

Britain's Active Parks Conference

24th October 2019, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

A one-day conference focusing on how our parks can play an increasing role in getting people active and changing lives

How Britain's parks are engaging with new audiences, in new places...

There is an increasing focus on the importance that our parks and other green spaces can play in getting inactive people active.

There are many ways of motivating and taking physical activity specific to local people in their park. This may include different levels of physical activity which can be fit into a general walk or dog walking schedule, the use of new technology to link to further information or perhaps the use of augmented reality and games.

There is no generic template for a good park or green space. The connections between experiences of nature, including diverse trees, plants and wildlife and mental wellbeing are strong. A park that only serves as a children's playground or a football training ground is not fulfilling its potential,

There is also a strong case for saying that using parks for people to be active supports mental wellbeing and social inclusion and contributes to a preventative health agenda.

Also, while green spaces are important we should also remember that 'blue space' matters too. Rivers, lakes and canals are all great places for people to enjoy paddlesports, swimming or just being near the water.

The possibilities for our parks as places where local people engage and are active are numerous and there is considerable scope for local residents to share their experiences of using the park, to help people come up with ideas. It is also important to recognise that visibility in the park makes it easier to see people like being active – reducing social distance.

There are also a number of ways that local groups and community entrepreneurs can become involved and develop bottom-up initiatives which can have a real impact due to their understanding of local needs and people.

This conference will feature real stories and successes to be told, lessons to be learnt, ideas and experiences to be shared

This conference is aimed at representatives from parks, social and sports development and other departments at our local authorities, social prescribers, public health, trusts, social enterprises, community groups and health and wellbeing bodies.

Presentations from:





8.45 - 9.30 Registration and Tea/Coffee

9.30 – 9.45 Welcome and introduction, Chair, Svend Elkjaer

Svend Elkjaer is founder and director of the Sports Marketing Network, a leading consultancy and information provider with community sport and physical activity. Being described as 'a positive disruptor' Svend has worked across the UK and Denmark with all types of providers and funders helping them to become vibrant, visible and viable.

9.45 – 10.15 The challenge of moving at scale while keeping it local

Dr Justin Varney MBBS MSc FFPH, Director of Public Health for Birmingham City Council

Birmingham has more green space than Paris, more canals than Venice, 15 green flag parks, 5 golds at Chelsea, and one of the youngest and most diverse populations in Europe, yet many of our parks and green spaces remain unloved and unused.

The evidence base that green space benefits health and wellbeing is well established and yet we also know that health rarely motivates people to take action and that engaging people requires significant local engagement and community resource, making it hard to scale and challenging financially.

Birmingham, as a founder member of the global Biophilic Cities movement, is committed to connecting our million citizens with nature as part of their daily lives in the city, in his presentation Dr Varney, Director of Public Health for Birmingham City Council will reflect on the challenge of moving at scale while keeping it local in England's second city. Dr Varney is Director of Public Health for Birmingham City Council, responsible for protecting and improving the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Birmingham..

10.15 – 10.45 Creating an accessible pathway for people on lower incomes to offer them free outdoor exercise classes

Born Borikor, CEO, Our Parks

Our Parks was founded by Born Barikor in March 2014 with the aim of creating an accessible pathway to exercise by providing free fitness sessions in parks across London and the UK. Our Parks delivers over 300 hours per week of outdoor group exercise classes across the UK, predominately in London, to activate outdoor spaces and parks, targeting inactive people.

The main goal of setting up Our Parks was to provide everyone with the opportunity to exercise by removing the barriers of cost so that anyone from any borough, any socio-economic background and any community group can participate. It was also set up to try to achieve social mobility between different community groups by encouraging them to exercise together, outdoors in their local parks.

Our Parks currently has a weekly repeat user base of 70,000 taking part in outdoor exercise across London and parts of the UK, which is set to grow in 2019-2020. The aim for Our Parks this year is to get 250,000 Parkers moving by 2020.

Born Barikor found himself with no money to join a gym but wanting to keep fit and he came up with the idea of Our Parks. He took degree in Pharmaceutical Science and after a career in sports development and personal training, Born left his job to realise his vision.

10.45 – 11.15 Working collaboratively with our communities to test out the ways to bring our parks into use as venues for physical activity

Karen Creavin, Chief Executive; The Active Wellbeing Society

Here in Birmingham, we have spent the last 7 years testing out ways to provoke physical activity in our parks. As a vital civic resource, we have worked collaboratively with our communities, especially those in the most deprived parts of the city, to test out the ways to bring our parks into use as venues for physical activity. Over this time we have had a focus on working with those least likely to be regularly physically active.

Most recently, we have been developing evidence and metrics around how this work has contributed to increased social cohesion and has raised levels of trust between citizens. As the privatisation of our civic spaces continues, our work in Birmingham lends a voice to those who are working to protect these vital assets for the benefit of all, not just those who can afford to be active. With a Masters in Public Sector Management in 2005 Karen Creavin started working for Birmingham City Council while there, in conjunction with a colleague she set up the 'be active' programme which has won national and international awards.

