Evaluation of Transforming Your Space

Final Report to the Big Lottery Fund

10 October 2007

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1. The aim of the Transforming Your Space initiative (TYS) is to enhance the quality of life for local communities, to improve the appearance and amenities of local environments, and to develop community assets. TYS developed as a follow-up to Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities, a £125m UK-wide initiative, launched in 2000, which enabled people – particularly in disadvantaged communities – to understand, improve and care for their local environment.

2. TYS has been delivered in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The delivery mechanisms and priorities vary between countries. The total budget for the programme across the UK was £46.5m, of which £36.6m was allocated to England, £4.7m to Scotland, £3.1m to Wales and £2.1m to Northern Ireland.

3. The programme had three overall key aims:

   - **Enhancing the quality of life of local communities** by supporting projects that improve the quality of the local environment and are consistent with local and regional initiatives

   - **Improving the appearance and amenities of local environments** by awarding funds to projects able to transform public and green spaces that are important to local people

   - **Increasing the development of community assets** through funding sustainable projects that demonstrate significant and meaningful engagement of the local community, or address community development support needs in order to include local people in decisions taken about the use of local spaces.

4. The purpose of the evaluation has been to consider the lessons that can be learned from the TYS programme, which sought to deliver a complex mix of social and environmental outcomes. Our evaluation has focused on the impacts and outcomes for the environment, beneficiaries and communities, in order to assess:

   - how far the programmes have succeeded in meeting their overall aims

   - how successful selected individual projects are in delivering their own aims

   - good practice in developing and running successful projects and programmes.

Methodology

5. Our research activity focused on a number of key activities.

   - **Scoping stage** –to understand how the TYS programme was designed and rolled-out in each of the countries.

- **Case studies** – we have undertaken case studies of TYS activity in 36 locations across the four countries. Two cohorts of case studies of TYS funded projects were undertaken throughout the lifetime of the evaluation: the first cohort in year 1 (2004-2005) of our study, the second cohort in year 2 (2005-2006). In order to understand the impacts of projects over time and test issues of sustainability we re-contacted cohort 1 in each of the subsequent years of the study (contacted three times in total), and cohort 2 in the last year of the study (contacted twice in total). The case study projects comprised the following:

    ➢ **England:** seven local authorities per year – two to three projects covered from each local authority's package of projects (a total of 14 case studies)

    ➢ **Northern Ireland:** three lead partners per year – one project visit in each (a total of six case studies)

    ➢ **Scotland:** four lead partners per year – one project visit in each (a total of eight case studies)

    ➢ **Wales**: four lead partners per year – one project visit in each (a total of eight case studies).

- **Beneficiary research** – we have gathered feedback from the beneficiaries of TYS activity in ten case study areas. Visits to ten projects took place in the first two years of the evaluation. In a number of cases we supported projects in developing beneficiary feedback mechanisms that would be facilitated by project managers, or even by beneficiaries themselves (such as video diaries or questionnaires). In the final year of the evaluation we completed our beneficiary research by telephone.

Key findings

6.   The range of activities and impacts arising from TYS is considerable.

- **Environmental** and **community** benefits arising from TYS are significant, and they frequently go hand in hand. Environmental impacts are to be found in the form of improved green and brown spaces, increased volume and variety of wildlife, lower pollution levels, etc. Community involvement in improving local spaces has been extensive, and has involved people of all ages and from all parts of the social spectrum.

- **Social** benefits are also evident on a considerable scale, although the impacts can be patchy. Many projects have addressed problems of anti-social behaviour and succeeded in engaging young people.

- **Health** benefits could in principle be a major outcome of the programme. As yet, although there is widespread evidence to support their existence, this is essentially anecdotal as health impacts typically take a long time to become evident.

- **Economic** impacts are limited. Where they exist, tangible impacts take the form of jobs, training and qualifications. Other economic impacts (such as increased tourism

sales, increased house prices, etc) will only arise in the longer term, and only as a result of TYS working in partnership with other regeneration initiatives.

7.   Although it is perhaps unfair to attempt a broad-brush characterisation of TYS projects in each of the four countries, it is notable that some types of activity crop up in one country more than others. In Scotland, for example, biodiversity has been a key feature underpinning many projects. In Northern Ireland, the improvement of wastelands and creation of outdoor amenities on a large scale has been a common activity. In Wales, the principle of sustainable development is a common thread across TYS activities. In England, improvements to localised urban spaces in disadvantaged areas have predominated.

8.   All projects, however, have been underpinned by a very strong degree of community involvement and engagement. This has taken many forms, and has benefited some projects more than others. A striking feature of many of our consultations, particularly in England, has been the number of consultees who have commented on improved relationships between local councils and community groups.

9.   The link between environmental and community benefits has been at the heart of Transforming Your Space, and it is here that the greatest impact can be seen.

10.   TYS appears to have generated significant community engagement and involvement, leading to increased confidence and capacity amongst local communities (as witnessed by their interest in becoming involved in spin-off projects, for example).

11.   Expectations are positive regarding the long-term legacy from most projects, although we found concerns based on the recognition that the level of activity has depended on the focus and energy of key postholders. These individuals must be expected to move on, or take on wider remits, but their role has proved vital and their continued involvement, where possible and where funding permits, will be an important element in long term sustainability.

12.   Case study projects in Northern Ireland appeared more likely than projects in other countries to seek ways of generating income to sustain their activities. This is in line with an increasing policy emphasis on the need to marry environmental projects with revenue generation in order to ensure sustainability. But our case study research showed that this aspiration has not been fulfilled: the earlier view of potential to realise this is now seen as over-optimistic, and such activities have gradually been curtailed.

13.   The importance of securing funding for a key postholder has been emphasised by grant holders and beneficiaries alike. With TYS now at an end, many projects will struggle to survive if funding is not found to keep a project 'champion' in post.

Beneficiary research

14.   Much of our beneficiary research confirms reports from project staff about the increased confidence, capacity and pride of local communities.

15.   Of equal interest are the areas in which beneficiary feedback has deviated from the views of grant holders. Residents' perceptions of maintenance, for example, do not always chime with reports from local authority staff.

16. There is much anecdotal evidence about the considerable impact of TYS on the lives of individual residents and volunteers.

17. With hindsight, it would have been preferable to undertake our final year of beneficiary research by visiting projects again rather than conducting interviews by telephone, which did not add materially to the rich findings from the earlier visits.

Conclusions

18. It is clear that Transforming Your Space can be described as a successful programme. TYS set out to achieve three main aims: enhancing the quality of life of local communities; improving the appearance and amenities of local environments; and increasing the development of community assets. There is no doubt that the programme has achieved these aims.

19. In particular, the following stand out as key outcomes arising from the programme:

    • significant environmental improvements to urban and rural greenspaces

    • better relations between and improved understanding between local councils and local communities

    • increased community confidence and capacity in many localities.

20. In view of the limited results from our final round of beneficiary feedback, there is considerable scope for more research to be undertaken over the longer term that would enable the full impact of TYS to be gauged.

1: Introduction and methodology

Introduction

1.1 The aim of the Transforming Your Space initiative (TYS) is to enhance the quality of life for local communities, to improve the appearance and amenities of local environments, and to develop community assets. The initiative was first set up under the New Opportunities Fund, but we refer to the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) throughout this report. Transforming Your Space (TYS) is part of BIG's wider *transforming communities* initiative.

1.2 TYS developed as a follow-up to Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities, a £125m UK-wide initiative, launched in 2000, which enabled people – particularly in disadvantaged communities – to understand, improve and care for their local environment.

1.3 TYS has been delivered in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The delivery mechanisms and priorities vary between countries. The total budget for the programme across the UK was £46.5m, of which £36.6m was allocated to England, £4.7m to Scotland, £3.1m to Wales and £2.1m to Northern Ireland.

1.4 The programme had three overall key aims:

- **(1) Enhancing the quality of life of local communities** by supporting projects that improve the quality of the local environment and are consistent with local and regional initiatives

- **(2) Improving the appearance and amenities of local environments** by awarding funds to projects able to transform public and green spaces that are important to local people

- **(3) Increasing the development of community assets** through funding sustainable projects that demonstrate significant and meaningful engagement of the local community, or address community development support needs in order to include local people in decisions taken about the use of local spaces.

1.5 The purpose of the evaluation has been to consider the lessons that can be learned from the TYS programme, which sought to deliver a complex mix of social and environmental outcomes. The findings from this research provide an insight into the success of a wide range of different types of activity in achieving these outcomes. It is hoped that the findings can be used to influence the design of future programmes.

1.6 Our evaluation has focused on the impacts and outcomes for the environment, beneficiaries and communities, in order to assess:

- how far the programmes have succeeded in meeting their overall aims

- how successful selected individual projects are in delivering their own aims

- good practice in developing and running successful projects and programmes.

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Methodology

1.7   Our research activity to date has focused on a number of key activities.

- **Scoping stage** – the purpose of this exercise was to understand how the TYS programme was designed and rolled-out in each of the countries. This consisted of a review of policy, monitoring and operational information related to the TYS programme in each of the four countries. This was followed-up by face-to-face or telephone interviews with key policy and operational contacts in each country.

- **Case studies** – we have undertaken case studies of TYS activity in 36 locations across the four countries. Two cohorts of case studies of TYS funded projects were undertaken throughout the lifetime of the evaluation: the first cohort in year 1 (2004-2005) of our study, the second cohort in year 2 (2005-2006). In order to understand the impacts of projects over time and test issues of sustainability we re-contacted cohort 1 in each of the subsequent years of the study (contacted three times in total), and cohort 2 in the last year of the study (contacted twice in total). The case study projects comprised the following:

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- **Beneficiary research** – we have gathered feedback from the beneficiaries of TYS activity in ten case study areas. Visits to ten projects took place in the first two years of the evaluation. In a number of cases we supported projects in developing beneficiary feedback mechanisms that would be facilitated by project managers, or even by beneficiaries themselves (such as video diaries or questionnaires). In this final year of the evaluation we completed our beneficiary research by telephone.

1.8   Our findings are largely qualitative in nature, rather than quantitative. Although BIG requires all projects to submit monitoring returns, these figures are not collated centrally. We have not, therefore, had access to a single source of data encompassing the entire TYS programme. This limits to some extent our ability to generalise findings presented here across TYS as a whole.

1.9   We would emphasise that the present report should be read in conjunction with our first and second year reports, where a full description of our methodology and detailed accounts of all 36 case study projects can be found. This final year report draws out and highlights key findings, but does not reiterate the detailed narrative surrounding the case studies (which can be found at www.biglotteryfund.org.uk).

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2: Policy and funding context

> *The quality of our local environment affects the quality of all our lives -*
> *we use public spaces on a daily basis and are affected by their condition.*
> *Successful, thriving and prosperous communities are characterised by*
> *streets, parks and open spaces that are safe, clean and attractive -*
> *'liveable' places, that local people are proud of [...]Responsibility for*
> *public space is shared, and many organisations and individuals, including*
> *local authorities, voluntary groups and members of the public directly*
> *influence the quality of the spaces around us.(DCLG, 2006[1])*

Policy and funding in the four countries

2.1   In this chapter we summarise some of the key policy drivers relating to communities and the environment in the four countries of the UK, together with a brief description of the way in which Transforming Your Space funding was administered.

England

Cleaner, safer greener communities

2.2   In June 2001, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury announced the establishment of the 'cross-cutting review' on improving public space. Lord Falconer, then the Minister for Housing, Planning and Regeneration, chaired the review and was supported by a cross-departmental team who looked into how cleaner, safer, greener public spaces could be achieved for all. The review reported its conclusions and recommendations early in 2002 in time to feed into Spending Review 2002.

2.3   The work of the cross-cutting review informed the publication of "Living Places - Cleaner, Safer, Greener" (October 2002). Living Places sets out the Government's vision and programme of action for improving the quality of local environments and public spaces. The Government's aim is for everyone to have access to attractive, high quality and sustainable public spaces and local environments that cater for the diverse needs of communities. This means ensuring that public spaces are:

- cleaner - by improving how they are maintained and how services are managed and delivered

- safer **-** by improving how they are planned, designed and looked after

- greener **-** by ensuring access to high quality parks and more attractive public spaces.

2.4   The report also responded to the recommendations set out in the final report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, "Greener Spaces, Better Places", published in May 2002.

