

Policies to Improve the UK's Green Spaces



A positive story in numbers

93% of people in England think it is important to have public green spaces nearby

There are **2.6 billion** visits made to UK parks each year

Each year, park friends and user groups raise **£30 million**

A negative story in numbers

In Manchester, the 25% per cent least deprived areas enjoy **2.7** times as much green space per head as the most deprived 25%*

Urban local authorities in England have reduced spending on open spaces by an average of **10.5%** between 2010/11 and 2012/13

77% of council parks departments have lost frontline staff

* Data gathered from free and publicly available sources and so may not be entirely accurate

Back to basics

*“If you can’t measure something, you can’t understand it.
If you can’t understand it, you can’t control it.
If you can’t control it, you can’t improve it.”*

H. James Harrington in [CIO](#) (Sept. 1999)

Basic questions that need answers

The **amount** & **location** of urban green space in England, Wales and Northern Ireland?

What **state** are our urban green spaces in?

How much **money** is spent on urban green spaces?

How much urban green space is publicly **accessible**?

How have urban green spaces changed over **time**?

Attempts at answers

The Department of Transport Local Government Regions •
Heritage Lottery Fund • English Heritage • The Countryside Agency •

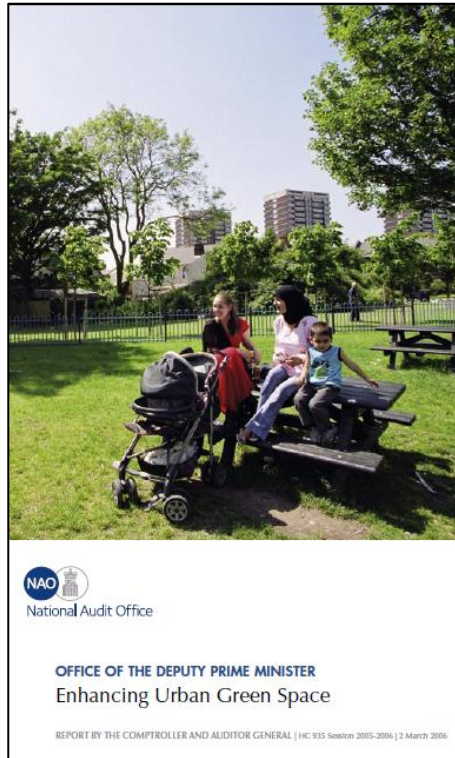
Public Park Assessment

A survey of local authority owned parks
focusing on parks of historic interest

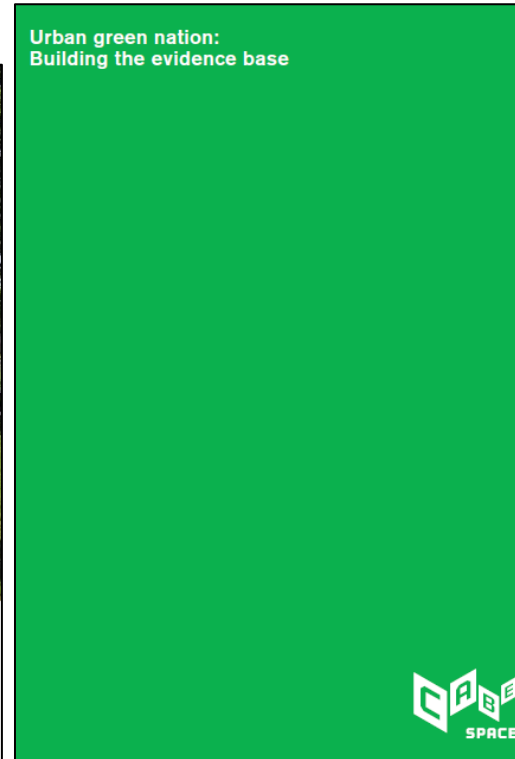
Undertaken by the Urban Parks Forum

Final Report
May 2001

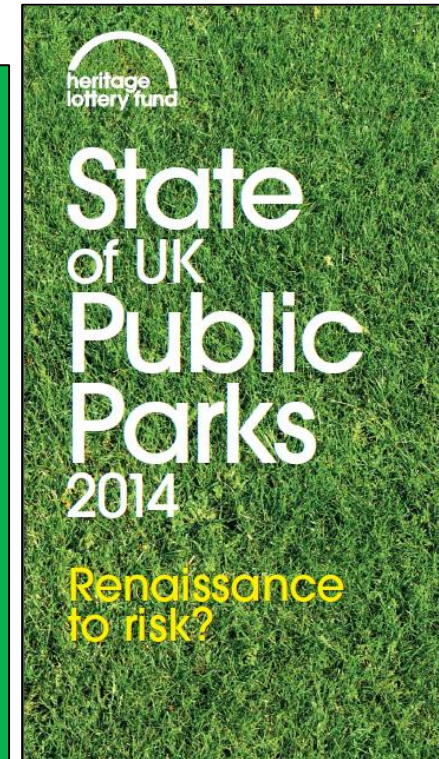
2001



2006



2010



2014

Policy 1: Cost-effective data



2013

1) Ordnance Survey

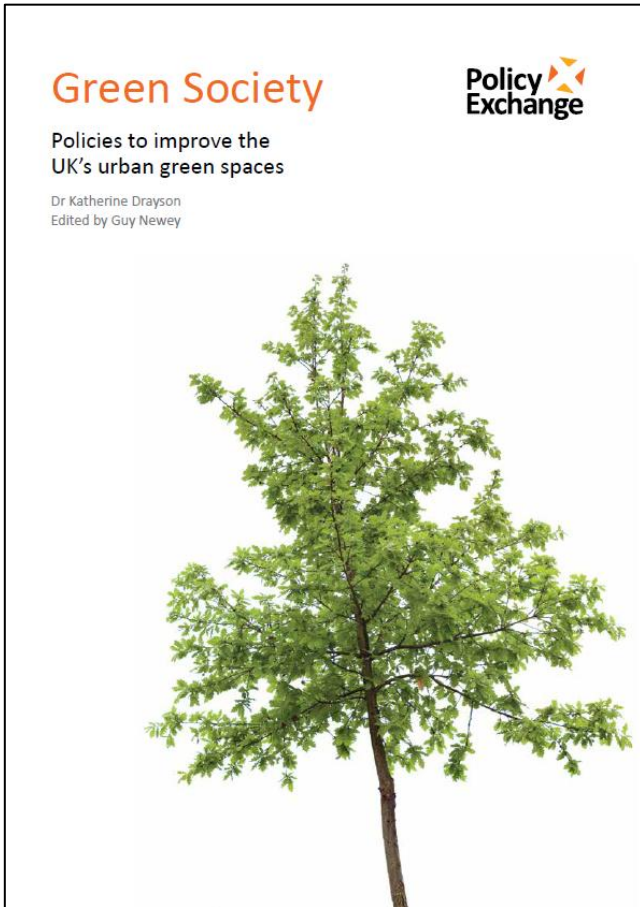
2) Crowdsourcing

Policy win



<http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/about/news/2014/deputy-pm-announces-plans-for-new-map-of-accessible-green-space-using-os-data.html>

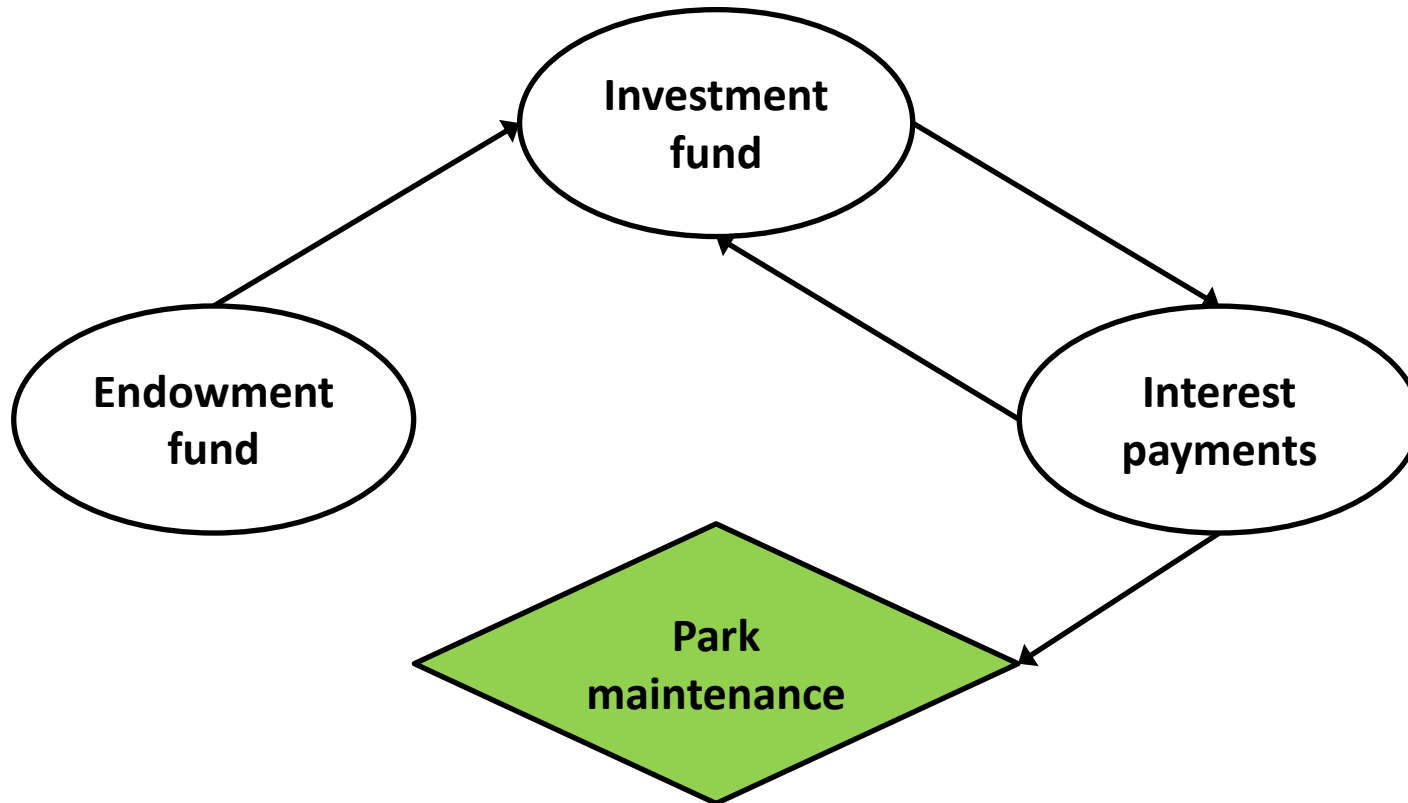
Data isn't everything



2014

- **Better use of local authority & private sector funding**
– e.g. endowments
- **Other public sector funding sources**
– e.g. green prescribing
- **Philanthropy & volunteering**
– e.g. council tax rebate

