



Plymouth GEMS (Future Parks Accelerator)

ENRICH Programme Co-Design Report





Contents

About this Document	4
Foreword	5
Executive Summary	6
Participants and Contributors	10
1.0 Background & Introduction	12
2.0 The Enrich Programme	14
3.0 Proposed Principles	19
Conclusion and Next Steps	28

About this Document

The Enrich programme, led by the Real Ideas Organisation, is part of Plymouth wider GEMS (Green Estate Management Solutions) Future Parks Accelerator project, led by Plymouth City Council.

The GEMS partnership is made up of the University of Plymouth, SERIO, Data Place, Plymouth Open Spaces Network (POSN), Plymouth City Council (PCC) and Real Ideas.

The project is funded and supported by the Future Parks Accelerator Programme (FPA), led by National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and the National Trust, Power to Change and the European Regional Development Fund's Urban Innovative Actions programme.

This document is a record of the Enrich programme and the proposed principles for the future direction of the work and has been authored by Real Ideas, with support of the partners.

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Foreword

Plymouth has a strong history of enterprise, research, innovation and connection to our natural environment, which is one of the most unique and diverse of any city in the country.

Today, in a world facing a climate emergency, a biodiversity crisis and an international pandemic which is exacerbating existing health inequalities, the importance of nature to the quality of our life is ever more critical.

Finding ways to nurture and provide access to our urban green spaces in ways that are just, fair and economically, financially and environmentally sustainable is a core part of Plymouth City Council's work. This is highlighted by partnership projects and policies supporting community environmental action such as Active Neighbourhoods, Poole Farm, Plymouth Tree Plan, Climate Emergency Action Plan and Green Minds and supported by a substantial capital investment programme in Sports, Outdoor Play and Natural Infrastructure across the city.

Our success in securing funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Trust's Future Parks Accelerator programme is enabling us to work with others and test new ideas to meet this aim through our Plymouth Green Estate Management Solutions (GEMS) project.

The Enrich programme is an important part of GEMS and aims to action-research how to create greater social enterprise activity in city green spaces and co-design frameworks that can help develop this approach.

Building on citywide community environmental action and Council investment in improvements to our parks and green spaces, Enrich enabled us to attract new and more diverse partners to the table.

The process has created a network of engaged community groups, entrepreneurs, nature-based enterprises and Council officers from a range of departments, with a collective vision to securing a positive future for our urban green spaces, supporting a more regenerative economy.

It sets out a proposed framework for future joint working that we hope to take forward with our partners as we develop Plymouth's GEMS to meet the needs of the 21st Century City.

Councillor Sue Dann

Portfolio Holder for Environment and Street Scene



Executive Summary

Enrich programme overview:

- Plymouth enjoys spectacular natural infrastructure. Bordered to the North and South by two national parks, it has one of the largest municipal urban estates for its size, with parks, green spaces and nature reserves covering almost a third of the city area.
- Green Estate Management Solutions (GEMS) is Plymouth's Future Parks Accelerator programme, which, in the face of a growing strain of public finances, escalating climate emergency and increasing health and well-being inequities, seeks to find better ways to collectively care for our urban green spaces, generating greater social, environmental, and economic value for the city.
- GEMS is built on a strong foundation of Plymouth City Council partnership projects and policies supporting community environmental action such as Active Neighbourhoods, Poole Farm, Plymouth Tree Plan, Climate Emergency Action Plan and Green Minds alongside a substantial capital investment programme in Sports, Outdoor Play and Natural Infrastructure across the city.
- Plymouth is the UK's first "Social Enterprise City", with some 200 social enterprises, cooperatives and community businesses.
- As part of the GEMS programme, the Enrich project seeks to action research on how we can create greater social enterprise and community business activity in city green spaces, both through direct business support and working with stakeholders to co-design a set of policy proposals to help facilitate more of this activity into the future.
- The Enrich project is working to deliver three outcomes: 1) a set of proposed principles for city-wide policy and practice development to support greater social enterprise and community business activity in parks – collated in this report; 2) direct business support to help these enterprises start-up and grow; and 3) a project extension to support the creation of a set of assets as the result of this report and to further a number of park-based public enterprises.
- The Enrich Report is the first outcome from a mixed, co-design, working group of 48 council officers, from across Plymouth City Council departments and social enterprise community businesses who are leading activity and have an expertise in parks.
- The process has highlighted the significant and greater role these community enterprises can play in collectively caring for our urban green spaces, supporting a more regenerative economy and a fair and inclusive transition. Currently these organisations are producing economic outcomes, running income generating businesses and creating green jobs, social outcomes, augmenting the city's wellbeing, cultural and educational offers; and environmental outcomes, renewing spaces and restoring nature.
- The Enrich process and the adoption of these proposed principles will support and make an active contribution to other key city initiatives and strategic policies. These include the Plymouth Plan, Climate Emergency Action Plan, Covid-19 Resurgam Recovery Plan, Doing It Ourselves, Cooperative Development Plan, Inclusive Growth and the city's Fab City commitment.
- To support the above, and further enable greater social enterprise and community business activity in parks, the Enrich Programme proposes the following principles for policy and practice development across four areas.



Devonport Park Pavillion ©Plymouth City Council



Proposed Principles Arising from Programme

1. Parks Pact

- The co-creation of a city-wide manifesto-style “Parks Pact” for the city. A public document that underlines, communicates and promotes our shared commitment to and the value we place on parks and green spaces and the role of social enterprise. A pact will further outline mutual expectations, approaches and ways of working, from across all stakeholders, when it comes to collectively caring for our natural infrastructure.

2 Communications

- Communications were seen as a high priority from across the Enrich participants and many real or perceived conflicts with past working were often seen as the result of collective poor communications. Suggestions were put forward for:
 - The development and delivery of a dedicated, more delineated customer-facing website for city urban green spaces and parks.
 - With specific reference to promoting greater community business activity in parks, there was a recognition for the need to provide clearer information, guidelines and toolkits for community businesses, and other such organisations, looking to develop activity in parks.
 - There was a recognition of need to agree and communicate what “good” looks like. To address this, it is proposed that toolkits and guidelines are accompanied by a set of case studies, on live examples of Plymouth-based community businesses in parks.
 - In addition to a desire to develop the online web-based information about parks, there was an equal desire to improve and develop on-site, both physical and digital park-based communications.

