

Dr Mark Drane

Overview

Mark is a practitioner and researcher working across the fields of public health and urbanism. His work uses settings-based approaches to go beyond minimising health harm and to support positive wellbeing. He is passionate about addressing health and social inequity and addressing health, firstly, as a human right. Mark lives in Cardiff, Wales with his family and works internationally in the field of healthy urbanism.

Mark founded Urban Habitats in 2018 as a test-bed for translational / practice-based research. This has been undertaken alongside his doctoral research through the Covid-19 pandemic observing the impact of people's urban environment on their health and wellbeing.

Originally trained as an architect, Mark has 20-years' experience including the delivery of over £2 billion of social infrastructure and responsibility for large multidisciplinary teams of built environment professionals. Drawing on this knowledge and expertise Mark now seeks to bring research into practice and policy to accelerate change that supports positive human and planetary health.

Mark has recently become a non-executive director with Green Squirrel, a social enterprise in Cardiff, Wales offering practical, creative, and inclusive opportunities for individuals and communities to explore solutions and take action on the climate and ecological emergency. He is also a visiting lecturer on health and place at several universities and contributes as an advisory board member for research projects in the field of health and place including currently with Cambridge University.

Some recent examples of work include:

- Health Impact Regulations support; Public Health Wales: supporting preparation for forthcoming regulations which will require all strategic decisions of public bodies to assess health implications. Support included: consultation response to government; communications plan refresh; HIA case studies for public bodies in Wales including integration into existing governance & operational systems.
- Guiding Principles for Planning Healthy Communities; Pickering, Canada: an evidence informed 'ecosystem approach' for a planned urban extension with a population of ~60k people. Principles include actions to support Indigenous knowledge and needs of First Nations communities.
- Making space for nature; Ysgol Pen Rhos School, Llanelli & Cardiff University: co-producing actions for nature & wellbeing children in a primary school setting in an area with greater health needs.
- Healthy streetlife: doctoral research explores the street as social and physical environments that impact health. During Covid-19 lockdowns qualitative research investigated residents' everyday health practices: from street bingo to socially distanced 'hellos'. Streets are evidenced as important health settings: Healthy Cities from the grassroots. Recommendations are tailored to policy & practice. These include addressing inequities experienced by women and by people who experience racism.
- Two current new projects include a programme evaluation of Healthy Happy Places that aims to create good mental health through the built environment; and exploratory research for Public Health Wales on health in the arts, culture, and sports sectors.

Current Positions

Urban Habitats ([website](#))

2018–Present, Founder & Director

UWE Bristol, School of Health & Social Wellbeing

2024–Present, Senior Research Fellow (maternity cover, 1day/week)

Centre for Alternative Technology, Wales

2017–Present, Visiting Lecturer & Tutor on Place and Health

Salus Global Knowledge Exchange

2020–Present, Research Lead & Associate

Green Squirrel Community Interest Company

2024–Present, Non-executive director

Past Experience

WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Urban Environments, UWE Bristol

2016–2024, Doctoral Researcher

UWE Bristol

2023–2024, Visiting Lecturer & Tutor on Place and Health

2018–2019, Research Assistant

IBI Group (now Arcadis)

Studio Principal, Science & Higher Education Practice Lead, UK & Ireland, 2009–2018

Dane Ashworth Cottam, Manchester, UK, Architect, Associate Director, 2004–2008

Parsons Brinckerhoff (now WSP)

2001–2003, UK Architectural Assistant

Parsons Brinckerhoff Constructors (now WSP)

1999–2000, Projects Engineer

AC Rajan & Associates, Chennai

1998, Architectural Assistant

Awards and prizes

2025 Urban Land Institute Health Leaders Cohort 8

2022 Best Research Paper

Healthy City Design International, Health in climate adaptation: Global case studies and lessons for practice. Presenting with Public Health Wales.

2003 Hadyn Smith Award

Royal Institute of British Architects, for top graduating student on professional diploma.

