



More in
Common

Understanding public opinion on green space

March 2026



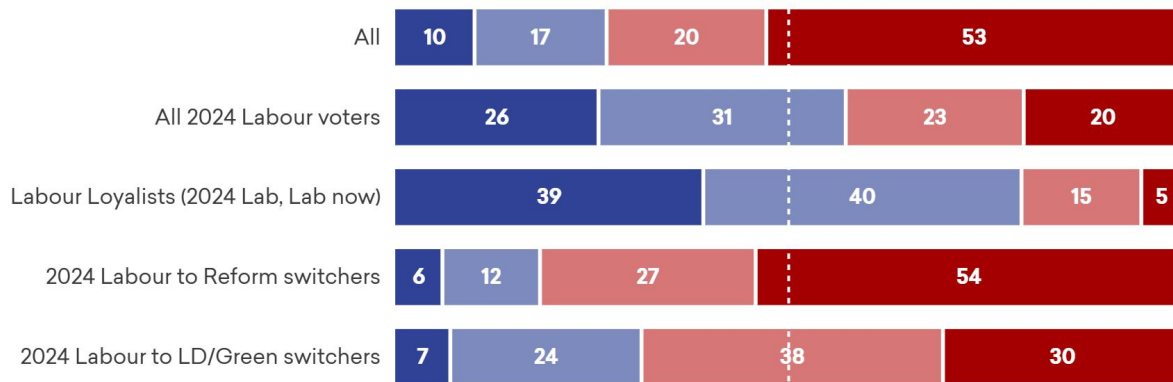
Britons and green space

Britons have lost confidence in the Labour government's ability to improve their lives

Few Britons and particularly Labour to Reform switchers have confidence the government will improve their lives

Please indicate which statement you agree with more using a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 means you completely agree with the first statement and 4 the second statement.

- 1- I expect the Labour government will improve the lives of people like me
- 2-
- 3-
- 4- I do not expect the Labour government will improve the lives of people like me



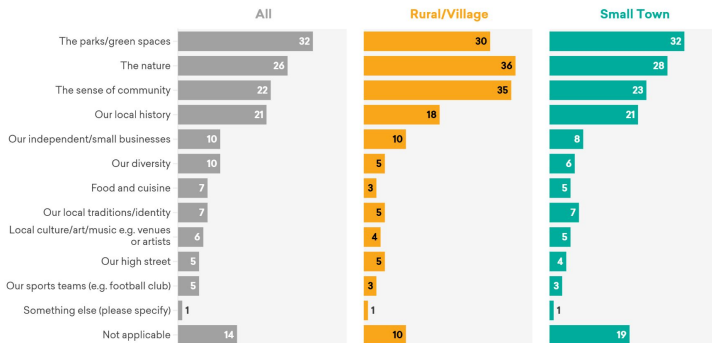
Confidence in Labour's ability to improve Britons' lives has collapsed: immediately after the election 54 per cent of Britons thought the government would improve their lives. This has fallen to just 27 per cent of Britons.

This lack of confidence in the government's ability to make Britons' lives better cuts across our segments. While our Right-leaning segments are particularly pessimistic, majorities of every segment don't think this Labour government will improve their lives.

Green space is what makes people most proud of where they live

Parks and green spaces are just as important sources of pride for those in urban areas as they are for those in rural areas

Thinking about where you are from, what makes you most proud of your local area?



With their grounding in core values and morals, our seven segments are powerful predictors of attitudes to some of the key divides shaping Britain today.

Yet on green spaces, our segments are united. Six out of seven say local parks and green spaces are their biggest source of local pride.

This extends to those living in both urban and rural areas.

