

# Private, voluntary and public sector partnership for outdoor space provision: *policy lessons from the Bags of Help grant programme evaluation*

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The challenge we face

Britain's cities and communities face an environmental crisis. It is a crisis that affects people's health and wellbeing, and one that jeopardises the green spaces they use and love.

Air quality in cities regularly breaches legal limits, putting public health at risk. Climate change brings the threat of more extreme weather events, affecting homes, livelihoods and property. And the future of urban green space, created through enormous effort over the last two centuries, is threatened as a result of an unprecedented squeeze on local authority resources.

In the midst of this crisis there is hope. Hope that governments will safeguard healthy and environmentally rich urban environments; and hope that civil society, businesses and individuals will respond by investing their own resources, financial and practical, to make a difference.

This report explores how this crisis can be addressed. It does so by focusing on urban green space; and in particular, how civil society and the private sector can help address the local challenges of providing and maintaining public outdoor space.

It draws on interim findings from a two year study of a programme to support local communities to provide, maintain and improve local green spaces in Britain. The programme was funded by Tesco through sales of carrier bags and administered by Groundwork UK. The report shows policymakers how small grants programmes can make a big difference, encouraging communities to value and use green spaces and highlighting how private businesses can help to provide and maintain them.

Local, non-governmental action is vital. But so is the role of the state in ensuring our green spaces have a bright future. Although there is a current shortage of public investment, that is not an inevitability we have to accept. The diminishing funds available to provide and maintain green spaces make the challenge for communities and businesses more difficult.

## 1.2. About the Bags of Help evaluation

Since October 2015 customers of large retailers in England have had to pay a statutory charge of 5p for each single use carrier bag they take away. Similar arrangements were introduced in Wales in 2011 and in Scotland in 2014. All proceeds must go to good causes that benefit local communities. When the scheme was extended to England significantly greater funds became available. This prompted the supermarket retailer Tesco to seek a national charity to work with them to design and administer a Britain-wide community initiative. Its aim was to develop, improve or widen the use of outdoor spaces in ways that enhanced health, wellbeing, social cohesion and environmental sustainability, and hence the overall quality of life in surrounding areas.

Groundwork UK, which describes itself as *a national community charity with over 35 years' experience of making places better and helping people in those places to improve their prospects*, was chosen as Tesco's charity partner. The new grants programme, called Bags of Help, opened for applications in October 2015. It invited proposals from non-commercial organisations, including charities, community groups, schools, health bodies, social landlords and local councils. These ideas were initially

assessed for eligibility, relevance and viability by Groundwork UK, and assigned to Tesco's local regions.

The first two rounds of the programme had a similar format. Once applications were assessed by Groundwork UK, shortlisting group meetings were held across different Tesco regions. In these meetings Tesco staff selected three projects to be voted on by customers over a two-week period. In each case the project with the most votes was awarded £12,000; the second received £10,000; and the third got £8,000. Over the two rounds, around 7,500 applications were received and nearly 14 million votes were cast by customers across England, Scotland and Wales. In all, 2,314 projects were awarded funding.

The use of Tesco store regions ensured a good geographical spread. Gaps were mainly in remoter rural areas. Indeed, one issue in the first round was the low number of applications in certain places, requiring some regions to be combined for shortlisting and voting purposes. Two measures were introduced to address this shortfall: first, customers were invited to nominate potential proposals; and second, local Groundwork and greenspace scotland enablers helped Tesco's own 'community champions' to promote the programme to a larger number of local groups. Enablers were also on hand to help with the application process, to assist with practical issues such as land ownership and to support successful applicants in implementing their proposals.

