



**Mo Baines**  
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**Parks for the Future**

# Value of our parks and green spaces?

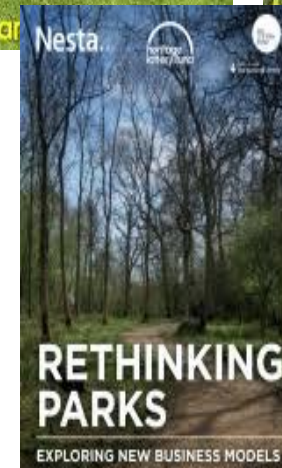


- Universal acceptance of the value of green space and parks
- Closer links to health and social care
- NICE studies alongside academics
- Natural capital accounting systems
- Understanding the different cultures and values and age range of Parks users.

# The desire for more and more information



- Backdrop of reducing parks budgets – ‘age of austerity’ and non-statutory service.
- Growing awareness of multiple value of parks to a wide variety of organisations and to wider environment
- Large investments over past 10 years – HLF
- Large body of academic research on benefits of parks and wider greenspace
- Government instigated public inquiry into value of parks and impacts of ongoing budget cuts.



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

# The Parks Inquiry



- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government tasked with producing report on ways to ensure future sustainability of parks.
- **Departmental Group** - Defra, DoH, DoE, Home Office etc.
- **Parks Action Group** – includes **APSE**, HLF, Groundwork, Parks Alliance, LGA, Nat.Fed. of Parks and Greenspaces, National Trust, Natural England, Fields In Trust
- APSE responsible for chairing Skills and Knowledge work stream
- **Main objectives:**
  - Identifying opportunities to promote knowledge and skills through the parks sector.
  - Consider ways in which best practice can be shared across the parks sector
  - Review the decline in parks managers roles and identify ways to build capacity

**Opportunity to speak directly to parks professionals through Advisory Groups.**



# Aims of the Focus Group

- Identify the roles and responsibilities of current parks professionals.
- Identify where parks service currently sits in the council structure.
- Identify where there are gaps in knowledge and experience
- Identify current training provision (formal/informal)
- Identify gaps/needs in training provision
- Membership/list of professional organisations currently used.

# The Modern Park



*“When I started it was all about horticulture. I can’t remember the last time we specified what type of tree we needed”*

*Now it’s very much about what goes on in the park. It’s about activity, it’s about negotiating leases, it’s very much around engagement rather than maintenance. We’re always having to evolve.”*

Paul Rabbit Section Head for Parks, Open Spaces and Projects Watford Borough Council.





# Park Professionals now!



# ‘An endangered species’?



**Park specific jobs have gone** and posts have gone upwards to directors of leisure, sport or even waste – or gone downwards to people in acting-head posts Park Managers are an endangered species

*Horticulture Week 2012*

“Several senior parks managers have left the service through redundancy, retirement or **disillusionment**. These kinds of losses are widespread and the outcome will be a decline in maintenance standards”.

*Dr. Stewart Harding, The Parks Agency*

“Over the past 18 months, 25% (of London Parks Managers) have either left or their jobs have been deleted. We are **losing people with park-specific skills** who are often being replaced by staff responsible for leisure or sport or those lower down the food chain with less knowledge”

*Tony Leach Chair, London Parks and Green Spaces Forum.*







# How does your local authority now view its corporate approach to parks and greenspaces?

- Budgetary management
- Contract management
- Performance management
- Customer expectation management
- Community engagement/volunteer management
- Awards and funding applications
- Procurement negotiation
- Income generation
- Events Management
- Partnership management (FOP's, Public Health, HWBB etc.)
- Environmental considerations ( biodiversity, climate change, flood alleviation etc.)

# Areas of research

- New Funding
- New Management Models (Partnerships, Trusts, Community management).
- New park styles
- Increased use of volunteers
- Income generation
- New maintenance regimes (Naturalised planting/maintenance schemes)
- Biodiversity
- Health, flood alleviation, climate change, social inclusion etc.etc.etc.



# Emerging trends and models



- **City Magnet Parks** – large public parks with large events and facilities for all
- **Club Parks** – managed by public and private ‘club’ which may be restricted re access, involving membership costs and maintained by volunteers.
- **Theme Parks** – Open to all but include a large number of purchased activities, income from which is re-invested into the park.
- **Laissez-faire Parks** – little formal design, with minimum regulation where local community can use it as they want to. Some concerns that this could lead to territorial claims on the facility.
- **Variegated Parks** – Split into zones to meet specific demands either on a permanent basis or at certain times of the year. This can lead to the park being fragmented with some areas accessible to all whilst others would be restricted to certain users e.g. football teams, tennis players etc.
- **Co-mingled Parks** – Facilities are designed for shared use which promotes community cohesion, and can be managed again by volunteers.
- **Sale or hire of parks** - parks which can be hired out or sold at times of financial constraint and income re-invested in remaining parks. Restrictions can be placed on sale which makes ensures will have to be kept as a park. These parks are likely to be those with limited income generating potential or low visitor numbers.

# Commercialisation?



- The need to generate additional funding is a key issue.
- Research show public will accept charges for certain experiences.
- Unhappy with too much commercialism – closes off parts of parks, particularly large events.
- Income generated in parks should stay in parks!
- Some parks better at raising income than others – sharing of profits between all parks to avoid some slipping into disrepair.
- Real need for park users to see the benefits commercial activity, particularly disruptive activity bring.
- Good communications critical!!

# What are others doing?





# Final thoughts...

- Sharing of best practice and successes is critical.
- Training and support as roles of parks professionals change.
- Greater exposure to innovation and stronger leadership skills to drive ideas forward.
- Corporate support e.g. Health and Well-Being Boards, stakeholders and community involvement.
- Consider carefully the belief that income generation can be the answer to self-funding.
- Clearly define role of volunteers – additionality not replacement.
- Develop clear plans for future shape of parks – role and function
- Better co-ordination of research to achieve workable solutions
- Parks are public assets and should be run for the benefits of the public, including public funding.
- Ability to show cost, quality and productivity of parks and their wide-ranging benefits.



**LOCAL SERVICES**

**LOCAL SOLUTIONS**



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