

**BOX 7.3** ÅRHUS*Århus' riverbank*

of the plan and extends to maintenance practices; a more natural appearance for parks has been adopted and has become very popular, achieving greater visual variety and maintenance savings. An innovative environment-friendly, though costly, approach is the irrigation of sports grounds with water collected from their own drainage systems, reducing water pollution from excess fertilisers.

**Staff performance**

A recent analysis concluded that the skill of some long-standing staff to manoeuvre in the political environment and in identifying/ following-up opportunities proved crucial to successful management of open spaces. By not using seasonal workers, operational staff are encouraged to train during the low workload periods. A profit-sharing scheme has also been adopted as an incentive for operational staff coping with difficult maintenance tasks and savings are shared according to hours worked or invested in the district's equipment.

Complaints are a good indication of the success of open space management and a 'balanced scorecard' is used to measure staff performance. Management is assessed by the local council every year and by external experts every three years, the aim being a score of at least 1.4 on a scale from 1 (for best practice) to 4. This regular feedback allows the administration to react swiftly to changes in residents' attitudes and needs, to their own operational practices, and to new knowledge about open space management.

Århus (population 292,000) is the second largest city in Denmark and dense for Danish standards. However, with the exception of the old city centre, the rest is a garden city.

**The Green Plan's vision and opportunities**

The priority given by politicians over many years to environmental issues and the ability of management to seize every opportunity have turned Århus into a 'green city'. Open space provision and the quality of management are considered close to optimal.

The green structure plan was prepared as part of the planning reforms of the 1970s and since then the political vision of 'Århus surrounded by forest', has acquired strong public support. The physical consequences of the widespread acceptance of the plan's green policies are best appreciated in the public support for various projects, such as the transformation of the Århus river valley from a sewage and waste outlet into a major recreational amenity through the creation of a continuous, publicly accessible path. Today, the well-designed urban space along the banks of the re-opened river is one of the most popular inner city recreational areas.

Environmental concern is one of the main driving forces