

Future Parks

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A View from the Ground Grand Designs?



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Newcastle's parks and green spaces – the worst of times, the best of times

- Ongoing significant budget reductions since 2010/11 – a reduction of 91%.
- All of the council's budgets are under great pressure, with a further £70m to find 2017/18-2019/20.
- Even with the earlier years' reductions, it was clear that we needed a new delivery model if we were to protect parks and green spaces for future generations.
- Elected Members were also looking for new delivery models which would support its Cooperative Council ambitions.

Newcastle parks and green spaces in 2027

- Vibrant, busy and popular, well maintained, and with lots of activities orchestrated by managers and partners.
- Recognised venues / spaces for health and therapeutic activities, for people of all ages and abilities and backgrounds.
- Strategically important wildlife sites and green spaces across the city delivering ecological value and supporting diversity, in line with the Council's statutory duties under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006);

Newcastle parks and green spaces in 2027

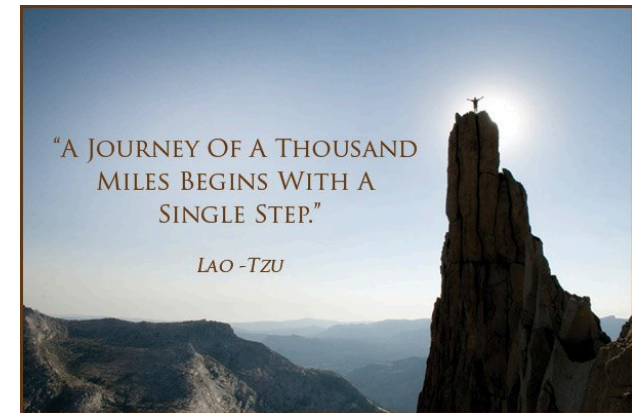
- Managed by an independent body with cooperative and mutual values, providing excellent opportunities for volunteers and stakeholders.
- Parks' users; friends of groups, and residents all integral to the delivery of the service.
- An enhanced parks service, with a culture of continuous improvement.
- Parks for all, and at the centre of the city's life – as was the original intention (our first municipal park – Leazes Park – opened in 1873).





Our transformation journey so far, 2015 -2016

- 2014 budget ideas - a 'national trust for Newcastle' – a crackpot idea? Perhaps, but members keen to find out.
- Research into models, partner/expert advice, partner opportunities.
- Making sense of what we have – estate; restrictions and opportunities; budgets and other resources.
- Project team and options appraisal, and identifying scope (in all senses).
- Open conversations, nothing secret, but no wide ranging consultation and engagement as yet.
- A quick realisation that 'something must be done'.



Parks and health – partnerships and benefits

- Supporting pathways to work for people with learning and physical difficulties through parks maintenance and management.
- Providing part of the city's network of health check provision and 'health trainer support', (working closely with "Ways to Wellness" and other parts of the health improvement network).
- Being skilled in supporting rehabilitation pathways for a variety of conditions including mental health recovery, cardiac rehabilitation, peripheral vascular disease, hypertension, pre-diabetes and diabetes; support and coordinate a network of volunteers, involved in these functions.
- But not just hospitals without a roof.

Key lessons – the challenges

- It takes a long time to transform.
- It takes a long time to get your house in order.
- You need the right transformation model in mind – but how do you know what's possible?
- Agreeing the scope of your transformation – and justifying it?
- You must invest in internal and external stakeholder management – and as soon as possible.
- You'll need culture change – staff, members, interest groups, volunteers, and residents.
- You're bound to unearth the unexpected.
- Transforming and pioneering are expensive processes – be prepared.



Our next steps

- Consultation programme – December – April.
- Finalising the business plan.
- Refining the model (and the scope)- in the context of the consultation.
- Hopefully we'll have a model that will work.
- Cabinet approval to proceed.
- Implementation – the legals, the new Board, the transition programme, the launch – September 17?