

# **A Foundation for Bristol's Parks**



## **Initial proposals from Bristol Parks Forum**



## Introduction

Good quality parks & green spaces are vital to health and wellbeing in an urban environment. In Bristol they are a key part of the city's attraction as a place to live and work and also play an important role in its growing tourism industry.

At a time of extreme budget pressures, Bristol City Council (BCC), in common with many other cities, is reducing its spending on parks and green spaces. BCC is in the first year of a three year process of reducing its budget for maintenance by around £3m. This is on top of a series of cuts made in earlier years and still further cuts are likely to follow.

To date budget reductions have been almost entirely achieved through 'increases in efficiency' and reductions in service provision. The current proposals include more cuts but also envisage additional income being raised through more commercial events and activities in Bristol's Parks.

Many other cities throughout the country are in a similar position of making cuts and there have been discussions at a national level of possible alternative models for funding parks. These options include forming Trusts or Foundations to take over some of the responsibilities in respect of parks from the Council.

**This document sets out a proposal to establish an arm's length charitable body, fully independent of the Council, to raise funds for Bristol's parks & green spaces while at the same time raising the profile of parks and encouraging more community engagement through volunteering and events - a Foundation for Bristol's parks.**

## Parks Foundation

A Parks Foundation's primary role would be to raise funds and awareness to support Bristol's parks. It would be an independent body with charitable status and a board of trustees.

Funds would be raised through public donations (including legacies) but also by seeking corporate support accessing 'social responsibility' budgets. In addition the Foundation would set up a trading arm to manage and run activities in parks such as cafés with the profits being passed to the charity.

Public engagement would be a key priority and the Foundation would work with Park Groups; other organisations and businesses to encourage and facilitate volunteering in parks. Funds raised could be for specific projects or to raise maintenance standards above those that could be achieved by relying solely on the reduced budgets available from BCC.

The Foundation would not be a 'Trust' (see below); it would not take on ownership or management of the parks, they would remain with BCC. It would carry out activities that are outside BCC's current role and would seek to employ a small number of paid staff supported by volunteers.

A funding agreement would need to be in place to ensure that any funds raised by the Foundation and passed to BCC directly benefited Bristol's parks & green spaces.

A foundation along similar lines has already been established in Bournemouth [www.bournemouthparksfoundation.org.uk](http://www.bournemouthparksfoundation.org.uk) and plans are being drawn up to establish a foundation in Brighton & Hove. Parks Foundations are common in the USA - [www.the-napf.org](http://www.the-napf.org)

## Other Discounted Options

Three other options we have considered are discussed below; all of these could be either city wide or focused on particular parks or areas. Bristol Parks Forum is of the firm view that Bristol's parks should be considered as a whole and not divided up. Some parks are more suited to fundraising activities and potentially more attractive to corporate donations than others; separating these is likely to result in a two tier park service to the detriment of some spaces.

### 1. Parks Trust

This would be an expansion of the Foundation model and would take on responsibility for managing Bristol's parks & green spaces as well as fundraising. Assets (parks & green spaces with associated structures) would be passed to the Trust on a long-term lease (100+ years). Some staff would be transferred to the Trust through a TUPE process. The Trust Board would then make all decisions on management of parks and the Trust would also have responsibility to fill any funding gaps.

This model is currently being established in Newcastle.

### 2. Parks Fund

This model establishes a fund which can seek donations from the public and businesses to support parks. The fund could be managed by an existing charity.

The Leeds Parks Fund was established last year and is managed by registered charity, Leeds Community Foundation – [www.leedsparksfund.org](http://www.leedsparksfund.org)

### 3. Council led Fundraising

The Bristol Parks consultation that closed on 29<sup>th</sup> January proposed a number of fundraising initiatives that would be run and managed by Bristol Parks.

#### Pros & Cons

All three charitable options, Trust, Foundation or Fund, have the advantage of a degree of independence from local authority control which would open up the opportunity to access funds that would not be available to Council led fundraising activities.

A Trust is the only model that envisages a change to the current management of day to day maintenance of the parks, however, it is not clear that this would bring significant cost savings and the risks associated with this model are high. It would be a complex undertaking and might not be supported politically due to loss of control by the Council.

While a Parks Fund would have the lowest set up costs of the three options for a charitable body; a Foundation with its own staff would be a more pro-active organisation and give more options such as trading and other activities.

#### Conclusion

Bristol Parks Forum believes that the Foundation model is the best option for Bristol at this time; though the option of moving to a Trust in the future should not be ruled out.

# Detailed Proposals – Updated 31 January 2018

## Proposed Structure

The Foundation would be set up as a limited company & registered charity, with a board of trustees with appropriate expertise.

In addition the Foundation would have a separate trading arm that could run or manage businesses in parks commercially to raise funds for the charity.

The charity's purposes would be similar to those established for Bournemouth Parks Foundation:

- a) To provide and enhance, or assist in such, the facilities, maintenance, equipping of parks, gardens, landscaped areas, woodland, open spaces, playing fields, playgrounds, nature reserves and recreational amenity spaces within the City of Bristol and the environs for the benefit of the inhabitants thereof;
- b) To advance public education in the area of benefit with particular regard to horticulture, arboriculture, ecology, geology, archaeology, heritage and local history;
- c) To provide or assist in the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the conditions of life for the inhabitants of the area of benefit.

The Foundation would be ambitious in accessing a wide range of income streams, working with established organisations and networks in Bristol to develop innovative ideas and fundraising programmes.

## Trustees

Finding the right Trustees would be crucial to the success of the foundation. The Trustees would need a range of experience and knowledge; as a minimum this would need to cover:

- Governance;
- Fundraising;
- Public engagement – press, web, social media;
- Marketing;
- Commercial/Trading;
- Parks Management;
- Legal;

It would be important that the Board had a strong chair to help drive the organisation in its early years. Trustees would be expected to use their network of connections to businesses, other charities and organisations to promote the Foundation and bring in the necessary skills and experience to ensure the Foundation's success.

It is important that the Foundation establishes its own identity as a separate entity to BCC and that it is seen to be separate. In view of this and to avoid possible conflicts of interest it is not envisaged that Councillors would be appointed as trustees.

### **Relationship with BCC (Parks)**

There would be an agreement (perhaps in the form of a memorandum of understanding) with BCC setting out the roles and responsibilities of the Foundation and the Council, with the BCC handing over responsibilities for certain activities.

Responsibility for managing parks would remain with the Parks Service as would enforcement of byelaws.

A funding agreement would need to be in place to ensure that any funds raised by the Foundation and passed to BCC directly benefited Bristol's parks & green spaces, with transparency over how the funds were spent.

The Foundation would have the authority to make decisions on where and how its funds are spent but as Parks would be responsible for any works carried out in parks & green spaces they could refuse permission for events, activities or projects to proceed. In practice as the objectives of both organisations would be aligned this is unlikely to present difficulties.

### **Relationship with Bristol Parks Forum**

The Foundation would work closely with the Parks Forum and its member groups whose support would be a key to its success.

It is envisaged that the two organisations would remain separate with the Forum holding the Foundation and its Trustees to account and ensuring that they work to the agreed plan and within the agreed restraints.

### **Relationship with Other Partners**

The Foundation would aim to utilise the experience, knowledge and resources of the project partners wherever possible and explore opportunities for joint working to reduce costs.

### **Foundation Scope**

The proposed work of the Foundation can be considered under a number of separate strands:

- a) Establishing an Identity – Logo, branding, website, social media presence, press coverage;
- b) Marketing Bristol's parks – both to encourage visits and appreciation of the parks by residents and to increase engagement with the Foundation and its activities;
- c) Fundraising – via donations, sponsorship, grants, fundraising events and in-kind support;
- d) Volunteering – encouraging, supporting and coordinating volunteering activities both within parks (nature conservation, gardening, litter picks etc) and to support the Foundation (admin tasks, representing the Foundation).
- e) Project work – working with Friends groups and others to raise funds through grants or other sources to enable improvements and enhancements to be made to parks & green spaces.
- f) Trading – operating cafés (directly with the help of volunteers or managing franchises), managing small scale activities eg bouncy castles etc.

The Foundation would expand its activities over a period of perhaps five or more years (see Project Plan below for the first 2 years).

Bristol Parks Forum's ParkWork project would form a key element within both the volunteering and project strands, with management of ParkWork being taken over by the Foundation.

The Foundation would seek to run some small scale 'quick-win' projects in 2019 to get its name known and build its reputation.

### **Staff & Accommodation**

The charity would employ a limited number of paid staff, supported by recruited volunteers. Staff would require accommodation, HR, IT & admin support, but costs of these overheads would need to be minimised as far as possible so as to maximise the funds available for its charitable objectives.

Ideally we would seek to find a location which the Foundation could use and advertise as its base, receive post and receive visitors but is also in a park setting.

### **Outline Project Plan**

The Foundation would require support from BCC or find alternative funding (such as from grants) to cover its initial set up and operating costs. This might include provision of shared office space. A project manager would be recruited (initially employed by BCC) to establish the charity.

Once established the charity would aim to raise funds to support the employment of key staff and ultimately to cover accommodation and admin costs.

Envisaged key staff:

- Set-up Project Manager/Charity CEO – full time
- Volunteering Manager – full time
- Communications/Marketing officer – part time (50%)
- Fundraiser – part time (50%)
- Commercial officer (trading arm) – part time
- Project managers – as required for individual projects
- Admin/HR support

The chart at Appendix 1 shows the proposed activities for the first two years.

In addition to the Project Manager the plan envisages that the volunteering manager would also be initially employed by BCC and then transferred to the Foundation once it exists as a legal entity.

## **DRAFT Funding Requirements**

**Note – all figures subject to confirmation**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>£</b>
Project Manager (1 FTE) 22 mths	Salary	Start-up Grant	75,000.00
Volunteering Manager (1 FTE) 22 mths	Salary	BCC	
Comms/Marketing Officer (½ FTE) 15 mths	Salary	Start-up Grant	22,500.00
Fundraiser (½ FTE) 15 mths	Salary	Start-up Grant	22,500.00
Commercial Officer (1FTE) 7 mths	Salary	BCC	
Design & set-up website incl domain	Consultant	Start-up Grant	15,000.00
Legal Advice (shared with Bournemouth)	Legal	Start-up Grant	20,000.00
Admin support to set up Charity	Salary	BCC	
Legal costs to set up Charity & Trading Co	Legal	Start-up Grant	15,000.00
Design of Logo & promotional materials	Consultant	Start-up Grant	10,000.00
Purchase of marketing materials	Purchase	Start-up Grant	10,000.00
Insurance costs	Ins	Start-up Grant	5,000.00
Training PPE & Tools for volunteers	Purchase	BCC	
Office running costs (incl IT)	Rent	BCC	
Admin support to Charity (HR, IT etc)	Salary	BCC	
<b>Total Start up Grant (Rethinking Parks?)</b>			<b>195,000.00</b>

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*For Bristol Parks Forum*

# Appendix 1 – Two Year Project Plan

## Bristol Parks Foundation