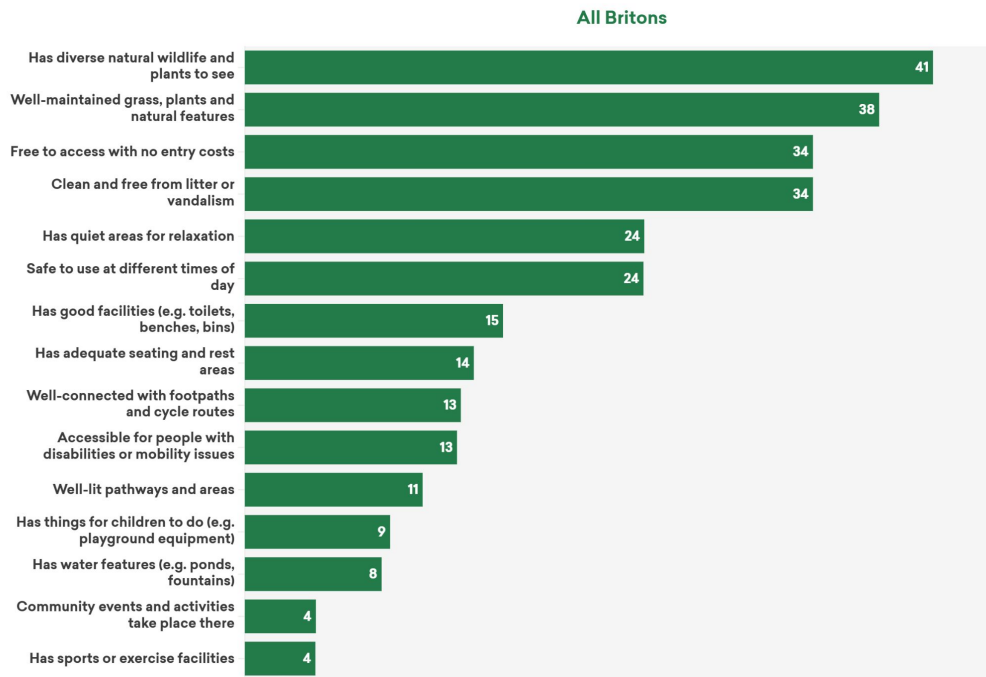
Parks and green spaces are unifying, not polarising in the eyes of the British public.

Thinking about where you are from, in a few words what makes you most proud of your local area?



But what do the public consider quality green space?

What do you think are the most important features for making a green space a high-quality green space?



The number one criteria for all Britons is the **natural wildlife and plants** in a green space. Number two is well **maintained grass, plants and natural features**.

At third and fourth, is **free access with no entry costs** and being **clean from vandalism and graffiti**.

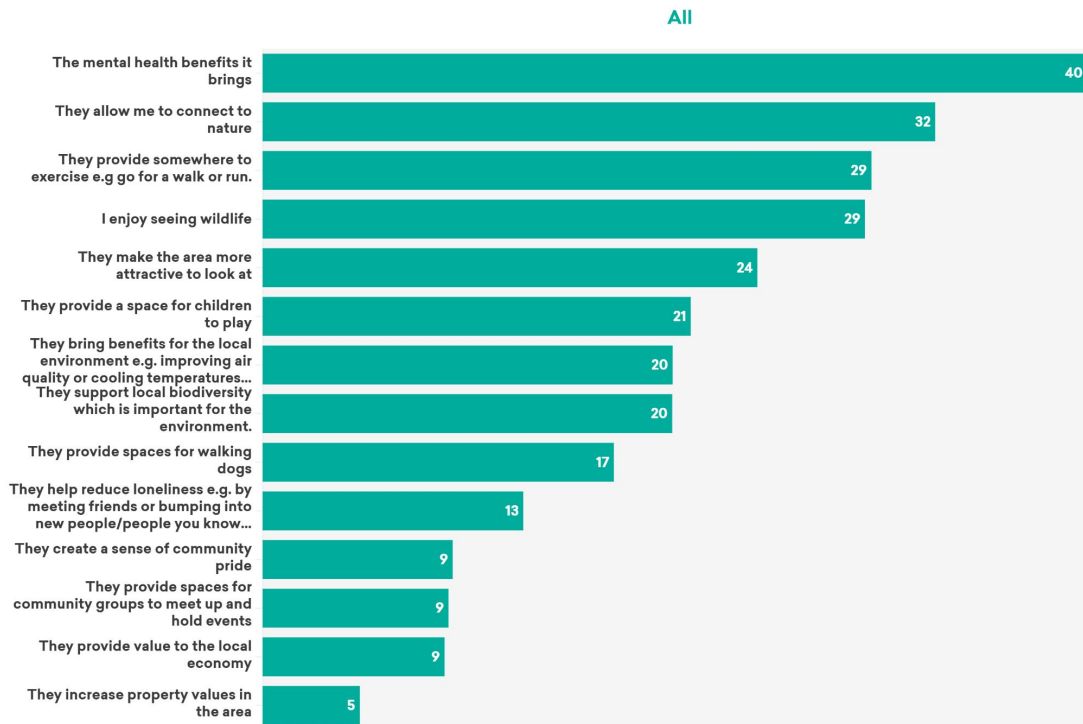
Criteria which are less important are **sports and exercise facilities** and **water features** such as fountains.

