



Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee

Neil O'Brien
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State,
Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

13 June 2022

Dear Neil,

Public Parks

The Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee intends to hold a one-off session in mid-July to follow up work of the previous Committee on public parks. I am writing to request an update prior to the session, in the hope of obtaining some clarity on the areas the Government are continuing to review and what has changed since our report recommendations from 2016-17.

It would be helpful if you could provide us with some information on the key developments since the Government responded to our recommendations in November 2017. Furthermore, if there are any areas of work you would like to draw to the committee's attention, we would welcome information from the department.

Additionally, there are some specific questions that would be helpful to get further information on:

Parks Action Group (PAG)

Stakeholders have confirmed the last meeting of the PAG was in June 2019. Is the group no longer operational? If so, what has it been replaced with and why? What key issues did the PAG raise and what solutions were implemented as a result?

Cross Departmental Group

How many times has the cross-departmental group, whose role is to implement the PAG's recommendations, met to discuss issues relating to parks? Will they continue to hold regular meetings?

Regular updates to the House

In the Government response to our report in 2017, the department committed to provide the House with regular updates on the progress of the cross departmental group and progress against accepted recommendations. The last formal statement to the House was in April 2019. When will the next update take place?

Parks Minister

It is noted that in 2019 "parks and green space" was listed as a key responsibility for the Minister of Local Government. However, on the current Government website, no ministerial position clearly states parks within its remit and responsibility. It would be helpful to ascertain if you have taken on the responsibilities the parks minister committed to in the Government response of 2017 (chairing of the cross departmental group, updating the House etc).



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Impact of Covid-19 on parks

Parks have been described as “a lifeline” to everyone during the pandemic, after the unprecedented increase in demand for green space. Local authorities severely impacted by the pandemic face extreme budgetary pressures, while parks are experiencing higher footfall (and therefore more wear-and-tear) than before. How does the Government plan to mitigate the funding gap between needs and local authority funding available? Can local authorities expect any additional support to assist the parks sector?

UN Sustainable Development Goal 11.7

There is some concern in the park sector that the UK may not meet UN Sustainable Development Goal 11.7 to “provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces” by 2030. As these goals are key to ensure sustainability, please can you confirm whether the UK is on track to meet this target?

The committee would welcome your response to the issues raised above by Monday 11 July.

With best wishes,

Clive Betts MP

Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee