

Rethinking Parks



Introduction

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What did the pilot projects test?

What were the challenges?

What did we learn?

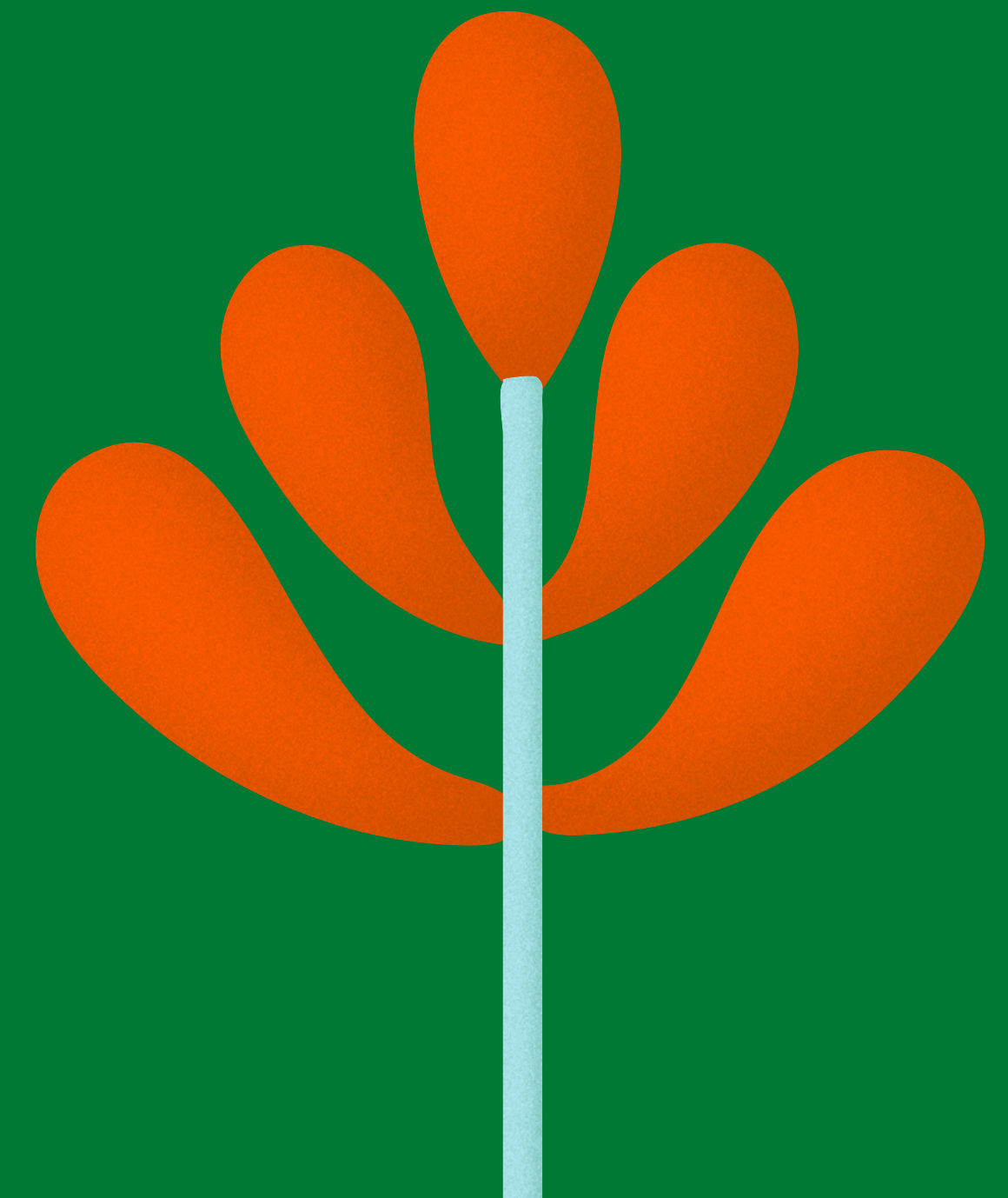
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Public parks play an important role in people's lives. They are loved assets, valued for many reasons, but due to demand placed on local authorities' budgets to support statutory services such as social care, non-statutory services like parks are facing budget cuts and are at risk of decline.

By 2030, it is predicted that only one transaction in ten will be completed with cash. In contrast, we have seen growth in contactless payments which now represent a third of the UK's card payments. Contactless technology has created a new way to donate in an increasingly cashless society. A large number of donors are open to this solution. Twice as many charity donors see contactless as a good idea than those who dislike it, and the under-35s are especially enthusiastic ([The Future of Giving](#), Barclays report). Whilst there has been notable successes for major museums, galleries and charities in the UK, parks represent an interesting and unexplored field of application for this technology.

To address the budget cuts parks are experiencing and to test the potential of contactless donation units, two Rethinking Parks grantees developed pilot projects in the hope of providing replicable solutions for other parks.



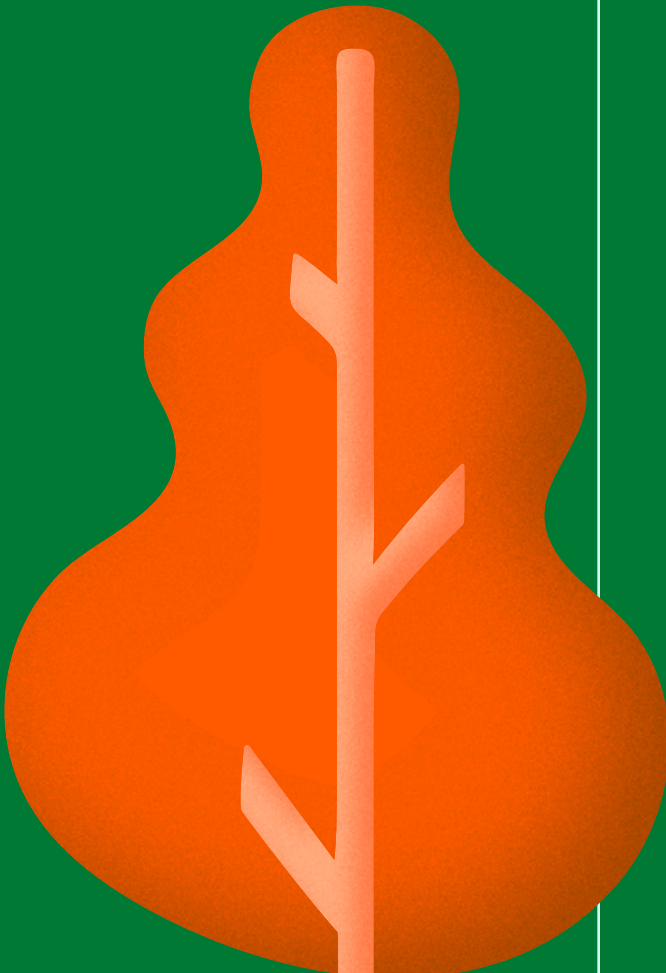
In this leaflet

In this leaflet, we will draw on the experience of Bournemouth Parks Foundation and the Lake District Foundation – two pilot projects backed by the Rethinking Parks programme to test whether contactless donations could form an effective income stream.

