



Northumberland

Response to Newcastle City Council consultation on “The Future of Newcastle’s Parks and Allotments 2017”.

Submitted 20th April 2017.

1. What do you think should be the main priority for how parks are run in future? Choose one option.

Generate income to keep the parks maintained (for example, through holding events in them and charging event organisers for this, or looking for business sponsorship)

Maintain the parks in their current state of repair, with the same level of facilities

Maintain parks without an increase in (for example) car parks, advertising or commercial events, even if this means some deterioration in their appearance

Ensure that community groups, not commercial organisations, have priority when it comes to using the parks

Increase available facilities, such as cafes or recreational equipment, and use business sponsorship and advertising in the parks to pay for this if necessary

2. If you have comments about this, or you found it difficult to choose just one priority, please tell us about this here:

Northumberland Wildlife Trust feel that maintaining the natural value of those green spaces in the consultation already designated as Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves (Throckley Pond, Throckley/Walbottle Dene – Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and LNR, Sugley Dene – Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, Denton Dene – Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, Jesmond Dene, Havannah – LNR, Big Waters Meadows – adjacent to NWT’s SSSI, Percy Pit and Walbottle Brickworks, Walker Riverside,) is an essential priority for any new management body.

Northumberland Wildlife Trust reviewed the health of nature on these Local Wildlife Sites for Newcastle City Council in 2016. While the review recognised the Council estate as remaining valuable for nature, many site reviews highlighted concerns with loss of species diversity associated with reductions in site management, (e.g. at Walbottle Brickworks, part of the Percy Pit site, where scrub encroachment is causing important habitat to be lost).

A new charitable trust may be able to provide a sharper focus on maintaining and improving standards for both people and nature, potentially less affected by changes in public funding priorities. However, Northumberland Wildlife Trust would urge Newcastle City Council to put in place guaranteed long-term funding certainty for any new management body, establishing an endowment or other financial vehicle to ensure income long-term to compliment other forms of revenue generation. Lessons from other studies (<http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/learning-rethink-parks>) and practical experience (e.g. our own nature reserve portfolio and the great creativity of [Green Estate](#) in Sheffield showcased on visit to Sheffield's park with Newcastle parks activists in March 28th 2017) suggest successful green space maintenance does require "core" income. Without it, the new management body may struggle to maintain or improve standards.

3. Which of these options would you say is your main concern about the future of the parks? Choose one option.

That increasing income by, for example, hosting more commercial events or having more car parking at the parks, will change the park environment

That people's health and wellbeing will suffer without access to park facilities

That all parks will fall into a state of disrepair and become unsafe

That some parks will fall into a worse state of disrepair than others

4. If you have comments about this, or you found it difficult to choose just one priority, please tell us about this here:

Research highlights the essential links between community health and access to local high quality green space e.g.

researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0538/POST-PN-0538.pdf

<http://www.hutton.ac.uk/research/projects/green-health>.

Lack of investment threatens access to green space in Newcastle, through actual loss of access (e.g. at Sugley Dene) or perceived loss of access due to limited maintenance (e.g. Hodgkin Park). Partnerships like Greening Wingrove, focusing on Nunsmoor Park, and the Hodgkin Park partner group are committed to working with the City Council to improve green space access to achieve demonstrable community health and wellbeing gains. Northumberland Wildlife Trust is committed to supporting this partnership

approach and would expect any new management body to welcome, encourage and facilitate partnerships wherever diversity of involvement could achieve better outcomes for communities and nature.

5. What do you think could be a positive outcome, or outcomes, from this proposal? Please tell us here:

A new charitable trust may be able to provide a sharper focus on maintaining and improving standards for both people and nature, potentially less affected by changes in public funding priorities. This could include costed, detailed site management plans that recognise the special natural features of specific sites and facilitate partnership working to deliver high quality management for nature.

However, Northumberland Wildlife Trust would urge Newcastle City Council to put in place some long-term funding certainty for any new management body, establishing an endowment or other financial vehicle to guarantee income long-term to compliment other forms of revenue generation. Lessons from other studies (<http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/learning-rethink-parks>) and practical experience (e.g. our own nature reserve portfolio and the great creativity of [Green Estate](#) in Sheffield showcased on visit to Sheffield's park with Newcastle parks activists in March 2017) suggest successful green space maintenance does require "core" income. Without it, the new management body may struggle to maintain or improve standards for people and nature.

6. Do you have any other concerns about this proposal? Please tell us here:

The proposal does not fully recognise the diversity of site types included in the proposal. The Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves highlighted in our consultation response are crucial for both people and nature and their distinctive and management needs (including those of protected species e.g. great crested newt) must be recognised by Newcastle City Council and any new management body. The Council has a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of policy or decision making as stated in Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Northumberland Wildlife Trust is committed to supporting any new management body and may be able to provide both advice and practical support associated with wildlife conservation as we have done on many NCC sites historically.

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7. Do you have any suggestions about how we could improve the proposal? Please tell us here: