



House of Commons

ODPM: Housing, Planning,
Local Government and the
Regions Committee

Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener

Eleventh Report of Session 2002-03

Volume I



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*Report, together with formal minutes, oral and
written evidence*

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The ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee

The ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and its associated public bodies

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The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/odpm.cfm. A list of Reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this volume.

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Photo Credits

We would like to thank Andrew Bennett MP, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Green Spaces (now incorporating the Urban Parks Forum), ENCAMS and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment for allowing us to use their photographs on the cover of this report. The main picture of Bournemouth Square in Bournemouth, was provided by CABA and is reproduced courtesy of Mark Ellis & Ashley Bingham ICD Ltd.

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Summary

Public spaces are used by everybody. A network of safe, well maintained and people friendly spaces encourage people to walk, get to know their neighbours and respect their surroundings. A well maintained park engenders a sense of pride and is appreciated by people of all ages. The benefits are more vibrant towns and cities, better personal health, a stronger sense of community and a more prosperous economy. However, many of our public spaces have been allowed to decay. Starved of funding and with no one organisation taking responsibility for their condition, they are suffering from physical neglect and the car has been allowed to dominate. The public gives this issue very high priority and the Government has recognised this problem. Both the ODPM and Defra have set out new proposals for a coherent programme which involves additional funds, strengthening the role of local authorities in managing the spaces, and seeking to promote coordination between government departments. It now needs to be clear how the proposals are to be taken forward.

The ownership of public space is fragmented between different public agencies and private landowners, and the powers to manage them are spread across a large number of different statutes. Local authorities need a clearly defined remit to ensure that the spaces are maintained to an adequate standard. The new powers should be set out in a simple framework which will probably require new legislation. New standards of management and maintenance need to be defined.

Public education which promotes environmentally responsible behaviour is important and deserves greater priority to reduce the need to impose fines which have limited impact and are difficult to enforce. However, new powers are required to levy fines which should be high enough to deter fly tipping, fly posting and graffiti and cover the costs of enforcement. Councils should be allowed to retain the income from the fines to fund improvements to the public spaces. Stronger powers are particularly required to manage the public service companies like gas providers and cable companies which have the authority to dig up roads and pavements. Heavy penalties need to be imposed if the streets are not adequately reinstated.

The Government has recognised that responsibility for funding and managing public spaces falls between several Government departments. This needs to be followed through. The Department for Transport has an important role in ensuring streets are attractive to pedestrians but it has not engaged effectively with the review of legislation and policies led by the ODPM and Defra.

The design of public places should ensure that they are attractive in themselves rather than simply a means of getting from one place to another. Many public spaces, such as squares and streets are designed around ease of access by car and to facilitate through traffic. All new spaces should be designed first and foremost to meet the needs of pedestrians. Detailed highways guidance requires a large numbers of signs and barriers which restrict pedestrian movement and unnecessarily clutter up many public areas. The guidance on signage needs to be reviewed to minimise their intrusion into public space and councils

should be allowed greater flexibility to adapt signage to fit into the local environment.

Local authorities are the main funders of the management and maintenance of public spaces. In the last 20 years, it is estimated that crucial funding to local authorities has fallen by £1.3bn. Since 1997, the decline has been halted, and there has been some reinstatement of the lost funding. Funding for public spaces over the next three years is to rise in real terms by about 1.3%. If the Government's proposals are to be implemented within a reasonable timescale, substantially more will be required. The Government has also set aside £201m over the next three years for a number of small pots of money for new initiatives to help local authorities plan their spaces better, but this is no replacement for basic revenue funding for maintaining and improving spaces. The Heritage Lottery Fund and the New Opportunities Fund are demonstrating what can be achieved when sufficient funds are invested in an individual public space. In some cases the renovated spaces are putting additional pressure on local authority revenue funds. The Lottery, like all the other new small funds, cannot be seen as a substitute for additional investment by local authorities.

1 Introduction

1. Attractive and well maintained parks and public spaces are crucial to the health of individuals and the well-being of our towns and cities. Our predecessor Committees have carried out several inquiries into public spaces including allotments, parks and cemeteries. The report into planning guidance on public spaces, published in February 2002, highlighted the appalling state of public spaces.

“The state of open space in our towns and cities remains a serious blight, diminishing the quality of life of their citizens.”¹

That inquiry considered revisions to planning guidance for the provision of public space and was followed up by revised planning guidance.

2. In October 2002, the ODPM published *Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener*. At the same time Defra published *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities*, which put forward plans to give local authorities new powers to manage public spaces, and allocated new funds. This inquiry looked at management issues, mainly of existing spaces, including green spaces, parks and hard spaces such as streets and pavements. In this report, we consider whether management arrangements and resources are adequate to bring them up to a satisfactory condition.

3. The Committee held three evidence sessions in May and June and visited Nottingham, Arnold and Leicester. We received 30 submissions which we commend to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. We are very grateful to our advisors Kit Campbell and Simon Quin, all who provided written and oral evidence to the Committee, and to Leicester, Nottingham and Gedling councils who gave us hospitality on the visits.

4. The terms of reference were announced in December 2002. The Committee sought comments on the Government’s proposals for making cleaner, safer, greener public spaces, including:

- the vision the Government has set out for public spaces;
- the main reasons for the poor state of public spaces;
- whether the proposals contained in the report will bring about sufficient improvement to realise the Government’s vision; and, if not, what should be done;
- whether the report gives adequate attention to all the relevant issues, and, in particular: what measures need to be taken in respect of:
 - transport;
 - environmental crimes, vandalism and disorder;
 - enhancing safety;

¹ ‘Public Spaces: The Role of PPG17 in the Urban Renaissance’ Third Report of Session 2001-2002 HC 238-1

- whether there will be sufficient involvement of the voluntary sector and Non-Departmental Public Bodies including the Regional Development Agencies;
- whether there is a sufficiently clear timetable for implementation;
- whether the funding proposals are adequate;
- what measures should be introduced to ensure local authorities give a higher priority to improving public spaces.²

² The full terms of reference are in Press Notice 08/2002-03 published on 11 December 2002

2 The State of our Public Spaces

5. It is now widely accepted that our public spaces are in a poor condition. In June 2000, the Prime Minister Tony Blair set out his 'liveability' agenda at a conference in Croydon:

“The one public service we all use all the time is the streets where we live. And in too many places, streets and public spaces have become dirty, ugly and dangerous.... We need to make it safer for children to walk or cycle to school in safety. We need local parks which are well looked after and easily reached with a pushchair. We need streets to be free of litter, dog mess and mindless vandalism.”

6. The ODPM's document Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener stated;

“..all too often we experience places that are unwelcoming, unkempt and difficult - or even dangerous to use.....”³

7. The overall condition of these spaces is however not known as there is no comprehensive assessment of the condition of public spaces. There is a range of indices which highlight the condition of parks, public spaces and streets. ENCAMS published the results of its first annual Local Environment Quality Survey of England last year which was a study of the environmental condition of 11,000 sites in 54 local authority areas.⁴ On most indicators ENCAMS found that standards ranged between unsatisfactory and poor. The condition of pavements was considered poor, while the state of street furniture and the condition and cleaning of litter bins was considered unsatisfactory. **ENCAMS' survey on local environmental quality produced useful data and should be regularly updated to assess progress.**

8. The report singles out the condition of low density housing areas, industrial areas and secondary retail and commercial areas as having the poorest environments. This highlights the need for initiatives in a range of locations and not just high profile historic parks and city squares. The first national database of parks owned by local authorities carried out by the Urban Parks Forum for the Government in 2001 showed that overall only 18% of parks were felt to be in good condition and that 82% of the UK's population did not have access to good parks and open spaces.⁵

9. The public now consider action to improve the state of public space a high priority. A Mori study in 2001 revealed that road and pavement repairs and clean streets were a very high priority for the public.

“In some of their local surveys, local people recognise that their towns or cities have improved but the problem is that they do not see where they live as safe enough,

³ 'Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener' ODPM 2003 page 6

⁴ First Annual Report of the Local Environment Quality Survey of England. Encams September 2002

⁵ Public Park Assessment: A survey of local authority owned parks, focusing on parks of historic interest Urban Parks Forum May 2001

green enough or clean enough.....People are not happy—in relative terms— about the quality of life.”⁶

10. Submissions to the Committee underlined the important role which high quality public space can play in improving the health and well-being of the nation. The environmental charity Groundwork commented:

“In addition to the evident recreational amenity, green spaces in urban areas contribute to public health, to the development of local social capital, to clean area, to local biodiversity and informal education.....Improving green and public spaces can have real benefits for health by promoting leisure and local food production. They are places to meet people, play sport and share experience...”⁷

11. Submissions to the Committee said that the poor condition of public spaces was due to:

- poor management due to the fragmented ownership of the spaces with no one agency in charge which had the remit and sufficient powers to manage them;
- a lack of public pride;
- lack of funding;
- poor design which gave priority to the needs of cars rather than pedestrians.

12. Since the Prime Minister’s speech in Croydon in 2000, the Government has begun to take action to improve the condition of public spaces.

- It set up the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce in 2001 to help develop a strategy for improving the state of green spaces;
- a cross cutting review was established as part of the 2002 Comprehensive Spending Review to consider funding for public spaces.

These initiatives were followed up;

- the ODPM published *Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener* in October 2002 which set out plans for new funding programmes and Government arrangements and;
- Defra published *Living Places: Power, Rights, Responsibilities* also in October 2002 which set out options for revising council powers to manage public spaces.

The two documents seek to improve the management and maintenance of public spaces by:

- giving local authorities new powers and setting up new cross government arrangements;
- introducing new planning arrangements to improve the design quality;

⁶ ‘The Rising Prominence of Liveability or are condemned to a life of grime?’ Mori. September 2002

⁷ LIV22 Groundwork

- allocating additional public funds in the Comprehensive Spending Review.

13. Public spaces play an important role in encouraging healthy lifestyles and supporting communities by encouraging informal contact. However, many are in a poor condition. The spaces are perceived as unsafe and have a poor image which deters investment in the area. It is therefore vital that they are included as part of any regeneration initiative.

14. The Committee shares the Government's concern about the state of public spaces and welcomes the prominence being given to improve them. In the rest of the report, we consider whether its proposals are sufficient to tackle the state of public spaces and suggest how they might be improved.

