

# Young Planners' Conference

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**Connecting Town and Country:  
Planning for Urban and Rural Areas**

**11 – 12 October 2024 #YPCConf2024**

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**RTPI**

Royal Town Planning Institute

# **BREAKOUT 1**

## **Sustainable Tourism and Rural Economies**

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Maria Manion - Chief Executive, Cambridge BID

Rob Pearce - Head of Parks Consultancy, Nene Park Trust

Chair: Asif Ali - Senior Planning Officer,  
Peterborough City Council



# Sustainable Tourism and Rural Economies

**Maria Manion**

**Chief Executive, Cambridge BID**

## What is sustainable tourism?

The aim of **sustainable tourism** is to increase the benefits and to reduce the negative impacts caused by tourism.

Sustainable tourism is about maintaining a balance and harmony between local communities and visitors while maintaining the integrity of the natural and built environment.

Going beyond managing the negative impacts of tourism, the term **regenerative tourism** is used to describe tourism that restores and improves the environment, culture, and economy of a destination.

Regenerative tourism seeks to create a **positive impact on local communities** and leave the destination in a better state than it was found, while providing an authentic travel experience for visitors.

Consider two different areas both supporting rural economies

**Cambridge, Cambridgeshire**

**Alnwick, Northumberland**

**Cambridge**, a high growth city, international reputation, known for education, innovation, knowledge sector and tourism. 50 mins from London.

Attracts over 8m visitors year

Cambridgeshire – largely rural economy including Fenlands.

Cambridge 145,700

Peterborough 215,670

Cambridgeshire 906,810

**Alnwick**, small market town, seat of the Duke of Northumberland, traditionally relied on agriculture and forestry, with specialist high tech industries and tourism. 50mins from Newcastle.

Northumberland – mainly rural, one of the most sparsely populated counties in England. No city in Northumberland.

Alnwick 8,430

Northumberland 320,600

Largest town in Northumberland: Blyth: 39,742



## Alnwick & Cambridge commonality

- Historic built environment (listed buildings, conservation areas)
- Villages & other attractions in hinterland (EH, NT etc, built and natural environment)
- Proximity to rural hinterland, primary service centres
- Significant number of residents reliant on visitor economy for employment (full time & seasonal)
- Transport to hub, but poor supporting infrastructure leads social and economic isolation – 7 day/wk isn't a reality with public transport, limits economic and social growth, access to services, employment and learning
- Areas of deprivation, disparities between wealth and poverty
- Inward investment and support services for local residents
- Range of cultural activities, sporting facilities, events
- Destination profile

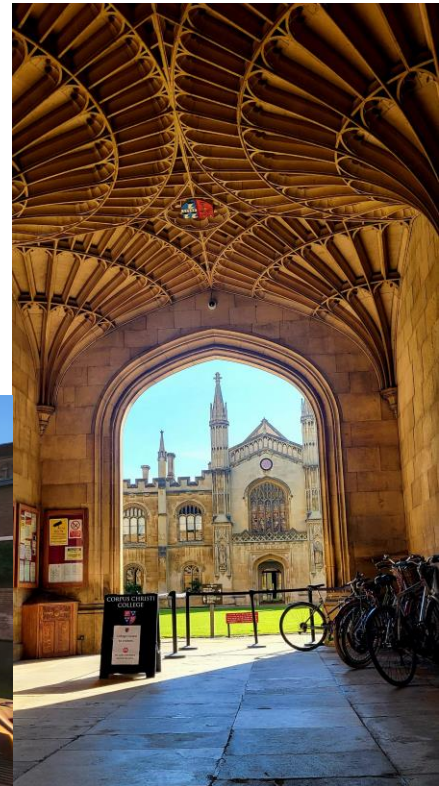
## Common factors supporting sustainable tourism and rural economies

- Leadership
- Partnership commitment & core funding (public and private sector)
- Relationships & communication particularly with stakeholders – residents, private and public sector and residents with visitors
- Management – leadership & clear destination management plan
- Flexibility – e.g. seasonality and other external factors, support services need to adapt
- Understanding of the business base; the consumer and different types of consumer; local environment and personality
- Know your limitations and be clear about the type of destination/place
- Imagination and creativity – boldness, ability to deliver with small budgets
- Longevity – it doesn't happen overnight and it needs to be sustained and revisited/renewed



# Cambridge

- Context - Cambridge has no DMO or LVEP and is not part of the national tourism structures
- Cambridge is perceived as being over crowded and too busy in July/August – City overwhelmed by days visitors and only 14% of visitors stay overnight
- Need to move visitors from a small area of the core, the honeypot, to other areas of the City and beyond. Needs to be seen as more than a 3hr visit to encourage overnight stays
- Things are changing – A DMP is being developed and conversations have started at a regional level
- Biggest challenges are transport, and profiling of the visitor economy as part of the cities and regions priorities - economic benefits need to be driven forward to ensure broader benefits can be felt, need to understand the local benefits.