Policy 2: Endowments



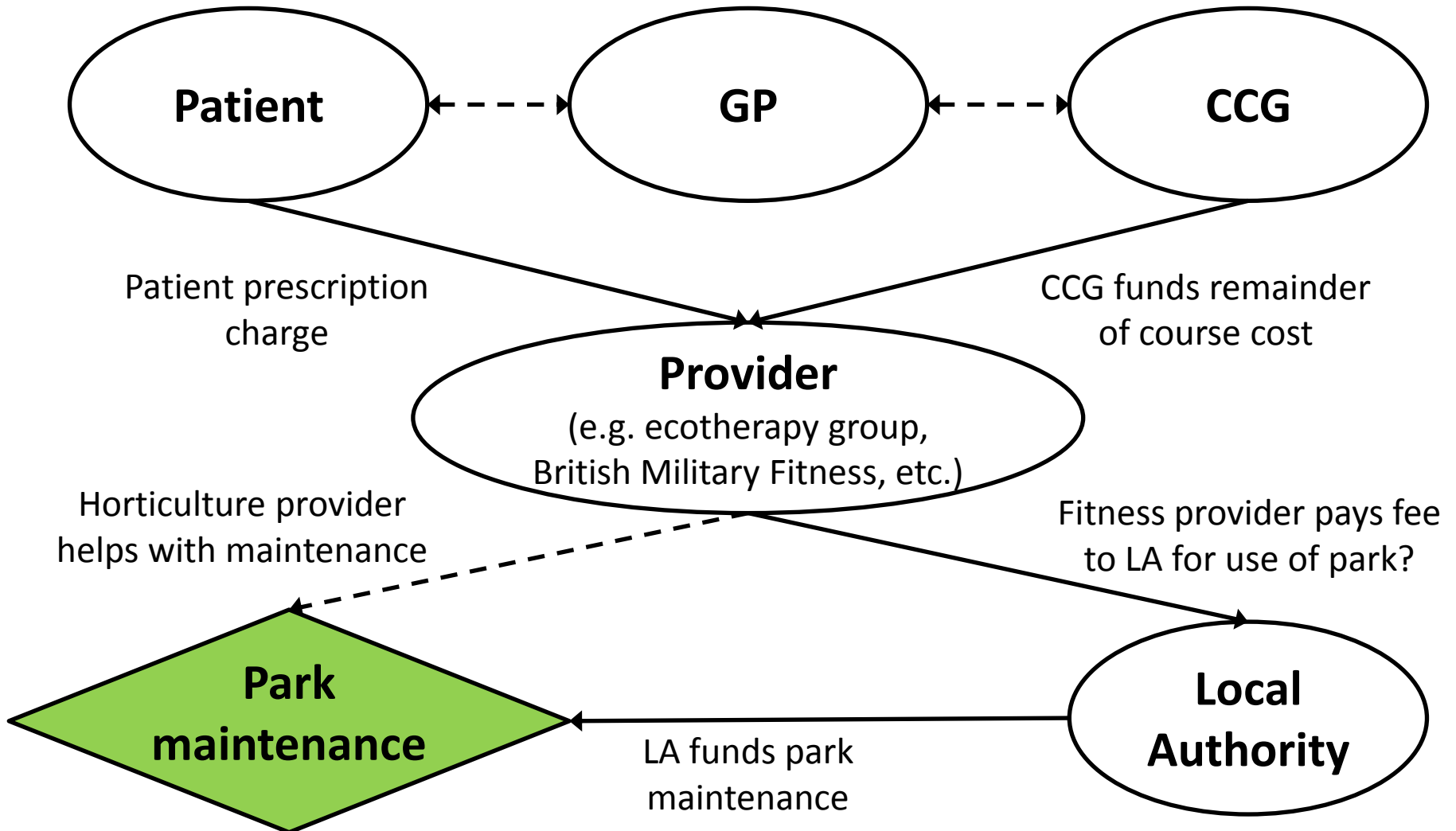
Advantages

- Long-term secure funding
 - Breaks expensive cycle of periodic large capital improvements
 - Easier to obtain grant funding
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Getting endowments started

- Local authority – review of opportunities
 - Developer contributions – CIL & S106
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Policy 3: Green prescribing



What needs to happen?

- Audit of existing green prescribing schemes
 - Trials of green prescribing
 - Registers of local green prescription providers
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Policy 4: Council tax rebate

- Attract greater mix of volunteers
 - Encourage long-term volunteering
 - Help prevent adversarial relationships between friends groups and council
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Incentivising volunteering - precedent

- Southampton City Council: 100% council tax discount to residents serving as Special Constables within Southampton
 - Northampton Borough Council: Community Contribution Priority Scheme
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Conclusions

Urban green space data

- Encouraging policy progress
- Still work to do

Urban green space funding

- Many different policy options
 - Endowments, green prescribing & council tax rebates are promising approaches
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Any questions?

