



Future Parks Accelerator

Extension Funding Application Form (Draft)

Please answer the following questions as fully as possible, taking into account the word limits in brackets. Please provide as much detail and evidence as you can, as this will help us to build the case for your extension funding.

Future Parks Accelerator remains a strategic priority for our organisations and we very much hope for a positive outcome from our extension funding application, however it is important to note that your application will be entering a highly competitive funding environment. You must present a convincing case for investment that clearly demonstrates the progress you have made so far and shows that you have a clear plan in place to secure a healthy and sustainable future for your P&GS.

A process map is attached to this document for your reference.

Please seek support from your Account Manager during this process, it is their role to help and advise you. If you have any questions or concerns, you can also contact Eleanor.Potter@futureparks.org.uk.

The deadline for submission is **Friday 7th August 2020**. Please submit your application forms and any attachments to Georgina.Harvey@futureparks.org.uk.

1. Please tell us about your FPA project to date:

Key: Expressions of Interest (EOI)
Parks and Green Spaces (P&GS)
Bristol and Bath Parks Foundation (BBPF)

a) What have you achieved so far? [500 words]

Our approach is to re-position the park service politically and societally, attracting new partnerships and investment – delivering change at the heart of decision making within the council and how the city works together to achieve better parks. In February 2021, we will publish a prospectus which presents information regarding the in scope parks (now called the Brochure). This will be marketed across many sectors, local to global and Expressions of Interest (EOI) will be invited, asking citizens, voluntary sector orgs, health funders and the business communities, to submit Expressions of Interest telling us what opportunities they see in Bristol's Green spaces, what they could bring, what results they would want to see, including ideas for partnerships with the council.

Our new strategy and action plan will be informed by the results of this market testing approach, as well as focussed work in other areas including health research, biodiversity mapping and asset reviewing, volunteering and community development etc.

The Project is currently going through a change process to reprofile both spend and activities to October 2021. This will help mitigate the impacts of Covid-19 and the ability of potential partners to engage. The process has joined up the project milestones with the internal strategic work needed to deliver transformation

As we put the foundations in place for the EOI phase we have delivered:

Reviews/mapping/baselining

- Full asset review, collating details of all our parks built and natural assets.
- Agreed principles for deciding which sites will be included in the Brochure.
- 19 community engagement sessions (4 face to face, 15 zoom)
- Online survey with over 1700 responses (exploring how people used their parks, pre and during lockdown)
- Worked with Vivid Economics to finely tune the Bristol Greenkeeper accounts
- Commissioned ecological surveys on 160 sites
- Initiated negotiations with 8 community anchor organisations and 6 community groups to help develop potential EOI

Business opportunities

- Pricing and costs analysis of our Catering Services and Nursery Business to help inform our future pricing strategy and in house commercial opportunities
- 'Businesses to target' plan - well developed
- Full range of sponsorship products being explored
- Draft report from Acorn highlighting the structure of investment partnerships and identify possible commercial operations and activities for Bristol's Parks

Health

- Literature review of how parks can improve health – with a focus on non-users who need Parks and Green Spaces (P&GS) for health purposes
- Initiated partnership building with health funders (CCG), public health professionals and parks managers to explore the findings of the health research in the Bristol context AND agree to work together to develop pilot projects and share data.

Comms

- Produced project (not parks service) branding and explanatory video clip about the project

Charitable Foundation

- Board training to Bristol and Bath Parks Foundation (BBPF)
- BBPF grant giving scoping report

Strategy

- Drafted Work plan for developing the PGS strategy

Evaluation

- Evaluation Logic model developed and base line information across all sections being assembled

We are currently also planning a pilot phase on two sites and a simulation on a larger site, to test our processes and emerging decision framework.

b) What difference has your FPA project made to date in your place? [250 words] –

The Bristol Future Parks (BFP) project has strengthened the standing of the Parks and Green Spaces (P&GS) services within the Council and it has allowed us to develop a number of strong partnerships around the city, in the following ways:

- Political buy in, level with Councillor Asher Craig, Cabinet lead for Communities, Equalities and Public Health proactively engaging, taking an active part as a member

of the governance board and committing to front Bristol Future Parks (BFP) in the video miniclip –

