

welcome to  
**#PARKPOWER**

**#PARKPOWER**

# foreword

**from Ailish Christian-West,  
Real Estate Director for Get Living**

**Get Living is proud to be backing #ParkPower. Launched as Londoners endure a second Covid-19 lockdown, #ParkPower celebrates how our local parks give us precious moments of calm and ways to stay active. For the guardians and managers of these spaces, it also reminds us of our responsibility to keep them open and safe – and protect them into the future.**

**getliving**

**Get Living owns and manages rental neighbourhoods across the UK. Our urban locations offer the best of city living, but we know that to live well people need more than a great home.**

**Our first and flagship neighbourhood East Village, the former London 2012 Athletes' Village, is defined by its 25 acres of open green space, including one of the largest new wetlands in Western Europe. For the 6,500 people that call East Village home, these spaces create a green oasis within easy reach of central London and right on the doorstep of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.**

**Our green spaces have never seen so much use and my team recognise the feedback captured in Commonplace's survey. Residents have appreciated nature's wellbeing boost whether on a run through the wetlands, escaping endless video calls with an ice cream in the park or as families playing outside together. Across London, for those of us with the privilege of managing public spaces, this increased use has been challenging and I hope we will all be using our experiences this summer and the responses here to feed into future planning and design.**

**#ParkPower gives us all an opportunity to reflect on how our parks are used and loved. It is a celebration of our city's great green spaces, but it also challenges us to use them wisely; to respond to local need, while protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Thank you to the London Collective and Commonplace for delivering such an important project.**

**#PARKPOWER**

# **a crowdsourced vision for the future of our green spaces**

**by Max Farrell,  
Founder of the London Collective**



**We are excited to be sharing the findings of the #ParkPower project, focusing on the future health and vitality of our green spaces. Covid-19 has shone a light on the value of communities and the role of green spaces. Both have been transformed from 'nice-to-have' into critical resources. During the 2020 Summer months, the London Collective crowdsourced opinions from the Commonplace platform about parks and green spaces, asking people what they value about them and what they would prioritise in the future.**

**With nearly 3,500 contributions from across London, we have built up an extraordinary picture of collective thinking at a seminal moment in time. We convened a group of expert members to analyse this data and propose recommendations across eight important themes. We have presented these as practical ideas for anyone involved in the creation of new spaces, or in maintaining and improving existing parks.**



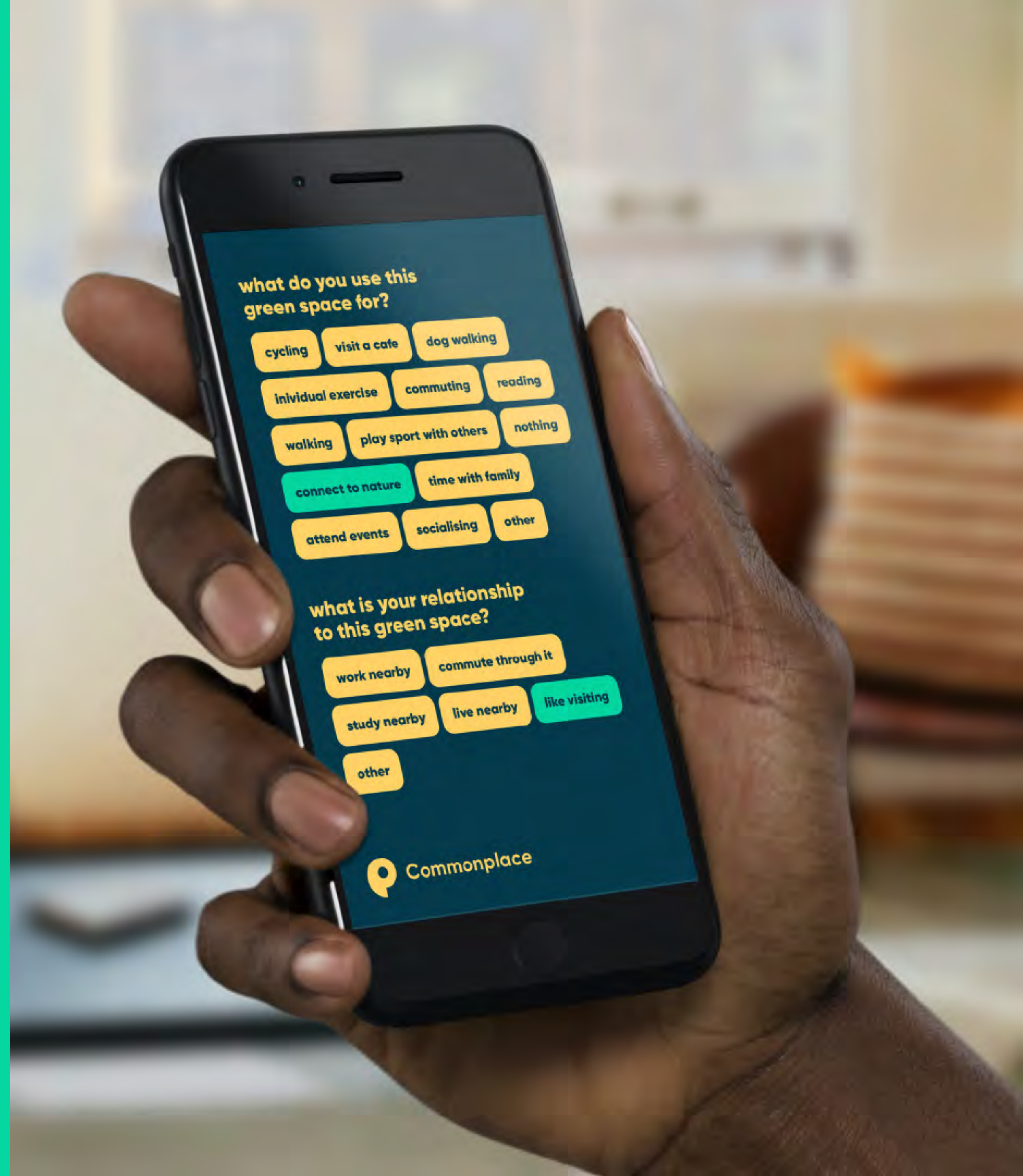
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# asking the right questions

Having run over 750 projects and engaged over 2 million people, we have collected widespread data which helped inform our questions for the #ParkPower project. Our aim was to get people to participate by thinking constructively about their lived experience in local green spaces, and how this relates to what they would (and wouldn't) prioritise or introduce in the future.

The meaningful number of responses collected, and their geographical spread, gave us the basis for the themed responses produced by the London Collective.

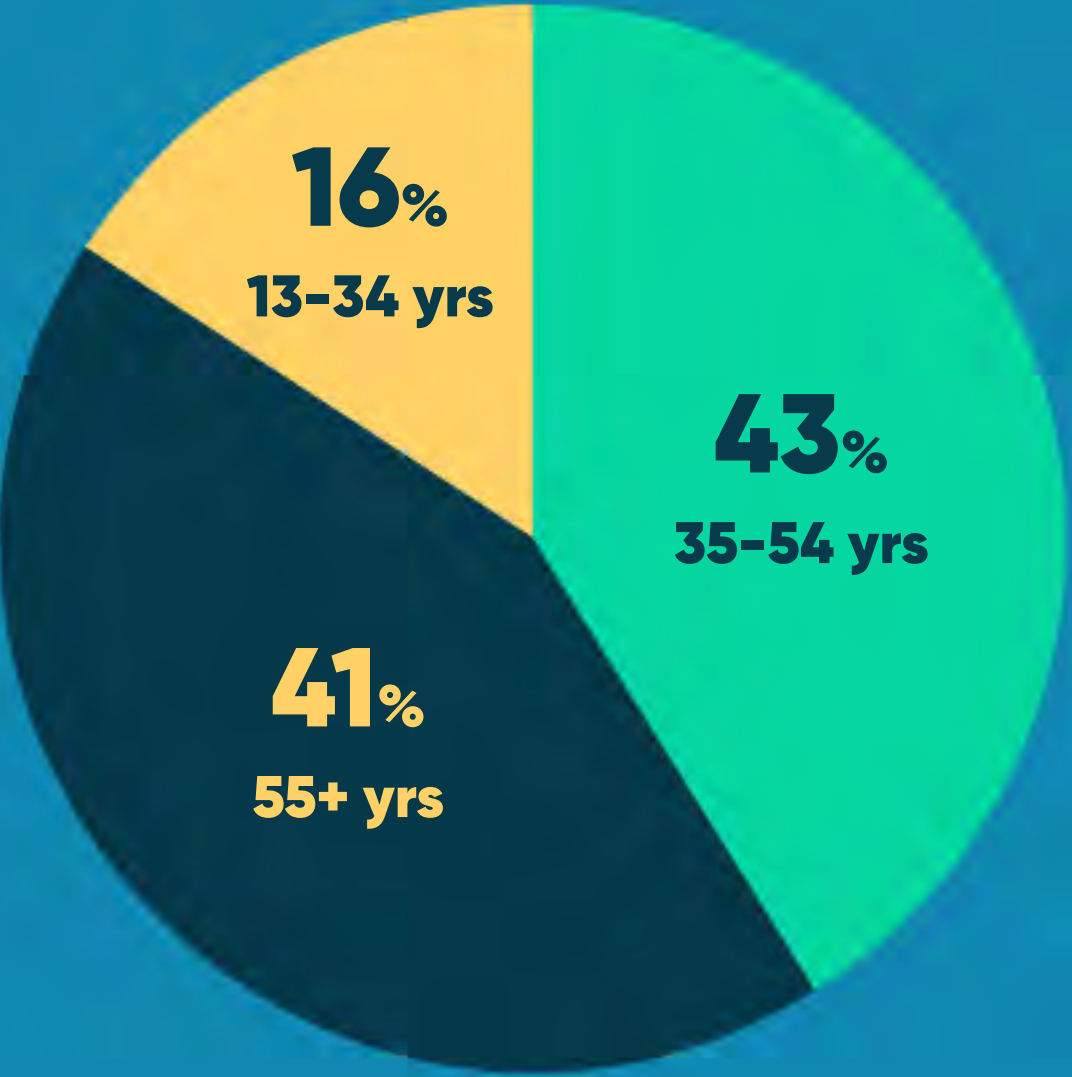
contributor





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# participation statistics



2,339

participants

3,440

contributions

2,458

comments



contributor



Commonplace

#PARKPOWER

# parkologies

Understanding the variety of open spaces in our city is an important first step: we saw that different spaces fulfil different local needs. This has helped inform our recommendations, ensuring that parks remain true to their character and identity that has evolved over the years.



