

CASE FOR COMPLETION OF THE APPLICATION FOR “FIELDS IN TRUST” STATUS FOR MOORLANDS RECREATION PARK (“MOORLANDS PARK”)

We are presenting this case to request the completion of the process which was started in September 2017 to Protect Moorlands Park forever through Fields in Trust (“FIT”). We are aware of some reasons for delay, but the park is vital to the local community for health, enjoyment and a hub for community spirit.

Moorlands Park is at high risk of changes to its character and space by areas being lost or built on. Nationally, parks are being lost at an unacceptable rate. A national survey by FIT states that one in five people say their parks have been at risk of loss/building.

The survey also states that 95% agree that parks should be protected from development. We are campaigning to have permanent protection on Moorlands Park through FIT, but know other parks in this area needs this protection too. The Council has already given this protection to Firs Field in Combe Down through FIT.

An agreement with FIT will bring the following benefits to Moorlands Park: permanent protection, the health and social benefits a park brings, community spirit, and financial savings.

1. Permanent Protection

FIT is a national organisation and a registered charity which is an active champion for the protection of parks and recreation areas. Previously known as the National Playing Fields Association, it gives protection to over 2,700 areas through a form of agreement called a “Deed of Dedication”.

The Council has acknowledged the importance of green space protection through its placement plan, but planning policies have limitations that put parks at risk:

- A Council can only consider planning applications in isolation, so any park is at risk of a series of applications which individually have little effect on the enjoyment of the green space but collectively cause significant loss and damage to its character;
- Planning policies are reviewed every few years. Councils are under ever-increasing financial pressures, and there is always the risk of planning protections being watered down in future plans.

A Deed of Dedication with FIT is not a substitute for planning protection, but it gives an additional, enhanced, level of **permanent** legal protection against any loss of land. The Deed contains binding commitments by the Council, in particular, not to dispose of any park land or to permit any building on park land which is not for the use of the park without the consent of FIT.

FIT works in partnership with the landowner (the Council) and other organisations involved in the parkland management (such as potentially, the Bristol and Bath Parks Foundation) to ensure the parkland is used for the benefit of the local community.

FIT also provide expertise and advice on the preservation of parkland.

2. Health Benefits

The protection of the park is crucial not just for ecology and wildlife but also for the health and social benefit of all sections of the local community, from the children who use the play area to the retired people who walk their dogs there.

According to a survey by FIT:

- 48% of people say using their local park helps them feel healthier;
- 86% of people visiting their local park use it for walking (including walking the dog);
- 69% of people think the loss of parks would be detrimental to children's development.

Using a park benefits:

- Physical health – walking and running helps with fitness and reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease and obesity;
- Child development – outdoor playing is an essential part;
- Mental health - natural therapy through the environment promoting relaxation, stress relief, and interaction with other people, reducing isolation.

3. Community

FIT are active champions, protecting parks and fields nationwide, working with the all the local community.

Previously when Moorlands Park land has come under development threat, this has caused local people stress and anxiety. FIT act as advocates for the local community in such situations.

FIT would carry out an independent assessment of any changes to park land, within the terms of the park's "Deed of Dedication". They can be robust yet flexible, and consider the needs and benefits to the whole community.

They can provide advisory and custodial oversight to the landowner and local park management.

The community then feel they have a supportive, impartial guardian, in matters regarding the Park.

4. Financial benefits

FIT often has grant funding available, but only to its protected fields. Over the years it has provided millions of pounds of improvements in conjunction with grant-making bodies.

Research commissioned by FIT (compiled using HM Treasury approved research methodology) has found that access to green spaces:

- Saves the NHS £111 million per year/ adult in UK in reduced visits to G.P.s (this doesn't include "knock-on" savings due to reduced prescriptions and referrals).
- The "Wellbeing" value associated with frequent use of parks is worth £34.2 Billion per year, through the above factors.