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[1] www.communities.gov.uk

2.5   In 2004, Home Office and ODPM (as was) funding was merged into the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, with a specific outcome to make cleaner safer greener public spaces, and a projected spend of at least £660m in the three years to 2007.

2.6   The six key priorities of the Cleaner Safer Greener Communities Programme are: creating attractive and welcoming parks, play areas and public spaces; improving the physical fabric and infrastructure of places; making places cleaner and maintaining them better; making places safer and tackling anti-social behaviour; engaging and empowering local people and communities; providing facilities and opportunities for children and young people and tackling inequalities.

2.7   The Department for Communities and Local Government has a lead role in co-ordinating the delivery of the Cleaner Safer Greener Programme across Government. A new Cleaner Safer Greener Advisory Board was set up in July 2006 to sustain and deliver further improvements.

CABE Space

2.8   The Urban White Paper of 2000 was followed by the establishment of the Commission for the Built Environment (CABE). CABE Space is the part of CABE dedicated to encouraging excellence in the planning, design, management and maintenance of parks and public space in England's towns and cities.

2.9   CABE Space works with local authorities and other national, regional and local bodies involved with the delivery of parks and public spaces in the public, private and voluntary sector to help them think holistically about the value and benefits of well planned, designed, managed and maintained parks and public space.

TYS in England

2.10   The TYS programme came from the New Opportunities Fund's Round 3 policy directions that focused on quality of life. In England a decision was made to link the TYS programme to the Fair Share programme; this prioritised funding to local authority areas that historically had received proportionally lower amounts of Lottery funding.

2.11   A key element of the TYS programme in England has been its broad reach, which has meant that a wide spectrum of projects has been eligible for funding. There has perhaps been less tailoring of specific priorities or requirements in the way that is apparent in the other countries (for example, match funding is a requirement in Scotland). However, there has been a focus on prioritising activity in the most deprived parts of local authority areas and ensuring strong evidence of community consultation in developing proposals. Projects were required to fall under the generic priorities covering the programme as a whole, as set out in 1.4 above.

2.12   TYS funding in England was pre-allocated to each of the 51 local authority areas. The amount of funding each received was weighted to reflect deprivation and population numbers in the borough. The local authority was then sent a letter that confirmed their allocation of the TYS monies, and was asked to nominate a lead organisation. In all but one case the local authority chose to take the lead on TYS activity in their area. Funding allocations ranged from £200,000 to £2.3m, and all local authorities were expected to put forward a portfolio of at least two to three projects.

2.13   Local authorities took a number of different approaches to working up proposals. While some had specific projects in mind and developed these, others held an open call for projects in their area which resulted in local prioritisation and agreement of projects that would form the local authority's package of activities. Some local authorities defined broad priorities for spending TYS funding, and used funding to deliver small grants to local groups that bid into the pot of funding. The most common types of activity for which funding was sought were parks and green space improvements, skate parks and community centres/facilities.

Scotland

2.14   In February 2002, First Minister Jack McConnell made a speech calling for environmental justice for all. Since that time there has been significant policy development in relation to health, social justice, communities, planning, access and biodiversity. In 2003, 'A Partnership for a Better Scotland' (the 'Partnership Agreement') was published, setting out priorities for the next four years of the Scottish Parliament.

2.15   Disadvantaged local communities are characterised by multiple forms of deprivation, in which poor quality physical environments and lack of access to safe and attractive greenspace compound and form a visible symbol of the other problems faced by the community. Poor environmental quality can have the following effects:

- stigmatises neighbourhoods that are already depressed and demoralised

- increases residents' fear of crime

- denies children places to play and other people places to take exercise

- depresses land and property values

- harms prospects for investment and employment

- inhibits the development of community pride.

2.16   The provision and quality of urban greenspaces is, therefore, not just an environmental issue - it is about social and environmental justice, and quality of life. Clearly this issue is applicable to the whole UK; nevertheless, it is in Scotland that environmental justice is most clearly enshrined in policy.

Greenspace Scotland

2.17   Greenspace Scotland (GS) was established in 2003 to promote a step change in the development and management of quality greenspaces in Scotland's towns and cities. Its goal is that: "Everyone living and working in urban Scotland has easy access to a quality greenspace which meets local needs and improves their quality of life." It has a remit to work across the whole of urban Scotland (urban is defined as settlements of more than 3000 population and clusters of smaller settlements which are urban in character).

2.18   Greenspaces are multi-functional and are used by many different people for many different things. As characterised by Greenspace Scotland, they can be:

- *breathing spaces*: oases of calm amidst city bustle; space to unwind, take time out and recharge the batteries

- *healthy spaces*: inviting places which encourage us to get active; developing healthy lifestyles through access to the outdoors

- *living spaces*: attractive spaces accessible from our backdoors which meet the needs of local people

- *meeting spaces*: communal places where people have time to stop and chat; encouraging communities to come together

- *play spaces*: safe places where children can adventure, explore and imagine; stimulating motor and sensory development

- *working spaces*: attractive places where people want to live and work; helping inward investment and providing opportunities for training

- *learning spaces*: stimulating places where the out–of–doors become natural grounds for lifelong learning; allowing young and old to learn together

- *wild spaces*: informal places where nature is welcomed back into the hearts of our cities; encouraging opportunities to see plants and wildlife first hand

- *creative spaces*: inspirational places encouraging creativity in an outdoor setting

- *celebration spaces*: gathering places where people can come together for festivities and celebration.

2.19 All the projects we have seen that are funded by Transforming Your Space can be described by at least one of the above, and the majority of projects combine a number of these characterisations.

2.20 In September 2006, Greenspace Scotland announced the launch of an action research programme entitled 'Demonstrating the Links'. Eight community groups from across Scotland are currently taking part in a two-year research project in which each will investigate the impact of their own community greenspace. One of these is Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park in Edinburgh, one of our TYS case studies. This community-led action research approach means that the research projects will be largely defined by the participating groups, making the research both practical and useful. We refer to this later, in Chapter 5.

Scottish Executive funded projects

2.21 A programme of greenspace for community projects drawn from local partnerships across the Greenspace Scotland network was submitted to the Scottish Executive in February 2005. The submission was successful and £1m was granted to help fund 50 urban greenspace projects. Combined with partnership funding this will deliver projects worth £4m.

2.22 All of the projects contribute to environmental justice and biodiversity, together with other priorities identified in the Partnership Agreement including physical and mental health, social

justice, stronger and safer communities, community capacity building, active involvement of children and young people, environmental education and lifelong learning, and creating opportunities for play and recreation.

2.23   The projects span communities across urban Scotland and are concentrated in areas of greatest need; the 15% most deprived areas and other areas of disadvantage, together with areas lacking quality greenspace.

TYS in Scotland

2.24   TYS in Scotland was managed by Fresh Futures Partnership (FFP) which was asked by BIG to run the TYS programme as award partner. Scotland was the only one of the four countries to use this approach in TYS, although the GSSC initiative had been delivered this way across the whole of the UK.

2.25   Fresh Futures Partnerships (FFP) is a partnership between Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Forward Scotland (FS). The development, management and delivery of the Programme in Scotland has been delegated to FFP, BIG's award partner. Fresh Futures Partnership has a team of staff based in Glasgow which is jointly managed by SNH and FS, and the management group is led by representatives of both agencies.

2.26   The key element of the Scottish TYS programme is Environmental Justice, which arises out of the Scottish Executive's Partnership Agreement, and is a key policy driver in Scotland. This highlights the fact that the most disadvantaged people in Scotland also typically live in some of the worst environments. While TYS is Scotland-wide, 75% of the money was to be used in the most deprived quartile of areas, as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). These are also the areas least likely to have green space.

2.27   In addition to the three key priorities outlined in the initial TYS policy guidance, FFP identified a further five sub-priorities for action which the majority of successful projects were asked to address:

- improving local environments

- public green and open spaces

- local access

- community gardens

- making community assets more sustainable.

2.28   In Scotland, the main focus has been on the use of space and the relationships that different communities have with a diverse range of spaces (urban, mountain, rural, water, etc.). Approximately half the projects focus on public open spaces, and the other half focus on schemes such as local access, community gardens, and making community assets more sustainable.

2.29   TYS was launched in Scotland in 2003. By this time, the TYS programme in other parts of the UK was already closing. The later timescale for TYS implementation in Scotland means

that it was viewed as the successor to Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities. All TYS monies in Scotland had to be spent by March 2007 – i.e. at the time of writing this final report.

2.30   The minimum grant available in Scotland was £20k and the maximum was £300k. The overall leverage ratio target was 70:30 (other funds:TYS) although this was interpreted flexibly. The average achieved was around 82:18. This includes substantial 'in kind' contributions from community groups and volunteers.

Wales

2.31   The policy context for TYS in Wales was set primarily by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)'s sustainable development strategy, and the Sustainable Development Action Plan 2004-07.

2.32   The strategy document "Creating Sustainable Places" defines a sustainable place as one where the activities of its citizens, communities, businesses and other organisations interact positively with each other and their environment.

2.33   Creating sustainable places requires partnership-led community based sustainable strategies to set out actions to regenerate economic, social and environmental conditions in areas of greatest need and opportunity. WAG believes that truly sustainable strategies require that the following guiding principles should be followed: partnership; community engagement and participation; vision; sustainable solutions; local delivery; setting targets, monitoring, review and evaluation.

2.34   Under the guiding principle of community engagement, the Strategy notes that *"sustainable places cannot be created without local communities themselves actively participating in the regeneration processes. By local communities we mean individuals, community groups, organisations and businesses living and working within proposed regeneration or development areas. Local communities should be involved from the very outset in the creative task of devising regeneration solutions and later in their delivery. Concerted efforts need to be made to strengthen the skills and ability of partnership members and the local community to participate in regeneration. Challenging decisions cannot be ignored and regeneration partnerships need to be open and clear about choices made and the difficulties involved in developing regeneration solutions which meet all social, environmental and economic objectives."*[2]

2.35   Under the heading of 'Liveable Places, Strong Communities' the Action Plan set out to help communities develop exemplars of sustainable development through:

- ensuring the built environment meets Wales's sustainable development goals

- issuing improved Transport Appraisal Guidance

- embedding sustainable development in planning policies

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[2]

http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/strategy/strategypublications/creatingsustplaces/workingwithcommunitiesguiding/workingwithcommunitiescommunity?lang=en

- appraising a revised transport framework for Wales against the sustainable development framework

- encouraging National Park Authorities to work with developers to provide small scale, low cost, sustainable housing within National Parks

- using the introduction of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for development plans.

2.36   The Welsh Assembly Government has introduced a focus on outdoor learning for under-eight year olds. Some projects in Wales (notably Flintshire's Woodlands for Communities project) have been well-placed to support this policy.

TYS in Wales

2.37   When TYS started there were perceived to be a wide range of possible policy directions to refine and focus the programme in Wales. A consultation process was undertaken to inform programme development.

2.38   Feedback from the consultations was that a focus on sustainable development was important. This related in part to the Welsh Assembly's duty relating to sustainable development. At the same time, Community Strategy Partnerships were influential in developing programme policies. There are 22 partnerships covering local authority areas. The Partnerships have been formed to meet a legal duty on local authorities in Wales, to prepare community strategies for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas, and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

2.39   Geographical spread was ensured by working through the 22 Community Strategy Partnerships. Each of the 22 Partnerships was encouraged to develop and submit one 'winning' project. Notional budgetary allocations to the Partnerships were made, based on population, social demography and a minimum grant level of £100,000. Partnerships tended to adopt the approach of an 'open call' for projects. This necessitated a sub-process to generate and then select projects.

2.40   The original closing date for applications was April 2003, but a second deadline (September 2003) was introduced to give some Partnerships more time to develop project proposals.

Northern Ireland

2.41   The Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) has set the policy agenda in Northern Ireland. EHS, an executive agency within the Department of the Environment, takes the lead in advising on, and in implementing, the Government's environmental policy and strategy in Northern Ireland. The Agency carries out a range of activities, which promote the Government's key themes of sustainable development, biodiversity and climate change. Its overall aims are to protect and conserve Northern Ireland's natural heritage and built environment, to control pollution and to promote the wider appreciation of the environment and best environmental practices[3].

