



A Parks Movement

**An insight into the
National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces**

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Background

- Founded March 2008 from 9 local/ town-wide Forums
- Constituted in Feb 2010
- Grassroots movement est. 7,000+ local groups
- Links up to 70+ area forums across U.K.
- Partner supported voluntary group, preparing to become CIO



A vibrant grassroots movement

- Community self-organisation
volunteering and action
- 7,000 local Friends of Parks
Groups
*all over the UK but particularly concentrated in
urban areas, such as those shown*
- A National Federation
co-ordinating and representing the movement



Community action

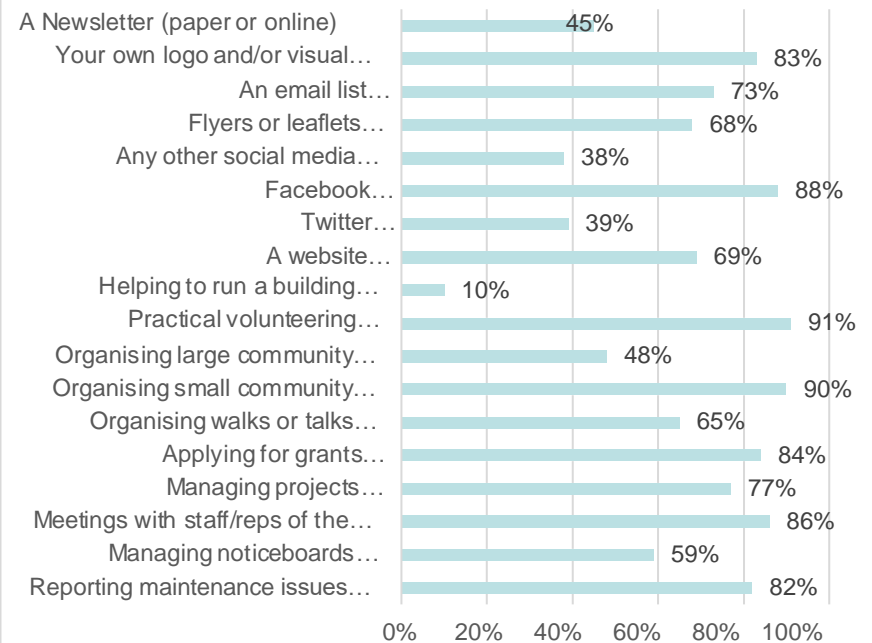
- The huge benefits our Friends

- A wide range of activities
 - Daily eyes and ears
 - Better promotion
 - Organising events
 - Help with maintenance
 - Access to extra funding and expertise
 - Ideas and vision for improvements
 - Help to protect green space
 - Strong community voice

A strong and active Friends Group may be able to do all of that – and more!



What Friends Groups do



Why set up an Area Forum?

For the Community

- Share experiences (+ and -)
- Support / mentoring
- Support (resources)
- Joint working
- United, louder voice
- Focus
- Links & partnerships

For the local authority/land owners

- Community contact
 - Consultation
 - Wider links
- Support (e.g. resources, events)
- Support and an independent voice
- Joint working
- Focus
 - Single point of contact
 - Co-ordination
 - Synergy

Community action

How can we ensure it makes a real difference?

- Strong, independent community organisation
- Good connection with park users and the local communities
- Good relations with managers
- Remember every group, every community and every green space has its own history and character



Partnership with Management

- Friends Groups need encouragement, support, and access to guidance and training
- Equipment, meeting and storage space
- Good communication and collaboration
- Mutual respect and understanding
- Spread good practice
- Develop popular and realistic vision
- Celebrate achievements



BOSF logged volunteer hours, April – June 2023



HOW FRIENDS GROUPS &
THEIR VOLUNTEERS
LOOKED AFTER BIRMINGHAM'S
OPEN SPACES
APRIL TO JUNE 2023

CONSERVATION
GARDENING 9632
INFRASTRUCTURE hours

3439
hours EVENTS
WALKS & TALKS
SCHOOL VISITS
EXERCISE SESSIONS

ADMIN
FUNDING 4337
MEETINGS hours
FINANCIAL
SOCIAL MEDIA

6192
hours LITTER
SECURITY
& EVERYTHING ELSE

That's a total of 23,599 hours.



