



# FRIENDS OF PARKS GROUPS NEW GROUP SETUP TOOLKIT

**Environmental Planning; Strategic Planning and Infrastructure**

Plymouth City Council, West Hoe Road, Plymouth, PL1 3BJ

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## **SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION**

The following has been put together to help guide members of the community in how they can work with Plymouth City Council to set up their own “Friends of Group” and work to help improve the park.

What is a Friends of Group?

A Friends of Group, is a constituted group, made up of a group of people or ‘Friends’ passionate about looking after their local park or green space. Friends groups work with Plymouth City Council to enhance their green space to meet the needs of their local community and can include a whole range of different activities.

This pack explains the basic stages of starting up a group, organising your first meeting, coming up with a constitution, funding sources and examples of projects your group can get involved in.

Contact information for Plymouth City Council Parks Services if you require any support and your group will be given a lead key contact from Plymouth City Council to support you in setting up your group. This contact will be able to help and guide you through the different stages and give you any advice and support they can. Initial contact information:

Postal Address:  
Parks Services  
Plymouth City Council  
Prince Rock Depot  
Cattedown  
Maccadem Road  
Plymouth  
PL4 0RZ

Tel: 01752 668000

Email: [wildlife@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:wildlife@plymouth.gov.uk)

Web: [www.plymouth.gov.uk/parkfriendsgroups](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/parkfriendsgroups)

## **SECTION 2 STARTING A GROUP**

It is worth finding out if there are any groups operating in your local park or area already. Have a chat with people in your park or local area, ask them if they know about any volunteer groups operating.

We also have a list of Friends of Groups working throughout Plymouth; along with contact information for each group.

You can find this information on the Plymouth City Council website:

[www.plymouth.gov.uk/parkfriendsgroups](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/parkfriendsgroups)

The council is committed to supporting and helping to develop “Friends of Parks” groups. In order to achieve this, the Council will organise a bi-annual Friends Group forum for all groups to come together as well as producing and updating online resources to support the function and development of Friends Groups.

Groups meet regularly and are always eager for new members to attend, so if there is already one in your area, get in touch and go along to the next meeting to find out more.

If there aren't any existing groups operating in your local park or greenspace you may wish to set up a new group.

Setting up a Friends of Group takes four stages.

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| Stage 1: | meeting like-minded people                               |
| Stage 2: | sharing ideas  |
| Stage 3: | setting up your groups' constitution and ways of working |
| Stage 4: | electing your group committee                            |

### **Stage 1 – Meeting like-minded people**

This may seem daunting, but help is at hand!

The aim of this stage is to gather as much interest in your potential group as possible by speaking to people in your local community.

Contacting the Council Parks team could be a good place to start as they may have contacts in the local community who would like to become involved with such a group.

You will generally find that there are many people in the local community who have an opinion about the park or green space in question.

Part of the work of a “Friends of” group is to take on these views and opinions and relay them back into the development and management plans for the park

These will also make up part of the constitution as AIMS and OBJECTIVES.

There are various ways you could try to meet new people including:

- Social media
- Through local groups – sports clubs, dog walkers, mother and baby groups, walkers etc.
- Speaking to the Council
- Getting to know people who use the park regularly
- If the park has a café, speak to the owners and see if they can help

## **Stage 2 - Sharing ideas**

This is the second stage which would consist of mulling over ideas/issues and aims of the groups and also an opportunity to identify the members who have skills, interest and enthusiasm in different areas; practical skills, promotion, social media, finances and so on.

Explore ideas on what you would like to achieve for the park and how you could go about achieving them.

Are there any projects you would like to do, or things you would like to change or do you want to ensure the park is safe and maintained for the future

Getting a list of things your group would like to achieve / do is a great start to officially forming your group.

## **Stage 3 – Choosing a constitution.**

A constitution basically explains how your group will be managed, from the aims and objectives of the group through to how meetings are to be run.

The constitution of your group does not have to be complicated but it should reflect how you wish your group to be managed.

