

- **Ensure adequate long-term resources for ongoing maintenance, management and improvements**

Maintain and increase the resources and investment in parks and green spaces to appropriate levels so they can be properly staffed and looked after, rather than let them become run down and derelict. It has been estimated that the UK's parks need a total budget of around £2bn - £3bn a year. Parks services are hugely cost-effective in terms of the outstanding, wide-ranging and widespread benefits they provide: but only a tiny percentage of public money is currently spent on them. Their true value as the 'Natural Health Service' should be quantified and recognised. They should continue to be funded through taxation from Local, City, Regional and National sources. Mechanisms suggested for achieving this include Central Government ring-fenced funding to Local Authorities, access to wider infrastructure budgets, existing and new levies on development, or through Council Tax or Business Rates. Endowments could provide additional resources.

- **Encourage and enable community involvement and empowerment of local people and park users**

Support the Parks Friends Groups movement – over 6,000 local groups - to grow and be more effective. We can get so much more out of the UK's parks and green spaces – there is a vast potential. Where there is an active Friends Group supported by an effective local authority (or other accountable management) parks usually become, over time, improved and better used. We can harness friends groups' ideas and promote them. We can inspire local communities to create friends groups for many of the 20,000+ additional parks and green spaces which need one.

## WHY DO WE NEED A CHARTER FOR PARKS AND GREEN SPACES?

No-one currently is legally responsible for ensuring the long-term maintenance of our parks and green spaces, leaving them vulnerable to underfunding, understaffing, neglect and dereliction - and even being lost to development. Parks maintenance, unlike social care or household waste collection, is not a statutory service – even though most people assume it is!

Consequently, due to years of funding cuts to local public services generally, councils find it harder and harder to allocate adequate money for parks. Total parks budgets across the UK are down to around £1bn - maybe a third of what they need to be to avoid parks becoming run down with an inevitable loss of their significant benefits. This also means that dedicated and experienced staff are being lost, as are a range of support services promoting the involvement of community groups and park volunteers.

We believe that much of the potential of the UK's public green spaces remains untapped, and they could be greatly improved. Wherever there is proper staffing and investment, parks are thriving – we want all of the 27,000 or so UK's green spaces to get the care, attention and improvements their users and local communities deserve.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- If your organisation supports the Charter please get them to sign up on our webpage below and encourage other groups to do so.
- Meanwhile, why not actively support groups and networks which seek to promote, protect and improve local public green spaces!

[www.parkscharter.org.uk](http://www.parkscharter.org.uk)

[@parkscharter](https://twitter.com/parkscharter) [f parkscharter](https://facebook.com/parkscharter)

# The CHARTER FOR PARKS



38 DEGREES  
people power change

Llais y Goedwig  
The Community  
Llwydianwog

TCV  
The Community  
Volunteers

FIELDS IN TRUST  
EST. 1955

greenspace  
scotland  
transforming urban spaces into people places

KEEP  
BRITAIN  
TIDY

UNISON

THE  
GARDENS  
TRUST

National Federation of  
Parks and Green Spaces  
Supporting Grass Roots

Friends of  
the Earth

The  
Parks  
Agency

THE  
PARKS  
ALLIANCE

## OUR PARKS NEED ACTION!

**Our local parks and public green spaces are vital for everyone and every community, and for all age groups and interests.**

Parks\* are an essential and unique service promoting relaxation, recreation and play, wildlife and bio-diversity, attractive walking and cycling routes, green jobs and skills, heritage, flood control, health and social well-being, and community cohesion.

However, there is growing alarm from the public, from Friends of Parks groups, parks managers, experts and politicians, about the serious long-term damage being caused by devastating cuts to green space budgets for staff and maintenance, and the lack of funding and investment by local and national government. If not reversed, this neglect will cause them to go into serious decline and become problem spaces abandoned by park users and plagued by vandalism - or even being closed and sold off. We must not let this happen.

**We therefore call on all politicians, and in particular the Prime and First Ministers of the Governments of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to adopt the new Charter.**

\* 'Parks' includes all public green spaces

## THE CHARTER

- Celebrate the central role well-run parks play in our neighbourhoods for all sections of our communities
- Recognise the right of every citizen to have access within walking distance to a good quality public green space
- Endorse a legal duty for all public green space to be managed to a good standard
- Embed effective protection from inappropriate development or use, or loss of any part of our parks
- Ensure adequate long-term resources for ongoing maintenance, management and improvements
- Encourage and enable community involvement and empowerment of local people and park users

## WE CALL ON ALL TIERS OF GOVERNMENT TO...

- **Endorse a legal duty for all public green space to be managed to a good standard**

We need to ensure that all parks in the four nations of the UK are managed to a good standard and that those managing them have adequate funding to do it. Councils have unparalleled expertise and experience in how to manage parks efficiently, effectively and attractively - for example as encapsulated in the internationally-recognised Green Flag Award standard. A statutory duty, backed by adequate funding, should be brought in for Local Authorities to enable and ensure all parks in their area achieve this - not just those they own or manage. Those who own or manage parks should work with park users and others to continuously improve green space.

- **Embed effective protection from inappropriate development or use, or loss of any part of our parks**

Our green spaces, parts of them, and facilities within them, are under threat due to a range of factors including pressure to sell them off to generate income, or for urban development, or inappropriate commercialism. They need effective protection by raising their officially-designated status, strengthening planning policies, and adopting 'in perpetuity' protective covenants such as through Fields In Trust.