3 Development of Clear Technical Policies & Practice

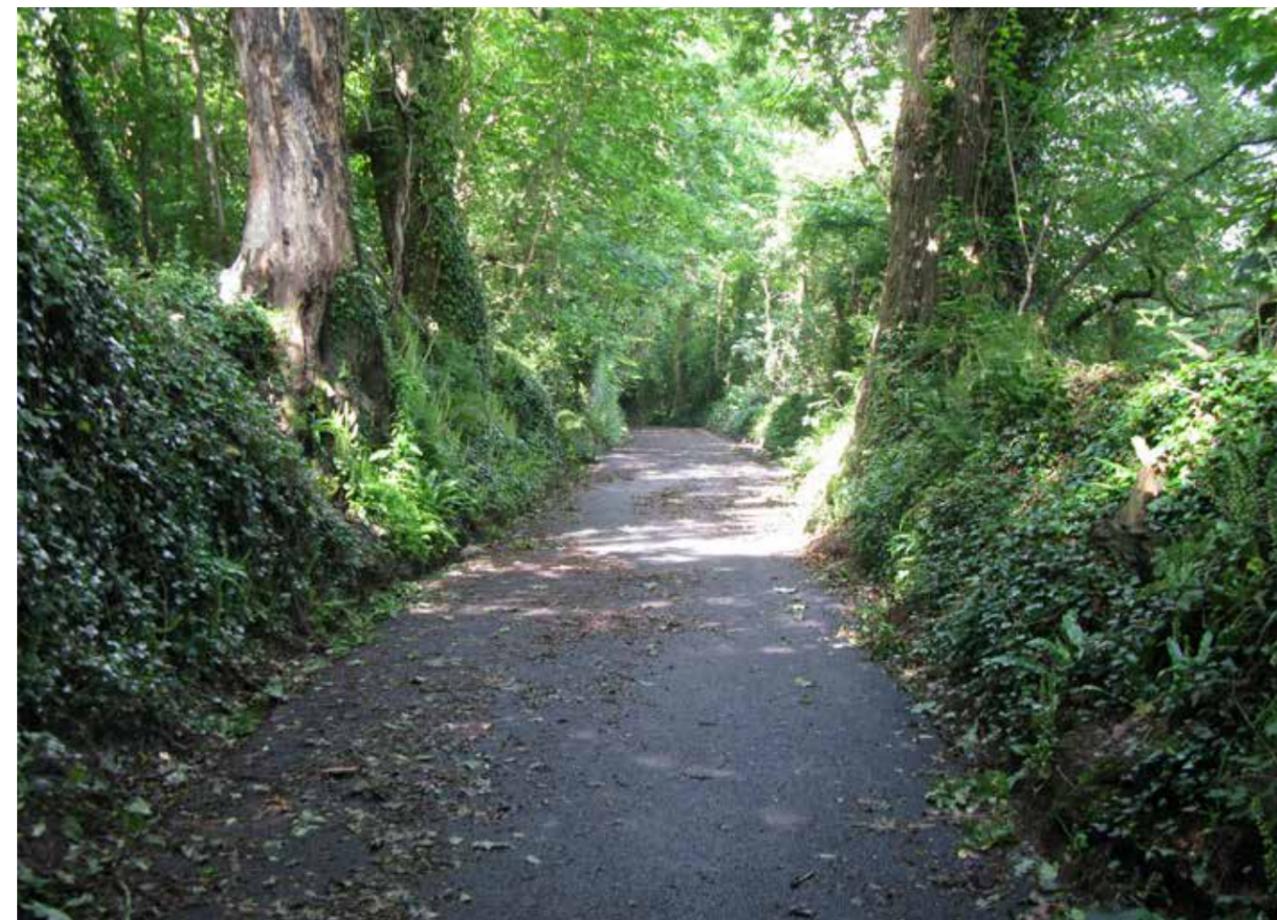
- The Enrich process surfaced a number of more technical proposals, largely relating to the access to and use of park-based assets.
 - There was a recognition of the need for ongoing learning and development in the way the city manages access to

park-based community assets. To favour successful income generating, quality businesses in parks that have assets locks and greater social/environmental purpose, pilot phases, sliding scale rents and subsidies should all be considered when managing asset leases and community asset transfers.

- Similarly, there is a proposal to further develop and formalise policy that allows social enterprises and community businesses to apply for licenses to undertake ongoing and longer fixed term activity in parks and green spaces, reducing administrative burdens.
- Seen as an important aspect to creating vibrant spaces, raising levels of engagement and activity, and supporting sustainable, financial viability of park-based assets, there was recognised need to limit the single uses of buildings, where possible and appropriate, in favour of greater mixed and more multi-use models.
- It was proposed to extend, as far as it is possible, the use of the Social Value Act to parks and to embed social (and environmental) value in all procurement, licensing and leasing decisions.



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Ham Woods ©Plymouth City Council

- The current PCC City Change Fund and previous pioneering Social Enterprise Investment (loan) Fund were seen as very successful. It was proposed that a new version of these are introduced for all types of social enterprise, cooperative and community business in parks.
- It was proposed that a greater level of income generated from park assets and businesses (e.g. cafes, car parks) should be more clearly ring fenced and spent directly on the associated park or green space. Both supporting park-based business and the wider parks themselves.

4 Intermediary Partnership

- There was a recognition that, to develop the principles and to continue to drive Plymouth’s community business approach to parks and green spaces, there is a need for some form of intermediary partnership – sitting across authority department and community businesses.

Next Steps

- Develop and clarify the future role and remit of the Enrich cohort, with particular reference to developing the proposed principles and to support the ongoing development of greater socially enterprising activity in parks.
- Continue to provide 1:2:1 business support for social enterprise community businesses within the programme, through GEMS, Empowering Places and Green Minds – to help them to continue to establish and grow.
- Continue to engage additional stakeholders and develop new partnerships and programmes to further roll out and embed the impacts of the work.
- Work strategically across the city to link and embed the work of Enrich and GEMS within key city policy priorities such as Resurgam and Fab City.
- Work with the national Future Parks Accelerator Cohort to exchange and share good practice and learning.

