

Parks and Open spaces: What any Party Manifesto for Hounslow Borough needs to include

The Friends Forum is a unique collection of advocates for local parks. Across the Borough, often in any weather, members of Friends groups are on the ground making a difference. We are all passionate about our parks and green spaces. Our collective experience across Hounslow have led us to identify the following principles and priorities that we invite all parties to adopt:

1. Protect Parks and open spaces

- All parks and open spaces are safeguarded from loss or unwanted development.
- All decisions affecting parks or open spaces are decided locally, with residents and Area Forum given the opportunity to shape and make decisions.
- Parks and green spaces are managed to best practice standards.
- Ecology, habitats and green networks of open spaces and river corridors are enhanced in line with the All London Green Grid

2. Ensure everyone can enjoy high quality parks and open spaces

- Safe and pleasant places – litter is cleared promptly, repairs are carried out, antisocial behaviour dealt with promptly, in co-ordination with relevant agencies.
- Healthy places – sports facilities, conservation volunteering activities
- Accessible places – with signage, paths, and walking and cycling routes, safe crossings, public transport services and car parks where appropriate.
- Designed for the whole community – for all ages, including playgrounds, facilities for teenagers and places to rest and meet others.

3. Sustainably fund parks and open spaces

- Commit adequate long-term resources for management, maintenance (including repair) and improvements
- Any savings are made through genuine efficiency improvements, including ‘investing to save’ (e.g. providing more or bigger bins, so bins need emptying less regularly). If grass is allowed to grow long (potentially with environmental benefits), adequate areas (e.g. near entrances or by homes) are cut and maintained for people to exercise and play.
- A percentage of the revenue generated in parks (from events, parking etc.) to be re-invested
- Invest in strategic projects to protect heritage, connect open spaces and create new routes – providing initial funding or match funding to leverage external sources

4. Involve the local community

- Support the establishment of new Friends groups for parks and open spaces (targeting support for areas which currently lack these)
- Support volunteer activities, such as clear ups and conservation days (sometimes known as ‘Green gyms’) to improve areas – including a clear contact point for support.
- Support for greater devolved management of parks where Friends groups have the capacity to take this on.
- Ensure open communication, consult widely on changes and how to direct CIL funding

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Outcomes:

1. No net loss of parkland or open space
2. A Green Flag park in every Ward.
3. Condition of parks improves – amount of broken, damaged or overgrown amenity features reduces.
4. Increased number of community-led activities in parks – e.g. clear ups, events