

State of UK Public Parks 2016

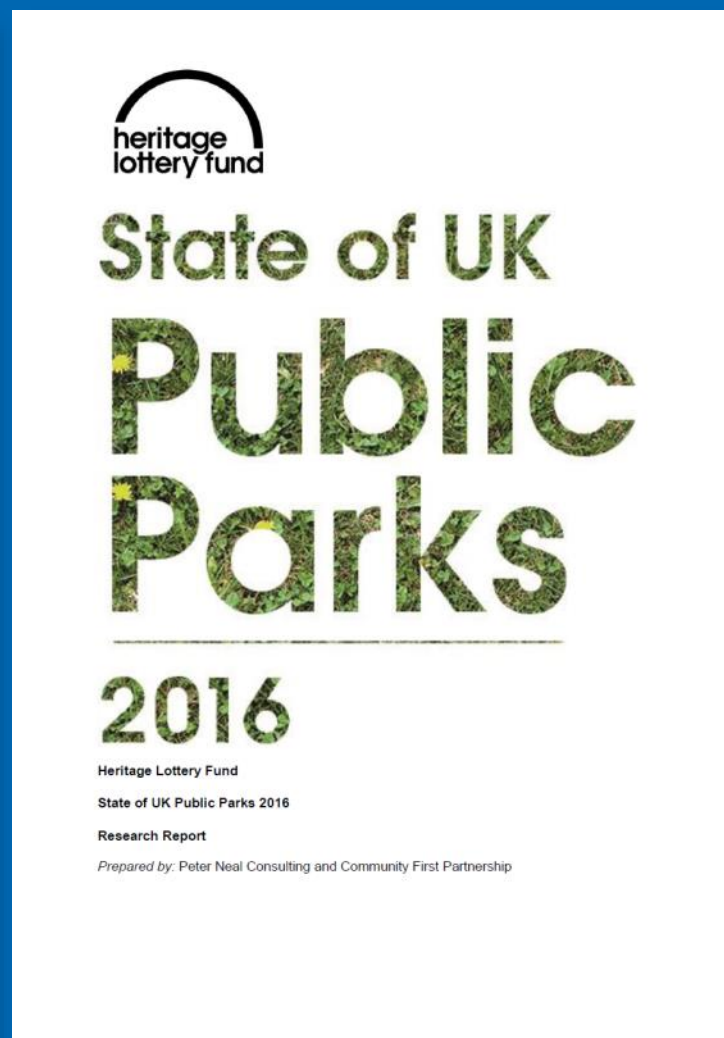
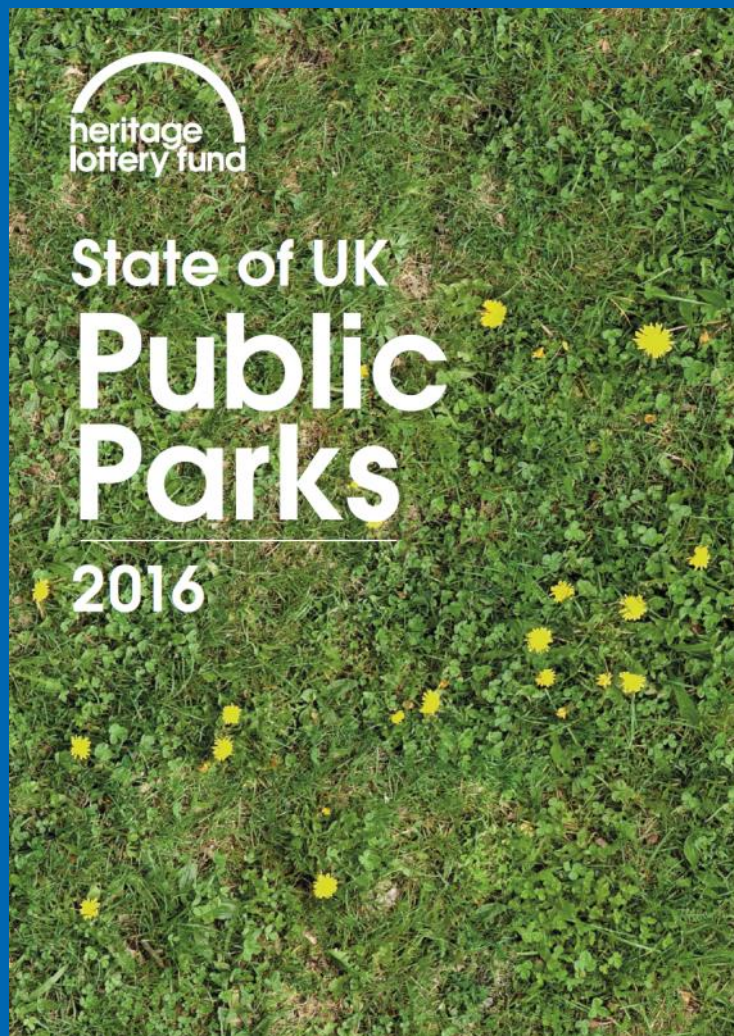


APSE Parks and Open Spaces Seminar
City Hall, London / 23 September 2016

Peter Neal / landscape consultant
State of UK Public Parks lead author



Summary and Full Research Reports



Project Team : Peter Neal Consulting / Ian Baggott CFP / BritainThinks

Parks are valued by the communities that use them

£50m

estimated to be raised by park friends groups each year.

↑ £20m from 2014

57%

of adults use their parks at least once a month or more.

↑ 3% from 2014

5,900

estimated number of park friends and user groups across UK.

↑ 1,100 from 2014

90%

of households with children under five visit their local park at least once a month or more.

↑ 7% from 2014

£70m

estimated value of volunteering hours given by park friends and user groups each year.

↑ £30m from 2014



ROTUNDA
Café

ROTUNDA
Café

... but their future may not be so bright

27%

of park managers report their parks have been improving over the past three years.
↓ 14% from 2014

53%

of park managers report their parks to be in a good condition.
↓ 7% from 2014

92%

of park managers report cuts to their revenue budgets over the past three years.
↑ 6% from 2014

95%

of park managers expect their revenue budget to be cut over the next three years.
↑ 8% from 2014

55%

of park managers expect their park revenue budget to be cut by 10-20% over the next three years.
↑ 17% from 2014



Summary Report and Key Findings



Our parks are an integral part of our lives, places where we relax, play, and exercise. They are fundamentally important to our long-term physical and mental wellbeing, and support cohesion within communities. As Chair of UKactive I know the importance of parks to keeping our communities physically active, and see programmes such as ParkLives and Green Gym driving park use and supporting investment. Such assets need to be protected and prioritised, not threatened with decay and closure. This important report will stimulate an essential debate on the future of parks, including the key partnerships – both public and private – required for the future.

Bartosz Jozwi, City Manager, City of Leicester

The State of Parks overview

Public parks make a significant contribution to the social and physical fabric of towns and cities across the UK.

From the fortified Victorian park movement that brought the aristocratic and gilded elite to the garden suburb and post-war new towns, we can quite justifiably claim to be a nation of great park-makers. The legacy has shaped the cultural heritage of communities and continues to enrich countless personal lives, businesses and experiences.

We can quite justifiably claim to be a nation of great park-makers.

Today, parks continue to add character, identity and value to neighbourhoods, making them more attractive, healthy and resilient places to live. They also provide an important home to nature, improving sustainability and providing much needed green space within our increasingly dense urban districts. Considerable pressure on public finances is making it much harder to properly manage, maintain and safeguard the great cultural and environmental resource.

This research

The second State of UK Public Parks report has been commissioned by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and published in 2014. We have completed a new set of UK-wide surveys with park

managers, park friends and user groups, park trusts, and the general public. These have been commissioned to understand the particular pressures parks are currently facing, what has changed over the past five years and how parks and park services are adapting to meet these challenges. This summary report is accompanied by more detailed research reports that are available at www.hlf.org.uk/stateofparks

SECTION 1: What we have found

Many of the results follow trends established in the last study and this adds confidence and contributes to our conclusions. We know people see their local parks frequently and this appears to be on the rise. Households with children, people living in urban areas and those from black and minority ethnic communities see their parks the most. At the same time, an increasing proportion of park managers report their maintenance budgets are continuing to fall. The number of park staff continues to be cut and fewer park managers report that their parks have been improving in the past three years. It is clear that there is a growing deficit between the rising use of parks and the declining resources that are available to manage them. The gap does not bode well for the future condition and health of the nation's public parks.