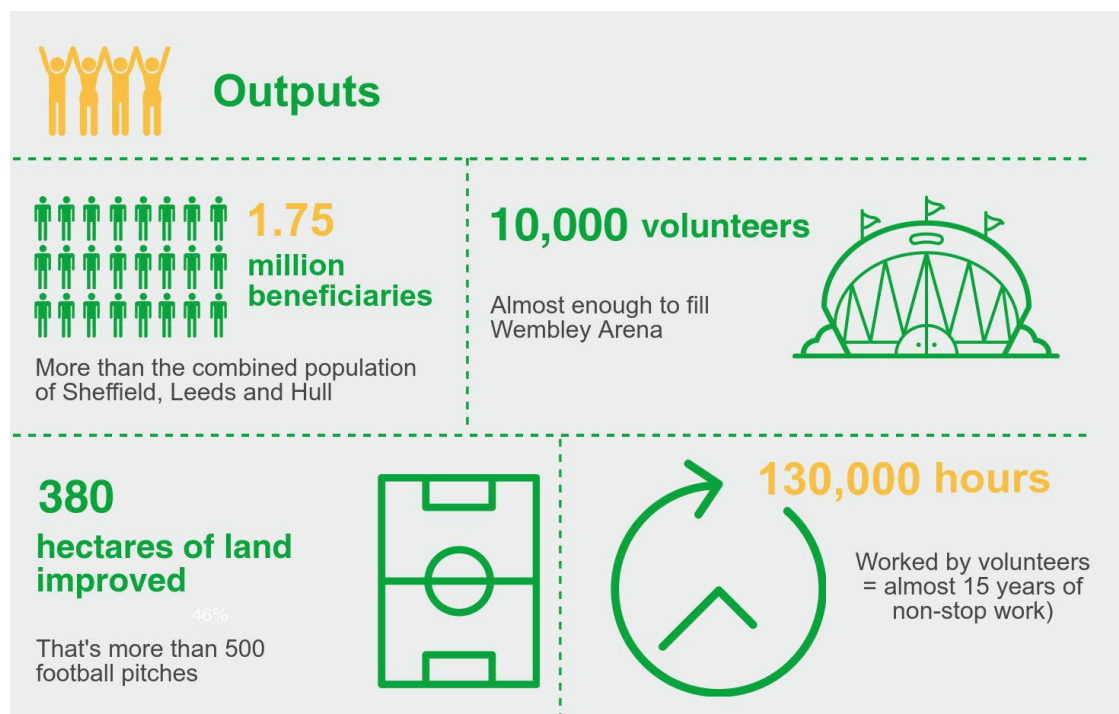
The evaluation began in November 2016 and is due to be completed in September 2018. The evaluation takes a mixed methods approach, including the following activities:

- Interviews with policy stakeholders at UK and devolved nation level, continuing throughout the evaluation.
- Surveys of grant recipients, Tesco customers and Tesco staff.
- 20 locality studies, with in-depth qualitative interviews and/or focus groups with the following:
  - Tesco community champions and Groundwork / greenspace scotland enablers;
  - project leads, volunteers, stakeholders and beneficiaries of two local projects in each area (40 in total);
  - local authority representatives.
- Analysis of project applications and Groundwork UK monitoring data.



## 2. What can small grants to local communities achieve?

Our research shows that small grants of £8,000-12,000 can lead to significant cumulative outputs. Taking 600 completed projects from the Bags of Help scheme, we calculated there were:



Projects focusing on parks, green corridors and nature areas were particularly successful at attracting volunteers.

Although long-term gains have not yet been measured, these grants also provide important benefits to the organisations and community groups that receive them, as well as helping individuals and communities.

### 2.1. What value does a small grant bring to voluntary and community groups?

**Small grants are particularly valuable to smaller, less established groups.** Our findings from the Bags of Help evaluation found that small grants made a big difference to many smaller community groups. In many cases it was the first time organisations had received funding (56% of projects), and the grant enabled a 'step change' in their activity and sustainability. This is where we saw the greatest added value. Groundwork UK says this echoes the experience of previous programmes it has managed, where many groups receiving funding for the first time gained experience, knowledge and skills, and the confidence to apply for larger pots of money and to grow as organisations.

For more established organisations funding was valuable in enabling discrete activities to go ahead. Examples included a project within a wider programme of riverbank maintenance (Owler Beck, West Yorkshire) and providing much needed equipment to improve existing facilities (Moulsecocomb Forest Garden, Brighton). Many established organisations said they found it increasingly difficult to fund infrastructure because most of their funding was earmarked for delivering services. Environmentally-focused organisations were also being hit by changes to the Landfill Communities Fund.