Divergence across the segments become along the lines of **safety**, where Established Liberals are the segment least concerned about safety at all times of day.

The ability to see and connect with **nature** is imperative to quality green space, but not without social elements such as **cost** and **cleanliness**.

Why is green space important to Britons?

Why do you think having access to green spaces is important?



The most important advantage of green spaces to Britons are the **mental health benefits** they bring - two-fifths of Britons name this as a top benefit.

When looking at Britons who suffer with mental health issues this number rises to **58 per cent, saying that the mental health benefits** are most important to them.

Second, is the **ability to connect with nature** and third is the provision of space to **exercise**.

While Britons recognise the intrinsic value of green spaces, the instrumental benefits they bring to people are why they are so important.

"I just think they're good because then even if kids live in an area let's say, where they've not got a really nice space, they've still got somewhere they could sit on the grass or be able to sit with a friends and discuss problems or family troubles, do you get what I'm saying?"

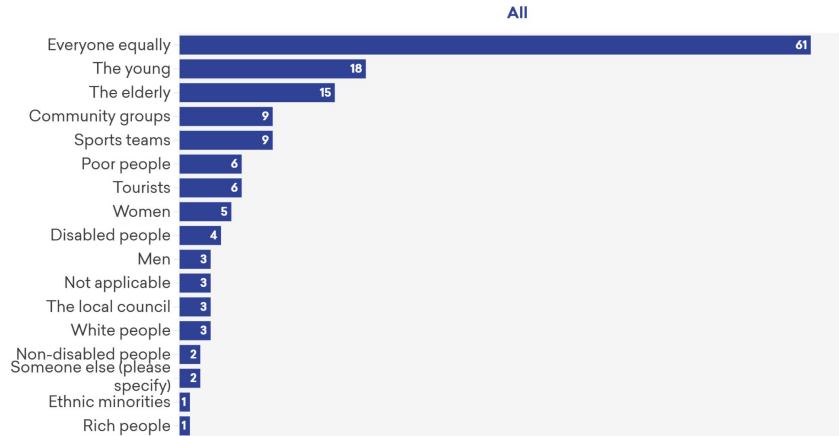
- **Josh, Apprentice, Grimsby**

Green spaces cut through the 'zero-sum' politics of Britain

Britons overwhelmingly believe we are all equal beneficiaries of green spaces

Who do you think benefits the most from green spaces in your local area?

Select up to three



More in
Common

More in Common • October 2025

"Yeah, I think they [green spaces] are used a lot aren't they by everybody for walking, exercise, dog walking, like say taking the kids out for a walk. It's not always people with kids or dogs. Everybody seems to have a use for them."

Catherine, Scunthorpe, Labour voter considering Reform

Increasing economic insecurity and feelings that those coming to the UK (both legally and illegally) are getting unfair handouts, has created a growing sense of 'zero-sum politics' among Britons.

Almost all policies are seen to have winners and losers, with few Britons thinking they personally will be the beneficiaries. Anything positive promised by the government is met with scepticism and suggestions there must be a catch.

