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Crystal Palace Park Community Projects Fund End of Programme Report

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CRYSTAL PALACE PARK COMMUNITY PROJECTS FUND REPORT

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Community Projects Fund End of Programme Report

1) View from the Chair

The Crystal Palace Park Community Projects Fund (CPF) Evaluation Report demonstrates what can be achieved with a limited amount of money, distributed in a local area and carefully targeted in response to community concerns.

The Fund was set up three years ago, to support existing community activity in the Park and to encourage new initiatives. It has now closed and has distributed the entire £240,000 allocated by Bromley Council, producing more than £800,000 worth of activity. 32 projects were supported with grants ranging from £750 to £19,500.

As the Park is in the process of being handed over to a community trust, it was important that the Fund serve to strengthen locally based community groups. Over 70% of grants went to local groups: groups already active in the Park; local groups not previously involved in the Park; and new and emerging groups. Support was also given to larger established regional and national organisations, bringing their experience and activity into the park and forging cooperation between local community groups and larger organisation with significant resources.

CPF supported work in an encouraging range of categories: heritage, conservation, arts, education, sport, and health and well-being, reflecting community need and interest, as well as the priorities of the Capital Improvement Programme.

At the outset of the Fund, certain groups were under-represented among Park users, in relation to the local population: children and young people, older people, members of BAME communities, and people with disabilities. CPF has funded projects representing these groups, increasing the number of people using Park facilities and altering the Park user demographic.

Good grant-making is more than just giving money. This is particularly the case with small, local grant programmes. When setting up the Community Projects Fund, in addition to providing funds, Bromley Council provided significant Council officer support, appointing a project officer who brought extensive community development, grant-giving, fundraising and organisational experience to the work of CPF. This meant prospective applicants were provided with help in developing proposals, follow up support, assistance with evaluation, and substantial help in leveraging funds from additional sources.

The Report highlights capacity building in the work of the CPF, which extended beyond just groups receiving grants. A number of local groups received developmental support from CPF staff. In some cases, groups were helped to carry out projects without the need for funds. Some were helped to secure funds from other sources. Training courses in fundraising, project planning, quality and evaluation were offered to all interested local groups.

Perhaps most important in the report are its recommendations, which emphasize the importance of continued capacity building, advocate a coordinated approach to volunteering, and more collaborative work generally, and suggest exploring possibilities for further small grants programmes. It is hoped that there will be opportunities to consider these recommendations with the appropriate bodies such as the Friends of Crystal Palace Park, the Shadow Board and Capel Manor College.

The Report stresses the value of the well informed and locally knowledgeable Grants Panel, with members bringing a range of relevant expertise. I would like to express my appreciation for the contributions of all my Grants Panel colleagues, who have given the benefit of their time, commitment, knowledge and experience so generously over the past three years.

Finally, on behalf of the Grants Panel, I wish to express our appreciation for the skill and dedication of the Crystal Palace Park Projects Officer who has worked tirelessly for the success of the Community Projects Fund and the good of the Crystal Palace Park community.

Ann Curno

**Chair of the Grants Panel
Crystal Palace Park Community Projects Fund
December 2017**

The Report that follows consists of an eleven page Evaluation Report, with fourteen accompanying appendices. The appendices are intended to account more fully for the work of the Fund, and to provide stand alone papers for readers interested in more detail on particular topics.

2) Introduction and Background

On 9th April 2014 the Crystal Palace Park Executive Project Board decided to establish The Crystal Palace Park Community Projects Fund (CPF), a grants programme making £240,000 available to community groups active in the Park, to be spent over three years. The objective of the programme was to support the development of activities, projects and events in Crystal Palace Park in order to engage the local community and increase park usage.

A Grants Panel was established to assess applications. Council Officers supported the Panel including under-taking initial assessments to advise if applications met grant criteria. The documentation required was made available publicly on the Bromley Council Website or on request. The process was accessible and inclusive to extend the opportunity to apply to groups who might otherwise be excluded. The fund launched in April 2015 and ended in September 2017.

The fund had no specific target audience, although the history and reputation of the park and local demographics influenced the potential audience. There are existing groups involved with heritage, arts and culture with an interest in the Park and other local (to the area) groups seeking to develop activities for the community who were potential applicants. Regional (Royal London Society for the Blind) and National (Parkrun) were also attracted to the Park because of its reputation and amenities.

3) Strategic objectives of the fund

The overarching aims of the fund were to:

- Increase the number of people using Crystal Palace Park and
- Enhance the Park users experience

How well did we meet these objectives?

