

Resourcing open space

Introduction

- 14.1 Local authority budgets for the enhancement and maintenance of open spaces have been reduced across the country. Parish councils tend to maintain their own open spaces, however this makes it difficult for the District Council to control what maintenance is actually being done and likewise the budgets for maintenance are difficult to control by parishes.
- 14.2 It will be essential to gain financial support (both internally and externally) for any improvements to existing provision or new provision. This section looks at a series of different mechanisms for the funding of open space.
- 14.3 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.
- 14.4 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 like catering outlets; the delegated management of facilities such as outdoor sports; commercial sponsorship (eg floral bedding); planning gain (eg through Section 106 agreements); volunteer support; reviews of fees and charges; and increased income from events and activities.

Section 106 agreements

- 14.5 Once an open space strategy has been established, it can be used as a framework for negotiating Section 106 contributions from developers. These can then be used to deliver new or improved open space. However, they will, of course, be limited to areas where development proposals are put forward. Furthermore, Section 106 Agreements have to meet the test of Circular 05/2005 and *“planning obligations should not be used solely to resolve existing deficiencies.”*
- 14.6 In addition to capital contributions, Section 106s agreements can be used for revenue costs. For example, the costs of Development Officer posts or the maintenance costs of new open space via a commuted sum.
- 14.7 It is recommended that the Council continue to ensure that revenue funding for open space from developer contributions is maximised. Further detail is provided in Section 16.

Use of redundant buildings

- 14.8 Redundant sport and leisure buildings should be re-used, wherever possible, for alternative sport and leisure use. For example, a redundant sports pavilion could be used as a children’s crèche or nursery.

Business funding and sponsorships

- 14.9 It is possible to use business sponsorship to fund improvements to open space. For examples, Cardiff City Council’s events and festivals programme is sponsored, and the Playground Project in Auchinlea Park, Glasgow, is sponsored by the Body Shop.

Partnership arrangements with the voluntary sector

- 14.10 The voluntary sector can be engaged through the formation of parks ‘friends’ groups. An example is that of Rossmere Park, Hartlepool, where the community was encouraged to take ownership of the park. The park was promoted and became heavily used, attracting investment from funding bodies which may not have been accessible to the local authority.

Lottery funding

- 14.11 The Heritage Lottery Fund provides grants for works to parks 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 from £50,000 to £5 million are available for a period of up to five years. Projects must involve all stakeholders and must demonstrate sustainability and the heritage value of the park.
- 14.12 The Young People's Fund supports projects that will improve local communities and offer more opportunities to young people. The scheme involves young people coming up with ideas for projects and being involved in their delivery.

The Big Lottery Fund

- 14.13 The Big Lottery Fund has several different potential funding sources for open space, sport, play and recreation facilities. These include:
- Changing Spaces – between 2006 and 2009, £234 million is available to help communities in England improve the environment. The programme has three priorities, including community spaces and access to the natural environment
 - Children's Play – £124 million has been made available to local authorities from March 2006 until September 2007. Local authorities are invited to submit their play strategy and a portfolio of project proposals as the basis for their application. They should be submitted by a Play Partnership, led by the local authority
 - Young People's Fund - this aims to support projects that will improve local communities and offer more opportunities to young people. Grants are available for
 - individuals, to help them make a difference in their community
 - voluntary groups and community organisations, to run local projects with and for young people.
- 14.14 More information can be found at: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme

- 14.15 The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme allows registered landfill operators to contribute 6.5% of their annual landfill tax liability to environmental bodies approved by the organisation ENTRUST. 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.

14.16 The project must be within 10 miles of a landfill or extraction operation.

Lottery Small Grants Scheme

14.17 The Lottery Small Grants Scheme offers Awards for All grants of between £500 and £10,000 for small projects, which involve people in their community. These can include local environmental work and community park projects.

Barclays Sitesavers

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

The Tree Council

14.19 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

14.20 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. In 2006 they expected to make grants of £26 million across the UK.

