

Recreational use of Urban Forestry program in East London, a social impact assessment

A Collaborative Project between Centre for Human Geography- Brunel University, Groundwork- London and Forestry Commission- London.

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Forestry Commission



Introduction

- LWGS to support a range of trees and woodland related activities involving community groups, local school and local authorities (Forestry Commission).
- The main aim is to examine various social benefits which occurred as a result of trees and woodland related activities



Objectives

- o To assess the effectiveness of LWGS in achieving various objectives/outcomes of woodland and tree related projects
- o To examine social impact of tree and woodland related projects
- o To identify any exceptional experiences that should be highlighted e.g. case-studies, stories, best practice
- o To include qualitative evidence on the project's effectiveness based on impressions and interviews with target groups



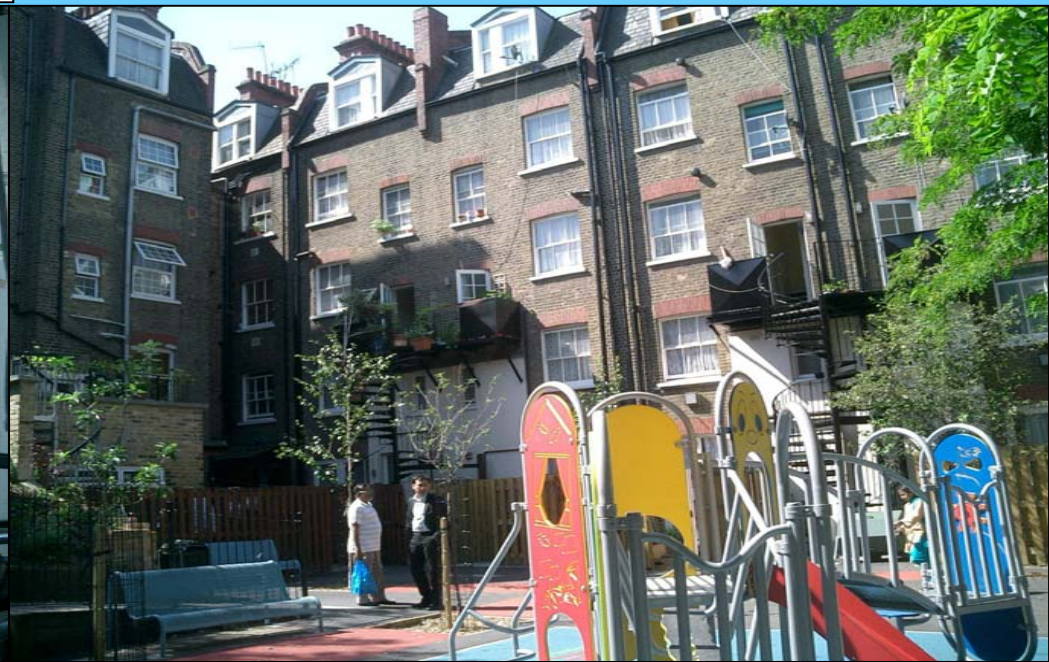
Methodology

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Measures / Indicators	Method of Assessment
<p>1. Project achievements: The effectiveness of the LWGS in achieving various objectives / outcomes of woodland and tree related projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ Increased woodland / tree related activities / events to improve community health and well being; ⑩ Improved facilities / access to the woodland for recreational purposes ⑩ Sustainability impact of the project 	<p>(Combination of Qualitative & Quantitative Research Methods)</p> <p>Review LWGS- grant application and monitoring forms,</p>
<p>2. Community engagement: The level of engagement of community target groups in the project delivery process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ The process of community engagement ⑩ The involvement of children, people with special needs, people from disadvantaged groups ⑩ The methods used for community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ Review of Groundwork / Forestry Commission websites, ⑩ Semi-structured interviews (23 respondents), ⑩ In-depth interviews (5 case studies to highlight good practice),
<p>3. Social benefits of the LWGS: The social benefits of trees and woodland (educational, health, community and recreational benefits to ensure urban quality of life)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ The perception of community groups and local people towards the benefits of woodland ⑩ Information on the people using the woodlands (visitor's profile, current use, frequency, purpose of visit, public ratings on woodland activities and benefits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ Steering group meetings, ⑩ Field observation, <p>Onsite visitor use surveys in two woodlands (165 users)</p>

