**Parks & People Stronger Together – Parks Action Group Community Empowerment Workstream, Doncaster, 7/9/19 & Newcastle 26/10/19**

PAG national liaison body between 9 green space organizations & 9 Govt departs. It’s role is to identify concerns and challenges facing UK parks & proposing solutions to Govt. to safeguard & enhance green space provision. It has a number of workstreams including funding, standards and communities.

PAG Empowering Communities work stream’s role is to help promote, develop and embed grassroots community empowerment/infrastructure throughout green space sector. Chaired by NFPGS.

Within that work stream, there are 3 projects coordinated by NFPGS, Locality & Groundwork:

* Locality leading an expansion of [www.mycommunity.org.uk](http://www.mycommunity.org.uk) as a knowledge & signposting portal for community groups interested in parks.
* Also, a new website [www.parkscommunity.org.uk](http://www.parkscommunity.org.uk) launched 1/7/19, aims to be dedicated ‘one stop shop’ for Friends groups.
* An NFPGS Networking post, Michelle Furado, April 19- March 20
* Delivering community empowerment peer networking regional events, six events, July –October 19 (Newcastle event, Life Centre, 26/10/19, 11.30-16.30)

Event provided an overview of the PAG and rest of day taken up with workshops:

* Building a strong and diverse membership – focused on single issue groups eg RMAA community garden
* Volunteering and project management
* Partnership working with land owners/managers – demonstrate impact of work doing eg volunteer hours good starting point. Also lobby for a standard in protective covenant for all parks (Harringey, Leeds)
* Fundraising – shared experiences of applying for funding, successes, failures, spending money, monitoring outputs.
* Promotion and social media

These were interspersed with ‘Just a minute’ showcasing successful ideas or challenges for groups.

Final plenary focused on networking and developing stronger communications (where they are keen to create regional networks but low number of Forums in attendance precluded this).

Rowntree Park York is a charity and has 500 members who donate £5 a year to support the Friends group. They then get 10% discount in the Cafe and also receive a newsletter. They have found PayPal very useful for renewals, and no one seems to miss £5 a year. They have music in the park most weekends during the summer.

Friends wearing Hi Viz when visiting the park. It gives a sense of security to the visitors.

After gardening they have tea and biscuits for their helpers.

Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum

Work with the council. The council provides meeting room, photo copying etc. Secretary of the Friends Group is a council officer.

Climate Change – Groups are allowed 5 minutes during council meetings to challenge them about how they will deal with climate change.

Friends go around parks to evaluate the standards are the same in each park. They use a tick box method and wish to bring all the parks up to the same standard ie Green Flag Standard. They have an apprentice scheme and recruit in parks. They generate funds with a plant nursery.

Other websites highlighted during day

[www.thegoodgym.org](http://www.thegoodgym.org/) is an organisation that will come to help out they run to the site do the task and run back.

w[ww.fieldsintrust.org](http://Www.fieldsintrust.org/) Fields in Trust champions and supports parks and green spaces by protecting them for people to enjoy in perpetuity. Because once lost, they are lost forever. We legally protect parks and green spaces in perpetuity.

Newcastle event best attended with over 70 people. Similar format to Doncaster.

Saltwell Park, Gateshead, a beacon well supported by GC and has active friends group. Contrasted with other friends groups who are struggling to recruit. Does demonstrate value to appropriate local authority support.

Disappointing there was little input from Urban Green (former Newcastle Parks Trust) considering they have been live since April ’19 and are viewed nationally as a ‘demonstrator’ site for how parks could be managed in future.

Tw/vc/kp

19/11/19