

Skills to grow

Seven priorities to improve green space skills



Foreword

It is no wonder people love parks. High quality parks and green spaces are crucial to our well-being. They invite physical activity and they provide a positive and welcoming environment for both physical and mental health.

As well as the obvious benefit to the character of a place, parks are places where people meet, where they have fun, where they feel they belong. They can also boost the economic potential of tourism, leisure and cultural activities in an area and increase local property values. As we adapt to a changing climate, the networks of parks, green spaces and tree lined streets that enhance our towns and cities are becoming fundamental components of sustainable urban regeneration.

Through the efforts of the green space sector we have seen that it is possible to renew many parks by generating new sources of funding and involving the community. Satisfaction with local parks is on the increase. In 2000 just 44 per cent of urban local authorities believed the quality of their local parks to be stable or improving. By 2005 this had risen to 84 per cent. However, there is more to be done, especially in deprived areas where the quality of green space and satisfaction levels tend to be lower and where a park can make a major difference to the quality of life.

But quality parks need a highly motivated and skilled workforce, now and in the future. They not only need skilled horticulturalists and other green space specialists, but also skilled managers and leaders. We know that there are concerns about whether we have the workforce and the skills to take us into the future and this could prevent the continued improvement in the quality of our parks. This is why we asked CABE Space, together with the wider green space sector, to consider this important issue.

Skills to grow is a significant document. It brings together, for the first time, the efforts of national green space partners and other interested organisations in tackling this issue. The major challenges and opportunities are highlighted, as are the many different initiatives and programmes that are going on in the green space sector. Opportunities for further action are put forward.

What is clear is that this is a complex issue with potentially far-reaching consequences for the future of green spaces. As such, *Skills to grow* represents a significant first step in a more ambitious process. Communities and Local Government is very keen to take action in the short term to find practical and workable ways to respond to the current economic downturn by providing new training and employment opportunities for people in the green space sector through additional local authority horticulture apprenticeships. There are other initiatives under way in government that aim to address the skills needs of this country and to tackle worklessness. Moving forward, we will be working with CABE Space, and with green space experts, workforce experts and skills experts to ensure that the strategy reflects emerging evidence on the issues and succeeds in solving the problems that are identified.

I am extremely grateful to the many national organisations that have been involved in the development of this strategy, showing their commitment to transforming green space skills across England. I am particularly grateful to the CABE Space team that has led the work.

We will crack this problem if everyone works together. With a more highly skilled and motivated workforce we will be able to continue to drive up the standards of our parks and green spaces and sustain the improvement into the future – and ensure that our heritage of parks, and all the possibilities they offer, will continue to grow and improve.

Baroness Andrews
Parliamentary under
secretary of state
Communities and
Local Government



The evolution of this strategy

Those working in the green space sector say that there is an acute shortage of people with the right skills to plan, design, manage and maintain our parks and green spaces and there is plenty of anecdotal evidence to support this claim. In addition, there is a growing body of research that has started to identify the skills shortages more precisely and highlight how they are preventing the improvements to our parks and green spaces that we all want to achieve. For instance the final report of the urban green spaces taskforce (2002) and the National Audit Office's *Enhancing urban green space* (2006) argued that the green space skills shortage was undermining progress across the sector. More recently, research by CABE Space and others has identified specific skills shortages in local authority green space departments.

However, compared with other occupational sectors there is still not enough of the sort of detailed, robust and comprehensive evidence that skills providers and government departments expect to draw on. One of the reasons for this is that the green space 'sector' is unusually diverse and fragmented, both in terms of employers and employees. While it is true that local authorities are responsible for many of our green spaces, a great range of other organisations – such as housing associations, charitable trusts and the private sector – plan and manage an increasingly large proportion of our green spaces. The fragmented nature of the sector makes it very difficult to collect comprehensive and robust data for research purposes, but it also makes it difficult to co-ordinate a response to the skills problem.

During the last few years, however, there has been a great collaborative effort to address this. With co-ordination from CABE Space, a large number of organisations whose work involves green space skills have been working together to create and deliver a plan for improvement. These organisations, listed at the end of this document, are now working together as the *Skills to grow* delivery board.

This strategy is the public face of their work so far. It sets out what we currently know about the skills and data shortages across the sector; it identifies actions to address them in the short term and proposals for further action that can be taken in the longer term. A key priority of the strategy will be to gain a more complete understanding of the skills gaps through further research. This will then inform any additional actions and help determine actions that will have the greatest impact.

A consultation on a draft version of this strategy was carried out in autumn 2008. Feedback from this consultation confirmed that the strategy's priorities are broadly supported and helped to improve our knowledge of the issues. For example, it showed that the skills thought to be most lacking are in horticulture and landscape design and that the main underlying causes are seen as budget cuts and a lack of apprenticeship schemes. A summary of the consultation feedback is available on request.

The next step will be to develop an evaluation framework to assess the impact of this strategy on the challenges faced. Progress will be monitored against this framework at quarterly meetings of the *Skills to grow* delivery board. At the end of 2009-10, once more research has been carried out, the strategy will be reviewed and updated. At the end of 2010-11 it will be reviewed again and a new strategy produced to ensure continued improvement in green space skills through to 2020.

'This strategy sets out what we know about the skills and data shortages across the sector; it identifies actions to address them in the short term and proposals for further action that can be taken in the longer term'

Sharing a common purpose

The successful planning, design and management of parks and the wider network of green spaces draws upon the skills of people working in a broad range of specialist occupations, from landscape architects to horticulturalists. The green space sector also requires management expertise, including skills such as advocacy and community engagement, in order to instil the public with the motivation and confidence to use and enjoy parks and green spaces and influence local authority decision-making.

We know from the research and consultations that have informed this strategy that there is some fantastically innovative and exciting work going on in the sector. There is, however, no single organisation that represents the full range of occupations that play a role in delivering high quality green space. Even though local government is the principal employer, there is much variation between local

authorities in the way that they manage their parks and green spaces and therefore, in terms of the type and scale of skills problem. These factors make the job of addressing the skills deficit a very considerable task indeed.

People employed in the green space sector often have low pay and status in comparison with other sectors. This is a key driver for the decline in green space skills, triggering a cycle of decline which leads to poor quality green spaces and low public expectations, as illustrated in figure 1.

