

Press release: Government pledges £500,000 for new action group to grow future of public parks

Parks and Green Spaces Minister Marcus Jones today (19 September 2017) launched a new Parks Action Group to help England's public parks and green spaces meet the needs of communities now and in the future.

The new Parks Action Group will include experts from the world of horticulture, leisure, heritage and tourism, and will be tasked with bringing forward proposals to address some of the issues faced by public parks and other green spaces across England. To support them, government is providing £500,000 funding to kick start their work.

The action group will propose what steps can be taken in line with the government response to the recent House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee report into the future of parks and green spaces.

Parks and Green Spaces Minister Marcus Jones said:

We recognise the value of parks and green spaces to local communities – including reducing loneliness, increasing wellbeing, and revitalising town and city centres.

But we need to do more to make sure future generations are continuing to enjoy their benefits. That is why we have announced a new expert-led Parks Action Group to work closely with the sector to find the right solutions.

This latest development builds on action the government has taken to date to encourage more people to make better use of parks including:

- In December 2015, the government published the "[Sporting future: a new strategy for an active nation](#)" which set out the importance of sport and physical activity. The [first annual report](#) on the implementation of "sporting future" was published with a specific focus on the themes of central government, local government and outdoor recreation.
- In [February 2016](#) the government awarded over £1 million to improve 87 small pockets of unloved, undeveloped or derelict land to transform them into 87 green spaces that the whole community can enjoy.
- The government has [announced](#) that is to continue the Green Flag Awards license for making sure that Britain's best parks and green spaces will

continue to be recognised for another 5 years. For 20 years, the [Green Flag Awards](#) have been recognising the best of green outdoor spaces in the UK, for people to enjoy and setting standards for park managers across the country to try to emulate. Many parks have won the award, but winners also include more unusual spaces such as social housing developments, cemeteries, canals, and shopping centres.

Parks research

Research published today from the charity Fields in Trust shows that living close to and visiting parks and green spaces can increase people's wellbeing and improve their health. The research also highlights the importance of parks as spaces for neighbours to socialise away, helping to reduce the risk of loneliness.

Fields in Trust's report, among others, will be fundamental to the Parks Action Group's work moving forward.

Helen Griffiths, chief executive Fields in Trust said:

I welcome the ministers response to the CLG Parliamentary Committee and Fields in Trust's appointment to the newly established Parks Action Group at this pivotal moment for the future of parks and green spaces.

Our ongoing research recognises how these spaces help to address significant public policy issues including health and wellbeing and community integration.

We are looking forward to furthering our work with colleagues across the sector to ensure that we value parks and green spaces and take account of the vital contribution they make to local communities.

Graham Duxbury, chief executive of Groundwork said:

Making sure that all communities and all sections of society are able to enjoy the benefits of good green spaces is vital. Joining a local group can help young people develop their skills and older people overcome loneliness.

Well managed green spaces can also help whole neighbourhoods cope with the costly impacts of climate change. We look forward to helping the action group unlock more practical support so that local communities and local authorities can maximise these social and economic benefits.

Matthew Bradbury, Parks Alliance's chief executive said:

Having been involved in lobbying for an inquiry, The Parks Alliance wholeheartedly welcomes the publication of the minister's response to the Local Government Select Committee inquiry into the Future of Public Parks and particularly the creation of a cross governmental and sector supported, Parks Action Group.

The Parks Alliance is very much looking forward to working with the minister, government and the wider sector to secure the future of public parks for the communities that they serve.

Further information

The House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee report: "the future of public parks" published in February 2017, made 17 recommendations that are addressed in full in the [government's response](#) published today (19 September 2017).

The direction of the Parks Action Group will be determined by park sector experts in co-operation with officials from a number of government departments. The Action Group will consider the recommendations from the government's response to the report and propose new projects and actions that will help our parks and green spaces thrive.

Members of the Parks Action Group

Parks and Green Spaces Minister Marcus Jones will chair the inaugural meeting.

The members of the Parks Action Group are:

- Drew Bennellick, Head of Landscape & Natural Heritage UK, Heritage Lottery Fund
- Matthew Bradbury, CEO, Parks Alliance
- Graham Duxbury, CEO, Groundwork
- Helen Griffiths, CEO, Fields In Trust
- Ian Leete, Senior Advisor on Culture, Tourism and Sport, Local Government Association
- Dave Morris, Chair, National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces
- Paul O'Brien, CEO, Association of Public Service Excellence
- Ellie Robinson, Assistant Director, National Trust
- Dave Solly, Natural England

The government has taken steps to encourage more people to make better use of parks. In December 2015, the government published the "[sporting future: a new strategy for an active nation](#)" which set out the importance of sport and physical activity. The first annual report on the implementation of "sporting future" was published with a specific focus on the themes of central government, local government and outdoor recreation.

87 Pocket Parks were awarded £1.05 million in 2016.

The government has supported the Green Flag Awards for 20 years and has recently announced that it is to extend the licence for another 5 years.