Participants and Contributors

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The Enrich co-design phase brought together 57 community businesses, voluntary organisations, social enterprises, council officers and leaders. The full list of participants and contributors is given below.

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1.0 Background & Introduction

We all love our parks; we inherently value them as a core and permanent feature of our cities and towns. They are places of fun, activity, relaxation and social congregation, a vestige of our commonwealth, free and open to all, playing a key role in contributing to our economy, health and wellbeing, the environment and conservation.

Plymouth, Britain's Ocean City is fortunate to have some 16,000 hectares of urban green space. Sandwiched between two national parks, Dartmoor to the North and the UK's first National Marine Park to the South, the city enjoys an wealth of woodlands, nature reserves, parks, waterfronts and squares - covering over one third of the city's municipal land area. However, pressure on our green spaces has never been so great.

The challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and issues of public health are growing, at a time when government spending has been ever-shrinking. This has created a contradiction and an uncertain future for our parks and green spaces. This valuable resource, that is so often taken for granted, is now central to many of our lives, as we continue to come to terms with the challenges and consequences of a global pandemic and national health crisis.

In response to this contradiction and a need to think differently and afresh about the nation's parks and green spaces, in 2019, financially backed by Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) teamed up with the National Trust to fund and launch the Future Parks Accelerator (FPA) programme.

Led by Plymouth City Council, Plymouth is one of eight areas in the UK to win a place on the FPA. The FPA is an ambitious and urgent programme, that builds on four years of innovation and prototyping, to support local authorities to transform their approach to the collective care of our nation's green estates.

It aims to help local authorities move towards more financially sustainable, collaborative and smarter models for green spaces, to increase their value for the public and to leave a strong evidence base and legacy for the future.

With the FPA funding, Plymouth's Green Estates Management Solutions (GEMS) project is exploring how we can bring new ways of thinking and make systemic change in how our urban green spaces are managed.

It supports the city's strategic vision for parks to transform how we collectively care, use and value our parks and urban green spaces.

GEMS is built on a strong foundation of Plymouth City Council partnership projects and policies supporting community environmental action such as Active Neighbourhoods, Poole Farm, Plymouth Tree Plan, Climate Emergency Action Plan and Green Minds alongside a substantial capital investment programme in Sports, Outdoor Play and Natural Infrastructure across the city.

The GEMS project is being delivered in two phases, aligned to the national FPA: a Co-Design Phase followed by a Transition Phase. Starting in June 2019, the project has now received an additional extension, supporting work to March 2022. The GEMS project partners are Plymouth City Council, Public Health, Real Ideas, SERIO (Plymouth University) and the Data Place.

The GEMS project has two broad, interdependent strands of work:

1. Public Sector Transformation, led by Plymouth City Council, focussing on financial planning, workforce development, natural capital accounting and approaches to biodiversity, community stewardship and volunteering. This strand has enjoyed strong involvement

from Public Health through an Appreciative Enquiry research and engagement process.

2. Enrich programme, led by Real Ideas, focuses on how we can bring greater 'social enterprise' thinking and activity to our parks and green spaces. The programme in year one brought together experts from across social enterprise sectors and council departments and, through a combined leadership, training and a peoples' assembly programme, has worked to not only put these community business ideas into practice, but also to make a set of proposed principles for wider policy changes - enabling greater activity into the future.

With the conclusion of the Co-Design Phase, this report represents the first output from the programme.

The report is concerned with the process and outcomes of the first phase of the Enrich programme in the form of a set of policy and practice proposals to consider for implementation in the Transition Phase and beyond.

It is a stepping off point, providing the foundations for further development work into the future.



2.0 The Enrich Programme

2.1 Social enterprise and community business in Plymouth

Under Social Enterprise UK's (SEUK) Places scheme in 2013, Plymouth became the UK's first Social Enterprise City. Today the city's ability to innovate and do things differently is increasingly recognised on the national stage. The State of the Sector report, undertaken by Plymouth Social Enterprise Network (PSEN) in 2019 and funded by Power to Change (PtC), showed that there are some 200 social enterprises, community businesses and coops in the city, employing over 7000 people with a combined annual turnover of around £0.6bn.

This successful and growing movement, working across localities, communities and sectors, creates significant levels of social, environmental and economic value and therefore represents a major asset for the city.

Hence, when it comes to considering our collective challenges as a city – in this case the management of parks and green spaces – our wider social enterprise sector, through a process of asset-based community development, has a considerable role to play.

With the establishment of the Power to Change Trust in 2015, the cooperative and social enterprise sectors evolved an increasing focus on the idea of place and geographic communities; from here the idea of “community business” has become more common place. Often understood as a subsection of social enterprise, but with a great emphasis on the local ownership and impact, PtC defines community business in the following way:

- **Locally rooted** – meaning a business started by local people that will benefit the immediate community around it.
- **Accountable to the local community** – local communities have a genuine say in how the business is run, e.g. through regular consultation, membership or ownership, etc.
- **Trading for the benefit of the local community** – community business makes money by trading products and services; it may trade across a broader area, but benefit is focussed locally.

- **That has a broad community impact** – they are set up to address local needs and contribute to a broader sense of confidence and pride in a place.

While the Enrich programme began with a broad definition of social enterprise, including community business and cooperatives, in practice it became clear early on that the majority of the social enterprises that participant in the programme either already identified as community businesses or, by the fact that parks are highly localised in their benefit and support, fulfil the definition of community business. Hence the question for the Enrich programme is probably better phrased as:

“How can we create greater community business activity and thinking in parks?”

Drawing on elements of cooperation, new-municipalism and regenerative new-economy thinking, the Enrich programme seeks to release Plymouth's entrepreneurial community power to develop new approaches to how we collectively fund, care for and enjoy our parks and green spaces, while supporting greater outcomes around the environment, health and wellbeing.



2.2 The Enrich Programme Design

To meet the timeline and create maximum value, the Enrich programme was designed as a fast-paced and practical programme of training, inspiration, deliberation, co-design and support, to collectively identify areas for development and kickstart new and greater community business activity in parks.

