



The Royal Parks

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

March 2014



The Royal Parks Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Introduction

Our eight Royal Parks are among the most visited attractions in the UK. These world-class landscapes attract around 40m visitors per annum. For some, particularly those from outside London and the UK, it is their first visit to a Royal Park. Others may visit regularly during the week, whether as part of their daily commute, to enjoy the fresh air and natural beauty on their own or with their families, or as a meeting place for friends. Many enjoy our parks' recreational facilities, from boating on the Serpentine to the Diana Memorial Playground, from a simple jog in Bushy Park to organised sports at the Hub in The Regent's Park, London's largest outdoor sports facility. And others enjoy the range of events we host, from summer concerts in the open air to Winter Wonderland.

The Royal Parks is responsible for managing and conserving over 5,000 acres of historic parkland across London, including valuable conservation areas, 170,000 trees,

important habitats for wildlife, listed monuments and buildings and lakes and ponds. This includes the eight Royal Parks (Bushy Park, The Green Park, Greenwich Park, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill, Richmond Park and St James's Park). We also manage Victoria Tower Gardens, Brompton Cemetery, Grosvenor Square Garden and the gardens of 10, 11 and 12 Downing Street. Whatever their reason for coming, all visitors have an interest in the parks. Because of our prime locations, our guardianship of these historic parks, our governance and funding arrangements and the central role we play in London and British life, there are many other organisations, groups and individuals that have an interest in the Royal Parks.

Managing the Royal Parks is all about balancing our responsibility to protect and conserve the parks and their unique habitats, with creative policies and activities to

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encourage wider access and enjoyment, and ensuring we can secure sufficient funding to enable us to continue to maintain the parks to high standards against the backdrop of declining Government funding.

We recognise that with the range of challenges we face, the continued support and contribution of our stakeholders is essential. In December 2013, we published our Interim Stakeholder Strategy. We are grateful for stakeholder

feedback and continue to welcome this at any time. In this final Strategy we are updating progress on the five key commitments.

This Strategy sets out our vision for stakeholder engagement and provides a framework to enable us to better plan, deliver and monitor the effectiveness of our engagement. It has the support of The Royal Parks Board, which has a specific remit around the involvement of stakeholders.

Vision and Objectives for the Strategy

Our vision for stakeholder engagement is:

“To maintain and enhance the trust and confidence of the public, and to build understanding and support for the delivery of our objectives.”

This Strategy sets the direction for how we will engage, not simply as a process, but by continuing to embed stakeholder engagement into our culture and activities. As with other public sector bodies, our

Government funding has been significantly reduced, limiting our resources. As a result, we cannot simply do more engagement, but need to engage more effectively, better coordinating and targeting our activity. And as more people experience our parks every year, we want to engage with a wider, more diverse stakeholder audience, including through new and different channels. The Strategy commits us to being more transparent, publishing an annual summary of

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our stakeholder engagement. Finally, it helps us to communicate a more consistent message, raising awareness about the role of The Royal Parks and building support for the delivery of our objectives.

We have four corporate objectives, which shape our strategic direction and operations over the period of the current Comprehensive Spending Review through to 2015/16:

1. To conserve and enhance sustainably, for the enjoyment of this and future generations, our world class natural and built historic environment and our biodiversity.
2. To engage with our visitors, stakeholders and partner organisations, and understand their views.
3. To manage the parks efficiently and secure investment in the parks' assets and services through an appropriate combination of Government funding, commercial income and philanthropy.

4. To be a centre of professional excellence where people want to work.

Objective two is a specific corporate objective around stakeholder engagement. The Key Performance Target against which that objective will be measured for 2013/14 is:

“Publish an interim stakeholder strategy by October 2013, tested against market research by March 2014.”

Delivery of the commitments in this Strategy is enshrined as a Key Performance Target for 2014/15:

“Implement, monitor and evaluate The Royal Parks Stakeholder Engagement Strategy by March 2015.”

We have developed some key principles of stakeholder engagement to underpin our vision

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Key principles of Stakeholder Engagement

- To seek, listen to and consider a diverse range of stakeholder views, knowledge and experience.
- To be open about where stakeholder views have been taken into account.
- To engage with stakeholders at the earliest opportunity about issues relevant to or affecting them.
- To carry out fair, open and meaningful consultation on significant issues affecting park users.
- To communicate information clearly and through different channels to maximise accessibility and understanding.
- To continue to embed stakeholder engagement into our culture and our activities.

