



Briefing 15- 36

July 2015

Barbecues in Public Parks

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England

For information only to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Key Issues:

As part of our summer briefing series on environmental issues, APSE has produced this briefing on barbecues in public parks. The briefing provides:

- Potential solutions to issues faced in parks and open spaces
- A roundup of issues councils might face with implementation

1.0 Background

The use of barbecues in public places can create a range of issues for Councils to overcome such as increased litter, grass scorching, associated fire risks, as well as impeding on the use of the space for other parks users. Some local authorities have recently imposed bans on barbecues in parks, whilst others have overturned barbecue bans or have even attempted to solve these issues through alternative means.

2.0 Alternative solutions to an outright ban

Providing a designated barbecue area (free of charge)

[Cambridge City Council](#) has installed barbecue stones (pods) at their Jesus Green Park and have designated barbecuing areas at other parks. These facilities are free to use, and during the spring/summer season their Streets and Open Spaces team hand out free bags to dispose of litter. It is now a criminal offence to light a barbecue or bonfire on any of Cambridge's open spaces or to cause any criminal damage to the area including burning grass.

Providing a designated barbecue area (available for a small fee)

[West Lothian Council](#) has a similar setup to Cambridge, except they charge for the hire of a barbecue unit, seats and bins, with 3 sessions available each day between 10am-2pm,

2:30pm-3:30pm and 6pm-10pm. Each session costs £22.85 (with reduced rates for smaller groups). Application forms are available from their Visitor Centre or can be completed online.

Installing steel bins to dispose of barbecue materials

Councils like [Brighton & Hove](#) have installed special steel barbecue bins for disposable barbecues which are able to contain a fire within its structure should one break out.

Displaying changes to residents

[London Borough of Hackney's](#) Love London Fields campaign is a great example of how to display information on where residents can barbecue in London Fields Park, and also provides excellent advice on how to safely use barbecues and who to get in touch with if any issues arise. Their most recent [management plan](#) noted that the campaign has been a huge success and strategies to manage their BBQ area included “improved signage, map displayed of BBQ area, media campaign (using social media & newspaper coverage) designed to promote responsible behaviour. A core group of local residents have met with Council to monitor these interventions”. According to the Council, the number of complaints regarding rubbish and barbecues in the park has dropped dramatically.



Advice for the safe use of barbecues (BBQs)

- BBQs may only be used in the designated area in London Fields.
- No BBQs are allowed after 9pm.
- Disposable BBQs will only be allowed when placed on metal stands. Bricks or other items will not be allowed, as they can damage mowing equipment if left behind.
- Children and pets should be kept away from the BBQs so they don't burn themselves.
- No throwing or sports games are allowed in the BBQ area.
- Never leave the BBQ unattended.
- If your group consists of more than 25 people, you must seek permission for your BBQ from the Council's Events Team, visit www.hackney.gov.uk/park-events

Disposing of your BBQ safely

- Ensure the BBQ is cool before attempting to move it.
- Before you dispose of a used BBQ you must ensure that it has been totally extinguished. Either let it burn out and go cold or pour water onto the fire. The used BBQ should be disposed of in the BBQ disposal bins provided in the designated BBQ area.

! Park Keepers are in the park to ensure the safety of all park users and local residents. If they feel a BBQ is not safe and does not follow the guidelines above, they will extinguish the BBQ.

A bucket of water and sand is kept in front of the Parks Depot. In case of fire, always call 999.

Please put your rubbish in the recycling or waste bins located around the park.



3.0 Issues around implementation

Implementing changes to your council's rules, regulations and provisions around barbecues in public parks is an issue that will likely capture the public's interest, both

positively and negatively, as we all have a stake in how parks are managed. Many will see a ban as an infringement on their rights, whilst others will believe that anything other than an outright ban isn't going far enough. The location of any permanent barbecuing facilities seems to be a point of contention amongst the diverse users of parks (e.g. single large area vs. multiple smaller areas, central vs. non-central location). The best solution to these varying views is to consult as widely as possible.

The London Borough of Hackney's [public consultation](#) approach is a good way of doing this (officers sent out 4,700 paper questionnaires to those living closest to the park, and it was also featured on the Council website homepage and publicised in the Council's newspaper, Hackney Today); they found 79.9% of the 535 respondents were supportive of the proposal to allow a designated BBQ area and were given helpful ideas as to how to develop such a facility.

4.0 APSE Comment

APSE appreciates the difficulty in striking a workable balance regarding the issue of allowing barbecuing in public parks whilst making sure that it doesn't conflict with the Council's other aims for open spaces, such as promoting healthy living. Upholding the idea that parks are meant to be used and enjoyed by as wide a cross-section of the public as possible, is a delicate balancing act. This can often mean dealing with the concerns of users who feel they are having their rights taken away because of the allocation of part of their open space to meet the needs of a relatively small minority, who wish to monopolise parts of the area to suit their specific needs, i.e. barbecuing.

The local authorities highlighted in this briefing note show just a few examples of how through thinking creatively they have been able to avoid a straightforward ban on the use of barbecues in parks, and equally avoided the need to enforce such a ban, with all the legal difficulties this could have entailed.

Garry Lee
Research and Coordination Officer

Wayne Priestley
Principal Advisor