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[3] http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/index/about-ehs.htm

2.42   The EHS is driven by three key objectives, aiming to achieve[4]:

- a significant improvement in the state of the environment

- a clear improvement in public attitudes and behaviours towards the environment; and

- a more sustainable way of living.

2.43   The EHS has been an adviser, a partner and/or a joint-funder of many TYS projects in Northern Ireland.

TYS in Northern Ireland

2.44   The start of the programme in October 2002 was preceded by a wide-ranging consultation exercise which lasted for 18 months. The consultations provided an opportunity to involve relevant stakeholders as well as signposting successful and unsuccessful applicants to other funding initiatives. The general consensus of these meetings was that the priorities should be kept as open as possible to enable flexibility in funding a wide range of projects.

2.45   The applications for TYS funding in Northern Ireland were all submitted during February 2003, with decisions on funding being made in June of the same year. The approvals panel was made up of a number of organisations - including Groundwork, Business in the Community, and Northern Ireland Environmental Link - as well as a number of departmental observers. The process is viewed by BIG as having worked well. A dedicated press team publicised the initiative through newspapers, TV and radio. In addition, a number of seminars and workshops were held to publicise the programme.

2.46   No conflict was found between the environmental and human aspects driving the programme: it was possible in most cases to fund projects which achieved benefits in both areas. Often improving the local environment in a community has positive effect on the social fabric and vice versa – improvement in quality of life was the overriding priority when allocating resources.   Match funding was not emphasised: more important was some evidence of partnership working and 'buy in' on the part of the local community.

2.47   In all, 14 projects were funded. The perception of BIG staff is that applications were generally of a very high quality; had further funding been available this could easily have been spent.

2.48   A good geographical spread was achieved: this was largely unplanned, but some regard was given to achieving a balance between urban and rural areas, and also to ensuring a spread of activity across Northern Ireland's communities.

The themes of TYS

2.49   Our analysis of findings has been guided by the ESRC Working Paper 1 on sustainable communities by Kearns and Turok[5] (April 2004) which provides a useful starting point for defining the issues and/or themes for this evaluation. Summarising other research and policy

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[4] Corporate Plan 2006-09 – EHSNI
[5] http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/197/WorkingPaper1PDF530Kb_id1142197.pdf

statements, they set out the range of benefits now associated with public, open and green space. In addition to the most obvious impact – improvement of the environment – they are:

- community: boosts the image of an area, reducing anti-social behaviour through the reclamation of space by the community, civic engagement, etc

- social: interaction amongst users of spaces and reduction in isolation

- health: improved air quality, reducing stress, opportunities and motivation for exercise and psychological benefits of outdoor space

- economic: bolsters investor confidence in the area, opportunities for employment in landscaping and management.

2.50   The following chapter, examining the impacts of TYS, is presented using the above themes as a framework.

3: Programme impact

Summary

The range of activities and impacts arising from TYS is considerable.

- **Environmental** and **community** benefits arising from TYS are significant, and they frequently go hand in hand.

- **Social** benefits are also evident on a considerable scale, although the impacts can be patchy.

- **Health** benefits could in principle have been a major outcome of the programme. As yet, although there is widespread evidence to support their existence, this is essentially anecdotal as health impacts typically take a long time to become evident.

- **Economic** impacts are limited. Where they exist, tangible impacts take the form of jobs, training and qualifications. Other economic impacts (such as increased tourism sales, increased house prices, etc) will only arise in the longer term, and only as a result of TYS working in partnership with other regeneration initiatives.

Although it is perhaps unfair to attempt a broad-brush characterisation of TYS projects in each of the four countries, it is notable that some types of activity crop up in one country more than others. In Scotland, for example, biodiversity has been a key feature underpinning many projects. In Northern Ireland, the improvement of wastelands and creation of outdoor amenities on a large scale has been a common activity. In Wales, the principle of sustainable development is a common thread throughout most TYS activities. In England, improvements to localised urban spaces in disadvantaged areas have predominated.

All projects, however, have been underpinned by a very strong degree of community involvement and engagement. This has taken many forms, and has benefited some projects more than others.

The link between environmental and community benefits has been at the heart of Transforming Your Space, and it is here that the greatest impact can be seen.

Introduction

3.1   In this chapter we set out some of the impacts which Transforming Your Space has had across the UK. These are presented under five headings: community, environment, social, economic and health impacts. (A full list of all projects' activities under these headings can be found in our Year One and Year Two reports.)

Community

3.2   Our case study research sought to identify the programme's impacts on local communities. Here we were looking for examples and evidence of increased community capacity, the creation of new networks, etc.

Increased confidence and capacity

3.3   There are many instances where the confidence and capacity of local communities has been considerably enhanced as a direct result of TYS projects. Some examples of this are highlighted below.

- *Burnley*: an important aspect of TYS is the opportunity it provided to realise new thinking – specifically, in getting communities to take responsibility for buildings and services in their local area. Working with communities has demonstrably built the confidence of individuals and groups. There is now a sense of 'we can do it' in Burnley Wood, Ennismore Street and Kibble Bank. Some groups, such as allotment holders' associations, have become stronger because they are now seen to be effective mechanisms: demonstrably improved conditions have given them credibility in working on future priorities. These groups are now seeking to take a wider role in managing the allotments, securing new funding, linking with other groups and schools, etc. Even where professionals delivered a capital spend project, e.g. the construction of the 'Teen Zones' play areas, ownership has been developed by encouraging use and involvement. 'Street Leagues' (football competitions) are part of the legacy from this: they were set up with active support from Burnley Borough Council sports coaches, who also trained the community to continue to run them.

- *Derby*: at Booth Streetscene the outdoor areas suffered from substantial vandalism shortly after the launch, which was very disheartening for the community. In response, the housing association repaired the damage immediately and worked with local youth groups to identify the perpetrators and engage them in managing the areas. This appears to have been a successful approach, as no further damage has been sustained. Austin Community Enterprise and Boulton Lane have recruited new members onto their management committees and have developed community plans.

- *Doncaster*: increased community engagement, and increased co-operation between communities and voluntary and community groups, is highlighted by project staff as one of the main outcomes arising from the TYS project. Community involvement, measured by numbers engaged as community centre users or group members, rose from 4,500 in September 2005 to 7,296 in September 2006. Increased respect and self-esteem amongst individuals and communities is cited as a major benefit. In terms of developing community capacity, the project manager believes that lessons learned will be transferred to other areas of the local authority such as a new Lottery project and the Play Strategy.

- *Sandwell*: the growth in capacity of community groups is reported to be greater than anticipated at the outset. Community expectations and confidence have risen: the community now knows what it can achieve, and people are willing to take control of

situations and actually drive things forward rather than simply feeding into consultations.

- *St Helens*: the 'feel' of the estates where work was focused is reported by consultees to have completely changed. As a result of the community's views being taken into account there is a better understanding and relationship between residents and local housing associations. The fear of crime is reported to have dropped markedly.

- *Swindon*: there has been far greater community interest than expected, and this seems set to continue beyond the lifetime of TYS. For example, feedback forms from the Broadgreen Centre projects show that users are pleased with the improvements and there is increased networking amongst the community. The Buckhurst Field community group continues to operate and is looking for more resources to deliver further projects.

- *Waltham Forest*: a key element of the TYS project was the support and creation of friends' groups: the project actually employed facilitators to help different friends' groups to develop. As a result, a thriving network of community groups has been created which are reported to be self sustaining and willing to work together.

- *Newburgh Waterfront*: one of the most important impacts of this Scottish project has been to increase the local community's belief in itself. Consultees within the Regeneration Group felt that the confidence engendered as a result of the project's success has increased local community aspirations. There are now plans, for example, to link up the waterfront with a coastal path. The regeneration of the waterfront has acted as a catalyst for change.

- *Burnside village enhancement*: this successful TYS project in Northern Ireland has energised the community and given it much more confidence. People were keen to start their next project – improving the riverbank area, to provide a continuous path away from the main road. Previously the idea of taking on such a project would have been intimidating, but as a result of their TYS experience there were no fears.

Communities and local authorities: working together

3.4   A striking feature of many of our final year consultations, particularly in England, has been the number of consultees who commented on improved relationships between local councils and community groups.

- *North Sirhowy Country Ranger*: it took time to break down people's negative perception of the Council and the local area. This has now improved immensely: people are now more trusting of the Council and more open to dialogue with them. Council officers are now involved in activity at a very local level, so that people recognise faces: this is part of a wider push within the Council to deliver services on a local basis so that people begin to recognise and trust those working in their local area. Although the Council was already moving in that direction, TYS helped it to communicate with local communities in a more constructive way. The project came at a time when the Council was looking how it communicated with the local

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community. The Ranger has 'brought the Council into the community' and provided an intermediary. Local people now have a better understanding of the Council and the way it works, and have become more willing to enter into dialogue.

- *North East Lincolnshire*: the TYS project has improved the Council's awareness of the variety of community groups that exist and also of the strength of the community to take responsibility for projects and deliver improvements to the environment.

- *Sandwell*: TYS has underlined to the Council the importance of community involvement and the need to ensure that they are using enough staff to support and increase the capacity of the local community.

- *Swindon*: the partnership that developed between the Council and the community as a result of TYS was something new for Swindon. In the past, projects were either Council initiatives on which the community was consulted, or entirely community-run projects with no Council involvement. In the TYS project, particularly throughout the development and design phases, the approach was very much one of partnership. This was not without its problems, and both sides learned much from the process. In particular, negotiations on the design of the project were protracted, as it took time to reach a mutually acceptable result. Council staff had to learn to work with the community rather than for them, and the community had to learn that the Council is required to go through various stages and processes and cannot produce instant results.

- *Telford & Wrekin*: TYS represented the start of neighbourhood working in Telford and Wrekin. TYS resulted in the creation of networks both within the community and with service providers. These networks are being maintained through the piloting of neighbourhood management initiatives. TYS provided the 'glue' which brought these groups together.

- *Waltham Forest*: the project has highlighted to the Council the value of community involvement in service delivery – a fact that is reflected in the Council's commitment to continue supporting community groups over the next three years.

- *North Grangetown:* this Welsh TYS project was novel for the Council in that they employed a dedicated officer with time and resources to work closely with the community, consulting them and looking for ways to involve them in project activity. In normal circumstances they would not have the opportunity to do this. It is an approach the Council would like to take in future, resources permitting. The Council is keen to learn lessons from this experience and has undertaken its own evaluation of the project and disseminated the findings.

- *Beardmore Park:* project staff believed they showed local authority officers a successful way to approach and develop community development projects, which they could use as a model for future projects. Community involvement from day one has been key to the project: this had never previously been achieved in this part of Glasgow, nor had it been seen in any project directed by the local authority. The project has influenced local authority decision making, and the project team have also

been approached by other organisations wanting to know how they went about consulting with the public and involving them in the design of the park.

- *North Ayr Community Gardens:* this is a first class example of working with a local authority to give local people the tools they need to look after their own gardens. Previously when gardens became overgrown or unruly the local authority reacted by issuing eviction notices. BTCV worked with local people to help them understand why gardens are important, and give them the information and tools (literal and metaphorical) they need to maintain them. BTCV has been able to show the local authority Housing Department that there are reasons why gardens become neglected (often due to residents' poor health or depression) and that there are 'softer' ways of dealing with problems than issuing eviction notices.

3.5 We would note that in the majority of English case studies the main consultees were from the local authorities. However, findings from these consultations were supported in those cases where we had feedback from other sources, e.g. community organisations.

Barriers

3.6 Many case study projects in England, where the local authority was the lead, reported that the Council had to keep a check on the community's plans and costings. There were many instances of project ideas having to be scaled back by the Council, often causing disappointment, because of 'unrealistic expectations' and 'unfeasible costings' on the part of community groups. Several Council consultees note this as a lesson learned, indicating the importance of strong partnership working from the very outset of design and development.

3.7 In some instances partnership working between the local authority and local community failed to materialise. In one English local authority, for example, a disappointing feature for council staff was that "the community were often not willing to take account of, listen to and use the specialist knowledge that exists within the Council. The community were very good at identifying problems but were then not willing to work with the Council to develop a solution".

Environment

3.8 Environmental impacts arising from TYS projects are to be found in the form of improved green and 'brown' spaces, increased volume and variety of wildlife, lower pollution levels, etc. Secondary impacts arise in the form of increased environmental awareness.

