Evaluation of the work of the Green Infrastructure Partnership 2014-2019 by Alister Scott

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Rationale and Terms of reference for Green Infrastructure Partnership Evaluation

It is now five years since TCPA took over the management of the Green Infrastructure Partnership (GIP) from Defra in 2014. It is timely to take stock of what has been achieved and to consider how the partnership might move forward. This evaluation project was approved by the GIP sounding board in June 2019 as part of ongoing work in a NERC knowledge exchange fellowship on mainstreaming green infrastructure. The evaluation was bounded within the following terms of reference approved by the GIP sounding board

•   To review past work and outputs of the GIP and to use this intelligence to help plan a future vision and direction of travel for GIP in line with key policy changes and increasing influence of green infrastructure in research, policy and practice.

•   To identify the current and likely future drivers of GI research, policy and practice to inform the evaluation.

•   To review terms of reference, priorities, funding and governance structure of GIP

1.2 Methodology

A range of methods was involved in the evaluation to help triangulate evidence from multiple sources. Both primary and secondary data were used and included:

- Desk Study: Review of past work and achievements
- Self-assessment report involving the production of a reflective report and supporting narrative authored by the TCPA critically commenting on its achievements and challenges.
- Internet survey (83 respondents) based on a qualitative format
- 10 Semi-Structured interviews with members of the GIP (x10). These used the emerging results of the self-assessment and internet survey. They were undertaken by phone and lasted 70-80 minutes..
- Annual GIP conference exercise 10 July 2019.
- An interactive exercise was embedded into the 2019 annual conference on "Delivering Better Green Infrastructure" to secure answers to three questions.
- Meeting with GIP Sounding Board 16th October 2019 where a draft report of findings was presented in order to provoke discussion and agree a final action plan reported in section 6.

1.3 Results

Across the different methods the key result was that there is **significant satisfaction with the way TCPA is managing the GIP and the key outputs (newsletter, library and web site) were highly valued.**

Other key results revealed:

- Little support for any wholesale change(s) in the current management direction and the leadership.
  - The informal governance structure of GIP was seen as a strength generally.
  - The extra bureaucracy and burdens from implementing a paid for membership structure was seen to be problematic and did not attract significant support.
  - The free access to GIP resources was appreciated and recognised albeit with some concern that this positive assessment may well hinder any case for funding by Defra
- An opportunity for GIP to better utilise the skills and expertise of its wider and growing membership
  - The membership of GIP was growing both on paper and in social media platforms. This was seen as a very powerful resource to engage with over GI policy issues and to seek feedback/intelligence from.
  - There was a clear focus on improving the web experience with a dedicated and stand alone GIP web site.
  - A programme of webinars on hot GI topics and video conferences were seen as mechanisms to enable people globally to participate in GIP events and to minimise travel and cost and time investment.
  - A training and CPD route was identified as a means to capture GIP resources within a dedicated training package such as MOOCs/module delivery.
- Recognition that GIP has strong academic credibility and does have an important role in supporting research impact which currently is not being exploited by GIP or TCPA to its maximum potential.
- Securing long term funding was vital for achieving a separate GIP identity and delivering on suggested resource improvements.

All the above points require extra resources which currently are not currently available in either staff or financial terms. Ideally, Defra were seen as the most appropriate body to fund GIP to deliver on these improvements particularly in light of the renewed policy focus on GI. **The idea that secured most traction across the results was for TCPA to lead on a grant bid with support from other partners to secure funding for GIP and thus turbo charge the resources, projects and outputs crucially with dedicated staff.** Huge opportunities exist within the GI policy arena such as climate change, biodiversity loss, net gain and nature recovery networks. Significantly all these issues featured in recent sounding boards agendas. There seemed to be strong support for GIP delivering greater impact

through improved outputs and current GI resources (newsletter and web site), but funding would be required to deliver this.

- The GIP was seen by some as preaching to the converted. There was recognition of the need to focus more on the policy influencing function and to engage with people and agencies that needed to be converted to see GI as a positive asset for their work.
- At present most of GIP work was perceived to be directed at national government level but not necessarily covering all departments. In particular, the smaller business interest was seen to have been missed as well as the new models of devolution (combined authorities and local enterprise partnerships). Cumulatively this was seen as a big audience to tap into.
- Need for more targeted activities and outputs for these different groups? Here the conference may not be the best space to try to engage. Currently all the existing outputs were too focussed on GI to appeal and perhaps there was a need to develop GI material that could appeal to such groups.
- There was support for a work programme with dedicated GI workstreams within a more action-orientated and deliberative set of outcomes and key messages. The conference was seen to be part of this rather than being a stand alone event.
- The key impact of GIP was seen largely through its knowledge and information exchange functions where GIP continues to punch above its collective weight.

1.4 Action Plan

1.4.1 Securing Long term Funding for the future evolution of GIP:

This is the priority action recommended from the review. TCPA has been given a clear vote of confidence in managing the GIP but in order to address the suggested improvements and crucially the separate identity of GIP, there is a need to secure long-term funding. Here TCPA could take the lead with support from the sounding board with outcomes identified that accord with this report that can be delivered through a project officer supporting GIP. The suggested activities from the evidence massed here include: a revamped stand-alone web site; webinars and other events/roundtables to address current and future GI policy opportunities and debates; meetings in all parts of the UK to reflect particular policy issues; training materials to improve the KE/CPD role with both general and targeted materials to suit specific audiences; case study library building on the current library resource and skills audit of GIP membership to better tap into areas of expertise.

Actions:

1. TCPA to work collaboratively across the sounding board and wider membership to submit a 3-5 year funding bid for resources.

2. TCPA should also approach Defra for part funding to help increase the viability for a successful funding application.

1.4.2 Devise more proactive and deliberative agendas using the Sounding Board for future GIP work and action

There was clear evidence and desire from TCPA and other responses, for members to play a more active role in setting the GIP agenda and joint GIP working through identified work streams. Here work undertaken by the author leading on some aspects of GIP work such as the NPPF 2 provides a more deliberative model notwithstanding concern from sounding board members over time and resources to undertake such work. Perhaps one pragmatic mechanism for this would be to use the updates from the sounding board to help prioritise the items for future sounding board meetings and determine GIP priority issues.

Furthermore, if there was an annual membership survey these evidence strands might provide a more active member-based agenda which TCPA could build from. It might also help identify different forms of event and activity and space where such things could occur.

Actions:

3. There are also smaller actions that could help to refresh the sounding board and identify any gaps in the membership base through (1) a skills audit of the GIP sounding board (2) a review of the makeup of the formal membership base.

4. Drawing from the results of this year's conference is there any way that the key messages could be communicated via a blog to the wider GIP membership and government.

1.4.3 Developing closer ties with other partnerships

Drawing from discussions with the sounding board on October 16th there might be an opportunity space for GIP to work more collaboratively with the ecosystems knowledge network. This might extend to sharing resources such as access to Web Ex but also enables both partnerships to build upon each others networks to mutual benefit. Whilst this has not been properly investigated there is a useful action in exploring these links which already have been started through joint working with the Welsh Government GI network . The Green Cities Action project has helped GIP rise its UK profile and provides a fertile base to build upon.

Actions:

5. Start joint discussions with EKN about collaboration and joint resources.

6. Continue work with devolved governments and established national forums on GI to make GIP a UK forum for GI

7. Invite representatives of Welsh and Scottish and northern Irish government to become members of the sounding board and consider holding meetings in the devolved nations.

1.4.4 Develop a stronger and more explicit research impact focus

The findings highlight the significant respect that GIP/TCPA commands in academic circles. Their staff are valued as a resource to help improve impact in an ever-increasing number of research projects. Current rules, however, often exclude TCPA/GIP benefiting financially from their input and expertise. It is desirable, therefore, to investigate opportunities/ models to reward GIP financially for the input and expertise that they provide for research projects. Here the model developed between TCPA and Northumbria University offers a possible pathway to exploit and adapt. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to make a case for wider recognition of their expertise to the research councils.

Actions

7. Work with Northumbria University to develop a business case for support from research councils where TCPA/GIP help projects achieve impact.

1.4.5 Supporting Natural England in testing and co-producing a set of GI principles and standards .

There was support for the GIP to establish some good practice GI principles reflecting previous work done for garden cities to secure some agreement on what good green infrastructure is aiming for. However, there is also current work in England going on under the umbrella of Defra/Natural England developing GI standards frameworks and there are also initiatives like Building with Nature that are working within this space. Given that duplication is not helpful, there is an opportunity space to add value. It Is recommended that GIP takes part as one of the pilots within phase 2 of Natural England GI standards project to test the principles out across its membership.

Action: TCPA to submit an expression of interest on behalf of GIP to undertake a pilot study of the GI principles using GIP membership.

2. What is the Green Infrastructure Partnership?

The Green Infrastructure Partnership (GIP) was originally set up in 2011[1] following a commitment made in the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper[2]. GIP was a partnership of some 270 member organisations with a role "*to identify and develop solutions to help local decision makers adopt a GI approach in their day-to-day planning, development and delivery*". Its work focussed on England given its management and funding by Defra.

In 2014, management of the GIP passed over to the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) but with no dedicated funding. At the time of writing GIP is now a rapidly growing network of 1648 members with a strong social media following (4,179 Linked in members and 3,641 twitter followers).

In 2014 GIP revised its core objectives building on the Defra work and has also extended the territorial remit of GIP to cover the UK.

1. To share information about green infrastructure research, policy, practice, funding, innovation etc.
2. To influence key decision-makers about the value of green infrastructure.

The current structure of GIP runs as an informal partnership network under TCPA management. It has a sounding board of some 25 members that meets quarterly and which provides the key thinking behind the work of the GIP as well as providing a forum for discussions, presentations and project work as appropriate.

2.1 Rationale for the GIP Evaluation

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[1] This is the original and archived web site (accessed 20 November 2019) hosted by Defra for the GIP. https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130123180142/http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/green-infrastructure/
[2] HM Government 2011 Natural Environment White Paper The Natural Choice : securing the value of nature https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-natural-choice-securing-the-value-of-nature
[3] This project forms part of several workstreams https://mainstreaminggreeninfrastructure.com/index.php

2.2 Terms of Reference

The evaluation was bounded within the following terms of reference approved by the GIP sounding board

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- To identify the current and likely future drivers of GI research, policy and practice to inform the evaluation.
- To review terms of reference, priorities, funding and governance structure of GIP

3. Methodology

A range of methods was involved in the evaluation to help triangulate evidence from multiple sources. Both primary and secondary data were used and included:

3.1. Drivers of change
A brief overview of key drivers of change impacting upon GI was undertaken signposting important policy and research priorities and outcomes. This provides a wider context within which the findings reported here can be evaluated.

3.2 Desk Study: Review of past work and achievements
This involved a summary analysis of GIP in terms of aims, objectives, outputs and work programmes post-Defra. An analysis of the twitter membership of GIP was undertaken as part of this stage.

3.3 Self-assessment report
The self-assessment report involved the production of a reflective report and supporting narrative authored by the TCPA highlighting its achievements and challenges. A set template was provided to guide the report material. The report was authored primarily by Julia Thrift the manager of the GIP with contributions from other TCPA staff involved in the partnership. The report was supplemented by a follow up interview. The report is in Appendix 1.

3.4 Internet survey (83 respondents)
An internet survey[4] (using largely qualitative questions) was developed and placed on the internet to enable anyone globally with an interest in green infrastructure to participate. It was not targeted at GIP members and tested respondents' level of awareness and engagement with green infrastructure more generally and how GIP has influenced their own work with forward-looking aspects.

3.5 Semi-Structured interviews with members of the GIP (x10)
Drawing upon the emerging results of the self-assessment and internet survey a series of semi structured interviews were undertaken with 10 members of GIP. These were undertaken by phone and lasted 70-80 minutes. Table 1 shows the prompts used.

3.6 Annual GIP conference exercise 10 July 2019.
An interactive exercise was embedded into the 2019 annual conference on "Delivering Better Green Infrastructure" to secure answers to the following questions.

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[4] https://northumbria.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/green-infrastructure-partnership-evaluation

Question 1: What is your ONE key policy or practice action for achieving better green infrastructure?

Question 2: How might GIP be changed (if at all) to achieve better green infrastructure?

Question 3: (i) How should key messages from today's GIP event be taken forward by (1) you?

(ii) How should key messages from today's GIP event be taken forward by GIP?