Karen set up and became Head of Wellbeing services at BCC, overseeing nationally acclaimed projects within the service. Karen is now Chief Executive of The Active Wellbeing society, a community benefit society that will deliver the wellbeing services on behalf of the Council.

11.15 – 11.40 Tea/Coffee



11.40 – 12.10 It's all about the local community and award-winning green space management

Paul Harper, Sports Development Officer, Glendale Lewisham

Glendale Lewisham is groundbreaking – we believe it is one of the first partnerships to incorporate events management and sports development which have become cornerstones of the contract with Lewisham Council because they promote community involvement.

Community involvement plays a crucial part in contemporary contract delivery because it ensures public green spaces remain relevant. It can also generate income for the betterment of parks. In the last 18-months our resident bid writer secured over £20,000 of funding for community projects such as fitting trim trail equipment in Mountsfield Park. In addition, Blackheath Festival, one of over 800 events held in the borough's green spaces, has generated £45,000 for improvements to the heath since it launched in 2014.

Our award-winning sports development officer coordinates the Lewisham Primary School Football League, which is the most attended, inter-schools event in London involving over 30 different primary schools.

Paul Harper has worked for Glendale for more than 15-years, where he is responsible for all things sports-related across Lewisham's parks as part of the firm's contract with Lewisham Borough Council.

12.10 – 12.40 Designing our cities to be playful: beyond parks

Dr Emmanuel Tseklevs, Senior Lecturer, Lancaster University

Green spaces are well known for their benefits in promoting health, wellbeing and increasing providing clean air. Urban public spaces, along with green spaces can be also designed to promote healthy behaviours. In this talk, we will demonstrate ways of motivating local people taking physical activity in their parks and beyond, through playful approaches and technologies. After a short presentation of the theories behind playfulness and wellbeing, we will showcase examples from cities and parks from around the world of encouraging citizens to adopt healthier behaviours and whilst having fun. Dr Emmanuel Tseklevs leads research at the intersection of design, health, wellbeing and technology at ImaginationLancaster at Lancaster University. His research is driven by life's mission to discover and share knowledge that inspires people to act on themselves and to enjoy healthier lives.

12.40 – 13.10 Connecting Actively to Nature – Devon

Gareth Dix – Director Strategic Relationships, Active Devon in partnership with Sport England

Devon is one of the largest counties in England with 2 coasts, 2 national parks bringing together both blue and green managed space within urban and rural settings. With an aging population often facing rural and social isolation this presentation will explore Active Devon's Connecting Actively to Nature (CAN) work funded by Sport England. The presentation will pick up on some of the unique aspects of the programme in particular working with nature partnerships, using an ambassador model and connection to social prescribing.

Gareth Dix is Strategic Relationships Director for Active Devon and is one of 8 newly appointed Extended Workforce Directors working with Sport England and Active Partnerships. He has worked in public health, coast and countryside and leisure provision within NHS and local authorities. Gareth's current focus is supporting system change towards a healthier Active Devon through building strong relationships.

13.10 -14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 14.30 Waterways have the power to make a difference to people's lives

Richard Preston, Partnerships and External Relationships Manager, The Canal & River Trust

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England & Wales. We believe waterways have the power to make a difference to people's lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier. By bringing communities together to make a difference to their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day. Whether people are walking, running, biking, boating, fishing, resting, spotting wildlife or simply seeking a bit of headspace, everyone needs time to escape.

Richard Preston is the Trust's Partnerships and External Relationships Manager in the West Midlands Region. With over two twenty years experience of managing countryside sites and outdoor space, public rights of way and inland waterways, he is a keen champion for the natural environment and peoples access to it. Richard is currently chair of the Local Nature Partnership for Birmingham and the Black Country.



14.30 – 15.00 Strength in Numbers Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces

Angela Lewis, Head of Programmes, Fields in Trust

We are calling for parks to be revalued for the multiple benefits they bring to people and the environment rather than just for the costs associated with their maintenance. Our 2018 research study 'Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces' uses HM Treasury approved methodology to provide a robust economic valuation of improvements in health and wellbeing associated with the frequent use of parks. Our research shows that parks and green spaces have an important role to play in supporting physical and mental health and wellbeing. Parks are often the settings for entry-level activity. Inactive people don't suddenly start playing sport in a formal setting, they walk, jog, cycle or play – and they need safe local green spaces to do this.

We will present case study examples from our Active Spaces programme which is helping to increase participation in many different physical activities on local parks and green spaces which will be protected for future generations to use and enjoy. Funded by the London Marathon Charitable Trust and delivered in partnership with Fields in Trust and Our Parks. Green spaces are good, do good and need to be protected for good.

