

## **CPRE LONDON AGM, 24 May, 2018 NOTE OF PRESENTATIONS AND PANEL DISCUSSION**

### **PATRICK FEEHILY, ENVIRONMENT DIRECTOR, GLA on the LONDON ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY**

Patrick Feehily outlined the key elements of the new London Environment Strategy with a focus on green infrastructure. The Strategy had recently attracted an interesting debate in the Greater London Assembly. Projected population growth to over 11 million by 2050, from the current 8.3m, was a major challenge with serious implications for housing, jobs and the environment. The Mayor's approach was to secure 'good growth' including through an integrated approach to the environment embracing air quality, climate change, waste, green infrastructure and noise in a single strategy as required by the 2011 Localism Act.

Green Infrastructure is the network of green spaces, rivers and wetlands, street trees, green roofs etc which deliver a range of benefits including healthy lifestyles, flood mitigation, urban cooling, biodiversity and ecological resilience. The Mayor supports the concept of London as a National Park City to help conserve and enhance wildlife and natural habitats, through valuing London's natural capital to secure greater investment. The draft London Plan contains a range of green infrastructure policies designed to protect Green Belt and green space, and promote river restoration and green roofs and walls. The Transport Strategy promotes a mode shift so 80% of all trips will be by foot, cycle or public transport by 2041, and the Healthy Streets approach which aims to reduce car dominance and make the local environment more attractive for walking and cycling. These policies support the health inequalities strategy which includes improving air quality and access to good quality green space.

Questions and discussion followed around the following issues:

- Extension of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone and the need to encourage cycling to and from schools
- the protection of allotments within London to enable people to grow their own food
- the threats from expansion of Heathrow to air quality, noise and development in the Green Belt
- the value of the All London Green Grid and the need for this to be strengthened in future Supplementary Planning Guidance
- the fragmentation of green space and the need to focus on areas of green space deficiency
- controlling land use within existing developments, such as the paving over of front gardens
- the threat of development in the Green Belt beyond London given its importance to Londoners.

### **PANEL DISCUSSION on *TRANQUIL LONDON: IMPROVING GREEN AND PUBLIC SPACES FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING***

Alice Roberts, Head of Green Space Campaigns, described CPRE London's recent report on Noise in Parks. She first outlined work on threats to protected green spaces, car-generating development in the Green Belt, and the opportunities to redevelop low density retail and industrial parks, and reclaim 'grey space' from the car use. She outlined the findings of recent research on Noise in Parks which examined the extent of traffic noise in 885 London parks and found one third were severely impacted by noise and fewer than half were free from noise. This reduced the health benefits of green spaces and had a damaging effect on wildlife. Potential solutions included restricting cars through filtering schemes, road closures, speed limits, and parking controls, and improving the

public realm through hedge and tree planting, shared space schemes and safer cycling and walking routes.

Ben Bost, from Transport for London, outlined the Healthy Streets approach supported by the Mayor in A City for all Londoners, to help us use cars less and walk, cycle and use public transport more. Healthy Streets are those which are attractive to pedestrians, easy to cross, not too noisy, where people feel safe and relaxed, with clean air, shade and shelter, places to stop and rest, and where people can choose to walk, cycle and use public transport. This approach is central to the Mayor's Transport Strategy which aims to achieve an 80% sustainable mode share by 2041 with 3m fewer car trips and 'vision zero' for road danger; where everyone enjoys at least 20 minutes of active travel each day; with 10% fewer heavy vehicle movements in central London by 2026; and zero emissions by 2050.

Jake Tibbetts, from the City of London Corporation, outlined the importance of the 32 hectares of city gardens and open spaces in the Square Mile to the wellbeing of the 450,000 people who work there each day, as well as its residents. These range from the relatively large Bunhill Fields to small, pocket parks and churchyards like St Dunstan's in the East. Recent refurbishment of some parks such as Whittington Garden has sought to improve a sense of tranquillity including through hedge planting and location of cycle paths. The expansion of green roofs in the city in over recent years has been positive but this does not compare to the value of publicly accessible green space at ground level. The intrinsic and health benefits of access to green spaces are increasingly acknowledged but we risk taking these for granted as development pressures increase. We need to demonstrate how a healthy, green environment can benefit productivity.

Lisa Lavia, Managing Director of the Noise Abatement Society, described how a focus on 'soundscapes' can help us understand better the impact on noise in everyday life. She outlined the work of the NAS, which was set up in 1959 to tackle noise pollution and promote solutions, and the key components of the Government's policy statement on noise published in 2010. Traffic related noise pollution causes the loss of one million healthy life years each year in Western Europe according to the WHO, and the social cost of noise pollution was between £7-10bn pa according to DEFRA. We need to tackle this through an approach based on promoting good and healthy 'soundscapes' or acoustic environments that recognised sound as a resource, and involving community engagement and participatory planning as pursued by Brighton and Hove City Council, the City of London, the City of Montreal and the Welsh Government.

Grant Waters, acoustic consultant and founder of the Tranquil City initiative, described how a multi-disciplinary team with expertise in acoustics, sustainability, air quality, social impact studies and data science has come together to promote the importance of tranquillity for the quality of city-life. The Tranquil City London campaign explores personal perspectives on the nature and importance of tranquillity in an urban context, and how it contributes to a feeling of calm and wellbeing. A 'Tranquil Pavement' map depicts levels of noise and air pollution and contains over 840 posts from Londoners expressing their own perceptions of tranquillity. Working with a variety of partners including City of London, Better Bankside, Team London Bridge and Lewisham Council, the initiative has also involved walks, talks, and workshops to gain a better understanding of people's perceptions.

Steve Potter, psychotherapist and trainer, outlined the vital importance of this issue for mental health and wellbeing, explaining how he used a mapping approach to explore moments in our life which are risky, creative, harmful, helpful or educational. He stressed how 'relational space' or the 'space within' 'meets and grows from the space around us' and how access to calm and enriching places is important for the development of healthy individuals. We are 'born to map' and the brain, mind, body and culture are all connected in a relational matrix which involves our experience in a range of spaces – head space, social space, and physical space. Trauma damages our mental health and our relational development, as well as our ability to share space, and providing opportunities for access to conducive, tranquil physical space can provide an important healing function for those affected by trauma.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- confusion and concern was expressed at the loss of funding and staff from parks and open space teams in many London boroughs, such as Croydon, particularly given the vital importance of such spaces as demonstrated by the panel speakers
- the damaging effect of Heathrow expansion in term of additional aircraft and traffic noise as well as development impacts was highlighted
- there was concern that noise associated with construction was becoming a bigger problem in many parts of central London and that standards set in the 1970s were no longer adequate today
- we should be making more of the vital importance of access to tranquil green spaces in the scale, design and location of new development, such as that at Mortlake in SW London where greater car use and proximity to railways were likely to cause significant challenges
- the panellists had provided a great deal of inspirational evidence and argument which we should use to redouble our efforts to stand up for green space and the public realm in our attempts to shape the future development of London
- we should recognise the wisdom of the founders of the Modern Movement and Le Corbusier in particular in seeking to provide opportunities for urban dwellers to live in a green environment
- there was a great opportunity to apply an approach based on tranquillity to the retrofit and remodelling, as well as the management, of parks and green spaces in order to maximise opportunities for people to experience peace and quiet.
- mental health was a major public health issue and we should recognise the mental as well as the physical health benefits of access to tranquil, green spaces in our work on this issue.