

Park Managers Forum

Wednesday 11 May 2016 – The Melting Pot, Edinburgh



Workshop summary: Park assets – towards an economic impact assessment

Background

This workshop followed on from the presentation '*Towards and economic impact assessment of park assets*' and looked at the challenges being faced by South Ayrshire Council relating to making an economic case for investment in greenspace management. This generated a number of discussions which are briefly summarised below:

Problems being faced

This is primarily about making a business case for continued revenue funding of greenspace in the face of reducing resources and the need for other types of spend.

There is a well-articulated national narrative about the importance of landscape and heritage for tourism and inward investment – this is not translated to the local level.

Greenspace doesn't have a champion

Is there information out there already?

Studies by CABEspace and others are now dated and rely on data from international studies – do they still hold true (and will decision makers give them credence); do we need localised studies – if so, how local (for every authority, CSGN wide??)?

SROI studies etc. (such as the one carried out by Edinburgh) include some economic data – can this be extracted to make a purely economic case?

Is this an area where the PMF could play a role in liaising with researchers to make sure that the results from emerging studies are applicable?

To make a case, data is often needed on park use and on where people are coming from (is this bringing in money from outwith the council area?) – this is difficult for smaller parks

Communicating value

Is an external research study really necessary to give credibility or is this more of an 'internal comms' requirement?

Could ecosystems services thinking help – is it accessible enough for decision makers; does it focus on the right things?

Can community groups and Friends make more of a difference in terms of generating political support?

Could existing Citizens Panels etc. be use to investigate what people value?

Case studies and examples

Being able to show decision makers the impact of what people are doing elsewhere is important (possible role for the Forum)

- Baxter Park improvements in Dundee showed an impact on property prices locally
- Perth and Kinross's work to re-open pavilions with partners has shown a big effect on visitor numbers and visitor satisfaction (and money is being spent in the pavilions)
- Falkirk has tangible evidence to show that investment in the green network has impacted on investment and resettling in the area

'The game is changing'

There is a need to look at connections and networks not just individual spaces

Can parks and greenspaces become income generating?

Commercial users of the parks do not always contribute financially to management costs (or do not properly reinstate sites after use)

Could community groups and Friends make more of a difference in terms of generating resources?

Land Services could be more strategic in how they manage all greenspaces if they can re-appraise contracts with Roads/Housing etc. and rationalise maintenance regimes to deliver best value

Could excess open space generate capital receipts (and could this income be ring-fenced for greenspace management)?

In some areas, developer contribution conditions are too restrictive in terms of how they can be used – this may need policy change but, at the very least, there is a need for park managers to engage with planning colleagues to explore ways in which revenue budgets can be enhanced by local development

A note on pragmatism

'If resourcing decisions are being taken between repairing a school or road (for example) and managing a park, it may not make any difference how good your economic case is'. This is about finding new ways of working as much or more than it is about finding ways to fund existing systems.