The Community Projects Fund (CPF) has substantially increased the number of people using Crystal Palace Park. We estimate more than 35,000 people have participated in the projects funded (to date). As a result of the plethora of projects, activities and events delivered, the Park users experience has been significantly enhanced.

This was because of the increased activity and the kind of projects funded. There was, literally, something for everyone with a good spread of projects including horticultural, agricultural, environment and wildlife projects which attracted participants and also volunteers– such as with Capel Manor Wild Life Garden.

Grants were given to deliver significant sporting, health and well-being activity, including projects targeting older and younger people, and those with additional needs. There was a high level of participation, with people who had not used Crystal Palace Park before becoming engaged as a result of their involvement in particular projects.

Other projects, such as those concerned with conservation and the arts attracted large numbers because they were accessible to more people (The Friends of Crystal Palace Subway) or engaged more people because of the method of delivery (Build Your Worlds).

Projects such as the Overground Festival brought huge numbers of new people into the Park and others, such as Crystal Palace Fun Runners, created significant improvements in terms of wayfaring, securing the Park as a venue for Park Run and other events, again involving large numbers. **See Appendices 10 and 14.**

4) Priorities and the extent to which these were met.

The fund had seven priorities all of which were met to some degree:

Category	Priority	Projects Funded
Heritage and Environment	Conservation, restoration or interpretation of the heritage of the park	Friends of Crystal Palace Dinosaurs, Friends of Crystal Palace Subway, Our Hut, Architecture for All.
Heritage and Environment	Improved natural environment	Pollinators in the Park, Paxton Green Time Bank, Invisible Palace, Capel Manor Wildlife Garden, London Wildlife Trust
Heritage and Environment	Better visitor information, way finding and services within the park	Friends of Crystal Palace Park, Crystal Palace Transition Town, Crystal Palace Sports Partnership
People and Communities	Supporting vibrancy and safety of the park and surrounding area	All funded projects contributed towards this priority
People and Communities	Healthier and more active people and communities	Pollinators in the Park, Invisible Palace, Capel Manor, London Wildlife Trust, Silver Fit, Communities First, Sports Active, Junior Parkrun, BYSS, Rising Stars, Friends of Crystal Palace Skate Park, Wide Horizons, Crystal Palace Sports Partnership
People and Communities	Local people improve their skills and employment prospects	All projects offering volunteering opportunities contributed towards this priority, particularly, Capel Manor, Sports Active, Crystal Palace Overground Festival, Crystal Palace Transition Town.
People and Communities	More people volunteer their time in the park	Almost every funded project provided volunteering opportunities. The largest source of these was the Overground Festival.

The Community Projects Fund enabled visitors to the Park to have better experiences because of the physical changes taking place as a result of the funding (e.g. Crystal Palace Fun Runners, Boundaries Gate Project) and because of the opportunities for involvement in the projects funded.

5) Beneficiaries/demographics

The population in the 'primary resident catchment area' surrounding Crystal Palace Park is 362,250. This includes the ward of Crystal Palace and 23 surrounding wards across 5 London Boroughs.

These are the primary participants or audience for projects, activities and events although for major events, Crystal Palace Park will attract visitors from all over London as well as Kent and Sussex.

The Park serves the local day to day leisure and recreation requirements of an immediate local population which is considered predominantly affluent and homogenously British which also has a large (34.1%) BAME community and employment rate of 71.9% with pockets of deprivation locally. The estimated **35,300** participants in projects funded represent approximately **10% of the primary resident population**. The Park also serves a larger, regional catchment area, through larger events like the Overground Festival and National and Regional groups with an interest in the Park (such as Park Run, RLSB) which encompasses the whole of South East London and Kent. This is consistent with other comparative parks like Clapham Common.

Population

There are 154,766 households in the primary catchment area and a median household income of £39,209. The population spread is 19.2% children 0-15; 66.7% adults 16-64 and 11.1% older adults aged 65+.

At the inception of the community projects fund, according to the Survey in 2014, our own research (Survey 2015), anecdotal evidence, observation and feedback from Park user groups, there was a perceived and actual imbalance of park users in relation to the overall population in the catchment area.

The groups under-represented were children and young people (apart from under 5's accompanying parents); older people and those with disabilities, and people from BAME groups who are more than 34% of the local population.

Numerical outcomes

A total of **64** applications were received across the grants programme. **33** applications were recommended for full or partial funding in the remaining 7 rounds, and all but one accepted the grant offer.