This leaflet outlines what the pilot projects tested, some of the challenges they faced, what they learned, successful implementation examples, and helpful tips.

The projects looked in particular at the following factors:

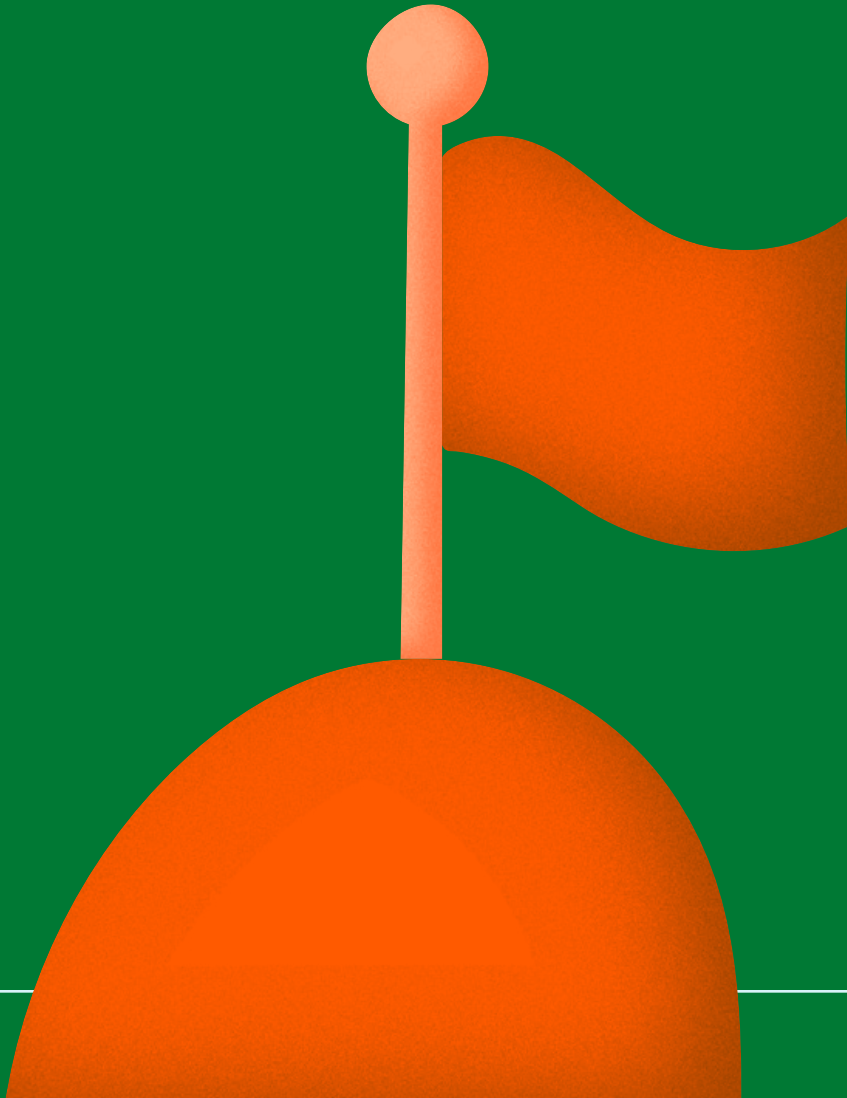
Investments needed to make a donation scheme work



Influence of communications approach on giving



Possible installation locations



Technology functionality outdoors



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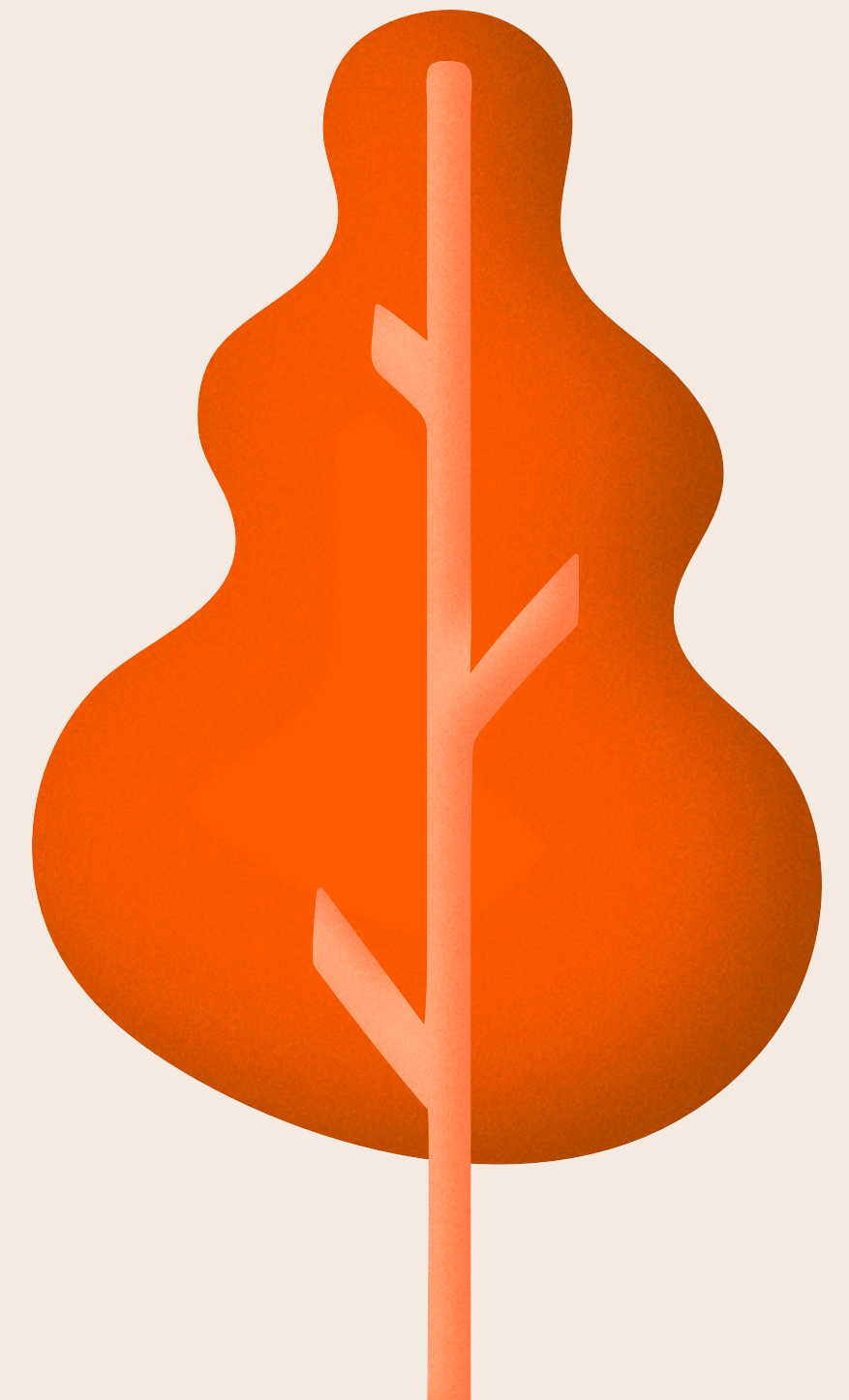
Investment

Contactless units can be either leased or purchased outright. Depending on the provider and the type of donation unit, they have a variable upfront cost.