**omniparks**

**where everything  
happens**



**urban  
oases**

**the green lungs  
of our city**



**social  
connectors**

**where we go  
to meet up**



**family  
parks**

**where we spend time  
with our loved ones**



**active  
parks**

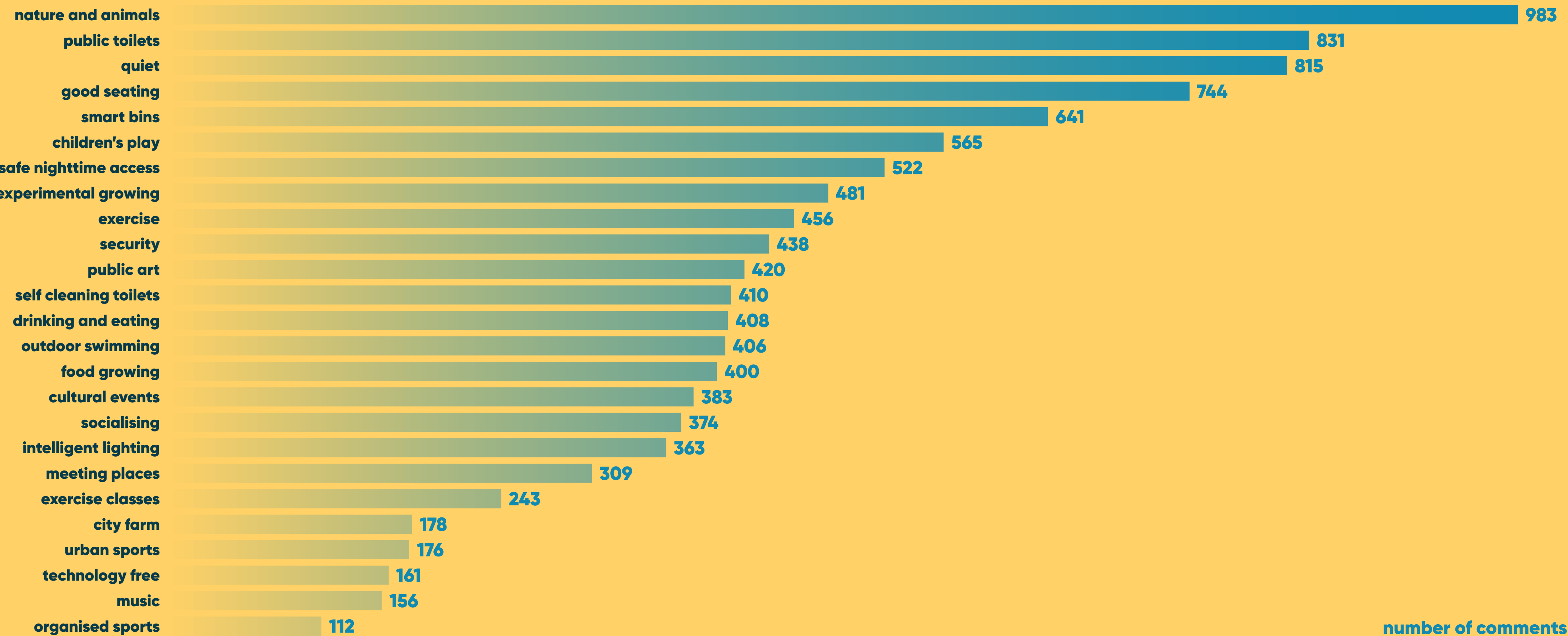
**exercising and  
traveling through**

contributor



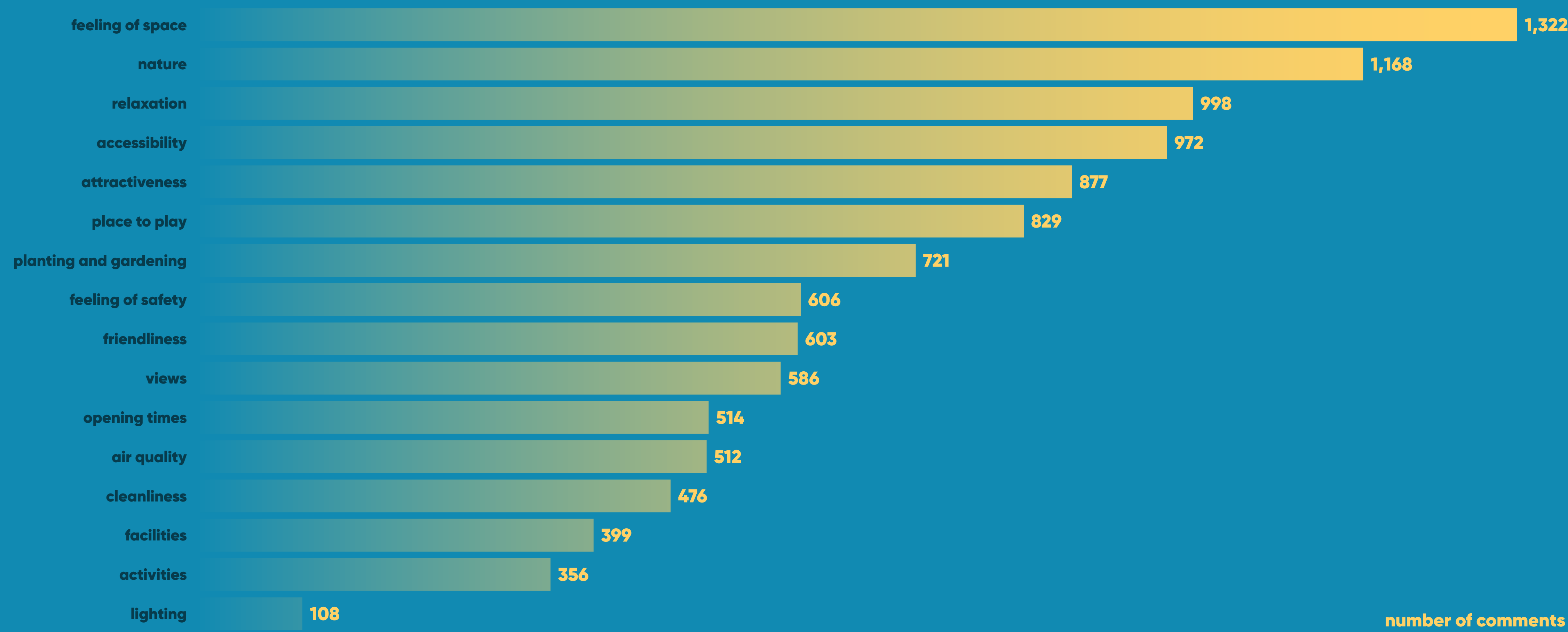
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we asked people what they would like to see in future green spaces



#PARKPOWER

we also asked people what's great about their green space



contributor





**#PARKPOWER**

# recommendation themes

**access  
to nature**

**health  
+  
wellbeing**

**social value  
+  
inclusivity**

**technology**

**zero  
carbon**

**active travel  
+  
accessibility**

**culture**

**public  
engagement**



# access to nature

*"London is the world's first National Park City and almost half of it is green space, making a major contribution to our health and wellbeing. We need to ensure parks meet the needs of future populations as well as those of the other species that inhabit them. Having a positive vision for a park of the future, based on input from Londoners, is a big step in the right direction."*

**Dan Raven-Ellison**

**Founder of London National Park City**



access to nature

# embracing nature in our city

**At a time when we are in a climate and ecological emergency, a global pandemic and London has just been made the world's first national park city, the time to consider and implement the future of our parks and green spaces has never had such momentum nor importance.**

**The public contributions made clear how much people value access to nature in our capital. London is renowned for being one of the greenest cities in the world, however many of our parks consist of vast areas of grass, increasingly becoming dusty brown deserts in our ever hotter summers.**

**Our parks can work harder to support wildlife, be more ecologically rich and in turn provide richer green oases for people to enjoy.**

contributor

SPACEHUB





access to nature

# community responses

Key stats:

**28%** of people valued space and nature in their green space

With **9%** of responses wanting to see more nature and animals/city farms in their park of the future

*"Nature is so important in this densely residential space. So many of us around here don't have gardens."*

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# wilding

**In order for more people to have access to nature, we have to make more space for nature in our city. The resounding feedback is that people value spending time in parks that feel natural. London already has world-renowned green credentials, though the distribution of these green spaces is uneven. Nature can reside in our city at any scale from a pocket park to the large-scale omniparks.**

**There is an opportunity to make nature more prevalent in our parks, to add green between the already existing parks and make our cities wilder and more wildlife friendly.**







# Make space for returning wilderness.

- Design new plant palettes based on existing soils, geology, aspect and drainage. Use native plants and species suited to the location, make parks work with nature
- Create more green habitats in our parks including biodiverse roofs on existing buildings, living green walls on blank elevations and more wildlife gardens
- Consider dog free zones in appropriate areas so as to not disturb wildlife, particularly during breeding seasons
- Consider green links to connect different parks together such as tree-lined streets. Connecting green spaces enables ecosystems services such as improved air quality, reducing the urban heat island effect and boosting wildlife population. It allows nature to move more easily through a network of green spaces in the city
- Include habitat creation for priority species in order to increase number and type
- Include hibernaculum wherever possible such as log piles, insect hotels and bird boxes







# time

**A common conclusion from the contributions was that people respond positively when parks are well maintained. A potential conflict to creating more natural areas in our parks is when spaces are perceived as untidy or neglected. Maintaining our green spaces in a way that works with nature will help create parks that thrive.**

**Nature can be created in our cities by changing the way we manage our green spaces. A review of where parks can afford to give space over to nature could inform the future of our parks.**







# If we take care of nature, nature will take care of us.



- Decide where educational signage describing the methods and ecological benefits of a more natural aesthetic may be appropriate
- Consider long-term maintenance. More horticulturally and ecologically trained personnel could work to protect our existing ecological assets and work to enhance biodiversity in our parks.
- Community participation in the maintenance and running of parks such as community led projects and 'Friends of the park' groups
- Areas currently maintained as regularly mown lawn could become wildflower meadow
- Consider a review of appropriate places for the creation of habitat islands. Areas could be planted and left to natural succession. They would become biodiverse pockets in the city for nature





# food growing

The idea of experimental growing was very popular with the public. It would connect people to nature in cities and teach young children where food comes from.







# We can start to produce food in new spaces within cities.



- Urban orchards would not only benefit people but also wildlife, by providing a food source for birds and insects
- Linking experimental growing to the climate agenda would mean that sections of parks could be used as test beds, by growing drought tolerant palettes and encouraging best practice for horticulture
- Kitchen gardens and allotments bring communities together and reduce food miles. There are opportunities to link the produce with a park food market or café



# health and wellbeing

*"So many people write to me with mental health related issues and one simple answer is go outdoors and get some fresh air. The park is the perfect environment for that, it doesn't cost a monthly subscription and it gets everyone away from the TV and laptop. I don't know who originated parks but we have a lot to be thankful for. Let's appreciate them and pass down to future generations how important parks are. During this current Lockdown, make use of parks as part of your daily exercise routine, from a slow walk to jogging."*

**Frank Bruno MBE**

**Founder of The Frank Bruno Foundation**





health and wellbeing

# we all need space to think

Parks offer escapism from the urban form. They allow us breathing space in the city and an opportunity to relax in a slower paced, quieter green environment.

The health benefits of spending time outdoors and amongst a natural environment are widely documented. Being active outdoors is scientifically known to increase life expectancy, reducing avoidable medical conditions such as obesity and Type 2 diabetes. Even views of green space can reduce stress levels. In these Covid times, it is evident how much people have appreciated their local park. Many people do not have a garden. Parks have offered a place to meet loved ones in the open air and provide much needed social connection.

The public feedback reiterated the need for quieter contemplative spaces in our parks, space to gather our thoughts and connect with nature.

contributor

SPACEHUB





health and wellbeing

# community responses

Key stats:

**26%** of responses viewed their green spaces as being important for their health and wellbeing

And **23%** of suggestions asked for more space to exercise/play sport and relax in their park of the future

*"The open green spaces are so important for mental and physical wellbeing and they are what makes Hackney such a good place to live! Connection with nature is important too!"*





health and wellbeing, conclusion #1

# escape to the new 'normal'

During lockdown, having access to parks has been fundamental and the appreciation of London's green spaces resonated in most of the comments received. Increased pressure has been put on our parks which has highlighted many ways our parks may have to adapt to the new 'normal'.







health and wellbeing, recommendation #1

**the first London parks were designed as a response to a public health crisis. How can our parks be re-imagined to deliver on their original purpose?**

- Parks should facilitate social interaction. Many people suffer from social isolation and loneliness. Future parks should be designed to set the stage for chance encounters and nurture a sense of community. Providing attractive meeting points, removing barriers, and thoughtful programming of activities can all help
- 'The Parks For Health Project' in Islington seeks to link parks to local health professionals, volunteer groups and leisure providers with a GP referral. 'Social prescribing' encourages inactive residents to participate in a variety of park activities from a healthy walk to a gardening session
- Contemplative spaces are invaluable for people's mental well-being. We should consider blocking unsightly views and buffering traffic noise to create a sense of calm and urban escapism







## health and wellbeing, recommendation #1

- Covid-19 has increased the demand for outdoor exercising. More facilities such as Trim trails or outdoor swimming could be provided
- Consider more covered areas to allow the park to be used in poor weather conditions. These could be used for exercise classes or as dry spaces for children to run around
- The design of future parks must allow for social distancing. Movable or individual seating and flexible use areas should be considered
- More toilet facilities would be a welcome addition for most people







health and wellbeing, conclusion #2

# ecosystem services

**Ecosystem services is a nature-based solution that improves the wellbeing of city dwellers. How much a park or green space contributes to ecosystem services should be integral to the planning of open spaces.**

**Designing a park based on how much it can give back increases the benefits to people, the environment and wildlife. Parks can create healthier, cleaner cities with carbon sequestration, microclimate regulation, and wind and noise reduction improving social and psychological wellbeing.**