Your group does not have to start from scratch when deciding on a constitution, parts of other groups' constitutions can be used. (A template constitution has been included in this toolkit to guide you)

Once your group has agreed the constitution; you will have to formally adopt it at the AGM. (see stage 4). To officially adopt a constitution, the group has to agree and the committee has to sign it.

As part of being a constituted Friends Group, Plymouth City Council request that your group holds Public Liability Insurance to cover any activities or events you wish to run. More information on this can be found on the Friends Groups web pages on the Plymouth City Council website: [www.plymouth.gov.uk/parkfriendsgroups](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/parkfriendsgroups)

## **Stage 4 – Electing the groups committee**

The fourth stage consists of electing a committee, depending on the constitution you have adopted will depend on the criteria included for your committee. A committee should consist of a chairperson, treasurer, secretary and at least 3 other members.

The 3 other members do not have to take up a specific role, however other groups have chosen to elect vice positions, such as vice chairperson, vice treasurer and vice secretary. Anyone can elect another member to a position, however it must be decided by vote who is to take a position. It is possible for individuals to act as chairperson and secretary whilst organising the first AGM, but they must give up their position when the committee are to be elected.

At this stage you may also wish to set up a bank account. This is helpful if you want to fundraise or apply for funding, as you will need a bank account to do that.

Any account set up for the group should be set up in the name of the group with at least 2 signatories for the account. The signatories must be members of the committee, usually the chairperson and the treasurer.

Other groups have chosen to have 3 signatories on the account, therefore if one member of the committee is unavailable, another can sign in their place.

After these stages are complete you will be a fully constituted group with a committee and a bank account.

Before your first meeting as a constituted group, Plymouth City Council asks that the group signs a partnership agreement, this will be discussed and explained through your lead contact from the Council who will also want a copy of your constitution for their files.

The partnership agreement is to ensure both parties understand roles and responsibilities and manage the expectations of the two parties.

## **SECTION 3**

### **SETTING UP YOUR FIRST MEETING**

Setting up your first meeting can seem quite complicated if you have never done anything similar before.

Below are some guidelines that should remind you of the small things that it is so easy to forget.

#### **Where should we hold the meeting?**

The meeting is usually organised in a facility that is local to your park or open space, and as open and accessible to as many community members as possible.

Remember that there will be a range of people attending your meeting including older age people, parents of young children and possibly wheel chair users. Facilities such as schools, churches and community rooms are commonly used as meeting places as they usually offer toilets, parking and easy access to the building.

If your park or green space has a building, speak to your parks service about using this facility.

#### **When should we hold the meeting?**

Give yourself at least 3 weeks to organise your first meeting, this will give interested parties the chance to make arrangements so that they can attend your meeting.

You should inform your Council Contact of your meeting dates so they can try to come along. They can also publish your meeting dates on the Council communications channels should you wish.

Your meeting should be organised at a time when most people in the community are able to attend, late afternoon/evening meetings are good because they allow community members who work to attend the meetings.

Following meetings can be held at whatever times suit the majority of your group best.

### **Who should we invite?**

As a community group you need to involve as many people as possible, therefore your meeting should be advertised as much as possible.

Word of mouth is the best form of advertising, however posters and leaflets are also beneficial if they are put in the right place. Schools, shops, clubs and the park itself are great places to put advertising for your meeting.

Some groups also choose to invite their local councillors, your official Council contact will be able to pass on your invitation and let you know if the Councillor can attend.

Your Council lead contact will also be happy to attend your meetings where possible.

### **What do we need to do?**

All meetings held by your group should have an agenda (what is to be included in the meeting) and all meetings should be minuted.

Minutes do not have to be a complete copy of everything that is said in the meeting, they should reflect the major themes that are discussed in the meetings with any action points marked against a name.

Minutes should also record the names of the people who have attended and any apologies sent for the meeting. Sample agendas and minutes are included within this pack.

Minutes should be made available to your Council lead contact, should they wish to review them.

Most groups hold around 4 meetings a year but some have more regular ones, but that is completely up to you as a group to decide when you want to meet.

## **SECTION 4 FUNDING**

All groups will need money to cover the day to day things, like meeting room hire, gloves, postage, tea and coffee.