These questions helped inform the evaluation with reference to a specific and key event in the GIP calendar.

3.7 Meeting with GIP Sounding Board 16th October 2019

A draft report of findings was presented to the sounding board in order to provoke discussion and agree a final action plan reported in section 6.

4. Results

4.1 Current and Future Policy Drivers for Green Infrastructure

This evaluation has to be seen against the changing context for GI. In 2014, GI was no longer viewed as a key government priority as evidenced by the loss of explicit GI roles in Defra agencies such as Natural England and the low-key role assigned to GI in emergent policy such as the National Planning Policy Framework[5]. However, since 2014 GI has risen rapidly up the policy and research agendas as evidenced by research councils funding an impressive range of GI projects representing millions of pounds of investment[6]. Drawing from my own scan of work on GI, the following key drivers of change can be identified which offer both opportunities and threats for GI.

4.1.1 Current Drivers

1. **The Planning System and viability** – A focus on economic viability has led to GI issues being of secondary importance. Here the annual housing target for 300,00 houses has tended to put wider placemaking components including GI further down the agenda and considered later on in the development process as well as being prime candidates for cuts in delivery phases when costs come under scrutiny . The NPPF revisions in 2019[7] provide extra guidance on environment which is welcome but the continued emphasis on GI being desirable rather than something that must happen is problematic. Nevertheless, improved policy for natural capital mapping and assessments has proved helpful.
2. **Economic growth requirements** – A government priority for economic development driven by the Industrial Strategy[8] where GI does not feature explicitly. In particular, national infrastructure does not talk about GI but rather focuses on grey infrastructure.

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[5] DCLG (2012) The National Planning Policy Framework
https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180608095821/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2 accessed 15 January 2020
[6] See https://mainstreaminggreeninfrastructure.com/project-page.php?NERC-science-GI for examples of NERC investment.
[7] MHCLG The National Planning Policy Framework (revised)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf

[8] HM Government (2018) |Industrial Strategy https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/the-uks-industrial-strategy

3. **Health and Well-Being** – Emerging from multiple research projects and practice, in particular from the valuing nature network[9], highlighting an evidence-based link between GI and increased health and well-being.
4. **Inequality in provision and access to GI** - Work highlighting the link between areas of high multiple deprivation and lack of access to GI and other key ecosystem services[10].
5. **Climate Emergency** - GI has been identified as a key delivery mechanism that can help deliver outcomes that meet the net zero carbon target (2050) as well as wider adaptation to climate change. The declaring of a climate emergency by many local authorities and HM parliament[11] has helped raise the political profile of climate change and the need for tangible actions. Here the role of Suds has become increasingly important.
6. **Biodiversity decline** – Recent reports[12] have highlighted the ongoing decline of nature and biodiversity. GI can be used to help deliver on this primarily through net biodiversity gain mechanisms which are attracting increased policy traction.
7. **SMART Cities** – Technology and big data has had an increasing role to play in the management of urban space. Tech applications now enable real time monitoring of air pollution, noise and pollination[13].
8. **Public Attitudes towards the environment** – There has been an upsurge in public supporting for and calling for more urgent action for the environment, partly in response to research and influential TV programmes but also through a widespread movement of young people associated with extinction rebellion[14].
9. **Valuing nature**- There has been significant research that has tried to capture the different values of nature. Stemming from the Millennium Ecosystem assessment national assessments of ecosystem services were undertaken by many countries including the UK [15]. Furthermore the development of natural capital accounting has attracted significant political and policy traction [16]. Here the fields of ecological and environmental economics intersected to create new ways to highlight the value of nature and thus green infrastructure. These financial values have been useful in highlighting the benefits of nature as a common pool resource.

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[9] Valuing Nature Network https://valuing-nature.net/
[10] See for example work by Birmingham City Council as part of their Green Living Spaces Plan https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/green_living_spaces_plan_appendix_2
[11] See http://theconversation.com/uk-becomes-first-country-to-declare-a-climate-emergency-116428
[12]See IPBES https://ipbes.net/news/global-assessment-summary-policymakers-final-version-now-available and State of Nature Reports https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/reports/
[13] See for example the urban observatory https://urbanobservatory.ac.uk/
[14] See for example https://rebellion.earth/
[15] See UK National Ecosystem Assessment http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/
[16] See work by ONS on methodology pioneered by Ian Dickie EFTEC https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/methodologies/principlesofnaturalcapitalaccounting

10. **Development plans**- Given that these are statutory documents which set out the priorities for future land use decisions, the way that GI policies address the full range of functions and provide a weak/strong impetus for action is key[17].

11. **Devolution** – The move towards strategic planning through combined authorities in England has given rise to opportunities for GI to be embedded in strategic plans but also poses risks that the necessary detail for GI planning will be lost.

12. **Interdisciplinary research**- There have been some exciting new research projects working across traditional disciplinary and professional boundaries to address GI. Here the IWUN project in Sheffield[18], the GHIA projects on old age in Manchester[19] and the ICASP integrated catchment project in Yorkshire[20], together with a series of 5 urban living projects[21], provide useful examples.

13. **EU policy and guidance**[22]. This has helped embed GI policy across the EU with a range of policy measures and also important GI research usually under the umbrella of nature based solutions[23].

These drivers in England have generated a plethora of strategy, guidance and policy; all with GI references and corresponding opportunities (listed below). Perhaps key in this list is the aspirational 25 Year Environment Plan (HM Government 2018) and the NPPF (MHCLG, 2019) which provides much of the statutory policy context for planning and land use change. Work from Scott and Hislop (2019) have highlighted some major gaps in the policy framework for GI[24] where, in particular, Suds, stewardship and mainstreaming functions are poorly represented. Of particular note is the lack of strong policy wording which leaves GI particularly vulnerable to housing and economic growth considerations which generally have a higher policy priority.

Key government strategies[25] include:-

- 25 Year Environment Plan (HM Government 2018)[26];

- National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2019);

- Industrial Strategy, Building a Britain fit for the future (HM Government, 2017);

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[17] See the GI policy assessment tool developed by Scott and Hislop
https://mainstreaminggreeninfrastructure.com/project-page.php?green-infrastructure-planning-policy-assessment-tool
[18] IWUN http://iwun.uk/
[19] GHIA https://ghia.org.uk/
[20] ICASP https://icasp.org.uk/
[21] Urban Living programme was based on 5 pilots : Newcastle, Birmingham, York, Leeds and Bristol
http://urbanliving.epsrc.ac.uk/
[22] EU policy on GI https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/index_en.htm
[23] See for example the naturvation project within a selection of GI projects funded by EU
https://mainstreaminggreeninfrastructure.com/project-page.php?EU-Projectson-Green-Infrastructure
[24] Scott A.J. and Hislop, M. (2019) What does good GI policy look like? Town and Country Planning 88 (5) 177-184
[25] Please note that only England has been considered in this brief policy overview.
[26] Please see https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan

- The Clean Growth Strategy[27], Leading the way to a low carbon future (HM Government Amended 2018)
- Clean Air Strategy[28] (Defra, 2019)
- National Infrastructure Delivery Plan[29] (Infrastructure and Projects Authority 2017)
- Integrated Communities Action Plan[30] (MHCLG, 2019)
- Sporting Future: A new strategy for an Active Nation [31](DCMS, 2015)
- Sport England: Towards an Active Nation [32](Sports England. 2016)
- Statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy [33](Department of Transport, 2017)
- Cycling and Walking for Individual and Population Health Benefits ([34]PHE, 2018)
- Everybody Active, Every Day [35](PHE, 2014)
- 5-year Forward View for Mental Health [36](NHS England, 2016)
- Department of Health & Social Care: Prevention is better than cure - Our vision to help you live well for longer [37](Department of Health 2018)
- Review of interventions to improve outdoor air quality and public health [38](PHE, 2019)
- Childhood Obesity - A plan for action [39](Cabinet Office, HM Treasury, Dpt health, No 10, 2017)

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[27] Clean Growth Strategy https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy
[28] Clean Air Strategy https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-air-strategy-2019
[29] National Infrastructure Delivery Plan https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-infrastructure-delivery-plan-2016-to-2021

[30] Integrated Communities Action plan https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-communities-action-plan
[31] Sporting Future: A new strategy for an Active Nation
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation
[32] Sport England: Towards an Active Nation https://www.sportengland.org/media/10629/sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf
[33] Statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/603527/cycling-walking-investment-strategy.pdf
[34] Cycling and Walking for Individual and Population Health Benefits
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/757756/Cycling_and_walking_for_individual_and_population_health_benefits.pdf
[35] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/everybody-active-every-day-a-framework-to-embed-physical-activity-into-daily-life
[36] 5-year Forward View for Mental Health https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Mental-Health-Taskforce-FYFV-final.pdf
[37] Department of Health & Social Care: Prevention is better than cure - Our vision to help you live well for longer https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevention-is-better-than-cure-our-vision-to-help-you-live-well-for-longer
[38] Review of interventions to improve outdoor air quality and public health
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/795185/Review_of_interventions_to_improve_air_quality.pdf
[39] Childhood Obesity - A plan for action https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action

- Civic Society Strategy – Building a Future that works for everyone [40](DCMS, 2018)
- A Connected Society: A strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change [41](DCMS, Office for Civil Society, No 10, 2018)

The renewed interest in GI has given rise to a significant increase in GI research. Using selected examples[42] from NERC and EU from the last 5 years, we can identify key thematic priorities (see below). It is noteworthy, however, that very few projects have examined the way the planning system impacts on GI which represents a significant research gap at the present time. What is clear is the increase of more inter and transdisciplinary research projects, although there is still concern at the lack of stakeholder engagement and investment throughout all phases of research with important questions being asked about how policy and practice influence the type of research that is being conducted. There is also a lack of research focus on the delivery and long term maintenance of GI

1. Making the business case for green infrastructure (SWEEP, ICASP, PERFECT Greening the Grey)
2. Health and Well Being (IWUN and GHIA)
3. GI tools (NCPT; Building with Nature; SPIES; Tree Design; My backyard)
4. Biodiversity (BESS; Valuing Nature Programme)
5. Nature Based Solutions (Naturvation; Green Surge; Grow Green; Urban Green Up)
6. Peri Urban (PLUREL)
7. Blue infrastructure (BEGIN; ICASP; Blue Green Cities)
8. Urban Living (Newcastle City Futures Urban Living Birmingham York Leeds TRUE
9. Innovation (this was a whole series of small GI projects. A useful evaluation is here.

4.1.2 Future Drivers

Looking to the future, it is clear that the **post Brexit landscape** will be a critical driver of change. **The planning system and industrial strategy** will still play a leading role in policy and decision making but it is likely that new ways of measuring the performance of planning will bring both environmental and social components into the viability equation. This will also give rise to a new set of tools and standards. A forthcoming **Environment Bill** will provide a mechanism to create an environmental watchdog and also will seek to address mandatory biodiversity net gain as well as translate some of the existing EU Directives into our law.

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[40] Civic Society Strategy – Building a Future that works for everyone
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-society-strategy-building-a-future-that-works-for-everyone
[41] A Connected Society: A strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-connected-society-a-strategy-for-tackling-loneliness
[42] This is not meant to be a comprehensive list but rather a reflection of where research efforts have been concentrated.

Devolution and the separate countries of the UK will become key drivers. It is clear that there are significant differences in the legislative context for GI across the devolved nations. Wales, for example, has the Health and Well Being future Generations Act and Scotland has a spatial planning framework NPF4.

UN Sustainable Development Goals[43] are a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The UK Government has signed up to these goals which have explicit references to GI as a delivery mechanism affecting goals on climate change, biodiversity and cities. These are a set of non-statutory measures that governments have signed up to with 6 monthly reporting intervals. At present these are managed under the auspices of UN Habitat[44]

Climate change will become increasingly important. The Net Zero carbon target for 2050 will be a key driver for change with fundamental changes to our rural and urban economies and potential for enhanced GI perhaps associated with rewilding. Nature based solutions also offer significant opportunities for naturalised SuDS schemes.

Within our urban areas **SMART cities and Big Data** will become key to the planning of cities and there needs to be a stronger focus on how the environment can be effectively mainstreamed here. The **changing spatial and distributional geographies of green space in terms of provision, quality and access** will also focus political and moral attention on the need to retrofit GI. This has escaped much attention due to the focus on creating new GI in developments. Issues such as **urban agriculture and pollinators** will become increasingly important as part of the city fabric.