Impacts on rural and urban greenspaces

3.9 There were many examples of environmental impacts on urban and rural greenspaces, examples are provided below.

- *Newburgh Waterfront Development*: the project has transformed this former industrial wasteground in Scotland by landscaping, adding pathways and lighting and improving the environment with a view to enhancing local people's quality of life. It has created much needed leisure facilities within Newburgh for walking, cycling, bird

and wildlife watching and sports. The improvements form the central part of a riverside walkway to run the length of the town, which provides a safe alternative route to the busy main street

- *Salsburgh Moss:* the Moss is a raised peat bog and is considered as a major asset both by local people and by environmentalists. The Moss had been mismanaged over the previous few years and substantial remedial work was needed to raise the water table in order to increase bio-diversity. The path had been eroded by quad bikes and a significant amount of damage had been done to walls, ditches, flora and fauna. Through installing steel kissing gates at the entrances to the route to deter bikers, creating a shrub plantation, picnic area and signage and upgrading the 1km footpath, the project has significantly improved the environment of, and access to, this valuable greenspace area and has increased its use.

- *Doncaster*: project staff highlight increased awareness of the quality environment, and changing attitudes towards environmental protection, as some of the main outcomes of the TYS project. The Potteric Carr project has preserved a large nature reserve, and improvements to three former colliery sites have created valuable recreation space. Further to TYS (though not directly resulting from it), management plans have been produced for 39 green space areas within the Doncaster area. Ecological footprinting at Potteric Carr and at other community centres as part of TYS has highlighted potential cost efficiencies and the scope for achieving environmental improvements through public procurement.

- *North East Lincolnshire*: the project has restored dilapidated areas and brought derelict space back into use. It has also created children's play areas and generally 'greened' a lot of public space. These improvements have created a legacy for local communities to build upon. One project, for example, involved the development of a community garden on a concrete 'podium' at the base of a block of flats. This has been a huge success, giving improved views to the residents. The garden has since developed to include greenhouses, and has started to supply food to the local community café. This environmental improvement project has led to a range of benefits including a growth in community spirit and a reduction in vandalism. Residents in other nearby blocks of flats are now keen to develop similar projects of their own.

- *Sandwell*: an overgrown and little used area of allotments was transformed by converting it into a market garden. This produces fresh fruit and vegetables for over 100 local people.

- *Thanet*: two similar projects have involved the restoration of dilapidated local bandstands, which are central to a larger area of public space. The impact of these projects is obvious yet hard to quantify: the improvements, both in rundown urban areas, mean that these areas can now be enjoyed by the local community.

- *Creggan*: the capital works funded by TYS allowed the project team to complete a coherent access plan around the middle reservoir and provide a new amenity in the form of a high level viewing area which has proved a real draw to visitors. The

project is being used as a demonstrator of how green space can be developed for and by local communities, and is currently being promoted as such by local regeneration agencies.

Biodiversity

3.10   Several projects, perhaps most notably in Scotland, have been conscious of biodiversity when developing and implementing their projects.

- *Wildlife Pond in Tain*: planting for biodiversity has been a key feature of this project in Scotland's Highland region. Plants and shrubs introduced to the pond have all been of native and local origin: as far as possible, they have either been raised locally or been removed from drains or ditches that were being cleaned out. Plant species have been selected to address five issues: tree species including rowan and alder to provide height, shade and visual structure to the area; shrub species including willow and hazel to provide habitat for nesting birds and added shelter; ground cover species including hardy ferns to provide a dry habitat for small mammals and invertebrates; emergent, floating and submerged plants including floating sweet grass and rushes to provide habitat for wetland species and also enhance the quality of the water; almost 50% of the pond edge has been kept free of shrubs and trees to allow ground flora to colonise the area naturally. The impacts of these measures are being monitored and recorded by local wildlife groups.

3.11   The involvement of Scottish Natural Heritage in the Award Partner structure for TYS in Scotland has had a significant impact on the way that some projects were developed. In some cases this led to increased burdens on project staff, but had a positive impact upon wildlife in the longer term. The best example of this is perhaps the following:

- *Newburgh Waterfront:* the community group did not have a detailed understanding of the environmental aspects of the project when it first put the TYS application together. This affected the project in the following ways: Scottish Natural Heritage was not consulted by the Group at the start, and the lack of input from SNH was part of the reason why the initial funding application was rejected by BIG; the cost of engaging environmental consultants was not factored into the bid, so Group members themselves had to conduct an environmental impact assessment with the help of SNH and the Ranger Service (involving investigation of site contamination and the impact of works on geese, ospreys, mud beasts and other local wildlife); the planting recommended by the landscape consultants proved to be not all native, and had subsequently to be changed; the window of opportunity for constructing the site was restricted (e.g. SNH stipulated that the use of heavy machinery for constructing paths had to take account of the migratory pattern of geese, which would be disturbed if the works continued beyond a certain date).

The built environment

3.12   Few of the case study projects have involved buildings, but one that did, the Solarium in Blackpool was among the most successful TYS projects.

3.13   'Solaris' involved the transformation of a derelict seafront solarium into a multi-purpose "zero energy" building incorporating Lancaster University's Sub-Regional Environment Centre, exhibition facilities, meeting rooms, business space and a café. The building has been constructed using a number of sustainability principles, including waste minimisation and energy self sufficiency through solar photovoltaic tiles and wind turbines - both of which generate more electricity for the building than it uses. Rainwater from the roof is also collected and used to flush the toilets.

3.14   The building has also been of benefit to the local community, schools, colleges and businesses. It provides:

- office space for business start-ups (as a result of ERDF Objective 2 funding)

- open-use meeting rooms, with preferential rates for community and voluntary groups

- a café, open to all, and particularly popular with the elderly

- exhibition space, one large space (at the front of the building) which displays education material for both adults and children; other spaces (throughout the building) which display professional artwork or work by school children.

3.15   The TYS funding was a relatively small proportion of the whole, but directly contributed to the construction, the fitting out costs of the building and the innovative energy demonstration features.

3.16   The Solarium was an entirely new concept for Blackpool, and indeed was innovative more widely: in 2002, when it was conceived, it was at the forefront of thinking about practical projects with an environmental focus. Its profile was increased through the involvement of Lancaster University's Sub-Regional Environment Centre. It has won awards as an environmental centre – notably from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Local Government Chronicle.

3.17   Another example of a building funded by TYS is the CRAFT project in Aberystwyth. CRAFT is about the recycling of furniture, household goods and bicycles; it sells furniture as cheaply as it can afford and provides a discount to customers on benefits or low income. TYS funding was used to renovate a derelict building and brownfield site in the centre of Aberystwyth to provide a venue for the project.

3.18   CRAFT decided at the outset that environmental sustainability would be a critical theme, and engaged an environmental consultant to help achieve this. The project represents what staff call a 'brand new image' for recycling: green, modern design which does not look like the typical expected recycling facility. The building utilises insulation, biomass heating, a woodchip burner, low energy light bulbs, low flush toilets, re-used roof slates and recycled steel frames in construction. The ambition was to create a totally 'green' building which might influence further take-up of new technologies – for example, by other clients of the environmental consultancy.

3.19   School groups and other organisations can benefit from visits to the building, to learn about recycling and sustainable construction, or to hire space for events and lectures. The new

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location is accessible and a good venue to attract audiences – for example, to the low energy light bulb display hosted during Energy Saving Week.

Sustainable development

3.20   There are many definitions of sustainability and sustainable development, but the best known is the World Commission on Environment and Development's. This suggests that development is sustainable where it "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Several TYS projects encapsulate this concept in some way.

3.21   In Wales in particular, a key driver for the TYS programme was the focus on sustainable development. This is evident in the Welsh case study projects – as illustrated by the CRAFT project summarised above.

3.22   Other examples of good practice include:

- *Burnley*: allotment fencing was made of 'Notwood', a product made from recycled milk bottles and shavings. This was produced by a local company, who used it as a training project, and installed by Groundwork Environmental Taskforce, which also provided learning and skills opportunities.

- *Doncaster*: the Doncaster TYS programme has focused on environmental good practice throughout all projects: for example, it has delivered a carbon neutral building at Potteric Carr and energy efficient features in the community centres.

- *Blackpool*: the Solarium has been widely acknowledged (not only in the present evaluation) as being an example of good practice in sustainable development. It was constructed according to these principles and operates in line with the fundamentals of environmental good practice.

Increased environmental awareness

3.23   TYS appears to have led to improved environmental awareness on a large scale among local communities. One good example of this is in Northern Ireland:

- *Bog Meadows*: the development of this large urban greenspace has resulted in positive environmental impacts such as increased biodiversity. However, the knock-on impacts on the surrounding environment have also been considerable. For example, the neighbouring school (believed to be one of the largest in Europe) has visited the site on education visits, culminating in pupils expressing an interest in undertaking environmental activity of their own. Having helped to remove japanese knotweed from the Bog Meadows site, they have also started to tackle it within the school grounds. Similarly, residents' groups in streets neighbouring the site have applied for funding to make their own environmental improvements such as community gardens.

3.24   There are many examples from other projects across the UK where environmental education and awareness raising have taken place as a result of TYS. These effects are evident across all

groups in the population, but the extent to which local school children and youth groups have been involved is particularly encouraging. This most commonly takes the form of bulb planting and, for young children, activities such as pond dipping, whereby pairs or small groups take it in turns to use long handled nets to scoop up creatures from the pond and examine them (often using educational worksheets to guide them).

Hard evidence of environmental impacts

3.25   It has proven difficult to obtain 'hard' figures for environmental impacts. Project monitoring returns to BIG could provide this supporting evidence, but we understand that this information has not been collated. Even if the data became available, important methodological questions would need to be addressed if the aim was to establish a value for environmental impact, including issues of scaling, weighting and attribution.

3.26   Examples of tangible environmental benefits which can be directly attributed to TYS include:

- *CRAFT Aberystwyth*: in six months of 2006 alone, 188 tonnes of furniture and related goods were saved from landfill

- *North Ayr Community Gardens:* this project exceeded its targets by a very large margin. The target for improving individual gardens was 48; a total of 1,061 gardens were improved. The target for improving community open spaces was 12; no fewer than 55 were improved.

- *Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park:* otters have recently been seen in the park for the very first time. This is directly attributed to the improvements carried out under TYS.

3.27   Several projects have led to wildlife monitoring taking place on a regular basis: for example, annual butterfly surveys, bird surveys (including ringing) by the British Trust for Ornithology, annual botanical surveys, etc at Bog Meadows in Northern Ireland. All findings are recorded and fed into a Northern Ireland-wide database. The project has aimed for best practice in land use through encouraging native species. The approach taken through the TYS project is intended to ensure that environmental impacts are recorded over the years to come.

3.28   Table 3-1 below gives an indication of the range of environmental benefits arising from TYS.

Table 3-1 Environmental benefits	Urban spaces improved	Rural/ woodland spaces improved	Nature reserve created/improved	Habitat area created	New/improved buildings	Trees planted	Increased biodiversity observed	Environmental training / awareness raising
ENGLAND								
Blackpool	√				√			√
Burnley	√							
Derby	√							
Doncaster	√		√		√			
NE Lincs	√					√		
Pendle	√							
Peterborough	√							
Sandwell	√							
St Helens	y			√		√		
Stockton	√							
Swindon	√							
Telford & Wrekin	√							√
Thanet	√							
Waltham Forest	√							
WALES								
Abergynolwyn				√				
CRAFT				√				√
Caerphilly Ranger								√
Newport								
North Grangetown	√							
Parc Taff Bargoed							√	√
Space 4 Youth								
Woodlands		√						√
SCOTLAND								
Beardmore Park	y					√	√	√
BBVP	√		√				√	√
Green Gym	√							

	Urban spaces improved	Rural/woodland spaces improved	Nature reserve created/improved	Habitat area created	New/improved buildings	Trees planted	Increased biodiversity observed	Environmental training / awareness raising
Moray Mountain Biking		√						
Newburgh Waterfront	√			√				
North Ayr Gardens	√							
Smarter Salsburgh		√						
Tain Wildlife Pond	√			√			√	
NORTHERN IRELAND								
Bog Meadows	√			√				√
Burnside	√							
Creggan			√					
Devenish		√	√				√	√
Inverary	√					√		
Woodland Trust		√				√	√	√

Maintaining environmental improvements

3.29 Maintenance is an important part of project sustainability. In our final round of consultations we asked project staff to indicate how this would be achieved.