The Parks Action Group's recommendations will be implemented through a cross-government group bringing together the relevant government departments including:

- Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
- Department of Health (DH)
- Department for Education (DfE)
- Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)
- Home Office (HO)
- Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Office address and general enquiries

2 Marsham Street

London
SW1P 4DF

Contact form

<http://forms.communiti...>

General enquiries: please use this number if you are a member of the public
030 3444 0000

Media enquiries

Email

newsdesk@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Please use this number if you're a journalist wishing to speak to Press Office
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Press release: No waste permit costs driver

Caught driving a tipper truck full of waste without being registered with the Environment Agency has today (Mon 18/9) cost Patrick Egan £965.

Egan of Grange Road, Grays was convicted in his absence by Basildon magistrates of driving the truck without being registered as a waste carrier nor being employed by a registered waste carrier.

The court fined him £660 and ordered that as well as the fine he should pay a victim surcharge of £66, Environment Agency costs of £85 and compensation of £154.

The tipper truck was stopped by police in Gumley Road, Grays in the course of an investigation into fly-tipping.

When the vehicle was stopped in January this year it was loaded with rubble, bricks and plasterboard.

Don't ignore advice

Egan told them the vehicle belonged to a friend called James whom he sometimes did favours for, such as driving lorries, and was paid £100 to drive it.

He said he did not check the load.

After the hearing an Environment Agency officer spokesperson said: "People driving tipper trucks such as Mr Egan drove have a responsibility to check the load and to be properly permitted by the Environment Agency. It is not good enough to ignore this advice as the court decision has shown today."

The cost of registering with the Environment Agency in 2017 is £154. The registration is valid for 3 years.

Policy paper: Government response to the Select Committee report: the

future of public parks

This publication sets out the response by Marcus Jones, Minister for Parks and Green Spaces, to the 17 recommendations made by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee in their [report](#) published on 30 January 2017.

Speech: UK Statement to the 61st General Conference of the IAEA

Madame President, Excellencies, and distinguished guests,

The United Kingdom associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Estonia on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to congratulate you, Madame President, on your election as President of the 61st General Conference, and thank the IAEA for its hard work in organising this event.

I would also like to express the gratitude of the United Kingdom for the leadership of Director General Amano, and thank him for his distinguished service during his second term in office. The UK looks forward to continuing our collaboration with him and the Agency to secure the future of civil nuclear energy and applications.

The United Kingdom welcomes the application for membership of the Agency by Grenada.

UK priorities

Madame President,

Following the government's announcement of its intention to leave the Euratom Treaty, I would like to affirm the UK's continuing strong support for the civil nuclear industry, for the highest standards of nuclear safety, security and safeguards, for the development of peaceful applications of nuclear technology, and for the IAEA's central role in achieving these goals.

In that spirit, I would like to highlight some of the UK's key objectives for the year ahead:

- To continue our commitment to civil nuclear energy both in the UK and internationally;
- To maintain robust nuclear safety, security, emergency preparedness and response, and safeguards regimes, and support their implementation; and,

- To promote the peaceful uses of new and existing civil nuclear technologies around the world, while ensuring an effective international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Mdm President, before I discuss in detail the UK's objectives, I would like to make a statement on recent developments in North Korea.

The UK calls again on North Korea to halt its nuclear and missile development programme. The recent nuclear weapon test is reckless and poses an unacceptable further threat to international peace and security. The international community has universally condemned this test and must come together to continue to increase the pressure on North Korea's leaders to stop their destabilising actions. North Korea must resume compliance with its safeguards agreement and cooperation with the Agency, and abandon its nuclear programme in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

Civil Nuclear in the UK and Internationally

Madame President,

Nuclear currently provides around 25% of the UK's electricity needs. In the coming decades many of our existing plants will reach the end of their operational lives, while the demand for low-carbon energy increases. New nuclear will have a key role to play in the years ahead, and there are many opportunities to be found in this sector in the UK.

Hinkley Point C, our first new nuclear plant for over 20 years, will provide 3.2 gigawatts of secure, low-carbon electricity for 60 years, meeting around 7% of the UK's energy needs. EDF have made excellent progress; in March this year the first concrete was poured for the power station galleries. The first reactor is due to come online in 2025, and the second the following year.

We are committed to maintaining the UK's status as a world leader in nuclear research and development, and to sustaining and developing our existing international collaboration in this field. We will maintain and build on our world-leading fusion expertise, and seek continued participation in international fusion projects such as the Joint European Torus (JET) project at Culham, and the ITER project in France. Furthermore, we recognise the potential of Small Modular Reactors for producing low-carbon energy, whether small versions of conventional technologies, or next generation reactors.

The UK remains open for business, and ideally placed to continue supporting opportunities across the civil nuclear fuel cycle.

Safety & Security

Madame President,

Safety

The UK remains proactive and transparent in fulfilling our obligations, and sharing expertise, to strengthen nuclear safety and radioactive waste management. We are an active Contracting Party to the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) and the Joint Convention, and look forward to engaging fully with the Joint Convention process next year. We are pleased that this year's CNS Review Meeting had the highest participation levels to date, and identified a number of cross cutting safety issues, which should be tackled as a priority by Member States, supported by the IAEA.

In April we welcomed an Operational Safety Review Team (OSART) follow-up mission to Sizewell B, to assess the facility's adherence to international standards of best practice, and have planned another mission to Torness in 2018. The UK government looks forward to receiving the findings from these missions and is committed to transparency on the outcomes, ensuring public confidence in our ability to safely deliver nuclear energy. We encourage all Member States to host OSART missions.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

The government is committed to maintaining the highest standards of emergency preparedness and response arrangements. The UK is reflecting the latest standards from Euratom and the IAEA in our domestic regime, as part of our commitment to continuous improvement.

Security

The UK strongly supports the central role of the IAEA in promoting robust nuclear security regimes and assisting in their implementation. We contributed a further £8.5m this year to the Nuclear Security Fund in support of these activities, and UK experts have supported International Physical Protection Advisory Service (IPPAS) missions. We encourage other Member States to provide funds and expertise to support the Agency's nuclear security work.

We congratulate the Agency on its successful Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Security last December, and look forward to the outputs of that Conference being applied, to help address current and emerging security challenges.

We continue work with the Agency to assist States in their capabilities to respond to nuclear security events, and to develop the effectiveness of the International Nuclear Security Advisory Service (INSServ). We encourage continued coordination between the Agency and other international bodies, such as the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) and INTERPOL, to deliver training and exercises.

This year the UK Office for Nuclear Regulation launched a new regulatory framework: the Security Assessment Principles. This outcomes-based framework enables industry to design security solutions which align with their business needs. This will increase security competence within the civil nuclear

sector, and place greater emphasis on protecting against emerging threats such as cyber.

Non-Proliferation Safeguards

Madame President,

The global safeguards regime is central to the peaceful use of nuclear technologies, and the UK supports the IAEA in its efforts to strengthen, and verify compliance with, safeguards obligations. The UK welcomes the continued development of State-level safeguards approaches.

We call on all States that have not yet done so to ratify Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols, to ensure their universalisation. As part of preparations for EU Exit, the UK is establishing a domestic nuclear safeguards regime which will deliver to existing Euratom standards. This will ensure that the IAEA retains its right to inspect all civil nuclear facilities, and will continue to receive all current safeguards reporting, ensuring that international verification of our safeguards activity continues to be robust.

Technical Cooperation

The UK remains a strong supporter of the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Programme. It is my pleasure to pledge more than €3.6m to the Technical Cooperation Fund, continuing our record of paying our voluntary contributions on time and in full, and we encourage other Member States to do so.

We congratulate the Secretariat on the success of the recent International Conference on the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme, and welcome its continued implementation of the Results-Based Management approach. We encourage the Secretariat and Member States to assess project outcomes, and implement lessons learned.

Non-Proliferation Treaty

The UK is committed to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and we recognise the IAEA's vital role in support of the Treaty. The first Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in May this year put us on a sound footing for the remainder of the cycle, and we look forward to a constructive PrepCom in 2018.

Iran

We welcome the Director General's reporting that confirms that Iran is adhering to its nuclear-related commitments as outlined in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. It is important for all parties to the Plan of Action to implement the agreement fully. Iran's continued co-operation with the Agency is required, and Member States should assist with continued financial support for the Agency's monitoring and verification activities.

Syria

In light of the Board's previous conclusion that Syria is in non-compliance with its Safeguards Agreement, we urge the Syrian regime to cooperate with the Agency to resolve all outstanding issues, including through concluding and implementing an Additional Protocol, as soon as possible.

IAEA Administration

Lastly, Madame President,

To meet the challenges of realising the global benefits of nuclear technology, it is important that the IAEA's resources are managed efficiently and sustainably to deliver its key priorities within existing funding envelopes. We also emphasise the importance of improving diversity in the Secretariat's staffing and senior appointments, and welcome efforts in this regard to date.

In closing Madame President, let me reiterate the UK's continued strong support for the vital work of the IAEA, in ensuring a safe and secure future for civil nuclear energy around the world, and maintaining an effective safeguards regime which underpins it. We look forward to its continued success, and that of this General Conference.

Thank you.

[Research and analysis: Hen harriers: tracking programme update](#)

Updated: Satellite tracked data spreadsheet updated.

The hen harrier is one of England's rarest and most spectacular birds of prey.

Hen harriers currently breed on heather moorland in the uplands across the UK and in a range of upland and lowland habitats across Europe. For the latest data read the [tracking update](#) document attached to this page.

Natural England is working with a range of organisations to conserve the species and this work contributes to one of these actions. See the Defra [hen harrier action plan](#) for more information.