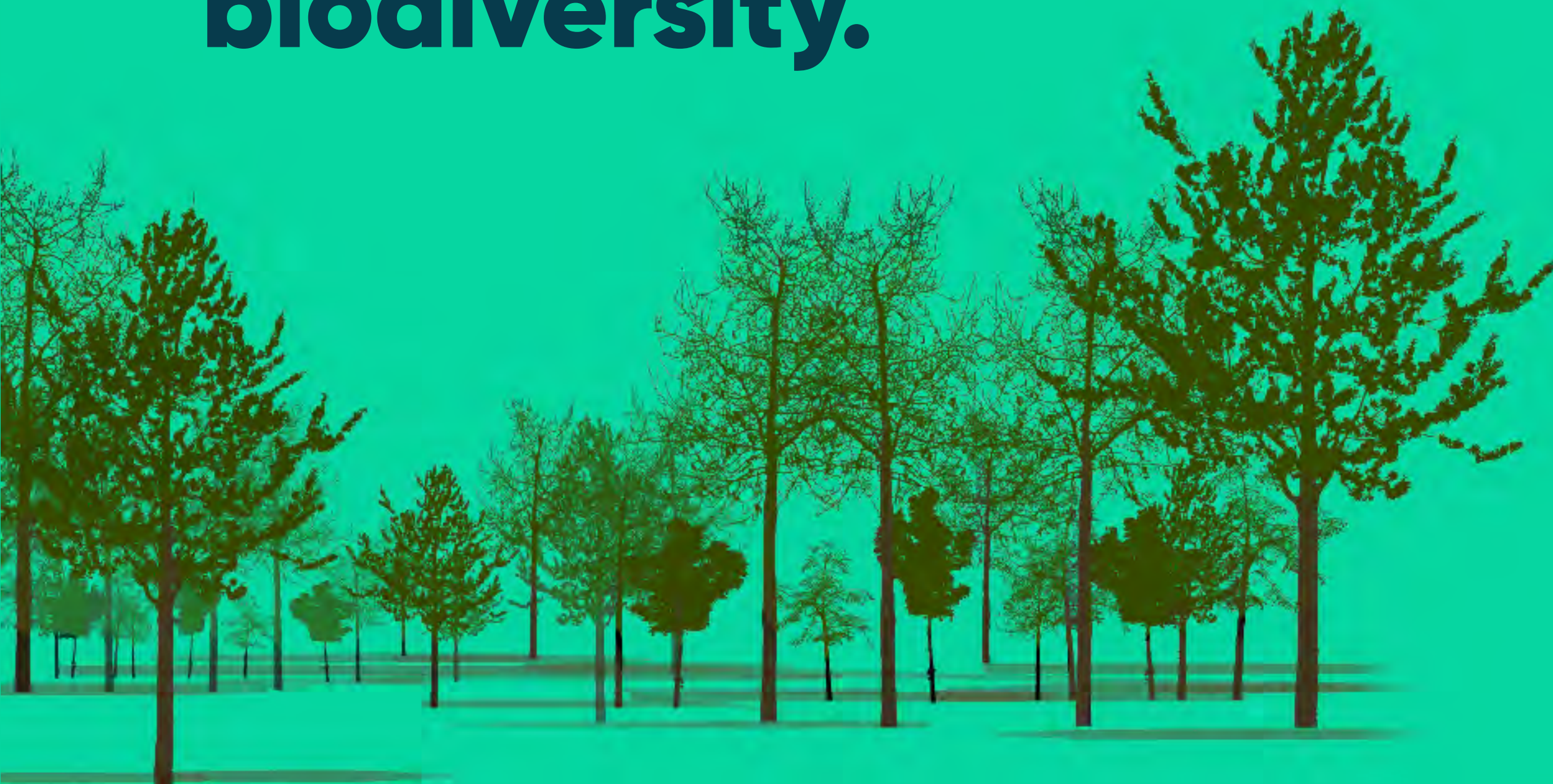




health and wellbeing, recommendation #2

**trees are the best technology nature has for locking away carbon, and they are centres of biodiversity.**

- We should plant more trees. Trees make our cities cooler, reducing the urban heat island effect and making our air cleaner by sequestering CO<sub>2</sub>. Exposure to trees can boost the immune system, lower blood pressure and even increase energy levels. We need more trees in the future of our parks and in the city
- Tree line streets capture particulates and create a more pleasant green network for people to walk through
- Species that are flowering or fruiting increase nature in our cities by being a food source for wildlife. Birds and insects then pollinate and spread seeds which is crucial for the reproduction of plants
- Consider sustainable urban drainage in parks. Rain gardens and swales are not only visually Appealing, they also filter water and slow the amount of run off going into urban drainage systems. Water can be also be harvested for irrigation





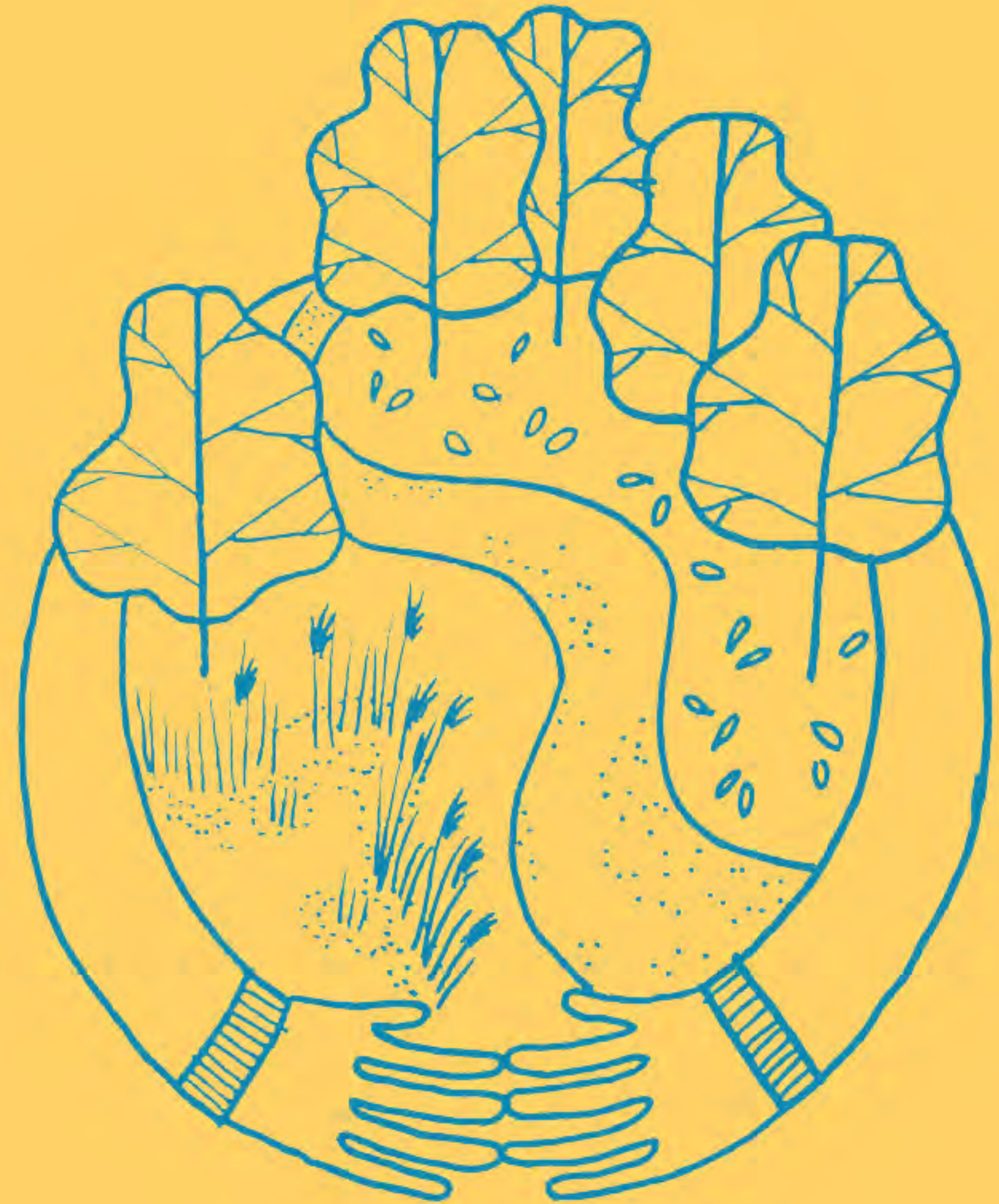


health and wellbeing, conclusion #3

# safety

**Parks are for all. Londoner's experience of parks can vary greatly. Conflict can arise between different user groups. There is no one solution and each park must be assessed to understand where the opportunities and constraints lie in it's functioning.**

**Any changes to our parks should mitigate any potential hazards or safety concerns.**







health and wellbeing, recommendation #3

# design, management and maintenance can transform a park into a welcoming space.

- Consider separating cycle paths from pedestrians. Mixed paths should be sufficiently wide and always have pedestrian priority
- Provide compliant-level access. Many run-down parks have uneven surfacing that can be a trip hazard, particularly to the elderly. Changes to the future of our parks should prioritise renewed surfacing with sufficient grip

- Parks should design out risk using passive surveillance such as attractive facilities for the local community with an active year round programme
- Keeping parks well maintained and the presence of a park warden, or other park staff also can make people feel safer







**social  
value and  
inclusivity**



**social value and inclusivity**

**ensuring  
everyone's  
needs  
are met**

**The idea of providing equitable access to parks permeates every design decision and detail that shapes citizen experiences. To ensure that the park delivers positive change in people's lives, it is crucial to respond to the needs of diverse identities, cultures, physical and mental abilities and age groups.**

**Parks offer multiple benefits to urban citizens, creating a critical infrastructure of open common spaces, that are capable of providing positive impacts on physical and mental health, social engagement and a creative interface with nature.**

**contributor** ForeGrounds





social value and inclusivity

# community responses

Key stats:

**28%** of responses praised their green spaces for  
it's facilities/opening times and accessibility

However **23%** of responses called for improvements  
in providing more meeting places, public toilets and  
better seating

*"Genius conversion of very average London back  
street into a green oasis, with social, environmental  
and economic benefits."*

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Commonplace



social value and inclusivity, conclusion #1

# the right to a green open space

Just like other forms of hard and soft infrastructure, parks are not neutral urban devices. Rather, the uneven distribution of open green spaces highlights and embeds inequalities across London.

This can manifest in terms of where and how much green space exists in certain neighbourhoods, how much is invested by the local boroughs to ensure they are maintained in good condition, and ongoing processes of green gentrification.





**social value and inclusivity, recommendation #1**

**ensure that the right to a green, open space is more evenly distributed and sensitively responds to local needs, assets and risks and benefits.**

- **Assess and allocate investment in new public spaces based on spatial and social analysis of functional and cultural needs, ensuring that all interventions are designed with sensitivity to local citizens' ways of life, identities, demographics and existing placemaking assets and initiatives**

- **Highlight contested spaces and analyse possible interventions for risks and benefits that they may bring to the area**
- **Ensure that opportunities for income generation (energy production, energy saving, renting out to cafes etc.) are harnessed but incomes and cash flows are ringfenced to support enhanced maintenance and public space provision**
- **Invest in existing and/or new green spaces, including close-to-home parks, pocket gardens and streets that can be identified as play streets for temporary use where large green spaces are unavailable**
- **Allocate public resources in a way that ensures adequate maintenance including design solutions that reduce the consumption of resources (water, fertiliser, labour, electricity, etc)**
- **Put in place monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to support ongoing interventions ensuring positive impacts are maximised and negative ones are reduced**



**social value and inclusivity, conclusion #2**

# **socially sustainable landscapes**

**The social value of a park rests in its ability to mean different things to different people, as its characteristics contribute to shaping people's experiences of living in the city together. To ensure that the park enhances people's quality of life, it is crucial that designs respond to the needs of diverse identities, cultures, physical and mental ability and age groups.**







social value and inclusivity, recommendation #2

# **invite diversity by developing spaces that eschew single forms of use and encourage different patterns of behaviour to emerge.**

- Design adaptive spaces – rather than fitting out play and exercise areas with equipment that prescribes uses and requires costly maintenance, use design to encourage users to improvise and utilise in the parks landscape in unforeseen ways without causing damage to the physical, natural and social functionality of the space
- Experiment with playful landscapes that encourage creative play through landform and planting design
- Create experiences that allow for an immersive engagement with nature and with social groups
- Embed places for immersive engagement with nature and social interaction into the design
- Plan safe resting and circulation spaces that support users' enjoyment of the park at different hours, maintain adequate distancing when necessary, and access different areas with confidence
- Consider paving, signage, lighting, seating, comfort stations, zoned areas for dogs, ball games, and food preparation, with a long-term view of maintenance budgets without compromising functionality and design



