



GroundsWell

Transforming our cities from the ground up

Annual Retreat



The Spine, Liverpool

19-21st November 2024



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Agenda

Tuesday, 19th November
The Spine, Spaces 1 and 2

12:00PM - 1:20PM

REGISTRATION AND LUNCH

1:20PM - 1:30PM

WELCOME ADDRESS

1:30PM - 2:30PM

CREATIVE URBAN GREEN & BLUE
SPACES

2:30PM - 3:00PM

COFFEE BREAK AND NETWORKING

3:00PM - 5:00PM

ECR SHOWCASE

7:00PM

ECR SOCIAL
LEAF, BOLD STREET

Wednesday 20th November

8:30AM - 9:00AM

REGISTRATION

9:00AM - 10:00AM

INNOVATION FUND CELEBRATION

10:00AM - 10:15AM

COFFEE BREAK

10:15AM - 11:15AM

DEMONSTRATOR PROJECT UPDATES

11:15AM - 12:00PM

CITIZEN SCIENCE AND CO-
PRODUCTION

12:00PM - 1:00PM

LUNCH BREAK

1:00PM - 3:30PM

SITE VISITS

3:30PM - 4:30PM

WARM UP AND CHAT

6:30PM

EVENING MEAL
ONE FINE DAY
(ENTRANCE ON ORMOND STREET)

Thursday 21st November

8:30AM - 9:00AM

REGISTRATION

9:00AM - 10:00AM

POLICY SESSION

10:00AM - 10:30AM

COFFEE BREAK

10:30AM - 12:30PM

IMPACT AND FORWARD THINKING

12:30PM

LUNCH AND CLOSE

SITE VISIT INFORMATION

On the afternoon of Wednesday 20th November you are invited to visit one of our partners based in the Liverpool City Region. Two of these visits involve travelling by coach to partner sites to learn more about their work, and the third is an immersive site visit that doesn't involve any travel, and will be held at the retreat venue. Please read the following information for each visit, and choose your preference on the registration form; we will try our best to accommodate everyone's preference, although this can't be guaranteed due to numbers.



SAFE Regeneration is a community business based beside the Liverpool-Leeds canal in Bootle. During this site visit you will learn about their story, get a tour of their organisation and community spaces (including the community pub!), then Jane and Brian will lead a discussion around a new Neighbourhood Transformation Planning Tool (NTPT) that they have been involved in developing with the community.

Canal & River Trust are the UK's largest canal charity, looking after 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England and Wales. For this site visit, the C&RT team will take you down to the Liverpool Waterfront on a tour of the docks. You will learn about how they are trying to balance development and regeneration with 'human scale' interventions that bring people closer to the water.



For this immersive visit to Dock Branch Park the Digital Urban Place team, in collaboration with Wirral Council, will take you on a virtual tour of the proposed park design, using VR headsets, an interactive media table, and gamepad explorer software. You will be able to complete tasks in the virtual world and view drone capture videos of the railway corridor where the Dock Branch Park will be built.

Impact Case Studies



1. UGBS in climate action policies

The Challenge: We face a triple planetary crises of climate change, nature degradation and pollution, impacting in population health and inequalities. However, little research is available about policies and interventions which would provide evidence about “what works”. We require research on intervention development and evaluation of policies and interventions that aim to mitigate, as well as reduce the vulnerability of populations to these crises.

Policy Landscape: In 2022, Northern Ireland (NI) published their Climate Change Act¹ detailing the legislation of how government will respond to climate change. A particular clause states that “proposals and policies under section 29 shall as far as is practicable, support nature based projects that enhance biodiversity, protect and restore ecosystems, and seek to reduce, or increase the removal of, greenhouse gas emissions or support climate resilience”. The government has undergone a public consultation on their intended carbon budgets and developing the climate action plan, investigating the opportunities for interventions and policies that provide multiple ‘wins’ or so-called ‘multi-solvers’ that address climate change, the nature crises, pollution, population health and wellbeing, and inequalities.

Underpinning research: The Connswater Community Greenway (CCG)² is an example of a nature based solution (NBS) that addresses these challenges. The GroundsWell team in partnership with EastSide Partnership, Belfast City Council and The Paul Hogarth Company, are working closely with the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), who are the lead department for the Climate Change Act, to integrate learnings from this work to inform the NBS element of the climate action plan. The CCG is an urban greenway which opened in east Belfast, comprising some of the most deprived communities in NI, in 2017. It involves 16km of new/improved walking and cycling infrastructure, remediated rivers, flood alleviation scheme, social programmes and events, signage, landscaping, and new civic square and public art.



The GroundsWell Belfast team have been conducting research on the CCG since 2010³⁻⁶; one of the longest running natural experiment evaluations of a NBS/UGBS intervention.⁷ The team are currently conducting a 5 year follow-up study involving a household survey, administrative data linkage, qualitative component, and economic analyses that explore health (including NCDs and physical activity as a NCD risk factor), social, economic, environmental, inequalities and climate impacts. The team completed community consultation and published a report on developing a climate resilient CCG with lessons for climate mitigation and adaptation.

