

#loveyourcommunity

The  
Active Wellbeing  
Society



A photograph of a community event in a park. In the foreground, a child in a red jacket is riding a bicycle. To the right, another child in a camouflage jacket is also on a bicycle. In the background, a green tent is set up, and a group of people, including women in hijabs, are gathered. The scene is outdoors with trees and residential buildings in the distance.

Karen Creavin

Inspiring  
communities,  
changing lives...  
the future of  
public leisure



A photograph of two young women standing in a park-like setting with their bicycles. The woman on the left has long brown hair, is wearing a black t-shirt and light-colored pants, and is leaning on a red bicycle. The woman on the right has blonde hair, is wearing a red t-shirt and black shorts, and is also leaning on a red bicycle. They are both looking towards the camera. The background features a green metal fence and trees. The text 'Why does public leisure matter?' is overlaid in white, with a white horizontal line underneath it.

Why does public  
leisure matter?

The impact  
of inequality  
burdens  
some  
communities  
more than  
others...





# Birmingham... Background to the challenge



- 1.1 million people in the city
- 408,000 Birmingham citizens live in the top 10% most deprived in England
- Large health inequalities directly linked to poverty in the city
- Austerity meant a reduction in role of public services and a diminished civil society to step into the gaps
- Poverty and community resilience have a relationship but not a straightforward one...

# Health benefits of physical activity

- Emerging evidence of physical and mental health benefits
- Prevention of a number of key lifestyle illnesses including diabetes, cancers and other causes of early mortality
- Reduction in premature death and premature ageing
- Combats stress
- Can help tackle social isolation



# History of the public leisure service

---

- First pools were as a result of bathing the poor (1840s)
- Came into public ownership as philanthropic gifts to promote health and wellbeing
- By 1950s Local Authorities were running them
- Based on springs from industrial revolution
- Moved to meet need
- By 1980s were being run as 'business' by council
- CCT and local government managerialism
  - Sport for the sporty
  - Sports development
  - Sport for good
  - Sport and politics
  - Sport and leisure





What gets in the way  
of good public leisure?



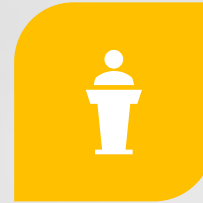
# Working in a political context...



SEEING PEOPLE BEING  
ACTIVE THROUGH THE  
LENS OF INCOME



MOVE OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
INTO LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT... NHS  
FOCUS ON CURE NOT  
PREVENTION