## Alnwick

- Seen as a honey pot location, close to coast and national park but with others around it but coastal towns suffering
- Harry Potter and Alnwick Garden happened close together. Alnwick Castle went from 64,000 visitors to 280,000 and Alnwick Garden in first year 500,000 visitors, plus Barter Books which now attracts around 500,000 people and House of Hardy.
- Manage influx and then disperse – accommodation was an issue, so they had to move out of the centre
- Need to spread benefit – investment in cycle and walk routes, joining up transport (bus meets train), seasonal coastal bus routes.
- Capital investment in coastal towns – regeneration as part of sustainability, now becoming their own small destinations
- Inwards investment of edge of town very noticeable – Alnwick has a Morrisons, Sainsbury's. M&S Foodhall, Aldi, Lidl, a specialist deli, Homebase, GoOutdoors. The town has a theatre, museum, leisure centre and small hospital. Enhanced role as a service centre.





## Alnwick – is the garden blooming?

- The coastal areas are thriving
- Enhanced range of accommodation now available – but a lot of second homes and holiday homes, in some areas more holiday homes than residents, some villages losing sense of community
- Employment opportunities still limited
- New developments but lack of open spaces and structured play
- Aging population - people who traditionally organized events dying!
- Focus is on people going to edge of town developments and retail
- The attractions are pulling in the visitors but not a strong enough link to the town centre
- Town centre is suffering significantly, high churn of units, banks all leaving
- Town centre now needs regeneration but the rural communities do have a high level of local services





## Cambridge & Alnwick – what are the lessons to learn?

- Sustainable tourism is about taking a holistic and long term approach
- Leadership and infrastructure are important
- Infrastructure important for access to services, employment and skills development without which social and economic isolation
- You can link the ‘honeypot’ destination to other areas via walks, cycling and other means
- Local people need to see the area offer as a ‘whole’ offer – they are your advocates
- With leadership needs to come investment, revenue and capital, leadership will drive the direction
- Know and understand the area, understand your offer and the vulnerabilities - forward planning and future proof.
- Leadership and vision can often be about an individual not an organization, make sure it becomes part of organisational culture – sustainable tourism is about longevity!





# Why Parks Matter and How to Make Them Count

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- Sustainable Tourism and Rural Economies
- Rob Pearce Nene Park Trust



# What I'm going to talk about?

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1. Why do parks matter?
2. Who pays for them?
3. Who benefits from them?
4. How can we make them count?

