



Green Spaces Campaigning Round-Up, Summer 2014

By the Campaigns Officer, National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces

Love Parks Week at the end of July will see hundreds of events to showcase our green spaces

We are calling on all park lovers to 'share the love' from 25 July to 3 August 2014 by organising events of all kinds, big and small, in local parks and registering them as part of Love Parks Week. Quality green spaces are essential to healthy, happy communities. We celebrate and showcase just this, campaigning for continual reinvestment. Last year over a million people attended events in green spaces throughout Love Parks Week, and this year 100+ events have already been registered on the LPW website. We are working in partnership with Keep Britain Tidy (who are the co-ordinators), Groundwork and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens to try to make 2014 the best year yet. Why not check out the details, think what you can do where you live, and let LPW know?! www.loveparksweek.org.uk



The UK's Friends Groups' prepare to launch national petition

In the light of the savage cuts to parks and green space budgets across the UK in the last 3 years and the threat of even more over the next 10 years, there is a need for those who care about our vital green spaces to speak out and call for the resources, management, maintenance and protection all such spaces deserve. We can't allow a slide back to the shocking days of the 1980s and 1990s when Government cuts and underfunding caused most of the UK's urban green spaces to fall into neglect and disuse. It then took 15 years of public campaigning by Friends Groups, recognition by local and national Government, partnership working, and massive additional funding to try to rescue the situation – with much success, but much more still to do. However, a new underfunding crisis is threatening all that effort and hard work and plunging the whole sector into decline again. The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces, supported by Keep Britain Tidy, the trade paper Horticulture Week and other major organisations, have drafted a public petition to the Government in order to say loud and clear what needs to be done, and urgently. We are aiming to launch it in time for Love Parks Week and are calling on all local and national organisations to back it and publicise it widely. It will be put up on the e-gov petitions page in June and needs at least 100,000 signatures to trigger activity and debate in Parliament.

This is what it will say: **PROTECT AND IMPROVE THE UK'S PARKS AND GREEN SPACES!** *Our green spaces are vital for people's health, social well-being and community cohesion. We are concerned about the damage being caused by dramatic cuts to budgets for staff and maintenance, and the lack of funding and investment by local and national government. We call for the Government to ensure adequate public resources for all green spaces, a statutory duty to manage these spaces to a decent (Green Flag) standard, and a national inquiry into these matters.*



The new Parks Alliance calls for the whole green space sector to work together and speak out

The Parks Alliance, the new alliance of national green space organisations set up to build the voice of UK parks, held a Roundtable in Birmingham on the 8th May. Reps attending discussed the various challenges and opportunities for public parks and green spaces, and how to lobby and campaign together. Members of The Parks Alliance transitional board led discussions on the vision, funding, focus and communications strategy for the organisation, alongside workshops on connections between health and park policy, what people need from their new parks organisation and examples of innovation in delivering parks, including in Birmingham. The transitional board chair Mark Camley said before the Roundtable: *"The leadership roundtable is an opportunity to*



discuss the latest challenges and opportunities for parks and continue to build The Parks Alliance as the voice of UK parks, representing the people and organisations that create, maintain, invest in and use the public green spaces at the heart of British life."

To contact the PA, email tlrt@theparksalliance.org

State of UK Parks report

A new and authoritative report on the state of UK parks is nearing completion. The project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, has gathered the views of green space managers, community based organisations and park users (including the views of 400 Friends Groups) through market research - and will be publicly launched in June. The authors say: *'The HLF share the concerns of many of us in the industry that the current demands and financial pressures on local authority budgets are likely to lead to a decline in the quality and condition of these incredibly important community spaces. Increasing under-investment may well have a significant impact on their future use and enjoyment.'* The hope is that this report will lay out the stark reality, and be a wake up call for the whole country about the deteriorating conditions of our green spaces, and the need for adequate resources and management to ensure their future.

www.stateofukparks.org.uk

Save grass roots football

Local amateur and youth football teams are linking up and mobilising to campaign for survival. They are battling against cuts to park maintenance budgets, increasing hire fees, and broken promises of funding from the Premier League from TV rights. They are campaigning to raise awareness and force the Premier League to back grassroots football - they demand grassroots



football receive 7.5% of the £5.5billion broadcasting rights for 2013-16, which go to the 22 absurdly wealthy Premier League Clubs. The Premier League originally agreed to give 5% of its total income to grassroots football but that has fallen to below 1% - with the organisation, the government and Football Association each cutting contributions from £20m to £12m a year.

