Experts in Regeneration

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Parks for People

Interim Evaluation

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heritage lottery fund

BIG LOTTERY FUND

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Executive Summary

The Parks for People programme aims to regenerate public parks of national, regional or local heritage value for the enjoyment and recreation of local people. The programme began as a joint initiative between the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Between 2006 and 2009 £80m of funding from BIG for public parks in England was added to HLF support for parks projects UK-wide.

Monitoring and evaluation are important elements of the programme. The Heritage Lottery Fund and BIG commissioned Hall Aitken, assisted by Community First Partnership (CFP), to provide support to projects to enable them to fulfil the monitoring and evaluation requirements of the programme.

This is our third and final report, and will show the progress made by 70[1] projects in the programme and the impact so far. Since many projects have not yet completed work this report presents the interim findings and potential future impact.

The Parks for People programme offers grants of between £250,000 and £5 million for projects which involve existing urban or rural green spaces designed for informal recreation and enjoyment, which local communities value as part of their heritage. The parks must be freely accessible to members of the public, and actively involve local people in their running and activities.

The programme requires all projects to work towards the following five outcomes:

o   Outcome 1 – Increasing the range of audiences.
o   Outcome 2 – Conserving and improving the heritage value.
o   Outcome 3 – Increasing the range of volunteers involved.
o   Outcome 4 – Improving skills and knowledge through training.
o   Outcome 5 – Improving management and maintenance.

Parks for People in context

Much has been written about the value of green space and that it forms an intrinsic part of the fabric of urban society without which our towns and cities would be much worse places to live.

Good quality green space can result in a wide range of benefits, including:

o   Economic value.
o   Physical and Mental Health Value.
o   Benefits for Children and Young People.
o   Social Cohesion.
o   Sustainability and biodiversity.

Investment in the quality of green space in the

> *"Parks and green spaces are the backbone of sustainable and high-quality urban environments. A growing body of robust research shows that high-quality green spaces bring considerable benefits to local economies, to people's physical and mental health, and to the environment."* (CABE 2010)

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[1] *There were 72 projects originally. Mesnes Park in Wigan is two separate grants but is only required to submit one set of monitoring data, and Bentley Park is currently on hold.*

last decade has resulted in a Parks renaissance. More people are getting involved in Friends groups, satisfaction with greenspace has increased and expectations have been raised. However, recent cuts in Local Authority budgets will constrain management budgets and the challenge for Parks Managers will be to safeguard the service and quality expected by local people with less money.

The concept of Big Society presents an opportunity for Local Authorities to develop greater ownership of services and assets by the Civic Sector. Examples of community trusts taking on the ownership of parks exist, however there is a need to develop organisational and community capacity before transfer of assets can take place. The Parks for People programme can help to build this capacity, with its focus on involving local people in heritage projects and increasing volunteer capacity.

The need for effective evaluation

Recent changes in government policy and public sector cuts mean that demonstrating the impact and value of improvements to parks has never been so important.   Although the benefits of greenspace are widely understood, historically there is little evidence of the value that high quality green space can make to wider agendas such as public health, quality of life, sustainability, education, community safety and social inclusion. Parks managers have lacked the business case for future investment or evidence of benefits to defend themselves against cuts.

Our work has shown that evaluating the impact of park projects is a relatively new concept and often managers lack the knowledge and skills to implement effective evaluation methods which will provide a case for future investment, both at a local and national level.

Hall Aitken and CFP were commissioned in 2007 to *'focus on providing support and advice to grantholders on their project monitoring and self-evaluation work; collating and analysing grantholders' data and evidence; and carrying out further research to get an overall picture of the social, economic and environmental impacts of the programme'.*

The support provided and data collected during our 3 year contract represents a significant step change in building the capacity of the greenspace sector in monitoring and evaluation. The unprecedented amount of data collected will help HLF and BIG at a national level and Local Authorities at a local level to demonstrate the impact of investment in parks.

Overview

Our contract involved working with 70 projects in receipt of £155m of Parks for People funding across two separate HLF Strategic Plans (SP). Projects in England from SP2 are joint funded by HLF and BIG. Projects in SP3 and all those in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales are just funded by HLF. As at December 2010 19% (£29m) of the funding had been claimed.

Projects are expected to develop a full set of baseline and target data during the development stage (once they have received their stage 1/first round pass and are working to develop their stage 2/second round application). 11 projects in our study are still in the development stage and are working to collect this data.

59 projects are currently in the delivery stage; they have received their stage 2/round 2 pass and are either on site or working towards this. They should have a full set of baseline and target data and be some way towards implementing their plans. Limited progress will have been made in some cases where projects have only just started to deliver, with many not yet on site.

Despite some projects starting the delivery of revenue activities before or while the capital works are ongoing, many have not. Therefore the 11 projects which have completed the capital works will be able to demonstrate progress towards achieving the outcomes, but in some cases the revenue elements have not yet started. Projects have up to 5 years to implement their revenue plans, and no projects within our study have fully completed all their proposals.

Despite the relatively early stage of the 70 projects in our study, the majority have baseline data and targets in place. This means we can build an effective 'before' picture and show the potential impact of the programme. Projects which are further progressed are starting to return 'actual' data, and through this we can start to make interim conclusions about the impact of the programme.

Outcome 1 – increasing the range of audiences

In order to effectively increase the range of audiences in parks, projects are expected to understand their baseline visitor counts, develop a visitor profile and compare this to the local area. From this information they can identify under-represented groups and develop an Audience Development/Activity plan that increases visitor numbers and/or diversifies their audience base.

From the baseline data collected from 70 projects we can see that:

o There are 36m annual person visits.
o On average, parks have 630,000 annual person visits.
o Overall, slightly more women (53%) than men (46%) visit parks.
o 11% of visitors are BME.
o 6% are disabled.
o Adults represent the largest age group visiting (in 62% of parks) and young people the smallest age group (in 66% of parks).
o The most popular reason for visiting a park is for a walk, closely followed by play and fresh air.
o On average 67% of visitors are satisfied with the park.

Overall, visitor numbers are expected to increase significantly to a total of 41m annual person visits. This is an additional 5.4m annual visits, a 15% increase amongst all projects in our study. Projects are using a variety of methods to increase their overall number of visitors including regular communication and public relations strategies, events and activities programmes, new and improved facilities and

Case study: Devonport Park in Plymouth aimed to increase visitor numbers by 15%. By last year, the park has enjoyed an increase in visitor numbers of over 30% over the past two years. This has been achieved through delivery of a strong media programme, regular events and organised walks through the park.

visits by schools and other organised groups.

Outcome 1 asks projects to increase the *range* of audiences, not just visitor numbers. We would expect that projects would identify particular target groups and plan activities and events to attract these groups. However, the survey and data results show that only a small number of parks are attempting to attract a different 'kind' of visitor:

o The majority of projects are not attempting to significantly change the gender split.

o Overall projects aim to increase BME visitors from 11% to 14%, with a third of projects aiming to increase their BME visitors by at least 1 percentage point. Targets are designed to reflect local demographics.

o On average projects aim to increase their disabled visitors from 6% to 8%.

o Only 8 projects want to change their visitor age profile.

Impact to date

So far annual person visits have increased by 890,000, or 16% of the 5.4m target. Overall good progress has been made, with 7 parks already achieving or exceeding their target.

No major changes have been made to visitor profiles, however there has been a significant increase in BME visits from 6% to 11% among a small number of parks.

There is also evidence of an increase in perceptions of safety, increase in community ownership and pride, improvements to the profile of the area and overall contribution to more sustainable communities.

Outcome 2 – conserving and enhancing our diverse heritage

Outcome 2 focuses on the capital works, which will conserve and enhance the heritage value of the park. This includes the physical conservation work to the landscape, features and facilities, as well as working to increase applicants' and visitors' appreciation and understanding of the heritage value of the park.

Overall the programme will see over 100 buildings and 230 features restored. The majority of parks are restoring historic features, improving landscaping and infrastructure and making a visible transformation to the appearance of the park. A relatively small number are removing buildings from at risk registers.

Projects have used a variety of methods to increase visitors' appreciation and understanding of heritage. These include interpretation boards and improved signage, information materials, guided tours and nature

Case study: Barnes Park in Sunderland included restoration work to railings, bandstand, gates, gateway and pillars and benches. There will also be improvements to the lake and the cannon.

To increase awareness and appreciation of the Park's Heritage, there will be a time capsule project, the Friends group are working on a DVD that shows the history of the park, and the Park's team and Friends Group are working on the local history. They also have a website which is well used by local schools, had articles in the local press, and run local exhibitions.

trails, history projects, education packs, events and marketing. Projects are involving Friends groups in these activities and employing on-site staff to deliver talks and tours.

Impact to date

So far, 35 buildings and 78 heritage features have been repaired or restored.

100% of projects which have completed the capital works and 94% of projects in delivery have noticed an increase in visitors' appreciation or understanding of heritage

Projects have also resulted in stimulating other heritage projects, contributions to local tourism and changes to way Local Authorities think about heritage.

Outcome 3 – increasing the range of volunteers

The purpose of outcome 3 is to increase both numbers and types of volunteers involved in the project. The aim of the Parks for People programme is to not only increase opportunities for volunteering in parks, but also to attract groups which do not traditionally volunteer (for example young people or BME groups).

The baseline data collected shows that across the programme:

- o 2,375 people were involved in volunteering in the parks before the projects started.

- o There is an average of 34 volunteers per park, however this ranges from none in 10 parks to over 200 in War Memorial Park and Brockwell Park.

- o This work represented a total of 50,000 volunteer hours spent in parks in a year – an average of 719 hours per park.

- o More women than men volunteer (54% and 46% respectively).

- o Only 9% are from BME communities (compared to 11% of visitors).

- o In the majority of parks the largest age group volunteering is over 50s. Only in 3 parks is the largest age group under 40.

Case study: *Chances Park in Carlisle set targets to increase volunteer numbers from a low baseline of 6 to 42. The aim was to involve volunteers in maintenance, horticulture, marketing and one off events. They have now established a 'Friends of Chances Park' group and over £1,000 worth of volunteer hours were recorded from April to May 2010.*

The project has also formed links with voluntary sector organisations, which has given local people a new sense of ownership of the park.

The majority of projects are involving volunteers from the start of the project. Engaging volunteers from an early stage provides a variety of different opportunities for people to get involved.

Across the programme it is expected that the total number of volunteers will increase dramatically, from 2,375 to 6,442, a 171% increase of 4,067 volunteers overall. As

the number of volunteers increases, so will the number of volunteer hours. It is expected that the time invested by volunteers will double from 50,000 hours per year to just under 100,000 hours. This represents £667,000 of volunteer activity using a daily rate of £50.

Projects are involving volunteers in a variety of ways; in the events and activities programmes, on project steering groups, through carrying out elements of the physical works and ongoing maintenance and by getting involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the project by carrying out surveys and visitor counts.

Impact to date

So far an additional 971 volunteers have been involved in projects, 24% of the 4,067 target. 10 projects have already met or exceeded their targets.

There has been an increase of 16,000 volunteer hours, which represents £107,000 of activity.

Volunteers have benefited from employment opportunities, increased confidence, health benefits, community cohesion and improved skills.

Outcome 4 – improving skills and knowledge through training

To achieve outcome 4, projects should establish a training plan for staff and volunteers. They should also consider establishing opportunities for work placements and use of the park by third parties as a training venue.

Across the programme, it is anticipated that approximately 930 staff and 1,700 volunteers will receive training. 370 work placements will be established and 570 qualifications obtained. In addition to this, 2,500 third parties will also benefit from using the parks as a training venue.

Projects have implemented a wide range of training opportunities in:

o Capital works and maintenance;
o Horticulture;
o Management; and
o Planning and running activities.

Case study: Gheluvelt Park, Worcester. Staff and volunteers have benefited from a range of training opportunities, resulting in 48 staff members trained and 2 volunteers. The project has also benefited from the Future Jobs Fund and has been able to establish 5 work placements within the park; all of which have also benefited from this training. So far 5 qualifications have been achieved, and the park has also been used as a training venue by 16 third parties.

Impact to date

So far 175 staff and 133 volunteers have been trained. 49 work placements have been established, 71 qualifications obtained and 86 third parties have benefited from using the park as a training venue.

Benefits from the training include employment, skills, confidence, improved maintenance of parks, better communication with visitors in terms of raising the profile of the area and ability to share learning elsewhere.

Outcome 5 – improving management and maintenance

To achieve this outcome projects should develop a management and maintenance plan and achieve the Green Flag award within a year of completing the capital works. We would expect that projects would establish a baseline Green Flag score and build into their management and maintenance plan ways to achieve the Green Flag award.

Surprisingly only 22 of the 70 projects (30%) have set a baseline Green Flag score. This means that projects that don't will not have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses that should inform their plan to achieve the award.

It is positive to note that 13 projects have a target to exceed the Green Flag pass mark of 66.

Some projects have also set other targets for Outcome 5, including:

Case study: Hale Park, Halton. With better equipment and more staff the park has had Green Flag status for 2 years. A rise in standards and people's expectations now means the park is held in higher regards, local people are now proud of the park. The responsive team have actually witnessed an increase in reports of minor vandalism, graffiti etc. The team believe that this is caused by higher expectations of the local community now the improvement work is complete.

o   Customer satisfaction; satisfaction rates are due to increase from 67% to 82%.
o   Perceptions of safety.
o   Performance targets for staff.
o   Achievement of Green Heritage award.

Projects are using a variety of ways to improve maintenance and management, including the appointment of additional dedicated staff and apprentices, improved design specification to reduce future maintenance costs, greater emphasis on responsive maintenance and enhanced supervision.

Impact to date

So far, 11 parks hold Green Flag status. 2 projects have improved their baseline Green Flag score and 3 have met or exceeded their target.

Satisfaction has also increased substantially from 61% to 80% amongst 29 projects which have carried out formal satisfaction surveys.

Conclusions

Despite a historical lack of evidence and experience of monitoring and evaluation in the greenspace sector, we have managed to collect a comprehensive suite of evaluation data and information from all projects in our study. Through the support provided we have been able to drastically improve the ways parks measure their

success and the dataset collected goes a considerable way to demonstrating the potential and actual impact of the programme to date.

Overall the programme has made a difference to the ways in which Local Authorities think about audience development, heritage management, engaging volunteers and skills development, as well as building capacity to develop their approach to monitoring and evaluation.

So far good progress has been made with increasing visitor numbers. Projects are using a range of methods to engage visitors, from events and activities programmes to improvements in marketing and communication. Being able to fund dedicated staff to implement these plans has been crucial.

Excellent progress has been made with capital improvements. Projects are also looking at ways to improve visitors' understanding and appreciation of heritage, through the activities and events, tours and other heritage related projects. They aren't just relying on the capital improvements to achieve these targets.

Projects are also successfully engaging volunteers in the delivery of many activities which helps ensure that the programme meets the needs of park users. There is also evidence that the programme is having a wider impact on park users, individuals working in and volunteering in parks and the wider community.

Almost a quarter of staff to be trained has been achieved, with many gaining qualifications, enhanced skills and knowledge. And management and maintenance is also improving as a result of the programme as additional revenue funding has enabled projects to employ more staff and sustain a higher standard of maintenance.

The key area of weakness in the programme so far is the lack of focus on targeting audience development or volunteer plans to specific groups. Only a small number of projects have identified hard to reach groups and are actively trying to engage these groups in the project.

Projects also need to review their current status in terms of Green Flag, as without having an idea of where they are now, implementing plans to achieve the award will be extremely difficult.

Although it is relatively early days in the development of the 70 projects in our study, the evidence collected so far suggests that overall the programme is on track to achieve its outcomes. However, projects need to consider audience and volunteer profiles in more detail and look to target their approaches to engage more hard to reach groups.

Introduction

The Parks for People programme aims to regenerate public parks of national, regional or local heritage value for the enjoyment and recreation of local people. Monitoring and evaluation are important elements of the programme. The Heritage Lottery Fund commissioned Hall Aitken, assisted by Community First Partnership (CFP), to provide support to projects to enable them to fulfil the monitoring and evaluation requirements of the programme.

This is our third and final report, and will show the progress made by projects and the impact of the programme so far.   Since many projects have not yet completed this report presents the interim findings and potential future impact.

The Parks for People programme

The Parks for People programme began as a joint initiative between the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), following the earlier success of HLF's Urban Parks Programme. BIG funding enabled HLF to support additional projects in England and HLF provided extra funding to support projects in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage though innovative investment in projects with a lasting impact on people and places. It is the largest dedicated funder of the UK's heritage, with between approximately £180million to £350million a year to invest in new projects.

The Big Lottery Fund is the largest distributor of Lottery funds. It was responsible for giving out half the money raised by the National Lottery for good causes, but this will be reduced to 40% by April 2012. BIG's mission is to bring real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need. Its remit covers health, education, environment and charitable purposes. BIG is an outcomes funder, meaning the focus is on the difference made because of BIG investment, rather than on the organisations that receive the funding.