3 Local Authority Powers and Responsibilities

15. The key problems with the management of public spaces are two fold:

- the ownership of public spaces and the responsibilities for their management are spread across several public and private agencies;
- the powers to manage and maintain spaces are inadequate, contradictory and included in a multitude of legislation.

Defra points out in *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities*:

“Although the public generally identifies local authorities as responsible for managing and maintaining public spaces, there is also a fragmented system of ownership, statutory roles and management responsibilities.”⁸

16. Councillor Dame Sally Powell from the Local Government Association told the Committee:

“In a street you may well have a frontage, a part of the pavement, which is the responsibility of the person who owns the house. The next bit of the pavement will be the responsibility of the local authority. You will have an uplifted kerbstone because it is the utility underneath that is responsible for the repair or maintenance. You will have a cable company, that will be responsible for another bit. Then you will have the highway authority, which is not always the local authority, responsible for the next bit.”⁹

17. The result of this fragmentation, according to the Association of London Government is

“a number of unrelated organisations with different priorities and focus, managing the public realm as a set of unrelated components, where no one has sole responsibility to see that stakeholder interests are balanced to the benefit of the public realm in its entirety. Stakeholders actions are often carried out independently and focused on a particular well defined aspect which delivers the benefit to that stakeholder but which often has a negative impact on another stakeholder.”¹⁰

18. Submissions to the Committee argued that:

- local authorities needed a new remit to oversee the management of public space in their areas;
- the legislation setting out their powers needed at least to be clarified to ensure that high standards are achieved;

⁸ 'Living Places: Powers, Rights , Responsibilities' DEFRA 2002 page 13

⁹ Q159

¹⁰ LIV12 Association of London Government

- new standards were required to assess whether quality spaces were being achieved;
- new powers were needed to manage the utility companies, set fines and enforce them.

19. The Landscape Institute suggested that local authorities need to be empowered to deliver quality public spaces, as they are uniquely placed to coordinate and provide a holistic approach.¹¹ The Local Government Association said that councils should be given the strategic role in ensuring that all agencies take action to manage public spaces adequately.

20. The importance of giving local authorities a new remit to ensure high quality public space was highlighted by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

“Unlike air, water, or waste no qualitative standards for public land are suggested other than in the Open Spaces Act 1906 ‘to keep local authority-owned open space in good and decent state.’ We remain concerned about this lack of duty of positive care or real incentives to achieve quality space.”¹²

21. There was considerable concern that the statutory basis for managing streets was spread across too many different pieces of legislation. Dame Sally Powell from the Local Government Association told us. “One of the problems for the public as well as local authorities, is that the legislation is myriad. It is all over the place, whether it is in the Town & Country Planning Act or the Environment Protection Act.”¹³ In its report *Paving the Way*, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment set out a list of more than 100 statutes, regulations and orders and at least another 30 guides which apply to the design and management of streets and the operation of utility companies.¹⁴

22. Many of the submissions to the Committee supported the proposals put forward by the Government to give councils new powers and responsibilities, but criticised it for not specifying how any of the proposals will be taken forward. They suggested a clear framework was needed which clarified powers and responsibilities which should be incorporated into a bill that simplified local authority powers and removed contradictory requirements. The LGA commented:

“It would be a missed opportunity if none of the measures in the consultation in the document result in legislative action.”¹⁵

23. Living Streets said that the new legislation should be “partly about using the powers that are there but it is also about making responsibilities very clear. I would also like to see the legislation include issues about regulation of local authorities to improve the work they are doing.”¹⁶

¹¹ LIV7

¹² LIV04

¹³ Q157

¹⁴ ‘Paving the way: How we achieve clean, safe and attractive streets’ CABE 2002

¹⁵ LIV18 LGA

¹⁶ Q258

24. The Government argued that new legislation was not necessarily the answer. Environment Minister Alun Michael told us:

“What we need to do is make sure that we simplify the ability of people to use the legislation which does exist, tidy it up where there are obstacles to using legislation.....Are there ways through partnership where you can avoid things?”¹⁷

25. Government could not set out a clear timetable for implementing the proposals. Mr Michael suggested that the evaluation of the consultation on *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities* would be published in autumn 2003, at least a year after the consultation started.

26. Councils need a clear responsibility to ensure that the public spaces are maintained to a high standard. The Committee accepts that much can be achieved without legislation to improve the management of public spaces. At the very least a simplified framework highlighting the different responsibilities, roles and powers is required. To simplify the framework, it will be necessary to revise some of the existing contradictory legislation. A simple guide is required setting out what local authorities can and should do in managing public spaces and what they can require others to do and listing the sanctions if they are not done.

27. The Government must publish an action programme setting out proposed implementation as soon as possible. The Committee was disappointed that the Government was not able to give a target date for the publication of its evaluation of the responses to its consultation document *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities*, which closed in February 2003.

Standards for management and maintenance

28. Effective management and maintenance are key to delivering a quality environment but parks and public spaces are currently maintained to highly varying standards. The Government has begun to develop a set of standards and monitoring arrangements including a new Best Value Performance Indicator and the condition of the local environment is part of the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment of local authorities. Further work is required to ensure that the wide range of issues in public spaces are measured and the different indicators are coordinated.

29. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment argues that there is no nationally recognised quality indicator for public space.

“This is a barrier not only to assessment of local expenditure and strategy but also to measuring the needs and improvement of the local area. There are a number of strands to draw together such as the Public Space Index, design quality indicators, the Green Flag Criteria, Beacon Council criteria and existing local authority performance indicators. Once a common system has been devised, it will need to be embedded within both the Improvement & Development Agency's best practice and

¹⁷ Q351/2

benchmarking work and the Audit Commission's work on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment"¹⁸

30. The introduction in 2003-2004 of Best Value Performance Indicator 199 covering the collection of litter and detritus has helped councils to monitor the maintenance of public space. However the indicator is too narrowly drawn and should be part of a wider index of environmental quality. ENCAMS told the Committee that it was too narrow in scope.¹⁹ The Heritage Lottery Fund noted: "We have yet to measure any benefits from Best Value coming through our projects and would welcome a more consistent and appropriate set of Best Value Indicators relating to delivering good parks and green spaces."²⁰

31. ENCAMS suggests that the Best Value index needs to be widened out into the Public Space Index. "The fear of public open space, which many people have because of graffiti, vandalism and litter is not recorded within that, and it seems to be very much a management response."²¹ The Public Space Index was put forward in the ODPM's Living Spaces to help councils assess local environmental quality. ENCAMS proposes that the Public Spaces Index should be a "voluntary way for local authorities to make a broad-based assessment of local environmental quality." It proposes that the index could be used as the basis for distributing Government funds.²²

32. A set of national indicators for the required condition of public spaces can act as an important spur to local authorities to improve the management and maintenance which will help them implement a new remit to ensure that public spaces are maintained to a high standard. Best Value Performance Indicator 199 on environmental quality and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment are a useful start but it needs to be broadened to include a wider range of factors. Best Value also needs to consider the management of parks and green spaces.

33. The planned Public Spaces Index needs to be developed as a framework which can be adapted by local authorities to suit the particular issues in their areas.

Prevention, fines and enforcement

34. Councils require powers to impose fines that are high enough to deter behaviour and to cover the costs of enforcement. Most submissions supported proposals in Defra's consultation document *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities* to give local authorities new powers to enforce regulations through fines. However, the impact of fines is inevitably very limited and enforcement problematic. Prevention is better than a cure, and greater civic pride could reduce the need to impose fines.

35. The Local Government Association commented:

¹⁸ LIV27 CABE

¹⁹ Q52

²⁰ LIV04

²¹ Q52

²² LIV17

“Collectively, the extension of these powers would mean that local authorities had the tools to either take action themselves, or to ensure that the responsible agency did so. It would provide a clear line of accountability and responsibility that is very confused at the moment.”²³

36. The LGA highlighted the cost and practical problems of enforcing fines. “Enforcement action is resource intensive in terms of staff time, often with little likelihood of success of prosecution or recovering costs.”²⁴ On our visit to Nottingham and Leicester, we also heard that the proportion of fines which are collected is very low. According to McDonald’s Restaurants:

“Not only does the current levels of fines not adequately represent the costs associated with litter clearance and maintenance of public spaces, it does not provide this disincentive.”²⁵

37. Councils are not using their powers to impose fines. Between 1 April 1999 and 31 March 2000, only 2,970 fines were issued by local authorities for littering offences.²⁶ LGA argues that if councils were able to retain the income from fines, there would be greater incentives to impose them.

38. The Government’s proposals to give councils more powers to enforce regulations are welcome. Councils need new powers to set fines for offences such as littering, dog fouling and fly posting at a level which are sufficient to both act as a deterrent to offenders but also to cover the costs of enforcement. Being able to retain the income from all fines would provide an added incentive to impose and enforce them. The collection of fines must be raised to at least 90% so that offenders cannot think that they can get away without paying.

Littering and dog fouling

39. Many submissions to the Committee highlighted the problems facing councils in clearing up discarded litter and dog fouling. During our visit to Leicester, the Committee was impressed by the council’s initiative to fine those discarding litter in the city centre, but there were problems with enforcement. The litter warden’s ability to enforce the fines was limited particularly as they could not require an offender to give their address.

40. Proposals in *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities* would extend authorisation for issuing fines for littering and dog fouling to any person working for or on behalf of a litter authority. Councils could also get greater powers to set their own fine levels for litter and dog fouling and high performing councils will be allowed to retain the income. The LGA argued that not only high performing councils should be allowed to retain the income. “We see no reason why this should not be extended to all authorities.”²⁷

²³ LIV18 Local Government Association

²⁴ LIV18

²⁵ LIV28

²⁶ Lords Hansard, October 8 2001, Column WA63

²⁷ LIV18

41. Proposals to give more powers to litter wardens are welcome. They need new powers to demand an offender’s address so that a fine can be enforced. All councils should be allowed to retain the income from fines as an incentive for enforcement.