SECTION 2: Rising to the challenge

Our research indicates that some local authorities and organisations are responding to the challenges ahead. However if it is park days and more needs to be done to share and test potential new approaches.

SECTION 3: What next?

Action is clearly needed to avert a case that will undermine more than two decades of investment in our parks and we welcome the Select Committee's decision to hold an inquiry into public parks. This report concludes with a renewed call to action that takes forward the key themes from the full study:

- Continuing local authority leadership
- Promoting active partnerships
- Supporting communities to take a more active role
- Developing new models of management
- Compiling, coordinating and updating data

No single organisation is capable of holding the considerable challenge alone. It needs collaboration with and proactive partnerships to ensure parks continue to serve their surrounding neighbourhoods and communities now and into the future.



Forest Recreation Ground, Nottingham

SECTION 1

What we have found Top ten findings

Parks are fundamental to our social fabric, providing unrivalled opportunities for people to come together, relax and play. We are pleased to work alongside the Heritage Lottery Fund and Nesta to support Parks for People and ParkLiving Parks. With more than half of the UK population using their local park at least once a month, these programmes help protect our green spaces and enable them to thrive for people and communities.

Ben Atkinson, Chief Executive, Big Lottery Fund

City perspective

Nottingham: Aiming to become cost neutral Nottingham City Council has faced a £100million reduction in its budget over the last five years. The parks service faces an ongoing pressure and is required to find a further £400,000 savings this year. It has focused on protecting its staff who provide the skills and expertise needed to drive the service forward and promote innovation. A key approach has been to pool funding and work hard to increase other sources of income. The service has now set a target to balance income and expenditure by 2020 and to operate on a cost-neutral basis.

How we undertook this research

We commissioned four primary surveys for this report:

- local authority park managers, park friends and user groups
- independent park trusts, and
- the general public (conducted by Befringethink).

We ran a day workshop with the West Midlands Park Forum, representing the largest urban consultation outside London and contributed to a GreenSpace Scotland Park Managers Forum.

We have also met with park managers in several of the HLF cities including Birmingham, Cardiff, Salisbury, Liverpool, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield.

In total, 193 individual local authorities needed to the park manager survey that ran from 4 April to 4 May 2014. The total original number from the last study and represents 46% of all local authorities. These are responsible for around 35 million residents.

The park friends and user groups survey received 481 responses from within 119 different local authority areas located across the UK. This was also a higher number of returns than the last survey and the return represented almost 6,000 individual members.

The park trust survey was a new addition to the survey and included the 50 different independent organisations, park trusts and user groups that fit into a small section. They include new trusts and those that have been operating for more than a century.

The survey of the general public was completed by 2,130 adults aged 16 and above. These also represent a sample of the UK population. The survey was undertaken between 27 and 31 May 2014 and used an established online survey methodology.

1. People use their parks regularly and visitor numbers are increasing
2. Park maintenance budgets continue to fall
3. Staff and skills are being lost
4. The quality of parks is expected to decline
5. Park services are facing increasing inequality
6. Park management will be much more varied in the future
7. Sources of external income are on the rise
8. Communities are doing more for their parks
9. Park trusts appear to be coping better through austerity
10. Local authority commitment to parks does make a difference

Regular and increasing use of parks



#ParksMatter

Continuing fall in revenue budgets

In the past three years (2013–15), what would you say the changes in your revenue budgets has been?

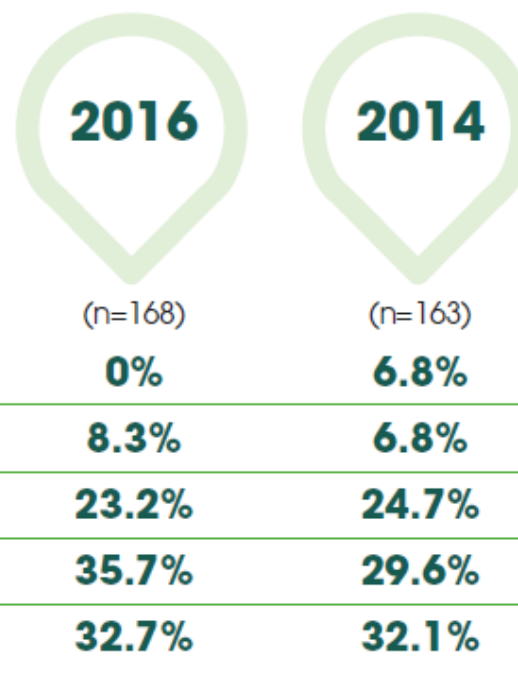


Table 1 Change in park revenue budgets in the past three years (2013, 2014 and 2015)

Expected declining condition of parks

What do you consider to be the trend in condition of your public parks over the last three years?