Green spaces range from parks to play spaces, from cemeteries to allotments. These spaces are vital in creating healthy, cohesive and sustainable communities, providing recreational space, contact with nature and helping to manage the effects of extreme weather conditions caused by climate change.

Figure 1: The cycle of decline in green space skills

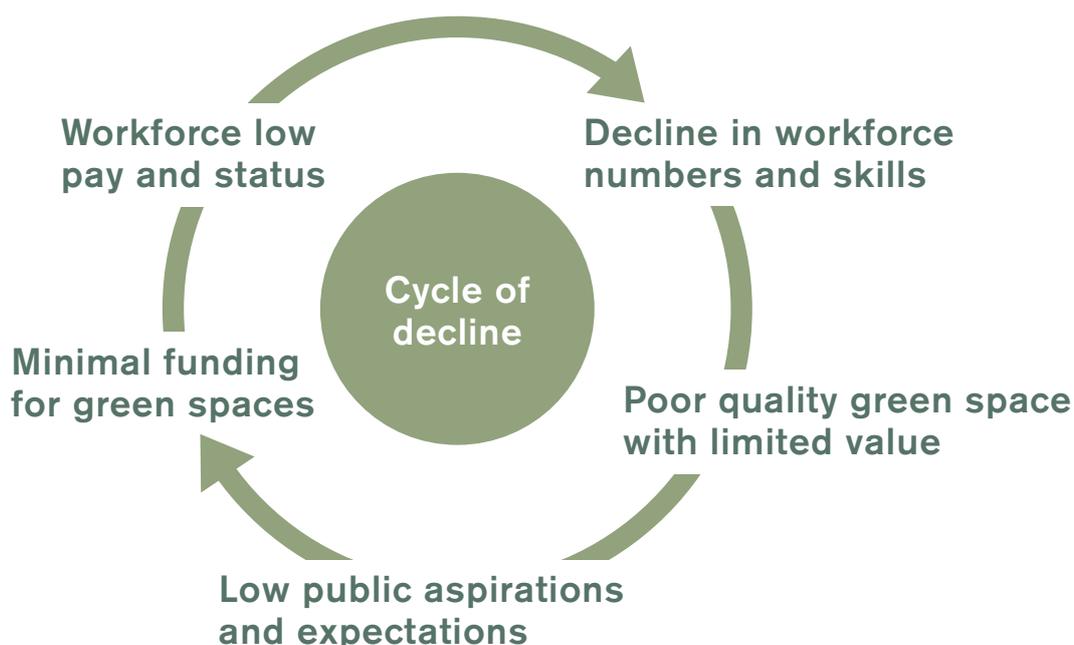
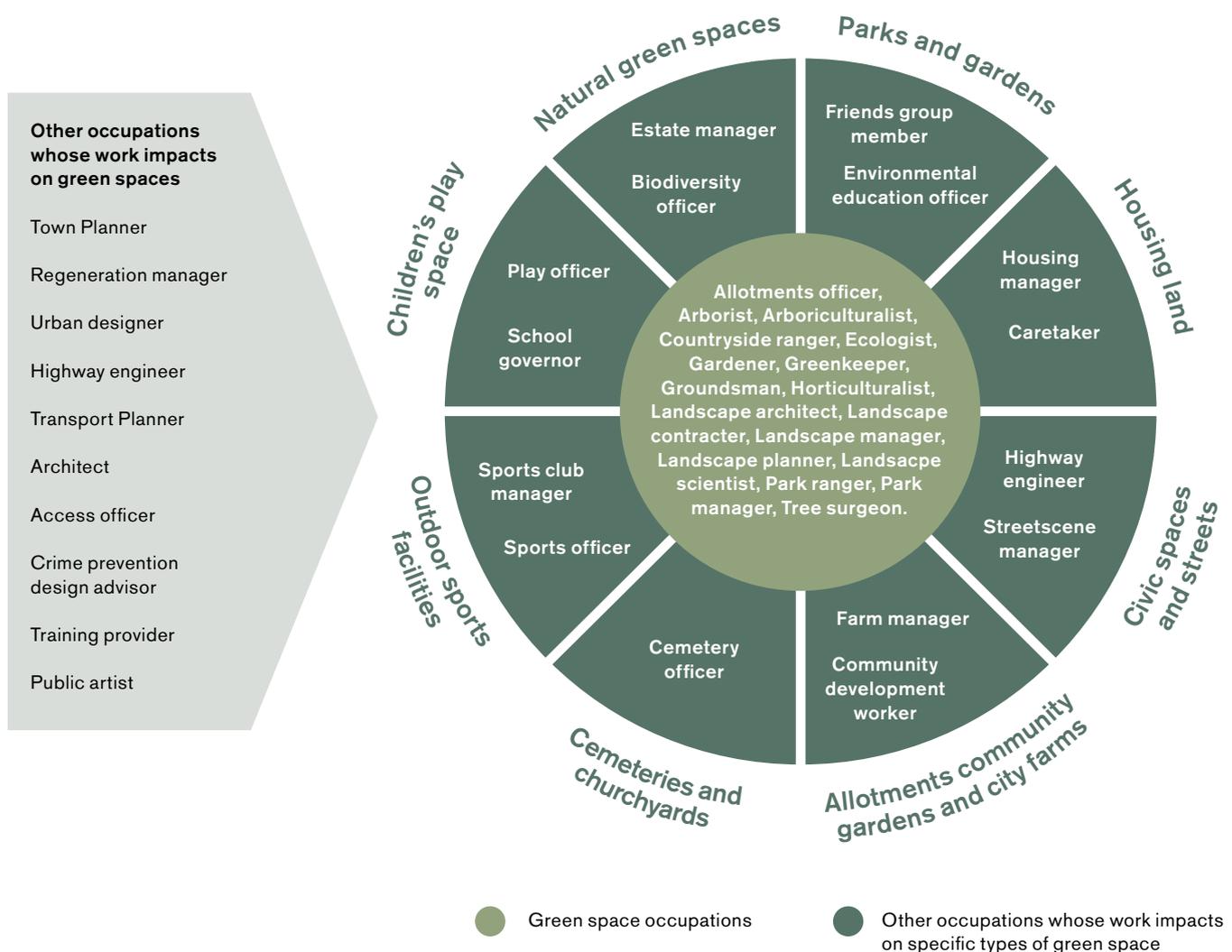


Figure 2: A typology of urban green space, from planning policy guidance 17 (PPG17)

- Parks and gardens
- Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces
- Green corridors
- Outdoor sports facilities
- Amenity green space
- Provision for children and teenagers
- Allotments, community gardens and city farms
- Cemeteries and churchyards
- Accessible countryside in urban fringe areas
- Civic spaces

The effective planning, design and management of such a diverse range of spaces relies on the skills of people employed in a similarly wide range of occupations, working in a variety of settings and fulfilling a mixture of functions, as illustrated in figure 3. Local authorities and their contractors are the main employers of green space workers, therefore finding ways of building capacity at local government level will be key to turning around the skills deficit. A significant number of green spaces are also managed by voluntary or community sector organisations, registered social landlords (housing associations) and an increasing number are managed by the private sector.

