



association for public service excellence

# Local Authority State of the Market 2026

## Parks and Greenspaces



Briefing 26/10

March 2026

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## Local Authority State of the Market 2026

### Parks and greenspaces

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# Results at a glance

(Change from 2025)

## Biodiversity

Consider biodiversity a priority for their parks and greenspace service **95%** +11%

## Budgets

Expect a decrease in revenue over the next year **57%** -1%

Expect a decrease in capital over the next year **48%** -10%

## Management Models

Expect their service to be managed in-house in the next 2-3 years **80%** +7%

## Income generation

Consider political resistance a barrier to generating income **75%** +6%

## Workforce

Implemented a recruitment freeze in the last 12 months **37%** -8%

Will not be recruiting apprentices in 2025-26 **71%** -2%

## Future decreases for the service over the next 12 months

Frequency of maintenance of grounds **68%** -7%

## Future growth for the service over the next 12 months

Community involvement/engagement **66%** +9%

Conservation and management of climate change **49%** +3%

# 1 Executive Summary

## 1.1 Purpose of the report

Each year APSE undertakes a survey on the state of the market in local authority parks, horticultural services and grounds maintenance. The survey is distributed to officers and elected members across the UK and includes a range of questions covering a diverse range of topics – from budgets and income generation to biodiversity targets and community groups.

Where possible, this report adopts a comparative analysis with previous APSE state of the market surveys. This allows for the identification of trends in the sector, as well as the challenges, opportunities, and issues that local authority parks and green space teams are facing. The results of the survey are shared with local authorities and other organisations to help them better understand the needs of the sector.

## 1.2 Methodology

APSE conducted an online survey of its member councils between January and February 2026. Respondents were relatively evenly spread across APSE's six areas of activity: APSE Scotland, APSE Wales, APSE Northern Ireland, APSE Northern, APSE Southern and APSE Central.

## 1.3 Three main takeaways

### 1. Parks are increasingly recognised as part of local climate and environmental solutions

The 2026 survey findings confirm that biodiversity and climate change remain firmly embedded in parks priorities. With 95% identifying biodiversity as a key focus and nearly half anticipating growth in conservation and climate management, parks are playing an expanding role in supporting carbon capture, flood mitigation, urban cooling and habitat restoration.

In the context of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain and wider local climate commitments, there is a growing opportunity to position parks as important components of green infrastructure. Ensuring that this contribution is clearly articulated within corporate climate strategies will help strengthen the case for sustained investment.

### 2. Financial pressure persists – and reorganisation adds uncertainty

Despite modest signs of stabilisation in some areas, the majority of respondents still expect reductions in revenue and capital budgets. Maintenance reductions remain the most anticipated area of decline. Workforce pressures, reliance on natural wastage, and limits on apprenticeship recruitment further underline the fragility of capacity within the sector.

In England, Local Government Reorganisation introduces additional complexity. Structural change can place discretionary services at risk during transition periods, particularly where asset rationalisation and budget realignment are under review. However, reorganisation also presents an opportunity to embed parks strategically within new unitary authorities as key contributors to climate resilience and public health outcomes.

### 3. Dual buy-in remains critical to long-term sustainability

Securing sustained investment in parks requires buy-in from both council leadership and residents. Senior leaders must recognise the preventative value of parks in reducing long-term costs linked to flooding, health inequality and environmental degradation. At the same time, resident engagement – through events, volunteering, friends groups and visible biodiversity projects – strengthens advocacy and reinforces parks as valued community assets.

The sector's ability to align climate action, health improvement and community cohesion within a compelling narrative will be key to protecting and enhancing parks in the years ahead.



#### Out of the loop with your council peers? APSE can help...

All APSE members can sign up to APSE's Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance Network. This online network provides regular meetings across the year, with expert speakers from across local government and the wider parks and greenspace sector. The network is your chance to talk about the latest legislation, technology and best practice with your peers in local government. Be sure to sign up for the network [using this link](#).

## What do the survey results tell us?

**87%**

*"Agree" or "Agree strongly"*

*"The squeeze on public sector resources are affecting parks and green spaces disproportionately to other service areas."*

There has been a 7% increase in the number of respondents who either 'Agree' or 'Agree strongly' with the above statement – increasing from 80% in 2025 to 87% in 2026.

This trend likely reflects the fact that, with local government finances across the UK continuing under pressure, albeit with improvements to the settlement in provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in England<sup>1</sup> and more certainty around multi-year settlements in parts of the UK, councils are continuing to prioritise statutory services such as children's and adult social care over discretionary services such as parks.

Notwithstanding the services local authorities are legally obliged to provide, parks also face fierce competition for resources from other council services. The latest [Survation public opinion poll](#), conducted on behalf of APSE, found that, when those polled were asked "If the local government was making cuts to public services, should the following be a priority to protect?" across 13 services, 'Parks and Greenspaces' came eleventh – which suggests that whilst the public value their local parks they do not regard parks as being in need of further funding compared to other high profile areas of public attention such as pot hole repairs ('Road Maintenance' being the top priority).

One respondent echoed this point:

- *"Parks are an easy target when authorities have to decide between services such as education and social services or even road maintenance."*



### APSE / Survation: What do councillors and the public think?

Every year, Survation is commissioned by APSE to undertake polling of both councillors and residents, examining perceptions of council services, financial sustainability, trust in institutions and expectations for the future. For a more detailed analysis of the latest poll findings, [click here](#).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-2026-to-2027/provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-2026-to-2027>

86%

"Agree" or "Agree strongly"

"Reductions in funding has resulted in a withdrawal of maintenance from some land and an increase in unmaintained land."

When it comes to those who 'Agree' or 'Agree strongly' with the above statement, there has been a slight increase of 2% from last year's survey (84%).

The current figure of 86% remains below the 2022 high of 92%. While this represents a decline, it may not be due solely to funding reductions.

An increasing number of councils are adopting more relaxed green space maintenance regimes to support rewilding and meet biodiversity and climate change targets. These approaches can result in spaces that appear less formally maintained, which may influence public perceptions.

However, survey feedback suggests that environmental action is sometimes viewed as a cover for budget cuts. As one respondent noted:

- *"Funding decrease is flagged as biodiversity and/or climate change action, whereas they should be distinct. The public think we are using biodiversity as an excuse to introduce cuts and it is more important than that."*

This suggests the decline may reflect both changing management approaches and challenges in clearly communicating the distinction between environmental objectives and financial pressures.



### Grassroots Messaging: Visual communication for biodiversity areas

APSE has received an increasing number of network queries from member councils seeking advice and examples of good practice in relation to differential mowing. The examples showcased in *Grassroots Messaging: Visual communication for biodiversity areas* illustrate the variety of ways councils are rising to this challenge. You can read the report [using this link](#).

93%

"Agree" or "Agree strongly"

**"Lack of investment in parks and green spaces will have health and social impacts"**

An overwhelming majority of those surveyed "Agree" or "Agree strongly" with the above statement and recent academic research adds weight to this claim. A February 2025 article in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health (JECH) found that in England, a 1% increase in grassland area was associated with a 37% reduction in annual preventable deaths among the most deprived urban areas.<sup>2</sup>

90%

"Agree" or "Agree strongly"

**"The public should get free access to all parks"**

An increase from 2025 (78%), 90% represents significant support across the sector for parks as a universal service – free at the point of access.

However, respondents also highlighted the importance of generating income through charges such as car parking and organised activities – including football, bowls and cricket – to help sustain and enhance parks and green space provision.

- *"Access to parks should be free, but there should always be a fee for some services such as sports football, bowls, cricket etc."*
- *"All parks and green spaces should be accessible to all and free to access by pedestrians. Car parking income is a vital way of self-financing our parks."*

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<sup>2</sup> [Inequality in green space distribution and its association with preventable deaths across urban neighbourhoods in the UK, stratified by Index of Multiple Deprivation | Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health](#)

“What environmental issues are a priority for your parks and greenspace service?”  
[Multiple choice]



Biodiversity continues to be identified as the main environmental priority for parks services at 95%. This is to be expected: Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory for all councils in England on 12 February 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). More information about the biodiversity initiatives local council parks teams are engaged in can be found in [11 below](#).

Litter control has seen an increase in priority, rising from 65% to 70%, reflecting growing concern around environmental quality and the visible impact of waste on local communities. Climate change continues to rank highly at 66%, underlining the sustained focus on mitigation, adaptation and resilience within greenspace services.

Comments also highlighted emerging environmental pressures, particularly the growing challenge of invasive non-native species and the spread of tree and plant pests and diseases, including ash dieback.



### Struggling to best the pests? APSE can help...

APSE's report – *Plant Biosecurity: The role of local councils* – provides exemplars of good plant biosecurity practices which will support Government plant biosecurity aims and objectives. You can read the report [using this link](#).

APSE Training has also designed a training course – *Plant Biosecurity for Local Authorities* – which explores the key pests and invasive species currently affecting the UK, as well as emerging threats that councils may face in the future. The course outlines how government agencies are supporting local authorities in tackling these challenges and, crucially, demonstrates how adopting robust plant biosecurity measures can enable councils to play a leading role in delivering effective, long-term solutions. To book your place on the course click [here](#).

“What social issues are a priority for your parks and green space service?” [Multiple choice]



As in 2025, the most popular response for social priorities was ‘Supporting healthy living’. Research by Public Health England highlights that regular use of parks is linked to lower risks of obesity, heart disease, and depression.<sup>3</sup> APSE’s own research in 2020 estimated that parks contribute £2.8bn per year to Scotland’s community health and well-being. Through their contribution to better health, parks save NHS Scotland some £9m per year in fewer GP visits alone.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding other social issues, the number of respondents acknowledging ‘Reducing anti-social behaviour’ as a priority has remained steady. Whilst the number acknowledging ‘Promoting community cohesion’ as a priority is up 6% from 2025 and 17% from 2024. These increases, perhaps spurred by the public disorder experienced in the summer of 2024, reflect attempts by local councils to find ways to bring communities together through shared use of local assets. For example, several northern English cities are transforming once neglected passageways into community spaces filled with flowers, vegetables and urban art.<sup>5</sup>

This renewed focus on cohesion is reflected in APSE’s recent polling with Survation which paints a positive picture of community cohesion. Almost two thirds of the public (62%) say their local area feels welcoming, and the same proportion believe people from different backgrounds generally get on well. Around one third rate cohesion in their area very highly – suggesting many communities are already experiencing the benefits of efforts to strengthen local relationships and shared spaces.

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<sup>3</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f202e0de90e071a5a924316/Improving\\_access\\_to\\_greenspace\\_2020\\_review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f202e0de90e071a5a924316/Improving_access_to_greenspace_2020_review.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.apse.org.uk/sites/apse/assets/File/Spending%20on%20parks%20in%20Scotland\\_compressed-2.pdf](https://www.apse.org.uk/sites/apse/assets/File/Spending%20on%20parks%20in%20Scotland_compressed-2.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/6a93f565-5264-496e-b8fb-df6c4f6f4a6f?>

**80%**  
"In-house"

"How do you expect the service to be managed within the next 2-3 years?"

There has been a 7% increase in number expecting their service to be managed in-house from 2025. This suggests a continued shift away from outsourced delivery models and reflects a growing confidence in direct service provision. In a period of financial uncertainty, in-house models can offer greater control over costs, workforce deployment and service standards.

Bringing services in-house can also align more closely with wider corporate priorities such as climate action, social value and community wealth building, enabling councils to integrate parks more effectively into broader strategic objectives.

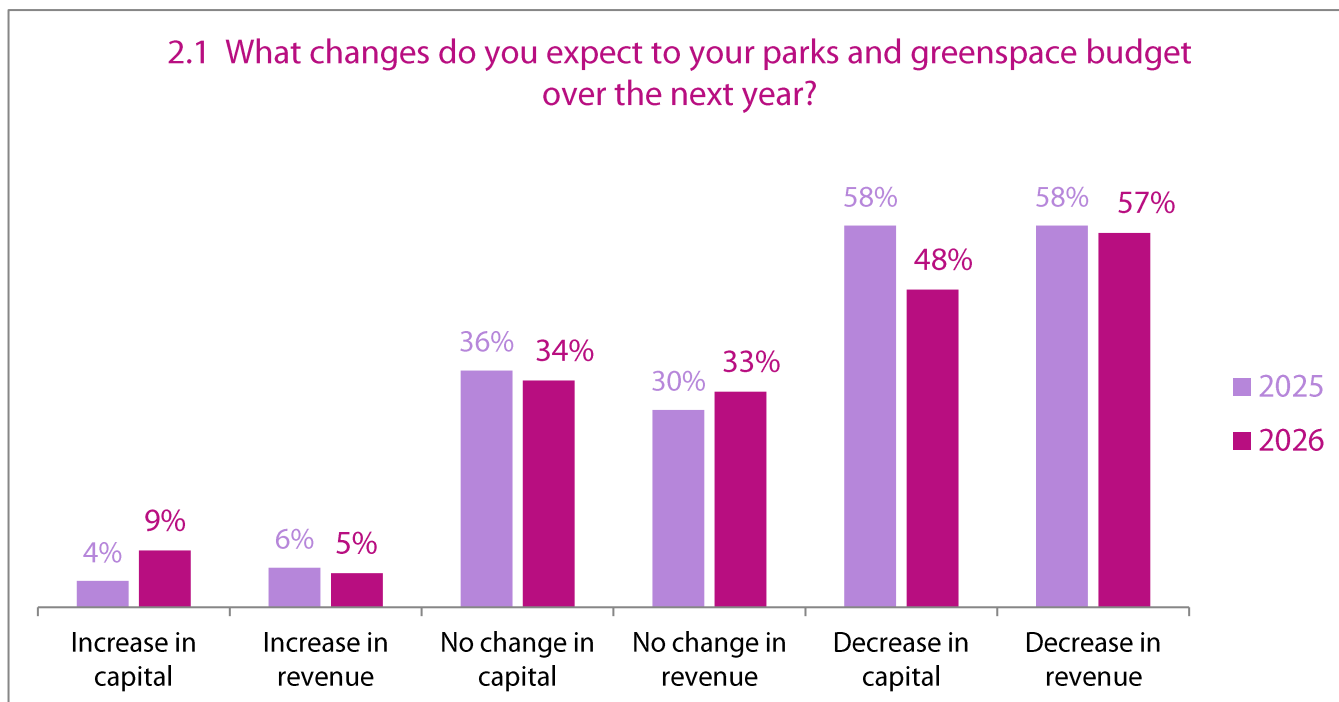


### Looking to insource your grounds maintenance service? APSE can help...

Through our ethical consultancy service – APSE Solutions – councils can access expert support with strategic reviews, operating models, business planning and transformation programmes to ensure an effective and sustainable in-house service. [For more information about how APSE Solutions can help, click here.](#)