UPSTREAM  
INTERVENTIONS AT SCALE:  
PROPORTIONATE  
UNIVERSALISM/  
INDUSTRIALISATION



SPORT VS ACTIVE  
CITIZENSHIP... HEALTH OF  
COMMUNITIES... HUMAN  
BEHAVIOUR AND SOLVING  
POLITICAL PROBLEMS



INCREASING  
PRIVATISATION OF THE  
HUMAN REALM AND THE  
RETREAT OF THE NATURAL  
SELF



What we have always  
done in the past

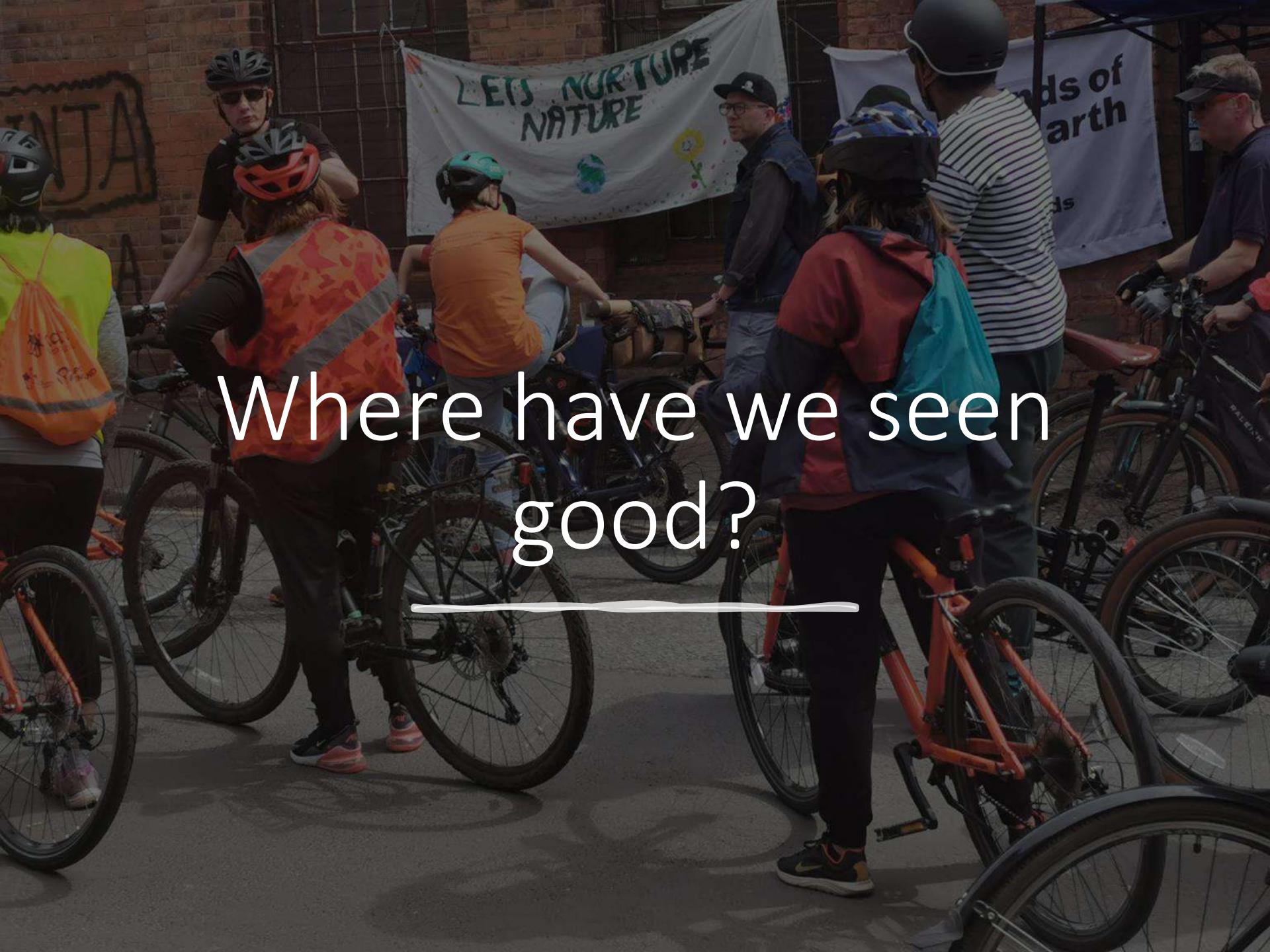
---

Sport for the sporty





What are the barriers that stop people being more active?



Where have we seen  
good?

---



# theory of healthy behaviour change.... Framing the leisure offer

---

CLARIFY THE BEHAVIOUR CHANGE AND WHERE

---

IDENTIFY PRIORITY COMMUNITIES AND ESTABLISH WHO  
ALREADY WORKS WITH THEM?

---

SHARE INTELLIGENCE AND CO CREATE OUTCOMES

---

IDENTIFY THE BARRIERS FOR COMMUNITIES BASED ON ABOVE

---

REMOVE OR MITIGATE THE BARRIERS

---

IMPLEMENT AND MARKET TO TARGET GROUPS THROUGH  
COLLABORATION

---

SHIFT THE NORM TO THE BEHAVIOUR NEEDED FOR  
HEALTHIER OUTCOMES



# Be active

---

- Universally free- differentiated by need (Marmot)
- 95 to 7000 to 500,000
- Collaboration between health and Council
- Data capture throughout
- Evidence of 'the inactive'
- Gym industry and rising tides
- Changed the reason we were doing the work





# Taking it outside – be active

---

- Based on green gym premise
- Devised hand in hand with BOSF and parks
- Built on learning and had volunteering at its core initially
- Sport England buy in from beginning
- Early pilot 6 sites – in conjunction with BC/EC
- Got the attention of Coca Cola early on-Parklives
- At its peak was running in over 80 parks