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Pathways to impact: GroundsWell co-hosted a public consultation on the NI carbon budget with DAERA, were part of an expert panel on an introduction to NBS workshop with DAERA and the climate leads from all government departments, and have held 2 workshops launching the Climate and Nature action report.⁸ The presentation showcased the CCG research as a NBS exemplar. The underpinning research is informing NI policy and the climate action plan. In summary, we have an opportunity to showcase UGBS as exemplars of NBS informing multi-sectoral policies at the nexus of health, climate action and inequalities. We are also responding to the climate crisis through relevant case studies in each pioneer city such as development of climate-resilient greenways and biodiversity interventions. Two funding applications have been submitted and a People's Panel established with the local community, to support this work including to the National Lottery Climate Action Fund for £1.5m to support interventions.

2. Community empowerment

The Challenge: Undertaking effective participatory research and decision-making is challenging.¹ Systems-based approaches for community involvement,²⁻⁴ can impact both community capacity building and intervention sustainability.^{1,4-6} However, such approaches are underutilised and have yet to be fully tested in UGBS.

Underpinning approaches: We recognise that UGBS is a multi-sector and multi-disciplinary topic. Therefore, there are lots of different languages and priorities that need to be united. This understanding is embedded across our work, implementing more collaborative approaches, to develop resources that communities want, leading to impact for research and communities. Through co-production approaches we are embedding community engagement in all WPs, from considering systems approaches to data linkage.

Empowering and democratising the research process. We are developing citizen science-based approaches such as the Our Outdoors App <https://www.spotteron.com/ouroutdoors/> which can be used as an evaluation tool by communities to collect the data they need most. In Edinburgh, one residents' group has been using Our Outdoors to gather evidence to support their case in preserving a local green space.

Developing community research capacity: We are offering training on Six Steps in Quality Intervention Development (6SQuID), covering how best to approach designing community-based programmes looking to optimise health and social outcomes and community journalism training to produce influential and impactful project stories from our community-based projects.

Giving a voice to those seldom heard: Much of our research focusses on homelessness, refugees/asylum seekers, people living with disabilities and people living in low-income neighbourhoods. We have engaged with those seldom heard in a number of ways including hosting seminars by organisations such as the Mae Murray Foundation and Making Space for Girls, and running workshops to co-produce accessible research tools and outputs.

Putting communities at the heart of the evaluation process: Connswater Community Greenway have involved communities over all waves of research and held group model building workshops involving local communities with stakeholders. An evaluability assessment process with Dock Branch Park focused on what the community wanted as well as other stakeholders in defining indicators of success. Using a range of participatory methods, we developed a core set of evaluation indicators based on the needs and preferences of community organisations.

Giving communities a 'place at the table': Our Community Steering Group and Impact Advisory Group provide advice on training and resources needed, make decisions on the use of the Innovation Fund, and review our impact strategy. WP6 is looking at the role of citizens in UGBS decision-making. Community partners also play an active part in our annual retreat including hosting site visits and inputting into sessions structures and content.

Providing the resources to focus on community issues: The community wealth building and community asset transfer work and the analysis on UK UGBS inequalities and preventable deaths in WP5 will inform local decision-making and policy processes.

Pathways to impact: Our seminars are available through our Youtube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@GroundsWellConsortium>). We are writing up our co-production approaches used in various projects and our learnings from administering the Innovation Fund. We will bring all our co-produced resources and project learnings together to disseminate through our website, on social media, in published journals and at project celebration events.

3. Data Linkage Innovation

The Challenge: Current linkage practices are limiting England's ability to make effective public health decisions. GroundsWell are changing data systems, allowing anonymised data linkage between people's environments and their health records, facilitated using household (HH) linkages. Linking data in this efficient way would have many applications: 1) Evidence of how UGBS investments keep people healthy without needing health services; 2) The 'right' data means we can focus efforts on communities experiencing health inequalities, ensuring no widening; 3) Evidence improved health outcomes.

Policy Landscape: Policy should be based on evidence-informed analyses of the wider determinants of health, particularly environmentally focused initiatives, supporting effective prevention of NCDs. The new UK Government is focusing on further devolving powers, so linking data across different sectors at regional levels is more important than ever when developing new policies to help those most in need. We are linking environmental changes to health data, enabling the pooling of shared resources; producing a complete picture, which recognises current evidence gaps. Robust, long-term follow-up of individuals and households is crucial for public health initiatives. This evidence is essential for fully understanding the impact of these changes on health outcomes and is something that GroundsWell is championing.

Underpinning research: We have written about working with NHS England to implement household linkages in health data in England, building on national progress completed in NI, Wales and Scotland¹. In NI, The Honest Broker Service provides safe access to measures of green/blue space coverage from satellite data have been linked to 2021 Census data to examine the association between self-rated health and individual access to the CCG². We are co-producing similar methods with a new park in Birkenhead and (See community empowerment and innovation fund case studies).

