

The Importance of Parks and Greenspaces to Health and Wellbeing



*'Look deep into nature and then
you will understand everything'*

Albert Einstein

The costs of ill-health to the UK Economy

The NHS spends:

£4.2 billion on CVD (2013/14)

£5.1 billion per year on obesity related disease

Costs beyond the NHS

£13.75 billion on diabetes

£105 billion on impacts of mental health



Breakdown of annual costs of diabetes treatment in UK (2012 figs)

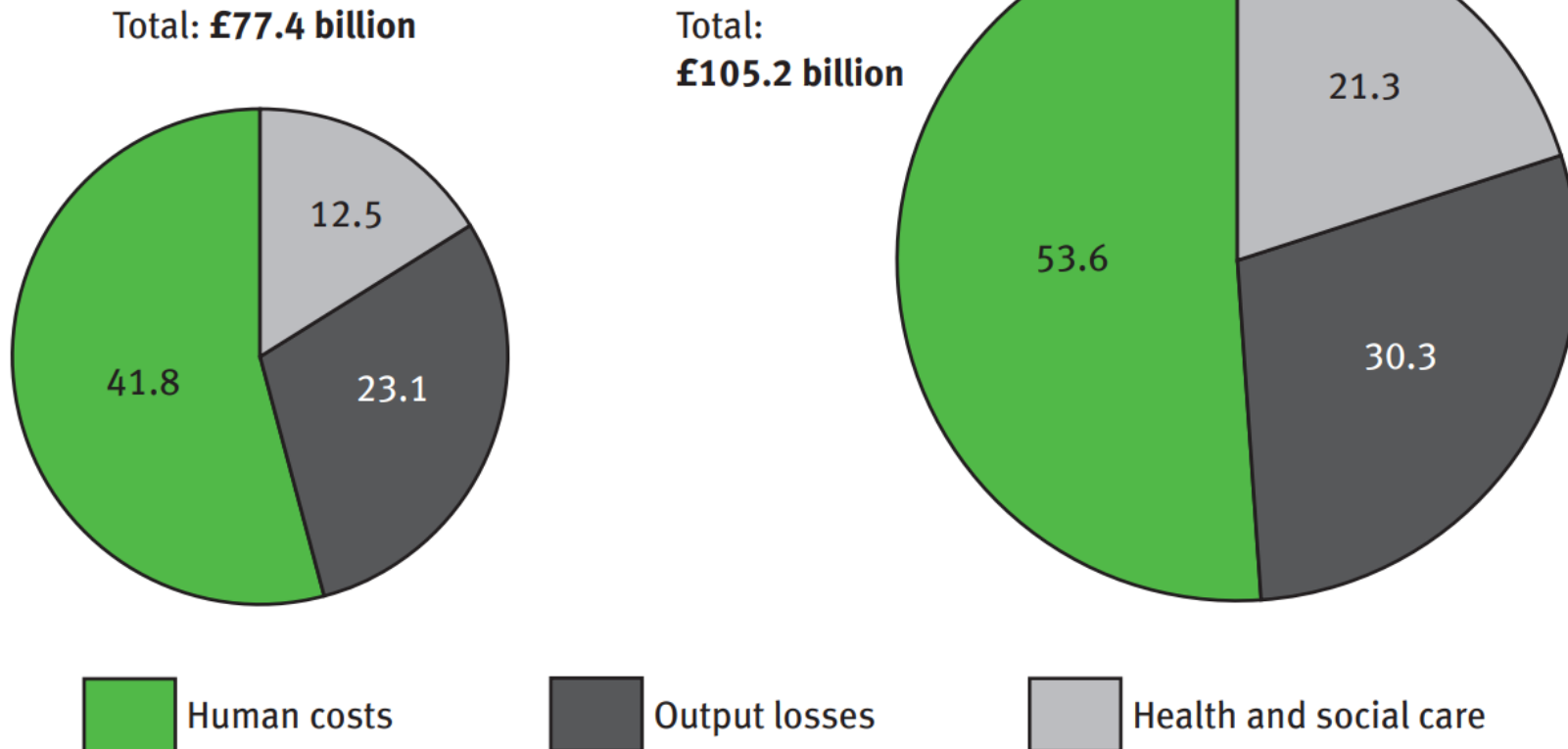
There are almost 3.7 million people who have been diagnosed with diabetes in the UK (2017)