	2013-15 Park Managers (n=189)	2013-15 Friends Groups (n=360)	2013-15 Park Trusts (n=19)	2001 PPA ¹ (n=334)
Improving	27%	42.2%	63.2%	29.4%
Stable	55%	26.9%	21.1%	33.2%
Declining	18%	30.8%	15.8%	37.4%

Notes ¹Public Parks Assessment asked the trend in condition over the last 10 years

Table 4 Trend in condition of parks recorded by park managers, friends groups and park trusts for the past three years (2013, 2014 and 2015)

What do you consider to be the trend in condition of your public parks over the next three years?

	2017-19 Park Managers (n=189)	2017-19 Friends Groups (n=359)	2017-19 Park Trusts (n=19)	2001 PPA ¹ (n=334)
Improving	19.6%	32.9%	57.9%	29.4%
Stable	41.8%	29.2%	26.3%	33.2%
Declining	38.6%	37.9%	15.8%	37.4%

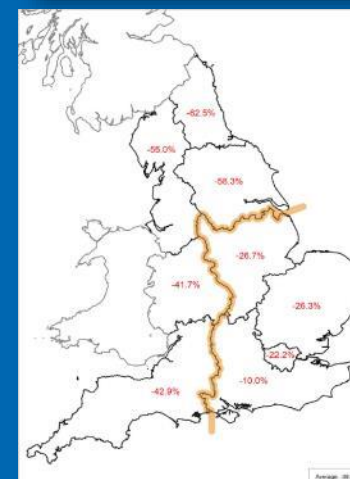
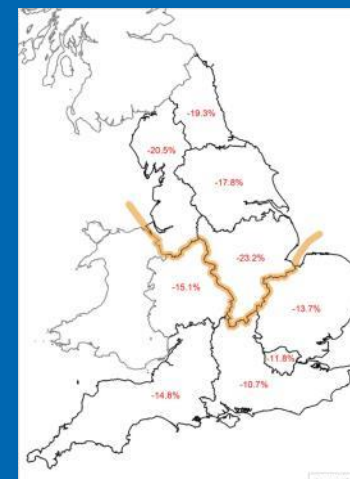
Notes ¹Public Parks Assessment asked the trend in condition over the last 10 years

Table 5 Trend in condition of parks recorded by park managers, friends groups and park trusts for the next three years (2017, 2018 and 2019)

Parks are facing increasing inequality

Region	% Average revenue cuts	Rank	% Average staffing cuts	Rank	% Average declining parks	Rank	Total	Rank
North East	-19.3%	3	-19.8%	1	62.5%	1	5	1
Yorkshire & the Humber	-17.8%	4	-14.3%	5	58.3%	2	11	2
North West	-20.5%	2	-11.5%	7	55%	3	12	3
West Midlands	-15.1%	5	-15.4%	3	41.7%	5	13	4
East Midlands	-23.2%	1	-7.4%	9	26.7%	6	16	5
South West	-14.8%	6	-12%	6	42.9%	4	16	5
East	-13.7%	7	-16.9%	2	26.3%	7	16	5
South East	-10.7%	9	-14.8%	4	10%	9	22	8
London	-11.8%	8	-11.2%	8	22.2%	8	24	9
Wales	-22.2%	2	-15.6%	1	70%	1	4	1
England	-15.9%	3	-13.3%	2	36%	3	8	2
Northern Ireland	-23%	1	-10.5%	3	0%	4	8	2
Scotland	-10.3%	4	-9.3%	4	50%	2	10	4
Averages	-15.9%		-13%		38.6%			

Table 6 Combined cumulative ranking of revenue cuts, staffing cuts and declining parks expected in the next three years (2017, 2018 and 2019) compared across the UK (Park Managers' survey)



Management is becoming more varied

Over the current and next three years (2017-19) are you considering disposing of / transferring the management or ownership of any green space? (n=189)	Sold entire site	Sold part of site	Transfer to community group	Transfer to voluntary sector	Transfer to a trust	Other	Total
Public parks and gardens	5	12	24	14	13	11	79
Outdoor sports facilities	3	5	52	20	12	6	98
Amenity green space	18	20	26	12	9	14	99
Natural/semi-natural green space	12	7	28	18	12	10	87
Provision for children and young people	2	1	17	6	6	8	40
Other type of space	4	3	7	3	2	4	23

Notes Numbers of authorities stating they have disposed of or transferred spaces

Table 7 Local authority disposal or transfer of management of different types of green spaces that is being considered in the current and next three years (2017, 2018 and 2019)

Sources of external income are rising

Ways to supplement the funding of parks (n = 2,130)	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Neither support or oppose	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	NET support
Greater funding from the National Lottery	39%	40%	15%	1%	1%	79%
More sponsorship of parks by businesses (e.g. funding of planting areas, features and facilities)	30%	45%	17%	2%	1%	75%
More funding from planning and local development (e.g. developer contributions from new housing)	32%	42%	18%	2%	2%	74%
Greater fundraising by local communities and park user groups	19%	46%	27%	3%	1%	65%
More commercial use of parks (e.g. ticketed events, fairs and shows)	18%	41%	25%	8%	3%	59%
Increasing charges for using park facilities (e.g. tennis courts or car parks)	4%	16%	23%	29%	24%	20%

Table 8 Public opinions on options to supplement funding for parks. N.B. excludes those answering "don't know" (May 2016)

Key Themes for Action

1. Continuing local authority leadership

As the owners of most public parks and green spaces, logic and history dictates that local authorities have a pivotal role in ensuring the continued provision of quality parks and green spaces. Our research shows that local authorities should:

A

Park strategies

Consider the benefits of up to date park/green space strategies to guide investment and address funding, staffing, skills, community engagement and future management challenges.

B

Elected champions

Embed parks and green spaces within corporate strategies and appoint a local elected parks champion as it is shown to have a positive effect on the condition of parks.

C

Financial information

Compile and maintain robust data and more detailed financial information for their parks to demonstrate the value for money that parks represent and to aid future business planning.

2. Promoting active partnerships

With the increasing diversity of organisations responsible for managing parks, greater collaboration and coordination is needed between partners to share funding and expertise to maximise the efficient use of limited resources. Our research shows that:

A

Local networks

Groups like those in Scotland, West Midlands and London, are best at sharing current learning and that there is a need to continue to support these groups as well as to establish and fund forum in those areas where they don't currently exist.

B

Park trusts

Further research and exploration of park trusts is needed to understand their structure, funding, operation and potential benefits.

C

Parish and town councils

These are increasing their role in green space management, but there is a need to understand if greater diversity in those responsible for parks could make it more difficult to deliver large-scale strategic environmental objectives in the future. ▶

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3. Supporting communities to play a more active role

Communities already play an important part in supporting their local parks and green spaces and this is expected to increase. For those groups that are keen to do more, additional support and assistance should be given to make the most of their contribution and ensure this collaboration is of mutual benefit. Our research shows that:

A

Skills and training

There should be more opportunities to develop the skills and formal qualifications of all volunteers involved in supporting parks and green spaces.

B

Organisational structures

Information about formal business structures and local authority processes should be made more widely available and appropriate for use by community groups.

C

Sharing responsibilities

Thought should be given to local authorities retaining responsibility and funding for complex aspects of park management such as insurance, health and safety, and financial administration to help fairly share obligations with local community groups.



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4. Developing new models of management and funding

Innovation, adaptation and change are an integral part of successful organisations, including park services. The current climate provides the opportunity to experiment, test and refine new contemporary and possibly more cost-effective models of management and funding. Our research shows that:

A

Alternative models

Research and case studies are needed to understand the strengths and weaknesses of different park service management models, including local authority trading companies, public/private partnerships, social enterprises, cooperatives, mutuals and trusts.

B

Income generation

The Rethinking Parks programme provided an opportunity to explore new funding and management models for parks but more opportunities are needed to test and trial additional income generating and management opportunities.

