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Delegates at the Arboricultural Association's 50th Anniversary Conference (www.trees.org.uk) were treated to a stream of eminent physicians and researchers all aligned to one theme. The body of emerging evidence is compelling: the quality of human health is inextricably linked to proximity with nature.

Bringing trees closer to people significantly improves health, happiness and wellbeing, but it requires vision and leadership to implement, qualities frequently absent from local and national politics. All the more encouraging then to find a top Government politician, Baroness Kramer, minister of state for transport, vigorously endorsing a new publication on integrating trees into sustainable development.

Trees in Hard Landscapes: A Guide for Delivery, published by the Trees & Design Action Group (www.tdag.org.uk), offers a masterclass for all urban professionals interested in making our towns and cities better places to live. Complementing its sister publication Trees in the Townscape: A Guide for Decision Makers, it provides ideas, strategies and practical solutions to the challenges of urban greening. Modern lifestyles have driven a wedge between people and nature, and these guides deal with the practicalities of re-establishing that primeval link.

The document advocates a strong focus on cooperation between the multiple disciplines involved in managing the urban realm, but that is a grand aspiration. Teamwork sounds good in principle, but individuals can find it difficult to interact with other professions, often preferring to stick with what they know.

It is human nature to favour the security of familiarity over the anxiety of the unknown, so getting all these professionals working together may be an uncomfortable departure from the traditional mindset. However, in the current climate of dwindling budgets and ever-increasing public aspirations, collaboration is the new reality and even the most anxious objectors will have to adjust.

