

People enjoying a park on a sunny day

Parks are highly valued spaces but with growing financial pressures, how can we ensure they are protected and sustained for the future? It’s time to rethink parks again…

Today, nearly £1.5million has been awarded to enable parks across the UK to trailblaze innovation and support new ways of management and maintenance.

Eight projects are bringing communities and councils together to make the most of these vital community assets through projects designed to protect them from slow decline as a result of local authority budget cuts.

Forming parks foundations; nurturing friends groups; and generating income through renewables, are just some of the ways projects will help find sustainable solutions that can be replicated by parks across the UK.

[quote=Alice Casey, Nesta's Head of New Operating Models]"Our aim is to help parks innovate to ensure they can sustain"[/quote]

The projects are the latest to be funded through Rethinking Parks, a joint initiative from Nesta, the Big Lottery Fund and HLF.

“Our aim is to help parks innovate to ensure they can sustain and develop as free, open and truly valued community spaces for the future,” said Alice Casey, Head of New Operating Models at Nesta?. “Rethinking Parks will demonstrate

ways to ensure that our parks will continue to be protected and loved by communities everywhere for generations to come."

Projects include:

Bristol & Bath Parks Foundation

Bristol City Council and Bath & North East Somerset Council are joining forces to develop a Parks Foundation to support parks across the two cities. This collaborative approach will test how public giving, volunteering and social enterprise can be encouraged to benefit parks for public use and enjoyment.

Leeds Parks Fund: Charitable Giving to Parks

Leeds City Council will work in partnership with Leeds Community Foundation, Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum and Leeds University to develop and promote charitable initiative 'Leeds Parks Fund'. The Fund will raise an income to enhance parks and green spaces in the city and it will provide an opportunity for communities, businesses and other partners to be more involved in how Leeds parks are developed.

Powering Parks by 10:10 Climate Action

10:10 Climate Action will work with Hackney Council and Scene Consulting in North East London to produce low carbon heat through installing ground source heat pumps within parks. It aims to save money through generating clean energy to heat buildings close to the parks, displacing previous fossil fuel use.

What is Rethinking Parks?

Rethinking Parks originally ran between 2014 and 2016, where the project supported 11 teams to test new ideas for funding our public parks 18 months. 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. More information can be found in Nesta's report.

The next round of Rethinking Parks grants will be awarded later in the year.



View of Brockwell Park, London

New Rethinking Parks funding to help parks innovate and thrive