



Why we must map green infrastructure

Green spaces and places are the life support system of our towns and cities. It is this green infrastructure – the network of parks, gardens, allotments, trees, green roofs, cemeteries, woodlands, commons, grasslands, moors and wetland areas – that makes crowded urban areas liveable and urban life environmentally, economically and socially viable.

Green infrastructure is a public service to which everyone has a right. With the onset of climate change, green areas will play a huge part in adapting our towns and cities to its effects. And we now understand the link between good quality green space and improving health and well being. Yet green infrastructure is often seen as a burden on the public purse and not as an asset that needs investment and skilled management. Its importance is not recognised alongside grey infrastructure such as the road or rail network, or the sewer system and it rarely features in spatial strategic decision making.

In particular it is the information on England's urban green assets that is missing. These assets are virtually invisible in data collection and remain unmapped on a national scale. The absence of basic, critical information about green infrastructure makes it impossible to plan and

manage this resource to its full potential. Without this information it is extremely difficult to maintain a strategic view, co-ordinate provision, anticipate future needs and plan over different time periods.

England needs a shared, national information resource on green infrastructure, so that national, regional and local government can support the better planning, design, management and maintenance of the environment. This in turn will improve quality of life. A shared national green infrastructure 'atlas' or map will inform decisions about investment, quantify the impact of spending by green infrastructure type and category and allow better assessment of provision overall. It will provide the information required to adapt better to a changing climate and social needs. And it will provide the necessary data to track improvements over time and facilitate co-ordinated responses.

Central government needs to co-ordinate a single shared, national information resource that records data spatially using a consistent approach to its collection and categorisation. Responsibility for this falls across at least three government departments. The undersigned organisations can help deliver the initiative: it requires a clear national lead to prioritise it.

Supporting organisations



Association of Garden Trusts, Black Environment Network, Capacity Global, Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management, English Heritage, The Garden History Society, Greenspace, Groundwork, International Council of Monuments and Sites UK, Institute of Parks and Green Spaces, Keep Britain Tidy, Landscape Institute, Natural England, Play England, UK Public Health Association

This statement is published by CABE as part of its 2009 Grey to Green campaign. For more information, see www.cabe.org.uk/grey-to-green You can download our policy briefing, *The green information gap*, from www.cabe.org.uk/publications