Background

The Royal Parks is an executive agency of the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS).

Our purpose is:

“To manage The Royal Parks effectively and efficiently, balancing the responsibility to conserve and enhance the unique environments with creative policies to encourage

access and to increase opportunities for enjoyment, education, entertainment and healthy recreation.”

The Royal Parks faces multiple challenges:

- a declining Government grant; the lack of end-of-year financial flexibility;

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- a small team with limited resource capacity;
 - the impact of climate change on the park environment, including extreme weather conditions and an evolving array of pests and diseases, and costs associated with this;
 - balancing the needs of our different park users and stakeholders; and
 - encouraging new visitors to discover what the parks have to offer.
- partnering with third parties to support delivery;
 - increasing efficiency in procuring our goods and services;
 - generating better value for money from our contracts;
 - reviewing our core activities and how we maximise efficiency in our resource;
 - understanding the different needs and views of stakeholders; and
 - understanding why people do not currently visit our parks.

We are responding to these challenges in a number of ways:

- increasing sustainable self-generated income;
- continuing to drive operational savings, some of which require investment;

Successful stakeholder engagement is at the heart of how we address these challenges.

Delivery

Our approach to stakeholder engagement has the full support of our Executive Committee, which will monitor progress of the final strategy. The Royal Parks directly employs around 115 staff, with

much core parks activity contracted out or licensed. Everyone, whether employed directly or indirectly, has a role to play in delivering successful stakeholder engagement.

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Like much of the public sector, The Royal Parks is operating with limited resources; this Strategy is realistic in its scope and deliverable within the resources available. Along with most other organisations, there will

be more emphasis on social and digital media channels in the years ahead.

Scope

Stakeholders can be defined in many different ways. For the purpose of this Strategy we are defining a stakeholder as:

“Anyone who visits, uses or has an interest in our parks or is affected by activities in, or policies of, our parks.”

To ensure that our stakeholder activity is targeted, useful and structured, we have identified three categories of stakeholder. These categories are not designed to rank stakeholders, but to recognise that different groups interact with the parks in different ways, with varying frequency and on a range of issues. We recognise that some stakeholders may fit more than one category, or move from category to

category. The lists below are not exhaustive, but examples of stakeholders with whom we regularly engage.

1. Local park stakeholders

Individuals or groups who have an interest in their local park, including Friends Groups, local residents, local businesses and elected local representatives such as local councillors and MPs.

2. Partner organisations

This group includes organisations with a role in the governance of The Royal Parks or who contribute to our annual funding, namely, DCMS, of which The Royal Parks is an executive agency, and the Greater London Authority, with the Mayor

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of London appointing The Royal Parks Board.

It includes organisations with which The Royal Parks partners to deliver key objectives or activities and/or who provide funding for key projects, including the Royal Parks Foundation, Transport for London, The Royal Household, the Metropolitan Police Service, Local Authorities, Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Royal Palaces, English Heritage, Forestry Commission, London Marathon Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England, the Military, The Crown Estate, the Crown Estate Paving Commission and The Royal Parks Guild.

3. Park visitors or users

This group includes the tens of millions of visitors to our parks each year, whether for recreation, relaxation or entertainment. It includes park users who commute on foot, by bike or by car. It includes people visiting our parks and enjoying lunch, a boat trip on the Serpentine, or an organised sports activity. These visitors may be

young or old, able or disabled, visiting alone or in groups, and they will come from varied cultural backgrounds.

This Strategy is aimed at stakeholders external to the parks and therefore does not include our small but highly committed team of staff responsible for managing our eight parks. There are three further stakeholder groups outside the scope of this Strategy, without whom our parks would not be maintained, conserved and enjoyed by millions of visitors each year:

- our contractor teams, who maintain our parklands, our paths, our buildings and our roads;
- our 1,800 volunteers who give their time, experience and knowledge to the organisation; and
- our partners with whom we contract or license to deliver key park activities or services, including events, catering and sports activities.