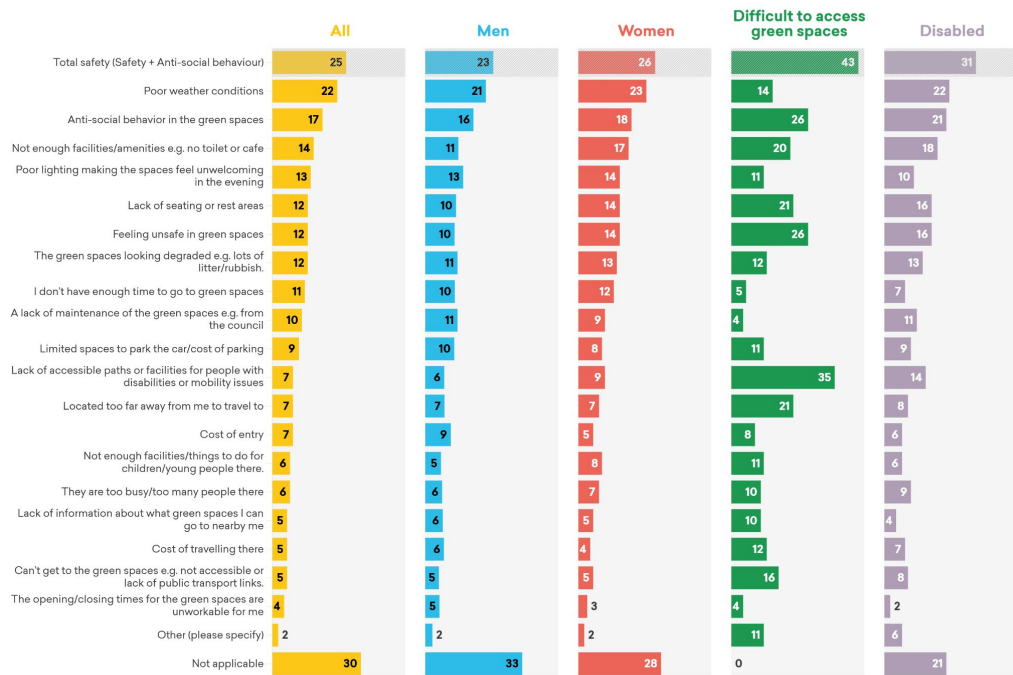
However, green spaces are seen as more of a collective asset. Asked who they think benefits most from green spaces in their local area - three fifths of Britons (61 per cent) say everyone benefits equally.

This sense of green spaces being seen as a shared asset all people can enjoy is true for voters of all political parties and all seven of our segments with Rooted Patriots (70 per cent) particularly like to say this.

What stops people from accessing green spaces?

Besides bad weather, safety and in particular anti-social behaviour is the biggest barrier stopping people from accessing green spaces

Safety is a top concern for those at risk of exclusion from green spaces



Safety is a greater concern for groups at risk of being excluded from accessing green spaces than the general public. While 25 per cent of Britons say at least one of feeling unsafe or anti-social behaviour is the biggest barrier preventing them from using green spaces more, this figure is 26 per cent for women, 31 per cent for disabled Britons and 43 per cent for those who say it is difficult for them to access green spaces.

Tackling safety concerns should be a priority for ensuring all Britons feel they can access green spaces.



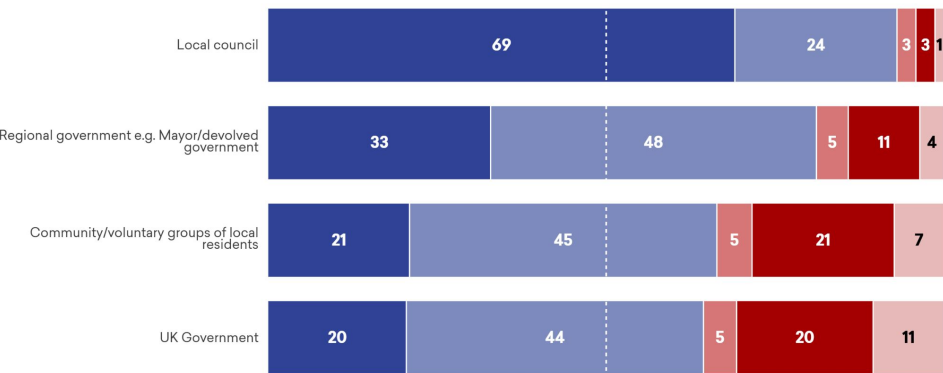
Government, politics and policies of green space

Britons believe the maintenance of green spaces should be the responsibility of government

Britons think local government should hold responsibility for maintaining green spaces

How responsible do you think the following should be for maintaining/upkeeping the quality of green spaces in your local area?