C

Endowments

These could provide an alternative model for parks but support is needed to understand this approach further and develop the skills associated with fundraising, creating, investing and using endowments.

5. Compiling, coordinating and updating data

Robust data is at the heart of all good planning and decision making. Whilst there have been some improvements in the collection of information, including the development of the long-awaited national green space map, many local authorities still have a limited understanding of the detailed workings of their parks service. Our research shows that:

A

Asset management

The release of the national green space map should significantly improve the capture of green space data, however pilot projects need to demonstrate how this new resource can best be utilised by local authorities and others when it becomes available in 2017.

B

Benchmarking

There are clear benefits to providing publicly accessible and comparable data on the scope, extent and costs of park services. The robustness, regular collection, coordination and sharing of US-style 'City Park Facts', referenced in our 2014 report, should be developed.

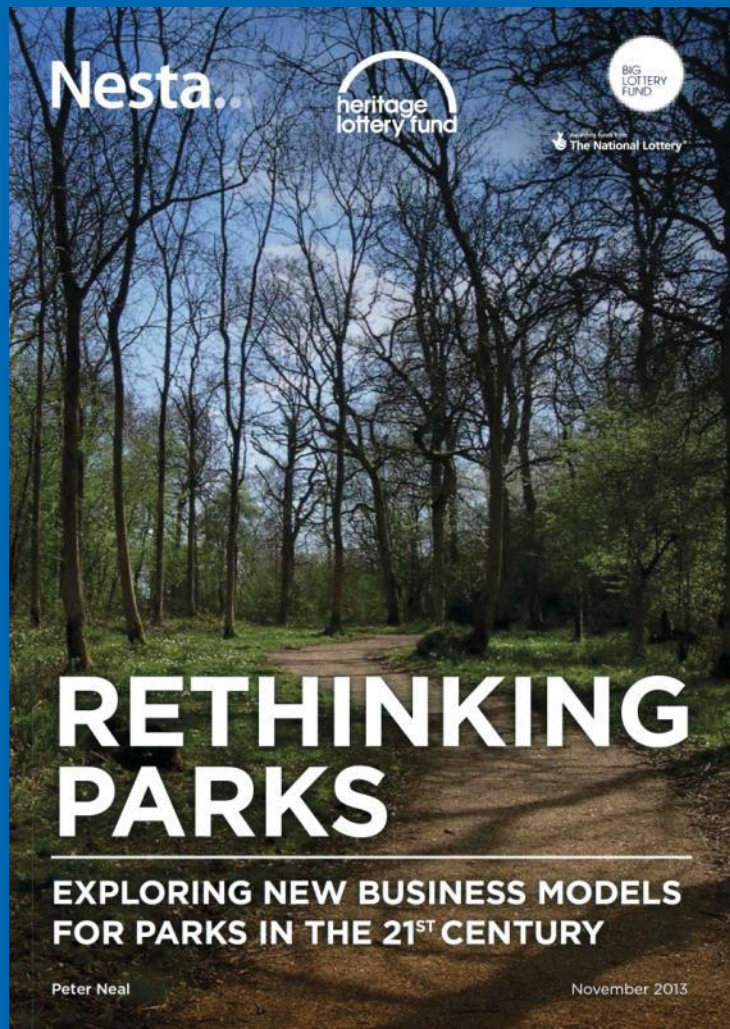
C

Valuation

There are direct advantages in calculating and capturing the economic, social and environmental value of parks through natural capital accounts. Pilot studies and UK-wide agreed methodologies need to be developed and funded. ■

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Nesta - Rethinking Parks



#ParksMatter

Nesta - Rethinking Parks



LEARNING TO RETHINK PARKS

Nesta... heritage lottery fund Awarding funds from The National Lottery Big Lottery Fund

Nesta... heritage lottery fund Awarding funds from The National Lottery Big Lottery Fund

RETHINKING PARKS HIGHLIGHTS

Rethinking Parks was a joint Nesta, Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund programme to find, support and test new approaches to raising income or reducing costs for public parks in the UK.