The programme offers grants of between £250,000 and £5 million for projects which involve existing urban or rural green spaces designed for informal recreation and enjoyment, which local communities value as part of their heritage. The parks must be freely accessible to members of the public, and actively involve local people in their running and activities.

The Parks for People programme has a two-stage application process. If applicants receive a Stage (or Round) 1 pass they can submit a Stage (or Round) 2 application. At stage/round 1 projects can also apply for a development grant to contribute to the cost of planning and developing the project. From April 2009 the programme continued to have a two-round process but bids must now compete for funds at the second round.

Our research includes 70[2] projects funded from Strategic Plan (SP) 2 and 3, awarded between September 2006 and December 2010. BIG and HLF joint fund projects in England in SP2, with SP3 projects funded solely by HLF. In our study,

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[2] *There were 72 projects originally. Mesnes Park in Wigan is two separate grants but is only required to submit one set of monitoring data, and Bentley Park is currently on hold.*

HLF and BIG have awarded funding of £155.4 million to 72 projects. Projects are mainly using their grants for capital works, although this funding does include revenue support for activities including management, monitoring and evaluation.

The programme aims to ensure that every community has;

o   access to a well-designed public park maintained to Green Flag Award standards;

o   opportunities to learn about the heritage value of their park; and

o   opportunities to take an active part in managing and using their park

Policy and context

This section provides a summary of the value of parks, and why they needed investment by HLF and BIG. It looks at how the changing policy environment may impact on future programmes and grant recipients. It also sets our work into context by showing the need for monitoring and evaluation support to demonstrate the value of the investment made.

The value of green space

Much has been written about the value of green space and that it forms an intrinsic part of the fabric of urban society without which our towns and cities would be much worse places to live.

"Parks and green spaces are the backbone of sustainable and high-quality urban environments. A growing body of robust research shows that high-quality green spaces bring considerable benefits to local economies, to people's physical and mental health, and to the environment."[3]

The table below sets out some examples that show what wide-ranging benefits green space can bring:

Figure 1: the benefits of green space

Economic value	Positive impact on property values
	Increased tax revenues
	Adding economic value through proximity to high-quality space
	The economic value of volunteering contributions
	Tourism related income
	CABE's research into the actual value of the green space asset[4] has however shown that local authority asset management and financial systems massively undervalue the resource.
	"This study calculated the value of a major public park as £108 million. It may come as a shock to learn that most councils value public parks at just £1 each" (CABE 2009)

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[3] Urban Green Nation: Building the Evidence Base (2010) CABE
[4] Making the invisible visible: the real value of park assets (2009) CABE

Physical and Mental Health Value	Savings in medical costs through exercise taken in parks
	Providing space for sports and active recreation
	Contact with the natural environment linked to stress reduction and improvements in mental health
	Proximity to good quality space encouraging greater physical activity
The Benefits for Children and Young People	Contributing to natural and challenging play space
	Tackling childhood obesity
	Benefits for children with ADHD
Social Cohesion	Freely accessible to all regardless of background
	Providing the opportunity for people to meet and engage
	Providing a setting for cultural events
	Contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place
Sustainability and biodiversity	Helping to redress the heat island effect
	Mitigation and amelioration of climate change
	Pollution amelioration
	Water and flood management
	Providing ecosystem services to sustain life

Policy context in 2011

For local authority park's managers these are challenging times. Parks have enjoyed a renaissance in recent years, as evidenced by the growth of Friends groups. This renaissance has raised the bar of people's expectations. Satisfaction with green space has also increased as has the amount of volunteering, with the latter now worth around £22,000 per authority or around £3.4m per year to urban England alone. These expectations and engagement need to be sustained and continually developed.

At the same time as expectations have raised, parks teams face financial constraints over the coming years.

"The challenge is to keep going with less money, while safeguarding the service and quality expected by local people." [5]

Such statements are backed by research that shows that environmental and cultural budgets are the most vulnerable to cuts. [6]

The coalition government launched the "Big Society" in the summer of 2010 and early thoughts included

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[5] Managing Green Spaces: Seven Ingredients for Success (2010) CABE
[6] Scanning financial horizons (2010) New Local Government Network

"New powers for local communities to take over the running of parks, libraries and post offices."[7]

The concept of Big Society develops the notion of communities taking on greater ownership of services or facilities such as green space. This has been referred to in early research on public parks during the mid 1990s. If the concept is to become reality then parks managers will be expected to explore and establish new models of governance. And the necessary investment in both organisational and community capacity needs to be found from ever decreasing budgets.

A key aspect of considering any asset transfer will be proving a robust business case which has traditionally been hard to develop due to the overwhelming lack of evidence, a fact that is explored further below.

In the context of parks restoration schemes it will be interesting to see how many explore new models of governance as part of their project proposal or project development. HLF may also need to be willing to consider a change of grantee between rounds 1 and round 2 and to contribute towards the costs of exploring governance in the development stage. These are key considerations as the organisation looks to develop Strategic Plan 4. Case studies do exist of HLF funding community led and run restoration schemes such as Warley Woods Community Trust and The Penllergare Trust.

There are many potential positive benefits of greater levels of community engagement and ownership. From more effective partnership working to improving skills, from the value of volunteering to greater social cohesion and from accessing other forms of funding to an improved quality of public space. However there is a fear that transfer of services will be seen as a cost saving exercise creating substitution rather than additionality of provision.

The Penllergare Trust was formed in 2000 in an attempt to save Penllergare Estate's historic and cultural landscape from falling into further dereliction. It aims to raise awareness of the estate's important past and the urgent need to protect and save the place for the future. The Trust proposes the restoration of Penllergare as a long overdue park for Swansea and for Wales.

The Penllergare Trust was awarded £2.1m of Parks for People funding in June 2009.

"Voluntary and community groups often find that their potential contribution is neglected, when, in fact, they carry out some of the most innovative and effective work in public services and we should be encouraging them to get more involved."[8]

The concept also needs to be set against the fact that currently as few as 4 out of 10 people feel they can influence decisions locally. There is also little evidence that the current demographic of friends groups and other community based organisations involved are truly representative of the wider community and thus potential users of green space.

The Localism Act will give groups and social enterprise the right to express an interest in running local services however with this will come different levels of

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[7] Transcript of a speech by the Prime Minister on the Big Society, 19 July 2010.
[8] A Plain English Guide to the Localism Bill (2011) Communities and Local Government

service in different geographical areas[9]. Such postcode variation could reinforce the research set out later that found;

The provision of parks in deprived areas is worse than in affluent areas

People from minority ethnic groups tend to have less local green space and it is of a poorer quality.[10]

Involving the third sector in service delivery will also present a challenge to local authority procurement systems that place so much emphasis on risk averse, complicated, regulation and paper heavy processes. These often present a barrier to small organisations bidding for projects or service delivery.

"In short, the Big Society is not simply about the state handing over services to the voluntary sector. It is about new forms of partnership, innovation and accountability."[11]

Background – a history of a lack of evidence

When Heritage Lottery Fund first started to invest in public parks[12] urban green space was entering its renaissance phase. There had not been an Urban Green Spaces Task Force, there was no CABE Space and new ideas on strategic planning, community involvement and placing green space at the centre of wider regeneration and social renewal were just being explored.

Practitioners were convinced of the value that green space could make to wider agendas such as public health, quality of life, sustainability, education, community safety and social inclusion. However little had been written or researched about the links and parks managers lacked the evidence for the business case for investment or at least to defend against cuts.

"Public parks are one of the most enduring and defining types of public space in Britain's towns and cities, and yet their use and the contribution they make to urban quality of life has been undervalued and taken for granted"[13]

By the later 1980s parks had lost their connection with the communities they were designed to serve. These communities had become more culturally diverse, and the offer made by parks did not reflect lifestyle and employment changes. Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) changed the approach to grounds maintenance with a shift of focus towards cost rather than quality of service. This subsequent lack of investment meant that parks no longer made clear links to civic pride, a sense of ownership or a sense of place and it was now that new approaches were needed. Investment not only to restore public space, but also to remake these connections and thus to animate space and bring vibrancy and celebrate the diversity of our towns and cities.

Over 15 years ago it was known that parks managers did not have the necessary evidence to plan strategically and to put forward a business case.

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[9] The Road to Reform (2010) Andrew Adonis in RSA Journal Winter 2010
[10] Urban Green Nation: Building the Evidence Base (2010) CABE
[11] The Road to Reform (2010) Andrew Adonis in RSA Journal Winter 2010
[12] Urban Parks Programme launched 1996
[13] Park Life, Urban Parks and Social Renewal (1995) Comedia / Demos

"mapping, auditing, defining purpose and monitoring use – these are now the urgent pre-conditions for renewal"[14]

The government's research at the time[15] echoed these feelings and amplified them around the dis-aggregation of cost and quality especially around the shift in focus from horticultural excellence to grounds maintenance.

The arrival of the Urban Green Spaces Task Force at the turn of the century led to a thorough review of the issues and some clear recommendations for the future. They found that; *"at a national level major research is needed to establish and quantify the use of green spaces by types of users and activities, and, in particular, the social, economic and environmental benefits of good quality parks and green spaces."*

The information deficit was confirmed by CABE Space in 2006. CABE Space set out to address the Task Force recommendation set out above, however their publication[16] gave some shocking/worrying results.

"Hardly anyone could answer our questions. And the patchy results we gathered didn't link the amount spent on parks with the quality of parks"

Whilst Best Value had replaced CCT it appeared that neither value nor quality could be clearly shown to have improved or indeed be any better understood. The research showed that parks managers still did not have robust management data and that service cuts did not necessarily equate to efficiency gains as an understanding of quality needed to be in the equation. A worrying conclusion from CABE's work was that parks and urban green spaces were slipping down the political agenda and that parks services were unable to compete with other service areas due to the lack of a robust business case founded on sound evidence.

Fast forward four years and CABE Space's Urban Green Nation[17] picks up the thread and takes it to a new level. Urban Green Nation aimed to fill the serious green information gap, by compiling and analysing data at a national level and found;

"Urban Green Nation shows how better information, more widely available, can create better public services. This is not fanciful: it is essential for the success of local government."

CABE's research findings show;

Almost nine out of 10 people use parks and green spaces, and they value them

If people are satisfied with local parks, they tend to be satisfied with their council

The provision of parks in deprived areas is worse than in affluent areas

People from minority ethnic groups tend to have less local green space and it is of a poorer quality

The higher the quality of the green space, the more likely it is to be used.

Over time, many urban parks have been neglected. Lack of investment by Local Authorities has led to many parks becoming degraded and dilapidated, maintained

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[14] Park Life, Urban Parks and Social Renewal (1995) Comedia / Demos
[15] People, Parks and Cities, (1996) Department of the Environment
[16] Urban Parks: do you know what you are getting for your money (2006) CABE Space
[17] Urban Green Nation: Building the Evidence Base; CABE Space (2010)

at the most basic level so that they become uninteresting, overgrown and uncared for. This spiral of neglect leads to vandalism, security fears, nobody wanting to visit and lack of use. The Parks for People programme recognises that with improved conservation and enhanced horticultural interest, the park can be revitalised and becomes an asset to the community.

Aims and purpose of our work

As demonstrated above, monitoring and evaluation have long been recognised as weak within the parks sector. HLF and BIG appointed the Hall Aitken and CFP team to help change the culture of project sponsors, encouraging them to incorporate ongoing monitoring and self-evaluation into parks development. As well as supporting projects in self-evaluation, we were also commissioned to carry out an interim evaluation of the programme.

The overall aims of our contract were;

o to provide support and advice to grant-holders to set up their monitoring systems and self-evaluation approaches;

o to collate and analyse grant-holders' data and;

o to carry out research to get an overall picture of the social, economic and environmental impacts of the Parks for People Programme.

The table below summarises how we have achieved these aims.

"We knew that many local authorities give their green space a low priority. We hadn't realised that, because of this, some don't even keep useful records of their expenditure and its outcome. With no helpful data, they're unable to make the case for more resources or allocate the resources they have in a proper, strategic way.

But what we did find out – the fact that many local authorities don't appear to have robust management data about their parks – is very important"

Urban Parks, do you know what you are getting for your money? CABE Space

Figure 2: self evaluation and programme evaluation activities 2008-2010

Self evaluation support	• Monitoring and evaluation framework and guide for projects
	• Data collection tool
	• Built and managed the www.parksforpeople.co.uk evaluation website, which contains a wealth of news, information and advice on how to self-evaluate effectively
	• Distribution of our findings and guidance through regular e-bulletins
	• Telephone helpline for projects
	• Reviews of a sample of stage 1 applications and providing advice to applicants on how to improve their monitoring and evaluation plans
	• Evaluation workshops and clinics
Interim evaluation	• Analysis of self-evaluation data

	• Surveys to collect qualitative information
	• Case studies of specific project approaches to monitoring and evaluation and impact
	• Interviews and surveys with key project and programme stakeholders
	• Survey with HLF staff and monitors

Our work has focused on supporting projects to collect robust monitoring data. We have worked to build the capacity of park managers to establish systems and collect monitoring data to provide robust evidence of impact. However, collecting data from a large number of projects which can then be aggregated at a programme level still presents a challenge; projects use a variety of methods and it is impossible to verify that all data is accurate.

Through our work we have aimed to ensure that parks are able to carry out a project evaluation to demonstrate the impact of the funding on their park. Using this same data to evaluate the programme is generally problematic, however can provide an indication of progress to date.

Key research questions

The programme requires all projects to work towards the following five outcomes;

- Outcome 1 – Increasing the range of audiences.
- Outcome 2 – Conserving and improving the heritage value.
- Outcome 3 – Increasing the range of volunteers involved.
- Outcome 4 – Improving skills and knowledge through training.
- Outcome 5 – Improving management and maintenance

The table below shows our key research questions for each outcome.

Figure 3: Key research questions

Increasing the range of audiences	o What has been the impact on overall visitor numbers?
	o Has the profile of visitors changed?
	o Has visitors' use of the park changed?
	o How have satisfaction rates changed?
Conserving and improving the heritage value	o How has the programme improved the condition of buildings, landscape and heritage features?
	o How are projects working to improve visitors' appreciation and understanding of heritage?
Increasing the range of volunteers involved	o What has been the impact on overall volunteer numbers?
	o Has the profile of volunteers changed?
	o What impact has the programme had on volunteers?

Improving skills and knowledge through training	o How many staff and volunteers have benefited from training because of the programme?
	o How many qualifications or work experience placements have projects achieved as a result?
	o What impact has the training had on staff and volunteers?
Improving management and maintenance	o How many parks funded through the programme have received a Green Flag award?
	o Has management and maintenance improved because of the funding?

The monitoring and requirements of the programme seek to change the culture of management of parks. Our research has examined the extent to which this has been achieved.

Programme overview

This chapter provides a short summary of the current status of each of the 70 projects in our study.

Funding distribution

The diagram below shows the location of the funded projects that form part of our project. The majority of projects are located in England, with 3 in Wales, 5 in Scotland and 2 in Northern Ireland. This reflects the distribution of BIG Lottery funding which focuses on England.

Figure 4: Distribution of 70 projects in our study

The two graphs below show how the funding is distributed regionally. Of the jointly funded BIG and HLF projects, three regions benefit the most; London, the North

West and West Midlands, and the South West benefits the least. Wales and Scotland benefit the most from the HLF only funded projects.. This reflects the historical distribution of urban parks, highlighting priority areas of need. It is expected that the distribution will become more evenly spread across the country as more areas apply for funding.

