



WE RETHOUGHT PARKS

BOURNEMOUTH PARKS FOUNDATION

Nesta...



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ABOUT THE RETHINKING PARKS PROGRAMME

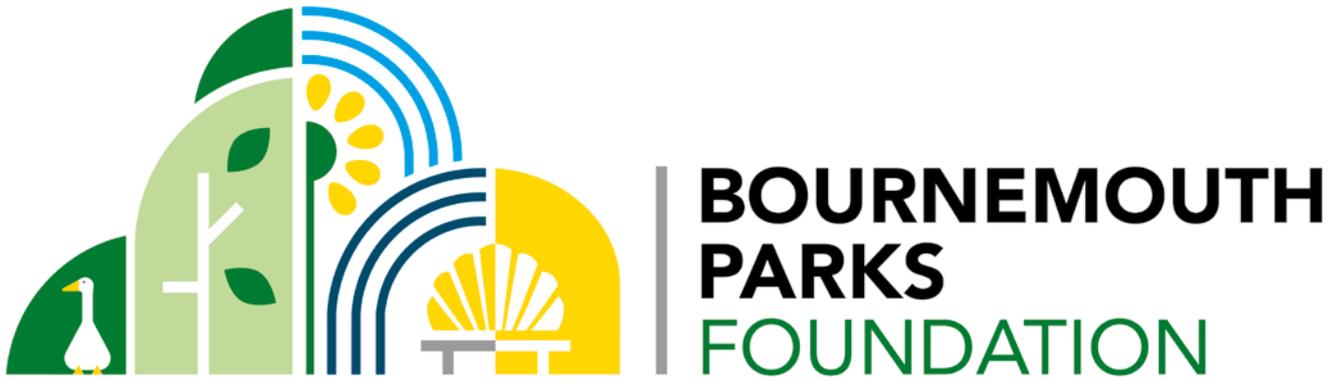
Rethinking Parks was a joint Nesta, Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund England programme to find, support and test new approaches to raising income or reducing costs for public parks. Public parks face cuts of 60% and more from current local authority revenues over the next decade, and this programme trialled new methods and models to address this funding gap. Other resources from the Rethinking Parks programme, including descriptions of other models, the summary report and links to tools for the sector can be found at: <http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks>

ABOUT BOURNEMOUTH PARKS FOUNDATION

Bournemouth is a large coastal town on the South coast of England. It is a popular holiday destination due to its warmer weather and situation east of the Jurassic Coast. Two parks were included in the initial phase of Bournemouth Council's Parks and Gardens Foundation project: Bournemouth Gardens, linking central Bournemouth and the beach, and Tuckton Park, a quieter linear park on the banks of the River Stour.



BOURNEMOUTH PARKS FOUNDATION: AT A GLANCE



Establishing an independent local parks charity to raise individual, legacy and corporate donations

A parks foundation is a charitable organisation that can receive direct donations from the public. A foundation allows park users to give to the green spaces they love, funding improvements that might not otherwise occur.



In setting up a charitable foundation we've been working well beyond our usual field of expertise. We've met people from both near and far who have been more than willing to share their experience and knowledge with us; whether that's telephone catch ups with the Seattle Parks Foundation, or meeting up with local resident experts in financial, legal and commercial sectors, we've found that if you ask there are plenty of people willing to share.



(Michael Rowland)

CORE CHARACTERISTICS



LONGER TERM
IMPACT



REQUIRES SCALE
FOR SUCCESS



PUBLIC DONATIONS



DIGITAL GIVING

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL IMPACT?

A foundation has the potential to raise significant additional funding for parks, but like any charity dependent on voluntary giving, this will take time and effort, and income can't be guaranteed. The return on investment is also dependent on the reach of the Foundation (the bigger the area covered, the lower the operating costs per park / per contribution) and the local population. For example, an area with a larger proportion of wealthy people may reap greater benefits than one where fewer households have disposable income to give.

WHERE MIGHT FUNDING COME FROM?

- Individual donations (digital and cash)
- Legacy or 'lifetime event' (e.g. birth or marriage) contributions
- Corporate contributions
- Grants

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR DELIVERY?

- A large population of people who value and use parks
- Access to wealthy individuals and businesses (for legacy and corporate contributions)
- Marketing and communications skills
- Fundraising expertise, including skills in legacy fundraising
- Trustees with strong finance, legal and leadership skills who can champion the Foundation
- Strong business management skills to operate the foundation

HOW LONG MIGHT IT TAKE?

