

to them by different stakeholders. This ability can be negatively affected by the lack of information about different types of public open space and about the different problems and opportunities they present for open space managers. It depends upon clarity about where responsibilities lie, but also upon more fundamental concerns about what spaces exist, how large are they, what they are used for, what qualities they have (including ecological), what needs different spaces have, and how they should be cared for.

SETTING ASPIRATIONS FOR PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

A particular issue in England had been the lack of local political support for public open spaces which, as a consequence, became a low priority in local government. This has led to poorly formulated policy frameworks for open space, which have not provided strategic guidance, vision and leadership, and clear relationships to other related public policy frameworks. Related to these concerns is the issue of stakeholder involvement in setting aspirations for open space policy. The concerns here are with the degree of civic pride and engagement from local communities, local interest groups and from local businesses, and how well open space management systems are grappling with the changing demands from an increasingly diverse urban population, particularly from the range of 'excluded' social groups.

The remaining themes address the delivery of open space management, and cover the four key management dimensions of coordination, regulation, maintenance and investment discussed in previous chapters

Management priorities

COORDINATING PUBLIC OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES: ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS

Different degrees of political priority will affect the status of public open space management services vis-à-vis other public services. A key issue was where powers for public open spaces lie in the urban governance hierarchy, what roles are played by different stakeholders within and outside formal governance structures, and how powers, decisions and implementation actions are coordinated among stakeholders, across levels of governance, and with other policy areas. In England, there has been a history of local government splitting up the responsibility for managing open spaces between different departments and contracting out implementation, resulting in confused and poorly integrated organisational structures and a lack of coordination of activities, services and responsibilities (see Chapter 5).

REGULATING PUBLIC OPEN SPACE: REGULATORY INSTRUMENTS AND MONITORING SYSTEMS

The key issue regarding the instruments available for managing open spaces was whether adequate powers exist, whether they are utilised adequately and what the drawbacks of their use are. As analysis in the previous chapter demonstrated, the perception amongst public space managers in England has been that greater use of regulatory powers is required. The connection with broader policy and regulatory frameworks (socio-economic, health and well-being, education, environmental quality, urban regeneration, and so forth) and the sensitivity to local contexts is also important, and this requires monitoring. The issue here was whether data collection systems are adequately developed, including systems for monitoring/auditing open space such as its biodiversity.

MAINTAINING OPEN SPACE: MAINTENANCE DELIVERY AND REINVESTMENT

The setting, delivery and monitoring of maintenance routines are as important as the initial design in determining the long-term quality of public open spaces. The English experience discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrates how under-funding, lack of prioritisation and unimaginative planning of maintenance led to a decline in the overall quality of public spaces. Key issues were how maintenance routines are designed and delivered and who they involve. How maintenance routines deal with variations in context arising from local circumstances, new demands and expectations were also critical. In particular should maintenance be run on the basis of generalised or specialist teams, and should it be devolved to local areas or centralised for maximum efficiency?

INVESTING IN OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT: FUNDING AND SKILLS

Adequate funding of urban open space management has been an issue in England, both in terms of the quantity of funding, but also as regards the ability to explore alternative sources, and the emphasis on capital funding for new projects. This raises questions about how to maximise the potential of existing funding streams and to exploit alternative sources of funding through partnerships, sponsorship, trusts, local charges/taxes, grants, how capital investment in new spaces is matched by revenue investment in maintenance, and about how reinvestment in renewing existing spaces factors long-term maintenance into the process. However, investment is not just about money. The quality of public open space management is directly related to the investment in people through the recruitment and retention of staff with adequate skills, both at management and