The Enrich Programme seeks to create two broad outcomes over the two years:

1. **Supporting the practical development of social enterprise and community business in parks and, alongside that,**
2. **Inform and develop new policy and practice for the city, to allow for more socially enterprising activity to take place into the future – wider systems change.**

The Co-Design Phase of the GEMS programme concentrated on laying the training basis for outcome 1. above, while at the same time developed and workshopped ideas and solutions for outcome 2. The approach included series of collective workshops, themed seminars, site visits and co-design sessions with participants. Moving into the Transition Phase, support will be more one-to-one direct work with the community businesses, to assist them to further realise their individual projects in parks.

With this in mind, the Co-Design element of the Enrich Programme drew on three different approaches and was in practice a tailored hybrid combination of:

- **Leadership Programme** – in addition to elements of leadership-training, the programme sought to develop a cohort of new ‘city leaders’, a community of practice that will continue to lead project work beyond the programme.
- **Business Accelerator** – that provided practical training and support around developing community business and social enterprise in parks, covering areas around impact, funding and income generation and legal structures.
- **Peoples' Assembly** – a deliberative democracy approach that brought together recognised



experts from diverse specialisms relating to parks, to consider the policy framework for developing community business in parks. Drawing on their first-hand experience, and with specialist expert support and facilitation, the cohorts considered the current challenges, envisaged solutions and co-designed a set of practice and policy proposals.

It is these proposals, from the Phase One Co-Design of the Enrich programme, that this report is chiefly concerned with. They are detailed further below.

2.3 Enrich Participant & Recruitment

To meet the aims of Enrich and the wider programme, the delivery team needed to bring together the right representation and balance of people – with the knowledge, expertise and commitment to be able to inform, learn, decide and act together – to bring forward socially enterprising solutions and to make change happen.

The programme did not have the time, resources, or the need to undertake a more prescriptive sortition system necessary for a more formal citizens' assembly democratic process – increasingly common for wider policy and governance changes. Hence, on balance, given the very specific aims of the programme – developing great community business activity in parks – the desire for specialist skills and local knowledge was greater than the need for democratic rigour. Therefore, a more self-selecting peoples' assembly style approach was selected.

The initial target was to recruit 40 participants: 20 social entrepreneurs, who were either already working in parks, or had ideas or plans to work in parks; and 20 council officers, from a range of city council departments.

An open call application process to join the programme was advertised, where potential participants were asked about their use and knowledge of parks, community business experience and any park-based enterprising ideas they may have. There was a very positive response to the call out, with over 70 applications submitted in total. Following the application process, the delivery team selected 48 individuals from across the council, Plymouth's communities, social enterprises and voluntary sector.

Based on preference (workshop timings), participants were split into two mixed (council and community) cohorts of 20 and 28 people – Cohorts 1 and 2 – who then undertook identical programmes of work.

Good representation was seen from across council departments, covering economic development, estates, natural infrastructure, culture, park and streets team, public health and planning. From communities and social enterprise, we were joined by several existing and park-based social enterprises, environmental consultants, members of Plymouth Open Spaces Network, ecologists, urban farmers, hydroponics engineers, caterers and outdoor exercise specialist – to name a few.



2.4 Workshop Sessions

Both cohorts then followed an identical planned programme of workshop sessions and events from October 2019 until March 2020, that consisted of:

- **4 weekday, day long, monthly training and co-design workshop sessions.**
- **2 weekday site visits/study visit days to South West green space based social enterprise projects.**
- **4 evening speaker seminars and a social event.**

*NB two final speaker seminars, a study day and the social event had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and undertaken online over April and June 2020.

The programme was designed to inform, educate and inspire, to give participants the skills and support structures to develop and lead feasible community businesses.

There was plenty of opportunity for people to work collaboratively, identify challenges and solutions and to then prioritise and put forward proposals to council. It also created space for different types of leadership to take place and new leaders to emerge, both as individuals and collectively as a group.

Workshop programme

Each of the workshops was themed on a key community business topic with part of the day dedicated to identifying, understanding and starting to solve our collective challenges – to develop socially enterprising solutions and inform policy. The workshop programme was preceded with an orientation phone call to participants, to introduce the team, further explain the programme and to answer any queries.

The workshop schedule:

Workshop 1:

Introduction to the programme, social enterprise, community business and other participants. During the day each participant to introduce themselves by giving a 10 minute “lightning talk”; the PCC and Real Ideas delivery team also covered the FPA, GEMS and Enrich programmes, their aims, structure and offer. There was also an expert session on social and environmental impact from Matt Little, Real Ideas’ Head of Impact.



Workshop 2: Strategy and leadership and identifying our collective challenges.

The day started with an introduction by Councillor Sue Dann, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene followed by mixed group exercises that began to surface problems, blockages and challenges – things the participants want to change about how we run our parks. The session introduced discussions around the concepts of leadership and strategy and there was an expert session from Real Ideas’ CEO Lindsey Hall on partnership work with councils.

Workshop 3: Funding and finance and solving our collective challenges.

Based on the assimilated list problems the groups wanted to solve from Workshop 2, Workshop 3 focussed on solutions, informed ideas as to how, as a city, Plymouth could do things differently to enable great community business social

enterprise activity in parks. The day also included taught sessions on funding enterprising ideas and income generation, with specific input on the council’s City Challenge Fund, Crowdfunding, grants, community shares and the PICNIC investment fund, designed for social investment in green spaces.

Workshop 4: Ownership and governance, recommendations playback and prioritisation.

Between sessions, solutions from the two cohorts were collated and organised into the beginning of a set of draft policy recommendations. These were re-examined, further refined, critiqued and prioritised in a combined session with both cohorts. In addition to training input on ownership and governance, there were expert sessions from Kate Swade from Shared Assets and FPA lead Casey Morrison from the National Trust.



2.5 Study Day Visits & Seminars

The study day visits aimed to raise the horizon on what was possible for the participants – in terms of alternative approaches to the good use of common land, in addition to providing working examples of successful projects in action. The process also strengthened relationships among the community of leaders and created the possibility of greater creative thinking.

