



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Pocket parks: support for small areas of
inviting public space where people can enjoy
relief from the hustle and bustle of city streets

Prospectus

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Pocket parks

Headline message

The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) invites applications from communities within deprived urban areas¹ to apply for funding to support them with establishing up to 100 pocket parks. We particularly seek applications from urban areas where there are significantly deprived wards according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation rankings (2015) and these will be prioritised in our assessment (see Annex A for the full programme criteria and weighting).

What is a pocket park?

Pocket parks are small areas of inviting public space where people can enjoy relief from the hustle and bustle of city streets. For the purposes of this scheme we have adopted the definition of a pocket park used by the Mayor of London: a piece of land of up to 0.4 hectares (although many are around 0.02 hectares, the size of a tennis court) which may already be under grass but which is unused, undeveloped or derelict.

Why is this support available?

Localism and decentralisation are central to the work of the Department for Communities and Local Government. Giving power to local people and institutions and freeing up local government to act in the interests of its residents, providing real leadership in its area, is opening the door to enabling communities to take a greater lead in driving the change they want to see in their local area.

We know that communities value hugely the green spaces around them and their positive impact on social well-being and physical and mental health is well documented. Local parks and green spaces provide a wealth of opportunities to get closer to nature, meet up with friends, play, take physical exercise, walk the dog or even just have some quiet time in the fresh air with a cup of coffee from their local high street. They could also be used to house community events such as street parties or music events which support local retailers.

In its manifesto for the 2015 General Election, the Government committed to launching “*an ambitious programme of pocket parks – small areas of inviting public space where people can enjoy relief from the hustle and bustle of city streets*”.

Pocket parks – locally identified, smaller areas of green space ultra-local to where people live and work – can provide those wellbeing opportunities, as well as helping to improve community integration, community pride and social action, especially where communities are involved in the upkeep and development decisions of the park.

Pocket parks can also contribute to wider government outcomes, including those around delivering quality natural environment and increasing the opportunities for people to

¹ Excluding London which has recently completed its own pocket park programme

engage with it². However we know that there is an inequality of local access to quality green spaces across the country. We want this programme to help address some of these imbalances which is why we are targeting our support to communities in urban areas of deprivation where access to quality green space may be limited or non-existent.

It is also important, especially in a challenging financial climate, to ensure that communities can access the support and skills they need to successfully maintain green spaces to a standard which ensure their continued use and therefore their positive contribution to the local community.

The Department for Communities and Local Government is therefore providing a **£1.5 million** fund to support the development of up to 100 pocket parks by communities in urban areas. This funding will help put communities and their partners in a position to take on the management of green spaces of value to them; and contribute resource towards turning around spaces so that they are in good condition and communities can focus on managing them for the future.

Applications must reach us by email to pocketparks@communities.gsi.gov.uk by **5:00pm on Thursday 10 December 2015**.

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² 2012 Natural Environment White Paper [‘the Natural Choice’](#) chapter 4

The Programme

Overview of the offer

The objective of the programme is to deliver up to 100 pocket parks across deprived urban areas³ in England in 2015-16. To this end, the programme is targeted at those areas.

We particularly seek applications from urban areas where there are significantly deprived wards according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation rankings (2015) and these will be prioritised in our assessment (see Annex A for the full programme criteria and weighting).

We have allocated £1.5 million to this programme in 2015-16. We expect to allocate grants of around £10,000 - £15,000 per project comprised of up to £10,000 capital and up to £5,000 revenue.

Grants will be paid to the appropriate principal local authority that is supporting the application (under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003) so that it can be released to the community as they need it to deliver.

Pocket parks are defined for this programme as a piece of land of up to 0.4 hectares (although many are around 0.02 hectares, the size of a tennis court) which may already be under grass but which is unused, undeveloped or derelict.

We will support 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 getting together, healthy living, relaxation, play, food growing and contact with nature.

There is no prescription on what a pocket park should look like and we welcome both innovative and traditional proposals. We are also keen to see applications from projects aiming to improve their local town centre or high street with a community green space. The aim is to increase access to good quality green space in a sustainable and community-led manner.

Communities may be looking at projects where there is a desire, with support, to take full or partial control of green spaces of value and importance to them. Partial control reflects that a pocket park may be a part of a larger site developed with the landowner's permission. This can include social housing areas and towns and city centres where communities can demonstrate a pocket park is needed and that they are willing to manage it.