Connect with us
on Social Media
@BOSFonline

In financial worth, that's
£257,229

THANK YOU!

We could not do all this without your help

Birmingham
Open Spaces
Forum
bosf.org.uk

Facing the challenges together

- Underfunding and falling budgets
- Community cohesion and involvement
- Improvements and adaptation needed
- Protection from inappropriate development

A BBC mini-documentary on some of the challenges:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yjvb9MxxDrw>

Community involvement and empowerment is essential for greenspace - now and in the future



THE UK FRIENDS GROUPS MOVEMENT: CO-ORDINATION, REPRESENTATION & SERVICES



THE MOVEMENT

- 7,000 local Friends Groups
- 70 Area Friends Forums

NFPGS PARTNERS & COLLABORATORS

- Key community-facing partners**
- Keep Britain Tidy (Green Flag / Love Parks)
 - Fields In Trust
 - The Conservation Volunteers
 - Groundwork UK
 - The Gardens Trust
 - National Federation of Cemetery Friends
- Other national greenspace organisations include:**
- National Trust
 - Association for Public Service Excellence
 - Parks Management Forum
 - Countryside Management Association
 - Local Government Association
 - Key Cities
 - Natural England
 - National Lottery Heritage Fund
 - Future Parks
 - Greenspace Scotland
 - Natural Resources Wales
 - Llais y Goedwig
 - Woodland Trust
 - The Wildlife Trusts
 - British Association of Landscape Industries
 - Landscape Institute
 - Social Farms and Gardens
 - Parks and Green Spaces APPG (Westminster)
 - Open Spaces Society
 - Town & Country Planning Association
 - Trees for Cities
 - Campaign to Protect the Rural Environment
 - ParkRun
 - Grassroots Football
- Cross-sector alliances**
- Parks and Green Spaces Network
 - Parks Action Group (currently on hold)



HOW STRONG IS YOUR COMMUNITY GROUP?

Take our free strength checker test and find out!



Welcome to the Parks Community UK website, providing a free online knowledge hub and network for all Friends of parks and green space community groups, no matter their size or level.

These groups play such a vital role to ensure our parks and green spaces remain well run and welcoming. Our role is to celebrate, support and empower these community volunteers to be effective and resilient.

Wondering where to start? Take a look at our most popular pages - the [Case Studies](#) and [Advice Guides](#)

Parks Community UK operates within the movement of thousands of parks and green space Friends and community groups and we are managed by [The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces](#), the movement's umbrella organisation.

'How To' Guides

These "How to" Guides and documents have been compiled from many trusted sources. They are designed to help Friends groups understand common issues and to provide solutions, some have been written by our pilot groups. Further contributions are welcomed as we constantly seek to expand the help we can offer. Hopefully, you can find the advice you need, if not, then do let us know and we will endeavour to create a new How-To!

ALL

CAMPAIGNING & PROTECTING

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

FUNDING & FINANCE

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

SITE IMPROVEMENTS

SITE MANAGEMENT

STARTING A FRIENDS GROUP

STRENGTHENING GROUPS

Identifying Trees



What Does A Tree Warden Do?



Plants For Encouraging Butterflies



A List Of Inspiring Events Friends Groups Can Put On!



8 Tips To Create A Successful Friends Group



How To Run A BioBlitz



Sources Of Funding



What Makes An Effective Chairperson?

QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE Chairperson

- Competence
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Firmness & Decisiveness
- Honesty and Dependability
- Openness
- Fairness
- Tolerance
- Patience
- Humility
- Stamina

Tree Surgery



Good Practice When Promoting Your Activities And Your Group



Using Images To Promote Your Park Or Green Space



Running A Guided Walk



Case Studies

Ideas to inspire people to take action

Many thanks to all the groups who have submitted their case studies to us so far, they showcase the kinds of things local park users can achieve. We hope they inspire others to take action too!