● Very responsible ● Somewhat responsible ● Don't know ● Not very responsible ● Not at all responsible



In focus group conversations, it is clear that while the public value the role local community groups play in looking after green spaces, they feel they are filling a vacuum left by government.

While they viewed local residents as having specific knowledge and expertise that should be incorporated into the management of green spaces they fundamentally believed that responsibility for the creation and maintenance should rest with government and saw this as a core responsibility for local councils.

In total, **93 per cent of Britons believe councils** should either be somewhat or very responsible for maintaining the quality of local green spaces compared to **66 per cent who say the same for community groups** and **64 per cent who say the same for the national government**.

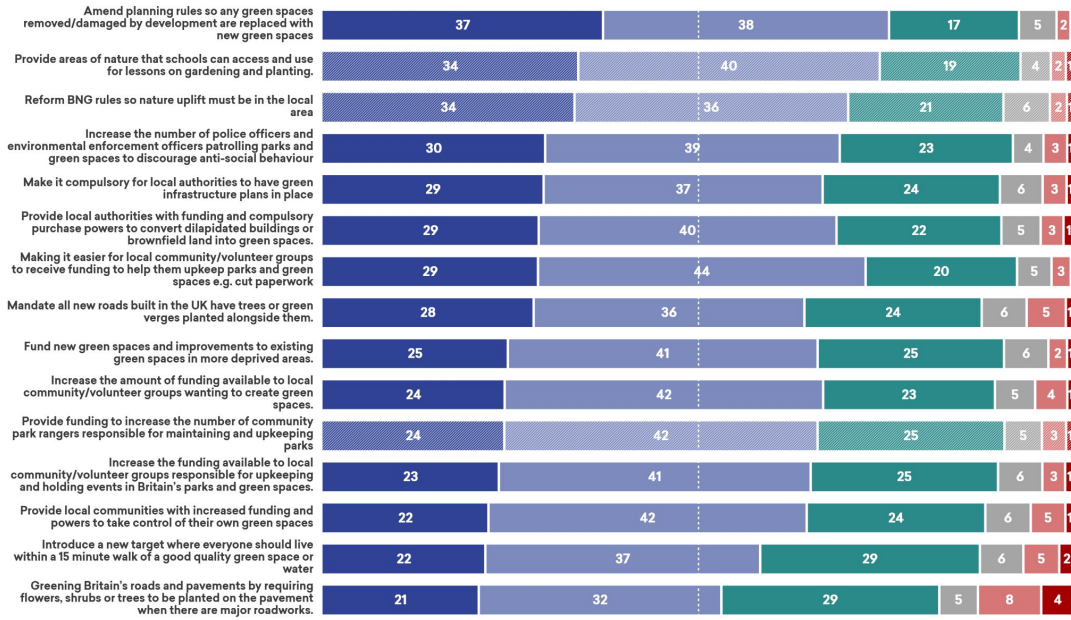
Given they view politicians and government, at the local level, as having responsibility for upkeep of green spaces it naturally followed for our focus group participants that they would like to see those in power driving improvements and the solutions to the problems green spaces face.

There is support for a range of policies to promote green space

All policies tested command majority support

To what extent would support or oppose the following potential government policies to create new or increase the quality of existing green spaces in Britain?

● Strongly support ● Somewhat support ● Neither support nor oppose ● Don't know ● Somewhat oppose
● Strongly oppose



All of the policies tested around improving green spaces had a majority support from the public, showing that there is overwhelming desire to improve Britain's green spaces.

An incredibly popular policy is access to nature in schools with near universal support. At the same time, looking to **reform regulation around Biodiversity Net Gain** to have a focus of local nature rather than national exchanges is notably popular.

Park rangers in the community to tackle anti-social behaviour and ensure that parks were properly maintained performed well in focus groups and polling, which helps in restoring degraded places with a sense of care.

The one falling point in the eyes of the public was relying too much on central government, especially where Britons feel they've been let down in the past.

Role of local government is getting behind communities, not stepping aside or stepping in for them

What I think is right is that they should talk to the people as well. The community. They should talk to the community - what do you want? How do you want this money spent and this is what we've got so what do you want?

Bebe, An interpreter living in Birmingham

The Government funds projects and the community does the work. So if you can set out live projects for us or if you could put stuff in place that the communities can guide and they can pay for it.

Zane, A quantity surveyor living in Birmingham

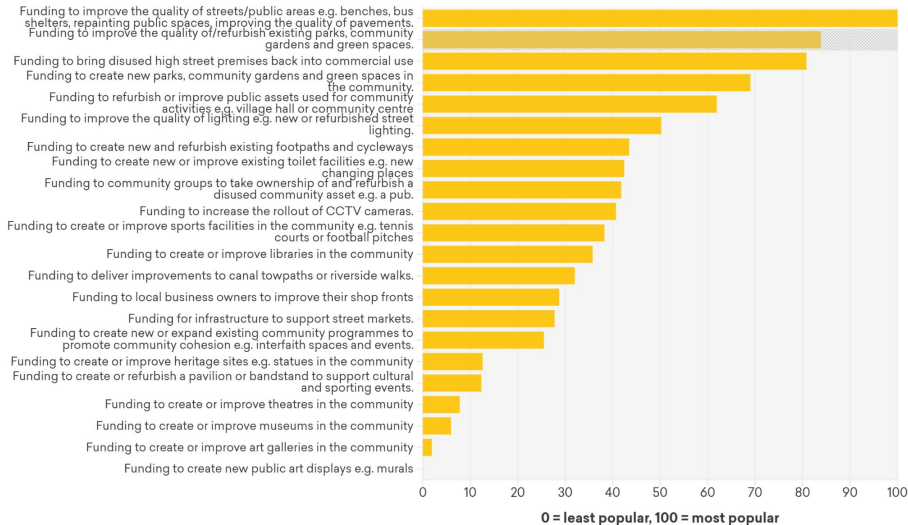
We'd have people that care about our communities doing stuff. The council don't care about our community. So the getting funding to the people that do care about our community would be great.

Stacey, Homemaker, Grimsby

Britons would be extremely receptive to Pride in Place funding going to increasing the quality of local green spaces

Funding improvements to the quality of green spaces is the second most popular possible use of Pride in Place Programme Funding

Below is a list of potential things that could be done to try to make your local town or area a better place to live. Please indicate which of them you think would make the most positive and least positive impact on how nice a place your local area is to live.



The government's new Pride in Place programme and the funding contained within it provides an opportunity to deliver these improvements to local green spaces.

A Maxdiff experiment was run to test which of the potential uses of Pride in Place funding by local councils (as outlined in the 'Exemplar Activities' document) Britons see as having the greatest potential to make their local community a nicer place to live.

This found that Britons see funding the maintenance and improvement of existing green spaces as the second most effective use of Pride in Place money - behind only public realm improvements.

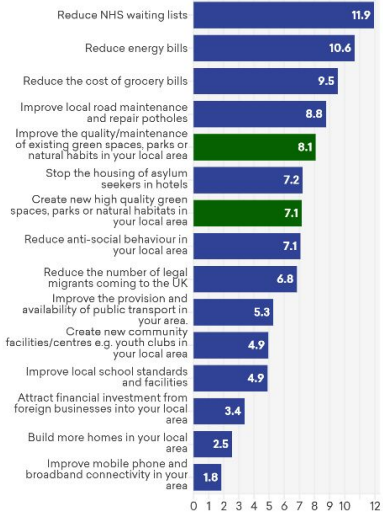
This was true for Britons of all political backgrounds including Rooted Patriots demonstrating that using the scheme to improve Britons' access to green spaces and the quality of local green spaces could play an important role in rebuilding public confidence in the government's ability to improve Britons' lives and local communities.

Improving green spaces has a major boost to confidence in national and local government

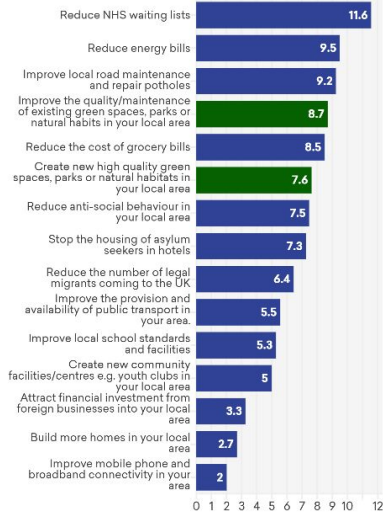
Improving the quality of green spaces would give Britons more confidence in the ability of those in power to improve their local communities than cutting legal migration

If the UK government [your local council/ your local MP] was to achieve [or strongly campaign for] the following things, then which would grow your confidence that they are capable of making your local area a better place to live the most and least?

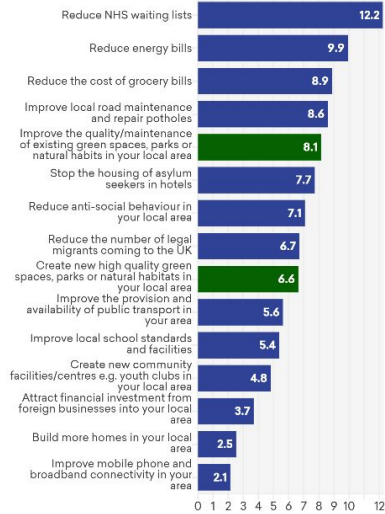
UK Government



Local Council



Local MP



In the ranking of things the UK government could do to improve confidence in their ability to make Britons' local areas nicer places to live, improving green spaces comes fifth, outperforming the ending of the housing of asylum seekers in hotels.

It ranks in fifth on this metric for local MPs as well and reflective of their reduced ability to influence this, the improvement of green spaces outperforms reducing the cost of grocery bills for local councils, leaving it as the fourth best thing local councils could achieve or campaign for to grow public confidence in their ability to make their local areas better places to live.

The key takeaways

Centre people not plants

One thing the sector can be guilty of is focusing on the importance of the green spaces for the environment, not for people themselves.

Britons love green spaces, primarily, because of the benefits they bring to themselves as individuals.

A mission to improve the quality of green spaces could play a real role in addressing the perception of a 'Broken Britain' that dominates the national mood.

To unlock support for this the sector must focus on making the case for what green spaces do for people, not plants and biodiversity.

Tackle concerns around safety

While Britons love their green spaces, there are clear safety barriers stopping them from enjoying them - particularly around anti-social behaviour.

When talking about improving green spaces, emphasise the need to make them safer and tackle the anti-social behaviour which harms the experiences of other users of green spaces.

Mental health offers an opportunity to broaden the coalition

While the environmental benefits of green spaces are acknowledged, it is the mental health and wellbeing benefits that green spaces offer which are seen as most important for the public.

This is particularly the case for Right-leaning segments who aren't the stereotypical champions of green spaces.

Emphasising the mental health benefits of green spaces is the best way of growing and diversifying support for them.

Questions?

andrew@moreincommon.com



More in
Common

Randomised control Trial: Testing the most effective messages

To examine the most effective messages for galvanising support for green spaces and voluntary action to protect them - we ran a randomised control trial with survey participants randomly split into five groups and either shown a specific frame or no frame (control). Observing how these groups respond to subsequent question allows us to identify the effectiveness of the messages

Control	Environmental benefits	Public health
No message shown	<i>Green spaces and environments reduce flooding risks by catching rainwater, clean air by stopping particulates floating in the air, and cool areas by providing more shade. They also provide a place for wildlife and biodiversity to live and thrive which is important in itself.</i>	<i>Green spaces make Britain a healthier place. Giving people the space to go outside and exercise, be that dog walking, running or playing sports, they get people more active, improving their health and saving money for the NHS in the long run.</i>
Mental health		Community connectedness
<i>Green spaces support the mental health of people who live nearby or visit them. Research has shown that access to green space can decrease rates of depression, anxiety, and overall reduces levels of stress. Many health practitioners are even starting to prescribe time in nature as a means to improve mental health.</i>		<i>Green spaces are the glue which hold our communities together. They facilitate chance meetings, small chats and smiles with neighbours and friends. Community parks and gardens host thousands of volunteers, children's birthday parties, picnics, sports teams and much more every week. Green spaces play a vital role in connecting people up and down the country.</i>