Parks for Health project Camden and Islington. Credit: Islington Council.

An initiative set up to secure the future of the UK's urban parks and green spaces.

The pioneering programme, Future Parks, was a £14million joint venture between The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the National Trust. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities also invested £1.2m.

> The programme brought together a rich partnership of those at the forefront of green space management to provide new ideas, inspiration and encouragement.
>
> *Eilish McGuinness, Chief Executive of The National Lottery Heritage Fund*

A new cohort approach brought together eight urban areas, covering a combined population of 5million people, to find new ways to manage and fund parks and open spaces across whole towns and cities. Chosen through a competitive UK-wide application process, the eight areas were:

- Birmingham
- Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole
- Cambridgeshire
- Edinburgh
- Islington and Camden
- Nottingham

- Plymouth
- Bristol

All participating places demonstrated four key themes:

- making green spaces central to everyday community
- giving the public a bigger role in how greens spaces are managed
- ensuring green spaces contribute more to mental and physical health
- transforming the way the green spaces are funded to secure their futures

First programme of its kind in the UK

The project cohort developed new ways of thinking about and planning for green spaces as natural networks, supporting a range of public health, wellbeing and climate resilience goals.

The three-year programme (2019–2022) ended with the Naturally Thriving online conference, where programme partners shared learnings with a wider audience.

Ten ways to emulate success

From their shared experience, the cohort of local authorities involved in the programme identified 10 core actions for others to replicate their success.

Their guidance included:

1. Know your green estate
2. Be ambitious for environmental justice
3. Ensure green space is central to local community life
4. Put health at the heart of green space strategy and plans
5. Grow your urban nature network
6. Make parks and green spaces a popular cause
7. Be socially entrepreneurial
8. Promote green space as valuable natural infrastructure
9. Develop new sources of investment
10. Nurture your green team and wider ‘family’

Discover the full guide on how to make the most of green urban space.

The programme also developed a broader set of resources to share learnings and help others to make similar changes in their own towns and cities.

Explore these resources on the Future Parks Resource Hub.

Legacy and impact

The evaluation of Future Parks provides significant evidence of the importance of green spaces in urban places and the value of investing in them in this way.

See more about the impact of the programme in the evaluation report.

Our commitment to investing in parks

We are committed to supporting parks and urban green spaces across the UK. Find out what we can fund.

If you have questions specifically about the Future Parks programme, get in touch via email: futureparks@heritagefund.org.uk.

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Children take part in outdoor activities in Stour Valley Nature Reserve. Credit: BCP Council/ Mark Holloway.

How to create sustainable urban green space in your area

© BCP Council/ Mark Holloway

How our pioneering programme showed what a vital public resource parks are