3.30 In many cases, local communities have taken responsibility for the environmental improvements achieved through TYS projects:

- *Parc Taff Bargoed*: vandalism was a problem at the outset but has reduced over the project lifetime thanks to support from the police and community safety wardens who patrol the streets and visit the park daily. Involving schools as much as possible from the beginning has been key to getting young people involved in the environment, and specifically the park, from a young age: this has reduced vandalism and encouraged respect.

- *Bog Meadows*: being in an urban environment inevitably means that there are instances of vandalism, dumped shopping trolleys, etc. However, the Ulster Wildlife Trust works closely with local residents, shopkeepers and other stakeholders to counteract this. For example, with the help of Council lobbying, the Trust persuaded the local supermarket to change the design of their trolleys so that they would be immobilised once they left supermarket property.

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- *North Ayr Community Gardens:* during the initial litter-pick at the start of the project the team of staff and volunteers collected a skip's-worth of rubbish plus 40 bags of litter. On a subsequent visit they collected only four bags. This was taken as an indication that once an area is cleared, the incentive is there for local people to keep it clear. However, the community also recognised that it will take longer to be sure that the results will last.

3.31 Several projects are seeking nature reserve status (such as Devenish in Northern Ireland and Burdiehouse in Scotland), in which case the local authority will take over maintenance of the site. In the majority of projects, in fact, the agreement of the local authority to take on responsibility for maintenance has been secured.

3.32 Other projects have obtained continued funding from varied sources to employ an environmental officer (or similar) to maintain the site in question.

Social

3.33 The social dimension of public space is important. "*Public spaces are open to all, regardless of ethnic origin, age or gender, and as such they represent a democratic forum for citizens and society. When properly designed and cared for, they bring communities together, provide meeting places and foster social ties of a kind that have been disappearing in many urban areas. These spaces shape the cultural identity of an area, are part of its unique character and provide a sense of place for local communities.*"[6]

3.34 CABE Space highlights several facets of the social potential of public spaces, each of them evident to varying degrees in TYS projects across the UK:

- **promoting neighbourliness and social inclusion**: the open spaces near our homes provide a valuable place to socialise with neighbours, whether chatting over the garden fence (e.g. North Ayr Community Gardens, Scotland) or meeting in the local park. Gardens and allotments, for example, can provide an especially good community focus and an opportunity for small, personal interactions

- **a venue for social events**: one of the benefits of high quality public space is its potential as a venue for social events. Well-managed local festivals and other events can have a positive effect on the urban environment, drawing the community together and bringing financial, social and environmental benefits

- **public space generates community cohesion**: public spaces are typically filled with both hard and soft landscape elements to help shape their character. Public art, for example, can make historical references, whilst also being fun to look at and interact with, appealing to adults and children alike: if the art is selected by the community through a competition (e.g. Newburgh Waterfront Regeneration Project, Scotland) then local people have a direct stake in the quality of the local environment.

3.35 The social benefits of TYS project are illustrated by the examples below.

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[6] "The value of public space" – CABE Space

3.36   First, we have seen many examples where TYS projects have been able to overcome anti-social behaviour. These include:

- *Burnley*: communities have taken responsibility, and much more positive relationships have developed – for example, between local youths and park rangers

- *Newport Community Transport*: the project has included an element of work on anti-social behaviour, undertaken jointly by the project team and the local authority's Youth Offending Team. This work addressed the problem of anti-social behaviour linked to transport such as vandalism of infrastructure, stones thrown at buses or from flyovers, and joyriding. Young people have been provided with training in mechanics, go-karting and computer-simulated driving lessons to help generate interest whilst also building skills for employment. Anecdotal evidence from local residents and police indicates that incidences of anti-social behaviour have decreased.

3.37   Increasing the positive benefits – as opposed to reducing negative aspects – can be seen in many projects. Examples include:

- *Abergynolwyn Village Hall*: an unexpected outcome is that the local sixth form college has become a room hire client of the hall and is now delivering adult and community education from the venue. This was not previously available to local residents and around 20 learners are currently enlisted on different courses including ICT and Welsh language. The college is planning to expand provision next year and the Village Hall may act as a hub for smaller settlements in the area around Abergynolwyn.

- *Moray Mountain Biking Club*: the process of building the bike trail network has had a significant impact on individual young people. By engaging them in doing something they enjoy, and which will benefit them, the project has managed to overcome a number of social barriers. Examples of success include one youth from a disadvantaged background who had previously burned down a shed belonging to the project sponsor: he was subsequently engaged in the project, and his behaviour became channelled in more positive directions.

- *North Ayr Community Gardens*: local people now see different ways of doing things, and new possibilities. Many local residents had so many social and personal problems that maintaining their garden was their lowest priority. The project worked with people to encourage purposeful activities that would help residents take control of some aspects of their lives. For example, one resident was in danger of being evicted because she had neglected her garden; she was found by project staff to be depressed and unable to cope. Once the project had helped her to clear her garden she gained a mental boost and subsequently maintained it herself.

3.38   Many examples are cited of overlap of social and environmental benefits, e.g. through activities such as community bulb or tree planting events, or community clean-ups and litter-picks.

Impact on mainstream services

3.39   In our final round of consultations we asked project holders whether their project had resulted in mainstream services being delivered in a different way. We found some evidence for this, although - perhaps unsurprisingly given the scale of interventions - this was partial, and in some respects tentative. Across England, we found instances where TYS had been used to pilot new types of delivery, and help local authorities build new, more constructive, relationships with local communities: examples included Stockton-on-Tees, St Helens, Doncaster and Burnley.

3.40   Also in some instances, new activities were piloted – pursuit of practical environmental projects at the community level in Blackpool is an example. Another example where the TYS project has been seen as a model for wider service provision is in Derby:

- *Derby*: the Austin Park Neighbourhood Base is the only 'one stop shop' in the city which offers multi-agency access not just to a range of public services but also to services provided by the voluntary/community sector. There was no existing model to guide the development of the project, and to begin with agencies were slow to come on board. The project adopted a 'one at a time' approach starting with Derby Homes, and gradually the other key agencies signed up. The base now includes the housing association, police, neighbourhood wardens, statutory agencies and various voluntary and community organisations which 'hotdesk' from the base or are signposted from it. The base also acts as a community voice reporting back to statutory agencies (for example collating reports of anti-social behaviour).

Economic

3.41   TYS did not set out to achieve significant economic impact – its primary goals focused on community and environmental benefits. We would not therefore place great emphasis on economic impact: nevertheless economic benefit was created through some local projects.

3.42   Table 3-2, below, sets out some of the hard evidence – in the form of jobs, training places, qualifications and volunteer posts - that has been recorded and reported to us. (We include volunteer posts as a 'minor' economic impact, as they are a well recognised factor in leading to paid employment.)

As noted above, TYS funding was in many cases used alongside other sources, particularly for the larger projects with a more substantial capital component where economic impacts might be expected to be more significant. In terms of overall additionality, we found that TYS was important in bringing forward local projects, in piloting new approaches and in enabling activity to take place more quickly or on a larger scale. We can be reasonably confident that the figures in table 3.2 are at least partially attributable to TYS, and we can also surmise that the economic impacts at programme level are not insignificant.

Table 3-2 Economic impact of TYS projects				
	Jobs	**Training places**	**Qualifications**	**Volunteer posts**
ENGLAND				
Blackpool	25			
Derby	1	12		
Doncaster		110	8	
NE Lincs				55
St Helens	60 person-weeks + 5 neighbourhood wardens	160		
WALES				
Abergynolwyn	6			
CRAFT	10			20
Parc Taff Bargoed	4		4	8
SCOTLAND				
Beardmore Park	3	8	8	
BBVP	1			
Newburgh Waterfront	Some short-term local construction jobs			
NORTHERN IRELAND				
Bog Meadows			15	
Woodland Trust				50
TOTAL	**50**	**290**	**35**	**133**

3.43   Although these results are positive, we would advise caution in their interpretation. They are indicative at best, as projects were not required to establish a sound baseline and, as noted above, impacts cannot be attributed solely to TYS. But other projects that did not provide us with figures may also have led to economic benefits which remain unrecorded.

3.44   In many instances respondents cited intangible and / or anecdotal economic benefits as a result of TYS activity, notably:

- increasing house prices in the surrounding area

- potential economic benefits arising from tourism (retail sales, accommodation, etc).

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3.45   With regard to rising house prices, our overall assessment is that such impacts are highly unlikely to be attributable directly to TYS, as too many other factors are in play (not least the general state of the housing market). However, TYS is widely agreed to be playing its part in local regeneration, and environmental improvements have been shown to impact on local house prices. In large-scale regeneration projects there can be a danger of 'crowding out' or displacement – e.g. of house prices rising in one area at the expense of another, or of local people being 'crowded out' from a neighbourhood that has become substantially more desirable. We would judge, although this is not statistically demonstrable, that the smaller scale of TYS, and its working with the grain of local communities, has probably resulted in increases in local people's well-being with little if any displacement, and fewer economic 'losers'.

3.46   Economic benefits in the form of increased tourism may arise as a result of large-scale environmental initiatives, both where the explicit aim is a high profile commercial tourism product, such as the Eden Project (not a TYS project), and where there is a 'softer' benefit in terms of landscape improvement and an enhanced opportunity for informal recreation which subsequently brings in visitors to the area and additional expenditure. TYS projects have been for the most part small-scale, and have focused on improving amenity for local people. We did not find evidence for economic impacts in relation to visitor spend; any such claims would be impossible to validate without baseline evidence (e.g. for local retail sales): as noted above, we found no examples of baseline data being collected.

Health

3.47   Governments, local authorities, primary care trusts and all those with an interest in improving public health increasingly recognise that the social fabric of communities and the quality of the environment that surrounds them are major determinants of health, and that these can only be addressed if different organisations and professions pool their knowledge, expertise and capacity. In the words of Groundwork UK, "all those involved in delivering regeneration now agree that a sustainable community is, by definition, a healthy community and that tackling disadvantage is at the root of improving well-being".[7]

3.48   The case study projects included many with an element of health-related activity although very few projects have had this as their major goal.

3.49   The most notable example of a project whose main aim is health improvement is the Green Gym. BTCV describes Green Gyms as a new approach to creating healthier communities and a healthier environment. They offer people a means of improving their physical fitness by involvement in practical conservation activities such as woodland management, tree and hedge planting, dyking, greenspace enhancement or improving footpaths. Benefits to quality of life also arise from the social contact and support that comes from working with others. Those who are particularly at risk of poor physical and/or mental health, such as the inactive or socially isolated, often benefit the most.

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[7] "For people, for places, for health" – Groundwork UK, 2006

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3.50   In the majority of other projects, health has been a (potential or actual) side-benefit of activity. Projects that involve clearing derelict wasteland and establishing pathways and natural habitat, for example, provide new greenspace in which people can exercise through walking, cycling or playing. Even the opportunity simply to sit in the fresh air can be beneficial to health.

3.51   There are many examples of instances where people with physical or mental health problems have benefited from TYS funded activity. Chapter 4 includes some examples of this. However, other than the data collected by BTCV in relation to their Green Gym projects, we are not aware of any 'hard' (quantifiable) evidence of health benefits arising from TYS.

3.52   Indeed, there is only limited evidence of projects engaging directly with mainstream health services to design and/or deliver activity. Where engagement has been attempted, results have been slow to materialise:

- *Newport Community Transport*: project staff were disappointed by the lack of engagement from 'the Health side': for example, they had hoped that interest would be forthcoming from the Welsh Ambulance Service (given that it was facing constraints, and the project might have complemented its service), but no response was received from approaches by the project team.

- *Green Gym:* BTCV reported an apparent lack of enthusiasm amongst GPs in some Scottish localities to refer patients to their local Green Gym. There are various 'champions' of the project amongst this group, and some local practices have been enthusiastic, but on the whole there has been considerably less GP involvement than BTCV expected. This is countered, however, by a good level of interest from other groups within NHS Scotland, including managers, ward sisters, etc.

4: Other key findings

Summary

TYS appears to have generated significant community engagement and involvement, leading to increased confidence and capacity amongst local communities (as witnessed by their interest in becoming involved in spin-off projects, for example).

