

Park Managers Forum – 9 December 2015

Workshop sessions on key issues and challenges – *setting agenda for the Forum*

Key themes highlighted:

- Changing park uses, management and expectations
- Asset management and value
- Value of parks – demonstrating impact – strategy and planning
- Staff skills, training and profession(al) development
- Community management and empowerment
- Funding and resourcing

Note: these topics could be clustered differently and there are links and overlaps between these themes

In more detail - collated summary notes:

(1) Changing park uses, management and expectations

<i>What's the issue</i>	<i>What needs to happen to address this</i>
Managing parks with less budget	Changes to management techniques Less cutting frequency Wildflowers and silviculture management Better planning
Quality of vegetation management with so few staff/deskilling of staff over years in face of budget cuts	Upskilling of staff Different management – education / awareness raising Boosting morale Grants officer
Maintaining open space to good standard with reducing workforce	Working with other services to pool resources
Firefighting not being allowed to develop and improve	Improve communications, benefits, trust
Change and adapting to change	Learn to better manage change Increase funding/new ways of managing assets
Flooding/climate change resilience	Storm water management plans What does this mean for greenspaces and watercourses? Failures and management <i>Learn from examples: Netherlands, Metropolitan Glasgow Strategic Drainage Partnership, Aberdeen Parks, others?</i>
<i>What does change look like?</i>	Adaptation to changing management regimes – climate change, budget saving, biodiversity Making parks more productive – food energy Food production, wood fuel, micro renewables, Going natural – grass, flowers, woods, wetlands Councils stop maintaining land which they don't own <i>Good example: Edinburgh Living Landscapes - relaxed working, flower meadows, perennial beds</i>
Expectations (who?) <i>- educate/ understand challenges</i>	Education – understanding challenges – members of the public, elected members, stakeholders

Changes to park use – <i>communication (int/ext)</i> - <i>change management</i>	Better understanding across teams about management regime change/adaptation and acceptance
	New ways of working isn't bad, changes to work methods etc, communication
	Skills to manage change
	Share good practice, policy and processes
	<i>How do you change? – flow chart examples of the process how to change</i>

+ Workshop session 2 – recommendations for action by Forum

New ways of working – adapting to change, future-proofing & communication	
Incentives – rewarding good behaviour to encourage change	What's already happening? Research partnership
Optimising grassland management	Who's already doing this? Set up a Forum sub-group Research partnership
Income generation	What's already happening? What works? Sharing experience, learning and recommendations Supporting piloting of new approaches
Communication strategy	Raising the profile and value of park

(2) Asset management and value

<i>What's the issue</i>	<i>What needs to happen to address this</i>
One size fits all – grass cutting frequency	Responsive to growth rates and location of grass
	Alternative management regimes/managing expectations
Concentration of effort on grass cutting at the expense of other features	Tailored maintenance for hierarchy of parks
	Using and implementing green flag action plans
Lack of replacement budget for key vehicles and machinery and pressure to reduce size of fleet	Maintenance regimes need to be changed to adapt to future fleet
	Short term sharing of fleet and public info notices explaining changes
Do we know the value of our assets?	Open dialogue between services – not precious about budgets
Dilapidated assets/infrastructure	
Ownership? Roads, buildings, Heritage Lottery	
Maintaining land that is not our responsibility	Stop it as can't afford to do it (Note: P&K Council have gone through the process)
Effective asset management system for greenspaces	Need an asset management system which allows strategic management decisions based on cost and equity
Improved Grounds IT system	GIS mapping so you know where everything is
Change/adapting to change	Learn to better manage change Increase funding/new ways of managing assets

Multi-functionality of greenspaces – to deal with effects of climate change	More multifunctionality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • green infrastructure • recognition of ecosystem services of greenspaces
Long term management of parks and open spaces	Investigate new funding models and management models
	New models such as the Land Trust - now active in Scotland but more research needed

+ Workshop session 2 – recommendations for action by Forum

Asset management and value	
Software solutions	Investigation and knowledge sharing about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice • Available solutions Working with e.g. APSE, KSB, Forestry Commission, LROS, FIT, NHS, HLF, Universities
Land ownership	
Planning policy	
Develop consistent system, standards and methods for valuing and managing assets including costings and databases	Work with other specialist organisations to help with developing consistent system