The **Lake District Foundation** paid £35 per month + VAT per unit with a two-year lease agreement.

On top of this, the maintenance costs and card provider fees need to be added.

Bournemouth Parks Foundation partnered with Goodbox and did not incur any rental charges during the trial. A Goodbox mini device, added to an outdoor unit, typically costs £12.50 per month to lease with a 12 months minimum commitment. A transaction fee on each donation also applies.



Messaging

Each of the **Bournemouth Park Foundation's** donation unit prototypes has different messaging and engagement activities. These evolved over the project's duration ranging from a simple poster next to the donation unit, to a unit being located next to an emotive fundraising cause. For example, a project fundraising for a new aviary in the city centre used a 2m-tall wooden parrot named Polly to tell donors a joke and then thank them for their donation.

At another site a polar bear links local action in parks to global action on climate change as his heart illuminates after a donation is given. Similarly, the Stone Age man at Hengistbury Head Nature Reserve, tells a story about the Stone Age period in exchange for a donation.

The **Lake District Foundation** worked with tourism partners, testing messages varying from specific to general conservation work. In addition to signs by the donation units, an online campaign offered positive messages about visiting the national park, aiming to create a feeling of reciprocity. They used appealing 'mascot' imagery in the red squirrel campaign and Ambassador Sean Conway, an inspirational adventurer living in the Lake District, reminded people of the ways they can have fun close to home.

Polly the parrot



The Sean Conway campaign in the Lake District



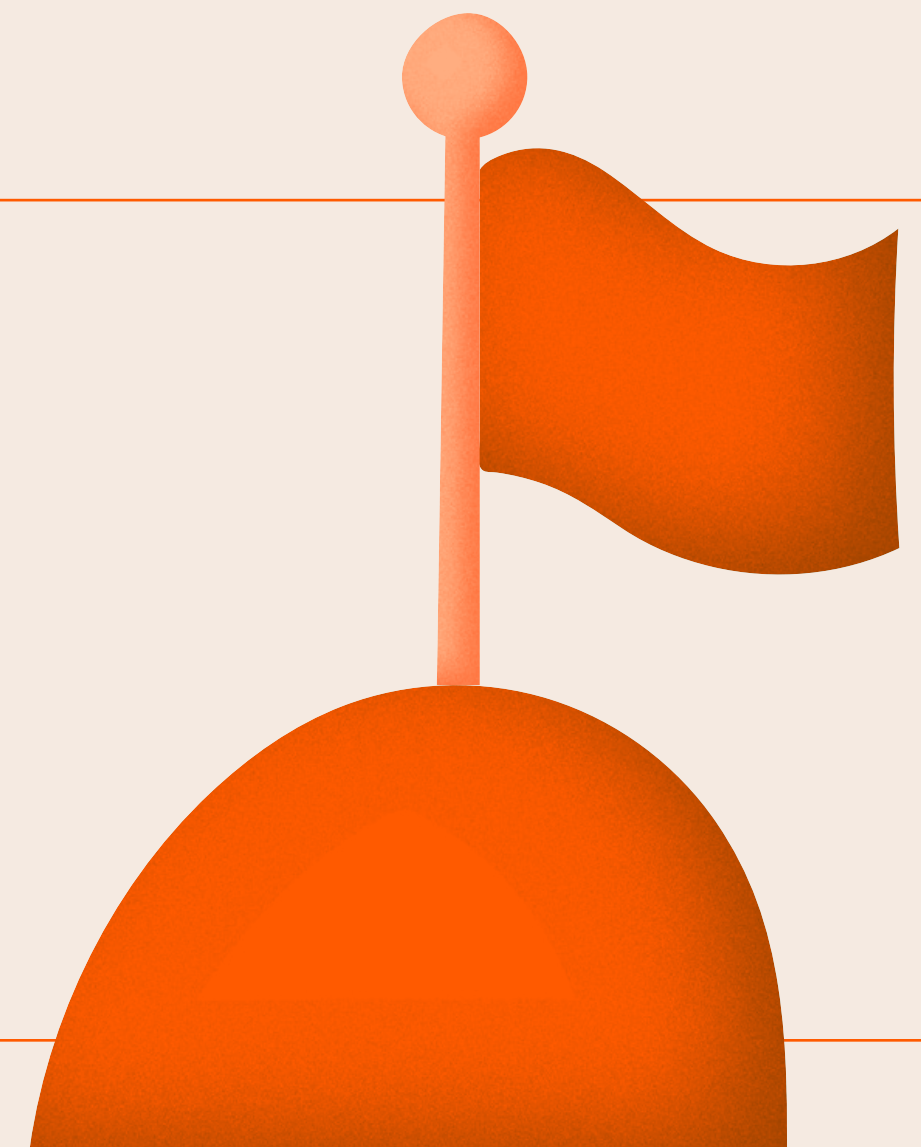
Location

Bournemouth Parks Foundation tested the contactless donation units in two public city parks with high foot traffic and by the visitor centre of Hengistbury Head. All the units were located outside to test the durability and sturdiness of the technology and were complemented by a sculpture or interactive feature.

The **Lake District Foundation** tested the contactless units by rotating them across five different locations across the Lake District National Park, including an open space, a circular walking trail, a visitor attraction (lake cruise) and a pub.

"We tested several prototypes with our research and development tech partner; each incarnation included an additional feature such as audio and visual prompts to 'nudge' visitors to donate. We learned that the latter alongside emotive messaging and calls to action are the key to attracting donations on a sustainable scale."

Cathi and Mark from Bournemouth Parks Foundation



Technology

Bournemouth Parks Foundation worked in partnership with **V2** to prototype and develop waterproof outdoor units. Their future plan is to integrate solar panels to facilitate easier long-term use in outdoor environments.

The **Lake District Foundation** used the technology already available on the market.

"We learnt that the technology requires regular monitoring and that donation points where people are already making transactions worked best. All units were tested indoors in visitor centers, a pub and the Glenridding Pier – a ferry transportation provider. The most successful to date were located inside the pub and at the Pier where the Foundation had existing partners and the least successful were located in areas with little existing footfall and/or no human interaction."