Fly-Posting, Fly-Tipping and Graffiti

42. *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities* puts forward proposals to increase council powers to tackle fly posting, graffiti and fly tipping. The Anti-Social Behaviour Bill, which is currently going through Parliament, was introduced after we published our terms of reference.²⁸ It addresses some of the concerns raised in the evidence to this inquiry. It is to give councils more powers to control fly-posting and graffiti. Council powers to fine those dropping litter are to be extended to cover fly-posting and graffiti, and the sale of spray paints to anyone under 18 is to be made an offence. The powers to control fly-tipping currently held by the Environment Agency are to be transferred to local authorities.

43. Many submissions to the Committee supported new duty on the owners of street furniture to keep their property clear of graffiti and fly-posting as proposed by Defra in *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities*. The LGA suggested that councils needed additional powers to carry out the work and claim back the costs from the owners. Councils welcomed proposals to extend their powers to investigate fly tippers, but they sought greater powers to fine fly tippers and impound their vehicles. The Council for the Protection of Rural England commented:

“We have some concerns about levels of fines for activities such as flytipping. Fines need to be high enough to deter offenders, which include some large companies for whom it can be cheaper to pay a fine than act responsibly.”²⁹

44. Proposals to increase council powers to control fly-posting, fly-tipping and graffiti are welcome, but they need to be extended so that councils can retain the income from fines, not least to cover the costs of enforcement. Councils need powers to set fines at levels which act as a deterrent and achieve high levels of collection.

Chewing Gum

45. The irresponsible disposal of chewing gum scars many public spaces. Once it has hardened it is remarkably costly and difficult to remove and invariably damages the surface of the paving. Proposals in *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities* would classify chewing gum as litter so that fixed penalty litter notices could be issued against those who drop it on the pavement. Another proposal would give local authorities powers to ban selectively the sale of chewing gum in areas where the problem is most acute. The Committee also looked at the potential for developing a gum which is less sticky.

46. Classifying chewing gum as litter would help to clarify a current uncertainty and has been welcomed by many submissions to the Committee. Banning the sale of chewing gum in some places is unlikely to be practical or an effective solution. One of the largest chewing

²⁸ Anti-Social Behaviour Bill [Lords], [Bill 84 (2002-03)]

²⁹ LIV09

gum manufacturers Wrigley said. “When someone chews gum, they chew it for 40-60 minutes....So the gum can easily be bought from areas right outside the areas of high deposition and be deposited in these areas.”³⁰

47. The Committee commissioned the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology to review work on developing biodegradable and less sticky chewing gum. The study has shown that there is potential to develop a gum which can more easily be removed.

48. Chewing gum is based on a synthetic rubber to which softeners, sweeteners and flavourings are added. It shares physical properties with other rubber based products such as car tyres, shock absorbers and some adhesives. A change in the stickiness or the biodegradability of chewing gum would require a change in the chemical structure of the rubber gum base. However, the gum base also determines commercially important features of chewing gum such as chewiness, flavour retention and shelf life. The challenge is to develop a less sticky or biodegradable gum base that does not compromise these other features.

49. Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology reports that the main manufacturer of chewing gum Wrigley has over the past five years invested over £5 million and dedicated three full-time R&D staff to producing a more easily removable chewing gum.³¹ Wrigley’s monitors patent applications in this area and is not aware of any that it considers particularly promising or that do not substantially overlap with its own areas of investigation. Another manufacturer Cadbury Schweppes has a substantial R&D programme for developing chewing gum, which focuses on improving its products. The development of less sticky or biodegradable gum has not been a priority to date because there has been little demand for it. Cadbury Schweppes believes that technology will develop over the coming years that will allow the development of less sticky or biodegradable chewing gum.³²

50. The submission by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology points to the work of Professor Cosgrove at Bristol University who leads the ‘polymers at interfaces’ group within the chemistry department at Bristol University. The results of a project carried out by his students into developing a less sticky gum were promising and the University is investigating whether it would be appropriate to apply for a patent. However, they have not been able to secure funding for further work. This casts doubt over claims by the manufacturers about the difficulties of introducing a more environmentally friendly product. Proposals by POST include taxing the sale of sticky chewing gum or requiring the manufacturers to pay for research.³³

51. It would be helpful if chewing gum was formally classified as litter so that fixed penalty notices can be issued on those who drop it. There is no doubt that it will be possible to produce less sticky gum. The Government should provide dedicated funding; or work with manufacturers to encourage them to undertake research. The

³⁰ Q87

³¹ LIV32

³² LIV31

³³ LIV32

Government should use all possible means to encourage manufacturers to increase their research.

Utility Companies

52. Many submissions to the Committee highlighted the problem of ensuring that utility companies properly reinstate pavements when they dig them up and work with local authorities in managing the repairs to their supply networks. Living Streets pointed out that Camden council could only inspect 6 per cent of the remedial work of reinstatement by the utility companies because of a lack of funding. Living Streets argued that “the public utilities should pay proper rental for the space they are using so local authorities have the money to restore it properly.”³⁴ Another proposal by the Urban Design Alliance was that the companies should be required to place bonds with the local authority before starting work so that it had some power over the standards of reinstatement.³⁵ At the moment councils can prosecute the utility companies and fine them, but according to the LGA, the procedure is lengthy and costly and councils cannot retain the fines.³⁶

53. When the Committee visited Arnold, we heard about problems which are likely to be caused to a market due to the water company wanting to dig up the street, and it appeared that the district council had no power to control over the work, even though it would be seen by the traders as responsible for the disruption that would be caused.

54. The Transport Minister John Spellar accepted that local councils needed more power over the utility companies. He told the Committee that his department was preparing a Bill that would increase local authority powers over the utility companies.³⁷ The ODPM suggested that this bill could be introduced in November 2003.

55. In the recent report on *Local Roads and Pathways*, the House of Commons Transport Committee highlighted the dangers of long term damage to roads caused by excavation by the utility companies. It urged the Government to bring forward powers through the New Roads and Street Works Act so that local authorities can reclaim the costs from the utility companies.³⁸

56. We support the Transport Committee’s recommendation to give local authorities additional powers to reclaim the costs of long term damage to streets caused by utility companies. We also recommend that new incentives are introduced to ensure that the utility companies reinstate pavements. This could involve requiring the companies to pay local authorities to carry out the reinstatement work on their behalf or lodging a bond with the council, which would be retained if the work was not carried out satisfactorily.

³⁴ Q249 Phillip Connolly

³⁵ Q249 Mr Hopkins

³⁶ Q180/1/2

³⁷ Q357

³⁸ ‘Local Roads and Pathways’ House of Commons Transport Committee Fifth Report of Session 2002-03 HC 407-1

57. The Committee welcomes the Government's plans to increase local authority powers over the utility companies through new legislation. The proposed Bill should be given priority in the Government's legislative programme.

Engendering Civic Pride

58. A lack of civic pride has meant that some people do not respect their public spaces. If behaviour was improved, the need for management, maintenance and fines would be reduced. The work of ENCAMS and voluntary organisations such as the Groundwork Trust highlights what can be achieved and the potential benefits of such work on a larger scale. The chewing gum manufacturers and fast food restaurants highlighted the importance of education in encouraging young people to dispose of their litter responsibly. The chewing gum manufacturer Wrigley told us:

“In terms of education, we want to tackle this issue at source, so we want to change people's behaviour and, from the research we have done, we know that the best and the most effective way of doing that is to target those people at a young age.”³⁹

59. ENCAMS said that the Government's documents are “brief on what can be done to engage the public and local communities, yet correctly sets down the principle that they are vital stakeholders in improving standards.”⁴⁰ ENCAMS highlighted the success of public campaigns which were closely targeted on specific groups such as dog owners to discourage them from allowing their dogs to foul in public spaces. It claimed that a television campaign had achieved a 40% reduction in dog fouling that was maintained over a five month period.⁴¹ ENCAMS said that it was very expensive to mount large public campaigns to change public behaviour and that its grant from the Government had not increased over the last seven years.⁴²

60. Groundwork works with specific groups in local communities on improving their environment by reclaiming derelict land and designing new facilities for parks. The projects help to build up the confidence of communities and particularly young people so that they become interested in and care for where they live. Groundwork is to receive £30m between 2003 and 2006 to set up a Community Enablers Fund that will be delivered in partnership with range of voluntary organisations.

61. Many parks have friends groups which are consulted on management and maintenance issues. Some evidence suggested that the members of the groups could play a more active role in looking after the spaces so that they become more integrated into the local community. **Local councils should encourage the individual members of friends group, many of whom are retired people but are still fit, to carry out some of the maintenance in the parks so that they become part of the local community.**

62. Public education has an important role in engendering civic pride which could reduce unnecessary subsequent maintenance and remediation. There are some good

³⁹ Q94

⁴⁰ LIV17

⁴¹ LIV17a

⁴² Q53

examples where organisations such as ENCAMS and Groundwork are working with communities. These and similar organisations need additional encouragement and funds to extend this work over a wider area and to tackle a broader range of groups. However any additional funds should be dependent on achieving tangible targets to improve the quality of the environment. Funding should not only come from the public sector. Private companies which are the source of the environmental problems should be required to contribute on the polluter pays principle.

4 Central and Local Government Integration

63. The responsibility for funding and managing public spaces falls between several departments in both central and local government. The benefits of successful public spaces can contribute to the objectives set by many different departments. For example, health improvements can be achieved if public spaces encourage people to walk more. An integrated approach is required at all levels of government to ensure that all departments share similar priorities and decisions are taken which contribute to achieving them.

Local Government

64. Within local authorities, the management of public spaces is split between several departments including planning, highways, housing, economic development and environment. Similarly, political structures need to treat public spaces as a cross-cutting issue. If they are given an enhanced role in managing public spaces and new powers, councils will need to develop more coherent management structures. The Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) point out that the current fragmented management arrangement “can lead to lack of cohesive action and leadership—exacerbated by other agencies involved including the police, public and private utilities and transport agencies.”⁴³ The Heritage Lottery Fund said:

“Effective management of the public realm requires a clear strategy and joined up working across the departments responsible for planning and enforcement, highways, refuse collection, leisure and greenspaces.”⁴⁴

65. One proposal by the RDAs is for local authorities to introduce area-based managers for focused action plans and management programmes, bringing together all the agencies involved. Some councils have started setting up such arrangements. On our visit to Nottingham we heard about its progress in setting up local management teams. Some submissions proposed that councils should consider appointing public space champions to ensure that public space issues are effectively considered at each of the committees. The Landscape Institute highlighted the need for each local authority to appoint an open space champion “with the skills and the authority to manage a cross-cutting approach to improve open space standards through policies, standards and practice. The role would be particularly beneficial in coordinating land-use and transportation planning with clearly defined design and management objectives. All too often, the conflicting interests that arise in these areas are unsatisfactorily resolved and result in poor quality open spaces, suffering more from lack of direction and vision than from funding.”⁴⁵

66. Councils need to be encouraged to set up new management arrangements for public spaces which involve all the different service providers on a neighbourhood basis;

⁴³ LIV20

⁴⁴ LIV04 Heritage Lottery Fund

⁴⁵ LIV07 Landscape Institute

internal council executives need also to be adapted to reflect the cross-cutting nature of public spaces.

Central Government

67. The management and maintenance of public spaces cuts across the responsibilities of many Government Departments—ODPM: Environment, Food & Rural Affairs; Culture, Media & Sport; Transport; Education & Skills; Health and the Home Office. It is important that all these departments work together with one department taking the lead. There has been considerable progress in coordinating the work of the departments which started with the 2002 Comprehensive Spending Review that included a Cross Cutting Review in Public Spaces. This review was carried out by a team of ministers and civil servants from several Government departments and involved representatives from several external organisations. The ODPM's document *Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener* underlined the importance of maintaining the momentum that has been generated by the cross cutting review on public spaces and the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce.⁴⁶ However, many submissions pointed to a hiatus in taking forward some of the proposals since then. There were also concerns that the Department for Transport did not appear to be committed to the Government's liveability agenda.

Continuing cross-departmental working

68. The submission by the ODPM to the Committee highlights plans to develop a new inter-departmental ministerial group “to give high level leadership and make improvements to the ways in which policy and action is organised, coordinated, developed and implemented.”⁴⁷ It also suggests that an oversight group of senior officials and a joint agency forum are also to be established.

69. We were told that none of the cross governmental organisations had yet met.⁴⁸ ENCAMS commented:

“Since the publication of the report there has been a certain lack of forward momentum.....At the moment I am not exactly sure, having got the report out in terms of the Spending Review, why this cross departmental way of working between officials could not carry on.....It seems to have been pushed out to each individual department to take recommendations forward, so I would welcome the establishment of a cross-departmental team. For example, the Home Office when it is dealing with the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill does not cut across Defra, who is dealing with the *Powers, Rights, Responsibilities* consultation. I do believe there have been some elements of duplication and thinking which have not been pulled together which that initial cross-cutting team were able to do.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ p64

⁴⁷ LIV30

⁴⁸ Q396

⁴⁹ Q40

70. The Planning Minister Tony McNulty said that the cross ministerial group would meet before the recess, by the middle of July 2003, and that the Government had waited to set it up “until they had a good body of work and substance under way.”⁵⁰

The Department for Transport

71. Whilst most departments are working across Government on improving the quality of public spaces, the Department for Transport appears not to be engaging with the Government’s agenda. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) says that the Department for Transport’s

“lack of engagement is hampering the credible delivery of the cross-governmental liveability initiative. There is a need to establish or integrate an influential design/public realm panel within DfT. This requires a fundamental commitment from the department. CABE is well aware of the excellent work that has emanated from the department in the form of establishing Home Zones. This forward thinking ought to be a starting point, rather than a conclusion, for DfT.”

72. The Transport Minister John Spellar told us that the department’s main motives were safety, and that quality of space “is slightly peripheral to this from our point of view.” The delays in producing a revised Walking Strategy highlights the lack of priority which the department gives to creating attractive public spaces. We welcome the DfT’s discussion paper on Walking, which was published after the completion of our inquiry, but it has taken more than 18 months to produce.⁵¹ In its response to the predecessor committee’s report on Walking in Towns & Cities⁵² which was published in November 2001, the Government agreed that “a new walking strategy was required for encouraging walking. It will prepare a new edition of Encouraging Walking to set out the strategy.”⁵³ In the design section of this report we consider further the Department for Transport’s role.

73. The Local Government Association said that the Department for Transport intends to undertake its own review of transport related environmental issues “but we have no details about its terms of reference or timing. It would have made far more sense to us to have included transport and, therefore, dealt with all environmental issues together.”

74. Momentum in cross-departmental working has been lost since the cross sector review that ended in summer 2002. It is important that the working groups involving officials and Ministers from the relevant departments are set up as a matter of urgency to assess progress and promote coordination.

75. We are very disappointed that the Department for Transport considers that the quality of space is peripheral to its interests and is not engaging with other departments. As the department in charge of the most used public spaces around transport interchanges, it has an important role in working with other Government

⁵⁰ Q397

⁵¹ ‘On the move: by foot a discussion paper’ DfT June 2003

⁵² ‘Walking in Towns and Cities’ Eleventh Report of the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee HC 167-I

⁵³ Department for Transport The Government’s Response to the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee’s Report on Walking in Towns and Cities. November 2001

departments to create attractive places. If it is carrying out its own review of transport related environmental issues, this needs to be integrated with the work of the other departments.

76. We recommend that the Department for Transport set up a public realm panel that can advise it on key design issues and ensure that the public spaces within its control are as attractive as possible.

5 Design

77. There are four design factors which have meant that public spaces have become unattractive and underused.

- They are often uninteresting and poorly planned.
- They are dominated by the car.
- Detailed highway standards are being rigidly applied.
- Streets are cluttered with street furniture, signs and rails.

Creating enjoyable spaces

78. Public spaces should be designed to create enjoyment rather than as through routes. The Urban Design Alliance commented:

“We are often creating, flat, bushless, benchless, corralled, waterless deserts. We should be designing for people’s enjoyment. The ODPM and Defra document focuses on ‘cleaner, safer greener’. What about more delightful?”⁵⁴

79. CABE highlights the lack of a coherent approach to the design of public space at a local level. It complains that:

“too often short term programmes are seen as compensations such as targeting chewing gum blight.....Carefully thought-through design solutions are the root to creating a good quality environment, rather than dealing with the consequences of a poorly designed one.”⁵⁵

80. The Urban Design Alliance (UDAL) suggests that public realm strategies should help “direct long term capital investment and long term revenue funds for maintaining and managing the public realm.....You need a strategy that is based on action plans that indicate where the money needs to be spent the most.”⁵⁶ UDAL proposed that public realm strategies should be one of documents required as part of the local development frameworks which are being proposed in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill to replace local and district plans.

81. Streets and public spaces should be designed to attract pedestrians and are enjoyable. A coherent design and management framework is required for both roads and formal public spaces which should be part of the new Local Development Documents.

⁵⁴ LIV16

⁵⁵ LIV27

⁵⁶ Q272

Making streets more pedestrian friendly

82. Accommodating the car has come to dominate the environment in many public places. Greater attention needs to be paid to creating attractive streets for pedestrians whilst also accommodating vehicles. Submissions to the Committee said that:

- the ODPM and Defra's documents did not consider how to improve streets and roads for pedestrians;
- national guidance on signage and street furniture was needed so that local authorities could ensure that public spaces were attractive to a wide range of users and could adopt their own design solutions to safety;
- new skills were required to manage and design streetscapes.

Providing for pedestrians

83. About 85% of public space is made up of highways and pavements and the Safer Streets Coalition complained that there was a lack of emphasis in the ODPM's Living Spaces report on our roads, lanes and pavements as vital public spaces. "Public spaces which are full of traffic or where traffic is able to speed... are ugly, unsafe and polluted. It puts people off from walking and cycling."⁵⁷

Living Streets told us;

"There are many, many examples of the way we inhibit the use of public space because of the way we actually provide for the space as merely a traffic corridor."⁵⁸

84. The Transport Committee's report on *Local Roads and Pathways* draws attention to the new Traffic Managers which the Government is considering, urging councils to employ. The Committee raises concerns that the managers would not take account of the needs of pedestrians and would concentrate solely on keeping traffic moving.⁵⁹ **The Transport Committee concluded that it is unconvinced as to the benefits of, need for and skills available to create traffic managers. We share these concerns.**

Signage and street clutter

85. The Government's highway and design guidance has allowed the motor car to dominate public spaces. The national requirements to put up guardrails and signs in many locations have subordinated public spaces to the needs of drivers. The Association of London Government emphasised that:

"the street environment is a major part of the public realm, yet the focus of its use has changed significantly over time, with legislation and guidelines used to manage it skewed towards traffic, making the public realm a vehicle focused environment

⁵⁷ LIV06

⁵⁸ Q274

⁵⁹ 'Local Roads and Pathways' House of Commons Transport Committee Fifth Report of Session 2002-03 HC 407-1

where the ‘right of way’ overrides, the ‘right of place’ where the needs of other users have been neglected.”⁶⁰

86. UDAL says that “Public spaces are often deadened by the hardware of safety, such as pedestrian guardrails and CCTV.”⁶¹ The Council for the Protection of Rural England commented: “While the installation of each sign may be innocuous, the incremental and cumulative effect is significant.”⁶² The Civic Trust said that streets are becoming cluttered with signs and street furniture.