Professional Memberships

Architects Registration Board

Royal Institute of British Architects

Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland

Fellow of The [PRACTICE.CV](#) | 01-01-2025
Royal Society of Arts

Health & Place Project Experience

WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Wellbeing, Public Health Wales; Health Impact Regulations; Wales, UK:

supporting the wider work of Public Health Wales in preparation for forthcoming regulations including: contributing to consultation response to Welsh Government; leading a communications plan refresh; leading publication of case studies of health impact assessment (HIA) from public bodies in Wales.

Cardiff University; Making Space for Nature; Llanelli, UK: an academic and enterprise partnership centred around the aim of working with local communities to co-produce plans for making space for nature. Co-design with primary school children at Ysgol Pen Rhos leading to an action plan for nature in the local area. Broad engagement undertaken with stakeholders.

WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Wellbeing, Public Health Wales; Health in Climate Adaptation; Wales, UK: case studies of health impact assessment (HIA) in climate adaptation planning. Outputs were included in 2023 WHO Europe regional Healthy Cities Annual Business Meeting publication.

Cardiff University & Quality of Life Foundation; Community Voices Cardiff; Cardiff, UK: “community consultation done differently”, one arm of a major research project with Urban Rooms across four nations of UK. A month-long programme of engagement activities with disenfranchised communities was undertaken and guidance published to inform policy and practice. Investigation of digital mapping and tools for engagement. Co-production engagement with primary age children “Create Your Own Park” and member of advisory board.

WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Wellbeing, Public Health Wales; Developmental ; Wales, UK: a whole country population health profile in support of Health Impact Assessment of Climate Change in Wales. Work to provide an up to date and rigorous assessment of the population of Wales with respect to climate impacts. Profile addressed structural inequalities including linked to gender and ethnic identity.

Johana Hartwig, Artist; Ascension, River Rhymney Urban Design Report, UK – urban design study using desktop and qualitative methods including with local residents and businesses to investigate how the River Rhymney is integrated within the urban fabric of Cardiff. Resident and worker views demonstrated in depth knowledge and understanding of the value of the river, its wildlife, and habitats and this evidence could be used to address this issue and supporting community agency and wellbeing at the same time. Role: lead researcher & consultant.

Urban Habitats; R&D Evaluating Climate Vulnerability with Geospatial Data; Wales, UK: project addressed use of GIS to better inform where climate adaptation action is required; availability and gaps in GIS data sets for Wales; use of GIS to combine and evaluate climate vulnerability and health inequality data.

WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Wellbeing, Public Health Wales; Country Population Health Profile; Wales, UK: a whole country population health profile in support of Health Impact Assessment of Climate Change in Wales. Work to provide an up to date and rigorous assessment of the population of Wales with respect to climate impacts. Profile addressed structural inequalities including linked to gender and ethnic identity.

SALUS Global Knowledge Exchange; Guiding Principles for Planning Healthy Communities; Pickering, Canada: evidence review of healthy urban planning frameworks and tools; development of an ‘ecosystem approach’ and guiding principles for planned urban extension with a population of ~60,000 people including everything needed to be self-sustaining place. This included a framework for evaluation including theory of change and logic model; outcome evaluation; process evaluation; co-production and inclusion evaluation.

WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Wellbeing, Public Health Wales; Health Impact Assessment of Circular Economy Approaches in Wales; Wales, UK: an HIA considering the impact of building on Wales’ success as a global leader in recycling to enhance circular economy approaches in Wales. Synthesising and reviewing an initial review undertaken by PHW; extending this to consider wider circular economy approaches; complex system mapping of impact pathways; and a supplementary review of the impact following the Covid-19 pandemic including e.g. increased PPE waste; impact on workers in the waste sector.

