

Rethinking Burnley's Parks

1. Link to our first pitch for Nesta funding:

<https://vimeo.com/92227209>

2. Links to the three short videos we made about the project

Volunteering in Burnley's Parks:

<https://youtu.be/Beua7BdF5n0>

Meadow Management in Burnley's Parks:

<https://youtu.be/ZBs5Ckl6P48>

Woodland Management in Burnley's Parks:

<https://youtu.be/S51MnOm6AM8>

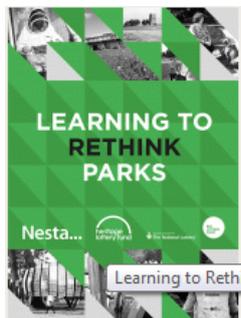
3. We Rethought Parks: "Go To The Park" Burnley

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/go-park-burnley>



4. Learning to Rethink Parks: Nesta report

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/learning-rethink-parks>



Brief Project Summary

Burnley Council manages 550 hectares of green spaces serving a population of 87,000 in one of the most deprived districts in the UK and which is facing the largest cuts of any. We achieve satisfaction of 85% and the challenge is to continue to maintain these high levels of satisfaction whilst making significant savings.

Consultation through the Council's Citizen's Panel has consistently identified that contact with nature and opportunities to see wildlife is what the public most appreciate about parks. A more ecological approach to greenspace management, including in our heritage parks would offer opportunities to save money and increase biodiversity and create more interesting parks and engage the community:

Nesta's Rethinking Parks Programme provided an opportunity to develop our initiative and we were one of 11 projects (out of 200 applicants) to secure a grant to pilot and develop our ideas.

Working closely with Offshoots Permaculture Project, our park friends groups and our own greenspaces staff, we developed and delivered in four areas of innovation.

1. A **'Volunteer in Parks'** programme to recruit, train and manage volunteers working alongside our gardening staff and park friends groups. Our staff were closely involved and were trained to work with volunteers. Over 12 months, 85 volunteers gave over 2,800 hours of volunteer time worth £43,000. We developed 4 volunteer roles and recruited volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds. The VIP programme continues.

2. Extending **meadow management** regimes to Green Flag parks: In consultation with friends groups we prepared habitat plans for each park and undertook baseline surveys before changing regimes in up to 33% of each park. We purchased an Amazone Profi-hopper which improved the appearance of formal lawns whilst also allowing meadows to be cut and hay removed in June/September. We introduced a 1-5* rating to measure meadow biodiversity. Public response has been very positive and savings of +£58,000 on target.

We also introduced the world's first urban bee cages, allowing the public to safely see and experience bees which forage in our meadows.

3. Replacing costly annual bedding schemes with **herbaceous perennial planting** in heritage parks with the aim of providing extended flowering seasons, reduced the demand for labour at peak times and increased biodiversity. Initially we are using a pallet of approximately 15 species. Savings +£28K per annum achieved.

4. Manage areas of **park woodlands** using paid staff and volunteers to thin these woodlands to produce woodfuel and woodchip for playgrounds earning +£15 K per annum from the RHI payments and savings in woodchip.

Nesta identified the project as one of their most successful initiatives. Our greenspaces team are learning new skills and we are innovating by holistically adapting permaculture techniques to the management of traditional urban parks.

In summary by rethinking how we manage our parks we are:

- Reducing costs
- Reducing CO2 emissions
- Increasing biodiversity
- Encouraging greater community involvement
- Allowing limited staff resources to maintain high horticultural standards in key areas of parks and deliver the public's priorities (attractive, safe parks, free of litter and dog fouling).