“The removal of street clutter is an aspect of the streetscape which greatly exercises our membership. Legislation regarding signage and other street furniture is either unclear in relation to design, too prescriptive or too inflexible... Much greater flexibility, consistent with safety, is necessary”⁶³

87. The Association of London Government called for a review of the way safety and directional information is given. It says that

“the growth in vehicles has been catered for by a ‘predict and provide’ policy resulting in the practice, regulation and standards being developed around accommodating and managing vehicles rather than developing the public realm as a whole with regard to all its functions and users. These standards have become national and developed a homogeneous style which has undermined local solutions and management.”⁶⁴

88. English Heritage points out that highways engineering needs to pay greater regard to local character and distinctiveness. It urged that local design solutions should be found that successfully create safe attractive and liveable neighbourhoods.⁶⁵

89. There are examples where councils have sought to create more pedestrian friendly streets, but they have had to contravene some regulations. The Urban Design Alliance highlighted the example in Kensington, in West London where the council has removed a lot of barriers and signs to create a more pedestrian friendly environment. However UDAL pointed out that “the politicians there had to take personal liability to go against the recommendations of some of their officers.”⁶⁶

90. The Committee noted that the Department for Transport has recently reviewed regulations on signage. When we visited Nottingham, the council told us that it was planning to remove about 10,000 no-parking signs within a square mile in the city centre as a result of changes in Highways Regulations. The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Orders 2002 which came into force in January 2003 removed the requirement for a no parking sign to reinforce a double yellow line indicating no parking at any time. **There are clearly opportunities to review the provision of other signage to reduce clutter.**

⁶⁰ LIV12

⁶¹ LIV15

⁶² LIV09

⁶³ LIV12

⁶⁴ LIV12

⁶⁵ LIV19

⁶⁶ Q274

91. CABE's report *Paving the Way* written for the Department for Transport sets out an agenda for improving streetscape design and management "to bring it into line with Government policy on design, sustainability and the urban realm." It highlights the importance of placing greater emphasis on the multiple uses of streets, rather than mainly vehicle movements, and calls for the revision of traffic sign regulations so that local authorities can vary the size of signs according to the local context. CABE told us;

"We took every single regulation and showed clause by clause how it could be changed.....We have not had one response to this document..."⁶⁷

92. Those interpreting guidance on signage and other safety measures are understandably cautious not wanting to endanger life and wary of expensive litigation. However, safety provision can be provided in a way which improves the environment. The Urban Design Alliance pointed to the benefits of attracting more people on to streets which provides a safer environment rather than blocking off roads to create cul-de-sacs.⁶⁸

93. The design and management of streets is dominated by the needs of the car to promote through traffic. This is due to inflexible regulations about the use of signage and barriers which clutter up streets, restrict pedestrian movement and create unattractive environments. The ODPM's and Defra's Living Spaces documents fail to consider how to make streets more pedestrian friendly.

94. The Department for Transport should reduce all its requirements for signage to the absolute minimum allowing councils greater freedom to design streets and install appropriate signage and street furniture, which fits into the locality, whilst not compromising on safety. It is very disappointing that the Department for Transport does not appear to have taken CABE's report seriously. The report requires detailed consideration and implementation of many of its recommendations. The Government should require councils to review the provision of signage every five years to ensure that redundant signs are removed and streets do not get cluttered.

Skills

95. A new approach is required to create and manage attractive public places which does not rely excessively on highways engineers. Highways engineers need to form part of a team that involves other professions. The perspective of the different users also should be recognised.

96. Living Streets emphasised the importance of developing cross-disciplinary teams.

"Some of the best local authorities have health professionals working within transportation teams to get the health aspects to it and to get the professions to look at things from the end-user perspective. We take traffic engineers and others out around the streets and says 'Forget all the textbooks and everything else. Look at it from how you see it when you are walking around.'" ⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Q230

⁶⁸ LIV15

⁶⁹ Q278

97. The Urban Design Alliance pointed out:

“We need to work across the professions, work with highways engineers and planners and politicians to have a different emphasis on safety.”⁷⁰

98. Pedestrian areas need careful design. They should not be the areas left over after the roads have been built and sight lines determined. Councils should not rely solely on highways engineers to design and manage streetscapes. We recommend that they should be encouraged to set up multidisciplinary teams which can consider how the needs of different users, and particularly pedestrians can be incorporated into the design and management of streets.

CABE Space

99. The ODPM’s Living Spaces: Cleaner, Safer, Greener announced the setting up of a new section within the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, for urban spaces to develop and encourage the use of integrated approaches, which combines thinking about the open and built environments.⁷¹ The new unit called CABE Space was launched in May 2003. It followed recommendations in the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce report that highlighted the need for an agency to advocate the economic, social and environmental role of parks and green spaces and provide leadership on strategic policy issues. CABE Space will be responsible for strategic coordination, promotion, campaigning and dissemination of good practice relating to urban space with a prioritisation for green space issues.⁷² It is setting up a strategic enablers scheme to help local authorities improve the design and management of their parks.

100. The proposal to set up CABE Space has been generally welcomed. The Landscape Institute commented: “It offers the potential of an holistic strategy for the public realm whether public spaces, streets or buildings.”⁷³ However, other agencies said that it should not focus exclusively on green spaces. The Local Government Association supported the setting up of CABE Space but suggested that

“it will be important to ensure that parks and green spaces are not seen as separate from the rest of the environmental and ‘liveability’ agenda. These spaces need to be seen as part of the wider public realm framework, rather than as entities in themselves.”

101. The chief executive of CABE Jon Rouse told us that whilst CABE Space’s remit “is particularly focused on green spaces. CABE’s sense is that we are concerned about the public realm in totality.”⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Q274

⁷¹ page 39

⁷² LIV27

⁷³ LIV07

⁷⁴ Q222

102. CABE Space's remit needs clarification. It is acceptable for it to focus initially on green spaces but within two years it must move on to look at the broader design and management issues in all public spaces.

6 The Funding of Parks and Public Spaces

103. Funding for the development, management and maintenance of parks and public spaces comes from two main sources. The costs of maintenance, management and most capital projects are funded by local authorities, whilst some high profile capital projects, including major renovation projects of existing spaces are increasingly being funded by the Lottery Distributors.

104. Between 1979 and 1997 there was a steep decline in overall funding. Since 1997, the decline has been stemmed but there are insufficient funds to implement many of the ideas in the ODPM's Living Places document. The funds being offered are mainly capital funding and will not have a lasting impact.

105. In the Comprehensive Spending Review 2002, the Government allocated additional funds for public spaces and parks through funding to local authorities and some special projects. Local authority funding for its environment budget is to rise 1.3% above inflation between April 2003 and March 2006. It allocated £201m between April 2003 and March 2006 for schemes to improve liveability. These include: an £89m Liveability Fund to be spent by local authorities on capital projects; £41m for CABA and CABA Space; £40m for Groundwork to fund its work with local authorities and communities; £30m for a Communities Enabler Scheme managed by Groundwork to help community groups improve parks and green spaces in their neighbourhood.

106. Witnesses giving evidence to the Committee welcomed the funding allocations but suggested that it did not match the scale of needs or the importance which local people placed on public spaces. CABA said

“The reality is that, since 1997, the decline which was pretty dramatic has been halted.....since 1997 we have experienced a one per cent increase in real terms over the period from 1997 to 2002, so we have stopped the rot.”⁷⁵

107. CABA said that there were insufficient funds to implement the proposals in the Living Places publications by the ODPM and Defra.

“There are not sufficient resources and therefore Living Places, whilst it has lots of good ideas in it, is always going to be constrained by the overall lack of resources which came out of the 2002 Spending Review.”⁷⁶

108. The need for revenue funding has not been adequately addressed. Newcastle City Council pointed out:

“A major and consistent factor is that revenue implications are not adequately catered for in capital schemes. The value of good maintenance is not sufficiently recognised in terms of the effects of depreciation of a scheme thereafter and longer term sustainability.”

⁷⁵ Q207

⁷⁶ Q206

The designs and the materials used for new or renovated public spaces need to be fit for purpose, serviceable and allow for easy maintenance to minimise the revenue costs without compromising on the attractiveness of the space.

The Liveability Fund

109. One of the new small pots of funds is the £89m Liveability Fund to be spent by local authorities on capital projects over the next three years. The Government has not yet published guidelines on how it should be spent. It seems that it is unclear what it will achieve, even in general terms.

110. CABE said that if the funds are distributed evenly to all local authorities “we will end up doing nothing well.”⁷⁷ It proposed that the funds should be used to help those local authorities without a public space strategy, draw one up. “We have to have some sort of rationale for distributing that money to 25 or 30 authorities where we can actually make a difference on the ground.” The Committee shares the Government’s concern that it should not be used to reward those local authorities who are neglecting their public spaces but also that some councils need to understand the importance of public and open spaces.⁷⁸

111. The increase in funds for public spaces is welcome but very modest; it will not make up for the severe decline in funds since 1979. Small pots of money distributed among a wide range of organisations can only make a limited impact on funding needs. Bidding for funds can divert valuable staff resources and skew priorities away from what an area needs. There is a severe shortage of revenue funding which has not yet been addressed. Funds could be better used if greater attention was given to continuing maintenance which could avoid major expenditure when a facility has suffered from long term neglect.

112. We recommend that the Government concentrates the Liveability Fund on a relatively small number of projects where it can make a significant impact.

Local Authority funds

113. The Urban Green Spaces Taskforce said that over the last 20 years in real and cumulative terms, public space had lost out on £1.3billion of funding by local authorities since 1979.⁷⁹ Since 1997, the decline has been halted, but there has been limited reinstatement of the lost funding. Local authority revenue funding for the management of public spaces is part of the Environment, Protection and Cultural Services block grant. The general revenue grant to local authorities is to increase by an average of 3.9% a year after inflation over the next three years according to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2002. The Government’s general revenue provision for most aspects of public space in the EPCS is to increase by only 1.3%.⁸⁰

114. Tony Travers from the London School of Economics pointed out:

⁷⁷ Q216

⁷⁸ Q392

⁷⁹ ‘Green Spaces Better Places: Final Report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce’ DETR 2002 page 22

⁸⁰ cited in ‘Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener’ ODPM October 2002 p65

“Almost £20bn more will go to health between 2002/03 and 2005/06 and £12bn to education. By contrast, spending on all the services councils provide in the streets and on public buildings visited daily by millions of their residents will rise by just £1bn in the same period.”⁸¹

115. Many submissions pointed out that councils have prioritised spending on social services and education because they have a statutory duty to provide them. The Local Government Association told the Committee

“There is strong pressure on local authorities for the bulk of their funding to be spent on social services and education, despite the fact that the environment is often a higher priority for local people than either of these services.”⁸²

There is no overall assessment of the funding needs of parks and public spaces. The Urban Green Spaces Taskforce in 2002 identified a need for an additional £500m over the next five years just for parks.⁸³

116. The increase in funds to local authorities is welcome. However, it will make a very limited impact on the long term backlog in funding for parks and public spaces. A long term funding programme is required which reflects the poor state of public spaces and the importance which the public puts on them. The £500m estimated by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce is a starting point but is an arbitrary figure and a more extensive assessment is required of the funding needed.