- Raised the profile of Parks with Directors and Executive Directors; including Growth and Regeneration lead Stephen Peacock, which has increased internal connectivity between departments, such as
 - enabling us to renegotiate how Corporate Landlord is applied to the Parks Service
 - opening up discussions with the urban design and planning teams, to ensure parks are linked into the refresh of the spatial plan and the regeneration of the city centre.
 - placing P&GS high on the agenda of corporate priorities.
- Initiated new partnerships with health professionals and funders, both within Public Health and the NHS – laying the foundations for future joint working to invest in parks and improve health outcomes
- Adding value and supporting the development of the newly established Parks Foundation
- Brought the narratives of the impacts of austerity on our parks to the fore, highlighting the need to do things differently – noticeable change in mind set at community events

c) Do you feel that your work to date has laid the groundwork for the systems change / transformation you are aiming for? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is? [250 words]

BFP aims to deliver the roadmap for transformation in the form of a new PGS Strategy. The Prospectus will inform this by testing the markets (community, voluntary sector, sports, health and business) for both opportunities and appetite across the sectors to work together to safeguard the city's parks and greenspaces for the future.

The need for timely systems change has become evident, there is still much to do, however, the high profile nature of BFP is enabling space for these changes to be explored at all levels within the Council. E.g.

- Bringing forward the emerging Volunteering strategy so that it develops in time for the EO1 phase
- Identifying that workforce change is needed in order to deliver potential pipeline of community projects, enable volunteering as an additional resource and continue business liaison, should the Prospectus successfully bring in interest from business sectors
- Identifying the risk to the service of Corporate Landlord and agreement from Senior Director to renegotiate how Parks Service engages with it.
- Setting up an internal working group with legal, procurement and finance to explore how sponsorship products can be ring-fenced for parks, how transparency can be assured, and outcomes evaluated.

Some areas for systems change still look challenging, e.g. ring-fencing income and

protecting budgets, the project has identified that we need to explore other investment models and we plan to work with BBPF and Environmental Finance to do this.

The real foundations for systems change will come post EOI which is a critical period when the new operating models will be set.

d) What have you learnt so far? [250 words]

Key learning includes:

- Years of cuts have resulted in a loss of organisational memory; information scattered across different systems and held in the heads of a few people, the time it took to bring this work together was much greater than planned.
- Bristol Future Parks is a huge undertaking, with a broad range of work packages, each requiring multi strands of work; however the core team structure is small, and temporary loss of staff to the C-19 response, further reduced capacity. This identified the need to expand the core team and to expand the parks management team responsibilities to increase capacity.
- The need for strong partnerships, as the Council focused on the C-19 response, the project lost priority and experienced internal barriers from the Communications team. To maintain momentum, we worked with our external project partners, to develop and deliver the parks survey and our online communications strategy.
- The need for our commercial business teams to increase their commercial skillset and be more customer focused, e.g. the need for upselling training, benchmarking pricing against competitors to improve gross profit and surveying customers.
- When venturing into a new sector, support it needed to guide learning. During the first phase of the commissioned business opportunities work, it took several discussions between the consultants and the management team before we really understood what was needed from the commission, together Simon Cronk and Acorn supported that learning.
- The strengths and weakness of the Greenkeeper Natural Capital Accounts and how we might use them confidently
- The importance of our parks to the health of the city, further amplified during C-19

e) How have you shared what you have done so far with others? [250 words]

There has been a host of opportunities to share our experiences via cohort events, as well as being active member of the natural capital, volunteering, working groups. Bristol has:

- Delivered a peer sharing session about our experience of doing an asset review, discussing the barriers and obstacles, and how we overcame this. This was a challenging part of our project wanted to share how we thought others could learn from or improve upon our processes.
- Ella Hogg (Parks Volunteer Coordinator) presented a FPA cohort session on Volunteering in Parks, covering Bristol's approach and the tools she is developing to forge a "volunteer positive" parks service.

- Actively contributed as the case study for the discussion lead by Simon Cronk and Mollie Dodds around procuring business and consultant support

Internal sharing:

- Learning from NT challenge with area parks offices and partners
- Findings from the FPA support with the business analysis commission (Mollie Dodd's) with the internal business unit managers to start planning the future developments

External sharing:

- Health findings and mapping data at the Health in Parks event and identified areas of need within the city. This will lead to greater partnership between health partners and the parks service.
- NHC spoke about Children's play in Bristol at the World Urban Parks Virtual Conference – 6th May 2020, an introduction to BFP was included in the presentation

There has also been a lot of learning through the various FPA webinars that Colleagues from across the council have taken part in and these have opened up ideas which will inform future change.

2. Please tell us about your future plans:

- a) How do you plan to embed your work to ensure that your project achieves lasting change?
[250 words]

Political and Senior leadership buy-in is driving our transformation plan, giving authority and direction to maximise opportunity through the Parks Prospectus approach and in agreeing a new 25-year parks strategy. Each FPA funded work package has a senior sponsor.

We:

- Are making inroads into partnership working with Health funders, we plan to second a public health manager, to embed the connections internally between parks and health and grow the external partnership.
- Are surveying our natural biodiversity to create a benchmark from which we can build and measure against in the future.
- Are planning to support grounds staff through training and by changing the way of working to enable partnership working with our Volunteers
- Have agreed a 'consolidation and expansion' plan to increase parks volunteering activity, including a time measurement tool which will act as a powerful advocacy to demonstrating value
- Will work with 18 local Anchor organisations to reach communities and ensure that citizens are engaged and want to submit project ideas.
- Are creating a cross departmental network of stakeholders to internally champion the aims and objectives of BFP. Eg Sustainably, Planning, Design, Community Development and One City Teams
- Will be exploring different financial models to ensure continued funding for parks, eg working with Environmental Finance and working with BBPF to explore how

they can hold sponsorship funding for reinvestment into parks.

- Will hold media on board events to ensure that the local press are knowledgeable and supportive of BFP

If successful, the prospectus approach will be repeated and we have already identified smallholdings as the next phase.

b) What are the main risks associated with your future plans? [150 words]

Risks which include:

- The market testing takes place late into the FPA project cycle (Feb – May2021) leaving little time to:
 - Build relationships with potential investors
 - Build a pipeline of sponsorship opportunities
 - Align opportunities with the P&GS Strategy
 - Build community buy in
 - Bring community project forward
- COVID-19:
 - Business sector may not be ready to engage or invest,
 - Community organisations may need to focus on economic survival
 - health partnership may be distracted by a second wave
- Lack of Citizen buy in, linked to perceptions that the project is too focused on commercialisation/big brands rather than public benefits and opportunities
- Council procurement processes are lengthy and could deter potential partners
- Failure to deliver a sustainable financial model for the P&GS service due to lack of interest through the Expression of Interest Phase.
- Change in Political Leadership in May 2021.

c) What is your project leading for? What further plans do you have for influencing change in the wider sector? [250 words]

We believe that our approach will become sector leading and we will have created a model which others can adopt and adapt. For example:

- We are inviting expressions of interest from commercial partners to develop a portfolio of commercial opportunities and over time, we will invest the revenue generated to deliver our strategic priorities including supporting parks in areas of greatest need, and measuring the benefits.
- We will have created a volunteering model which will deliver volunteering opportunities outside of the traditional approach, local authorities currently support. Bristol is a 'volunteer positive' organisation and we wish to push the boundaries and imbed volunteering into Bristol's DNA and encourage through our programme non-traditional approaches which will embrace a new audience from

across the city; and include opportunities such as coaching and mentoring, survey work, volunteer rangers, environmental records, walk and talk sessions with community leaders etc.

- As a dedicated parks charity, the BBPF represents a unique opportunity. We expect the Foundations to develop new relationships between business and communities and deliver mutually beneficial community programmes, in partnership, alongside the parks service.
- We have the desire to create a decision making process that enables us to prioritise the opportunity that fits best within any one site, taking into consideration all aspects of that site, such as biodiversity, health, community, equalities, income potential and local and city context. We are currently working with internal and external organisations so that we can develop this process.

3. Please tell us more about your extension funding application:

- a) Please confirm the amount of extension funding you are requesting.

£238050

- b) Why do you need extension funding, and what difference would it make to your project?
[500 words]

- c)

At the end of the current FPA funding we will have

- Identified opportunities within the city's P&GS, including commercial leisure-based activities, community initiatives and corporate sponsorship.
- Evaluate ideas submitted through our EOI phase and progress some community opportunities.
- Drafted the P&GS Strategy ready for consultation.
- A portfolio of ideas.

We will be at the cusp of something exciting, the extension funding will increase our ability to respond to more opportunities during the current project and enable us to progress others, to get closer to making them a reality

Enterprise and business relations: we will be able to progress the complex and valuable commercial EOI through the procurement phases. We will develop a strong pipeline of corporate sponsorship agreements linking organisation to community, enabling us to argue for funds internally to embed the relationship-management role within the parks service.