The study day visits programme:

Study day 1: Visit to Par Athletics Track and Newquay Orchards in Cornwall. This involved a tour of each site and a briefing with members of the respective teams.

Study day 2: (Postponed due to Covid 19). Visit to Plymouth-based community businesses and related projects. Locations include: Snapdragons (Victoria Park), Soapbox Theatre (Devonport Park), Poole Farm (PCC), Pollenize CIC, Stonehouse Creek and Tothill Park.

Seminar programme:

Again, designed to broaden thinking, to add broader context to the programme and to build networks and relationships within the community of practice, the Enrich Programme also included four evening speaker panel events.

The first event was the Case for the Green New Deal: Economist Ann Pettifor presented some of the arguments in her book of the same title, followed by a questions and answers session.

This event was run in partnership with Plymouth Social Club. The second was Green Enterprises: technology and food production. This Fab City themed event included a series of talks and discussions from food producers, technologists and Fab City leaders, exploring solutions to producing more of what we consume as a city.

The two remaining seminars also had to be postponed and undertaken online later in April and June 2020 due to Covid-19. They were themed on the distribution of land ownership and environmental economics.



3.0 Proposed Principles

As a result of the Co-Design phase of the Enrich programme, the mixed group of council, community, social enterprise and community business representatives developed the broad set of principles for policy and practice changes to be considered by the city to support “greater community business activity in parks”.

Between each session, the co-created outputs were collated and refined by the delivery team and reflected back to, and re-checked by, the group in following sessions. There was a final check-in session in Workshop 4, where recommendations were further tested, refined and prioritised by the participants.

The proposed principles were cross-referenced with outputs from the wider GEMS programme, particularly the appreciative inquiry process and outcomes, and were then further developed by the delivery team and with external expert support from partners the National Trust and Shared Assets, as a final sifting process.

The proposals are wide ranging in their scope, both technical and more strategic, as well as cultural and values based. Over the course of the Co-Design sessions, it was clear that four broad thematic areas were emerging, leading to the development of four areas of proposals: a Parks Charter or ‘Pact’ for social enterprises in Plymouth; the development of Communications; Technical Policies; and the creation of an Intermediary Partnership.

These proposals are described in greater detail below.

3.1 Proposal One: Parks Pact

It was clear from early in the process that there was a widely-felt lack of clarity among the group with regard to our collective vision, values and mutual expectations when it came to city’s parks and urban green spaces. The cohorts had a range of questions with regard to how, as citizens and businesses, the city values our natural infrastructure.

What is the cost and benefit of a green space and how do we measure it; where do parks sit within the council’s list of priorities; how do we value and what is the role of particular staff, volunteers and partners; who really owns and has responsibility for parks?

A set of more fundamental questions about our relationships to our urban green estate. A set of questions the cohorts felt it was important to begin to not only find collective, clearer answers to, but also to better communicate and uphold those answers.

These are questions that are not just limited to parks and shared urban green spaces but have relevance to other areas of civil society. Questions of power, accountability, connection and trust; questions that, if we are to make the most of mobilising community power, need better answers. See Civil Society Futures PACT report here.

The idea of a parks charter, manifesto or pact is not new, campaigning work on The Charter for Parks, led by an alliance of organisations, has been ongoing for some time.

Other cities have also adopted similar pioneering approaches, compact style “deals” have been adopted between councils and civil society to address, protect and improve a variety of public and community services. The Wigan Deal provides a good example.

“A vision, talking about doing things differently and the bigger role of citizens and communities; to engage more people, better marketing and communication of value, action, a manifesto and new ways of doing things” – Enrich Participant

To answer some of these questions, clarify shared values and to promote collective responsibility, it is proposed that a co-created “Plymouth Parks Pact” is devised, published and communicated and, most importantly of all, acted upon.

A “Parks Pact” charter would serve and number of purposes:

- Outline the city’s shared vision, values and mutually agreed expectations, for parks and urban green spaces in Plymouth. This would make a statement that clearly signals that as a city value our open green spaces, our environment, quality of life and health and wellbeing. A process which, in turn, helps to converse green spaces into the future, create a shared sense of ownership and responsibility and fosters popular, long term sustained support for a greener city.



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- Promote and enable greater participation and practical action, for council staff, wider stakeholders and citizens. With cross city buy-in, a pact would give a greater sense of permission and point to ways for all stakeholders to take greater positive action, enabling community power and more practical action such as volunteering, skills development and greater support for park-based community businesses and a green job creation.
- Provide a clear common framework for better decision making and acting together into the future, linked to wider city strategies, plans and agreements.
- Actively promote Plymouth’s park-based social and community businesses, create greater usage and income into parks and supporting the city’s wider agenda around coop development, a fairer and more inclusive economy and a green job creation.
- Promote the city for tourism and inward investment more broadly. Not only making a positive statement about the quality of our city and our green spaces and how we value them, but also the city’s positive approaches to community engagement, democratic buy-in, the role of community business, social enterprise and the voluntary sectors in the creation of a more inclusive wellbeing economy.

This could have positive knock-ons to inward investment, tourism and attracting further funding to the city.

The Pact will need to be developed and adopted by a cross-cutting inclusive group of key stakeholders, including but not limited to council, public health, housing providers, universities, businesses, social enterprises and community, the voluntary sector and, most vitally, the public. At the top level, it should be an easy to understand set of agreements between the council and citizens.

“Manifesto with clear outcomes and outputs – must have buy-in at all levels of council and externally” – Enrich Participant

The priority of the Enrich group is that there should be mechanisms built into the Pact to ensure greater levels of accountability for the commitments stakeholders make. It was recognised there are multiple levels of detail, starting with broad vision statement, through to practical actions to change behaviours and tackle specific challenges.

Where the Pact provides a mechanism for agreeing and working to our shared values, further proposals speak to the idea of communications and add more in terms of technical detail.

3.2 Proposal Two: Communications

A recurring theme of the co-design discussions was communication – the need to improve communications between departments, partners, citizens and stakeholders – both in terms of the content of what is communicated and also the method and medium of communication.

