

consultation (i.e. on open space related spatial planning policy), to the direct involvement of communities in the management process or indeed across the range of open space related activities. In Melbourne, the community is consulted with regard to the development of the metropolitan open space strategy, the organisation of recreational activities, and in specific park planning processes; the approach being to involve as early as possible and to encourage the airing and discussion of all views. In Hannover, the city council also has a statutory duty to ensure the participation of the community in the planning process and has to respond to formal complaints. As a result, whenever a new park is planned, an existing one is refurbished or even a task such as tree cutting undertaken, the council seeks to involve the community. In Wellington, several key statutes affecting open spaces require formal public consultation. These include preliminary input of ideas to help policy formulation, followed by formal written submission and hearings on draft plans with recourse to higher levels. The benefits are thought to be the gathering of community support for processes, and the consequential reduction of adverse criticism, although only when the council uses a range of methods to communicate effectively.

Beyond statutory consultation, proactive initiatives to involve and communicate with open space users have been used in the eleven cities. They include Voluntary Neighbourhood Boards which have been introduced in Århus, and are made up of local residents and businesses. There is now an obligation to involve these local boards in all matters concerning local areas. In a similar fashion, Minneapolis utilises Park Activity Councils which bring together park users, local residents and MPRB staff to develop and run recreation and sports programmes and other park services. They also include local partnerships, such as the three-way partnership which forms the basis of a new 'collaborative model' being introduced in Curitiba to involve the city government, the community and the private sector in open space planning. The initiative represents an attempt to overcome a decision-making processes which, previously, was highly centralised.

Another initiative is the involvement of users in open space appraisal in Groningen through the BORG management system which gives residents a role in assessing open space quality as a means to raise awareness of their surroundings. Participation through design operates in Malmö on an ad-hoc basis when parks are being renovated, and in Zürich where the former industrial areas of the city are being converted into parks, with the direct participation of local residents, business and key local organisations. Similarly, in Minneapolis, Park Planning Citizen Advisory Committees are utilised for new capital improvement projects and consist of volunteers or citizens appointed by the Commissioners.

Volunteer rangers are a particularly successful initiative in Wellington, assisting with patrolling and inspection of open spaces, especially the

larger areas, becoming the councils eyes and ears. There is now a paid volunteer coordinator working for the council to coordinate the activities of the rangers which has helped to establish better lines of communication between the council and the community.

In Paris and Hannover, involvement is encouraged through the strategic use of lower-tier district councils as conduits for organised community participation on open space matters, and as a means to disseminate plans and policies to the community. In Hannover, this latter role is supplemented by the large number of publications produced and events run especially for that purpose. In Zürich this role is played by local open space administrators such as those employed in each district of the city. Because they are usually well known to the local population, they act as a direct conduit through which residents can engage with the city council on open space issues.

#### PROBLEMS WITH INVOLVEMENT

Overall, two types of problems have been encountered by the cities, problems broadly associated with too little participation, or at least an unwillingness of groups to get involved; and conversely, less frequent problems associated with too much involvement.

Too little involvement was not usually associated with a lack of effort on behalf of particular cities to involve their citizens, but more often with a lack of response to their effort. In Århus, for example, despite provision for public participation in municipal planning, the actual levels of participation mean that most decisions on the strategic management of open spaces are taken on an administrative or political basis. Local citizens are far more concerned with influencing the quality of their own local open spaces, and seem content to leave more strategic decisions to those with direct responsibility for such matters. The city has found it particularly difficult to involve the business community and minority ethnic groups in decision making.

However the opposite – too much involvement – has been a problem in Groningen and Minneapolis for different reasons. In Groningen, the Dutch tradition of high levels of public participation has led to a situation where public works (including open space management) has sometimes been demand-led rather than planned. The implication has been ad-hoc city management approaches and a tendency for those who shout the loudest to get the most out of the system. To resolve the problem, project development (including major repair works) is now the only aspect of open spaces management in which there is direct public participation. In Minneapolis, although there are around 20 'adopt-a-park' agreements in place between the MPRB and community groups, unsolved disputes between the MPRB and its highly unionised workforce around the