Community engagement: we will have increased capacity to work with communities, giving support to progress more ideas beyond the EOI phase. We will set up and test systems that support community initiatives in the longer term. We will be able to signpost more individuals and groups to develop their projects, supporting communities wishing to set up 'friends of' groups, fundraise or progress Community Asset Transfers. We will commission local 'anchor' organisation to provide support and guidance to take community ideas forward. We will also develop and adopt a toolkit for consulting citizens about commercialisation or major changes within parks.

Parks and Green Space Strategy: we will deliver a strong consultation process ensuring that our citizens and political leaders' buy-into the parks transformation programme. The strategy will be adopted by the Council by March 2022. As part of this consultation we will

trail the consultation toolkit and start conversations with citizens about those sites where larger scale opportunities have been identified.

Partnership development: we will invest a modest sum to continue to support and strengthen our partnership network and support the BBPF to generate unrestricted funds to cover its core costs, including development of a business plan and systems to trade.

Health programme – we aim for parks to become a significant provider of public health benefit. With the extension funding we can second a public health manager to help us strategically link parks and public health, develop and embed partnership working with the health sector and develop health programmes.

Evaluation: we will continue to evaluate the project through the Natural History Consortium and draw on the collective power of their 13 members to evaluate and develop high quality learning to share with the FPA cohort and other Local Authorities

Volunteering: We have recently made significant progress in developing our volunteering programme. We have set out an ambitious 5-year plan (outside of the current FPA investment) to double volunteering to at least 10,000 hours per year. We are embedding systems and capacity to achieve this. With additional resources we will be able to support our Volunteer Coordinator to measure the impact and value of volunteering and develop training materials. Giving us the evidence we will need to embed this role/ function into the parks service workforce.

Nature Programme: Parks and green space can make a significant contribution to becoming a nature-rich city. We are developing a plan to contribute to the city's nature recovery network. With additional resources we will be able to digitise survey data ready for inclusion on our online brochure in time for the EOI phase and conduct woodland surveys in the spring of 2021. We will also trial Edinburgh University's Natural Capital Standards tool.

d) What would happen to your project if you are **not** awarded a grant increase? [250 words]

We remain committed to making BFP project a success. Ability to succeed will need resources to take ideas forward. If the extension and funding is not secured this will significantly weaken our ability to get a number of the work streams across the line in a timely manner. Therefore in the absence of alternative core funding, now much less likely as we enter a covid19 period of austerity, inevitably we would need to make compromises.

Making ideas a reality will require careful navigation through the procurement process, ensuring that citizens are informed and in agreement. We would still do all this, but with fewer dedicated staff we would miss opportunities and limit our engagement to the basics resulting, in the risk of the project becoming mediocre.

We would make less progress in taking sponsorship and 'match-making' opportunities forward where the potential was there but complexities required careful unpicking and resolution.

It would leave core elements of the project such as the health partnership less well developed and would not afford the opportunity to embed health work within our service.

Our plans and programmes would be less informed, less progressed and less complete.

Our strategy would remain our flagship expression of ambition, but itself compromised by

lack of capacity to build-in all the learning from our BFP programme. Ultimately, our ability to re-position parks to capture internal and external investment would be lower.

- e) What are the long-term risks for your green space portfolio if your project is **not** awarded a grant increase? [250 words]

Our staff have embraced the concept and need for change and we need to be in a position to fully deliver and implement those changes. If we cannot conclude the project we will have ultimately failed to re-think parks, leaving hopscotch of good ideas and initiatives but not the breakthrough we believe is possible – we will still have public parks just not delivering to their potential for the city.

Key long term risks include

- Continued austerity cuts to the service budget resulting in the further decline in the quality of the City's Parks
- Reduction in Senior Management interest in the parks service and subsequently the service being passed over when opportunities (such as the potential opportunities which may come out of the Covid 19 crisis) arise
- Increased citizen dissatisfaction in Bristol's Parks

In addition to this, we are developing a partnered parks service – where public and private finance and support come together. Failure to capitalise on the fantastic opportunity that is Bristol Future Parks risks this future. We will inevitably lose support from partner organisations seeing us slip back into business as usual.

- f) Why do you think we should support your application for extension funding? [250 words]

We have clear ideas about our future park service and the role we should play in supporting a vibrant, healthy and fair city. We believe our journey offers sector leading learning that others can adopt and adapt. We are stimulating and developing enterprise partnerships, developing social investment opportunities, supporting communities to identify and progress local solutions, developing our approach to volunteering and placing parks at the centre of a health revolution.