Figure 3: Green space sector occupations



While this jigsaw of interlocking roles and responsibilities contributes to the vitality of the sector, it also provides significant challenges in terms of co-ordination and advocacy.

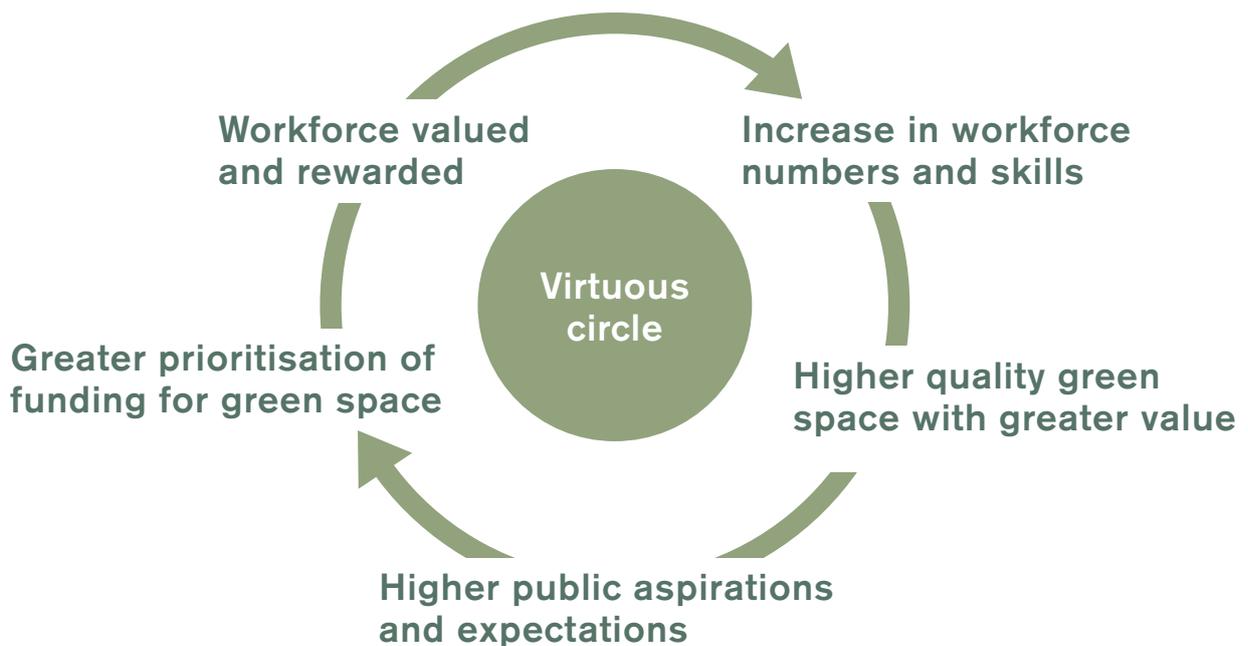
To overcome these challenges, all those involved will have to recognise their role in the jigsaw. Stakeholders need to co-ordinate their efforts and work together for the common purpose of delivering high quality green spaces. The seven priorities outlined here will facilitate a joined-up approach by developing synergies in the work being done within different occupational sectors.

Our aim is to reverse the cycle of decline, creating a virtuous circle where careers in the urban green space sector are valued, seen to be open to everyone and appropriately rewarded. The result will be networks of high quality green spaces at the heart of healthy, sustainable communities.

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Figure 4: A virtuous circle of urban green space skills



Problems and opportunities

The green space sector is not alone in needing to address a workforce skills gap. In December 2006 the *Leitch review of skills* identified a number of challenges facing the UK if we are to realise the aspiration of being recognised as an economy based on world class skills by 2020. The government has committed to addressing these challenges over the coming years in partnership with individuals and employers. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills was established in April 2008 to promote increased investment in workforce skills by employers.

The problems outlined below have been identified by those working in the green spaces sector and through previous workforce skills surveys. The 2006 National Audit Office report, *Enhancing urban green space*, identified that the skills shortage in the green space sector, particularly of management skills, is a significant barrier to the improvement of green space.

In 2005 a study of councils with 'beacon' status for the quality of their parks and green spaces, *Parks need people*, revealed some of the key skills challenges that even high-performing councils are facing.

The 2007 Academy for Sustainable Communities report *Mind the skills gap* confirmed that the skills required to create sustainable communities are in short supply – including shortages of skilled planners, landscape architects and people in the environmental sector – all of whom impact on the quality of green spaces.

A skills survey of 54 local authorities, done by CABI Space, Lantra and GreenSpace in 2008, confirmed anecdotal evidence that there is a severe shortage of both specialist and generic skills in the green space sector. It also highlighted the limited funding for training and development within local authority departments that manage parks. A summary is available on the CABI website.

However, additional research needs to be done to understand these issues in depth: a more robust evidence base is essential if we are to address these challenges successfully. This will be an important part of the work proposed in this strategy.

1. Problems with recruitment and retention of staff

'From the current position of labour shortages in landscape architecture and urban design in particular, labour shortages are forecast to increase significantly to over 90 per cent by 2012. This is a reflection of the growing demand for design skills and the lack of increase in supply.' *Mind the skills gap*, Academy for Sustainable Communities, 2007.

Problems

- Lack of interest in green space careers, particularly among young people.
- Actual or perceived low status and wages in comparison with other sectors.
- Lack of clear career paths and opportunities to progress.
- A lack of skilled labour is predicted, given likely future demand.

Opportunities

- Changes in education including the new key stage three curriculum and 14-19 diplomas will provide better links to green space occupations.
- Development of the qualification credit framework, to be in place by 2009, will make green space sector qualifications more transferable.
- The government's Building Schools for the Future programme and the Primary Capital programme provide opportunities to create better environments for learning outdoors and encourage young people to get interested in green space.
- Development of new frameworks for green space apprenticeships.
- The development of online sector skills frameworks for green spaces, such as GreenSKILL, can help green space workers progress in their careers.
- High public interest in gardening and wildlife provides a starting point for fostering interest in green space careers.
- Wider government initiatives to combat worklessness can encourage people into the sector.

2. Lack of workforce diversity

'There is virtually no ethnic diversity and the proportion of women working in the sector is only around 10 per cent.' *Parks need people – the skills shortage in parks: a summary of research*, CABE, 2005.

Problems

- Local authority parks management has a workforce that is unrepresentative of the communities it serves particularly in terms of age, gender and ethnicity.
- The landscape architecture and planning professions have low ethnic minority representation.

Opportunities

- Increasingly diverse roles in the green space sector offer varied and stimulating career options.
- Greater community involvement in urban green spaces can be used to promote green space careers to people from diverse backgrounds.
- Equalities legislation has been strengthened and there is increased recognition of it within the sector.

3. The existing range of skills is too narrow

'38 per cent of local authority park managers reported a lack of skills in fundraising and 32 per cent a lack of skills in marketing and publicity.' *Local authority green space skills survey*, CABE Space, Lantra, GreenSpace, 2008.

Problems

- The new policy context in which local government operates means that partnership working and involving local communities are now vital – parks teams need the skills to be able to do both of these.
- New skills are needed to plan, design and manage green spaces in the context of climate change.
- The limited public sector funding for green spaces hinders skills development because money for training is often scarce.
- Appropriate training courses are not always available across the country.
- There is inconsistency in the type and quality of training courses across the country.

Opportunities

- The government's housing growth programme provides opportunities for highlighting the need for investment in green space skills.
- The Olympic Park provides an opportunity to showcase new green space skills.
- IDeA's Get On campaign aims to get local authority employers to take a more proactive, sustained and strategic approach to workplace skills for life.
- Responding to the effects of climate change makes investing in green space skills a higher priority.
- Government targets for maintaining and enhancing opportunities for biodiversity are a driver of green skills.
- The government's voluntary Skills Pledge and Train to Gain funding give employers incentives to improve their team's skills and work towards higher education qualifications.
- The Audit Commission increasingly requires local authorities to act more strategically in building a workforce that can meet future challenges.
- In response to *Further Education: raising skills, improving life chances* (DfES, 2006), the Learning and Skills Council is supporting skills development at a regional level.



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4. The shortage of green space management and leadership skills

'Training budgets are very small – on average around 0.94 per cent of total staff budget. This compares with around 2.9 per cent in the National Health Service and 5 per cent in the Civil Service.' Local authority green space skills survey CABE Space, Lantra, GreenSpace, 2008.

Problems

- Green space workers with technical or practical skills often lack the management skills needed to progress in their careers.
- Management training opportunities are limited and of variable quality.
- Funding for this training is often not available.
- Some green space workers lack interest in developing management skills.

Opportunities

- There is growing recognition and support for leadership skills training across the sector, as demonstrated by the CABE Space leaders programme and the work of the Homes and Community Agency Academy.
- From April 2009, comprehensive area assessment key lines of enquiry are likely to include an assessment of the skills to deliver local priorities, including green space skills where relevant.

5. Lack of co-ordinated working across the sector

'Often, parks' staff are not entirely aware of how they fit into the council's management structure and it is not always apparent where responsibility lies.' Parks need people – the skills shortage in parks: summary of research, CABE 2005.

Problems

- There is need for greater co-ordination of green space services at national and local levels.
- There is no consistency in the structures of workforces that have responsibility for green spaces.
- There is a lack of understanding across occupational sectors of roles and responsibilities such as between design and management.
- There is little co-ordination between different landowners such as social housing providers and local authorities in managing green space networks.

Opportunities

- The government's new *National improvement and efficiency strategy* provides a framework for local authorities and their partners to share learning and good practice and encourages joined-up working at local government level.
- The local government performance framework for local authorities and their partnerships includes a range of indicators that will require joined-up working between parks and other services. These include: NI5, satisfaction with local area; and NI199, children and young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas.
- The Homes and Communities Agency Academy promotes and supports the cross-cutting skills needed to create and maintain sustainable communities and can support green space skills in the housing sector.
- There is growing recognition and funding for green space improvement projects that achieve wide-ranging benefits, such as BTCV's green gyms that increase levels of physical activity.
- The government's national play strategy, includes measures to improve joined-up working between play, planning, green space and highways professionals such as cross-professional training that will be delivered by Play England.
- The Department of Health's *Healthy weight, healthy lives* strategy includes measures to improve joined-up working between planning and public health.
- Green space sector strategic forums, such as the London Green Skills Group and regional parks benchmarking groups, can help authorities join forces to tackle skills challenges.



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‘There is growing recognition and support for leadership skills training across the sector, and for local authorities and their partners to share learning and good practice’



Seven priorities

Addressing the challenges identified in this strategy will require smart thinking, joined-up working and a clear set of priorities.

We have identified seven strategic priorities and for each one we have developed a detailed action plan covering years 2009-10 and 2010-11. The action plans are summarised below. The actions will be delivered by a range of organisations that will work together as the *Skills to grow* delivery board. Members are listed at the end of this document. The actions are informed by current national policy and initiatives; industry standards and codes of practice; initiatives from professional institutes and trade associations; and funding for skills development.

Some actions are already underway and beginning to have a positive impact, such as the Landscape Institute's careers campaign, 'I want to be a landscape architect', and the horticultural careers initiative, GROW. Others, such as the new horticultural apprenticeship framework developed by Lantra, will be launched soon.

Longer-term actions will be developed once we have a stronger evidence base and when the impact of actions undertaken in the initial years has been assessed.

Figure 5 shows how the strategy will be delivered in three broad phases.

Figure 5: Three phases of action to 2020

Phase 1: 2008-09	Strategy development – co-ordinating the sector and delivering early wins.
Phase 2: 2009-11	Building capacity – increasing the workforce and growing skills.
Phase 3: 2011-20	Embedding skills – integrating skills across the sector and beyond.