4.2 Desk Study

4.2.1 Management of the GIP by Defra 2011-2014

The GIP was created as a direct result of the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper with its management and secretariat provided by Defra with funding made available for this work. The general aims as stated by the Environment minister Richard Benyon[45] were to:

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[43] https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

[44] http://mirror.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=9

[45] https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130124020159/http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2011/10/11/more-green-spaces/

- look at the condition of green infrastructure across England and how it meets communities' needs;
- investigate the scope for improvements, and look at the barriers to green infrastructure in existing areas to meet future challenges such as climate change;
- consider how local communities, planners and decision-makers can best be supported in designing and developing green infrastructure;
- demonstrate the social, economic and environmental benefits that well designed green infrastructure can provide; and
- help people to quantify the costs and benefits of investing in green infrastructure and make the case for new projects.

Following two successful workshops in 2012 the GIP agreed the following work strands which were carried out by working groups across the 270 organisations crossing civil society, professional bodies, local authorities, developers, planners and social housing enterprises, and academics.

- GI for the Built Environment: How to design and retrofit GI
- Large Scale: How to plan GI for ecosystem services
- Neighbourhoods: How to work with communities
- Local Delivery: How to implement GI at the local level
- Valuation: How to value and make the case for GI
- Education, Training and Skills: Ensuring that people have the skills and knowledge to deliver improved GI
- Communications Strategy: Ensure that relevant decision-makers see GI as a key part of delivering better places and have access to the tools and knowledge that will help them to implement it

The working groups were set up to achieve the following outcomes.

- Find ways to provide green infrastructure in towns, cities and rural areas.
- Address barriers that might prevent this progress.
- Develop an evidence base on the condition of England's green infrastructure and how it meets the needs of communities.
- Demonstrate the many benefits that green infrastructure can bring.
- Look into how communities, planners and decision-makers can best be supported in designing and developing green infrastructure.
- Help people to quantify the costs and benefits of investing in green infrastructure and make the case for green infrastructure projects.

A key publication came from one working group published by the Landscape Institute in 2011 Local Green Infrastructure: helping the communities make the most of their

landscape[46]. A further publication was planned emerging from joint work between the Landscape Institute and TCPA but this was never published. To help promote information and membership interactions on GI there was a GIP linked-in page managed by Michele Parker of Greenspace (not managed by Defra) .

4.2.2 Defra hand over and GIP priorities under the TCPA 2014

At the time of the hand over there were 300 members of the GIP. A dedicated handover conference event in March 2014 enabled vital intelligence to be collected by TCPA as to the type of GIP that was wanted by members at the time. The results of this workshop are summarised below to provide a useful benchmark for this review in order to understand how far these ambitions were met in the subsequent 5 years. The following section summarises this feedback below using the same subheadings.

Perhaps most influential in the future trajectory of GIP was that the GIP should remain free to join and secondly that they wanted it to be a bit more outspoken than it could be when run by Defra.

Positive aspects

The diverse network & partnership element was highly valued due to active cross sector representation with members involved in many different facets of GI policy and practice. Here knowledge exchange and learning from inspirational GI champions in face to face events with the opportunity to build important connections were important. A quarterly news bulletin was also valued which gave information about events, new evidence, policy and reports. A transparent governance and decision-making process was also seen as positive (due to being Defra-led).

Limitations

There was considerable uncertainty about the role(s) of GIP. These centred on whether it was just about information/knowledge exchange or something more. Here the lack of any dedicated web site and terms of reference was significant as was its relationships with other regional or local GI partnerships.   Given its Defra remit there were limitations in its ability to engage with unusual suspects outside the environment and outside England and to help achieve the desired policy integration across the different government departments and agencies; bodies who might have a GI interest. In particular, there was recognition of the lack of representation from developers and potential investors. In terms of the outputs produced they were not seen as innovative, but rather as an expression of current Defra work programmes. Consequently, some members wanted to be more actively involved in GI work shaping agendas rather than simply being recipients of information in a relatively passive manner.

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[46] https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2015/12/LocalGreenInfrastructurewebversion_002.pdf

There was a recognised need from the GIP membership to communicate new research and evidence on GI and extend the focus on biodiversity to actively embrace social and economic agendas more explicitly. A further gap was identified in relation to retrofitting GI in grey urban areas which was increasingly seen as being marginalised in the GI debate. The lack of focus on rural GI was also identified as an area for more attention; GI was being increasingly bounded in the urban and peri urban domains. Mainstreaming GI into different policy domains was also seen as an important opportunity space.

Action Plan

 The feedback that members provided at the handover event provided the TCPA with clear and consistent priorities for TCPA which was then translated into an action plan. A key decision was made to build a relatively informal membership structure to achieve GIP objectives mindful of the lack of resources. Key to the TCPA vision for GIP was the building of strong cross sectoral representation through a sounding board structure across the key GI domains. The membership wanted to maintain and build upon the strong knowledge exchange remit but also to try and actively influence and inform GI policy through the range of activities it pursued. Members were very clear that they did not want to pay for membership of the GIP, however, and this drove the decision to keep it as an informal network.

The following twin objectives were identified

- To share information about green infrastructure research, policy, practice, funding, innovation etc
- To influence key decision-makers about the value of green infrastructure

Given the lack of any direct funding for the management of GIP, TCPA embarked on a programme of securing sponsorship from a range of bodies for its successful operations. This strategic decision was taken so as to ensure that a wide range of different interests were contributing to the GIP (so it couldn't be dominate by a single agenda e.g biodiversity) and to create a resilient source of funding that was not reliant on one or two core funders.

The TCPA also established a much stronger social media presence for the GIP using both twitter and linked in.

Social media platforms

The GIP has grown its social media platform with accounts for linked in and twitter now well established and rapidly growing (twitter (3569[47])and linked in (4192[48])followers). Interestingly, TCPA invested significantly in the development of the twitter account but did

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[47] As of 31st October 2019
[48] As of 31st October 2019

very little for the Linked In platform. The increase in Linked In is thus a surprise for the TCPA. We may speculate that this growth merely mirrors the growth and interest in GI in policy and practice agendas globally and that GIP does have a unique function which is not duplicated elsewhere.

A detailed analysis was undertaken of twitter followers (September 2019) and this reveals an interesting membership structure (Figure 1). First there is a diverse membership structure covering many different interests. Not surprisingly the individual category (31%) dominates; the classification was undertaken only using information available in in the twitter profile. Often this lacked sufficient detail about the work of the person or role they held, so they were classified as individuals.

Unpacking the profile further the key players in GIP on twitter appear to be academics (13%) voluntary groups (10%) and private sector (11%). Media and community groups represented 4% of the profile. However, in terms of absolute numbers there were 99 professional body representatives and 117 members of partnerships, 84 representing national government agencies and 78 local government.   There were also 45 councillors and 27 schools. Cumulatively this confirms the range of bodies and interests represented which could represent a useful resource to more actively engage with.

Sector	Number	%
academic research	456	13
promotion	24	1
voluntary sector	339	10
community group	135	4
conference or event	21	1
councillor politician	45	1
individual	1068	31
media/ journalist	153	4
local government	78	2
local campaign group	63	2
national government body	84	2
nature reserve park or green blue space	42	1
partnership	117	3
project	165	5
private sector	396	11
professional body	99	3
school	15	0
training	42	1
it/web/app	60	2
school	27	1

Figure 1: Twitter Profile (July 2019)

Twitter analytics reveal a highly variable level of impressions month by month but within a consistently increasing membership (Figure 2). Indeed, having another 320 new members in a month is really impressive.
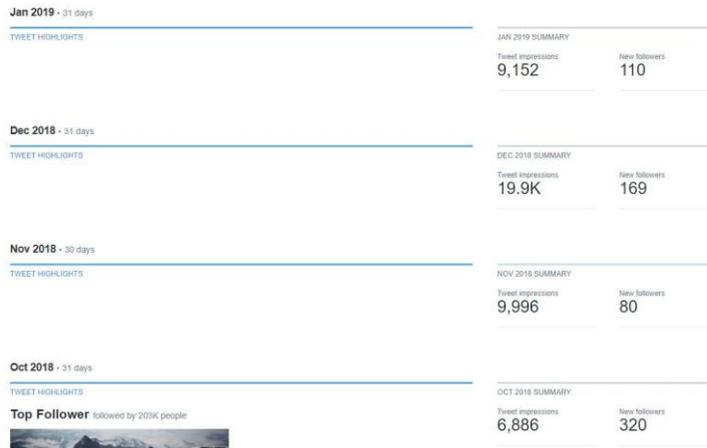
Figure 2: twitter analytics : impressions from October to January 2019

Figure 3 highlights twitter activity for the month of June 2019 in terms of the top tweet and interactions. This reflects a relatively low level of tweet activity (3 tweets) but again clear interest with new followers.
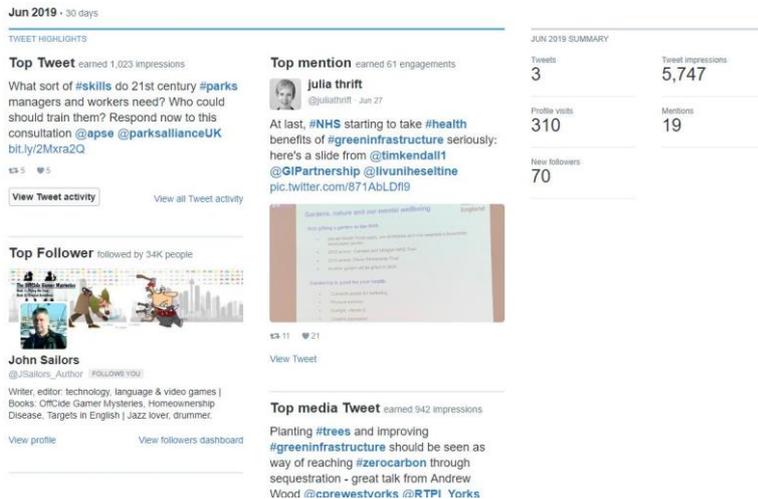
Figure 3: Twitter Analytics : Activity in June 2019

An assessment of all tweets for GIP was undertaken for October 2019. In total there were 9 direct tweets (5 are shown in Figure 4) and 39 retweets. Figure 4 provides a good snapshot of the different tweets that occurred. The top left example highlights a traditional information exchange role on new government guidance that impacts on GI. Meanwhile the top right provides a more critical note on the dangers of current policy. This is interesting in that the GIP modus operandi does not normally enable specific views to be made on specific issues. The GIP resources themselves are also highlighted in a tweet on updates to the GI resource library. It is noteworthy here that this attracts significant interactions (18RTs and 20 likes).   A tweet also highlights a GIP event in Belfast as part of the Green Cities project which involves TCPA. Significantly, this may create a confused message given that GIP does not run this initiative and does not attend events as a body itself. The next tweet attracts significant interactions with 5 replies, 24 retweets and 30 likes, again alerting followers to a new MHCLG initiative on pocket parks. The final examples from different twitter accounts highlight the value of GIP resources from key GIP followers; the first on the newsletter and the second on a recent networking event on GI revealing strong political support and also an increasing profile across the UK. These tweets represent strong public endorsement of the GIP.
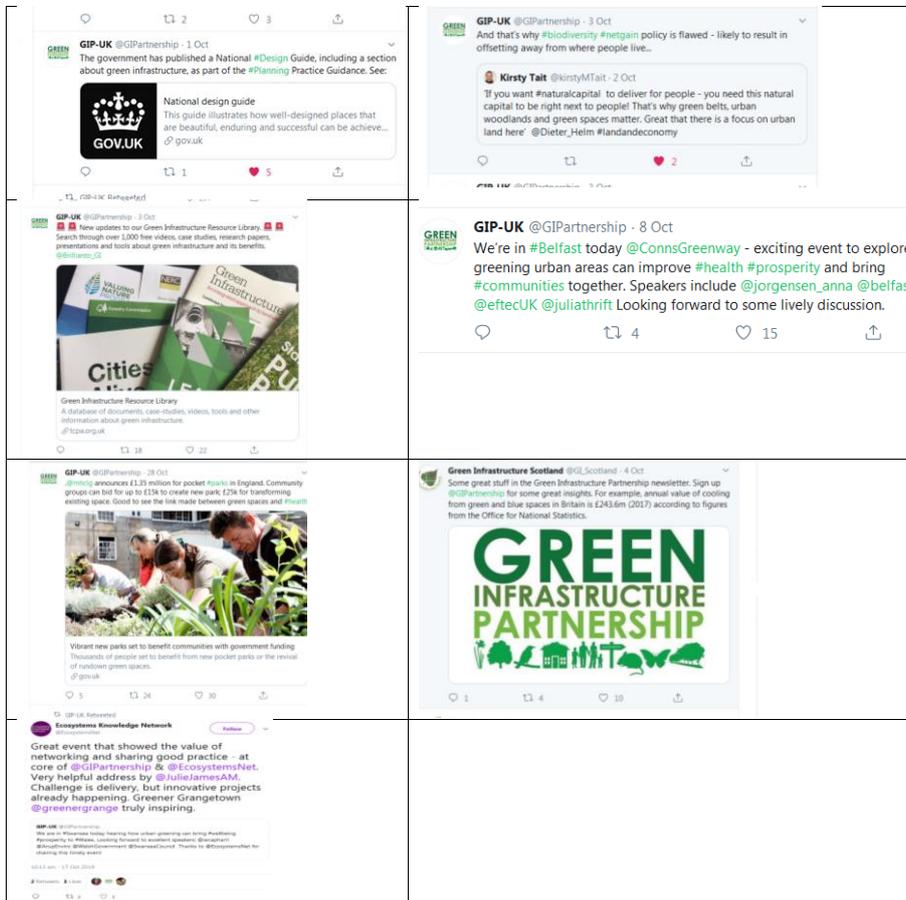
Figure 4: A selection of tweets from October 2019 from @GIP-UK

Impact of GIP

Within the desk study material used for this part of the review there is limited data available on impact. Here we define impact in both means of reach (how many people benefit from GIP resources and outputs) and also how many people change their behaviours or decisions as a result of GIP resources or interventions. However, from the documentation available and notes on meetings and workshops and associated correspondence, the following impacts stand out.