Pathways to impact: In Years 2&3, GroundsWell held regular meetings with an NHS data processor, NHS England and NHS Cheshire & Merseyside Integrated Care Board. NHSE are now adding UPRNs to current and historical addresses for all NHS registered patients. In Y3 we completed a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) with our partner IG expert, now used by ICBs throughout England³. These data are ICB priorities for household-based winter poverty evaluations, and broadly across England for Climate Change, net zero and flood risk priorities. This has accelerated and improved the health evaluation of environmental initiatives.

As part of the NHS England NW Secure Data Environment, we advocated for linkages to replicate ongoing work in NI, where rich survey data are nested within administrative data, providing rich data at a 5 year follow up. We have evidenced our partner working through our co-produced manifesto for environmental data linkage change, published across online platforms. GroundsWell have worked closely with the Civic Data Co-operative in Liverpool, contributing to a delivery plan for the Liverpool City Region on using data to drive public decision-making. These discussions have led to an 'Office for Public Service Innovation'.

4. Innovation in integrating systems models

The Challenge: GroundsWell aims to optimise the health impact of UGBS. However, the communities – indeed the systems – which desire, design, develop, and deliver UGBS are fragmented and siloed. Similarly, research programmes and disciplines lack integration and coherence. The challenge is to augment current systems approaches in public health to address these shortcomings. Our innovation is the application and integration of systems methods and approaches incorporating co-production, data sharing and community engagement. We have applied a systems approach to the development of the consortium, its wider community and the programme of work to achieve a shared and common understanding of the aims and desired outcomes of the programme, its completeness and coherence.

Underpinning approaches and research-based activities: We demonstrated our approach in two case studies: 1) using the Connswater Community Greenway (CCG); 2) the GroundsWell consortium governance. The underpinning approach was to conduct workshops and use systems tools to develop a shared understanding of the context of the research problem and to develop an agreed purpose for the research.

Systems approaches were then explored to develop an understanding of what would be required to achieve the agreed purpose, the dynamics and dependencies between these activities, and the governance and management structures necessary to achieve the outcome. Individual system approaches exist for each of these needs but have not been integrated previously. We have developed an innovative way of sharing data between these approaches and have extended this to incorporate other models to inform decision-making.

The integration of these approaches provides an overall laminated view of the integrated systems framework. The process involved starting with developing and applying an Enhanced Soft Systems Modelling approach coupled with Rich pictures, Context Diagram, Root definitions, and Conceptual model techniques. Rich pictures and Context diagrams techniques are utilised as to visually communicate and convey discoveries between stakeholders. Root Definitions (RDs) were used to identify a statement of purpose. These were validated across the consortium. The RDs were then used to identify a set of relevant and coherent activities in support of the identified purpose. Activities were then expanded out into a Conceptual Model, mapping out the entire system. In parallel, a programme level Causal Loop Diagram (CLD) was created to identify the causal and dynamic interrelationships within the system and its environment. Alongside, a Viable System Model (VSM) identified a viable multi-organisational structure, specifying key functions and lines of communication across the project. The Conceptual Model, CLD and VSM was then integrated via a big Activity Comparison table, linking activities, roles, responsibilities and measures of success. From this, a Dependency Model was then developed to identify key dependencies in the activities across the consortium.

We have developed a reference model for the ongoing sustainability and maintenance of the CCG in Belfast, taking the same overall approach. This approach has had the following impacts to date: 1) enabled the CCG team to identify new stakeholders required in the sustainability and maintenance phases; 2) identification of key indicators for the 5-year follow-up evaluation; 3) identify action priorities such as anti-social behaviour, and conflict between user groups which are part of a suite of intervention development projects.

Pathways to impact: The initial impact has been achieved with the establishment and governance of GroundsWell. It has facilitated us to identify key areas that 'block' the system, areas to accelerate through resource reallocation, and identification of challenges across hubs and WPs. We have responded to requests to share our approach with other research consortia. It is anticipated that taking an integrated systems approach to the future structure of the Eastside Partnership and related agencies will ensure the sustainment of the CCG and demonstrate the enhanced effectiveness of UGBS. We have led workshops utilising the system approaches and continue to develop a toolkit to aid dissemination to other case studies. The findings from the 3 case studies will inform 'best practice' intervention development. The first set of papers describing this have been submitted for publication.

5. Addressing inequalities in access to UGBS

The Challenge: Despite the well-documented health benefits of exposure to nature^{1,2}, a significant portion of the population remains low or non-users of UGBS. A survey conducted in England revealed that 26% of respondents visit UGBS fewer than once a month³, and a study of 33 European cities found that 10% never use urban green spaces⁴. Reasons for this underuse are varied, including structural, social and individual factors such as lack of nearby parks, safety concerns, cost, and poor health. GroundsWell addresses these challenges in two ways: i) embedding an equality lens in all research and engagement activities; and ii) increasing awareness of policymakers, researchers and communities of low and non-users of UGBS with the aim of addressing knowledge gaps. **Policy Landscape:** Policymakers are increasingly interested in promoting access to UGBS as part of public health and urban planning strategies. However, current policies often fail to address the complex range of underlying barriers that prevent equitable access to these spaces and the benefits that can arise. For policies to be inclusive and effective they need to be better informed about these low and non-users of UGBS; research has a crucial role in providing more understanding and prominence. This connects to the work being undertaken in GroundsWell (e.g., UGBS and national policymaking case study) that is identifying ways to increase consideration of equality and inclusivity in national and local level UGBS decision-making.

Underpinning research: Research aims focus on a novel theoretical model on factors contributing to low and non-use of UGBS. This model identifies four influential domains: individual factors, social and community networks, physical environment characteristics, and wider political and societal factors. These factors are interconnected and rarely operate in isolation, often combining to either create opportunities or present barriers to accessing and enjoying UGBS. The model is designed to have a range of applications for both academic and non-academic audiences. In academic contexts, it can inform the development of research designs, guide interventions to reduce barriers, and shape qualitative research methods. In non-academic settings, it can support policy development, inform urban planners about inclusive design strategies, and aid in developing training programmes focusing on addressing these barriers.

Pathways to impact: Several activities are underway to integrate an equality focus across GroundsWell. These highlight barriers experienced by low and non-users of UGBS and opportunities that might arise. Activities include developing a resource library, delivering health inequalities capacity-building sessions for staff and establishing an "equality champions" group to promote the integration of equality-focused themes in research and engagement. To raise awareness and stimulate discussion within GroundsWell and across policy and planning sectors, we are producing a video highlighting the barriers to UGBS use, which will be shared through our communication channels and with key organisations working in this field.

This output, alongside the theoretical model, aim to influence policy and practice by promoting inclusive development, design, and maintenance of UGBS to reduce barriers for low and non-users, and ultimately reduce health inequalities.

We are monitoring Groundswell's impact on addressing inequalities and will provide a detailed report at the end of the project. Early progress is evident with all seven work packages incorporating an inequality focus in their research and engagement. Moving forward, we aim to build on this momentum, collaborating across work packages to influence policy, planning, and research, ensuring equitable access to UGBS for all groups.

6. UGBS and national policymaking

The Challenge: In the last decade, UGBS has gained increasing attention among policymakers in the UK and devolved nations. Despite the growing research interest in UGBS governance, little is understood about UGBS as a public policy issue, particularly at the national scale. And while there are both statutory requirements and ambitions for governments, local authorities and NGOs to co-produce UGBS with communities, there is a recognition that current approaches and tools are frequently inadequate. An improved understanding of the UGBS-related policy process and implementation across the UK (both in terms of national and devolved government) is crucial for promoting evidence-based UGBS policies that can drive lasting health, social, and environmental benefits.

Policy landscape: Our research is developing novel perspectives on the UK (and devolved) UGBS policy landscapes, and how those policies are translated in practical terms. UGBS presents both benefits and challenges as a policy issue; on one hand, ambiguity around the potential benefits of UGBS and the responsible departments often leads to confusion and deprioritisation. On the other hand, the cross-departmental nature of UGBS issues can create increased funding opportunities and valuable collaborative projects. Meanwhile, engagement with communities is often piecemeal and tokenistic. Our emerging data suggests that several current issues in political infrastructure are negatively impacting UGBS policymaking. Despite growing public interest in UGBS, which traditionally drives increased political attention, post-Brexit instability in government and the civil service has resulted in limited progress within the UK Government. Non-sitting government in Northern Ireland has also limited progress. Support for UGBS as a public health asset is generally high within policy communities, and some policy frameworks effectively support UGBS, particularly in Wales and Scotland, both of which have national wellbeing frameworks/legislation¹. However, resource constraints hinder cross-organisational and cross-department collaboration on UGBS issues, which is key to progress. Concurrently, our review of existing literature is elucidating mechanisms and producing new knowledge to inform better ways of working with communities. In addition to policy, this work considers service delivery: how policies are enacted by organisations in co-production with communities, and how better ways of working can reduce health inequalities.

Underpinning research: Policymaking is often complex, non-linear, and highly dependent on the values and preferences of individuals². Consequently, we utilised a qualitative and realist-inspired methodology to capture a variety of rich perspectives from individuals involved in national UGBS decision-making in the UK and devolved nations. In total, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 26 national decision-makers from Westminster, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and spread across various government departments, government bodies, and other nationally important stakeholders. Our analysis is grounded in Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework³, which suggests that three streams (problem, policy, and politics) are critical to the policymaking process. Our realist review of evidence is exploring the extent to which different approaches to community-involved UGBS decision-making are effective and in which contexts⁴, including the socio-cultural and political or governance structures within which decision-making takes place.

Pathways to impact: Each of our interviewees will receive a policy brief summarising our findings, along with actionable recommendations. Our findings have identified a variety of opportunities to improve UGBS policymaking, and the next phase of our research will involve country-specific workshops aimed at gathering perspectives on how best to tackle the identified issues, ensuring our suggestions are co-produced with decision-makers. Our policy briefings will also be made publicly available and promoted via GroundsWell's social media channels, and this phase of research will be published in two academic papers currently under preparation.

7. Modelling stakeholder coordination for group decision-making

The Challenge: Group decision-making on developing and managing UGBS, such as parks and rivers, requires balancing environmental, social, and economic considerations. This often leads to complex, and sometimes contentious, discussions. A diverse range of stakeholders—including community members, environmentalists, urban planners, scientists, and policymakers—bring varying priorities and perspectives, from ecological preservation and public access to economic development and infrastructure needs. While this diversity of perspectives can enhance the planning process by ensuring that multiple aspects of sustainability and community welfare are considered, it also poses challenges in reaching a consensus, as stakeholders may have conflicting visions. Effective collaboration, transparent communication, and a shared commitment to long-term benefits can enhance the planning process. However, group dynamics—such as power imbalances, social pressure, and groupthink—can create obstacles, resulting in suboptimal decisions or unsatisfactory compromises. These complexities may lead to rushed decisions or prolonged indecision, ultimately affecting the quality of the outcome.

Addressing these challenges requires not only attention to stakeholder conflicts but also the use of structured decision-making approaches that ensure all perspectives are fairly represented and integrated.

Underpinning approach and research: We adapted a group decision-making framework into a computer simulation model^{1,2} and applied it to a large number of group dynamics configurations in order to understand in which conditions stakeholder coordination is more likely (or not) to happen, and why. Our model aims to help us understand and anticipate real-world situations in which a group is more likely to get to satisfactory decision. To do so, we created an agent-based model whose agents represent stakeholders deciding whether or not to implement an intervention (i.e., a proposed idea that can be implemented in an area). Each stakeholder evaluates the intervention based on the benefits they can gain from it. Each stakeholder holds a certain influence and position in the network and over time, they attempt to influence the ones they are connected to in order to change their assessments of the intervention. We conducted a large number of experiments in which a series of parameters related to the stakeholders and the network they form were manipulated to understand what are the conditions and situations where coordination is more likely or not to be achieved and the possible mechanisms behind it. Next steps include validating our model using a real-world cases of successful and failed proposals of UGBS interventions.

Pathways to impact: In 2023, we showcased our model at the GroundsWell Annual Retreat, where stakeholders, scientists, and community members had the opportunity to interact with an interactive version of the model. They were able to modify network configurations and assess their impact on the stakeholder coordination. We gathered feedback to enhance the final version of the model. Moving forward, our next goal is to develop a real-world network model, enabling us to conduct case studies with the on group decision-making related to UGBS. We are discussing the best ways communicate our findings to those involved in stakeholder group decision-making, in particular for UGBS interventions.

8. UGBS and community ownership

The Challenge: Community engagement in UGBS is encouraged in the design of programmes, implementing volunteer schemes and jointly managing assets. Eastside Partnership is a case in point with a social enterprise managing the Connswater Community Greenway successfully for more than a decade. However, social enterprises often see limited financial and health value created by such spaces, opportunities to maximise community impacts are constrained and in effect, local people often subsidise or de-risk assets for local authorities and public agencies. This research aims to strengthen Eastside Partnership's ability to own and control UGBS and build a more supporting enabling environment for the community management of such assets.

Policy Landscape: There is a significant policy impact potential around support for social enterprises, Community Asset Transfer and General Disposal Consent. Northern Ireland lacks the overarching policies, legislative provisions and resource investment available in Britain and especially Scotland. The programme of in-depth interviews will evaluate the legislative and policy arena focusing on the Scottish context. Tracing the process of asset transfer in both cases working with Eastside Greenways, Development Trusts Northern Ireland (DTNI) and consultants will build data on the interface between the social enterprise and policymakers in each case. The implications for developing a progressive policy environment will be established and a Briefing Paper format will articulate the lessons for practice, skills development and financing social enterprises in UGBS.

Underpinning research: The research on community ownership involves an evaluation of two urban spaces part of the Connswater Community Greenway. This has involved quantitative surveys of users; participant observation of negotiations to secure ownership and preferential lease terms along with the NGO DTNI; in-depth interviews with policymakers, practitioners and the social enterprise sector; small area census data; and cost-benefit analysis on the community and financial value attached to both spaces. The research has shaped a working paper on UGBS and Community Tourism, using the Groundswell survey data. This shows the diverse uses of the research to help Eastside Partnership develop new economic opportunities.

Pathways to impact: We aim to trace multi-level effects by supporting the transfer of the two assets at a local level; use the research and analysis to help support DTNI to lobby more effectively for support for social enterprises; and at a regional level, to build the policy and legislative environment, investment finance and skills on community asset transfer in NI.

Social enterprise and asset control. Consultants are developing a Business Case to Belfast City Council for the development of Orangefield Pavilion as part of an Innovation funded project. We have provided substantial inserts from the user survey and on the catchment Census analysis. We have helped shape the options and preferred solution.

Impact on intermediaries. We have established a formal partnership with intermediaries including DTNI to strengthen knowledge translation and policy impact. Murtagh has led the preparation of five Technical Advisory Papers on community wealth-building to influence the policy agenda (<https://www.dtni.org.uk/community-wealth-building/>). We are planning a 6th bespoke paper on UGBS.

Regulatory reform. Murtagh was appointed as Ministerial Advisor on a new Community Wealth Building framework for NI. Key in this, is his recent work with the Department on a project on Area-based Regeneration in which the Groundswell research can feed directly into the new policy framework around asset-based regeneration; the social enterprise sector in particular; and on the development of a regional approach to community asset transfer.

Skills, knowledge and learning. ASSETS is a 5-part technical manual (with a short course) developed using research from Groundswell (and other funding) to build the skills, knowledge and learning of social enterprises.

9. Inequality in green space distribution and its association with preventable deaths across urban neighbourhoods in the UK

The Challenge: Green spaces in our cities include parks, tree-lined streets, school and university campuses, botanical gardens, squares with flower beds and even cemeteries. In addition to being nice to look they are a valuable resource. They offer opportunities for exercise and for social interaction; they can reduce air pollution and urban warming; they can act as barriers to traffic noise and - in the context of Belfast or other divided societies - even serve as buffers between communities with a history of violence. It should be unsurprising that such green spaces have been shown to be associated with improvements in physical and mental health among those who use them and those who live in proximity to them. Indeed, a growing body of literature points to the benefits associated with urban green space in terms of reductions in morbidity and mortality enjoyed by those living near them.

Policy Landscape: Allocating space to green areas, however, comes at a cost. In urban areas that cost is principally in the form of buildings including residential housing, and transport, for which there are pressing demands. Policy makers and urban planners must balance the benefits with the costs when deciding how to allocate limited space across alternative competing uses. To do this, it is important that they understand the benefits and costs associated with urban green space and how these are distributed across different groups in society.

Underpinning research: We examined the relationship between preventable deaths and the availability of urban green space across the UK.¹ While the relationship between health and urban green space has long been known, this was the first study to examine the relationships with preventable deaths across the UK.

The study used government data on the percentage of space in urban areas that was covered in vegetation to measure green space. It compared areas with similar populations across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in terms of the distribution of green space among residents divided by affluence into five groups. In each country with the exception of Wales, those who were better off had a greater percentage of space that was designated as green in the area they lived.

The study examined the relationship between green space and preventable deaths - deaths that can be mainly avoided through effective public health and primary prevention interventions. It found that each 1% increase in urban green space in the most deprived areas was associated with a 37% lower annual preventable death count in England, accumulated 5-year preventable death count in Northern Ireland and a 41% accumulated 5-year preventable death count in Scotland.

Pathways to impact: The study demonstrates for the first time that urban green space is associated with lower levels of preventable deaths in the UK. It demonstrates that such green space is particularly important to the health of those communities who have the least amounts of it – those who live in socioeconomically deprived areas. These findings make an important contribution to the literature. They demonstrate for the first time the nature of these benefits in the UK and how they are distributed. They serve as a prompt for further research and for efforts to preserve and enhance the provisions of green space in particular for those living in socio-economically deprived communities.

10. Community-led innovation

The Challenge: UGBS tailored to community members are best led by communities. We provided resources to support innovative ideas from marginalised communities, generating practice-based evidence in collaboration with embedded researchers.

Underpinning approaches: Our Innovation Fund has funded a range of projects designed and led by communities working to improve the health and social benefits from UGBS. The projects link to one or more of the work packages and all have a researcher to support them to facilitate knowledge exchange between the consortium and Innovation Fund holders.

Funding the issues that matter to communities: Our Innovation Fund allows community groups to lead on projects that are priorities within their own geographical and organisational context. Some of the issues projects are addressing include: giving children and young people more of a voice in local decision-making on green spaces, making blue space activities such as paddle-boarding and kayaking more accessible to those with disabilities, and alleviating food poverty by engaging community members in gardening activities to learn about sustainable food practices.

Reaching underserved communities: A key focus of all Innovation Fund projects is including populations who are at most risk from NCDs or who might benefit most from better quality UGBS. For example, the Mae Murray Foundation's project works with people with disabilities to make their beach activity programme inclusive, and the Canal and River Trust's Impact Sefton project is working with a pupil referral unit to enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of young people struggling to meet the demands of mainstream education.

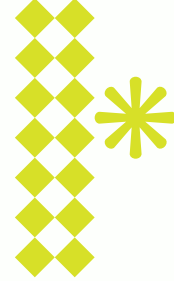
Bringing communities working in UGBS together: Although Innovation Fund projects focus on different topics, conversations with communities highlighted that networking and learning from other projects working in UGBS is highly beneficial. We offer opportunities for all funded projects to come together online at quarterly meetings to share updates and work through challenges. All projects are also invited to our in-person annual retreat where photographs and stories from each project will be shared in an artwork exhibition created by a local gallery. This exhibition will also be transported and set up in each hub city following the retreat for wider audiences to learn about each funded project.

Building research capacity within community organisations: We are testing how a community-embedded researcher approach could be implemented to support projects, providing a mutually-beneficial link between universities and community organisations. GroundsWell researchers offer pragmatic training on evaluation methods such as focus groups, behavioural observation, and survey administration. Projects have opportunities to take part in training such as the Six Steps in Quality Intervention Development (6SQuID) and Community Journalism.