201 applications to the programme
11 teams were selected to participate in the 18-month programme

[TEAMS]

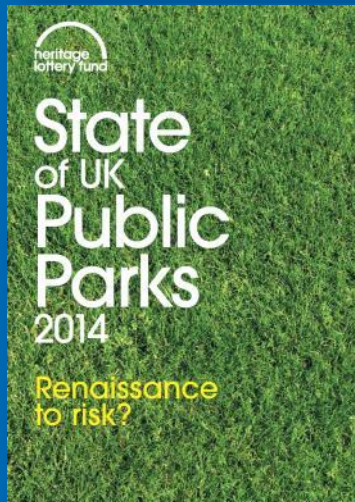
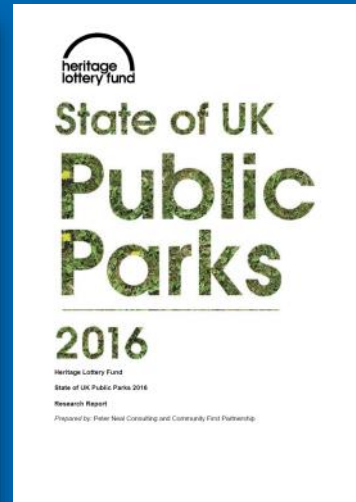
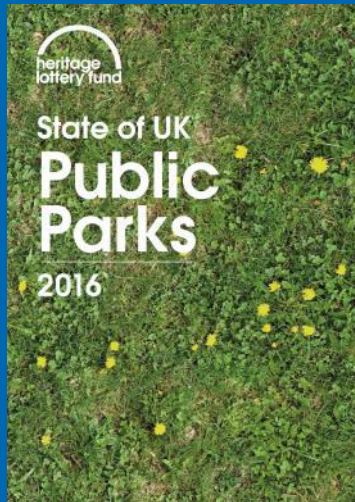
- 1 My Park Scotland, Edinburgh and Glasgow
- 2 Darlington Rethinking Parks
- 3 Go to the Park, Burnley
- 4 Heeley Park Subscription Society, Sheffield
- 5 Endowing Parks for the 21st Century, Sheffield
- 6 Bloomsbury Squared, London
- 7 Park Hack, Hackney, London
- 8 Eastbrookend Rekindled, London
- 9 Coastal Parks and Garden Foundation, Bournemouth
- 10 ParkWork, Bristol
- 11 Everton Park - A Community Hub, Liverpool

[ACROSS THE 11 RETHINKING PARKS TEAMS]

4,829 HOURS VOLUNTEERED

£20,232.60 of cash donations

HLF Web Resource - Parks Matter



Respondent ID	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z		
	Are you able to state your current annual revenue budget (€)	Please state your current percentage your parks and green space	Do you know what percentage your parks and green space	Please state the percentage	Looking back over the last three years (from 2013/14 to the start of the 2015/16, what would you say the changes in your revenue budgets	Looking back at what you thought in 2013/14 (at the start of the previous State of UK Parks survey), how the level of costs you have experienced been...	Looking forward over the next three years (from 2015/16, what would you say	Looking forward over the next three years (from 2015/16, what are you likely to have a capital	2013/14 (€)	2014/15 (€)	2015/16 (€)	2016/17 (€)	2017/18 (€)	2018/19 (€)	2019/20 (€)	2020/21 (€)	2021/22 (€)	2022/23 (€)	2023/24 (€)	2024/25 (€)	2025/26 (€)	2026/27 (€)	2027/28 (€)	2028/29 (€)	2029/30 (€)	2030/31 (€)	2031/32 (€)	2032/33 (€)
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2	1	Yes	2700000	No	no	10%	About what was expected	10%	Yes	100000	100000	100000																
3	2	Yes	1176794	No	no	20%	About what was expected	20%	Yes	no	no	no																
4	3	Yes	1079183	No	no	0%	About what was expected	0%	Yes	no	no	no																
5	4	Yes	1500000	Yes	0	no	About what was expected	50%	Yes	300000	290000	280000																
6	5	Yes	2000000	No	no	10%	About what was expected	10%	Yes	200000	200000	210000																
7	6	No	no	No	no	0%	Worse than expected	5%	Yes	no	no	no																
8	7	Yes	1000000	No	no	30%	About what was expected	20%	Yes	no	no	no																
9	8	No	no	No	no	4%	Worse than expected	4%	Yes	no	no	no																
10	9	Yes	14420000	Yes	0.5	no	About what was expected	50%	Yes	no	no	no																
11	10	Yes	300000	No	no	20%	About what was expected	20%	Yes	no	no	no																
12	11	No	no	No	no	20%	Worse than expected	20%	Yes	no	no	no																
13	12	No	no	No	no	20%	Worse than expected	20%	Yes	no	no	no																
14	13	Yes	200000	No	no	10%	About what was expected	11%	Yes	no	no	no																
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16	15	Yes	1747000	Yes	0	no	About what was expected	5%	Yes	2000000	2000000	2000000																
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19	18	No	no	No	no	30%	Worse than expected	21%	Yes	no	no	no																
20	19	No	no	No	no	30%	Worse than expected	30%	Yes	no	no	no																
21	20	Yes	1750000	No	no	7%	Worse than expected	3%	Yes	no	no	no																
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24	23	Yes	2000000	Yes	1.7	20%	About what was expected	11%	Yes	400000	400000	400000																
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41	40	Yes	no	Yes	20%	10%	Worse than expected	10%	Yes	100000	100000	100000																
42	41	Yes	no	Yes	1.6	20%	Worse than expected	20%	Yes	no	no	no																
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47	46	Yes	no	Yes	1.4	10%	Worse than expected	10%	Yes	300000	300000	300000																