For a simple and quick way to get your case study onto our website, please use our Case Study Submission Form: [click here and take a look](#). We have designed the form so it is easy to complete. It allows other Friends groups to read and learn from your story. We hope they will be inspired by what your group has done and learn some useful tips to enable best practice.

ALL

- CAMPAIGNING & PROTECTING
- EVENTS & ACTIVITIES
- FUNDING & FINANCE
- PARTNERSHIP WORKING
- SITE IMPROVEMENTS
- SITE MANAGEMENT
- STARTING A FRIENDS GROUP
- STRENGTHENING GROUPS

How To Set Up A Forum And Some Advice For Creating A Friends For Sunderland Green And Open Spaces Forum



Protecting A Historic Reservoir – Friends Of Edgbaston Reservoir, Birmingham



From An Anti-Social To A Social Space – Friends Of East Rugby Group, Rugby



Community Engagement And Partnership Working – Green Tides (Adur And Worthing Green Spaces Partnership)



Having A Management Plan Allows Ambitious Partnership Working To Flourish – Friends Of Troopers Hill, Bristol



Restoring And Managing A Historic 'People's Park' – Warley Woods Community Trust, Sandwell, West Midlands



Woodcock Park Mural – From Eyesore To Local Landmark



Friends Of Central Park Dog Show



Consulting With The Community And Developing A Master Plan – Latchmere Rec, Kingston Upon Thames





BETTER FRIENDS

A self-assessment tool to help green space Friends and Community Groups reflect and strengthen

START

National Federation of
Parks and Green Spaces
Supporting Grass Roots



BETTER FRIENDS

THE STATE OF THE MOVEMENT OF
GREENSPACE FRIENDS GROUPS
THROUGHOUT THE UK

The second report
presenting the headline
findings of the Parks
Community UK 'Better
Friends' Strength Checker

September 2023



www.natfedparks.org.uk
www.parkscommunity.org.uk

National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces

supporting grass roots

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The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS) is the umbrella organisation that aims to amplify the voices of Friends Groups across the UK.



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National Federation
of Parks and Green
Spaces

National co-ordination

Organisation

- Supporting the grassroots
- Community voice
- Raising public profile
- Promoting standards
- Liaison with Sector
- Lobbying Government
- Charter for Parks

Activity

- Website resources
- E-mail forum
- Network newsletter
- Online meetings, themed discussion
- Sector research (inc. UCL links)
- Community empowerment representation (Parks Working Group)

Challenges and opportunities

- ◆ Resources
- ◆ Competing priorities
- ◆ Advocacy – remember the pandemic..?



The one change that worked
Conservation

Sam Pyrah

Mon 13 Jan 2025 11.00 GMT

[Share](#)

I was in despair about the environmental crisis. Then I volunteered to clean up my local park



“Aren’t you good?” passersby say to Sam Pyrah, as they walk through the park. Photograph: Courtesy of Sam Pyrah

‘Instead of sobbing in front of your computer screen,’ my counsellor said, ‘go out and do something’

There’s a pesky crisp wrapper half-sunk in the mud under brambles. Each time I secure it within the jaws of my litter-picker, another piece tears off. I persist, until all the fragments of coloured foil are in my bin liner. Then I move on.

I’m volunteering with a group at my local park. They perform a range of tasks, but today - my first time - we’re litter-picking. “Aren’t you good?” passersby say, as they walk through the park with their takeaway coffees. Or sometimes: “You’re fighting a losing battle there, love!”

When our bags are full, we gather for a break, in our fluorescent yellow gilets, drinking tea from flasks, munching apples and tutting over people hanging poo-bags on bushes when there are plenty of dog-waste bins. I arrived this morning on a knife-edge of anger and tears, but this simple, repetitive and collective act

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Further info...



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