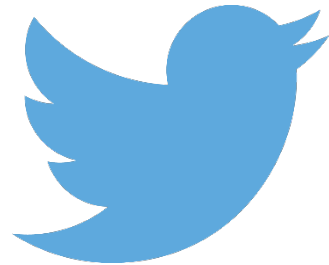




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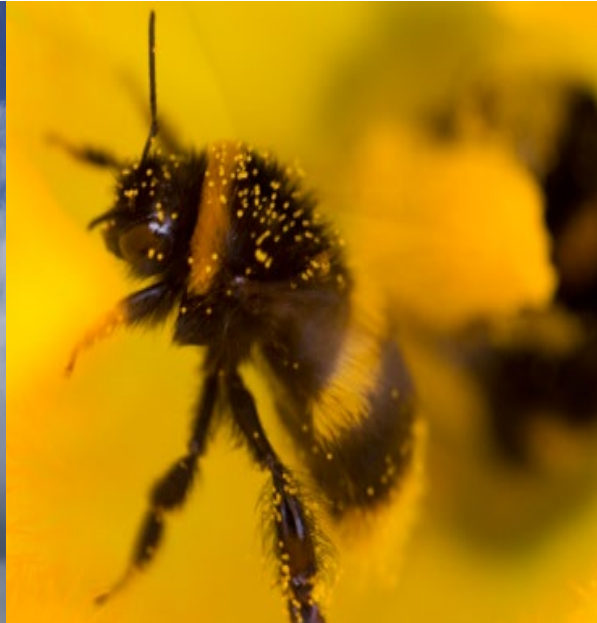
Greening our urban spaces





What is all the commotion about?





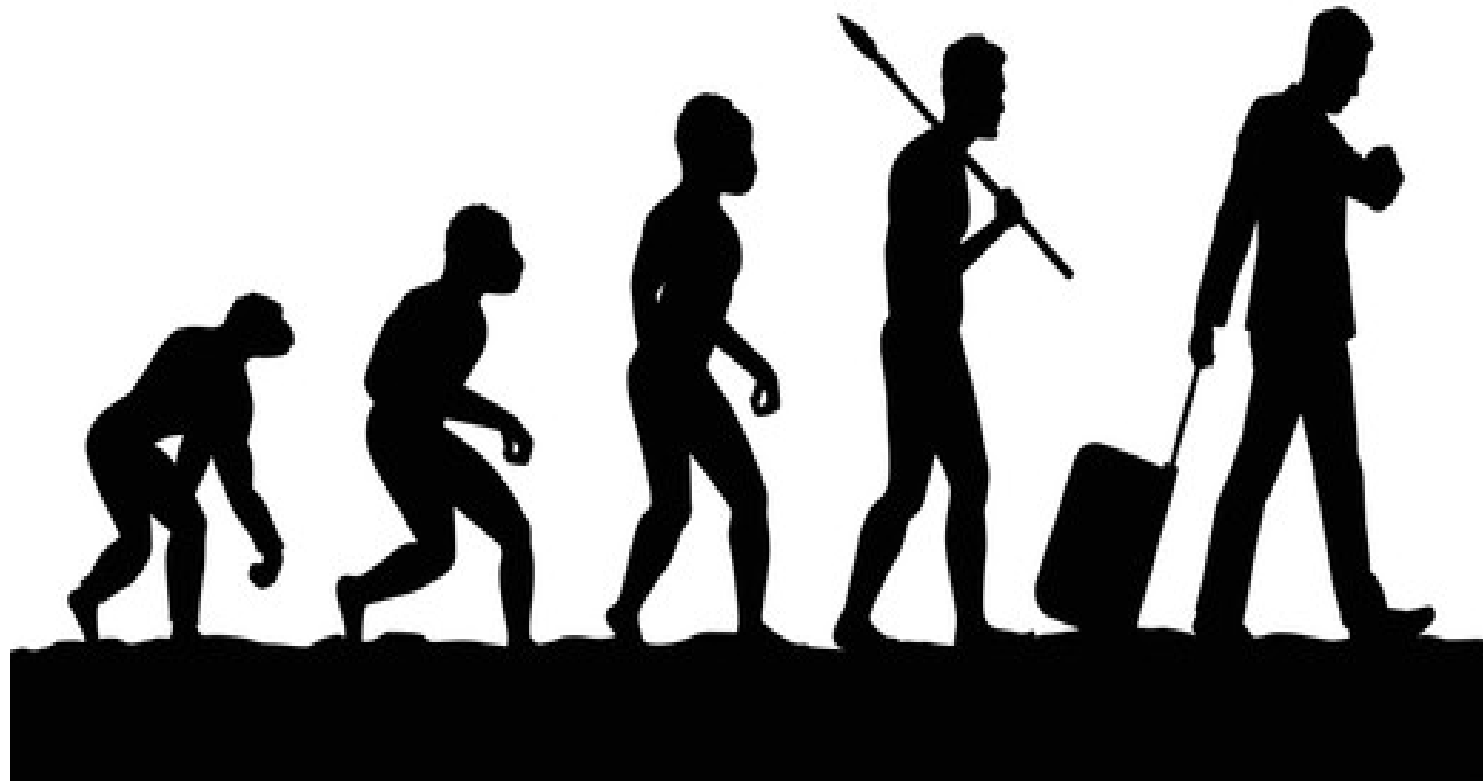


Why has it taken so long to take action?