It was apparent from the process that communications was seen as a high priority from across the cohorts and that many real or perceived conflicts with past partnership working, were in reality more the result of collective poor communications, as opposed to any disagreement over values, method or other such differences of opinion.

Closely linked with Proposal Two – Parks Pact – there is clearly a need to better communicate our shared values and approaches to collectively caring for our parks. The ideas for communication development are holistic, 360 and make requests of all stakeholders equally.

Good, pervasive communication is fundamental if we are going to create greater social enterprise and community business in parks and are seen as much a function of culture and practices, as well as media and content.

There was a call to improve the systems and content of communications between all park stakeholders, therefore the following more detailed proposals are made.

Proposal Two a) – Web Presence

The development and delivery of a dedicated, more delineated customer-facing website for city urban green spaces and parks.

While there was recognition that the council’s website, covering a range of services, is generally seen as very good, more could be done to actively promote and market all engagement with parks, and, specifically, opportunities to develop social and community businesses in our green spaces. There also was acknowledgement that there are challenges for a council to host and update a website that can fulfil the needs of all groups across the city.

Therefore, an additional dedicated website, hosted, branded and managed to an extent, outside and/or in partnership with the council is proposed.

The Bath and Bristol Parks Foundation provides a useful example of how crowdfunding and donations opportunities can be incorporated and Urban Green Newcastle offers another example of where external websites have been introduced.

With parks currently being fully integrated into the main city council website, Enrich participants felt that in addition to making things harder to find, it also sent the message that parks and green spaces are wholly the preserve and responsibility of the council. If we are seeking to better promote “Green Minds”, “collective care” and greater citizen action for parks and green spaces, a more independent website could carry this message better and, in addition, have the potential to deliver a better customer experience.

Proposal Four below relates to the ideas of creation of intermediary partnership for city parks and green spaces, which could provide for the hosting of a dedicated website.

Proposal Two b) – Tool Kits & Guidelines

With specific reference to promoting greater community business activity in parks, there was a recognition for the need to provide clearer information, guidelines and toolkits for community businesses, and other such organisations, looking to develop activity in parks.

The proposal is for the creation of a set of toolkits and guidelines, both for use internally for the council staff and externally for community businesses, that more clearly outline the processes, opportunities and expectations for all parties.

Pulling on expertise from partners and referencing relevant technical policies, the aim would be to create a publicly accessible and easy to follow set of documents that would improve communications, increase efficiencies, save time and increase park usage.

Specific guideline details would need to be agreed, but they could be expected to include – processes for asset transfer and leasing council land, the planning requirement and processes, options for more medium term sustained use of land, key points of contact and additional supporting information.

This communication material would need to be subject to intermittent review and could be made more easily available via a dedicated website and potentially further supported by an intermediary partnership.

Proposal Two c) – Case Studies

If we are to “create greater community business activity and thinking in parks”, there needs to be a clear, communicated message of what we mean and what “good” looks like.

To address this, it is proposed that toolkits and guidelines are accompanied by a set of case studies, on live examples of Plymouth-based community businesses in parks (i.e. Soapbox Theatre and Pollenize CIC). Case studies that give a clear indication to anyone looking to develop community enterprise activity in a park, what we as a city mean by this and what we are looking for.

Proposal Two d) – Physical & Digital Signage

In addition to a desire to develop the online web-based information about parks, there was an equal desire to improve and develop on-site, park-based communications. The proposal is to review, design, develop and deliver better park-based signage, interpretation and orientation. The tone and detail can be modified to communicate with different audiences in variety of setting e.g. see the below image explaining “weeds” on verges.

This should also be tied to the website, creating opportunities for a virtual element and could be part of the refreshed “look and feel” of green space communications and linked to the shared values, attitudes and behaviours contained in a Parks Pact.

Further consideration should be given to how park-based community business and social enterprises can both support and be supported by this onsite signage.

The communications recommendation was heavily prioritised by the group, where some direct quotes from the group are shown below.

“More information and sharing allows the breaking of ‘blame the man’ culture – gives responsibility back to the citizens for their city e.g. parks being honest about the budget and funds available, and highlights the small things people do and how it saves money” – Enrich Participant

“More flexible interface – user friendly, nuanced, one system, simple different routes to access, IT fit for purpose” – Enrich participant

“Principles / toolkits – to enable more activity in parks, clear processes to work with council, technical support, connecting networks, gatekeepers to and between networks, who owns this?” – Enrich participant.

3.3 Proposal Three: Technical Policies & Practice

A prominent area of discussion and interest was how the ideas and solutions identified during the Enrich programme and the values included in a Parks Pact would be practically implemented in practice.

How do we move from aspiration to real changes on the ground? Practical policy development was seen as an important mechanism to support the identified solutions, to deliver the benefits and enable increased social enterprise and community business activity in parks.

Beneath both the Parks Pact and communication development, there was considerable discussion with regard to specific miscellaneous areas of technical improvement that could benefit from modification and further development.

There was significant interest in policy change relating to land and buildings owned by the council as well as how the social and environmental value of community businesses can be recognised in decision making.

A suite of technical practice developments are proposed in the following areas:

Proposal Three a) – Innovative models for land and asset ownership and stewardship

- Leasing of land and buildings – introduce policy that provides more flexible and favourable terms for asset locked organisations, wishing to make greater use of council land and buildings, where they can demonstrate clear added social, community and environmental benefit. This could include early and regular break clauses, trial/pilot periods, subsidised, reduced and/or sliding scale rents. This is an approach that has been trialled by the council’s Estates Team and managed through a Service Level Agreement that can be regularly reviewed.

There was a strong recognition that current, more traditional approaches to the leasing of key assets such as park-based cafés – predominantly based solely on financial considerations – was not creating the best outcomes for all. If we want to engage commercially successful organisations, that will commit for the long term and create additional social and environmental impacts for parks (i.e. coops, social enterprises and community businesses), we need to consider a partnership approach, with longer lead-in





Freedom Fields Park ©Plymouth City Council

times, opportunities to offer pilot phases (test business cases, offers, consider redevelopment design and investment opportunities) and, in successful cases, offer long-term leases (25 years) to allow for capital funding investment.

