



Barrell on ... Green assets a perfect Olympics backdrop

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Our national pride has taken a battering over the past few years, with corrupt politicians and incompetent bankers — a culture of the few, driven by personal gain, at the expense of the many and our national best interest. How breathtaking it was to see the contrast between these shameful failures and the British Olympic success. The same country but a different vision, based on long-term planning rather than short-term exploitation.

At the Olympic Park, British professionals showcased how an industrial wasteland can be rapidly transformed into a thriving hub of international attention. On the water, track and field, years of careful planning and considered investment has delivered stunning achievements. But most noticeable of all was how green and blue London looked to the eyes of the world.

The parks, trees, grass and water created the visual framework within which the unique London architecture sits — the perfect backdrop for the events and drama of the games to unfold. London's green assets served it well when it mattered most, but they were not just manufactured overnight. Trees take decades, if not centuries, of care and investment to deliver the scale to make cities green, and parks are just the same.

The people who designed those parks and planted those trees are long dead. They knew they would never see the results of their work yet they still fought for the money and argued the case for green space, which gave us the infrastructure to deliver the perfect international event. These people had the vision to see beyond their lifetime, making an immense contribution to the greater good that we all benefit from every day.

As the Olympic afterglow fades, it may be too much to expect politicians to think beyond re-election, but ordinary people can. So when the inevitable austerity cuts start to bite, raise your voice for those trees and parks that made all this possible and argue for a green legacy of which Britain can be proud.

