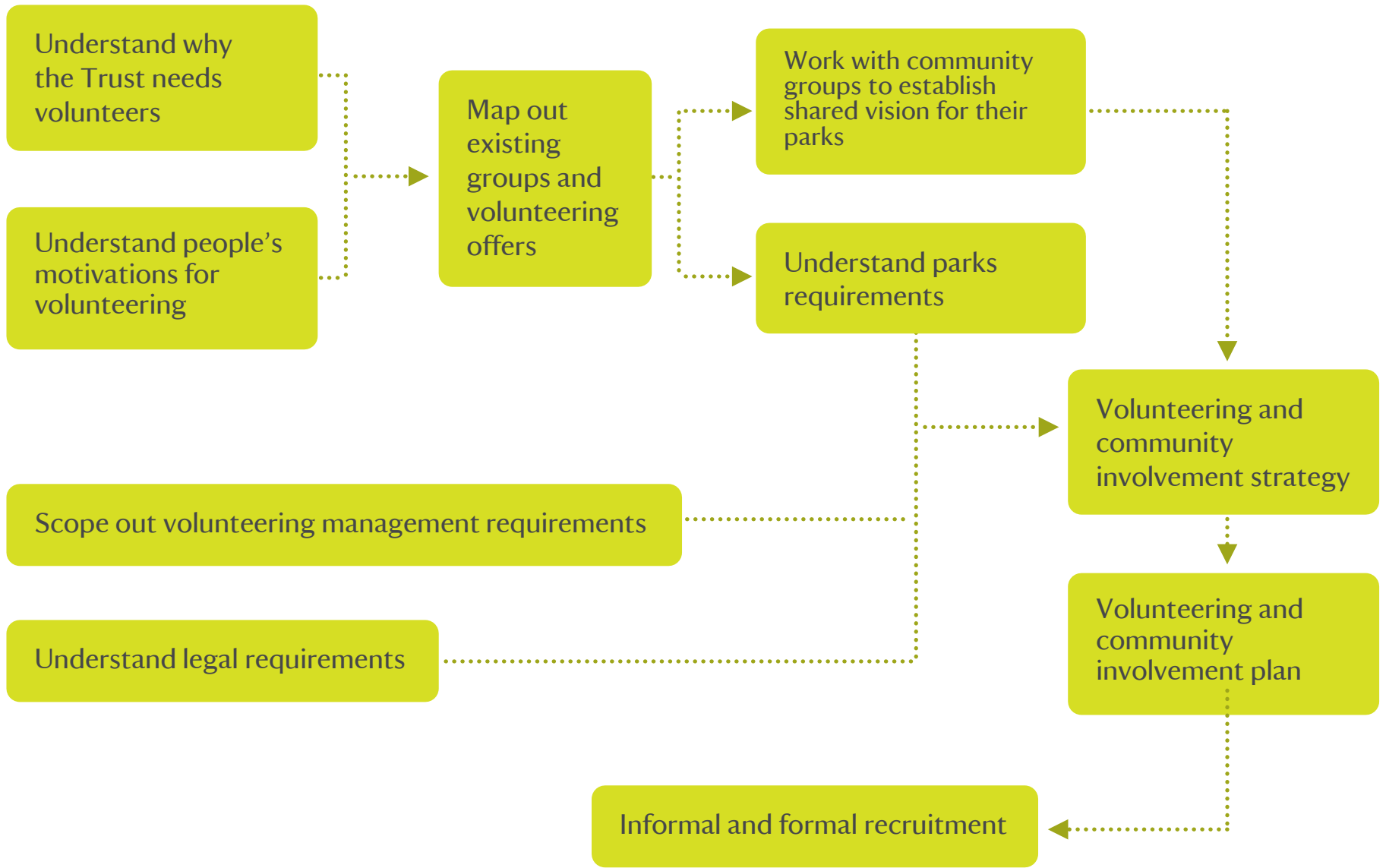


Future Parks

www.futureparks.org

Pathway to volunteering and community involvement in a Parks Trust



Understanding why the Parks Trust needs volunteers

Understanding why the Parks Trust needs volunteers

As a first step, the Parks Trust should consider why it needs volunteers

Reasons are likely to include


- To ensure long-term sustainability of project
- To establish community links
- To give parks greater relevance
- To increase vibrancy of the parks
- To benefit from added value

Understanding people's motivations for volunteering

As a next step, the Parks Trust should understand people's motivations for volunteering in parks

Reasons could include

- Sense of community
- To use professional skills
- To develop skills for work or life
- To escape from work
- To feel ownership of local places
- To find fun activities to do with family and friends



These will inform the Trust's volunteer recruitment campaign

Mapping out existing groups and volunteering offers

As part of wider stakeholder mapping, the Parks Trust should fully map out existing community groups and volunteering offers

Other volunteering offers could include accredited or structured volunteering

For existing 'Friends of' and community groups, ask

- What are their motivations?
- How representative are they?
- What support do they need?
- Where do they see issues?
- How well networked are they?
- Are they open to Parks Trust involvement?

