Celebrating public parks and revaluing their contribution to community health and wellbeing

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- **National Have a Field Day 8th July to demonstrate public support for parks**
- **Visit your local park this weekend - you'll feel happier and healthier as a result**

Have a Field Day on Saturday 8th July is a celebration of the UK's parks and green spaces. Charity, **Fields in Trust** is working with local communities to demonstrate the many ways we value our parks. From carnivals, sports competitions, musical performances and community picnics, thousands of people will be attending hundreds of events in local parks across the country which showcases exactly how much we love our local parks and green spaces.

Fields in Trust, the charity behind Have a Field Day, was founded on July 8th, back in 1925 with a clear aim to ensure that everyone – young or old, able or disabled and wherever they live – should have access to free, local outdoor space for sport, play and recreation. However, financial pressure on local authorities means that our parks and green spaces are increasingly under threat and many could be lost forever to building and redevelopment.

The recent Communities and Local Government Parliamentary Inquiry reported on the public benefit that parks contribute to preventative public health, mental well-being and community cohesion; yet parks could still be lost to building development as they are not a statutory service for local authorities. Funding cuts mean green spaces are less well maintained and they are under threat due to pressure on land for housing and retail developments. Nearly 92% of local authority parks departments have experienced budget cuts in the past three years. This is in the face of three-quarters of park managers reporting increased visitor numbers (*State of UK Public Parks 2016*).

New research for Fields in Trust indicates that more trips to more parks more often is good for the health and wellbeing of the UK. Visiting every day produces the highest wellbeing scores but our new research suggests the optimum use of green space is at least once a week as this gives us 65% of the health and wellbeing benefits rated across the four Office of National Statistics indicators. The completion of this research will identify a robust economic and monetary value for these health benefits in order to make the case to local councils and governments to maintain our parks.

But health and economic value aside, deep down we all know that parks and green spaces are incredibly valuable and that's why across the UK communities are coming together at Have a Field Day events to showcase the many ways parks are enjoyed by local communities. For example, Birkenhead Park, the first publicly-funded civic park in the world, is launching a new family programme; several parkrun volunteers are recognising the importance of their local park for running; in Wales thousands will attend a community carnival in Pontypool Park; The winner of the UK's Best Park Award 2016, Rouken Glen, near Glasgow, is hosting Children's Nature Activities allowing youngsters to explore water beasties. And a series of neighbourhood picnics have been organised by members of the 38 Degrees campaign group who are also completing a petition asking councils to protect these much-loved community spaces. On Wimbledon's middle weekend community tennis is being celebrated in Bounds Green, north London, where there is also football training and an Australian Rules football tournament.

Fields in Trust Ambassador, author **Bill Bryson** said: "*Britain has the comeliest, most enchanting, abundant and often venerable parks and green spaces of any country I know. Wherever you are, you are never more than a few minutes from woods, greensward and fresh air. How splendid is that? I am delighted to see them celebrated by Fields in Trust*."

Fields in Trust Chief Executive, **Helen Griffiths**, said "*Our parks and playing fields are used by whole communities from pre-schoolers to retired adults. Research helps us understand how a local park can contribute to its neighbourhood but the real value of a green space is determined by the local community who use it for play, sport and recreation. Each of the thousands of parks playing fields and playgrounds across the UK is valuable to the neighbourhood that it serves. Fields in Trust believe we should re-value our green spaces as resources which contribute to public health, mental wellbeing and community*

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cohesion, not simply view them as a drain on council finances for upkeep. If you Love Your Local Park we encourage you to get together with neighbours on 8th July and celebrate our precious parks and playing fields."

All planned events are listed on the Fields in Trust website. From picnics to sports matches and community carnivals look up your local event and join in – or get a group of friends together for a picnic to demonstrate how you #LoveYourLocalPark.

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CONTACT

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A selection of photographs can be downloaded from a Dropbox location

Access to our event video and online graphics are available on request
www.fieldsintrust.org

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