- Human nature is very much driven by optimism – ‘rain today sunshine tomorrow’
- Humans are very much ‘hardwired’ to deal with immediate threats.
- Long –term , slow moving threats are something we tend to ignore or fail to understand –climate change, global deforestation, animal extinction.
- Despite warnings over decades the penny is only just beginning to drop
- It is noticeable that younger people are taking action as they see these problems will hit in their lifetimes rather than in their grandparents/parents lifetimes.
- Economic expansion and by association modern lifestyles have been driven by consumerism and profits – pollution, waste and environmental impacts are someone else’s concerns – usually future generations.



Where did it all begin?



Why did the disconnection from nature happen?

First of all, there is no nature and us. We are part of nature, we belong inside the web of life - but we have forgotten it.

Disconnection from nature is often considered as a symptom of broader-scale societal changes.

Examples of variables contributing to nature disconnection include:

- urbanisation
- consumer driven lifestyles
- changing social norms and perceptions
- rise in electronic media
- reduced access to green spaces
- ***The demonization of nature and the need to tame and own it - **Modern man talks of the battle with nature, forgetting that, if he won the battle, he would be on the losing side.** – E.F.Schumacher***

We now face an '**extinction of experience**' - the phenomenon of urbanisation reducing everyday nature experiences, with implications for health, emotions, attitudes, and behaviour.



Rewards for naughty children

Change doesn't always mean pain, if actions or experiences can bring benefits.

Therapeutic value of greenspaces to mental and physical health and well-being have begun to be recognised and promoted – community gardens, allotments, forest bathing, outdoor education etc.

Ecosystem services - are the benefits provided by ecosystems that contribute to making human life both possible and worth living. Examples include products such as food and water, regulation of floods, prevention of soil erosion and disease outbreaks, and also non-material benefits such as recreational and spiritual benefits in natural areas sometimes known as *cultural* ecosystem services.

Again the emphasis is upon nature benefitting humans – 'one way traffic'

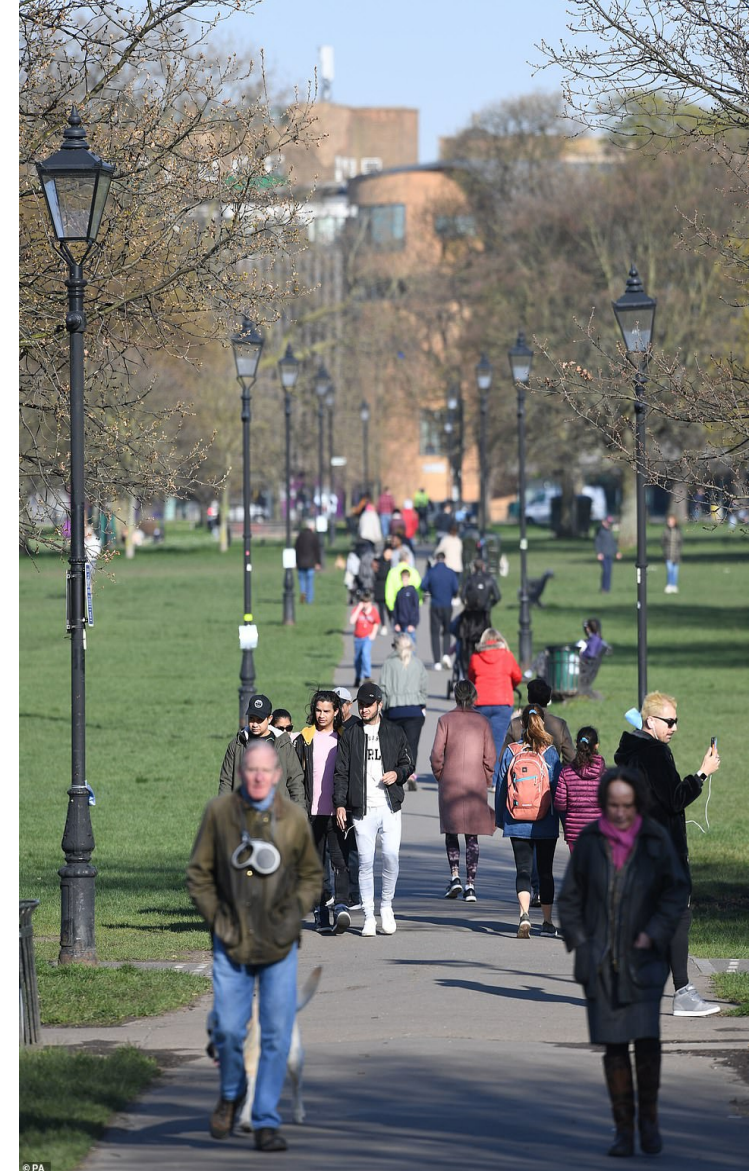


COVID-19 – A game changer

As a result of a series of lockdowns greenspaces became the only places open to people to take exercise and recreation.