26 projects have been delivered or are nearing completion, and 5 of the remaining 6 were recommended for funding in the final round and had only recently been informed of the decision at the time of writing. **See Appendix 10: Participants**

Project spread

There was a good spread of projects funded across themes:

- Although the highest number of projects funded were sports or health and well-being (9 or 28%), only **15%** of total funding was allocated to this theme.
- The highest level of funding went to Heritage, Conservation and Arts Projects (26% of total fund) where 7 projects (22%) were funded.
- Exactly **half** of all projects funded were existing, operational local groups with a further 5 grants to local groups not previously active in the Park and 2 to new groups.
- Altogether 23 of the 32 projects funded, **over 70%**, were local groups.
- Of the remaining 9 projects funded, 3 were existing groups not previously active in the Park, 4 were Regional and 2 National groups.(see appendix 2: **Breakdown of Projects by Theme**).

The projects funded have addressed some imbalances, with a significant increase in the number of children and young people participating in positive activities in the Park, e.g. Sports Active worked with 102 new young people; an increase in individuals from BAME groups and more representation of older people. (e.g. Silverfit). Groups working with people with disabilities and special needs, such as RLSB and CASPA have also been funded.

In addition to individuals participating in projects, activities and events funded by the Community Projects Fund, other groups and individuals have benefitted. Parent/carers from lower income families benefitted from free activities for their children to participate in; for example, 53 families with children with additional needs or disabilities have benefited from the provision of safe, appropriate activities through CASPA's activity programme.

The wider community benefits from community cohesion outcomes such as collaboration and joint working, and people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds coming together.

Other community benefits accrue from increased provision and subsequent potential reduction in antisocial behaviour. There are increased positive behaviours and benefits, such as health and well-being outcomes and personal and social skills development.

6) Wider Impact

Small grants can lead to big things when people do something that benefits the wider community. In this respect, the Community Projects Fund has had a wider impact:

- The community projects fund has improved the lives of individuals participating in projects funded by offering new activities, improving health and well-being, bringing people together and reducing social isolation.
- It has helped vulnerable members of the community by providing funds for groups like RLSB and CASPA who work with them. The increased activity in the Park also provided them with new opportunities – including volunteering.
- Community cohesion has been supported as the Community Projects Fund has attracted applications from groups working with a diverse range of individuals. Activities have been free so local people who historically may not have used the Park or who have difficulty accessing services, have done so.
- The 'pump priming' provided in the form of a small grant in many cases encouraged other funders to support projects and helped them build a reputation of success.
- There were other long lasting effects. Several projects continue in full, others in part. Of those that have ended, some were time limited. Very few simply ended, which is not just a measure of success but a positive for the Park – leaving a legacy of provision that can be built on in the future. **(See Appendix 14: Project Progress report)**
- The fact that the Community Projects fund made decisions quickly, so that applicants could be advised within a month of the closing date whether their applications had been successful, had wider implications, especially where other funders required evidence of matched funding raised.

- Personalised support and individually tailored guidance was available to grant applicants at the pre-application stage and continued as required. Applicants valued the opportunity to develop a relationship and be provided with help formulating fundable project ideas. This help has a wider impact currently and into the future as organisations continue to seek funding and develop projects.
- Further capacity building - bespoke training on fund-raising, project planning and quality monitoring - was provided free for potential applicants, and the wider community. This helped build resilience for small voluntary groups and individuals with ideas, helping to generate activity in and around Crystal Palace Park. Attendees welcomed the opportunity to network and build potential partnerships.
- A co-ordinating function has been provided through the Community Projects fund which has helped bring together individuals and groups with a common interest. A means of perpetuating this function is being explored.
- Activities, projects and events have taken place without funding being provided through the community projects fund as a result of the community development work undertaken by CPF e.g. The Secret Garden Apiary, Summer 2015 Nature Trail, Ecospheres Project, etc. This has either been because help was provided to lever in other funding, or because introductions made meant groups and individuals could support each other to deliver activities.

7) Delivery groups and organisations/breakdown

- 23 of the 32 grants awarded or 71% went to local groups of whom 16 were already active in the Park. 5 of these were recommended for funding twice.
- A further 5 grants were made to local groups who had not previously been active in the Park
- 2 were made to newly established groups.
- Of the remaining 9 grants to groups not previously active in the Park, 4 were regional and 2 National.
- A total of 26 organisations received grants (6 groups received 2 grants each). 12 were registered charities, 2 were Community Interest Company's, 2 were Charitable Incorporated Organisations, one was an Educational Provider and one a Local Authority Group. The remaining 8 were constituted voluntary organisations including unincorporated associations.
- 15 of the 26 have paid staff, 11 are voluntarily staffed, managed and run.

8) Process: What went well?