Ownership of the site of a pocket park 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 evidence of agreement from the landowner to the works outlined in the application. All applications must also be supported by the relevant local authority, which must be willing to hold the grant and pass it on to the community.

³ Excluding London which has recently completed its own pocket park programme

We appreciate communities need help and support to deliver good quality management of green spaces, which is why we will look to support partnership models where communities have or intend to access partner expertise whether from their local authority or relevant networks, bodies or professionals. That support may be secured either directly by using some of their revenue funding to invite expert contributions, or by communities becoming part of existing support networks already operating amongst managers of green spaces such as local parks and open space forums.

We expect that our support will enable, for example (this list is not exhaustive):

- Capital – support to prepare a site, earth-works, landscaping, tree planting, structural works etc. and put it into a good condition for further development.
- 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. You may also wish to use some of this element of the funding to develop the required sustainability strategy.

We will not fund:

- Work that would happen anyway. This money cannot simply top up an existing project UNLESS communities can provide clear evidence that the proposal would not have happened without our funding.

Programme criteria

We will support projects that meet the following criteria:

- Evidence of need
- Applicant
- Site
- Nature
- Match funding
- Sustainability
- Deliverability

- **Evidence of need**

- The application must be a **community-led proposal** which comes from any group with a constitution working **within a deprived urban area** where the **access to green space is poor** or can be shown to be needed. We will give added weight to those from deprived local authority wards according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation rankings (2015).

- **Applicant**

- By community we mean a group of people who have come together such as a friends group, a tenants group, community gardeners association etc. The group will need to have a constitution.
- Communities will need to show that they have engaged their local authority to secure their support. At a minimum the local authority must be willing to act as

the accountable body for the funding and a supporting letter signed by the community and local authority that confirms that the latter is willing to do so will be required with applications.

- Applications will need to detail the partners the group is working with and / or networks they have already established to take forward the project

Within their application, communities will therefore need to submit:

- a. Details of their group and how it is constituted
- b. That they have their local authority's agreement to host the funds
- c. Details of the partners and networks that they will work with and draw support from (such as advice and good practice)

Any grant awarded will be provided to the local authority partner under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. By making an application to DCLG for funding, communities agree to be willing to accept any terms or conditions their local authority may wish to place on the funding. Applicants may wish to discuss this in advance of their application with their local authority partner.

- **Site**

The site must be no bigger than 0.4 hectares (and can be much smaller) which is unused, undeveloped or derelict, not used to its full potential by the community. Pocket parks will be in urban areas which can include town or city centres. We are also asking for an explanation of how this project adds to the provision of quality green space within the area.

We are open to considering any and all ideas that meet the criteria and see a pocket park delivered in whatever shape or form. Particular features that we will look for in applications include:

- The site must be called a pocket park and be branded as such
- It must be in an urban area of deprivation in England
- It can be a new site or an existing site and all or part of a site.
- It needs to be accessible and available for the community who wish to use it and ideally openly accessible to all

- **Nature**

Pocket parks should aim to provide a green open space that offers both habitat opportunities and opportunities for people to connect with nature. As such, schemes that value and make use of existing landscape and natural features will score higher. We are also keen to see the addition of trees to pocket parks, with trees providing many benefits, improving air quality, providing shade for people, and homes, shelter or such as nesting sites for wildlife so we will welcome proposals that provide more trees and/or make the most of those that are already there.

- **Match funding**

Communities are expected to contribute by providing or making a commitment to securing match funding towards the grant awarded. This can be secured by any means from direct local fundraising to securing grants from other bodies - or a combination of these.

Within their applications, communities will need to explain what match funding has been or is intended to be secured and by when. It can be from local authorities, charitable bodies or foundations, from community events, crowd-funding or elsewhere – or any combination of these. DCLG's funding is expected to be used to start delivery and establish the site and its core features, putting it into a good sound condition that the community can then add features as they secure further resource to do so. If match funding is not already available, we expect to see evidence of effort being made towards securing match funding.

- **Deliverability and value for money**

All proposals must deliver a pocket park that is fit for purpose and of value to the community.