Education

PhD: Healthy Street Life – a socio-ecological framework of pathways to health impact in the residential street. University of the West of England, 2016 – 2024

Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice: - RIBA North-West - Passed with Distinction, 2003 - RIBA Hadyn Smith Award

Degree of Bachelor of Architecture - Manchester School of Architecture (a joint school of Manchester University and Manchester Metropolitan University) - Passed with Distinction, 2001

Degree of Master of Arts in Architectural Design The University of Edinburgh - Class 2:1 Honours, 1999

WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Wellbeing, Public Health Wales; Health Impact Assessment of Climate Change in Wales; Wales, UK: case study of the Biosphere as a landscape & series of communities that will experience varied health impacts from climate change including smaller coastal communities, coastal towns, inland towns, larger towns, dispersed communities, and smaller rural communities; each appraised for existing assets & situation, health impacts of climate change, & identification of vulnerable groups.

Green Squirrel; Railway Gardens, Social Value Assessment; Cardiff, UK: – preparation of a holistic social value review including Social Value Assessment using HACT methodology. Assessment considered value created by activities including volunteering, environmental works, & green & blue infrastructure enhancements. Assessment of this community hub focused on sustainable communities & wellbeing. Assessment was co-produced with community volunteers thus building capacity within community & incorporating community expertise.

Cardiff Council; Streets for Health, Cardiff, UK: a pilot project to establish a framework & ways of working to deliver on 2020 white paper commitment to deliver a "...a 'streets for health' initiative across the city" focussed on wellbeing, green & blue infrastructure, safety, being child friendly, active travel, biodiversity, SUDS, & access for everyone. 10 proposals screened with pilot delivered in Plasnewydd area of city. To build council capacity, a ½ day workshop on wellbeing & environment was also delivered to circa 50 staff from across council departments.

Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales; Art of the Possible; Wales, UK: input via interviews & commentary as sectoral expert on health & wellbeing to A Healthier Wales and Cohesive Communities goal convenors to inform development of Journey Checkers subsequently published. Report available from: [link](#)

Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales; The Future Generations Report 2020; Wales, UK: this report comprises the first review by the Commissioner of the Act. Input to draft prior to publication as sectoral expert to chapter Health and Wellness – the shift to prevention. Report available from: [link](#)

Bevan Commission; Health and Place Briefing; Wales, UK (uncommissioned): a briefing to the Bevan Commissioners on the topic of health and place addressing how a prudent health and care system for Wales can support wellbeing in place.

Pobl Housing Association; Penderry Regeneration; Wales, UK: with urban designers The Urbanists in development of an outline masterplan. A high level framework was developed encompassing Future Generations wellbeing goals to support those responsible for delivery of individual interventions to undertake rapid appraisal of potential wellbeing impact.

NHS England; Healthy New Towns, Phase 1 Programme Advisor; England, UK: the programme assesses how to 'design in health' across ten residential developments across England encompassing about 70,000 new homes and a population of 200,000 people. Mark assembled a team including academic partners. Reports from Phase II available from: [link](#)

Summary of multi-sectoral built environment experience

Over 20 year's Mark has experience of delivery of over £2.0bn of social infrastructure including: strategic estates consultancy; science & higher education; healthcare; leisure; community & cultural; housing & regeneration; education; and transportation. Mark has worked with organisations and clients including: governmental; public sector; private sector & development; third sector / community organisations; artists and creative practitioners. Four examples are:

Queen Elizabeth University Hospital and Royal Hospital for Children Glasgow, UK – A new 170,000m² 'super hospital' and one of the most advanced medical campuses in Europe. Delivered five weeks ahead of schedule and achieved BREEAM Excellent. £840m

Birmingham Women's Hospital & Regional Genetics Laboratories, UK – Whole service transformation to redevelop the existing site to create a national centre of excellence. LEAN approach to provide the most supportive, patient-focused physical environment possible. £48m

Oldham Local Investment Finance Trust (LIFT), Oldham, UK. A public-private partnership delivering ten community leisure and health facilities providing a Hub and Spoke model of care. Projects supported regeneration of the community, for example Glodwick Health Centre which was in the community where the Oldham Race Riots started in the early 2000s. £90m

Northgate Integrated Health & Social Care Centre, and Residential Accommodation, Chester, UK Integrated Health and Social Care Centre including 4 GP practices, community facilities; treatment, therapy, and diagnostics. Social Care facilities including virtual ward, patch team, social care crisis response, director of public health, and third sector hub. £23m