- Licensing – similar to leasing, there is a recommendation to further develop and formalise policy that allows social enterprises and community businesses to apply for a license to undertake ongoing and longer fixed-term activity in parks and green spaces.

Again, where organisations have a clear asset lock and social and/or environmental purpose, improved policy in this area would increase activity and potentially reduce any administrative burden. For example, a license could be granted alongside leases, such as the case of Stiltskin Children’s Theatre in Devonport Park.

Proposal Three b) – Mixed multi-use of land and buildings

Seen as an important aspect to creating vibrant spaces, raising levels of engagement and activity, and supporting sustainable, financial viability of park-based assets, there was recognised need to limit the single uses of buildings, where possible and appropriate, in favour of greater mixed and more multi-use models.

Sports fields provide an example of where clubs often have the sole use of a green space and the associated asset, which can subsequently limit usage. How could these community assets be used more effectively and efficiently by a range of users, creating greater engagement and benefit for communities and the environment?

The proposal is to prioritise and actively favour, through policy and communication, the mixed and multi-user approach to all assets as far as it is possible and appropriate.

This would be introduced as leases come up for renewal or new leases are developed. It could also be combined with mixed management models and the use of partnership organisations to share management responsibilities.

Proposal Three c) – Social Value

The proposal is to extend, as far as it is possible, the use of the Social Value Act to parks to embed social (and environmental) value in all procurement, licensing, and leasing decisions.

This would mean that the economic benefits of any contract or agreement should be assessed alongside the benefits to people and the environment of Plymouth. The council is already developing a Charter Mark (via the Inclusive Growth Board) for suppliers to demonstrate good



Radford Park ©Plymouth City Council

business and social value during the procurement process – how can this be further applied to all green space contracts also?

Proposal Three d) – Funding and finance

The availability of suitable finance for social and community businesses is crucial. The current PCC City Change Fund and previous pioneering Social Enterprise Investment Fund (SEIF), with a mix of grant and low or no interest loans are successful schemes to build on. The proposal is that a new version of these are introduced for all types of social enterprise, cooperative and community business in parks.

Other mechanisms, such as shared profit models, repayable grants (i.e. Scotland Social Enterprise Fund) and equity share investments should be explored, developed and communicated.

Proposal Three d) – Linking local park income to local spend

The proposal is for a greater level of income generated from park assets and businesses (e.g. cafes, car parks) to be more clearly ring fenced and spent directly on the associated park or green space. This could be adopted through policy and communicated transparently with the public, encouraging active buy-in and promoted via the Parks Pact. Mile End Park, owned by Tower

Hamlets and Hackney Parks in London, provide examples of local authority using income from assets in this way.

Considered of most importance to the group are policies that ensure social-environmental value is built into decision making through council procurement, leasing and license processes. One theme that ran throughout was the need for a built-in review mechanism for all policies.

“Build in social-enviro value act to all decisions” – Enrich participant

“Collective asset sharing, to borrow against and unlock opportunities” – Enrich participant

“Progressive leasing – two stage lease to allow for investment and innovation for social enterprises” – Enrich participant

Again, the development of some form of intermediary partnership, between community business and the council could add value here.

The Plymouth Social Enterprise Network (PSEN) provide a good example in creating added value for the city, being able to point an additional £6m of investment it has help leaver into the city.

3.4 Proposal Four: Intermediary Partnership

Throughout the Enrich programme, how functions, roles and responsibilities could be reorganised for greater city benefit, manage down costs and to provide greater support for the ongoing development of greater social and community business in parks, was a recurring theme.

There was a recognition that, to lead on the Pact, for best ongoing communications and to continue to drive Plymouth's community business approach to parks and green spaces, there is a need for some form of independent, intermediary, infrastructure body for parks – sitting across authority department and community businesses. The proposal is to further explore and develop an intermediary partnership for Plymouth parks and green spaces.

While the need was very clearly recognised, the exact nature, remit, make up and formality of any such partnership remains a set of open questions.

Very good examples exist in the city of intermediary organisations that have created significant added value for key sectors. PSEN has some 80 members, who collectively employ 9,000 people with a combined turnover of in excess of £0.5bn – the Network can point clearly to an additional £6m of funding that their work has levered into the city.

Plymouth park partnerships do exist in the form of GEMS partner Plymouth Open Spaces Network (POSN), representative group for Friends Groups. However, given that the chief aim of the partnership here is the development of social enterprise and community business, these are two quite different things.

Likewise, there is overlap with interest groups such as Environmental Plymouth, who are also showing good leadership in related areas, but is again quite different – so questions remain as to how this can possibly fit together.

What there is no appetite for and is not being considered in a greater detail here, is the packaging up of the city green spaces into an independent trust such as the aforementioned Urban Green Newcastle. What is envisaged is more of an operational, championing leadership group, that can provide support and information and attract new funds and opportunities into the city.

Further discussion and consideration is needed here and this could involve anything from the

creation of an independent body or enterprise to a more informal network or community of practice – such as what is emerging from Enrich network.

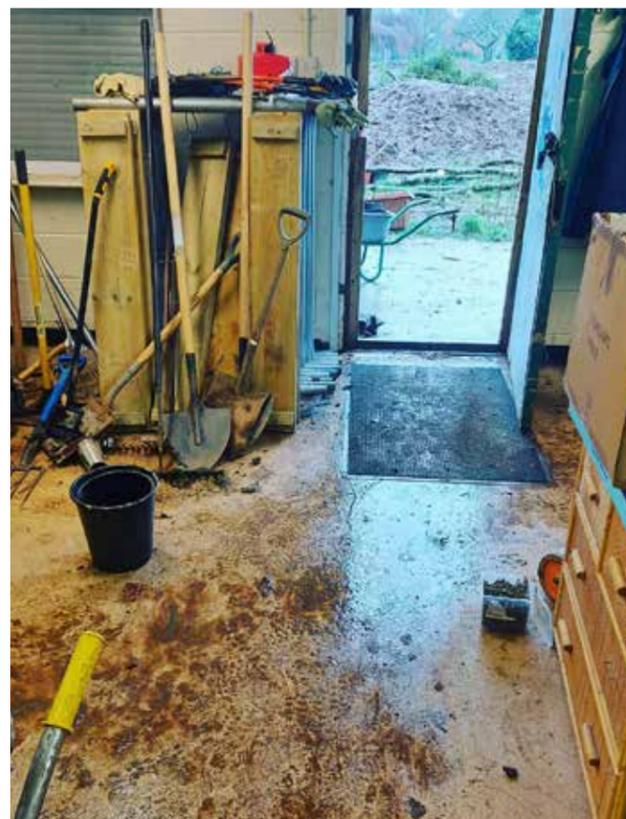
“Independent body to depoliticise and involve greater representation to create non-party political long-term future, including citizens assembly” – Enrich participant

