I love where I live.

I live in a small town in mid Cornwall famous for its hurling (throwing a silver ball up and down town ‘fighting’ for Town & Country). In spite of the ‘Cornish’ charm of the place it has its fair share of run down property and boarded up shops. Thankfully though, we have escaped the second home influx, unlike Padstow just up the road.

So why do I love this place. Well, it has a thriving community of all ages, the whole mix of housing tenures, a post office, a small supermarket (now threatened by an out of town supermarket), two butchers ......... and of course a bowling green. You meet people on the street, talk to them; we even know our neighbours long before they know us. In essence, you feel part of the place, you feel you belong. This is what is known as ‘Social Capital’.

I recently wrote to John Woodcock MP in support of his campaign to stop bowling greens being closed as part of local authority cutbacks. On the face of it, EHP’s might think that this has nothing at all to do with environmental health. In fact, it has everything to do with environmental and public health.

Back in 2000 **Robert Putnam wrote a fascinating book entitled *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* Student EHP’s should put Clays’ to one side and read this one first as this is 21st century public health.**

Putnam writes how we have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbours, and our democratic structures– and how we can reconnect.

The author goes on to warn us that our stock of social capital – the very fabric of our connections with each other, has plummeted, impoverishing our lives and communities.

Next year marks the anniversary of a key document *Environmental health - 2012 - A key partner in Delivering the Public Health Agenda.* In recognition of its recommendations*,* EHP’s could do no better than to re visit social capital and the work they currently do.