



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?

Wednesday 11th July 2012

Blue

Workshop Notes

Workshop 1: Priorities for Place-keeping: City, Area and Site and Collective, Organisational and Individual

What are the key issues that need to be addressed and the priorities for the city as a whole?

Theme: Time, funding and resources

- Working in partnership takes time and resources which are restricted. How much can we achieve?
- Ring-fencing of budgets and lack of place-keeping and revenue funding pots.

Theme: Managing the public

- Managing increased expectations and changing perceptions of roles, responsibilities and what is acceptable.
- Encouragement of collective responsibility and providing for long-term motivation.

Theme: Community Groups and Partnership Working

- Their definition of quality, make-up (are they representative?) and potential demands from partnership working.
- Friends Groups are one voice; there are groups like Sheffield Wildlife Trust (SWT) too.
- Partnerships could lead to more conflicts of interest. SCC (Sheffield City Council) need to stand up to 'who shouts the loudest'.
- Simple Management Plans are great but there needs to be an agreement of what the community can do.

Theme: Communication

- Management Plans not always understood by laymen.
- SCC need to be honest with the public, give them the options and ask them what they think.
- Need for positive communication- what are benefits of the change?

What are the key issues and priorities for the different organisations?

Theme: A strategic view of Sheffield

- Many groups are working towards common goals (SWT, Sheffield Landscape Trust and the Steel Valley Project) Are they in competition? Is it SCC's responsibility to look at who is best placed to do certain work?
- Identify city-wide priorities and sort strategic partnerships where groups can work together, not in competition.
- SCC need to get a better picture of, and consolidate/improve efficiency of strategic links with the voluntary and third sector. Time to sort out strategic partnerships.

Theme: Community Groups

- A large amount of resource is needed for SCC to maintain community groups.
- They are finding it more and more difficult to work with 3rd sector/Friends Groups with the constraints posed by the L.A such as Health and Safety. Could lose the 'friendly' relationship.
- Community groups are themselves short of time to look for funding options, which are decreasing. Charitable funding is under pressure too.

Theme: Political Responsibility

- Reliance on the 3rd sector can bring conflict. SCC have a political responsibility to keep people on board.
- Having a Project Officer in the Local Authority is important. It maintains stability.
- SCC need to keep a balance of which areas of the city need most management.

What opportunities does the current situation give?

Theme: Funding opportunities

- Who can bring in the money to fill the gaps?

- Can we use money more effectively? Use certain funding to match other funding?
- Tap into climate change, health & food for funding opportunities. Investment & action now will pay-back in long-run.
- Record achievements alongside Management Plans as a way of match funding, showing added value.

Theme: Design and Maintenance

- Make spaces multi-functional. Combine SUDS and open space etc to reduce maintenance.
- Wildflower meadows, allotments & orchards are sustainable uses of green spaces also saving on maintenance.

Theme: Partnership Working

- Can officers and friends groups work together on collective sites?
- There is healthy competition between groups but some groups are chasing the same funds.
- Could we have a 'Friends of Sheffield Parks'?
- The Trust Model in place-keeping E.g. Nene Park Trust. Is this something the council can consider?
- But Trusts are only worth considering if they are viable. It's all about legacy.

Theme: Communication and Education

- How do SCC promote themselves? How do they get the messages out?
- Activities on sites to connect with local communities and incite a sense of ownership and responsibility.
- Maintain links with schools. Get kids involved from an early age to incite ownership and responsibility, they are more likely to be part of a Friends Group later.

Workshop 2: Delivering the GOSS and building place-keeping capacity and collective responsibility

How to deliver the GOSS through place-keeping?

Theme: Awards

- Green Flag Awards are important to communities, are a performance indicator for SCC, a good motivator, recognise volunteer involvement and people 'get them'.
- Are a way of formalising partnerships such as Service Level Agreements with Sheffield Wildlife Trust.
- But there are issues of cost versus value.
- Could there be a Sheffield Standard Award?

Theme: Community involvement:

- Is it about reinforcing relationships to get more groups involved?

Theme: Sheffield Standard

- Easy to understand, easy to score and considers all spaces big and small.
- It should be SCC's responsibility to identify roles and responsibilities within it.
- It can be devolved and moulded to suit different partners, all as part of the Sheffield Standard brand.

Can we identify critical roles, responsibilities, approaches and actions to do this?

Theme: Roles and responsibilities

- The Council have a political responsibility.
- The University of Sheffield could help share knowledge and provide academic support.
- If communities are offered more say, surely they will have to expect to take on more responsibility?
- But there are issues of liability.

Theme: Sharing and transference of visions

- Can the Sheffield Standard be transferred more locally? Green Estate has a good vision but can this be shared with other groups? We need to have a shared vision.

Theme: Broad Approaches

- There needs to be a crusade/campaign on the broader issues of green space. Why are we doing it?
- A third of England's population live in the core cities- need to join forces.
- Get a mixture of views- research, evidence and academic that are separate, making the politics easier.
- Take education to the parks. Make it more about strategic, city-wide issues.
- Need leadership to take this forward. Craft ideas at event today and take it to the community in simple terms.
- Open discussions (like this) allow Council Officers to start knitting together ideas to present to politicians.

Theme: Changing perceptions

- Funders want to cut ribbons, people who buy lottery tickets want money spent on certain things.
- Need to change mindset from place-making to place-keeping.
- Do people know how bad it is? Looking around, places look ok!
- Often takes a crisis to get people motivated. Are the government bold enough to create a crisis?

Income opportunities

- Green space as a business? Need to consider lead-in times for businesses to grow and difficult trading times.
- But not all parks have this luxury/opportunity. Also people don't want to have to pay for everything!

How might this work in practice at different scales - city/strategic, organisational, site based and personal etc.?

Theme: East GOSS approach

- Mapping exercise is useful. Has been helpful to split the GOSS into a smaller area, getting people in smaller area talking to each other, establishing trust and understanding.

Theme: Neighbourhood planning

- The Government is trying to promote Neighbourhood planning. SW Sheffield is thinking of coming together to make a plan. Element of competition but common interests bring together. It will take time but is worth promoting and supporting (admin support from council and academic support from uni?)
- Connect at a local area not the entire city. Focus on climate change or anti-social behaviour at neighbourhood level. Could Community Assemblies have a role?

Theme: Modelling

- Modelling needs to happen. If spend is £xx in a year in an area. What have you got in years 2 and 3 with x-10%, x-20% etc? What can partnerships do to deliver this? What would it look like? How can we get the best return for the money left? Where can we leave the grass and where can't we?
- But SCC spend very little on maintenance of spaces. The scale of cuts is much larger.
- We need to model how much green space Sheffield needs. Has it got too much? Could we turn some green space into allotments or use for forestry?

Theme: National funding

- Funding from national sources- GreenSpace has launched '*Green Places Fund*'. Birmingham already signed up and Sheffield thinking about it. SCC about to recruit somebody as fundraiser for parks.
- A National Charity that people give to rather than the L.A might be more attractive to people.

Theme: Volunteering

- Volunteering is not a substitute, it is additional. Needs support and resources to be sustained.
- SCC and SWT have tried corporate volunteering to receive donations but most groups don't give anything.
- The city isn't joined up on volunteering. It tends to be one-off and takes up a lot of resources.
- BTCV and SWT have regular armies. Could a Sheffield green space volunteer group be developed?