

fit



fields in trust

A Manifesto for Parks

Putting local green spaces at the heart of our communities

Championing our Parks

A revaluing of our green spaces to ensure their contribution to society is properly recognised

Supporting our Communities

Ensuring access to parks is available to all and communities are enabled to support their green spaces

Activating our Nation

Putting parks at the heart of efforts to create a healthier and more active nation

Protecting our Green Future

Safeguarding the future of green spaces and recognising the contribution they will make to the next generation



Foreword

from Fields in Trust Chief Executive Helen Griffiths





Our nation's parks and green spaces are at a critical juncture. In these challenging times, our local spaces are vulnerable to closure and so it is important we stand up to champion the positive impact they have on our society.

Research has found that 92% of local authority park departments have experienced budget cuts in the past three yearsⁱ and that between 2014 and 2016 a total of 214 playgrounds were closed by 65 local authorities across the UKⁱⁱ.

Fields in Trust's submissionⁱⁱⁱ to last year's Communities and Local Government Committee's Public Parks Inquiry called for a change in the way public green space is conceived, not as a drain on spending that requires a considerable amount of money to maintain - but rather as an asset which can be deployed to achieve longer term savings and happier, healthier more connected communities.

It is important that we re-value the enormous contribution our green spaces make to our communities. Ahead of the publication of the Minister's response to the CLG Committee's inquiry report, this General Election offers an opportunity to ensure parks remain central to the debate on how we tackle issues such as healthcare, community cohesion and our children's development.

Our Manifesto for Parks furthers the calls set out in our inquiry submission through four policy "green lines".

- **Championing** our parks is about revaluing our green spaces to ensure their contribution to society is properly recognised.
- **Supporting** our communities calls for parks to be available to all.
- **Activating** our nation puts parks at the heart of efforts to create a healthier nation.
- **Protecting** our green future looks at how the next generations require a safeguarding of our parks today.

When you are speaking to candidates during this election, please challenge them on what they will do for these four "green line" issues and how they will ensure local green spaces continue to be at the heart of our communities.

Championing our Parks

A revaluing of our green spaces to
ensure their contribution to society
is properly recognised



Parks should be considered by local authorities as an asset not a drain on their spending



Our parks and green spaces should be re-valued as a resource which contributes significantly to public health, mental wellbeing and community cohesion, not simply viewed as a drain on council finances for upkeep. A Social Return on Investment study carried out by City of Edinburgh Council^{iv} found that for every £1 spent on the city's parks there was a £12 return in social, environmental and economic benefits.

We should take advantage of all opportunities possible for funding of our green spaces



Community-led, commercial, sporting and heritage funding can all play a role in helping to re-develop parks, playgrounds and other green spaces. Fields in Trust are supportive of the NESTA's^v position that *"Rather than searching in vain for a silver bullet, parks teams should identify all the opportunities they have to raise income or reduce cost across all aspects of their operations"*.

Value should be attributed to the cost savings parks provide to the health service



Numerous research studies have demonstrated the health impact of access to green space in allowing physical exercise, promoting mental wellbeing and providing a stress-free space to relax. The closer people are to green space the more impact it has. The European Centre for Environment and Human Health at the University of Exeter^{vi} estimates that £2.2bn of health benefits are delivered by outdoor exercise in England every year. A large proportion of this takes place in parks and green spaces.

Parks should be treated as a key part of moving 'upstream' in the tackling of social issues



In a time of austerity social policy has become more geared to building a society that prevents problems from occurring rather than attempting to cope with the consequences. The preventative approach of moving 'upstream' to tackle social issues earlier saves money and can avoid significant problems for communities and individuals. Few public services have such a cross cutting impact as parks and green spaces. Changing the conversation to recognise the role that parks can play in funding the prevention rather than the cure is crucial to sustaining their future.



Supporting our Communities

Ensuring access to parks is available to
all and communities are enabled to
support their green spaces



Local authorities should ensure a benchmarked standard of green space provision



Adequate and equitable provision of parks and green spaces should be ensured through adherence to Fields in Trust benchmark Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play^{vii}. The Guidance recommends a minimum quantity guideline of 3.55 hectares of formal outdoor space provision per 1,000 population and 3.2 hectares of informal provision per 1,000 population. Local authorities should also aspire to a high quality of green space provision in line with the Green Flag Award^{viii} standard.

The work of 'Friends of' and community action groups in parks should be celebrated



Parks and green spaces provide places for diverse communities to come together. Their role within our local communities should be recognised and steps should be taken to help such groups establish and thrive as part of a national network of 'Friends of' groups.