| Prevalence | 2016 - 2017 |
|------------------|-------------|
| England | 3,116,399 |
| Northern Ireland | 92,480 |
| Scotland | 289,040 |
| Wales | 191,590 |
| UK | 3,689,509 |

| Cost of diabetes treatment in the UK in 2012 | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Area of expenditure | Type 1 diabetes | Type 2 diabetes | Total cost | Percentage of costs |
| Source: Kanavos, van den Aardweg and Schurer: Diabetes expenditure, burden of disease and management in 5 EU countries, LSE (Jan 2012) | | | | |
| Diabetes drugs | £0.344 billion | £0.712 billion | £1.056 billion | 7.8% |
| Non-diabetes drugs | £0.281 billion | £1.810 billion | £2.091 billion | 15.2% |
| Inpatient | £1.007 billion | £8.038 billion | £9.045 billion | 65.8% |
| Outpatient (excluding drugs) | £0.170 billion | £1.158 billion | £1,328 billion | 9.7% |
| Other (including social service) | - | - | £0.230 billion | 1.7% |
| Total | £1.802 billion | £11.718 billion | £13.750 billion | 100% |

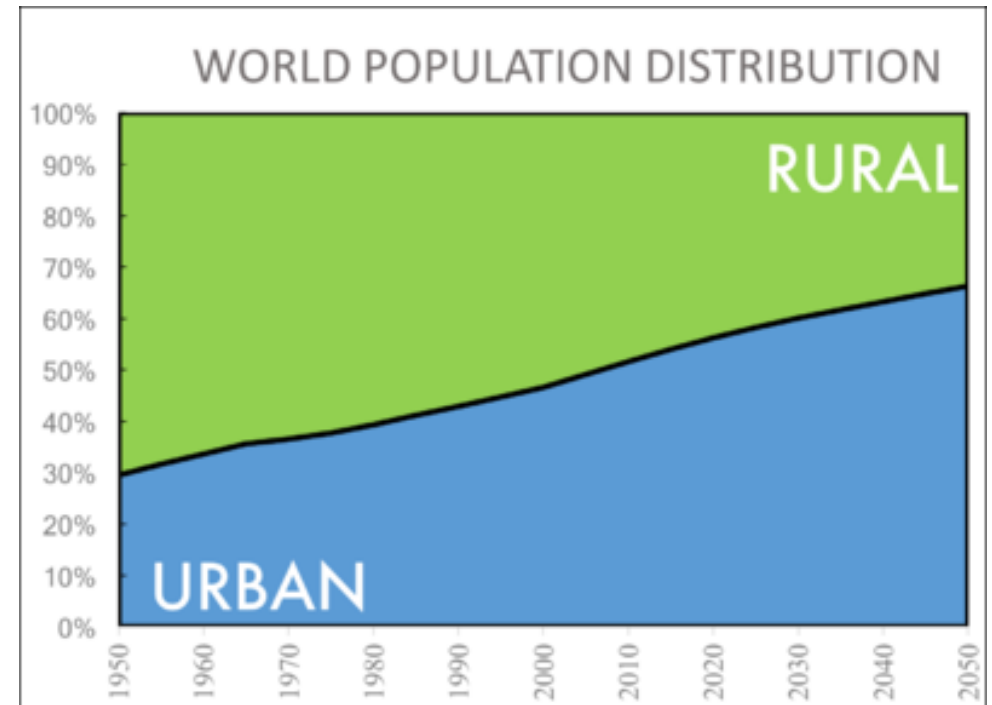
Mental Health – The real costs

Economic and social costs of mental health problems in England, in 2002/03 (left) and 2009/10 (right) in £ billions



Humans and nature

- Humans have lived predominantly rural lives up to the 18th century.
- the proportion of people living in urban areas is projected to rise from 46.6 to 69.6%, by 2050.
- Urbanization is associated with improvements in public hygiene, sanitation and access to health care, but it has also entailed changes in occupational, dietary and exercise patterns
- Areas for green space within urbanised areas are being reduced.
- Increased recognition of multiple values – health and wellbeing, flood alleviation , urban cooling, social cohesion, biodiversity, improving air quality etc.
- Rising costs of ill health are significantly affecting budgets for non-statutory services – parks and greenspace.