Memorandums of understanding and sponsorship

The TCPA and GIP developed and secured memorandums of understanding with respect to the GI agenda. These were seen as agreements to help work on common agendas with

regard to the mainstreaming and championing of GI policy and practice. Six MOU were signed with government agencies, partnerships and a university. These provide tangible evidence of working together on the GI agenda through shared resources and inputs to help champion GI.

In particular the formal partnership with Northumbria University regarding a NERC research project came about due to the reputation and influence of GIP and has enabled both the university and GIP to benefit from shared agendas relating to the mainstreaming of GI.

The impact of the GIP is also testified through its multiple sponsorship agreements. These agreements speak volumes about the credibility and value of the GIP in providing a useful mouthpiece for sponsorship opportunities. The following agencies have funded GIP: Land Trust, Landscape Institute; Arup; Sport England; Groundwork UK; the National Trust; Canal & River Trust; Wildlife Trusts; GreenBlue Urban. In addition, we have had funding for the various GIP conferences from a wide range of partner agencies.

Meeting with the Natural Capital Committee 2014

Members of GIP met with a Natural Capital Committee member Robin Smale which led to a telecon between him and a range of local authority green space managers to discuss the challenges of funding and maintaining urban GI. The GIP meeting helped raise awareness of the value and importance GI in the natural capital agenda, This was significant as previous consultation material had not mentioned the role of GI.

The role of the GIP sounding Board:

The GIP sounding Board is effectively the "think tank" for GIP and through its collective work and agendas has produced some noticeable impacts.

The introduction of the NPPF in 2012, along with the associated National Planning Practice Guidance, made Natural England's green infrastructure planning guidance outdated, but it remained on NE's website and practitioners continued to refer to it. However, when NE's website (which had been a stand-alone site) was transferred to the .gov website the guidance was archived. There was widespread unhappiness about this because the Planning Practice Guidance, as it was then written, barely mentioned green infrastructure. The role of the GIP was to make it possible to get four key organisations (Land Trust, Landscape Institute, Groundwork and the TCPA) to agree at very short notice to collaborate on a letter to the Minister. This was a direct result of the sounding board meetings, which had generated consensus around GI and partnership working to achieve it. The letter secured responses from both Defra and DCLG Secretaries of State with the issue being covered by Radio 4 today.

During the last few years a number of ad hoc meetings have been held so that members of the sounding board could discuss how to respond to consultations. The point of the meetings is to share ideas and expertise. But each organisation has then gone away and written its own response to the consultation. Further work through the sounding board had led to communications with the chair of the CLG select committee on the impact of the

NPPF (2016) as part of a select committee inquiry and a composite response to the NPPF2 consultation (2018). Furthermore, the co-production of consultation responses has helped provide a resource for agency responses in their own right as for example evidenced in the RTPI response.

4.3 Self-Assessment Report

The self- assessment report provides a powerful manager-led summary of achievements and challenges for GIP. The report was supplemented by a telephone interview which I have merged into the following narrative using quotes where they are helpful.

4.3.1 The Defra hand Over 2014
The Defra hand over event in 2014 was clearly important in enabling TCPA to get a clear sense of direction as to GIP's future direction and priorities at first hand.

"*TCPA used part of the event to consult them about the future of the GIP. They* (GIP members) *gave us some clear messages. Firstly, that it should remain free to join. Secondly, that they wanted it to be a bit more outspoken than it could be when run by government*"

This helped define the TCPA-led objectives for GIP endorsed by GIP members at the time, namely;

1. **To share information about green infrastructure research, policy, practice, funding, innovation etc**
2. **To influence key decision-makers about the value of green infrastructure**

4.3.2 Progress on GIP objectives under TCPA
On each of these objectives significant progress has been made and this has to be seen against the changing policy, practice and research context with increased attention on green infrastructure at international, national, regional and local levels.

On objective 1 the newsletter has become the principal output supported by annual conferences and events. This is seen to fill a policy and practice gap with clear accessible information. However, with increasing work falling under the GI umbrella, it did pose challenges to ensure that all priority news was adequately covered and made fresh and insightful for the intended audience. Here the English bias was recognised but with limited resources, coverage of issues in the devolved countries was compromised. More recently this issue has been addressed with newsletters and events enabling Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to feature far more than hitherto. This highlighted the positive synergy

between TCPA getting grant money (GreenCities campaign) and its spin off benefits to GIP profile and coverage[49].

There was much ambition evident for improving the other key outputs which collectively provided a powerful GI resource base. Here the GI library, GI sounding board, social media (twitter and linked in), dedicated events and workshops were seen pragmatically as good achievements but with potential for improvement, but only if dedicated funding could be secured.   The vulnerability of funding was clearly exposed here as a key concern.

On objective 2 two significant positive impacts were identified. First, was the dialogue with the Natural Capital Committee which helped get green infrastructure on to their radar and into their initial report. Second, was the high profile campaign with other bodies when Natural England's excellent green infrastructure guidance was transferred to the gov.uk web site without any improved NPPG revisions[50].   In both cases this was seen to generate national policy responses and demonstrate impact.

The increase in GI attention provides both opportunities and challenges in terms of new national guidance and plans and how they are interpreted in national legislation and planning policies (e.g. 25 year environment plan (HM Government 2018); NPPF and NPPG (MHCLG, 2019); the Environment Bill (HM Government 2019) and other legislation particularly in Wales (Well Being and Future Generations Act (WAG, 2017) and Scotland (new Planning Act 2019). However, within these opportunity spaces there are inherent challenges with the way that new concepts such as natural capital and net biodiversity and environment gains might be implemented, particularly in the absence of clear guidance.

It was also recognised that with limited resources only key policy makers were targeted. As part of this strategy the development of a GIP sounding board with quarterly meetings enabled such policy makers to be invited to give presentations.

One notable success has been the growth (and continued growth) of both twitter (3569[51])and linked in (4192[52])followers. This was seen as surprising particularly for linked in where no dedicated input had been developed as opposed to twitter where some resource had been devoted. The growth posed challenges in terms of providing regular material and maintaining effective information exchange and interaction.   The lack of resources hindered TCPA developing an effective social media strategy.

4.3.3 Governance and funding
A constant thread running through the self-evaluation report was the limited resources that were available to support GIP. This led to GIP relying on sponsorship for its operation, supporting work and outputs. TCPA is a small charity with volatile work and funding

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[49] See https://uk.thegreencity.eu/ which is managed by the GIP

[50] The letter is here:-
[51] As of 31st October 2019
[52] As of 31st October 2019

streams which necessarily divert staff. Thus, there is a potential lack of continuity and potential vulnerability for GIP which depends on how well TCPA is doing.

The current informal governance arrangements of the GIP were seen as a key strength in terms of its flexibility and structure. As it is not a formally constituted body, this means that there is minimal bureaucracy associated with its running and operation. The free membership, in particular, does not create additional bureaucracy in terms of collecting dues and deciding what kind of organisational structure it needs to become in terms of any income received. There was significant reluctance for any change to the governance structure towards a more formal body with a paid membership due to the extra administrative burdens on TCPA.

The current arrangements allow the GIP to focus on its core objectives and respond to opportunities as they arise, although this depends on resources. This means it is not able to qualify for grants or indeed represent a particular viewpoint. Rather it acts as a knowledge exchange catalyst and broker with TCPA at the forefront of any activity. The development of the sounding board has provided an extra rung of flexibility and regularity enabling presentations to be made from people working on GI policy and practice.

However, one noticeable issue over time has been the loss of joint working across the GIP agenda from members. Here members would provide active support in areas where they were strong in GI matters which added value to areas where TCPA were strong. This has now waned considerably with TCPA providing most if not all of the effort. It was felt that a return to a more strategic member-led approach would be beneficial particularly with regard to agendas and work of the sounding board.

Whilst the TCPA has input time and resources into the GIP it has been seen as mutually beneficial. TCPA recognise the value that being managers of GIP provides for work on GI and this is increasing.

4.3.4 The future of GIP

A final part of the self-evaluation report /interview looked to the future with a view on what the GIP should ideally should look like in 2024. The following points are reproduced as written.

- *"A stand-alone website with lots of very useful content for practitioners, planners, councillors, influencers, etc.*
- *4,000 + members with more interaction between members*
- *More members from Wales, Scotland and NI and better coverage of GI issues in those nations*
- *Dedicated support staff*

- *Objectives delivered by a partnership of various organisations".*

This captures the key point that those managing the GIP see the need for consolidation rather than fundamental change. The information dissemination role is explicit and well-resourced with greater interaction between members as part of the GIP agenda. The objectives are delivered though an improved partnership structure implying an evolution in the current versus future partnership arrangements and work. This can be translated into the following core ingredients;

- First, to secure funding that can enable improvements to existing resources and also enable the appointment of dedicated staff to deliver these.
- Second, there is an important process to how GIP operates where TCPA becomes less dominant as the key actor but rather enables work streams to be developed across the membership with other leads.

All this does not imply a transformation in structure or roles but rather a more solid funding resource to enable GIP to deliver and manage a better service.

4.4 Internet survey

There were 83 responses to this survey with full results listed in Appendix 2. This was publicised through the GIP newsletter and social media and wider networks snig the mainstreaming green infrastructure web site[53].

4.4.1 Key Headlines from the survey
1. Respondents are generally happy or very happy (89%) with the way that GIP is run by the TCPA and the work that it is doing.
2. GIP resources are valued by participants with the Newsletter receiving most praise; used regularly by 76% of respondents with many seeing it as providing a unique and valuable service.
3. Respondents support the current governance arrangements of the GIP although there is notable concern that GIP is not funded directly by government and given the high profile now given to GI, should be.
4. Most desired changes reflect the need for an improved and dedicated web site and funded GIP staff resource.

The rest of this section unpacks the detail of the responses using graphical and tabulated data and quotes from respondents. Note the survey was based mainly on open questions to allows for post survey coding.

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[53] Please see https://mainstreaminggreeninfrastructure.com/project-page.php?gip-evaluation-survey

4.4.2 Membership
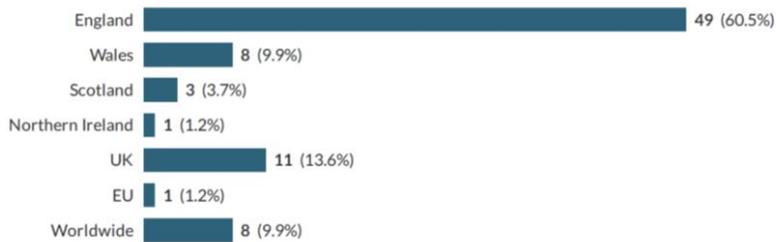
Figure 5: Location of survey participants.

Figure 5 reveals that the majority of respondents were from England (60.5%) and Wales (10%). It was disappointing to note that Scotland (4%) and Northern Ireland (1%) were poorly represented. Interestingly, the survey attracted a 11% response from EU/rest the World.

