

Resourcing open space

- 18.1 There are always improvements, enhancements and new provisions that could be made to improve the network of open space across the district. However many would require funding of some format.
- 18.2 Identified priorities can be resourced in a number of ways. Initially it may be necessary to allocate funding from within existing budgets for open spaces. This funding will be used to support other funding that is available from external sources, much of which will come from governmental organisations or quangos which require match-funding from local authorities.

- 18.3 Potential sources of income are outlined below:

Sale of Council land

- 18.4 Generating and reinvesting resources obtained from land which is surplus to requirements is a principle that has been successfully adopted in the London Borough of Bromley, and by Glasgow City Council (through its Parks and Opens Spaces Strategy).
- 18.5 This is, however, likely to be a long process, and ultimately may prove difficult to achieve
- 18.6 If considered feasible at some future stage, reinvestment would:
- secure political credibility for the sale of land
 - provide sufficient funding to carry out significant rather than purely minor open space improvements. It should, however, be realised that the process may take two/three years to introduce, owing to planning, legal and other restrictions which could delay its introduction
 - also, this mechanism is likely to be create some public controversy and its potential success depends on how the process and sale of land is sold to the public in terms of benefits and outcomes.

Section 106 planning agreements

- 18.7 In particular, Section 106 agreements can be used to achieve environmental improvements. Once a Strategy framework has been established, the process of obtaining these improvements will be enhanced because they can be used to achieve specific purposes, e.g:
- by opening linear route ways to connect green spaces
 - providing walking and cycling routes
 - obtaining open space in areas of deficiency
 - funding open space improvements
 - there are maintenance considerations to be taken into account; ie significant costs may arise, particularly if new open space is acquired.
 - it may therefore be necessary to obtain an endowment fund wherever possible to cover these ongoing costs.

- it should of course be noted that such Agreements have to meet the test of Circular 1/97, and “Developers should not be expected to pay for facilities which are needed solely in order to resolve existing deficiencies”
- some councils have used part of the contributions towards revenue ‘Development Officer’ posts; e.g. in N Nottinghamshire.

Use of redundant buildings

- 18.8 Sympathetic use of redundant facilities for leisure and recreational purposes is also a possibility. This could include the establishment of small commercial sports facilities (e.g. tennis) in parks. Another example could be the use of a redundant sports pavilion as a children’s crèche or nursery.
- 18.9 However there appear to be few (if any) redundant buildings within Harborough District Council at present. This is not an issue that has been raised through the consultation process.

Business funding/sponsorships

- 18.10 Examples from other boroughs including sponsorship of Cardiff City Council’s events and festivals programme, and the Body Shop Playground Project in Auchinlea Park, Glasgow.

Partnership arrangements with the voluntary sector

- 18.11 This could include the formation of further parks “Friends” groups. An example is that of Rossmere Park, Hartlepool, where the community was encouraged to take ownership. The park was promoted and became heavily-used, attracting investment from funding bodies. The Harborough in Bloom project has in the region of 30 volunteers for the main planting project in early summer, and for on-going maintenance. It is a good example of a sustainable project supported by the local community.

Lottery funding

- 18.12 This could include the Heritage Fund if works are carried out which are of outstanding interest and importance to the national heritage. Funding is provided for whole-park projects, the conservation of park features or park activities. Grants are available from £50,000 to £5 million for a period of up to five years. Projects must be designed to involve all stakeholders, must demonstrate sustainability, and must demonstrate the heritage value of the park in question.

Review of pricing

- 18.13 This needs to cover all charges where a significant income is obtained, including outdoor sports, allotments and burials. The review needs to consider:
- charges for similar provision in other local authorities
 - the quality of provision
 - whether the service can be improved to justify a price increase
 - the extent to which the market will bear any future increase
 - whether differential pricing can be used to encourage off-peak usage
 - concessions for minority groups, or those which the Council particularly wishes to encourage

- pricing at a level which does not deny access
- lower and/or more favourable charges for Harborough residents.

Living spaces

18.14 The “Living Spaces” grant scheme was launched in May 2003, and covers schemes with a value of £1,000 to £100,000. It may be suitable for small local parks, and is open to existing neighbourhood groups. The scheme supports:

- improving local parks
- creating or improving pocket parks or community gardens
- creating or improving play or seating areas
- cleaning up neglected residential land
- restoring village greens
- carrying out planting schemes on estates or verges
- creating or improving nature areas or city farms
- restoring local cemeteries
- restoring paths, gateways, ponds or boundaries.

The “People’s Places” Scheme

18.15 The “People’s Places” scheme runs until the year 2006, and is administered by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. It is provided for local community groups, and is for the transformation of derelict, underused or unsightly land or buildings. The scope of grant available is for schemes with a value of £3,000 to £10,000.

The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme

18.16 The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme was revised in April 2003, and allows registered landfill operators to contribute 6.5% of their annual landfill tax liability to environmental bodies approved by the organisation ENTRUST.

18.17 The scheme must be used for social, environmental and community based projects complying with specific “approved objects.” These objects are the provision and maintenance of public amenity, and restoration and repair of buildings open to the public with historical or architectural significance.

18.18 The project must be within 10 miles of a landfill/extraction operation. Note however that District Councils cannot apply.

Local Heritage Initiatives

18.19 Local Heritage Initiatives are to assist local communities in the preservation of their environment, landmarks and traditions including archaeological, natural, built and industrial heritage. A community group could investigate and celebrate a historic park, prepare a public exhibition in a park, and repair a feature. Up to 100% of project costs between values of £3,000 and £25,000 are payable.

18.20 Your Heritage Grants are available from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and are for projects of between £5,000 and £50,000 in value.

18.21 English Heritage supports the Heritage Grant Fund for historic parks and gardens where there is a significant risk of losing important landscape features.

Lottery Small Grants Scheme

18.22 The Lottery Small Grants Scheme offers Awards for All grants of between £500 and £5,000 for small projects which involve people in their community, and can include local environmental work and community park projects.

Barclays Sitesavers

18.23 Barclays Sitesavers is a grant mechanism for community projects which transform derelict land into community leisure and recreation facilities. Between £4,000 and £10,000 per project is available.

The Tree Council

18.24 The Tree Council supports the Community Trees Fund which funds up to 75% of all expenditure on tree planting schemes having a value of £100 to £700.

The Esmee Fairburn Foundation

18.25 The Esmee Fairburn Foundation aims to improve quality of life, particularly for people who face disadvantage. Eligible activities include the preservation and enhancement of open space, and good management of woodlands, gardens and allotments. The size of grant is not limited, with the average award for the year 2002 being £33,500.

Others

18.26 These could include other pro-active mechanisms such as :

- increased income from events and activities
- improvements negotiated as “added value” from service providers

18.27 The degree of funding will define the scope and timescale over which any developments could be implemented. It is therefore essential to carefully consider all possible sources of funding.

18.28 These should include Council capital and revenue funding, but should also include consideration of the release of existing funds; commercial opportunities such as the franchising of facilities such as catering outlets; the delegated management of facilities such as outdoor sports; commercial sponsorship (e.g. floral bedding); planning gain (e.g. through Section 106 agreements); volunteer support; reviews of fees and charges; and increased income from events and activities.

18.29 Further detailed information regarding grants can be found in Claiming Your Share: A Guide to External Funding for Parks and Green Space Community Groups, obtainable from <http://www.greenspace.org.uk>