ targets similar to recycling targets?
- If so, then local communities could and should be involved in deciding where and how much grass can be left uncut.
- A clear communications plan is essential
- You can link community and volunteering opportunities and the use of ‘third sector’ organisations, such as Wildlife Trusts, with serious research, emerging biodiversity initiatives and “re-wilding” practice
- So, the concern for the destruction of habitats and species-decline can be the starting point for a new type of green space management.
- By taking the opportunity created by the current financial circumstances councils can
 - unlock the real potential of their land for promoting wildlife and sustainability
 - make substantial savings or release resources to improve standards elsewhere.

Right or Wrong?

- If the change process is not managed well, and a poor PR story is told, there will be little public support and a great deal of complaint.
- Can the public be persuaded that such new maintenance regimes are not merely budget cuts or poor practice in disguise? Will people be convinced by the drive to protect nature? Can we sweeten the pill?
 - Native wildflower planting/sowings in natural areas can bring to life the argument for reduced mowing and show genuine concern
 - Colourful naturalistic plantings in more urban areas give a wow factor which cannot fail to please most of the public.
- Councils could/should be beacons of good practice
- Parks professionals should show the way forward, but they must make their case properly, tell the story well and manage the change effectively, if they hope to persuade a sceptical public.

Beware -Long Grass Regime Problems!

Long grass regimes do have challenges which will be a cause of concern for some of the public.

- Long grass can be seen as a fire risk in dry conditions, so vigilance and timeliness of cutting are essential;
- it can trap litter,
- if areas appear abandoned then fly-tipping can occur,
- there are the inevitable complaints about pollen, allergens and hay fever.
- Long grass cut badly or not cleared generates complaints
- a large proportion of the population still see long grass as an 'untidy mess' especially in the winter, rather than an interesting habitat , food source or protective shelter for wildlife.

Getting it Wrong





Biodiversity? Looks more like neglect...

CAMPAIGNERS say a beauty spot hit by six-foot weeds has been neglected.

Rose beds in Fog Lane Park, Didsbury, have been swamped by dock leaves while previously well-kept areas have been over-come with thicker.

One local resident, Elizabeth Patrick, said she had even had

to fill up black bags of rubbish which had been left to build up.

Manchester council said the park was being left to grow to encourage 'bio-diversity' – including wild flowers, butterflies and birds.

Friends of Fog Lane Park, a group set up by volunteers to help look after the park, folded

in 2009. Residents say the park has been in decline ever since.

Jack McElvey, 87, a retired theology lecturer who lives on Brooklawn Drive, has collected scores of signatures for a petition slamming the council for 'neglect'.

He says the park no longer

has a dedicated park warden – and that park staff have told him that they can no longer maintain the park because of cuts.

Dr McElvey said: "Whole fields have been left to grow over. Youngsters used to play football on a field near my house but that is no longer possible because of the dock leaves and weeds that are as tall as me.

"The state of the park is very saddening."

Manchester council has decided to allow parts of its parks to grow wild to encourage a more diverse range of plants and wildlife.

But critics such as Dr McElvey say it is an excuse for spending less money on maintenance.

Coun Rosa Battle, the council's executive member for culture and leisure, said: "There is a bio-diversity strategy in action across the city, not just at Fog Lane, and park managers have chosen areas that once left fallow will create a more natural environment and attract a greater range of wildlife – benefitting the wider ecosystem of the park and surrounding areas.

"The rest of Fog Lane park remains well tended by park rangers, but the park is under continuous review and we have planned a meeting with local people to hear their thoughts on the park's strategy."

Coun Battle added that members of the public could call the council's environment team on 0161 234 5004 if they had concerns or suggestions about their local green spaces.



NOT WILD ABOUT THIS Jack McElvey in an over-grown section of Fog Lane Park in Didsbury

CANCER RESEARCH UK



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Manchester 2012

It's your time to Shine to beat cancer

Take steps now to help beat all types of cancer. Join together with friends and family to raise money at Shine, the night-time walking marathon.