- The value of a broadly based, well informed and locally knowledgeable Panel cannot be underestimated. Originally recruited from 31 applicants, the Panel of predominantly local people with direct experience of the park itself, bring a good balance of interests and skills.
- The Panel have individually and collectively, a wealth of experience in grant giving and making, voluntary and community work, fund raising, governance, and project development and delivery.
- The grant application and decision making process was fairly straightforward and on the whole, worked well. The timeline for notification of the outcome from applications

was swift and deadlines published at least annually in advance. This was felt to be very helpful.

- Throughout the lifetime of the grants programme there has been a point of contact for potential applicants. This open, accessible and supportive function was valued by applicants and more widely, enabling positive relationships to be built across a wider community than the Park itself. This has raised the profile of the Park, and of the Community Projects Fund.
- Although the grant giving process was managed robustly and in line with Council Procedures, applicants were not regarded as a homogenous group and were provided with different levels of support as appropriate to their needs. A flexible approach was taken to ensure all kinds of groups could be supported, the results of which are demonstrated by the range of applications.
- As well as one to one advice, personalised support and guidance, training was provided free to help upskill potential applicants (see above)

What could we have done better?

- Although the grant making process was revised during the first year of the programme, the application form was still substantial and requirements necessarily robust. This limits the kind of groups who might apply. Although the fund was open to applications from £100 to £20,000, the average amount applied for was £8,500.
- Other comparable grants programmes have a lower limit of £500 and an upper limit of £10,000. Whilst this may have placed a limit on the kind of projects funded, it could have encouraged additional fund-raising and therefore, more money into the Park.
- A simpler application process for grants of less than £1000 is something for consideration although it would require amendment of council regulations. These preclude payment up-front, which created difficulty, especially for smaller groups with no paid staff who were the majority of applicants. To address this, groups were set up in advance on the payments system and it was agreed they could invoice regularly immediately spend began.
- Although this helped, it created more activity, as invoices had to be produced and then paid, more frequently
- Payment in advance would require amendment of financial regulations but would avoid excluding groups who might otherwise apply.

The £240,000 allocated to the grants fund represented 10% of the budget available for the Capital Improvement programme. At a time when local authority grant aid has virtually disappeared, this was regarded as a measure of Bromley Councils commitment to the Crystal Palace Park community.

9) Finance

The total project value of the 32 projects funded over the lifetime of the Community Projects Fund was £824,566.92.

Round	Total Project Value	Amount Requested	Amount allocated
Two	£137,339	£58,586	£36,497
Three	£277,156.22	£124,072.22	£36,975.22
Four	£124,382.70	£40,725	£40,725
Five	£54,140	£39,485	£32,185
Six	£57,733.20	£29,105	£20,993
Seven	£95,677.80	£51,062.80	£45,356.80
Eight	£78,138	£30,428	£30,267.98

Grand totals	£824,566.92	£373,464.02	£240,000
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- The total project value was more than **220%** of the amount requested
- The amount allocated was just under **65%** of the total amount applied for
- All funded projects were delivered, with applicants either paring down the activity level or, more commonly, identifying additional alternative funding sources or generating income.
- **100%** or all £240,000 of the grant fund has been allocated, producing more than £800,000 worth of activity.

This means for every £1 of grant funding **£3.43** worth of activity was generated.

Leverage of Other Funds

Success in applying to the Community Projects Fund assisted applicants in raising additional funds. The Arts Council provided funding to several groups we funded, as did Heritage Lottery Fund. The fund was pivotal in helping a newly formed group access funds because it provided the group with its initial funding.

This function is important because building a reputation is central to the success and longevity of voluntary groups. The CPF grant signalled that groups were viewed as successful and able to deliver. The fact that the Community Projects Fund was supported by the Council carried significant weight with other funders.

Sponsors as well as funders like to give money when they can see others are doing so, which was another positive spin-off of the fund.

In addition to other grants, funds and in-kind resources were leveraged from other sources. These included:

- Get Active Bromley provided almost £30,000. More than £15,000 was matched funding of projects receiving money from the Community Projects Fund, a £1,000 grant was made to the Scouts for a project in Crystal Palace Park and £13,000 allocated for continuation projects.
- The CPF negotiated free or subsidised space with Better (formerly Greenwich Leisure Limited) at the NSC. This was valued at more than £5,000 at the time of writing and continues to be provided for 2 groups still delivering a programme. Better also provided subsidised tutors.
- Following discussions with the CPF, Affinity Sutton sponsored activity in the Park, by commissioning some groups to provide activities, match funding others, and paying individuals on a freelance/sole trader basis.

Finance Issues

Payment in arrears precludes some small and new groups and those run completely by volunteers from applying. Local Authority accounting procedures must be robust but it would be more helpful to new and small groups to be paid quarterly in advance.

