

Press Release  
(For immediate release)

## Funding awarded to explore urban public parks

Monday 26 October 2015

The University of Bradford has been awarded funding to undertake innovative research into the past and future prospects of urban public parks.

A team led by [Dr Anna Barker](#), University of Bradford, has been awarded a research grant by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The total value of the funding is over £275,000 to support innovative research into the life, times and social order of Victorian public parks.

The team, including Professor Adam Crawford and Dr David Churchill, both of the University of Leeds, will explore the future prospects and lived experiences of city parks as public meeting places, in both the Victorian period and the present day. The project is being supported by and conducted in collaboration with Leeds City Council Parks and Countryside Department.

The project advances the AHRC priority research theme of 'Care for the Future' and its central ambition of 'thinking forward through the past' by investigating the heritage, social purpose, expectations and lived experiences of public parks. The project will contribute to a reinterpretation and reinvigoration of the vision, governance and sustainability of urban parks in cities of the future.

On receiving the award Dr Barker, Lecturer in Sociology from the Faculty of Social Sciences, said: "We are delighted that this funding will enable us to conduct this exciting research in collaboration with Leeds City Council. We hope the study will inform and influence public policies and practices at a local, regional and national level on the significance, role and place of urban parks in cities of the future, supporting safe, sustainable and inclusive societies".

Professor Adam Crawford commented: "By connecting the arts and humanities with the social sciences, this research will allow us to develop new insights into the past, present and future role of public parks as places of social mixing. It will help us use experiences and expectations forged in the past to think through the place and possibilities for urban parks of the future".

Leeds City Council's executive member for communities Councillor Debra Coupar said: "We are delighted to be working with a research team led by Dr Barker to explore both the heritage and future prospects for public parks in Leeds. The findings of this research will be invaluable in helping us to assess how the lessons and experiences of the past can play an important part in how we approach our future work in the city's parks."

The project aims to have a number of societal impacts, including advancing public understandings of the historical experiences and social role that city parks play (or might play)

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in communities of the past, the present and the future and, in doing so, contribute to public knowledge about the social and cultural heritage of parks. The project will engage public audiences through a public exhibition and a free-to-access digital collection of photographs of Victorian parks in Leeds.

For more information please contact Dr Anna Barker on 01274233516 or at [a.barker3@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:a.barker3@bradford.ac.uk)

Picture available: Research Team in Woodhouse Moor by Queen Victoria

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## ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD

Founded in 1966, the University of Bradford is one of the UK's 'traditional' universities. It is a research-intensive institution, ranked in the top 50 in the UK for the quality of its research, with three quarters being classed as either world-leading or internationally excellent in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF). The University was ranked No 1 in Yorkshire for employed graduates obtaining professional & managerial level jobs.

Known for its strong emphasis on employability skills and knowledge transfer work with businesses, the University has a truly global make up with over 20 per cent of its student population being international. The University is also a leader in sustainable development and education, and is within the top ten greenest universities in the UK, according to the Green League 2013.

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