Sarah from the Lake District Foundation



What were the challenges?

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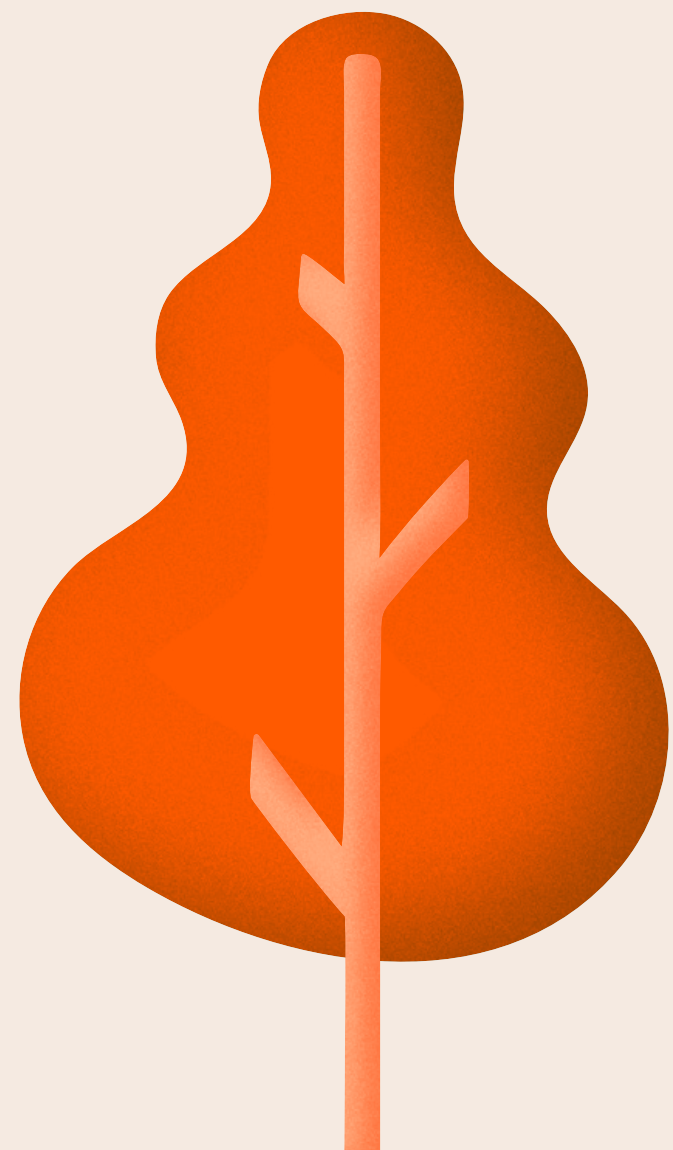
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Investment

Both pilot projects found costs to be higher than expected and estimate that the return on investment will happen approximately one year after installation. Despite the slow return, they will continue testing the technology and add a 'new wave' of contactless donation points as people continue moving from cash to contactless.

The **Lake District Foundation**, with an average of £79 donated per month, found that the lease cost of £35 + VAT was balanced by the cost they would have incurred to maintain support if they had bought the units.

Bournemouth Parks Foundation, which developed the outdoor technology with a partner, arranged it so they did not incur rental costs for the length of the prototype programme. They estimate an approximate cost of £1,500 for purchasing and maintaining an outdoor unit, including installation costs, messaging, as well as transaction fees. In the last year, they received an average of £216 donated per month, but registered a great variation ranging anything between £15 to £981 depending on seasonality, location and engagement activities of the donation unit.

Collection top box at the Lake District



Messaging

Both pilot projects are conducting ongoing observations and adjustments to measure the impact of different messaging. In particular:

The **Lake District Foundation** found that compared to other fundraising tools, contactless and cash donations limited their ability to build funding relationships with donors since donations were made on a one-off basis. This does not allow follow-up as it does not provide information about donor profiles.

For **Bournemouth Parks Foundation** getting the emotive messaging right for each location was vital; they quickly established that locating the donation units next to a fundraising project, an interactive sculpture or as part of a major seasonal event worked well.

The Stone Age man

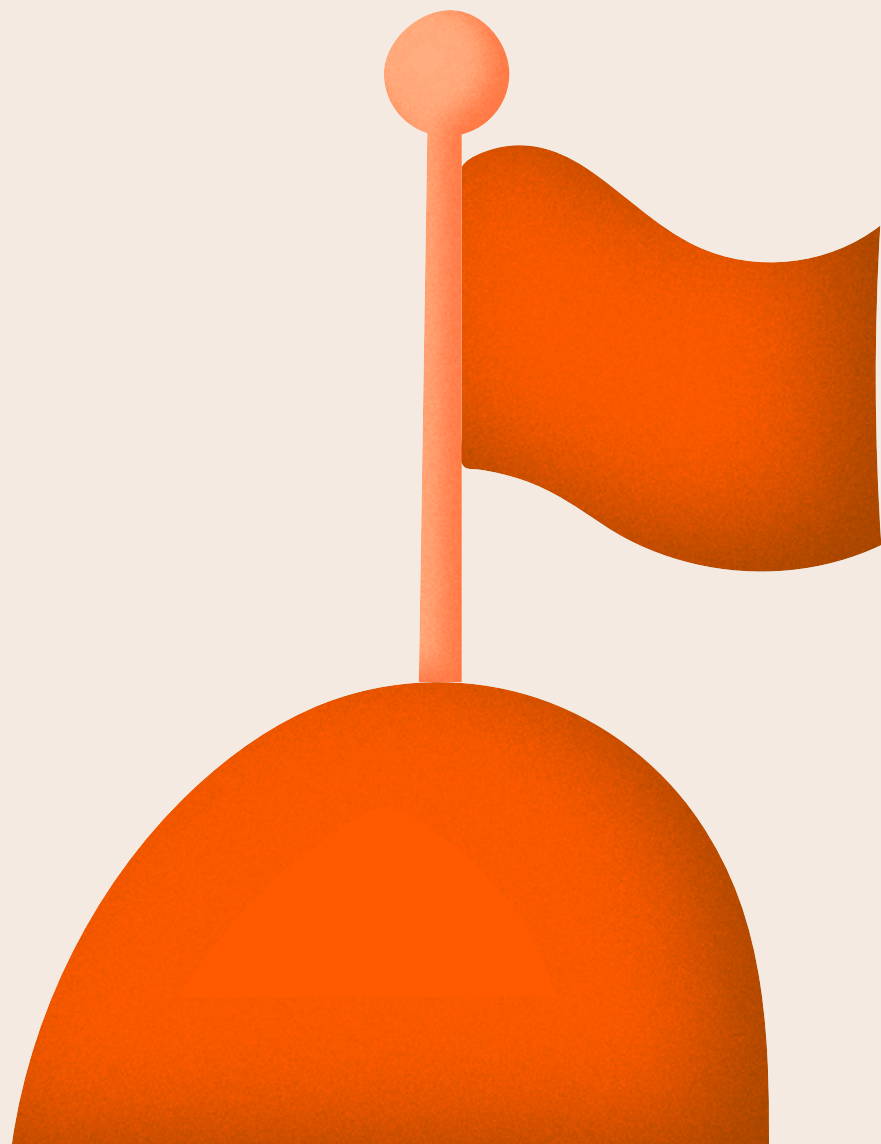


Location

Bournemouth Parks Foundation's main challenge was showing how this technology can be used outdoors in unstaffed locations. To address the challenge they used interactive creative installations to detect visitors, nudge them with audio sounds, and thank them for donating with a visual or audio reward.