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These stakeholder groups are critical to the delivery of successful stakeholder engagement. They engage regularly with visitors and other stakeholders, directly influencing the experiences people have of our parks, and gaining valuable feedback and insight into

perceptions. We need to work more closely with them to ensure that they are informed and consistent in their responses, and to coordinate and consider the feedback they receive about our parks.

Our current stakeholder engagement

The Royal Parks' stakeholder engagement is necessarily complex and multi-faceted. Some stakeholders engage with The Royal Parks organisationally, as their interest is across all of our parks. Often the engagement is part of a longer-term relationship with stakeholders. Conversely, some stakeholder engagement may have a discrete beginning and end, for example, if it involves a project or a particular issue. And each park, with its own character and qualities, has different stakeholders with different interests. The key point is recognising that stakeholders may need to be engaged in different ways, at different times, and for

different reasons, and to respond accordingly. Currently our engagement broadly falls into three types:

Monitor

We monitor stakeholder feedback through direct contact with our staff, through social media and through media channels. There is potential to consider how we get more regular feedback on perceptions of our parks through our contractors, concessions and licensees.

Inform

We aim to communicate relevant and timely information to our

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stakeholders. Delivery mechanisms vary depending on the situation, but include:

- proactive communications using print, broadcast and online media;
- information on our website and social media channels;
- direct contact through letters, email or phone calls;
- attending external meetings or events to provide updates on various issues; and
- providing information around the parks, on notice boards and signage.

Engage

We host stakeholder meetings in each of the parks twice a year,

Where a range of views can be raised, issues brought to our attention and information disseminated. We have regular bilateral meetings with partner organisations and attend and contribute to appropriate partner fora. We actively engage with partner organisations in support of common objectives. We consult formally on major changes to park business, and less formally, for example through online surveys. We also engage stakeholders in the development of our Park Management Plans, which inform our longer-term maintenance and conservation regimes. This type of engagement also includes the many community engagement activities we carry out each year.

Community Engagement

The Royal Parks provides access to a range of life long learning opportunities, raising awareness and understanding of the heritage and natural world of the parks and developing activities for participation. The life long journey

begins on the first visit to the park, maybe as a child, and continues throughout life, supporting well-being, knowledge and skills development, and increasing social interaction.

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Community engagement provides access to education, community participation and volunteering opportunities, enabling people to make a positive contribution to their local park. We use a range of engagement methods and often work in partnership with others, allowing us to work with different sections of the community based on their particular needs and to provide platforms for informing and consulting with local communities and promoting participatory activities. We work with three experienced partners to deliver our environmental education service: the Field Studies Council education; The Holly Lodge Centre; and the ISIS Education Centre, all of whom hold the Learning Outside the Classroom quality benchmark.

An example of our community engagement is the Victoria Tower Gardens playground consultation, where we developed a theme, ideas and concepts for refurbishing the playground and engaged with the community for over a year. The group held mudlarking sessions on the shores of the Thames, carried out intergenerational activities and developed mood boards with under fives. The project engaged a wide range of ages and abilities, working with local residents, Friends and Residents Groups and local community centres, Westminster Abbey and many more agencies. Phase 1 is complete, with Phase 11 due for completion in June 2014.

Our plans for future stakeholder engagement

We want our stakeholder engagement to be as inclusive as possible, within our resource constraints. As part of our stakeholder analysis, we will be reviewing how we can achieve a better balance between continuing

our current stakeholder activities, whilst accommodating future engagement priorities. This will enable us to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, without giving disproportionate attention to

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some, at the expense of others, whose views may be equally valid.

We will continue to respond to particular areas where stakeholders have concerns. For example, in 2013 we established a residents group, together with our event organiser, to meet regularly and gather feedback ahead of our summer concert series in Hyde Park. We then worked with the event organiser to address those issues. A key area of improvement was sound travelling to areas outside the park. The Royal Parks and the event organiser ran a dedicated sound line, along with partners from Westminster City Council, to log sound complaints during the concerts. In 2013, calls and complaints were significantly lower than in previous years. In 2014 we are building on this by meeting the same group before and after the BBC concert weekend.

Stakeholder mapping

To develop a more coherent and consistent approach to stakeholder management and to ensure our engagement with our stakeholders

is as effective as possible, we are carrying out a stakeholder mapping exercise. This will help us better understand who our stakeholders are, how and why we currently engage with them, over what issues and who leads on that engagement in The Royal Parks.

