



Empowering our communities

For the Parks Working Group



How can local park users and their communities be fully involved in their green space as real partners?

The experience of the Friends Groups' movement throughout the UK ...



A vibrant grassroots movement

- Community self-organisation
volunteering and action
*60,000 regular activists, 840,000 members,
7 million hrs of volunteering annually*
- 7,000 local Friends of Parks
Groups
*all over the UK but particularly concentrated
in urban areas, such as those shown*
- A UK-wide Federation
co-ordinating and representing the movement



Community action

- what can park users do to help?

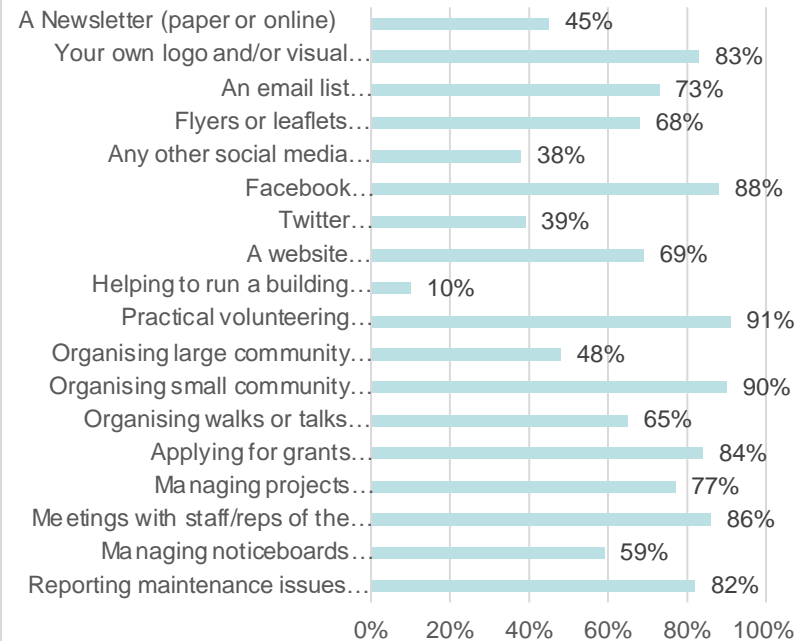
Acción comunitaria: ¿qué pueden hacer los usuarios del parque para ayudar?



- 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



Community action

How can we ensure it makes a real difference?

- Strong, independent community organisation
- Good connection with park users, User Groups and the local communities
- Good relations with managers and Local Authorities
- 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, plus meeting and storage space
- Good, regular communication and collaboration
- Mutual respect and understanding
- Spread good practice
- Develop popular and realistic vision
- Celebrate achievements



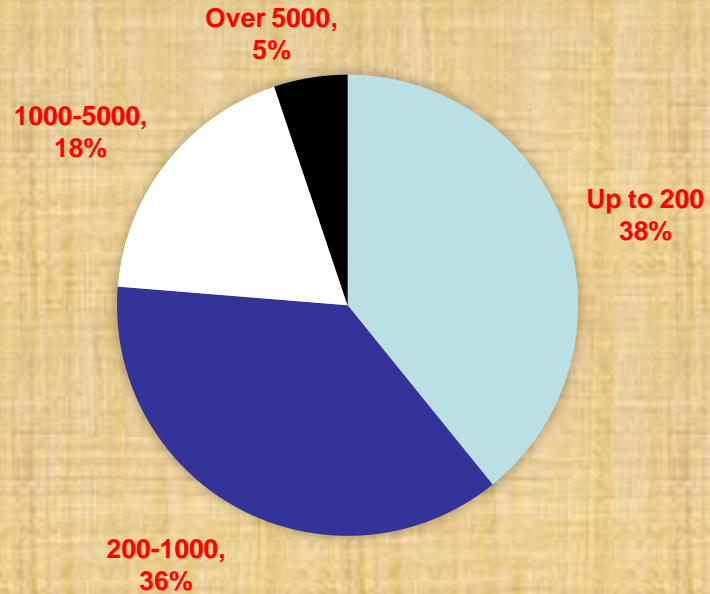
Some key challenges to address her

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



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

GROUP HOURS OF VOLUNTEERING PER YEAR



Huge benefits of Friends Groups

- For volunteers and members

- For green space

- For managers

- For communities



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 Working Group

National co-ordination and action

- **Key challenges**

- Supporting the grassroots
- Recognising community voice
- Raising public profile
- Promoting standards
- Ensuring protection
- Liaison within sector
- Influencing and lobbying Government
- Charter for Parks



Previous achievements

of the 'Parks Action Group' regarding Community Empowerment

HCLG Select Committee 'Future of Public Parks' Inquiry

- 2017 Report - Recommendations R3 and R4 urge active support for Friends Groups and Friends Forums, and good partnership-working with Local Authorities

Government

- Minister for Local Government (Rishi Sunak MP) gives Government backing for the above Recommendations R3 and R4 (and most of the others)

Parks Action Group (2017-2020) set up to implement the Report's Recommendations

- Explicit commitment to promote community empowerment
- PAG Community Empowerment Theme Group set up (2017-2020), convened by NFPGS and supported mainly by Groundwork and Locality
- PAG CE Theme Group funds and successfully organises 9 regional Community Empowerment 'Parks and People: Stronger Together' mini-conferences around England in 2019. See report: <https://natfedparks.org.uk/pagce-conferences-2019/>
- PAG CE Theme Group gets 1 year funding to help develop NFPGS networking, and Locality website info



Further info...



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