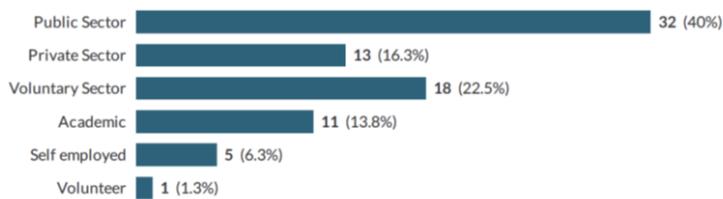*Figure 6: Professional background of participants*

Figure 6 reveals that the majority of respondents were from the public sector (40%) but the private (16%), voluntary (22.5%) and academic (13.8%) sectors were all well represented. In terms of the membership of GIP, 62% of respondents were members with 13% joining within the last year. Significantly 22% did not know about GIP.

4.4.3 Use and Value of GIP Resources

Newsletter (Use)
- Never: 9 (11.3%)
- Rarely: 10 (12.5%)
- Regularly: 36 (45%)
- Often: 25 (31.3%)

Newsletter (Value)
- Not valuable: 3 (4.9%)
- Some value: 12 (19.7%)
- Valuable: 38 (62.3%)
- Essential: 8 (13.1%)

Web Site (Use)
- Never: 16 (20%)
- Rarely: 44 (5...)
- Regularly: 17 (21.3%)
- Often: 3 (3.8%)

Web Site (Value)
- Not valuable: 4 (7.5%)
- Some value: 29 (54.7%)
- Valuable: 17 (32.1%)
- Essential: 3 (5.7%)

Resource Library (Use)
- Never: 30 (37.5%)
- Rarely: 36 (45%)
- Regularly: 12 (15%)
- Often: 2 (2.5%)

Resource Library (Value)
- Not valuable: 4 (8.2%)
- Some value: 18 (36.7%)
- Valuable: 22 (44.9%)
- Essential: 5 (10.2%)

Figure 7: Assessment and use of key GI resources

Figure 7 captures the use and value of the key GIP resources. **The newsletter** is used at least regularly by 76% of respondents and, of those, valued by 75%. This is the most used (by some way) and highly rated resource at the current time. Further results (not shown in the diagrams) reveal that 84% of respondents receive the newsletter with 11% wanting to receive it following completion of the survey (Appendix 2). Qualitative comments reinforced the value and uniqueness of this GI resource. *"The newsletter is one of the better circulars"*; *"a brilliant resource always something new".* However, there were also a minority of dissenting voices apparent reflecting issues about its timing *"all old news by the time it comes out"* or a reflection of lack of time to read such material which implies it is not priority material. *"I just don't have the time to read this"*.

The web site is used at least regularly by 24% of respondents and, of those, valued by 36%. Here the qualitative comments illuminate the need for a more dedicated stand-alone web site separate from TCPA resources with more information.

The GI Resource Library is used at least regularly by 18% of respondents (the lowest use) and, of those, over half found it valuable. The qualitative comments highlighted its relative "clunkiness" but also its positive value for those seeking to find information on specific topics. "*As someone new in post the library provided a quick way to get up to speed"*.

Set within overall comments on resources there was a thread apparent that GIP had little dedicated resources itself; rather these were merged under the auspices of the TCPA.

Are you attending this years (2019) annual event

Yes — **12** (14.6%)
Dont Know — **8** (9.8%)
No — **62** (75.6%)

Have you attended previous annual events

Yes ; the majority — **3** (3.7%)
Yes : several — **12** (14.6%)
Yes : one — **9** (11%)
No — **58** (70.7%)
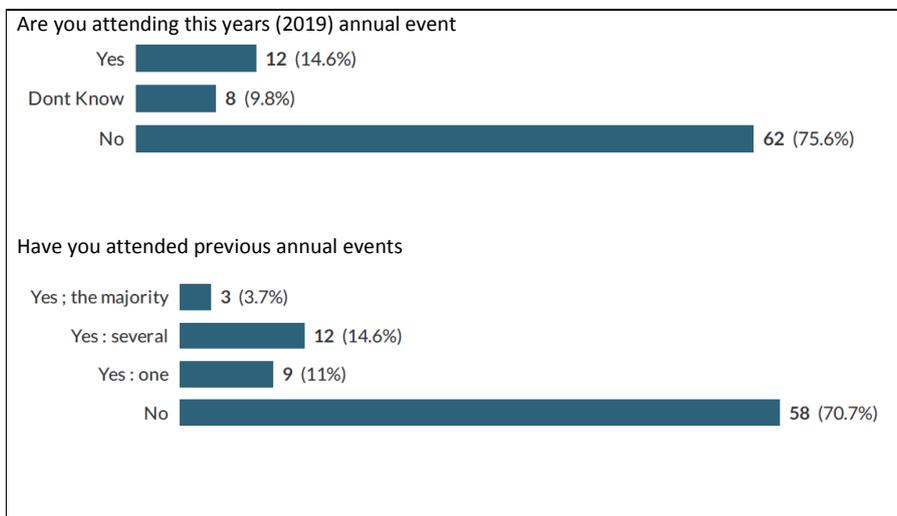
Figure 8: Annual GIP conferences

Figure 8 reveals that 12 respondents were definitely attending this year's **Annual Conference** with 8 still undecided. Qualitative responses highlighted the cost of such events and the full day timetable as key barriers. Further comments highlighted the London location (negative) and the fact that "*I have heard these speakers on many occasions previously*".

24 respondents had attended at least one annual event and comments highlighted the value of the networking opportunity and also the chance to hear key speakers particularly from national government and research. However, most comments highlighted the value of learning from practice.

4.4.4 Roles of GIP

A question was asked on what respondents considered to be the primary role(s) of the GIP[54]. From the comments received, the dominant role was seen to be an "*informal network and forum for discussion*". In addition, the "*policy shaping and delivery*" role was also identified thus according with the established objectives. However, what was interesting were the supplementary roles identified such as "*acting as a GI champion*"; a

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[54] This was in direct response to the confusion aspect raised in the Defra hand over meeting in 2014 .

"*trusted intermediary*"; a "*knowledge exchanger working across research, policy and practice*" ; and "*GI coordination and liaison*".   Whilst these all fit within the two core objectives of GIP, they collectively speak volumes about the effective leadership role that TCPA plays through its management of GIP.

A supplementary question was asked relating to the desired future roles for GIP. Here the responses are interesting in suggesting a more proactive research and policy shaping role. Crucially, this was seen as conditional on funding given the contemporary importance of GI. Here Defra support was seen as essential to enable TCPA to invest in needed improvement in resources and to manage GIP. Indeed, given the increased policy attention on GI there was seen to be a lot of fragmented initiatives related to GI and thus GIP could have "*stronger liaison, coordination and collaboration roles*". Other areas featuring including dealing with *"social inequality in the provision of GI",* thereby having a stronger policy shaping role. Here opportunities were identified to *"share draft responses to consultations on GI matters"* to help inform individual agency responses[55]. Interestingly there was support for a stronger and more explicit research role highlighted in terms of helping "*set the impact agenda*" as well as assuming leadership on some collaborative research projects.

4.4.5 Impact of GIP

A question sought to identify the impact of GIP over the last 5 years. Not surprisingly, the key impact related to the information and knowledge exchange functions. Here the reach component as identified by comments such as "*a great talking shop" ; "promoting the GI term across the planning community"; "creating a strong GI narrative to take across sector"; " informed multiple audiences at national government and local authority scales"; and "providing information on funding opportunities " ,* are all powerful expressions of this type of impact. However, as one response observed: "*the actual changing of policy, activity and behaviours in response to GIP interventions is much harder to identify*". Nevertheless, responses did identify this more elusive measure of impact through the "*NPPG saga with loss of GI guidance*". The fact that GIP activity and events and resources have collectively "*helped mainstream GI through its elevation up the political agenda" and* the positive GIP narrative has enabled "*local communities to actively use the principles in their GI delivery"*.

4.4.6 Governance

Within any discussion on existing and future roles, the issue of governance structure becomes critical. The results on future governance arrangements reinforce strong support for the status quo with 77% favouring the current informal arrangements (Figure 9).   Paid membership was not favoured strongly in either informal or formal structures (13%). Here

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[55] Note this is something that GIP has done through ad hoc activities within the sounding board itself

comments about flexibility and lack of bureaucracy were seen as compelling arguments. These mirror the TCPA self assessment report findings.

An informal network as is the current status quo — 61 (77.2%)

A more formal network with Consititution, Chair and Board requiring paid membership — 6 (7.6%)

An informal network but with paid membership — 5 (6.3%)

Other — 7 (8.9%)
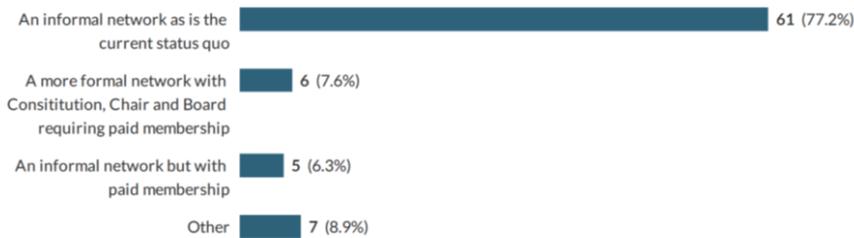
Figure 9: Desired future governance structure for GIP

As part of the future governance agenda there was also a question directly relating to the level of satisfaction with TCPAs management of the GIP (Figure 10). The results are emphatic with 89% of respondents happy with current arrangements with nobody unhappy, although 11% did express some concerns. The qualitative comments reaffirmed the high level of respect towards the TCPA and its role as a "champion of planning" who are ideally placed to take a lead. Other themes emerging related to the important contribution and continuity of Julia Thrift in making the GIP work largely through her "*quietly efficient leadership*" role. It was also noted positively that membership and access to GIP resources were still free.

Very happy — 27 (36.5%)

Happy — 39 (52.7%)

Some Concerns — 8 (10.8%)

Not happy — 0
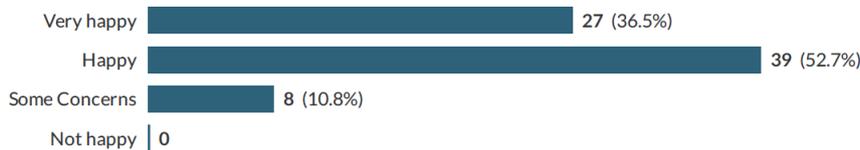
Figure 10: Satisfaction with TCPA Management of GIP

In terms of the concerns apparent (11%), there were points made about the loss of different GI workstreams and the ability to try and direct policy change explicitly through access to ministers. There were also comments relating to the composition of the membership; "*..links with consultancies business and engineering could be stronger*". There were also comments about the apparent England centric focus of GIP work and one or two comments that took exception to TCPAs particular GI focus on garden cities for example.

4.4.7 Future Direction and Priorities of GIP

The last question related to the future direction and priorities of GIP, set within the current resource constraints. Whilst there was some repetition encountered here with future roles, there were some interesting new themes apparent.

Perhaps the largest number of comments related to the need for **a stand-alone web site** to enhance the information sharing role[56]. The GI Resource Library also received some critical comment with perhaps scope for greater interactivity and improved case studies section with some analysis undertaken rather than just passive links. Associated with this there was also strong support for developing new ways to engage more of the membership through the use of **webinars.**

On the impact agenda there was an interesting comment on the opportunity to develop **training resources**. The need to engage with GI issues across Wales and Scotland and not just England was also apparent but comments did recognise the resource constraints.

4.5 Semi- structured interviews

10 semi- structured interviews were undertaken across the different sectors involved in the GIP; academic, professional institute, government delivery agency, local authority, consultant, charity, developer, community group, councillor and partnership bodies. These were all members of the GIP with 8 actively involved in the GIP sounding board. The prompts for the discussions are recorded in Table 1 below and were built upon the foundation of the self-assessment report and emerging results from the internet survey so as to avoid duplication and also allow more of a focus on possible actions.