Expectations are positive regarding the long-term legacy from most projects, although we found concerns based on the recognition that the level of activity has depended on the focus and energy of key postholders. These individuals must be expected to move on, or take on wider remits, but their role has proved vital and their continued involvement, where possible and where funding permits, will be an important element in long term sustainability.

Projects in Northern Ireland were more likely than projects in other countries to seek ways of generating income to sustain their activities. This is in line with an increasing policy emphasis on the need to marry environmental projects with revenue generation in order to ensure sustainability. But our case study research showed that this aspiration has not been fulfilled: the earlier view of potential to realise this is now seen as over-optimistic, and such activities have gradually been curtailed.

The importance of securing funding for a key postholder has been emphasised by grant holders and beneficiaries alike. With TYS now at an end, many projects will struggle to survive if funding is not found to keep a project 'champion' in post.

4.1   In evaluating Transforming Your Space, we sought to explore several themes over the course of the three years. These related both to the benefits arising from the project-specific processes involved in designing, management and delivery of the Programme, and also regarding the wider effects beyond TYS – on practice elsewhere and over a longer time period. In this chapter we present some of these wider findings from the final year of our evaluation, focusing on:

- community engagement and involvement

- barriers to successful implementation

- sustainability.

Community engagement and involvement

4.2   In all four countries, we found that TYS has had a significant impact upon the scale and nature of community engagement and involvement in those areas where the Programme has been delivered.

4.3   In many cases, particularly in England, projects came 'off the shelf': that is, the ideas had already been developed and were awaiting an appropriate source of funding. In many such cases, for example in Doncaster and Derby, local community groups had been involved in

earlier dialogue about priorities and possible shape of projects, and were re-involved under TYS to re-scope and refine the concept. Thus, while there were relatively few examples in England of projects that arose entirely within the community, the initiatives were nevertheless fully supported by local groups.

4.4   Elsewhere in the UK, there were projects that originated directly from the local community. However, we found that some of these grassroots projects were in areas not particularly disadvantaged by poverty or urban blight. At least two of the case study projects in Scotland might be considered as 'middle class' in area and character.

4.5   Where the lead organisation was a local authority, TYS facilitated better communication and partnership working with local communities. There are many examples of this, including:

- *Sandwell*: openness and flexibility on the part of the local authority has helped community engagement significantly. The Council did not adopt the view that "we are the Council and we know best": rather, it was willing to work with the community which meant that a number of interesting projects developed which would not otherwise have taken place, and there is a real sense of ownership of the projects amongst the local community – a factor which is crucial in terms of sustainability.

4.6   While communities were directly involved to different degrees in generating and developing the ideas for projects, we found that across the UK, the benefits of engaging with TYS have resulted in significant increases in community confidence and capacity.

Barriers

4.7   The **multiple funding sources** used in some projects have brought advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, if one pot of funding comes to an end there are others to fill the gap. On the other, complex funding packages can lead to severe administrative burdens, particularly for projects that are led by inexperienced community groups. Examples have been cited to us of projects coming to an end as a result of administrative strains. One project in Doncaster, for example, reported resignations and turnover directly attributable to the burden of managing myriad funding streams. The entire project was forced to close down because of this.

4.8   Issues surrounding **technical issues such as land ownership, planning and insurance** caused problems for several projects across the UK. In Pendle, for example, the main barrier cited by consultees was the difficulty of ascertaining land ownership. This led to delays in project development and consequently to dissatisfaction amongst the community. The other barrier was the length of time taken to obtain public liability insurance. These problems have significantly added to project timeframes, making it difficult to sustain community interest and involvement.

Sustainability

4.9   In a programme such as Transforming Your Space, there are several aspects of sustainability: environmental, social and financial.

4.10   Over the lifetime of the evaluation we have found that where TYS has provided capital funding for new equipment or physical resources, it is a common feature that the local authority steps in to guarantee future maintenance when funding streams come to an end. To some extent, therefore, financial sustainability presents less of a challenge for this kind of project, as maintenance and management become absorbed into mainstream budgets. (This is common across the UK, not just in England where there was more local authority involvement at the start.)

4.11   Sustainability is built into the physical design of many capital-funded TYS projects. In Burnley, for example, it is being achieved in part through robust 'low-maintenance' fencing at the allotment improvements, and the use of high specification (and higher cost) materials for the TeenZones.

4.12   Environmental sustainability featured prominently in projects across the UK. It was a strong feature of the Wales TYS programme, where applicants were asked to complete a sustainable development checklist, and was also a prominent feature of several of the Scottish case studies. At the Tain Wildlife Pond, for example, surplus stone from the original site was stored locally until it could be utilised in other projects. In Tain and also in the Newburgh Waterfront project, Scottish Natural Heritage played an important advisory role in ensuring the use of native plant species and improving biodiversity.

4.13   Sustainability in terms of community involvement is another factor for consideration. Many projects report that the creation and/or continuation of Friends' Groups will play a major part in keeping projects going.

4.14   While structures such as Friends groups can be seen as one of the most effective ways of involving communities in the management of a site, it is important to remember that these groups will often need ongoing support to develop. This is particularly so in their early stages, where groups may need practical help to establish and organise themselves, and then to work with local authorities or other public agencies[8].

4.15   Training and capacity issues have been evident, as volunteers involved in green space management tasks require a wide range of skills: "from practical conservation tasks to meeting and negotiation skills, assertiveness training and publicity and fundraising skills"[9].

4.16   Groundwork UK notes that continuous modest improvement helps to sustain community interest, as setting goals and timetables provide positive outcomes which keep people motivated. Maintaining a number and variety of events and promoting school use of a green space can also generate ongoing involvement.

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[8] "Sustaining green space investment" – Groundwork UK, 2006
[9] ibid

4.17   The great majority of project respondents, with very few exceptions, expected that the legacy from their project would still be in place five years after the end of TYS funding.

Income generation

4.18   One way of securing the longer term financial sustainability of a project is to find ways of generating income. This can be achieved through:

- charging a fee for access or facilities (e.g. sports facilities, visitor centre, licensed activities such as fishing or cycling, etc)

- setting up a not-for-profit enterprise (e.g selling timber products or plants, or providing training).

4.19   As Groundwork UK points out, the level of income that is achievable through such means will, to some extent, be dependent upon the level of affluence of the community within which the site or facility is located[10].   Given that a considerable proportion of TYS activity is targeted at disadvantaged areas, we might not expect to see too much evidence of revenue generation in this respect.

4.20   In Year Two of our evaluation we started to see some evidence of projects generating their own revenue streams – for example by selling local produce, hiring out equipment in country parks, etc. We noted at the time that our longitudinal approach to the evaluation would enable us to track this trend over a longer period, and indeed in our final round of case study interviews we asked respondents to comment on this.

4.21   A year on, we found that the early signs of income generation from Year Two have in many cases failed to bear fruit. The revenue generation opportunities which were discussed in the early years of the evaluation either failed to get off the ground, or started but were subsequently downscaled. The lack of success in generating income is put down to various factors, including: insufficient size of local market (e.g. for freshly produced vegetables); loss of key member of staff responsible for driving forward activity; restrictions imposed by seasonality (many people will not pay for some leisure activities e.g. boat trips at certain times of the year); technical or other problems (e.g. difficulties in obtaining insurance for some activities). There were, however, still some useful learning points: in Burnley community groups proved more willing to pay for equipment hire from another third sector organisation than when the same service was operated by the Council.

Key postholder

4.22   One of the overriding themes that has emerged from our final round of consultations with all case study projects is the need for a central figure or key postholder to carry the project forward.

4.23   At the end of our Year Two report there was an emerging sense that many projects were being driven by a key individual without whom activity might tail off. Our final year consultations,

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[10] "Sustaining green space investment" – Groundwork UK, 2006

both with project managers and individual beneficiaries, have confirmed that this is a major concern for many TYS projects.

4.24   In projects across the UK, TYS has either funded or facilitated the appointment of a project coordinator. This post and remit have taken various guises - sometimes it is an office-based administrator, sometimes it is a country ranger or warden – but what postholders have in common is the drive to develop activities and to recruit local people and groups to take part in those activities. These people, quite simply, make things happen. The cost of funding each post is comparatively small, but the threat to TYS activity if the post is lost is significant. In other words, the benefits of these posts are considerably greater than the costs.

4.25   The problems associated with sustainability can be seen in the following example:

- *Devenish*: The project has secured Heritage Lottery funding to continue to fund the coordinator's post until 2007, but the activities supported by TYS are suffering. With the cessation of TYS funding, project staff have left and activities have wound down – e.g. the organic garden is no longer maintained, only a few New Dealers are still doing volunteering, etc. Staff had developed several channels of potential revenue generation such as selling organic vegetables, but none of them generates enough cash to help the project keep going. The project manager believes that growing and selling flowers may be more profitable than vegetables, and there are many local retired people who would help to get involved in this kind of activity, but again it needs funding for coordination. If the current project manager leaves it is likely that most activities will tail off. The success of this project depends on having someone in post who can coordinate activities.

4.26   In some other cases (for example in Doncaster, Derby and Stockton-on-Tees), dilution of the initial focus has been planned in, and the role of the TYS 'champion' mainstreamed, with their efforts spread, apparently successfully, over a wider area.

5: Beneficiary research

Summary of year three beneficiary research

Our final round of beneficiary research has served to underline some of the findings from our main case study research. Much of our beneficiary research confirms reports from project staff about the increased confidence, capacity and pride of local communities.

One of the clear themes emerging from our research is the identification of the need for a key postholder to drive things forward: feedback from beneficiaries in this respect echoed that of project staff .

Of equal interest are the areas in which beneficiary feedback has deviated from the views of grant holders. Residents' perceptions of maintenance, for example, do not always chime with reports from local authority staff.

There is much anecdotal evidence about the considerable impact of TYS on the lives of individual residents and volunteers.

With hindsight, it would have been preferable to undertake our final year of beneficiary research by visiting projects again rather than conducting interviews by telephone, which did not add materially to the rich findings from the earlier visits.

Introduction

5.1   The focus of TYS is on 'enhancing the quality of life for local communities, improving the appearance and amenities of local environments, and developing community assets'. In seeking to provide a forward-thinking evaluation for the client, we proposed at an early stage in the research to involve project beneficiaries in evaluating the impact of the initiative. Expected benefits included internal reflection and learning, and more in-depth examples of good practice in generating and maintaining local involvement.

5.2   It was agreed that work with beneficiaries would be undertaken in ten of the case studies: five from the first cohort in year one, and a further five in year two. This consisted of two case studies in each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and a total of four projects in England, reflecting the higher level of funding.

5.3   The ten projects were selected to provide a variety of environments and a cross-section of the activities funded through TYS. They were:

- England   The Paston Fair Share project, Peterborough

- England   The Solarium, Blackpool

- England   Shakespeare Street Play Area, Derby

- England   North East Lincolnshire

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- Wales   North Sirhowy Valley Community Ranger, Caerphilly

- Wales   Volunteer Wardens Scheme, Parc Taff Bargoed

- Scotland   North Ayr Community Gardens Initiative, South Ayrshire

- Scotland   Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park

- N. Ireland   Bog Meadows, Falls Road, West Belfast

- N. Ireland   Devenish Integrated Environmental Project, Enniskillen.

5.4   The projects ranged – in terms of grant size – from about £80,000 to £200,000. They also demonstrated a range of potential and predicted beneficiaries, both direct and indirect, from young to old, and from local beneficiaries to interest groups from further afield.

What is a beneficiary?

5.5   Given the variety of projects the TYS funding covers, the definition of beneficiary varies quite significantly between case studies. We made a distinction between:

- *direct beneficiaries* – consciously enjoying the results of the project. This may range from re-routing their walk to work to pass through an improved park, to members of a 'green gym' getting involved in conservation activities and other types of volunteer. This group includes, but is not limited to, a sub-category we might term 'enthusiasts'

- *indirect beneficiarie*s - including those in the wider community who unintentionally experience a higher quality of life owing to the project activities, such as better views of the surrounding landscape, cleaner air in the local environment, or lower crime rates on local estates.