*We received £5000, which is a lot for a small group, and since we've been set up we've relied on sponsorship to the tune of £300 annually from one main business, a local insurance company. [It's made a] huge difference.*

*(Project lead, South West England)*

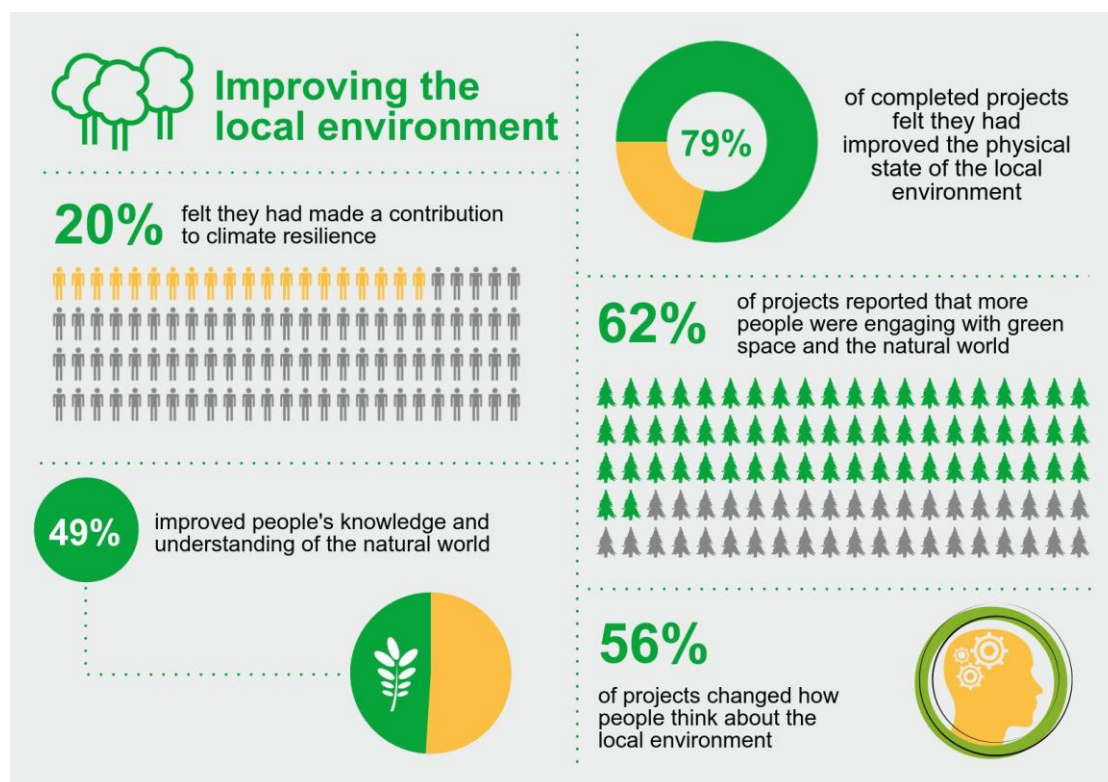
A range of factors helped to make Bags of Help funding accessible to community groups:

- **It was easy to apply** for grants. This helped the many organisations involved that were new, small, inexperienced and without paid staff. More than half (56%) of organisations had no paid staff and the same proportion had never applied for a grant before. However, the process of allocating projects locally for voting in sets of three shortlisted projects left some projects waiting a long time to find out whether or when their application would go to a vote.
- **The scheme was flexible.** Although there were some basic criteria, projects had a great deal of freedom over what to do with the grant. From the second round of funding this included freedom to allocate funds for both capital and revenue activities.
- **Creativity and innovation** can flow from a flexible approach. To maximise the value of small grants, it is important to allow creativity and to recognise that needs and aspirations vary across projects. If they are carefully and flexibly administered, grants provide a positive experience for new groups, building confidence and providing potential pathways to bigger ambitions.
- **Support through dedicated contact points** within the grant-giving organisation is critical for small, less established groups. Around half of all projects funded received some support from Groundwork or Tesco and 98 per cent of these found the support helpful. Local Groundwork Trusts played a particularly important role in promoting the scheme to local groups and helping them to apply for projects.