## Active Parks programme...

- Since April 2015, we have reached **47,045** unique participants, leading to **279,256** attendances.
- We have run activities at **213** different venues with open spaces, running **12,722** individual sessions.
- Highest attended activities:
  - Multi Sport/ Friendly Fun Free sessions (25%)
  - Walking (12%)
  - Green Fit Baby (12%)
  - Running/Jogging (10%)
  - Tai Chi (10%)



# Active Streets

- Launched in 2015
- Born out of citizen demand – playing out day
- Unrestricted free play/ sport on your doorstep
- Owned by each of streets
- Community cohesion and belonging

## What is it?

- Road closed to traffic but open to humans
- Bringing a range of activities to local citizens
- Creating opportunities for conversations *with* communities where they feel most comfortable
- A chance to reimagine the space
- Creating a sense of belonging and trust





# Building on the learning

---

- DfT and BBBs
- Emerging theory of change continues
- Based on evidence base from prototyping
- Free bikes, learn to ride, cycle maintenance
- Data exchange and GPS tracking – minimum requirement of use
- Entitlement based on deprivation
- Tackling inequality – the cycling experience and not widening the gap...




# Impact of Big Birmingham Bikes Scheme



 **7,000** free bikes giveaway

 **2,733** adults & **15,108** children trained to ride a bike

 **20** self-run community cycling groups formed

 **42** instructors & **88** ride leaders trained  
(58% from BME communities)

 **750,000** miles cycled on free bike =30x round world  
(250,000 on free bikes)

 **43%** replaced 1 mile+ car journeys with cycling  
(249 survey respondents)

 **66,000kg** carbon offset

 **4,196** volunteer hours =£71,316 value

 **74%** have improved health/fitness from using their free bike  
(423 survey respondents)

 **36** helped to gain employment through using their bike

 **73%** increased cycling confidence by using free bike  
(404 survey respondents)

 **18%** have met new people in using their new bike  
(103 survey respondents)

Source: Icons made by Freepik from [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com)





We moved from **sport** development to **community** development...

*Community development begins in the everyday lives of local people.*







How could it be different?



our approach to working with communities on a leisure service was...

- Immersion
- Collaboration
- Trust building
- Adding value
- Scaffolding
- Co-create/ coproduce



*I wish this was...* “I don't feel safe walking to the park. I wish families could walk together. I wish that the teenage children who make me feel unsafe could have activities to occupy them.” don't feel safe walking to the park. I wish families could walk together. I wish that the teenage children who make me feel unsafe could have activities to occupy them.”

- Going to where people are, not expecting them to come to us
- Removing barriers – cost, hunger, isolation, travel . . .
- Providing social, learning and friendship opportunities
- Physical activity by stealth and ‘doing with’ to create Sustainability
- Share the learning
- Daring to think beyond the building, beyond what we have always done



## Distributive leadership

- Doing with and not to...
- Where is the energy
- Starting where they are at
- Building trust
- Letting go
  
- And an asset based community development approach...





## Co design

*'a social conversation in which everybody is allowed to bring ideas and take action'  
(Friere)*





# Community development

- *In a process of action and reflection, community development grows through a diversity of local projects that address issues faced by people in community.*



# Radical Community Development

- “ committed to the role of **community** work in achieving transformative change for social and environmental justice
- develops analysis and practice which move beyond symptoms to the root causes of oppression”



# Continued...

- ...the new reality where a growing number of people are **actively searching for local traditions** and for new forms of locality rooted in the modern context of global interconnectivity. (2011 *The New Way of the Future: Small, Local, Open and Connected* Ezio Manzini)





Shifting the norm means...





working out new ways of being active....





In new places...





**With new audiences...**





# How is this relevant to public leisure?



## *Leisure centres are where I:*

- *Wash my clothes in the shower*
- *Have a free breakfast*
- *Talk about my bereavement with Joan while we swim*
- *Feel alive again*
- *Speak to people for the only time in my day...*
- *Play with my kids*



We can change lives and change what we mean by  
public leisure ...

---



A large, red, fuzzy letter 'A' made of a soft, fibrous material, positioned at the top of the image.

A large, yellow, fuzzy letter 'S' made of a soft, fibrous material, positioned in the middle of the image.

Karen Creavin- Chief Executive

[karen.creavin@theaws.org](mailto:karen.creavin@theaws.org)

07968372297





## What else do we do...

- System change
- Data and insight
- Rewilding urban environments
- Protecting the commons
- Change management
- Community scaffolding and development