APSE Training's '*Insourcing Public Contracts: Rebuilding Capacity*' course also helps council grounds maintenance teams understand what's needed to successfully bring services back in-house. It provides practical guidance on assessing viability, rebuilding internal capacity, planning the transition and designing a modern, sustainable in-house delivery model – giving teams the confidence and tools to manage grounds maintenance services effectively within the council. [You can book your place on the training course here.](#)

## 2 Budgets



The main takeaway from 2.1 is that there has been a modest improvement in the budget outlook for the next 12 months. This would reflect the latest APSE and Survation research which found just over one quarter of councillors (26%) now believe it is very likely or likely their council will issue a Section 114 notice (or Section 95 in Scotland) within the next five years. This represents a notable fall from over one third (34%) in the previous year.<sup>6</sup>

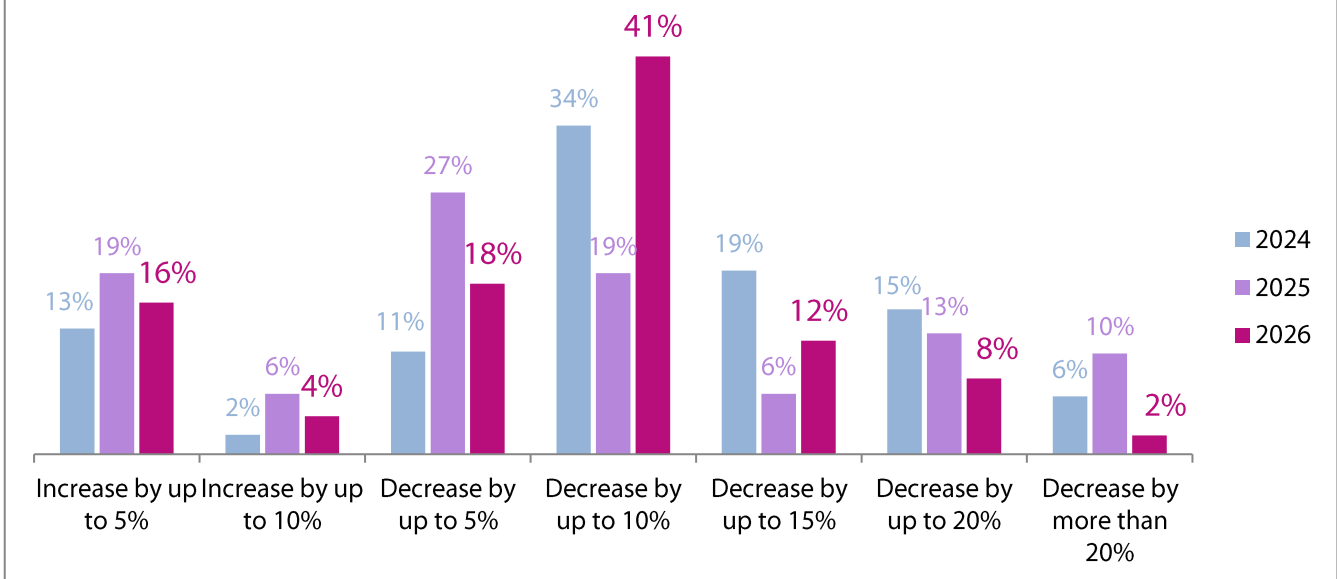
2.1 reveals very few of those surveyed expect to receive an increase in capital in their parks budgets this coming year (9%), with even fewer expecting an increase in revenue (5%). 57% and 48% expect a decrease in revenue and capital respectively, representing a modest improvement from 2025.

Of those who are expecting increases, local government reorganisation is cited as a driver:

- *“Increases are primarily driven by LGR and the desire to spend reserves before they are reallocated. Even more challenging given reduced staffing levels.”*

<sup>6</sup> <https://apse.org.uk/sites/apse/assets/File/Damian%20Lyons-Lowe.pdf>

## 2.2 What is your expectation of the level of funding in your service budget in the coming five years?



2.2 reveals just how uneven expectations are across UK local government with regards to the medium-term funding of local authority parks services.

It is revealed that the overwhelming majority of those surveyed (81%) expect their level of funding to decrease. Of note is the rise in those surveyed expecting a decrease of up to 10% (+13% from 2025).

At the other end of the spectrum, those expecting their level of funding to increase over the next five years has remained steady since 2024, averaging at 20%.

One respondent reported no change but again raised the complex and unpredictable issue of looming local government reorganisation:

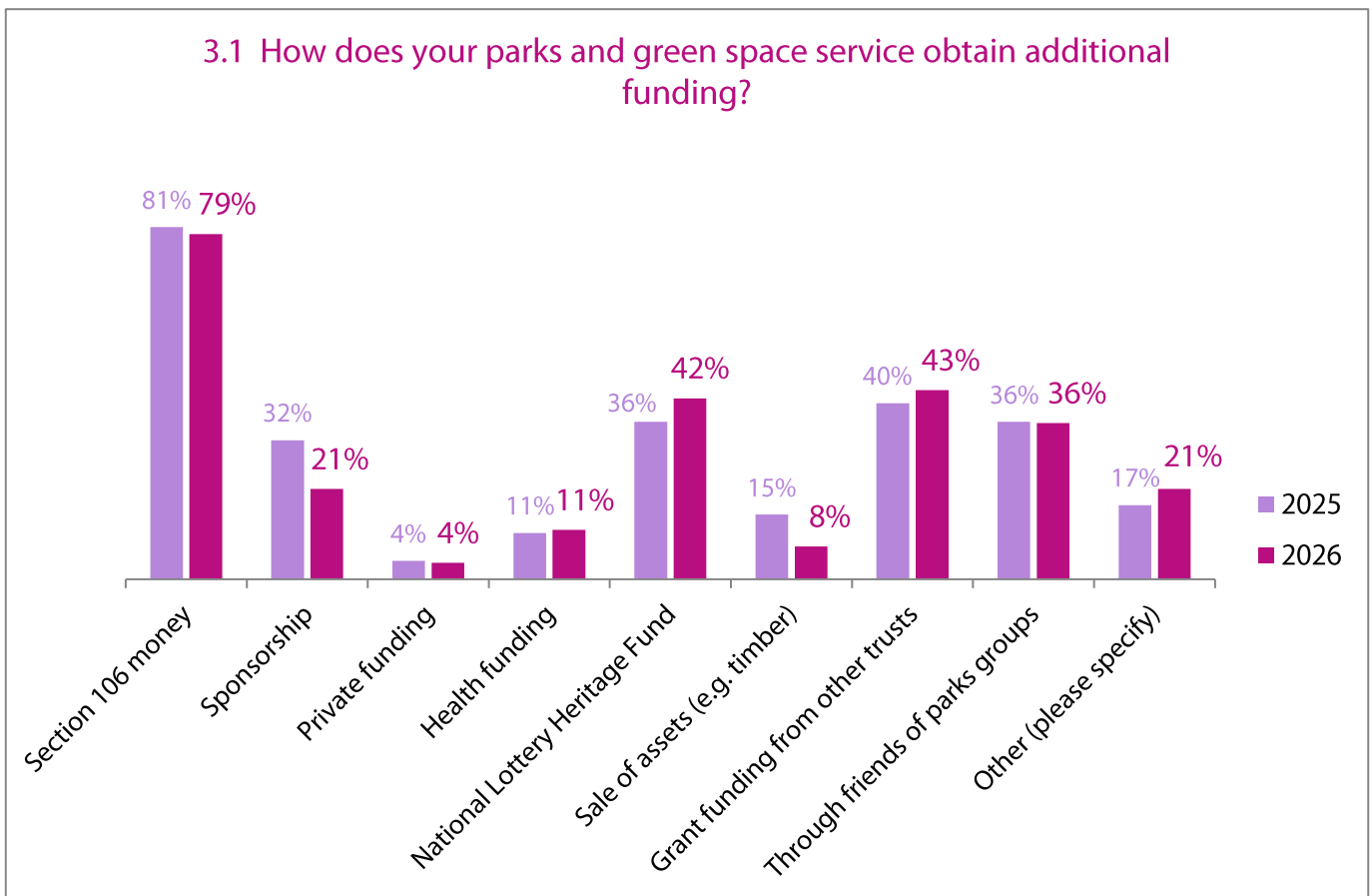
- *"Unknown, but expect LGR to be disastrous for Parks services."*
- *"Unknown due to impact of LGR."*

### Facing reorganisation? APSE can help...



With councils merging services, there will be a need to review property and asset bases, look at depot rationalisation or repurposing sites, and ensure services are fit for purpose and are run with optimal efficiency. The APSE network can support your local authority grounds maintenance service through reorganisation – visit our [Local Government Reform Support Hub](#) for more information.

### 3 Additional funding



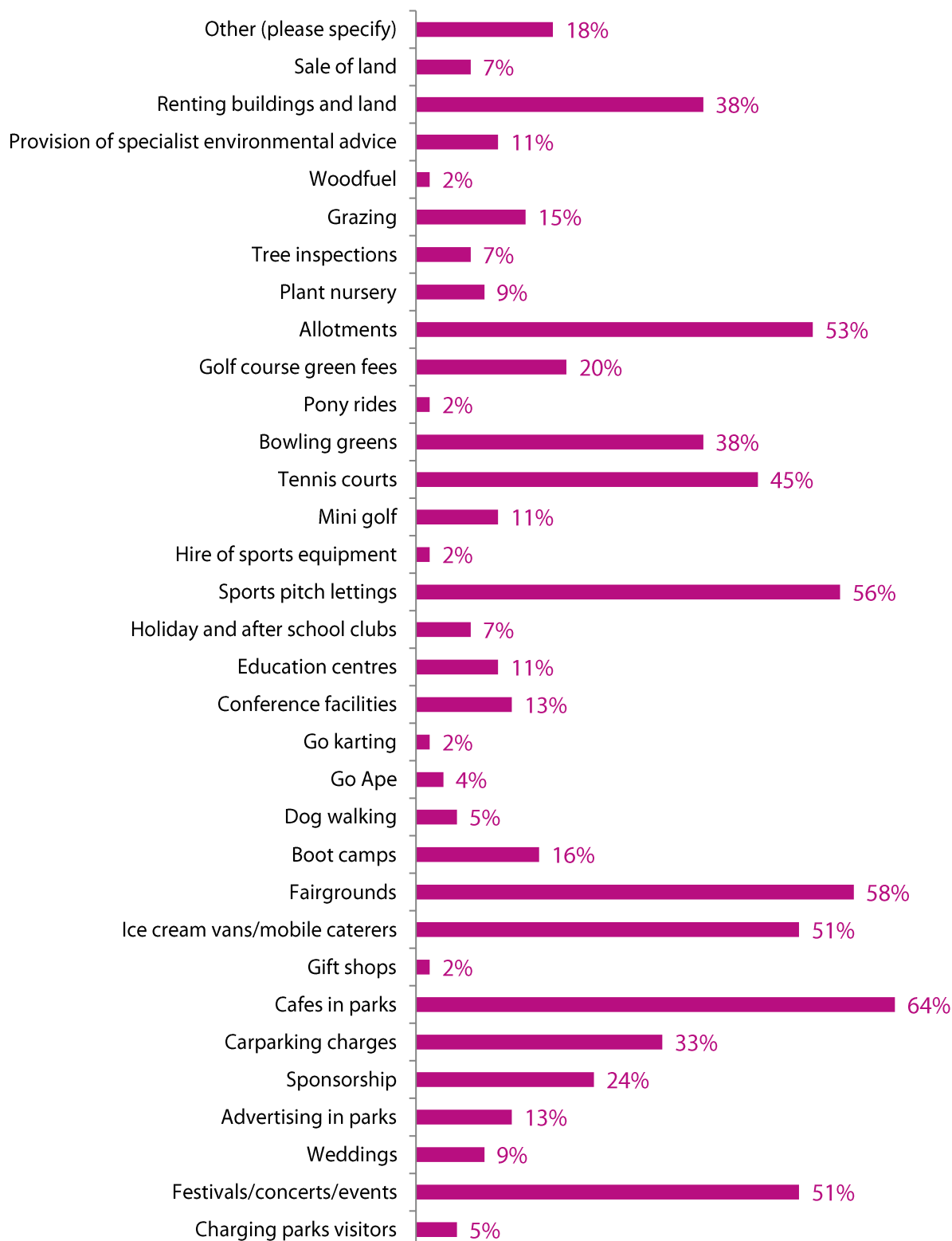
Section 106 money remains the most popular source of additional funding for local councils with a little under four-fifths of those surveyed obtaining funding from it. This represents a drop of 9% from 2023, and a drop of 14% from 2019. This drop may be explained by the shift to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Unlike S.106, which is tied to specific developments and often includes obligations for green space, CIL funds are distributed more flexibly and may not prioritise parks. Also, with the Government making housing a priority by targeting 1.5 million new homes over the next five years, councils may now be prioritising affordable housing in S.106 agreements, sometimes at the expense of contributions for public open spaces or parks.