117. If local authorities were given a statutory duty of care for public spaces, they would be encouraged to prioritise funding to improve them. We therefore recommend that local authorities should be given a new statutory duty.

Lottery Funds

118. Since 1997 the Lottery Distributors have made an important contribution towards the capital funding of public spaces, reinstating and improving many public spaces. The Heritage Lottery Fund has provided about £310m to more than 230 public parks while the New Opportunities Fund has a £130m programme to help urban and rural communities improve and care for their natural environment.

119. The Lottery Distributors can only make a limited contribution to improving public space, but they have demonstrated that with sufficient funds spent in small areas, significant improvements can be made to local areas. However, in some areas the capital projects have made the overall shortage of revenue funds more apparent.

120. The Lottery Distributors cannot make up for the shortfall in funds to local authorities. The New Opportunities Fund noted:

⁸¹ Quoted in ‘The Rising Prominence of Liveability: or are we condemned to a life of grim’ Mori, September 2002. Page 11

⁸² LIV18

⁸³ ‘Green Spaces Better Places: Final Report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce’ DETR 2002 page 23

“Lottery money can be an integral part of a strategy to improve parks and green spaces... but it cannot replace a long-term mainstream commitment by government and local authorities.”⁸⁴

121. The Heritage Lottery Fund accepted that its investment was only “a small drop in the ocean.”

“Of course we are limited by the funding that is available, but what we want to provide is best examples of the standards that can be achieved with the money put in and these are very valuable to other local authorities. Once people can see the quality that can be achieved with the resources that can be put in, then they know what they can do and want to do it. We have seen one park, which we have provided the money for, having a knock-on effect. The local authority, on seeing that success, has sought and found its own funding and funding from other areas to continue the process through further parks.”⁸⁵

122. The New Opportunities Fund has allocated about 10% of its money to green spaces. The Fund could not explain how this level of contribution had been decided, explaining that it was set by Government. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment argued that the proportion should be increased reflecting public priorities to about 20%.

“We think that reflects a better balance of how much the public think public space is an important beneficiary of the lottery.”⁸⁶

The New Opportunities Fund is merging with another lottery distributor the Community Fund. NOF said that the funding priorities for the new distributor had not been fixed.⁸⁷
We recommend that the new fund expands the contribution to green spaces provided up to now by New Opportunities Fund.

123. The Heritage Lottery Fund provides mainly capital funding for parks, while local authorities have to make a ten-year commitment to provide the revenue funding to maintain it. The HLF provides some revenue funds for up to five years for security wardens. Councils may have to transfer funds from other parks to fulfil the revenue commitment if their environment budgets are not increased to cover the improvements funded by the HLF. When the Committee visited Arnold where the HLF provided about £1m for improving Arnot Park, it learned that Gedling council had to find funding from other parks budgets to maintain the refurbished park.

124. The Lottery Distributors cannot make a significant contribution to the overall shortfall in funding for public places, but they can demonstrate the benefits of a major injection of funds into a single project which then can be emulated across a wider area using other funds. However, the Heritage Lottery Fund can exacerbate the shortage of

⁸⁴ LIV14

⁸⁵ Q287

⁸⁶ Q211

⁸⁷ Q302

revenue funding in a local authority area because of the requirement to cover the maintenance costs of a park which they have refurbished.

Private Funds

125. The potential to attract private funding for the maintenance of public spaces, through Business Improvement Districts and from developers through planning gain has not been maximised. High quality open spaces tend to help the local economy and increase the success of a private development. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment argued that while planning gain contributions to affordable housing help one sector of the community

“investing the benefit from development into the public realm would, in a sense, produce benefits for the whole of the community and actually might make development itself more acceptable to the community,”⁸⁸

126. The Government is reviewing guidance on the negotiation of developer contributions as part of a planning permission. We recommend that the guidance should consider contributions to improving the public realm.

127. The Local Government Bill 2001, once approved, will give local authorities powers to set up Business Improvements District where an additional business rate can be levied for improvements in a defined area. Boots PLC suggested that BID programmes should be closely linked with local authority strategies to improve public spaces.⁸⁹ Councils will also need to have clear authority over the spaces to ensure that the private funds have a real impact on improving them. **Service level agreements between the BID and the local authority and other service providers will be important to ensure that additional services are being provided.**

128. Contributions from private developers can make major contribution to improving the local environment. Councils need new guidance on how to levy them. Business Improvement Districts offer an important opportunity to access private funds for revenue projects, but it will have to be part of a concerted programme which brings clear improvements.

⁸⁸ Q207

⁸⁹ LIV25

Conclusions and recommendations

The State of our Public spaces

1. ENCAMS' survey on local environmental quality produced useful data and should be regularly updated to assess progress. (Paragraph 7)
2. Public spaces play an important role in encouraging healthy lifestyles and supporting communities by encouraging informal contact. However, many are in a poor condition. The spaces are perceived as unsafe and have a poor image which deters investment in the area. It is therefore vital that they are included as part of any regeneration initiative. (Paragraph 13)
3. The Committee shares the Government's concern about the state of public spaces and welcomes the prominence being given to improve them. In the rest of the report, we consider whether its proposals are sufficient to tackle the state of public spaces and suggest how they might be improved. (Paragraph 14)

Local Authority Powers and Responsibilities

4. Councils need a clear responsibility to ensure that the public spaces are maintained to a high standard. The Committee accepts that much can be achieved without legislation to improve the management of public spaces. At the very least a simplified framework highlighting the different responsibilities, roles and powers is required. To simplify the framework, it will be necessary to revise some of the existing contradictory legislation. A simple guide is required setting out what local authorities can and should do in managing public spaces and what they can require others to do and listing the sanctions if they are not done. (Paragraph 26)
5. The Government must publish an action programme setting out proposed implementation as soon as possible. The Committee was disappointed that the Government was not able to give a target date for the publication of its evaluation of the responses to its consultation document Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities, which closed in February 2003. (Paragraph 27)

Standards for management and maintenance

6. A set of national indicators for the required condition of public spaces can act as an important spur to local authorities to improve the management and maintenance which will help them implement a new remit to ensure that public spaces are maintained to a high standard. Best Value Performance Indicator 199 on environmental quality and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment are a useful start but it needs to be broadened to include a wider range of factors. Best Value also needs to consider the management of parks and green spaces. (Paragraph 32)
7. The planned Public Spaces Index needs to be developed as a framework which can be adapted by local authorities to suit the particular issues in their areas. (Paragraph 33)

Prevention, fines and enforcement

8. The Government's proposals to give councils more powers to enforce regulations are welcome. Councils need new powers to set fines for offences such as littering, dog fouling and fly posting at a level which are sufficient to both act as a deterrent to offenders but also to cover the costs of enforcement. Being able to retain the income from all fines would provide an added incentive to impose and enforce them. The collection of fines must be raised to at least 90% so that offenders cannot think that they can get away without paying. (Paragraph 38)
9. Proposals to give more powers to litter wardens are welcome. They need new powers to demand an offender's address so that a fine can be enforced. All councils should be allowed to retain the income from fines as an incentive for enforcement. (Paragraph 41)

Fly-Posting, Fly-Tipping and Graffiti

10. Proposals to increase council powers to control fly-posting, fly-tipping and graffiti are welcome, but they need to be extended so that councils can retain the income from fines, not least to cover the costs of enforcement. Councils need powers to set fines at levels which act as a deterrent and achieve high levels of collection. (Paragraph 44)

Chewing Gum

11. It would be helpful if chewing gum was formally classified as litter so that fixed penalty notices can be issued on those who drop it. There is no doubt that it will be possible to produce less sticky gum. The Government should provide dedicated funding; or work with manufacturers to encourage them to undertake research. The Government should use all possible means to encourage manufacturers to increase their research. (Paragraph 51)

Utility Companies

12. We support the Transport Committee's recommendation to give local authorities additional powers to reclaim the costs of long term damage to streets caused by utility companies. We also recommend that new incentives are introduced to ensure that the utility companies reinstate pavements. This could involve requiring the companies to pay local authorities to carry out the reinstatement work on their behalf or lodging a bond with the council, which would be retained if the work was not carried out satisfactorily. (Paragraph 56)
13. The Committee welcomes the Government's plans to increase local authority powers over the utility companies through new legislation. The proposed Bill should be given priority in the Government's legislative programme. (Paragraph 57)

Engendering Civic Pride

14. Local councils should encourage the individual members of friends group, many of whom are retired people but are still fit, to carry out some of the maintenance in the parks so that they become part of the local community. (Paragraph 61)
15. Public education has an important role in engendering civic pride which could reduce unnecessary subsequent maintenance and remediation. There are some good examples where organisations such as ENCAMS and Groundwork are working with communities. These and similar organisations need additional encouragement and funds to extend this work over a wider area and to tackle a broader range of groups. However any additional funds should be dependent on achieving tangible targets to improve the quality of the environment. Funding should not only come from the public sector. Private companies which are the source of the environmental problems should be required to contribute on the polluter pays principle. (Paragraph 62)

Local Government

16. Councils need to be encouraged to set up new management arrangements for public spaces which involve all the different service providers on a neighbourhood basis; internal council executives need also to be adapted to reflect the cross-cutting nature of public spaces. (Paragraph 66)

The Department for Transport

17. Momentum in cross-departmental working has been lost since the cross sector review that ended in summer 2002. It is important that the working groups involving officials and Ministers from the relevant departments are set up as a matter of urgency to assess progress and promote coordination. (Paragraph 74)
18. We are very disappointed that the Department for Transport considers that the quality of space is peripheral to its interests and is not engaging with other departments. As the department in charge of the most used public spaces around transport interchanges, it has an important role in working with other Government departments to create attractive places. If it is carrying out its own review of transport related environmental issues, this needs to be integrated with the work of the other departments. (Paragraph 75)
19. We recommend that the Department for Transport set up a public realm panel that can advise it on key design issues and ensure that the public spaces within its control are as attractive as possible. (Paragraph 76)

Creating Enjoyable Spaces

20. Streets and public spaces should be designed to attract pedestrians and are enjoyable. A coherent design and management framework is required for both roads and formal public spaces which should be part of the new Local Development Documents. (Paragraph 81)

