



# Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

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Dear Colleague,

This week is Love Parks Week. Parks and green spaces should be celebrated throughout the year but, because they are so important, Keep Britain Tidy take one week a year, every year, to really recognise them. As Minister for Parks and Green Spaces, I want to see parks that are well-maintained, financially sustainable and supported by a skilled workforce. Therefore, I am very proud to take this opportunity to celebrate all that parks have to offer and update you on the great work the Parks sector and MHCLG have been delivering to ensure that these spaces continue to thrive.

Parks and green spaces provide millions of us with a gateway to the great outdoors, a place to go for a jog, to walk the dog or to simply take a moment away from the hustle and bustle of urban life. Parks strengthen our communities and make our local areas more attractive places to live and work.

In the last two years, the Government has spent £15 million on parks and green spaces. This has included a £3.75 million Pocket Parks Plus programme which supported the development of new pocket parks. It also allowed local communities to refurbish their treasured spaces. The programme has provided financial support to 200 community-led projects.

We have also provided grants, totalling £9.7 million, to every local authority across England to help them renovate and develop their parks so that they can continue to be enjoyed by communities.

We have provided £1.2 million for the Future Parks Accelerator, a £10 million-pound joint project between MHCLG, the National Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund to test new and innovative approaches to managing and funding parks that will ensure the benefits of public spaces are enjoyed by generations to come. The 7 pilot areas in England are: Birmingham; Bournemouth; Christchurch and Poole; Bristol; Cambridgeshire; Islington and Camden; Nottingham; and Plymouth.

Our Parks Action Group (PAG), established in 2017 as a response to the Select Committee's report on Public Parks, has been very busy in recent months ensuring parks and green spaces are well-looked after to increase their value to local communities. For example, the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE), has been examining service improvement and reviewing the skills modern day park managers require to effectively run parks. As a result, we are now working with the Landscape Institute to develop two apprenticeship standards for park managers and a Continuous Professional Development day that will take place later this year.

The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS) and Locality are working with my department to develop a community empowerment programme to ensure those who volunteer and care about our parks and green spaces have the tools to make a difference. The MyCommunity website run by Locality will host a green spaces knowledge hub which will be a useful source of information for volunteers, helping them to understand how they can contribute to their local green space. From July, networking events will be held across the country to give our much-valued volunteers the chance to learn from one another and help build the national network.

Our Green Flag Award scheme led by Keep Britain Tidy, a member of our Parks Action Group, has done great work in championing our parks and green spaces and the hardworking people behind them, both from local authorities and communities. The awards are valuable because they recognise and reward local authorities and communities for their dedication, set standards for park managers across the country and give locals and visitors alike an easy way to find quality spaces to enjoy. I am pleased to announce that this year there are a total of 1970 successful applicants and they will receive their awards during Love Parks week at ceremonies across England.

We are also working with DEFRA, Natural England, the Environment Agency and Fields in Trust on Green Infrastructure standards to ensure any new and existing development has high-quality green spaces for communities to enjoy. This innovative project will deliver a universally agreed framework and will honour Government's commitment to the 25-year Environment Plan to improve the quality of green spaces for the future.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework also sets out how a Local Green Space can be designated through local and neighbourhood plans, allowing communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance for them. Once a Local Green Space has been designated it can also be nominated to the local authority to become an Asset of Community Value by parishes and community organisations, such as neighbourhood forums.

Our parks and green spaces are huge assets to our towns and cities, they contribute to the health and well-being of our nation, help to mitigate against climate change and play an important part in supporting biodiversity. The future of our nation's parks is an issue close to all our hearts and the Government is committed to doing everything we can to preserve them.

I would encourage you to celebrate your local park this Love Parks Week.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rishi Sunak', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**RISHI SUNAK MP**