Angela Lewis is Fields in Trust's Head of Programmes and also has a Development Manager role covering the West Midlands and Gloucestershire. She joined Fields in Trust in 2011 with a focus on the QEII Fields Challenge and now leads the organisation's work on the Centenary Fields programme in partnership with The Royal British Legion, and the London Marathon Charitable Trust's Active Spaces programme. She is also leading the charity's corporate partnership work. Angela has always worked in sport and leisure for a variety of organisations at national, regional and local level including Sport England and the London Borough of Richmond.

15.00 – 15.30 Parks – our natural health service

Ian Mackenzie, Green Health Programme Manager, greenspace scotland / NHS Lothian

Want to get active and keep fit and well? A dose of greenspace could be just what the doctor ordered!

Parks are often described as 'our natural health service', with a growing body of research evidence showing their positive benefits for physical and mental health and wellbeing. greenspace scotland, working with NHS Lothian and the Edinburgh & Lothians Health Foundation, have published Scotland's first health board-led Green Health Strategy. This presentation will describe the process of developing the Strategy and look at how it is being implemented to fully realise the potential of the NHS outdoor estate, parks and greenspaces as community health assets. greenspace scotland is Scotland's parks and greenspace charity working towards the goal that everyone in Scotland can access and enjoy quality greenspace which meets their needs and improves quality of life. Ian has recently joined greenspace scotland and NHS Lothian to lead the delivery of the Greenspace and Health Strategic Framework for Edinburgh and the Lothians.

Prior to joining greenspaces scotland Ian Mackenzie managed the Living Landscapes programme with the Scottish Wildlife Trust, including the Wild Ways Well programme in Cumbernauld. His work has focused on urban landscapes and helping unlock the benefits of greenspaces for communities.

15.30 – 15.50 Conclusion and finish



Sports Marketing Network, the organiser

Sports Marketing Network is a unique organisation where physical activity and community sports providers can share best practice on how to become vibrant, visible and viable and develop innovative and enterprising enterprises.

We have been described as positive disruptors and we have worked with a wide range of sport, physical activity and community organisations helping them to adapt, change and become better equipped to the changing landscape.

More than 4000 community sports providers from across the have participated in one of our Grow Your Club workshops, benefitted from 1:2:1 consultancy and mentoring, attended one of our conferences, participated in one of our webinars or read one of our Guides, so we have developed an unparalleled knowledge and understanding of the opportunities and challenges for the enterprise and innovation aspects of community sport and physical activity.

Thousands of people involved with community sport and physical activity across the UK and Scandinavia have participated in one of our 'hot topics' conferences covering issues such as Innovation and Enterprise in Community Sport, More Disabled People into Sport, More Girls into Sport and A Healthier Nation through Sport and Physical Activity, to name a few....

To book your place complete registration form below or [go to](#)

www.smnuk.com/product/britains-active-parks/

#MoreThanSport Academy...Innovative training and support to get more people active

There is a strong focus across the UK on increasing levels of physical activity. This will mean reaching new audiences which, by definition, must include the inactive. The social benefits which are brought to communities by being physically active are wide-ranging and well documented. From health and wellbeing to educational attainment and social cohesion. However simply moving active people into new and different activities will not be enough to achieve these bold ambitions.

We must understand that sport does not resonate with everyone and hence it will not act as a cohesive ingredient by default in every situation; least of all with those for whom sport is not a current part of their lives. However, we can broaden the appeal and create a sense of shared ownership behind which people from different backgrounds can unite.

To achieve such ambitions there is a clear role to be played by innovation, as well as a significant contribution to be made by the existing workforce. We need a workforce that understands people at every level of the sporting spectrum and recognises that not everybody can be, or even wants to be a sports star; however, everybody wants to feel accepted.

But the bad news is that a recent survey of the sporting workforce showed only 2 in 5 had any sense that working with inactive people was for them.

The #MoreThanSport Academy will focus on:

- 1. We should increase our focus on training and support for those coaches and instructors who are keen to engage with inactive people.**
- 2. We should also engage with charities, community groups and other local bodies to help them attract and support a new workforce from outside the traditional sport and physical activity sector to engage with inactive people.**
- 3. And finally, we should be developing and supporting social entrepreneurs in community sport and physical activity.**

This is all delivered via workshops, webinars, videos and mentoring.

For more information go to <http://www.smnuk.com/morethansport-academy/>

Britain's Active Parks Registration Form

A one-day conference,
24th October 2019, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

Contact name	
Organisation name	
Job Title	
Contact tel.	
Contact email	
Invoicing address including post code	
Purchase order number:	

Names and contact details of all delegates

Name	Job Title	Email

Delegate Fees: £155 per person

Payment details

I enclose a cheque for £ _____

Please invoice me/my organisation (for Purchase Order Number see above) for £ _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Print name _____

Position in organisation _____

Please complete and return to
Sports Marketing Network, 5 Station Terrace, Boroughbridge, YO51 9BU
or email svend@smnuk.com Tel: 01423 326 660