

Trailblazers set out to curb the threat to UK Parks

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Brockwell Park. Photo Jeff Gilbert

Parks trailblazers are set to shake up the way we use and fund our parks, after receiving backing from Rethinking Parks - a £1m programme to support the most innovative and promising new business models for public parks.

Heritage Lottery Fund's report, *State of UK Public Parks*, released last month showed that while parks have improved significantly over the last few decades, they are at serious risk of rapid decline unless future funding can be generated in new ways.

Ideas trying to meet this challenge range from membership schemes and endowment models, to new horticultural approaches and pop-up meeting spaces. The projects are spread across the UK with two each in the South West, North East and North West, three in London, one in Scotland and one in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Rethinking Parks is a partnership between the Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Nesta. 11 projects are being supported through the programme, including:

- Park Hack, Hackney, London - Groundwork London, London Borough of Hackney and Gensler will look at how they can offer new services such as pop up meeting spaces to local businesses across a range of parks in Hackney
- Go to the Park, Burnley - Burnley Borough Council and Newground will test new horticulture approaches – such as introducing bee farms and managing woodland for fuel - to help cut costs and increase income, as well as setting up a Volunteer in Parks programme (VIP) to encourage community involvement

Lydia Ragoonanan, Rethinking Parks programme manager said: “Parks play a central role in communities throughout the UK, but we’re at real risk of losing these vital spaces. We hope these ideas might provide some solutions to the issues facing the sector and help sustain our precious parks long into the future.”

Notes to editors

About Rethinking Parks: Rethinking Parks is a £1m fund to find and support organisations and partnerships to develop, implement and spread new approaches to sustaining and making the most of UK public parks. It is a partnership between the Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Nesta.

Projects:

- Everton Park – A Community Hub - The Land Trust and Liverpool City Council are transferring ownership to the Land Trust and enabling the community to have a say in how the space is managed and maintained
- Heeley Park Subscription Society, Sheffield - Heeley Development Trust will test a subscription model which will offer members additional opportunities over and above the existing free facilities in the park, for example advance booking to concerts held in the park
- Endowing Parks for the 21st Century - The National Trust is working with local authorities in Sheffield and Manchester to develop an endowment model and explore how to raise revenue from income sources not widely used by parks
- My Park Scotland - Greenspace Scotland will build on existing digital technologies to help people in Edinburgh and Glasgow discover opportunities to engage and give to their local parks
- Eastbrookend Rekindled - Thames Chase Trust is working with London Borough of Barking and Dagenham to place a public services team in unused buildings within the park and explore whether this could be a viable solution to maintaining assets as well as bringing new audiences to the park
- Darlington Parks Improvement District - Groundwork, Darlington Council and Darlington Cares and the Green Spaces Forum will test the potential of corporate giving to sustain their local parks
- ParkWork, Bristol - The Bristol Parks Forum and Bristol City Council will offer horticultural training and skills development as a route to employment, while improving maintenance and management of the parks
- Bloomsbury Squared - London Borough of Camden will explore the willingness and opportunities for local businesses and organisations to contribute directly to the cost of maintaining Bloomsbury’s urban parks and squares

- Coastal Parks and Garden Foundation - Bournemouth Borough Council will create a Foundation for parks across their authority and test the extent to which public giving can help financially sustain a park, including exploring digital opportunities around real-time giving
- Park Hack, Hackney, London - Groundwork London, London Borough of Hackney and Gensler will look at how they can develop new services (such as pop up meeting spaces) for local businesses across a range of parks in Hackney
- Go to the Park, Burnley - Burnley Borough Council and Newground will test new horticulture approaches – such as introducing bee farms and managing woodland for fuel - to help cut costs and increase income, as well as setting up a Volunteer in Parks programme (VIP) to encourage community involvement

Further information

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