

Pocket Parks: frequently asked questions



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

What is a pocket park?

Pocket Parks are envisaged as small areas of inviting public space where people can enjoy relief from the hustle and bustle of city streets. We welcome proposals that provide a pocket park that the community welcomes, needs and values in any shape and form.

We have adopted the definition of a Pocket Park used by the Mayor of London when he supported the establishment of 100 sites from 2012-2015.

“A Pocket Park is 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”.

They can be both natural and more formal in character (and perhaps ideally a blend of both) on the basis that they either will provide a green open space that also offers habitat opportunities and opportunities for people to connect with nature.

They must be openly accessible for the communities they will serve, and ideally offer open access for anyone wishing to use them.

Where can a Pocket Park be?

They will be in deprived urban areas close to where people live, and range from being an urban fringe community space to a green and natural oasis in a town or city centre.

London is not included in this programme as a programme of pocket parks has recently been completed there.

Why is DCLG focusing on deprived urban areas?

By targeting action into deprived areas and communities with less access to quality green space, we believe we will increase the impact that can be achieved by making the multiple benefits a pocket park can deliver (for health, wellbeing, community integration) available to people who may not have had access to them before.

As such we are particularly inviting applications from urban areas of high deprivation as defined by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2015). Applications from communities in these areas will receive priority and weighting within our assessment.

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What do you define as a community group?

By community group we mean a group of people who have come together for a purpose – this might include friends groups, tenants or residents groups, community gardeners associations, town teams, coastal community teams, voluntary and community organisations or even Business Improvement Districts. The group will have a constitution. If you are not part of a group then you will need either to form one or partner with one.

Can a community apply for grant for more than one Pocket Park?

Yes. Having applications from several communities in one local authority area is also fine, as long as the local authority is willing to partner them all.

Why are we expected to work with a local authority? What level of local authority are we expected to work with?

DCLG funding will be provided via the principal level (i.e. county, district or unitary) local authority to which we will make the grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act. We are unable to provide funding through parish councils. By making an application to DCLG for funding, communities agree to be willing to accept the local authority's terms and conditions for the provision of grant. Should you wish to see these terms and conditions before applying for a grant from DCLG, please discuss them with your local authority partner.

Working with the local authority comes with many benefits. It is essential that they are supportive of proposals as the body responsible for local green space planning and strategies and as leaders of the local planning process whenever change is proposed. They will also be able to signpost communities to others in their local area who can offer relevant support.

Which other partners do you think might be able to help?

Communities are encouraged to identify in their application any partners and networks they wish to draw support from.

For example, DCLG's ['MyCommunity'](#) website provides a wide range of support and advice for communities. It includes the [My Community Forum](#), an on-line place where you can meet and chat to experts and connect with others who are also passionate about their community.

We also know a range of networks dedicated to the green space sector exist that bring together communities interested in green spaces to share knowledge and good practice and help communities grow their skills. There are also businesses that can support communities with developing and managing sites and growing the skills to do so.

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Supporters might also include local town teams, Business Improvement Districts or Traders' Associations looking to support their local high street through a new shared space for customers and communities to enjoy.

Where resource is required to access support, communities can propose covering that cost through use of a portion of the revenue funding component of their grant. Procurement of any paid services will need to follow the requirements of the local authority holding the grant for you – please discuss these with your partner authority.

What can DCLG's funding be used for?

A grant will be divided into 'capital' and 'revenue' element.

The **capital** element is envisaged as being for physical works to develop the site, to put it into a condition the community can manage it going forward and to add features (such as pathways or benches) and interpretation.

The **revenue** element is for communities to invest in managing the site going forward and/or to secure the skills and advice they need to deliver. This may include;

- a) Securing professional help to develop a plan for how to sustain park delivery
- b) Gaining access to networks that can connect communities with other groups who are also managing spaces to share advice, good practice and skills.

We appreciate our funding will not support all a community may want in a pocket park. DCLG's funding is envisaged as being used to establish the site as a pocket park and put into a condition where the community and their partners can maintain it and add to it as they secure further funding (including the match funding required).

Can we apply for a grant for a suitable project that is already under way?

The grant is for new schemes or those that would not happen without DCLG's money. We will not support the implementation of projects which are well under way or work that would happen anyway.

What does making use of natural features mean? Can we use the grant for play equipment?

Sites must meet the adopted criteria for size and nature. They can be both natural and more formal in character (and perhaps ideally a blend of both) on the basis that they will provide a green open space that also offers habitat opportunities and opportunities for people to connect with nature.

Playground furniture requires a significant allocation for continuing maintenance, for safety reasons. Many designers working in small spaces now look instead to incorporate 'playful features' into the landscape such as climbing rocks, grass mounds etc. which are more natural and therefore have added value as habitat for nature that people can connect with. Our criteria would place added value on proposals that promote more natural, playful

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features. While proposals which request funding for off the shelf equipment will not be precluded, schemes that value and make use of existing landscape features are likely to gain more favour with assessors.

Does the match funding need to be in place at the time of application?

No, but DCLG will look for communities to have explained in their applications what match funding they plan to secure, how and by when, and have demonstrated their commitment to securing it by end of the 2015/16 financial year.

Match funding should be for 100% of DCLG funding; if communities believe they cannot secure this in full, they should still submit their applications and tell us in that how much they believe they can secure.

What would be suitable as match funding?

This can take many forms and we are open to any proposals from the community. Options might include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Other grants schemes offered by local authorities, charitable foundations or trusts, Lottery or business providers
- Direct fundraising amongst a local community, individuals and/or business
- Newer forms of funding such as Crowdfunding

How will my application be assessed?

All applications will be scored against the same criteria as set out in the prospectus. Following the closing date, applications will be sifted against these criteria by DCLG, with those considered a good match going forward a panel of green space experts drawn from DCLG's partners.

When will I know if we have been awarded a grant?

DCLG will contact all successful applicants directly once the assessment panel has confirmed its decisions. All applicants will be informed by end January 2016

When must I have spent the money by?

DCLG's money must be spent by the end of March 2016.

Will there be further funding next year?

No, DCLG funding is only available this financial year.

How does this programme differ from past support for Pocket Parks and other similar green spaces?

This programme is currently unique in targeting support to communities wishing to lead the establishment of a pocket park. In designing it we have learnt from partners past experiences of supporting communities managing green spaces (such as pocket parks in London and Northamptonshire, Millennium and Doorstep Greens and others). These insights include the support communities need to be able to deliver and sustain delivery.