## 2.2. What is the value to individuals and communities?

Our research showed that small investments in community outdoor space can bring significant benefits to individuals and communities.

### *Improving the local environment*



**Improving wellbeing.** There is extensive evidence that use of green space has positive effects on wellbeing, especially for people whose wellbeing is low or who live in deprived areas.<sup>1</sup> This was borne out in our research, as volunteers and beneficiaries reported improved wellbeing as a result of engaging with the local environment and with other people, and being more physically active. While the evidence is not yet comprehensive, we can reasonably conclude that providing accessible green space with opportunities for community engagement can help to reduce public health, social care and NHS costs.

<sup>1</sup> What Works Centre for Wellbeing (2017) *What drives wellbeing inequality at the local level across Great Britain?* London: What Works Centre for Wellbeing <https://www.whatworkswellbeing.org/product/drivers-of-wellbeing-inequalities-briefing/>



## Box 1: Mental health benefits from engaging with green space

### Mary, South East England

Mary has suffered several traumas in her life, including the loss of close relatives in recent years. This had affected her mental health and she felt socially isolated. Mary was invited to join a project in her local area, working to renew an area of parkland that had become neglected and a site for antisocial behaviour. She helped to plant trees, shrubs and vegetables, build planters and renovate a pond. Importantly, she has also developed a close network of friends with the other volunteers on the project and has become more socially and physically active in her life beyond the project. She has found the project invaluable to her overall mental wellbeing.

*"I lost my son two years ago, he was only 27, it knocked me for six so I find doing what I can here is nice, it's in the fresh air ... it's better than therapy, you're not judged. You go to therapy and they say 'tell me how you feel today', and you say 'what do you want to hear, or what can I tell you to make you listen', that's how I found it. Whereas you don't get judged here, you know you've got a thing that's going to grow, that you did, and that's much better. It's a kind of mindfulness and of course it's a reason to go out every day. If you have any kind of mental health problem, it gets you out of the door, it gives you something to look forward to ... and as well that we chat, we have a good natter, and you know that's not going to go further than the group that you're in"*

Such benefits are felt by users of green space as well as volunteers. The creation of spaces where local residents feel welcome and safe brings people out of their homes and encourages interaction with other people, as well as with the local environment.

**Bringing communities together.** Accessible public green space can attract large numbers of local residents. However if green spaces are not well maintained, they can deter potential users, and residents cease to value them highly. Spaces can then attract antisocial behaviour (ranging from littering to drug use and crime) leading to a spiral of neglect. Simply by creating a presence in local green spaces, projects can begin to 'reclaim' these places for residents and communities. Using small grants to reinvigorate outdoor space with new amenities can in turn catalyse more widespread use. In Staindrop, County Durham, a new playground formed part of a project to revive engagement with a neglected park area, bringing the local community together as users and 'guardians' of the park. More than three-fifths of Bags of Help projects (61%) felt that they had increased local engagement with green space and the environment.

*I feel the project we're doing, it's going to initiate lots of things to happen and people are seeing that now, we've got other residents come in and say what can we help and do ... There's an old lady over there and she's indoors with all the windows closed and going and engaging her and saying you can come across the road and giving her a bit of support across the road ... but when we had a little fun day she baked cakes and came over with cakes and it was like, wow!*

*(Project lead, Croydon)*

*Before, you had to go out of the village to play, or if you play in the back garden, the only people you are going to play with are your friends from school or people you already know, [now] we've got a playground where kids are just playing with anybody from the village ... And it's not just about the kids being able to play, you've got your carers, the parents, the grandparents ... friendships are being made, little support groups are being made.*

*(Local resident, North East England)*

## **2.1. Challenges and limitations**

Receiving permission from landowners to carry out works or activities can be a problem for some organisations, although this was very rarely mentioned in our research. Local authorities in particular were keen for communities to take part in maintaining and improving public outdoor spaces.

In some cases, however, local planning departments had created barriers by imposing onerous administrative procedures or by blocking proposed developments outright.