The **Lake District Foundation**, which tested the contactless donation units by rotating them in five locations, realised that the units located in more isolated locations were not well used and therefore became more costly to run. The unit located in the pub was much more successful. Another challenge faced was that some of the staff and volunteers at visitor centres where the units were installed were initially uncomfortable asking visitors to make a donation.

Contactless donation unit in the Lake District



Technology

Contactless technology available on the market, which is commonly used in the charity and museum sectors, was found unsuitable for outdoors use. This was due mainly to:

- Their need for a power supply, which limits the choice of suitable locations.
- Disrupted connection during online payments in poor weather conditions.

Bournemouth Parks Foundation, thanks to the partnership with a technical provider, developed prototypes to overcome such challenges, while the **Lake District Foundation** had to limit the testing mainly to indoor locations.



"Whilst the parks and greenspaces sector has faced continuous budget cuts in the past decade, many organisations have developed creative new ways to build new income streams. Rethinking Parks aimed to learn from the experiences of Bournemouth and the Lake District and to use this information to help target future projects' investment based on their learning. Both projects identified that after testing

the technology for over 15 months, they still received more cash donations than contactless donations – we are at the beginning of the transition in parks so it is important to get this right now and learn from the prototyping that has been carried out as we expect contactless giving to increase over the next 18 months and beyond especially after COVID-19."

Tiffany Gregor, Assistant Programme Manager at Nesta

What did we learn?

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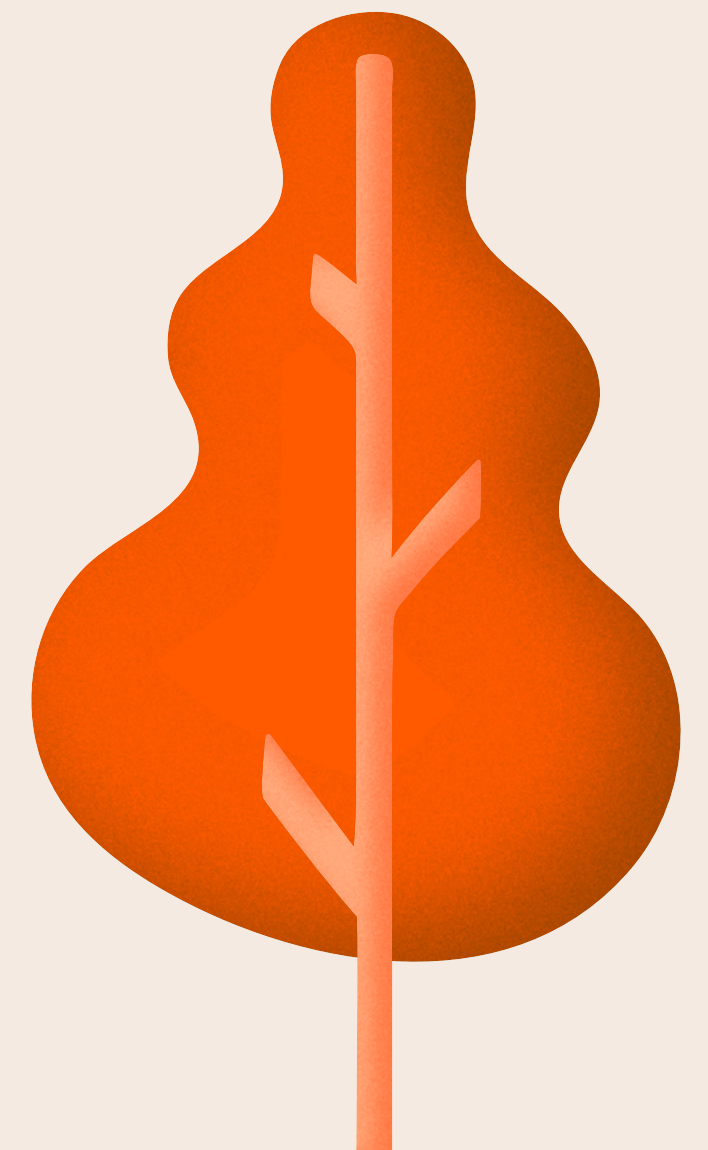
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Investment

Although across the UK contactless is one of the primary payment methods, it is still a new concept for people to donate with their contactless card. Although promising, contactless donations have a slower return on investment than other forms of donation.

To optimise the time and money invested, the pilot projects recommend:

- Adopting a prototyping approach and having a testing period budget. This will help to quickly determine what works and adapt along the way.
- Factoring into the budget not only the direct costs of leasing or purchasing the units, but also the indirect costs. These include staff time, marketing activities, units installation and maintenance.
- Applying for a support grant or investment from a funding agency, the council or local authority.
- Including contactless donations as part of a wider fundraising strategy that includes other forms of donation (such as cash, QR codes and online donations).