1. Increase awareness of the sector and the opportunities it offers.
2. Improve entry routes and career paths in sector occupations.
3. Improve the availability and quality of training, including continuing professional development.
4. Improve management and leadership skills.
5. Increase the sector's investment in skills.
6. Build capacity for co-ordinated working
7. Develop and maintain a strong evidence base



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Increase awareness of the sector and the opportunities it offers.

By 2020, working in the green space sector will be considered an excellent career choice that is open to everyone and offers a range of fulfilling roles. Green space employers will find it easy to recruit suitably trained and qualified staff.

Outcomes by 2011

- Improved access to good green space careers information and advice for career changers as well as young people.
- Better availability and accessibility of high-quality work experience.
- Increased use of green space for learning in schools.

Actions already underway

- The horticultural careers initiative, GROW, was launched in 2008 with online careers information and a careers information pack.
- The Landscape Institute launched its 'I want to be a landscape architect' careers initiative in 2008.

Proposed actions in year 2009 – 2010

- Develop a national campaign to promote green space careers.
- Continue to roll out 'I want to be a landscape architect' to promote careers in landscape architecture.
- Use *Learning outside the classroom* and other school grounds initiatives to promote green space careers.
- Continue to promote careers in horticulture through the GROW careers initiative.
- Pilot a demonstration visit for careers advisors to raise their awareness of what the sector can offer.
- Publish online inspiring case studies illustrating the different routes and motivations of people entering the industry for use in careers and course information.
- Ensure green space employers are involved in the delivery of the 14-19 land-based and environmental studies diplomas.
- Develop guidance for employers on structured work-experience placements for the land-based diplomas.
- Make links with the Stephen Lawrence Trust and Black Environment Network and other specialist organisations to see how they can help promote green space careers to a greater diversity of people.
- Review the content and presentation of information on Lantra's careers websites as part of a wider scheduled renewal of the sites.
- Update the AskWhatIf careers website so that it better reflects the role of green space professionals in developing sustainable communities.

Case study

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

The parks and open spaces team at Oldham council looks after 15,000 hectares of green space. In 1995, it began a major programme of refurbishing Oldham's parks in partnership with the local community.

Recognising the need to attract younger employees into the parks service and develop a skilled workforce that reflects the area's ethnic diversity, the parks team introduced modern apprenticeships. In the last ten years, the parks team has taken on 20 local modern apprentices. Most of them are still employed by the council, and just four have moved on to other roles.

The team works hard to raise the profile of careers within the parks service, especially among the Asian community where horticulture is not seen as an obvious career choice. The parks service has held open days and team members have visited local schools and mosques to talk about careers in parks and open spaces. These recruitment initiatives are starting to show results: there was an increase in applications from ethnic minority candidates for the 2008 programme.

Another way in which the parks management service has become more representative of the local community is through a partnership with a local security company. The company is responsible for security within Oldham's parks and a large proportion of its staff working within the parks are from Asian and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds.

Proposed actions in year 2010 – 2011

- Deliver the second stage of the green space careers campaign.
- Explore the potential for a bursary scheme for landscape management degree-level and post-graduate courses.
- Develop positive action recruitment programmes for under-represented groups such as women, young people and black and ethnic minority people.

Improve entry routes and career paths in sector occupations

By 2020, anyone interested in a green space career will have a range of options for entering the sector, from training 'on the job' through an apprenticeship, to taking a more academic route to a technical or management role. Once working in the sector, there will be opportunities for progression and for moving between different types of job, and staff retention rates will be high.

Outcomes by 2011

- Information about how to start a career in the green space sector, including information about funding, is clear and easily accessible.
- Monitoring of entry into sector occupations is in place.
- There are clear career paths that encourage progression by those already working in the sector, as well as people entering it with transferable skills from previous employment.

Actions already underway

- GreenSKILL, the online skills and training management tool, has been launched by GreenSpace and Lantra.
- A new apprenticeship framework for parks and green spaces has been developed by Lantra and will be launched in 2009.

Proposed actions in year 2009 – 2010

- Promote the use of national occupational standards that are relevant to the sector and develop guidance for their use.
- Promote the new apprenticeship framework for parks and green spaces.
- Promote GreenSKILL, the online resource for recording and planning career development.
- Develop a funding stream for adult apprenticeships and for career changers with first qualifications or transferable skills.
- Develop a national green space staff exchange facility as an extension to the historic and botanic gardens bursary scheme.

Proposed actions in year 2010 – 2011

- Explore the potential for graduate entry schemes for green space managers.
- Work with Job Centre Plus to influence local employer partnerships where local authorities have signed agreements to encourage people into green space jobs.
- Develop green space career pathway documentation for local authorities, including a pilot case study.

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Case study Greencorps Chicago

The training of green space workers is a key component of the City of Chicago's plan to be 'the most environmentally friendly city in the world'. Each spring, about 40 Chicago residents join the Greencorps Chicago training programme to learn new skills in landscaping and horticulture. During the nine-month course, participants get practical experience in a variety of roles while providing service to community gardens and green spaces throughout the city.

Greencorps trainees receive academic and practical training in subjects such as horticulture, carpentry and equipment operation, as well as specialist topics such as the remediation of contaminated land. Participants earn recognised qualifications, develop job-readiness and acquire skills in project management, team working and community outreach.

Trainees also complete internships within the green industry, spending time working in companies that offer services such as landscaping and environmental remediation. This professional experience is a valuable preparation for future employment in the industry.

Established in 1994, Greencorps is run by the City of Chicago department of environment in partnership with landscape architects WRD Environmental. First-time job seekers make up a large proportion of trainees. In 2008, Greencorps had more than 250 graduates and more than three-quarters of them were in employment.

Improve the availability and quality of training, including continuing professional development

By 2020 there will be a range of professionally accredited green space training courses available across the country offering qualifications at all levels. Green space professionals will be able to access short courses and bite-sized learning to encourage continuing professional development (CPD).

Outcomes by 2011

- The sector's skills requirements and skills gaps have been mapped.
- A supporting framework that recognises accredited CPD is in place.
- There is improved awareness of, and access to, high-quality training that addresses the needs of employees as well as employers.

Actions already underway

- The sector's skills requirements and skills gaps have begun to be mapped through local authority surveys.