The recruitment of Trustees, approval by the Charity Commission and establishing a charity bank account can take six months or more. A Foundation can take up to a year to begin operating and raising funds.

BOURNEMOUTH PARKS FOUNDATION

WHAT THE TEAM DID

WHAT WAS THE TEAM'S ORIGINAL IDEA?

The team comprised:

- **Bournemouth Borough Council Parks team** (BBC) led the work
- **The Seattle Parks Foundation** in Washington State, US, acted as a sounding board to the team throughout the process
- Specialist digital communications and fundraising companies were contracted to design and develop the website and digital giving functionality
- Local Friends groups
- Trustees for the Foundation



Bournemouth Borough Council (BBC) park's team wanted to test whether a parks foundation, similar to those that operate in the United States, could be established to support Bournemouth's parks and gardens. They also had a specific interest in understanding whether new digital technologies could be used to enable people to donate to parks whilst physically in a park.



WHAT DID THE TEAM DO?

1. Bournemouth Borough Council researched how parks foundations operate in the United States. The team drew on contacts with the Seattle Parks Foundation to scope the core business model for Bournemouth Parks and Gardens Foundation.
2. In 2013 £30,000 had been raised in nine months for a new visitor centre at the Hengistbury Head Nature Reserve. This experience signalled to the BBC team the community's willingness to give to open spaces, and the opportunity to recruit volunteers to assist with this.
3. Indicative objectives for the organisation were drafted. The project team referred to existing charitable objects of another parks charity to guide the drafting of their objectives. Using established objectives and referring the Commission to them speeds up the application process.
4. The BBC team recruited three local business people as trustees. The appointment of suitable trustees was a critical element for success. One is a local tourism entrepreneur, one is a partner in a local legal practice and another a retired accountant. It was important that the Foundation could maintain a level of independence from the local authority, and therefore elected officials are not trustees.
5. The project team developed targets for the core digital giving, legacy donations and volunteering strands of the foundation. Legacy donations are monitored according to indicators (such as expressions of interest), whereas digital giving and public donations had income targets from the start.

6. BBC appointed a project manager to develop the different elements of the Foundation model. (In retrospect the team wished this had been an earlier step).
7. The project team worked out the right governance and company structure for the objectives for the Foundation. How decisions would be made and who would make them, the social mission of the organisation, and whether the organisation would be involved in trading were all considerations. An independent company was created and registered with Companies House, and then an application was submitted to the Charities Commission.
8. The project manager and contracted web developer conducted audience research to inform the marketing, branding and communications plan. For example, in a focus group, local people expressed a preference to donate to specific projects rather than general maintenance.
9. A website and marketing materials (e.g. leaflets) were designed by web and communication contractors so the public would be aware of the Foundation, what it was aiming to achieve and how they could contribute.



We're still on the cusp of digital giving and public interaction with it, we need to develop trust in the applications we apply technology to; having trusted financial platform brands and logos on our own website will go a long way towards this.



Michael Rowland, Bournemouth Borough Council

10. The team trialled different approaches to market the Foundation and get donations. They designed and constructed two installations to attract digital donations in the park: a talking parrot and a talking bench. The idea was to enable people to donate at the moment they were having a positive experience in the park, rather than having to remember to give at a later point. The talking parrot was placed in front of an aviary for rescued birds in Bournemouth's most popular park. The talking bench was placed in an area with lower footfall but which is popular with walkers, so it provides an entertaining resting point. Duck racing was also tested as a low tech method to raise interest and entice parks users to donate during the summer months.
11. A legacy offer was developed in collaboration with the bereavement team at BBC. The foundation's legal trustee offered a free will writing service (through his chain of solicitors) where information on legacy giving for the foundation was provided as a starting point to raise awareness.
12. Volunteers were recruited to assist with fundraising, awareness raising and events such as the duck racing.
13. Following the first summer of operation, the foundation team drew on user insights, financial and other indicator data to inform the longer term business plan for the foundation.



WHAT HAPPENED AND WHAT NEXT FOR THE TEAM?

The Foundation was launched in early summer 2015. Digital installations were in place later in the summer. The talking parrot was very successful in raising awareness and coin donations, though digital contributions to this and the talking seat have been slow.



We've seen that people love to engage with technology on site – our bench and parrot engage people, but we need to work out how to translate this into members and donations, our signage and messages need to be clearer



Theresa McManus, Bournemouth Parks Foundation

The team are continuing with the Foundation model with some modifications. To be viable, the Foundation needs to diversify their fundraising strategy and focus on securing larger longer term contributions, for example from corporate sponsors.

INDICATIVE FINANCIAL FORECAST:

BOURNEMOUTH PARKS FOUNDATION - RETHINKING PARKS FINANCIAL

Financial Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
INDICATIVE INCOME					
Membership Subscriptions	-	£500	£750	1,000	1,500
Installation Donations	£5,323	£10,497	£10,607	£11,176	£13,252
Other Donations	£200	£700	£1,050	£1,400	£2,100
Corporate Donations	-	£6,000	£7,500	£9,375	£11,719
Legacy Donations	-	-	-	-	-
Gift-Aid		£2,999	£8,536	£9,110	£10,845
Grant Funding	£76,000	£25,000	£30,000	£35,000	£40,000
Commission Income		£5,000	£7,500	£10,000	£12,500
Funding to get Established		£25,000	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000
TOTAL INCOME	£81,523	£75,696	£90,943	£102,060	£116,916
INDICATIVE EXPENDITURE					
Generating Installation Income	£23,137	£7,118	£7,298	£7,768	£2,054
Generating Other Voluntary Income	£3,082	£6,335	£6,804	£6,852	£8,105
Customer Acquisition	£27,106	£13,609	£10,798	£14,843	£11,438
Customer Service	£327	£491	£472	£596	£723
Customer Retention	£982	£2,108	£2,366	£2,437	£2,607
Delivering Charitable Activities	-	£3,125	£3,750	£6,375	£10,000
Grants Awarded	-	£21,875	£26,250	£28,625	£45,000
Overheads	£10,973	£8,265	£14,958	£15,107	£15,258
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£65,607	£62,927	£72,696	£82,602	£95,185
PROJECTED NET RESULT (Income - Expenditure)	£15,916	£12,770	£18,248	£19,458	£21,731
NET RESERVES	£15,916	£28,685	£46,933	£66,391	£88,122

A revised fundraising and communications strategy is being launched to build and retain the community of Foundation supporters. The Foundation is also applying for grants to demonstrate and build the credibility of the Foundation, and implement further practical improvements across parks.



LEARNING THROUGH OBSERVATION IN LOWER GARDENS, BOURNEMOUTH:

When the parks team at Bournemouth Borough Council decided to test digital giving they understood that they would have to find new ways to grab the public's attention. "We knew from experience and published research that static signs don't help people to connect with green spaces. We wanted to create an emotional attachment, something that would encourage people to make an instant donation when they were in the park" says Mark Holloway from the council's Parks Service.

After considering many different options, from interactive screens to public events, the team settled on the idea of using eye-catching installations in two of Bournemouth's parks, as Theresa McManus from the parks team explains.

"We then spent some time observing park users to find the most suitable locations for the installations, and we had conversations with people to find out what kinds of causes they cared about."



Theresa McManus

This led the team to commission the creation and installation of a talking parrot sculpture next to a tropical bird aviary in Lower Gardens. To support the renovation of the aviary, visitors were invited to make a £1 coin donation to get a cheeky response from the parrot, or they could give instantly via text or a mobile giving platform. The second installation, a riverside Speaking Bench (activated by an infra-red sensor), invited digital donations towards a sculpture trail.

In the few months since the talking parrot appeared in Lower Gardens, it has raised around £4,000 in £1 coins. There is no doubting that this is a very positive outcome - it is expected that in a year or two there will be sufficient funds to provide match funding for a substantial renovation bid. However, {most of} these funds were raised through cash donations, not digital giving, and as yet no income has been raised through the Speaking Bench. So, is this evidence that the outdoor environment is not suitable for digital giving?

To answer this question, the Parks Service spent time on site observing park users as they interacted with the installations. They noticed that both the parrot and the bench attracted a great deal of interest. When they spoke to people, they found out that a sizeable minority (around 5-10 percent) were very keen on supporting each project but they were reluctant to make cashless donations, as described by Mark Holloway. "We've realised that we're still on the cusp of digital giving and interaction, and perhaps need to develop trust in the applications we apply technology to. One way to address this is to use an online giving platform that people are familiar with."

