

What Future for Parks?

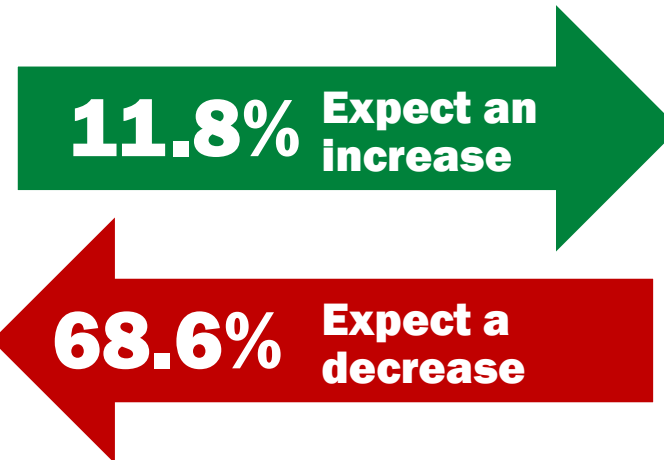


Please give your opinion on the following statements

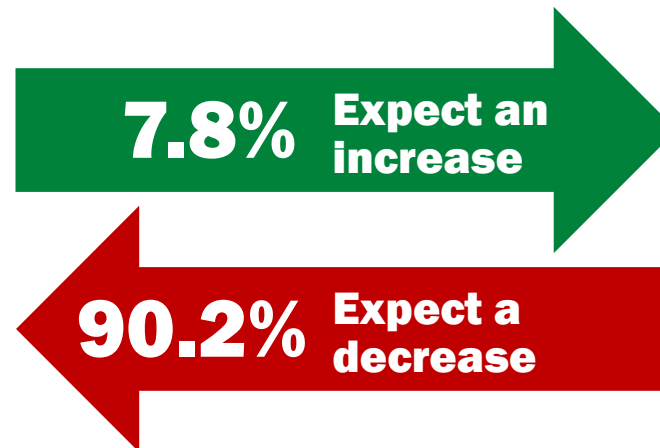
Answer Options	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	No opinion
The squeeze on public sector resources is affecting parks and green spaces disproportionately to other service areas	40.6%	37.5%	18.8%	0.0%	3.1%
Reductions in funding has resulted in a withdrawal of maintenance from some land and an increase in unmaintained land	35.9%	50.0%	12.5%	0.0%	1.6%
Lack of investment in parks and green spaces will have health and social impacts	68.8%	25.0%	4.7%	0.0%	1.6%
There is a clear link between parks/play provision and levels of crime/anti-social behaviour	42.2%	32.8%	6.3%	1.6%	17.2%
There's a limit to the extent to which volunteers can be involved in delivering parks and green space services	77.4%	14.5%	4.8%	3.2%	0.0%
The public should get free access to all parks	60.9%	26.6%	9.4%	3.1%	0.0%

How do you expect the parks and green space budget to change over the next year?

Capital expectations



Revenue expectations



'Plugging the gap'

- Rethinking Parks was a joint initiative between Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Nesta.
- Pioneers of 21st Century parks are being asked to come forward and rethink the use and financial sustainability of the UK's public parks
- Eleven UK parks received a share of £1m in grant funding and specialist support to explore new ways of **raising income** or **reducing costs**.
- Models tested included greater use of herbaceous and wild meadow planting, public donations, mobilising volunteers and friends groups to help with maintenance and even the creation of a pop-up meeting space
- For parks teams: involve people – parks users, local businesses and residents, and others who care about parks – in designing and delivering new ideas. Then test these ideas with small-scale prototypes and look for external support to address skills gaps
- For government and policy-makers: encourage innovation and appropriate risk taking across the sector by sharing good practice and making sufficient funding available to support innovation
- For funders: emphasise funding models that focus on sustainability – like mixed grant/loan funds or endowments.



Learning to Re -Think Parks



- *'Parks are facing significant funding challenges'*
- *'No one solution to putting them on a sustainable footing'*
- *'Any change should be managed in a sensitive, constructive way that involves local people and local businesses'.*
- *'local taxation is still an essential cornerstone for funding parks into the future'*
- *'Encourage collaborations across sectors where parks can make a valuable contribution, such as health and wellbeing, environment, employment or education, as well as business and resident engagement'*
- *'Diversification of income is necessary if parks are to remain free and open and resilient into the future'.*
- **These changes will take time to implement outside of the pioneering authorities**
- **Only 19% of local authorities report that efficiency improvements will be enough on their own to deal with challenge of ongoing budget cuts**

The problems involved in raising income

- New fund raising can alienate the very people parks are intended to benefit
 - Un-healthy
 - Parents and children
 - Lonely
 - Economically – challenged
 - Community volunteers



Case Study – Charging for Park Runs.