Funding for further development of playing pitches

Sources of capital funding

14.21 There are several potential sources of financial aid for pitch provision. These include:

- Football Foundation
- Sport England Lottery Fund
- Rugby Football Foundation
- Council funding/grant aid support to voluntary clubs.

Football Foundation

14.22 The Football Foundation is dedicated to revitalising the grass roots of football, constructing modern infrastructure and creating facilities that are fit for the game in the 21st century. The maximum grant for a capital project is £1 million. Grants of this size will only be awarded in exceptional circumstances. The percentage level of support is variable but in exceptional circumstances could reach 90%.

(See <http://www.footballfoundation.org.uk/> for more information)

Sport England Community Investment Fund

- 14.23 The Sport England Community Investment Fund is used for funding applications over £5000. Projects that are eligible for funding are assessed against the priorities of the national framework for sport. However, decisions regarding funds are actually made by the nine regional sports boards and applications must also fit in with the regional funding criteria.
- 14.24 Sport England's mission is to increase participation in sport and active recreation by 1% every year to 2020. It is committed to investing in a coherent system for community sport and promoting a consistent framework for how sport is organised at a local level. County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) have responsibility for achieving increases in participation within their area and it is therefore important that discussions about each project are held with the relevant CSP.
- 14.25 Priority will be given to those projects that deal with inequalities in sport and significantly narrow the participation gap for priority groups. (Note: the target is to close the participation gap between these groups and the regional average by 25% between 2005 and 2008).
- 14.26 The regional priority groups are:
- people over 45
 - black and minority ethnic groups
 - people with disabilities
 - women and girls
 - socio-economic groups with top 20% most deprived communities.
- 14.27 Applications will be considered in rounds with a maximum of £400,000 being allocated to each round. Decisions on all applications will be made within eight weeks.

See <http://www.sportengland.org/> for more information.

Rugby Football Union

- 14.28 In January 2003, the Rugby Football Union (RFU) announced the commencement of the rugby football foundation fund. Community rugby clubs can apply for grants and/or interest-free loans to fund capital facility projects that contribute to the recruitment and retention of players. This funding is available to clubs participating at Level 5 or below which means the vast majority of community clubs are eligible.
- 14.29 There are two different elements to the fund:
- **Ground Match Grant Scheme:** this provides easy-to-access grant funding for capital projects which contribute to the recruitment and retention of players. A list of projects that qualify for a grant will be sent to clubs on request as part of the application pack. All projects that qualify for a grant also qualify for the loan (see below)

At present, clubs can apply for between £1,500 and £5,000, which they must equally match (ie 50:50). Clubs may only apply for one grant per project.

- **Interest-free loan schemes:** The interest-free loan scheme provides loans to clubs to help finance capital projects that contribute to the recruitment and retention of players. The key features of the scheme are:
 - loans will be interest-free (though if a club defaults on a capital payment, the whole loan will be subject to interest until the outstanding amounts are paid)
 - the maximum loan available is £100,000
 - the maximum loan period will be 15 years, including an initial two-year capital holiday
 - security will be required for the loan scheme in the form of either a charge over property or personal guarantees.

14.30 Clubs may apply for both a grant and a loan for the same project (providing that the appropriate conditions are met). A club could, therefore, apply for a maximum grant of £5,000 (providing it matches it with £5,000 of other funding) and a maximum loan of £100,000. Grants and loans will be awarded by the Trustees of the Rugby Football Foundation.

14.31 Information packs are available from the Secretary of the Rugby Football Foundation, Graham Hancock. He can be contacted on 020 8831 6538 or by e-mail (grahamhancock@rfu.com) or at the Rugby Football Foundation, Rugby House, Rugby Road, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW1 1DS.

Other sources

14.32 These could include other proactive mechanisms such as:

- increased income from events and activities
- improvements negotiated as ‘added value’ from service providers.

Review of pricing

14.33 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 Rother District residents.

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14.34 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 www.greenspace.org.uk