(3) Value of parks – demonstrating impact – strategy and planning

<i>What's the issue</i>	<i>What needs to happen to address this</i>
Value of parks not understood	Adopt new ways of doing things
Value of parks and open spaces in local authority (funding/budget share etc)	Open space strategy (10 years) parks strategy
	Tapping into more funding streams
Promoting need for quality maintenance of greenspaces	Maintaining or improving parks/greenspaces in difficult financial times
Lack of communication between departments and missed opportunities for aligning agendas	Leadership from senior management and internal forums
	Lack of resources forcing innovation but more direction required
Managing parks with less budget	Recognition from senior management and elected members, adequate budgets
	Restructures, changes to management – needs more of a higher level
	Recognition at highest value to protect/maintain budget levels
	Lobby Scottish Government/Elected Members to maintain or increase budgets
Value of parks not recognised	Need to make financial case for retaining investment in greenspace
Measurable health benefits from use of greenspace	
	Influencing research agendas

(4) Staff skills, training and profession(al) development

<i>What's the issue</i>	<i>What needs to happen to address this</i>
Loss of experienced staff and how to replace	Upskilling of staff Education and training Awareness raising Boosting morale Council buy in to provision of apprenticeships
Diminishing morale and productivity within workforce	
De-skilling of staff over years in face of budget cuts	
Reductions in staffing and perception of changes (apprenticeships etc)	
Lack of suitably skilled staff	National grading system (two-tier system – like Edinburgh? Better grades to pull in skilled staff Training – old apprentice style (and link to high class training establishments)
Lack of people entering into horticulture/park's training	
Loss of skills and knowledge in the sector	Training, support, etc. for staff and managers CPD, courses, professional outlook
Staff training and development	Quality and targeted training – SVQ?
	Opportunities for between Council secondments and placements
Parks and greenspace as a profession	Grading, charters, staff exchange, CPD

+ Workshop session 2 – recommendations for action by Forum

Staff – skills, profession(alism), morale	
<i>Forum</i>	<i>Working with</i>
Develop parks and greenspace career path – including training	Council/Government recognition Training establishments
Cross council -training and development	
Agreed pay scales for roles 1) identity – heritage skills don't lose 2) quality - new skills (community, fundraising, ecological, environment) 3) benchmark grading panel	IOG and BIGGA – they have online standard skill paths, grades and job descriptions
Professional body (Institute of parks and greenspaces) - Give us a voice - Pressure group - Staff development	CIOH APSE Public sector membership

(5) Community management and empowerment

<i>What's the issue</i>	<i>What needs to happen to address this</i>
Community engagement, delivery (Empowerment Bill)	More community involvement
	Community development / support officers
	Funding and grants officers
Increasing demand and encouraging of co-production/community development in open space maintenance and management	Support and knowledge to allow communities to have greater influence in shaping open space maintenance and management.
	Guidance, good practice examples.
Friends groups already undertaking maintenance but not 'ready' to take on management	risk management ,exit strategy, guidance, capacity-building, skills

+ Workshop session 2 – recommendations for action by Forum

Community – involvement, friends, volunteers, management and ownership	
Sharing good practice - and saying what didn't work	Through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themed meetings • Short presentations (Pecha Kucha style) • Circulate info by email
Sharing resources and info/knowledge about who can support community groups (eg national agencies)	
Sharing info about funding	
	Working with others to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build capacity in community • Remove barriers to community involvement

(6) Funding and resourcing

<i>What's the issue</i>	<i>What needs to happen to address this</i>
Shortage of capital to invest in income generating strands of work	Enhanced appetite for risk needed to enable commercial borrowing
	Officer time freed up to devote to developing business cases
	Grants / funding officer
Little or no investment and reduced resources	Reinvest in frontline services
	Across Council/agency cooperation
	Cold calling for funding! Across Council access to budget - condition and suitability budgets etc
	'Political 'strategic spend External funding
	Grant funding officer could bring in extra finance and more than pay for his/her wages
	Volunteers, inter-authority cooperation, fleet purchases
Funding/private sector engagement	Quick fixes, private sector network
Cashflow capital and revenue - using external groups to obtain funding	Issue: time to set up group(s) and go through funding applications