

What then?

We want as many young people as possible to maintain their involvement with friends groups in order to ensure sustainability. Why? Because if younger people don't engage with their local green spaces, the risk of losing them is increased as friends groups get older and no one has the interest or skills to take over.



FUTURE PROOF PARKS

The benefit for the community:

Their park continues to be maintained and improved, and younger people will get more of what they want out of their parks (e.g. play areas, skate areas, increase facilities)

The benefit for Friends groups:

They will be supported and helped by the involvement of younger people

The benefit for young people:

Their skills and interest will be developed, their employability increased, their perspective enriched

Groundwork West Midlands, Fields in Trust, and the National Youth Association will offer further training for young people, including:

- Events management
- Volunteer management
- Leadership development

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What is Kick the Dust: Future Proof Parks?

Kick the Dust, the overarching project that runs the Future Proof Parks project, is a new, 3-year national strategic programme that aims to transform how heritage organisations engage young people.

The Future Proof Parks project aims to:

Raise awareness and get younger people interested in their local green space: its value as a space for use by the community, a space for nature and natural habitats, and the value of its heritage and history

Build the skills and resilience of local heritage and Friends of Parks Groups to put their work on a more sustainable footing

Break down barriers between younger and older generations, and change perceptions

Why is this important?

Historic parks and heritage landscapes are threatened by funding cuts and because the groups that care for them are getting older. Young people will suffer most from a decline in the quality and accessibility of green space. **Future Proof Parks** will address this by harnessing the energies and talents of young people and, through advice and training, encouraging them to support local heritage groups. This will support their own personal development and help them become role models to engage their peers in volunteering.

Who will the project be working with?

- Young people (ages 11-25) from a wide demographic range.
- Friends groups that already maintain local green spaces and parks.

What will the project do?

Future Proof Parks will support:

- 180 young people to become volunteers, contributing to the work of;
- 60 friends groups across five locations

For **West Midlands**, this means:

- 12 friends groups over 3 years (4 per year)
- 180 young people over 3 years (60 per year)
- We aim to get about 15 young people volunteering with each friends group

We hope to get 16 of the 60 young people per year to join the friends group as group members in each year of the project.

Development

- We will identify friends groups that welcome the involvement and support of young people, and offer preliminary training in safeguarding and participation.

- We will identify young people that are interested in volunteering with friends groups. These young people will be local to the park that the friends groups maintain. We want as wide a demographic as possible (student groups, young people looking for volunteering, park users, young people with limited opportunities). Friends groups are encouraged to be involved with this recruitment by putting on taster sessions, and promoting their group through social media pages.
- We will facilitate a consultation between friends groups and young volunteers to share ideas and get to know one another. Together, they will create a Development Plan for their park.

Take off!

Friends groups and young volunteers will work together in planning, organising and delivering activities that maintain the park, promote its use and heritage, fundraise, and make its running more sustainable.

Examples of activities that can be done:

- Surveys with park users
- Online promotion of park and friends group activities
- Campaigns to advertise the group locally
- Litter-picking/ clean-ups
- Gardening, planting
- Research
- Family fun days
- One-off events/ projects that make use of park – music events, games, community picnics, seasonal events
- One-off events/ projects that celebrate heritage stories – oral history, photos, film
- Creating materials that promote heritage/ history of park
- Planning groups, and representing the park at local council meetings

An 'Exploring Heritage' module is available to young people who would to commit to continued involvement, to inspire special knowledge and interest in the heritage value of sites.

Young volunteers will also be mentored by their project Youth Worker to maximise the skills and experience they gain from their volunteering.