

A further lesson is that the delegation of some responsibilities to the operational level is desirable if maintenance routines are going to be flexible enough to incorporate the varied and changing demands of users and the multiplicity of individual open space contexts. The roles of park keepers in Paris and Minneapolis and area maintenance team leaders in Zürich and Groningen seem good examples of this, and suggest that where local flexibility is required, public rather than private employees are likely to be more adaptable, unencumbered as they are by the often highly prescriptive contractual arrangements that define the responsibilities of private contractors.

In each of the eleven cities, maintenance approaches have been adapted to respond to the individual needs of different types of open spaces, even when there is no formal provision for dealing with those. Some cities have developed quite sophisticated mechanisms to cope with a variety of geographical, seasonal and cultural contexts by shaping maintenance approaches accordingly. The key lesson is therefore that individual open spaces have different needs, and the more successful cities seem to be those that openly acknowledge and understand those differences and actively plan for them. In nearly all cases, locally responsive maintenance implies some degree of devolution of responsibility to local areas, together with good communications between management and operational teams and users and a responsive city-wide system. Individual park maintenance plans, dedicated park keepers, area-based managers and user participation can all play an important role here. Thus even where there is a larger degree of centralisation of management decisions, such as in Paris, there is still room for local adaptation of maintenance routines.

### Investing in open space management

Although for most of the eleven cities current levels of funding are still satisfactory, all have faced budgetary constraints over recent years, with capital expenditure budgets suffering the most. Nine out of eleven cities depend on allocation from a general municipal budget for their open space core funding. Only Minneapolis and Melbourne benefited from dedicated funding, making resource allocation relatively free from the bargaining and uncertainty typical of the other cases. The latter approach is more likely to secure adequate levels of resources, but the fact that most cases do not have such a system suggests that political and legal obstacles to such a solution should not be underestimated.

For most cases, the key message that emerges is that adequate funding for open spaces is likely to remain dependent on the skills and political clout of open space managers and committed politicians to make the case

for open space investment, and to bargain with providers of other services for a larger slice of a limited cake. In this regard, accounting methods which link more explicitly open space expenditure to other environmental benefits, as in Århus, or that are more transparent in the relationship between the costs and the benefits they provide, as in Zürich, can be powerful tools to promote the cause of open spaces.

A further lesson is that there is much potential in exploring supplementary sources of funding. Particularly promising was the use of planning gain for capital expenditure on open spaces in Zürich, Groningen, Wellington and Curitiba, revenue-generating public-private partnerships and PFIs in Minneapolis and Tokyo, as well as the use of voluntary sector and community resources in Melbourne and Tokyo. An important prerequisite, however, is that resources raised in this way should be returned in full to the departments responsible for their generation as 'additional' funding.

As for reinvestment in open spaces, the constraints in nearly all the cities were discussed above. The main lesson to come out of the cases relates to the potential benefits of planning reinvestment activities in the context of thematic reviews, as in Malmö; asset management systems, as in Zürich, Melbourne and Groningen; or on the basis of long-term financial planning, as in Wellington. This is based on the need to place reinvestment priorities in the context of other open space management needs, thereby providing clear cause/effect links between day-to-day maintenance activities and longer-term reinvestment. Although this process was still in an evolutionary phase in most of the cities, its potential is quite considerable. The aim should be the automatic tracking of depreciation over time, and the factoring in of reinvestment as part of the continuum of maintenance activities, from minor and regular works, to major and periodic work.

Another key lesson concerns the increasing consideration of lifetime issues in investment decisions. Many of the cities provided good examples of efforts to consider the potential future costs of ongoing maintenance in investment decision-making. This has meant a closer participation of maintenance staff in development and investment decisions, including the analysis of development and investment plans by operational managers. A parallel lesson in this regard is the need to reshape monitoring and feedback systems to provide enough information to allow for the long-term maintenance consequences of new investment to be assessed.

Across the eleven cities, there is an explicit concern with the skills necessary for open space management and their development. However, the nature of the skills relevant for each case, as well as their distribution within management structures varies widely. History, organisational arrangements and styles of service, as well as the nature of the main open space aspirations explain that variation.