Compared to last year (36%), there has been a 6% increase in the number of those surveyed accessing National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) money. There has also been an increase in those accessing 'Grant funding from other trusts' (+3%).

3.1 shows that local authority parks teams are continuing to successfully introduce new and innovative ways to sustainably manage parks. Whether this be through income generation, partnerships or alternative forms of funding. However, there is a limit to how many budget gaps these new innovations can plug.

## 4 Income generation

### 4.1 What areas do you currently generate income in through fees and charges (either provided in-house or through a franchise)?



APSE's State of UK Public Parks 2021 Report found that, between 2010 and 2016, parks lost an estimated £500 million in funding. An estimated £190 million was lost from local authority parks budgets between 2016-2021, meaning a total of £690 million was lost from parks budgets 2010-2021.<sup>7</sup>

The squeeze austerity placed on local council finances – and the finances of parks teams in particular – has meant parks professionals have had to come up with more creative ways to generate income to bridge the gap left by cuts in funding. These sources of income include commercial trading for profit, using assets to generate income and, in some cases, offsetting service costs by using fees and charges.

4.1 reveals the wide range of income generating activities parks and greenspaces teams are engaged in. These activities took a serious hit during the pandemic as cafes, sports pitch hire, and events were effectively stopped by public health restrictions. Though there has been some recovery, several income generating activities are still much slower than they were pre-COVID. For example:

<b>Income generating activity</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>Variation (+/-)</b>
Sports pitch lettings	<b>83%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>-27%</b>
Fairgrounds	<b>80%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>-22%</b>
Festivals/concerts/events	<b>77%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>-26%</b>
Renting buildings and land	<b>73%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>-35%</b>

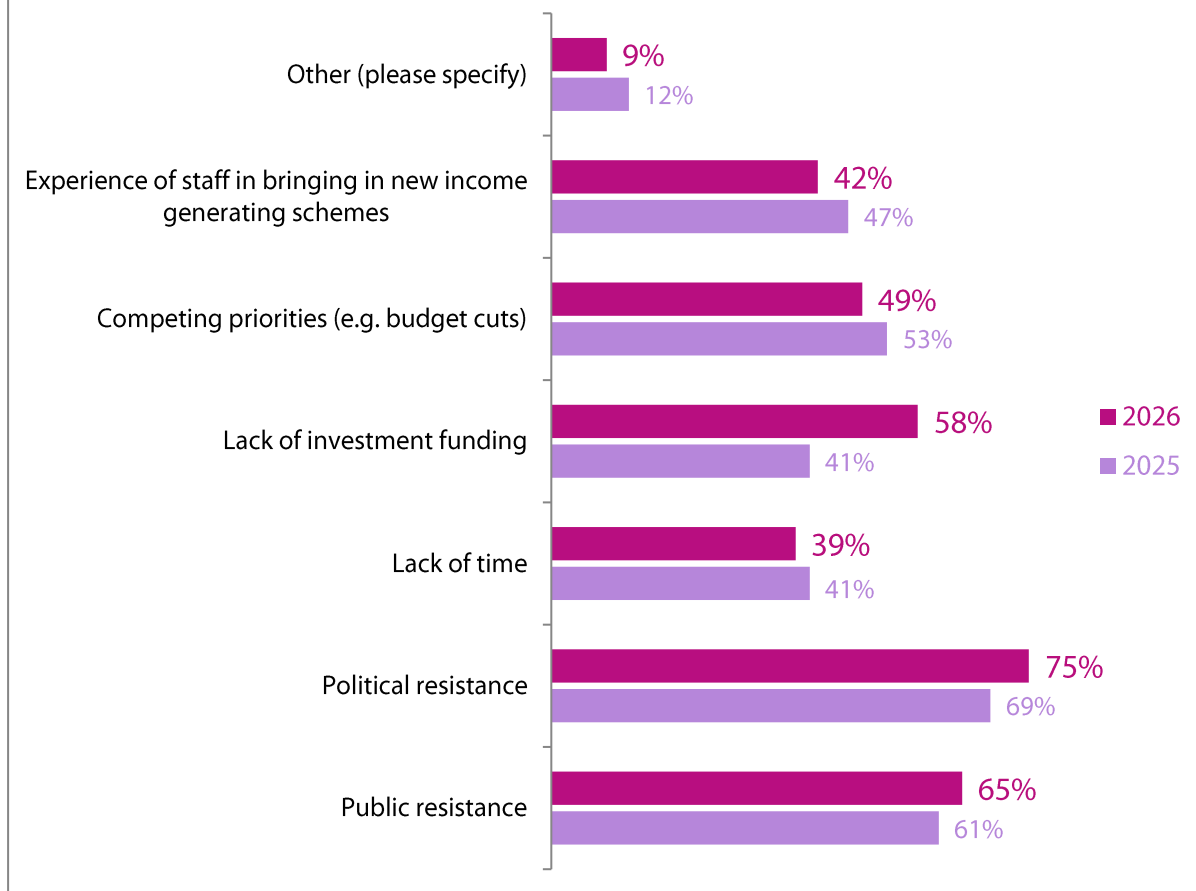
### In need of some commercial savviness? APSE can help...



APSE's rich database of consultants boasts a strong track record of delivering income generation for council grounds maintenance teams – and in the current budgetary climate this is more important than ever. Our team of experts combine a unique understanding of developing your team's commercial awareness with the ability to identify untapped sources of income. For more information about how APSE can help you unlock much-needed additional income, click [here](#).

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/research/current-research-programme/state-of-uk-public-parks-2021/>

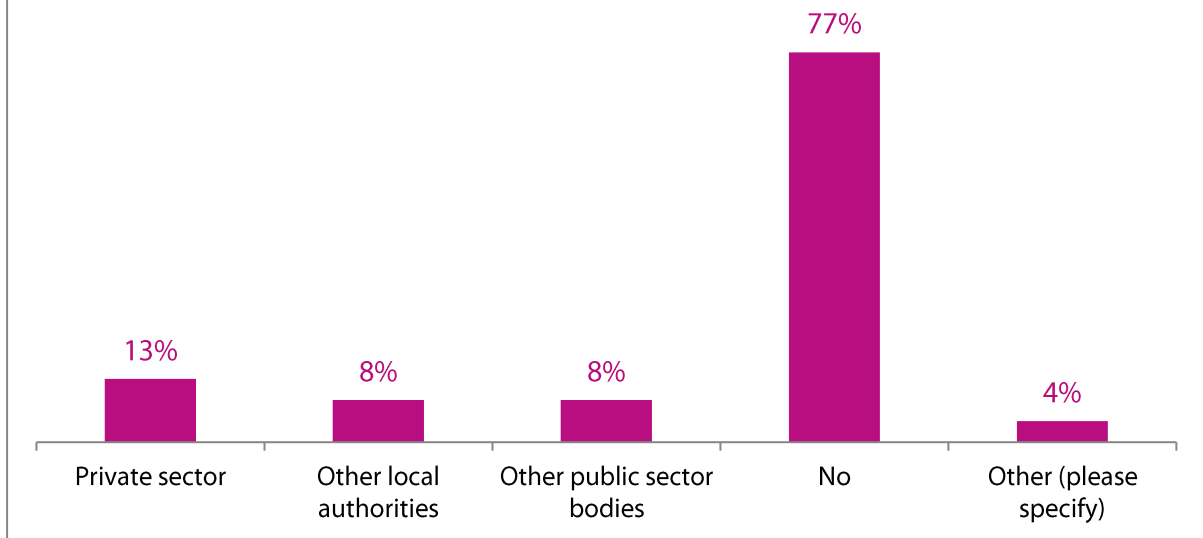
## 4.2 What are the barriers to generating income?



Regarding barriers to generating income, 4.2 shows 'Political resistance' and 'Public resistance' top the list. Public resistance (65%) is a 25% increase on the 2023 figure, whilst political resistance (75%) represents an increase of 31% from 2023. These increases may reflect the fact that, as the cost-of-living crisis has squeezed family budgets and weakened disposable income, charging and trading in parks services has become a more sensitive issue on the doorstep.

Budget and resource restraints also means parks teams are faced with a 'Lack of investment funding' (58%) and a 'Lack of time' (39%). So even for those teams that have political support, many lack the resources and capacity necessary to effectively implement income generating schemes.

### 4.3 Do you sell your services outside of the local authority?



The figures in 4.3 demonstrate just how few local authority parks teams sell services outside of the local authority. The fact that near to half (42%) of those surveyed in 4.2 do not have access to personnel with the necessary experience and knowledge of income generation makes it much harder to proceed with selling services outside of the local authority.

In APSE's "Local authority income generation, trading and charging: State of the Market Survey Report 2015", APSE argued "there is huge scope for developing business relationships with other public sector providers including the NHS, Police and Fire and Rescue Services."<sup>8</sup> From 4.4, one can see that huge scope still remains as 'Other public sector bodies' remain a largely untapped customer base; just 8% of those surveyed sell their services to other public bodies.

#### In need of some commercial savviness? APSE can help...



APSE Training has designed a highly interactive course for parks professionals providing insight into the key issues and best practice techniques for creating a more sustainable basis for future funding. The course covers:

- Commercialisation - Business planning
- Risk management - Commercial environment
- Alternative funding sources
- Income generation - Traditional sources v Blue sky thinking

To book your place on 'Advanced Parks Management: Sustainable Finance (CPD)' click [here](#).

<sup>8</sup> <https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/briefings/2015/15-64-local-authority-income-generation-trading-and-charging-state-of-the-market-survey-report-2015/>

## 5 Efficiencies

The examples show a strong and continued focus on reducing maintenance and staffing costs, particularly through revised grassland management such as reduced mowing frequencies, annual cut-and-collect regimes, naturalisation, tree planting and the creation of biodiversity areas. Planting schemes are being adapted to lower-maintenance options, with less seasonal bedding, and some councils are reviewing pruning schedules and prioritising essential tree works.

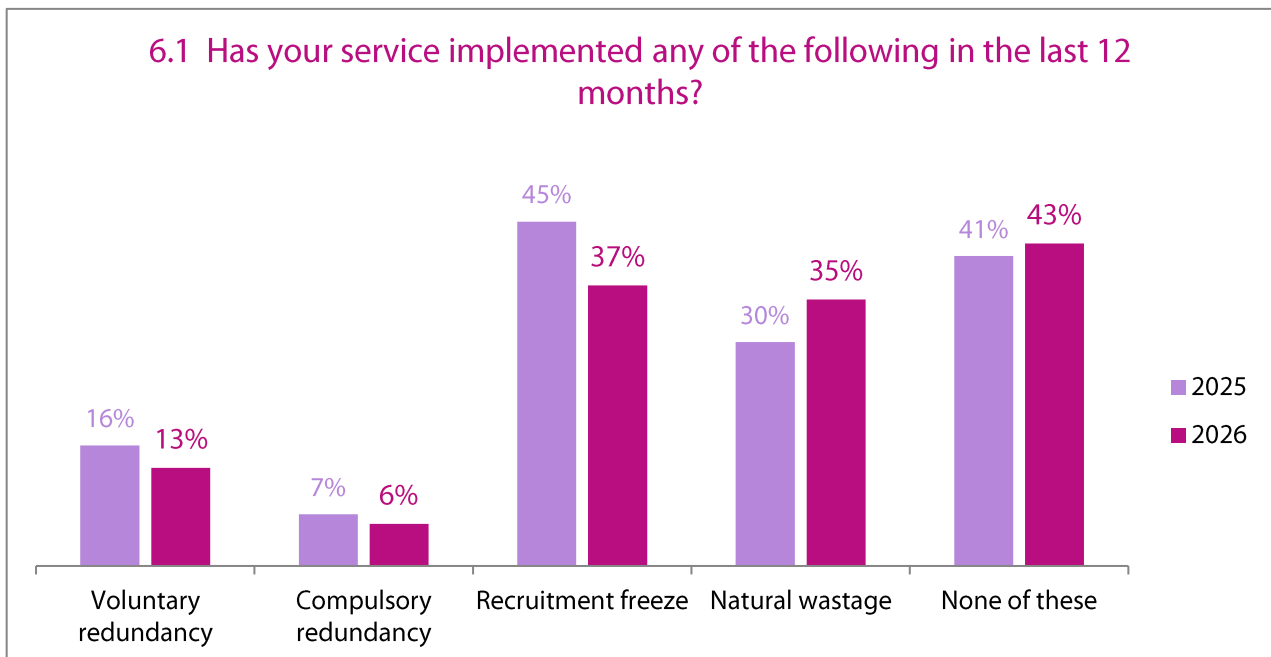
Savings are also being achieved through staff reductions, changes to working practices, route optimisation and reviews of security, opening arrangements and parks buildings, including some closures. In certain cases, assets such as football pitches, bowling greens and cricket squares are being transferred to clubs, and discretionary services removed.

Income generation remains a key priority, with councils reviewing fees and charges, expanding commercial activity, securing grants and sponsorship and increasing volunteer involvement.

Comments included:

- *"Review of Fees and charges; Removal of discretionary services such as Christmas tree provision; advertising and sponsorship opportunities."*
- *"Reducing intensive mowing areas through naturalisation and tree planting; Annualised hours and alternative working practices."*
- *"Increased utilisation of volunteers; Increased external grant, sponsorship etc."*
- *"Income generation is the key focus on delivering savings."*
- *"Looking at greater prioritisation for tree works, reduction of paddling pools season."*
- *"We are implementing alternative grassland management approaches through reduced mowing frequency and a change to an annual cut and collect in some locations. We are also starting to look at winter pruning to assess if this can be modified."*
- *"Reductions on staff (both front line and parks managers); Transfer of Football pitches, Bowling Greens and Cricket Square to clubs; Designating more areas for reduced or cessation of maintenance; Closure of parks buildings (e.g.: Public Toilets and Pavilions)."*
- *"Reduced grass cutting frequencies & changing planting schemes to lower maintenance ones - less bedding and more mixed borders."*
- *"Further staff reductions and introduction of bio areas."*
- *"Management of biodiversity initiatives to assist in delivery without incurring additional costs in either equipment or staffing."*
- *"Open spaces review - rounds, route optimisation, grassland management (Relaxed mowing regimes)."*
- *"Reduction in Seasonal workforce."*
- *"Reviewing security contracts/arrangements. Management of public conveniences. Review of opening/closing arrangements."*

## 6 Workforce



6.1 reveals there has been an 8% drop in the number of authorities reporting a 'recruitment freeze' (37%). This is down from 45% who reported a recruitment freeze last year, the highest APSE had ever recorded. This reduction would suggest that some councils are beginning to ease the most stringent short-term financial controls introduced during periods of heightened budget uncertainty. However, this does not necessarily indicate growth in staffing levels, but rather a stabilisation following significant workforce reductions in previous years.

Over a third (35%) report natural wastage, a 5% increase from last year. Allowing posts to remain unfilled when staff retire or leave can reduce immediate financial pressure, but over time it may erode capacity, skills and institutional knowledge within parks teams.

## 6.2 Are staff absence levels at an acceptable level?



When it comes to staff absences, the most notable change from 2025 has been with regards to the numbers reporting ‘Too high’ absence levels (+10%). There may be several reasons for this including the cumulative impact of physically demanding roles, an ageing workforce – 52% of the local authority parks sector workforce is over 50 according to [APSE Performance Networks data](#) – and ongoing pressures linked to stress and workload.

In some areas, long-term sickness may also reflect reduced resilience in teams that have already experienced significant downsizing.



### Sick of your team’s absence levels? APSE can help...

APSE Performance Networks is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking service across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. As standard for all our benchmarking services – including grounds maintenance – we provide data on staff absences and productivity. By comparing with other UK councils, APSE Performance Network provides intelligence which can be used for internal reporting, informing priorities and budgeting, as well as highlighting areas of improvement over time. For more information about how your parks team can benchmark against others – and secure big improvements in cost, quality, productivity and performance – [click here](#).

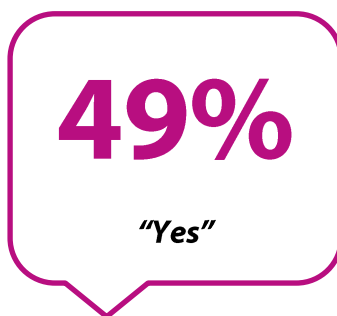
## 7 Training and apprenticeships



"Is the training budget over the next 12 months going to..."

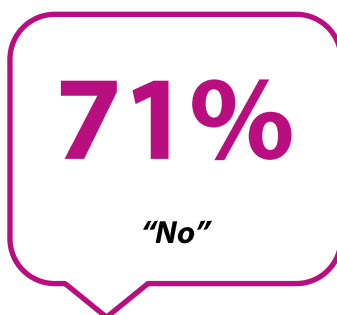
81% reported their training budget will stay the same over the next 12 months, which is a notable increase from last year (68%).

There has been a 16% decrease in the number of councils expecting their training budgets to decrease (9%) and a 2% rise in the number expecting an increase (9%).



"Do you have apprentices?"

49% of respondents stated that they currently have apprentices. A 12% increase on last year but still down from 2022 when 61% reported they had apprentices.



"Are you going to be recruiting apprentices in 2026-27?"

Almost three-quarters reported they will not be recruiting apprentices for 2025/26 – a 2% decrease from last year but still a 14% jump from 2024. 2025 was the highest figure APSE has ever recorded in our series of state of the market surveys in parks. As budgets feel the strain, and with fewer senior staff available, councils report lacking the capacity to properly train and support apprentices.

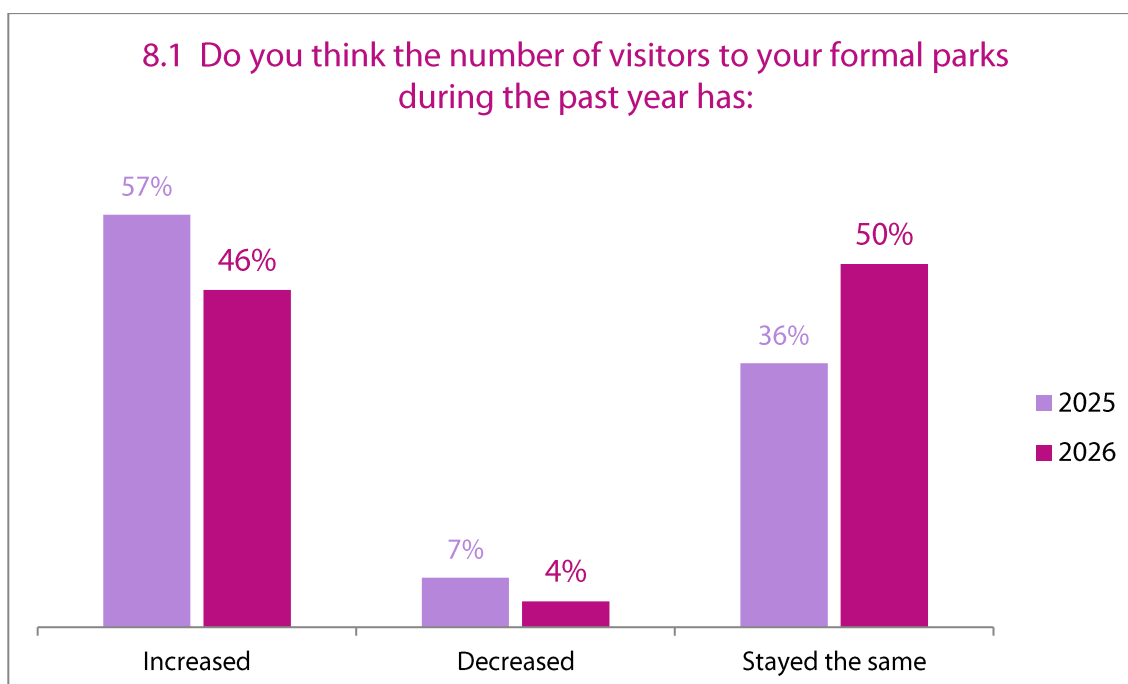
APSE has always advocated for the importance of apprenticeships, lifelong learning and career pathways in the local authority parks sector. APSE previously held the Chair's role of the Parks Action Group Knowledge and Skills workstream and published a report '*Nurturing skills for 21st century parks*', which we would encourage you all to download for free from the APSE website.<sup>9</sup>

Our conclusions from that report included the development of a model framework that is recognised by all stakeholders in the sector and which would guide organisations in developing the appropriate knowledge and skill.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/special-interest-portals/parks-portal/research-papers/nurturing-skills-for-21st-century-parks/nurturing-skills-for-21st-century-parks/>

## 8 Number of parks and visitors



The graph above reveals that 46% of those surveyed report the number of visitors to their formal parks has increased during the past year. This suggests that the heightened interest in parks, which surged during the pandemic, has been sustained over time. We know that UK parks experienced a significant increase in visitors during the pandemic – as many as 94% reported increased visitor numbers in the 2021 APSE survey.<sup>10</sup> A study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* observed that urban park usage in Edinburgh nearly doubled during the pandemic, with notable increases in social, sports, fitness, and playground areas.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 8.1 supports this trend, revealing that visitor numbers remain high, indicating that parks continue to play a vital role in community well-being and outdoor activity post-pandemic. This sustained engagement highlights the enduring value of greenspace in urban environments.

APSE's *Post Pandemic: Green Urban Spaces* guide explores ways in which local authorities can maximise the recognised benefits of urban green space to residents, communities, local businesses and the wider local environment<sup>12</sup>. You can read the report [here](#).

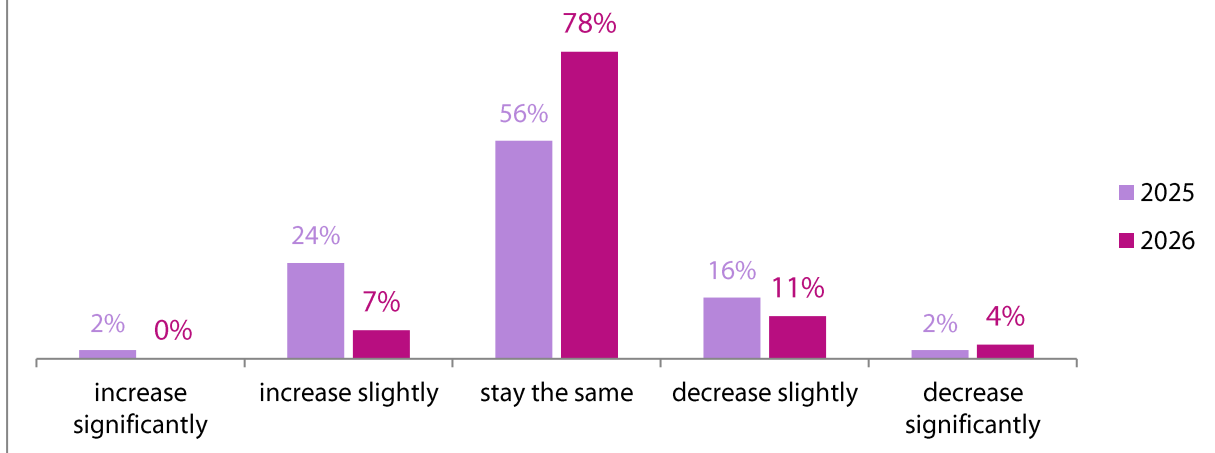
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<sup>10</sup> <https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/briefings/2021/21-20-results-of-the-apse-survey-parks-and-greenspaces-state-of-the-market-2021/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10648880/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/research/current-research-programme/post-pandemic-green-urban-spaces/>

## 8.2 Overall, how do you expect the total number of formal parks (including playgrounds) to change over the next year?



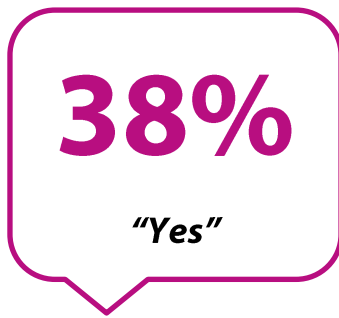
When it comes to the total number of formal parks (including playgrounds), 8.2 reveals an overwhelming majority (78%) expect the number of parks to remain the same. However, there has been a notable decrease (-17%) in those expecting the total number to 'Increase slightly' from last year. This drop may be a result of the slowdown in urban regeneration projects or new housing developments.

Comments indicate that although overall park numbers may remain stable, this often relates only to local authority-owned sites, with new provision increasingly delivered through privately managed housing developments.

Respondents highlighted ongoing challenges around insufficient refurbishment budgets, ageing play equipment, limited staffing capacity and rising costs, making some sites difficult to maintain. There were also references to play park rationalisation and interest in community asset transfers. Comments included:

