

Plymouth GEMS (Future Parks Accelerator)  
**ENRICH Programme**  
**Co-Design Report:**  
**Executive Summary**



# 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

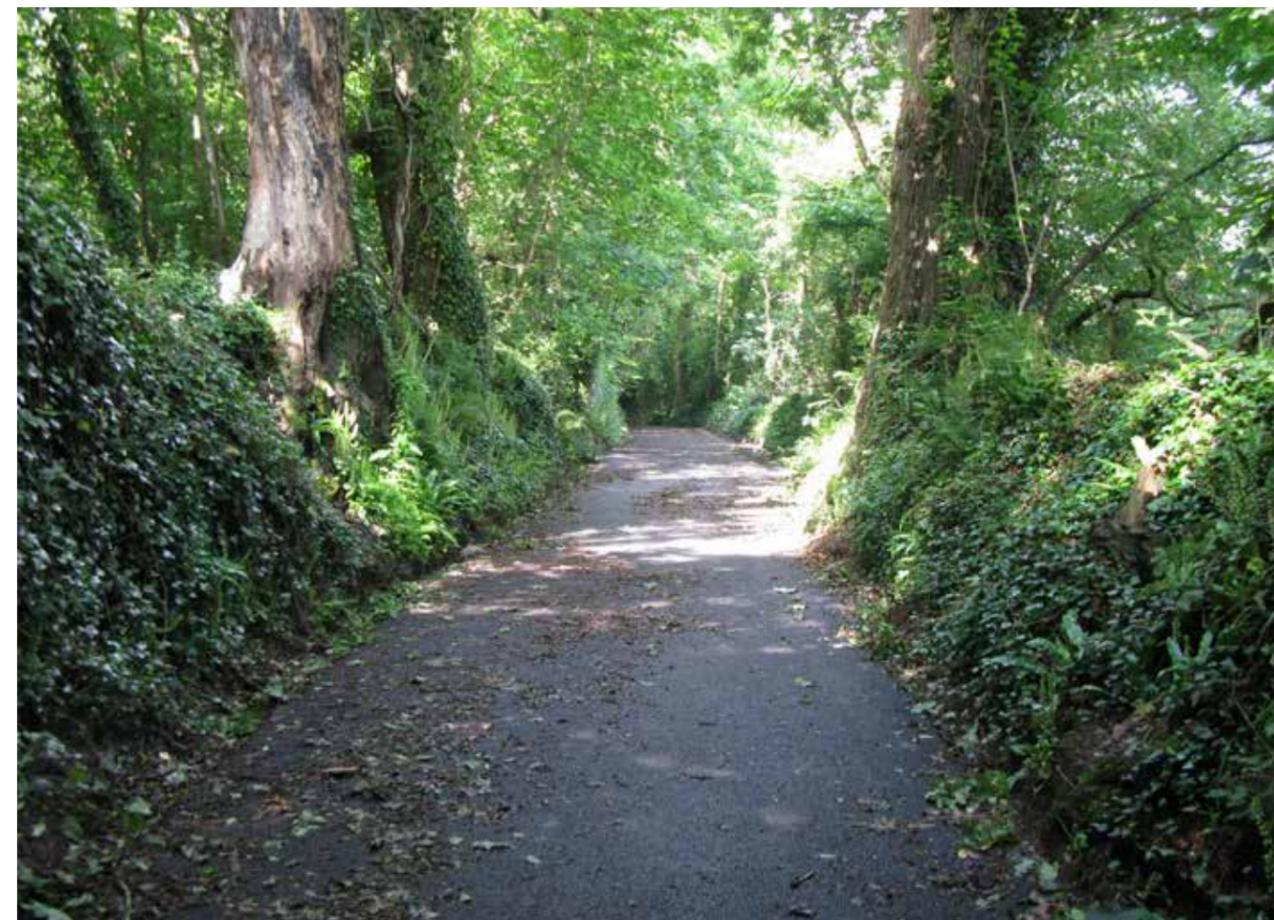
- The Enrich process surfaced a number of more technical proposals, largely relating to the access to and use of park-based assets.
  - There was a recognition of the need for ongoing learning and development in the way the city manages access to

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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- 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.

