

General election on 8th June: Now is the time to speak out for local parks and green spaces!

We call on all candidates and political parties to agree to the following statement, and include it in their leaflets, manifestos and public pronouncements:

The UK's parks and public green spaces are extremely popular and essential facilities for local neighbourhoods providing a wide range of unique benefits for all sections of our communities. Despite this they are facing an underfunding crisis and an uncertain future. The good management of these spaces should be a statutory duty, and they should be properly funded and protected.

To all local Parks Friends/Community Groups around the UK

Elections for MPs will be held on June 8th. **We urge you to take this opportunity to contact (eg by letter, e-mail or face to face) your local candidates and parties standing for election, to lobby for issues that are important to you in relation to your local parks or green spaces.**

Please remind them that parks and green spaces are an essential resource for all our communities, providing numerous vital benefits and services: health, sports, travel routes, leisure, education, play, social cohesion, local economy and biodiversity, to name just a few. They are used by virtually everyone and as such they should receive the resources they need to ensure they can fulfil their vital functions. The Federation strongly supports a statutory obligation for these spaces to be managed and resourced effectively. *

In spite of the essential role our parks and green spaces play we are entering a local and national greenspace crisis, due to continued cuts to parks budgets – mainly a result of central government cuts to Local Authorities' overall budgets. **Park lovers need to speak out**

now. Past experience of revenue cuts has shown that if local spaces are poorly resourced they are very likely to become problem spaces with negative effects on our communities. Furthermore, on top of cuts there is a growing pressure on greenspace in many areas of the UK, which could lead to inappropriate urban development and commercialism.

Earlier this year a parliamentary Inquiry by a cross-party Select Committee of MPs received evidence from hundreds of expert organisations, with over 320,000 members of the public signing a special petition calling for the management of parks to become a statutory service. The MPs' report recognised the vital role of parks for every community, and the unacceptable and devastating underfunding crisis they face – the Committee called for immediate action at all levels. We await the incoming Government's response. **

Your local parks/green spaces have their own specific issues and needs which ought to be heard and addressed. With over 6,000 local Friends Groups around the UK and millions of park lovers, this is a growing and powerful force and we encourage you to publicly raise the profile of your local parks and the benefits that they afford your local communities. Your group can influence future MPs and political parties who will make funding and other decisions that will impact your local parks. Please consider writing to your local newspapers too and spreading ideas on social media.

This is an opportunity to make our local parks a priority.

Thank you for your efforts

Yours sincerely

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National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces
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* See NFPGS submission 'Parks Crisis: A Call For Effective Government Action Now':
<http://www.natfedparks.org.uk/nfpags-literature.html> It has been calculated that the entire UK's parks services need around £3-4 billion per year. This is a very small amount for what is recognised as crucial public infrastructure daily serving the entire population. In our view this could easily be funded out of general taxation. For example it has just been announced [Sunday Times Rich List, May 2017] that the richest 1,000 UK individuals alone have a combined wealth of £658 billion, an increase of £83 billion over the last 12 months.

** Details regarding the Communities & Local Government Select Committee Inquiry into Public Parks:
- The Committee Report: <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcomloc/45/45.pdf>
- What the public think: <Https://spark.adobe.com/page/Cu7ttsXspLhK/>
- A response to the Report and the Election: <http://www.hortweek.com/commitment-parks-task-force-open-space-strategy-feature-parks-alliance-election-manifesto-call/parks-and-gardens/article/1432690>