More people used green spaces than ever before.

- “**biophilia hypothesis**” which asserts that humans have an innate desire to connect with nature.
- “**Nature deficit disorder**” is a related, more recent concept, which sees children’s reduced contact with outdoor environments as having negative results for their development.
- Numerous surveys showed positive impacts of greenspaces on mental and physical wellbeing.
- Greater appreciation and desire for greenspaces.





Government is listening?

Government is introducing legislation, strategies and funding to support nature and greenspaces.

Funding is being provided for efforts to:

- Reduce the impacts of climate change,
- Restore peatlands,
- Increase tree planting,
- Increase opportunities for biodiversity,
- Protect pollinators
- Improve air quality
- Protect our rivers and seas
- Create new national parks.

Looking good?



In reality – a long way to go!

- **HS2** could have a significant impact on hundreds of nature reserves, sites of Special Scientific Interest and ancient woodlands.
- Still supporting opening new coal mines, extending Heathrow airport and pushing forward with extending North Sea oil and gas exploration
- UK government failed on 17 out of 20 UN biodiversity targets agreed in Japan in 2010. The data was also part of the 2019 State of Nature report, which found that populations of the UK's most important wildlife had fallen by 60% in 50 years.
- Concerns about tree planting figures in relation to available tree saplings, right areas of land for planting and ongoing management.
- New planning laws may threaten greenbelts, and other protected areas with resultant negative effect on wildlife.
- Concern that environmental laws are not being sufficiently funded causing breaches of legislation.



One small step, one giant leap

Our urban areas have long been typified as barren wastelands — ‘concrete jungles’ inhospitable to plant and animal life. However, the exact opposite may often be true: urban areas can be hosts to significant biological diversity

Nearly any urban area can create interventions that enhance benefits to health and well-being .
and greater connectivity to the natural world.

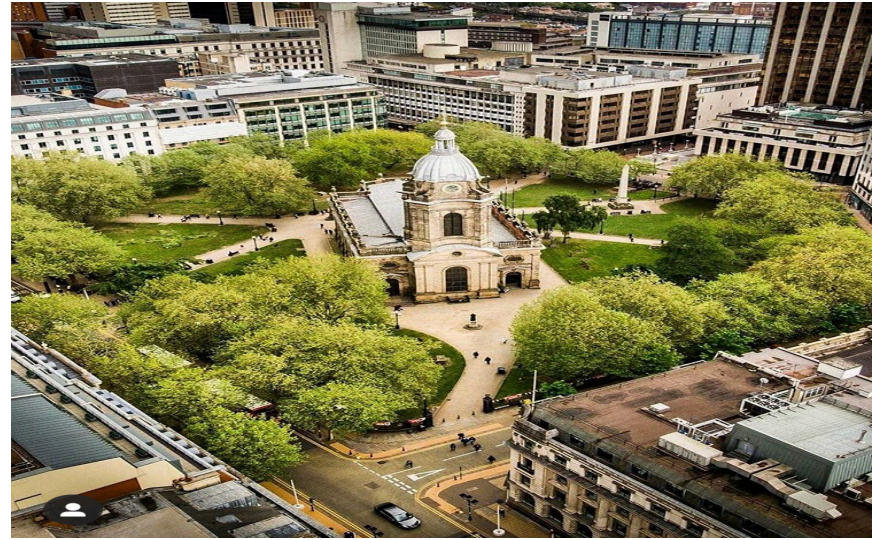
Through careful and considerate planning, design and management, local authorities and their partners will need to focus on improving and restoring their existing and future green spaces with the aim of improving the life experiences of all the species which will need to co-exist in these spaces.

APSE has produced a guide which explores ways in which local authorities can maximise the recognised benefits of urban green space to residents, communities, local businesses and the wider local environment.



Post Pandemic: Green Urban Spaces

- **Greenspaces and health improvement**
- **The issue of access to greenspaces**
- **Improving access to greenspaces**
- **Coronavirus and greenspaces**
- **Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services**
- **Opportunities to enhance and increase greenspaces**
- **'Small is beautiful'**
- **Threats to our greenspaces**
- **Sharing the load.**
- **Conclusions**



NEW MUNICIPALISM

Delivering for local people and local economies



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