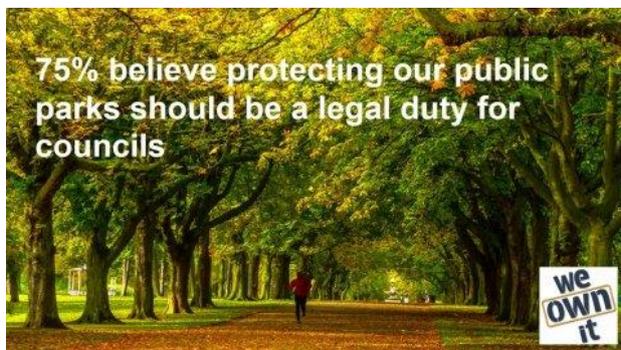


We love our parks! Keep them public - BERA will fight to protect our parks and open spaces (see article below)

Wednesday, September 28, 2016 - 00:00



New polling shows 70% of the public believe privatising parks is unacceptable and 75% believe councils should have a statutory duty to protect public parks. The [government's inquiry on the future of public parks](#) closes this week.

We asked Survation to find out what the public thinks about the possibility of parks being privatised - [see the full polling here](#).

[Research](#) by the Heritage Lottery Fund shows that 9% of parks managers are considering selling off whole parks or parts of parks in the next three years. The ['State of UK Public Parks' report](#) suggests around ten parks have been partially (and in one case wholly) sold off in the last three years.

London Councils have warned that cuts could lead to a ['slide towards privately-run parks' by 2020](#). In Battersea park, [private company Go Ape has opened for business](#), charging parents for their children to be able to use the space.

Cat Hobbs, Director of We Own It, said: 'The idea of privatising parks is hugely unpopular and it should be completely ruled out by government and councils. Public parks are precious green spaces that belong to all of us - but cuts could mean a slippery slope towards sell offs. There should be a new legal duty to protect parks for the future.'

Dave Morris, Chair of the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces said: "Our public green spaces are treasured and essential resources for all communities and for all sections of our communities, as underlined by the rise over the last 15 years of the inspirational movement of many thousands of local greenspace Friends Groups. Rather than accept the deepening underfunding crisis we call on the public to demand these vital spaces become a statutory service to ensure they are well managed and secure for current and future generations to enjoy."

Mark Camley, Chair of the Parks Alliance said: 'Parks play a vital role in providing spaces for children to play, and adults to exercise, take part in sport or just relax. With increasing urbanisation they provide a vital free service for families. As well as retaining them, we need to ensure that they are properly maintained and funded because no-one benefits from a poor quality park that doesn't feel safe.'

The Heritage Lottery Fund report shows that parks are used by over 37 million people each year and that 79% of the public support investing in parks, but cuts mean they could be facing 'decline and neglect'.

Over 200,000 people have signed a [38 Degrees petition](#) in support of a statutory duty for councils to protect parks. The We Own It polling shows the strong support for this amongst the general public.