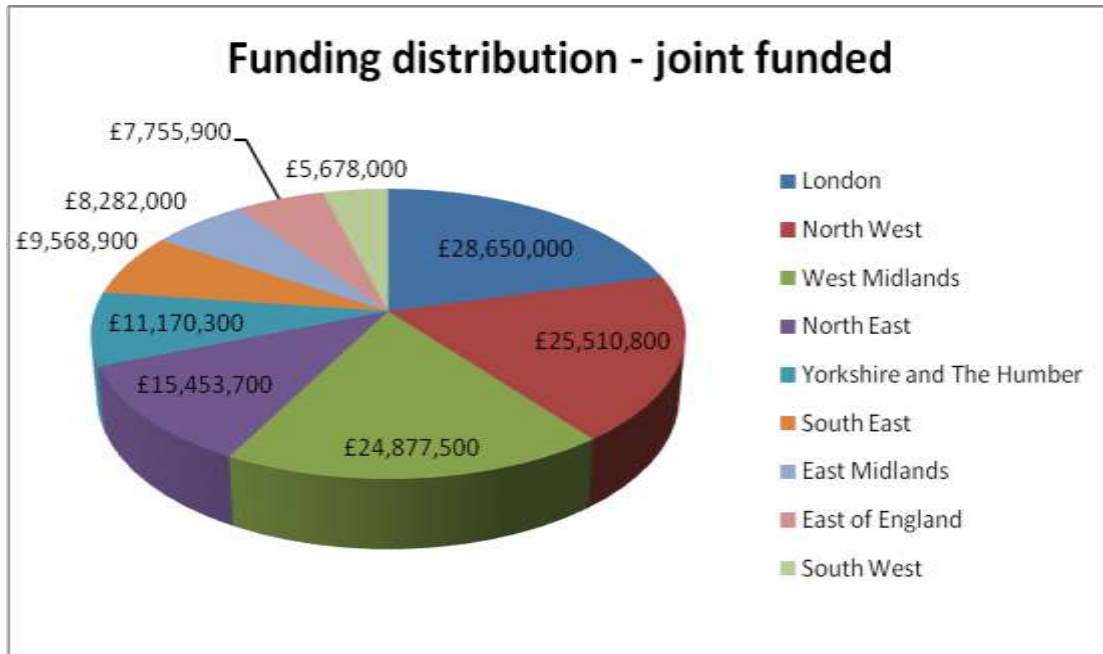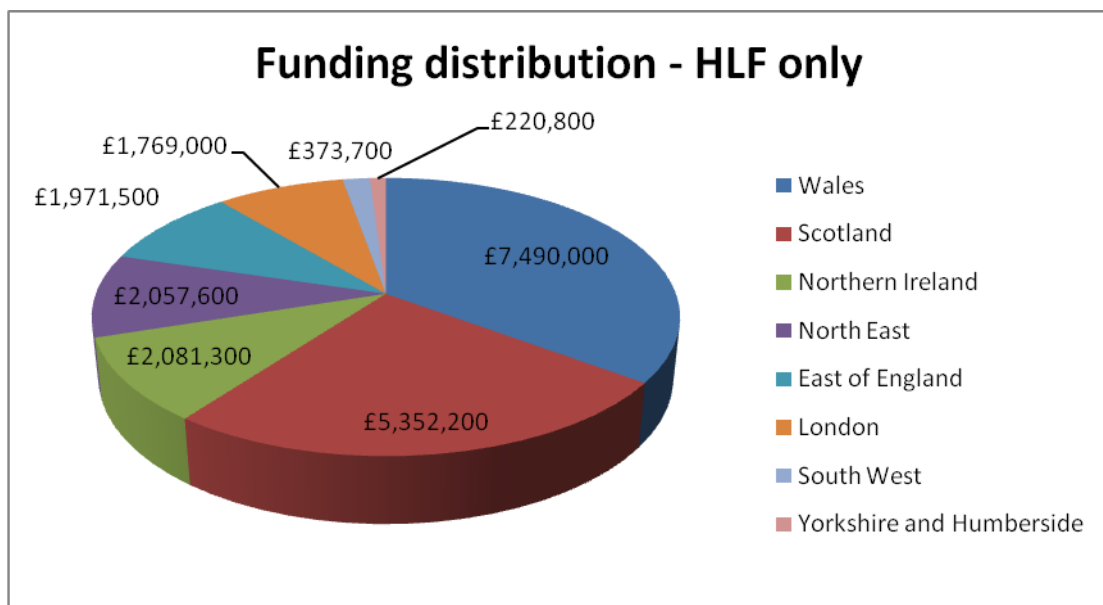Figure 5: Distribution of BIG and HLF funded projects

Figure 6: Distribution of HLF only funded projects

Progress to date

The 70 projects included in our study are all at different stages of development. Of the 64 projects in SP2, all but 5 have achieved their stage 2 pass and are now delivering their project. Of the 7 projects in SP3, only 1 has achieved its Round 2 pass, with the other 6 currently in the process of developing their Round 2 bid.

For the purposes of this report, we have split projects into the following groups;

o   projects in the development stage (10 in total)
o   projects with a stage 2 pass, but do not yet have permission to start delivery (5 in total)
o   projects with a stage 2 pass with permission to start delivery (57 in total)

Projects in the development stage are still in the process of collecting their baseline monitoring data for their stage 2 application. Some progress will have been made, but this varies from project to project.

Projects which have received their stage 2 pass but have not yet started to deliver will have a full set of baseline and target data, but not show any progress towards achieving the outcomes.

Projects in the delivery stage with permission to start work will be able to show some progress towards achieving the programme outcomes. However, of these 43 projects, only 11 have completed the capital works. Some projects will start the delivery of revenue activities before or whilst the capital works are ongoing, but many have not. Projects have up to 5 years to implement their revenue plans, and no projects within our study have fully completed, with only 18% of the total funding drawn down to date.

Spend as at March 2011

To date, 46 of the 70 projects have drawn down £29.2m of funding in total. No projects have drawn down 100% of their funding, however both Markfield Park in London and the Mere at Ellesmere have claimed in excess of 90% of their grant. The table below summarises the percentage drawn down projects in our study.

Figure 7: percentage of funding drawn down by projects in our study (December 2010)

Stage	Draw Down	Number of projects
Stage 2/Round 2 Pass	>75%	6
	50% to 75%	8
	25% to 50%	7
	0 to 25%	35
	No permission to start yet	5
Development (between S1/R1 and S2/R2)		9
TOTAL		70

We can see that only 6 projects have drawn down more than 75% of the funding, and only 14 more than 50% of the funding. From an evaluation perspective, the programme is still at a relatively early stage.

The majority of the funding is for capital works. On average 88% of the grant is spent on capital works, with the remaining 12% on revenue activities. However, up to 40% of some projects' total grant is for revenue activities such as employing staff, ongoing maintenance and activity programmes. 14 projects have less than 5% to spend on revenue funding.

The table below shows the percentage drawn down by each project to date.

Figure 8: Percentage of funding drawn down by each project (as at December 2010)

		Project	Total grant	Total draw down	% draw down	Project stage
SP2	East Midlands	Sconce and Devon Park, Newark	£1,308,000.00	£889,207	73%	Stage 2
		Recreation Ground, Nottingham Forest	£3,379,500.00	£90,750	3%	Stage 1
		Stafford Orchard, Quorn	£708,900.00	£551,582	81%	Stage 2
		Spinney Hill Park, Leicester	£2,793,000.00	£70,902	3%	Stage 2
		Memorial Park, Whaley Bridge	£526,600.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
	East of England	Moggerhanger Park, Bedfordshire	£1,108,200.00	£34,925	3%	Stage 2
		The Rose Garden, Bushey, Hertsmere	£994,200.00	£356,181	37%	Stage 2
		Cedars Park, Cheshunt	£2,092,000.00	£6,584	0%	Stage 1
		Howard Park & Gardens, Letchworth Garden City	£2,098,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
		Town Centre Gardens, Stevenage	£1,953,400.00	£149,208	8%	Stage 2
	London	Bishops Park & Fulham Palace Grounds, London	£4,188,000.00	£139,871	4%	Stage 2
		Brockwell Park, London	£3,889,000.00	£185,403	5%	Stage 2
		Clissold Park, London	£5,144,000.00	£462,269	10%	Stage 2
		Horniman Gardens, Lewisham	£1,050,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
		Lloyd and Aveling Park, London	£3,817,000.00	£159,400	4%	Stage 2
		Lordship Recreation Ground, London	£4,329,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
		Markfield Park, London	£1,525,800.00	£1,447,540	96%	Stage 2
		South Park Gardens, London	£1,240,200.00	£769,210	66%	Stage 2

		Project	Total grant	Total draw down	% draw down	Project stage
		Victoria Park Project, Tower Hamlets	£5,146,000.00	£197,973	4%	Stage 2
North East		Barnes Park, Sunderland	£2,507,200.00	£1,645,261	67%	Stage 2
		Brinkburn Dene's, Darlington	£968,800.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
		Stewart Park, Middlesbrough	£4,897,000.00	£313,213	7%	Stage 2
		Ouseburn Parks, Newcastle upon Tyne	£4,870,000.00	£2,090,737	45%	Stage 2
		Wallsend Parks, Wallsend	£2,928,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
North West		Chances Park, Carlisle	£914,100.00	£474,222	53%	Stage 2
		Castle Park, Frodsham	£2,033,000.00	£884,129	46%	Stage 2
		Hale Park, Hale Village	£660,000.00	£356,251	55%	Stage 2
		Derwentwater Foreshore, Keswick	£1,233,500.00	£943,641	77%	Stage 2
		Dunwood Park, Oldham	£1,181,600.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
		Avenham & Miller Parks, Preston	£1,876,000.00	£351,351	19%	Stage 2
		Queens Park, Bolton	£4,666,000.00	£335,211	7%	Stage 2
		The Green, Silloth-on-Solway	£1,324,700.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
		King's Gardens, Southport	£480,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 1
		Stamford Park, Tameside	£4,402,000.00	£21,412	1%	Stage 2
		Mesnes Park, Wigan (Phase 1)	£1,989,000.00	£707,957	38%	Stage 2
		Mesnes Park, Wigan (Phase 2)	£2,001,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
NI		Brooke Park, Derry	£1,638,000.00	£37,310	2%	Stage 1
		Dixon Park, Larne	£560,600.00	£279,422	52%	Stage 2
Scotland		Burngreen Park, Kilsyth	£484,700.00	£213,838	47%	Stage 2
		Cambuslang Park redevelopment	£596,900.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
		Duthie Park, Aberdeen	£2,706,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
		MacRosty Park, Crieff	£1,251,500.00	£182,711	15%	Stage 2

	Project	Total grant	Total draw down	% draw down	Project stage
South East	Mote Park, Maidstone	£2,116,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
	Herschel Park, Slough	£1,761,600.00	£268,597	16%	Stage 2
	South Hill Park, Bracknell	£2,734,000.00	£93,161	4%	Stage 2
	St James' Park, Southampton	£1,231,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
	Castle Park, Whitstable	£2,249,200.00	£1,209,056	56%	Stage 2
South West	Hillworth Park, Devizes	£1,218,800.00	£19,946	2%	Stage 2
	The People's Park, Devonport, Plymouth	£3,646,000.00	£1,115,543	32%	Stage 2
	Gyllyngdune Gardens, Falmouth	£1,055,200.00	£65,943	7%	Stage 2
Wales	Victoria Gardens, Neath	£1,543,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
	Bedwellty House and Park, Tredegar	£4,105,000.00	£407,441	11%	Stage 2
West Midlands	Burslem Park, Stoke on Trent	£2,336,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
	Priory Park, Dudley	£2,006,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
	Gheluvelt Park, Worcester	£898,500.00	£251,006	29%	Stage 2
	Beacon Park, Minster Pool and Gardens of Remembrance, Lichfield	£4,349,000.00	£1,314,734	32%	Stage 2
	Telford Town Park, Telford	£2,459,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
	The Mere at Ellesmere Heritage Project, Ellesmere	£1,240,000.00	£1,102,165	93%	Stage 2
	Walsall Arboretum, Walsall	£5,012,000.00	£37,774	1%	Stage 2
	War Memorial Park, Coventry	£2,829,000.00	£150,762	5%	Stage 2
	Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich	£4,993,000.00	£890,981	19%	Stage 2
Yorkshire & Humber	Clifton Park, Rotherham	£5,098,000.00	£3,848,229	80%	Stage 2
	Middleton Park, Leeds	£1,667,000.00	£0	0%	Stage 2
	Pannett Park, Whitby	£1,558,000.00	£957,166	65%	Stage 2
	Roberts Park, Saltaire	£3,435,600.00	£2,887,300	87%	Stage 2

		Project	Total grant	Total draw down	% draw down	Project stage
SP3	E	Seafront Gardens, Felixstowe	£304,600.00	£107,681	71%	Round 1
	L	Raphael Park, London	£260,200.00	£0	0%	Round 1
	NE	Exhibition and Brandling Park, Newcastle	£197,200.00	£0	0%	Round 1
	S	Pittencrieff Park, Dunfermline	£511,500.00	£0	0%	Round 1
	SW	Marine Cove Gardens, Burnham on Sea	£403,200.00	£0	0%	Round 2
	W	Penllergare Valley Woods, Penllergare	£442,600.00	£165,034	75%	Round 1
		TOTAL	**£155,407,400**	**£29,240,189**		

Programme baseline

This chapter of the report provides a summary of the baseline and target data received by projects. The information collected builds a comprehensive picture of the programme before the projects started work, as well as demonstrating the potential impact of the programme using target data.

Programme requirements

The Parks for People programme expects each project to achieve 5 outcomes;

o Outcome 1 – Increasing the range of audiences
o Outcome 2 – Conserving and improving the heritage value
o Outcome 3 – Increasing the range of volunteers involved
o Outcome 4 – Improving skills and knowledge through learning and training
o Outcome 5 – Improving management and maintenance

The stage 1/round 1 application forms ask projects to describe how they will achieve these outcomes and how they will measure the impact. During the development stage, they are expected to set a baseline position, agree on measurable targets and set up systems against which they can monitor progress. We asked projects to submit their baseline data and targets, and then report progress against the baseline yearly.

The quantitative baseline and progress data is supplemented with qualitative data from surveys sent to all projects and detailed case study information on 11 projects.

Summary of data collected

During the 3 years we have worked with projects to raise their awareness of providing evaluation data. Each year has seen an increase in the numbers of projects engaging in self-evaluation and the quality of the data submitted.

Figure 9: Projects returning self evaluation data
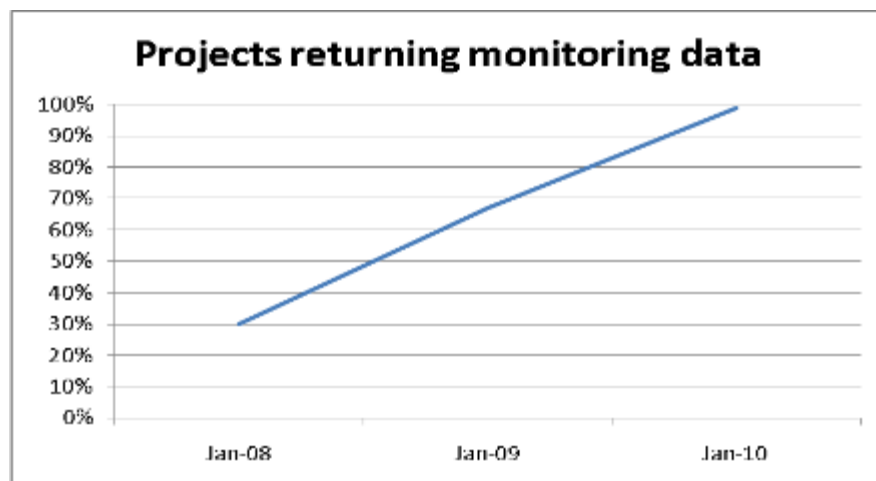
As at March 2011, 69 out of these 70 projects (99%) have returned some data.

This is split as follows;

Figure 10: Percentage of projects submitting monitoring data per outcome

	Baseline established (% of total)	Targets set (% of total)
O1: Increasing the range of audiences	67 (96%)	62 (88%)
O2: Conserving and improving the heritage value	63 (90%)	63 (90%)
O3: Increasing the range of volunteers involved	66 (94%)	57 (81%)
O4: Improving skills and knowledge through learning and training	68 (97%)	55 (79%)
O5: Improving management and maintenance	22 (31%)	70* (100%)
Some data submitted	69 (99%)	70 (100%)

the target for outcome 5 is pre-determined as this is the pass mark for Green Flag, so all projects automatically have this.

47 projects (67%) completed the qualitative survey concerning outcomes 1, 3 and 4 and 34 projects (49%) completed the outcome 2 and 5 survey. We have also carried out detailed case study research, consisting of a telephone interview or visit and stakeholder survey with the following projects;

o   Gheluvelt Park, Worcester
o   Burslem Park, Stoke on Trent
o   Devonport Park, Plymouth
o   Bushey Rose Garden, Hertsmere
o   Stewart Park, Middlesbrough
o   Castle Park, Frodsham
o   Sconce and Devon Park, Newark
o   Barnes Park, Sunderland
o   Chances Park, Carlisle
o   Hale Park, Halton

Issues with data collection

We have been able to collect partial or full monitoring data from 99% of the projects in our study. This means that for the data should be sufficiently robust to allow for conclusions at a programme level.

However, there are some difficulties with collecting project level monitoring data and then aggregating this at a programme level, which can affect how robust the data actually is, as explained below. This is particularly the case for outcome 1.

Estimating visitor numbers

The baseline number of person visits per year is ultimately an estimate and each park will use a slightly different method to arrive at their estimate. For example, some may have automatic counters installed at every entrance, others may only have one. Some do not have automatic counters and instead carry out a manual count. Although we have produced guidance on the best way to accurately calculate visitor numbers, the results for each park will still be an estimate.

This isn't an issue for individual projects; as long as they stick to the same method, their targets will reflect the projected increase and actual data will show the overall increase in numbers of visits. The difficulty is when we aggregate the individual park data to estimate the impact at a programme level; as in effect we are adding together 70 different estimates, calculated using several different methods.

Carrying out visitor surveys

As with the visitor counts, the way projects carry out their surveys in order to estimate their visitor profile will differ from park to park. We advise that projects survey at least 100 visitors, however this is not always possible. And if a park estimates its annual person visits to be in excess of 1m (as 7 parks have done) then this only represents a small sample.

There is also a tendency for bias to affect the results of a survey, particularly if quotas are not used. People carrying out face to face surveys will generally favour women and the elderly rather than young people or men, which will skew the results.

Other issues

There are also some general issues with the data collected for all outcomes;

o   Some parks do not yet have a full set of data. This is particularly the case for projects still in development, where there is no expectation that they will have this yet.

o   Despite quality checking all data received, we cannot be 100% confident that it is all accurate. As stated in previous chapters, the collection of this quantity of data is a relatively new concept to many park managers.

Possible solutions

The solution to this would be to insist that every park uses exactly the same methodology, or for an external organisation to carry out the data collection for every project. This first option would be impossible to enforce and the second would be

extremely expensive. The approach taken here is therefore seen as the most appropriate, bearing in mind the above caveats.

There is always a trade off between data validity and the cost or difficulty in collecting it; we feel that in this case, the balance is about right. Conclusions can be made about the potential and actual impact of the programme to date, however these need to be considered in light of the above.

Overall we feel that the guidance produced and the support delivered has gone a considerable way to mitigate these issues, however it is inevitable that errors will still arise.

Notwithstanding the above, we feel that the work undertaken by all projects to collect this unique data set should not be underestimated, and the conclusions we can draw from it will go a considerable way to indicating the actual and potential impact of the programme to date. It is important to understand that before now, this would not have been possible.

Outcome 1 – increasing the range of audiences

To measure the extent to which they are increasing the range of audiences, the programme expects projects to develop the following;

o   An Audience Development Plan/Activity Plan which details the activities they will undertake to increase the numbers and/or range of visitors
o   Set a baseline for their current visitor numbers; the Parks for People guidance suggests the use of automated counters, however this is not always possible for every park
o   Carry out a profile of current visitors and compare this to the profile of the area. This will identify any areas of under-representation which they can address through the activities in the Audience Development Plan/Activity Plan
o   Set targets for an increase in visitor numbers and targeted groups
o   Carry out visitor surveys to develop an understanding of why people visit the park

Audience profile 'before'

From the baseline data collected, we can get an idea of the profile of park visitors before the projects started;

o   Across the 70 projects there are 36m annual person visits. These range massively from 1,000 at Burngreen Park, Kilsyth to 4.7m at Kings Gardens, Southport.
o   On average, parks have 630,000 annual person visits
o   Overall, slightly more women (53%) than men (46%) visit parks
o   11% of visitors are BME
o   6% are disabled
o   Adults represent the largest age group visiting (in 62% of parks) and young people (under 25) the smallest age group (in 66% of parks)

Figure 11: Largest age groups visiting parks
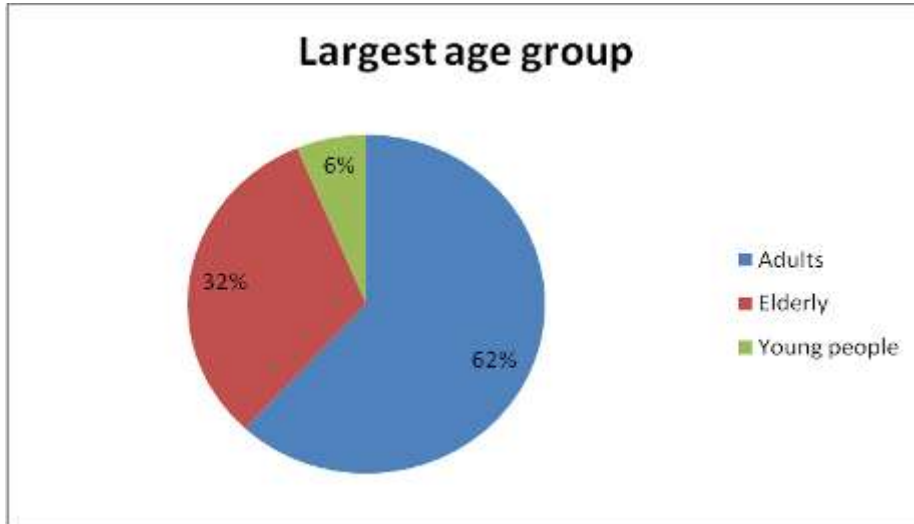
The most popular reason for visiting a park is for a walk, closely followed by play and fresh air.

Figure 12: Most popular reasons for visiting parks
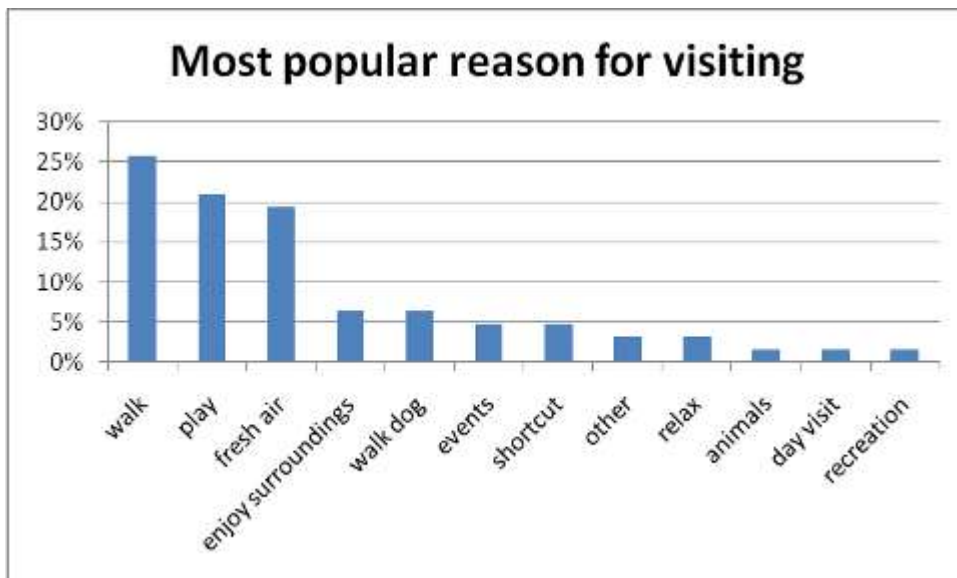
On average 67% of visitors are satisfied with the park, however this ranges from 2% satisfaction at Stafford Orchard in Quorn, to 98% satisfied at Horniman Gardens in Lewisham.

Changes in visitor numbers

Overall, visitor numbers are forecast to increase significantly. The table below shows that across the 70 projects, there is an expected increase to 41m annual visits, which is an increase of 5.4m or 15% increase overall. On average, projects anticipate a 62% increase in annual person visits.

Figure 13: Baseline visitor number (annual person visits)

	All projects total	Lowest	Highest	Average
Baseline	36,067,540	112	7,400,283	601,125
Target	41,482,091	1,238	2,520,000	700,543
Expected increase	5,414,551	0	2,142,992	90,243
% increase	15%	0%	2,003%	62%

The range of baseline and expected increases in visitor numbers is extremely large, perhaps highlighting the different methods projects use to calculate annual person visits. However, as shown in the graph below, 75% parks with data have between 100,000 and 1,000,000 annual person visits.

Figure 14: Frequency distribution of annual person visits
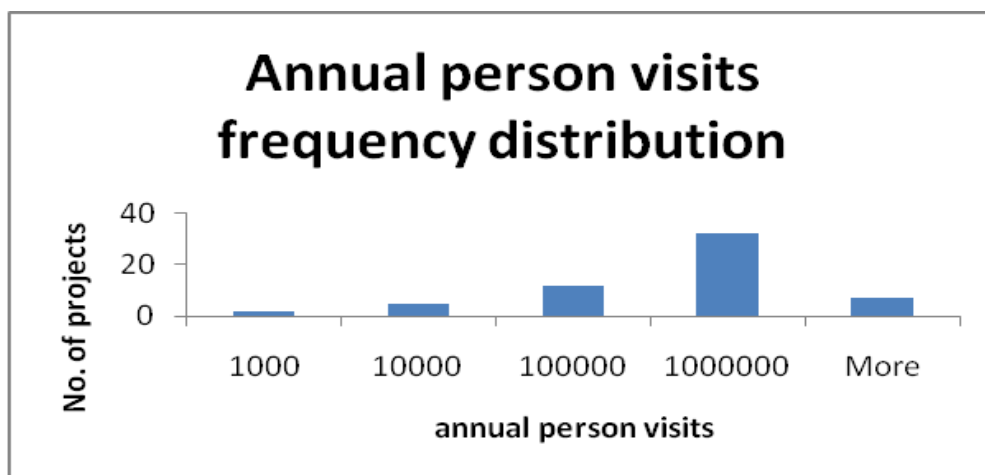
Considering the total investment made, the overall expected increase in visitor numbers equates to £29 per extra annual person visit, which would represent good value for money.

This can be compared to research carried out by HLF in 2009, which looked at 15 restored parks and compared visitor data to the Heritage Grants programme. It found that *"visit numbers increase by nearly 70% following an HLF funded park restoration. This is higher than for projects funded through Heritage Grants, including Major Grants"* (HLF Programme Review, September 2009). The table below shows the value for money calculations carried out at this time, comparing different HLF funded programmes.

Figure 15: Value for money comparison for HLF programmes

Programme	Cost per additional annual person visit
Heritage Grant (£50k-£1m)	£13
Heritage Grant (£1m-£5m)	£71
Major Grants	£30
Parks	£18

It is obviously expected that the physical improvements themselves will attract a larger audience by raising the quality of the visitor experience. However projects need to carefully consider their revenue plans and not simply rely on a 'build it and they will come' approach. Projects are using a variety of methods to increase their overall number of visitors including;

o   Regular communication and publicity about the activities and attractions the parks have to offer
o   Regular events programmes and activities, including;
    o   Picnics
    o   Fun days
    o   Nature walks
    o   Play
    o   Music events
    o   Traditional holiday events at Halloween, Christmas etc
    o   Sport and physical activities
o   New and improved facilities, including cafes, toilets and visitor centres
o   School visits

We have introduced a wide range of activities to increase our range of audience in the Park, from Tai Chi (which attracted an age range from 5 to 85yrs!). We have had a Summer programme of activities in the Park ranging from Forest Schools Workshops, Adventure Days, Summer Splash which was run by the local Police to target 11 to 19 yrs olds in order prevent anti social behaviour in and around the park. We now run regular Picnics in the Park for children on the Autistic spectrum and their families. These offer a chance for the families to meet and gain support from each other in a very informal setting. Barnardos provide fund activities for the children and Carlisle Mencap family support worker can establish links with the parent and carers and sign post help for them. These picnics will continue to take place every school break next year. (Chances Park, Carlisle)

Changes to visitor profiles

Outcome 1 asks projects to increase the *range* of audiences, not just visitor numbers. We would expect that projects would identify particular target groups and plan activities and events to attract these groups. However, the survey and data results show that only a small number of parks are attempting to attract a different 'kind' of visitor.

No forecast change in gender split

Overall, projects are not attempting to significantly change the gender split. The baseline shows an overall 46% male/53% female split, however the target is 47% male/52% female.

Figure 16: Baseline and target gender split

		All projects average	Lowest	Highest
Male	Baseline	46%	24%	73%
	Target	47%	30%	85%
Female	Baseline	53%	27%	76%
	Target	52%	15%	70%

There are 1 or 2 examples where projects are trying to redress the balance; for example Moggerhanger Park, Bedfordshire has a target to increase male visitors from 38% to 50%, but in most cases projects are not.

BME visitors targeted to increase

Overall projects aim to increase BME visitors from 11% to 14%. Around a third of projects have a target to increase their BME visitors by at least 1 percentage point. But 16% have no target to increase their BME visitors. A small number of projects wish to significantly increase their BME profile;

o   Markfield Park, Haringey (from 21% to 31%);
o   Walsall Arboretum (from 7% to 25%); and
o   Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich (from 12% to 44%)

Figure 17: Baseline and target BME percentages

BME	All projects average	Lowest	Highest
Baseline	11%	0%	89%
Target	14%	1%	82%

Slight increase expected in disabled visitors

On average, projects aim to increase their disabled visitors from 6% to 8%. 30 projects want to increase the number of disabled visitors by at least 1 percentage point. 3 projects aim to significantly increase their disabled visitors;

o   Lloyd and Aveling Park, London aims to increase from 1% to 15%
o   Spinney Hill Park, Leicester aims to increase from 5% to 17%
o   Raphael Park, London aims to increase from 5% to 16%

Figure 18: Baseline and target disabled visitors

Disabled visitors	All projects average	Lowest	Highest
Baseline	6%	0%	17%
Target	8%	1%	20%

Only a small number of projects aim to change their visitor age profile

Only 8 projects have targets to change their overall age profile;

Figure 19: Projects aiming to change their overall age profile

Park	Current largest age group	Target largest age group
Gheluvelt Park, Worcester	60-74	20-29
Beacon Park, Minster Pool and Gardens of Remembrance, Lichfield	60-74	18-60
Sconce and Devon Park, Newark	20-29	30-59
Queens Park, Bolton	20-29	under 24s
Stafford Orchard, Quorn	12 to 19	40-65
Spinney Hill Park, Leicester	40-49	under 19
Wallsend Parks, Wallsend	50-59	25-50
Castle Park, Whitstable	50-59	35-55

Outcome 2 – conserving and enhancing our diverse heritage

Outcome 2 focuses on the capital works, which will conserve and enhance the heritage value of the park. For many parks, this involves researching and understanding the history and design of the park, understanding how subsequent layers of design have been introduced and deciding what and how conservation works should be taken forward. The work may include conserving and restoring buildings, paths, statues, and monuments, however for others it is about restoring historic vistas, replanting lost features or interpreting cultural heritage. Projects should:

o   For certain sites develop a conservation management plan (CMP) which sets out what is of significance and value, and therefore what they will conserve and restore. The CMP should demonstrate a holistic understanding of all heritage assets (note only required on sites with Grade I and II* listed buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas, registered landscapes etc)

o   Undertake survey work of built and natural heritage assets

o   Provide details of the capital work they will undertake to conserve the heritage value of the park

o   Show how the capital works will make a visible difference and change to the park

o   Take before, during and after photos

o   Consider other methods of recording progress; for example through condition surveys

○ Report the number of buildings or monuments to be removed from an at risk register (if applicable)

○ Consider ways in which the project can enhance the community's appreciation and understanding of the heritage value of the park

Capital works

The table below shows the targets for each key indicator for outcome 2. We would expect that every project would achieve at least 1 of these indicators, as they cover the capital works element of the project. The majority of parks are restoring historic features, improving landscaping and infrastructure, with only a small number removing buildings from at risk registers.

Overall the programme will see over 100 buildings and 230 features restored.

Figure 20: Targets for capital works

Types of capital works planned	No. of projects	Target
Repair/restoration of buildings	45	101
Repair/restoration of features	56	230
Buildings into active use	28	46
Landscape features improved	53	62%*
Re-construction lost features	41	104
Infrastructure improvements	54	71%*
Habitat conservation	44	N/A
Species protection	27	N/A
Surveys	37	N/A
Buildings removed from at risk register	8	13

*average across all parks

Tracking progress

All projects are expected to take 'before', 'during' and 'after' photos, to record the changes to the physical environment. A sample of 'before' photos is shown below, demonstrating the need for significant capital investment.

Figure 21: Before photos collected by projects

Burngreen Park,
Kilsyth

Bushey Rose
Garden, Hertsmere

Chances Park,
Carlisle

Gheluvelt Park,
Worcester

Markfield Park,
Haringey

Outcome 3 – increasing the range of volunteers

The purpose of outcome 3 is to increase both the numbers and range of volunteers involved in the project, both during the development stage, delivery stage and post completion of capital works. Projects should;

o   Develop a programme of volunteering opportunities and activities

o   Set targets for volunteer involvement

o   Set up systems to record volunteer involvement

o   Carry out a profile of their volunteers to identify any under-represented groups

o   Carry out an annual survey or case studies on volunteer involvement, to identify the impact volunteering has had on the park and the wider community

Who volunteers in parks?

Traditionally, parks have well established Friends groups, consisting of interested local residents. Typically, these are often white, middle class, elderly people, who have time to spend and are keen to get involved in their local area. 'Friends' are voluntary groups of local residents, workers or visitors who dedicate some of their time, energy and effort to caring for and improving their local park, garden or open space. Anyone can join a 'Friends' group and give as much or as little time as they want.

The aim of the Parks for People programme is to not only increase opportunities for volunteering in parks, but also to attract groups which do not traditionally volunteer (for example young people or BME groups).

The baseline data collected shows that across the programme;

o   2,375 people were involved in volunteering in the parks before the projects started

- There is an average of 34 volunteers per park, however this ranges from none in 10 parks to over 200 in War Memorial Park, Coventry and Brockwell Park, Lambeth
- This work represented a total of 50,000 volunteer hours spent in parks in a year – an average of 719 hours per park.
- More women than men volunteer (54% and 46% respectively)
- Only 9% are from BME communities (compared to 11% of visitors)
- In the majority of parks the largest age group volunteering is over 50s. Only in 3 parks is the largest age group under 40.

Volunteers come from a range of groups, as shown in the table below;

Figure 22: Volunteer groups

Group	% of projects
Friends group members	94%
Local residents (not members of Friends group)	75%
BTCV or equivalent	28%
Other (includes; o Schools o Local voluntary groups o Youth clubs o Churches o Local businesses)	66%

At what stage are volunteers involved?

The majority of projects surveyed (33%) stated that they started to involve volunteers before they submitted their stage 1 application. 24% started to involve volunteers during the development stage, 27% during the delivery stage, and only 15% once the capital works had completed. This is positive, as engaging volunteers from an early stage provides many additional opportunities for people to get involved.

Changes to numbers of volunteers

Across the programme it is expected that the total number of volunteers will increase dramatically, from 2,375 to 6,442, a 171% increase overall. On average, projects are looking to increase volunteers by 401%.

Figure 23: Baseline and target volunteer numbers

	All projects total	Lowest	Highest	Average
Baseline	2,375	0	254	36
Target	6,442	2	518	98
Expected increase	4,067	0	518	62
Overall % increase	171%	0%	4,900%	401%

Volunteer hours

As the number of volunteers increases, so will the number of volunteer hours. It is expected that the time invested by volunteers will double from 50,000 per year to just under 100,000.

Figure 24: Baseline and target volunteer hours

	All projects total	Lowest	Highest	Average
Baseline	50,315	0	12,000	931
Target	99,800	2	17,500	1,848
Expected increase	49,485	0	8,880	916
Overall % increase	98%	0%	9900%	399%

Volunteer profile

In the same way as with the visitor profile, only a small number of projects are aiming to change the profile of volunteers. More women than men volunteer in parks, and overall this gender split is not envisaged to change much; overall projects aim to increase the proportion of male volunteers by 2%. Only 12 projects (17%) want to change their volunteer gender profile by at least 10 percentage points.

Figure 25: Baseline and target volunteer gender

		All projects average	Lowest	Highest
Male	Baseline	46%	4%	100%
	Target	48%	20%	80%
Female	Baseline	54%	0%	96%
	Target	52%	20%	80%

Only 50% of projects have ethnicity information on their volunteers. This shows that on average, 9% of volunteers are from BME backgrounds. This is targeted to increase to 18%.

Only 5 projects aim to change their volunteer age profile, with all wanting to encourage a greater proportion of younger volunteers.

Figure 26: Projects aiming to change their volunteer age profile

Project	Baseline largest age group	Target largest age group
Brockwell Park, Lambeth	35-44	26-40
Gheluvelt Park, Worcester	50-59	20-29
Castle Park, Whitstable	50-59	45-64
Horniman Gardens, Lewisham	65-74	16-24
Duthie Park, Aberdeen	Over 50s	16-24

Volunteer activities

The majority of volunteers were involved in management related activities and one off events before the projects started.

Figure 27: Baseline volunteer activities
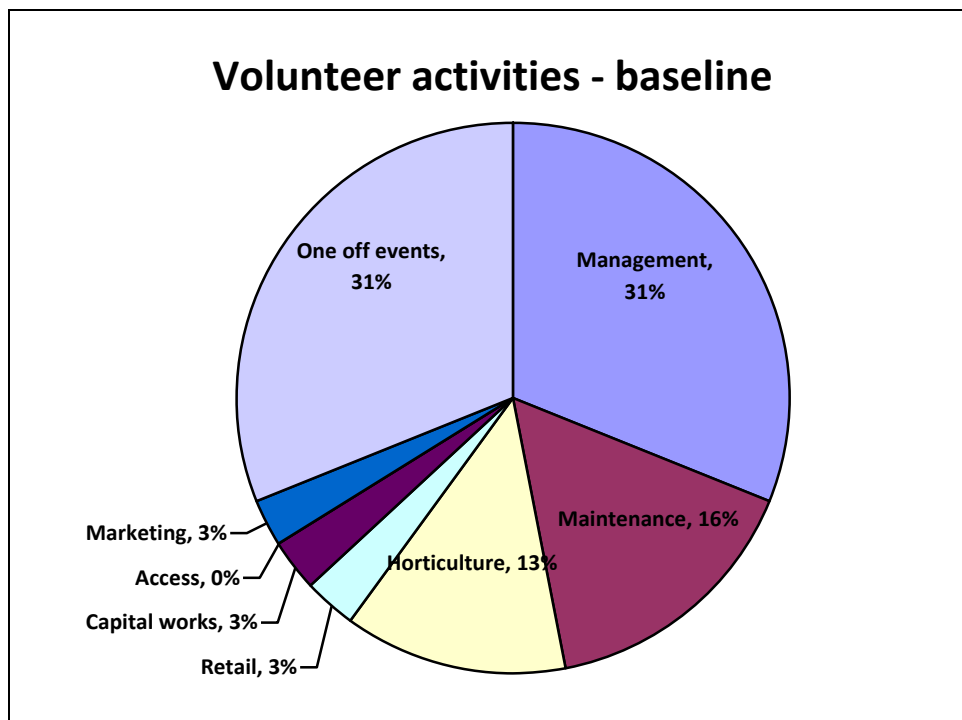
It is expected that volunteers will be able to get involved in a greater variety of activities as a result of being involved in the project.

Figure 28: Target volunteer activities
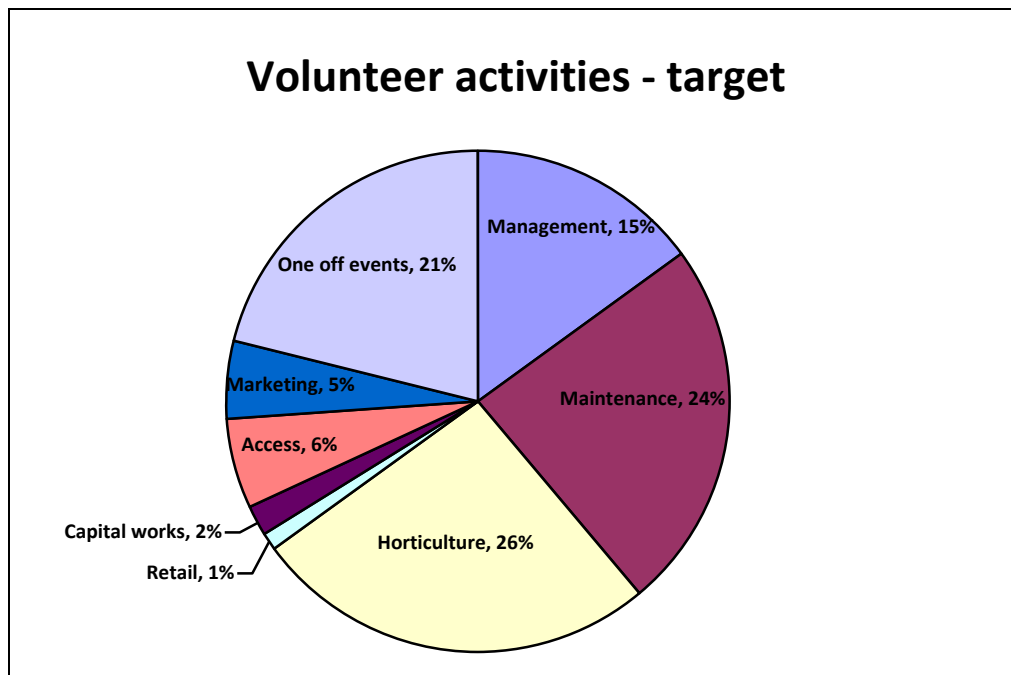
Outcome 4 – improving skills and knowledge through training

To achieve outcome 4, projects should:

- ○ Set up a training plan which identifies training activities for staff, volunteers, or the use of the park by third-party organisations
- ○ Set targets for the numbers of staff and volunteers trained
- ○ Set targets for the number of qualifications to be obtained
- ○ Set up systems to monitor the training activities and measure satisfaction

Targets

Across the 70 projects, it is anticipated that approximately 930 staff and 1,700 volunteers will receive training. 370 work placements will be established and 570 qualifications obtained. In addition to this, 2,500 third parties will also benefit from using the parks as a training venue.

Figure 29: Baseline training numbers

	All projects total	Lowest	Highest	Average
Staff trained	928	1	295	16
Volunteers trained	1,715	1	185	33
Work placements	373	0	123	6
Qualifications achieved	570	0	80	9
Third parties using park as training venue	2,598	0	2,300	40

Outcome 5 – improving management and maintenance

To achieve this outcome projects should:

o Develop a Management and Maintenance Plan
o Identify their baseline Green Flag score and develop an action plan to achieve Green Flag status
o Achieve Green Flag status within a year of completing the capital works and keep it for a further 5 years (or 7 years under SP3)

The Green Flag Award is the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces in the United Kingdom. The scheme was set up in 1996 to recognise and reward green spaces in England and Wales that met the standards. It is also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in green areas

Setting a baseline Green Flag score

Surprisingly only 22 of the 70 projects (30%) have set a baseline Green Flag score. This means that projects that don't will not have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses that should inform their plan to achieve the award.

Of those projects that have set a baseline, the scores range from 26 at Marine Cove Gardens, Burnham on Sea, to 70-74 at Gheluvelt Park, Worcester and Clissold Park, London.

11 parks already hold Green Flag status;

o Clissold Park, London

- o Gheluvelt Park, Worcester
- o Hale Park, Halton
- o Markfield Park, Haringey
- o Sconce and Devon Park, Newark
- o Pannett Park, Whitby
- o Avenham & Miller Parks, Preston
- o South Park Gardens, London
- o Bedwellty House and Park, Tredegar
- o Horniman Gardens, Lewisham
- o Cedars Park, Cheshunt

Targets

It is positive to note that 13 projects have a target to exceed the Green Flag pass mark of 66;

Figure 30: Projects aiming to exceed the Green Flag pass mark

Project	Baseline	Target
Bishops Park and Fulham Palace Grounds, London	50	70-74
Burngreen Park, Kilsyth	66	75
Bushey Rose Garden, Hertsmere	47.75	73
Clissold Park, London	70-75	80
Gheluvelt Park, Worcester	70-74	80
Howard Park & Gardens, Letchwork Garden City	N/A	70
Sconce and Devon Park, Newark	66-69	75-79
Pannett Park, Whitby	N/A	70
Town Centre Gardens, Stevenage	45-54	70
Memorial Park, Whaley Bridge	N/A	66+
Cedars Park, Cheshunt	66-69	70-75
Cambuslang Park Redevelopment Project	N/A	68
Pittencrieff Park, Dunfermline	N/A	66+

Some projects have also set other targets for Outcome 5, including;

- o Customer satisfaction
- o Perceptions of safety
- o Performance targets for staff

    o   Achievement of Green Heritage award

Satisfaction rates due to increase significantly

Overall, satisfaction rates are targeted to increase from 67% to 82%.

Figure 31: Baseline and target satisfaction rates

	All projects average	Lowest	Highest
Baseline	67%	2%	98%
Target	82%	55%	100%

Programme impact

The work undertaken by projects and the support team over the last 3 years has seen an unprecedented amount of data collected on parks. The previous chapter summarises the baseline and target data collected from the majority of projects to provide an idea of the potential impact of the programme.

This chapter analyses both quantitative and qualitative data collected from a smaller number of projects which have started to deliver their project to assess the actual impact of the programme to date.

Of the 70 projects in our study, 57 have permission to start delivery. However, as shown on p.20, only 14 have drawn down more than 50% of grant and only 11 have completed the capital works. In this chapter we have analysed any 'actual' data collected from these 57 projects with permission to start. We have presented the results depending on the level of grant draw-down, as a proxy measure for progress.

Outcome 1 – increasing the range of audiences

Summary

Overall 26 projects have reported 'actual' data for Outcome 1, which is 37% of the study.

36m annual person visits are forecast to increase by 15% to 41m.

So far annual person visits have increased by 890,000, or 16% of the 5.4m target.

Good progress has been made, with 7 parks already achieving or exceeding their target.

No major changes to visitor profiles, however there has been a significant increase in BME visits from 6% to 11% among a small number of parks.

Satisfaction has increased substantially from 61% to 80%.

There is also evidence of increases in perceptions of safety, increase in community ownership and pride, improvements to the profile of the area and overall contribution to more sustainable communities.

On track to achieve the targeted increase in visits

So far, the programme has seen an overall increase of 890,000 annual person visits, which is 16% of its overall target of 5.4m. This is from 16 parks where the capital work is either complete or underway. Projects which have drawn down almost all their grant have achieved over 80% of the targets, which shows good progress overall. Only projects which have drawn down less than 25% are showing an actual decrease in visits. This is probably due to the disruption caused by the capital works which can often lead to sections of parks being closed to the public. The table below shows the actual increase to date;

Figure 32: Actual changes in annual person visits

	No. projects	Actual person visits at December 2010*	Actual increase	% of target
Draw down > 75%	6	2,048,070	324,293	84%
Draw down 50% to 75%	8	481,601	28091	17%
Draw down 25% to 50%	8	4,839,091	1,146,388	65%
Draw down less than 25%	35	22,040,734	-610,719	-15%
All projects with permission to start	57	29,409,496	888,053	14%
All projects	70	36,955,593	888,053	16%

this includes the baseline position if actuals are not yet known or recorded

It is encouraging to see that 7 of the 17 parks submitting actual data have already exceeded their targeted increase. This may be because original targets were pessimistic, or that their approach has had a much greater impact than originally anticipated. If this trend continues then the total target is likely to also be exceeded.

Figure 33: Projects already exceeding their targets

Project	% drawn down	Target	Actual
Devizes, Hillworth Park	2%	25,000	25,672
Devonport - The People's Park, Plymouth	32%	1,238	1,977
Gheluvelt Park, Worcester	29%	40,000	69,049
Hale Park, Halton	55%	80,000	90,000
Sconce and Devon Park, Newark	73%	220,000	221,047
Roberts Park, Saltaire	87%	364,635	577,897
War Memorial Park, Coventry	5%	200,000	251,873

Projects have identified a number of 'critical success factors' when attempting to attract a greater number of audiences. These include;

o   Having a dedicated park team present on site

o   Employing someone whose role it is to develop and implement the activities programme – e.g. Urban Park Ranger or Activities Officers have proved invaluable in most cases

- Talking to the local community and consulting visitors on what events and activities they would like to see
- 'Branding' of the park and implementing an effective public relations and marketing campaign
- Improved play areas, cafes and other improved facilities attract more visitors – it's important for visitors to have 'something to do'
- Having a website to promote the park and its activities and events
- Engaging other organisations, voluntary groups and schools who can deliver their own activities in the park
- Ensure the activity planning and masterplanning are joined up
- Be prepared to be flexible and responsive to new ideas and needs
- Recognise the importance of community outreach in really understanding local needs and opportunities

No change to gender split

Despite projects aiming to slightly increase the proportion of male visitors, projects with actual data have shown a slight decrease in the percentage of males, from 46% to 45%.

Figure 34: Actual changed to gender

		Projects with actual data (n=15)	Draw down <25% (n=7)	Draw down 25%-50% (n=5)	Draw down 50%-75% (n=2)	Draw down >75% (n=1)
Male	Baseline	46%	48%	43%	40%	51%
	Target	49%	47%	44%	42%	49%
	Actual	45%	46%	41%	45%	58%
Female	Baseline	52%	53%	55%	58%	49%
	Target	50%	51%	57%	59%	51%
	Actual	54%	52%	59%	54%	42%

Significant increase in BME visitors achieved

For 11 projects with actual data, the percentage of BME visitors has increased overall, from 6% to 11%. This is backed up by the survey results, where 33% of completed projects have seen an increase in BME visitors.

Figure 35: Actual changes to BME

	Projects with actual data (n=14)	Draw down <25% (n=7)	Draw down 25%-50% (n=5)	Draw down 50%-75% (n=1)	Draw down >75% (n=1)
Baseline	6%	8%	3%	2%	18%
Target	12%	18%	4%	7%	19%
Actual	11%	16%	4%	6%	20%

Some projects have tried to attract BME visitors by engaging with local community groups. For example Barnes Park, Sunderland lies within an area with a large Bangladeshi community. This community rarely uses the park and this is thought to be due to antisocial activity. The project has built links with the local Bangladeshi women's group and supported training for members of this group. Through this they hope to build and strengthen links with this community and encourage greater use of the park.

Overall progress has been made, however this is something that takes time. Projects need to ensure that they develop specific activities and events that will target BME communities.

A small number of projects have made good progress;

- o Sconce and Devon, Newark increased from 2% BME to 6% (target was 7%)

- o Queens Park, Bolton increased from 21% to 36% (target was 28%)

- o Roberts Park, Saltaire increased from 18% to 20% (target was 19%)

- o War Memorial, Coventry increased from 12% to 19% (target 13%)

No overall change in proportion of disabled visitors

To increase disabled visitors projects tend to work with existing physical or mental health charities or organisations to help engage more disabled people. For example Gheluvelt Park, Worcester is working with Mencap on a regular basis in order to engage people with learning difficulties.

Although work is ongoing, there has been no overall change to the proportion of disabled visitors.

Figure 36: Actual changes to disabled visitors

Disabled visitors	All projects with actual data (n=17)	Draw down <25% (n=8)	Draw down 25%-50% (n=5)	Draw down 50%-75% (n=3)	Draw down >75% (n=1)
Baseline	6%	5%	10%	7%	1%
Target	7%	5%	11%	8%	5%
Actual	6%	5%	9%	4%	1%

Despite this, there have been some specific examples where projects are making good progress;

o   Chances Park, Carlisle have achieved their target of 3% (from baseline of 0%)
o   Beacon Park, Lichfield has increased from 5% to 12% (target was remain at 5%)
o   Queens Park, Bolton has increased from 4% to 9% (target 10%)
o   War Memorial Park, Coventry has increased from 0% to 5% (target was 3%)

And 50% of completed projects and 11% of projects in delivery who completed the survey have seen a slight increase in disabled visitors.

No significant change in age profile, but hard to reach groups are starting to increase

Of projects with actual data;

o   2 have seen their visitors get older
o   7 have seen their visitors get younger
o   8 have seen no change in age

For example, Beacon Park, Lichfield had a baseline largest age group of 60-74. They had a target to change this to 18-60, which they have achieved.

From the survey results, 42% of projects which have completed the capital works and 67% of projects being delivered have seen an increase in elderly visitors. And 86% of projects which have completed the capital works and 38% of projects being delivered have seen an increase in young visitors. This indicates that traditionally hard to reach age groups are visiting parks more.

For example, South Park Gardens, London have successfully engaged young people aged 12-21 by setting up a music festival.

Reasons for visiting

The top 2 main reasons for visiting parks remain going for a walk and getting some fresh air. However it is positive to note that 'attending events' is now the third most popular reason, increasing from the sixth most popular reason. This reflects the work projects are doing implementing their activity programmes.

Figure 37 – Actual reasons for visiting
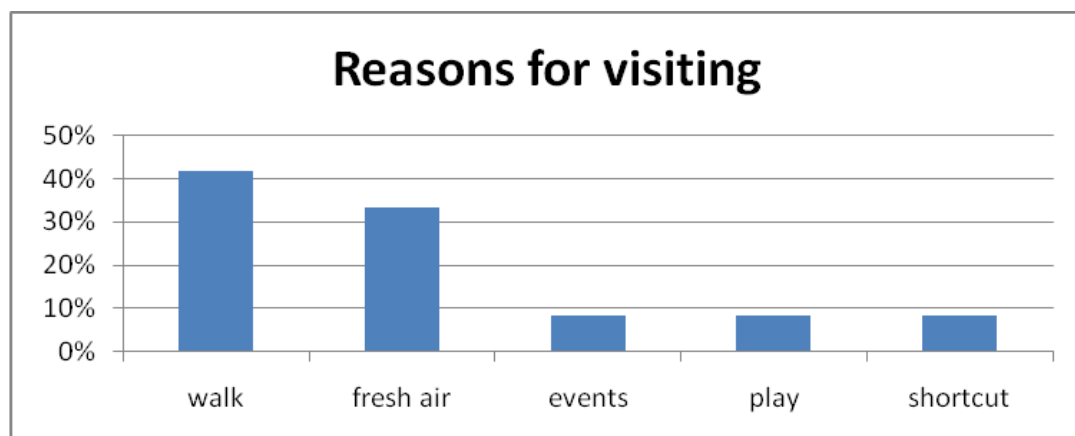
Other impacts

The data collected shows the impact to date on 'hard' indicators such as visitor numbers and changes to visitor profiles. However, there is also evidence that projects have achieved 'softer' impacts on visitors and local communities.

Parks are perceived as being safer

Tree works, cutting back undergrowth and improved lighting, increased natural surveillance and permanent park staff will decrease fear of crime and contribute to increased perceptions of safety.

"One particular [instance] that springs to mind is whilst at the local primary school carrying out a consultation regarding the renewal of the play park. A young boy approached me and said thanks for clearing up the park, because his mum lets him play in the park now as she can see him from their kitchen window and knows he will be safe. The park was very overgrown before and had had its problems with antisocial behaviour. This made my day!" (Chances Park, Carlisle)

Local communities are taking ownership of their parks

Increased involvement of volunteers in Friends group, and wider consultation on the plans to improve the park help to increase civic pride and a sense of ownership amongst local people. The Parks for People programme is helping to raise awareness and build capacity of local communities and voluntary groups; something which is key to the success of Big Society.

"We have anecdotal evidence that awareness and ownership of the park has been raised. That people now respect the park more. The number of vandalism incidents have been reduced, this demonstrates that the improvements have lead to a greater respect for the area and facilities" (Hale Park, Halton)

I think that a lot of people have been surprised at how big the park actually is now that a lot of the overgrown areas have been cleared. I think that now the park is looking so good I feel that the local residents will not allow the park to fall back to how it was before. They have realised what an asset the green space we have here is to the community and by getting as many members of the community involved, I really do feel that people will not accept anything less than what they have now. (Chances Park, Carlisle)

"The cafe in the park is seen as a hub of community activity and meeting up. When it was in danger of closing, they showed their support by producing over 300 signatures to save the cafe" (Markfield Park, Haringey)

Improvements are raising the profile of the area

Parks are a key feature of the urban environment, central to the lives of residents and visitors alike. Improvements to parks will therefore have a positive impact on the image of an area.

"We keep a guest book in the summer house which documents people's feelings about the garden. Most people are glad to see the garden being well used and popular with all ages. It has raised the profile of the history of Bushey in terms of it being an artist community and the local museum is getting more visitors." (Bushey Rose Garden, Hertsmere)

Improvements to parks contribute to a more sustainable community

We've seen that parks build links with community groups, schools, colleges, voluntary groups and businesses, placing parks once again at the heart of the community. Traditionally houses adjacent to well maintained parks enjoy a premium to their value.

"Evidence from local estate agents – there is increased interest in the area. The church reports an interest in having open air services there. More parties are taking place there" (South Park Gardens, London).

"I feel that the work with the local primary school which is situated on the periphery of the park is giving them a great sense of ownership and hopefully will encourage generations to come to look after the park and continue the work already started" (Chances Park, Carlisle)

Involvement in the programme has changed Local Authorities' approach to engaging audiences

There is evidence that Local Authorities are realising the benefits of effective monitoring of park audiences.

"From May to September this year we had 74,032 visitors through the gates that are monitored. The local authority has shown an interest on the basis of these figures of putting them in other local parks in the City!"

"By 'branding' the park and project - 'Gheluvelt Park Life'; creating and delivering a more robust, enlarged and embedded annual calendar of events, recognising the necessity to ensure park profile and facilities remain at current high levels, ensure the park retains staff and officer support" (Gheluvelt Park, Worcester)

"We were initially sceptical about the gate counters but really pleased we have installed them. It would be useful to use them in some of our other parks. The project has made us think about all aspects of a park in terms of increasing usage." (Burslem Park, Stoke on Trent)

Case study: Devonport Park, Plymouth

Devonport Park's efforts to restore the park to its former glory included a target to increase visitor numbers by some 15%. This was to be achieved via a range of events and activities.

By last year, this target had been exceeded and in fact, the park has enjoyed an increase in visitor numbers of over 30%, sustained for the past two years. This has been achieved through delivery of a strong media programme, which used Facebook as well as the local media, webpage and leaflets. Regular organised events have been held, including Fun Days and organised walks through the park. But above all, it has been the strength of partnership working which has been the foundation of the Park's success, bringing together the Friends Group, Local Authority, the local press and others to deliver a strong and coordinated programme of support.

The project has also achieved its aims to increase usage of the park by older people, young people and people from beyond the Devonport and Stoke wards, as these user groups were under-represented.

Outcome 2 - conserving and enhancing our diverse heritage

Summary

Overall 28 projects have reported 'actual' data for Outcome 2, which is 40% of the study. All projects have targets relating to this outcome and are working to achieve it.

100 buildings and 230 heritage features are due to be restored or repaired

So far, 35 building and 78 feature repairs/restorations have been achieved

100% of completed projects and 94% of projects in delivery have noticed an increase in visitors' appreciation or understanding of heritage

Projects have led to work on other heritage projects, contribution to local tourism and changes to Local Authority approaches.

The chart below shows progress to date with projects who have submitted actual data. The figures show the percentage complete to date. So far:

o   35 buildings have been restored or repaired;
o   78 heritage features restored or repaired;
o   22 buildings have been bought back into use;
o   34% of the total landscape features to be improved have been;
o   33 lost features have been reconstructed;
o   38% of the total infrastructure to be improved has been;
o   26 projects have carried out nature conservation work; either protecting species or habitats or carrying out surveys, and
o   6 buildings have been removed from an at risk register

Figure 38: Progress with outcome 2 from 28 projects submitting actual data
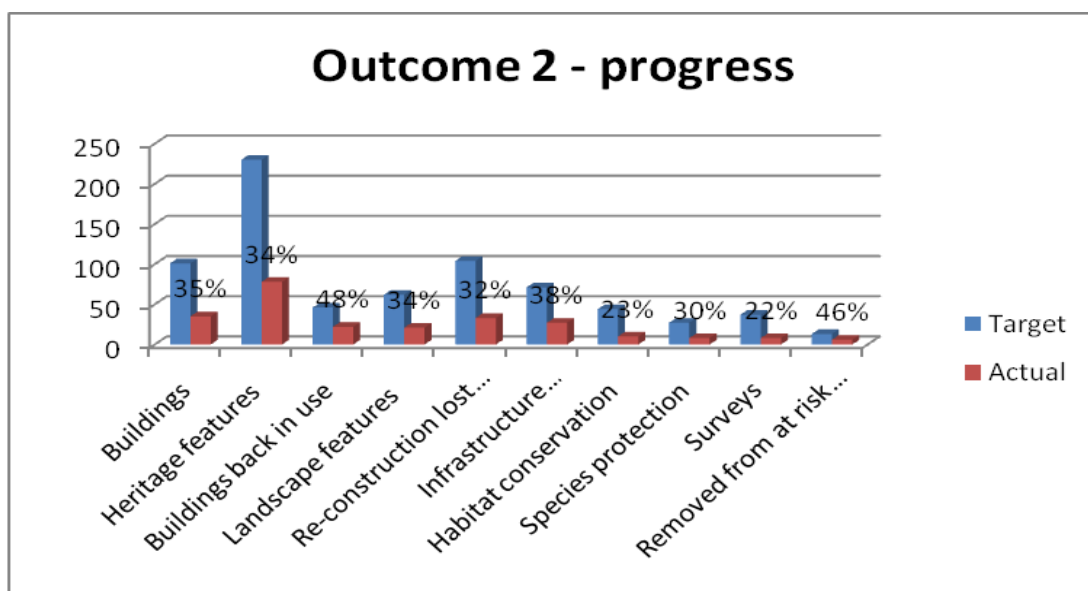
The table below shows progress with outcome 2 for projects with permission to start.

Figure 39: Outcome 2 actuals for projects with permission to start

	Projects with actual data (n=28)	Draw down <25% (n=7)	Draw down 25%-50% (n=7)	Draw down 50%-75% (n=6)	Draw down >75% (n=4)
Buildings	32	16	11	0	5
Heritage features	67	30	21	8	8
Buildings back in use	22	11	4	0	7
Landscape features	21%	15%	26%	62%	22%
Reconstruction of lost features	28	16	4	7	2
Infrastructure improvements	27%	11%	61%	82%	43%
Habitat conservation	10	0	0	5	2
Species protection	8	2	0	4	1
Surveys	8	2	1	2	1
Buildings removed from at risk register	6	0	3	0	3

The majority of the Parks for People funding has been spent on physical improvements. These include work to improve or create;

- o Park lodges
- o Cafes
- o Improved access; paths and parking
- o Interpretation boards
- o Shelters and benches
- o Listed buildings and monuments/sculpture
- o Walls and boundary fences
- o Views/vistas
- o Tree works and planting
- o Bridges and lakes
- o Horticultural features
- o Visitor centres
- o Bandstands
- o Entrances
- o Pavilions
- o Signage/Lighting

Increasing understanding and appreciation of heritage

One of the aims of the Parks for People programme is to engage audiences with heritage. Projects are expected to increase visitors' understanding and appreciation of the heritage value of their park.

Projects have used a variety of methods to achieve this, including;

- o Interpretation boards and signage in the park
- o Information materials such as leaflets, notice boards, websites
- o Guides tours and walks, nature trails
- o Podcasts
- o History projects with schools
- o Education packs
- o Events that reflect the history of the park
- o Talks and presentations
- o Marketing and PR

One of the most noticeable observations from consultations was that people had a range of different names for the site and the lack of historical site knowledge. It is our aim to standardise the gardens identity - working with the friends group the site now has its own logo. Part of the capital improvements will deliver improved interpretation signage. (Bushey Rose Garden, Hertsmere)

In many cases, projects are involving their Friends group in delivering many of these activities. For example, the Friends of St James' Park has held 4 public talks focusing on the history and heritage of the park and its surrounding area. Volunteers have also received training on how to collect and interpret historical information. In some parks the additional of onsite staff (such as Rangers) to deliver talk and tours has been invaluable to achieving this outcome. And in one case, the contractor leading on the conservation elements of the project has agreed to provide heritage appreciation training and to undertake tours of the site.

Of those projects completing the survey, 100% of completed projects and 94% of projects being delivered have seen a significant or slight increase in visitors' appreciation or understanding of heritage.

We have received favourable written feedback and positive comments from people who have attended our Herschel Park Heritage walks and talks and who have discovered the park's heritage through Slough Museum's workshops. Many of the people who provided feedback commented that they were previously unaware of the park and its estate's fascinating heritage. Some have now become members of the Friends group and have become involved in promoting the park and its heritage. Slough Museum have been contacted by local schools who are using the project as a vehicle for citizenship/sense of place projects and are pleased and interested in the project. (Hershel Park, Slough)

Critical success factors

Projects identified the following factors which help ensure outcome 2 is achieved;

o Conservation management plans must consider the 'whole' heritage of the site, including design and landscaping
o Quality must underpin capital works and associated investment – for example signage
o It's important to raise awareness of the short term impact and disruption caused by the site works

Other impacts

The heritage improvements to the parks have also resulted in other impacts.

The work has led to other heritage projects

13 projects have found the Parks for People project has led to other heritage related projects in the area. Some examples include;

"Interpretation signage has recently been put up on Tankerton Slopes close to the site to explain the history and nature conservation interest of the grass slopes" (Whitstable Castle Park)

"The project was linked in to the celebrations of the birth of Lord Armstrong 200 years ago" (Ouseburn Park)

"Popular TV programme "Who Do You Think You Are" featured Davina McCall who's Great, Great, Great Grandfather was the founder of the Victorian park and estate. The programme created a lot of interest in the park including a visit from the Sheriff of Berkshire, 2 BBC Radio Berkshire broadcasts about the park, its heritage and the HLF funded restoration project. Slough Museum has had a couple of spin-off projects relating to prominent astronomer Sir William Herschel whom the park is named after and the nature reserve section of the park now has a strong wildlife heritage volunteer group who assist the P4P funded park manager. The project has also given rise to increased interest in the history and heritage of some of Slough's other heritage parks". (Herschel Park, Slough)

Projects have contributed to tourism or other activities in the area

12 projects have contributed to wider heritage based tourism/activities in their area. Some examples include;

"The Castle and Park have already been used for conferences with visitors from other European countries. A Town Twinning event has been held and also a European educational exchange conference. At both the heritage is explained and promoted and is likely to lead to increased tourism." (Whitstable Castle Park)

"The Walkers are Welcome Organisation's UK National Conference was held in Kilsyth. The Burngreen was included on the walking routes" (Burngreen Park, Kilsyth)

"Roberts Park is located across the River Aire from Saltaire Village which is a designated World Heritage Site and therefore contributes to the wider heritage based tourism and activities as a whole. For example the Saltaire Festival at the end of September is an annual event with International Markets and events in the village and the park" (Roberts Park, Saltaire)

Changes to the way Local Authorities think about heritage

The table below shows responses from the outcome 2 e-survey;

Figure 40: Changes to the way Local Authorities think about heritage

Has the project made you/your Local Authority think differently about how...	% of projects that agree
It manages its heritage assets?	75%
It engages people with heritage?	88%
It interprets / celebrates heritage value?	71%
It develops other heritage projects in the future?	63%

Local Authorities have found that, through the P4P funded project, they have been able to collect comprehensive information and a detailed understanding of the heritage value of the site. For many, the systematic collection of this data is unprecedented, but something that they will replicate in other parks.

