



The North Sea  
Region Programme  
2007–2013



## ***Place-keeping* through Partnership: How can we sustain quality green & open spaces in a time of economic constraint?**

In Sheffield, the ongoing funding cuts are having a real impact on how well the local authority can continue to provide green and open spaces. However, there is also increasing awareness of the role parks play in our collective health and wellbeing, for climate change, biodiversity and pollution mitigation. To ensure we do not lose these green benefits, key questions are raised: ***Who provides? Who pays? Who manages? Who cares?***

To answer these questions, Sheffield City Council's Parks and Countryside Service have been working with members of the EU-funded MP4 'Making Places Profitable' project, based in the Department of Landscape at the University of Sheffield. MP4 has been investigating the potential of ***place-keeping***, or the long-term management of green and open spaces, and the importance of ***partnership working*** to ensure a sustainable green space legacy, particularly important in these times of economic constraint.

Sharing the realities of the current situation and exploring green space partnership capacities (who does what) across the city and beyond, was the focus of the recent event '***Place-keeping through Partnership***' on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2012, held at ICOSS and hosted by the Council and MP4.

With support from the University's Research Exchange for the Social Sciences (RESS), the event saw over 50 delegates from public bodies, community groups and third sector organisations' participate in an intensive and highly successful day of presentations and workshops.

The day's proceedings were opened by Isobel Bowler, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport & Leisure, with discussions from the day's workshops drawn together by Liz Ballard, Director of Sheffield Wildlife Trust. A number of important points were raised, including:

- the **importance of transparency**, patience, trust and **good communication between organisations**;
- the need for **adaptable expectations** and perceptions of future open space management **by community organisations**;
- this is a time for **realism, reinvention** and **rediscovering innovation**;
- the **potential of area-based approaches** to help things move from strategy to working on the ground (such as the East GOSS pilot facilitated by Green Estate);
- the role of the **University as an important civic partner** contributing through student volunteering, evaluation and supporting best practice;
- the need to recognise the **added value of the third sector**; and,
- the **changing role of Sheffield City Council**, potentially from service provider and landowner **to facilitator and coordinator**.

The day was closed by Paul Billington, Director of Culture & Environment, Sheffield City Council. Mr Billington reflected on the collaborative working that had taken place and looked forward to a new chapter for the city's green and open spaces, turning *place-keeping* through partnership into action on the ground.

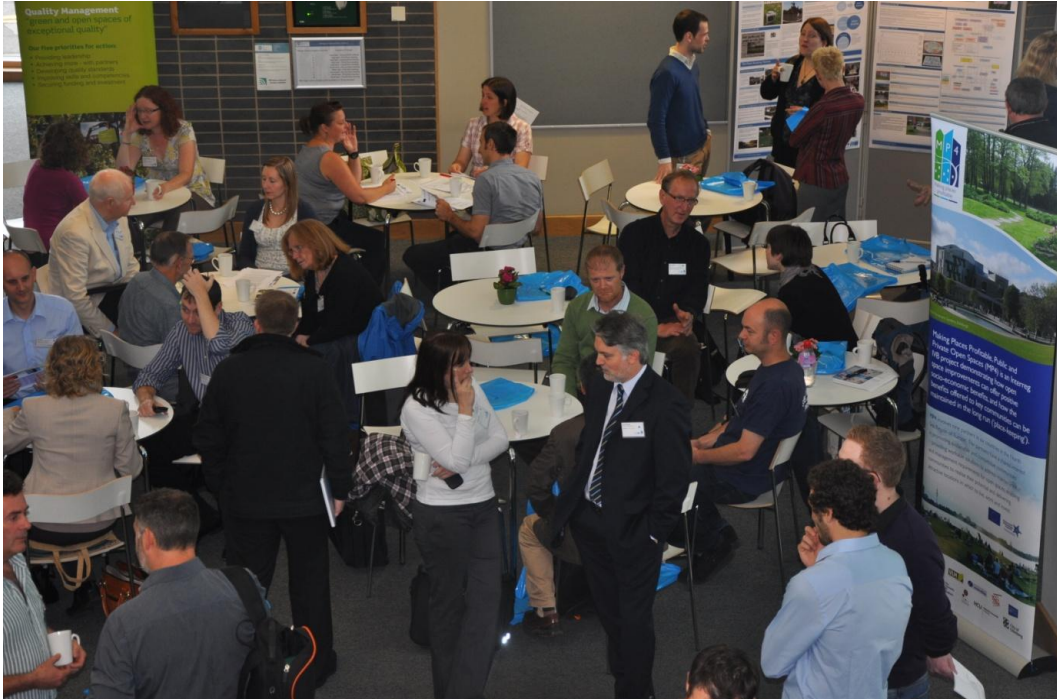


Image 1: Delegates discuss green space partnership working in event exhibition space.



Image 2: Dr Alice Mathers presenting work on *place-keeping* undertaken by MP4 at the University of Sheffield.



Image 3: Event delegates listening to invited speakers in the morning session.

This event marked the launch of a **new chapter for *place-keeping***, with *place-keeping* identified by delegates as an effective approach to tackling current issues in green and open space provision and management.

Following the event a **number of outputs will be available** to support those taking forward *place-keeping* on the ground:

- A ***place-keeping* charter**
- The University of Sheffield ***place-keeping* research group** ([www.place-keeping.group.shef.ac.uk](http://www.place-keeping.group.shef.ac.uk))
- MP4 ***place-keeping* e-toolkit** (September 2012)
- MP4 ***place-keeping* online policy documents** (September 2012)

2012 promises to be an exciting year for *place-keeping*, therefore **please keep in touch regarding your work** and look out for **upcoming *place-keeping* events** at [www.place-keeping.group.shef.ac.uk](http://www.place-keeping.group.shef.ac.uk)

**For further information** on this MP4 '*Place-keeping* through partnership' event, please contact [place-keeping@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:place-keeping@sheffield.ac.uk) or visit our websites: [www.mp4-interreg.eu](http://www.mp4-interreg.eu) and [www.place-keeping.group.shef.ac.uk](http://www.place-keeping.group.shef.ac.uk)