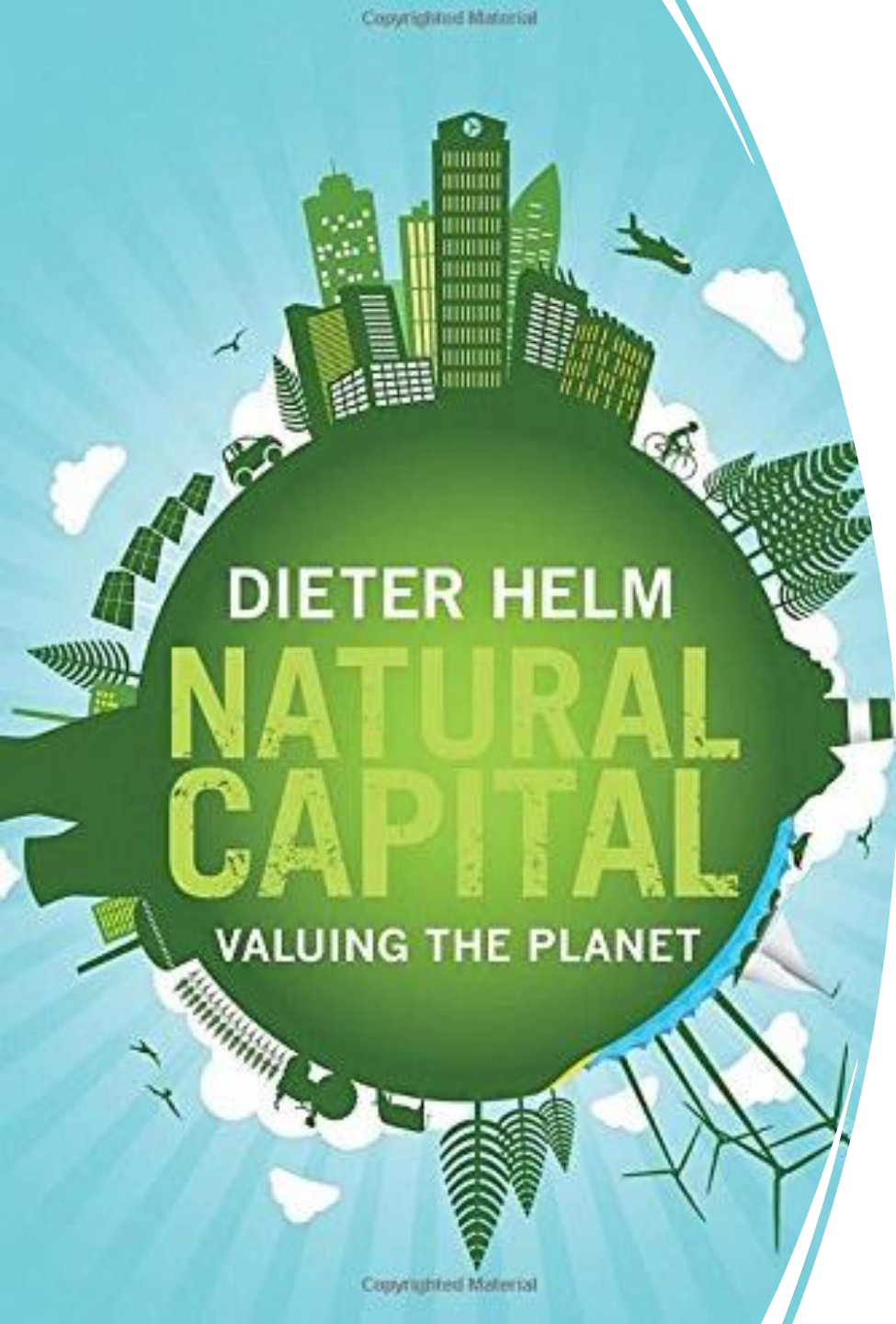




What's your  
favourite  
park and  
why?

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Natural capital is what nature provides to us for free. Renewables—like species—keep on coming, provided we do not drive them towards extinction.

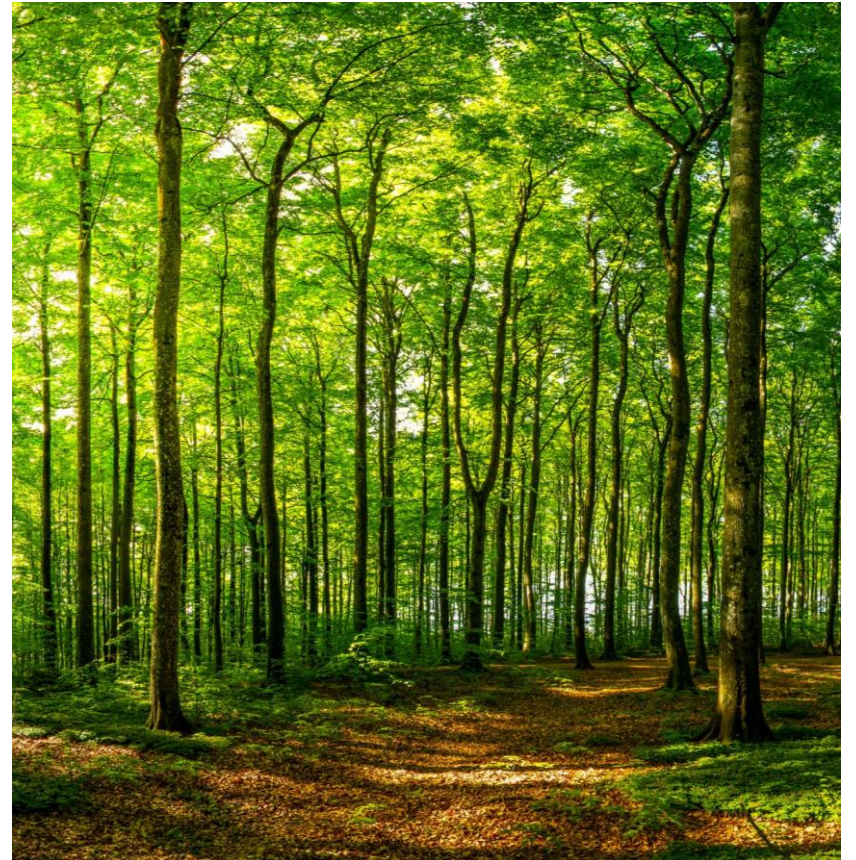
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Natural capital is made up of all the elements of nature that benefit people, including ecosystems, species, fresh water, land, minerals, and the air. The benefits that natural capital provides are called ecosystem services.