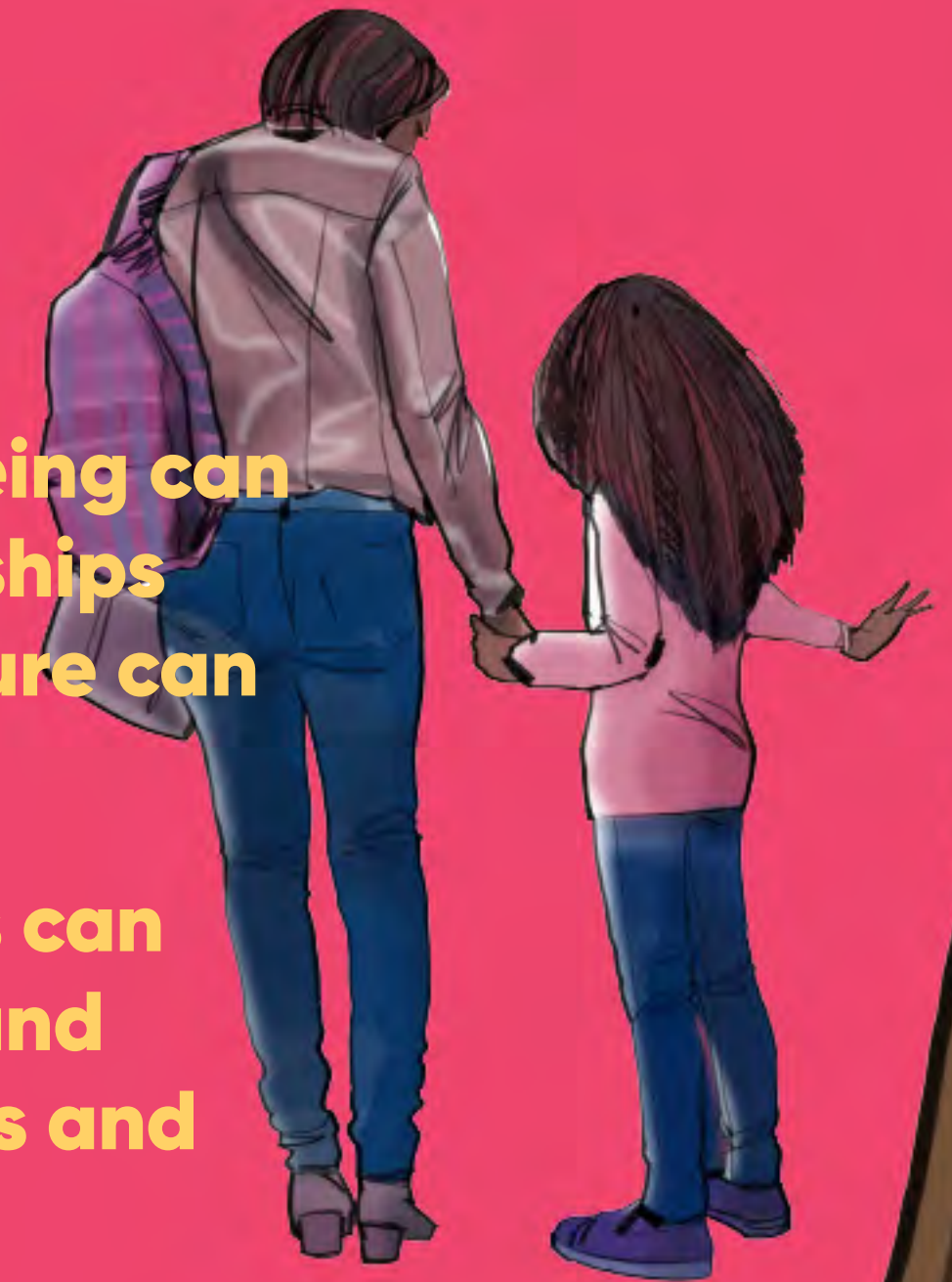


social value and inclusivity, conclusion #3

# inclusive places

The social value of parks can be maximised by considering how multiple dimensions of wellbeing can be accommodated, and how the interrelationships between people's lives, urban spaces and nature can deliver positive impact to all three.

Designing both finished and unfinished spaces can help to stimulate engagement, participation and creativity, while distributing different functions and environmental typologies in the landscape.







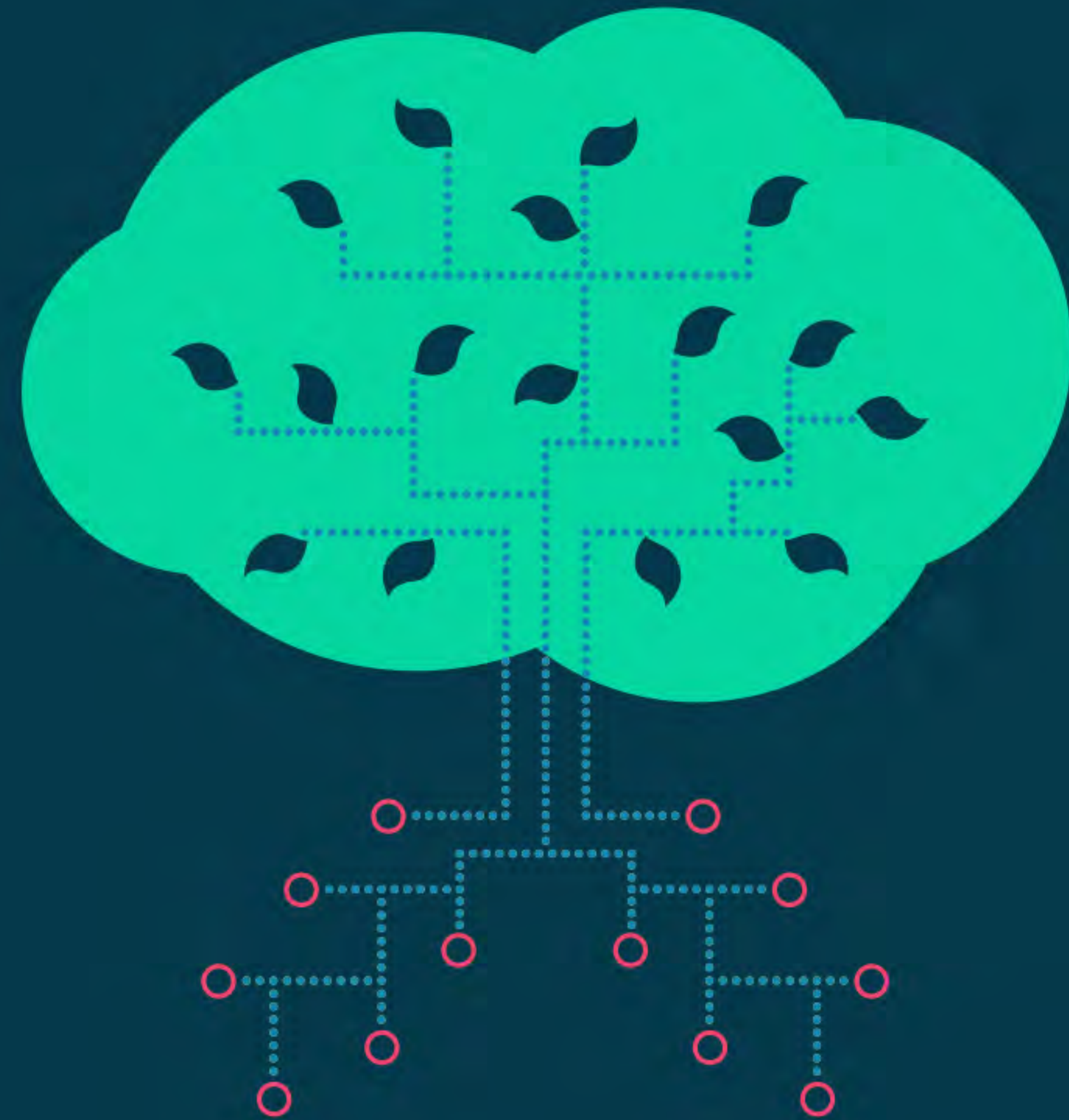
**social value and inclusivity, recommendation #3**

# **design for multiple dimensions of wellbeing by making room for co-design and co-creation as a foundation for placemaking.**

- **Consider how existing or new public spaces can foster community creativity, engagement and local identity-building, for example via food growing, community gardening, crowdsourcing or participatory budgeting**
- **Seize opportunities to use public spaces as places where communities can engage with delivering services to those in need e.g. soup kitchens, community gardens for the elderly**
- **Work with partners who can benefit from the space to further education, entertainment, and sports uses**







**technology**





technology

# taking steps to future proof our parks

New digital technologies are redefining how we live, work and play. Using real-time data to make informed decisions based on user input, as well as anonymous data capture, can improve many aspects of our lives and, in this case, the health and future of our parks.

From the monitoring of air quality to understanding how spaces are being used in a park, there are many opportunities in harnessing the benefits of technology, to suit the needs of a park and its users.

This section of the e-book explores how small, sympathetic changes in the infrastructure of a park can enable positive change. It also shows how technology can make our parks more inclusive spaces, become a platform for community engagement and interaction and set the standard on green energy generation, supporting 'net zero' efforts.

contributors



CRAFTY FISH

SIEMENS







## what technology can do



**monitor  
park  
health**



**create  
renewable  
energy**



**enable  
community  
engagement**



**educate  
and  
inform**



**ensure  
a safer  
park**

## what technology should not do



**disturb  
the  
wildlife**



**spoil the  
natural  
aesthetic**



**waste  
finite  
resources**



**spy  
on the  
public**



technology

# community responses

Key stats:

**10%** of people wanted technology that would help improve the park experience e.g. smart bins, self cleaning toilets and intelligent lighting

*"Smart lights and technology will aid sustainability and be reactive to weather, lowering the carbon footprint of the park."*

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Commonplace

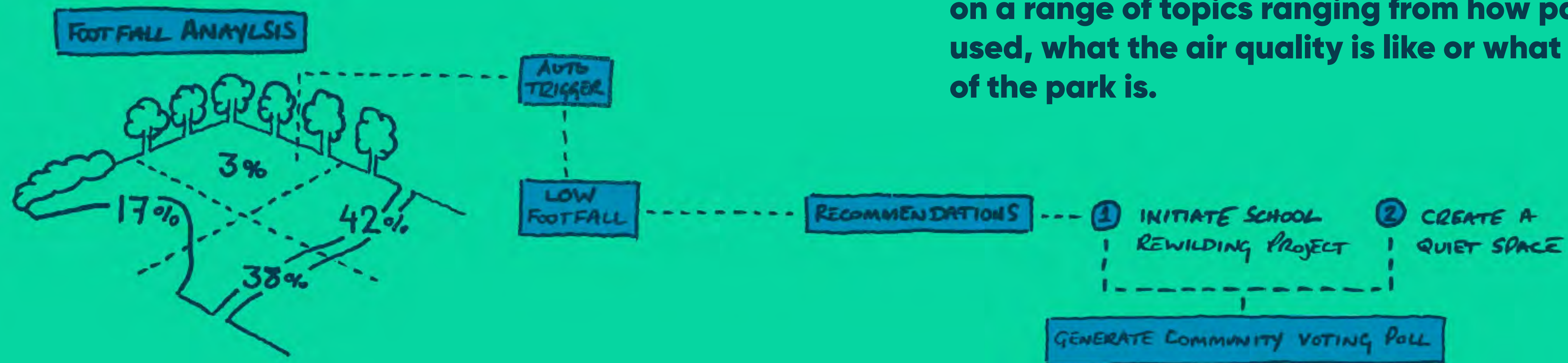




# using data to inform decisions

Urban parks are dynamic multi-use spaces with less structure than the buildings that often surround them. Data can be difficult and costly to gather, is quickly out of date and makes evidenced-based decision making difficult and unreliable.

Like the buildings we work in, parks have the potential to capture the real time data on how they are being used, to make the right decisions for the park and its users. Deploying an enabling layer of technology to capture data using connected sensors is a first step to understanding and making decisions on a range of topics ranging from how park space is used, what the air quality is like or what the condition of the park is.





# an enabling layer of technology to drive decision making

- Understand space and air quality – deploy sensors to anonymously measure space usage, by times of day and gather air quality data.
- Use existing park assets such as benches, buildings, and lighting solutions to host an unobtrusive layer of technology.
- Create a model to capture and analyse data from parks using existing available technology that can be constantly updated forming a true picture of park usage and status.
- Install smart bins with sensors that can notify when full and provide publicly available data of how much waste is being collected.







# using technology to engage

Digital engagement with the local park can create enhanced relationships between users, their community, and the park space. Providing multiple digital touchpoints ensures all types of users are engaged. A common digital platform, which also includes physical communication points, for London parks would provide a portal for engagement, working across multiple digital formats.

Social media has a role to play as a virtual community enabler and a source of information on how people interact with a park as well as the ability to engage local stakeholders such as businesses, community groups, wellbeing, educational and environmental platforms.





