



## The Friends Groups movement: Spreading our influence from grassroots to Government April 2019 Update

- \* The Federation is ***the democratic umbrella organisation for the movement of over 6,000 local Friends of Parks groups*** – the volunteers who act on behalf of the communities who use and care about our vital public green spaces. We exist to represent their activities, issues and concerns, and to amplify their passionate and knowledgeable voices. In particular we promote grassroots coordination among Friends Groups (there are around 70 Area Forums so far, involving over 3,000 of the groups) and partnership-working with Local Authorities and other greenspace national organisations.
- \* We in the NFPGS continue to be a key participant and influence in the ***Greenspace Sector / Government liaison body - the Parks Action Group [PAG]*** - discussing and debating what must be done to address the underfunding crisis. We ensure the voices of the Friends Groups movement are being heard loud and clear! We ourselves are coordinating a Community Empowerment workstream backed by the whole greenspace sector and Government Departments, and we are currently helping organise a series of regional conferences for Friends Groups to strengthen networking, good practice and partnership-working.
- \* Our Chair and reps from other national organisations have held 2 meetings with Clive Betts MP, the Chair of the ***Communities and Local Government Select Committee***. The Cttee has written to the Minister for Parks seeking a report on progress made over the last 2 years on addressing their Recommendations in response to the growing underfunding crisis facing parks. We have ensured that members of the PAG have been able to respond also, so that the Cttee can keep up pressure on Government to take effective action.
- \* 23 national organisations (and hundreds of local groups) have now signed up to back the new ***Charter for Parks*** calling for proper recognition, funding and protection for all the UK's public green spaces. All organisations are urged to add their support: [www.parkscharter.org.uk](http://www.parkscharter.org.uk)
- \* Following ongoing discussions with ourselves and others ***The Mail on Sunday, has continued with its Save Our Parks campaign***, taking many of its demands from the Parks Charter. On 30th December there was a special double page spread 'We Salute The Parks Saviours' about the Friends of Parks Groups movement, with some excellent examples and quoting the NFPGS Chair. You can read it here: <https://www.natfedparks.org.uk/pdf/nfpgs-save-our-parks-sunday-mail-20181231.pdf>
- \* We continue to support the ***Lottery-funded 'Rethinking Parks' project - parkscommunityuk - to promote community empowerment throughout the UK***. It is being run by the Friends of Lordship Rec in London, working with a dozen other Friends Groups. The project is actually co-managed by our Chair, who is also the Chair of the Friends of Lordship Rec. The idea is to develop a website 'one stop shop' for all Friends Groups, with 'How To' guides, information, links to supporting organisations, case studies etc to inform and inspire.. And then transfer it to the NFPGS for its long term maintenance and promotion. Watch this space for more details.
- \* The NFPGS treasurer Roland Bruce, of the Bristol Parks Forum, will be running in the ***London Marathon on April 28th*** - please support our efforts on behalf of the UK's parks and Friends Groups by sponsoring him at [justgiving.com](http://justgiving.com) (google London Marathon Roland Bruce)