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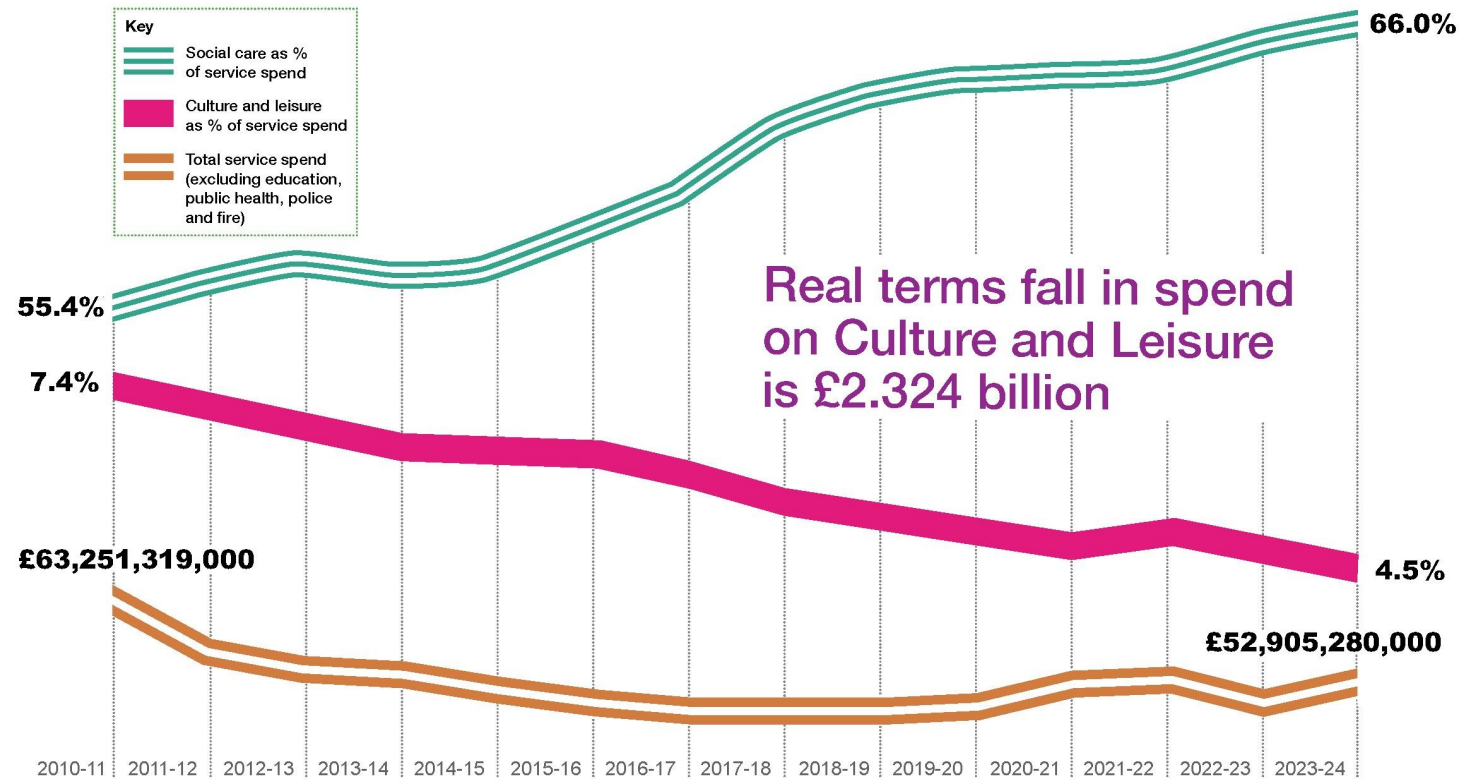
- Parks are considered natural capital because they are part of the natural environment and provide benefits to people:
- Quality of life: Parks provide free green spaces for people to play, meet friends, and get close to nature.
- Climate change: Parks can help fight climate change by storing carbon and improving air and water quality.
- Biodiversity: Parks can improve biodiversity and ecological resilience.
- Property values: Living near a park can increase property values.
- Urban cooling: Parks can cool cities by over half a degree Celsius.
- Noise pollution: Parks can protect urban properties from noise pollution.



# Who pays for our parks?



## Under Pressure: council spending on culture and leisure



Data has been provided and processed by the Local Government Association.  
Data is shown for London Borough Councils, Metropolitan Borough Councils, Shire County Councils and Shire Unitary authorities.  
Data is budgeted net revenue spend published annually by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).  
Data is in real terms at 2023/24 prices using the CPI deflator series published by the Office for Budget Responsibility in March 2024.  
Social care includes adult social care and children's social care.  
Total service spend excludes spend on education, public health, police services and fire and rescue.  
Data in 2010/11 is adjusted for revenue expenditure funded from capital by statute (RECS).

From 2016/17 spend on Sure Start and Services for Young People is included in the DLUHC data on children's social care spend. To adjust for this, spend on these two services areas is taken from the Department for Education's s251 column data collection and added into the DLUHC data for 2010/11 to 2019/20.  
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RedQuadrant has made every reasonable effort to ensure the information contained herein is accurate and referenced to reputable sources. This is an indicative survey on the subject and does not claim to be complete or comprehensive.





# Who benefits from our parks?

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# Why Parks are a Smart Investment

## Natural Capital Values for Parks in England

- Annual economic value £6.6 billion
- Annual saving to the NHS of £2 billion
- Asset value of over £200 billion
- Every £1 spent provides between £7 and £10 of quantified benefit

High Streets are struggling. The focus of high streets is shifting away from retail to food and leisure services.

Parks are one of the top priorities when addressing the factors that influence viability and vitality and viability of high streets.

An 'urban heat island' effect is created in cities by solar radiation trapped within the built environment.

Parks in England provide an urban cooling benefit of £4.8m pa.

Increases in greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide trap heat, warm the globe and drive climate change.

The value of carbon sequestration by trees in public parks in England is estimated at £9m per year

As towns compete to attract investment, the presence of parks, squares and gardens becomes a vital.

Urban green spaces raise nearby house prices by an average of £2,500.

Mental ill health costs the UK £1058m pa

London's parks alone help avoid an estimated £370m of mental health related costs each year.

Disconnected communities could be costing the English economy £27 billion every year.

Nearly half of all people say that parks are the most important public space. They create opportunities for social interaction in ways that enhance health and wellbeing.

Every year physical inactivity costs the UK around £1bn.

Active visits to Parks in England result in £2bn in avoided health costs.

A third of people are disconnected from the places where they live.

There is a social return of £8.50 for every £1 invested in nature conservation volunteering.

The number of species worldwide is in sustained mass decline, threatening the environment.

Parks are among the most species rich types of urban green spaces and 1,500 species of UK's pollinators deliver and estimated £680m in value to the economy.

Air pollution is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK, causing up to 36,000 deaths.

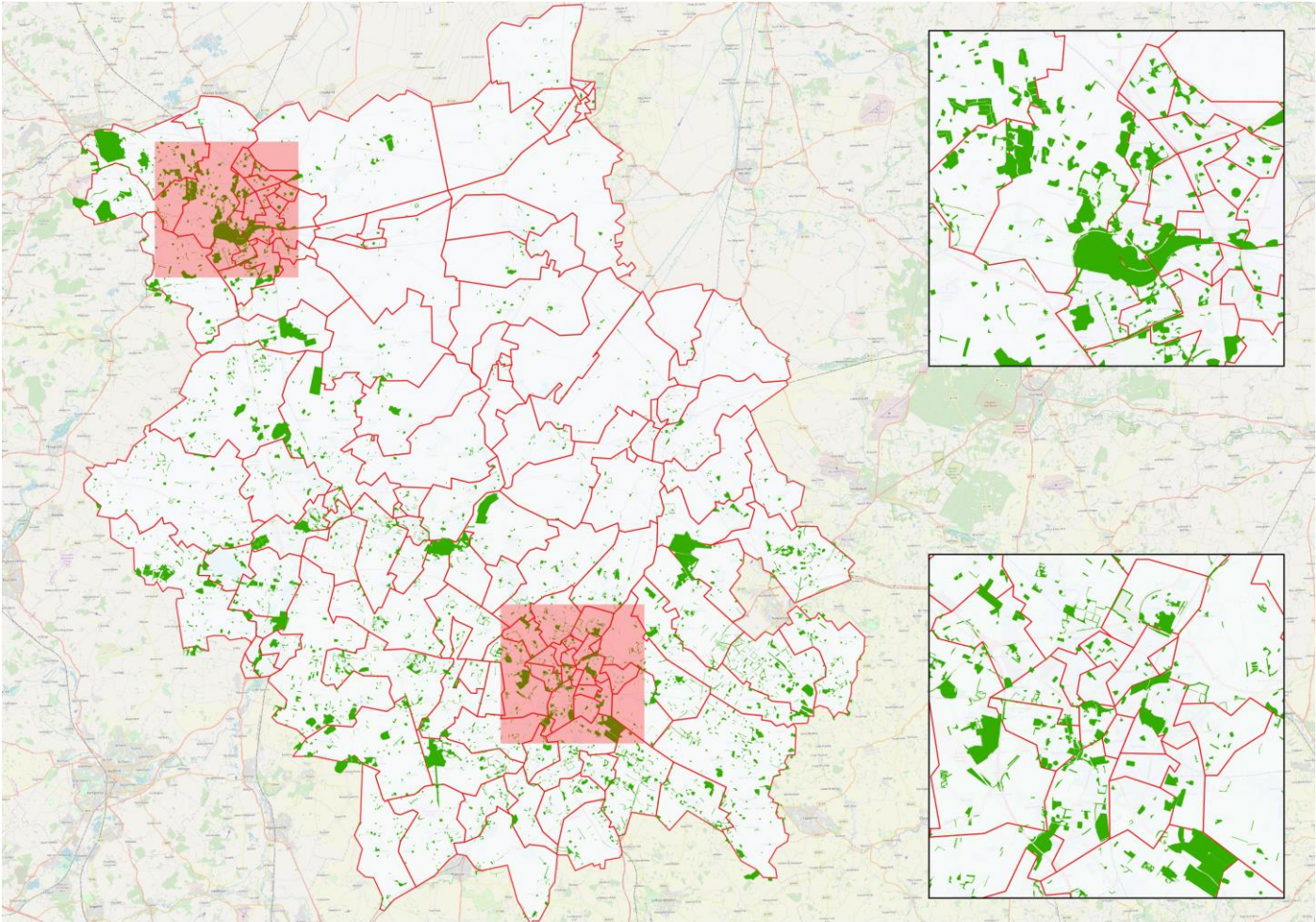
The benefits of air pollutant removal by trees in public parks in England is estimated at £60m per year.

The proportion of impermeable surfacing in towns and cities has risen by 22% since 2001.

Urban green spaces store and filter water, reducing the risk of flooding and improving water quality.



# Cambridgeshire is a green county with nearly 2,900 publicly accessible greenspaces delivering an annual benefit worth £375m



Estimated 15m visits per year



£375m per year in benefits to local communities.



£316m per year from health benefits



Health and wellbeing services currently deliver on average £25 per visit.



In 2031, health benefits may reach £371m per year,




Neighbourhood Public Parks provide the most benefits creating £131 million in annual benefits



Every £1 spent on parks delivers £37 in benefit.



