

Getting a Group Started

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum is a community run Registered Charity that aims to support local communities make the most of their open spaces

What is your Open Space?

The open space that is important to your community might be a park, a nature reserve, a playing field or just a square of green at the end of the road. Big or small if it is important to your community then it is worth making the most of.

Why do we need a group?

Setting up a group means you can spread the load. Whether your space needs saving from developers or just cleaning up - doing it by yourself is hard work. If you can get friends and neighbours involved, or the local school and youth group, the dog walkers and the football players you get different points of view and lots of willing volunteers.

A formally set up group will also find it easier to raise money.

What sort of group do we need?

You can have a group where you just agree amongst yourselves what you want to do and get on with it. But if you want to raise funds you will need to be a bit more formal. You will need a constitution, a chair, secretary, treasurer and an Annual General Meeting (AGM). If you need to raise lots of money you may want to think about becoming a registered charity or even a registered company.

Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Constitution - what do we need?

Most groups usually start with a constitution. This is a declaration of the aims of your group and how you are going to meet those aims. It doesn't need to be a complicated legal document and BOSF have some examples you can start from. As a minimum you will a **Chairperson** (you can call them whatever you like) to co-ordinate activity, a **Secretary** to record decisions and deal with correspondence and a **Treasurer** to record and handle any money you receive or spend.

There is lots of help available if you've never done anything like this before (see over the page). You can add in any other posts that are relevant to your project eg Bat Officer, Publicity Officer, Volunteer Secretary, Social Media Volunteer etc.

What shall we do?

To get your group off to a good start you need an easy to organise, cheap, attention grabbing activity.

Try a fancy dress litter pick, collect everyone's Christmas trees and get the council to chip them, get local children to sign a petition using their handprints on a long sheet of wallpaper, hold a table top sale to raise money, set up a carol singing evening, plant a wild flower meadow. BOSF members have done all these things and are happy to share experiences and advice. Make sure you collect the contact details of the people who come for future reference.

Money !

Very quickly you will discover that your group needs some money - even if it's just little amounts for postage and posters.

You can raise money by:

- Asking your members for a subscription or membership fee
- Applying to your local Councillors for a donation from the Community Chest
- Asking local businesses for financial support or gifts in kind
- Making an application to the Lottery through Awards for All
- Holding a table top sale or similar event
- Making an application to a grant making body or a trust. See BOSF Website.

There is plenty of help available from BOSF members and other organisations if you are new to fundraising.

Who can help?

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum

Help getting your group started...and beyond

Info@bosf.org.uk admin@bosf.org.uk

www.bosf.org.uk

0121 451 2336

Funding Central is a free resource for charities & voluntary organisations. It lists thousands of funding and finance opportunities.

<http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk/>

Keep Britain Tidy

A national organisation that now runs national Love Parks Campaign and consists of a whole range of environmental programmes, from beaches to parks and schools.

<http://www.loveparks.org.uk/home/1816>

Active Parks Birmingham

Devised by Friends groups and taken to Birmingham City Council as a joint pilot back in 2013 this project has seen several million pounds of investment brought into Birmingham to help improve the health & well-being of citizens.

Following on from the huge success of the pilot year, Active Parks was rolled out to 50 Birmingham Parks in 2014!

There were all sorts on offer to suit every member of the family that includes — walking, running, cycling, conservation, gardening, bushcraft, Zumba, Tai Chi, Park Fit Baby, rounders, basketball, boules, tennis, rowing and canoeing.

For full details and a time table of activities, go to the Active Parks Website:

<http://beactivebirmingham.co.uk/active-parks>



Active Parks is working in partnership to offer a wide variety of free physical activities across Birmingham parks with:

- Parks Community Groups
- BOSF
- Birmingham City Council Parks
- Birmingham City Council Wellbeing Service
- Park Lives
- Sport England
- Street Games
- TCV
- Reward Your World