5.6   Potential beneficiaries are not necessarily restricted to 'local' residents; others, including special interest groups, may travel in to access the new or improved amenity. While focusing on feedback from the local community, we therefore also sought to gain feedback from beneficiaries from further afield (such as wildlife groups), which may form additional 'communities'.

Year 3 beneficiary research

5.7   As planned, in the final year of our research we contacted project beneficiaries by telephone rather than visiting them in person. This approach was not without its problems: it was often very difficult to track down individuals who are 'one step removed' from our primary contacts. In many cases we had to use intermediary contacts as a proxy for individual beneficiaries (for example, a countryside ranger in one project felt able to speak on behalf of local residents). This was useful, but not an entirely reliable approach in evaluation terms.

5.8   One disappointment of our final year beneficiary research was the difficulty in following up the beneficiary feedback mechanisms that we had helped projects to establish earlier in the evaluation. For example, we gained only limited insight into whether projects had continued to make use of (for example) video diaries.

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Beneficiary groups

5.9   Many thousands of people, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas of the country, have benefited from TYS either directly or indirectly. In our Year One and Year two reports, we provided extensive narrative to illustrate how local residents have gained from the programme.

5.10   In this final year report we do not provide the same level of descriptive detail. Rather, we have chosen to focus on three groups from the wider population which benefited from TYS projects, and to discuss the nature and scale of these benefits. The groups are:

- schools

- people with mental and physical health problems

- (to a lesser extent) local businesses

Schools

5.11   The extent to which school children and young people have been involved in TYS activities has been a very positive result from the overall evaluation, and is confirmed by our beneficiary research. Examples of projects which have been of benefit to schools, as identified by consultation with beneficiaries, include the following:

- *Caerphilly Community Ranger*: The Community Ranger was actively involved in work with local schools, in particular Argoed Primary School. This included participation in a Forest Schools programme where children learned in a forest environment (in a circle in the woods). Their learning about woodland resources was integrated with other subjects on the national curriculum (e.g. maths). They had the chance to learn some basic bush-crafts (e.g. making whistles). The Ranger also worked with a group of excluded children, which he felt was hard but rewarding work. He is well known in the local primary schools, where he helped to improve and develop their gardens, and has also completed similar work for a disabled group and the local nursery.

- *Bog Meadows*: The project is seen by local schools as a great resource, enabling them to do a range of field work which would not otherwise be possible in such a built-up area. One consultee, a science teacher from St Louise's Girls School, has used the Meadows to do water sampling and testing, biodiversity studies etc: it is seen as a huge advantage to be able to teach in a 'hands on' way. The children have benefited from working in the fresh air and have become more enthusiastic about learning.

People with mental and physical health problems

5.12   Although the bulk of our case study research struggled to find tangible evidence of health benefits arising from TYS, our beneficiary research provides some valuable insights into the impact which the programme has had on individuals' health – particularly those with mental health problems. One example is in Northern Ireland:

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- *Bog Meadows*: activities at Bog Meadows bring together people who would not normally mix. For example, volunteer groups often comprise students undertaking postgraduate degrees alongside participants in the Shadow Programme (for people with mental health problems) and 'ordinary' local people. This increases understanding between various sections of the community and helps to break down the stigma associated with mental illness.

5.13 People with physical health problems benefit in theory from the kind of environmental improvements instigated by TYS. However, although many TYS projects have put in place environmental improvements to facilitate walking, running and cycling, the benefits are not necessarily fully realised. In Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park, for example, one beneficiary consultee noted that "those who most need to exercise are still not making the most of this resource".

The business community

5.14 Examples of beneficiaries in the business community include direct beneficiaries:

- *Solaris Blackpool*: The business community has benefited from affordable business space, the creation of high quality new location for events and meetings and through the assistance given by the Solaris staff in improving energy efficiency. For example, one of the tenant companies has been working with local hoteliers to improve their energy efficiency (and therefore reduce their costs). This project has provided local hotels with free resource efficiency reviews and helped to introduce low-wattage spotlamps in hotels.

5.15 And also indirect beneficiaries:

- *Bog Meadows*: The benefits to client companies of 'Business in the Community' are considerable. The challenges encourage team building, develop leadership skills, improve motivation and get people out into the fresh air. In the case of Bog Meadows it also increases environmental awareness. The benefits for the Bog Meadows are that work that might take a Warden a week is done in a day. The result is one of mutual benefit to the project and to BitC.

Impact on local communities

Pride and spirit

5.16 Findings on community spirit from the beneficiary research echoed, and amplified, those in the main case studies:.

- *Derby*: The play area has given the estate something to be proud of. One consultee commented that the project was initially seen as a "quick fix" to show the community that improvements were being made, but that it has become much more than that. The project, along with other initiatives (e.g. the new PFI-funded Primary School), has raised expectations and increased the sense of pride in the community. The children also seemed to have learned to respect something which was developed for and by

them. Whilst there has been minor vandalism, generally the play area has not been damaged. The project manager felt that this was because they could see that something worthwhile was being done, whereas the old play area was so run down they did not value it.

- *Caerphilly Country Ranger*: one resident explained that in terms of community spirit they were starting from a low base – 15 years ago there was a working colliery with all the social structures that went with it, but then "the colliery disappeared and so did the community spirit".

Increased knowledge and capacity

5.17 There are strong indications of improvements in knowledge and capacity amongst local residents – perhaps most clearly in terms of their local authority:

- *Caerphilly Country Ranger*: through the Ranger, the community now understand what the statutory duties of the local authority are, what the ranger can do and what they themselves can do. This has been very important as in the past people have tended to moan and expect the Council to do everything.

- *Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park*: the individual members of the community have learned how organisations and local authorities work – for example, why some things take time, and how to ask the Council the right questions in order for action to be taken.

- *North Ayr Community Gardens*: the community is now much more "active and accountable". They are aware of the funding opportunities and want to see exactly where the money goes and discuss what the benefits will be. They now realise that earlier they were essentially passive: small management groups tended to take charge and the benefits were not enjoyed by the whole community. Now these groups are much more accountable. The first project manager also found the 32 resident committees were working for themselves, only looking for benefits for their own area or street. There are signs that these committees are working more closely together.

- *Parc Taff Bargoed*: One member of the management committee reported that they had learned a lot about funding and the processes required to access funds. Another resident also said they had learned that "you have to give things time to develop" regarding voluntary groups. Aspirations can be high to begin with but people have to develop the skills to meet those aspirations – "sometimes people want to run before they can walk". To begin with members of the community could justifiably argue that it would be quicker and easier to do things on their own rather than through the committee but this would have be a short term approach. Now the consultee feels the value of the committee is "greater than the sum of the parts."

- *Paston*: One consultee reported that the Paston Action Group has also benefited from the project; their involvement has improved the skills and confidence of the Group's members in developing proposals and projects. The Action Group does not meet now but this is because it has largely been superseded by 'Energy for Paston', a newly

formed Development Trust aiming to improve the quality of life for local residents by creating more things to do in the area for all ages, making it a safer, cleaner place to live with less crime and greater more community involvement. The skills gained through the TYS project have therefore been taken into this new forum. In particular, members of the Paston Action Group learnt a lot about grant application processes and this has helped them (and subsequently 'Energy for Paston') apply for other funds.

- *Parc Taff Bargoed*: All consultees agreed that the community is better placed to be involved in such projects and to come up with new ideas. One committee member commented that increasingly the members are "bouncing ideas off each other" and even sharing ideas with other groups and organisations to put in joint bids. This wouldn't have happened in the past. The community also brings together people from all walks of life but still works really well as a group – "there's a sense that things are really coming together". The volunteer wardens also felt that the different user groups are working better together, for example the fishing group did not always appreciate the work that was being done to improve the habitat around the ponds, but now they have a very good relationship with all users.

5.18   Increased knowledge and awareness of environmental issues is also evident:

- *Burdiehouse Burn*: there is a sense that community understanding of conservation has improved – "some individuals have become real experts" - for example developing a detailed knowledge of bats and birds.

Bringing people together

5.19   A sense of cohesion has been formed as a result of some projects:

- *Parc Taff Bargoed*: The events organised through the committee are helping to give the communities a sense of pride and ownership in the Parc. Over 5,000 people attended one event so people are becoming increasingly aware of the Parc. One villager also sensed that the three villages are working together much better – "it is no longer 'them and us' it's now about 'the area'".

5.20   In Northern Ireland, some case study projects have played a very important role in helping to heal community divisions:

- *Bog Meadows*: a local teacher commented that "many of the girls at the school had never met a Protestant person before", and felt even small projects like this that bring communities together can make a massive difference in terms of perceptions and understanding. Another consultee noted that "small cross-community projects may just have a local impact but the cumulative effect is immense".

- *Devenish*: The project has played an important role in bringing schools and children from different backgrounds together. It would be hard to say that it has actually reduced conflict although these benefits may not emerge for some years. It has certainly increased understanding of and between different groups, both in terms of

the sectarian divide and bringing together a range of volunteers including those with learning disabilities.

Impacts on individuals

5.21   Our research has highlighted many examples of the impact that TYS has had on individual members of the community. One such example (but there are many others) is of two volunteer wardens who have benefited hugely from participation in TYS. Both had previously experienced personal problems, including depression, and both replied to the TYS adverts without really knowing what to expect. They report the outcome of their involvement as being extremely positive. One of the volunteers was lacking confidence and had been to self-esteem classes in the past: now he is giving presentations to community groups and schools, dealing with press enquiries and feels he is "a different person" after a year of volunteering. Another volunteer said that he felt "much more positive and much more outgoing". Both interviews revealed the important role the project has played in easing people back into work who had previously struggled with personal problems.

Disappointments

5.22   Although the overall tone of this evaluation has from the start been extremely positive, it would be misleading to suggest that there have been no disappointments. In our final round of consultations with beneficiaries we asked them to point out any aspects of the project which they felt were weak. These perceptions, from the perspective of specific users, demonstrate the need to build a broad-based understanding and to seek to agree priorities early across the different groups in the community.

Community involvement

- *North Ayr Community Gardens*: One consultee thought that the street and garden clean-ups had made a difference but that sometimes they helped the wrong people. She felt that the Action Team shouldn't be helping pensioners as the Council provide this service for free so they are "doing the Council's work for them". She also felt that "some people don't deserve help especially if they are young, unemployed, able-bodied and capable of doing it themselves". She felt that the Action Team were sometimes "taken as mugs" by people who got their gardens tidied up for nothing. She commented that clean-ups near schools and around sheltered housing were really valued by the community. Another participant was disappointed that the project managers sometimes looked to start new groups instead of building on the efforts of the original group. For example the Green Gym project and a new gardening group have received new equipment, yet established groups are told there is no money. There was a feeling that the club required greater clarity on what funding was for them and what was for other groups, then they can plan what their priorities are.

5.23   Beneficiaries from several projects commented on the difficulty of engaging people who wouldn't normally be involved.

- *Parc Taff Bargoed*: One consultee felt that participation by local people could have been higher, though it is improving. They are trying to change mindsets of people – it takes time to break through apathy. This was neatly summarised by one consultee who said "the community is rather like the Parc itself, it is growing out of a hundred years plus years of damage and misuse". As a result, changing the way the community thinks will not happen over night. Linked to this there was some frustration that it tends to be "the same old characters" who are expected to take on the work.

Relations with local authorities

5.24   In one project, relations between community organisations and the local authority were seen as having failed to reach their potential:

- *North East Lincolnshire*: the inability to link to, or "cross over" with, other local authority projects and activities was a disappointment from the perspective of the Environworks [social enterprise] project manager. With a bit more joined-up thinking the council could have helped with planning and rights of way issues, but these issues got "buried in bureaucracy" and the fact that different departments have different responsibilities. As a result, they never got the cooperation they wanted. One example of this was that Environworks failed to persuade the Council's works teams to contribute to site clearance and preparation work due to insurance issues, despite having robust health and safety systems in place. As a result, they had to hire or buy equipment instead of being helped by the Council or being able to borrow equipment from them.

5.25   Disappointments were expressed by some beneficiaries in relation to the maintenance of TYS-funded facilities:

- *Peterborough*: A number of people commented that the level of maintenance has been disappointing - indeed one consultee felt that the Council seems less interested in this type of maintenance work now that it does not have direct responsibility for a housing portfolio. It seems that during the course of the project maintenance has improved but could still be better. On consultee expressed the view that the agreement with the Council regarding maintenance "should have been hammered out first" and that, as a result, there is a lack of clarity regarding what constitutes an acceptable standard. Overflowing bins and glass (which the tenants often pick up) only encourage misuse and further littering.

What do beneficiaries think about the future?

5.26   Finally, we asked our beneficiary consultees to give us their general opinion about how things might proceed after the lifetime of TYS, in order to gain an impression of their level of optimism regarding sustainability.

5.27   Our main case study research highlighted that in many projects, success and sustainability hinges upon there being a key postholder (coordinator, project manager, etc) in place. This point was also clearly identified by beneficiaries.

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- *Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park*: individual consultees emphasised the importance of the project coordinator role and raised concerns about the future of the initiative if this was lost: "he is the pivotal point around which everything revolves". Although this project has aimed from the start to hand over responsibility to the local community, it is not evident that this will happen. Among individual beneficiaries there was a view that the community was "not ready" to take this on, and if the project coordinator post ceases to be funded there will be no driving force to keep the initiative going. Beneficiaries also noted the importance of having a 'neutral' coordinator who is not driven by a particular agenda.

- *Caerphilly Country Ranger*: Beneficiaries recognised that the local authority has generally been very supportive of the programme but there was an acknowledgement from residents and from the ranger himself that he is not perceived as a member of the Council's staff but "as part of the community". This put him in a unique position as a "neutral go-between" regarding community and council issues. Consultees were in agreement that he has helped to ease communication between the community and the council on a range of issues.

- *Parc Taff Bargoed*: Both volunteers expressed serious concerns about the sustainability of their posts, even on a voluntary basis, and this seems to be a real worry for them. Given the range of activities undertaken by the wardens there is a concern that many of the events will end without their input. One consultee also expressed the view that they have now built up a good relationship with the local communities and that ending the warden programme "would be like pulling the rug from under them". One of the committee members expressed the importance of having a paid post to organise the volunteers. Whilst in theory the warden scheme can continue with limited funds (due to its voluntary nature) the volunteers need support, equipment and materials need to be ordered, funding secured, tasks coordinated with other agencies etc. Whilst the management committee could take on some of this role (e.g. in terms of setting tasks and priorities) it would be very difficult to deal with the day-to-day issues.

Longer term beneficiary research

5.28   As mentioned in Chapter 2, Greenspace Scotland has launched some action research on greenspaces in Scotland, entitled 'Demonstrating the Links'. Eight community groups from across Scotland are taking part in a two-year research project in which each will investigate the impact of their own community greenspace. One of these is Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park in Edinburgh, one of our TYS case studies. This community-led action research approach means that the research projects will be largely defined by the participating groups, making the research both practical and useful. The research will be carried out in a way that maximises community involvement and develops skills and confidence.

5.29   The action research, backed by Greenspace Scotland, Communities Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and NHS Health Scotland, has been developed with the Scottish Community Development Centre. The impacts and outcomes from each community group's research will

be linked to national targets and priorities, enabling the widest lessons to be learnt from the experiences of real people.

5.30   Greenspace Scotland notes that: "Empowering communities to develop their own research should lead to outcomes that closely match the needs and aspirations of the communities themselves. The results will also provide the most relevant findings for other communities across Scotland to develop greenspaces that are fit for purpose - greenspaces that communities want. The action research, backed by Greenspace Scotland, Communities Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and NHS Health Scotland, has been developed with the Scottish Community Development Centre. The impacts and outcomes from each community group's research will be linked to national targets and priorities, enabling the widest lessons to be learnt from the experiences of real people. The project involves a series of networking and dissemination events, and will be independently evaluated. The work will be carried out by Greenspace Scotland and the Scottish Community Development Centre, with funding from Communities Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage. The action research will provide community groups with mentor support, training and networking to enable them to develop and undertake their own research project. Based on a model developed by Communities Scotland, this work will build community capacity, deliver practical research projects and provide evidence which will be of value to the community groups and the wider greenspace community[11]."

5.31   Although this initiative comes too late to be included within the TYS evaluation, it is clearly an important piece of research which may provide useful guidelines for conducting beneficiary research in future BIG programmes.

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[11]

http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/default.asp?page=15&theme=Greenspace%20Scotland&uid=316

6: Conclusions

Summary

It is clear that Transforming Your Space can be described as a successful programme. TYS set out to achieve three main aims: enhancing the quality of life of local communities; improving the appearance and amenities of local environments; and increasing the development of community assets. There is no doubt that the programme has achieved these aims.

In particular, the following stand out as key outcomes arising from the programme:

- significant environmental improvements to urban and rural greenspaces

- better relations between and improved understanding between local councils and local communities

- increased community confidence and capacity in many localities.

In view of the limited results from our final round of beneficiary feedback, there is considerable scope for more research to be undertaken over the longer term that would enable the full impact of TYS to be gauged.

Introduction

6.1   In this section we provide a final overview of Transforming Your Space and its achievements.

6.2   We start by reviewing the way in which the programme was administered in each of the four countries.

Funding distribution mechanisms

6.3   The available funding for the programme was allocated between the four countries, approximately in relation to population. The programme was administered differently in each country, and the scale of individual projects also differed by country.

- In **England** a decision was made to link the TYS programme to the Fair Share programme; this prioritised funding to local authority areas which historically had received proportionally lower amounts of Lottery funding. Funding allocations ranged from £200,000 to £2.3m, and all local authorities were expected to put forward a portfolio of at least two to three projects.

- The way in which TYS was distributed appears in many cases to have resulted in significantly improved understanding between local councils and local community groups. TYS came at a time when English local authorities were already starting to work at a more local level (through neighbourhood management and similar initiatives), and the level of engagement with local communities was starting to

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increase. TYS alone, therefore, has not been responsible for altering the way in which councils and communities engage – but it has worked with the grain of policy direction to encourage this development. Although local communities have had a strong voice in determining the details of how funding should be spent in particular neighbourhoods, the selection of which neighbourhoods to support has been down to the local council. TYS in England has been complemented by various other funding sources, and leverage has varied from project to project within each local authority: some projects were funded solely by TYS, others received only a small proportion of their total costs from TYS. Attribution of project impacts directly to TYS is difficult, but the contribution of TYS to the development of partnership working is strong.

- In **Wales** a different approach was adopted whereby each of the country's 22 Community Strategy Partnerships was encouraged to develop and submit one 'winning' project. Notional budgetary allocations to the Partnerships were made, based on population, social demography and a minimum grant level of £100,000. The lead organisations for the projects varied: around 13 were developed and led by the voluntary sector, with the remainder being managed by local authorities. Generally the programme is reported to have proceeded with few problems, and BIG country officers do not appear to suggest that an alternative approach to funding should have been taken. However, problems are said to have arisen in the case of several voluntary sector-led projects, where support that was promised by local authorities has failed to materialise.

- **Scotland** was the only country to utilise the Award Partner approach for TYS, whereby Fresh Futures administered the programme on behalf of BIG. This approach appears to have generated a greater proportion of community-driven projects than in England. We believe this is due in part to the fact that Fresh Futures and its constituent agencies were already linked in to many community based initiatives and were able to promote TYS directly to them through existing networks. BIG country officers believe that the Award Partner approach has been justified, and that managing it in-house or via local authorities would not have achieved the same results. However, the need for post-award development and support is one of the lessons that has been learned.

- Projects in Scotland achieved a very high rate of leverage: typically, 70% of project funding came from non-TYS sources (BIG was expecting some level of co-finance, but not on the scale that was actually achieved). One of two conclusions might be drawn from this: either that TYS funding was marginal and many of the projects might have gone ahead in the absence of TYS, or that TYS was a driver in securing other sources of funding and getting things done. Our consultations with Scottish projects and with BIG officers lead us to believe that the latter is true. However, BIG country managers report that the existence of multiple funding packages caused delays in getting some projects up and running. It is also very difficult to attribute projects' impacts directly to TYS.

- The minimum grant available in Scotland was £20k and the maximum awarded was £150k.

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- **In Northern Ireland** the Award Partner approach was considered, but was ruled out because those on the likely shortlist of candidates were already heavily committed in administering other programmes. A small number of large projects were supported. Rather than operating a completely open bidding process, BIG was clear from the outset about the size (c. £200K) and number (c. 10) of awards that would be made. In the end, a total of 14 projects were supported, with an average grant size of £150K.

- In Northern Ireland, by contrast to Scotland, co-financing was regarded by BIG as neither necessary nor desirable: BIG wanted to be the main funder. There were two reasons for this: first, the perceived disadvantage of multiple funding sources is that it takes longer to pull funding together and thereby causes delays; and second, impacts are more difficult to attribute. In practice, some of the concerns of BIG Northern Ireland officers have been borne out in Scotland, where some delays have arisen as a result of complex funding packages, and where attribution of impacts has been very difficult.

6.4 The various approaches taken by the four countries were related to their own infrastructure and each had its strengths and weaknesses. It is impossible to state with authority that any one approach is better or worse than the others. However, the level of additionality in Northern Ireland projects appears to be higher than in the other countries: that is, a higher proportion of respondents report that their project 'could not have proceeded' in the absence of TYS. Likewise, in Northern Ireland it is easier to attribute project impacts directly to TYS because projects were discouraged from putting together multiple funding packages.

6.5 We have not been able to identify any particular correlation between the size of a TYS project (in financial terms) and its success. The impact on beneficiaries of some of the smaller Scottish projects, for example, appears to have been on a par with larger TYS projects elsewhere in the UK.

6.6 Neither have we identified a strong correlation between the funding mechanism and the impact or sustainability of projects. In England, where local authorities played a leading role in allocating funding, the sustainability of many projects has been secured by the local authority taking responsibility for future maintenance. However, similar outcomes can be seen across the other three countries, where the local authority did not necessarily have a say in whether or not the project should have been funded.

Policy fit

6.7 The TYS programme has provided a good fit with policy, at UK level and in each of the four countries. For example, the Welsh Assembly Government's focus on sustainable development has been reflected in TYS projects. In Scotland, the Executive's drive towards environmental justice has, likewise, been echoed in TYS projects supported.

Innovation and good practice

6.8 We have not found any examples of genuinely innovative projects funded under Transforming Your Space. Many projects have been 'new' to a given part of the country or to the organisation in question, but none has been innovative in the sense of being genuinely

ground-breaking. This is not a criticism (TYS did not set out specifically to be an 'innovative' programme), rather an observation.

6.9   There are, however, some examples of good practice in project design and management. Perhaps the best example is the Solarium in Blackpool, which has received wide publicity.

6.10   Good practice also exists in the way that many projects have broken down barriers between different parts of the community who would not otherwise have had cause to mix. For example, several projects in Northern Ireland have literally created a common ground which catholic and protestant communities can enjoy together. Other projects have sought to engage beneficiaries with mental health problems alongside the wider community, with a view to reducing the stigma attached to mental health.

Monitoring, evaluation and management

6.11   BIG requires projects to submit monitoring returns detailing the outputs and outcomes of each project. However, the Fund did not collate this information centrally.

6.12   The focus of this evaluation has been on beneficiaries rather than on process, but it is worth commenting briefly on the way in which the programme was managed. On the whole, BIG is widely recognised as a very 'flexible' funder, and grant recipients welcome the Fund's willingness to re-negotiate the finer points of individual project funding where appropriate. However, in a few instances grant holders have indicated that more interaction and occasional visits from BIG staff might have helped them (particularly in the case of small English authorities).

Health benefits

6.13   Health is an important element of 'quality of life' (a key theme of TYS), and for that reason we might have expected to see more projects specifically encouraging health-related activities. However, it is extremely difficult to monitor health benefits over a short period of time. As TYS did not require grant holders to report specifically on this, it is not surprising that evidence of health benefits is limited.

6.14   Given the very obvious connections between the environment and health, if similar programmes are funded in future it may make sense to 'design-in' mechanisms for monitoring health impacts.

Value for money

6.15   This evaluation was not designed in the form of a cost-benefit analysis. Indeed, the range of activities and outputs funded by TYS is so diverse that it would not lend itself to such an approach: the programme would have needed to be designed and delivered on an entirely different basis (particularly in terms of monitoring). Consequently, our findings have been essentially qualitative rather than quantitative.

6.16   However, we concluded from the evidence available that, overall, TYS was used wisely, and that communities across the UK have gained lasting benefit from it.

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