A fund designed by and for communities: Our Community Steering Group input into the development of the fund, including defining its focus and priorities. The group also score all applications and make decisions on where funding should be allocated. Feedback from the projects funded is gathered throughout the lifecycle of the projects and all projects will be invited to feed into the process evaluation of the fund in Year 4/5.

Pathways to impact: Updates on all Innovation Fund projects are shared through our quarterly newsletter (e.g., [GroundsWell Innovation Fund Launch \(mailchi.mp\)](#)) to researchers, communities and policy-makers on our mailing list. Resources and outputs created by projects will be shared widely through our website and social media channels where appropriate. Photographs, artworks and written stories from each project will be displayed in an exhibition at the annual retreat and at community locations in each hub city. Overall learnings from the Innovation Fund will be collected and presented in a published paper.

WP Updates



WP1 & 2

WP1 is advancing multiple research initiatives, including a data extraction process for evidence synthesis, with early-career researchers assisting. A resubmitted paper is under review by "Health Research Policy and Systems," and a policy modelling paper is progressing. Jeremy presented GroundsWell's governance model at two major conferences and is keen on integrating outputs from other work packages into a research framework. Stakeholder diary entries collected by Liverpool could lead to an ethnographic study on Dock Branch Park.

Year highlights: Synthesising and summarising evidence from more than 350 existing systematic reviews of studies of the impacts of UGBS; further developed the integrated systems model to include Bayesian-based dependency modelling; begun to develop integrated systems models for case studies in Liverpool and Edinburgh; an agent-based model exploring conditions that foster UGBS stakeholder co-ordination for group-decision making has been developed; a further model to estimate health, economic and societal impacts of possible interventions in the Connswater Community Greenway is in development.

WP3

WP3 has begun data collection in three parks that will soon be renovated within the Linking Leith's Parks project. The second round of Innovation Funding closed on October 1st. The 12 applications received from Community groups in Edinburgh and Liverpool are currently being reviewed. Budget reviews at the hub level are ongoing to reallocate remaining funds for upcoming projects, ensuring effective resource distribution across initiatives. We are also exploring the opportunities to collaborate with the other work packages

WP4

WP4 is making progress on health indicators initially for Cheshire and Merseyside, later to be extended to Edinburgh and Belfast, focusing on conditions like asthma, diabetes, and mental health. The indicators support a series of papers due by year-end. A residential data linkage paper has been published in a special issue of Learning Health Systems. We are investigating the possibility of investments in training or survey work in WP3 and the team are exploring the development of a toolkit for making data research accessible to children.

WP5

2 papers published on UGBS, economic evaluations and inequalities; a paper has been accepted on inequality in green space distribution and its association with preventable deaths across urban neighbourhoods in the UK; survey on a case study on community asset transfer in Belfast has been analysed; a further survey of users of a another community asset transfer case study has been completed with 330 validated responses; data collection for a Discrete Choice Experiment survey in Belfast has started.

Collaborative data analysis efforts are being discussed across Edinburgh, Liverpool, and WP5.

WP6

Work stream one on national policy (interviews with national policy makers) is advancing smoothly, with a planned submission by Christmas. Follow-up activities are in the works, including focus groups with key national policymakers. Work stream three (realist review) has finished its initial paper reviews, with the next phase focused on filtering relevant papers and extracting data. PhD students are making good progress, now beginning work on ethical approvals and data collection. WP6 will also be participating in the Healthy Cities Design Conference in October, where they will primarily discuss work stream one in collaboration with TRUUD.

WP7

A branding guide has been developed to ensure consistent representation in publications, and website updates, including impact case studies and Innovation Fund project details, will be published soon. A Community Journalist training course is planned for early next year, aimed at early-career researchers and community partners, leading to a new community magazine and mini zine. The "Community Reads" workshop in Edinburgh highlighted making academic outputs more accessible. 2400 engagement events held; so far!

WP HI

Cross Cutting Theme on Health Inequalities WP has undertaken a mapping exercise to understand how each WP is addressing health inequalities in their work. From this, we have created an infographic and blog, which has been shared with the Equality Champions Group for feedback. We are also collaborating with a filming company to produce a video exploring the barriers people face in accessing UGBS. In collaboration with WP3, we have successfully identified volunteers for the video. Additionally, we are nearing completion of the full first draft of our Theoretical Model paper. Lastly, we submitted our impact case study to the GroundsWell Leads for inclusion in the annual report to highlight our contributions.

ECR Presentations



Dickinson-Phelan, C.

