

Government Funding available for Pocket Parks

The MHCLG are inviting applications from community-led organisations working in partnership with local authorities and other local partners to apply for grants, from a £1.35 million fund, to establish new pocket parks creating safe and usable green spaces and for helping to restore and renovate existing parks which have fallen into disrepair, bringing them back into public use.

Grants of up to £15,000 for new pocket parks and £25,000 for renovation of existing parks split between capital and revenue expenditure. Grants will be paid to the appropriate principal local authority that is supporting the application (funding will be paid using powers under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003) so that it can be released to the community in order to deliver the project.

Pocket parks are defined for the purpose of this programme as a piece of land of up to 0.4 hectares (although many are 0.02 hectares - equivalent to the size of a tennis court) which may already be under grass, but which is unused, undeveloped or derelict. We have set an upper limit on new green spaces because we want to support communities to develop smaller, derelict plots in neighbourhoods where they are sited to be close to where communities will use and benefit from them.

The prospectus states there is no prescription on what a pocket park should look like and applications from projects aiming to improve their local town centre or high street with a community green space are welcomed. The aim is to increase access to good quality green space in a sustainable and community-led manner. The programme also supports communities to develop new green spaces or improve existing ones that are in poor condition, that provide people with better quality spaces; increasing opportunities for social mixing, healthy living, relaxation, play, food growing and contact with nature addressing health and wellbeing, integration social isolation or loneliness.

MHCLG expect the grant to be used as:

- 1) Capital – support to prepare a site, earth-works, landscaping, tree planting, structural works etc. and put it into a good condition for further development
OR
- 2) Resource – to secure support from relevant experts (i.e. landscape architects, lawyers, horticulturalists or wider green sector experts) and/or to connect with existing green space support networks such as Friends of Parks Groups. You may also wish to use some of this element of the funding to ensure a robust sustainability strategy is developed.

The fund is not for general maintenance and we will not fund work that would happen anyway. Funding cannot be used to top up the budget of an existing project UNLESS communities can provide clear evidence that the proposed work would not have happened without the funding. An additional payment of £500 will be added to all successful grant applications to enable applicants to access support to conduct a full, detailed evaluation of the project, by buying in professional assistance should they require it.

Some of the key points about applications:

- Must be community-led
- Renovation of parks or parts of a park should address specific local needs and lead to a significant increase in the use of the park, such as:
 - bringing a children's play area back into

use; • encouraging local people to use parks for exercise and physical activities and improve physical or mental wellbeing; • bringing communities together to overcome social barriers, for instance younger and older people or people from different cultural backgrounds; and • encouraging people to use the park who may be less likely to do so, for instance disabled people or people from BAME backgrounds. . Ownership of the site in which the park is located may rest with the community, the local authority or other public sector body, or a private sector body or trust including a housing association.

- All applications will need to provide written evidence of agreement from the landowner to the works or activities outlined in the application.
- All applications must also be supported in writing by the Council, which must be willing to work in partnership with the applicant, hold the grant and pass it on to the community
- Must detail areas of local need and support with evidence and data
- Must set out how the development will be sustained beyond the grant period
- Must be submitted by no later than 31st December 2019

For more details please see this website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pocket-parks-helping-communities-transform-unloved-neglected-or-derelict-areas-into-new-green-spaces>

If you are interested in submitting a bid for this grant and would like to discuss with the Open Space Strategy team, please email zoe.whiteside@chorley.gov.uk