

## **MHCLG Skills for Parks Consultation**

### **Historic England Response – 27.06.2019**

1. Do you believe that it is important that a 'greenprint' is established for Knowledge and Skills development in Parks Management for the next decade?

Yes. Historic England supports the research recommendations.

2. Do you believe that it is important that Parks Management has its own distinct and clear professional status?

Yes. Parks management is a highly skilled role involving complex responsibilities and multi-discipline teams. Current salaries and grades underplay these roles. We published a brief history on 'The Park Keeper' (see attached) which explains how the role evolved.

3. Do you believe that this could be contained within existing professional institutions? Or do you believe it needs one of its own?

Whilst this is beyond the role of Historic England to comment on, the views of our own landscape advisers are that we do not need yet another professional body. A previous professional body set up by Green Space failed, ditto the Institute of Landscape & Amenity Management.

We all need to collaborate through the existing professional institutes, the Landscape Institute, Institute of Horticulture, Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management etc.

The Landscape Institute has recently openly broadened its membership to support the public parks sector which is a welcomed development. Many consultants working on public parks projects are already members or registered LI practices, and also local authority landscape architects, so it makes sense local authority parks professionals should be members too.

4. If you are a professional institute would you give status to Parks Managers if they achieved a level of competency / experience / qualifications aligned with the competency framework? If so please give further details.

Although this question is not directly relevant for Historic England, we would like to see conservation accreditation developed to encourage more professionals to specialise, recognise the skills and experience of specialists, and to help identify skilled personnel for specific projects.

5. Do you agree with the idea of having a clear and distinct career path for the Parks professional?

Yes. Historic sites need long term care and stewardship and often this includes a committed team with in-depth knowledge. We need to attract new professionals and

keep them engaged and interested in their careers. It is a fascinating work spanning many different skills.

6. Do you agree with the draft competencies outlined in the framework for parks professionals? What should be added / deleted / amended?

The draft competency framework is useful however the horticultural and landscape management expertise is understated with 'broad knowledge of horticultural skills and practices'. 'Broad' implies general awareness whereas we need parks teams with in-depth knowledge and experience. This is an important strategic component as well as an operational one.

Parks teams need to be helping develop Green Infrastructure and green space strategies, and local policies. They also need to have the vision to develop integrated parks services that deliver beautiful places to visit and enjoy, provide sports and community participation, health and welfare benefits, protect heritage, enhance wildlife habitats, and maximise their Green Infrastructure functionality. Good contract and project management skills rely on experienced personnel.

Historic England has previously run training which might be relevant to park management. We could discuss how this could be further adapted to meet some of the competencies.

7. Please provide any other comments you may have on the competencies framework. What should be added / deleted / amended?

We are pleased to see APSE highlight previous CABESpace research which Historic England partnered. The issues are still pertinent alive 10+ years on and it is worrying issues have festered for a decade. The Historic & Botanic Garden Trainee Programmes was set up to address some of the issues and the programme is now run by the English Heritage Trust <http://hbgtp.org.uk/about-the-programmes/>

Local authority training programmes for parks professionals not only supported public parks but also in turn generated skilled personnel for other sites such as major visitor attractions, National Trust properties etc. The demise of local authority schemes had far wider impacts for the sector.

The consultation concentrates on the parks professions but there are some other notable allied local authority green spaces professionals: planning department landscape architects and tree officers, cemetery teams, sports grounds managers, country parks and sites rangers.

The Green Flag Awards Scheme has been a valuable benchmark for parks teams and their local authorities. It would be good to see this benchmark integrated in to the Greenprint and to ensure Green Flag Award, and the heritage accreditation, developed and continued long term.