Dataman - Protecting Our City With Data Driven Insights - **Third place winner**

Khalaf, R

My Research and Me - **First place winner**

Viadmour, K

Community Vulnerability and Resilience to Climate Change in East Belfast

Finucane, C

Summer in East Belfast

Logan, F

Inclusive Cities: Exploring Safe and Inclusive Design of Urban Green and Blue Spaces

Mullineaux, S

An Ode to the Connswater Community Greenway

Tate, C

Economic evaluation of urban green and blue spaces

Cleland, C & Jones, S

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Akaraci, S

Evaluating the impact of Connswater Greenway on Birth Outcomes

Küçükali, H

Routinely collected data helps evaluating population health interventions

McAnoy, B

Social change for health and prosperity through control of zoonotic disease in cities

Glover, S., Walsh, S. & Illyuk, J. - Second Place Winner

Environmental Epigenetics and Healthy Minds

Thompson, H

Community Ownership

Wendelboe-Nelson, C

Community Researchers and Co-production - New Pathways to Impact Generation

Crook, R & Burnett H

Our Beautiful Grotspots

O’Kane, N

Inclusive Beach Programme Evaluation

Mason, S

Dear Green Place Photo Collage

Useful Information

The venue – Royal College of Physicians, The Spine

An outstanding example of workplace and education design, designed to WELL Platinum Standard and is considered one of the world's healthiest buildings. The northern home for the Royal College of Physicians encompasses its values throughout. Designed by AHR, The Spine houses a mix of activity-focused areas set across a flexible layout. With some of the best and most advanced medical simulation facilities in the world, there are also spaces designed to host the PACES examinations and medical assessments.

ADDRESS 2 Paddington Village,
Liverpool L7 3FA



Top floor



Recommended hotel – Novotel Liverpool Paddington Village

Located in a prime position next door to The Spine and just a stone's throw from the many university campuses. As the highest hotel in theCity, they offer incredible views over Liverpool and the River Mersey. Please note that accommodation is subject to availability, so please book by calling the reservations team on the number below during the working hours Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, or email below and quote GroundsWell to receive the discounted conference room rate.

PHONE 0151 245 6695 EMAIL hb737-re@accor.com

ADDRESS 3 Paddington Village, Liverpool L7 3FA



Restaurants

The following meals will be provided as part of the retreat programme for all those who registered using the online registration form:

Tuesday 19th November:

- Hot buffet lunch
- GroundsWell Early Career Researchers are invited to a social get together at Leaf, Bold Street at 7pm on Tuesday 19th November.

Wednesday 20th November:

- Light breakfast (e.g., pastries, tea/coffee)
- Hot buffet lunch
- Dinner at One Fine Day

Thursday 21st November:

- Light breakfast (e.g., pastries, tea/coffee)
- Sandwich lunch

Restaurant recommendations for others who are staying in Liverpool on Tuesday 19th:

Bold Street is about a 20 minute walk from The Spine and offers an eclectic row of different cuisines from around the world; walk-ins are available but best to book ahead:

Leaf (English tea shop that serves a variety of small plates and larger meals); Mowgli or Bundobust (Indian street food); Maray (small plates inspired by the flavours of the Middle East); Greek Taverna (traditional Greek food); Albert's Schloss (Alpine restaurant and beer hall); the Italian Club (Italian pasta and fish restaurants)... and lots more!

If you want to book ahead for something a bit fancier in the city, there's also Wreckfish Bistro, Maray Dockside, Manifest, Bacaro, the Arts School and Panoramic 34.



Liverpool

Discover a variety of things to do in Liverpool, including a lively waterfront, grand architecture, and a vibrant arts and culture scene. Liverpool is a compact, walkable and liveable city that encourages outdoors exploration. The city has more galleries and museums than any other city outside London, and a passion for sports including two of the world's historic football clubs, Liverpool FC and Everton FC.

During your visit, take time to visit the legendary Cavern Club, where live music is played every day, or book an electrifying performance of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the UK's oldest continuing professional symphony orchestra. If you're a fan of the Fab Four, then don't miss a visit to the award-winning 'The Beatles Story', the world's largest permanent exhibition purely devoted to telling the story of their lives.

Liverpool's wider art scene is vibrant, inspiring and democratic. Liverpool is the host city of the UK's Biennial of Contemporary Art: a celebration of all that art can do to transform places and people. Home to the National Collection of art in the North, Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery contains one of Europe's finest collections of paintings, drawings, sculpture and decorative art, from Pre-Raphaelite masterpieces to David Hockney's shimmering sixties' canvasses. Elsewhere, the Tate's northern base offers an always-vital assessment of contemporary art, complemented by the city's artist-led galleries.

Visit Liverpool at night and you'll be able to enjoy a whole new selection of exciting things to do, including top restaurants and bars in the city's Baltic Triangle, Independent venues in Bold Street or lively atmosphere in Matthew Street.

We'd love you to use Our Outdoors on the site visits. Here's how:



Find an
outdoor green
or bluespace



1

2

3

4

Download the
Our Outdoors
App here.



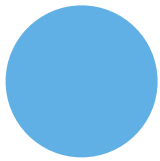
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on Our
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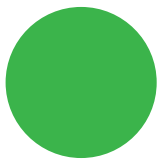
Take 2 minutes
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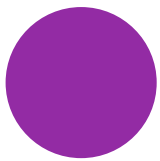
Badge Colour Key



GroundsWell Team Member



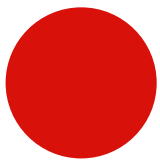
GroundsWell Liverpool Partner



GroundsWell Edinburgh Partner



GroundsWell Belfast Partner



Innovation Fund Partner



Demonstrator Project