

BOX 6.5 GREENWICH: ANTI-GRAFFITI INITIATIVES

Operation Clean Sweep leaflet, Greenwich

through their 'graffiti monitoring officer', by giving members of these organisations relevant training and offering information packs and the necessary tools to remove graffiti and fly-posters. The Greenwich Society is one of these, and over 18 months, 50 volunteers were recruited and went out once a week or every fortnight, removing 3,000 'marks' over the period.

At the start, their work was limited to private buildings but it has now been extended to street furniture. The key to their success has been a quick response and good monitoring; the sooner graffiti is tackled the easier it is to remove and repetition is discouraged. The society aims in the future to divide their area into zones and encourage volunteers to take responsibility for a zone.

Greenwich Council operates a 'graffiti strategy' through which it involves the community to tackle this aspect of antisocial behaviour. The council is working with young persons to remove graffiti, especially in areas covered by the Cleansweep initiative that have a high proportion of social housing, and where graffiti is downgrading the environment and increasing the fear of crime. Working through schools and youth clubs, the initiative targets the age group that is responsible for the graffiti. At weekends and during school holidays, teenagers are supplied with materials and receive supervision to tackle the problem.

Officers have observed that not only do the young persons enjoy the work, but often the graffiti does not reappear in the locations that have been cleaned. Thus the initiative not only improves the public realm but also educates those sectors of the population who are likely to exercise peer pressure on the offenders. As part of this pilot, the council is also working with traders to prevent young persons gaining access to materials that can be used for graffiti painting.

The council involves community organisations in areas outside the Cleansweep pilots in the 'Adopt a Building' project,

In some cases the private sector manage public spaces in their entirety, for example in Brindleyplace in Birmingham. There, through mutual agreement, a coordinated approach to the maintenance, cleaning and sign posting of these public/private spaces and the surrounding council owned and managed land has been developed. Many such public/private spaces were reported to be the result of Section 106 planning agreements, through which developers have negotiated with local authorities to create or improve the public realm. While Section 106 contributions on the whole tended to be more concerned with new projects, rather than with managing the existing environment, the monies they provided were also used for long-term management. In the City of London, for example, the 'Street Scene Challenge' initiative is half funded by Section 106 contributions, and half funded from the parking surplus fund. The initiative has been used to provide public spaces for the general public, but also provides the only forum through which local authority officers and departments come together to discuss public space issues.

The private sector in the form of local business contributed to public space management in several ways, the most widespread of which was the sponsorship of street furniture, hanging baskets, lampposts, flower displays and verges. Lancaster reported the successful implementation of

such a scheme for its flowerbeds and street signage. However, several of the authorities felt that such schemes can lead to visual clutter.

Increasingly popular was the involvement of local businesses in partnerships covering public spaces, whether this be through representation on a not-for-profit company board with other stakeholders, including the local authority, or through commuted sums or financial contributions to public space services. Coventry City Council had gone one step further by setting up an independent not-for-profit city centre management company – CV One – in an effort to improve the city centre's image, in part through the quality of its public spaces. Under the auspices of CV One, city centre businesses pay an annual membership fee which the company uses to invest in improvements to the city centre. With a flexible budget the company reported that it can respond to public space management issues quickly and efficiently (Box 6.6). The legislation included in the 2003 Local Government Act to allow local authorities to set up business improvement districts (BIDs) and levy extra charges for public space management was eagerly awaited here, and in many of the authorities interviewed.

Businesses that create a high impact on public space, such as licensed premises and fast-food takeaways, were generally singled out for particular criticism. Local authorities thought that most local businesses did not recognise that public space quality affects them, and in the cases where