Messaging



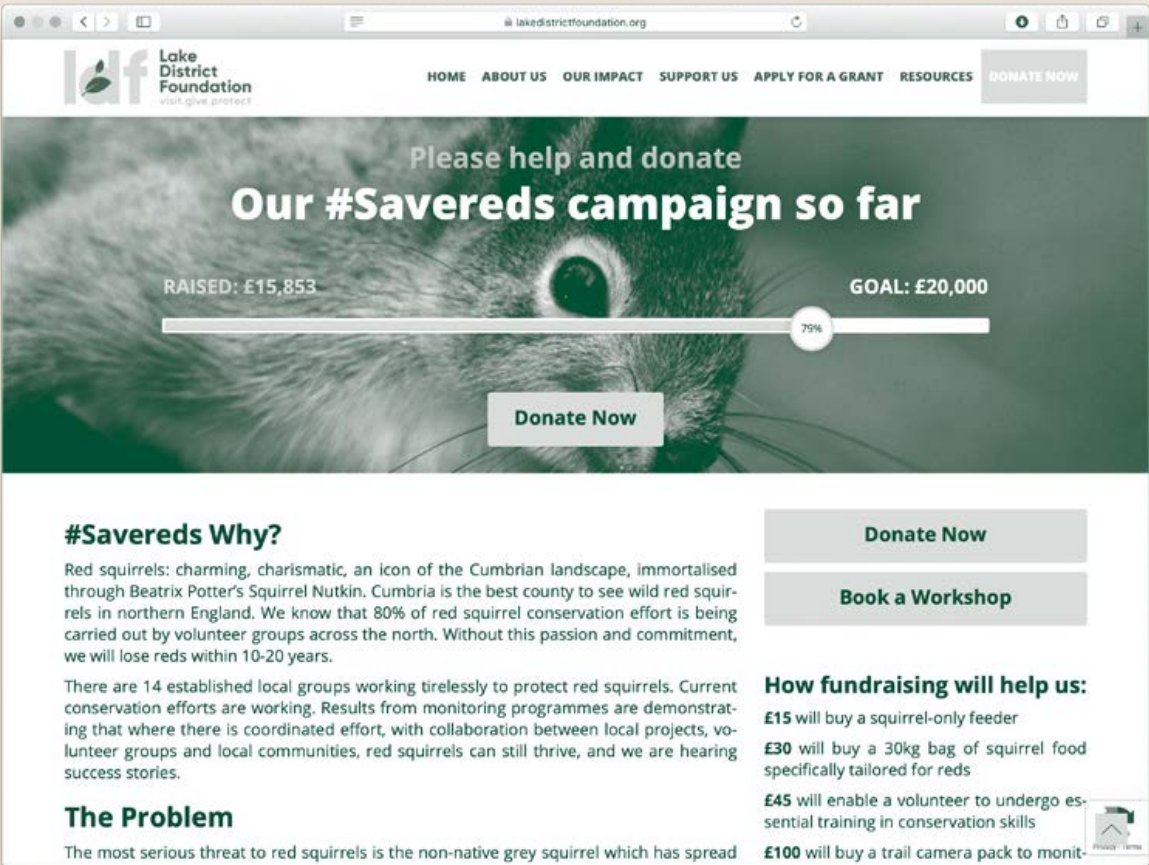
Rather than opting for general marketing messaging, both pilot projects agree that getting the message right is key to engagement. This requires knowing the audience. The **Lake District Foundation**, for example, conducted a visitor perception survey completed by more than 700 respondents to segment visitor profiles and capture baseline information about their attitude to giving.

Another important element is balancing the need to keep it positive and attractive while also communicating the urgency for funding to maintain greenspaces. A useful resource to help frame donors behaviour is the EAST framework developed by the Behavioural Insights Team.

Particularly successful donation requests were:

- Complemented by images of specific local problems and solutions, with a precise breakdown of costings of what is needed, can help make the case for giving. An example of this is the #Savereds campaign at the Lake District, helping efforts to protect red squirrels across Cumbria.
- Stressing an emotional connection to a cause, giving people hope they can make the difference. The **Bournemouth Foundation's** Have a Heart campaign (see page 17 for more information), which raised almost £2,000 in two months.

The #Savereds campaign on the Lake District Foundation's website

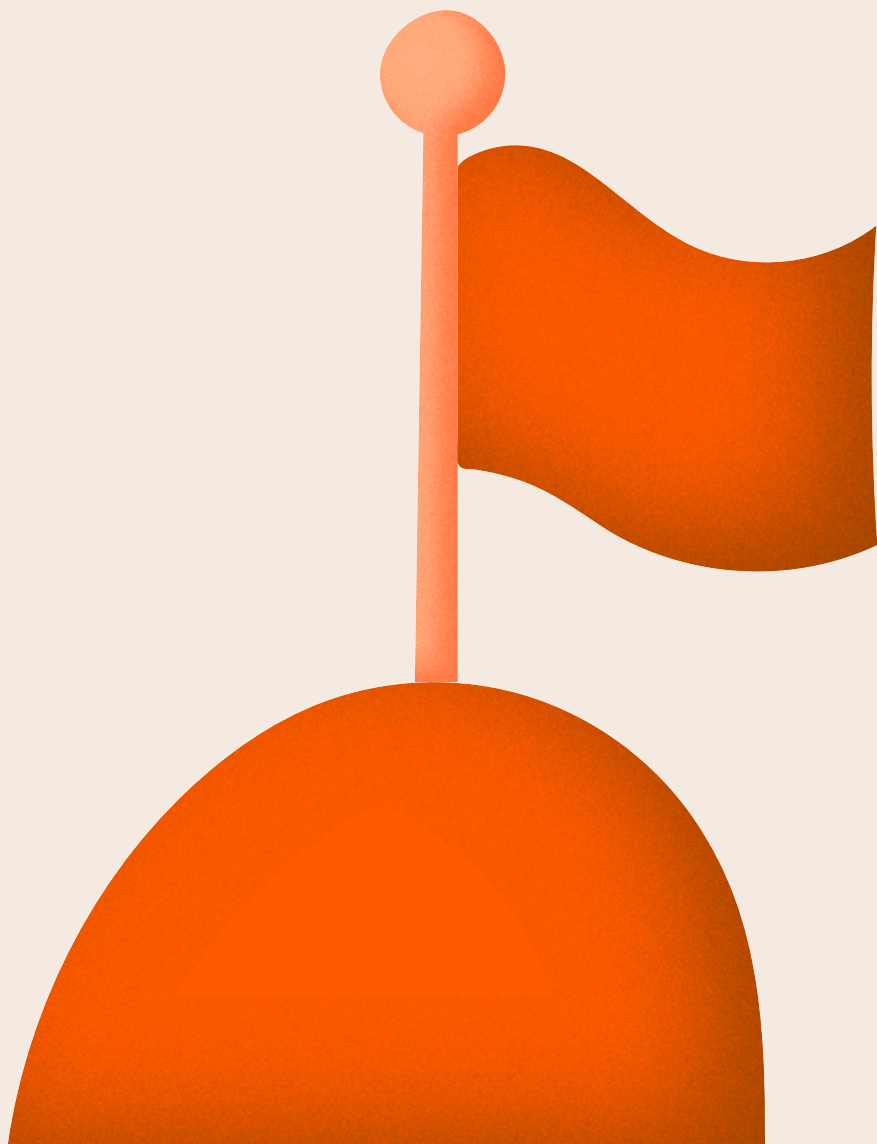


Location

Both projects found that messaging alone was not sufficient in driving donor's interaction with the units as location and an added level of engagement or interactivity were also important factors in determining success.

- Units placed in remote locations were not very successful. It is unclear whether this is due to a donor's disinclination to give in such an environment, or if it is due to the fact that units are not as visible.
- Both projects agree that an engagement element should always be included. This can either be an interactive installation that detects and nudges visitors to give, and/or staff or volunteers encouraging visitors to donate (in a pub, company or visitor center). Where staff and volunteers are involved, training should be provided so that staff and volunteers are comfortable approaching visitors and relaying key messages.

