



**To whom it may concern:**

**The Parks Management Association** represents those individuals and organisations working in the public parks and open spaces sector, whether in the public, private or third sector. The Association remains independent and we work through a steering group of parks professionals acting in the interest of public parks in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We are completely independent which allows us to champion the value of public parks and open spaces and steer the best intervention and development amongst the various organisations that work within the parks sector.

One of the most important organisations within this sector is The Gardens Trust. It is the only national organisation that exclusively focuses on historic designed landscapes, commonly known as 'historic parks and gardens'. Many of the parks and gardens that we manage on a day to day basis are historic designed landscapes, from the most famous and notable such as the Grade I Birkenhead Park, the country's first municipal and publicly funded park, to the lesser known, but equally important, such as the Grade II\* Rosary Cemetery in Norwich, Norfolk, the country's first non-denominational cemetery. These landscapes are incredibly important to the nation as well as to our many communities that enjoy and value them daily.

As a charity, the Gardens Trust represents and supports the 36 local volunteer County Garden Trusts in England, the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, and works with related bodies across the UK. The Gardens Trust is the statutory consultee for planning applications which affect parks and gardens on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest at all Grades. The work that local authorities and the many park managers, planners, landscape architects, heritage consultants carries out in managing and protecting these landscapes cannot be undertaken without the advice and guidance of the Gardens Trust and the many County Garden Trusts across the UK.

We in the Parks Management Association simply do not recognize the Government's description of statutory consultees in relation to their invaluable work. Their work is always constructive, pragmatic and timely and cost efficient and incredibly important.

Our many historic parks and gardens have a major role to play in growing our economy, as historic parks and gardens support well-designed development with ready-made access to pre-existing greenspace. They also add hugely to the UK's tourism economy, being one of the biggest drivers in this field, nationally and internationally. They also meet the challenges of the climate emergency, and are critical too in supporting nature recovery, especially as older, established landscapes support biodiversity significantly more than newly-created open space. They foster safer streets, as public parks play an important role in social cohesion by offering both places to come together and build communities, as well as offering places for wellbeing, play and recreation for all. This is the reason that so many of them were created in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and challenging inter-war periods. And most importantly, they ensure that our NHS is fit for the future, because parks help reduce demand on it by offering free-to-access places

to exercise and enjoy fresh air, critical for the nation's health and wellbeing. The scientific and academic evidence for this is now overwhelming. We urge the government to support the work the Garden Trust does in protecting some of the nation's most valuable and freely accessible assets – our historic parks and gardens.

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