Some groups ask their members for an annual membership fee to cover their basic costs. The level of membership is decided by the group at their AGM (Annual General Meeting).

Other groups choose to fundraise to support the group activities. These can be decided during your first initial meetings as a group.

The group treasurer will keep records of any spending and income, and once a group has decided to go ahead with a bigger project, this is even more important as all grant giving bodies want to see records that their money has been spent correctly.

You may also require funding to support some of the activities you are planning to carry out. There are several ways you can raise funds, including:

- Fundraising events
- Sponsorship from local businesses

- Collecting donations
- Apply for funding from external funders

## APPLYING FOR FUNDING

When applying for funding it is really important that the funder you apply to is willing to give funds for projects similar to yours.

For example, it would not be advisable to apply for an environmental grant if you wanted to set up a sports project. By reading through the information provided with the funding application you will be able to work out what the funder is willing to give money for.

To help fill in your application please bear the following points in mind:

- 1) Don't be too extravagant with your first bid, it is better to apply for smaller amounts of money when you first begin. Funders like to see experience of dealing with money and projects before they offer you a large sum of money.
- 2) Make a list of the funder's aims and objectives and make statements about how your project will reach these aims and objectives.
- 3) Funders like projects which meet the needs of local people, if you have completed a piece of consultation that shows that your project will meet these needs try to refer to it in the application.
- 4) Funders also like to fund projects which include more than one group or organisation, refer to the fact that you work in partnership with Plymouth City Council and any other groups or organisations.
- 5) Before filling out the application make sure that you have a full project proposal that covers how the project will be managed. Funders like to give money to groups who are well organised and would be ready to start the project as soon as the money is available.
- 6) Try not to ramble, include everything that you feel you need to write but write it in the shortest way possible.
- 7) Make sure you include any match funding you have received. Equipment, facilities or volunteer time given in kind can be classed as match funding.
- 8) Make a check list of any extra information other than the application form, which needs to be returned to the funder, such as a constitution or financial records. Tick them off as you attach them to the application (either hard copy or digital)
- 9) If you are not successful with your first bid, don't give up, try and try again! Some funders will give you an explanation of why you were not successful if you request it in writing.
- 10) Try to get a copy of a successful application for that funder, this will show you what kind of things the funders are looking for. Many friends groups apply to the same funders so another "friends of" group may be able to offer you some help.
- 11) Finally, remember that the Parks Services team are always available to help and support your group. Speak to your Council lead contact for support.

## **Some useful organisations who provide funding**

The Chestnut Fund – Start-up grants (administered by TCV)  
National Lottery Heritage Fund



Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Plymouth Community Homes  
Tesco  
Co-op  
Gregs Community Projects Fund  
Biffa  
Awards for All

## **APPENDIX I**

### **SAMPLE AGENDA**

An agenda does not have to be complicated. It should simply reflect what the group wish to cover in the meeting.

The agenda below is an example of how an agenda could be set out and what it could contain.

It is completely fictional and is not linked to any “friends of” group.

### **AGENDA**

#### **FRIENDS OF \*\*\*\*\***

**20<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2004, 6.30PM**

#### **HELD AT THE PARK PAVILLION**

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies
2. Progress since last meeting
3. Consultation
4. Funding applied for
5. A.O.B. (any other business)
6. Date and time of next meeting
7. Close

An agenda for an AGM would be slightly different because it would have to include a financial report for the year and election of the committee, it could also include guest speakers and a progress report from the committee.

## **APPENDIX 2 SAMPLE MINUTES**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING**

#### **FRIENDS OF \*\*\*\*\* GROUP MEETING**

**20<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2004, 6.30PM**

#### **HELD AT THE PARKS PAVILLION**

##### **1. Welcome, introductions and apologies.**

Hugo First Friends of \*\*\*\*\*

Bob Frapples Friends of \*\*\*\*\*

Dee Compose Friends of \*\*\*\*\*

Chris Mass Friends of \*\*\*\*\*

Abby Birthday Friends of \*\*\*\*\*

Percy Park-Keeper Leicester City Council

P.C. Plod Police

P.C.S.O. Smith Police

Apologies received Faye Kinnet, Terry Dactill and Justin Case

##### **2. Progress since last meeting**

Bob said that group had run a community litter pick on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> that had attracted more than 20 volunteers who collected a large amount of litter from the park.

