We'll get started in a minute...

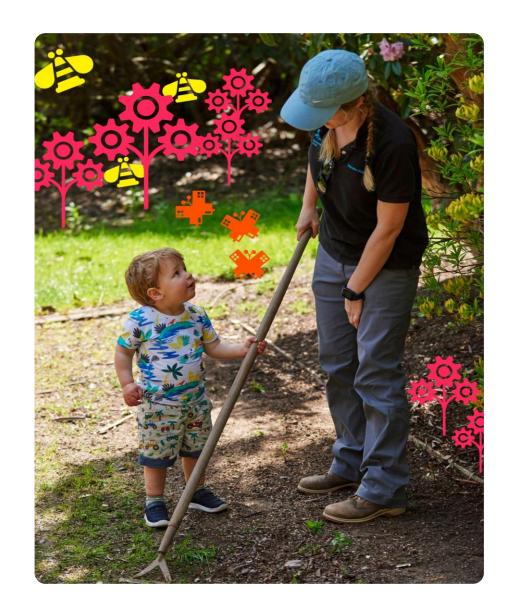




Nature Towns and Cities: **Growing community power through green space**

The aim today is to:

- Demonstrate what community-led greening can achieve
- Show how moving from delivery for communities to delivery with them creates better, more sustainable places
- Share real examples of collaboration between residents, councils, and partners



- 1. Welcome (5 mins)
- 2. What does it mean to be community-led Jon Alexander (15 mins)
- 3. Case Studies (30 mins)
 - 1. Tom Kirby, Granton Community Gardeners
 - 2. Carrie Deacon, Ealing Council
 - **3. Jon Hutchinson,** Groundwork
- 4. Panel discussion What does genuine collaboration look like? (30 mins)



Housekeeping

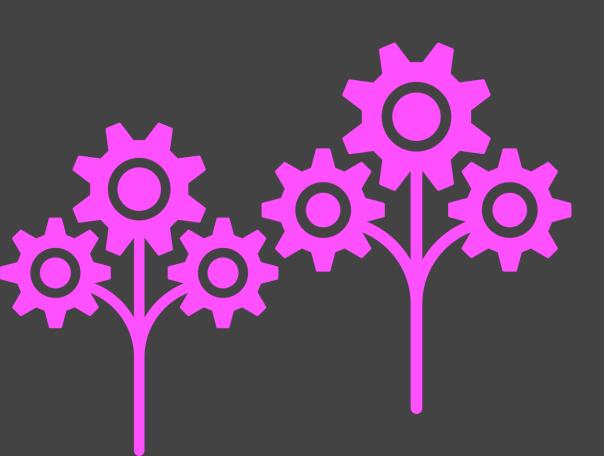
 Please use the Q&A tab to ask questions or start a discussion topic

If you need any support throughout the session please email info@naturetownsandcities.
 org.uk