Manchester, Saturday 8 September.

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The South Manchester Reporter

CRUISE HOLIDAY

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Book by 3 September 2012



REVERSE DECISION TO REDUCE GRASS CUTTING IN HEREFORDSHIRE



Campaign created by

Colin James



2,437

of 3,000 signatures

TO: HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

We the undersigned want Herefordshire Council to REVERSE it's decision to reduce grass cutting frequencies from 7 times a year to just 3 times a year in this years budget. This is a massive reduction of almost 60%!! Yet Herefordshire Council has increased the Council Tax by almost 2%.

The Old Market shopping centre has recently opened at a cost of over £90 million, which will hopefully attract more people to Hereford and grow our local economy, however, Hereford looks a mess, all the grass and verges are overgrown and this will lead to treble the amount of work required when they eventually get around to it, which is false economy.

This online petition has been launched by Hereford Voice in a bid to persuade Herefordshire Council to reverse the decision and restore Hereford back to a more attractive standard.

#cutgrassbfd

Why is this important?

We believe that this is a necessary course of action in order to attract investment and economic benefit back to Hereford.

The state of Herefordshire also discourages potential investors and tourism alike from visiting the County, this is potentially an economic disaster for Hereford.

Category: [Cuts](#) [Planning](#) [Public Services](#)

Wales online

Anger at overgrown condition of Ebbw Vale Cemetery

17:27, 3 JUN 2014

UPDATED 18:14, 3 JUN 2014

BY JONATHAN EVANS



Ebbw Vale Cemetery has become overgrown with long grass

Council promises action after families left upset at lack of grass-cutting

Blaenau Gwent Council has vowed to review its frontline service priorities after upset families complained about the condition of the borough's cemeteries.

A lack of grass-cutting in recent months has led to some cemeteries becoming severely overgrown.

In December last year, the local authority announced budget cuts of £8.8m in 2014-2015 in an attempt to bring about a balanced budget.

These money-saving plans included more than 160 jobs being axed, with allotment and ground maintenance grants being slashed.

But the council has now acknowledged that cemeteries "do need to be a top priority" despite the cutbacks.

Sally Morgan, from Beaufort, visits Ebbw Vale Cemetery around once a month.

Her father is laid to rest there, along with her grandmother, grandfather and great-aunt and great-uncle.





Getting it right





**CANTLEY PARKLAND
WILDFLOWER AND
GRASSLAND TRIAL**

For more information please search "wildflower" on www.wokingham.gov.uk
or call customer services on: 01753 974 6000

Cleaner and Greener Services







Before



After







In case you need to give yourself horticultural permission!



A photograph of a garden path. The path is covered in tall, green grass and small white flowers. On either side of the path are various trees and shrubs, including a large tree on the left and a dense thicket of greenery on the right. In the background, two tall buildings are visible through the trees. The sky is overcast.

Kew Gardens had severe
budget cuts too!





















New Model SLAs/Specifications

- Specs/SLAs used as transformational leadership tools
- All-inclusive contract approach
- Outcome/output-based rather than frequency-based maintenance specifications –identify desired outcomes/outputs
- Longer contracts -7-10 year contracts are not as disruptive and encourage long-term investment by service providers
- New management models based on strong partnership ethos and flexible working relationships
- Problem solving, innovative and creative approach to tackle future austerity measures and industry challenges
- Move away from specs based on solely horticultural practice and standards
- Move towards promoting sustainability and biodiversity.
- Invest to save with wildflower and prairie-style planting

New SLAs/ Specifications

- **Communication planning/ community engagement on consequences of reductions/changes**
- **Adjust maintenance regimes intelligently to fit available resources, current demands and circumstances**
- **Flexibility and scalability built in**
- **Robust performance targets/ KPIs all carefully devised to achieve key outcomes and objectives**
- **Reward and payback systems linked to KPIs**
- **Permission to trade with profit share**
- **Identify resources available/ freed to improve key facilities/sites and/or make savings**
- **Trial/experiment with changed regimes on agreed sites**



Thanks for listening!