The campaign say: 'Don't Let GrassRoots Football Die!'. Tens of thousands signed their petition (which closed in February) on the e-gov website. Their day of protests across England in January included a 95% stoppage from Merseyside teams, and many other areas affected.

See: www.theguardian.com/football/2014/jan/26/grassroots-football-protest

More details on the campaign: www.savegrassroots.co.uk

Support Kew Gardens and sign their petition

Budget cuts threaten Kew Gardens' world-class status. Up to 125 jobs are threatened at the botanic institution after ministers imposed £1.5m cuts despite warnings of critical impact on research.



www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/apr/24/budget-cuts-threaten-kew-gardens-world-class-status

Watch the David Attenborough video and Sign the petition (89,000 have already signed!)

www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/globally-important-conservation-and-science-under-threat-at-royal-botanic-gardens-kew-due-to-uk-government-cuts-5m-deficit-will-lead-to-loss-of-over-120-posts

Open Spaces Society call for action to defend access to the countryside and green spaces

On the 82nd anniversary of the famous Kinder trespass protest for the right to access the countryside, Kate Ashbrook, the general secretary of the Open Spaces Society (Britains oldest national conservation body, founded in 1865), called for that spirit to be 'reignited' in the light of current threats to countryside and green spaces. *'The governments in England and Wales are attacking our green spaces, making it almost impossible for local people to register them as town or village greens to secure their rights to enjoy them. The cuts in local authority funding and the obsession with development mean that budgets for maintaining, creating and recording public paths have been slashed. The national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty have to make*

do with ever-shrinking funds to protect our top landscapes. It's time that the government recognised that open country, green spaces and public paths are not a luxury but a vital need. They contribute massively to our health and well-being, as well as bringing income to the rural economy. This year we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the right to roam on open country: the first access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 was opened to the public in September 2004. But there is much more to be done. We are keen to see completion of coastal access around England, and greater access to woods and forests. There are unrecorded paths and commons to be claimed. The Kinder trespassers, five of whom, scandalously, were jailed, showed what can be achieved with determination and courage. We must never forget their legacy as we face the battles of today.' www.oss.org.uk/reignite-the-campaigning-kinder-trespassers-zeal

Meanwhile, for example, there is all-party support for safe-guarding the protection of village greens throughout Wales: www.oss.org.uk/all-party-support-for-village-greens-in-wales

Greenspace Scotland monthly bulletins

Greenspace Scotland continue to produce their excellent monthly e-bulletins containing an incredible amount of detail. This includes up-to-date information on their organisation; strategic matters; Scotland, UK and international news; research; funding; jobs and training; and a log of dozens of coming events. Why not check out their May 2014 bulletin:

www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=131&mid=127&fileid=457



Various towns take significant steps to promote urban green spaces

- **Glasgow:** Greenspace Scotland, working with Glasgow City Council and the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership, has recently completed a short piece of work aimed at quantifying the potential for green infrastructure interventions in the centre of Glasgow. The study looked at an area around George Street and sought to identify: where surface water management interventions would be most effective; whether projected overheating could be addressed through increasing green cover; where green infrastructure could enhance quality of place.

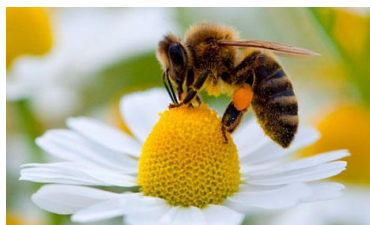


- **Bristol:** A £7 million fund has been secured to support Bristol as Europe's Green Capital 2015. The funding will deliver a range of projects to help Bristol remain at the centre of green investment and urban sustainability. News from Bristol's greenspace Friends: www.bristolparksforum.org.uk

- **Birmingham:** Birmingham has become Britain's first 'biophilic city'. It is joining San Francisco, Wellington and Oslo in a global network of such cities - urban centres celebrated for their green

credentials, their open spaces and their links to nature. The Biophilic Cities network is aimed at finding ways to make sure the need for connection with nature and other forms of life is met in the world's urban centres.

