



Communities and Local Government Committee Report on Public Parks (January 2017)

Findings and Recommendations

The Purpose of the Report

Committee established to look at :

- Roles of parks
- The challenges facing the sector
- Future sustainability
- Conclusions and recommendations



The Roles of Parks

Q/ Why Do Parks Matter?

Widely recognised multiple benefits

- Health and well-being
- Environmental benefits
- Social benefits
- Economic benefits
- VFM £1 : £36 – ‘natural capital’



Challenges facing the Parks Sector



- Different needs – different users
- Alternative funding sources – Newcastle 97% funding loss.
- Alternative management models
- Reliance on volunteers/ FOPG
- Reduced maintenance/ closure of facilities
- Loss of community links – Ranger Services
- Loss of skills base/succession planning
- Health and Safety
- Access to capital and revenue funding - 'investment and decline cycle'
- Development pressures

Sustaining the future for parks



- Volunteers – additionality not replacement
- Alternative models, asset transfers, parks trusts – ‘added value’
- Need to retain local authority skills and democratic responsibility
- Pathfinder support – limited funding to be available
- Statutory duty?
- Parks Champions
- Links to Health and Well-Being / parks and green space strategies.
- Parks forums and Parks Managers networks
- Central co-ordination and leadership – Minister and cross-departmental WG



APSE COMMENT

- Welcomes report and raising of profile of parks at Government level
- Elements of 'Ground-hog Day'
- Value of parks clearly seen by many
- Parks entrenched in corporate and stakeholder objectives – important, but is it new?
- Sustainability of volunteers/ skilled workforce/ apprenticeships
- Greater consultation and transparency already practiced.
- The need for income generation
- Growing use of parks
- Use of S106 and CIL to cover revenue costs
- Alternative models – do they work?
- Protecting democracy and transparency
- Information sharing
- Core funding – avoiding 'tipping the balance'.
- Will parks really be a government priority?