We have learnt some valuable lessons from our engagement activity in the past 12 months, which has not always been as consistent or as timely as it could have been. The stakeholder mapping exercise will be informed by the market research currently being undertaken on park visitors' expectations, views and perceptions. This will help us to baseline our current engagement, and to draw up a framework for improving our engagement.

Social and digital media

The Royal Parks currently operates on three social media platforms: Facebook, Flickr and YouTube. The Royal Parks has eleven Facebook pages with a combined audience of 185,000 friends. The Royal Parks works with a number of key

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stakeholders to promote and share content on our social media channels, for example to promote deer safety advice during rutting season.

Engaging with wider stakeholder views

In our Interim Strategy, we referred to five specific actions we are undertaking in 2014 to encourage wider and more diverse stakeholder engagement. This Strategy updates on progress:

- 1. Meet the Park Team.** From spring 2014, The Royal Parks will be hosting a programme of informal, two-hour drop-in sessions in each of our parks. Hosted by the Park Manager and their team, the events are aimed at visitors who do not currently engage with the parks, and will provide an opportunity for them to express their views, ask questions and find out more about what we do. A summary of key points will be published on the website and participants will be asked for feedback, so we can ensure the sessions are useful.
- 2. Visitor feedback from our partners.** We contract or license a range of partners to deliver key park activities or services, including events, catering, sports activities and the maintenance and conservation of our parklands, paths, buildings and roads. These partners engage regularly with visitors and other stakeholders, directly influencing the experiences people have of our parks, and gaining valuable feedback and insight into perceptions. Feedback comes from a range of sources, including face-to-face contact, comment cards, online and commissioning independent feedback. We are working with these partners to understand what visitors are saying about their experiences in our parks, how partners are responding to this, and are tracking trends. Together with other activities outlined in this Strategy, this will give us more and better informed feedback to help us continue to improve the experience people have of our parks.
- 3. Market Research.** We have engaged a Market Research partner

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to undertake quantitative and qualitative research to understand who is visiting our parks, how often and to better understand their views. This research will continue through to the autumn and will measure visitor satisfaction in areas such as catering provision, cleanliness, amenities and enjoyment. We are also commissioning research to understand the views of those who do not currently visit our parks, to help us understand why and how we might encourage them to do so. We are particularly interested to hear from groups traditionally harder to reach or who are less likely to engage with us currently.

4. **Social Media.** We are exploring the feasibility of engaging with a wider stakeholder base by expanding our social media reach through launching on Twitter. A presence on Twitter will enable us to more widely engage with followers, be part of conversations relevant to our parks and use those conversations to provide better services. Our Facebook audience captures followers from around the

globe who use the channel to communicate their experiences and memories of the Royal Parks. This provides a digital platform which allows us to communicate key messages instantly, such as road closures and restoration work.

News stories can be shared and re-tweeted by followers and partner organisations.

5. **The Royal Parks website.** Our website is used to communicate a variety of information, from visitor information and event details to park regulations and consultations. The redevelopment of the website will improve users' experience when visiting our site and make the website more accessible. We are making the website easier to view if you have a mobile or tablet device.

We will be complying with the web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG 2.0) to ensure that we provide the best experience for people of all abilities and disabilities. We are also improving how you navigate and find information on our website. We are

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publishing additional content about our parks and their features. Finally, we are publishing new online

services, to help visitors interact and do business with us more efficiently.

Responsibility

Responsibility for delivering this Strategy sits with The Royal Parks Executive Committee, which has delegated responsibility for each of the Key Performance Targets to individual Directors. For objective/KPT two, *“Implement, monitor and evaluate The Royal Parks Stakeholder Engagement Strategy by March 2015,”* this responsibility sits with the Communications and Commercial Director.

our staff and our stakeholders need to know how, when and who to engage. Following the stakeholder mapping exercise, we will be clarifying contact points between The Royal Parks and our partner organisations, to increase the consistency and effectiveness of engagement, so key stakeholders know who to contact, and so our staff are clear about their responsibilities.