The role of nature and greenspace (Academic research)

- Physical and mental illnesses associated with sedentary urban lifestyles are an increasing economic and social cost.
- Areas with more accessible green space are associated with better mental and physical health.
- The risk of mortality caused by cardiovascular disease is lower in residential areas that have higher levels of 'greenness'.
- There is evidence that exposure to nature could be used as part of the treatment for some conditions.
- There are challenges to providing green spaces, such as how to make parks easily accessible and how to fund both their creation and maintenance



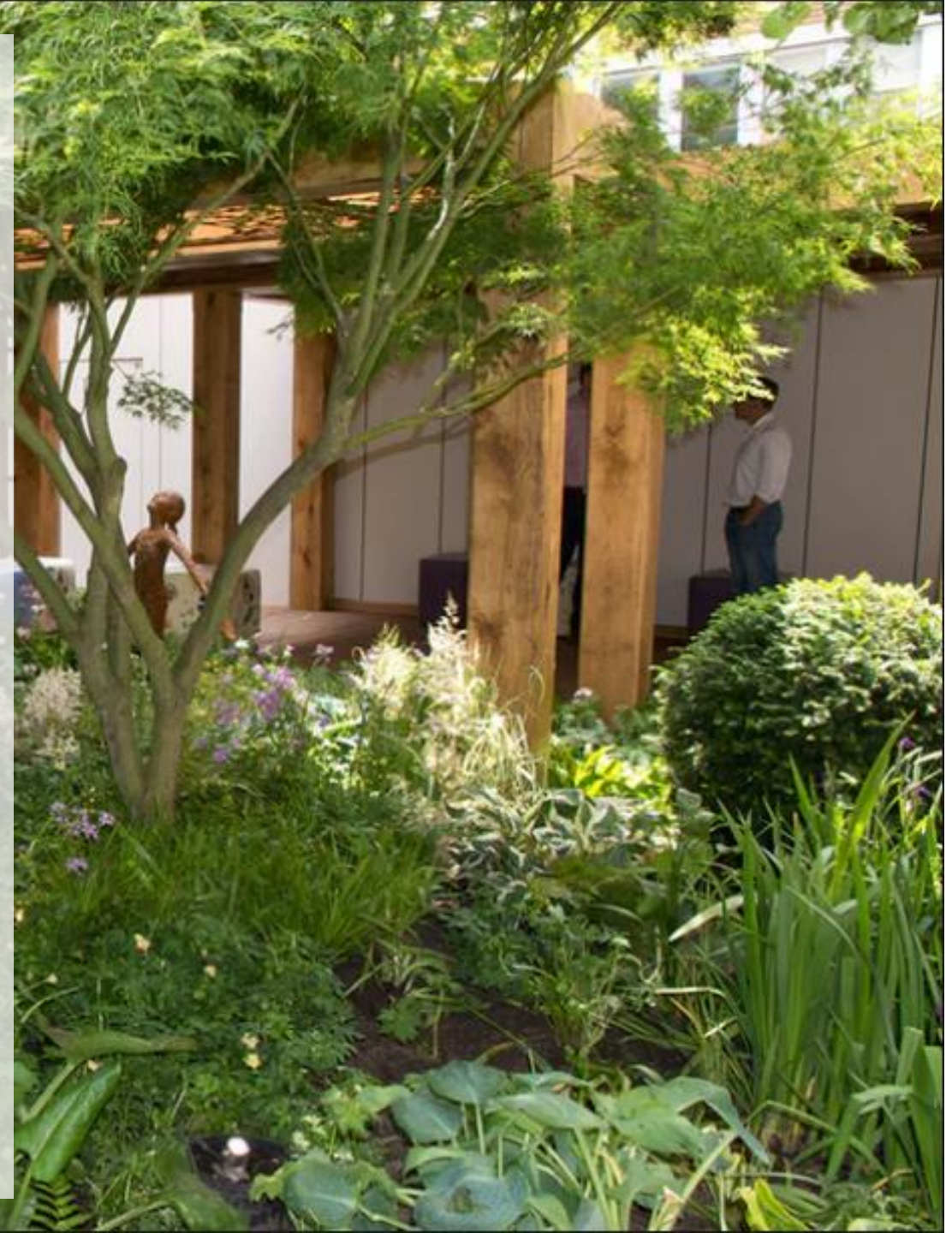
Green Environments are healthy environments