There is also a limit to existing capacity and appetite for community-led small grants for outdoor space. Experience from Bags of Help suggested that two rounds of funding within one year began to exhaust demand in some areas, and in others demand for funding was limited from the start of the scheme. However, the scheme was ambitious in its attempts to reach all local areas in England, Scotland and Wales. Different approaches might be required for different areas in order to maximise the long-term sustainability of future small grants programme for green space.

Once a project has been completed communities tend to be left on their own, with no wider support infrastructure or networks for community groups to share learning and support each other.

Our findings clearly show that small grants can reach large numbers of people and produce potentially large outcomes, at least in the short term. It is less clear how sustainable these outcomes will be without further funding over time, or without a wider infrastructure to support communities and/or maintain green spaces. We consider this in the next section.

A wider question concerns the balance between small scale, demand-led, activities and strategic action. To really achieve the greatest impact there is a need for local authorities and stakeholders in the community (in this case, Tesco) to work together locally to ensure that grants are used in ways that meet local strategic objectives and are promoted to the projects and places most in need of support.

## **2.3. Replicability**

There is no doubt that a programme of small grants for green space could be replicated by other grant giving organisations. Given that the Bags of Help scheme has now widened its criteria beyond green space and reduced the maximum grant size to £4,000, there might now be scope for a long-term funding stream focused specifically on green space. The key to success would be to include a mix of smaller and larger grants, perhaps more targeted at areas with the most acute need for support, such as places with high levels of deprivation and ill-health.

### 3. How can we catalyse community engagement in providing local green space?

Distributing funds through a larger number of small grants widens the number of organisations that benefit and is especially helpful for smaller organisations. As has been reported elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> this is an important way of maintaining small-scale, local civil society activity. But does this act as a catalyst for long-term community engagement in providing local green space?

#### 3.1. Catalysing future action by communities

**Ambition and motivation.** Findings from our research suggest small grants encourage less established groups to carry out more ambitious works and motivate them to continue their work.

*I think the one thing the Bags of Help grant has done is inspired us, motivated us, cos our motto now is onwards and upwards. This is the way forward for community groups.*

*(Project lead, Bristol)*

One in ten projects funded through Bags of Help (9%) said the scheme had led them to consider taking over the management of the space where the project took place. A further one in twenty (6%) said they would now consider taking on ownership of the site. Although this is a small proportion, it covers a significant number of projects.

**Partnerships**, new and existing, were developed through the delivery of projects. In many cases funding also led to partnership working with other organisations.

- 40% reported working with other community groups;
- 29% made links with local businesses;
- 25% worked with local government organisations.

**Skills and capacity.** The experience of bidding for funding builds skills and capacity to bid for further funding. We believe that, more broadly, community-led green space projects can catalyse wider community engagement with green space. Some of our project case studies, including Staindrop and Brighton, bear this out.

Small grants may have more 'catalyst potential' in areas with lower levels of existing activity, but where some community members have begun to take action. However, there might be a higher risk of failure in these areas too: this is something that our research will explore in greater depth over the next year.

#### 3.2. Challenges and limitations

**Involving different sections of communities.** Community green space projects, like many other largely voluntary activities, face a challenge in engaging with a broad spread of local populations. Interim findings from Bags of Help found that 67% of projects had no non-White volunteers, while in a further 11%, between 90% and 99% of volunteers were White. This chimes with evidence from the case studies

<sup>2</sup> Ellis Payne, A., Taylor, R. and Alcock, P. (2012) 'Wherever there is money there is influence': exploring BIG's impact on the third sector. TSRC/Big Lottery Fund: [https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/-/media/Files/Research%20Documents/er\\_policy\\_actor\\_report.pdf](https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/-/media/Files/Research%20Documents/er_policy_actor_report.pdf)

conducted as part of the research. This does not necessarily mean that projects do not engage with different population groups. There were many excellent examples of projects that worked hard to engage with people of different ages, genders and ethnicity. But it does highlight a challenge for projects to engage a more diverse range of people in the core work of community-building.