At this stage, both pilot projects acknowledge that they have only scratched the surface of the potential of contactless donations and are keen to keep testing it.



Technology

Both pilot projects suggested including a cash donation box next to the contactless terminal to accommodate different giving preferences.

Developing a good working relationship, where possible, with a technical partner can help adapt the technology to the specific location requirements. Some considerations for outdoor technology include:

- Being solar powered, vandal and waterproof.
- Having Wi-Fi access or a reliable 4G signal, especially key in poor weather conditions.
- Having easy access to the unit mechanism for maintenance.



"There is a real willingness to donate where the message is clear, emotive and relevant. Cash donations, whilst important, are labour intensive to collect and the mechanical technology is prone to problems with jammed coins and potential theft. Whereas, contactless technology creates a secure donation platform with donations

coming directly into your charity's bank account. The upfront costs of purchase and installation related to return on investment should be considered as part of an overall budget for interpretation in parks or the focus for a grant or philanthropic support."

Mark from Bournemouth Parks Foundation

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The Lake District Park's Instatrail

This is an initiative developed by the Lake District Foundation using QR codes and a map on Instagram to determine the best location for outdoor contactless donation units. Due to the challenges faced with wifi connection in certain areas, the Lake District Foundation decided to launch a competition on Instagram to enable the park visitors to find units or QR codes in specific locations.

What is it about?

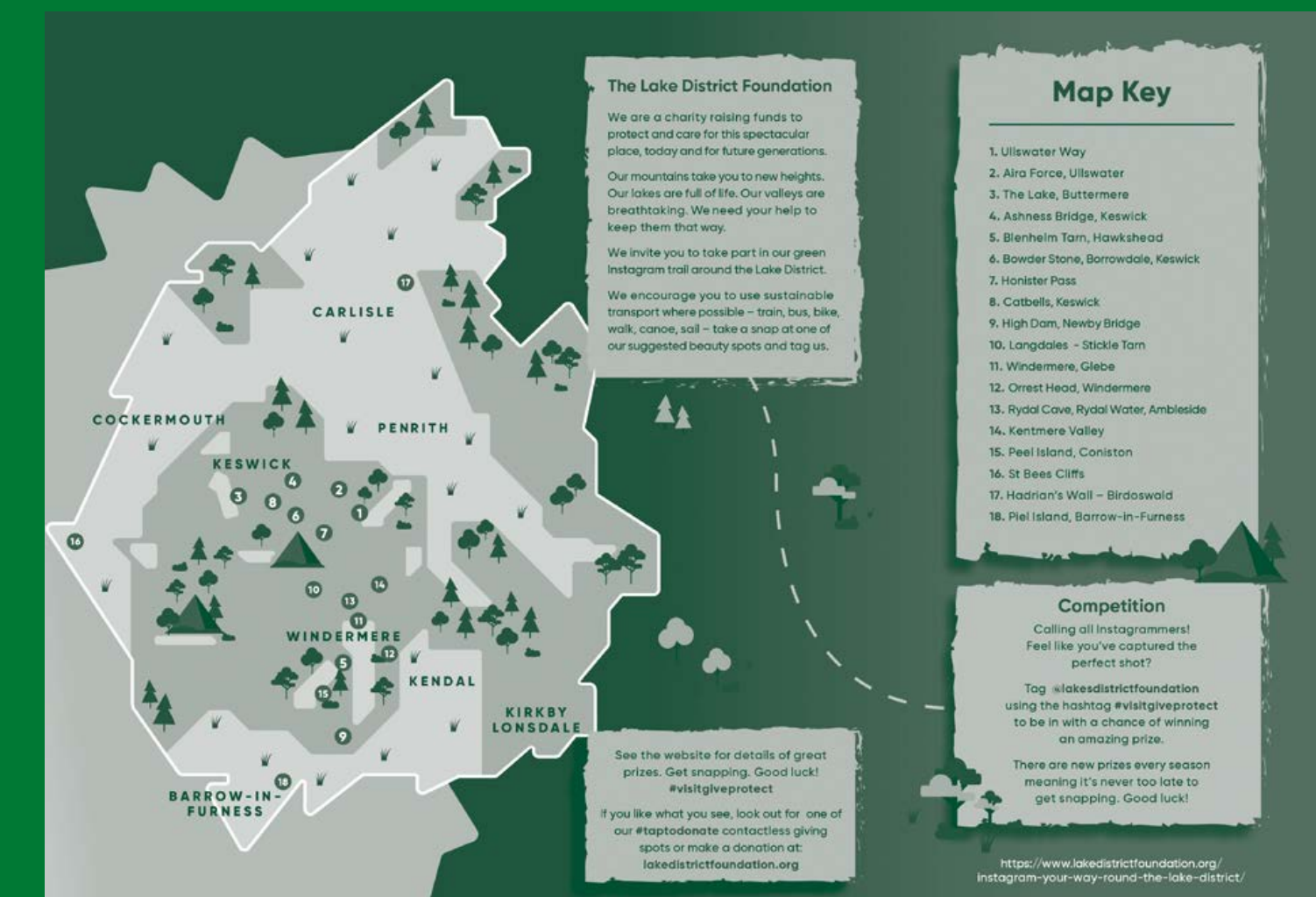
Instamap is a map that shows all locations within the Lake District, all connected by public transport, where visitors can take photos and share on social media. There is a regular prize for the best photograph – donated from one of our business supporters.

This map is helping to determine whether the locations shown would be suitable for outdoor contactless donation points.

This is early days and we were planning to promote the initiative further over the summer months. Like much of this activity, it will be weather dependant.

QR codes are also being used in a similar way and we're planning a QR 'treasure hunt' in the future.

The Lake District's Instatrail



Sarah Swindley,
CEO at the Lake District Foundation

Bournemouth Parks Foundation's Have a Heart campaign

This initiative shows how an interactive feature and emotive message can trigger more donations for unrestricted funds.

What is it about?

We were keen to try a contactless unit with an interactive panel in one of Bournemouth's busiest parks. We had the opportunity to install a polar bear installation as part of a six week Christmas festival. A 2m tall panel depicting a polar bear on the 'last' iceberg set the scene for acting locally to mitigate global climate change. Sensors in the donation post detected passers by and 'nudged' them with a short festive tune. A donation by card instigated a sequence of LED lights (stars in the night sky) which illustrated the 'bear' constellation; this was emotively supported by the sound and illumination of a beating heart.

What were the results?

Although initially we faced a technological challenge with the sequencing of the lighting and at one stage there was some vandalism, we are now confident that the next prototype will be more robust.

This prototype was the most complex but promising of our work thus far in terms of pushing the technology to its limits. The public's generous response and their donations to us resulted in this being our most successful unit to date.

How much money did you raise?

Over the six week Winter Wonderland period we raised just under £2,000.