Some outdoor spaces are 'salutogenic' – that is they reduce stress and encourage healthy behaviours.

Whilst the particular reasons for this are not fully understood, various factors may – in isolation or combination – be important, including outdoor activity and exercise, natural daylight, stimulation for the senses, and aesthetic experience. What we do know is that experiencing these natural environments – or helping to care for them - can improve the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and help to recharge their physical, mental and social capacities.

Sir Muir-Gray, Director of the National Knowledge Service and Chief Knowledge Officer of the National Health Service.

Derek Feeley, Director-General Health and Social Care and Chief Executive NHS Scotland



The role of Health and Well Being Boards

- Health and wellbeing boards were established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to act as a forum in which **key leaders from the local health and care system** could work together to improve the health and wellbeing of their local population.
- Partnership between bodies from the NHS, public health and local government have a statutory duty, with clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), to produce a joint strategic needs assessment and a joint health and wellbeing strategy for their local population.
- **PARKS AND GREENSPACES?**
- Need to be seen as an asset that can be deployed to achieve longer term cross-cutting health savings.
- Current concerns about health, child obesity, access to nature and mental and physical wellbeing require a green infrastructure that is accessible, well maintained, and sustainably funded.



Parks Inquiry Report 2017

Recommendation

'We recommend that the Minister issues very clear guidance to local authorities that they should work collaboratively with Health and Wellbeing Boards, and other relevant bodies where appropriate, to prepare and publish joint parks and green space strategies'.

Government Response

Oversight of the Local Plan to ensure Duty to Co-operate is being delivered (this will cover the joint working with Health and Wellbeing Boards),

If inspectors find that local authorities haven't appropriately assessed and planned for green infrastructure to meet health and wellbeing needs (alongside other functions of green infrastructure such as urban cooling and sustainable urban drainage) then they would not find the plan 'sound'

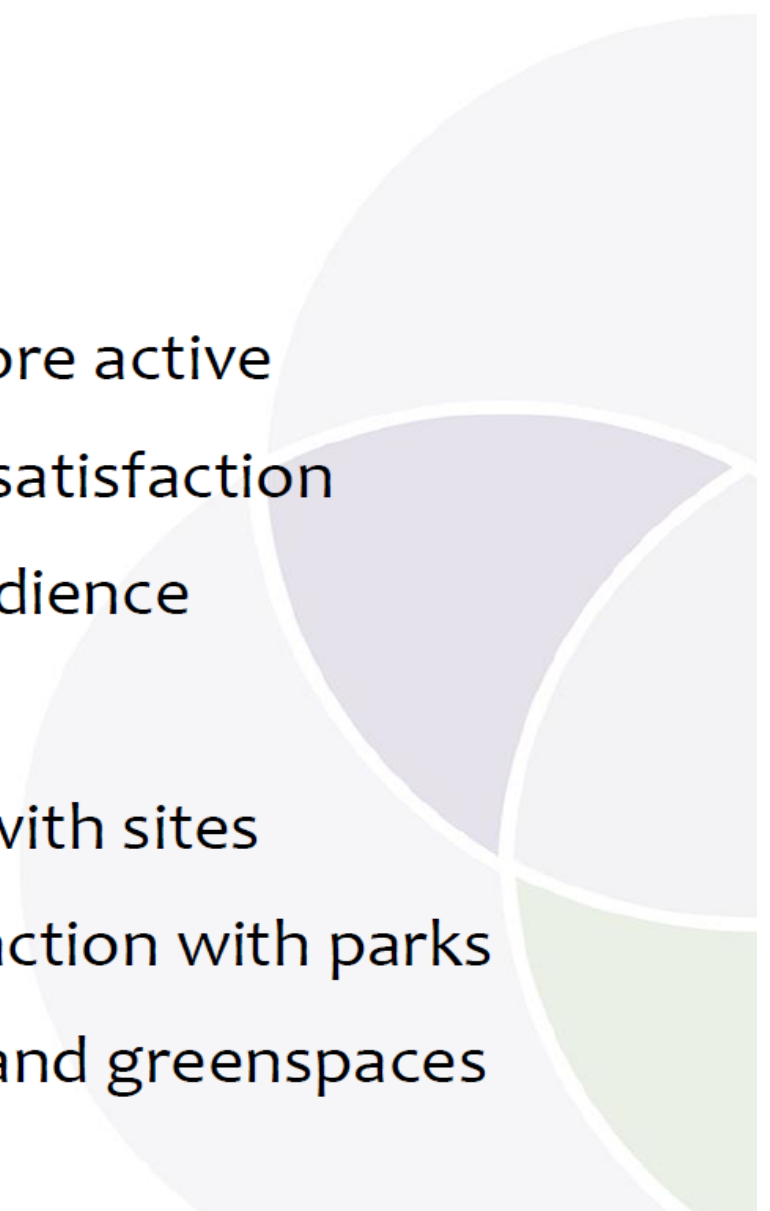
■ SHARED RESPONSIBILITY/SHARED FUNDING

South Derbyshire
parklife
activities for all in the open air



'Natural HEALTH Service'

Outcomes

- Increase in people becoming more active
 - High levels of participation and satisfaction
 - Repeat customers and wider audience
 - Strengthened partnerships
 - More community engagement with sites
 - Increased awareness and satisfaction with parks
 - Raised political profile of parks and greenspaces
- 

Birmingham Wellbeing

- Joint initiative between NHS Heart of Birmingham PCT and Birmingham City Council (2008)
- Free access to swimming, fitness classes, and gym sessions to all of the residents of the constituency as long as they exercised at least 4 times per month.

Key Findings:

- Price is a barrier to participation
- Access to free exercise increased people's likelihood to participate
- Hard to reach groups including women and ethnic minority communities engaged with the scheme
- Regular exercise increased participants self reported sense of wellbeing
- Participation on the scheme **increased participant demand for other lifestyle information such as smoking cessation and alcohol advice**

Expansion of the offer

- The Wellbeing Service offers residents the opportunity to be active, improve their health and connect with their local community, across **parks and green spaces** (through programmes such as Active Parks, Run Birmingham), leisure centres and community venues (via Be Active) and on the streets (through Active Streets, Big Birmingham Bikes).
- The service enables everyone to participate, regardless of income and ability and removes cost and social distance as a barrier to participation.
- Key to the success of the service is the ability to engage some of the hardest to reach communities in activity and healthy lifestyles.
- New offers include walks and rambles, running, cycling, Zumba, Tai Chi, sports like rounders, basketball, boules, tennis, rowing and canoeing to other activities like gardening, conservation and bushcraft.
- **PARTNERSHIP HAS BEEN KEY**

Key issues to consider regarding the use of greenspace

- **Accessibility** – if you live close your likely to use it, (consider disabled access)
- **Facilities – relevance/cost** – do they promote exercise and are they affordable?
- **Quality** – well designed spaces will attract usage, poor maintenance will deter visits
- **Safety** – need to consider perception as well as actuality, organised events are usually better attended.
- **Opportunity for social interaction** – events, seating, community buildings, environmental projects etc.



Conclusions

- Green space can promote greater levels of mental well being and happiness as well as physical activity.
- Nature –based therapy helps alleviate both physical and mental illnesses and improve recovery time. (views and gardens).
- Faculty of Public Health suggests interaction with nature helps patients with ADHD, depression and Dementia.
- Increased opportunity for social interaction.
- Parks maintenance under severe threat – need to share costs to achieve benefits
- Need for co-ordinated approach

Humans need to reconnect
with nature

