

Foreword



The generation of economic benefit is not the primary reason for the provision of urban green space. Parks, gardens and squares are places of relaxation, recreation, refreshment and relief; but these are qualities that are in short supply in our towns and cities, and things that are in short supply are valued. Whether this civic and social value is translated into economic return is the subject of this report.

The report is not based on theory, but on case studies of real places. It reaches conclusions that offer real encouragement to those charged with creating new communities or revitalising established ones, by showing how expenditure on green space really does represent an investment that produces a long-term dividend. This dividend comes in the form of direct expenditure in the green space itself, in the increased expenditure enjoyed by local businesses as a consequence of the attraction of greater numbers of people, and in the raised property prices that accompany a valued amenity.

Time and again, perceptions of the value of a local area and confidence in its future have been enhanced because of the physical improvements to the park. It has been an important factor in increasing confidence to stay in the area rather than to relocate elsewhere. By contrast, under-investment over previous decades in parks and green spaces has deterred investment in the area. Investing in green spaces reverses this spiral of decline enhancing the social, economic and environmental well-being of our communities.

At a policy level, this contribution to a higher quality of urban life is being increasingly recognised, and the provision of well integrated, well designed green space must be an essential part of serving the objective of delivering *Cleaner Safer Greener* communities where people will want to live and not leave.

On the basis that people vote with their feet (and their money) the improved property values and economic activity that surround green space are a measure of confidence in a neighbourhood's future: an indicator that we are getting things right. We need more of the same.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Morrell'.

PAUL MORRELL,
CABE COMMISSIONER