Proposed actions in year 2009 – 2010

- Ensure Lantra's coursefinder listings for green space courses are comprehensive and kept up to date.
- Ensure green space employers are aware of Train to Gain funding and the Skills Pledge.
- Ensure that the sector is supporting staff who need to improve basic skills such as numeracy or literacy.
- Explore the potential for a virtual national green space skills academy offering accredited training and skills development.
- Work in partnership with colleges to adapt training regionally to sector needs.
- Work with Skillsplus to support the improvement of skills training and development in local government.

Proposed actions in year 2010 – 2011

- Explore the potential to develop new post-graduate courses in park and landscape management.
- Seek funding for a professor of green space management with a university partner.

Case study London Borough of Lewisham

The London Borough of Lewisham has been working with Glendale Grounds Management since 2000 when the green services company was awarded a 10-year contract to manage the borough's 45 parks.

Glendale is responsible for the full range of parks services in Lewisham, including the introduction of park keepers at key parks, security, event management and community engagement through park-user groups. The innovative contract features performance-related payment and included a significant upfront investment from Glendale, with £1.5 million being spent in the first three years. The London Borough of Lewisham used this investment to secure additional funding from the council and other sources including the Heritage Lottery Fund, EU Life Environment funding, and the Football Foundation. In 2008, the value of the parks management contract was around £3 million.

Regular meetings enable the small Lewisham parks team to monitor the contractor's performance closely. Glendale and Lewisham work together to address strategic issues such as how to develop a skilled workforce and how to retain skilled workers within the parks service.

Most of the staff working in Lewisham's parks were recruited locally through advertisements in job centres, newspapers and magazines. Some employees are recruited from Envirowork Lewisham, a local charity that trains unemployed people in grounds maintenance and other green space skills. Others join the company through a job trial scheme, in which organisations including Trees for Cities and Groundwork refer individuals for a six-week placement with the possibility of permanent employment. Glendale also takes on a number of apprentices each year.

All Glendale employees complete a skills matrix that identifies opportunities for skills development and career progression. The company offers a range of internal training programmes, some of which are delivered by managers who have received training accreditation from Lantra Awards and the National Proficiency Tests Council. Around 10 employees each year complete NVQ level 2 courses in grounds maintenance through the Train to Gain initiative.

Improve management and leadership skills

By 2020, green space professionals will be effective advocates for their sector, providing the necessary leadership and management skills to keep parks and green spaces top of the agenda.

Outcomes by 2011

- There are annual increases in the proportion of green space managers who have done management training.
- Learning opportunities are tailored to the needs of green space managers.
- There is increased awareness of the changing role of green space managers and leaders and the importance of being able to respond to new challenges.
- There are opportunities for green space professionals to learn alongside people employed in other sectors.

Actions already underway

- The fourth CABA Space leaders programme has been delivered in partnership with Natural England and the Homes and Communities Agency Academy.

Proposed actions in year 2009 – 2010

- Ensure that GreenSKILL and other relevant competence frameworks encourage the development of management and leadership skills.
- Identify how the Chartered Institute of Management and Facilities Management Institute can contribute to green skill needs.
- Develop, with training providers, short courses about leadership, management and finance tailored to the green space sector.
- Deliver the fifth CABA Space leaders programme and develop a legacy for 2010-11.
- Ensure links are made with national capacity building programmes to achieve government aspirations for community involvement in decision-making.
- Develop online communities of practice to support professional development.
- Develop a national mentoring programme for green space managers.

Proposed actions in year 2010 – 2011

- Start the national mentoring programme for green space managers.
- Deliver the CABA Space leaders programme legacy.

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Case study Leeds City Council

Facing challenges with recruitment, retention and skill levels, Leeds City Council's parks and countryside service established a comprehensive employee development programme. A key aspect of this programme is investing in the managers of the future, to ensure the sustainability of the parks service workforce.

Each year, several junior- to mid-level managers from the parks and countryside service attend the CABA Space leaders programme. Attendees learn new skills and establish valuable connections with other managers in the green space sector during this intensive, three-day long residential course.

High-performing employees are also recognised and rewarded through an annual awards scheme. Individuals and teams can be nominated for awards by their colleagues. Other education and training initiatives run by the service include apprenticeships and opportunities for employees to study for BTEC diplomas and foundation degrees. The parks and countryside service is working with Park Lane College and Leeds Metropolitan University to develop a foundation degree in parks management.

The range of learning and skills development opportunities on offer gives employees a clear path of progression within the service and contributes to high levels of staff satisfaction, motivation and attendance.

Increase the sector's investment in skills

By 2020, green space employers will recognise the importance of investing in staff training and development and sufficient funding will be allocated to ensure that green space workforces are of a high calibre.

Outcomes by 2011

- Increased investment in skills by sector employers.
- Skills development supported by sufficient funding.

Actions already underway

- Guide to improving green space skills published by CABE Space as supplement in *Horticulture week* magazine.
- Train to Gain funding is being promoted through regional green space forums.

Proposed actions in year 2009 – 2010

- Work with the Learning and Skills Council to tailor Train to Gain publicity and support for green space employers.
- Publish green space skills success stories about employers that have had funding from Train to Gain.
- Promote opportunities for investing in green space skills to local government.
- Ensure local authority workforce development plans include green space skills.
- Sponsor an IDeA Get On award for achievements by green space learners.
- Promote the importance of investing in green space skills to elected members and chief officers in local authorities.

Proposed actions in year 2010 – 2011

- Provide guidance for local authorities about how to structure tendering frameworks to ensure contractors invest in staff skills.
- Identify a joint pilot scheme with an appropriate trade union to promote green space skills development, possibly using the Union Learning Fund.

Case study Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council has a strong reputation for environmental planning and landscape architecture. Many local authorities have outsourced most of their professional design services, but Hampshire has retained highly skilled and multi-disciplinary teams of in-house professionals.

Hampshire's property services division has a service level agreement with all of the 528 schools within the county, covering property management, design and project implementation.

A significant advantage of the in-house approach is that the Hampshire staff are able to monitor quality standards closely with frequent visits to project sites. Hampshire's consistently high standards in design quality and contract management have been recognised with a number of awards including a Landscape Institute Award in 2007 and two regional awards from the Royal Institute of British Architects in 2008.

Having these professional skills within the council puts Hampshire's landscape architects in a good position to spot opportunities across the organisation and initiate ideas. It also makes it easier to draw in funding from different sources across the council. For example, during the last few years the team has pooled together funding from central government and various departments within the council to provide safer access routes to schools and around school sites.

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Build capacity for co-ordinated working

By 2020, the planning, design and management of green spaces will be co-ordinated effectively within and between the organisations responsible for them, such as local authorities and social housing providers. Different parts of the green space sector will understand their respective roles and skills and will work together to achieve high quality green spaces.

Outcomes by 2011

- Greater use of multi-skilled project teams in the delivery of green spaces.
- More opportunities for cross-sector communication and learning.
- Development of regional and, where appropriate, local versions of this strategy.

Actions already underway

- The *Skills to grow* delivery board, with representatives from a range of national green space organisations, has been set up to co-ordinate work on green space skills.
- CABE Space offers design scholarships for non-design professionals working in public space.

Proposed actions in year 2009 – 2010

- Co-ordinate with complementary skills initiatives such as the Homes and Communities Agency's *Skills action plan*, Encams' local environment skills programme and the *Local government workforce strategy* from the Local Government Association and IDEA.
- Influence the Homes and Communities Agency's 'single conversation' with local authorities to ensure consideration is given to green space skills.
- Deliver a green space event for social landlords to promote green space skills.
- Update and publish Neighbourhoods Green's *Scene not heard* and disseminate to social landlords.
- Encourage the creation of regional green space skills groups using the London group as a model (see case study below).
- Deliver the third round of CABE Space design scholarships.

Case study

London green spaces skills group

In 2001 a Greater London Authority report on the capital's green spaces recommended setting up a London Parks and Green Spaces Forum. The forum now has a number of specialist sub-groups, one of which focuses on green space skills.

The green spaces skills group has 28 member organisations and is funded by the London Development Agency, Lantra, Capel Manor College and the Learning and Skills Council. Members meet formally every few months, but networking takes place all year round.

One of the group's main activities is a regular London-wide survey of land-based skills needs and delivery. It has also published a number of reports that have informed investment and strategy decisions within the sector.

By working together, the group's members have made a significant impact on the awareness of, and funding for, green skills in London. For example, the group's recommendations about the skills needs of the green space and land-based sector were adopted by the London Skills and Employment Board in its *London's future* report, published in July 2008. The group has also facilitated the introduction of apprenticeship schemes in horticulture, landscaping and arboriculture for the London region and has been involved in the successful reintroduction of the Royal Parks' apprenticeship scheme.

Proposed actions in year 2010 – 2011

- Provide guidance on green space skills for non-green space decision makers such as councillors, directors and chief executive officers.
- Produce recommendations about how to structure green space services within local authorities to improve good practice and joined-up working.
- Develop sustainable communities training skills modules for the green space sector with relevant professional bodies.
- In the light of research into local authority structures, (see priority 7), identify and promote mechanisms for co-ordinating green space services across authorities.

Develop and maintain a strong evidence base

By 2020, national labour market information about green space sector jobs will be available to inform skills development and used as part of the national labour force surveys, putting green space jobs on a level with other sectors. Detailed information on skill gaps and shortages will also be collected regularly at regional and local levels.

It is clear that more needs to be done to build the evidence base about skills shortages in local authorities and in the private and voluntary sectors. Lantra, GreenSpace and CABE Space have begun to fill the evidence gap through initial research and a baseline survey of local authorities. Future surveys and research will be used to strengthen and refine the strategic actions outlined in this document.

Outcomes by 2011

- Data about the skills shortage and other workforce issues in the urban green space sector is available.
- The data is used effectively to prioritise the actions contained in the strategy and to measure progress in delivery.

Actions already underway

- A local authority green space skills survey was done in 2008 by CABE, Lantra and GreenSpace.
- The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) carried out a skills survey in 2009 and will include skills questions in its annual benchmarking surveys of local authority parks and green space departments.

Proposed actions in year 2009 – 2010

- Commission national labour market research to investigate skills gaps and shortages, workforce diversity and discrimination, training and the impact of the economic situation.
- Commission research into the structure of green space services in local authorities and how it affects skills and the capacity for joined-up working and produce good practice recommendations.
- Identify opportunities to include the collection and analysis of skills and employment data within existing mechanisms such as the Green Flag Award application process.
- Consider the skills needs of private sector contractors through a national contractors forum.

- Commission research into sports grounds maintenance and management skills and co-ordinate this with the wider green space skills evidence base.
- Work with Train to Gain brokers to gather information on their funding of training for green space employers.
- Use national and regional benchmarking groups to gather information about local authority green space services. Repeat this annually to contribute to the evidence base.

Proposed actions in year 2010 - 2011

- Commission research into comparative levels of pay and whether this affects career choices across the green space sector.
- Provide guidance on specific green space skills needs in areas of urban expansion.
- Gather information on the motivation of students, post-college progression and retention in the sector to inform careers marketing through the National Student Database.

‘Future surveys and research will be used to strengthen and refine the strategic actions outlined in this document’

National partners

The following organisations have helped develop this strategy and will continue to support its delivery as part of the *Skills to grow* delivery board.

Association for Public Service Excellence

APSE is a not for profit local government body working with over 300 councils throughout the UK. Promoting excellence in public services, APSE is the foremost specialist in local authority front line services, hosting a network for front line service providers including parks and environmental services. APSE also hosts the UK's largest voluntary benchmarking service and operates a UK-wide training programme.

www.apse.org.uk

BTCV

BTCV's vision is "a better environment where people are valued, included and involved". Their goal, as a sustainable development organisation, is to work through community-based projects to achieve environmental, social and economic goals. BTCV supports green space skills by working in partnership with communities and green space managers, providing opportunities for volunteering, work experience, skills development, accredited training and access to employment.

www2.btcv.org.uk

CABE Space

CABE Space is the government's advisor on public space and is dedicated to bringing excellence to the design and management of public spaces in our towns and cities including green space. It is responsible for leading and co-ordinating the Skills to Grow strategy, as well as delivering some of the strategy actions.

www.cabe.org.uk

The Civic Trust

The Civic Trust is an independent national charity. It is the umbrella body for over 750 Civic Societies, representing over 250,000 individuals committed to improving and caring for our public spaces and places. It is the leading UK charity dedicated to bringing vitality and high quality design to the built environment. The Civic Trust supports green space skills by encouraging and helping communities to campaign for, and develop, better green spaces.

www.civictrust.org.uk

Communities and Local Government

Communities and Local Government aims to create thriving, sustainable, vibrant communities that improve everyone's quality of life. It sets policy on local government, housing, urban regeneration, planning and fire and rescue. CLG funds CABE Space to deliver the skills strategy as part of their public space programme and is currently funding green space apprenticeships in local authorities through a grant scheme.

