



GREEN SPACES
A submission by Wandle Valley Forum to the London Assembly Environment
Committee investigation
November 2016

1. Wandle Valley Forum is delighted that the London Assembly Environment Committee is investigating the future of the capital's green spaces. We play a volunteer-led role in celebrating and protecting the complex network of green spaces across four boroughs in the Wandle Valley. Our work has identified the immense contribution which green spaces play as a source of environmental, social and economic wellbeing. We share the Committee's view that much of this is now at risk not least as a result in changes to local authority funding. The uncertainty over future support from the four riparian Boroughs along the Wandle presents one of the greatest risks to the integrity of the Wandle Valley and the benefits it provides.

2. We have established priorities for the Wandle Valley and set these out in the Wandle Valley Forum Charter. We hope this proves useful to the Committee in its investigations. The priorities it sets out draw on input from over 100 community groups, voluntary organisations and local businesses who support our work; including a major Wandle Futures event in 2015.

3. The Wandle Valley Forum Charter addresses a number of the issues identified by the Committee for particular investigation:

a. *Best practice models of green space governance and management* – we identify opportunities to supplement local authority management of green space with other community-led and enterprising approaches. This will require more sharing of local assets, including buildings and open space, to allow community enterprises to develop and flourish. We also support a role which draws on the established role of Business Improvement Districts and other sources of pooled economic investment which benefit the public realm and extends it to green infrastructure and networks of green space.

b. *The benefits of green space and natural capital* – we identify a wide range of contributions that the Wandle Valley makes on the doorstep of millions of people as a:

- place of sanctuary
- place for sport and recreation
- source of economic benefits for 20% of London's manufacturing industry
- major heritage asset
- natural playground for adults and children alike
- outdoor gym promoting physical health
- living classroom for both children and adults

General enquiries: wandlevalleyforum@gmail.com
Web site: www.wandlevalleyforum.org.uk
Twitter: [@WandleForum](https://twitter.com/WandleForum)

Please respond to Chair, Wandle Valley Forum, c/o 43 Bramcote Avenue, Mitcham CR4 4LW

- place to relax
- source of inspiration for creative industries
- venue for nature walks
- green corridor linking different parts of London
- source of clean air
- source of well being
- place of beauty

c. *Promoting green infrastructure thinking across London* – we strongly support the development of sub-regional partnerships and believe strengthening and sustainable resourcing of the Wandle Valley Regional Park provides an ideal model to pursue. This should include a review of the Lee Valley precept as part of providing a fairer funding approach. We are also strongly supportive of the London National Park City initiative and its ability to connect local and sub-regional green space into a wider network and vision

d. *The barriers to improving green space* – we make a number of suggestions, including:

- develop coherent planning policies for green space networks that run across borough boundaries
- pool resources from the community infrastructure levy and s106 obligations into a single fund to support sub-regional green infrastructure, such as the Wandle Valley.
- use biodiversity offsetting from major projects such as Crossrail 2 to enhance the landscape and wildlife of green space networks, such as the Wandle Valley
- provide much needed leadership at a London level for initiatives such as the Wandle Metropolitan Park – a vast green space opportunity spanning three boroughs and stretches from Beddington to Mitcham. This remarkable area is more than three times the size of Hyde Park and yet much has restricted access and it lacks coherence and is barely known even to those people who live next to it
- address the role of major players such as Network Rail and Transport for London in securing better access and networks, including removing barriers to long distance routes such as the Wandle Trail impeded by rail lines and bridges
- avoiding silo thinking which imposes one-size-fits-all approaches to green space that lacks sensitivity to their local context – e.g. the current TfL funded Quietways proposals would introduce more than 60 4m lighting columns and more than 50 illuminated bollards along a short and very narrow stretch of critical green space along the Wandle between Colliers Wood and Trewint Street bridge

About Wandle Valley Forum

Wandle Valley Forum brings together people and organisations that care for the River Wandle and its diverse network of open spaces. We provide support and an independent voice for over 100 community groups & voluntary organisations and for everyone who shares a passion for the Wandle. Among other roles we monitor planning applications for developments which impact on the special qualities and character of the Wandle Valley and make representations on developments which raise Valley-wide issues by reason of their strategic significance or potential to set a precedent. Wandle Valley Forum was established in 2005 and is the primary consultative forum on Wandle Valley issues for the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust; the London Boroughs of Wandsworth, Merton, Sutton and Croydon; Greater London Authority and other statutory bodies