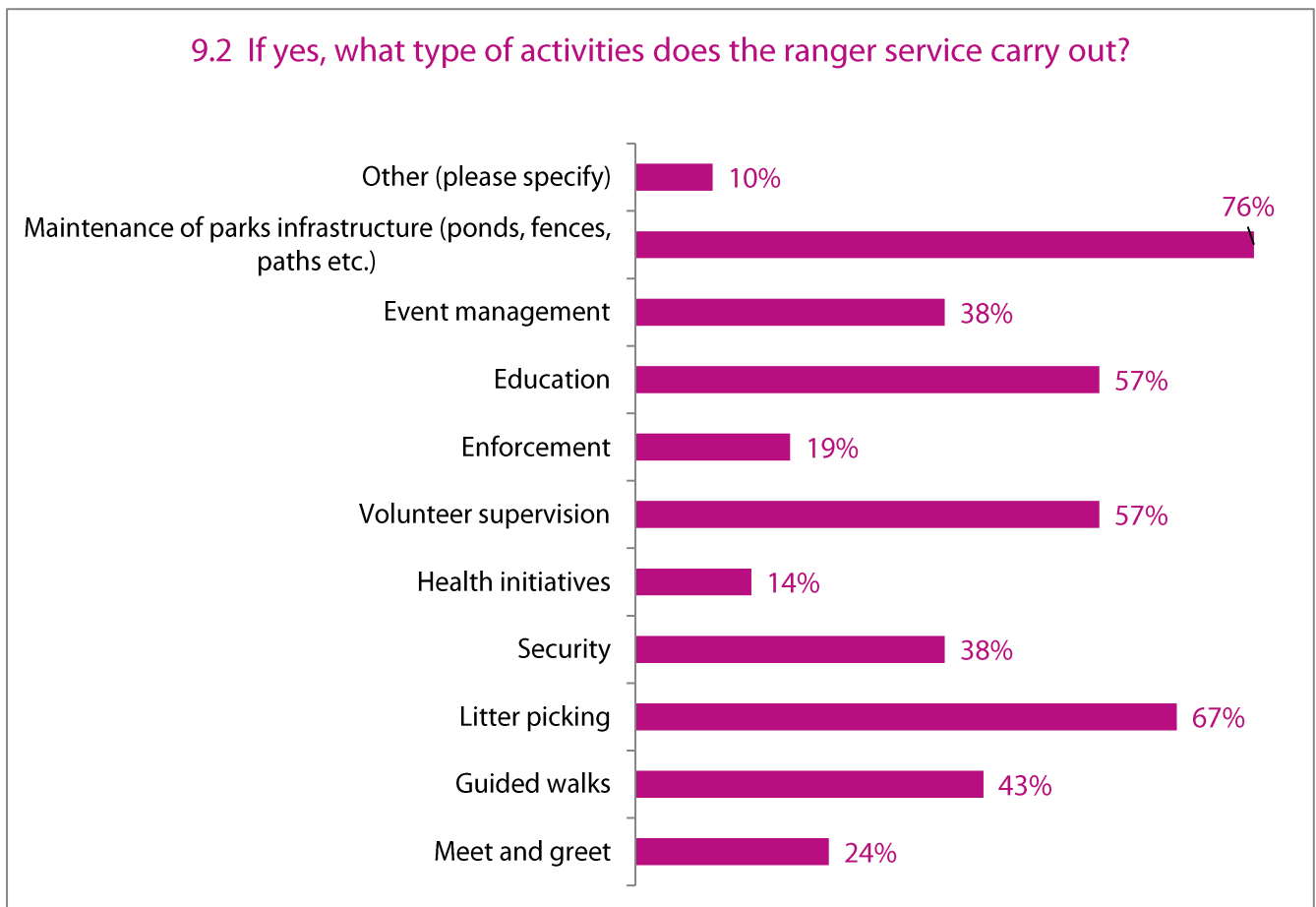
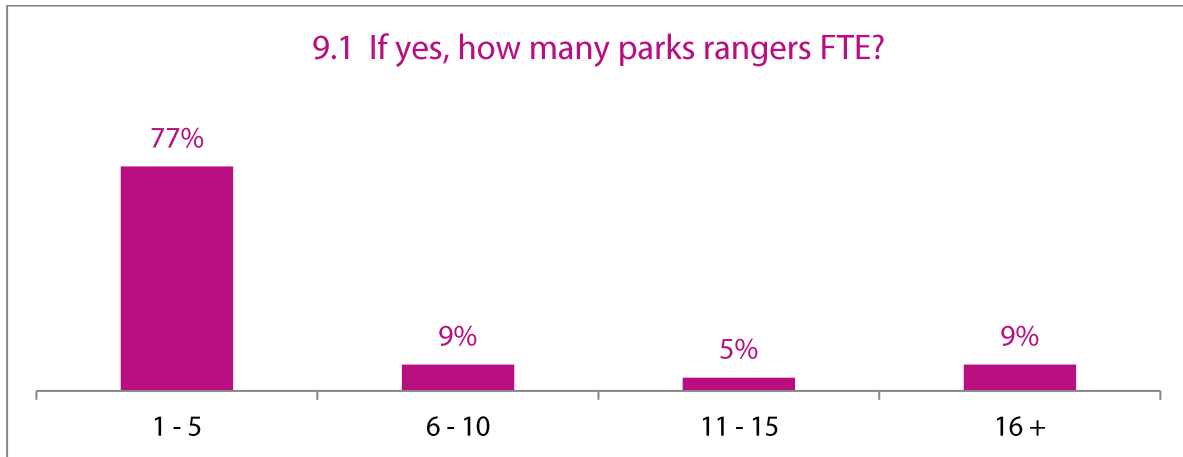
- *"If this only refers to local authority owned/managed parks then this will stay the same. New privately owned/managed parks are being delivered in new housing developments."*
- *"There is less funds available for the repairs/refurbishment of parks and therefore a lot of our play areas are equipped with items that are at the end of their life or need significant money spent on them and we do not have this. We also have only 1 member of staff that is able to carry out repairs which is not always practical and the cost of materials has increased - some of which makes our play areas uneconomical to repair/replace."*
- *"Councils do not set refurbishment budgets high enough to cover the larger spends like rubber surface renewal. They install inclusive kit to tick boxes with no research into how inclusive kit can mean exclusivity to certain children."*
- *"A number of communities want to maintain the open space in their village or settlement themselves and so have or are in the process of putting in Asset Transfer requests."*
- *"Rationalisation of play parks."*

## 9 Rangers



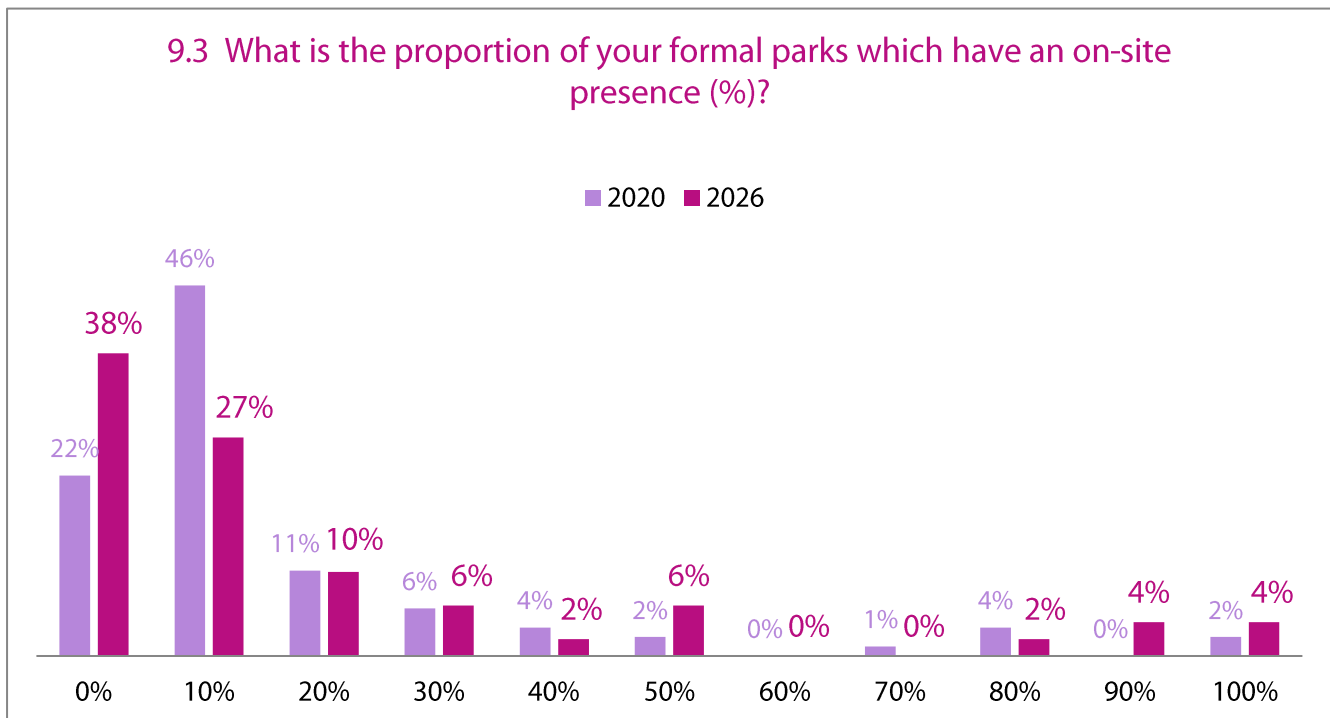
Do you have parks rangers?

38% reported having parks rangers, which is a 14% decrease from 2025 (52%) and a 21% decrease from 2024 (59%).



With regards to the type of activities the ranger service carries out, 9.2 reveals the diversity of roles and responsibilities. There is very little variation from 2025 – ‘Maintenance of parks in infrastructure’ remains the most commonly identified activity with ‘Litter picking’ and ‘Volunteer supervision’ following closely behind.

When asked about the proportion of formal parks which have an on-site presence, 9.3 shows a breakdown of the responses received.



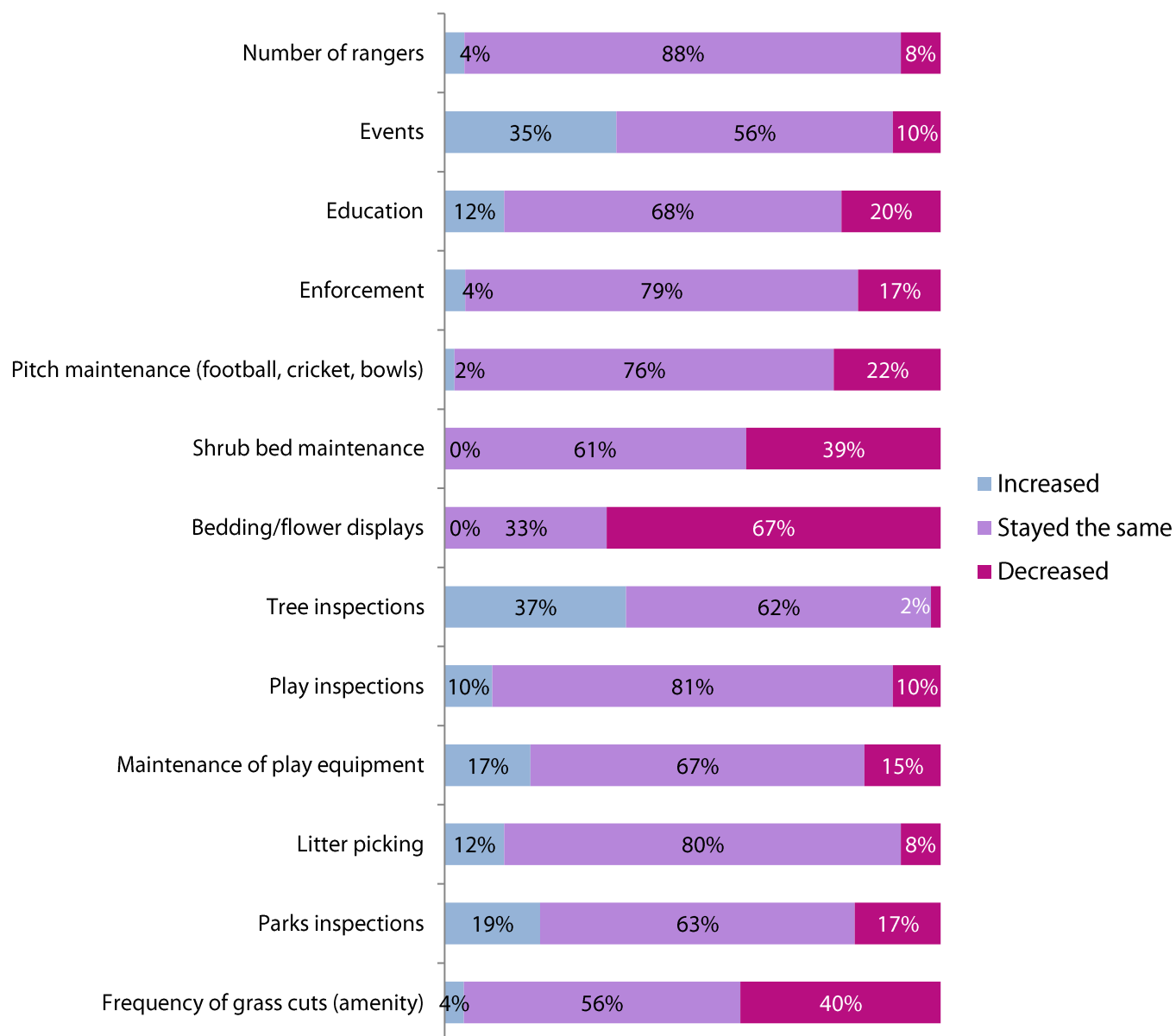
The decline in permanent on-site presence, or "parkies," in parks and greenspaces is a concerning trend, particularly given the growing emphasis on public safety, especially for women and girls. The survey finding that 38% of respondents reported having no on-site presence in their parks – a significant 16% increase since 2020 – highlights a shift away from traditional models of park management and supervision.

This reduction in physical oversight raises important questions about safety, accessibility, and the overall quality of public spaces. Without adequate supervision, parks risk becoming underutilised or perceived as no-go areas, undermining their role as vital community assets that promote mental and physical well-being, social cohesion, and environmental stewardship. In 2023, West Yorkshire Combined Authority produced guidance on the design and management of parks. *'Safer Parks: Improving Access for Women and Girls'* includes suggestions for placement of facilities, paths and features that are easy to navigate and maximise visibility, ideas for bringing more women to the park, and recommendations for ways to a sense of belonging and familiarity.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/news/articles/2024/safer-parks/>

## 10 Service standards and quality

### 10.1 Over the past year, have the following increased, decreased or stayed the same?



Slightly bucking the trend of recent years, the number of those surveyed reporting decreases in maintaining flower displays has decreased (67%). This is likely due to a levelling off following several years of sharp reductions in ornamental planting. Many councils may already have reduced bedding to a core minimum, meaning there is less scope for further cuts without visibly impacting town centre and civic pride initiatives.

No one surveyed reported an increase in bedding/flower displays or in shrub bed maintenance.

Regarding tree inspections, the safety of trees has now become a pressing concern for parks teams across the UK. Ash dieback has wrought destruction across the country and is expected to kill a

significant portion of the UK's ash trees – up to 80% according to the Woodland Trust<sup>14</sup>. With some high-profile fatalities caused by falling trees, tree inspections have grown in frequency for 37% of local authority parks professionals this past year and decreased for only 2% of respondents.

There has been a 9% increase in events from last year. This may suggest a renewed emphasis on activating parks as multi-use community spaces and maximising their social and economic value. Events can help drive footfall, strengthen community engagement and, in some cases, generate much-needed income through hire fees, concessions and sponsorship.

The survey revealed the average number of grass cuts per annum is 13. This is an increase from 12 in 2024 and 2025. While modest, this uptick may indicate a partial recalibration of maintenance regimes following several years of reductions linked to budget pressures and biodiversity-focused approaches.

With a growing emphasis on biodiversity and rewilding in public green spaces, councils across the UK are shifting their focus toward more sustainable and low-maintenance landscaping, such as wildflower meadows, which require less upkeep than traditional flower displays and shrub beds. to the views of residents and communities.

The decrease in 'Education' and Events' activity at a slower rate compared to 2025 highlights a gradual stabilisation in community-facing activities after the significant disruption of recent years.



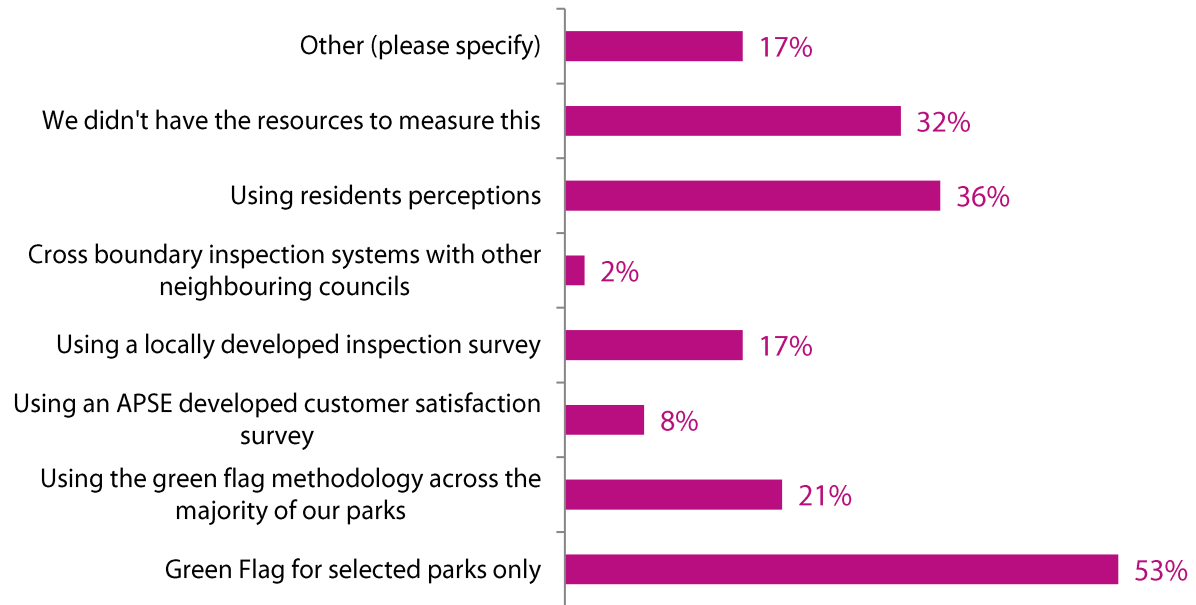
### Tree planting schemes: Progress, challenges and opportunities

APSE held online events in [late 2025](#) and [early 2026](#) showcasing best practice local case studies in tree planting schemes strategies from across the UK. We also designed a report – *Tree planting schemes: Progress, challenges and opportunities* – to help local authorities understand the current state of UK trees and recommendations on how to approach this issue pragmatically. You can download the report [here](#).

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/tree-pests-and-diseases/key-tree-pests-and-diseases/ash-dieback/#:~:text=Ash%20dieback%20will%20kill%20up,ash%20trees%20across%20the%20UK>.

## 10.2 How did you measure the quality of parks during 2025-26?



The effects of the continuing budget reductions with increasing demand for services present an increasing challenge for local authorities to be able to continue to provide a high level of service delivery. To get from start to finish and deliver services effectively, councils need to know where they are, where they are going and how to get there – they need evidence and decisions need to be grounded in good data not opinions.

Data is crucial in our ever-changing world for first class information on how to deliver first class public services. So, it is concerning to observe in 10.2, that 32% do not 'have the resources to measure' the quality of parks. This gap in measurement capacity risks weakening the evidence base needed to defend budgets and demonstrate value for money at a time when scrutiny of discretionary services is intensifying.



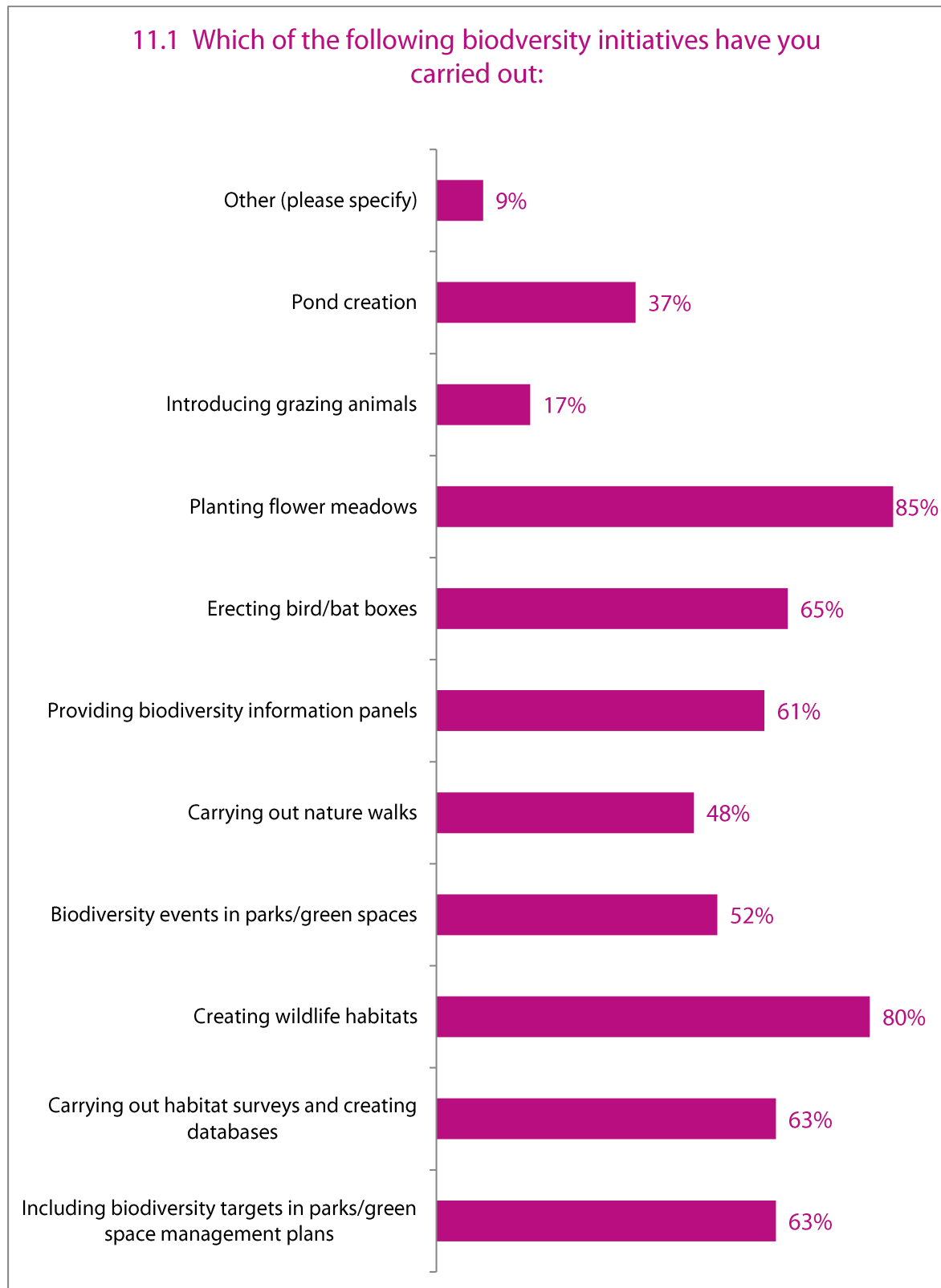
### Struggling to find a quality inspection system? APSE can help...

APSE's Land Audit Management System (LAMS) is a quality inspection system to monitor grounds maintenance and/or street cleansing. If you are a member of APSE's Performance Networks you will be able to use LAMS to measure the quality of your own localities, and at the same time benchmark these against other local authorities. You can choose between using the system to monitor grounds maintenance, street cleansing and/or cemeteries/crematorium land maintenance.

For more information about how LAMS can help support your grounds maintenance team on its quality improvement journey, [click here](#).

## 11 Biodiversity

### 11.1 Which of the following biodiversity initiatives have you carried out:



The most popular initiatives, as highlighted, include:

### **1. Planting Flower Meadows (85%)**

Flower meadows are a visually appealing and ecologically beneficial way to enhance biodiversity. They provide food and shelter for pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and other insects, which are crucial for maintaining healthy ecosystems. Flower meadows also require less maintenance than traditional grass lawns, making them a cost-effective and sustainable option for councils. Furthermore, they contribute to carbon sequestration and improve soil health.

### **2. Creating Wildlife Habitats (80%)**

This is the most widely adopted initiative, reflecting a focus on restoring and enhancing natural ecosystems within urban areas. Wildlife habitats can range from rewilding sections of parks to creating ponds, wetlands, or woodlands. These habitats support a variety of species, from insects to mammals, and contribute to the overall health of local ecosystems. By creating interconnected habitats, councils are addressing habitat fragmentation, which is a major threat to biodiversity.

### **3. Erecting Bird/Bat Boxes (65%)**

Installing bird and bat boxes is a practical and targeted approach to supporting specific species. Bird boxes provide nesting sites for species that may struggle to find suitable habitats in urban areas, while bat boxes offer roosting spaces for these nocturnal pollinators and pest controllers. Both initiatives help to boost local populations of these species.



#### **Biodiversity Net Gain? APSE can help...**

APSE Training has designed a highly interactive course for parks professionals who are keen to further their understanding of this crucial topic and how they can link BNG to corporate and service objectives. You can learn more about the course – *Biodiversity Net Gain: Preparing Parks Professionals* – [here](#).

## Are you considering 'Rewilding' any of your parks or greenspaces?

**53%**

Responded "Yes"

Just over half (53%) of respondents say they are considering 'rewilding' their greenspaces. Feedback suggests that while interest remains, approaches and terminology are evolving.

Several respondents noted that public perception can present challenges, with one council highlighting the need for greater community engagement and education after encountering resistance to proposals at a pilot site. Others commented that 'rewilding' may not be the most appropriate term, preferring language that better reflects managed biodiversity or habitat enhancement.

Practical considerations are also shaping activity. Some councils reported savings through introducing biodiversity measures in parks and cemeteries, while others are focusing on older or less frequently visited areas as suitable locations for nature-led approaches. The implementation of Nature Networks was also cited as a strategic driver.

APSE's '[Protecting local greenspace](#)' report finds examples of golf courses and quarries turned into valuable biodiversity areas now teeming with wildlife. This includes an abandoned golf course turned into a wildlife haven in Cheshire and a disused quarry transformed by natural regeneration in West Cumbria.<sup>15</sup>



### Best practice in rewilding/renaturing? APSE can help...

The APSE report – *Rewilding for the future: Insight and best practice from local councils* – provides an overview of what schemes councils are engaged in and the progress they are making in contributions to rewilding. You can read more about the report [here](#). The APSE Training course – *Wildflower Meadows and Grasslands Management for Local Authorities* – looks at adopting different grassland management techniques, including wildflower planting schemes, which can be implemented at a much faster rate, with similar benefits to tree planting. You can book your place on the training course [here](#).

<sup>15</sup> <https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/briefings/2025/25-03-protecting-local-greenspace/>

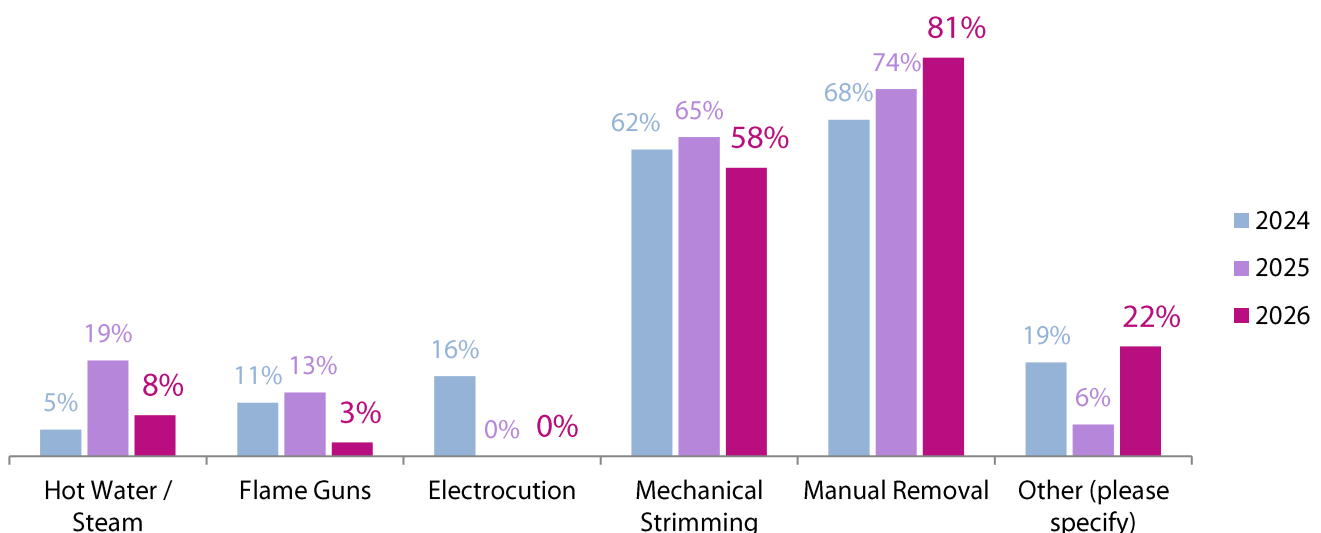
## 12 Weed control

Are you considering reducing the amount of chemical treatment you use to eradicate weeds?

**58%**  
Responded "Yes"

58% of respondents are actively or considering ways to reduce the amount of chemicals they use to manage their parks and greenspaces. This is a decrease of 5% from last year, 10% from 2025 and 29% from 2024. But this drop can be explained by the fact many councils have already reduced chemical treatment to the minimum.

### 12.1 What alternative methods will you be using to remove weeds?



Manual removal remains the most popular method for tackling weeds, with 74% of respondents opting for this approach. Unlike chemical herbicides, manual removal eliminates the risk of soil or water contamination, making it a preferred choice for those seeking sustainable solutions. The slight increase from last year suggests that more people are willing to invest time and effort into this labour-intensive but effective method.

Mechanical strimming follows behind, with 58% of respondents using this technique. While strimming does not remove weeds at the root, its ability to maintain tidy landscapes with minimal effort makes it a practical solution.

Interestingly, alternative methods such as flame guns and hot water steam have seen decreases in adoption. Flame guns, which use intense heat to destroy weeds, have decreased 10% from the previous year. Meanwhile, the use of hot water steam has decreased by 11%,

The use of electrocution for weed removal remains at 0%.

We know there is disagreement amongst the scientific community about the safe use of glyphosate; the European Union extended glyphosate's authorisation for a further 10 years. APSE also understands, from various meetings and consultations with our members, that alternative methods are not the most cost-effective – nor always the most popular on the doorstep. However, APSE believes the prudent approach for local councils is to restrict its use – and the survey results show that is happening across hundreds of councils across the UK.



### Weeding out poor practice? APSE can help...

APSE regularly receives queries on weed control methods from our member councils. We source responses to these queries by circulating them to our extensive UK-wide network of parks professionals. Queries relating to glyphosate usage have even been collated into a report [here](#) (which APSE member councils can access by contacting [enquiries@apse.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@apse.org.uk)).

If you belong to an APSE member council and have weed control queries – or any queries relating to grounds maintenance – the APSE network may have the answers. Connect with the APSE network and get involved with our Network Queries service [here](#).

## 13 Community and volunteer involvement

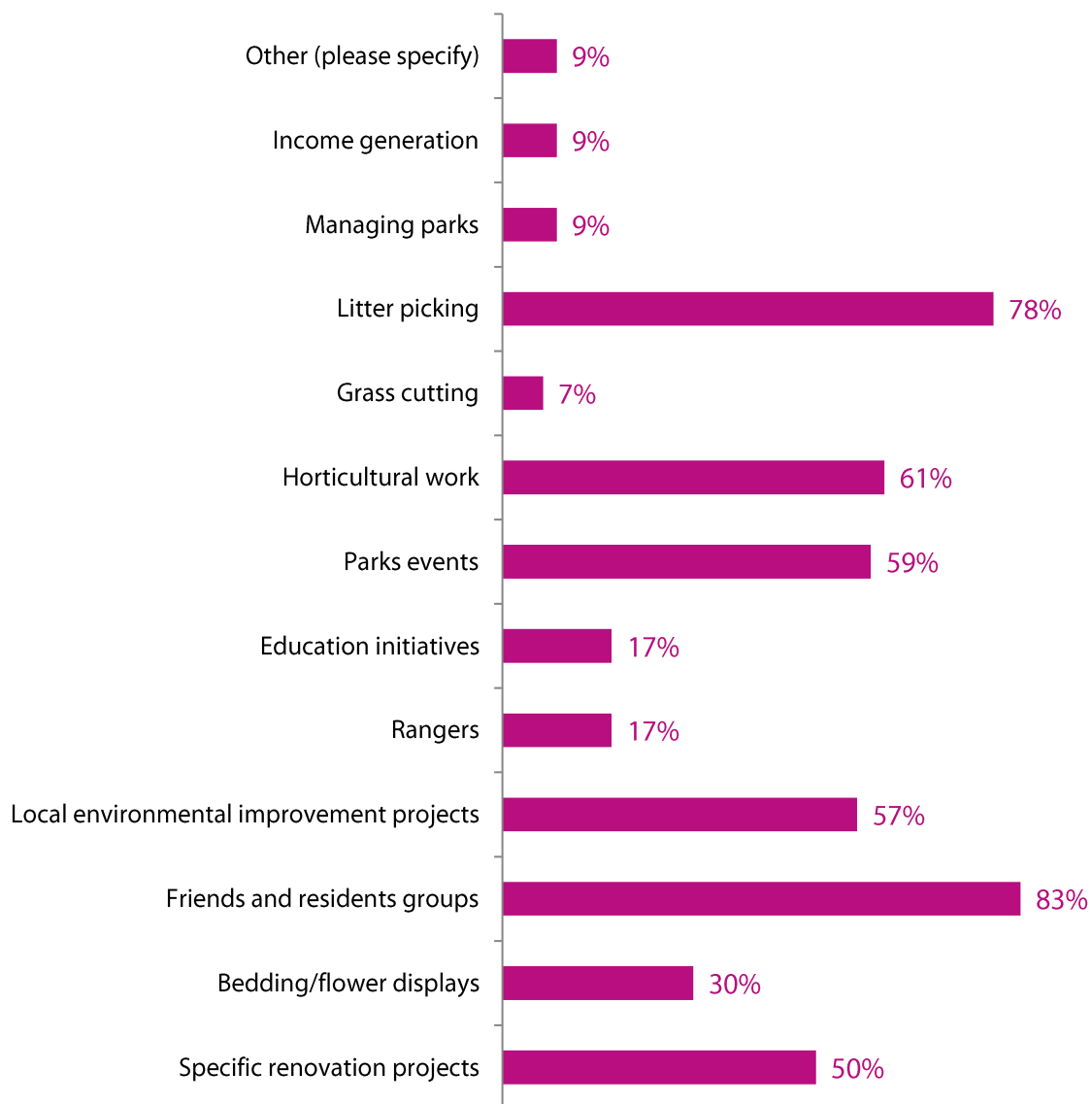
Do you have friends of parks groups?

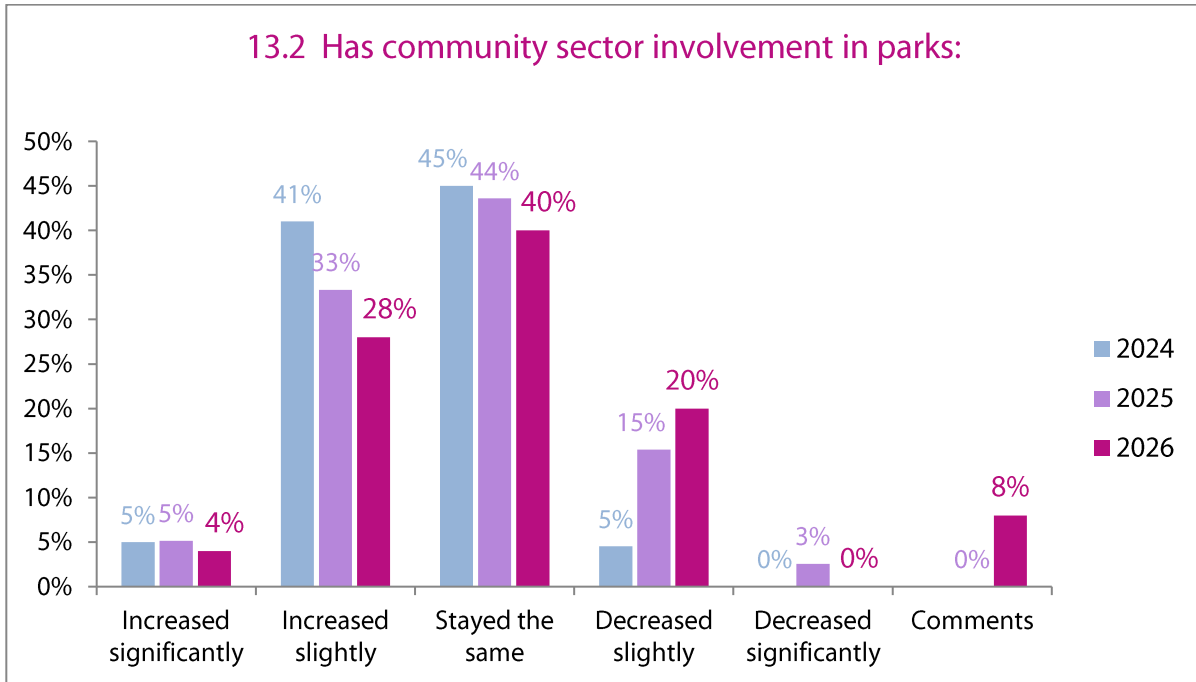
**76%**

*Responded "Yes"*

Friends of Parks groups can play a key role in preserving parks, organising events, and advocating for improvements; leading to better-maintained and more accessible outdoor spaces for residents. This reflects a growing awareness of the importance of community involvement in environmental stewardship and public space management, particularly at a time when council resources are stretched.

### 13.1 How are volunteers involved in the parks service?





13.2 shows the rate of respondents reporting significant or slight increases in community sector involvement in parks has slowed – standing at 32% compared to 28% in 2025 and 46% in 2024. Economic slowdowns or budget constraints can reduce the resources available for community engagement programs, making it harder to sustain or grow involvement. Furthermore, communities may be facing other pressing issues that divert attention and resources away from parks and recreational activities. For instance, rising living costs or other social challenges – ageing population – might lead to decreased volunteerism or participation in community projects.

However, looking ahead, those surveyed expect community sector involvement in parks to increase over the next 12 months. As reported in [14](#), 66% of respondents expect to see community involvement in parks grow in 2026/27.

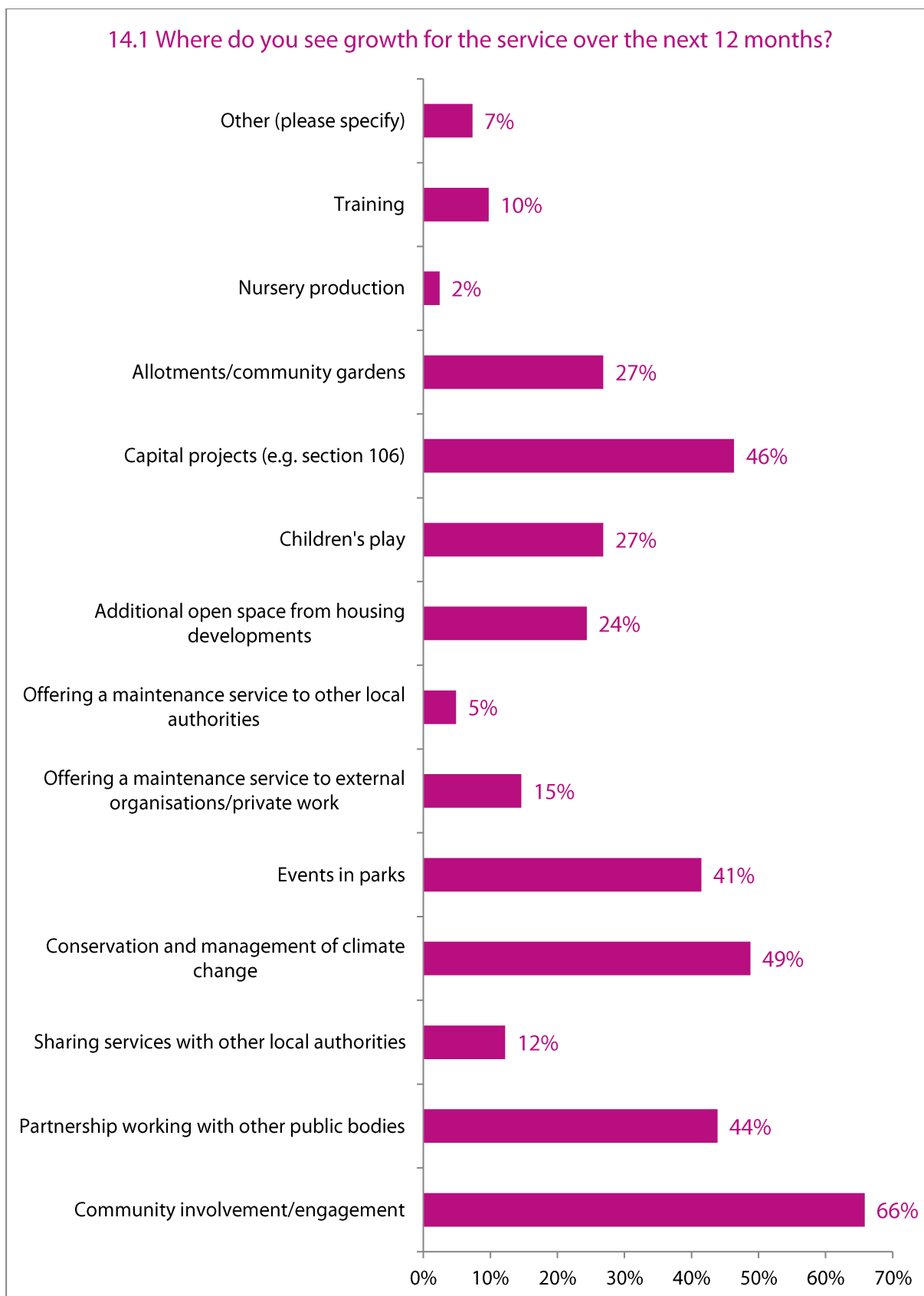
Volunteers can make a huge difference to the quality of life of local communities, contributing to the delivery of local authority outcomes. Managing the quality of local provision is vital. It is incumbent on local authorities to ensure the quality of volunteer management and support reflects the value of such an important frontline resource.