“Social enterprise as training provider – access to information on planning, procurement, regulations” – Enrich participant

“Council are a barrier to communication, allow free flow of communications between public, communities and business” – Enrich participant

Proposals One, Two and Three could all stand to benefit from being supported by, if not led by, some form of intermediary partnership – giving some sense of the scope and remit of such an entity. This requires further investigation and a viable business case would need to be developed as a next step. However, discussions within the Enrich cohorts did surface some further initial thinking along these lines.

Some suggest possible further roles and responsibilities of an intermediary partnership in the longer term included:



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- Helping to manage a number of park-based assets.
- Holding and being responsible for delivery of online communications platform and services.
- Contact point for community business and the public.
- Education and training provision to address gaps in knowledge and skills that exist across the council and community business sector. Formal and informal training could be provided by a non-council organisation.
- Helping to access and manage routes to funding and hold funds. Act as a further route to attract additional and alternative funding and managing financial schemes.
- Provide ongoing brokerage services and coordination of resource sharing. As an independent partnership, connect and broker working relationships and practices, such as where resources could be shared more efficiently.
- A democratic role and provide further representation – be a voice for Plymouth residents and represent ideas and interests of all park stakeholders / communities. Provide a space where ideas are collectively shaped and decided amongst a representative group within a framework of social, economic, and environmental value.

The council, GEMS partnership and Green Minds project will continue to explore the role of an intermediary partnership and alternative models to support the management and development of community business in parks and green spaces across the city.

Any partnership will need to be constructive, add value, be enterprising and not reliant on limited council funding. Further information on the evolving ideas around parks and foundation is provided by NESTA in their Rethinking Parks: Parks and Foundation report.

The group were especially supportive of models that allowed for greater representation outside of the traditional local government and political structures.

It saw an intermediary partnership playing a positive role in the improvement of place-based communications and the management of parks and green spaces in partnership with social enterprises.



Conclusion and Next Steps

Covid-19 has highlighted many of the inequalities that exist in society today and has forced us to re-evaluate what we hold most dear. Chief among these has been the unequal access to land and green space – something that we have better learnt to value and prize most highly.

This year's Green Spaces Index, produced by Fields in Trust, the national charity and research body that supports the legal protection of parks and green spaces, states clearly that:

“Parks and green spaces play a vital role in people's health and wellbeing, and these benefits have been shown even more starkly during the really difficult times our country has faced in recent months. Our local parks and green spaces have been crucial during the crisis and they will have a significant part to play in our recovery.

“Yet our research shows that over 2.7 million people don't have a park within a short walk of home and this number is forecast to grow over the coming years. This doesn't have to be the case and that's why we're calling for a national strategy to recognise their value by ensuring access to parks and green spaces is guaranteed both now and in the future in areas where they are most needed”.

The Fields in Trust's recent Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces research valued the physical health and mental wellbeing benefits for communities at more than £34 billion each year. Not only critical to our health and wellbeing, but the benefits to the environment, employment and the economy are also clear.

Where much of the economic value in Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces is recognised as a result of wellness value (improving and supporting mental and physical health) and subsequent cost savings to the exchequer, the Enrich and wider GEMS programme is adding something further – direct regenerative economic growth and green job creation. While this is early days it is clear from the case studies of Pollenize CIC and the Soapbox Theatre that the Enrich approach is both creating sustainable jobs and wider outcomes around conversation, culture and education.

As a starting point the above recommendations, supported by the Transition Phase and further development in partnership with stakeholders

such as Power to Change, has the potential to create more jobs and community services. Also contributing to key city policies such as the Resurgum Covid Recovery Strategy and wider policy areas such as Doing it Ourselves, Plymouth's strategic action plan is to double the size of the cooperative economy.

With such an extensive and well-loved green estate, Plymouth is very well placed, not just in terms of the potential for green job creation, but also in terms of capturing the wider value from the renewed attention on green space, both in terms of adding to our tourism and inward investment offers.

In 2019 both Plymouth City Council and key local stakeholders such as PSEN, declared a climate emergency and clearly green spaces have a role to play in environmental conversation and tackling climate change.

Plymouth is already making significant strides in the direction with the recent Climate Emergency Action Plan, the Green Minds project (related to GEMS) and the city's commitment to join the international Fab City network.

The Enrich community businesses are already working to support these agendas, such as the aforementioned Pollenize CIC and eco-teach start-up Ginium Ltd, working on hydroponic food production. Clearly there is a role and need for these organisations to play a greater part in this collective, system based, whole city change.

As work now starts on the GEMS Transition Phase to support the development of a social enterprise approach into the city's natural infrastructure, the above proposed principles will lay a good foundation to allow for and support new community business ideas to come forward, to start-up and grow and allow continued support for the existing Enrich cohort.

This will all contribute to a fairer, more inclusive, regenerative, healthy and sustainable city – with our green spaces and parks at its heart.

Next steps will involve:

- Identifying the role and remit of the Enrich cohort to support progression of the community business and social enterprise approach and proposed principles with support of the GEMS programme.
- Focus implementation activity holistically around identified “community enterprise pioneer parks”.
- Providing 1-2-1 support for community businesses and social enterprises within the programme through both GEMS and Green Minds.
- Continue to engage additional stakeholders and develop new partnerships and programmes to further roll out and embed the impacts of the work.
- Work strategically across the city to link and embed the work of Enrich and GEMS within key city policy priorities such as Resurgum and Fab City.
- Work with the national Future Parks Accelerator Cohort, and other national stakeholders, to advocate, exchange and share good practice and learning.



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