**Engaging communities that need most support.** A strength of the Bags of Help programme is its commitment to funding all areas of England, Scotland and Wales. This ensured that all local areas could potentially benefit from access to small grants. The drawback is that those communities that most need support – more deprived areas with fewer internal resources – are no more likely to receive funding than those in wealthier areas. There are good reasons why Bags of Help was organised as it was, including a desire to ensure that all Tesco customers could access the scheme, but this does raise broader questions about the importance of delivering additional resources to those who most need them.

**Continuity of funding.** It almost goes without saying that if groups hope to use small grants as a means of stepping up their level of work, they need to be able to access further resources. This is a challenge across the voluntary and community sector. More public spending will make a difference, but is not the solution on its own. As Bags of Help showed, private sector organisations can make a big difference too (see section 4 below) but this does not address the challenge of continuity as currently configured.

**Infrastructure.** In order to effect deeper long-term change across a wider area such as a whole town or city, small grants schemes need to be accompanied by investment in support infrastructure.

Since there is likely to be little additional public funding for green space investment in the short to medium term, this entails developing strategic partnerships of local investors such as private firms and grant-making bodies, local government (including planning and green space departments), statutory health bodies (NHS, public health, social care) and community representatives.

There needs to be a supportive and diverse ecosystem. A thousand flowers will not continue to bloom without fertile soil, irrigation, sunlight, and different types of vegetation such as shrubs and trees. This raises the question of how different stakeholders can work together locally to create such an environment in a harsh landscape.

## 4. How might the private sector play a role in future green space provision?

Set against the backdrop of public spending cuts, and their resulting and continuing impact on parks and green space budgets, the evaluation of Bags of Help can provide important reflections on the potential role of private sector partners in supporting local green space provision.

Here we discuss the benefits of a role in green space provision for private sector partners. We also consider the positives for the public and voluntary sectors, as well as the wider community. We acknowledge some potential limitations of such partnerships, discuss the replicability of the Bags of Help model, and conclude with recommendations on the future role of private sector organisations.

Our research shows that the Bags of Help scheme has improved perceptions of Tesco.



Viewed together, these findings provide useful lessons on the potential role of private sector organisations in future green space funding.

### 4.1. Advantages for private sector partners

The evaluation of the Bags of Help scheme shows that benefits to private sector partners include improved local perceptions of the company; impact on staff; and engagement in the local community ecosystem.

#### *Perceptions of the company*

The scheme has enhanced perceptions of Tesco as a trusted and important part of the local community. This is a significant finding, given the importance large firms attach to image and reputation. The findings are even more positive among grant



recipients, with 91% of grant recipient respondents saying the scheme had improved their personal perception of Tesco.

### **Staff morale**

The evaluation found that many Tesco community champions were positively engaged in the programme. These key individuals often know, and are known by, their local community, and take an active interest in the projects being funded.

*I'm a people person, so I jumped at the chance. So I've grown with the role and I love it. With it being a small community of local people, I think I know everybody in the community... So it's a great job for me.*

*(Tesco Community Champion)*

Staff members felt positive about the scheme and appeared to take pride in their role in it. They often linked this to their pride in the company, and the tangible and visible impact the company is having on the local community.

### **Playing a part in the local community ecosystem**

The Bags of Help research has underlined the value of the partnership between the private, public and voluntary sectors, but it has also highlighted the potential for these partnerships to grow, and in time play a more significant role locally. As public budgets are reduced, small scale grants could make a significant impact within community projects. As an important part of a local ecosystem, private sector organisations can play a vital role not only as funders, but also in providing support such as business planning and project management.

The research demonstrated the important role key members of Tesco staff play in local communities. These individuals' knowledge and experience could play a growing role in communities as other areas of support are reduced.

*One local store, really proactive manager there, even takes his staff to river clean-up projects, very tuned in to his local area.*

*(Groundwork Enabler)*

## **4.2. Advantages for the public and voluntary sectors**

Funding is a perennial challenge for both the public and voluntary sectors and is being magnified by public sector cuts. The chance to learn more about how to effectively partner with the private sector and thus tap into additional resources is an opportunity to be grasped. However, the benefits of such partnerships go beyond finance. They include the knowledge and experience of local staff acting as stakeholders within communities; and the opportunity to share learning between different sectors.

