

A green rectangular sign with rounded corners and a white border is mounted on a weathered wooden post. The sign features the text 'MANIFESTO FOR BETTER PUBLIC SPACES' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with a green lawn, a tree with white blossoms, and a brick house under a blue sky.

**MANIFESTO
FOR BETTER
PUBLIC
SPACES**

cabe
space

Why the need for a manifesto?

There is huge national demand for better quality parks and public spaces. Surveys repeatedly show how much the public values them, while research reveals how closely the quality of public spaces links to levels of health, crime and the quality of life in every neighbourhood.

We now need to create a national consensus that parks and public spaces are a genuine political and financial priority. Every organisation or individual that signs up to support this Manifesto will be helping to make the case at both a local and national level. We all benefit from great public space. And this is a chance to demonstrate our commitment.

What is CAFE Space?

CAFE Space is part of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and was set up in May 2003. It champions excellence in the design and management of parks, streets, squares and other open spaces in our towns and cities. CAFE Space receives funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and support from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

How can you get involved?

Sign up to this manifesto by logging on to:

www.itsyourspace.org.uk

And encourage your friends, family and neighbours to do the same.



We will ensure that creating, and caring for well-designed parks, streets and other public spaces is a national and local political priority.

High quality parks and public spaces are an essential feature of successful neighbourhoods where people want to live, work, play and invest. They are vital to people's health and the local economy. We want the government to promote the importance of high quality public spaces, and for local and national leaders to commit to improving parks and public spaces.

2



We will encourage people of all ages – including children, young people and retired people – to play an active role in deciding what our parks and public spaces should be like and how they should be looked after.

Public spaces are the ‘glue’ that holds society together, the places where we meet different people, share experiences, and learn to trust one another. We must transform our parks, streets and squares into attractive, vibrant places that help to create sustainable communities.

3



We will ensure that everyone understands the importance of good design to the vitality of our cities, towns and suburbs and that designers, planners and managers all have the right skills to create high quality public spaces.

Many of our best-loved historic parks and public spaces were created by the leading designers of the day and they are still rich in culture and beauty. Today, when we create new spaces, we must again employ skilled designers to create places that people enjoy and respect, and once again become a source of inspiration for other countries.

4



We will work to ensure that the care of parks and public spaces is acknowledged to be an essential community service.

Parks and public spaces deteriorate rapidly unless they are well maintained. They urgently need increased, more stable and better coordinated funding from both the public and private sectors. We also need to encourage innovation and high standards through initiatives such as the Green Flag Award Scheme.

5



We will work to increase public debate about the issue of risk in outside spaces, and will encourage people to make decisions that give more weight to the benefits of interesting spaces, rather than to the perceived risks.

The increasing fear of litigation is leading to the creation of bland, featureless public spaces. Many playgrounds are now so dull that children reject them in favour of more exciting and potentially dangerous places. Councils are becoming reluctant to give permission for street parties, and trees are felled to avoid the risk of falling branches. As a society we must accept that the benefits that vibrant, interesting places bring to our communities and local economies far outweigh the potential risks to individuals.

6



We will work to ensure that national and local health policy recognises the role of high quality parks and public space in helping people to become physically active, to recover from illness, and to increase their general health and well-being.

Good networks of streets and parks encourage people of all ages to be physically active. Walking, cycling and sports become part of everyday routines if people have easy access to attractive parks and natural green space, and if local streets give pedestrians a higher priority than vehicles.

7



We will work to ensure that good paths and seating, play opportunities, signs in local languages, cultural events and art are understood to be essential elements of great places – not optional extras that can be cut from the budget.

Public spaces belong to everyone – the young and the old, the less able-bodied, and people from all cultural communities. There is evidence, however, that some groups, especially older people, use parks and public spaces less than others. We believe that spaces should be designed to be comfortable, interesting and accessible for all.

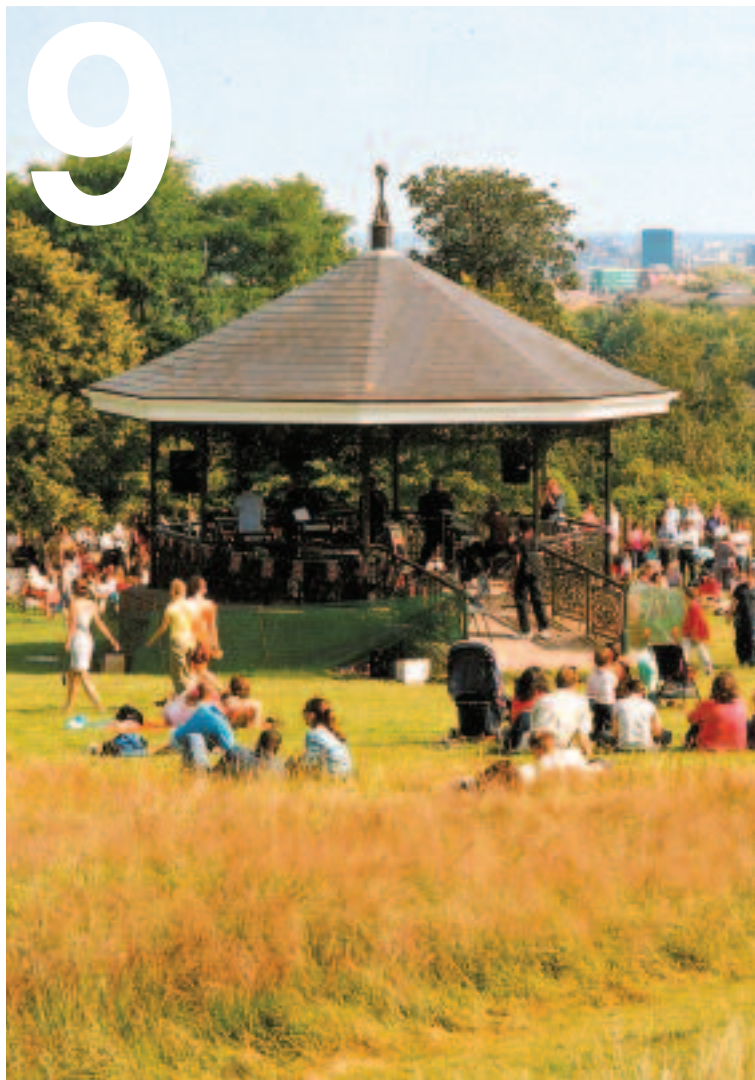
8



We will encourage people who are designing and managing parks and public spaces to protect and enhance biodiversity and to promote its enjoyment to local people.

The parks, streets, squares and natural green spaces in our towns and cities have an important role to play in supporting biodiversity – the mix of wild plants and animals with which we share our world. Sympathetic design and landscape management can greatly increase biodiversity and our everyday contact with the natural world.

9



We will seek to ensure that public spaces feel safe to use by encouraging councils to adopt a positive approach to crime prevention through investment in good design and management of the whole network of urban green spaces.

Many parks and streets are so derelict and run down that people feel scared to use them. In contrast, places that are well-designed and cared for feel safer and people tend to use them more. This, in turn, helps to create busy, thriving places.



We will encourage people from all sectors of the community to give time to improving their local environment. If we work together we can transform our public spaces and help to improve everyone's quality of life.

The most popular parks and public spaces often have local communities, businesses and politicians working together to look after them and making them a source of local pride. If we all wait for someone else to do something, then nothing will change and many of our parks and public spaces will remain run-down and unattractive.

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