

How to... conserve and enhance our diverse heritage

This short guide on conserving and enhancing heritage in parks is based on the work we have completed with projects funded by the HLF / BIG Parks for People programme. In order to successfully conserve heritage and increase understanding amongst visitors, parks need to:

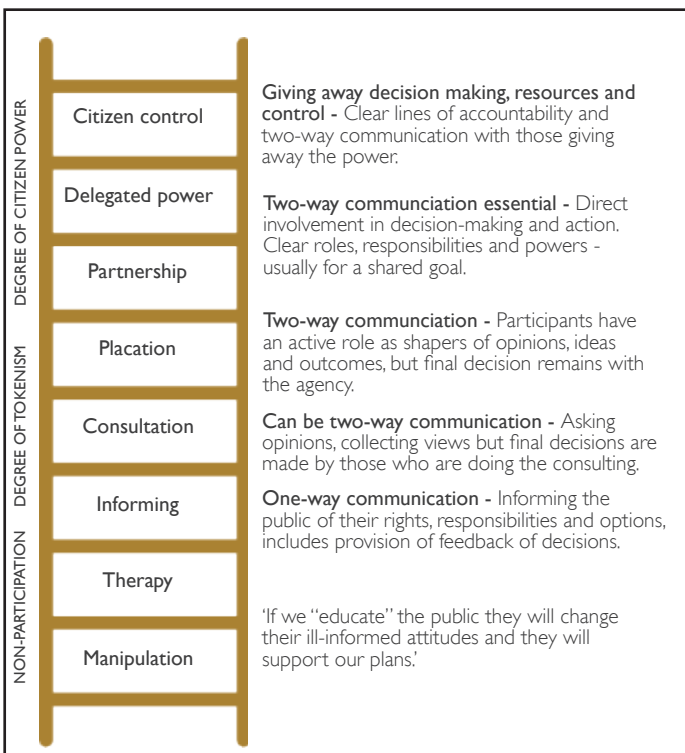
- Understand the heritage value of the park;
- Understand existing and new user needs;
- Develop methods of increasing visitors' appreciation and understanding of heritage.

Understanding the history & heritage value

A conservation management plan will explore what features of the park are significant and valuable. Drawing up a conservation management plan helps parks to understand why heritage is important and to who. A conservation management plan should include:

- A description of the heritage features of the park;
- Details on why it matters;
- Information on what improvements are planned;
- Details on what will be needed to look after it.

Understanding user & non-user needs



It is important that parks consult existing and non-visitors, to develop plans that reflect current and future needs. Involving Friends groups and other residents in the design work is essential to ensure local people feel involved in the process and feel a sense of ownership and pride in the improved park. Use a variety of methods of engaging the community:

- Involve members of the Friends group in the project steering group;
- Hold public meetings and exhibitions;
- Use local newspapers or community newsletter to inform people of the plans;
- Use questionnaires and surveys;
- Develop a website or blog to enable people to have their say.

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Increasing visitors' appreciation and understanding of heritage

As well as physical improvements to the park, it is important to consider ways to engage audiences in heritage. Parks can use a number of methods to increase visitors' understanding and appreciation of the heritage value of their park and wider community. Ways to do this include:

- Interpretation boards and signage;
- Information materials such as leaflets, notice boards and websites;
- Guided tours, walks and nature trails;
- Podcasts;
- History projects with schools;
- Education packs;
- Events that reflect the history of the park;
- Talks and presentations;
- Marketing and PR.

Case Study: Hale Park in Halton have employed a Heritage Champion, who has established a number of activities and events relating to the history of the park and the village of Hale. Notice boards contain pieces of historical information and a 'heritage pathway' is being devised to allow visitors to follow a trail around the park and through the village. The walk will include a visit to the grave of 'Childe of Hale' a mythical resident who lived in Hale and grew to 9'3". The park is also planning to collect and display historical films of the park in conjunction with the North West Film Archive.

Top tips

Projects have identified the following critical success factors to successfully conserving and enhancing heritage in parks:

- Employ someone to carry out heritage projects
- Develop a strong brand and identity for the park
- Involve the Friends group and other volunteers to deliver heritage projects and collect and interpret historical information
- Collate all data relating to heritage in one place
- Be creative about the methods you use to engage audiences in heritage
- Consider how heritage projects in the park can have a wider impact on the local area