

Rethinking Torbay's Parks
A Public Consultation



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all participants who have taken part in this study. We are particularly appreciative towards the volunteers from the Friends of Torbay Parks and Green Spaces and the various Community Partnerships for their time and assistance in accessing participants. We also acknowledge the contribution made by people from across the Bay who gave their time to tell us about their experiences of taking part in project activities.

This evaluation reports follows the insights and lessons from Rethinking Parks, a joint Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery Fund and Nesta programme to test new ways to fund public parks. The research seeks to evaluate community feeling towards a number of options selected following from the Rethinking Parks programme. This piece of research and evaluation work was undertaken by Deborah Rylands with support from the Natural Environment Services Team in Torbay Council.

Interactivity

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Contacts

For further information about this report and the evaluation contact:

Debs Rylands

For and on Behalf of Groundwork in Devon & Cornwall

(An operating area of Groundwork South)

First Floor

18 Belle Vue Road

Saltash

Cornwall

PL12 6ES

07718 325 659

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Introduction

Overview of the Torbay Greenspaces Rethinking Parks Research

The Torbay Greenspaces Programme is a programme funded by the Torbay Council to support Torbay's Friends of Parks and Green Spaces and to increase public engagement and involvement in the Bay's parks in a sustainable manner.

This European investment is about improving the quality of life in rural areas and promoting diversification of the rural economy. The budget is channelled through the 'Leader' community-led approach to development, which is called Local Action in the South West.

Learning to Rethink Parks

Rethinking Parks was a joint Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Nesta programme to test new ways to raise income or reduce costs for public parks in the face of significant budget cuts. This report reviews the impact of the 11 ideas we tested and the lessons learned from this experimental innovation programme, and explores the potential of new approaches for the UK's parks. More details of the projects can be found online at <http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks>

Aims and Objectives of the Research

Rethinking Torbay's Parks and Green Spaces involves looking at the successes and lessons learned from innovative projects around the UK, but also with consideration to public feeling and the desire of the general public in getting involved in making projects happen.

- 1.1 The research sought to gain insight into how well our communities feel that the projects trialled within Rethinking Parks would fit with Torbay's parks and green spaces.
- 1.2 The survey provided an opportunity for participants to express desire to get involved, while demonstrating the ideas for which they felt they would like to support.

Research design

Given the need to gain an overarching understanding of the community feeling towards project ideas, a quantitative study approach was adopted, focussing on specific project ideas and aimed at Torbay residents.

The aim was to examine community feeling towards eleven project ideas trialled within the Rethinking Parks programme as well as programmes in parks used in other areas of the country, using a sliding scale of subjective feeling of the fit for the local area from 'This would be a good for Torbay (and I would like to be a part of it)' to 'This definitely wouldn't work for Torbay' together with an opportunity to feed back on the preferred project ideas.

The research was undertaken using Survey Monkey to provide an accessible platform for participants to provide feedback, using multiple choice questions and text boxes to provide further comment. Questions can be seen at the end of this report.

Sampling and Methods of Data Collection

As there were no sensitivities around the types of people involved with the projects, recruitment to the online study was undertaken on a voluntary basis, by members of the community, who were willing volunteers.

Requests for participation in online evaluation were sent to friends groups, community partnerships and community builders for Torbay, as well as shared across social media by groundwork South and Torbay Council.

The survey was open between 00:00 on Friday 19th August and 00:01 on Saturday September 10th, 2016 and secured 99 responses in this time. No information was taken on ages or towns, giving a truly anonymous feedback process. However, an opportunity to provide contact details was provided for those who wish to be involved in the development of projects and for further information to be sent.

Consent and ethics

As this study focussed on community feedback, it was not deemed necessary to obtain ethics clearance. This decision was taken because the methods of research were neither experimental nor invasive and would not touch upon sensitive issues that may cause distress to participants.

No fieldwork was undertaken and no personal data was required as a compulsory element of the research, however, the researcher handling personal data have undertaken DBS clearance.

The study was explained to those taking part. Whilst we would be using the information they provided in the final report, their anonymity is protected. Personal data was not requested as an essential piece of information and data handling has taken place in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Limitations and challenges of research

- The need to provide anonymous feedback means that it is not possible to profile respondents by town/local park, age, gender, ethnicity, etc. It is, therefore, not possible to gain a full understanding, from this particular piece of research, of what influences respondents' feelings towards the project ideas.
- While linking to details of the Rethinking Parks projects was provided, it is not possible to know whether responses were made based on informed bases or whether responses were to 'gut feeling' based on the short terminology within the questionnaire segments.
- Responses were few in number, despite a great deal of publicity created by Groundwork South, Torbay Council, Community Partnerships, Torbay's green space contractors and Torbay's Friends of Parks and Green Spaces.

Summary of Rethinking Parks and other Projects data included in evaluation

Crowd Funding



Greenspace Scotland took part in the Rethinking Parks project to develop and test the impact of public contributions to parks in Glasgow and Edinburgh, enabled through a parks information, events and crowd-funding website.

The idea

[MyParkScotland](#) provides a website that brings together people who value and love greenspaces in spaces in Edinburgh and Glasgow with opportunities to attend events, sign up to volunteering and donate to their park. Friends of Groups can promote events and projects, whilst the public can have easy access to information about all parks in their area.

The desired impact

MyParkScotland is a unique solution which will help people discover and support their local parks. The web-based platform combines elements of crowdfunding, for individual and business giving to support parks and parks projects, with an investment strategy to develop longer term sustainability and endowment funds.

This is about improving our parks today, as well as maintaining and safeguarding them for future generations. It will also be your first port of call if you're looking to find your local park and what's on through the interactive hub which provides information about park events, facilities and activities. We hope it will help more people to use, enjoy and support our parks.

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/myparkscotland-greenspace-scotland>

Natural Maintenance and Sustainable Planting
- and -
Volunteer Training Programme
- and -
Paid for services in parks (pay to use allotments, bee hives, etc)



Go to the Park, Burnley - Burnley Council developed an alternative model of park management by sustainably managing large areas of the town's using ecological and permaculture techniques. Burnley Go to the Park also mobilised volunteers in areas where their efforts would make most benefit to parks, and complement the changes in management.

The idea

Based in Towneley Park (Burnley's largest heritage park covering 200 hectares) and extending across five other heritage parks, 'Go to the Park' will develop an alternative model of park & green space management that will sustainably manage large areas of parks and green spaces using ecological & permaculture techniques. The project will test the opportunities to save money by adopting ecological & permaculture techniques to manage

our heritage parks, earn money from wildflower crops, bees and wood fuel, engage people through our 'Volunteer in Parks' programme and increase the wildlife value of our green spaces.

The desired impact

The project aims to create more attractive and ecologically rich green spaces that are cheaper to maintain and produce economically valuable products. The Volunteer in Parks programme will strengthen community involvement in Burnley's parks, making them more vibrant places to visit and improving wellbeing. The team Go to the Park is a partnership between Burnley Borough Council, Offshoots Permaculture Project (part of the Together housing group) and our park friends groups.

Project report: https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/rethinkingparksburnley_0.pdf

Formation of a charity to raise funds through individual, legacy and corporate donations

Bournemouth Borough Council developed and tested the impact voluntary donations can have for the long term sustainability of parks in Bournemouth. Bournemouth Parks Foundation was established independently from the local authority. Digital, cash and legacy donations all formed part of the Foundation's first efforts to raise funds for parks.

The idea



Bournemouth Borough Council is being supported to create a foundation for parks across its authority so the peoples' affection for their parks and gardens translates to giving. The team will be exploring how new digital giving technologies can make it easy for people to give to the parks in real time. They will also test whether the opportunity for people to leave a legacy donation is a viable option to sustain their parks and gardens. The approach will draw on learning from models already being used in the United States, such as in Seattle.

The desired impact

Our model is designed to ensure a sustainable future for Bournemouth's parks, which can then be rolled out nationally. Opportunities for impulsive giving and legacy investing will be maximised alongside a cultural change where residents are really proud to support the town and its green spaces via a charitable foundation.

Project report: <http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/bournemouth-md.pdf>

Programme of business volunteering opportunities to carry out projects in parks



Groundwork North East and Darlington Council developed and tested the impact longer term partnerships between businesses and parks friends groups can have in sustaining public parks.

The idea

Darlington Rethinking Parks plans to reignite philanthropy in Darlington where parks were once created and donated to the town by wealthy Quaker business owners for the benefit of the people of the town. There is a clear demand from business within Darlington to make a meaningful contribution to the wellbeing of the community. The project will engage businesses to contribute not only money and manpower towards volunteering days and improvement projects, but also seeks to engage businesses in giving their advice and skills to improve the strategic management and operation of parks. Rather than one off or ad hoc contributions from business this project seeks to enable businesses to make a long term and sustained commitment to parks in Darlington.

The desired impact

The team is hoping to see, at the end of the project, that the Parks selected are thriving and the Friends capacity increased as a result of business input. We would like businesses to have a connection with their local park on some level, contributing towards the everyday management of the park through to the longer strategic goal.

Project Report: <http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/darlington-final.pdf>

Charity run parks, to increase sport and visitor engagement and maintain parks with the local community



Groundwork South Council worked with Cornwall Council to create a programme through which the Pilgrim Pitch, at Saltmill Park, Saltash, Cornwall would be a unique community sports facility for the South West of the United Kingdom.