Parkruns have been described as *'a new model for community sport volunteering'* – the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's Sporting Future paper.

'Parkrun provides an invaluable way of utilising public spaces and getting the whole community involved - young and old- in physical activity, which we all know is massively important for our health and wellbeing' – Graham Evans MP.

The decision to charge is the first of its kind in the world and has been criticised across all sectors of society. Justification was to help meet maintenance costs of the surfaces Parkrun participants use on a weekly basis

Selling Parks and other greenspace assets

- **Case Study – London Borough of Bexley**
- Aims to sell up to 26 greenspaces , some of which are parks.
- Justification is to meet £56 million of savings required by council and to re-invest some of monies gained through sales back into improving grounds maintenance by reducing the number of areas requiring maintaining, therefore more sustainable with resources available.
- Sale of land represents less than 1% of total greenspace in the borough.

However.....

- Generally recognised small parks and open spaces are nearest to local communities and regularly used
- Young people heavy users of such spaces
- Removal of such spaces can break the use of parks by communities – impact on social and health benefits
- Concern about impact on socio-economic groups which use them as may be only greenspace areas they have access to.
- **Once they are gone they are gone permanently.**

Mixed messages

- Woodland Trust launched appeal to purchase one of largest remaining fragments of Scotland's ancient Caledonian pinewood.
- Woodland of international importance on this scale to be for sale is virtually unheard of.
- Teeming with rare and wonderful wildlife.
- Working in partnership with local community forest group.
- One of regions largest areas of ancient woodland under threat from proposed golf course and associated housing development which would see 25ha of 30ha woodland cut down.
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats, also home to bats, badgers and otters.
- Scottish Government policy strongly opposed to removal of such woodland.
- Initially planning consent refused despite compensatory planting being proposed.
- Local authority now proposing to back development due to *'social and economic benefits arising out of this that **far outweigh** the partial loss of the ancient woodland'*