Research area



- 1. 27 community groups & organizations**
- 2. Five case studies (Ben Jonson School, Spelman Street, Lesnes Abbey Woods, Claybury Woods and Lea Valley Woodlands)**
- 3. Claybury Woods (LB of Redbridge) and Lesnes Abbey Woods (LB of Bexley)**



General findings



- **Theme 1:**
- **The effectiveness of LWGS in achieving various objectives**



General findings



Theme 2: Community engagement/sustainability:
Consultation/events/fun days, guided walks, posters, notice board, reports, newsletter, training and emp, website, email, phone, direct contact

Theme 3: Qualitative evident from five case studies:
positive impact reflected on the statement gathered during interviews

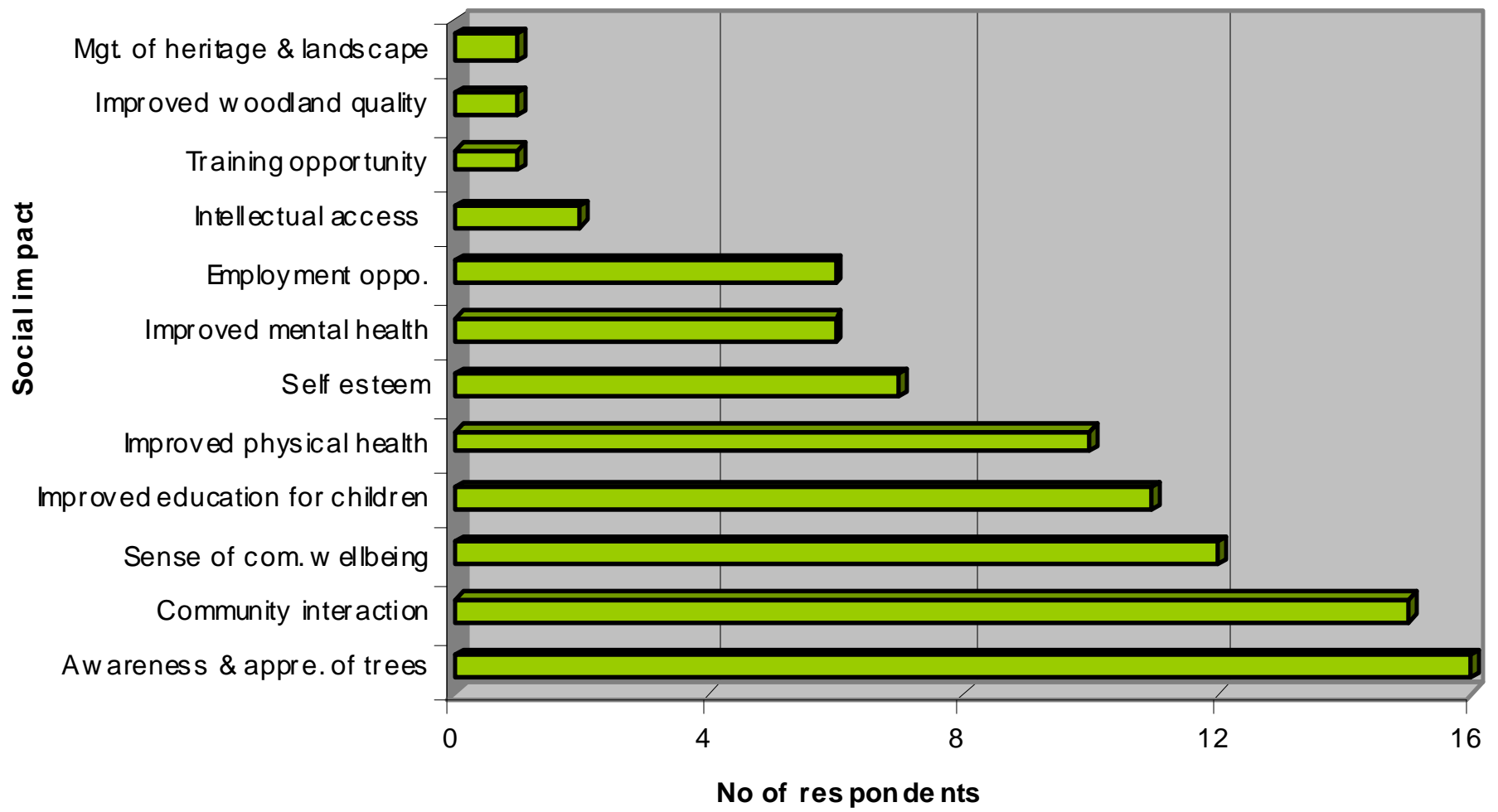
The evidence

“The place used to be a hiding place for people using drugs. Since we installed a gate and secure fencing, and due to the continuous presence of children and parents in the park, the anti social behaviour has completely stopped now. It is one of the biggest positive impacts of this project.” (The representative of Spitalfields Housing Association)

“People do really enjoy coming here. We like to see more of our trees going out into the parks so that these trees can have positive impact on our local environment in future”.

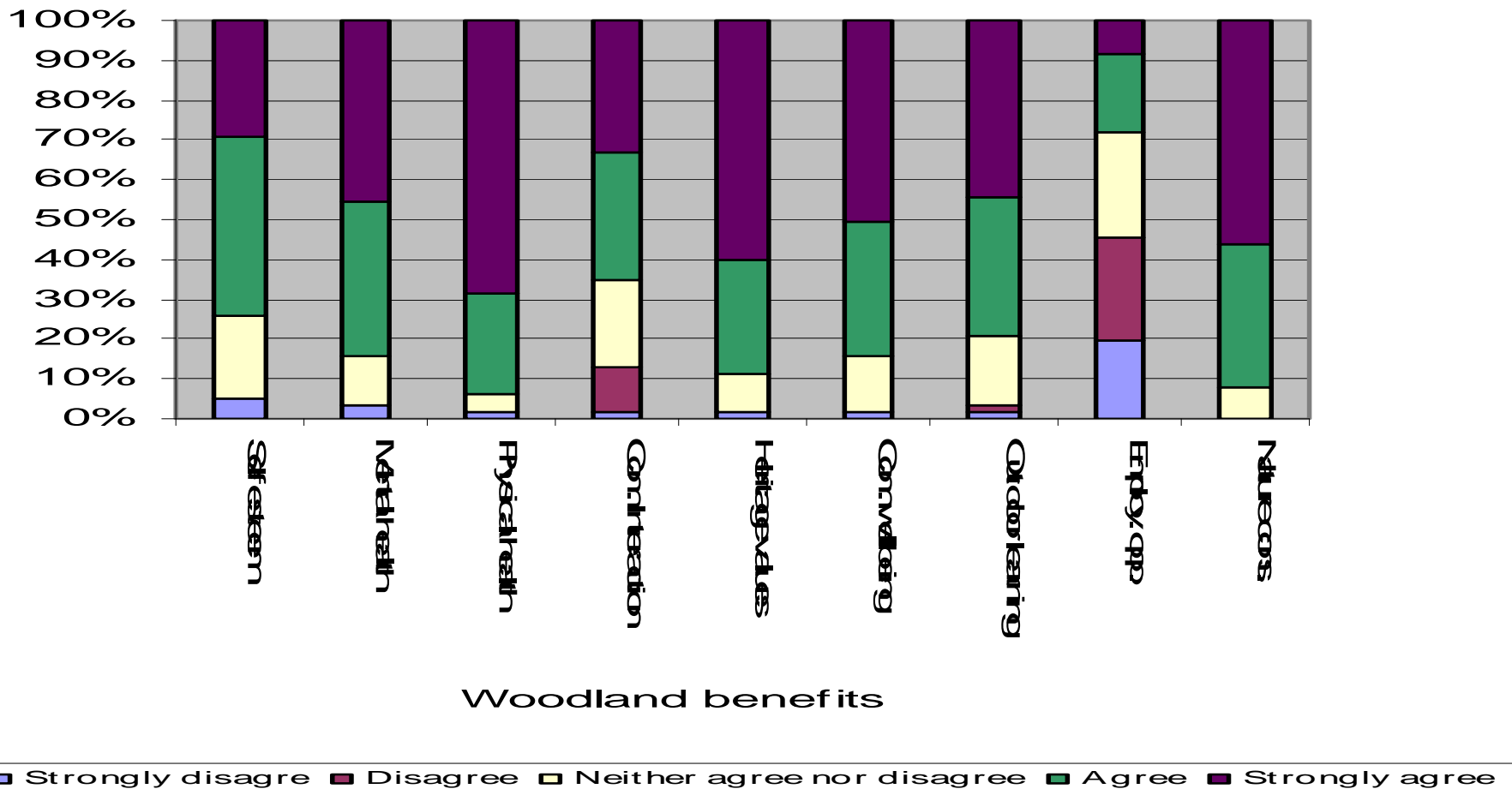
(A member of HMUS)

Social impacts of woodland mentioned by groups (fig 1.)