### Struggling to engage volunteers? APSE can help...



APSE Training has designed a highly interactive course to help local authorities understand their obligations and responsibilities in managing volunteers effectively and supporting voluntary and community organisations. For more information about *Working with Volunteers and the Voluntary Sector*, and how you can book your place, [click here](#).

## 14 Future growth



The projected growth in community involvement and engagement within UK local parks over the next 12 months is a positive indication of a shift towards more participatory green spaces. With 66% of respondents highlighting this area as the most likely to experience growth, it suggests that local authorities and park management teams recognise the importance of fostering stronger connections between the public and these outdoor spaces. Increased community involvement can lead to more volunteer programs, local initiatives, and educational activities, helping to create a sense of ownership among residents and ensuring that parks remain well-maintained and valued by the community.

Capital projects, identified by 46% of respondents as a growing focus, point to significant investment in infrastructure and facilities within parks. This could include new pathways, play areas, seating and improvements to accessibility.

The emphasis on conservation and climate change management (49%) highlights the ongoing awareness of environmental challenges and the role that greenspace can play in mitigating climate impacts.

The anticipated growth in park-based events (42%) suggests a move towards making parks more dynamic, multi-use spaces. Hosting events such as festivals, concerts, markets, fitness classes, and community gatherings provides an opportunity to bring in additional income through permits, sponsorships and ticket sales.

Just over a quarter of respondents (27%) anticipate future growth in allotments/community gardens. APSE runs a separate annual state of the market survey on allotments, the latest of which can be accessed [here](#).<sup>16</sup>



### Struggling to manage your allotments? APSE can help...

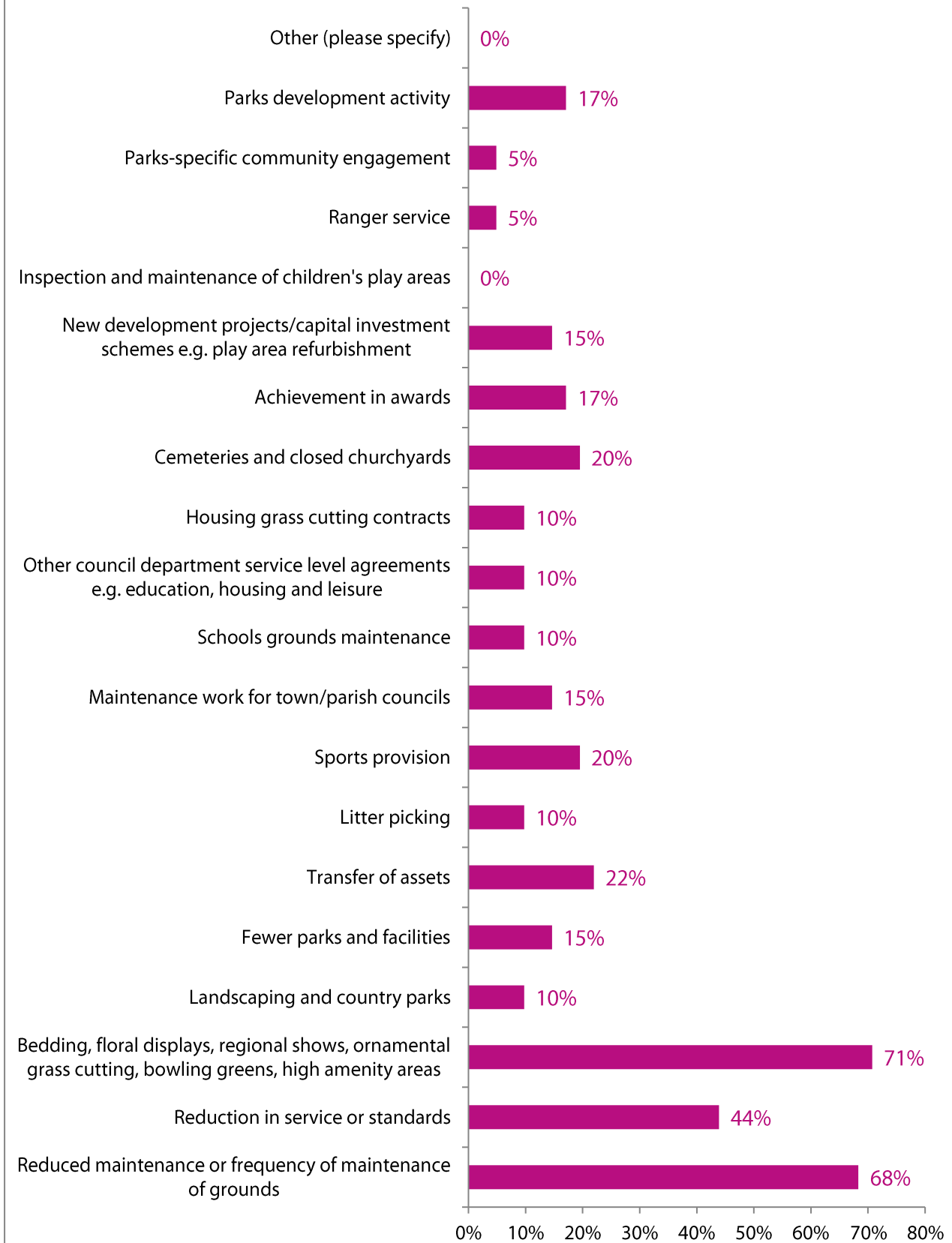
APSE Training has designed a highly interactive online course to help local authorities understand their obligations and the challenges involved in managing allotments e.g. funding, water, waiting lists, costs and enforcement, shared use, self-management, and site safety. For more information about

*Managing Allotments in Local Authorities*, and how you can book your place, [click here](#).

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<sup>16</sup> <https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/briefings/2025/25-21-apse-state-of-the-market-on-allotments/>

## 14.2 Where do you see future decreases in work for the service?



Future decreases in work are listed in 14.2. A substantial 68% of respondents indicated that maintenance reductions would be a key area of change, reflecting a broader trend of resource constraints. Within this category, specific services such as bedding, floral displays, regional shows, ornamental grass cutting, bowling greens, and high amenity areas are expected to see a 71% reduction in maintenance efforts.

There has been a drop in those expecting a decline in service quality and standards, from 64% of respondents in 2025 to 44% in 2026. This shows a degree of cautious optimism that, despite ongoing financial pressures, councils are striving to protect frontline standards where possible. It may also indicate that previous rounds of reductions have already been absorbed, leaving less visible scope for further decline.

Of those surveyed, 20% expect a decrease in sports provision. This means that discretionary and hire-based facilities remain vulnerable to budget pressures. Reductions in sports provision could have knock-on effects for community health, club sustainability and income generation.

17% expect a decrease in parks development activity. This shows that capital-led improvements and enhancement projects are increasingly difficult to progress in an uncertain funding climate. Development activity is often one of the first areas paused when resources tighten.

15% expect fewer parks and facilities. This represents a continuation of asset rationalisation strategies seen in previous years, where councils review their estate footprint to reduce long-term maintenance liabilities. While numbers remain relatively stable overall, the pressure to consolidate assets remains present.

## **15 APSE Comment: Climate resilience, reorganisation and the future of local parks**

This year's survey findings highlight the increasingly important role that parks and greenspaces play within local communities. They are no longer viewed simply as discretionary services, but as key contributors to addressing climate change, supporting public health and strengthening community resilience.

Across the UK, 95% of respondents identify biodiversity as a priority, 66% highlight climate change, and nearly half anticipate growth in conservation and climate management activity over the next 12 months. These figures demonstrate a clear strategic shift. Parks are increasingly understood not only as leisure spaces, but as frontline assets in carbon sequestration and habitat restoration.

The introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain in England has further accelerated this repositioning. Councils are embedding flower meadows, habitat creation and nature networks into mainstream parks management. While financial pressures remain acute, the direction of travel is unmistakable: climate adaptation and ecological restoration are becoming core business for parks services.

However, this transition is taking place against a backdrop of continuing financial constraint. A majority of respondents still expect decreases in both revenue and capital budgets. Maintenance reductions remain the most commonly anticipated future decrease. Councils are being asked to deliver more climate resilience and biodiversity outcomes with fewer resources.

At the same time, Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in parts of England is creating additional uncertainty. Several respondents explicitly referenced LGR as a risk, with concerns about loss of local identity, asset rationalisation and the potential downgrading of parks within newly merged structures. During periods of structural change, discretionary services can be particularly vulnerable while asset bases and financial strategies are recalibrated.

Yet reorganisation also presents opportunity. New unitary authorities have the potential to take a more strategic, landscape-scale approach to climate adaptation and nature recovery. Larger geographic footprints can support joined-up thinking. If parks are embedded early in new corporate strategies, they can be positioned as central to climate resilience planning rather than peripheral amenities.

This is where dual buy-in becomes more important than ever.

Senior leadership teams must recognise parks as cost-avoidance assets. Well-managed greenspace reduces surface water flooding costs, supports physical and mental health (thereby reducing demand on health and social care), improves air quality and enhances economic attractiveness. Climate mitigation and adaptation strategies that ignore parks risk being both more expensive and less effective.

Equally, resident buy-in remains critical. While the APSE and Survation public opinion polling shows that parks are not always prioritised for additional spending, there remains overwhelming support for free access and strong recognition of their health and wellbeing benefits. Engagement through events, friends groups, volunteering and visible biodiversity projects helps translate abstract climate policy into tangible local action. When residents see wildflower meadows, tree planting and habitat creation in their own neighbourhoods, climate policy becomes real.

Parks and greenspaces sit at the intersection of environmental, social and economic policy. The 2026 survey findings show a sector under pressure but also one adapting, innovating and increasingly aligning itself with the defining challenge of our time: climate change.

Securing investment in parks is therefore not simply about protecting a discretionary service. It is about safeguarding the green infrastructure that underpins climate resilience, public health and community cohesion for generations to come.

## 15.1 Three main takeaways

### 1. Parks are increasingly recognised as part of local climate and environmental solutions

The 2026 survey findings confirm that biodiversity and climate change remain firmly embedded in parks priorities. With 95% identifying biodiversity as a key focus and nearly half anticipating growth in conservation and climate management, parks are playing an expanding role in supporting carbon capture, flood mitigation, urban cooling and habitat restoration.

In the context of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain and wider local climate commitments, there is a growing opportunity to position parks as important components of green infrastructure. Ensuring that this contribution is clearly articulated within corporate climate strategies will help strengthen the case for sustained investment.

### 2. Financial pressure persists – and reorganisation adds uncertainty

Despite modest signs of stabilisation in some areas, the majority of respondents still expect reductions in revenue and capital budgets. Maintenance reductions remain the most anticipated area of decline. Workforce pressures, reliance on natural wastage, and limits on apprenticeship recruitment further underline the fragility of capacity within the sector.

In England, Local Government Reorganisation introduces additional complexity. Structural change can place discretionary services at risk during transition periods, particularly where asset rationalisation and budget realignment are under review. However, reorganisation also presents an opportunity to embed parks strategically within new unitary authorities as key contributors to climate resilience and public health outcomes.

### 3. Dual buy-in remains critical to long-term sustainability

Securing sustained investment in parks requires buy-in from both council leadership and residents. Senior leaders must recognise the preventative value of parks in reducing long-term costs linked to flooding, health inequality and environmental degradation. At the same time, resident engagement – through events, volunteering, friends groups and visible biodiversity projects – strengthens advocacy and reinforces parks as valued community assets.

The sector's ability to align climate action, health improvement and community cohesion within a single, compelling narrative will be central to protecting and enhancing parks in the years ahead.

## 15.2 How can APSE help?

All APSE members can sign up to APSE's Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance Network, which is an online network providing four learning events across the year, with expert speakers from across local government and the wider parks and greenspace sector. You can sign up to the network using [this link](#).

### *Training*

APSE Training has also designed several special interactive online course for parks professionals:

1. **Introduction to Parks Management (CPD)**. This preliminary course provides an introduction to the key issues and principles of parks management. If you are looking to move towards a more senior position, or you want to grow the skills to understand, develop, and cope with the demands faced by managers, this course will provide a robust overview. You can book your place on the course [here](#).
2. **Advanced Parks Management: Sustainable Finance (CPD)**. This particular course is the first in what is expected to become a suite of advanced modules for senior parks professionals. Focussing on sustainable funding, it provides an insight into the key issues and best practice techniques for creating a more sustainable basis for future funding. You can book your place on the course [here](#).
3. **Biodiversity Net Gain: Preparing Parks Professionals**. This training has been specifically designed to familiarise parks and greenspaces colleagues with this legislation. Through a variety of interactive activities, learners will have the opportunity to gather information and discuss strategies for practical application. You can book your place [here](#).

### *Benchmarking*

APSE Performance Networks is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking organisation in the UK. With over 200 authorities in membership, Performance Networks assists local councils by:

- Demonstrating progression on carbon reduction/ecological actions
- Helping to set a clear baseline on which competitiveness, efficiency and value for money can be measured in a systematic manner.
- Identifying the impact of service changes and interventions for your own local authorities and for others.
- Assessing the quality, cost and competitiveness of the services that councils provide on a regular basis.
- Helping to report data in meaningful ways to both elected members and the public.
- Identifying direction of travel and pace of change with regard to service delivery.
- Identifying inefficiencies such as poor productivity and high cost.
- Supporting service improvement through process benchmarking and sharing best practice examples.

For more information about how your parks service can benefit from Performance Networks membership, click [here](#).

## Sign up for APSE membership to enjoy a whole range of benefits

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular network meetings, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The networks are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Networks are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE Network meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email [enquiries@apse.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@apse.org.uk).

Our national networks include:-

- FM and Building cleaning
- Catering (School Meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authority Commercialisation, Income and Trading Network
- Local Government Reorganisation Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing

Visit [www.apse.org.uk](http://www.apse.org.uk) for more details.



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