Making Streets more Pedestrian Friendly

21. The Transport Committee concluded that it is unconvinced as to the benefits of, need for and skills available to create traffic managers. We share these concerns. (Paragraph 84)

Signage and Street Clutter

22. There are clearly opportunities to review the provision of other signage to **reduce clutter**. (Paragraph 90)
23. The design and management of streets is dominated by the needs of the car to promote through traffic. This is due to inflexible regulations about the use of signage and barriers which clutter up streets, restrict pedestrian movement and create unattractive environments. The ODPM's and Defra's Living Spaces documents fail to consider how to make streets more pedestrian friendly. (Paragraph 93)
24. The Department for Transport should reduce all its requirements for signage to the absolute minimum allowing councils greater freedom to design streets and install appropriate signage and street furniture, which fits into the locality, whilst not compromising on safety. It is very disappointing that the Department for Transport does not appear to have taken CABE's report seriously. The report requires detailed consideration and implementation of many of its recommendations. The Government should require councils to review the provision of signage every five years to ensure that redundant signs are removed and streets do not get cluttered. (Paragraph 94)

Skills

25. Pedestrian areas need careful design. They should not be the areas left over after the roads have been built and sight lines determined. Councils should not rely solely on highways engineers to design and manage streetscapes. We recommend that they should be encouraged to set up multidisciplinary teams which can consider how the needs of different users, and particularly pedestrians can be incorporated into the design and management of streets. (Paragraph 98)

CABE Space

26. CABE Space's remit needs clarification. It is acceptable for it to focus initially on green spaces but within two years it must move on to look at the broader design and management issues in all public spaces. (Paragraph 102)

The Funding of Parks and Public Spaces

27. The designs and the materials used for new or renovated public spaces need to be fit for purpose, serviceable and allow for easy maintenance to minimise the revenue costs without compromising on the attractiveness of the space. (Paragraph 108)

28. The increase in funds for public spaces is welcome but very modest; it will not make up for the severe decline in funds since 1979. Small pots of money distributed among a wide range of organisations can only make a limited impact on funding needs. Bidding for funds can divert valuable staff resources and skew priorities away from what an area needs. There is a severe shortage of revenue funding which has not yet been addressed. Funds could be better used if greater attention was given to continuing maintenance which could avoid major expenditure when a facility has suffered from long term neglect. (Paragraph 111)
29. We recommend that the Government concentrates the Liveability Fund on a relatively small number of projects where it can make a significant impact. (Paragraph 112)

Local Authority Funds

30. The increase in funds to local authorities is welcome. However, it will make a very limited impact on the long term backlog in funding for parks and public spaces. A long term funding programme is required which reflects the poor state of public spaces and the importance which the public puts on them. The £500m estimated by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce is a starting point but is an arbitrary figure and a more extensive assessment is required of the funding needed. (Paragraph 116)
31. If local authorities were given a statutory duty of care for public spaces, they would be encouraged to prioritise funding to improve them. We therefore recommend that local authorities should be given a new statutory duty. (Paragraph 117)

Lottery Funds

32. We recommend that the new fund expands the contribution to green spaces provided up to now by New Opportunities Fund. (Paragraph 122)
33. The Lottery Distributors cannot make a significant contribution to the overall shortfall in funding for public places, but they can demonstrate the benefits of a major injection of funds into a single project which then can be emulated across a wider area using other funds. However, the Heritage Lottery Fund can exacerbate the shortage of revenue funding in a local authority area because of the requirement to cover the maintenance costs of a park which they have refurbished. (Paragraph 124)

Private Funds

34. The Government is reviewing guidance on the negotiation of developer contributions as part of a planning permission. We recommend that the guidance should consider contributions to improving the public realm. (Paragraph 126)
35. Service level agreements between the BID and the local authority and other service providers will be important to ensure that additional services are being provided. (Paragraph 127)

36. Contributions from private developers can make major contribution to improving the local environment. Councils need new guidance on how to levy them. Business Improvement Districts offer an important opportunity to access private funds for revenue projects, but it will have to be part of a concerted programme which brings clear improvements. (Paragraph 128)

Appendix 1 – Visit to Nottingham, Arnold and Leicester

Monday 12th May – Tuesday 13th May 2003

Participants

Mr Andrew Bennett, MP
 Mr Clive Betts, MP
 Mr John Cummings, MP
 Mr Chris Mole, MP
 Dr John Pugh, MP
 Ms Christine Russell, MP

Libby Preston (Sub-committee Clerk)
 Ben Kochan (Committee Specialist)
 Kit Campbell (Specialist Advisor)
 Simon Quin (Specialist Advisor)

Tuesday 13th May: Nottingham

Overview

1. The Sub-committee were welcomed to Nottingham by Jane Ellis, the city centre manager, who gave an overview of the three presentations that followed.

Living Places and the Urban Design Framework

City Centre Review

2. Heather Emery, the Urban Design Manager, explained the key targets that had emerged in a review of the city centre conducted in 1989. These were:

- Extension of the city centre towards the canal and station
- Extension of both shopping centres
- Development of mixed-use sites, including provision of car parking
- Development of a parking strategy which favoured shoppers and visitors
- Prioritising and investing in facilities for pedestrians
- Management of the city centre

An additional review in 2000 stressed the importance of:

- Clean and green

- Putting people first

Urban Design Framework

3. Mrs Emery explained that an Urban Design Framework provided a strategic framework to guide all development in the city centre. This framework ensured all development contributed to the same vision. This vision included the targets identified by the city centre reviews of 1989 and 2000. It also encompassed: identification of future, medium and long-term, projects that would enhance the public realm; a statement of aspirations for the evolution of a 'city of squares'; an improved basis for realising urban design and regeneration opportunities; and a basis for making funding applications.

City Centre Streetscape Design Manual

4. A City Centre Streetscape Design Manual was being devised to bring together issues of maintenance and design. It aimed to ensure:

- the principles of good streetscape design were more widely adopted across the council
- consistency of colours and materials for street furniture and ground surfaces
- improved collaborative working across the council
- a quality maintenance regime, avoiding shoddy utility reinstatement works
- removal of existing streetscape clutter (through a clutter buster)⁹⁰
- availability of the manual for everyone involved in the design or management of Nottingham's streets
- The manual would be championed by managers within their sections and explored through workshop sessions.

Delivery

5. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), and its public space division, CABESPACE, had appointed an 'Enabler' to provide practical assistance on one project, Old Market Square. The Enabler had provided advice based on past experience which was found to be very useful.

6. The council had used the objectives of their local transport plan to further their urban design and review aims; for example, filling in the subways to make pedestrians top priority. Mrs Emery emphasised that council objectives and strategies must compliment each other.

⁹⁰ The council estimated there were 20 000 redundant items of street furniture and signage cluttering up the city centre's streets.

Management, Maintenance and Enforcement of the Public Realm

7. Malcolm Price, manager of Street Scene explained how the city had changed its approach to the management of the public realm. Ground maintenance and cleansing services were decentralised to the control of one of ten area managers. It was thought that management at area level would mean local needs would be responded to more appropriately. Area committees were encouraged to establish local service standards and develop partnerships in the local area. The city centre was classed as a distinct area with its own manager. The council hoped to extend the scheme to include other services in the future.

8. Surveys were conducted by wardens on a monthly basis (weekly basis in the city centre) to ensure each area was meeting its service standards. Effectiveness, efficiency and best value were also monitored. Mr Price emphasised the importance of street wardens who were able to monitor and report problems immediately. However he added that private space, which couldn't be patrolled, was frustrating to manage.

Graffiti and Flyposting

9. Graffiti and flyposting caused considerable problems, especially in September when new students arrived in the city. Again private property caused a problem. The council did not remove graffiti and flyposters from private property because of the risk of causing damage to the property. Utility boxes caused a similar problem. The normal method of removal, high-pressure water, could not be used on these. However if the graffiti or posters were political in nature or offensive they were removed within 24 hours, whatever the property. Mr Price was keen that the licensing system should impose a ban on flyposting.

Flytipping and Abandoned Vehicles

10. Flytipping was a big problem, yet difficult to manage because there was a lack of witnesses, and therefore prosecution was difficult.

11. Abandoned vehicles had been a big problem, especially because of the time taken to obtain permission to remove the vehicle. The council implemented an amnesty scheme. Owners could sign over a car to the council who would remove it free of charge. This had been a big success. However Mr Price called for a review of the 25 year old law which dealt with clearance of abandoned vehicles.

City Centre Management

12. Jane Ellis, City Centre Manager, explained the importance of feedback from the public. Nottingham conducted a public perception survey every five years, the last being in 2000. A city centre residents' survey had also been conducted in 2002. Results of such surveys enabled the council and management team to reassess their targets and priorities; for example, public perceptions of street begging had been instrumental in the formation of a begging policy. Mrs Ellis then outlined some of the key management issues in Nottingham city centre.

Environmental Management

Waste Management

13. Trade waste caused a management a problem. Many of the city's buildings did not have service areas, or space for wheelie-bins. Bags were therefore used for rubbish and placed on the street for collection. This was unsightly and a pedestrian obstacle.

Street Activities

14. Mrs Ellis commented that the Peddlers legislation was often misused and desperately needed review. She said the legislation to manage street activity was too complex, with too many conflicts, one consistent regulatory framework was needed. In the absence of this, the city had developed voluntary codes of practice for buskers in an attempt to manage activity in the streetscene. Designated busking areas had had some success. The council were now trying to establish a code of practice for charity collectors. The city had taken a hard line towards street-begging, with injunctions taken out against persistent beggars. Mrs Ellis explained that Nottingham had been part of a begging circuit used by beggars who had been moved-on or banned from other cities. Many of these had been hard-drug users who had a noticeable impact on crime in the city centre. Town centre wardens had been instrumental in monitoring and reporting infringements of begging injunctions.

Landscaping

15. Mrs Ellis described the problem she faced in trying to plant trees and so on in the city centre. This planting was viewed as engineering, not as landscaping, thus beyond her control.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

16. The city had a pilot BID in the Lace Market area of the city. They were hopeful this would produce positive effects. Future BID areas had been identified in Forman Street and Trinity Square. The focus of each BID would vary.