Welcome



Jon Alexander – New Citizen Project

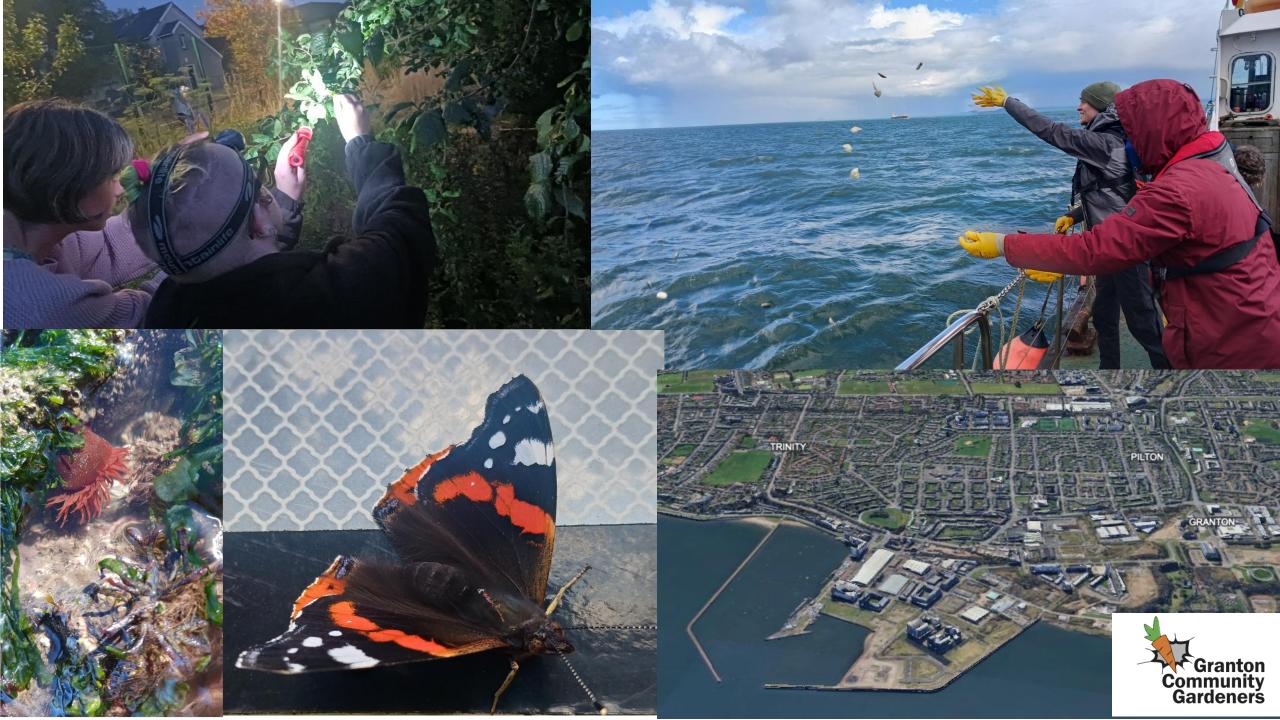












Growing Community Power through Green Space – a Local Authority Perspective

Carrie Deacon

1st December 2025



About Ealing



The eighth most diverse borough in England & Wales



375,000 people - the third largest borough in London



179 languages



17,730 businesses



Largest Sikh community in London



52.4% of residents were born outside of the U.K.



93% micro-entrepreneurial businesses



7.5% increase in population since 2011



31% of residents live in poverty



Highest rate of alcohol related hospital admissions in London



Residents in Northfields live around six years longer than residents in Norwood Green

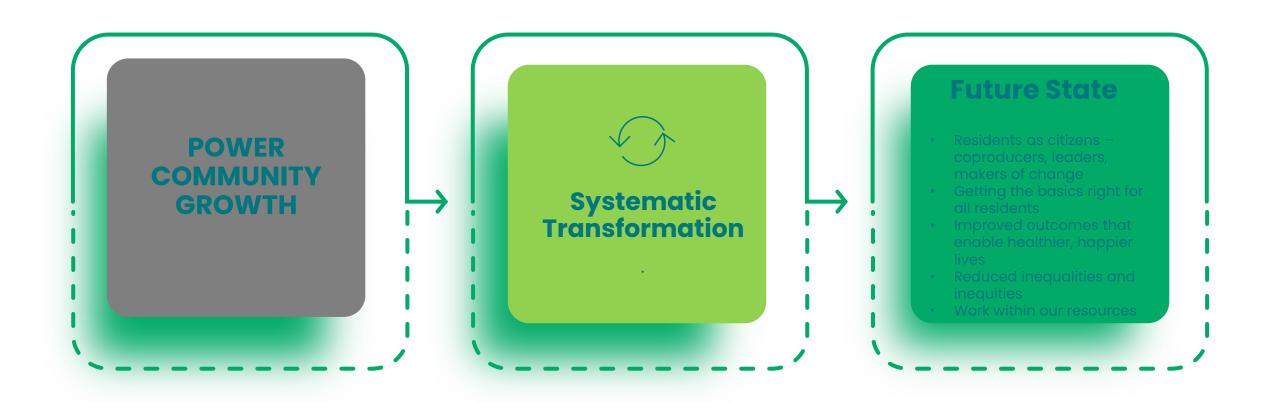


House prices are 15 times median earnings

Our vision is to massively increase social connection in the borough, giving everyone as much choice and power in their lives as possible – so that people can live happier and healthier lives



Fundamental shift in mindsets, behaviours and ways of working



Social connections

Person and community centred

ndividual agency

Community Power

Early Help and prevention

Asset/ Strength based

Towns and neighbourhoods

Inequalities and inequities Data, digital and ICT

Partnerships and collective impact

Systematic in how we need to change













Social connections

Person and community centred

Individua agency

Power

Early Help and prevention

Asset/ Strength based

Towns and neighbourhoods

Inequalities and inequities

Data, digital and ICT

Partnerships and collective impact

Donating money

Individual giving of money to organisations, projects, or causes that matter to individuals, typically outisde the realm of the state and sometimes in opposition to it.

