



Birmingham Open Spaces Forum

The Who, What and Why?

BOSF is a volunteer network organisation, set up at the end of 2004, that brings together all the community groups in Birmingham with an interest in green open spaces. Our **main focus** is supporting the volunteers who add value to the city's open spaces.

Who is BOSF?

Currently there are more than 130 member groups - some are large and organised others are 2 people & a dog. There are areas of the city less well represented than others and **we need your help** to make sure that all of the city can benefit from what a friends group can offer. A study undertaken when BOSF was established demonstrated that an open space with a friends group benefited from an average of **£35k** a year additional funding and volunteer hours equivalent to **1.5 additional staff**.

What is an Open Space?

For our purposes an Open Space is any space that a community regards as a green area, accessible to the local community. This includes: parks, allotments, nature reserves, country parks, cemeteries, wildlife corridors, playing fields & the bit of green at the end of the road.



Why is there a BOSF?

There have been friends groups in Birmingham for decades. BOSF was set up to provide a support network for those groups and to use that wealth of experience to encourage other individuals to get groups established. The other key role for BOSF is to make links with the organisations that manage Birmingham's open spaces. In most cases this is Birmingham City Council. BOSF works with BCC to ensure that users are able to be actively involved in how open spaces are managed.

What does BOSF do?

BOSF offers opportunities for groups and individuals interested in open spaces to share knowledge and experience. This is in the form of regular information newsletters, funding advice, networking opportunities and training.



Is BOSF any good?

BOSF, working in partnership with Birmingham City Council, is recognised nationally as the model on which all other authority-wide networks should be based. BOSF members, sometimes with BCC staff, have spoken at events across the country and is a founder member and organiser of the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces.

How to contact BOSF: info@bosf.org.uk www.bosf.org.uk [@BhamOpenSpaces](https://twitter.com/BhamOpenSpaces)

BOSF & Birmingham City Council

Co-Production & New Ways of Working

What BOSF aims to do is to find new ways of working with BCC to ensure that local people have the chance to make the greatest contribution possible to improving their local communities.

This has been demonstrated over the last 10 years by the numbers of groups taking on more responsibility for their local sites - from litter picks to large events, fundraising for capital investment & service provision. All enabled by the constructive & supportive role played by the BCC Parks Service



This co-production model has developed beyond the Parks Service and working with the Wellbeing Service has produced **Active Parks**.

Devised by Friends groups and taken to BCC as a joint pilot this project, it has seen several million pounds of investment brought into Birmingham to help improve the health & well-being of citizens.

BOSF wants to encourage and develop further co-production & to create a culture of co-efficiency so that more citizens can be actively engaged in service development.

Friends Groups Taking Action Across Birmingham

Birmingham is a huge vibrant urban area that has 591 parks and open spaces, covering 3,700 ha. This covers the large National Nature Reserve of Sutton Park, 10 LNR's, 6 Country Parks, 176 SINC's & SLINC's, 237 Play Areas and 115 Allotment Sites.



Many of these have active community groups who volunteer their time to bring the added value to their site. They bring in extra funds for their sites from Lottery, Landfill Tax and other local sources. They put on a variety of activities that includes Conservation, Litter Picking, Sporting Activities, Forest Schools & Fun Days.

Achievements the Community Groups of Birmingham have made include creation of new orchards, running marathons, learning new skills, willow weaving, creation of new habitats and bringing their voices together to help save Birmingham's Open Spaces from the loss of land, facilities & jobs!

