

APPENDIX 4

Future Parks Accelerator Programme Evaluation

Introduction

The Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University in partnership with Urban Pollinators and the University of Sheffield has been commissioned by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Trust to evaluate the Future Parks Accelerator programme.

CRESR is a UK leading research and evaluation specialist, and the evaluation team has specific expertise in parks and greenspace-related research.

The lead contacts for the evaluation will be Will Eadson (Reader in Urban Sustainability Policy, CRESR) (w.eadson@shu.ac.uk) and Julian Dobson (Director of Urban Pollinators) (julian@urbanpollinators.co.uk).

What we're doing

The evaluation will involve three sets of linked activities organised around the themes of *evaluation*, *learning* and *storytelling* as follows.

Evaluation

For funded projects this will involve the following activities:

- Initial visits to all funded projects to carry out a participatory workshop aimed at developing a shared understanding success will look like from the perspective of each project. We will also spend time discussing any evaluation plans projects have in place, offering guidance where required.
- Case studies with a selection of projects (to be determined following on from initial visits), involving qualitative workshops and interviews with project stakeholders and parks users
- Annual catch-up interviews with project leads to discuss project progress.
- Projects may be asked to submit some information for the programme evaluation (including their individual project evaluation data) but will not be requested to collect additional data: primary data collection will be carried out by the programme evaluation team. We will also work to ensure alignment between programme and project evaluation processes

We will focus our evaluation on how change is happening, not just on what has been achieved; and aim to be empathetic to the unique contexts and challenges faced in each local area.

Learning activities and evaluation support

Given the innovative nature of the programme, it is important that projects feel supported and have opportunities to share their experiences. We have therefore included the following activities to facilitate learning between projects and across the programme:

- two full-day learning events a year (six in all). The primary purpose of each is to provide an unpressured space in which project participants can engage in group work to share their own experiences. Events will take place at different project locations to give projects opportunity to showcase their achievements.
- we will offer support to develop organisations' evaluation capacity to complement individual project plans. As well as activities at learning events and guidance during project visits, support will also include an evaluation helpdesk for projects to receive support from the evaluation team regarding their own evaluations

Storytelling

Our evaluation will chart individuals' and projects' own stories and, via their experiences, the stories of the places they are seeking to protect and change.

A roving reporter will attend each of our learning events, meeting and interviewing participants and writing short, lively accounts of their experiences. These will be uploaded to a project website and audio or video interviews will be used to bring participants' experiences to life. We will also produce short vignettes from our case studies.

When we'll do it

We would like to visit each project as soon as is practically possible and will be in touch shortly to being arranging visits with you. Other key dates are to be confirmed but our initial timescales are as follows:

- Initial visits to projects: June and July 2019
- First learning event: October 2019 (subsequent events at roughly 6-monthly intervals)
- 1st round of case study visits: March-June 2020 (with follow-ups in Spring 2021 and 2022)
- End of grant-giving report: May 2021
- Final evaluation report: May 2022

The evaluation will last for a year longer than the projects themselves so that we can better understand sustainability of project achievements.

How to contact us

If you have any questions about this evaluation, please contact Will Eadson in the first instance. His contact details are:

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