Social impact of woodland as mentioned by visitors: Lesnes Abbey woods (fig 2.)

“The creation of new path for wheelchair users has added ‘elements of intellectual access’ to the woodland. Now, we can see that more and more people are using the woodland” (Council Representative)



People's feeling after visiting woodlands

fig 3. Visitors in Claybury woods

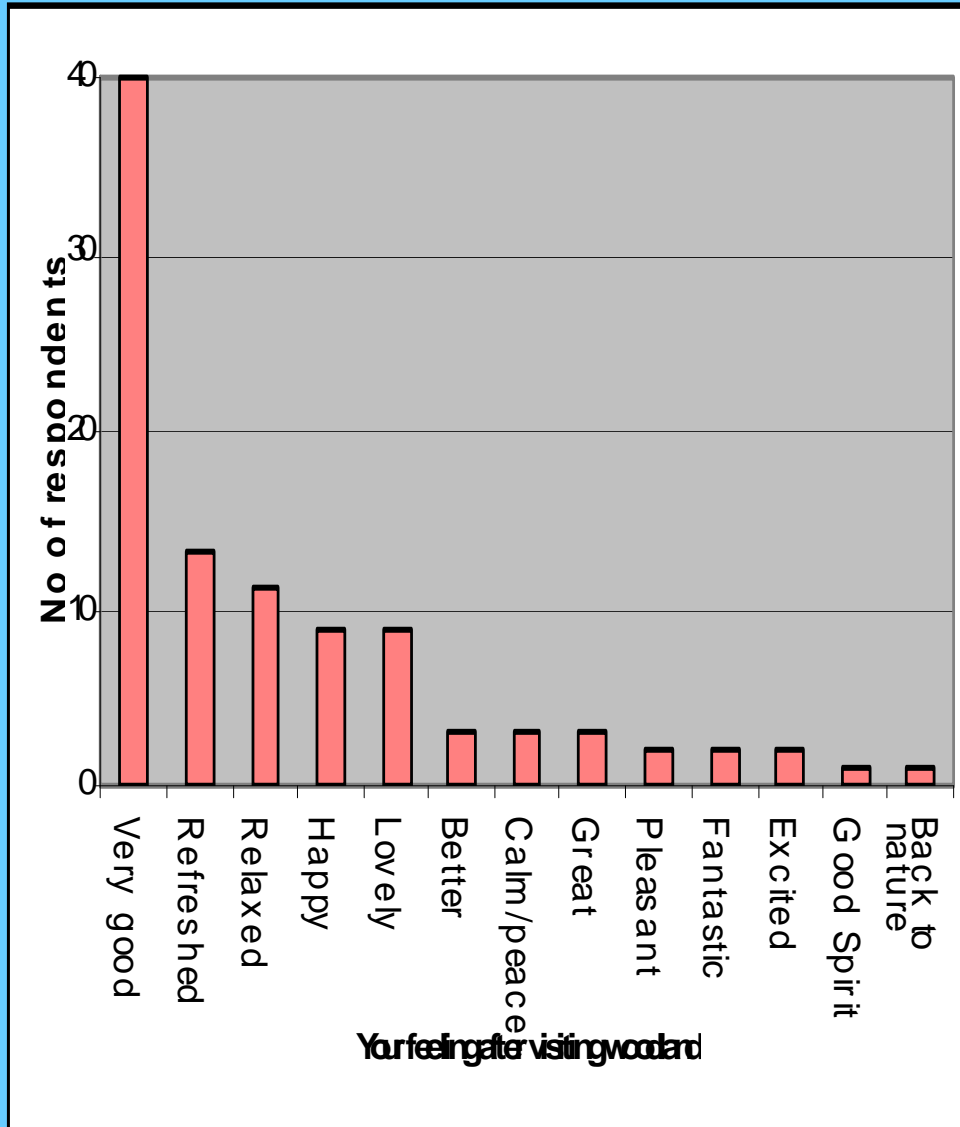
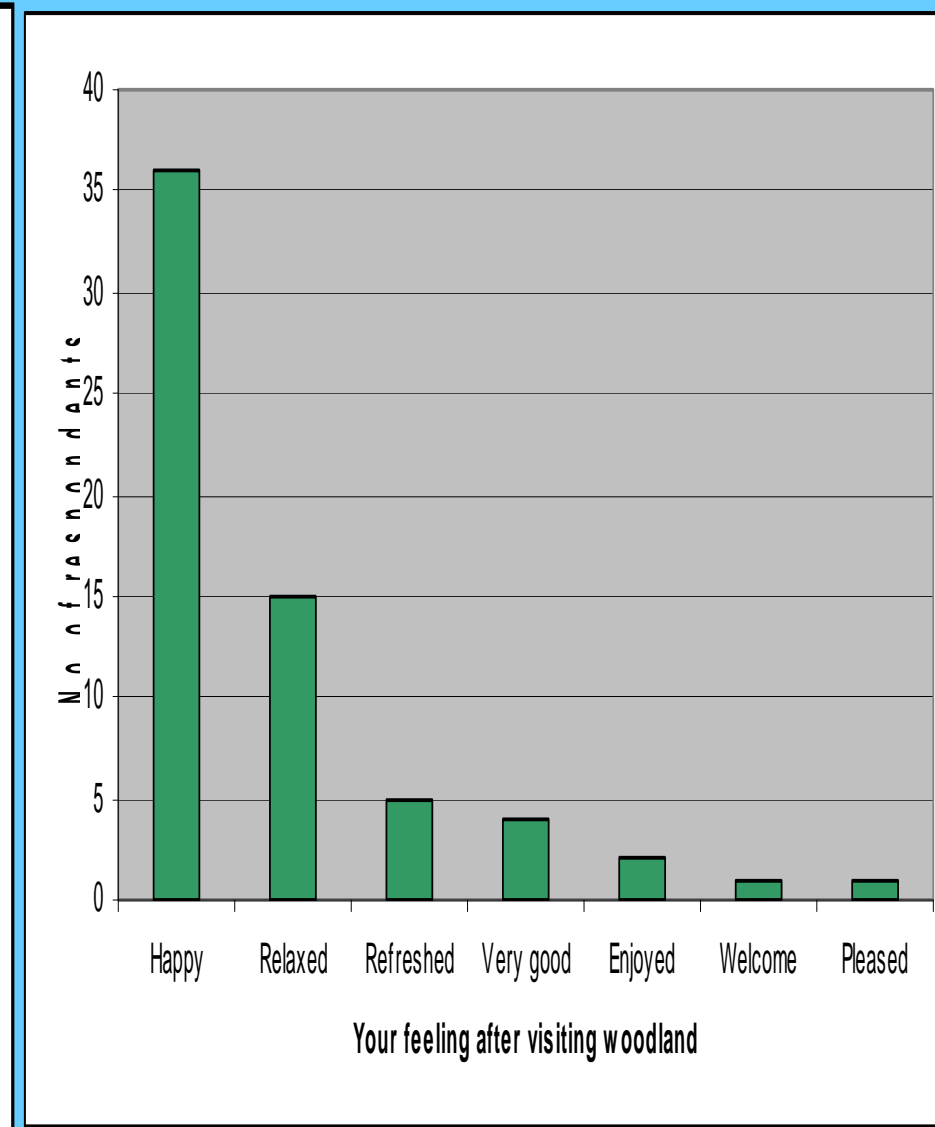


fig 4. Visitors in Lesnes Abbey



Conclusion



- The impacts of LWGS on various social benefits have been seen as positive.
- The analysis of two on-site visitors' surveys conducted separately in *Claybury woods* and *Lesnes Abbey woods* have brought up many issues with regards to frequency and type of use, visitors social profile, the purpose of visiting woodlands and public rating on different kinds of social benefits.
- The long term support (funding, care and commitment) and evaluation is required.

**"Conservation without funding is
only conversation"**

Swaminathan, Former Vice President, IUCN

Thank you!

References

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