

P-05-893 Save our Parks in Wales:

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 17 Medi 2019
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Reference: RS19/10336

Petition Number P-05-893

Petition title: Save our Parks in Wales



Text of petition: Parks and play areas are falling into disrepair or are under threat of being built on or sold to developers.

This is despite the vital health and social benefits that our much-loved green spaces provide.

This petition is to galvanise support to save our parks, playgrounds and open spaces from being lost forever, to serve the needs of today's and those of future generations and to uphold the obligations councils in Wales have under the Well-being Of Future Generations Act 2015 and the Environment Act 2016.

We want:

- 1) A statutory requirement for councils to ring-fence funding for parks at £30 per household per year.
- 2) There to be a legal duty for all green space to be managed to a good standard.
- 3) New rules banning the development on, selling off or the inappropriate use of, parkland.
- 4) A new Welsh Government fund to provide emergency help for parks most at risk and ensure the long-term future of Wales's green open spaces.
- 5) A legal requirement for all councils to operate an Open Spaces Strategy in accordance with the Fields In Trust Standards, the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, and the Environment Act 2016 and to work with Fields In Trust to protect and enhance all public green open spaces in Wales.

1. Background

Local Government Funding

A significant proportion of a local authority's budget comes directly from the Welsh Government via revenue funding support. Local authorities also receive some capital funding from the Welsh Government, along with some specific grant funding. The remainder of an authority's budget is made up of council tax receipts and income it generates itself.

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The main revenue funding provided by the Welsh Government is known as the *Revenue Support Grant (RSG)*. This is an un-hypothecated grant, which means that there are no specific requirements placed on an authority for how it spends that funding. The Welsh Ministers have consistently stated that local authorities are considered best placed to decide how to use resources based on local priorities.

Decisions relating to an authority's budget are taken by its Cabinet, and voted on by all council members. Funding for parks and open spaces will often be included in wider policy areas, such as 'community learning and leisure', and not always easily identifiable. There is currently no statutory requirement on local authorities to ring-fence any funding it receives from the Welsh Government for parks and open spaces.

Each individual local authority is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of many of the parks and open spaces within its area. However, some parks and open spaces may be maintained by a community or town council or other voluntary or private entity.

Planning policy

The Welsh Government's national planning policy is set out in [Planning Policy Wales \(Edition 10\) \(PPW\)](#). Section 4.5 of PPW discusses recreational spaces. In relation to open green spaces and playing fields, it states:

- Planning authorities should provide a framework for well-located, good quality sport, recreational and leisure facilities, and develop clear policies for the provision, protection and enhancement of sport, recreation and leisure facilities.
- These policies should set standards of provision, so that local deficiencies can be identified and met through the planning process, and set out policies to avoid or resolve conflict between different activities.
- Formal and informal open green spaces should be protected from development, particularly in urban areas where they fulfil multiple purposes;
- All playing fields whether owned by public, private or voluntary organisations, should be protected from development except where:
 - facilities can best be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site;

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- alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is made available locally, avoiding any temporary loss of provision; or
 - there is an excess of such provision in the area.
- Planning authorities should protect playing fields and open spaces which have significant amenity or recreational value to local communities from development; and
 - Planning authorities should encourage the multiple use of open space and facilities, where appropriate, to increase their effective use.

The latest version of PPW (Edition 10) was published in December 2018. The structure of the document differs significantly from previous versions, having been revised to take account of the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*.

The new PPW also introduces the concept of 'placemaking' to help 'deliver on the aspirations' of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. PPW describes placemaking (on page 16) as:

... a holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focused on positive outcomes. It draws upon an area's potential to create high quality development and public spaces that promote people's prosperity, health, happiness, and well being in the widest sense.

The Future Generations Commissioner has cited the revision of PPW as an exemplar of how the Act should be reflected in public policy.

PPW is supported by a suite of Technical Advice Notes (TANs) that provide further guidance on specific planning issues.

TAN 16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space states (in paragraph 2.2) that planning authorities can best achieve the objectives set out in PPW by undertaking local assessments of need and audits of existing provision, in the form of an Open Space Assessment. The Open Space Assessment should be used to inform preparation and review of the planning authority's Local Development Plan (LDP).

Paragraph 2.4 goes on to state that the Open Space Assessment and LDP policies should provide the basis of a broader corporate Open Space Strategy, prepared in conjunction with other sections of the local authority and key stakeholders.

Title:

Legislation relating to the disposal of playing fields

The *Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Regulations 2015*, made under the *Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Measure 2010*, make provision for involving communities in local authorities' decisions about proposed disposal of land consisting, or forming part, of a playing field.

The primary purpose of the legislation is to:

- Require the local authority to publish information on the impact of the proposed disposal of a playing field on the health and well-being of the community, by reference to a number of key strategies, plans and assessments for the area in which the playing field is located; and
- Strengthen arrangements for consulting the community, playing field users and relevant national bodies before the local authority takes a final decision to proceed with a proposed disposal.

Further information can be found in the [statutory guidance on the regulations](#).

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.