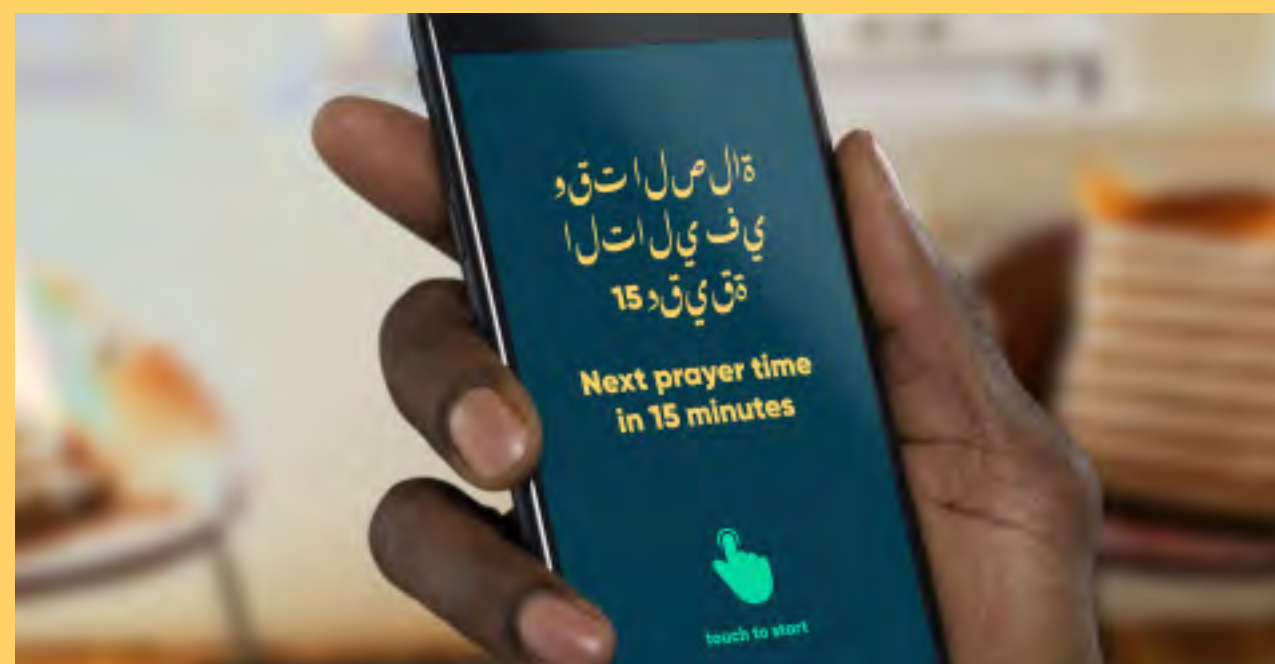


# creating a common digital platform to enhance the community's ability to engage

- Multiple ways of access, providing a common way for park users and the wider community to engage with the space.
- Digital touch points located in the park, replicating the basic services of an app that is accessible to all.



- Park-specific topics displayed such as weather, safety, transport, community info and park events.
- Links to third party info such as fitness apps and resources for those seeking to use the park for exercise e.g. busy times, opening hours etc.







# creating a richer park experience

A park digital platform including data gathered from sensors and digital engagement supports the creation of additional park services and a richer experience for the users – where the space works for them and becomes more inclusive.

Many of these digital services are common in buildings but should be adapted and made specific for parks. These include 'way-finding' in the park environment and vicinity; maps and amenities, booking of spaces and facilities or even parking and/or electric vehicle/micro mobility charging or hire.



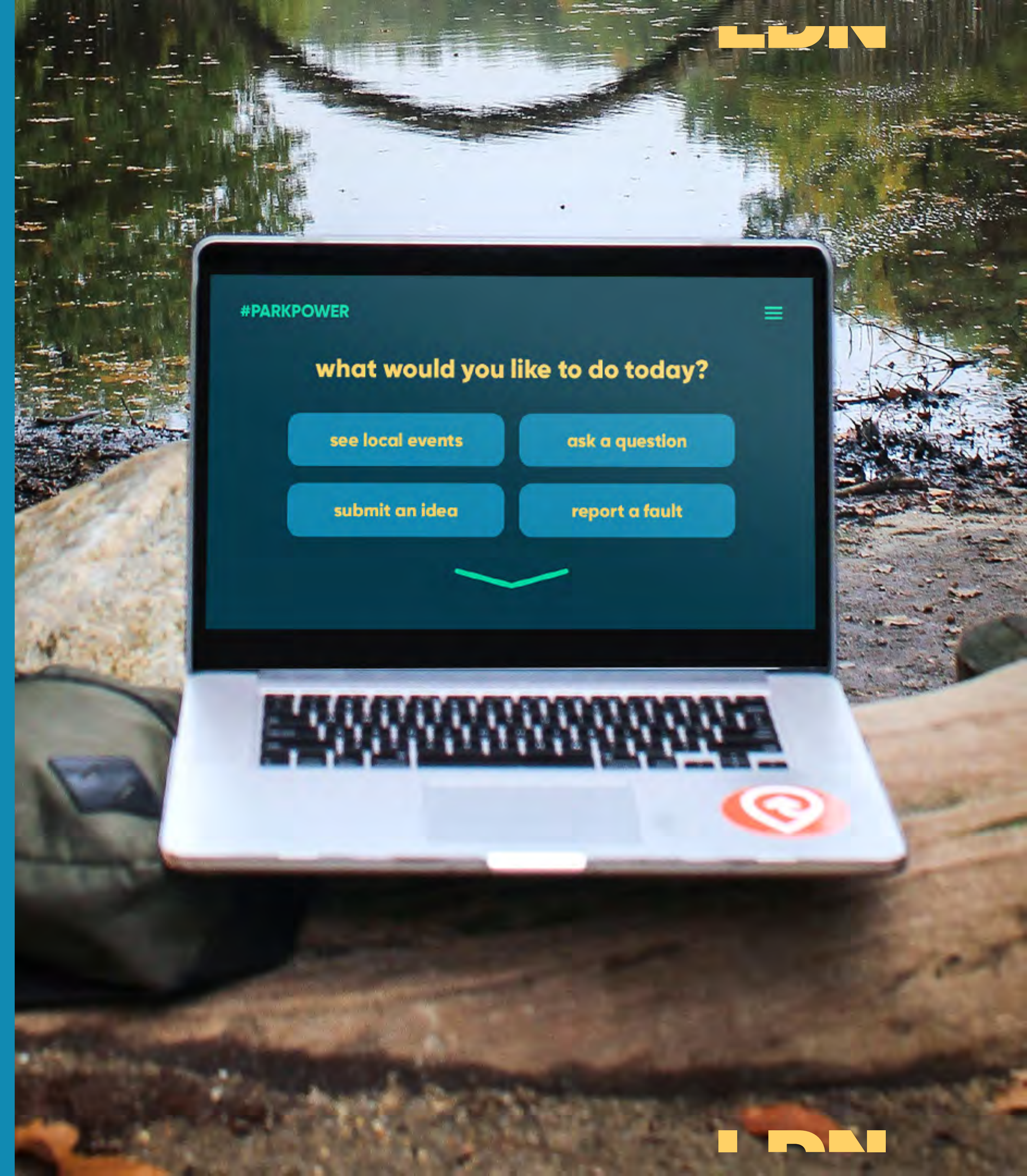




technology, recommendation #3

# creating additional services to enrich the park experience

- Prioritise park-user services for development based on user preferences/requests from platforms such as Commonplace – tailored by park type to ensure relevance.
- Identify the data needed to make the user services effective. For example, to enable fault reporting sensor-based location data or QR codes could be used to identify a location or an asset that needs attention.
- Blending technologies and data to create services e.g. combining technology such as location sensing with CCTV, smart lighting and geo-fencing to enhance park user safety.







technology, conclusion #4

# smart park lighting

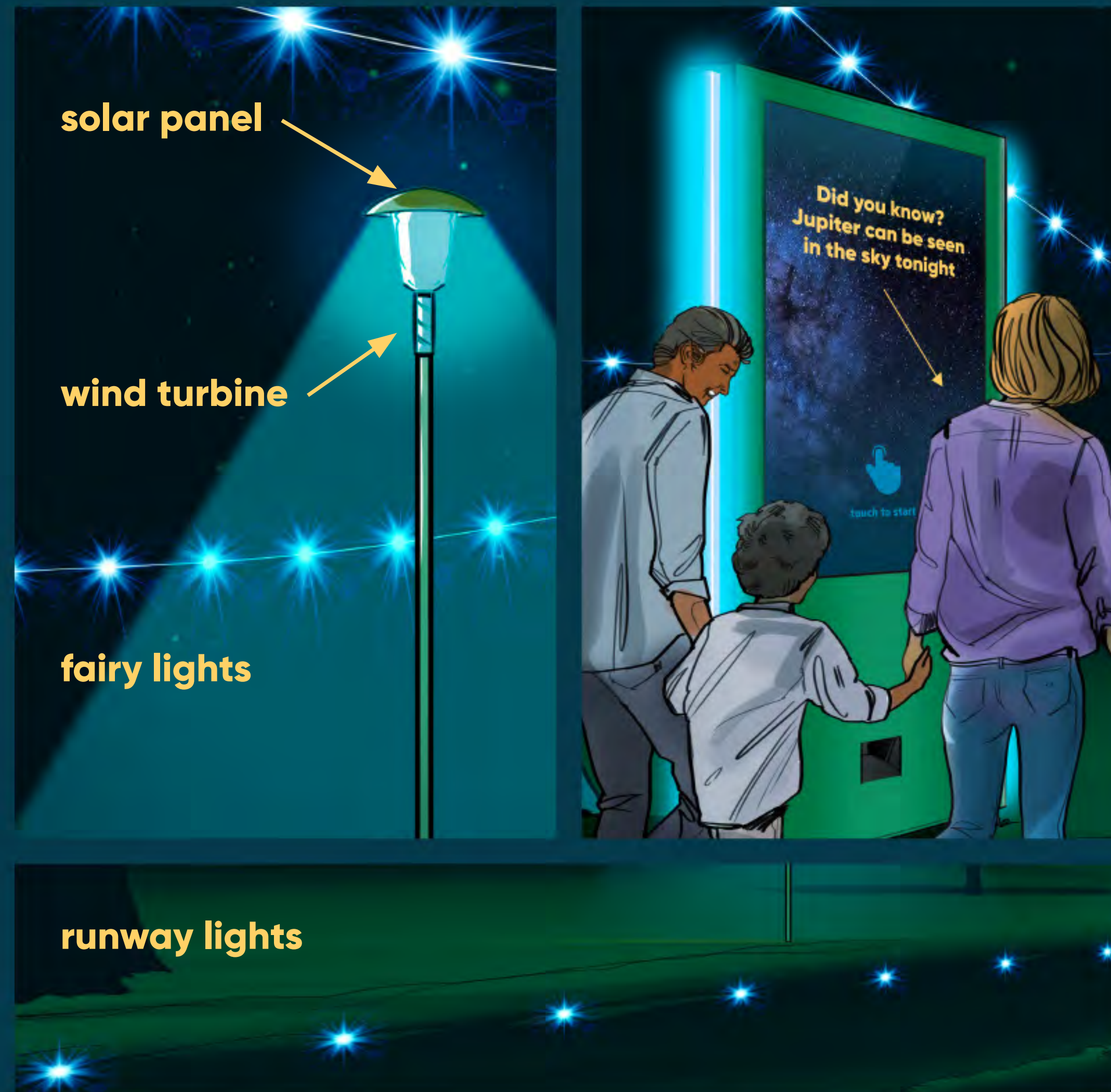
Use of smart connected LED lighting can make parks more attractive, safer, energy efficient and beneficial to all users, including wildlife. LED lighting is far more energy efficient than other earlier lighting technologies but is also far more flexible in how it can be used for lighting pathways, entrances, activity areas, landscape, and park features. As well as creating ambience, installed lights can accommodate a wide range of important sensors and, when connected, can become the digital central nervous system of the park.



LED

LED





## improve parks with smart and adaptable lighting

Develop best practice lighting design options for different park types and different use areas within the park. Minimise disturbance to wildlife with careful positioning and aiming of lights, and to be good neighbours and not intrude on homes near the park.

- Develop best practice lighting design options for different park types and different use areas within the park.
- Define lighting standards for safety in parks, like recognised lighting standards for buildings.





# parks can be a beacon for sustainability

Urban parks are precious and valuable resources and must become sustainable in both energy efficiency and environmental impact. To do so will increase the value of these resources to local communities, enhancing their role and standing. Technology has a major role to play in enabling this change in value perception as well as meeting the key objectives.

A park will consume energy for its services but also has opportunities for energy generation through technologies such as solar power and kinetic

generation, as well as being a place that can provide energy and environmental services.