Within their application, communities need to tell us about their pocket park and what they plan to do. We will expect applications to:

- Explain out what they will provide in the site with the grant money
- Include a timescale that shows what they will deliver when
- Confirm that they have permission of the owner to develop the site as a pocket park
- Attach a plan of the site now and another that shows what it will look like after the grant is spent

In their application, communities will need to set out their plan and timeline for delivery and confirm that DCLG's money will be spent by end March 2016. They will need show it will deliver value for money by highlighting the benefits they believe can be achieved, including for example detail on how many people are expected to benefit from or have improved access to the space, and show how they have considered the challenges ahead and risk to delivery.

The proposal must be realistic and achievable, logical and well-constructed with the outputs and benefits achievable clearly identified. We will also look for evidence that the challenges and risks to success have been properly considered and are understood.

- **Sustaining delivery**

The ability to sustain delivery is important. We appreciate our funding may simply support the start of work to establish a pocket park, and will want to hear how communities and their partners plan to continue the work, through to opening the park and beyond into keeping it open and well managed in the years ahead. In particular, communities will be expected to:

- Achieve the Green Flag Community Award, the free to enter national quality standard for green spaces, within the 2016 or 2017 judging rounds and maintain that for at least 5 years;
- Secure the pocket park for the future by registering it as an Asset of Community Value and under Local Greenspace Designation. They are also encouraged to consider dedicating it for use as a green space for use by the community in the future through schemes such as Field in Trust designation.

In their application, communities will need to tell us how they plan to sustain development and delivery of the pocket park beyond the grant period. If their application is successful, they will be expected to provide by 31 March 2016 a detailed sustainability plan that sets out how they plan to sustain the development and ongoing management of the park.

For further details including weightings that will be given in assessment of applications, see Annex A.

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Application and assessment

We are inviting applications from community groups interested establishing a pocket park. An [application form](#) is available to download.

Applicants will need to complete the form, collate the required supporting documents, and then scan these in and return their applications to us by e-mail to pocketparks@communities.gsi.gov.uk by **5:00pm on Thursday 10 December 2015**.

Applications will only be accepted on the form provided by DCLG and returned to us by email.

We require one application per site, but community groups and their partner councils can submit applications for as many sites as they wish.

When finalising your application, please refer back to the **programme criteria** as set out in this document and check your application has responded to them all as best as possible.

Assessment of applications

Applications will be assessed by DCLG against the criteria and weightings set out in the in the **Programme criteria and weightings** section of this prospectus (Annex A)

Those considered to meet the criteria will go forward to a panel of sector experts brought together from organisations with experience in green space delivery and management. This panel will advise DCLG on which projects should be supported. The final decision on which projects are supported rests with DCLG. Applicants will be notified of the results by the end of January 2016.

Given the short window of opportunity and scale of the funding DCLG's decision will be final.

Award

DCLG will inform successful applicants by the end of January 2016.

Communities and local authority partners will be expected to sign a letter of expectation that sets out what they will receive from DCLG and what will be expected from them in return. Examples of these are attached as Annex B (letter of expectation for communities) and Annex C (letter of expectation for local authorities). Once these are signed and returned to DCLG, local authority partners will be immediately contacted to arrange transfer of the grant to them, so delivery can proceed.

This grant from DCLG is a once-only opportunity to secure DCLG funding to establish a pocket park – it is only available this financial year, and will not be available in future years.

Further information:

E-mail: pocketparks@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Web page: www.gov.uk/government/publications/pocket-parks-support-for-communities-to-manage-small-green-spaces

Annexes

- A. Programme criteria and weighting
- B. Example letter of expectation for successful community applicants
- C. Example letter of expectation successful for local authorities

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ANNEX A

Programme criteria and weighting

CORE CRITERIA	Sub criteria	Examples of evidence likely to score highly	Weighting %age of score (of 100%)
Evidence of need	Community-led proposal	Statement from community	20
	A deprived urban area	Project is a located in a ward which is among the most deprived wards in the country	
	Access to Green Space poor	Planning assessment, GS strategy, ANGSt analysis, map showing GS in the city/town	
Applicant	Local authority committed to partnership and willing to act as accountable body	Local authority details and statement/letter confirming willingness	15
	Support partners and networks identified	List of relevant partners inc. any costs	
	Established community body	Constitution; supportive partner testimonial	
Site	New area or in need of improvement	Description, photos and map/plan of before and intended after	15
	Accessible to the community who wish to use it and ideally openly accessible to all	Statement from community or responses from a survey of community who will use it	
Nature	Will be a green open space	Map/plan and/or survey of site	15
	Proposals make use of natural features	Plan and/or description	
	Plans include trees or tree planting	Plan and/or description, including number of trees	
Match funding		Logical and realistic plan; statement of support from funder	10
Sustainability		Statement of intent, including outline sustainability plan	10
Deliverability	Realism, fit to brief, innovation, impact, risk, value for money	Clear and sound project plan with milestones, (and detail that confirms DCLG's money will be spent by end March 2016), outputs and outcomes. Realistic explanation of innovative idea. Statement of risk and mitigation.	15

ANNEX B

Example letter of expectation for successful community applicants

The Department for Communities and Local Government (the Department) is issuing a grant of (£15,000) to (xyz Council) under powers set out in section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 to support the work set out in your application for the Pocket Parks programme, included at Annex A.

The Pocket Parks programme will support up to 100 communities and their partners to establish a pocket park as a small area of inviting public space where people can enjoy relief from the hustle and bustle of city streets.

The Department will:

- Provide you, via your local authority partner, with a grant of £15,000, broken down as [£10,000] capital and [£5,000] revenue money⁴.
- Provide each community and local authority partnership with a Relationship Manager and signposting to networks and other sources of further advice and support.
- Share the learning and good practice from pocket park projects widely and, in particular, amongst people interested in taking on the management of public space.

We expect you to:

- Establish your pocket park as proposed in your application and deliver within the timeline you set out.
- Produce a sustainability plan for the future of the park by 31 March 2016
- Confirm your match-funding by 31 March 2016
- Maintain effective and professional relationship with your local authority partner towards achieving delivery.
- Follow the terms of the grant funding agreement entered into with your local authority partner.
- Achieve the Green Flag Community Award by the end of the 2017 judging round
- Apply for Local Greenspace Designation and to be listed as an asset of community value, both by 31 December 2016. Also to confirm to the Department by then any other designations you will apply.
- Keep your Relationship Manager informed of progress including spend, issues, variations and risks each month and if needed on request.
- Participate in learning and knowledge sharing opportunities, from project group meetings, partner network meetings and online fora.
- By the end of your project, produce a case study (which includes benefits achieved and figures on costs and income generated) and share this with the Department.
- Share any media outputs with the Department before they go out, and so they can share them wider if it wishes to do so.
- Allow the Department to disseminate this learning more widely and to use these products wider including to inform further thinking on green spaces.

⁴ Figures will reflect actual grant awarded

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to working with you.

Signed (on behalf of the applicant):

Print name:

Date:

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ANNEX C

Example letter of expectation for local authorities

The Department for Communities and Local Government (the Department) is issuing a grant of (£x,xxx)⁵ to (xyz Council) under powers in section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 to support the work set out in the approved applications for pocket park funding, included at Annex [z]. You have confirmed your agreement to take receipt of the approved funding on behalf of the communities which will enable you to enter into a grant relationship with the community and provide them with funding at least equivalent to the approved funding in an appropriate and timely way.

The Pocket Parks programme will support up to 100 communities and their partners to establish a pocket park as a small area of inviting public space where people can enjoy relief from the hustle and bustle of city streets.

The Department will:

- Provide through a Section 31 grant to your authority up to £15,000, broken down as £10,000 capital and £5,000 revenue money to support each project – specific breakdowns are attached at Annex A.
- Provide each community and local authority partnership with a Relationship Manager and signposting to networks and other sources of further advice and support.
- Share the learning and good practice from pocket park projects widely in particular amongst people interested in taking on the management of public space.

This grant and support provided will assist you in supporting your community to establish their pocket park as proposed in their application including within the timeline set out in that.

Your grant making processes will no doubt enable you to monitor progress of the programme and confirm that money is being used in the correct way by the community. We would encourage you to maintain an effective and professional relationship with each project, and support them to deliver, in particular, through any necessary local planning processes.

The Department is keen to disseminate learning from projects more widely including to inform further thinking on green spaces. We would appreciate your support to capture this learning when necessary.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to working with you.

Yours etc

⁵ Figures will reflect actual grant awarded