# Nene Park - for every £1 spent £4 in benefit



**Table 6.** Annual monetary flows (£, 2023) of benefits provided by ecosystem services for sites at Nene Park.

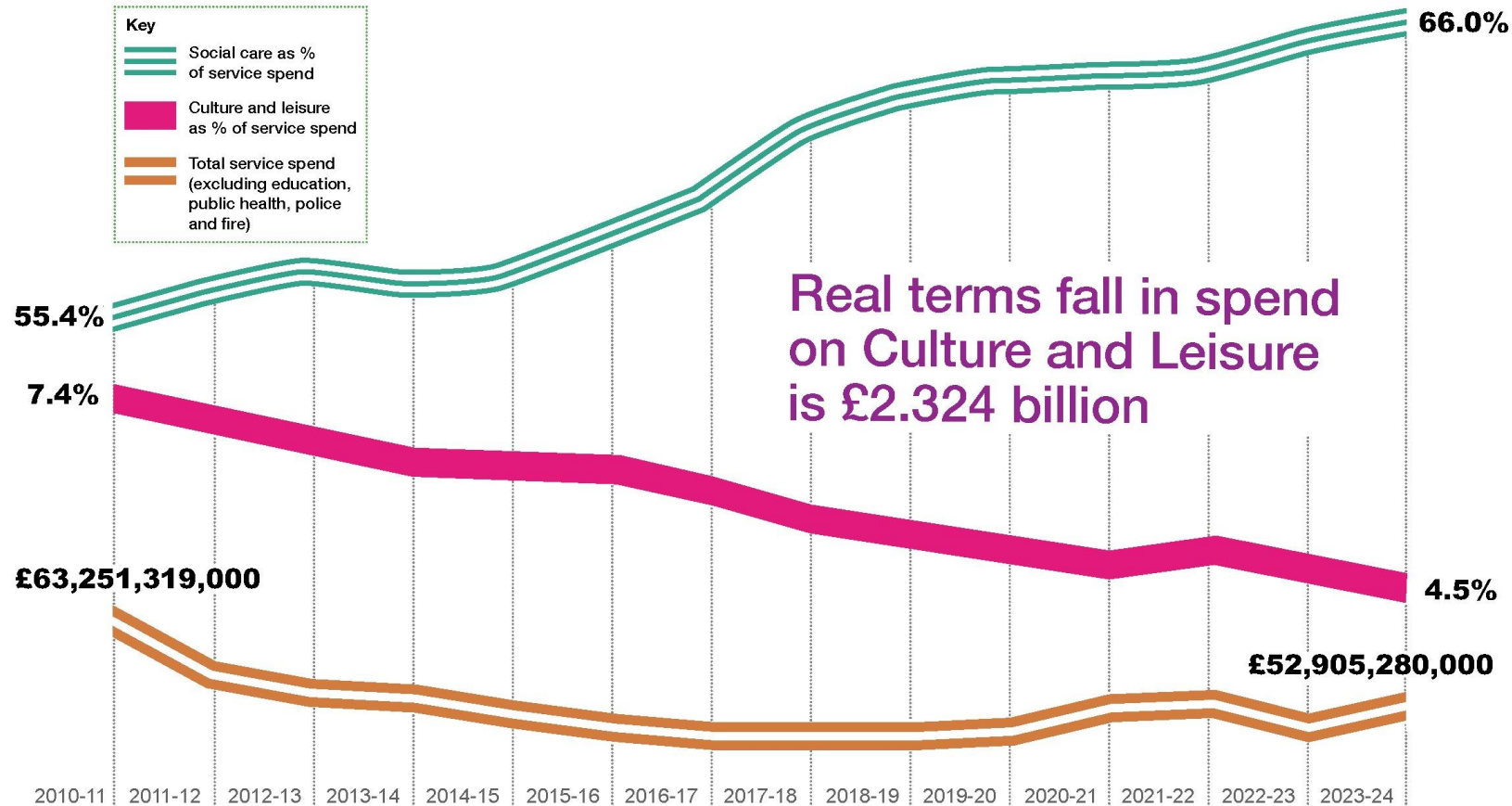
Ecosystem service	Ferry Meadows	Land at Eye Green	Orton Meadows and Mere	Rural Estate	Tenter Hill	Thorpe Lea Meadows	Thorpe Meadows	Thorpe Wood Golf Course	Thorpe Wood North and South	Woodston Reach	ALL SITES TOTAL
Woodland	103,000	2520	13,500	7,480	0	21000	31,200	13,000	25,600	7,230	225,000
Other habitats	27,400	-2,030	1,270	19,700	1,090	490	6,770	12,800	30	780	68,300
Agricultural emissions	0	-61,400	0	-123,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	-184,000
Carbon balance (sum of above)	130,000	-60,900	14,700	-96,000	1,090	21,500	38,000	25,800	25,600	8000	108,000
Air quality regulation	9,930	114	1,410	766	44	1,840	2,790	1,920	1,680	608	21,100
Agricultural production	0	98,700	0	114,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	213,000
Timber/woodfuel production	15,300	221	1,920	964	0	3,160	4,780	1,550	4,180	1,120	33,200
Flood reduction by woodland	10,200	261	2,110	851	0	3,490	5,550	852	1,150	1,120	25,600
Water quality	4,620	71	580	298	0	1,010	1,530	509	1,020	358	10,000
Noise	38,100	0	0	0	0	0	12,600	0	8,430	2,950	62,100
Recreation	6,330,000	18,700	1,360,000	546,000	221,000	357,000	1,350,000	0	258,000	91,000	10,500,000
Physical health	5,160,000	8,770	393,000	182,000	74,800	129,000	487,000	0	92,500	32,800	6,560,000
Total values	11,700,000	65,800	1,780,000	749,000	297,000	517,000	1,910,000	30,600	393,000	138,000	17,600,000

Who really  
understands  
our Parks?





## Under Pressure: council spending on culture and leisure



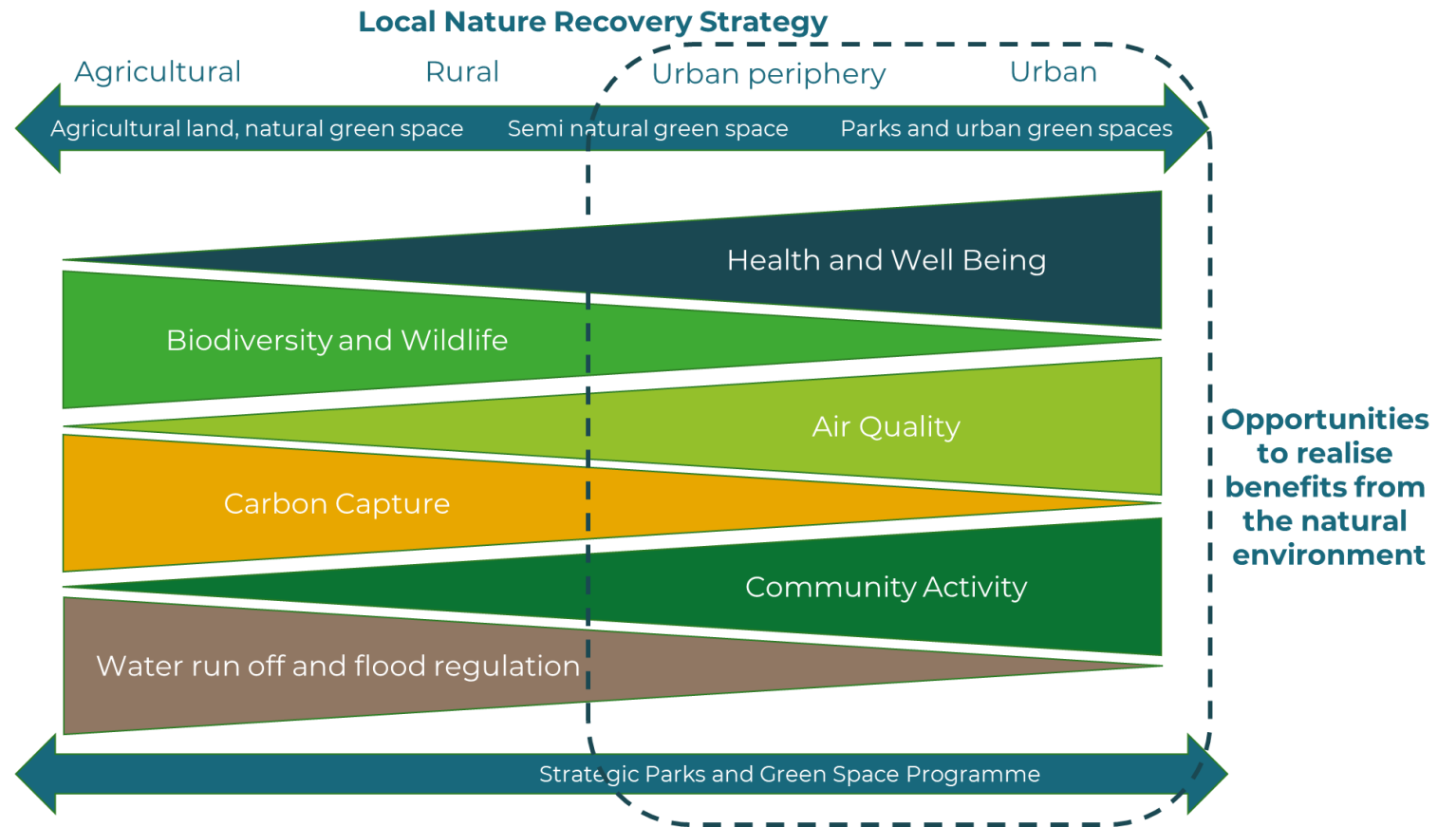
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# Parks are a key feature of the landscape

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How could  
we make  
parks  
count?