Tip: 'Friends of' groups should not be seen as a separate category to 'ordinary' volunteers

Their skillset and potential should be identified early on during setup of the Trust

Working with community groups to establish shared vision

The Parks Trust should work with community groups to establish a shared vision for their parks

For existing 'Friends of' and community groups, ask

- What is special about the park?
- What is its story?
- What is the value of the park to them?

This will help the Parks Trust to develop a shared vision for parks that involved an active community from the outset

The National Trust calls this the 'Spirit of Place'

The National Trust uses Spirit of Place as a tool to determine e.g. the vision for a site, interpretation, programming and marketing

Tip: Be sure to manage expectations

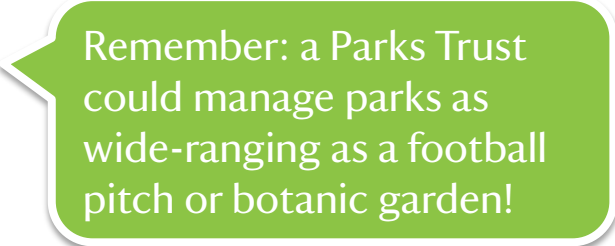
You can do this with a 'You said, we did' approach

Understanding parks requirements

As part of wider masterplanning, the Parks Trust should map out the offer for each park to inform volunteer requirements

For each park, ask:

- What offer does/will this park provide?
- What are the essential works required?
- What are the 'nice to have's'?
- Where could volunteers add value?



Remember: a Parks Trust could manage parks as wide-ranging as a football pitch or botanic garden!

Scoping out volunteer management requirements

Simultaneously, the Parks Trust should scope out requirements for its volunteer management structure

Ideally, a stakeholder/community engagement manager should

- Be recruited separately from TUPE staff to ensure impartiality
- Consider innovative ways of involving communities
- Establish a two-way channel of communications between the Trust and 'Friends of' groups
- Upskill volunteers

- Instill volunteering and community involvement in the work culture of all staff to ensure sustainability of volunteering
- Be sure to break down misconceptions about volunteering (e.g. that volunteers replace paid staff)

Understanding volunteering costs

Volunteers are not a 'free resource'. Recruiting, managing and equipping volunteers has a cost that should be considered. However, volunteers do bring added value

The National Trust places the notional value of volunteering at £9.13/h.

Volunteer costs may include

- Training
- Equipment
- Provision of facilities (e.g. restroom)
- Protective clothing (e.g. waterproofs, boots)
- Out-of-pocket expenses

Understanding legal requirements

The Parks Trust should also consider legal requirements before development of a volunteering and community involvement strategy

When considering the role of volunteers, avoid

- creating a contract
- specifying fixed time commitments
- offering pay or benefits in kind (except out-of-pocket expenses)

Give reassurance to paid staff that volunteers add value; they don't replace existing staff

For more information about volunteering and the law, visit <https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/volunteers-rights>

This will be covered in the Trust's community engagement strategy

Developing a volunteering and community involvement strategy

The Parks Trust should develop a volunteering and community involvement strategy to inform its community involvement plan

The volunteering and community involvement strategy will include

- The Parks Trust's vision for volunteering and community involvement
- A vision for parks as shared with key stakeholders
- A strategy for volunteer management that links to the above
- Definition of the Parks Trust's ethos about volunteering, with parks as a space for community collaboration
- Clear articulation of how volunteering and community involvement relates to staffing and working culture

Recruiting volunteers

A volunteer should be able to carry out any role if they have the right skills

Some suggested roles include

- Governance
- Gardening
- Conservation and maintenance
- Fundraising
- Events
- Visitor engagement
- Data collection/surveying
- Volunteer management
- Community engagement and networking

Ideally volunteers should have excellent customer service skills and will become advocates for the Parks Trust.

Recruiting volunteers

The scope of volunteering options offered will depend on demographics and successful volunteer management

Volunteering options could include

- Regular (e.g. twice weekly)
- Flexible (individually arranged)
- Family volunteering
- Events-based (e.g. drop-in)
- Employee volunteering (CSR)
- Group volunteering (e.g. 'Friends of' groups, special needs groups)
- Microvolunteering (e.g. social media advocacy)
- Crowdsourced volunteering

- Accredited volunteering (e.g. through colleges)

Tip: Understand your customers. For some segments the word 'volunteering' can be off-putting. Instead, ask them to 'join in' and 'lend a hand'

Certain times work better for certain segments, too: Saturdays tend to be no-go for busy families

In some instances, the Parks Trust could take on a facilitating role, not necessarily delivery

Case study 1: The National Trust's volunteer 'journey'

The National Trust has over 60,000 volunteers, who contribute more than 4.5 million hours per year – an average of 74 hours per volunteer.