Giving things

Peer support

who do it.

Giving your possessions or resources to people, groups, or platforms for the re-use by and/or benefit of others. These could include acts like giving items to a local charity shop or donating blood.

Giving and sharing data

The sharing of data for medical and scientific research, policy-making, and humanitarian purposes to improve private and public life.

Sharing money and resources

Sharing your financial or non-financial resources, either peer to peer or through a community group or a platform, for the use or benefit of others in your community.

neighbour to helping a young person with their homework. This might be regular or one-off, and oftens involves degrees of reciprocity and mutual

Community action

Giving help to support a community event, campaign, or project run by neighbours or a local community group.

The mutual and reciprocal exchange of

peers in and outside of public services.

Rarely considered volunteering by those

emotional and practical support between

Acts of neighourliness

This informal type of social action can range for doing the shopping for an elderly benefit.

Caring

care for a relative or friend (other than one's own children), who may otherwise require state care.

Involvement of frontline staff

The recognition and involvement of frontline staff in management and decision-making structures and processes or generation of new ideas.

Citizens providing ideas and expertise

Methods to enable citizens to provide ideas for new, improved or future solutions, and develop proposals individually, collectively or collaboratively; ranging from traditional written consulation to more interactive and deliberative forms.

Citizens making decisions

A range of models of direct, participatory, or

deliberate decision making, where citizens have formal power within an organised context to make decisions on specific issues that matter to them.

Co-production and co-design of services

The involvement of citizens and/or frontline staff, sharing power with professionals or management, to plan and deliver services together, often in a smaller and more intensive setting and recognising the contributions both partners have to make.

Advocacy

People volunteering their time to help another person talk about their needs and wishes or representing their voice on their behalf.

Co-operative models

Services and organisations such as co-ops and community benefit societies that are owned and managed collectively by a range of local stakeholders workers, service users, and members of the local community.

Community stewardship of assets

The management, but not necessarily ownership, of community assets by community groups and organisations that have responsibility for funding, managing and maintaining their local assets.

Community ownership of assets

The legal transfer of a public or private asset (e.g. a building, park, pub) to a formalised community group or organisation to own and manage for the community benefit.

The voluntary and informal

Formal Activism volunteering

A Typology

of People

Power

Donating

and sharing

Reciprocal

and informal

help

Shaping

ideas and

descisions

Community

control

Regular volunteering in public institution

People freely giving their time, skills and expertise (in person or online) through an established framework to enhance and add capacity to public services delivered by public organisations.

Regular volunteering within civil society

People freely giving their time, skills, and expertise (in person or online), through an established framework

or formal role for a charity or community group. This mode of helping may or may not work be alongside public services.

One-off or infrequent volunteering

People freely giving their time (in person or online) through an established framework to enhance and add capacity to public services during one-off events such as an emergency.

Social movements

People giving their time to make the case for changes or improvements to public services, society in general and/or to self-advocate. This can be initiated by individuals, communities, unions or civil society organisations.

Community organising

An approach to community empowerment and development that focuses on one-to-one relationship building, community capacity and mobilising peoplepower to take action and address social inequality.

Protest

A form of individual or collective civic participation typically framed in opposition to power and that seeks to change the status quo, often in a more radical or fundamental way.

In practice



Community Champions



What is it?

Community champions are a growing network of over 100 volunteers, who either live or work in the borough, who work to ensure that health information and support reach people through familiar, credible voices.

How is it different?

This is an approach to our community engagement on public health that aims to build more trusting and lasting relationships with residents. Champions make a big difference by starting conversations with their communities about the issues that are affecting their health and wellbeing and signpost them to relevant support and services.



As a network of individuals and local organisations, champions use their passion, life experience and skills to help their communities thrive. Champions meet together regularly and also receive training from us on a wide range of areas, building on their existing strengths and interests. As trusted figures in their own networks, champions also help the council and partner organisations understand what the health and wellbeing priorities are in our 7 towns by feeding back what is working well and what improvements are needed.





"We are working together more and helping each other and bridging gaps in the community. I hope this will continue to grow"

Angela, Community Champion

Community Action research initiative



What is it?

The Community Action Research Initiative is training 27 residents from our communities in systemic participatory action research, so we can begin to build a sustainable research infrastructure to transform how we understand health inequalities. The initiative allows residents with lived experience of health inequality in their communities and work in equal partnership with us to achieve long-lasting change.



How is it different?

The programme is a new way of working for us as, alongside our residents, staff will also be upskilling in participatory action research. As a council, this new skill gives the tools to work differently and authentically with our communities to tackle health inequalities.



We are connecting residents with lived experience of health inequity together to learn a new skill and become part of a sustainable community research hub in Ealing. Having gathered stories of health impact in their communities, residents will set up action research groups based and invite relevant council officers, voluntary sector representatives, and other community members to work together in these groups.



"This project will enable communities to shape where they live"
Gurpreet Rana, Chief Executive of Ealing and Hounslow Community Voluntary Service

Your Voice, Your Town



What is it?

Your Voice Your Town is a new neighbourhood governance model, that supports community powered change. It brings together residents, community and faith organisations, businesses, and councillors to drive forward change that matters most. Residents have the power to choose their town priority and can participate in problem-solving and change-making actions, including allocation of funding.

How is it different?

Our new approach has been designed directly with communities. We connected with over 1,000 residents across 32 different locations. Residents, shaped both how it would work, and what would be the focus. It required the Council to work in entirely different ways, and shift power and control. We are learning about how this will work, and hope to build more on this fundamental shift in the years ahead.

How does it build connection and shift power?

Town Teams made up of local people are being formed to problem solve, to set direction and to make decisions, meaning that people are making a difference where they live and connecting with one another. Residents have voted for their top priority, more residents are connecting with local groups, and many have offered their skills to help deliver solutions.





"I truly want to contribute to Acton and enjoy my environment"
Your Voice, Your Town participant

Let's Go Southall



What is it?

Let's Go Southall is a local initiative to get residents in Southall more active and make connections. It was co-created in 2020 with community groups, businesses, faith groups, charities and service providers to break down barriers to physical activity. Residents in Southall experience stark health inequalities and there are high numbers of people who are inactive, so the key goal of the project is to make it easier for residents to bring activity into their everyday lives.



How is it different?

Let's Go Southall develops and targets local leaders to host regular exercise or activity groups in their communities. Residents are empowered to drive change, become more active and create new connections.



How does it build connection and shift power?

110 local leaders in Southall now host 80 activities a week – reaching 1,100 residents. Educational classes and social meet-ups are also held regularly. Let's Ride Southall has also evolved into what is now the largest community cycling project in London. 1,100 bikes have been given away to new bike riders, as well as training and wraparound support.

"I've made more friends; I've became mentally stronger and more confident and physically healthier."

Southall resident

Urban Hack



What is it?

An immersive civic participation and education programme that gives young people the skills and confidence to become change-makers in their local communities.

How is it different?

Teams are set a challenge and across four days they follow a Masters-level design process to generate solutions. The challenge is tailored to reflect local communities. The programmed evelops fundamental skills for young people's futures, whilst increasing their engagement with civil society and future careers.

How does it build connection and shift power?

The programme has so far with 5 schools, in 3 Towns, involving 87 students exploring real world challenges. They have developed 18 student led projects addressing real world challenges. Students get a real understanding of their local area, design skills, community challenges, and apply their skills to a real-world challenge of interest to the Council and Community. Students are supported to get involved in further initiatives. Aims to support a generation of changemakers, and for young people in the borough to understand their power and how things work. Council, other public service and community can also pose challenges to the teams, and get new ideas and involvement.





"I've gained more confidence. It feels like your voice is being heard in the community. The programmeallows you to have an impact in local places, which you don't normally feel can happen but, if you think about it, it can." Young person





What is it?

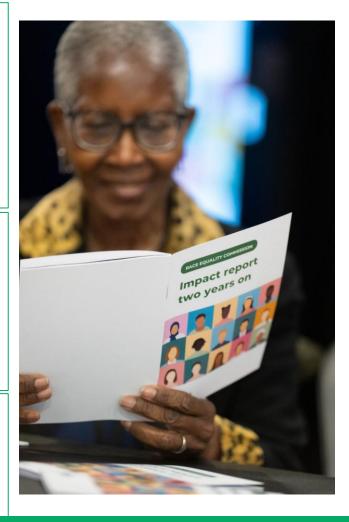
The Race Equality Commission was established in 2021 to learn more about the impact of race inequality. 12 independent commissioners investigated seven priorities: education, health, housing, democracy, policing, income and employment, and housing. It listened to local people, businesses and community leaders to develop an honest assessment of the nature of race inequality in Ealing and then set demands to us related to the commission's priorities.

How is it different?

An independent Citizens Tribunal was set up following the conclusion of the Commission. The Citizens Tribunal still meets to discuss our progress against their demands, whilst also drawing attention to where there are ongoing racial inequalities. As an independent entity, community members set their own demands to the council and continue to hold us to account through consistent challenge and scrutiny.

How does it build connection?

The REC aims to confront race inequality in Ealing through genuine conversation as a first step. The Citizens Tribunal members bought a wealth of lived experience – a vital asset that has enhanced our own understanding of the multifaceted challenges of race inequality.



"We are not here for a mere "tick-box exercise." Our goal is to create tangible change through genuine community engagement.

Denise Charles, Chair of Ealing Citizens Tribunal



LAGER Can









Our Journey



Our Transformation Journey







ABOUT

GROUNDWORK

Groundwork is a federation of charities mobilising practical community action on poverty and the environment across the UK.

In 2024 we worked across 3,000 green and blue spaces, primarily in urban deprived communities





LINDOWN MOSS LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP



























...TO Build Healthy and Happy Communities....

Across five Groundwork Trusts, our Green Hub Facilitators are nurturing the growth of brand new green community hubs. We are committed to co-creating ten new hubs a year until 2027, providing funding and tailored support to set each hub up for success. This anchors a root network of hubs across the North of England, inspiring happier and healthier people in dozens of communities across the North.



BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER...

The Northern Network connects the people involved in running green community hubs through events and networking opportunities. We bring community leaders together at networking and training events, allowing them to inspire each other and problem solve together. We also uplift hubs' stories through our monthly hub spotlights.

This simple act of coming together to share experiences can be transformative – we want to build a network of collaboration, celebrating each hub's successes across the North.



...THAT HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE CHANGE.

The Northern Network is equipping its communities with the skills and confidence needed to improve their personal prospects, to gain a greater sense of personal and collective agency, and to become change-makers themselves. Local people are involved with the development of new green hubs from day one – this is a project delivered by Groundwork but powered by communities.

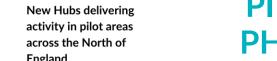








across the North of **England**







118

Individuals who have attended Northern **Network training**



Organisations working collaboratively across the North



Registered 1919 members of the Northern

Square meters of land improved at **Green Hub sites**



Volunteer hours dedicated by communities to Green **Hubs activity**

PHASE 2 YEAR 1



Members of Green Social

Prescribing Group Green Leadership Academy Participants

Network

171



Attendees at Green Hub events and activities from March 23 - March 24





tRaining

COMMUNITIES IMPROVED LAND THE SIZE OF



FOOTBALL PITCHES

WE CONNECTED WITH 2886 PEOPLE AT OUR

GREEN COMMUNITY HUBS

249 Octivities

took Place:

169 NOTURED-BOSED 51 PLUNNING

19 tROINING

ORGUNISING **GROUPS** Had an

average of



VOLUNTE ERED a total of







KEY LEARNING FROM 40 YEARS OF GROUNDWORK



Working at the Speed of Trust: a recognition that in places with lower social capital this will take longer and be more complex.









Panel discussion

Please use the Q&A tab to ask a question