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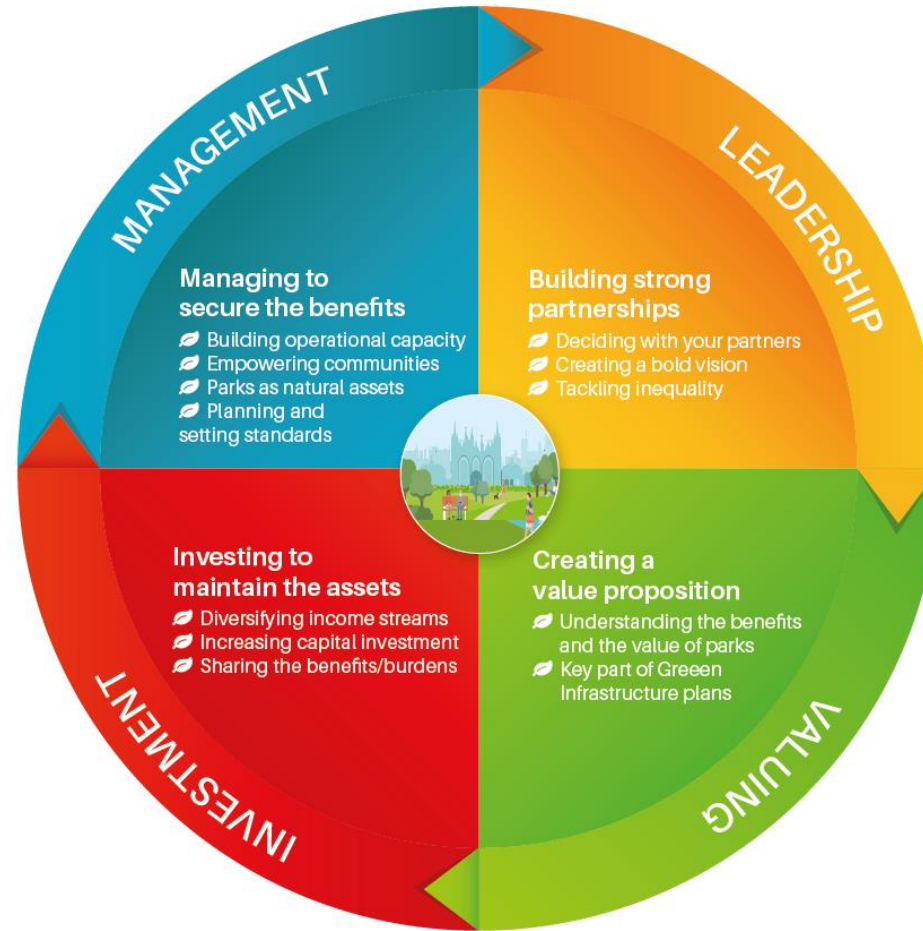


# Why parks matter





# How to make parks count





# Why Parks are different

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Police Protection



Railway Service



Post Office



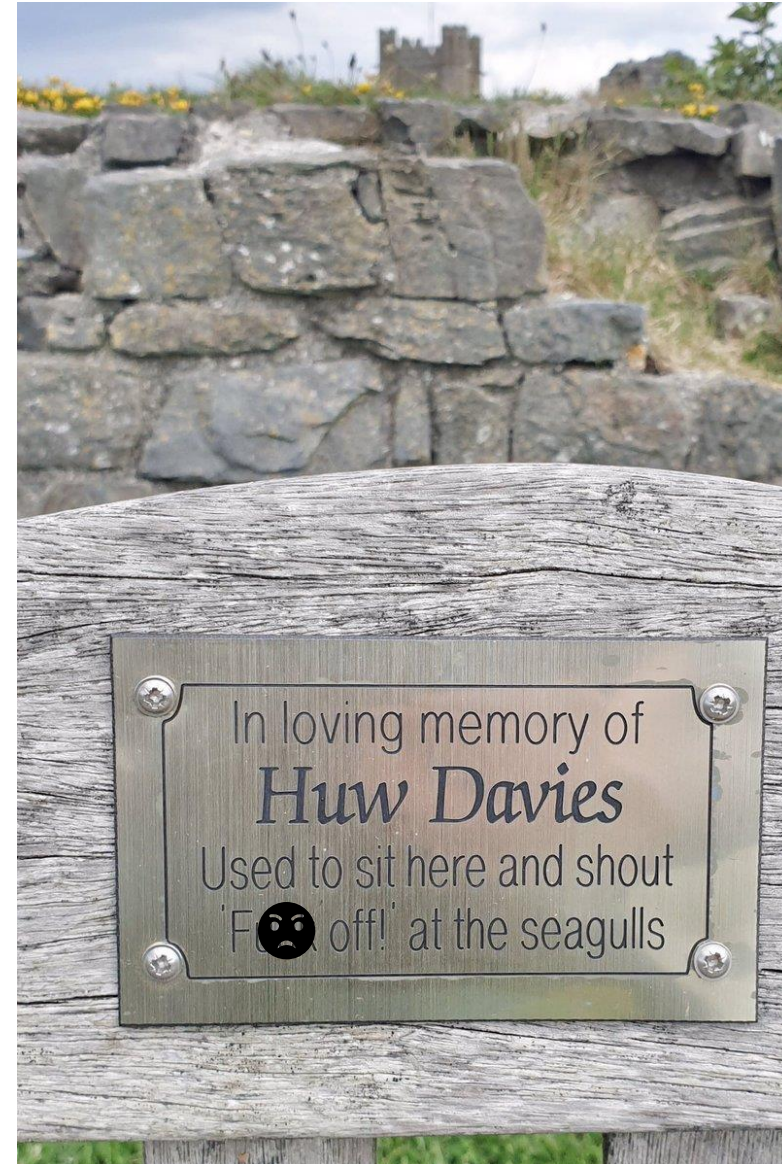
Roads



DEAREST DAUN: THIS PARK BROUGHT US BACK  
TOGETHER ALMOST 30 YEARS AGO. IF YOU  
EVER LOSE ME AGAIN, YOU CAN FIND ME HERE.  
HAPPY 25TH! ALL MY LOVE - PETER

# Thank you!

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## Q&A

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Rob Pearce - Head of Parks Consultancy, Nene Park Trust

Chair: Asif Ali - Senior Planning Officer,  
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