There are robust means to avoid mispending. Suitable processes, such as direct contact and monitoring, facilitate robust scrutiny.

10) Recommendations

The Community Projects Fund (CPF) has demonstrated what can be achieved with small amounts of money appropriately targeted. The activity generated is disproportionately greater than the funds provided. Clearly there is an appetite for collaboration and partnership working amongst groups operating in the park, and for future project development and delivery.

Issue:

1) The Community Development function should be retained in order to build on the work of the Community Projects fund and harness the added value it has brought.

Action: This function could be provided short term by an organisation with the infrastructure to support it, such as Capel Manor College. Alternatively the Friends of Crystal Palace Park could fund raise for a paid Community Development post. In future the Shadow Board is encouraged to embed this function in the Park management structure.

Issue:

2)

Community capacity building support has been vital in helping emerging and existing groups to progress, develop and plan projects and identify and apply for funding. This must continue to avoid loss of the momentum generated by the Community Projects Fund. A **Central Point of Contact** would greatly increase the likelihood of retaining this capacity building dimension in Crystal Palace Park.

Action: Community Links Bromley provide Community Capacity Building support and this should be quantified and drawn into the Crystal Palace area. The Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) for Lambeth, Croydon, Lewisham and Southwark may also provide a resource. This should be explored.

Issue:

3)

Volunteering is the fuel that runs the park and will become even more important in future. It is recommended that a central volunteer co-ordination function be developed to ensure best use of the volunteer resource across the park, to ensure all who want to can access volunteering opportunities, and to ensure that the volunteering relationship is reciprocal so that the benefits to volunteers are made explicit.

Action: Currently individual groups recruit and manage their own volunteers. A strategic approach to volunteering, providing roles across different themes of activity would benefit the park and volunteers themselves. A volunteer co-ordination function is pivotal for the future. This could be merged with the Community Development Post and vested with the Friends of Crystal Palace Park.

Issue:

4)

Future Funding

The Community Projects Fund leveraged substantial **matched funding and additional resources** into the park. This needs to be ongoing as it will be pivotal to ensuring continued activity in the park. **Making grants** to local groups for activities, projects and events has proved hugely beneficial, with the grants fund generating a disproportionate level of activity and added value.

Action: The Shadow Board could consider, finances permitting, establishing an annual or bi-annual grants fund. For now, there is Bromley Community Fund – providing grants of up to £3,000, and other funds like Clarion Housing Small Grants Programme. These and other funders in all 5 boroughs adjacent to the park could ensure that their grants criteria incorporated and/or prioritised groups operating in Crystal Palace Park.

11) Legacy

The Community Projects Fund (CPF) has demonstrated what can be achieved with small amounts of money appropriately targeted. The activity generated is disproportionately greater than the funds provided. The legacy remaining is consistent with both the funds overarching strategic aims, and its priorities:

Strategic aim 1) Increase the number of people using Crystal Palace Park

The CPF has not only increased usage of the park, it has altered the demographic. Groups not previously active such as Sports Active, Rising Stars Support and Wide Horizons - have become so, and continue to use the park. This increase has been due to the kind and variety of projects funded, because the broad range of these has appealed to a wide cross section of the local community.

Strategic aim 2) Enhance the park users experience

Heritage and Environment

The architectural, heritage and cultural features of the park have been promoted, providing opportunities for people who might not usually identify with these to do so.

The CPF has facilitated physical, sustainable changes such as the new Adult and Junior Running tracks, the Capel Manor Wildlife Garden and Farm Improvements, The Boundaries Gate Project, and The Subway. These stand as a tangible legacy.

In addition to the work funded, innovative ideas that did not quite become fundable projects, such as IForest, Opera in the Park, Community use of the Concert Platform – were put forward and are concepts for the future.

Regional and National groups have also been successfully encouraged into delivering projects in the Park, which signals further potential opportunities

A legacy of examples of good practice remains, demonstrating the impact of the fund and providing evidence to support future funding bids. These are worthy of wider dissemination and forums to do this in are being explored.

People and Communities

The 'Park for Everyone' hashtag promoting the summer programme highlighted the collaboration and partnership work taking place in the park between local groups. The Community Projects Fund has demonstrated what is possible through the diverse nature of projects delivered. The Overground Festival coming into the park cemented this development, as it in effect provided an 'umbrella' for community activity as well as being a significant local and regional event.

The legacy of the CPF is a 'joining' together of individuals and groups with a common interest, with groups like Capel Manor helping support others concerned with similar themes of activity.

The Community Projects Fund leaves a further legacy - of the goodwill it has generated - towards the funder, towards other groups operating in the park and towards the park itself, and surrounding community.

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