GIP core objectives fit for purpose
Desired Governance structure
Making more of the GIP Membership
Work priorities given resource constraints
Securing funding for future GIP priorities
GIP in 2024 what does it now look like?

Table 1: Interview Prompt for Semi Structured interviews.

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[56] Currently this sits within TCPA web site

1.   To share information about green infrastructure research, policy, practice, funding, innovation etc

2.   To influence key decision-makers about the value of green infrastructure

Both objectives were supported strongly across all interviews. There was only a limited appetite to add to these, in part, recognising the limited resources that were available as GI rises up the political and policy agendas. As one respondent admirably put it "*Too many roles (rolls) give you indigestion"! ….. .. "is GIP trying to do too much; perhaps it can and should focus more on the gaps in GI work*" (Consultant). This quote is interesting in perhaps encouraging GIP to prioritise work and activity in policy and research gaps and not try to cover all GI areas which may duplicate work in other agencies that address GI in part.

The objective on information sharing was seen as being critical to the work of GIP and its current outputs. Many responses identified the key driver here being the *ever increasing number of policy developments and opportunities which impacted upon GI and thus "needed a GI champion to be at the forefront of communicating what was going on*" (Charity). However, it was recognised that this may actually pose problems for GIP in *"trying to keep up with all the policy developments; particularly when Scotland , Wales and Northern Ireland were factored into the equation"* (Academic) and also the need to perhaps go further than information just providing a "*signposted set of links for people to follow* "(Government Agency).

The second objective on influencing key decision makers about GI did attract more critical comment across the respondents. Here there was more of an appetite to prioritise "who" needed to be targeted   and "how". For example, there appeared to be a "*strong focus on influencing national government working through Defra and its associated delivery agencies rather than working at the regional (combined authority) or local authority levels"* (partnership). In addition, "*businesses and developers might be usefully targeted*" (Local Authority).   Concrete ideas put forward to help realise these ambitions included more targeted events towards key groups particularly focusing on under-represented groups within separate outreach activities and events (Councillor). One idea suggested was to build upon the template of TCPA for garden city principles as a way to help develop and co-produce a set of GI principles to help shape future work programmes57.

 As part of the policy influencing role, it was felt that a research and impact role was already being undertaken implicitly by GIP but without formal recognition. The. ..*"research influencing and impact role is hidden from view; yet GIP is highly valued and respected in*

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[57] It is important to note here that Natural England are currently overseeing a GI standards project within which Phase 1 report has produced a set of 10 principles on GI. These are not in the public domain at the time of writing but it is important that there is not duplication here.

the academic community. Is there not scope for this role be more explicit in GIP work?" (Academic). The focus of attention on influencing national government was still seen as important but the ability to secure access to Defra and MHCLG ministers was seen now as *"more problematic as opposed to when the partnership was managed by Defra"* (Government Agency).

There was an opportunity identified for the GIP Sounding Board to help deliver on objective 2 through *"actively representing GIP at workshops or conferences"* (Institute) rather than relying on particular events or meetings which happened infrequently under the GIP banner. However, it was here that several respondents highlighted the necessary overlap between what GIP did and what TCPA did. This interchangeability was seen to benefit both TCPA and GIP at times, providing powerful synergies but there was concern that this diluted the individual identity of GIP. However, to be clear, there was recognition that this was a pragmatic response to the lack of funding which perhaps *"reflected poorly on government at a time when GI did need to have more funding allocated towards it and GIP was having to find its own resources"* (Academic)*.*

There was one area of tension across the responses encountered relating to whether GIP could assume more explicitly *"a GI leadership role to provide a unified coherent GI voice"*. (Government Agency) versus other (more) responses that tended to view such activity as counterproductive and time consuming, often resulting in a *"lowest common denominator approach" which deflected from other important information sharing roles"* (Charity).

4.5.2 Governance

The majority of respondents felt that the current informal governance structure was advantageous and a pragmatic response to a partnership that received no core funding. However, it was interesting to note across several respondents their own agency *"unease at being unable to contribute more to help support TCPA"* governance and work, particularly with regard to the agenda and workstreams of the GIP sounding board (Institute; Government Agency). Here, pressures of time and workload were cited as key reasons for the decline in joint working and leading of workstreams. This, when combined with their highly positive assessment of the work that TCPA were doing, led to the willing acceptance of the status quo. The findings strongly supported the internet survey with only one response supportive of a change to a paid membership and/or formally constituted partnership body. However, there was consensus view that Defra should now play a more active role in funding the GIP.

4.5.3 Funding the GIP
Whilst there was universal praise for outputs produced by GIP free to the membership, albeit with the exception of the annual GIP event, this was not seen as a sustainable long-term model (Institute; Government Agency). Furthermore, it was seen as problematic that,

at a time of increasing interest in GI matters, there was a lack of funding for the invaluable work the partnership does. Here the fact that currently GIP resources were available free and highly valued ironically tended to undermine the case for financial support. *"If everyone thinks GIP is doing an excellent job why would you want to put money into it"* (Academic). Nevertheless, there was universal support for securing more funding for GIP to improve and extend its range and quality of outputs and resources and to build a stronger and separate identity from the TCPA. Some comments highlighted the need for Defra and other government departments to step up to the plate but there was a degree of financial pragmatism in that the best way forward was to support a grant bid perhaps (led by TCPA) to resource the GIP.   This commanded universal support across the respondents with all willing to help support such a venture.

4.5.4 Membership

The membership of GIP was increasing both in the conventional formal membership via the mailing list and in the growth of followers on social media platforms (linked in and twitter). From the 300 members at the time of TCPA takeover in 2014, the membership is now 1648 members with (4,179 Linked In members and 3,641 twitter followers). This represents a huge potential asset for the GIP to draw upon. However, it is viewed as a "*neglected and often passive resource*" (Academic). Consequently several responses wanted to *make "more of the membership resources and expertise on key GI issues"* and concomitant with this could .."*develop task and finish groups to work on particular GI hot topics via calls for evidence for example".* (Developer).   When prompted for examples to deliver on this and tap more effectively into this wider membership base ; i.e. beyond the sounding board, the use of webinars, blogs, vlogs within a more interactive and "one stop shop" web presence were all highlighted.

Some critical reflection amongst the respondents identified the need to better understand the skills and interests of the membership both at sounding board level and more generally in order to see if a particular skill/interest area in GI were over or underrepresented. This was seen as particularly important for the sounding board given its influential role and a skills audit exercise was suggested. An annual membership survey was also seen as a possible way to help shape a more strategic approach to feed more directly into the future work programme of the GIP supported by the sounding board. One response highlighted that perhaps the information supplied to the annual conference this year might be used in this way (local authority).

This raises a wider question of the purpose of the sounding board and its relationship with the wider membership. In particular, there was recognition that the current membership and focus of activities was heavily skewed towards the English policy situation and that more consideration needed to be given "*to covering Welsh and Scottish issues and even hosting GIP meetings there"* (Consultant). It also raises the issue of whether the need was

for specific skills and expertise in GI such as business skills versus the spheres of influence in GI through dedicated roles such as a land manager.

It was also commented that the current membership might be those who were attracted to GIP because of their interest in GI and this raised the question of how you attract the unusual suspects to the GIP and whether the name itself may act as a disincentive here to the wider mainstreaming of GI. Responses tended to recognise this problem but solutions revolved more around dedicated sessions to particular target user groups and improved training packages.

4.5.5 Future

This question was focused on what a successful GIP might look like in 2024. Responses were interesting but consistent. Technology was seen as an important area to better exploit with improved web resources acting as a UK one stop shop for GI information with simultaneous interaction with social media platforms. The visions all identified the regular use of webinars and video streaming to engage with the wider membership more regularly over key issues that impact on GI. Furthermore, an opportunity was identified to develop on line training resources on GI to enable professional development (CPD) perhaps using the RTPI learn platform as a possible model to follow. Here the idea of developing a set of GIP resources around key evidence and messages about GI within an easily digestible package was strongly supported (Academic; Government Agency; Institute;, Community; local government; Developer).

In terms of mainstreaming green infrastructure many saw GIP resources and interventions being focussed towards particular user groups who had yet to fully get the GI opportunity. The current climate and health emergencies were seen as useful ways to target these unusual suspects for example.

Crucially the funding issue was seen as key to future success with a substantial grant mechanism seen as key to unlocking the next phase of GIP development.   Whilst the TCPA leadership was supported there was increasing recognition of the key role that Julia Thrift (Manager GIP and Director of Healthier Placemaking) played in its success, raising serious question as to its resilience. A grant would enable a dedicated project officer to be identified for the day to day running of GIP and to slowly allow GIP to emerge as a distinctive entity in its own right.

4.6 GIP Annual conference "Achieving Better Green Infrastructure"

The annual conference of the GIP took place in London on July 10th 2019. This provided a useful opportunity to feed intelligence into the GIP evaluation process through a focus on one key GIP event drawing from the activities of the day. An interactive exercise was designed using 3 questions to test their perceptions on the conference theme and the actions that should follow the conference both for them as individuals and for the GIP. The information was collected via post it notes as the day progressed following an initial briefing at the start of the conference[58]. A summary of the post it notes is presented for each question with a brief commentary.

4.6.1 Question 1: What is your ONE key policy or practice action for achieving better green infrastructure?

- 'Strike while the iron is hot' – more could be done now to press home the advantage being enjoyed by GI, in policy and practice terms; Rising profile of GI politically and publicly
- Stewardship – need for improved long term management. Maintenance is a dirty word. Suggestions to address the clear concerns people had that the benefits of GI should not be lost as a result of poor management and stewardship
- Finance delivery models to improve long term management but also to help business case (the GIP could have a role in this).
- Monitoring and evaluation – more concerns rather than solutions as to how would better GI be monitored and assessed for its benefits
- Break Silos – again concerns about GI not being seen as an environmental matter and the need for multi-disciplinary approaches as well as joining up professionals, people and agendas
- Having green infrastructure embedded into infrastructure delivery plans
- Crossing disciplinary and scalar boundaries – GI as something that crosses both subject and spatial boundaries
- Developer incentives – a few comments about how to encourage developers to engage better in GI; building with nature seen as a way to raise standards
- Stress on using simple, easy to understand language and terms. Increasing number of new environmental terms does not help.

When these individual work priorities are compared with the agenda for the conference (Figure 11), there is considerable synergy apparent with an agenda highlighting developments in policy (notably involving Wales and Scotland) ; GI standards project and wider mainstreaming; landscape scale approaches and GI investment. However, the stewardship issue perhaps is less evident.

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[58] A video briefing was presented by Prof Scott with support for the questions provided by Mike Grace.

Figure 11: Agenda for GIP 2019 Annual Conference Achieving Better Green Infrastructure

4.6.2 Question 2 How might GIP be changed (if at all) to achieve better green infrastructure?

- The GIP could do more to forge partnerships and collaborations but broaden who the partnership is for.
- Creating and sharing best practice and evidence in a range of outputs; going beyond links
- Integration of GI; for example working across different sector priorities; housing, regeneration, transport, drainage and across work teams in these areas. Going beyond the GI expert/officer
- Work harder on language
- Convert other business and economic interests into the value of GI ; here a combination of language and also translation and application of GI lexicon into the hooks of economic bodies.
- Be more critical and outspoken

In terms of the key themes emerging above there is recognition that GIP could be strengthened to include more bodies and interests who are necessary to help successful mainstreaming of GI. Thus, the conference was not perhaps the best place to do this as it generally preached to the converted. This synergised with the demand for more integration to enable GI messages to have traction across different sectors. Behind this lay the need for more effective information and evidence of the value of GI in core working practices. Supporting this, there was also calls for more outputs that could signpost good case studies and evidence, going beyond the usual list of web links. Interestingly, all this represents a major undertaking for a non funded body but perhaps there is a way to tap into useful

policy and literature reviews from within the research community. The need for better communication and language was also seen as important with again the common barrier in GI terminology itself hindering wider adoption. The last set of comments about GIP being more critical is interesting in that GIP does not have a single view as it represents a loose and diverse network of those interested in GI. This may reflect a view by some (but not a majority view as evidenced by other surveys in this report) that the GIP is a more formally constituted body able to have a collective view on GI policy.

