

The cities exhibit a range of approaches for assessing reinvestment needs, although none had systems in place to automatically track the depreciation of open space assets in order that long-term investment needs can run in parallel with day-to-day maintenance requirements. Instead, the standard approach is for open space units in their various guises to make annual bids for capital expenditure. In Århus, for example, the need for reinvestment in open spaces is initially decided on the basis of agreement between the leaders of the different units within NED. Bids are next cleared with other municipal departments and accepted by the relevant city councillor before being presented for approval to the City Board. Hannover operates a similar process. Each section of FUS is responsible for planning the necessary reinvestment. Their requirements are sent to a central analysis group in the Finance Department, which advises the municipal cabinet in their final decision about budgetary allocation. However, neither system guarantees that requests for funding will be met.

Malmö takes a more systematic approach to reinvestment in their parks and major new investments are usually preceded by a thematic review, for example focusing on city playgrounds. These reviews are dictated by local political agendas, but they enable systematic consideration to be given to the investment needs in a particular area. In Melbourne and Zürich the new management tools reveal the need for reinvestments just as they reveal maintenance needs. In Melbourne, the LOTS framework identifies the need for immediate and long-term decisions to be made on asset maintenance and renewal that reflect both workforce and organisational objectives. In Zürich, decisions on new investment are based on the classification of open space services under product groups, where maintenance and reinvestment priorities can be prioritised.

In Wellington, changes have separated regular maintenance regimes from one-off capital projects. Reinvestment is now managed under the Asset Management Section of the Parks and Gardens Unit. Previously, funding for major open space projects was vulnerable to emerging political priorities and to funding allocations made on a year-to-year basis. Now, with the advent of long-term (ten-year) financial planning, managers' ability to forward plan has been greatly improved and should result in more consistent investment in new and refurbished public open space (see Box 8.5).

A significant trend was the greater consideration to lifetime approaches in investment decisions, with ongoing maintenance costs becoming an increasingly important concern when allocating funding. The experience in Groningen provides a case in point, with the recognition of a general lack of coordination between annually-set maintenance budgets and the maintenance tasks derived from one-off capital investments funded through urban regeneration and housing sales. Open space managers now

routinely participate in the development process and are able to project the long-term consequences of different design options, consequences that will eventually make themselves felt on their budgets.

Other cities exhibit a similar concern. In Århus, cooperation between departments of the city authority over new open spaces starts at the project level, ensuring that there is a maintenance input from the very beginning. In Malmö, new projects have aimed to improve quality and reduce maintenance costs at the same time, and both those planning new investments and those responsible for overseeing day-to-day maintenance participate in the formulation of new projects. In Hannover, because divisions within FUS are responsible for both investment and day-to-day maintenance, long-term management issues are considered for all capital investment proposals.

The skills required

A strong theme running through the international cases was the emphasis placed on skills and skills development; both at management and operational levels. The Natural Environment Division of Århus City Council has a strong body of professionals ranging from landscape architects to foresters, botanists and trained gardeners who work in both the administrative and operational sections of the division. These skills are supplemented by those of architects and engineers who work in other parts of the organisation. A focus on ecology in the 1980s and 1990s led to the appointment of biologists and a change in the skills profile, with a consequent change in management practices. Many members of the council also have professional backgrounds and their skills are used in initiating, carrying out and managing projects.

In Hannover, most of the leading staff at the Environment and Green Space Division have a professional background in horticulture or landscape architecture and managers in the division are trained in new management methods. At lower levels, most managers have gone through technical colleges, and specific skills are also sought at the operational levels: cemetery gardeners, perennial gardeners, foresters, and so forth. In Malmö, the overall planning of parks is carried out by architects and landscape architects at the Streets and Parks Department and the City Planning Office. At the operational level, many park keepers have gone through horticultural sciences courses at further education level. Similarly, in Zürich, trained landscape architects are employed by the Green Planning Office of the City Council for planning and management, whilst at the operational level trained gardeners and other specialists are used, many having graduated from the Council's own apprenticeship scheme. In Paris, 'The Grid of Jobs' carefully defines all administrative positions and the qualifications and practice-based experience required for each.