Stakeholder engagement is so integral to our purpose and the delivery of our Corporate Objectives, that it must become a core business activity for all staff, embedded into our culture. Both

Evaluating stakeholder engagement

We are considering how we measure the effectiveness of our

stakeholder engagement. This will become the responsibility of the

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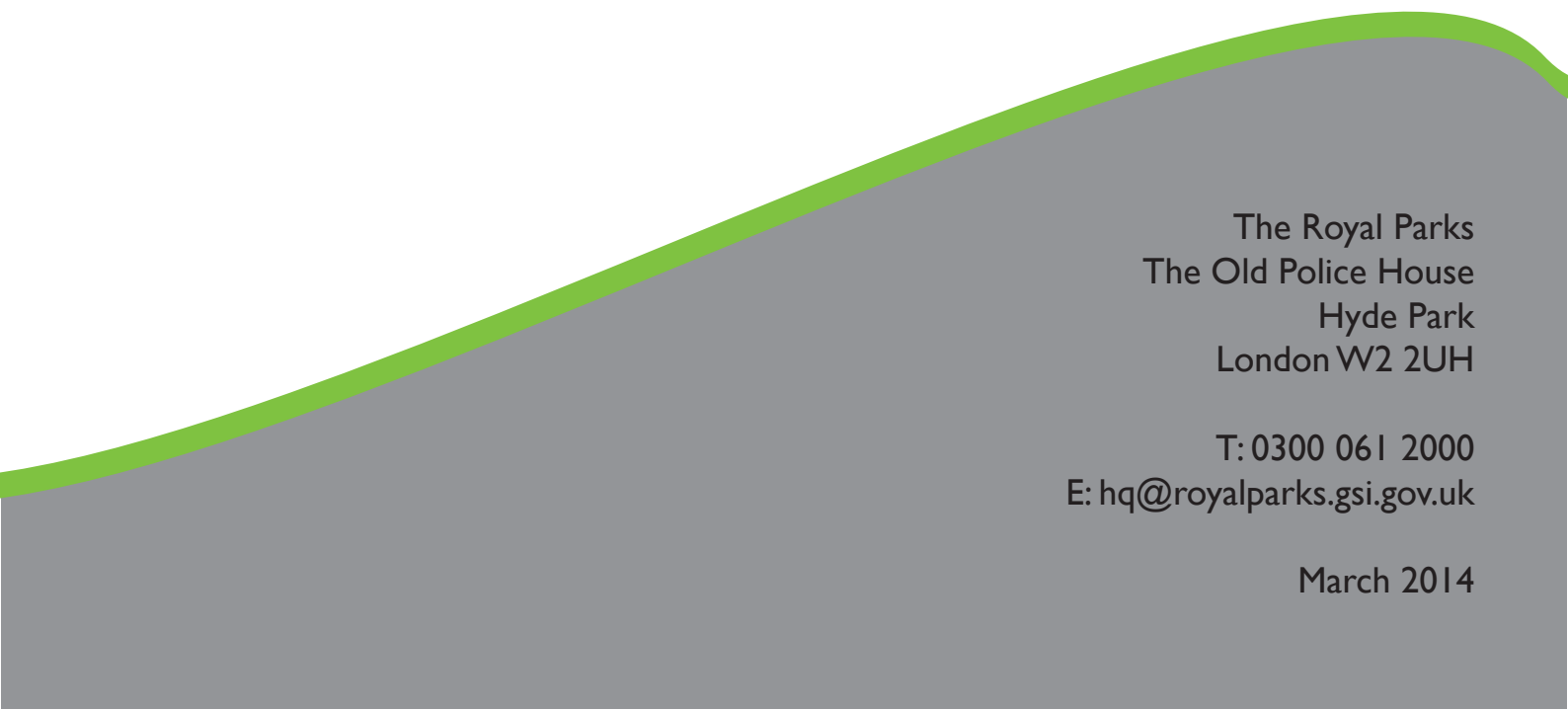
Head of Media and Public Affairs, who will report regularly to our Executive Committee, identifying key activity undertaken, any lessons learnt and key activity planned. This will feed into the annual summary of stakeholder engagement which

we will publish as part of our Annual Report, from 2014/15. We will evaluate our engagement against the key principles set out in this strategy, and provide an overview of our “monitor”, “inform” and “engage” activities.

Continuing engagement

We continue to welcome views on how we engage with our stakeholders, including, going forward, how we are meeting the

key principles set out in this Strategy. Please contact us at: hq@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk.



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