Walkabout

17. The Sub-committee were then guided around the city centre where they saw some of the problems and solutions that had been discussed. The tour included: Old Market Square, Chapel Bar, Trinity Square, The Lace Market, Bridlesmith Gate, Lister Gate, Low Pavement and High Pavement. On the tour the Sub-committee met some of the 'hands on' team and were accompanied by one of the street wardens.

Tuesday 13th May: Arnold

Overview

18. The Sub-committee were met by Petar Kanuritch, Director of Environment and Development, and Mark Armstrong, Town Centre Manager. Mr Kanuritch briefly described Arnold. Arnold is a suburb of Nottingham, about five miles north of the city and

is the main shopping area in the district of Gedling. Gedling has a population of about 111 000. Arnold's shopping area is a very long high street which culminates in a public events space, Eagle Square. Alongside the high street is a large park, Arnot Hill park, which is being refurbished with Heritage Lottery Funds.

Arnot Hill Park

19. The park's total refurbishment cost is £1.3 million. £995 000 of funding was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The lake alone cost £400 000 to refurbish. Mr Kanuritch described some of the difficulties the council had faced in securing lottery funding and some of the cultural differences they experienced when working with the lottery.

20. Mr Kanuritch described the management approach to the park which includes; locking the gates from dusk to dawn to try and reduce vandalism; a tough enforcement approach to litter dropping, coupled with an education programme at local schools; and successful prosecutions of those that allow their dogs to foul. The last approach was helped by the courts, which increased fines for dog fouling in appreciation of the problems the faeces cause. The council are now trying to secure increased penalties for those that drop cigarette butts. These fall into the cracks in the paving and are difficult to remove hence the desire for a deterrent.

21. The Sub-committee were told that the council wanted the park to cater for local children, especially teenagers, who were often displaced from other areas. They proposed to build a kickabout area and install skateboarding facilities. Wardens would supervise the area in the day, as they would the whole park, but it would be unsupervised in the evenings. Mr Kanuritch stressed the importance of trusting children; no surveillance measures would be installed unless evidence of drug abuse was found.

Walkabout

22. The Sub-committee then walked around the park with Mr Kanuritch who talked through the refurbishment programme. The Sub-Committee then had a tour of the town centre, led by Mr Armstrong, who explained the management challenges the very linear centre posed and the aims the council had for Eagle Square. Mr Armstrong also pointed out the posters on litter bins. These had been the winners in a competition organised with local schools to promote litter awareness.

Tuesday 13th May: Leicester

Overview

23. The Sub-committee was welcomed to Leicester by the city council leader Cllr Ross Willmott. Frazer Robson, the Council's Service Director for Planning and Sustainable Development, set out the council's strategy for developing new, and improving existing, public spaces. He emphasised the importance of getting the right policy framework. He pointed out that the council's policies on public spaces and the local environment were included in its community plan and the City of Leicester local plan. The council has also produced draft supplementary planning guidance on the provision of open space and how the need for it should be assessed. The masterplan drawn up by the Leicester Regeneration

Company highlights the importance of high quality public spaces in the developments which it is promoting.

24. Mr Robson said that there was a shortage of public spaces in the city and that the council were unable to increase public space because they owned so little land in the city. It was important to maximise the contributions from developers to public space when new developments were proposed and to make better use of existing spaces. He pointed to the plans for the redevelopment of the Shires Shopping Centre which include a pedestrian street and public square.

25. The council had a £1m action programme for the city centre which was being used for new street furniture, improved street cleaning and public art.

Funding

26. The council's environmental services budgets had fallen by 30% since 1997. Capital funding had been secured for individual projects from the East Midlands Development Agency, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Single Regeneration Budget. But the revenue costs to maintain these facilities fall on the council. It could secure more from developers, but the potential is limited as it is competing with other demands on developers for affordable housing, highway works, education, public art and so on.

Integrating Programmes

27. The council was seeking to develop coherent programmes: by integrating transport works with public realm improvements; working with its Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership on introducing alcohol byelaws; and working with the city centre manager on managing street trading and begging.

Operational Issues

28. John Hackman, service director of environmental services set out the council's management issues.

Litter

29. Mr Hackman said that 21,000 tons of litter were picked up every year. Solutions which the council were applying included introducing £50 fines for those dropping litter. These were imposed by litter wardens. They had issued 19 tickets in their first week. The council was working with the universities to make students aware of the litter problems.

Chewing Gum

30. Mr Hackman said that gum was a major problem. When discarded on the street it was very hard to remove and disfigured the pavements. The council had expensive programmes to remove it. It had considered gum boards, where people were encouraged to stick their gum, however these were not sufficient to tackle the problem. He said that the gum manufacturers should be taking a more pro-active approach to development of a biodegradable product.

Graffiti Removal

31. The removal of graffiti was costing the council about £160,000 per year. It had a target to remove sexist, racist and obscene graffiti within two hours and other graffiti within three days. Mr Hackman highlighted the problems of private properties where they had limited powers to remove graffiti and to recover the costs.

Flyposting

32. Flyposting on the side of buildings and lamp posts detracted from the general ambience of the city and was expensive to remove. The council was working with the club owners who advertised events using this method. It was considering designating sites for posters. It was also seeking to use the byelaws efficiently to tackle the problem.

Take-aways/Fast Food Outlets

33. The litter and anti-social behaviour resulting from a concentration of fast-food restaurants in parts of the city centre was undermining the environment and balance of the city centre. The council was restricting planning permissions for outlets in parts of the city centre in an attempt to tackle the problem.

Walk-around

34. The Sub-committee visited parts of the city centre where it was able to see some of the problems and solutions described by Mr Robson and Mr Hackman. It also saw: a gum buster initiative where high powered jets of water were used to remove chewing gum; the litter wardens patrolling the city centre and the St George's area where the council and Leicester Regeneration Company were seeking to promote a new cultural quarter.

Formal minutes

Monday 14 July 2003

Members present:

Mr Chris Mole, in the Chair

Mr Andrew Bennett
Mr Clive Betts
Mr David Clelland
Mr John Cummings

Mr Bill O'Brien
Dr John Pugh
Mrs Christine Russell
Mr Gary Streeter

The Sub-committee deliberated.

Draft Report (Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 128 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Appendix agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Third Report of the Sub-committee to the Committee –
(*The Chairman.*)

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the Committee.

[The Committee adjourned.]

Formal minutes

Monday 14 July 2003

Members present:

Mr Andrew Bennett, in the Chair

Mr Clive Betts

Mr David Clelland

Mr John Cummings

Mr Chris Mole

Mr Bill O'Brien

Dr John Pugh

Mrs Christine Russell

Mr Gary Streeter

The Committee deliberated.

Report (Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 128 read and agreed to.

Summary read and agreed to.

Appendix read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Eleventh Report of the of the Committee to the House – (The Chairman.)

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Sub-committee be reported to the House.

Several memoranda were ordered to be reported to the House.

Ordered, That the provisions of Standing Order No. 134 (Select committee (reports)) be applied to the Report.

[The Committee adjourned.]

Witnesses

Wednesday 7 May 2003

Page

Mr Alan Woods, Chief Executive, **Ms Dee Bingham**, Policy and Practice Development Manager and **Ms Sue Nelson**, Marketing and Programmes Director, ENCAMS (Environmental Campaigns) Ev 1

Ms Jo Hartop, Head of Communications, Wrigley UK and Ireland, and **Mr Alistair Whalley**, Director of Public Affairs Europe, Wrigley Company Limited, and **Ms Jessica Samson**, Environment Manager, and **Mr Nick Hindle**, Head of Corporate Affairs, McDonald's Restaurants Limited Ev 7

Mr Tony Hawkhead CBE, Chief Executive, and **Ms Stevie Spring**, Chairman, Groundwork Ev 14

Tuesday 20 May 2003

Dame Sally Powell, Hammersmith and Fulham Councillor, lead member for transformation of the local environment at the LGA, and **Mr Malcolm Smith**, Director of Environment Regeneration at the London Borough of Newham, LGA advisor Ev 19

Mr Jon Rouse, Chief Executive, and **Mr Dickon Robinson**, CABE Commissioner, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Ev 25

Mr Tom Franklin, Director, and **Mr Philip Connolly**, London Manager, Living Streets, and **Mr John Hopkins**, Member of Urban Design Alliance's Green Spaces Working Group, Urban Design Alliance Ev 30

Wednesday 4 June 2003

Ms Lorna McRobie, Policy Adviser for Landscapes, Heritage Lottery Fund, and **Mr Stephen Dunmore**, Chief Executive, New Opportunities Fund Ev 36

Rt Hon Richard Caborn, a Member of the House, Minister of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport Ev 41

Rt Hon Alun Michael, a Member of the House, Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Ev 41

Mr Tony McNulty, a Member of the House, Parliamentary Under-Secretary,
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Ev 41

Rt Hon John Spellar, a Member of the House, Minister of State, Department
for Transport Ev 41

List of written evidence

Memoranda LIV 01 to LIV 27 were published on 30 April 2003 in HC 673-II

1	McDonald's Restaurants (LIV 28)	Ev 57
2	Sustrans (LIV 29)	Ev 59
3	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (LIV 30)	Ev 60
4	Cadbury Schweppes (LIV 31)	Ev 75
5	Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (LIV 32)	Ev 76

Reports from the ODPM Committee since 2002

The following reports have been produced by the Committee since the start of the 2002 Parliament. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2002–03

First Report	Local Government Finance: Formula Grant Distribution	HC 164 (CM 5753)
Second Report	Annual Report to the Liaison Committee	HC 288
Third Report	Affordable Housing	HC 77 (CM 3783)
Fourth Report	Planning, Competitiveness and Productivity	HC 114 (CM 5809)
Fifth Report	Departmental Annual Report and Estimates	HC 78 (CM 5841)
Sixth Report	The Evening Economy and the Urban Renaissance: Interim Report [Responding to issue in the Licensing Bill]	HC 541 (HC 750)
Seventh Report	The Effectiveness of Government Regeneration Initiatives	HC 76-I (CM 5865)
Eighth Report	Planning for Sustainable Communities: Sustainable Communities in the South East	HC 77-I
Ninth Report	Reducing Regional Disparities in Prosperity	HC 492-I
Tenth Report	The Draft Housing Bill	HC 751-I