The next steps will involve using the installations as a centrepiece for activities and events that create stronger links to the parks' users. Although the ambition to secure funds through digital giving has yet to be realised, Mark Holloway is optimistic that they have taken important first steps towards this goal.

WHAT ADVICE DOES THE TEAM GIVE TO OTHERS?



“It’s worth writing everything down in a plan. The work we did with Nesta to start with on marketing, communication and research/project plans has helped us focus and streamline our thoughts from rough ideas into clear ideas and workable plans.”

“We spent quite a long time trying to do things on a shoestring, but ended up falling behind targets. We then took a decision to put some extra resources in, which in hindsight we could have done earlier. For example, get a programme manager in place as early as possible. The programme manager helped develop the project and kept it on track.”

“Carefully assess where your project lies in terms of the time in which things need to be done by, the resources you can afford to deploy, and the quality you want to achieve – try to think about this early and ask for someone’s advice who has experience of this.”

“We do think that digital-giving will work in an outdoor environment, provided there is connectivity to the internet/phone networks, but now think initially that it will need to be driven by events or activities which provide some drama and emotion to inspire the donation.”

“If you want people to trust your organisation enough to donate through a digital platform you need to demonstrate that it is secure and professional. Spending some extra time and money on web design and marketing resources is well worthwhile.” For example, if Just Giving is available, communicate this and the connection with this service to donors.



QUICK GUIDE TO DELIVERY: BOURNEMOUTH PARKS FOUNDATION

Feasibility Assessment

1. Consider the scope and objectives of the foundation - will it simply raise funds, or will it also have a role in improving or managing parks? Is there scope to raise income through trading, merchandising or other commercial activities?
2. Assess the reach of the foundation. Consider the population and geography covered, parks and greenspaces included, and any competing or/and complementary interests that may need to be considered when assessing fundraising (and other) opportunities.
3. Gauge support from key stakeholders, such as parks users, Friends groups and possible donors. Research the local market to test people's willingness to give, preferred methods and opportunities for in-kind support.
4. Identify the governance and organisational structure that will best suit the objectives and activities of the organisation, and whether the foundation will be a membership organisation or not.
5. Identify how trustees, staff and volunteers will be recruited and supported.
6. Assess the cost and timeframe to develop the foundation given the proposed scope and activities. The feasibility of establishing and operating a foundation should include an analysis of the effort needed to convert interest into donations, the balance of paid versus volunteering staff, the ability to obtain pro-bono specialist skills.
7. If the foundation looks feasible, identify sources of funding for the setup phase if needed.

Development

8. Recruit or establish a project manager / coordinator role.
9. Establish a governance group to inform foundation development in the setup phase. This may be a small group, but will help direct and inform trustee recruitment and liaise with the local authority or authorities and other stakeholders in early stages.
10. Buy in or recruit professional branding, marketing, website and communications support.
11. Design the implementation plan for the project. Identify other delivery partners if feasible. Include initial projections and targets for fundraising.
12. Recruit and secure trustees for the foundation, ensuring they bring strong legal and financial skills.
13. Draft the charitable objects for the foundation.
14. Submit relevant Companies House and Charity Commission applications. Identify a suitable charity bank account so you can apply as soon as you get a charity number.
15. Once you've obtained a charity number, apply for a charity bank account.
16. Develop marketing, branding and communications for the foundation. Make sure your fundraising strategy and events plan are aligned with your communications and branding.
17. Develop a website and other forms of digital giving, if using. Decide whether to rent or buy your domain names before you develop the site. Allow time for testing to ensure the website is intuitive for users and integrated with the wider communications and marketing approach. Design the site so you can manage content changes easily within the resources you have available to do this. Make sure your website will allow you to track how donations were raised (e.g. different 'landing pages' for different events or marketing campaigns).
18. Design role descriptions (including for volunteers). Professional fundraising expertise is likely to be a core need.

Implementation

19. Recruit volunteers and/or paid staff to carry out key roles and activities.
20. Carry out marketing and fundraising activities, events and other communications in line with your plan. Monitor expenditure and income for each fundraising activity separately.
21. Adapt based on analysis of performance - which activities generate most interest and most income, which have the best return on investment - and feedback from stakeholders. Keep testing and improving your activities.

WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

BOURNEMOUTH PARKS FOUNDATION

<http://www.bournemouthparksfoundation.org.uk/>

NESTA

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/coastal-parks-and-gardens-foundation>

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