www.communities.gov.uk

Encams

ENCAMS (Environmental Campaigns) is the environmental charity that runs the Keep Britain Tidy campaign. They campaign for better cared for and more attractive places, and against litter and neglect. Their vision is for cleaner, greener places respected and enjoyed by all. ENCAMS also promotes the importance of skills through the Local Environment Skills online competency framework, and they are part of a consortium that manages the Green Flag Award Scheme.

www.encams.org

English Heritage

English Heritage exists to protect and promote England's spectacular historic environment and ensure that its past is researched and understood. They undertake research in historic environment skills, and manage the HLF funded historic and botanic gardens bursary scheme, promoting and supporting skills development in this part of the green space sector.

www.english-heritage.org.uk

GreenSpace

GreenSpace works towards achieving a network of easily accessible, safe, attractive and welcoming parks, gardens and green spaces which meet the needs of everyone and which contribute to the economic, social and environmental well-being of people and places, now and for future generations. They manage the Institute of Parks and Green Spaces which represents green space managers, manage a network of regional green space forums, deliver conferences for the sector and are part of a consortium that manages the Green Flag Award Scheme.

www.green-space.org.uk

Homes and Communities Agency Academy

The HCA Academy is the skills and expertise arm of the new Homes and Communities Agency – the government's national housing and regeneration agency. The Academy strengthens the agency's work to create affordable homes in thriving communities.

www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/academy

Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)

The IDeA, owned by the LGA, works for local government improvement so councils can serve people and places better. They support councils on issues impacting on local people and encourage partnerships. Their Beacon scheme recognises best practice which they share on their website. Their Leadership Academy helps councillors to become better leaders. The IDeA works with national, regional and local partners, tackling priorities such as health, children's services, promoting economic prosperity, customer services and workforce development.

www.idea.gov.uk

The Institute for Sport, Parks and Leisure (ISPAL)

ISPAL is the professional membership body for a fast growing industry, representing sport, parks and leisure industry professionals. ISPAL supports the continuous improvement of green space skills by communicating relevant information and sharing best practice to its members, providing opportunities for networking and facilitating discussions, responding to policy and providing learning and development opportunities for those managing and aspiring to manage green spaces.

www.ispal.org.uk

Landex

Landex is an umbrella body representing 34 colleges across England and seeks to enhance the collective quality of service and provision to learners and land based industries and to add value for member colleges.

www.landex.org.uk

Landscape Institute

The Landscape Institute is an educational charity and chartered body responsible for protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment for the benefit of the public. It champions well-designed and well-managed urban and rural landscapes and promotes careers and accredits courses in landscape architecture across the country.

www.landscapeinstitute.org

Lantra

Lantra is the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector, representing 17 industries across the whole of the United Kingdom, including horticulture, landscaping and environmental conservation in the green space sector. As a Sector Skills Council, Lantra ensures that people working in the sector have the right skills to carry out their jobs effectively, which in turn improves productivity and performance.

www.lantra.co.uk

Local Government Association

The LGA is a voluntary lobbying organisation, acting as the voice of the local government sector, and an authoritative and effective advocate on its behalf.

www.lga.gov.uk

Local Government Employers (LGE)

LGE was created by the Local Government Association. They work with local authorities, regional employers and other bodies to lead and create solutions on pay, pensions and the employment contract which encourage and enable local authorities to invest in the development of their employees

www.lge.gov.uk

Natural England

Natural England is the government's advisor on the natural environment. They provide practical advice, grounded in science, on how best to safeguard England's natural wealth for the benefit of everyone. They ensure sustainable stewardship of the land and sea so that people and nature can thrive. Natural England supports the skills needed to manage the natural environment through advocacy, developing best practice, knowledge sharing and research.

www.naturalengland.org.uk

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)

The RHS is the UK's leading gardening charity dedicated to advancing horticulture and promoting good gardening. Their goal is to help people share a passion for plants, to encourage excellence in horticulture and inspire all those with an interest in gardening. The RHS supports green space skills by awarding horticultural qualifications, delivering professional training programmes, promoting gardening in school grounds and providing guidance and advice.

www.rhs.org.uk

Organisations who responded to the consultation

Alan Barber Consultant
Association for Public Service Excellence
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Bassetlaw District Council
Bath and North East Somerset Council
Blackburn With Darwen Borough Council
Chelmsford Council
Cheshire County Council
Christchurch Borough Council
ConstructionSkills
Department of Health
Dorset County Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
England and Wales Cricket Board
English Heritage
Entec
Exeter City Council
Forestry Commission
Greenbelt Group Ltd
GreenSpace
Groundwork Black Country
Havant Borough Council
Heritage Lottery Fund
Historic Royal Palaces
Hull City Council
Institute for Employment Studies
Integreat Yorkshire
Ipswich Borough Council
ISPAL
King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
KMC Consultancy
Land Restoration Trust
Lichfield District Council
London Parks & Green Spaces Forum
Macclesfield Borough Council
Mansfield District Council
Mid Beds District Council
Mid Sussex District Council
Natural England
Peabody Trust
Places for People
Play England
Plymouth City Council
Rotherham Council
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Royal Town Planning Institute
School of Horticulture Writtle College
South Gloucestershire Council
South Yorks Police
spaces4learning
SPARKS and GARDENS
Suffolk County Council
Swale Borough Council
The Royal Parks
Treecall Consulting Ltd
Wansbeck District Council
Warwickshire council
Wealden District Council

References and more information

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- *Planning policy guidance 17: planning for open space, sport and recreation*, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2002
- *The play strategy*, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008
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For more information on green space skills please visit www.cabe.org.uk/public-space/skills

The successful planning, design and management of parks and the wider network of green spaces requires a range of skills and occupations, from landscape architects to horticulturalists. But evidence shows both a decline in the numbers entering these occupations and a lack of existing skills within the sector. CABE and its partners have analysed the problems and opportunities and *Skills to grow* offers a strategy for addressing them. The strategy sets out a clear set of priorities that will create the conditions for an effective green space sector. *Skills to grow* will be useful for people working in local, regional and national government, green space organisations and sector skills.

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Commission for Architecture
 and the Built Environment

The government's advisor
 on architecture, urban design
 and public space