Have a Field Day should be supported as a demonstration of the many ways communities engage with their local parks



To celebrate parks and their contributions to our neighbourhoods, Fields in Trust is encouraging communities to come together on their local green spaces as part of a national day of action on Saturday 8th July. Have a Field Day will see park users celebrate the many reasons their community loves its local parks.

Provision should be made to ensure a voice for park users at all levels of decision-making



The recent Communities and Local Government Parliamentary Committee's Public Parks Inquiry^{ix} has helped to give representation for the network of park users that exists across the UK. This should not be treated as a one-off exercise and steps should be taken to ensure the parks community retains both a meaningful voice and accountable representatives in local and national government.

Activating our Nation

Putting parks at the heart of efforts
to create a healthier and
more active nation



All communities should have access to spaces for physical activity



In order to create a more active nation, in line with the Department for Culture, Media & Sport^x recommendations, local communities need to be provided with adequate spaces of sufficient quality to take part in physical activity. In the case of public parks this provision should be available free at the point of access to ensure non-exclusion of any section of society. The volunteer coaches and organisers who work tirelessly to ensure this provision is available for everyone through initiatives, such as parkrun, should be celebrated and properly supported.

The role of parks as the starting blocks for elite sporting success should be championed



The nation's sporting heroes all started their journey to success on local green spaces along with many fellow budding young sporting stars. The role of our parks and green spaces in creating the elite sportspeople of the future should be championed and steps taken to ensure each and every child's enthusiasm can be nurtured and developed.

Parks should be recognised as spaces to allow people to come together



Our local green spaces allow activity and creativity to flourish and the diverse range of volunteer groups that help make them vibrant parts of our communities should be supported. Parks can act as a focal point within a community and thought should be given as to how they can be designed and improved to best support the communities they serve.

Investment should be made to ensure parks remain places for the inactive to become active

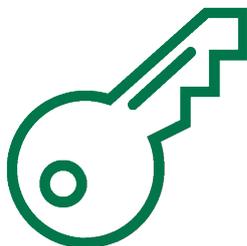


With ever increasing housing density in our towns and cities, local parks are vital spaces to allow inactive people to make the first steps and undertake physical activity within a safe and inclusive environment. Investment should be made to ensure parks and green spaces contain suitable facilities to support active people and communities.



Protecting our Green Future

Safeguarding the future of green spaces
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The contribution of parks as places for children to develop physical literacy should be recognised



Children learn physical literacy through play long before they participate in any sporting activity and yet there is no mandatory provision of play spaces. More consideration needs to be given to the informal play spaces that provide multiple opportunities for children to engage in physical activity at a young age and the security of their provision within communities.

Parks should be places where children can learn and be close to nature



The early stages in a child's development are the most important and green spaces allow them opportunities to be close to nature from an early age. The Children's Play Policy Forum^{xi} concluded that play initiatives lead to improvements in children's physical and mental health and are linked to cognitive and social developmental benefits. Parks should be safeguarded as safe spaces for learning and development.

Inclusive facilities should be provided to ensure everyone is able to play safely



Investment in parks and playgrounds is needed to ensure they are safe, interesting places for children to explore with their parents if active young people and adults are to develop. Provision should be made to ensure parks and green spaces are accessible to all within a community and remain truly non-exclusive.

Steps should be taken to ensure the nation's parks and green spaces are safeguarded for current and future generations



Protection with Fields in Trust ensures that a green space will remain a place for communities to come together and be active in perpetuity. Protection is achieved through a legally binding Deed of Dedication, agreed with the landowner. It's a robust yet flexible means to ensure green spaces are safeguarded forever.

References

ⁱ www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks-2016

ⁱⁱ www.api-play.org/news/nowhere2play-campaign

ⁱⁱⁱ www.fieldsintrust.org/News_Detail.aspx?newsid=35cd0b70-ad0e-46ab-a998-c15629e926c5

^{iv} www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20064/parks_and_green_spaces/1300/the_value_of_city_of_edinburgh_councils_parks

^v www.nesta.org.uk/publications/learning-rethink-parks

^{vi} www.ecehh.org/news/green-exercise/

^{vii} www.fieldsintrust.org/guidance

^{viii} www.greenflagaward.org.uk

^{ix} www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcomloc/45/4502.htm

^x www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation

^{xi} www.childrensplaypolicyforum.wordpress.com/publications

Icons with thanks to Abraham, AfterGrind, Artem Kovyazin, Aya Sofya, Baboon designs, Chatnut is Industries, corpus delicti, Genius Icons, Numero Uno, Oksana Latysheva, Oliviu Stoian, Rflor, sahua d and Scott Lewis via The Noun Project at www.thenounproject.com.



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