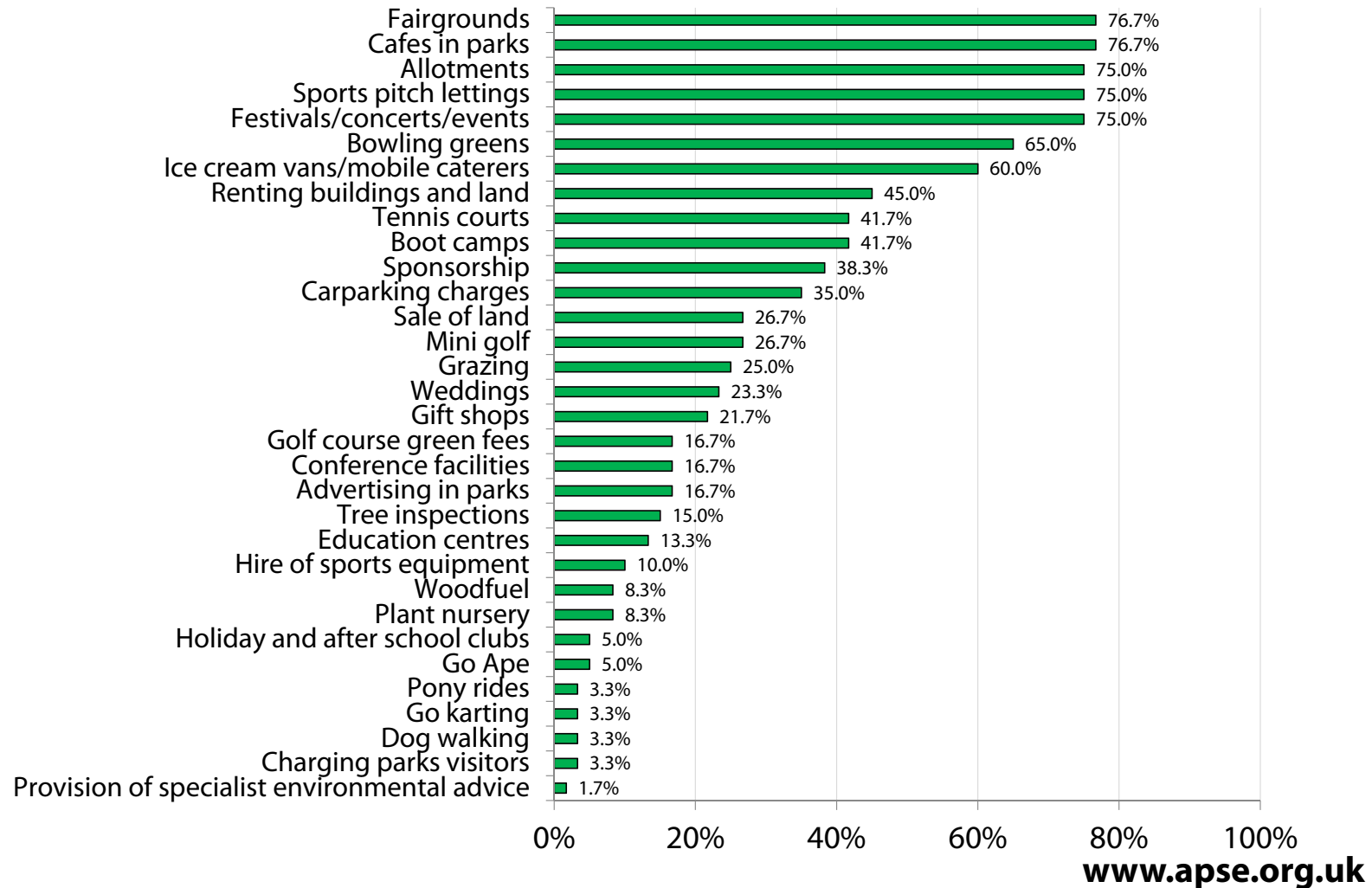


Getting it Right?

- Dockey Wood, Hertfordshire – National Trust owned Bluebell wood
- Peak times 2000 cars per day, bluebells trampled and queues of traffic building up in area causing congestion and associated parking damage.
- 2015 Survey showed visitors amenable to small charge to increase staff and protect area e.g. fencing to limit number of visitors entering wood at any one time.
- Charges apply between 10am and 4pm (£3 adults/£1 children) NT members free. No charges outside these times. Charges apply peak weekends April – May.
- Money being used to protect bluebells and provide staff to help reverse decline in bluebells due to erosion and compaction of soil.
- **Outcry** – *‘crime against country lovers who have been going there for years to enjoy piece and tranquillity’*, NT charging to visit to see bluebells, members threatening to stop subscriptions!
- Plenty of other places to see bluebells on the Ashridge estate where there is no charge.
- **Seasonal charging regimes** on other estates at popular times of year where bluebells are amongst key attractions

Charges not popular despite consultation, justification and limitations

What areas do you currently generate income in through fees and charges?



New Funding?

£30 Million HLF a year over the next 2 years -regeneration works, new community facilities and a range of activities that will generate income and involve volunteers.

Other **proposals** include:

- Parks Improvement Districts- funding long term maintenance and improvements
- Park levy in top of council tax – introduced in some areas of London
- Public Health Funding – green prescribing to address mental illness and obesity – **problems now public health is responsibility of local authorities**
- Council tax rebates for residents who help maintain green spaces
- Diversifying the commercial productivity of parks for food production and renewable energy
- Leasing sites for different but compatible uses e.g. animal grazing.

➤ Problem is many of these are still ideas and proposals and even if implemented, are unlikely to redress the loss of previous and projected funding losses.

➤ **Only 19% of local authorities report that efficiency improvements will be enough on their own to deal with challenge of ongoing budget cuts**

Sustaining the success

- Real challenge is to **maintain** and **sustain** income levels to ensure the value of capital investments are not lost.
- Many local authorities are generating substantial income streams- both tried and tested and innovatory.
- Real challenge is to involve local communities to become involved in decision making and maintaining these valuable assets.
- Local business and developers are being encouraged to include greenspace and park areas in their development plans.
- Other organisations which benefit from parks are being approached to invest in greenspaces – NHS, Police and Crime Commissioners.
- Corporate Natural Capital Accounting – putting a value on assets but also identifying losses.

Closing Comments

- The future for the UK's parks is unclear – more self funding, partnerships and transfer of assets are some of the options.
- Initiatives such as, '*Re-thinking Parks*' is providing innovative ideas on future management models and income generation opportunities.
- Real concern that there is a point at which income from efficiencies and income generation will not be enough to meet critical funding levels.
- Local authorities have over 170 years of experience in managing and maintaining parks.
- APSE still believes: Public parks, public benefits, public funding.

LOCAL SERVICES

LOCAL SOLUTIONS

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