Dee and & Chris had successfully sourced some spring flowering bulbs to go in the grass banks along the edge of the park and wanted to thank the store that supplied them for free.

**Action** – Dee will organise a day for the planting, volunteers needed.

A team of youths has been registered with the MAD scheme. They are working together at the moment to identify a project that they are interested in.

**Action** - Percy to work with the team to give support and ideas.

##### **3. Consultation**

The last draft of the questionnaire has been completed, consultation has been planned to take place at the forthcoming fun day.

**Action** – Justin Case to collect names of volunteers for consultation at the forthcoming fun day. It was also suggested by Percy that the Youth Workers may be able to help carry out questionnaires.

**Action** – Percy to liaise with youth workers

##### **4. Funding Applied For**

Hugo has received the applications for Awards for All. The group discussed that funding for the Easter celebrations or Easter half term sports coaching could be

applied for. It was decided that the Awards for All money should be used for the Easter half term sports coaching.

**Action** - Dee to fill in the Awards for All application, Bob to give support where needed.

**5. A.O.B. (any other business)**

Terry enquired about the park closing times over the next few weeks. Percy explained that the park closes at dusk every night.

**Action** - Percy to put poster on main gates with the approximate closing time for the park.

**6. Date and time of next meeting**

Next meeting will be 22nd November 2004, 6.30pm at The Parks Bowling Pavilion.

**7. Close**

**APPENDIX 3**  
**SAMPLE CONSTITUTION**

Below is an example of a constitution, feel free to use any ideas you may gain from it. Again the constitution can be as simple or as complicated as you like. If you would like more sample constitutions contact your Parks Officer who will be more than happy to help.

**CONSTITUTION**

Adopted on the .....Day of.....

**Name**

The name of the group is “The friends of .....Park”

**AIM**

To promote the use of ..... Park and it’s historical, ecological and horticultural values.

**OBJECTIVES**

- The group’s objectives are:
- 1. To assist with current and developing projects that will improve the Park.
  - 2. To raise funds to ensure sustainability of the group.
  - 3. To encourage wider community participation in improving the park.
  - 4. Establish an acceptable balance between the needs of dog owners and the needs of other park users.

**MEMBERSHIP**

**1. Membership shall be open** to any person who has an interest in the park. However, Councillors and Council officers are not permitted to vote or stand for committee positions of the group.  
Anybody, corporate or unincorporated association, which is interested in furthering the groups work, subject to agreement by the executive committee.

**2. Every member shall have one vote**  
The executive committee will consist of a Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and up to two other executive members (drawn from the membership)  
The committee may unanimously and for good reason terminate the membership of any individual, provided the individual’s concerned case has been heard by the committee before a final decision can be made. The individual has the right to be accompanied by a friend.

**3. Membership fees?**  
Some groups choose to charge members a small annual fee to help pay for room hire, equipment and other small items. AS a group you can decide if you want to do this or not.

**APPENDIX 4**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)**

The inaugural General Meeting will be held in .....  
The AGM will be held in ..... of every year.

There will be a minimum of **four** ordinary meetings of the group each year, the timing of which will be decided by the Committee.

The Committee shall give at least 21 days notice to members of the Annual General Meeting each year and at least 7 days notice of other meetings.

**RECEIPTS/EXPENDITURE**

- 1. The funds of the group, including all donations, contributions and bequests, shall be paid into an account operated by the committee in the name of the group. All cheques drawn on the account must be signed by at least two members of the executive committee.
- 2. The funds belonging to the group shall be applied only in furthering the aim and objectives.

**AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended by a 2/3rds majority of the members voting at an Annual General Meeting providing the majority of those present and voting are residents of the local neighbourhood.  
In the event of dissolution of the group the available funds of the group shall be transferred to another body with similar objectives.

Adopted by:  
Name:  
Committee Role:  
Signature:  
Date: