



Community Involvement and Empowerment in Greenspace

Recognising, supporting and promoting 'Friends Groups' and volunteer-led activity in the Covid era and beyond - the UK example

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The grassroots movement in the UK

Volunteering comes in many forms

Our focus is....

- Community self-organisation and empowerment *represented by...*
- 7,000 Friends of Parks Groups
27,000 UK parks – all need a Friends group!
- 70 Area Forums and Networks
 - Birmingham *120 Friends groups. 1 Forum*
 - London *700 groups. 17 borough Forums.*
- The National Federation
 - *the democratic umbrella body promoting, coordinating and representing this movement.*
 - All volunteers, and unfunded... so far!*



The benefits Friends Groups bring

Friends/volunteer groups bring a wide range of Added Value to greenspace

- Volunteering hours are equivalent to 5-10% of total UK spend
 - *Eyes and ears*
 - *Promotion*
 - *Activities and usage*
 - *Access extra funding*
 - *Help with maintenance*
 - *Expertise and skills*
 - *Help protect green space*
 - *Strong community voice*
- Community groups crucial
 - *they enable capacity, range and sustainability of activities, a sense of local pride and 'ownership', and effective partnerships among user groups and with management*



Current challenges Friends Groups face

The challenges are many!

For our sites

- Finances
 - *Systemic underfunding and understaffing of parks services, compounded by covid extra work and loss of commercial income.*
 - *less staff for liaison with groups*
- Usage
 - *massive increase, and many new users*

For community groups

- Face to face meetings suspended
- Many events, activities and volunteering sessions postponed
- Most community buildings / cafes closed



The future

For Friends and community groups

- Engage new people
- Social media skills to improve organisation and communications
- Ensure social distancing and safety at volunteering sessions, events and activities
- Support and partner with parks staff
- Lobby and speak up for greenspace

For our movement, continue to...

- Strengthen the movement and the National Federation
- Build strong strategic partnerships at the national (and international!) level
- Lobby for proper recognition and resources for parks





Further info...

www.natfedparks.org.uk

www.parkscommunity.org.uk

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