Although the evaluation focuses predominantly on funding, concentrating on the impact the grants have on local groups and green spaces, it is important to consider other ways in which relationships between the sectors can be nurtured in order to continue to develop and maintain quality green space.

A report by CRESR in 2013<sup>3</sup> found that funding relationships between small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and voluntary organisations were relatively small scale. However, small firms do have an interest in supporting local communities, and the quality of the local environment can be vital to private sector organisations.<sup>4</sup> The CRESR report found a need to raise awareness within local business communities of the opportunities for involvement. But it was crucial that all partners could find value in the relationship.

It is important to highlight how private organisations can play a key role in green space, from supporting local action through staff time, awareness raising, advice and practical help, to direct delivery of projects. Time should be invested in building and nurturing long-term, trusting relationships.

### **4.3. Limitations**

As our research has shown, schemes such as Bags of Help can improve local perceptions of private firms. But the longevity of schemes matters. It is helpful if motives for involvement go beyond creating positive perceptions, and are also rooted in a desire to play a part in improving local infrastructure.

Such investment needs to fit within the bigger picture of grants and support for communities. Any tensions or conflicts between business priorities and the desire to contribute to the local community should be identified and overcome.

### **4.4. Replicability**

The model for this grant scheme is common in the voluntary sector. Intermediary third sector organisations, such as Groundwork UK, are well placed to administer such funds using well established grant management systems and local experts who can help identify community need and support smaller groups.

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<sup>3</sup> Bashir, N, Dayson, C, Eadson, W and Wells, P (2013) *Local Business Giving: between the raffle prize and a new source of funding*. Sheffield: CRESR. <https://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/local-business-giving.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Haq, S (2011) Urban Green Spaces and an Integrative Approach to Sustainable Environment," *Journal of Environmental Protection*, 2 (5) pp.601-608.

## 5. Lessons for policymakers

There is already a wealth of existing and relevant advice for local, devolved and national governments - including the recommendations of the House of Commons communities and local government select committee following its public parks inquiry.<sup>5</sup>

Previous studies by Groundwork UK<sup>6</sup> and the Fabian Society have also produced compelling recommendations which remain unheeded.

We do not want to replicate these nor needlessly add more recommendations. Instead we draw out some key lessons from our research with specific regard to (a) supporting community-led engagement with green space and (b) engaging with the private sector on this agenda.

### 5.1. The need for local support infrastructure

A fundamental barrier for voluntary and community groups is the lack of a wider support infrastructure. Our research showed the value of local Bags of Help enablers working with groups to access funding, but also the lack of wider support for voluntary and community groups. Although individual council officers were often very helpful and encouraging, this tended to be the limit of local support. As the parliamentary inquiry into public parks recommends, it is critical that local authorities put resources and time into helping community groups to maintain and improve public green space. They can also reduce barriers to action by assisting small organisations through planning processes, or even introducing local planning guidelines with a presumption in favour of communities that want to improve green spaces.

In 2015 the Fabian Society recommended that local authorities set up Green Partnership boards, backed by an up-to-date Green Space Strategy.<sup>7</sup> This would be welcome. But, reflecting the challenges faced by local government in servicing existing boards, strategies and statutory demands, we argue that local stakeholders should join forces to develop green space networks. These should include, but not necessarily be led by, local authorities as well as healthcare services, private firms and voluntary and community representatives. These overarching networks should have a responsibility to promote and support community green space networks where voluntary and community organisations can share learning, collaborate and develop a collective local voice.

### 5.2. The private sector can make a difference to community action

Funding from Bags of Help has been invaluable for voluntary and community organisations attempting to improve local outdoor space. The flexible and streamlined approach to grant making taken by Tesco and its charity partner, Groundwork UK, is appreciated by community groups and the funding enhances Tesco's image.