- Plymouth: The town is digging up its roadside verges to create wildlife havens for bees. Britain's species of bees - and other pollinating insects including butterflies, moths and hoverflies - have experienced decline in recent decades, raising concerns about the potential effect on food supplies, gardens and the countryside. A project is being launched to lure the countryside into the inner city by creating wildlife havens for bees and other pollinators. Roadside verges will have low-growing wildflower meadow plants such as red clover, birds-foot trefoil and knapweed to provide nectar and pollen for the bees and bugs.



Details and links from the GSS bulletin:

www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=131&mid=127&fileid=457

London's Friends Groups and Green Space organisations call for the need for statutory recognition and adequate funding for parks to be made into an election issue

The London Parks and Green Space Forum (the independent representative strategic voice for the park and green spaces sector in London) and the London Friends Groups Network (for the 500+ local Friends Groups) called for parks to become an issue in the May elections. They issued a joint appeal to all contacts throughout London, with detailed points that local people could raise with candidates:

'Please remind them that parks and green spaces are an essential resource for all our communities, providing numerous benefits and services: health, sports, leisure, education, play, social cohesion, local economy and biodiversity, to name just a few. They are used by virtually everyone; and as such they should receive the resources they need to ensure they can fulfil their vital functions. The Forum and the Network strongly support a statutory obligation for these spaces to be managed and resourced effectively. In spite of the essential role London's parks and green spaces play we are entering a local and national green space crisis, due to continued cuts to parks budgets, mainly a result of central government cuts to Local Authorities' overall budgets. Park lovers need to speak out now. Past experience of revenue cuts has shown that if local spaces are poorly resourced they are very likely to become problem spaces with negative effects on our communities. Furthermore with London's rising population and space shortages for housing and schools, this means that on top of cuts there is a growing pressure on green space in every Borough, which could lead to inappropriate urban development and commercialism.'



To read in full, go to: www.lfgn.net and check out Documents/Elections2014.

Birmingham Parks budget cuts public outcry wins back £2m for green spaces

In February 2014 Friends Groups in Birmingham launched a campaign against a proposed £2.7m budget cut for the management of the city's green spaces. As a result of extensive lobbying and massive public support, co-ordinated by the Birmingham Open Spaces Forum, £2m of the threatened cut was restored. However, due to Government underfunding, the Council was forced to make £87m cuts throughout the public sector, with the loss of 1,000 jobs. For more details about the Friends Groups and their activities in Birmingham check out: www.bosf.org.uk

'Rethinking Parks'

Over the next two years, Nesta, The Heritage Lottery Fund and The Big Lottery Fund have a pot of £1m to back a small number of pioneering innovations, with a focus on *'finding the new business models that will enable our parks to thrive for the next century.'* They say: *'For example, what if parks made the most of temporary installations to generate income - like open air cinemas, food festivals or art showcases? What if communities took on the maintenance of parks, or real-time user data from smartphones was used to inform maintenance regimes? If you've got an idea to re-imagine the way your local park is used, maintained or run, we want to hear from you.'* They are doing this because: *'Like many other public services our public parks are under increasing pressure, with limited resources available for maintenance and management. Public sector funding for discretionary services like parks is projected to fall by 60% or more over the next decade. We need ambitious new business models, management tools and partnerships to create a more sustainable future for the way our parks are used and maintained.'* See more at: www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks#sthash.rBsTLyWT.dpuf



In response to this initiative the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces had issued a statement which called for adequate funding for all the UK's 30,000 urban green spaces. The NFPGS statement said: *'[The Government's] strategy seems to be to abandon their public responsibilities and to apply continuous pressure on the sector to 'rethink' the tried and tested model for the successful management of local public green spaces - Local Authorities adequately-funded by local and national taxation.* This model, whilst of course not perfect, has largely worked for the whole country for as much as 100 years. Indeed, mainly due to the influence of the Friends Groups movement and expert opinion on the vital importance of well-run green spaces, most Parks Departments were improving their transparency, accountability, innovation and standards. New and fanciful ideas are being promoted. These ideas, whilst they may work for a few spaces, or as 'add ons' to the existing core funding for some spaces, seem to be wholly inadequate and inappropriate for the ongoing and long-term, secure and*