4.6.3 Question 3 (i) How should key messages from today's GIP event be taken forward by (1) you?

- Take GI out of the environment part of their Area Action Plan and put it up front.
- Improve dialogue across different departments dealing with GI role in placemaking.
- Identify different GI hooks to build improved traction (placemaking, nature base solutions, climate change emergency)
- Test planning policies in local plan for GI

These key messages really connect well with wider mainstreaming efforts and theory. It was good to see that the conference had led to specific actions in peoples work[59] In particular, there was recognition of the need to take GI out of its environmental silo and to use different GI hooks to secure improved policy traction. In the post it notes the climate and health emergencies featured prominently as did more holistic concepts such as placemaking and nature based solutions.

4.6.4 Question 3 (ii) How should key messages from today's GIP event be taken forward by GIP?

- Engaging with new stakeholders within GIP to widen the potential delivery of GI,
- Highlighting best practice but within a follow up guide /case studies on web site
- Using evidence to influence policy to pilot initiatives (niche but presumably to help change behaviours).
- GIP to be more proactive in sending messages from events in terms of implications for policy. Here the need for blogs and thought pieces was seen as valuable. There is a temptation to be reactive.

The final themes emerging reflected an opportunity for GIP to engage with new stakeholders (those who were not present today) to widen the potential mainstreaming and delivery of GI. There were also several suggestions that the event itself should generate some agreed actions that could be circulated. One idea suggested that the annual event

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[59] As one of the joint speakers I can confirm from my own work that the conference has led to work with 3 new local authorities

could be more problem-orientated with solutions promoted as part of wider conference outputs.

The web site was seen as a key information/knowledge exchange repository with also post conference blogs and thought pieces welcomed. However, suggestions implied more than just linking to case studies reflecting a need to have some overall post conference assessment. Building on this point were also a set of ideas supporting more proactive and deliberative processes where the conference might fit in rather than being a stand- alone event.

5 Commentary

This section draws together the main result strands from each part of the methodology as a series of key headlines to help inform an action plan for GIP. A draft of this action plan was presented to the GIP Sounding Board on 16th October which attracted some further ideas and comments which are added to the material herein.

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 The different result strands highlight significant satisfaction with TCPA in managing the GIP.

This is the key finding across all survey material confirming that TCPA is managing the GIP well and leading it in a direction that is generally supported. Such positive endorsement has to be seen against the considerable challenge of managing a voluntary partnership which relies on sponsorship and cross-subsidisation from TCPA for its operational success. Indeed, members expressed unease that they were not able to invest more time in helping support the running of the GIP sounding board and leading on any identified workstreams. There was little support or appetite for any wholesale change(s) in the current management direction and the leadership provided from the TCPA.

However, there was evidence that suggested a more strategic and deliberative approach to the work of the GIP sounding board could take place and that there was a useful exercise to undertake a skills audit to ensure that the full range of interests and skills were adequately represented across the wider GI arena. The key GIP resources could be augmented by providing more services that could involve the wider membership more in its work however. Here webinars were seen as key delivery vehicles.

5.1.2 The informal governance structure of GIP was seen as a strength generally.

The extra bureaucracy and burdens from implementing a paid for membership structure was seen to be problematic and did not attract significant support. The free access to GIP resources was appreciated and recognised albeit with some concern that this positive assessment may well hinder any case for funding by Defra, for example.

5.1.3 There was an opportunity for GIP to better utilise the skills and expertise of its wider membership

The membership of GIP was growing both on paper and in social media platforms. This was seen as a very powerful resource to engage with over GI policy issues and to seek feedback/intelligence from. However, currently it was not being used except in a very passive manner with material going almost exclusively from GIP to the membership in a one-way information flow. Many responses saw an opportunity space to better utilise this

wider membership resource. First, there was a clear focus on improving the web experience with a dedicated and stand alone GIP web site. Second, a programme of webinars on hot GI topics and video conferences were seen as mechanisms to enable people globally to participate in GIP events and to minimise travel and cost and time investment. Here the Ecosystem Knowledge Network with their regular and well attended webinar programme might provide a useful operational model to pursue.   This type of approach could also lead to more events but within a one-two hour slot and also enable particular working groups or task and finish groups to be established. Third, the training and CPD route was identified as a means to capture GIP resources within a dedicated training package such as MOOCs/module delivery. Finally, there was recognition that GIP has strong academic credibility and does have an important role in supporting research impact which currently is not being exploited by GIP or TCPA to its maximum potential. Somewhat ironically it appears many academics and UKRI are exploiting this expertise to their benefit. A more recent partnership agreement between Northumbria University and TCPA/GIP may represent a possible model to address this.

However, despite a growing membership only 83 people filled in the GIP survey which was heavily advertised on social media platforms and of these only 51 were members. Thus, fundamental questions remain as to how best to capitalise and involve such a large and globally diverse membership base.

5.1.4 Securing long term funding was vital for achieving a separate GIP identity and delivering on suggested resource improvements.

All the above points require extra resources which currently are not currently available in either staff or financial terms. Ideally, Defra were seen as the most appropriate body to fund GIP to deliver on these improvements particularly in light of the renewed policy focus on GI. As mentioned above there is almost a hidden research role that GIP plays supporting academic impact and this could also offer a potential funding avenue as research impact becomes increasingly more important. There are a large number of GI projects being undertaken all with aspirations to impact upon policy and decision making. GIP resources could help with this.

However, the idea that secured most traction across the internet and semi structured surveys was for TCPA to lead on a grant bid with support from other partners to secure funding for GIP and thus turbo charge the resources, projects and outputs crucially with dedicated staff.

5.1.5 The lack of a separate identity of GIP was hindering its development.

In the 2014 membership feedback there was concern expressed about what the GIP was for. The results here tended to confirm that there was little confusion over the key roles pursued by the TCPA. However, within the management of the GIP by the TCPA, the separate identity of GIP had become increasingly blurred with TCPA activity/resources.

This gave rise to ideas as to whether members could represent a "GIP view" at conferences and events[60]. Issues of GIP identity were also lost with no dedicated web site (currently embedded in TCPA) and with a clunky; hard to access menu. Furthermore, the annual conference was badged as a joint TCPA/GIP event which dilutes the GIP identity[61]. There were comments reflecting a blurring of activity when TCPA did GI work and projects versus the separate role of GIP.   Here the appointment of a specific GIP partnership officer was seen as one way of addressing this. Whilst Julia's Thrifts management was praised universally there were issues about capacity and vulnerability and need for this separate identity so that TCPA and GIP could have some separation .

5.1.5 The GIP was seen by some as preaching to the converted.

There was recognition of the need to focus more on the policy influencing function and to engage with people and agencies that needed to be converted to see GI as a positive asset for their work. At present most of GIP work was perceived to be directed at national government level but not necessarily covering all departments. In particular, the smaller business interest was seen to have been missed as well as the new models of devolution (combined authorities and local enterprise partnerships). Cumulatively this was seen as a big audience to tap into. An additional point was raised on whether there was a need for more targeted activities and outputs for these different groups? Here the conference may not be the best space to try to engage. Currently all the existing outputs were too focussed on GI to appeal and perhaps there was a need to develop GI material that could appeal to such groups.

5.1.6 The annual conference and GIP events were valued but …..

There was clear evidence for a return to a work programme with dedicated GI workstreams within a more action-orientated and deliberative set of outcomes ad key messages. Here the conference was seen as part of a bigger picture where particular projects might report back or where a particular GI topic could be tackled. There was clear support for conference messages to feature as an output in their own right.

5.1.7 The impact of GIP was seen largely through its knowledge and information exchange functions rather than creating a direct and measurable impact.

Many comments made reference to fact that GIP continues to punch above its collective weight. This also reflects the skills/experience of the TCPA in its management of a voluntary

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[60] This was an interesting viewpoint but perhaps failed to account for the fact that GIP is not a formally constituted body. This is perhaps a key point to note as many survey participants perhaps see GIP in a similar vein to a local nature partnership for example

[61] This should not be seen as a criticism. Rather this reflects a blurring of ideniety which hwas evident in n2014 when it was passed o to TCPA from Deffra.

body like this. There was recognition of its ability to engage multiple audiences in a loose network.   This raises issue of coordination and action particularly given the exciting opportunities now existing within the GI policy arena such as climate change, biodiversity loss, net gain and nature recovery networks. Significantly all these issues featured in recent sounding boards agendas. There seemed to be strong support for GIP delivering greater impact through improved outputs and current GI resources (newsletter and web site), but funding would be required to deliver this.

6. Action Plan

These actions reflect the author's assessment of the preceding evidence together with some horizon scanning linking into the key policy drivers that may shape and direct the GI agenda. The action plan was also informed by discussions with the GIP sounding board in October 2019.

6.1 Securing Long term Funding for the future evolution of GIP:

This is the key action from the review. TCPA has been given a clear vote of confidence in managing the GIP but in order to address the suggested improvements and crucially the separate identity of GIP, there is a need to secure long-term funding. Here TCPA could take the lead with support from the sounding board with outcomes identified that accord with this report that can be delivered through a project officer supporting GIP.

The suggested activities from the evidence massed here include:

- A revamped stand-alone web site
- Webinars and other events/roundtables to address current and future GI policy opportunities and debates.
- Meetings in all parts of the UK to reflect particular policy issues
- Training materials to improve the KE/CPD role with both general and targeted materials to suit specific audiences.
- Case study library building on the current library resource.
- Skills audit of GIP membership to better tap into areas of expertise.

Actions:

1. TCPA to work collaboratively across the sounding board and wider membership to submit a 3-5 year funding bid for resources.

2. TCPA should also approach Defra for part funding to help increase the viability for a successful funding application.

6.2. Supporting Natural England in testing and co-producing a set of GI principles and standards

There was support for the GIP to establish some good practice GI principles reflecting previous work done for garden cities to secure some agreement on what good green infrastructure is aiming for. However, there is also current work in England going on under the umbrella of Defra/Natural England developing GI standards frameworks and there are also initiatives like Building with Nature that are working within this space. Given that

duplication is not helpful, there is an opportunity space to add value. It Is recommended that GIP takes part as one of the pilots within phase 2 of Natural England GI standards project to test the principles out across its membership.

Action: TCPA to submit an expression of interest on behalf of GIP to undertake a pilot study of the GI principles using GIP membership.

6.3. Setting more proactive and deliberative agendas for future GIP work and action

There was clear evidence and desire from TCPA and other responses, for members to play a more active role in setting the GIP agenda and joint GIP working through identified work streams. Here work undertaken by the author leading on some aspects of GIP work such as the NPPF 2 provides a more deliberative model notwithstanding concern from sounding board members over time and resources to undertake such work. Action in the form of a grant bid and pilot for the GI standards project reflect workstreams

Perhaps one pragmatic mechanism for this would be to use the updates from the sounding board to help prioritise the items for future sounding board meetings and determine GIP priority issues.

Furthermore, if there was an annual membership survey these evidence strands might provide a more active member-based agenda which TCPA could build from. It might also help identify different forms of event and activity and space where such things could occur.

Actions:

3. There are also smaller actions that could help to refresh the sounding board and identify any gaps in the membership base through (1) a skills audit of the GIP sounding board (2) a review of the makeup of the formal membership base.

4. Drawing from the results of this year's conference is there any way that the key messages could be communicated via a blog to the wider GIP membership and government.

6.4. Developing closer ties with other partnerships

Drawing from discussions with the sounding board on October 16th there might be an opportunity space for GIP to work more collaboratively with the ecosystems knowledge network. This might extend to sharing resources such as access to Web Ex but also enables both partnerships to build upon each others networks to mutual benefit. Whilst this has not been properly investigated there is a useful action in exploring these links which already have been started through joint working with the Welsh Government GI network . Te green Cities Action project has helped GIP rise its UK profile and provides a fertile base to build upon.

Actions:

5. Start joint discussions with EKN about collaboration and joint resources.

6. Continue work with devolved governments and established national forums on GI to make GIP a UK forum for GI

7. Invite representatives of Welsh and Scottish and northern Irish government to become members of the sounding board and consider holding meetings in the devolved nations.

6.5 Developer a stronger and more explicit research impact focus

The findings highlight the significant respect that GIP/TCPA has in academic circles. They are valued as a resource to help improve impact in an ever-increasing number of research projects. Current rules, however, often exclude TCPA/GIP benefiting financially from their input and expertise. It is desirable therefore to investigate opportunities/ models to reward GIP financially for the input and expertise that they provide for research projects. Here the model developed between TCPA and Northumbria University offers a possible pathway to exploit and adapt. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to make a case for wider recognition of their expertise to the research councils.