Volunteers are able to carry out a breadth of roles within the National Trust, from governance and professional advice to gardening, and from providing a visitor welcome to property-specific volunteer roles. Because different types of volunteering appeal to different people, the National Trust provides a range of experiences, from 'pop-up' volunteering at events to micro-volunteering, such as promoting Trust events via social media.

Fundamental to volunteering are the Trust's support structures. The Trust ensures the best possible volunteer experience through its volunteer 'journey', with specific support and guidance over four key stages: plan, recruit, manage, grow.

Volunteering at the Trust is also supported by effective use of online systems. MyVolunteering provides an online portal that makes it easier to volunteer, find help and guidance, and makes it easier for volunteer managers to coordinate volunteers.



Case study 2: Milton Keynes Parks Trust

Milton Keynes Parks Trust was established in 1992 on an 'Endow and enterprise' model. A volunteering offer has been built into Milton Keynes' Parks Trust, with roles varying from supporting educational visits to patrolling and events, and from practical conservation and wildlife surveys to administration.

The Trust has built up an established volunteer base of 160 who give around 10200 hours per year and cover 2200 hectares. It also has flexible volunteering arrangements with TCV Green Gym, Canal & River Trust, as well as independent 'Friends of' groups.

Strengths of the volunteering offer at Milton Keynes Parks Trust include:

1. Finding a good fit between role profiles and volunteers' interests
2. Regular communications, including get-togethers
3. Volunteer management best practice, e.g. paying expenses, providing training, gathering and acting on volunteer feedback.

Recommendation: Listen to your volunteers. Take time to understand them so that all parties benefit from the experience.

Case study 3: English Heritage

Prior to 2015, English Heritage was non-departmental public body with responsibilities including statutory advice on the historic environment, administration of grant funding for heritage assets, and management of the national collection of buildings.

With an £80 million grant from the government, English Heritage has become a self-financing charity responsible for managing the national portfolio of historic properties and visitor experience. (Statutory advisory functions were moved under the banner of Historic England).

As part of its strategy for transition to a charitable Trust, English Heritage will shift from being a staff-led 'doing' organisation to a values-led collaboration with its members, supporters and volunteers. Volunteering with English Heritage is already seeing a significant growth, with volunteers up 27% from 1,473 in 2013-14 to 1,872 in 2014-15.

Case study 4: Green Academies Project

The Green Academies Project (GAP) is a partnership between the National Trust, Bournville College and Birmingham Youth Service. It has delivered three work streams on National Trust countryside sites and in local urban greenspaces:



1. NVQ Accredited Training in Land Based Conservation
2. National Trust Apprenticeship Scheme for young people aged 16-19
3. A Community Engagement Programme of events and activities.

GAP delivered clear social benefits by encouraging disadvantaged urban communities to engage with and learn about nature, while adding value to conservation management at National Trust places and in urban greenspaces.

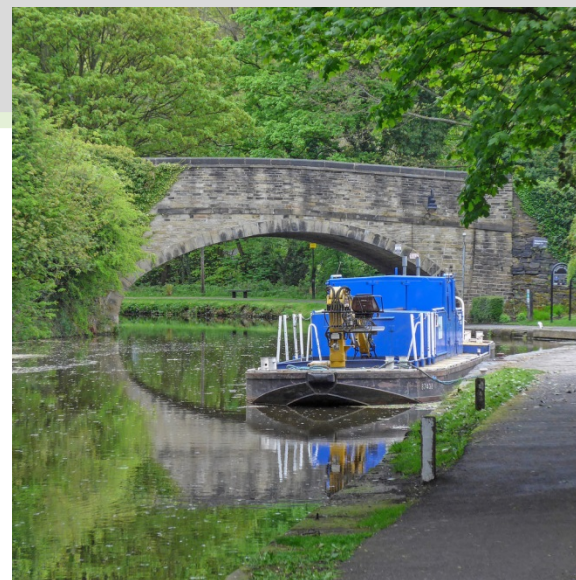
Recommendation: The Trust can work in partnership with other services to deliver targeted social benefits and gain added value

Case study 5: Canal & River Trust

Formerly state-owned under the banner of British Waterways, the Canal & River Trust (C&RT) cares for 2,000 miles of waterways in England and Wales.

C&RT's 10-year strategy (from 2014) redefines the Trust as a partnership-building, customer and community-focused organisation.

As a result, C&RT has developed mechanisms to facilitate volunteering for existing 'Friends of' groups, e.g. supporting 'Friends of' groups and including opportunities to get involved with them on C&RT's volunteer portal.



Recommendation: The Trust does not always need to 'own' the volunteering offer – it can act as a facilitator