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<sup>5</sup> See here for further information: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/public-parks-16-17/publications/>

<sup>6</sup> Dobson, J (2012) Grey places need green spaces. Birmingham: Groundwork UK <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/grey-places-need-green-spaces-uk>

<sup>7</sup> Wallis, E (2015) *Places to be: Green spaces for active citizenship*. London: Fabian Society. <http://www.fabians.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/PlacesToBe-Final1.pdf>

Strategic stakeholders that are working with companies such as Tesco to deliver community grants have a real opportunity to outline the priority needs within local areas.

National and devolved governments have an opportunity to use the Bags of Help experience to promote private sector led environmental and wellbeing funding schemes. This is especially pertinent in the case of retailers with a regulatory duty to use funds from the carrier bag charge for good causes.

### **5.3. Small as well as large businesses can play their part**

Local small businesses could also play an active role in supporting community green space action – and some already do. Community groups can find it hard to know how to engage with local businesses. The role of organisations like chambers of commerce and voluntary and community sector (VCS) umbrella bodies are critical in promoting engagement between business and voluntary groups.

### **5.4. We need national strategic coordination of green space grants programmes**

Bags of Help successfully funded a range of community green space projects that, in most cases, would not otherwise have gone ahead. But there is a need for a more coordinated, mixed portfolio of funding and grants. Currently there is no medium-sized grant programme and there is no strategic approach to funding community green space provision, nor local green space provision more generally.

Recent changes to Bags of Help might limit the scope for supporting green space projects in future because grant sizes are now smaller and funding criteria have been broadened to include a wider range of community projects, including indoor activities.

A strategic working group should be established to develop and maintain a mixed, strategic portfolio of funding options for community green space. Its members should include representatives of national and devolved governments, Natural England, national charities (e.g. Groundwork UK), private sector stakeholders (e.g. retailers included in carrier bag legislation), and grant-making bodies (particularly Heritage Lottery Fund).

### **5.5. Stakeholders must ensure green space is valued in urban decision-making**

Work to date has tended to focus on the health or economic impacts of green space. There is plenty of evidence to make the case for investment on economic or health grounds. We now need to better understand how urban decision-making on green space takes place and how it can be more effectively integrated in policy processes.

At a more fundamental level, more work is required to embed the value of green space in policymakers' thinking across different domains. The field of fuel poverty and domestic energy efficiency provides an example of how this could happen. Progress is being made to integrate fuel poverty as a concern for healthcare providers and public health teams. Tackling cold homes is now a core element in NICE guidance for healthcare providers. This has happened through a process of marshalling the evidence on the healthcare risks of cold homes and consistent lobbying, locally and nationally, over a sustained period.

## **5.6. Funding and support should focus on deprived areas and those with poor health outcomes**

There is a need to complement schemes like Bags of Help with support for communities that would most benefit from improved access to high quality green space - those in more deprived locations and areas with poor health outcomes.

## **5.7. Community green space activity needs to reflect local diversity**

A perennial issue for voluntary and community work more generally is the need to develop programmes that engage a wider range of people. Groundwork's longstanding commitment to working with young people, often in deprived areas, is a good example of how funding can be put to good use to engage different sections of the population and also achieve outcomes beyond the improvement of local green space. The Green Leaders programme (part of the wider Big Lottery Our Bright Future portfolio) is one such scheme.

## **5.8. Money matters**

These are straitened times for public finances and we have to work out alternative ways of getting things done. At the same time it is critical that this does not detract from the recognition that funding for green space needs to increase in the longer term.

This might be achieved through tapping into different sets of resources, or 'smarter' funding by bringing bodies together to develop pooled urban environment and wellbeing funding strategies (for example). But there are limits to the efficiencies that can be made. More public money is required and improving the flow of resources requires a shift in how urban green space is valued by national and urban decision-makers.

### **Acknowledgements**

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This report forms part of a wider research project evaluating the Bags of Help scheme. For more information please contact Dr Will Eadson ([w.eadson@shu.ac.uk](mailto:w.eadson@shu.ac.uk)), or visit the project page on the CRESR website: <http://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/ourexpertise/evaluation-tesco-bags-help-community-grants-programme>

More information about the Bags of Help scheme can be found here: <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/tescocommunityscheme>