effective management of most of our 30,000 urban green spaces. These ideas often boil down to increasing commercialisation of public space, and/or a hope that community volunteers will somehow commit to life-long voluntary work and management responsibilities. In reality, if adequate and long-term resources for all our green spaces are not fought for and guaranteed, thousands of spaces will fall into disuse or even close, many will be 'developed' on, or partly or completely sold off, or they will be transformed into commercialised sites for those who can afford access and sponsorship. There is also a very real threat of Friends Groups being pressured to compete with each other for ever-scarce resources instead of working together for everyone's benefit - this would be a disaster for the country's green spaces.'

Meanwhile, one thing that's come out of some of the 'rethinking' seminars held around the UK is a call for some of the funding from 'statutory' services to be diverted into parks on the grounds that green spaces provide statutory outcomes eg prevention of ill-health, flooding relief, transport corridors, educational services and access, and so on. For example a small % of a local health budget may add up to a huge % of a struggling parks department.

* The May 2014 Sunday Times 'Rich List' figures reveal that the personal wealth of the richest 1,000 UK individuals has doubled to £519 billion since 2009. In approximately the same period, 2008-13, the Government cut £30 billion from vital Local Authority public services (including parks), provided to 60 million people. Through adequate national taxation these savage, unnecessary and unacceptable cuts could all be easily restored.

'Can you put a price on the beauty of the natural world?'

In an interesting article, the green campaigner and journalist Goerge Monbiot says he believes *'those who reduce nature to a column of figures play to an agenda that ignores its inherent value and seeks to destroy it.'* www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/22/price-natural-world-agenda-ignores-destroys



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Big Lottery Fund - new conversation starts



The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) is holding a UK wide conversation through a dedicated website on how it should spend £4 billion of lottery funding between 2015 and 2021. The online conversation, as BIG calls it, will run until July 2014. BIG is asking for views on how it should shape its vision and plans over the six year period in support of its mission to bring real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need. Called Your Voice, Our Vision, the website focuses on four specific areas that are key to the Big Lottery Funds work and asks the questions:

- Vibrant communities: How can we grow social capital and help communities to make the most of their strengths and talents?
- Addressing Disadvantage: What can we do to support people living in poverty to achieve a better

quality of life? How do we address increasing demand for help in difficult times?

- Working Together: Tell us how we can best work with others to make a difference. How can we share our information, learning and resources for the benefit of others?
- Stronger Sector: How can we best support the development of a stronger voluntary, community and social enterprise sector?

It is easy to join the conversation, simply go to the website and register which is quick and easy. Once registered, visitors can read what others are saying, join in discussions and contribute by adding a blog, film or a tweet. www.yourvoiceourvision.org.uk

National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces

There are now over 5,000 Friends Groups and at least 50 area/town forums of Friends Groups. New networks have been recently established in many places including Edinburgh, Southampton, Lewisham, Newcastle... We are doing our best to encourage and support the continued growth of this movement, to amplify these passionate grass roots voices and their fantastic efforts, to provide a strategic platform, to encourage greater communication and coordination throughout the UK, and to ensure that all the UK's green spaces get the resources, maintenance, management and community engagement and empowerment they deserve - now and for always! We want:

- a Friends Group for every green space and a Friends Groups Forum for every area, town or region
www.natfedparks.org.uk/mediapool/118/1181937/data/NFPGS-Lets-be-friends.pdf
- stand up for our green spaces together
www.natfedparks.org.uk/mediapool/118/1181937/data/NFPGS_standing_up_for_our_green_spaces.pdf
- appreciate the UK's green spaces and ensure they get the funding they need
www.natfedparks.org.uk/mediapool/118/1181937/data/NFPGSfederationSpeakOutleaflet2sidesA5.pdf

So there we have it - some information and inspiration to encourage everyone to raise their voices!

best wishes

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Note: Please note that this bulletin is produced by the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces, but the accuracy of the details included and the weight given to each piece are the responsibility of the Campaigns Officer.



www.natfedparks.org.uk