"The historical information for our site was very fragmented. Collating all the details and bringing it together for future reference. A good understanding of the heritage values of the site has given officers and volunteers the opportunity to pass on the site history as an organised activity." (Stevenage Town Centre Gardens)

The project has also changed the way Local Authorities think about interpreting heritage assets, using a range of innovative methods to engage visitors and residents.

"Heritage can sometimes be seen as a dry subject. People need to be hooked in and given opportunities to look more deeply about how their city parks came to be" (Ouseburn Park, Newcastle upon Tyne)

"It has been a revelation. Previously, signage was really the only way heritage interest was communicated. Following our experience with this project we now automatically think of interpreting and promoting heritage interest via a wide range of tools and techniques" (Whitstable Castle Park)

The project has also enabled Local Authorities to demonstrate the economic and social value of parks, raising the profile of the local area.

"Working through the various processes required by the HLF has ensured our organisation considers more thoroughly the way in which we plan, deliver monitor and evaluate its heritage led projects. The project highlights the value of parks both in monetary, economic and social terms and helps champion the parks cause by raising the profile value and importance of parks. Slough's heritage is now seen as important to the social wellbeing of the town and greater effort will be made to bring the town's heritage to the fore when developing new projects." (Herschel Park, Slough)

Demonstrating impact

Projects have taken a series of "during" and "after" photos, to document the changes to the park, and the improvements to the heritage features. Some examples are shown below:

Figure 41: Photos demonstrating the impact of completed capital works

|	
	Restored bandstand, Kilsyth Park, Burngreen
	Restored gates and railings, Chances Park, Carlisle

| | New water feature and landscaping, Gheluvelt Park, Worcester |
| | Improved access, Hale Park, Halton |

Improved paths and new bridge, Sconce and Devon Park, Newark

Projects are also demonstrating a high quality approach to conservation work. A considerable amount of time and effort has gone in to some projects, researching historic materials and designs, and this is reflected in the improvement work carried out.

Roberts Park in Saltaire carried out a lot of research into original gate and bench design and path layout, and the completed work shows this commitment to high quality conservation. Some examples of this are shown below:

Figure 42: Images showing the attention to detail in design at Roberts Park, Saltaire
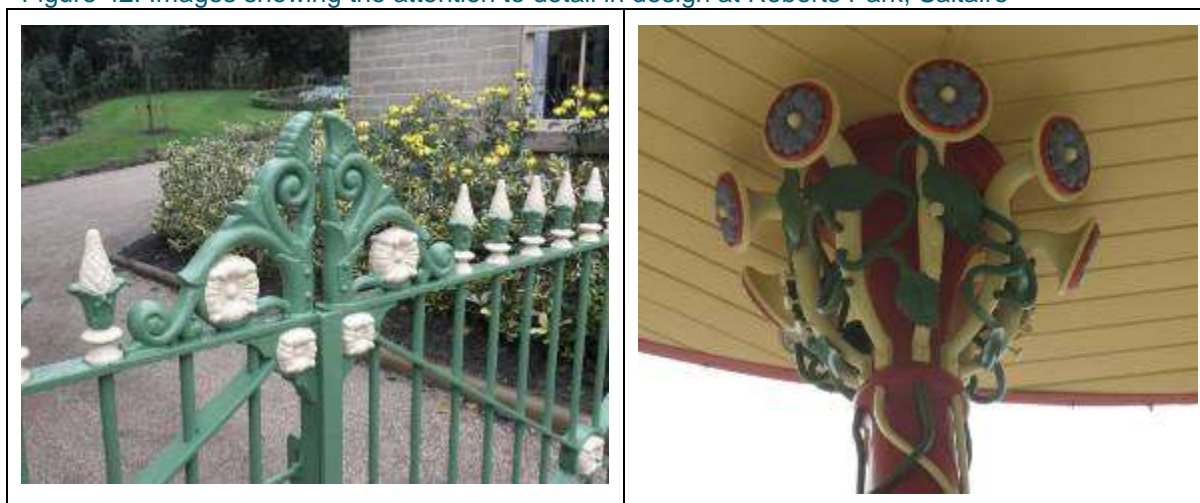
Bushey Rose Garden in Hertsmere also carried out a lot of research into the history of the Mawson designed garden. They researched original designs from Mawson's books, visited other gardens designed by him, and collected historical photos from local people to trace how the garden has evolved. They then compared photos from the garden in the 1930s to before the works started in 2006. The images below show how one part of the garden has changed as a result of the work, and how it

compares to when it was built. Work like this leaves an important legacy, demonstrating the impact of conservation work carried out in parks.

Figure 43: Images tracing the changes to the sunken garden at Bushey Rose Garden

	1930s
	2006
	2009

June 2010

Case study: Barnes Park, Sunderland

Barnes Park was created during the 1906/07 recession as a work creation initiative and provided employment for 2,000 people.

Key features of the park include the collection of mature trees which dominate the site and also the valley itself in which it is situated, which is characterised by a stream which feeds into Bishopwearmouth Burn. Several bridges cross the burn and entrance to the lake, which is home to a variety of water fowl, giving the park its unique character. A Grade II listed bandstand lies at the heart of the tree edged valley and the coach house is the largest remnant of the park's Victorian history.

The project involves restoring the boundary railings, the bandstand, the ornate gates, the stone gateway and pillars, the stone archway next to the coach house, and the original benches. There will also be improvements to the lake and the cannon will be restored and will be put back with interpretation. The Archway entrance to the Coach House cafe was restored along with replica gates being made for the Durham Road entrances.

To increase awareness and appreciation of the Park's Heritage, there will be a time capsule project, which is being developed with local schools. The Friends Of group are working on a DVD that shows the history of the park, outlining the work that has been (and will be) done. The Park's team and Friends Group are working on the local history, have a living history project. They have a website which is well used by local schools and they have had articles in the local press asking for old photographs or postcards of the park from when it first opened 100 years ago, and had an exhibition in the library.

At the original opening, the park was opened with a golden key. The team tracked this down and the current owner of the key brings it along to events. Although no formal surveys have yet been undertaken, feedback from the Friends group has been positive, and the noticeboards at the entrance to the park are continually updated with news about events, etc, and are popular.

Outcome 3 – increasing the range of volunteers

Summary

Overall 27 projects have reported 'actual' data for Outcome 3, which is 38% of the study.

There are currently 2,375 volunteers in the 70 parks, this is due to increase by 171% to 6,442

So far there has been an additional 971 volunteers, 24% of the 4,067 target

10 projects have met or exceeded their targets

There has been an increase of 16,000 volunteer hours

Volunteers have benefited from employment opportunities, increased confidence, health benefits, community cohesion and improved skills

Projects are involving volunteers in the following ways;

- o Planning and running events programmes and activities
- o As members of project steering groups
- o Carrying out maintenance activities
- o Running tours and talks
- o Distributing leaflets and maintaining websites
- o Carrying out visitor surveys and counts
- o Planting
- o Archaeological digs and surveys

To date, the total number of volunteers has increased by 971, 24% of the total target. This is backed up by the surveys, where 85% of projects have seen an overall increase in volunteers. This shows good progress.

Volunteers have helped during the grand opening of the park, mostly on the day making sure that people were looked after. Bulb planting, preparing a history of the park, getting involved in our up and coming Carols in the Park. The volunteers also helped out in the initial stages compile a tree study and species study of the park and also collecting visitor data prior to the counters being fitted on the gates. We have a great group of people who are delighted to give up their spare time to help and we are actively trying to encourage more. (Chances Park, Carlisle)

Figure 44: Increase in volunteer numbers

	No. projects	Actual at December 2010*	Actual increase	% of target
Draw down > 75%	6	133	47	14%
Draw down 50% to	8	359	179	60%

	No. projects	Actual at December 2010*	Actual increase	% of target
75%				
Draw down 25% to 50%	8	573	225	82%
Draw down less than 25%	35	2,059	477	26%
All projects with permission to start	57	1,144	928	34%
All projects	70	3,346	971	24%

includes the baseline where no actual data recorded

10 projects have either already met or exceeded their target for increasing volunteer numbers;

Figure 45: Projects which have met or exceeded their target for volunteer numbers

Project	Target volunteers	Actual to date
Burslem Park, Stoke on Trent	23	40
Chances Park, Carlisle	42	75
Devonport Park, Plymouth	28	77
Beacon Park, Minster Pool and Gardens of Remembrance, Lichfield	10	68
Ouseburn Park, Newcastle upon Tyne	106	161
Roberts Park, Saltaire	8	24
South Hill Park, Bracknell	20	24
War Memorial Park, Coventry	254	637
Mesnes Park, Wigan	54	65
Victoria Park Project, Tower Hamlets	86	162

Volunteer hours are increasing

To date, good progress has been made, with 32% of the targeted increase already achieved. So far there are an additional 16,000 volunteer hours invested in parks per year.

Figure 46: Actual volunteer hours

	No. projects	Actual at December 2010*	Actual increase	% of target
Draw down > 75%	6	2,269	1,141	23%
Draw down 50% to 75%	8	4,567	1,089	55%
Draw down 25% to 50%	8	10,849	7,042	1,239%
Draw down less than 25%	35	42,596	4,782	12%
All projects with permission to start	57	60,281	14,054	30%
All projects	70	66,339	16,024	32%

7 parks have already met or exceeded their target for increasing volunteer hours, as show below;

Figure 47: Projects which have met or exceeded their target for increasing volunteer hours

Park	Target	Actual
Devonport, Plymouth	1064	3769
Gyllyngdune Gardens, Falmouth	150	180
Ouseburn Park, Newcastle upon Tyne	1064	1997
Roberts Park, Saltaire	192	1295
South Hill Park, Bracknell	120	600
War Memorial Park, Coventry	972	3803
Wigan, Mesnes Park	387	3568

Projects have identified the following critical success factors to increasing volunteers:

o Employment of a Parks Community Engagement Officer at Stevenage Town Centre Gardens has seen an increase in volunteers and activities.

o Increase the number of organised activities that volunteers can get involved in.

o Start to engage volunteers early in the project

o Don't underestimate the impact and disruption of the site works – find something else for your volunteers to get involved in.

o Build in time (and money) to your plans to engage and support volunteers.

o Consider the reasons why people want to volunteer and develop activities that meet these needs.

o Link volunteering activities to training, particularly for volunteers looking to improve their CV or employment opportunities.

Impact on volunteers

As well as helping to improve the park and visitor experience, volunteers themselves gain something from the experience. The survey has identified the following examples of benefits or impact on volunteers;

Employment opportunities

Volunteering often to leads to increased opportunities for employment, as volunteers gain necessary skills and experience. Projects have supported apprenticeship schemes and training during the capital phase and ongoing activities.

Two students from North Herts College secured part time employment following working in partnership with our project. (Stevenage Town Centre Gardens)

Opportunities to socialise and improve confidence

Volunteering gives people the opportunity to meet and mix with new people.

The museum volunteering which consists mainly of retired people have said that they find their involvement very rewarding, meeting people and engaging with their passion of the steam engine and museum. (Markfield Park, Haringey)

"I re-gained confidence. I feel happier working with other people and interacting with them. I have a better appreciation for my local area" (quote from volunteer from Lloyd and Aveling Park, London)

Health benefits

Volunteers involved in delivering activities and events have benefited from improved health and mental wellbeing.

I have had reports that the health walks and jogging groups have found health benefits with weight management and social interaction. (Markfield Park, Haringey)

Improved community cohesion

Volunteering brings people together to share a sense of pride in their neighbourhoods. It helps to break down social and cultural barriers and develops bridging capital.

They get to know their neighbours better (South Park Gardens, London)

Learning new skills

Volunteering gives people the opportunity to learn new skills and gain qualifications.

Some volunteers from Mencap are now taking a diploma in environmental conservation (Sconce and Devon Park, Newark)

Probably the best example is that of a retired guy who is the leading light in the 'friends' group. He lives across the road from the park and has been heavily involved in its improvement and restoration for over 10 years (well before the HLF project started). He spends most days in the park and works in the 'friends' office in the pavilion. Volunteering has helped to give meaning to his life in retirement. He was individually honoured by the Lord Mayor in 2010 for his contribution to the park and to our successful HLF bid (Burslem Park, Stoke on Trent)

Case study: Chances Park, Carlisle

Chances Park was originally the grounds of Morton Manor, which is a Grade II listed building built in 1807. The Manor was home to the Chances family, important industrialists in Carlisle who bequeathed both the manor and park to Carlisle City Council in 1944.

The Manor is now the home of the Morton Community Centre, which boasts 12,000 visitors a month. The Community Centre houses the Friends of Chances Park group who have been active for over 10 years. It was the popularity of the park and Morton Community Centre which provided the impetus for the P4P bid and the demand for improved facilities in the park to support a wider audience. The park and centre provide a base for many voluntary and community groups, but it was felt that more could be achieved by making physical improvements to the park to create a range of new activities.

The park set ambitious targets to increase volunteer numbers from a low baseline of 6 to a target of 42. The aim was to involve volunteers in maintenance, horticulture, marketing and one off events. The first step was to establish a Friends of Chances Park group. This has been achieved and the members (and friends of Friends) regularly deliver mailshots. Over £1,000 worth of volunteer hours was recorded from April to May 2010.

Volunteers helped during the grand opening of the park, mostly on the day making sure that people were looked after. Other activities supported by the Friends include bulb planting, preparing a history of the park and Christmas Carols in the Park. The volunteers also helped out in the initial stages of the project by compiling a tree study, recording species of trees in the park and also collecting visitor data prior to the counters being fitted on the gates.

Elsewhere, the project has formed links with voluntary sector organisations, including Carlisle Mencap, RSPB, Barnados and the World Owl Trust. The result of this has been to give local people a new sense of ownership of the park. However the team recognise that more needs to be done to get more people actively involved. There has only been a slight increase in volunteer numbers and while these volunteers are very enthusiastic, the park team recognises the danger of over reliance on a small number of people.

Outcome 4 – increasing skills and knowledge through training

Summary

Overall 22 projects have reported 'actual' data for Outcome 4, which is 31% of the total sample.

930 staff and 1,700 volunteers will be trained, 370 work placements created, 570 qualifications obtained and 2,500 third parties using parks as training venues

So far 175 staff and 133 volunteers have been trained, 49 work placements established, 71 qualifications obtained and 86 third parties benefiting.

Benefits from the training include employment, skills, confidence, improved maintenance of parks, better communication with visitors, raising profile of the area and ability to share learning elsewhere

Projects have implemented a wide range of training opportunities, including;

Figure 48: Training opportunities

Capital works/maintenance	Lime pointing
	Iron work preservation/restoration
	Splash pad maintenance
	Play equipment maintenance
	Water quality assessments
	Repairing stone rockery
	Treating benches
Horticulture	Plant knowledge and care
	Noxious weeds
	Landscaping
	Allotments
	Wood chipper
	Willow working
	Bulb planting
	Bird box
	Rose pruning
	Tree identification
Management	Health and safety
	Play area inspections
	First aid

Activities	Food hygiene
	Web maintenance
	Committee skills
	Video editing
	IT
	How to recruit volunteers
	Teacher training
	Green Flag awareness
	Countryside management
	Park keeper
	Working with people with special needs
	Lone working
	Project management
Activities	Health walks
	Dog training/dog agility
	Dog obedience
	Tai Chi
	Nordic walking
	Local history
	Planning activities for young people
	Events management

This has resulted in 175 staff and 133 volunteers trained so far.

Figure 49: Actual staff and volunteers trained

		All (n=21)	>75% draw down (n=3)	50-75% draw down (n=4)	25-50% draw down (n=6)	<25% draw down (n=8)
Staff	actual to date	175	4	15	72	81
	% target achieved	19%	19%	32%	77%	11%
Volunteers	actual to date	133	12	22	44	55
	% target achieved	8%	12%	15%	15%	6%

The majority of training beneficiaries are staff and volunteers, however 26% of projects surveyed stated that local residents and park visitors will also benefit from training courses. 86 third party organisations have also benefited from being able to use the parks as a training venue.

49 work placements have been established, including;

- Apprenticeship scheme at Roberts Park, Saltaire
- 4 Network Learning Centre apprentices benefited from a 2 week placement with local ironworks company at Burngreen Park, Kilsyth
- Trainees have been employed by the landscape contractor to help deliver the capital works at Ouseburn Park, Newcastle

71 qualifications have been obtained, including;

- 8 North Herts college students have attained level 2 NPTC landscape at Stevenage Town Centre Gardens
- OCN in Countryside management at Penllegare Valley Woods
- NVQ Level 2 in Horticulture at Ouseburn Park, Newcastle
- NVQ Level 2 Amenity Horticulture at Whaley Bridge Memorial Park
- NVQ level 1 Practical Horticulture, NVQ Level 2 RHS in Horticulture and Level 3 in Community Development at Devonport Park, Plymouth

Impact of training

The training and qualifications obtained have resulted in a number of benefits for the recipients, the parks and the wider community.