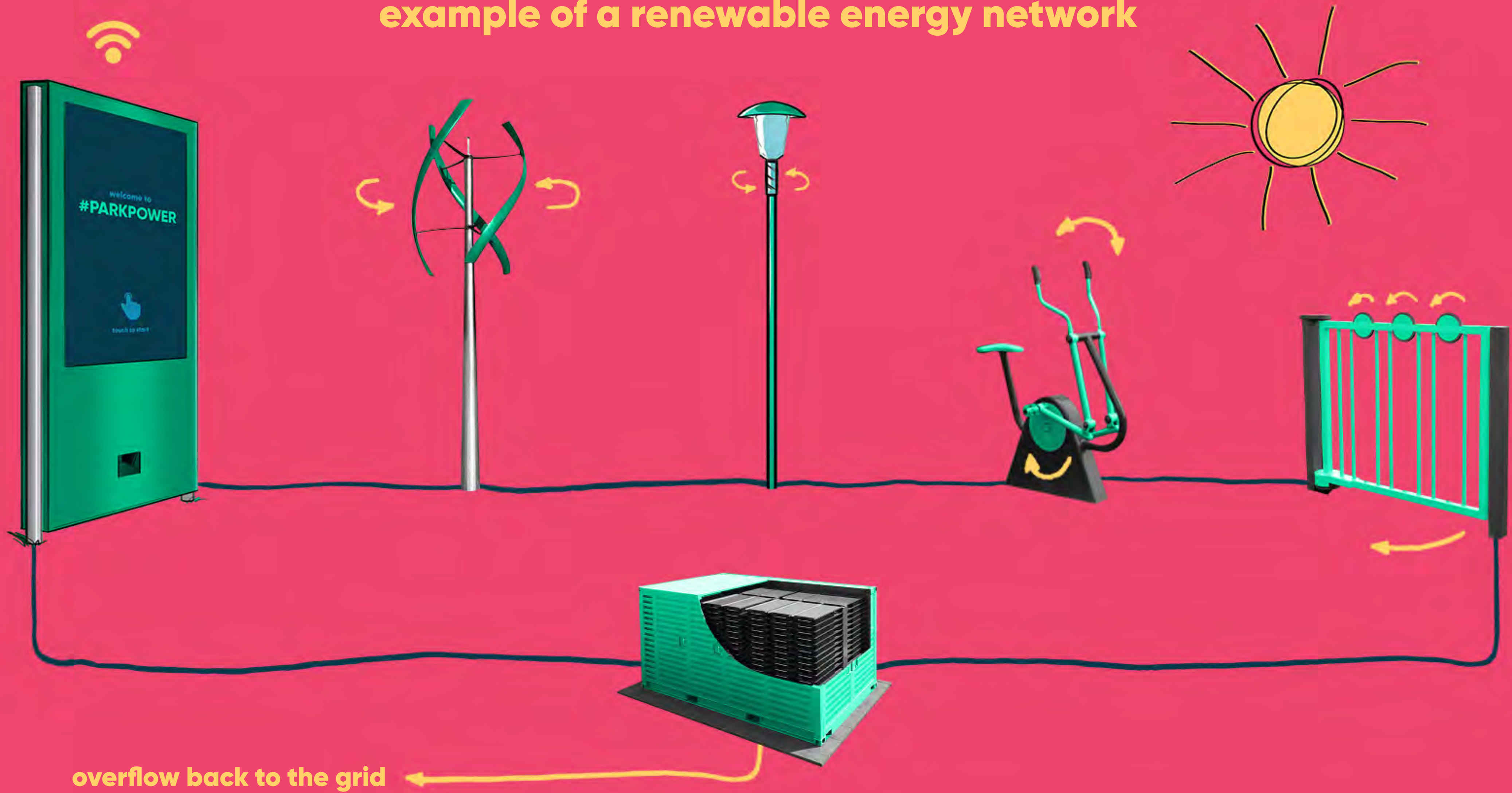
Perhaps one of the most important roles for urban parks is CO<sub>2</sub> capture. Technology to measure and calculate the contribution of a park in this regard can become an important method of assessing and reporting the park's ongoing value to the community.







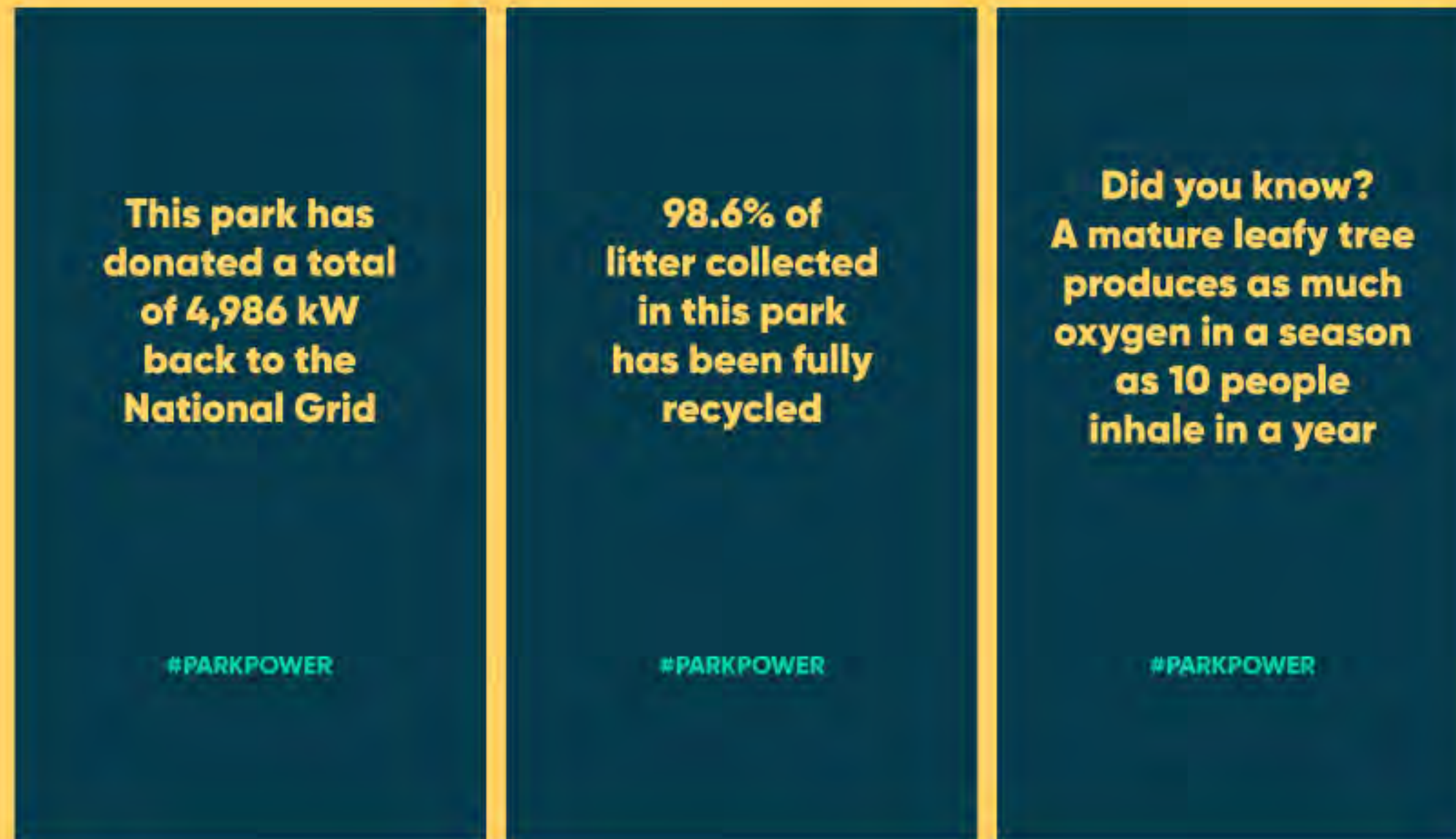
## example of a renewable energy network







# driving awareness of sustainability and a platform to demonstrate it



- Energy and CO<sub>2</sub> transparency – energy usage in parks might be limited compared to a building but understanding it can drive decisions.
- Energy production – enable parks to be energy autonomous, integrating unobtrusive micro generation solutions into the park environment to reduce costs and CO<sub>2</sub> – and as a means of engaging park users in the benefits of sustainability.
- Use digital engagement to spread the message about the park's natural attributes and contribution to environmental impact.





**zero  
carbon**





zero carbon

# achieving net zero

**The Climate Crisis is now part of all our lives and has a direct and increasing impact on our open spaces.**

**Climate change is altering the very nature of London's parks. In mid-summer we now see parched brown grass instead of the green open spaces we love. Increasing carbon emissions and our planet warming up are directly responsible for this. However, we can make a direct positive impact, and this means reducing all our carbon emissions.**

**The processes of improving and managing our parks' natural capital can also contribute positively to reducing climate change impacts and achieving 'net zero' parks. This can be through better product choices, use of recycled materials and by maximising tree and other planting. Together we can achieve 'net zero'.**

contributor

targeting  
zero





zero carbon

# community responses

## Key stats:

**6%** of people are already involved with planting and gardening in their current green spaces

**7%** of responses called for more farming of their own food and experimental growing in the future

*"In a polluted world it absorbs the pollutants we create and allows us to enjoy clean air"*

*"Sustainability in all aspects e.g. planting for pollinators, compost toilets, no single use items in any facilities, composting and recycling facilities."*

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Commonplace





zero carbon, conclusion

# sowing the seeds

Reducing carbon emissions in our parks has to start with the way we design and create them and therefore requires strong design principles to set a high environmental standard.

We need to think of carbon emissions in the same way as gravity and sunlight, a design fundamental. We need to think of our parks as organisms that will evolve over time and therefore need to age well and respond to natural cycles.

All materials used in their creation are on loan from the environment and should be used so that they can be returned without environmental damage. We need to think long term so that future climate change is understood and integrated into today's designs.







# we have a chance to get it right

To reduce emissions from our parks we need to start with what is already on the site and maximise its reuse. We should also design to introduce the minimum of new material and that material should be from recycled or renewable sources and from non-oil based products.

New planting and trees should be selected for a long life, and to suit a changing climate. New elements such as paths, play areas and seating should be highly durable and long lasting. Wild areas are important for encouraging wildlife habitat and community enjoyment. We need to design our parks to have different experiences in tune with the natural seasonal cycles.

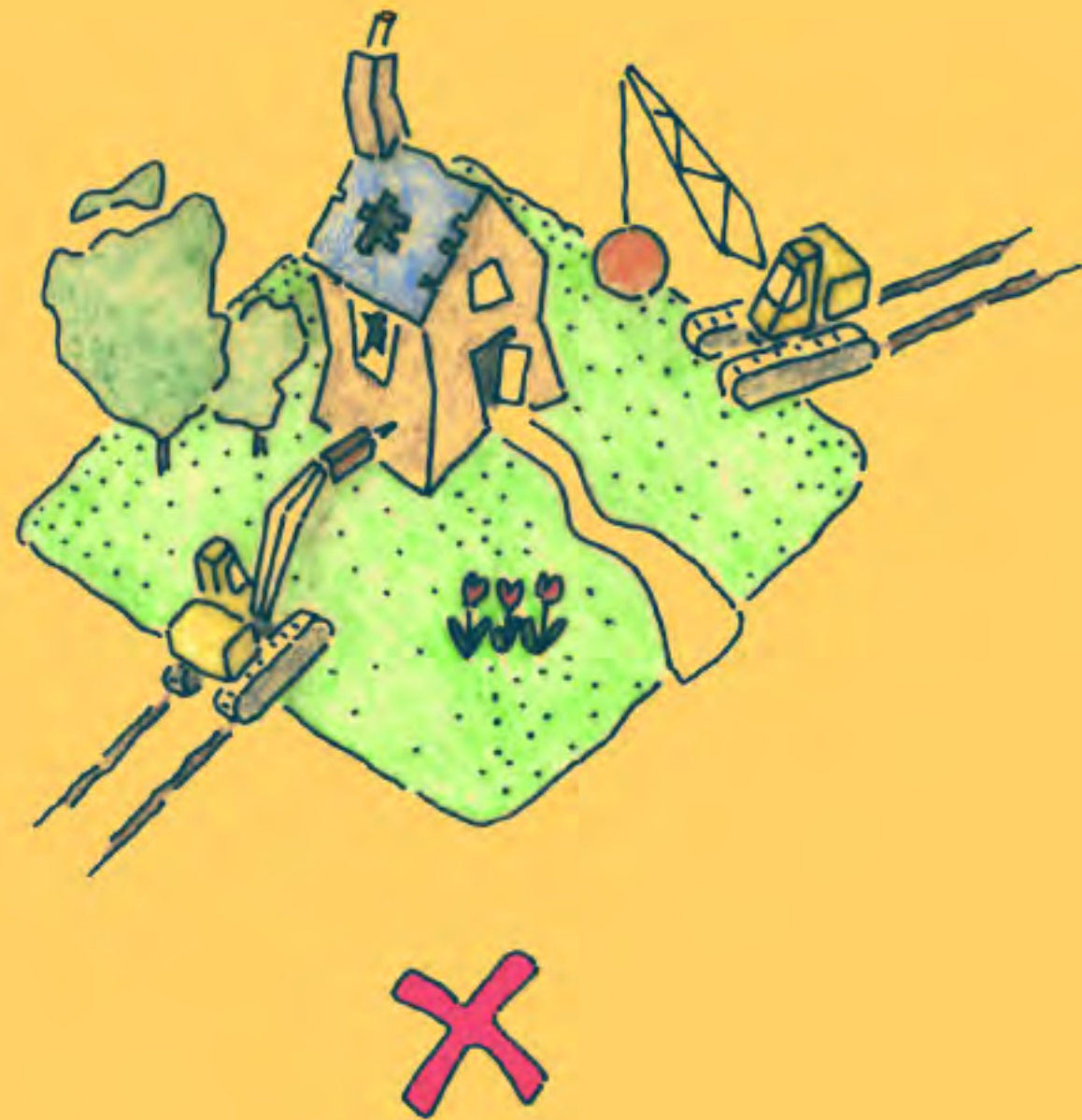
The following recommendations highlight the design principles required for minimising carbon emissions.







## zero carbon, recommendations



**work with what you already have**  
maximise the retention of existing materials,  
flora, fauna and structures



**minimise restructuring or  
new works to the site**  
moving earth, changing levels is carbon intensive





zero carbon, recommendations



**aim to minimise maintenance**

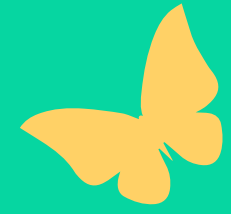
for new materials and planting  
maximise durability



**avoid using high carbon new  
oil based materials**

such as rubber, synthetic materials and glues





## zero carbon, recommendations



**use natural, renewable sources  
of materials as a priority**

**materials that are reusable or recyclable**



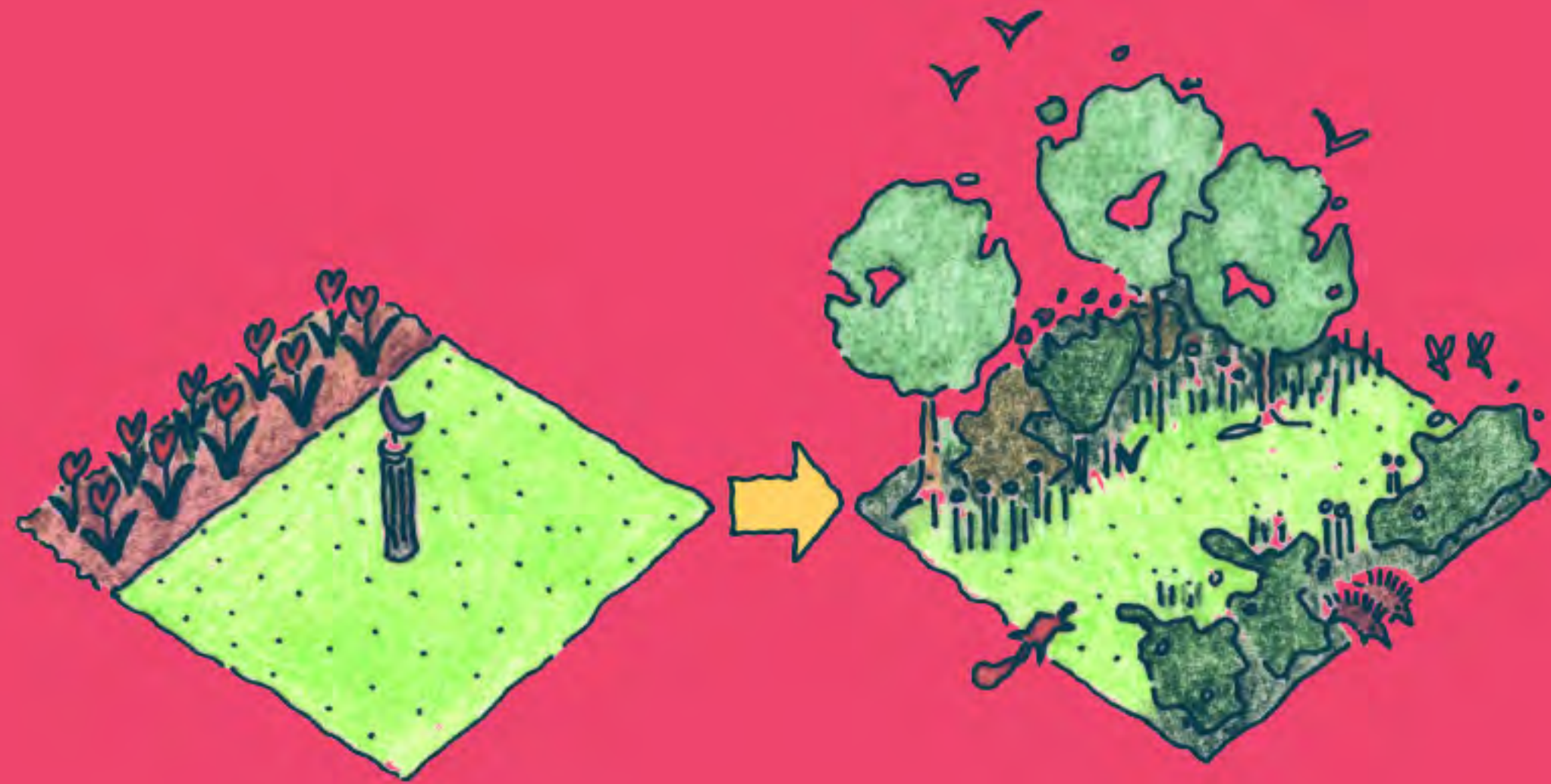
**use recycled materials  
where possible**

**avoid oil based or non-recyclable materials**





**zero carbon, recommendations**



**maximise wilding and  
habitat creation**

**avoid conflict between habitat and park lighting**



**enable education and interaction**

**with natural resources and  
the seasonal changes in the park**





**active  
travel and  
accessibility**





**active travel and accessibility**

# **everyone can find their way**

**London's parks provide fantastic 'green' routes, taking pedestrians and cyclists away from traffic and through some of the most attractive areas of the capital. Pedestrians comprise the majority of visitors but with many other users including cyclists, provision for all visitors needs to be balanced to maintain a high-quality experience and to preserve the tranquillity of the parks that Londoners cherish.**

**From children learning to ride a bike or scooter, to office workers participating in active travel to commute to their place of work, or walking groups for recreational exercise, parks are often the first port of call for active travel. Despite this, existing urban design best practice for walking and cycling primarily relates to road environments.**

**This section of the e-book will explore how changes can be made to infrastructure and facilities to ensure inclusive and accessible park environments for active travel.**





active travel and accessibility

# community responses

Key stats:

**77%** of all respondents normally travel to their green spaces by walking, cycling or running

With over **3/4** of people travelling to the parks this way, we should design spaces for pedestrians and cyclists to co-exist safely

*"It would be great if active travel to and through the park could be encouraged more e.g. a child friendly cycle route linking local schools (such as Rosendale) into the park."*





active travel and accessibility, conclusion #1

# priority for pedestrians

Visitors cycle in London parks for many different reasons including for leisure but also to transit on their way to an onward destination. Speed limits do not always apply to cyclists within parks so fast cycling can impinge on other users' enjoyment of the same space. This is also at odds with one of the key reasons why Londoners enjoy their parks – to escape and connect with nature.

This problem has been amplified by the use of apps that encourage time trials in scenic locations and through increases in the volume of cyclists using parks for commuting purposes.







**active travel and accessibility, recommendation #1**

# **resolve the tensions that exist between modes of travel**



- **Create more design cues that help visitors understand expected behaviours**
- **Widen substandard shared paths which are on key desire lines to increase capacity and improve pedestrian comfort levels**
- **Consider the potential for dedicated 'wheeled routes' around the edges of parks for utility cycling**
- **Improve wayfinding and signage in line with Legible London principles to direct cyclists to more appropriate routes**
- **Regularly monitor footpath demand in high footfall locations to ensure they are fit for purpose and appropriate for their usage**
- **Consider a design guide for walking and cycling in parks – much of the existing guidance is focused on urban environments**
- **Develop Kitemark style standards for parks incorporating active travel**





active travel and accessibility, conclusion #2

# make parks accessible

Access to parks can be difficult because main roads can sever access and create a barrier to their use. The location of access points is often related to historical considerations such as land ownership but don't necessarily reflect recent changes to surrounding land uses.

Visitors can find the interface between quiet parks and main roads confronting as there is often very little transition between the two. Widely spaced park entrances can funnel cyclists and pedestrians to key pinchpoints which can increase the risk of conflict with other road users.







# improve safe access to parks



- Provide parallel crossings or signal controlled crossings to separate cyclists and pedestrians at key arrival points and provide more space
- Consider increasing the permeability of parks to surrounding areas but being careful to retain their natural character
- Increase signal green times for pedestrians at junctions adjacent to park entrances to reflect their increased use by children and the elderly.
- Create a sense of arrival or indication of a transition to promote increased awareness that users are entering a park environment
- Consider access typologies that reflect the needs of pedestrian, wheelchair, scooter and cycle users in different contextual settings.





# improve parking facilities for cyclists and e-scooters

Well located, secure and sheltered cycle and escooter parking facilities enable users to be able to stop and dwell in parks for longer and can increase spend.

However, an absence of or a shortage in facilities can lead to inconsiderable parking which can impinge on access and reduce visual amenity.







**Inadequate parking and a lack of facilities can encourage users to drive rather than cycle to parks, adding to problems with local congestion and impacts on noise and air quality.**

- Consider the development of cycle parking standards to provide a yardstick for identifying likely level of demand for facilities
- Locate parking away from main pedestrian thoroughfares to reduce the potential for conflict but still close enough for natural surveillance
- Consider use of sheltered parking facilities that enhance the natural setting rather than detract from it – such as the use of green roofs.







active travel and accessibility, conclusion #4

LDN

# facilitate year-round active travel use

The use of parks for active travel purposes will vary considerably depending on the season. In the Spring, concerns have been expressed about poorly maintained paths and overhanging vegetation restricting visibility and width.

In Summer, when usage is likely to be highest, concerns about conflicts between cyclists and dog walkers may be more prevalent, whilst in the Autumn concerns might be in relation to slippery paths created by falling leaves and flooding.

In Winter, ungritted paths and dark mornings and evenings can give rise to safety and security issues.

LDN





**Thinking about conditions at different times of the year is therefore important in determining the correct infrastructure design response.**

- **Consider park opening hours in the winter to accommodate early morning and evening commuting patterns**
- **Survey the park at different times of the year to assess usage and pedestrian and cycling needs**
- **Assess visibility lines in all seasons to ensure the safe use of paths and tracks**
- **Consider scope for improvements to lighting in conjunction with habitat considerations.**





**culture**





culture

# the show must go on

Our parks are destinations for leisure and gathering. Particularly with the need to socially-distance physically, people chose to meet in their open spaces to continue their social lives. The advantage to experiencing cultural activity in an open space, is that other activities and vista can be in the periphery. One can see their children play, enjoy birdwatching, get up and leave to grab a sandwich, feel no stress to arriving late or leaving early. In parks, we can see and hear the power of our complete lives happening, in concert.

Any scale park can consider how they will engage with these five recommendations, as people want a variety of experiences for a variety of ages. We recommend using the 'Including Culture in Development' guide created by the Urban Art Forum for the Urban Land Institute to help find the right cultural interventions for any park.

contributors

FUTURE\CITY







# community responses

## Key stats:

Only **8%** of responses valued their local green space for its culture

With **10%** calling for more places for music, art, eating and drinking in the park of the future

*"Over the last six months this has gone from an area I'd never visit to my favourite spot to hang out. The skate park has transformed into a cultural epicenter."*





culture, conclusion #1

# design for culture and play

Consider how the design can make a feature of the environmental responsibility that can encourage all ages to engage with their natural environment. This can be through passive experience – walking through a sound garden, or active engagement through education programming and planting, integration of public art, or how the play equipment is integrated into and or made from the natural environment.