The idea - At the heart of the project is a multi-sport facility comprising a synthetic all weather pitch (AWP) and changing rooms, all carefully designed to bring lasting benefit for the local community.

The project concentrates on three main themes:

- Remediating a deficiency of quality sports and recreational facilities in an area of need
- Ensuring the involvement of the Saltash community, from project inception to service delivery, as the imperative both of a sense of ownership of the resource, and for its long-term sustainability
- Furthering the links between local authorities, sports clubs, schools, Plymouth Argyle Football Club (aka The Pilgrims), local community groups, and other agencies to ensure the continuing success of this project

The desired impact - The project would be the catalyst for the development of skills in targeted sports, including football and hockey, through providing new opportunities for the development of clubs in Saltash. The employment of an Activities Co-ordinator, alongside a part-time Site Supervisor, would be instrumental in the development of initiatives.

Project Report: Transforming Saltmill Park, Saltash, Cornwall -

<https://www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/south/pages/saltmill-park>

Privatisation of areas within one or more parks in Torbay

The idea - Encourage social entrepreneurial activity and create opportunities for commercialising service delivery by identifying specialist services which could trade from parks and open spaces.



Creation of enterprise areas within parks are designed to enable private business to take responsibility for areas of the park, generating interest in open spaces and giving responsibility for maintenance of areas of the park to private businesses operating in that area.

Project Report: <http://apse-archive.org.uk/>

Private company sponsorship of flower beds and park areas

The idea - Offering the sponsorship of flowerbeds to private companies, with a focus on hotels and tourism-dependant companies overlooking prominent flowerbeds in Torbay. Use of private money to support the direct cost of seasonal planting.

The impact: Flowerbeds maintained to a high quality through private financial support, private companies working together to ensure quality or provision of this service by contractors. Increased business networking and maintenance of quality floral displays in Torbay.

Groups running paid for events to bring funding to individual parks groups to fund projects in their parks

The idea - Working with friends groups to develop programmes of events and activities for a range of audiences to raise money for their projects in parks. Training provided for groups to enable groups to develop and deliver a broad spectrum of activities. Groups will be supported to deliver activities for all age groups through relevant checks, safeguarding training and ongoing development support.

The impact: Friends groups incentivised to deliver exciting events in parks, open spaces and local places to engage the wider community in their local area, while raising funds for exciting, community-led projects to improve parks and open spaces.

Park maintenance run through training programmes for unemployed people



The idea - Development of Green Teams to create better and greener places while providing team members the opportunity to learn new skills, gain qualifications and improve their employment prospects.

The impact: Green Team members are often young, unemployed and lacking experience and qualifications. We give them the tools to do the job - and their local neighbourhoods and customers see the benefits on the ground. From grass cutting to woodland management, play equipment inspections to snow clearance, the teams respond directly to issues identified by local people swiftly and professionally.

More details: [https://www.groundwork.org.uk/South West Green Teams](https://www.groundwork.org.uk/South_West_Green_Teams)

Findings

Findings have been calculated through the analysis of positive and negative answers, each combined with those who were unsure (maybe). This has been done as the unsure voting could represent a desire for more information on the proposed methods of implementation, as opposed to a lack of faith in the idea.

Q1: A number of projects across the UK have undertaken radical new ways of making parks sustainable. Would the following measures fit with Torbay?



**Privatisation of areas within
one or more parks in Torbay**

**Yes
13.40%**

**Maybe
65.98%**

**No
20.62%**

Summary Q1

Key areas suggested by respondents that

The strong message from the community is that the power for ensuring the sustainability of parks lies within the community. The idea of privatisation of areas of the park received the highest number of negative responses and the lowest number of positive responses, although almost 68% of respondents were unsure.



Conversely, the private sponsorship of flowerbeds was the highest ranked amongst yes and maybe votes, potentially demonstrating that communities would like to see private money supporting these areas, but without the private control over public open spaces.

The three most popular yes results were:

	Yes	Yes
Park maintenance run through training programmes for unemployed people	70	71.43%
Private company sponsorship of flower beds and park areas	69	71.13%
Investment in a programme to train volunteers in projects for parks	65	65.66%

The three most popular yes and maybe results were:

	Yes	Maybe	Yes & Maybe
Crowd funding projects in parks (asking the public to donate)	21	73	97.92%
Investment in a programme to train volunteers in projects for parks	65	31	96.97%
Private company sponsorship of flower beds and park areas	69	26	97.94%

The yes results show a strong public inclination to the increase of skills in members of the public to maintain our public open spaces, through **programmes aimed at volunteers** and **green team** style programmes to **train the unemployed** in outdoor work-related skills.

This is reflected in the yes and maybe votes, with a **volunteer training programme** being the second most popular project suggestion.

The most popular ideas identified in Q1 mirrored the question on [best fit with Torbay](#) and showed that training volunteers and unemployed people were the most popular, with private sponsorship the third most popular idea. It could be argued that a programme for volunteers and a programme for unemployed people who wish to undertake such a programme would be the same programme with each requiring some sustainable rolling programme to allow for new volunteers and those leaving volunteering and the programme.

This being the case, it is worth considering that the options on establishing a charity to raise funds through individual, legacy and corporate donations also scored highly, although it is feasible that this would rate higher with additional public understanding of the funding implications for



Survey Questions

Q1

A number of projects across the UK have undertaken radical new ways of making parks sustainable. Would the following measures fit with Torbay?

	Yes	Maybe	No	Yes	Maybe	No	Yes & Maybe
Crowd funding projects in parks (asking the public to donate)	21	73	2	21.88%	76.04%	2.08%	97.92%
Investment in a programme to train volunteers in projects for parks	65	31	3	65.66%	31.31%	3.03%	96.97%
Privatisation of areas within one or more parks in Torbay	13	64	20	13.40%	65.98%	20.62%	79.38%
Paid for services in parks (pay to use allotments, bee hives, etc)	23	63	9	24.21%	66.32%	9.47%	90.53%
Establishing a charity to raise funds through individual, legacy and corporate donations	45	47	4	46.88%	48.96%	4.17%	95.83%
Private company sponsorship of flower beds and park areas	69	26	2	71.13%	26.80%	2.06%	97.94%
Charity run parks, to increase sport and visitor engagement and maintain parks with the local community	53	39	4	55.21%	40.63%	4.17%	95.83%
Programme of business volunteering opportunities to carry out projects in parks	51	42	3	53.13%	43.75%	3.13%	96.88%
Groups running paid for events to bring funding to individual parks groups to fund projects in their parks	48	45	2	50.53%	47.37%	2.11%	97.89%
Park maintenance run through training programmes for unemployed people	70	25	3	71.43%	25.51%	3.06%	96.94%
Introduction of natural maintenance and sustainable parks to reduce costs	47	44	5	48.96%	45.83%	5.21%	94.79%

Q2: Which two items above do you think would be the best fit for Torbay?

Park maintenance run through training programmes for unemployed people	37
Investment in a programme to train volunteers in projects for parks	33
Private company sponsorship of flower beds and park areas	33
Establishing a charity to raise funds through individual, legacy and corporate donations	20
Introduction of natural maintenance and sustainable parks to reduce costs	14
Groups running paid for events to bring funding to individual parks groups to fund projects in their parks	13
Programme of business volunteering opportunities to carry out projects in parks	8
Crowd funding projects in parks (asking the public to donate)	6
Privatisation of areas within one or more parks in Torbay	5
Charity run parks, to increase sport and visitor engagement and maintain parks with the local community	5
Paid for services in parks (pay to use allotments, bee hives, etc)	1
Other proposed ideas:	
Sports in parks,	
Business' carrying out projects	
Community service opportunities	2
None. The Council needs to stop cutting corners and FIND THE MONEY to pay for THEIR OWN PARKS' MAINTENANCE instead of expecting the public to work for nothing on them or pay for events in them!	

Other comments, questions, or concerns...

"Don't turn Cary Green into a car park"

"Torquay needs to invest in its outside spaces and give them more importance... If Torbay looked after its green spaces curbs paths etc the whole town would look and feel better and attract more visitors who will spend and therefore improve the town. [...]work ethic and pride in its

*"the **** of Rock Walk was an unmitigated disaster and a complete folly"*

"Love the natural look achieved in Rock Walk. Is this low maintenance? It seems to be really good for

"I wish more parks and woodlands were managed with wildlife as a greater priority"

"It's really nice to see that there are still people who want to take care of Torbay's green spaces. Keep up the good work!"

“Whatever you decide something needs to be done. Our parks always used to look so pretty and Torquay is now becoming a sadder place without them”

“Some very good options - well worth exploring them further.”

“It would be nice if public conveniences in parks stayed open. If there were kiosk concessions maybe the loos could be paid for”

“more natural areas planted, not just roundabouts. Less trimming and cutting would save money and benefit the environment. More trees would also work all round.”

“targeting schools regarding littering and the environment would be good”

“Communities need to be encouraged to use and share in caring for their green spaces. More community planting.”

“Encourage local people to adopt their local green spaces but many people are put off by the councils "red tape and training"..." approach. As long as no machinery is being used then those willing to offer time and free labour should be better encouraged with

“My concerns are that green areas will be sold off to developers for building. Green spaces are crucial to everyone's wellbeing.”