HLF - Grant funding opportunities



Sharing Heritage
Grants from \$3,000 to \$10,000



Our Heritage
Grants from \$10,000 to \$100,000



Heritage Grants
Grants of over \$100,000



Young Roots
Grants from \$10,000 to \$50,000



First World War: then and now
Grants from \$3,000 to \$10,000



Skills for the Future
Grants from \$100,000 to \$750,000



Resilient Heritage
Grants from \$3,000 to \$250,000



Heritage Endowments
Grants from \$250,000 to \$1,000,000



Heritage Enterprise
Grants from \$100,000 to \$5,000,000



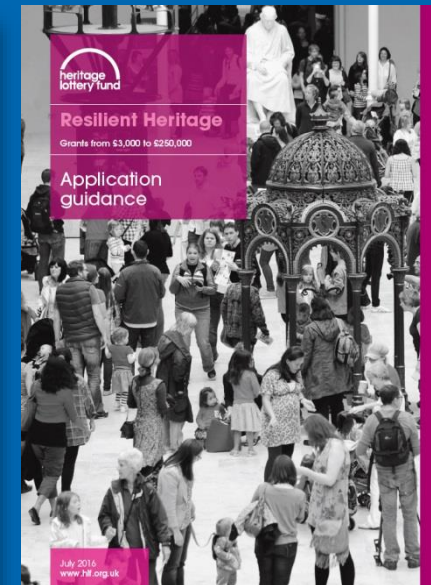
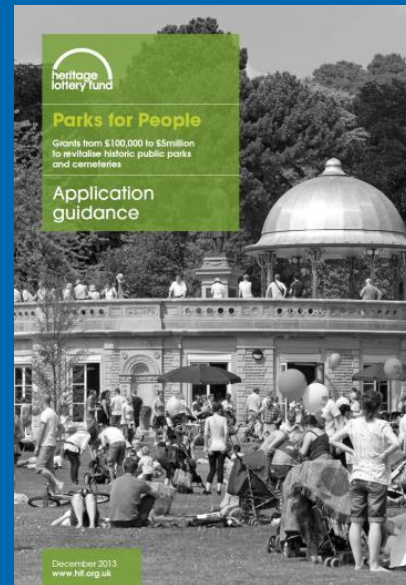
Townscape Heritage
Grants from \$100,000 to \$2,000,000



Parks for People
Grants from \$100,000 to \$5,000,000



Landscape Partnerships
Grants from \$100,000 to \$3,000,000



Funding for cultural and natural heritage

- Parks for People: £100K - £5m
- Landscape Partnerships: 100K - £3m
- Sharing Heritage: £3K - £10K
- Our Heritage: £10K - £100K
- Heritage Grants: £100K +
- Resilient Heritage: £3K - 250K

#ParksMatter

Drew Bennelick
Head of Landscape & Natural Heritage



Heritage Lottery Fund
7 Holbein Place
London SW1W 8NR

Telephone: 020 7591 6000

Textphone: 020 7591 6255

www.hlf.org.uk

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