LDN

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culture, recommendation #1

# East Village Green Link & Wetlands



**East Village pulls the green spaces and inventive play spaces of Queen Elizabeth Park through into Victory Park for its residents via The East Village Wetlands. It brings a rich ecosystem of flora and fauna and thriving wildlife that will give way to an education centre, signage and wayfinding, talks and providing ideas for public art. As a gateway and signpost, the Portlands stretch across the Belvedere to the area in front of the Chobham Academy, opening onto green space that will be used for planting, public art, commercial activity and community participation.**





# build to make things happen

The easier it is to do something, the more likely it will happen. Understanding what infrastructure is needed will encourage cultural artists to perform in your park and can attract great opportunities and reduce running costs.

Think about adding dry performance areas, electrical power, wi-fi and wiring; designing natural planting or earth mounds can be acoustic barriers to keep sound directional; capturing and using solar power for speakers. Speak to cultural professionals about matching the capacity to the style of entertainment and type of experience.





culture, recommendation #2

# how can bandstands be made relevant?



Beckenham (Greater London), Kent / UK - Jul 16 2020: The Bowie Bandstand in Croydon Road Recreation Ground, central Beckenham. David Bowie performed here in 1969.

Use them to create a series of free summer concerts in the city's parks, that include a diverse genre of music to cater for a diverse society, with the aim of expanding the use of parks bandstands as community and leisure spaces during the summer evenings and nights. This could also include music from the local community alongside music from well-known performers to help benefit and compliment the community that the park is in.

Smart wiring could be installed on the bandstands, providing eco-friendly energy, including solar powered speakers, enabling them to be used for small dance classes or workshops. Southend-on-sea restored their Victorian bandstand and has hosted Becontree Brass Band, High Voltage Big Band, the South Essex Youth Symphony Orchestra and the Swinging Belles jazz vocal group.





**culture, conclusion #3**

**LDN**

# **a harmony of culture and public art**

**Think about different cultural experiences, the people who will be your public and what types of art may help uplift the sense of place at the earliest stage.**

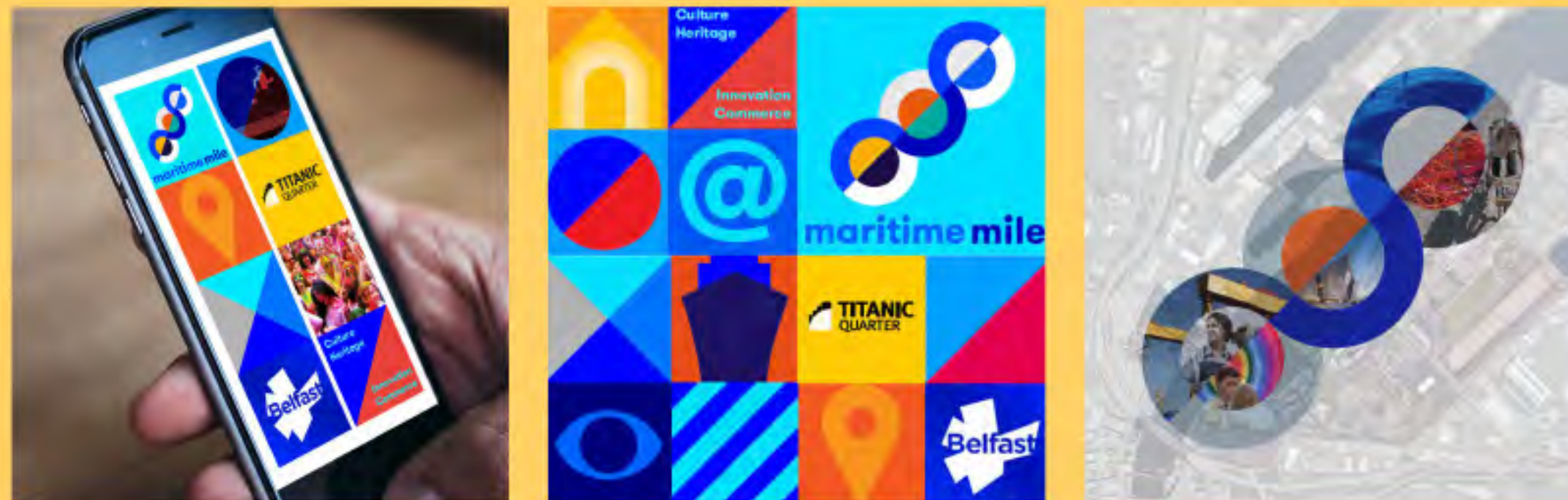
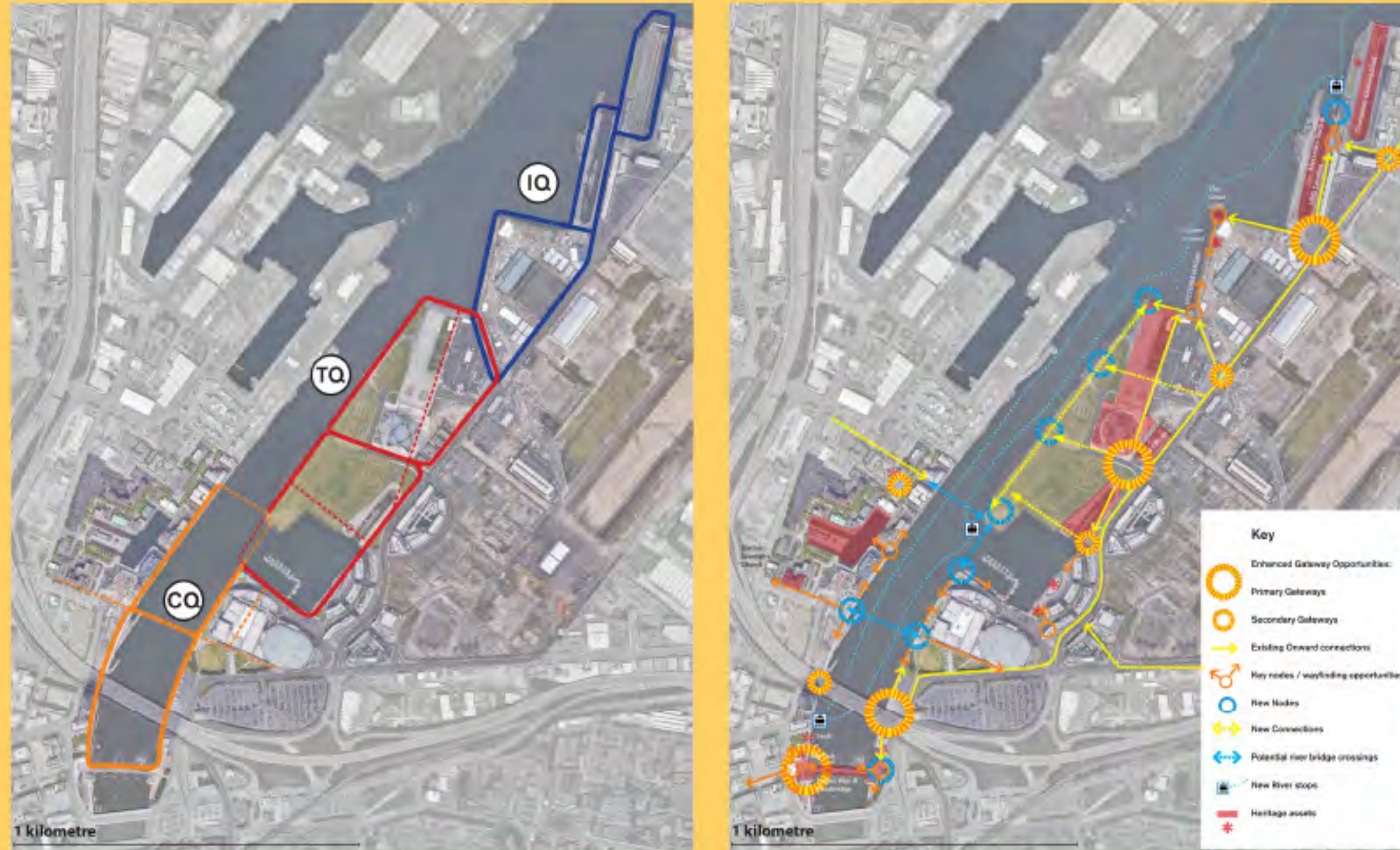
**When considering a masterplan or how to join the open spaces into a more cohesive visitor destination, commission a culture strategy and public art strategy. The joined-up effort also will raise questions of community governance, programming needs and practical considerations for activating the park now and in the future.**

**LDN**





## culture, recommendation #3



Branding by Hat-trick design

# Maritime Mile, Belfast

Northern Ireland's leading heritage waterfront destination is a mile-long stretch along the River Lagan. Their Development & Activation Strategy sets out a vision of 'The Maritime Mile' as a place where generations of dreamers come to make their mark through authentic design, activation and invention celebrating Belfast's future as well as its maritime heritage.

With 12 cultural principles and themes and a new connectivity framework, the 'Links in the Chain', show how each stakeholder can retain their unique character whilst working together to deliver a varied programme of cultural initiatives. These range from landscape improvements and bespoke street furniture to artist residencies and new public art commissions.





culture, conclusion #4

LDN

# time to make new friends

**Audit the existing or new cultural organisations that could be a resident in your park. The pavilion or community hub may be shared with a cultural institution that could run classes, hold rehearsals, have artist studios on display. Having cultural production onsite will generate a dynamism and programming specific to place.**

**Or maybe there is a partnership for outdoor performance that happens in the cultural institution's local park, making a local offer of international reputation.**



LDN





culture, recommendation #4

# Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at Wembley Park

The developer Quintain formed a partnership with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to move its headquarters to Wembley Park this year. Their role as a key arts anchor in the new cultural neighbourhood places music at its heart whilst a new park is being developed.

The partnership was brokered by Futurecity, who helped both parties develop a shared vision to establish a creative hub bringing together education, community outreach, performance, digital projects and administration in a single location and offering infinite programming opportunities.







**culture, conclusion #5**

**LDN**

# **sound and music for the soul**

**Sound and music shapes our experience with the environment. The right composition of sounds can drive endorphins and override the stress receptors to create a powerful connection to time and place. Sound affects our bodies, from our hormone secretions to our heart rates. It improves learning, enhances cognitive performance, activates both hemispheres of the brain and affects our feelings, moods and emotions.**

**Consider how to shape the acoustic experience of place, reach out to sight-impaired audiences, subtly encourage behaviour through positive suggestions.**

**LDN**





culture, recommendation #5

# focus sound and music for surprise, entertainment and guidance

Create picnic areas with acoustic treatment, these could form part of an open free community space that could be utilised for children's parties, community events, community led workshop initiatives.

Smart wiring can be used to provide the spaces with speakers and listening pods. Fitness spaces could also be wired with speakers to create environments that are more conducive to exercise and benefit fitness spaces. Listening pods can also be used as standalone experiences.





# public engagement



*"It is extremely encouraging to see that so many people are interested in making the most of London's green spaces. They are more important now than ever before, especially as we enter a second national lockdown. Spending time in nature has proven benefits to our mental and physical health, especially for people living in more urban, built up areas. We will continue to work together with our partners to maximise the benefits of the capital's green gems."*

**Oliver Sells**

**Chairman for City of London Corporation's  
City Gardens and Open Spaces committee**





public engagement

# shared value in green spaces

**#ParkPower demonstrates just how valued green spaces are across London. The research collected should challenge us to think about how we can better design these treasured assets with the community in mind. Covid-19 has focused attention on the importance of taking community views into account. The way we use and interact with different spaces is changing. These changes need to be reflected in the way we plan our towns and cities. Making sure that our local areas remain relevant, attractive and accessible for all is going to be an ongoing challenge.**

**Fortunately, legislation is in progress and sustained community engagement is seen as the cornerstone upon which improvements must be made. Tools like Commonplace can help do that locally and at scale. The value of ongoing engagement is in joining up local conversations so that people are able to have one holistic conversation about the place they live, work or play.**

contributors



Commonplace

**LDN**  
COLLECTIVE



# let's keep the conversation going...

**To ensure the views of the community are at the heart of future development of green spaces, it is important to have an ongoing dialogue. Creating awareness around the different methods of engagement and the issues to focus on will increase participation and enable more people to take part and have their say.**

**For the conclusions and recommendations of #ParkPower to be truly effective, we must go beyond**

**communicating solely through digital and social channels. We must talk to people on the street, actively engage with local community groups, schools and everyone that has an interest in the future health and vitality of our green spaces.**

**We hope you will be a part of this ongoing conversation and look forward to hearing your views.**





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**download the e-book and help us  
shape the future of our green spaces**

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*we respectfully ask you not to print this e-book, thank you 😊*