Selected publications

Drane, M. (2024) *Healthy streetlife: an ecologic exploration of residents' health practices in the street environment*. PhD, WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Urban Environments, UWE Bristol. Available from: [link](#)

Drane, M., Green, L., Ashton, K., Fletcher, M., and Azam, S. (2024) *Putting the spotlight on health, well-being and equity using health impact assessment: case studies from public bodies in Wales* [online]. Cardiff: WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Well-being, Public Health Wales. Available from: [link](#)

Edmonds, N. and Green, L. **[MD contributor]** (2023) *Climate Change in Wales: Health Impact Assessment* [online]. Cardiff: WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Well-being, Public Health Wales. Available from: [link](#)

Andrew, R., **Drane, M.**, Green, L., Lewis, R. and Wooldridge, A. (2022) *Circular Economies and Sustainable Health and Well-being. The public health impact of public bodies refocusing on waste reduction and reuse in Wales. Summary Report*. [online]. Cardiff, Public Health Wales. Available from: [link](#)

SALUS **[MD lead author]** (2022) *Creating Healthy Communities. An ecosystem approach to creating health in Veraine, a proposed new community in Ontario, Canada* [online]. Billerica: SALUS. Available from: [link](#)

Rice, L. and **Drane, M.** (2020) Indicators of Healthy Architecture—a Systematic Literature Review. *Journal of Urban Health* [online]. 97 (6), pp. 899–911. Available from: [link](#)

Drane, M. & Carmichael, L. (2018) Typologies of knowledge for healthy streets: the need for an interdisciplinary paradigm for public health and design practice. In: *City Street 3*. Beirut 31 Oct-03 Nov 2018. Beirut: Notre Dame University Louaize, pp. 366-385 Available from: [link](#)

Selected conference papers

Drane, M. (2024) Healthy streetlife: Residents' street design priorities to support everyday health practices. In: SALUS Global Knowledge Exchange, ed. *Healthy City Design International*. Liverpool, UK, October 2024.

Drane, M., Hartley, L., Lee, S., Reid, N., Turnbull, T. (2024) *Healthy urbanism rehab* [poster]. In: SALUS Global Knowledge Exchange, ed. *Healthy City Design International*. Liverpool, UK, October 2024.

Drane, M. and Edmonds, N. (2023) Health in climate adaptation: Global case studies and lessons for practice. In: SALUS Global Knowledge Exchange, ed. *Healthy City Design International*. Liverpool, UK, October 2023. Publication: [link](#).

Gattis, M., **Drane, M.**, Khan, M. (2023) *Making space for nature for children's wellbeing in Llanelli, Wales* [poster]. In: SALUS Global Knowledge Exchange, ed. *Healthy City Design International*. Liverpool, UK, 16-17 October 2023. Publication: [link](#).

Soleman, M. [chair], Collis, A., **Drane, M.**, Gough, M., Lea, N., White, R. (2023) I Am Not Hard to Reach. Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament, Cardiff. 13 July 2023. The Privilege Café.

Drane, M. and Williams, N. (2022) Health in climate adaptation: Global case studies and lessons for practice. In: SALUS Global Knowledge Exchange, ed. *Healthy City Design International*. London, UK, 10-11 October 2022. **Award: Best Research Paper**

Drane, M. (2022) Guiding principles for planning healthy communities: Veraine. In: SALUS Global Knowledge Exchange, ed. *Healthy City Design International*. London, UK, 10-11 October 2022.

Rice, L. and **Drane, M.** (2021) Indicators of healthy architecture: lessons for practice from a systematic literature review. In: SALUS Global Knowledge Exchange, ed. *Healthy City Design International*. [online] 11-14 October 2021.

Drane, M. (2018) *Typologies of knowledge for healthy streets: the need for an interdisciplinary paradigm for public health and design practice*. In: *City Street 3*. Beirut 31 October - 03 November 2018.