Rendering of the Have a Heart donation unit at Bournemouth Parks Foundation



Cathi Farrer, Foundation Manager
at Bournemouth Parks Foundation

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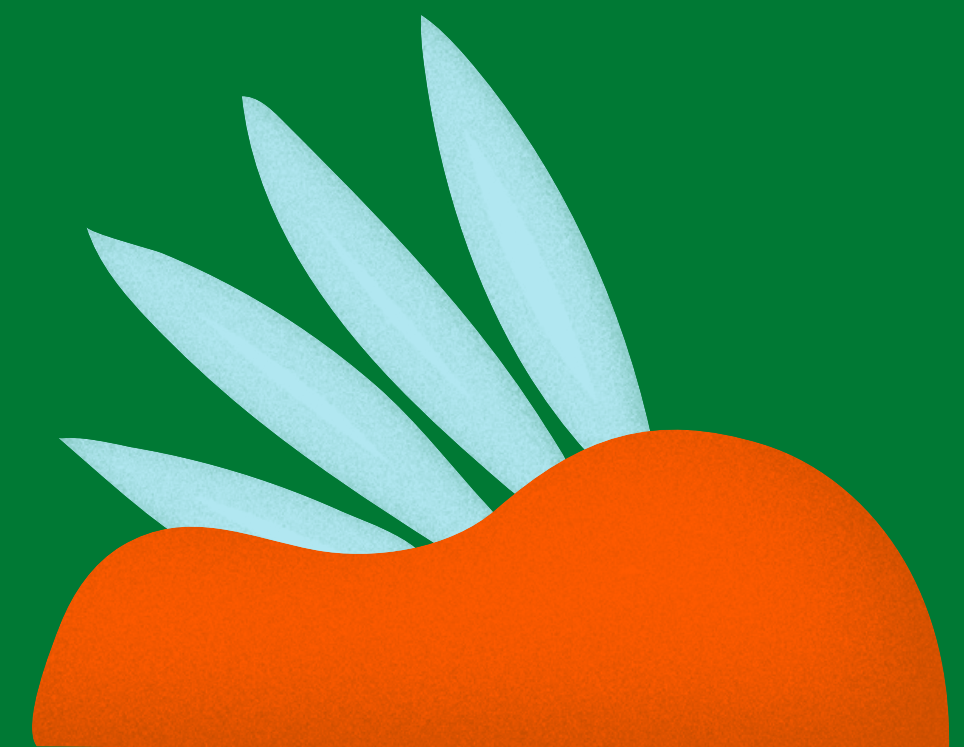
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Questions to ask before trialling contactless donation

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- 1 How would you go about testing locations and messaging cheaply and adjusting based on feedback?
- 2 How would you fund the initial expenses related to contactless donation units?
- 3 Do you already have donation schemes or fundraising projects in place that you can link to?
- 4 Who are your potential donors? Do you know what their motivations are in donating to particular parks?
- 5 Do you know where your highest footfall is located?
- 6 When thinking of messaging, have you actually tested what will resonate with people?
- 7 How would you use the donations? What is the governance in relation to the donations?
- 8 Do you need to get permission from a landowner to install the donation unit?
- 9 How will you pay for the installation of the unit?
Does it need a power supply or will it be solar powered?



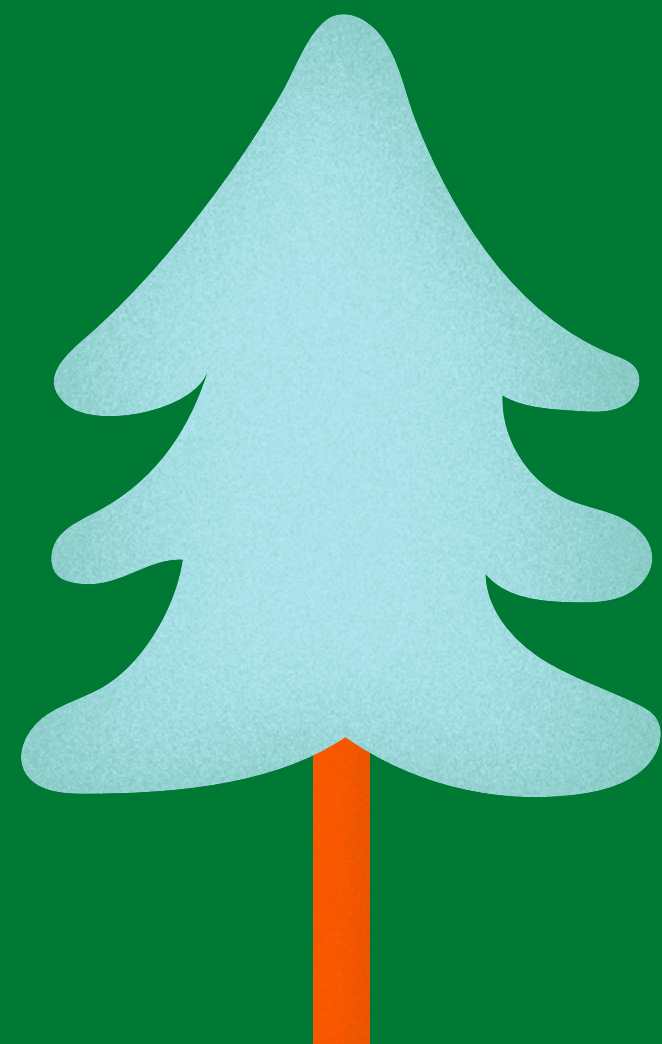
Tips from the pilot projects

The Lake District Foundation's tips:

- Contactless donation technology works well when it is integrated into your wider fundraising campaign. Linking your ask to your newsletters, website and social media communications will help to build brand recognition and enable your donors to find out more about your campaign.
- Communicate regularly and with transparency with all stakeholders throughout the project.
- Work with partners, such as well-known businesses, who will help you to gain donor trust and confidence and can also help with technological issues along the way.

Bournemouth Parks Foundation's tips:

- Really think about how you're going to interact with your audience/donors through your donation unit.
- A simple contactless donation unit with a poster may work in some parks with a really high footfall, but we've found that if you 'nudge' your audience towards the unit (through sound), then reward them (either with a joke, or light element) we've connected with our donors more.
- Having a unit located right by a cause you're fundraising for really helps too.
- Good luck and keep testing and changing messaging until it works – don't be afraid to fail and change things!



- [Would you go contactless for your favorite Parks?](#)
- [Bournemouth Parks Foundation: Contactless trial – the journey so far](#)
- [The Lake District Foundation: Contactless donations – the journey so far](#)
- The [EAST Framework](#) is a useful resource for using Behavioural Science to influence donors behaviour

Rethinking Parks is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Nesta. It supports innovative ways of managing and financing the UK's public parks to make sure they are sustainable and are run more impactfully for their local communities.