With further investment we will be in a strong position to take forward opportunities presented by our soft market testing EOI phase, and complete the evaluation and dissemination of key elements ready for others to adopt.

We will develop a decision-making framework that will allow us to evaluate and process multiple expressions of interests. We will compare ideas that will compete for the same space offering different opportunities. In deciding one idea over another, we will need to build a model that is transparent and fair, that can identify strategic priorities, such as revenue generation, and supports local ideas like nature or health based initiatives. We will need political and community support to get the balance right.

The newly formed Bristol and Bath Parks Foundation is a fantastic opportunity to progress our shared ambition to build partnerships between businesses and park communities. We will explore how sponsorship models can exploit this collective relationship between local authority, charity and community and be able to demonstrate success in how this works in our region offering solutions to others.

What have you done to minimise the level of additional grant you are asking for? [150 words]

Bristol Future Parks is currently reprofiling both milestones and funding, to stretch the project until October 2021. Most of the core staff costs are included within this reprofile however, it would mean that we will be operating on a shoestring at a key and very busy time, just pre and post Expression of Interest, so additional funding has been requested to add value during this time as well as to extend the project to March 22.

We have identified £57000 (23.9%) Match Funding in the form of staff costs, including the continued input of the Strategy Officer, Volunteer Coordinator as part of the Bristol Future Parks team and increased Management input into the project

g) What sort of support package do you think you might need during the extension phase of your project? [150 words]

The key support that we will be needing is

- Continued support from Casey Morrison re Volunteering and Participation
- Continue support from Mollie Dodd and Simon Cronk re business support and advise, and to have a place on our emerging Advisory Board.
- Knowledge on visitor experience, including programming, service vaster flow and engagement
- Communications branding and marketing
- Sharing and lectures on all Green infrastructure and climate issues
- Natural capital accounting and health modelling
- Alternative business and funding models

4. Please tell us about your parks and greenspaces during the Coronavirus crisis, and your plans for recovery:

a) Describe the role parks in your place have played in helping your community stay resilient and healthy during the Covid-19 crisis. What have you noticed about who and how parks are used? Has this resulted in any changes to your FPA project? [250 words]

The relevance and importance of Bristol's parks has been notable during this crisis, as a lifeline for communities, especially those with limited or no access to any green space. Politically this has given us greater political profile and placed us higher on the list of corporate priorities.

During the pandemic we saw a significant increase in the use of public space, with estimates of around 30% increase in usage. People were utilising their local park and green spaces more regularly, it has been noted that local communities have an increased desire in getting involved in volunteering and supporting their communities. More people used their local green space for exercise, supporting people's mental health and wellbeing, family cohesion, physical health and reconnection with nature.

The parks service has responded to Covid in the following ways:

- Creating initiatives to support volunteering i.e. individual volunteering programmes and volunteering bubbles to manage social distancing.
- Worked with businesses, organisations, and faith groups etc. to ensure that we continued to maintain access to public spaces when the lockdown measures were

at their peak.

- Adapted the maintenance operations to support establishment of wild flora in parts of the city
- Worked with the business community to support the reintroduction of business activity, such exercise classes, catering outlets.
- Developing projects which will see Bristol becoming a greener place along the high street and creating better places for people to use; rather than just viewing them as a functional transport route, they are now being considered part of the urban landscape.

b) What do you think your FPA project will contribute to recovery in your place? How would an extension help with this? [250 words]

Bristol has recognised the importance of parks during the pandemic, and how they have become a vital lifeline for people. What we need to do now is better understand how we can capture this, so that we can put in place changes which meet the future needs for our communities.

P&GS have been highlighted as intrinsic to the city's economic recovery, as they provides a resource and backdrop for businesses and health and wellbeing for employees; they create the right environment and framework for the city when it is being promoted nationally and internally when seeking to attract new business and investment. With Bristol being one of the UKs favoured cities to work and live in, Parks and Green Spaces will assist in attracting talented workers to the City.

COVID has helped us to understand where communities have been hit the hardest and through the Parks and Green Space Strategy consultation we will better understand local needs.

The extension will allow us to have a greater focus on nature, volunteering, business engagement and communities and come out with some clear deliverables which ensure our future delivery model is fit for purpose and meets the needs of the city over the next 25 years.

As part of the recovery we will need to remodel some of the services which we provide and the extension will allow us to do this working alongside other cities within the cohort, so that we can share and learn from each other.

Please supply a work plan and budget summary for your project's extension period and grant increase. And appendix (with staff outputs)