

BOX 8.6 MALMÖ



Malmö parks, designed for reduced maintenance

Malmö (population 250,000) is Sweden's third largest city. An industrial centre until the 1990s, the city has experienced an increase in immigration over the last decade, resulting, for the first time, in a housing shortage that places new development pressures on the city.

The Green Plan

Malmö's Streets and Parks Department, one of the most successful in Sweden, has received a number of national awards. As part of the process of preparing the General (land use) Plan, Malmö produced a Green Plan providing guidelines for future requirements for all open areas within the city. The Green Plan aims to ensure adequate provision and distribution of urban parks and to protect existing open spaces from development. The Green Plan is not legally binding but serves as guide in decision making. Its impact relies on its acceptance by the key stakeholders and the relevant departments'

commitment to its implementation. Communicating effectively is therefore an important aspect of the department's work and it has been very successful in marketing the value of parks as a way of improving the quality of life in the city.

The city has powers to acquire land and to negotiate and agree with other landowners to develop areas for public recreation. In Sweden, all natural areas are publicly accessible irrespective of ownership, but agreements can improve accessibility and provide facilities for visitors. One such agreement with the Water Authority allowed the integration of ponds and canals in parks, increasing water-based recreation and biological diversity, with costs borne by the Water Authority who benefited from a less expensive option for managing storm water.

Contracting out maintenance

Maintenance operations are financed entirely by the city. The Streets and Parks Department employs both private and municipal contractors; over the years it has progressively increased the demands on the contractors' expertise and as a consequence, they have shouldered increasing responsibility for delivering quality.

The department sets the standards and the contractors are responsible for their implementation and the coordination of operations. For the last decade there has been a gradual move from the issuing of specific instructions to contractors towards a more flexible system based on them achieving the department's broadly defined key goals. Contractors are encouraged to take initiatives to deliver continuous improvement, which should improve their chances to be awarded future contracts. Although each maintenance area of the city has a manager who is the contact for the area's contractors and acts as a supervisor, it is the responsibility of the contractor to oversee his own activities and to report any problems to the city council. This demands skilled contractors and good communications between the commissioning body and the contractor and should lead to mutual learning.