Actions

8. Work with Northumbria University to develop a business case for support from research councils where TCPA/GIP support research projects achieve impact.

7. Appendices

Appendix 7.1 Self Evaluation Report by Julia Thrift and other TCPA staff (comments)

Green Infrastructure Partnership

This is a set of questions/prompts to help structure a self-evaluation report from the TCPA (2500 words max) to be used as a key output in the evaluation of the green infrastructure partnership.

This report is not about you having to provide metrics or data as many require; rather it is about you taking time to develop your own reflexive narrative, thinking critically about what you have achieved as a partnership under your TCPA leadership.

It also allows you to think creatively about the kind of GIP you want to see for the future and what that might look like.

The questions and prompts below are only suggestions for you to adapt as you see fit; they provide some prompts to help structure a written response. This response will then shape a follow up interview.

Self Evaluation Template. (please expand to fit the text you type.

FROM DEFRA TO TCPA

In taking over the reins from Defra in 2014 you developed a new strategy for GIP in consultation with members; reflecting back would you have changed anything that was done at that initial stage.

At that time the GIP had fewer than 300 members. Defra wanted to host an event to formally hand over the GIP to the TCPA, so that the Minister could speak and reflect on what the GIP had achieved so far, and around 80 members signed up to attend the event. I think Defra was surprised by how popular it was. This provided, rather by chance, an opportunity to meet a large proportion of the members and so the TCPA used part of the event to consult them about the future of the GIP. They gave us some clear messages. Firstly, that it should remain free to join. Secondly, that they wanted it to be a bit more outspoken than it could be when run by government. And then the two objectives set out below (sharing information across the sector, and influencing decision-makers).

If the event hadn't taken place we would have had to email the members to ask them what they wanted from the GIP, which would have been a far more superficial way of engaging with them. So, I think we were very lucky that were are able to meet so many members – and the objectives that came out of that event have turned out to be robust and useful.

OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT The Green Infrastructure Partnership has two key objectives (listed below) For each summarise (bullet points) what you see as the SWOTS of GIP in addressing each of these

OBJECTIVE 1 To share information about green infrastructure research, policy, practice, funding, innovation etc

IMPACT What do you consider to be your greatest impact(s) on this objective

Strengths

This has been achieved primarily through the newsletter, but also through events. Much of the TCPA's work involves communications and dissemination so setting up a newsletter for GIP was something we could do quite easily and seems to have been welcomed by the sector (judging by the growing number of people who subscribe to it). As a former journalist, I've been able to bring some professional communications skills to this. Also, having worked in promoting green infrastructure for many years, starting with my work at CABE, I have enough background knowledge to be reasonably confident in assessing the significance of new things – and the TCPA as a whole is well-connected and gains a lot of relevant information through other projects and policy work. We also have a lot of social communications experience across the TCPA and this has helped establish the twitter account.

Commented [JM1]: I think the newsletter is an easy-to-read overview of things happening in the sector.

Weaknesses

Our resources are limited and things are done in a rush. We probably miss some news that we should include, particularly from Scotland, Wales and N Ireland.

Commented [JM2]: I echo this. Content is often found incidentally, which obviously leaves us vulnerable to missing items which are important but perhaps not widely reported on in national media.

Not completely sure who our audience is, apart from the assumption that they either work in or enjoy reading about green infrastructure.

There is no feedback function so we can learn how to improve our work. Better understanding of this could help with writing (i.e. does it need to be written in more simple language, more technical, longer, shorter, etc.; do people want to see more of a certain kind of content.

I imagine there are many people who would find the newsletter useful but don't know about it – and we don't really have the means to target them.

I imagine a lot of people are confused about what exactly the GIP does.

Opportunities

Since the TCPA took on the GIP the amount of policy development, research and general activity around GI has increased hugely. In the early days of publishing the newsletter we used to worry that we wouldn't have enough news (for six issues a year) and now we often have too much (for 10 issues a year). Given that there will be an Environment Bill in England in the next 12 months, and lots happening in Wales and Scotland too, we are not going to run out of content for newsletters, social media or events.

Threats

Because GI has gone up the policy agenda there are now far more GI related events, which means we need to keep our events fresh and relevant to our audience.

Commented [JM3]: Newsletters that aggregate green infrastructure news in a similar way. Some of these may have more resources to search for and compile relevant news, therefore risking our users unsubscribing because ours isn't up to scratch or repeats stories.

Overall comment.

The 'sharing information' objective has been a consistent activity throughout the last five years and still seems to provide a service that isn't provided by any other network or organisation.

OBJECTIVE 2 To influence key decision-makers about the value of green infrastructure

IMPACT(S) What do you consider to be your greatest impact(s) on this objective.

Strengths

At about the time the TCPA took on the management of the GIP the Natural Capital Committee was being set up and Dieter Helm was appointed chair. With Dieter Helm running it, and reporting to the Cabinet Office not Defra, it was clear that it would be influential. The people in Defra who were running the GIP knew nothing about it, but we pushed them to get us an invitation to the launch of their first report. At the launch it was clear that the NCC was thinking about rural natural capital managed by private sector organisations. Public parks, for instance, just didn't figure. In view of this, we contacted the NCC and managed to set up a meeting between one of its members and about a dozen local authority green space managers. It might have been a co-incidence, but after that the NCC's reports started to increase their interest in urban green infrastructure, and its value was recognised in the 25YEP.

Another 'win' was that when Natural England's website was transferred to the .GOV website it was streamlined and a lot of its guidance about green infrastructure was scrapped. People across the sector were hugely upset by this. In response, the TCPA, the Land Trust, the Landscape Institute and Groundwork wrote a letter to both the minister at Defra and the minister at MHCLG explaining that the guidance had been lost and that the guidance provided in the PPG wasn't good enough to replace it. We have no idea what happened, but Radio 4's Today programme picked up on it and the TCPA's chief executive was invited on to talk about it. (We suspect that someone got confused between green infrastructure and the green belt.) As a result, ministers were keen to sort something out and following this the references to green infrastructure in the PPG were greatly improved. Without the strong links and shared agenda created by the GIP it wouldn't have been possible to do this.

Weaknesses

With limited resources we have to be very strategic in deciding who to try to influence – there are many decision-makers who are still unaware of the evidence about the benefits of GI who we won't be able to communicate with.

Opportunities

The policy agenda has changed hugely in the last five years. The 25 Year Environment Plan, the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and the growing public interest in climate change, provide many opportunities.

Threats

The growing influence of natural capital accounting could be a way of demonstrating the financial benefits of GI and proving that it is a good investment. However, there is also a high risk that it could be used as a 'license to trash'. For instance, without very strong policy and legal safeguards a

developer could say, 'OK, that tree has been valued at £5,000 so I'll pay you £5,000 the chop it down.'

Overall Comment

POLICY DEVELOPMENT in what way has GIP influenced or responded to key policy developments 2014-2019 e.g. NPPG revised guidance omitting GI ; HM Government 25 year Env plan, NPPF and draft environment bill concerning GI. Is there a role for GIP leading on current policy changes ?

See above for PPG and 25 YEP.

Various government policy officers have been invited to GIP sounding board meetings in the last five years while they were preparing new policies or initiatives and have valued the opportunity to discuss policy proposals with the GIP sounding board members as part of the policy development. These include: Defra (net gain); Ordnance Survey (GI mapping).

The TCPA has been engaging with Defra over the Environment Bill. At the moment it looks as though its impact on planning will be minimal, which is disappointing in terms of creating and improving GI.

RESEARCH The GIP is seen as a key policy and practice participant for many research bids. You/GIP receive multiple requests for inclusion on research projects. How can GIP strengthen its role and impact in research

Because the GIP isn't an organisation, it can't be represented in research proposals. The TCPA, if invited to be part of GI research proposals, will include a disclaimer to make this clear. Eg 'The TCPA manages the GIP. We cannot speak on behalf of the GIP but will use the knowledge we have gained through speaking to members to contribute…'

BARRIERS Reflecting back on the last 5 years what have been the greatest barriers to achieving your objectives

Uncertain and unpredictable funding, that requires a lot of senior staff time and effort to secure – time which could be spent on policy work and influencing. Staff changes due to support staff being allocated to a wide range of projects and often moved from one thing to another – one of the realities of being part of a small charity. Not having enough staff time to promote the GIP as much as we could have done.

VISION Looking forward how do you see these barriers being overcome

You might make reference to current policy developments on the back of HM Government 25 year Env plan, NPPF and draft environment bill

GI is now far higher on the policy agenda than it was five years ago, which should present a lot of opportunities for the GIP.

 RESOURCES ASSESSMENT What are your reflective comments on the key GIP resources that you provide? How might these be improved and changed given current financial/staff resources

1. Annual meetings/events

Arup's support for the annual conference has been vital – we simply couldn't have held the conferences with out them. Their support (hosting the conference) means that the TCPA can afford to offer places at a relatively low ticket price (much lower than our other conferences) which is important as the GI sector generally couldn't afford higher ticket prices.

2. Monthly Newsletters
   Would be lovely to have more time to work on these and sharpen up the way it's written and presented.
3. Workshops
   Have been held ad hoc when a particular issue seemed to benefit from x-sector discussion. Seem to have been very useful to help people develop their thinking.
4. Member meetings sounding boards
   The fact that so many people attend suggests that people find them useful. Could perhaps be more strategic?
5. Web Site
   Really wish we could create a stand-along website, but despite lots of effort haven't been able to secure the resources to do this.
6. GI library
   Very please we've been able to host it. But have lacked time to promote it as much as we'd have liked.
7. Social Media
   Pleased with what we've achieved (3,000+ twitter followers) but don't have time to do much with the huge Linkedin following.
8. Staff support
   It's really helpful when staff support is consistent and long-term as GI can be quite technical. Frustrating when staff are moved from one project to another and the new person is starting from scratch again.
9. Supporting Research
   Having the support of the NERC GI fellow has been hugely helpful, providing resource to follow up important issues that TCPA staff don't have capacity or skills to do.

Are there any other resources you would want to develop?

A stand-alone website, and lots more marketing and promotion.

MEMBERSHIP Are there any reflections on the current membership arrangements.

e.g. How can the membership be made more active and/or participatory What advantages/disadvantages does the GIP have as a voluntary free to join partnership organisation have; How might a change in structure and members improve the resources?

No clear answer to this in terms of the wider membership. In the current environment, light-touch networks seem much more appropriate than organisations with structures, committees etc.

Regarding the sounding board, when the TCPA took on the management of the GIP the other partners who provided early – and vital – financial support also provided the support of their staff. There was a lot of discussion about how it was a partnership and it should not be up to the TCPA to do everything. The Landscape Institute's policy manager had 'promoting GI' in his work targets and so was able to put a lot of time and effort into various things. For instance, he did a huge amount of work regarding updating the PPG with better references to GI. The partnership worked very well

because at that time the TCPA didn't have strong contacts at Defra, but the LI did; and the LI didn't have strong contacst at MHCLG, but the TCPA did. So by working together we could influence both departments and play to the strengths of both organisations.

Sadly, however, that sort of co-ordinated partnership working has not happened more recently. We would like to encourage it, and perhaps this should be raised at a future sounding board meeting. It helps if there is a specific project to focus on. I hope that other organisations do not feel disempowered and unable to offer practical help.

TCPA How has the GIP benefited the work and profile of the TCPA. Are there any disadvantages of hosting the GIP in TCPA. Is there confusion between GIP and TCPA activities.

The TCPA has invested considerable staff time in the GIP that is not recouped through the GIP sponsorship / funding. However, running the GIP has strengthened the TCPA's ability to apply for other projects (eg PERFECT, Green Cities). It has also given us a stronger focus on Defra and Defra policies (much of our policy work has previously focused on MHCLG).

There probably is confusion between TCPA and GIP activities (particularly regarding the annual conference) although we try to be as clear as we can.

FUTURE

It is now May 2024 What does the GIP ideally look like in your eyes and how does it differ from 2019?

- A stand-alone website with lots of very useful content for practitioners, planners, councillors, influencers, etc.
- 4,000 members and a more interaction between members
- More members from Wales, Scotland and NI and better coverage of GI issues in those nations
- Dedicated support staff
- Objectives delivered by a partnership of various organisations.

ANY OTHER COMMENTS

Appendix 7.2 Internet Questionnaire Results

Please see the following web link for a full set of results.
https://mainstreaminggreeninfrastructure.com/reports/Appendix2%20Fullsurveyresults.pdf