Impact on training beneficiaries

Recipients of the training benefit from employment opportunities, improved health and wellbeing and confidence levels.

One ETF trainee attained permanent employment with main contractor (Burngreen Park, Kilsyth)

Members of the FOMP have enjoyed the jogging group. Several parents of local schools have kept the health walks up and have been attending regularly and have had walk leader training. (Markfield Park, Haringey)

Training has added to staff self-confidence and competences e.g. in current duties, job applications and improved their skills (Gheluvelt Park, Worcester)

Impact on park

The park benefits from improved maintenance with more skilled people working in the park.

Our site benefits from the additional maintenance care and attention and the improved public perception from seeing continued activities in the gardens (Stevenage Town Centre Gardens)

Those trained have been able to undertake a wider range of tasks. In the case of the Green Flag training, this has prompted staff to be more aware of what contributes towards a successful park (Burslem Park, Stoke on Trent)

The training so far has benefited the park by allowing more tasks to be completed eg path clearance, pruning, planting etc (Ouseburn Park, Newcastle)

Impact on park users

Park users benefit from improved maintenance and activities.

On-site gardener has learnt skills to communicate with public re issues such as dogs, cycling, etc. (Bushey Rose Garden, Hertsmere)

The training has allowed volunteers to get involved with the planting and feel a part of the process. It has also allowed the children to mix with the residents and it is always good for them to see the park from a child's perspective (Chances Park, Carlisle)

Last year our Community Parks officer put on a range of successful activities. This year the range of activities has been extended largely due to the success and interest those attending. (Stevenage Town Centre Gardens)

Impact on wider area

Training staff and volunteers in communications and public relations helps to raise the profile of the area.

It has been noted that the website has regular new hits of approximately 40 a day. This has given a wider view of all the events and activities available in the park and so readily available for the locals to see (Markfield Park, Haringey)

The training increases surveillance in the park on a daily basis that has improved perceptions of safety (Devonport Park, Plymouth)

Sconce and Devon park have let the running of the kiosk to a local social enterprise who employ people with learning disabilities.   (Sconce and Devon Park, Newark)

Changes to Local Authority approach to training

Local Authorities are changing the way they deliver training to staff, and have an increased emphasis on training for volunteers. They are seeing the benefits of increased training on their staff and parks.

The park is now perceived as a valuable and suitable training venue outdoor and indoor. There is more purpose to training and attention to training needs specific to the park and park staff and relevant volunteers such that a cohort of Future Job Fund staff have been put through a tailored programme. (Gheluvelt Park, Worcester)

Sharing learning elsewhere

Projects are able to use the learning and knowledge gained to benefit other projects.

The chair of the Lordship Friends group has visited other Friends groups both in Haringey and elsewhere in London to advise on how to get more resident engagement (Lordship Recreation Ground, London)

Partnership with HLF funded Trent Vale project (Sconce and Devon Park, Newark)

Case study: Gheluvelt Park, Worcester

Before the project started, only staff benefited from training. The project wanted to expand this to volunteers, with targets of 50 staff trained, 5 volunteers trained and 2 work experience placements established. So far, a wide range of training has been delivered:

o   Noxious weeds workshops;
o   Allotment workshop;

- o Woodchipper training;
- o Emergency first aid;
- o Needlestick;
- o Floral art;
- o Splashpad management and maintenance;
- o Play equipment management and maintenance;
- o Water quality;
- o Gardening/horticultural sessions;
- o Staff supervision;
- o Dog training and dog agility;
- o Tai chi; and
- o Nordic walking

Both staff and volunteers have benefited from this training, resulting in 48 staff members trained and 2 volunteers. The project has also benefited from the Future Jobs Fund and has been able to establish 5 work placements within the park; all of which have also benefited from this training. So far 5 qualifications have been achieved, and the park has also been used as a training venue by 16 third parties.

The training plan for 2011/12 is still to be confirmed, however a priority will be to ensure that all parks staff complete the full set of training in order to maintain and improve the new facilities. They would also like to encourage further accredited training where possible.

The emergence of the 'young friends' will also allow for a wider range of opportunities for younger people to benefit from training.

The training received so far has resulted in many benefits to both individuals and the park as a whole. Training records and feedback generally show high levels of satisfaction with the training provided. Some have used it to apply for other positions within the council or have discovered an understanding of their own skills. Staff and volunteers have more confidence in their skills and abilities which in turn has increased their confidence with the park users. Local Authority staff have witnessed a lot of praise from individuals using the park to staff regarding the horticultural changes and visitors appreciate the efforts of the gardening group. It has also resulted in a better understanding between volunteers and staff of the complexities of park management and maintenance.

In summary, there is now a better sense of pride and ownership amongst staff and volunteers. This in turn gives confidence in the offer and the ability to 'sell' the facilities now available.

Outcome 5 – improving management and maintenance

Summary

Overall 6 projects have reported 'actual' data for Outcome 5, which is 9% of the total sample.

Only 30% of parks have a baseline Green Flag score

13 have targets to exceed the Green Flag pass mark of 66

Ways to improve management and maintenance so far include apprenticeship schemes, more staff, on site staff, increase in supervision and more responsive maintenance

2 projects have improved their baseline Green Flag score and 3 have met or exceeded their target

Projects have used a variety of ways to improve maintenance and management, including;

o Appointment of apprentice gardeners to supplement existing staff
o Improving design specification to reduce maintenance burden – for example litter bins that prevent wildlife from pulling out litter
o Dedicated on site staff
o Greater emphasis on litter picking and tidying
o Increased staffing
o Enhanced supervision
o More responsive ad hoc maintenance

So far, 6 projects have reviewed their baseline Green Flag score, with 2 improving on their baseline position and 3 either meeting or exceeding their target;

Figure 50: Projects reviewing their baseline score

Project	Baseline	Target	Actual
Burslem Park, Stoke on Trent	39	66	43
Gheluvelt Park, Worcester	70-74	80	70-74
Hale Park, Halton	N/A	66	77
Sconce and Devon Park, Newark	66-69	75-79	75-79
South Park Gardens, London	N/A	66	70-74
West Bromwich, Dartmouth Park	N/A	66	48

Future plans

As the majority of projects are still in the delivery stage, future plans for improving maintenance and management are important to consider. These include increasing the involvement of Friends groups and other volunteers in management, improved public engagement, employing dedicated staff and increasing responsive maintenance works;

o   *We are also looking to support the 'friends' group in increasing its numbers and skills of the group to take an even more active role in the management of the park.* (Burslem Park, Stoke on Trent)

o   *Improved public engagement, educating park users with regard to issues that might have an adverse effect to the park e.g. not feeding the pigeons and Canada geese.*(Stevenage Town Centre Gardens)

o   *By undertaking the 25 recommendations in the Management and Maintenance Plan e.g. employ a Community gardener, establish a robust and proactive maintenance regime for all aspects of the garden, develop a performance system for environmental management, implement the proposal in the marketing plan etc* (Marine Cove Gardens, Burnham on Sea)

o   *Regular inspections of all structures & monuments. Provision for cleaning and graffiti removal of all structures & monuments. Long term provision for painting of structures and monuments. Regular drainage inspections and rodding Provisional allowances for repair / reinstatement work to hard surfaces. Increased provision for litter picking in anticipation of greater park use & events.* (Burngreen Park, Kilsyth)

o   *The appointment of a senior gardener on site will be a considerable improvement for the management of the site. In addition the new improved building footprint (with improved heating, plumbing and heat recovery systems) will ensure that the new building will be in line with modern regulations and can be maintained with greater efficiency* (Gyllyngdune Gardens, Falmouth)

Projects also identified a number of critical success factors for achieving outcome 5;

o   Consider the maintenance costs of all improvements

o   Consider the impact of Local Authority cuts on new and existing projects and build these into maintenance plans

o   Build volunteers' capacity to become involve in management and maintenance

Satisfaction rates have increased significantly

For projects with actual data, we can see that satisfaction has increased dramatically, from 61% to 80%.

Figure 51: Actual satisfaction rates

	All	>75% draw down	50-75% draw down	25-50% draw down	<25% draw down
Baseline	61%	47%	66%	73%	66%
Target	82%	85%	80%	87%	78%
Actual	80%	No data	79%	91%	66%
Number of projects with actual data	17	-	4	5	8

Overall, 12 projects have shown an increase in satisfaction, 9 of which have either already met or have exceeded their target. For example;

o   Bushey Rose Garden, Hertsmere – increased from 34% to 99% (target was 80%)

o   Devonport Park, Plymouth – 19% to 76% (target was 75%)

o   Hale Park, Halton – 42% to 70% (target 65%)

Survey results back this up, with 86% of projects which have completed the capital works and 40% of projects being delivered saying that satisfaction has increased.

Case study: Hale Park, Halton

With better equipment and more staff the park has had Green Flag status for 2 years. A rise in standards and people's expectations now means the park is held in higher regards, local people are now proud of the park. The responsive team have actually witnessed an increase in reports of minor vandalism, graffiti etc. The team believe that this is caused by higher expectations of the local community now the improvement work is complete.

Using GreenStat measurements visitor satisfaction has increased from 42% to 70%. Overall the park has a very positive feedback score from the increased number of individuals visiting. The health benefits of using the park are being realised by the local community. With significant improvements having been made to the park the council now utilise the area as a starting place for the 5km run, bridge run and cycle events.

P4P support has provided a suitable drainage area along the main road which runs through the park to the old estate. Spot profile checks taken out by the friends of the park have provided them with key information relating to the change in visitor perceptions. More families have been seen at the park as the perception of the park is now one of cleanliness and family friendly.

Being the predominant greenspace in Hale Village, the park has to take on a multi-functional usage. Evidence from those individuals who utilise the park demonstrates that the park redevelopment has achieved and exceeded initial expectations. The local football team have a full drainage system incorporated into their pitches, the new children's playground has attracted families from all over the catchment area and older individuals are using the park as a means of improving their health.

Stakeholder views

As well as analysing data from projects, we also carried out surveys and interviews with HLF staff and wider stakeholders. The majority of staff and stakeholders interviewed felt that the programme has had a large impact on achieving the outcomes, in particular through increasing the number of visitors to parks. It is positive to note that no respondents felt that the programme has had a zero or negative impact on any of the outcomes.

Figure 52: Stakeholder views on project impact

	Very large impact	Large impact	Moderate impact	Small impact
Bringing different audiences in contact with Heritage	15%	70%	7%	7%
Increasing visitor numbers to parks	44%	33%	19%	4%
Making Local Authorities think differently about heritage assets	37%	30%	33%	0%
Improving skills in the parks sector	26%	37%	33%	4%
Increasing the number of volunteers involved in parks	26%	63%	11%	0%
Bringing different volunteers in contact with greenspace and heritage	19%	44%	26%	11%
Restoring the historic environment	41%	44%	15%	0%

In terms of comparing the Parks for People programme to previous HLF funded parks programmes, staff and stakeholders felt that it has a greater emphasis on people; in terms of targeting new audiences, volunteers and community development activities. This is attributed to BIG's involvement in the programme. Stakeholders also felt that the programme has a greater emphasis on achieving outcomes and self-evaluation. Stakeholders also agree that this greater emphasis on self-evaluation is changing the way Local Authorities approach monitoring and evaluation of parks, and this is having wider benefits.

"Parks' staff are starting to understand that measurements demonstrating economic and social impact are helpful, and worth spending money on"

All respondents agree that the Parks for People programme represents good use of Lottery funding; the programme benefits a larger cross section of society than other heritage programmes and the impacts achieved on visitor numbers represents good value for money.

"With emphasis on a community approach to sustainability underpinned by a costed management and maintenance framework PfP delivers good value for money overall. Particularly as parks should represent easily accessible heritage."

Park stakeholders also agree that the funding has been well-spent, with the majority stating that improvement works have had a large impact on the park and the wider community.

"It has definitely improved it and made it a much nicer place to visit. More people are coming into the park and local area from further away which is having a very positive impact." (stakeholder at Devonport Park, Plymouth)

Looking ahead

This chapter summarises the key conclusions from the findings outlined in previous chapters. It makes recommendation for consideration by HLF, BIG and projects in order to maximise impact as the programme continues. It also considers how recent policy changes will impact on the programme and the greenspace sector as a whole.

Key conclusions

Despite a historical lack of data and experience of monitoring and evaluation in the greenspace sector, we have managed to collect a comprehensive suite of evaluation data and information from all 70 projects in our study. Through the support provided we have been able to drastically improve the ways parks supported through the programme measure their success. Despite some issues with data quality and validity, the dataset collected is unprecedented and goes a considerable way to demonstrating the potential and actual impact of the programme to date.

The impact to date is based on a small number of projects completing the capital works, as no projects have yet finished completely.

The majority of projects are considering ways to achieve all 5 outcomes, however for Outcome 1 and Outcome 3 there is an emphasis on increasing numbers rather than changing the profile of visitors/volunteers. And only a small proportion of projects have a baseline for Outcome 5, compared to over 90% of projects for all other outcomes.

Overall the programme has made a difference to the ways in which Local Authorities think about audience development, heritage management, engaging volunteers and skills development, as well as their approach to monitoring and reporting park usage.

So far good progress has been made with increasing visitor numbers. 15% of projects have completed and so far the programme has achieved 16% of its targeted increase. And 7 projects have already met or exceeded their own targets. Projects are using a range of methods to engage visitors, from events and activities programmes to improvements in marketing and communication. Being able to fund dedicated staff to implement these plans has been crucial.

Excellent progress has also been made with capital improvements. 35% of buildings and features to be restored have been completed, despite only 18% of the funding being drawn down from projects. Projects are also looking at ways to improve visitors' understanding and appreciation of heritage, through the activities and events, tours and other heritage related projects. They aren't just relying on the capital improvements to achieve these targets.

Projects are also successfully engaging volunteers in the delivery of many of these activities which helps to ensure that the programme meets the needs of park users. The fact that 100% of completed projects have seen an increase in understanding/appreciation shows that these activities are working. There is also evidence that the programme is having a wider impact on park users, individuals working in and volunteering in parks and the wider community. Parks are perceived

as being safer places to visit, local people are fiercely proud of their parks and the improvements are raising the profile of their local areas.

Good progress has also been made with engaging volunteers, with 24% of the targeted increase in volunteers being achieved. The majority of projects are starting to work with volunteers before the capital works start, which is very positive.

19% of staff to be trained has also been achieved, with staff gaining qualifications, enhanced skills and knowledge. This has a personal impact as well as helping to ensure that parks are better managed and maintained.

Management and maintenance is also improving as a result of the programme; additional revenue funding has enabled projects to employ more staff and improve maintenance. Increased involvement of local residents in volunteering activities and increased use as a result of the improvements and activities is also resulting in greater expectations from local people about how the space should be managed and maintained; there is therefore greater pressure from users and the local community to maintain these high standards.

However, only 8% of the target for volunteers to be trained has been achieved to date. Many projects admit that the development of training plans for volunteers is considered once the capital works are complete. There is a risk that volunteer involvement will decrease following the completion of the capital works, and projects need to ensure that they maintain involvement in order to achieve targets.

The key area of weakness in the programme is the lack of focus on targeting audience development or volunteer plans to specific groups. Despite outcome 1 and 3 being about changing the profile of visitors and volunteers, there has been no real change in profiles so far. Only a small number of projects have identified hard to reach groups and are actively trying to engage these groups in the project.

Projects also need to review their current status in terms of Green Flag, as without having an idea of where they are now, implementing plans to achieve the award will be extremely difficult.

Although it is relatively early days in the development of the programme, the evidence collected so far suggests that overall the programme is on track to achieve its outcomes. However, projects need to consider audience and volunteer profiles in more detail and look to target their approaches to engage more hard to reach groups.

The future?

At the time of writing, the majority of Local Authorities are facing severe budget cuts. This will have major constraints on the ability of Authorities to maintain high quality parks. The continuation of the Parks for People programme represents a unique opportunity for Local Authorities to invest in parks, and the HLF and BIG requirements to maintain the park to Green Flag status gives park managers the "stick" they need to retain their revenue budgets.

The programme also represents an opportunity for Civil Society organisations to benefit from funding. However, many stakeholders interviewed felt that although the role of the voluntary sector in parks management should increase in the future, the application process for voluntary groups may need to be simplified, and a greater level of support for applicants will be needed.

The need to demonstrate value has never been greater, and the importance of self-evaluation in programmes such as Parks for People continues to be recognised by both policy makers and grant recipients. Despite the completion of our contract, we feel that the momentum generated during the last three years should not be lost. There is an opportunity for HLF staff and monitors to continue to support projects in the systematic collection of evaluation data, in order to ensure that the full impact of the programme is reflected in later years.

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